

Inner Circle Study Guide

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Plot Summary

Reed is expecting a lot from the New Year at Easton. After the drama of her first year, it's hard to imagine how this year could be any worse. Reed's boyfriend, Josh, is loving and trustworthy. Josh also knows what Reed went through in the previous year. He went through a lot too, when his roommate, and Reed's boyfriend, Thomas, was murdered by a girl in Billings. Reed started the last year not knowing anyone. She was elected to be a part of Billings, the most sought after dorm, where all the coolest girls lived. She was put through hazing by the girls there, but she was proud to have made it into the cool girls circle. Then, Ariana tried to kill her and killed Thomas.

This year, Reed knows everyone. She is still in Billings. She is full of hope. Reed quickly realizes that some girls want the traditions of Billings to continue. Cheyenne has elected herself the leader of Billings. Reed goes along with Cheyenne's plans, until they involve hazing new girls. A new headmaster has done away with the Billings tradition of a sorority. Billings girls will no longer be able to choose who gets into Billings. Cheyenne decides to go on with the hazing in circle. The six girls that the headmaster placed in Billings will have to prove they are worthy of being there. Reed watches as Cheyenne becomes more and more obsessed with pushing certain girls out. A war breaks out in Billings between Cheyenne and Reed. With the other girls caught up in the middle. Cheyenne is willing to go to great lengths to make life difficult for anyone who disagrees with her.

When Cheyenne seduces Reed's boyfriend Josh, it seems like she can go no lower. But Cheyenne's cruelty continues. Eventually the headmaster finds out what has been going on in Billings. He interrogates the girls, Reed refuse to rat out Cheyenne despite everything. Someone tells on Cheyenne and she is expelled. Cheyenne is so upset at the idea of leaving that she kills herself. That's when Reed realizes that Cheyenne drugged Josh in order to get him to sleep with her.

Cheyenne pretends to give in to Reed and allow all the girls to join Billings. They hold an initiation ceremony, but Cheyenne tricked them. She inducts only the girls that she likes. In the middle of the ceremony the new headmaster comes in. One of the girls tells the headmaster that Cheyenne was the leader and she gets expelled.

The night before Cheyenne is supposed to leave, she takes commits suicide by taken prescription pills. When Reed sees the pills, she recognizes the ones that Josh described earlier. Reed also finds an email that Cheyenne wrote before she died, blaming Reed for her death. Noelle Lange, the most powerful girl from Easton the year before, and a friend to Reed show up at the end of the book. She seems to know everything that has gone on in Billings.



New Year; Peace; Tradition, Honor, Intimidation; Interesting

New Year; Peace; Tradition, Honor, Intimidation; Interesting Summary

Reed arrives at school in the freshness of autumn. It lightens her mood. This year, Reed is determined, will be different than the last. During Reed's previous year at Easton Academy, she had lost her virginity, fallen in love, and survived an attempted murder and the murder of her boyfriend. Reed's mother, who used to be addicted to prescription medications, has sobered up. It is the first time that Reed's mother has come to her school. With her father's pride, and her mother's sudden change in personality, Reed feels almost normal. Reed is not as wealthy as the other girls at Easton. When they arrive at the school, the front drive is littered with the copious baggage of the other girls. Reed has a modest amount of luggage, and a new computer—a gift from her friend Natasha. When Reed says goodbye to her parents, she looks around with hope. The year before she had arrived an outsider with no friends, but this year at least she knew people. And the bad girls from the year before had transferred out.

Walking over the grounds, Reed stops to watch some of the boys involved in a pick up soccer game. Suddenly, Reed feels a sense of déjà-vu. In that spot, the year before she had first met Thomas, who she would fall in love with. Thomas had been murdered. Luckily, Reed is taken out of her reverie by the sound of her name. Josh picks her up in his arms. Josh is Reed's boyfriend. They kiss in front of everyone, and Reed feels like everything is right in the world.

The next old friend that Reed sees is Constance. Constance really wants to get into Billings, the dorm where Reed lives. Usually, the girls from Billings vote to replace the seniors who have graduated. But, after last year's murder, the tradition is cancelled. Reed can't imagine why Constance would want to be in Billings after last year's events. But Constance is a bit airheaded, and says that not even a murder could make Billings less cool. Constance immediately regrets being so callous about the murder of Reed's ex-boyfriend.

There is a new headmaster at Easton Academy, Cromwell. The girls gossip as the ceremony that begins the semester goes on. Missy Thurber, and her mindless sidekick Lorna Gross, make fun of a new girl. Reed tries to comfort the new girl with a smile. As Headmaster Cromwell starts speaking, it's clear that the rules are changing at Easton. Following the disaster of the year before, Cromwell is a strict disciplinarian. When Gage Coolidge makes a fart noise during the ceremony, Cromwell sends his disciplinarian to take Coolidge out. Mr. White is a tall angular man with white hair. He intimidates the kids into silence. Some of the girls complain after the ceremony that Headmaster Cromwell is full of himself. Easton is an old school, with traditions. Reed welcomes the idea of change, but Missy makes fun of Reeds opinion. Everyone wants to know what



happened to the girls from Billings involved in the murder the year before. Since Reed was their friend, everyone looks to Reed for gossip. Reed is embarrassed to admit that none of the girls have contacted her. Reed is hurt to be pushed aside so easily, but she is glad that a new year is beginning without the four girls who as the most popular and powerful girls in Billings used to control the school. Rumors abound about what the girls are up to. Ariana is in a mental institution. The other girls are said to be modeling in Paris, or in rehab.

New Year; Peace; Tradition, Honor, Intimidation; Interesting Analysis

The beginning of the books gives an idea of what Reed went through in the previous book, set in the last semester. Reed began the school as an outsider, clearly less wealthy than the other girls. Reed's working class background will be significant in how she relates to the other girls as the story progresses. The reader also learns that Reed came out of the troubles in school a stronger person. She is hopeful for this year, partly because she made it through the year before. This year, Reed is familiar with the school. She understands the environment and has friends. The new headmaster's speech shows that the environment that Reed got to know in the previous year is subject to change. The headmaster's position foreshadows the conflict between the old way of doing things and the new way of doing things, which will be central to the plot.



Every Last Inch; New Rules; Creative Thinking; Needed

Every Last Inch; New Rules; Creative Thinking; Needed Summary

Reed notices a very beautiful girl, and Missy and Lorna pretend to be friendly. The new girl ignores them. When she is out of earshot, Missy and Lorna call her names. Josh tells Reed later that the girl used to go to Easton, but wasn't there last year. Her name is Ivy Slade. There is a rumor that she had sex with Gage all over the school.

