

If I Have a Wicked Stepmother, Where's My Prince? Study Guide

If I Have a Wicked Stepmother, Where's My Prince? by Melissa Kantor

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Plot Summary

If I Have a Wicked Stepmother, Where's My Prince?, written by author, Melissa Kantor, is a novel that tells the story of Lucy Norton and her journey of self-discovery, as well as her struggle to adjust to her new family.

The story begins by introducing Lucy, a smart, artistic and athletic sophomore. She compares herself to Cinderella, with a wicked step-mother and step-sisters and friendless. She has recently moved to New York after her father remarried but, with her mother having passed away and her father working in San Francisco, she's left alone with a new family which doesn't seem to care about her or her feelings.

As the story progresses, the reader learns that Lucy is treated differently than her step-sisters and that her father takes her step-mother's side every time. Lucy is left feeling out of place and unimportant. At school, however, Lucy begins to make friends, Madison and Jessica, and finds out that the cutest senior in school, Connor Pearson, thinks she's "cool." But this success with friendships and relationships is somewhat overshadowed by the fact that her father continues to ignore her requests to spend quality alone time with him.

Throughout the next several chapters, Lucy begins to have a true friendship with Jessica and Madison and she has her first date with Connor, but notices that all they talk about is basketball. Lucy begins to see the differences between her life at school and at home, since she doesn't seem to have enough time to talk to everyone at school but she is routinely ignored at home. When the pressure at home with her step-mother, Mara, becomes too much, Lucy gets into an argument with her and decides to defy Mara's request that she come home directly after school. Instead, Lucy goes to an art show opening in New York City where she has a meaningful conversation with her classmate in art, Sam Wolff, who, until now, has ignored Lucy's attempts to befriend him.

Starting in Chapter 16, things begin to take a turn for the worse. Connor and his friends lose the big basketball game; Connor gets drunk and ignores Lucy at the party she defied Mara to go to; Lucy's competition for Connor, Kathryn Ford, begins to show more interest in Connor; and Lucy gets into a big fight with her dad that results in his choice to ground her indefinitely.

Lucy's struggles continue in the following chapters. She notices that Kathryn is becoming more flirtatious with Connor, and that he doesn't seem to mind; she has difficulty finding her inspiration for a self-portrait and, when she finally does finish her self-portrait, she begins to notice that she has an effortless connection with Sam Wolff. Meanwhile, Lucy is also starting to notice that she and Connor don't seem to have much in common, since he only talks about himself and basketball. At home, Lucy thinks that her relationships with her step-sisters is getting stronger when they confide in her about going to a party but she soon realizes that their kindness had been a set-up when they blame her for knowing about their actions.



Just when Lucy begins to lose all hope, things begin to change for the better. She is finally able to communicate her feelings to her father and he responds with support and love when he commits to being at home more often. Her father also seems to notice the way Lucy has been treated by Mara and her step-sisters and, after they apologize to Lucy, they are able to start over and develop honest, caring relationships. Although Connor and Kathryn are interacting like a couple, Lucy realizes she doesn't care because she doesn't like him as much as she thought. At the end of the book, however, Lucy still gets her Prince Charming when Sam Wolff reveals his true feelings for her and she allows herself to acknowledge that she has the same feelings for him.



Chapters 1-3

Chapters 1-3 Summary

Chapter 1 begins with the main character, Lucy, comparing her life with Cinderella's. Like Cinderella, her mother has passed away, she has a wicked step-mother, Mara, and two evil, 12 year old twin step-sisters. Lucy states that she recently moved to New York but that her father works in San Francisco during the week, leaving her alone with Mara and her step-sisters. Lucy discusses her experience at her new school, Glen Lake High, stating that she has no friends and that this is her third new school in three years. Lucy describes several popular people in her class, including Jessica Johnson and Madison Lawler, who are best friends, and Connor Pearson and Kathryn Ford, the guy voted "best looking" and the homecoming queen. There is a brief interaction between Lucy and step-sisters, in which they make fun of her and her step-mother does nothing. Lucy describes her bedroom in the basement, containing two posters of her favorite paintings. Lucy shares that her mother was a well-known artist but that her father won't allow her paintings to be displayed in their new house. Lucy contemplates how her life revolves around Mara's feelings and she wonders why she has no prince if she has a wicked step-mother and evil step-sisters.

At the beginning of Chapter 2, Lucy shares that she tried to make a friend at Glen Lake, Sam Wolff, a guy in her art class and the best artist in school. When he seems uninterested in her friendship, Lucy decides to give up on making friends at school. Chapter 2 focuses mostly on Lucy's interactions with Jessica and Madison, along with their boyfriends, Dave and Matt, and Connor Pearson, when they decide to sit at her lunch table. Although she is shy at first, Lucy makes an accidental comment about the basketball game Dave, Matt and Connor are talking about. Lucy thinks that she is about to be humiliated, but she and Dave get into an argument about which basketball team is going to win the game. When Dave gets too excited and somewhat in Lucy's face, Connor tells him to back off and then apologizes to Lucy and winks. Lucy is stunned by this but then Connor, Matt and Dave leave the table. Madison and Jessica talk about the connection between Connor and Kathryn, how Kathryn is faking an interest in basketball just to impress Connor and how they are sure Kathryn and Connor will be dating soon. Lucy leaves the table without them noticing.

Chapter 3 begins with Lucy remembering how she and her dad had a more relaxed eating schedule but how, with Mara, every dinner is at 7pm on the dot and the dining room table is always set elegantly. After being ignored at dinner, Lucy gets a call from her dad and, rather than tell him she has no friends at school, she talks to him about the upcoming basketball game. While on the phone, Lucy's step-sisters begin talking about Jennifer Johnson, their best friend and younger sister of Jessica Johnson, and Lucy realizes the vast difference between her and the twins' personalities. She thinks about how she would have rather stayed in San Francisco but the location of the twins' dad determined where they lived. As Lucy continues the conversation with her dad, Mara picks up the phone, something she does often. She appears to join their conversation



about basketball, even referring to Lucy as her daughter, and Lucy shares that her mother died of cancer when she was three and that she doesn't feel she needs a mother. Mara hints that Lucy should get off the phone and, as Mara clears the dining room alone, she thinks how she should have known better than to think her step-sisters would have helped.

Chapters 1-3 Analysis

Chapters 1-3 focus on introducing the main character, Lucy, and her situation with family and school. Chapter 1 starts with Lucy comparing herself to Cinderella, complete with a wicked step-mother, Mara, and evil, 12 year old twin step-sisters, to whom she refers as "the Princesses." Lucy describes herself as tall, red-haired and "friendless." She reveals in Chapter 1 that she recently moved to New York after her father remarried but she seems to feel somewhat abandoned by her father, because he spends five days a week working in San Francisco. Chapter 1 also introduces the fact that Lucy's mom was a well-known artist but that her art can't be celebrated in their new home because of Mara's feelings. Lucy reveals that she is constantly in trouble or about to be in trouble because of Mara's feelings.

In Chapter 2, Lucy interacts with some of the more popular kids in school by accident and, to her surprise, it isn't as bad as she thought it would be. Chapter 3 develops the dynamics of Lucy's family further. The reader learns that Lucy's mother died of cancer when Lucy was 3. Based on the interactions between Lucy, Mara, her step-sisters and her father, Lucy appears to feel left out and unimportant in her family. Lucy also implies that her step-mother goes out of her way to treat Lucy differently when her father is around. At this point in the book, it seems that Lucy wishes things would go back to the way things were before her father married Mara.



