

# **Fallout Study Guide**

## **Fallout by Ellen Hopkins**

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# Plot Summary

Fallout by Ellen Hopkins is the third book in her Crank series. Fallout focuses on three of Kristina's five children who are struggling with the legacy of her drug addiction. Hunter is a college student with a great job and a wonderful girlfriend, but cannot seem to control the compulsion to use drugs and cheat on his relationship. Autumn struggles with panic attacks and OCD. Summer has lived in and out of foster homes most of her life and still struggles with the abuse she suffered as a small child at the hands of both her father's girlfriend and a foster father. Fallout chronicles how these three children of a crank addict blindly find their way to one another and to their own special brand of recovery.

Hunter is haunted by his own eyes. Hunter knows his eyes belong to the man who fathered him, a man Kristina swears raped her. Hunter wonders what that makes him. Autumn struggles with panic attacks and OCD. At school, Autumn might as well not exist for the number of people who notice her. Until Bryce. Summer is in yet another foster home. Her only joy each day is her boyfriend, Matt. Lately, however, Summer has noticed that Matt's best friend, Kyle, has been offering more than friendship toward her.

Hunter's girlfriend, Nikki, learns her parents are divorcing because of her father's affair. Hunter wants to support Nikki, but he cannot help but think that she is still luckier than he because at least she knows who her father is. Autumn and Bryce begin to spend more time together and Autumn is shocked when he makes it clear that she is the girl he wants. Summer learns that her foster sister is using crank and that she has sexually abused another foster sister. Summer has to stand up against this abuse because she knows how deeply it scars. However, standing up for the right thing does not always have the right consequences.

Hunter cheats on his girlfriend and hopes to get away with it, even though the guilt is tearing him up inside. Autumn and Bryce become intimate and Autumn secretly hopes she will become pregnant. At the same time, Autumn realizes she is losing her aunt as Aunt Cora prepares for her wedding day. Summer is placed back with her father, a double-edged sword that leaves her confused and alone. Summer turns to Kyle for support, realizing that he, despite his anger issues and drug use, is the only one who truly understands her.

Hunter meets his biological father. When Hunter confronts the man who raped Kristina, he realizes that he is just a good man who allowed crank to control his life. Brendan has cleaned up and served honorably in the military, showing Hunter that it is possible to overcome the legacy of the monster. Autumn meets her own father for the first time since she was a small child and decides she wants to meet her mother as well. Autumn insists on a road trip to Nevada. Summer is forced into yet another foster home when her father is arrested for DUI. Rather than live miles from Kyle, Summer and Kyle decide to run away.



After confronting his father and making amends to Nikki, Hunter confronts his mother over Christmas dinner, saying all the things his siblings cannot. Autumn arrives in Nevada with her father and discovers the root of her anxiety problems and begins to overcome them. Summer meets the sister that she did not know about and with the help of her siblings, confronts the legacy of being Kristina's daughter.



# Pages 1-70

## Pages 1-70 Summary

Fallout is the third in the Crank series by Ellen Hopkins. The Crank series is a series of books about Kristina Snow, a young girl who while visiting her drug addicted father, was introduced to crank, crystal meth. Although Kristina tried repeatedly to break the addiction, she failed and continues to be an addict. Fallout focuses on three of Kristina's five children.

Hunter is nineteen and has what appears to be a good life. The eldest of Kristina's five children, Hunter was adopted by Kristina's parents, author Marie Haskins and her second husband, Scott. Hunter is in college and has a wonderful girlfriend, Nikki, whom he loves very much. However, Hunter is haunted by his genetic past, aware that his mother claims his father raped her. Hunter wonders if it is possible to inherit such a gene, to become a rapist simply by fact that he was conceived that way. As Hunter stares into his unique green-gray eyes, he hears the door open. Nikki is upset because her parents are divorcing. Hunter tries to be sympathetic but she is thinking constantly that at least Nikki knows who her father is and can spend time with him. Then Nikki, who has just learned her father is having an affair, asks Hunter to pledge his faithfulness to her. Too bad he has already been unfaithful.

Autumn lives with her Aunt Cora and paternal grandfather in San Antonio, Texas. Autumn suffers from OCD and panic attacks, only feeling secure when everything is in perfect order. Autumn's father is in prison, but she overhears a phone conversation that informs her that he will be getting out soon. Autumn does not know anything about her parents, not even her mother's name or if she is living or dead. All she knows is that her parents were once crank users who ended up in jail.

Summer is fifteen and lives in California. Summer is currently in a foster home with two other girls. The foster home is okay, but she dislikes the mother, Darla's, propensity to yell. Summer used to live with her father, who was a crank addict but is now a simple alcoholic, but the state saw him as unfit. Summer does not think her father was so much unfit, as unconcerned in the face of abuse she suffered at the hands of his girlfriends. Summer sees her mother from time to time, though they had a fight the last time they saw one another. Summer's only joy seems to come from her boyfriend, Matt, who is the kindest guy she has ever known. However, she somehow cannot stop thinking about Matt's best friend, Kyle, who has made it clear he is interested in Summer.

## Pages 1-70 Analysis

The entire novel is written in verse without chapter breaks or other traditional divisions of a modern novel. This different style of writing gives the reader a sense of tension, of intensity, that is fitting with the plot. The narrators, Hunter, Autumn, and Summer, are all



children of a crank addict. In fact, they all share the same mother. Each is dealing with the fallout of their mother's addiction in their own way.

