

Gray Mountain Study Guide

Gray Mountain by John Grisham

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Plot Summary

Gray Mountain by John Grisham begins in the middle of the 2008 recession. Samantha, a lawyer at a high profile firm, has just been furloughed, along with several other employees. The firm can't afford to pay them, but they don't want to let them go. Instead, they want the employees to work for a year at a charity service. They'll retain their work benefits. After a year, the firm might be able to find jobs for them. It's risky, but Sam has no other choice but to take the offer.

Sam reaches out to each of her parents. Her father used to be a famous lawyer, but he was arrested for committing fraud. This caused Sam's mother to break up with him, and things had always been tense between them. Sam realizes that she hates her job. She works incredibly long hours and doesn't have any form of a social life. Her bosses don't care about her, and many of her clients are bad people.

Sam begins to panic about not having a job. She ends up finding a charity in the mountains of Virginia that could use her. It's a small legal aid firm run by someone named Mattie. Sam is initially turned off of the idea of practicing law in such a small town. She constantly reminds them that she's a city girl and she's only around for the year. Despite that, Sam ends up becoming friends with Mattie and the other lawyer at the firm, Annette. She takes a liking to her clients as well, enjoying that she can work with small town people that actually need and appreciate her help.

Through Mattie, Sam also meets Donovan Gray, Mattie's nephew. Donovan fills Sam in on the coal mining companies in the mountains. They completely destroy the environment and take advantage of the miners, forcing them to work until they're sick. Then, they fire them without giving them any benefits. They cut corners and let the local water become contaminated by sludge and runoff. Donovan runs a law firm that challenges the coal mining companies, making him one of their greatest enemies.

Donovan reveals to Sam that with the help of his brother, Jeff, he was able to acquire documents from one of the mining companies which details that they knew their mining was causing sludge to runoff into the water. Donovan intends to sue the company, and he wants Sam to help him. Sam is hesitant because she doesn't approve of his underhanded methods. Things take a turn for the worse as Donovan dies in a mysterious plane crash.

Jeff is convinced that the crash was the mining companies' preemptively going after Donovan, hoping that any evidence might have died with him. Jeff is determined to take up Donovan's fight. He joins forces with one of Donovan's lawyer friends, Jarrett London, who intends to take the case to court, if he can get help from Sam's parents. Sam is torn, especially once she enters into a relationship with Jeff. When the FBI gets involved, Sam finally has had enough and backs away from the case; but, she still helps Jeff move the evidence so he and Jarrett can pursue the case on their own.



Sam gets an offer to go back to work in New York with a different firm. She's tempted to take it at first, but she changes her mind when she starts to see the effect that she's having on the small town. Sam decides that she's going to stay in Virginia and work alongside Mattie for at least the next two years, wanting to finish up all the cases she's currently taken on and helping all of the clients whom she has met.



Chapters 1-5

Summary

Chapter 1 - The book opens with Samantha sitting outside the law firm where she works in Manhattan. The firm is famous for being the largest law firm in the world. Samantha laments the fact that it means nothing really because of the recession. All of the businesses they have worked with were hit hard, with many of the larger ones closing down. As a result, the law firm has no business coming in and no way to pay their employees. Everyone is panicked as a string of employees are fired over a few days. Samantha is called into a meeting with her boss, Andy Grubman. Two other employees, Ben and Izabelle, are called in as well. Andy explains that with how chaotic things are, the firm can't afford to pay them. He fought to get them a furlough, meaning they stay on for a year without getting paid, but after that year the firm might find new jobs for them. They get to keep their benefits as long as they do charity work. The three agree, but are all heartbroken as they're escorted out of the building.

Chapter 2 - Sam returns home and calls her parents to tell them what has happened. Her parents were divorced when she was younger because her father was having an affair. About that same time he ended up getting caught trying to hide money from one of his cases and spent three years in prison. Both parents offer their support and encourage Samantha not to take the furlough and to find something else. Samantha admits to herself that she hated the job because she had to work such long hours, which destroyed her social life. She meets up with Izabelle, a co-worker, later, who is still panicked about the furlough. Sam reaches out to the nonprofit groups that Andy had mentioned, but half of them have already filled up. Sam decides that she's not going back into big law, and that there must be a better way to make a living.

Chapter 3 - Sam has no luck with signing up for any of the nonprofit groups. She decides to go and visit her parents in D.C. First, she visits her father. He's working as a consultant with several other lawyers who have been disbarred. He's sympathetic toward her and pushes for her to work alongside him in litigation. Sam isn't interested in what he's doing, and she's very dubious about a consultant firm that's made up of disbarred lawyers. Her father tries to subtly ask about Sam's mother, Karen, hinting that he wants to see her. Sam says she'll see what she can do, but she knows that Karen has no interest in seeing him. The chapter ends with one of the nonprofit groups, The Mountain Legal Aid Clinic, finally getting back to Sam.

Chapter 4 - Sam gets in touch with Maggie Wyatt, the executive director of The Mountain Legal Aid Clinic. Maggie tells Sam that she's been bombarded with potential applicants for the job. She asks if Sam has any experience working in Virginia. Sam has never been to Virginia, which seems as far out in the boonies as possible for her. Maggie says Sam can likely get the job if she comes down to Brady for an interview the next day. Sam agrees and then goes to see her mother. She briefly talks about her father, Marshall, and the job offer he made to her. Karen warns her against it, having the



same suspicions that Sam did. Karen makes it clear that she has no interest in seeing Marshall again after what he did. She tries to again insist that Sam get a new, safer job, but Sam decides she wants to try out the nonprofit, hoping the drive down will help clear her head and give her time to think.

Chapter 5 - Sam drives up to Virginia. Before she gets to Brady, she's pulled over by someone named Romey. Romey accuses her of speeding and takes her into the station. She's let out moments later by an attorney, Donovan Gray. Donovan is Maggie's nephew. He explains that Romey doesn't actually work for the police. He's jealous of his cousin, who is a sheriff. So, sometimes he pulls in random strangers for speeding. Sam is incredulous about the whole thing, but eventually just accepts it. She talks to Donovan, asking why he carries a gun. He explains that he sues the coal companies because their strip mining causes devastating pollution to small towns, such as Brady. A lot of people dislike him because they work for the coal companies and enjoy the money that comes with it, not caring about the damage to the environment. Donovan assures Sam that the small town is mostly filled with good people, though. Sam takes a liking to Donovan. The chapter ends with Donovan telling Sam that Maggie is available and ready to meet with her for the interview.

Analysis

Chapter 1 - The early 2008 setting is established right away at the start of the book, which sets up the economic trouble the world is facing. Samantha is also firmly established as being a city girl. The economic situation gives her motivation for traveling down to Virginia. Being a city girl sets up her initial struggles to adapt in a completely different environment. Sam's status as a high profile lawyer is set up as well, which allows for a contrast for the type of work that she'll be doing later on in the book after she makes the move. It's only lightly touched upon, but Sam also makes it clear that the larger firm doesn't really care about their employees, suggesting some of the themes shown later on regarding large corporations.

Chapter 2 - Sam's family situation is brought up for the first time. The tension between her parents comes up several more times throughout the book. Sam's relationship with her parents is established as well. While it's clear that they care about one another, it's also clear that there are visible communication issues. Sam doesn't entirely trust her father, and she has a hard time communicating with her mother.

Sam's dislike of her past job comes up, which addresses one of the themes of Work versus Home. Sam realizes that she doesn't even want to go back to her job because for the last few years it has completely consumed her. Her job had destroyed any social life that she was trying to make, and she wasn't even happy with the work that she was doing.

Chapter 3 - The relationship that Sam has with her parents is expanded upon in this chapter. Sam's father, Marshall, makes it clear that he wants to get back together with her mother, Karen. Karen wants nothing to do with Marshall because, just like Sam, she



can't fully trust him. The theme of Family is introduced through these interactions and it is clear that they are about as dysfunctional as they come. This may suggest reasons as to why Sam has thrown herself into her work and avoided social interaction outside of the work environment.

Sam's inexperience and initial dislike with litigation are brought up, something that she has to deal with throughout the rest of the book. Marshall's shady consultation firm comes up again much later when Jeff and Donovan are looking to go after Krull mining.

Chapter 4 - Sam initially struggles with the idea of going to Virginia. At first, she thinks she's just going out there because she doesn't have anything better to do since she isn't exactly rushing back to work. She again reiterates that she's a city girl and doesn't have any real interest in going out into the mountains, something that will change by the end of the book. Before she goes out, Sam gets the chance to meet with her mother, exploring a bit more of the family dynamic. Sam ultimately decides to go out to meet Mattie, simply because she doesn't know what else to do with her life.

Chapter 5 -- Sam gets her first taste of what life is like in the mountains. Through Romey, she is able to run into Donovan Gray, who ends up being a major character throughout the book. Donovan explains a lot of what is going on with the mining corporations. This is important since many of Sam's cases will deal with the mining corporation, plus it sets up Donovan's animosity with them, which eventually leads to his death. Donovan makes it clear that while the town might have a few colorful characters; most of the people are good and deserving of health. Both Donovan and Mattie end up helping Sam make the transition to life in a small town.

Discussion Question 1

Describe Sam and her relationship with her family.

Discussion Question 2

Why is Sam considering working for a nonprofit?

Discussion Question 3

What does the incident in Chapter 5 tell the reader about the town of Brady?

Vocabulary

insomnia, litigation, conglomerates, furlough, repository, pilfer, despised, liberated, ambitious, inviolable, malfeasance, egregious, unabated, ghetto, incarcerated, rehabilitated, lucrative, cajoled, timid, census, inquiry, mediation, commiserate, foliage, impaired, frayed, insignia, belligerent, intimidation



Chapters 6-10

Summary

Chapter 6 - Sam has her interview with Mattie. Mattie asks her about her life in New York and her work experience. Sam admits that she mostly dealt with financial matters and never actually saw the inside of the courtroom. Mattie doesn't seem bothered by this, admitting that they need all the help they can get. She invites Sam to her house for dinner and offers her a room for the night, since the small town doesn't have any reputable places to stay. Sam meets Chester, Mattie's husband. Sam shares details of her life with Mattie and Chester, admitting that she was unhappy with her job and felt like it was grinding away at her life.

Mattie and Chester go into some more detail about what life is like in the small town, and how the coal companies are destroying the area. They tell Sam how Donovan's father, Webster, sold his land to the coal companies, against the wishes of his family. They mined deep into the mountain, destroying and polluting the land. The company declared bankruptcy so they could avoid paying Webster all of the money that they owed him. Donovan's mother ended up taking her life because of the stress, so Donovan was raised mostly by Mattie and Chester. Since becoming a lawyer, he's vowed to take down the coal companies and is constantly challenging them, making himself their number one enemy.

Chapter 7- Sam returns to D.C to see her family. On the way there, Mattie calls to inform her that she has the job. Sam agrees to start on Monday. She sees her father first; who is proud to hear that she'll be doing real law work instead of just dealing with financial contracts. The two end up talking about the situation of their family, and Sam reveals that Karen has no interest in seeing him again. Sam ends up leasing a truck with Virginia plates, figuring that will help her blend in and be more readily accepted up in the mountains.

Chapter 8 - Sam spends her first day as an intern. Her job is mostly to take notes and to follow the lead of one of the other lawyers. The first case she hears about is someone named Lady, whose husband was arrested because he was unable to pay his bills. He had originally been charged with speeding, a relatively small fee. The fees continued to grow when he met with his legal aid. They set up a monthly payment plan, but the fees kept getting bigger, and they had to pay even more after he was arrested. Sam is horrified to hear this, and she later talks to Mattie about it. Mattie says it's only technically legal, largely because nobody is there to defend them. She assures Sam that they will challenge the group and they'll back down. It happens a lot she tells Sam.

The next case is a domestic violence issue. Sam handles this one with Annette Brevard, another lawyer who works with the group. Annette does everything she can to protect the victim, Phoebe. Sam is grateful, but also very overwhelmed with the severity of the cases and how hard everyone has it in town. She takes a call about a social security



case, but Mattie later tells her to refer it to another firm, since they don't handle social security cases. She says it's too easy for those cases to be people trying to cheat the system.

Sam finds out how close everyone is at the firm, and it seems to her more like a small family. They seem to share everything together. Annette pulls Sam away because they're due to court in fifteen minutes.

Chapter 9 - Sam and Annette go to court for Phoebe's case. They work with the defense, a lawyer named Richard. Richard makes a good case, and the judge can clearly see that Phoebe's husband is bigger than her, and Phoebe has marks on her body, while her husband is perfectly fine. The other lawyer tries to argue that Phoebe started the fight, but nobody is buying it. The lawyer also argues that Phoebe's husband needs to be let go because he's going to lose his job, but Phoebe points out he has no real job, he just sells meth. The judge agrees with Phoebe and her husband has to spend the next few days in jail while Annette helps Phoebe obtain a restraining order and a divorce.

