

# **Harvesting the Heart Study Guide**

**Harvesting the Heart by Jodi Picoult**

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# Plot Summary

*Harvesting the Heart* by Jodi Picoult is a touching story about a woman who has never known a mother and therefore has no reason to believe she can be a successful mother herself. Paige has run away from one romance and the possibility of parenthood into a marriage with a successful surgeon that leaves her often dealing with the stress of life on her own. When Paige becomes a mother, she does not measure up to her own expectations and runs away, just like her own mother did. However, Paige soon realizes she does not have to do what her mother did and that love is the only thing that truly matters. With *Harvesting the Heart* Jodi Picoult has delivered a novel that is not only heartwarming, but also deals with doubts every mother has experienced. The novel portrays how one woman triumphs over those doubts.

Paige O'Toole barely remembers her mother because she left when she was just five. Although Paige has a loving father, she feels her mother's absence in everything Paige does. When Paige commits a sin against her father's Catholic beliefs, she feels as though she has no choice but to run away and begin her life elsewhere. Within a few weeks, Paige has a job and meets the man she marries.

Paige is a wonderful artist. When Nicholas, a medical student at Harvard, comes in to the diner late one night, Paige draws his portrait. In the portrait, Paige captures deep secrets about Nicholas that he has never shared with anyone. Paige's ability to do so, draws Nicholas to Paige. Although Nicholas has a girlfriend, he cannot get Paige out of his mind. Nicholas impulsively asks Paige to marry him. It seems like a fairy-tale romance, until Nicholas and Paige tell Nicholas' parents.

Nicholas' parents are wealthy--his father is a successful doctor and his mother a famous photographer. Nicholas is born late into their lives after they try for more than a decade to have a child. Nicholas grows up with everything he can possibly want and believing this is how all children are raised. Nicholas never fails at anything and never has anything refused to him by his parents. When Nicholas' parents threaten to disown him if he marries Paige, Nicholas is not sure how to handle the situation, only knowing Paige is the woman he loves.

Nicholas and Paige get married with a lie between them. Paige is afraid to tell Nicholas, who believes her to be a virgin, that she has had an abortion. Paige was in love with a boy she meets on a blind date and hopes to one day marry. However, when Paige becomes pregnant a few months before her high school graduation, she knows she is not ready to be a mother. She does not want to begin a marriage because of a child. An abortion seems like the only answer, but the abortion drives an indestructible wedge between her and her boyfriend, as well as disappointing her Catholic father. Paige decides the only thing she could do is to run away as soon as graduation is over.

Paige and Nicholas make their marriage work for seven years with Paige working two jobs in order to pay off Nicholas' mounting student loans. When Nicholas finishes his internship, he insists on buying a house they cannot afford in order to make a good



impression on the social hierarchy of the hospital where Nicholas hopes to be head of cardiothoracic surgery one day. Paige is unhappy in the house, which is devoid of color and is unhappy at the parties Nicholas expects her to attend because she does not fit in with the other wives. Things become more difficult for Paige when she learns she is pregnant.

Paige is convinced she will not be a good mother because she does not have a good role model. All Paige's fears seem to come to pass when the baby is born and she does not automatically know how to care for him. With Nicholas' lack of help and Paige's sense of isolation, Paige becomes desperate for an escape. When the baby falls and gets a bloody nose, Paige runs away, convinced the baby will be better off without her.

Paige goes home to her father, suddenly convinced that if she finds her mother she can figure out how to be a good mother. Paige meets her ex-boyfriend again while waiting for a private detective to find her mother and realizes that Nicholas is the only man she wants to be with. However, Paige will not go home until she knows she can be a good mother to her baby. Paige goes to her own mother and finds her running a riding school in North Carolina in order to pay for her show horse.

Paige does not get the answers she wants from her mother during the three months she spends with her. Paige does reconnect with herself, however, and discovers that the answers are always inside of herself. Paige returns home to Nicholas and Max, hoping to be a better wife and mother than she was before. However, Nicholas is not as receptive as Paige would have liked. Nicholas has had a hard time since Paige left and is forced to reconnect with his own parents in order to utilize them as babysitters. Nicholas is also unsure of Paige's feelings for him, afraid she has only come back to take his child away.

Paige moves in with Nicholas' parents and attempts to convince Nicholas that she is back for good, while Nicholas tries to convince himself that divorce is the only option. When Max becomes ill, Nicholas is forced to realize that Paige is still the only woman he loves. Paige finally realizes she is stronger than she had previously believed and is able to stand strong for herself and for Nicholas. There will be no more running away for Paige.



# Prologue, Paige

## Prologue, Paige Summary

*Harvesting the Heart* by Jodi Picoult is a touching story about a woman who has never known a mother and therefore has no reason to believe she can be a successful mother herself. Paige has run away from one romance and the possibility of parenthood into a marriage to a successful surgeon that leaves her often dealing with the stress of life on her own. When Paige becomes a mother, she does not measure up to her own expectations and runs away as her own mother did. However, Paige soon realizes she is not like her mother and that love is the only thing that truly matters. With *Harvesting the Heart* Jodi Picoult delivers a novel that is not only heartwarming, but deals with doubts every mother experiences portraying one woman's successful triumph over those doubts.

Paige is outside her house watching her husband change their son's diapers through the bedroom window. Paige ran away three months earlier, and Nicholas, her husband, will not let her back into the house, so she has been sleeping in the front yard for two days. Paige remembers the dream she often had after her son's birth. The dream turns out to be a memory of Paige and her mother. There are water stains on their kitchen ceiling when Paige is little. Paige thinks they look like horses, so Paige's mother says they should color them in; she helps Paige draw a mural across the ceiling. Paige's father paints over the mural a few weeks after her mother's disappearance.

Paige is an artist who has just reconnected with her art while away. Paige sits out on the front lawn drawing pictures of her husband and son, watching the lights go on and off inside the house. When Nicholas comes out on the front porch sometime before dawn, Paige feels a short lived surge of hope. Nicholas looks at some of her drawings, surprised to see she has begun drawing again. A pleasant moment passes until Paige asks to hold her son. Nicholas becomes angry and tells her she had her chance. Nicholas marches back into the house, leaving Paige alone.

## Prologue, Paige Analysis

This chapter introduces the two main characters, as well as the tension that moves the plot. Paige, the first character to appear, is a young mother who has run away from home and just returned, hoping to be welcomed back but finds herself unwanted. Paige is an artist and spends much of her time drawing portraits of the people inside the house. Paige clearly feels regret for leaving her family and wants to return to things the way they once were, but she is meeting resistance from her husband. This foreshadows the entire novel, which opens in the past before this time and ends a few weeks after the time in which the prologue takes place. Nicholas, a successful doctor and full time dad, is the second character introduced. Nicholas clearly cares about his wife, as indicated by his choice to step outside in the middle of the night to see if she is safe and



sound. However, Nicholas is also angry with his wife for leaving him and afraid of what her return might mean for him. This, too, foreshadows the rest of the novel as the reader must wonder how these two people arrive at this point, and if Nicholas will ever relent and allow his wife back into his life.





# Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 1, Paige

## Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 1, Paige Summary

Paige finds herself in a diner called Mercy a few days after she has gotten off a bus in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Paige is in desperate need of a job, but the owner of the diner does not need a waitress so sends her on her way. Before Paige leaves, she draws a portrait of the man on the back of a menu. The portrait has a picture of a woman with horrible scars on her back on the forehead of the man. Paige has always had this gift of drawing people's secrets within her portraits and hopes this time it will get her a job. Paige leaves the drawing on the counter and waits outside the door.

In a moment, the man, Lionel, comes and tells her she can have the job. Then Lionel tells her about his grandmother, Mercy, who had been a slave in Georgia. This was the woman Paige draws in his portrait. Lionel teaches Paige how to wait on tables. Her first customer is a medical school student who barely looks at her-not rude, but standoffish. The customer is Nicholas, the man destined to become her husband.

Paige leaves home the day after her high school graduation, leaving a note for her father that simply said she loves him. Paige's father, Patrick O'Toole, is an amateur inventor whose day job is as a computer programmer. Patrick's parents move to the United States from Ireland when Patrick is only five, and he has spent his entire life hoping to return to Ireland someday. Patrick tells Paige bedtime stories based on Irish mythology. Patrick raises Paige on his own after Paige's mother leaves when Paige is five. Patrick did his best, raising Paige Catholic with all the beliefs that go with it. That is partly why Paige ran away. Paige broke one of the most important rules of the Catholic faith. Paige has an abortion.

Paige takes a bus east, hoping to start over as far from Chicago as possible. Paige gets off in Cambridge and calls her father from her new home. Paige expects to find her father frantic, but he is calm, though clearly happy to hear she is well. It is at is no going back.

Two weeks after taking the job at Mercy, Lionel trusts Paige enough to allow her to lock up. Doris, another of the waitresses gives Paige a place to sleep on her couch. Doris also comes up with the idea of a blue plate special, offering a portrait with a meal. Soon, there are dozens of portraits hanging above the cash register with Lionel's portrait. One night, after everyone has left except for Nicholas, Paige decides to draw his picture. Hidden within the picture is a boy sitting in a tree holding the sun. Nicholas grabs the picture out of her hand and is surprised to see this. Paige is surprised, too, convinced it is a reference to one of the stories her father told her as a child.



Nicholas invites Paige to join him at his table and they talk. Paige tells Nicholas about growing up in Chicago and running away. Paige tells him everything about herself, except for Jake and the abortion. When Nicholas is ready to leave, he asks her to hang the picture. Then he kisses her on the forehead and leaves.

## **Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 1, Paige Analysis**

In Paige's first person point of view, the reader learns several things about her. Paige has run away from home, she has an abortion, and she is raised by her father after her mother runs off. These events go to Paige's character elements as they shape who she is and how she will react to certain events in her life. Paige has a close relationship with her father, but she leaves home because she feels that her sin against his religion, the abortion, is unforgivable; she cannot handle the shame this would cause her father. This is important because this tells the reader how Paige handles stressful situations. It also foreshadows future events when Paige once again finds herself in another stressful situation.

This chapter introduces Paige's father, Patrick. Patrick is important to this novel, not only because he is Paige's father, but because of his influence on her life, his role as a father, and the fact that he has a wife who leaves him for unknown reasons. One of the themes of this novel, child-parent relationships, comes into play in this chapter as the reader gets to know Paige and her relationship with her father. Paige loves her father so much that she is afraid of his shame, but she is not afraid of hurting him by running away without warning. This relationship, too, foreshadows the rest of the novel, as it becomes an important element in Paige's motivations and actions.

Also important in this chapter is the introduction between Paige and Nicholas. Paige describes Nicholas as grand, as someone who is not conceited but above mere mortals. Paige views Nicholas as perfection and sees him as the man she has been waiting her whole life to meet. This is a difficult description for a man to live up to and foreshadows the rest of the novel as the reader wonders if Nicholas is really the demi-god that Paige sees him as. Someone this high on a pedestal is sure to fall off --the reader must wonder what will happen when he does.



# Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 2, Nicholas

## Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 2, Nicholas Summary

After ten years of trying to conceive, Nicholas is a surprise to his parents. Nicholas is raised with everything a young man can want and does not know this is unusual until he begins college. Nicholas is always top in his class, always dates the most beautiful women, and wins a silver medal in the Olympics as a member of the American rowing team. Nicholas has never known failure and is afraid that someday failure will be unavoidable.

Nicholas cannot get the waitress out of his mind and stops by at closing the following night in order to ask her name. Paige tells him that her father picked her name, but her mother had not liked it until one night it occurred to Paige's mother that Paige could stand for a fresh page that is waiting to be written. Paige admits that this conversation in which her mother tells her about her name is the only long conversation she can recall with her mother. Nicholas pulls her into his arms and thinks of how he comes to decide to specialize in cardiothoracic surgery that last year. Nicholas has watched a heart transplant and speaks to the recipient the next day. The man tells him that he has thoughts and feelings that are not his and he is sure those thoughts come from the heart of the young woman who makes the donation. This makes Nicholas think that it is his heart that keeps bringing him back to the diner.

After spending time touring the city the week before, Nicholas decides to ask Paige on a date for the fourth of July. Nicholas has the date planned to the last detail, but it does not go as he thought it would. Dinner is wonderful, but traffic makes it difficult for them to get to the banks of the Charles for the fireworks display. When they finally arrive at the Charles, they cannot get close enough to see the show and find themselves stuck in a tunnel with no view of the sky at all. However, Paige describes the fireworks for Nicholas simply by the sound, showing Nicholas a show like nothing he has never seen before.

Nicholas takes Paige to meet his parents. Paige is intimidated by the house in which Nicholas grew up and even more intimidated when she realizes that Nicholas' mother is *the* Astrid Prescott, the photographer. There are pictures that Astrid has taken all through the house, many of which have appeared in famous magazines and calendars. For Nicholas, however, the intimidation comes from his father, a stand-offish man who rarely showers his only son with affection.

Over dinner, Astrid speaks of her latest photographic adventure in Nepal. Nicholas talks about his rotations at the hospital. Finally, Astrid asks Paige where she works, and it is clear neither Robert nor Astrid approve of Paige, especially when Astrid asks after



Rachel, Nicholas' current girlfriend. Nicholas becomes enraged by his parents' attitude and takes Paige out of the house. However, once alone, Nicholas and Paige have their first argument over Nicholas' behavior.

The next day, Nicholas takes Rachel to the diner when he knows that Paige will be there. Paige is their waitress, and when Nicholas tells her that Rachel wanted her portrait done, Paige draws her as a lizard. That night Nicholas calls in sick to the hospital and wanders through Harvard Square. At closing time, Nicholas walks to the diner and traps Paige in a romantic embrace. When Paige stiffens in his arms, Nicholas becomes convinced she is a virgin. This idea touches Nicholas so deeply that he asks her to marry him without conscious thought.

## **Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 2, Nicholas Analysis**

Nicholas is the narrator in this chapter, taking up the story in the third person point of view rather than Paige's first person point of view. Nicholas gives the reader some background on himself, explaining how he has never failed at anything and adding that he grew up in a home of privilege. These are important character elements about Nicholas that foreshadow many events later in the novel and which explain Nicholas' reactions to certain situations based both on his upbringing and the idea that failure is an alien concept to him.

Nicholas has a girlfriend, but it does not stop him from becoming infatuated with Paige. Nicholas' obsession with Paige is clear from the first part of this chapter when he lies in bed with another woman but his thoughts are on Paige. This, too, foreshadows not only later sections of this chapter, but the rest of the novel as well. Since the chapter is in Nicholas' name, and he is the narrator, it is clear that Nicholas is going to be an important character in the rest of the novel.

The introduction of Nicholas' parents in this chapter is significant because of their reaction to Paige. Nicholas' parents do not approve of Paige, and, it seems their disapproval stems from the fact that Paige is not of their economic background. This gives the reader insight into the character of Nicholas' parents; it also sets them up as the antagonists of the novel, a barrier between the two main characters. The meeting of the parents also leads to the first fight between these two lovers--a fight that later prompts Nicholas to bring his girlfriend to the diner in order to show Paige he does not need her. This plan backfires when Paige conducts herself most properly, except for drawing the girlfriend as a lizard. This, too, foreshadows Nicholas' character because it shows the reader how he reacts when someone crosses him. Finally, when Nicholas asks Paige to marry him the reader must wonder what she will say, since she is only eighteen and has just run away from home. Not only this, but Nicholas comes to believe Paige is a virgin, a fact the reader already knows to be false. This also foreshadows future chapters as the reader wonders if Paige will tell Nicholas the truth or allow him to continue to believe the lie.



# Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 3, Nicholas

## Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 3, Nicholas Summary

When Nicholas is four, his mother teaches him not to trust strangers by sitting him in a chair and repeating the order over and over. For months afterward, Nicholas has an irrational fear of strangers. It is because of this that Nicholas does not understand his desire to marry Paige, a woman who is essentially a stranger to him. Nicholas takes Paige to his apartment that night, wanting to know everything there is to know about her. However, Paige will not speak to him. Finally Nicholas coaxes a few words out of Paige, and she tells him that she cannot consider marrying him because she barely knows him. Nicholas guesses her middle name and gets it right, almost convincing Paige that they are meant for each other.

Finally they are talking with the same ease that had initially existed between them. However, Nicholas ruins the rapport by bringing up Paige's mother. Suddenly Paige is running out the door. Paige is waiting for Nicholas when he comes home the next day, having cleaned his apartment and baked cookies. Nicholas is not sure how to feel about this invasion, but likes the changes she has made. Nicholas' mother decorated his apartment with a designer when he first moved in and he had never truly felt at home there. Now he does.

Nicholas does not believe in romantic love before he meets Paige, but he is beginning to believe now. Nicholas thinks about his parents. His mother is born rich and wants to get away from the expectations of that life; his father is born poor and wants everything Astrid has. They are the same people on opposite sides of the coin.

Paige asks Nicholas about his work at the hospital and talks him into asking her medical history. When the questions begin to revolve around Paige's mother's history, Paige is unable to answer. Again Nicholas asks about her mother, and Paige is sullen and reluctant to discuss her. Nicholas takes her into his arms to console her and intimates to her that he knows she is a virgin. Paige attempts to correct his assumption, but is distracted by his kisses. When able to speak again, Paige tells him she will marry him.

## Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 3, Nicholas Analysis

Paige is reluctant to answer Nicholas' proposal since they have only known each other a very short time. This forces Nicholas to admit to himself that he is in love with her, an emotion he has never really experienced before. Nicholas is also forced to admit that



Paige has brought changes to his life that he never thought he wanted but is happy to accept. This again delves into Nicholas' character, showing the reader a controlling side of his personality that might not have been completely evident in the previous chapter. This controlling side will come into play in later chapters; therefore, this chapter foreshadows Nicholas' reactions to specific events in later chapters.

Paige's reluctance in discussing her mother is once again shown in this chapter, showing the reader that her mother's absence in her life is a fact that deeply affects Paige. Paige feels as though she has no history due to her mother's absence and that she knows little of her mother. This lack of a relationship with her mother foreshadows later chapters in which Paige begins to all she lost in not having a mother present in her growing-up years. Finally, Paige agrees to marry Nicholas. This marriage will be pivotal event in the rest of the novel.



# Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 4, Paige

## Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 4, Paige Summary

Paige thinks of how she should not have begun her marriage based on a lie but is fearful she will lose Nicholas if she tells him she is not a virgin. She even allows him to continue believing it on their wedding night when they made love for the first time. Paige and Nicholas move into Harvard's married housing. Paige buys her wedding outfit at a discount store with money that is a gift from her friends, including Nicholas.

Nicholas and Paige visit his parents after Nicholas breaks the news of their wedding over the phone. Astrid and Robert are polite at first, but when assured that Paige is not pregnant, Robert tells Nicholas if he marries Paige, he will cut him off financially. Nicholas takes Paige and runs from the house, but instead of getting into his car, he goes into the woods behind the house. Paige follows, assuring him that they would be alright. Paige will work while Nicholas finishes school.

Paige calls her father the day of the wedding to tell him about Nicholas. Patrick tells Paige a story about when he takes her to the petting zoo and she becomes frightened when a lot of sheep come at her at once. Patrick says he picks her up and saves her, as he always has. Paige listens to this story and wonders if her father will ever forgive her for the abortion.

Nicholas and Paige get married at the justice-of-the-peace. Paige panics when she realizes she does not have a ring for Nicholas, but at the appropriate time Nicholas produces two bright gold bands.

## Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 4, Paige Analysis

Paige addresses the fact that Nicholas believes her a virgin and shows the reader that she allows him to continue to believe it even on their wedding night. This begins the marriage with a lie, which foreshadows the effects this lie will have on the marriage. Paige enters this marriage afraid of what her father thinks of her, marrying a man he has never met, and afraid he will never forgive her for her decision to have an abortion just months before. This touches on the theme of parent-child relationships. Paige's relationship to her father is important to the story not only because he is the man who raises her and helps shape her personality, but because Paige's relationship with her father directly affects the relationship she will have with her husband.