Reed is chosen by the school to a mentor the new girl that Missy called "Miss Island Nation." It's a hassle, but more importantly the new girl had been placed in Billings. Traditionally Billings girls chose the new people in the dorm. Cheyenne calls a meeting for all the girls in Billings. The rich Billings alumnae association has bought all the Billings' girls gold and diamond necklaces. There are six necklaces left over for the six new girls. Cheyenne gives each of the girls a stack of papers. Each Billings girl is supposed to investigate the new recruits. They are to sit down and interview prospective girls, as well as watch them to make sure they are worthy of Billings. Reed doesn't want to spy on the new girls. Reed was chosen under strange circumstances, so she doesn't believe Billings quite as much as the other girls do. The meeting is broken up by the arrival of the new headmaster. Headmaster Cromwell has brought six girls, who he says will be the new Billings girls. Sabine, the new girl that Reed is supposed to mentor is one of the new girls. Cheyenne protests that Billings girls always choose their own. Cromwell is disgusted by the sorority aspect of Billings. He plans to put an end to it. Cromwell puts Cheyenne in her place. Cheyenne takes the necklaces and refuses to accept the new girls.

The new girls are shy and intimidated. Reed introduces herself to Sabine, who will be her new roommate. Reed's roommate from the year before, Constance, has been put in Billings as well. Constance is really excited. It's a dream for her to be put in Billings. Sabine is from Martinique. She is sweet and Reed warms to her right away.

Cheyenne holds a meeting of the old Billings girls in her room. She rages at the idea that Billings is being controlled contrary to tradition. It is Cheyenne's senior year. This is her last chance to be the most powerful girl in school. The girls make fun of the new girls, saying that they aren't fit to be in Billings. Cheyenne plans to make it so uncomfortable for the new girls that they will want to leave. Reed tells them there is nothing they can do, but Cheyenne disagrees. Reed is nervous about what Cheyenne is planning.



Every Last Inch; New Rules; Creative Thinking; Needed Analysis

Cheyenne is clearly trying to take the place left by Noelle Lang, who used to be the most powerful girl in the school. The history of Billings is set up. Billings has always enjoyed a place of prestige. The girls in Billings are very loyal to their dorm. The alumnae association shows that long after the girls graduate from school, they still show a sense of solidarity to Billings. Reed is shown as an outsider. Reed is not the typical girl in Billings. She comes from a poorer family for one thing. More than that, Reed didn't always go to Easton, so she has less awe for Billings than the other girls, who have wanted to be in Billings since they were freshman. Cheyenne is proving to be manipulative and power hungry. Cheyenne also shows how much she dislikes Reed. Cheyenne takes the tradition of Billings very seriously, and to her Reed is not good enough to be in Billings.

Reed learns more about Sabine. Sabine comes from the islands, so she doesn't have clothes fit for the New England winters. Sabine wanted to know what it was like to live in the United States. Reed knows that Easton Academy is not the typical American school, but she doesn't say that to Sabine. Sabine is already homesick for Martinique. Reed remembers first coming to Easton and being in awe of its big beautiful building and its history. Reed decides to be a friend to Sabine. They get along right away.

Reed gets an email from Dash McCafferty. Dash is Noelle's ex-boyfriend. Dash and Reed spent some time together over the summer. Dash went over to the restaurant where Reed worked and they talked for a long time. Dash is at Yale, but he misses going to Easton. He tried to kiss Reed over the summer, but she pulled away. Reed doesn't know if Dash and Noelle still talk, but the idea of talking to Noelle's boyfriend makes Reed nervous. Reed is also in love with Josh, so she feels a little guilty about talking to Dash at all. Reed sends Dash back a quick email, telling herself that he is just being friendly. Constance comes in raving about her new room and how beautiful Billings is. Constance tells Sabine what a big deal it is to be in Billings. Constance's boyfriend Whittaker also went to Easton, though now he is in college



Cozy; A Piece of Easton; My Guy; Cat Burglary

Cozy; A Piece of Easton; My Guy; Cat Burglary Summary

Reed takes Sabine around the school, pointing out buildings. Sabine takes notes, afraid that she will get lost. Josh walks up to them with his friend Gage. Sabine has an instant crush on Gage, but Reed knows that Gage is not nice to girls. Josh makes an attempt to be friendly to Josh. Josh's family used to vacation in Martinique, so he and Sabine have something in common. When the boys leave, Reed warns Sabine about Gage. Sabine says that Josh is cute, but that she would never go after a Cheyenne's boyfriend. Reed tells her that Josh is her boyfriend. Sabine looks surprised. She saw Josh and Cheyenne sitting close together and laughing and assumed that they were together. Sabine apologizes and admits that she might have made a mistake. But, Reed is full of jealousy, wondering what Cheyenne was doing with her boyfriend.

Cheyenne has made all the new Billings recruits gather together. Reed does not like Cheyenne's plan of making the girls pass a test to be part of Billings. The other girls in Billings don't seem to share Reed's outrage. They are all excited to haze the new girls. Cheyenne's test for the girls is for them to steal something that has a powerful history in Easton and bring it back to Billings. She gives them three days to find something. Reed and Cheyenne argue as to whether the task is necessary. Cheyenne hints that Reed shouldn't have been let into Billings in the first place.

As Reed adjusted to all the homework she has this year, another responsibility is brought up by Headmaster Cromwell. Cromwell announces that there will be a dinner held at Driscoll Hotel in Easton for the alumni weekend. All students are required to volunteer for preparations. The Driscoll Hotel is an old, magnificent hotel in town. It was built mainly for visitors to Easton Academy and as a place to hold dinners and festivities for the alumni of Easton.

Sabine continues to crush on Gage, and nothing that Reed tells her makes a difference. Sabine and Reed see Cheyenne arguing with Astrid. Astrid seems angry and reluctant. Cheyenne is pushing Astrid to do something. Astrid walks away angrily. When Reed asks Cheyenne what happened, Cheyenne claims that Astrid is just upset over an ex-boyfriend. Reed knows that Cheyenne is lying. Cheyenne accidentally bumps into Ivy Slade. Ivy just looks at Cheyenne and runs away. Sabine tells Reed to confront Cheyenne about Josh, but Reed is hesitant. She doesn't want to seem like the crazy jealous girlfriend.

Constance comes to Reed for help about the task. Constance has no idea what to steal for Billings. Even if she did, Constance is terrified of getting caught. Meanwhile, Reed has received another e-mail from Dash. His interest in her makes her nervous. Reed



tries to brainstorm with Constance, who is so nervous she looks sick. Constance thinks about asking Josh to give her the keys to the art cemetery, but Reed doesn't want him involved. They decide she should call Constance's boyfriend Whittaker. He went to Easton his entire high school career. Reed doesn't know where Sabine is, or what Sabine has planned to steal. Cheyenne is missing too, which makes Reed nervous that Cheyenne is messing with Sabine somehow. Reed feels very protective of Sabine.

Cozy; A Piece of Easton; My Guy; Cat Burglary Analysis

Sabine noticing Josh with Cheyenne undermines the happiness that Reed was feeling at the beginning of the year. Despite her desire that everything be peaceful, already there is drama in every aspect of Reed's life. Reed clearly wants to trust Josh. Reed's attitude shows that she is pretty level headed, but the doubt that Sabine puts in her head grows. Cheyenne shows her true colors, and how deep her obsession with Billings is. The difference of opinions between Reed and Cheyenne is a foreshadowing of a future showdown on how Billings is going to be. Cheyenne represents the old order of Billings, when girls were chosen according to whether or not their mothers were in Billings, as well as on how wealthy and upper class they were. Cheyenne's comments about Reed not belonging hurt Reed. Reed knows she is not upper class, but being a part of Billings means a lot to her. Both Cheyenne and Reed care about Billings, but in different ways.