As they're leaving the court, several thugs try to threaten Phoebe into dropping the charges. Annette and the other lawyers rally around Phoebe and the thugs go away. Mattie later assures Sam that the thugs would never do anything to a lawyer, especially a female one. She's never been attacked in 26 years. Sam goes home with Annette, since she's staying in the apartment above Annette's garage. Annette talks a little more about small town life, and Sam shares some of the stress she experienced from her other job. Annette is confident that Sam will do well, and she's tough enough to really make a difference for the people that need help in Brady.

Chapter 10 - Samantha begins her next day of work. She meets with an elderly client, Francine Cooper. Sam is surprised that Francine wants to edit her will to remove her children. She explains that she has valuable land, and she knows her family will just sell it to the coal company if they inherit it. She and her neighbor have a deal that the other will inherit the land, since they also vowed to never sell to the destructive coal companies. Her neighbors are old too, so they're looking for advice on who else could potentially inherit the land.

After that, Sam goes to have lunch with Donovan. He talks about some of his past cases, explaining the dirty tactics that the coal companies use. They're willing to cheat and lie in court to win their cases, and because of how popular they are many of the jurors frequently side with them. Donovan offers Sam a job in her free time to do research for him, saying she's perfect because she's new to town and thus completely unbiased. Sam reluctantly agrees to think it over, but Donovan seems confident that she'll accept, simply because there's little else to do in Brady, and he can sense her growing interest.



Analysis

Chapter 6 - Sam once again brings up how unhappy she was working in New York. She brings up her inexperience in the courtroom as well, since her work in New York was comprised of going through documents and working with rich clients. Mattie doesn't mind because she's already overwhelmed with the sheer volume of work. Mattie explains more about what life is going to be like for Sam over the next year, as well as giving her an idea of what kind of clientele she'll be dealing with while she's working with the legal aid firm. The theme of Work versus Home is brought up in this chapter as there is a direct comparison implied with Mattie's ability to have satisfying work and have a great home life, too. Sam is very aware of this fact and it is part of what makes her consider taking Mattie's job offer.

Mattie tells Sam more about Donovan and why he's so motivated to fight against the coal company. She also explains how Gray Mountain got destroyed. Additionally, the theme of Environmental Responsibility is brought up in this chapter, setting the scene for further statements to be made about the mistreatment of the land by large corporations.

Chapter 7 - Sam's father once again makes it clear that he wasn't happy with the job that Sam used to have. He wants her to be in the courtroom going against the big corporations, just like he used to do. Sam of course has jaded feelings about that because of the fact that while her father was going after big litigation cases, he was also blinded by greed and lying about how much money he was receiving. Sam still believes that he has money from his plane-chasing days that he kept hidden after being arrested. Sam makes it clear to Marshall that Karen has no interest in getting back together with him, but Marshall just seems to ignore this. This entire theme demonstrates the theme of Family and in particular, Marshall's intense desire to make things right with Karen.

Chapter 8 - Annette is introduced for the first time. She acts as a supporting character throughout the majority of the book, and she helps Sam with several of her first cases. Sam gets her first introduction into the type of cases that she'll be handling. Through Lady's case, the theme of Justice is demonstrated. Most of what they were doing was questionably legal, but as Mattie points out, the questionable part doesn't matter unless someone steps in to defend those people. The unfortunate truth is most of those people are unable to afford the rates offered by most lawyers, which is why Mattie runs the legal aid clinic for free.

Lady's case is resolved relatively quickly, but Phoebe's case lasts throughout a larger portion of the book. Phoebe's case is important because it gives Sam her first view of cases that don't just involve large corporations. It's also a case where Sam starts to personally become involved with the clients, going beyond just battling other lawyers in court.

The theme of Justice is demonstrated in other ways in this chapter. Mattie implies that she wants to be able to help people that are genuinely being denied their benefits, but because of how common fraud is, she simply can't spare the time when there are so



many other cases that require their attention. Then, as Sam becomes involved in the various cases of the day, she begins to see that she can make a difference in the lives of the people living there, that her work could matter. She is also upset and appalled at how the coal mines have such a strangle-hold on the people and she determines to seek out justice for those people as long as she stays in Brady.

Chapter 9 - Sam gets another look at how personal the legal aid firm becomes in their cases. Most lawyers would let their involvement end in the court room, but Annette and Sam stay alongside Phoebe to help her get a restraining order against her husband, knowing that he'll be able to get out soon on bail. This case is also Sam's first experience of actually being in the courtroom for a client, although she still doesn't take the lead since Annette is there.

When they leave the court, the legal aid team is confronted by a group of thugs. This shows the underhanded methods that some people in the town are willing to take. Fortunately, the other lawyers are there to make sure that the thugs aren't able to do anything. Sam is still scared, even after Mattie assures her that thugs like that are all talk.

Sam and Annette start to become friends. Sam once again brings up the stress that came with her old job living in the city. Annette praises Sam for her strength and tells her that she can really make a difference in Brady. Although Sam is still thinking about the city, this pushes her onto the path of staying in Virginia, a decision that she's not sure she wants to make just yet.

Chapter 10 - Sam meets Francine for the first time, another client that Sam will have to deal with repeatedly over the course of the book. Francine helps to show the destruction that's caused by the mining companies, something that Sam is starting to get more and more involved with. Sam settles the case relatively quickly, but she'll have to deal with Francine again when she finds out that her neighbors can't be trusted since they were forced into selling their lands. The theme of Environmental Responsibility is demonstrated in Francine and her neighbor's refusal to sell their land to the mining company. They've seen firsthand what the companies do to the land, and how it is slowly poisoning the water and killing the way of life in that area.

When Sam goes to meet with Donovan, she learns that Donovan strongly believes that he needs to do anything he can to try and level the playing field, otherwise the mining corporations will walk all over the lawyers. Donovan hints at a much bigger case, but doesn't go into detail. Although it hasn't yet been firmly established, readers can clearly get the impression that Donovan and Sam are starting to have feelings for one another.

Discussion Question 1

How is this job different from the job that Sam had in the city?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the theme of Environmental Responsibility.

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the influence that the mining companies have over the town of Brady.

Vocabulary

lax, punitive, abomination, transcript, enriched, stultifying, aerodynamics, bailiff, stout, inerrant, glamorous, gaudy, detested, rustic, delinquent, domestic, adamant, injunction, malicious, famished, fatigue, epicenter, lamenting, unanimously, incredulous, sauntered, astute, severance, bureaucracies, illicit, aroma, deferred



Chapters 11-15

Summary

Chapter 11 - Mattie takes Sam up to the mountains. Sam sees the beauty of the mountains, and then Mattie shows her the areas that have been demolished by the coal companies. Mattie reiterates how corrupt the coal companies can be, saying many of the same things that Donovan explained the other day. They go to court twice, once for Lady and once for Phoebe. Mattie threatens the lawyer trying to keep Lady's husband in prison, threatening to sue him for using an illegal debtor's prison. He agrees to let Lady's husband go with a greatly reduced fee. Phoebe's case goes well again, and the judge agrees to the restraining order, and warns her husband to make sure his brother doesn't do anything that could cause him to get thrown into prison.

When Sam returns home, she starts reading up on some of the local news. There's a group of eco-terrorists using high powered sniper rifles to disable the coal trucks. They're very careful to go after safe targets, never shooting at moving trucks or people. Sam also reads the news from back home in New York, which makes her home sick.

Chapter 12 - Donovan takes Sam out to the mountains, specifically the part that is owned by the coal company he is suing, Strayhorn. Donovan is suing them because when they were mining, a large boulder crashed through a trailer, killing two boys. Donovan explains that the company tried to demolish the rock, but he and the sheriff managed to stop them. They're joined by one of Donovan's friends, Vic Canzarro, who used to work as a safety inspector.

Donovan and Vic record some of the mining, taking note of the various violations. Donovan plans to use it as further evidence when he goes to court in a few days, knowing the Strayhorn representatives will try to claim they always follow all of the regulations. They're spotted and have to leave, but Donovan assures Sam that the Strayhorn employees won't be able to catch them. After safely leaving, Donovan and Sam make plans to meet over the weekend.

Chapter 13 - Donovan takes Sam flying in his plane. He shows her more of the area and gives her another view of some of the mountains which have been devastated by coal mining. They fly to the small town of Rockville, where Donovan shows Sam a huge sludge pool caused by the coal mining. The pool is supposed to be isolated, but it has leaked into the water and caused numerous deaths from cancer. Donovan and Sam land the plane and meet up with Vic again. They go to speak with Jesse McKeever, someone who lost most of his family to cancer. They visit another family, looking to recruit as many witnesses and people willing to sue the company as possible.

At a restaurant, Donovan talks more about the case. They would be suing one of the larger coal companies, Krull Mining. Many environmental lawyers have backed away, too afraid to deal with such a ruthless corporation. Donovan reveals that he managed to



acquire corporate documents that detail the mining company knew exactly what they were doing and how dangerous it was for the town. Sam agrees to help go through the documents and prepare for the huge lawsuit against Krull Mining.

Chapter 14 - Donovan teaches Sam how to fly the plane. They go over the mountain where Donovan used to live. He reveals that he was the one that found his mother when she killed herself. They fly back to town, but Donovan returns to the skies, intending to fly out to visit his wife and children who moved away because they were unable to handle the stress of Donovan's life. Sam and the rest of the legal aid firm have dinner together. Sam has a good time, but she feels like Annette is cold towards her, suspecting that it might have something to do with all the time she's been spending with Donovan.

Chapter 15 - Sam tries to avoid Annette the next day. She drives around the town and later the state, taking in more of the sights, still adjusting to how different life is in the mountains compared to New York. She returns in the evening and goes to visit Donovan. He's meeting with a jury consultant, preparing for his upcoming case with Strayhorn. Sam asks more details about the documents that Donovan acquired, wanting to know how he got them. He declines to tell her, and Sam in turn says she can't work with him as an employee. She reads through some of the documents talking about the black lung disease that many of the miners suffer as a result of coal pollution. She finds a report from Mattie, talking about everything her father went through before he finally passed away.

Analysis

Chapter 11 - In this chapter, Mattie demonstrates the theme of Justice. She aggressively goes after the opposing lawyer because it was wrong of them to detain Lady's husband in the first place. If they're going to try and bend the law to work in their favor, Mattie is going to do whatever she must do in order to protect her clients. Mattie is not only able to get Lady's husband released, but she's able to detract from the unfair debt that was unjustly put on Lady's family in the first place. This is again an example of the legal aid firm going above and beyond to help their clients.

When Mattie brings Sam into the mountains, she's trying to help motivate Sam and give her a reason to stay in the firm. It's implied that this is because, like Donovan and Annette, Mattie realizes Sam's potential. She cares about the cases she's already taken on, and she's shown that she's willing to do the work and can quickly learn how to best help her clients.

The eco-terrorists are brought up for the first time in Chapter 11. Although there is little evidence at this point, it seems that Donovan is in some way involved with the group for two reasons. First, it's mentioned that he's willing to go as far as necessary to stop the mining companies. The second reason is that he has experience with firearms.



Chapter 12 - Vic Conzarro is introduced for the first time. Donovan brings Sam out into the mountains because he wants her to see firsthand the damage that the mining companies have done. He believes that it will help motivate her. This is very similar to what Mattie did in the previous chapter. Donovan goes into more detail about the corrupt mining companies.

Donovan's motivations and tactics demonstrate the theme of Morality versus Ethics. What he does in order to get the evidence that he needs is technically ethically (and legally) wrong. However, morally, he feels compelled to proceed. They're technically trespassing on land that belongs to the mining company, but Donovan needs to go there in order to collect more evidence for the Strayhorn case. Donovan and Sam continue to become closer, even though she learns of his family who live elsewhere.

Chapter 13 - Donovan continues to try and motivate Sam to hate the mining companies by showing her a better view of the damage that they've done. This also establishes Donovan as a skilled pilot. The symbolism of the plane is introduced, here. Not only does the plane define and offer insight into Donovan's character, it serves as a symbol of the cause for protecting the environment from ruthless companies.

Krull Mining is brought up for the first time. Krull acts as one of the major antagonistic groups. Donovan shows Sam all of the damage that they've done. He wants to go after them for the sludge pool. When pressed about the evidence, Donovan reveals that he was able to get his hands on incriminating documents. He doesn't go into detail about how he got them, but Sam can clearly tell it was through underhanded means. This scene demonstrates the theme of Morality versus Ethics. In order to do the right thing, Donovan has been willing to break some laws in order to do so.

