

Jane's Melody Study Guide

Jane's Melody by Ryan Winfield

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Plot Summary

Jane's Melody by Ryan Winfield is the story of a mother trying to make sense of her daughter's death. Jane McKinney's daughter Melody has just died of a drug overdose, and Jane is distraught. She wants to know all about her daughter whom she has not seen for the last year of her life. Her grief leads her to stalk a young musician who she believes was her daughter's boyfriend.

Caleb Cummings is a twenty-five year old homeless musician. Jane offers him a job to clear her backyard and put in a flower garden and fountain because she believes the man has a connection to her daughter. The man lives in her house while he works. Jane feels guilty when she becomes attracted to him because he is so young. Also, he was her daughter's boyfriend.

Caleb tells Jane that he did not know Melody. She had stopped to hear him play on the street corner near where she worked at a coffee shop and left him a silver dollar. He then went to the coffee shop and left the silver dollar as a tip for her. It was a subsequent game they played, but he never knew her name. Their relationship never went past trading a silver dollar back and forth.

Caleb helps Jane deal with the grief she feels about her daughter. The two begin an intimate relationship despite the fifteen year age difference. Jane is bothered by the difference in their ages, but Caleb is not concerned by it. Though he loves Jane, she feels that she is robbing the young man of his youth and dreams. When she learns that he has been offered a chance to become part of a band in Austin, she cannot let him pass up the opportunity. He tries to get her to go with him, but the memories of her daughter are in Washington State. To make him leave, Jane tells him that she does not love him.

The death of her best friend from a brain tumor shows Jane that life is short. She cannot live in fear. This gives her the catalyst she needs to move on with her life. Jane sells her home on Bainbridge Island and leaves Seattle behind. She goes in search of Caleb, the only man she has ever loved.



Chapters 1-2

Summary

In Chapter 1, Jane is sitting in her car at the cemetery staring at her daughter's grave the day after her daughter's funeral. It is pouring down rain, which matches Jane's mood. She tries to tell herself that her daughter cannot be dead, but when the windshield wipers whisk the rain from the windshield she sees her daughter's grave and knows that it is true. Jane cannot believe that the day before she buried her daughter. Her mother and brother were there. Jane does not like them. She feels her own mother blames her for Melody's death. Jane knows it is not her fault, but still feels guilt.

Jane sees a stranger standing over her daughter's grave. He bends down and lays something on the grave. Jane reaches to switch on the wipers again so that she can see, but accidentally hits the high beams. He turns to look at her. She can see that he is a young man. He carries no umbrella in the pouring rain and is getting drenched. When the wipers clear the windshield again, the man is gone. Jane goes to the grave and finds a silver dollar. Jane wonders about its significance. She was not involved in the last year of her daughter's life due to Melody's spiral into drugs and alcohol. She slips the coin into her pocket and returns to her car.

Jane goes home and sits in her garage with the car running. She has thoughts of suicide because she does not know how she can continue living when her daughter is dead. She has memories of when she and Melody first moved into this house. The ringing of the phone interrupts her thoughts. She knows it is her sponsor checking on her. She does not want her to be the one to have to find her body so she goes inside to answer the phone. Her sponsor, Grace, is worried about her and wants to come over. Jane sees the mess that her mother and brother left before their departure and suggests that she go to Grace's house instead. Grace talks to her to help take her mind off of her daughter's death.

Jane tells Grace that her brother was drinking and that he and their mother fought so loud that Jane's neighbor half an acre away called to see if Jane was okay. Grace fixes up her spare room for Jane to stay so that she does not have to travel home in the storm.

In Chapter 2, Jane is on the ferry headed to the mainland from the island she lives on. She thinks that things would have been different if she had gone looking for her daughter and offered her help. She wonders if her daughter would still be alive. Jane reminds herself that she paid for five treatment centers and gave Melody all the support possible. She offered to take Melody home as long as she stayed clean and sober after her last treatment. But, Melody turned her down and went back to drugs.

Jane thinks of when she lived in the city going to the University of Washington. She met Melody's father, Bruce and became pregnant. He took off when she was five months



pregnant. She dropped out of college and moved to Bainbridge Island, a quiet small-town island that she thought would be immune to any dangers of drugs and alcohol. Alcoholism runs in Jane's family; so, she had been worried about her daughter becoming involved with the same addiction.

Jane goes to her daughter's apartment building. It is a run-down building and this is where her daughter died. The door is answered by a girl with an attitude that tells Jane that she has not agreed to an inspection. The girl realizes her mistake and apologizes. Jane tells her that she has come for Melody's things. The girl tells her she will be right back and shuts the door. The girl returns with a box, and Jane is surprised by how little there is. She tells Jane that she and Melody shared the other stuff. Melody never mentioned having a family to her.

Jane asks her if there is anything she can tell her about her daughter. The girl says that she did not know her well because Melody only moved in a few months ago. She tells her that she worked at the Devil's Cup. They called to say they had her final check. The girl tells her that Melody talked about enrolling in beauty school. When Jane is leaving, the girl tells her that Melody owed her rent. She tells her one fifty, but the girl wants cash and takes the eighty-five dollars that Jane gives her. Jane sees the red track marks on the girl's arms when she reaches for the money. Jane thinks about pulling back the money, but she does not.

Jane goes to the Devil's Cup. The girl did not know Melody. She gives the check to Jane and tells her that the manager is not in, but he will be in the coffee shop during the week. Jane hears music as she walks to her car. She follows the music and finds a young man playing a guitar. She wants to give him some money, but she has only the silver dollar she took from Melody's grave. Jane realizes it is the man from the cemetery. She asks about his age, and he tells her that he will be twenty-five in July.

Jane wants to talk to him, but he does not want to talk to her. She tells him she saw him at the cemetery. She shows him the coin he left at the grave. He asks if she is Melody's sister. When she tells him she is Melody's mother, he offers his condolences for her loss and walks away.

Analysis

Jane is distraught over the death of her daughter. She is obsessing about her death and wants to join her daughter. Jane feels that her mother blames her for her daughter's death and she does feel guilty that she is alive and her daughter is not. To distract herself from these thoughts, she tries to learn everything about her daughter. Melody has been the only constant in her life for twenty years. She feels that she has failed her daughter. She contemplates suicide because she blames herself for her daughter's death and her inability to help her.

Jane does not get along with her family. Her mother favors her brother who is an alcoholic. Jane feels that she is not loved by her family. Melody was her family and



when Melody chose drugs over her, Jane was hurt. She feels unloved. When she goes to pick up Melody's belongings, she realizes that she did not know her daughter and no one can tell her anything about her. When she sees the man from the cemetery, she thinks that he will be able to tell her about Melody.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Jane sitting in her car staring at her daughter's grave? Why does she blame herself for her daughter's death?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Jane contemplate killing herself? What stops her?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Jane contemplate not giving Melody's roommate money that she claims Melody owes her?

Vocabulary

congregation, captivate, hypnotic, cliché, immune, predispose, oblivion, nostalgia



Chapters 3-4

Summary

In Chapter 3, Grace and Jane have lunch. Grace is worried that Jane is not eating. Grace orders beers for them to drink. Jane is surprised because she has never seen Grace drink. Grace says that just because her husband is in recovery and Jane's family should be does not mean that they cannot enjoy a beer every now and again. Having the beer makes Jane eat a little because she does not want to drink on an empty stomach. Grace asks Jane about work. Jane tells her that she has not returned to work yet. She has savings she can rely on, so she is not worried about not working. Jane spends her time stalking Melody's Facebook page to see who is making comments on her wall. Two days before her death, Melody posted that "Love is life and life is good." Jane believes that the musician was Melody's boyfriend. Grace encourages her to try to talk to him again.

Jane goes to the doorway where the musician was playing before, but he is not there. She goes to the Devil's Cup and talks to the manager. She asks him if Melody had a boyfriend. He is not for sure. Jane then asks him about the musician who plays near the shop. He tells her that the musician came in a lot and he and Melody flirted. She asks where she might find him and he tells her some places to look.

Jane finds the man lying on a bench. She greets him, and he says she is bordering on stalking. She tells him that she just wants to talk to him. When he gets up, Jane sees that he has cuts and bruises. Some guys beat him up and took his stuff. She wants to take him to the hospital, but he will not go. Jane then tells him she is not leaving him like this and offers to take him to his home and clean him up. He has no home. He is sleeping on the bench temporarily. He is on his way to Austin, Texas. She makes him go home with her. Jane asks his name as they walk to the car. He tells her his name is Caleb.

Caleb falls asleep in the car. Jane wonders about living on the street. She wonders what Grace will think of her taking the young man into her home. She helps him into the house and takes him to Melody's old room. She helps him out of his jacket and his boots. Jane gives him some Advil and cleans the blood from his face. He falls asleep, and she checks on him periodically throughout the evening.

Having someone in Melody's room makes her think of her nights of lying awake worrying about her daughter. Melody sneaked out many times to go drinking when Jane thought she was in her room safe. Jane tried many ways to help her daughter. She tried counseling, AA for teens, and outpatient and inpatient programs; but, nothing seemed to work. One night Melody did not come home. Police refused to file a missing person's report until she was missing for three days. Jane received a message that she was staying with a friend and would not be coming home anytime soon. Melody did not come home until her first overdose when she stayed at home while waiting for a bed in



the treatment center. It was during this time that Jane asked Grace to be her Al-Anon sponsor to help her deal with the pain of dealing with her daughter's addiction.

She dreams about Caleb. The pained look in his eyes concerns Jane. She believes him to have a connection to her daughter and she would like know about it.

In Chapter 4, Jane wakes the next morning to an alarm screeching. Caleb is in the kitchen making breakfast. He has set off the smoke alarm. Her toaster is on the blink. It burns toast which sets off the alarm if one is not careful. Caleb looks much better and Jane is self-conscious about her own appearance. For the first time in a long time, Jane eats everything on her plate. Jane finds Caleb attractive and can see what Melody would see in him. She reminds herself that he is Melody's love interest to temper her lustful feelings.

Jane asks if he ever takes off his cap. He tells her that it belonged to his dad and it is the only thing that he ever gave him. That's why he always wears it. Jane asks him what he will do without his guitar. He says one will turn up because it usually does. He will then save up and go to Austin. Austin is a good place for musicians to get their start.

