

How to Be Single Study Guide

How to Be Single by Liz Tuccillo

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Plot Summary

NOTE: This guide specifically refers to *How to be Single* by Liz Tuccillo, Pocket Books, New York, USA, 2008 (paperback). Also, this guide refers to each chapter by its rule number.

When Dale leaves Georgia for his samba instructor, Georgia turns to her friend, Julie, for help. Georgia is very emotional and needs a girls night out. Julie puts together such a night, inviting her friends Ruby, Alice, and Serena to join them. None of the women have ever met before. Knowing Julie is the only thing they have in common. Nervous about what to plan, Julie enlists the help of Alice, a dating pro. The women end up at a bar called Hogs and Heifers, and the evening is quite eventful. Serena gets alcohol poisoning, and Georgia gets thrown out for dancing on the bar too long. As the women wait for Serena in the emergency room, Julie strikes up conversation with two French women. After hearing their stories, the French women tell Julie that American women have no pride. Julie decides to travel the world to compare single women and to learn about the single culture in different countries.

On Julie's travels, she falls in love with a married French businessman named Thomas. Thomas tells her he has an open relationship. The rule he and his wife have is that he must return home after two weeks. When he chooses to stay longer with Julie, his wife flies to China to force him home and to tell him that she is pregnant.

Meanwhile, Ruby, Georgia, and Alice go about their single lives back in the states. Watching Serena take her oath to become a swami is the catalyst that prompts each of the women to make a vow to herself. Ruby vows to focus on becoming a single mother. However, she backs out of artificial insemination at the last minute and decides to improve her mental health first. Alice vows to marry the next man she meets. Unfortunately, she is not in love with Jim. She loves him, but there is no spark that she thinks she should have in a relationship. After trying different things to make it work, Alice finally admits to Jim that she is not in love with him. Georgia decides to date younger men and enjoy her single time. Serena, upon taking a vow of celibacy, suddenly has more sex than she has in years, thanks to a handsome swami. As a token of his love, he ties a black piece of string around her ankle. Soon, she notices there are many women with this same type of string tied around their ankle. She confronts them and finds out that they are all happy to share him. Serena thinks sharing this man is the craziest thing she has ever heard. She quits the yoga center and gets her old job back as a celebrity chef.

Julie and her friends need time away from it all, so they all travel to Iceland. There, they plan an impromptu ritual to start a new life. They wrap their fears and past failures in a cocktail napkin and burn it, symbolically burning the failures that have been burning inside them.



Chapter 1: Rule 1

Summary

Chapter 1: Rule 1 sets up the book's structure as a series of rules for being single. The chapter jumps between present and past tense. The story is primarily told in present tense from the first person point of view of Julie, the one friend that the others have in common. Words in italics are comments made by her friends that she is incorporating into her narrative or for emphasis. Each friend is introduced in sections titled "How Georgia is Single," "How Alice is Single," and "How Serena is Single" to offer background information for the story.

The chapter begins with "How Georgia is Single." Julie is talking to Georgia on the phone at 8:45 a.m.. Georgia says she wants to die and begs Julie to arrange a girls night out to show her she can still have fun after her husband, Dale, has decided to leave her for his younger samba teacher. Julie, who is running errands for work, tries to juggle a tray of Starbucks coffees to-go as she attempts to get into her car while talking on her cell phone to Georgia. Julie reveals that she is a publicist for a publishing company. On this particular day, she is helping to promote a new book about how women can keep their husbands attracted to them throughout their pregnancy.

Julie reveals that she always thought Georgia took advantage of Dale. She says Georgia always took a negative, bossy tone with Dale. Julie, as a single woman, takes note of Georgia's treatment of Dale and decides that once she finds a husband, she will always treat him with kindness, always look hot, and will do whatever he asks.

Even though Julie is tired of the New York single scene, she knows that she owes Georgia a girls night out. Of all her friends, Georgia is the only one who ever arranged dinner parties or blind dates to try to help Julie meet someone. So, she agrees.

In the section "How Alice is Single," Julie explains that Alice was dumped by her her boyfriend at age 38 after five years of dating. Alice, a defense attorney for Legal Aid, decides the breakup is a crime against her ovaries and vows to make dating her full-time job. She gave up practicing law, but she continues to teach part time at a university so she can pay her bills. She made it her job to get invited to all important functions in New York. So as not to appear desperate, she stays busy learning new hobbies or trying new things. As an added plus, she meets new men at these functions, too. Since she has been dating full-time, Julie knew Alice could recommend all the best places to go on a girls night out. She invites Alice, who agrees to find all the best places to take Georgia on their girls night out.

In the section "How Serena is Single," the reader learns that Serena was a vegan celebrity chef whom Julie befriended in college. Serena did not like going into smoky, loud places because they are not good for her health, but she agreed to go on the girls night out. Serena had a boyfriend named Clyde for three years, but she knew he was



not "the one." She never found anyone truly interesting to her. So, at age 35, she began concentrating on her self by taking yoga and following drastic diets. Since she settled on Hindu as a way of life, she is very patient. She is the friend that Julie laments to most about her own job as a publicist. Julie always wanted to be a writer, but she does not want to give up her steady paycheck for something so uncertain.

In the section "How Ruby is Single," the reader learns that Ruby was alone after the death of her cat three months ago. Ruby was depressed and did not want to leave her apartment. She got the cat after a relationship with a man fell apart.

Julie explains how she is single, too. She dates, but none of the guys seem to work out. She wonders how people find each other in New York. She says she gets upset and cries occasionally about being alone. Then, she starts going out all over again. Alice accuses Julie of being too snobby because she refuses to try online dating. Julie thinks Alice is the snobby one because she will not go out with the fruit stand guy who is interested in her.

Julie's mother thinks Julie is single because she enjoys being independent. The truth is that Julie is not happy being alone. She shares her history of dating "bad boys." She decided to break her "bad boy" habit after Jeremy broke up with her by not showing up for her father's funeral.

At the end of Chapter 1, Julie hopes they all have a good girls night out, but she's satisfied just by getting everyone out of their apartments for a change.

Analysis

Chapter 1 sets the tone and structure for the novel.. Each chapter is labeled as a rule. The content of that chapter supports the rule and tells the story. This chapter is written in present tense from the first person point of view of Julie, the narrator. Julie is the protagonist of the story because she pulls together all her friends and creates a support group from them all. At this point in the story, it seems as though the conflict will be women trying to understand men.

The chapter is full of wit and sarcasm. For instance, Julie remarks that Georgia is "a tad upset" after she screams that she wants to die (1). She also makes sarcastic remarks about the book, *How to Keep Your Husband Attracted to You During Your Pregnancy*." Her sarcasm makes a point – women are worried about keeping their men. Julie and her friends are worried about getting men, and Julie herself admits she has already contemplated ways to keep the husband she does not even have yet.

The writer uses italics to show when Julie is incorporating her friends words into her own thoughts. For example, she tells about Dale's "whore gutter trash" samba instructor. The words "whore gutter trash" are in italics, representing to the reader that Julie is incorporating Georgia's thoughts into her narration. Julie's assessment of Georgia's treatment of Dale allow the reader to compare and contrast Georgia and Julie as well as married woman to single woman. Julie tells how Georgia has treated Dale,



then remarks that Georgia took him for granted. Comparing Julie's ideas about how she would treat her husband represent a romantic idealism, while Georgia's represent a harsh reality if her tone was really as bad as Julie recalls.

The author uses lawyer lingo for Alice's language. When Alice tells her story about the ex-boyfriend dumping her after five years, she uses legal terminology to express her frustration. She sees the dumping as a "felony" and "grand larceny."

Julie points out the irony in Alice's decision to quit working to concentrate on dating so she could meet someone "when you least expect it." Alice explains that she stays busy and enjoys new hobbies and activities that she has always wanted to try. By staying busy, she does not look desperate, according to Alice.

Serena, ironically, works on improving herself so she will be perfect when she meets Mr. Right. Julie believes all this self work has made Serena more complicated than any man would want to deal with. Despite Julie's opinion of her, Serena represents a light. She is thin and has a light-complexion. She strives for religious enlightenment and inner peace. Her name even suggests it since it is so close to the word "serene."

Julie uses several sentence fragments to tell about Ruby. The fragments represent Ruby's broken feelings and previous relationships.

Discussion Question 1

Why is the back story about how each character ends up single important?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the symbolism of Serena's appearance and name.

Discussion Question 3

Discuss Georgia's insistence on having a girls' night out.

Vocabulary

contempt, impatience, uproarious, felony, insubordination, diatribe, reflux, bingo



Chapter 2: Rule 2

Summary

Chapter 2: Rule 2 alternates between sections of present tense and past tense. Julie explains that she and Alice carefully selected plans for their upcoming girls night out for Georgia, who had threatened suicide and feared living life alone. They knew the night had to be upbeat and fun-filled. Using Alice's dating information and logic, they choose to go to a steak house for dinner because it will be filled with men seeking meat and beer. Julie wonders how her friends will get along. Having not met previously, they only know about each other through her. She sums up their characteristics: Georgia is newly divorced and on the verge of a nervous breakdown; Ruby is depressed over the death of her cat; Serena obsesses over her mental and physical health; and, Alice's full time job is dating. Georgia tries to dress too young, and her skirt is so short that Julie can see her behind. No one brings it to Georgia's attention.

Serena drank a vodka tonic, which is out of character for her. She ordered a vegetable plate. Alice introduced them to a table of guys and explained that they were out to show Georgia a good time after her separation. Soon, all the women were giggling like schoolgirls and having a good time. From the steakhouse, the women went to a sports bar called Sports. A guy named Gary that they met at the steakhouse tagged along with Ruby. Disappointed with the fact that all the men were watching sports, Alice convinced Julie to play foosball. In less than four minutes, guys walked up to them and challenge them to a game, earning Alice the title of genius.

Julie noticed that Serena was eating chicken wings and ordering more. Georgia was trying to get a man's attention, but he was watching a game. Julie overheard Ruby tell Gary that she loved Ralph but that he was just a cat. One of the foosball challengers asked Ruby what kind of work she did. She said she was a facialist instead of a professor. Later, she explained to Julie that a study showed that the smarter a woman is, the less likely she is to marry (34). She said she will tell a guy after a few dates what her real job is if it looks like they will be together for some time. Just then, Julie saw Georgia kissing the guy she'd been talking to; he did not seem too happy about it. The foosball guys, Bruce and Todd, suggested that they all go to a bar called Hogs and Heifers, a biker bar where women take turns dancing on the bar. Gary tells Ruby he will meet them there.

After arriving at Hogs and Heifers, Georgia, Serena, and Alice hopped on the bar and started to dance. After the song ended, Georgia stayed on the bar for more dancing. Serena, covered in hot sauce from her wing binge, meets a guy named Frankie who is an art dealer. A man named David introduced himself to Julie and she explained that her friend was still dancing on the bar because her husband recently left her. He seemed to understand and was very nice to Julie. Just when she thought maybe he was someone she could be interested in, he joined the others in the club who were yelling for Georgia to get off the bar. David yelled at Georgia and tells her that someone younger and hotter



wants to dance on the bar. Georgia heard and was hurt; so was Julie. Alice jumps to Georgia's defense and both end up scratched and bruised from getting thrown out of the bar. Julie left David to check on Serena, who was vomiting down the side of Frankie because she's had too much to drink. He was disgusted with Serena and suggested they take her to the hospital for alcohol poisoning. Ruby was upset because Gary never showed up, but they all leave to get Serena to the hospital. Julie felt guilty for not noticing Serena's heavy drinking, which she refers to as "hazing herself" (43).

In the emergency room waiting area, Julie noticed two French women in their early forties. She struck up a conversation with them and they appeared disgusted when they learned she had one friend in for alcohol poisoning and two in for fighting in a bar. They said American women have no pride. The next morning, Julie got up and did some online research about single women in various countries. On Monday, she approached her boss about her book idea. She wants to travel the world and learn about how women are single in different countries. Instead of telling women how to find a man, she wants to tell women how to be single. Julie convinced her to support the book.

Before Julie set out on her writing assignment, she called her four friends and asked them to look after each other in her absence. Serena told her she was going to become a swami; she had already quit her job and would take her vows at a ceremony soon.

Analysis

"Don't be crazy, no matter how you feel, because it makes us all look bad," is a theme that carries throughout Chapter 2: Rule 2. The night gets off to a good start, but a person who never drinks or eats meat is suddenly drinking and eating wings. Later in the night when she begins vomiting on Frankie, who is disgusted with Serena and her entire group of friends. Julie feels that when Georgia and Alice get tossed out of the Hogs and Heifers bar, it also reflects poorly on the group. Her feeling is justified by the French women in the hospital waiting room. They tell her that American women have no pride.

Alice, known for her brilliant mind as a defense attorney, employs her logic to plan the girls night out. It is ironic that she uses her intelligence for scouting out men and that she goes as far as to lie about her career in order to meet men. Their goal is not to look desperate, but everything they do is ironically fueled by desperation.

The author captures the fun of the evening and helps create the voice of the narrator by using fun terms that keep with Julie's witty nature. For instance, "There was gold in them thar steakhouse" is a reference to a western expansion phrase attributed to gold miners, "There's gold in them thar (there) hills" (31). To Julie and her friends, finding a good man is worth as much as gold. Julie uses another witty phrase in her description of Georgia on the bar. She likened her drunken dancing to a stripper on speed, a simile (40). She also describes Serena as "hazing herself" with her extreme drinking (43). This phrase is a reminder that Serena and Julie met in college. Hazing is a reference to fraternity rituals in which heavy drinking was often involved.



