

Everything, Everything Study Guide

Everything, Everything by Nicola Yoon

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Plot Summary

The following version of the novel was used to create this study guide: Loon, Nicola. *Everything, Everything*. Delacorte Press, 2015. Kindle.

Love is worth everything, eighteen-year-old Madeline sums up the novel *The Little Prince* in the book *Everything, Everything* by Nicola Loon. Madeline, like the main character in her favorite novel, decides to follow her heart even though it means she might lose her own life. She suffers with SCID, a rare condition characterized by a nearly nonexistent immune system, and has lived all of her life inside a controlled, sterile environment. When she has the chance to experience love, however, Madeline decides a chance at being alive is worth the risk she must take.

Having lived more than seventeen years inside her home, Madeline believes that she has come to terms with her illness. She has taught herself to live her life through books and stay busy with her school work. Dreaming of life outside will only cause her to be depressed by what she cannot have and cannot do, so Madeline has learned to ignore the outside. Her satisfaction with her secluded life is destroyed one day when a teenaged boy moves in next door. Oliver, called Olly, makes several attempts at friendship with Madeline before they begin communicating through email.

With the help of Madeline's permissive nurse, the two begin having short visits face-to-face in Madeline's home. They quickly fall in love and the rule not to touch one another is disregarded. Touching leads to kissing and the two are soon enamored with one another. It is after Madeline hears Olly's father abusing him and runs outside to protect Olly without thinking that her overly protective mother learns about the visits. Madeline's mother forbids her from seeing Olly again in person or even talking to him through email or IM.

Unable to go back to her life the way it was, Madeline decides she wants to take a chance at really being alive even if it means that she may die. She and Olly take a trip to Hawaii where they snorkel, jump off a cliff into the ocean and enjoy Hawaiian food. They profess their love to each other both verbally and physically. The second day of their trip, however, Madeline wakes up with a raging fever and her heart stops. She is taken to a hospital in Hawaii where she is revived.

A few months later, Madeline, who is trying to convince herself that she can go back to a life of seclusion after she has experienced the world, gets an email from the doctor who treated her in Hawaii. This doctor has conducted a good deal of research into Madeline's case and believes Madeline does not suffer with SCID. Madeline sees a local SCID specialist and it is confirmed. Madeline's mother had invented Madeline's disease after she lost her husband and son in a car wreck. Because Madeline had been so sick as an infant, her mother believed keeping her in a sterile environment was the only way to protect her. Because Madeline's mother was a doctor and oversaw her daughter's care, no one had the opportunity to question the diagnosis until Madeline was treated by the doctor in Hawaii.



Madeline struggles to understand why her mother thought she was doing what was best for her by keeping her isolated from the world. Hoping to be able to repair her relationship with Olly, Madeline flies to see him in New York where his family moved to escape his abusive father. She arranges to meet him in a used book store where she has left a copy of the book *The Little Prince*. That book offers herself as a reward if it is found. Olly recognizes the book and smiles.



The White Room - The Welcome Committee

Summary

In the section “The White Room” Madeline describes how her books provide the only color in her germ-free, white bedroom. Each book arrives new, vacuum sealed in plastic which she removes before writing her name along with a suggestion of rewards a person might enjoy if they were to find her lost book and return it to her. All the rewards, which Madeline says do not really apply since there is no one to borrow her books, involve the finder getting to spend time with Madeline.

In “SCID Row” Madeline tells her reader that she has Severe Combined Immunodeficiency causing her to be allergic to everything. Severe sicknesses can be triggered by just about anything. Because of her sickness, Madeline has not been allowed outside her house in seventeen years.

In “Brthdae Uish” Madeline’s mother, who is also her doctor, asks Madeline what game she wants to play in honor of her birthday. Madeline chooses Phonetic Scrabble even though she is terrible at it. Because it is her eighteenth birthday, Madeline says that both she and her mother are more aware of her illness and its detrimental impact on her life than usual. Although she should have been enjoying the normal teenage benchmarks like getting her driver’s license and going to prom, Madeline was not able to go anywhere.

In the section “Stays the Same” when Carla, Madeline’s nurse, comes the next day she learns that Madeline and her mother stuck with their traditional routine of vanilla cake, Scrabble and a viewing of the movie Young Frankenstein. Carla, who also has a teenage daughter, says she is jealous of the sweet relationship between Madeline and her mother.

Carla later notices that Madeline is reading the book Flowers for Algernon. She asks Madeline why she is reading it again because it always makes her cry. Madeline says the book also gives her hope that a cure might be found for her illness. She says she wants to make sure she is reading it on that day.

In the next section “Life Is Short ™” Madeline reviews the book Flowers for Algernon in two short sentences “Algernon is a mouse. The mouse dies” (15).

In the section “Alien Invasion, Part 2” Madeline hears the noise of a moving truck pulling up at the house next door. Madeline senses that Carla is immediately worried that, “it’s happening again” (16).



The section “Madeline’s Diary” is composed of pages of Madeline’s diary from when she was a young girl. In this entry dated August 5, she wrote that the family that had lived next door had moved away and that she had dreamed they were abducted by aliens.

In the section “Welcoming Committee,” Madeline pulls back the curtains to her window to look outside. She tells Carla that since she is older, she will not have the problems she did the last time. Madeline sees a man and woman along with a girl who appears to be a little younger than her and a teenaged boy. Madeline watches as the boy runs up the side of the house and grabs the sill of an upstairs window, appearing to be able to defy gravity. His parents criticize his behavior but Madeline stares in wonder. The boy sees her and their eyes meet. He smiles at her.

Analysis

This novel is told from the first person point of view by Madeline, a girl diagnosed with Severe Combined Immunodeficiency. Because of her susceptibility to sickness and allergies, Madeline has to live in an environment free from the bacteria, viruses and other triggers that could make her sick. Besides her nurse and her mother, it appears that Madeline has had little human contact throughout her life.

The tone of the novel is both sad and hopeful. Even though Madeline realizes how sick she is, she also holds out hope that a cure could be found for her illness. As she tells her nurse, she hopes that she will be reading the book *Flowers for Algernon*, when a cure is found. This book is an important object in the novel because it is about medical experimentation. Although a cure is found for the main character, however, this cure results in the man’s death.

Notice the symbolism also in the way the narrator describes the room in which Maddie lives. Her bedroom is completely white. This color is significant because it is the color of cleanliness and sterility. In this purified room in which she lives, the only color is the spines of the books lined up on her bookshelves. The image of the colorful books in this white room symbolizes the idea that Madeline can only experience real life through the books that she reads. These books are the only source of excitement or personal contact that Madeline has in her life.

Madeline has just turned eighteen. While Carla envies the relationship that Madeline and her mother have, Madeline has never been able to do anything that a normal teenager does. The problem, or conflict, in the novel is introduced in the section “Alien Invasion, Part 2” in the form of the new boy who has just moved in next door. Madeline is attracted to him right away and admires the way he moves.

Notice the different forms of language that the author uses in this part of the story. Along with the traditional text chapters, there is one chapter composed of handwritten pages from Madeline’s journal when she was a little girl. There is also a section where Madeline writes a review of the book *Flowers for Algernon*. The title of the section “Brthdae Uish” is the phonetic spelling of the words Birthday Wish. It ties in with



Phonetic Scrabble, the game that Madeline and her mother play together. Notice also the chapter title “SCID Row” is a phonetic play on skid row, a alternative term for jail. This indicates that Madeline considers herself to be in jail because of her illness.

Things to remember in this section include Madeline’s habit of labeling her books with her name and rewards for the person who finds the book in the case that it becomes lost.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the medical condition from which Madeline suffers. How true to life is Madeline’s description of her lifestyle as a result of her disease.

Discussion Question 2

Describe the tone of the opening of the novel. How does the author convey this tone?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss Carla’s concern about having new neighbors. What do you think happened with the previous neighbors? Discuss the meaning of the dream Madeline had about them leaving.

Vocabulary

decontaminated, deemed, fanciful, exotic, phonetic, impulsively, omissions, insurmountable, silhouette, angular



My White Balloon - First Contact, Part Two

Summary

In “My White Balloon” Madeline dreams that her house, the balloon protecting her, bursts with her breathing.

In the section “Neighborhood Watch” Madeline lists the schedules of the members of the new family living next door to her. She notes that the father’s activities include drinking heavily and yelling at his family. Olly is the only one who does not have a predictable schedule.

In “I Spy,” Madeline describes the part of Olly’s room that she can see. She notices he goes to the roof often and wonders what he is doing up there. A poster in his room depicts a form a street gymnastics which she believes that Olly practices. She wishes she knew more about him.

In “Menteuse,” Madeline, her mother and Carla have just sat down to enjoy the French meal they have every Friday when her mother mentions that Madeline is late with an Architecture assignment. She asks if it has anything to do with the new neighbors and Carla looks at Madeline sharply as well. Although she has never done so before, Madeline lies to her mother and tells her that she is late only because she has been reading too much.

Because Madeline is not eating, her mother worries that she has a fever and has just reached to feel her forehead when the doorbell rings. Even though Madeline’s mother tells her to stay in the dining room, Madeline cannot help but follow. She knows that her mother will not let whoever it is past the air lock behind the front door. Madeline hears a voice that she believes it Olly’s telling her mother that his mother baked a Bundt for them to bring. He says it is inedible. Madeline’s mother thanks them for the cake but tells them she cannot accept it. Even though Kara comments that she thinks Madeline’s mother is rude, she still refuses the cake. Olly asks if perhaps Madeline was at home, if she could show them around. Madeline’s mother tells them only that Madeline cannot before she thanks them again and closes the door.

Her mother bows her head when she comes back into the house. Madeline remembers that her mother once played soccer, and also had a husband and son before she had to be sequestered with Madeline in the bubble that is their house.

In the section “Piece De Rejection,” in her room Madeline is able to hear Olly’s dad yelling at Olly and Kara. He throws the cake at Olly but Olly jumps out of the way. The plate breaks but the cake remains intact. Olly’s father yells at him to clean up the mess.



Later Madeline stands in her window hoping that Olly will see her. Instead of smiling at her, he pulls his blinds shut.

In “Survival” Carla accuses Madeline of moping but Madeline is simply remembering why she decided that she had to stop paying attention to the world around her. Olly’s rejection of her hurt. Carla gives Madeline a pep talk, encouraging her not to let her circumstances get her down.

In her next “Life Is Short™” review, Madeline summarizes the book *Lord of the Flies* in a single sentence. She writes that, “Boys are savages” (34).

In the section “First Contact,” Madeline has begun to relearn how to ignore her neighbors when she begins to hear pinging on her window. She tries to ignore the sound but eventually gets up and looks outside. Olly has set the Bundt cake on his window sill. It has googly eyes pasted to it and appears to be contemplating the distance from the windowsill to the ground. Suddenly the cake falls from the windowsill and Madeline realizes she has just witnessed a suicide. A flashlight shining on the cake on the ground show Madeline the cake is still in one piece.

In the section “Night Two” Madeline ignores Olly when he throws things at her window the next night.

Madeline can ignore Olly no longer on “Night Four” and goes to the window to see the Bundt cake sitting in the window sill. It has been doctored with bandages.

On “Night Five” the Bundt cake is surrounded by cigarettes, a martini glass and a bottle of pills. Madeline wonders if the scene is representative of another suicide attempt.

On “Night Six” Olly has fashioned a sort of IV line he has attached to the Bundt cake. He uses a stethoscope to pretend to listen for a heartbeat. When Olly notices Madeline watching him he only shakes his head solemnly.

On “Night Seven” Olly is performing last rites on the Bundt. He writes his email address on the window with a black marker.

In “First Contact, Part Two” Madeline sends Olly an email message.

Analysis

A mystery is presented in this section of the novel. When Madeline’s mother comes back inside from rejecting the Bundt cake that Olly and Kara’s mother baked for them Madeline’s mother notes how full her mother’s life had once been before it was determined that she was sick. She says that her mother once traveled and played soccer. Madeline also mentions her father and brother but does not indicate why they are no longer with the family. The reader wonders if there was a divorce or if they just could not all live together because of Madeline’s condition.



At eighteen years old, Madeline tells her first conscious lie to her mother. The reader is able to piece together both from Carla's reaction to the new neighbors, Madeline's mother's concern and Madeline's own response to what she saw as a rejection from Olly that the neighbors who lived next door to their home before provided significant distraction for Madeline. Her mother is concerned that Madeline has been spending too much time observing the neighbors and has fallen behind in her schoolwork. It is at this point that Madeline lies and tells her mother that she has been distracted with a new book that she is reading, not the neighbors. Despite Madeline's claim she is not distracted by the neighbors, it appears that she spends a good deal of time watching them because she has become familiar enough with their schedules to be able to know their comings and goings, and even create a schedule for everyone except Olly, who is unpredictable.

Notice in this section Carla's permissiveness when it comes to Madeline's behavior. Even though Madeline's mother instructs Madeline to stay in the dining room when the doorbell rings, Carla allows Madeline to leave the room. At first she tries to enforce the request that Madeline stay where she is but when Madeline reasons that the person at the door will not be allowed past the air lock, Carla relents.

The Bundt cake is a significant symbol in this section of the novel. It is an offering of friendship between Olly and Madeline's families. When Madeline's mother does not accept this gift and even tells Olly and Kara she cannot accept it, the teens believe that she is being rude. Of course, Madeline's mother offers no explanation why she cannot accept the cake. This lack of explanation may come because Madeline's mother has gotten tired of trying to explain Madeline's condition or because she just does not want people to ask questions. Madeline thinks it is because she is just so strange that her mother does not want anyone to know about her.

After Olly and Kara return home with the Bundt cake, it appears the cake becomes the center of a family argument. Madeline watches from the window of her room as Olly's father throw the cake at him but Olly is able to jump out of the way. Olly later uses the cake as the central actor in a series of suicide attempts on the part of the cake. The humor comes from the statement that Olly made when he first presented the cake to Madeline's mother. He told her upfront that the cakes that his mother makes are usually not edible. The fact that the cake survives all of the abuse that Olly puts it through is evidence it is probably not edible. In one of her first emails to Olly, Madeline makes up a recipe for a cake using ingredients like rocks and cement as a joke.

The air lock is also significant in this section because it shows how far Madeline's mother is willing to go to make sure her daughter does not get sick. The air lock prevents germs and other things that could hurt Madeline from getting into the house. It could not have been cheap to have a house built that was outfitted with this kind of precautionary measure.



