

Girls in Pants: The Third Summer of the Sisterhood Study Guide

Girls in Pants: The Third Summer of the Sisterhood by Ann Brashares

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Plot Summary

The last summer before they go off to college, four girls renew their close friendship that centers on a pair of jeans they share to keep their friendship alive when they are not together. *Girls in Pants* is a story about growing up and maturing. It is a story of conquering fears that stand in the way of the next step to adulthood. It is the story of four girls who are very different but who share the need to identify significant truths about themselves and to move past these realizations and into the future.

The four girls, Tibby, Lena, Bee and Carmen, begin their summer by conducting a ceremony they have created which centers around a pair of jeans they pass around. There is a very strict set of rules that guides when they wear the pants, and they all imagine that magical things can happen to them when they have them on.

Lena is very conservative, and she begins the summer by going into a depression and isolating herself from those who love her most. Her strongest desire is to go to art school, and she takes a drawing course during the summer vacation. Through her drawings of her family, she begins to see what she never has seen before in each of them. By truly understanding her family, she begins to understand herself and begins her journey to freedom from her fear of failure.

Tibby does not think much of herself, and she thinks she is capable of almost nothing. A series of events forces her to rise above what she thinks she can accomplish, and through these accomplishments, she gains her own self-respect. When she does this, she can more clearly see the boy she has grown up with since childhood as someone she can love in a new and different way.

Carmen finds out that her mother is pregnant by her new husband. Carmen feels she will be left out of the family when the baby comes, especially when she goes away to school in the fall, so she decides to forego her dream of Williams College and go to a local school. When the baby finally comes, she realizes it will be an addition to their family and not a deterrent to her mother's love and attention. With this knowledge and security, she is able to love a boy she has recently met who seems perfect for her, and she allows herself to go away from home to Williams.

Bee met a boy two years before at soccer camp, and she has secretly loved him ever since then. When she finds she will be spending a lot of time with him during this last summer before college, she is scared that she will not be able to work with him and be his friend due to her feelings for him. Her fear has been to let herself admit to her feelings, and as a result, she cannot be the loving person she wants to be. When she learns to release the feeling she has tried to suppress, she becomes the person the boy she loves is looking for, and they are able to express their true feelings for each other.

At the end of the summer the girls get together and relate their experiences. They realize how many more people are in their intimate group. They vow to stay in touch forever, no matter what may happen to them.



Prologue and Chapter 1

Prologue and Chapter 1 Summary

The last summer before they go off to college, four girls renew their close friendship that centers on a pair of jeans they share to keep their friendship alive when they are not together. *Girls in Pants* is a story about growing up and maturing. It is a story of conquering fears that stand in the way of the next step to adulthood. It is the story of four girls who are very different but who share the need to identify significant truths about themselves and to move past these realizations and into the future.

The prologue introduces the four girls and the Pants. The girls are described as if they are cars. Carmen is like a powerful, bright red gas-guzzler that is a lot of fun but can make a mess of things. Lena is like a hybrid car that gets good gas mileage, is easy on the environment and is pretty good-looking. Bee is lacking in safety features, without even brakes, and her color is ocean-blue. The fourth girl, the historian and writer of the story, is Tibby. Tibby is a powerful model, probably dark green.

The Pants were first used two summers previously by the four girls when they finished school and were splitting up for the summer vacation. They created them as a kind of club. The Pants are put away for the winter school year and brought out only in the summer. This year, however, is to be the last summer they will be together, so the pants are to have special meaning. The Pants consist of one pair of jeans the girls pass between themselves, to help them to do magical things when they put them on.

The story begins as high school graduation has just concluded, and the girls are on the football field with their families taking pictures. That evening after the pictures are taken and congratulations are said, the four girls meet at Gilda's for the ceremony of the Pants. Gilda's is an aging gym where the mothers of the four girls worked out while they were all pregnant at the same time. The girls have remained best friends through all these years.

The ceremony begins, and the Pants are unfolded for the first time since last summer. The girls begin with a poem:

"To harbor the Pants and the Sisterhood
And this moment and this summer and the rest of our lives
Together and apart."

Prologue and Chapter 1 Analysis

In the prologue, the basic history of the first two books is briefly discussed. The reader learns that the four girls formed a club to make the time they would be apart for summer vacation pass more easily. However, this third summer may be the last time they can be

together, as it is the summer before they will separate to go to different colleges in the fall.

Each chapter begins with a poem or a quotation, and the chapters are not numbered. The quotation at the start of this chapter says, "Afterwards, the universe will explode for your pleasure." The girls' universe is about to change forever, as they head off to college. This summer is the summer before the universe will explode, and there will be fun and excitement ahead.

The story begins with the girls and their families creating memories of their graduation from high school by taking photographs at the football field. There is only a short, sketchy description of the girls and their families, but it can be assumed they are from normal, middle class families. One of the girls will tell this story, though it appears that it will be told in the third person. The girl who says she will tell the story is Tibby. While it will not completely be told through her eyes or experiences, it will be told through her knowledge from her association with the other girls.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Tibby's younger sister wakes her one morning with the news that Brian is downstairs. Tibby goes down in her pajamas to meet him, and he is playing dominos with her brother. When Tibby comes in, Brian asks her to go into the living room with him. There they sit on a couch in a room that is very seldom used except for special occasions, and Tibby knows he has something important to say. He asks Tibby to go to the senior dance with him that evening. She is surprised, but she says she will, partly because she does not want to hurt his feelings. They grew up together and have always been friends, but not "that kind" of friends.

The same morning, Lena is filling out papers for school that fall and thinking about a lady she saw on television who had never seen her mother. The lady makes sure she is always easy to find in the phone book whenever she moves to a new location so that her mother can find her easily if she ever looks for her. In some ways, this lady reminds Lena of herself, only Lena thinks about a boy named Kostos. He was a major part of her life, but he left her.

The phone rings, and it is Carmen, wanting to know what Lena is wearing to the senior party that afternoon. She hasn't decided yet. Her closet is divided into two groups: the clothes during Kostos and the clothes after Kostos.

Chapter 2 Analysis

The opening quotation refers to a boy who shared love with Lena but who broke her heart by breaking up with her. This chapter more fully develops the mood of the everyday lives of four teenage girls.

Tibby is asked by a male friend to go on "sort of" a date to the senior dance. She is surprised, and not wanting to hurt his feelings, she decides to go. She seems uninterested in him, but he represents her past and her childhood.

As Lena reminisces about a boyfriend she had who broke up with her, her life seems to be divided in two time periods: the time she spent with Kostos and the time afterwards. Lena is currently in limbo as she moves toward the future, since she is still tied to her past. A feeling of the closeness of the girls is established in this chapter, and a partial view of each individual's personality is unveiled.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Tibby's younger sister calls out loudly that Brian has come to pick her up. He arrives with flowers for Tibby and chocolates for the rest of the family. He is wearing a suit coat and tie, while Tibby has on jeans, or rather, the Pants, and a filmy blouse that shows to best advantage what little cleavage she has.

Brian has grown up from a neighborhood friend who was kind of ugly and awkward to a handsome young man of eighteen who girls secretly admire. Since he has no car, he walks to Tibby's house, and she drives them in her car. She notices that they like each other in a different way than they used to when they were younger. Arriving at the dance, Brian takes Tibby's hand to indicate to the others that they are here together. The girls meet in the bathroom, and everyone is excited and talking about the night ahead.

Going back to the dance floor, Brian grabs Tibby and wants to dance. It is definitely their first dance together, and they are both conscious of each other's body as they move together. Very quickly, Tibby becomes nervous about the feelings she has and asks Brian to leave with her and go to the 7-Eleven. Once they arrive there, they think about playing an old video game they used to play, but instead they decide to go to a nearby park. At the park, they sit on a picnic table and talk. Tibby stands on the ground in front of Brian, who is sitting on the table. They gradually get closer together, until Brian eventually kisses her and tells her he loves her.

Chapter 3 Analysis

The opening quotation by Willa Cather refers to love and the unlikely, but wonderful, things that can be accomplished through it. The first indication of Tibby and Brian's changing feelings toward one another occurs in the car when Tibby realizes she likes Brian in a different way than before. A wonderfully realistic scene is depicted as the girls gather in the bathroom. Some girls smoke, while some primp, and some just gossip. Moving to the dance floor signifies the leaving behind of an old tradition, and a new one begins as the couple dances.

The development of this relationship is continued for Tibby and Brian through the entire chapter, as they quickly turn from childhood friends into young adults with new and different needs and desires. At this point in the story, Tibby does not appear to have any recognizable fears.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Carmen is at home, and going into her mother's bedroom, she somehow feels it is different than it used to be. Her mother has recently married a man whom Carmen only met the year before, so now it is a woman and a man's bedroom. Carmen is there to "borrow" her mother's false eyelashes. She feels more of a stranger here than she has for the last few years when it belonged only to her mother. She goes into the bathroom to look for the eyelashes, and in the process, she knocks a bottle containing her mother's vitamins into the toilet. Fishing them out and cleaning them, Carmen realizes that the vitamins are prenatal vitamins.

Tibby wakes up the morning after the dance and feels like she has a hangover. She hasn't had any alcohol, so she realizes it is from her experience the night before with Brian. She wonders how the kiss will affect her and Brian the next time they see each other. As she looks around her bedroom, it begins to look different to her than it ever has before. It is stale, dusty and has layers of clothes and other paraphernalia lying everywhere. She opens a window that has been closed for years to let the fresh air into the room.

Tibby decides to tell her mother about her experience with Brian, and she goes into the kitchen. Immediately, her mother tells her that she has to leave and that Tibby must stay home and watch her sister, Katherine. A brief argument ensues before Tibby finally gives in. The disagreement causes her to decide not to tell her mother about Brian, even though her mother really likes Brian and would be happy for them.

Tibby finds Katherine a distraction from her own thoughts, and when Katherine wants to taste an apple from the nearby tree, Tibby doesn't help her. Instead, Tibby watches as Katherine continually tries to climb the tree to get one. Tibby looks at the tree as a dirty, rotten thing that drops fruit onto their lawn.

Chapter 4 Analysis

In Chapter Four the descriptions of the characters of Carmen, Tibby and Bridget are expanded. The opening poem is descriptive of Tibby and her relationship with Brian, which is escalating. The apple tree in her yard is symbolic of something that has been around her for a long time but that she failed to see and appreciate. More adult situations are introduced with this relationship, and the quote refers to the kiss by Brian and indicates it was the right time for Tibby to accept it. All the characters seem to be maturing quickly, and each is, on some level, uncomfortable about the changes taking place.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Carmen's mother says that life is too short not to do some things you want badly. Carmen's response to herself reflects her own maturing process. She thinks that her mother's statement is the excuse everyone uses for things they do and can think of no other excuse for. Her mother apologizes for not telling Carmen sooner that she is pregnant, and she explains that she and David (her new husband) want to wait until the child is born to find out if it is a boy or girl. Carmen thinks that it has to be a girl. It turns out the baby is due in late September, very near Carmen's birthday. She feels uneasy about the situation.

Carmen gets a note from Tibby with a box of Oreo cookies with extra stuffing. The note says that Tibby knows what she is going through, since Tibby has a sister much younger than herself and how terrible it is. She writes, "I feel your pain. I mean, couldn't they have just gotten a dog?" The scene is somewhat ironic, as is the opening quote by Homer Simpson.

