

Identical Study Guide

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Plot Summary

"Identical" is written from the alternating viewpoint of the twins, Raeanne and Kaeleigh Gardella, with chapters switching between their two perspectives. Their narratives are written in free verse in sometimes jagged shapes of broken hearts or liquor bottles, with the appearance of the text reinforcing the content. Each twin's chapter ends on a left-hand page, while the other twin's chapter begins on a right-hand page. Where the two are juxtaposed, selected words from each are identical, set off from the rest, as if trying to join with the words from the other twin on the opposite page. This technique illustrates the twins' deep connection.

Raeanne and Kaeleigh, are both troubled high school students. Their family had been torn apart years before, when their Daddy drank too much and swerved their car into oncoming traffic. There was a fatality and Mom lost her ability to love. Mom is never home these days. She is running for a seat in the U.S. Congress. Daddy is a judge, stern and domineering. Daddy started looking for the love he couldn't get from Mom by visiting little Kaeleigh in the night, back when she was only ten. Young Raeanne could only watch, scared and jealous. Kaeleigh copes as best she can with Daddy's continuing sexual abuse, trying to be a good girl, finding solace in binge eating and cutting herself with a razor. Raeanne, Kaeleigh's twin, wishes Daddy loved her best and that she could pleasure him. Raeanne looks for something to fill the void inside her. She trades sex for marijuana and becomes more and more reckless. Raeanne steals OxyContin and whiskey from Daddy, and she experiments with drugs and bondage.

Kaeleigh finds escape at a Lutheran home, where she has a part-time job. One resident, Greta, reaches out to Kaeleigh, sensing her pain since she herself had been abused by her father. Kaeleigh also has a loving boyfriend, Ian, who understands that Kaeleigh is troubled but does not know how to help her. Kaeleigh wishes she could open up to Greta or Ian, but she cannot. Sometimes Raeanne comes to Kaeleigh's rescue when Kaeleigh seems unable to help herself.

A few days after Mom wins the election, Kaeleigh overdoses on whiskey and pills. Daddy finds Kaeleigh and seeks help from Hannah, a nursing-student neighbor with whom he had had an affair. Hannah helps Kaeleigh vomit and then tells Daddy that Kaeleigh needs help, but Daddy wants to handle things himself, as usual.

A desperate Raeanne goes off in search of Grandpa Gardella, Daddy's father, to find out if secrets from Daddy's past might explain why he is such a demon. Raeanne learns that her Daddy was sexually abused by a neighbor when he was young. Raeanne understands Daddy better, but she still needs to feel something, anything. Raeanne goes off with Ty, a young man who is into drugs and bondage, and just when things start to get out of control, Ian arrives to rescue Kaeleigh. Ian is disappointed that Kaeleigh is with Ty, but Raeanne explains that she is not Kaeleigh, not her twin sister. Ian, devastated and shocked, explains that Raeanne is dead, killed in a car crash years ago, and the girl standing here is indeed Kaeleigh.



A doctor helps Kaeleigh to understand that she probably has dissociative identity disorder where she has created multiple personalities to cope with the trauma in her life. Daddy is forced to go into rehab and then find an apartment thirty miles away. Mom only comes home for rare visits, for the sake of appearances. Grandma Gardella moves in with Kaeleigh, in the family home. Ian promises to stand by Kaeleigh and love her, as long as he is able, to help her through her treatment. Kaeleigh vows that the abuse stops here, that her children will be protected and nurtured. Raeanne, lurking quietly inside of Kaeleigh, vows that she will never leave, because she is strong and she must protect her twin.



Raeanne (p. 1), Kaeleigh (p. 7), Raeanne (p. 19)

Raeanne (p. 1), Kaeleigh (p. 7), Raeanne (p. 19) Summary

"Identical" chronicles the struggles of two high-school-aged twins, Raeanne and Kaeleigh. Following a terrible car accident when the twins were younger, their family fell apart. Their mother is cold and distant, always out of town. Their father is an alcoholic who abuses OxyContin, and he uses Kaeleigh sexually to replace the love he doesn't get from his wife. Kaeleigh struggles to please everyone, but she cuts herself and binges. Kaeleigh has trouble letting her boyfriend love her. Raeanne is jealous of Kaeleigh, wishing Daddy would let her pleasure him. Raeanne trades sex for drugs, purges, and takes many personal risks to fill the emptiness she feels inside. The novel explores the motives behind the actions of each main character, coming to a climax when Kaeleigh overdoses and loses her identity.

In Raeanne (p. 1), teenager Raeanne begins the novel, reflecting on the mirror-image symmetry between herself and her twin, Kaeleigh. But they are not alike on the inside. On the inside, Kaeleigh is the egg, like their mother, cold and controlled. Raeanne, then, is the sperm, like their father, codependent and cowardly. Raeanne wonders if she and her twin share one soul, or if they each have their own. The twins live in a California valley, in a town designed to resemble Denmark to attract tourists. The houses are perfect on the outside, much like twins Raeanne and Kaeleigh, but behind their facades they hold secrets. Raeanne knows that telling her secret isn't an option, because it's likely that no one would believe her, or if they did, no one would trust her, because "once a nark, always a nark, you know?" (p. 6).

In Kaeleigh (p. 7), Kaeleigh wishes she could tell her secret. She has tried to tell her mom, between campaign swings, but her mom does not want to hear. Kaeleigh reflects, in verse shaped like a liquor bottle, that her Daddy is a broken man with no friends and a tattered family. But if Kaeleigh tells on Daddy, she must tell on herself as well, revealing the part she keeps locked away. Their home is beautifully decorated, but no one ever visits, they have no parties, no family photos, no evidence of happy memories. The only person who comes is their maid, Manuela. Mom is never home. Her parents don't seem normal, but Kaeleigh isn't sure what exactly is normal. Kaeleigh remembers when she and Raeanne would giggle about their parents, Ray and Kay, so in love, and how they met in a courtroom when Kay's then-boyfriend was charged with driving drunk. Kay left her boyfriend for the handsome judge. But then Daddy fractured their world, driving under the influence, veering into oncoming traffic. A family member was killed and Kay fell out of love with Ray. Even worse, Kay fell out of love with everyone. The family are walking zombies, each going their own way. Kaeleigh understands that Mom



is running for Congress in order to escape her family. Kaeleigh is left behind at home, where Daddy begs her to open her arms and love him the way Mom used to.

In Raeanne (p. 19), Raeanne craves Daddy's affection. Raeanne wonders if Daddy would want her if she were more like Kaeleigh, more like Mom. Raeanne wants to love Daddy the way Mom used to. In text shaped like a broken heart, Raeanne writes that Daddy might take a bullet if someone told on him, but more likely he would shoot Mom, especially if he were on a bender. Daddy, like Raeanne herself, often falls into "a state of numb" (p. 20). Sometimes students mistake Raeanne for her sister, Kaeleigh. Raeanne is sometimes amused, sometimes angered, when that happens. Raeanne's boyfriend, Mick, is two years out of high school. Mick provides Raeanne with marijuana, or bud, in exchange for sex. Marijuana takes Raeanne to a distant place, where she doesn't mind fulfilling Mick's needs, and she doesn't mind the munchies afterward. She is careful, however, to stick her finger down her throat after she eats, because Daddy would not want her to get fat. Raeanne likes the feeling of being in control over Mick, controlling when he gets off.

Raeanne (p. 1), Kaeleigh (p. 7), Raeanne (p. 19) Analysis

The Gardella family seems perfect on the outside, living in a perfect house, but the family has untellable secrets. Young Kaeleigh has been sexually abused by her Daddy for years, but the twins see nowhere to turn for help. Raeanne wonders when it is right or wrong to be a narc, especially since Daddy has said he will swallow a bullet if anyone tells. Mom is blind to the truth, emotionally divorced from her family. The girls must find a way to end their torment.

Throughout the novel, when the verse viewpoint switches from one twin to the other, selected words and phrases are offset from the verse to be closer to the adjoining page. For example, on the last page of Raeanne's first chapter, a left-hand page (page 6), the phrase "a secret" is offset to the right, closer to Kaeleigh's first page. On Kaeleigh's first page, a right-hand page (page 7), the phrase "a secret" is offset to the left, closer to Raeanne's last page. But the other words on the pages are different. This shows the fact that the twins have a deep common bond, despite their differences.

Kaeleigh asks, repeatedly, if her life is really so bad. Of course, the question itself implies that something is wrong. The fact that Daddy helped decorate her bedroom hints of something ominous.



Kaeleigh (p. 29), Raeanne (p. 37), Kaeleigh (p. 47)

Kaeleigh (p. 29), Raeanne (p. 37), Kaeleigh (p. 47) Summary

In Kaeleigh (p. 29), Kaeleigh's best friend, Ian, is waiting when she gets off the school bus near her house. He knows she has been avoiding him. His eyes reflect concern, pain, anger, and love. He wants to be more than friends with Kaeleigh, and he encourages her to share her deepest secrets so he can help. Kaeleigh admits that she has been avoiding him, but she can't say why. Sometimes when Ian holds Kaeleigh, she sees her Daddy's face and pulls away. Ian tries to understand, but he cannot. Ian gives Kaeleigh a ride to work, and she builds up her resolve and kisses him.

In Raeanne (p. 37), Raeanne is furious to find a girl named Madison leaning through the window of Mick's truck. Madison is Mick's ex. Raeanne wants to dig her claws into Madison's tough hide, especially since the only drugs Madison the jock would ever do are steroids. Raeanne is tired of playing passive; she will leave that to Kaeleigh. Madison fumes as Mick and Raeanne drive away, sitting close together. Once Madison is out of sight, however, Raeanne scoots to the far side of the truck in anger. Mick pulls her back toward him, leaving bruises. A part of Raeanne likes it when he takes control, because it means he cares. Raeanne rationalizes that she is in control of their quickie in the truck, numbed by pot. The way to gain control is to say no. but sometimes Raeanne finds it hard to say no.

In Kaeleigh (p. 47), Kaeleigh wishes she could say yes to Ian, so they could be closer. She works at a Lutheran home, helping the elderly residents who have already lived their lifetimes. Kaeleigh admires them for not crumbling, even as they approach death. Kaeleigh is especially close to Greta Sorenson, a woman who once defied the Nazis. Kaeleigh thinks of Greta as her "faux Grandma" (p. 49). Kaeleigh's grandma on her mother's side doesn't visit since the accident, and her grandma on her father's side doesn't visit because she and Daddy haven't spoken for three decades. Daddy's parents had an ugly divorce years before. Kaeleigh once looked up her Daddy's father and he sent birthday cards, until Daddy found out and put an end to their contact. At the Lutheran home, Kaeleigh once saw an expression of fear in Greta's eyes and asked her what she was afraid of. Greta explained that she had met evil when she was a child, then she married evil and accepted it because it was nothing new. Kaeleigh understood and wondered how to divorce herself from the evil she had already accepted.



Kaeleigh (p. 29), Raeanne (p. 37), Kaeleigh (p. 47) Analysis

Raeanne likes it when Mick is rough and takes control, supposedly because it means he cares. But deep down she knows that is not true. She knows that Daddy is not being a loving father when he controls Kaeleigh. Raeanne muses about being out of control, in jagged free verse, then thinks about being in control, in a neat column of text. Being in control requires use of the simple word, no, as illustrated by the jagged then smooth text on page 45.

Kaeleigh has two trustworthy friends, Ian and Greta, but she is unable to confide in either of them about her pain. Ian clearly loves Kaeleigh, but sometimes when they touch he morphs into Daddy. Kaeleigh cannot explain this to Ian, but he remains steadfast, hoping that someday she will share her secrets. Kaeleigh realizes how lucky she is to have Ian in her life. Greta has told Kaeleigh that she met evil in her own life, and she senses that Kaeleigh has her own evil to face. Kaeleigh understands their connection, but she does not have the strength to confide in Greta. She feels the need to protect Daddy and maintain the status quo.



Raeanne (p. 57), Kaeleigh (p. 67), Raeanne (p. 77), Kaeleigh (p. 89), Raeanne (p. 99)

Raeanne (p. 57), Kaeleigh (p. 67), Raeanne (p. 77), Kaeleigh (p. 89), Raeanne (p. 99) Summary

In Raeanne (p. 57), Raeanne stays out late on purpose with Mick, hoping Daddy will be passed out by the time she gets home. Tonight, she gets her wish. Daddy has been on OxyContin since the accident; the doctor refills the prescription without question. Raeanne borrows a few pills and some Wild Turkey from time to time. Raeanne is careful not to cough when she swallows the burning whiskey, so as not to wake Daddy, then loses herself on the "Oxy/Turkey merry-go-round" (p. 61). Raeanne remembers the first night Daddy came to their bedroom, even if Kaeleigh can't or won't. With slurred speech, Daddy told Kaeleigh he was so lonely and kissed her on the lips, with love that was meant for Mom. Raeanne lingered in a dark corner, full of envy. Raeanne describes Kaeleigh's loss of innocence, Kaeleigh's ability to block memories, and Raeanne's attempt to tell Mom, all in verse shaped like the letter L, followed by the letters UST (p. 65). Mom no longer loved them by then, because her kisses had been taken away on the bumper of the semi truck. Raeanne knows the family unraveled that night, irreparably.

In Kaeleigh (p. 67), Kaeleigh gets the lead in "Grease," the school play. She is happy until she sees that Madison has a role as well. Kae and Madison are long-time rivals, often swapping insults. Kaeleigh delays taking her shower after P.E. to avoid Madison, and as a result she misses the bus. Kaeleigh doesn't have a driver's license, even though she is old enough, because Mom is never home to sign for it and Daddy won't. Mr. Lawler, her history teacher, drives up and offers Kaeleigh a ride home. Kaeleigh doesn't trust any men, but she accepts the ride anyway. Mr. Lawler asks her not to tell anyone, because of others' perceptions, but promises to be a perfect gentleman. Kaeleigh admits to herself that he is cute, but students and teachers together are taboo.