Quit Billings; Bogarted; The Presentation; The Vote

Quit Billings; Bogarted; The Presentation; The Vote Summary

When Josh finds out that Reed is letting the hazing go on at Billings, he is mad at her. Josh thought that after Noelle left Easton, the rituals in Billings would stop. Reed feels like this is unfair. Hazing always happened at Billings. More so, Reed has been against the hazing this year. She feels offended and hurt at Josh's attitude. He doesn't understand why she stays in Billings at all. Reed notices that Ivy is always alone, so she tries to make friend. When Reed introduces herself, Ivy already knows who she is. Somehow Ivy knows that Thomas was killed over Reed the year before. Reed is so taken aback she doesn't know how to respond. Ivy tells her to leave, and Reed does.

Cheyenne continues to flirt with Josh in front of Reed. Reed tries to ignore it, but she has doubts. When Josh tells her that he joined Cheyenne's volunteer group for the Driscoll Hotel dinner, Reed can't help but wonder why Josh wants to spend time alone with Cheyenne. Josh tells her that all the seniors joined the same group to spend time together. Trey, Cheyenne's ex-boyfriend joins the wait staff group with Sabine and Reed.

The new girls at Billings are presenting their stolen items. Reed continues to think the task is stupid. Each of the girls is nervous that their items won't be good enough to please Cheyenne. Cheyenne lines the girls up. Sabine rushes in at the last minute. Cheyenne begins with Lorna, who has stolen a memorial plaque. Cheyenne is unimpressed. Lorna almost starts to cry. Missy goes second. Even though Missy is Lorna's best friend, she brags that her item is better than Lorna's. Everyone is impressed when Missy pulls out the original Easton Academy Handbook, usually kept locked in a glass case in the library. Kiki has stolen the cornerstone of Gwendolyn Hall, the first Easton Academy building. Sabine managed to steal one of the black banners that hang in the chapel. Reed can't imagine how she managed to get it down. Cheyenne pretends to be unimpressed. Whittaker sent Constance an original Easton uniform. Again, Cheyenne pretends to be unimpressed. She knows that Constance got it from Whittaker, and makes a show at humiliating Constance for not doing the task alone. Astrid has the original school bell. When Astrid doesn't tell how she got the bell, Reed realizes that Cheyenne must have helped her. The hypocrisy of Cheyenne helping Astrid and then humiliating Constance makes Reed angry. Reed can see what Cheyenne is doing. The three girls that Cheyenne wants to be in Billings are getting approval. The other three girls are getting bullied. Cheyenne hopes that the other girls will be so unhappy in Billings that they will ask for a transfer. Cheyenne gives a speech telling the other girls that they should think about where they belong, and then she orders the girls to replace the items where they found them.



In the middle of the night, Reed is woken with a hand over her mouth. She starts to panic, when she realizes that it is Tiffany. Tiffany guides her out into the hall without waking Sabine. All the official Billings girls are gathered. They go downstairs, into the basement, where Cheyenne has set up a circle of chairs. Each of the new recruits has a picture on the wall, with a bowl beneath it. Cheyenne gives each of the Billings girls six black marbles and six white ones. They are all supposed to vote on the girls. Reed votes yes for everyone, even though she doesn't like Missy. She wants to make a point. Astrid, Kiki and Missy, predictably, are voted in. Sabine has a tie. As the Billings girl with the most family members as Billings alumni, Cheyenne casts the deciding vote against Sabine. Reed curses at Cheyenne and tells everyone that Cheyenne cheated and helped Astrid. Cheyenne denies it. When Reed says that Cheyenne doesn't get the choice as to who lives in Billings, Cheyenne tells her plan of torturing the girls who weren't chosen until they want to leave. Reed tells them that she refuses to be a part of it.

Quit Billings; Bogarted; The Presentation; The Vote Analysis

Cheyenne's desire to have power in Billings is getting out of control. Cheyenne and Reed are becoming enemies over how Billings will be run. Cheyenne seems to really believe in the traditions of Billings. Considering Cheyenne's family history in Billings, it makes sense that she takes pride in the dorm. It also is significant that as a senior, Cheyenne's position in Billings is something she has been looking forward to since she was a freshman. Reed represents the changes coming to Billings, changes that make Cheyenne's position of power redundant. Cheyenne gets her self-esteem from her position of power at Billings, so Reed's stubbornness about the new recruits affects Cheyenne personally.



Playing the Game; Cinderella II; Taking sides; The Game

Playing the Game; Cinderella II; Taking sides; The Game Summary

Sabine admits to Reed that Gage helped her get the tapestry down for the task. Sabine tries to convince Josh, Reed and Trey that Gage is actually a good guy. They laugh her off. Sabine is depressed that the task didn't go well. Reed tries to reassure her, but Reed knows that the girls will never approve of Sabine while Cheyenne's in control. While Reed, Sabine and Constance are discussing Cheyenne at the lunch table, Cheyenne approaches with some of her friends. Cheyenne says that Sabine and Constance can't sit at that table anymore. Reed points out that she sat at that table last year, when she was only a sophomore. That statement bothers Cheyenne, who was not one of the cool kids last year. Constance and Sabine give in to Cheyenne's harassment and move to another table. Josh and Reed get up in protest, and Reed feels a rush of pride that Josh chooses her over Cheyenne. Meanwhile, Cheyenne invites Missy and Astrid to sit, even though they are new recruits too.

Sabine and Reed are woken up in the morning by the banging of pots. Cheyenne, London, Vienna and Portia drag Sabine out of bed in her underwear. Reed remembers this hazing ritual and hates it. Reed grabs Sabine's jeans to give her. Cheyenne gives a speech about proving that the girls want to be in Billings. She makes them clean everyone's room. Reed tries to stop it, saying that there is no need since they have a cleaning lady. But the girls feel like they have to obey Cheyenne. Reed knows that Cheyenne will never accept them, but Sabine, Constance and Lorna still believe that they can earn their place at Billings. The girls are forced to clean the bathrooms with toothbrushes. Mrs. Lattimer, the housemother for Billings comes in. The girls all pretend that nothing is going on. Even if Reed doesn't like what Cheyenne is doing, she won't turn her back on another girl from Billings. Lattimer believes Cheyenne's excuses and leaves. By the time Reed is ready for class, the other girls have just finished cleaning. Cheyenne makes each of the new girls offer her services to one of the Billings girls. Astrid offers help to Cheyenne, who makes her go through her drawers and clean out the lint. Missy asks Vienna, who forces her to color coordinate her closet. When Kiki asks Reed, Reed tells her there is nothing she can do. Cheyenne gets angry, but Kiki leaves anyway. Rose follows Reed's example and refuses to give a task. London can't think of a task, and Cheyenne gets so angry, she storms out.

In English class, Mr. Winslow calls for everyone to turn in their papers. Reed notices that Sabine, Constance and Loran are looking frantically through their bags. Cheyenne stole their papers. Mr. Winslow feels bad, but he gives them all zeros for the assignment. To Reed this is going too far. She had experience with these kinds of games the year before with Noelle. Noelle was the master of messing with new people.