Discussion Question 1

Why do you think Madeline's mother does not simply tell Olly and his sister what is wrong with Madeline instead of just refusing the cake they bring without an adequate reason? Would it not be easier just to be honest? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

What do you think that Olly is trying to communicate through his antics with the Bundt cake? Give reasons to support your answer.

Discussion Question 3

Discuss Carla's role in Madeline's life. Do you think Carla is as strict with Madeline as her mother is? Why or why not? Give reasons for your answer.

Vocabulary

deflates, carcasses, subsides, unpredictable, surveillance, ornate, infrequently, wayward, inedible, cloistered, mired, succession, suppressing

First Contact, Part Three - Ten Minutes After That

Summary

In the section “First Contact, Part Three,” Olly responds to Madeline’s email with an Instant Message. He learns from their conversation that Madeline is half Japanese and half African American. He tells her he that they will be friends.

As the two continue to get to know one another, Olly asks Madeline if she is grounded. She explains that she is not grounded but she cannot leave the house. Later when he asks why there is most always an adult with her, Madeline asks if they can talk about something else. In a separate IM session, Madeline asks Olly why his father was so angry that day. Olly indicates that while Madeline’s reasons for not leaving the house are her secrets, his father’s behavior is his secret.

One morning at 3 a.m. Madeline IMs Olly again to find out if everything is okay. The reader can infer that Olly’s father has hit his mother. Olly types that it is not the first time it has happened and will not be the last. In another IM conversation the next day, Olly finally gets Madeline to tell him that she is sick. She had been trying to explain that she went to school online and Olly kept pushing her for an explanation. She told him that she had an illness that would cause her to die if she left the house. He told her that he did not feel sorry for her, one of the reasons that she would not tell him at first, and that they were still friends. They agree that they wish they could meet each other in person. Olly asks her to come to the window so he can see her. He calls her Maddy for the first time that night.

In the section “Astronaut Ice Cream” Mr. Waterman, Maddy’s architecture teacher, arrives at the house on one of his few personal visits to look at the model she has made for class. She describes the process through which a person has to go in order to visit her. The requirements include a medical background check as well as a thorough physical. Before entering the house they have to go through a decontamination process to ensure they are not bringing anything into the house that could make Maddy sick. He compliments Maddy on her model and then looks for the astronaut that she always includes in all of her work. He finds this character in the diner in front of a table loaded with food. He asks her how he will eat all of the food in front of him while wearing his helmet.

In the section “Everything’s a Risk,” Maddy suggests that Carla knows something is different about her. She has messages from Olly on the computer that she wants to read but does not dare to do so. When Carla asks what is so interesting on her computer Maddy lies and says it is a cat video. Carla tries to look but Maddy lies and says Carla will not want to see it because the cat dies. It is at this point that Carla laughs and asks if that is the best that Maddy can come up with. Maddy admits she did



not want Carla to know she was communicating with Olly because she did not want Carla to worry about her getting sad again.

In “Fifteen Minutes Later” Maddy asks Carla if Olly could come for a visit. Carla insinuates the answer is no.

In “Two Hours Later” Maddy asks Carla again and Carla asks if she is crazy.

In “Ten Minutes Later” Maddy asks for a shorter visit and Carla says no again.

Analysis

Notice the name change in this section of the novel. For the first time in her life, Madeline has someone who calls her by a nickname. It is the less formal Maddy that Olly chooses as a name for his new friend. Olly first uses this nickname in the set of instant messages in which Maddy cheers him up with a corny joke after his father apparently hit his mother during an argument.

While the two talk about just about everything during their Instant Messaging sessions, there is a topic each that they do not want to discuss. Maddy does not want to talk about her illness because she does not want Olly to feel sorry for her. Olly does not want to talk about his abusive father. Olly does get Maddy to explain to him that she cannot leave her house because she is sick though she does not go into many details.

When Maddy puts the astronaut figurine in the diner of the shopping center she designed, she creates a situation that parallels her own life. When her teacher discovers where the astronaut is, he asks her “But how will he eat all that scrumptious food with his helmet on?” (59). Maddy is like the man in the astronaut suit cut off from the world in the safe environment of her home. Just like the astronaut cannot eat any of the food in front of him with his helmet on, Maddy cannot enjoy life in the confines of her home. What is significant is that Maddy thinks to herself that she had not thought about the astronaut wanting to eat any of the food. Before the point in her life when she met Olly, Maddy had not thought about herself wanting to enjoy anything that life had to offer. In this section as she and Olly talk about wishing they could meet in person, Maddy realizes that she, like the astronaut, might actually want to eat the food.

Even after Maddy has explained the process that a person has to go through to pay her a visit, she is quick to suggest that perhaps Olly could be snuck in for a visit. Carla says no to the idea but Maddy continues to ask, as if she hopes that her permissive nurse will make an exception.

Notice also the new forms of communication introduced in this section of the novel. Olly apparently gives Maddy his email address by writing it in marker on his window. She begins communicating with him through email and then the two pick up their conversation via IM. Each of these IM sessions are tagged with the day and time they take place. Maddy’s end of the conversation is notated not only with her name but her words also appear in a lighter type than Olly’s responses. The emails sent are formatted



just like real emails with lines for who the email is sent by, who it is sent to and a subject line.

There are significant differences in Maddy's writing in her email and IMs, and Olly's writing. Maddy uses correct grammar, capitalization and punctuation. Olly, however, does not capitalize anything and rarely uses punctuation. Since it appears he is an intelligent boy, it can be surmised that this is some way in which he hopes to convey his personality. For instance, some say that referring to one's self by a lowercase "i" instead of a capital "I" indicates low self esteem. This could be true since Olly's father abuses him and his family so badly.

Discussion Question 1

Do you think it is a good idea for Olly to visit Maddy? Why or why not? Think about this not only in terms of her illness but emotional wellness as well.

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the steps that a person has to go through to visit Maddy. Why must all these precautions be taken? What might happen if any of these precautions were skipped?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss how the Internet and computers help Maddy to live a life in which she is somewhat connected to the outside world. How does the Internet help with schooling and friendship?

Vocabulary

impractical, brooding, contradiction, heretic, probability, strategically, harried, scrumptious



Later Still - Makes You Stronger

Summary

In the section “Later Still,” when Maddy asks Carla again if Olly can come and see her. Carla tells her, “We can’t always get what we want” (66). Before she leaves, however, Carla wavers, telling Maddy how much she does not like to say “no” to her. When she mentions to Maddy that her mother would never allow the visit Maddy reasons that they can just not tell her. Carla seems disappointed as she asks Maddy if it is that easy for all teen girls to lie to their mothers.

In “To Those Who Wait” two days later Carla tells Maddy that she and Olly have to stay on opposite sides of the room from each other and that they cannot touch. She says she has given Olly the same directions. She then tells Maddy that Olly is waiting for her in the sunroom. When Maddy asks her why she changed her mind, Carla says to her that she deserves “a little something” (67). As Maddy prepares herself to meet Olly in person, she thinks to herself that he is the biggest risk that she has ever taken.

In “Future Perfect” Maddy writes an email to Olly before she goes downstairs. In it she tells him that she expects their meeting will be perfect.

In the section “Olly” Maddy describes the sunroom, which her mother designed to resemble the outdoors, as her favorite room in the house. Olly had climbed up a rock wall and is examining the fake leaf of a banana tree when she walks into the room. They both comment that the plant is not real at the same time. They are uncomfortable at first but then Olly asks about the sunroom. She notices he wears a black rubber band around his wrist that he pulls at when he gets nervous.

He describes the ocean to her when he learns that is where she would like to go if she could go anywhere she wanted. His description is not particularly positive because he describes it as a force that is deadly. Maddy laughs when she realizes he is scared of the ocean but he accuses Mother Nature of being a lousy mother. When Maddy asks Olly to do a trick for her, he catches himself saying there is not enough room and that they should go outside. He tries to apologize but she stops him. When Carla walks in, signaling their visit is over, she makes sure they did not touch. Even though they did not touch the eye contact between herself and Olly is enough to make Maddy feel like she is on fire.

In “Diagnosis” Maddy creates an article describing Hysterical Abdominal Rhopalocera, one’s feeling of having butterflies in the stomach after meeting a love interest.

In the section “Perspectives” Maddy thinks she is getting physically sick the following day but Carla tells her that what she is feeling is only due to lovesickness. Maddy tells Carla that she cannot be in love because there would be no point, since she could never be with Olly. Carla tells her that it is important that Maddy get to experience real



life. She explains that doomed love is a part of real life. For the rest of the day, Maddy imagines Olly everywhere she goes. She lets herself believe she is in love with Olly but refuses to think she is in love. By the end of the day, Maddy has come to realize that for the first time, she is allowing herself to want more than what she is able to have.

In “Wonderland” Maddy is so scared by the wanting and what that desire can do to her that she sends Olly an email telling him that she is busy and cannot talk. Carla notices Maddy is not spending time on her laptop and asks if they had an argument. Maddy only shakes her head no. As she reads the book *Alice in Wonderland*, Maddy compares herself to Alice. She does not want to get lost like she did when she was eight. At that time, looking at the world outside had made her realize what she did not and could never have. She does not want to go back to those feelings.

In her “Life is Short TM” review of *Alice in Wonderland* Maddy types “Beware the Queen of Hearts. She’ll have your head” (84).

In the section “Makes You Stronger” Maddy is surprised Monday morning when she has no messages from Olly. She refreshes her email several times and even checks her spam box. She explains to Carla she does not have any messages from Olly, but that she had sent him a message requesting that he not send her any messages. Carla laughs at Maddy’s youth and tells her that her feelings will pass. She advises her not to give up on the friendship just because she is afraid of getting hurt. Carla also mentions how cute Olly is. As she encourages Maddy to send a message to Olly, she tells Maddy that love cannot kill her.

Analysis

In this section Carla allows Maddy a visit from Olly that seems dangerous both physically and emotionally for Maddy. Physically the visit is dangerous because Maddy could get very sick if Olly were to bring in something to which she was allergic or if he had the beginnings of a disease causing virus. The reader knows that Olly has been decontaminated but does not know if Olly has had the medical background check or physical people generally have to have in order to get near Maddy. Because Carla is a nurse, the reader hopes that she knows what she is doing as far as Maddy’s health is concerned.

Maddy seems to be more worried about the emotional effects of her date with Olly than getting sick. It appears that when the family had neighbors in the past, Maddie allowed herself to get too caught up in watching the neighbor children and wanting to go outside even though she knew she was not allowed to do so. Because it caused her such pain and depression, Maddy has tried not to think about what she is missing by not being able to go outside. Her new relationship with Olly is a fresh reminder of what she is missing by not being able to go outside and live a normal life. Consider Carla’s advice to Maddy. She tells her that doomed love is a part of everyone’s life. While this is true, not everyone goes into a love affair with the knowledge the relationship is doomed from the beginning. Instead of discouraging Maddy from pursuing her friendship with Olly, Carla



encourages the friendship. “You have enough things to be afraid of. Love can’t kill you” (87) Carla says.

Because she sees Maddy as one of her children, Carla treats Maddy like her own child. Maddy realizes how much affection her caregiver has for her and realizes that Rosa takes advantage of her mother’s big heart like Maddy has just done. Maddy also recognizes that Carla probably often tells Rosa she cannot have everything that she wants, just like she has told Maddy when she begs her to allow Olly to visit.

When Maddy reads a book, she tends to compare the things she sees around her in terms of that book. In this particular section, Maddy is reading *Alice in Wonderland*. As a result, she compares Carla to the Cheshire Cat in that book when she describes her smile: “Her smile is toothy and wide, very Cheshire Cat–like. Any minute now her body will disappear, leaving just a grinning floating head in its wake” (85).

Discussion Question 1

When Carla and Maddy discuss whether or not Maddy should continue her relationship with Olly, Carla advises Maddy that love cannot kill her. In Maddy’s case, might this be the wrong advice to give? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

How does Maddy convince Carla to let her have a face-to-face visit with Olly? Is Maddy being manipulative? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss Maddy’s fear that she, like *Alice in Wonderland*, will get lost. Is her fear legitimate? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

antics, bemused, crevices, guffaw, bane, vigorously, illicit, akimbo, spontaneous, combustion, retorts, irreparably, infinity, annotated, futile, nonplussed



No Yes Maybe - Chaos Theory

Summary

In the section “No Yes Maybe,” Maddy contacts Olly via IM on Monday night. She told him she sent the email telling him not to contact her because she got scared. Maddy suggests that they agree to just be friends, an arrangement that she believes will be a solution to their problem.

In “Time” Maddy is determined time has slowed down in the week Carla makes her and Olly wait before they see each other again. She includes diagrams of techniques she has devised to help pass the time as well as a graph to plot how much time has actually passed as opposed to how much time she feels has passed.

In the section “Mirror, Mirror” when the day finally arrives for her to see Olly again she struggles to decide what to wear. Because she does not go out much she only has white t-shirts and jeans. All of her shoes, which she rarely wears, are white. All of them are too small or almost too small. She decides to do some shopping on her own. Although Maddy wishes she could talk to her mother about how she is feeling she knows it is best to keep Olly a secret.

In the section “Forecast,” Maddy notices that even though she and Olly talk about clothes, their bodies seem to be having a conversation of their own. When the air purification system in the house turns on, Olly asks how it works. Maddy describes how the house is sealed with the exception of the filters on the roof. Those industrial filters not allow particles any bigger than 0.3 microns to get inside. She explains they had the money to purchase that filtration system because of a settlement reached with the trucker who killed her father and brother in a traffic wreck. The trucker had been driving three straight shifts with no sleep. She says she was so young when they died that she does not even remember them.

Olly asks her if she has ever thought about how different her life might be if she could change just one thing. She explains she tries not to think about the impossible in order to keep herself “Zen” (97). Olly shares with her his opinion of people, that they are predictable based on what inputs matter most to them. He regrets the fact that he cannot figure out to what degree those inputs should be changed or how to put in the right inputs so that bad things did not happen at all. He explains that when one takes into consideration chaos theory, it would be impossible to ever predict a person’s behavior or manipulate it accurately. While Olly learned that people were unpredictable from mathematics, Maddy learned this same lesson from books. Even though they predict that life is unpredictable, Maddy tells herself that she can predict she is going to fall in love with Olly and that it is going to be a disaster.

