

# **Jumping the Nail Study Guide**

## **Jumping the Nail by Eve Bunting**

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# Plot Summary

Jumping the Nail by Eve Bunting centers around Dru, a teenage girl from La Paloma, California, who watches her peers jump off the Nail, a high cliff. When her depressed friend Elisa jumps, Elisa has a mental breakdown.

Dru just graduated La Paloma High School. She is a smart girl, who has a scholarship to Northwestern. She dates Mike, a gorgeous, popular and kind-hearted guy. No one noticed her before she started dating him. She feels like an outsider in his group because everyone is rich, beautiful and wears designer clothes. Dru lives in an average house her family rents.

Dru and Mike learn that Scooter, Mike's friend who loves attention, will jump the Nail. The Nail is a 90 foot cliff. A girl had jumped the Nail a while ago. She hit the rocks and is now in a wheelchair. They go to the Nail to watch the jump and they learn Elisa, Dru's best friend and Scooter's girlfriend, will jump as well. Dru gets very upset because Elisa struggles with depression. Dru and Mike try to talk Scooter and Elisa out of jumping, but they jump.

When they come out of the water, Elisa is in shock and will not speak. Dru takes care of her at Elisa's house. Elisa says a drowned girl in a car underwater talked to her. The girl asked her to stay. Elisa has a mental breakdown. Scooter comes over, demanding Elisa go to a party with him. She does, which shows she is in an unhealthy relationship where Scooter controls her.

After their jump, other people want to jump. Tom and Grant, twin brothers, jump to impress Tom's girlfriend, Diane, who cheats on him. They jump at night and Tom has to get 27 stitches in his head. Dru and Mike realize they must tell an adult about the jumping, but hold off a day.

Meanwhile, Dru and Mike are very much in love. He asks her to stay with him in California. Her mother says Mike is rich and she could have an easy life with him, so she encourages Dru to stay as well. Dru must make a choice between Northwestern (in Chicago) or Mike.

Elisa is missing. Dru and Mike search for her, finding car tracks that drive off a cliff. Elisa has driven her car off the cliff, committing suicide. Divers try to bring up her body, but they cannot. Her body stays in the car, just like the drowned girl. Dru is heartbroken over Elisa's death. But in the end, Dru realizes she should not make decisions based on a guy. She decides to go to Northwestern after all. She tells Mike she loves him and that she will be back. But Elisa will not be back. Dru mourns Elisa, thinking she should be alive.



# One

## One Summary

Jumping the Nail by Eve Bunting focuses on Dru, a teenager in La Paloma, California who sees the dangers in her peers jumping a high cliff called the Nail. Dru is worried about her depressed friend Elisa who jumps the Nail and has a mental breakdown.

In One, Dru has just graduated from La Paloma High in California. Dru walks her dog on a beautiful day. She thinks how expensive the houses are. Her mom, who is a real estate agent, regrets not buying a house because they could have made a fortune. Dru's family rents instead. Dru walks past Mike's house, realizing she does not look good. Mike is her boyfriend. No one noticed her until she started dating Mike, who is popular, gorgeous and nice to everybody. Dru runs into Diane Skoal, Mike's ex-girlfriend. She asks Dru when she will go to Northwestern. Dru says mid-September. With a sly smile, Diane says that Dru will not be home until Christmas. Diane will attend San Diego State with Mike.

Dru sees Mike's house, El Nido, or the nest, which is perched up high and costs \$2 million. Mom is jealous because she used to date Mike's father a long time ago. She feels she could have been rich. Dru's dad owns a music store and plays piano at a restaurant on weekends.

Dru thinks about the Nail, a cliff that is 90 feet from the top to the water's surface. People jump it. But not since a girl jumped, misjudged her distance from the rocks and broke her back. The girl is in a wheelchair. Scooter Navarro will jump. He is Elisa's boyfriend and Elisa is Dru's best friend.

Dru goes back to her house. Mike calls and asks if she wants to see Scooter jump. She would rather not, but will go for Mike. Mom is happy because she has another date with Mike, who comes from a rich family.

## One Analysis

Dru discusses the idea of feeling invisible. She feels this way until Mike and she start dating. This represents the universal teenage feeling of being invisible. It is a theme often seen in books about adolescence. For Dru, it is a real feeling and her encounter with Diane only exacerbates the feeling to a deeper level. Diane is Dru's competition and her motivation is to either torture Dru or wiggle her way back into Mike's life.

El Nido represents wealth. In English, el nido means the nest; it is literally and figuratively a "nest egg" of money. Mike's family is rich and El Nido is a status symbol for their socio-economic class. Dru does not have the luxury of living in an expensive house; her family rents. Therefore, El Nido represents something out of touch for Dru,

something she can never reach or obtain. Even though she dates Mike, the relationship is new and she has not burrowed her way into "the nest" as of yet.

# Two

## Two Summary

In *Two*, Dru and Mike drive up to the Nail. It is windy and the sea is far below. There are other teenagers up there as well. Dru and Mike walk down to a ledge to see the jump better, but Dru worries. She hopes Scooter does not jump. Mike says Scooter just wants to brag and scratch his name into the wooden Danger sign, like others who have jumped before him. The other teenagers are unlike Dru because they are rich, beautiful and wear designer clothes. They run into two peers. One says there is a rumor that Elisa, Dru's best friend, may jump with Scooter. Dru gets very upset and teary-eyed. Mike does not understand why Dru is so upset. Dru knows Elisa's secret, so does their friend Lizzie, but not many others do. She wishes she had known; she would have tried to talk Elisa out of it. She has no idea how she and Elisa fell into the in-crowd and date in-crowd guys. She whispers to Mike that Elisa and Scooter will jump.