Jane offers to help Caleb get to Austin. She wants him to help clean up her back yard and plant a flower and vegetable garden. It is overrun by blackberry brambles/ It will take hard work to get it cleared. He can stay with her while he works; and, she will deduct food and room and board from what she pays him for the job. He believes it will take a month or two to finish the job. He does not want to take charity. She assures him that he will be doing her a favor. He agrees, but Jane has to agree not to ask him about Melody.

Jane agrees and takes him in to town to get clothes to wear and takes him with her to get a manicure. Jane then takes him to lunch. His dad had died of liver disease because of his drinking. His mother died in a car accident that she caused while she was drunk. He was supposedly in the car, but he does not remember it. After his parents' deaths, Caleb went to live with his aunt in Spokane. He was introduced to music by a man who lived down the street. Caleb worked a paper route to get money to buy a guitar. The school counselor discovered that he was synesthetic, which means he can hear sound in color. His aunt died when he was sixteen. When they tried putting him in a foster home, he ran away.

Jane tells him that drinking problems run in her family as well. Caleb does not drink anymore because he does not want to be like his dad. After lunch, Jane and Caleb go to the local hardware store and get gardening supplies. The clerk asks her if she has decided to sell her home. If so, there are people interested in buying it. The Peters Brothers buy houses on big lots. Then, they demolish the existing house and put several houses up in its place to sell. Jane tells him that she is not selling.



Analysis

Jane is having difficulty dealing with her daughter's death. Her mentor from her support group is there to help her through, but she does not want to tell her how bad she is. She is not eating. She is obsessing over Melody's Facebook page. This obsession leads her to try to find the musician that she believes was Melody's boyfriend. Jane wants any connection to her daughter that she can find and the musician to her is a connection. He is reluctant to talk about Melody to her, but she is persistent because she is desperate to learn about her daughter. She is so desperate that she is not even thinking of her safety by bringing a strange man into her home.

Jane needs someone to care for in her daughter's absence; and, this young man needs someone to tend to him. He is beaten up and homeless. So, she takes him in and offers him a job. This gives Jane something to think about besides her daughter. Also, not being alone will quell the thoughts of suicide.

Jane has lustful thoughts about the young man. She tries not to because he is her daughter's boyfriend. That makes her feel for the young man and she wants to help him. She offers him a job so that he can get the money to fulfill his dreams of going to Austin.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Jane believe that the musician is her daughter's boyfriend? Why does she want to talk to him?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Caleb agree to stay on Bainbridge Island and work for Jane?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Caleb agree to work for Jane, but only if she agrees not to question him about Melody? Why do you think Jane agrees to this?

Vocabulary

reverie, mischievous, penetrate, unkempt, intensity, synesthetic, abstinent, heretics, atheist



Chapters 5-6

Summary

In Chapter 5, Jane goes to her Al-Anon meeting on Saturday morning. She goes late so as not to have to talk to Grace before the meeting. She is not sure how Grace will react to her arrangement with Caleb. One of the women is talking about her husband and his drinking. When it is Jane's turn to speak, she thanks everyone for their condolences and help in dealing with the death of her daughter. She is obsessed with how Melody died. The state certificate listed her death as by misadventure. Jane believes it to be a suicide. She believes she has been killing herself since she was fifteen and began drinking and doing drugs.

Jane says that she is obsessing with another project. She has taken in her daughter's boyfriend who is a musician down on his luck. She is having him work for her until he gets back on his feet. After the meeting, Jane talks to Grace. She hopes that she is not upset with her for not mentioning Caleb before. Grace assures her that Jane does not need her permission for anything. Jane tells Grace that she and Caleb's relationship is strictly professional and she will not let anything happen. Grace tells her there is nothing wrong with looking.

Jane goes to the store. At home she puts away the groceries and the supplies she has gotten for Caleb. She goes to Melody's room to put them away and realizes that Caleb has been sleeping on pink sheets. Thinking he might want something less feminine, she changes the sheets and throws the pink sheets in the trash. Pink was Melody's favorite color and Jane had left them in her room in case she came home. Melody will not be coming home and throwing away the sheets gives her a feeling of liberation, but also guilt. She then begins to clean the clutter from the rest of the house. She has several bags of trash and a pile for Goodwill when Caleb comes in from working in the backyard.

Jane asks Caleb to help her take the bags to the landfill. Caleb asks if she is sure she wants to throw it away. She says it is time to remove the clutter from her life. She feels better after throwing the bags in the landfill.

In Chapter 6, Jane buys Caleb a guitar. A storm is starting as she makes her way home. She is surprised that Caleb is working outside in the storm. She watches him clear away vines with his wet shirt clinging to his chest. He turns her way and she waves for him to come inside. She then hides the guitar in her room until she is ready to give it to him. Caleb asks her for a towel and strips down to his boxers at the door so as not to drip water through the house. She tells him to go take a shower because she has a surprise for him.

Jane gives Caleb the guitar, and he tells her that he cannot accept it. The name of the guitar is Jane. He says it is even better than the one he had before. She tells him it is a



gift and it brings her joy to give it to him. She says to repay her he can play her a song. He plays a beautiful love song he wrote. Once dinner is over, Jane makes them cocoa and they settle next to the fire as a storm roars outside.

Caleb wants her to talk about herself. She tells him about the first night she and Melody spent in her present home. She feels a stab of pain at the memories. Caleb asks about Melody's father. Jane tells him that he abandoned them when she was pregnant and never paid a dime in support. She does not know whether he is alive or dead. The memories make Jane start to cry. Caleb wraps his arm around her and lets her sob against his chest. She asks Caleb if he can tell her anything about her daughter. He says he would rather not talk about it. They get into an argument when he will not talk. Jane begins to yell. Caleb walks from the room to his bedroom and leaves the guitar where it was lying.

Analysis

Jane feels slightly embarrassed about bringing the young man home and slips in late to her meeting so as not to tell Grace about it. Her share with the group shows what she is feeling about her daughter's death. She believes Melody committed suicide and that all of her addictive behavior was a sign of wanting to kill herself. Grace does not chastise Jane about bringing the young man home, but tells her that looking at him can do no harm.

Looking around Melody's room and seeing it is exactly how she left it when she was last there makes Jane want to clear out the clutter in her life. She begins to clean getting rid of everything that has accumulated since she has been dealing with her daughter's addiction. Clearing out the clutter, is symbolic of letting go of the past and preparing for the future.

Jane's feelings for Caleb begin to grow. She buys him a guitar and this brings them closer together. She tells Caleb about Melody's childhood. The memories bring Jane to tears and she is hurt when Caleb will not share his memories of her daughter. She wants to know about her life so much that it hurts that he will not discuss her.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Jane slip into her Saturday morning meeting late to avoid Grace? Why does she worry what Grace will think about her arrangement with Caleb?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Jane throw away Melody's pink sheets? Why does throwing them away give her a feeling of liberation?



Discussion Question 3

Why does Jane buy Caleb a guitar?

Vocabulary

customary, ritual, respite, critique, nomad, narcissistic, acoustic, uncharitable, compliment, callous, anguish



Chapters 7-8

Summary

In Chapter 7, Grace and Jane go for a walk after the Saturday meeting. Grace asks how her yard is coming. She says that Caleb is making good progress. Jane tells her that she feels it is time that she goes back to work. There is a conference in Portland the following week that she is considering attending. She needs to get away because she and Caleb are getting along too well. He makes breakfast every morning, washes the dishes, and does his own laundry. Some nights he takes his guitar and treats her to live music in her living room. She says that he is smart and fun to talk to as well. Jane believes she is attracted to him. She feels guilty when she looks at him because she feels he is off limits because he was Melody's boyfriend.

Jane is not sleeping well because she is either thinking about Melody or thinking of Caleb sleeping just down the hall. Grace gives her an Ambien to take to help her sleep. Grace has been having terrible headaches, and the Ambien helps her sleep. Grace tells her that life is fragile and no one ever knows when they will pass. She tells Jane not to let fear have a place in her life.

Jane returns home. Caleb is in the yard with a portable stereo playing. She watches him work for a bit. She realizes that the yard work will one day be gone and Caleb will leave. This depresses her, but she does not know why. She decides she just needs rest and goes to her room turns on the TV and takes the Ambien Grace gave her. She gets up to get something to eat and hears the dryer buzz. As she folds Caleb's laundry, her eyelids get heavy. She puts in the clothes in his room, but grabs one of his t-shirts. She goes to the kitchen and grabs a bag of Doritos.

In her room, she strips and puts on Caleb's t-shirt. She climbs in bed with the Doritos and starts watching *The Bachelor* on the television. The Ambien seems to affect her eating and emotions rather than helping her sleep. She eats the chips one after the other tears streaming down her face. She wipes her hands on the front of Caleb's shirt without thinking, leaving it covered in orange finger stains. The bag is soon empty and she tips it up to get the crumbs in the bottom of the bag. She has the bag raised when there is a tap at her door and Caleb enters. Their lock eyes as they look at one another. Jane is overwhelmed with embarrassment. Before she can say anything or lower the bag, Caleb grins and retreats from the room closing the door. At that moment, the Ambien kicks in, and Jane falls asleep.

Jane awakens the next morning and feels rested. Looking down, she sees her orange fingers and the stained t-shirt and is mortified. She is embarrassed that Caleb saw her that way. She showers and dresses. As she goes into the kitchen, she's happy that Caleb is not there. He left a note by the coffee pot telling her that her breakfast is in the microwave. She tells herself she is acting crazy for walking on eggshells in her own



home because she is attracted to her dead daughter's boyfriend. She knew it was wrong, but she still thought about him all the time.

Jane puts Caleb's t-shirt in the washer. Passing by Melody's room, she sees Melody's baby book lying on the dresser. She picks it up and sits down on the bed. Looking through the book, Jane begins to cry. Jane looks up to see Caleb standing in the doorway when she finishes reading the book. He sits next to her on the bed. He tells Jane that he feels that he knows Melody after having read it. Jane questions this. Caleb confesses that he never knew Melody. He never knew her name until she died.

