

The Good Girl Study Guide

The Good Girl by Mary Kubica

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Plot Summary

NOTE: This study guide refers to the Kindle Edition of *The Good Girl* by Mary Kubica

Mia Dennett, the protagonist in Mary Kubica's *The Good Girl*, lives on the perimeter of her high-society family. She has less than a warm relationship with her mother and sister and a worse relationship with her father. The latter relationship is so bad that she decides to get even with her father, James, by making him part with what he loves most, his money and his reputation. Her plan is to have a hardened criminal arrange her kidnapping and "hold" her for ransom. Her father would have a choice. If he did not pay the ransom, the kidnapper, a man named Dalmar would let the world know about bribes he took early in his career. In the meantime, Mia would live in an apartment, out of site, until the police "found" her.

Dalmar hires a man, Colin Thatcher, to kidnap Mia and deliver her to him. He does not tell Colin, however, that Mia has planned her own kidnapping. Everything is going as planned until Colin decides to save Mia by not delivering her to Dalmar. He fears the unimaginable things that Dalmar and his men will do to Mia. Once Mia realizes that he is not taking her to Dalmar, she becomes scared. Colin decides to take her to a cabin in Minnesota that belongs to his father to hide out until he can come up with a better solution. It is fall and as the winter comes, he does everything he can to keep the place as warm and functional as possible. He and Mia stay there for 3 months. At first she is afraid of him and thinks that he is going to hurt her. She tries to run away once. He finally tells her the truth, that he bought her there to protect her, but now they have to worry about being caught by Dalmar who he thinks will kill them both if he finds them. He also has to worry about the police finding them and being arrested for kidnapping. While he worries about these things, he also worries about his mother who has Parkinson's disease. He manages to send her some money and hopes that someone is caring for her in his absence.

During their time in the cabin, Colin and Mia become close. Colin falls in love with her and decides that when he leaves she will come with him. They plan a life together and unbeknownst to both of them, she becomes pregnant.

When a friend/co-worker of Mia's realizes that she is missing, she calls Mia's mother who does not take her fears seriously at first. Finally she does and the family calls the police. The sergeant assigns the case to Gabe Hoffman, a modest, honest detective who does not like James. He feels sorry for Eve as soon as he meets her and even though there is some doubt at first that Mia is really missing, he continues to follow up on the case for Eve's sake.

While Mia is gone, Eve worries about her and awaits her return. She thinks about how she could have been a better mother and wonders whether she will be able to tell Mia how much she loves her.



Gabe finally finds Mia and in rescuing her, the police kill Colin. Mia returns home, but has selective amnesia and cannot remember anything that happened to her while she was with Colin in the cabin and she claims to be Chloe, not Mia. She acts strange in other ways as well. She goes to a psychiatrist and makes a little bit of progress, but Gabe is anxious for things to move faster because he knows that Colin did not act alone. He worries about Eve's and Mia's safety. During his continued investigation, Mia finds out she is pregnant with Colin's child. In spite of James' wish for her to get an abortion, she decides to keep the baby, to Eve's relief.

Eve leaves James and Mia says that she can stay with her. Gabe and Eve have gotten closer, but Eve tells him that she cannot pursue a relationship with him because she needs to take care of Mia. Gabe finally gets Mia to remember more and discovers that Dalmar was behind the kidnapping and that he was blackmailing James. James never paid the ransom, however, because Dalmar could not prove that he had Mia, as he did not have her. Gabe arrests James and Eve files for divorce. The police have yet to find Dalmar. At the end of the novel, Mia admits that she planned her own kidnapping and explains her motivation - to make James pay for being a bad father.



Section 1: Eve Before - Gabe Before

Summary

NOTE: Mary Kubica has written *The Good Girl* as a collection of several short narratives. This study guide follows the order of the book and uses section numbers to group the narratives in the Chapter Summaries/Analyses.

(Eve Before) - Eve Dennett gets a call from a friend of Mia's who also works with her, Ayanna Jackson. Ayanna is worried because Mia did not come to work and she cannot reach her at home or on her cell phone. Eve is skeptical that anything is really wrong and thinks that she will show up. As Ayanna tells her all that she has done to try to find Mia, Eve starts to feel that something really is wrong.

(Gabe Before) - Gabe Hoffman, a detective who has been assigned to Mia's missing persons case goes to the Dennett's house. His sergeant has emphasized how important it is that he does not mess it up. It is a high profile case because Mia's father is an important judge. He is not excited about being given the case. The judge (James), Eve, and their other daughter Grace greet Gabe who instantly finds Eve breathtaking. He does not like James and decides that he does not like Grace either. He questions the family about when they last saw Mia. He discovers that they are not close to her and do not see her often. James does not think that she is missing. Grace does not seem to be worried either. Eve is worried, however.

(Eve After) - The tense switches to the time after Mia has returned home. Eve rushes her to James' car. Cameras flash trying to get her picture. She has just been to see a psychiatrist named Dr. Rhodes. Eve tells her that she has to go back next week. She calls her Mia, but knows that Mia wants to be called Chloe instead. James promised to drive her to the appointments, but says that Eve will have to do it next week as he has to be in court. Eve reminds him that Mia needs him. James questions Mia about her mental state. She has selective amnesia. She remembers everything except what happened to her while she was missing. Eve tries to explain, but James scoffs at the whole situation,

(Gabe Before) - The story returns to the investigation. Gabe goes to the school where Mia teaches to question Ayanna. They discuss the last time she saw Mia, and he finds out the everyone got along with Mia. She loved her job,, and the students miss her. He also discovers that she has been dating a man named Jason. Ayanna tells him that it was not serious and that Mia was just staying with him until someone better came along. She does not know of any problems between the two of them, even though Gabe follows a line of questioning to find out if one existed. Ayanna also discloses that Mia and her parents are not close.

(Eve After) - At Mia's house after her return, she surprises Eve by drinking coffee. She never drank coffee before as it makes her nervous. Her personality is different as well.



She is no longer energetic. Eve is careful not to ask her a lot of questions like James does. Mia decides to show Eve one of her (Mia's) paintings. She remembers painting it. Eve wants to tell her about the things she did while Mia was gone hoping that she would come back and how she worried about her, but she does not. Their time together ends when Mia goes upstairs because she is tired and does not feel well.

(Gabe Before) - Gabe continues the investigation by going to Jason's office to question him about his relationship with Mia and the last time he saw her. Jason has an alibi that covers the time of Mia's disappearance. Even though Gabe tries to make Jason nervous because he does not like him, he realizes that Jason probably has nothing to do with Mia's disappearance.

Analysis

The novel's opening section serves many functions. It introduces many of the novel's main characters and establishes their relationship with each other. It also features some of the novel's symbols and provides insights into themes such as sibling rivalry and the complexity of people. Finally it set's up the novel's plot and unique structure.

Readers receive an introduction to the members of Mia's family and her co-worker and friend. They also meet the detective who will follow the case. The description they get from Eve and Gabe about each of these people helps aids in readers understanding the relationship they have with each other. For example, it is not hard for readers to believe Ayanna's statement that Mia and her parents are not close. Eve is reluctant to think that anything may have happened to Mia. She admits that she is "listening only halfheartedly to the woman on the other end of the line." Mia's twenty fifth birthday is approaching and Eve has not planned for it. James tells Gabe that Mia is not missing. She is simply "misplaced." He goes on to say that "She's doing something rash and negligent, something irresponsible." Grace is not upset either. Her description of their last conversation hints at the fact that the two of them do not get along. When she says that Mia was just being Mia, readers get the impression that this is not a compliment. The entire family admits that it is not strange for them not to have heard from Mia for awhile. They do not even visit Mis at her apartment.

While even Ayanna says that Mia is independent, both she and Eve believe her to be responsible. Ayanna's description of Mia gives the impression that she is the opposite of her family. Mia gives herself to less fortunate children and helps raise money for the school. Apparently, Mia is so different from her family that, "You never would have known that she was a Dennett." At this point Mia does seem to be a good girl who comes from a rich family, but one that she only lives on the outskirts of because blood ties them together.

Gabe's character gives readers another view of the family. However, it may not be through an objective eye. He dislikes James, and highlights his coldness. He also dislikes Grace, calling her plump because he does not like her. The only person who receives a kind description is Eve. He notes her beauty and how much she is crying to



show how upset she is. He also dislikes Jason and gives him a hard time because of this. As he has done with Grace, he lets his opinion of the person drive his judgement.

The theme of mental abuse appears in the scenes with James. Gabe says that he does not like the way James demeans Eve. Before answering Ayanna's call, Eve is relishing her "last few hours of silence (she) has before James comes thundering through the front door and intrudes upon (her) world." When James drives Mia and Eve home after Mia's doctor's appointment, his tone is harsh with Mia. He calls her doctor a shrink. He questions her diagnosis. In addition, he makes it sound as if Eve cannot manage to take Mia to her appointment alone asking her if she can handle it.

There is also the hint of physical abuse. Mia is missing. This implies that someone may have taken her by force and that harm has, or may come to her. The falling leaves symbolizes the coming of fall and winter when things die. Leaves are also falling from the tress. Families also have trees and it could be that a person has fallen from it - meaning that they are now dead. Eve wonders whether someone could have broken into Mia's apartment.

In this same section, though, readers discover that Mia is alive, creating another mystery. What happened to Mia during the time that she was gone and how is it that she manages to return? The twist encourages readers to follow the story to discover the answer to these questions.

The section also shows the book's unique structure in which the story comes together through the eyes of various characters. Mia, though, has amnesia, so she cannot tell her own story. Readers need to stay alert though as to when the narrators are reliable and when they are not. This fact highlights the theme that characters lie to others and to themselves to project the image they want people to see and that people cannot always trust their first impression.

Discussion Question 1

Why does it take such a long time for Eve to realize that Mia is missing?

Discussion Question 2

From what you know about Mia thus far, what do you think about her character?

Discussion Question 3

What does Gabe's assessment of people tell you about how he may handle the case?



Vocabulary

precious, alternative, trivial, substitute, stalwart, hovering, assigning, dilapidated, ridiculously, preliminary, expedition, fidgeting, assert, negligent, retorts, pathetically, commonplace, shrink, amnesia, chagrin



Section 2: Colin Before - Eve After

Summary

(Colin Before) - Colin pays off Jason to break his date with Mia. Then he follows follows her to the bar where she is supposed to meet Jason. He has been following her for awhile and knows her habits. After Mia gets the call from Jason saying that he is not coming, she stays at the bar and Colin starts a conversation about the doodle she is drawing on a napkin. As she drinks, she starts to talk to him. They flirt with each other, but he tries not think think about the fact that he is going to kidnap her and get paid for giving her to a man named Dalmar. Instead he thinks about the money he is going to get for doing the job.

(Eve After) - Eve is looking at Mia's baby pictures when she remembers that Mia used to have an imaginary friend name Chloe. She tells Dr. Rhodes, who finds it interesting. Then, Eve starts looking for a significance in the name Chloe. She cannot find anything. She thinks that she could just ask Mia about the significance but calls Gabe instead.

(Colin Before) - The narrative switches to Mia's kidnapping. Colin takes Mia to his apartment. The two start kissing and then he stops her. He tells her that it is not a good idea to continue. She gets ready to leave, but he tells that she is too drunk to leave. She thinks that he is being nice, but he is thinking that she cannot go when he is so close to completing his job.

(Gabe After)) - Moving back to the time after Mia has returned, Grace and Mia go to the police station to meet Gabe. He has asked her to come to find out whether seeing the sketches she made while in captivity would jog her memory. Mia does not say anything at first, but Graces takes the pad and starts asking questions. She makes Mia look at a drawing she made of Colin. She questions her about brining a drawing pad to Minnesota. She wants to know why Mia did not run. Gabe jumps to Mia's defense. The sketch of a Christmas tree shocks Grace again. Mia looks shocked, but Gabe tries to calm her. He says that they found a Christmas tree. He says the fact that they did is charming.

