

Fangirl Study Guide

Fangirl by Rainbow Rowell

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Plot Summary

An insecure college freshman learns she can overcome the hurts of her past in the novel *Fangirl* by Rainbow Rowell. Since she was eight, Cather Avery has dealt with life by disappearing into writing fanfiction about her favorite young adult book series. Now that she's in college, life has become too real for Cath. Her twin sister is asking for space; the mother who abandoned Cath wants to renew their relationship; and, the end of the Simon Snow series is coming. All of these events bring stress to a girl who can't conquer her own insecurity about the college dining hall. Additionally, Cath feels as if she is the only one who must watch over her mentally ill father and alcohol addicted sister. With the help of some friends, Cath manages to come to terms with the pain her mother caused, accept the love of a new boyfriend, rebuild the relationship with her twin sister, and finish her conclusion to the Simon Snow series. She accomplishes all of these things before the end of her spring semester.

For the first time in her life, Cath is separated from her more outgoing twin Wren, who has decided she no longer wants to be known as Cath's twin. Luckily, Cath's upperclassman roommate, Reagan, takes Cath under her wing, showing her the basics of college life. Despite her help, Cath's first semester of college is a train wreck as Cath witnesses her twin sister drink and party to excess. To make matters worse, Cath's mother, who abandoned the family when Cath and Wren were eight, tries to rekindle a relationship with the girls. Wren goes along with their mother's plan. Then, a boy pretends to be friends with Cath. He uses the story they write together as his own work for a college fiction writing class. Topping things off, Cath's father is sent to a mental hospital. Cath leaves college early to take care of him, missing the end of her first semester.

Cath considers not returning to college for spring semester but the budding of a friendship with Levi, Reagan's friend, entices her back. Levi slowly proves himself over the course of the spring semester. Cath's relationship with her sister is rekindled after Wren survives a bout of alcohol poisoning and is warned by their father to stop drinking. Now Cath's life is back together to some extent, but she is faced with two challenges. She must finish her fanfiction novel about Simon Snow before the ending of the Gemma T. Leslie Snow series in May. She must also write a piece of fiction to turn in for her final project for a fiction writing class.

It is through this writing project that Cath finally puts into words the hurt and pain associated with her mother leaving Cath and her family. Cath finally feels able to come out of hiding and face the world as she deals with her emotions and makes peace with that part of her life. In parallel, the ending of the Simon Snow series leaves Simon finally at peace with his mortal enemy through the course of the novel. At the story's conclusion, Cath finds peace not only in her real life but also in the make believe world that has helped her cope for so long.



The Simon Snow Series and Chapters 1-3

Summary

Cather Avery, an insecure college freshman, learns she can overcome the hurts of her past in the novel *Fangirl* by Rainbow Rowell. Since she was eight, Cath has dealt with life by disappearing into writing fanfiction about her favorite young adult book series. Now that she's in college, life has become too real for Cath. Her twin sister is asking for space, the mother who abandoned Cath wants to renew their relationship and the end of the Simon Snow series is coming, all bringing their own kinds of stress to a girl who can't conquer her own insecurity about the college dining hall. Additionally, Cath feels as if she has to single handedly watch over her mentally ill father and alcohol addicted sister. With the help of some friends, Cath manages to come to terms with the pain her mother caused, accept the love of a new boyfriend, rebuild the relationship with her twin sister, and finish her conclusion to the Simon Snow series all before the end of her spring semester.

An Internet encyclopedia article describes the Simon Snow series, a collection of children's books written by Gemma T. Leslie. The first book is released in 2001 with the final book scheduled to be released in 2011.

In Chapter 1, Cath and her twin sister Wren move into their college dormitories. Cath had wanted to room with her sister but Wren wants an independent life at college. Cath is surprised to find her roommate's friend alone in her room when she first arrives and wonders if he is her roommate. He is friendly and offers to help her move boxes up. Reagan, her real roommate, seems to treat Cath coolly.

The twins' father offers to take them to eat pizza after moving Wren in but she declines, saying she wants to go to the freshman barbeque. Cath asks her father to pick her up for pizza after he finishes moving Wren in. She tells them she wants to get unpacked. With her things in their places, Cath does feel more like she is at home. She even puts three of her Simon and Baz posters up.

At the conclusion of the chapter is an excerpt from a Simon Snow novel describing Simon meeting his roommate, Baz, for the first time.

In Chapter 2, Reagan has not returned to the room when Cath wakes. She eats in the room choosing not to go to the dining hall because she is unsure where the hall even is or the process to get food. When she returns to her dorm room after class, the boy from the day before is waiting in the hallway. Cath won't let him in the room with her until Reagan gets there. When she arrives, Reagan and the boy start unpacking her things. Levi tries to talk to Cath until Reagan makes a snide remark about him having to spend lots of time in the hallway.



When Cath finally gets to go to her fiction writing class, she thinks that all the students look as if this has been what they've been waiting for since they came to school. Cath notes that Professor Piper, who is an actual author, is smaller than Cath thought she would be. The professor starts discussion by asking why people write fiction. Among the other answers, Cath thinks to herself that she writes to disappear.

In the Simon Snow section at the end of this chapter, Simon is concentrating on making a coin fly away. He doesn't notice a girl sit down beside him. She is successful with the trick and Simon asks her how she did it. Her reply insinuates that magic isn't something that is done, but something that just is.

In Chapter 3, Cath finds it impossible to write while Reagan is in their dorm room. Reagan is loud, outgoing and seems to take up a lot of space but she doesn't seem to be intent on being best friends with Cath, which is fine with her. She sneaks into the bathroom to eat because she doesn't want to eat in front of Reagan and Levi. When she returns to the room, the two are leaving and Cath is finally able to write freely.

Cath has lunch with her sister and Courtney. Wren seems irritated when Cath asks her advice about the fanfiction book she's writing. Wren, instead, wants to talk about Cath's roommate. She thinks it is strange that the two of them don't talk more. Wren tells Cath that she and Courtney are going to a party at The Triangle House. She asks Cath to come along but Cath refuses.

In the Simon Snow segment, Simon asks The Mage if he really has to be roommates with the same boy through all his years at Watford. He argues the boy is evil. The Mage tells him that since The Crucible has put them together, they must stay together.

Analysis

Cath is a college student trying to come to terms with being pushed out of her nest before she was ready. Her twin sister, Wren, has been her best friend all of her life. The two even wrote stories together in previous years. Now, Wren's interests have moved beyond Simon and Baz. Cath, an English major, is focused on literature especially since she has found a niche for herself writing Simon stories in a fan site on the Internet. She has more than 5,000 people following her site. In college, Cath's Simon fetish is seen as immature as the books are ones that are enjoyed mostly by younger people.

To make matters worse for Cath, Wren has decided that she does not want to room with her sister in college. This decision forces the insecure and anxious Cath to step out on her own. Cath goes to class, but has yet to venture out to the dining hall yet. She most enjoys her fiction writing class but admits to herself that she writes because it helps her to disappear. Meanwhile, when Cath does see Wren, her sister is pressuring her to make friends with her roommate. Wren also tells her sister of her plans to attend a fraternity party. Cath tells her sister to call if she needs her, indicating that although Cath is the more anxious of the twins, she has always been the one to take care of her more impulsive sister.



Each chapter in the novel thus far has been followed up with a short segment from a Simon Snow story. Interestingly, each of these snippets parallel what is happening to Cath in her life. In the first chapter, for instance Cath enters her dorm room for the first time to see a boy standing there. Similarly, Simon finds himself with a strange boy when he enters his room.

Discussion Question 1

Describe the relationship between Cath and Wren. How are the girls different? How are they similar?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the purpose of the Simon Snow snippets at the end of each chapter. How do they relate to the material in that chapter?

Discussion Question 3

What is your first impression of Cath? Is she likable? Is she strange? Explain.

Vocabulary

philologist, infuriating, defiantly, nonchalant, ramshackle, buxom, treachery, levitate, ramparts, skeptically, indulgently



Chapters 4-6

Summary

In Chapter 4, Cath is feeding the campus squirrels of which she sends a picture to Abel, her boyfriend whom Wren refers to as an end table. Nick from her fiction writing class approaches her and asks her about their most recent writing assignment. She is worried when he suggests they might have to read their work out loud.

Back in her dorm room, Reagan confronts Cath about her energy bar diet. When Cath admits that she doesn't know where the dining hall is, Reagan insists that she go with her. Realizing how deeply anxious Cath is, Reagan asks her why she isn't on drugs. Reagan says she is taking drugs, which she calls wonderful things.

Over dinner, Reagan admits that she doesn't want a roommate but she has to live in the dorms for her scholarship. She was supposed to get a private room but didn't because of overcrowding. Cath admits that she wanted to live with her sister but that her sister wanted to meet new people. Believing Cath is pitiful, Reagan tells her that she is going to be her friend.

In Chapter 5, Cath lets Levi wait for Reagan in their room when he begs her. He tells her she looks better nourished now that she's been going to the dining hall regularly. Cath also realizes she is happier. She and Reagan eat together and ridicule the people in the cafeteria. Cath drops an accidental hint to Reagan that she writes about Simon and Baz, in addition to be a fan, which Reagan thinks is weird.

Since she's begun college, Cath has posted only one chapter of her fanfiction book "Carry On, Simon." She is writing the book as if it were the eighth book in the Simon Snow series. The thousands of people who read the Simon series on the Internet, think that Cath's book is the eighth installment. She has promised her readers she will finish the book, even if it takes longer since she is in college.

Nick, the student in Cath's fiction writing class, asks her in class if she will be his partner for their group writing project. Because they decide to meet at the school library across campus after dark, Levi insists on walking her to and from the library. Nick makes Cath write with a pen, which she is not used to doing, but as they write, she almost feels as if she is writing with Wren again as they would do at home.

Following the chapter, Simon is crying because his mother has died. Basil tells him that he understands how he feels because he lost his mother as well. Simon wonders if he is lying.

In Chapter 6, after six tries and six unanswered messages, Cath finally gets her father on the phone. She makes sure he is eating and makes him promise to go to the grocery store. After three missed messages from her father, Cath tries to return his calls but misses him three more times.



One Friday night, Cath is trying to write a chapter for Simon but is thinking instead about the A that she and Nick got on their writing project. Nick made her promise they would write together again and they have set up a date for Tuesday. Cath wants to talk to Wren about it but Wren is been hurtful in her insistence Cath leave her alone. Wren also makes fun of Simon when Cath tells her that she wants to talk about boys. Cath curses Wren before Wren hangs up. Cath wonders if her sister is on drugs.

Reagan tries to get Cath to go to the school's football game but Cath refuses. By the end of the day, Reagan forces Cath to go bowling with her and Levi. After bowling the two invite Cath to a bar. She is tempted, but decides against it. Back in her room, Cath calls her dad, then writes until she goes to bed.

In Simon's lecture, Miss Possibelf is talking about the power of words. She says the key to casting a spell is unleashing the power of the meaning of words.