Now Reed is going to take what she learned from Noelle and beat Cheyenne at her own game.

Playing the Game; Cinderella II; Taking sides; The Game Analysis

It's clear that Cheyenne is trying to maintain power in Billings. Reed feels torn. ON the one hand, Reed thinks that Cheyenne is crazy and that people like Sabine have just as much right to be in Billings as Cheyenne. ON the other hand, Reed is a product of the hazing ritual. It gave her a sense of having earned her place in the illustrious dorm. The hazing also made Reed a stronger person. Reed's real problem with Cheyenne is that she is giving three of the girls preferential treatment. Cheyenne has no intention of letting Sabine, Lorna or Constance into the clique. To Reed, she is playing games with those girls' hopes.



Your Choice; One Person; Whispers; The First Time

Your Choice; One Person; Whispers; The First Time Summary

Reed's first attack on Cheyenne is to commandeer the Billings table. Reed enlists Josh, Tiffany, Trey, Rose, Constance, Sabine and Lorna. They all leave class early so that they can be the first people at the lunch table. Ivy walks by the table, glaring at Reed. Rose knows Ivy from before Reed came to Easton. Rose says that Ivy has been through a lot. When Cheyenne comes in, they all act normal. Cheyenne tries to make the girls leave the table, but they refuse to budge. Cheyenne gives up and sits at another table. When Kiki, Missy and Astrid come in, Josh and Trey get up, as planned. Reed invites the girls to sit. Kiki and Astrid join the table, but Missy is too loyal to Cheyenne. Reed feels like she won the first battle with Cheyenne.

Later on, Reed walks into the library and finds Cheyenne and Josh sitting close to one another and giggling. On the inside Reed feels like jealous and angry. She asks what they are doing. Josh looks guilty, but Cheyenne is enjoying Reed's confusion. Cheyenne and Josh were planning the food for the party. Josh laughs when he realizes how jealous Reed is. He thought she was mad, because she didn't like Cheyenne. He tells Reed that she is the only one for him. Reed doesn't want to sound crazy, but she is afraid of believing him and being made a fool of. He kisses her. Josh thinks that being in Billings is making Reed paranoid. When Josh leaves, Reed checks her email. There is another message from Dash. Reed responds and Dash writes back right away. Reed feels like a hypocrite being in contact with Dash, after accusing Josh.

There is a study night in Billings, with pizza and champagne. Cheyenne, Vienna and Sabine aren't there. Reed goes looking for Sabine. She hears whispers coming out of Cheyenne's room. Thinking that Cheyenne and Vienna are planning a new task for the new girls, Reed walks into the room. She is surprised to find Sabine. Cheyenne has promised Sabine help in seducing Gage. Reed doesn't trust Cheyenne's intentions and she tells her so. Cheyenne says that she is just helping Sabine out. Reed feels sick with nerves, knowing that Cheyenne must have selfish motives.

Reed waits until the boys' advisor leaves Josh's dorm the next day, before she sneaks in. When Josh sees her he immediately starts kissing her. Reed pushes him away with difficulty. She wants to talk to him. Reed tells Josh that she loves him. Josh tells her he loves her too. Josh has been waiting to say it for a long time, but he didn't want to scare Reed away.



Your Choice; One Person; Whispers; The First Time Analysis

Reed deciding to openly challenge Cheyenne is dangerous. Reed has watched these types of games played out in Billings before, but she didn't act out against Cheyenne before. She is finally taking a stand against Cheyenne. But, in response the reader can expect Cheyenne to fight back. The fact that Cheyenne seems to be seeking out time with Reed's boyfriend is significant. There is nothing else that Reed really cares about. Reed also cares about Sabine, so Cheyenne's sudden interest in Sabine's love life is significant as well. What Cheyenne is planning is not clear. But Cheyenne is clearly planning something that involves Sabine.



Happiness; Paralyzed; Dignity; Willing Participant

Happiness; Paralyzed; Dignity; Willing Participant Summary

At breakfast the next morning, Sabine is missing. Gage, Reed, Trey and Josh are eating breakfast when Reed sees Sabine approaching, with Cheyenne close behind. Cheyenne calls out to Gage to take a look at the new Sabine. Cheyenne has dressed Sabine up in preppy clothes. She is wearing a short plaid skirt and tight shirt. Her hair is slicked back, and she is wearing high heeled shoes. It is clear from how she is walking that she doesn't have much practice in heels. Suddenly, with Gage watching, Sabine slips on some spilled water. Her food spills over her face and shirt, and her skirt comes up showing her underwear. The entire cafeteria starts laughing, including Gage. Reed looks over at Cheyenne and sees her give a subtle high five to Portia. Sabine runs out, humiliated. Reed calls Cheyenne out, but she has no proof.

Sabine hides in the infirmary all day. At ten p.m. Sabine still hasn't shown up at the dorm. On top of being worried about Sabine, Reed hasn't heard from Josh. Josh always calls at ten. Constance and Sabine come rushing into the room. They tell Reed she has to come and see something. She demands that they tell her what it is first. They saw Cheyenne and Josh together in the art cemetery. Reed and the other two girls run to catch Cheyenne in the act. Looking through the windows, Reed sees Cheyenne half naked, sitting in Josh's lap, taking off Josh's clothes. Reed is so angry she can't think; she vomits. Then, Reed burst in on them. Josh doesn't react. Cheyenne tries to remain calm. Reed slaps Cheyenne hard across the face, and Cheyenne runs. Reed chases Cheyenne all the way back to Billings. Cheyenne tries to keep Reed out of her room, but Reed pushes in behind her. Cheyenne tells her that it was Josh who wanted her. She shows Reed a text message from Josh asking her to come to him in the art cemetery. Reed doesn't know what to do, when Mrs. Lattimer comes in and sends Reed to her room.

Happiness; Paralyzed; Dignity; Willing Participant Analysis

Cheyenne has been threatening Reed for some time. Sleeping with Josh was her revenge. First, Cheyenne went after Reed's friend, Sabine. Then Cheyenne went after Reed's boyfriend. After Reed stood up to Cheyenne, Cheyenne needed a way to have power over Reed. Josh's reaction when Reed burst in is strange. He doesn't react much at all, and he doesn't chase after Reed and Cheyenne. When Cheyenne give Reed evidence that Josh started it, Reed has to reconcile the fact that someone she trusted betrayed her.



Reinforcements; Four Hours; Sweet Little Sabine; Wasn't Me

Reinforcements; Four Hours; Sweet Little Sabine; Wasn't Me Summary

After Mrs. Lattimer sends Reed to her room, Reed paces, venting her anger to Sabine. Reed is hurt that Josh would betray her. The fact that Josh was the perpetrator makes everything worse. IN her rage, Reed admits to Sabine that Cheyenne had already voted Sabine out. Sabine is outraged. She had tried so hard to do the tasks and get a chance to be accepted. The girls are so angry that think about the possibility of getting Cheyenne expelled. Reed knows that she couldn't think of a way to get Cheyenne expelled. However, Reed knows someone who would know exactly how to get Cheyenne in trouble. The problem is that Reed doesn't know where Noelle is or how to contact her. Reed emails Dash, asking him how to get in touch with Noelle. Reed and Sabine are frightened by the thought of doing something so bad. They change the subject. Reed can't sleep. She keeps picturing Cheyenne and Josh together. At four a.m. in the morning, Reed hears an ambulance and sees flashing lights. She sees cop cars and an ambulance stop in front of the boys' dorm Ketlar.