In Raeanne (p. 77), Raeanne sees Kaeleigh arrive home with Mr. Lawler, and she thinks about how she would have shown him a different Gardella girl, one who isn't worried about age differences or impropriety. Raeanne considers the world of men, different from Daddy, even perhaps nice men, although she has never met one. She thinks it's good to sample many men, for years, to maybe find one worth keeping, but the fun would be in the fishing. Daddy isn't drunk today, because Mom will be home and they must get ready for a press conference on the front lawn. Raeanne dresses in designer clothes and smiles as her mother asks, but Mom doesn't know she's smiling at the notion of dropping her pants and telling the press what to kiss. Mom can't pull away when Daddy puts his arm around her, because the press is watching. Mom answers



each question perfectly, until a woman with blocky legs asks about judges who break the laws they are sworn to uphold. Mom replies that her husband does not hold himself above the law, and that the fatal accident was a personal tragedy. She asks if her family should apologize for not dying. Raeanne muses that the blocky-legged reporter doesn't realize how connected her parents are, able to separate a reporter from her job. During dinner, Raeanne tries to imagine they are a normal family in which Mom is not a cardboard cutout, Daddy is not starved for affection, and she and Kaeleigh are not irrelevant.

In Kaeleigh (p. 89), for Kaeleigh, life is both easier and more difficult with Mom at home. Kaeleigh hopes Mom will lose the election so she would be home more often. Food is Kaeleigh's friend because it is one thing she can control. She uses food to dull her emotions, except when Daddy is watching, because no daughter of his will wear double-digit clothes. Kaeleigh helps Mom with the dishes, and Mom stiffens whenever Kaeleigh brushes against her. The two drink wine together but can't communicate. Mom can't even manage an answer when Kaeleigh asks if she misses her family when she's away. Mom finally asks if Kaeleigh is all right, Kaeleigh says no, and still they go their separate ways to bed. Kaeleigh considers calling Ian, but since it's Friday night he's probably out or asleep.

In Raeanne (p. 99), when the house is quiet, Raeanne calls Mick and sneaks out. She offers to roll a joint and please him if he will drive slower. Mick slows and comments that he saw her on TV. Raeanne gets angry when Mick says her mom is hot. They arrive at a secluded party spot on Figueroa Mountain. Madison is there and Raeanne considers a catfight, but Mick looks happy to see her. Raeanne grabs a beer and turns her attention to a cute guy. He asks if she and Mick are friends and makes a joke about them coming together. Raeanne replies that they did arrive together, and they've come together a few times, too. Raeanne knows it's stupid to go off into the woods with a stranger, but because Mick is in his truck with Madison, Raeanne makes her decision. The cute guy says his name is Ty and that he saw her on the news earlier. Against her better judgment, Raeanne makes love with Ty in the woods.

Raeanne (p. 57), Kaeleigh (p. 67), Raeanne (p. 77), Kaeleigh (p. 89), Raeanne (p. 99) Analysis

Raeanne remembers the first night Daddy came to Kaeleigh for the love he couldn't get from Mom. He was drunk and Kaeleigh was innocent, eager to please. Afterward Kaeleigh just tried to forget, but Raeanne was jealous. By that time Mom was emotionally distant from the family, as Raeanne poignantly describes, so distant because her kisses rode away on the bumper of the semi Daddy hit with the family car. For many reasons, each member of the Gardella family had withdrawn from the others.

Kaeleigh tries to communicate with her Mom, perhaps even to talk about Daddy's abuse, but Mom is closed and distant. She will not see or hear anything that disturbs her status quo. She had only come home, in fact, for the sake of appearances, to hold a press conference on the lawn depicting herself as a loving Mom running for Congress.

The twins' lives flow in the narrative from one to the other, without overlap. Kaeleigh decides not to call Ian when the house is quiet, but Raeanne does call Mick. Raeanne goes out after Kaeleigh is asleep and gives herself to a stranger. At least Raeanne is in control, so she thinks, by defying her parents and choosing who she will have sex with.



Kaeleigh (p. 109), Raeanne (p. 119), Kaeleigh (p. 131), Raeanne (p. 143)

Kaeleigh (p. 109), Raeanne (p. 119), Kaeleigh (p. 131), Raeanne (p. 143) Summary

In Kaeleigh (p. 109), Kaeleigh hears Daddy begging Mom not to go, but early Saturday morning Mom leaves town. Kaeleigh counts Daddy's steps, pretending to be asleep and willing him to pass by her bedroom door without opening it. Twelve steps would lead to her bedroom, twenty to his own. He does open her door, but merely brushes her cheek, cries, and asks why he can't take it all back. Anguished, he falls asleep next to Kaeleigh's bed and she sneaks out. She will walk to work and still be early. She feels alone and dirty as the sun rises. There is a new resident at the old folks' home, a ladies' man named William O'Connell. He flirts with all of the ladies, harmlessly, impressing all except Greta. Kaeleigh freezes when William calls Kaeleigh a "lovely little flower" (p. 113). She is transported to some distant time when Daddy told her, "Don't be afraid, little flower. It's only me" (p. 114). Greta sees Kaeleigh's distress and tells the nursing home residents that Kaeleigh has taken ill. In Greta's room, Greta has the sensitivity to stay quiet while Kaeleigh cries. Greta says she knows Kaeleigh has some powerful demons, and promises to listen when Kaeleigh is ready to talk. Kaeleigh wants to talk, but she can't talk about Daddy ever, or about Mom before the election, or about how she misses being close to Raeanne, or about the other family members who never come around. Kaeleigh hugs Greta and promises they will share stories sometime. On the way out, Kaeleigh pokes William in the shoulder, being friendly, and tells him her name.

In Raeanne (p. 119), Raeanne believes it is better to confront demons than to lock them away like Kaeleigh. Raeanne decides to confront her demon, Madison, who is getting in the way of her relationship with Mick. Mick may not be worth the trouble, but he does help fill the empty hole that needs love and he supplies her with bud. Madison tells Mick that Raeanne is with other guys all the time, and Raeanne denies that, threatening to kick Madison's ass. But kicking Madison's ass could get her suspended from school or even hauled into Daddy's courtroom, so she decides to seek revenge another way. Her plan begins to form when she sees Madison search her purse for a tampon, but meanwhile she meets the attractive Mr. Lawler over lunch to discuss her history paper. While Raeanne speaks, Mr. Lawler places his hand over hers. Later Raeanne visits Kaeleigh's drama class. Kaeleigh isn't there, so Raeanne saunters onstage by Madison, wrinkles her nose, and asks loudly if Madison is on the rag.

In Kaeleigh (p. 131), Madison is humiliated by Raeanne's question, most people laugh, but Ian looks disappointed. Kaeleigh can't remember her lines. When Kaeleigh and Ian are alone, running lines, Ian remarks that sometimes he doesn't know who Kaeleigh is. She admits that sometimes she doesn't either, and then Ian smiles. At home after school, Kaeleigh regrets the black energy inside of her that drives a wedge between



herself and Ian. She decides to control what she can, her curves, and heads to the refrigerator to binge. Despite her binges, for some reason she has yet to reach double digit sizes. An eating disorder, she rationalizes, is not like other addictions. While gathering food, she hears a message on the answering machine from Grandpa Gardella. He wants to warn Daddy that his mother has resurfaced. Grandpa thinks she will want money in exchange for not causing trouble for Mom's election. The message spoils Kaeleigh's appetite. She had thought her grandmother was dead. Kaeleigh wonders what secret Grandma knows and why she has stayed away.

In Raeanne (p. 143), Kaeleigh may have lost her appetite, but Raeanne eats ice cream while she thinks about Grandpa Gardella's message. While Kaeleigh is excited to learn more about her family tree, to dissect its demons, Raeanne believes this turn of events will only bring more pain. Raeanne considers what secret her grandmother knows, in verse shaped like a letter E. Next to the letter E are the words, "inquiring minds want to know" (p. 145), referring to the tabloids. Raeanne decides not to call Daddy, because she wants to see the look on his face when he hears about the phone message. Instead, she calls Mom, and Mom responds that she will put some people on it. Raeanne wonders if she could do her own blackmailing, to get things she wants. She decides it will be more fun if Daddy's mother catches him by surprise, so she erases the phone message, then enjoys ice cream and laxatives. In bed, she muses that life is about to change, but perhaps not for the better. She remembers the first night when Daddy unzipped his pants and asked Kaeleigh, his little flower, to touch him. Raeanne was scared, but secretly she wished she could touch Daddy too. Afterward Daddy cried, and little Kaeleigh worried that she didn't love him good enough. Daddy realized then what he had done, and explained that Mom would be mad if she knew Kaeleigh loved him better than she did. They must keep this secret so Mommy wouldn't go away. Kaeleigh thought it over, then she agreed. Raeanne wonders who or what created such a great empty need in Daddy.

Kaeleigh (p. 109), Raeanne (p. 119), Kaeleigh (p. 131), Raeanne (p. 143) Analysis

Raeanne wants to be different from her twin. She wants to confront her demons. But rather than confronting the demons at home she chooses a scapegoat, Madison. Madison's only crime seems to be paying attention to any boy a Gardella girl shows interest in. Plot developments are foreshadowed when a mysterious answering message appears, mentioning a Grandma the twins had assumed was long dead. Raeanne, always looking to cause trouble, erases the message in hopes of ambushing her Daddy.

Ian speaks more truth than he realizes when he says sometimes he does not know who Kaeleigh is. She cannot argue. While Raeanne fills her emptiness with drugs and sex, Kaeleigh tries to fill hers with food. She doesn't understand why she doesn't gain weight, because it is only her sister who purges.



The fact that Kaeleigh knows exactly how many steps Daddy must take to reach her door is disturbing. She would have no need to count those steps, were it not for the abuse they precede. Daddy sometimes shows regret and guilt, spilling tears by Kaeleigh's bedside, but he does nothing to change his abusive ways. Raeanne is the only twin who has flashbacks about Kaeleigh and Daddy having sex. Raeanne is always the spectator, huddled in the corner, afraid yet jealous. Innocent little Kaeleigh takes the blame on herself when Daddy cries, worrying that she didn't love him good enough. Daddy uses emotional blackmail to ensure Kaeleigh and Raeanne don't tell, saying that Mom would be jealous and she would leave them. Of course, Mom has already left them emotionally, just not legally.



Kaeleigh (p. 155), Raeanne (p. 169)

Kaeleigh (p. 155), Raeanne (p. 169) Summary

In Kaeleigh (p. 155), Kaeleigh wakes in the morning with her tummy flatter than ever, needing to binge more than ever. She feels an urge to pleasure herself sexually, which she has never done before, and afterward she feels humiliated. In the shower, she deliberately cuts her leg with a razor, and she smiles as blood vanishes down the drain. It stings, but at least she feels something. She dresses in baggy clothes, like a "pregnant hippie" (p. 159), then braids her hair. She skips breakfast and almost makes it out the door when Daddy stops her. He insists that she change clothes, not accepting her excuses. He chooses a pink angora sweater for her, saying it makes her look like her mother. He stays to watch her change, making her want to vomit, but then the phone rings. In jagged text Kaeleigh notes that her jeans rub against her cut, reminding her that she is alive. She shoves her hippie clothes in her backpack and runs out the door, trying to catch the bus, but she is too late. Daddy pulls up in his Lexus. He instructs her to undo her braids. He pinches her cheeks hard, angry that she left without waiting for him. He will decide what is or isn't too much trouble. She nods and he relaxes, saying she is the one person he can count on. In the car they seem normal, Kaeleigh knows, he in a suit and she in angora, but the neighbors and the world have no idea how abnormal she and her Daddy both are beneath the surface.

In Raeanne (p. 169), Raeanne finds school boring, with the exception of Mr. Lawler's class, when she can wonder about what is behind his zipper. Through a window Raeanne sees Ian outside with Madison. For Madison to flirt with Mick is one thing, but to betray Kaeleigh is yet another. Raeanne raises her hand and asks to be excused. Outside, Ian looks uncomfortable, then hurt. Madison just smiles and says she asked Ian to vote for her in the school election. Ian leaves, not wanting to talk to Raeanne, who he thinks is Kaeleigh. Raeanne can't worry about Ian anymore, because she is skipping Spanish to meet Mick. Being with Mick is uncomplicated. They share pot and sex, then Mick is pulled over for driving erratically. The cop sniffs the air and asks for Mick's license and registration, then he recognizes Raeanne as Kay Gardella's daughter. Mick admits they have been smoking. Deputy Carson pulls Raeanne aside and explains that he does not want to hurt Kay's chance of winning the upcoming election. He was, in fact, the first officer on the scene eight years ago, when Daddy crashed his Mercedes and tore the Gardella family apart. Deputy Carson asks Raeanne to bring him their stash, after which he will write Mick a speeding ticket. Deputy Carson tells Raeanne she shouldn't hang around losers, and that he believes people who survive horrible accidents are either evil or saved for a reason, which, he asks, is Raeanne? Raeanne wonders if she was saved because she is good at sex, or if Deputy Carson doesn't know what he is talking about, or if fate was simply too busy on the day of the accident to bother with her. She wonders, if things had gone differently that day, how different their lives would be today.



Kaeleigh (p. 155), Raeanne (p. 169) Analysis

Kaeleigh is tormented, feeling guilty about masturbation and then cutting herself with her razor. The reader is left to wonder, along with Kaeleigh, why her stomach stays flat no matter how much she binges. Daddy demonstrates his dominance over her, telling her what to wear. Kaeleigh shows some sign of disobedience when she tries to sneak out of the house, but then she is physically punished by an angry Daddy. His anger only dissipates when he is satisfied that Kaeleigh is back under his control.

Raeanne demonstrates love and loyalty for her twin, Kaeleigh, when she confronts Ian, but for some reason Ian seems to think Raeanne is Kaeleigh. Later, a police officer says that anyone who survived an accident like her family's is either evil or saved for a reason, giving Raeanne much to think about. Cynically, she thinks fate might have been too busy to bother with her, and yet, she wonders about the person in the car who was killed that terrible day.