(Colin Before) - Colin fights off the urge to let Mia go. Dalmar calls and tells him when to drop her off. Mia is saying that she needs to go when Colin comes back in the room after taking the call. He forces her into his car. Instead of taking her to Dalmar, he drives away from the city. Mia begins to panic. She pleads for him to let her go. Colin points his gun at her and tells her to be quiet. Mia is quiet, but continues to cry.

(Eve After) - Gabe has sent Mia a copy of one of the drawings in the sketchpad. At the urging of Eve, Mia opens the envelope. There is a crude drawing of a woman. Mia says that she drew it. However, Eve realizes that Colin drew it and the subject is Mia.



(Colin Before) - The narrative switches to Mia's kidnapping. Colin continues to drive. Mia questions him about why he is kidnapping her. When she tells him that she has to go to the bathroom, he stops at a truck stop. He robs it, terrifying both Mia and the cashier. Then he takes some warm clothes including a couple of sweatshirts. He ties Mia's hands as he has done before and gets an envelope. After stuffing it with money he mails it. He keeps the rest of the money. He continues to drive, now knowing where he is going.

(Eve After) - There are policemen outside the house to guard it. Normally Mia does not notice them, but on this day she does. She and her mother go to the psychiatrist who hypnotizes her. She remembers being in the car with Colin. Then she says that this was not supposed to happen and that it was all her fault. Dr. Rhodes assures her that it is not her fault. Eve makes note of the details Mia gives but wonders what purpose it serves.

Analysis

Through the narrations of Colin, Eve, and Gabe, readers obtain an image of the people involved in Mia's kidnapping - Colin Dalmar, and Mia. The section of narratives gives readers clues as to what may have actually happened. It also supports the theme that one cannot trust their first impression, siblings do not always get along, and the notion that people will lie to themselves and others to protect their image. This section also continues to characterize Gabe.

Readers find out about how Mia disappears from Colin as Mia still has amnesia. His narrative, though, shows how conflicted he is. When he says that Mia is going to change his life, he is right. However, it is not because he is going to get a big pay off for kidnapping her. Instead it is because he decides not to turn her over to Dalmar. Even though he tries to deny it and fight it off, he feels something for Mia. His feelings are enough for him to forgo the money he is to receive. He says that it is because he worries about what will happen if his family finds out about his involvement in the kidnapping, but this is a risk he knew he was taking before he took the job. Thus, he decides to use his family as an excuse to not go through with the plan. This is the lie he tells himself and readers instead of admitting that he is attracted to Mia. Before kidnapping Mia, he did not know her. He did not know the sound of her voice or the color of her eyes. Once he meets her, however, things change. He cannot go through with the plan and turn her over to a coldblooded murderer.

Still he could have decided to ask for the ransom himself. He had the goods (Mia) and he was already in enough potential trouble with Dalmar that one more double cross would not make a difference. Yet he does not do this. Even when he robs the store at the truck stop, he takes the time to send money to his mother. His unconditional love for his mother and that that he gives to Mia is part of his character. He is not a cold-hearted criminal after all.



The good girl image Ayanna painted of Mia earlier in the book begins to fade in this section as hints appear that Mia may know more than she is revealing. First of all, she only gets scared when Colin starts driving away from the city. Until then, Colin describes her as having a poker face. This is a strange way for a kidnapping victim to behave. Once she returns, she says that this should never have happened and that it is all her fault. The psychiatrist thinks this is a typical reaction for someone who has undergone such trauma. Is her statement a clue that James and Grace are right about her character? Is the whole situation her fault because she somehow orchestrated it? Could Mia be telling herself an even bigger lie that Colin tells himself. Could her amnesia be self-imposed to protect her, not from what happened to her, but from the damage that she did to Colin? As readers ask themselves these questions, they realize that their first impression of Mia, as a good girl who did not get along with her snobby family, may not be correct.

Grace still does not seem to feel sorry for Mia. She is not happy to have to accompany her to the police station and she readily points out inconsistencies in evidence the police find when they storm the cabin. She finds it strange that Mia has a sketch pad and that she had time to draw Colin. Why did she not run instead? She also finds it strange that there was a Christmas tree in the house. Grace is a lawyer and thus knows that saying these things in front of the police could have negative consequences for Mia as the authorities may begin to wonder whether she was really kidnapped at all. She raises these questions though because of the rivalry between the two girls. Mia is now getting attention from everyone. Even James takes the time to drive her to her appointments with Dr. Rhodes. All of this attention would disappear if people found out that Mia was not the innocent victim she pretends to be.

Gabe agrees with Grace. It is strange that they found a Christmas tree in the cabin and that she never ran. Also, kidnappers usually do not let their victims sketch them. Gabe says that Grace "turns to Mia and presents the obvious. "If he sat still this long, Mia, long enough for you to draw this, then why didn't you run?" (pp.52) Instead of grilling her on this question though, Gabe jumps to Mia's defense, once again showing how his feelings for people taints his judgment. He even tries to soothe Mia when she becomes agitated at the mention of the Christmas tree. Gabe knows something is strange. His dislike of James and Grace and his sympathy for, and interest in, Eve, however, cause him to protect the person Eve cares about, Mia, instead of doing his job properly.

Finally, the section shows Eve beginning to turn to Gabe and leaning on him for strength as she had once done with James. After trying to find out why Mia wants to be called Chloe, she calls Gabe and starts to relax upon hearing his voice. The two are now on first name basis, taking away a layer of professionalism in their relationship. She still cannot truly connect with Mia.

Discussion Question 1

Do you think that the justification Colin gives for not turning over Mia to Dalmar is the real reason he does not do so? Why or why not?



Discussion Question 2

Does the fact that Colin does not give Mia to Dalmar redeem him in your eyes? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Compare Grace's reaction to the sketches in the sketch book to Gabe's response? Would you have reacted as Grace does? Why or why not. What do you think of Gabe's response?

Vocabulary

larceny, abstract, crumpled, intent, cursive, verdant, differentiate, desperation, humiliate, ruffled, narcissist, peruse, leering, inaudible, picturesque, lethargy, shatters, squirms, startle



Section 3: Colin Before - Colin Before

Summary

(Colin Before) - Colin takes Mia to a cabin in Minnesota. He has been there before as a child. He has decided that this is the best place for them for now because of the cabin's location. They are completely isolated, and no one is there in the fall. He sees disgust in Mia's eyes once they get there. He tells her that she had better get used to it. When he tells her to start a fire, she defies him until he holds the gun to her head. During the next few days, Colin fixes the electricity and turns on the water. Mia simply stares out of the window and gives him an attitude. They leave the cabin to get food. When Colin tells her that he cannot call her Mia in public, she tells him to call her Chloe. During the whole period of time, Colin tries to come up with a plan. He thinks about leaving the country and leaving Mia in the cabin. After lunch, Colin tries to sleep and Mia tries to escape. He catches her, grabbing her by the hair and pouncing on her. He gets her to stop moving by holding the gun to her head and cocking the hammer. He takes her back to the cabin and puts her in the bedroom, threatening to kill her if she makes any noise.

(Gabe Before) - Gabe's search for Mia continues, and he gets his first lead in the case when he goes to the bar where Mia was on the Tuesday night she disappeared. There he discovers that she left with a man who she met at the bar and gets a description of him.

(Colin Before) - Colin goes outside to chop firewood. When he returns, Mia is not in her usual lifeless state on the bed with her back to the door. Now she is in her underwear. She tries to seduce Colin, asking him if that is what he wants. He tells her to stop and rushes out of the cabin.

(Eve Before) - Eve cannot sleep because she is worried about Mia. Gabe stays in touch with her and she tells him everything she knows that can help with the investigation, but she still cannot help but worry. She also thinks about how she was not a great mother and all of the things that she should have done to have been a better one like not allowing Grace to make Mia cry, and not getting mad at Mia when she was noisy, and not keeping her children indoors so that they would not make a scene. She also thinks about the type of mother she would have liked to have been and all of the things James had done for Mia when she was younger. She hopes that she will have the opportunity to make it up to Mia.

(Colin Before) - Colin continues to hide out with Mia in the cabin. He finally makes her eat and he feels that she now knows that he is in charge. He takes precautions to make sure that she does not run away. He knows that he needs to run away without Mia before Dalmar finds him, but he says that something is holding him back from doing so.

(Gabe Before) - Gabe goes to the Dennett's household and shows them the sketch of Colin. James thinks that Mia might just be having fun with him. When Gabe points out



that, according to Eve, such behavior is not in accordance with Mia's personality, James tells him about all of the trouble Mia has gotten into. She does not have a record because he managed to cover up her crimes. Eve claims that she has changed, but Gabe wonders whether this is true. He says, though, that it could be that something really has happened to her, and that he will be in trouble if they find her dead. James tells him to find Mia and bring her home. James warns Gabe, however, that Mia is not who she may seem to be.

(Colin Before) - Mia follows the same pattern every day. She only gets up when Colin tells her to do so. She barely eats and stares out the window. Colin tries to figure out how to get out of there. He does not have a passport, so he cannot leave the country.

(Eve Before) - Eve remembers when she first met James and their early years together were happy. She says that man no longer exists. She calls Gabe the morning after his visit to tell them about the lead to explain Mia's teenage criminal behavior and to assure him that Mia is different now. Grace, had never gotten into such trouble. She blames everything on James and says that he hid Mia's actions because of the impact it would have on him. Gabe tries to reassure her and tells her that Mia's actions were normal. Her instincts tell her that something has happened to Mia even though she can see why James believes what he does. However, she would never admit the latter.

(Colin Before) - Colin finally tells Mia why he has brought her there. During the conversation, he tells her the extent of Dalmar's evilness, including how he killed a nine-year-old boy when his parents could not pay the ransom he wanted. Mia tells him that he is lying, but she looks scared. He tells her that there is no telling what Dalmar would have done to her.

Gabe, still not knowing who the mystery man is, puts his image on TV. He thinks about what his life must have been like. He is watching TV when he sees a press conference with the Dennetts and the sergeant. Gabe had no idea that it was taking place.

(Colin Before) - In the cabin, Colin ties Mia up because he needs to do some shopping. He feels bad, but he does not know of any other way to ensure that she will not try to escape. He thinks about how much he learned from Scouting and about how he had not been able to shoot a whitetail deer. He had thought that it was beautiful. His friend had done so. Not long afterward, the same friend had been sent to juvenile detention. While he is out of the cabin, he thinks about how easy it would be to leave now, but he admits that he cannot because he cannot leave Mia to die. When he returns, he explains why he tied her up and tells her that if he wanted her dead, she would be dead by now. Then he gives her the gun. She does not shoot him.

Analysis

This section moves the plot forward and gives more insight into the characters through their actions and backstories. In addition, it explores the theme of the different forms of abuse and the fact that first impressions do not always tell the truth. There are hints of



the sibling rivalry between Grace and Mia and the lies that people tell themselves and others to create the image they want to project. Finally, it highlights different types of love that can exist.

Collin's narrative shows how the threat of physical abuse helps him keep Mia under control. That and the fear of not knowing what is going to happen next. That is mental abuse. Whenever he needs to keep her under control, he threatens Mia with the gun. Not only does it keep her from running away, but it also keeps her from displaying her arrogance. At one point, when she tries to escape, he does physically hurt her in his attempt to recapture her. It is the gun, however, that really keeps her under control. The power of the gun is so strong that Colin gives it to Mia to prove that he does not intend to hurt her. She inflicts her own form of mental abuse on him when she stands there, with the gun in her hands before lowering it. While he does not think she can shoot him, he does wonder until she lowers it.

