

King of the Screwups Study Guide

King of the Screwups by KL Going

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Plot Summary

King of the Screwups is a novel by Printz Honor Winner K.L. Going. The story follows the main character, Liam Geller, as he tries to come to terms with the fact that no matter what he does or how hard he tries, he manages to screw situations up and disappoint his father. When Liam's father, Allan Geller, discovers his son and a girl about to have sex on his office desk, Allan declares this event "the last straw" and tries to ship Liam off to live with his grandparents in Nevada. Instead, Liam ends up moving in with his cross-dressing uncle in a trailer park in a small town in upstate New York. Uncle Pete is Allan's estranged brother that Liam hasn't seen since his mother's modeling retirement party when Liam was seven.

When Liam arrives in Pineville, New York, he decides the best way to succeed is not to rely on his popularity. His father's term for Liam, Mr. Popularity, seems to be what has been landing Liam in all this trouble. Liam sets out to make himself one of the most unpopular kids in school. As usual, Liam's plan backfires. He winds up making the neighbor that his age, Darleen, think he's a pompous moron, and making all of the popular kids at school think he's a hero.

Even when Liam helps one his uncle's friends, Eddie, in his boutique, Liam doesn't see that he is a talented person, just not in the way that his father is. While Liam tries to enlist in the army to make his father proud, his mother and uncle finally stand up for Liam against his controlling father. For the first time, Liam gets to make some of his own decisions and focus on the positive aspects of his life rather than dwelling on all the negativity.



Chapters 1 and 2

Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

Liam Geller is a nine-year-old boy. He is doing an interview on a TV show with his two famous parents, Sarah and Allan Geller. Sarah is a former model turned boutique owner and Allan is a financial genius. When the interviewer asks Liam a few questions, the answers Liam gives make the family sound bad. Liam tries to make up for the faux pas, but makes it worse by talking about a paternity test to prove that his father is his father, even though he and Liam look nothing alike.

Liam's father walks in on Liam and Delia having sex in Allan's office. Allan starts yelling at Liam. Liam is drunk and all he can think about is how he thought Delia loved him, but when they started to undress each other he realizes that she doesn't love him, that she just wants to be popular. As Mr. Geller continues to rage at Liam, he tells Liam that he wants Liam out of his house. Liam tries to sit up to apologize, but he blacks out instead.

Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

Liam having two famous and successful parents is ironic because it seems as if Liam himself cannot do anything right. The opening chapter foreshadows this being the first in a long line of stories about all of the ways Liam screw up throughout his childhood.

Liam talks a lot about his name brand watch and clothes. This makes him seem very superficial and materialistic. He isn't looking at people and situations for what they are, but rather judging by what they own and what they wear. One of the reason Liam is acting out is that he doesn't feel good enough for his parents. They are both smart and successful, so Liam is using his popularity to gain friends and girls, rather than her personality or who Liam is as a person.



Chapters 3 and 4

Chapters 3 and 4 Summary

Liam remembers back to when he was five years old. He is backstage at a runway show with his mom and the other models. He starts to imitate the models and they all start talking about how GQ he is. Liam ramps up his showing off and when he jumps off the stage expecting his mom to catch him, she doesn't and he falls into a pile of chairs.

When Liam opens his eyes, he is still in his dad's office on top of his dad's desk. His mom is standing over him and she hands him a cup of coffee. She asks Liam why he has to upset his father and if Liam is trying to get kicked out of the house. She says that his father arranged to have Liam live with grandparents. Liam says his grandparents hate him, to which his mother says they hate her too.

She says that she called Liam's Uncle Pete to arrange for him to stay there for a while. She warns Liam that he has to present it to his father as if it's Liam's idea. She also says he has to call Pete to arrange the details and then she walks out.

Liam remembers his grandparents visiting when he was seven. His grandparents are talking about what a discipline problem Liam is and how his manners are bad. Gram says it's good that Sarah retired from modeling so she can take care of Liam. As Gram is boasting about Allan becoming a CEO because she stayed home with him, Mom asks about Peter, dad's brother. A knock at the door reveals Peter in a full-length gown and heels. Allan and Grams usher Peter out of the house.

When Liam looks at the name: Aunt Pete and phone number scribbled in his mother's handwriting on a piece of paper, he knows he has to make his father change his mind. He doesn't want to go live with his cross-dressing uncle in a trailer park. Liam goes downstairs to find his mom cooking breakfast and his father working at the table. Liam tries to apologize. His father won't talk to him and his mother says his father doesn't want Liam there, so Liam walks out.

Chapters 3 and 4 Analysis

It seems as if Liam's whole family thinks of him as a delinquent and a screwup. With it being Liam's senior year of high school, having to live with a relative means that he'll have to switch school. This foreshadows Liam starting over again at a new high school, making new friends and making a new life for himself. He can either see it as an opportunity to start over or he is doomed to repeat his same old mistakes in a new place and with new people.

Peter is Liam's cross-dressing uncle and Allan's brother. He seems to be the black sheep of the family. In a way, this makes Peter and Liam allies. Liam has been such a disciplinary problem his whole life that his parents are fed up with his behavior. They no

longer believe him when he says he is sorry or that he won't do it again, because his past behavior proves that he will just do it over and over again.



Chapters 5 and 6

Chapters 5 and 6 Summary

Liam calls his Uncle Pete. Liam mentions staying with him for a couple months, which takes Pete by surprise because Sarah told Pete a few weeks. Pete says they'll have to enroll Liam in school, even if it is temporary. Pete asks for Liam to tell him the truth about it being Lima's idea to come stay with him. Liam says Pete is the only choice because he lies about his dad's parents saying he couldn't live with them. He mentions he can't live with his mom's mom in Paris because of an incident the previous year. Liam mentions he is entertaining to Pete and Pete says Liam will fit right in.

Liam remembers showing his father a school project that he got a B on in school. His father mutters under his breath about no son of his being a B student and about the paternity test. Liam's mom comforts Liam, tells him a B is good and to put his diorama in the parlor.

While Liam is packing, his dad comes in his room. His dad says this is for the best. Liam blurts out about trying harder at Pete's before he realizes that he hasn't told his father he's going to Pete's instead of his grandparents' house. His dad suggests Liam chose the one thing that would hurt him the most - living with his cross-dressing brother - and walks out of the room.

Chapters 5 and 6 Analysis

Pete insinuates that he some kind of performer, which is why he says Liam will fit right in when Liam says he's entertaining. Liam living with Pete foreshadows Liam turning his life around through the lessons that his uncle teaches him about life. It seems as if Liam is not meeting his father's expectations of him, even a as young child. This might be causing Liam to act out instead of act good in order to get his father's attention. It seems no matter how hard or how little Liam tries, he always manages to get himself into a bad situation.



Chapters 7 and 8

Chapters 7 and 8 Summary

Liam's mother drives him to Golden Meadows, the trailer park where Uncle Pete lives. She gets out of the car beaming as she greets Uncle Pete and the other guys that are with him outside of his trailer. Liam stays in the car and he notices a girl and her father going inside the trailer and laughing after the dad says something to his daughter as they look in Liam's direction. Liam bites his lip until it bleeds, but his mother doesn't notice.

Uncle Pete tells Liam to get out of the car and come meet the guys. Sarah stays for over an hour, talking about the good old days with Pete and his band. She tells Liam about the night she met Liam's father.

After Sarah leaves, Pete's friends start to leave too. Pete tries to get them to stay, but one of his friends whispers in Pete's ear that they'll be fine once they get to know each other. They move his stuff into the guest room and Liam finds out that there isn't a closet or an iron in the trailer. Uncle Pete asks if Liam wants to talk so they head out to the living room. Pete asks why Liam brought his surfboard when they are miles from the water and even that water is not fit for surfing. Liam doesn't want to explain it's a gift his father gave him when they were in Hawaii. Pete heats up two bowls of frozen spinach in the microwave for dinner. This is when Liam glimpses what his new life is and that nobody is coming to save him from it.

