

Ladies and Gentlemen Study Guide

Ladies and Gentlemen by Adam Ross

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

Ladies and Gentlemen Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Futures.....	3
The Rest of It.....	6
The Suicide Room.....	8
In the Basement.....	10
When in Rome.....	12
Middleman.....	14
Ladies and Gentlemen.....	16
Characters.....	18
Objects/Places.....	22
Themes.....	24
Style.....	27
Quotes.....	29
Topics for Discussion.....	30



Futures

Futures Summary

David Applelow is in his early forties, recently left unemployed when the theater group for which he was manager and general jack-of-all-trades closed. Applelow is waiting to be interviewed for a job that he knows little about. The ad in the newspaper was vague, but the starting salary was more than generous. Applelow, who has had quite an eclectic professional life, believes that it is a sales job and feels more than qualified. However, he finds himself watching the other hopeful candidates also waiting with him, noting their over qualifications and abject nervousness.

When Applelow is finally called in to be interviewed, he finds the interviewer sexually attractive. Applelow's mind wanders to thoughts of impressing this beautiful woman. The interview goes well until the end when the woman, Ms. Samuel, asks Applelow if he believes in astronomy, Nostradamus, and Zodiac signs. Afraid of offending this woman who could mean the difference between a great starting salary and starvation, Applelow admits that he does not always take it seriously but is open to any new ideas. When Applelow leaves the office, he feels so optimistic he calls to cancel the interviews he has scheduled for the rest of the day.

Back at his apartment building, Applelow runs into his neighbor, Marnie Kastopolis. Marnie gives him the key to her apartment and asks Applelow to let her younger son inside when he arrives later in the evening. Marnie makes it clear that she does not want Applelow to give her son, Zach, the key. Applelow recalls that Marnie had mentioned having trouble with this son, but had thought those problems were getting better now that he was in college. It seems he was wrong.

When Zach shows up later that night, Applelow lets him into the apartment. Zach asks Applelow if he wants to share a beer. Zach goes and buys the beer and he and Applelow talk in Applelow's apartment for a while, talking about Marnie, Zach's older, genius brother, and Applelow's former job.

Over the next couple of days, Applelow stays close to the house in hopes of getting a call from Ms. Samuel for a follow-up interview. However, no one calls. Finally Applelow goes around his neighborhood putting in applications at restaurants and stores. When he returns home, Ms. Samuel's secretary calls to set up another interview. This time Ms. Samuel is joined by a man called Dr. Pip Love-Wellman whom she introduces as the founder of their company. This time the interview is decidedly weird as Pip asks Applelow a group of unusual questions and then asks him to guess the color of Ms. Samuel's aura. Applelow apparently guesses correctly because he is told that he will be asked back for another interview.

After the second interview, Applelow is convinced that he will get the job. This thought relieves Applelow's concerns about his dwindling funds, which he withdrew from the



bank a few days before and has hidden in a book in his apartment. As Applelow thinks through his future, he hears arguing in the hallway outside his apartment. Applelow watches as Marnie and Zach fight, doing nothing when Zach physically restrains his mother. Later that night, Zach comes to Applelow's apartment and asks to stay the night. Due to his affection for Marnie, Applelow agrees.

The next day Applelow wakes early and dresses, taking his money from its hiding place. Zach wants to know what Applelow is going to do. When Applelow tells him he must leave so that he can go fill out some new applications, Zach asks to go with Applelow so that he can hang out at his apartment later in the day. Applelow agrees. As Applelow fills out applications in local restaurants, Zach complains about the cold and being hungry. Applelow finally gives in and takes Zach to lunch at a Greek place. Zach orders the most expensive thing on the menu, irritating Applelow. However, as Applelow listens to Zach he realizes that he is allowing life to happen to him much like Applelow did as a young man. Applelow advises Zach to finish school or follow through with his promise to his mother to join the Air Force rather than run off to California as he plans. After lunch, Zach thanks him and returns to his mother's, apologizing for their argument.