The narratives with James in them continue to show how he abuses both Eve and Gabe by treating them in a demeaning manner. Gabe also suffers mental abuse due to a lack of respect. He forces the man in charge at the bar to call him "detective" when he calls him "buddy." He says that he hates it and he finds it "denigrating." Later in the section, he finds out about the press conference covering his case by accident.

Many first impressions come into question in this section. While previous sections only hint that Mia may not be a good girl, this section proves James' assertion that there is more to Mia than meets the eye. Under normal circumstances, she would have a criminal record. Even Eve admits that she can understand why James might think that Mia may just be fooling around with the man she was last seen with. She will just not admit this to anyone else. In addition, Colin's description of Mia's attitude does not support that of the caring teacher Ayanna describes. According to Ayanna, one would not know that Mia is a Dennett. Colin says that, "The apple does not fall far from the tree."

Readers also learn new information about James that casts doubt on the impression they already have of him. There is a reason he thinks that Mia may be misplaced and not missing. She is not only independent, but rebellious to the point that she has committed crimes. When she was younger, James had spent time with her helping prepare for school activities.

Eve also says that she and James had a different type of relationship when they were younger. They had been in love early in their marriage. She implies that he is the only one who changed and that he did not respond to Mia's cry for help. Yet, she points out that she was not the best of mothers. During their youth, she suppressed her children because she wants quite. At the beginning of the novel, she dreads James' arrival because he will intrude on her world. In addition to representing a different picture of James, she presents a different picture of herself.



Over the years, Eve creates a story in which James is the only bad parent. This is the story she tells Gabe to make both Mia and herself look like victims - the image she wants to project.

Colin begins to show himself to be a sensitive man with feelings instead of a hardened criminal. He could not kill a deer when he looked into its dark brown eyes and he cannot give Mia to Dalmar once he hears her voice and looks into her eyes even though he knows it means putting himself in danger. He cannot leave her later either, even though he still knows that it would be better for him if he did. It takes him some time to admit that it is Mia who is keeping him from leaving, however. He lies to himself, saying that he does not know why he cannot leave until he is finally able to admit to himself that she is the reason he is staying.

Mia, though, does not give him anything in return. She only attempts to seduce him because she thinks that doing so will help her in some way. The love Colin gives Mia is unconditional. He takes care of and develops feelings for her without expecting anything in return. This type of love differs from Eve's and Richard's form of love. Their love is like that one would find in a Hollywood movie. A girl from a small village comes to the big city and meets a dashing and handsome man who saves her from an unwanted fate. It is interesting to note the parallel between Eve's situation when she first met James and the situation she finds herself in now. Once again she is in a barren world in which she feels as if she does not have options. Gabe appears as the strong professional man who will listen to her stories and appreciates her. She has once again found someone to save her.

The last point to note is that Eve's memories hint at the sibling rivalry between Grace and Mia. Grace had done things to make Mia cry. Eve's memories do not include the girls playing happily together. Grace never had a criminal record. This facts presents another reason she may have been jealous of Mia. Grace was more the "good girl," but Mia got the attention through her indiscretions.

Discussion Question 1

Eve admonishes herself for not being the "best of mothers." Do you think she was the best of wives? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Colin continue to stay at the cabin instead of leaving? What would you do in his situation? Explain your answer.

Discussion Question 3

Do you think that there is more to Mia than meets the eye? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

barren, pockmarked, ingrate, apocalyptic, periphery, pretentious, crucified, denigrating, militant, masquerading, convulsed, vigorously, laboriously, snippets, ransacking, distended, implores, shiftlessness, hibernate, agrarian

Section 4: Eve After - Gabe Before

Summary

(Eve After) - Mia tells Eve about a reoccurring dream she has had. In the dream she is watching herself sleep in a chair. It is in a cabin and she has a gun in her lap. She senses feelings of fear, terror, and foreboding. The man who has kidnapped her (Colin) touches her to wake her up. She knows that she could kill him, but she does not do so. He calls her Chloe and tells her that he has made some eggs. Eve wonders whether the dream is symbolic or real and focuses on two things: the words on the sweatshirt she was wearing and eggs. She realizes that the words, which are in French, are Minnesota's state motto and wonders why, if the dream is a memory, Mia did not shoot Colin. Then she searches for the meaning of the word "eggs" in dreams. The result of the search leads her to realize that Mia is pregnant.

(Colin Before) - Colin goes fishing. Mia joins him. He knows that she is cold and give her his jacket. She does not say thank you, but he does not expect her to. They start talking about her family. She tells him that she is not like her father and that Grace is everything she never was. She compares what he has done to support Grace to what he has not done to support her. Colin gets mad because she feels sorry for herself for no reason in his opinion. She gets mad at him for not feeling sorry for her and starts to go back to the cabin. He asks if he family would have paid the ransom. She answers that they will never know.

(Gabe Before) - shifts back to his investigation. Gabe goes to the Dennett household on Mia's birthday. Eve expects Mia. She is making lasagna because Mia loves it. He observes how beautiful she is and wonders if James has consoled her since Mia's disappearance. They talk about why he became a detective and then they start talking about Mia as she was growing up. He notes that when the investigation first started, one would never have known that Grace had a sister.

(Colin Before) - The narrative moves back to the cabin. Colin knows that it is Mia's birthday and gives her a sketch pad. He got it during the time he had tied her to the bathroom sink and had to drive a long way to do so. She does not say thank you, but he understands why this is.

Mia has not returned yet, but in the hope that she does, Eve plans a party and invites guests. No one comes as James called everyone she had invited and told them that there was no party. When he arrives home, though he talks about Mia's sixth birthday. He had appeased Mia and come to a compromise when she had wanted a Tibetan mastiff. Instead he had special ordered a stuffed one for her. It is still in her room. The fact that he remembers it surprises Eve, but it shows her that he is worried about Mia. It is Halloween as well and neighbors come by trying to be kind. Eve acts grateful, but thinks otherwise.



(Colin Before) - Back in the cabin, Colin lets Mia walk outside on her own. She draws. They talk about her art. She asks if he has siblings. They snap at each other when they talk, but that is how they communicate. Colin reminisces about how he got involved in crime. He knows that even though she still has the gun, he has power over her because she fears the unknown. At the end of the chapter, Mia comes back to the cabin with a cat. Colin tells her to get rid of it because there are not enough resources for all three of them.

(Gabe Before) - The narrative returns to Gabe's investigation. Now, after about three weeks, Gabe gets a valid tip on where the mystery man (Colin) lives. He and a backup team go to take a look at the place and, in addition to finding signs of a struggle, find Mia's driver's license.

Analysis

The plot moves forward in this section. In addition, readers learn more about Colin's character through his actions and his backstory. They also see his unconditional love in action. This section provides insight into the aura under which Mia becomes pregnant. Finally, it further shows that James has two sides to his personality and the rivalry between Grace and Mia.

The Gabe Before sections help keep the major story line alive. While readers know that Mia was kidnapped, the characters in the real-time story do not. There is still the possibility that Mia is simply off having fun with a new guy. The final narrative in the section proves that she was abducted. In the meantime, readers see how everyone is getting closer to Mia. Her mother rushes to the door every time the doorbell rings thinking that it is her. She plans a birthday party for her, something that she had not gotten around to doing when Mia was still there. Colin also gets closer to her. He gives her a sketch pad for her birthday and begins to give her more freedom.

Yet, even though he finally admits that he has feelings for her (he gets the sketch pad for her because he is looking for atonement and he admits that she is not bad on the eyes), he still knows that he is in control. In describing this, he demonstrates mental abuse. He does not have the gun. She has it. So he can no longer threaten her by pointing it at her head as he has done in the past. Now it is the thought of the unknown that scares her the most. This threat is mental, not physical.

This narrative does reference physical violence, though, when Colin thinks about how he got involved in crime. First, there is the violence in his household. Then, there is the abuse he inflicts to pay off his debts.

The story of his past compared to Mia's life supports the theme that first impressions can be wrong. Colin supports his mother who had suffered under his father's wrath. The narrative paints a picture in which Eve suffers under James' wrath. In addition, James has in essence left the family as he no longer really has a connection with them. Yet, when Mia left, she abandoned everyone, including her mother. While Colin does not



blame his mother for his plight, Mia thinks her mother shares part of the blame for not getting the love she wanted. When she refers to the fights she and Grace would have about her drawing, she says that her mother did nothing to come to her defense. She "would pretend not to hear." The fights highlight her rivalry with her sister. Her sister would tell her to get a life when she saw her drawing. Mia would in turn call her sister a loser because she did not support her. Given the pictures of Colin and Mia readers obtained at the beginning of the novel, they are beginning to see how wrong their impressions were.

Colin is capable of giving unconditional love. He does things for Mia such as going out of his way to buy her a birthday present and giving her his garments when he knows he is freezing not expecting anything for her in return. She does not give it either. That is not until later when she asks him about his life. When she does give unconditional love, she first practices on a cat, just as a couple may get a pet to practice raising a child.

Their evolving relationship shows that everyone's impression of what Colin did to Mia is wrong. Her pregnancy probably signifies abuse to everyone in Mia's world. In fact, it signifies the first time Mia ever showed that she cared about someone that did not help create her image (as the children at the school do).

The other "bad guy" who has a soft side is James. Eve remembers he used to help Mia when she was young. When Mia throws a tantrum because she cannot get an exotic dog, James comes up with a compromise and special orders the dog for her as a stuffed animal. He did not do any of these things for his image. He did it because he loved his child. As Mia grows up, she continues to want things her way and when she does not get it she rebels. Once again, James comes to her aid. Eve gives the impression that he did it to protect his image, but could he also have done it to protect his little girl the best way he knew how without totally giving up his wishes for her? Now that they know that James tried to build a relationship with Mia, readers see that their impression of him thus far may be wrong.

Discussion Question 1

Why do you think that Mia never shot Colin even though she could have?

Discussion Question 2

Mia tells Colin that she and her father are different people. Do you agree with her assessment? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Do you think Mia thinks about Dalmar as much as Colin thinks she does? Why or why not? If so, do you think that the plan would have gone through as she had envisioned if Colin had turned her over to Dalmar?

Vocabulary

pessimism, rationalization, pretentious, contempt, therapeutic, conquer, override, stammers, ploy, protruding, startles, sarcastically, atone, generously, impassively, enormous, sublet, disgruntles, unsubstantiated, insolent



Section 5: Colin Before - Eve After

Summary

(Colin Before) - The narrative returns to the cabin with Mia wanting to know how much Dalmar paid Colin to kidnap her. At first, he withholds the information. He finally tells her after she talks about the threats her family got due to the cases he father handled. She hoped her father would get shot.

(Eve Before) - Eve shares how she spends her days and her feelings while she waits to find out about what has happened to Mia or for her return. Her feelings are a mixture of sadness and anger and she thinks about the things that she could have done to support Mia more when she was a child and how James would get mad because Mia spent her time on art instead of other subjects in school. Instead of supporting Mia she had remained quiet because she was afraid that James would get mad. She had also not supported her when James did not grant her wish to study at the Art Institute of Chicago. At that point, Mia had started her countdown, planning when she could leave home.

(Colin Before) - Mia has kept the cat and readers find out that she is feeding it some of her food and has made a home for it. Colin is still trying to come up with a plan for where to go next and he worries about an unknown person. He takes comfort in the fact that at least if his image is on TV there will be someone who can take care of the person. One evening Mia asks Colin about whether he has a legal job and what it is. She then says that she teaches summer school. During the conversation, they hear footsteps. Colin reaches for the gun, but it is not there.