Analysis

Even while her relationship is developing with her roommate, Cath's relationship is deteriorating with her sister. When Cath finally gets in touch with her sister, Wren is hurtful. She insinuates that Cath is overprotective. When Cath tells her sister that she wants to talk to her about boys, Wren assumes that Cath wants to talk about Simon and Baz, the book characters that Cath is so wound up in. In her state of mind, whether she is drunk or high, Wren doesn't even consider that Cath might want to talk about a real boy.

Reagan and Cath have connected on a certain level because they finally admit to each other that they don't want a roommate. Reagan also recognizes Cath's need for a stronger person to guide her. Cath is lost without this person. She doesn't seem clingy, just needs someone to point her in the right direction. In a way, Reagan takes over Wren's spot in Cath's life as she insists that Cath go to the dining hall, and even forces Cath to go out with her every once in a while.

Meanwhile, Cath has begun to connect with a boy in her fiction writing class. After the two get an A on their first writing project together, Nick makes Cath promise that they will write together again. It is about Nick that Cath is hoping to talk to Wren about when Wren chooses to make fun of Simon.

Discussion Question 1

What do Reagan and Cath have in common? How are they different?

Discussion Question 2

Why is it so painful for Cath when Wren makes fun of Simon and Baz?



Discussion Question 3

Discuss the differences between Cath and Wren's view of boyfriends.

Vocabulary

recurring, steerage, innocuous, ravenous, melodramatically, doppelgänger, brusque, redeem, sentient, irreconcilable, ingenious, voluptuously



Chapters 7-9

Summary

In Chapter 7, Abel calls Cath to break up with her. She texts Wren the news, and Wren comes to visit that afternoon. Wren is still in Cath's room when Reagan and Levi walk in. Reagan doesn't seem impressed but Levi is obviously infatuated with Wren.

At the end of the chapter, a section from the Simon novel indicates that Agatha Wellbelove knows that she is the most attractive witch at the school. Everyone, in fact knows this. Agatha chooses to share her loveliness; smiling at everyone as if it is the greatest gift she could give them.

In Chapter 8, Cath and Nick discuss the scene they've been assigned, one with an untrustworthy narrator. Nick tells Cath he's started his scene three times so far. She is impressed with Nick's writing ability. They have begun sitting next to one another when they write. Cath feels complete.

Wren has started a strange, new diet. Cath comments that even with Wren's new eating habits they're both the same size. Courtney says it is because she and Wren drink on the weekend. Wren tries to kid Cath about Nick, but Cath doesn't want to talk to her sister about boys. Although she's been paying more attention to the men all around her, they are the last thing that she wants to talk to her sister about, or anyone for that matter. She tries to get her sister to go home with her over the weekend to see their father but Wren refuses.

In fiction writing class, Nick teases Cath when the professor mentions how much she's looking forward to reading Cath's writing.

At the end of the chapter, Simon and Baz have gotten locked out of their school because they were arguing and lost track of time. Simon discovers he has an Aero bar that he offers to share with Baz.

In Chapter 9, Cath decides to take a walk downtown before going home. She winds up at Levi's Starbucks where he fixes her a free coffee. At home that weekend, Cath's dad tells her that he has been talking to Cath and Wren's mother. She wants to get to know them better. Cath refuses to listen.

Simon and Baz hold each other's hands after being attacked by creatures outside the fortress. In her writing, Cath indicates that sometimes you hold another's hand just to prove that you are still there.



Analysis

In Chapters 7-9, Cath's dad adds to her already upside down world that her mother wants to get to know her better. This is the first time that the twins' mother has been mentioned, except when Cath admitted that her name and Wren's names are a division of the name Catherine. Her mother had not known that she was expecting twins and didn't want to come up with another name. It can be deduced that their mother never had much of an active role in their lives up to this point and that Cath prefers that she not try to be part of their lives now.

Meanwhile, now that she is in college, Cath is paying more attention to men than ever. Abel, her boyfriend, broke up with her, but she doesn't seem terribly upset. She continues to write with Nick. They become more and more like one person as they write together. Cath also seems to have some attraction to Levi as she visits him one day at the coffee shop where he works without even really knowing why she is going there.

Cath continues to write on her book about Simon. During her weekend at home, she is able to write like she had never been able to at college. Writing alone in her own bedroom, Cath finally realizes that she writes fiction because she is able to immerse herself totally in the feelings and emotions of the people about whom she is writing. For a while, her world and its pain go away.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Cath noticing boys more and more now that she is in college? What does this signify?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Cath get so upset when her father suggests to her that her mother wants to get to know her? Why do you think Cath responds as she does?

Discussion Question 3

How do the sections of text from the Simon series parallel what is happening in Cath's life? How does Cath use her writing as a form of therapy?

Vocabulary

blandly, feinted, nefariously, indulgent, yeti



Chapters 10-12

Summary

In Chapter 10, Cath is feeling overwhelmed by all of her classwork. She tries to discuss it with Nick but he doesn't seem to understand. When they leave the library that night, Levi is already waiting to walk her to her dorm. He asks if Nick has ever offered to do so.

Also in this chapter, Cath confronts Wren about their mother. Wren is of the opinion that their mother can't hurt them any worse than she already has. Cath isn't so sure. Wren tells Cath she hasn't said anything to her because she knows how upset it makes Cath.

In Chapter 11, Cath is in her quiet dorm but is thinking about the "F" that Professor Piper gave her for her unreliable narrator story. The professor had accused her of plagiarism. She tries to get in touch with Wren, but she doesn't get an answer. So, she calls an Emergency Kanye Party. She is singing and dancing when Levi knocks. He joins her. They are still dancing when Reagan comes back to the dorm.

Cath looks at her phone and realizes she has a text from Wren. The message indicates Wren is at a bar and needs help. Levi offers to drive her, but Reagan tries to tell her that there is nothing to worry about. Levi drives Cath to the bar where Wren had sent the text. She finds Wren and asks what is wrong. Wren, who is drunk, tells her that she meant to dial Courtney. When some boys in the bar see that Cath and Wren are twins, they begin making perverted jokes. Both Levi and Jandro, the man whom Wren is with, take up for the girls. Jandro hits one in the face.

When they leave the bar, Wren is angry with Cath. Even though she's drunk, Wren takes off with her boyfriend to another bar. Courtney goes with them. Levi takes Cath to a truck stop to eat. She finally tells him about Professor Piper's response to her work. Levi was already aware that Cath wrote Simon Snow stories and asks her about them. She explains that in fanfiction, she is able to take the characters and rewrite their stories. In the end, Levi agrees with Cath that what she is doing isn't really plagiarism, but that she probably shouldn't turn in any more Simon stories for her class.

Simon is determined that Baz is up to something as he has been sneaking around and staying out all night. Even though Simon has followed him for hours, he has no idea what he is planning.

In Chapter 12, Levi arrives at Cath and Reagan's dorm room before Reagan has gotten there. He asks Cath to read him some of her fanfiction. She complies. He is strangely interested. Before she finishes the story, Reagan comes back to the room. She seems oddly pleased that Levi is hearing Cath's writing.

At the conclusion of this chapter, a snippet from a Newsweek article tells how devoted Simon Snow fans have become.



Analysis

In these chapters, Cath's relationship with Wren deteriorates. However, her relationship with Levi seems to develop. Even though Cath is studying with another boy, Levi continues to meet her at the library to walk her back to her dorm. He asks her if Nick ever offers to walk her, intending her to realize that he would offer if he were a gentleman. Cath doesn't seem to understand Levi's point. Later, when Cath gets the text from her sister, Levi drives Cath to make sure her sister is all right. Without intending to, Cath has revealed part of her inner personality to Levi when he came to the dorm to find her dancing and singing. He asks why she was having such a bad day and Cath tells him about her professor's reaction to the writing assignment that she turned in. He agrees with her that it probably wasn't plagiarism, but encourages her not to turn any more fanfiction in as college work.

Levi seems to have a sincere interest in Cath's writing. He also seems to have an unusually large bank of knowledge about Simon and Baz. Even though Cath at first believes that he is only doing it as a way of making fun of her, Levi listens intently when she reads a story to him. The story that she reads to him deals with Simon looking for hares. His search takes him and Baz into a nursery where Baz says that he stayed before his mother was killed. Simon is able to sympathize with Baz because his own mother left him, unlike Baz, Simon grew up in an orphanage. Simon's situation is somewhat similar to Cath's as she also was abandoned by her mother.

Meanwhile, Wren seems more and more imbedded into the drinking scene. One evening while drunk, she sends a message to Cath that she had intended to send to Courtney. Cath comes to find her sister, believing that she is in trouble. Instead, Wren is angry with Cath for coming. Cath is again hurt by Wren's reaction to her concern.

Discussion Question 1

Do you think Levi is honestly interested in Cath's stories? Do you get the vibe that he also is a fan of Simon? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Do you believe that Cath's story was plagiarism as her professor said it was? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Levi ask Cath if Nick ever offered to walk her home? What point is he trying to make to Cath?

Vocabulary

surplus, archetypical, inane, protagonist, plagiarism, re-purposing, languid, calligraphy, inimitable, protocol, quorum, incest, debasing, depraved, guffawed, nemesis, subtlety, impenetrable, telepathy, indignant, despicable, prat



Chapters 13-15

Summary

In Chapter 13, Cath isn't trying to make friends while at college, while Wren's schedule is crowded with social activities. Cath remembers that the girls had always been this way. Even as children Wren got invitations to parties and Cath came along as a package deal. Cath also remembers to two going to therapy together when their mother left. Their mother left on September 11, making their teachers believe the girls were upset by the terrorist attacks. Their father didn't tell the teachers any differently. He didn't even tell his own mother what had happened until nearly eight months later.

Cath reaches for her laptop to write but her thoughts are interrupted by the phone ringing. Levi invites her to a party. She refuses. He asks her to finish reading her story to him. She tells him she won't read to him over the phone. At that moment, Levi knocks on the door. He has coffee and gives her the choice of gingerbread or eggnog. Cath continues her story. Before long, she is imitating Simon's and Baz's voices. She glances up at Levi to find him mesmerized. In the story she is reading, both boys realize they were left by their mothers even though it was for different reasons.

Reagan bursts through the door. She asks Levi if he brought her a gingerbread latte and why he's there so early. Cath learns Levi is taking a young adult literature class for which the two of them plan to study. Before they leave, Levi asks some more questions about the world of fanfiction. Cath is surprised that he seems to understand the idea.

In the snippet from a Leslie novel, Simon and Penelope discuss the idea that Simon has the gift of magic, but his parents aren't magicians. When Simon insists they must have been magicians, Penelope tells him that magicians would never have abandoned their child.

In Chapter 14, on the way home for Thanksgiving break, Cath learns that Wren is going to spend some time with their mother. Cath is upset, mostly because Wren has not discussed the idea with her. At home, Cath's dad tries to talk to Cath about her mother. Cath tells him that it is too late for her mother to decide she wants a relationship with them now since she wasn't around when they needed her. She says that now she's figured things out by herself, she doesn't want her mother anywhere near. Wren winds up staying the night with her mother and doesn't come back for Thanksgiving with her sister and father. Cath and her father eat in the living room watching television.