Chapters 4-6

Chapters 4-6 Summary

In Chapter 4, Lucy is furniture shopping with her dad, Doug, and Mara. Lucy admits that she doesn't care for furniture shopping but, when she said this last weekend, her father had a talk with her to let her know that her saying this hurt Mara's feelings and that he hopes she would reconsider going the next weekend. Lucy feels upset that her room in the basement remains unfurnished, as Mara has supposedly been unable to find the right pieces, despite finding pieces to refurnish the rest of the house. Lucy knows that her dad will not help her on this subject because when she mentioned this to him, he became stern and upset with what Lucy was implying about Mara. While furniture shopping, Lucy finds a beautiful, antique wooden easel and enjoys spending the alone time she gets to spend with her father as they admire it. However, their time together is interrupted when Mara joins them. When she sees the easel, she says that it is not the right look for Lucy's room and that there isn't a space for it. Receiving no support from her father, Lucy leaves the shop empty-handed, going back only to retrieve Mara's coat upon her request.

Chapter 5 begins with Lucy enjoying her lunch, as usual, in the art room. She is studying her art and wondering if her art is taking a direction like her teacher, Ms. Daniels, suggested. Lucy also wonders if she is talented enough for her art to even have a direction. When she gets to the cafeteria later in the week, Madison and Jessica insist that she sit with them. Unsure of what's going on, Lucy decides to accept their invitation. When she arrives at their table, Lucy finds that Madison and Jessica are beside themselves with excitement. When Jessica mentions the name Connor Pearson, Lucy begins to get nervous and wonders what news they have to tell her. Jessica tells her that Connor Pearson likes her and that he wants her to come to his basketball game tonight because he thinks she's "cool." Lucy inquires about Kathryn Ford but Madison and Jessica assure her that Connor and Kathryn are just friends. As she sits frozen at the lunch table, the truth hits Lucy: Prince Charming has invited her somewhere. She realizes that she's finally reached the point in her fairy tale life where she gets to live happily ever after and she accepts Jessica and Madison's invitation to go to the basketball game with them.

At the beginning of Chapter 6, Mara questions Lucy about going to the basketball game, who she's going with, what time she'll be home and how she's getting there. Lucy resents Mara's questions, since no one seems to care what she's doing any other time and because Lucy feels that Mara is putting rules into place that hadn't been there when she was just living with her dad. When Mara is satisfied with Lucy's answers and leaves the room, Lucy has to decide what to wear. She decides to go outside of her comfort zone of jeans and a t-shirt and she wears her hair down as well. Madison and Jessica comment on her hair color, which makes Lucy feel self-conscious about wearing her hair down, but they say that Lucy's hair color is "hot." Lucy goes to the basketball game with Madison and Jessica but, unlike them, she pays attention to the game and to



Connor, noticing how athletic and good looking he is. When the game is over, Lucy notices that Connor waves to the crowd. Although she is sure he didn't wave directly at her, she is pleased with the fact that he knows who she is and she remembers that Prince Charming only knew Cinderella's shoe size.

Chapters 4-6 Analysis

The dynamics in Lucy's family are developed further in Chapter 4. During this chapter, Lucy reveals further that she feels forced into many things in order to avoid hurting Mara's feelings. The text also implies that Lucy may resent the fact that her father, Doug, seems protective of Mara's feelings but not of hers. In Chapter 4, the reader sees an example when Lucy finds an antique easel that she truly loves, and even he finds beautiful, and she is not able to get it because Mara doesn't feel the style fits in with the overall theme of their home and because Doug does not advocate for Lucy.

Chapter 5 focuses on the interaction between Lucy, Madison and Jessica. Lucy is surprised when Madison and Jessica want to eat lunch with her and she's even more surprised when they tell her that Connor Pearson, the hottest senior in school, thinks she's "cool." Lucy thinks that her life may be turning around for the better, since it seems that her Prince Charming has finally arrived. Chapter 6 demonstrates the relationship between Mara and Lucy better, as Mara seems suddenly interested and typically controlling of what Lucy is doing. Lucy seems to resent Mara for her attempts to be a mother and to enforce rules that had not been in place when it was just Lucy and her dad. Lucy is able to enjoy the basketball game, however, and at the end of Chapter 6, she is hopeful about what might come of Connor's interest in her.



Chapters 7-9

Chapters 7-9 Summary

Chapter 7 finds Lucy, Madison, Jessica, Matt, Dave and Connor getting pizza after the basketball game. Although there are several moments of awkward conversation and silence, Connor shows his interest in Lucy throughout the night by giving her a kiss on the cheek when he arrives at the pizza restaurant, putting his arm around her as they walk to their table, putting his hand on the back of her neck while they walk around eating gelato, putting his hand on her knee as he drives her home and giving her several good night kisses when dropping her off at her house. Throughout the evening, Lucy and Connor are mostly quiet, and Lucy is in a state of shock, but they appear to have a strong connection and Connor's behaviors towards her seem to be effortless and natural. Lucy notices that Jessica and Madison appear to be her friends now as well, since Lucy is now included in their girl talk and hugging. When Lucy finally gets out of Connor's car, she thinks about this being the first date of her life and feels like she's had the best night of her life. She thinks that maybe being Cinderella isn't so bad.

Chapter 8 focuses on Lucy's trip to the Guggenheim Art Museum. Although she wakes up late, she rushes to get ready to go so that her father doesn't have to wait for her. Excited that this trip to the museum will be the first alone time she's had with her father since moving to New York, Lucy is hurt, angry and disappointed to find out that Mara is joining them. Although she tries to communicate her disappointment to her dad, her feelings go unnoticed, because he seems concerned only with Mara's feelings. Lucy feels that the trip to the museum is ruined when she sees that all her dad and Mara are going to do is cuddle, laugh and talk with each other. Lucy's dad doesn't seem to notice her attempts to talk with him and enjoy the museum with him as in the past so, angry and hurt, Lucy decides to go through the museum without her dad and Mara. As time passes, she becomes less angry and finds herself able to enjoy the art exhibits. She has a brief, awkward conversation with her art classmate, Sam Wolff, who seemed disinterested in talking with her. On the way back from the museum, Lucy thinks about how she could have had the best night of her life last night but still be so sad today.

In chapter 9, Lucy arrives at school but she notices that something seems different- people are standing in small groups whispering to each other. She becomes more suspicious when she notices that the small groups seem to stop talking whenever she's walking past them and, when she arrives to lunch, she learns from Madison and Jessica what everyone is talking about- that she is Connor's girlfriend. Madison and Jessica ask for details about Connor and Lucy's date and, while Lucy admits he's a good kisser, she doesn't give any other information. When Lucy sees Connor in the hallway, she accepts his invitation to his next basketball game and he gives her his basketball jacket. Lucy notices that everyone in school seems to want to be her friend now. But nothing has changed at home. Lucy continues to be ignored by Mara and her step-sisters and Mara continues to take up any time with her dad that she might get. But when Mara interrupts Lucy's phone call with her dad to tell her she has a call on the other line, Lucy is



surprised to hear Connor's voice. When he agrees to call her later that night, Lucy is excited. She doesn't even care that Mara and her dad are still talking on the phone.

Chapters 7-9 Analysis

In Chapter 7, Lucy feels like she is experiencing the happily ever after part of her fairy tale life. She is out on a group date with Connor but his behaviors make her feel like she's the only one around. Lucy and Connor share several good night kisses, causing Lucy to have the best night of her life. However, Chapter 8 seems to bring Lucy back to reality when she realizes that Mara is joining Lucy and her dad on their trip to the museum. Lucy clearly feels hurt, betrayed and disappointed that her father invited Mara along, since she and her dad haven't spent time alone together in quite some time and because going to museums together is an activity they once shared.

Lucy is unable to communicate her feelings to her father, however, since he appears uninterested in listening to them. In Chapter 9, Lucy sees that people are acting differently at school and are even interested in talking to her. She finds out from Madison and Jessica that she is Connor's girlfriend, a fact that had not been revealed to Lucy by Connor. Lucy seems to be in shock by this but is happy nonetheless. She is even happier when Connor calls her at home later that night, so happy that she doesn't even care that her father is ignoring her for Mara once again.