(Gabe Before) - Eve goes to the police station to find out whether Gabe has any news about Mia. He tells her that they think that the man who kidnapped Mia is Colin Thatcher and tells her about his record. The news horrifies Eve who wants to know what he would want with Mia. Gabe promises to find the answer.

(Colin Before) - Colin and Mia find out the name of the visitor. A lady who had been vacationing in the area has a flat tire and has come asking for help. She thinks they are a nice couple. The situation gets tense at times as the lady asks questions and Mia and Colin both worry about what each might do. After fixing the tire, Mia can tell that Colin is thinking of harming the lady and manages to pull him away before he does anything.

(Eve After) - James and Eve go to see an ObGyn that James knows. They do not tell Mia why they are going to see this doctor instead of her own. Eve says that Mia does not pay attention to the type of doctor. The examination confirms that Mia is pregnant. The news shocks Mia. The doctor tells her that she has options. Eve cannot hide her thoughts. She shouts that Colin raped Mia just as the doctor re-enters the room.



(Colin Before) - It is now winter, and Colin is still trying to figure out where they can go. Mia comes in and he gets her to drink coffee even though she tells him why she does not. He admits to himself that she is not bad to look at and tells her that he paid Jason off to break his date with her the night he kidnapped her. They talk about why they left with each other that night. She starts to draw him.

(Eve After) - Mia goes to see Dr. Rhodes who tells her that she has time to decide what to do with the baby. Eve does not think that Mia should get an abortion, but James does. He said that there were too many possible problems with an adoption.

Analysis

One of the important elements in this section is the change readers begin to see in both Eve and Mia. It also shows the bond that continues to grow between Colin and Mia and how first impressions can be wrong

Mia shows the first signs of truly caring for a being other than herself when she adopts the cat. On the surface, the cat serves the same function as a pet does for a couple who wants to experiment raising a child before they actually have the child. Mia sees the unconditional love Colin gives to her. She finds out the amount of money Colin was promised to kidnap her. Readers do not know whether she thinks that this is a lot of money or not, but it is after learning this that she tries to care for the cat. In order to do so, she is willing to sacrifice her own food as there is not enough food for all three of them. She also makes a home for it. It could be the monetary value of her worth is making her think about her own worth and she feels that it is now time to try to love another living being. She is not, however, ready to share this love with another person. In fact she cannot as the only person she is with is Colin. Thus, the cat is the safe way to practice displaying such feelings.

The cat also has symbolic meanings. It is guardian and it keeps secrets. This foreshadows the fact that there are secrets that Mia is going to want to keep. Cats are also seen as beings who guard home and symbolize domestic goodness. This point is especially relevant due to the fact that Mia is pregnant and Colin is the father. It is as if the two of them are building their own home in the cabin. The cat foreshadows the fact that Mia is pregnant.

The lady who comes with the flat tire demonstrates the truth in this statement. While she seems to think that Colin is a bit strange at times due to his answers to her questions, she does not think that Mia is in danger. She thinks, in fact, that they are a couple. Interestingly enough, Mia goes along with the assumption. At this point, though, readers may be like Grace in an earlier section and wonder why she did not try to escape or at least give a clue that she was Mia Dennett and needed to be rescued. It could be that she also feels a bond with Colin and at this point prefers being there than to be home. Or, it could be that she is able to develop more of a sense of herself there. In the wilderness she can grow, as shown by the fact that she adopts the cat, without thinking about her image. Or, there could be another reason that readers do not yet know about.



She could also truly be worried that something will happen to the lady if she makes a false move. Whatever the reason, her decision shows that she may be thinking about the welfare of others.

Eve is also beginning to show change. Her thoughts focus on how she could have been a better mother to Mia, but looking beyond that, readers see that she is thinking how she could have been a stronger and less selfish person who fought for others and what she believed in instead hiding behind the option that caused the least amount of noise. Going to the police station is her first big step in showing that she is ready to step out of her robot like, perfect housewife existence into the noisy, harsh, crazy real world. Even Gabe notes how out of place she looks there. She starts to use her newly found voice by fighting against Mia having an abortion.

In this section, Colin continues to admit that he is attracted to Mia. He says once again that she is not bad to look at and he feels that he has to discredit Jason, in this sense, acting like a jealous man.

Discussion Question 1

What do you think Mia thought about the amount of money Dalmar paid Colin to kidnap her?

Discussion Question 2

Why do you think Mia adopts the cat? What does the fact that she wants to keep it say about her character? Has she changed since the beginning of the novel? Explain your answer.

Discussion Question 3

If Mia decides to keep the baby, do you think that she will be a good mother? Why or why not.

Vocabulary

piercing, shiver, asbestos, scumbag, imported, shudders, shriveled, hurled, assailant, eject, guzzles, begrudgingly, intimate, swerving, gasping, indulgent, listlessness, ravaging, concedes, indifference



Section 6: Colin Before - Eve After

Summary

(Colin Before) - Colin cannot sleep. He is thinking about the mystery woman. Mia gets up and joins him. He decides to confide in her. He tells her about his life growing up. His father drank and had a bad temper. He got fired a lot. His mother, however, always worked, but they were still poor. Then his mother got Parkinson's disease and his father left. Colin took care of her. He dropped out of high school and went to the city to work thinking that he could get more money to help her. This is the first time he has told anyone about his parents.

(Gabe Before) - Gabe finds Colin's mother. She is barely able to do anything for herself and cannot give Gabe any information except that Colin has not visited her lately and he normally does. She keeps on asking for him. Gabe looks around. In Colin's room he finds a postcard from Minnesota that stays in his mind. He cannot leave Colin's mother alone, so her to a nursing home.

(Colin Before) - Colin tells Mia his mother's name and shows her the old picture of her that he carries with him. She realizes that the information he gave the lady with the flat tire was untrue. He does not tell her who he is, but he does tell her that his father had brought him to the cabin once to impress a lady he was dating. He had promised him a bike if he did not mess things up. He never got the bike. Mia impresses him due to her knowledge of nature as they walk. She says that she cannot describe how her father makes her feel, but that he would not understand anyway as her father did not beat her and provided for her physical needs. She also tells the story of volunteering in a homeless shelter one night. By the end of the chapter, Colin feels as if they are not so different as they had both felt betrayed and disillusioned by someone who could have given them everything.

(Gabe Before) - The narrative switches to Gabe's investigation. He does not find any leads as he goes through Kathryn Thatcher's phone records and talks to Colin's old school teachers. An ex-girlfriend seems more like a prostitute and has nothing good to say about him. He still thinks of the place in the postcard, tracks the mileage from Chicago and asks for footage from traffic cameras along the route. He does not know what he is looking for, though.

(Colin Before) - The cat comes back with a dead mouse. Colin takes it and tells Mia that he is going out and taking it with him so that she will not leave while he is gone. While he is out, he calls someone he knows who makes fake passports. When he returns, Mia runs out to get the cat and declares that it is staying even though Colin says it has to go. He knows something is changing in their relationship. In the same chapter, he continues to tell her about his life. He gets upset with himself because he feels that he has let his mother down and goes outside even though it is snowing.



(Eve Before) - Eve is decorating the house for Christmas when Gabe drops by. They are now on first name basis. They talk about how her life had not turned out as expected, and Gabe takes her in his arms. Eve kisses him, but he backs away saying that he cannot under the circumstances. He does tell her, though, that he comes to see her, not because he has to come.

(Colin Before) - Mia and Colin continue to talk about their families. When he asks her why she does not talk about her mother, she says that there is not anything to say about her. She is quiet, and her father dominates her. She loves Mia because she is her mother. She also tells him about the time Grace had let her hide for over an hour when they were supposed to be playing hide and go seek. Her mother had finally realized that she was missing. She had called her her good girl and Grace had had to apologize. She says that she tries to be a good girl. They talk about who is looking for them and it seems as if she wants to tell Colin something, but she does not.

(Gabe After) - Gabe is under pressure to wrap up the case. As Mia is the only one who can help them know what really happened and she cannot remember anything. Gabe decides to try to find the cat, hoping that it will cause her to remember something.

(Colin Before) - Colin continues to tell Mia about his life. He thinks that she now sees that he had saved her life by bringing her to the cabin. By the end of the chapter, he asks her to show him how to draw and he draws a picture of her.

(Eve After) - James has convinced Mia to get an abortion even though Eve does not agree. When it is time for her to go for the procedure, Eve wants to go as well, but James will not allow it. After they leave, Eve realizes that James has even taken the keys to her car so that she will not follow them.

Analysis

This section characterizes Colin and highlights several of the novel's themes, including the error of judging people by the first impression they give and the existence of sibling rivalry. It also shows the existence of both mental and physical abuse.

Colin's backstory sketches Colin's character and, in doing so, shows that one cannot judge people by the first impression they give. Colin is not a bad man. The mystery woman he cares so much about is his mother. He cares about her so much, in fact, that he carries a picture of her with him. Trying to help her is what causes him to get involved in crime. It is not to elevate her social status. It is to help her survive as she suffers from an illness. As a result, he gets caught in circumstances that he cannot get out of. Even if he could, doing so would be even harder because he needs the money for his mother.

Ironically, Gabe, who thinks that Colin is a hardened criminal, helps readers realize the load Colin carries. His mother is in such bad health that it is amazing that he worked so hard to take care of her and help her stay in her own home instead of putting her in a



nursing home which is really the best place for her, but somewhere that she does not want to go. Gabe realizes this and takes her there instead of leaving her in the house.

Colin shows how he made an effort to revive his relationship with his father by going to the cabin with him. His mother even hoped that this is why he is inviting him to the cabin. His father lets him down, however, when he finds out that he is just there to boost his image. His father does not even follow through by giving him the bike he promised as a reward. Readers understand that Colin's life may have been different if his father had taken care of his family. Instead, in his life, Colin has seen physical abuse in his family. He has threatened others with the same.

When Mia tells her story, it is different. Even she realizes that she has not experienced the presence of physical abuse or poverty that Colin has. Instead she wins him over by telling him how she spent a night in a homeless shelter. Then, when she talks about her story, she gives a tale of mental abuse. Her mother let it happen because she is weak. Her sister and father both abused her. An example of her sister's abuse occurs when they are supposed to be playing hide and go seek and her sister never goes to look for her. Even though her mother calls her a good girl when she finds her, she feels that her sister is still the superior one. When she has to apologize, she does it like a snob. She claims that she tries to be a good girl.

Her claim contradicts the story her family tells about her indiscretions. Could everything she is saying be a lie that she tells herself and is now telling Colin to project the image that she wants him to have of her? If so, it is working. Mia captivates Colin. He has not told anyone about his parents, but he tells her. He feels that they both suffer from betrayal and disillusionment. He wants to express what he sees in her in a drawing and connect with her by showing his interest in art. He plans to take her with him when he leaves.

Mia shares information with Colin, when he asks, but seems to be holding something back. In addition, as they get closer, she starts becoming bossy. She puts her foot down and says that the cat stays when he says that it has to go. Even Colin knows that something is changing. Her actions foreshadow that maybe Colin's impression of her is not correct and that once again, he may be the kind hearted guy who has gotten in over his head.

Discussion Question 1

What does the fact that Colin cares so much about his mother say about his character?

Discussion Question 2

What is the significance of Colin sharing so much information with Mia? Do you think the relationship is mutual? Explain your answer.



