

Going Bovine Study Guide

Going Bovine by Libba Bray

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| Going Bovine Study Guide..... | 1 |
| Contents..... | 2 |
| Plot Summary..... | 3 |
| The Beginning: Chs. 1 - 7..... | 4 |
| Two Weeks Later: Chs. 8 - 14..... | 7 |
| The Mission: Chs. 15 - 21..... | 10 |
| On the Road: Chs. 22 - 27..... | 14 |
| The Gnome: Chs. 28 - 33..... | 17 |
| Of What Happens: Chs. 34 - 40..... | 20 |
| More Happens: Chs. 41 - 47..... | 23 |
| The End: Chs. 48 - 51 and Ch. 1..... | 26 |
| Characters..... | 28 |
| Objects/Places..... | 32 |
| Themes..... | 35 |
| Style..... | 37 |
| Quotes..... | 39 |
| Topics for Discussion..... | 40 |



Plot Summary

Cameron Smith is an angry 16-year-old loner. His sister, Jenna, is a popular girl who has what Cameron doesn't seem to want: friends, popularity, and good grades. Cameron's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Smith, have a distant relationship and Cameron can barely tolerate spending time with either of them. Cameron deals with his family issues by smoking pot and listening to Portuguese music by the Great Tremolo, an off-key singer with a ukulele.

After what seems to be a bad drug experience, Cameron begins to hallucinate and his body stops responding to his commands. A trip to the doctor, and the psychiatrist, reveals that Cameron has Greutzfeldt-Jakob disease. In layman's terms, Mad Cow disease. Cameron's body will begin to degenerate and so will his mind, he doesn't have much time left and there is no cure.

Cameron is in the hospital when he makes his first friend, a dwarf named Gonzo. After a visit from a punk rock angel, named Dulcie, Cameron convinces Gonzo to run away from the hospital with him and go on an angel-directed quest. Gonzo, a germaphobe, reluctantly agrees and the two go on a quest to find the mysterious Dr. X. Dr. X has opened a black hole between dimensions and the dark matter he accidentally unleashed is what has caused Cameron's sickness. Dulcie has told Cameron that if he finds the doctor he will be cured.

The two boys embark on a journey to find Dr. X. Along the way they have adventures, meet a yard gnome named Balder, test their strength and create a strong friendship. Their trip takes them across the country from Texas to Florida where they eventually end up at Disney World, the place Dr. X has been hiding. Cameron and Gonzo learn the true meaning of life on their adventure and face their darkest fears. In the end, Cameron must face the toughest realization of his life that his life is over.



The Beginning: Chs. 1 - 7

The Beginning: Chs. 1 - 7 Summary

In Chapter 1, Cameron is a sixteen-year-old high school student who lives with his mom, dad and twin sister, Jenna. Cameron remembers the day that he almost died while on the It's a Small World ride at Disneyland when he was 5 years old. He was entranced by the machines and the lights and decided that if he stopped the ride he could save his family from all the craziness of the ride. Cameron jumped out of the boat, into the water and had to be saved by his father. Cameron remembers this as the most alive he has ever felt.

In Chapter 2, Cameron is in English class and is bored out of his mind. He has two teachers today, an English teacher and a Spanish one, as they are reading Cervantes' Don Quixote. The teacher's are teaching together in an effort to get the students prepared for the state's standardized test. Cameron isn't impressed with the class and is even less impressed with Chet King, top jock and his sister's current boyfriend. Cameron falls asleep and is startled awake by a dream about flames. He claims he jumped because he saw a cockroach and the teacher sends him for a janitor. Cameron leaves class and heads to the fourth floor men's room where he meets up with a group of stoners who share their pot with him. The group in the bathroom is discussing Schrodinger's dilemma, a theory in which scientists ponder if a cat in a box is dead or alive. Before Cameron leaves a dwarf, Gonzo, joins the group and is introduced to Cameron.

In Chapter 3, Cameron makes it to the end of the day and is on his way out of the building when he stops to harass his sister. Jenna is pretty, popular, smart and really doesn't want anything to do with her brother. She is by the lockers with the rest of the dance team when he begins to tease her. Jenna gives as good as she gets and clearly wants Cameron to go away. Chet comes up to Jenna and asks Cameron if he will be going to the football game. He also talks about the fact that his pastor thinks they shouldn't be reading Cervantes in class, it can make them ask questions they shouldn't.

In Chapter 4, Cameron heads for Eubie's Hot Wax, an independent records store that specializes in old LPs. Eubie tries to get Cameron to listen to some jazz, but Cameron isn't interested. He picks up the record he ordered and leaves. Eubie tells him to get a life and a girlfriend and to spend some time away from the store. Cameron heads to the university across the street where his father is a physics professor. When he arrives, his father is flirting with a young teaching assistant. Cameron asks to borrow the car and his father refuses. Cameron gets up to leave but his foot has fallen asleep, he trips and breaks a snow globe all over his father's desk. His dad is disgusted. He gives Cameron his ID card, so he can buy a book, and they part ways. Cameron buys his book and catches the bus home. As he is looking through the window at the sky he catches a glimpse of large wings, but dismisses it.



In Chapter 5, Cameron arrives home to find that the house is his for the evening. His mom made lasagna, but he orders pizza instead, turns on the TV and gets stoned. As Cameron is sitting he sees something white run by the doorway. Grabbing a frying pan he goes upstairs to check things out. He finds a white feather on the windowsill with the word "hello" written on it.

In Chapter 6, Cameron is sleeping off his pot hangover when his mother comes to wake him up. He has promised to mow the lawn and he needs to get up for his job at Buddha Burger. Cameron tells his mom he will do it later and she leaves the room. When he wakes up he is late for work. As he drives away he sees his father mowing the lawn. Cameron clocks in to work and is given a lecture by his boss and a co-worker. Cameron's co-worker goes on break just as his sister's popular friend, Staci, comes in with friends. Cameron takes their order and makes their drinks. However, when he delivers the drinks his arms begin to twitch uncontrollably. The drinks fly and coat Staci and her friends from head to toe. Cameron's boss fires him on the spot. As Cameron is trying to figure out what happened, he looks into the dining area and sees a girl with pink hair and large, white feather wings. He hands in his Buddha Burger badge, but when he looks back the girl is gone.

In Chapter 7, Cameron's dad comes home and announces they are going to have an early family dinner. Jenna and Cameron try to get out of going, but it doesn't work. Cameron envisions a long, painful dinner ahead where his parents don't get along. Cameron is bitter that his father wants to have family time and feels it is due to the fact that he has been working late with his TA, Raina, whom Cameron is convinced his father is seeing. Dinner isn't fun. Jenna asks to go on a church ski trip with Chet and is turned down. Cameron's father makes him feel like a loser because he isn't doing well in school. Cameron's mother has news about a job that no one really cares about. After dinner, Cameron is approached by a homeless man who tells him the world is going to end.

The Beginning: Chs. 1 - 7 Analysis

In Chapter 1, Cameron speaks as if he has some sort of chip on his shoulder. He retells the story of his drowning and suggests to the reader that in his life he has never felt truly alive. He couldn't explain to his mother why he jumped off the ride, but he seemed to be searching for something.

In Chapter 2, Cameron is bored with life, bored with class and is unimpressed with school. He is a cynical boy and finds some humor in the fact that Chet went from being a star football player to religious nut, but still thinks it is ok to have sex with lots of girls. Cameron seems to get along with many different groups at school, but he doesn't belong to any of them.

In Chapter 3, as Cameron is harassing his sister he begins to think about the state of their household. Their father is always at work, their mother lives through her children and the family only communicates through notes and messages. Cameron feels that



Jenna's way to cope with the dysfunction is to be more and more perfect. It is clear from the conversations around the locker that Jenna is a bright girl who is trying to keep up a façade.

In Chapter 4, Cameron and his father clearly don't see eye-to-eye. Cameron has a slight suspicion that his father may be having an affair with his TA, but he doesn't want to think too much about it. His father doesn't understand him, and he doesn't understand why Cameron doesn't do well in school. It is apparent that Cameron's father would like him to be interested in his life at the university, but Cameron isn't interested.

In Chapter 5, Cameron is high, again. He is also in the house alone. For the third time in the book, a fire has been mentioned. Once Cameron dreamed of fire in class, another time there was a mention of a fire in a free paper, now there is a brief mention of fire on TV. This may become a theme in the book. When Cameron finds the feather on his windowsill it appears that he is about to find out about the winged creature he saw from the bus window.

In Chapter 6, Cameron just doesn't care about school, his family, his job, or life in general. His early comment to Chet, that he belongs to the religion of apathy, seems to be very true. Cameron makes his way through his shift until he is completely humiliated in front of Staci. But his embarrassment is forgotten when he sees some sort of angel in the dining room of Buddha Burger.

In Chapter 7, the dinner scene is horribly painful. Cameron's father seems to be the jerk that Cameron says he is. He is disapproving of his son and doesn't treat his wife and daughter much better. Cameron is completely disrespectful and, just slightly, hurt by his father's words. Cameron's mother seems to be a shell of a woman.



Two Weeks Later: Chs. 8 - 14

Two Weeks Later: Chs. 8 - 14 Summary

In Chapter 8, Chet is in the 4th floor bathroom again. However, this time he isn't getting stoned, he is getting sick. He makes it back to English/Spanish class and is almost in a full-blown panic. He can't think and he can no longer control himself. He begins to curse at the teachers and his arms are flailing as Chet tries to escort him to the principal's office. Cameron accidentally punches Chet and the football players in class attack him. Cameron is suspended and his mother drives him home. Once at home, his father comes home early and his parents question him about drug use. They decide that he is no longer allowed privacy and he is to go to counseling. Cameron tries to tell them he isn't on drugs, but they don't believe him. The final blow comes when Jenna tells him not to acknowledge her anymore. She tells him that Chet is a good guy and that she doesn't understand why Cameron would punch him.