## Two Analysis

Dru represents a mother figure. The other teenagers are eager to see Elisa and Scooter jump, but it tears Dru apart. She seems to take a motherly role with Elisa because she feels her influence would have stopped her best friend from jumping. Being a mother figure causes Dru not to fit in with the group. She is not rich or beautiful, but more importantly, she looks at the teenagers as people to whom she cannot relate. Thus, she separates herself from her own age group. This may foreshadow the reason why Elisa does not tell Dru about jumping, because Dru might have disciplined her like a child. However, Dru's maturity foreshadows that she may stop a dangerous situation and help Elisa after all.



# Three

## Three Summary

In Three, Scooter and Elisa bring helmets in case they hit the rocks. Scooter seems very carefree. Elisa refuses to make eye contact with Dru. Scooter goes to scratch his name in the Danger sign. Dru gets in between Scooter and Elisa and talks to Elisa privately. She tells her she does not have to jump; she can decide for herself. Elisa says she has things to prove. Dru asks Elisa the last time when she had seen a doctor and if she still takes her pills. Dru says she stopped going and she does not need the pills anymore. She does not feel depressed because Scooter makes everything okay. Dru begs Elisa not to jump.

Scooter is anxious to jump, so he asks Mike and Dru to drive his motor scooter down to the cliff. Dru thinks Scooter is crazy, but Dru and Mike drive the scooter down toward the cliff.

## Three Analysis

When Elisa says she has things to prove this foreshadows that she will jump and there will be consequences. Elisa does not jump for fun or for the experience, like Scooter, who loves attention. She is mentally ill, so jumping signifies something much more. This jump could damage Elisa mentally or hurt her physically. But she cannot be talked out of it because she must prove herself. Pressure from Scooter comes before her own mental stability. She says Scooter makes everything okay. This foreshadows that Elisa may be in an either controlling or abusive relationship. She is trapped mentally due to depression and she may be trapped literally because of Scooter's hold over her.

# Four

## Four Summary

In *Four*, many kids from Dru's graduating class come to see Scooter and Elisa jump. Dru and Mike maneuver on Scooter's motor scooter and drive down to the cliff. Lizzie is there, Dru and Elisa's close friend. Dru runs into her friend Jeremy, who says he called Scooter last night to tell him about the girl who jumped and broke her back. Jeremy's mom volunteers at the convalescent center where the girl is. She can move around in her wheelchair and feed herself, but she cannot sit on her own. She will never walk again. Even telling Scooter all this, Jeremy could not convince him to call off the jump.

The scene at the Nail is a party. The crowd cheers for Elisa and Scooter to jump. Dru talks with Lizzie privately and tells her Elisa does not take her pills anymore. Lizzie says she had to come; she could not bear to miss it. Mike comes over and cuddles with Dru. There is no sound. Scooter and Elisa jump off the Nail. They do not hit the rocks and splash into the water. No one sees them for a while. Scooter comes up first then Elisa. They climb out of the water. Elisa is in shock. She is freezing and does not speak. Her one bare foot is red and blotchy. But Scooter is excited and proud. He wants to continue carving their names into the sign. Dru says Elisa should be taken home. Scooter asks who is next to jump and declares the Nail separates the men from the boys. He takes Elisa home. Elisa's shredded black boot surfaces and floats atop the water.

## Four Analysis

The girl who is in a wheelchair is the physical manifestation of the jump. The negative impact is physical for this girl. For Elisa, the impact manifests in a mental way. Elisa is in shock and cannot speak. But Scooter is fine and brags of their accomplishment. For some reason, the Nail seems to affect women in a different way than men. Scooter can handle the jump fine. But Elisa and the girl in the wheelchair end up damaged in some way. This damage symbolizes fragility in the females of this book. Females get hurt if they try to be adventurous. Risk and adventure lead to a woman's demise. But for men, it is freeing.

The boot symbolizes an omen. It is shredded and floats atop the water eerily. It is black, the color of mourning or death, showing that something ominous had occurred when Elisa was in the water. Even Elisa's foot is red and blotchy. Elisa cannot talk. All of this foreshadows that Elisa lost a part of herself underwater, or in other words, experienced a death of her true self.



# Five

## Five Summary

In Five, everyone is excited about Scooter and Elisa's performance. Tom, Diane's boyfriend, drives Dru and Mike back to Mike's car at the top of the Nail. Diane is Miss Perfect; she is blond and beautiful. She still likes Mike because she watches Mike puts his arm around Dru. They talk about the jump and Tom says Elisa will do anything for Scooter. Diane says Mike and she should take Friday classes at San Diego State. That way Mike can drive Diane home on the weekends. Dru stares out the window, trying not to get upset. She imagines Mike and Diane spending more time together. Dru's eyes meet Tom's and he is not happy either.

It is really windy and cold at the top of the Nail, so Dru wants to leave. She worries about Elisa, but Diane says she looks fine. They see Hopi, a friend who looks Native American. He has Elisa's boot and gives it to Dru. Hopi says he will jump and make it a ritual on the same day, same time next week. Dru and Mike say not to do it, but the others encourage him. Hopi says not to tell any adults. Scooter comes back and says Elisa is fine. Dru wants to see Elisa and judge for herself. Dru says she will not watch Hopi's jump, but she does.