Chapters 10-12

Chapters 10-12 Summary

Chapter 10 begins with Lucy learning in art class that she has to do a self-portrait, about which she's not excited. At lunch, as she's talking with Madison and Jessica, she is approached by Kathryn Ford. Kathryn engages Lucy in a small conversation and states that she is not interested in Connor because, although he is "adorbs," she seems him like a brother and doesn't date high school guys. When Kathryn leaves, Madison and Jessica talk about how fake Kathryn is and how they don't believe her. During art class, Lucy tries again to have a conversation with Sam about his art work but he again seems to be disinterested. When Lucy gets home, her step-sisters tell her that Mara is very angry with Lucy about how messy her room is. Mara confronts Lucy about her room and Lucy explains that it would be easier to keep it clean if she had furniture. Lucy's dad comes home and Mara tells him that Lucy is taking a "snotty" tone with her. Although he seems to want to take Lucy's side, her dad makes Lucy apologize to Mara and tells her that she's not allowed to go the basketball game tonight. Feeling angry and betrayed, Lucy calls Connor and Jessica and tells them she can't go to the game.

In chapter 11, Lucy wakes up and hesitantly checks her voicemail, preparing herself to feel bad if Connor didn't call. She is happily surprised when she hears a message from him, saying that he is taking her out to dinner. Lucy gets a message from Jessica as well and, when she calls Jessica back, they make plans to go with Madison to "Miracle Mile" for shopping. Lucy tells Jessica that she has a date with Connor and has nothing to wear and, throughout the rest of the chapter, Jessica and Madison help Lucy shop for the perfect outfit. While shopping, Lucy sees Sam, from her art class, waiting outside of the dressing room. She is shocked to see him but is even more shocked when she sees that he's shopping with Jane Brown, the beautiful friend of Kathryn Ford. Lucy learns that Sam knows Jessica and Jessica informs Lucy that Sam and Jane are dating. Since she didn't find the perfect outfit, Lucy is about to leave empty-handed. However, just before leaving, Jessica and Madison spot a sexy red mini-dress and, after trying it on, Lucy decides to buy it, even though it's hard for her to believe she's looking at herself in the mirror when she has it on.

Chapter 12 focuses on Lucy's date with Connor. When he arrives at her house, Lucy's step-sisters seem smitten with him. She also notices that they are on their best behavior and are being nice and helpful to her. Lucy finds herself embarrassed and somewhat angry when Mara and her father meet Connor, as Mara is wearing a dress similar to Lucy's, she is frequently touching Connor and she is presenting herself as nice and loving toward Lucy. Feeling uncomfortable and wanting to leave the house as soon as possible, Lucy insists that she and Connor should get going. She wants to explain to Connor that her family was being fake, but doesn't get the chance because of how charming he is. He compliments her on her dress several times throughout the evening and holds her hand tenderly at all times. Over dinner, however, Lucy begins to notice that, while their physical connection is undeniable, they seem to struggle with engaging



in a conversation when the topic is not basketball. When Connor finally asks Lucy to tell him about herself, he pays the check and says he has to leave to be home by the curfew established by his basketball coach. Lucy ignores her observations and focuses on how wonderful it is to kiss Connor.

Chapters 10-12 Analysis

Chapters 10-12 develop the plot further in several different ways. Chapter 10 mostly focuses on Lucy's interactions with her dad and Mara. Although she doesn't usually argue with Mara, chapter 10 finds Lucy unable to hold her thoughts in any longer when Mara is angry with her for having a messy room. While Lucy's line of reasoning makes sense, her father is of no help to her in the situation, as he sides with Mara and grounds Lucy for the night. Not only does Lucy feel angry because of her father's actions, but she is angry because she will not be able to go to Connor's basketball game. Chapter 11 finds Lucy relieved to learn that Connor is still interested in her despite her being absent from his basketball game. In this chapter, she also focuses on developing her friendships with Jessica and Madison further.

Lucy has her first real date with Connor in chapter 12. Although she feels slightly uncomfortable, she steps outside of her comfort zone to wear a sexy red mini-dress. She is somewhat embarrassed and angry by her family's behaviors, as they are all being nicer than usual and pretending to have a good relationship with Lucy. Lucy continues to have a hard time believing that her relationship with Connor is really happening and the text seems to support her small doubt in subtle ways. Also in chapter 12, Lucy begins to notice that she and Connor have a hard time maintaining a conversation when the topic isn't basketball. For now, though, she chooses to enjoy Connor's affections.



Chapters 13-15

Chapters 13-15 Summary

In Chapter 13, Lucy and Connor continue their relationship. They "watch" basketball games while talking on the phone and openly enjoy their relationship in school. Lucy feels like she's leading two separate lives, since everyone wants to be her friend at school while, at home, Mara and her step-sisters continue to ignore her. Several nights after she received a new bed, Lucy is having dinner with Mara and her step-sisters when Mara mentions that her friend is coming to visit. She asks Lucy if her friend can sleep in Lucy's bed while Lucy sleeps in the den. Now realizing why she got a new bed, Lucy can't stop herself from challenging Mara on this issue. She tells Mara that she has to think about giving up her room and her step-sisters enter the conversation, calling her selfish and unhelpful. When Lucy begins to challenge her step-sisters, Mara corrects her and threatens to tell her father how she's been acting. Unable to hold back her emotions any longer, Lucy yells at Mara. Once in her room, Lucy realizes that she couldn't call her dad even if she wanted to because only Mara knows the name of his hotel. This scares Lucy.

Lucy wakes up early in Chapter 14 and, when she finds a note from Mara on the counter saying that she and her father expect Lucy home right after school, Lucy decides that she is not going to miss the basketball game and biggest party of the year tonight. She quickly gets ready for school and packs a change of clothes in her bag. Lucy is nervous for the first part of the day, thinking that she is about to get caught at any moment. She realizes soon, though, that no one will suspect anything until after school, so she begins to relax and tries to formulate a plan for what she will do for the several hours between school and the basketball game. When Lucy learns that all of her friends are busy after school, she tries to think of another plan. It's then that she sees a postcard left on her locker, inviting her to an art opening in New York City. She decides that the invitation is from her art teacher, Ms. Daniels. Lucy figures out that going to the art show will take up her afternoon and she will still be able to get back in time for the game. Lucy now feels hopeful about her afternoon.

Chapter 15 finds Lucy at the art show of Milton Newman in New York City. After being taken in by the wonderful paintings, Lucy begins to look around for Ms. Daniels, as she feels awkward being at the event alone. Unfortunately, the only familiar face she sees is that of Sam Wolff. Not thrilled about this, she thinks about leaving but decides to stay. Just then, Sam approaches her and starts a conversation. It is tense at first but, when Sam's mom comes up to them and Lucy is introduced to her, she realizes that Sam's mom owns the gallery and that Sam invited her to the art show. When Lucy tells Sam that she assumed Ms. Daniels invited her, since he has never responded kindly to her attempts to have a conversation with him, Sam says that he hasn't responded to Lucy's attempts at conversation because he doesn't like people talking about his paintings. Lucy sees that Sam is "cool" and they continue their conversation, even sharing some laughter and smiles, until Lucy realizes that she's lost track of time and needs to leave



right away to get to the basketball game. As she rushes off, Lucy realizes that she didn't say goodbye to Sam.

Chapters 13-15 Analysis

At the beginning of Chapter 13, Lucy contemplates how different her home life is from her school life, as her family continues to ignore her at home but she doesn't seem to have enough time to talk to everyone at school. At the end of Chapter 13, however, Lucy and Mara get into a fight, during which Lucy finally challenges Mara on how she treats her and how, despite Mara's statements that she wants them to be a family unit, she doesn't treat Lucy that way. In Chapter 14, Lucy takes her defiance further by deciding that she is not coming home directly after school, as her father and Mara requested, because she doesn't want to miss another basketball game and party. Although she initially seems to feel badly about her decision, she becomes more confident about it as the chapter progresses.