The next morning Applelow is preparing for his final interview with Ms. Samuel and Dr. Love when Zach comes over. Zach tells him he is going back to school and thanks him again for his advice. As Zach talks, Applelow continues to dress behind a closed door. By the time he is dressed, Zach is walking out the door. Applelow rushes to his interview and is amused by the intelligent, highly educated pair also waiting for a final interview. When Applelow is called into the office, he is once again asked a group of strange questions. Applelow plays along, guessing colors and their meaning to the delight of Dr. Love and Ms. Samuel. Finally Applelow is told he has gotten the job. As happiness floods Applelow and his worries disappear, he learns that the whole thing was a joke for some reality hidden camera show. Applelow is devastated, worried about his bleak future.

When he arrives home, Applelow discovers that Zach has stolen the last of his money. At the door, Marnie thanks Applelow for his advice to Zach. Applelow is angry and thinks about telling Marnie the truth about her son, but then decides there is no reason to burden her with the truth.

Futures Analysis

This short story is the story of a man who is struggling to find a job after a life of moving from one job to another, doing whatever fit his situation or his mood. Now he finds himself coasting toward old age and he is suddenly out of work from a job he thought he would have for the rest of his life. Applelow works at finding another job, but without enthusiasm. When he interviews for a job that seems ideal, even though he has no idea what it is for, Applelow stops going to interviews with the assumption that he will get this plum job. The problem is, Applelow has no idea what the job is for, therefore he could not possibly know he is an ideal candidate for it. Yet Applelow convinces himself that the job is his and he stops trying.



At the same time, Applelow meets his neighbor's son. Zach is a directionless boy who has caused his mother a great deal of trouble over the years. The more Applelow gets to know Zach, the more he sees in him himself as a young man. Applelow sees in Zach the same inability to take life by the horns that Applelow had when he was young. Applelow tries to encourage Zach to be more proactive in his life, to finish school and make wise decisions rather than just go off and do whatever sounds good at the moment.

The irony in this story is that Applelow believes that he has changed, that he has outgrown Zach's inability to be proactive in his own life. As an example Applelow feels that his qualifications and likely success at getting the job with Ms. Samuel, a job for which he continues to fail to get a description throughout the interview process, prove that he has outgrown his ambivalence toward life. In reality, however, the reader can see how the joke unfolds even before Applelow learns that the interview process with Ms. Samuel was all a joke for a reality show. The entire situation is just symbolic of Applelow's inability to be proactive in his own life.

When Applelow loses out on the plum job he thought he was going to get and then learns that Zach has stolen all his money, he thinks that he will not tell Marnie the truth in an attempt to control something about his future. The joke here is that Applelow has never been in control of his own life by choice and will continue to not be in control. At the same time, by protecting Zach from the reality of his actions, he has enabled him to live the same life Applelow continues to live.



The Rest of It

The Rest of It Summary

Professor Roddy Thane is alone in his office in the English Department at Hollins University when he is joined by the custodian, Mike Donato. They had gotten into the habit of meeting at night like this because Thane was reluctant to go home and Donato liked to tell stories of his past. Tonight Donato tells a story of how he was running drugs with the captain of a boat when the captain got a call from the Coast Guard to check out an island where a rich woman lived alone with two servants. The captain made a habit of helping the Coast Guard, so he agreed even though they had a great deal of cocaine on board the ship. When they arrived, they found what appeared to be a massacre, but no bodies. They later learned the old woman had run out of food and her Dobermans went crazy with starvation and ate the three humans and all the animals on the island.

After hearing this story, Thane suggests to Donato that they write down his life stories and make a book of them. Thane is excited by the idea for a while, thinking his ex-wife would have found it suitable to the kind of work she always tried to encourage him to do. On the way home,

Thane thinks of his ex-wife, of a fight they once had on a ferry, and decides he does not want to go home alone. Instead Thane stops at a bar and then goes to a club where they have live music. Thane feels immediately out of place when he notices that the club is filled with students from both his school and several other local universities. Before he can leave, a student from one of his classes approaches him. Thane follows the young lady outside as she smokes a cigarette. She suggests they go to see a local landmark, a lit star. However, when the young lady goes inside to get her things, Thane leaves.

Thane lives in the home of another professor at Hollins. The other professor and his wife have taken a trip to Ireland and left Thane to care for the house and their dog. Thane hates the house and its remote location, recalling he only agreed to the situation because he thought it was the kind of place his ex-wife would have enjoyed. Thane has also discovered that the professor and his wife who own the house were having marital problems due to the man's depression and more than likely took their trip to Ireland to work their problems out. Thane has found a group of letters the couple had been writing to one another and reads them when he is there alone.