Hunter was adopted by his maternal grandparents and given a fairly normal and secure upbringing. However, Hunter is haunted by the idea that his biological father raped his mother, resulting in his birth. This idea, this fear that he is somehow not a good person because of his father's actions, cause Hunter a great deal of emotional turmoil that is beginning to leak into his relationship with his girlfriend, Nikki. This foreshadows for the reader a time when Hunter might make a mistake that can cost him his relationship, if not his emotional sanity.

Autumn is seventeen and a few years younger than Hunter. Autumn lives in Texas with her Aunt Cora and paternal grandfather. For all Autumn knows about her parents, she is an only child. Autumn has never been told anything about her mother and knows only a few things about her father such as the fact that he is currently in prison for grand theft auto. Autumn is isolated, coasting through high school without any meaningful relationships. At the same time, Autumn suffers OCD and panic attacks without a known cause. This leaves Autumn feeling like something of a pariah and as though she is not worthy of love.

Summer is a tough girl who has seen a great deal more in her fifteen years than any child should ever have to see. Summer suffered abuse at the hands of her father's girlfriend, Zoe, when she was just a small child. Summer was also sexually abused in a foster home by a man who was supposed protect her and help her. Summer knows all about her parents' crank addiction and lives with the fallout of it everyday. Of Kristina's three eldest children, Summer is the one who sees both her mother and father regularly, but she is not better off for it. Summer struggles in personal relationships because of the transitory nature of foster care and simply because she never had a normal relationship due to the addictions controlling both her parents.



# Pages 71-221

## Pages 71-221 Summary

Hunter has a radio remote show from the UNR/Boise State football game. Hunter is forced to do the show with Montana, another personality at the radio station. While at the football, giving away hotdogs and soda, a couple of fans come up and begin to flirt with Hunter. Nikki arrives as Hunter is indulging a little in the flirtation. Nikki is with her parents and therefore is already tense without having to see Hunter flirting. Hunter tries to reassure her. Later, Montana tells Hunter that he needs to separate himself from his on-air persona if he wants his relationship to work. A short time later, Hunter's parents arrive at the game and Hunter learns that his father is upset because Kristina has been in contact about another of her schemes.

Autumn is upset because Aunt Cora has been acting differently. Aunt Cora has recently begun classes to become a massage therapist and Autumn learns she has also been dating her teacher, Liam. Later, on the drive to school, grandfather tells Autumn that her father wants to see her. Autumn does not know how to feel about this. At school there is a new boy in Autumn's first class, Bryce, who seems interested in her despite Autumn's inability to understand why.

Summer wakes in the middle of the night to find her seven-year-old foster sister crying in her room. Summer tries to calm Ashante at the same time she recognizes the shame and fear of abuse. Summer asks Ashante what happened and learns that their other foster sister, Erica, has sexually abused her. Summer assures Ashante that she is safe now, then storms into Erica's room. Erica is high from crank. Summer attacks her and they fight for a few minutes before the foster parents come to break them up. Summer tells Darla what has happened. The next day, Kyle is sympathetic to Summer's ordeal and the cut on her face while Matt is distant and openly disgusted.

Hunter learns that Kristina has been beat up by her boyfriend, Ron, again and that his mother has flown to Vegas to care for her. Hunter's dad tells him that while searching for Ron, the police found a significant amount of crystal meth in the bedroom. Kristina now faces possession charges. Hunter's dad is annoyed by this and worried about Kristina's two youngest sons, Donald and David, who will have to come stay with them for a while. Hunter volunteers to move in with Nikki even though the two had a fight that morning.

Autumn arrives at school and finds Bryce talking to another girl. Autumn nearly has a panic attack as she assumes he has moved on from her, but is happy when Bryce explains it was nothing and then asks her to lunch. After lunch, Autumn and Bryce kiss, her first real kiss.

Summer, who is back living with her dad after the whole Ashante fiasco, cannot stop thinking about Kyle. One afternoon, Summer calls Kyle and asks him to come pick her up. They go to a secluded place and Summer admits to Kyle that she loves him. As they



become intimate, Summer confesses to Kyle that she was once raped by a foster father and that she has never been with anyone else. Kyle is kind, though his love-making is somewhat rough. They decide to tell Matt the news together.

## Pages 71-221 Analysis

Hunter finds himself the center of attention by many beautiful co-eds because of his radio job. Hunter cannot resist this attention even though he knows that he loves Nikki and does not want to do anything to change that. It is like an addiction for Hunter, messing up the good things in his life. As though to show where this addiction comes from, Kristina makes a new impact in Hunter's life when his mother has to go take care of Kristina and her two youngest children after Kristina's boyfriend beats her and leaves her to take the fall for possession of a significant amount of crank. This is just one of many moments of crisis that Kristina brings to her family, forcing Hunter's parents to deal with the complicated situation of what to do about Kristina's youngest children.

Autumn discovers that Aunt Cora is in love with her massage therapy teacher. This upsets Autumn because it changes the status quo, which is deeply important to Autumn. At the same time, Autumn learns her father is getting out of jail and would like to see her. Autumn is not sure how she feels about this because the only family she has ever really known is her aunt and grandfather. Finally, Autumn meets someone who seems interested in her, but Autumn is so insecure in herself and her ability to be loved that she does not trust his intentions until he makes them very clear. Although Autumn has never been touched by the chaos in her mother's life like Hunter has been, she still suffers the fallout of her addiction due to her odd family situation.