Kaeleigh (p. 185), Raeanne (p. 201)

Kaeleigh (p. 185), Raeanne (p. 201) Summary

In Kaeleigh (p. 185), Kaeleigh's leg is swollen from her razor cut. Only a bomb threat saves her from revealing her injury in P.E. Kaeleigh wonders about God. Some believers seem really happy, but then some Christians are not very Godlike. She reads the Bible sometimes, but she finds the Old Testament scary. The New Testament is more appealing, but Jesus asks people to forgive, especially their enemies. Kaeleigh is sure there are people she will never be able to forgive. Greta, from the nursing home, first advised Kaeleigh to read the Bible. Greta found comfort there herself, when her country was overrun by Nazis. The Bible, however, did not help Lutherans to save Jews. People had to do that for themselves. The Nazis punished freedom fighters by sending them to camps or killing them on the spot. Greta believes that she and her friends earned God's mercy because of their actions. Kaeleigh mainly believes in a higher power known as the power of her father. He is guilty of several of the seven deadly sins, but not gluttony. Kaeleigh plans to practice some gluttony before she goes to work. Too much food is the only thing she really feels, other than pain from the razor. While Kaeleigh bicycles to work, she muses that she hates holidays, except for Halloween and Easter, because they both involve candy. Kaeleigh's friend, Brittany, pulls up in a car. She is excited about her new driver's license and offers Kaeleigh a ride to school the following morning. Kaeleigh accepts, thinking Brittany might come in handy for rides home from work when daylight gets shorter. At the nursing home, Greta has a special visitor, a man from her past who makes her eyes sparkle. They speak together in Danish. Kaeleigh guesses they are in love. Greta glows as if filled with light from heaven, and since Greta believes in heaven, it is so for her. Kaeleigh is happy for her until she feels a jab of jealousy. Kaeleigh wonders why an old woman should have love, when she herself is doomed to loveless decades of frigidity. Then Greta laughs, and Kaeleigh is ashamed. Kaeleigh wonders if the evil in her was always there, since birth, or something spawned sometime between then and now.

In Raeanne (p. 201), Raeanne thinks Kaeleigh takes herself too seriously. Everyone has a secret side, not so nice, but not necessarily evil. Raeanne believes it is a sin to pervert faith with religion, because no God "worth his salt" (p. 201) would have created this world. But Raeanne must make the best of her world. Mick is out of pot and threatening to sue the sheriff's department for stealing his stash. She decides to call Ty. He meets her at a convenience store, driving a BMW convertible. They won't be caught in a compromising position in this car. Ty's parents are wealthy. His father is Chumash, and he received a nice sum of money when a casino was built. The family now owns land with cattle, horses, and a young vineyard. One day, when Ty finishes apprenticing with another winery, he will be a vintner. Ty lives in a guest house on his parents' property. When Ty and Raeanne arrive at his house, he asks if she is up for fun and games. He offers whiskey, then brings a wooden box containing his stash. They share some opiated hash. He warns her to take it slow, and she is glad she listened. Her head tingles. Raeanne laughs, feeling like her head is unattached. Ty leads her to his



bedroom. He is rough with her, but she likes it until he ties her wrists to the headboard. Raeanne says no, but he does not stop. He explains that she should say, "Please, sir" (p. 213), and the part of her that understands her Daddy knows she must comply. He flips her onto her stomach, then binds her ankles. Ty beats her, then gets on top of her, and Raeanne realizes she likes the pleasure mingled with pain. Afterward, Ty unties her and rubs her with soothing eucalyptus oil.

Kaeleigh (p. 185), Raeanne (p. 201) Analysis

Kaeleigh reads the Bible sometimes, searching for hope and answers. The Old Testament is scary, perhaps because the oppression and violence described within are too familiar. The New Testament is more appealing, but Kaeleigh worries that she will never be able to embrace the concept of forgiveness. Some people don't deserve to be forgiven. Greta provides Kaeleigh a good example of finding faith, happiness, and hope. Greta, who was abused by her father and saw atrocities committed by the Nazis when she was young, is still able to laugh and embrace love. Kaeleigh feels jealous of Greta, then regrets the evil within herself.

Raeanne does not think Kaeleigh has evil within. She thinks that religion is a perversion of faith, and that no God would have created the world as it is. Raeanne decides to dabble in the evils of the world, meeting up with Ty for exotic bud and sex. She loses control of the situation when Ty ties her to the bed and beats her. But the part of her that understands Daddy knows she must comply, and the part of her that wishes Daddy would love her the way he does Kaeleigh, actually enjoys the pain and domination. Raeanne especially enjoys Ty's concession to her afterward, rubbing her wounds with eucalyptus oil, apologizing, in his own way, much like Daddy. But apologies do not undo abuse.



Kaeleigh (p. 215), Raeanne (p. 229), Kaeleigh (p. 243)

Kaeleigh (p. 215), Raeanne (p. 229), Kaeleigh (p. 243) Summary

In Kaeleigh (p. 215), sometimes Raeanne comes to Kaeleigh during the night, to listen without judgment, but tonight Kaeleigh is alone. She must wrestle with her memories by herself, until she falls asleep. She is awakened early in the morning by Daddy's cursing. He wants to know if one of Kaeleigh's friends, or a boyfriend, is responsible for so many recent hang-ups. Kaeleigh says no, and that she doesn't have a boyfriend. She doesn't mention the fact that Grandma Gardella could be the caller. Daddy instructs Kaeleigh to come home right after work and not answer the phone, then he leaves. Kaeleigh despises her father and decides to dress how she wants, in velour sweats Daddy would not approve of, then she waits for Brittany to pick her up. She hears a voice in her mind, a low, feminine voice she can't quite place. When Brittany arrives, in the car with her are Joel, from drama, and Ian's little brother, Shaun. Shaun sits in back, next to Kaeleigh. He moves his leg to touch hers, then puts his arm around her. Kaeleigh gets angry, and Shaun says he thought she would like it, since his brother Ian says Kaeleigh is into other guys. Just then, Brittany's car gets a flat tire. Shaun tries to put his arm around a shivering Kaeleigh once again, while they wait for a tow truck, and Kaeleigh pulls away. Shaun calls her frigid, leaving Kaeleigh to wonder if that is his term or Ian's. She wants to ask Ian what exactly he said about her, but she is afraid. She thought Ian understood that she is lukewarm because she is damaged. No matter what, she does not want to lose Ian. Maybe Madison told him lies about her.

In Raeanne (p. 229), Raeanne describes the uproar at home, when Daddy learns that Kaeleigh rode to school with Brittany and was late. A nursing student who lives up the street, Hannah, called Daddy when she happened to drive by while Kaeleigh was waiting for the tow truck. Daddy left ominous voice messages for Kaeleigh, saying he is disappointed and asking Kaeleigh to come up with an appropriate punishment for herself. Kaeleigh is shaking at the news. Then, to Raeanne's disgust, Kaeleigh goes to the kitchen to binge. Kaeleigh's binges make Raeanne want to puke, and she often does. Raeanne begs Kaeleigh to stop, but she won't, because she knows Daddy won't let her have any dinner. Raeanne decides to help. She goes into Daddy's bathroom and "borrows" (p. 232) some OxyContin. One is for Raeanne, three are for Daddy. When Daddy arrives, she mixes a highball, including one Oxy to begin dulling his senses, and soon brings him another. Kaeleigh apologizes to Daddy for being late, explaining about the flat tire. She makes the mistake of mentioning that Brittany just got her license. Daddy explodes, then begins to slur his words. He asks Kaeleigh to fix him some dinner. Kaeleigh and Daddy stuff themselves with leftover stew while Raeanne goes into the bathroom to purge. Raeanne doesn't enjoy the actual throwing up, but she likes the cold porcelain and the feeling of her belly "emptied, even temporarily, of food. Of fat. Of



pain" (p. 236). Daddy is snoring and Kaeleigh's punishment is averted, so Raeanne takes the remaining OxyContin and drinks some whiskey. She feels good about coming to Kaeleigh's rescue, because there is no cure for Daddy. In bed, she remembers another night, when Kaeleigh was ten. Mom was away on a retreat and Daddy came into the girls' bedroom, smelling of whiskey. This time, for the first time, he commanded Kaeleigh to lie still while he kissed her "down to the small, naked V" (p. 240). After, Kaeleigh worried that Daddy didn't love her anymore, because he didn't ask her to touch him, but he had taught her something new that no little girl should learn from her father. Raeanne has other memory flashes, including a mysterious woman with mahogany hair and green eyes like a wildcat. She senses that solving this puzzle is important.

In Kaeleigh (p. 243), on the following morning, Kaeleigh wonders if she should wake Daddy so he won't be late for work, or if she should let him sleep. Kaeleigh knows he will be angry either way. She considers the relief that dying would bring. For one thing, Mom might win the election, due to the sympathy vote. She thinks about her own funeral, then her mind wanders to another funeral she would rather forget. The food, flowers, and booze smelled like death. A woman Kaeleigh barely remembers burst into the funeral and called Daddy a monster. Kaeleigh guesses that if she let that mysterious woman into her life now, she would become crematorium fuel, with no funeral. Kaeleigh decides to wake Daddy, and he asks why she waited until it was so late. She lies, saying she had tried to wake him earlier. As Kaeleigh tries to leave, Daddy grabs her by the wrist. He forbids her to ride to school with Brittany. Brittany pulls up at the bus stop, however, and Kaeleigh accepts the ride. Joel and Shaun are not in the car this time, because they got in trouble for being late to school the day before. Kaeleigh feels good about defying Daddy, just so she doesn't get caught. Brittany parks crooked, giggles, and admits she's supposed to wear glasses. At school, Kaeleigh sees Shaun whispering something about her to a group of guys. She confronts him and pushes him. Shaun calls her a skank, then Ian arrives and tells Shaun to shut up. Ian takes Kaeleigh somewhere private, then he holds her and asks what happened. For the first time they really, truly kiss, and when Kaeleigh comes up for air she says, "I love you" (p. 255). Ian says he loves her too, but she always keeps him walking on eggshells. He wants to love her, but she won't let him. Kaeleigh asks why Ian told Shaun that she sleeps around, he gets angry, and the bell rings. They agree to talk later. Kaeleigh is happy to walk with Ian's arm protectively around her, especially as they pass by Madison and Shaun. Then Ian kisses her again. She still needs an answer, though, about what Ian said about her, and she hopes it doesn't involve Madison. She is happy to be in love but also unhappy, because "love is an invention of fiction writers" (p. 258).

Kaeleigh (p. 215), Raeanne (p. 229), Kaeleigh (p. 243) Analysis

Kaeleigh is troubled that Ian, Shaun, and Madison all seem to think she is sleeping around, but it does not occur to her that people may be confusing her with her twin. She struggles to remember Grandma Gardella, a glimmer of husky voice, who is apparently



calling their home then hanging up. The reader is left to wonder, along with Kaeleigh, who she is trying to reach, and why.

Once again Raeanne comes to the rescue of Kaeleigh, after Daddy learns that Kaeleigh rode to school with a new driver and was late. Raeanne spikes Daddy's pills with OxyContin, which she has evidently done before. Raeanne is disgusted when Kaeleigh binges, and once again Raeanne goes to the bathroom to purge. She enjoys the feeling of an empty stomach. In bed, Raeanne remembers another night when Daddy came to Kaeleigh, the first time he kissed her privates and taught her things no girl should learn from her father. Little Kaeleigh was left to wonder if she had failed because Daddy hadn't asked her to touch his privates. Raeanne is the twin who remembers these nighttime visits; Kaeleigh prefers to block them out. Raeanne struggles to remember more about Grandma Gardella, who has mahogany hair and green eyes. Grandma's return offers a glimmer of hope to Raeanne, although she isn't sure why.

Kaeleigh thinks about dying, her own death. Her mind wanders to a long-ago funeral, when Grandma Gardella apparently called Daddy a monster. Kaeleigh can only imagine what Daddy would do if she actually spoke with Grandma. Along with daring to defy Daddy more, Kaeleigh dares to tell Ian she loves him. She loves him and she feels his love for her, and yet she struggles to believe in love, just as she struggles to believe in God. Love, trust, and faith have not been steady companions in Kaeleigh's life.



Raeanne (p. 259), Kaeleigh (p. 273), Raeanne (p. 287)

Raeanne (p. 259), Kaeleigh (p. 273), Raeanne (p. 287) Summary

In Raeanne (p. 259), Raeanne wishes she could do more to help Kaeleigh, but sometimes Kaeleigh sabotages herself. Raeanne supposes she sabotages herself as well, always wanting more drugs, more men, or more sex. She thinks she is in love with Mr. Lawler. She notices the muscles beneath his trousers. After class, Raeanne asks Mr. Lawler if they could meet to discuss her term paper. She offers to buy him a cup of coffee and they agree to meet that afternoon at the public library. Meanwhile, Raeanne has plans to meet Mick at lunchtime, partly because she misses him, but mostly because she misses her lunchtime buzz. She hasn't seen Mick since they were pulled over by Deputy Carson. On the way to the store where Mick will pick her up, Raeanne sees Ty. He asks if she enjoyed their play and if she wants an encore. Raeanne gives a vague answer and Ty is surprised, not used to having someone play such games with him. Raeanne imagines no one man will ever be enough for her. She compares and contrasts Ty, Mr. Lawler, and Mick, until Mick arrives to pick her up. She kisses Mick, hoping he won't taste her guilt, then daringly invites him to her bedroom at home, because the possibility of getting caught is half the fun.

In Kaeleigh (p. 273), Kaeleigh is giddy, standing next to Ian in drama class. Their kiss was the first time a kiss ever felt right. the way it should feel, instead of feeling like something dirty. Kaeleigh wants to give herself fully to Ian, but she does not know how to give what her Daddy has always taken. Ian asks if he can take Kaeleigh home after school, so they can talk. Kaeleigh agrees, and she sees both love and fear in his eyes. When Ian touches her, Kaeleigh feels sensations in parts of her body she usually tries to ignore. As they leave drama, Madison mouths the word "slut" (p. 277) at Kaeleigh. Kaeleigh can't imagine why. Riding behind Ian on his motorcycle feels somehow different today, even though she has ridden behind him many times before. She hopes she will never lose this feeling, as she has lost so much else before. Inside the Gardella house, Kaeleigh and Ian kiss and touch, until Ian moans and takes Kaeleigh to a dark place. Ian begs her to tell him what is wrong, and he starts to cry. Kaeleigh cries too and says she would tell him if she could tell anyone. Anger flashes in Ian, and he explains that he wants her, not just for sex, but mostly for the part of her she is afraid to give. She tells him that something changed today and she will give herself to him as soon as she can. Ian responds that he will try to wait longer, as he has already waited, but reminds her that love is nothing without trust. They kiss again. Between them there is no need for sex or control, only connection. After Ian leaves, Kaeleigh buries her head in the refrigerator. Nothing calls to her, even though she has not eaten all day, so she grabs a healthy snack. Her demons may not be gone, but they are sleeping. Kaeleigh hears



Daddy pull into the garage and she slips out the front door. She is too happy to deal with him.