Chapter 14 - Donovan's experience as a pilot is brought up once again. When Donovan teaches Sam how to fly the plane, he is literally and symbolically, handing over the reins to this particular cause. He continues to show Sam the mountains, both to motivate her and to help her understand why he feels so strongly about fighting the corrupt mining corporations. Donovan's experience with his family is explored. This gives Sam another reason not to get involved with him, since he's still technically married. This also touches upon the theme of Work versus Home. Donovan lost his family because he was so focused on the mining corporations. He says he loves them, but he obviously isn't willing to try and find some middle ground.

Also, in this chapter, Sam begins to get closer to everyone in the legal firm, with the exception of Annette who is acting cold towards her.

Chapter 15 - Donovan once again brings up the theme of Morality versus Ethics. He makes it clear to Sam that he acquired the documents in an underhanded way, which is why he won't go into more details about it. This upsets Sam, who decides that she doesn't want to work with Donovan. She sees too much of her father in Donovan, and she can't approve of someone using backdoor methods.



While Sam is going through some of the documents, she comes upon a detailed report of what Mattie's father was going through when he died of black lung from the coal mines. This gives more insight into just how devastating the effects of black lung can be and the reason why Mattie and Donovan fight against the mining companies so vigilantly. This also underscores the theme of Environmental Responsibility.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the symbolism of the airplane.

Discussion Question 2

How are Sam and Donovan similar?

Discussion Question 3

Why might Annette be cold toward Sam all of a sudden?

Vocabulary

contamination, fatalities, monotonous, aviation, steeples, rendezvous, tandem, picturesque, empathy, tentative, sassafras, quaint, dilapidated, bravado, recoiled, perturbed, altercation, brazen, frenetic,



Chapters 16-20

Summary

Chapter 16 - Sam goes into work and ends up having a very chaotic day. Her first client of the day is Pamela Booker. Pamela recently had her wages garnished for credit card debt that was over ten years old. She tells Sam that she had no idea about the debt since it was from before her divorce. Her employer fires her because he doesn't want to deal with all the paperwork. Pamela has now lost her home, and she and her two children are living out of their car. Sam and the others help Pamela throughout the day, getting food for her and the children and eventually securing a motel for them.

Sam goes after Pamela's former employer as well as the collection agency that is trying to take her money. She prepares the lawsuit, but before she can file it Phoebe comes in with her husband. Much to Sam's dismay, she's reconciling with her husband and wants to drop the restraining order. Annette and Sam try to talk her out of it, but they get nowhere. Next, Sam meets with Francine. Francine is devastated as her neighbors sold their land because they desperately needed the money. She destroys the will that Sam made up, unsure of what to do next.

Sam organizes everything with Mattie for Pamela's lawsuit. She drives down to the courthouse to file the case. She lingers to watch Donovan choosing the jury for his big case. She leaves the courthouse feeling like a lawyer for once, proud of what she and the agency were able to do to help Pamela.

Chapter 17 - Sam spends the day helping Pamela's family. She picks up the kids' school work and then brings them food. She spends some time discussing the case with Pamela, assuring her that she'll go after the company that is garnishing her wages, and even her old boss, since it was unfair of him to get rid of her just because of the garnished wages. She's surprised at how much of an impact she's had on the family in such a short time. When Sam returns home, she gets the chance to talk to Annette. Annette explains that things are difficult between Donovan and his wife, since she's been away for so long.

They're technically still together, Annette explains, and Donovan frequently flies out to see her and their child. Annette says that Donovan has a reputation of sleeping with other women, especially younger ones. As they talk, Sam suspects that Donovan and Annette might have been an item before, and Annette might have been jealous because Sam had suddenly drawn his attention. Sam finds Donovan attractive, but she knows he is trouble and she won't act on her feelings. However, hearing Annette's information makes her grateful that she decided to pass up his previous job offer.

Chapter 18 - Sam heads out to meet with Pamela's previous employer. She explains everything about the upcoming case and how the wages never should have been garnished in the first place. She acts confidently and assures him that the case will be



settled soon, even though she has no idea how long it might actually take. The boss is impressed and agrees to rehire Pamela when the case has been settled.

Sam returns to the office, and she and Mattie take on another client, Buddy Ryzer, whose wife is Mavis. Buddy has been suffering from black lung for years. Sam thinks that he looks and sounds like he's 60, even though he's only around 40. He had been diagnosed before, but when it came time for the coal companies to pay, they challenged his claim. They had their own doctors take a look at him, and the doctors kept coming up with different excuses for it. Since they couldn't afford their own doctors or lawyers, the courts had to side with the coal companies, so Buddy has just been getting worse and worse. Meanwhile, he has to keep working for them.

Mattie promises to take the case. Later, she tells Sam this is the reason she got into law in the first place. Sam agrees that she wants to help, and Mattie is grateful; but, Mattie is also guarded because she knows that Sam will be leaving soon. She doesn't want Sam to accumulate a huge case pile and then just dump it on their understaffed legal aid firm when she returns to New York.

Chapter 19 - Sam spends the next few days working on Buddy's case. She gets the old medical documents which show that he had black lung. She talks to Mattie about it, who explains how the doctors working with the coal company are able to bury the evidence and make sure that it never sees the light of day. Sam asks why they can't sue them for fraud, and Mattie explains that no law firm would go against the big coal companies, and even if they did the case would be dragged out for years. Sam is still determined to help Buddy get the pay owed to him, and Mattie helps her set up the case.

Later that evening, Mattie and Sam go to Donovan's. She meets his brother, Jeff, who works for his firm. Donovan explains the case has been going well the last few days and the coal company is clearly losing. They offered to settle for \$500,000, but Donovan wants to push the case and settle for 3 million, against the advice of everyone else. He gives them his closing speech, which Sam admits sounds very impressive. Later, Sam goes to visit Pamela and they plan a trip for the following day to look at a low rent apartment where Pamela and her family can stay.

Chapter 20 - Sam continues to work on her growing cases. She does more research on what happened to Buddy and even reaches out to Donovan, knowing that he would be interested in going after the lawyers that buried the evidence. He wants to talk about it, but he has to wait for his current case to finish. Sam helps Pamela find a decent trailer to rent, with the legal aid firm promising to pay the rent for the next three months while Pamela settles in and waits for the garnishment issue to be dropped and her funds returned.

Sam also deals with Francine's will. They find an environmental group that promises to protect the land. Francine has a hard time signing the will, but she eventually agrees, knowing the group will take care of it and not just sell it off like her estranged family would. After that, Sam and Mattie go to the courthouse, meeting with Donovan and Jeff who are waiting for a verdict. A few hours later, the jury agrees to all of Donovan's



claims. Everyone ends up celebrating at Mattie's later that evening. Sam uses the opportunity to spend some time with Jeff.

Analysis

Chapter 16 - Sam meets Pamela for the first time. Pamela's case lasts throughout the majority of the book, and it's the first case that Sam has to handle on her own. Sam gets much closer to Pamela than she does any of her other clients, with the possible exception of Buddy towards the end of the book. Sam becomes very involved in Pamela's case. Helping Pamela out is one of the driving forces in Sam deciding to stay, because she gets to directly see all of the good work that she's doing in the area, and the profound effect that she has on her clients.

Sam is willing to go above and beyond to help Pamela. She plays a little dirty herself when she calls up Pamela's boss. She tells him that what he was doing was illegal, even though she has no idea whether or not someone could fire an employee for having garnished wages. Sam makes sure to get food for Pamela and her family, and even helps them find a cheap motel where they can stay while the case is being decided.

The theme of Justice is brought up when Phoebe comes back with her husband. Annette is upset that she wants to drop the charges, and she recognizes that Phoebe is a lost cause. She predicts that Phoebe and her husband are going to end up in prison. The author seems to be suggesting that sometimes justice can't be served because the participants aren't willing to accept the outcome.

Francine's case is brought up again. Sam settles it off screen, but the reader later learns that she found a group that Francine could donate the land to once she's passed on. This comes up later when Francine's children challenge the will because they want to get the land for themselves. The theme of Environmental Responsibility is demonstrated in Francine's determination to keep the land safe from the mining companies.

Chapter 17 - Sam helping Pamela plays a large role in her deciding to stay. Unlike in New York, Sam feels like she's actually doing good in the world. Her clients are people that really need help, not rich business owners that are just looking to snatch up property for cheaply. Sam can tell that Pamela and her family are grateful for what she's doing for them, and she recognizes that they never deserved to be put in such a difficult position anyway, since the collection agency had no right to go after them for such old debts.

Annette and Sam address the issue between them, restoring their friendship. Annette goes into more detail about Donovan's family life, elaborating on why his wife left in the first place and the open relationship that they have. Annette warns Sam off from Donovan, saying that he'll just be trouble. This ends up being true, since it's Sam's close involvement with Donovan that gets her on the radar of the FBI and Krull Mining after Donovan's death. The theme of Work versus Home is introduced here as exemplified by



Donovan's estranged relationship with his wife. Sam begins to see how damaging it can be when a person only lives to work.

Chapter 18 - Sam continues to show how much she cares about her new clients. She shows up at Pamela's former place of business, pleading with her boss to reinstate her. She isn't able to get her job back right away, but she does come to a deal with the manager when she explains how Pamela never should have had her wages garnished in the first place.

When she returns to the office, Sam is introduced to Buddy and Mavis. Buddy explains how he's suffering from black lung, but he's forced to keep working in the coal mines because his family needs the money. He's afraid that he's going to be fired any day because he'll be physically unable to work, and the mining corporation can fire him without having to provide any benefits.

Sam discovers that he was diagnosed with the black lung, but the coal mining company refused to pay him the money that he was owed. They later challenged him in court. Since he couldn't afford to hire a lawyer, he lost. The mining company hired their own doctors to look over Buddy. Of course, the doctors' opinions were in favor of the mining company. This demonstrates the theme of Morality versus Ethics. Legally, the mining company knows all of the loopholes; but, the right thing to do is to take care of the worker who gave his time and energy to working for the company.

Mattie takes the case. Later, she explains to Sam that she started the legal firm because of everything that happened to her father. Mattie brings up the fact that Sam is going to be leaving soon, a fact that Sam doesn't dispute. Mattie appreciates Sam, and she gives the impression that she believes that Sam can be persuaded to stay, which is why she took her on the earlier trip through the mountains. Sam is still planning on returning to New York at this point.

Chapter 19 - Mattie exposes Sam to more of the corrupt tactics that the mining companies use so they don't have to pay out any money to their workers. They bury all of the evidence that can potentially be used against them, and because their clients don't have the money to hire lawyers there's no chance that anyone will expose what they're doing. Both Mattie and Sam recognize that it's worth trying to help Buddy get the money that's owed to him.

Sam wants to take it one step further by going after the mining company for burying the evidence in the first place. Mattie knows that the mining company's practices were completely illegal, but she doesn't want to fight against them. She knows that their firm is too small to go against the corporation for something that serious. However, Sam sees that there are battles that are worth fighting. The theme of Justice is demonstrated when Sam becomes determined to bring to light the gross injustices perpetuated by the larger companies.

Donovan's hatred for the mining company is shown by how aggressively he goes after them in court. He refuses to accept their settlement, even though everyone is advising



him that it's a good amount of money. Donovan wants to do as much damage as possible, and he isn't concerned with the fact that his client is getting more than enough money. His case against Strayhorn is also another example of Justice as a theme. He had been going after Strayhorn since before Sam had ever come to town, and he was only now starting to see results.

The theme of Appearances is also demonstrated in this chapter as Sam observes and learns from Annette that Donovan's marriage is not good, that he is often unfaithful, and that he frequently crosses many ethical lines in order to obtain much of his evidence against the mining companies. On the surface, Donovan seems like a dedicated freedom fighter, righting wrongs for the underprivileged, but underneath it all, what is emerging is someone is bent on revenge and uses the cases of the poor to further his own agenda.

Chapter 20 - Sam continues to go above and beyond to help her clients. She's doing more research into Buddy's case, trying to find a way to go after the mining corporation for burying the evidence in the first place. At the same time, she's also helping Pamela find a place for her and her family to live. Even though she isn't present, Mattie shows her care for her clients since Sam is using money that Mattie set aside specifically to help clients that were in such a desperate situation.

The difficulty with Francine's family is foreshadowed when she meets with Francine again, having changed the will so the land will be donated to a preservation group. Once that is done, Sam and Mattie go to the courthouse, where Sam gets to spend a little more time with Jeff. The two continue to get closer when she invites him to sit with her at the celebration party.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss Donovan Gray's character.

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the theme of Justice as it is demonstrated in Chapters 16-20.

Discussion Question 3

What has Sam begun to understand about practicing this type of law which is both legal and moral?