In Chapter 9, Cameron meets with his drug counselor and doesn't make much progress. The therapist doesn't want to hear what is going on with Cameron, she wants to hear things that reinforce what she already thinks of him. He tries to tell her that maybe he had some bad pot, but she tells him he must be on hallucinogens. She then talks about herself for the rest of the hour. Cameron then meets with a psychiatrist recommended by the therapist. He opens up to the psychiatrist, telling him about the winged girl, the white feather, the pain he has had and the fire he keeps seeing. Cameron is given a prescription for anti-psychotic medications and laughs at the irony of the drug counselor telling him not to do drugs and the doctor giving him drugs to take.

In Chapter 10, Cameron's medication is making him exhausted, but for some reason he still can't sleep. He finds himself at home alone one night and decides to go to Eubie's to find some music. Eubie invites him to hang out, but Cameron turns him down. Cameron takes some CDs with him and decides to go for a bike ride down a dark road. He gets down the road and is suddenly scared. The weather is getting bad and Cameron worries there might be a tornado. Before he can bike back down the road, lightning explodes in the sky and trees around him begin to catch on fire. He sees a burning man in front of him and thinks that he hears people screaming. As he pedals down the road he notices a figure standing in the road in front of him. It is a huge knight in shining armor carrying a sword. Just as Cameron begins to freak out the figure disappears. Cameron goes home to Google "bad pot experiences" thinking he has smoked some bad weed. As he is searching a picture of the Disney ride, It's a Small World, comes up on the screen along with the picture of a feather that reads: "Follow the feather." He clicks on the feather and is shown a video clip of a scientist pondering the meaning of life and if there is an afterlife. The scientist speaks about there being eleven dimensions. As Cameron is getting into the video he hears a siren going off in his head and his mother calls from downstairs. He realizes that he has been sleeping. Cameron heads down stairs where his mother and sister are fixing breakfast. He is convinced that the toaster is overheating and will burst into flames. Cameron



approaches the toaster as it goes up in flames. The flames have eyes and seem to be trying to claw at him. His mother screams and tackles him to the floor, but Cameron can't stop screaming and writhing in pain. It is unclear if Cameron is really experiencing this or if he is having some sort of seizure or attack.

In Chapter 11, Cameron is at the hospital and is being subjected to different tests. He is in the MRI machine and is beginning to get worried. His father comes home from work early and expresses that he is worried about Cameron. He tells Cameron that he has scheduled an appointment with a specialist in Dallas for the next day. The specialist tells Cameron and his family that he has Greutzfeldt-Jakob disease, the human form of Mad Cow disease. The doctor doesn't say that Cameron will die, but it is pretty clear. He will begin to lose control of his body, develop dementia, hallucinations and progressive muscle decline. Cameron's father is irate that the doctor can't figure out how he contracted the disease. Cameron is overwhelmed.

In Chapter 12, Cameron has been surfing the internet since receiving his diagnosis. The things he finds there are not comforting and confirm to him that the disease is terminal. The school has put together a virtual pep rally for him live from the gym. The entire school is there to say nice things about Cameron and to celebrate his bravery. Cameron is there too on the Jumbo Tron being projected from home. At the end of the rally Cameron sees the girl with pink hair and wings whom he has been noticing over the past few weeks. When he sees her, he passes out.

In Chapter 13, Cameron finds himself in the hospital when he wakes up from passing out. While he is still in the process of waking up he begins to hallucinate about cows and black holes. He overhears his parents giving permission for experimental treatment, then he is out again for a few days. Cameron spends a total of two weeks in the hospital. His mother comes and talks to him about memories of their Disneyland trip. His father sits by his bedside, Chet comes to see him and they argue. Chet is trying to convince Cameron to believe in Jesus and God, claiming that faith will help him to understand why this is happening. Cameron is too angry to hear Chet's advice and isn't sure how he feels about it anyway. He meets his new nurse and asks her if he will be cured. She doesn't have an answer. Cameron is also visited by the ninety year old woman across the hall. She tells him that she wasn't meant to die at the hospital; she also tells him that she has seen the giant flaming knights he has seen. As the chapter ends, the pink haired angel tells Cameron to wake up. He awakens, but can't breathe and is given shots and a breathing tube.

In Chapter 14, Cameron finally wakes up to find that he is still alive. He also finds that he has a roommate. Paul Ignacio Gonzales, Gonzo, the dwarf from the fourth floor bathroom at school. The two have a few things in common, including being sick and stuck in the hospital. Gonzo explains that he is in the hospital often because his mother worries about everything. In fact, she calls twice while the boys are talking. Each time with a new ailment or worry she found on the internet. Gonzo asks Cameron if he is going to die and Cameron tells him he isn't sure. Gonzo is in the hospital now because he was given a growth hormone that was cow derived, when his mother heard Cameron had Mad Cow she freaked out and sent him for testing. While Gonzo argues with his



mom, in a mix of English and Spanish, Cameron turns on his Tremolo music and fades out.

Two Weeks Later: Chs. 8 - 14 Analysis

In Chapter 8, it is becoming increasingly obvious that something is wrong with Cameron. His hallucinations are getting worse and his muscle spasms are becoming more uncontrollable. Unfortunately, his previous drug use and bad attitude are standing in the way of him getting help.

In Chapter 9, Cameron is beginning to understand that something is going on with him and that he needs help. It is clear that he isn't going to get it from the drug counselor. However, he seems to feel comfortable enough with the psychiatrist to tell him what has been happening.

In Chapter 10, Cameron's imaginings are getting weirder. At this point it isn't clear if what he is experiencing is reality or not. However, whatever it is, it is reality to him. The odd hallucinations and feelings of pain he has been experiencing are getting worse. In this chapter they seem to culminate and it becomes clear to his family that something is really wrong.

In Chapter 11, Cameron is scared and confused about his diagnosis. It is clear that his father is also scared and confused because he can't solve Cameron's problem and he can't control the situation. It appears that Cameron will die within the next four to six months.

In Chapter 12, he school is trying to give Cameron support, but Cameron is so angry that he can't accept it. He is bitter as he looks around the crowded pep rally and wonders why him and not them.

In Chapter 13, Cameron's days in the hospital have been a blur of visitors, medications and hallucinations. He begins to struggle with the meaning of life and whether or not there is a God. The idea of escaping the hospital to live life to the fullest is introduced by the old woman who visits him from across the hall. A few days after her visit, the constant coughing coming from her room has stopped. Cameron hopes she was able to leave and didn't die at the hospital.

In Chapter 14, Gonzo is a familiar face for Cameron and is someone he can relate too. The pair both have illnesses that greatly effect their lives, they also know each other from school and have common interests.



The Mission: Chs. 15 - 21

The Mission: Chs. 15 - 21 Summary

In Chapter 15, Cameron wakes up in the hospital to a bright light. He shields his eyes and someone speaks to him. It is Dulcie, the pink haired angel who has been following him. Dulcie invites Cameron to feel her black and white checkered wings so he will believe she is real. Cameron is completely freaked out. Dulcie gives Cameron a mission. He must find Dr. X and save the world from destruction. If he can do this in two weeks, he will be cured. Oh, and Gonzo has to go with him. Cameron thinks he is crazy. Dulcie tells him that Dr. X, a physicist, has discovered the secret to traveling in time and space. In this last trip he brought dark matter back with him. The dark matter is what is attacking Cameron. Because Cameron has been infected by the dark matter, he will be able to decode the clues left by Dr. X and find his whereabouts. She gives Cameron an old laminated Disney wristband that has been specially treated with medicine. Dulcie tells him that he will be well for two weeks because of the medicine in the wristband. The wristband has the different parts of Disneyland listed in the following order: Adventureland, Frontierland, Liberty Square, Frontierland, and Tomorrowland. Cameron ignores Dulcie and goes back to sleep, but when he wakes up he decides to take up her challenge. What does he have to lose?

In Chapter 16, Cameron wakes up Gonzo when his parents and sister leave the room. He tells Gonzo about the visit from Dulcie and about the mission she wants them to go on. Gonzo clearly thinks Cameron is nuts, but he is also just a little bit interested. Cameron gets out of bed and gets dressed, ready to begin his mission. Gonzo tells him to wait for him, he will go too.

In Chapter 17, Cameron and Gonzo make a nervous escape from the hospital, carefully dodging the nurses and orderlies working the floor. They make it outside, but aren't sure what to do from there. Cameron has Gonzo call a cab and they get in. Cameron decides to trust in Dulcie's advice and follow the signs. He looks up to see a billboard with directions telling him to go to a certain street. The boys take the cab to the street and find themselves at the bus station. However, there are no buses until the following morning. While trying to determine what to do next, they are met by the janitor who is cleaning around them. He is the homeless man with the tinfoil hat Cameron met while waiting for his parents after dinner so many weeks before. The janitor tells them there is a bus, the Fleur-de-Lys, leaving for New Orleans that night. Gonzo agrees to go to New Orleans and Cameron uses his emergency credit card to buy the tickets.

In Chapter 18, the boys have a long trip to New Orleans. Cameron sleeps most of the way, but is occasionally woken up by the woman seated next to him. She is a long time resident of the city. She gives Cameron an old, worn out match book that is a replica of the Junior Webster album he saw at Eubie's. Cameron accepts the book and puts it in his pocket. The boys stop to eat at a seafood café. Gonzo is too afraid of germs and illness to order anything on the menu. This annoys both Cameron and the waitress. The



boys argue, trade insults, eat and then forget about it all. They end up at a parade downtown while they figure out what to do next. Cameron pulls the matchbook out of his pocket and tells Gonzo they are going to head to the bar that is listed on the package.