Chapters 7 and 8 Analysis

Sarah mentions to Liam that Pete was in a glam-rock band in college. The guys that his mother and Uncle Pete are introducing to Liam at the trailer park must be members of Uncle Pete's existing band. Pete is nervous about having Liam stay with him since he hasn't seen Liam since he was seven.

Pete and Liam are polar opposites of each other. While Liam is wearing designer clothes and shoes, his uncle is wearing very casual and generic clothes and shoes. While Liam is a vegetarian, Pete eats mostly meat.



Chapters 9 and 10

Chapters 9 and 10 Summary

Liam dreams about being at a photo shoot with his mom and dad. His dad says something about showing Liam who his real father is. The male model previously rubbing on his mom turns into Uncle Pete. Liam wakes up and it takes him a moment to realize where he is. He hears voices outside his bedroom door whispering about waking Liam up because it's noon.

Liam opens the door to find his uncle ready to knock and his two friends and bandmates, Eddie and Dino standing on either side of him. Orlando, the other bandmate, is sitting on a stool in the kitchen. They suggest going to the museum a few towns over. Eddie mentions that his cousin, who lives next store, likes to go to the museum. Liam opts for breakfast first.

The guys wait in the living room while Liam goes through his ritual of getting ready. Liam almost starts a fire with a cardboard box and steaming teapot he's using as an iron and ironing board. When Uncle Pete sees what happened, he just says no harm done.

Eddie cooks an egg-white omelet for Liam's breakfast and hamburgers for the guys' lunch. Liam notices that Uncle Pete and Orlando hold hands, so he assumes Orlando is Pete's boyfriend. They ask Liam what his plans are. Liam mistakes this question for his plans while he is living with Pete. Instead, they mean his plans for after he graduates since he is a senior. When Liam mentions business like his father, Pete suggests he has to find something he loves to do. The guys toast to Liam staying with them for a few weeks.

Chapters 9 and 10 Analysis

The paternity test that keeps popping up suggests that Liam's mom was sleeping with Allan and another guy close to the time she got pregnant with Liam. The girl next door Eddie is referring to as his cousin is the same girl that Liam saw the door before when he arrived. Since they are about the same age, although very different in the lifestyles they lead, it foreshadows the two becoming very close friends or even boyfriend and girlfriend. Uncle Pete's reactions to Liam screwing up are completely different from his father's reactions. This takes Liam by surprise. Liam thinks the smoldering cardboard box is symbolic of what his life is going to be like in the trailer park and what is yet to happen.



Chapters 11 and 12

Chapters 11 and 12 Summary

After breakfast, Liam grabs his cell to call Delia, the girl he was caught having sex with on his dad's desk. Liam goes to the picnic table outside but realizes he doesn't have Delia's number. So he calls his friend Brice for it. Brice starts questioning Liam about his encounter with Delia, but Liam admits they didn't have sex because his dad walked in on them. Brice keeps plying Liam for details while Brice tries to find Delia's number in the phone book. When he can't find it, Liam tells him to forget it.

Liam opens his eyes and sees the girl from next door sitting on her steps. This probably means she heard everything Liam said about what happened between Liam and Delia. Before Liam can explain, Delia's dad steps out of the trailer and introduces himself and Darleen to Liam. He starts talking about how they are both seniors and how great Darleen is to Liam. After Darleen's dad leaves, Liam tries to get Darleen to talk but she says the phone is ringing and goes inside.

Liam dreams about being at an awards banquet with his parents. When his father steps up to the podium for his acceptance speech, Liam thinks his dad is going to thank him and his mom. Instead his father thanks his colleagues. Liam's cell phone rings in his pocket and everyone at the banquet turns to look at Liam. Liam wakes up to the phone in the trailer ringing.

Liam cracks his bedroom door to see Uncle Pete stumble into the kitchen in a kimono and orange tube socks. Pete's response to the phone call is "Hell!" as he tells Liam that school starts today and Liam is late. They both rush to get ready. Pete is digging in his room looking for a manila envelope Sarah FedExed with all of the legal documents Pete needs to enroll Liam in school.

Liam stops helping Pete look and notices the red floor-length gown Pete wore the time he made an entrance into Liam's house when his grandparents were visiting. Liam asks if Pete and his mom planned it. Uncle Pete says they did and that he hasn't worn the dress since. He also says that Allan never let Pete come back after that.

Chapters 11 and 12 Analysis

Darleen and Liam are polar opposites. Darleen is smart and plays the cello. Liam gets bad grades and is only good at being social. Darleen is her father's pride and joy and Liam is his father's nemesis. The fact that they are both seniors suggests that they might have some classes together and get to know each other. It might be Darleen that teaches Liam about real life.

While Pete and Liam are completely different, they also have a lot in common. For one, they are both shunned by Allan Geller. Allan sees them both as screwups, although he

thinks they are screwups for different reasons. It's ironic that Allan Geller is always putting his brother down and that his son has turned out to be a disappointment to him, just like Pete has.



Chapters 13 and 14

Chapters 13 and 14 Summary

Pete and Liam don't find the papers, so Pete says he'll enroll Liam in school tomorrow. Pete goes back to bed because he works nights at the radio station. When he wakes up, he sees Liam lounging on the couch watching TV, so Pete suggests they do something together. Liam mentions running. Pete goes to change and Liam runs into Darleen outside. Liam invites Darleen to run with them, mentioning it's great cardiovascular exercise and will help her lose weight. Darleen takes it as an insult, says she's not fat and walks back into her trailer. Pete comes out in a terrible spandex outfit and they start running.

During the run, Aunt Pete, as Liam refers to him, is struggling, so Liam slows his strides. They talk about Orlando being Pete's boyfriend. Liam wants to know why they don't live together, to which Pete says people can love each other but not be able to live with each other. Liam also finds out that his grandparents kicked Pete out of the house because they caught him trying on one of grandma's dresses.

Liam thinks back to a session he and his dad had with the psychologist, the psychologist infers that Liam is acting out at school to get his father's attention. Liam says he wants his dad to play basketball with him. Allen says if Liam really wanted his attention, he would choose an activity that Allen likes.

That night, Pete finds the paperwork. Liam insists he can meet with the principal on his own, but Pete says he's his guardian and he'll enroll Liam in school. Instead of thanking Pete for everything, which is what Liam wants to say, he tells Pete that he's not his father. The next morning, Pete and Liam are sitting in the principal's office. They both realize they thought the other one grabbed the papers, so Pete has to go back to the trailer to retrieve them.

Liam waits in the outer office doodling the principal with a long neck. The principal walks by and sees it. He gets red in the face and angry. Liam sees Darleen at her locker, which is near his locker and Liam waves at her. They also have physics together, in which the principal is the teacher. Liam ends up insulting the teacher/principal by asking him if he always teaches this class. The teacher gives Liam a timed pretest that the other students took on the first day. Liam answers one question. The teacher makes fun of Liam in front of the whole class. He also tells Liam that he isn't going to coast by in this school, but if Liam shows an effort then the teacher will work with him.

Chapters 13 and 14 Analysis

Pete is using the run as a way to spend quality time with Liam. Even though Pete is struggling, it foreshadows the runs becoming regular events. It's a good way for Liam and Pete to talk and get to know each other. Liam has good intentions, but somehow

when the words come out of his mouth, they come out all wrong. Embarrassing Liam in front of the class is not right, but his message in that if Liam tries that the teacher will help Liam is positive.



Chapters 15 and 16

Chapters 15 and 16 Summary

The rest of Liam's day is pretty much in the wake of his messing up with his physics teacher/principal. He's late the last period, pretending to study his schedule as he enters the room. The English teacher turns out to be his Uncle's boyfriend, Orlando. The assignment is to write an essay on the best part of the summer. The problem Liam has is every good memory leads to a bad one. At the end of class, Liam only has one word so Orlando makes him stay after class and write the essay. Liam decides he should make it up.