In “Madeline’s Dictionary” she describes an obsession as “acute (and completely justifiable) interest in something (or someone) acutely interesting” (100).



In “Secrets,” the time Maddy is spending with Olly is catching up with her. Her mother worries because she has fallen asleep during two movie nights. Maddy tells her she just is not getting enough sleep and her mother lectures her on her need for adequate rest. Because she is keeping secrets from her mother, Maddy feels that they are drifting apart.

The section “Thank You For Shopping” is a receipt for t-shirts in six different colors and a pair of blue shoes.

In “Numerology” Maddy includes the number count for things she notices in Olly’s house like the minutes that pass between the time his father comes home and the time he starts yelling at his family, how many IM joke it takes to make Olly feel better after his hate filled family dinner, how many visible and invisible bruises Olly’s mother has, and how many hours left until Olly’s next visit.

In “Olly Says,” during their next visit, Olly admits to Maddy he sometimes wishes that he could just run away from his family. Maddy realizes she cannot come up with anything she believes would be appropriate to say to Olly. She realizes that people touch because they do not have the right words to say. Olly asks Maddy why he feels he has always known her. Maddy feels the same way. At the close of the chapter, Olly says that he dad did not always act the way he does now.

In “Chaos Theory” Olly shares a memory from when he was ten years old. His father had made homemade hot chocolate for him. Olly has noticed his father’s moods have been worse lately and he tries to gauge what his mood is currently. His dad is talking to him about how Newton was wrong, that the universe is not deterministic because a person could do everything right and their life still turn out badly.

The phone rang and his father answered it. He heard his father ask if he was being fired. Olly had heard mentions of fraud and his father being investigated. On the phone Olly’s father said the thought he was being cleared of his supposed crimes. He tells his boss they cannot fire him because he will not be able to get another job if they do. Olly leaves the room. A few months later Olly’s dad got violently drunk for the first time. Olly had wondered if he had stayed and comforted his dad after he was fired if things would have been different.

The importance of touch is discussed in this section. One of the rules of Maddy and Olly’s visit is that they cannot touch. Touch, of course, could spread germs. When Maddy hears the story about Olly’s father, she realizes she cannot come up with the proper words to comfort Olly. It is at this point, she knows, that people would touch. “This is why people touch. Sometimes words are just not enough” (105) she realizes.

Analysis

Even though Maddy and Olly agree to just be friends it becomes obvious to Maddy right away that she cannot keep up her end of the deal. She notices during their second face to face meeting that: “Our bodies are having their own conversation separate and apart



from us. Is this the difference between friendship and something else?” (96). As she thinks about the consequences of falling in love, Maddy forecasts that the experience will be devastating for her.

Showing that their relationship is getting closer, Olly and Maddy share with each other the most painful parts of their lives. It was because of the death of her father and brother in a car wreck that she and her mother were able to afford the industrial air filtration system in the house where they live. Olly shares that his father was not always as abusive as he is now. He says it was the result of being fired, perhaps even set up for fraud and then fired, that he lost his job and is unable to get a similar job.

It is as they are talking about their lives and how they might be different that Olly brings up chaos theory. Chaos theory is the idea of unpredictability. According to this theory, any one change in input could change the output drastically. It is a scientific theory that predicts that human behavior is unpredictable. While Olly spends his time wondering if his actions might have changed the outcome of his family's situation, Maddy explains that she cannot spend her time wondering how her life might be different. The difference in the two is that Maddy has no choice but to accept her situation. She stays inside her clean environment and lives or she goes outside that environment and take the chance that she will become very sick and perhaps die. Olly's prison, on the other hand, is one from which he has the option of escaping. He will not always have to live with his abusive father. He, his mother and his sister all have to option of leaving this abusive man.

Maddy and Olly's father illustrate two different outcomes one can have when life throws them a situation over which they have no control. Maddy chooses to try not to desire what she cannot have. She tries not to consider what might happen if she were not sick. Olly's father, however, seems to get very angry at the circumstances at work that are beyond his control. It appears that he has been pinned as the scapegoat for a fraud investigation at his job. Because of the circumstances under which he is fired, Olly's father believes that he will not be able to get another job in his field. Instead of taking his misfortune in stride, Olly's father allows himself to get bitter. He turns to alcohol to deaden his pain, and then takes his frustration out on his family.

Because of the lies she has told her mother, Maddy notices that their relationship is suffering. She wishes she could talk to her mother about the feelings she is having about Olly but knows how angry it would make her mother. Her original lie makes her have to tell more lies in order to cover up the first lie. In this section she cannot tell her mother that she is staying awake too late talking to Olly through IM because it would give away her first secret.

Included in this section of chapters is a continued variation in styles and formats. For instance, she includes a receipt for the colored t-shirt and shoes that she orders. In the chapter “Numerology” she keeps track of the number of times significant events take place at Olly's house, like the number of times Olly's father curses about the burned pot roast. In another chapter she includes drawings and diagrams of how she passes the time waiting for Olly's visit.



Discussion Question 1

What problems do you see with Maddy's decision that she and Olly can just be friends? Do you suspect, like Maddy does, that their relationship will turn out badly? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

How does Maddy's original lie continue to affect her relationship with her mother?

Discussion Question 3

Compare and contrast Maddy and Olly's outlooks on life. How is each affected by the input given them by their families and those around them?

Vocabulary

ellipses, interminable, metaphorically, epoch, punctuality, regimen, sepulchral, scythe, microns, heretic, compromised, marginally, deprived, deterministic



A Tale of Two Maddys - Life and Death

Summary

In the section “A Tale of Two Maddys,” Carla warns Maddy that her mother has asked Carla if she has noticed anything different about Maddy recently. Carla warns Maddy that since she has been canceling movie nights and other activities with her mother, her mother is lonely. Carla blames herself for letting Maddy see Olly at all. She tells Maddy that she will not allow her to see Olly again, that she needs to make time for her mother. When Maddy later asks Carla if she is serious about not letting her see Olly, Carla relents but instructs Maddy to start spending time with her mother again.

As she thinks about these recent developments, Maddy realizes that her mother is worried because of the changes Maddy has made, like buying shirts in different colors instead of all white. She admits to herself that she wishes that she had the opportunity to make decisions for herself, just like ordinary teens, without the advice of her mother. She thinks she should be allowed just that little bit of normal teen life.

In “Freedom Card,” Maddy receives the credit card she ordered.

In the section “Upside Down,” Olly grudgingly tries to teach Maddy how to perform a handstand even though he does not think she has enough upper body strength. She tries several times but it is not until he instructs her to imagine she is in outer space that she is able to get herself upside down. Wanting to try it again, Maddy starts to get overbalanced from the beginning. She is surprised when she feels Olly’s hands on her ankles. When she stands up he remains where he is, only three feet from her. They hold hands as they study each other closely for the first time. It is not until they hear Carla coming that they move away from one another.

In the section “Skin,” Maddy discusses the way the cells in a person’s skin are constantly renewing while those in one’s brain do not. Even though her skin will not remember the feel of Olly’s skin in two weeks, her brain will remember.

In the section “Friendship,” when Olly learns that Maddy has not gotten sick from his touch but instead is feeling “brand-new” (123), he suggests to her that he wonders what a kiss might do to her. She reminds him that friends do not kiss.

In the section “Research,” Maddy does not tell Carla about Olly touching her because she is afraid Carla will stop their visits. She does sneak peaks at her medical records but sees nothing in them that indicate she might be getting sick. At the end of this section Maddy includes three pages of research on the proper kissing technique and atmosphere.

In “Life and Death,” Olly is sitting in the middle of the couch in the sunroom when Maddy enters for their next visit. He compliments her on her orange shirt and asks if he should move. She sits beside him. They hold hands. Suddenly Maddy notices that Olly is closer



to her. She moves closer as well and they kiss. She pulls away to breathe and Olly rests his forehead on hers. He tells her that a kiss has never felt like that to him. It is at this point that Maddy knows that everything between them has changed.

Analysis

One of the aspects of life that Maddy misses most being trapped in her house are the benchmarks of being a teen. She feels suffocated by her mother but at the same time guilty that she wants to get away from her mother because her mother has done so much for her. She knows that her mother is sad because Maddy wants to make some of her own choices but Maddy does not think she should have to be responsible for sharing every decision she makes with her mother. She feels she should be allowed that small freedom of being able to grow up normally.

Thanks to Carla, Maddy is able to enjoy the magic of a first love and a first kiss. Of course, Carla is not aware that the two have touched. Maddy keeps this information from even her caregiver. Significant is that Maddy has not gotten sick even after being in such close proximity to Olly. Note Olly's new status in Maddy's life. "Olly's now the only person in my life that I haven't lied to" (127). Part of Maddy's ability to enjoy her coming of age involves lying to her mother and then lying to Carla. In another step toward adulthood, Maddie orders a credit card. Ironically, the name of the card is the FreedomCard, as if having a credit card could grant a person freedom. For Maddie it is a promise of being able to make her own purchases without having to ask her mother. The reader must wonder, however, why Maddie would think she needs her own credit card.

The idea of being trapped by one's situation is continued in this section of the novel. A difference that Maddy notes between herself and Olly is that they use their bodies differently. "His body is his escape from the world, whereas I'm trapped in mine" (118) Maddy notices about Olly as she watches the way he moves and how he calms with his movements. Because of her sickness, however, Maddy's intelligence and desires are trapped by her health, forced to stay inside because her body might die if she did not.

Notice in this section the way the author personifies Olly's voice as he helps Maddy perform a handstand. "His voice slides up my neck, whispers into my ears" (119) she writes. The idea of a voice sliding up her neck gives it the quality of an animal or person.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss Carla's lecture to Maddy about her relationship with her mother. Do you think Carla is overstepping her bounds? Why or why not?



Discussion Question 2

In what ways is it mature of Maddy to realize why her mother is so upset about the changes through which Maddy is going? In what ways does Maddy lack maturity in her desire to do things that might make her sick?

Discussion Question 3

Is Olly a good influence on Maddy? Why or why not? Defend your argument with specific examples from the novel.

Vocabulary

normalcy, critiquing, fortitude, splayed, inverted, migrates, disentangle, correlation, causation, belie



Honestly - Nurse Evil

Summary

In the section "Honestly," Olly and Maddy agree that though they probably should not have kissed, they are not sorry that it happened.

In the section "Owtsyd," Maddy beats her mother at Fonetik by playing the phonetic forms of the words "outside," "freedom," and "secrets." She notices her mother has been looking at her strangely all night. Finally she asks Maddy what is going on with her. Their conversation is interrupted by a scream and slam from next door. They run to the window where Olly, his mother and his father are all on the front porch. Olly draws his father's attention from his mother, trying to pick a fight with him. His dad misses Olly with a punch and falls onto the concrete driveway. He does not get up until Olly's mom goes to him, and then he grabs the woman and drags her behind him. Olly tries to get between them but his dad punches him in the stomach. Maddy runs outside, believing she has to protect Olly.

They are all shocked when Maddy hollers at Olly's dad to stop. His dad goes into the house, followed by his mother. When Olly sees Maddy he begs for her to go back inside the house. She will allow her mother to pull her back into the house only after Olly has assured her that he is okay.

In the air lock, Maddy's mother asks Maddy why she went outside for a total stranger. From the look on Maddy's face, her mother is able to see that Olly is not a total stranger. Maddy explains they are online friends. Her mother throws away the clothes that Maddy was wearing and makes her take a shower. In bed that night, Maddy realizes she cannot remember anything about being outside besides her fear for Olly.

In "The Third Maddy," Maddy's mother comes into her room and sits on her bed. Maddy turns away from her, pretending to be asleep but not wanting her mother to kiss her on the forehead like she did when Maddy was little. She wonders why she is being cruel to her mother. When her mother leaves the room, there is a black rubber band on Maddy's bedside table. It is at this point that Maddy knows that her mother has learned about her relationship with Olly.

In the section "Life is a Gift," Maddy wakes to the sound of her mother yelling at Carla. Hoping to keep Carla from taking all the blame, Maddy runs downstairs. Despite Maddy's insistence that what happened was not Carla's fault, Maddy's mother fires Carla. Before she leaves, Maddy gives Carla her copy of the book *Flowers for Algernon*. She tells Maddy "Life is a gift. Don't forget to live it" (141) before she leaves.

In an installment of "Madeline's Dictionary" Madeline offers a definition for the word "asymptote." She writes it is a "wish that continually approaches but never achieves



fulfillment” (142). She includes a line chart of a wish going on indefinitely but never reaching the line of fulfillment.

In the section “Mirror Image” Maddy pulls open her curtains to find Olly standing there. He writes on his window in black marker to find out if she is okay. She says that she is but that she is grounded and the Internet is turned off so she cannot message him.

In “Schedule Change,” Maddy shows a drawing of a schedule board. The only things scheduled are nurse interviews.

In “More Than This” after a week of nurse interviews, Maddy’s mother tells her that she has hired a new nurse. She asks Maddy if she understand why she is doing the things she is doing. It makes her angry when Maddy tells her mother that Carla was her friend. She argues that friends are not supposed to give a person false hope or encourage them to endanger themselves. It is at this moment that Maddy realizes that Carla really will not be coming back to work and that she will really not be able to see Olly again. As if she senses Maddy’s grief, her mother asks her to tell her about him.

After Maddy’s description, her mother tells her that she wishes that she could have more to her life than what she has. Maddy begs to have Internet privileges back but her mother will not allow it. When Maddy tells her mother that love cannot kill her, her mother says that is not true.

In “Nurse Evil,” Maddy describes how her new nurse makes her call her “Nurse Janet” and leaves sticky notes enforcing the rules on Maddy’s laptop. Even though Maddy is allowed Internet access only before 3 p.m., she and Olly have managed to exchange some communication between their classes. One day Maddy is surprised when Nurse Janet’s note says the same thing that Carla told her about life being a gift and warning her not to waste it. Maddy wonders if she is wasting her life.

Analysis

Important to notice in this section is that although Maddy has been in the room with Olly, touched Olly, kissed Olly and has gone outside but not gotten sick the reader must wonder how bad Maddy’s SCID really is. As easily as Maddy claims she gets sick, it seems that one of these four activities would have triggered some bout of illness even though it might have been mild.