Bridget, meanwhile, meets a boy at soccer camp named Eric Richman. He was her boyfriend at camp two years ago and broke her heart. This situation seems to be very uncomfortable for Bridget.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Carmen takes on the role of an adult who has just found out something that a daughter might try to hide from her mother. This reversal of the usual roles is a significant one in the maturation of young adults, and the irony of this is reflected in the opening line by Homer Simpson. Her mother, acting like a child, makes the anticipated excuses for not doing something that was expected of her. Some comical relief is introduced when Carmen receives a note from Tibby saying that her mother and stepfather should have just gotten a dog. Meanwhile, the author continues to develop Bridget's character at soccer camp as the reader learns she had her heart broken by a boy two years ago who again turns up at this year's camp.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

When Lena and her mother Ari arrive at their home, Carmen is waiting for Lena. Lena and her mother are hot from their shifts at work, but Carmen notes that at least they have jobs. Carmen has none, but she says she applied for a job at eight dollars per hour taking care of an older lady who is partially blind. More to help her out than anything, Ari offers Carmen eight and a half dollars an hour to watch Valia, who is her mother and Lena's grandmother.

Lena takes Carmen to her bedroom and slams the door. She is very upset that Carmen would take a job watching her grandmother. She explains that she got a job some time ago partially so she wouldn't have to spend time around her grandmother, who she describes as "a nightmare!" Carmen thinks maybe she can handle her, but Lena says that the two of them are not a good match right now.

At camp that evening, Bridget goes for a run just at sundown. Leaving the familiarity of the roadway, she strikes off through the woods. Soon she sees in the distance what looks like a dead bird with its head sticking up at an unnatural angle. She dreads having to run by it, and she thinks that maybe she can close her eyes. She can't, however, and as she nears the object, she realizes it is a mitten with the thumb sticking up. She is embarrassed by her previous fright.

Lena borrows her father's car to go to drawing class. Taking him to work on her way, she goes a few more blocks and then to her class. Along with the other artists in the class, she is doing a charcoal drawing of a nude man named Andrew, who poses for five minutes at a time. Lena enjoys the drawing partially because she feels comfortable doing it, and she does not have to think about anything but her drawing. She is particularly glad that she doesn't have to think about Carmen's stepbrother, Paul Rodman. She had become very attracted to him physically, and she is embarrassed even thinking about it. Paul's father got very sick, and she didn't know what to say to Paul about it. She never expressed the feeling that she is sorry about his father.

About this time, Lena's father walks into the class. The first thing he sees is the naked Anthony standing in front of his daughter. Before any explanations can be made, he grabs Lena and leads her out of the room and into the hall. The instructor immediately follows them out, only to hear Lena's father begin a tirade in Greek that ends with him asking, in English, how the instructor could let this happen to Lena.

Lena's instructor, Annik, is confined to a wheelchair. She asks if they might take a moment and discuss the matter, but Lena's father will not even listen to her. He only says that Lena will not be returning to this class.



Chapter 6 Analysis

Johnny Carson is saying that the more you rail against fate, the better your chances are of getting into trouble. Lena's mother Ari and grandmother Valia are introduced into the story. Ari looks at a situation and sees two possible solutions, but Lena looks at the same situation and sees disaster. Like the person who stands under the tree and shouts at the sky, Lena will probably get nothing but trouble for her negative outlet. Her father is also introduced and seems to act without thinking. He is described as stricter than any of Lena's friends' parents.

Bridget's character is more fully developed, as well. She appears to be fearful of things she creates in her own mind, like a mitten that looks like a dead bird, but she is not fearful of real situations that are threatening, such as running alone in the woods where she has never been before. The woods represent a path that is unknown to her and that she has not taken before.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Carmen is spending her first morning with Valia. She cannot seem to get her tea right. As she struggles with it, she thinks of fall and how her thoughts of it have changed. She really wants to go to Williams College this fall because it is where her dad went. Now, though, when she thinks of fall, she thinks of her room at home being changed into a baby's room, and she is angry that her thoughts have been changed without her consent. The phone rings, and it is Tibby wanting to talk. Just as the conversation begins, however, there is a *beep beep beep beep* noise. Carmen realizes it is Valia logging onto the computer, so she has to hang up and can't talk to Tibby.

Going into the living room where Valia is I-M-ing on the computer, she turns on the television to watch her favorite soap, *Brawn and Beauty*. Valia tells her to change the channel to seven because she wants to listen to what she calls *The World Apart*. The two argue briefly, and Valia asks her which of them is getting paid.

In the next scene, Carmen and Tibby are together. Carmen wants to hear exactly, start to finish, what happened between Tibby and Brian. As Tibby begins, she becomes embarrassed and can feel her face turning pink. Just then, her cell phone rings, and it is her mother telling her that she and her father are at the hospital with her sister Katherine, who fell out of the upstairs window.

Meanwhile, Lena is taking a break from her job at the Elite restaurant. It is hot everywhere, and she really dislikes the job. She wishes she had her old job at a clothing store like she did last summer. However, her dad is somewhat set in his ways, and he thinks the job is practical and the Greek way. Lena also misses her art classes and feels that everything is caving in on her.

Lena and Annik have a moment alone, and Annik tells Lena that she should continue taking the class. Lena can get the tuition free by doing some work around the classroom. Lena agrees, and Annik tells her that she should tell her dad. Lena knows that she will do most anything Annik asks of her, but telling her father is not one of them.

Chapter 7 Analysis

The action continues to be broken down by character, as the story is related chronologically. The humorous quote from *This Is Spinal Tap* takes on a double meaning, encouraging the reader to view the darkness of the girls' feelings in a humorous perspective.

Carmen spends time with Valia, and the problems between the two cause Carmen to complain to herself. Her wonderful thoughts of going to college in the fall have been



shifted to concern about having a new little sister and the problems that might create just when she will be starting school.

Next, the reader sees Carmen talking happily with Tibby, just getting ready to hear a minute-by-minute description of Tibby's date with Brian. Their fun is interrupted when Tibby gets a phone call from her mother telling her that she and her father are at the hospital with her little sister, Katherine, because she fell out of a window of their house. This sequence of events is likely to change Tibby's life substantially.

Lena, taking a break from her job at a restaurant, which her dad encouraged her to take, thinks that everything is going wrong in her life. She hates her job, and now she doesn't even have her art class to look forward to. This is the beginning of a change in Lena's entire personality.

Lena takes the bus to the art school and talks with Annik, her art teacher. Annik tells Lena that she should continue her art classes and to just be truthful with her father, since Lena apparently has a great deal of talent. Lena agrees to continue with the class, but she tells herself that she could never talk about it with her dad. All the girls are experiencing obstacles to the things they have been dreaming of, and their spirits are all declining at this point.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

As Tibby baby-sits her brother Nicky, she prays that her sister Katherine will not die. She blames herself for opening a window that is normally closed and for not helping Katherine to get an apple from the tree. If she had helped Katherine, she wouldn't have tried to get one from the open window. Tibby's dad calls just then with the news that Katherine will recover. Her dad tells Tibby that she can come to the hospital in two hours with Nicky.

Tibby receives calls on her answering machine from Carmen, Bee and Lena, all telling her that they're sorry and that they are thinking of her and Katherine. When Tibby gets to the hospital, Katherine tells Tibby that the window was open, and it looked like an apple was real close. She tried to get it. After Tibby and Nicky talk to her and hear of her experience, Brian comes into the hospital room. Katherine is excited to see him, and she knows she really likes him. After talking to Katherine, Brian looks at Tibby, and she can see in his look that he wants to comfort her and possibly even to say that he meant what he said while they were in the park the night before. Tibby wishes everything could be like it was before.

Carmen lies on her bed thinking of Tibby and Katherine. Her mother goes to bed very early now, and David, her stepfather, often works very late. She looks up at the ceiling that she decorated with star stickers when she was eight years old. Now they make her think of leaving. She wishes she could just stay here and everything would be as it was. She begins thinking about leaving for college, and the seven-hour trip she would be away from home. What would happen if she just didn't leave?

Chapter 8 Analysis

The quote from Oscar Wilde is about taking things for granted. While we have things, they seem meaningless, but if someone else had them, we would be jealous. Tibby's relationship with her sister can be seen in light of this quotation. At first, Tibby takes Katherine for granted, but when Katherine is hurt, Tibby realizes that she doesn't want to lose her sister. Tibby is relieved that her sister has survived the fall and wishes she had been more careful about leaving her bedroom window open. She also thinks of all the times she could have been more responsive to her sister's needs. When she sees Brian, she wishes things were the way they used to be. She is happy about her sister's recovery, but she feels that change is overwhelming.

Carmen also wishes things were not changing. She wants to be able to leave for college and have everything exactly the way it used to be when she comes back home. She knows the change is forever, however, and wonders what would happen if she didn't leave at all. Would things not change?

The chapter continues to explore the changes required in growing up and in the process of maturing. There comes a point in a young adult's life when change seems to happen all at once, and the plans that were made don't always turn out the way they were imagined.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

The chapter begins with Lena telling her father she will be doing an extra shift at the restaurant. She says this to cover for the time she will really be at the art class. She also tells her parents that she has seen Katherine, who is doing well but will have to wear a hockey helmet until the end of the summer. While Lena is doing the dishes, Valia comes up behind Lena and announces that Kostos has separated from his new wife Mariana and that they did not have the baby they expected.

At soccer camp, Bridget and Diana are talking in their bunks quietly before they go to sleep. Bridget cannot help but talk about Eric. Soon Diana tells her to be quiet. As Bee continues to talk about him, their other roommate Katie also tells her to be quiet. After that, Bridget thinks to herself that she is excited to be near Eric again and that he's sleeping not too far away from her right now. She tells the others that she will be all right with Eric's closeness. That night, Lena and Carmen I-M about Bridget and her situation with Eric. They wonder if they should go get her from soccer camp right then. They decide to wait a week.

The next day, Carmen is excited about going to the hospital for Valia's checkup. Carmen is wearing the Traveling Pants, and she wants to give them a chance to work their magic. She and Valia have been getting on each other's nerves a great deal. On the way in Carmen's car, Valia constantly criticizes Carmen for things like holding the steering wheel wrong. They arrive early for the appointment and decide to go for ice cream first. Valia cannot decide on a flavor. She criticizes the clerk and the ice creams before she eventually chooses peppermint, which she hates and wants Carmen to eat instead.

About that time, a boy walks into the ice cream parlor, and Carmen can't help but almost stare at him. He has yellowish-brown hair and a jaunty attitude, and Carmen immediately decides she likes him, or at least, she doesn't hate him yet. At that moment, Valia drops the ice cream from her cone with a shriek at Carmen in Greek. As Valia makes a move to walk away, she slips on the ice cream on the floor and falls very hard. Carmen begins to help her up, and the guy she has been looking at comes over and helps. It appears Valia's leg is hurt rather badly. The two decide to walk Valia to the emergency room just around the corner, and as they leave the ice cream parlor, the door slams against Carmen and cuts her arm.

Valia is lucky and gets into an examining room where a Greek doctor is there to assist her. The boy who helped them is still sitting back in the waiting room, and he hands Carmen a damp paper towel to wash her arm. As they begin talking, Carmen finds out that the boy is a premed student who volunteers at the hospital, and he thinks Carmen is doing a really nice thing in taking care of the troublesome Valia.



Chapter 9 Analysis

Both Lena and Carmen are dishonest. Lena lies to her father that she is working extra shifts to cover up the fact that she is still taking art classes. Carmen doesn't really tell a lie, but she feels like she did since she didn't tell the boy she met that she is getting paid to watch over Lena's grandmother. There is a sense that these dishonesties will play a more important role in the plot than the girls realize at the time.