In Raeanne (p. 287), Raeanne waits at the library, but Mr. Lawler is late. He finally arrives and sits across from her at a table. Their legs touch, and he does not seem to mind. They talk about conspiracy theories, but they are both getting aroused. A cell phone call from Daddy breaks the mood. Mr. Lawler asks if Raeanne has any more questions. She wants to ask whether or not he has a girlfriend and if he would consider sleeping with a student, but instead she asks if he will give her a good reference when she starts applying to colleges. He places his hand on hers and agrees, reminding her that she is his favorite student and reminding her that she still owes him a cup of coffee, next time. Raeanne is thrilled to know there will be a next time. Later Raeanne wonders if he is actually interested in her or if she is reading too much into things. While Raeanne walks home, Brittany drives by and stops. Raeanne accepts a ride, rationalizing that Daddy had only given his order not to ride with Brittany to Kaeleigh. But just to be safe, Raeanne directs Brittany to drive toward their house from the other direction. And that is when Raeanne sees Daddy standing on the front porch of Hannah the nursing student. Raeanne knows, from Daddy's body language, that this is not an innocent chat between neighbors. Maybe, she hopes, Daddy will leave Kaeleigh alone for a while.

Raeanne (p. 259), Kaeleigh (p. 273), Raeanne (p. 287) Analysis

Raeanne knows that she has a problem, always wanting more men, sex, and drugs. Mick, Ty, and Mr. Lawler all have qualities that make them right for her, but separately none of them are enough. She thinks the fun is in the search, looking for the perfect man, but that is just a rationalization for no commitment, no depth of feeling, and no responsibility. She flirts with scandal with Mr. Lawler, who seems interested in her as well. Their connection extends beyond an interest in history and politics to prolonged physical touches, even though they both know it is wrong. Raeanne also knows it is wrong when she spots Daddy with Hannah, but instead of worrying about how an affair could tear her family apart even more, she considers that Kaeleigh might get a respite from nighttime visits. Such is the sad life she lives, in the Gardella household.

Kaeleigh struggles with her love for Ian. She does not know how she can give to him what Daddy has already taken, but she needs to realize that what Daddy took from her has nothing to do with love. Feeling loved makes Kaeleigh lose her need to binge, though, so her emotional state is moving in a positive direction.



Kaeleigh (p. 301), Raeanne (p. 317)

Kaeleigh (p. 301), Raeanne (p. 317) Summary

In Kaeleigh (p. 301), Kaeleigh is thrilled and terrified to be in love, but who can she trust if not Ian? She wonders about Daddy and Hannah, if they truly are having an affair, and if Mom would even care. Her parents aren't real parents anyway, who care about their kids and each other. The pantry is bare, because Manuela the maid is in the hospital. Kaeleigh wonders if Hannah took care of Manuela in the hospital or if Hanna will grocery shop for her family. She makes two boxes of mac and cheese, enough to feed eight, and she eats every bite. Unlike Raeanne, Kaeleigh cannot drink Wild Turkey. She goes for vodka instead. After her first glass her brain feels no effect, so she has another, larger glass. Suddenly the vodka kicks in. Kaeleigh makes the mistake of calling Ian, and he can tell she is drunk. Disappointed, he says that love doesn't make him drink. She tells him she just found out that her father is having an affair with a neighbor, and he says he is sorry. Ian reminds Kaeleigh that drinking won't make tomorrow better, but letting him love her will. Kaeleigh cries, in text shaped like teardrops, after the phone call. She was wrong to think there could be such a thing as real love, wrong to think Ian could love her if he knew all of her secrets. She heads to the bathroom and ejects the vodka mixed with undigested mac and cheese. She briefly feels sorry for Manuela, then remembers Manuela won't be around to clean up the mess. Kaeleigh goes into the tub and cuts her legs with her razor, adding blood to the mess in the bathroom. She imagines how it would feel to bleed to death, pleasant, perhaps, then she has a flashback to the accident years before.

In Raeanne (p. 317), Raeanne finds the scene in the bathroom which smells like death. Raeanne resigns herself to cleaning up the mess, so Daddy won't see. Tonight is Halloween, and Raeanne must decide who she wants to party with. She actually feels jealous of Hannah. She pictures them together, making love. She has got to stop thinking about sex so much. Daddy accuses Raeanne of forgetting to tell him something important, and Raeanne runs through a long mental list of possibilities: the mess in the bathroom; her ride with Brittany; her sighting of Hannah; missing pills; Lawler; Mick and the cop. But Daddy means the answering machine message. Not the one Raeanne erased, though, but a new one from Mom. She plans to host a big party at the house for the election, and with no Manuela, Raeanne and Daddy must handle everything. Raeanne dares to mention Hannah, and Daddy looks uncertain. Raeanne explains that she seems nice and might know how to put together a party. Raeanne can see the guilt in Daddy's eyes, and she innocently asks if she should speak to Hannah. Daddy says he will take care of it. At school, Mr. Lawler calls out to Raeanne in the hallway. She is glad she shaved her legs and wore a short skirt and stockings. When he says she is one of the few students worthy of his respect, Raeanne thinks she must be schizoid, because she wonders how she might enjoy earning his disrespect. He shocks her by asking if she has any plans for the night. Her mind races to the possibilities, but what he wants is for her to answer his door for an hour or so, handing out candy to trick-or-treaters. She is somewhat disappointed but she agrees, imagining what could happen



when he gets back home from his appointment. But then she worries, with no access to pot beforehand, will she be able to have sex, and could she possibly enjoy it?

Kaeleigh (p. 301), Raeanne (p. 317) Analysis

Kaeleigh doesn't know what to think about Daddy and Hannah together, except as proof that there is no such thing as real love. The thought makes her want to binge, but because their maid is in the hospital their pantry is bare. She eats two boxes of mac and cheese, enough to feed eight, and follows that with too much vodka and an ill-advised call to Ian. Ian, who is always the voice of reason for Kaeleigh, reminds her that drinking won't make tomorrow better, but letting him love her will. His beautiful words do not make Kaeleigh feel better, however, because she believes he would fall out of love with her if he knew all of her secrets. She throws up the vodka and food, then tops it with blood from cutting herself, then wonders who will clean up since Manuela isn't available. She thinks about dying, once again, because she heard that bleeding to death is a relatively pleasant way to go. She feels that no one is around to help her clean up, either the mess in the bathroom or the mess that is her life.

Raeanne finds Kaeleigh's mess in the bathroom, which smells like death to her, then resigns herself to cleaning it up so Daddy won't see. Raeanne tempts fate with Daddy by suggesting that Hannah should help plan a party at their house for election night, since Manuela is in the hospital. Daddy's first reaction is guilt, but then he embraces the idea. Raeanne knows this will lead to trouble for Daddy, and she is glad. As the novel progresses, Raeanne puts more energy into protecting Kaeleigh and thwarting Daddy.



Kaeleigh (p. 333), Raeanne (p. 349)

Kaeleigh (p. 333), Raeanne (p. 349) Summary

In Kaeleigh (p. 333), when Kaeleigh gets home from school, she finds Daddy and Hannah in the kitchen discussing party plans, sitting much too close together. The plus side is, Daddy is too distracted to pay attention to Kaeleigh. Kaeleigh steps down the hallway in stocking feet, conjuring up a memory of her and her twin playing at ice-skating when they were little. Kaeleigh is surprised, because she rarely thinks of such memories. They are too painful. Kaeleigh can't binge in the kitchen, because Daddy and Hannah are there, so Kaeleigh goes to her room and picks a few scabs until they bleed. She answers the phone but hears only rustling. As she gets ready to leave for work, Kaeleigh reflects that she hasn't seen Daddy look so human in a long time, with no slurred speech or red-rimmed eyes. The phone rings again, and this time a familiar scratchy voice says she is Kaeleigh's grandmother. She wants to tell Kaeleigh a difficult story, but not on the phone. Daddy asks who is calling, and Kaeleigh lies. Daddy leaves the room, and the woman asks if Kaeleigh is all right. Kaeleigh responds, "Yes...no...gotta go" (p. 343). Kaeleigh is so late for work now, she is forced to ask Daddy for a ride. Hannah jumps at the chance to take her, so they can talk about the party. Kaeleigh has no choice but to accept, but all she wants is silence, to think about her grandmother. At the Lutheran home, Greta introduces Kaeleigh to her old friend, Lars. He is the man Greta loves. Kaeleigh doesn't think she will ever be so satisfied, so happy. She wonders what Ian is doing at that moment.

In Raeanne (p. 349), Raeanne is surprised that Mr. Lawler's house is so neat, given the television stereotype about single men being slobs. While he is away, Raeanne answers the door and explores Mr. Lawler's house. She tries out his bed. Eventually a group of people Raeanne's age shows up at the door, including Madison. Just as Madison asks whose house this is, Mr. Lawler arrives. He gives candy to the group and dismisses them, thanking Raeanne for watching his house while the group are within earshot. Mr. Lawler guides Raeanne inside, saying he will pay her for her trouble. Privately, he admits he wishes she could stay for a while, but now they both know she cannot. Raeanne melts when he opens the car door for her. On the way to Raeanne's house, he says that he finds her attractive, that he would go out with her if she were eighteen and not his student, but tonight was an eye-opener. They live in a small town, after all. He apologizes for leading her on. Raeanne rationalizes later that Mr. Lawler is the type to settle down and have kids, and that is so not her. She does not believe in happy ever after.

Kaeleigh (p. 333), Raeanne (p. 349) Analysis

Kaeleigh's behavior continues to be self-destructive, but at last she speaks with Grandma Gardella. Clearly, Grandma has something important to tell her, and clearly



Grandma is concerned about Kaeleigh's well-being. Grandma may well be an impetus for change.

Raeanne is disappointed when her Halloween night with Mr. Lawler does not turn out as she had hoped, but Mr. Lawler shows her that some men do indeed struggle to do what is right. Mr. Lawler had considered giving in to temptation with Raeanne, but the thought that they could be caught, along with his deep-down knowledge that having sex with a student would be wrong, was enough to make him resist temptation. Raeanne melts when he opens a car door for her, because she is not used to chivalry. Later she rationalizes away her disappointment, thinking that Mr. Lawler is the type to settle down and have kids, while she certainly is not.



Kaeleigh (p. 363), Raeanne (p. 379), Kaeleigh (p 395)

Kaeleigh (p. 363), Raeanne (p. 379), Kaeleigh (p 395) Summary

In Kaeleigh (p. 363), when Kaeleigh awakens on the morning after Halloween, she feels she is sitting on powder kegs while holding a lit torch. Mom came home late last night and is sleeping in the guest room. Mom will either win the election and go away to Washington, or lose the election and go away once she finds a new crusade. Kaeleigh just wants her Mommy back. She overhears Mom says she talked with Daddy's father, and Daddy is shocked and baffled. Mom wants to know what secret his mother could blackmail him for, and Daddy says he has no idea. Kaeleigh wonders about the many family secrets, what made Daddy the way he is, why his mother has stayed away, why Daddy doesn't speak to his father, and how much Mom knows about any of these questions. Kaeleigh only knows that her family "puts the 'dys' in dysfunctional" (p. 369). Kaeleigh wants to talk with Ian about her family, but he might leave her if he knows how truly messed up she is. Kaeleigh wants to talk with Mom about Ian and falling in love, but she seems not to care about Kaeleigh at all. The only option left for Kaeleigh is to stuff herself with food. Later, at the Lutheran home, Greta is dressed for church but there is no Lars. Greta explains that Lars no longer believes in God. Greta explains that she and Lars fell in love as children, but her father beat her when he found out. Lars went off to fight the Nazis, and that was the last Greta saw of him for more than sixty years, when he found her here. They have decided not to dwell on the decades spent apart, but instead on making new, joyous memories. Greta's story gives Kaeleigh new hope. She meets Ian and holds him tight, struggling against her impulse to pull away.

In Raeanne (p. 379), Raeanne prepares for the inevitable fight between Mom and Daddy, but then she is drawn into it. Daddy wants to know why Raeanne didn't tell him that Grandpa Gardella had called, and Raeanne turns the tables, asking why she doesn't know him and saying she'll just talk to him herself next time. Raeanne asks why Daddy doesn't talk to his father, and it's obvious Mom would like to hear the answer to that question. Daddy will only say that his father made his childhood extremely hard. Daddy looks like a scared little boy and Raeanne almost feels sorry for him. His look reminds Raeanne of the look she often sees on Kaeleigh's face. Raeanne asks Daddy about his mother, but he pours himself some whiskey and starts to leave the room. Mom stops him, saying he had better not dare leave, and that Raeanne has a right to know. Daddy says his memories are of her passed out on the couch with scotch and cigarettes, and Raeanne thinks to herself that it is just déjà vu with different booze. Kids made fun of him for his dirty clothes, Daddy explains, because his mother never washed him. He always hoped his parents wouldn't show up drunk for school plays. The first time he brought home straight As, his mother was gone for good. She left Daddy behind with his father, and Daddy will not talk about that part of his life. Later Raeanne asks



Mom if Daddy was abused, thinking this is the ideal moment for Kaeleigh to ask for help, but Kaeleigh says nothing. After several glasses of wine, Mom tells Raeanne she looks like Grandma Gardella. In bed, Raeanne remembers the night when Daddy "crossed the final line" (p. 391) with Kaeleigh. He had yelled at Mom over the phone, because she wouldn't come home, and then he came to Kaeleigh and raped her in her bed. No gentle Daddy this time. Raeanne wonders who created the demon inside Daddy. Unfortunately, all of the possible candidates are related to her.