Liam remembers a summer day when he was eight years old. His mom is running errands. He is home with his dad and they decide to have a picnic in Liam's tree fort, while Allen reads *Treasure Island* to Liam.

When Liam gets home from school, he calls his father at his office. He apologizes and asks to come home. His father tells him that he isn't going to play charades with him—that Liam hasn't learned his lesson and he hasn't changed. He tells Liam he can't come home and hangs up the phone.

Liam is lying on top of the picnic table when Darleen looms over him and tells him to move. He tries to talk to her but she doesn't really talk back. He says she should get to know him since they are neighbors. She says she knows him and spits out his juvenile delinquency and needing a place to stay until his rich father comes and bails him out. She says Eddie is her father's cousin so that's how she hears the story. Liam says he might be in need of some friends because he's new in town and Darleen points out that he's already Mr. Popularity at school. Liam tells Darleen he's going in now and when she just says fine, Liam stomps inside and flings himself on the couch.

Chapters 15 and 16 Analysis

Liam's father substitutes a lot of material things in place of quality time with his son. Liam is acting out in order to get attention because even negative attention is attention. The problem is that his dad is fed up with Liam's behavior. Liam's reputation precedes him. Everyone that knows Liam's background is judging him based on his actions rather than the person he is standing before them. The only exception to this is Pete, who is trying to get to know his nephew.

Darleen treats and thinks of Liam a lot like Allen. Liam's need to get Darleen's attention and approval is really a need for his father's attention and approval.



Chapters 17 and 18

Chapters 17 and 18 Summary

Liam remembers a conversation with his guidance counselor in seventh grade. When the counselor asks him what he wants to be, Liam thinks a model, but then remembers his parents says he should pick something else. When Liam tells the counselor his aptitude is being popular, she tells him that doesn't require a skill, while a career does.

After looking around Pete's trailer, Liam realizes what his father has meant all of these years about compromising his life and ending up like Pete. He creates a plan to become unpopular. On Monday, he tells Pete he's going to ride the bus, he creates a cowlick in his hair and wears one of his uncle's t-shirts. When he gets on the bus, he tries to sit with Darleen, but she won't let him. A girl named Becky with red hair and purple braces gets Liam to sit with her. She says she heard he got kicked out of his house for sleeping with a model. In an attempt to make himself sound uncool, he ends up admitting that he knows a famous Elle model and all of the kids are tuned into exactly what he is saying.

At school, the same thing happens. No matter how much he tries to act and be uncool, it backfires on him. Everyone at the school is nice to him. He gets invited to join the football team and sit with the captain of the football team, his girlfriend and their friends at lunch. In English, Orlando calls on Liam three times and Liam gets it wrong every time. Jen tells him not to worry, that once he catches up that the English teacher is really goo. Darleen walks by smirking as Jen leans in to tell Liam this.

Chapters 17 and 18 Analysis

Liam is purposely trying to make himself unpopular, so he can make something out of his life. He also wants to prove his dad and Darleen wrong. In true Liam style. However, the more he tries to make himself unpopular, he screws that up too, which foreshadows him becoming more popular than ever.



Chapters 19 and 20

Chapters 19 and 20 Summary

Before Liam steps into the shower, he looks at his reflection in the mirror. He is looking for some trace of his father in his looks but all he sees is his mom. When Liam boards the bus, he tries to trip a few times to look uncool. When the kids start talking about his uncle's band, Liam defends their drag queen status as being glam-rock instead. When the goth girl on the bus gives him props for standing up for his uncle's band, she hands him a cigarette. This causes the bus driver to slam on his breaks, kick Liam off the bus and peel away—leaving Liam in a cloud of dust.

Liam remembers going on a road trip with his parents. His mom is driving and insists that Liam sit up front with her. When they are reminiscing over a dress delivery, Liam sees a faraway look in his father's eyes. His father insists his mother pull over so he can drive and she ends up hitting a minivan.

Because Liam doesn't know the way to school, he starts walking. He reaches a shopping center, where the only shop that looks interesting is a his and her apparel shop. When he walks in, he finds out that Eddie owns the shop. He explains to Eddie that he got kicked off the bus. Liam compliments Eddie on the setup of the store. Eddie admits he doesn't get much business. Eddie also says that the bus driver has hated Eddie and Orlando, and Petey forever, so Liam concludes that he would have been kicked off the bus no matter what he did. Eddie gives Liam cash to buy them breakfast.

Chapters 19 and 20 Analysis

Liam is metaphorically looking for his father in his features. He is looking to find characteristics that his father possesses so that he gain approval from his dad. The more Liam tries to make himself uncool, the more kids seem to like him. It foreshadows the style Liam is creating by dressing in his uncle's clothes turning into a new trend at the school.

Liam recognizes the faraway look in his father's eyes. His father feels left out because of the bond that Liam and Sarah have. Allan doesn't have a close bond with either his wife or his son. It also shows that Allan is derogatory to both Sarah and Liam, so Allan doesn't reserve his contempt just for his son.

Because Liam knows a lot about fashion and Eddie needs help with his clothing store, it foreshadows Liam helping Eddie. Liam might work in the shop and come up with ways that Eddie can promote the store and increase his sales.



Chapters 21 and 22

Chapters 21 and 22 Summary

Liam recalls a time when he is working in the shop with his mother. He is helping her pick out a dress for the window. When they ask a regular customer for her opinion, Liam says he can't help it when he's always right.

Liam gives Eddie some advice on which items to order out of a catalog to stock in the store. Liam also suggests that Eddie get new mannequins. Eddie offers Liam a job to model in the store window every Saturday and to do some work around the shop.

Eddie and Liam are working on a window display. They are also working out the details of rearranging the shop to move the items on display to a more prominent spot in the shop to increase impulse buys. Liam is posing in boxer shorts and a robe in the store window when his uncle crashes his car into a meter out front. He comes in the shop yelling because he's been looking for Liam since the school called him at 9:30 this morning to tell him about what happened on the bus. Pete orders Liam into the car and when they get home, Pete is visibly upset that he almost lost Liam and he just got him.

Chapters 21 and 22 Analysis

Liam has a talent when it comes to fashion. He has learned a lot over the years from working with his mom. This is the skill the guidance counselor was talking about Liam having to choose a career. Eddie identifies Liam's talent in one day. It foreshadows Eddie helping to give Liam an outlet to use his talents, while simultaneously helping Eddie to run a better shop. Liam expects a tirade from his uncle like the ones he gets when his father is angry. The difference is that Pete really seems to care about Liam's welfare, so his reaction is more out of fear of what might happen to Liam than true anger.



Chapter 23 and 24

Chapter 23 and 24 Summary

When Liam is 10, he goes to the office with his dad for the day. He wanders to the vending machine to get a snack. When he finds it broken, he goes to several other floors looking for vending machines. He is lost for two hours and when he returns to his dad's office, his dad didn't even know how long he'd been gone.

Uncle Pete cleans and Liam stays out of his way. Pete bursts into Liam's room. Liam expects Pete to tell him he is shipping Liam to his grandparents in Nevada. Instead, Pete tells him the guys are coming over to rehearse, that they rehearse every Tuesday and he doesn't want to hear any complaints or snickering out of Liam.

While Liam listens, the band members arrive at the trailer. Liam leaves a message on the answering machine for his parents. Then, he goes out into the living room to watch the band practice. The phone rings and it's Jen from school. She says she heard about the bus incident and offers Liam a ride. Liam tries to get out of it, but Pete says he can ride to school with Jen, so she arranges to pick him up at 8:30 the next morning.