Bridget becomes more openly interested in Eric and wonders if they will possibly resume their relationship of two years past. At the same time, Lena finds out that her old boyfriend and his wife have separated because the baby they expected never came. These two sets of parallels begin a pattern in the story of the girls' lives.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Bridget takes extra time getting dressed just in case she should run into Eric on the soccer field. As she leaves for the field, she thinks to herself that everything is different now than it used to be. She almost longs for it to be like it was. She is excited that she will be around so many soccer players, however. She is the youngest coach and the only one to have made the high school all-American team. She can tell she is respected already. She will coach her first team, and it will be boys. Her friend Diana will coach a girls' team, so they won't get to spend too much time together.

When Bridget arrives on the field, she stands next to Eric while they wait for the team announcements. As they begin talking, Eric says "we" when telling her of his summer so far. Bridget asks who the "we" is, and Eric tells her it his girlfriend, Kaya. They have been traveling in Mexico together. Later, Bridget is embarrassed that she had any hopes of them reuniting.

Lena is very happy on the way home from her art class. She is wearing the Traveling Pants, and her class went especially well. When she arrives home, her father meets her with a furious yell and asks her where she has been. He tells her that he stopped by the restaurant and found that she isn't doing extra shifts. He bluntly asks her if she has returned to the art class. She is forced to admit that she has, and she runs to her room crying.

Later that evening, Lena and her mother and father talk about the day. Her father explains that he is adamant she will not return to the art school but that he will pay for her to attend a regular university. She mentions that it is a little late for that decision, but her father tells her that she may be able to get in somewhere. If not, she can stay home and work to earn money for school next fall. She thinks she would rather die first and leaves without saying anything to her father or her mother.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Bridget's character is further developed. The reader learns that she has no mother and has worked especially hard at being good at soccer, partially to compensate for the missing parent. Like the others, she hopes wistfully that the changes going on around her might go away. She has become very successful at soccer, however, and gets greater recognition for her accomplishments than she has known until now.

Lena feels that her father is punishing her when he agrees to allow her to either attend a regular university or stay home and work. Bridget's hopes are also dashed when she is disappointed that Eric has a girlfriend and somewhat embarrassed that she had some hopes of reuniting with him.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Carmen finds out that she can attend the University of Maryland, which would allow her to stay home rather than going away to college. When she tells her mother this, she is surprised and hurt that her mother is not in favor of the idea. She tells her mother that she believes her place is at home, but her mother says she belongs at Williams College. Her mother says that it doesn't mean that Carmen will not belong at home anymore, but Carmen is scared that it does.

Tibby talks to Lena on the phone and realizes that Lena is sad, so she and Carmen buy Lena some root beer flavored jellybeans. They send Lena a note with the candy telling her that it is unheard of to only like root beer. The brown bag doesn't look too appetizing, but they know it is what she would want. Lena feels that she is being punished by having to go to a college with general education courses instead of just an art school.

Tibby has taken a job in a movie theater. Her friend Margaret has just done Tibby's clean up work at the end of her shift because Tibby fell asleep in the theater and dreamed that she was holding on to her window ledge from outside, just about to fall. She submitted a film she made a year ago to NYU, and she has been accepted to NYU's film program. She doesn't look forward to learning to make movies since she has had the job at the theater; she finds them almost too mechanical.

At camp, Bridget is trying to convince herself and Diana that she will not pay attention to Eric. Then, as assignments are handed out to the coaches for duties off the soccer field, she is astonished to learn that her partner will be Eric. After the announcement, Bridget asks the head coach if she can change partners, and she is told flatly, "no."

Chapter 11 Analysis

Carmen is very good at analyzing the anticipated outcome of most events, but when she knows something will not turn out in her favor if she follows a certain pathway, she tends to follow it anyway to disaster. When she tells her mother that she wants to switch to a local school, she hopes her mother will be happy that she has chosen to stay home to help with the baby. However, her mother tells her not to be selfish and that there is no reason for her to stay home. This, of course, is not the reaction she wanted from her mother.

Tibby and Carmen share Lena's disappointment that she will have to attend a college with coursework she doesn't feel she will enjoy. Lena feels that her father is punishing her.

Bridget tries to convince herself that she doesn't care about Eric and that she will be able to ignore him. Then, ironically, she learns that she will have to work with him at chores after soccer is over each day.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

Carmen is spending another day with Valia, and Valia is in no better mood than before. She refuses to get into Carmen's car for the trip to the hospital because Carmen holds the steering wheel wrong. As a result, Carmen pushes her the two miles to the hospital in her wheelchair.

After Carmen looks around the hospital for over forty minutes for the guy she doesn't hate yet, they finally meet. Exchanging names, she finds out that he is Win. When Carmen tells Win that Valia's husband passed away a year ago and that she had to leave her home in Greece, Win tells her that Valia has one good thing going for her. When Carmen asks, "What's that?" Win says, "She has you."

When Lena finally gets up the courage to go back to the art class, she and Annik talk once more. Annik learns that Lena's father will not pay for her to go to art school, but Annik tells Lena that there are other ways of going than by paying full tuition. Annik asks Lena if she has looked into the possibility of getting a scholarship. Lena hasn't, and Annik almost tells her that she'll help her. Then, she holds back and tells Lena to look online to find out how to go about it.

Bridget realizes that she not only won't be able to ignore Eric, but she'll also be with him all the time. She thinks to herself that she will just treat him as a friend and ignore the fact that he is the only one she has ever been really attracted to. She will try to forget that she seduced him two summers ago, and they will just remain friends.

Chapter 12 Analysis

The parallel between Bee and Carmen continues. Bee has a possibility of striking up a romance with someone she had a relationship with in the past, while Carmen has a chance to have a relationship with someone new.

Annik's first instinct is to help Lena get into an art school, but she realizes that it is better for Lena to accomplish this for herself. Lena will learn more by working independently for her scholarship than by relying on Annik.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Carmen, Bridget and Lena pick Tibby up in Carmen's car for a surprise. Tibby keeps telling the others she doesn't want to go, even as the four of them drive off. They go to the swimming pool that just happens to be closed. Not waiting for anyone else, Bridget climbs over the fence and motions for the others to follow. Tibby, however, says she will not. She is scared to death of the thought of climbing. She stays outside alone while the others splash in the pool in their underwear.

Carmen takes Katherine to the hospital as a favor for Tibby, and they decide to wait in the children's playroom. While Carmen is on her hands and knees imitating a penguin, Win pops up from behind a large playhouse, and Carmen is very embarrassed. Win introduces her to a little girl just slightly older than Katherine, and the two children begin playing together. Carmen finds out that Win works in pediatrics, and much of the time he watches kids in the playroom while their parents have consultations with the doctors. When they say goodbye, Win tells Carmen that he would like to see her again and that she can tell him anything she wants. He says that he would like to listen. After they separate, Carmen thinks to herself that she really likes him, and he seems to like her too. Still, she thinks that he likes a girl who is kind and selfless, and that is not how she really sees herself at all. He likes a Good Carmen, and she is a Bad Carmen.

Chapter 13 Analysis

Tibby has developed some insecurity and depression, and she doesn't want to go have fun with the other girls. What is more, she cannot stand the thought of climbing the fence around the pool due to the fact that she still blames herself for Katherine's fall from her window.

A number of coincidences lead to Carmen once again meeting Win at the hospital. When she discovers him there, she is in the process of mimicking a penguin, and she is very embarrassed that he has seen her like this. They come closer to becoming friends, but Carmen thinks he likes her for being somebody she is really not.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

Three weeks into camp, Bridget and Eric have settled into a rhythm. They are in charge of the boats at the lake, and campers rarely show up to use them. Between two-thirty and five, they basically sit around in the sun and talk.

On this particular day, Bridget has the Traveling Pants on over her best green bikini. Bee still feels very passionately about Eric, but she is careful not to ask too many questions about his girlfriend. She dives into the lake from the dock, and when she comes up, she suggests they try out one of the kayaks. Soon they are floating gently in the lake, both lying back and talking. All of a sudden, a bee flies at Bridget, and the two begin trying to bat it away, which finally causes them both to fall into the water together.

Lena tells Annik that she has applied for a scholarship at RISD. There is one scholarship left, and they have over seventy applicants. Still, Lena is determined to do the best she can. She has also taken on extra shifts at the restaurant to get the money for the deposit.

After class one day, Annik asks Lena to stay and practice drawing. Since they have no model, Annik says she will pose for Lena, but she says laughingly that it will have to be a sitting pose because she cannot stand. After an hour of intense drawing, Annik wheels over to Lena to see her work. She notices that Lena has done a very good drawing but that she didn't draw the wheelchair in the picture. Annik asks Lena why and says that the chair is a part of her. To get the real feeling of who she is, Lena should have drawn the chair as she saw it.

Tibby's family had a housekeeper named Loretta, and her parents have fired her. Tibby didn't realize how much she liked and appreciated Loretta until she was gone, but her parents felt Loretta in some way was to blame for Katherine's fall. Tibby feels more and more guilty as the days pass, and she finally looks up Loretta's address and decides to drive to see her.

When Tibby finally finds Loretta's house, Loretta is extremely pleased she has come and begins jabbering in Spanish before giving her big hugs. She wants to know exactly how Katherine is doing, and Tibby tells her that she is progressing nicely but misses Loretta. Loretta asks Tibby to stay for dinner, so she does. While everyone else is creating a feast in her honor, Tibby sits on the couch with Loretta's sick sister and watches television in Spanish. When the meal is finally revealed, Tibby sees that they have prepared steak for her, a special meal for Loretta's family. Tibby sits down and tries her best to eat it pleasantly, but she has been a vegetarian for nine years.



Chapter 14 Analysis

Bridget has managed to keep the relationship with Eric on a friendly basis only, but she secretly loves him and feels very passionately about him. They have a great deal of time alone together, and a situation is evidently being created which can lead to more intimate activities.

Annik is portrayed as an extremely good drawing coach. She somewhat embarrasses Lena by chastising her for not drawing her as she sees her, in her wheelchair. Lena had thought about drawing the chair, but she decided not to accentuate Annik's condition. Annik explains the chair is part of her, and in order to capture her as she really is, the chair must be included. This is a metaphor for a broader lesson about learning to see, accept, love and appreciate yourself and others as they really are, not as you would like them to be.

Lena shows more compassion than she has before when she goes to Loretta's house and meets her family. She is surprised that Loretta doesn't feel any grudge against her, and she sees what an impact it must have had on her and the rest of her family when Loretta's income was lost. She is somewhat humbled by this Hispanic family, how friendly they are and how much they are able to forgive and look on the good side of everything.



Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

One Saturday, Carmen, Lena and Tibby are in the backyard of Tibby's house talking. Carmen explains that Win likes the "Good Carmen," but that's really not who she is. The other girls can tell that Carmen thinks a great deal of Win and that he is very good looking. Lena tells Carmen that she should be herself and that if Win doesn't like her for who she really is, he's not worth her time.

Bridget sees Eric all the time, and they have become real friends. She still loves him, but her new relationship with him is one of friendship. She has become used to him. They spend time together away from work, eating, jogging and just talking.