Ruby is smitten with Gary very quickly after meeting him. When she tells him that Ralph was just a cat, it foreshadows the end of whatever relationship they are going to build. In Chapter 1, Julie noted that when Ruby falls quickly for men, she is devastated when the relationship falls apart. The reader does not have to wait long for this foreshadowing to present itself. By the end of the chapter, Gary still has not shown up to Hogs and Heifers after promising to meet Ruby there.

Sarcasm continues in Julie's narration in Chapter 2. For instance, she notes that Hogs and Heifers is full of men from all backgrounds who share "a deep respect for women and their struggles..." (37). She refers to her own friends – Georgia, Serena, and Alice – as "White Trash Rocketts," another example of sarcasm and a reminder of the chapter's title. Dancing on the bar for one song is acceptable to Julie, but staying there song after song like Georgia did is not. Throughout their girls night, several people have looked at the group of women as though they are crazy. The man Georgia kissed thinks she is crazy, Frankie thinks Serena is crazy and disgusting, and the French women say the women are disgusting because they have no pride.

In considering their lack of pride, Julie thinks of several women important to the feminist movement (45). Steinem was co-founder of Ms. Magazine and the first woman to speak at the National Press Club. Jane Fonda is an actress and feminine activist. The Mary and Rhoda reference refer to a 1970s TV show called The Mary Tyler Moore Show. In it Mary and her neighbor Rhoda are single women who have jobs and make lives for themselves during the feminist movement's beginnings.

As the reader learns that the narrator will set out on a world-wide trip to explore dating customs from around the world, it is apparent that Julie is the protagonist of the book. The antagonist, then, is reality. The facts Julie uncovers in her initial online research make reality the biggest challenge single women must face.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss reality as the antagonist of this story.

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the women's out of character behavior and identify which were dangerous and which were silly. What is the difference?

Discussion Question 3

What impressed Julie about David? How and why did David quickly lose favor in Julie's eyes?

Vocabulary

abundance, devouring, vegetarian, divine, groove, gyrating, siblings, hazing, swami



Chapter 3: Rule 3

Summary

Chapter 3 opens with Julie being in France. Her oldest friend, Steve, now lives in Paris and he makes arrangements for Julie to stay with him and meet some single women to talk about their lives. Steve takes Julie to a club called Regine's which has a ladies' night each Saturday from 8 to 11 p.m. Only women are permitted during those hours. Steve says this gives women a chance to meet and talk before men are allowed at 11 p.m. He says that men are lined up trying to get in because they know the club is full of beautiful women every Saturday night. He also tells her that French women sip wine, but do not get drunk. Initially, Julie thinks this is a novel idea and a big cultural difference – that French women go out in droves just for the chance to make friends with likeminded women. After getting into the club, however, she discovers it is a male stripper club. Since Steve is not allowed in the club, he turns Julie over to his friend Clara. Clara introduces her to Patrice, Audrey, and Joanne. Clara is also single, so Julie gets four interviews at the male strip club.

Julie learns that the French women have a different attitude toward men because of their pride. If they get dumped, they don't call the guy or try to find out what went wrong; they just accept it as "his loss" and move on (57). They are all good at accepting rejection. Clara introduces Julie to her brother, Thomas, who owns the club and several others in Paris. Julie describes the black-haired, blue-eyed man as dashing. He invites Julie to have dinner with him to discuss her project more.

Thomas and Julie have dinner at another club he owns. It is full of well-dressed people and all are couples. He explains that he invited her there to show her a different perspective of dating. He tells Julie he has an open marriage, meaning that he and his wife allow each other to date other people. This restaurant is a couples-only restaurant downstairs and sex club upstairs. Thomas gives her a tour and she sees shadows of people having sex in the low-lit room. Thomas tells her sex clubs and open marriages are one way that people keep their marriages exciting. She is appalled, but he reminds her that she has never had sex in a long-term relationship and is not aware of the need to break routine.

The section "Back in the States" is written in past tense from the omniscient point of view. Ruby, Alice, and Georgia attended Serena's swami ceremony. They were shocked to see Serena's shaved head and took note of how hot the male swami was. The three friends in the audience use the meditation time to make decisions for themselves. Georgia decided to date only young, hot guys. Alice decided to marry the next man she meets. Ruby decided to be a mother.

Ruby stops at a park on her way home from Serena's ceremony. She watches children play and hears two mothers talk about how hard it would be to be a single mother. Their conversation convinced Ruby to believe she would never be able to handle being a



single mother. She decided to get another cat, so she stopped at the animal shelter. She heard a dog crying and howling and asked to see him because he sounded so lonely. She learned that the dog had been adopted but brought back as an owner surrender. The dog was going to be put to sleep the next day. The shelter volunteer did not try to find the dog a good home; she just talked about how loud the dog was. Ruby was upset that she couldn't adopt the dog, but they were not allowed at her apartment. She did adopt a cat named Vanilla and signed up to be a volunteer once a week at the shelter. She decided she would work hard to find homes for the pets that were otherwise considered hard to adopt.

After the ceremony, Georgia changed into tight jeans and a sweater and went shopping at Whole Foods to meet men. She met a young man named Max who asked for her phone number.

The night of the ceremony, Alice went on a blind date with Jim. He was smitten with her and she enjoyed his attention. She decided not to try so hard this time.

In Chapter 3: Rule 3, the section "Back in France" returns to first person narration. It is told in past tense. Julie met Audrey and Joanne at the opera to watch their friend Steve conduct the orchestra. They saw Lohengrin, a story about a princess who dreams about her knight in shining armor. When he appears, she cannot ask him who he is or where he is from; otherwise, she will lose him. Naturally, she cannot help but ask and she loses her true love forever. Thomas and his wife were also at the opera. He waved to Julie and pointed her out to his wife from a distance. His wife left early and Thomas invited Julie for a walk. When he walked her back to Steve's apartment, Thomas said they should have an affair. Julie had a coughing fit; then told him she did not believe in sleeping with married men. He understood. She told him she would probably go to Rome next and he encouraged her to do so. He said he had restaurants there and knew many single women there as well. She sarcastically replied, "I'm sure you do" (90). He was annoyed and told her that she must dislike herself a lot to think he acted that way with every woman he met and told her it was not fair for her to paint an image of him as a pig.

In a second section, "Back in the States," Georgia called Ruby and Alice to meet her to discuss Max. He never called her. Alice told her that her only defense was to be resilient. Georgia decided to put a stop to that kind of behavior. She left Ruby and Alice and went to Whole Foods to find Max and give him a piece of her mind. She found Max talking to a young woman who had an NYU backpack. He was uncomfortable when Georgia approached him. She told him that asking for a woman's number then not calling her was "ungentlemanly" (97). Under his breath, he told her not to go psycho on him. Georgia told him that she only appeared to be psycho because women in the past did not stand up for themselves when treated that way. She said she wanted to enlighten him. But her enlightening was getting loud and drawing a crowd. The NYU woman agreed that Max should not call Georgia a psycho for telling him how she felt. He called her a psycho, too. The NYU woman loudly told him not to call her a psycho. Security asked Georgia to leave. The NYU woman stayed to talk to Max. Georgia held together her dignity for a few blocks before starting to cry.



Analysis

In Chapter 3, Julie and all of her friends are trying to determine their belief sets. Julie does not believe in dating married men, as she tells Thomas (90). Despite her belief, she is very attracted to him. The fact that he is married gives him the bad boy element that Julie to which she has admitted she is most attracted. Georgia believes she will date younger men; Alice will marry the next man she meets, and Ruby will adopt another cat. Serena had a public ceremony in which she professed her beliefs, and also vowed to be celibate and give up all her worldly goods.

Ironically, Georgia breaks the second part of Rule 3: "Then Behave Accordingly." Georgia goes after younger men, but acts motherly when she scolds Max for not calling. She told him it was ungentlemanly not to call, but he never expressed any desire to be gentlemanly. This also breaks rule 2, which was to not to be crazy because it makes all women look crazy. Not only does Georgia put herself in the position so that she has to date again, but she has to learn dating according to a younger generation. It appears that her desire to date younger men is only in revenge against her husband, who left her for a younger woman. Julie's interest in Thomas, despite her proclamation that she does not believe in dating married men, foreshadows that she will break her own Rule 3 by not sticking with her belief. He owns a restaurant in Rome and knows people there, foreshadowing that Thomas and Julie may share a connection there as well.

In this chapter, the opera is another example of foreshadowing. The reader sees its fruition. The opera is about a princess who longs for her knight in shining armor. She learns that all she has to do to keep him once he arrives is not to ask who he is or where he is from. Curiosity gets the better of the princess, and she loses her knight when she asks for the truth. Julie looks at Thomas as a knight in shining armor when she first met him at Regine's. She described the crowd as parting as he walked in slow motion toward her (60). Her comment about him knowing single women in Rome slightly offended Thomas and he left, just like the princess who could not keep her mouth shut to keep from losing her knight in shining armor.

Thomas represents a knight in shining armor in this chapter for several reasons. First, his business connections can offer Julie more insight into her dating research. Secondly, he is handsome and charming. Third, he escorts her around Paris. Ironically armor and amour are very similar words. Amour suggests a secret love affair, which Thomas actually proposes to Julie.

The narrator uses several styles of language in Chapter 3. For example, Julie earns a half-hearted smile from Thomas when she makes a joke about his sex club clientele. He said most of his customers had been coming there for years. She remarked "No pun intended," which actually made the pun intentional (66). The pun she generated makes reference to sexual climax. The author chooses another play on words to drop a hint of foreshadowing in Chapter 3 when Thomas asks Steve if he can take Julie on a walk following the opera. Thomas comments on the warmth of the October night and tells Steve he would like to "take advantage" (89). Steve points out the irony of the phrase



when he asks if Thomas means he wants to take advantage of Julie. Even though Thomas explains that he specifically meant the nice weather, the author has planted the thought in the reader's mind, and it becomes an element of foreshadowing.

Joanne makes an interesting cultural distinction between French and American parents. Joanne tells Julie that French parents are honest with their children. If a child is not good at something, the parents level with them and there is no shame in failure. She suggests that American parents take a different approach to failure, trying to shield their children against it. Growing up knowing failure makes it easier for French women to accept dating failure. Alice is actually just figuring this out in Chapter 3 when she meets Jim. Instead of working hard to get him, she decides to simply enjoy his attention. She says that it is okay not to try so hard all the time (86). She has conditioned herself to be so competitive and to win, that it is unusual for her to take a more relaxed stance.

Ruby identifies with the loud shelter dog whose long, mournful howl draws her to see the dog. Since she is immediately drawn to the dog, she is likewise immediately alarmed to find out the dog will be euthanized the next day because no one likes to hear her mourn. Ruby has been mourning her dead cat for three months and has been very vocal about her depression. This connection, and knowing there's no way she can save the dog herself, leads Ruby to take a proactive step in her life. She volunteers at the shelter. Knowing she cannot help every dog that comes through, she can help find them homes.

Chapter 3 also introduces choices as one of the book's motifs. Throughout this chapter, Julie and her friends make choices. Julie chooses to travel to France for her book. Serena chooses to become a swami. Ruby chooses to volunteer. Alice chooses not to try too hard in her new relationship, and Georgia decides to date younger men. Julie's travels demonstrate different choices that other women around the world make. For instance, the French women accept rejection and take it less personally than Julie and her American friends.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the choices each woman makes in this chapter.

Discussion Question 2

Explain the differences between French and American cultures.

Discussion Question 3

Explain Georgia's logic in deciding to date only younger men.

Vocabulary

harpsichord, notion, banquette, pride, insecurities, ingenious



Chapter 4: Rule 4

Summary

In Chapter 4: Rule 4, Alice enjoyed the quaintness of being a couple with Jim. He told her that he loved her, and she told him she really did not know how to respond and he said it was fine.

In the section called On to Rome, Julie was on the plane hyperventilating from nervousness. She called the calmest person she knew, Serena, who talked her through some breathing exercises. She looked up and saw Thomas. He said he decided to go to Rome with her. He got her itinerary from Steve. He noticed her panic attack and gave her a muscle relaxer. She slept all the way to Rome. She awoke in her hotel room and found a note from Thomas, telling her to meet him at the café next door.

Julie met Thomas at the café. He was talking to a friend, Lorenzo, who had just been dumped by his girlfriend. She simply said she didn't love him anymore. He was personally destroyed and wanted advice from a single woman. He wanted to know how someone could just fall out of love. Julie said she didn't believe in romantic love. Lorenzo and Thomas were both shocked at her cynicism. Thomas asked her how love could ever find her if she didn't believe in it. She burst out crying, but he soon had her laughing again.

Thomas and Julie had dinner, then drove around Rome on a motorcycle Thomas borrowed from Lorenzo. When they returned to the hotel, Julie suddenly realized she had no idea where Thomas was staying. On the elevator, he made a point to tell her his room was on the third floor and hers was on the second. He said goodbye to her when the elevator stopped on her floor, giving her a customary kiss on both cheeks.

In the section called "Back in the States," Georgia was waiting for Dale to come visit for a talk. She knew she should get herself together to appear extremely hot, but instead she did not. When he arrived, he was hot, but she still did not regret her decision to stay comfortable instead of dressing up. Dale suggested Georgia get the kids through the week and he get them on weekends. She was mad because she would have them during the week when all the work had to be done – homework help, lunches for school, etc. He would have them for fun weekends. The narrator pointed out that this would have been a good arrangement to allow her to date, but she did not think of that. Instead, she demanded that his new girlfriend not be around her children because she broke up their marriage. Dale said that their marriage ended five years earlier, right after their daughter was born. Georgia was upset but tried to hide it by accusing Dale of lying to feel better about cheating on her. He said their marriage had been passionate and sexless. A heated argument began and ended with Dale storming out of the apartment.