Vocabulary

affidavits, reveled, mundane, phalanx, eminently, jaded, hyperbole, roughshod, devour, diatribes, cordial, quash, deteriorate, discriminate, benign, repercussions, salacious, wistfully, garnishment, glamour, coerce



Chapters 21-25

Summary

Chapter 21 - Sam flies out with Donovan and Jeff to meet her father. They gather together to talk about the big case between Buddy and the Casper Slate Mining Company. Donovan is interested in going after the company itself. Sam shares the evidence they've gathered, and her father is hopeful that they will have an easy win, but they're going to need finances.

He and Donovan work on the logistical details, with Marshall promising that he'll easily be able to raise the necessary funds for the case. Compared to the cases that Marshall's firm usually deals with, this one is relatively inexpensive, plus investors will be pleased with all the facts that they've gathered.

Marshall pries a little more about the Krull Mining Company case that Donovan has been investigating, but Donovan doesn't give up any of the details, not fully trusting Marshall. Sam thinks that's a good move, and while she wants to get help for Buddy, she is worried about how shady everything is becoming; a firm reminder why she always tried to avoid serious litigation in the past.

Chapter 22 - Donovan is becoming famous for his victory against Strayhorn. The company is talking about trying to appeal, but Donovan and the others know there is nothing they can do. Donovan keeps pushing forward, helping Sam with Buddy as well as pressing his case against the Krull Mining Company. No other lawyers are willing to help Donovan against Krull, and Sam has to once again decline the offer to work with Donovan. She thinks his style of practicing law is too dangerous, and she is still worried about how he acquired the documentation against Krull in the first place. Donovan is getting quite a bit of attention from the press, since he has publicly announced he is going after both Krull, as well as Casper Mining. While this is happening, Jeff and Sam have been getting closer. In a shocking conclusion to the chapter, Donovan is found dead on November 24th.

Chapter 23 - Mattie and the rest of the office get the news of Donovan's death from Jeff. Apparently, Donovan had been flying his plane and crashed in a nearby town. Sam goes to meet with Jeff, who is convinced that it was foul play. Donovan was an expert pilot flying in one of the safest planes, and the weather conditions were perfectly clear that day. Sam and Jeff spend some time together, with Jeff vowing to bring down whichever mining corporation struck out against Donovan. Sam knows that she's getting closer to Jeff, but after everything that has happened she isn't looking to start a relationship, especially since she might be returning to New York eventually.

Everyone gathers at Mattie's where they meet Donovan's wife, Judy. They quickly arrange for a memorial service. Marshall gets in touch with Sam, having spent the last



few days looking into the crash. He promises that he'll help out in whatever way he can, and offers to come down for the funeral. Sam declines his offer.

Chapter 24 - Sam attends the funeral for Donovan. She has a very hard time with it, and afterwards she ends up leaving so she can spend Thanksgiving with her mother. She has lunch the day after with her father and discusses what happened. He's trying to wrangle up his own legal team so he can pick up and continue with Donovan's cases. He says he's unsure whether he thinks it was foul play. He doesn't see enough incentive on the mining company's part to take out Donovan.

While Donovan was working alone, it wouldn't be impossible for someone else to pick up and continue the case, Sam knows. Marshall thinks killing Donovan is too thuggish for the mining companies, and since they didn't know about the evidence Donovan had, it looks even more extreme. Marshall says how much he liked Donovan, and how he thought the two of them were very alike, and how he was hopeful that Sam would start pursuing more cases like this. Sam has enough of the subject and Marshall agrees to drop it.

Chapter 25 - Sam returns to the legal aid offices and finds that Francine's family is waiting for her. They're very upset, and they've convinced Francine that they should be written back into the will. Sam and Annette can see that Francine clearly wants nothing to do with them. They manage to stall and tell the family it will take at least a week for them to change the will around. Mattie and Sam know that the family can't wait around that long, and they hope that Francine will feel free to tell them what she wants to do, really, once her family aren't there pressuring her.

They have to quickly head to court, where Phoebe and her husband have just gotten arrested for possession of meth. Annette is only there because she wants Phoebe's kids to be taken care of. She tells Phoebe that they don't handle her type of criminal case, but she's going to look out for her children and try to find them a safe place. They end up having to quickly rush off after Mattie summons them to Donovan's place, which is being raided by the FBI.

The FBI are seizing all of the documents that they can, since they have a warrant that Mattie assumes was given to them by one of the major coal companies, wanting whatever evidence Donovan had on them. Mattie tells Annette and Sam that Jeff had already anticipated something like this and had removed all of the hard drives from the computers, so the FBI wouldn't be seizing anything useful. Mattie tells Sam that Jeff wants them to meet with him to discuss important things, but she doesn't go into any more detail.

Analysis

Chapter 21 - Now that Donovan is finished with his big case, he's able to look at the evidence that Sam has against another mining company called, Casper Slate. Donovan is impressed with everything that she was able to gather, and both he and Marshall are



interested in pursuing the case. Marshall is proud of Sam for getting so involved, and he sees it as her following in his footsteps. The theme of Family emerges from the collaborative efforts between father and daughter. It is clear that Marshall wants to reconcile with both his daughter and his estranged wife. Sam is very wary, however.

The theme of Justice is also demonstrated in this chapter. Both Donovan and Marshall know that they're going to be in court for years if they go against Casper Slate, but they both consider that to be a battle that's worth fighting. For Donovan, it's because of his hatred of the mining companies, but Marshall just seems interested in the money and glory associated with the case. This underscores the theme of Appearances in that Marshall appears to be involved because he wants to right a wrong, stand up for the little guy, but it becomes evident to Sam that he's only in it to make a big score for his own company and to make a name for himself.

Donovan is again vague about the details of his other long term case against Krull mining. He knows that Marshall doesn't have the best reputation, and he doesn't want to risk giving Marshall information that could later be used against him. This just gives readers more evidence that Donovan most likely acquired the documentation in an illegal fashion.

Chapter 22 - Donovan keeps pressing forward against the mining companies. He wants to start a case against Casper Slate, and he also wants to try and finally bring down Krull with the evidence that he acquired. Sam turns down working with Donovan because she is starting to see how obsessed he is becoming. She wants to help Buddy, but she can tell that Donovan is just in it because he wants to bring the mining companies down and he's becoming far too reckless, just like her father was in the past. The theme of Appearances is demonstrated in this comparison that Sam makes between the two men.

Things come to a head with Donovan at the end of the chapter when it's revealed that he has mysteriously died. This is a major turning point in the book and marks the point where Jeff starts to become a main character. Donovan's death has a huge impact on Sam as well.

Chapter 23 - More details are revealed about Donovan's death. The information doesn't quite add up to Jeff. Donovan was a skilled pilot, something that was established in the earlier chapters. On top of that, the flying conditions were perfect that evening, so an accident just seems that much more unlikely. Jeff spends the rest of the book trying to find evidence of Donovan's murder. This demonstrates and touches upon the theme of Family.

Sam and Jeff are drawn closer together because of Donovan's death. She even admits that the two of them may be beginning to enter into a relationship, but she's trying to avoid that because she still isn't sure if she'll be staying in Virginia long-term.

The distance between Sam and her parents is shown once again, and demonstrates the theme of Family. Marshall offers his support for Sam, because he actually liked



Donovan. Sam declines his offer to come down, even though she clearly needs support. She's just not comfortable enough with her father to have him come down and be with her. She doesn't fully trust him, any more than she had ever trusted Donovan.

Chapter 24 - Marshall continues to push for Sam to become a litigation lawyer, just like he used to be before being disbarred. This annoys Sam, who is tired of both her parents trying to push her into a job that she isn't interested in. Marshall shows his support by telling Sam that he's still trying to find a team of lawyers to take up Donovan's cases.

Marshall has a hard time believing that the mining companies could have had Donovan killed. It seems too thuggish to him. The companies that he's used to dealing with, he argues, use legal means, or subtle, less messy tactics. This touches on the theme of Appearances as Marshall is inclined to believe that the wealthy mining companies wouldn't stoop to something as pedestrian as cold blooded murder. He will, of course, be proven wrong in the next few chapters.

The coal companies start lashing out at Sam using the FBI. They want to find whatever evidence Donovan was able to obtain against them. Jeff and Donovan had anticipated that, and the FBI search ends up yielding nothing. The FBI continue to be a hassle to Sam, Mattie, and Jeff throughout the rest of the book, constantly trying to find the evidence that Donovan hid.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Sam reach out to her father for financial help with the mining cases?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the different messages that are being sent about the theme of Family.

Discussion Question 3

Why is Sam still considering going back to New York?

Vocabulary

dirges, eulogy, pulpit, stoic, condolences, petrified



Chapters 26-30

Summary

Chapter 26 - Mattie and the others go to speak with Jeff at a local hotel. He tells them how he moved the hard drives from the computer, and that he believes the office has been bugged, which is why he wanted to meet at the hotel. Samantha is uncomfortable and wants to leave, especially when Jeff starts to talk about the documents. Jeff wants Mattie and the others to start taking over the cases that Donovan was working on. Mattie knows they can take some of them, but certainly not the bigger ones that Donovan was involved with, such as the ones with Krull and Casper Slate.

Sam leaves, and she's followed by a thug that she names Bozo. He warns her not to work with Jeff, and that she should just stay in the legal aid office. Jeff approaches her shortly after and explains in more detail how deceptive Donovan was and how he worked with a hacker to originally get the documents. Donovan also broke into the building, constantly using different disguises to avoid being caught by the surveillance system.

Jeff has the documents, but he doesn't go into any more detail than that. He wants to get them to a group of lawyers that can actually use them to continue the cases and stop the coal mining corporations. He also makes it clear that he has feelings for Sam.

Sam is overwhelmed and just wants to return to New York, but Jeff insists that she's too deeply involved in things. He gives her a prepaid phone that she can use to speak to either him, or Vic, without fear of being listened to by the FBI.

Chapter 27 - Sam meets with Buddy and Mavis to discuss the changes to the case. She tells them that she'll still work with them for the black lung case, making sure that Buddy gets the money that's owed to him. Buddy asks about the bigger case involving the mining company trying to cover up that they knew Buddy was sick from the start. Sam tries to explain that the case is above her, but Buddy refuses to give up. Sam is heading back to the office when she runs into Bozo again watching her. In a panic, she calls Jeff who assures her that he's just trying to scare her.

Sam gets back and finds that Francine's family is still pestering her. She assures them Francine hasn't been around to change the will, and she'll notify them if she does, as long as they stop harassing the office. The FBI arrive shortly after, questioning Mattie and Sam about Jeff's location. They can honestly say that they have no idea where Jeff is. Mattie tells the FBI that she'll be representing Donovan's estate and working alongside Jeff, so any potential meetings between the FBI and Jeff should take place in their office, with her present.

Chapter 28 - Sam reads the news and sees that the eco-terrorists have struck again. She wonders if Jeff or Donovan could be associated in some way with them. Sam and



Mattie attend a winter festival in town. While there, Jeff approaches Sam, in disguise. He gives her a note with instructions to meet him in the woods the next day for a hike. She agrees to meet him, and the following day he takes her deep into the woods and over to the small cabin that remained at Gray Mountain. He explained that the hidden cameras had caught people investigating the cabin just a few days ago; four goons that seemed to be from a mining company, likely Krull. The two spend the evening together, talking about their past and respective love lives. They end up sleeping together.

The next morning, Jeff takes Sam into the mountains and guides her to a hidden cave, where the Krull documents are, along with all the guns that the Gray's owned. Sam asks if Jeff was involved with the snipers, but all he says is that he wouldn't want to go to prison. She considers checking the cabinets for the sniper rifles the eco-terrorists used, but she decides against it. She spends another evening with Jeff before returning back to town.

Chapter 29 - Sam finds out that Phoebe has been released on bail so she can see her family. She takes Phoebe to see her kids, but warns Phoebe that she's still looking at five years in prison for what she did. She returns to the office and meets with Jeff, Mattie, and the FBI. They question Jeff about the documents, but Jeff says he doesn't know anything about them. Jeff isn't being held or charged with any crimes, but the FBI warn him that they might have more questions.

Sam learns that things are looking bleak with the Strayhorn case. The mining company is trying to argue against the verdict that Donovan had won, knowing that without Donovan they have a much greater chance of winning, even though they technically settled. Mattie is determined to take up the case and honor Donovan's memory, since it was a case that he rightfully won. Jeff tells them that he's going to be gone for a little while, not elaborating on where he's going.

Sam has more complications in her cases when she discovers that Francine has had a stroke. She was rushed to the hospital, but she didn't make it. The family arrives after the funeral, telling Sam that Francine burned up the will. Sam doesn't want to fight them, even though she assumes they're the ones that destroyed the will. They leave, thinking that they're going to get the land. The next day, the firm gets a letter sent by Francine, containing the original copy of the will.