## Five Analysis

Ritual represents the idea of achieving goals. For example, Diane wants to establish a ritual with Mike to take Friday classes and for him to drive her home on the weekends. If she succeeds in convincing Mike to do this with her, she may convince him to start dating again, especially since Dru will be in Chicago. Diane wants to establish this ritual to get Mike back. Hopi establishes the ritual of the jump. If he jumps, the attention will be off Scooter, his rival, and back onto him. The ritual will allow Hopi to be the hero and continue with this dangerous trend.



# Six

## Six Summary

In Six, Mike tries to distract Dru on the car ride to Elisa's house by discussing how his father talked about dating Dru's mother. Mike's father had really adored and loved her. When Dru's mother had seen Dru's father on graduation night in 1965, it was love at first sight and they were married three months later. Mike's father had been so upset, he left La Paloma. Dru says he came back an All-American success story.

They arrive at Elisa's fixer-upper house that smells of coffee and cigarettes. Mike stays in the car. Dru goes into the house and knocks on Elisa's bedroom door. Elisa shakes in the wet suit, so Dru takes the wet suit off her and puts her in the shower. She dries her and puts a sweatshirt on her. She tucks her into bed and makes her hot tea.

Dru shows the mangled boot to Elisa, who screams. Elisa says the drowned girl in the car deep under the water pulled it off. Dru does not believe her, but goes along with it. Elisa did not see the girl because everything was pitch black, but she bumped into a car. A hand grabbed onto her boot and the drowned girl said for Elisa to stay. Elisa shook herself as the boot came off. She told Scooter, who thought it was funny and said Elisa should have brought the girl up too. Dru is furious at Scooter for leaving Elisa in this mental state. Elisa makes Dru swear not to call her mom. She says to go to Mike, who is sitting in the driveway, and tell him she is fine and to come back. Elisa does not want to have Mike wait.

Dru goes to Mike and says Elisa is really freaked out. Elisa does not want Scooter to know she is a mess because she is supposed to be brave like him. Mike goes home. Dru finds the boot and throws it in the trashcan.

## Six Analysis

Once again, Dru plays the role of Elisa's mother. She takes care of her, even dresses her and tucks her into bed. She addresses her like a child, not believing Elisa's story, but humoring her so she will remain calm. Elisa then begs Dru not to call Elisa's real mom. But this is not necessary, since Dru takes care of her. However, this is another instance when adults are left out. Hopi says not to tell adults about jumping off the Nail in the last chapter. Elisa does not want the real adult, her own mother, to help her. Therefore, the Nail takes on a childlike quality where only children can understand the jump. Adults are not welcome or allowed. This explains why Dru, a mother figure, does not fit in with the other kids.

There are more foreboding details about Elisa's relationship with Scooter. Scooter does not wait. He only allows bravery from her. Thus, the reader can see Elisa is involved in an abusive relationship where he controls everything. This foreshadows that Scooter may go too far in his control and push Elisa to the edge of her demise.



# Seven

## Seven Summary

In Seven, Elisa is asleep. Dru calls her dad, saying Elisa is sick and she'll be home late. She feels comfort and safety in talking with Dad. The doorbell rings. Scooter is here for Elisa. He wants her to come party, but Dru says he is nuts. She is in no state to party, but he does not care. Elisa comes to the banister and he asks her to come party. Dru says no, but Elisa asks Scooter to wait for her. Elisa gets ready and Dru talks with her. She says she was about to call the hospital because she was so worried. Elisa laughs off this comment, saying she had a bad dream. She dresses in a red miniskirt and fixes her beautiful red hair. Scooter screams up and says to Elisa she has until the count of 10 to get down there. Dru asks how can she let him talk to her like this. She remembers Tom said Elisa will do anything for Scooter. Elisa replies he is sweet and thanks Dru for taking care of her and tells her to forget everything she said.

Scooter still counts and Elisa makes it down by 10. Dru sees Scooter's life as a big wig in La Paloma, but anywhere he will go, he will be big because of his personality. Elisa is in love with him, the same as Dru feels about Mike. Scooter says they will jump again, the first team ever to jump twice. Dru says they should jump with Hopi and make it a threesome. Scooter says Diane already called Mike about the party. Dru knows Scooter hurts her on purpose.

## Seven Analysis

Elisa represents the battered woman. She has battered woman syndrome in an emotional sense. She does not see how Scooter really treats her and accepts the emotional abuse as part of her life. Even when Dru points out his controlling number counting, Elisa defends him. She chooses to be emotionally abused and Dru remembers that other people see this too, as she remembers Tom's comment. Dru realizes Elisa is in love and no matter what she says, Elisa will stay in this unhealthy relationship.

The reader sees the beginnings of schizophrenia, which is a mental illness where the person hears voices and see illusions. Both of these things happen to Elisa underwater. A person with schizophrenia can also seem fine, which Elisa seems when she gets ready for the party. Thus, Elisa is in a fragile state, which could be tipped at any moment toward insanity.



# Eight

## Eight Summary

In Eight, Mike picks up Dru from Elisa's house. He dresses nicely and is showered in order to go to the Spindrift, the beach hangout. They stop by Dru's house and she changes and wears her hair the way Mike likes it. She remembers the first night Mike noticed her. Mike had usually politely looked at her, but that night, he seriously looked at her. He had asked her if she was a ballet dancer because of her hair and the way she moved. Dru had been excited.

Dru tries to convince herself she worries too much about Elisa. She looks at her new clothes for Northwestern.

Dru and Mike drive to the Spindrift, which has a jukebox, dance floor and food stand. Everyone is there. Diane comes up, only paying attention to Mike. They sit next to Scooter and Elisa. Scooter answers questions for her. Scooter brags, saying they are the chosen ones and everyone loves a jumper. Hopi and Diane dance slowly. Hopi kisses her while Tom, Diane's boyfriend, watches.