Even though Maddy has no ill effects from any of the changes in her environment, her mother takes all precaution. She burns the clothes Maddy had been wearing when she went outside and makes Maddy take a shower to wash away anything that might have gotten on her skin or in her hair. For the next several days she takes Maddy’s vitals every hour instead of every two hours trying to catch any signs of sickness early.

After both Carla and Nurse Janet repeat to Maddy the quote about her life being a gift, Maddy wonders if she is using her life properly or if she is wasting it. Considering Maddy’s medical condition there is little she can do differently about the way she does



live her life. Maddy does seem to believe that she is missing out on a life experience because her mother is not letting her communicate freely with Olly.

Even though her mother has put Internet restrictions on Maddy, she and Olly still find a way to communicate. This form of communication adds another format in which information is presented in the novel. Olly talks to Maddy by writing on his window with a black magic marker. Of course, the writing appears backward to Maddy. It is presented in the novel as Maddy sees it. Because the letters are backward, Olly's part of the conversation does not appear in the Kindle format of the novel. Maddy pantomime's answers to Olly's written questions.

The black rubber band that Olly wears around his wrist appears again in this section of the novel. When Maddy's mother comes into her bedroom the night that Maddy went outside, she leaves a black rubber band on Maddy's nightstand. Maddy only has to look at it to realize that her mother knows about her in person visits with Olly.

Discussion Question 1

Compare and contrast Carla and Nurse Janet.

Discussion Question 2

Do you agree with Maddy's mother's comment that Carla was not Maddy's friend? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Consider Carla's advice to Maddy when she learned that Maddy was attracted to Olly. She told Maddy that love could not kill her. When Maddy tells her mother this, her mother tells her that is incorrect. Which do you think is right? Why? Defend your answer with examples from the book.

Vocabulary

conspiring, defiance, morphing, vise, relinquishes, enormity, feigning, pantomime, existential, nostalgically, revoked, cynical, dubious, despot, biased, reinstated



Neighborhood Watch #2 - Other Worlds

Summary

In the section “Neighborhood Watch #2,” Maddy lines out her daily schedule and Olly’s daily schedule since they are unable to message one another. It includes a good deal of watching each other through the window.

In “Higher Education,” since he has been back in school, Olly IMs Maddy whenever he has the chance during the school day since that is the only time she is allowed Internet access. He sends her pictures of things at school to make her feel like she is part of his life. While Maddy misses Olly, she is also jealous of the fact he gets to live outside his house. She thinks high school should be considered utopia while he claims it is not that great. Maddy mopes about missing getting to spend even small bits of time with Olly when she sees him with another girl when he arrives home from school. The girl is smiling at him and touching him. Maddy realizes her mother was right, that once he was back in school, Olly would get to know girls who were able to leave their house because they were not sick and that he would forget her. When Maddy glances out the window at them, Olly is looking at her window and frowning as he waves at her.

In “Aloha Means Hello and Good-bye, Part 1,” Maddy cancels another mother-daughter night because she is distressed about Olly. Her mother tries to make her feel better by telling her how lonely she felt when she was a teenager but Maddy tells her mother that she is alone, different from being lonely. Before she leaves Maddy’s room, her mother gives her a picture of their entire family standing on the beach in Maui, Hawaii. She said it was Maddy’s dad’s favorite place to go. Maddy is just an infant in the picture. It was one month before her dad and brother were killed.

In the next section “Later, 9:08 p.m.” Olly asks through his window writing if Maddy is jealous. She mimes back to him that she is not.

In “Madam, I’m Adam,” Maddy shares how she sometimes reads her books backward starting with the last chapter and ending with the first. She describes how she likes to watch the action of the novel in reverse. She mentions that if a book were written about her life, it would read the same both forward and backward, like a palindrome. Even though she loves her books, she does not imagine how she can ever be satisfied again with just books after having gotten so close to Olly.

In “The Glass Wall,” Maddy is woken up by lights from Olly’s house. Olly stumbles out of the house and then turns back in a fighter’s position. His mom eventually comes out and tries to calm him but he jerks away. After she goes back inside, Olly puts his face in his hands and cries.



In the section “The Hidden World,” Maddy sees particles of dust in the shafts of sunlight coming into the sunroom. She realizes there are whole worlds that exist even though people do not see them.

In “Half Life,” Maddy explains that since she met Olly she has morphed into two people. One of her selves was content to read books and stay alive while the second believes that death would be worth getting to experience real life.

The section “Good-bye” is a letter from Maddy to her mother explaining that she has to go out and discover life on her own. She tells her mother that she understands the book *The Little Prince* and how he felt getting his rose was more important than death. She apologizes for not being able to go back to the way she was before.

In the section “The Five Senses,” Maddie records what she hears, sees, feels and smells as she goes outside. She also records that she tastes Olly as she stands in front of him, giving him a kiss.

In the section “Other Worlds,” Maddy tells Olly that she is running away. Olly tries to take her back to her house but she refuses. She asks Olly to help her with her plans. She asks him to take her to his roof where she will explain what she wants to do.

On the roof Maddy asks Olly what he does up there but he is so afraid for her that he tells her that does not matter. She lies and tells him she has gotten some experimental pills that are supposed to keep her from getting sick. When she has finally convinced him that she is not trying to kill herself, she asks him again what is under the tarp on his roof. He pulls it off to show her an orrery that he has built. As Maddy admires it, Olly asks her again if she is sure about her plans, when she says that she is, he asks her where she wants to go.

Analysis

Regardless of what it may cost her, Maddy has decided that she wants to experience life. Notice the line in Maddy’s letter to her mother where she tells her mother that she loves her and that: “I may not get the chance to tell you again” (168). This line tells the reader that Maddy realizes her situation is serious and that she knows that she is endangering herself by going outside.

There seem to be several things that are pressing Maddy forward to have a real life experience. One of these things is Olly and her realization that she can never be a real girlfriend to him because she is not able to go out in the world. Another circumstance that seems to prompt Maddy’s desire to go out in the world is the knowledge that no one, not even her mother, really understands what her life is like. Her mother had come to Maddy’s room hoping to comfort her daughter by telling her that she knew what it was like to be a lonely teen. It is at this point that Maddy tells her “‘I am not lonely, Mom,’ I snap. ‘I am alone. Those are different things.’” Maddy has been alone for all of her life with only her mother and her nurse as company. Olly is the first person with whom Maddy has been interested in having a relationship.



Another thing that seems to spark Maddy's interest in going out on her own is the picture that her mother gives her of the family before Maddy's sickness was diagnosed and before her father and brother were killed. Maddy sees herself outside for the first time. As she compares who she has become and the baby she once was, Maddy realizes that the baby had more hope and excitement about the future than she does as a teenager.

Since Maddy's world is built on books and reading, it makes sense that she describes how she feels and how she comes to decisions by using books as examples. *The Little Prince* is the book she uses to explain to her mother why she wants to take a trip into the outside. Even though she did not understand the book when they first read it, Maddy has learned what it is like to meet a person who makes her life more full and without whom she does not think life would be worth living. Even though she is taking a chance with her health by going out, she believes even death will be worth the little glimpse into real life that she will get.

Notice also the literary description that Maddy uses when she first sees the orrery that Olly has built. "At first I'm not sure what I'm looking at. It's like reading a seemingly random collection of words before the sentence becomes clear" (176). She compares her lack of understanding about the model of the universe that Olly has built with the way a person who tries to read random words would not understand what those words were saying.

In a final note, remember that Maddy is lying to Olly about the pills she says she has ordered from the Internet. She uses this lie to get him to agree to help her with her trip. In a way she uses him and his love for her. Imagine how he might feel if she were to die while they were together. In a way it is selfish of Maddy to ask Olly to go with her on a trip. It is also selfish of her to lie to him about the pills.

Discussion Question 1

Do you understand Maddy's reasoning for wanting to live real life even if it winds up killing her? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Consider the request that Maddy makes of Olly. Is she being fair to him to ask him to take on so much responsibility? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

When Maddy's mother tries to comfort her by telling her that she was lonely as a teen, Maddy tells her mother that she is not lonely, she is alone. Discuss the difference between these two states.

Vocabulary

obnoxious, utopia, inevitable, palindrome, trapezoid, epiphany, divine, impervious, bravado, obstinate, orrery



Aloha Means Hello and Good-bye, Part Two - Madeline's Dictionary

Summary

The section "Aloha Means Hello and Good-bye, Part Two" contains only an email confirmation of the purchase of two air fares to Hawaii.

In "Happy Already," Olly tells Maddy that she is crazy when she says that she has booked them tickets to Hawaii. She insists to him that she will be okay, that the pills will work. When Maddy tells him she wants to go see the state fish of Hawaii, he relents. As they drive he tells Maddy an old friend of his lives in Maui. He would like to arrange a visit while they are there. Maddy is overwhelmed by the speed of the car and all the things to see while they are driving. Since they have time before their flight leaves, Maddy instructs Olly to take her to an apartment in Koreatown. When they stop she tells Olly she was happy before she met him, but she is alive now.

In "Infected," Carla is excited to see Maddy. She examines her closely with her nurse's eyes and asks how she is. Olly prompts Maddy to tell Carla about the pills. Maddy does so but she knows that Carla does not believe her. Instead of saying anything, Carla just offers to fix them breakfast.

Olly asks again about the pills while they eat and Maddy wishes that she could ask why she has not gotten sick yet. Carla says that Maddy may not have gotten sick because she has not come in contact with one of her triggers yet or because the pills are working. Maddy follows Carla into the kitchen and Carla tells her that she understands what Maddy was doing. When she was young, Carla had taken a chance with her life by leaving her family and Mexico in the middle of the night to try to find a better life. She regrets some decisions she made but that a person is not living if he does not have some things that he regrets. Maddy thinks for a moment what might happen if she were to die but then mentions to Carla her hope that she will not get sick. When Carla encourages her to think that way, Maddy is filled with hope.

In the section "TTYL" a cell phone shows a message to Olly's sister telling her he will be back in a couple of days.

In "First-time Flyer FAQ," Maddy describes her first experience in a plane in a series of questions and answers.

In "The Carousel," Olly tells Maddy that he believes the baggage carousel at the airport is the perfect descriptor for life. In his theory, people are represented by the luggage. Their lives begin when they are put onto the carousel. Some luggage is damaged and does not work properly, some pieces fall off before they are supposed to do so and some get forgotten and just go around and around. Maddy questions Olly about his



family members and their roles as baggage. His mother is one of the damaged bags and his sister one of the lost bags. He says his father is the carousel, but Maddy tells him that is not fair, that his father cannot be in charge of everything. After he gets a lei for her, Olly holds her close and begs her not to die. She says that she will not.

In the section “Madeline’s Dictionary” Maddy defines a promise as “The lie you want to keep” (194).

In “Here Now,” in the taxi ride to the hotel where Maddy and Olly will stay, they are suddenly driving next to the ocean. Olly asks the driver to pull over so they can look. Maddy gets out of the car and walks to the beach where she takes off her shoes and wades into the water.

In the next installment of “Madeline’s Dictionary,” she defines the ocean as “The endless part of yourself you never knew but always suspected was there” (197).

Analysis

The pills are an important symbol in this section of the novel because they are what Maddy uses to persuade Olly that she can go on a trip to Hawaii with him without getting sick. When the two tell Carla about the pills, Maddy knows right away that Carla does not believe her. She knows there are no such pills experimental or otherwise but she plays along with Maddy’s game. This strikes concern for Carla’s competence as a nurse because even though she knows that Maddy has a disease where being outside could kill her, Carla does not once mention that Maddy should not go on the trip. She does not immediately send Maddy back to her house or contact her mother, she just allows Olly and Maddy to go on their trip.

Because Maddy has lied to Olly about the pills, she cannot ask Carla the questions about her illness that she wants to ask. She thinks it is strange that she has been outside for as long as she has and has not yet gotten sick. She wants to ask Carla about it but the question would reveal that she lied about the pills. When Carla does address Olly’s question about whether Maddy’s good health so far meant the pills were working, Carla suggested they might be but also suggested perhaps the two had not come in contact with any of Maddy’s triggers yet.

Notice the continued references to sickness and Maddy’s illness in this section. When Maddy says goodbye to Carla, Maddy whispers to Carla, “Maybe I won’t get sick” (186). Carla affirms her suggestion causing hope to spread through Maddy “like a virus” (186). The use of this simile not only refers to how quickly a virus can spread and make a person sick, but also gives the reader a sense of hope mixed with foreboding. Another reminder that Maddy suffers a serious illness comes when she and Olly are in the airport in Hawaii. Olly hugs her and begs her not to die. Even though she promises him that she will not do so, her promise is negated in the next section, an entry from her dictionary where she defines a promise as a “lie you want to keep” (194). Maddy comes straight out and calls her promise to Olly that she will not get sick a lie. She knows with



the disease that she has that she will eventually encounter something that will trigger an allergy or cause an illness.

Meanwhile, Maddy's excitement about seeing the world for the first time could be compared to that of a small child. Because she has been kept inside all of her life, Maddy has never seen a city, never ridden in a car and never seen the ocean. She marvels at how beautiful everything is. She is surprised when Olly mentions that when his family went to Hawaii his father had criticized the place because it needed to be more inviting. Maddy thinks of Olly's father "I wonder how his dad has managed to live in the world all his life without knowing what was precious in it" (191).

Another quote of interest in this section is Maddy's response in her mind to Olly when he tells her to be careful when she wades out into the ocean for the first time. She wonders if he is instructing her to be careful not to drown, or not to get sick. Of more concern to her is her new feeling of being alive and she wonders if she should not "be careful because once you become a part of the world it becomes a part of you, too?" (196). Before Olly, Maddy had separated herself from the world and not allowed herself to think about what she was missing. Now that she has experienced what the world has to offer, Maddy knows she will not be happy living in seclusion any longer.

Discussion Question 1

Compare and contrast the way that Maddy looks at the world and the way that she believes that Olly's father looks at the world.

Discussion Question 2

Consider Olly's comparison of the baggage carousel to life. Do you think his comparison is accurate? Why or why not? What does he mean when he says that his father is the carousel?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss Maddy's reactions to her first foray into the world, like riding in a car and seeing the ocean. How does the author create a tone that is both full of wonder but also fearful because of the disease that Maddy has?