Summer, who knows what it is like to be a victim of abuse, finds herself in a position where she must defend the innocent. Summer does her best, but she is punished for her honesty and attempts at helping by once again being yanked from a foster home. Summer is placed back with her father, a situation that is made difficult by her father's alcoholism. At the same time, Summer looks for affection outside of the home because she has never had affection inside of it, but instead of turning to her kind and gentle boyfriend, Summer turns to his rebellious best friend. Summer, who knows that Kyle's father is also an alcoholic, sees a kindred spirit in him and trusts him in ways she never trusted Matt. Summer's choices are not the best in the eyes of the neutral observer, but she is doing the best she can with the instability she has always known.





# Pages 222-380

## Pages 222-380 Summary

Hunter has moved in with Nikki after spending several days winning back her trust after their fight. Donald and David have moved into Hunter's family home, wreaking havoc on everything and everyone. Hunter attends a party one night that features a bowl full of donated prescription medicines. Just as Hunter is going to take three of the pills, Nikki calls to ask for a ride home. Hunter saves the pills. The next day, Hunter gets a call at the radio station from a grateful listener to whom Hunter gave some concert tickets. Later, Hunter goes to dinner for Thanksgiving at his parents' house. As chaos breaks out, Hunter takes the three mystery pills.

Autumn finds herself having Thanksgiving dinner at Liam's family home in Austin. Autumn is uncomfortable around so many strangers and nearly has a panic attack. Micah, Liam's cousin, takes Autumn outside and helps her relax. Later, Micah sits next to Autumn during dinner, making his interest in her very clear. However, Autumn is distracted when her aunt announces she and Liam are getting married.

Summer sees Kyle briefly Thanksgiving morning, saddened to learn he has to spend the day in Fresno. Summer recently saw Kyle lose his temper the day they told Matt about them, therefore she does not show too much disappointment in fear of drawing some of that anger down on herself. Back at the house, Summer gets a call from her mother. They argue after Summer does not give much consolation to her mother's current situation. Later, Summer goes to a local restaurant with her father and his girlfriend for dinner. As they eat, Summer asks her father how he and her mother met. In telling the story, Summer's father lets slip that she has a sister. After dinner, while Summer is still reeling from her father's revelation, the police pull them over.

Hunter wakes early to do a remote radio show at the Sparks Hometowne Christmas Parade. Nikki refuses to attend. Hunter does the show with Montana and is later approached by Leah, his grateful listener. Leah offers sex to Hunter for the concert tickets he gave her and, against Montana's sound advice, Hunter takes her up on it. Afterward Hunter sees a man who has the same eyes as him as he makes his way to the talent show he is to judge. When Hunter arrives at the talent show, the same man is standing with Montana. Hunter is shaken, but he hides it and pretends nothing is going on.

Autumn finds herself sucked in by all the wedding planning even though she does not want any of it. Autumn feels as though Aunt Cora is pushing her out of her life even though Cora assures this is not the case. While Aunt Cora and grandfather are in Austin looking for a church to have the wedding, Autumn invites Bryce over. Alone in the house, they make love. Afterward, while washing her sheets, Autumn wonders if she might get pregnant and begins to fantasize about a future with both Bryce and a baby.



Summer's father spends the weekend in jail. Summer calls her mother and immediately suspects that she is using again. They argue again. When Summer's father comes home, Summer tells him she loves him, much to his surprise. They talk about the past again and her dad tells Summer more about his difficult relationship with her mother. This conversation confirms for Summer what she has always kind of known: that her mother never loved her or her father. Later, Summer hears a message on the answering machine from her case worker that suggests her father's DUI will cause Summer to be placed back in foster care.

## Pages 222-380 Analysis

Hunter is drawn back into his mother's drama and this causes him to use pills to self-medicate. The reader can recognize that Hunter is on a self-destructive path not unlike his mother's. This is underscored when Hunter has a sexual encounter with one of his listeners despite his deep feelings for Nikki. Even though Hunter knows he loves Nikki and that he will not survive if he loses her, he cannot help but do the wrong thing. To add to Hunter's problems, he sees a man who he recognizes as his biological father. Hunter is thrown for a loop when he finally meets this man he has spent so much time wondering about. The reader wonders if this will cause Hunter to fall deeper into his mother's pitfalls or if meeting the man who fathered him might in some way help him.

Autumn is upset by her aunt's decision to marry because it makes her feel as though she is losing the only person in the world who cares about her. As a result, Autumn has sexual relations with her boyfriend and dangerously does not use protection. Autumn reacts to the loss of one loved by trying to make a person who will be forced to love her and depend on her. This is reckless behavior that could cause Autumn some terrible heartache in the future; a pitfall that is not unlike the pitfalls that caused her mother's downfall.

Summer learns she has a sister and is shocked by this news. Although Summer is the one child of Kristina's eldest kids to know best the secrets and unhappiness that follow in her mother's wake, she is still shocked to learn she has a sister out there somewhere. At the same time, Summer's sense of instability is increased when she learns her father's arrest for DUI on Thanksgiving will more than likely yank her out of her current situation and place her back in foster care. Summer's biggest fear is being taken away from Kyle. However, the reader must wonder if Kyle is really the best thing for Summer when even she admits to being afraid of his terrible temper.