When Scooter leaves to get a drink, Dru and Elisa talk. Elisa notices all the girls crowding Scooter. She says the drowned girl is out there now. Dru says Elisa simply sees a reflection of the two of them in the glass. But Elisa says she sees the drowned girl.

## Eight Analysis

Dru is a bit guilty of catering to her boyfriend, just like Elisa. Mike is not controlling, but she will do certain things for him. She goes to the Spindrift, though she does not feel like it. She wears her hair the way he likes it. She looks longingly at her new clothes for Northwestern, a place that represents distance from Mike. In a subliminal way, Mike gets in her head. And she submits to what he wants.

The sea represents a dark and lonely place. At the Nail, the sea holds dead bodies. It is rough, cold and out of control. Under the sea, it is pitch black and the depths contains scary things. The sea at the Spindrift is the same because Elisa still sees the terrifying drowned girl there. In this book, the sea is a ghostly, unpredictable force that can haunt the life right out of its victim.



# Nine

## Nine Summary

In Nine, Dru and Mike eat by themselves. Mike says Diane and Tom will probably break up soon because he is going to college far away. Hopi and Diane will probably stay together because they will be in San Diego together. Dru and Mike go to walk on the beach, but Elisa gets upset and starts to warn her about the drowned girl. Dru says it is okay because Mike will be with her.

They walk on the beach. She does not understand this feeling of urgency. On their graduation night, they had sneaked away and made out on a blanket. Her heart beat fast. She says she does not want to have sex. He replies that she will never have to do anything she does not want to do with him.

Mike says she is the great love of his life and to please stay in California. Mike's dad said that he regretted letting Dru's mother go. Mike is not serious about the request because she has a scholarship to Northwestern. She realizes they are in love; the heat and electricity between them are very strong. People call to them to come back because there will be a celebration for Elisa and Scooter.

They see a person in the darkness. It is a homeless woman. Mike gets her coffee. Dru realizes Elisa had mistaken this woman for the drowned girl. They return to the Spindrift for the celebration orchestrated by Diane.

## Nine Analysis

Mike starts to pressure Dru to stay in California. Though he does not really mean it, the subliminal messages have been sent. He begins to put pressure on Dru, which likens him to Scooter. He tries to control their relationship and dictate it the way he wants it to be. Also, Mike wants Dru to stay in California, instead of offering to move to Chicago. Again, Mike starts to take the Scooter role, whether he realizes it or not. Dru is now confused. Her motivation is to be successful at Northwestern, but she also has Mike to consider. This foreshadows that Dru must choose between college and Mike by the end of the book.

# Ten

## Ten Summary

In Ten, Mike and Dru come to the celebration. Diane steps out in a sexy mermaid dress, proclaiming Scooter and Elisa as King and Queen of the Deep. She presents them with seaweed crowns. Elisa does not want to go up, but Scooter makes her. Dru says Elisa can leave with her and Mike. Elisa keeps freaking out, looking out the window as she sees the drowned girl, who is really the homeless woman.

A slow song comes on. Diane and Hopi dance in a slow, sexual way. The music stops. Grant, Tom's twin, holds the cord. Tom says he and Grant will jump the Nail together tonight. Everyone gets excited. Mike says not to do it; they will be killed. Tom says they are jumping. Diane has a huge smirk on her face because she knows she is the reason.

## Ten Analysis

Diane represents the seductress. She lures men into her trap and makes them do whatever she wants. She has control over these men. In other words, she is the female version of Scooter. She is not necessarily an abuser, but she does play mind games and prey on the weak. Diane knows exactly what she is doing and her motivations are purely selfish and evil. As she toys with Tom's emotions, she causes a potentially destructive situation.

# Eleven

## Eleven Summary

In *Eleven*, everyone drives to the Nail to see Tom and Grant jump. Dru promises Elisa she will go with her. Elisa goes because other girls swarm Scooter. Dru responds they cannot be watchdogs, but she realizes she is insecure about Diane. Elisa asks Dru to warn Tom about the drowned girl but not use her name. Dru tells Tom he may get hurt, he may get paralyzed and Diane will not want him if he is paralyzed. And he makes his twin jump. Dru says Elisa described the jump and how cold the water is and said there is an old car. Diane comes and Tom smiles, so Dru realizes she cannot talk Tom out of it.

There is no light at the top of the Nail. Scooter advises them to take a running start. The twins jump outward and disappear under the water. Elisa screams and says the drowned girl has one of them. Scooter tells her to chill out and that she is crazy, but Dru defends her. Both twins come to the surface. Tom's face bleeds.

## Eleven Analysis

The jumps symbolize insecurity. Everyone who jumps is insecure about something. Scooter is insecure because he wants to stay the center of attention. He cannot handle life without some type of fame. Elisa jumps because she is insecure in her relationship with Scooter. She wants to prove to him she is brave and that she is worthy of him. Tom jumps because he is insecure in his relationship with Diane and rightfully so. The jumps symbolize a continual cycle of insecurity, which also can be labeled adolescence.



# Twelve

## Twelve Summary

In Twelve, Tom has 27 stitches in his head. Grant tells the doctor Tom fell and hit his head on a rock. The jumping will stop if Grant says anything to adults. Tom has Diane's attention. She is by his side. Mike says Tom is brave, but dumb; he could have been killed. Elisa is in shock and cannot stop shaking. Dru offers Elisa a ride, but she goes with Scooter. Mike says 27 stitches will not stop anyone from jumping. Hopi will jump; his friends will jump. Things have not gone far enough. Mike says the police cannot sit and wait to find someone in the act. Dru comes up with a plan to call the nice police officer who spoke at their school. Mike says they can think about it.