Vocabulary

levity, cryptic, etiquette, mundane, validated, loquacious, paradoxical, turbulence, regale, magnanimously



Reward if Found - Zach

Summary

In “Reward if Found” the front desk worker at the hotel where Maddy and Olly will stay mistakes them for newlyweds. She tells them to enjoy their honeymoon and neither of them correct her mistake. In the room, Maddy is first struck because there are no beds. Olly pulls down the Murphy bed, surprising Maddy that a bed could be hidden in the wall. They are briefly embarrassed because there is only one bed but Olly breaks the silence by going to Maddy’s backpack for the guidebook. Instead he pulls out her copy of *The Little Prince*. He teases her by holding the book up high while jumping on the bed. As she tries to get it from him she feels vertigo, her heart squeezes and her stomach feels strange. Afraid she is sick Olly asks if she needs to go to the hospital. When her stomach growls, they decide they are just hungry. As they laugh with relief Maddy feels her heart squeeze again but she ignores the feeling.

In “Remembrance of Things Past” Olly and Maddy go to a souvenir shop to buy gifts for family members. Maddy is not sure what the right gift would be for her mother. Since this is the first time she has made memories of her own without her mother, Maddy decides a postcard with the words “Oh, how I wish you were here” (204) was the only thing suitable.

In the section “Swimsuit” as Maddy looks at herself in the mirror, she thinks that she should have tried on the swimsuit she picked out before buying it. She thinks her body is proportional but does not really have any reference points. It will be the first time she has ever worn a swimsuit and wonders if it is really acceptable to go out in public with so little clothing. When Olly calls to her, she opens the bathroom door quickly to get her embarrassment out of the way. His look tells her that she looks good in the suit.

In the section “Guide to Hawaiian Reef Fish” Maddy includes drawings of common Hawaiian fish as well as drawings of herself and Olly snorkeling.

In “Jump” Olly describes Maddy as a baby who does not know enough to be afraid of things when she gets into the water right away. Maddy is thrilled by the colors of fish they see. After they finish snorkeling, Olly and Maddy jump from a cliff into the ocean. Even though the decision to jump seems pivotal, Maddy decides she does not want to think too much about it. She thinks that jumping is not that scary considering what she may face in the future.

“Cliff Diving: A Guide” is a page from the tour guide the Maddy brought to Hawaii. It describes the feelings associated with cliff diving.

In “Zach” Olly friend Zach comes to visit them. Zach says he is using his full name Zachariah because he has decided he wants to play rock music but Olly refuses to call him that. During dinner Olly asks Zach if he has told his parents yet that he is



homosexual. Zach says he has not and explains to Maddy that his parents do not like the arts and that they are very traditional. As they talk, Olly asks to borrow Zach's phone. He tells Maddy that she has to contact her mother and hands her Zach's phone with his email pulled up. There are three messages from Maddy's mother. The last one states that she is on her way to Hawaii to get Maddy. Feeling both guilty and resentful, Maddy holds the phone to her chest until Zach asks her if she is okay. Maddy confirms that Olly has told Zach about her illness and says that she feels fine. In fact, Maddy seems surprised how good she does feel. She sends her mother a message telling her that she is fine and asking her not to come to Hawaii.

When Zach questions Maddy about the pills, she is so distracted by her mother's emails that Zach realizes she is lying. He says he will not tell Olly because he had been lying about his own situation so long that he knew what it was like to be in her situation. She asks him what he fears would happen if he were to tell his parents about himself. He says that the way things stand is better because his parents would force him to make a choice, he knew he would not be able to choose his parents. He says to Maddy that disappointing the people who love them might be a part of growing up.

Analysis

Maddy continues to be amazed at the world she sees around her, both natural and manmade. She has never stayed in a hotel before, never worn a swimsuit before. When Olly pulls down the Murphy bed from the wall, Maddy is surprised to learn that there are beds that come out of the wall. Because she has never worn a swimsuit before, she is surprised by how much the suit she chose exposes. In her classic humor she thinks to herself: "The only way to subdue this suit is to wear more, possibly all my clothing at once" (205).

Because Maddy has been alone all of her life she also has no comparison points on which to judge her own body. As she studies herself in the mirror, she wonders how her body compares to those of other girls her age. As it is, Maddy believes that everything on her body is proportional and is in the right places. When Olly sees Maddy in her swimsuit it is clear that he does not think there is anything wrong with the way her body looks. As she examines herself Maddy makes a comment to herself that anyone who hates a certain part of their body should remember. "As it stands, my only issue is that I would gladly trade this body for one that works properly" (205). Maddy just wishes that she had a body that would allow her the freedom to be part of the world.

When he sees how Maddy reacts to the world around her, Olly compares her behavior to that of a baby: "He says I'm like a baby who runs headlong into things, not knowing enough to be afraid" (208). In many ways, Maddy is like an infant in the world because she has so little knowledge of what is going on around her. She does not know what is dangerous and what is not. This is another aspect of life in which Maddy has been stunted because she has been forced to live alone in a sterile environment. In another way, Maddy is getting a chance to live life like the baby she was in the family photo. When she looked at herself as an infant, Maddy saw a child who had her whole life in



front of her to experience new things. Even though she missed out on a good deal of experiences, she is making up for them as a teenager.

When Maddy learns that her mother has been trying to reach out to her through Olly's email address she is both saddened and angry. "By eighteen years old, other teenagers have separated from their parents. They leave home, have separate lives, make separate memories. But not me" (203). Maddy is resentful because her mother will not allow her the freedom to make her own choices and live her own life. She feels that her mother has violated her privacy by looking at her email account and that she has overstepped her bounds by flying to Hawaii to get her. On the other hand, Maddy realizes how much her mother has sacrificed for her. She feels guilty because she knows her mother is worried and that if anything were to happen to Maddy, her mother would be left all alone.

While they are alone, Maddy and Zach talk about their lives and their relationship with their parents. He tells her that if he were to tell his parents the truth about himself they would force him to make a choice and he would not be able to choose his parents. He has not told them the truth because he knows how difficult it would be for them and how much they would be hurt. In his sympathy with Maddy concerning her own situation he says "Maybe growing up means disappointing the people we love" (218).

Meanwhile, Maddy's health does not seem to be suffering because of her decision to travel to Hawaii. Even among the references to Maddy's illness and the other characters asking if she is okay, Maddy is surprised how good she actually feels. "I feel fine. I feel more than fine" (216) Maddy thinks to herself at one point after Zach asked how she was feeling. In another instance, when Maddy looks at herself in the mirror while putting on her swimsuit she notices "I look flushed, like a rosy-cheeked summer girl who belongs in the sun" (205). This quote insinuates that Maddy does not look pale, like someone who is sick or might become that way. Another time that Olly asks Maddy how she is doing she tells him: "'I've never felt better in my life,' I say. I'm grateful at least that I don't have to lie about this" (218).

Discussion Question 1

Discuss Zach's statement to Maddy that sometimes growing up meant a person had to disappoint those who loved him. Do you think Zach is correct? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss Maddy's wish that she had a body that worked like it was supposed to. How does her wish for herself put petty complaints about one's body size or proportions to shame?



Discussion Question 3

Do you think Maddy's mother has overstepped her bounds by reading Maddy's emails and contacting Olly? Why or why not? Since her daughter is eighteen, does her mother technically have the right to tell her what to do? Does Maddy's illness affect your opinion of her mother's actions?

Vocabulary

vertigo, plait, subdue, derriere, conclude, euphoric, indefinable, pivotal, impending



The Murphy Bed - Released, Part One

Summary

In the section “The Murphy Bed,” Olly deems the left side of the bed as his. When Maddy asks him if he is nervous he first says that he is not but then admits he is. He holds her and they fall asleep together.

In “All the Words” Maddy wakes to discover they have been asleep nearly an hour. They hurry to get ready to go to the beach to watch the sunset but get distracted with one another on the lanai. She indicates to him that she wants to have sex with him and he takes her to the bed. He stops remembering that they need condoms but she tells him she bought some in the souvenir shop. They touch and kiss until they are joined together.

In her next installment of “Madeline’s Dictionary” Maddy defines the word infinite as “The state of not knowing where one body ends and another begins” (226).

In “The Observable World,” Maddy talks about the Big Bang, a theory describing how everything in the world came into being in an instant.

In “This Time” after their experience, Maddy feels as if she knows Olly better and is known by him better as well. They go to dinner where they touch all though their meal. Before they go back to the hotel, they walk on the beach. Finding a place to sit, Olly tells Maddy that his father apologized to them the first time he hit their mother. He sat the family down together and told them it would not happen again. Olly and his mother believed him. Kara did not. It was nearly a year before he did hit her again. In the meantime he drank and yelled at everybody. Maddy asks him why his mother does not leave him. She senses Olly is angry with his mother when he tells her that his mother will not even talk about leaving. She will tell him only that love makes people crazy.

Olly says he agrees with his mother, that love makes people crazy because he allowed Maddy to leave his family and come to Hawaii with her. Maddy agrees because she left the safety of her sterile environment to come to Hawaii with him. Regardless, Maddy tells Olly that he should leave his family because the environment is not safe.

In “Spiral” Maddy writes a spiral poem about her experiences in Hawaii.

In “The End” Maddy wakes feeling as if she is in a hot oven. When she is fully awake she realizes that her head and skin even hurts. She is so sick that she thinks she is dying. Olly wakes just as Maddy thinks what her sickness will do to him. He tries to tell her that she will be fine but Maddy feels as if her throat is swelling shut. She tells him that she needs an ambulance. She is only slightly aware of what is happening as he calls on his cell phone. Maddy’s heart stops and then starts again.



“Released, Part One” is a copy of Maddy’s discharge form from the hospital in Maui. She is checked out against medical advice.

Analysis

Maddy and Olly are alike because they exist in their own forms of prison. Maddy’s prison is a result of the disease she suffers. Olly’s prison consists of his abusive father and his father’s promises that he will stop his abuse. Olly’s mother will not leave and Olly feels like he has to stay to protect her. Maddy realizes that Olly is just as fooled by his father’s promises that he will change as his mother is.

Conflicting messages are given about Maddy’s health in this section of the novel. At one point she thinks to herself “I am the picture of health” (222) but then just a few minutes later she refers to Olly, dressed in his typical black, as being “the angel of death on vacation” (223). When Maddy wakes up sick the day after she and Olly share a perfect day together, the reader is both happy that Maddy got the chance to experience life but also fearful that the one day of happiness will indeed result in her death.

Although Maddy wakes very, very sick, there is not much information given at this point about what is wrong with her. It is noted that her heart stops and is started again. Information on the discharge card from the hospital indicates that she was checked out of the hospital against medical advice. It is not certain who checked Maddy out of the hospital or why they did so.

Discussion Question 1

Why do you think Maddy was checked out of the hospital against medical advice. If she was really sick because of her SCID, would the hospital not have been the ideal place for her to stay until she was well? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Do you agree with Maddy and Olly, do you think that love makes people crazy? Why or why not? Support your answer with examples from the book.

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the way that Olly and his family live in a prison just like Maddy lives in a prison. How are their situations similar? How are they different?

Vocabulary

default, languidly, precarious, inarticulate, cataclysm, inedible, tamp, vise, lucid



Resurrected - His Last Letter is Haiku

Summary

In “Resurrected” Maddy writes that she does not remember much about her stay in the hospital or the airplane trip home. She does know that she is alive and does not want to be.

In the section “Readmitted” Maddy’s room is transformed to a hospital room while her mother tends to her. She wakes, fully conscious, and realizes nothing hurts. She stops her mother from giving her medicine to make her go back to sleep and gets her mother to confirm that she is going to be okay. Her mother asks Maddy how she could have done this to herself and to her. After seeing the look on her mother’s face, Maddy decides that love is terrible and that she does not want anything to do with it.

In “Released, Part Two” Maddy tries to convince Olly by IM that she is physically okay but asks him to stop asking her. A couple hours later Olly sends several messages to Maddy to which he does not get any answers. When he mentions that being able to IM is better than nothing Maddy does reply to him. She tells him that it is worse than nothing. He suggests that perhaps at some point they will perfect the pills and they will be able to have a future together. It is at this point that she tells him she was lying about the pills. She tells him that she wants the whole world and that it is too hard to go back to things being the way they were before. She asks Olly not to email or IM her any longer. When Olly tells her that his life is better with her in it Maddy replies that hers is not and logs out.

In her next “Life is Short,” Maddy sums up the book *The Invisible Man*: “You don’t exist if no one can see you” (246).

In “Geography” Maddy describes her desperate attempts not to think about Olly and all of the things they did together. She realizes that she has to let Olly go because love can kill her. At this point in her life she has decided she had rather be alive than be able to live.

In “Map of Despair” Maddy draws a picture of her heart with all the places bearing names of depressing places.

In her next “Life is Short,” Maddy summarizes the books *The Stranger*, *Waiting for Godot*, and *Nausea* in one sentence: “Everything is nothing” (251).

In “Select All, Delete,” Maddy’s email page is shown with her deleting all of the emails that Olly has sent to her.

In the section “Pretending” Maddy notes that she continues to get stronger. She reads, but reads no books about happy endings or the meaning of life. She keeps her blinds closed. She tries not to think about Olly and does not answer his emails. Her mother



announces to Maddy that she has asked Carla to come back. She believes that Maddy has learned her lesson.

In “Reunion” Maddy tries not to cry when Carla blames herself for what happened to Maddy but she starts and cannot stop. She refuses to talk to Carla about Olly she does not want that pain to heal because she is afraid she might forget and try to love again.

One day while Maddy is working on a model for her architecture class she hears a truck next door. This time she does not go to the window. Carla looks and tells Maddy what she is seeing. Olly, Kara and their mother are the only ones there. Maddy has to see for herself. She sees the frantic acts of packing and how nervous Olly’s mother seems. Olly seems to sense Maddy’s eyes on him. He turns and looks at her. Their eyes meet. When Olly waves at her, she turns away from the window.

In “Neighborhood Watch #3” Maddy reports on Olly’s father’s schedule now that his family is gone.

In “Five Syllables” Olly’s dad moves away just a month after the rest of his family. Maddy hopes that he is not joining them somewhere. She retrieves Olly’s emails from her trash folder and reads them. The first two are limericks that make her laugh. In his next messages he describes his attempts to get his mother to leave his father. He says he told his mother about Maddy and her willingness to do anything just to live. His mother thought Maddy was brave. He suspected the story might have had something to do with her decision to leave.