One day Naughton, one of the boys on Bridget's team, asks her if he can go jogging with her after dinner. She thinks it is somewhat strange, but she tells him that he can. Later that day, Eric and Bridget learn that they are to take eight kids on an overnight rafting trip. Bee is concerned about how she will act with Eric on an overnight trip, sleeping in sleeping bags next to each other. She's mastered her ability to look at him only as a friend at the camp, but can she do it on an overnight trip under the stars together?

Lena has a dream about her parents and decides that they will be the subjects of the portfolio she must turn in with her scholarship application. She begins with her mother. She poses her mother in her natural place, the kitchen. Lena studies her as she never has before when she begins the drawing, and Lena realizes that she sees more of her mother and the way she really is than she ever has before. She sees conflicts between her mother and her father, compromises, age, softness and many other intimate things not generally noticed. When Lena shows Annik the drawing the next day, she is very excited. She tells Lena it is extremely good. Lena says, "Do you think I got the chair?" and Annik tells her yes, "I really do."

Chapter 15 Analysis

Carmen tells the others that Win doesn't know her for who she really is, and Lena tells her that she must be herself and that Win must accept her for who she is, not who he thinks she is. This idea parallels Lena's experience in drawing Annik and again highlights the importance of accepting people as they are.

Bee is to be faced with the temptation of spending a night with Eric, and she is not sure she can handle it and still remain just friends. One of her team members seems to want to spend time with her, just as she acted two summers ago with Eric. She notices the similarity of the two situations and is embarrassed that she was so forward with Eric.

Lena decides to draw her parents for her portfolio project. To do this, Lena must concentrate on seeing her parents very deeply and accurately, and in doing her drawings she discovers truths that she never noticed before. She begins to see and understand her parents from their points of view as well as from her own.



Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

Bridget is ready for her evening run, and Naughton is waiting for her. The two begin a strenuous run, and Bee is amazed that Naughton can keep up. She notices that he is very nervous about something, and he finally gets up the courage to tell her that he thinks she is special. When she says that she thinks he's nice too, he says that his "like" is different and asks her if she has a boyfriend. She is honest and tells him that she doesn't, and he says that maybe after camp they could be friends. Not wanting to be too negative, she tells him that anything can happen in the future.

Later that evening as Bridget sits alone with Eric on the dock, she tells him that she wants to apologize for something. She says that she is sorry for the way she acted two summers ago, when she practically threw herself at him. Eric is four years older than she, and the difference in their ages was the same as the age difference between Bee and Naughton.

Eric tells Bridget that she doesn't have to apologize, that he wanted her also and that the situation was more complicated than she can realize. They end by silently agreeing not to discuss it again, and Bridget tries to hide her tears from him.

One day, Brian comes to Tibby's to see Katherine, as he does almost every day. For some reason that Tibby cannot explain, she is avoiding him completely. When the two do meet, his eyes ask her what is wrong. When Carmen comes over and immediately sees what is happening, she straightforwardly asks Tibby what she is doing. Looking around Tibby's messy room, she asks her if it is about Katherine. She points out that Katherine is getting better, but Tibby is getting worse.

Carmen has to tell her dad that she doesn't want to go to Williams College in the fall and that she feels she is needed at home instead. She calls him and stalls long enough so that he realizes she has something important on her mind. She finally tells him and dreads his response, but he is calm, saying only to let him tell them at the college, since he has a large deposit and will have some difficulty getting it back. He explains to her that he knows she will make the right decision.

Chapter 16 Analysis

When a boy four years younger than Bee tells her that he "likes" her, Bee realizes how it must have been for Eric two years before when she approached Eric in pretty much the same way. The parallel makes her realize how dumb she must have looked to him. She apologizes, but Eric tells her that it was not that simple and that he wanted her as much as she wanted him. Reversing the situation allows the reader to see basically the same situation from two viewpoints.



Tibby's depression continues. She thinks to herself that she is responsible for Katherine's fall and that somehow her relationship with Brian is partially to blame. While Carmen manages to mess up her own life very often, she seems to have the ability to correctly analyze other peoples' situations, including Tibby's.

Carmen tells her dad that she won't be going to the school where he went, which she knows means a great deal to him. She is somewhat surprised that he appears to already know. He tells her that he understands and trusts her to make the right decision.



Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

Bridget and Eric do well on the first day of the raft trip, but their relationship has become slightly more formal. That night after their camp dinner, it begins to rain, so Bee knows she will have to share the leader's tent with Eric. They had both assumed they would be able to sleep apart outside under the stars. As they both settle into their sleeping bags, Bee asks Eric about Kaya, his girlfriend. He finally changes the subject and asks her about her friends. Bee feels very juvenile in the way she has acted in comparison to Kaya, who has already graduated from Columbia.

Lena has drawn some of her family members for her portfolio, and it is time to draw her grandmother, Valia. She is a little surprised when Valia agrees to pose, and Valia sits somewhat uncomfortably, staring at Lena. As Lena begins her sketch, she somehow begins to see Valia's pain more deeply, and in so doing, she understands it better. She realizes that Valia has deteriorated a great deal in the last year, possibly because her husband had always managed to see her as the beautiful young girl she had been. Now, with no one to see her that way, she has changed into an old, shriveled woman. Lena decides to try to capture some of the beauty Valia had when she lived in Greece.

When Lena finishes with the drawing, she also understands Valia much better, and she can appreciate her grandmother much more. Kissing Valia on the head at the end of the session, Lena begins to face Valia head on. They both seem to understand each other a little more.

Meanwhile, a phone message on Carmen's answering machine from Win is cut off abruptly as the tape ends, but not before Win tells Carmen that he has been thinking about her.

Back on the rafting trip, Bridget wakes from a light sleep in the tent next to Eric. He has rolled close to her, and she can't help but feel his closeness. She silently wishes he would want her again, but more than that, she wants him to trust her.

Chapter 17 Analysis

Bridget and Eric remain more formal toward each other, but the night together in the tent proves that she still would like to begin anew the relationship they had two summers previously, while Eric doesn't appear to feel the same way. Bridget is able to look at it in an objective manner that shows she has begun to mature.

While drawing Valia, Lena begins to see into her soul and gains much more understanding of her inner pain. She tries to add some of Valia's youth into the picture, and this also helps her to realize what causes Valia to be so difficult to be around. The



two appear to have a better understanding of one another after looking at each other so closely for over an hour. This hints that Lena has also begun maturing, as has Bridget.

Carmen gets a phone message from Win that briefly expresses his interest in her, so it is apparent there is a mutual feeling of admiration between them.



Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

Tibby is looking out the window of the theater one day and sees Brian coming toward her with Katherine and Nicky. The sight of the helmet always makes Tibby feel uncomfortable and depressed. Brian, however, gives her a look that says he understands and sympathizes with her.

Carmen takes Valia to the hospital and waits for her in a remote place, hoping to be left alone. However, she accidentally finds her mother at a class for expectant parents that David is not able to attend, so Carmen takes his place. Her mother silently cries tears of happiness.

Lena is now ready to draw her sister, Effie. They don't start off particularly well, as Effie is not interested or very cooperative. Lena finally asks Effie outright what is wrong, and Effie admits that she doesn't want Lena to go to art school. When asked why, Effie tells Lena it is because she doesn't want to be left alone with "them," meaning their parents and Valia. The two embrace, and the tension between them has gone away.

After the child birthing class, Carmen and her mother run into Win. Christina and Win get along well immediately, and Win tells them that they look alike and are both beautiful. When Win finds out that Carmen is her mother's partner in the class, he looks at Carmen with admiration and awe. This makes Carmen feel uncomfortable, though, and she once again thinks he is seeing in her something that really isn't there. Then she hurries to pick up Valia. Her mother quickly follows Carmen into the elevator. She demands to know who Win is and how Carmen knows him. Carmen tells her mother that she knows him a little but that he doesn't know the real Carmen.

Chapter 18 Analysis

All the girls begin to turn around their unhappiness in this chapter. Each one seems to find a little hope and more understanding of their inner fears. Tibby all of a sudden realizes the significance of the sight of Katherine's helmet, and she appears, through this understanding, to be a little less isolated from Brian.

Carmen again runs into Win, just as she finishes the child birthing class with her mother. When Win finds out Carmen has partnered with her mother, he admires Carmen even more. It bothers Carmen to again be seen as such a "Good" Carmen. She and her mother have become closer, however, and her mother even seems a bit happy that Carmen will be staying home when the baby comes. At any rate, the two seem to understand each other a little more.

Lena sees her sister more realistically through her drawing, just as she did with Valia. Through Effie's nonchalance during the beginning of the drawing session, Lena realizes

that Effie is unhappy with her for planning to go away to art school and leave Effie alone with her parents and Valia.



Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

Tibby has been trying desperately to pay back Margaret the favors she has so often done for her at the theater. She decides to ask Margaret to go to dinner with her after their shift one evening, and she realizes that Margaret has come with her just to be polite. Maybe it is, once again, Margaret that is providing the favor, not Tibby. Tibby then understands that taking Margaret out of her setting and into Tibby's is not the best way to repay her for her help.

Carmen and Lena are at a Starbucks, and Carmen tells Lena that Win once again caught the "Good Carmen" at an act of kindness. Lena asks Carmen if she has ever thought that she might actually be the "Good Carmen," and Carmen assures her she isn't. Then Carmen tells Lena that Paul Rodman will be spending the night on her couch the next night and that he has asked about Lena. At that time Carmen's cell phone rings, and it is her stepfather, David, who thanks her for helping her mom at the hospital. Carmen is cool and annoyed at him, but she really doesn't understand why. He asks if he can borrow her phone charger for a few days, and she says it is fine. After hanging up, though, she realizes that the charger is in her purse.

Tibby sends the other girls a note with assigned items for the beach trip for the end of summer, along with a reminder that they each owe sixty dollars to her for expenses for the trip.

Lena has been thinking about Paul. Even though he's not really in her family, she feels she wants to draw him for some reason. He comes to her house, and they hug stiffly. After they talk briefly, Lena poses him in her backyard in front of a sturdy old oak tree that her parents had cut down so it wouldn't fall on their house. Looking at him intensely, she realizes once more how much you don't normally see in someone until you look much closer. In Paul, she finds a softness and a roundness that haven't shown before, and she feels that she understands some of the pain and grief he feels for his sick father. A ring he wears doesn't seem to fit his personality, and Lena asks him about it. Paul tells her that it is his father's and that he wants Paul to wear it. With that, they take a break from the pose, and Lena realizes that Paul understands her feelings. They sit close together in the sun and the warm breeze.

Chapter 19 Analysis

Tibby begins to understand that when people do favors for others, they actually may be trying to do something to make themselves feel better. Margaret goes to dinner with Tibby to please Tibby, not for her own pleasure. Tibby grows up and matures a little more with this realization. She finally decides that Margaret is probably alone most of the time, and that it is her own choice to live that way.



In telling Lena about her last meeting with Win, Carmen begins to wonder just a little if he really might like her for the way she really is. Maybe Carmen is a nicer person than she has given herself credit for. With the phone call from David and a slight bit of prompting from Lena, she also realizes that her attitude towards David is less congenial than it should be.

Lena also continues to mature as she gets over the awkward feelings she has toward Paul. Looking at him objectively, she realizes the pain he feels for his sick father, and he appears softer as she absorbs this fact.

The author uses a note from Carmen to the others to begin to bring the original plot of a trip to the beach back into the story.



Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

Carmen becomes tired of staying in the dark den with Valia. She puts Valia into her wheelchair and takes her outside for a walk. Soon they arrive at a Mediterranean restaurant, and Carmen gets them a table outside under a white umbrella that contrasts starkly with the bright blue sky. There are a number of items on the menu that Carmen recognizes from the Kaligaris' house, but the Kaligaris aren't cooking ethnic foods right now because Lena's father thinks it makes Valia homesick. Getting some Mediterranean dishes and taking them to the table with lemonades, Valia is at first critical and sniffs the food disdainfully. Carmen immediately is sorry for bringing Valia here. She thinks it is definitely another one of her good ideas gone bad. After staring at the food for a moment, Valia breaks into tears and hangs her head, telling Carmen, "I want to go home." Carmen knows she doesn't mean to her home here, in Bethesda, Maryland.

On the mid-weekend at camp, Bridget finds herself alone in her cabin. Most of the other staff have left for the weekend. Going to bed, she begins to notice that she is cold. The more she thinks about it, the worse she feels, until she realizes that she must have the flu. Drifting in and out of a fitful sleep, she wakes to find Eric next to her, asking if she is all right. He brushes her hair out of her face and notices that she has a fever, and he goes to find something for her to take to lower it.

Carmen decides that she must do whatever she can to get the Kaligaris to let Valia return to Greece. After discussing it with Lena, she finds some time alone with Ari, Lena's mother, and explains that Valia is dying in the United States. She needs her friends back in Greece. Ari doesn't disagree, but she says it is more complicated than Carmen realizes. Carmen knows, but she doesn't tell Ari how the rest of their family is suffering by having the unhappy Valia in their home.

Chapter 20 Analysis

Carmen once again does a good deed by taking Valia to get Mediterranean food, and Valia completely breaks down. This time, Carmen begins to realize that she is really doing some good as she tries to get the Kaligaris to let Valia return to her beloved Greece. She is beginning to see that maybe she is the "Good Carmen," as Win sees her.

Bridget finally lets down her guard against Eric when she comes down with the flu. While she is ill, he shows his care for her, opening the way just slightly for a more intimate relationship.



Chapter 21

Chapter 21 Summary

One night Tibby cannot fall asleep, and she stares out the window at the apple tree. She associates the falling of its apples with Katherine's fall, and it reminds her of her inadequacies. She doesn't feel she can love Katherine, Brian or anyone else, and she thinks that she isn't wise enough to see the significance of major events that surround her. The more she thinks about this, however, the more she sees how good she is at isolating herself from everything around her, good and bad. The real reason she isolates herself is to protect herself from failure. As she begins to understand this, she sees that she must open up and try new things in order to keep alive mentally.

When Bridget's roommates return, they have been partying and have little concern for Bee's condition. Eric returns with something to help reduce her fever, and he becomes outraged that the lights are on and music is blaring. Seeing that he won't be able to quiet the cabin down, he gently picks up Bee and takes her to his cabin so that she can sleep in the quiet. Barely aware of what is happening, Bee hopes she can remember this act forever, since she thinks it is the sweetest thing that has ever happened to her.

Eric tucks Bridget into his bed and gives her water and some pills. Looking into his eyes, she knows how deep their friendship really is. Taking her temperature, he finds that it is 104.7 and wonders if that is safe. Eric decides to call Bridget's dad, but she tells him that her father is not at home. He realizes that she must mean permanently, but he doesn't ask. Eric just sits on the bed with Bridget and watches her. She continues to shiver, so eventually he lies down beside her and comforts her, just like a mother or father would, if she had them.

The next morning, Tibby awakes before dawn and sees the tree as she never has before. Opening the window and looking down, she sees how far it really is. She decides to try to swing from her window to the tree as Katherine tried to do. Concentrating, she holds a branch and precariously swings herself onto the tree. She works her way down safely to the ground. Only then does she realize that she is locked out of the house.

When Bridget wakes the next morning, she has thrown the covers off as her fever dropped. As she lies next to Eric, she realizes that she is in her underwear, still wrapped in his arms. Thinking about the situation, she understands that when she slept with Eric two summers before, it had been for sex, and it drove them apart. Now, sleeping together was for a more practical reason, and it has brought them closer together. As he wakes and gets up and turns so that she can dress, she wants desperately to tell him that it is all right and that she won't press him for anything more. Before she can say anything more, he has gone.



Chapter 21 Analysis

Chapter twenty-one is full of awakening awareness. First, Tibby becomes aware that her isolation is hurting herself and others instead of helping anyone. Understanding this, the tree begins to symbolize freedom from her fears, and she decides to address them head-on by conquering the tree. She does this by climbing onto it and getting safely to the ground. This signifies her release from isolation and the beginning of a new understanding of how to cope with the situations around her.

Bridget must rise from her fear of a true friendship with Eric to a level of comfort with their situation. His treatment of her, and particularly the act of holding her closely, signifies his removal of the unseen barrier that has built up between them. She begins to see that sex can be a wonderful experience between two people, but that, without the right commitment to each other, it can be a weapon that distances two people from a real relationship.



Chapter 22

Chapter 22 Summary

One morning, Christina is in the bathroom for an unusually long time. When Christina comes out, Carmen notices that she is white and looks terrible. Christina tells Carmen that she thinks her water may have broken, and she calls her midwife, who tells her to come to the hospital immediately. Since the baby is not due for another month, both are worried about the situation. When Christina is settled in the hospital, Carmen calls David, but she is only able to leave a message. She decides that she needs help, since she can't take care of her mother and look for David, and her mother refuses to have the baby until David is with her. Carmen calls Tibby, who says that she will come to the hospital immediately.

Sitting with Christina, Tibby feels the effect of being up all night climbing the tree and waiting for the house to be opened. Christina has more contractions, and Lauren, her midwife, tells her that she is going into labor. Christina is obviously trying to hold back until Carmen and David can get there. Tibby asks herself, "How did I get here?" Tibby learns that it will probably be several hours before the actual delivery of the baby, and Lauren asks her to sit with Christina, as Tibby is the only one she has right now.

Carmen is in front of the hospital. She calls everyone she can think of who might be able to locate David, but she gets no one. Right then, Win walks up and asks her if she is all right. Carmen explains what is happening. She remembers that David asked to borrow her cell phone charger but that it wasn't where she told him it should be, so his cell phone might be dead. She decides to go to her stepfather's office, and realizing that Carmen is almost in hysterics, Win goes with her.

Arriving at the law firm, Carmen is able to go quickly past the receptionist because her mother has worked there for years. She knows the people and her way around the offices. When Carmen and Win find her stepfather's secretary, Irene, Irene gets right to work trying to locate David. When all her efforts fail, Carmen talks to the agency where David rented a car and finds out exactly where the car David rented is at that very moment. It is in Dowingtown. Win asks how far it is to Downingtown, and the two leave on the hour and a half drive.

Chapter 22 Analysis

The irony of the statement by Western Union that the telephone is too complex to be useful is that from this initial and awkward technology, satellite systems can now track rental cars wherever they are. Though the telephone does fail Carmen, satellite technology enables Carmen and Win to track down David.

Carmen is once again put into a situation where someone else needs her, and she rises to the challenge. As usual, Win is there to witness the event, but this time, he joins her.

Tibby is challenged to do something she feels she is not good at, but she tells herself to remain true to her new goal to remove herself from her depression and isolation. She takes on a new role of caring for someone beside herself.



Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Summary

Lena prepares to sketch her father and has the feeling in the back of her mind that it will be to show his anger properly. She understands that she must leave her own emotions behind and see him only with her eyes. In her father's eyes, she notices that there is fear, and she wonders what he is afraid of. She thinks that she knows: it is a fear of her independence and of her growing up and not being something he can be proud of. He is also afraid of growing older and losing the power he has created.

After two hours, Lena lets her father go, and she understands how much he has tried to please her. Later that night, Lena sees her father staring at his portrait and contemplating what its meaning is.

Win is driving Carmen's car while she continues to use the cell phone to try to locate David. Carmen hardly knows Win, but she is able to talk to him much more easily than boys she has actually dated. Carmen tells him that she is very close to her mother, and Win explains that he is close to both his parents and is an only child. He had a baby brother, but he died after living only a few months. Suddenly Carmen realizes that Win has spent his life wishing his brother had lived, while Carmen has spent the summer wishing her mother wasn't even going to have a baby.

At the hospital, Tibby is scolded for using her cell phone because cell phones can cause interference with the monitoring equipment. Even though she is still with Christina, she feels very much alone, and she has a great deal of difficulty handling the pain Christina feels. Finally, she is no longer able to watch helplessly, and Tibby grabs Christina's hands and tells her to squeeze them with the pain she feels from her constant contractions. She does, and Christina begins to focus on Tibby and what she is saying to help her. As Lauren examines Christina once more, she realizes that it is time for her to deliver the baby. Christina, however, rejects their help. She still does not want to deliver until David and Carmen are with her.

Chapter 23 Analysis

Lena begins to sketch her father, expecting to see anger in him. Instead, she begins to see fear. A complex number of fears, often centering his concern for her and for what he wants her to be when she grows up, fills his face. He is scared that she is not turning out as he had envisioned. Through her efforts, she does realize that her father is trying to help her by allowing her to draw him as she sees him.

Tibby continues to find herself in the uncomfortable position of having to comfort someone during her most painful time. It is the need to help Christina that drives her to rise to challenge her own fear and to eventually overcome it without understanding the accomplishment she has just made. Even though Christina continues to fight for what

she wants, Tibby finally realizes that it is not the best option for her health and that of the baby.



Chapter 24

Chapter 24 Summary

Carmen and Win eventually find David at his mother's house, and he joins them in Carmen's car for the drive back to Bethesda. As Carmen is introducing David to Win, she realizes that she doesn't know Win's last name, and he doesn't know her last name. They are driving along at ninety-five miles an hour, and a patrolman stops them for speeding. Carmen jumps out of the car and yells what is happening, and the officer tells them to go on. He will radio ahead so they aren't stopped again.

At the hospital, Tibby remembers that she has traded the Traveling Pants for the hospital scrubs she is wearing. The two nurses are ready for the delivery, and finally, Tibby convinces Christina to let the baby go so it will be healthy for Carmen and David. Finally after a great deal of yelling and coaching, the baby appears and is held up for Christina to see.

Chapter 24 Analysis

Two major events take place in this chapter. First, Tibby is able to shed her fear of being close to someone and is therefore able to complete the task given to her in the hospital. At the same time, Christina is able to shed her fear of having the baby without Carmen and David's presence, which allows for a healthy birth. Both achieve success over their fears at the same time, and each needs the other to achieve this.

Carmen and Win become better friends, finally finding out each other's last names. Carmen makes the decision to focus on getting David united with her mother as opposed to allowing herself to be at the birth without him. This is a major change for Carmen, as she would not have been able to achieve this at the beginning of the summer.



Chapter 25

Chapter 25 Summary

Arriving at the hospital, David, Carmen and Win rush to the delivery room where they meet a slightly befuddled and messy Tibby in the hospital scrubs. They hurry to the room where Carmen is, and all congratulate her and look at the beautiful baby boy.

When Carmen begins to look for Tibby, she realizes that both Tibby and Win are gone, but she does find a note on the Traveling Pants from Tibby telling her to put them on and to create some wonderful memories for herself. Carmen finds Win, and they immediately hug each other. She finally confesses to him that she is not really the good person he thinks she is, but she has often been selfish and unkind. He shows relief and tells her that he was once fat. Looking at him, she sees no fat whatsoever.