Chapter 30 - Sam returns to New York for Christmas. While she's there, she's called by Jeff. Jeff says he came to the city to surprise her. She asks how he got there, and he explains that he's working with a lawyer friend of Donovan's, Jarrett London. Jarrett wants to meet with Sam to discuss the case. Sam meets with him, but she's overwhelmed with what Jarrett wants. He has plans to go forward with the case, but he wants Sam to get her mother to help, since she has high ranking legal contacts that will help with the case. He also knows about the documents.

Sam quickly dismisses herself. Jeff catches up with her and the two have dinner. Jeff says he had no idea Jarrett was going to do any of that, and Sam believes him. Jeff tries to convince her to take over Donovan's firm, since Mattie will only be able to



handle a few cases. Sam says she doesn't want to commit to anything, but Jeff keeps pressing. He talks about the chemistry they have, but Sam makes it clear she isn't looking for a relationship and that it would just be physical. Of course, Jeff doesn't have a problem with it just being physical. Sam declines the offer, feeling completely under-qualified. She reminds Jeff that she's only going to be in Brady for a few more months to finish up her year of charity with Mattie.

Analysis

Chapter 26 - In Chapter 26, the theme of Justice is demonstrated through Mattie's actions. She wants to do everything she possibly can to help take on some of Donovan's cases; but, she recognizes that the legal aid office is just a small firm. She's already overwhelmed with her current case load. She tries to take on what she can to help. However, she knows that if she wants to help anyone she can't overload her firm.

Jeff, on the other hand, demonstrates the theme of Work versus Home. For the remaining part of the book, he's completely obsessed with the case against Krull. He tries to drag Mattie and Sam into the case, but neither one of them is comfortable with the extreme measures that he's willing to take.

After Sam is blindsided by Bozo, Jeff explains how he and Donovan were able to get the documents in the first place. This brings in the theme of Morality versus Ethics. Donovan and Jeff both knew that it would be years before they could do anything with the evidence, but they were still willing to obtain it because in their eyes there's nothing more important than bringing down the corrupt mining companies.

Jeff also oversteps in the way that he interacts with Sam. He knows that he needs Sam's help to go against Krull; so, he makes it seem like she has no other choice, insisting that she's already too involved to just leave. He gives her the prepaid cellphone so he can keep in touch with her, which means dragging her back into the case if she does decide to return to New York.

Chapter 27 - Sam feels as if she's drowning with all of the choices and the cases piling up. As much as she wants to see the mining corporation pay for what they did, she recognizes that they aren't going to be making any progress on the case. They were barely getting any support when Donovan was alive, and now that he's dead they've lost the little momentum that they had. She's more concerned with Buddy getting the money that's owed to him.

The fact that Sam is being stalked by Bozo just gives her more motivation. She knows how extreme the mining companies can be, and she doesn't want to see Buddy and his family dragged down. This also seems to be pushing her to leave and return to New York when her time with legal aid is done.

Francine's family continues to make trouble for Sam. This is another battle that Sam isn't willing to fight. She comes to an agreement with the family to try and get them to



back away. It ends up being a temporary solution, since the family returns to argue with Sam after Francine passes away.

This entire chapter is a sort of 'dark night of the soul' in regards to Sam. She is torn between wanting justice for the people she's involved with, and with preserving her own career and safety. In her current state, she's feeling as if it would just be simpler if she walked away and went back to New York, where she didn't have to get her hands dirty with courtroom litigation and underhanded mining companies. In short, she's tired, distraught, emotionally bombarded, and just wants a little peace. It won't happen, unfortunately.

The FBI continues to make trouble for Mattie and the rest of the firm. Mattie makes it clear that she will be the one representing the estate, so anytime the FBI wants to consult with Jeff they're going to have to go through her as well.

Chapter 28 - Jeff and Sam cement their relationship by the end of the chapter. Although they aren't willing to become boyfriend and girlfriend, they've certainly become more than friends. Jeff drags Sam deeper into the case when he shows her all of the stolen evidence. While showing her the evidence, Sam also discovers the gun locker that the Gray brothers used. When she questions Jeff about his involvement with the eco-terrorists, he admits that he was working with them. He doesn't make it clear whether or not Donovan had any involvement, but it's strongly implied that he did.

The theme of Environmental Responsibility is demonstrated, lightly, in this exchange between Sam and Jeff. Both agree that the environment needs protecting, but the way in which Jeff has chosen to champion the cause frightens Sam. He knows that she doesn't want to take up Donovan's cause and go against Krull, but he still shows her the evidence anyway, making her an accessory.

Chapter 29 - The FBI keep pressing Jeff and the others, trying to find any clues that might lead them to the evidence. They know Jeff knows something, but for the moment they don't have anything that they can formally charge him with.

Things are grim around the office because everyone is upset that Donovan's case is being appealed. Without Donovan around to challenge the mining company they hope that they'll be able to win the appeal and not have to pay anything for the death of the Tate children. Mattie takes up the case because she knows that the case had already been legally won and is worth fighting for. This is another example of the theme of Justice. Mattie tells Sam that they'll likely be fighting with Strayhorn for the next two years, but it's important enough to fight for.

Once Francine passes away her family returns to try and argue with Sam. Just like the mining companies, they're playing dirty by pretending that Francine destroyed the will, hoping that means the lawyers will have to resort to the previous version of the will that gave them control of the land. Francine shows she was willing to play dirty too, and she arranges for a letter to be sent to the firm containing the actual copy of the will. Environmental Responsibility is demonstrated as a theme, in this section by Francine's



unwillingness to surrender her property to those people whom she knows would allow it to be exploited and ruined.

Chapter 30 - Jeff comes to New York to see Sam. At first it seems like he's just there because he wants to surprise her, but it soon becomes clear that he is only there because of the case. Jeff is letting his work consume his life, making the same mistake that Sam was at the start of the book, and thus demonstrating the theme of Work versus Home. Jeff brings Sam to meet his lawyer friend, Jarrett London. Sam realizes that they aren't actually interested in her, but more focused on the connections that she has through her mother. Sam doesn't like being approached just because of who her parents are, and she doesn't appreciate that Jeff is dragging her even deeper in the case when she made it clear that she didn't want to pursue it.

Jeff continues to try and get Sam to work with them when they have dinner together. He tries to use the relationship between them as a way to motivate Sam. This brings into question whether or not he slept with her because he was genuinely interested, or because he just thought it would make the two of them closer, and thus increase the chances of Sam helping him out. Jeff later tries to argue that he was effectively trying to do both.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Environmental Responsibility.

Discussion Question 2

Why does Sam feel so overwhelmed?

Discussion Question 3

How does Sam feel when Jeff shows up in New York? What does that reveal about Jeff's character?

Vocabulary

catastrophe, intubated, flippant, marauding, forlornly, dilapidated, haphazardly, paltry, feigned, renege



Chapters 31-35

Summary

Chapter 31 - Sam discovers that Jeff has been arrested for trespassing on the airfield where Donovan stored his plane. When she contacts him, he assures her that it isn't a problem and he'll be rescued by Donovan's lawyer friends. He ends up being released a few days later. He says that he was only breaking in to see if it was possible to sneak into the airfield and sabotage a plane, which it was. He let himself get caught so he could charm one of the guards, managing to find out that one of the guards had recently quit. Jeff is suspicious and is now looking into that guard.

Sam goes to court, alone for the first time. She's representing Pamela, and the case goes over incredibly well. The judge rules in favor of Sam, and she ends up getting double what she asked for Pamela. They return to the office and celebrate. They also find out that Francine's children are pushing to use the older will, unaware that Mattie and the others have the most recent one.

Sam and Mattie go to court for one of Mattie's black lung cases. Sam meets the opposing lawyer, Trent Fuller. Trent Fuller openly threatens Sam and warns her to drop Buddy's case, saying they are unhappy with his allegations and will go after both her and him for libel if they ever try anything again. Sam is stunned at how brazen he is. Mattie says Trent is famous for being a brute of a lawyer in the pocket of the coal companies.

Chapter 32 - Sam gets an email from Jarrett pushing for her to work with him. She politely declines, but says she will at least be open for a meeting in the future. She gets another email from her old boss, Andy. He says he's leaving the firm because he wants to start his own, smaller firm. He promises the hours won't be as bad and they'll only have a couple of clients, but clients with a lot of money. Sam is tempted by the offer, but she also doesn't want to abandon Mattie who is overwhelmed with clients. It had only been three months, and Sam hadn't expected to have to make any decisions until the end of the year. The more she thinks about it, the more she's tempted by Andy's offer. She stalls and asks for more details, giving her time to think.

Jeff calls and meets up with Sam. He explains that he got in touch with the missing guard and found out more about the night that Donovan crashed. Apparently there had been a man who stayed in a plane after arriving. Jeff believes that he sneaked out of the plane, sabotaged Donovan's, and then spent the night back on his own plane. Nobody had bothered to ask this guard because he quit shortly afterwards. Jeff intends to push the lead, hoping he'll be able to prove foul play with the coal mining companies.

Chapter 33 - Sam is put temporarily in charge of the Strayhorn appeal. She has to do most of the heavy lifting, but they know she'll be gone by the time it goes to court for real. Mattie is just too busy to currently handle it herself. Sam agrees to do what she



can while she's still there. She thinks about Andy's offer, and feels guilty that she is thinking about leaving early when Mattie still needs so much help. Sam and Mattie inform the lawyer handling Francine's will that they have the original copy and they send it over, also informing the lawyer they aren't looking for a fight.

Sam gets a call from Jeff, but she doesn't talk for long. He invites her to a hike over the weekend, but she says that she's unsure because of how busy she is. Sam meets with Buddy, who has just gotten fired because he is too sick to work. He is receiving no benefits, and with the abrupt firing, he has no other job lined up. Everyone knows that he only has a few years left to live anyway, he tells them. He laments if things had been different ten years ago when he first appealed for benefits, he might have been able to get help and find a better job. Sam is hurt, and Buddy once again asks if there's a way to get justice. She apologizes and says she's just an intern that's going back to New York. Instead of being mad, they thank Sam for everything that she's done. She was the first real lawyer they had, and they appreciate everything she tried to do to help them.

Chapter 34 - Jeff takes Samantha up to the mountains, again bringing her to Gray Mountain. He packs a pair of kayaks, but they don't end up using them. The two spend the night sleeping together, but in the morning Jeff goes missing. Sam waits for him to return, realizing that he must have been using her as a cover, making it look like a romantic trip into the mountains when he was really there for the hidden documents. When Jeff returns, Sam pretends to be asleep and acts like she has no idea he had been gone.

Chapter 35 - Sam gets the check for Pamela's case. She goes out to surprise her and helps give her some financial advice. She returns to the office to celebrate with Mattie and the others, but their celebration is cut short when Mattie gets a surprise message warning her that the FBI is coming. Mattie uses the time to hide the computers, claiming they're out for repairs when the FBI arrive. The FBI harass them for a little while and go through all of Sam's files. They don't seem to find what they're looking for, which Sam assumes is Jeff's files. She later goes to Mattie, who asks her to come clean about everything she knows about Jeff's cases.

Analysis

Chapter 31 - Jeff continues to demonstrate the theme of Work versus Home. In Jeff's case, he is so dedicated to catching his brother's killer that he is blind to anything else around him, including his relationship with Sam. He is willing to get arrested because he figures it will help further the case and can potentially give him some evidence that shows one of the mining companies is responsible for Donovan's death. Like Donovan, he's willing to do extreme things if it means taking down the mining corporations, having little regard for what the consequences of his actions might be.

Sam has her first day in court when she has to represent Pamela. Fortunately for her, the case goes incredibly well. Sam is beyond happy and excited, not just because she did well, but because she was able to help Pamela. This case helps push Sam towards



staying in Virginia because she knows that she can make a difference, and she'll be doing far more good working with these types of clients as opposed to the rich business owners that she'd normally work with back in New York. The theme of Justice is demonstrated in both her scenes in the courtroom and her interactions afterward with Pamela.

Sam's next court experience isn't as positive. Trent shows just how brazen the mining companies are willing to be with their threats. He's able to openly threaten her in the court house because he knows how powerful the mining companies are. He's demonstrating all of the traits that Donovan and Jeff had warned her about. Mattie stands up to him, but even she later admits to Sam that Trent is dangerous.

Chapter 32 - Sam is given a chance to return to New York when Andy reaches out to her. Sam is hesitant, showing that she's gotten attached to her new life in the mountains. Sam purposefully gives an answer that will stall for time because she's hesitant about returning, but at the same time she's having a hard time just turning her back on her old life in New York.

Jeff reveals everything that he learned while he was at the airfield. His evidence is flimsy, but it eventually adds up when he's able to get in touch with the fired guard and put together what must have happened to Donovan's plane. It's never made clear what happens after the fact, as Jeff only hints that he'll be sending people to interview the guard, and that he has plans to exact revenge on the person that sabotaged Donovan's plane.