Nicholas' parents decide to cut him off from the family fortune due to his decision to marry Paige. This is a surprise to Nicholas, who has never done anything that causes his parents grief until this moment. This again touches on the theme of parent-child relationships because a child's relationship with his parents is very important, especially at times of change such as a marriage. This is a time when Nicholas needs his parents the most and they have made the decision to walk out of his life. Nicholas is hurt by this. This foreshadows later chapters in which Nicholas is forced to turn to his parents in a time of need. This also makes his parents more clearly the antagonists of the story, although the reader might now wonder if they will remain in the role as antagonists now that they are no longer in Paige and Nicolas' life.





# **Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 5, Paige**

## **Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 5, Paige Summary**

Paige remembers a time when her father is out of town and her mother took Paige to the zoo, instead of taking Paige to church as she is expected to do. Paige and her mother go through many of the exhibits, the polar bears, the elephants, and the penguins. The zoo prides itself on its natural habitats. The elephant habitat is separated from the visitors by a moat filled with water. While standing there, Paige's mother decides to play in the water. Paige's mother takes off her shoes and splashes in the water, warning Paige not to join her. Then, at the penguin exhibit, Paige becomes separated from her mother in the dark exhibit area. Paige is very scared, but when her mother magically appears and takes her hand, Paige feels safe.

## **Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 5, Paige Analysis**

This chapter is about a time before Paige's mother leaves, a flashback, in which her mother breaks the regular routine and takes Paige to the zoo. This chapter is important because it reveals to the reader the kind of mother Paige's mother is, a little silly but basically good. This also touches on the theme of parent-child relationships. Paige clearly misses her mother from the moment her mother left and still thinks about her quite often. The loss of her mother is deeply significant to Paige and it foreshadows later events in the plot in which Paige becomes obsessed with her mother's absence.



# Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 6, Nicholas

## Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 6, Nicholas Summary

Nicholas is having a bad week. A patient dies on the table, another has to be told her tumor is cancer, and an intern leaves a patient because of the patient's vulgar language, and Nicholas has to take over. On top of all this, Nicholas learns that a favorite patient has returned to the hospital, in the final throes of AIDS. Nicholas goes into the ICU to check on his mentor, Alistair Fogerty's, bypass patient. The man goes into cardiac arrest while Nicholas is with him, but Nicholas manages to bring him back.

Late at night, Nicholas goes to visit his patient with AIDS, afraid to wake her but taking comfort from the feel of her hand. Nicholas thinks about her children and wonders what will happen to them when she dies. Nicholas is ashamed of himself for becoming attached to this one patient, but he cannot help himself.

During his fourth year of medical school, four months after becoming married, Nicholas goes to Winslow, Arizona to work at a clinic on an Indian reservation. Nicholas is overwhelmed with the poverty and lack of medical supplies at the clinic. On his final day there, Nicholas treats a young girl who is pregnant; the baby is in a breach position. Nicholas wants to perform a C-section on the girl, but a Hand Trembler comes in and ran her hands over the girl's belly. The baby is born in the normal position.

Nicholas calls Paige at home, waking her in the middle of the night, just to hear the sound of her voice. The next morning Nicholas is allowed to perform a bypass on his own with Alistair Fogerty observing. Nicholas performs the surgery with perfection, taking only an hour longer than Alistair would have done himself. Nicholas is disappointed that Alistair does not praise his work.

Nicholas goes home and finds the apartment empty because Paige is at work. Paige is working two jobs, the waitress job at Mercy and a receptionist position in an OB/GYN's office. Paige does take some college extension courses for a short time but stops, saying the extra job would be better, so they can get out of debt sooner. Nicholas thinks she quit because the work was too difficult, but he does not want to hurt her feelings by saying so.

When Nicholas returns to the hospital, he learns that his AIDS patient is dying. Nicholas is then paged to the ICU where his bypass patient dies. Alistair calls Nicholas into his office and tells him there is nothing he could have done for the patient, but this does not make Nicholas feel any better. At home, Paige is decorating a Christmas tree when Nicholas arrives. Nicholas does not even know it is Christmas. Nicholas is drunk, since



he stops at a bar on the way home. Paige helps him to the couch, telling him he cannot save them all.

## **Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 6, Nicholas Analysis**

The point of view of this chapter once more shifts to Nicholas' third person narration. This chapter shows the reader what Nicholas does on a daily basis, spending the majority of his time at the hospital. Nicholas wants to be a cardiothoracic surgeon. Not only this, but Nicholas wants to be the head of cardiothoracic surgery at Mass General, a fact that foreshadows later events in the novel as Nicholas attempts to achieve this desire. Time passes in this chapter, and there is a flashback to the time Nicholas spends in Arizona and witnesses the miracle of an Indian healer turning a baby in its mother's womb.

The most important aspect of this chapter is the human side to Nicholas' work. Nicholas has formed an attachment to a patient dying of AIDS. Her impending death hurts him deeply, but he is ashamed to admit this. In Nicholas' line of work, it is important that he not create emotional bonds with his patients because many of them will die. However, Nicholas has not yet reached the point where he can place a barrier between himself and the human aspect of his job.

Also important in this chapter is Nicholas' relationship with Paige. This relationship has become very important to Nicholas, although he has discovered that there are still things he does not know about his wife. This is important because it shows the depth of feelings between Nicholas and Paige, but it also shows Nicholas' ignorance of his wife's feelings--a fact that will become important later in the novel. However, Nicholas and Paige still feel very deeply about each other, a fact especially evident when Nicholas comes home drunk and depressed over the deaths of two of his patients and Paige is so supportive.



# Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 7, Paige

## Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 7, Paige Summary

Paige is dressed for a fund-raising dinner and is waiting for Nicholas to come home. Paige and Nicholas buy a house which has a mortgage too large for their budget because Nicholas feels it is important to have the house in order to keep up appearances at the hospital. Paige hates the house because all the carpets and walls are white or beige, a drab house which drains her creativity.

Paige hates these dinners because she feels she does not fit in with the other wives. Paige drags her feet getting ready. On the way to the dinner, they pass a group of trick-or-treaters, since it is Halloween, and a man comes to the car window and frightens Paige. Nicholas disappears as soon as they arrive to talk with his colleagues. Paige talks to a few of the wives who she knows, though she feels left out of the conversation because all the wives are either mothers or have successful careers themselves.

Over dinner, a doctor asks Paige what she does for a living. Since Nicholas does not want her to tell the truth, Paige hesitates in her answer. Finally, she makes a flippant remark about breaking hearts so her husband can mend them. Amused, the man asks Nicholas where he found Paige and Nicholas replies waiting tables. Paige is so upset by Nicholas' response, she excuses herself to hide in the bathroom. Once there, Paige is sick. When she is able to leave the restroom, Paige asks Nicholas to take her home. Nicholas attempts an apology once they are home, but Paige is still hurt by his comment.

The next morning, Paige gets up early to make Nicholas' lunch as she always does despite being still angry. After Nicholas leaves, Paige goes upstairs and is sick again. Paige calls in sick to Mercy, but goes to her job at the OB/GYN's office and asks the doctor to do her a favor. After learning she is pregnant, Paige remembers the first time she decides to go to art school. Paige wins a class at the Chicago Art Institute when she is in the eighth grade. In this class, she is required to draw nudes, using live models. The final class, Paige draws a naked, pregnant woman on a special piece of paper that the teacher held up to all the other students as an example of art with great potential. At home, Paige hides the drawing in her closet, so her father will not see it. It is not until weeks later that she realizes she has drawn her own face for that of the model and it is filled with fear.

Paige goes to Mercy and talks to Marvela, the other waitress. When a woman walks into the diner with a baby, Paige volunteers to wait on the woman. The woman is prepared to leave when she realizes the diner does not have a highchair, but then Paige volunteers to hold the baby so the woman can eat. Marvel asks Paige why she would



do such a thing after the woman leaves and Paige tells her she is pregnant. Marvella is thrilled, but Paige is not so thrilled. A pregnancy now was not part of Paige's plans, not to mention the fact that Paige is convinced she will not be a good mother. Paige wants to go to school now that Nicholas' school debts are mostly paid off. When Paige returns home, she sits on the porch to wait for Nicholas. When he comes home, he thinks she is still angry until Paige begins to cry. Paige tells him about the baby and Nicholas is thrilled as well as assuring Paige she will be a good mother.

## **Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 7, Paige Analysis**

Nicholas has become what he disliked of his parents, a man who worries more about social expectations than his own wife. This touches on Nicholas' character elements that are established a few chapters back, but expands on them to the point that they have begun to affect Paige. Paige hates the social responsibility that comes with Nicholas' ambition because she does not feel she fits in. Nicholas does not help when he announces to everyone that he met Paige waiting tables when they decide early in their marriage that they would not tell people that fact.

Paige is ill, and she learns that her illness is due to her pregnancy. Paige is not happy to be pregnant. The reasons she gives in this chapter are the ideas that she wants to go to school, that they still do not have a comfortable savings built up, and because she worries about her mothering skills. This foreshadows later events in the book where the tension in the plot is based tightly on Paige's feelings about motherhood and her mothering abilities.

The brief flashback in this chapter when Paige remembers taking an art class in junior high school is significant because Paige has the ability to draw people's secrets in her art. In this drawing, Paige has drawn her own face. This is significant because there is fear on her face. The model Paige draws is pregnant and the fear on her own face seems to reveal to Paige that she will be a poor mother. This adds to Paige's fear now that she is pregnant.



# Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 8, Paige

## Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 8, Paige Summary

Paige remembers back to the first time she fell in love. Paige's first love is a girl named Pricilla Divine. Pricilla moves to Chicago from Texas when Paige is in sixth grade and chooses Paige to be her best friend. The two girls do everything they are not supposed to do together. They walk through the bad side of town, stuff their bras, and cheat on their algebra tests.

One afternoon Pricilla asks Paige if she has ever kissed a boy. Paige lies and says she has, but Pricilla catches her in the lie when Pricilla kisses her. The two girls practice kissing quite often. One day, Pricilla makes Paige hide in Pricilla's brother's closet with her. The two girls watch from the closet as Pricilla's brother has sex with his girlfriend.

Pricilla's aunt sends her an Ouija board when both girls are in the eighth grade. Pricilla asks the board who will be May Queen that year in the annual parade to celebrate the Virgin Mother. Before the board gives its answer, Pricilla asks another question. Pricilla wants to know who will be Paige's date. The board spells out Seth. The next day, it is announced that Paige will be the May Queen, although she had been certain it would be Pricilla. Paige worries that Pricilla will not want to be her friend anymore, but after school, Pricilla takes her to meet a boy who will be Pricilla's date the night of the May Queen parade. They will be going on a double date that night.

After the May Queen parade, Pricilla and Paige tell their parents they are spending the night at each other's houses. The girls then met up with Pricilla's boyfriend and a boy named Jake. They go to Burger King for dinner and then to the drive-in movie. Things quickly become uncomfortable when Pricilla and her boyfriend have sex in the front seat. Jake takes Paige out of the car and apologizes for the situation to her. Jake then kisses her forehead, promising he would never put that kind of pressure on her.

## Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 8, Paige Analysis

This entire chapter is a flashback to important events in Paige's childhood. Paige has a good friend who is obsessed with sex and teaches Paige about it by forcing her to spy on her brother while he is with a girlfriend. However, this is not the most important part about this chapter. This chapter introduces Jake, a character who has been mentioned briefly in the previous chapters, who will most likely prove to be the father of the child Paige aborts shortly before moving to Cambridge. This first meeting between these two



characters is important because it shows the reader Paige's state of mind when she meets this boy, her experience with sex, her young age, and Jake's attitude toward her. Jake appears to be a nice boy, the kind who would not take advantage of such a young girl. This meeting is important as well because it helps the reader understand Paige's reaction to Nicholas at the beginning of their relationship and because it probably influences Paige's reaction to being pregnant again.



# Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 9, Nicholas

## Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 9, Nicholas Summary

Nicholas is flying to Connecticut to retrieve a heart for an eighteen-year-old patient who has been on the waiting list most of his life. Nicholas has been making great strides in his career, doing bypasses without supervision any more and turning heads of the powers-that-be at Mass General. Nicholas is now, unofficially, the associate director of cardiothoracic surgery. As a consequence, he has few friends among his colleagues.

Nicholas and his team collect the heart in less than an hour and are back on the helicopter headed to Mass General. Nicholas falls asleep and dreams about a time when his mother and father are having marital problems. Robert Prescott takes his son to a ballgame, a rare treat that Nicholas always looked forward to. However, a strange woman joins them at the park. There is clearly something romantic between Nicholas' father and this strange woman, a fact that causes Nicholas to see his father in a new light. Nicholas and his father leave the ballpark early, and when they return home, Astrid learns about the woman and becomes angry with Robert. Robert does not come to dinner that night. Nicholas lies awake in bed listening to his parents fight, and, for the first time, feeling as though he is going to have to choose between his parents.

Back at Mass General, Nicholas assists on the transplant. Nicholas is disconcerted for a moment by the sight of the young man laying on the table because Nicholas is used to his patients being elderly. Fogerty tells Nicholas that they are God, or at least fixing what God did wrong. Afterward, Fogerty reminds Nicholas that he is throwing a dinner party at his house that night.

Nicholas has been having nightmares which cause him to lash out at Paige in the middle of the night. In the nightmares, Nicholas is running from something, then suddenly he is running toward something. Paige is always there to console him afterward.

Paige does not want to tell anyone she is pregnant, does not even want to buy maternity clothing. When Nicholas comes home that night he finds Paige sitting on the floor of the kitchen with a glass in one hand and bottle of Drano in the other. Paige performs a test that said the baby would be a boy. Paige is unhappy with the idea of having a boy.

Paige prepares for the dinner party by getting food from Mercy and painting discount plates and glasses with little pictures of various animals to make them look as though they all match, since Paige and Nicholas do not own enough matching dinnerware for the party. When everyone begins to arrive, Nicholas becomes the perfect host and





Paige disappears into the kitchen. Just as Paige is returning, she overhears two of the wives talking about the art work on the china, comparing it to children's crayon drawings or scribbles of a monkey. Paige runs from the room.

Nicholas remembers how his mother mends her marriage shortly after the baseball game. Astrid takes a photograph of her hands and superimposes them over a picture of her husband's hands. She names the photograph 'Don't' and hangs it at the head of the stairs where Robert is sure to see it. Astrid and Robert make up soon after. Since that incident, Nicholas has admired his mother's strength.

Nicholas tells the group that it is pregnancy hormones that has caused Paige's outburst, aware that somehow he has lost control of the party. Alistair now sits at the head of the table in Nicholas' place. Nicholas goes upstairs to coax Paige back down. Paige does not want to return because she feels so out of place, but Nicholas pushes her by telling her how important socializing with these people is for his career. Nicholas also tells her how his father is not rich when he marries his mother and has to work for all he becomes. Nicholas and Paige return, making a joke about her hormones, and the party ends on a successful note. After everyone is gone, however, Paige throws all the plates and glasses into the fireplace.

## **Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 9, Nicholas Analysis**

About five months have passed since the end of the last chapter. Nicholas is making great strides in his career, taking the lead in harvesting hearts and participating in the actual transplant surgery. However, these great strides in his career are taking a toll on Paige. Paige does not like the socializing Nicholas forces her to do in order to further his career. Not only this, but Nicholas is suffering as well because he has no friends his own age with whom he can socialize. Nicholas socializes mostly with the various department chiefs at the hospital, each friendship specially designed to further Nicholas' ambitious career, but most of them much older than Nicholas. This foreshadows future tension within the novel, tension between Nicholas and Paige, as well as social problems for Nicholas.

The memory Nicholas has of his parents' marital discord is important for two reasons. The first is that it changes Nicholas' admiration for his father. Most boys think their father is the greatest man on earth, and they model their own behavior after their fathers. However, during the episode when Robert Prescott brings a strange woman into his son's life and makes it clear there is something romantic going on between them, Nicholas' admiration of his father changes irrevocably. Additionally, when Nicholas' mother uses a photograph to keep her marriage from disintegrating, Nicholas learns the true meaning of strength, and it is his mother who is the strong one, not his father. This foreshadows later events in the novel when Nicholas is forced both to turn to his parents for help and to learn from their experiences in order to repair his own life.



When the wives of Nicholas' supervisors make fun of the drawings that Paige spends most of the day drawing on the dishes, Paige is crushed. Paige's art has always been the most important thing in her life, the only thing she can do really well. This criticism causes Paige to lose some of the joy she once got from her art. It also shows the reader how petty and unkind the wives of Nicholas' colleagues can be. This episode foreshadows a moving away from her art that will deeply affect Paige's life. This episode also reminds the reader that Nicholas' father is not born to wealth like Astrid but has to work at it, much like Paige has to work at it. This, too, is foreshadows an explanation which will come later in the novel.



# Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 10, Paige

## Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 10, Paige Summary

Paige has taken to sending off for travel brochures, as if she wants to run away from the baby growing inside. Paige has a rough time with her pregnancy, especially the third month. As Paige learns about her baby's development at that stage, she can not help remembering the baby she aborted at the same age. Paige had the abortion because she was not ready to be a mother, but she feels she might still not be ready.

Paige goes for a walk and ends up at a cemetery across town. Paige remembers how her mother used to take her to cemeteries when she was a child. Paige's mother, May, wrote obituaries for the *Chicago Tribune* and would often go to visit the gravestones of the people for whom she wrote these obituaries. May wrote the simple obituaries but, at times, is allowed to write the longer ones, which would appear in the paper as a small article. May clips these obituaries from the paper every week and keeps them a scrapbook, which she leaves behind after she runs away.

Paige remembers a time when she asked her mother what happens to people when they die. May tells her she is not sure, but she hopes it is a heaven of their own choosing. As Paige walks through the cemetery in Cambridge, she wonders if her mother is in heaven now looking down on her. Paige used to ask her father why her mother left and all he would tell her is because she wanted to. Paige wonders now if her mother left to be with a lover or if she were searching for someone she had lost.

Paige remembers when she was a small child and it is almost Mother's Day. Paige asks her father to make an alarm system for the juice pitcher to let everyone know when it is empty. Nothing upset May more than to find an empty juice pitcher in the refrigerator, so Paige thinks the alarm will make May happy. However, on Mother's Day, with the alarm packaged and a nice dinner prepared, May does not show. Paige and her father wait for hours before finally giving up. Late that night, Paige hears her mother come home and argue with her father before opening the present. May apologizes.

Later that day, Paige calls her father from a payphone. Paige tells him she is having a baby that is due around Mother's Day, something she has avoided telling him before. Patrick is happy, though Paige thinks she can hear the echo of her first child in his voice.

Paige walks home. On the way, she falls into a neighbor's mailbox that is full of mail. For a reason she cannot explain, Paige steals a letter from the box. At home she reads the letter, which appears to be a love note to a man. Paige hides the letter in a box of Maxipads, wondering who these people are and what they look like. Nicholas finds her



there. Paige sits with Nicholas while he showers, and then they fall into a romantic embrace on the bed. While making love, Paige experiences some pain and asks Nicholas to stop. Nicholas leaves the room and Paige fantasizes about traveling to places far away.

## **Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 10, Paige Analysis**

Paige is suffering delayed grief over the baby she aborted seven years ago. Paige feels a connection with this other baby while she progresses with her pregnancy hearing shame in her father's voice that may or may not be real. This chapter begins to treat with the theme of parenthood as Paige inches closer to the time when she herself will be a mother. Parenthood is a complicated occupation, and Paige is attempting to avoid it by fantasizing about running away to an exotic locale. Not only this, but by telling Nicholas she is uncomfortable in their sexual relations, she is pushing him away, foreshadowing a time when she will push him completely away.

Paige's memories of her mother taking her to various cemeteries are significant because it equates motherhood with death. Paige is, in an unconscious way, equating her impending motherhood with the death of her individuality. This theme of individuality is further developed as the novel progresses. This chapter also reveals Paige's thoughts about what might have happened to her mother. Paige is curious about her mother now as an adult, which foreshadows Paige searching for her mother to experience her mother as an adult child.

