

I'll Be Seeing You Study Guide

I'll Be Seeing You by Lurlene McDaniel

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Plot Summary

Carley Mattea is in the hospital recovering from a broken leg when she meets a young boy named Kyle Westin. Kyle is unable to see, a condition he hopes is temporary as the result of an experiment gone wrong. Kyle and his friends were attempting to make rocket fuel when an explosion caused burns to Kyle's chest and damage to his eyes. On Kyle's first night in the hospital, he and Carley become friends. Carley spends a great deal of energy boosting Kyle's spirits as he battles depression over his situation. At one point, Kyle accuses Carley of not understanding the seriousness of his situation because she is only dealing with a broken leg. What Kyle doesn't know is that Carley is not a stranger to hospitals and that she is actually a cancer survivor.

Carley was twelve when she was diagnosed with a tumor. She underwent serious surgeries to remove the tumor and that operation was successful though it left Carley with a serious facial deformity. One side of her face is severely disproportionate and Carley is tormented seriously by others. She tends to avoid strangers and recalls instances in which children were horrified by her appearance. Because of this, Carley has never had a lasting friendship or a boyfriend. As the friendship between Kyle and Carley deepens, Carley enjoys Kyle's attention so much that she makes the decision not to tell him about her deformity. As Kyle regains his sight, she vows never to see him again, thereby eliminating the possibility that he might reject her because of her appearance. Toward that end, she leads Kyle to believe he's seeing her when he's actually looking at her sister, Janelle.

Carley has been told there's nothing that can be done to reconstruct her face but her mother makes appointments with plastic surgeons again and they hope for someone with new technology that will make it possible. They find such a doctor and he shows them, with computer software, what Carley's face can look like. Carley's hopeful but disappointed when she discovers the process will take more than a year. She believes this eliminates any chance she has with Kyle.

However, Kyle has seen Carley's inner beauty and he wants to get to know her better. When he shows up at the book store where Carley works, Carley's sister points her out so that Kyle is face-to-face with the real Carley. He is furious that she kept the secret, saying she never gave him a chance to accept her as she is. Carley is at school one day when students begin talking about a plane buzzing the parking lot. Carley joins other students outside and discovers it's the plane that belongs to Kyle's uncle dragging a banner indicating he's anxious to see her again despite their rocky start.



Chapters 1 and 2

Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

As the story opens, Carley Mattea is talking with her new friend Reba Conroy. The two are on the eighth floor of Knoxville General Hospital in Knoxville, Tennessee, a floor set aside for adolescents with an array of problems. They are discussing what they know about a new patient who's slated to be admitted later that day. His name is Kyle Westin and he lives in Oak Ridge, the town where Carley lives. Carley is currently being treated for an infection that occurred after she suffered a serious break in her leg while roller blading. That situation is being resolved with high-powered antibiotics and physical therapy but Carley is no stranger to hospitals. When she was twelve, she was diagnosed with a cancerous tumor. The doctors were able to remove it but the surgery left her with a severely deformed face. Half of her face sags horribly, so much so that Carley is often tormented and ridiculed.

Reba is outgoing and cheerful and she looks forward to making a new friend when Kyle arrives. Reba is fourteen and confined to a wheelchair. She is dwarf-like in appearance as a result of a disorder known as spina bifida. Reba is currently in the hospital in preparation of an abdominal surgery.

Reba is ushered back to her own room by a nurse who says it's time for medications. Carley promises to stop in to visit later. She gets a call from her sister, Janelle, who says she and her boyfriend will be driving to the hospital the following day. Janelle says she has assignments from Carley's teachers she'll be bringing. She asks if Carley wants anything else and Carley asks Janelle to bring her books on tape. Janelle urges Carley not to spend all her time listening to books, but to make some friends. The supper trays arrive as Janelle ends the conversation. After the meal, Carley heads to Reba's room but the girl has family visiting and Carley ducks away before anyone can see her and ask questions about her face.

During the night, Carley wakes from a nightmare and has trouble going back to sleep. She goes down the hall and stops by Kyle's room, easing in and watching him. Suddenly Kyle cries out, asking who's there, and when he turns toward the door Carley realizes his eyes are covered with gauze, meaning he can't see her.

In chapter two, Carley tells Kyle she thought she heard him and had just stopped to see if he was alright. Kyle asks what time it is and Carley tells him it's three in the morning. Kyle asks why Carley is "roaming around" and she says she'd had a nightmare. Kyle says he can't sleep either. The two begin talking and Carley asks how his injuries occurred, wincing even as she says it because she hates when people ask what happened to her face. Kyle tells her he and some friends were attempting to make rocket fuel and that there was an explosion. He reveals bandages on his chest as well and says they aren't certain whether the damage to his eyes will be permanent.



Kyle says he feels helpless and Carley silently remembers her own brush with cancer and how helpless she'd felt knowing there was a huge incision across the entire top of her head and down her face. Kyle then asks why Carley is in the hospital and she says she broke her leg rollerblading. She doesn't tell him about her cancer treatments from several years early. Carley tells Kyle that a sense of humor is a big asset toward dealing with the illness, even if he needs to pull from a dark sense of humor. As an example, she points out that he could write an entire term paper on how "not to make" rocket fuel. Kyle smiles and says he "sees" her point. Carley says he can now respond to anyone who asks, "do you see," with "No, dumbbo, I don't see." Kyle reveals that he's had a passion for chemistry and Carley says her own passion is for design. Kyle asks where she goes to school and Carley hesitates, not wanting to run the risk that they might go to the same high school, and is saved by answering by the arrival of a nurse.

Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

Carley reminds Reba that good-looking teenage boys don't give girls like them a second glance. Reba seems momentarily deflated and Carley assures herself she's saying this for Reba's own good. In fact, Carley is reminding herself that she has to protect herself from possible heartache that will come whenever someone teases her or makes fun of her. Carley has spent the past several years being taunted for her appearance. She has learned to cope by distancing herself from others and by making jokes all the time, but this has come at a price to her self-esteem. She also has no friends because she calls herself a "social liability."

From the first moment Carley talks with Kyle, it's evident he's struggling with the idea he might be permanently blind. An interesting aspect of this is that Carley, who knows about pain, tells him it's okay to ask for pain killers when the pain becomes severe. Kyle's response is that he embraces the pain because it makes him certain his eyes are still there.



Chapters 3 an 4

Chapters 3 an 4 Summary

In chapter three, Carley scrambles to grab her crutches. She explains that she couldn't sleep and heads off to bed. As she's leaving, Kyle calls out to her, asking if she'll come back the following morning. Carley is delighted at the invitation. The next morning, Reba asks for details about Kyle and is sympathetic when she learns of the accident that brought him to the hospital. Carley, answering Reba's questions, says Kyle is cute, nice, and that she likes him. Carley agrees to take Reba to meet Kyle and they go to his room together.