Discussion Question 3

Are Colin and Mia really alike? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

evicted, empathetic, compassion, upholstery, painstaking, inadequate, gaunt, deformed, scant, hobbles, vehemently, recessive, maneuver, disillusionment, decapitated, manufactured, reluctance, impulsive, dreadful, burdensome



Section 7: Colin Before - Eve After

Summary

(Colin Before) - Mia gets sick. Colin knows that she is so sick, she needs antibiotics, but he does not know the best way to get help for her given their situation. During her illness, she realizes that her mother does love her, but did not know how to show it and tells Colin that she believes that he was able to pay Jason off to break the date. During her illness, she does call Colin Jason at some point. Even though this annoys him, he still helps her. The cat is always by her side.

(Eve After) - Mia has decided to keep the baby because while she is waiting for her appointment she connects with a child whose name is Owen. This is the name she knows Colin by. She does not know why the name is important, but she sees the fact that she whispered the name and the child had the same name as a sign that the baby should live. She leaves and goes to her apartment. Eve, who has packed her bag to leave James finds her there. She realizes that she has not been giving Mia enough credit. She is okay. It is Eve who is upset. Mia tells her that she can stay with her.

(Colin Before) - The narrative goes back to Mia's time at the cabin with Colin. Mia is really sick now and is delirious. Colin realizes that she has to see a doctor and takes her to see one in spite of Mia's objections. They go, get a prescription and leave without any problems.

(Gabe Before) - Gabe splits in time between visiting Kathryn Thatcher and Eve. James is coming home less and less. Gabe now has other cases, but images of Colin taking Mia away and Eve crying herself to sleep make him determined to continue his search for Mia. His continuing investigation leads him to Kathryn's old neighbor who has her mail. Among it, he finds the envelope with the cash that Colin sent to her when he first left with Mia. He looks at the postmark and makes a connection with the road leading to the location of the cabin. He contacts an officer in the area and faxes an image of Colin to him.

(Colin Before) - Mia is better. Colin detects that she is different now. She is not interested in anything, even drawing. He reminds her that if he gets caught he will be sent to jail. She lets him worry about everything because she says that no one has ever worried about her before. Even though he knows he has a lot to worry about, his biggest worry is being without her.

(Gabe After) - Gabe goes to visit Mia and Eve. He has the cat with him. The cat remembers Mia and Mia remembers it. She answers the questions Gabe poses, but appears to be confused about whether or not she was afraid and felt threatened. Gabe feels as if he has made progress though and comes up with the idea of taking her to the cabin to jog her memory even more. He thinks he needs to know more in order to keep both Mia and Eve safe.



(Colin Before) - Colin takes Mia out to choose and cut a Christmas tree. He comments that things that would have scared her before, like the sight of an ax in his hand, no longer do. The Christmas tree makes her happy and he tells her that he did it so that she would stop being so sad. The two talk about whether they would have been together or even met under different circumstances. The two of them sleep together and have sex. Afterwards, he still feels as if she is far away at times. He wants her to know how to defend herself so he teaches her to shoot a gun. He tells her that he would not have killed her, but she gets him to say that he might have and says that she would have killed him as well in the beginning if she had had the chance.

Gabe goes to tell Eve that they discovered that Mia had gone to a doctor to treat pneumonia and that the cabin Colin had spent time in with his father was in the same area. Gabe plans to go there. Eve wants to go as well, but he says she cannot. The two are in an embrace with James comes down the stairs. He wants to know what is going on. Eve tells him that they found Mia, but he says that he will believe it when he sees it.

(Colin Before) - They have lights for the Christmas tree. Colin is happy because of their current relationship. They talk about where they would go if they could. She says that she would go to a town in Italy. They also talk about who they would be. She would be Chloe and explains that she chose that name because when she was young she had seen a news report which talked about a girl named Chloe who had been killed. The family was devastated. She wanted to have a family who missed her as much as Chloe's family had missed her. She tells him that he should remain Owen because that is who he is to her.

(Eve After) - Dr. Rhodes, Mia, Eve, and Gabe go to the cabin. The doctor tells Mia that she can do it and when the detective who is accompanying them tells Mia that she would not have survived the winter, Gabe says that Mia is stronger than she looks. Mia looks interested in her surroundings. The narrative ends just as Mia is about to walk into the cabin.

Analysis

Several aspects of the novel's plot reach a peak in this section with people getting closer to each other and Gabe getting closer to solving the case.

An interesting convergence occurs as the Gabe in the past and the Gabe in the present both move toward termination points in the case. The Gabe of the past (Gabe Before) gets several big breaks and closes in on finding Mia in this section. He begins to find proof that his theory that Colin may have taken Mia to the cabin is correct when he discovers the envelope Colin sent his mother. This leads him to issue an image of Colin in the area which leads to the doctor's identification of Mia.

The Gabe in the present still seeks to find out who is behind Mia's kidnapping. He needs Mia to help him do this, however, and thus needs to jolt her memory. He starts bringing portions of her memory back when he brings her the cat. As the section ends, she is



about to step into the cabin, the same place readers feel that the Gabe of the past will be stepping into as he closes in on where Colin took Mia. The cabin is the point of the meeting of the Gabe of the past and the Gabe of the present.

Colin shows his unconditional love for Mia when he takes her to the doctor. He knows that his is risking a lot by doing this. He could lose his freedom and maybe even his life if Dlamar is looking for him. As he does with his mother, however, he is ready to sacrifice himself for Mia's sake. This sends an ominous sign to readers as it foreshadows the fact that the two of them will be found, a feeling that Gabe's actions reinforce when he sends an image of Colin to the local authorities. The tension rises as readers wonder whether the couple will be able to escape the cabin before Gabe finds them.

It is interesting to note that even though Mia seems to have feelings for Colin and worries about his safety, she seems to be moving back to her spoiled brat behavior now that she realizes that Colin will do whatever he can to please her. This is similar to how she behaved with her father. She sulks when she does not get what she wants, as she did when he did not get her the exotic dog that she wanted and when he did not support her love of art and send her to the school where she wanted to go. After Colin sacrifices himself for her, she starts to complain and will not eat or even draw. She lets Colin do all of the worrying, saying that no one had ever worried about her before. He has to carry the burden to make her happy. Even Colin realizes that something changes when she gets better. This "something" is the shift of power. She now has the power over him.

Mia, however, seems to change when she goes to get her abortion. During the time in the waiting room, she seems to realize how much Colin really loved her and what he sacrificed for her. She actually feels something for another person and thus is able to reach out and now connect with another person. At this point, she has graduated from connecting to a cat, to connecting to a child. Later she is able to let her mother into her life. She tells her mother that she can stay in her apartment, a territory that had only been hers in the past. Her mother had not even been able to get in when she first realized that Mia was missing. Now, she is taking care of others instead of looking for them to take care of her.

Eve also takes steps to show her love for Mia. She leaves James and offers herself, as she is, to Mia. Doing so, takes strength as she, like Mia, has always relied on others to move her to different places. First it was James who took her away from her small English village. Then it was Gabe who she wanted to take her away from her life with James.

Discussion Question 1

During her illness, Mia realizes that her mother loved her, but her mother did not know how to show it. Do you think that the same is true of her father? Why or why not?



Discussion Question 2

Do you think that Gabe would have followed up on the case so diligently if he were not attracted to Eve? Explain your answer.

Discussion Question 3

Is Mia worth Colin's love? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

devotion, camouflage, condemnation, delirious, curvature, mural, perimeters, diligence, abrasive, obituary, pudgy, masquerading, berserk, shreds, gibberish, subdued, vigorously, adrenaline



Section 8 : Gabe Christmas Eve - Mia After

Summary

(Gabe Christmas Eve) - The narrative moves back to the past. It is Christmas Eve, and Gabe is rushing to the cabin. He is almost certain that Mia is in the cabin and the local detective and his men are on their way there, too. Gabe fears that the detective will start firing to end things quickly if he finds Colin and Mia in the cabin. Gabe wants to get there first.

(Colin Christmas Eve) - Colin finds out that the papers are ready and plans to surprise Mia on Christmas day with the news that they are leaving and are now going to be able to start their new life together. He also has his contact working on obtaining a fake ID for his mother so that so can join them in the future. The two talk about what they want for Christmas and after Mia goes back in the bedroom, he thinks about how the fear is gone and the people who will be leaving are different from the ones who arrived. He is cooking when he hears a noise.

(Eve After) - Mia is back in the cabin. Mia remembers bits about her life in the cabin. She does not want her mother to call her Mia. She is Chloe. She smiles for a short time and then the smile fades.

(Colin Christmas Eve) - Colin realizes that the police are there. He tells Mia, but she thinks that he is talking about Dalmar. She says that they have to fight and that she does not want to die. Floodlights come in through the window. He hides Mia from view and raises the hand with the gun to shield his eyes from the light.

(Gabe Christmas Eve) - The local detective realizes that Colin has seen them. Gabe is not there yet and tells them not to shoot, but they see that he has Mia and a gun and start shooting before Gabe arrives.

(Eve After) - Mia remembers the shootout. She starts sobbing and blames Gabe for killing Colin. She says that she sees blood everywhere and sobs for Colin to wake up and not leave her.

(Gabe Christmas Eve) - Colin is dead, and Gabe is mad because he wanted him alive. The local detective takes over, also making Gabe mad. After taking a look at Colin and the cabin, he goes outside to talk to Mia. She tells him, as she has also told the local detective, that Mia is not her name.

After Mia remembers Colin's death, they all go to a hotel and Dr. Rhodes explains that she thinks that Mia is suffering form Stockholm syndrome. Gabe agrees, but Eve thinks that Mia really loved Colin. She stops short of blaming Gabe for his death and Mia's



current state. Gabe reminds her that Colin did not plan the kidnapping alone and that maybe Mia knows who did. However, he knows that Eve still blames him.

(Eve After) - Mia continues to be upset because of her memories of Colin and talks about killing herself. Eve tells Gabe that she cannot be with him now because she needs to be there for Mia. Mia tells Gabe what she knows about the kidnapping. She says that it had something to do with James and that Colin had taken her to the cabin instead of delivering her as planned because he did not want her to get hurt and thought that the cabin was a safe place to hide. Eve thinks that Colin might not have been so bad after all.

(Gabe After) - Gabe searches James' chambers and discovers that Dalmar had sent him ransom letters saying to either pay the ransom or else he would expose the fact that the judge had taken bribes in the past. As Dalmar could not prove that he had Mia, James never paid anything. Even though at first he did think that Mia had just run away, he later thought she was dead. He is disbarred and arrested. These events make Gabe happy. Eve files for divorce. She will get half of James' wealth which she will use to take care of herself and Mia.

(Epilogue - Mia After) - Mia tells Dr. Rhodes that things changed between her and Colin when she realized that he was saving her. She tells her that she loved Colin and wishes that she had not remembered anything. She does not tell her that she had planned her own kidnapping as a way of getting even with her father for not praising her when she thought she had done well. She felt guilty for putting Colin in the situation he was in now. She had not told him because she finally had someone who was talking care of her. She did not want that to end.

Analysis

In this section, readers get answers to most of the opened questions in the novel. This section also reinforces the themes that one cannot always trust their first impression and that people tell lies to themselves and others in order to project the image they want to portray. Finally, readers realize that Colin's unconditional love for Mia has outlasted other types of love.

The before and after stories merge to solve the major mysteries in the novel. Gabe finds Mia and he gets a lead pointing to Dalmar as the person who hired Colin to kidnap Mia. While Gabe thinks that the case is closed and that now all they have to do is find Dalmar to wrap things up, readers find out what really happened. Now they understand why Mia seems far away from Colin at times and asserts that it is all her fault and that this was never meant to happen. She is telling the truth. Colin should not have died because if he had known that the kidnapping was a sham, he would have delivered Mia to Dalmar as planned. All of the events that followed instead were her fault because she put everything in motion by planning the kidnapping and she never told Colin the truth. Chances are that Dalmar never would have harmed her as she made sure that James would pay the ransom by adding blackmail to the package. James would either have to



part with his money or his reputation and chances are that he would have parted with his money to save his reputation if Dalmar really had had Mia.