# Pages 381-548

## Pages 381-548 Summary

Hunter talks to Nikki about his biological father and she advises him to let it go. However, when Hunter runs into Brendan again at the radio station Christmas party, he finds he cannot let it go. After drinking too much, Hunter begins to grill Brendan about his mother. When Brendan admits to knowing Kristina, Hunter tells him that he knows Brendan raped Kristina while they were both high on crystal meth. Brendan pulls Hunter aside to try to explain to him what happened that night. Hunter tells Brendan he is his father.

Autumn has begun to drink in an attempt to keep her anxiety about the wedding under control. The night of the rehearsal, Autumn drinks too much after a shopping spree and is barely able to get ready to go to the church on time. The next day, Autumn's dad, Trey, and grandmother, Maureen, show up unexpectedly. A fight breaks out between Trey, Maureen, and Autumn's grandfather. Bryce, shocked to discover that Autumn lied to him about her parents being dead, leaves unexpectedly. Somehow they get through the wedding. Afterward, Autumn drinks too much at the reception and is nearly raped by Micah, but is saved by Trey.

Summer is told she will be moving to Fresno. Kyle is heartbroken and promises to find a way so they can be together. The new foster home has three other girls, two sisters and another girl who was clearly sexually abused. Summer worries that the foster father, Walter, is a sexual predator. Summer settles in fairly quickly. Hiding her cellphone, Summer makes plans with Kyle to meet when he comes to Fresno to visit relatives.

Hunter moves back into his parents' house after Nikki listens to a message on his phone from Leah that leaves nothing unsaid. Hunter is miserable without Nikki and spends his days helping his mom around the house to keep busy. Hunter learns that his biological grandfather has been arrested again for selling marijuana and that he is sick, more than likely dying. Hunter tells his mother about meeting Brendan. She is surprised, but supportive. Later, Hunter asks his dad if he ever cheated on his mom. Hunter learns that his father was once uncommitted to his mother but realized that he did not want to inflict that much pain on someone he loved.

Autumn tries to make amends with Bryce, but he is going to California for Christmas and she cannot see him until he returns. Autumn's grandfather has been ill since the wedding, therefore when she begins to feel sick to her stomach she believes she has the same flu. Trey shows up at the house and Autumn learns that the reason she knows nothing about her parents or her extended family is because Aunt Cora and grandfather kept moving around when she was little to keep them from finding her. Autumn suddenly decides she wants to meet her mother. Trey agrees to take her. During the drive, Trey suggests to Autumn that her stomach upset might be morning sickness.



Summer and Kyle run away together on the spur of the moment. Summer feels some guilt for leaving her new foster sister who has recently confided in her the abuse she suffered. However, Summer knows better than anyone that it is a mistake to trust anyone in a foster home. On the road, Summer has Kyle stop by her dad's trailer so that she can borrow clothes and some money from her father's girlfriend. They then go shopping, buying sleeping bags and nonperishable food so they can live in campgrounds until they can find jobs. Their first morning together, Summer discovers that Kyle is addicted to crank.

## Pages 381-548 Analysis

Hunter confronts his biological father and discovers he is not the monster Hunter always thought he was. Later, Hunter also learns that his father once cheated on his mother, but discovered that loving her meant he did not want to hurt her, therefore he stopped. Hunter learns many things about himself from his two fathers, both his biological father and his adopted father. Hunter has always put himself first, but now he is beginning to realize that life is not always black and white and that sometimes you have to put others first. This could be the epiphany that Hunter needs to help him improve his behavior.

Autumn is shocked to discover her father at her aunt's wedding. Autumn has never thought she would meet her father, therefore she told Bryce he was dead. When Trey shows up at the wedding, not only is Autumn shocked, but the whole family bursts into turmoil. The reader must realize, however, that Aunt Cora invited her brother and mother to the wedding, suggesting that Cora has come to realize that it is time to put the past in the past and move forward. Autumn seems to feel the same way when she decides she wants to meet her mother. However, the reader wonders how meeting someone like Kristina, how realizing how destructive her mother is, can possibly help someone with such a fragile emotional state as Autumn.

Summer ends up in a new foster home miles from Kyle, causing her to grieve not only this new change in her life but the only stability she has found, her relationship with Kyle. However, Kyle has other ideas and he quickly steals Summer away from her foster home. The reader has to worry, however, that Kyle's volatile temper and both his and Summer's immaturity could end with them in trouble. When it is revealed that Kyle is a crank addict, this concern is increased.



# Pages 549-663

## Pages 549-663 Summary

Hunter is working overtime while the stars at the radio station are on vacation. All Hunter can think about is Nikki, whom he is still trying to win back. Hunter has even bought her a promise ring, but he is afraid he will never have the chance to give it to her, especially when he calls and hears a male voice in the background. Hunter picks up his aunt, Leigh, and his mother, Kristina, at the airport as they arrive for Christmas. Hunter and Kristina quickly get into an argument. Leigh tries to get Hunter to realize that Kristina's ability to love her children has been compromised by her use of crank.