Kyle is patiently flipping through the channels on television. He pauses at each channel, listens for a moment, then goes on to the next. Kyle is friendly to Reba as well. During their conversation, he reveals that he's learning there are sounds he never noticed until he lost his sight. Reba tells him she's dependent on a wheelchair. She says that if he hears the whirring sound of an electric wheelchair, he'll know that it is her.

Kyle says he's likely to be in the hospital for a week while his doctor monitors his situation. He asks Reba about her situation and she reveals she's to have surgery later in the week. Kyle asks if the surgery will make it so that Reba is no longer confined to the wheelchair but she tells him that won't ever happen. Kyle seems shocked that Reba's situation won't improve. Kyle again expresses frustration that he can't do anything without help. Carley suggests that he call her room if he needs company but he says he is unable to dial the phone because he can't see. Carley points out that he knows what the keypad looks like and that he can dial her number if he thinks about that and uses his sense of touch. He tries it and they hear the phone in Carley's room ring.

There's a slight lull in the conversation and Reba "blurts out" that both Kyle and Carley live in Oak Ridge. Kyle is immediately interested and Carley shoots Reba a look that expresses her feelings. Reba seems unrepentant. Carley tells Kyle she attends the public school and Kyle says he attends the private school called Webb. Just then, two doctors enter and say Kyle's bandages will have to be changed. Carley and Reba leave. In the hall, Reba says she feels sorry for Kyle and that she believes he'll regain his sight.

From early on, Carley is comfortable that Kyle can't see her and enjoys the fact that he talks and interacts with her as if she's normal. Carley has already made up her mind that she doesn't want to encounter Kyle after he leaves the hospital, especially not if he regains his sight.

In chapter four, Carley is given another dose of intravenous antibiotics and she has to go to physical therapy after the medications are finished. The therapist is named Linda Gallagher who tells Carley she'll be working on her physical therapy two times a day in thirty-minute sessions. Carley reveals to Linda that she'd gotten roller blades for



Christmas and had broken her leg the day after Christmas. Carley says she spent two weeks in a cast before doctors discovered the leg wasn't healing properly and decided to operate. Linda says they'll have Carley's therapy established while she's in the hospital and that she'll have to return for therapy after she's released.

Linda says that Carley will soon begin riding a stationary bike and will be doing weight training to strengthen her legs. Carley, who passed her road test in October and has her driver's license, asks if she'll be able to drive. Linda says she can't drive right away but, because the left leg is broken, Carley would be able to drive an automatic fairly soon.

Carley asks Linda if she works with blind people and Linda says she doesn't personally have that responsibility though there are staff members who focus on that. She asks why Carley is curious and Carley tells her about Kyle. Carley asks what kinds of things the therapists will do to help Kyle. Linda says he'll be taught to move around safely and the therapists will focus on his emotional state because blindness is a "big emotional adjustment." Carley can empathize with that, remembering when she'd been told the tumor was cancer, had been removed, but that there was no way to reconstruct the bone and tissue that was removed as part of the surgery. Carley works through her therapy and thinks about Kyle. She says she wants him to recover but doesn't want to give him the opportunity to see her once he can see.

Janelle arrives, "breezing" into Carley's room. She says Jon stopped at the snack bar but will be up soon. Janelle asks about physical therapy and whether it hurts. When Janelle mentions Jon again, Carley makes a caustic comment and Janelle asks why Carley doesn't like Jon. Carley hesitates, unsure how to skirt the issue, but their conversation is interrupted by Jon's arrival. He barely glances at Carley, mumbles a greeting, but then moves to the other side of the room and turns on the television. When Janelle asks why he isn't visiting with Carley, Jon says he wants to give the sisters time to catch up without his interference.

Janelle is obviously upset at Jon's attitude but Carley says she's accustomed to that attitude from people. Janelle asks if Carley has heard from any of her friends at school and Carley points out she has no friends. Janelle asks about Dana but Carley says they haven't been friends for months. When Janelle asks why, Carley says she is a "social liability" and that she doesn't blame Dana. Janelle then asks about others in the hospital and Carley tells her about Reba and Kyle. Janelle quickly picks up on the fact that Carley likes Kyle and teases her a little about it.

Chapters 3 and 4 Analysis

From the beginning, Kyle is nice to Carley and Reba, a fact that makes both girls happy. However, when Kyle asks about Reba and learns she's going to be always confined to the wheelchair and that her health issues can't be "fixed," he seems shocked. At that point, Carley believes that Kyle would be shocked and less sociable if he could see what Reba and Carley look like. Carley is set on protecting herself and it's understandable that she does so, but it also seems that she might not be giving Kyle the



benefit of a doubt. That will be Kyle's argument when he discovers the truth about Kylie's appearance.

While it can be argued that Carley isn't giving Kyle a chance to accept her, it's also easy to understand that Carley wants to hold onto the memory of their interaction without allowing Kyle's rejection to taint it. It should also be noted that Carley is uncomfortably aware that she's in a good situation as long as Kyle can't see and as long as none of his friends or family members tell him what she looks like.

Carley notes that she doesn't attempt to hide her face from her physical therapist, figuring that the woman deals with people with deformities all the time. Carley's typical humor comes through during her first conversation with Linda. When Linda promises that Carley will have no need for the crutches "in no time," Carley responds that she can't possibly give them up because she uses them to "fight off my admirers." Linda smiles at Carley's humor and commends her for facing the situation without grumbling.

Carley understands that the break was severe and she knows that her parents were concerned, but she hasn't been overly worried. Carley recalls the argument with her mother when Mrs. Mattea announces the rollerblades will be thrown away. It will later be revealed that her mother feared this was some sign that the cancer had returned.



Chapters 5 and 6

Chapters 5 and 6 Summary

In chapter five, Carley finishes supper just as Kyle calls, inviting her to his room to visit for awhile. She accepts. When she arrives, she discovers Kyle is out of bed and seated in a chair. He says she "missed all the excitement" when he'd dropped his lunch tray on the floor, sending his mother into a "fit" because the nurses weren't helping Kyle eat. He says he should have waited for help but that he doesn't want to be fed. He wants to eat on his own. Kyle says the result of his mother's fit is that a therapist has been to see Kyle to start helping him survive without his eyesight. Kyle offers Carley a chair and when he's fumbling with it, she offers to help but he insists he do it for himself.