As Carmen and Win agree that they are all right together, they end up kissing, and for the first time, Carmen kisses with abandon and from the inside. As they leave the hospital, Carmen realizes within herself that she really is the Good Carmen at last.

Chapter 25 Analysis

Carmen has been successful in allowing her mother and David to come together with the baby, and also with Carmen's total, unselfish blessing. In so doing she is able to pull herself away from the Bad Carmen, and can now feel confident enough in herself that she can allow Win into her life. As a new person has come into the world in the form of her baby brother, Carmen has come into the world as a new and improved "Good Carmen."



Chapter 26

Chapter 26 Summary

Tibby leaves the hospital and walks back into the real world. She sees the harshness in it, but she is determined to allow her newfound self to confront it. She finds Brian, and they walk to Rockwood Pool and make the climb that she wasn't able to accomplish when she was with her friends. Tibby and Brian strip to their underwear and jump into the water.

Bridget is excited about Christina's baby and sends her flowers and balloons. Still, she feels a need to talk to Eric, but he seems to have left the camp for a few days. She can't understand why he would leave without telling her. She tries to call Tibby, Carmen and Lena, but none of them answer. Bridget feels alone for some reason. She doesn't enjoy her usual run. She can't get interested in food, and she can't seem to sit still or relax. She constantly thinks about Eric, and she sees that she is falling into the same situation she did two summers before. It appears it is a one-sided love.

Finally, the time arrives for Lena to draw herself. She puts on the Traveling Pants and sits in front of the mirror. She finds that she sees herself differently than she ever has before. She realizes that she sees someone who is waiting for something, and it is Kostos she is waiting for. He won't come back, though. While she draws herself, she finally discovers that only she can release herself, and she must begin by releasing Kostos from her mind.

Chapter 26 Analysis

Tibby is close to releasing herself from her depression and fear. At the same time, she needs to let Brian know she is ready to connect with him. The return to the pool and the act of climbing the tree and going over the fence show her release of fear, and subsequently, the removal of her clothes in front of Brian signifies the final step she takes to overcome her fears of the early part of the summer.

Bridget cannot release herself from her love of Eric. She sees this flaw in herself, but she cannot make herself turn away from it. When she thinks about her summer two years ago with Eric and the events of this summer so far, she sees it as a dead end, but still cannot make herself change. When Eric leaves and Bridget cannot contact any of her friends, her loneliness magnifies, and she sees that she is not the strong person that she has always thought of herself as.

Lena, typical of herself, has left her own self-portrait for last. As she looks into the mirror to begin, she sees a new person in her reflection. The person she sees is waiting for something or someone, and she realizes that to get over this stage of her life she must release herself from her love of Kostos. Lena knows that the only person who can make that change is herself.



Chapter 27

Chapter 27 Summary

Bridget faces tournament week at camp with a new determination. It is apparent that her team and Eric's team will meet in the final game on Friday. She thinks of nothing else all week, and she doesn't see Eric at all.

On the day of the final game, Bridget has to face the problem of what to do with Naughton. She has decided where to place the other players, but she is stuck on where Naughton could be most effective. Early in the morning, she takes Naughton to the field and tests him as goalie. She finally understands that he can't do a good job in practice because he has too much time to think, and it slows his reactions. She feels he will be very good in an actual game.

Christina finds some time alone with Tibby, and she asks Tibby to be the baby's godmother. Tibby is very excited and agrees, and when Carmen comes in, she is happy for everyone. She announces that she has a date with Win.

The final soccer game between Bridget's team and Eric's is a total defensive battle with no score by either team at the end of the regular game. The overtime will continue until one team misses a shot. When it is Eric's team's turn to shoot, Bridget puts Naughton in as goalie. Everyone on the field is amazed by Bridget's choice. When Eric's kicker shoots the ball, Naughton is immediately on it and blocks the shot, giving Bridget's team the win.

Chapter 27 Analysis

This chapter brings a sense of conclusion and accomplishment to several of the girls. Bridget wrestles with trying the unknown by using Naughton as the final goalie, against the safer decision of using her regular goalie. By winning the game, she has overcome her fear of the unknown.

Meanwhile, Tibby gets recognition and satisfaction of being named the godmother of Christina's baby. This strengthens the feeling of accomplishment of coming out of her shell. Carmen also achieves a success. She finally allows herself to date Win, and she has become confident enough in herself to begin to give a little of herself to someone else.



Chapter 28

Chapter 28 Summary

Lena takes her final portfolio to Annik before submitting it to the scholarship committee. Annik sees it as a sure winner, and she lets Lena know that this is an extremely important event in her life. She tells Lena that she is now an "artist." Lena's heart soars, but she has one last question of Annik: "Why are you in a wheelchair?" Annik says that she thought Lena would never ask.

As Carmen gets ready to go shopping with Win, she pauses to look in on her mother and the baby, now named Ryan. She has changed from thinking of the baby as one more thing to compete for her mother's attention, to someone she can build her world with.

Bridget feels it is time to talk seriously with Eric, and they walk to the dock on the lake where they spent so much time all summer. There is a light breeze, and a full moon lights up the lake. Bridget is barefoot and is wearing the Traveling Pants. She asks Eric to listen to her, and she tells him that she is disappointed that he left the camp without talking to her. She feels they are very close friends and that is not something close friends do. Eric asks Bridget to listen for a while. He explains that he went to New York to tell Kaya that he didn't love her anymore. His thoughts are with Bridget too much for him to give Kaya his full love. Bridget is ecstatic.

Tibby, Lena and Bridget all receive a note from Carmen reminding them that they only have six days until their final beach trip together.

At home, Lena receives a letter from the scholarship committee that she has been given the scholarship. She now does not need her parents' permission or financial help, but she feels that she needs to get her father's permission as a final accomplishment. She dresses nicely and drives to her father's office. He lets her know that he understands he has made her summer difficult, but he says that she can attend the art school with his blessings. He understands her need to pursue art because he has seen her drawings and realizes that her talent is real.

Lena's father gives Valia permission to return to her home, and Valia I-M's her friend in Greece that she is finally coming back. Her friend responds that she is crying with happiness for them both.

Chapter 28 Analysis

Lena's acceptance into the art school and her father's willingness to allow her to attend are very important accomplishments. The fact that her influence has also given her father the insight to allow Valia to return to Greece makes her entire summer's trials and tribulations worthwhile and round out Lena's victory over her personal challenges.



When Bridget finally allows herself to let Eric go, it is the freedom he needs to break off his relationship with Kaya and give himself completely to Bridget. Thus, as Bridget finally achieves freedom from her love of Eric, he can offer his love to her, and she can get her real desire satisfied.



Chapter 29

Chapter 29 Summary

Carmen calls her dad and admits that she has decided she really wants to go to Williams rather than Maryland. He tells her that he will make a phone call for her and see if they will accept her. Ten minutes later, he calls her back and says that Williams will admit her. She jumps with joy, and after hanging up with her father, Carmen wonders if her mother had anything to do with this. Perhaps her father never really called and cancelled her acceptance.

Eric goes to Bridget's cabin and asks her to go for a walk with him. At the last second, she returns to her cabin and puts on the red dress she wore to the senior party. The two walk to the dock and sit in their usual places. He admits that he returned to camp knowing she would be there, and she says that if she had known he would be there, she probably would not have attended. They both agree that she has grown up a lot over the summer. They put their arms around each other and agree that they were meant to be together and that it had to happen some time.

Chapter 29 Analysis

Carmen achieves two of the goals she has unknowingly set for herself for the summer. She has overcome her fear of more competition from the new baby for love and understanding from her mother. Overcoming this fear allows Carmen to feel more secure in leaving home to go to Williams College.

Bridget achieves the goal she set consciously for herself of conquering her love for Eric. In so doing, she matures enough that Eric sees her as the person he really wants to be with. By proving to herself she can overcome this need, she has allowed herself to shed the need and get what she really wanted all the time, Eric's love.



Chapter 30

Chapter 30 Summary

The four girls arrive at the beach house and immediately go into the ocean. Tibby enjoys lying on the beach under the warm sun. She can't keep the vision of her goodbyes to everyone from overwhelming her thoughts, and she knows it will be a melancholy beginning to a new part of her life. The girls receive several phone calls. First, Win calls and tells Carmen that Katherine's hockey helmet is off. Then, Valia calls to ask where the photocopy of the sketch Lena made is, since she wants to take it to Greece. Then a call comes for Bee. It is Eric, and the other girls watch her on the phone. She is in pure heaven. Then, Brian calls for Tibby, and the phones seem to keep ringing all afternoon.

The girls realize how many more people there are within their own inner circle than there were at the beginning of summer. Tibby lies awake that night and wonders at everything that has happened to them all, but she has some trepidation about the new choices they will all have to make and the new things that will compete with the four girls' friendship and closeness.

Tibby finally gets up and walks to the beach, where she finds the other three already. They have had a common feeling and all responded to it. The Pants are put in the middle of a tight circle, with the girls surrounding them, and the four friends think about the future silently. Tibby understands that everything can't always go as planned, and that is part of their futures that makes life real.

Chapter 30 Analysis

The summer ends much as it began, with the four friends all together for one final time. They have grown together in ways they could not have imagined at the beginning of the third summer of the Traveling Pants. They all agree that they will always find a way to be together again in the future.



Epilogue

Epilogue Summary

The last night on the beach, the girls decide to exchange gifts rather than to say goodbye. Carmen gives each girl a frame with three pictures in it. One is of their four mothers when they were young, and one depicts the four girls of the Pants when they were young. The last picture is of them with their families after graduation in the football field, taken only three months before. Bridget's gift is four small chains with four tiny pairs of pants attached as charms. Lena has created four nearly identical drawings. They are pictures of the Pants drawn upside down, and she has added an "e" so the Pants spell "WE." The gift from Tibby is a ten-minute video. Each girl gets a copy. "To brave the undertow, we had learned to hold hands." Epilogue, p. 338

Epilogue Analysis

The epilogue provides closure for the girls as they move into the next stage of life. The gifts that the girls exchange represent the friendship that they will carry with them wherever they go. The Traveling Pants will continue to travel, at least in spirit.



Characters

Carmen Lowell

Carmen is one of the four Girls in Pants. She tends to be reckless and makes mistakes. However, her recklessness tends to turn out all right, and she often is the better for having made those mistakes. Carmen lives with her mother and stepfather, who just got married a year before. She decides to take care of her friend's grandmother, Valia, for the summer. The two disagree a great deal of the time, but their relationship becomes a catalyst for providing them both with something they desperately want and need.

Carmen has always been very close to her mother. When her mother marries David, Carmen becomes uncomfortable with the change in the relationship between her and her mother and feels less secure. She realizes that this distance will be intensified if she goes away from home to college, and she decides to go to a local school so that she can stay at home to protect her relationship with her mother.

As Carmen matures during the summer and begins to overcome the fear of the losing her relationship with her mother, she also begins to allow herself to conquer the very things she felt were her own personal defects. She goes from seeing herself as the "Bad Carmen" to becoming the "Good Carmen."

Al

Al is Carmen's father, who is divorced from her mother. He lives with Krista, but they are not married. Carmen has a difficult time discussing things with him. Al appears to still discuss the important things in Carmen's life with her mother.

Lena Kaligaris

Lena is one of the four Girls in Pants. At the beginning of the story, Lena's life is in turmoil. She is in love with Kostos, a boy who left her after he got another girl pregnant, and Kostos and his new girlfriend have since married. Even Lena's clothes are described as "before Kostos" and "after Kostos." She is not able to release his memory, and it controls her ability to relate to others.