When Mia reveals that she planned her own kidnapping, readers see how wrong first impressions can be. Mia is not a good girl. She is a manipulator. She manipulates Colin, who tries to save her from both Dalmar and James by taking her away to start a new life under a new name. She manipulates her mother by acting as if she cannot take care of herself and thus needs her undivided attention to show her that she loves her. She manipulates Gabe to the point that he is ready to believe that she is a victim. Yet, each of these people see signs that something is not right. Colin realizes that she can be bossy and pretentious and that she is distant. He makes excuses for her actions, though. When she is sick, she calls him Jason. When the police arrive, she only worries about her life, saying that she does not want to die. Eve realizes that she has misjudged Mia when she finds Mia in her old apartment. Mia is calm. It is Eve who is upset. Gabe notices inconsistencies in Mia's story and even remarks that she is strong, but he readily makes excuses for her. Finally, she manipulates readers who have probably come to feel sorry for her by this point. The person they really need to feel sorry for, though is Colin. He was the good boy. Even Eve comes to realize that he was not as bad as she had thought when she first found out about his existence.

Mia lies to everyone to portray herself as the victim. She starts her own narrative by saying how she cannot tell Dr. Rhodes everything. Just as she did not want to give up the unconditional love Colin gave her by telling him the truth, she is not about to give up the unconditional love her mother pours over her. Mia acts sad, as she did with Colin. She threatens suicide and now it is her mother who worries for her. This is what Mia wants.

Still, even though Mia acts in a selfish manner, Colin's unconditional love for her lasts beyond the narrative. While Eve leaves James and turns Gabe away, Mia decides to have Colin's baby. She sees all that he did for her. In addition, Mia lets Eve stay with her and she accepts the cat, thus accepting a guardian of the household and a domestic symbol. She also reconnects with her friend Ayanna. Maybe, because of all that Colin did for her, Mia now is able to care for others and maybe she will connect with Ayanna on a deeper level.

There is a mystery that remains unanswered. Once it is answered, it could reveal Mia's true character. Will the police find Dalmar? Will he tell everyone that Mia is the mastermind behind the kidnapping plot?

Discussion Question 1

What do you think would have happened if Colin had been arrested instead of killed? Would Mia still have had amnesia?



Discussion Question 2

Do you think that Mia really suffers from amnesia, or is she just manipulating everyone? Explain your answer.

Discussion Question 3

Was Eve right to have turned Gabe away in order to devote all of her time to Mia? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

pseudonyms, trudge, mocks, engraving, pacified, incensed, commotion, incomprehensible, psychosis, phantom, discretely, malnutrition, envisioned, reproachful, aghast, lingering, abhorrence, remorse, sham, hesitant



Characters

Mia Dennett

Mia is the girl who is kidnapped in the novel and the search for her drives the novel's plot. Eve and James are her parents. Grace is her older sister. Jason is the man she is dating at the time of her disappearance. By the end of the novel, she has developed a relationship with Colin, the man who kidnapped her. While she declares that she is a good girl, Mia is a mixture of personalities.

Mia is a rebellious, selfish daughter who wants love on her terms. She wants to follow a path in life that her father does not approve of. Their clashes cause her to rebel and her father covers up the crimes she commits as a teenager. Whether he does this to protect his own image or her, the family ignores the fact that her actions are really a call for the attention and love she craves. This rebellious girl is the image James and Grace have of her. Even Eve does not really believe that she is missing at the beginning of the novel. James and Grace also suspicious of her when she returns.

The students at her school and her coworkers see her as a dedicated teacher who understands her students and garners their respect. In fact, her students are sad when she disappears and her friend, a fellow teacher, reports her missing to Eve, who thinks that her actions are just Mia being Mia.

Colin sees her as a victim whom he has to save from the evil man who hired him to kidnap her. While she is with him, he sees signs of her various personalities. At times, she is a snob and behaves like a spoiled child. She also shows her intelligence, love of art, and compassion.

Readers also gain insight into her various personalities and realize that she is not the victim she claims to be. As a child, James tried to please her when she wanted things. She does not budge when he wants something of her. Her role as an art teacher at the school she works in could characterize her as a good girl, yet she does not care enough about her students to feel the love and respect they have for her. Instead she wants to get even with her father for not giving her what she wants. Readers may also doubt her feelings for Colin. Does she really love him or does she simply feel guilty because she knows that she put him in the situation he is in?

When she returns, readers may also wonder whether she really has amnesia, or is it all an act? They may see signs of her turning into a better girl when she decides to keep the baby and takes in her mother and the cat. In doing so, she is finally taking responsibility for her own actions.



Eve Dennett

Eve is the mother of Mia and Grace. James is her husband. Gabe, the detective, finds himself attracted to her. She is a martyr in her relationship. Mia's disappearance, however, causes her to take a look at her role in creating the toxic relationship Mia has with the family. By the end of the novel, she breaks old habits in favor of giving Mia the love and attention she needs.

In her role as a martyr, she sees herself as a victim. James is the one who is the problem in the relationship, and he should be the one who should change his behavior to improve their relationship. Instead of talking to James about their marriage and how things have changed, she confides in Gabe, someone who cannot do anything about her situation. He tries to show her that she can escape, with him. However, like the martyr she plays, she feels trapped. She cannot leave James. She sees herself as being dependent on him.

Her background helps explain her outlook on her life. She is from a closed-minded village in England. James saved her from the fate of marrying just another village boy. Her current life is the price she has to pay. She admits that, at the beginning of their marriage at least, she enjoyed being the trophy wife and when Mia disappears, she does not claim to have been a good mother.

During Mia's absence, however, she begins to take ownership of her life. She fights for Mia's return and when she does return she tries to stand up for her against James. After James' arrest, she finally breaks her old pattern of behavior. Instead of looking for a man to save her, she decides to try to be a good mother to her child, finally answering Mia's call for help.

Gabe Hoffman

Gabe is the detective who is put on the case to find Mia. He is a competent, honest policeman who dislikes James and does not get the credit he deserves. During this case, his heart drives him to continue to search for Mia after others are ready to give up. It also causes him to overlook inconsistencies in Mia's story that Grace observes as he wants to please Eve by giving her back her daughter. His interest in her also causes him to go after James looking for evidence to incriminate him.

His character is very much like that of a saint as his actions help heal both Eve and Mia. He also helps Kathryn Thatcher have a better quality of life.

Due to Gabe's intervention, Eve finally steps out from under James' dominance and her old pattern of depending on men to take care of her. Mia learns to love others. The fact that she keeps her unborn baby and takes in Eve and the cat are examples of her growth in this area.



James Dennett

James is the father of Mia and Grace. He is also Eve's husband. He is a judge who not only rules in the legal word, but also at home. The novel portrays him as a heartless man who is only interested in his image, power, and money. Everything he does, such as covering up Mia's illegal actions, is for his own benefit, according to the narrators. His love of money drives him to corruption. He takes bribes. It is also what Mia thinks she can use to hurt him. Thus, she puts into place a kidnapping scheme with the intention of making him give up what he loves the most, money and his reputation.

Eve's memories provide the only glimpse readers have of his character before the story takes place. Her early memories of him depict him as a driven, charismatic person. Early in their marriage he had liked the fact that she was British and made efforts to please Mia. Along the way, however, his character morphed into the one Eve, Mia, and Gabe portray.

Colin Thatcher

Colin is one of the novel's narrators. Dalmar hires him to kidnap Mia. He has a good heart though and this keeps him from handing her over to him. On the surface, Colin is the most evil character, next to Dalmar, in the novel. In reality, he is the most caring.

He has survived his father's abandonment of the family and does everything in his power to take care of his mother. This fact causes him to turn to a life of crime to make the money his mother needs to support herself and deal with her illness. Even after he kidnaps Mia, and is on the run, he sends his mother money that he could use as well.

His love for others is unconditional. He does everything that he does for others without asking anyone for anything in return. Finally, this means giving up his life. This sacrifice shows his love for Mia as he knows that they cannot maintain the relationship they had with each other once they return to civilization. His unconditional love for Mia still exists in her in the form of their unborn child.

Grace Dennett

Grace is Mia's sister. She is also the daughter of James and Eve. Grace's personality is like James'. In fact, Mia describes her as her father's daughter. She is arrogant and wants to make sure that people recognize the fact that she is a lawyer.

While she shows signs of realizing that something may have happened to Mia, she does not show affection towards anyone in the family. Mia's return does not change this fact. Instead of showing empathy for her sister's plight, she questions her about facts that seem inconsistent, just as James questions her about her mental state.



Jason

Jason is the man Mia was dating prior to her disappearance. His character is like her father's. He is self-absorbed and readily breaks dates with Mia. He does not care about her at all, as shown by the fact that he allows Colin to pay him off to break their date the night that Colin kidnaps her. Readers know that Mia only plans to continue seeing him until she finds someone to replace him. Thus, she is also using him to suit her purposes.

Ayanna (Mia's friend)

Mia's friend knows the Mia who is responsible, cares about the students she teaches and loves her job. She is the only person who realizes that something is wrong when Mia does not come to work because she does not know the other facets of Mia's personality. She is a loyal friend who is still there to assist Mia when she returns home. She takes care of the cat when Mia returns to the cabin.

Kathryn Thatcher (Colin's Mother)

Kathryn receives her son's unconditional love. She relies on him and thinks that he is a good boy. He gets caught up in crime because he needs money to take care of her. She has a severe case of Parkinson's disease. Colin sends her money when he kidnaps Mia. Gabe gets a lead on where Colin is from the postmark on the envelope. At the end of the novel, she is in better shape and is living with her sister. She never knew how Colin got the money he used to support her.

Dalmar

Dalmar is the man Mia hires to stage her kidnapping. He is a hardened criminal and has no problem torturing and killing his victims. He is so dishonest that he tries to get the ransom money from James even though he does not have Mia. It is from the ransom letters that he sends James that Gabe learns that James has taken bribes. At the end of the novel, the police know that he hired Colin, but they have not yet found him.



Symbols and Symbolism

The Character of Mia

Mia symbolizes the poor, little rich girl. Her character epitomizes people who seem to have everything such as money, beauty, and a family that is intact. She has everything but the love she needs. These people are rich in material things, but are poor when it comes to their emotional needs. Her search to get what's missing in her life causes her to take drastic measures.

The Character of James

James' character symbolizes people in the world whose quest for power leaves them heartless. At one point, he seems to have just been charismatic and tried to be a good father and husband. He and Eve were happy at one point. He used to like the fact that she was British, and he tried to do things for Mia. At some point, he turns his back on his family and pursues power instead. James could easily be any of the white collar criminals readers hear about in the news.

The Character of Colin

Readers may first perceive Colin to be the stereotype of a bad guy. In reality is symbolizes characters who get into trouble because of their good intentions. He is actually a guardian whose attempts to help others lead to self-sacrifice. His mother's financial needs lead him to a life of crime. His attempt to protect Mia leads to his death.

The Character of Eve

Eve symbolizes people who can be characterized as martyrs in their relationships. She thinks that James is the problem and that he is the one who should be doing things differently. She talks about her problems to Gabe, but he cannot do anything to help her situation. She describes herself as a victim and it is only when Mia disappears that she starts to take ownership of her role in Mia's unhappiness. She also acts as if she is trapped. She can never be with Gabe, at first because she is still married, then because she is going to give herself to Mia. Until James is arrested, she views herself as being dependent on him. Thus, she allows him to treat her badly, does not defend Mia, and feels as if she cannot leave him.