When Paige asks for an alarm in the juice container, she is Paigwants fix something but tries make her stay. This is significant because it not only touches on the theme of parent-child relationships, but it also shows how Paige feels about May's leaving and how her mother's abandonment continues to make Paige feel misplaced responsibility for her mother's actions. This, too, foreshadows a time when Paige will interpret her inability to make her mother stay as proof of Paige's incompetence as a mother, which will prompt a decision which will change everyone's lives.



# Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 11, Paige

## Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 11, Paige Summary

Jake and Paige's relationship began on a friendship basis despite that first kiss. Paige hangs out with Jake so much that he starts to become irritated by her presence. Jake does not want Paige around at first, but slowly comes to enjoy her constant presence. Jake would tell Paige about his dates, discussing them with her as if she were one of the guys, a fact that both makes Paige happy and frustrates her because Paige is in love with Jake. Jake works at his father's garage and Paige spends hours watching him, learning more than she ever wants to know about cars.

When Paige turns seventeen, things begin to change between her and Jake. On the night of her junior prom, Paige is at Jake's house, since she does not have a date to the dance. Jake does not know it is her prom night and he has a date. Jake wants Paige to help him get ready for the date. Paige grows upset and runs out the door. Jake comes to Paige's house after he realizes why she is so upset. Jake admonishes her for not telling him about the dance and then he kisses her.

The next day, Jake and Paige do not know what to do about the passion that developed between them. Jake tells Paige he cannot sleep or eat, that he thinks about her all the time, and that he wants to be with her all the time. Paige tells him he is crazy and that they should not see each other any more because it is no longer safe. Paige's father is Catholic, as is Jake's family. Pre-marital sex is a sin in that religion, a thought that weighs heavily on both Paige and Jake.

However, that night Paige asks her father about his marriage. Patrick tells her that he was once engaged to the daughter of his parents' best friends. A month before the wedding, Patrick realized he could not marry the girl because he did not love her. After telling his fiancy and his family, Patrick went to a local cafe, where he met May. It was love at first sight and the wedding took place three months later. Many of the gifts May and Patrick received at their wedding were originally intended for Patrick and his first fiancy.

Patrick warned Paige that Jake was not the only man in the world and that he might not be her one and only. Paige became restless with this thought and slipped out of the house, well aware that her father was watching her from his bedroom window. There was a storm that night, but Paige managed to make it to Jake's garage. Paige and Jake made love for the first time in the back of a Jeep Cherokee.



## Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 11, Paige Analysis

The relationship between Paige and Jake in this flashback is a very exciting one because it goes against everything that these two have been taught. Paige has loved Jake since she was fourteen, loved him enough that she would listen to his stories of the other girls in his life without letting him know how much it hurt. Finally when their passions are kindled, neither is strong enough to let it pass them by. This is important to the overall plot of the novel because it not only introduces Paige's deep love for this other man, but it also shows the reader how difficult the decision to have an abortion must have been. This chapter further illustrates the character elements that guide Paige's choices in life and helps the reader to predict choices she will make later in the novel.

The story of Patrick and May's marriage is important because it touches on the theme of individualism as it relates to May. Thus far, the reader and Paige both have no idea why May left her family, except for a sense that she was not happy. This story of how from the beginning of her marriage, she no longer had an identity that was fully her own, from the fact that most of the wedding presents were meant for another woman, must have had a profound impact on May. Perhaps May's loss of identity continued into her marriage and affected her happiness. Not only this, but this story parallels Paige's love life, if one takes into account that though Paige was in love with Jake, just a few weeks after having aborted his child, she was engaged to Nicholas. Not only does this foreshadow a future explanation as to what happened to Jake, but it also helps the reader to perhaps understand Paige's actions when she decides she can no longer be a wife and mother.



# **Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 12, Nicholas**

## **Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 12, Nicholas Summary**

Nicholas arrives at Lamaze class late, the only class he has managed to attend for Paige's entire pregnancy. Nicholas joins Paige on the floor, remembering how he had come home the night before and found her in tears for no reason. The class instructor calls Nicholas to the front of the class and has him put on a sympathy belly. Nicholas wears it well at first, making a joke out of it for the entertainment of the other fathers, but struggles when the instructor has him bend down to pick up a pen. Nicholas falls, eliciting laughter from everyone in the room. Paige comes to his side and helps him out of the sympathy belly, then excusing them from the class. At the car, Paige explains that she did not like seeing him that way; however, Paige looks through Nicholas when she says it.

## **Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 12, Nicholas Analysis**

This chapter is important on two levels. First, Nicholas clearly does not make his wife and child a priority in his life, since he has not made the time to attend the Lamaze classes with his wife. Nicholas' career is more important to him, and this whole class seems to be a joke to him. This foreshadows a chapter later in the novel when Nicholas is forced to take care of the baby on his own. Second, this chapter suggests that not only is Paige having a hard time with this pregnancy physically, but her emotions are also raw. Paige does not like seeing Nicholas dressed as a pregnant woman, nor as the laughing stock of the entire class. However, the last line of the chapter, in which Nicholas observes that Paige seems to be looking right through him, begs the question, who is Paige is thinking of? Perhaps Jake? This foreshadows future tension in the novel as the reader wonders if Paige will ever see Jake again and what will happen when Nicholas finds out about Jake.



# Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 13, Paige

## Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 13, Paige Summary

Paige goes into labor in the middle of the night while a class four hurricane is brewing outside. Paige wakes Nicholas when her water breaks, but he tells her to go back to bed because it is a month early. Paige begins having contractions, one right after the other and finally convinces Nicholas to take her to the hospital. While Nicholas argues with the charge nurse about the room Paige is put in, Paige fights the urge to push. Once in the room, the labor nurse checks Paige, declares her ready to push, then leaves to find the doctor. Nicholas tries to console Paige, but she tells him not to touch her.

The doctor comes in. When the head appears, the doctor asks if Paige wants to touch it, but she demands that they just take the baby out of her. Paige pushes for some time, but the baby fails to make its way down the birth canal. Paige hears the doctor order a special care team, but then the baby decides to make an entrance. Nicholas comments on how fast the labor took, and Paige finds herself wondering if he knew this was not her first pregnancy. Then, when the doctor asks if they had picked a name yet, Paige tells everyone her baby will be called Max, after her mother May.

Nicholas leaves Paige and Max alone, so he can do his rounds at Mass General. Paige holds her baby and stares into his face, expecting to feel a rush of maternal feelings, but not experiencing anything. A nurse comes in and teaches Paige how to nurse her baby, explaining that a newborn does not automatically know how to nurse. The pain Paige experiences surprises her and brings tears to her eyes.

Paige sends the baby to the nursery in the middle of the night, so she can sleep. In the middle of a dream about her mother, the nurse brings the baby for his midnight feeding. After the baby goes back to the nursery, Paige again dreams of her mother, about a time when she was young and her father gave her mother a plant for her mother's birthday. After her father leaves, Paige's mother complains about the gift because she is not good at taking care of things. May is convinced the plant will die within two weeks. Then May pulls a hidden pack of cigarettes down and begins to smoke over the sink. Max is brought back then, again interrupting Paige's dreams.





## Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 13, Paige Analysis

Paige gives birth to a boy and is disappointed when maternal feelings do not suddenly overwhelm her. Paige does not know what to do with her new baby, and she begins to have dreams about her mother telling her that the mother was not good at taking care of things. This seems significant for Paige to remember this bit of dialogue between herself and her mother at this particular moment when now Paige is the sole provider for this tiny, new human being. This touches on the theme of parenthood in both the idea that now Paige is a mother, and Paige remembers her mother. Paige is afraid she cannot take care of her child. Paige's mother expressed the same thought to her only daughter many years ago, shortly before disappearing from Paige's life. The two are probably related. In any case, this foreshadows more tension in the plot of the novel as Paige struggles to care for her child and begins to think about her mother more than ever.

It is also important to note that here again Nicholas shows only a passing interest in this new part of his family, his son. Nicholas is happy that Paige has managed to give birth in a short length of time, so he can still make it to Mass General to visit his patients. This may seem a little callous, but it may also just be the fact that Nicholas is a doctor first. Like the chapter before, this callous attitude foreshadows a later twist in the plot in which Nicholas is left to care for the baby on his own.



# Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 14, Paige

## Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 14, Paige Summary

Late in her senior year of high school, Paige became ill with the flu. Paige was down with the flu for five days before she finally realized it was not the flu. She was pregnant. Paige went to school as if she was all better, but neither she nor her father could believe it. When Paige told Jake, he offered to marry her, but Paige did not want to marry because of being, thinking it would be an unfair burden for that child. Besides, Paige was not ready to be a mother. Paige decided she wanted an abortion and Jake agreed.

Jake arranged to take her to a clinic a hundred miles from Chicago, so there would be no chance of anyone they knew finding out, especially their parents. Paige woke early on the morning of her appointment and went to confession, but she could not tell the priest what she was about to do. Then she and Jake drove to the clinic, finding it surrounded by protestors.

Paige and Jake were told they would have to wait more than an hour, so they left the clinic to take a walk and waste some time. The protestors thought they had changed their minds, so they cheered when they came outside. Paige and Jake found a small park where they played for a short time. Then they returned to the clinic where the operation was performed. When Jake came to Paige afterward, she thought she saw an image of their baby floating above his shoulder.

Jake took her home and carried her up to her bedroom and stayed with her to be sure she was okay. Jake promised to see her the next day, but Paige knew instinctively that this would be the end of their relationship because could not look at each other without seeing the baby they had aborted. A week later, Paige found a note Jake had slipped into her backpack before she took a bus to Cambridge. The note was a copy of a poem that Jake had on a sampler above his bed, an Irish Blessing. Paige did not know when Jake had put the paper in there, but she knew that he also realized their relationship could not continue any longer.

## Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 14, Paige Analysis

This flashback continues the story of Jake and Paige's relationship. In this chapter Paige learns she is pregnant and makes the decision to have an abortion. Paige is not ready to be a mother in this chapter, a fact that she attributes to her young age. However, Paige is not ready to be a mother seven years later either, because her



mother ran away; thus, she feels this has left her incompetent to be a mother. Touching on the theme of parenthood, Paige also suggests that she cannot be a mother now because she cannot base a marriage on a child. While this may be mature thinking, it is not Paige's true reason and perhaps she knew it at the time.

The relationship between Paige and Jake ends shortly after the abortion due to the fact that both of them feel that what they did is murder. This foreshadows events that have already taken place, Paige's running away and meeting Nicholas. It also suggests that there are feelings left unspoken between Paige and Jake. The foreshadowing here makes the reader wonder what will happen if Paige ever sees Jake again. Will they get back together and leave Nicholas in the dark? Or will things have changed?



# Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 15, Nicholas

## Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 15, Nicholas Summary

Nicholas does not understand what is happening to his wife. Paige has become a ghost and she does not seem to know what to do with Max. Nicholas is afraid Paige is suffering from postpartum depression. Nicholas comes home from work one night and finds Paige still in her nightgown. When Nicholas offers to watch the baby so Paige can sleep, Paige laughs when he asks her what to do for the baby.

Fogerty called Nicholas into his office two days after Max's birth and told him to not to allow his son to cause him to be compromised. Nicholas believed Fogerty was simply being pompous, but that night, when Max would not stop crying in the middle of the night, he understood Fogerty's intention. Left alone with Max, Nicholas attempts to keep the baby happy by bouncing him up and down, but Max only stays quiet for a short time. Nicholas changes his diaper and has a hard time buttoning the baby's little outfit. The baby settles down for a short time but begins to fuss again. Nicholas sings to him, pacing around the room, bouncing the baby again and turns on the T.V. Nothing seems to calm the child, and Nicholas is becoming irritated by the constant crying. Finally Paige comes downstairs to feed the baby. Nicholas showers, then finds Paige in the nursery feeding the baby. Nicholas lies and says the hospital has called him in. Nicholas spends the night in the on-call room, although he is not on-call.

## Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 15, Nicholas Analysis

The theme of parenthood comes into focus again in this chapter, first with Paige and then Nicholas. Nicholas assumed, as Paige did, that motherhood would be a natural thing, that Paige would simply know what to do when the baby arrived. However, not only does Paige not know what to do, she is clearly overwhelmed by the whole ordeal. Nicholas does not know what to do to help Paige. Nicholas also does not know how to care for a baby any more than Paige does. Nicholas cannot spend more than an hour with the baby before he is irritated by the baby's cries. Not only has this, but Nicholas feels his career is more important than his son and becomes irate when the baby keeps him awake at night. This chapter once again shows the reader Nicholas' priorities when it comes to his family and also shows his lack of concern for the obvious trouble his wife is having. This is important because it foreshadows a time later in the novel in which Paige makes a decision that will affect Nicholas, his career and his son.



# Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 16, Paige

## Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 16, Paige Summary

Paige wakes in a pool of her own milk, so Paige quickly changes and then feeds Max. Today she is in a hurry because she is taking Max out on his first outing. Today is Paige's six-week visit at the OB/GYN. Paige has tried to take the baby out before, but loading up the baby and all his supplies is a difficult process. Paige manages today, though she is not sure if she should put a sweater or a sweatshirt on the baby, so she put both on him.

The day before a woman from Le Leche came to check on Paige and the baby. The woman wanted to know how the nursing was going and Paige said it was fine, but Paige wanted to give the baby a bottle a day, just in case something happened to Paige. The woman was outraged, saying a bottle now would only confuse the baby. Before the woman left, Paige asked her when her life would go back to normal. The woman suggested it never would.

Max falls asleep on the way to the doctor's. Paige does everything she can to keep him asleep when they arrived, grateful that he did. In the office, Paige is greeted by all her ex-coworkers, all excited to see the baby for the first time. While waiting for her turn, Paige watches all the pregnant women stare at Max, and she wants to warn them that it's not as fun as it seems but cannot seem to express herself.

When the doctor finally calls her back, the baby sleeps all through Paige's exam. Paige does not do so well, however. Paige bursts into tears and asks the doctor when life will be easier, when she will know how to be a mother. The doctor tells her it will take her whole life to know.

When Paige leaves, she manages to get the baby into the car without waking him. However, the parking lot attendant turns on loud music and frightens the baby awake. Paige stops the car in the middle of the parking lot and nurses the baby, bursting into tears again when the attendant yells at her for blocking the drive lane.

That night at home, Paige puts the baby down for a nap, then takes a long bath. Paige plans a seduction for Nicholas, since the doctor has said they can resume their love making; it has been since Paige was six months pregnant that they made love last. However, Nicholas is tired when he comes home and puts her off. Paige follows him into the bathroom and attempts to seduce him, but when Paige's milk sprays his chest, Nicholas rebuffs her, saying he is not ready yet. Paige sits alone in the nursery and waits for Max to wake.



## Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 16, Paige Analysis

Paige's uncertainties as a mother come out loud and clear in this chapter as she asks two professionals when she will get her life back and when she will know how to take care of her child and they both tell her it will take a lifetime. Paige is crying out for help in this chapter, first to the professionals and then to her husband, but no one seems to hear her. This foreshadows a time when the pressure will become so great, Paige will have to do something, but what that might be is still unclear at this point.

Nicholas' rebuffing his wife is not helpful at this point, especially since he makes it clear that her new, softer body does not turn him on. This foreshadows the future of their marriage. How do you keep a marriage alive when one partner is no longer attracted to the other? This also touches on the theme of parenthood. Nicholas' career is his first priority and now Max has to be Paige's first priority. However, what about Paige's needs? Who will take care of those? Again, this foreshadows later events in the novel when these needs refuse to be put off any longer.



# Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 17, Nicholas

## Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 17, Nicholas Summary

As tension rises between Paige and Nicholas due to Nicholas' refusal to be more helpful with the baby, Nicholas decides it is time to tell his parents they have a grandson. Nicholas has not spoken to his father since the night his father told Nicholas he could not support his decision to marry Paige, but Nicholas has spoken to his mother over the phone at Christmas and birthdays ever since Astrid sent Nicholas a card in the early years of his marriage to Paige. Nicholas has not seen Astrid, nor has he told Paige about these phone calls.

Nicholas does not understand the changes that have occurred in Paige since the baby's birth and is beginning to think that perhaps his parents had been right about her the whole time. The baby does not seem that difficult to deal with now that he is getting a little older and not crying so much. Max even smiled for Nicholas for the first time.

Paige has been pushing Nicholas to let his parents know about Max, so now he is at his parents' house with pictures of the baby in his pocket. Nicholas let himself into the house so he does not have to face one of the servants and finds his mother in her darkroom. Astrid is developing pictures she took in the Moab and having trouble with the color. Nicholas walks in and watches her for a moment, shocking her with his presence. Nicholas allows his mother to look him over before he announces that she has a grandchild. Astrid tries to keep Nicholas from leaving, she wants to talk. Nicholas hands her the pictures and storms from the house, not ready to forgive her yet.

At home, Nicholas tells Paige that he went to see his mother. Paige is glad because she wants to get to know her in-laws now that enough time has passed to heal old wounds. Nicholas does not think that will happen any time soon. However, Nicholas has discovered some parental pride he did not know he possessed.

## Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 17, Nicholas Analysis

The rising tension between Nicholas and Paige is important because it shows how isolated and alone Paige feels and how distant Nicholas has kept himself from his wife and child. Nicholas is beginning to find that Max is fun to be around and someone he can be proud of, but he is still uncomfortable with the idea of caring for the baby and spending extra time with him. Paige needs Nicholas' help, but Nicholas is still not hearing her pleas, foreshadowing a moment when Paige will stop asking for his help.



Nicholas' going to his mother is significant because, not only does it allow the grandmother to know about her grandchild and pull the characters of Astrid and Robert back into the story, but it also foreshadows a time later in the novel when Nicholas will have to make the choice to either forgive his parents their over protectiveness or to shut them out of his life completely. The fact that Nicholas has been speaking to his mother in secrecy demonstrates two things. First, Nicholas is not opposed to keeping secrets from Paige, although he would expect her to tell him everything. Second, it shows that Nicholas is closer to his mother than implied by their formal break and is closer to forgiveness than the reader might have thought before this revelation.





# Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 18, Paige

## Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 18, Paige Summary

Paige has been reading an article about post-partum depression and the fact that some women who suffer from this illness have been known to kill their babies. The article suggests that a new mother should write down all the things they can do well in order to fight the oppressive depression that sometimes comes with new motherhood. Paige writes out a list that revolves around her skills in dealing with Max, including the ability to dress him, to make his formula, and to change his diaper.

The doorbell rings and it is the UPS man. Ever since Astrid found out about the baby, the UPS man has been coming almost daily. The package today contains a stool with puzzle pieces that spell out Max's name. There is also a silk scarf for Paige with a note saying not only the baby deserves a gift. Paige immediately puts the scarf on, thrilled with the thought behind the gift.

Paige takes Max into the kitchen and heats a bottle. Paige has decided that one bottle a day will not hurt him. Paige settles the baby on the couch, laying him on a pillow, so that he will not smell her milk and fight the bottle. Then Paige turns on Oprah. The two of them sit there for a short time watching the show, with Paige chatting away to Max about each of the guests, who were all women who had had babies, although they claimed they did not know they were pregnant. Paige finds the whole idea ridiculous.

When Max raises his chin and the bib falls to the floor behind Paige. Paige turns for a second to retrieve it. When she turns back around, Paige finds Max on the floor screaming. Paige picks him up immediately and attempts to soothe his cries against her shoulder. After a minute, Paige lifts her head to see if the baby has settled down and discovers that he is bleeding. When Paige cannot stop the bleeding right away, she takes the baby into the kitchen and calls the pediatrician's office. The nurse talks Paige through the procedure to stop the bleeding. Paige assures the woman that she never meant to hurt her baby and the nurse is flippant in her response, saying most mothers do not.