In Chapter 15, Lucy finds herself at her first art opening in New York City. She also finds herself having an effortless conversation with someone she never expected: Sam Wolff. Although the text suggests that Lucy and Sam have a better connection, Lucy doesn't seem to notice this or focus on this at this point in the story, as she continues to be concerned with making it to Connor's basketball game in time.



Chapters 16-18

Chapters 16-18 Summary

In Chapter 16, Lucy makes it to Connor's basketball game just in time. When she makes her way up the stands to her seat with Jessica and Madison, she can see that they are excited and aren't interested in paying attention to the game. Jessica tells Lucy that they are going to be the only three sophomore girls invited to the prom and Madison says that they will be invited tonight after the game by their boyfriends. Excited, the girls watch the rest of the game and, when Glen Lake loses, they decide to get something to eat while the boys have time to grieve their loss. Afterwards, the girls head to the party and, when they arrive, Lucy sees that the entire school seems to be there and everyone is celebrating, despite their loss. Lucy thinks her decision to defy Mara and come to the party is the best decision she's made. Unable to find their boyfriends at first, Jessica is the first to find hers, Dave, who is drunk and informs them that Connor and Matt are in the back yard. Lucy finds Connor also drunk and passed out under a table. He tells her he needs to sleep for a while and thanks her for coming.

Chapter 17 begins with Connor getting sick on Lucy's shoe. As they get in the back of Kathryn Ford's car, Lucy realizes that she doesn't see anything charming about Connor right now. She thinks about how pointless defying Mara was, and how much trouble she will be in, and is nervous as she approaches her house. While getting out of the car, Kathryn makes several comments about Connor that make Lucy upset, especially when Kathryn implies that Lucy wouldn't even be dating Connor if Kathryn were interested in him. When she gets in her house, Lucy sees that her dad is still up and, rather than have the discussion with Mara present, she decides to address her dad now. Although Lucy thought that her dad was going to be open to hearing her side, as the conversation progresses, she realizes that he will only take Mara's side. Despite her attempts to share her point of view and to tell her dad that Mara treats her much differently when he's not home, her dad feels that she's being paranoid. He tells her that she must apologize to Mara and that she is grounded until they see a change in her attitude. Lucy wonders if her happily ever after is coming true after all.

In Chapter 18, Lucy forces herself to apologize to Mara. Mara accepts and tells her that she is expected at dinner tonight. Lucy returns to her room and sleeps until she is woken up by her step-sisters telling her that Connor called. When Lucy calls Connor back, he apologizes for being drunk the night before and asks her to the prom. Beyond excited, Lucy accepts. She knows now how important it is for her to demonstrate a change of attitude. When Lucy goes to dinner, she uses her best manners when introducing herself to Mara's friend and asks Mara if there's anything she can do to help. Mara says she would like Lucy and her step-sisters to wear white and black outfits and to help with the serving of drinks and dinner. Lucy feels foolish when she realizes that she will be doing all the work. Although she feels angry and hurt that the guests think she is hired help and that her family is ignoring her, she keeps her feelings inside because she wants to go to the prom. After dinner is over, her dad says that he thinks



tonight they were like a true family, leaving Lucy in disbelief that he could actually think that.

Chapters 16-18 Analysis

Chapter 16 brings a high and a low point for Lucy. While she is beyond excited to find out that Connor is planning on asking her to the prom, things start to go badly when Glen Lake loses their big basketball game. The evening only gets worse when Lucy realizes that, not only is Connor drunk and unable to interact with her, but that she defied Mara and will get in trouble without getting anything out of the evening in return. Matters are only made worse when, in the beginning of Chapter 17, Kathryn Ford implies that, if she were interested in younger guys, Lucy wouldn't even have the chance of dating Connor.

Chapter 17 also contains the fight between Lucy and her dad that seems inevitable. Despite Lucy's best efforts to communicate her feelings to her dad, her dad seems unable to appreciate her point of view and he continues to take Mara's side. Lucy seems to lose hope in her father's ability to help her at this point, especially when he grounds her indefinitely. Her feelings of hopelessness seem to strengthen in Chapter 18 when Lucy's dad interprets her working and being treated like an employee throughout dinner as her being the person he knew she could be and as one of the first times they've all interacted as a family. Lucy puts up with this treatment, however, in hopes of gaining permission to attend the prom with Connor.



Chapters 19-21

Chapters 19-21 Summary

Chapter 19 begins with Lucy continuing to be concerned about the self-portrait she was assigned in art class. Knowing that she will fail the class if she doesn't produce something, she decides to use her lunch break to go to the art room. Ms. Daniels suggests that she use a painting that's important to her as inspiration and hands her a book of paintings to get her started. While looking through the book, Sam enters the classroom and they have a brief, but positive conversation. Just as Lucy finds an inspirational painting and gets an idea for a self-portrait, Madison and Jessica come into the classroom and start talking about prom dresses. They also tell her that Kathryn broke up with her boyfriend. Lucy is not happy when she sees Connor talking to Kathryn at his locker after school, or with how physical Kathryn is being with him. The next day, which is Senior Cut day, Lucy learns that Madison and Jessica have both heard from their boyfriends about Senior City Night and she feels nervous because she hasn't heard from Connor. Madison and Jessica reassure her that Connor is very into her.

At the beginning of Chapter 20, Lucy is in the art studio working on her self-portrait, after finally finding her inspiration. Seeing that she seems more focused on this sketch, Ms. Daniels asks to see it. Lucy expresses her worry that Ms. Daniels won't like it, like she hasn't liked the others, but Ms. Daniels stated that she could've been convinced about the other sketches if Lucy had been interested enough in them to defend them. After looking at her current sketch, Ms. Daniels compliments Lucy's work and Lucy realizes how excited she is by it as well. At that point, Sam approaches Ms. Daniels and asks about taking his painting home, since she has kept it in the classroom because of its beauty. When she realizes that Ms. Daniels can't help Sam get the painting to his car, Lucy offers to help him, thinking it could be fun to hang out with Sam. After getting the painting in his car, Sam gives Lucy a ride home. On the way, they talk about art and have a somewhat flirtatious conversation about Mara. The chapter ends with Lucy going in her house and promising Madison that she would call her back to discuss a prom dress.

Chapter 21 starts with Lucy finally receiving a call from Connor, who apologizes for not calling and states that he has been sick from drinking too much. The rest of the chapter focuses on Lucy, Madison and Jessica shopping for the perfect prom dress. Lucy shares that she allowed herself to be ordered around by Mara in order to secure her father's credit card. But she feels that it was worth it when she is able to go dress shopping with her friends. While Jessica and Lucy are searching for a dress, Madison tries on a dress that makes her look like a movie star and she decides to buy it. Feeling insecure about what will look good on her, Madison urges Lucy to visualize herself at the prom but, unfortunately, Lucy is unable to get a clear vision of what she would look like at the prom. Just then, Jessica emerges with a dark blue gown and, even though she finds it tacky, Lucy agrees to try it on. Surprisingly, Lucy doesn't think the dress is



tacky at all- she finds herself to be beautiful in it. After seeing the positive reactions of her friends, Lucy knows she has found the perfect dress.

Chapters 19-21 Analysis

Chapters 19-21 illuminate several insecurities that Lucy is experiencing, along with the resolutions to these insecurities. In Chapter 19, Lucy experiences insecurity when she realizes that her friends' boyfriends called them but that Connor hasn't called her after Senior City Night. Given that Kathryn Ford no longer has a boyfriend, and because she has seen Kathryn be flirtatious with Connor, Lucy begins to worry that Connor replaced her. She seems to feel better, though, when her friends tell her that Connor's probably too sick to call her. In Chapter 20, Lucy experiences insecurity about her art work. This is something that she has struggled with before, as suggested by earlier text, but she seems to feel particularly insecure and exposed about her self-portrait, especially given that she has had difficulty in deciding on a concept.