The next morning, Darleen sees Liam getting a ride from Nikki and Jen. Liam offers Darleen a ride but she refuses. Joe, Nikki's boyfriend, says Darleen is a freak. Liam defends Darleen and Jen says that Liam is right. When Joe mentions all of the things Darleen has tried to boycott and protest, Jen mentions she thinks Darleen has been hostile since Darleen's mom left.

Chapter 23 and 24 Analysis

So far, everything that Liam thinks will make him unpopular is making him popular. When the popular kids giving Liam a ride suggest he doesn't want to be friends with Darleen, this opens up a door for Liam. If Liam really wants to be unpopular, he has to find a way to make Darleen be his friend. This also foreshadows Liam's plan blowing up in his face when Darleen finds out that he only becomes friends with her to make himself seem unpopular and uncool.



Chapters 25 and 26

Chapters 25 and 26 Summary

Liam's dad is making fun of the fact that Liam's school is spending money on the basketball, but shorting the arts' program at Liam's school. Liam's dad doesn't even realize that he's putting down the basketball team that Liam is on right in front of Liam's face.

Liam concludes that Darleen is exactly the person he needs to be friends with. Liam thinks his chance comes when Mr. Mallek assigns Darleen as his lab partner in physics. When Liam doesn't do one part of the experiment right, Darleen makes him do the other part. When he finally gets it right, they only have three minutes left of class, which isn't enough time to finish the rest of the experiment. Liam suggests they write down the numbers someone else got, but Mr. Mallek is right behind Liam and declares that cheating.

Mr. Mallek sends Liam and Darleen to the guidance office. He also gives both of them a failing grade on the lab. Liam leaves the guidance office without a hall pass and is late for English. Orlando gets on to Liam for being late, not having either of his books or a notebook for the last week. He sends Liam back to the guidance office and tells him not to come back to class until he has the books and notebook he is supposed to have.

Chapters 25 and 26 Analysis

Liam tries to become friends with Darleen to implement his unpopular plan. The plan ends up backfiring on him right away. he ends up landing Darleen with a failing lab grade on an experiment. Instead of winning Darleen over, this is going to cause Darleen to hate Liam even more than she already does. Orlando is being even harder on Liam to prove a point—that he is not extending Liam any nepotism.



Chapters 27 and 28

Chapters 27 and 28 Summary

When Liam gets home from school, Pete asks if he has plans since it's Friday night. When Liam says no, Pete invites him to go to the mall with him and the guys. Liam mentions that he doesn't think Orlando likes him because he kicked out of his class today. When Orlando arrives, Liam and Dino are having an ab crunch contest.

When they arrive at the mall, Liam realizes it is the perfect place to buy items for an uncool wardrobe. He gets the guys to help him pick out shirts. He tries to get them to help him pick out shoes when Pete suggests he and Liam go to the shoe store and meet the guys later. Pete tells Liam at the shoe store that he shouldn't buy the shirts to impress the guys because they like Liam the way he is. Liam recognizes a look on Pete's face that Liam also makes. Liam convinces Pete to buy a pair of heels to go with his red dress.

When they all get home after having fun at the mall, at Friendly's and on the drive home, the phone is ringing. It's Liam's dad. He says the guidance counselor called him out of an important meeting to tell him Liam didn't show up for the first day of school, got kicked off the bus, was sent to the office for cheating and got kicked out of class. Allan reams Liam, telling Liam if he makes one more mistake that he's going to live with his grandparents in Nevada. When they hang up, Pete tries to talk to Liam but Liam goes to his room.

Chapters 27 and 28 Analysis

Pete thinks that Liam is buying shirts that are not his style in an attempt to win Pete's friends over. Liam is also starting to convince Pete that Pete should be himself. Since Pete has worn his red dress since the incident that got him estranged from his family, Liam is trying to convince Pete to get back out there and wear the dress by adding a pair of great shoes to the ensemble.

Unfortunately, the only news that Allan Geller receives is the bad news. This perpetuates his beliefs that Liam is a failure and that his brother doesn't know what to do as a parent to Liam.



Chapters 29 and 30

Chapters 29 and 30 Summary

Liam arrives at school the next day trying to think of an academic club he can join, like he told his father he was doing on the phone the previous night. During the announcements in homeroom, Liam watches as the members of the AV club present on the screen. He remembers how his dad was a member of the AV club so he decides to join.

In the cafeteria, Liam passes up the option to sit with Jen and her friends to sit with Raymond and Simon from the AV club. When he asks how he can join, they tell Liam the club is full. Liam indirectly threatens them and they tell him to be here in the morning at 8:30.

Raymond and Simon give Liam lessons for a week. The following Monday, it is Liam's debut reading the announcements. He picks a ridiculous outfit and Eddie drops him off at school. Liam reads the announcements way too seriously and then repeats all of the announcements in French. When he leaves the announcements room, all the kids are congratulating him. Darleen walks by and calls him an idiot.

Chapters 29 and 30 Analysis

Liam picks the geekiest club at the school to join. He figures this will win him points with his father while also showing all the kids in school just how unpopular he is. The direct opposite happens. Liam ends up being a hero to the kids at school instead of making himself look like a geeky nerd.



Chapters 31 and 32

Chapters 31 and 32 Summary

At lunch, Joe Banks and the rest of his table, join Liam and the AV guys at their table. The football team makes Raymond an honorary member and gives him a jersey to wear when he is doing the sports announcements. Darleen walks by glaring at the spectacle.

When Liam arrives in English, Orlando hands him his latest essay with a D minus on it. The essay assignment is to write about something they are good at. Liam writes about how he is good at screwing things up. He writes five pages and turns it in,. Orlando tells him to stay after class to rewrite the essay on something positive. Orlando points out several things Liam is good at and threatens to give him after-school detention until he completes the assignment.

When Liam gets home late, Uncle Pete is dressing for a gig the band has tonight. When he tells Pete what happened with Orlando, Pete jokingly says he'll march down to school tomorrow dressed in his glam-rock outfit and protest it. Liam laughs and says that's just what his mom would have done—make him laugh instead of getting mad. Liam fixes Pete's makeup and thinks that he does some stuff right sometimes.

Chapters 31 and 32 Analysis

Not only has Liam managed to make himself more popular, but he has made two of the biggest nerds in school popular too. Orlando is trying to help Liam see all of the positive attributes that Liam possesses. Liam and Pete are helping each other. Each one is helping the other overcome the emotional abuse that Allen has burdened them both with during their lifetimes. Liam starts to realize that even if Pete's life doesn't measure up to his father's standards, Pete is happy with his life.



Chapters 33 and 34

Chapters 33 and 34 Summary

On Friday night, Liam runs into Darleen at the picnic table. She's decorating a stop homecoming, save the arts poster. Liam invites her to dinner because Pete and Eddie want to talk to him about something. She says no. when Liam makes up that Pete wants Darleen to come and he's been looking forward to eating with her all week, Darleen agrees. She agrees under the condition that Liam will leave her alone after that.

Liam calls Eddie to find out more information about Darleen. He asks what kinds of books and TV shows she watches and if he should invite her dad, Phil. He doesn't answer Eddie's questions about why he wants to know. at dinner, Pete tells Liam that he thinks Liam should model at Eddie's store like they originally planned. When Pete mentions Sarah is a former model to Darleen, Liam mentions she quit because she got too old and because Liam's grades were bad. Pete says this isn't true, it's because Allan was jealous of Sarah. Liam and Pete argue about it.

Liam remembers his mom's last runway show when he is seven. She tells him she's quitting because sometimes other people have to shine.

When Eddie picks up Liam the next morning, Liam has a new idea for the shop. He tells Eddie that one of the guys at school is having a last pool party of the season before his parents close the pool. Liam plans to call all of the kids at school and to rearrange the store to promote the same of bathing suits, tanks and shorts. Liam brings his surfboard to be part of the window display. The plan works and Eddie sells a whole bunch of bathing suits. It gets so busy that Eddie calls Darleen to have her come down and help with the register. Darleen gets mad because she thinks it's part of Liam's plan to become popular. In the melee, somehow Jen convinces Eddie to help with the fashion show as a homecoming fundraiser and she recruits Liam as one of the models.