Carley applauds his effort once the chair is in place and says no one enjoys feeling useless, though there's a difference between being helpless and feeling helpless. Kyle agrees and says he's certain Carley understands the frustration over feeling helpless. She's immediately wary, fearing someone has told him about her bout with cancer but he is referring to her broken leg. Kyle reveals that the doctors say he'll probably regain his sight if the boys used acids to make the rocket fuel but that his chances are slim if they used alkalines. Carley asks which he used and he says he can't remember because they had mixed lots of concoctions the afternoon of the accident.

Kyle seems bored and says he's tried to watch television but has discovered he can't make a lot of sense of his favorite shows without the ability to see what's happening. Carley offers to lend him some of her books on tape and Kyle, after learning she has a wide variety, accepts. Carley watches Kyle and notes that he's the kind of good-looking, popular boy she'd sneak peeks at if they were in school but would never dare talk to. She says in the hospital, the social system is different and made even more so because of Kyle's blindness.

Kyle asks for Carley's hand and she gives it to him. He holds her hand, twining their fingers together and saying he'd had the desire to touch her. Kyle then asks if Carley has a boyfriend and she is unable to respond for a moment. She says she doesn't and when he says he's happy she doesn't, she asks if he has a girlfriend. Kyle says he's a shy person and can never find the courage to talk to girls. Carley says he doesn't seem shy but he says that's because Carley is "different" because she seems to understand him so well. Kyle says everyone - including his doctors - are telling him to be prepared to live without sight for the long-term. He says his sight probably won't ever be perfect, even when he can see again. Just then, Kyle says his parents will be arriving shortly and he wants Carley to meet them. She says she has to check on Reba who is scheduled for surgery the following day, and leaves. As she rushes from his room, she turns away from the elevator, fearing she might see Kyle's parents and that they might question why there was a girl with a deformed face leaving Kyle's room.



In chapter six, Carley heads to Reba's room but finds relatives visiting. She does call Reba later that day and promises to be thinking about her during the surgery. Reba, who's had medication to make her sleep in preparation for the surgery, asks if Carley has told Kyle about her face. Carley says she hasn't because she's enjoying the fact that Kyle is treating her like a normal person. Reba warns that Kyle might see her "someday" but Carley assures Reba it won't happen.

The next morning, Carley leaves some books on tape for Kyle. He asks her to stay and visit but she's headed to physical therapy again. When she returns from the therapy, she learns that Reba's surgery is over and that she'll be back on the floor by later in the day though she won't be allowed visitors until the following day. The nurse then reveals that Carley's lunch tray has been delivered to Kyle's room because Kyle said they planned to eat together.

Carley arrives at Kyle's room to find that he's learning to eat without his sight. Kyle says it's a sign of his confidence that he can eat without spilling anything that he's invited Carley to eat with him. Kyle asks what Carley will be doing the following day. She says her parents will be coming for a visit. Carley says her mom and dad own a book store and that they have extra help on Saturdays, making it possible for them to get away. Kyle asks for the name of the book store, saying he'll drop in to see her when he's out of the hospital. Carley hates to give the name because she is serious in her determination not to see Kyle once they are out of the hospital, but she tells him anyway. Carley is seldom out front in the bookstore because she hates the stares and questions of strangers. She figures she can tell those working the front to tell Kyle she isn't there if he ever drops in, and that he'll give up.

Kyle reveals that he is interested in chemistry and physics, and that he hopes to attend MIT for an engineering degree. He says he wants to work for NASA and that he also wants to learn to fly a plane. His uncle owns a plane and "operates a business flying around real estate agents and advertising banners." Carley says she's seen the signs behind planes and Kyle says he sometimes goes up with his uncle who also flies banners with personal messages. Kyle suddenly becomes angry, says that it's not fair that he's blind, and lashes out when Carley advises that he has to learn to live with the situation when it can't be altered. Kyle's response is that Carley can't possibly understand the seriousness of his situation because she's got a broken leg that's going to heal while he might face the rest of his life without his sight. Carley excuses herself and leaves his room.

Chapters 5 and 6 Analysis

Kyle senses that Carley understands a great deal about what he's going through and he believes it's because she's recently been through the surgery on her leg. Kyle doesn't know about the cancer, the weeks in the hospital, and the uncertainty about her future. These things have made Carley into the caring person she is, able to connect with Kyle through his pain.



The story about Kyle's uncle's plane seem like an insignificant aside as it's being discussed by Kyle in chapter six. However, it will later be revealed as very important. Kyle will send a message to Carley using that service.

When Kyle is talking about his uncle's plane, he becomes despondent again. He says his dream has been wrapped up in his ability to fly a plane and that he now fears that dream is in danger. Kyle is obviously facing depression and Carley tries to cheer him up by making jokes but she's unsuccessful. At one point, Kyle becomes angry and shouts that it's "not fair."



Chapters 7 and 8

Chapters 7 and 8 Summary

In chapter seven, it's Saturday morning and Carley's parents arrive. They have books and tapes and her father says the doctors believe Carley will be released by early in the week. Her mother says she's changed some displays at the book store for the upcoming Valentine's Day season. Carley hates Valentine's Day, saying only the pretty, popular girls get gifts and cards. Her parents leave later that day and Kyle arrives, feeling his way along the way and revealing that he's beginning to get around on his own. He apologizes for his anger the previous evening and Carley assures him she hadn't taken it as a personal attack. Carley then finds herself rambling about nothing in an attempt to cover how flustered she feels because of Kyle's attention.

Kyle says he wants to know what Carley looks like. She counters, asking what he thinks she might look like and making him guess her hair color, eye color, and other details. Kyle gets only the fact that her hair is long correct and then he asks if he can feel her face.

In chapter eight, Carley is panicked because she knows Kyle will discover her deformity if he feels her face. She can imagine him touching the caved-in area near her left eye and cheek bone, and then drawing away and asking what's wrong with her. Carley knows she's not going to let him and she also knows that she's no longer simply omitting details in an effort to keep Kyle from knowing about her face because she's now actively hiding the fact from him. When Carley hesitates, Kyle apologizes, saying his therapist is encouraging him to use his sense of touch to help him decide what things look like. Carley says she doesn't mind him touching her face but she would prefer that he wait until he can see her with his eyes. Kyle says he might never see again but Carley says she believes he will. She says that if he still can't see once the bandages are removed, she'll allow him to touch her face. Carley, in an effort to get him out of her room, says she'll be going to physical therapy soon. She walks with Kyle to his room and he asks if she'll visit him again later. Kyle says his parents will be visiting him later as well and that he wants Carley to meet them. She says she'll be there but knows she'll find a way to stay away.