In the section "Back in Rome," Julie visited with single females while Thomas had business meetings. She quickly found out that none of her interviewees had slept with



Thomas. She also learned they were shy, but not afraid to slap a man. Slapping was a consistent story from the Italian single females. The women told Julie that if she had not felt passionate enough to slap a man, she had never been in love. One of the women advised her to go out in Rome and fall in love right away. They advised her to let herself get lost in love.

At dinner, Julie asked Thomas if a woman had ever slapped him. He said that a French man might slap them back. Julie noticed that she enjoyed spending time with Thomas and that she was beginning to feel like they were a couple. Thomas got a phone call from Lorenzo, who was threatening to jump off the balcony of his apartment. Both leave the restaurant and run to Lorenzo's rescue. He wanted to kill himself as revenge against his ex-girlfriend. Thomas tackled Lorenzo and sat on him until he calmed down, making Thomas seem heroic to Julie. At that moment, she fell in love with him. Without thinking about it too much, she ran over and gave Thomas a big kiss on the lips. Afterward, she was embarrassed. Thomas gave Lorenzo a muscle relaxer so he would sleep through the night. On their way back to the hotel, Thomas told Julie he needed to go back to France; all his business in Rome was complete. She felt even more stupid for kissing him. He asked her how she enjoyed the week and she admitted it was fantastic. He said he enjoyed it even more. They kissed passionately in front of the colosseum and went to Thomas' room. The next morning, Julie felt guilty for staying with him but was still happy she allowed herself to get caught up in a moment. She realized she was ready to leave Rome, too.

Analysis

Chapter 4's subtitle carries a foreshadowing message: "Even Though It's Impossible to Know When You Should and When It's Just Going to End in Disaster." Something is going to end in disaster. At first, it appears that Julie's growing infatuation with Thomas may end in disaster, especially after she kisses him suddenly when he saves Lorenzo from jumping off his balcony. However, the end of the chapter finds Julie happy that she has taken a chance and loved passionately, even if just for a brief time. This means that something disastrous will come later in the story.

Alice's discovery of couples activities in New York City introduce her and her girlfriends to a culture they never knew existed – a couples only culture. This gives comparison to the couples only restaurant that Thomas owns in France. Of course, there is a big difference between his French sex club and the Brooklyn Botanical Garden; but they are both still destinations for couples. Alice realizes that she enjoys the couples culture, even though she isn't exactly crazy about Jim. She notes that she could have been holding hands with Ted Bundy and she would have been happy at these couples' destinations. Ted Bundy was a 1970s serial killer, kidnapper, and rapist who was put to death by electrocution in a Florida penitentiary.

During Julie's panic attack on the airplane leaving Paris, Thomas is a calming influence. He literally helped calm her anxiety attack. Georgia's discussion with Dale is an eye opener that places some of the blame of their broken marriage on her. He says they



never had sex and the passion died for him five years earlier. Georgia realizes this is true, but accepting it as Dale's reason for leaving will put her at least partially to blame for their breakup. She wants to blame the samba teacher Dale is dating now. She offers to have sex with him right then and there, complete with her oily hair and old sweatpants. The author's choice to add the imagery of her appearance shows that perhaps she is to blame for Dale's sexual interest in her dying.

So far, Julie has collected two differences between women around the world and American single women. In Paris, the single women have pride. In Rome, the women are free with slapping men who anger them. Ironically, one seems cold and the other seems very impassioned. The French women are cool with their pride. The Italian women are passionate in expressing their anger or frustration. If a man breaks up with a French woman, she is likely to say it is his loss and move forward. In Italy, the woman is likely to slap the man.

Conversations with Thomas and Lorenzo in the café and with the single Italian women lead Julie to two more revelations about being single. First, she must believe in love. The men point this out to her during their conversation. The single women tell her she also needs to believe she deserves it. The revelation is a big one for Julie.

The author uses some similes in this chapter to help create more vivid imagery. One is that Julie and Thomas kissed like teenagers. The image created is that they kissed like kissing was new and exciting, full of passion. Kissing in front of the coliseum also creates imagery and symbolism. Their kiss takes place in front of the historic landmark, which is both majestic and decaying. The growing feelings she feels for Thomas are likewise majestic, and her old values are decaying.

Discussion Question 1

What does Julie learn about French women?

Discussion Question 2

What does Julie learn about Italian men?

Discussion Question 3

Identify and discuss one instance of foreshadowing in this chapter.

Vocabulary

irrevocable, heaving, bodice, emanating, venturing, disoriented, sarcasm, anthropological



Chapter 5: Rule 5

Summary

In Chapter 5: Rule 5, Georgia and Julie tried on bikinis in Rio de Janeiro. Georgia found an orange one that made her look like a Bond girl. Julie tried one on, but the sales clerk advised her not to wear it because she had too much cellulite. Georgia, mad with the clerk's comments, stormed out without buying a swimsuit. When they got out of the store, Georgia decided to go back in and buy a bikini for Julie and herself, so she got the orange bikini she loved after all.

On the beach, Georgia and Julie met some single women and began talking about Julie's book project. The women tell them about a kissing custom in Rio. Men and women just walk up to each other and kiss. They talk about how married men cheat on their wives in Rio, but the women just accept it. One of the women, Flavia, told them the idea of fidelity is American. Flavia invited the women to join them at a local club that night. Georgia went with the intent to steal a kiss from any random man. Julie went to view that singles scene for her book.

At the club, Flavia met her recent one-night-stand, and Anna met her fiancé. Julie noticed a handsome man standing in the corner of the club near the door. She thought it was unusual to feel attracted to another man when she had just recently had sex with Thomas. Georgia, knowing Anna worried about her future husband visiting prostitutes, asked Anna's brother if he would tell his sister if he knew that happened. He said he would not because the men had to stick together. On the way out of the club, the handsome man walked up and kissed Julie and put his phone number into her phone. Georgia was happy that at least one of them had been kissed. The next morning, Julie woke up to see Georgia flipping through a catalog of some sort. It was a male prostitute catalog. Georgia picked one up the day before. Potential customers could select their choice of prostitute. Georgia said she was going to call one if she did not get kissed at the samba party they were going to attend that night.

Back in the states, Alice considered how nice it was to have steady sex, even if it was not passionate. She decided it was good enough. She decided to take her contentment and convert it into sexual excitement. They had the best sex of their relationship that day.

Serena began having erotic thoughts after taking a vow of celibacy. Ironically, she had not had sex several years prior to taking the vow. She ran across Swami Durgananda one morning when preparing fruit for the day. She noticed his good looks, and they made small talk. Soon, both were arriving in the kitchen early for different excuses, but really to visit with each other. After some time, they got to know each other and began hiding to have sex.



Back in Rio, Georgia and Julie go to a neighborhood samba party with Flavia and her friends. Anna's fiancé kissed Georgia, but she pushed him away and told him to get back to the party. She told Anna's brother that he should be ashamed for not telling his sister about the kiss. During the dancing, someone threw a beer can and hit Flavia in the face. They left at 3 a.m. to go to a pizzeria. The restaurant was full, even with families who had young children.

The story returns to the U.S. where Serena called Ruby and Alice for lunch to ask their opinions. She told them about having sex with the hot swami. She considered leaving the church and said that he felt guilty, too, because he had never done anything like that. Alice advised her not to do or say anything just yet and to take time to think about what she really wanted.

Back in Rio, Georgia hired a prostitute from the catalog. She and Julie drank a lot of wine while trying to decide what to say when the man arrived. When he arrived, Julie left and called the handsome man from the bar, who spoke very little English. She rented a hotel room, and they had sex. Both Georgia and Julie had a fling in Rio. Georgia left for home and gave Julie the number of her cousin in Australia. At that point, Julie decided her next stop would be Australia.

Analysis

Right away, Julie learns of a different culture in Rio. In the swimsuit shop, the clerk tells her the truth instead of lying to her about the way she looks in a bikini. Women are judged very heavily on their appearance there. The women they meet on the beach also offer a contrasting view. In Rio, the men cheat on their wives. The women know about it, but feel like they cannot complain. According to the Brazilian women, fidelity is an American concept based on the country's Puritan ethics. This directly refers to the founding of the United States, as Puritans were early settlers who set the moral compass for Americans. The Rio experience was also a lesson in supply and demand for Julie. The friends she and Georgia make on the beach are quick to tell them that men from Rio are jerks to women. They are accustomed to women with perfect bodies wearing bikinis on the beach, many of whom are tourists looking for a fling. With beautiful women looking for sex in great supply, men in Rio do not have to commit.

Julie also learns that the words "married" and "husband" have different meanings in Rio. Generally, women used these words to describe their dating relationship or the guy they were dating seriously. It does not refer to a legal arrangement at all. This idea seems to contribute to the notion that there is no true, legal commitment to marriage, as exemplified in the married men cheating on their wives. This different idea of marriage may well be why the women accept being cheated on in Rio. As Flavia explained, fidelity is a concept of the United States. Julie also explained to the Rio women that in the United States, if you want a man to call you, you should not have a one-night-stand with him.



One of Flavia's friends also pointed out Julie's and Georgia's Puritan values. This comment actually symbolizes the United State's Puritan beginnings. Georgia is infatuated with the idea of learning the samba because it is a sexy dance and because she feels like she is getting revenge against Dale, who left her for a samba teacher. She even says she wants to kiss a married man on the trip. In her mind, she is getting even with Brazilian women out of frustration for Dale's new girlfriend. Ironically, she is exhibiting the same behavior of which she accuses Dale's new girlfriend.

The author uses some understood similes throughout this chapter, some of which are conveyed through sentence fragments. The following is an example: "Alan looked at Georgia like she was from another plant. Or the United States" (149). The two sentences are very brief and closely resemble stream of consciousness thinking. In this case, they represent Julie's quick wit and clever observations. By using fragments here, the author allows the reader a glimpse into Julie's mind. The understood simile is that the United States is like a whole other world, or planet in this case. This indicates that Julie is beginning to see differences among single culture as she travels, even though she seems to do more partying and less writing and interviewing.

This chapter, more than others, begins showing Julie's sarcasm and wit. When Georgia talks about hiring a prostitute, she says she wants to stay sexually active at any cost. Julie quips, "Literally," making reference to the fact that prostitutes are paid for sex. When Georgia convinces her to browse the male prostitute catalog with her, Julie jokes about "having stud muffins instead of bagels for breakfast" (152). Her wit also shines through when she tells the story of Serena's affair with the other swami. The two have been meeting in the kitchen early to prepare food for the yoga center that day. They used this time as a way to meet for sex. Julie narrates: "All the kneading and rising and mixing had to lead to something" (163).

The phrase cleverly refers to the swamis' bread making. It also gives a sexual undertone. Kneading symbolizes touching. In mixing bread ingredients, items are mixed together to become one batter; in this case, two humans mix together for sex. The reference to rising specifically refers to yeast breads, but also slyly doubles as a reference to a male erection.

By showing several of Julie's personality traits in this chapter, the reader sees that she feels much more comfortable joking about sex than dealing with the idea of falling in love. All four women struggle to combine or separate their notions regarding sex and love in this chapter. Julie struggles with being attracted to other men so soon after having sex with Thomas. She felt like she was falling in love with Thomas, but the man she meets in Rio is just sex. Georgia goes looking for just sex because she is trying to make sense of how her husband's love for her suddenly died. Serena believes she has fallen in love and is having sex that is forbidden due to her vow of celibacy. Alice is trying to turn the sex she has with Jim into feelings of love. She liked steady sex, but she was not in love with Jim.



Discussion Question 1

Does Georgia really stand up to the bikini sales clerk? Explain why or why not.

Discussion Question 2

Discuss some of the differences between dating in the United States and dating in Brazil.

Discussion Question 3

In this chapter, both Serena and Alice are in sexual relationships. Discuss the difference between the two relationships.

Vocabulary

clutching, bling, liposuction, cellulite, naive, aqueduct, surreal, tenacity



Chapter 6: Rule 6

Summary

Chapter 6: Rule 6 is told in past tense.

Julie had many long layovers on her way to Australia. The trip totaled 22.5 hours. She handled the flying part of her trip well, but she experienced anxiety in the airports because of the statistics she found while doing some research during her long layovers. She read that there was a man drought in Australia and New Zealand and that there are five women to every man in Australia. She identified with the stats because at age 38, she was beginning to feel like she would never find someone to marry. When she finally arrived at her hotel, Alice was there asleep. Georgia told her where she was going next and what a great time they'd had in Rio. Alice did not want to be left out, so she planned a trip to Australia. Alice dodged questions about her relationship with Jim when Julie asked. On their first night in Australia, they met Georgia's cousin, Rachel, who got them all invitations to a party.

At the party, Alice and Julie met a group of four young men who remarked about how great it was that they were so young and accomplished. When Alice revealed they were both 38, the young men excused themselves to talk with other women after one told them they looked great for their age. What was meant to be a compliment actually served as an insult. Alice and Julie got two of the men to dance with them later, but it was clear they were not interested in the older women.

Back in the states, Georgia went out with Sam on his first date since his divorce, a date arranged by Alice. He was a perfect gentleman, quirky, and very humble. At the end of the date, they set another date for exactly one week away. Georgia thought it was unusual to wait so long for a second date, but she chalked it up to his dating inexperience. She was hopeful that she and Sam would work out in a good relationship.

In Australia, Julie ran across the name of another writer who wrote articles about being single during the man drought. Julie emailed her and the woman agreed to meet them on the island on which she lived. In the meantime, Julie and Alice joined Rachel and three men for a boat ride. Julie interviewed the men about dating. She assumed they did not have to worry about finding someone to love because there were so many more women than men in Australia. They told her that statistics don't mean they can easily find the right person. They said dating was depressing.