Maddy reads Olly’s last email to her in “His Last Letter is Haiku.” He has written a Haiku to her telling her that he loves her.

Analysis

The action falls as Maddy makes up her mind that she cannot love Olly. She does not want her life with him to return to what it was before. She knows she will not be happy that type of relationship. Regardless, Maddy has learned that if she wants to stay alive, she cannot take any more chances. She immerses herself in reading and classwork again.

While Maddy has symbolically locked her prison and thrown away the key, Olly manages to convince his mother to get them out of the prison of his father’s anger. He indicates in one of his emails to Maddy that he is not sure what convinced his mother to leave. First he had told her that he could no longer be part of the family if she insisted on staying with him. He tells Maddy that he also told her Maddy’s story, about what she was willing to do in order to live. His mother had thought that Maddy was brave.

Based on the pain she is feeling because she has had to let Olly go, Maddy decides that love is terrible. She also comes to this decision because she has seen how much distress love has caused her mother. All the worry that her mother suffered was



because she loved Maddy so much. Instead of wanting healing for her broken heart, Maddy wants her pain to stay sharp so that she will remember not to love again.

When Olly writes to Maddy about how he convinced his mother to leave his father he states “sometimes you have to leave the people who love you the most” (259). This action works two ways. Even as Olly realized he could no longer be a part of a family in which there was so much abuse, he did not understand Maddy’s need to leave him behind. In the same way Olly needed to escape what was causing him pain, Maddy needed the same kind of escape.

Of course Maddy had already experienced this need to leave a person who loved her when she made the decision to leave her mother and go out in the world. Maddy also knows what it feels like to have to be returned to that person she left because she made a foolish decision. Her mother asks Maddy how she could have hurt both herself and her mother so badly. Maddy describes her feelings in a metaphor “My guilt is an ocean for me to drown in” (242).

Discussion Question 1

Discuss Maddy’s dream about Olly in “Geography.” What do you think this dream represents?

Discussion Question 2

Do you agree with Olly that there are times when it is best for a person to leave a loved one? Why or why not? Support your answer with examples from the novel.

Discussion Question 3

How does Maddy react to her heartbreak? Do you think her decision to block out Olly is the best one she could make? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

vigil, translucent, mime, existential, nihilist, aside



Here and Now - Beginnings and Ends

Summary

In “Here and Now,” Maddy states that while a person cannot predict the future, he can also not predict the past.

In “For My Eyes Only” Maddy gets an email from Melissa Francis, the doctor who took care of her in the hospital in Hawaii. Even though this doctor only saw Maddy for a few hours, she says that she has put much research into her case since that time. She does not believe that Maddy has SCID. She attaches a variety of test results and suggests that Maddy get a second doctor, other than her mother, to review them. She tells Maddy she thinks that Maddy did catch a virus that caused an attack of myocarditis because Maddy’s immune system is weak as a result of the way she has been living.

In the section “Protection,” Maddy at first cannot understand the email even after she has read it several times. When she does understand, she thinks perhaps someone has made a mistake. She finds her mother in the bathroom and shows the test results to her. She notices that her mother freezes for a minute when she mentions the name of the doctor in Hawaii. Maddy tells her mother that the doctor thinks that she is not sick but her mother takes the papers from her and tells her that doctor is irresponsible and that she made a mistake. Maddy notices the doctor’s letter seems to have upset her mother more than it has Maddy. Her mother explains to her that she had to protect her. When she says the same words a second time, Maddy senses an uncertainty that makes her uncomfortable.

In her next installment of “Madeline’s Dictionary” Maddy defines suspicion as “the truth you don’t believe, can’t believe, won’t believe” (268).

In “Identity” Maddy shows Carla the test results the following morning. Carla reacts differently to the test results and tells Maddy that they need to find out if Dr. Francis is correct. She sounds tired when she tells Maddy that she has sometimes suspected that the accident that killed Maddy’s father and brother caused her mother to have some sort of mental breakdown. Maddy gets sick and dry heaves into the sink. She tells Carla that she has to know the truth.

In “Proof of Life” Maddy is unable to sleep. She walks to her mother’s office to try to locate information about her medical case. Her mother is immaculate with her record keeping and Maddy finds a file on herself that even has notes about each of her mother’s doctor visits while she was carrying her. There is proof that Maddy was very sick as an infant. One month after the death of her brother and father, Maddy was in the hospital for three days with Respiratory Syncytial Virus. After this her mother’s record-keeping becomes less organized. There are tests from one allergist and three immunologist, none of which found that Maddy had any disease. At this point there was



nothing else in the file. Maddy searches for more test results but finds nothing. She realizes that what she is not finding is the proof for which she is looking.

Maddy's mother walks into the office and asks what Maddy is doing. Maddy asks her mother if she is sick. She repeats her question twice. She demands to understand why she cannot find any test results proving that she has SCID. Her mother insists that the test results are there. When she cannot find them, she accuses Maddy of taking them. Maddy notices fear and confusion in her mother's voice. It is at that point that Maddy was sure that she had never been sick.

In the section "Outside," Maddy runs outside and vomits into the lawn. She is crying and laughing at the same time. Her mother runs up and insists that Maddy has to go inside because she could get sick. She begs Maddy, telling her that after losing her son and husband, she could not lose her daughter as well. Maddy realizes that Carla was right, her mother never recovered from the shock of the deaths. Even though her mother tells her that she did what she did to protect her, Maddy is angry instead of compassionate, accusing her mother of being the one who was sick.

In "Fairy Tales," Maddy states her entire life has been a lie.

In "The Void" Maddy notes a universe can disappear just like it can appear.

In "Beginnings and Endings" Maddy ignores her mother for the next four days. At the end of those four days Carla takes Maddy to Dr. Chase, a SCID specialist. Maddy knows what he will say and wonders who she will be if she is not sick. The doctor seems nervous when Maddy comes into his office. She assures him that she already knows. He tells her that he, as well as his colleagues have checked her test results several times and believe that she does not have SCID. He says that if Maddy's mother had done any research about SCID or performed any tests, she would have recognized the truth about her daughter.

When Maddy asks him why she got sick in Hawaii, he agrees with the findings of the doctor in Hawaii, that she had an attack of myocarditis. Before she leaves, Dr. Chase warns her that she needs to be careful introducing herself to life in the real world because her immune system is probably underdeveloped.

Analysis

Just like Olly has told Maddy there is no way to predict the future because there are too many factors that could influence behavior, Maddy learns in this section there is also no way to predict the past. Maddy gets a bombshell when she is contacted by the doctor who saw her in Hawaii with the information that she probably does not have SCID. This information comes as a second climax in the novel.

Although Maddy's mother has not really been a major character up to this point, the reader's full attention is suddenly focused on her. Remember Maddy's comment in "Brthdae Uish" where she says "I guess if you're going to be born with an illness that



requires constant care, then it's good to have your mom as your doctor" (8). In her email to Maddy, Dr. Francis tells her that it is definitely not good to have a parent as a doctor. "Physicians should never practice on their families" (262) the doctor says.

It is because she is unable to find her test results that Maddy knows that the doctor in Hawaii is right about her case. Even though her mother kept all of the information from her prenatal appointments as well as detailed accounts of Maddy's early sicknesses, there is nothing about the diagnosis of SCID. There are no test results or any proof of an official diagnosis.

Carla and Maddy's mother have different reactions to the test results that Maddy received from the doctor in Hawaii. Maddy's mother tells her that the results are wrong, that the doctor either made a mistake or is being irresponsible in her role as a doctor. Carla, however, takes the test results seriously. She indicates that she had always wondered if Maddy really had SCID. She encourages Maddy to follow Dr. Francis' advice and get a second opinion.

Even though Maddy had been declared to be healthy, she still has to be careful about transitioning to life in the world because she has been kept away from so much in the way of germs and sickness. The doctor explains to her that her immune system is underdeveloped and that she needs to slowly transition into life in the outside world. She is still in danger of becoming badly sick because her immune system has not developed as it should.

There are a good deal of literary techniques used in this section of the novel. Because Maddy understands the ocean, she compares what she feels to her experience with the ocean. "I'm struggling in a black ocean, a life jacket across my chest, an anchor on my leg" (276). Maddy describes her conflicting feeling of being pulled down into the water and lifted up at the same time. She uses a metaphor to describe her mother's face after the secret is out about Maddy's illness. "Her face is a ruin of fear" (276) and "Her pain is endless. It falls off the ends of the world" (278). The imagery in these quotes helps the reader to visualize how much Maddy's mother is hurting when her lie is discovered. In another quote Maddy describes her feeling of not being able to breathe as well as her mother's lack of proof that Maddy was ever sick. "It's like my sickness was invented out of the much-too-thin air that I'm breathing" (274).

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the circumstances under which Maddy's mother decided that Maddy had SCID and tried to protect her. Do you feel compassion for her mother or anger?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss your opinion of Carla's suspicion that perhaps Maddy was not as sick as her mother thought. Do you think she should have said something before this point in Maddy's life? Why or why not?



Discussion Question 3

Discuss the changes in Maddy and her mother's relationship after Maddy's discover that she did not have SCID.

Vocabulary

surmise, eludes, adamantly, burgeoning, recedes, insubstantial, meticulous, illegible, dissipates, catastrophic, fugue, atone



After the Death Of - This Life

Summary

In the section “After the Death Of” Maddy tries to understand what happened to her mother to make her invent such a terrible disease for Maddy. Even if her mother were able to explain it to Maddy, Maddy is not sure she would be able to understand. Carla convinces Maddy that she needs to stay at home for the sake of her health. Maddy considers getting in touch with Olly but decides too much time has passed and she is not sure what she would even say to him. Maddy also believes that the person whom she was before she found out the truth about her health condition no longer lives.

In “One Week A.D.” Maddy puts a lock on her bedroom door.

In “Two Weeks A.D.” Maddy’s email folder shows a variety of emails she has written to Olly but not sent.

In “Three Weeks A.D.” Maddy’s mother tries to go in her room but discovers the door is locked.

In “Four Weeks A.D.” Maddy paints each wall of her room a different color. When her mother knocks on the door, Maddy pretends like she does not hear her.

In “Five Weeks A.D.” Maddy turns off the air filtration system and gets real plants for the sunroom.

In “Six Weeks A.D.” Dr. Chase will not let Maddy go to school yet but allows some of her tutors to see her in person.

“Madeline’s Mom” is a copy of a transcript where Maddy’s mom was finally able to talk to her psychiatrist about the night she was told her husband and son were dead. Even on that night she was preoccupied with Maddy’s sickness.

In “Flowers for Algernon,” Carla leaves Maddy as a full time nurse because Maddy no longer needs her. Carla asks Maddy when she will forgive her mother but Maddy says that what her mother did was not forgivable. Carla insists that she was sick and still is. When Maddy says her mother took her whole life from her, Carla reminds her that she still has a good deal of life left. Before they part, Maddy asks Carla if she ever read the book *Flowers for Algernon*. Carla said she did but there was not enough hope in it and that she cried like a baby.

In “The Gift” Maddy’s mother knocks insistently on the door until Maddy finally opens it. She tells her mother it is not a good time. Her mother gives her a present even though Maddy hurts her intentionally with her comments. She tells her daughter that she still has a good deal of her life left. She asks her to forgive her.



In “The End is the Beginning is the End” Maddy’s mother has given her a phone open to a weather app that shows a sunny forecast for the rest of the week. Maddy feels she has to get away. She discovers that Olly’s ladder is still where he left it. On the roof, his orrery is still there. As she sits there, she thinks of how she does not know who she is any longer. She tries to pinpoint the event in life that determined how her life would turn out but realizes there are any number of things that could have determined what happened to her. There is no way to know what aspect of her life she should change in order to make her life turn out the way she would have liked.

In “Future Perfect #3” Maddy finally sends an email to Olly. She says only “By the time you read this you will have forgiven me” (298).

“Takeoff” is a plane ticket to New York.

In “Forgiveness,” Dr. Chase had not wanted Maddy to fly so soon but she decided safety was not everything. Her mother had not been happy with her plan to fly to New York but had swallowed her fear. She still did not completely believe that Maddy was not really sick. In the end of all of her questioning, Maddy decided that everything boiled down to love, that love really did make people crazy.

Maddy remembered that when she left, her mother asked when she was coming home. She told her mother she was not sure that was home anymore.

In her “Life is Short TM” summary of *The Little Prince* Maddy states: “Love is worth everything” (302).

In “This Life,” Maddy told Olly only that there was a gift waiting for him at a used book store. When she enters the store she is first surprised by how much she likes it. She sets up her copy of *The Little Prince* on one of the shelves in the S-U section so he will not miss it. When he sees the copy of the book he picks it up and reads the rewards to which he is entitled if he returns it. The reward circled is the one that says simply “Me: Madeline.” Olly sees Madeline and tells her that he found her book.

Analysis

The title “After the Death Of” tells the reader all he needs to know about how Maddy is feeling at this point in her life. Every thing she thought was true about herself and her life has turned out to be a lie. She is not sick. Her mother is sick. For that reason Maddy has had some of her life stolen from her. Now Maddy is faced with getting reacquainted with herself based on a major change in who she thought she was.

Maddy’s mother brings her a phone, a peace offering. It is a symbol both that her mother realizes that Maddy needs her freedom but also that she wants Maddy to stay in touch with her. The phone is a symbol of freedom because Maddy will would only need a phone if she were allowed outside the house. For this reason, the phone is a symbol that Maddy’s mother has come to realize that her daughter needs her freedom. The



phone may also symbolize the hope Maddy's mother holds that her daughter will keep in touch with her.

The list of rewards that Maddy put in her books in the first section of the novel finally fulfills its purpose in this final section. Maddy had mentioned in "The White Room" that "I rarely have visitors, and so there's no one to lend my books to" (1-2) she does not believe that she will ever have the opportunity to pay out any of the rewards she has listed inside any of her books. In Olly's case, she is able to pay out on all of the rewards she offered for the discovery of her "lost" book *The Little Prince*. The final reward is Madeline herself, a gift that Olly quickly accepts.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss Maddy's treatment of her mother in this section of the novel. Do you think she is being too cruel? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

How is the phone that Maddy's mother gives her a perfect gift? Do you think Maddy understands the emotions that her mother is trying to convey to her?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the way Maddy uses her book, *The Little Prince*, to reunite with Olly. In what ways is the book symbolic of their relationship? Give specific examples from the book to support your answer.