In Chapter 15, Levi comes to Cath's dorm room. He's angry because he can't find Reagan. The two of them were supposed to study together. Levi tries to make Cath understand that he has a disability that affects his ability to read. At first, Cath doesn't realize that he is being serious. He walks out mad and she goes after him, apologizing when she suddenly realizes he isn't just being lazy. She panics when she realizes she's locked her keys in her dorm room; but, Levi has a spare to let them in the room. She



reads the book to him that he and Reagan were supposed to study together. She begins sitting in her desk chair, but later joins him on the bed. She lies next to him. When she finishes, he kisses her in a way that she has never been kissed before.

Analysis

Wren and Cath are going their own ways more and more. Wren seems angry and irritable when Cath tries to talk to her. She is obviously still holding Cath's act of showing up at the bar against her even though Cath intended only help her sister whom she believed to be in trouble. It is Cath's turn to be angry with Wren when Wren makes arrangements during Thanksgiving holiday to spend time with her mother. Instead of coming back home for dinner with her sister and father, however, Wren stays with her mother. Cath struggles with the anger she feels toward her mother for believing it will be so easy to step back into their lives now that she and Wren are in college. Cath believes that because she has made it through the major bumps of adolescence, she no longer needs her mother.

Note that in both Cath's fanfiction and in the Leslie version of the novel, Simon believes that his parents abandoned him. This issue of abandonment may be one of the aspects of Simon that attracted Cath to him and his stories in the first place since Cath has also been abandoned by her mother. Although many things about Simon change in Cath's stories, the fact that he was left by his parents remains the same. This could be one of Cath's ways of dealing with her frustration about her own mother leaving. Remember also that the first Simon novel came out the year that Cath's mother abandoned her. Cath has been able to use Simon and his stories as an escape from her own pain since that time.

Throughout Chapters 13-15, Levi and Cath develop a deeper bond. He comes to the dorm room looking for Reagan because she is supposed to study with him. Instead, he is angry because she is not there and had stood him up the day before as well. When Levi tries to explain to Cath that he has a reading disability, she doesn't understand at first and believes he's just using Reagan to help him get good grades. When Cath finally understands what he's been trying to tell her, he has already left the room. Cath apologizes and then reads the entire novel "The Outsiders" to him, both of them deeply affected by the story. By the time she finishes, the two are lying on the bed together. They kiss in a way that Cath has never been kissed before just before she falls asleep. Additionally, Cath learns in this part of the novel that all the time that Levi had been sitting in the hallway outside their dorm room, he had an extra key all along. He is too much of a gentleman to let himself into Cath's room when he knows that she doesn't feel comfortable with him there alone.

Discussion Question 1

Why is it significant that Cath and Wren's mother left on Sept. 11?



Discussion Question 2

Why is Cath so angry with her mother for trying to be part of her life at the point she feels like she no longer needs a mother?

Discussion Question 3

How has Levi made it through college even with his inability to read?

Vocabulary

misanthropic, amiss, intramural, exploitive, superscript



Chapters 16-18

Summary

In Chapter 16, Cath and Levi wake up when Reagan slams the door. Levi runs out, claiming to be late to work. Tears come to Cath's eyes as she apologizes but learns that Levi was not Reagan's boyfriend. Reagan is angry because she didn't expect to find him with Cath and is hurt because he'd always liked her best.

After getting over her initial shock, Reagan encourages Cath to explore her feelings for Levi. The next time Cath hears from Levi, he is inviting her to a party. She doesn't want to go and uses the excuse to Reagan that she has a class early the following morning. Later, Cath feels bad about not having sent a text back to Levi about the party. She wonders what might have happened had they awakened alone instead of having Reagan wake them up.

Cath is studying herself in the mirror on the back of the door when Reagan barrels into the room, slamming the doorknob into Cath's side. Reagan is headed for Levi's party, and Cath agrees to go with her. She is surprised when she gets to Levi's house at how nice it is. Reagan helps her find Levi. He is in the kitchen kissing another girl. Cath heads for the front door with Reagan muttering an explicative behind her.

The Mage tells Simon about the Insidious Humdrum, a man who is the enemy of magic. It is believed this man is out to hurt Simon. Simon has been brought to Watford in an attempt to protect him from the Humdrum.

In Chapter 17, before Cath gets out of Reagan's car at the dorm, she asks her to pretend like that night never happened. Reagan agrees. Levi calls Cath twice and texts her once, but she doesn't respond. She tries to avoid Levi by spending a lot of time in the library. Once when she meets Levi in the dorm, he acts as if nothing happened.

Cath is having trouble writing her final project for her Fiction Writing class. When she meets with Nick, he wants to work on the story they've been writing together. She finds herself correcting his mistakes and reigning in the plot. He accuses her of crossing out everything. She's noticed that they write together well but once they are finished, the lights go out in his eyes and he rushes off. He even comments that it is strange that they work so well together since they are so different. When they leave the library that night, Cath asks Nick to walk her to her dorm. He is checking his phone and doesn't even look up as he tells her that he'd better not.

While studying in the library one day, Cath meets a girl who is a fan of Magicath's writing. She doesn't know that Cath is the author, only that she is another fan. Her encouragement causes Cath to keep writing about Simon. In her fiction writing class, her professor warns her and the other students that if they want to be in her advanced class, they need to be serious writers and ignore any distractions. Back in her dorm



room, Cath can no longer smell Levi on her sheets. She cries, wiping her nose on the pillow.

In part of a story written by Cath, Simon saves Agatha from being killed by Baz as he seeks out his next victim.

In Chapter 18, Nick tells Cath he plans to turn in the story they've been working on collectively as his final project for Fiction Writing Class. He asks if they can get together again to proof their stories. Cath agrees, but she doesn't intend to show up. Once she gets out of Nick's sight, she starts running and doesn't stop until she gets to her dorm.

In her dorm Cath tries to write, but all she wants to write is about Simon and Baz. She falls asleep and wakes up in the dark when the phone rings. It is Kelly from her father's work telling her that he had to take her father to the hospital. Cath calls Wren, but Wren tries to discourage her from going to the hospital. She can't get Reagan on the phone, but Levi answers and agrees to drive her to the hospital.

Analysis

Cath feels betrayed by both of the men to whom she has been attracted. First, Cath believes that her relationship with Levi is becoming more than just friendship. Reagan even encourages Cath to explore the relationship after getting over her initial shock of finding the two of them together. When Cath shows up at Levi's party, it is she and Reagan who get a shock when they find Levi kissing another girl. Cath asks Reagan to allow her to pretend like that night never happened.

Also, Cath realizes that Nick was using her only as an editor and writing assistant. Since Levi doesn't know that Cath has gone to the library to work with Nick, she knows that he won't come to walk her back. Cath takes the chance and asks Nick to walk her, but he refuses. At their next writing session, Nick tells Cath that he's planning on turning in the story they've been writing together as his own work. Cath feels angry, hurt, and used. The only encouragement she seems to get in this section of the book is from a fan of Magicath from the Internet. She and a girl in the library realize they both like the "Carry On" series though, the girl has no idea that Cath is the author.

Cath's world goes from bad to worse when her father's boss calls to tell her that he's back in the hospital. It seems that Cath's father suffers from some sort of mental disorder that results in mania causing him to lose track of time and not sleep or eat properly. Cath feels guilty because she hasn't been there to take better care of him. Wren refuses to go to the hospital with Cath, saying there is nothing they can do. Cath, however, gets in touch with Levi when she tries to call Reagan. He offers to take her to the hospital and even waits with her in the waiting room.



Discussion Question 1

What signs have you noticed in Cath's relationship with Nick that he was only interested in her assistance as a writer? Did you think he'd turn their story in as his own?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Reagan act the way she does when she catches Cath and Levi sleeping in the same bed together?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Wren reason that they don't need to go to their dad's hospital? Why does Cath believe they do? Which one is right?

Vocabulary

aberration, synonym, emphatically, insidious, pervasive, dubious, revamping, carrel, implore, nonchalantly, errant, frivolous, trolling, wheedling



Chapters 19-21

Summary

In Chapter 19, Levi drives Cath to the hospital. In the waiting room, she tells him that she saw him kissing the other girl. Believing that he thinks their kiss did not mean anything, Cath asks Levi to leave just as the orderly comes to show her to her father's room. When she's finished, he is gone.

At home, Cath sees the signs that would have let the twins know something was wrong with their father if they'd been there. At the hospital the next day, her father is lucid. He asks where Wren is and wonders if Cath should be at school, too. She stays with him until visiting hours are over. Cath remembers telling Wren during one of her father's earlier bad spells that she was afraid she would end up like him. Wren promised her at that time that would not happen that Wren would keep her from it.

In the Simon snippet, written by Leslie, Simon realizes the Humdrum is himself as a child.

In Chapter 20, Wren and Cath's father come home on the same day. Cath recognizes right away that he's stopped taking his medication. He tells her that he has to get back on the horse. Wren spends much of her time with friends during the break while Cath stays home and watches over her dad. One morning Wren comes in and asks Cath to make her an omelet. They talk about Christmas plans and Wren says she plans to spend Christmas Eve with their mother. She suggests Cath come along. She gets angry when Cath refuses and tells her sister they should be trying to reconnect with their mother together. Cath blames her brokenness and weirdness on her mother. Wren, however, doesn't believe that she has allowed her mother's actions to have the same affect on her as Cath and their father have. Cath tells Wren that their father acts as he does because he is sick, and that she'd rather be broken than wasted.

Wren watches the Simon Snow marathon on television with Cath and her father until her mother comes to pick her up. That night as Cath tries not to think of Wren and their mother as she is going to sleep, she finds herself thinking about Levi. On Christmas when the family opens gifts, Cath notices there is still a silver box left with her name on it. At first she thinks that it is from Levi. In the box, there is an emerald necklace inside, identical to the one her sister is wearing. She drops the box and runs upstairs. She thinks of the way that she and Wren used to talk about which parent they'd stay with if their parents got a divorce. Cath had wanted to stay with Wren more than anything but she remembered that they'd both thought their father loved them more than their mom did.

In the Simon Snow snippet the Humdrum asks Simon if he thought he could become as powerful as he is without leaving something behind.



In Chapter 21, Cath waits until it is almost time to go back to school before she announces to her father that she doesn't want to go back. Her dad tries to get her to think about staying until the end of the spring semester. Wren comes in the front door while they are still talking. Cath pulls away from her father and goes upstairs. Later, Wren tries to talk to Cath about her decision but Cath walks away to sleep on the couch. The next morning, Cath's father tells her that he doesn't want her to drop out of school because of him. Later, Reagan calls Cath asking if they want a couch for their dorm room. She tells Cath how bad she feels about what happened with Levi.

Analysis

It is in these chapters that Cath has perhaps reached her lowest point. When she finally tells Levi what has been bothering her, he acts like both the kiss he shared with her and with the other girl were no big deal to him. Cath is deeply hurt as the kiss did mean a lot to her. It has taken much courage for her to go to Levi's house with Reagan in the first place and to hear that she meant nothing to him is the ultimate form of hurt.

Cath is still afraid for her father and the condition in which he allowed himself to get while both girls were away. Because she is afraid that he will get sick again, she tells him that she plans to go to a college closer to home. He discourages her, telling her that he doesn't want it to be his fault that she gives up the opportunity and her scholarship. Wren also tries to talk to Cath about her decision, but Cath won't listen to her at all.