One of the men, Freddie, talked about the shift in power when dating. He said until women were in their 30s, they were in charge – men sought them. The shift happened at about 32; then the men had power because the women were chasing them. He said it was payback for all the pain the women put them through when they were younger. When asked if he would consider dating a younger woman, Freddie said he had a formula he used to decide the age of the women he dated. He divided his age by 2,



then added 5. The other men laughed, but they did not disagree. Julie did the math and determined that they wanted to date 19-20 year old women. Freddie also explained that there are no single older women; they are all married. Julie challenged his statement because it did not fit her statistics. Freddie, however, owned half the bars and restaurants in town. Julie suggested he was just overlooking the older women. He said maybe he was. Will, the driver of the boat, said Julie and Alice had nothing to worry about since they were only 31 or 32. The women did not correct them.

Julie and Alice set out to look for women over age 35 in bars and restaurants. At a restaurant called Freddie's Fish, a group of four older women was seated next to them, so they struck up conversation. They said they felt invisible in the clubs, so they just went out to eat or stayed home. Julie asked them if they considered moving, and they all mentioned Europe. Yet, they would not seriously consider leaving to improve their love lives.

Georgia got two emails, a short phone call, and a text message from Sam. For their second date, Georgia met him at a bar near his apartment. She saw that he was different; he exhibited more confidence. Georgia also noticed the change from wine on their first date to beer on this one. He revealed that he had been dating all week. He was surprised to learn that women wanted to date him despite his meager salary. He said as a nice guy with a decent job, he might as well be Jesus Christ himself. This made Georgia's stomach turn, so she said she wasn't feeling well and that she was going to catch a cab and head home. Sam said he would call her in 20 minutes to make sure she'd made it home. Despite coming across as a jerk, she knew he was a really nice guy.

Ruby worked her first shift at the animal shelter. Three dogs were euthanized and Ruby was horrified. She asked the man who led the dogs to their death how he chose. He said they based the choice on the animal's adoptability – their health, age, and temperament. As he took another dog, Ruby asked for a moment with it. She hugged the dog and whispered how much she loved it, then he took the dog. From that moment on, she made sure her face and loving words were the last experience the dogs had on their way to be euthanized.

Serena was still having sex with her fellow swami every chance they could. He gave her a secret symbol of his love – a black string that he tied around her ankle. He said every time he saw it, he would be reminded of their bond. Serena was certain that he was in love with her. One day while teaching yoga, she noticed four other women with black strings tied around their ankles. She went to the swami's room after yoga class and found him having sex with an intern, who also had a black string tied around her ankle. She went to the dressing room and found the other four women and asked them what their strings meant. They were open about their sex with the swami. Serena was shocked that they were all okay knowing that they were part of his "harem" (219). Serena cut the string off her ankle using one of the women's keys. She barged into the swami's meditation class and screamed at him, then left. She went to his room and hers, taking all their orange clothing and dumping it outside on the sidewalk. On her way out, she ripped up the clergy sign in the window and told the head swami that if they



were clergy, so was Howard Stern. The head swami told her to take her belongings and leave.

In Australia, Julie and Alice received an email back from the author Julie had previously emailed. She invited them to visit her on her home island, Tasmania.

Georgia decided to use a dating strategy to regain Sam's attention. She called to invite him to dinner to make up for their recent botched date when she excused herself early. They set a dinner date for Saturday at Georgia's apartment. She had \$100 worth of flowers delivered to her house and charged them to Dale's credit card. She placed them in obvious places all over the apartment. She placed cards from the admirers who supposedly sent the flowers casually by each arrangement. When Sam showed up with a tiny bouquet, he immediately felt insecure about his choice. She also arranged for a man to call her, but she let the call go to voicemail, meaning they had to hear the message that was being left for her. One, from Hal, said he couldn't wait to see her again, so she rushed to the machine to turn down the volume. The next call, however, from a man named Jordan, was also heard when a message was left. Acting flustered, she said she must have turned the ringer off instead of turning the volume down. She turned it all completely off. He focused on Georgia the whole night. Georgia was pleased that she created her own demand. When Sam called her the next day to ask for another date, Georgia told him that she was going to date Hal exclusively. She knew she wanted someone who didn't play games and who was genuinely interested in her.

Serena moved in with Ruby since she had no place to stay after leaving her swami position. On a conference call with all the friends, the women talked about Serena's experience. Ruby suggested that the mayor's office should euthanize women who have bad temperaments, poor health, etc. She omitted age. This would give healthy, nice women a better chance of finding Mr. Right. They made Ruby realize that her volunteer work was depressing her. Georgia took Ruby's phone and called the shelter to quit on Ruby's behalf. They also encouraged Serena to ask for her old job back. Surprised to learn they had not replaced her, Serena set an appointment for the very next day to talk with the celebrity family.

In Australia, Julie and Alice met Fiona, an author, at an Irish pub in Tasmania. Fiona explained her hopeful look during the man drought was simply based on the idea that women have not met their future husband yet. Julie saw that Fiona had chosen not to believe in the statistics and to just have fun. They met her boyfriend and realized that she was writing from experience. As Alice was packing to leave for home, Julie said she wanted to go home, too. Alice encouraged her to go to India instead. Julie was homesick and she missed Thomas. She admitted that she'd thought of him every day since Italy. Thomas called her from out of the blue and said he had business in Bali. He wanted to meet her there and said his wife knew he was going and did not ask anything else. Julie agreed.



Analysis

In this chapter, Julie is profoundly affected by statistics. The idea of the man drought has her deeply concerned for her own ability to find Mr. Right. The stats show that there are more women than men in Australia and the men admittedly do not see anyone over about 32. It is the younger women who get all their attention. The men they were boating with who were in their 30s preferred to date women who were 19 or 20 years old. With a shortage of men in Australia, men were able to date whomever they chose. In meeting the older single women in the restaurant, Julie realizes that her notion of moving to find love is just as impractical for the Australian women as it is for herself and her friends. Why should they leave their careers and homes just to seek love? At the end of the chapter, she returns to her love of statistics for comfort, however. When Thomas asks her to meet him in Bali, she wonders what the odds were that a French man would ask her to meet him in Bali. She believes the odds are in her favor, and she needs a self esteem boost after this trip to Australia, so she agrees to go to Bali.

Julie's self esteem is wrecked in Australia. In one way, most of the men thought she was in her early 30s, which statistically made her very much in demand. Knowing, however, that she was 38, Julie begins to feel undesirable and hopeless. Dancing with the young man who found her undesirable was disheartening for her.

To explain the idea of a man drought, the author utilizes personification. The example is that there used to be a lid for every pot (187). This gives the pot, human characteristics in the comparison. The personification continues when Julie supposes that some lids have found new kitchens to go to in search of a better pot, a younger, prettier pot.

As Julie tries to fall asleep on the plane to Australia, she thinks about the "little monologue" she runs through her mind often (189). These thoughts are printed in italics for ease of identifying them.

Alice intentionally dodges questions about her relationship with Jim during her visit with Julie in Australia. She seldom talks about him and takes great interest in Julie's research about the man drought in Australia. These facts indicate her lack of interest in Jim and foreshadows the fact that she will find herself single again in the future.

A continuing motif throughout this chapter is supply and demand. The supply of men is limited in Australia, making them in great demand. Competition for men is very competitive and reserved for the younger women since men choose to overlook older women. Back in the States, Georgia wins Sam over using her own artificial supply and demand. She created the illusion of demand by sending herself flowers and arranging for fake phone calls from a couple of men. Despite the system working, Georgia chooses not to be with Sam after all. Once she gets him to want her, she passes him by to find someone who respects her for her own attributes.

Fiona addresses the idea of supply and demand by saying women just need to be patient and enjoy life while they are waiting for Mr. Right. She found her boyfriend by adopting this theory and was surprised to learn that he had lived near her all his life.



She said women just need to be open and be themselves and love will find them. Focusing on the man drought statistics can be so depressing that women stop trying to date.

There are a few cultural references made throughout the chapter that may need explaining. When Julie was dancing with the short, stocky man in the club, she knew he wasn't interested in her. Alice suggested he simply did not know how to dance. A short time later, when he was dancing with a younger woman, she spotted him doing a spirited version of the Cabbage Patch (196). The Cabbage Patch is a hip hop dance that originated in the late 1980s. There are videos online that show how to do the Cabbage Patch and feature the 1987 song called Cabbage Patch.

Another reference that needs explaining is the likening of Ruby to Sister Mary Prejean (213). The term is a combined reference. Mary refers to the Virgin Mary who obviously was troubled by the death of her son, Jesus. At the shelter, Ruby became a mother figure to the dogs who were facing death and she was saddened by their deaths. The Prejean reference relates to Sister Helen Prejean, a real-life nun who supports abolishing the death penalty. So, in referring to Alice as Sister Mary Prejean, Julie portrays Ruby as both maternal and political.

When Serena leaves her organization, she says that if the organization is considered clergy, so is Howard Stern. Howard Stern is a radio and television personality host known for on-air indecency.

Serena sees her swami's gift of a piece of black string as a binding commitment. Given their vows of poverty, it showed great thought. Ironically, the black string was not a special gift after all because he had given the same thing to all the other women with whom he had been sexually involved. The celibate swami was ironically a player. Symbolically, the color black has several different connotations. One is that of death. Mourners often wear black, meaning that the reader could have seen the black string as a string of death, foreshadowing that Serena's relationship with the handsome swami would soon end. However, black also symbolizes sophistication and mystery. Finally finding love, Serena felt more sophisticated and their hidden rendezvous was obviously a secret. The gift of the string alone made sense given their vows of poverty. Ultimately, however, the reader learns that the handsome swami is free with his black string so it is actually meaningless.

It is also interesting that the swamis wear orange outfits. Orange is the color often associated with prison wear. In a way, the swamis were like prisoners. They lived onsite and worked for their accommodations. They earned no money and were not allowed to have possessions. Ironically, orange represents enthusiasm and stimulation, and the swamis were both in their sexual relationship. When Serena piles up their orange uniforms and stomps on them, not only is she expressing her anger with the swami, but with her job as a whole. Ironically, she went into the organization to gain peace, but she left angrier than ever.



Discussion Question 1

Discuss the supply and demand motif in this chapter.

Discussion Question 2

What was the significance of Serena tearing up the clergy sign?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss Ruby's role at the animal shelter. Why did she volunteer?

Vocabulary

pod, behold, dumbstruck, blokes, swarthy, exhilarating, sinewy, random



Chapter 7: Rule 7

Summary

In Chapter 7: Rule 7, Alice's experience in Australia opened her eyes in terms of dating prospects for a woman in her late 30s. She returned home and told Jim she was ready to get married. He was ecstatic and they began planning their wedding. She continued to try to convince herself she loved him enough to go through with it.

Julie had a panic attack on the plane to Bali when she woke up and realized it was pitch dark outside. All of the other passengers were asleep. She made it through the panic attack and went back to sleep. The next day, Thomas met her at the airport. They got to their hotel at 2 a.m. Julie saw that he had reserved a huge villa for them that overlooked rice paddies. For the next eight days, they did not leave the villa except to have a meal. In those eight days, Thomas made six business calls and three calls to his wife. He always left the room for those. Julie wondered what his marriage must be like. Thomas told her he could be gone for two weeks with no questions, but after that, he had to return home. This also gave her a time frame for his visit. She knew he'd leave in a few more days to get home.

Julie's editor, Candace, called to see how work was going. Julie told her it was going well and Candace joked that she was checking up on her to make sure she had not run away with some wealthy Italian. Julie assured her she would write a great book.

They decided to leave their villa to go for some walks. On one walk, they saw a young man with an older woman at a café. Thomas and Julie both saw different things in the other couple. Thomas saw an older woman taking advantage of a young man; Julie saw just the opposite. Thomas said women go to Kutu to find younger men. Women go to the beach and the Balinese gigolos meet them there. They saw the other couple again in the courtyard and again at a dance ceremony. The woman spoke to them. She was Australian. Her name was Sarah and her companion was Made. Sarah thought Thomas and Julie were on their honeymoon. They agreed to have dinner with Sarah and Made. Sarah got drunk at dinner and began to notice others staring at her, age 50, and her boyfriend, age 25. She insisted that Made was not a gigolo and that what they feel is real, then said she bought him a motorcycle and gave money to his family because she loved him and wanted to help. She said he had a job and a strong work ethic. Made calmed her by telling her people just did not understand their love. She called the people staring at them an expletive and Thomas and Julie quickly left. Julie was shaken by seeing Sarah's true desperation. She realized that if Thomas asked her to give up the life she knew to stay with him in Bali, she would probably do it.

Serena was sad because of her swami time and her breakup. Ruby was still having nightmares about all the shelter dogs that were euthanized. The next morning, Ruby awoke to find Serena curled in the fetal position. Ruby made her green tea and offered comfort. Serena would not eat on her own, but did eat yogurt when Ruby fed it to her.



Ruby began to feel nurturing and decided maybe there was another way she could be a mother. She was going to ask one of her gay male friends for a sperm donation. She knew the couple would help her raise the baby as well. When she met them at lunch to ask for a sperm donor, she learned that they had already agreed to give sperm to a lesbian couple. They talked about her deep depression from the death of her cat and how she worked at the animal shelter that killed dogs. They saw her as unfit. She decided to call her gay friend, Craig. He was nice and made a good living as a theater lighting specialist. When she met him for lunch, he told her he was HIV positive. She suggested an HIV wash. He finally broke the other news to her: he hoped to let her down easy with his HIV news, but he did not expect her to suggest the wash. He told her he had already promised his sperm to his 40 year old pilates instructor. Ruby was disappointed and left.