Dru is back home. Mom wants to speak to her. They have been invited to El Nido, Mike's house. Mom is dying to see the inside of the ritziest house in La Paloma. Ironically, Dru has never been inside Mike's house because she is not ready for it. She feels she has to be ready for how wealthy he is. When she is more secure, she will go inside. She does not want her whole family going over there, especially since Mom is Mike's dad's ex. Mom is thrilled and accepts the invitation with pleasure. Mom thinks it is a sign that Mike is really serious about Dru, especially since his parents want to meet her. Dru gets angry and says Mom never reminisces about Dad. Mom says she does and that she and Dad love each other. They end their talk and head to bed.

## Twelve Analysis

One of the recent jumpers finally gets hurt. Tom's stitches foreshadow that another jumper may be seriously injured by the end of the book. Grant chooses not to tell the doctor the truth, which foreshadows that adults should be involved now. No one can stop the situation as Mike points out. It is just a matter of time until something major happens.

A male is finally negatively affected by jumping the Nail. Elisa and the girl in the wheelchair seem to be damaged from their jumps, but the males jumped unscathed. Tom is a male who manifests injury from the jump, thus proving anyone can get hurt, male or female. The jumps do not discriminate by sex; everyone is subject to the danger of the jumps. Anyone who makes it out unscathed is simply lucky.





# Thirteen

## Thirteen Summary

In Thirteen, Claire, Dru's oldest sister who studies music in New York, calls Dru. Dru tells her everything. Claire asks what Dru would do if Mike decides to jump and asks Dru to jump with him. Dru responds Mike would not jump and he would never ask her to do something she did not want to do. Claire asks what Dru would do if Diane takes her place; would she jump then? Dru does not answer the question.

Mike calls, surprised by his family's invitation too. Dru says they have to tell about the jumping and fast. Mike had been about to tell his dad, but did not. They will deal with it tomorrow, after the big dinner. Mom comes home with a nice outfit to wear. Dru wishes she did not have to go. Dru whispers into her dog's ear that she really wants to go to Chicago.

She runs on the beach with her dog. She sees a homeless man, thinking he is sad, but she will not go near him. She thinks of Elisa, hoping she dropped the seaweed crown in the garbage with the black boot.

## Thirteen Analysis

Claire's questions bring out Dru's insecurity. Though Dru will not jump, she is still caught in a cycle of adolescent insecurity. This foreshadows that she and Mike may have a confrontation, since Dru tries to convince herself Chicago is the right decision. Dru learns that insecurity comes from within her too and she must decide if it will rule her and change her college plans.



# Fourteen

## Fourteen Summary

In Fourteen, Dru, Mom and Dad drive to El Nido. Mom is nervous, but Dad is calm. Mr. and Mrs. Moriarty (Mike's parents) and Janie (Mike's little sister) welcome Dru's family. They show them around the house, which is gorgeous with hardwood floors, glass walls and amazing views. They have a perfectly delicious dinner. Dru gets annoyed because Janie says she likes her better than Diane. Dru thinks she is special, but Diane has been here already. Mrs. Moriarty will start college in the fall; she has never finished her college education because she met Mr. Moriarty. It is a huge regret for her. They discuss the California university system, which the Moriartys think is the best. Dad agrees, but he is happy his girls have scholarships to attend wherever they want.

After dinner, Mike watches Dru. Dad plays piano for them and Dru finally sees her father for who he is: a sophisticated man. Before they leave, Dru and Mike walk out to the terrace. They will call Officer Tracy tomorrow. Mike asks her again to please not go to Chicago. She says he asks her to jump. There are all kinds of jumps. Dru says he needs to stop asking because it is hard enough for her to go away.

Dru's family goes home. Mom comes into her bedroom and shocks Dru, telling her to stay because some other girl will get Mike. Mom sees the way Mike looks at her. She wants Dru to have money and financial stability, saying it is a good life, the life she has never had. Dru is shocked Mom wants her to give up her scholarship. Mom says she could lose Mike.

## Fourteen Analysis

Dad represents a secure person. He is not jealous of Mike's father or the money he has. He is also not nervous driving to the house. Dad is secure in who he is and proud of who he is. Dru finally recognizes this in her father and sees him for the first time with clear eyes. He is a person to admire. She wants to be like him.

Mrs. Moriarty represents who Dru will be if she stays in California. She has given up her life for her husband; she has even given up her dream of college. Dru will have the same experience if she stays home to be with Mike. Dru sees herself 30 years from now.

Mom represents extreme insecurity. She is impressed by money and material things. She cannot get over the fact she is not rich. Mom is so insecure that she believes marrying off her daughter to a rich boy will bring Dru complete happiness. Mom loves Dad, but she does not feel comfortable in her own skin or in her life. If Dru gives in to her own insecurities, she could end up like Mom.



# Fifteen and Sixteen

## Fifteen and Sixteen Summary

In Fifteen, Dru wakes up to the phone ringing at 5 a.m. Elisa's mother says Elisa dropped her off at work last night and never came home with the car. She is frantic, asking if Dru has seen her. Elisa's depression has been very bad lately. Dru calls Scooter, who says Elisa is wacko, seeing and hearing things, and that he was out with someone else last night. Dru tells him off.