Chapters 33 and 34 Analysis

Everything Liam has tried to do to make himself unpopular, Darleen thinks he is doing to make himself popular. Eddie and Pete know something about Allan that Liam doesn't. It seems as if his mother has been sheltering Liam from more than his father's outbursts all of these years. While Liam puts his father on a pedestal, not too many other people think so highly of Allan Geller and his abusive behavior towards his wife and son.

Liam is too young to understand at the time, but Sarah indirectly tells Liam she is quitting to remove herself from the spotlight and to put Allan Geller in the spotlight. When Liam puts these words together with what his uncle said about Sarah quitting because Allan became a CEO and always treated Sarah and Liam like crap, Liam starts to figure out the truth.

Chapters 35 and 36

Chapters 35 and 36 Summary

Eddie and Liam close the shop. They go to Eddie's house to have pizza with the guys to celebrate the success of the sales event. When Liam sees the same Andy Warhol picture his mom has, Liam's heart starts to ache for his mom having to leave modeling. As the guys are eating pizza, drinking wine and reliving Eddie's successful day, Liam asks if any of them were unpopular. They all tell their own stories. Pete says the most unpopular guys in high school is Liam's father. He says Allan took Sarah on their first date to the Pineville High Homecoming Dance the year after he graduated to show her off to all the people who used to mock him.

Liam remembers a rainy day at the shop with his mom. His parents have been fighting over his report card. Even though business is slow, neither of them wants to go home. Liam asks his mom if she and his dad still love each other. She says people get together for a reason. While some things change over time, it doesn't mean they stop loving each other.

When Liam gets home, Pete goes to work. Liam calls leaving message after message for his mom to pick up. She finally calls back and says she just got in and that she wasn't answering her cell because it was off. Liam tells his mom about the job modeling at the store for Eddie and the upcoming fashion show for homecoming. He asks his mom to tell dad about it and that he joined the AV club. She says she'll tell him about the job but not that it's modeling.

Chapters 35 and 36 Analysis

It seems like Sarah might have only married Allan because she ends up getting pregnant with Liam on the night of her senior homecoming dance. The story Pete and the guys are telling is not the same story that Liam's parents have always told him. Liam's mother keeps hinting to Liam with what she says that there is more to the story than he knows, but she never comes out and tells him.



Chapters 37 and 38

Chapters 37 and 38 Summary

After Liam hangs up with his mom, he decides to go to Rob's unsupervised pool party. Liam wants to get buzzed. He starts drinking at the party. He convinces the football team to have a cannonball contest. While they're doing that, he starts to teach the cheerleaders how to surf, but loses his balance and takes Jen to the ground with him. He kisses her, when someone screams cops. Jen, Rob and Joe make it to Joe's car and speed off. The cops grab Liam before he can get in the car and arrest him.

It turns out that Pete's friend Dino is the arresting officer. Dino calls Pete and leaves it up to Pete as to whether or not Dino should call Sarah and Allan. Dino hangs up and tells Liam to sleep it off in the cell until Pete gets off work in the morning.

Chapters 37 and 38 Analysis

Liam's father dislikes Liam so much because he is everything his father could never be socially at Liam's age. Liam has made the wrong decision in going to the party to drink. Now, his decision is going to land him in jail, and ultimately, living at his grandparents' house in Nevada. Pete coming to the station implies that he doesn't want Dino to call Liam's parents.



Chapters 39 and 40

Chapters 39 and 40 Summary

Liam wakes up in the cell. He can hear his uncle on his radio show from the radio Dino is listening to in the station. Pete is hosting a poll on whether he should spring his nephew or ship him off. Liam listens as most of the callers vote to ship Liam off. Pete ends his show with the Alice Cooper song, No More Mr. Nice Guy.

Aunt Pete shows up and tells Dino he's taking Liam home. When they get home, Pete ask Liam why he went to the party, got drunk and was the only one that got caught. Liam admits to not getting in the car with Joe because he was drunk. Pete asks if he can think ahead like that why Liam doesn't think things through more often. Pete says Liam is acting out because he's mad at Allan. Liam denies this and says she's mad at Pete. He says he heard Pete's show and if he's going to kick him out, Pete should have done it at the station. Pete says he's not kicking him out but that he expects more from Liam from this point on.

Chapters 39 and 40 Analysis

The song Pete plays at the end of his radio she is what he implies is his verdict. Pete implies he's going to ship Liam off to Nevada. Liam assumes that Pete is going to kick him out. Pete takes Liam by surprise. Pete actually believes in Lima and Liam's ability to be a great person, as long as Liam is acting like himself and not who other people expect him to be.



Chapters 41 and 42

Chapters 41 and 42 Summary

Liam goes out to the picnic table. Darleen comes out to the picnic table too. Liam admits that everything he's done so far has been to impress her. This takes Darleen by surprise and she apologizes to Liam. After Darleen leaves, Liam leaves a message on his dad's cell. He asks to talk face-to-face with his dad about his future as Liam's birthday present.

Liam's dad leaves Liam a message that he'll pick him on Tuesday for his birthday. Liam starts cleaning the trailer, even though it's a week early. When Pete comes home, Liam admits he's cleaning because his dad is coming on Tuesday to pick him up for his birthday. Pete expresses his surprise that Allan is coming and Liam gets mad and stomps out before Pete has a chance to explain what he means.

Darleen is sketching at the picnic table. Liam tells Darleen his father is visiting. He also mentions trying to get a B on the physics test. Darleen says that might be hard for Liam since it is a cumulative test. She tells Liam she doesn't think he is dumb as he thinks she does.

Chapters 41 and 42 Analysis

If Liam allowed Pete to finish, it seems as if Pete was going to say that he is surprised Allan is returning to Pineville. Liam takes Pete's surprise as surprise that Allan would want to see Liam on Liam's birthday. Darleen pays Liam a compliment, but it is worded in a way that is a little complex.



Chapters 43 and 44

Chapters 43 and 44 Summary

On Liam's birthday, he is woken up by the smoke detector going off in the trailer. He opens his door to a smoke-filled kitchen and all of the guys making him breakfast. They give him a leather portfolio and a gift certificate to have a photo session at the same place his mom had her first photos taken. Liam gets choked up because nobody has ever done anything like this for him before.

When Liam gets home from school, he cleans the kitchen from breakfast. When Pete starts to set up for band practice, Liam asks him to skip practice tonight but Pete refuses. Liam gets dressed for dinner with his dad and the guys starts arriving for practice. On their second set, there is a knock at the door. It's an Army recruiter sent by Liam's dad to talk about his future with him. Liam and the recruiter talk outside at the picnic table. Pete comes out at the end of the talk and rips up the commitment papers the recruiter gives to Liam. Pete says he'll get Allan on the phone right now, but Liam says it's his fault that he assumed his father was taking him to dinner.

Chapters 43 and 44 Analysis

Liam thinks that everyone judges him by all of his screwups. In reality, people like his Uncle Pete and Pete's friends see Liam for the person he is. They see him for his good qualities. This is a foreign concept to Liam because his father is the direct opposite and only sees him for all of his mistakes and negative qualities. The way Allan worded the message to Liam made Liam think that Allan was coming to take him to dinner for his birthday. In reality, when Liam thinks back on it, he realizes it was an assumption on his part.



Chapters 45 and 46

Chapters 45 and 46 Summary

The next two days, Liam hardly makes it to school for the announcements. On the second day, he reads the announcements without any enthusiasm. He makes adlib comments about how all he wanted was to be unpopular and how the lunch room never offers a vegetarian option. After announcements, Darleen comes to Liam's locker. She tells him his announcements were unique today and the fact that everything has meat in the cafeteria is fascist.