That weekend Thane has trouble concentrating on his work. On Monday, he worries about running into the young student from the club on campus, but when he sees her she seems to not remember their brief encounter. Donato has left a note on Thane's office door informing him that he has a new story to tell. Thane has lost interest in the book he proposed to Donato and resolves to avoid the man, but Donato surprises him by coming to his office early in the evening before Thane's final lecture. Donato tells Thane how his cousin, a mob hit man, called him on Friday and announced that he had



killed his wife. Donato tells Thane that he has been hiding the cousin in his house ever since. Thane is aware the man is wanted for murder due to an article in the paper. Thane thinks about turning in Donato and his cousin, but is unsure of what he should do. Thane calls his ex-wife who is now an attorney in New York. Thane's ex-wife advises him to do nothing.

Thane leaves early, cancelling his final lecture, and heads downtown for unknown reasons. As Thane tries to decide what to do, he becomes bogged down in traffic stalled after a traffic accident. Thane knows his only choices are to turn Donato in or help him. Thane decides to call Donato and insist on meeting his murderous cousin.

The Rest of It Analysis

This short story is about a man who is divorced from a woman he still deeply loves and has come to realize does not love him. This does not stop Thane from continuing to think about her, to fantasize about what she might like about his life, and to call her with the simplest excuse. Everything Thane does in this story revolves around his ex-wife, from living in a remote country house, to choosing a possible lover, to choosing a non-literary writing project. However, none of this comes to the attention of the ex-wife, let alone inspires her to return to her ex-husband. Thane's wife has moved on, gotten remarried and had children. She has a life that does not include Thane. In fact, it becomes clear that Thane rarely even crosses her mind now.

The story of Donato and his crazy life is a contrast to Thane's own life. Donato has taken risks, he has lived a dangerous life that is a sharp contrast to the safe choices that have left Thane alone and lonely. Thane finds this life exciting when Donato tells stories, but becomes frightened when the reality of Donato's lifestyle touches Thane's life. At first Thane is confused and uncertain what to do, but later he realizes that his ex-wife sees him as a coward and that by confronting this killer, by getting involved in Donato's life, he can shake this coward's appearance. Thane is once again making a choice based on how he believes his ex-wife sees him. However, this time there is the potential for danger. The reader is left wondering if Thane will back off at the last minute as he has done before. Perhaps this time Thane's choices have been taken from him, just like the choice to leave his marriage was made by his wife, not him.



The Suicide Room

The Suicide Room Summary

Griffin is sitting in a dorm room smoking marijuana with his girlfriend, Alyssa, and his friends, Will and Casey. Will and Casey have been a couple for a long time and they often seem to read each other's thoughts. Griffin and Alyssa have been together for a short time and Griffin is already thinking of breaking it off with Alyssa. In fact, he and Casey have been sneaking around together for a few weeks.

Casey tells a story of how her sister saw her boyfriend crash his car after a party one night, unable to help him after he drove off a cliff and died with several of his passengers. Alyssa mentions her brother, Danny, who was injured at birth when the cord wrapped around his throat, leaving him mentally impaired. Griffin tells a fake story of how his grandfather died of burns after his lighter blew up in his face. Will's story features an uncle dying of cancer. The entire family gathered around him as he lay dying and when Will, a child at the time, asked if he was going to die then, his uncle's wife died of an aneurism.

All the talk about death leads Will to a room on the ninth floor where a girl committed suicide their freshman year. The room is still boarded up and rumor says that it still looks like it did the day the girl died. Will offers to take Alyssa up there. Casey and Griffin decide to follow. On the elevator, Will gets off on the eighth floor and tells everyone to wait for him on the ninth. By the time the elevator door opens the fire alarm is sounding. Everyone leaves with the exception of one young man who is convinced it is a false alarm.

At the door of 9E Will attempts to pull away the wood blocking the door, but cannot. Instead, Will goes out the fire escape, enters the room through the window, and unlocks the door from inside. The room has been emptied, but Alyssa is still clearly impressed with the closeness of death. Casey and Griffin both get an odd feeling that something might be going on between Alyssa and Will.