Caleb tells Jane that Melody came by one day when he was playing near the Devil's Cup. She was beautiful and tortured and he felt she was a kindred spirit. She tossed the silver dollar in the case after he played her a song. The next morning he went to the coffee shop and left the silver dollar in her tip jar. They playfully passed the silver dollar back and forth in this way and flirted with one another. He always looked forward to her coming to hear him play. One morning he went to the coffee shop and she was not there. After a week, he asked about her and found out what happened. He went to her grave to pay his respects and to give her back her coin.

Caleb did not tell Jane until now because he needed the work and a place to stay. He was afraid that the truth would lose those for him. He apologizes for not telling her. Jane asks if he liked Melody, and he says he did. She asks if he was attracted to Melody. He says that he is attracted to Jane. Everything that he liked in Melody, he loves in Jane. Caleb tells her he has been attracted to her since he first saw her. Every night he lies in bed and thinks about her just down the hall. He cannot get her out of his head. He kisses her. Jane is stunned. She pulls him to her and kisses him harder. She wants him, but guilt makes her pull away. Jane races from the room. She sits on her bed and cries because she misses her daughter and because she is alive when her daughter is dead. She feels her life is a failure because her daughter is dead.

After an hour, she leaves her room and finds Caleb sitting on the bed where she left him. Caleb apologizes and offers to leave. She tells him that he is not leaving. She hugs him and tells him that this should not change their relationship and that they are both adults who have been through a lot.

Jane lies awake that night thinking. She wonders if it is Caleb her daughter was referring to in her Facebook post. She wonders what would have happened if they had actually spoken. Jane wished she could change the past. Her thoughts turn to Caleb and their kiss. She gets up and goes to stand outside Caleb's door. She questions whether it is wrong because Melody liked him. She turns the knob halfway and then retreats to her room.

The next morning, she dresses in her business suit and packs her suitcase. She tells him that she is going to a health insurance convention in Portland for a week. She gives him half his pay because she wants him to stay because he wants to not because he needs to. He asks if she wants him to stay. She says of course, she wants her yard finished. She gives him extra money for groceries and cab fare and there is a bicycle in



the garage that he can use. The conference will be over on Friday, but she is planning to stay until Sunday. The pained look in Caleb's eyes upsets her.

Jane feels that she will cry as she prepares to leave. To lighten the mood, she tells him that if he goes into town to get her some Doritos. This makes him smile. Jane wipes away a tear and wonders if she will see him again.

In Chapter 8, Caleb works in the garden. His heart broke the instant Jane drove away. He blames himself for having lied to her. When he saw her in the cemetery, she looked so much like Melody that he thought she was Melody's ghost. When he found out she was Melody's mother, he felt guilty for being more attracted to Jane than Melody. He believes that any chance he had with Jane disappeared when Jane drove away.

The next morning, his hands are too raw and swollen to work for long. He goes inside and puts all of his belongings in two garbage bags. He leaves the guitar she gave him on the bed in Melody's room. He takes five hundred dollars from the money Jane gave him and leaves the rest on the kitchen table. He locks the door and puts the house key under a rock in the flowerbed. He then walks away. As he walks he thinks he hears a woman cry for help. He follows the cries and finds a goat tethered inside an enclosure. The ground is barren and muddy around it. The goat cannot get to any food. Caleb tries to move the goat so it can get to some grass, but it tries to charge him. He gathers some branches and leaves and throws them to the goat.

Caleb goes to the hardware store. Ralph helps Caleb get supplies to help with the blackberry vines. Caleb asks if he has any goat food. Ralph tells him that goats eat anything including blackberries. Caleb takes a cab back to Jane's house and puts his clothes away. He grabs two apples from the kitchen fruit bowl and takes the bicycle from the garage. He goes back to where the goat is and lures him home with the apples.

Analysis

Jane is worried that she is getting along so well with Caleb. It makes her nervous. It also makes her feel guilty because of Melody. Jane is so wrapped up in her grief and her growing feelings for Caleb that she does not notice that Grace is having health issues. She mentions terrible headaches that affect her sleep.

Jane puts on Caleb's shirt to feel closer to him without crossing any noticeable lines. It is however an intimacy that shows how she feels about him. This plus seeing how upset Jane is about Melody's death, makes Caleb confess that he did not know Melody. They just flirted, but he never knew her name until she had died.

Caleb confesses that he likes Jane and kisses her. Feeling guilty about kissing this young man her daughter had liked in her daughter's room makes Jane push him away. She does have feeling for him, however, and will not let him leave when he suggests it. Instead she chooses to go away for a week to a conference to sort out her feelings.



Caleb feels that her leaving is because of his kissing her. So, he packs up his things to leave. Seeing the goat makes him change his plans. Instead of leaving, he rescues the goat and takes it home with him.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Jane push Caleb away when he kisses her?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Caleb leave when Jane leaves for her convention? How does he feel about her leaving?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Caleb come back after finding the goat?

Vocabulary

melancholy, abyss, kindred, propensity, genetic, momentary, misfortune, distraction, remorse, pathetic, starvation, haunches, ornery, enclosure



Chapters 9-10

Summary

In Chapter 9, Jane sits listening to a lecture in the hotel. Her thoughts drift to Caleb, and she worries that he has taken his money and left. She knew it was a risk, but she felt she was holding him hostage. Part of her thought that if he were gone she would be able to move on from her daughter's death. The other part wanted him to stay. After knowing that her daughter was never intimate with him, she wonders why she is afraid to act on her feelings.

The man next to Jane brushes her leg. He is from Phoenix. He asks her to have dinner with him. She can tell that he is after more than dinner. She lies and tells him that she has a boyfriend. He holds up his hand showing her his wedding band and winks. She agrees, and says she will meet him in the restaurant at eight. At eight thirty, she is on the ferry on her way home.

Jane hears guitar music as she enters the house. She clears her throat to get his attention. He moves toward her, taking her in his arms. They begin kissing. She starts to pull him toward the bedroom when there's a knock at the door. Two policemen who have had a call about a disturbance. The call was about a woman screaming. They discover it is the goat. After the police leave, Jane questions Caleb about the goat. She says it is going back to his owner.

Caleb suggests that they think about it tomorrow. They begin kissing and move to the bedroom. Jane worries that Caleb is used to young women and is worried about how her body looks. She soon forgets these thoughts as the two have sex.

In Chapter 10, Jane awakes alone in the bed. She is nervous about how he feels about her this morning. She finds the kitchen empty. She gets a cup of coffee and goes to the sliding glass doors. She sees the goat. Caleb enters the room fresh from the shower. He kisses her. Caleb cooks breakfast. He opens the pantry door and shows her an entire shelf lined with bags of Doritos. He tells her that she never looked cuter than that night. She asks him if he does not think she is too old for him. He thinks she is perfect. Caleb tells her that he was nervous because he felt he would not be experienced enough for her.

The two have sex once again. Caleb tells her that he loves her. She tells him he is just infatuated. He tells her he wishes she could see herself the way he does. She is an amazing, kind, smart, and beautiful woman. He knew he loved her from the first time he saw her. Caleb assures her that she does not have to say she loves him until she is ready.



Analysis

Jane admits how she feels to Caleb, and the two become intimate. Jane is nervous about their age difference and what Caleb will think of her body. Caleb thinks she is perfect and does not think about the difference in their ages. He tells her that he loves her, but Jane will not believe it. Jane does not believe that she is worthy of being loved. Her abusive past makes her feel unworthy of love.

Caleb wants her to see how beautiful and amazing that she is. She cannot, however, see it. Her mother's derisive comments all of her life have left her self-image damaged. It will take Caleb's patience to help Jane emerge from her shell.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Jane leave the convention early?

Discussion Question 2

Why is Jane obsessed with the age difference between her and Caleb?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Jane not believe that Caleb loves her?

Vocabulary

drone, supplemental, optimistic, flirtatious, facade, serial, anticipation, ecstasy, imminent, subtle, culprit, insecurity, incorrigible, tyrant, ravish, dilate, infatuated



Chapters 11-12

Summary

In Chapter 11, Jane and Caleb go in search of the owner of the goat. They find out that the goat belongs to Mrs. Hawthorne. Jane had tried to sell her an insurance policy many years ago. Since her husband's death many years ago, she has lived alone. Mrs. Hawthorne remembers her from years before and tells her that she does not want a policy. They tell her they are there about her goat. They offer to rent him. His name is Bill Clinton.

Jane tells her that Caleb thought the goat was abandoned and took it home. Caleb negotiates with Mrs. Hawthorne to buy the goat. Jane is amazed by his negotiating skills. When they are leaving, Mrs. Hawthorne asks if Caleb can bring her in some wood. He tells her the firewood should be stacked differently to keep it from rotting.

When they get home, Jane inspects the work that Caleb has done. She is amazed by how much he has gotten done. They burn a pile of blackberry vines and sit around the fire as the sun goes down. Jane is happy that he is making such progress, but it also worries about what will happen when he finishes. Jane sees that the rosebush her mother gave her has not been pulled out. Caleb cannot do it. He asks why she wants it gone. It is because her mother gave it to her and it is pink, which was Melody's favorite color. They talk about the plans for the garden including a fountain.

The two have sex again that night. Jane watches him sleep and thinks about the difference in their ages. She hears Grace in her head telling her not to worry about it.

In Chapter 12, Jane goes to her Al-Anon meeting. The women tell her that she looks good. When it is her time to share, she tells everyone that she is sleeping with her gardener and that he is fifteen years younger than her. She is happier than she can ever remember being, but she feels guilty for being happy when her daughter is dead. She thinks she is being selfish for not being racked with grief. She asks Grace what she thinks after the meeting. She tells her that she is happy that Jane is moving forward and she should trust her gut and not be secretive.

When she goes home Caleb is gone and so is her bicycle. For a moment, she thinks he is gone, but his belongings are still in his room. She sits in Melody's room and stares at the pink walls. She thinks about Melody and how she had been a difficult child crying for hours for no reason. Jane wondered if there was something wrong with her even then; something that the drugs and alcohol relieved.

Jane thinks it is time to let go of the past. She goes to the hardware store and gets paint to paint Melody's room. She meets Caleb on the way home. He is evasive about where he has been, but he finally admits that he was at Mrs. Hawthorne's. He goes to stack



her wood pile for her so that it would not rot. As payment, she gives him a small pewter figurine of a man playing a trumpet.