In Chapter 19, the boys head off to find the address of the jazz club listed on the matchbook. Cameron isn't sure what he will find there, but he thinks it will be about jazz musician Junior Webster. The club is called the Horn and Ivory. When they arrive they meet a drag queen, Ms. Demeanor, who agrees to take them to find Junior at the club. The club moves from time-to-time so they will need her to get in the door. Ms. D seems to understand that the boys are on a special sort of mission. She sees and knows more than she is saying. Once they find the club, Cameron is taken to see Junior Webster while Gonzo stays with Ms. D. It is unclear to Cameron if Junior is dead or alive, when he meets the musician he determines the guy must be alive just really old. Junior shares his passion for music with Cameron. Cameron has never understood jazz music, but now he is able to understand it. Junior asks Cameron to keep his sunglasses and bury them under the angel. Cameron agrees even though he doesn't know what Junior is talking about. Junior tells Cameron that he knows about Dr. X and he also knows about the flaming knight, whom he calls The Wizard of Reckoning. Cameron and Gonzo meet back up in the club and Junior asks the boys to play the guitar and drums while Junior has a last stand horn battle with The Wizard of Reckoning, the same flaming knight that has been chasing Cameron. If the Wizard wins the battle, Junior will have to pay with his horn. The Wizard wins, but Junior pays with his life. Before he dies, he gives Cameron his horn. The boys escape the club and run into a homeless man who tells them that all things are buried under the angel in the graveyard. Cameron and Gonzo aren't sure, but they think this might be a clue as to where to bury Junior's glasses. Cameron notices that the part of his bracelet that lists Adventureland has begun to fade, indicating that his reprieve from his illness is running out.

In Chapter 20, Cameron and Gonzo take a cab to the run down area of New Orleans where the cemeteries are. They don't know where to look first until Gonzo reads the name of one cemetery named Cypress Grove. Cypress Grove Blues is the name of a Junior Webster song. They enter the graveyard and Gonzo is completely freaked out. The boys look for an angel to bury the glasses under, but realize there are tons of angels in the graveyard. They spot a mausoleum and Gonzo stops to help some girls who are taking pictures in the graveyard. Cameron continues to the mausoleum and finds Dulcie waiting for him. She tells him she can't help him find the right angel, that she is just the messenger, so out of frustration Cameron buries the glasses under Dulcie's feet and waits. While waiting he trips over a rock and finds a scrap of newspaper with different personal ads on it. At the bottom, next to the ad for the Roadrunner Bus Line is the message: Follow the Feather. Cameron takes this as a sign and is going to tell Dulcie when he sees that she has disappeared.

In Chapter 21, the boys arrive at the Roadrunner Bus Company to find that the only busses out are headed to Daytona, Florida. They purchase tickets with Cameron's father's credit card and notice police have entered the station. The police are passing out "missing" fliers with their pictures on them. The boys run to the bus and bury themselves in the back until the police leave and the bus pulls away. They take some



time to talk on the road and play some cards. Gonzo wants to have a deep conversation with Cameron about knowing what people are really like inside, but Cameron doesn't seem to want to go there. Cameron's leg begins to twitch and he notices that Adventureland has disappeared from his bracelet and Frontierland is fading. He falls asleep hoping he won't have a seizure on the bus. Cameron dreams that his mother is in the hospital room with him reading to him. She is reminiscing about reading to him as a child and wonders why they stopped, he can't respond but squeezes her hand so she knows he is listening. In the background, the TV is playing Roadrunner cartoons.

The Mission: Chs. 15 - 21 Analysis

In Chapter 15, Dulcie, whose name is similar to Dulcinea of Don Quixote, has given Cameron a mission. He is to complete a quest as the main, action plot of the book. It is obvious by now that Cameron's character plot will be one of growth and self discovery, now the reader has been given the vehicle in which that change will occur. .

In Chapter 16, just like Don Quixote, Cameron now has a quest and a Spanish speaking side kick. Gonzo is unsure about the risks they are taking by leaving the hospital, but he seems to understand that Cameron needs a friend as much as he, Gonzo, needs some adventure.

In Chapter 17, Cameron decides to undertake his quest based on faith. His faith that he is not completely nuts and that Dulcie is telling the truth about Dr. X and the end of the world. His trust in "signs" (quite literally) leads them to the next leg of their adventure - a bus to New Orleans, Louisiana.

In Chapter 18, the drama in the seafood restaurant shows just how limited of a life Gonzo has been living. He doesn't eat shellfish just in case he is allergic, no seafood because of mercury, and no salad bar for fear of listeria. Gonzo's anxiety drives Cameron nuts. It seems that Gonzo, too, has a journey of personal growth and discovery ahead of him.

Chapter 19 is the longest chapter so far in the book. During the chapter Gonzo becomes a little more adventurous and Cameron begins to trust more in the clues and signs he has been seeing. The entire scene with Junior Webster in his room and in the club is a surrealistic experience. It plays out like a confused hallucination, especially when Junior and the Knight battle in the club. For a moment, Cameron seems to be in his hospital bed, but then the moment is gone. It is unclear if the author is implying that New Orleans is real and the hospital is a hallucination, or if it is the other way around. During this confusing moment, Cameron has a paragraph long flashback of being at Disneyland with his family.

In Chapter 20, Cameron is worried that no matter what he does he might just be on a wild goose chase. He wants Dulcie to help him, but she seems to just be there as a person for him to talk to. Not as a person to help him find his physical way to Dr. X. It is

still unclear why Cameron needs Gonzo on the trip. He seems to need to take care of Gonzo's mental health and doesn't necessarily enjoy the companionship.

In Chapter 21, Cameron is beginning to feel a real responsibility for Gonzo, so when Gonzo begins to talk about being lonely Cameron tunes him out. He doesn't want to be more responsible for Gonzo's happiness. Again it is unclear if the hospital is reality or if the bus ride is. However, the tie-ins between the two places are becoming more pronounced: the Roadrunner, Don Quixote, his mother.



On the Road: Chs. 22 - 27

On the Road: Chs. 22 - 27 Summary

In Chapter 22, Cameron wakes up on the bus and finds Dulcie sitting in the seat in front of him. For a few minutes he is worried people will think he is crazy, but he gets over that when he realizes everyone is asleep. Cameron is developing a crush on Dulcie and asks her a few personal questions about her life when she was alive. It is clear that Dulcie will not answer his questions. Instead, she talks about how living people take the small things in life for granted. Cameron tells her about his dream about his mother and wonders aloud why he didn't remember her reading to him. The bus stops for gas in Mississippi, Dulcie leaves and the boys get off for a break and snacks. Cameron goes to use the phone and leaves Gonzo to watch the bus and play video games. Cameron calls home and talks to Jenna. She is worried about him and tries to get him to come home. His father gets on the phone and asks him where he is. Dulcie appears and tells Cameron that the phone is being traced. He has a mission to accomplish and he is going to have to forget about home until he succeeds. Her words upset Cameron and he tells Dulcie to go away and leave him alone, then he goes to the bathroom and takes a long look in the mirror. He looks pale and sick. Cameron returns to Gonzo only to find that the bus has left, stranding them in Mississippi.

In Chapter 23, Cameron is pissed at Gonzo that they missed the bus. The boys are stuck in Mississippi and are walking down a dirt road. Gonzo calls his mom to get help and she tells him there is an unidentified spot on his lungs. He hangs up with her and Cameron picks a fight with him. He tells Gonzo that his mother is making him crazy and that her paranoia is keeping Gonzo from living his life. Gonzo punches Cameron and tells him that his mother gave up a good life as a singer for him and that he owes her everything. Cameron begins to shake and sees an army of Fire Giants coming up through the road. He battles the giants and begins to lose his sanity. Instantly he is in the hospital with his mother and nurse, Glory. They are calling a doctor because he can't breathe and is getting more sick. When Cameron wakes up in Mississippi again he is lying in the road about to be run over by a van. Two kids get out of the van, Daniel and Ruth, and offer to take the boys to their compound where they can see a doctor. Cameron is all about going, but Gonzo is reluctant . . . he thinks they are serial killers.

In Chapter 24, Cameron and Gonzo find themselves in a commune called CESSNAB, the Church of Everlasting Satisfaction and Snack 'N' Bowl. The goal of the community is to prevent unhappiness at all costs. The people at CESSNAB take great strides to be equal to each other. Daniel and Ruth explain that competition creates unhappiness. When you think about good things like bowling, buying jeans and drinking shakes you will stay happy. They take Cameron and Gonzo to a special bowling alley where Cameron's confidence is boosted as he bowls perfect games on after another. An unhappy member of the community, Thomas, is still sad after bowling so commandos come to escort him away. Daniel and Ruth explain that the community can't afford to have negative people around, they also state that they are worried about Gonzo.



Cameron tells him about his disease and mission and they tell him he can cure himself by being happy. Cameron thinks about Dulcie and begins to frown, when it seems that Ruth is about to call the commandos he reassures them he is fine.

In Chapter 25, Gonzo tries to get Cameron to understand that CESSNAB is some sort of cult. He doesn't buy the fact that everyone is wonderful or that being happy will cure all your problems. Cameron is angry by what Gonzo says and tries hard to hang on to the warm feelings he has had over the past five days. He goes to the library in an attempt to find a copy of Don Quixote. There he meets Library Girl, a tough girl who explains to him that they only have a book on happiness at the library. He takes it, but when he opens it and reads he begins to question some of the writings. Library Girl sarcastically asks him if he liked the book and he answers back in a sarcastic way. She asks him to meet her in the bowling alley in five minutes. When they meet she shows Cameron that the balls in the alley are rigged with magnets so that no one ever loses. Cameron begins to lose his faith in the abilities of CESSNAB. Library Girl suggests to him that bitterness, anger and unhappiness are all a valuable part of the human experience. Then she gives a signal for revolution. She ties Cameron to her and they escape to a control room where Library Girl begins to read Hamlet over the loudspeaker. Cameron is in a daze as Daniel and Ruth break into the room with commandos. The commandos violently force Library Girl to give up her book and Daniel knocks Cameron out with the butt of a gun.