In Bali, Thomas was at a business meeting while Julie enjoyed their luxurious hotel room. She finally went to the beach to look for desperate single women. On the beach, Julie used her New York street skills to fend off a counterfeit Rolex salesman, a hair braider, and a t-shirt salesman. A young gigolo came up to her and told her that she was beautiful. Offended, she yanked her chair and beach bag up and stormed away. On her way back to the villa, she convinced herself she must truly be desperate. As much as she wanted to stay with Thomas, she needed to leave right away. When he saw her packing, he begged her to let him go with her to her next destination. When he kissed her, she agreed.

Back in the states, Georgia met a man named Bryan at parent teacher conference and began dating. After several dates, they had sex one Saturday night. Georgia was happy and even was more patient with her children the next day. When Bryan had not called or texted her by 8 p.m. Sunday, she was angry and frustrated with her children again. On Monday, Georgia decided to call Bryan. Ruby suggested she not call him, but Georgia insisted she couldn't work without calling him. After calling and leaving him a message, Georgia realized she was waiting for him to call again. Nothing had changed. She became so sick she had to go to bed. A sitter came to take care of the kids. At 9 p.m., he finally called. They made small talk and he said he would call her later in the week so they could make plans. They did go out and have sex again, but he did not ask her out. He called one night after the kids were asleep and asked her to meet him at the coffee shop across the street. She did not tell him the kids were with her. She left her son, Gareth, a note saying she would be back in five minutes and not to be scared. Then, she went across the street. When she got home, she saw Gareth was not in his bed. She found him sitting on her bed, scared. When he could not find her, he called his dad. Dale was on his way over. Dale said he was getting a lawyer to get custody of the kids.

Analysis

In this chapter, the desperation of several characters is explored. Serena reflects on her desperation that led her to be suckered in by the handsome swami. Ruby is desperate to become a mother. Georgia is desperate to keep Bryan, then to keep Dale from



gaining custody of her kids. Alice desperately wants to be in love with Jim. Julie is desperate for love, too, and she finally realizes it.

Also, in this chapter, Julie is caught between two worlds – independence and interdependence. The independent woman inside her loves spontaneity and loving in the moment. Her interdependence wants to have a long-term relationship that is predictable. She tries to live in the moment, but still worries about her future. Her man vs. self conflict is still unresolved even after many travels to study single woman culture.

The different opinion Thomas and Julie share about the older woman/younger man couple they see in the café demonstrates gender bias. Thomas sees the couple as an older woman taking advantage of a young man; Julie sees just the opposite. Ironically, when they meet the couple, Sarah and Made, it seems as though Thomas' thoughts are correct. Sarah gives Made money for his family and gives him gifts, yet she promises he is no gigolo. She cannot admit her own desperation.

Julie was very upset to know that one of the young Bali men who approached her on the beach saw her as a desperate tourist. She was indignant and stormed away when approached. The, while walking home, she thinks maybe she is desperate. Maybe that's why she agrees to see a married man that she can never have for herself. Maybe she's compromising her principles because she is desperate. A kiss from Thomas makes her change her mind about leaving Bali right away. Out of desperation, she stays.

Ruby's desperation for a baby is highlighted after she nurtures Serena during her break-up. Ruby offers her tea, feeds her yogurt, and asks how else she can help. Getting turned down for sperm from two different gay men makes her feel even more desperate in her desire to have a baby. To make matters worse, the gay couple she first asks reveal they have been watching how she handled the situation with her cat's death. Her deep depression over the loss of the cat does not make her appear to be the most suitable mother.

This chapter has a few cultural references that readers need to understand. HIV, the disease Craig has, is a virus that attacks the immune system. Julie also refers to an old saying, "That made my day." She says, "And I wonder if the beach would be full of older women waiting for their day to be Made" (273). This play on words cleverly used the spelling of "Made" (the young Bali man's name) to confirm that women on the beach were indeed desperate.

This chapter tells about Georgia's choice to leave her children home alone to go see Bryan at the coffee shop across the street from her apartment. When Julie starts this "Back in the States" section, she begins it in first person, present tense. In the retelling of Georgia's story, she reverts to third person limited point of view and past tense, telling the facts and giving a little insight into Georgia's mindset. Julie says Georgia's actions are upsetting. Ironically, she tries to keep her retelling brief, but it runs long since there is so much to tell. It also ultimately points out Georgia's desperation. This section also shows that Georgia's dating desperation is harming her relationships with her two children. She is angered easily and takes her frustrations out on them by yelling at



them. Her attitude directly affects their attitudes as well. When she is yelling, they are defensive and combative. Georgia really had no idea how desperate she was until Dale threatened to take the kids. This realization hits her hard.

Her son, Gareth, hears their entire fight, including when Dale accuses Georgia of leaving the kids with him so she can run out and have sex with whoever she meets. Julie takes the news of Georgia's antics just as hard because she realizes the severity of leaving the children alone. Julie and her other friends want to be married and have children. Here is Georgia, mother of two, leaving them alone. Julie realizes the severity of this kind of desperation. She is also concerned about the legal troubles Georgia will soon face. Dale's sudden announcement that he wants custody of the kids sounds like it might be a quick decision, one that he has not talked over with his new girlfriend. Regardless, if Georgia never wanted her kids to be around his girlfriend, she will not be able to have control over that if he gains full custody.

Depression experienced by many of the characters is explored in this chapter. Both Serena and Ruby are depressed – Ruby because she wants a baby and Serena because of her upsetting chain of events as a swami. Ruby realizes that she feels better when she helps someone else who is depressed instead of wallowing in her own emotions. This leads her to seek out sperm donors. Unfortunately, the potential donors know the old Ruby, the one who gets too depressed to take care of herself. They do not see her as a fit mother, which leads to more depression for her.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss Julie's struggle with desperation.

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the impact of depression on the characters in this chapter. Identify the characters who suffer from depression and discuss its possible causes.

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the big mistake Georgia made in this chapter.

Vocabulary

catastrophe, imminent, bamboo, paddies, bliss, trek, gargoyles, insistent



Chapter 8: Rule 8

Summary

In Chapter 8: Rule 8, Julie and Thomas flew to Beijing. He called his wife from their hotel to let her know he would be gone longer. Julie felt some guilt for causing her anguish. Thomas said his wife did not like that he was gone longer, but he had fun helping Julie with her research. They discovered reports of a woman drought in Beijing. They saw people going to Beijing to adopt children. Thomas asked Julie if she wanted to have children. She said she thought she would if she met the right person but did not think she could do it alone. In reality, she'd thought a lot about having Thomas' baby. He told her she would make a good mother.

Thomas talked to a Chinese woman sitting nearby. He told her Julie was researching single women. The woman's name was Tammy and she lived in Beijing. She said the woman drought was true only in the Chinese countryside, not in the city. Tammy said she did not date Chinese men because they were awful. She preferred westerners. She told them about a Beijing bar that was full of westerners. Julie and Thomas decided to go there when they arrived.

At the bar, Brown's, Julie met a single woman named Wei. Wei loved being single and not tied down. Wei said she only dated Western men because Chinese men were only concerned about money. The single western men that Thomas talked to said they liked Chinese women better because they were more devoted. Two Chinese men they meant also rejected the idea of a woman shortage, unless it was possibly in the country. But Chinese men said they preferred Western women. They said Chinese women were materialistic and Western women were more independent.

Thomas' wife called and threatened to go to Beijing and drag him home. Thomas told Julie he loved her very much and did not want to go home.

Serena noted how money could buy happiness. She saw the joys of wealth while working for the celebrity family. They loved Serena, and she loved working for them. She noticed they were different when she went back to work for them. Joanna, the wife and mother, asked Serena to start making a raw food diet. She looked sad when she asked. Joanna said there would be a doctor consulting with her daily on the diet. Serena was happy to comply.

Ruby still could not shake the urge to have a baby of her own. She began exploring donated sperm banks. The doctor said her hormone levels needed a boost, requiring shots. She could not give herself a shot, but Serena couldn't do it for her. She called Alice who obliged. Alice and Jim were planning their wedding. During a visit with Jim's sister and brother-in-law, Alice realized how much in love they were. She realized that she was not in love with Jim because she realized her wedding day would not be the best day of her life. Her solution was to elope so she would not be reminded that she



was settling. She chose to elope to Iceland, so they could get married in the dark. Serena and Ruby realized what she was doing, but she would not admit it herself.

Analysis

Chapter 8 is a short chapter with envy as a motif. In a Beijing nightclub, Julie and Thomas hear several interesting, conflicting opinions. Chinese men prefer Western women because they are independent and not materialistic. Chinese women prefer Western men because they are not materialistic. Western men prefer Chinese women because they are more devoted. Julie summed it up best with the old saying, “The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence” (302). This old saying may also apply to Thomas and Julie’s relationship. Perhaps, she is his figurative greener grass. His wife’s threat to come to Beijing to drag him home is foreshadowing a future event.

Serena envies her employers, the celebrity couple that has everything. Serena even believes that they can buy happiness because their penthouse is huge and overlooks a great view of the city. They have everything they want. She begins to realize that there are some things money can’t buy – health. Joanna is sad when she asks Serena to begin an all raw diet. The news that a doctor will be consulting with Serena daily on the menu alludes to the seriousness of this request. Robert, the husband and father of the family, is sad and says very little. Joanna talks to Serena with tears in her eyes. It is clear that Robert is experiencing an illness. This foreshadows a serious development in the future.

Alice’s envy of Jim’s sister and brother-in-law leads her to cancel her wedding plans and settle for eloping. She knows her wedding day will not be perfect because she is not in love with Jim. She is also tired of compromising with Jim’s mom and her own mom over wedding details, like flowers. Ruby had envied Alice’s relationship with Jim until Alice shares her elopement news with Ruby and Serena. After learning that Alice was going to elope with Jim to Iceland to get married in the dark, it is clear to Ruby that Alice does not have everything after all. Alice is not happy, though she is thankful to have someone to spend time with as a companion.

Discussion Question 1

Alice is “happy enough.” What does that mean? How does it compare to being truly happy?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Ruby not seek out heterosexual male friends to help her have a baby when her gay friends refuse?



Discussion Question 3

Discuss the irony of Chinese singles dating.

Vocabulary

rationalize, mistress, expat, pursed, consultant, gracious, vulnerable, casual



Chapter 9: Rule 9

Summary

In Chapter 9: Rule 9. Thomas told Julie he had been investigating for her research and had found a place they must go that day. They went to Zhongshan Park, where parents went to find matches for their unmarried children every Thursday and Saturday afternoon. The parents held big posters with their child's information, such as age, height, and level of education. Julie saw it as depressing. Thomas suggested that since China had the one-child rule, getting the child married was better for the parents' care as they aged. Thomas and Julie also did some other sight-seeing that day.

During lunch, Julie told Thomas that their experience had been good for her and not to feel sorry for her. She said she understood his situation. He said he knew she would be fine and he did not feel sorry for her. It was difficult for him to leave her because he wanted to stay with her instead of going back to his wife. She excused herself to go to the restroom which she found was a public squatter toilet. That night, they went to a party as Wei's guests and ran into Tammy, the Chinese woman they had met on the airplane. Tammy told them about all the changes China had experienced in the past 10 years. The women had new freedom, including selecting their groceries from a supermarket. She also explained that a child born out of wedlock would not be registered for health care. When a woman became pregnant unexpectedly, she had an abortion. Tammy said if you are a single, older woman and want to have children, you simply marry the next man you meet.

On their last day together, Julie and Thomas went to the Forbidden City. The outside was not impressive, but once inside, it was beautiful. Thomas got a call then suddenly began acting very uncomfortable so Julie asked what was wrong. His wife was across the street at Tiananmen Square and was on her way to him at the Forbidden City. He took Julie out the back entrance and went to meet his wife, Dominique. She caught up with them and began yelling at him in French. Periodically, she darted looks of disgust toward Julie. She told Thomas she was pregnant. Julie hung her head and left. Julie began thinking back about how she got herself in this situation. She was trying to live life and play by rules that were not her own. Julie was ashamed. She realized that Thomas was a bad boy, even if he was only 20 percent bad. The worst part for Julie was the realization that she was still making the same mistake – dating a bad boy.

Serena encouraged Julie not to give up on her assignment, not to go home. She insisted Julie go to India. Julie napped in the hotel room, hoping Thomas would not go back there. Wei called and woke her up. She invited her to a party upstairs in the hotel. Julie thought she should warn Wei that her days were numbered. Wei enjoyed being single and independent so much that she did not think about getting married, settling down and having a family. Clearly, she needed to know her time was running out. Julie slid on a pair of slippers and went upstairs to the party. She interrupted karaoke to make an announcement to all the women at the party. She told them they would not always be



surrounded by men and would not always be young. Wei laughed and told her she was funny.

Back in the States, Georgia took Ruby for her insemination appointment. While waiting, Ruby could think only of her mother, a single mom who stayed depressed all the time. She recalled how she pitied her mother. When the doctor was ready to inseminate, Ruby backed out. That afternoon, she went to visit her mother. Her mom told her how lonely she had been as a single mother. When she realized how depressed Ruby was, she told her that she needed an antidepressant. She had been on one for the past year and it improved her life. Ruby's mom apologized for not hiding her depression during Ruby's childhood. She did not know how important her own mental health was for her children.

After Ruby's appointment, Georgia had an appointment with a child services representative. He was investigating Dale's claim that Georgia was an unfit mother. Georgia tried to be cheerful, not angry or bitter, but her true feelings came out when she referred to Dale's girlfriend as a "Brazilian whore" (349). The representative made a few notes in his book and left. He came back later to talk with the children. They would not talk in front of Georgia, so she left the room. While alone, she realized she had lost her mind because of her divorce. She wanted another chance to be the mom her kids deserved.