Starting in Chapter 19 but becoming reality in Chapter 20, Lucy finally finds the inspiration for her self-portrait and she is excited about it. Her excitement and the compliment from her art teacher seem to boost Lucy's confidence in her artistic skills. Also in Chapter 20, Lucy's relationship with Sam is developed further and it becomes clear that she likes spending time with him. It is also clear that she and Sam have an effortless connection, however Lucy does not seem to pay much attention to this. At the beginning of Chapter 21, Lucy finally hears from Connor and realizes that he was sick and that her worries about him having a relationship with Kathryn were unnecessary. She also experiences insecurity when shopping for a prom dress, since she is unable to picture herself looking good in any dress. However, when her friends help her find the perfect dress, even she can't deny how beautiful she looks.



Chapters 22-24

Chapters 22-24 Summary

Chapter 22 starts with Lucy feeling overwhelmed by having to complete not only her self-portrait but the next art assignment as well. Lucy uses her lunch breaks and even skips a math class to complete her self-portrait. When the painting is complete, she feels numb rather than excited. Sam asks to see it and he tells her that it's incredible. He discusses what he likes about the painting, telling Lucy that what she called a mistake "makes the painting." Suddenly, Lucy feels like she's able to see the painting for the first time and she realizes that he's right and finding that she loves the painting as well. Sam says that he's been meaning to say something to Lucy but he isn't able to finish his sentence because Jessica and Madison enter the classroom. Before he leaves, Lucy thanks Sam for his comments on her self-portrait, saying that they made her feel like a real artist. Sam tells her that she is a real artist. Jessica and Madison tell Lucy that Kathryn got back together with her older boyfriend and is not going to the prom. They try to discuss Lucy's painting but don't seem to understand it; however, Lucy is happy to have them as friends anyway.

In Chapter 23, Lucy receives a call from her dad, who says that he is unable to leave San Francisco because of fog. He asks her to pass this message along to Mara. Lucy agrees to do so and she confirms with her dad that she has plans with Connor and her friends tonight. Mara calls and Lucy gives her the message about her dad, causing Mara to be upset because they have plans. She asks Lucy to tell the twins to take a cab to their dad's house tonight. Lucy gives the twins the message and they make plans to take advantage of no one taking them to their dad's house. On the way to get pizza, Connor talks about himself and his parents and, when they arrive at the restaurant, Connor, Matt and Dave enter into a conversation. When Lucy suggests that they all go to an art show in New York City, everyone at the table gets quiet and Connor states that he doesn't like museums. He quickly changes the subject and, when Lucy resolves a debate the boys are having about basketball, Connor gives her a big, flashy kiss and Lucy feels that she is not so much a girlfriend but a trained dog.

Chapter 24 begins with Lucy being glad that she told Connor she wasn't feeling well. She wants to avoid kissing him again in case she feels like a trained dog again. When she goes in her house, she wonders if she really is getting sick, since her stomach hurts. While making herself some tea, she hears her cell phone ringing but can't find it. Eventually, she finds it; she left it in the freezer. When Lucy answers the phone, she doesn't recognize who it is at first, but she can hear two separate voices telling her to come get them. She realizes that it is her step-sisters, Emma and Amy, and they are crying and begging her to come and get them. They tell Lucy they went to a party and that they can't call anyone else because they aren't supposed to be there. They tell Lucy that they're scared and, feeling badly for them, Lucy agrees to come and get them. When she arrives at the party, she finds other kids making out and doing drugs. Emma



and Amy tell her that they didn't know the party would be this way and they both give her hugs, thanking her for coming to get them.

Chapters 22-24 Analysis

Chapters 22-24 develop the plot in significant ways. In Chapter 22, Lucy finishes her self-portrait and has a meaningful discussion with Sam about it. He confirms for her that she is a real artist. Also in the chapter, Sam implies that he has something to ask Lucy but never gets the chance because they are interrupted. The text suggests that what Sam did say when Lucy asked him to finish was not what he was originally going to say. The connection between Lucy and Sam is becoming undeniable, even to Lucy, who notices how easy it is to talk about her painting with Sam. In Chapter 23, Lucy begins to notice some real issues in her relationship with Connor. He seems unable to talk about anything but himself and basketball, he is not willing to attend an art showing with her and his kisses are beginning to feel like praise rather than passion.

Lucy begins to avoid kissing Connor at the beginning of Chapter 24, telling him that she's sick. Also in Chapter 24, Lucy's relationship with her step-sisters is developed further. For the first time in the book, she identifies them by their names, Amy and Emma, possibly indicating that she is beginning to see them as people rather than annoyances. When they go to a party without permission and get scared because of the maturity of the content at the party, Lucy rescues them and they are grateful, giving her a big hug.



Chapters 25-27

Chapters 25-27 Summary

In Chapter 25, Lucy realizes that this is the first time in a long time that she's woken up without thinking about Connor's kiss. Instead, she is thinking about Emma and Amy and how nice they were to her the night before. Lucy is thinking that she is actually excited to eat breakfast with her family, but when she gets into the kitchen, she sees Mara, the twins and their dad talking about the party. When Mara addresses Lucy, Lucy says that she thinks they should go easy on the twins because they had a rough night. But Mara says that she wants to know Lucy's part in the twins' actions, stating that the twins said that Lucy knew they were at the party and picked them up afterwards. Lucy realizes that Emma and Amy set her up. She goes to her room and, when her dad comes home, he tries to talk to her. Lucy tells him that she feels he got married and left her in a house with people she doesn't know, that he is her home and that his case seems more important than her having a home. She doesn't give him a chance to answer and she tells him to leave.

Chapter 26 finds Lucy getting ready for school after either sleeping or pretending to be asleep for the entire weekend to avoid her family. On the way out of the house, she notices her father's briefcase but assumes he will be leaving later. At school, Lucy sees Connor and realizes how much she missed him. They kiss and she wonders how she could have ever not liked his kiss. When he asks her to come watch him lift weights, she agrees but says that she needs to spend some time working on her landscape painting. On the way into the studio, she bumps into Sam, who is going to get his tuxedo for prom. He makes it clear that he doesn't want to go to prom but says that his attitude shouldn't ruin it for Lucy. Lucy spends time on her landscape; however, when she realizes that she lost track of time, she quickly tries to clean up to go meet Connor. While washing out her brush, she sees a blue color that reminds her of her prom dress. She begins to envision herself at the prom, having the best night of her life, only she doesn't picture herself there with Connor...she pictures herself dancing with Sam.

In Chapter 27, Lucy is in her room when she smells Chinese take-out, something that Mara never allowed in the home. Lucy, who hasn't interacted with her family in days, tries to think of how she can go upstairs to get food without having to eat with them. When she figures out a plan, she goes upstairs to the kitchen and is shocked to see her dad, Mara, Emma and Amy eating at the kitchen table. As she's eating, her dad says that the twins have something to say to her. Emma and Amy apologize for getting Lucy in trouble and saying that she knew they were at the party. Then, coming as a complete surprise to Lucy, Mara apologizes for accusing Lucy of putting the twins in danger. For the first time since moving to New York, Lucy doesn't have to clear the table. Later, Lucy's dad comes to her room and says that he will be working out of the New York office for two weeks. Lucy falls asleep thinking about how happy she will be to see her dad every day and how his presence will make Mara and the twins bearable. But she can't help but think that her happiness will be short-lived.



Chapters 25-27 Analysis

Chapter 25 starts with Lucy thinking about how nice her step-sisters were to her and how she is actually looking forward to having breakfast with her family. But this feeling doesn't last long when she gets to the kitchen and realizes that Emma and Amy have shifted the blame onto her. Thinking it's not worth fighting about, Lucy goes to her room. When her dad confronts her about what happened, Lucy finally tells her dad exactly how she feels about him getting remarried and then leaving her to live with people she doesn't know. She tells him that she doesn't feel at home in New York because he's not there.