When the time for Kyle's parents to arrive draws near, Carley goes to visit Reba. Reba is still connected to tubes and IVs but she's becoming more coherent. When Carley tells Reba that Kyle has asked to touch her face, Reba wonders if Kyle might ask one of the nurses about her. Carley says she can only hope the nurse will be kind her description if that happens. Reba says no one would say anything bad about Carley but she reveals that her sister's boyfriend, Jon, had done just that. Carley says she was walking through the gym when she heard Jon talking to some other boys. Someone said Jon was lucky to be dating Janelle because she's so pretty and someone else said it was a shame Janelle didn't have a sister. Carley says that Jon's response was that Janelle does have a sister and that "it's Carley, the dog-faced sophomore girl." Carley says Jon went on,



saying he couldn't stand to look at Carley and that some of the boys had made barking noises. Carley had run away and she says she can't tolerate Jon now. Carley says she never told Janelle.

Carly and Reba continue talking and Carley says she's sure Reba was right when she advised Carley to tell Kyle the truth. Reba says Carley could still tell the truth but Carley says it's gotten too complicated.

Later that evening, Kyle calls and is clearly disappointed that Carley didn't come meet his parents. Carley says she'd spent time with Reba and Kyle seems to understand. Kyle says his parents and friends are starting to believe Carley is a "figment of my imagination" or that he's outright lying about her. Kyle says he has friends visiting the following day and that he wants to introduce them to Carley. She chooses that moment to tell him the truth but he puts her off, saying he's had a sleeping pill and wants to go to bed. She agrees to wait to talk to him the following day.

Chapters 7 and 8 Analysis

Carley is clearly torn about her feelings for Kyle. She likes him and enjoys the fact that he seems to like her. Their relationship is budding like that of a "normal" girl and Carley has longed for that though she's been careful not to let herself dream it might happen. At one point Carley reveals to Reba that things are good between her and Kyle because he's blind. Reba immediately picks up on it and asks Carley if she's saying she hopes he doesn't regain his sight. Carley is ashamed to realize Reba is correct, at least to some degree.

At one point, Carley says she doesn't know why it's become so important that she keep her secret from Kyle, but it seems clear why it's important to her. Carley is so caught up in the fact that she has a boyfriend that she isn't willing to take a chance that will change. Though Carley agrees in theory with Reba, she will go to great lengths to protect her secret.

Carley's explanation of why she doesn't like Jon is interesting on several levels. Looking back on this section, this is the first time Carley has indicated her thoughts about Janelle's life. Carley believes Janelle is self-centered and too busy with her own life to worry about Carley. When it's clear that Carley will have to travel back to the hospital for physical therapy, Carley says she can drive herself so her parents don't have to miss work and Janelle doesn't have to miss her extracurricular activities. Carley's mother says Carley's therapy is more important than Janelle's activities and that Janelle will drive her. Carley gives up the argument but plans to take it back up once she's home. When Carley reveals that Jon had made fun of her, she says she hadn't told Janelle about it because she didn't want to look like a whiner. What Carley doesn't know is that Janelle always stands up for her whenever someone makes a rude comment within her hearing.



Chapters 9 and 10

Chapters 9 and 10 Summary

In chapter nine, Carley asks Janelle to come to the hospital early Sunday morning rather than going to church. Janelle arrives and Carley reveals she wants Janelle to pretend to be Carley and meet Kyle's friends. Carley knows Kyle's friends will then tell Kyle that she's very pretty. Janelle outright refuses but Carley argues, saying she "never" asks Janelle for a favor and that the one time she does ask, Janelle refuses. Janelle says this is manipulation but Carley says she knows Kyle's friends will call her a freak. Janelle says no one would dare call Carley a freak but Carley continues to argue, eventually telling Janelle she really likes Kyle and pleading for her help.

Just as Janelle seems about to give in, Jon enters, saying he'd been worried when Janelle wasn't at church. Janelle reveals Carley's plan and Jon objects, saying he doesn't want anyone else flirting with Janelle. At that point, Janelle objects, saying Jon has no right to try to control her. Carley waits, hoping Jon's arguments will drive Janelle to do as Carley wants. Carley then excuses herself, saying she's going to get a soda, and leaves the room. While she's gone, Carley tells Jon he needs to help her with this plan. She then reveals that she'd heard his comments in the gym and that she has noticed that he can't even look at her. Jon asks if Carley is going to tell Janelle and she says she isn't but that she would appreciate it if Jon will help. He agrees and when Janelle returns to the room, Jon urges her to help Carley.

Just then the phone rings. Kyle says his friends Jason and Steve are visiting and Carley promises to come over in a few minutes. In chapter ten, Janelle gets into a wheelchair with her leg propped up and plans to say her arms are tired from being up on the crutches so much. Janelle predicts Kyle will notice the difference in her voice but goes through with the charade. She returns after a few minutes and says it apparently went well. Janelle refuses Carley's invitation to stay and visit for awhile, saying she has to study for a lit test.

That evening, Kyle and Carley talk about their estimated stays in the hospital and learn Carley will probably be leaving first. She says she'll be returning for therapy and he asks that she stop in to visit when she does. Kyle says he's worried about falling behind in his classes and Carley suggests he have someone tape the lectures so that he can listen to them on tape. Kyle says he has grown to like Carley and asks if he can call her once they leave the hospital. Carley puts him off and Kyle takes it that she might not want to be involved with someone who's blind. Carley pleads with him that they remain friends for the remainder of their stays without promises.



Chapters 9 and 10 Analysis

Carley reveals to Jon that she has heard his comments in the gym and it seems this is the first time Jon has that information. He continues to be uncomfortable around Carley and can't look her in the eye. She points that out to him as well when she's trying to get him to help her convince Janelle to pretend to be Carley. Carley is fully committed at the point where she cons Janelle into meeting Kyle's friends, Steve and Jason. She is standing out in the hall with Jon with the depth of her lies hits her. She realizes that her dishonest has caused her to manipulate the lives of several people and she hates how she feels about that.

This is truly an example of a tangled web of lies as Carley continues to try to keep up the subterfuge. The evening after Janelle meets Kyle's friends, Kyle tells Carley her voice sounded different when she'd visited that day. Carley says she'd had an allergy attack earlier in the day which probably accounted for the difference. This constant need to tell another lie to cover up something is quickly spiraling out of control for Carley and when Kyle figures it out, he's very angry.

Kyle believes that Carley is beautiful and is even more convinced of it once Janelle pretends to be Carley and meets Kyle's friends. He asks Carley if they can stay in touch after they leave the hospital and Carley tries to put him off. She knows she doesn't want him to see her once he regains his sight but he takes it to mean that she might not want to be involved with him because he's blind. He says that and Carley denies it but doesn't make Kyle believe her. It's evident he holds to that idea. It seems that Carley, who has spent a great deal of her life miserable because people didn't tolerate her because of her differences, should have been more sympathetic to this fear in Kyle.