Autumn continues to make her way to Nevada with Trey. Autumn sees snow for the first time as they drive into a blizzard outside Bishop. As they drive, and Autumn becomes nervous about meeting an extended family that is not expecting her, Trey tells her about his relationship with her mother, Kristina. When they finally reach Carson City, they stop to clean up at a hotel. Before they can make the drive to Autumn's grandparents' house, the snow closes the roads.

For the first few days they are on the run, Kyle begins to go through withdrawal from crank. Summer gives him the space he needs to get through it. They hit the road again, stopping for their first hot meal in a week at a little diner. Afterward, while driving on slick roads a Hummer in front of them spins out and they have a roll over. When the police come, Summer calls her grandparents in Carson City.

Hunter goes to Nikki early Christmas morning and gives her the promise ring. Nikki forgives him. Later, Hunter picks up his grandfather from the airport before picking up Kristina. Again Hunter and Kristina argue.

Autumn has trouble sleeping, worried about meeting her family and about impending motherhood. Autumn drags Trey out of bed to begin the day.

Summer spent the night at the hospital, relieved that Kyle is going to be okay. As she talks to Kyle, Grandpa Scott shows up. Summer says goodbye to Kyle for what she hopes is not the last time. Grandpa Scott questions Summer about her situation on the way home and assures her they will work out the situation the following day.

Hunter's mother once again tries to tell him that the crank has made it impossible for Kristina to care for anyone but herself.

Autumn and Trey arrive at her grandparents' house. Kristina is shocked to see her. Autumn will not let Kristina touch her.

Summer arrives with Grandpa Scott. Both are unsure who Autumn is when they spot her in the yard, but Summer suspects. Summer and Autumn talk for more than an hour.



Hunter is happy to have met a new sister and to see Summer getting on with her so well.

At dinner an argument breaks out with Kristina again. Hunter accuses his mother of hurting everyone who ever loved her. Kristina tries to defend herself, but her apologies are hollow. However, Kristina's children can now look to one another for hope.

## Pages 549-663 Analysis

Somehow all three of Kristina's children end up at the Haskins' home for Christmas dinner. Hunter, who has finally made amends with his girlfriend and promises both her and himself he will never hurt her again, is happy to have his sisters with him and to see them getting along. Hunter is volatile around his mother, however, and arguments break out over and over again over Kristina's selfishness and her addiction. While Hunter has grown up aware of his mother's addiction and how it impacts her life, he still struggles to understand how her addiction can be more important than him and his siblings. Summer feels much the same way despite her own experience with addiction with Kyle. Autumn, who has never spent much time with her mother, does not feel the impact of her mother's selfishness. However, Autumn has finally come to the understanding that the volatile nature of her parents' relationship when she was a toddler is the root of her panic attacks.

All of Kristina's children suffer as a result of her addiction. Her elder children suffer neglect and some abuse while her younger children have suffered the worst because they have been in Kristina's care most of their childhood, watching her addiction but also suffering abuse at the hands of her lover. Kristina's parents and siblings also suffer when they are forced to bail Kristina out of yet another crisis or forced to care for her children, to come to love them only to have Kristina yank them away again. As per the name of this book, the fallout of Kristina's addiction has touched everyone's lives. However, it seems that each of Kristina's eldest kids are beginning to see past the selfishness of Kristina's addiction and are beginning to adjust their own thoughts and actions to benefit themselves. Perhaps a little selfishness is not such a bad thing if it can keep a person sane. Together, Kristina's eldest children have one another and can learn from each other in a way that will help them survive their mother's legacy.



# Characters

## Hunter Seth Haskins

Hunter is Kristina Shepherd's oldest child. Hunter was conceived during a rape while both his biological parents were high on crank. Hunter lived with his mother the first few months of his life, but eventually was adopted by his maternal grandmother and step-grandfather. Hunter has had a good life, and continues to have a good life, but the idea of being conceived during a rape consumes Hunter to the point where he has trouble controlling his impulsive behaviors. Hunter cannot help but wonder if somehow he might end up like his father, a criminal.

Hunter loves his girlfriend, Nikki, but cannot keep himself from cheating on her. Hunter has never been a popular person before, but he achieved some fame as a child from his mother's notoriety as a poet and novelist. Now Hunter is a radio personality and he is finding himself the center of attention from a group of female listeners. Among these is a forceful young woman, Leah, with whom he cheats on Nikki in a moment of weakness.

After Nikki learns of Hunter's betrayal, he begins to see that he can control his own actions. Not only this, but Hunter meets his biological father and discovers that the monster he thought he had been sired by is really just a man who made mistakes while addicted to crank. Now Brendan is a war hero and a good man, someone Hunter does not have to be afraid of. This realization goes a long way to help Hunter deal with his own emotional turmoil.

## Autumn Rose Shepherd

Autumn is Kristina's second child. Autumn was taken from her parents by her aunt when she was only two years old while her parents served time in prison. Autumn's grandfather and aunt made the choice to hide her from her parents and other relatives in order to protect her from their volatile living situation. Autumn suffers from OCD and anxiety attacks from an unknown cause.

Autumn has always been something of a loner. The only person in her life that Autumn truly loves and feels loved by is her aunt. However, when Aunt Cora announces she is getting married and moving to Austin, Autumn feels abandoned. Autumn turns to alcohol to control her emotions and her anxiety attacks. At the same time, Autumn has fallen in love and placed herself in a position to become pregnant at seventeen.