In Chapter 26, Lucy interacts with both Connor and Sam. Although she finds herself again being smitten with Connor, she is shocked when she notices that she pictured herself dancing at the prom with Sam, not Connor. In Chapter 27, Lucy sees that maybe her dad does take her feelings seriously, since he is now working from New York for the next two weeks in order to be home. Lucy also gets an apology from Emma, Amy and Mara. Lucy wants to be happy about her dad being home for the next couple of weeks but has a hard time not thinking about the fact that her happiness won't last forever.



Chapters 28-29

Chapters 28-29 Summary

Chapter 28 begins with Lucy noticing that Sam isn't in school for two days. She wonders why she is thinking about him so much. She discusses that her dad being home is wonderful, except she can't stop focusing on how sad she'll be when he leaves. On the day of the prom, her dad and Mara come into her room carrying two large packages—the beautiful antique easel Lucy fell in love with and a painting that her mother did for her. Lucy and her dad discuss the painting and he tells her that her mom started it when she got sick. Lucy's dad also tells her that he will be going back to San Francisco for two weeks and then quitting if he is unable to work from New York, bringing Lucy to tears. Emma and Amy insist that Lucy get ready for the prom at their house and Mara lends her a pair of shoes. When they get to Madison's, Connor compliments Lucy on her dress. But he is paying a lot of attention to Kathryn. As Lucy is getting a picture with her dad, she invites Mara and the twins to be in the picture. For the first time, she feels like they are a family.

At the beginning of Chapter 29, Lucy is riding in the limo with her friends and Connor to prom. Unfortunately, Connor seems more interested in Kathryn. The night continues to decline for Lucy when she sees Sam and Jane enter prom together. She sees how sweet he is being to her and she realizes why she's missed him so much in school. Lucy's sadness grows as she watches Connor and Kathryn dance as prom king and queen. They appear much closer than brother and sister and Lucy excuses herself to the bathroom. She takes a minute to herself and realizes that she doesn't feel jealous of Kathryn, she feels relieved. Lucy hears Jane and Sam arguing but doesn't eavesdrop on their argument. When she enters prom again, Lucy finds Connor and tells him that she's leaving. He doesn't seem to care and, as Lucy is leaving, she wonders if Jessica and Madison will continue to be her friends if she's not dating Connor. Just as she's about to walk out the door, someone touches her shoulder. She turns around and is surprised to see Sam, who tells her that he's wanted to tell her for weeks that he likes her. After a long pause, Lucy suggests that they leave the prom together. She says goodbye to Jessica and Madison and explains the situation with Connor and Sam. She is happy to find out that Jessica and Madison are going to remain her friends. When she leaves with Sam, they take a horse and carriage ride. She tells him that things are better in her family and that she doesn't believe in fairy tales anymore. But as they kiss, they agree that they still get to have the happy ending.

Chapters 28-29 Analysis

Chapters 28 and 29 bring an end to Lucy's story. Chapter 28 focuses on Lucy's relationships with her family. She is beyond happy to have her dad home but is sad that things will be going back to normal again soon. Lucy feels that she has her dad back when she receives the antique easel she fell in love with, when they share a painting



that her mom did for her and when he tells her his plan to ultimately move back to New York. Lucy notices that her step-sisters and Mara are being nice and loving as well and, at the end of Chapter 28, she feels that they are a family for the first time.

Chapter 29 brings a close to the story by resolving Lucy's relationships with Connor and Sam. Although she thought she cared for Connor and that the feelings were mutual, his behavior with Kathryn throughout prom confirmed for Lucy that she doesn't really like him and that he doesn't know her. While she is jealous when she sees how attentive and sweet Sam is with Jane, it isn't long before Sam finds Lucy and tells her that he's liked her for weeks. At this point, Lucy tells him that she feels the same way and she realizes that, with a fulfilling romantic relationship with Sam and true friendships with Jessica and Madison, she is going to get her happy ending after all.



Characters

Lucy Norton

Lucy is the main character of the book. She is an artistic, athletic and smart sophomore in high school. Throughout the book, she compares her life to Cinderella's life, pointing out that she has a wicked step-mother, two evil step-sisters and no friends. The reader learns early in the story that Lucy's mother passed away many years ago and, although she often suggests having a close relationship with her father, she clearly feels that they have lost much of their relationship because of his new wife. Lucy struggles with this loss throughout the book and her anger and resentment towards her father grows as he continues to be unable to truly hear and appreciate her feelings and respond to her need to spend quality alone time with him. Lucy appears to harbor resentment in general towards the fact that she had to move to New York, that her dad is gone the majority of the time for work and that she has to live with her step-mother and step-sisters who either ignore her or make her life miserable. The pressure she experiences at home seems to be lessened when she begins to make friends and gets a boyfriend.

For a while, Lucy enjoys being the girlfriend of the most popular guy in school but she soon begins to realize that it might not be that great after all when she can no longer deny the fact that they have nothing in common and that he is not as caring as she once thought. While Lucy's confidence is temporarily boosted by her newfound popularity and relationships at school, she begins to find true confidence in herself as she begins to appreciate her artistic abilities, her inner and outer positive qualities, her self-worth and her own perspective. As her confidence grows, Lucy is able to find the strength to voice her own opinion, reach a new level of self-acceptance and make important decisions about romantic relationships. By staying true to herself, Lucy finds her happy ending.

Mara Norton

Mara is the step-mother of the main character, Lucy. From the beginning of the book, she is described by Lucy as wicked. While it doesn't seem that Mara is a naturally wicked person with bad intentions, it doesn't take long for the reader to see why Lucy may find her to be wicked. Whether it's because Mara is too focused on herself, on her own twin daughters, on creating the perfect life with her new husband or because she feels threatened by her husband's late wife and feels threatened by her husband's connection with Lucy, or some combination of the above, Mara doesn't pay much attention to Lucy or her feelings. She doesn't respect Lucy and her father's need to spend alone time, she doesn't get furniture for Lucy's room, she expects Lucy to do most of the cleaning up and she allows her daughters to speak to Lucy however they want and she pretends to care about Lucy when her father is around.

Despite Lucy's attempts to explain her feelings to Mara, Mara's self-centeredness and insecurities leave her unable to truly hear or appreciate Lucy's perspective. It seems



that there is no hope for a relationship between Mara and Lucy; however, after the text suggests that Lucy's father has a serious conversation with Mara about Lucy's feelings, Mara's actions begin to seem more genuine, as she begins to respect Lucy's space, feelings and time with her father.

Doug Norton

Doug is the father of the main character, Lucy. He is a corporate attorney who, based on the text, appears to be a well-meaning father and husband. He lost his first wife, Lucy's mom, many years ago and recently remarried Mara. While he and Mara decided to live in Glen Lake, meaning that Lucy had to relocate to New York from San Francisco, Doug continues to work five days a week in San Francisco. Throughout the book, his absence, his desire to make Mara happy and his inability to truly hear Lucy's feelings creates tension in the home and in his relationship with Lucy, as he appears to put Mara's feelings above anyone else's. This means for Lucy that she can't say how she feels, make her own decisions or even celebrate her mother's artwork, as doing any of these things could potentially hurt Mara's feelings and cause Doug to lecture her and force her to apologize.

Doug struggles throughout the book to hear Lucy's perspective, despite her many attempts to communicate her feelings to him, and the reader gets the sense that Doug's inability to hear Lucy's feelings stems from his desire for their new family to work. With Lucy's persistence, however, Doug finally realizes the importance of being there emotionally and physically for Lucy and he makes significant changes in his life to be able to do so.

Connor Pearson

Connor, the cutest senior in school, is Lucy's boyfriend throughout much of the book. He is extremely athletic and a talented basketball player, a sport in which he and Lucy are both interested. Although he is the most desirable boy in the school, the story reveals him to be mostly conceited and inconsiderate. As Lucy discovers, he is only interested in talking about himself or about basketball and he is not open to trying to appreciate any of Lucy's interests. When Lucy sees that he's acting as if he's in a relationship with someone else, she realizes she doesn't care because she knows that Connor doesn't really know her or appreciate her for who she is.