When Jen approaches Liam about the fashion show for homecoming, he says he won't be participating. When they get to English, Orlando notices Liam doesn't have his Hamlet book, so he lets him borrow his copy. Liam accuses Orlando of saying one thing and doing another because Orlando said he would have to go to the office if he didn't have his book. When Orlando says they're going to talk about the family dynamics in Hamlet, Liam gets up, walks out and heads to the office.

That night, Liam dials the recruiter a few times and hangs up before finally letting the call go through. He arranges to enlist with the recruiter and then calls his dad to tell him. His dad says it is excellent news. He asks his dad when he can come home because he needs a tutor to pass the GED. Allan agrees to pick Liam up at Saturday. Liam tells him about modeling for Eddie and Allan blames Sarah for always dragging him to her fashion shows. Liam apologizes but doesn't even know why. Before they hang up, Allan says to meet him at school because he's not going to go to Pete's trailer.

Chapters 45 and 46 Analysis

It has finally hit Liam that his dad has given up on him. Since his whole life has been trying to impress his father, Liam is disappointed and doesn't have the desire to really try or participate in anything right now. He doesn't even recognize that Darleen is reaching out to him when she comes up to him at his locker after the announcements. The family dynamics topic in English class puts Liam over the edge because his own family dynamics are in chaos.

For one of the first times in his life, Liam has made a decision that his father approves. The problem is that it is not the decision Liam wants to make. Liam puts the modeling thing out there to see how his dad reacts. Allan reacts just as Liam suspects he will. It also confirms for Liam subconsciously that it is Allan that didn't want Sarah modeling anymore.



Chapters 47 and 48

Chapters 47 and 48 Summary

On Friday, Liam doesn't plan to go to school but his uncle keeps waking him up. Pete says Liam missed Eddie's ride already so Pete called Jen. When Liam gets to school, he asks Joe for a cigarette and Joe offers Liam beer to go with it. They smoke and drink a beer, skipping homeroom. Liam tells Joe he's dropping out and joining the army. Joe goes to first period, but Liam takes the cigarettes and beers to the bleachers for the rest of the day. He goes to English class, but Orlando takes him out in the hall because he smells like cigarettes and beer. They argue because Liam says Orlando planned to fail him from the start and Orlando insists that he has given Liam chance after chance that Liam has not taken.

It takes Liam an hour to walk home. When he gets there, Dino's police car is there, along with Orlando's truck. Pete confronts Liam but Liam tries to go in his room and slam the door. Liam tells Pete that he enlisted and Pete gets so angry that he pins Liam against the wall. Pete admits the reason he and Allan stopped talking is that he told Sarah to leave Allan. Pete says he isn't going to give up on Liam.

Chapters 47 and 48 Analysis

What Liam doesn't see is that he got a clean slate when he moved to Pineville. While he thinks that everyone prejudged him, this is not true of Pete and Pete's friends. They all know how emotionally abusive Allan is and they know a lot of the background information about his parents that Liam doesn't know. They were all giving him a fresh start, chance to start over and excel in life at all of the things Liam is good at. Liam didn't recognize this, but instead chooses to feel sorry for himself and take the easy way out. In a way, Liam is trying to escape Pete's house before Pete has a chance to throw Liam out, saving Liam more disappointment and heartache.



Chapters 49 and 50

Chapters 49 and 50 Summary

At 3 am, Liam knocks on Darleen's door. He finally convinces her to let him in. He asks her if there is something wrong with him and why she doesn't like him. She tells him at first she just thought he was shallow and a morn, but then she realized she judged him without getting to know him. She tells Liam he has to stop worrying about what everybody else thinks and start caring about what he thinks. She shows him the letter her mom wrote before she left. Darleen tells Liam his living room light just came on so he better go.

On Saturday morning, Pete drives Liam to school and they meet Eddie, Orlando and Dino on the steps of the school. When they go into the principal's office, Liam's parents are already there. Liam tells his parents that he changed his mind about going into the army, that he wants to finish the school year in Pineville and do the community service Dino suggests for setting the school alarm off the previous day. Liam apologizes to Orlando for his behavior. Pete stands up to Allan on Liam's behalf, but the principal insists they can settle this amicably.

Liam has to plead with his mother, but she finally stands up against Allan. She tells Liam that she always wanted Liam to be like his father, but that she sees Liam is just like her and even better. She says she loves him, Liam is 18 now and he can choose to do what he wants, with the support of all the friends that have been behind him since he arrived in Pineville. She tells Liam she loves him.

Chapters 49 and 50 Analysis

Darleen realizes she made the biggest mistake someone can make when it comes to another person—she judged Liam from his outward appearance and gestures without taking the time to really get to know Liam as a person. Sarah finally realizes that she has to stand up to Allan in order to allow Liam to excel in his life. Allan has been so emotionally abusive to Sarah over the years that she has also permitted him to be emotionally abusive to Liam. Finally, Sarah realizes the harm this behavior has caused and she is giving Liam a chance to live his life without being under his father's microscope.



Epilogue

Epilogue Summary

Two weeks later, Liam is in the dressing room for the homecoming fashion show. He's showing Jen and Uncle Pete how to put on eye shadow. Liam is also coordinating the outfits of the other models. Pete is DJing and wearing his red dress and rhinestone shoes in the show. Liam goes into the hall to talk to Darleen. She congratulates on his winning homecoming king. When she asks about his dad, he says his parents got in a big fight so his mom is staying home today even though she promised to come to the show. Liam asks about Darleen's notebook. She says Jen asked her to do some sketches of the fashion show for the school paper. She also says she knows Liam had everything to do with arranging it.

Epilogue Analysis

Liam is facing the consequences of his decisions with his community service and suspension he had from school. Now he is doing what he loves to do - running the fashion show for homecoming. He is slowly learning to accept who he is and how to focus on the positive aspects of his life rather than focus on the negative ones.



Characters

Liam Geller

Liam Geller is a 17-year-old boy living in New York City with his parents. He is somewhat of a juvenile delinquent at this point in his life. He lost his driver's license for drunk driving. He is promiscuous. His grades in school are usually failing.

While Liam has a close relationship with his mother, his father always seems to be mad and disappointed with Liam. When Liam's father catches Liam drunk and about to have sex with a girl when his parents were downstairs, his father threatens to send Liam to live with his grandparents, but instead Liam ends up with his cross-dressing uncle in his uncle's trailer.

Liam only wears designer clothes and shoes. He has a good eye for fashion and for the fashion business because his mother taught him everything she knows as a former model. Liam was always working with his mother in her boutique, so he also has a head for the retail business.

In Liam's mind, whenever he tries to do something, he doesn't succeed. Instead, he feels as if he is always screwing things up. Liam is so beaten down by his father's criticism, however, that it takes his uncle and his uncle's friends to convince Liam that he truly is talented.

Allan Geller

Allan Geller is Liam's father. Allan grew up in the small town of Pineville, New York. His parents are still alive and living in Nevada. He is estranged from his brother, which the reader finds out later in the novel is because Pete tried to convince Sarah to leave her husband.

Allan is a professional financial genius. He is now the CEO of MoneyVision. He also receives an award as man of the year. While Allan excels in his professional life, he is a bully and a tyrant in his personal life. He tries to control everything that Sarah and Liam do.

His controlling tyranny is what leads Liam to try so hard to impress his father in the first place. No matter how hard Liam tries to impress Allan, Allan just seems to get angry and says how disappointed he is in Liam. Everyone putting Allan on a pedestal perpetuates the problem, but by the end, Allan is losing his power over Liam and Sarah.



Sarah Geller

Sarah Geller is a retired famous runway model. She is also Liam's mother. Sarah now owns and runs Style Boutique in Westchester, New York.