She and Wren are divided for the first time in their lives over their mother's desire to be a part of their lives. Wren believes the two should be trying to reconnect with their mother together. Cath uses Wren's argument, that they don't have to do everything together, against her. Cath blames her mother for her own strange personality quirks. Wren argues that Cath and her father are both allowing their mother's actions to affect them badly. They are letting her make them crazy. She tells Cath that she isn't broken the way Cath says she is broken. Cath seems to hit a sore spot when she tells Wren she'd rather be broken than wasted, perhaps identifying the reason that Wren has spent so much time getting drunk and high so that she doesn't have to think about their mother and how hurt she has been by her behavior.

The idea that Cath is letting her childhood rule her adulthood becomes an issue in this section as Simon faces the Humdrum, a creature who is trying to harm him. Simon realizes this creature is just a younger version of himself. The Humdrum represents what Simon has had to leave behind in order to become the person that he has become. In parallel, Cath is facing a point in her life where she can allow the demons of her childhood to destroy her, or she can choose to leave them behind and become a greater person.

Discussion Question 1

Why do Cath and Wren differ so violently on their opinions about their mother? What arguments do they offer to strengthen their side of the discussion?



Discussion Question 2

What parallels are there between what is happening in the Simon Snow snippets and what is happening in Cath's life?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Cath's father get so angry with her when she tells him that she doesn't want to go away to school the following semester?

Vocabulary

mutilate, desiccated, charismatic, melodrama, precedent, pathological



Chapters 22-24

Summary

In Chapter 22, Cath finds herself back in her dorm room with Reagan even though she'd never made a conscious decision to go back. Even though she dreads seeing Levi again, she dreads worse the idea of letting her father down.

In her Simon fanfiction, Cath writes about his roommate Baz, encouraging him to get up and go about his day even though he really doesn't want to do so.

In Chapter 23, Cath has gotten an incomplete in her fiction writing class. She had expected a "D" and was willing to take it for all the things she felt she'd done wrong during her first semester. Reagan suggests to her that she needs to talk to her professor about what is going on with her grade. Cath tries to explain to her professor that she doesn't feel as if she is cut out for fiction writing, but Professor Piper tells her that she believes that Cath is afraid of what she might find if she writes something unique to her. Cath agrees to think about the professor's offer to give her til the end of the semester to turn in her story.

Cath checks in on her father and finds he's doing well, even though his product has been renamed Zombeanie Weenies. He tells Cath not to worry, but Cath is worrying. She's worrying about seeing Levi again. She is surprised one day when she finds him sitting outside her dorm room. He tells her that what happened between them wasn't just a kiss. When he promises that he really likes her, she agrees to let him come into the room.

In the Simon Snow snippet, Simon struggles with his need to trust Basil as he must trust his enemy to save him from falling down a cliff.

In Chapter 24, even though Cath still hasn't forgiven Levi and doesn't trust him, she is able to tell him that she is rooting for him. Levi asks her to read more of her fanfiction to him. She finishes the story in which Simon realizes that Baz is a vampire. After she finishes, she tries to tell Levi that she believes they won't work out as she doesn't trust anyone. She also shares her opinion of herself as being crazy.

In the Simon Snow snippet, Simon prepares for his first date with Agatha in a story written by Leslie.

Analysis

Even though she never really intended to go back to college, Cath winds up back in her dorm room. It appears that her desire to keep from hurting her father is stronger than her fear that she will have to face Levi again. Cath does see Levi again. He apologizes to her for telling her that the kiss did not matter to him. Levi already recognizes some of



Cath's weaknesses as he has her read her fanfiction because he realizes that this relaxes her and helps her to open up. Cath is very negative about her prospects for their relationship, thinking that they do not have enough in common.

Also in this section, Cath is stunned by her professor's offer to let her have another semester to turn in her Fiction Writing final project. Cath had been prepared to take a bad grade in the class. She believed this would be her punishment for turning in a story in which her teacher had accused her of plagiarism and for her misplaced trust in Nick. Professor Piper recognizes that Cath had helped Nick on his final project. She mentions to Cath that his writing style had changed quite a bit since the last semester and she felt the change had something to do with help that Cath had given him. Cath argues to her professor that she is not cut out for fiction writing. She feels comfortable in Simon's world, but she does not feel comfortable in her own. Writing her own story would require her to have to face the world. Professor Piper seems to recognize this fear in her student and addresses it, though she doesn't push the issue too hard.

Discussion Question 1

Why is it significant that Professor Piper realizes that Cath helped Nick with his story?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Levi encourage Cath to read fanfiction to him?

Discussion Question 3

How do the Simon Snow snippets parallel with what is happening in Cath's life? Why are these parallelisms significant?

Vocabulary

symbiotic, proactive, catatonic, translucent, heft, grandiose, abashed



Chapters 25-27

Summary

In Chapter 25, when Cath wakes up the following morning, Reagan tells her they need to set some ground rules. First, she doesn't want to know when Cath has sex with Levi. Second, she does not want the two of them to make out in front of her. She also asks Cath not to be jealous of Reagan's friendship with Levi. Reagan does admit that she let Levi hang out in their room because she knew he liked Cath.

Reagan helps Cath get ready for her date. Levi is waiting when the two get back from dinner. Levi tells Cath he is going to show her the East Campus where his classes are scheduled. The two talk about their families. Levi seems very interested in learning about what it was like growing up with a twin. Cath learns that Levi grew up on a ranch. Levi is surprised that Cath didn't realize that he liked her. She tells him she thought he was still dating Reagan. After their first "date" Cath and Levi are together on almost a daily basis. As she gets to know Levi better, she realizes that the only thing that would make him more of a nerd would be if he preferred to live in an imaginary world instead of his own.

Although she wants to, Cath never allows herself to touch Levi first. They always meet in her dorm room. An inside joke between the two of them has them talking about what might happen if Levi got Cath to his room in the house in which he lives. Levi scares Cath because she knows he is experienced and that he got that experience from Reagan. One weekend, Cath tells Levi that she's planning on going home. He has to beg her to allow him to drive her home.

In the Simon Snow snippet, Simon lets his anger get the best of him and tries to attack Basil. Basil evokes a magic wall that Simon slams into before Simon can touch him. Basil asks Simon if he plans to attack the Humdrum in the same way.

In Chapter 26, Cath returns to Professor Piper's office to tell her that she won't take her offer allowing her to turn her story in late. Instead, she again gives in to the professor's personality. Cath says she has no idea what she will write her story about. The professor suggests to her that she write about something with which she is familiar.

When Levi comes to help Cath put her things in his truck, she gets irritated with him because he insists on carrying her laundry basket. Levi believes the act is chivalrous while Cath says it is undermining. Cath had not checked the weather and is surprised by how hard it is snowing when they get on the road. Both of them are stressed on the drive to Cath's house with Cath apologizing for asking Levi to drive her while Levi apologizes for not refusing to drive in the weather. It is during the drive that Cath finally admits that she was frustrated because of her indecision about whether or not she should write the fiction story. Levi encourages her to do so just because it is so great that her teacher has given her a second chance to get a good grade.



In a Magicath snippet, Baz and Simon talk about how much they like one another.

In Chapter 27, both Levi and Cath are relieved when they arrive at Cath's house. They go in to find Cath's dad drawing sketches in the living room. He is shocked when he sees how out of touch Cath's father is. Her father comes to himself when he sees how bad the weather is outside and backs up Cath when she tells him that he can't drive back to the campus.

Levi agrees to stay. Cath cooks supper. Her dad sends them upstairs to watch television as he has his things spread out all over the couch. Levi laughs at the twins' room, believing that it is cute. He tells her about his mother and her dislike of Reagan. Cath tells him about her mom leaving them. Levi talks about 4-H, a club of which Cath had never heard. At bedtime, Cath sets Levi up on the couch in the living room. She goes down once to make sure the door is locked. Levi wakes up and asks her what is wrong. The next morning he has to leave to go to work but promises to pick her up Sunday night.

In the Simon snippet from one of Leslie's novels, Simon continues to swear that he Humdrum was never any part of him.

Analysis

In these chapters, Cath continues to fight with herself over whether or not she should take Professor Piper's offer and write a non-fiction piece or if she should forget the whole thing. The whole issue seems to be much deeper than just a college assignment. Cath has already indicated that she feels an unusual need to do as Professor Piper asks her. She also somehow relates to the professor as a mother figure. Cath's inability to make a commitment to the assignment may indicate that Cath recognizes there is a story inside her, but that it is one she does not want to write.

Discussion Question 1

Talk about Cath and Levi's argument about the laundry basket. Is it chivalrous for a man to carry things for a woman as Levi says or is it an undermining of the woman's ability as Cath says that it is?

Discussion Question 2

Describe Cath's father from Levi's standpoint. What sort of first impression might Levi have gotten from him?



Discussion Question 3

How are Cath and Simon alike in their unwillingness to admit that certain things have defined who they are, even if they don't want to accept these experiences?

Vocabulary

siphoning, insinuate, estrangement, gaudy, incessant, undermining, chivalrous, pedestrian, peril, feigning, precedent, lamentable



Chapters 28-30

Summary

In Chapter 28, Cath is alone on a Friday night in her dorm room. She thinks that she has a whole weekend to work on fanfiction and her fiction writing assignment. She gets a call on her cell phone from Wren. She is so surprised that she doesn't answer on the first ring, but she does on the second ring. The voice on the other end isn't Wren's. It is her mom telling her that Wren has been dropped off at the hospital because she had too much to drink.

She finds her mother in the sixth floor waiting room but doesn't recognize her as the person she remembered from her childhood. When the doctor finally comes to tell them that Wren will be okay, Laura leaves. Cath is upset that her mother doesn't even want to stay to see Wren. Cath is surprised, but Laura indicates that Wren really wouldn't want to see her. Cath is angry that her mother is leaving her alone as well. The two argue for a minute before Laura leaves.

In an excerpt from a Leslie novel, Simon realizes that he will have to tell the Mage that he has seen the Humdrum and knows what it is that he is fighting.

In Chapter 29, when the nurse finally lets Cath into Wren's room, the two talk for a minute. Then, Cath lays her head down, realizing how tired she is. She hears Wren whimper and looks up to see that she is crying. Wren motions that she wants Cath to lie down in the bed next to her. Wren curls up next to her, and they fall asleep holding hands.

Their dad gets to the hospital hugging them and telling them that they are okay now. All three go back to their home in Omaha. Before they leave, the nurse asks Wren if she wants to talk to an addiction specialist. Wren refuses, and her dad looks unhappy. When they go into the waiting room, Cath hears her sister gasp. Her boyfriend, Jandro, is there, reaching to hug her. Levi is there also.

When Cath and her family get home, her father wants to talk about the incident with Wren that night, but Cath convinces him to wait. After Wren has a shower, Cath asks her about her boyfriend. Wren says that Alejandro had nothing to do with the bruise and that he hates when she gets drunk.

In a FanFixx snippet, Baz tells Simon that he can't be friends with Simon. Simon has too many friends, and the and Simon are already enemies.