Jessica Johnson

Jessica is one of Lucy's best friends. Although they did not start off as friends at the beginning of the story, Jessica began talking to Lucy when Connor became interested in Lucy. Jessica and Lucy went on to develop a true friendship.



Madison Lawler

Madison Lawler is Jessica Johnson's best friend and, eventually, one of Lucy's best friends as well. Madison becomes friends with Lucy at the same time Jessica does.

Sam Wolff

Sam Wolff is Lucy's classmate in art class. He is a talented artist whom Lucy admires and attempts to befriend several times to no avail. When he does start talking to Lucy, she realizes they have an effortless connection. Although he has a girlfriend for most of the book, he ends their relationship at the end of the book and reveals to Lucy that he likes her.

Emma Gilman

Emma Gilman is Lucy's 12 year old step-sister and Amy's twin sister. She is interested in fashion and she is rude and unpleasant to Lucy throughout the most of the book.

Amy Gilman

Amy Gilman is Lucy's 12 year old step-sister and Emma's twin sister. Like her sister, she is interested in fashion and is mean to Lucy throughout most of the book.

Kathryn Ford

Kathryn Ford is a beautiful senior girl at Lucy's school who often flirts with Connor and makes it known to Lucy that Connor wouldn't be interested in Lucy if Kathryn dated younger guys in high school. She is crowned prom queen and eventually takes Connor's attention away from Lucy.

Jane Brown

Jane Brown is Sam Wolff's beautiful girlfriend. She and Sam break up at prom.

Ms. Daniels

Ms. Daniels is Lucy's trusted art teacher.

Mr. Gilman

Mr. Gilman is the father of Emma and Amy, Lucy's step-sisters.



Matt

Matt is Madison's boyfriend.

Dave

Dave is Jessica's boyfriend.



Objects/Places

Glen Lake, NY

The main setting of the book is Glen Lake, NY.

San Francisco

San Francisco is the city where Lucy and her father used to live and where Lucy's father still works.

Glen Lake High School

Glen Lake High School is the school that Lucy and her friends attend.

Piazzolla's

Piazzolla's is a pizza restaurant that Lucy and her friends frequent.

The Dancer

One of Lucy's favorite paintings and the painting that gave her the inspiration for her self-portrait is named The Dancer.

Autumn Rhythm (Number 30)

One of Lucy's favorite paintings is Autumn Rhythm (Number 30).

Margaret Tanner Gallery

Lucy attends her first New York City art show opening at Margaret Tanner Gallery.

The Prom

The entire book leads up to the prom.

Princess One/Princess Two

Lucy refers to her step-sisters throughout the book as Princess One and Princess Two.



The Art Studio

Lucy spends a lot of alone time in the art studio.

Cinderella

Lucy compares her life to the fairy tale Cinderella throughout the story.



Themes

The Never-Ending Love of a Family

At the beginning of the book, the reader learns that Lucy has recently moved from San Francisco to New York due to her father getting remarried. The reader also learns that Lucy's father still works in San Francisco five days a week, leaving Lucy to live in New York with her new family. Lucy makes it clear that her father's remarriage, as well as his working in San Francisco, causes her to feel abandoned, unimportant and unloved. Her father's choices seem to create a sense of hopelessness in Lucy, as she implies throughout the book that she and her father's relationship, as well as her life, will never be the same again. Although she develops friendships and romantic relationships as the book progresses, Lucy continues to feel lonely at home, as her step-mother and step-sisters ignore her and, when her father is home, he is either spending time with his new wife or lecturing Lucy about her behavior towards her new family.

Additionally, Lucy's father appears unable to truly hear or respond to Lucy's feelings throughout most of the book, which also contributes to Lucy feeling lonely and trapped. However, when Lucy communicates her feelings clearly and calmly, without the use of sarcasm, her father appears to hear her for the first time and immediately makes changes to the family's situation so that Lucy's feelings and concerns are addressed. Lucy sees through her father's response that they haven't lost their close and loving relationship after all but that, even during this time of adjustment, he loves and supports her.

The Importance of Communicating Your Feelings

Much of what seems to fuel Lucy's anger and resentment towards her family throughout the book is her tendency to hold her thoughts and feelings inside. This is seen most clearly through her interactions with her family, specifically with her dad, since she frequently decides not to communicate her feelings because she assumes that they don't matter and that nothing will change. To support her assumption, Lucy often experiences the feeling of being shut-down or shut-out the few times she does attempt to communicate her feelings to her father or step-mother, because they simply do not listen or do not believe what she is saying. While her parents do not provide her with the loving and supportive responses she was looking for, likely due to their inability to face their own faults or the fact that their family may not be blending as well as they'd hoped, Lucy also struggles to communicate her feelings clearly, as she often employs the use of sarcasm and allows her anger and resentment to affect her word choice and tone of voice.

However, when Lucy clearly and calmly communicates her feelings to her father, he listens and responds in a way that positively addresses Lucy's feelings. Pleasantly surprised by his actions, Lucy realizes how much more peaceful and relaxed she feels



with her family situation once her feelings are clearly communicated and heard. This theme is also seen in Lucy's relationships with Connor and Sam. Although she notices problems developing in her relationship with Connor, it isn't until the end of the book that she acknowledges and voices her true feelings about Connor, which allows her to hear Sam's feelings for her and respond to his feelings in kind.

Accepting Situations in Your Life for What They Are

It is no secret to the reader that Lucy is unhappy with her father's decision to remarry, move them to New York, have her change schools and continue to work out of town while she lives with a new family. She is so unhappy that she compares her life to that of Cinderella's, feeling that she has a wicked step-mother, evil step-sisters, no friends and that she is an employee in her own home. Lucy makes several comments and has numerous fantasies throughout the book about her father divorcing her step-mother and her life going back to the way it was before she moved to New York. Lucy seems to feel increasingly disappointed, hurt and angry when this doesn't happen, only adding to her struggle to adjust to and accept her new life. While some important changes are made in the way her family interacts, Lucy's ability to accept her new family and her new life towards the end of the book adds to her overall increase in happiness.

Lucy also struggles to accept the problems she is beginning to notice in her relationship with Connor, specifically that he seems interested in talking only about himself and basketball, that he isn't open to experiencing any of Lucy's interests with her and that he does not seem to really know or appreciate Lucy for who she is. While Lucy is noticing these problems, she chooses to ignore them in order to continue experiencing the many perks that accompany being in a relationship with Connor. However, towards the end of the book, Lucy decides that she has to accept that she and Connor are different people with different interests and that, no matter how hard she tries to make their relationship work, it will never be the type of relationship for which she longs. This realization allows her to end her relationship with Connor just in time to acknowledge and act on her true feelings for Sam.



Style

Point of View

If I Have a Wicked Stepmother, Where's My Prince? is written from a first person perspective. The author utilizes Lucy's perspective to tell the story and, as a result, the reader is easily able to see, feel and understand her thoughts, reasoning and emotions. The writing style allows the reader to get an immediate sense for who Lucy is, her thoughts about herself, her perspective on life and the reasons why she has the perspective she has. The first person perspective of the book offers the reader insight into Lucy's intelligence, independence and sarcasm, as well as her insecurities, hurts and anger.

Since Lucy and the reader experience events in the book simultaneously, Lucy's intelligence and vivid descriptions allow the reader to clearly experience Lucy's anger with feeling abandoned, lonely and unimportant, her struggle with feeling oppressed by her step-mother and step-sisters, the difficulties she experiences when trying to fit in and make new friends at school, the thrills of experiencing her first date and her first kiss and her relief and sense of peace when she is finally able to feel at home with her family and have the romantic relationship she's been looking for. Because of the somewhat emotional and personal writing style of the book, readers can easily find themselves rooting for Lucy as she navigates the difficult adjustments in her family life and in her romantic relationships.