Dru and Mike drive everywhere to search. They go to the Nail, the Spindrift, and all around the area. They find the homeless woman on the beach, who says she talked to Elisa, the Queen of the Deep. Elisa said she is coming. Those are the same words the drowned girl said to Elisa. Mike stops the car by the Danger sign. Red lipstick scratches out Scooter and Elisa's names. It scratches out the hearts underneath. A lipstick tube is in the grass. Mike finds tire tracks that go to the edge of the Nail and beyond. Dru cries.

In Sixteen, the police come and find Elisa's seaweed crown floating in the water. Divers try for three days to get Elisa's body out of the car to no avail. Elisa had driven off the cliff. Everyone has questions. Dru wonders if Elisa threw her crown over the edge before she drove off the cliff? Or did she wear it behind the wheel? She will never know.

Everyone comes to Elisa's memorial. Lizzie says it is not Scooter's fault; it was Elisa's decision to jump that first time. Lizzie says she does not understand why girls do dumb stuff guys want them to do. Dru says, guys can be just as dumb, like Tom and Grant. Jumping the Nail is over, but it will probably return someday.

In the fall, Dru flies to O'Hare, the Chicago airport. The night before, Mike says he loves her and that he wishes she was not going, but he knows she has to. Dru says she will be back, but Elisa will not because she is gone forever in the Deep when she should be alive.

## Fifteen and Sixteen Analysis

The seaweed crown represents how Elisa saw herself. She was a mere object of Scooter's, of no worth or value to herself or the world. The crown is made of seaweed, a smelly and filthy plant of the ocean. Elisa saw herself as a representation of the seaweed, a pitiful girl who did not deserve anything better. As the crown floats on the water, it is a reminder to all the teenagers that succumbing to insecurity will kill you, either emotionally or literally.

There is now a second car and a second drowned girl under the water. They sink to the deepest part of the sea, where no one can find them except those who jump the Nail. Therefore, the jumpers will delve into the deepest part of their insecurities, causing them to be swallowed whole by their insecure motivations. Jumping the Nail will return

someday because there will always be teenagers with insecurities who are easily influenced by their peers.



# Characters

## Dru

Dru just graduated La Paloma High in California. She is very smart and wins a scholarship to Northwestern in Chicago. She spends her last summer watching her peers jump off the Nail, a high cliff. Dru acts like a mother figure because she is worried about the jumpers, especially her best friend Elisa. She tries to talk sense into Elisa, but Elisa jumps anyway. When Elisa has a mental breakdown, Dru takes care of her when no one else will. Dru proves she is a good friend and has a good heart. When the other kids encourage people to jump, she tries to talk them out of it. She has a hard time fitting in with her peers because they are all beautiful, rich and wear designer clothes. Dru is middle class and lives in a rented house. She awkwardly deals with her rich peers, not understanding their selfish and sometimes mean-spirited motivations. Dru is simply too mature for her peers.

Dru is an observer as well. She observes her mother, who is easily impressed by money and material things. She sees how her mother reacts to money and how she always tries to impress others. Dru does not want to end up like her mom. In fact, she takes after her father, a sophisticated man who is not impressed by riches.

Her relationship with Mike starts to define her as a person. She is Mike's girlfriend. When Mike asks her to stay in California, she seriously considers the idea. But then she realizes she will be doing it for a guy and she is not that type of girl. Dru tells Mike to stop asking her to stay; she stands her ground. She leaves for Northwestern without regrets, confident she has made the right decision for herself.

## Elisa

Elisa is Dru's best friend. She struggles with depression. She should be visiting a doctor regularly and taking her medication, but she stops. She says Scooter makes everything okay. Scooter is her new boyfriend, who is popular. He convinces her to jump the Nail and they do. Elisa has a mental breakdown in which she thinks she saw a drowned girl in a car underwater who speaks to her. Elisa's mental state is fragile, but she will do anything for Scooter, who controls her. Elisa struggles to keep her sanity, but she keeps losing her grasp on reality.

Elisa is a lonely girl. Her mother works all the time and her father is not around. She has no siblings, thus no one to take care of her. Even Scooter will not help her; he just wants attention and to party. Elisa turns to Dru for nurturing. Elisa sees the drowned girl on the beach. Most likely, Elisa struggles with schizophrenia, a mental illness where people hear voices and see illusions. Schizophrenia often emerges at adolescence. Therefore, Elisa struggles with the normal feelings of adolescence including not fitting in and loneliness, and also struggles with serious mental illness. She also struggles with an



emotionally abusive relationship, in which she defends Scooter. She does not see herself as abused because her self esteem is lacking. When she commits suicide, she stops the cycle of jumping the Nail, at least for a while.

## **Mom**

Mom is Dru's mother, who is impressed by money and material things. She is a real estate agent. She used to date Mike's dad a long time ago, but left him for Dru's dad.

## **Diane**

Diane is Mike's ex-girlfriend. She is blond and perfect and will be attending San Diego State with Mike in the fall. She tries everything to get Mike back to Dru's annoyance.

## **Mike**

Mike is Dru's boyfriend. He is popular, gorgeous and kind-hearted. He is in love with Dru and wants her to stay in California. He tries to help Dru in stopping the jumpers.

## **Scooter**

Scooter is Elisa's new boyfriend. He loves attention and fame. He is an emotional abuser who controls Elisa.

## **Lizzie**

Lizzie is Dru and Elisa's close friend. She knows about Elisa's depression and is the only one to whom Dru can talk about Elisa.

## **Hopi**

Hopi is a Native American-looking kid. He is friends with Scooter and Mike. He says he will jump the Nail on the same day, same time as Scooter. He tries to make jumping a ritual.

## **Tom**

Tom is Diane's boyfriend. He watches Diane kiss another boy. To win her back, he jumps the Nail at night with his twin brother. He hits his head and gets 27 stitches.