Paige takes the baby upstairs to clean him up, bouncing him and turning him to the mirror--all the things that normally cheer the baby, but nothing works. Then, suddenly, the exhausted baby falls asleep in her arms. Paige gently lays him down and cleans his nose as best as she can, noticing for the first time dark circles under his little eyes. Paige is terrified that she is like those women in the article she read, that she hurt her baby intentionally.



When the baby wakes, Paige gives him a bath and soaks his outfit in the bathroom sink. Paige is in such a good mood the rest of the afternoon, but she becomes embroiled in guilt. When Nicholas comes home, the first thing he does is complain about Paige not going to the cleaners that day. Paige suggests that Nicholas watch the baby so she can run her errands, but Nicholas only wants a bath and some time to relax. Then, when Nicholas goes upstairs for a shower and finds the baby's bloodstained outfit, he rushes downstairs to demand an explanation. Paige tells him what happened, blaming herself for the entire episode.

Nicholas takes the baby and suggests that perhaps Paige should go run her errands while he takes care of Max. Nicholas' implied accusations push Paige out of the house and fill her with more guilt. Paige is so upset that when she goes to the ATM to withdraw a hundred dollars, she accidentally withdraws one thousand dollars. Instead of putting back the extra money, Paige returns to her car and decides to do so later. As Paige drives toward the grocery store, and then past it, she decides she needs a break. Paige decides to take a small vacation away from her family. She tosses Nicholas' shirts out the window and feels freer than she has in months.

## **Part 1, Conception 1985-1993, Chapter 18, Paige Analysis**

The term post partum depression has made an appearance in this novel in an earlier chapter when Nicholas considered it might be possible that his wife is suffering from the disorder. Now Paige reads an article about the same condition and the fact that some women have killed their babies while dealing with the disorder. This puts Paige in a frame of mind that makes it easy for her to assume guilt over an accident that was just an accident. When Max falls from the couch, Paige believes that she injured her baby intentionally. While this might be an understandable reaction, it is not true. However, this reaction was foreshadowed earlier by Paige's struggles with parenthood.

The theme of parenthood comes into play here as well. Parenthood is a complicated occupation. Paige is alone with her child every day without the advice of a woman who has been in Paige's position before and can give her some reassuring advice. The only advice Paige has been given throughout this ordeal has been tongue in cheek that only makes the ordeal more difficult for her. Paige is convinced that she is a terrible mother, not only because she does not automatically know how to care for her child, but because she never had a maternal role model in her own life. This fact also foreshadows the next section of the novel in which Paige goes looking for reasons for her poor mothering skills and her need to run from these situations.

Nicholas' reaction to Max's accident also touches on the theme of parenthood. Although Nicholas can not be bothered to be home with his child on a more regular schedule, he still clearly loves the child and automatically blames his wife when the child is injured. Although this may be an expected reaction, it is also unfair, as has Nicholas' reaction been to all of Paige's struggles since the baby was born, and is the catalysis that sends Paige running away. It is not Nicholas' fault that Paige has run away, but if he had been



more supportive of her, instead of absent and accusatory, Paige might not have made the decision she did. However, this also foreshadows the next section of the novel in which Nicholas will have to make a choice between fatherhood and his career.



## Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 19, Paige

### Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 19, Paige Summary

Paige stops at Ruby's House of Fate in Pennsylvania, the home of a fortune-teller. Ruby tells Paige that her future is in her past. Paige thinks this means she is going to Chicago. Ruby agrees, telling her she will find her mother and that bad blood skips a generation. Finally, Ruby tells Paige that she needs to call Nicholas.

Nicholas is not happy to hear from Paige when he learns she is in Pennsylvania and not returning home that night. Paige assures him she will return, just not any time soon. Nicholas becomes angry and tells her not to bother to return home.

Paige arrives in Chicago early the next morning. Knowing her father will not be home until that evening, Paige stops at the art store where she once bought all her supplies and buys paper, charcoal, and conte sticks. The owner of the store recognizes her and allows her to take the supplies in exchange for a portrait of him. Paige then drives to the lake and draws pictures of both Nicholas and Max, but she cannot get their eyes just right. Paige is afraid that Nicholas will not allow her to return home when her journey is over.

Paige remembers when her father took her to Grand Cayman for an amateur inventor's conference. After the conference was over, Patrick took Paige swimming in the ocean. Paige, twelve at the time, saw a sea turtle and decided to follow him and see where he was going. Paige swam further than she had intended, and when she returned to where her father was waiting, he was angry that she had wandered so far away. Paige draws the turtle now as she remembers it, and, when she is done, she discovers she has drawn a picture of her mother in each of the tiny polygons on the turtle's shell.

Late that evening, Paige drives down her own block, knowing she will not be here long. Paige walks up the path to her own childhood home and knocks on the door. When Paige's father opens it, he initially mistakes her for May, his long-lost wife. A moment later, he realizes who she is and tells her she looks just like her mother.

### Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 19, Paige Analysis

Paige learns from a psychic that her future lies in finding her mother, a fact that most of the readers have probably already guessed. Paige calls Nicholas to tell him she will not be coming home that night and finds him at first concerned and then very angry. This, too, is probably to be expected and part of Nicholas' character elements. Now the



question with the reader is if Nicholas will allow Paige to return to him and the baby, a question that even Paige can not answer. However, it is important to note here that Paige has every intention of returning to her family, unlike her mother who never returned.

Paige attempts to draw her family and cannot. This is symbolic of her physical and emotional separation from her family. Paige has returned to her art for the first time since the ill-fated dinner party, and this is important to note because it will prove to be Paige's way of working through her emotional turmoil. Paige's father reacts to her presence at his door with the mistaken thought that she is his long-lost wife. This too is symbolism. This symbolizes another loss, another moment of separation, and a relationship that is beginning to come full circle.



## **Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 20, Nicholas**

### **Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 20, Nicholas Summary**

Nicholas is angry at Paige, mainly because he has no one to watch the baby in the morning while he performs a bypass surgery. Nicholas calls the bank to cancel Paige's credit cards and freeze his accounts before he calls his mentor, Alistair Forgerty. Forgerty is unsympathetic. Nicholas searches Paige's phone book for a babysitter or a friend who would be willing to help, but finds that his wife has no babysitter or friends.

Max begins to fuss. Nicholas takes him upstairs to change his diaper and immediately gets christened by the baby's urine. Nicholas curses, imagining Paige in the baby's place. Nicholas takes Max downstairs and puts him in the highchair before he begins to search for the formula and baby bottles. It takes Nicholas a few minutes to work the whole thing out, and, when he does, he turns to the highchair and discovers the baby gone. Nicholas searches all the downstairs rooms before he finds the baby has slid under the tray on the highchair. Again Nicholas curses Paige for having the highchair in the kitchen if the baby is too small to use it.

Nicholas feeds his son in the dark nursery until the baby falls asleep. Nicholas then moves the baby to the crib, only to have him wake the instant his body touches the mattress. Nicholas recalls finding Paige in their bed with the sleeping baby and urging her to move him into the nursery so as to not begin a bad habit. Now he understands her silent movements throughout the house attempting to not wake the baby.

Nicholas remembers a time when he was a child and a bully had bloodied his lip. Over the next few weeks, Nicholas had ignored the bully until everyone in the school yard did the same. This was what he planned to do to Paige. Nicholas would not allow himself to be inconvenienced or to let Paige see him cry or complain. Nicholas sleeps with the baby in bed with him and dreams of Paige.

### **Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 20, Nicholas Analysis**

Nicholas is angry at Paige because having the baby will inconvenience him. Nicholas does not admit to himself that he is hurt by Paige's abandonment and promises himself he will not allow Paige to see him hurt. Not showing his feelings is typical of Nicholas' character and foreshadows a time when this information might be important to Paige. Nicholas struggles with the baby, struggling with all the same things Paige struggled with, but Nicholas has the advantage of having seen Paige care for Max. Now Nicholas

is in Paige's position and he is not thrilled with the idea, let alone doing a better job of it. Although Nicholas has not been an active participant in his child's life, he is now forced into the situation, like it or not. This foreshadows not only Nicholas' struggles at being a single dad, but also Nicholas' forced commitment to fatherhood.



## Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 21, Paige

### Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 21, Paige Summary

Patrick gives Paige some of her mother's clothes, which he had saved all these years. After changing, Paige finds her father in the kitchen with a wedding photo of him and May. Paige asks about her mother's other things, but May took all her important papers with her. Paige then asks about their marriage and Patrick says that he thought they were very happy and had no clue that May was going to leave. Paige asks why he never went looking for her mother. Patrick tells her a story of how when he was a child his father would cut the fields for haying, moving in tighter and tighter circles until there was one large patch left in the center. Patrick and his sister would run into that center and scare out the rabbits that had gathered there. Once, Patrick caught one and wanted to keep it but his father told him it would die if kept in a cage. Patrick kept it anyway, and the rabbit died the next day. Patrick's father told him some things are meant to stay free. This was why Patrick never tried to find May.

Patrick tells Paige that May was born in Mississippi. After her father died, her mother moved the family to Wisconsin. At eighteen, May went to work for a local department store at the make-up counter. May wanted to move to California, so every once in a while she would take all her savings and board a bus, but she always came back before she had made it all the way to California. Once she made it to Chicago and that was when she met Patrick. They were married three months later. May wanted to write television scripts, so she started writing obituaries for the Tribune because she had to start somewhere. Patrick said May was a good mother; although, she always treated Paige as if she were an adult in a child's body. When May left, Patrick was caught completely by surprise. Patrick thought for a while she had gone on to California, and he would buy the Los Angeles papers looking for her name. Patrick never did find May's name. Finally, Patrick began to believe that May had lied to him the whole six years they were married, that she had been planning to leave all that time. Patrick thought if she ever did come back, he would not welcome her. Patrick had lost faith in love.

That night Patrick came into Paige's room and told her the story of Dechtire and Cuchulainn, as he did when she was a child. It is an old Irish tale that centers on a woman, Dechtire, who was married to a Ulster chieftain. Dechtire was so beautiful that even the gods took notice of her. Dechtire was taken to the heavens and became the lover of Lugh, the sun god. Dechtire and Lugh had a son, Cuchulainn, whom Dechtire eventually took back home with her. Dechtire's husband took her back because he still loved her and raised Cuchulainn as his own. When Patrick finishes the story, he tells Paige he missed her, then leaves her to sleep in her old childhood bed.





Paige leaves her father's house the next morning with a picture of her mother and all the information Patrick could give her. Paige wants to find a private detective to help her, but she does not know where to start looking. Paige drives to the church her family attended when she was child. Paige thinks about how she gave up on her religion when she found out she was pregnant with Jake's child, but she felt that God had not given up on her; He was still pulling the strings. Paige kneels to pray in front of the statue of the Virgin Mary and thinks about all she does not know about being a mother.

Paige leaves the church when a priest she knows walks towards her. In her car, Paige decides she must go and see Jake before she can even think about leaving town. Paige can see him before she pulls up to the pumps, talking to another customer. Paige pulls in and smiles brightly at Jake. Jake is surprised to see her, telling her his father died and the garage is now his.

Jake fills Paige's car with gas and then takes one of her credit cards for payment. A moment later, Jake comes back to tell her the credit card is not valid. Paige gives him another and then follows him into the office. When the second does not work, Paige calls the credit card agency and learns that Nicholas cancelled her credit cards. Paige begins to cry when she realizes she has very little money and a husband who seems serious about cutting her out of his life.

Jake consoles Paige as she tells him everything, including about Nicholas and Max, and Max's nosebleed. While Paige talks, a woman walks into the garage with Jake's lunch. This is Jake's wife, Ellen, a dark beauty who clearly knows all about Paige when the introductions are made. Ellen politely excuses herself, so Paige and Jake can continue their discussion. Paige tells Jake that she has run away--again.

## **Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 21, Paige Analysis**

Paige learns her mother's history at the beginning of this chapter, a history that is sketchy and probably not what she expected. Paige's mother was a restless person who had never been happy being in one place long and who had attempted to run away many times in her life, physically and figuratively. This begins to introduce more significant character elements of May, giving Paige a better picture of the woman she has decided she must find in order to be comfortable in her own life. This touches on the theme of individuality for both Paige and May. May is a woman who wants to be her own person, but she created the person she wants to be rather than discovering the person she really is. May wants to be glamorous, to be a Hollywood personality and wants these things so much that she dressed up and pretended to be a person she was not in order to get a job. Paige, on the other hand, still does not know who she is because she never had a mother to tell her who she was. Paige thinks her own identity is wrapped up in her mother's, a woman she does not know. Paige thinks that if she finds her mother, she will find herself. This foreshadows a meeting between the two women and a possible moment of clarification for Paige.



Paige's meeting with Jake has been foreshadowed in earlier chapters. It seems Paige needs to meet with her first love again in order to clarify her feelings for Nicholas, which is perhaps part of the reason she came to Chicago in the first place. Jake seems to be the same kind of guy she knew before because when Paige falls apart, Jake is there to pick her up just as he always did before. However, Jake is married now. This foreshadows a later chapter in which Paige and Jake are forced to confront their unfinished feelings for each other and decide the destinies of two other people.



## **Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 22, Nicholas**

### **Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 22, Nicholas Summary**

Nicholas takes Max to work with him the next morning, assuming there is an employee day care where he can leave him. However, Nicholas learns that the employee day care is not on the Mass General campus but miles away and does not open until long after Nicholas is due in surgery. Nicholas makes a deal with a nurse in orthopedics to take care of the baby while he is in surgery.

Max kept Nicholas up half the night; therefore, he is so exhausted that he misses the door to the operating suite, already more than twenty minutes later for the procedure. Fogerty is in the suite when Nicholas enters and makes a snide remark regarding Nicholas' new single-father status. The moment Nicholas finishes his surgery, he goes to pick up Max. However, the nurse he left his son with went off duty so left the baby with someone in the volunteer lounge. Nicholas does not even know where the volunteer lounge is. A young girl takes him to the appropriate place, but there is no one in there. Finally Nicholas finds a woman who saw Max with a young volunteer and tells him they are in the cafeteria.

Nicholas rushes to the cafeteria, by this time frantic to find his son. A teenage girl is feeding Max an ice cream bar. When Nicholas confronts her, demanding to know what she is doing, the girl chastises him for only packing one bottle. The girl had to take Max to the milk bank, a place where nursing women donate milk for premies, in order to feed him. When Nicholas realizes this teenager knows more about babies than he does, Nicholas offers to pay her to sit for Max until Paige comes back. The girl agrees, for five dollars an hour.

### **Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 22, Nicholas Analysis**

This chapter fulfills foreshadowing from previous chapters, in that it shows the reader how unprepared Nicholas is to care for his own child. Nicholas does not even know if his hospital has day care and where it is located. On top of this, Nicholas leaves his child with a complete stranger, who, in turn, leaves the baby with a teenaged volunteer. This volunteer knows more about babies than Nicholas, symbolizing not only Nicholas' isolated upbringing but his oblivion toward his wife and child ever since Max's birth. This chapter foreshadows a turn in the plot in which Nicholas must learn to deal with his child or find himself losing everything he has worked so hard for in his career.



## Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 23, Paige

### Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 23, Paige Summary

Jake takes Paige to a friend of his, Eddie Savoy, who is a private detective. Jake and Eddie met during the Persian Gulf War, a fact that surprises Paige. Eddie tells Paige that anyone can be found. It is all in the numbers. Everyone has a driver's license and a social security card. If the missing person is not using their own name and numbers, they are using someone else's. Everyone can be traced through public records. Eddie tells Paige about a woman he once located. The woman's family had a history of diabetes. Once Eddie traced the woman to Maine, he found her in a hospital due to the fact that she was the same age as her family members when they succumbed to the disease. Eddie promises to do all he can to find Paige's mother. However, the fee will be fifty dollars a day, a fee Paige is not sure she can afford.

Paige calls Nicholas from a pay phone on the way back to Chicago. Nicholas demands an apology before Paige can get two words out. When Paige tells him she is going to find her mother, Nicholas has no comment. It is not until Paige asks after Max that Nicholas becomes irate. Nicholas yells at her for putting his patients at risk by forcing him to care for Max and then tells her he never wants to see her again.

Jake tells Paige that he is going to take a well deserved vacation while they wait for Eddie to find her mother so that they can spend some time together. The next morning, Paige goes to Jake's early and finds Ellen making a huge breakfast. Paige is awed by the easy-going way Jake and Ellen have between them, hoping that when she returns home, she and Nicholas can find a similar rapport. Ellen leaves for her job without eating. Paige and Jake spend the next two days shopping, eating, and enjoying each other's company. At seven, when Ellen returned, Paige would go home to her father's, often curious what Ellen and Jake were doing in her absence.

On the third day, Jake decides they are going to go to the lake for the day. Jake gives Paige a bathing suit that belongs to Ellen and packs a picnic that Ellen helped him prepare. Paige is uncomfortable changing in the same room Ellen and Jake share, especially when she sees the family Irish Blessing hanging above the bed. Once at the lake, Jake and Paige jump right into the water. Jake pulls Paige under the water and then swims away, urging her to follow. When Paige catches up, she is exhausted. Jake holds her above water, and then he kisses her. Paige pulls away, swimming quickly to shore. Paige pretends to be asleep on the shore when Jake returns. Jake falls asleep, so Paige sits up and draws him. Paige thinks about Jake and Nicholas and Max. Paige knows that her place is with Nicholas and Max.



Eddie Savoy has found Paige's mother. May left town under the name of Lily Rubens, a young woman for whom May had written an obituary three days before she left. From there, May went to Wyoming and worked for a Wild West show. Five years later, May ran off with one of the cowboys with some money they had stolen from the show. From there May moved to Washington DC, then to Rockville, Maryland, then to Farleyville, North Carolina. Eddie even found evidence that May had returned to Chicago the day of Paige's high school graduation, though no one recalled seeing her.

When the meeting is over, Eddie tells Paige that her bill has already been paid. Once in the car, Paige begins to cry. Paige does not know what to do now. Jake holds her and tells her she must go to North Carolina. Paige is afraid to meet her mother because she is afraid to learn she is just like her. However, Paige knows she has to go before she can return to her family.

## **Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 23, Paige Analysis**

Paige and Jake spend time together as though they are attempting to reconnect with what it was they had in the past. Jake and Paige were friends before they were lovers, then they were lovers with an intense passion that neither had known before. This climactic meeting now is part of what Paige has needed to know before she can return to her life with Nicholas and Max. Paige needs to close the circle that begins when she met Jake, to end their relationship on a stronger note than the one they had left it with before. Paige ran away, assuming that she and Jake were over, without actually talking to him. Now Paige needs to make sure she was right. When Jake kisses her in the lake, Paige finally knows. Paige realizes that there is not the same passion between them, even though she had felt some jealousy regarding Jake and his new wife. However, the kiss assures Paige that it is Nicholas she wants to be with.

When Nicholas tells Paige that he no longer wants to see her, Paige takes it in stride, hoping it is just his anger talking. However, this anger on Nicholas' part foreshadows the end of the novel when Paige makes the decision whether or not to return to her family. Nicholas has every right not to welcome her back, just as Patrick expressed in the parallel story line regarding May. Patrick said there was too much hurt for him to welcome May back into his life after she had left. Nicholas might feel the same, and this is something that Paige will have to face if she is to return to him.

Eddie Savoy, the private detective, has found May. Paige learns that her mother is not only alive, but that she may have come to her high school graduation seven years earlier. Now Paige is afraid to meet this woman she has thought of and dreamed of for more than twenty years, afraid that she might learn she is exactly the same as her mother. This is a transition within the plot for Paige, a moment when she must decide if she can go see her mother and face the truth about her own past and her future, or if she will simply disappear as her mother once did and avoid facing the difficulties she will have to deal with if she returns to Nicholas. This foreshadows the next turn in the plot as Paige makes her decision.



## Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 24, Nicholas

### Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 24, Nicholas Summary

Nicholas had been changing Max's diaper when Paige called. At first, Nicholas was happy to hear her voice, to know she was okay. However, when Paige asked about Max, Nicholas became angry again, feeling hurt, lost and confused. After he hung up the phone, it rang again almost immediately. Thinking it was Paige, Nicholas yelled into the phone, only to find it was Alistair demanding a meeting that evening.