Setting

If I Have a Wicked Stepmother, Where's My Prince? takes place in Glen Lake, New York. The text suggests that Glen Lake is not far from New York City and, as a result, several scenes take place in antique furniture stores and art galleries in New York City. There are also several scenes in the book where a character mentions participating in an activity in New York City. Since Lucy and her father have recently relocated from San Francisco to Glen Lake, Lucy occasionally references things that she and her father used to do in San Francisco. The city is also mentioned regularly, because Lucy's father continues to work there during the week. Another popular setting in the book is Glen Lake High School, the school that Lucy and her friends attend. More specifically, Lucy spends a great deal of time throughout the book in either the school's lunch room or the art studio. Several scenes in the book take place in the Glen Lake High gym, where Lucy and her friends, Madison and Jessica, attend their boyfriends' basketball games.

Also throughout the book, Lucy spends a large amount of time in her bedroom, which is the basement of her new home. Lucy points out frequently that her room is unfurnished, since her step-mother can't decide on the correct furniture; however, she does get a bed towards the end of the book. Another important location mentioned regularly throughout the book is Piazzolla's, the pizza restaurant that Lucy and her friends frequent.



Language and Meaning

If I Have a Wicked Stepmother, Where's My Prince? is a young adult novel aimed primarily at adolescent females. Although no deep sexual elements exist, the text does include discussions and thoughts of experiencing a new crush, as well as several passages that include kissing. The story focuses mostly on Lucy's journey to adjust to and accept her new family and her new life. There is a subplot, involving a fair amount of dialogue, which focuses on the relationship between Connor and Lucy, as well as her developing relationship with Sam. The language throughout the book is straightforward and clear. It is designed to keep the reader moving quickly through the story. The sentences are of moderate length but tend to be highly descriptive. There is no hidden meaning in the text, only occasional foreshadowing or suggestions aiming at the final outcome.

The story is balanced between sections of dialogue and sections that describe Lucy's thoughts, feelings and/or reasoning. The author's overall use of vocabulary and simple sentence structure makes the story easy to read and comprehend, although the reader will encounter difficult vocabulary words at certain points throughout the book. The author also capitalizes on telling the story through the perspective of an adolescent girl by displaying sarcasm in the dialogue, with which many in the book's target audience can identify. In sum, the language and meaning of the text is simple, easy to comprehend and enjoyable.

Structure

If I Have a Wicked Stepmother, Where's My Prince? is 283 pages long. It is divided into 29 unnamed chapters. Although the chapters are not particularly short, several chapters can be read in a single sitting without any sense of fatigue. If I Have a Stepmother, Where's My Prince? is an engaging read built around a relatively straightforward plot with a number of plot twists along the way.

Chapters 1-3 introduce the main character, Lucy, as well as the members of her family and several of her classmates who ultimately become her friends. These chapters also introduce the main struggle happening within Lucy's family. Chapters 4-6 develop the dynamics occurring in Lucy's family. Also during these chapters, Lucy finds out that she is the new romantic interest of the cutest senior in school, Connor Pearson. In Chapters 7-9, Lucy officially becomes Connor's boyfriend and she becomes more popular in school. But her happiness is overshadowed by her father continuing to ignore her. Chapters 10-12 continue to develop Lucy's family dynamics, as she gets into a fight with her step-mother and receives no support from her dad. Lucy also begins to notice that she and Connor seem to have a somewhat forced connection. The story starts to become more intense in Chapters 13-15, as Lucy has a big fight with her stepmother and decides to defy her stepmother's instructions. Also in these chapters, Lucy begins a friendship with her art classmate, Sam Wolff, and she realizes that they have an effortless connection.



Lucy's situation continues to worsen in Chapters 16-18, as Lucy finds it harder to deny that she and Connor don't share much in common. Lucy also gets into a seemingly inevitable fight with her father and is grounded indefinitely. Chapters 19-24 continue to develop Lucy's relationships with Connor and Sam. Lucy is becoming increasingly insecure about Connor's sincere interest in her. Lucy is also beginning to realize, however, that she has a strong connection with Sam. At the end of Chapter 24, Lucy helps her step-sisters when they are stuck and scared at a party they didn't have permission to attend. The beginning of Chapter 25 finds Lucy excited about finally having a more positive relationship with her new family until she finds out that her step-sisters blamed her for their actions. Chapter 25 contains the primary climax of the book, as Lucy finally tells her father that she feels abandoned and unloved.

Chapters 26-29 bring an end to Lucy's story. Her father truly hears Lucy's feelings for the first time and makes major changes to his work arrangements and to the way that the family interacts. With these changes, Lucy is able to find the peace, support and love from her father and in her family for which she's been searching. Chapter 29 provides a second climax in the book when Lucy realizes that she doesn't actually like Connor and decides to end the relationship. She makes this decision just in time to hear Sam's true feelings for her and she is then able to acknowledge and voice to Sam that she has the same feelings for him, which allows Lucy to find her happily ever after.



Quotes

"News flash. Not everyone's life goal is to get the word JUICY tattooed on her ass."
(Chapter 1, page 7)

"Can I just say that we thought you were never going to get here." (Chapter 5, page 37)

"Connor Pearson likes...drumroll, please...Lucy Norton." (Chapter 5, page 39)

"Definitely." (Chapter 5, page 41)

"Hey. You made it." (Chapter 7, page 56)

"I thought we were, you know, going into the city just the two of us." (Chapter 8, page 65)

"That's what we like to hear." (Chapter 8, page 67)

"She's only, like, Connor Pearson's girlfriend." (Chapter 9, page 77)

"All right, I'm gonna go watch, Red. I'll call you at halftime, ok?" (Chapter 9, page 86)

"Sorry. Really, I'm sorry. I just cannot understand how someone who seems to care about art as much as you do cares about basketball." (Chapter 15, page 157)

"There goes your prom date." (Chapter 16, page 162)

"Tonight it really felt like we were a family." (Chapter 18, page 189)

"Oh, I was potentially grounded forever, but now I'm not." (Chapter 21, page 210)

"Ladies, I'm going to the ball." (Chapter 21, page 216)

"I'm done." (Chapter 22, page 218)

"You are an artist." (Chapter 22, page 221)

"I'm not really the museum type, Red." (Chapter 23, page 229)

"Is my girl great, or is my girl great?" (Chapter 23, page 230)

"Lucy, you have to come get us!" (Chapter 24, page 233)

"You know what, Dad, I really don't feel like talking to you anymore. So if you don't mind, could you please leave me alone?" (Chapter 25, page 243)

"We're sorry we got you in trouble." (Chapter 27, page 253)



"So I'm going to work out of the New York office for the next couple of weeks." (Chapter 27, page 254)

"She started this when she got sick. She made it for you." (Chapter 28, page 262)

"Not exactly. But I do have a pair of silver shoes in my closet." (Chapter 28, page 267)

"No, really. I'd like one of all of us." (Chapter 28, page 270)

"They really look great together, don't they?" (Chapter 29, page 274)

"Look, I know this is going to sound crazy, but the thing is, I like you." (Chapter 29, pages 278-279)

"Sam, let's blow this fairy tale." (Chapter 29, page 279)

"The thing is, Jessica, he doesn't even know me." (Chapter 29, page 280)

"We definitely get to have the happy ending." (Chapter 29, page 283)



Topics for Discussion

Discuss why Lucy was angry and hurt by her father's actions throughout most of the book.

Name three specific possibilities as to why Mara treated Lucy the way she did.

What did Lucy need from her father most? Explain.

What painting inspired Lucy's self-portrait? Why is this fact significant?

Name three ways that all teenage girls could relate to Lucy's story.

Why might Lucy's relationship with Sam be more successful than her relationship with Connor?

What two factors contributed the most to the ultimate success of Lucy's new family?