Serena tried meditating that more healing energy was going into the food she prepared, hoping Robert would get better. One afternoon, Robert could not breathe well so Joanna asked Serena to pick up their son at school. As soon as she saw him, she told him his mother was busy and could not be there. She knew the boy, Kip, would worry about his dad. They got close to the apartment just in time to see Robert get loaded into an ambulance.

Joanna explained that Robert was having difficulty breathing and asked Serena to stay with Kip. In the corner of her eye, Serena spied a celebrity photographer snapping pictures of the incident. Serena moved Kip out of view, then took off across the street after the photographer. Serena shoved him down, busted his camera and took the digital card. He threatened to call the police, and she threatened to kill him. Kip was impressed with her actions and they became friends. Until this, he had never really talked with her.

Analysis

Motherhood is a motif in Chapter 9: Rule 9. Ruby gives up the idea of motherhood as a single mom while she is waiting to be artificially inseminated. She recalls how sad and lonely her mother was and does not want to live that life either. If Ruby previously thought kids would fill that void, thoughts of her mother remind her that it isn't true. She recalls feeling like a burden as a child, knowing her mother was suffering to raise two children alone. Ruby has never considered her problem as depression on its own. She has always related the depression to an event, such as the death of her cat or a break



up with a boyfriend. Talking with her mother, however, puts depression into a different perspective for her. Knowing that her mother takes antidepressants and recommends them, Ruby realizes her loneliness is something that can be treated medically. This life change might also change her outlook as far as marriage or dating goes. The talk with her mother also proves to her that she was not a burden; the problem was her mother's depression.

Serena becomes protective of Kip when Robert is being carried out in the ambulance. She wants to protect the boy and his family from a gossip tabloid photographer to give them privacy during the difficult time. With adrenalin pumping, Serena overpowers the photographer and threatens him.

Julie becomes somewhat of a mother to Wei when she tries to warn her and all the single women at Wei's party about the reality of being single. She tells them they will not be young forever and tries to get them to focus on finding a life partner. Instead, they laugh it off as a joke. This is a reminder that we cannot force our cultural norms on people from other cultures.

Tammy talks about motherhood in China and explains there is no single mother option there. While the women do have some freedoms there, they are not totally free to decide what to do with their bodies. Single women who get pregnant have abortions in China. Tammy's explanation of this leaves the reader to understand that the decision is not an emotional one as it often is in the United States.

Georgia is being judged to determine whether or not she is a fit mother. She is angry and put out with the whole process until the child services representative has her leave the room so he can talk to her son and daughter. Given a little time alone to reflect and to think about something other than her failed marriage or her dating woes, Georgia realizes that her children are her biggest blessing and that they have been suffering, too. She has neglected their needs while trying to sort out her own.

While on the plane to Beijing, Thomas and Julie talk about whether or not she wants children. She does, and she can imagine having his. Because he is married, she knows it will never happen. The ultimate representation of motherhood in this chapter comes from Dominique. She flies to Beijing to drag Thomas back to France and to tell him she is pregnant. This knowledge ends the fantasy romance Julie had with him. The fact that Dominique's confrontation of Julie and Thomas happens in the Forbidden City is symbolic. By Julie's standards, their love was forbidden from the beginning. Their love was also forbidden by Thomas' standards, because he broke the rules of his open marriage. His wife knew he was getting serious with Julie because he broke their two-week rule.

This chapter also expresses irony in Julie's research. The women of Beijing say Chinese men are too materialistic; they prefer Westerners. The men of Beijing say the same thing about Chinese women. They, too, prefer Westerners. The Westerners prefer Chinese women because they are more devoted. This makes Julie realize that being single is a global competition.



Discussion Question 1

Discuss Tammy's explanation of why there can be no single mothers in China. Also, explain her tone during the discussion.

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the irony of Dominique's confrontation with Thomas in the Forbidden City.

Discussion Question 3

How does Julie feel when Dominique shows up in Beijing? How does she handle her emotions?

Vocabulary

porridge, squatting, encountered, melodramatic, elegance, disgust, alternative, custody



Chapter 10: Rule 10

Summary

In Chapter 10: Rule 10, Julie cried all the way to India. Serena arranged for a friend's friend named Amrita to meet her at the airport. She told Julie that single women have important decisions to make. She said she was 35 and had been dating to find a love marriage. Her family was pushing marriage, though, and she decided to let them arrange one for her. Her family relied on horoscopes and posted her information on matrimony websites. They did it because they believed parents know what is best for their children. Julie realized the horoscopes were not the ones she was familiar with in American culture. Amrita offered to introduce Julie to her sister, who had a successful arranged marriage.

On her way with Amrita to meet her sister, Julie noticed poor children begging along the roadside. Amrita told her not to give them money because it was all given over to organized crime. She said that after chatting for about 20 minutes with the man her parents picked for her, she decided she had nothing to lose by marrying him. She was very happy and they had a son. Her success is what convinced Amrita to try the arranged route. On the way back, Julie saw more people begging. Amrita reminded her again not to give them anything. This time, Amrita said they were happy begging; it was the life they knew.

Back at the hotel, Julie took a nap then went to the bar. She told the bartender that she couldn't stop thinking about a little boy she saw begging earlier in the day. He told her not to give them money and reminded her that they were not unhappy; it's the way of life they knew. By the time Julie got back to her hotel room, she was depressed. She realized that all her future relationships will be compared to Thomas. Now, not only did she have to find love, she had to find love better than his.

The next day, Amrita called to invite Julie to come sit in on her arranged date. Julie agreed. Shortly after that call, Alice called. She said she did not think she could go through with marrying Jim because she wasn't in love with him. Julie advised her to marry him because the notion of falling in love was overrated. Julie said if Alice and Jim respected each other and compatible, to just marry him. This advice was out of character for Julie and was based on her depression.

At Amrita's house, the family decided Julie could go with Amrita to her room while they talked with her suitor. Amrita explained that the parents must like the man and his parents before introducing them to their daughter. She also explained that they tried to keep suitors in the same caste system. Her caste was known as the Brahmins; they were teachers, priests and intellectuals. After an hour, Amrita's parents introduced her to the man. When Amrita and the man went for a walk, Julie was invited to sit with the parents. Amrita's father explained that an Indian marriage must be comprised of three things: emotional, intellectual, and physical compatibility. Without all three, a marriage



would not work. Horoscopes helped predict compatibility. Her mother explained that romance is a Western idea.

Amrita's family was surprised that Julie's family was not looking for a husband for her to marry. Julie started to cry and went to get cleaned up. She heard Amrita come in and announce that she and her suitor would be married. Julie, not wanting to intrude on the family moment (and wanting to get home), asked Amrita to call her a cab. The cab ride went right back through the poor section and some older children were still outside. The cabdriver told her not to give them money because it went to organized crime. She decided to do it anyway. Anytime the car stopped, she gave money to children along the route.

Back at her hotel, Julie had an upset stomach and slept late the next day. She awoke feeling sorry for herself, then she began thinking about those children. She went to the hotel's front desk and asked if there were volunteer opportunities there so she could help those children. A woman named Hamida overheard and invited her to help a group of friends feed the children. Hamida, her three friends, and Julie went to outdoor festival vendors and bought food to give to the children and even took them on carnival rides. Julie's thoughts turned to Thomas and his wife, raising their child and living a happy life. She began to cry.

Alice packed for her elopement. She called Ruby to talk. Georgia and Dale met with the child services representative. Dale blurted out that he wanted Georgia to keep the kids. She was shocked. They agreed that Dale could have the kids every other weekend and for dinner one night a week. When the representative left, Georgia asked Dale why he changed his mind. He said his girlfriend left him because dating a man with children made things complicated. Georgia was happy for the chance to make up for her neglect to her son and daughter.

Kip missed his mom and dad; so, Serena called Joanna at the hospital. Joanna told Kip that his dad was coming home. Serena knew that might be a bad thing. When Joanna called to inform her of family who would be coming, Serena knew this move home was a bad thing. Serena helped manage the house during this time. Serena was given a chance to say goodbye to Robert. In watching Joanna, Serena realized she needed to give love a chance again.

Analysis

Priorities are a main focus in Chapter 10. Julie is stricken by the poverty in India and the locals' decision not to help. Julie hears enough excuses and begins giving to the poor children on the road back to her hotel. She listens to them initially when they say not to give the children money, but finally decides she will do what she wants. She wants to help, so she gives them money during her cab ride. She is happy to team up with Hamida and her friends to treat the children to food and carnival rides. Shifting her priorities to the poor children helps her forget about Thomas, at least for a little while.



She feels guilty about having her own pity party when there are starving children all over the city.

Amrita decides to prioritize marriage at the encouragement of her parents. Her sister has a successful arranged marriage, so Amrita decides to give that approach a try as well. Julie learns about the priorities involved in creating an arranged marriage. The marriage must be compatible emotionally, intellectually, and physically. She was surprised that parents prioritized physical attraction for their children, but Amrita's father told her a marriage without it would not work.

Alice is organized and has her priorities straight. She is packed and ready to elope. She has enough time to call and check on Ruby and Serena. Her lack of excitement regarding her elopement foreshadows that something will interrupt her plans.

Dale re-prioritizes his attempt to get full custody of the kids and makes a sensible arrangement with Georgia. She puts her children as her number one priority and finally realizes that they have also suffered in the divorce. Serena prioritizes for her employer as people come in to say their goodbyes to Robert.

Julie's depression in India leads to situational irony when she gives Alice bad advice about marrying Jim. She advises Alice to marry him and to stop worrying about it because the single outlook is grim. Normally, Julie would have advised her to follow her heart and to be truthful.

Julie listens with interest when Amrita's father explains how arranged marriages work. Julie thinks India may have the right idea since their divorce rate is only one percent.

Guilt is another minor theme in this chapter. Julie feels guilty for her self-pity over losing Thomas and being single when there are so many impoverished children in front of her. Alice feels guilty for not wanting to marry Jim. Georgia feels guilty for not taking better care of her children. Georgia feels guilty for how she treated her children. She knows she yelled too much and concentrated more on her dating than on her children's needs. She is happy to have a second chance to be the nurturer they need.

Discussion Question 1

How does Julie try to deal with her guilt and her sadness in India?

Discussion Question 2

For what specific reasons does Julie advise Alice to marry Jim, even if she is not in love with him?



Discussion Question 3

According to Indian culture, what are the three elements for a good marriage? How do those elements differ from your culture's idea of a good marriage? Explain.

Vocabulary

leper, jags, racist, ashram, makeshift, inquisitive, ambitious, glaring, deficiency



Chapter 11: Rule 11

Summary

In Chapter 11: Rule 11, Robert passed away, and Serena left to get some fresh air. Georgia, Ruby, and Alice all showed up to be with her to share in her loss. They talked and walked along the river. They could not imagine losing the love of their life like Joanna had just lost. The talk made Alice realize more than ever that she was settling since Jim was not the love of her life. Once at home, Alice cried a lot. Jim came over to pick her up, but she was still crying. She told him the truth. He got mad at first, but he understood and forgave her. Julie was happy to hear that Alice had not taken her advice. Julie encouraged Alice to use her honeymoon ticket to meet her in Iceland. Serena had some time off after Robert's funeral, so she decided to go to Iceland, too. Ruby and Georgia also decided to go.

Thomas called Julie when they were in Iceland. He told her how sorry he was, and she told him she did not want to talk to him because it was too sad for her. She hung up on him. The women decided to go to a thermal pond called the Blue Lagoon. The women convince Alice she did the right thing. She started crying. Julie, still upset by Thomas' call, started crying. So did Ruby and Serena. Two women nearby looked concerned and puzzled. The women asked if the friends were okay, and they explained that they were all going through something at the moment. Georgia asked the women if they could recommend a good restaurant.

At the restaurant, the friends ran into the women they saw earlier in the day. One woman, Sigrud, was there with her husband, Karl, and their two female friends. Karl was interested in Julie's book. During conversation, they learn that in Iceland, no one cares whether a person is married or single when they have children. The Icelanders explain that church there is state-run; no one really goes. They all went to a club together after dinner. One of the Icelandic women, Hulda, said men there were lazy and there is little dating. People have sex right away.

The friends' conversation was growing on pity again, so Julie decided they needed to go somewhere to have a ritual. The Icelandic women went along with them and suggested a beautiful place with water in which to hold the ritual. One of the women said they could have picked a prettier place if it had not been for the water requirement. They could have gone to the place where the elves live. Hulda said her aunt had seen the elves. Julie instructed her friends to put their disappointments and their expectations into the cocktail napkin she handed them. She used a lighter to burn each napkin. After this ritual, the friends were free to move on.

The next day, the friends decided what they believed in. Alice believed in elves. Georgia believed in love a second time around. Serena believed Joanna and Kip would get through their loss and that she, too, would be happy. Ruby believed they were all going to be happy and also believed in Lexapro, an antidepressant. Julie believed in miracles.



Alice went back to work for Legal Aid. Ruby started taking her antidepressant. Julie enjoyed their night out to celebrate Alice's job. They danced and had a good time. In considering what to write in her book, Julie realized one of the secrets to being single was to love yourself. She hated that phrase, but found it to be true. Julie found comfort in the fact that she was not alone in life because she had good friends and saw other single women all around the world also had the same problem.

Analysis

Chapter 11 draws the story to a close. The inciting force that wraps up this novel occurs when Alice calls off her plans to elope with Jim. From there, Julie decides Alice should use the honeymoon and meet her in Iceland. The other women like the idea so much that they all decide to make the honeymoon trip with Alice. The climax of the story occurs when the women have their ritual to destroy their problems and their expectations.