## Dad

Dad is Dru's father. Unlike Mom, he is not impressed by money or material things. He owns a music shop. He plays piano on the weekends at a restaurant. He is a refined, sophisticated man.



# Objects/Places

## La Paloma

La Paloma is a city in California with expensive homes and a beautiful beach.

## The Nail

The Nail is a 90 foot cliff. Teenagers jump the Nail, even though it is very dangerous.

## El Nido

El Nido means the nest in English. It is the name of Mike's house, which is the nicest house in La Paloma. It is worth \$2 million and sits on a cliff.

## The Deep

The Deep is the underwater of the sea. When jumping the Nail, people jump into the Deep.

## Spindrifft

Spindrifft is a teenage hangout in La Paloma on the beach with a makeshift dance floor, jukebox and food counter.

## Murchisons

Murchisons is a cliff walk. On graduation night, Dru and Mike go there to make out.

## Easter Island

Easter Island is a Polynesian island in the South Pacific which has almost 900 ancient statues.

## The Boot

The boot is Elisa's black boot that comes off during her jump. She says the drowned girl pulled it off.





## **San Diego State**

San Diego State is the university Mike and Diane will attend in the fall.

## **Mandela's Rock**

Mandela's Rock is the middle ledge of the Nail.



# Themes

## Jumping

One of the major themes of this book is jumping. People literally jump off the Nail, but there is another kind of jump as well. As Dru says, "There are all kinds of jumps" (Fourteen, p. 153). Jumping is also an emotional jump or taking an emotional risk. For example, Mike asks Dru to stay in California with him. In other words, he wants her to forego her scholarship at Northwestern. To Dru, this is an emotional jump. He does not ask her to jump the Nail, but he asks her to take a risk in her life. Dru decides not to take this jump with him. She goes to Northwestern.

On the other hand, Elisa jumps. She literally jumps the Nail and she takes an emotional jump due to Scooter. She does not want to jump the Nail, but she does because she feels she must hold onto Scooter. Girls swarm him and she must keep him interested in her. Therefore, she risks her emotional sanity and jumps. After doing so, Elisa has a mental breakdown. The emotional jump she takes is too risky and the consequences are dire. This emotional jump puts Elisa in a downward spiral, which ends in suicide. Elisa risks too much for her relationship and the reader sees how taking an emotional jump can be a dangerous and deadly situation.

However, there is a good jump. When Dru goes to Northwestern, she takes a jump for herself. She makes a good decision because she lives her life, but not for a guy. This emotional jump is positive.

## Control

One of the major themes of this book is control. Many characters try to control situations. For example, Scooter controls Elisa. Tom observes, "Elisa would do anything for Scooter" (Seven, p. 70). Scooter exerts complete control over Elisa both mentally and physically. He counts to 10 for her to hurry because he does not like to wait. He commands her to jump the Nail, though she does not want to do so. Therefore, he takes physical control of her body as well because he puts her in physical danger. At the Spindrift, Scooter talks on Elisa's behalf, thus controlling her again. Scooter's control is one of abuse and it is the most dangerous control of all.

Dru tries to control Elisa by being mothering. She tries to convince her not to jump. After she sees how Scooter treats Elisa, she talks on Elisa's behalf and counters Scooter. Dru controls the situation, not allowing Elisa to have a voice. Even though Dru controls out of good intentions, it is still control that she is after.

Additionally, Dru controls her unfolding relationship with Mike. She is not ready to see his house, thus she does not go over there. She is not ready for his upper class lifestyle. When her family goes there via invitation, Dru loses control of this situation, but she



realizes it is okay because Mike's family only has good intentions for her. The reader learns sometimes a person needs to give up control in order to see the truth.

## Dealing with Money

One of the major themes of this book is money. The characters all deal with money in different ways. For example, Dru shies away from money. She is content in her rented house, with her middle class lifestyle. She will not go to Mike's extravagant house because she does not want to deal with the upper class. She does not fit in with her rich classmates, who all wear designer clothes. Dru views money in a negative light since she sees many of her rich peers as mean-spirited and selfish. She takes after her father, who is not impressed by money and is happy in his life. She sees him as a sophisticated man whom she admires.

However, her mother has a very different view of money. She loves money and everything it represents. She is impressed by material things, especially when she walks into Mike's house; she appreciates all the fine things. She wishes she and Dad would have bought a house a long time ago because now they would be rich. Mom feels insecure because they do not have money.

Mike deals with money casually. He has money, so it is not a big deal to him. He has a car and lives in a nice house. Mike views money as just a normal thing, which does not control his life. He is not insecure because he has money nor does he show off his money. His view of money is healthy.



# Style

## Point of View

The point of view of the book is first person. This point of view is reliable, proven by the fact that the narrator, Dru, reports on the major events of the book, including jumping the Nail. Dru also makes observations of other characters in the first person voice. The point of view is important to the book because a major aspect of the book is the emotional development of the main character, Dru. There could not be the dramatic impact of this development if the reader could not see directly into Dru's private thoughts and most personal fears. Dru also speaks her mind through a heavy amount of dialogue. Her voice is powerful when she speaks to Mike, her boyfriend, because she tells him private thoughts, including her fears.

The story is told mostly through exposition and dialogue. The passages have some description and they are short, but they do give a personal look into Dru's fears of her peers, including Elisa, jumping the Nail. This method is most likely used in order to keep the reader focused on Dru. She spends most of the book worrying about Elisa and others who will jump the Nail. The reader must see the experience of jumping the Nail through Dru's eyes to understand the full impact and danger of the jump. The reader would be lost if s/he is not privy to Dru's thoughts. The reader sees when Dru is fearful or worried, as s/he feels these emotions along with Dru.