Reed doesn't want to face the school alone. Gossip runs so fast that Reed expects everyone to be talking about Cheyenne and Josh. Cheyenne comes running up to them holding the outfit she had let Sabine borrow. Sabine had cut it up into little pieces. Sabine claims that the washing machine destroyed it. When Cheyenne asks how the shoes got destroyed, Sabine claims that a dog got hold of them. Reed is impressed that Sabine could be so vengeful. Sabine says it takes someone like Cheyenne to bring it out of her. Reed waits for Sabine, hoping that Sabine will be by her side for the rest of the day. But, Sabine has to visit her counselor. Reed goes to breakfast nervous. The day is cold and Reed is underdressed, making her feel even more vulnerable. To Reed's surprise no one is talking about Josh and Reed. Trey runs up to Reed and asks how she is. Reed doesn't know what he is talking about. Trey tells her that Josh had a seizure in the night. He is in the hospital. Despite everything that happened, Reed's first emotion is worry that Josh is OK. As they are talking, a car drives up and drops Josh off. Josh calls out to her, but Reed runs away. Josh is weak and can't keep up with her. She stops. Josh tells her that he was drugged. He can't remember how it happened. Suddenly, Cheyenne was on top of him. Reed things he is lying. She starts to cry. Reed takes medicine for seizures. Right before he took them the night before, he noticed a little pill with blue dots, but it was too late. He had already swallowed the pills. Reed tells him that she saw the text message he sent Cheyenne. Josh claims he doesn't know anything about it. Josh remembers being at the committee meeting, afterwards Cheyenne followed him to the art cemetery. Reed can't listen anymore. She doesn't believe Josh. She runs away, as he yells for her to stop. He tells her he loves her.



Reinforcements; Four Hours; Sweet Little Sabine; Wasn't Me Analysis

Reed is too overwhelmed to understand what is going on. Being in Billings, Reed is accustomed to backstabbing and lies. But seeing the message that Josh sent to Cheyenne was too strong of evidence for Reed to believe Josh's story. It is significant that Josh had a delayed reaction that night to Reed walking in. Josh didn't seem ashamed or upset. He just seemed confused. After everything that Reed has been through at Easton, she has reason to doubt people. Reed has been manipulated before. Reed knew she couldn't trust Cheyenne around Josh. But Reed did trust Josh. So, to see him underneath Cheyenne with his clothes off is an image that Reed can't yet forget.



The Best; Adequate; Familiar; Just a Dorm

The Best; Adequate; Familiar; Just a Dorm Summary

In the middle of the night, Reed hears the front door of Billings slam shut. She hears the voice of Mr. White. Lorna, Sabine and Constance come into Reed's room looking dejected. Cheyenne bursts in behind them. The girls got caught. Reed is out of the loop. She asks what they were doing. Cheyenne had sent them out to steal a test. They were caught outside, so Mr. White didn't know what they were doing. They told him they just went out for a walk. They were put on probation. Cheyenne is livid. She humiliates the girls for tarnishing Billings' name. Reed notices that the other three new girls weren't out. Cheyenne claims that she was going to send the other girls out the second night. Reed demands to talk to Cheyenne outside. Cheyenne is hesitating, thinking that Reed is going to attack her again. Reed promises she just want to talk. She tells Cheyenne that the tasks are over. Cheyenne laughs it off. Reed tells her that she will go to the headmaster if Cheyenne doesn't leave the girls alone. Cheyenne doesn't believe that Reed will do it. Reed tells her that she will blame it all on Cheyenne. Cheyenne knows that she would get expelled. Reed turns her back on Cheyenne and goes back to bed.

Astrid and Reed leave their soccer practice for a meeting in Billings. Reed is nervous about what Cheyenne may have planned now. Astrid asks how Reed is feeling. At first Reed thinks that Astrid is taunting her and will tell Cheyenne everything she hears. Astrid is being sincere. Astrid claims that she was never friends with Cheyenne. Their families have known each other for a long time, but Astrid is not on Cheyenne's side. Reed is relieved to have another person on her side. Astrid gets a text from Cheyenne telling her and all the new girls to meet in the library. Reed rushes back to Billings to find out what Cheyenne has planned. The girls are planning the initiation ceremony for the new girls. When Reed sees Cheyenne, she can barely keep her temper. Reed wonders if Josh and Cheyenne are dating now. Cheyenne makes a speech about keeping up the traditions of Billings. Reed says that they could get expelled for having the initiation ceremony. Cheyenne has decided to initiate all the girls. Reed is shocked. Cheyenne says that they have to accept the new girls.

Tiffany catches up to Reed after lunch. But, Josh runs up after them. Reed takes off running. She can't face Josh, but he catches up to her and grabs her arm. He begs her to talk to him. She tells him to leave her alone, that it is over. The look on Josh's face almost makes Reed change her mind. But Tiffany comes up and pulls Reed away from Josh.

Ivy Slade was watching Reed and Josh talk. Ivy accuses Reed of breaking hearts. Tiffany tries to pull Reed away, but Reed is curious. Ivy seems to think she knows all about Reed. Reed asks if Ivy is still talking to Taylor Bell, a girl from the previous year before who was expelled. Ivy walks away haughtily. Reed is overwhelmed. Tiffany tells



Reed not to worry about Ivy. Ivy enjoys messing with people's heads. Ivy reminds Reed of the year before, when Ariana tried to kill her.

Sabine is upset that she has to join a sport. Reed convinces her to join the soccer team. Constance runs up to them excited. She received an invitation to the initiation ceremony at Billings. Reed is happy for Constance. Sabine is not as excited. Sabine doesn't understand the hype about Billings. Sabine just wants to be normal, living in a normal dorm. Reed feels a little rejected. Billings is supposed to be the most popular dorm. Sabine not wanting to be in it makes Reed feel a little stupid. She also feels like Cheyenne will win if Sabine leaves. But, Reed tells Sabine that if she is unhappy that she can move out. Sabine tells Reed that she doesn't want to move, because then they won't be roommates.

The Best; Adequate; Familiar; Just a Dorm Analysis

What Cheyenne did with Josh, whether he was drugged or not, has changed the way that Reed reacts to Cheyenne. Before, she played along. Even if she thought Cheyenne went too far with the tasks, Reed let Cheyenne have her lead. But, after Cheyenne sunk low enough to try and steal Reed's boyfriend, Reed doesn't care about anything anymore. To Reed Billings should be open to anyone who wants to be a part of it. The new girls have tried to do everything that Cheyenne wanted them to do. Reed finally puts her foot down. She is threatening Cheyenne with the only thing she has that Cheyenne wants. Cheyenne loves Billings and would hate to be expelled. Ivy's treatment of Reed is sadistic. Ivy is out of Cheyenne's league when it comes to playing games. Ivy is from the old group of girls. When Reed tells Cheyenne she learned from the best, Ivy's group is who Reed is talking about.