When Autumn's father shows up unexpectedly, Autumn begins to learn things about her family she has never known. Autumn did not know she had siblings until her father told her. Autumn also did not know anything about her mother or whether she was still living. When Autumn learns that her mother is still alive, Autumn insists on meeting her, traveling with her father to Nevada to meet not only her mother, but also all of her siblings, her grandparents, and other extended family on her mother's side.



## Summer Lily Kenwood

Summer is Kristina's third child. At fifteen, Summer has already seen so many things that an adult should not be expected to handle. Summer has suffered abuse at the hands of her father's girlfriend, has been sexually assaulted by a foster father, and placed in a position where she had to deal with her mother's embarrassing behavior while high on crank.

Summer is the only one of Kristina's eldest children who is still in some kind of contact with her mother. This is not a good situation, however, as Summer finds herself often burdened with her mother's multiple problems. At the same time, Summer finds herself moved out of yet another foster home and into her father's home. Summer's father was once a crank addict, but he has exchanged that addiction for alcoholism. While living with him, Summer manages to get her father to tell her some things about his relationship with Kristina, showing Summer that she is not the only one her mother has sacrificed for her addiction.

Summer's life is unstable at best. For this reason, Summer looks for stability in her relationship with boys. Summer falls in love with a boy who has as many home troubles as she, placing herself in a relationship that could prove to be as volatile as the ones her mother has experienced over the years. Somehow, though, Summer ends up with her grandparents and meets her long lost sister, a moment that helps Summer find some stability in her crazy life.

## Marie Haskins

Marie Haskins is Kristina's biological mother. Marie is a writer who has written a fictional account of Kristina's life, something that has made her famous and brought some amount of fame to her family. Marie cannot give up on her daughter and often bails Kristina out when she is in trouble, including caring for her five children in one way or another. Marie and her second husband, Scott, have adopted Hunter and in the course of the novel take custody of Kristina's two youngest children, Donald and David. Marie is a well-meaning, average American mother who loves her kids and grandkids.

## Scott Haskins

Scott Haskins is Marie's husband and Hunter's adopted father. Scott became Kristina's stepfather when she was five, making him the only stable father figure she has ever known. Scott finds himself pulled into Kristina's drama each time Marie tries to help her, making him frustrated with the way Kristina runs their lives. Scott is an older man and no longer wants to raise young children, but agrees to take care of Kristina's youngest children when she is hospitalized after a severe beating at the hands of her boyfriend. Scott is a kind, gentle man who has taught Hunter well, but he is also a man frustrated by addiction.





## Kristina Snow Shepherd

Kristina is the subject of the two prior books in the Crank series. Kristina was only a teenager when she was first introduced to crank and became an addict. After a rape, Kristina became pregnant and swore to give up the drugs for her child's sake. However, Kristina fell off the wagon again. Eventually Kristina became pregnant again and swore again to clean up. That was seventeen years ago and Kristina is still using.

Kristina is seen as selfish and uncaring through her children's eyes. However, Kristina's mother tries to tell everyone that Kristina's addiction has caused her brain to stop processing love the way it should. This is an excuse for Kristina, but it is an excuse rooted in truth. Kristina reunites with her husband, Trey, in this novel. At the end, the reader is informed that Kristina is receiving treatment for lung cancer and is writing a new book with her mother.

## Trey Shepherd

Trey Shepherd is Autumn's father. Trey also appeared in an earlier novel in the Crank series. Trey and Kristina were married and manufactured drugs together. For this, both Trey and Kristina went to prison. As a result, Autumn was placed with Trey's sister, Cora. Trey is released from prison shortly before Christmas in this novel and goes to Cora's wedding, seeing Autumn for the first time in many years. When Trey tells Autumn that Cora and her grandfather hid her from her mother and the other members of her mother's family all her life, Autumn decides to go with Trey to meet them. Trey wants to see Kristina again to see if he can get over his feelings for her, but instead they end up getting back together.

## Cora Shepherd

Cora is Autumn's aunt. Cora took custody of Autumn when she was only seventeen and took her to her father. Cora and her father hid Autumn from both her parents and her maternal grandparents most of her life. However, when Cora becomes engaged, she contacts her brother and invites him to the wedding. This seems to be an attempt on Cora's part to reunite Autumn with her father and extended family.

## Nikki

Nikki is Hunter's girlfriend. Nikki is deeply wounded when she learns her father is leaving her mother for another woman. For this reason, Nikki deeply needs to believe that Hunter will be true to her. However, Hunter has already cheated on Nikki once and does it again. When Nikki learns about this, she kicks Hunter out. Hunter, however, realizes that Nikki is the only one he wants and he fights until he wins her back.

## **Brendan**

Brendan appeared in the first Crank novel. Brendan was a teenager who was also addicted to crank when he met Kristina, who was calling herself Bree at the time. Brendan raped Kristina while they were both high, resulting in Hunter's conception. After nearly twenty years, Brendan and Hunter meet. Hunter tells Brendan the truth about his conception. Brendan then tells Hunter that he was an addict, but a court order that forced him to join the military changed his life. Brendan is now an Iraqi vet. This changes the way Hunter sees himself and helps him change his behaviors.