Jane has Caleb help her paint Melody's room. He questions if she is sure she wants to do it. She is very sure. She hesitates on the last bit of pink. Caleb wraps his arms around her and tells her he loves her and she tells him that she loves him too. The words just slip out. Together, they hold the roller and paint over the last section of pink paint. They have sex in the newly painted room on the floor.

Analysis

Jane thinks it is important to find the owner of the goat and properly compensate the owner. Mrs. Hawthorne is a lonely old woman who is ornery. She haggles with them over the goat and takes a liking to Caleb.

Jane is amazed at how much Caleb has gotten done in the yard with the goat's help. They make plans of what to do with the space. Jane and Caleb are enjoying their new sexual relationship. Jane tells everyone in her Al-Anon meeting that she is sleeping with him. Grace is happy that Jane is moving forward and happy. Jane still has a fear about Caleb leaving.

Jane decides to paint Melody's room to help her let go of the past. She enlists Caleb's help. Caleb questions her because he does not want her to regret the decision. When she hesitates on the last bit, he helps her paint it making her tell him that she loves him. She does not want to admit it, but she knows that it is true.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Jane feel it is important to find the goat's owner?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Caleb not want to tell Jane that he is helping out at Mrs. Hawthorne's house?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Jane have trouble saying I love you to Caleb?

Vocabulary

bygone, elaborate, aback, condolence, accustom, clarity, symbolically, sentimental, consummate, illusion



Chapters 13-14

Summary

In Chapter 13, Jane returns to work taking sales calls. While she is away, Caleb works in the yard. He soon has the blackberries and Scotch Broom cleared away. Jane joins him when she gets home early and enjoys the physical labor. Jane had never thought she could love a man so much. She felt safe around him. Caleb takes the bicycle over to Mrs. Hawthorne's. Jane wonders if he is doing work for her there or just keeping her company.

Jane has Caleb fill out information for a health insurance policy. She wants him taken care of if he gets sick. Jane comes home one day and finds that Caleb has set up plastic black garbage bags on the ground making a long runway down a slope in the backyard. He tells her to put on a bathing suit. She returns wearing a bikini. Caleb strips to his boxers. He takes the garden hose and wets the plastic making his homemade version of Slip 'n Slide. They have fun sliding along the track getting wet and muddy. They hose each other off and go inside and have sex.

Jane asks if he has had many lovers. He says not many. He tells her about the girl he wrote the song about. He met her when he first came to Seattle. He thought he loved her. He now thinks it was infatuation. The girl was very moody. He kicked down many bathroom doors to make sure she was okay. She ended up marrying a software engineer at Microsoft.

Caleb asks about Jane. She tells him that when Melody was young she was her priority. She had lots of first dates. When Melody got older and into drugs, Jane was too wrapped up in her problems to think about dating. She tells Caleb that there was always a feeling of being alone within her and he makes that disappear.

Jane receives a phone call. Her brother is in the Seattle jail for a DUI. Her mother is coming down to go to his hearing and will be staying at Jane's house for a few days. Jane tells Caleb she wants him there, but he will have to sleep on the couch.

In Chapter 14, Jane's mother shows up early pounding on the door waking them. Jane jumps out of bed and makes Caleb get out of her room. He drags a blanket to the living room and lies on the couch. Her mother complains about how long she had to wait at the door. Jane carries her bags into Melody's room. Her mother is upset that she painted Melody's room. She says she would have left it the way she was. She complains that if she had known Jane had a house guest she would have stayed at a hotel.

Caleb meets Mrs. McKinney. After shaking his hand, she wipes her hand on a napkin. She retires to her room without speaking to him. Caleb says they look alike, but they are nothing alike. Mrs. McKinney resurfaces at dinner and still does not acknowledge Caleb.



She tells Jane her plans for the next day. Jane says she will drive her to the city, but she will not see her brother. This is his fourth DUI. Jane talks about how her father would get drunk and beat her and her brother Jonathan, while their mother sat drinking wine and pretending everything was fine. Mrs. McKinney gets up and storms from the kitchen slamming her bedroom door. Caleb hugs Jane. He sneaks into her room that night and they have sex.

Mrs. McKinney dresses in a white suit for court. Jane drives her to the courthouse, but will not go in. She thinks that Jonathan needs to hit rock bottom so that he will then seek help. Mrs. McKinney cannot let that happen because he is her son. Jane knows how she feels because that is how she felt about Melody. Jane touches her mother's shoulder and her mother touches her hand. It is the only act of intimacy between them as adults that Jane can remember.

Analysis

Jane's feelings for Caleb grow. She even has him get a health insurance card because she wants him to be taken care of if he gets sick. He makes her feel young and vital. Jane asks Caleb about his other lovers even though it makes her feel jealous to think of him with someone else. Caleb feels the same way. He does not want to think of Jane with anyone, but him.

Jane wonders about Caleb's relationship with Mrs. Hawthorne. She is jealous of the time that Caleb spends with her. She knows that he is just helping the older woman, but wonders if he is just keeping the woman company. Caleb shows Jane how to let go and have fun and she enjoys a fun afternoon with him.

Mrs. McKinney's stay causes a strain in Jane and Caleb's relationship. Jane feels that Caleb is staying away from the house so as not to be near her mother. She misses their time together. Her mother is not happy with the changes that her daughter has made in her life since Melody's death. She believes she is using this young man as a way of hiding from her grief. She does not trust that Jane and Caleb's relationship will last or that it is good for either of them.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Jane insist that Caleb get a health insurance card?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Jane ask Caleb about his previous lovers? Why do they make her jealous?



Discussion Question 3

Why will Jane not go to the courthouse for Jonathan's hearing? How does this make her mother feel?

Vocabulary

distract, infatuate, compatible, conspiratorial, impatient, arraignment, indignation, agape, debark, denial, frailty



Chapters 15-16

Summary

In Chapter 15, Caleb goes to see Mrs. Hawthorne. She shows him a yellow-diamond engagement ring. Her husband purchased it overseas when he was in the Navy. She remarried after he died and it did not seem right to wear it. Caleb asks if she does not have family to pass it to and she says that she has outlived two of her kids and the third is ungrateful. Caleb will work to pay off what she feels is sufficient for the ring.

When Caleb returns to the house, both bedroom doors are closed. He considers knocking on Jane's door, but decides to work in the yard instead. That night no one appeared. He can hear the television in Jane's room. He has a peanut butter sandwich and works on the lyrics of a new song. He falls asleep thinking of Jane.

In Chapter 16, Jane and Caleb show Mrs. McKinney the backyard and tell her the plans they have for it. She criticizes their plans. Caleb ignores their bickering and tries to keep the peace. Her mother has been staying for a week. Jane can see that Caleb's patience is wearing thin. He was avoiding her as best he could. Jane notices that Caleb is spending more evenings at Mrs. Hawthorne's. She believes it's because he's trying to escape her mother.

When Jane and her mother are alone, Mrs. McKinney asks her how long she and Caleb have been sleeping together. She sees the way she looks at him and the way he looks at her. Her mother asks if she does not think he is too young. Other people might think so. She tells Jane that she is being selfish and shameful for sleeping with a boy Melody's age so soon after her daughter's death. Jane tells her that she wants her out of her house by tomorrow morning. She can stay in a hotel if she wants to be near Jonathan. She tells her that she was never a mother to her and she has no right to use Melody's name to try and hurt her.

Jane is lying on her bed when she hears a cab pull up and the front door open and shut. Thirty minutes to an hour later she hears a light knock on her bedroom door. Caleb tells Jane that he feels sorry for her mother. She cannot see the amazing woman her daughter is because she is too busy fighting her own demons. You have to hate yourself to put people down all the time.

Jane and Caleb go into the city to go to a baseball game and get chili dogs. After the game, they run into a friend of Caleb's. Mitch tells Caleb that their friend Jeremy is in Austin getting tons of gigs and making good connections. Everyone has been wondering where Caleb has been. Mitch and his friends are playing a gig. He asks Caleb if he would like to join them for a few songs. Jane tries to get him to go, but he does not. He tells her he did not want to. He just misses music.



Jane feels that she is keeping him from enjoying his music with his friends. She feels their age difference is affecting their relationship and that she is taking advantage of him. He does not like her self-doubt. When they get home, they have sex in the dining room with Caleb taking complete control.

Analysis

Caleb has big plans for his future with Jane. He wants her to be his wife. He is not afraid of hard work. Caleb tries to be nice to Mrs. McKinney, but she does not pay any attention to him. She treats him like the help. Jane feels that Caleb is staying more at Mrs. Hawthorne's to avoid her mother. Yet, he is really working there to get her an engagement ring.

Mrs. McKinney knows that Jane and Caleb have been sleeping together. She thinks it is scandalous. Her mother thinks that what others think is the most important thing. Mrs. McKinney believes that sleeping with a boy Melody's age after her daughter has just died is shameful and disrespectful to her memory. Jane throws her mother out of her house for using Melody's memory against her.

Jane feels that she is keeping Caleb from his dreams of music. Seeing his friends makes her realize that he is giving up a part of his life to be with her. Her doubts about him make him angry. He wants to make her see that she is desirable and that he loves her. Her self-doubt is a roadblock in their relationship.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Mrs. McKinney so critical about anything that Jane does?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Caleb feel sorry for Mrs. McKinney?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Jane doubt Caleb's love for her? Why does this make him angry?

Vocabulary

remnants, ungrateful, incompetent, covert, rendezvous, conquest



Chapters 17-18

Summary

In Chapter 17, Jane is busy with work and enjoys the distraction. She sees all the progress that Caleb is making and knows that soon it will be done and he will leave. Jane is also thinking about her brother. Caleb suggests Jane should go and see Jonathan. Jane asks Caleb if he still thinks about Austin. He asks if she would come with him if she went. She says she cannot move to Texas because everything she has is here. He says they will talk about it later.

Jane goes to see Jonathan. She remembers when he got old enough to fight their father back. Their father stopped hitting them, but the verbal abuse continued. She was relieved when he died of a massive heart attack. Jonathan is cocky and cannot believe he is still in jail. He cannot believe they are trying to get him for a felony. He does not feel he has any blame in what happened. She tells him that he is just like Melody. She tries to get him to admit that he needs help. Jane tells him that she will not help him with his bail. She will pay for treatment if he will go.