Sarah is beautiful and regal. She has always taken Liam with her wherever she goes. This includes her runway shows when she was modeling in Paris, Milan and various other cities and countries in the world. Along the way, Sarah is the one that teaches some valuable lessons that provide him the talent he has for fashion and business.

While Sarah often fights with Allan over matters that have to do with Liam, she usually gives in to Allan's demands. Sarah retired from modeling because Allan forced her to do so. By the end of the novel, she finally stands up to Allan for Liam.

Pete Geller

Pete Geller is Allan's brother. He is older than Allan. Pete and Allan have been estranged for the last 10 years. Pete also doesn't speak to his parents anymore. Uncle Pete, which Liam often refers to as Aunt Pete, is a cross-dresser and part of a glam-rock band.

Pete is also a homosexual. His boyfriend is Orlando. Pete agrees to take Liam in when Allan throws Liam out of the house. He works nights as a DJ at the local radio station, where his handle is Rockin' Pete. Throughout the novel, Pete tries to instill self-confidence in Liam.

Pete and Sarah are also very close. They went to high school together and knew each other before she and Allan married. Pete always speaks very highly of Sarah and tries to help Liam understand his own self-worth in the process.

Darleen

Darleen is a teenage girl that lives in the trailer next door to Pete. She is very studious and she is also artistic. Liam and Darleen see each other the day that Sarah drops Liam off to live with Uncle Pete. Darleen lives with her father and her mother left them a few years prior. Darleen is always staging protests and boycotts at school. Most of the kids think she is a pain. She and Liam get off on the wrong foot, but by the end of the novel they are friends.

Orlando DeSoto

Orlando DeSoto is Pete's boyfriend. He is also one of the members of the glam-rock band. Orlando's day job is as the senior English teacher at Pineville High School, which also means that he is Liam's English teacher. Orlando repeatedly tries to get Liam to



apply himself in English class. Even after all of the chances Orlando allots Liam, Liam tells Orlando off and tries to quit school. At the end, Liam apologizes to Orlando and Orlando helps to restore some self-confidence in Liam.

Dino

Dino is another one of Pete's friends. He is also in the glam-rock band. Dino's day job is a police officer. Dino arrests Liam for underage drinking at a student's pool party. Dino is also the one that arranges for Liam to complete community service in Pineville for setting off the fire alarm at the school.

Eddie

Eddie is another one of Pete's friends. He is the final member of the glam-rock band. Eddie owns the His and Hers Apparel shop in town. Eddie hires Liam to work in the store on Saturdays as a window model and to help him run the shop.

Mr. Mallek

Mr. Mallek is the Pineville High School principal. He is also Liam's physics teacher. A few times throughout the novel, Mr. Mallek and Liam have some run-ins with each other. Mr. Mallek tells Liam that he will work with him if Liam works with Mr. Mallek, but that he isn't going to give Liam a free rode. By the end of the novel, Mr. Mallek agrees to allow Liam to finish high school at Pineville High School.

Jen

Jen is a cheerleading. She is also one of the most popular girls in school. She latches on to Liam and wants to be his friend as soon as he arrives. At the pool party, Liam and Jen end up kissing. At the end of the novel, Liam helps Jen run a fashion show as a fundraiser for homecoming.

Joe

Joel is the captain of the high school football team. He too accepts Liam as a friend right away. At the pool party, however, Joe drives off drunk without Liam when the cops arrive. Joe is also the one that gives Liam cigarettes and beer the day Liam skips school but shows up for English class reeking of cigarettes and beer.



Objects/Places

Westchester, New York

Westchester, New York is an area in New York City. This is where Sarah runs her boutique. Westchester is also where Liam and his parents live.

Pineville, New York

Pineville, New York is a small town in upstate New York. It is the town where Allan, Sarah, Pete, Dino, Orlando, and Eddie grew up. When Liam moves to live with Pete, Pineville is where Liam winds up.

Pineville High School

Pineville High School is the local high school in Pineville. It is the school where Liam enrolls for his senior year. It is also the school where Liam repeatedly tries to become unpopular with the kids. No matter how hard he tries, it seems as the kids at the high school think that he is super cool.

His and Hers Apparel

His and Hers Apparel is the shop that Eddie owns in town. He sells underwear, bathing suits and apparel of this nature for both men and women. The shop window is where Liam starts modeling as a live model. Liam's work in Eddie's shop also helps promote Eddie's business and boost the sales of the shop.

Announcements' Room

The announcements' room is the area of the school where they broadcast the school announcements every morning. When Liam joins the AV club, he is one of the three members that reads the news for his classmates. A few times, the school adviser for the group is also present. Liam uses his appearances in the announcements' room to try to become unpopular, but it always seems to backfire and he walks out of the room more popular than he's ever been.

Picnic Table

The picnic table in between Pete and Darleen's trailer is a popular meeting place. Liam often rests there when he needs to get out of the trailer. Darleen uses the picnic table to



draw and paint. The two teens often run into each other at the picnic table and various discussion ensue.

Red Floor Length Gown

The last time Liam saw his uncle, Pete was wearing a floor length red gown. Now, the gown hangs on the back of Pete's bedroom door. Liam convinces Pete he should wear the gown again. Pete buys new shoes to go with the gown and ends up wearing it in the fashion show and while DJing for the homecoming fundraiser.

Sketchpad

Darleen often carries around a sketchpad. She always seems to be drawing at the picnic table or working on some kind of an art project. At the end of the novel, Darleen has a sketchpad to draw sketches from the fashion show for the school newspaper.

Gift Certificate

On Liam's 18th birthday, the guys give him a gift certificate to the local photography studio. The gift certificate is good for one photo session to help Liam start his modeling portfolio. It is for the same studio where his mother had her first shots taken to start her modeling career.

Portfolio

On Liam's 18th birthday, the guys give him a black leather portfolio. The portfolio is a professional book where Liam can feature his modeling photographs. The portfolio comes along with the gift certificate for the photo session.



Themes

Relationships

One of the primary themes running through the novel is relationships. The novel reveals that even the individuals that make up a family have different relationships among the family members. For example, Liam has a very close relationship with his mother, Sarah. Liam and his father, Allan, on the other hand, have a very combative relationship. Allan and Liam do not get along and Liam feels as if nothing he does is right and just ends up disappointing his father.

Friendship is another type of relationship the novel tackles. It seems as if Darleen hates Liam when he first arrives in Pineville. After Darleen has a chance to really get to know Liam, however, she discovers that he isn't the pompous and shallow moron she thought he was. By the end of the novel, the two are friends.

Liam also manages to establish friendships with his uncle and his uncle's friends. In a way, all of the men try to act as role models for Liam. They are trying to show him that he can be a success even if Liam doesn't find his success in the same exact way Allan did. While Liam tries to fight bonding with these men throughout the novel, by the end he understands they have his best interests at heart and will always be there to support him.

Coming of Age

One of the primary themes that run throughout the novel is growing up and coming of age, even against adversity, such as having an emotionally abusive parent. Liam struggles with the fact that his coming of age includes having to spend his senior year at a new high school, with new people and living in a new town. Liam tries to take responsibility for his life and change the way he does things to attempt to stay out of trouble.

Liam also faces the fact that even though his father is his father that his dad is not supportive of him. Liam learns that he has to learn to make choices that are right for him and to stop worrying about what everyone else thinks of him.

Family

Family is the central theme throughout the entire novel. This is because the storyline is about the lives of this particular family - the Gellers. While every family has their trials and tribulations, Liam's family has its own family dynamics that are the same and that are different from those of other families. In the end though, they are a family and they will get through it together, one way or the other, even if only some of the family members are able to stick together.