The Character of Gabe

Gabe's character is symbolic of the character of a saint. Through his work, he heals Mia and Eve. He heals Eve by being there for her, listening to her, and continuing the search



to find Mia. He heals Mia by finding the cat and reminding Mia of the person she had become when she was with Colin. He also helps heal Kathryn Thatcher. This is something that even Colin could not do. He puts her in a nursing home when she needs it and helps her get the right medication and later lives with her sister.

The Leaves of the Trees at the Beginning of the Novel

These leaves symbolize Eve's family. The family is dead at the beginning of the novel, even though they cling to the family structure. It also sets the scene for the ominous things to come.

The Name Chloe

Mia chooses to call herself Chloe because, for her, the name represents having a family who cares for you and misses you when you are gone. When she returns home, she is Chloe because Colin has given her the unconditional love.

Eve's British Nationality

Eve's nationality symbolizes her individualism. As she gives up elements of it to become more American, she gives up her individuality and control over her life.

The Cat

The cat that Mia finds while she is with Colin symbolizes unconditional love and healing. When Mia finds the cat, she takes it in and cares for it. In the beginning, the cat does not show any love for her. In fact, she has to hold it to keep it from running away. Later, the cat recognizes Mia's care and clings to her. Gabe brings the cat to the women to help them heal.

It is also the symbol of a guardian and of domestic life. Mia and Colin build a life together and are indeed a family as Mia is pregnant. The image of domestic life continues when she decides to keep the baby.

The Meals Colin and Mia Have

Colin and Mia form a bond, and it seems as if they love each other. However, their meals together do not show the same communion as meals shared by those who care for one another. This symbolizes that maybe Mia's treatment of Colin comes more from guilt than love.



The chicken noodle soup that they once hated does make Mia feel at home when she returns to her apartment. This symbolizes that maybe now Mia really understands everything Colin did for her. Finally, she may feel something for him.

Guns

Guns symbolize control and physical violence. Colin feels in control when he has the gun. He says that drawing for Mia does the same thing for her that holding a gun does for him. The detective who helps Gabe find Mia also uses the gun to wield his power. Gabe sees him as someone who has something to prove. Gabe is the same, to a lesser extent. He says that the prospect of carrying a gun led Detective Hammill to the job of a policeman even more than it had led him to the position.

Eggs

Eggs are a symbol of fertility and birth. Eve realizes that Mia is pregnant when she tells her of a dream that she continues to have in which Colin tells her that he has prepared eggs.

Drawing Sketches

Mia loves to draw, and she and Colin connect by talking about her art and later drawing each other. Mia likes it because by doing it she can impose change and it is a place where reality does not have to exist. This is what her sketches symbolize - something outside of reality. Her life with Colin does not represent reality. Given his prior record and their social status, they would not have existed together outside of their current circumstances. They even discuss this while they are in the cabin. In addition, the sketches in the sketch pad do not represent the reality of a real kidnap victim. Such people do not draw their captive and do not have Christmas trees.

In addition, it would not exist if she were to tell him the truth. This is why she remains silent.



Settings

The House Mia Grew Up In

The novel opens with Eve in the house where Mia grew up. On the surface, this household would produce a "good girl." The family is well-to-do. The parents are still married. There is no physical abuse, and the girls do not go wanting for food, warmth, or a place to sleep. As the novel continues, though, readers discover that the household is not perfect and neither is Mia.

Mia's Apartment

Mia's apartment, the place she moves to to be independent of her family, is where she has to return to in order to regain her independence and her sense of self. Eve also goes there to do the same.

Mia's School (Her Place of Employment)

The school where Mia teaches shows that she is a woman of many personas. Here she is a good girl. She gives herself to the children she teaches and they miss her when she disappears. Her colleague and friend thinks that she is missing before her own mother does. Even though she receives affection at the school, it is not enough for her. This fact shows the importance of receiving validation from one's parents.

The Cabin

The cabin is the place Colin decides to use as a hideout while he contemplates his next step. He takes Mia there, and they stay there for three months. It is located in the wilderness and puts Colin and Mia on equal footing. Colin has an advantage because he knows the lay of the land and can take care of Mia. The cabin does not have the material comforts that the house she grew up in has, yet Mia does find some happiness here as it has someone who is there to take care of her. Outside of this world, however, the couple cannot exist together due to Colin's criminal record and Mia's social status.

The Police Station

Eve goes to the police station to talk to Gabe about the case. This is the first time she steps outside of her world and represents her taking control of her life and moving out from under the dominance of James for the sake of Mia. This is something she cannot do in her own home. There she can only see herself as a victim.



Themes and Motifs

Love comes in many forms, but not all of them are lasting.

One of the themes in the novel is that love comes in many forms. There is physical love, intellectual love, Hollywood-style love, and unconditional love. The novel explores each type of love and goes on to make the statement that unconditional love is the one that is the most touching and everlasting.

Eve and James experience a combination of a physical, intellectual and Hollywood-style love. Eve is only 18 years old when she first meets James. She is from a small English village and then is "whisked away to a new world, dropped in the middle of a roaring metropolis..." She goes on to say, "... at first glance, I was swept off my feet. I was in love." (pp. 109) She was in a Hollywood-type setting. Then came the lead actor, James, who was older than Eve. He was also "cosmopolitan and brilliant." (pp. 110). His confidence impresses her. Thus, added to the Hollywood-style love is the love of his intellect.

For his part, James sees Eve as a trophy wife and, at least at the beginning of their relationship, an asset due to the fact that she is British.

Their love does not continue, however, and they are unable to pass love along to their daughters. Eve notes that she did not mean to be a bad mother, it just happened.

The strength that men give her seems to be what attracts Eve to men and her attraction to Gabe is no exception. He comes along and, like James had done in the past, plays the role of her knight in shining armor. He is professional, authoritative, and caring.

Gabe falls for Eve based on her physical beauty and the fact that she needs him. He repeatedly notices how beautiful she is. This relationship does not last, however. Eve ends it in order to be with Mia.

Eve's willingness to give up Gabe shows that she has found a new type of love. This type of love is the type in which you give yourself unconditionally to another person. This is the everlasting type of love readers see in Colin's relationships. In fact, this form of love lasts beyond the lifespan of the person who gives, it. Colin's tendency to care for others causes his self-sacrifice in several instances. He sacrifices himself for his mother by turning to a life of crime in order to get money to help her. Later, he sacrifices himself so that Mia can go back to her life, knowing that the two of them will not be able to have a life together in the civilized world. Even though he does not survive, those that he loved still care for him.



It is remarkable that Colin's unconditional love reaches beyond the grave as it protects his baby from James' will when Mia is about to get an abortion. Her contact with a child that has the name she knew Colin by (but was not his real name) keeps her from getting the abortion.

This sense of unconditional love reaches Eve and she is finally able to give herself to Mia, unconditionally. She says no to Gabe, even when it is possible for the two of them to be together and she moves out of her comfort zone to live in the place that makes Mia happy. Other than giving Eve a place to live, Mia does not do anything else for her. She lets Eve do all of the worrying for her and this is what Eve does without expecting Mia to give her anything in return.

People are complex and may tell lies to themselves and others to project a certain image.

The title of the novel depicts one of its major themes. It is called *The Good Girl*, referring to Mia and her claim of trying to be a good girl. This is what she tells herself she is. She tells Colin that this is what she has tried to be. Eve tries to convince Gabe that she is a good girl after he hears about Mia's indiscretions. Yet, even though Mia thinks that she is a girl who has been wronged and even places the blame for Mia's misdeeds on herself and James, readers know that Mia has many personas.

To the school where she teaches, she is a devoted teacher who understands her students. In this life, she is a responsible person. Thus, when she misses work and cannot be found, her friend worries about her to the extent that she calls Eve.

Grace and James have a harsher view of Mia's character. They see her as being an irresponsible troublemaker. Even Eve thinks that Mia is simply off somewhere and will show up later when she first finds out that Mia is missing. By the end of the novel, readers discover that Mia's antics are even worse than James or Grace could have imagined. This time, Mia has gone as far as to stage her own kidnapping and is ultimately responsible for Colin's death. Yet, even though Mia admits that the events of the last three months are her fault, she never explains what she really means by this and is able to justify her actions in her mind. It is all James' fault because he had betrayed and disappointed her. Now he has to pay.

In reality, the only thing that Mia's father did not do was to support her wish to study art after she rejected his wish for her to follow in his footsteps. He was there for her during her childhood - putting together toys and fulfilling her wishes when she had tantrums. When he does not bow to her wishes when she gets older, she convinces herself that he is a bad man and that she is the poor, misunderstood, rich girl.

Mia is not the only character who lies to herself and tries to get others to see them as they want to be seen. Colin, Gabe, Eve, and James do this as well.



Even though Colin loves and cares for his mother, he puts her life at risk to "save" Mia from Dalmar. Part of his justification for doing this is that his mother would be appalled to find out about his involvement in Mia's kidnapping. If this is really true, then why did he agree to kidnap Mia in the first place? In reality, his line of thinking could be just a lie he is telling himself to cope with the fact that his attraction to Mia has made him choose her over his sick mother.

At first, Gabe is not happy about his assignment to Mia's case. Once he meets Eve, however, his sentiments change. He tells himself that he is following up on the case as any good detective would do. Yet, readers know that he has an ulterior motive; he wants to continue to see Eve. In the end, his attempt to please her drives him to pursue the case even after he gets other assignments.

Eve has spent years playing the role of the martyr and convinces Gabe that she is one. As the narrative progresses, though, she starts to admit the truth to herself and begins to change. She realizes that James has always not been the way he is now, and even though she places the blame for his change of character on him, readers may wonder whether she simply does not want to admit her role in the deterioration of their marriage as she does not want to admit that James could be right about Mia being "misplaced" instead of missing. She does admit, however, that she has not been the best of mothers.

James' attempt to protect his image involves telling lies about his own behavior and hiding the ransom notes he receives. Still, he is not the cold-hearted character the novel portrays him as being. His character is complex. He tried to be a good father to Mia when she was young and even has memories of her childhood and at the end of the novel he expresses a form of regret. Yet others who want to present good images of themselves, like Mia and Eve, focus on the negative side of his character.

Abuse can come in many forms.

Abuse can be physical. It can also come in the form of words. The novel makes the point that abuse can come in both forms and both can be equally damaging.

The hint of physical abuse appears at the beginning of the novel with the image of leaves falling on the ground, a symbol of the end of life. Then Eve receives the news that Mia is missing. A missing person evokes images of violence. Someone has been taken against their will, by force. Further harm has been done to them or will be done to them in the future.

The theme of abuse in its physical form continues when Colin kidnaps Mia at gunpoint and when he thinks about what Dalmar will do to her if he delivers her to him. The threat of physical abuse morphs with mental abuse when Mia realizes that Colin is really kidnapping her, not delivering her to set up the fake kidnapping as planned. He has not harmed her physically, but the thought that he might do so harms her mentally. Once



they leave the city, her voice becomes hysterical. "The poker face has given way to gaping eyes, to ruddy skin."

Throughout her captivity, Mia faces the threat of physical abuse as Colin uses the gun to control her. At one point, when she tries to run away, Colin does turn violent. When he gives the gun to Mia, he faces the threat that he will suffer from physical abuse if she decides to use it on him. When Gabe finds Colin and Mia, Colin faces physical violence from the police and dies.

Colin comes from a household where physical abuse took place. Mia comes from a household where mental abuse took place. James dominates the family through intimidation. Gabe notes how James speaks to Eve when he interviews the family and Mia tells Colin how James has tried to make Eve lose her sense of herself by making her more American than British.