She goes home to find a candlelit table set for two with fresh flowers and champagne flutes. She asks him what they are celebrating. He says they are celebrating the yard being finished. He thinks they should have a barbecue and invite the ladies from her Saturday meetings.

In Chapter 18, Everyone enjoys the barbecue and Caleb is a big hit with her friends. The backyard is beautiful and admired by Jane's friends. Jane asks Grace if she is okay. She keeps making comments to her husband, Bob. Grace brushes off her question and asks how things are with her and Caleb. Caleb charms Jane's friends. He negotiates the sale of the goat to Jane's friend Earl because they do not have anything more for him to eat. They turn on the fountain for the first time to end the evening. After everyone leaves, Caleb carries Jane inside and they have sex.

Analysis

Jane is worried about Caleb leaving. The yard is almost finished, but she does not want him to go. He has become an important part of her life and she does not want to think about what it will be like when he is gone.

She is also worried about her brother. She wants him to get the help that he needs so that he can break his addiction. The two grew up in an abusive home. She knows that he drinks to cope. She goes to see Jonathan to get him to see that he needs help. If he does not, he will end up like Melody. She wants to be able to help him like she was unable to do for her daughter.



Grace's behavior is rather erratic. She is being nasty to her husband. Jane does not question her because she is enjoying her day with her friends. She is too wrapped up in Caleb to notice that her friend needs her help.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Jane go to talk to Jonathan? Why will he not admit that he has a problem?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Caleb want to meet Jane's friends? How is he treated by Jane's friends?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Jane not question Grace's behavior toward her husband?

Vocabulary

stark, motivation, partition, calibrate, commissary, alight, petty, banter, chastise, shrewd, lavish, protestations, alabaster, conjure, amalgamation



Chapters 19-20

Summary

In Chapter 19, Jane goes with Caleb to a gig. Caleb is playing at the Paradigm Pub with his friend Mitch. Jane meets some of Caleb's friends. One girl named Michelle refuses to make eye contact with Jane and walks away from the table. Jane is left at the table with Caleb's friends as he goes to set up with the band. Caleb's friends make Jane feel old. Jane does not like the way Michelle looks at Caleb. This jealousy makes her start drinking. She learns from Caleb's friend that Caleb and Michelle used to date. When the friend sees that this upsets Jane, he tells her that she has nothing to worry about with Caleb.

Michelle upsets Jane by making snide comments about her age. On a break, Caleb makes a comment about being glad that Jane is loosening up. To show him she can have fun, she buys shots for the whole table and starts a tab handing the server her credit card. After her third shot, the band begins to play "Sweet Child o'Mine," the song Jane requested Caleb to play. She goes out onto the dance floor. She begins dancing wildly with anyone in the crowd. Jane feels free like she did when she was in college before she got pregnant. After the song, Jane is the only one still on the dance floor. People stare at her as she spins out of control and stumbles. This does not faze her. She dances harder until she hits someone and falls to the floor. Jane is then picked up and taken from the bar. Jane vomits on the sidewalk. She feels sick all the way home.

In Chapter 20, Jane wakes feeling horrible the next morning. She is embarrassed by her actions that night before and believes Caleb must hate her. She finds he has left her to Advil and a glass of water along with a note hoping she slept okay and that he loves her. She is not proud of herself.

Jane asks Caleb how bad she was the night before. She does not remember much. He tells her not bad at all. She is mortified to learn that she sang to Caleb on the way home. Caleb makes her breakfast. Jane realizes that she misses her Saturday morning meeting for the first time in five years. Jane begins to feel better about her mortifying evening. Caleb tells her that he wants to take her out to dinner that evening. Jane decides to spend the afternoon for herself. She goes to get a pedicure.

Jane keeps thinking about Michelle and how young and pretty she is and her jealousy will not abate. She goes to the hair salon to get highlights. The stylist tries to talk her into subtle natural highlights, but she wants chunky and dramatic, a younger look. After it is finished, she likes it, but wishes she had listened to him and been more subtle.

When she gets home, the bike is gone from the garage. She knows Caleb is at Mrs. Hawthorne's. She gets ready for their dinner date. Caleb is amazed by her appearance. He does not have an enthusiastic reaction to her hair, and she is disappointed. He takes her to the nicest restaurant in town. Near the end of the meal, Jane slides an envelope



toward Caleb. It is the rest of his pay. He reluctantly takes it and puts it in his back pocket. Jane tries to pay for dinner to make up for her behavior the night before. Caleb tells her that he enjoyed her dancing before she tipped over the line.

Jane questions if she is as hot as Michelle. She says she saw him looking at her and she cannot blame him. Michelle was obviously still into him. Caleb questions if Jane's changes in appearance are because she is competing with Michelle. Jane tells him that she is too old for him. Caleb is tiring of hearing about her age. He says no one has a problem with her age except her. He tells Jane that he and Michelle dated for a minute. She apologizes to him.

Caleb tells Jane that he loves her just the way she is and just the age she is. He wants her to know that he is there for her. Now that the work on her yard is done and he is paid, he can convince her that he is there just for her.

Analysis

Jane goes to a gig with Caleb and does not fit in with his friends. She's jealous of his former girlfriend, who is there, too. Jane is very self-conscious of her age and cannot be comfortable around the Caleb's younger friends without drinking. This leads her to get drunk and make an idiot out of herself. She is embarrassed by her behavior the next morning, but Caleb being young and in pubs often for gigs sees this behavior all the time and thinks nothing of it.

Jane cannot shake the way Michelle made her feel inferior the night before. She wants to make herself look younger so she gets chunky highlights. Jane's new hairstyle boosts her confidence. She cannot wait to see what Caleb thinks. His indifference upsets her. He thinks she is beautiful the way she is and does not like that she is trying to compete with Michelle.

Jane is self-conscious and cannot help comparing herself to the younger woman. She is worried about the age difference between her and Caleb. Caleb does not care about the age difference. He loves her just the way she is and wants more than anything to make her realize that she is a beautiful woman and he loves her just the way she is.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Michelle make snide comments to Jane?

Discussion Question 2

Why is Jane obsessed about where Michelle is in the pub and about her previous relationship with Caleb?



Discussion Question 3

Why does Caleb think it is silly for Jane to compete with Michelle?

Vocabulary

iconic, transition, habitat, inebriate, eternity, initial, dissipate, subtle, insecurity, conjure



Chapter 21-22

Summary

In Chapter 21, Jane goes back to the pub where she got drunk to retrieve her credit card. The bartender recognizes her as being with Caleb. He asks if she can get a message to him. Caleb needs to call Jeremy, or send an email to let him know if he's going to take the gig in Austin. He cannot hold it open forever. The bartender tells her that Caleb told him to tell Jeremy he would get back to him, but Jeremy has not heard anything yet and cannot wait much longer. She tells him that she will give Caleb the message.

Jane is hurt that Caleb did not tell her about the gig. She scolds herself for falling for someone so young. He has his whole life ahead of him and will go places that she cannot follow. After her work appointment, Jane drives past her house to the park and walks along the beach. She wonders if she really loves Caleb or if he is a distraction—a way to get her mind off of her daughter's death. She thinks she should finally let go of her daughter's death and let go of Caleb. She cannot kill his dreams. Jane knows he will stay if she lets him and she knows she has to let him go.

Jane goes home and finds Caleb playing his guitar in the living room. She stands in front of him. She tells him that they need to talk. She asks why he didn't tell her about the gig in Austin. He tells her the band's name is Broken Coyotes. It is a folk-rock mixed group looking for a guitar player. Rumor is they have a record label ready to sign them. He did not tell her about it because he is not taking it. It is a great opportunity, but he would rather be with Jane. She tells him that he cannot walk away from this opportunity. Caleb becomes upset. He questions if after she got her work out of him and had her fun that she can just move on so easily.

Jane tells him that he has his whole life ahead of him and half of hers is already gone. If he stays, he will always be haunted by what ifs and begin to resent her. He asks her to go to Austin with him. She claims everything she has is here and she is too old to start over. He asks her to let him stay and she refuses. She tells him it is over. Caleb drops to his knees crying. She fights back her own tears. She tries to make her say that she loves him. Jane fights the urge to take him in her arms. She tells him to sleep in the other room and goes to her bedroom and shuts the door. She lies in her bed and cries. Her only solace is she did what was right.

In Chapter 22, When Jane wakes the next morning, Caleb is gone. She quickly dresses and goes after him. She feels she has made a mistake and must not let him leave. When she finally makes it to the airport, she cannot get out of the cab. She decides to let him go. Jane drives to Grace's.

Grace's eyes are red-rimmed as if she has been crying. Jane forgets her own grief and asks if she is okay. Grace tells her that she has had a rough morning and asks what is



wrong. Jane tells her that Caleb left that she sent him away and why. She tells Grace that he asked her to go to Austin with him and that she told him that she did not love him. She tells how she went to the airport, but chickened out. She asks Grace what she should do. Grace tells her that as her sponsor she would tell her to write an inventory on it; but, as a friend, she would tell her to go to Austin and never look back.

Analysis

Jane is upset when she learns that Caleb did not tell her that he was offered a possible gig in Austin. She thinks that she is keeping him from pursuing his dreams. She makes him leave because she does not want him to resent her in the future. How can he be happy on Bainbridge Island with her and not miss his music and wonder what if?

Jane does not want to be responsible for his missing out on a great opportunity. She knows how much he loves his music. He is young and does not understand how resentment can build up and ruin a relationship. She does not want that to happen to them so she makes him leave.

The next morning, Jane regrets her actions. She goes after him, but on the way to the airport decides that she should let him go. Jane goes to see Grace to talk to her about what happened. Her friend has been crying, but Jane brushes this sign of her friend's distress aside to talk to her about her issues. Grace's advice is to go to Austin.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Jane so upset by Caleb's offer from Austin? Is it because he did not tell her or she feels he is giving up his dream?

Discussion Question 2

Why does she tell Caleb that she does not love him? How does he react?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Jane chicken out at the airport? Why does she let him go?