Nicholas arrives at the meeting with Max in his arms and a splitting headache. Before Alistair can even begin the meeting, Nicholas announces that he is taking a leave of absence for a week and when he returns, his situation with Max will be resolved. Alistair is not happy about this, and Nicholas suddenly realizes he has probably just lost his chance of being chief of cardiothoracic surgery. However, Nicholas knew that he has no other choice.

Nicholas began going to the park with Max and met some nice women who gave him helpful suggestions regarding Max's care. The women tell Nicholas there is no way he will be able to arrange for a nanny or a babysitter in a week. There is a long waiting list for the best child care centers and nanny services. One woman told Max she had put her child on a waiting list when she was six months pregnant. The women tell Nicholas to feed Max cereal so he will sleep through the night and how to help Max with his teething gums.

When Nicholas tells the women that Paige has left him, they are shocked. One of the women offers to give Nicholas the number for a good divorce attorney. Nicholas is surprised by how quickly he defends Paige's choices, explaining to these strangers that Paige never knew her mother and has gone to look for her. When Nicholas feels Max's first tooth poking through his gum that same morning, his first thought is that Paige should be there. Then he reminds himself that Paige should have wanted to be there.

### Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 24, Nicholas Analysis

The reader is clearly shown through Nicholas' point of view that he is more hurt and missing Paige more than he has let her know. Nicholas takes Paige's call with relief, happy to find that she is alive and well. However, when Paige asks about the baby, Nicholas is suddenly filled with anger, although the cause of this anger is not completely clear. Is Nicholas angry because of what Paige has done? Or is Nicholas angry

because Paige asked after the baby before she asked after him? This foreshadows Nicholas' reaction to Paige should she return to him and the baby.

Nicholas' priorities have shifted in the short time Paige has been gone. Although he knows he is putting his career at risk, Nicholas takes time off in order to deal with his babysitting dilemma. Throughout the novel, Nicholas' career has always been his sole concern, even when Paige cried out for help shortly after the birth of their baby. Now Nicholas realizes that his priorities lie at home. This shows some character growth in Nicholas and also foreshadows later events in the novel when Nicholas will differently than when work was his only pursuit. It is also clear that Nicholas still loves Paige and wants her back from his comments at the end of the chapter. The only problem Nicholas has is that he thinks Paige ran away because she wanted to, that she did not want to be with him and the baby. This opinion, too, must change before Paige can come home, if she ever chooses to.



## **Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 25, Paige**

### **Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 25, Paige Summary**

Paige drives through North Carolina and imagines the rolling hills and green fields look just as Ireland must. Paige wonders if perhaps her mother had this same thought when she came to North Carolina. Paige thinks about her mother as she makes the drive, remembering a time when May had wanted Paige to take the city bus after school to meet her at work. Patrick had told May it was too dangerous because Paige was too young. However, May defied her husband. May taught Paige the route she would have to take and told her not to tell her father. The next day, Paige made the trip with no trouble, remembering to stay close to the driver and not to speak to anyone. May was waiting for her when she got off the bus, just as May had promised.

Paige stops to ask for directions, assuming the business where her mother once worked in North Carolina was a bridal boutique by the name she had been given, Bridles & Bits. However, the store proves to be a horse tackle shop. The shop is closed when Paige finally finds it, but when she looks through the windows, she can see a mural on the ceiling exactly like the one she and her mother drew on the kitchen ceiling when Paige was a child.

### **Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 25, Paige Analysis**

Paige has reached the town where her mother was last known to live. Paige thinks of Ireland as she drives through the countryside, wondering if her mother thought the same thing. Paige desperately wants her mother to think of her and her father, wants to know that her mother still loves her. Paige remembers a time when her mother lied to her father and allowed Paige to take a city bus through Chicago. This again demonstrates May's character elements, as to the kind of mother she was and the kind of woman she might be now. Paige is frustrated at the end of her travels when the shop she is looking for is closed. However, Paige knows her mother has been there because of the mural on the ceiling, foreshadowing the next chapter when Paige finds out where her mother has gone from here.





## Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 26, Nicholas

### Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 26, Nicholas Summary

Astrid opens the door of her home and finds Nicholas standing there with Max in his arms. Astrid allows him in, reaching for the baby and being rebuffed. Nicholas explains that he has come here because he feels he has no other choice. Nicholas has been unable to find reliable childcare, and he must return to the hospital that morning. Nicholas puts Max on the floor and asks his mother if she is busy. Astrid, who has a deadline on a book that has already passed, tells him she has nothing at all to do that day. Nicholas tells his mother about Paige, feeling as though he should defend her but unable to find the words.

When Astrid begins to question Nicholas about Paige, Nicholas becomes angry and threatens to leave with the baby. Astrid then takes the baby and insists that Nicholas leave. Nicholas tells her everything about Max's routine and then walks to his car. Before he leaves, Nicholas asks what his father will do when he finds Max in his house. Astrid assures him that Nicholas' father will welcome the baby.

When Nicholas returns to retrieve his son that night, he finds that his mother has managed to turn the entire living room into a nursery in the few hours he has been gone. On the couch, Nicholas finds his father asleep with Max on his chest. Nicholas accidentally wakes his father and asks after Max. Robert tells him he knows that he has done well in his career. When Nicholas asks again about Max, Robert says Nicholas should find his mother for those answers.

Astrid apologizes for the overwhelming amount of baby things in the living room; she simply could not resist. Astrid also shows Nicholas some pictures she has taken of Max, praising the baby as a good subject. While Nicholas looks through the pictures, he wonders what happened to Paige's art things. Nicholas cannot remember seeing Paige draw in a long time. Then Astrid shows Nicholas a picture of Paige that she took while Paige was pregnant when she happened to see her at a diner in Boston. Paige clearly did not know she was being photographed. Astrid remarks how Max has his mother's eyes. Nicholas says he hopes that all he gets from her.

### Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 26, Nicholas Analysis

The point of view of this chapter switches from Paige's first person point of view in the last chapter to third person point of view. Nicholas has brought Max to his parents



because he has no other options for childcare and does not want to lose his job on top of everything else going on in his life. There is a twist of irony in Nicholas taking the product of his marriage to the only two people who were against the union in the first place. However, Astrid and Robert are clearly thrilled to be grandparents.

When Nicholas is faced with his father for the first time in seven years, Nicholas finds his father to be proud of his son's accomplishments over the past seven years. Nicholas does not know how to deal with this more mellow version of his father, surprised as much by Robert's demeanor as he is by his mother's willingness to help Nicholas out with Max. Robert's change in character is parallel to the one going on with Nicholas--a mellowing out due to the desire to be a part of his child's life. Just as Nicholas has come to realize that Max is more important than his career, Robert has come to see that being a part of Nicholas and Max's life is more important than his own opinions regarding Nicholas' marriage.



## Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 27, Paige

### Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 27, Paige Summary

Paige has learned that her mother lives on a rented farm, Fly by Night Farm and teaches riding lessons for a living. Paige wanders into the barn looking for her mother and finds a stable hand alone in the barn. Paige finds examples of her mother's writing on a schedule board in the barn, recalling it from her childhood. Paige does not know what she will do when she is face to face with her mother, but knows that she wants to touch her, to know if she is just like her.

Paige asks the stable hand where May is and is told to look out in the ring. Paige has no idea what the ring might be, but she wanders out of the barn and begins to walk up a path that leads behind the barn. Paige sees a woman riding a horse in a fenced area and walks over, wondering if the woman might be her mother. A man is there, too, telling the woman what to do with the horse. Paige moves closer to get a better look at the woman and is nearly crushed when the horse jumps a wall and thunders toward her. Paige apologizes and moves on after realizing the woman is not her mother.

Paige tours the buildings on the property and makes her way back to the first barn, still unable to find her mother. Outside the barn, the stable hand is wiping down a horse. Paige walks up behind him and calls out to him. The man's hat falls off as he turns, and Paige realizes it is not a man, but a woman. It is her mother. Paige introduces herself and her mother tells Paige she knows who she is. May introduces Paige to the stable hand and then takes her to a field out behind the property.

May asks how Paige found her. Paige tells her about the ceiling in the tackle shop. Paige is not satisfied with her mother's reaction to her sudden appearance. May acts nonchalant, as though she has missing family members appear every day. Paige thinks about Max and Nicholas, thinks how she had never meant to leave them, she only meant to leave. This is what May says too. May then introduces Paige to a show horse, which is the sole reason May runs this farm, to pay for his care. May says this horse is the only thing she owns. Then May says the horse's name is Donegal, the same as in Donegal County, where Patrick was born in Ireland. It is then that May finally hugs Paige.

May takes Paige to her house and shows her to her room, a little girl's room that May kept with the hope that Paige would someday come to her. May says that she has always remembered Paige as the five year old May left behind. Before her mother returns to her lessons, Paige asks why she came to her graduation. May says she did it for herself, not Paige. Paige tells her that she is married and that she has a baby. Paige waits for her mother to accuse her of abandoning her baby, but May simply walks away.



Paige walks to the ring and watches her mother give a little girl lessons on a pony. When the lesson is over, May talks Paige into taking a lesson of her own. Paige has never been on a horse in her life so resists at first, but then she manages to control the horse and make it gallop. May tells Paige that by watching her ride the horse, she knows that she is a strong, brave girl, much like herself.

Back at the house, Paige and May make dinner together. Paige is upset when her mother criticizes her father for not teaching her to core a head of lettuce. Paige is also upset when she realizes she does not even know how her mother likes her salad. They eat on the porch and discuss Patrick briefly. Paige takes the opportunity to ask her mother why she left, but she does not get an answer. Paige pushes the question, but May becomes angry and tells Paige maybe she should be more concerned about why she left Nicholas and Max.

Paige is angry at first, but then she begins to think about Max and Nicholas and about the way she felt when left alone with Max all those months. Paige felt as though she had lost her individuality that she was no longer Paige, but Nicholas' wife and Max's mother. This is why she left, not to find her mother. Paige also imagines this is why her mother left as well. Paige climbs into the bathtub, thinking about how Max will be three and a half months the next day. Paige knows that Max should be starting solid foods and wonders how he likes them. When Paige opens her eyes, she finds her mother standing over her, staring at her naked body. May tells her she had grown into a beautiful woman.

Paige wakes in the middle of the night, remembering the arguments she once overheard from her parents' bedroom. Tonight Paige hears the same crying she would wake to all those night ago. Paige slips from her bed and goes to her mother's bedroom. Paige tells herself she is not a child anymore and it is no longer her job to make her mother feel better. However, Paige cannot help herself. Paige climbs into her mother's bed and holds her the way she did when she was a small child.

## **Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 27, Paige Analysis**

Paige finds her mother on a rented farm in North Carolina. Paige is surprised by her mother's reaction to her, surprised that her mother is not more emotional about the reunion. This is a climactic moment in Paige's life. Paige has waited twenty years for this moment and it is a disappointment. However, when Paige's mother introduces her to her whole purpose in life, a show horse, and tells her the horse's name, Paige realizes her mother has not forgotten herself and her father. The horse bears the name of Patrick's home in Ireland, Donegal. This is irony, that a woman who ran away from her family would name her one possession after her husband's homeland. However, it also shows her deep feelings for her husband.

Paige is confused about her own decision to leave her husband, as well as her mother's choice to leave Paige and her father. However, when her mother forces Paige to think



about why Paige left her family, Paige is forced to admit that she left because she wanted to. Paige left because she had lost her individualism, a theme to the novel. Paige was no longer Paige, a waitress, an artist, a person. Paige had become Nicholas' wife, Max's mother, a person she did not know nor was sure she wanted to be. Now Paige realizes that she did not run away solely to find her mother, but to find out who she was independent of these roles she has been playing. Paige needs to find out if she can be a wife and a mother without losing who she is beyond those roles. Paige hopes her mother will help her find this truth out.

Foreshadowed in this chapter is a budding relationship between mother and daughter. Paige learns to ride a horse because her mother asks her to. Paige also discovers that she knows very little about her mother and she is desperate to learn the little things as well as the big things. Paige wants to know her mother's likes and dislikes, her habits and her desires. Paige wants to know why her mother left her, but she also wants to know if she takes cream in her coffee. The next few chapters show Paige learning a few of these things.



## **Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 28, Nicholas**

### **Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 28, Nicholas Summary**

Nicholas and Paige were already engaged when they went out on their fourth date. Nicholas had planned it to the last detail--dinner at a fancy restaurant, drinks in the bar, and necking in the car. Paige is dressed to the nines that night, borrowing a dress from Doris and buying a pair of expensive shoes. The date did not go as planned, however. Paige was out of her comfort zone. The dinner took so much energy for her in trying to remember etiquette, that she was exhausted by the end of the night, not to mention the allergic reaction she had to some mushrooms that caused her lip to swell. Afterward, Nicholas realized just how different their worlds were. Nicholas also wondered if they could make a marriage work when they were so different. However, Nicholas decided that he and Paige could make it through anything if they could find a happy medium between their two worlds.

### **Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 28, Nicholas Analysis**

The flashback in this chapter is seen through Nicholas' point of view. Nicholas remembers a time when he had wanted to impress Paige so he took her to a fancy restaurant. The strain of the proper restaurant was too much for Paige, and Nicholas began to wonder how they could make a marriage work. However, Nicholas decides they can if they can relate to each other's worlds. This foreshadows Nicholas' reaction when Paige returns to him and it also allows the reader into Nicholas' frame of mind from the beginning of his marriage to Paige. It is as if Nicholas has been waiting for this marriage to fail since the beginning.



## Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 29, Paige

### Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 29, Paige Summary

Paige has become a stable hand in her mother's barn, helping Josh take care of the horses. Paige finishes in one of the horse's stalls and has forgotten to lock the gate. The horse gets out, and Paige must help Josh catch her. When they take a break a little later, Josh tells Paige how her mother got Donegal. May had been working for a Kentucky millionaire. When the man became ill, his wife left him, but May stayed and took care of him. As a reward for her loyalty, the man gave her Donegal, the sire of a bloodline that dated back to Seattle Slew. May then came to North Carolina with the express purpose of finding a farm she could rent in order to earn the money needed to show Donegal. Josh also lets Paige know that despite Donegal's phenomenal success in the shows, the farm lost ten thousand dollars the year before.

Paige gets into the habit of riding the pony, Tony, every morning after mucking out the stalls. Paige's mother taught her how to jump the horse. Paige fell once, but she learned what caused the fall and climbed back on. Paige wants to ride Donegal, but her mother tells her she must be a much stronger rider before she can handle a horse like Donegal. Paige watches her mother ride Donegal and draws the two of them together. May is impressed with the drawing, so Paige allows her to keep it. Later, Paige writes a note to Max, telling him where she is and all about the horses at his grandmother's farm. Paige asks Max to tell Nicholas she loves him.

In August, Paige goes with her mother and Donegal to a show. Paige sits beside a woman who bets a man and his horse will win. However, May and Donegal put on a good show and they win the first prize. Paige wins five dollars. Later, Paige and her mother celebrate the end of summer by camping out in the backyard. May asks about Patrick and Paige tells her that he is pretty much the same as he has always been. Paige asks about the rodeo guy May ran away with, and May tells her it was nothing, just sex. May says there has never really been another man in her life since Patrick. May asks about Nicholas and Paige begins by describing his looks. May corrects her and forces her to describe Nicholas as a person. Paige talks about his work habits, about how little she sees him, and about how she is afraid Nicholas is no longer attracted to her.

May asks if this is why Paige left Nicholas and she denies it, but she wonders if maybe it did not have something to do with it. May tells Paige that even if she is not happy in her marriage, she should have waited until Max was older before leaving. May says that when Paige was born, she felt her individualism disappear, terrified by her new baby. Paige tells May that she was a good mother after remembering a time when her mother



cared more about Paige than anything else. May response that maybe she was and maybe she was not.

## **Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 29, Paige Analysis**

Paige has gone to work on her mother's farm and is trying to learn how to ride a horse so she will soon be good enough to ride Donegal. Paige watches her mother in a horse show. Paige is sharing her mother's life with her so that she can get to know her better, get to know the things about her mother that she has always wanted to know. Paige has finally become the friend her mother had wanted her to be when she was a small child. Their worlds have come full circle.

Paige asks about her mother's love life and learns that her mother has never loved anyone as much as she did Patrick, Paige's father. It is ironic, that a woman who ran off on her husband twenty years ago after only six years of marriage still declares that she is in love with her husband. However, her actions seem to prove it is true. May also talks about the way she felt after her marriage and the birth of her daughter, that she was no longer an individual person. This is how Paige felt as well, a sense of losing her identity in those of the people she loved the most. This seems to be the same parallel Paige has seen between herself and many of her mother's actions. This foreshadows the moment when Paige is finally forced to ask herself if she is truly just like her mother.





## Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 30, Nicholas

### Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 30, Nicholas Summary

At his home, Robert Prescott is on his hands and knees cleaning up vomit Max has left on the carpet. Robert picks up Max when he is done cleaning and dances the baby around the room to the tunes of a Sesame Street tape. When Robert hears keys in the front door, he quickly turns off the tape and sits on the couch, pretending to be going over patient charts. Astrid walks into the room and asks if everything is alright. Robert notices too late that the chart he has been reading is upside down.

Nicholas' hands shake as he begins an operation on his mentor, Alistair Forgerty. Alistair requires a bypass and has requested that Nicholas perform it. Alistair also asks Nicholas to take over his patients, since he will have to take a leave of absence after the surgery. Nicholas performs Alistair's surgery with no complications and then allows an intern to finish, although he had intended to do it himself. Nicholas is exhausted after the emotional surgery.

Astrid and Robert are under the dining room table with Max because it seems to be Max's favorite place to play. Astrid has laminated photos of Nicholas, Max, and Paige that she uses to teach Max the proper name of each person. Robert comments that Nicholas would be upset if he knew Astrid was showing the baby pictures of Paige. Astrid says that what Nicholas does not know will not hurt him.

Astrid has Max in the dark room when Nicholas comes to pick him up. Astrid is telling the baby a version of Cinderella that begins at the end of the story instead of the beginning. Astrid tells the baby that Cinderella is bored in the castle all day, so she buys a camera and starts traveling the world taking picture. Prince Charming becomes a laughing stock because his friends think he should keep a leash on his wife. Then Nicholas comes in and tells her he is just checking in; he wants to go back to hospital to be there when Alistair wakes up.

When Alistair wakes up, he demands to see Nicholas. Alistair is in pain, but he is still his own self when he tells Nicholas to take care of his patients but not to mess with his desk. Nicholas goes to Alistair's office and is sitting behind the desk when Elliot Saget, the chief of surgery, walks in. Saget tells Nicholas to get used to the office because he will be acting chief while Alistair is away for the next six months. Nicholas finally has everything he wanted, but he has no one to tell.



## Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 30, Nicholas Analysis

This chapter switches back and forth between the third person point of view of Nicholas, Robert, and Astrid. Robert is shown as the doting grandfather that the reader probably least expected of this man, who once forbade his son to marry the woman Nicholas loved. Astrid, as the reader has seen her in several chapters before, is a doting grandmother. Astrid's choice to show Max pictures of his parents in order to teach him their names is an important moment in this chapter because it foreshadows a time later in the novel when Max will recognize the people in those photos. It is also important because it is the first time the reader sees Astrid's true opinion of Paige. Although Astrid should be the one person who would be glad to see Paige gone, Astrid seems eager to keep Paige a member of the family.

Nicholas performs a surgery on his boss and mentor that essentially leaves him the job he has wanted since graduating from medical school--head of cardiothoracic surgery. This is a momentous moment for Nicholas that brings to a close a plot line that showed Nicholas fighting for this one minute. Paige has fought for it, too, going to social dinners in order to present the proper facade for Nicholas. It is ironic that it is only after Nicholas' personal life falls apart that his career takes the one turn he has always wanted but had not foreseen coming so quickly. It is also telling that it is Paige Nicholas thinks of at this important moment in his career.



## Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 31, Paige

### Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 31, Paige Summary

After May breaks her ankle, Donegal goes down with colic. Although May does not think there is a connection, Paige is certain of it. Paige wants to handle the problem for her mother, but May insists on being in the middle of the crisis. The vet comes and says Donegal will be fine, but in the middle of the night Paige goes to check the horses and finds her mother asleep in Donegal's stall.

As Donegal gets better, Paige is allowed to ride him. May stands out by the fence to watch, worried about both her horse and her child. Paige rides the horse with the grace of a born horsewoman, even jumping a stream in order to impress her mother. May is impressed, clapping loud enough that Paige and Donegal can hear her across the field.

That night May comes into Paige's room. Paige asks again why her mother left. May tells her daughter that she tried to be a good wife and mother, but the role did not fit what she thought of who she was. May had lost her identity and needed to get it back. When Paige says that she feels the same way, May asks her to stay with her, indefinitely. Paige thinks about it for a minute, thinking that if she stayed, it would be for good, and she would never see Nicholas and Max again. Suddenly Paige knew it was time to go home.

When Paige tells her mother she must leave, May tells her that she cannot go home again, that Nicholas will not welcome her back. Paige becomes angry and asks her mother why she never came back. Did she not want to know what was happening with Paige? Did she not realize everything she had missed in Paige's life, things Paige had needed her to be present for? May tells Paige she is just like her. However, for the first time, Paige realizes she is nothing like her mother. Paige begins to pack even as her mother continues to insist that Nicholas will never take her back. Paige reminds May that Paige took May back.

### Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 31, Paige Analysis

Paige has reached a climactic moment on her mother's farm. Paige has ridden Donegal. This is important to the plot because Donegal symbolizes every reason May left her family and the love she still nurtures for her family. Paige has finally reached a moment with her mother where she is completely safe and loved in her mother's life. After this moment, Paige hears from her mother the true reason why the woman left her family,



and it is the reason that Paige had figured out on the first night at her mother's home. Again touching on the theme of individuality, May admits to leaving her family because she had lost the person she was and needed to find that identity again. Paige understands this because it is the same reason she left her family and the reason she found her mother. Paige needed to know who she was outside of Nicholas and Max, and she needed to know if she was the same as her mother. Paige has learned that she is nothing like her mother.

May foreshadows the end of the novel when she says that Nicholas will not take Paige back. The reader already knows that Paige will return and Nicholas will not allow her into the house due to the prologue. However, the question the reader must have now is will Nicholas ever relent or will he ask for a divorce?



## **Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 32, Nicholas**

### **Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 32, Nicholas Summary**

Max has his first cold and Nicholas is miserable watching his son struggle with the stuffy nose. Nicholas has spent the entire day carrying the baby around, attempting to keep him comfortable. Now it is late, and Nicholas is sitting on the couch watching the evening news with Max in his arms. The doorbell rings just as Max has fallen asleep. Nicholas is angry because the baby is awake again and Nicholas has surgery in the morning. Nicholas goes to the door, muttering under his breath how it had better be an emergency. When he opens it, Paige is standing there.

At first, Nicholas is glad to see her, needing to reach out and touch her. However when Paige begins to speak, the old anger creeps back. Nicholas tells her she is not welcome back. Paige reaches for Max and Nicholas moves away, telling her she made her choice. Nicholas promises he will never let her see the baby again. Then he slams the door.

### **Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 32, Nicholas Analysis**

Paige has returned, bringing this section of the novel full circle. At first, Nicholas is happy to see her, wanting to touch her to make sure she is real. This foreshadows the rest of the novel as Paige attempts to prove to Nicholas that she is back for good. However, the reader must keep in mind that Nicholas is a very angry man, as proved by his threat to keep the baby from Paige and his slamming the door in her face. If Paige is to get back in with her family, it will be a hard-fought battle.



## Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 33, Paige

### Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 33, Paige Summary

After driving straight from North Carolina to Massachusetts, Paige has to sleep on the front lawn, since Nicholas has shut her out of their house. Paige stares at the door, waiting for it to open, smiling and waving at the neighbors like her behavior is perfectly normal. The day before, Paige saw Nicholas leave and assumed he was going to hospital, and she then let herself into the house. The house was a mess, but Paige did not clean it up because she did not want Nicholas to know she had been inside. Paige took a shower and changed her clothes before leaving the house again.

Paige drove to the hospital later that day and asked the lady at the information desk where the day care center was, hoping to see Max without Nicholas knowing. When Paige learned that there was not one at Mass General, she thought Nicholas must have him in a regular day care center. This was funny to Paige since she had wanted to put Max in daycare before so that she could have time to herself sometimes. Nicholas had not allowed it.

Today, Paige is waiting for Nicholas to leave so she can follow and find out where Max's daycare is. Nicholas ignores her as he loads the baby and his equipment in the car. Paige is careful to follow a few car lengths back so Nicholas will not see her. When Nicholas pulls up to his parents' house, Paige cannot remember why the place looks familiar until she sees Astrid at the door. Paige then must decide if she should follow Nicholas to the hospital or attempt to see Max. Paige suddenly is filled with an intense love for Nicholas and a need to tell him how she feels. Paige follows Nicholas to work, following him to the surgical floor and waiting with the patients' families until Nicholas reappears.

Paige shadows Nicholas the rest of the day, watching him make rounds with his patients, meet with other doctors, learning through the course of the day what a large impact Nicholas has on so many people's lives. Paige learns that Nicholas has been made acting chief of cardiothoracic surgery and she is happy for him. When Nicholas catches Paige in one of his patient's rooms, he demands that she leave before he calls security.

Paige goes to the Prescott's mansion to see Max. When Astrid opens the door, Paige is afraid Astrid will send her away. Max is in her arms, and is so much bigger than she remembered him. Paige calls Astrid Mom and suddenly Max is reaching for her, calling her Mama. Paige begins to cry. Astrid allows Paige into her home.



## Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 33, Paige Analysis

Paige's homecoming is not going quite as she had planned. Paige is stuck out on the front lawn of the house she shared with her husband and is forced to follow him through town in order to find out where her child is being cared for while he works. Paige lets herself into the house in order to shower, a scene that foreshadows a later event in the story. The next day, Paige follows Nicholas around the hospital and has some insight to what he does when he is not at home with her and a better understanding of his need to be at the hospital so much. This understanding seems to have come too late, however, as Nicholas is no closer to allowing her back into his life.

Paige goes to see her son and he recognizes her, thanks to the pictures Astrid has been showing him all these months. This moment, when Astrid allows Paige into the house, foreshadows the rest of the novel, showing the reader exactly whose side Astrid is on and foreshadowing the next few chapters in which Astrid makes her chosen side even clearer. The theme of child-parent relationships also comes into play here. Astrid, knowing what is best for her son and his family, has allowed Paige into her own home despite what Nicholas probably told her. Paige also is reconnecting with her own son, but she is also about to be welcomed into the bosom of her husband's family even now that the future of her marriage has come into question.



# Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 34, Nicholas

## Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 34, Nicholas Summary

Nicholas was having a great day until he caught Paige in the hospital. Now Nicholas is in a bad mood. Nicholas' only bright spot now is the idea that Paige will never guess where Max is. Nicholas grabs his jacket, recalling that Saget told him that if Alistair decided not to come back, the job would be Nicholas' permanently. Everything was going perfectly in Nicholas' life. Nicholas would not let Paige ruin it.

Nicholas lets himself into his parents' house and hears Max's laughter from the nursery upstairs. Nicholas crawls into the room to surprise his son and finds the surprise is on him. Astrid is there, and so is Paige. Nicholas is jealous that Paige can make Max laugh so easily when it took him weeks to learn how to please his son. Nicholas thinks of a morning when Paige got up early to make his lunch and she wiped her hands on her nightgown when she thought Nicholas was not looking. Paige had not gotten up to make his lunch since Max was born. That is when it hits Nicholas that Paige has not come back for Nicholas, she has come back for Max.

Nicholas begins to yell at his mother, telling her she should not have allowed Paige in the house. Paige says she will leave. Nicholas tells her if she goes back to the house, he will get a restraining order against her. Paige objects that it is her house and her child too. Nicholas says she should have thought of that before she left. Paige tells him that not everyone can be as perfect as he is. After Paige leaves, Astrid tells Nicholas she is ashamed of him.

When Nicholas arrives at home, Paige's car is parked out front, but Nicholas does not call the police. Nicholas puts Max to bed with the help of the vacuum cleaner, then goes downstairs and steals a peek at Paige. Paige is sitting on the steps of porch with drawings scattered around her. When the wind blows and stirs up the drawings, Nicholas opens the door and catches a couple. All the drawings are of Max. Nicholas turns to go back inside, but stops to tell Paige how good he thought she was with Max. Then Nicholas tells her she cannot stay on his lawn forever. Paige tells him about camping out in North Carolina with her mother and Nicholas tells her he wants to take her camping in Maine.

Before Nicholas goes in, he realizes how cold it is and he decides to get Paige a jacket from inside. Paige thanks him for being cordial. Nicholas goes upstairs to sleep. Nicholas is still convinced that Paige has only come for Max and if that's true, he does not want to let her come back home. Nicholas decides to sleep on it and make a decision in the morning.





## **Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 34, Nicholas Analysis**

Nicholas was happy with his day until he saw Paige. Nicholas does not want Paige anywhere near Max, but when he sees she has found his child, Nicholas becomes convinced that Paige wants to take Max, that she did not come back for also because she misses Nicholas and this becomes Nicholas' motivation for the remainder of the novel. Nicholas is heartbroken, and this shows itself in anger. However, Nicholas still loves his wife; this is evident when he goes outside to check on her and manages not only to have a decent conversation with her, but offers her a jacket to keep warm. Nicholas has become Paige's antagonist, the one person fighting to keep her from what she wants, and in this way Paige has become Nicholas' antagonist because he believes she is keeping him from what he wants, even though Paige is what he wants.



## Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 35, Paige

### Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 35, Paige Summary

Instead of visiting Max or following Nicholas, Paige goes to the cemetery where she went while pregnant. Paige wants to clear her mind, but the sight of a baby's grave who died about the time Paige's first baby was conceived reminds her that she has failed to tell Nicholas the truth. Paige feels she must tell Nicholas everything in order for them to start all over.

Paige walks to Mercy and finds the old gang still there. Lionel tells Paige that Nicholas came there looking for her a few months back, thinking she had run away. Lionel told Nicholas Paige was not that kind of person. Slowly, Paige's old co-workers go back to work and give Paige a moment to look around. The diner is smaller and dirtier than she remembered, but her drawings are still hanging above the cash register. Among them is the drawing Paige did of Nicholas. Paige climbs up on the counter to get a closer look at the picture, remembering the little boy she drew within it sitting in a tree with the sun in his hands. When Paige first drew it, she thought it was Cuchulainn, but Nicholas later told her he had never heard of Cuchulainn and the drawing had a different meaning to him.

Paige lets herself into Nicholas' house and spends the bulk of the afternoon cleaning. The phone rings and Paige answers it out of habit. It is Astrid and she wants Paige to come over and talk. Paige goes right over, overjoyed to see her son is beginning to crawl. Astrid tells Paige that she wants her to move into the house. To make Nicholas happy, she will have to leave early in the morning and late at night when Nicholas is dropping off or picking up Max. Paige is shocked because she knows this is not what Nicholas would want and because Astrid once fought Nicholas when he wanted to marry Paige.

Astrid tells Paige that she did not want her to marry Nicholas because she thought she was another of the girls who follow Nicholas around like a puppy dog without a mind of their own. However, when Paige ran away, she proved she was strong enough to keep Nicholas in line. Astrid shows Paige to her room after a quick lunch and tells her to come to dinner, so she can get to know Robert.

At dinner, Robert is polite and welcoming, thanking Paige for Max. Robert asks Paige about her trip, and she tells them about her mother and her reasons for leaving, then returning. Paige watches the way Robert and Astrid flirt with each other across the room, and she realizes she really never knew Nicholas well enough to flirt with him that way. Paige also knows that Nicholas does not know everything about her, and she must change that fact.



Paige drives to Nicholas' house and lets herself in, then slips up to the master bedroom. Nicholas is asleep when she enters. Paige kneels beside the bed and caresses his face until he wakes. Nicholas pulls Paige up onto the bed and sits beside her. Nicholas quietly tells her that she was not a virgin when they married and that she had had an abortion. Nicholas becomes enraged, accusing her of lying to him. Paige tries to tell him that it is the abortion that was the root of her problems with Max, why she left him and Max. However, Nicholas does not want to listen and he throws her out of his house.

### **Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 35, Paige Analysis**

Paige decides she must tell Nicholas the truth about her past, so that they can begin their life together without lies between them. However, before she can do this, Astrid surprises her by inviting her to move into the Prescott mansion. Astrid reveals her own motivations by explaining that she thought Paige a weak woman and has since learned how strong Paige truly is. It is ironic, but the woman who fought to keep Paige from marrying Nicholas is the same woman who is now giving Paige a place to live and hoping that she and Nicholas will be able to fix their broken marriage. Robert, also a strong opponent to Paige's marriage, appears to be on Paige's side, grateful for his grandson, at any rate.

Paige tells Nicholas the truth about her past, hoping he will realize her motivations are to start over with the truth rather than living a lie with a woman he barely knows. However, Nicholas does not see things Paige's way and perhaps feels that Paige is only trying to push him further away, so she can steal Max away. This revelation adds tension to the plot and drives it toward a climactic ending.



## **Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 36, Nicholas**

### **Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 36, Nicholas Summary**

Nicholas calls an old college friend who is a divorce attorney for advice on how to proceed with a divorce. Nicholas is not happy with what he learns. Paige has the upper hand because she put Nicholas through medical school, so she is entitled to a large part of his earnings. Additionally, Paige does not work the long hours Nicholas does, so she has a better chance of getting custody of Max.

Nicholas returns to his office at the hospital and begins to make lists, one of all the things he and Paige own and another of his and Paige's vital statistics. Nicholas cannot help wondering about Paige and this other man she had been with before Nicholas, whether or not she would have had the baby had she married the other man. The idea is driving Nicholas insane with jealousy.

Astrid walks into Nicholas' office with a photo she had framed for him. While showing it to him, Astrid announces that Paige has moved in with her. Nicholas demands that Astrid not allow Paige near Max, and Astrid assures him Paige will not be home when Max is there. Nicholas then proceeds to tell Astrid that Paige is not who she thinks she is. Astrid tells him that she and Robert almost got divorced once, and she thought she had to fight him every inch in order to make him stay, but finally realized she would be stronger if she yielded first. Nicholas tells her that Astrid should throw Paige out of the house and apologize to him.

Paige runs into Nicholas at the Prescott mansion while he is picking up Max and asks that he stop divorce proceedings. Paige asks for a second chance, but Nicholas will not listen. Nicholas promises a big settlement, but they both know that Paige does not care about money. Paige begins to cry, and Nicholas can feel his heart breaking, but it does not stop his resolve. Nicholas leaves even as Paige pledges her love for him.

### **Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 36, Nicholas Analysis**

Tension builds as Nicholas consults a lawyer about a divorce. Nicholas cannot stop thinking about Paige with another man. The idea drives him wild, and it quickly becomes his motivation in everything he does. Paige has essentially cheated on him by allowing him to believe all these years that he was the only man she had ever known. When Astrid tells Nicholas about her near divorce, she is not only attempting to sway him to stop pushing Paige away, but she is showing him how to fight for his wife. This parallel



story should teach Nicholas how to win his wife back, but instead he refuses to take the lesson offered and has his mind set on getting as far from Paige as possible.

Paige does not want a divorce, and she finally tells Nicholas how she feels, but it may be too late. Not only does Nicholas think Paige only came back for Max, but now Nicholas thinks she is a liar whom he cannot trust. Paige's motivations have not changed; she only wants her family back. However, it continues to be an uphill battle.



## **Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 37, Paige**

### **Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 37, Paige Summary**

Paige has decided she must move out of the Prescott home. Paige is running away again. However, Robert tells her she must continue to fight for her family, telling her that she must not allow Nicholas to forget her. Paige decides not only will she stay, but she will go to work as a volunteer at the hospital in order to be around Nicholas as much as possible. Paige asks the volunteer coordinator to put her anywhere Nicholas might be, so Paige is assigned to the surgical floor and recovery.

Later that afternoon, Astrid finds Paige drawing in the backyard. Paige is a little depressed because her first day as a volunteer did not go as well as she had hoped. Nicholas laughed at her. Astrid watches Paige draw, telling her she had wanted an artistic child, but Nicholas was never good with a camera. Paige offers the information that her mother was an artist and a writer. Paige tells Astrid she wished she had a mother like her, an understanding woman who stayed. Astrid explains that she runs away all the time, the only difference is that she comes back.

Paige draws Astrid with leaves falling all around her. In each leaf, Paige has drawn a different woman, an African woman, a Spanish woman, and other women Astrid has photographed. Then Paige draws herself and her mother. Astrid asks Paige to draw a picture of herself. Paige tries, but each attempt ends in failure until Astrid points out that she has drawn Nicholas.

### **Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 37, Paige Analysis**

Paige is going to run away again, which has become her established pattern when things become too difficult to handle. However, Robert talks her out of it. Paige then decides to volunteer at the hospital, so Nicholas is forced to deal with her. However, it does not seem to go very well at first. Paige begins to draw in Astrid's backyard to soothe her nerves. Paige has bonded with Astrid faster than she did with her own mother. Astrid symbolizes everything Paige had wanted in her mother, a woman who is artistic, is around, and is affectionate.

Paige draws Astrid and finds that she has drawn herself and her mother within the portrait, symbolizing all the strong women in her life and her own strength. Astrid then wants Paige to draw herself. Paige tries and fails. Every picture she has drawn is of Nicholas. This symbolizes Paige's desire to be with Nicholas and that when she looks inside herself, it is Nicholas she sees.



# Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 38, Paige

## Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 38, Paige Summary

Paige has begun to draw a portrait of Nicholas' daily patient and of Nicholas himself, then taping them to his office door. This has caused a stir at the hospital with people gathering outside Nicholas' office in order to see who Paige has drawn that day. Nicholas is unhappy with the attention, especially when Saget comes to take a look. Saget then searches out Paige and asks her to meet with the communications director.

Paige is at the Prescott's and she is in a bad mood. Max is in Robert's study with him. Paige goes to collect him and attempts a civil conversation, but she is feeling uneasy, angry, and she blows up at Robert when he asks if she likes Handel. Paige accuses Robert of being a snob before she remembers that Nicholas once told her Robert was born poor. Robert is not offended. Robert tells Paige that the reason he did not want Paige to marry Nicholas was because she would force Nicholas to give up all of their riches, and he could not imagine anyone wanting to do that. However, Robert now knew he had been wrong.

Paige is singing Max to sleep that night when she finally realizes the truth about their relationship. All her life, Paige has been waiting for a man who needed her to serve his every need. Now she had just that, in Max.

When Paige meets with the communications director at the hospital, she finds out that the woman wants to hang her art in the hospital's lobby to give it a more family-like atmosphere. Paige has agreed and watches as the janitor hangs her drawings, some of Nicholas' patients, some of Max. Paige is thrilled because she is getting paid and because the display includes a small card with her name on it. Not only this, but the director also wants her input on a new heading for the hospital's stationary.

One late night, Paige calls her mother. Paige tells her she is sorry for the way she left things and that May had been right about Nicholas. May is apologetic too, wishing only happiness for her only child. May then surprises Paige by announcing that she called Patrick. When Paige hears this, she is filled with hope that she and Nicholas will one day work things out.

Max wakes up screaming, as though he is constipated. Paige changes him, thinking he has had a bowel movement, but she finds nothing. Max is better after that and begins to play, but Paige is sure there is something wrong with the baby. Paige calls her father and asks about May's phone call. Patrick appears open to the idea of seeing May again and is thrilled that Paige has become close to her once more. As a reward for the drawings, Saget arranges for Paige to watch Nicholas perform a surgery. Paige watches as Nicholas performs a bypass surgery, amazed with his power to stop and start a



human heart. Paige is once again awed with Nicholas and his career choice, falling in love with him all over again.