In Chapter 30, when their father confronts Wren about her drinking, she tries to pretend she doesn't have a problem. Based on her response, he at first tells her that she has to come back home. Cath has never seen her father this mad at one of them. Wren asks Cath why she is not mad at her. Cath explains that she has been scared and doesn't want to drift that far away from her sister again. Wren cries telling Cath she can't believe



Cath has a boyfriend and she didn't even know about it. She asks Cath to forgive her for being so hateful to her. Cath refuses, telling Wren she doesn't have to forgive her.

Cath finally takes a moment to read Levi's texts to her. He tells her how much he cares for her. She calls him. Cath can't imagine leaving school at this point. She borrows her dad's computer and logs onto her FanFixx account leaving a general message for her readers and continuing her writing. Wren had been in the closet on the phone. She comes out and sleeps, then wakes up to read what Cath is writing. It is not until Wren asks a question about the story line that Cath realizes she is awake. It turns out that Wren has been reading Cath's work all along.

The following morning Wren's father tells her he will allow her to go back to school if she stops drinking completely, goes to see a counselor, and goes to AA meetings. He also insists that she come home every weekend. Cath kicks Wren under the table when Wren tries to argue. Knowing her other choice is to come home permanently, Wren agrees.

In Cath's FanFixx snippet, Baz realizes how much he unnerves Simon just by being in the same room with him.

Analysis

Things come to a head with Wren and her wild behavior when a friend drops her off at a hospital emergency room with alcohol poisoning. Although Wren has always tried to put forth the image that she is the family member with her life pulled together, it suddenly becomes obvious how badly she is falling apart. Instead of stressing out over going to the dining hall, Wren has drowned herself in alcohol to try to forget her problems and pain.

Although Art does not believe that he has been a good father, he puts his foot down, showing that he does know how and when to draw boundaries. He gives Wren an ultimatum. She can either come home period or she can agree to stop drinking, go to AA meetings, and come home on the weekends. Knowing that her dad is serious and that her sister is on her dad's side, Wren agrees to stop drinking.

This section of the novel is good for Cath because while she is scared by what happens to her sister, she realizes that her sister really hadn't drifted as far as she had thought. Even though Wren had made hateful comments about Cath's Simon writing, Wren had kept up with Carry On, Simon throughout the semester. Writing about Simon seems to be a thread that has connected the girls since they started their fascination with the fictional character. Wren's apparent and sudden lack of interest in Simon seems to be one of the things that hurt Cath the most.

Also in this section, Cath finally gets a chance to confront her mother. When Wren was dropped off at the emergency room, the workers there had looked in Wren's phone and contacted her mother. Not knowing anything about her daughter, Laura calls Cath. Cath is forced to wait with the woman who has become a stranger to her. When the doctor



comes out with the news that Wren will be okay, Laura collects her things to leaves. Cath is outraged that her mother is leaving her alone in the hospital with her sister so sick. Laura tries to excuse herself, saying that she has tried to have a relationship with Cath but Cath has refused. Cath tells the woman that she needs to try harder. Interesting is Laura's comment to Cath that she shouldn't be so sure that Wren will want to see her when she wakes up. This comment indicates that while Cath believed her sister and mother were having great success at patching up the relationship, they may not be as great as Cath believes.

Discussion Question 1

What do Cath and Wren learn about each other in this section of the novel?

Discussion Question 2

Evaluate Art's parenting skills. Is he a good parent? Should he have noticed Wren's problem earlier and done something?

Discussion Question 3

Consider Cath's relationship with Levi. How does it grow during this section of the novel?

Vocabulary

deft, bilious, aghast



Chapters 31-33

Summary

In Chapter 31, when they get back to college, Cath finally meets Alejandro formally. She notices that Wren looks at him as if she has been converted. Levi calls Cath when he gets back to campus. Reagan is already in the room, so he doesn't feel comfortable coming up. He begs Cath to come to his room with him. She finally agrees when he promises that they will take sex completely off the table until they talk about it some more. When Cath leaves the dorm, she knows that she won't be coming back until in the morning.

In his room, Cath is still nervous and scared. She is scared more of allowing herself to go further than she is ready, but doesn't let Levi know this. He finally asks her to read her fanfiction to him, knowing that it will loosen her up. Cath finishes the story about the hare. Levi asks her to keep reading because when she is reading, she lets him touch her. Cath suddenly realizes how messed up that it and puts down her phone. She wants to put her full attention on Levi without being distracted. She believes that he deserves that. She finally allows herself to kiss and touch Levi the way that she's wanted to all along. Levi tells her that he is falling in love with her.

In the FanFixx snippet, Penelope confronts Simon, asking if he has figured out yet that he has a crush on Baz.

In Chapter 32, even Levi notices how happy Cath is now that she and Wren are part of each others' lives again. She and Wren have even talked about their mom with Wren showing surprise that their mom even came to the hospital. She tells Cath that their mom doesn't want to be a parent and had even asked Wren to call her Laura instead of Mom.

Wren and Cath are working on the ending of "Carry On, Simon," together. Wren insists that Cath can't kill Baz but that seems to be the direction the story is headed. One day while they are working on the story together, Cath asks Wren if she is in love. Wren finally admits that she is but says that Cath is, too. Cath shares her fear with Wren that she will mess up on the first time she tries to sleep with Levi. Wren comforts her by telling her the first few times attendance is most important. As their tones grow more serious, Wren again asks Cath not to kill Baz. She argues that he deserves a happy ending.

In the FanFixx snippet, Baz tries to convince Simon to calm down and hush as he questions what they are doing.

In Chapter 33, Cath lies to Professor Piper, telling her that she has started working on her fiction assignment. Unable to admit that she doesn't want to write the story, Cath tells her she is writing about her mother.



Later, up in Levi's room, Levi admits to her that he got a bad grade on a test. She offers to help him study but he argues she already has enough to do. Cath unbuttons his shirt, admiring his chest for the first time. They make out until she gets a text message. After she answers, he has pulled his knees up, signaling his lap is unavailable. She raises her arms to allow him to remove her shirt.

In a snippet from one of Leslie's novels, Simon tries to comfort Agatha after an encounter with Baz in the forest. He tells her that Baz is a monster.

Analysis

Now that Cath is happier with being close to Wren again, she is able to concentrate more on her relationship with Levi. Levi has more than proven his reliability. First, he was willing to drive Cath to take care of her father when he was in the hospital. Then, he makes the trip back to Lincoln to see her when Wren is hospitalized. Cath realizes how attracted she is to Levi and is afraid that if she ever allows herself to open up to him that she will go further than she wants to go. It is when she realizes that it is only when she is distracted that Levi is able to be affectionate with her that she knows she can no longer allow herself to be distracted. Levi, always a gentleman, has promised Cath that he will not go further than she is comfortable.

Now that Cath has begun to overcome her fear of her own love for Levi, she has two more big projects that she has to complete. First, she needs to finish her personal goal of getting Carry On, Simon finished before Leslie completes her last book. Second, she needs to come to some decision about her Fiction Writing assignment. Though she continues to want to forget all about the project and just take a bad grade in the class, she can't bring herself to tell her professor. In fact, during her last checkup session, Cath told Professor Piper she was writing her story about her mother.

Discussion Question 1

How do Cath and Wren differ on their opinions of the way that Baz and Simon's story should end?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Cath seem to have so much trouble with her Fiction Writing project? What is hampering her?

Discussion Question 3

Up to this point, how have Cath and Wren handled their struggles and problems differently? How are they working together now?

Vocabulary

incessantly, abstinence, affronted, reciprocate, predilection, labyrinth, fetish, adamant, liable, abort, repugnant, aerie, conceded



Chapters 34-36

Summary

In Chapter 34, Wren and Cath are headed to Cath's dorm room, arguing about a detail in a Simon story when Cath sees Nick standing outside her door. She is angry with him and chooses not to go any closer. Reagan has opened the door asking if Nick belongs to Cath. She had told him to wait outside. Reagan nor Wren know what happened between Nick and Cath, they only know she won't talk about him any longer. He tells her the story they wrote together, which he calls "his" story, has been chosen for publication in the college's literary journal. However, Professor Piper knows that Cath contributed to the story. She won't let it go in the journal unless Cath's name appears on it as well. Levi comes up, putting his arm around Cath and introducing himself to Nick. Nick goes on to tell Cath what an honor having his story in the journal would be. Cath tells him to take it, she doesn't want any credit. Nick clenches his teeth angrily, saying that he's already lost his teaching assistant's position because of her. At this point, Wren pushes Cath past her into the room and Levi follows, closing the door behind them. Once they are in the room, Cath realizes that the story really doesn't matter to her any longer.

Later, Levi asks Cath why Wren doesn't like him. He has noticed that the two only hang out when he is not around. He believes he embarrasses Cath because he is not as smart as Wren's boyfriend. Cath says she'd never even known about Alejandro's scholarship. She tells Levi that he is magic. He presses and Cath finally tells him that what he's noticing has nothing to do with him. She is afraid that once Levi gets to know Wren he might prefer her over Cath as others have done in the past. Levi argues that he can tell the difference between the two. He tries to convince Cath that he already likes her better than Wren, that she isn't as hardened. He even likes that Cath doesn't smile at everyone because it makes it more special when she smiles at him. Levi tells her that he chooses her over everyone at which point she tells him that she loves him.

In the Leslie snippet, Simon bemoans not being able to use his magic to fly. Penelope tells him that he only needs a friend, then says that charm that makes him fly.

In Chapter 35, Reagan suggests to Cath that they need to turn in their housing forms if they want to be sure to get the same room together. Meanwhile, Cath has been trying to write a chapter a night to finish up her Simon Snow story. In the middle of a Simon discussion, Wren asks Cath if they could room together the next year. Cath tells her she's already signed up to room with Reagan again but she encourages Wren to sign up for a room on their floor.

In this Simon snippet, Penelope stops Simon from trying his way to get through a flaming gate. She tells him there is more than one way to do it.



In Chapter 36, Levi asks Cath if she's shown any of her writing to her professor. Cath tells him that she isn't writing it. Levi gets angry, not understanding how Cath can think her Simon story is more important than an assignment, a second chance to make a good grade on an assignment. Levi leaves, telling Cath he'll see her in nine days. Cath cries. When she finally goes for a drink of water, Levi is sitting in the hallway. He agrees that she has to finish her writing. He asks only that she allow him to be with her.

In the Magicath snippet, Simon decides it is no longer feasible to keep trying to fight the Humdrum.

Analysis

It is in this section of the novel that Cath finally gets the opportunity to hold Nick responsible for what he did to her. She had believed that he enjoyed writing with her and their work was being done only on a "for fun" basis. Instead, Nick had announced to her at the last minute that he intended to turn the work they'd done together in as his final project. Cath does nothing to retaliate, but the professor recognizes Cath's hand in the stories. After the professor realizes what has happened, she has Nick removed from his position as her teaching assistant. Later, Nick's story is chosen to be published in the school's literary journal. Because the professor knows Nick didn't write the story alone, she requires Cath's name be put on the story as well. Because Nick has once tried to pass the story off as his own, Cath refuses to go along with Nick now. She tells him that she doesn't want any credit for her part in the work, a decision that keeps his story out of the journal.