Chapters 11 and 13

Chapters 11 and 13 Summary

In chapter eleven, Carley's mom is checking her out of the hospital and Carley takes the opportunity to say good-bye to Reba. Reba asks what Carley is going to do about Kyle and she says they simply won't see each other again so it's not an issue. Reba urges her to reconsider but Carley refuses. She stops in at Kyle's room and Kyle asks if Carley intends to keep her promise to remain friends with Kyle. She says she does and hopes that he'll forgive her when she doesn't keep that promise. She is seated near him and he reaches out unexpectedly and touches her face. She almost jerks back but he's touching the smooth side of her face and she remains still for the touch. She's obviously crying when she joins her mother back in her room and says she's been saying good-bye. Her mom says it's interesting that Carley is crying because she's leaving.

Carley and her mom argue over transportation to physical therapy. Carley says she can drive herself but her mother insists Janelle will drive her. Carley is back at school and refers to herself as a "nonparticipant." She says she's on the outside looking in as she always has but that it's now different because she's experienced Kyle's attention. Carley is at her locker, trying to hurry so she won't miss her bus home, when she drops her notebook. A boy stops to help but then stops helping to stare at Carley. Jon pushes the boy aside, telling him to either help her or move out of the way. Jon helps pick up her things then asks Carley to wait with him for Janelle to be ready to go home. She initially refuses but he says he has some things he needs to tell her and pleads with her to wait with him.

In chapter twelve, Carley realizes she won't make it to her bus anyway and goes to the atrium of the high school with Jon. She can't imagine what he wants to talk to her about and can't imagine filling up the forty-five minute wait. Jon begins by saying he really likes Janelle and that he knows he's been "a jerk" toward Carley. Jon says he knows Carley could have caused Janelle to break up with him by telling her what he'd said in the gym. Jon says he was trying to look important to his friends but that he's come to realize he'd done just the opposite. Jon says his actions have weighed on him since he's come to know Carley better and since he's realized how much Janelle cares about her. Jon reveals that Janelle always stands up for Carley when someone says something rude about Carley. He cites one instance in which she had a girl in tears by the time she'd finished explaining Carley's past. Jon says Janelle calls Carley a hero for surviving cancer and still coming to school.

Jon then says that Janelle has been impacted by the few minutes she spent in the wheel chair at the hospital because she'd suddenly felt the helplessness that comes from being at a disadvantage. Jon finishes the conversation by asking Carley that she not reveal to Janelle that he's become "a slobbering puppy" over her. Carley teases him a little and promises to keep his secret. Just then Janelle arrives and asks what they were talking about.



Jon carries Carley's books to the car and Janelle follows, seemingly confused. The following afternoon she drives Carley to physical therapy. There she asks again what Jon and Carley were talking about the previous day. Carley says Jon was asking advice about the Valentine's gift for Janelle. Carley and Janelle talk about other things and Carley says she doesn't intend to check in on Kyle while she's here, citing her decision not to see him again. Janelle says she believes it's a mistake to walk away from the relationship. When Carley says someone as good-looking as Kyle would never like her, Janelle says Carley has a "rotten perception of physical beauty and its importance."

In chapter thirteen, Janelle says that being pretty can be a handicap. She says that she worries that people might want to be her friend because she's pretty and not because they like her. Carley argues that she and Kyle like each other but that Kyle won't like her when his friends make fun of her or when he can see her. Janelle accuses Carley of being stubborn and gives up the argument. Janelle goes to the cafeteria to study while Carley goes to therapy. When she's finished, she goes to the eighth floor despite her insistence that she wouldn't. There, she sees Kyle on the floor, methodically searching for something he dropped. Carley watches for a minute and turns to leave. Kyle hears her and calls out, asking who's there, but Carley rushes to the elevators and leaves. She reclines her seat as if she's very tired when she gets in the car, hoping Janelle will take the hint and not try to start a conversation.

Chapters 11 and 13 Analysis

Carley and Reba carry on a constant argument about Carley's face and her handling of the situation with Kyle. Carley insists that she knows what she's doing and that there won't be any chance of continuing the relationship once she leaves the hospital. Reba doesn't agree. At one point Reba points to her wheelchair in an effort to make Carley understand there are things worse than having a deformed face. The two girls have varying issues facing them but there's no doubt each has some serious problems. As is typical of human nature, each looks at their own problems as being more severe than those of the other.

Carley often uses her long hair to shield the deformed side of her face, hiding it to some degree from onlookers. On the way home from the hospital, Carley pulls her hair back in a ponytail. She says she wants to be sure she remembers that Kyle's impression of her as a pretty girl is an illusion and that it will never be true.

The high school is laid out like a giant wheel with the atrium in the middle where the hub of a wheel would be. The hallways jut off this area like spokes of a wheel. The atrium is a popular gathering place for students and it's there that Jon apologizes to Carley. This is one of the settings that's described in reasonable detail.

Carley reveals a childhood memory that has apparently bothered her for years. She says that when she was in fifth grade there was an overweight girl with thick glasses in their class. She says people made fun of her and that she joined in that teasing. Carley tells Janelle that she fears God might have punished her for teasing the girl.



Chapters 14 through 16

Chapters 14 through 16 Summary

She calls the hospital and learns he's been released. She goes back to the doctor for a checkup and learns the pins are holding and the infection is gone. Her mother questions the doctor about the infection and Carley discovers her mother has worried that the infection had something to do with the cancer returning. On the way home that day, Carley's mom suggests they talk to plastic surgeons again to see if there's some new option for reconstructive surgery. Carley agrees.

One afternoon Carley and Janelle are at the book store when Kyle calls. He reveals that he has his vision back. In chapter fifteen, Kyle says he has to wear dark glasses outside and has a long way to go to be able to see well. Kyle says his friends Steve and Jason have assured him the patch he wears over one eye is "a cool way to meet girls," but Kyle says he's told them he's already met the perfect girl. Kyle then asks about Carley's leg. She says the cast is to come off on Valentine's Day and he asks her to attend the Valentine's Day Dance with him. Just then people begin coming into the store and Carley says she has to go. She tells Janelle she has to keep Kyle from ever seeing her but Janelle says she's still making a mistake and refuses to offer any other advice.

In chapter sixteen, Kyle calls again and insists they meet. She tells him she hasn't been completely honest. She says she has a boyfriend named Jon, that they'd broken up before her trip to the hospital, but that they've reunited. Kyle argues but finally says that he still wants to meet her. He says if he can just see her one time he'll go away and leave her alone. Carley comes up with a ridiculous plan and tells Kyle she'll be at a coffeehouse called the Mudpie. She says she'll be there Friday afternoon at four-thirty with her boyfriend. She says Kyle can see her but that he can't say anything to her because her boyfriend is jealous. Kyle agrees.