New Ritual; Ringleader; Done; Punishment Fitting the Crime

New Ritual; Ringleader; Done; Punishment Fitting the Crime Summary

The Billings girls dress all in black. The new girls dress all in white for the ceremony. Each of them held a candle. London leads the new girls into the room blindfolded. Cheyenne had laid the jewelry boxes with the Billing's necklaces on the mantelpiece. She tells the new girls to remove their blindfolds. Cheyenne then calls Astrid's name. Astrid walks forward and lights her candle from Cheyenne's. The girls call out a welcome to Astrid. Then Cheyenne calls Missy and inducts her into the group. When Sabine is called forward, only Reed, Rose, Tiffany and London call out the welcome. Reed is confused as Portia hands Sabine a jewelry box. It is empty. Before Reed can do anything to stop the ceremony, Cheyenne plows forward, giving Constance and empty box. When Cheyenne calls Lorna, Lorna doesn't move. She is crying. Reed curses Cheyenne for the cruelty of the mock ceremony. Cheyenne tells Reed that Ariana went over everyone's head to induct Reed in. She says that Reed was not voted into Billings, and that she has not right to be there. Reed doesn't want to believe it. No one defends Reed, because Headmaster Cromwell has just walked in the door.

Cromwell interrogates each of the girls separately. He tries to intimidate Reed by staying silent. He asks Reed to tell him what was going on in the ceremony. Reed figures that someone must have already told Cromwell the truth. Reed doesn't want to be a rat. She refused to tell him anything. He just wants to know who the leader is. Reed, though she hates Cheyenne, realizes that she doesn't want to betray Billings. Whatever Cheyenne may say about Reed not belonging, Reed is loyal to Billings and to the girls of Billings. She refuses to say anything.

All the girls are gathered at Billings when Reed gets back. Rose tries to comfort Reed. She tells her that Cheyenne was lying about Reed's induction. It was done differently, but Reed wasn't unwanted. Reed knows that Cheyenne doesn't want her because she isn't upper class. Billings is for high class people, and Reed is not a part of that society. When Cheyenne comes in, she tells them she has been expelled.

Cromwell comes in with Mrs. Naylor. He tells them that Mrs. Lattimer has been fired for not stopping the Billings girls from continuing with their sorority lifestyle. From now on, Cromwell tells them, Billings will be like any other dorm on campus. All the girls are on probation. Mrs. Naylor is going to write up daily reports on what the girls do in Billings, so that Cromwell will know everything.



New Ritual; Ringleader; Done; Punishment Fitting the Crime Analysis

The fake ceremony is Cheyenne's way of beating of beating Reed and all Reed stands for. If Reed represents the new face of Billings, Cheyenne is making it clear that girls like Reed have no place in Billings. It was a cruel way to end the initiation period. Constance, Sabine and Lorna had all tried very hard to be a part of Billings. The public rejection shows how much Cheyenne hated the idea of Billing's power dynamics to change. Her comments to Reed are hurtful; because being a part of Billings made Reed feel important. Reed started at Easton as a scholarship student, not knowing anyone, feeling like an outsider. As a member of Billings, Reed felt like a part of the establishment. Reed felt like she belonged. Cheyenne's words took all of that confidence away. But when Reed is interrogated by Cromwell, she realizes that whether or not Cheyenne accepts her, she is a Billings girl. Reed went through hell to be a part of Billings, and she feels loyal to the dorm, and all the girls in it.



Peace; Long Gone; The Movie; Morbid Curiosity; Surprise, Surprise

Peace; Long Gone; The Movie; Morbid Curiosity; Surprise, Surprise Summary

Mrs. Naylor ordered all the girls to bed, but Reed goes in to talk to Cheyenne. Reed knows that Easton and Billings mean everything to Cheyenne. Cheyenne blames Reed for everything. Reed is surprised and denies that she had anything to do with it. Cheyenne thinks that Reed told on her to Cromwell. Reed protests that she was one of the only ones who knew that it was a fake ceremony, so she couldn't have told on them. Cheyenne says the Billings house is something that Reed can't understand, that it is elite, and Reed is not a part of it. Reed tells her that being rich isn't special. Cheyenne kicks Reed out. Reed goes to her own room and asks Sabine if she told on Cheyenne. Sabine didn't. They know that it's better without Cheyenne. Reed hopes that things will settle down now that Cheyenne is gone.

In the morning, Reed wakes up to screams. She runs into the hall. Everyone is gathered around Cheyenne's door. When Reed pushes her way in, she finds Cheyenne dead. A box of pills with little blue dots lies on the floor. Mrs. Naylor arrives and starts giving Cheyenne CPR, but it's too late. Cheyenne left a note, saying she just couldn't go home.

The scene outside reminds Reed of the year before, police cars and ambulances. This time, Reed is not a part of the story. Josh shows up and holds Reed. Reed realizes now that Josh told her the truth, that Cheyenne had drugged him. Reed starts to hyperventilate. She apologizes to Josh for not believing him. He holds her while she cries.

Josh and Reed are getting out of town for a few days. Josh's family has a townhouse in New York. AS she is packing up to leave, Reed checks her email. She remembers that she had written Dash. When she opens his message, she is not sure what to make of it. It is short, and says that everything happens for a reason. Then, Reed sees another message. It is from two in the morning. Before Cheyenne took her own life she sent Reed a message. The message blamed Reed for her suicide.

Reed goes out to eat with Josh, still reeling from the message from Cheyenne. Josh gets up to go say hi to some friends of his parents. Reed is sitting alone panicking when she hears a familiar voice. Noelle Lange is standing in front of her. Reed is so happy to see Noelle. Noelle always was in control. Noelle got off probation and is travelling. Reed asks her if she knows about Cheyenne, and Noelle gives her a knowing look. She tells Reed that everything happens for a reason.



Peace; Long Gone; The Movie; Morbid Curiosity; Surprise, Surprise Analysis

Cheyenne kills herself because her identity is so wrapped up in Billings she can't take the shame of being kicked out. Her mother and grandmother both went to Easton. It was her whole life. The only good thing for Reed is that she realizes that Josh was telling the truth. The pills that Cheyenne used to kill herself are the same ones that Josh described. When Noelle shows up, it seems strange. Reed sent a message to Dash asking for Noelle's help and then suddenly she appears in town right after Cheyenne's death. When she quotes Dash, it's almost like she had some part in what happened to Cheyenne. It's clear that Noelle was somehow involved. She might have been the one behind Dash's emails all semester. Or she might have intervened after Reed asked Dash for Noelle's help. The book ends without saying.