### **Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 38, Paige Analysis**

The theme of individuality comes into the novel once more when Paige is asked to draw portraits to display in the lobby of the hospital. Ironically, after having her art laughed at by the other doctors' wives, Paige has gotten revenge by having her art on display in the very hospital where these women's husbands work. Not only this, but every time Nicholas walks into the hospital, he will have to look at her work as well.

Paige calls her parents and in a parallel story to her own, she learns that her mother has called her father and there might be a possible meeting sometime in the future. This gives Paige hope for her own marriage, making her think that if she stays close to Nicholas, he will eventually be forced to deal with her. Paige falls in love anew with Nicholas every day, especially on when she is allowed to watch him perform a bypass surgery, foreshadowing a later chapter when Nicholas learns that Paige was allowed this opportunity. Max's illness may foreshadow future difficulties for everyone involved in Max's life.





## **Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 39, Nicholas**

### **Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 39, Nicholas Summary**

Nicholas is angry that Paige seems to be everywhere he goes. At first, he threw away her drawings, but soon he started to give the patient drawings to the patients and keeping the ones of himself. Nicholas goes to the operating room for his routine bypass that morning and attempts to set everyone at ease when he walks in, though he has not gotten that technique down quite yet. After the surgery is over, Nicholas looks up and is convinced there is an angel watching him from the observation room.

When Nicholas makes his rounds later that day, he finds Paige in nearly every one of his patients' rooms. Nicholas attempts to make her stay away, but Paige resists his every attempt. When Paige tells Nicholas that it was her in the observation room that morning, Nicholas becomes even angrier at her. Finally Nicholas convinces her to leave, but as she is leaving, Paige tells him that she thinks Max is getting sick. Nicholas wants to know how she would know that.

### **Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 39, Nicholas Analysis**

Paige's plan to be everywhere where Nicholas is seems to be working, although Nicholas is still angry at her. When Nicholas sees an angel watching over him, a moment that is symbolic of Nicholas' need to be taken care of, he does not think of Paige. However, knowing it was Paige makes him angry because he still thinks she lied to him and that she only wants Max--Paige mentioning Max only reinforces Nicholas' belief. Nicholas is motivated by misunderstandings and half truths, while Paige is motivated by love. Nicholas is now in the position Paige was in after Max's birth, lost and unsure of himself and his place in his love's eyes. They have essentially switched places and must help each other find the truth. This touches on the theme of individuality. Also the theme of parenthood comes into play here. Paige may not be the best mother in the world, but she has found the truth in herself, and she knows when her child is sick, proving she had the instincts all along, she just did not know how to listen to them.



## **Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 40, Paige**

### **Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 40, Paige Summary**

Max is still not right when Nicholas picks him up that night, but no one is concerned except for Paige. Paige tries to draw, but she cannot get the picture to come out the way she wants. Finally, she falls asleep, but she wakes in the middle of the night convinced that Max needs her. Paige dresses and runs downstairs. When she opens the door, Nicholas is standing there. Max is sick.

### **Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 40, Paige Analysis**

Paige is convinced that Max is sick, and she is proven right when Nicholas comes to the house to get her. It is interesting that Nicholas has come for her. This chapter also foreshadows the next one in which the reader learns what has caused Max's illness.



## **Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 41, Nicholas**

### **Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 41, Nicholas Summary**

When Nicholas took Max home that night, Max was restless. Max woke frequently, then when Nicholas went to change his diaper he found blood in it. Without thinking, Nicholas gathered the baby and loaded him into the car, not going to the hospital but to get Paige.

Nicholas and Paige wait for the pediatrician to come tell them something. Finally, the doctor tells them that Max has an abdominal mass. Paige asks if the baby is alright, but the doctor ignores her, annoying Nicholas. The doctor tells them they are going to do a sonogram, then a decision will be made as to what to do. The doctor returns a few minutes later and says they are going to operate.

Nicholas and Paige sit in the surgical waiting room. Nicholas feels uncomfortable; he has never been on this side of the operating room before. Nicholas searches his memory for information about this type of surgery, but cannot come up with anything. Paige needs to get up and move around, so they walk down the hall for a cup of coffee. It is Halloween, so many of the staff are dressed in costumes. It takes so long for the doctor to come talk to them that Nicholas is becoming a nervous wreck. Finally they learn that the surgery went well, and Max is going to be fine.

Paige insists on seeing Max, even though Nicholas would rather wait until the baby is out of recovery. When they enter the recovery area, and Paige sees her baby with tubes and wires sticking out of him, she screams at Nicholas that he is a liar. Paige is convinced that the baby is dead.

### **Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 41, Nicholas Analysis**

Nicholas is distraught, as is Paige, over their child's illness. Suddenly all their differences go flying out the window and Nicholas wants nothing more than to comfort his wife. Nicholas feels responsible for what has happened to his child. This is a good example of character growth. Nicholas was not a very concerned father in the early days of his son's life, barely getting out of bed when Paige went into labor and then leaving them alone at the hospital in order to do his rounds. Nicholas even became irate at the baby's crying because he had to work the next day. This new Nicholas would not behave in that way. The final part of the chapter in which Paige sees her baby and

becomes convinced that he is dead foreshadows the next chapter. Paige is distraught, and it is up to Nicholas to help her through this time of struggle.



## **Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 42, Paige**

### **Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 42, Paige Summary**

Paige falls into a stress-induced trance, wandering through the streets of Cambridge, unaware of her surroundings. The only thing Paige can think is that her baby is dead. Paige begins to scream at God, asking why he did not take her instead. Paige lies on the concrete and feels someone slip his arms around her and pulls her off the ground. Paige knows it is her savior.

### **Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 42, Paige Analysis**

Paige is falling apart in this climactic scene in which she screams at God for taking her first child and now her second too. Paige is convinced that God is punishing her for some wrong she committed. This chapter is a culmination of everything Paige believes and everything that has happened to her since her childhood coming down on her all at once. Paige has always believed that her mother leaving was her fault, that being with Jake was a sin, that the abortion was her ticket to hell. To have Max appear dead, Paige believes this is her punishment for all that has happened in her life. This is a transition point in the plot, the down slope that will take the reader to the conclusion of the novel.



## **Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 43, Nicholas**

### **Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 43, Nicholas Summary**

Nicholas gathers Paige off the concrete and takes her home, trying to reassure her all the way that Max is going to be fine, despite the fact that they encounter someone wearing a Death costume. At home, Nicholas takes Paige, who is clearly in shock, into the house and strips her clothes away because they are wet and muddy. Nicholas needs to warm Paige, so he takes her upstairs and bathes her as he bathes Max in the bathtub. Paige suddenly comes to life and calls Nicholas' name. Paige climbs from the bathtub into Nicholas' arms and they move together, making love on the bathroom floor. Nicholas takes Paige to bed later and makes love to her again. They make love three times, once for forgiving, once for forgetting, and once for beginning again.

### **Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 43, Nicholas Analysis**

Nicholas rescues Paige, and he is symbolized in her mind as her savior, then Paige becomes Nicholas' savior. Nicholas makes love to his wife as he has wanted to since she returned, repairing what has been damaged within their marriage. Paige welcomes him despite being in a deep state of shock at the beginning of the chapter. This foreshadows the next chapter because the reader, as well as Nicholas, must wonder if Paige really knew what she was doing, and if this is truly the beginning of a new start or the beginning of the end.



## **Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 44, Paige**

### **Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 44, Paige Summary**

Paige wakes up in Nicholas' arms. Paige cannot remember much detail about the night before and tells Nicholas that it should not have happened. This gets Nicholas out of bed, convinced that Paige does not want to be with him. Nicholas tells Paige that Max is doing well and that they can see him. Paige goes into the bathroom to shower and dress. Paige thinks about the list she wrote the day she left her family and begins to make a new one with eyeliner on the mirror. Paige lists the ability to gallop a horse, to draw, to seduce her husband, and to tell herself she is not her mother. However, Paige becomes convinced that the list she should be writing is the things she cannot do. Soon Paige has a list that covers the entire mirror and the walls.

Nicholas and Paige leave for the hospital, and Nicholas apologizes for the night before. Paige is disappointed by his words. Nicholas also says he was wrong and that Max belongs with Paige. At the hospital they learn that Max has been moved to pediatrics, which Nicholas says is a good sign. In the elevator, Paige imagines herself with Max at three, walking through a cemetery and drawing. Suddenly, Paige realizes that she can be strong and that she can be strong for someone else, too. Paige reassures Nicholas when he hesitates to get off the elevator, and they walk hand in hand to Max's room.

### **Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 44, Paige Analysis**

Nicholas and Paige once again cross wires, each thinking the other does not want to be in the marriage any longer. Nicholas has changed his mind about keeping Max from Paige and agrees to let her have custody, which of course is major character growth for him. Paige also sees into herself and shows character growth when she realizes that she is a strong woman and that she can be strong for herself and Nicholas too. The author does not tell the reader whether or not they will get back together, leaving that last detail to the reader's imagination. However, if this relationship continues to parallel both Astrid and Robert's and Patrick and May's as it has throughout the novel, chances are good they will end up together.

This chapter also touches on the theme of parenthood once more as Paige and Nicholas learn their son is going to be okay. Paige has become the mother she always wanted to be; this is evident here when she imagines herself with her son as he grows older. Nicholas, too, has become the kind of father he has not been earlier in Max's life and will continue to be so if his depth of emotion continues to run as it has through the latter part of the novel. There is also a parallel here. It is the child that tore Paige and Nicholas apart, but it is the child who has brought them back together.



# Characters

## Paige O'Toole Prescott

Paige is the daughter of an Irish immigrant and a woman, who disappeared when Paige is only five years old. Paige grew up believing her mother left because there was something wrong with Paige. When Paige falls in love and discovers she is pregnant, she is unable to consider the idea of being a mother. Paige never learned from her own mother how to be maternal and is afraid she will not only do a bad job herself but will run away just as her own mother did. Paige has an abortion that ruins the romance with the child's father and leaves her so consumed with guilt that she believes her father will never forgive her. Paige runs away the day after her high school graduation in order to outrun what she has done.

When Paige arrives in Cambridge Massachusetts, she quickly gets a job in a diner and there meets the man she will one day marry. Paige believes that if she keeps the past in the past, she will be able to begin her life again and do it better this time. However, marriage to a doctor does not prove to be the solution Paige believed it would be. Paige is left alone most of the time due to her husband's work schedule and feels she does not measure up when her husband takes her to the many social occasions that are required of a professional with his ambitions.

Paige learns she is pregnant again seven years after her abortion. Paige is scared that she will not be a good mother. Paige thinks often both about her mother and the baby Paige aborted, and these thoughts undermine her confidence in her own parental skills. It does not help that Paige's husband is too busy to be home and help. When the child is born and Paige does not instantly know what to do for him, her confidence is shattered. Paige works hard with the baby for three months, giving every minute of herself to her child and neglecting her husband. Paige's husband reacts badly, becoming angry with Paige for not being able to do it all. Finally, when the baby falls off the couch and gets a bloody nose, and Paige's husband blames her for the accident, Paige can no longer handle the role of mother and wife.

Paige did not intend to leave; she thought she was going to the grocery store. However, Paige finds herself in Chicago, asking her father for information about her mother. Paige meets up with her ex-boyfriend, Jake, who helps her find a detective to help her with her search for her mother. When Paige finally meets her mother for the first time in twenty years, Paige asks all the questions Paige thought she wanted answered only to find the answers were always inside of herself. Paige returns home to find a husband unwilling to take her back and a baby that continued to grow and flourish without her. Paige works hard to win her family back only to find herself in the middle of a crisis that could take everything away from her once again.





## Nicholas Prescott

Nicholas Prescott is the child of an affluent doctor and a famous photographer mother. Nicholas was a miracle child, coming just as his parents had accepted that they would never have children. Nicholas always had everything he ever wanted, unaware that his childhood was not typical until he entered college. Nicholas is a medical student when Paige first meets him in the diner where she works. Nicholas falls head over heels for Paige, although she is not the type of girl he typically dates. Nicholas likes to date beautiful girls who travel in the same circles as he and his family. Paige is beautiful, but she comes from a world as different from Nicholas' as ice from fire.

When Nicholas asks Paige to marry him, the words surprise him as much as they do Paige. Nicholas' parents are not happy, however, and Nicholas' father disowns him for Nicholas' choice of brides. Nicholas spends the next seven years making his way through med school and his internship without the money his parents once provided for his education. Paige pays for Nicholas' schooling, working two jobs during most of their marriage. Nicholas decided he wanted to be a cardiac surgeon. Not only a cardiac surgeon, but Nicholas wants to be the head of the department. This ambition causes problems between Nicholas and Paige. It is not the job, but the social aspects of it that bother Paige. This ambition causes Nicholas to buy a house they cannot afford, and which Paige does not like. Paige must also attend dinner parties with people she does not like, nor fits in with.

Nicholas is given a rude awakening to Paige's unhappiness when she disappears one night. Nicholas is forced to take care of his three-month-old son by himself. Nicholas has no idea of how to care for Max because his work schedule did not allow for him to spend much time at home around the baby. Now Nicholas must care for the child, as well as find someone to sit with the baby during the day. Since no decent day care has openings, Nicholas is forced to turn to his parents for help. Slowly Nicholas rebuilds his relationship with his parents, only to find them giving Paige emotional support when she returns. Nicholas' parents allow Paige to move in with them despite Nicholas' objections because they know that Paige is the best thing for their son.

## Patrick O'Toole

Patrick O'Toole is Paige's father. Patrick is an Irishman who, despite having lived in the United States since he was a small child, always wanted to return to his home land. Patrick is an amateur inventor who spends much of his time in his basement workshop working on his current project. Patrick also holds a day job as a computer programmer.

Patrick fell in love with a woman he met at a diner and married her three months later, although he had been engaged to another woman shortly before. The marriage lasted less than six years, with his wife walking away without any explanation. Patrick still loves his wife and has never remarried, spending all his free time with his young daughter, who his wife left behind. When Paige has her abortion, Paige is afraid that her father knows simply from her behavior. Patrick is a strict Catholic and abortions are



against his beliefs. Paige is afraid her father will be ashamed of her, so she decides to run away rather than remain around her father, a constant reminder of that shame.

Patrick misses his daughter after she leaves him, but he does not go out of his way to find her. Paige is disappointed by this, afraid it means she can never go home again. However, Paige does go home again, after her baby is born, and Patrick helps her find her mother. Patrick has never been comfortable talking to Paige about her mother, but he overcomes this reluctance in order to help her because he knows she desperately needs some answers. Patrick is a loving father who will do almost anything for his daughter.

## May O'Toole

May O'Toole is Paige's mother. May is a restless soul, who was never happy being a wife and a mother because she felt that this role took away her individualism. May was a good mother, however, although she often did unconventional things with her daughter. Paige has memories of her mother taking her to cemeteries in order to read the grave markers and to grieve for people they did not know. May once took Paige to the zoo rather than take her to church, and May played in a small pond in the park that visitors were not supposed to get into. Paige also remembers a mural her mother painted on their kitchen ceiling of horses and the time her mother allowed her to take the city bus across town alone, although she was only five.

May ran away from her family and became a player in a Wild West show. Shortly after, May stole some money from the show and ran away with a man. Sometime later, May became the owner of a show horse, and she began renting a small ranch in order to sell riding lessons to pay for her show horse. May has always been happy on her own, though she misses her family. When Paige finds her, May tells Paige you can never go back because there has been too much hurt. However, May calls Patrick and begins to make amends to her own family.

## Astrid Prescott

Astrid Prescott is Nicholas' mother and a famous photographer. Astrid loves her son very much and is more than willing to help him when he brings her grandson to her. Astrid never wanted to disown her son because of his choice to marry Paige; that decision was more Robert's. However, Astrid was concerned about Nicholas' choice because she felt that Paige was more of a lap dog than a good wife. Paige's disappearance and return changed Astrid's mind.

Astrid now thinks that Paige is a strong person, which is exactly what her son needs. This is why Astrid decides to help Paige see Max and give her a place to live while Nicholas struggles with the situation. Astrid once found herself in a similar situation to Nicholas'. Astrid's husband, Robert, once had an affair and was going to leave her. Astrid fought him at first, refusing to allow him to leave. However, Astrid eventually saw she was only driving her husband away. Astrid took a photo of her hands superimposed



on her husband's and hung it in a place Robert would be sure to see it. Soon after, Robert changed his mind and chose to stay. This experience gives Astrid a perspective, which she attempts to use to show Nicholas that he needs to forgive Paige.

## Robert Prescott

Robert Prescott was born poor, not unlike Paige. However, Robert fought for everything he gained, not only by marrying a rich girl, but by working his way through society to gain a name for himself. When Nicholas tells his father he is going to marry Paige, Robert is not happy--not because Paige is a poor girl from the wrong side of the tracks, but because Robert knows how hard a person has to work to maintain the lifestyle Robert has. Robert does not want Nicholas to turn his back on privilege, something Robert believes Paige will encourage Nicholas to do.

Robert has mellowed out with age and is grateful for the chance to get to know his grandchild and to spend time with him. Robert is more than willing to help Paige when she returns, allowing her to live in his house and giving her advice to help her win back his son. Robert now sees that Paige is good for Nicholas and wants the two to stay together. However, it takes a bit longer for Paige and Nicholas to accept this new Robert and to become comfortable in his presence again.

## Max Prescott

Max Prescott is Paige and Nicholas' child. Max begins to affect his mother in a negative way long before he is born. Paige is afraid of this child, afraid she will not be able to care for him properly or be the kind of mother he needs. When Max is born, Paige does not know how to care for him. Nicholas is rarely around because he is annoyed by Max's constant crying. Max is a colicky baby, and he cries quite often. Paige cannot deal with the crying any more than Nicholas, but she does not have the luxury of leaving.

Max falls off the couch when he is three months old and bloodies his nose. Paige takes this as a sign that she is a terrible mother, and this notion is underscored when Nicholas returns home, learns about the incident and berates Paige. Paige leaves the house for a break and ends up leaving for three months. Nicholas is forced to deal with his son for the first time since Max's birth. Nicholas does not know how to care for a baby, but quickly learns. Max becomes the focus of Nicholas' life now that Paige is gone, taking away some of the focus Nicholas had for his work. Max is also the catalyst that brings all the characters back to each other, bringing Nicholas back together with his parents as well when Nicholas is forced to go to them for babysitting duties. Max also brings Paige and Nicholas back together when he becomes ill.

## Alistair Fogerty

Alistair Fogerty is Nicholas' boss and the head of cardiothoracic surgery at Mass General. Nicholas wants Fogerty's job when he retires. Nicholas begins to move in



Fogerty's circles from the beginning of Nicholas' time at Mass General, making it clear to the man that he will have his job some day. Fogerty seems to agree. Fogerty gives Nicholas preferential treatment, allowing him to do procedures before most of the other interns. When Fogerty becomes ill shortly after Paige leaves and needs a bypass, it is to Nicholas he turns. Nicholas performs the surgery, taking over as temporary head of cardiothoracic when Fogerty takes a six month leave to recover.

## Jake Flannigan

Jake Flannigan is Paige's first love. Paige meets Jake on a blind date and the two become friends first. Jake is older than Paige and does not see her in a romantic light for the first years of their friendship. Paige is deeply in love with Jake, however, and becomes an integral part of his life, although he does not always appreciate it. Paige talks with Jake about his dates and the girls he likes, always willing to listen, although there are times when the conversations hurt.

Finally Jake sees Paige for the young woman she is, and they become lovers. Jake wants to marry her, is deeply in love and unwilling to let her go. However, Paige does not want to get married until after college. When she becomes pregnant, Paige and Jake again discuss marriage, but Paige does not want to start a marriage because of a pregnancy. Paige insists on an abortion, although it is a sin against her Catholic beliefs. Jake takes her to a distant town for the procedure and helps her through the ordeal. However, when it is all over, Paige knows that her relationship with Jake is over as well. When Paige returns to Chicago eight years later and meets Jake again, she knows the decision to end the relationship was the right one. Jake is happily married and Paige believes she was always meant to be with Nicholas.