Chapter 33 - Sam is put in charge of the Strayhorn case. This ends up giving her more motivation to stay because she knows that the full case is going to take roughly two years to complete. Mattie just wants her to handle it while she's still working at the firm, but Sam seems determined to see the case through until the end. Sam is clearly affected by all of the cases that she's worked on in such a short time, and the last thing she wants to do is give up on Mattie. This is further evidenced by the fact that she feels guilty for thinking about Andy's offer.

Sam has even more motivation when she meets with Buddy, who bitterly regrets not having obtained legal aid sooner. This hurts Sam's feelings because, initially, she feels that Buddy is blaming her for all of the problems they are having with the case. However, Buddy and Mavis are very appreciative toward Sam because she is the only person who has been willing to help them. Whenever they talk about Sam, they're always so proud. Even though she says she's not going to be around and can't pursue their case, they're not mad at her. Sam knows that she wants to work with this kind of client.

Chapter 34 - Jeff's obsession with the case is shown again when he uses Sam as an excuse to get into the mountains to collect the evidence. This is also another example of his willingness to compromise himself. The theme of Morality versus Ethics is often shown quite tellingly through Jeff's character. He doesn't care about what Sam might be feeling, and he won't just come out and tell her why he needs her to come into the



mountains with him. This is likely because he knows that she wouldn't agree to it, given that she has already objected to anything involving the documents.

Chapter 35 - Sam finally gets the check for Pamela's case, which gives her another reason to stay. She's happy and proud of herself for winning the case because she knows that Pamela was a good person who needed help. She's overjoyed when she sees the way that Pamela reacts, and she wants to be able to provide that satisfaction and care for all of her clients. When she was in New York, she was working with clients that didn't care about anyone besides themselves. They wanted to manipulate the laws to suit their own needs, but Pamela is just someone that's trying to make it in the world and raise her family. Sam feels like she's actually making a positive difference in the world.

The FBI keep hounding Sam, trying to find out something about the missing evidence. They know that Sam is close to Jeff, but Jeff has been smart enough not to give Sam anything that could potentially ruin the case.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Work versus Home.

Discussion Question 2

Describe Jeff's character.

Discussion Question 3

Why does Sam feel conflicted in these chapters?

Vocabulary

tryst, filched, arbitrate, epistle



Chapters 36-40

Summary

Chapter 36 - Sam discovers that earlier in the day, Buddy has killed himself. She goes to talk to Mattie about it, and they both believe that he did it because his family needs the insurance money since he was fired. Sam is torn up, and Mattie gives her a few personal days to get everything sorted out. Sam uses the time to force a meeting between her two parents, explaining everything that has happened, even the documents. Her parents warn her not to get involved in Jeff's dirty business. They promise to help and support her. Sam is surprised to see them leave together.

Chapter 37 - Sam meets up with Jeff at a restaurant. The two of them briefly talk, with Sam asking if Jeff is just using her to move the documents. Jeff admits that he is, and he still needs her help since he's only able to move so many documents at one time. He knows that he's being followed still, so the most he can get away with is small trips. Sam returns to the office and everything the FBI took the previous day had been returned.

Chapter 38 - Sam and Mattie attend Buddy's funeral. Sam has a hard time and wants to leave, but Mavis catches her and insists on her staying. Sam ends up talking to one of Buddy's children, who tells her that Buddy was always saying good things about her. He said that Sam was the only one brave enough to fight the coal companies, and he hopes that she doesn't go back to New York anytime soon because she is needed so badly there.

Chapter 39 - Jeff brings Sam into the woods again so he can finish moving the documents. Sam hears gunshots during the evening, and Jeff runs back to the cabin. He tells her that there were thugs waiting for him, but he managed to lose them because he knew the terrain. He gives Sam a gun to protect herself and goes to get the last of the documents. There are more gunshots and Sam goes to investigate. When she returns to the cabin, the documents are gone. Jeff quickly shows up, and she learns that Vic came by and moved the files from the cabin while Jeff was out. They escape and bring the files to Jarrett London, who offers Sam a job on the case.

Chapter 40 - Sam meets with Jeff one last time. He tells her that he's leaving for a few months. He's tired of people following him around. He thinks he has a lead on who killed Donovan, and he wants to follow up on that. Sam gets another email from Andy, but she decides to decline it. She tells Mattie that she wants to start working for her, at least for the next two years so she can help out with the Strayhorn case and all the other cases that she's started.



Analysis

Chapter 36 - Sam being hurt by Buddy's death is just another example of how close she has gotten to the community in Virginia. She truly cared about Buddy and wanted to help him. It hurts her all the more that he committed suicide out of desperation. It was the only way that he would be able to provide for his family. Sam knows that she can't just abandon her clients who are that desperate for help.

Sam is able to make some strides with her family, forcing them to come together because she needs their help. This entire chapter is about the theme of Family. It is first demonstrated by Buddy's family and the ultimate act of desperation that he did for them. It is explored again with Sam's outreach to her own parents. Sam explains everything to them. She reveals that she even reached out to her mother for help in dealing with the mining corporations. Sam herself doesn't get personally involved. Like Mattie, Sam knows that it's a battle she isn't capable of fighting. Sam is more concerned with helping her current clients than she is with bringing down the corporations.

Chapter 37 - Jeff comes clean with what he has been doing. This is yet another example of Jeff showing that he's willing to do whatever it takes to win his fight against the mining corporations. Jeff could have potentially had a real relationship with Sam, especially once she made the decision to stay in Virginia. He isn't able to focus on that because he is consumed with bringing down the mining corporations. This underscores the theme of Work versus Home.

Sam is willing to let Jeff continue to use her as a shield. This is likely because Sam is still emotional about losing Buddy. While she doesn't want to be the one to fight the mining corporations directly, she does want to see them brought to justice.

Chapter 38 - Sam is given more reasons to stay in Virginia when she's stopped by Mavis. Mavis thanks her for everything that Sam tried to do for the family. Mavis's children also talk about how proud Buddy was to be working alongside of Sam. Just like with Pamela, Sam gets to see the effect that she's having on the people that she works with and for.

Chapter 39 - The mining corporation sends thugs to ambush Jeff, showing how committed they are to having the documents destroyed. This provides evidence that everything Jeff and Donovan have been saying is true and removes any doubt as to whether or not Donovan was actually killed by them. If they're willing to send armed gunmen after Jeff, it makes sense that they'd also be willing to kill Donovan, who was by far the greater threat of the two brothers.

The shootout gives Sam another reason not to want anything to do with the case. She was likely only helping Jeff move the evidence because she was still hurt over Buddy being forced to take his life. Sam has learned enough from working with Mattie to know when she needs to turn a case down, which is why she doesn't accept the offer from Jarrett to press the case against Krull, even though she knows he has the evidence to bring them down.



Chapter 40 - Now that Jeff has given away the evidence, he isn't sure what he wants to do with his life. He's in a very similar situation to Sam at the start of the book, after she lost her job. Just like with Sam, he wants to go far away and try to figure out what he should do with himself.

Sam has accepted that she wants to stay in Virginia. She says that she's only going to be staying for two years because she wants to finish up the Strayhorn case, but readers are given the impression that she will likely stay longer than that because of how much she cares about her clients. She's likely just saying two years because she wants to have some flexibility in her life, since she doesn't want to feel like her job is dictating everything she does in her life.

The theme of Justice is subtly brought up again at the end of the book. Even though Jeff and Sam have delivered the evidence that condemns Krull, the mining company still hasn't been found guilty by the end of the book. Based on everything that Sam has said throughout the book, it will still be many years before they're finally brought to justice. But, it's still a battle that's worth fighting.

Discussion Question 1

What suggests that the mining company was involved in Donovan's death?

Discussion Question 2

What does Jeff determine about his next steps?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Sam decide to stay in Virginia?

Vocabulary

practicality, Pershing, indebted, awash, interrogations, internment, predictability, effervescent, scintillating, proposal



Characters

Samantha (Sam)

Samantha is the main character of the story. She starts out as a successful lawyer in New York. However, due to the recession, she soon finds herself furloughed, with no other option but to work for a charity firm for a year. Sam is shown to be an incredibly hard worker at the firm. She mentions several times that for the last few years she hasn't had anything resembling a social life because she's always working long hours. When Sam is furloughed, she realizes that she hated her job. She didn't like the clients she was working for, or the long hours that she kept putting in. The pay was good, but that didn't matter because she never actually got to spend the money doing things that she enjoyed.

Despite always claiming to be a city girl, Sam takes very well to living in the mountains. She thrives in Mattie's firm, where she shows that she cares about her clients and wants to make a difference in the world. She isn't as concerned with the big companies as Donovan or Jeff, instead wanting to make sure that her clients are getting the best deals possible whenever they go to court. Sam is shown to be very charismatic, instantly hitting it off with her new coworkers and clients.

Sam is usually very straight forward. She constantly points out to her coworkers that she's going to be back in New York within a year. She also makes it clear what she wants first from Donovan and later with Jeff. Sam applies this straight forward approach to her job as well. She doesn't like being deceptive as a lawyer, and she's very uncomfortable when she learns about the underhanded things that Donovan and Jeff were doing to the mining companies. Sam does get a little more aggressive when she's in the courtroom; but, she doesn't seem willing to cross the same lines as Donovan and Jeff.

Andy Grubman

Andy is Samantha's boss when she's back in New York. In the beginning, Samantha doesn't mind working with him. However, when she's contacted by him toward the end of the book, she seems to have a change of heart. She doesn't like the way he flippantly treats her, and she has a hard time believing his words.

Karen

Karen is Samantha's mother. She lives in Washington D.C. and works for the Justice Department, a position of which she is very proud. Karen is always pushing for Sam to get a new job, wanting her to come to Washington and get a career like her own. Sam likes her mother; but, she seems to have a harder time talking to her. Sam notes that Marshall, her father, is the better listener.



Sam tends to go to her father for advice over Karen. Karen has a very antagonistic relationship toward Marshall. She even tells Sam that she doesn't want to see him again. Sam believes that Karen is the one who turned him in, and she thinks that Karen is keeping tabs on Marshall because he's hiding money from her.

Marshall

Marshall is Sam's father. He was a litigation lawyer who specialized in plane crashes. He took his job very seriously and was quite successful, but he was also committing fraud and keeping the money that he got from his jobs. It was never outright stated how much, but Sam makes it out to sound like it was a significant amount. Sam thinks that Marshall became a better listener when he was in prison, which is why she usually goes to him for advice.

Like Karen, Marshall is always pushing for Sam to change careers. He's excited when she starts working with the legal aid firm because he thinks she wants to go after the big coal companies. He wants her to work at his consulting firm with some other disbarred lawyers. Sam turns him down because she believes that her father would do anything to get ahead in a case, something that she strongly disapproves of.

Mattie

Mattie is Sam's new boss when she accepts the job at the Mountain Legal Aid Clinic. Mattie is an older woman who has been practicing law for nearly 30 years. She got started because her father was stricken with black lung from working in the coal mines. She saw how her strong father was reduced to a sick old man and lost the ability to work. She decided that she was going to do everything she could to protect anyone else from suffering the same fate.

Mattie is very protective of both her workers and her clients. She doesn't back down when someone tries to intimidate her, and she doesn't stand for anyone trying to bully someone in her office. Mattie raised Donovan like a son after he lost his mother, and she's very proud of everything that he's managed to accomplish against the mining companies.

Donovan Gray

Donovan Gray operates his own law firm in Virginia. His primary focus is attacking the mining corporations for all of the crimes that they commit. Donovan hates the mining companies because they destroy the mountains, including his own home. His father sold their land when he was younger, but the mining companies didn't hold up their end of the agreement. They ended up losing everything. In her grief, Donovan's mother killed herself on the mountain.



Donovan is shown to be a very skilled and aggressive lawyer. He's willing to do whatever it takes to win his cases, even when it means breaking the law. He seems obsessed with defeating the mining companies, refusing to settle if he thinks he can force more money out of them, even when Mattie and the others are advising against it. Donovan doesn't let the mining thugs intimidate him. Like Mattie, he's very protective of everyone in the town.

Donovan is married and has a daughter, but he doesn't spend that much time with his family. He drove them away because he was obsessed with his work and they couldn't handle the stress. Since his wife is gone, Donovan has a reputation of being a flirt and sleeping around, especially with younger women. Sam later finds out that he was seeing Annette for a time.

Donovan is killed by Krull Mining thugs in the middle of the book after he threatens to sue them. They knew he had access to stolen evidence that could have been used to prove their willing negligence in court.

Webster Gray

Webster Gray is only mentioned in passing by Mattie, Donovan, and occasionally Jeff. He's the one that sold the family land to the mining company, but they didn't hold up their end of the bargain and the family received very little. Neither Donovan nor Jeff know the whereabouts of their father, who doesn't even show up for Donovan's funeral.