Characters

Reed Brennan

Reed is a scholarship student at Easton Academy, which sets her apart from the crowd of rich kids. Reed has a different perspective on things. However, after being chosen to be in Billings the year before, Reed found herself in the most desired dorm, hanging out with the most popular girls. But one of the popular girls was mentally unstable and killed Reed's boyfriend. The semester before was difficult, as Reed had to prove her worth in Billings in a series of hazing rituals. Reed survived the drama of the in-crowd and is hopeful for a school year that will be easier. Reed's boyfriend Josh is handsome and loving. Reed is still in Billings. But when Cheyenne tries to take over as the most popular girl in school, Reed is caught up in the same hateful drama as the year before. Reed tries to protect her new roommate Sabine from the hazing ritual. The problem is, even though Reed thinks that the snobbery of Billings goes too far, Reed is proud to be a Billings girl. Reed is caught between enjoying her status and thinking that the hierarchy of popularity is wrong.

Natasha

Natasha is a good friend to Reed. Reed doesn't have a strong family life. Her mother has an addiction to prescription medication. Reed's family is also less wealthy than most of the kids that go to Easton. Natasha encourages Reed to succeed. Natasha also lets Reed spend the summers with her, away from her family. Natasha is older than Reed and gives her good advice.

Noelle Lange

In Reed's first year at Easton, she is taken under the wing of Noelle Lange. Noelle doesn't appear in this book. She was expelled the year in connection with Thomas's murder. However, Noelle played a big part in making Reed who she is. Noelle could be manipulative and was in control of Billings, but she was good at being in control. Despite all the bad things that happened in Reed's first year, Noelle made Reed feel proud to be a part of Billings. Noelle protected Reed. Noelle was the ring leader, the most popular girl in school and her legacy at Easton is still palpable. Noelle's boyfriend Josh seeks out a friendship with Reed during the summer. Noelle left such an impression on Reed that she is nervous just talking to Dash, in case Noelle found out. At the end of the book, Noelle mysteriously shows up after Cheyenne's death, aware of the emails that passed between Dash and Reed. Reed is overjoyed to see Noelle, who is confident and mischievous.



Thomas Pearson

He was murdered in the previous book when Ariana lost her mind. Thomas was Reed's first boyfriend. It wasn't Reed's fault he was murdered, but she was an object of speculation after his death. Thomas was an enigmatic character who swept Reed off her feet. He drank a lot and was generally wild.

Josh

Josh and Reed got together before the summer. Josh's best friend was Reed's boyfriend, Thomas. Thomas was murdered the year before by Ariana. Josh is in love with Reed. He doesn't believe in the hazing that goes on in Billings, but he doesn't realize how far Cheyenne will go to get power. When Reed catches Josh and Cheyenne flirting, Josh tells Reed it doesn't mean anything. But, Cheyenne drugs Josh and tricks him into having sex with her. Reed catches them in the act. Josh has a seizure from the pills that Cheyenne gave him. Reed doesn't believe Josh's story about getting drugged. Reed breaks up with Josh over Cheyenne.

Constance Talbot

Constance is a bit of an airhead. She wants to be in Billings more than any of the girls. Most of the popular girls look down on Constance. Constance was Reed's roommate in Reed's first year. When Constance is put in Billings by the headmaster, she feels like her dream has come true. The dream turns to a nightmare quickly. Cheyenne doesn't think Constance belongs in Billings. Cheyenne devises impossible tasks, and bullies Constance in an attempt to make her want to move out. Reed tries to support Constance as much as she can.

Ivy Slade

Ivy Slade was absent the year before. Reed never met her. Reed is surprised by how rude Ivy is to her. Ivy seems to have it out for Reed. Ivy was friends with the popular crowd that Reed got caught up in. Ivy enjoys bating Reed. Ivy's friend told her all about Reed. It's disconcerting for Reed to have a stranger pretend to know so much about her. Ivy says cruel things that remind Reed of the awful first year she had, in which Reed's boyfriend was murdered.

Cheyenne

Cheyenne is a member of Billings. She was less important last year when Noelle Lange was in charge. Now that the most powerful girls of Billings are gone, Cheyenne wants to be the biggest girl at Easton. The problem is that the new headmaster wants Billings' traditions to stop. Cheyenne has no intention of obeying the new headmaster. She tries



to force out the new Billings girls by making life horrible for them in Billings. Cheyenne manipulates the girls, giving them impossible tasks in a hazing ritual, but never intending to let them be in Billings. Cheyenne comes from a family of Easton Academy students. She takes the school and its traditions very seriously. When Reed tries to stop Cheyenne from controlling and manipulating the new girls, Cheyenne turns on Reed. She wants Reed out of Billings too, because Reed is a scholarship student. Her family is not the kind of people that Cheyenne believes belong in Billings.

Headmaster Cromwell

The new headmaster was once a student of Easton Academy. He was hired after the dramatic events of the previous year ended with the murder of Reeds boyfriend Thomas. Cromwell has very strict rules. He forbids the girls at Billings from continuing in their tradition of choosing their own residents. He appoints six girls to reside in Billings. When Cromwell finds out that Cheyenne has been continuing the sorority atmosphere of Billings, and getting special treatment, he has Cheyenne expelled.

Mr. White

Mr. White is a silent intimidating figure. He is Headmaster Cromwell's disciplinarian. No one wants to cross Mr. White. When a boy fakes a fart in the chapel, Mr. White takes him out of the room. The pampered upper class kids of Easton have never known anyone who could push them around like Cromwell and Mr. White.



Objects/Places

Easton Academy

Easton Academy is a prep school in New England. It is a very wealthy school with old traditions. The alumni of the school are very involved and the rules are very strict to keep the reputation of the school elite. Reed is one of the few students at Easton that does not come from a wealthy family. She is there on scholarship. Many of the students there think that Reed is not worthy to be at Easton because of her middle class background. A new headmaster is at Easton in the book. After the dramatic death of a student in the last year, Easton is trying to regain its reputation as a model institution. That reputation is tarnished again when Cheyenne kills herself in Billings dorm.

Hull Hall

Hull Hall is also called Hell Hall by the students. It is the office building of Easton. The Headmaster, the faculty and deans all have offices in Hull Hall

Billings

Billings is the most admired girls dormitory at Easton Academy. Traditionally the only people allowed to room at Billings were chosen by the girls at Billings. Billings has a very old, secret sorority mentality. Many of the girls at Billings have a long line of female relatives that went to Easton and roomed in Billings. Cheyenne wants to keep the tradition of billings alive, whereas Reed thinks that the cruelty of hazing new girls at Billings should stop. All the girls who end up in Billings feel proud of being a part of it. Everyone wants to be in Billings. The dorm represents the cool crowd at school, as well as the upper class.

Ketlar

Ketlar is the boys dormitory at Easton Academy. Josh lives in Ketlar. When Reed wants to tell Josh that she loves him, she sneaks into his dorm room. They almost have sex, but Reed stops them so they can talk. Josh doesn't push her. He is so elated that she came to tell him she loves him. After Reed catches Josh and Cheyenne together, she sees an ambulance go to Ketlar in the middle of the night. She doesn't find out until the next day that the ambulance came for Josh.

Driscoll Hotel

The Driscoll Hotel is an old, magnificent hotel in town. It was built mainly for visitors to Easton Academy and as a place to hold dinners and festivities for the alumni of Easton.