## The Mercy Gang

Mercy is a diner where Paige went to work shortly after arriving in Cambridge. Mercy is owned by Lester, who named the diner named after his grandmother. The cook is Lester's brother, Leroy. The other waitresses are Doris, who allows Paige to sleep on her couch until she marries Nicholas, and Marvela. These four become Paige's closest friends in Cambridge. To get the job, Paige drew a picture of Lester that had a smaller drawing within it of Mercy, his grandmother. Lester is so amazed by the portrait that he gives her a job despite having just told her he did not need a new waitress. Shortly after she gets the job, Paige is encouraged to draw portraits for the customers. These portraits are hung above the cash register and remain there for many years. Among them is one Paige drew of Nicholas a few weeks after she first meets him.



# Objects/Places

## Patrick's Workshop

Paige's father, Patrick, is an amateur inventor. Patrick's workshop is Paige's favorite place in her childhood home. It is the place where Paige and her father made a special mother's day gift for Paige's mother shortly before her mother's disappearance.

## The Note

When Paige leaves her father's home shortly after her high school graduation, she leaves him a note that says she loves him.

## Secret Note

Paige finds a note that Jake slipped into her backpack shortly before she left Chicago that holds an Irish blessing he has had over his bed on a sampler ever since she met him.

## Paige's Car

Paige lives in her car for the first few days after her return to Cambridge because Nicholas will not allow her into the house.

## Portraits

Paige is a talented artist who has a talent for drawing people's secrets into their portraits. Paige makes one of these portraits of Nicholas that includes a secret they both share.

## The List

The day Paige leaves her family, she makes a list of all the things she can do. Upon her return and the medical emergency involving Max, Paige writes another list that chronicles the things she cannot do.

## The Apartment

In the early years of their marriage, Nicholas and Paige live in a tiny apartment that is cluttered, but full of homey feelings.



## **The House**

Shortly after Nicholas' residency, Nicholas and Paige buy a house they cannot afford because Nicholas feels he must keep up appearances to further his career. Paige feels the house is colorless and not very homey, but she lives in it to make Nicholas happy.

## **Mercy**

Mercy is the name of the diner where Paige goes to work shortly after arriving in Massachusetts and where she meets Nicholas.

## **Donegal County, Ireland**

Paige's father is from Donegal County in Ireland. Her father constantly tells her stories about Ireland. Patrick O'Toole always talks about returning to Donegal County someday, even though he was only five when his parents moved to the United States.

## **Chicago, Illinois**

Chicago is a large city at the uppermost tip of Illinois. Chicago is where Paige grew up and is where she goes when she runs away from Nicholas and Max.

## **Cambridge, Massachusetts**

When Paige leaves home shortly after her high school graduation, she takes a bus to Cambridge, Massachusetts in order to make a new life for herself. Within a few days, Paige has a job and has met the man she will marry, Nicholas.

## **Farleyville, North Carolina**

Farleyville, North Carolina, a place of green, rolling hills, much like Paige imagines Ireland, is where Paige finds her mother.



# Themes

## Parenthood

One of the main themes of this novel is parenthood. This theme is not about the relationship between the child and the parent, but the capacity of a person to be a parent. Paige is afraid to be a mother because her own mother ran away when she was only five. The memories of her mother that Paige has are not encouraging because her mother was quite unconventional in her parenting skills. Paige feels that she did not have a role model to follow in order to know how to be a good mother, although she did have a good father, who did all he could to make sure she had a good childhood.

When Paige learns she is pregnant with Max, she panics, because she had aborted a child. Paige feels she sinned when she had her abortion and will be punished for what she has done. This new baby feels foreign in Paige's womb, and Paige is unhappy with the feel of him as he begins to grow inside of her. When Max is born, Paige has no idea what to do with him; she is unhappy that breastfeeding is painful and afraid she will never be able to make the child happy. Max is a colicky baby and cries often. Paige sees this as her fault. Paige also finds it impossible to leave the house with her baby and does not take him anywhere until he is six weeks old. At this point, Paige takes the baby with her to a doctor's appointment and all goes well until the baby wakes up on the way home, and Paige is forced to pull the car to the side of the road to nurse him.

All new parents find it is difficult to deal with their new charge. A baby is a full-time job. However, some parents never find a way to cope with this new demand on their lives. Paige's mother never found a way to consolidate her daughter into her life and still maintain her individual identity. Paige is afraid the same will happen to her. However, Paige's is more concerned for her child than she realizes, making her a far better mother than she knows.

## Parent-Child Relationships

This novel examines the theme of parent-child relationships on three separate levels. The first level is Paige's relationship with her own parents. Paige has a close relationship with her father, since from the time she was five, she grew up with him and no mother. However, after Paige has a secret abortion, she feels her father knows her shame and that he is equally ashamed of her. Paige decides she must run as far away from her home as possible so as to save her father any more shame. Paige's mother left when Paige was only five, leaving Paige and her father alone and giving no word as to where she went. Paige has vivid memories of her mother and feels driven to find her mother because Paige feels that she herself has failed as a mother. When Paige does find her mother, she does not find the answers that she had thought she might, although she finally realizes that she is not like her mother. Paige returns to her family whereas her mother did not.



The second parent-child relationship detailed within this novel is the relationship between Nicholas and his parents. Nicholas was a late-in-life child, who was born after many years of attempts and disappointments. Nicholas was a spoiled child, given everything he could possibly desire. However, when Nicholas decides he wants to marry Paige, his parents cut him off, afraid that Paige will take Nicholas away from everything they have fought for and built in their lives. Nicholas takes this rejection with difficulty but marries Paige anyway. After Max is born and Paige leaves, Nicholas turns to his parents for help, since he cannot find help anywhere else. Nicholas' parents are very happy to take care of their grandson and happy to have Nicholas back in their lives. Nicholas' parents admit they were wrong about Paige and actually admire her now more than ever. When Paige returns, Nicholas' parents take Paige's side and let her move in with them because they know Paige is exactly what Nicholas needs. It takes Nicholas longer to figure this out for himself.

The final parent-child relationship examined in this novel is the relationship between Paige and Nicholas and their son Max. When Paige learns she is pregnant, she is less than thrilled, although Nicholas is very happy. Paige feels she does not know how to be a good mother, since she did not have one of her own. When Max is born and Paige does not automatically know how to care for him, she sees this as proof that she is a bad mother. When Max falls and gets a bloody nose, Paige is even more convinced she cannot be a good mother. Paige leaves her family that day. When Nicholas is forced to take care of his son due to Paige's desertion, he has no idea how to care for a baby, since he has been working non-stop since the baby's birth and has not been around to see what Paige does to care for him. Nicholas struggles for the first few weeks until he meets several women who tell him how to care for the child. Nicholas turns into the father Paige always knew he could be, while Paige is finally relaxed around her child and a much better mother herself.

The parent-child relationships in this novel build upon each other, explaining and dictating the way each character behaves and responds in moments of crises. These relationships are a major theme in this novel because the major plot line follows the idea of motherhood, not only through the character of Paige and her mother, May, but through Astrid, Nicholas' mother. Although motherhood is a major theme, the father's role in child rearing must also be included as a theme because Paige's father and Nicholas took up the slack when the mothers decided they could not handle the job any longer.

## Individuality

Individuality is a major theme in this novel because it is a challenge that several of the characters struggle with. The first character who struggles with this theme is May, Paige's mother. May is a woman who feels strongly about her own identity, and feels that by being a wife and a mother, she has simply become an extension of someone else's identity and no longer has an identity of her own. In order to resolve this problem, May leaves her family when Paige is five. Although this is a difficult thing for May to do,





she feels she cannot return to her family because she caused too much hurt to be allowed back into the family.

Nicholas also struggles with his individuality. Nicholas is driven to be successful because he was raised by a father who had to fight for everything the father gained in life. Nicholas spends so much time fighting for his career and his own identity, that of a surgeon, that the fact that he is also a husband and father becomes lost. Nicholas does not take the time he needs to make sure his wife is happy and that he is bonding with his child. Nicholas is so focused on his own identity that he loses sight of the one thing that matters the most to him, his wife.

Paige has no idea what her identity is. Paige goes from being Patrick's daughter and Jake's girl, to being Nicholas' wife. Paige loses her hopes and dreams in her marriage. She is so busy caring for Nicholas that she forgets to take care of herself. Paige stops drawing, the one talent she has always nurtured. When Paige gives birth to Max, she suddenly finds herself cast in a role with which she has no familiarity. Paige begins to think almost obsessively about her own mother and becomes convinced that she is just like her mother and will one day leave her family the way her mother once did. However, when Paige finds her mother, she realizes that she is a person unto herself and is not like her mother. Paige returns to her family in a way her mother was always afraid to do and eventually regains the family's trust.

Individuality is an important theme in this novel because ultimately it is a novel about the search for one's own identity. Every person must discover who they are and what they want from life in order to obtain happiness in this life. Paige learns this the hard way, as does Nicholas.

# Style

## Point of View

The point of view of this novel switches between first person, with Paige as the narrator and third person with Nicholas as the narrative character. Each character receives equal space in the book, some chapters repeating information given in a prior chapter in order for the reader to see the same scene through the other character's viewpoint. In this way, the reader is always aware of how each character feels about a given situation because the reader has seen it through both viewpoints. This can be redundant at times, but it does give a clearer view of the emotional aspects of the novel for the reader.

Whenever the novel is seen through Paige's first person point of view, the reader gets direct insight into her emotions, her thoughts, and her frame of mind. At times, even this direct insight can be confusing, especially when Paige herself does not know what it is she wants or what she is doing, such as the day she leaves the house to do the grocery shopping and ends up leaving for three months. When the novel is seen through Nicholas' point of view, not only does the reader get insight into his emotions and thoughts, but the reader is also allowed to see things that Paige would not be privy to, such as the way Nicholas struggles with Max the first few weeks she is gone. These chapters also give insight into the thoughts and emotions of Nicholas' mother as the narration occasionally strays into her view point during a chapter that is denoted as one of Nicholas' third person narrations.

This shift in point of view works in this novel because it allows the reader to peek into not only the thoughts and emotions of Paige, but it also into those of Nicholas. The narration is not without fault, however, expanding the length of the novel to a point where the reader may begin to wonder if the point will ever be made; however, the advantage of being able to explore the depth of the character's emotions make this narration style work.

## Setting

There are three major settings within this novel beginning with Chicago, Illinois. Chicago is where Paige was born and raised, a large town that is made smaller by the tight communities within the larger urban sprawl. Paige spends most of her narration time in Chicago within the safety of her parents' home, a small, modest house. Paige's mother once drew horses on the ceiling of the kitchen, so that the two of them could lie on the kitchen table for hours and watch the horses seemingly race across the room. The house also contains Patrick's workshop in the basement, a place where Paige spent countless hours watching her father work on his various inventions, always with a gleam of happy expectation in his eyes. This room is one of Paige's favorite memories of her childhood.



The second setting in the novel is Cambridge, Massachusetts. Paige begins her life in Cambridge by working in a small diner called Mercy. At Mercy, Paige makes friends and she meets Nicholas, who will quickly become her husband. Mercy is a tiny diner with dingy walls and worn-out booths. The only decoration in the diner is the portraits that Paige drew of the customers, including Nicholas. After her marriage to Nicholas, Paige and he move into a tiny apartment that is so small Nicholas is constantly stepping on Paige's art supplies. After his residency, Nicholas and Paige buy a house, but it does not have the same charm of their apartment, and Paige feels her spirit choked away by its drab colors. The house seems to represent everything that is missing from Paige's life: color and direction. The house is symbolic of the way Paige feels as she finds herself stuck in a marriage where she is alone most of the time, having and raising a baby she neither wants nor feels competent to care for.

The final setting of the novel is Farleyville North Carolina. Farleyville is a tiny town nestled among the hills and valleys of North Carolina, a resemblance to the Ireland her father often described to Paige as a young girl. Paige finds the similarity remarkable upon her arrival. This is where Paige finds her mother, living on a rented ranch where she gives riding lessons and raises a show horse with prestigious bloodlines. This place feels foreign to Paige when she first arrives but becomes more of a home than she has known in many years. Paige is tempted to stay here for a while, to stay with her mother and leave the pain of her family behind. However, Paige eventually realizes she does not have to be like her mother and makes the decision to return to Nicholas and Max.

The settings in this novel are important because each one echoes Paige's feelings at each point in her life, especially the house she shares with Nicholas and Max. Paige is an emotional woman who feeds off her surroundings. When Paige was a child, she took comfort from the familiar surroundings of her mother's kitchen and her father's workshop. When Paige is an adult, she draws comfort from the familiar, from Mercy and the apartment she shares with Nicholas. However, when Nicholas insists they move into a house full of drab, dull colors, Paige feels the color go out of her life likewise. Paige even stops drawing while in this house. It is not until Paige finds her mother in a place eerily similar to her father's Donegal County that she stops allowing her surroundings to dictate her emotions and returns home to claim what is hers.

## Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is simple and direct with only the occasional set of words that a common reader might not understand. Nicholas, one of the main characters, is a doctor and there are times when he speaks of his career using vocabulary an average person might not be familiar with. However, these words are used infrequently and are usually explained in the narration.

The author tells her story with both exposition and dialogue, with the dialogue often consisting of short, easy passages, while the exposition can, at times, be lengthy, although simple to follow. Conversations take place over the phone, through correspondence, and face to face. Some of the dialogue is heavy with strong emotion



and some so carefree and light that the reader might wonder why it was included at all. There are times when the writer includes written correspondence as the narrator reads it, and other times when the narrator is writing a note or making a list. The author reveals person's thoughts as he or she writes them down. All these techniques help to develop each character fully.

The author also pays attention to her settings and her character's senses in a way that allows the reader to feel as though they are driving down the street with the character. When the author introduces a new setting, she does not offer minute details, but introduces only what is needed in order for the reader to fully appreciate each setting. This keeps the pace of the novel moving quickly without causing the reader to feel that they do not know where each scene is taking place.

## Structure

The novel is divided into forty-four chapters, each chapter named either for Paige or Nicholas, depending on which is the focus of that chapter. This unique way of naming her chapters allows the readers to be aware before they read a single word whose point of view the chapter will follow, with the exception of the few occasions in which a chapter denoted to be Nicholas' is actually written in the viewpoint of his mother, Astrid. This also takes away the shock a reader might experience when moving from the first person point of view to the third person point of view.

The novel follows two distinct story lines. The first is a love story revolving around Nicholas and Paige. The novel opens with Nicholas and Paige meeting in a diner where Paige works, their falling in love and marriage, and their separation shortly after their son's birth. The second story line revolves around Paige's desire to find her mother. This story line first introduces the reader to Paige's history with her mother and the fact that her mother left when Paige was five. Shortly after her son's birth, Paige decides she must find her mother and succeeds in doing so. These two story lines are also intertwined with several smaller plot lines, one regarding Nicholas' relationship with his parents, another Paige's relationship with her father, and finally a plot line revolving around Paige's teenage sweetheart that ended with an abortion.

The pace of the novel ebbs and flows, at times quickly paced and at other slow and methodical, like a lazy summer afternoon. This fluctuating pace mimics that of a heartbeat, which can be seen as symbolic of the entire story for two reasons. First, the novel is a love story which has everything to do with the heart. Second, Nicholas is a heart surgeon.



## Quotes

"Nicholas won't let me into my own house, but I have been watching my family from a distance." Prologue, Paige, pg. 1

"When I least expected to, I found Mercy."

Part 1, Conception, 1985-1993, Chapter 1, Paige, pg. 9

"In Nicholas' defense, he did not have much time to discover his new wife. His rotations kept him at the hospital more often than he was at home, and after he graduated from Harvard, he was even more pressured for time." Part 1, Conception, 1985-1993, Chapter 6, Nicholas, pg. 87

"The women lay on the blue industrial carpet like a string of little islands, their bellies swelling toward the ceiling and trembling slightly as they panted and exhaled. Nicholas was late for Lamaze class." Part 1, Conception, 1985-1993, Chapter 12, Nicholas, pg. 160

"I woke up in a pool of my own milk."

Part 1, Conception, 1985-1993, Chapter 16, Paige, pg. 188

"I lifted my head to see if Max was quieting down, and then I saw the blood, staining my shirt and a corner of the beautiful new scarf. My baby was bleeding."

Part 1, Conception, 1985-1993, Chapter 18, Paige, pg. 212

"I knew even before I turned onto my old block that I would not be staying long enough to remember all the things about my childhood that I'd trapped in some dark corner of my mind." Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 19, Paige, pg. 226

"Astrid and Robert Prescott sat on the floor of their dining room under the magnificent cherry table that, with all the leaves in place, could seat twenty. Max seemed to like it under there, as if it were some kind of natural cave that deserved exploration."

Part 2, Growth, Summer 1993, Chapter 30, Nicholas, pg. 333

"I marvel at this man, whom everyone seems to know, who seems so controlled and so calm. Nicholas, who could not tell you where I keep the peanut butter in his own kitchen, is completely in his element at this hospital." Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 33, Paige, pg. 364

"Suddenly I realize that this is what I've been waiting for--a man who depends entirely on me. When I met Jake, I spent years trying to make him fall in love with me. When I married Nicholas, I lost him to the mistress of medicine. I dreamed for years of a man who couldn't live without me, a man who pictured my face when he closed his eyes,



who loved me when I was a mess in the morning and when dinner was late and even when I overloaded the washing machine and burned out the motor." Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 38, Paige, pg. 413

"When he had changed Max's diaper and seen the blood, he didn't even stop to think. He bundled Max in a blanket and ran out the door without a diaper bag, without his wallet. But he hadn't driven straight to the hospital; he'd gone to his parents'. Instinctively, he had come for Paige." Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 41, Nicholas, pg. 437

"Another mark for my accomplishment list: I can stand on my own in a world that is falling apart. I can stand so well, I realize, that I can support someone else."

Part 3, Delivery, Fall 1993, Chapter 44, Paige, pg. 452



## Topics for Discussion

Is it possible for a person to inherit the desire to run away? Do children inherit bad parenting genes? Is it possible for the child of a bad parent to be a good parent? Was May a bad parent before she ran away? Did running away make May a bad mother? What might have happened if May had stayed? Would Paige have run away if her mother had not ran away?

What constitutes bad parenting? Was Paige a bad parent? Was Max's accident, falling off the couch, an example of Paige's bad parenting or simply an accident? Do all mothers know how to be a good mother before their child is born? Where does this knowledge come from? Would Paige have known what to do if her mother had never left?

Discuss fatherhood. Was Patrick a good father? Why did Paige not learn how to be a good parent from her father? Was Nicholas a good father? Would he have been a good father if Paige had never left? Was Robert a good father? Should Robert have disowned Nicholas for marrying Paige?

Discuss ambition. Is there ever a time when ambition is a bad thing? Can a person have too much ambition? Too little ambition? Did Nicholas have too much ambition? Did Paige have any ambition, or did she give up on her own desires? What about Patrick and May? Did they have ambition? Why did neither achieve their desires? Do you think they gave up on ambition?

Discuss art. What is the significance of Paige's artwork? Why do you think she drew secrets into her art? Where do you think she got these secrets? Was Paige psychic?

Discuss setting. Was setting an important detail in this novel? Why do you think the writer had May living in North Carolina? Did May's choice of location have anything to do with her past? Why or why not? Why do you think the writer had Paige grow up in Chicago? What is the difference between Chicago and Cambridge? How did moving to Cambridge change Paige's life?

Discuss the point of view of this novel. Why do you think the writer chose to narrate Paige's chapters with the first person and Nicholas' with the third person? How would the novel have been different if it had been written the other way around? Or if the entire novel were written in the third person point of view or first person? Would it have been more confusing or clearer?