Kaeleigh (p. 395): For once, because of Ian, Kaeleigh doesn't feel like self-medicating with food. But then she hears Mom and Daddy fighting. Kaeleigh decides to shave her legs, and then she is famished, after all. Daddy yells at Kaeleigh for stuffing her mouth with too much cereal, then kisses her as no father should. Mom enters the kitchen and sees them too close together. She asks what is going on and Kaeleigh lies that there was something in her eye. Mom relaxes, obviously eager to accept the lie. Kaeleigh runs to the bathroom and throws up her three bowls of cereal. The girl in the mirror instructs her to tell or run, but Kaeleigh will do neither. On the bus to school, Kaeleigh sees Mick drive by with Madison. Kaeleigh knows Raeanne won't be happy, but at least Madison might leave Kaeleigh alone now. Kaeleigh sees Ian and starts toward him, but then his face morphs into Daddy's and she runs for the bathroom. She picks at a scab on her ankle until Ian texts, asking if she is okay. He is waiting for her to come out. He sees blood on the leg of her jeans, she says she cut herself shaving, and he lovingly asks her to be more careful. Ian takes her home from school on his motorcycle, but he takes a detour to a secluded spot. He explains that he needs more from her now, since they love each other. He needs her to share her secrets. He sees she is losing weight and he thinks she is cutting herself. He offers to get help, but Kaeleigh refuses because she knows that to get help, she would have to reveal the source of her pain. He makes her promise not to cut, or to call him if she thinks she is about to. Driving past Hannah's house, Kaeleigh sees Daddy in the doorway, kissing Hannah. At home, Mom is animated, as she used to be before the accident, because of the party preparations. Despite the roomful of workers setting up furniture, Daddy comes up behind Kaeleigh and yells at her for riding with a young driver. Kaeleigh feels brave because they are not alone. She tells Daddy that yes, she has friends, in spite of him, but they are probably not as close as Daddy and Hannah.

Kaeleigh (p. 363), Raeanne (p. 379), Kaeleigh (p 395) Analysis

Kaeleigh realizes that Daddy has many secrets, many of which even Mom does not know. Kaeleigh can't talk to Ian about her family and she can't talk to Mom about falling in love with Ian, so instead she binges. At the nursing home, Greta reminds Kaeleigh that love does exist, after all, and maybe there is hope for a happy tomorrow. Love for Ian makes Kaeleigh not want to binge, but then she hears her parents fighting and she changes her mind. Later Ian confronts Kaeleigh about cutting and losing weight, and he begs her to trust him and call him when she feels the urge to hurt herself. Kaeleigh refuses Ian's offer to find help for her, because she could never reveal the truth about



her parents to anyone. At home she does find the courage, however, to accuse Daddy of having an affair with Hannah while Mom can hear. This defiance is a major turning point for Kaeleigh.

Raeanne uses her talents to turn the tables on Daddy as well, making him tell her and Mom something about his childhood. Raeanne begins to see what made him the way he is, but clearly there is more to the story. Later she flashes back to the first time Daddy had actual sex with Kaeleigh, making her scream. Raeanne laments that whoever helped to create Daddy is probably related to her, meaning that their evil is probably within her as well.



Raeanne (p. 411), Kaeleigh (p. 427), Raeanne (p. 439)

Raeanne (p. 411), Kaeleigh (p. 427), Raeanne (p. 439) Summary

In Raeanne (p. 411), Raeanne can't believe Kaeleigh mentioned the affair between Daddy and Hannah. Mom and Daddy retreat to the bedroom to fight, the cleaning crew gets right back to work, and Raeanne is left to direct the delivery people. The drama sends the family to their separate corners, described by Raeanne in text on four corners of a page (p. 412). Daddy is in his room with his whiskey and pills, Mom is in the guest room with her phone and wine, Kaeleigh goes to the kitchen for five hot dogs, and Raeanne goes to vomit and then call Mick for bud. Mick tells Raeanne that he is back with Madison, but he's perfectly willing to meet Raeanne for pot and sex, as long as Raeanne doesn't tell Madison. While Raeanne smokes, Mick drives out Foxen Canyon, near Ty's house, and then pulls over for his reward. Raeanne says no, since he's with Madison, and tries to give him money for the pot. Mick forces himself on her, and for a moment Raeanne turns into Kaeleigh, pretending to acquiesce. She says he can't have all the fun, but could they please take another hit first. Raeanne grabs the tray of expensive bud from under the seat, opens the truck door, and sends the tray flying like a frisbee. She knows he will leave the truck to gather it back up. Raeanne locks the doors and slides to the driver's seat. She has never driven before, but she decides to drive away. Mick probably won't report her to the cops, but if he does she can imagine the headlines. She realizes this is the first time she ever told Mick no. She parks the truck on the shoulder, far from where she left Mick, wipes her fingerprints from the keys and steering wheel, and leaves the keys under the seat. Mick will have a long walk to this point, and probably no one will pick him up at two in the morning on election day. Raeanne, too, has a long walk home, and she had better be home before sunrise. She sneaks in through a window after an hour's walk, realizing that when she wakes up it will be the day that changes everyone's lives. Raeanne wakes to a variety of sounds, described in scattered text that could be read in any order. Most of the sounds are from the telephone. No one pays her any attention. She wonders if she should go to school, then decides it might be fun to ask Hannah for a ride.

In Kaeleigh (p. 427), Kaeleigh still loves her Mom and wonders why Mom doesn't want to be her mother anymore. It couldn't be because she is ignoring the relationship between Kaeleigh and Daddy, because she sure didn't ignore the affair between Hannah and Daddy. In history class, Mr. Lawler asks Kaeleigh how she feels about her mother running for Congress. Kaeleigh makes it clear that she does not want to talk about it. Mom comes to take Kaeleigh out of school, and Kaeleigh resents missing her chance to see Ian during drama. She does not want to be presented as "familial bling" (p. 430) for Mom's benefit. Kaeleigh tells the press that the worst part is having Mom away so much, but the real worst part is the fact that Mom so wants to go. On election



night, loyal Republicans gather at the Gardella house. Kaeleigh vows to register Democrat when she's old enough, so she won't have to vote for her parents. Daddy schmoozes the crowd, thinking about his own election coming up in two years, until Hannah arrives. Mom is furious when she sees the two of them together. Mom sends Daddy off for drinks, then tells Hannah she has instructed an assistant to pay off Hannah's student loans. In exchange, Hannah should think about ending her relationship, to avoid scandal. At that moment Kaeleigh realizes that her Mom, not Daddy, holds the power in their relationship, and that Daddy wields a big stick when she's not around so he can feel like half a man. Mom leaves Hannah and Daddy returns. Kaeleigh overhears Daddy ask if Hannah plans to take orders from his wife, and Hannah responds that now would be a good time for them to end things. Hannah walks out just as election results come on the television, showing Kay Gardella with 52% of the votes so far. Daddy is torn between following Hannah and strutting with his wife, and, as Kaeleigh puts it, "the Game conquers, always" (p. 438).

In Raeanne (p. 439), by midnight, Mom is declared the winner of her Congressional seat. After several glasses of champagne, Raeanne doesn't care, because Mom isn't here even when she is here, anyway. Kaeleigh has gone away to cry. Raeanne is happy because she has a year to be bad now, since no election is coming up. Raeanne goes to bed, floating on champagne and OxyContin, wishing she could find some solid ground. The next morning the phone rings, and neither of her parents stirs. Raeanne fights her hangover to answer. Grandma Gardella is on the line. Raeanne tells her she is too late to ask for money, because the election is over, but Grandma says she had no plans to ask for money. Then Daddy grabs the phone, and he changes from a man to a little boy as he listens to his mother. He responds that he will never forgive her, then hangs up and turns his venom to Raeanne. Raeanne tells him Grandma doesn't want money, and in her Daddy's eyes she sees fear. Mom comes to Raeanne's rescue, and Raeanne goes off to evacuate champagne and turmoil. Raeanne writes about the problems of puking regularly, in text shaped like a champagne glass. Raeanne wants to get high, can't call Mick, and so she calls Ty. She needs to feel desirable, needs to feel.

Raeanne (p. 411), Kaeleigh (p. 427), Raeanne (p. 439) Analysis

Page 412 provides an excellent example of the author's use of text formatting to reinforce the action. As each of the Gardellas retreats to a separate corner, their activities are described in a separate corner of text. Raeanne tells Mick no, for the first time, when he wants sex, because he is back together with Madison. Raeanne throws his stash out the truck window and locks herself in his truck when he refuses her offer of money instead, then she daringly drives away. She is learning, perhaps partly from her experience with Mr. Lawler, that sometimes it is better to say no. The next day, election day, Raeanne realizes that the family's lives will change forever, one way or another. When Mom wins the election, Kaeleigh cries but Raeanne is glad, because Mom is never available anyway and now, with no election looming, Raeanne is free to be bad. The reader is left to wonder just how bad Raeanne intends to be.



Kaeleigh doesn't understand why Mom doesn't want to be her mother anymore. The truth seems to be that Kay Gardella has sealed herself off from all emotion, to avoid any more pain like what she experienced on the day of the terrible accident. Kaeleigh is fascinated to learn, at the election party, that Mom is the one with the power in her marriage. Kaeleigh realizes that Daddy compensates for his weakness by dominating her. Kaeleigh sees Daddy choose the Game, meaning his political future, over trying to reconcile with Hannah. Kaeleigh wants no part of the Game. She does not want to be familial bling and she does not even want to vote for her parents when she is old enough. Daddy's Game seems to be unraveling, at last, when Grandma Gardella calls.



Kaeleigh (p. 451), Raeanne (p. 467)

Kaeleigh (p. 451), Raeanne (p. 467) Summary

In Kaeleigh (p. 451), three days after the election, Mom leaves. Kaeleigh wonders if she will ever be able to leave her Daddy. Ian is Kaeleigh's voice of reason. He and she kiss, but he senses that Kaeleigh is not ready to go further. She tells him that he is the glue holding her together, and he responds that she is stronger than she knows. At home, Daddy is in his room on the phone, begging Hannah to take him back and sobbing. A part of Kaeleigh feels sorry for Daddy, even as most of her hates him. She still wonders who made Daddy this way, since babies aren't born evil. Kaeleigh stays in her room, hoping Daddy will pass out. But Daddy enters her room and forces himself on her. Kaeleigh wants to scream, but she does not. Once, in the past, Daddy lifted himself off of her and said, "Forgive me. Not my fault" (p. 460). Kaeleigh wonders who else's fault it could be. Kaeleigh tries to shower the scum away, then heads off to work at the Lutheran home. She realizes she must break up with Ian instead of leading him on, because she will always belong to Daddy. At the nursing home, Greta sees Kaeleigh is upset and takes her to her room. Greta wants to know Kaeleigh's secret, and asks if it has anything to do with her father. Kaeleigh breaks down. Greta confesses that her father, a butcher, would ask her to cleanse him after work, including his privates, and then he would force her to have sex. Her boyfriend Lars was gentle, but when Greta turned down his marriage proposal, Lars went off to war. And now, having shared her story, Greta wants to hear Kaeleigh's story. Kaeleigh wants to tell, but she worries that maybe part of her asks for what she gets from Daddy.

In Raeanne (p. 467), Raeanne thinks Kaeleigh asks for what she gets, with her feigned innocence. Raeanne wonders if real love will ever find her and thaw her. Daddy and Ian both love Kaeleigh, and she is incapable of loving them back. Kaeleigh only loves Mom, who doesn't love her back. Raeanne remembers something about Mom that Kaeleigh doesn't, something that would make her dive from a tall bridge into shallow water. Raeanne thinks if you die loveless, you spend eternity loveless. Therefore, hell is frozen. She wonders what will happen when the twins turn eighteen, if Kaeleigh will leave Daddy. Raeanne remembers how much she enjoyed Ty's opiated hash. She wonders if she should try heroin. She does not want to try psychedelics, because they make you look inside your own head, and she might find something really scary there. While Raeanne is at a park, Ian pulls up on his motorcycle. He offers her a ride. Raeanne is sure he isn't confusing her with her twin., but then she thinks maybe he is. Raeanne buries herself in Ian's jacket as they ride. She wonders if Kaeleigh really appreciates what she has. Ian pulls over and wants to walk, holding Raeanne's hand, clearly thinking she is Kaeleigh. Raeanne wants him. She can't confess who she really is, and she kisses him. The she reaches for him in a way that all men want, and Ian stops her.



Kaeleigh (p. 451), Raeanne (p. 467) Analysis

Kaeleigh, always wanting to please and hoping for the best, almost feels sorry for Daddy when he pleads with Hannah to take him back. She knows that babies are not born evil, and she wonders again who made Daddy the way he is. When Daddy is finished talking with Hannah, he comes to Kaeleigh and rapes her. She wants to scream, but she does not. She remembers that once, after sex, Daddy asked her to forgive him because it wasn't his fault. Kaeleigh wonders who else's fault it could be. The reader already knows that Kaeleigh does not think she can ever learn to forgive her Daddy. At the Lutheran home, Greta reveals more about the abuse she suffered as a girl, but still Kaeleigh cannot share her story. A part of Kaeleigh takes the blame, because maybe she somehow asks for her abuse. Kaeleigh's fear that she is unclean and somehow responsible for what Daddy does to her, is the reason why she feels unworthy of Ian, unworthy of love.

Raeanne knows for sure that Kaeleigh asks for what she gets, with her feigned innocence. When Ian takes Raeanne for a ride, thinking she is her twin, Raeanne is jealous of the love Ian and Kaeleigh share. Raeanne kisses him and he kisses back, but he pulls away in shock when she touches him in the way she is used to touching other guys. Ian knows that this girl is not the Kaeleigh he loves. Raeanne considers trying harder drugs, but she will never try psychedelics, because they would take her on a journey inside her own head, a scary place.



Kaeleigh (p. 481), Raeanne (p. 493)

Kaeleigh (p. 481), Raeanne (p. 493) Summary

In Kaeleigh (p. 481), Kaeleigh is falling through a deep opiate sea of booze and painkillers. Daddy won't be home for a while, and by then Kaeleigh might be beyond saving. She hears Raeanne's voice, from a childhood memory at the playground, telling her to get up. The voice morphs into present-day Raeanne, saying Kaeleigh should get up or Raeanne will have to kick her ass, and then Raeanne goes for help. A door slams. Kaeleigh tries to swim away, to hide. She counts the steps coming closer, twelve to her door, twenty to Daddy's. A voice starts to lift Kaeleigh from the water, slaps her, then fades away. She tries to drown, but footsteps won't let her sleep. Daddy's voice returns, along with a woman's, then air rushes into Kaeleigh's lungs. She leans over the side of her bed and vomits Wild Turkey and pills. The other voice, too sweet, belongs to Hannah, who asks what Kaeleigh took. Then Hannah tells Daddy Kaeleigh should be okay, and Daddy grabs hold of that idea. He dismisses Hannah's advice to take Kaeleigh to the hospital for monitoring. Hannah understands that Daddy wants to keep this event out of the tabloids, but nevertheless Kaeleigh needs help. Daddy insists he will handle things in-house. Kaeleigh feels anger at her parents and a blush of love for Ian. She wishes she could give herself to Ian, untainted. She waits for Daddy to return, to punish her for trying to die.