While it is not important to Julie, she learns a lot about the dating situation in Iceland. Without a heavy emphasis on church, there are fewer moral guidelines for dating to follow. People have sex sooner and do not go out on dates as they do in America. Single mothers are not only accepted, they are expected. Men who do not want to date a single mother do not do a lot of dating in Iceland, according to the Icelandic women the friends met in the thermal pond.

While this chapter is written in past tense, it switches briefly to present tense on the last page. Julie says "I am definitely not alone in this. I am definitely not alone..." (445). The switch to present tense at the end gives the illusion that the narrator is just wrapping up her story for publication.

Miracles are a motif in this chapter. It is a miracle that Alice breaks her engagement since her most level-headed friend, Julie, advised her to go through with it. It is a miracle that Julie hung up on Thomas. She is really in love with him, but more determined to walk away from her typical bad boy dating style. All the women burn away their problems during their ritual, and they all hope for a miracle to keep them from being lonely.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the effects of the state-sanctioned church on dating and family life in Iceland.

Discussion Question 2

What is Julie's emotion at the end of the book? What is responsible for it?



Discussion Question 3

Discuss the impact that Hulda's belief in elves had on the group of American friends.

Vocabulary

barricade, whatnot, groggy, thermal, reassured, gross, clinically, lagoon, amniotic, foggiest, regaling, lobbyist, scrolling



Characters

Julie

Julie is the narrator of the story. She is 38 years old, single, and a publicist for a publishing company in New York. Julie is the person who binds all the other women in this book together. All of the various friends she has made throughout different stages in her life become friends with each other while Julie is traveling the world researching and writing her book on how to be single.

Julie develops the book idea after watching and listening to her friends lament about not being able to find Mr. Right. When a girls night out lands Julie and her friends in an emergency room waiting room, she hears a pair of French women talking about how disgusting Julie's drunk friends are acting. Julie strikes up a conversation, and the French women say that American women have very little pride when it comes to dating. That spurs Julie's interest in global dating customs. She pitches the idea to her publisher. Promising to pay her own travel expenses, Julie is given a small advance. She sets out on her travels to write a book about dating customs around the world.

Georgia

Georgia, also in her 30s, gets dumped by her husband for a much younger, Brazilian samba teacher. Georgia is crushed and suddenly finds herself more interested in dating than taking care of her two young children. Her insistence on partying after her divorce is the catalyst for the girls night out, which prompts Julie's interest in writing a book about single women around the world.

In her pursuit of dating, Georgia makes some bad decisions -- including leaving her young children alone at night to see a man in a cafe across the street from their apartment. She leaves a note on her son's pillow telling him not to be scared; she will be back in five minutes. The little boy does not see the note, however, and calls his father. Dale, Georgia's ex-husband, is furious. He begins a legal battle to gain full custody of the children. Until this incident, Georgia had full custody and Dale simply got the kids whenever he wanted. The children stayed with their father many weekends so Georgia could date. In the end, she keeps the kids, but only because Dale's girlfriend dumps him. The girlfriend said that Dale's children made their relationship too difficult.

Serena

Julie met Serena in college. Serena works as a chef for a celebrity couple and their son. She respects her employers' privacy and does not talk with Julie about her work too much. However, in the event that Serena might slip up and say something, she makes Julie sign a confidentiality statement like the one she signed when she started working for the celebrity family.



Serena follows Hinduism. As such, she seeks to live a clean, vegan life. On their girls night out, however, she has a drink and eats a lot of meat. Alcohol poisoning sends her to the hospital that night. Serena later decides to become a swami. After four years of celibacy in the secular world, she takes a vow of celibacy for her religion. Within months, she meets a male swami, and they have an affair. After realizing the swami is having affairs with their yoga students, Serena leaves the religion and returns to her job with the celebrity couple.

Alice

Alice, 38, is an excellent defense attorney for Legal Aid. She is also the youngest law professor at New York University. Julie describes Alice as sexy and voluptuous, a "goddess" (8). Alice dated a man for five years. Then, the man left her because he had commitment issues. She is beyond crushed; she is angry to have wasted five child-bearing years on the man. She claims it is a felony against her biological clock, and she refuses to take it lying down. Very aware of her biological clock, Alice decides to stop practicing her full-time job as an attorney and to devote more time to dating. She keeps her teaching position just to pay the bills. Alice is integral to Julie's girls night out plans because she knows all the hot spots in New York.

Ruby

Ruby stays depressed most of the time. At the start of the book, she is depressed over the death of her cat, Ralph, who died three months earlier of kidney failure. Ruby had adopted Ralph because she was tired of the heartbreak and disappointment caused by dating. She failed to consider that the cat might die. After his death, she stays in bed, does not clean her apartment, and cries constantly. Luckily, Ruby works as an executive recruiter. As her own boss, she can work by phone and computer to help people find jobs. For a short time, she volunteers at an animal shelter.

Ruby desperately wants to be a mother and plans to be artificially inseminated. While waiting for the procedure to take place, she changes her mind because she recalls how depressed and lonely her own mother was as a single parent.

Thomas

Thomas is a French business man that Julie meets on her worldly venture. He and his wife, Dominique, have an open marriage. He pursues Julie because he admires her independent nature. Thomas has black hair and blue eyes. Julie is immediately attracted to him, but she keeps her distance because dating a married man goes against her morals. Thomas follows her to Italy because he has business there, and Julie changes her mind, deciding to live in the moment. She falls in love with Thomas. He meets her in Bali and accompanies her to Beijing.



The trip to Beijing violates his open arrangement with his wife. Their arrangement allows them to be apart for two weeks, no questions asked. He is in his third week with Julie. On the day he is set to return home, Thomas' wife shows up in Beijing and says that she is pregnant.

Dominique

Dominique is Thomas' wife. They have an open marriage arrangement that allows them to be apart for up to two weeks with no questions asked. When Thomas violates this arrangement, Dominique goes to Beijing to drag him home. While yelling at him in the Forbidden City, she tells him she is pregnant.

Dominique is a petite, blonde, French woman who owns a lingerie store. Many famous people shop her store. Julie is struck by how classy and reserved she appears to be, even when yelling at Thomas.

Amrita

Amrita is a single woman Julie meets in India. After trying to date to find a marriage partner out of love, Since Amrita's parents had been successful in arranging her sister's marriage, Amrita decides to let them do the same for her. Amrita's parents use a system of horoscopes, the caste system, and emotional compatibility to choose suitors for Amrita to consider.

While Julie is there, Amrita agrees to marry one of the men presented to her by her family. While the men are selected by the woman's family, the woman still has a say in whether or not she will marry.

Flavia

Flavia is a tall, Brazilian woman whom Julie and Georgia meet in Rio. Flavia is a party girl who actually finds a boyfriend. Flavia and her friends invite Georgia and Julie to experience Rio's culture by going samba dancing at nightclubs. One night during a neighborhood samba party, Flavia gets hit in the face with a beer can that was hurled onto the stage where she was dancing.

Swami Swaroopananda

Swami Swaroopananda is the handsome swami who develops a sexual relationship with Serena, despite their vows of celibacy. Serena is in love with him, and she believes that he feels the same when he gives her a black string to tie around her ankle. He explains that it is all he has to give her. She takes it as a token of true love until she sees other women are also sporting a black ankle string.



Symbols and Symbolism

Steakhouse

In Chapter 2, the steakhouse the women visit during their girls night out symbolizes a house of "beefy" men. Alice knows men love to eat steak, and she chooses this place for dinner so they can be surrounded by men. The idea works because the steakhouse is full of men.

Julie and Alice know there is a lot at "stake" this night, too -- Georgia must have a big night. The homophone "stake" relates to the steak in steakhouse.

Knight in Shining Armor

In the opera Julie goes to see in France, a princess is waiting on her knight in shining armor. Thomas represents a knight in shining armor to Julie. First, his business connections can offer Julie more insight into her dating research. Secondly, he is handsome and charming. Third, he escorts her around Paris. Ironically "armor" and "amour" are very similar words. Amour suggests a secret love affair, which Thomas suggests to Julie.

Whole Foods

Georgia goes looking to meet younger men in Whole Foods. The store symbolizes shopping. Some people are shopping for groceries; Georgia is shopping for a man. As the name "Whole" implies, Georgia hopes to find a good, wholesome man there, someone who is concerned with being healthy. She becomes consumed with why Max does not call her after asking for her number. This consumption alludes to foods. Ironically, by looking for men at this grocery store, it is really Georgia who is on the market.

The Samba

The samba is a seductive, Brazilian dance. In this book, Georgia's husband, Dale, leaves her for his samba teacher. With this experience, Georgia makes the samba symbolize something dirty or bad. To Georgia, women who dance the samba are trashy and steal other women's men. Ironically, Georgia never questions why her husband has a samba teacher.



The Rome Coliseum

Julie and Thomas kiss in front of the Rome Coliseum. It is an ancient piece of history that is crumbling. The emotions Julie is feeling are also ancient. She is allowing part of herself to crumble away so she can be lost in the moment with Thomas. On a less romantic note, the Rome Coliseum symbolizes that Julie's morals are crumbling and becoming a thing of the past.

Male prostitutes

The male prostitutes in Rio symbolize equality to Georgia, but Julie is not quite convinced of her line of thought. Women in Rio accept the fact that their husbands will have mistresses. To Georgia, it is only fair that women get to hire male prostitutes. The catalog that features them symbolizes a wish book of sorts.

Bread Making

Serena's bread making symbolizes sex. Kneading symbolizes touching. In mixing bread ingredients, items are mixed together to become one batter; in this case, two humans mix together for sex. The reference to rising specifically refers to yeast breads. Also, it slyly doubles as a reference to a male erection

Statistics

Statistics symbolize logic, and Julie tries to make love logical through her study of numbers. Julie learns through her interviews, especially in China, that statistics cannot always be trusted because the Chinese did not feel the effects of the woman shortage predicted by statistics. Statistics are comforting to Julie because they represent logic and do not require any emotion to understand.

Serena's Black String

The color black symbolizes death and mourning, foreshadowing the death of Serena's relationship with the handsome swami. Black also symbolizes sophistication and mystery. Finally finding love, Serena feels more sophisticated. Their hidden rendezvous makes their love mysterious. The gift of the string alone symbolizes their vows of poverty.

Cocktail Napkins

In the final chapter of the story, the cocktail napkins that Julie gives to each of her friends represent their fears and the things of their past. As they burn their napkins, they burn their fears and their past obstacles. They can move forward in life.



Settings

Hogs and Heifers

Hogs and Heifers is a New York bar known for its biker culture. Julie and her friends visit the bar on Georgia's girls night out. Georgia gets thrown out for dancing on the bar too long, and Serena must be taken to the hospital for alcohol poisoning.

Regine's

Regine's is a male strip club in Paris open to women for free buffet from 8 to 11 p.m. After 11, men are admitted. Upon entry into the bar, Julie did not know it was a male strip show. She thought the women of Paris just wanted to get together to be with friends. Thomas is owner of the club.

The Rome Coliseum

The ancient Coliseum in Rome was the backdrop for Thomas and Julie's first kiss. They passionately kissed like teenagers there.

Rio

Georgia visits Julie during her stay in Rio. They learn that the women of Rio work hard to improve their looks and to remain beautiful and young-looking. Cellulite is not encouraged on the beach. Rio is a festive town, known for Carnivale and samba dancing.

Australia

On the continent of Australia, there is a man drought; making competition among single women strong. The men prefer younger women, which leaves women in their 30s dining with groups of friends and overlooked in nightclubs.

Bali

When Julie and Thomas stay together in an elaborate villa in Bali, they are mistaken for honeymooners. Julie does not want their relationship to end, but she knows it must because Thomas is married.



The Forbidden City

The Forbidden City in Beijing is home of the Palace Museum. It was the site of China's imperial palace from the mid-1400s to the mid-1900s. In the story, Thomas' wife confronts him here and demands that he return home because she is pregnant.



Themes and Motifs

Supply and Demand

The motif of supply and demand, as it pertains to being a factor in relationships, appears throughout the book. As Julie and her friends begin talking, it is clear that meeting people in New York City is difficult. Even Alice, who quits her full time position as an attorney with Legal Aid to approach dating like a job, has not met Mr. Right. Though, she is going to all the right spots for singles, there are not enough good, single men to meet the demand.

As Julie tours the world, she runs across the notion of gender droughts, too. For example, the male drought reported in Australia seems to be true. The supply of men falls short of meeting the demand for them by women. Both Julie and Georgia meet men who are in their 30s who date women whose ages are 19 and 20. The younger women date the older men because there are not enough younger men to go around. Consequently, the men's preference for younger women leaves women in their 30s with little opportunity to marry.

The men see supply and demand in a different way. They see it as though the younger women have all the power, since men of all ages are targeting them. When the women turn 30, the men have all the power. The problem is that the men have little interest in women their own age when they can have younger women. As men age, however, they are less likely to be accepted by the younger women. Then, the men turn to women their own age.

A female drought was reported in China, but everyone Julie talks to in Beijing denies it. They suggest the drought is in the country, not the city. Actually, China has a different supply and demand problem. Chinese women prefer to date Western men. Chinese men prefer to date Western women. There are very few people in Julie's travels who prefer to marry within their own Chinese culture.

Supply and demand affects how the women from different cultures approach motherhood, too. After Ruby finally gives up her hope of a traditional family, she considers artificial insemination from a sperm bank. However, some in the American culture discourage Ruby from starting a family alone without a father. As Ruby and the friends learn, this is not a concern in Iceland where morals are not an issue and the supply of women who are single mothers makes it acceptable to men who want to date.