Style

Point of View

The novel is written in the first-person point of view, from the perspective of the main character, Liam Geller. The point of view of this novel is intimate, allowing a reader to connect closely with the main character, Liam. The book written in this manner allows the reader to get inside Liam's head, thoughts and inner struggles. The reader cares what happens to the narrator. The point of view also allows the author to inject her own opinions into the narration and to expand on the events taking place around the other characters and the occurrences taking place.

Setting

The novel starts out in Westchester, New York. After this, the novel is set primarily in a small town in upstate New York, Pineville, during the 21st century. The main characters are involved in the daily life of living in a small town as Liam tries to restart his life and learn who he is. Liam is constantly trying to find a way to make himself unpopular so that he can succeed in ways that do not involve his popularity or social status.

The setting of this novel works well with the plot. At first, the reader is not aware that the main character is not a delinquent, but just can't seem to get his life straight. However, as events unfold, the talents of the main characters is a constant part of the plot, the lives of the characters and even the outcome of the novel.

Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is relatively simple and easy to read. The language is from the 21st century, which is when the novel is set. The language is descriptive enough that it helps to explain the situations and is detailed enough for the reader to truly understand.

Structure

The novel is divided into 50 chapters and an epilogue. Each chapter ranges from three pages to 20 pages long. The chapters tell the story primarily in exposition and some dialogue. The narrator injects her own voice and thoughts throughout the book, providing her opinions and feelings of the events unfolding in the novel. The narrator switches back and forth between the past and the present.

The beginning of each chapter is usually a memory Liam has of his childhood or a specific event in his life. These memories help to provide the reader with clues as to how Liam turned into the teenager he is when the novel is unfolding. These memories

also help to put into context what Liam's intentions are, but what ends up happening instead.

The novel contains one main plot and several subplots. The main plot is that of human relationships concerning family and friendships. One subplot is the coming of age of the characters, primarily that of Liam Geller. Another subplot is family.



Quotes

"She said if we hadn't got the paternally test, she would never have believed it" (Chapter 1, p. 5).

"You're a screwup, Liam. Do you think being Mr. Popularity will be enough to get you by in life" (Chapter 2, p. 6).

"He hasn't changed his mind yet" (Chapter 3, p. 12).

"Go. He doesn't want you here" (Chapter 4, p. 19).

"A couple weeks, right? You're going to get yourself straightened out" (Chapter 5, p. 22).

"How could you? Did you try to come up with the one thing that would hurt me the most? You must have given it a lot of thought" (Chapter 6, p. 26).

"Your father will change his mind soon. Honestly, Li, he doesn't mean the things he" (Chapter 7, p. 33).

"I suppose we can have spinach tonight" (Chapter 8, p. 37).

"It's all right. No harm done" (Chapter 9, p. 43).

"Petey has wanted this for a long time. Ever since" (Chapter 10, p. 47).

"Are you a senior? Maybe the two of you will have some classes together" (Chapter 11, p. 51).

"You know, it was a stupid joke. If we'd known how your father would react, we never would have done it. I mean, we knew he'd be mad, but we didn't think" (Chapter 12, p. 57).

"We'll have to do this again sometime" (Chapter 13, p. 64).



"If my son really wanted my attention, he'd choose something he knows I enjoy" (Chapter 14, p. 66).

"You don't have one good memory of your entire summer" (Chapter 15, p. 77).

"You know, I don't need your charity, but sometimes people are friendly to other people who are new in town just...well, because they might need some friends" (Chapter 16, p. 82).

"Am I in trouble again" (Chapter 17, p. 86).

"Come on, we're cool" (Chapter 18, p. 97).

"A drag band dresses like women, but a glam-rock band just dresses up" (Chapter 19, p. 103).

"So it wasn't my fault he didn't like me" (Chapter 20, p. 113).

"Did Sarah teach you all this stuff" (Chapter 21, p. 117).

"Right away I almost lose you" (Chapter 22, p. 123).

"You didn't even look for me! I got lost and you didn't even look for me. I hate you" (Chapter 23, p. 125).

"Trust me on this one, Liam. Darleen Martinek is not someone you want to be friends with" (Chapter 24, p. 133).

"Liam Gellar and Darleen Martinek. Table four" (Chapter 25, p. 135).

"I truly despise you" (Chapter 26, p. 141).

"You know, you don't need to impress the guys. Buying that stuff, I mean" (Chapter 27, p. 149).

"Did he fill your head with a bunch of crap" (Chapter 28, p.156).

"Because if I were you and there were only two of us in my little club and a third person wanted to join, I would let him" (Chapter 29, p. 161).

"Way to go, Liam" (Chapter 30, p. 169).



"I'm giving you a second chance because I want you to succeed" (Chapter 31, p. 175).

"Damn, that's pretty good" (Chapter 32, p. 180).

"It's not bullshit. Mom told me herself" (Chapter 33, p. 189).

"Sometimes other people need to shine for awhile" (Chapter 34, p.195).

"Because he was completely and utterly socially inept" (Chapter 35, p. 215).

"There is a lot of things you don't know, Liam" (Chapter 36, p. 222).

"Outta here" (Chapter 37, p. 227).

"You don't look so good. Why don't you lie down in that cell over there" (Chapter 38, p. 231).

"Looks like my nephew is goin' down" (Chapter 39, p. 236).

"This isn't anger" (Chapter 40, p. 243).

"We voted you off" (Chapter 41, p. 245).

"I don't think you're half as dumb as you think I think you are" (Chapter 42, p. 254).

"Nobody's ever done something like this for my birthday" (Chapter 43, p. 257).

"I understand you've been having some difficulties, and your father thinks you'd be an ideal candidate for the U.S. military" (Chapter 44, p. 264).

"Your announcements were unique today" (Chapter 45, p. 271).

"Letting some flame designer watch you she waltzes down the runway. Your goddamn mother" (Chapter 46, p. 276).

"I;m not your father, Liam" (Chapter 47, p. 283).

"Liam, you do have potential. I know you do" (Chapter 48, p. 287).

"I think you try too hard to please everyone, and now you're ready to throw everything away just because there are people like me who judge you by what's on the surface, without getting to know what's underneath" (Chapter 49, p. 293).

"I'm sorry, Li. I love you more than anything" (Chapter 50, p. 304).

"But you're still here" (Epilogue, p. 309" (Chapter



Topics for Discussion

Who is the true Liam Geller? Do you think he is a delinquent or just a product of some very unfortunate situations? Why do you think Liam's plans always seem to backfire on him? What do you think happens to Liam for the rest of his senior year and after graduating?

Discuss the relationship between Liam and his father. Why do you think Allan has such contempt for his son? Why do you think Liam continues to seek his father's approval? Is there true competition in their relationship? How does Liam feel about Allan? How does Allan feel about Liam? How do Liam's feelings change after he decides not to enlist in the army? What does he do about it? What happens to Allan?

Discuss the relationship between Liam and Sarah. Why do you think she sticks up for Liam all the time, but then seems to back down against Allan? Is there true competition in the relationship between Sarah and Liam? How does Liam feel about Sarah? How does Sarah feel about Liam? How do Sarah's feelings change? What does she do about it? What happens to Sarah?

Discuss the relationship between Liam and Pete. Are they friends, family, foes or somewhere in between? Is there true competition in their relationship? Why does Liam think Pete is continuously trying to get rid of him? Why does Pete hold back on a lot of information he has on Allan and Sarah?

Who is the true Darleen? Why do you think that she just ignores Liam's attempts to be friends with her? Do you think Darleen changed after her mom left? Does Darleen empathize with Liam's relationship with his dad, or is there something else that changes Darleen's mind about Liam?

Who is Uncle Pete? Is he a tortured soul or simply a normal homosexual male in a band? Why do you think Pete never tries to repair his relationship with Allan and their parents? What role does Pete play in helping Liam get his life straightened out?

Discuss Liam's popularity. What impact does it have on the characters of the novel? How does it motivate them and how does it derail their lives?