Levi and Cath have their first major disagreement in Chapter 36. Cath is focused on finishing "Carry On, Simon," a project that she's been working on for years, before the final Leslie novel is released. By not completing her book by the designated time Cath will disappoint herself, as well as the thousands of people who have followed her version of Simon and Baz through the years. Levi, however, does not completely understand Cath's dedication to her novel. He feels she is throwing away an opportunity to have a second chance at getting a good grade in a class, a chance that he has never been given but would love to have. Cath realizes that by not completing the Fiction Writing assignment, she will be allowing it to control her feelings and her relationship with Levi. In the Simon Snow snippet following this section of "Fangirl" Simon realizes that he's only working against himself when he continues to fight the Humdrum, an enemy which is a part of himself as a child that Simon believes that he has left behind. The choice of this snippet may indicate that Cath realizes that she has to face, and write about her mother and the pain it caused the family when she left as her final assignment. If she continues to fight the influence this part of her life had on her, it will only cause more problems the older she gets.

Also, in this section the tables turn on Wren when she decides that rooming with her sister isn't such a bad idea. When Wren asks Cath if they can room together the coming year, Cath has to tell her that she and Reagan have already made plans to be roommates again. This is an interesting reversal of roles as it was Wren who wanted a



room and an identity separate from her sister. Now she has realized that her sister isn't as bad as she once thought but Cath has since moved on. Cath is very diplomatic in suggesting that Wren try to get a room on the same floor as she and Reagan, indicating she still wants to be around her sister, but has loyalty to her new friend as well.

Discussion Question 1

In what way does Cath get the upper hand in her relationship with Nick? Do you think she makes the right decision by refusing to go along with his request? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Do you agree with Levi? Do you think that Cath should give her fiction writing assignment a higher priority than completing "Carry On, Simon"?

Discussion Question 3

Although it was Wren who wanted to be an individual in college, it is Cath who has actually developed strong relationships without the help of her sister. What does this say about Cath? What does it say about Wren?

Vocabulary

monetize, prestigious, peripheral, arbitrary, noncompliant, snog



Chapters 37-38

Summary

In Chapter 37, Luke wakes Cath up, telling her that he has to go to work. She asks him to let him stay in his room until her gets back. She opens her laptop and starts working on her fiction story. She writes painful words and cries until Levi returns, then closes her laptop.

Cath, Levi, Wren and Reagan attend a party at a bookstore when the final Simon books are distributed. Reagan makes fun of Cath and Wren because they are crying.

In the snippet from the book, Simon realizes that he created the Humdrum with his need for magic. He tells his younger version that he is no longer hungry.

In Chapter 38, Levi is in Cath's room, taking up too much space on her bed. He asks her to read him the story she wrote for her fiction writing class. She refuses, deciding instead to finish reading the final Simon Snow novel.

Leslie's novel ends unexpectedly with Baz offering Simon the hand of friendship and Simon accepting. He says he'd never really disliked Simon because if he had, Simon would have been dead.

The "Fangirl" novel ends with a snippet from Cath's Fiction Writing story. She closes with a story in which she has been playing hide and seek with her sister. She's been hiding for so long she wonders if her sister is even looking for her any longer. When she does decide to come out of hiding, it is the world she warns to be ready because she is coming.

Analysis

With the end of the book, Cath has completed her novel "Carry On, Simon" a project and world that she has immersed herself in since her mother left her family ten years ago. The ending of the Leslie series of Simon books seems to indicate an end of the juvenile, childish portion of Cath's life. The action of this series of novels is wrapped up with Simon and Baz, who have been mortal enemies through the course of the series, making peace with one another. Simon learns that Baz has never really disliked him, because if he did, he would have destroyed him by this point. Similarly, Cath finally allows herself to write about the day that her mother decided to leave the family for her final assignment in Fiction Writing. It is as if Cath makes peace with this part of her life and makes a decision to move on, just as Simon was forced to stop fighting the Humdrum in order to keep it from over taking him. To further her unintended revenge on Nick for attempting to steal her work, Cath's story is chosen for the underclassman prize in the college literary journal, the spot that Nick's work would have gotten had Cath agreed to allow her name to be put on the work.



Discussion Question 1

How does Cath come to terms with her past?

Discussion Question 2

What do the endings of the novel “Fangirl,” the Simon Snow series and Cath’s fiction writing assignment have in common?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Cath choose to read the conclusion of the Simon Snow book to Nick instead of reading her assignment for Fiction Writing to him? What does this signify?

Vocabulary

similes, melodramatic, stoke, despoil, ineffectual, tyrant, animosity, breach



Characters

Cather Cath Avery

Cath Avery is the main character of the novel. She is the twin sister of Wren and the daughter of Art and Laura. Cath is beginning her first year of college. She is highly intelligent but is insecure to the point that she hides from new experiences and can't even bring herself to go to the dining hall alone. Cath's first disappointment of her college career comes when her twin sister decides she'd rather not room with Cath. Along with leaving home for the first time, Cath is forced to try to muddle through new surroundings without his sister who has been her best friend up to this point.

Though she doesn't like to think about it, Cath is still suffering from trauma caused when her mother abandoned the family when Cath and Wren were still young girls. A series of children's books, the Simon Snow series, was released the same year that Cath's mother left. It seems that Cath has immersed herself in Simon's world as a way to cope with the pain she feels.

In her first semester of college, Cath's high school boyfriend breaks up with, upsetting her only because it signals the breaking with her high school years. Cath has begun to notice boys during her first semester of college and develops interest in two in particular. One is a boy in her fiction writing class who tells Cath he wants to write with her outside of class for fun. Near the end of the semester, however, Nick announces to Cath that he wants to use the story they wrote as his own final assignment for their class. Cath gets unintended revenge when her college professor recognizes Cath's writing style in the story and removes Nick from his position as a teaching assistant. When Nick's story is later selected to be included in the school's literary journal the professor will not allow it to be included unless Cath's name appears on the story as well. Cath refuses to allow her name to be put on the story, keeping Nick out of the journal.

Levi is another student that Cath discovers that she is attracted to. Cath realizes that she wants to have a physical relationship with Levi but is afraid that if she gives in to her desires she will go further than she is comfortable. Levi is a gentleman, however, and allows Cath to move as slowly as she feels comfortable.

Cath grows through her first semester of college, first being called upon to care for her father when he is hospitalized as a result of the mania from which he suffers. She skips the last days of her fall semester to be with him in the hospital because she believes that is what family does for one another. Cath again leaves school when her sister is hospitalized for alcohol poisoning. Although Wren expects Cath to be angry with her, Cath tells her sister she is tired of being mad at her, she just wants her sister back.

At the conclusion of the novel, Cath finally comes to terms with the trauma of her childhood when she writes about the experience as her final writing assignment for her



fiction writing class. Cath struggles with the project during her fall semester and hopes just to take a bad grade in the class when she misses the end of the semester. Her professor, however, gives her a second chance to complete the assignment but she still puts off writing the story until the last minute. Although her story is difficult for her to write, she wins the underclassman award in the college literary journal for her piece.

Levi

Levi greets Cath in her dorm room on her first day of college. He is the friend, and former boyfriend, of Reagan, her roommate. Levi spends much time in Cath and Reagan's room, in fact, he offers to walk Cath back and forth to the library during her late night writing sessions with Nick. He asks once if Nick has ever offered to walk her to her dorm, insinuating to Cath that Nick is no gentleman. One day Levi comes to the dorm room angry because Reagan is not there. She was supposed to help Levi study for a literature class they are taking together. Levi admits to Cath that he has a disability, which appears to be some form of dyslexia, that keeps him from being able to read and comprehend what he is reading. Cath at first makes fun of him, seeming to believe that he's just lazy but when she realizes how serious he is, she spends the whole night reading the book "The Outsiders" to him so that he can pass his test.

Levi invites Cath to a party but then engages in kissing another girl because Cath had not told him she was coming. Intending to surprise him, Cath walks in on him in the middle of the kiss. When Cath later confronts Levi about the kiss, he says that neither his kiss with the girl nor his kiss with Cath meant anything. Cath asks him to leave. Later, Levi apologizes for telling Cath their kiss meant nothing. He works on repairing the damage caused in the relationship. He is patient with Cath and lets her take her time in becoming physically affectionate with him.

Wren Avery

Wren Avery is Cath's twin sister. She was born first and was born larger than Cath, which Cath believes is a trend that has carried on through the girls' lives. Wren is more sociable and more outgoing than Cath. At the beginning of their college careers, Wren decides to live with another girl instead of her twin sister, claiming that she wants to be an individual instead of part of a matched set. Instead of doing well in school, Wren gets in with a crowd of people who like to drink and party. At first Wren seems to enjoy the party scene. She ignores her sister. When she does talk to Cath, she is rude and hateful. Although their mother abandoned them as small children, Wren has accepted her offer to try to get to know one another. During their spring semester, however, Wren is dropped off at a hospital emergency room suffering with alcohol poisoning. Intending to wake her up, her father requires that she come home every weekend and attend AA meetings. It is at this point that Wren begins to rebuild her relationship with her sister again. Though Cath never asks why, Wren seems irritated at her roommate, Courtney, and doesn't like to be around her anymore. Wren also admits to Cath that their mother still doesn't want to be a parent and insists on Wren calling her Laura instead of mom.



Things have come full circle by the end of the novel with Wren asking Cath if they can be roommates during the following semester.

Art Avery

Art Avery is Cather and Wren's father. He raises the twins by himself after their mother abandons them. Because he is so devastated when his wife leaves, Art doesn't tell the girls' teachers or even his own mother about what has happened until several months later. He has a tendency to become manic, a condition for which he has been hospitalized twice before the girls go to college, then again once during their fall semester. In these manic periods, Art tends to stop sleeping and eating properly as he concentrates on his work. Through the years Cath has learned the symptoms of her father's disorder and knows when he needs to back away from work, sleep or eat.

Cath indicates that her father has never been much of a disciplinarian. He had typically trusted the girls to do as they were supposed to and did not involve himself too much in their activities. When Wren is hospitalized with alcohol poisoning, however, her father puts his foot down demanding that she stop drinking. He had at first told Wren he was going to make her come home from college but decided instead to make her come home every weekend and promise to go to AA meetings.

Laura

Laura is Art Avery's ex-wife and Wren's and Cather's mother. Laura abandons the family when the twins are only eight years old. She says that she has to get away for a while to figure out who she is. Laura never comes back, instead divorcing Cather's and Wren's father and marrying another man. When Cather and Wren begin college, Laura contacts Art, wanting to get back in touch with the girls. Wren agrees to spend time with her mother but Cath refuses to see her. Laura does go to the emergency room when Wren is admitted for alcohol poisoning but leaves as soon as she learns that Wren will be all right. Cath confronts her mother when she says she is leaving the hospital because she is angry that Laura is leaving her alone. Later, Wren admits to Cath that their mother didn't want to be a parent or deal with any of the heavy stuff that went along with being a parent. Wren was surprised that Laura showed up at the hospital at all.