Annette

Annette is the other paid lawyer working with Mattie. She's very similar to Mattie in that she cares about the other employees and can be very protective of her clients. Annette is good friends with Sam and helps guide her through her earlier cases. Their friendship is briefly threatened when Annette gets jealous of all the time that Sam is spending with Donovan. She ends up getting over it, and the two are able to be friends again.

Lady

Lady is one of the first clients that Sam helps. Lady's husband was put in prison because he was unable to pay his debts. He was trying to pay off his initial debt, but every time he went to court the fee increased. The lawyers started to demand more money. He was put into jail which carried an additional fee with it, putting him further in debt. Sam and Mattie knew it was illegal to hold someone like that, and they were able to quickly get him pulled from prison. They had the debt reduced to a reasonable amount.



Phoebe

Phoebe is another client that Sam helps early on in the book. She works alongside Annette to help Phoebe get a restraining order and a divorce filed against her husband after a domestic abuse incident. They're able to get him put in prison for a few days. When he gets out, Phoebe ends up getting back together with him, much to the dismay of Sam and Annette. Things get worse when Phoebe and her husband are arrested for possession of meth. Sam and Annette do what they can to take care of her children, but they cut ties with Phoebe after she gets herself thrown in prison, knowing there's nothing more they can do for her.

Francine

Francine is an old woman who comes to the legal aid firm seeking help with her will. Originally, she wants the land to go to her neighbors because they have a deal not to sell it to the mining companies. She returns a few days later, devastated that her neighbors broke the agreement because they ran out of money and wanted to get away from the mountains. Sam helps Francine find a preservation group that will keep the land safe. This angers Francine's children, who keep trying to get her to change it back. Francine passes away shortly after, but not before arranging a copy of the will to be sent to Sam, ensuring that the land will go to the preservation group and not her family.

Strayhorn Mining

Strayhorn Mining represents one of the antagonistic groups in Gray Mountain. One of their drivers was responsible for two children dying because they weren't following proper safety procedures. Donovan takes the case and scores one of his biggest wins against them. After his death, they try to appeal the ruling, knowing that without Donovan they can win in court. Mattie and Sam decide to take up the case. Sam even cites them as one of the reasons why she doesn't want to return to New York since she's determined to see the case settled once and for all.

Vic Canzarro

Vic is a mountain man that used to be one of the mining operators. He was fired from the job, but never went into more detail than that with Sam. He works alongside Donovan and Jeff, helping them acquire evidence against the mining corporations. He disappears for a while near the end of the book when his girlfriend gets pregnant, but he returns towards the final chapters to help Jeff move all of the evidence against Krull Mining.



Krull Mining

Krull Mining is one of the largest mining corporations in the mountains. Donovan has been going after them for years. He wants to sue them because they didn't take the right safety procedures when they were securing their sludge. As a result, it spilled into the water supply and caused anyone who drank the polluted water to get cancer. Krull Mining goes after Donovan when they discover he has documents that can be used to prove their crimes. After killing him, they target Jeff and Sam, believing them to have access to the documents as well.

Pamela

Pamela is another client that Sam helps. She's one of the first clients that Sam takes on her own. Pamela's wages were suddenly being garnished because of a debt from ten years ago. She lost her job as a result of the garnished wages, which meant she couldn't pay her rent and she was forced to live in her car with her two children. Sam goes after the collection agency and gets them to drop the case and pay Pamela for all the damage that they caused. She becomes very protective of Pamela. She helps her find a new place to live and makes sure that her children are able to eat while the case is going on.

Buddy and Mavis Ryzer

Buddy and Mavis are a couple that approach Sam because Buddy is suffering from black lung brought on by his time working at the mines. Buddy was diagnosed years ago, but the mining company refused to pay him anything. When he tried to challenge them, he didn't have a lawyer so he was crushed in court. With no other options, he spent the next ten years working for them, even though they knew he had black lung and would get sicker and sicker every day he worked. It gets to the point where Buddy is unable to work so they fire him on the spot. In desperation, Buddy takes his life so his family will at least have some insurance money.

Buddy and Mavis were extremely appreciative of everything that Sam did for them, and they were proud to have her as their lawyer. She takes their death very hard. The couple's case ends up being one of the driving forces for Sam staying in Virginia, since she doesn't want to see something like that ever happen to anyone up there again.

Jeff Gray

After Donovan dies, Jeff takes over in the fight against the mining corporations. Jeff doesn't have the same legal experience that Donovan does, so he relies on Sam and Donovan's lawyer friends to help him. Jeff had a hard time growing up. If it weren't for Donovan, Jeff thinks he would have ended up in jail. He never wanted to disappoint his older brother. Jeff gets involved with Sam toward the end of the book, but their



relationship is purely physical. It's never made clear whether he actually had feelings for her or if he was just trying to get her to help him against Krull Mining.

Jeff is consumed with his desire to defeat the mining corporations. Like Donovan, he's willing to do whatever it takes to beat them in court. He even gets in a shootout with some thugs from Krull Mining when he's trying to move the evidence. Jeff can be very deceptive, and he usually tries to keep things hidden from Sam.

Casper Slate

Casper Slate is the mining company responsible for Buddy getting black lung, and they ultimately drive him to suicide when he loses his job with them. Sam and Donovan tried to arrange a lawsuit against them for burying evidence, but it falls apart when Donovan dies. Marshall tries to take up the reins, but he doesn't have the same support that Donovan does and the status of the case is ultimately left unresolved by the end of the book.

“Bozo”

Sam is threatened by a thug that she assumes is from Krull Mining. She doesn't have an official name for him, so she just decides to call him Bozo. He shows up several times near the end of the book, clearly keeping tabs on Sam and trying to keep her too frightened to work alongside Jeff.

Jarrett London

Jarrett is a lawyer friend of Donovan's who gets introduced toward the end of the book. He only shows up a few times, but he wants to take over the case against Krull Mining. Jeff manages to get the documents to him at the end of the book, but it's never made clear whether or not he was able to move forward with the case.



Symbols and Symbolism

Airplane

Donovan is an experienced pilot, but he ends up dying in an airplane. Symbolically, the plane represents Donovan's involvement with bringing down the mining companies and his dedication to ending their corruption. When he gives Sam flying lessons, in effect, he is offering her a chance to work with him, to help keep the coal companies in check.

Security Escorts

When Marshall is talking to Sam about his relationship with Karen, he says that they talk about once a month. When Sam asks Karen, she says that they maybe talk once a year. Karen's answer that she seldom speaks to Marshall shows her true feelings for him. Marshall's answer represents the relationship that he wishes that he had with Karen.

New York Apartment

When Sam is living in New York she lives in a lavish apartment that costs \$2,000 a month to rent. This represents the wealth and privilege that Sam is being forced to give up when she's furloughed and has to spend the year in Virginia. In comparison, Sam is living in an apartment above a garage once she moves to the mountains.

Artwork

When Sam starts work at the Mountain Aid Clinic, she notices that it's furnished with local artwork. She notes how different this is from the New York firm, where they spent millions furnishing the office with lavish artwork. This represents the big differences between the large for profit firm and the small, local nonprofit firm.

Water Bottles

In Bates and the surrounding area, everyone is drinking water from bottles, and Mattie even warns Sam against drinking from a tap. This represents the damage that the mining companies have done to the environment, where nobody is willing to even try drinking from the water because they fear it's polluted.



Donovan and Jeff's Guns

Donovan owns many guns. The guns represent the danger that he's in from his cases with the coal mining companies. For Jeff, his guns represent guilt, since he's hiding the high powered rifle that he uses as an eco-terrorist.

Photo of the Tate Children

Donovan keeps pictures of the Tate children in his office as a reminder of why he's fighting the mining companies. The picture is a reminder of their corruption and the danger that they pose to the area.

Francine's Will

Francine drafts a will that leaves her land to a preservation group rather than her family. To her, this is an act of rebellion against the mining companies that have done so much to destroy the mountains and the surrounding area.

New Yorker Magazine

When Sam has down time she reads the New Yorker online. This is something that she never did when she was back home. It represents her home sickness and longing for New York.

Prepaid Phone Card

When Jeff goes in hiding, he gives Sam a prepaid phone so he can keep in touch with her and not have to worry about their conversations being listened in on. This represents the trust that he has for her. Sam's act of keeping the phone shows that she's willing to work with Jeff.



Settings

Manhattan

The story first starts in Manhattan, where Sam is initially working. After she gets furloughed, she only returns to the city for a few days during the holidays. This is also where Sam has a brief meeting with Jarrett about the Krull Mining case.

Washington D.C

Sam frequents Washington D.C several times throughout the book when she goes to visit both of her parents who work there. After she's furloughed, she spends some time with her mother while she's trying to find a nonprofit group to work with.

Brady, Virginia

Brady is where the majority of the action takes place. Brady is where the Mountain Legal Aid Firm is located, and where Sam relocates after being furloughed. Donovan's firm is also located in Brady. Sam attends several trials at the court houses, a first for her as a lawyer. When Sam is taking care of Pamela and her family they stay in one of the hotel chains in the area.

Mountains

Sam spends a good deal of time hiking through the mountains with Donovan and Jeff. They both know the area better than anyone else and frequently take her off the trails. Many of the coal mining operations take place in the mountains.

Gray Mountain

Gray Mountain is one of the areas that was destroyed by the mining companies. It used to belong to the Gray family, but Webster sold it away. Donovan and Jeff have a small cabin that's completely off the grid and uses no electricity. Sam later learns that the Krull Mining documents are hidden away in one of the caves they played in as children.



Themes and Motifs

Work versus Home

The theme Work versus Home is clearly shown very early on in the book after Samantha has been furloughed. Sam is initially panicked about losing her job, and she makes it seem like there's nothing more important in her life. After she's been furloughed, Sam has the time to think about her time with the firm. She realizes that she doesn't know what to do with herself because the last few years of her life have been completely consumed by work. She barely socialized, and she even comments that the one relationship she did have fell apart because she was never around since she had to put in such long hours at work.

Sam would elaborate on this theme after setting up shop in Brady. She compares the work hours with the two jobs. Sam would frequently be putting in 60-80 hour weeks when she was working in New York, but in Brady she's, for the most part, just putting in normal office hours. She's even able to take days off to meet with her family or spend time with Donovan and Jeff. In comparison, she mentions that part of her benefits at New York were paid vacation days, but she was never able to use them because it would mean falling behind with work and likely getting laid off as a result.

The theme is demonstrated with Donovan as well. Donovan is a husband and a father, but he spends nearly all of his time in the book fighting against the mining companies. His family was driven away because they couldn't handle his extreme hatred for the coal mining companies and the coal mining company's retaliation.

While Donovan misses his family, he's not willing to give up the fight, and he spends most of his time taking cases against the coal companies, cases that he and Mattie both remark are more likely to be lost than won given the resources of the coal mining companies.

Morality versus Ethics

This theme Morality versus Ethics is initially hinted at early on through some of the past work in which Samantha has been engaged. When Samantha is initially looking for jobs and just starting out in Brady, she talks about how her law experience is quite different from what the charity groups are looking for someone to do. She doesn't go into that much detail, but she mentions several times that she was doing finance work for large corporations that won most of their court cases simply by being able to throw money at their problems. They hired firms like the one Samantha used to work at to find legal loopholes to justify their action or ways to shut down their opposition, whether or not it's right.

Morality versus Ethics is more prominently explained after Sam has met Donovan. Donovan explains to Sam about all of the terrible things that the coal mining companies



do, such as letting their employees get black lung and not properly taking care of their toxic materials. Sam is horrified and asks how they can get away with it. Donovan explains that their legal team is good at finding legal loopholes, what they're doing is clearly wrong, but they're able to get away with so much of it because they can exploit the laws in their favor. What they're doing should be illegal, but by skirting the laws they're able to justify their actions and avoid being held accountable.

The theme is also shown through many of the smaller cases that Sam works while she's helping the legal aid firm in Brady. Some of the strongest examples come from Buddy and Pamela's case. Because the mining companies were able to dissolve unions, Buddy can be fired at any moment. Once he wants to start a lawsuit, the mining company starts putting him in increasingly challenging work conditions, just waiting for him to slip up so they can get rid of him without any benefits.

Pamela's boss gets rid of her once her lawsuit begins because he doesn't want to deal with the paperwork. Both of these are extremely unfair to the hard workers and morally wrong; but, the bosses are able to get away with it because they technically aren't breaking any laws.

Justice

This theme of Justice is explored through Donovan and Jeff. The theme first comes up with Donovan's case against the Strayhorn mining company. Donovan is suing them because of an accident regarding one of their mining trucks, an accident that only happened because Strayhorn mining was cutting corners with proper safety precautions. All they cared about was making money.