When the fire trucks arrive, Will leads everyone out to the fire escape. Johnny Manion shows up. Will and Manion have been in competition to see who can accomplish the most outrageous prank. They have remained pretty equal, but Manion's last prank, eating a dozen moths, has left the ball in Will's court. Out on the fire escape, Will tells Manion that his next prank will be to commit suicide. No one argues or tries to talk Will out of it, leaving him to say some pretty tough things to Casey. Then Will tells them he has no intention of killing himself, but he will walk all around the building using only a two inch ledge. No one believes him until he begins. Casey is frightened at first, but as Will makes it to the end of the first wall with no trouble the group becomes excited by the possibility that he will succeed. They follow his progress from the dorm rooms all around the building, calling out advice and warning him of obstacles.



As Will reaches the end of the final wall, Casey and Griffin wait for him in one of the dorm windows. As they wait, Casey gives Griffin a kiss and asks him to find her that night. They kiss deeper. When they pull apart, they discover that Will is crossing right outside the window where they are standing. Casey leaves, running ahead to watch Will's triumphant success at the fire escape. Griffin moves to a room further down the hall. As Will crosses the window, Griffin thinks he could pull him inside or push him. Instead, Griffin does nothing. A moment later, Will falls to his death.

The Suicide Room Analysis

There is a great deal of duplicity going on in this story. Griffin is the center of a great deal of it. Griffin, who sought out his current girlfriend simply because she was thought of as the hottest girl on campus, stole his girlfriend from another boy but lost interest the moment she admitted her love for him. Griffin is also having an affair with his friend's girlfriend. Griffin is a typical college student on the one hand, having fun with his peers and doing the occasional drugs. On the other hand, Griffin displays a lack of morals and a difficulty in accepting what he has and what he does not have. Griffin wants what he wants, but once he has what he wants he is no longer interested. This is more than likely a character flaw that will follow Griffin the rest of his life.

The theme of death is clear in this story from the beginning of the story. The conversation focuses on death from the beginning sentence. They begin by discussing deaths they have witnessed or know someone else has witnessed. This leads to a discussion of a room where a young girl committed suicide Will's freshman year at the university. Suicide quickly becomes the subject of discussion as Will announces that he plans to kill himself to best Manion with whom he has been having a contest. Will announces this with a lecture to his girlfriend suggesting that she is not reason enough for him to want to continue living.

As the story comes to its conclusion, the author interrupts his narration to tell what happens to each of the characters in the future, overlooking himself and Will. Each has become successful, with the exception of Casey who has an affair after marrying and it leads to her downfall. This suggests to the reader a personality difficulty in Casey that Will recognized and was familiar with. Perhaps if Will had lived, but the reader soon learns that Will fell to his death that day. The reader is left with an uncertainty about Will. The reader wonders if Will really did mean to commit suicide that day, if he decided to commit suicide after seeing Casey in Griffin's arms, or if it was truly an accident. No one but Will will ever know, leaving the reader with the only lesson the author can offer, the idea that something that tragic affects everyone and it is something that cannot be anticipated.



In the Basement

In the Basement Summary

The narrator and his wife, Carla, are having dinner with friends Nicholas and Maria. Maria is a doctor who is expecting her first child. Nicholas and Maria show the narrator and Carla the sonogram of their child, whom Nicholas refers to as a boy even though they have stated that they do not want to know the baby's sex until its birth. Afterward, the narrator and Carla clear the dishes, moving around the very small apartment carefully to avoid knocking into anything. The narrator thinks of all the work Nicholas has done to make the apartment more efficient. Nicholas is well educated, but he is unemployed as he works slowly on his dissertation. Maria, despite her advanced pregnancy, has been working long shifts to make up for the lack of money. On top of this, the narrator has heard that Nicholas once cheated on Maria and stole a credit card application from her, supporting himself by putting her deeply into debt during their separation. In the end, Maria took him back for reasons that remain difficult for the narrator to understand.