## Setting

The setting of the book is La Paloma, California. It is a beautiful beach city with expensive homes valued upwards of \$2 million dollars. Dru loves to walk or jog on the beach and enjoys the sunny weather. She lives in a rented house that is average. Her house is nicer than Elisa's, which smells of cigarettes and coffee, but it is nothing special. The kids from La Paloma are rich, privileged, beautiful and dress in designer clothes. Wealth surrounds Dru from the people to the houses.

Most of the book takes place at the Nail. The Nail is a 90 foot cliff. When one jumps the Nail, they jump right into the waves of the sea below. Down underwater where it is black is the Deep. The Nail is divided into places to watch the jumps. One can stand atop the Nail, but s/he will not see the jumper descend. Most people go to the middle area, or ledge, of the cliff to watch the jumpers. This is the best area for viewing.

Another setting is Mike's house. Mike lives in the most expensive house in La Paloma. It is called El Nido, which means the nest. In Mike's house, everything is perfect. The hardwood floors are a beautiful sand color. The walls are glass. The views of the ocean are spectacular. The house sits on a cliff, watching over all of La Paloma. Even the dinner served in the house is absolutely perfect.



## Language and Meaning

The language of this book tends to be informal. The sentences are constructed in a manner that is common to modern times. The sentences follow the complex rules of grammar. Slang is not used. Dru, the main character, has a lot of dialogue. When she speaks, she uses everyday language to express her thoughts and emotions. There are moderately difficult vocabulary words interspersed throughout the text. The language adds a depth to the book that allows the reader a glimpse into jumping the Nail, Elisa's mental illness and Dru's most private fears.

The language of the book characterizes how teenagers speak to each other. The book is told in exposition and dialogue. The focus tends to be on jumping the Nail and the end result of when a person jumps the Nail. When Dru describes jumping the Nail, she uses words of extreme fear and worry. For example, the jump is always silent. The jumpers dive into the water and are not seen for a while. Through the language, Dru expresses the jumps as terrifying and senseless, not as impressive and brave. Dru speaks in a very authoritative tone, especially compared to her peers. She speaks with meaning in her voice that conveys pragmatism and fear for the jumper. This is contrary to her peers who encourage the jumpers and even chant for them to jump. Dru's mothering voice comes out and it is powerful, especially when she speaks to Mike because she reveals her most private thoughts.

## Structure

The book is comprised of 16 chapters, each approximately 10 pages long. Each chapter has a number. The chapters tend to be normal length for a young adult book and have short passages of description. Short amounts of time pass in a few paragraphs. Larger spans of time pass in between chapters; for example, one chapter takes place on Saturday and the next chapter takes place on Sunday. The time line of the book consists of Dru's life in the summer after she graduates high school as she watches her peers jump the Nail. Dru reports on the time before the jumps, the jumps themselves and the aftermath of each jump.

The plot of the book is fairly simple. It is about Dru who just graduated from La Paloma High. She watches her peers jump the Nail over the summer. Elisa, her best friend, jumps the Nail and has an emotional breakdown. The one subplot is Dru's relationship with Mike. He asks her to stay in California with him and she must decide whether to go away to college in Chicago or stay.

The book's pace is fast due to the author's use of short passages and short chapters. Dialogue is quick and to the point. The book is an easy read and the plot engrosses the reader into the world of jumping the Nail. The story line is linear with a few flashbacks of Mike and Dru's relationship. There are no long sections of back story. The book is quite easy to read and entertains as a whole.



## Quotes

"Mike who was special and who'd noticed me that night and made me special too." One, p. 7

"Sometimes a person has to go along. There are things to prove." Three, p. 26

"She said she wanted me to stay. The drowned girl." Seven, p. 65

"Elisa would do anything for Scooter." Seven, p. 70

"Beyond was the deep ocean darkness, blacker than night and filled with secrets." Eight, p. 85

"The whole world loves a jumper." Eight, p. 87

"I see the drowned girl." Eight, p. 90

"No person should have that much control over another person's life." Ten, p. 111

"Things haven't gone far enough yet." Twelve, p. 128

"You need to have your own life, if you're a woman or a man." Fourteen, p. 148

"There are all kinds of jumps." Fourteen, p. 153

"The trivial question nags and nags at me, and I know I'll never have an answer." Sixteen, p. 171



## Topics for Discussion

What does the idea of jumping signify? How do the characters "jump" in this book emotionally? Are there any types of jumps beside the Nail? Who takes the biggest emotional jump?

What does the drowned girl symbolize? Who is she? Why does Elisa choose to see a drowned girl and not a drowned boy? The drowned girl is in the Deep, so what does the Deep symbolize?

What does this book say about abuse? How are relationships portrayed? Who has a healthy relationship and who does not? Do Dru and Mike have a healthy relationship? Explain why or why not.

How is money represented in the book? Does it matter? Does Mom have a point that marrying a rich boy will be a nice, easy life? How does Dru view the upper class and money?

Dru feels left out amongst her peers. Who else feels left out? Why is this adolescent emotion so strong and identifiable to readers? Do any adult characters feel left out as well, and if so, how?

How is mental illness portrayed in this book? Is anyone else mentally ill besides Elisa? If so, who? Could anyone or anything have prevented Elisa's suicide?

What would you do if your best friend decided to jump the Nail? Would you ask about her/his motivations? Would you tell an adult or let your friend jump? Should Mike and Dru have waited that long to tell an adult?