In Raeanne (p. 493), Raeanne cannot believe Kaeleigh had enough ambition to try to kill herself. Raeanne lies in bed with Kaeleigh, not ready to let her go. Raeanne tells Kaeleigh, if she's strong enough to kill herself, she's strong enough to fight Daddy. Raeanne doesn't want Kaeleigh to die. Daddy has not even come back to check on Kaeleigh. He is getting drunk instead. Raeanne wonders if he needs to drown his guilt or find redemption in penance, prison, or demise. Finally in the morning Daddy checks on Kaeleigh. He scolds her and she promises never to do anything like that again. Daddy says no one outside of the room should ever know what happened, because Mom would be hurt. He orders Kaeleigh to clean up the mess, then come to him to apologize. Kaeleigh does apologize, with shoulders stooped. She cleans up the mess, but cannot wash away the stench of her Daddy. For a week Kaeleigh goes about her life, but Raeanne knows she is changed inside, she is no longer afraid to die, she is afraid to live. Daddy simply moves forward, as he has done after every tragedy. Hanna visits now and then, warning Daddy that the reasons behind Kaeleigh's suicide are still there and that she needs help. Daddy says Kaeleigh will be fine, and then tries, unsuccessfully, to renew his relationship with Hannah. One day, Hannah visits Kaeleigh when Daddy isn't home. Kaeleigh reassures Hannah that Daddy's affair had nothing to do with what she did, then lies and says it was all about a boy at school. Daddy arrives, tells Hannah not to drop by unannounced, and orders Kaeleigh to make dinner. Raeanne decides Daddy is a "cold-hearted bastard" (p. 500), and that she should try to contact Grandma Gardella. Somewhere in Kaeleigh's address book is an entry for Grandpa Gardella, which is a good place to start. She asks Brittany to drive her on the two-hour trip. After a long and annoying, ride, Raeanne steps through Grandpa



Gardella's front door. Grandpa remarks that he wondered if she would ever come. After an awkward silence, Raeanne asks why Daddy won't have anything to do with Grandpa. Grandpa explains that his wife, Charlotte, left because he had cheated on her. Charlotte also drank too much. Grandpa had to work long hours, so he put his son, Ray, in the care of a trusted neighbor, Miranda. One horrible day, Grandpa discovered that Miranda was using ten-year-old Ray to make child pornography. His photos appeared in magazines. Ray never forgave his father. Raeanne is stunned at the insight she has gained into her Daddy. Grandpa crumples, sad that he is all alone. Raeanne hugs her grandfather and they agree to stay in touch, but Raeanne warns that Daddy won't like it if he finds out. Raeanne has ugly images in her head during the ride home, which she tries to counter with whiskey and a pill. Raeanne has three voicemails from Daddy and one from Ty. She calls Ty, and they agree to meet and get high. She leaves a message for Daddy that she is with friends. Even if he comes looking for her, Daddy won't find her out in the boonies, at Ty's house. She powers off her phone. While waiting for Ty, Raeanne thinks about Daddy. He didn't want his daughters to have a childhood because he didn't have one. For the moment, Raeanne is sorry for him. Raeanne needs to feel something again, with Ty. She had turned off feeling the night Ian turned away from her, and she has felt nothing since. At Ty's house, Raeanne gets high on black African bud. Part of her relaxes, while another part screams out a warning. He kisses and bites. Then the doorbell rings and Raeanne wonders if Daddy actually found her, but at the door is Ian. Ian comes toward her, hurt, and asks how she could break her promise. He calls her Kaeleigh, and she responds that she is not Kaeleigh. Ian asks who she is, then, and she replies that she is Raeanne. Ian tells her no, Raeanne died in the car accident. Raeanne knows that can't be true, because she is right here, but then she remembers that after the accident they took Mom and Raeanne away. Raeanne, her twin, didn't answer when she called out. Ty is angry, but Ian explains that Raeanne really is dead and something is wrong with Kaeleigh. Raeanne realizes she must hide deep inside Kaeleigh, to be strong against Daddy, so that no one, including Kaeleigh, will know she has survived.

Kaeleigh (p. 481), Raeanne (p. 493) Analysis

Kaeleigh overdoses, and Raeanne leaves her to go for help. Daddy finds her, then brings Hannah, who uses her nursing skills to save Kaeleigh's life. Daddy does not want to accept the fact that Kaeleigh needs help, because that would mean public scrutiny. Hannah cannot believe Daddy is so selfish. Kaeleigh merely waits for Daddy to punish her, because she tried to die.

Raeanne cannot believe that Kaeleigh had enough ambition to attempt suicide. She lays with her sister, telling her that if she is strong enough to do that, she is strong enough to fight Daddy. Daddy, ever cold and focused on himself, does not bother to check on Kaeleigh's well-being until the next morning. Daddy warns Kaeleigh not to mention the suicide attempt to anyone, just as he had told her not to mention their nighttime activities, using the threat that Mom would be hurt or would leave them. Clearly, Kaeleigh needs help and she must tell someone the truth, or she will not survive. Kaeleigh is changed now, Raeanne knows, because now she is more afraid to



live than she is to die. Raeanne visits Grandpa Gardella, looking for answers about her Daddy's past, and she learns that he had been sexually abused by a babysitter and used to make child porn. Daddy never forgave his father, even though Ted Gardella did not know the babysitter was abusing him. Given that fact, Daddy could never expect forgiveness from his daughter, Kaeleigh, who suffers abuse with his knowledge and at his hand.

Raeanne deals with her terrible new insight by going to Ty's house for drugs and sex games. Ian arrives and Raeanne loses everything, even herself, when Ian reveals that Raeanne died in the accident years ago. Of course, this is why everyone thought Kaeleigh was sleeping around. She was, In fact, although she did not realize it. She acted under the power of her alter-ego, Raeanne. Everything Kaeleigh did was counterbalanced by Raeanne. When Kaeleigh binged, Raeanne purged. When Kaeleigh shrank from intimacy with Ian, Raeanne looked for sex with a variety of partners. All of this was a coping mechanism for Kaeleigh, in order to withstand the abuse she endured at home. Raeanne vows that she will never leave Kaeleigh, and she silently settles deep inside her twin.



Kaeleigh (p. 523), Raeanne (p. 565)

Kaeleigh (p. 523), Raeanne (p. 565) Summary

In Kaeleigh (p. 523), Kaeleigh wishes she were dead. She is having withdrawal symptoms from OxyContin, and whole blocks of time are missing. She tries to reach Raeanne, but she cannot. She is allowed no visitors at the hospital. Dr. Carol Stone, a psychotherapist, explains to Kaeleigh that she can only conquer her demons by confronting them. Kaeleigh doesn't tell the doctor that she will have to go home to her demon. Daddy is outside the door, arguing that he has a right to see his daughter. He enters, touches her, and says, "I wish I could take it all back" (p. 526). Kaeleigh wakes later, confused, unsure what she has or hasn't done. She wishes she could tell Greta everything, because Greta has been through the same experience and still found love with Lars. Kaeleigh knows that if Ian knew the truth about her, he would turn his back on her filthy self, if he hasn't already. Kaeleigh wonders if she will ever feel the same again, if Mom will come for her. She remembers once, taking a shower and telling Mom it hurt where Daddy had touched her. Mom merely turned red and closed her eyes to the truth, like Kaeleigh needs to do now. At the hospital the next morning Kaeleigh feels better, and that is bad because they might send her home. Raeanne returns, arguing with Kaeleigh about Ian. Kaeleigh asks Carol, the doctor, if there is such a thing as split personality. Carol replies that dissociative identity disorder is rare, but it does exist. Sometimes one alter knows about another, sometimes not. Sometimes one alter will do things another will not. Carol explains that the condition is often brought about by trauma or sexual abuse. It can be cured, or regulated, but only after years of treatment and the courage to dig deep for the truth. Kaeleigh says she might know someone like that. Carol says that, if they are talking about her, she could go to a residential center in nearby Ventura. Kaeleigh wants to stay at the hospital, with Carol treating her, but the doctor explains that is not possible. Kaeleigh must decide, because her symptoms are improving and she will probably be released tomorrow. Kaeleigh asks if the doctor has spoken with her mother, and Carol responds that her father said he would take care of that. Kaeleigh surprises herself by saying her father is a liar. Kaeleigh starts to call Mom on Carol's cell, then remembers Mom's refusal to see things. She asks Carol to talk to Mom instead. Mom promises to get on a plane right away, but Kaeleigh isn't so sure Mom can be counted on, now that she remembers that shower scene where Mom shut out the truth. She wonders how many personalities might be inside of her, "doing drugs and sleeping around all up and down the state" (p. 536). Raeanne points out that Kaeleigh is cussing now, and that Daddy will go to prison if she tells. Raeanne also reminds Kaeleigh that everything isn't Daddy's fault. Daddy enters the room, saying Kaeleigh doesn't need her mother because she isn't three anymore. Kaeleigh says she will never be a little girl again, because he took that away from her. He says he doesn't know what she means, and that he told Mom not to come. Daddy says they will go home tomorrow and discuss their options. Kaeleigh tells him he needs help and he raises hand to strike, but just then Carol walks in and warns him to stop. Carol steps between them and says Kaeleigh will have to stay an extra day or two, because of a blood imbalance, perhaps from so much vomiting. She might have kidney disease.



Carol later explains that the electrolyte imbalance is real, but the kidney disease was an excuse to keep Kaeleigh in the hospital. Kaeleigh and Raeanne do battle in Kaeleigh's head. Kaeleigh wants Raeanne to go away, and Raeanne wants to play and get high. Kaeleigh thinks about all of the things she should tell Carol about, starting with drug abuse, alcohol, bulimia, onto cutting and promiscuity, and finally, letting Daddy have sex with her. Even then, there is no guarantee Kaeleigh can be fixed. Suicide sounds better and better, and Raeanne thinks maybe she can help. Kaeleigh can't blame Ian for giving up on her. He is good, the opposite of her in every way. Kaeleigh has nothing to live for. For the first time in a long time, Kaeleigh lets tears fall in a flood, and suddenly Ian is there. He apologizes for not coming sooner, Kaeleigh starts to explain, and Ian says not now. He just wants to hold her. Kaeleigh says she hopes she can make things up to him, when he's better. Ian explains that he thought about walking away, which would be easier, but he can't imagine life without Kaeleigh. Dr. Shore explained to him that Kaeleigh has a long road ahead, and Ian wants to try and be there for her. Now Kaeleigh has one thing to live for. With Ian's strength and Carol's help, maybe she can push Daddy aside. When Daddy arrives to take Kaeleigh home, he sees the roses Ian brought. He says Ian had better stay away. Kaeleigh responds that, if Daddy stops her from seeing Ian, she will tell everything. Daddy says it will be her word against his, and no one will believe her. Just then, Grandma Gardella enters, and tells him that she will believe Kaeleigh.

Six months pass. Kaeleigh lives in the family home, but with Grandma Charlotte. In the hospital, Grandma confessed that she was sixteen when she got pregnant by Ted, and they were from different backgrounds. He was a good man, but blue collar. He could not give Grandma the lifestyle she grew up with, so she turned to alcohol, cigarettes, and Prozac. She left him mostly out of boredom. Then a couple of years before the accident, Grandma stopped drinking and reconnected with her son and his family. She even babysat for the twins, as Kaeleigh somewhat recalls. Then Raeanne died, and Grandma went back to the bottle instead of looking out for Kaeleigh. One day Grandma came home, drunk, and found Daddy washing Kaeleigh in a way that was wrong. Grandma confronted Daddy, but he said no one would believe a drunk over a judge, and he would take her down. She ran, drank, and never forgave herself. She finally sobered up so she could come back and make sure Kaeleigh is all right. She is sorry she took so long. Kaeleigh forgives Grandma, and Dr. Carol says forgiveness is the only way Kaeleigh will be able to move past everything. Kaeleigh can't forgive Mom, because Mom won't even admit her role in what happened. There is no love left inside of Mom. No one at school knows about the two sides of Kaeleigh. Ian won't tell, and the story is that Kaeleigh had viral meningitis. She apologizes to Mr. Lawler and avoids Madison. Mick avoids her, and Ty has his own reasons to keep quiet. Kaeleigh is taking driving lessons, Grandma and Grandpa are cordial with each other, and Kaeleigh works at the Lutheran home to stay in contact with Greta. Greta convinced Kaeleigh to confront Daddy, so she can heal. Kaeleigh doesn't want Daddy to go to prison, and besides, he could probably pull strings to avoid a jail sentence. Instead, he checked himself into a rehab program, and when he gets out he will find an apartment thirty miles away. Kaeleigh does not think she will ever forgive him. Kaeleigh still hasn't told Ian about Daddy. Ian thinks her disorder was caused by the accident. Maybe some day she will be able to tell him everything. Most of Kaeleigh's addictions are under control, with no alcohol or pills in the house, but now



and then she has some bud, a food binge, or a close cut with her razor, because she is not perfect. Kaeleigh still feels Raeanne with her, and Carol says she should explore the things she did as Raeanne. Kaeleigh is certain, though, that the abuse stops here. She will create a home for her children that is nurturing, safe, and full of love.

In Raeanne (p. 565), Raeanne will always be here, keeping Kaeleigh safe. She will talk for Kaeleigh and take punishment for her when necessary. Carol plans to make Raeanne go away, and Raeanne will pretend she has succeeded. But Raeanne will always be Kaeleigh's twin, forever alive inside of her.