Vocabulary

resolve, resent, machismo, furrow, desolate, irreversible, chasm, disperse, solitary, asylum, selfless, pylon, involuntary



Chapters 23-24

Summary

In Chapter 23, Jane goes on with her life, but finds no joy in it. One day in the mail, she receives the health card that she made Caleb get. She takes it to the backyard and stares at the fountain. She goes to her Saturday morning meeting. Grace is the only one who knows that Caleb is gone. When it is her time to share, she tells the group that she has been an idiot. She tells them that she has chased away the only man she has ever loved. She is like a scared little girl who does not believe that anyone can love her. She tries to write an inventory, but cannot get past writing his name. She cannot go to Austin because everything she knows is here. Her support group, her job, her house, and her memories of her daughter are all here. Jane begins to cry.

The women hug Jane after the meeting. Grace asks Jane for a ride home. Since Grace usually likes to socialize after the meetings, Jane thinks that she wants to talk to her. Jane asks if Grace is mad at her. Grace tells her that it is not always about her. Grace's husband is drinking again. He has been for over five years. He does not want to hide it anymore. Grace does not care what he does. Grace tells Jane that she is dying. She has a brain tumor. She has a few months at best. Jane wants her to try every treatment available, but Grace is resigned to dying. She has known for a long time, but did not know how serious it was until recently.

Grace wants Jane to do her a favor. She wants her to go to Paris with her. She has always wanted to go. She and Bob had planned to go, but they have been fighting. With his drinking, she has asked him not to go and she cannot go alone. Jane agrees to go with her. Grace will pay for everything. She is using the money she was saving for her retirement that she will never have. Jane tells Grace that she loves her. Grace tells her she loves her too and then tells her to not get gushy that she was not dead yet.

In Chapter 24, Grace and Jane go to Paris. They enjoy their time, but Grace has moments where she has fainting spells or tremors. One day, Grace notices that Jane is sad and realizes that it is Melody's birthday. To celebrate it, they go to Notre Dame and light a candle for Melody. Grace thanks Jane for coming with her and tells her that it means so much to her.

Grace does acts of kindness throughout the city, giving people money or buying ice cream for children.

Grace has a seizure one morning that scares Jane. Jane begs her to take her anti-seizure medication, which Grace has not been taking because it makes her weak and tired. That evening as they eat their dinner on the balcony of their hotel room, Grace tells Jane that it is hard for Bob to think about her dying. Jane asks if thinking of dying scares her. She admits that it does, but it helps being in Paris.



Grace can tell that Jane misses Caleb. She asks Jane to make her a promise that she will live the life that Grace cannot. She wants Jane to live without fear. She tells Jane that she and Bob married young. Bob spent his free time drinking, while she was at home wondering. They were trying to have children, but learned that she could not. Bob was gone all the time and Grace fell in love with a kid who raced motorcycles. Her house was near the track and she would take him sandwiches and watch him race. She loved him more than life itself, but she was afraid of being judged and afraid of giving up her security for an uncertain life with a young daredevil. She stayed with Bob, but she feels it was not fair to him or to her to stay.

The young daredevil died two years after they called off their relationship, but she would give up everything to have had those two years with him. Jane promises to live the life that Grace cannot. Grace kisses the top of Jane's head. Jane cries at the intimate gesture.

Analysis

Jane loses the spark in her life when Caleb leaves. She admits to her support group that she does not believe that she deserves love. She cannot go to Austin because everything in her life is here, not in Texas. All her memories are tied to this place and she cannot leave them.

The news of Grace's illness sends Jane into even more of a depression. She wants her friend to fight for her life, but Grace is resigned to her fate. She wants to go to Paris, and Jane is only too happy to make her friend's dream come true. She enjoys spending time with Grace and wants to spend as much time with her as possible before her death. She wants her friend to have as much joy as she can.

Jane is scared by Grace's illness, but does not want her friend to know this. Grace confides in her about her past affair and how she should have left her husband. She regrets not pursuing the relationship with the young daredevil and advises Jane to not make the same mistake. She tells her to live without fear. If she loves Caleb, she should let go of the past and be with him. Grace wants Jane to learn from her mistakes. She wants her to enjoy her life.

Discussion Question 1

How does Jane react to receiving Caleb's health insurance card in the mail?

Discussion Question 2

What is Jane's reaction to Grace's news that she is dying?



Discussion Question 3

Does Grace's experiences with a young man in her past affect what she thinks Jane should do in regard to her relationship with Caleb?

Vocabulary

sabotage, forlorn, denial, acronym, lavish, masseuse, concierge, solitary, amidst, uncertain



Chapters 25-26

Summary

In Chapter 25, Grace becomes sick the next morning. Her health is deteriorating by the day. Jane asks Grace if she has ever been to Venice. The two decide to go to Venice together. Jane is not ready for their time together to be over just yet. They have trouble finding their hotel in Venice. It is raining and a kind young man gives them umbrellas and takes them to their hotel.

Grace sleeps most of the next day suffering from tremors in her sleep. Jane monitors her closely in case she has a seizure. The next day Grace is nicely rested and they begin exploring Venice. At one point in their walk, Grace becomes confused and does not seem to recognize where she is or who Jane is. She soon recovers, and they continue exploring. They go for a gondola ride. They have the boat drop them off near their hotel because Grace is tired. She tries to get Jane to go out exploring without her, but Jane will not leave her.

Jane awakens in the night to Grace's screaming. Grace is sitting up in bed wild-eyed with her hands balled into fists at her side. She asks Jane what she has done with her boy. Grace seems possessed to Jane. Not knowing what to do, she gets Grace a glass of water, which Grace knocks out of her hand. Grace seems to come to and looks at the glass on the floor and starts crying. Grace tells her that she wants to go home. She wants Bob. She needs to be with Bob. Jane promises that they will be on the next flight home. Grace says that she is scared and Jane says that she is, too.

Bob meets them at the airport. The flight was difficult with Grace looking around nervously as if she will be set upon by evil from every side. She looks ten years older than when they left. Bob thanks Jane for everything. Jane kneels to speak to Grace, but she does not seem to recognize her. Jane tells Bob to go ahead and that she will get the bags. Grace waves at her and she waves back. When they are gone, Jane allows herself to cry.

In Chapter 26, Three weeks later, they bury Grace. Bob asked Jane to speak at the funeral, but she could not do it. She does not think that she could honor Grace's memory without mentioning their trip, and it is too private to her. Once Grace is buried, Jane visits Melody's grave. She tells her and Grace to take care of each other.

When she goes home, she sees everything differently. She knows things will never be the same. Her house is a mess. Unpaid bills are stacked on the kitchen table, laundry is overflowing in the hamper, and she is surviving on Doritos. The fountain has run dry, the grass is tall, and weeds have reclaimed the vegetable garden. She feels very alone.

Jane is changing the sheets in Melody's room when she finds a note on the bed. The ink is smeared with tears. It says that he knows she did not mean what she said and



that he loves her and knows that she loves him. He will come back when things are more equal between them. She wonders how she had missed this note. Jane remembers how he helped her through her grieving and how sensitive and loving he was. She is startled by a knock on the door.

Mrs. Hawthorne is on her doorstep. She is being taken to a home. She asks how she can get in touch with Caleb. He ran off without a word. She tells her that she is certain he is in Austin and she does not know how to get in touch with him. Mrs. Hawthorne asks if she can trust her to give Caleb something for her when she sees him. Jane says that she does not think she will see him again. The woman tells her that of course she will. She hands Jane a box that contains a ring. She gives it to Jane and winks. Mrs. Hawthorne tells her that Caleb was working for her to get the ring. He had big plans. He is a good man.

Jane goes to the hardware store and asks Ralph if the Peters brothers are still interested in her house. The brothers come to see the house and Jane has her friend Esmeralda, a realtor, there to help her deal with them. Esmeralda helps her get a good deal for the house.

Jane's friends help her with a yard sale to sell her belongings. She stays in the empty house on an air mattress just like she and Melody did when they first moved in. Jane moves through the house rehashing her memories of Caleb and Melody that the house holds. She still feels grief over her daughter's death, but she has also found a kind of peace.

Analysis

Jane is scared at how fast Grace's health is deteriorating. She does not want their trip to end. She feels that once it ends she will lose her friend. Grace wants to go home to be with her husband. She is scared and she needs his strength to help her.

Three weeks after her return, Grace dies. Grace's death is the catalyst for Jane's letting go of the past and taking Grace's advice and going to Austin for Caleb. She still grieves her daughter's death, but knows that she does not have to be in Bainbridge Island. Her daughter will be with her where ever she goes. Mrs. Hawthorne's visit also sparks Jane's departure. The ring shows how much Caleb cared for her and she knows that she has to go after him.

The process of getting rid of her belongings brings Jane peace. She knows that she will grieve for her daughter for the rest of her life, but it should not keep her from living her life. Jane's friends help her to let go of the past so that she can go find happiness in Austin.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Jane suggest that they go to Venice rather than go home?



Discussion Question 2

Why does Jane not speak at Grace's funeral? How does she honor her friend?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Jane sell her house? Is she not upset that it will be torn down?

Vocabulary

otherworldly, bombard, luxurious, oblige, eulogy, formality, conspiracy, acoustic, asbestos, unison



Chapters 27-28

Summary

In Chapter 27, Jane digs up the rose bush that her mother gave her when she moved into the house. She looks back at her house one more time before getting into her car. As she drives away, she honks twice as if to say goodbye, but she does not know to whom or why. On the ferry, she gets coffee and stands on the deck watching the island recede into the sky. It had been her home for twenty years.

Jane goes to her mother's house in Olympia. She takes the rosebush from her car and hauls it to the front door. There is no answer. She is walking back to her car when a Cadillac pulls up and her mother gets out wearing her church hat. She is surprised to see Jane. She tells her mother that she sold her house and is leaving town. Her mother questions if she is chasing that boy. Jane will not argue with her mother. She tells her that she came to drop off her rosebush. Mrs. McKinney invites her in for coffee. She appreciates that Jane brought the rosebush and has the perfect spot for it.