## Objects/Places

### Cell Phone

Summer hides her cell phone from her new foster family so that she can keep in touch with Kyle after moving to Fresno.

### Books

Summer is highly intelligent and enrolled in advanced academic classes in school. Summer is also well read and takes several beloved books with her on her many moves from foster home to foster home.

### Foster Care

Summer lives in and out of foster care most of her life because of her mother and father's various addictions.

### Pills

Hunter uses pills to help him get through a chaotic Thanksgiving day.

### Alcohol

Autumn turns to alcohol to help her through the emotional turmoil of her aunt's wedding and apparent abandonment.

### Crank

Crank is a slang term for crystal meth. Crystal meth is a highly addictive illegal drug. Kristina, Hunter, Autumn, and Summer's mother, is a crank addict.

### DUI

Summer's father is charged with DUI, driving under the influence, on Thanksgiving Day after drinking too many beers at dinner. Kyle's mother also died while driving under the influence, though Kyle believes her death was intentional.

## **The X**

The X is the radio station where Hunter works as an on-air personality.

## **University of Nevada, Reno**

Hunter attends college at the University of Nevada, Reno.

## **San Antonio, Texas**

Autumn lives with her paternal grandfather and aunt in San Antonio, Texas.

## **Reno, Nevada**

Hunter and his family, the Haskins, live just outside of Reno, Nevada.

## **Fresno, California**

Summer is forced to live with a foster family in Fresno, California. This is from where Summer runs away with Kyle.

# Themes

## Addiction

This novel is about the three eldest children of a woman addicted to crank for more than twenty years. Hunter should be well-adjusted because he was raised by his maternal grandparents, but the knowledge that his father was a rapist causes him a great deal of emotional turmoil. Autumn has never meet her parents, does not even know her mother's name. However, she suffers anxiety attacks that are a result of her parents' volatile relationship when she was young. Summer is still in contact with her mother, and is still impacted by the various addictions that rule both her parents' lives.

Addiction is a mental illness that can sometimes take over a person's life. Kristina has been addicted to crank since she was a teenager. Despite many periods of sobriety in her lifetime, Kristina continuously goes back to the drug to deal with the stresses of day to day life. This addiction has caused Kristina to push her children away. As a result, her children each have their own emotional trouble and must find a way to deal with it.

Hunter uses recreational drugs from time to time to deal with his own stress. Hunter also uses sex as a way to deal with life, causing himself great pain when his infidelity gets back to his girlfriend. At the same time, Autumn uses alcohol to control her anxiety attacks when her aunt decides to get married. Summer does not use drugs, refuses to use anything stronger than marijuana. However, Summer's instable life causes her to turn to a volatile relationship that could leave her as injured and abuse as her own mother. In this way, addiction causes a great deal of turmoil on the family and therefore is a major theme of this novel.

## Family

Hunter is a part of the nuclear family from which Kristina hails. Hunter was adopted by his maternal grandparents and raised pretty much the same way Kristina was. Summer is aware of her nuclear family, but is not a part of it because she was left in the custody of her father and when he could not handle his responsibilities, she was placed in foster care. Kristina often visits Summer and plays a large role in her life, though a very unpleasant role. Autumn does not even know her mother's name and is unaware that has has siblings until her father tells her.

Family is an important part of this novel because all the narrators of the novel are related to each other through their common mother. Although some of these children do not know about one another, they somehow come together at the end of the novel and find strength from one another. At the same time, Kristina continues to survive despite her addiction because her family has always been there for her and willing to help her out of trouble. If not for family, Kristina most likely would not have survived so long. For this reason, family is an important theme of the novel.



## Abuse

Summer has suffered a great deal of abuse in her life. Summer was abused by her father's girlfriend when she was a little girl. Later, after being taken out of her father's care because of his addictions, Summer suffered sexual abuse at the hands of a foster father. As the novel develops, Summer finds herself in a relationship that can prove to be violent, a fact she is very aware of that causes her to temper her behavior around her boyfriend.

Kristina is involved in a relationship with a man who often beats her and her children. For this reason, Kristina is taken to the hospital in the middle of this novel because of a terrible beating at her boyfriend's hands. Not only this, but the family is aware that this man has also beaten Kristina's children.

Abuse is a theme of the novel not only because of Summer and Kristina's experiences with abuse, but because abuse sometimes goes hand in hand with addiction. Kristina's addiction has created a dangerous situation for all her children, both the ones who live with her and the ones she has abandoned for one reason or another. It is a difficult situation, but a fact of life about addiction that Kristina's children must come together to stop. That is why abuse is a theme of the novel.

# Style

## Point of View

The novel is written in the first-person point of view of three different narrators. The narrators are three of Kristina's children, Hunter, Autumn, and Summer. Each tells their story in the weeks and months leading up to a surprise meeting at the end of the novel.

The point of view of this novel is important because it is a change from the narration that the author used in her previous novels. The two previous Crank novels were written from Kristina's point of view. This novel is told from the first person point of view of Kristina's eldest children. The point of view allows for an intimate view of their lives for the reader and allows the reader to grow concerned about what might happen to each of these children. It is a point of view that gives the reader great insight into the fallout of addiction, the main theme of the novel.