Nick Manter

Nick Manter is a boy from Cath's writing class who uses Cath's talent to benefit himself. When they first write together on a project requiring partners, Nick and Cath get an "A" on their story. They spend the rest of the semester writing a story that Nick says is just for fun but turns out that Nick was intending to turn the story in as his final writing project. He gives Cath no credit for her part in the story. The teacher, however, recognizes the story is not Nick's unique work and fires him from his teaching assistant's position after Cath confirms her suspicions that Cath helped Nick on the story. When Nick's story is selected for the college's literary journal, the professor tells him that she will not allow it



to be included unless Cath's name is on it as well. He is angry with Cath refuses to allow him to put her name on the story, keeping it from being put in the journal.

Alejandro

Alejandro is Wren's boyfriend. Cath knows from the look on her sister's face when she talks about him that she is in love with him. When Cath and Levi go to check on Wren at Muggsy's after she texts Cath a 911, Alejandro hits one of the drunk males who is leering and talking dirty about Cath and Wren because they are hot twins. Alejandro later surfaces when Wren is dropped at the hospital suffering with alcohol poisoning. He is waiting in the waiting room when she is dismissed. Wren tells Cath that Alejandro had nothing to do with her hospitalization and, in fact, hates it when she gets drunk. Alejandro is a Mexican from Scottsville. He is a member of an agriculture fraternity and is attending college on a Regents scholarship.

Reagan

Reagan is Cather's roommate at college. Reagan is an upperclassman. Her scholarship requires that she live in the dorms. She had thought that she would have a private room but had to have a roommate because of overcrowding. Reagan tells Cath that she does not like her but decides to be her friend because she feels sorry for her. Reagan gets briefly freaked out when she first finds Cath and Levi together. After she realizes that they are dating, Reagan encourages and supports Cath in the relationship. Reagan and Levi had been sweethearts in high school but had broken up in college. When Reagan realized that Levi had a crush on Cath, she encouraged him to spend time in their room.

Professor Piper

Professor Piper is the teacher for Cath's Fiction Writing Class. When Cath turns in one of her fanfiction stories for the class, the professor tells Cath that she has committed the offense of plagiarism. Instead of reporting Cath for cheating, the professor warns Cath not to turn anymore fanfiction in as her assignments. After Cath misses the last part of the professor's writing class because her father is in the hospital, the professor gives Cath another opportunity to turn in her final project.

Kelly

Kelly is the creative director for Cath's dad. Kelly is the reason why Art still has a job. It is Kelly who takes Art to the hospital when he starts showing signs of being in a manic state. Kelly also calls Cath to let her know that her father is sick again.



Courtney

Courtney is Wren's roommate in college. It is with Courtney that Wren goes out drinking and partying. When Wren returns to college after she is hospitalized for alcohol poisoning, Courtney seems to irritate her.

Abel

Abel is Cath's boyfriend from high school. Wren describes him as more of an end table than a boyfriend. Abel breaks up with Cath halfway through their fall semester of college, saying they never had a real relationship.



Symbols and Symbolism

Cath's Simon and Baz Posters

Cath has several Simon and Baz posters that have been drawn specifically for her. She feels self-conscious about displaying all these posters at school so she only chooses a few.

Carry On, Simon

Carry On, Simon is the name of the fanfiction novel that Cath is writing based on Gamma Leslie's series of novels. Cath hopes to finish her e-novel before Leslie publishes her final installment.

Gravioli

Gravioli is a combination of ravioli and gravy for which Cath and Wren's father is working on an advertising campaign. He does get the project but is offended with what the company wants to do with the ads.

Emergency Kanye Party

When the twins were still living together, they would throw impromptu emergency Kanye parties whenever they were stressed or upset about something. Cath is having a private emergency Kanye party when Levi walks in on her and joins in even though he doesn't know what she's doing.

World of Mages

The World of Mages is the fantasy world in which Gamma T. Leslie's novels are set. Cathy believes that she is a nerd because she would rather live in this fantasy world instead of the real world.

Watford School of Magicks

The Watford School of Magicks is the school that Simon and Baz attend in the World of Mages.

Antique Couch

Levi tries to entice Cath to his room with the promise of showing off his antique couch.



Nick's Story

Nick Manter, a boy whom Cath had thought liked her, turns out to be using her to write a good story for a Fiction Writing class. He turns in the story as his own work but the professor recognizes Cath's style. The story is later selected for the Prairie Schooner but the professor won't allow it to be included in the journal unless Cath's name appears on it as well.

Prairie Schooner

The Prairie Schooner is the university's literary journal. Cath's story about her mother wins the underclassman prize in this journal.



Settings

Pound Hall, 913

Pound Hall, 913 is Cath's and Reagan's dorm room.

Love Library

Love Library is where Cath meets Nick while he is working so they can write together.

Andrews Hall

Andrews Hall is the building in which Cath and Nick's fiction writing class meets.

Muggsy's

Muggsy's is the bar to which Levi takes Cath after she gets the 911 call from Wren that was meant for Courtney.

St. Richard's Hospital

St. Richard's Hospital is the hospital to which Kelly takes Cath and Wren's dad when he has a breakdown.

Levi's Room

Levi lives on the top floor of a Victorian house off campus. It is an ultimate show of trust for Cath to go to Levi's room as she knows there will be no one to walk in and interrupt them. In it in Levi's room that Cath writes her story about her mother.

St. Elizabeth's Hospital

St. Elizabeth's Hospital is the hospital at which Wren is dropped off when she is suffering with alcohol poisoning.



Themes and Motifs

Family Dysfunction

Cath is a young woman who has come from a highly dysfunctional family. Her mother never wanted to be a mother. She had gotten pregnant accidentally, however, and married Cath and Wren's father because of the pregnancy. Cath remembers her mother was already starting to show in her wedding pictures. Laura's disinterest in her babies is shown most openly in the girls' names. She had thought she would have one daughter whom she intended to name Catherine. When she learned that she was having twins, Laura did not even put forth the effort to come up with a second name, instead dividing the one name into two, Cather and Wren.

The family dysfunction became most obvious to Cather when her mother left in 2001. She remembers her father falling apart and not even telling his own mother that Laura was gone until the following summer. The girls, who would have been about eight years old at the time, learned to cook so that they would have something other than fast food meals to eat. Wren began stealing things. Cath reverted to wetting her pants. Since their mother's decision to leave came at the same time as the 2001 terrorist attacks, the girls' teachers believed they were afraid of the terrorists. It was not until several months later that they were even told about what was really happening so that the correct issues could be addressed.

As adults, Cath is introverted and insecure while Wren desperately wants to be someone else. Their father had manic phases where he doesn't eat and doesn't sleep, dedicating himself instead to his work. This mania finally lands him in the hospital during Cath and Wren's freshman year of college. Cath blames herself for not keeping a closer eye on her father. Wren dedicates herself to partying and drinking, leaving her suffering with alcohol poisoning. Wren is dropped off at a hospital by a "friend" who doesn't even stay to see if she's okay. Both Art's mania and Wren's drinking are methods of escape from the pain they are feeling, just as Cath's writing is an escape for him. Art realizes, however, that he needs to take care of himself so that he can guide his girls through their lives. He encourages Cath to return to class when she almost decides not to go back after fall semester. He also demands that Wren stop drinking as she is destroying her life.

Trust

Trust is a major issue with which Cath struggles at the beginning of her freshman year of college. After being abandoned by her mother, she has trouble trusting anyone. Reagan's friend, Levi, however, works hard to earn her trust even as another boy whom she has met takes advantage of her.



Cath has realized in college how attractive the males there are to her as they have become young men instead of children. There are two in particular who have caught her attention. The first is Nick, a boy in her fiction writing class. Nick chooses her as his writing partner for a project. The two make an “A” on their first writing assignment together. Cath believes Nick may like her but soon realizes he only likes writing with her. After they leave the library after each late night writing session, he does not offer to walk her back to her dorm, even refuses when she asks one night for him to do so. Nick completely destroys Cath’s trust when he tells her that he is turning in the story they wrote together as his own end of the semester project for their class. Cath feels cheated and angry.

Levi, Reagan’s boyfriend from high school, is another boy to whom Cath is attracted at college. Levi does a much better job of earning Cath’s trust than Nick. Because she was abandoned by her mother, Cath has attachment issues and lives with a fear that those who claim to love her will only hurt her and leave her in the end. Not only does Levi not do either of these things, he encourages Cath to talk to him about her insecurities so they can be addressed openly. Levi is a boyfriend who is open and loving but also willing to allow Cath to proceed at her own speed. Since he does not push her, Cath is able to see how open and trustworthy Levi has made himself. She wants to repay him for the ways that he has proved himself to her by being as open and loving as he is.

Writing as an Escape

For much of her life, Cath has used writing as a way to escape from her world and the problems there. She chooses to write fanfiction, a genre where a writer manipulates the world and characters already created by another author. In Cath’s case, she uses the work of Gamma T. Leslie, the author of a series of young adult novels written about a young magician. According to information in the novel, the first Simon Snow novel would have been published in 2001, the same year that Cath’s mother left Cath and the family. Since that time, Cath has used fanfiction as a way to escape from the pain of her own world into another world where she feels as if she is in charge. With Simon, the main character of the novel being an orphan, Cath may even feel a certain connection with him on that level. In her Fiction Writing class in college, Cath admits to herself, though she doesn’t answer out loud, that her fanfiction is a way for her to disappear from the world.

In contrast to this disappearing and hiding, it is when Cath finally works up the courage to write about the day her mother abandoned her that she comes out of hiding. It seems that as Cath has struggled with whether or not she should write her final project for her Fiction Writing class that this story has been inside her. One indication that Cath knows it is the story of her mother leaving her that she needs to write is that when her teacher pushes her for a topic, Cath tells her she is writing about her mother even though she has really put no effort into coming up with an idea prior to this spur of the moment comment. In writing this story, Cath doesn’t escape from her pain, but she does somehow come to terms with it as she is able to put it into words. The ending of the novel, with a snippet of Leslie’s novel describing Simon coming to peace with Baz



placed just before the conclusion of Cath's story indicates that Cath has been able to make peace with her past, just as Baz has made peace with Simon.

Coming of Age

Coming of age is a major theme in this novel. Up to this point, Cath has always had the safety of her family and her relationship with her twin sister, Wren, to provide her with the grounding that she has needed to feel safe in life. Wren has been more outgoing and has been the one to lead for Cath, a stronger personality that she is lost without now that the two are in college. Not only is Cath in an unfamiliar world, her twin has declared her independence, wanting to be an individual. Cath is left alone to try to find her own place in her new world.

Though she seems hateful at first, Cath's upperclassman roommate, Reagan, soon takes Cath under her wing and shows her the ropes of college life. Reagan hates living in the dorms and had wanted a room of her own but because of overcrowding and scholarship requirements, is paired with Cath. Though their relationship is unusual, the two become friends.

The course of the year brings scares to Cath including her father being hospitalized when he enters a manic state and then her sister being hospitalized for alcohol poisoning. Both times Cath steps into these situations as the adult, showing up and taking care of her family members. Her new boyfriend, Levi, shows his dedication to Cath and wins her trust by supporting her through her family problems. Cath matures as she learns to show her love to Levi without going further than she wants to in the relationship but still acknowledging the desire she finds growing inside herself.