Kaeleigh (p. 523), Raeanne (p. 565) Analysis

Kaeleigh finds herself in a hospital, alone and confused. She cannot seem to communicate with Raeanne. Daddy forces his way in, even though visitors are not allowed, and says he wishes he could take everything back. Kaeleigh knows that Daddy only regrets his actions because he is about to be exposed. Kaeleigh believes that she has lost Ian forever, but he shows up with roses and the promise that he will try to stand by her during her recovery and beyond. Kaeleigh wonders if Mom will visit, but then she remembers a moment long ago, when she was showering and told Mom that it hurt where Daddy had touched her. Mom ignored her blatant plea for help that day, she realizes, so she knows that she can never count on Mom for help or love. Kaeleigh's doctor helps her to understand that she has dissociative identity disorder, or multiple personalities. With a great deal of hard work, Kaeleigh's prognosis for the future is good. Even now Kaeleigh cannot bear the thought of sending Daddy to jail, so he is instead sent to rehab and ordered to live in a separate apartment afterward. Kaeleigh does not think she will ever forgive Daddy, no matter what her doctor prescribes, no matter what the New Testament requires. Grandma Gardella arrives as a late rescuer, full of regret that she was unable to help Kaeleigh for so many years, but ready to be a loving caretaker now and in the future. Most importantly, Kaeleigh vows that the abuse will stop with her, that her children will always feel safe, nurtured, and loved. Thus, the abuse cycle will end, as long as Kaeleigh remembers her vow and follows through on treatment.

Raeanne makes her own vow, that she will always keep Kaeleigh safe. She will stay hidden, where Dr. Carol cannot find her, but she will never go away. The reader is left to decide whether this is good news for Kaeleigh or a sign that Kaeleigh will never truly recover.



Characters

Raeanne Gardella

Raeanne is an identical mirror image of her copper-haired twin sister, Kaeleigh. Her left side has double moles and a dimple. Raeanne thinks she is like their father, co-dependent and cowardly. Raeanne is jealous of the incestuous affection Daddy gives to her twin, Kaeleigh, but claims not to care that their mother prefers spending her time away from the family. Raeanne trades sex for marijuana from Mick, a boy two years older than her, and she is always looking for other guys to spend time with. Pot takes Raeanne to a distant place, and she doesn't mind the munchies afterward. She is careful to purge after binging, however, because Daddy would not want her to get fat. Raeanne is not afraid to take chances or defy her father, and, as the novel progresses, she puts herself in greater danger. Raeanne is sometimes frustrated by passive Kaeleigh, and yet Raeanne goes out of her way sometimes to protect her twin.

Kaeleigh Gardella

Kaeleigh is a high-school student, an identical mirror image of her copper-haired twin sister, Raeanne. Her right side has double moles and a dimple. Raeanne thinks Kaeleigh is like their mother, cold and controlled. The Gardella family was torn apart when the twins were ten. Their Daddy drove while drunk and swerved the family car into oncoming traffic. A fatality resulted, and Mom lost her ability to love her husband or her daughters. Kaeleigh is the one Daddy visits during the night, under the influence of whiskey and pills, looking for the love his wife no longer gives him. Kaeleigh tries to be a good girl. She yearns for the love of her mother, who is never home, and she does all she can to please her father, who dominates her. She likes a boy at school, Ian, who represents her best hope for the future. Kaeleigh gives Ian mixed signals, trying to be close yet so often pulling away, because of what her father has done to her. Kaeleigh uses food to numb her pain. She wants to defy Daddy by growing to double-digit sizes, yet somehow she keeps losing weight. In addition to binging, Kaeleigh experiments with cutting and occasionally drinking or taking pills. Kaeleigh finds escape by working at a Lutheran nursing home. One resident there, Greta, was also abused by her father, but Kaeleigh is not able to share her own troubles with anyone, not even Ian or Greta.

Raymond Gardella

Ray Gardella is the husband of Kay Gardella, father of twins Raeanne and Kaeleigh. He is a district court judge with gunmetal eyes. His drinking problem led to a horrific accident years ago, that resulted in a fatality and the disintegration of the Gardella family. Ray victimizes his daughter, Kaeleigh, having sex with her by night and controlling her every move by day. Ray's mother was an alcoholic who left the family. Ray was a victim of abuse himself, as a child, when a trusted neighbor took photos of



him for pedophile magazines, and he never forgave his father for unwittingly putting him in that situation. Ray reacts to events by moving forward, no matter what, with help from Wild Turkey and OxyContin.

Kay Gardella

Kay Gardella is the wife of Ray Gardella, mother of twins Raeanne and Kaeleigh. Kay does not want to hear about disturbing family secrets, even from a daughter who is crying out for help. Kay has distanced herself from her family, ever since the horrific car accident caused by Ray's drunkenness, by hitting the campaign trail, running for a seat in the U.S. Congress. Kay prefers to solve problems by pretending they don't exist or by using money and influence to buy peoples' silence.

Mick Morona

Mick is Raeanne's boyfriend, of a sort. Raeanne uses him to rebel against her parents and also to obtain marijuana, or bud, in exchange for sex. Mick drives a slate gray Chevy Avalanche. He is two years out of high school, having graduated at the bottom of his class. Mick uses another girl from Raeanne's school, Madison, to make Raeanne jealous.

Ian

Ian is Kaeleigh's boyfriend, always patient, always hoping Kaeleigh will trust him with the secrets that torment her. He rides a Yamaha motorcycle. His eyes are turquoise, like the Caribbean. Ian knows that Kaeleigh is troubled. He tries to understand when Kaeleigh, suddenly imagining her Daddy in place of Ian, pulls away from an embrace or a kiss, but he does not understand the source of Kaeleigh's torment. He believes she is traumatized just from the car accident that her family endured.

Mr. Lawler

Mr. Lawler is a history teacher. His eyes are green, flecked with gold, and he is single and muscular. There is sexual tension between him and his student, Raeanne, but a close call makes him realize that they can never be together.

Madison

Madison is a student at the local high school. Madison is an athlete and the ex-girlfriend of Mick. Raeanne is jealous of the time Madison spends with Mick, and Kaeleigh is jealous when Madison pays attention to Ian.



Greta Sorenson

Greta lives at the Lutheran nursing home where Kaeleigh works. Kaeleigh thinks of Greta as her faux Grandma. Greta and her friends defied the Nazis during World War II, smuggling Danish Jews into Sweden. Greta suspects that Kaeleigh has a dark secret and she tries, gently, to draw Kaeleigh out. Greta understands Kaeleigh because she herself had been sexually abused by her father.

Mrs. Cavendish

Mrs. Cavendish is a drama teacher. She produces the plays in which Kaeleigh, Ian, Madison, and other students perform.

Ms. Petrie

Ms. Petrie is the school P.E. teacher, who seems too interested in watching the girls take their showers after class.

Manuela

Manuela is the maid for the Gardella family. She is never physically present in the novel, only mentioned, and mainly notable for her absence whenever Kaeleigh or Raeanne makes a mess that needs to be cleaned up.

Ty

Ty is an older boy who Raeanne meets at a party. Ty is interested in dangerous games, such as bondage, and Raeanne is desperate enough for love and escape that she complies. Ty's Native American parents are wealthy, having received money from the government following the opening of a casino. Ty is an apprentice at a vineyard, and he will eventually become the vintner on his parents' land. He always has a stash of quality bud to share with Raeanne.

Grandpa Ted Gardella

Grandpa Ted Gardella is the father of Ray and ex-husband of Charlotte. Ted has weathered skin and the same gunmetal eyes as Ray. Ted had cheated on Charlotte. After Charlotte left, Ted asked a trusted neighbor to babysit young Ray, but the neighbor used Ray to produce pedophile porn. Ray never forgave his father, even though Ted had no knowledge of the abuse. At the time of the novel, Ted is alone, yearning to be a part of his son's life.



Deputy Carson

Deputy Carson is the officer who pulls Mick and Raeanne over for erratic driving. He was also the highway patrolman who helped the Gardella family years prior, when Daddy crashed their Mercedes.

Brittany

Brittany is a friend of Kaeleigh's. She is excited about her new driver's license and offers to drive Kaeleigh to school. She likes a boy named Joel, from drama class, and she giggles a lot.

Joel

Joel is a boy from drama class. Brittany likes him, gives him a ride to school, and wins him over as her boyfriend.

Shaun

Shaun is Ian's younger brother. He rides to school one day in Brittany's car, along with Joel and Kaeleigh. He tries to put his arm around Kaeleigh because he had overheard Ian say that Kaeleigh likes other guys. When Kaeleigh rejects him, he calls Kaeleigh frigid, leaving her to wonder if that is his term or Ian's.

Hannah

Hannah is a petite, blonde, nursing student who lives near the Gardellas. She becomes romantically involved with Ray Gardella, until Kay finds out about their affair. Kay ends things between them, using bribes and threats to drive Hannah away. Later in the novel when Kaeleigh overdoses, Hannah urges Ray to get help for Kaeleigh, but Ray says they can handle things privately.

Grandma Charlotte Gardella

Grandma Charlotte Gardella is the mother of Ray and the ex-wife of Ted. Kaeleigh and Raeanne remember Grandma Gardella as a flash of memories, husky voice, mahogany hair, and green eyes like a wildcat. Charlotte, who drank because she couldn't make the adjustment from a white-collar to a blue-collar lifestyle, left her husband, Ted, and their son, Ray. Years later, after she sobered up, she reconciled with Ray and his new family, even babysitting for the young twin girls. After Ray's car accident, when someone was killed, Charlotte resumed drinking. When she saw Ray touching Kaeleigh inappropriately, Ray threatened Charlotte, saying no one would believe a drunk over a



judge. Charlotte disappeared once again. Near the end of the novel Charlotte returns, sorry she didn't help Kaeleigh sooner, but ready to rescue her from her father if need be.

Lars

Lars is an old beau of Greta's, from the old country, who finds her again after sixty years of separation.

Dr. Carol Stone

Dr. Carol Stone is a psychotherapist, assigned to help Kaeleigh after it becomes clear that Kaeleigh is self-destructive. She determines that Kaeleigh probably has dissociative identity disorder and will need long-term treatment.



Objects/Places

Lutheran Home

Kaeleigh works at the Lutheran Home, using it as an escape from her Daddy. She finds peace there, among the patients who have already lived there for a lifetime, especially with a resident named Greta.

Chevy Avalanche

Mick drives a Chevy Avalanche. Raeanne regularly skips lunch at school in favor of riding with Mick, exchanging sex for pot. One day Mick and Raeanne are pulled over by the police for driving erratically in the truck.

Bud

Bud is a common name for marijuana, which Raeanne enjoys rolling and smoking. Raeanne trades sex for bud.

Kaeleigh's Bedroom

Kaeleigh's bedroom is the place where her Daddy visits at night, to find the love he no longer gets from his wife. Kaeleigh counts Daddy's steps when he enters the front door. Twelve paces lead him to Kaeleigh's bedroom door, twenty paces lead him away to his own room.

OxyContin

Ray's doctor has prescribed OxyContin for pain, for years, with no apparent regard for need or quantity. Raeanne regularly steals her Daddy's Oxy, both for her own use and to lull Daddy to sleep faster when he is angry, by adding it to his drinks.

Yamaha Motorcycle

Ian rides a Yamaha motorcycle. Kaeleigh loves riding behind Ian on his bike, holding him tight and absorbing his strength. One day Raeanne rides with Ian on the bike, letting Ian believe she is her twin, Kaeleigh.



U.S. Congress

Running for a seat in the U.S. Congress provides Kay an excuse to spend almost all of her time away from her family. After Kay wins the election, she lives in Washington, D.C., permanently.

Tabloids

The tabloids, or gossip magazines, are a potential nightmare for the Gardella family. Both Ray and Kay will do anything to keep their family secrets from tabloid journalists, because appearance is everything.

Figueroa Mountain

Figueroa Mountain is a place where teens meet to party, because the location is too remote for police or parents to find. Raeanne meets Ty on Figueroa Mountain.

Razor

Kaeleigh uses a razor to cut herself, in an attempt to feel something other than the pain of being abused by her father.

Ty's House

Ty's house is a guest house on his parents' property, where Raeanne learns about the pain and pleasure of bondage, and also about the sweet flavor of opiated hash and black African bud.

Dissociative Identity Disorder

Dissociative identity disorder is a rare condition often caused by trauma or sexual abuse, in which the brain copes by forming two or more distinct personalities. Dr. Carol Stone thinks Kaeleigh might have this disorder, given that Kaeleigh often took on the personality of her deceased twin, Raeanne.



Themes

Nature vs. Nurture

Twins Raeanne and Kaeleigh, actually two facets of Kaeleigh's personality, spend a great deal of time considering whether their Daddy was born evil or if experiences made him that way. They both feel that their life experiences have made them the way they are, and, over time, they learn that their Daddy was sexually abused as a boy. Raeanne flirts with illegal and dangerous activities throughout the novel, trading sex for drugs, stealing a car, experimenting with bondage, stealing pills, and more. Raeanne worries that she is destined for evil, both from harm done to her and heredity: "Demons, they say, are fallen angels. The real question is, who pushed Daddy over the edge, into the abyss? I'd say there are several likely candidates. And, oh awesome. I'm related to all of them, heiress of darkness" (p. 394). Throughout the novel, Kaeleigh struggles to be good, despite being sexually abused by Daddy. Kaeleigh concludes: "Babies aren't born cruel or filled with sick desire. Evil is not intrinsic. It's fashioned" (p. 456). A great deal of evil has been thrust upon Kaeleigh, ever since a horrific car accident tore her family apart, and her only hope for salvation is to believe that evil is fashioned, not intrinsic. Kaeleigh has a great deal of inner strength, even if that inner strength often goes by the name of her deceased twin, Raeanne. Part of Kaeleigh's healing process must include the realization that her goodness is her own and that Raeanne's strength is also her own. She does not have to define herself by the evil forced upon her by her abusive father and indifferent mother. In fact, at the end of the novel, Kaeleigh vows that the abuse will end with her and she will ensure that her children feel safe and nurtured.