## Setting

The novel is set in three different locations. Hunter lives in Reno, NV near his family home. Autumn lives in San Antonio, Texas with her aunt and grandfather. Summer lives in California. All three settings are simply a backdrop to the main themes of the novel. In fact, the setting only becomes important when all three of the narrators end up in Nevada at the same time.

The setting of this novel is not as important as the themes of the novel. The settings simply describe where the three children live and how their locations have placed distance between each of them. In the end, all three end up in Reno, where the whole thing started. Kristina lived in Reno with her mother and stepfather and later gave birth to several of her children there. In this way, the final setting of this novel brings the story in all three of the books in the series full circle.

## Language and Meaning

The language of the novel is English. The novel is written in verse and therefore the language occasional rhymes or contains words that are used more for their imagery than for anything else. The author strives to use words that the intended audience will understand easily, but that also works with the verse in which she is writing. For this reason there will appear in some of the stanzas words that a young reader might not be readily familiar with, but that is still easily defined by its use in the verse.

The language is, for the most part, authentic to the age and background of the narrators. Although Summer is the youngest, she is the smartest, therefore the language she uses is more intelligent than a child her age might use. The language is lyrical and full of imagery, telling a story in a way that is unusual but full of meaning. In

this way, the language of this novel works well with the plot and the structure of the novel.

## Structure

The novel is written completely in verse. There are no divisions in the novel, no chapter breaks or part breaks. The poems in the novel have titles that are often the first line of the poem. Each time the narrator changes, the author begins the verse with the narrator's name. However, there are no other breaks in the narration, giving the novel a sense of frantic speed that fits with the themes of the novel.

The novel contains three main plots. Each main plot follows the lives of each of the three main characters. Among the subplots are relationships that each maintains with a member of the opposite sex, such as Hunter's relationship with Nikki. Another subplot follows Summer's discovery that she has a sister she never knew. Another subplot follows Autumn's struggle to deal with her aunt's wedding plans. All the plots come to a satisfying conclusion at the end of the novel.





## Quotes

"We hear that life was good before she met the monster" (p. 2).

"And if a guy like that is really my father, could I have inherited a rape gene?" (p. 15).

"They don't call it the monster for nothing. It chews people up, spits 'em out, often unsalvageable. So why have I been even a little tempted to take a spin with the monster?" (p. 61).

"Change is coming. The surety of that has augured its way into my brain, stirring up all those buried childhood fears. I deal with the uncertainty of tomorrow by uber-controlling today" (p. 95).

"I don't know enough about being in love to insist that I really am. But I definitely feel something for Bryce, and I'm almost positive he feels something for me" (p. 173).

"A battle begins inside me. Head versus heart. Logic versus emotion. And every synaptic surge of logic is telling me not to let my mouth spill the words my hear insists are true" (p. 209).

"I soar up, up, dangerously close to heaven, and I'm not the slightest bit afraid" (p. 261).

"And I almost want to tell him I love him. Not that I have, since I was a little girl" (p. 363).

"Our eyes lock, green-marbled gray to green-marbled gray" (p. 403).

"End of story except for the fact that this happens to be the girls' fourth foster home in six years, and Rosa can't remember her mother's face. Sad, I suppose" (p. 453).

"Kristina is all about Kristina" (p. 607).

"Trust. Joy. Courage. Honesty. Belief. Belonging. Attaining these things may not come easily. Because, look very long at Kristina, I see me me me" (p. 662).



## Topics for Discussion

Who is Hunter? What is good about his life? What question about his biological father bothers Hunter? Why does Hunter have trouble feeling sympathy for his girlfriend when he learns about her parents' divorce? Why does Hunter struggle with the idea of fidelity? How does this inability to be faithful impact Hunter's life?

Who is Autumn? What disorder does she suffer from? What does Aunt Cora claim to be able to see around Autumn? What color is it? Why? Why is Autumn unable to believe Bryce might have feelings for her? How many friends does Autumn have? How many boyfriends has she had? Why is this? What is the root cause of Autumn's problems?

Who is Summer? Why does she live in a foster home? What is Summer's relationship like with her mother? For what reason? What is Summer's relationship like with her father? How does this change as the novel progresses? Why is Summer forced to return to her father's home early in the novel? What preceded this? Did Summer do the right thing in this situation?

Who is Kristina Snow Shepherd? What has the reader learned about Kristina from previous novels in this series? How has Kristina's lifestyle impacted her children? Which child has the most contact with Kristina? Which the least? For what reason? Why is Kristina arrested in the middle of the novel? What is the charge? How does she get out of it?

Who is Brendan? Why is Hunter shocked when he meets him? What does Hunter think of this man when he first sees him? How does Hunter learn that his first impressions of Brendan are wrong? Why does Hunter confront Hunter? What information does he give him? How does meeting Brendan affect Hunter? How does meeting Brendan help change Hunter's behaviors?

Who is Marie Haskins? What is the subject of the book that has brought her so much fame? What kind of book does Marie want to write now? What book does the reader learn Marie will be writing at the end of this novel? How does Marie's novel and her fame impact Hunter? How does it impact Autumn? Summer?

Who is Trey? How does his reappearance in Autumn's life impact her? What does Autumn know about Trey? What does she learn from Trey in the course of this novel? What did Autumn think about her parents before meeting Trey? What did Autumn tell Bryce about her parents? Why? How does talking to Trey about his volatile relationship with Kristina help Autumn understand the basis of her anxiety problems?