James' treatment of Eve makes her feel trapped and has contributed to her becoming a bad mother. She had no sense of herself and thus could not be the type of mother she had hoped to be. His treatment of Mia causes her to rebel and commit crimes. The mental abuse the family members feel could have even caused Grace to become a much colder person than she may have been without James' dominance.

Sibling rivalry exists.

Siblings spend more time with each other than with their parents. Yet, this does not mean that they will be close to each other. The existence of sibling rivalry is a theme that appears in the novel as the relationship between Grace and Mia exemplifies.

As Eve thinks about her parenting efforts, she remembers times that Grace made Mia cry when they were children. Later, Mia remembers bonding with her mother when Grace and James were out of the house. She says that Grace was her father's daughter and she was her mother's.

The relationship between the two girls does not improve when they transition into adulthood. When Mia disappears, Grace does not take the situation seriously. Even when Mia returns, Grace is suspicious. She wonders why Mia did not try to escape and how she ended up having a sketch pad with her and sketching while in captivity. Grace, in fact, asks questions that Gabe also has, but does not really pursue due to his feelings for Eve.

In addition to noting that sibling rivalry exists, the novel also explores possible origins of toxic sibling relationships. In the case of Mia and Grace, one cause could be the girl's looks and personalities. Mia takes after her mother, both in sentiment and looks. As readers learn from Gabe, Grace, however, has an unfortunate mixture of her mother's and father's physical traits. Realizing her disadvantage, Grace strikes out to claim her space in the family. She makes Mia cry and earns her father's love by following in his footsteps.



It is ironic though that Mia, is jealous of Grace. She says that Grace is everything that she is not. Her father pays for Grace's apartment even though she has enough money to pay for it herself, while Mia has to struggle and pay for her own. When Grace lets Mia continue to hide instead of looking for her when the girls play hide and go seek, Mia says that Grace has to apologize, but is allowed to do so as a snob. Grace does not appreciate Mia's work and when she tells Mia to get a life, Mia responds by calling Grace a loser.

Readers never see the two women reconcile and may wonder whether they ever will as Eve is ready to give Mia her full attention and seems to forget that she has another daughter.

One cannot trust first impressions.

In the novel, first impressions are not reliable when it comes to judging family relationships or character. The best example of this theme comes from Mia and Colin who do not fit the first impression readers have of them.

Part of this impression comes from the social status of each character as well as their family structures. Mia comes from a rich family. Her parents are still married to each other. On the surface, things are okay in her home and life even though she is not close to her parents.

In contrast, Colin comes from a poor family. His father was abusive and left his mother when he discovered that she was sick. He has resorted to a life of crime. In the beginning of the novel, he seems to be a hardened criminal and Mia seems to be a victim.

The truth is that Colin is a good boy. His father leaves the family. However, instead of trying to get even with him as Mia tries to get even with her father, Colin writes him off and tells his mother that he is not worth thinking about. He shows his mother unconditional love by trying to help her even if it means potential harm to himself.

Mia, on the other hand, is not a good girl. She only cares about herself. The outward appearance that she comes from privilege, has a good job, and is loved by her students does not portray her true character. She is a criminal. She committed crimes when she was a teenager even though her record gives the impression that she is a good girl. She stages her own kidnapping as a way of getting even with her father who she feels does not love her enough. Yet, Eve's memories show how he tried to do things to appease Mia, who had tantrums when she does not get what she wants.

By the end of the novel, readers realize how they have misjudged both Colin and Mia, even though their public records show each of them to be the opposite of what they seem.



Styles

Point of View

The narrative is written from four distinct points of view. They work together to explain the happenings before, during, and after Mia's kidnapping ordeal. The narration comes from the points of view of Eve, Colin, Gabe, and Mia. It is appropriate that these people tell the story for two reasons. The first is that they were there throughout all of the events and represent all of the constituencies. Eve represents the family, Colin represents the criminals, and Gabe represent the police who look for Mia.

The other purpose is that they are the ones who tell the story that Mia wants told. Mia can manipulate all of these people and through them, she can also manipulate the readers. James and Grace are also family members, but they know and acknowledge Mia's dark side and would not present Mia as Eve does. Eve takes part of the blame for Mia's behavior upon herself and, in the end, sacrifices her life for her - just as Colin does. A narrative by Dalmar would not have been as kind as Colin's narrative. Dalmar knows that Mia planned her own kidnapping, so his narrative would have presented a completely different side of her. Gabe is also easy to manipulate as he cares for Eve and wants to please her.

The readers believe the picture the narrators paint of Mia. They are not surprised that Mia does not speak for herself until the end because she has amnesia. She speaks when she gets her memory back. This is when readers find out that she has manipulated them as well. She has created a grand picture of her own reality. This mimics the reason she draws. It is a place where reality does not have to exist.

Given that the narrators are so unreliable in terms of reading Mia's personality, it is important that readers realize that they may be unreliable in other areas as well. Eve sets herself up as a martyr. Mia is the poor little rich girl. Both of them suffer under the dominance of James who cares only about himself. Yet, he and Eve had been happy in the early days of their marriage. Grace had never caused problems like Mia did, and James had helped Mia when she was young. Could it be that something the narrators are not telling turned him into the person they hate so much?

Gabe falls in love with Eve and wants to help her heal, so it is only natural that he is going to dislike her husband. He also feels inferior to James. This gives him another reason to dislike him. He notices the inconsistencies in Mia's story, but chooses to ignore them. The detective who storms the cabin may have handled the investigation differently and been harder on Mia.



Language and Meaning

Even though the novel revolves around a crime, the focus is on the lives of the people involved. Thus, the language is not complicated. The characters' thoughts and conversations are non-technical in nature and do not involve jargon.

The vocabulary is descriptive at times. This choice of language creates the mood and setting of various scenes. In essence, the author uses the language to create a drawing, much as Mia might have done if she had recorded all of the happenings in her sketchbook.

Structure

The novel's distinctive structure features various narratives that revolve around the time before Mia's return home and after her return. The story freely switches between the narratives, moving the story forward and converging towards the end to place Mia at the cabin when she loses her memory and at the cabin when she begins to remember the details of her ordeal. Just as readers think they are up to date with the story as Mia tells Gabe what happened, they find out what really happened from the only person who knows the entire story - Mia. The epilogue (Mia After) adds the ultimate twist to the plot.

The novel's structure has thematic implications. By interweaving the past with the present and having readers follow the entire story, they feel the impact of the realization that one cannot trust their first impressions as they realize that their impression of Mia is wrong. They may also wonder how wrong their impression of other characters may be as well.

Even when the narrative moves from a "before" to an "after" story, they often support each other in content. Thus, for example, readers see Colin and Mia getting closer and are therefore not surprised to find out she is pregnant. Mia's "after" actions are also often explained in the "before" narratives. Readers learn why she now drinks coffee and understand why she chooses to use the name Chloe.

Each narrative is short, reflecting the urgency to find Mia, and possibly Eve as well, before something dire happens.



Quotes

They're dead mostly, some still clinging to the trees.

-- Eve (Eve Before paragraph 1)

Importance: This quote sets the stage for the rest of the novel. Fall has come, representing the end of a period of time. Leaves are dead and are clinging to trees to support them, but the support is not provided. The tree does not bring them back to life, just as Eve clings to a family (family tree) that does not give her life.

Some people might call it an hourglass figure; I probably would, too, if I liked her. But instead I call it plump.

-- Gabe (Gabe Before paragraph 41)

Importance: This quote serves to characterize both Gabe and Grace. Regarding the characterization of Gabe, the quote demonstrates how he allows his personal feelings to cloud his judgement. He uses a negative word to describe Grace just because he does not like her. He, himself, acknowledges that this is the case. As a result, readers must realize that his investigation can be tainted by his personal feelings. Regarding the characterization of Grace, Gabe's description of her physical appearance could explain the source of her rivalry with Mia. Readers later learn that Mia is beautiful, like her mother. Grace, however, has an unflattering combination of both her mother's and father's looks. Grace's attempt to put Mia down could be because she realizes that she does not have the looks that Mia has. She has to use other parameters to sculpt her identity. She uses her brains and realizes that she can gain favoritism by following her father's will as her mother is not strong enough to make a difference in what happens in the household..

I don't know the color of her eyes or what they look like when she's scared. But I will.

-- Colin (Colin Before paragraph 3)

Importance: This quote is important because it foreshadows that something ominous is about to take place.

She told me that she drew because it was the only way she could bring about change...It was a place where reality didn't have to exist.

-- Eve (Eve After paragraph 26)

Importance: Mia said this to her mother when she asked her why she likes to draw. Mia's response is a cry for help. She wants something in her life to be different, but her mother does not pick on her plea. This fact adds to the characterization of Eve as a "bad" mother and to the characterization of Mia as someone who is not happy with the life her parent's have given her.

The kids that are flawless,," ha adds, "Those are the ones that worry me.

-- Gabe (Eve Before paragraph 38)



Importance: This quote supports the characterization of Gabe. His personal feelings shape his feelings. He says this to Eve to make her feel better. It is an ironic statement, however, as Mia has a clean record; thus, she should be the one that worries him.

I know how betrayal and disillusionment feel, when someone who could give you the world refuses even a tiny piece of it.

-- Colin (Colin Before paragraph 19)

Importance: This quote helps explain the bond that forms between Colin and Mia. In spite of their different classes in society, they see themselves in each other. This fact supports the theme that first impressions do not tell the whole story of one's circumstances. They are both wounded even though one would not expect Mia to be.

For this moment, the burden is his.

-- Eve (Eve Before paragraph 65)

Importance: Here, Eve is stating that Gabe gives her the identical thing that Colin realizes he gives to Mia. Both men shield the women from worry and things that are unpleasant. Both women find such a trait attractive in men. These are their knights in shining armor. James served this role when Eve first met him. Once she had to participate however, she was not interested and, thus, James also lost interest. Gabe now fulfills this role for Eve. Mia is also looking for someone to fulfill this role in her life. Colin serves this role for her.

That's what she tells me. She tried hard to be the good girl.

-- Colin (Colin Before paragraph 28)

Importance: Colin is telling readers what Mia told him. His words support the theme that people tell lies to themselves and others to create the persona they want others to see as readers find out that she is not a good girl in reality. She has been in trouble with the law before and she has planned her own kidnapping.

She tells me that it's called imperialism; a relationship based on dominance and subordination.

-- Colin (Colin Before paragraph 30)

Importance: This supports the theme of abuse that runs throughout the novel. Here, Colin references the mental abuse that can cause harm to people.

According to research, people who live with animals have decreased anxiety and lower blood pressure.

-- Gabe (Gabe After paragraph 8)

Importance: This medical finding justifies in Gabe's mind how Mia managed to survive her captivity, She had the cat. Taking the cat to the two women is also a symbolic way of him trying to help them heal.



There's no such thing as breakfast, lunch, or dinner. It's all the same. It all tastes like shit.

-- Colin (Colin Before paragraph 146)

Importance: Colin feels that he loves Mia. Mia feels a connection with Colin, yet they do not share good meals together. Meals are a sign of togetherness and communion. So, if the two of them are really connected they should enjoy the symbolic meaning of a meal even if they do not like the food. The fact that they do not makes readers wonder whether the two are really as close as Colin would like them to be to each other. It is not until later, when Mia returns to her apartment, that she enjoys chicken noodle soup. She says that it makes her feel as if she is at home. Now that Colin is gone, she realizes all he did for her. In his absence, she feels the sense of communion from the meal they used to eat together.

There are times..she's too far..away,..even when she's in the same room.

-- Colin (Colin Before paragraph 149)

Importance: This quote supports the theme that people have many different personas. Colin thinks he is close to Mia, but this quote indicates that he does not really know her - which is the truth as he never knows that she planned her own kidnapping.