Carley talks Jon into helping her by taking Janelle to the Mudpie at the appointed time. Jon initially refuses but Carley pleads and he finally gives in. They both agree they won't tell Janelle because she would refuse. That Friday, Carley misses the bus and has no option but to go to the Mudpie with Jon and Janelle. Shortly before four-thirty, she excuses herself to go to the bathroom and hides in the shadows, watching as Kyle and Steve come in. Steve sees Janelle and points her out to Kyle. They are there for only a few minutes and leave.

Chapters 14 through 16 Analysis

Carley's plan to have Kyle see her at Mudpie is completely ridiculous and self-serving. What's impossible to believe is that Jon goes along with her. By this time, Carley has come to have a greater respect for Jon but she loses some of her self-respect by manipulating those around her into her plans. Carley is so deeply into this situation by



this point that she can't see a way out and continues to pile on one lie after another. What's ironic is that Carley is hurting herself and others because of an ingrained tendency to avoid friendships. She refuses to try to make a relationship work with Kyle because she fears the hurt of rejection. However, she hurts herself by pushing Kyle away.



Chapters 17 through 19

Chapters 17 through 19 Summary

In chapter seventeen, Carley and her mom meet Dr. Chaffoo. He explains the process by which he proposes to reconstruct Carley's face. The process will take three surgeries stretched out over eighteen months. He will take some of the bone from Carley's scalp but promises he will have to shave only a small segment of her head to make the graft. The procedure sounds painful and Carley can tell her mother is also put off by the details. Then Dr. Chaffoo uses digital imaging to show Carley a picture of what she'll look like following the surgery. She looks at the picture and says that, for the first time in years, Carley Mattea could be pretty. Carley's mom begins to cry and they agree to the process.

Carley is at the book shop one day when she hears Kyle's voice. Kyle speaks to Janelle, thinking she's Carley, but Janelle this time tells him the truth and points to Carley, who has her back to them. Carley doesn't turn around as Janelle leaves the room. In chapter eighteen, Kyle demands an explanation. Carley remains with her back toward him and he insists again that she turn around and give him an explanation. She again refuses and asks him to imagine why she might refuse to talk to him, face-to-face. He says he can't imagine a reason. Carley asks if he thinks Janelle is pretty and Kyle senses this is about her appearance. He asks Carley if she has the opinion she's not pretty and says he doesn't care about her appearance. Carley then turns to face him and notes that he is shocked when he sees her face. Carley refuses to let his reaction make her cry while he's standing there. He asks what happened to her and she says she had cancer. He asks if she's alright now and she says she no longer has cancer.

Kyle asks why Carley kept this from him and she says she enjoyed having him treat her as if she were normal "instead of a freak." Kyle says Carley isn't a freak but that her lies have robbed them of the chance for Kyle to like her despite her deformity.

In chapter nineteen, Carley talks to Reba one day and discovers she had visited with Kyle after they were both released from the hospital. Reba says he'd talked incessantly about Carley. Reba also reveals she has a boyfriend named Mike who has cerebral palsy.

On Valentine's Day, Carley, Jon, and Janelle are leaving the school together when there's a rustle of excitement over something happening outside. They follow the crowd of students out the door and discover there's an airplane buzzing the parking lot of the school. Just then, a long banner unfurls behind the plane and someone says it must be some sort of advertisement. Just then the sign becomes completely visible. It reads, "Carley, Be Mine. K.W." Everyone is amazed at the elaborate Valentine and Janelle points out that Carley had better get home and call Kyle. She says she will.



Chapters 17 through 19 Analysis

Carley is disappointed that the surgeries will take so long. She had hoped to have them completed much sooner and conveys that to the surgeon. He points out that she is young and that a year and a half is not that long. Carley's argument is that she won't be finished with the surgeries before she's out of high school. In Carley's mind, having this deformity has hampered her ability to enjoy what should have been a happy time of her life.

Kyle makes several points when he and Carley meet face-to-face for the first time. He says she didn't trust him to see past the appearances. Another important aspect of this is that Carley continues to insist that Kyle wouldn't like her because of her deformity even when she's face-to-face with him and he is saying he doesn't care. Kyle says that Carley is trying to make decisions for him and that he won't continue to argue her into accepting his explanations.



Characters

Carley Mattea

Carley is a fifteen-year-old girl who battled cancer at the age of twelve and has spent the intervening years with a severely deformed face as the result of surgery to remove a tumor. Carley is in the hospital as the story opens, recovering from a broken leg. Carley is a strong character who depends heavily on humor to get through life. When she fears someone might be making fun of her, she tends to make jokes in an effort to protect her feelings. Carley doesn't believe Kyle can possibly like her once he sees her deformity and this lack of faith stems from the years of emotional abuse she's suffered. When Carley meets Kyle and he seems to like her, she makes a conscious decision not to tell him about her deformity or her close call with cancer. Carley enjoys Kyle's attention so much that she is willing to perpetuate the lie so that she won't have to face his rejection. Carley comes to realize her sister, who she believes is too self-centered to pay any attention to Carley's problems, is actually her staunchest supporter. As Carley comes to accept other facts, she also realizes she might have underestimated Kyle but she fears taking the chance to find out for sure. Meanwhile, Carley's mother sets out to again contact plastic surgeons in the search for someone who can provide repairs to Carley's appearance. When Carley watches a digital image of herself with her deformed face rebuilt to be more symmetric, she says the surgery will make her pretty though she hates the fact that it will take three surgeries over eighteen months to make it happen.

Kyle Westin

Kyle is a bright young student at a private high school who along with friends, attempts to make rocket fuel. The experiment goes bad and Kyle is severely injured. His most serious injury happens to his eye and it's not clear at the beginning whether Kyle will ever see again. Kyle is a very handsome young man but he is also somewhat shy. He tells Carley that he is too shy to talk to girls but he quickly befriends Carley and depends heavily on her in the first few days of his hospital stay as he battles depression over his injuries. Kyle is very smart and hopes to attend MIT after graduating high school. He also has an interest in planes and fears his dreams of becoming a pilot might end if he doesn't recover his sight. Kyle is worried about his future if he never regains his sight but after his eyes begin to heal he tells Carley he's a better person for the experience. Kyle is angry when he discovers Carley has lied to him about her appearance. Kyle is shocked by Carley's appearance but he is also willing to accept her as she is. Kyle then goes to the extreme of hiring a plane to make it clear to Carley that he wants to see her despite her deformity.



Janelle Mattea

Carley's older sister, Janelle is constantly protecting Carley though Carley doesn't realize it. Janelle faces a different set of challenges in that she's judged because she is pretty. She says people don't expect anything more from her because of her looks. Janelle is a senior as the story opens and she is busy with her own life but is always willing to put her own activities aside in order to accommodate Carley.