When the narrator and Carla return to the living room, the narrator notices a picture of an attractive woman with her family among the Christmas cards. Nicholas notices the direction of his gaze and urges Maria to tell them about the woman, Lisa. Maria tells them that Lisa was her roommate in college, a highly intelligent woman who could have done just about anything. Nicholas takes over the narration, telling them how Lisa once decided to be a writer and wrote a brilliant narrative, but later lost interest and threw it all away. Then Lisa decided she wanted to get married and set out to find a potential spouse like she was hunting for a job. Lisa did not find a husband during college. In the years after college, while Maria and Nicholas went on to medical school and graduate school like their classmates, Lisa flitted from one prestigious job to another. Finally Maria got an invitation to Lisa's wedding. Lisa married an Israeli man whose girlfriends and family teased him about marrying outside of their traditions all through the wedding, leaving everyone feeling somewhat uncomfortable. Over the years, they learned in detail of Lisa's extravagant lifestyle and the births of her two children. Then, out of the blue, Lisa called Nicholas and Maria repeatedly, asking for advice about buying a dog.

While in California to attend a wedding, Nicholas and Maria made plans to see Lisa. They were dutifully impressed with her home. After some talk, Nicholas and Maria asked where the dog Lisa had bought was. Lisa took them into the basement where she kept the dog. Lisa explained the dog would not potty train, that it was just too much work, so she began keeping it in a small kennel in the basement. Maria was so upset by this that she and Nicholas quickly left, leaving the poor dog to its lonely fate.

When the story is over, the narrator and his wife walk home in the snow. The narrator's wife, feeling generous, tells her husband that she will try to stop nagging him about finishing his novel or getting a job. The narrator tells his wife in a long, drawn out narrative that ruins the mood that he will focus and get finished as soon as possible.



The narrator thinks smugly how lucky he is to have such a generous wife and that he is nothing like Nicholas.

In the Basement Analysis

In this story, there are three characters who personify the main theme of the novel. The focus is on Lisa, a bright, outgoing woman who could have done anything she wanted. Lisa could have been a great writer, a doctor, or just about anything else. However, Lisa could never finish a project. Lisa decided to get married to a wealthy man, but struggled to find one she liked. In the end, Lisa married a man who would clearly never be truly committed to her. Lisa gave birth to two children whom she allowed others to raise. Lisa bought a dog, but lost interest in it when it failed to be potty trained immediately. Nicholas holds Lisa up as the definition of failure, of a woman who had everything and failed to take advantage of it, to take her life by the reigns and make the most of it.

As the narrator listens to Nicholas' story about Lisa, he thinks of all of Nicholas' faults. Nicholas is a highly educated man who has failed to finish his dissertation, but he has also failed to get any other kind of job. Not only this, but Nicholas once cheated on his wife and then got a credit card in her name, building up debt for her as he lived off of the card. Despite this, Maria took Nicholas back and they are now having a child. The narrator thinks Nicholas is a loser and that Maria could do much better than him.

At the end, however, the reader learns that the narrator is the same as Lisa and Nicholas. While Nicholas and the narrator have great disgust for what they see as Lisa's inability to complete any task, they both are unemployed, living at home off of the income their wives make while they work on some project that never seems closer to completion. The narrator is working on a novel that he continually promises his wife he will complete, but never seems to come close to doing so. The narrator holds himself above Nicholas, but in the end it seems they are one in the same, both unable to complete a project and both living off of the income made by their hardworking wives.



When in Rome

When in Rome Summary

Caleb's father once told him to be there for his brother when he needed him. Caleb resented this because Kevin was the kind who always needed someone, but he swore he would try. To show the reader how difficult this would be, Caleb tells the story of how he went to California to visit his brother while he was in law school. Kevin was living with a high school friend, Troy, whose father often financed his incorrigible behavior. Kevin, Troy, and Caleb went to dinner one night during his visit. Both Kevin and Troy were high, but Kevin insisted on driving. Kevin went to a strange house and bought drugs. Then, while driving, Kevin and Caleb began to argue and Kevin missed a red light, nearly causing several accidents as he drove through the intersection. A police car appeared behind them, its lights flashing. Kevin pulled over and threw a bag of cocaine on Caleb's chest. Caleb was sure he would be arrested, but Kevin knew one of the cops and was able to talk his way out of a ticket. Angry beyond words, Caleb struck out at Kevin as they drove away. Kevin pulled over. Caleb grabbed him and pulled him out of the car, preceding to choke Kevin with his tie. Troy, who had been passed out in the backseat, came to and attacked Caleb, beating him severely. The police finally showed up and both Kevin and Troy were arrested for possession of illegal drugs. Caleb and Kevin did not speak for more than two years.