Cromwell hosts an alumni weekend that will end with a big black tie dinner at Driscoll Hall. Reed signs up for the wait staff, but her boyfriend Josh signs up for food alongside Cheyenne. Josh and Cheyenne are often seen together planning for the dinner at the Driscoll Hotel, which makes Reed very nervous and jealous.

The Art Cemetery

The Art Cemetery is not a graveyard. It is the art studio at Easton. The Cemetery is where Josh spends most his nights. Josh is really into to art, and as an upperclassman Josh has the key to the cemetery. Josh and Reed spend a lot of time together in the cemetery to have some romance and privacy. When Cheyenne drugs Josh, Reed finds them about to have sex in the cemetery. Since the cemetery is where Josh and Reed used to go to be alone, it feels like even more of a betrayal that she should find them there in such a special place.



Themes

Friendship

The book centers on the friendships of the girls in Billings. The feud between Cheyenne and Reed makes Reed appreciate her friends even more. As Cheyenne goes after Reed's boyfriend and reputation, the loyalty of Sabine, Constance and Tiffany keeps Reed from being overwhelmed. The need to protect Sabine and Constance from Tiffany is also a motivator for Reed. In order to protect her friends, Reed has to stand up to Constance, even if that means breaking with Billings' traditions.

Love

As a coming of age novel, first love is very significant in the protagonist's life. The moment when Reed admits that she loves Josh changes their relationship. It is a moment of trust that they share. Because Reed loves Josh the feeling that he may have betrayed her is devastating. The theme of love brings up other questions as well about loyalty, honesty and trust. Reed has to learn to trust Josh. She also has to avoid the temptation of Dash, a handsome boy who is already in college.

Betrayal

Betrayal is the central theme of the book. Billings is supposed to be a house that embodies loyalty. When Mrs. Lattimer walks in on the hazing process, all the girls cover it up. Even though Reed and some of the other girls think what Cheyenne is doing is wrong, they band together against the authorities. When Cheyenne drugs and seduces Josh, she is not just betraying an old friend; she is betraying a fellow Billings girl. Though Cheyenne believes that being in Billings has to do with credentials, Reed believes that Billings is about belonging to a group. It is about loyalty. The betrayals of that loyalty, which go on throughout the book, undermine the solidarity of Billings. Betrayal is also a part of Reeds relationship to Josh. She thinks he has betrayed her, and has to deal with the hurt of that betrayal.



Style

Point of View

The book is told from the point of view of Reed. Because the story is told from a single point of view the narrator is unreliable. Reed is a teenager. Her perspective comes from her age and experience. Reed cannot tell the reader accurately what other character's motives are. The first person narrator helps the plot progress, because the reader discovers things along with the narrator. The reader only sees what Reed sees, so everything else is second-hand information.

Setting

The book is set in an upscale, expensive preparatory boarding school in Connecticut. It is a setting of the privileged. The kids at the high school are mostly from wealthy homes, where a good education is a given. The narrator is the black sheep of the school in that her background is not upper class. It is significant that many jokes are made about Reed's blue-collar background. The attitude of condescension towards Reed, even jokingly reveals the mentality of the society of the school.

Language and Meaning

The language is easy to understand. The dialogue is modern, and the cultural references to movies and music are current. The prose is accessible, which makes the plot move along swiftly. Most description is expository. The weather is described and the buildings at Easton Academy. Mostly the book is made up of the inner dialogue of the main character, Reed. The plot is developed through conversation not third person narration.

Structure

The book is divided into forty-four chapters. The chapters aren't numbered, but they have a short title that explains the theme of the chapter. The chapters are relatively short. When action is developing the chapters are shorter, quickening the pace. The bulk of the narrative is conversation and the inner dialogue of the narrator. The narrator's thoughts lend a lot to the dialogue and give a sense of the history of the series. There are few time gaps in the story. Much of the plot will take place in a single day, or over a period of days. From the beginning of the book to the end not more than a few months have passed.



Quotes

"I tried to shoot my friends a bolstering look as I went by, but they were too busy seeing their lives flash before their eyes to notice." Reed, "A Piece of Easton" pg. 64

"In my first few months at Easton, I had fallen in love for the first time, lost my virginity, made friends with the most popular girls at school...and stood by totally naïve while one of them brutally murdered my boyfriend. And that was only the beginning." Reed, "New Year" pg. 2

"Last year was over. Last year couldn't touch me. Those people were all gone. Transferred or committed or just gone. This year could be anything I wanted it to be." Reed, "New Year" pg. 2

"She was wearing a white blouse with short puffed sleeves and a black pleated mini. Her toenails were red, her fingernails pink, and her skin shone like a Jergens ad. Every inch of her was buffed, waxed, and toned to perfection. But still, I just couldn't see Josh going for her. He was too anti-establishment. Too laid back. Too...into me." Reed, "A Piece of Easton" pg. 61

"She stared at me. I stared back, hoping to show her that she didn't bother me. That as rude and bizarre and dark as she seemed, I was not intimidated. I was a Billings Girl. I stared people down, not her." Reed, "Quit Billings" pg. 81

"Her proprietary look at Josh curled my toes. I had to say something. Anything. But what could I say without looking like the psychotically paranoid and jealous girlfriend? How was it that no matter what, Cheyenne always seemed to get the last word?" Reed, "Bogarted" pg. 85

"Everyone wanted to be in Billings. Being in Billings meant being admired. It meant being feared. It meant being the best. You didn't just give that up. Even if it almost killed you." Reed, "Quit Billings" pg. 79

"My heart tore down the middle. Today his words felt like a cruel joke. Like torture. He kept calling me, but I didn't look back. I would never look back." Reed, "Wasn't Me" pg. 165

"'Oh, I can.' I felt strong as I stared her down. Certain. I had the high road. I was in charge. 'Don't test me, Cheyenne. I learned from the best.'" Reed, "The Best" pg. 170

"As much as I still wanted to throttle Cheyenne, I couldn't help smiling as I joined the rest of the Billings Girls. I had won. Billings would be a better place because of me. I had beaten Cheyenne." Reed, "Adequate" pg. 175

"As much as I hated her, as awful as she'd been, as easily as she'd tricked me, now that I was faced with the choices, I knew that I couldn't be the one to give up Cheyenne.

Doing that would be proving her right about me. It would be proving to her that I wasn't a true Billings Girl." Reed, "Ringleader" pg. 192



Topics for Discussion

Why does Reed play along with Cheyenne's hazing ritual?

Does Reed feel like she belongs at Billings?

What does Reed mean when she faces off with Cheyenne and says she learned from the best?

Why does Billings mean so much to Cheyenne?

Reed went through the hazing ritual when she started at Billings, so she understands how hard it is. Reed feels proud to be from Billings and to have survived her own hazing. Is the hazing a valuable part of being in Billings?

Why does Jos think that Reed should leave Billings?

Does Josh not realize how bad Cheyenne can be? Or does he not care?

Why does Cheyenne kill herself?

Sabine is impressed by the rituals of the school. How does the history of Easton and its prestige affect the girls?

What does Noelle mean when she quotes Dash's email? Do you think that Noelle wrote to Reed in Dash's name?