In Chapter 26, while Cameron is unconscious he feels himself riding in a ride around the hospital. He sees his parents and notices that his mother has discovered his father's affair; he also sees his nurse who talks to him and changes his IV bag. Then he is awakened by angry, violent Daniel and Ruth. Ruth beats him with the literature book containing Hamlet while Daniel threatens to cut him out like a cancer. They take him to the bowling alley where everyone has gathered. Daniel intends to brainwash Cameron by having him bowl perfect games. However, Library Girl has turned the magnets off of the lanes. Cameron bowls, but only gutter balls. Daniel and the others are in disbelief. Other members of the community begin to bowl. They enjoy being competitive with each other and eventually there is complete chaos. CESSNAB members are cursing, fighting and singing happy songs. Gonzo comes in to save Cameron and they walk away, cracking jokes about CESSNAB and happiness.

In Chapter 27, Cameron and Gonzo stop for the night at a seedy motel that rents rooms by the hour. The place is so old and gross that Gonzo immediately freaks out and wants to call his mom. Again, Cameron makes a comment about Gonzo's mother not allowing him to live his life. Gonzo reaches for his inhaler and has a panic attack when he can't find it. Cameron finds the inhaler and Gonzo begins to reminisce about an event that happened as a kid. He was invited over by the neighbor kids to play. The kids dared him to go across the monkey bars and, even though they were too high for Gonzo, he did. He was on the last bar when his mom started screaming. Her fear convinced him that he couldn't make it and he fell, breaking a rib and having to stay at the hospital. He said he hated her for that, and because from then on he thought he needed her to live. Cameron tries to lighten Gonzo's mood when he begins to cry. Gonzo recovers and



asks Cameron if he ever thinks of dying. Cameron doesn't answer, but thinks about his family and how much he misses them.

On the Road: Chs. 22 - 27 Analysis

In Chapter 22, Cameron is beginning to appreciate the small things in life that Dulcie talks about, but in his own way. He isn't as excited about microwave popcorn, like she is, but he appreciates the time he and his mom spent together and misses his family when he is on the phone with them.

In Chapter 23, Cameron's condition is getting worse. Despite the wristband Dulcie gave him, he is becoming more and more weak. He is upset with Gonzo for making up diseases and reasons to die and tells Gonzo that the worst thing might happen and Gonzo just might have to live. Cameron doesn't say it, but his frustration lies in the fact that he is the one who is going to die, not Gonzo.

In Chapter 24, CESSNAB is a Nirvana like commune. However, they do not tolerate anyone who will bring bad feelings to their community or question how things work. It seems that they use the power to positive thinking, and possibly drugged smoothies, to keep everyone docile and in line. Cameron likes feeling happy and enjoys not having to worry about the world around him however, Gonzo is not happy with how things are turning out. He is anxious to get back on their quest.

In Chapter 25, Cameron desperately wants to pretend like his world is safe and secure. The best way for him to do that is for him to follow the positive vibe of CESSNAB. However, he knows that something about the place isn't right. When Library Girl speaks of negativity being a part of human nature Cameron can't help but believe her. It is his nature to be pessimistic and to question the things around him.

In Chapter 26, Cameron walks away from CESSNAB with a better understanding of life. The message seems to be that no one can be happy all the time, and if they are, they are living a lie. Happiness comes when you can see the absurd, or the good things among the bad.

In Chapter 27, Cameron is coming to terms with his possible fate. He is also beginning to understand some of what Gonzo has gone through. Cameron knows he will die, yet wants to live. Gonzo is not dying, but is afraid to live.



The Gnome: Chs. 28 - 33

The Gnome: Chs. 28 - 33 Summary

In Chapter 28, Gonzo falls asleep, but Cameron is too wired to rest. He walks to the convenience store to look around. He uses the payphone to call home and tells his dad he loves him. While in the store his arms begin to twitch and he knocks over a shelf, getting himself kicked out of the store. Outside he meets Tara and Justin, two teens who are on their way to a party. They invite Cameron to join them and he gets into the truck with them. On the way to the party they stop to skinny dip (except Cameron) get high and knock over mailboxes. Once at the party Justin goes in to make a drug deal and Cameron is left alone to wander around. In the yard he runs across a yard gnome, named Balder, who claims to be a Norse god and the son of Odin. Cameron is convinced Balder is a hallucination until he frees the gnome and Balder steals \$3,000 from the party. The two call a cab and head back to the hotel. Balder thinks Cameron is a kind person and asks if he can join him on his journey. Cameron agrees, but only if Balder will talk to Gonzo so that Gonzo doesn't think he has completely lost his mind.

In Chapter 29, Cameron, Gonzo and Balder sit down at a diner to eat and figure out a plan. Gonzo is not happy about having Balder with them and feels that Balder is just a dwarf who hates himself and won't admit he is a dwarf. Balder makes a show of stabbing himself with a knife to prove he is really a gnome and Gonzo freaks out. Cameron begins to think of his mother and leaves her a phone message telling her he loves her. When he hangs up he sees Dulcie who has forgiven him for being a jerk. She shows him footage of Dr. X, which Cameron had seen on the internet, and leaves looking worried. Cameron returns to the table to find Gonzo and Balder causing a scene. They are taking money from people in return for a chance to try and kill Balder. Cameron breaks up the show and then smells smoke. The fire giants and the Wizard of Reckoning have shown up. They burn down the restaurant and motel and then suck it into the black hole with them. Cameron tries to explain to Gonzo what happened, but his friends think he is nuts. They decide to keep on going to Florida and Cameron decides they need to buy a car to take them there.

Chapter 30:

The boys, and gnome, show up at a seedy car lot and purchase a 1968 Cadillac. The car is as big as a boat and is painted blue and gold with cow horns on the hood. The slick salesman takes the rest of their \$3,000 and tells them to treat the car well. At the last minute he tells Cameron that his parents will have to sign for the car. Balder, who has said nothing to this point, begins to spout phrases and they convince the salesman that he is a talking doll prototype. The man agrees to take a newer version of Balder in exchange for Cameron's parents' signature. They drive the car off the lot and are excited to be driving on the open road. Balder impresses Gonzo with his knowledge of the sci-fi movie Star fighter and the two bond.



Chapter 31:

The road trip is fun for all three of the boys. They laugh to Tremolo's terrible music and talk about why people don't ever have to pee in action movies. Balder says that he enjoys the music of Copenhagen Interpretation and tells a story of how the band dropped from the sky in ancient times, sang, brought peace and then left again through an opening in the sky. Cameron doesn't tell the others, but he begins to see puppets from It's a Small World while driving down the road.

Chapter 32:

It is raining when Cameron sees a sign for Hope, Georgia. The sign has a feather on it, so Cameron decides to pull off. Balder is sleeping and Gonzo quickly follows. Cameron runs across a gas station on a dead end road and is approached by an old man. The man tells him that what he is looking for is past the dead end, if Cameron wants he can leave the car with him where it will be safe. Cameron doesn't think it is a good idea, but the car breaks down and so he leaves it for the man to look at. Past the dead end is a huge tree and Dulcie. Dulcie explains that the tree is special because it grants wishes. The two of them take some time to read the wishes on the tree. Dulcie explains that the wishes aren't always granted exactly as they are written, sometimes it is the heart of the wish that is granted. Cameron thinks that is stupid, but leaves a wish anyway at Dulcie's insistence.

Chapter 33:

Cameron asks Dulcie what will happen once he finds Dr. X and stops the dark matter. Will he ever see her again? Dulcie avoids answering the question which irritates Cameron. It begins to rain again and he drifts off to sleep. He dreams of his parents in his hospital room, of the old woman by the sea and of the fire giants taking Dulcie up through the sky. When he wakes, Dulcie is gone and Cameron heads back to the gas station. The old man asks him to come inside, telling him that he has something Cameron will need. The man gives Cameron a rusted screw. Cameron is reluctant to take it, since the man insists he has to close his eyes to get it. The two argue a little about trust and Cameron gives in. When he opens his eyes there is a rusty screw in his hand and the old man is gone.

The Gnome: Chs. 28 - 33 Analysis

Chapter 28 opens with an honest, emotional moment between Cameron and his father. His father drops all pretenses and tells his son how much he cares about him. Cameron can hear his father's sadness in his voice. Cameron takes the opportunity to tell his father he loves him, and then the payphone shuts off. This chapter also shows us that Cameron is an honest person. Multiple times in the chapter he states that stealing is wrong and is uncertain when others do it.

In Chapter 29, Cameron misses his mother and begins to see that some of her silly, often annoying, mom moments are the very things that make her so endearing. He is



also coming to better understand Dulcie's perspective that sometimes people are too busy to enjoy and appreciate the small things in life. He has another episode of feeling ill, and that is when the fire giants and the Wizard show up. While he is fighting them off, he sees himself back in the hospital. He also has a moment where he is at the shore with the old woman who didn't want to die in the hospital. She tells him it is ok to relax and go to sleep, Cameron is tempted, but chooses to go back to the fiery restaurant and save his friends instead.

In Chapters 30 & 31, the trio is getting to know and appreciate each other more. Gonzo and Balder are also beginning to bond over the fact that they are smaller than the rest of the world.

In Chapter 32, Cameron is thrilled to see Dulcie and is falling for her in a big way. Just having her company makes him happy. Cameron doesn't let Dulcie, or the reader, know what he wished for.

In Chapter 33, Cameron is learning to trust his own intuition and to trust others. He is able to follow the feather clues now without hesitation. But the next step, trusting other people, is a bit harder for him as shown by his reluctance to close his eyes around the old man.