Perhaps most difficult for Cath during this time is her mother's choice to try to get to know the twin daughters she abandoned nearly ten years prior. When Cath learns that her mother is trying to get back in touch with her, she is immediately angry that she could even think that Cath would want to get to know her. Even more infuriating to Cath is Wren's decision to spend time with their mother even though it takes away from the time she spends with Cath and her father, the people who were with her for all the difficult years after their mother left. Cath is finally able to come to terms with her mother's abandonment in a way when she writes about her experience in a project for their writing class. Cath puts off the project and at several points decides that she can't go through with it because she knows writing the story will be painful. When she finally does write the story, just a few days before it is due, Cath wins the freshman writing award for her work.



Styles

Point of View

This novel is written from the third person point of view of a narrator who is uninvolved in the story. Although the narration is from the third person, the narrator follows Cath through her first year of college. The focus on Cath is important in the story as it is one of her coming of age. A focus on multiple characters would have weakened Cath's story while a first person point of view might not have picked up on all of the nuances that indicate that Cath is growing and maturing.

Cath's story is told mostly through exposition as the narrator describes what is happening around Cath and the way Cath is reacting to what is happening. There is scattered dialogue as Cath talks to other characters like Reagan, Levi, Wren and her father. The story covers the period of time from August until May of the following year, two semesters of college.

Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is not difficult or overly complex. The ideas flow smoothly as Cath makes her way through her fall and spring semester of her freshman year in college. The novel really doesn't make use of any specialized language except in the cases of the Baz and Simon excerpts where some references are made to vampires and fictitious places in the World of Mages.

Structure

The novel "Fangirl" covers the space in time of one fall and spring semester of college for Cath. The book is divided into one slightly longer part that is dedicated to the fall semester in 2011, while the second part is dedicated to the things that happen during the spring semester of 2012. The fall semester part of the novel is 21 chapters long, while the spring semester part is 17 chapters long.

The novel has a foreword describing the Simon Snow series of books. The first book would have been released when Cath and Wren were eight, just after their mother left. After each chapter of the novel, there is a snippet either from one of the Leslie novels or from fanfiction written by Cath by herself or Cath and Wren. These snippets generally are related in some way to what happened in that prior chapter. Either Cath is using Simon's world to try to understand what is happening to her or Leslie is writing about a Simon experience similar to one experienced by Cath.

The plot of the novel is fairly simple with the focus being on Cath maturing through her first year of college. She faces many different difficulties during this year of college through which she must persevere. The major hurdle that Cath must overcome is her



troubled relationship with her mother. Cath's mother left the family when the girls were eight, leaving them trying to pick up the pieces. Cath blames her insecurities and oddities on her mother's behavior. At the conclusion of the novel, Cath comes to terms with her mother abandoning her through her writing.



Quotes

Walking to class, Cath couldn't shake the feeling that she was pretending to be a college student in a coming-of-age movie.

-- Narrator (Chapter 2 paragraph 14)

Importance: Even though Cath isn't in the coming-of-age movie she imagines she is in, she is in a coming-of-age book. Her story is very much one of coming-of-age and facing one's demons.

And Wren didn't take up nearly as much space as Reagan did. Figurative space. Head space.

-- Narrator (Chapter 3 paragraph 5)

Importance: Cath refers to the feeling that there is so much of Reagan and her personality that Cath doesn't even have room to think when she is in the room. Cath had never gotten this feeling with her sister, Wren, in the room with her.

It's not just that.... I don't like new places. New situations. There'll be all those people, and I won't know where to sit — I don't want to go.

-- Cath (Chapter 4 paragraph 84)

Importance: When Reagan asks Cath why she hasn't gone to the dining hall even though she been in college for several weeks, Cath tries to explain all of her insecurities about new situations and new people.

That I really thought we could go on like we were. And I'm sad because it feels like now high school is finally over. Like Abel was this piece of a really happy time that I thought I could take with me.

-- Cath (Chapter 7 paragraph 72)

Importance: Cath mourns for the loss of Abel as her boyfriend. She had not necessarily loved him, but he was a tie to high school.

It's not like she'd come here to observe Levi in the wild. She didn't know what she was doing here.

-- Narrator (Chapter 9 paragraph 7)

Importance: Cath is surprised to find that she has gone into the Starbucks store where Levi works. She finds herself studying him even though she isn't sure why.

A little manic was okay. A little manic paid the bills and got him up in the morning, made him magic when he needed it most.

-- Narrator (Chapter 9 paragraph 78)



Importance: Cath realizes that her dad is unusually energetic. She also knows that it is this energy that makes him productive. It is dangerous only when he gets too manic.

This was why Cath wrote fic. For these hours when their world supplanted the real world. When she could just ride their feelings for each other like a wave, like something falling downhill.

-- Narrator (Chapter 9 paragraph 88)

Importance: Cath decides that she writes fiction because she is able to use her writing as a way to escape from the real world into characters with whom she is familiar.

Cath wasn't sure how she was going to keep everything straight in her head. The final project, the weekly writing assignments — on top of all her other classwork, for every other class. All the reading, all the writing. The essays, the justifications, the reports. Plus Tuesdays and sometimes Thursdays writing with Nick. Plus Carry On. Plus e-mail and notes and comments ...

-- Narrator (Chapter 10 paragraph 2)

Importance: At the conclusion of her first semester of college, Cath is getting a little overwhelmed with the number of assignments that she's been given in addition to keeping up with her writing duties as Magicath.

This is college — what we do here is real. I've allowed you into an upper-level course, and so far, you've greatly impressed me. But this was an immature mistake, and the right thing for you to do now is to learn from it.

-- Professor Piper (Chapter 11 paragraph 27)

Importance: After Professor Piper accuses Cath of plagiarism when Cath turns in one of her fanfiction pieces as original work, she tries to make Cath understand the gravity of her mistake. She also encourages Cath to move forward from her mistake.

The whole point of fanfiction,' she said, 'is that you get to play inside somebody else's universe. Rewrite the rules. Or bend them. The story doesn't have to end when Gemma Leslie gets tired of it.

-- Cath (Chapter 11 paragraph 190)

Importance: Although Professor Piper is not interested in her explanation, Cath tries to make her teacher understand her viewpoint on the plagiarism issue.

(Cath still found this incredibly embarrassing; it was like their mom was so self-centered, she couldn't be trusted not to desecrate a national tragedy with her own issues.)

-- Narrator (Chapter 13 paragraph 17)

Importance: Cath believes it was because her mother was so selfish that she chose September 11, the day that most people were distracted with the national terror tragedy, to leave her family.



How do you not like the Internet? That's like saying, 'I don't like things that are convenient. And easy. I don't like having access to all of mankind's recorded discoveries at my fingertips. I don't like light. And knowledge.

-- Cath (Chapter 13 paragraph 73)

Importance: Cath is surprised at Levi's comment that he does not like the Internet and uses this argument to try to explain to him why the Internet is a good thing.

There are other people on the Internet. It's awesome. You get all the benefits of 'other people' without the body odor and the eye contact.

-- Cath (Chapter 13 paragraph 77)

Importance: Cath tries to explain to Levi, who likes face-to-face contact with people, why she prefers contact with others through the Internet.

We did get it. Sometimes getting it is infinitely worse than not getting it.

-- Art (Chapter 14 paragraph 15)

Importance: Cath's father defines the agony of winning a contract. Now that he has won the contract, he has to deal with his customer's ideas on how to promote the product, ideas that he often believes are idiotic.

But when he found that idea, it almost always got killed. Either the client rejected it, or his boss rejected it. Or changed it. And then it was like someone had tapped straight into her dad's heart and was draining the sap from his soul.

-- Narrator (Chapter 14 paragraph 29)

Importance: For creative people, their ideas are pieces of themselves. It sometimes physically hurts when an idea is rejected or altered.

Underneath this veneer of slightly crazy and socially inept, I'm a complete disaster.

-- Cath (Chapter 16 paragraph 68)

Importance: Cath tries to explain to Levi that while she may seem somewhat off kilter, she is actually covering up the worst parts of her personality.

The fact that she was thinking about whatever this was in terms of playground equipment showed that she wasn't ready for it. For him. Levi was an adult. He had a truck. And facial hair.

-- Narrator (Chapter 16 paragraph 96)

Importance: In her thoughts, Cath refers to her relationship with Levi in terms of a seesaw. She believes this reference indicates that she is still a juvenile, while she sees him as a mature adult.

She wanted everyone here, starting with this guy, to know that her dad was a person, not just a crazy person. That he had people who cared about him and who would notice



if he was roughed up or given the wrong medicine.
-- Narrator (Chapter 19 paragraph 14)

Importance: Cath is doggedly devoted to her father, wanting the workers at the hospital to know that even if he did have a mental condition, he was loved and someone was looking out for him.

So, fine. You can go have a relationship with the parent who abandoned us, and I'll stay here and take care of the one who picked up the pieces.
-- Cath (Chapter 20 paragraph 65)

Importance: Again, Cath shows her devotion to her father by sticking with him when she knows that he needs her instead of spending her time trying to get to know a parent who left them years earlier, leaving them all hurting and broken.

Sometimes the intimacy and affection in his voice were too much for Cath. Sometimes she felt like he was talking to them like her dad talked to her and Wren.
-- Narrator (Chapter 25 paragraph 107)

Importance: Even though she tries not to be jealous of Reagan and Levi's past relationship, she still is sometimes affected by the similar affection that she hears in Levi's voice for both her and Reagan.

To really be a nerd, she'd decided, you had to prefer fictional worlds to the real one.
-- Narrator (Chapter 25 paragraph 113)

Importance: Cath thinks briefly that Levi could be classified as a nerd. Then, she realizes that he doesn't completely fit her definition of a nerd because he doesn't hide in fictional worlds as she does.

Cath had fallen behind on Carry On, Simon since this thing with Levi started — which on the one hand, was perfectly okay; she wasn't such a nerd that she'd rather make up love scenes with boys than be in one.
-- Narrator (Chapter 25 paragraph 125)

Importance: Cath realizes that even she isn't as much of a nerd as she once thought she was as she does prefer to spend time with Levi instead of writing about Simon and Baz.

Some of our best friends couldn't even tell us apart. And then, when they could, it would be because Wren was the better one. Because she talked more or smiled more — or just flat-out looked better.
-- Cath (Chapter 34 paragraph 139)

Importance: Cath finally admits to Levi that she is afraid that once Levi gets to know Wren, he will prefer her to Cath, just as their other friends have done.



I have to fight for every grade I get — I'd kill for a second chance at most of my classes. And you're just walking away from this assignment because you don't feel like it, because you've got this arbitrary deadline, and it's all you can see.

-- Levi (Chapter 36 paragraph 35)

Importance: Levi tries to make Cath see how foolish he believes that she is for putting her fanfiction before a chance to bring up her grade in the fiction writing class and save her scholarship.

Sometimes writing is running downhill, your fingers jerking behind you on the keyboard the way your legs do when they can't quite keep up with gravity.

-- Narrator (Chapter 37 paragraph 26)

Importance: When Cath finally sits down to write the story that has been inside her all along, the painful story of her mother leaving her, the thoughts come so fast that her fingers can't keep up on the keyboard.