Together they plant the rosebush. They then take their coffee on the patio to admire their work. Mrs. McKinney comments that her friend Marta insisted on the early service today and she is glad because if they had gone their usual time at eleven she would have missed Jane. Jane is glad, too. Mrs. McKinney asks if she received the flowers she sent for Grace. She knows she was a great friend to her daughter.

Jane asks about Jonathan. He has made a deal. He will serve one day shy of a full year. He plans to get sober. Mrs. McKinney takes Jane's hand and tells her that she has made a lot of mistakes. It is too late to change them. She never understood Jane, but she never had to worry about her not like Jonathan. She has always been proud of Jane. Jane squeezes her mother's hand and cries. As she leaves, her mother asks her to keep in touch.

As she stops at a gas station to get gas and snacks, she washes her car and thinks of the excitement she felt moving to Seattle for college and then to Bainbridge Island and all the great years that followed and also the hard years when Melody discovered drugs and alcohol. Jane feels she is starting over again at forty. This time she has a plan and knows what she wants.

In Chapter 28, Jane is driving to Texas. It is a long drive. As she gets closer to Austin doubt begins to creep over her. What if Caleb does not want to see her? Where will she go? What will she do? She makes it to Austin and gets a room at the Hampton Inn. The next morning she explores the town. She asks around about the band Broken Coyotes. People give her suggestions of where to try, but she has to go at night because that is when the bands play.



That night she goes to clubs searching for Caleb. When it gets late and people are staggering around drunk and rowdy, Jane calls it a night. She searches again the next day. She finds post on a window that the Broken Coyotes will be playing that night. She commits the address to memory and walks back to her hotel with a smile. Jane cleans herself up and puts on her cutest dress and goes to Rosa's Place.

When the band comes on stage, Caleb is not among them. A guy asks to buy Jane a drink. When the band takes a break, Jane goes up to the stage and gets the attention of the lead singer. She asks him about Caleb. He tells her that Caleb had talent, but they went with someone else because there is no room for two songwriters in a band. He does not know where Jane can find Caleb. Jane did not sleep at all that night.

In the morning, she goes out and asks for Caleb by name in every bar and club she can find. She is alone in a strange town in a strange state and her only possessions are spread between two suitcases and the trunk of her car. She begins to think that coming was a mistake. Jane walks aimlessly not knowing what to do. Jane suddenly realizes that this journey was about her finding the courage to move on and be able to live her life without fear. She had made the promise to Grace to let go of fear.

The sound of a guitar comes to Jane on the night air. She follows the sound and finds Caleb playing on the steps of an old warehouse turned bar. Jane reaches into her purse and tosses the silver dollar that Caleb put on Melody's grave into the open guitar case. He watches it land and slowly looks up. She knew at that moment she would love him for the rest of her life.

Later that night, when they are lying in bed, Jane tells him that she brought him something. She teases him by handing him his health insurance card. She then gives him the blue felt box that Mrs. Hawthorne gave her. Jane tells him that if he plans to ask her to marry him he should know that she is homeless and unemployed. He tells her that he has a day job that pays his rent and a small balcony that could use some plants. He suggests putting her to work for him this time.

Analysis

Jane takes the rosebush her mother gave her as a housewarming present to her mother and helps her plant it. It brings the two women closer together. Mrs. McKinney admits that she has always been proud of Jane. It is hard for her to be around her daughter because she made such mistakes in her life. She regrets not being a better mother and still Jane turned out to be a strong, confident woman who makes her proud.

Jane is initially disappointed when she arrives in Austin. She cannot find Caleb and feels that giving up her life in Seattle was not such a good idea and she cannot return there. Jane thinks about Grace and how coming to Austin was her way of living without fear. She does not give up. Eventually, she finds Caleb. The two truly love one another and she proves her love by having given up her life to come be with him. Caleb



understands what she has done and knows that they are meant to be together. They are ready to live happily ever after.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Jane dig up the rose bush and take it to her mother?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Jane become discouraged when she cannot find Caleb? Does she regret coming to Austin?

Discussion Question 3

Why is it important that Jane tell Caleb that she is homeless and unemployed? What is his reaction?

Vocabulary

condolences, dormant, nostalgic, recede, angst, oasis, dilapidated, bygone, cacophony, disclosure



Characters

Jane McKinney

Jane McKinney is a health insurance agent who has just lost Melody, her only daughter, to a drug overdose. She has been dealing with Melody's addiction since Melody was fifteen years old. Jane joined an Al-Anon group to help her deal with the problem. She tried over the years to help her daughter by paying for treatment programs, but none of them worked. Her daughter chose to find places to crash with friends rather than stay with her mother where she would have to stay sober and clean.

Jane is desperately trying to discover who her daughter had become during the year absence from her life. She sees Caleb as a connection to her daughter, but she also feels a connection to him. Jane is embarrassed by her feelings toward the young man who is not much older than her daughter had been. She also feels it as a betrayal to Melody because she believes Caleb was Melody's boyfriend. When she discovers he was not, her guilt subsides, but she still feels that their age difference is a problem.

Jane does not feel comfortable around Caleb's friends. His old girlfriend makes her feel old and jealous. She has a makeover to make her look younger, even though Caleb does not care about her age. Jane feels that she is stifling Caleb's youth and dreams. She makes him pursue an opportunity in Austin that he cannot pass up. She feels that if he chooses her over Austin, he will grow to resent her for his decision.

When her best friend Grace dies, Jane realize that life is short and she cannot forsake her happiness. She leaves behind everything to find Caleb in Austin. She lets go of her grief and moves on without fear because she knows that she wants Caleb to be a part of her life.

Caleb Cummings

Caleb Cummings is a homeless young musician. He is playing on the streets of Seattle. Jane takes him home and offers him a job clearing her backyard of blackberry brambles and putting in a flower garden and fountain. She believes that he knew her daughter. However, even though he and Melody flirted with one another at the coffee shop where she worked and the street corner where he played, he never knew Melody's name. They never had a real relationship.

Caleb has plans to go to Austin to make his break into music. The work Jane offers gives him a chance to earn the money he will need to set himself up in Austin. He cannot pass up the opportunity, so he lets Jane believe that he knew her daughter rather than jeopardize his chance of the job.

Caleb falls in love with Jane. He works odd jobs for Mrs. Hawthorne. In exchange for the work, she will give him the engagement ring that her first husband gave her. He



plans to ask Jane to marry him. Caleb gets along with Jane's friends, even though he is only twenty-five and they are much older. To him age is just a number and he does not care that Jane is fifteen years older.

Caleb loves his music, but he is willing to give it up to stay with her. He begs Jane to let him stay or to go to Austin with him. She refuses. Caleb leaves with a broken heart. His big break does not happen in Austin and he is happy to see Jane when she arrives.

Grace

Grace is Jane's best friend and sponsor. She helps Jane deal with the struggle of Melody's addiction and her subsequent death. Grace is Jane's rock. Jane always goes to her for advice. Grace develops a brain tumor, which she keeps a secret until her health begins to deteriorate rapidly. Grace asks Jane to go to Paris with her because she has always wanted to go and wishes to see it before she dies. Her death is the catalyst that makes Jane move on with her life.

Bob

Bob is Grace's husband. He is an alcoholic who does not believe he has a problem. He and Grace have a tumultuous relationship due to his drinking.

Mrs. McKinney

Mrs. McKinney is Jane's mother. She and Jane do not get along. Her mother stood by while Jane's drunken father beat her and her brother. Mrs. McKinney favors Jonathan more than Jane. She admits to Jane that she is proud of her and she does not have to worry about her as she does Jonathan. She is a proud woman who is not proud of the choices she has made in her life, but she feels she is too old to change now.

Jonathan McKinney

Jonathan McKinney is Jane's brother. He is an alcoholic who is arrested for his fourth DUI. Jane will not help him because she wants him to admit he has a problem and seek the help he needs. Jonathan ends up taking responsibility for the accident and takes the deal the prosecutor is offering him. He wants to be sober.

Mrs. Hawthorne

Mrs. Hawthorne is an older woman who lives on her own. Caleb and Jane buy a goat from her. Caleb helps her out around her house to pay for an engagement ring that she has that he wants to give to Jane.



Melody

Melody is Jane's daughter who died of a drug overdose in her early twenties. Jane tried to get her help over the years, but Melody always returned to drugs. Jane had no contact with Melody that last year of her life; so, her daughter was like a stranger to her. She does not know what Melody's life was like toward the end. Jane desperately tries to discover more about who her daughter had become.

Mitch

Mitch is Caleb's friend. He asks Caleb to join him for a gig. When Jane sees Caleb on stage, she finds out that he has talent.

Michelle

Michelle is an old girlfriend of Caleb's. She is not over Caleb and tries to get his attention at the pub where he is playing. Jane becomes jealous and has a makeover to make her look younger to compete with Michelle's youth and beauty.



Symbols and Symbolism

Melody's Grave

Jane sits staring at her daughter Melody's grave. She is obsessing about her daughter's death. She wants to join her in her grave. Jane sits in her car in the rain just to be near Melody.

Bainbridge Island

Bainbridge Island is where Jane lives. She moved to the island when Melody was young because she thought her daughter would be sheltered from the dangers of the city. Jane has lived there for twenty years.

Blackberry Brambles

Jane hires Caleb to clear blackberry brambles from her backyard. She wants to begin clearing out the clutter in her life.

Silver Dollar

Caleb leaves a silver dollar on Melody's grave. Jane picks it up and wonders why he left it. He tells her that Melody tossed the silver dollar in his guitar case one day after listening to him play. They have been passing it back and forth as a kind of flirtatious game.

Goat

Caleb takes a goat that he believes is abandoned. The goat belongs to Mrs. Hawthorne. Caleb negotiates to buy it. He uses the goat to help him clear the backyard.

Engagement Ring

Mrs. Hawthorne has an engagement ring that Caleb wants to give to Jane. He works for her to pay for it.

Guitar

Jane buys Caleb a guitar to replace the one that was stolen.



Health Insurance Card

Jane makes Caleb get insurance because she wants to know that if something happens to him he will be taken care of. Caleb has left when she receives his health insurance card in the mail.

The Ferry

The Ferry takes people to and from Bainbridge Island. Jane does a lot of thinking on the ferry as it takes her to the city or back home.