Of What Happens: Chs. 34 - 40

Of What Happens: Chs. 34 - 40 Summary

In Chapter 34, Cameron pulls over for gas and finds that they are being hunted by the police. The CESSNAB people believe they attacked them and the people in the burned out restaurant believe they are terrorists. The United Snow Globe Wholesalers Office (which has been mentioned in other chapters) has put a \$10,000 bounty on their heads as an act of public service. The boys decide to drive on back roads from this point forward, it is on these roads that they run out of gas and have to walk to a gas station. They end up finding a futuristic gas station being run on a farm. A young boy lives on the farm and takes them downstairs where they meet Drs. A, M, T and O, former colleagues of Dr. X. They explain that Dr. X's wife died in a bomb attack while buying him a snow globe. After that the Dr. wasn't the same. Eleven years ago he made some changes to their Infinity Collider machine, while listening to Copenhagen Interpretation, and disappeared through a black hole with the machine. Dr. X had a theory that musical notes and vibrations were the keys to inter-dimensional travel. Cameron decides to recreate Dr. X's activities in the hopes of finding where the Dr. went.

In Chapter 35, Cameron gets ready to go into the Infinity Collider machine against the advice of Gonzo. Everyone is worried about what will happen, but Cameron knows he must do this. He gets into the machine and they close the doors, music of Copenhagen Interpretation begins to play. He feels squished, then smashed, then inflated, then blown apart. Inside the chamber he sees different dimensions. In one, Dulcie is crying in the snow, in another Glory is playing with a little girl, in another Dr. X is with Copenhagen Interpretation. Cameron opens the doors of the Collider to find that he is still in the same place where he started, and still no closer to finding the doctor. However, the scientists are thrilled as this experiment allowed them to get a step closer to opening Putopia, the Parallel Universe Travel Office. One of the scientists, Ed, feels that Dr. X is in Tomorrowland in Disney World. The boys eat some veggie tacos and then leave.

In Chapter 36, in the car headed for Florida Cameron decides they need some sort of cover from the police. He, Gonzo and Balder have become nervous that they will be pulled over and sent to jail for being terrorists. Cameron picks up three college aged hitchhikers hoping the cops will be looking for two teens and not a car full of kids. The college kids are headed to the YA! Party House in Daytona. Cameron plans to drop them off on their way to Disney in Orlando. On the road they pass a large billboard for United Snow Globe Wholesalers, and then they pull into a gas station. Dulcie is there and tells Cameron that she hates snow globes and is upset by the idea of life being trapped behind glass. Cameron goes to the counter and is recognized by the clerk who calls for the cops so she can collect the reward. Dulcie begins breaking snow globes to distract the woman while the boys flee. The woman takes out a gun and shoots at their car as they drive away.



In Chapter 37, the carload of boys pulls off the road for the night. They settle in, start a fire, eat and get drunk. Dulcie shows up and accidentally lets Cameron know that she can see the future, but that the future can change at any time. Cameron gets angry that she knows his fate and won't tell him. He insists she tell him what will happen to the three fraternity boys and is depressed when he discovers that one will die shortly after tell the story of his trip with Cameron. He becomes angry and tears off the wristband Dulcie gave him. Balder finds him and tells him that even the gods must die, but that is no reason to not enjoy living. Cameron thinks about his words and takes his wristband back.

In Chapter 38, the gang gets back on the road and traffic picks up when they reach Daytona. Cameron tells the college guys that they will need to get out here because he and Gonzo can't take the time to wait in traffic. Cameron thinks about Keith dying in the war soon and tries to tell Keith to stay in Daytona as long as he can. After the guys are gone, Cameron and Gonzo realize they stole Balder.

In Chapter 39, Cameron and Gonzo decide to find the college kids at the YA! Party House in Daytona and get Balder back. Gonzo is excited about going, but Cameron just wants to get in and get out. They decide to take a room and freshen up after seeing all of the pretty girls heading for the Party House. When they arrive, Cameron is approached by an agent who asks him to be on the TV channel's famous game show where he can win a lot of money. He and Gonzo separate and agree to meet up in an hour. Cameron and the producer, Iphigenia, go to her office where he answers questions. She tells him that YA! sponsors all sorts of sodas and gimmicks and fashion trends in an effort to make teens happy. She tells him they even offer identity packages so that kids don't have to figure out their own identity. They leave the office and she gives Cameron a tour of the rest of the house, then he meets up with Gonzo and waits for his 3:30 game show time. Neither has seen the college kids who have Balder.

In Chapter 40, Cameron is ready for the game show, but is uncertain about what he has gotten himself into. If he answers the music questions correctly he wins money, if he answers wrong he is dunked in a tank of human waste. Cameron almost ends up in the waste when he answers a question wrong about Junior Webster, but saves himself and gets \$600 when he identifies a Tremolo song. He and Gonzo go from the stage to an auction where Keith is auctioning off Balder, who is in a dress. The boys are outbid for Balder and the gnome is given to Marisol, the pretty game show girl. As a last joke Keith pulls out the magic screw given to Cameron by the old man at the gas station and asks Marisol if she wants to screw. Marisol isn't amused, but the crowd is and YA! offers Keith a job. At that moment his destiny has changed and he will no longer die in the desert while serving in the army.

Of What Happens: Chs. 34 - 40 Analysis

Chapter 34 is a very funny one, with Gonzo's craziness going out of control. He is convinced that the scientists are going to kill them and has some great dialogue. The



pacing seems to have sped up and it seems that Cameron may - finally - be getting somewhere with his quest.

In Chapter 35, Cameron is more nervous about what will happen to him than he is confident he will find Dr. X. In the collider he sees that there are other dimensions, ones that show different lives than the ones lived in the current one. Oddly, he isn't disappointed that he didn't find X, he is relieved to be alive and excited that he was brave enough to do what he did.

In Chapter 36, Cameron is getting closer to his destination and doesn't want to be caught now. He is also noticing that Dulcie seems slightly depressed. Her hatred of snow globes seems rather strange and it is interesting considering what Cameron saw of her alternate life while in the collider. He saw her in the snow banging her hands against glass.

In Chapter 37, Cameron feels like a fool for trusting Dulcie. He doesn't know what the future holds for him and is upset by it. But he also doesn't like the responsibility of knowing what happens to others in their future either.

Chapter 38 is the shortest chapter so far in the book. It is only two pages long. The chapter is used as a break, almost as a before and after. "Before Balder is stolen" and "After Balder is stolen." It is the point at which the boys must take action.

In Chapter 39, Cameron and Gonzo show a lot of bravery going to find Balder. Going to the YA! Party House is not something either of them would normally feel comfortable with. Cameron is convinced that they can get Balder, be on the game show and leave before anyone knows they are there.

In Chapter 40, Cameron trusts his instincts and is able to win some money to help finance their quest, but he is also willing to give up the money if he can save Balder. He also senses the moment that Keith's life changes after Keith is hired by YA! This gives Cameron the sense that it is possible to change his own destiny like Dulcie said.



More Happens: Chs. 41 - 47

More Happens: Chs. 41 - 47 Summary

In Chapter 41, Cameron and Gonzo pay some people off in order to have access to Marisol's room where she is using Balder as a jewelry tree. They are about to leave with him when Parker shows up and stops them. He tells them he will let them go with the gnome if Gonzo agrees to be on the game show. Cameron and Balder are surprised when Gonzo says "yes" and goes with Parker. Cameron is taking Balder to the hotel when he is confronted by his sister Jenna. She is thrilled to see him and goes with him to the hotel to put Balder away.

In Chapter 42, Cameron and Jenna go to the YA! lounge to talk and have a soda. He explains to her what he has been doing on their quest and she tells him that she has to tell their parents she has seen him - but promises to give him a head start. He slips away to get Gonzo and Balder, but runs into Jenna's hot friend Staci. Staci kisses him and he forgets all about leaving.

In Chapter 43, Staci and Cameron drink and Staci asks to go to Cameron's hotel room where they have sex that lasts for about three minutes. When it is over, Staci leaves and Cameron doesn't feel so great. He falls asleep and sees himself in the hospital where Glory is giving him morphine. He tells Glory that if he falls asleep he will die. He wakes up again in the hotel to find Dulcie; she wraps him in her wings and they have an intimate experience.

In Chapter 44, Cameron wakes up to a crabby Balder, who has been in a closet since the night before, and realizes that he doesn't know what happened to Gonzo on the game show. He races to the Party House to find him, but only finds a guy selling shirts that say, "Bring back the dwarf." Cameron heads back to the hotel in fear. Gonzo arrives at the hotel, but instead of being upset his is excited. He is sporting a new black and blue Mohawk and a tattoo of a Buddha Cow that says "How now mad cow?" Gonzo tells about the game show. That they strapped him to an electric chair and he thought for sure they would zap him, but instead they shaved his head. The crowd went wild and his is a semi-celebrity. Gonzo left the stage with an intern named Drew and the two of them went to the tattoo parlor. Drew shows up at the hotel to meet Gonzo, Cameron and Balder. For a few minutes Cameron is jealous of Gonzo's new friend . . . until Drew kisses Gonzo on the lips and Cameron realizes they are more than just friends. As the guys head to the Party House they see a huge crowd and Cameron thinks the cops have come for them. However, it is the Copenhagen Interpretation. They have just appeared after being lost for an unknown amount of time.

In Chapter 45, Copenhagen Interpretation begins to play and the crowd goes crazy. During intermission, Cameron and his group are allowed to go backstage with the band because they recognize Balder from when they time traveled to his land. The band explains that they were playing a song about snow when a black hole opened above



them and sucked them in. They have spent the time since then going from dimension to dimension and visiting different times and worlds. Cameron asks them if they saw Dr. X and they say no. He explains to them that Dr. X was listening to their snow song when he disappeared and that might be the reason they were sucked into the black hole. Cameron wants to use their snow song to create the right vibrations to find Dr. X. The group heads back to the stage, but the concert has to be cancelled because of heavy winds and fire. Cameron and his friends can see that the fire is really the fire giants. The band tries to play their song anyway and the crowd joins in singing. Cameron holds his miniature of the Collider up to the speakers and the fire giants all begin to disappear. He thinks that he just saved the universe.