Choices

The motif of choosing occurs several times in *How To Be Single*. Julie chooses to change her career by doing worldwide research to write a book about single women. She chooses to begin a relationship with Thomas, and she chooses not to talk to him when he calls her in Iceland.



Ruby chooses to volunteer in a shelter and chooses to replace her deceased cat, Ralph, with a new one named Vanilla. She chooses to opt for artificial insemination, then chooses not to go through with it.

Alice chooses to quit her job to date full time. Later, she chooses to go back to it. She chooses to settle on Jim as a marriage partner, then chooses to elope. Finally, she chooses not to marry him at all.

Georgia chooses to concentrate on dating younger men. Then, she chooses to leave her children alone to pursue one. This bad choice almost results in her losing custody of them. When she is granted another opportunity to be a better mother, she chooses to take it and make her kids her first priority.

Serena chooses to leave her job as a celebrity chef to pursue peace of mind and purity as a swami. Driven by her sexual desires, she chooses to ignore her vow of celibacy and to have sex with the handsome swami. She is angry to learn that he is having sex with a number of other women. She chooses to show how angry she is by causing a scene in the yoga center. Next, she chooses to call her former employer to ask for her old job back, and she gets it.

The heart chooses whom to love.

The motif of choices in *How to Be Single* connects with the theme that while individuals are free to make most choices in life, the heart chooses whom to love. This is proved several times in the book. No matter how hard the women try to break the code for finding love, they are not successful. Alice tries to put herself in all the popular places at the right times, hoping love will fall into her lap. She even quits her full time job to pursue dating full time. This approach allows her to increase her odds of finding Mr. Right, but it does not address love as an emotional issue. Increasing the number of men does not guarantee that the heart will fall in love.

Julie prefers looking at statistics to gain insight on finding love. She understands numbers better than matters of the heart. She is at her happiest studying marriage and dating statistics. She is not unsettled when she sees first-hand that the man drought is accurate in Australia, but she is unsettled to learn that the Chinese woman drought is not accurate. She does not understand how numbers can be wrong. In that case, the statistics do not reflect the single people's preference to date other nationalities instead of their own. She even tries to change it somewhat when she wants to introduce Wei to a Chinese man she met. Neither wants to meet the other, despite all they have in common. This reminds Julie that the heart does not heed tradition or statistics when choosing whom to love.

Also, at first, Julie does not consider dating Thomas because he is a married man. However, as she spends more time with him, her morals crumble. Her heart chooses to fall in love with him, regardless of her previous qualms.



As a contrast to the other women, Alice knows that love is tied to what the heart chooses because she misses love in her relationship with Jim. What she experiences with Jim is more of a comforting situation than a feeling. Though Alice tries consciously to love Jim, her heart chooses not to be "in love" with him. Fortunately, Alice recognizes this and calls off her marriage to Jim.

Motherhood

Motherhood is a motif in the book. Georgia is the only official mother in her group of friends, but the others are thinking about becoming mothers. Alice is furious when her boyfriend breaks up with her after wasting five productive years of her ovaries. Her biological clock was ticking, and the breakup signified that was not about to lose more time that she could never reclaim.

Ruby thinks about taking on motherhood as a single parent with the help of artificial insemination. She backs out at the last minute, however, when recalling her own mother's experience in motherhood. Ruby's mother was a single mother of two; she was depressed and lonely all the time. Ruby is also depressed and lonely. She thought a child would take that pain away, until she remembered her own mother. After passing on the artificial insemination, Ruby goes to see her mom to apologize for her not being able to have her own life. Ruby's mom explained that it was not Ruby's fault. With antidepressant medication, the last year of her life has been wonderful.

Having a loving relationship does not insure happiness.

In *How To Be Single*, the author explores the theme that having a loving relationship does not insure happiness. For example, Ruby has a loving relationship with her adopted cat, Ralph. Ralph came into her life after she was dumped by a boyfriend years ago. When Ralph dies, Ruby goes into a deep depression. Julie notes that this is sometimes typical for pet owners. However, for Ruby, the depression caused by her grief is debilitating. Except for doing freelance work from her home, she is unable to function. Ruby learns from talking to her mother that her mother had once suffered from clinical depression. Ruby is inspired to seek help for her own mental health issues.

Though Julie experiences a close relationship with Thomas, a loving one on her part, she is not happy for a couple of reasons. First, Thomas is a married man. Though Julie tries to ignore her attraction to him, she finally gives in and falls in love. Her happiness over the relationship is tempered with the fact that he is unavailable. Their romantic trysts, which are on a time schedule, cannot provide sustained happiness and contentment.

The relationship between Julie and Thomas comes to an abrupt halt when Thomas' wife appears with the news that she is pregnant. The end of the romance leaves Julie



unhappy. Perhaps, her greatest unhappiness is with herself after letting go of her morals and living for the moment of experiencing a loving relationship with Thomas.

Serena's attempt at a loving relationship with the swami does not end in happiness. After the swami's romantic gesture of giving her a black thread as an anklet, Serena is appalled when she learns that the swami has given a number of women the same gift.

Envy

"The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence" is a good way to explain envy. The Chinese single crowd envies the Western world. Chinese women and men tell Julie they would prefer to have a relationship with a Westerner.

Envy may also apply to Thomas and Julie's relationship, too. Perhaps, on some level, Julie envies Tom's wife. It is possible that Tom envies Julie and her freedom to travel and write. Though he and his wife have an open marriage with a set amount of time to be away without questions being asked, Julie has total freedom with no deadlines of "reporting in" to a spouse.

Serena envies her wealthy employers because she sees that their money does buy them happiness.

Ruby envies mothers, and Alice envies the love Jim's sister has for her husband. Until Alice changed her wedding to an Icelandic elopement, Ruby envied her relationship with Jim. It seemed like Alice and Jim had everything that she wanted out of life, plus the potential to have a nuclear family.

Styles

Point of View

A significant portion of *How To Be Single*, by Liz Tuccillo, is told from the first person point of view. The point of view changes from first person to third person limited or omniscient when the narrator tells stories about the other characters.

From time to time, the point of view and tense are mixed, indicating disarray or confusion. For instance, in Rule 7, Julie begins telling the story in first person, present tense. She changes to third person, limited in the next sentence. The topic of this section was upsetting to Julie, as she said in her narration. The random switch of narration and tense indicates that the narrator is flustered. Most of the time, the point of view is easily distinguished. When the story is about Julie, it is told by her from the first person point of view. When Julie talks about her friends, the point of view is third person limited, with only an occasional omniscient look into the thoughts of additional characters (68).

Language and Meaning

There is a variety of foul language scattered throughout *How To Be Single*. Also, the novel contains many sexual references and innuendos. The language is straight forward. When a slang term or foreign word is used, the author follows it up with a brief explanation. The language is very conversational and draws the reader in like an extra friend to the group.

The author uses italics occasionally in several different ways. When she is telling the story but using the words of another character, those words appear in italics. For example, the words "whore gutter trash" are words she is repeating from Georgia (5). On the same page, she uses italics again to emphasize "that tone." Shortly after the phrase, the author explains "that tone" is impatience, contempt, and disgust. In another example, the author italicizes the foreign word "fica" to call the reader's attention to it. Through the characters' dialogue, the author explains that the word means "one-night stand" (140).

Julie's wit and sarcasm show through most of the story in the way of quips and puns. For instance, she says "Because at the end of the day, it's night (25)." That line is funny because the reader is expecting something profound. When Thomas talks to her about his sex club clientele, he says that many of them "have been coming here for years." Julie replies, "No pun intended" (66).



Structure

How To Be Single, by Liz Tuccillo, has eleven chapters.. Each chapter is a numbered rule for being single. The stories in each chapter coincide with the rule. For instance, Rule 1: Make Sure You Have Friends is all about Julie and her group of friends. It concentrates on how they are single rather than why they are single. No one in this circle of friends wants to be single. Julie's narration puts the focus on how each woman has ended up that way.

The story follows a logical sequence. The first chapter begins with Georgia, not Julie. Julie tells of her frantic phone call from Georgia who insists on getting out and having a good time with her single friends. Georgia is recently divorced and wants to have fun, mostly to get even with her ex-husband. Georgia is the catalyst for the girls night out that brings Julie's friends together as a group. So, it is fitting that the book begins with Georgia's situation.

The rising action of this story is broad because it covers the lives of five different characters -- Julie, Georgia, Alice, Serena, and Ruby. Each one has a climactic moment. For Julie, it is when Thomas' wife shows up at the Forbidden City. For Alice, it is calling off her marriage. For Serena, it is finding out the swami was not loyal to her, and for Ruby it was bolting away from her insemination appointment.

Collectively, the story's climax occurs when all the friends meet in Iceland for what should have been Alice's honeymoon. When they had an impromptu ritual to burn their fears and the things that went wrong in the past, they all shared in the climactic moment of a new beginning. They had been separate characters in the story since Julie left to travel, but they are reunited with a strong friendship and collectively strong will.



Quotes

It was a crime against my ovaries.

-- Alice (Rule 1: Make Sure You Have Friends paragraph 6)

Importance: This quote explains why Alice is so mad after her boyfriend of five years broke up with her. They dated from the time she was 33 to when she turned 38. Very aware of her biological clock, Alice declares the breakup a crime against her ovaries.

Love isn't that clever.

-- Julie (Rule 1: Make Sure You Have Friends paragraph 1)

Importance: Julie compares Alice quitting her job to look for love full-time to Serena sitting back to see if love would just happen. She never went out anywhere and lost her passion for fun. Julie worried that love does not just find people because it is not that clever.

I had an epiphany as to how this entire night might actually turn out okay.

-- Julie (Rule 2: Don't Be Crazy, No Matter How You Feel, Because It Just Makes Us All Look Bad paragraph 3)

Importance: Julie is worried about the mismatched group of friends she put together for Georgia's girls night out. None of Julie's friends have ever met each other; she is their only common denominator. She knows each woman's quirks and peeves, but she thinks that possibly, the night has potential to be a success.

They made me get off the bar I was dancing on.

-- Georgia (Rule 2: Don't Be Crazy, No Matter How You Feel, Because It Just Makes Us All Look Bad paragraph 5)

Importance: Georgia's unwillingness to stop dancing on the bar was the catalyst for the group of friends getting thrown out of the bar. She and Alice had minor injuries from the scuffle and had to be treated at the emergency room while Serena was being treated for alcohol poisoning. Georgia tells this to two French women in the emergency room, and Julie strikes up a conversation with them. The French women tell Julie that American women have no pride or dignity. Julie decides to travel the world to learn how women in other countries are single.

For instance, the minute you called me an evil genius, I wanted to spend more time with you. Because you seemed funny and interesting and you are beautiful.

-- Thomas (Rule 3: Decide What You Believe In and Then Behave Accordingly paragraph 6)

Importance: Thomas explains to Julie how he can be attracted to another woman even though he is married and loves his wife.



As I watched him walk away, I realized what I believed in for this moment at least: sometimes the princess really should just shut the hell up.

-- Julie (Rule 3: Decide What You Believe In and Then Behave Accordingly paragraph 5)

Importance: Julie says this to herself after she realizes she offended Thomas with a sarcastic remark. He said he knew a few single women in Rome she could interview. Julie remarked, "I'm sure you do." He scolded her for the remark and left.

Wow. You actually wake up early to read. That's impressive.

-- Serena, as Swami Durgananda (Figure Out the Whole Sex Thing – When You Want It, How to Get It, Who to Do It With paragraph 4)

Importance: Serena says this to the handsome Swami Swaroopananda when she sees him in the kitchen early one morning. She begins getting up earlier and cooking more foods so she can spend time with him. In a short time, they break their vows of celibacy to have an affair.

Kiss my orange ass.

-- Serena, as Swami Durgananda (Rule 6: Make Peace with the Statistics Because There Really Isn't Anything We Can Do About Them (Or Is There?) paragraph 2)

Importance: Serena has taken all of her orange clothing and all of Swami Swaroopananda's orange clothing and piled them in front of the business. The head swami tells her she is following her own ego too much and creating bad karma for herself. This is her reply.

Wow. I guess you must like flowers.

-- Sam (Rule 6: Make Peace with the Statistics Because There Really Isn't Anything We Can Do About Them (Or Is There?) paragraph 4)

Importance: Sam notices several large flower arrangements sent to Georgia, presumably by other men. She uses the flowers to increase his attraction to her by making her seem wanted by so many more men. This crazy plan actually works. Ironically, after proving her point, Georgia does not want to date him.

A marriage must be composed of three things: you must be emotionally compatible, intellectually compatible, and physically compatible. If you don't have all three, a marriage will not work.

-- Mr. Ramani, Amrita's father (Rule 10: Remember That Sometimes There Are More Important Things Than You and Your Lousy Love Life AND Get Your friends Involved in Helping you with Your Lousy Love Life paragraph 13)

Importance: Mr. Ramani surprises Julie by including physical compatibility in his marriage formula. This shows her that sex is an important part of a marriage at any age and it is recognized as such by elders.



She said she didn't want to date a man who had children. It's too complicated.
-- Dale (Rule 10: Remember That Sometimes There Are More Important Things Than You and Your Lousy Love Life AND Get Your friends Involved in Helping you with Your Lousy Love Life paragraph 3)

Importance: Dale relinquished his attempt to get custody of the children because his girlfriend walked out on him. After the caseworker leaves, he breaks down crying when he tells Georgia the news.

I am definitely not alone.
-- Julie (Rule 11: Believe in Miracles. paragraph 1)

Importance: Julie's bond with all her friends has grown, and they have become a tight-knit group. She has their friendship, even if she never meets Mr. Right. This statement also refers to the knowledge she gained while globetrotting. Single women all over the world are experiencing the same types of problems in looking for love. She finds comfort in knowing the struggle is not isolated to her and her friends.