Vocabulary

legible, delineated, chasm, inviolable, reconcile, teem, scenario, pivotal



Characters

Madeline “Maddy” Whittier

Madeline “Maddy” Whittier is the main character and narrator of this novel. She is a girl believed to have Severe Combined Immunodeficiency, a condition that forces her to live in a germ-free environment with purified air. She is not allowed to go outside for any reason because she might come in contact with an allergen or trigger that would make her sick. Despite her illness, Madeline is intelligent and has a good sense of humor.

Because she has an incident of depression when she was eight years old because she wanted to go outside and play with the new next door neighbor but was unable to do so Madeline has tried to ignore the world outside her home. She lives through her books, enjoys her relationship with her mother and nurse, and stays busy with her school work.

Madeline is distracted by the world again when a family with a teenage son her own age moves in next door. The two begin communicating through emails and IM. Olly begins calling Madeline by the nickname, “Maddy” signaling a change in the girl’s outlook on the world and opinion of her life. Madeline persuades Carla, her nurse to allow her to see Olly, the boy, in person. Once they begin having face-to-face visits Madeline and Olly quickly fall in love with each other. When Madeline’s mother learns about the visits she not only forbids Madeline from seeing Olly again but she also will not allow Madeline to even talk to Olly.

Even though she is aware of how serious her illness is, Madeline decides it is more important for her to feel alive than it is for her to live in seclusion. She schedules a trip to Hawaii and invites Olly to come with her. Madeline enjoys her foray into the world but wakes sick the second day of her trip. Her mother comes to get her and takes her home.

A few months after her trip to Hawaii, the doctor who treated Madeline contacts to tell her that she does not think that Madeline has SCID. When Madeline learns the she has really never been sick, she is angry with her mother and struggles to understand why she acted as she did. Because she is not sick, however, Madeline flies to New York to meet Olly and tell him they can have a future together.

Dr. Pauline Whittier

Dr. Pauline Whittier is Madeline’s mother and also serves as her doctor. After the death of her husband and son in an automobile accident when Madeline was only an infant, she became convinced that Madeline had SCID. She based her diagnosis on the fact that Madeline was sick often as an infant. Later, it is discovered that Madeline’s mother was so worried about losing her daughter the way she had lost her husband and son that became overprotective.



When Madeline looks through her mother's files and discovers that she can find no definite diagnosis of SCID for herself, she realizes that her mother had convinced herself that the diagnosis was true. Madeline's mother seems truly baffled when she realizes there is no definite diagnosis for her daughter's disease among her papers. It does not appear that Madeline's mother concocted her daughter's illness out of any motive with the exception of keeping her daughter safe. She seemed to truly love her daughter and take the best care of her that she could.

Although Pauline's name appears written on one of the daily health logs that Madeline includes in her book, she is not called by name at any other point in the novel. She is referred to only by her relationship to Madeline. For this reason, her role as a mother is portrayed as a stronger role than her role as a doctor.

Oliver "Olly" Bright

Oliver "Olly" Bright is a member of the family that moves into the house next door to Madeline's house. He is the teenaged boy with whom Madeline falls in love. He is intelligent in his own right with his favorite subject being math. He tries to understand life using cause and effect. He likes to wonder what might have happened in his life if one certain factor had been changed.

Like Madeline, Olly is in a prison of his own. His prison is composed of his abusive father. Olly and his mother both believe his father's promises that he will stop hitting his wife and being verbally abusive but he never does so. Olly is afraid to leave his mother and sister alone because they will have no one to protect them.

Because Madeline lies to Olly and tells him that she has pills that will keep her from getting sick, he agrees to go to Hawaii with her. Even though he has had relations with girls before, he tells Madeline that being with her is like nothing he has ever experienced.

Carla Flores

Carla Flores is the nurse who takes care of Madeline during the day. She develops a close relationship with Madeline because she has a teenage daughter of her own whom she wishes would act more like Madeline.

Although she does not admit it until later in the novel, Carla admits after Madeline gets the letter from Dr. Melissa Francis that she always suspected that Madeline did not really have SCID. Perhaps this is why Carla allows Olly to visit Maddy even though the visit could potentially make Madeline very sick.

Before Madeline and Olly go to Hawaii, they stop by Carla's apartment. Even though Carla knows that Madeline is lying about the pills she claims to have ordered from the Internet, she does not let Olly know that Madeline is lying. She apparently feels fairly



secure in her belief that Madeline is not really sick because she does not try to make Madeline and Olly cancel their trip.

Olly's Dad

Olly's dad is an abusive drunk who hits his wife and abuses his children. Olly remembers a time when he was not that way but the abuse has continued for several years. The abuse began after his dad got fired from a job for some sort of fraud. It is suggested that Olly's dad believed he would be cleared of the crimes of which he was accused but instead he was let go. Because of the circumstances under which he was fired, Olly's dad is unable to get a job in his field. Olly remembers his dad telling him that the universe was not deterministic, that a person could do everything right and still have trouble in life. His bad temperament seems to have been brought on by his perceived bad luck in life. He concentrates on what he has lost instead of looking at what he has.

Zachariah

Zachariah "Zach" is Olly's friend from Hawaii. Olly and Madeline visit with Zach during their trip to Hawaii. Zach is also facing a difficult situation with his parents. Although his parents are very traditional and dislike the arts, Zach wants to be a rock and roll musician. He also has realized that he is gay. He is struggling with how to tell his parents about himself. He knows he will disappoint them. He is the one who suggests to Madeline that disappointing one's parents is part of the coming of age process.

Olly's Mom

Even though her husband is an abusive drunk, Olly's mom refuses to leave him. It is only when Olly tells her mother about what Madeline was willing to do to be able to live her dream, Olly's mother realizes she is living her life in prison in a way as well. She uses her strength to break out of her jail by taking her children away from her husband with her one day while he is at work.

Kara Bright

Kara Bright is Olly's brother. Like her brother, Kara is disturbed by the way her parents treat each other. Unlike Olly, Kara does not believe her father's promises that he will stop abusing their mother. She shows out by smoking cigarettes and painting her fingernails black.

Dr. Melissa Francis

Dr. Melissa Francis is that doctor in Hawaii who treats Madeline when she is taken to the hospital there. She later sends Madeline a letter advising her that she does not



believe that she has SCID. In her letter, she suggests that Madeline get checked out thoroughly by a SCID specialist for a second opinion.

Rosa Flores

Rosa Flores is Carla's teen daughter. Rosa is never an active character in the novel but Carla speaks of her often. Carla indicates that her daughter is spoiled and that she wishes that she would act more like Madeline.

Mr. Waterman

Mr. Waterman is Madeline's archeology tutor. Although Madeline does not have many visitors, Mr. Waterman is allowed visits on two different occasions to look at models that Madeline has made.

Nurse Janet Pritchert

Nurse Janet Pritchert is the nurse who is hired to replace Carla. Unlike Carla, Nurse Janet is very strict and distant. She insists that Madeline call her Nurse Janet and communicates with Madeline by leaving sticky notes on her computer.

Mystery Girl

Olly comes home one day with the mystery girl. Even though she denies her feelings, Madeline is jealous when she sees Olly with this girl.

Dr. Chase

Dr. Chase is the SCID specialist from whom Madeline gets her second opinion. He agrees with Dr. Melissa Francis that Madeline does not have SCID.



Symbols and Symbolism

White Room

This white room in which Madeline lives is symbolic of how clean and disinfected Madeline's entire life had to be in order to keep her from getting sick.

Colorful Books

These colorful books that fill Madeline's white bookshelves are symbolic of the only contact with the outside world that Madeline has in her life. It is through her books that Madeline vicariously lives her life.

Flowers For Algernon

The book *Flowers for Algernon* is symbolic of Madeline's wish that a cure could be found for her disease. She tells Carla that she wants to be reading this book when a cure for her illness is actually found.

The Bundt Cake

The Bundt cake is a symbol of friendship. It is first offered to Madeline's mother by Olly and Kara but she refused to take it because she was afraid there might be something in it that would make Madeline sick. Later, Olly uses the cake in a suicide routine to prove how inedible the cake really is and to prove to Madeline that he still wants to be friends.

Clay Astronaut Figure

This clay astronaut figure is a symbol of Maddy's intelligence and fun loving personality. She hides this figure in all of the models she makes for her architecture tutor.

Black Rubber Band

This black rubber band is a symbol of Olly. He wears it on his wrist and pulls on it when he is uncomfortable. After Madeline's mother learns about Madeline's friendship with Olly she leaves a black rubber band on Madeline's night stand, a symbol that she knows Madeline's secret.



A Family Photo

This family photo is a symbol to Madeline that she once had a family and was once able to go outside. This picture was taken when she was just an infant on the beach in Maui. It is because Maui was her father's favorite place that Madeline decided to go there on her trip with Olly.

Pills

These pills symbolize the lie that Madeline tells Olly in order to get him to go to Hawaii with her. She says that these pills will keep her from getting sick. In reality Madeline has not ordered any pills to keep her from getting sick.

Medical Files

These medical files, with missing information about Madeline's diagnosis of SCID, symbolize Madeline's true medical condition. Just like there are no files that include test results concerning a SCID diagnosis, Madeline does not have the terrible illness because of which she has lived in seclusion all of her life.

A Phone

Madeline's mother gives her this gift of a phone after it is determined that Madeline does not really have SCID. It is a symbol of her mother's acceptance that Madeline is not really sick and that she will be going out of the house. Had she not intended to let Madeline out of the house, Madeline would not have needed a phone.

The Book The Little Prince

This book, *The Little Prince*, is one of Madeline's favorite books. It is symbolic of Madeline and Olly's relationship because the prince in the book has to take the chance he will die in order to really live. In Madeline's case, she also has to take the chance that she might die in order to really live.



Settings

Madeline's Room

Because it is believed that Madeline has SCID, she spends a good deal of time in her room. It is in this room from which she emails and IMs Olly. She is also able to see into Olly's room from her bedroom window, making it a good place for her to spy on him. Madeline's room is completely white, symbolizing how sanitized it is in order to keep Madeline from getting sick.

Outside

Because Madeline has SCID, she is not allowed to go outside. Notice in the book how the word "outside" is capitalized. This capitalization signifies the mystery Maddy associates with this place that she is unable to go. When she sees Olly's father hurting him one night, Madeline could not help but run out to try to help him.

The Sunroom

Madeline tells Olly that her mother had the sunroom in their home specially designed for her so that she could feel like she was able to go outside. The sunroom was almost completely made of glass and was filled with fake trees and greenery. There was even a pond with fake fish. It was in the sunroom that Olly and Madeline met in person for the first time and where they had their first kiss.

Maui, Hawaii

When Madeline decides that she wants to go outside and live she books herself and Olly a trip to Hawaii. She chooses Hawaii as their destination because she has learned from her mother that Maui was one of her father's favorite places.

Ye Old Book Shoppe

It is at this used book shop in New York City that Madeline arranges to meet Olly. It is during this meeting that Olly learns that Madeline does not really have SCID.



Themes and Motifs

Coming of Age

Through her first lies to her mother through her discovery that she really is not afflicted with SCID, Madeline comes of age as she learns to try to cope first with her disease and then with her realization that her mother fabricated her disease in an attempt to protect her. Madeline has had an unusual coming of age experience because she has not been able to interact with the world like others her age. When she meets Olly and feels the need to protect their relationship, Madeline lies to her mother for the first time. Although she had been happy with the life she had before she met Olly, Madeline decides when she meets him that there was more to life. She makes a decision that perhaps it is worth death in order to get to really experience life for even just a day.

Most teens go through a natural process of separation from their parents as they grow up. As an eighteen-year-old, Madeline is still very connected to her mother. She has not had the opportunity to make decisions on her own or have experiences on her own because of the disease from which she suffers. Madeline is happy with this arrangement until she meets Olly. Feeling the need to pursue her relationship with Olly, Madeline persuades her nurse to allow her to have visits with Olly in person. Madeline lies to her mother the first time she can remember about this friendship with Olly and his visits. This lie begins a division between Madeline and her mother. For the first time, Madeline is experiencing something that she cannot share with her mother.

In her coming of age, Madeline gets to experience the typical teen feelings of first love when she meets Olly. Her situation is contrasted with Olly's when he tells her that even though he has kissed and had sex with other girls, he still feels the relationship is special with Madeline. Because Madeline has been kept from other's her age she has not had the chance to be kissed or lose her virginity. At eighteen, she is experiencing all of these things for the first time.

It is when she begins seeing Olly that Madeline first begins to resent her mother and the way her mother treats her. When Madeline's mother finds out about her daughter's friendship with Olly, she cuts off all communication between the two. She will not even allow them to talk through email or IM. After Madeline and Olly go to Hawaii, Madeline's mother accesses Madeline's email in order to find out where her daughter has gone and who she is with. Madeline resents her mother's invasion of her privacy.

Madeline must take the biggest step in coming of age when she learns that her mother fabricated her illness. She tries to understand how her mother could have done such a thing to her but cannot. Even though she knows that her mother is sick and that she thought she was protecting Madeline by keeping her inside, Madeline cannot forgive her mother for taking away so much of her life.



Madeline additionally struggles with identity when she learns that she is not really sick. Because she did not want to make herself unhappy, Madeline did not spend much time thinking about what her life might be like or who she might be if she was not sick. For this reason she is unprepared to live a life in which she can go out into the world. She no longer trusts her mother and has no one to turn to except Olly. It is for this reason that Madeline turns her back on her mother and goes to Olly as soon as she is able.

Death by Love

Love can make a person crazy, can make them take foolish chances and can make them make bad decisions. In many ways, love can have painful consequences. Madeline's mother disagrees with Carla's statement that love cannot kill a person. While in most cases love is not fatal, in Madeline's case her mother might be right. When Madeline decides to pursue her love for Olly, she takes the chance that her love affair could kill her.

When Madeline fights with her fear of hurt and rejection if she pursues a relationship with Olly, Carla tells her that love cannot kill her. It is these words that encourage Madeline to pursue the relationship. It is not until later, after Madeline is recovering from the illness she caught while in Hawaii that she realizes that her mother's take on the situation might be more realistic, especially considering Madeline's disease. Believing she is making the best decision for herself, Madeline decides, "I have to let Olly go. I've learned my lesson. Love can kill you and I'd rather be alive than out there living" (247).