In Chapter 46, the guys get ready to leave and say good-bye to Drew. Cameron tells Gonzo that he can stay, but Gonzo insists on finishing their quest. Cameron's bracelet shows that he has very little time left, but he wants to take Balder to the beach where the gnome believes a ship will come and take him home. Balder tells him he doesn't have the time to do it, but Cameron lies and says he does. The three friends have a great day at the beach and Cameron reflects on how the memories will stay with them even after they are long gone.

In Chapter 47, Balder sees his ship, the Ringhorn, on the horizon and realizes that he has left his things in the car. Cameron goes to get them and is confronted by vigilantes from United Snow Globe Wholesalers. The men try to grab him, but he runs for the beach. He and Gonzo decide to run opposite directions and Balder, who can't be killed, will distract the men. More and more Globe workers fill the beach. Dulcie shows up to help Cameron, but is shot and captured while they fly across the beach. Dulcie is shot with a special weapon that traps her inside a snow globe. Cameron goes into the water and is about to be caught when the police show up and arrest the men from Snow Globe. While in the water Cameron has a flash of jumping into the water of Its a Small World when he was there as a kid. But the flash is gone when he emerges from the water. The men fighting Balder manage to impale him with a stick and then give him to a little girl to play with. Cameron and Gonzo buy him back from the little girl only to find that Balder is actually bleeding. He has been stabbed by mistletoe, his only weakness. As they sit on the beach, Balder dies. The boys make a boat for him and set it on fire like a traditional Norse funeral pyre, and then they watch it go out to sea. An hour later, they watch as the Snow Globe truck pulls away and follow it to save Dulcie.

More Happens: Chs. 41 - 47 Analysis

In Chapter 41, considering all of Gonzo's phobias, it is amazing that he would be willing to risk the dunk tank to save Balder. He faces his challenge bravely, even though he knows that the reason Parker wants him on the show is to exploit the fact that he is a dwarf. Cameron is surprised to see Jenna, but he is even more surprised that she is so happy to see him.



In Chapter 42, Cameron is glad to see his sister and glad to hear she has broken up with Chet. He also realizes that his sister is a lot like their father. She agrees to give him a head start to leave before she tells their parents where he is.

In Chapter 43, Cameron has waited his whole life to lose his virginity and to do it with Staci Johnson. However, he is left with an empty feeling when the act is over. He wonders what it would be like to fall in love, something he will never get to do.

In Chapter 44, Gonzo has finally been allowed to be his true self. He tested his bravery and has even come out of the closet as gay, something which will come as a complete surprise to the reader. He is genuinely happy and living life to the fullest.

Chapter 45 is filled with some serious action and is very fast paced. Many of the subplots of the book are beginning to tie together, as well as some of the character arcs.

In Chapter 46, Cameron and Gonzo have learned to appreciate the moment and to live for the fun of the moment. Something neither of them could do at the start of their trip. Balder's ship still has not come, but he is confident it will. Cameron thinks about Dulcie and it is clear that he is in love with her. The kind of love he wondered if his father has for his mother and if his mother had for him and Jenna.

Chapter 47 is the climax of the plot. Everything changes in this chapter. Cameron and Gonzo are no longer on the defensive, they are on the offensive. The death of Balder and the capture of Dulcie have changed things.



The End: Chs. 48 - 51 and Ch. 1

The End: Chs. 48 - 51 and Ch. 1 Summary

In Chapter 48, they follow the Snow Globe truck even though Cameron is out of time on his Disney lifeline bracelet. By the time the truck pulls into a diner, Cameron needs to sleep. Gonzo watches the truck while Cameron recharges. The truck pulls away and the boys go into the restaurant to check out the snow globe shipment, they need to make sure one of the globes isn't Dulcie. They get back in the car and follow the Globe truck, eventually finding themselves following the truck to Disney World.

In Chapter 49, Cameron and Gonzo park the Cadillac and enter the Magic Kingdom. They quickly disguise themselves in character costumes and begin to hunt for a shipment of snow globes. Gonzo's boyfriend calls and Cameron is about to tell him to hang up when he is accosted by Snow Globe agents by It's a Small World. He manages to alert Gonzo, who asks if he should fight the men. Cameron signals, no, Gonzo should run and save himself. Cameron escapes from the agents and jumps onto the trap in Tomorrowland. He then gets off the tram and climbs a platform inside the ride.

In Chapter 50, Cameron goes through a door on the ride and finds Dr. X. Dr. X couldn't get over the death of his wife and so has created United Snow Globe Wholesalers in order to keep calmness and control the world. He tells Cameron that he can't cure him and that he doesn't really want to. Cameron asks to have Dulcie and asked by Dr. X what he has learned about his life. Cameron tells him it is important to love and be loved. When he is finished, the Dulcie globe appears on Dr. X's desk. Cameron asks the doctor to set her free and is told that can't be done. The Wizard of Reckoning arrives and calmly walks up to Cameron, taking his helmet off as he approaches. Under the helmet is a surprise, the Wizard is Cameron. The Wizard tells Cameron that he has never left the hospital and that his mind is dying even as they speak. He tells Cameron that the things he has seen and experienced are all a mash up of things Cameron has seen over his lifetime. He also points out to Cameron that in the past two weeks Cameron has really lived, so what does it matter if the living wasn't real. He wants Cameron to come with him, to finally die. Cameron looks at his Disney wristband and sees that it is really a hospital band. But he is not ready to give up and runs from the Wizard.

In Chapter 51, Cameron rushes through a corridor trying to escape the Wizard. Each time he opens a door he finds a different scene: past, present, future, alternative. In one scene he sees his mother when he was a child, in another he sees Jenna as a mother, in yet another he sees Gonzo in an amusement park with Justin. Everywhere he goes the Wizard is waiting. The wizard tells him he is going to die and Cameron agrees that he is. But he remembers Junior's horn and gets it out of his backpack. He blows it and the notes send the Wizard away. The Wizard is gone and Cameron can see himself in the hospital room. His parents are holding his hands and his sister is on the bed. Glory



turns off his EKG and closes his eyes. All goes dark. Cameron sees the universe zipping by and feels that he is a part of something.

In Chapter 1, Cameron is in total darkness and begins to hope that this isn't all there is to death or he is going to be really bored. Then he sees Dulcie and they are on a sort of live Its a Small World ride. She is seated next to him and they are excited to be together. She asks him if he is ready for what comes next and he says he is, even though he isn't. But he isn't scared and it is clear that something comes next. Particles begin to explode in the sky and the universe unfolds before them. The end.

The End: Chs. 48 - 51 and Ch. 1 Analysis

In Chapter 48, things have come full circle. Cameron has found himself back where the story began, at Disney World.

In Chapter 49, Cameron prepares Gonzo for their inevitable break up. He gives Gonzo the rest of the money and tells him to go to New York and see Drew if something happens to Cameron.

In Chapter 50, Cameron's world is beginning to unravel and he is coming to terms with all of the things that he has learned in the past two weeks. But he is not ready to give up yet, he is not ready to die.

In Chapter 51, Cameron has had his reckoning and has determined that reality is what you make it. It doesn't matter what the true reality is because he is dying, but he is at peace with the idea. He dies in the hospital surrounded by the people whom he loved and who loved him.

Chapter 1 is the final resolution of the book. Everyone in Cameron's hallucination came to terms with their lives and so, in a way, has Cameron. The end of the book is bittersweet as Cameron has seemingly wasted his life, but can no longer return to life and fix it. However, at the least, he has an appreciation for his life and the people that he loved that he didn't have before. Which contributes to his happiness. He and Dulcie prepare for the next stage in what is to come.



Characters

Cameron Smith.

Cameron Smith is an angry 16-year-old loner. His sister, Jenna, is a popular girl who has what Cameron doesn't seem to want: friends, popularity, and good grades. Cameron's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Smith, have a distant relationship and Cameron can barely tolerate spending time with either of them. Cameron deals with his family issues by smoking pot and listening to Portuguese music by the Great Tremolo, an off-key singer with a ukulele.

Cameron finds out that he is suffering from Mad Cow disease and that his body will begin to fail on him shortly. After a visit from an unorthodox angel, Cameron undertakes a quest to save the universe and himself. After a long, psychedelic journey Cameron discovers his own strength, how to love and the meaning of life. In the end he dies with this knowledge and with a changed perspective on life.

Jenna Smith.

Jenna Smith is Cameron's twin sister. She is everything that Cameron isn't: smart, popular, and able to deal with the realities of life. Jenna loves Cameron, but is tired of being embarrassed by his druggie behavior at school. Jenna is determined to ignore the dysfunction that is going on at home and has thrown herself into being perfect and popular at school. Jenna is deeply effected by Cameron's illness and sits by his bedside at the hospital. She shows up on his quest and the two are able to make peace before Cameron's time runs out.

Mr. and Mrs. Smith.

Cameron's parents seem to barely tolerate each other. Mrs. Smith is over involved in her kids' lives, while her husband is over involved in his Physics department and - possibly - his young research assistant. The two adults have little to do with each other before Cameron's illness. Cameron and his father don't get along and can barely tolerate each other, although it seems that Mr. Smith is trying to have a relationship with his son. Cameron would rather ignore his parents and their family problems than deal with them. As Cameron grows more ill his parents begin to rebuild their bond and each of them changes and grows. By the end of the book Mr. Smith is less rigid and Mrs. Smith is more responsible.

Paul Ignacio

Gonzo is a Latino dwarf who goes to school with Cameron. He is also assigned to be in the same room with Cameron at the hospital. Gonzo has an overbearing mother who



feels that every little thing in life could kill him. Over time, Gonzo has also adopted this view. His fears have kept him from really living his life to the fullest. Gonzo isn't sure he wants to go on Cameron's quest, but he does for Cameron's sake. By the end of the journey Gonzo has come out of the closet and is meeting the challenges and adventures of life head on.