Donovan has been pursuing the case since it originally started several years ago, and it's about to reach a conclusion shortly after Sam arrived. Donovan never gave up, even when the mining company tried to intimidate him or cover up their crime.

The theme is shown again through Donovan and Jeff's struggle with Krull Mining. Their battle with Krull Mining began in the 90's when their sludge spilled over into the water supply, causing anyone who drank the water in the nearby area to get cancer. The Gray brothers have been pursuing the case all that time, a case that never even gets settled by the end of the book, and ultimately ends up costing Donovan his life. While it's heavily implied that they finally have all the evidence and lawyers to push and win the lawsuit, it's also implied that the legal battle will wage for years before getting resolved.

The theme is also shown through Mattie once Sam finds out that she lost her father to black lung. Mattie continues to take on black lung cases, and she admits that she started her legal aid firm because of what happened to her father. She wants to help people, even though she too usually doesn't end up winning cases against the mining companies. Sam starts to take this mentality towards the end of the book, wanting to stay around in Bates for another two years because she intends to keep fighting for her



clients and wants to see their lives improve, even if it means staying beyond the initial year that was required.

Sam is getting used to dealing with the clients, and she genuinely wants to help as many people as she can. Mattie interferes when Sam is trying to settle a case of someone claiming they aren't getting their disability benefits. Mattie stopped taking on those cases because there was simply too many of them, and while some people did legitimately need their help, it was too hard to tell those apart from the fraud cases, so she lets other law firms handle those cases.

The theme comes up again with Francine's will. Sam makes a will that gives her land to a preservation group.

Family

The theme of Family is introduced fairly early in the novel, as well, with the introduction of Sam's relationship with her mother and father. She is a lawyer, but doesn't want to be associated with her father since he's been discredited and disbarred. On top of that he cheated on her mother and then committed fraud on a high profile case, an act that got him several years in prison.

However, as the novel progresses, Marshall, Sam's father, goes out of his way to try and make things better. He admits to the wrongdoing, saying that he lost sight of the important things. Neither Sam, nor Karen, fully accept his apologies, but the fact that he continues to extend himself to them begins to suggest that what he is saying is actually true, he wants their forgiveness and acceptance.

The theme of Family is also chronicled in Jeff and Donovan's relationship as brothers. Jeff doesn't become a prominent character in the book until the middle of the book, when the involvement in the mine case becomes hard boiled. It is clear that he looks up to his brother and wants to support what Donovan is doing. It is also clear that Jeff understands why Donovan has a narrowed perspective when it comes to the mines.

Their parents were killed as a direct result of the mines. Both brothers are bent on avenging their parents' deaths and making sure that the mining companies are held accountable for all of their underhanded tactics and the corruption involved in their industry.

Appearances

Appearances are deceiving on many levels in this novel. While Sam would prefer for everything to be black and white, cut and dried, it is not. This extends, especially, to the people in her life. Her father deceives her in the middle of the novel when he agrees to help bankroll Donovan's list of law suits against various mining companies. Sam knows that he's doing it to make a name for himself and to get back into the 'game' of being a high profile lawyer. That he tells her that he's doing it to be close to her is disingenuous.



Later, Jeff appears to be a loving boyfriend, or at least someone who is intrinsically involved and has feelings for Sam. However, later, Sam learns that he was using her for her contacts (her mother and father) and to be able to use Sam as cover for his excursions into the woods to retrieve the documents.

The town of Brady seems like an idyllic small town in a beautiful section of the country. However, this is also deceiving as it couldn't be further from the truth. Most of the people in the town are tied in to the mining industries that are so prevalent in the area. To that end, then, no one in town will go against one of the only large sources of income and employment for the area. This has allowed the company to place a stranglehold on everything, allowing for unsafe practices and questionable ethics.

Phoebe, herself, appears to be the battered wife, seeking help in leaving her husband. When Mattie and Sam help her to get the restraining order, and have her husband locked up, they appear to have scored some points for Justice. However, later on in the book, Phoebe reunites with her husband and ends up being arrested with him for dealing in meth.

Environmental Responsibility

The theme of Environmental Responsibility is demonstrated a few times throughout the novel, and sets the backdrop for one of the primary conflicts in the novel. The mining companies refuse to practice safety standards in regard to runoff and processing of industrial wastes. They don't take care of their workers, and they run roughshod over the entire area. As a result, Donovan and his brother, Jeff, dedicate themselves to pursuing cases that will harass and shame the oil companies into doing the right thing.

The companies are shown to be of the type that only view the land as a commodity to be used. Little regard is shown of a reclamation of the land, for the people who are exposed to the elements down in the mine, nor the impact on the surrounding environment for generations after the mine closes. The author is suggesting that stronger oversight needs to be made in these cases.

When Francine passes away, her children show up and start fighting for the land because they want to sell it. Sam has the original copy of the will, but the legal aid firm doesn't want to deal with the family because they know they'll try and argue that Francine wasn't in the right state of mind, so they'll keep dragging it out in court. While nobody wants to see the land go to the mining company, they also don't want to spend the next few months too busy dealing with Francine's family. They pass along all the documentation to another lawyer to handle the case.

The theme gets displayed one last time after Donovan passes away and Mattie has to take on all of his cases. She does what she can to take on some of the important ones, like the Strayhorn mining one, but she has to pass on many of the cases simply because the small legal firm was already overwhelmed and if they took on more cases they wouldn't be able to help their existing clients, let alone the new ones.

Styles

Point of View

Gray Mountain is told from the third person narrative perspective. For the most part, the perspective is limited to everything that Samantha is feeling or thinking because she's the main character. There are a few small sections where the narration takes on an omniscient view to talk about other events happening in the world, such as when Donovan passes away or when Buddy commits suicide. These sections are very brief, only lasting for a few pages. The main focus is usually on whatever Sam is thinking or feeling.

Language and Meaning

Since Gray Mountain focuses so much on Sam's work as a lawyer, there are many legal terms and laws that get discussed. When Sam moves to Virginia there are also certain local terms that are used, especially when talking about the mining corporations. All of these terms are explained by the narrator, helping the reader to understand exactly what is happening even if they don't have any sort of legal background. Some of the characters speak with more of a rural accent to reflect the fact that they grew up in the mountains or out in the boonies, as Sam herself puts it.

Structure

Gray Mountain is told in a very direct fashion. From time to time, the narrator skips ahead, usually summarizing whatever Sam was doing during that time. Typically, she was just doing uninteresting research for her cases that would bog the readers down. There are a couple of instances where the perspective shifts away from Sam to focus on what another character is doing, with the most notable example being the section with Donovan after winning his case and leading up to his death.



Quotes

It's okay. I understand. You have the right to be angry and upset. Look at you—all three have Ivy League law degrees and you're being escorted out of the building like thieves. Laid off like factory workers. It's awful, just awful.”

-- Andy Grubman (chapter 1 paragraph 34)

Importance: Andy lays out very clearly how desperate things have become at the firm, while also highlighting the talents of Sam and the others. This helps to establish Sam as well as the setting very early on.

In a chic SoHo loft that cost her \$2,000 a month, Samantha flung her office crap at the floor and fell onto the sofa. She clutched her cell phone, but waited. She breathed deeply, eyes closed, emotions somewhat in check. She needed her mother's voice and reassurance, but she did not want to sound weak, wounded, and vulnerable.”

-- Sam (chapter 2 paragraph 1)

Importance: This passage highlights the type of lifestyle that Sam is used to living in New York. It helps to establish the later differences when she's working in the mountains of Virginia.

The relief came from the sudden realization that she had just been freed from a job she despised. She felt liberated and wonderfully unburdened.

-- Sam (chapter 2 paragraph 2)

Importance: Sam realizes how unhappy she was working at the New York law firm. Her job had consumed her life for the last three years. Now that she wasn't working she finally had the time to focus on herself.

It seems to be legitimate, for now anyway. Surely you're not thinking about working for Marshall. It's a gang of thieves and they'll probably be in trouble before long.

-- Karen (chapter 4 paragraph 27)

Importance: Karen's disdain and distrust for Marshall is made evident right away. That distrust is something that the other characters feel toward Marshall. Even Sam seems hesitant to trust him about certain legal matters.

As the roads became narrower, she asked herself more than once what, exactly, was she doing? Where was she going? What could she possibly find in Brady, Virginia, that would entice her to spend the next year there? Nothing—that was the answer. But she was determined to get there and to complete this little adventure.

-- Sam (chapter 5 paragraph 9)

Importance: When Sam is first going to Virginia she's filled with doubt. She treats it like it's just going to be a temporary part of her life. Everything changes once she gets



involved with the law firm. By the end of the book, she's comfortable and planning on staying for some time working in Virginia.

The artwork. The prior year the equity partners at Scully & Pershing had gone to war over a designer's proposal to spend \$2 million on some baffling avant-garde paintings to be hung in the firm's main foyer. The designer was ultimately fired, the paintings forgotten, and the money split into bonuses."

-- Sam (chapter 6 paragraph 3)

Importance: The differences between the Virginia firm and the New York firm are shown right away when Sam enters the office. She's going from a big firm with deep pockets to a much smaller, nonprofit firm treating the locals in a small town.

Somewhere in the back of my overworked brain I've had this fantasy of the three of us sitting down to a nice dinner in a lovely restaurant, not as a family, heaven forbid, but as three adults who might just have a few things in common.

-- Sam (chapter 7 paragraph 30)

Importance: This passage highlights the current dysfunction between Sam and her parents. Sam is upset that her parents can't put aside their differences so they can all get together and just act like normal people. By the end of the book, Sam is able to get her wish.

The coal companies are clever and they never send down one truck at a time. They travel in pairs, so there's always a witness ready to testify. Trucks hauling coal that weighs a hundred tons, racing across old, twenty-ton bridges still used by school buses, and absolutely ignoring every rule of the road.

-- Donovan (chapter 10 paragraph 87)

Importance: Donovan is highlighting some of the destructive things that the coal companies do. This also explains his big case against Strayhorn, a case that Sam ends up taking after Donovan passes away.

Samantha stood motionless, staring in disbelief and trying to absorb the devastation. She finally said, "This can't be legal." "Afraid so, according to federal law. Technically it's legal. But the way they go about it is quite illegal."

-- Mattie (chapter 11 paragraph 11)

Importance: Mattie highlights one of the main themes of the book in this passage. She brings Sam up to the mountains to witness the devastation, hoping that it will help motivate her and help her understand why it's so important that there's someone to stand up to the mining companies.

Tony and his buddy lost every ounce of badness they'd had only seconds earlier. They backed away, avoiding eye contact, and wanting no part of Donovan. "Excuse us, fellas," Donovan said in an effort to provoke them. As he walked by, his eyes flashed at Tony, who held the glare for only a second before looking away.



-- Donovan (chapter 11 paragraph 80)

Importance: This passage shows not only Donovan's protective nature, but also the power that he has in town. Even the thugs know better than to try and challenge Donovan directly.

As she drove away from the Starlight Motel, Samantha realized she had spent the better part of the past twelve hours aggressively representing Pamela Booker and her children. Had they not stumbled into the clinic early that morning, they would be hiding somewhere in the backseat of their car, hungry, cold, hopeless, frightened, and vulnerable.

-- Sam (chapter 17 paragraph 5)

Importance: Sam is starting to truly care about her clients. She spent half the day fighting on behalf of Pamela. She's starting to realize how much of a difference she's making in the community, and she feels good about how much she was able to do for Pamela.

Samantha was struck by the sheer recklessness of Donovan's decisions. His client was a poor woman with little education and dim prospects for a better life. Her husband was in prison for selling drugs. She and her two sons had been living in a small trailer deep in the hills when the tragedy happened. Now she was alone with nothing but a lawsuit.

-- Sam (chapter 20 paragraph 34)

Importance: This passage highlights just how much Donovan hates the mining companies and how far he was willing to go to see them defeated. Unlike Mattie and Sam, he isn't as concerned about the welfare of his clients as he is about bringing down the big mining companies.

Two weeks earlier, he had filed the Hammer Valley lawsuit against Krull Mining in Charleston and received regional coverage. Two weeks before that, he had won the Tate case with a spectacular verdict and got his name in a few newspapers. On November 24, three days before Thanksgiving, they found him dead."

-- Sam (chapter 22 paragraph 10)

Importance: Donovan's death is a major turning point in the book and something that has a strong impact on all of the characters.

There are three things I want to do. The most important client is the Ryzer family. I feel like I'm needed there, and I can't just up and leave them in a few months. They're vulnerable right now, and for some reason they think I can help. I'll do the best I can.

-- Sam (chapter 40 paragraph 45)

Importance: Sam has come to appreciate her time in Virginia. She doesn't want to leave because she still has a lot of things that she wants to do and people to protect. This is very different to the Samantha who a few months before was only working at the firm because it was necessary for her job in New York.