Lena is talented and wants to go to school to study art. However, when her father finds Lena drawing a nude model, he tells her that he is going to withhold funds so that she won't have tuition to get into school. Lena creates a portfolio of drawings of her family that wins her a scholarship to art school, and ultimately her father sees Lena's talent and accepts her decision to pursue art as a career. Through her drawings of her family, Lena is able to see them as they really are and to understand the fears each is hiding. In herself, she sees that she cannot be the person she truly wants to be until she gives up the hope of reuniting with Kostos.



Bee

Bridget (Bee) Vreeland is a soccer player and one of the four Girls in Pants.

She went to soccer camp two summers before and fell in love with Brian, a boy who was four years older than she. She succeeded in seducing him, and she has felt guilty ever since. However, try as she might, Bee cannot get her love of Brian out of her mind, and this is one of the things that keeps him from making a commitment to her at the soccer camp the last summer after high school. She has a fear of allowing him to see her as she really is, and she struggles with her desire to be with him physically. When Bee finally conquers this fear, she becomes the girl Eric wants, and they allow each other into their lives more intimately.

Tibby Rollins

Tibby is another of the four Girls in Pants. She fights the changes within herself that would allow her to mature. When she becomes interested in a boy she has known since she was a little girl, she begins to understand that change is taking place whether she likes it or not. When Tibby's sister falls out of the window of Tibby's room and is hurt badly, Tibby blames herself and withdraws from her family and friends. She battles her depression through most of the novel.

Tibby is slow to accept all the changes taking place around her, and she would rather look to her past than toward the future. She is aware of how things change from the way they were. She wants to learn to produce movies, but when she takes a job in a theater, she begins to feel that movies are just forms of entertainment, not really a way of expressing truth.

Once Tibby allows herself to look realistically at the changes in her life, she begins to understand that her withdrawal is hurting those who love her, and that is the impetus she needs to emerge into the love of her friends.

Alice

Alice is Tibby's mother.

Felicia

Tibby's crazy great grandmother is named Felicia.



Ari Kaligaris

Ari is Lena's mother. She is protective of both Lena and her father, and she finds herself torn between a need to be loyal to her husband and to her daughter, when those loyalties are at odds.

George Kaligaris

Lena's father is George. He is a successful lawyer, but Lena finds out that he harbors a number of fears which make him much more complex than he seems to be. Many of his fears have to do with Lena maturing and not being what he envisioned her, and some of his fears are for himself as he grows older and faces a loss of the power he has created for himself.

Valia Kaligaris

Lena's widowed grandmother is named Valia. Upon coming to live with her son and his family, Valia makes their lives miserable. She is particularly bitter that Kostos and Lena didn't continue their relationship and eventually get married.

Valia yearns for her friends in Greece, whom she misses terribly, but her son feels she cannot take care of herself. He forces her to stay with his family, thinking it is best for her. She harbors a great deal of fear that she is getting so much older and will not ever be able to see her friends in Greece again. This fear is taken out on the whole family and anybody else who comes into contact with her.

Margaret

Tibby's co-worker at the theater is a middle-aged lady named Margaret. She appears to have chosen to be totally alone in life for some unknown reason. Tibby learns that even though you don't understand someone's personal choices, that doesn't mean those choices are wrong. Sometimes people make the right decisions for themselves, even though others think they are wrong.

Effie

Effie is Lena's younger sister. She is close to Lena initially, but she becomes contrary toward Lena when she sees that Lena will be going away to school and leaving her with the older adults.



Brian

Brian has been a neighbor and friend of Tibby and is interested in her as a girl as they get older. He has grown from a dork into a boy that girls drool over. Brian is very understanding of Tibby's withdrawal after Katherine's fall. Brian is a stable boy who is not concerned that he doesn't have a car, and he is not ashamed to play with Tibby's younger siblings.

Kostos

Kostos loved Lena, and she thinks about him all the time. Even Lena's clothes are divided into two categories: those she wore when Kostos loved her and those she has bought since, which seem empty. He got another girl pregnant and married her, but the couple never had their baby.

Katherine

Katherine is Tibby's three-year-old sister. Katherine is completely devoted to Tibby and always has a positive outlook on life no matter what happens to her. Though young, Katherine is a determined little girl who does not forget her goals and continually looks for new ways to achieve them. She falls out of Tibby's window while trying to get an apple from their tree.

The character of Katherine, like that of Brian, represents a commitment of love to Tibby while asking for nothing in return. Understanding this allows Tibby to recognize that she does not contribute to her loved ones' lives through her withdrawal.

Nicky

Nicky is Tibby's younger brother.

Christina

Christina is Carmen's mother. She has recently remarried after living alone with Carmen for several years, and she has become pregnant at thirty-nine years of age. Christina reflects some of Carmen's natural beauty and is devoted to Carmen. However, when she becomes pregnant by her new husband, she struggles with telling Carmen since she senses that Carmen will feel threatened by the news.

David Breckman

David has just married Carmen's mother Christina a year ago. He is a young lawyer working hard to advance.



Alice

Alice is Tibby's mother. Tibby realizes that she doesn't share as much of herself with her mother as she should, especially since her mother the closeness of mother/daughter secrets and intimacies.

Eric Richman

Eric is a boy who broke Bridget's heart at summer soccer camp two years prior to this story. Bridget is four years younger than Eric, but she seduced him, somewhat against his will and somewhat willingly.

As Eric goes on with life, he finds a girl more his own age, and they become lovers and travel together in Mexico. Bridget tries to understand, but she realizes that she must look immature in Eric's eyes, since his new girlfriend has graduated from college already and is more sophisticated. Eric likes Bridget, but her insecurity in her relationship with him keeps him from allowing himself to reach out to her.

Paul Rodman

Paul is Carmen's stepbrother and Lena's previous boyfriend. He has left town to take care of his father, who is very ill, and Lena cannot get him out of her mind.

Annik

Annik is Lena's art teacher, and Lena greatly admires her sensitive drawings of people. Annik is confined to a wheelchair and has beautiful red hair with many shades. She is in her late twenties.

Annik takes on the role of guidance counselor to Lena, and she shows her how to understand the real meaning of people through their features. Through Annik's teaching, Lena learns to accept people as they really are instead of seeing only what she wants to see or what shows on the surface.

Win Sawyer

Win is a boy Carmen meets in the ice cream parlor when Valia falls. He works at the hospital where Valia goes for blood tests and physical therapy. His real name is Winthrop.

Win becomes interested in Carmen, and it seems that every time they meet, Carmen is providing noble assistance to someone. As a result, Carmen thinks Win likes her for someone that he sees, but not what she really is. When Carmen reveals that she is not the perfect person that she seems, Win seems somewhat relieved. Win reveals that he



was once fat, just as Carmen may have once been self-centered. Neither the fat Win had nor the "Bad" Carmen remain.

Naughton

Naughton is a boy on Bridget's soccer team at camp. He's not especially good, but he seems to have a knack for being around the ball, and Bee works hard with him. He wants to spend more time with her off the practice field.

Naughton represents Bridget's process of maturing as she sheds her fear of the unknown and lets Naughton successfully defend the final goal, allowing Bridget's team to win the camp championship.

Ryan Breckman

Ryan Breckman is a star on a soap opera that Carmen especially likes. When her baby brother is born, she convinces her mother to name him Ryan. Carmen is often kidded when she sees a particularly good-looking boy but says that, "He is no Ryan Breckman."



Objects/Places

The Traveling Pants

The four main characters of the story purchased a pair of jeans two summers prior to when this novel begins. They have designed a small sect around the Pants. There is a set of rules to which the girls must adhere when they wear the Pants, and there is a poem that they recite as the Pants are brought out at the beginning of the summer and retired at the end.

The girls take turns wearing the Pants, and they believe that certain magical things can happen to the one who wears them. The group uses the pants as a symbol of hope and achievement, and as a bond to hold them together spiritually when they are apart.

Gilda's

Gilda's is a gym where the four girls' mothers went for exercise while they were pregnant at the same time. In the late 1980s, Gilda's was new and fresh. Now, it appears to be somewhat worn out and not as modern as newer gyms. As the four girls of the Pants have changed, so has the old Gym.

Tibby's Bedroom

Tibby's bedroom has not been cleaned for years, nor has the window been opened. She notices this on the day after her first kiss with Brian. Opening the window to let in the fresh outside air, which symbolizes her first acceptance of change, also allows her sister Katherine to fall out.

The Apple Tree

Outside Tibby's bedroom window stands an apple tree. It bears fruit and symbolizes patience and wisdom. Tibby initially views the tree as hazardous, since her sister falls from the window while trying to get an apple from it. When Tibby climbs down the tree and must sit and look at it until her house is unlocked, she sees through the danger to the reality of the tree as a symbol of learning and knowledge.

Movie Theater

Tibby takes a summer job at a movie theater to try to understand more about how movies are created. Since film is her field of study, she feels it is appropriate. However, she must watch the movies over and over, and soon their magic is lost on her. She begins to feel that the theater is a symbol of commercialism and untruths.



The Hockey Helmet

After Katherine's fall from the roof, she must wear a hockey helmet for the rest of the summer in order to protect her head. When Tibby sees it, it makes her feel guilty for causing the accident.

The Hospital

The hospital is where Katherine goes for emergency treatment after her fall, where Carmen takes Valia for blood work and physical therapy and where Carmen discovers her mother in a class for expectant parents. The hospital is also where Carmen runs into Win several times.

The hospital represents healing and understanding, both mental and physical. Scenes in the hospital generally end with an improvement of some type. Valia improves with her therapy. Katherine gets the helmet taken off her head. Carmen's mother leaves with a new baby, and Carmen and Win find the truths of their relationship while there.

Rockwood Pool

The local swimming pool in Bethesda is Rockwood Pool. Tibby is at first unable to overcome her fear of climbing to get over the pool fence and allow herself to return from her depression. She ultimately takes Brian to the pool to make the climb over the fence, leaving behind her fear and isolation.

Prynne Valley Soccer Academy

Bridget is a soccer coach at the Prynne Soccer Camp for the summer. The camp has separate cabins for boys and girls. The cabins and the dining hall are all made of wide knotty pine planks from floor to the ceiling. There are several soccer fields and a lake where water sports are taught.

The Dock

There is a dock at the lake where Bridget and Eric spend a great deal of time relaxing alone. When she finally decides to talk to Eric at the end of soccer camp, this is where they go. The dock represents tranquility and a feeling of openness and honesty.

Wheelchair

Annik's wheelchair represents an integral part of someone that is not a part of that person's outward physical being, but of their spiritual inner being. The wheelchair is

something that may be considered unpleasant to some, but only by accepting it and embracing it as part of reality can Lena see and appreciate the whole person.



Themes

Maturing of Teenagers

The process of maturing to adulthood is a central connecting idea of the novel. The story initially shows the somewhat carefree attitudes of its main characters as they begin their last summer after high school. They all have the summer mapped out in their minds. The summer will begin with them taking jobs and will end with a party to retire the Pants they formed the club around.

The summer turns out to be very different from what the girls envision. Each girl experiences a certain fear and uncertainty as the summer progresses. During this time, each girl finally identifies the uncomfortable emotion that is plaguing her and has uncertain apprehensions about herself. This identification process is the first in a series of experiences that must be dealt with in order for each girl to conquer her particular fear.