The Wizard of Reckoning.

The Wizard of Reckoning is the antagonist of the book. He is a large, mysterious knight who is chasing Cameron while he pursues Dr. X. The Wizard seems to want Cameron's life and shows up in the moments when Cameron's body is weakest. If Cameron is the Road Runner, the Wizard is the coyote. Cameron believes that he has conquered the Wizard, but finds out in the end that he can never outrun the Wizard. Why? Because Cameron IS the Wizard. The Wizard is the part of himself that Cameron has been hiding from.

Dulcie.

Dulcie is a punk rock angel who has been sent as a guide, of sorts, for Cameron's quest. She has huge feathered wings and curly pink hair. Dulcie is Cameron's guide, friend and eventually his lover. It is because of Dulcie that Cameron comes to understand the meaning and power of love. Dulcie describes herself as a messenger for a higher power, but she never addresses what this higher power is. She assigns Cameron his quest: to find Dr. X and save the universe from the evil dark matter that has created the Wizard of Reckoning.

Balder.

Balder is a garden gnome who comes alive at a house party. He claims to be a Norse god who has been turned into yard art. Cameron sets Balder free and Balder becomes his loyal servant in return. Balder is a sage warrior and a valiant fighter. He is virtually indestructible and loves to challenge people to try and kill him. Balder and Gonzo have a love/hate relationship and the three guys form a solid friendship by the end of the book. Balder is killed by a branch of mistletoe while the boys are visiting the beach.

Junior Webster.

Junior Webster is a jazz great who lives in New Orleans, LA. Junior's club is the first stop on the quest to find Dr. X. He has seen the Wizard of Reckoning and is eventually killed by the Wizard. It isn't clear in the book if Junior is already dead when Cameron meets him, but the assumption is that he is and that his club exists in some sort of "other" world.



The Fire Giants.

The Fire Giants are agents of the Wizard of Reckoning. They show up when Cameron is at his weakest physically and bring fire and destruction with them. Cameron defeats the Fire Giants, and saves the universe, during a concert given by Copenhagen Interpretation.

Glory.

Glory is Cameron's nurse at St. Jude's. She is a tough woman who has lost a young daughter to cancer. Glory takes care of Cameron during his illness and seems to really grow to care about him. She is at his side when he dies.

Dr. X.

Dr. X is a physicist, like Cameron's father, who has been traveling through different dimensions. During his travel, he unleashed dark matter which is what has caused Cameron's disease. Cameron's quest is to find the doctor, save him and banish the dark matter. What Cameron finds out is that the doctor lost his faith in life after his wife died and doesn't care about the destruction he has brought to Cameron and the rest of the world.

Eubie.

Eubie owns a vintage record store where Cameron likes to hang out. Eubie introduces Cameron to Junior Walker records, but Cameron isn't interested in the jazz sound. Eubie encourages Cameron to go out and enjoy his life, but Cameron doesn't want to hear it.

Tara and Justin.

Tara and Justin are two teens Cameron meets at a gas station in Mississippi. They take him to a huge house party where Justin is selling drugs. It is at the house party that Cameron meets, and rescues, Balder the gnome.

Daniel and Ruth.

Daniel and Ruth are members of CESSNAB who save Cameron and Gonzo when Cameron passes out in the middle of a street. Daniel and Ruth live on a compound where everyone is happy and drinks vanilla smoothies. CESSNAB is a place where people worship at the alter of positive thinking. They hate competition and believe that trying to achieve goals is the reason for disharmony in peoples' lives. When Cameron



accidentally finds himself in the middle of a CESSNAB revolution, Daniel and Ruth turn against him and become violent.

Drs. O, M, A, and T.

The doctors live in a futuristic gas station somewhere in the South. Gonzo and Cameron run across them when they are searching for a gas station. The scientists know Dr. X as he was part of their group until he disappeared 11 years earlier. They try to use their Collider to help Cameron track down Dr. X. Their goal is to start an inter-dimensional travel agency.

Iphigenia.

Iphigenia is a producer for YA! TV in Daytona, Florida. She is wrapped up in the fake world of YA! TV and tells Cameron that the TV channel gives people an identity so they don't have to go and find one on their own. Iphigenia gets Cameron ready for his time on the YA! game show he is going to film.

The College Guys.

The College Guys are three hitchhikers the boys pick up to use as cover while being chased by the police. The college guys are on their way to Daytona to the YA! Party House and buy food and alcohol for Gonzo and Cameron. When they arrive in Daytona, the college guys steal Balder which causes Gonzo and Cameron to return to the YA! Party House and continue their adventure.

Parker Day.

Parker Day is the host of YA! TV. His face is all over TV and on billboards across the country. Parker allows the boys to steal back Balder in exchange for Gonzo being on a dare based game show. Gonzo's decision changes his life.



Objects/Places

Don Quixote.

The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha, Don Quixote for short, was written by Miguel de Cervantes in Spanish in 1605 and 1615. Don Quixote is in the process of losing his mind when he sets off of a romantic quest for a woman named Dulcinea (similar to the angel Dulcie). Quixote has a sidekick, Sancho Panza, who goes with him on his delusional quests. The story has become a foundation of modern literature and is being taught in Cameron's English-Spanish cross-over class.

Schrodinger's Cat.

Schrodinger's Cat is a thought experiment that the stoners discuss in the school's fourth floor bathroom. The cat is brought up numerous times in the book when talking about different dimensions of reality. In the experiment, only theoretical, a cat is placed in a box with poison. The cat is either dead or alive inside the box, but the life of the cat is only fully realized once the box is opened and the cat is examined. In the meantime life can be lived like the cat is alive or dead - the reality isn't determined until the well-being of the cat is actually revealed. An interesting note here, with this thought experiment Schrodinger was trying to solve a problem he was having with the Copenhagen Interpretation of quantum physics.

Eubie's Hot Wax.

Eubie's Hot Wax is the name of the vintage record store where Cameron likes to hang out. It is where he buys his Tremolo records and where he is first introduced to Junior Walker music, which he doesn't like.

The 4th floor bathroom.

The 4th floor bathroom at school is where Cameron and other stoners hang out and get high. It is where Schrodinger's Cat is first discussed and is also where Cameron first meets Gonzo.

Greutzfeldt-Jacob disease.

Greutzfeldt-Jacob disease is the scientific name for what is known as Mad Cow disease. Cameron has contracted the disease, but it is never clear how. The disease causes the body and mind to degenerate. There is no cure and Cameron's life expectancy is only a number of weeks.



Copenhagen Interpretation.

Copenhagen Interpretation is a popular Inuit rock band that went missing at the same time as Dr. X. The band was sucked up in a black hole and has spent the last eleven years traveling in different dimensions. However, the mystery of their disappearance and their music is discussed by people on a regular basis. They have become legends. The band reappears at the YA! Party House and plays their music so that Cameron can save the world from the Fire Giants.

Junior's sunglasses and horn.

Junior Walker understands the quest that Cameron is on. He has also seen the Wizard of Reckoning and knows that the Wizard is after them and Dr. X. He gives Cameron his sunglasses and tells him to bury them under the angel in order to find his next clue. He also gives Cameron his horn to play when he needs it. Cameron plays the horn right before his death.

Church of Everlasting Satisfaction and Snack N Bowl.

The Church of Everlasting Satisfaction and Snack N Bowl, CESSNAB for short, is a compound where Cameron and Gonzo are taken when Cameron passes out in the street. CESSNAB is an alluring place for Cameron because it encourages him to stop thinking about hard things and to only think about how wonderful he is and how special he is. Gonzo hates the place. People who can't be positive are brainwashed in a bowling alley where you are only allowed to win. When a revolution breaks out on the compound Cameron and Gonzo escape.

The YA! Party House.

The YA! Party House is where Cameron and Gonzo make their most important breakthroughs on the quest. They test their bravery at the house and also make some big realizations about themselves. Both boys participate in game shows while at the house, Cameron makes amends with his sister, he has sex for the first time while at the house, and Gonzo comes out as a gay man at the house. The party house is located in Daytona, Florida and is a huge televised party. Cameron and Gonzo go to the party to find the college kids who stole Balder and save him.

Putopia, Parallel Universe Travel Office.

Putopia is the place where Cameron and Gonzo find Dr. X's team of scientists. It is also where Cameron has a chance to step into the collider and try to find Dr. X's location. Cameron is given a miniature of the collider when he leaves Putopia which eventually



helps him save the universe. He is also told by one of the scientists, Ed, that Dr. X is at Disney World.

United Snow Globe Wholesalers.

United Snow Globe Wholesalers is an organization created by Dr. X. The goal of the organization is to keep things orderly in the world. Snow Globe has put a bounty of Gonzo and Cameron's heads after they were labeled as terrorists. Snow Globe uses special guns to trap people inside of snow globes. They are able to trap Dulcie, but not Cameron or Gonzo. The agents of Snow Globe are the people who kill Balder on the beach.

The Ringhorn.

The Ringhorn is the ship that will come to take Balder back to his home with the gods. After leaving the YA! Party House, the boys take Balder to the beach to await the ship. The ship is on the horizon when the Snow Globe vigilantes attack and kill Balder. The boys attach Balder's body to a surf board and name it the Ringhorn. They set the body on fire and send it out to sea.



Themes

Love.

The overarching theme in *Going Bovine* is that of love. Different aspects of love that are discussed include understanding love, falling in love, renewing love and the different types of love felt by people.

During Cameron's quest, he learns more about the love that his parents share. At first it seems to him that they are not in love, but as they watch their only son struggle with terminal illness he notices that their bond is deeper than he originally thought.