Reba Conroy

This is a fourteen-year-old girl who was born with spina bifida and who is in the hospital while Carley is recovering from a broken leg. Reba is an outgoing young girl who is eternally optimistic.

Jon

Janelle's boyfriend, he is initially very rude to Carley but comes to realize she is a strong, wonderful person. Jon becomes Carley's advocate and stands up for her when another boy is shocked by Carley's appearance. Jon is a stronger character than he initially appears and apologizes to Carley for having said mean things about her.

Mrs. Mattea

Carley's mother, she is very protective of Carley, a fact Carley doesn't fully appreciate until they return to the hospital for a checkup to determine if Carley's leg is healing properly. At that point, Mrs. Mattea reveals that she'd worried the return of the cancer might be to blame for the infection and Carley more fully understands her mother's concerns.

Dr. Chaffoo

This is the plastic surgeon who says he can restore Carley's face. When Carley seems disappointed at the amount of time it will take, Dr. Chaffoo points out that Carley is still very young and that she has her entire life ahead of her.

Steve

Kyle's friend, Steve was in the group of boys who attempted to make rocket fuel that resulted in the explosion causing Kyle's injuries. Steve is also the friend who drives Kyle to the Mudpie to see Carley.



Linda Gallagher

This is Carley's physical therapist. Carley doesn't hide her face from Linda, realizing Linda deals with people with physical handicaps on a daily basis. Linda commends Carley for her humorous approach to life, saying it's much better than the grumpy attitudes of some people.

Dana

This is a girl who had been friends with Carley but who had dropped their friendship, apparently once Dana began to be interested in boys. Carley says she doesn't blame Dana because Carley considers herself a "social liability" but Janelle says Dana's attitude is petty.



Objects/Places

Knoxville, Tennessee

This is the city where Carley is in the hospital and where she has physical therapy.

Knoxville General Hospital

This is the name of the hospital where Carley has surgery on her leg and where she meets Kyle.

Oak Ridge

This is the name of the town where Carley and her family lives.

The book store

This is the business owned by Carley's family and where she works.

Spina bifida

This is the cause of Reba's health issues.

The eighth floor

This is the floor set aside in the hospital for adolescents.

Mudpie

This is the name of the coffee shop where Carley arranges for Kyle to see Janelle.

The atrium

This is an area of the high school where students gather when they are not in class.

Valentine's Day

This is the holiday Carley hates, saying it's for pretty people. It's also the date of the dance Kyle asks Carley to attend with him.

Rocket fuel

This is what Kyle and his friends were attempting to make when an explosion caused Kyle to temporarily lose his sight.



Themes

The importance of appearance

Carley has a major deformity because of a bout with cancer at the age of twelve. Carley remembers her parents' fears that she would die and her mother says that she sees Carley as a beautiful young woman who survived. Carley is tormented by her peers, most of whom are callously rude in their comments to her and about her. As an effort to insulate herself from those comments, Carley has no friends and seeks to use humor, which is often very dark. Carley also avoids strangers as much as possible. She works in the back at the book store so she doesn't have to see strangers react to her appearance. At one point Carley says to Janelle that Janelle can't possibly understand the hurt that comes with all the rude comments. Janelle says there's a flip side of that coin. She is very pretty and says she faces a different kind of prejudice because she's so pretty. Janelle says Carley has a warped perception of beauty if she thinks it's only what a person sees from the outside. Later, Kyle says he learned to like Carley because of her inner beauty which meant the outer appearance didn't matter so much. An interesting aspect of this theme is that Carley's mother realizes Carley's appearance is a handicap to Carley. She cries with happiness when she discovers a plastic surgeon who is willing to rebuild Carley's face, giving her a more normal appearance.

The Need for Tolerance

The need for tolerance is seen from the opening pages of the story though some of the characters doubt the ability of others to be tolerant. Arguably the most important example of this theme is seen in Carley's interactions with people. Carley notes that people always stare and that some ask what happened to her. She says a child even ran away screaming. Carley spends her time avoiding crowds and relationships because she knows people will make fun of her. When Carley first meets Kyle, she thinks he is very nice and she likes him. Kyle also likes Carley but she fears he will reject her if he knows about her deformity. Carley notes Kyle's reaction when he learns Reba is in a wheelchair and will never be able to walk, and takes that as an indication he would not be tolerant. When Kyle realizes the lies Carley has told, he is angry, saying she didn't trust him enough to believe he would look past the deformity. The situation is reversed when Carley realizes she has not been particularly tolerant of Janelle. Carley and Janelle are discussing Carley's relationship with Kyle when Janelle says that being pretty isn't always a good thing. She points out that she never knows for sure if someone wants to be her friend simply because she's pretty or if they genuinely like her. Finally, Jon is an example of this theme. Jon makes fun of Carley early in his relationship with Janelle but has a change of heart after he gets to know her and comes to realize the depth of Janelle's devotion to Carley.



The Importance of Dreams and Hopes

Kyle says he has plans to attend MIT and become a pilot, ultimately hoping to work for NASA. His plans are very specific and he seems to have put a great deal of thought into them. When he loses his sight and isn't certain whether the blindness will be temporary, Kyle faces depression and anger. Carley understands that depression, having faced it herself after her bout with cancer. In Carley's case, the dreams are less about an education and career and more about the ability to move freely through life without being subjected to stares and rude comments. When the doctors were able to remove the tumor, thereby saving Carley's life, one of her parents' dreams is answered in that Carley survives. However, her deformity makes her the brunt of jokes and stares which Carley hates. When her mom asks if Carley wants to contact plastic surgeons again to see if new technology might be available to help reconstruct her face, Carley doesn't have to think about it because she wants this so much. Her dreams are answered by the surgeon who announces he can fix Carley's face. Her mother reveals this is important to her as well though she has always told Carley she is beautiful as she is.

Included in Carley's dreams for a future is a relationship with a boy. She wishes that boy could be Kyle but accepts that it can't be. When the surgeon announces that he can reconstruct her face, Carley is happy but she is disappointed to learn it will take some eighteen months and three surgeries. She believes this means she will be out of high school before she might reach the dream of having a boyfriend but then she sees Kyle's valentine in the form of a banner flown behind his uncle's plane and knows that the dream has come true.