Jane's backyard

Jane has Caleb clear her backyard of blackberry brambles and put in a flower and vegetable garden along with a fountain. It allows Caleb to make money to go to Austin and allows Jane to keep Caleb around so that she can ask him about Melody. The yard turns out better than she could have imagined.

Alcohol and Drugs

Alcohol and drugs are to blame for the death of Melody. Alcohol is a vice for Jonathan McKinney and Grace's husband Bob. Jane joins an Al-Anon group to deal with the addictions of those around her.



Settings

Bainbridge Island

Bainbridge Island is where Jane lives. She takes Caleb into her home and has him clear away her backyard. Most of the novel takes place on Bainbridge Island. Caleb and Jane's relationship develops there.

Seattle

Seattle is the city across the water from Bainbridge Island. This is where Melody lived and where Jane found Caleb. Jane has work appointments in the city also.

Austin

Jane follows Caleb to Austin to rekindle their relationship. Caleb went there because Austin is known for its music scene. It is very different from Seattle's rainy and cool weather. Austin is hot and dry.

Paris

Grace has always wanted to go to Paris and asks Jane to go with her. She wants to see the city before she dies. Grace and Jane enjoy exploring the city and Grace is happy that she is able to enjoy the beautiful city with her friend. Grace's health starts to deteriorate, but she does not let that affect her enjoying the sites.

Venice

Grace and Jane extend their European travels to Venice. Jane does not want the trip to end so she suggests that she and Grace go to Venice together. She wants to spend all the time she can with her friend because of her failing health. They have to leave Venice suddenly when Grace's condition worsens and she just wants to go home to be with her husband.



Themes and Motifs

Death

Jane has just lost her daughter, Melody, to a drug overdose. She feels guilty that she is still alive, while her daughter is dead. Jane goes to support meetings to help her deal with her daughter's addiction and death.

Jane also loses Grace, who was her best friend and sponsor at Alcoholics Anonymous. Grace dies slowly from a brain tumor. Jane is able to spend time with her friend and say a proper goodbye. Melody's death is difficult because she watched her daughter slowly kill herself with her drug and alcohol abuse. Jane tried to help her by paying for treatments and offering a place to stay, but her daughter chose the drugs over her relationship with her mother. Jane had no contact with her daughter the last year of her life and feels that she did not know her at all.

Addiction

Melody McKinney had been addicted to drugs and alcohol since she was fifteen. Jane had paid for many treatment centers, but nothing worked. Her daughter did not want help for her addiction, which eventually caused her death. Jane joins an Al-Anon meeting to help her deal with her daughter's addiction and how it has affected her life. Addiction is prevalent in her family, and she feels guilty for having passed this legacy to her daughter.

Jonathan McKinney, Jane's brother, is an alcoholic. He is arrested for his fourth DUI and does not think it is his fault. Jane wants him to accept responsibility for his actions and get help. Jonathan is reluctant, but eventually takes a deal to spend a year in prison and take advantage of their programs to get sober.

Jane refuses to be around anyone who has not been sober for a year. After her trials with her daughter, she does not want to have to deal with the pain and heartache of dealing with an alcoholic. Jane and Jonathan were also abused at the hands of their alcoholic father. Their mother did nothing to protect them. The abuse has left a rift in Jane's relationship with her mother.

Love

Jane falls in love with Caleb even though he is fifteen years younger than her. She feels guilty for her feelings and about the age difference. She feels that she is too old for him. She thinks that she stifles his youth. Caleb does not care that she is older. Her age is what he likes about her. He sees her as confident and smart.



Caleb is willing to give up his love of music for the love of Jane. He is offered a gig in Austin, but he plans to turn it down to stay with her. Jane makes him take the opportunity because she believes he will grow to resent her if he does not. She loves him, but she does not want him to give up an opportunity to pursue his dream. Jane goes by the adage "If you love something, set it free."

Caleb does not want to leave Jane. He wants her to go with him to Austin, but she cannot leave the place that holds the memories of her daughter. Caleb reluctantly leaves, but he promises to return when they are on more equal footing.

Grief

Jane is in mourning over the death of her daughter, Melody. This makes her obsessed about her daughter's life. She stalks Melody's Facebook page to see what people post so that she can learn more about her daughter. She becomes obsessed with finding Caleb because she believes he has a connection with Melody. Their relationship began because Jane is mourning her daughter and desperately wants a connection to her. She sees Caleb as a connection. When she begins having romantic feelings toward him she feels guilty because she believes he was Melody's boyfriend.

Jane is able to work past her grief with Caleb's help. He helps her see that she can enjoy her life and it does not have to end because her daughter is dead. Jane had contemplated suicide after her daughter's death. Her grief was so great she wanted to join her daughter. Her relationship with Caleb brings her out of this depression and back into the land of the living.



Styles

Point of View

The point of view of the novel is third person. It is told through the eyes of Jane McKinney and Caleb Cummings. Jane is a forty-year-old woman who has just lost her daughter to a drug overdose. Caleb Cummings is a twenty-five year old homeless musician whom Jane takes in to work for her because he knew her daughter. Since the story is told from the third person point of view, readers can get to know the characters and understand their actions.

The story is told through exposition and dialogue. This allows the reader to become acquainted with the two main characters, Jane and Caleb. The dialogue shows the emotional connection between Jane and Caleb. Jane is mourning the death of her daughter, and Caleb is homeless and trying to get back on his feet. The story is told on a strict timeline so the reader follows it easily. The viewpoint switches from Jane to Caleb, but sticks mostly with Jane. The reader is able to see their lives unfolding as the story progresses.

Language and Meaning

The language of the novel is simple. The book is intended for a more mature audience due to the sexual relationship between Jane and Caleb. The sentences are simple and make the book quick and easy to read.

The language of the novel is simple. Jane and Caleb have high school educations. Jane left college during her freshman year because she became pregnant. Caleb is concerned only with his music. They use everyday language to relate their story. The reader gets to see how the two meet and fall in love. This leads the reader to become a part of their love story with the hope that they can make it work despite the fifteen year difference in their ages.

The author's style is simple with short, concise sentences. Winfield uses simple, but powerful language to convey Jane and Caleb's story. They have an new, intense relationship. This is shown by their lengthy exchanges. The reader is taken along as they explore every avenue of their budding relationship.

Structure

Jane's Melody is comprised of twenty-eight chapters. The chapters are short to medium length. The pace changes from fast to a slow pace depending what is happening in the characters' lives. When Jane is grieving for her daughter, the pace is slow because she is slowly descending into depression. Life slowly passes along with her barely noticing. The pace spends up when she meets Caleb and their relationship heats up.



The plot is simple. Jane McKinney has lost her daughter and is in mourning. She is desperately trying to learn about her daughter. She meets Caleb, a man whom she believes to be her daughter's boyfriend. It turns out that he never even knew Melody's name. Her relationship with Caleb helps Jane to overcome her grief and to learn about love.

The novel is a normal paced read with medium length chapters. It shows the effects of grief and how alcohol and drug abuse can affect friends and family of the person who is addicted. It is the story of a woman who overcomes the death of her daughter and finds happiness in the arms of a younger man.



Quotes

Because I'm old enough to know that life is nothing but one big riddle with a question for an answer.

-- Grace (Chapter 7 paragraph 10)

Importance: Grace says this to Jane when they are talking about Jane's relationship with Caleb.

Don't you let fear have a place in your life, J. Not even a tiny place. Get rid of it from every hidden corner. Chase it away with the truth, and do what you want to do while you can.

-- Grace (Chapter 7 paragraph 5)

Importance: Grace is telling Jane not to let what others think affect how she lives her life.

I never knew Melody.

-- Caleb (Chapter 7 paragraph 8)

Importance: Caleb admits to Jane that he is not Melody's boyfriend. He never even knew her name until after she had died.

You're just infatuated with me because this is exciting. Because I'm an older woman.

-- Jane (Chapter 10 paragraph 4)

Importance: Jane does not believe that Caleb loves her and tries to convince him that he is only infatuated.

Okay. I don't know if I have the right words, but love is this feeling I get when I look at you. A feeling that as long as you're near me, or in the world even, then everything will be okay. That everything has meaning. It's as if the world was all shades of sepia—like an old movie reel—and that everywhere I looked I saw suffering and pain. Then I heard your voice, I saw your face, and somehow the color came into everything.

-- Caleb (Chapter 13 paragraph 1)

Importance: Caleb tries to explain to Jane how he feels about her. He explains what love is to him.

Maybe I can put it like this: there was always this ache in my guts, an aloneness, but whenever I'm with you it seems to disappear.

-- Jane (Chapter 13 paragraph 11)

Importance: Jane is explaining to Caleb how he makes her feel.



I see you've erased any trace of her already. I would have left it as it was myself, but then I guess we all have our own way about things.

-- Mrs. McKinney (Chapter 14 paragraph 6)

Importance: Mrs. McKinney chastises her daughter Jane for attempting to erase the memory of Melody.

Because she has this amazing woman for a daughter, and she's so blinded by whatever demons she's fighting that she can't even let herself see it. And because at the end of the day, you've got to really hate yourself a lot to run around putting people down all the time.

-- Caleb (Chapter 16 paragraph 1)

Importance: Caleb is explaining why he feels sorry for Jane's mother.

I don't know why I said it. It just seems sometimes like maybe I roped you into this whole thing. With me, I mean. You sure didn't have much of a choice, did you? And, I don't know, maybe my mother was right—maybe I'm just too old for you.

-- Jane (Chapter 16 paragraph 12)

Importance: Jane feels that she is hampering Caleb's social life. She feels that his music dreams are being stifled.

So you're not to blame here at all?

-- Jane (Chapter 17 paragraph 1)

Importance: Jane is talking to Jonathan about his DUI. She wants him to realize that it is his fault because of his addiction.

Death is just the moment that your hourglass runs out of sand. That's it. It happens to everyone eventually. All any of us gets to decide is where the sand falls.

-- Grace (Chapter 24 paragraph 1)

Importance: Grace is telling Jane that she does not fear death. It will happen to everyone. All one can do is live their life to the fullest.

She suddenly realized that this journey had always been about her finding the courage to move on.

-- Jane (Chapter 28 paragraph 1)

Importance: Jane realizes that her journey to Austin helped her let go of her past and that is what she needed.