Cameron also learns a lot about his love for his sister. As he describes her in the book it is clear that they have a sibling rivalry, but he never expresses hatred of her. As the book progresses, Cameron thinks of his sister fondly. They repair their relationship while at the YA! house and he sees her in the future with a child named after him.

Cameron's dad learns to let go of his disapproval of his son and, in the end, shows Cameron how much he loves him by never leaving his side. His love also prevents him from placing Cameron in hospice. On the other hand, Cameron's mother's love for her son gives her the strength to make the life-ending decisions she must make for him.

Cameron's memories of his mother reveal how much she loves him and how much he took that love for granted.

Finally, Cameron finds a different kind of love in his relationship with Dulcie.

Appreciating Life.

During Cameron's quest he realizes that he has been existing in life, but not really living his life. Eubie encourages Cameron to live life, Dulcie tries to get him to appreciate the simple things and Gonzo's fear of life is encouragement for Cameron. But it is not until he faces challenges on his quest that he truly understands what people have been telling him about living his life to the fullest.

Gonzo also must learn to appreciate life. His fear of even the smallest things has prevented him from living a full, enriching life. His journey with Cameron changes that forever.

Balder's inability to experience life, because he is a yard gnome, has also allowed him to appreciate life. However, he has a full appreciation for life when the boys meet him and doesn't have to seek out experiences to understand that life is precious.

By the end of the book the reader, too, has been taught to appreciate life. As Cameron lies in his hospital bed, taking imaginary adventures, he learns so much. But because



he is incapacitated he doesn't get the chance to share his new appreciation of life and love with anyone but himself. He doesn't get to make the amends in real life that he has made in his mind. It is a warning to the reader to not put off living and loving.

Testing Limits.

Part of learning to love and appreciating life is through testing personal limits. Cameron, Gonzo, Balder and Dulcie are each limited by things in the story which affect their behavior and their understanding of life.

Cameron is limited emotionally. He would rather coast through life than experience it head on.

Gonzo is limited by his perceived physical limitations. He is afraid of everything and is kept from living by his fear of dying.

Balder is limited by being a yard gnome. Although he can move and talk, he doesn't do so because people will either be afraid of him or will kidnap him. He is forced to live life through watching others.

Dulcie is also limited by her nature, like Balder. She is an angel and as such must play by certain rules. She is unable to help Cameron when she wants to because of these rules.

Each character is tested at one or more points in the book. When tested they learn that they are not so much trapped by their limits, but by their own perceptions of themselves.



Style

Point of View

Going Bovine is told from the first-person point of view of Cameron Smith, a 16-year-old with a bad attitude. Cameron has a history of drug use and is not exactly Mr. Popular at school, but he seems to be liked well enough. Cameron's tone of voice is sarcastic, which can become grating after a while. However, his tone changes in the last third of the book as his character grows and is more tolerant and less bitter toward life.

Cameron's character uses curse words often and tends to think and speak sarcastically. His speaking is fairly straightforward and he is not afraid to say what is on his mind. He also makes straight forward comments about people and situations in his mind that leave the reader with no doubt about how he is feeling.

Setting

There are numerous settings in Going Bovine. The book begins in Hildago, Texas, a small town. Cameron ends up as a patient at St. Jude's hospital and remains a patient there until his death at the end of the book. However, much of the book takes place in Cameron's mind as he travels the country on a quest. During the quest there are many small flashes of the hospital, but the real meat of the story does not actually take place there. The hospital is just the place where Cameron's physical body and family are.

As Cameron and Gonzo undertake their quest to find Dr. X and save the universe, they are provided with experiences in many different settings. They go from Hildago, Texas to New Orleans, Louisiana, to Mississippi, to Hope, Georgia, to Daytona, Florida and finally to Disney World in Orlando, Florida. Each place on the way has it's own setting which helps to develop the plot and characters. In New Orleans, the boys enter a jazz night club and are exposed to new ideas and music. In Mississippi they attend a house party and find the gnome Balder. Along a rural road they meet a team of scientists and in Georgia, Cameron begins to understand that wishes aren't always granted in the exact way the wisher intended. Florida provides them with the biggest changes in plot and character when the setting is a televised house party.

Language and Meaning

Cameron and Gonzo's language and word choices help to develop their characters. They both curse, make crude jokes and make sexual references. All of these things establish them as typical teenage boys. Cameron's bitterness and Gonzo's phobias also help the reader to create clear, individual mental images of each character. As an angel, Dulcie is appropriately cryptic if not a tad childish in her reactions and responses. Balder is the wise person of the group and has many sage conversations with both boys. All-in-all the language and dialogue of the story is fresh, funny and helps to create each



character's individuality. As the character's change, so do their word choices and sarcastic and flippant conversations.

The author's language choices are chosen to create a surrealistic experience for the reader. It is not understood until the end of the book that Cameron has hallucinated his entire quest, but the language of the writing leads the reader to guess that this may be the case. The author intersperses flashes of memories, real-time hospital experiences and fantasy scenes within the narrative text. At times this can be confusing. It can also be frustrating when there are no connections that can be made between the flashes and the central story line. However, the author successfully creates a world where the unrealistic seems plausible.

Structure

Going Bovine is separated into 52 chapters. However, the chapters are numbered 1-51 & the last chapter is Chapter 1 again. This new Chapter 1 denotes the first chapter in Cameron's new experience in the afterlife. Each chapter begins with a narrative title which helps the reader understand what is coming next. The first third of the book is spent establishing Cameron's character and the context of the world in which he lives: his home, his family, his friends and his personality before the Mad Cow disease takes over. The middle of the book focuses on the quest and on Cameron and Gonzo's many wild, confusing adventures. It shows them learning to trust themselves and growing. The last third of the book is about how the boys deal with life now that they have learned to trust themselves and others. It includes the plot and character climaxes as well as plot and subplot resolutions.



Quotes

"The realest thing I'd ever experienced was that moment under the water when I almost died" (Chapter 1, p. 5).

"Zero, my favorite number. As in zero expectations, zero disappointments" (Chapter 6, p. 37).

"The gym explodes in sound. It's meaningless. I'm going to die" (Chapter 12, p. 89).

"Ain't that a sight? With all the things we know and learn, we still ain't touched the big mysteries - where we come from, where we go next, why we even here" (Chapter 19, p. 155).

"The two of them trade riffs back and forth like fighters in the ring" (Chapter 19, p. 161).

"And if we're safe all the time - no rejection, no bad news, no negative thoughts, no failure - they stay happy, and then our parents are happy that we're happy, and, you know, it's all good" (Chapter 24, p. 210).

"That much happiness makes people unhappy" (Chapter 25, p. 222).

"He really can't commit to being okay. It might kill him" (Chapter 27, p. 236).

"I think about dying every day, because I can't stop thinking about the living" (Chapter 27, p. 240).

"I have seen how those supposed to have no power can be disregarded quite easily" (Chapter 30, p. 290).

"Balder argues that you can never know about destiny: are the people you meet there to play a part in your destiny, or do you exist just to play a role in theirs?" (Chapter 31, p. 293).

"Like Odin, you see only the coming doom and lose faith in what is here, what is good" (Chapter 37, p. 364).

"Like Dulcie said, the only thing that makes sense in the world is the random" (Chapter 49, p. 456).

"No. You exist. The question is, did you live?" (Chapter 50, p. 467).



Topics for Discussion

How might the drugs given to Cameron in the hospital be affecting his quest? What might be happening in his hospital room that is being expressed in his dream quest?

For example: Might someone be watching Roadrunner cartoons? Who? Is someone reading to him? Who might that be?

Gonzo spends most the book as a healthy person afraid of dying; Cameron spends most of the book as a dying person wanting to be healthy.

- 1) What might Gonzo learn from Cameron on their trip?
- 2) Why might Cameron be frustrated with Gonzo's behavior?
- 3) How do the boys' outlook on health and dying affect each others' thoughts and behaviors? Do they change each other at all? How?

Why might the author refer to Don Quixote so much in the text? What comparisons might the author want the reader to make? Which characters in the book are similar to the characters in Don Quixote? Why do you think the way you do?

Why does Library Girl choose that specific passage of Hamlet to read during the revolution at CESSNAB? (p. 224)

- 1) What sentiment does the passage express?
- 2) How is the passage relevant to life in CESSNAB?
- 3) What message is the author trying to get across to the reader?
- 4) Do you agree or disagree with the message? Why do you feel the way you do?

Much of the book is focused on Cameron and Gonzo finding some sort of happiness in their lives. The author seems to suggest that sometimes it takes bad things in life for us to see and appreciate the good things in life.

How can bad things help you to see and appreciate good things? Give an example of this.

While camping on the way to Daytona, Dulcie lets it slip that she knows the fates of the people around them. Cameron is angry that she has withheld this information from him and he forces her to tell him what will happen to the three college kids they are traveling with.



What does Dulcie tell Cameron that upsets him so much? Why does the information upset him? What does his grief tell the reader about his character? How has he changed since the beginning of the book?

In a short flash the reader discovers that Cameron's doctor has approached his parents about putting him in hospice, essentially this means they will be sending him home to die. Cameron's father refuses to deal with this issue, so his mother takes over and decides.

- 1) Why is it difficult for Cameron's parents to put him in Hospice?
- 2) What does this scene tell the reader about changes in them as individuals?
- 3) How does this scene show changes in their marriage?

Cameron tells Gonzo multiple times that his mother is holding him back in life. At times, it seems that Cameron feels Gonzo's mother is a "bad" mom. What are your thoughts on Gonzo's mother's behavior? Do you understand her fears? Why or why not? Do you agree with Cameron's assessment of Gonzo's mother? Why or why not?

Cameron learns so much about himself and the meaning of life by the end of the story that he will take with him into the next phase of his existence. However, he is not able to share his revelations with those that he loves. Nor is he able to make amends for past behavior.

How satisfying is this ending for the reader? Why do you feel the way you do?