Style

Point of View

The story is presented in third person from the limited perspective of Carley Mattea. The limited perspective means the reader doesn't know what's going on in the thoughts of any other character nor does the reader know about the actions of characters that happen when Carley isn't around. For example, Carley talks to Reba after the girls and Kyle have been dismissed from the hospital. Reba says she's talked to Kyle and that he spent a great deal of time talking about Carley. The reader doesn't know about the conversation between Kyle and Reba until Carley learns about it. The reader is privy to Carley's thoughts and feelings which means the reader knows why Carley lies to Kyle in the first place. Carley's motivations are honest in that she has something with Kyle she's never before experienced. She enjoys that attention so much that she wants desperately to hold onto it. The reader isn't asked to judge Carley's actions but is aware of the motivation behind them. Kyle's reaction to Carley's appearance is presented only from Carley's perspective. This means the reader knows that Kyle recoils when he sees her face for the first time, which in Carley's mind means that he is repulsed by her appearance. The limited perspective is an appropriate option for the story and the reader does not miss out on vital information because of the limitations.

Setting

The story is set in Tennessee, probably in the 1990s. The setting is specifically two towns in Tennessee, Knoxville, and Oak Ridge. The two towns actually exist and the use of a real setting may be intended to lend credibility to the story. There are specific settings within the overall settings. These include the Knoxville General Hospital which is where the story opens. Even more specifically in the hospital are several rooms on the eighth floor which is set aside for adolescents. These rooms are not described in great detail but there is sufficient information for the reader to create a mental image of the setting. Another important setting is the high school where Carley, Janelle, and Jon attend. Several important scenes occur here including Jon's apology to Carley and his testament that he's come to realize how wrong he was to make fun of her. Within the high school is an atrium where Jon and Carley wait for Janelle to finish a practice. That atrium is the "hub" of the school, is located in the center of the building, and is the place students sometimes gather before or after classes. The author does not go into great detail describing the physical settings which keeps the story moving quickly. The time setting is not specifically defined. The modern technologies seem to exist to some degree also Carley and Kyle listen to books on cassette players. The fact that digital books are not available indicate the time setting is several years in the past.



Language and Meaning

The majority of the story is written in a very straight-forward style and the action moves very quickly. There are few words or phrases readers with an average vocabulary will not understand. The story is divided between dialogue and narrative. The dialogue is meant to mimic the conversations of young people during this time period and seem to be believable. The dialogue is acceptable and believable. There is a great deal of "dark humor" about illness and hospitals, the result of Carley's efforts to deal with her deformity. The humor is not always funny and is sometimes so repetitious as to be annoying. The fact that the story is presented from Carley's perspective means the reader is aware of the thoughts and motivations of Carley as the story unfolds. While there is no deep religious overtones, Carley worries about being a good person. When she finds herself wondering if Kyle's lack of sight in the long-term might mean they could have a long-term relationship, Carley is horrified that her selfishness should take such a turn. Carley does want what's best for Kyle and hopes he will regain his sight.

Structure

The story is divided into nineteen chapters. Chapter one opens in the hospital. The majority of the story is presented in chronological order after that fact though there are pieces of historical information presented in the form of flashbacks and memories. For example, it's clear Carley doesn't like her sister's boyfriend Jon and that he's uncomfortable around her. Janelle doesn't know why but Carley remembers overhearing Jon talk about Carley's appearance, comparing her to a dog. In chapter two, Carley meets Kyle for the first time and likes the fact that he isn't affected by her appearance. Over the next two chapters, the relationship between Carley and Kyle grows with Carley feeling guilty that she's not telling Kyle about her face but enjoying the fact that he believes she's pretty too much to change her tactic. In chapter eleven, Carley is released from the hospital and returns to her home though she has to return to the hospital for physical therapy over the coming weeks. In chapter fourteen, Carley learns that Kyle has been released from the hospital as well. In chapter sixteen, Carley convinces Jon to fool Kyle into thinking Janelle is Carley. In chapter nineteen, Carley and Kyle have a showdown over her lies and she realizes he might like her for who she is after all. The chapters are titled by number only and there is no clue to the reader about what will happen in any particular chapter. The chapters are roughly the same length and most chapters end with a thought intended to lead the reader into the next chapter.



Quotes

"Carley wondered how he would have reacted to Reba if he'd been able to see her. Or to Carley. She felt insulated and safe so long as he couldn't see either of them" (Chapter 3).

"She wanted the best for him. She just didn't want to be in his life of vision when, and if, his bandages came off" (Chapter 4).

"But here in the hospital, with his eyes bandaged, the scales of social acceptance were balanced. He couldn't loathe what he couldn't see" (Chapter 5).

"Just like Humpty Dumpty, all the plastic surgeons and medical geniuses couldn't put Carley Mattea back together again" (Chapter 8).

"All at once her knees started shaking as it dawned on her that she was manipulating people's lives. She was working so hard to protect herself that she was forcing her sister and her sister's boyfriend to conform to her will" (Chapter 10).

"She didn't want to forget that what Kyle had made her feel was an illusion. She would never be normal. Or pretty" (Chapter 11).

"She tells them what a hero you are to have survived cancer and show up in school every day in spite of the way the doctors left your face" (Chapter 12).

"Because when a person's pretty, that's all people expect her to be. She isn't appreciated for anything except her physical appearance" (Chapter 13).

"Carley saw her mother look relieved, and until then she hadn't realized the cancer issue had been weighing on her mind. It certainly hadn't weighed on hers" (Chapter 14).

"She had been born whole and complete. At age twelve she'd been held hostage by cancer and robbed of normalcy" (Chapter 15).

"She traced her fingertips over the screen, over the full-faced view of her picture. For the first time in years, Carley Mattea was pretty" (Chapter 17).

"For awhile you got to think I was pretty and I got to think some guy liked me. Too bad illusions can't be real life" (Chapter 18).



Topics for Discussion

Who is Carley Mattea? What kind of character is she? What are her strengths and weaknesses? How has she learned to cope with her deformity? Is she believable? Is she likable?

Who is Kyle Westin? What happens that lands him in the hospital where he meets Carley? Kyle says he's shy. Do you believe that? Why or why not? What are Kyle's strengths and weaknesses? What kind of person is he? What are his dreams?

What is the lie Carley tells Kyle? How does she perpetuate that lie? What happens when Kyle discovers the lie? Kyle says Carley robbed them of the chance to discover whether Kyle would have liked Carley from the beginning despite her deformity. What does he mean by that? Do you believe Kyle would have accepted Carley if he'd been able to see her from the beginning? Why or why not?

Who is Reba? Who is Janelle? What is the relationship of each to Carley? How are the two girls similar? How are they different? Compare their roles in the story.

Who is Jon? What is Carley's relationship with Jon and what happens to change their opinions of each other? Is Jon a believable character? Is he likable? What seems to motivate him?

What do you consider the most important theme of the story? Give three examples of this theme.

Describe Carley's life, including her family members, school, and friendships. How do you believe her life might have been different if she hadn't had cancer? How might the lives of her family have been different?