As each girl addresses this portion of her inner growth, each understands what must be given up in order to accept changes that are inevitable in the future and already occurring. While each girl takes a different pathway in her process of moving forward, each discovers a different method of conquering her inner fears and understanding adulthood.

Personal Fear

Part of the process of maturing is conquering personal fear. Carmen's fear is that she will be left out of her mother's life after her mother has a baby. She is worried that while she is away at college, her room, which symbolizes her personal identity, will gradually change to the point it will no longer reflect what she has been for so many years. She addresses this fear by making a conscious decision to stay at home in order to protect her identity and her place in her mother's life. Once she turns this fear around to acceptance of her new baby brother, Carmen begins to see her brother as an addition to her life and to the cohesiveness of the entire family, her stepfather included.

Bridget has a fear that she will have to spend the summer working closely with a boy whom she seduced two years before. She feels she may not be able to control her physical desires, and her fear includes the possibility of humiliation if she is not able to control herself in his presence. Once she is able to conquer this fear, her personality changes to the point that her boyfriend of two years previously sees her as more mature, and thus, more desirable.

Lena's fears are possibly the least noticeable of those of the four girls. Lena's life is in a great deal of confusion at the beginning of the summer. This confusion somewhat masks her fears, and they do not become noticeable as quickly as those of the other girls. Lena's first fear is introduced as a form of desire, the desire that a previous



boyfriend will somehow return and whisk her away romantically. Her fear is that this will not happen, and she spends most of the summer somewhat in a state of confusion due to the uncertainty of this possible event. When Lena learns that her father will not assist her financially in going to art school, another fear surfaces, being denied art school. She tries to secretly continue the summer art class in hopes that her father will not dwell on Lena's preoccupation with this goal. Through her drawings of her family, Lena recognizes each one's personal fear. She finally sees in herself what was not obvious to her before: that she is in a state of confusion because she cannot part with an old boyfriend. Lena needs to rely, not on a teacher or an old boyfriend or her father, but on herself to attain her goals. Lena is able to conquer her fears and move forward with her life's goals.

When Tibby's younger sister falls, Tibby feels guilty and sinks into withdrawal and depression. Even after her sister recovers, Tibby cannot pull herself out of her depression. She has convinced herself that she is somehow providing more support and love to her sister by withdrawing her love from others. In reality, as Tibby discovers, her isolation causes discomfort in her sister and in a boy with whom she had just begun a relationship at the beginning of the summer. This understanding allows her to free herself from her own feelings of inadequacy. At some point, this new freedom allows her love to be released, and in turn her family and friends' love of her increases.

Family Relationships

Throughout the story, family relationships are integral to the development of the various plots and also to each girl's personal identification process. Carmen's relationship with her mother, and the fear of losing it, drive her motives throughout the entire summer. She eventually realizes that the relationship with her mother is secure, and this allows her to expand her acceptance of her stepfather, her new baby brother and her new boyfriend, Win.

Lena's family structure is by far the most expansive. Her family includes her grandmother, her mother, her father and her younger sister. A past boyfriend, while he is not physically in her life during the story, is a part of her family group, since his influence remains overpowering to her. Lena addresses this complexity by analyzing each member of her family individually through her art.

Bridget addresses her lack of family with a tremendous desire to accept any form of family affection as a major event. While the lack of family, or the decrease in family structure, often has a catastrophic effect on the lives of most people, Bridget approaches this void in her own way. Her desire to fill this void through recognition of her achievements and the acceptance of her friends becomes more evident.

Seeing People as They Really Are

An important theme is seeing people as they really are. When Lena is reluctant to draw her art teacher's wheelchair as part of her portrait, she learns that ignoring the



wheelchair means ignoring a part of that person. She goes on to achieve better understanding of her family by seeing them as they are, with all of their fears and complexities. This theme surfaces in each girl's story. Bridget gains insight into herself and begins to see her own actions as they really are when a young boy confesses that he has a crush on her. She recognizes that her own actions of two summers ago were similar, and her new self-knowledge helps her overcome her current problems.

Tibby must learn to see her own depression in perspective. She learns to accept that she is not completely responsible for her sister and that she is hurting herself and others through her withdrawal. Only by seeing the truth about herself can Tibby come out of herself and experience love. Similarly, Carmen needs to learn to see her true self. She thinks that Win has a false image of her because he only sees the "Good Carmen." Carmen must learn to see Win for who he is, instead of as a person who expects her to be perfect. She must also see the truth about herself, since she is, at least in part, the "Good Carmen."

Style

Points of View

The story is told from the third person point of view. While Tibby is the narrator, she includes the other girls' thoughts and feelings in the third person narration. In this way, each of the four girls' character is developed. Tibby is privy to their inner experiences through her close friendship with them, and so, in a way, the Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants is truly the narrator of the story.

The characters, other than the four girls, don't relay their opinions or experiences to the reader. However, their characters are strongly developed through their actions and words. This is particularly true of Valia. It is impossible not to feel her displeasure at being forced to live with her son when she wants to be back home with her friends in Greece. Annik's personality is also revealed through this style when she mentions that she has wanted Lena to ask her what caused her to be confined to a wheelchair.

Brashares uses an unusual tool to develop the characters of Lena's family. The reader seems to learn first-hand the feelings and fears of each of Lena's family members, particularly those of her father, as Lena draws them. Through Lena's eyes, we see into each person's inner world. It is also easy for most readers to see the struggle within Lena's mother between her husband and Lena, who subconsciously opposes her father's decisions.

Setting

Settings common to all four girls are not as important to the construction of the plots as the settings of each individual girl's life. Common settings occur at the beginning when the four friends are together on the football field for pictures after graduation, for the ceremony of the Pants at Gilda's Gym and on the beach in the final chapter. Even in the instances where two or three of the girls share the same setting, the feeling of excitement and tenseness is not apparent.

In Bridget's story, five settings are important to the events that shape her character. These settings are the soccer camp, on the dock at the lake, in the tent on the rafting trip, Eric's bed in the staff cabin and the field where the final soccer game is played. Bridget develops a new level of maturity in each of these locations.

Lena's experiences are, for the most part, in the setting of her house. However, the more important events that occur outside her home happen in the summer classroom where she takes a drawing class. The structure of the room is overshadowed by the nudeness of the model she draws.

Carmen experiences character-building events at the hospital more than any other place, but her room in the apartment with her mother becomes symbolic of her fear of



being distanced from her mother. Her time with Valia also contributes to her process of growing up.

Tibby has perhaps the most significant setting, that of her bedroom and the apple tree growing outside her window. All the events that she experiences here are essentially negative. In this location, she begins the journey to overcome depression and isolation when she decides to clean her musty room and opens the window to let fresh air in. This act and the setting in which it happens are the source of the fall of her little sister and the subsequent firing of the Hispanic woman who has helped the family and befriended the children. Tibby must come full circle to the window again to finally pull herself out of her withdrawal, when she climbs down the apple tree from her window. The other two locations that are important to Tibby are the movie theater, where she struggles with insecurities about her choice of career, and the pool, where her depression is symbolized by the fence that separates her from the joy of the swimming pool.

Language

The novel is designed specifically for teenage girls, and the language reflects this. There is no obscene or abusive speech, little regional slang and no variation from acceptable, mainstream, teenage conversations. The story reads evenly, and there are no instances where a middle-class American teenaged reader would need knowledge outside their normal experiences to understand the story.

There are three exceptions to this. Valia often utters a phrase in Greek, and at one point an e-mail is presented in Greek and then translated into English. Margaret, the girl who works with Tibby at the theater, also utters a few words in a foreign dialect, as does the Hispanic lady that Tibby's father fired when he decided there must be some connection between her and Katherine's fall.

Sex is referred to on several occasions during the events that unfold. However, in this third story of the series, there is no instance of specific sexual activity other than kissing, although the characters refer to sexual relationships in the past.

Structure

The story is related in sections within each of the chapters, each section belonging to a different girl who is having a personal experience. These experiences often occur at the same moment in time as another girl's experiences. At the initial introduction of the plots and characters, this is somewhat confusing until the reader becomes comfortable with each of the girls independently.

There is a prologue that sets the history of the previous two books in the series, followed by thirty chapters and an epilogue. While there are several flashbacks in the form of minor musings of the girls, the chronological flow is interrupted only once. This happens in Chapter Two when Lena relays that, while staying home from school one

day, she saw a talk show where a girl always left a trail of where her life was going so that her real mother could find her if she wanted to. Lena muses that she does this also in case Kostos, a previous boyfriend, should look for her.

Each chapter begins with a quote. The quotes relate to an event that happens to one or more of the girls in the course of that chapter. Interestingly, the variety of quotes used ranges from historical politician Winston Churchill to television host Johnny Carson to characters in the actual novel such as Effie Kaligaris. In addition to the prologue, epilogue and chapters, the book includes a copy of the ten rules the Sisterhood must adhere to when they wear the Pants.



Quotes

"To honor the Pants and the Sisterhood

And this moment and this summer and the rest of our lives

Together and apart." Chapter 1, p. 13

"I'm telling you, they're gross. If they were good, wouldn't we all be eating them instead of buying apples from the bin at the A&P?"

"But we agreed, life is too short not to try for something you want." Chapter 5, p.17

"I feel your pain. I mean, couldn't they have just gotten a dog?" Chapter 5, p. 20

"She's miserable about Bapi. She's miserable that she's in the States living with us. She hates my dad for making her come. She hates everything about this country. She wishes she were in her own home surrounded by her friends. She is furious at everybody, can't you tell?" Chapter 6, p. 59

"Mr. Kaligaris, might it help if you and Lena and I sat down for a few minutes and discussed what we are trying to do in this class? You must know that virtually every art program offers - " Chapter 6, p. 65

"You do. You've got to take up some space, girl." Chapter 12, p. 130

"You could make a really fine drawing, Lena. I can tell this is the right approach for you - portraits, long poses. I can see how deeply you respond to gestures and facial expressions. You'll excel at it if you work hard." Chapter 14, p. 102

"Carmen, that's just sad. Be yourself. If he doesn't like you for yourself, then he ain't worth it." Chapter 15, p. 158

"Hi, Carmen? I hope this is the right Carmen. If this is the right Carmen, then this is Win. If not, it's . . . It's still Win and sorry to bother you. Even if this is the right Carmen, I might be bothering you and I'm sorry if I am. I found your number on the . . . well, never mind. I'm not like a stalker or anything. I swear to God. I've never called somebody up out of the blue like this. But I have to admit I've been thinking about you and . . . 'Beeeeeeep." Chapter 17, p. 180

"If you don't try, you save nothing, because you might as well be dead." Chapter 21, p. 223

"I used to be fat,' Win shrugged. 'I was the fat kid. Since we're uncovering our inner selves, I might as well through that in.'" Chapter 25, p. 281



"The reason it doesn't matter is because you've done it. What happens after is a little of this or a little of that. A little car wreck. A little dread disease. A little heartbreak. Now you are an artist." Chapter 28, p. 307



Topics for Discussion

Discuss what significance the Traveling Pants have toward the girl's security in the novel.

Explain why each girl must overcome her personal fears before she can take the next step toward maturity.

Discuss the true meaning of the apple tree to Tibby.

What is the significance of the drawings of her family members to Lena?

Discuss the reasons Bridget's soccer accomplishments may be important to her.

Trace the event you feel most exemplifies the realization to Carmen that she might actually be the "Good Carmen."

Explain the interpretation of fear Lena discovers in her father when she draws him.

Discuss the significance of Naughton to Bridget.