In the case of Madeline's mother and the SCID diagnosis, love can make a person make bad decisions. When Madeline learns that she does not really have SCID she struggles to understand that her mother made the false diagnosis based on love. During her eighteen years living as an SCID patient, Madeline felt as if she were in prison. She had no life outside her home. Her mother and nurse were her only companions. She does not understand how her mother could call what she did to her love when being trapped in her took away so much of Madeline's life.

Love can also make a person blind as is demonstrated in the story of Olly and his family. Olly remembers a time when his father was not angry and abusive. Even though his father has made no progress toward treating his family any better, Olly and his mother hold out hope that he will keep his promises and stop abusing them. Their love for him makes them believe his promises even though he never keeps them.

Difficulty of Life for a SCID Patient

Having guests, going to school and even making friends is more difficult for SCID patients because of their compromised immune systems. Madeline's story gives readers a look into the way that a patient with this affliction might have to live. While Madeline gets the good news that she does not really have SCID and gets to transition to real life, most patients with this disorder do not get this opportunity.



First, Madeline has not been allowed to go outside for more than seventeen years. Since her mother self-diagnosed Madeline with SCID when she was about six months of age, it can be assumed that Madeline's world has been confined to her house since that time. Outside is a danger to Madeline because of allergies and germs with which she could come into contact.

Madeline is forced to live in a controlled, sterilized environment. Because her mother received a settlement from the trucker who killed her husband and son, she had a house modified for Madeline and her condition. There is an air lock inside the front door to seal out potential hazards. The windows in the house are sealed and an industrial air purification system cleans and circulates the air. A sun room made of glass is intended to help Madeline feel like she is outside but the plants in the sun room are fake as are the fish in the pond.

Because she has to stay secluded, Madeline has very little contact with other people. For this reason she lives the majority of her life through books. Her best friends are her mother and her nurse. Computer technology, like Internet and Skype, allows Madeline to take real time classes and confer with tutors but it still is not like being in school. It is not until she meets Olly that Madeline really has a friend of her own age.

Madeline also describes the ordeal through which a person must go in order to visit her. They must have a medical background check and thorough physical to make sure they are not sick or getting sick. Before they enter the house, they have to go through a decontamination process. Once inside, visitors are not allowed to get too close to Madeline. They are particularly forbidden from touching her in order to avoid the transfer of germs.

Different Types Prisons in Which People Live

While Madeline lives in seclusion because of her disease, she is not the only character in the novel who lives in a type of prison. Olly's father lives in the prison of his anger and resentment while he creates a prison of abuse for his family. Madeline's mother keeps herself and Madeline in prison because of her grief and fear.

Madeline is the character in this novel whose prison is most obvious. She forced to stay inside her house, in a sterile environment in order to keep from getting sick. Because she is stuck inside her house, Madeline feels as if she is not really able to live her life. At one time she was happy to live her life vicariously through the books that she read. After she met Olly, Madeline decided that it was worth the risk of dying to get the chance to really live.

Because she has given her daughter a diagnosis of SCID, Madeline's mother forces herself to live in a prison as well. At one point in the novel, Madeline felt sorry for her mother because she knew that her mother had been active and enjoyed travel before Madeline got sick. Later, when Madeline learns her disease was fabricated, she no



longer feels sorry for her mother and the way she dedicated her life to her. She knows that the prison her mother lived in was one she made for herself.

Olly's father lives in his own prison of resentment and anger. He is not able to look past the fact that he got badly treated at his job. Instead of looking at the things that are positive in his life, Olly's father focuses on the bad things. One example of this is Olly's memory of his family's trip to Hawaii where his father commented that the people needed to work on the initial impressions of the place. He had made this comment while the family was still in the airport. Because she has had so little experience with life Madeline, enjoys even the reception they receive at the airport and wonders why Olly's father focuses so strongly on the negative.

Because Olly's father lives in a prison of anger and resentment, he causes his family to live in prison as well. They are imprisoned by his anger and his promises. He promises he will do better but he never follows through. They love him but at the same time they are scared of him. It is after Olly's mother hears Madeline's story that she finally works up the courage to break free of the prison in which her husband had been forcing her to live.

Power of Lies

Lies can separate people and can destroy lives as demonstrated in the novel *Everything, Everything*, by Nicola Loon. Madeline tells lies to her mother to cover her relationship with Olly. These lies create a rift in the closeness between Madeline and her mother. It is the lie told by Madeline's mother, that Madeline had SCID, that tears them apart. When Madeline learns that her mother kept her from living she is angry and unable to forgive her mother's lie, even if it was intended to protect her.

The separation between Madeline and her mother begins when Madeline does not tell her mother about her relationship with Olly. Because she is keeping this relationship a secret, Madeline is soon telling the first lies she can remember to her mother. Madeline has not been getting enough sleep and her mother asks if it is because of their new neighbors. In order to protect her relationship, Madeline lies and says it is because she has been reading too much.

When Madeline discovers that her illness has been a lie, she is unable to forgive her mother or even understand how she could do such a thing to her. In an attempt to protect her sickly daughter, Madeline's mother decided, without running any tests, that her daughter had a compromised immune system. This allowed her to keep Madeline safe inside the house. When Madeline discovers that her mother fabricated the illness, she cannot believe that her mother would tell such a lie that would destroy her life.

While Madeline's mother thought she was protecting her daughter and keeping her alive, she was actually setting the relationship up for failure through her lie. They were close for years and she was able to keep Madeline protected for those years but once Madeline learned about her mother's lies, their relationship was destroyed. Before

Madeline went to see Olly she told her mother she did not know if she was coming back since the place they lived no longer felt like home.



Styles

Point of View

This novel is told from the first person point of view of Madeline, who is the main character in the novel. She describes her way of life as a SCID patient, describes the way she met Olly and the process through which they fell in love. The novel really would not work as well if it were told from any other point of view. No one else would have the deep insights into Maddy's life as a SCID patient. A third person omniscient narrator could have been used but it would have created an emotional distance between the reader and Maddy.

Language and Meaning

This novel is unique in the way the author includes a variety of different ways to communicate information through various forms of language. Because Maddy is a SCID patient, she cannot have face-to-face relationships with many people. For this reason it makes sense that the author portrays her conversations with Olly through the format of Instant Messages or emails.

While the Kindle version of this book gets the idea across, there are a good deal of formats that do not translate to the Kindle version. For instance, when Olly communicates with Maddy by writing on his window, the backward text is not included in the Kindle version of the novel. Some of the notated illustrations in the book are difficult to read in the Kindle version. Additionally, some sections, such as "Numerology" and "Neighborhood Watch" appear in the book as if they are written by hand while the Kindle version shows them in regular typeface. Other forms in which information is presented in the novel includes plane tickets, pages from travel guide books, purchase receipts and letters.

Structure

This story is told from the first person point of view of Maddy, the main character. The action follows a linear time line. The first five chapters tells the story of Maddy's illness and her life in a sterile environment with her mother and her nurse. The problem in the novel is introduced in the chapter "Alien Invasion, Part 2" when Maddy finds herself attracted to a new boy who moves in next door to her house.

The story moves through several chapters as Olly and Maddy get to know one another and fall in love with each other. The action rises slowly during these chapters. It is when Maddy decides to leave her sterile house and take a trip with Ollie that the action and tension rises more sharply. A climax comes when Maddy gets sick their second day in Hawaii. The action seems to fall as Maddy realizes that she needs to keep herself healthy but another climax comes when Maddy gets a letter from the doctor who treated

her in Hawaii. This doctor tells her that she does not believe Maddy has SCID. A second climax is reached when Maddy gets confirmation that her immune system is not as compromised as her mother claimed it was. The denouement comes when Maddy meets Olly in the used book store in New York to tell him that she is not really sick.



Quotes

Basically, I'm allergic to the world. Anything can trigger a bout of sickness."

-- Narrator (SCID Row)

Importance: Because she has SCID, Madeline has to live in an atmosphere where she is protected from anything that might trigger an illness.

I guess if you're going to be born with an illness that requires constant care, then it's good to have your mom as your doctor."

-- Narrator (Brthdae Uish)

Importance: Although Madeline at first believes that she is lucky to have her mother as her doctor, she later learns how ironic her words are. When Madeline is sent the letter by the doctor in Hawaii she realizes that her mother diagnosed her with a disease that she never had.

Olly's rejection has made me feel like a little girl again. It reminded me why I stopped paying attention to the world before."

-- Narrator (Survival)

Importance: When Madeline believes that Olly has rejected her she feels pain just like when she was eight years old and allowed herself to get depressed because she could not go outside like other children. She remembers how badly she felt and does not want to feel like that again.

Having a visitor is a big deal because they have to agree to a medical background check and a thorough physical. Also they have to be decontaminated, which is basically like getting a high-speed air bath for about an hour. It's a pain to come see me."

-- 57-58 (Astronaut Ice Cream)

Importance: Madeline explains the requirements through which a visitor has to pass in order to be cleared to have a face to face visit with her.

Everything's a risk. Not doing anything is a risk. It's up to you."

-- Carla (To Those Who Wait)

Importance: Carla encourages Maddy to continue her relationship with Olly despite her fear because there are risks in everything. She tells Madeline that continuing the relationship will be a risk while not continuing it will be a risk as well.

But the difference between knowing it and seeing them in person is the difference between dreaming of flying and flight."

-- Narrator (Olly)

Importance: Even though Olly had told Maddie that his eyes were blue like the Atlantic



Ocean, she realizes that she gets a different feeling when she sees his eyes in person. She compares this difference in knowing what color Olly's eyes are and seeing them in person as the difference in dreaming about flying and actually flying.

What would be the point?' I say, throwing my hands up. 'Me in love would be like being a food critic with no taste buds. It would be like being a color-blind painter. It would be like — '"

-- Maddy (Perspectives)

Importance: Maddy uses several colorful comparisons when she describes how useless it would be for her to fall in love. She compares herself in love in similes a food critic who cannot taste and a painter who is colorblind.

I am OK, but, like Alice, I'm just trying not to get lost. I keeping thinking about the summer I turned eight. I spent so many days with my forehead pressed against my glass window, bruising myself with my futile wanting."

-- Narrator (Wonderland)

Importance: Remembering how bad she felt when she was eight years old and wanted to be able to go outside like other children, Maddy does not want to get lost in wanting again. She compares her feelings to those of Alice, the main character in the novel Alice in Wonderland. She desperately does not want to get lost in wanting again.

The trucker who killed my dad and brother fell asleep behind the wheel. He'd been working three shifts in a row. They settled with my mom."

-- Maddy (Forecast)

Importance: When Olly asks about the industrial air filtration system in her house, she tells him that it was paid for by the settlement from a wrongful death suit for her father and brother.

We're drifting apart because for the first time in my life, I have a secret to keep."

-- Narrator (Secrets)

Importance: Maddy realizes that it is because she is lying to her mother about her relationship with Olly that they are drifting apart.

This is why people touch. Sometimes words are just not enough."

-- Narrator (Olly Says)

Importance: It is when Olly talks to Maddy about his relationship with his father and the abuse that goes on in his family that Maddy wishes that she could touch him. She realizes that sometimes touch can convey feelings that words cannot.

His body is his escape from the world, whereas I'm trapped in mine."

-- Narrator (Upside Down)



Importance: One of the differences in Maddy and Olly is that Olly uses his body as a way to calm himself and express himself. Maddy, on the other hand, feels that her body is a prison because she cannot even go outside her home without the fear of getting sick.

Ever since Olly came into my life there've been two Maddys: the one who lives through books and doesn't want to die, and the one who lives and suspects that death will be a small price to pay for it."

-- Narrator (Half Life)

Importance: Maddy describes her new realization about herself and her life only after she meets Olly. She realizes for once that even if she were to die, it would be worth getting to live and be happy, if only for a short while.

I was happy before I met him. But I'm alive now, and those are not the same thing."

-- Narrator (Happy Already)

Importance: In this section Maddy describes the difference between being happy and being alive. She indicates the two states of being are not the same thing and that she would prefer to be alive.

He grows serious again. 'Maybe growing up means disappointing the people we love.'"

-- Zach (Zach)

Importance: Zach, who has not told his parents he is gay and that he wants to be a rock star, suggests to Maddy that in order to grow up, they have to take the chance that they will disappoint the those who love them.

I'm on my way home. I'll remain trapped there forever. I'm alive and don't want to be."

-- Narrator (Resurrected)

Importance: As she is on the way home, instead of being happy to be alive, Maddy is very unhappy that she is alive. She knows that she will be trapped for the rest of her life in her house, never able to live again.

I wish I could undo the last few months of knowing him. I would stay in my room. I would hear the truck beeping next door and I would remain on my white couch in my white room reading my brand-new books. I would remember my past and then I would remember not to repeat it."

-- Narrator (Reunion)

Importance: Back in her old life, Maddy wishes that she could relive the last several months with the memory that she should not get to know Olly but ignore him entirely. It is as if she wishes she could live her life in reverse, just like she sometimes read her books in reverse.



I felt it was important to contact you directly. You need to know that I've studied your case very closely. I don't believe you have, or have ever had, SCID."

-- Dr. Melissa Francis (For My Eyes Only)

Importance: The doctor from Hawaii drops a bombshell when she contacts Maddy to tell her that she does not think that she ever had SCID.

Sometimes I think maybe your mama's not quite right. Maybe she never recovered from what happened to your papa and brother."

-- Carla (Identity)

Importance: When she realizes that a doctor has advised Maddy that she may not have SCID, Carla shares her own doubts with Maddy. She says that she believes that her mother may have misdiagnosed because she was still in shock because of the death of her husband and son.

I don't believe the evidence of my own eyes. I don't believe what I'm not seeing."

-- Narrator (Proof of Life)

Importance: When Maddy looks for evidence in her mother's office that she has SCID, she is shocked because she is not able to find any test results or diagnosis sheets saying that she did have SCID.

Granted, SCID is a very rare disease and it comes in many forms, but you have none, absolutely none, of the telltale signs of the disease. If she did any research, any tests at all, she would've known that."

-- Dr. Chase (Beginnings and Ends)

Importance: When Maddy sees a SCID specialist, he tells her that if her mother had properly researched the disease and performed any of the suggested tests, she would have known that Maddy did not have SCID.