Keeping Up Appearances

Appearances are vitally important in the Gardella family. The houses in their neighborhood have "Norman Rockwell facades" (p. 5), but those walls conceal secrets. Ray and Kay Gardella are both public, political figures, and they must display scandal-free personas. Congressional candidate Kay closes her eyes to any hint of trouble at home, whether it be alcoholism or sexual abuse. She prefers the campaign trail to her own home. District judge Ray keeps a watchful eye on everything, including his daughter's size and wardrobe. Twins Kaeleigh and Raeanne, actually two facets of Kaeleigh's personality, have opposite reactions to their parents' need to paint a pretty picture. Kaeleigh works hard to maintain the status quo, despite the abuse she suffers. Kaeleigh's only small rebellions are wearing frumpy clothes and binging, to increase her clothing size to double digits. Raeanne, on the other hand, fights the status quo by living on the edge, publicly disobeying her parents, flirting with scandal. Ironically, when Raeanne skips meals or purges, she thwarts her twin's efforts to gain weight. When Kaeleigh eventually overdoses on alcohol and pills, Ray's main concern is keeping the event out of the tabloids, and when Kaeleigh has an identity crisis he worries more about her trashed reputation than her mental health. Mother Kay does not even bother to come home. At the end of the novel, when Kaeleigh's doctor learns of Ray's abuse,



Kaeleigh does not want to publicly humiliate her Daddy or send him to jail. Instead, arrangements are made for him to go to rehab and get a separate apartment. Presumably, the Gardella image will remain more or less untarnished.

The Silence of Victims

Too often, victims of abuse remain silent, feeling that they somehow deserve their abuse, feeling that they must somehow protect their abuser. Kaeleigh Gardella has been sexually abused and dominated by her Daddy, ever since he crashed the family car and killed Kaeleigh's twin sister, Raeanne. The girls' mother, Kay, fell out of love with her husband that day and distanced herself from the family. Mom even closes her eyes to the abuse Kaeleigh is suffering at the hand of Daddy, because denial is easier. Kaeleigh deals with abuse by fragmenting her personality. Most of the time when Daddy forces himself on her, Kaeleigh retreats, compartmentalizing her pain, becoming a spectator in the form of her deceased sister, Raeanne. Raeanne is the one who rebels openly against her parents, while Kaeleigh tries to be good. Raeanne sometimes encourages Kaeleigh to tell someone about the abuse, but Kaeleigh does not have the strength to do so. Kaeleigh knows a woman, Greta, who had been abused by her own father, but Kaeleigh feels unable to share her own pain with Greta. Kaeleigh's boyfriend, Ian, begs Kaeleigh to tell him what is haunting her, but Kaeleigh cannot. She is protecting Daddy, of course, but she is also protecting herself. She chooses the familiar evil over an unpredictable change.



Style

Point of View

"Identical" is written from the viewpoint of twin sisters, Raeanne and Kaeleigh. With each chapter, the viewpoint switches from one twin to the other. Some words on the last page of each chapter match with identical words on the first page of the following chapter, linking the twins and their thoughts. Each twin sees the same world but through different eyes, providing the reader with a broad perspective on the world of the novel. At the end of the novel, the two points of view are joined into one.

Setting

"Identical" is set in a small California town, designed to look picture-perfect, reminiscent of Denmark, to attract tourists. The Gardella home is lovely on the outside, but dark secrets lurk within. Their home shows no evidence of happy family life - no photos, no real personal touches. The Gardellas do not entertain. The rare party or press conference is staged by professionals, to advance the political career of Kay Gardella. Appearances are maintained by the maid and by the Gardella twins. The world of "Identical" offers places of escape for Raeanne and Kaeleigh, such as school, a Lutheran nursing home, and the cars of boys looking for fun, but the twins see no opportunity for salvation in the world around them.

Language and Meaning

Raeanne and Kaeleigh are intelligent, well-educated, and eloquent teenagers, with impressive vocabularies. But they also use phrases common to teens, reminding the reader of their immaturity and highlighting their angst. Raeanne's vocabulary is studded with profanity and drug terminology, because she uses sex and drugs to fill an emotional void. Kaeleigh's vocabulary reflects her desire to be a good girl, although her language becomes rougher as her life unravels.

Structure

"Identical" is written in free verse, a non-rhyming, informal poem. This format lends a sense of intimacy, as if the reader is experiencing the twins' thought patterns. Some lines of verse are neatly stacked and spaced, some are jagged, and some form shapes such as broken hearts or whiskey bottles. The free verse could be reformatted as standard text, most of the time, because it does not scan as poetry.



Quotes

"Good, bad. Left, right./Kaeleigh and Raeanne./One egg, one sperm./One being, split in two./And how many/souls" (Raeanne, p. 2).

"The houses line smooth black/streets, prim rows/of postcard-pretty dwellings,/coiffed and manicured from curb/to chimney. Like Kaeleigh/and me, they're perfect/on the outside. But behind/the Norman Rockwell facades,/each holds its secrets" (Raeanne, p. 5).

"Auger into that core, like tapping/a maple, you'll get doused/with incredibly sweet sap./It's a lot of work, work that/Kaeleigh could never appreciate,/because she doesn't like maple/syrup anyway. But I do. I love/it. And if Daddy would just stand/still for me, I'd happily tap his core" (Raeanne, p. 25).

"But hey, I'm sick and tired of playing/passive. No, I'll leave that to Kaeleigh./Kaeleigh, queen of passive, all the time/saying no, but not strong enough/to mean it. Not strong enough to fight./Not anywhere near as strong as me" (Raeanne, p. 40).

"In control./Out of control./Sometimes they're/the same thing./The trick is knowing/that, realizing/it's okay to feel/out of control/once in a while,/as long as/you're sure/you can regain/the upper hand/when you/absolutely need to" (Raeanne, p. 45).

"I could barely remember/how her kisses felt. They/rode away on the bumper/of that fucking semi. How/we hungered for them" (Raeanne, p. 62).

"Kaeleigh, all sweetness,/wanted to comfort Daddy,/who drew her onto his lap./Stroked her hair. Kissed/her gently on the forehead./Cheeks. Eyes. Finally, on/her lips, but not nasty/or mean or with tongue/or anything but misplaced/love. Love meant for Mom" (Raeanne, p. 63).

"You can't trust a man,/any man,/any more than you can/put your/faith in a rabid dog, not/even your/own dog, one who would/never hurt/you, except he's rabid" (Kaeleigh, p. 74).

"The knob turns. Quick,/before/he can open my door, I scrunch my/eyes, will my breathing to slow./He steps inside, creeps to my bed./I give/a silent prayer that he'll believe/I'm asleep, take pity, leave me/to my feigned dreams, all/the while preparing to give/myself away" (Kaeleigh, p. 109).

"One thing for sure, sex will never/be about love with Mick. I don't love/him, and he definitely doesn't love me./Still, he semi-fills a gaping black hole/inside me. That place wants love,/maybe even needs love, but love is/something I'm pretty sure doesn't exist" (Raeanne, p. 121).



"It's Probably Weird/To think about an addiction/like it's a sentient being,/but that's how it feels./Like it's something living/inside you. Something/you can't get rid of because killing it means killing you" (Kaeleigh, p. 138).

"What would happen if all our dirty/laundry was hung out on a line/where the entire world could see it?/Would Daddy still be a judge?/Would Mom still run away?/Would Kaeleigh and I be taken,/forced into foster care? Would our/lives be less filled with misery?/Or would it just be more of the same" (Raeanne, p. 149).

"When Daddy/finished, he burrowed/his face/into Kaeleigh's hair/and wept. Confused at/his tears,/and at the sticky stuff icing/her hands, still Kaeleigh/pleaded,/ 'Don't cry, Daddy./What's the matter? Didn't/I love/you good enough" (Raeanne, p. 152).

"I've come to believe that people/who survive accidents like that one/are either just plain evil, or saved/for a reason. Which are you" (Raeanne, p. 183).

"Your entire life is joyless./Go ahead. Eat. Pig out, in fact./Food is real, too much/of it the only thing you feel./(Except the razor.) So feel" (Kaeleigh, p. 191).

"Ask me,/it's/a sin to pervert faith with religion./Despite every church, mosque, and/synagogue in it, this is not the world/any God worth his salt would have/created" (Raeanne, p. 201).

"I feel good about aiding/Kaeleigh's salvation tonight. Too/many times in the past, I've stood by,/powerless to interfere. They say/an ounce of prevention is worth a pound/of cure. There is no cure for Daddy" (Raeanne, p. 237).

"At ten, it isn't exactly/easy to separate/good touch/from bad/touch,/proper/love from/improper love,/doting daddy from perv" (Raeanne, p. 241).

"I'm in love./And I like how that feels./And I hate how that feels./Because love is an invention/of fiction writers" (Kaeleigh, p. 258).

"Our Fingers Interlock/And it feels like commitment./And that begins a tug-of-war/inside me./I want Ian to give me all of himself./But that means returning/the priceless gift./I want to open myself, let him inside./But how do I give what has/always been taken" (Kaeleigh, p. 274).

"Love is about helping each other/through dark times, Kaeleigh./Try to remember that, okay?/Getting drunk tonight won't make/tomorrow better. But letting me/love you will. It's all up to you" (Kaeleigh, p. 311).

"Sex, Sex, Sex/I have really got to stop thinking/about it so damn much, you know?/Daddy and Hannah; Daddy and Mom;/Daddy and Kaeleigh; Daddy and whoever;/Lawler and whoever; Mick and whoever; Ty.../Sex, sex, sex. I have really got to stop/wanting to have it, and more and more of it" (Raeanne, p. 321).



"I just want my mommy back,/just want to be the little girl she tells/stories to, whose hair she brushes/every night/until it shines like polished brass./Why does life have to be so messed up?/Why can't it just keep marching in/perfect order" (Kaeleigh, p. 364).

"I feel cold, way deep inside,/and it's the kind of cold/that can't be fought/with Hollandaise or alcohol/or a pile of quilts" (Raeanne, p. 391).

"Demons, they say, are fallen/angels. The real question is,/who pushed Daddy over/the edge,/into the abyss? I'd say there/are several likely candidates./And, oh awesome. I'm related/to all of them, heiress/of darkness" (Raeanne, p. 394).

"Funny, because, wrapped up in my/own little corner of the universe,/I always thought it was Daddy/who carried the power here./Now I see how wrong/I was. Now I see why/he wields such a big/stick when Mom/isn't around. It's/the only way he/can feel like/even half a/man" (Kaeleigh, p. 436).

"I need to feel/desirable, not like a piece/of furniture, something/you can sit on. Something/that belongs to my mom/or my daddy. I need to feel/like somebody wants me,/even if he wants me for/all the wrong reasons./Mostly, I just need to feel" (Raeanne, p. 449).

"Babies aren't born cruel/or filled with sick desire. Evil is not/intrinsic. It's fashioned" (Kaeleigh, p. 456).

"Sadness now, and I wonder how/it feels/to live without a constant fog/of sorrow, a breeze of loneliness./Complacent, I wait for my daddy/to come and punish me for trying/to die" (Kaeleigh, p. 492).

"What has brought him to this place?/Loneliness?/Greed?/Genetics?/What redemption can there be for him?/Penance?/Prison?/Demise" (Raeanne, p. 495).

"Funny how when your life is/mostly bullshit, you turn off/feeling. Sometimes it's hard/to turn it back on again" (Raeanne, p. 515).

"Am I her? If I'm her, where/is me? I can't go away, not/all the way away. Kaeleigh/is weak, no match for Daddy./If I die,/she'll die too. I'll always/be right here. Ian doesn't/have to know. Daddy/doesn't have to know. Even/she won't/know I'm still here. I'll/have to hide better, always/be Kaeleigh. It's a new game,/but necessary for me to/survive" (Raeanne, p. 522).

"When/Raeanne died, it emptied/every ounce of love from Mom's/heart. Why couldn't she save/just a spoonful - for me" (Kaeleigh, p. 557).

"One thing for sure. I will break/the abuse cycle. It stops with me./My children will not live in fear./I will create a home of nurture/and love, and raise them safely/there" (Kaeleigh, p. 564).



Topics for Discussion

How does Kaeleigh Gardella manage to balance two separate yet identical personalities, in the form of Kaeleigh and Raeanne? In what ways are Kaeleigh and Raeanne alike? In what ways are they different? How does Kaeleigh benefit from her split personalities?

What clues does author Ellen Hopkins provide, throughout the novel, to the fact that Kaeleigh and Raeanne Gardella are one and the same? Are most readers likely to be shocked and saddened when Ian reveals that Raeanne died years ago in a car crash, or are they likely to feel relieved that the ugly truth has finally been revealed?

What coping mechanism(s) does each member of the Gardella family use, to avoid or numb their pain? Why is each strategy successful or not? Is it better to avoid pain or work through it?

Why does Ray Gardella abuse his daughter, Kaeleigh? Why does Kay ignore the abuse? Why does Kaeleigh accept the abuse, without telling anyone? Why does Kaeleigh feel unable to tell Greta or Ian, both of whom she trusts, about the abuse?

Why does Raeanne wish she could satisfy her Daddy sexually? Why does she allow herself to be abused and used by other boys?

Why does Ray Gardella continue to drink, even after his drunk driving killed his daughter, Raeanne? Why does Kay Gardella continue to drink, even though she saw the destructive behavior of a drunk boyfriend and a drunk husband? Why do Ray and Kay allow their underage daughter to drink?

What is the role of religion in the novel? What efforts do Raeanne or Kaeleigh make, to get in touch with their own spirituality? Do Raeanne or Kaeleigh believe in God? Why or why not?

Why does Kaeleigh's boyfriend, Ian, stand by her despite her coldness and indecision? Why does he stand by her even when, in his eyes, she has cheated on him many times? Why does Kaeleigh pull away from Ian, even though she trusts him and they love each other?

Why do Ray and Kay Gardella focus more on appearances than on reality? Are political figures destined to hide their dirty laundry and ignore it, or is there another alternative?

What is dissociative identity disorder? Why has Kaeleigh developed this disorder? Will Kaeleigh likely be cured? Why does Raeanne vow that a small piece of her will always remain with Kaeleigh?

What is free verse? Why does the author, Ellen Hopkins, choose to write "Identical" in free verse? How and why does Hopkins interlock the end of each chapter with the beginning of the next? Why is the text sometimes jagged, sometimes smooth,

sometimes formatted into shapes? How does the appearance of the text reflect its content? Would the novel read differently if it were formatted in narrative paragraphs rather than as free verse?