After the deaths of their parents, Caleb and Kevin begin speaking again. Now both of them are living back east, Caleb working for a big law firm and Kevin at a cheesy Tex-Mex restaurant. One night while Caleb is working on a new merger, Kevin calls and tells him that his girlfriend has left him. Kevin asks Caleb to come see him at the restaurant. Although it causes him a lecture from his boss, Caleb goes. Kevin shows him around the restaurant and then takes him into the basement where his office still shows the effects of an attempted robbery. Kevin explains that he now takes the nightly deposits home to deposit in the bank the following day.

Kevin and Caleb walk out of the restaurant and decide to go get a drink. Caleb becomes nostalgic and asks Kevin if they can start again, if they can build a strong relationship as brothers. Kevin agrees. Then Caleb is suddenly hit from behind, knocked down by a mugger. The mugger beats up both Caleb and Kevin, taking both their wallets and the money from the restaurant. Caleb and Kevin go to the police station and file a report, then Caleb takes Kevin home. Kevin's girlfriend is waiting in his apartment, having supposedly come back to nurse him through his injuries. Caleb packs his own injuries and then leaves, but remembers he has left his blackberry on Kevin's couch. When he returns, Caleb discovers that the girlfriend has left the door unlocked. Inside, Caleb discovers Kevin with the mugger and his girlfriend. It turns out it had all been a prank to steal the money. Caleb leaves, his thoughts on the reaction of the dry cleaner when he sees the blood on his suit.



When in Rome Analysis

This is the story of two brothers, much like Cain and Abel, one who is smart and successful and one who has given up on responsibility and who makes mistake after mistake. Caleb dislikes his younger brother and does not try to hide it, but instead attempts to shame him into being a better person. When Kevin nearly ruins Caleb's future by throwing a bag of cocaine at him during a traffic stop, Caleb nearly kills Kevin in his anger. This changes the relationship, causing it to end for a time. However, when their parents die, Kevin lets Caleb back into his life and gives the impression of a desire for a good sibling relationship. In reality the reader comes to guess that Kevin has only reignited his relationship with his brother in the hopes of using his brother as a source of support when life becomes difficult. As if to prove this, Kevin uses Caleb as a witness in a fake robbery.

Caleb wants to have a good relationship with his brother. Caleb wants to help Kevin and to make his life better. However, Kevin has no desire to allow Caleb to help him improve his life. Instead, Kevin surrounds himself with people who live a criminal life with a lack of morals. In the end, Caleb comes to realize that sometimes a person cannot have a relationship with a relative no matter how badly they want one. When he learns that Kevin has used him to steal fifty-thousand dollars from his employer, Caleb does nothing. Caleb does not even become angry. Instead, Caleb walks away, leaving the reader with the impression that he feels he has done his duty by his brother and now he is done with him.



Middleman

Middleman Summary

Joshua is thirteen and his parents, in the fall of 1980, have just placed him in a private school, Trinity. There Joshua immediately becomes friends with Kyle Duckworth and Abe Herman. When Abe has his bar mitzvah, Joshua is fascinated with the process. Joshua asks his father why he is not Jewish and his mother explains that she is not Jewish, therefore he is not either. Joshua's father makes little comment, only to explain to Joshua that their last name of Rose is a modified version of Rosenberg.

Throughout his seventh grade year at Trinity, Joshua becomes enamored with Kyle Duckworth's family, particularly his father and older sister, Elsa. Joshua goes out of his way to try to get Elsa's attention, but fails. Elsa is a senior in high school and has her sights set on going to Princeton where she hopes to join her boyfriend. To Elsa, Joshua is just her little brother's annoying friend. However, while watching television with the Duckworth family one night, Joshua points out that his father did the voice over work for the commercial they are watching. Mr. Duckworth and Elsa are both fascinated by this information and it becomes the main topic of conversation over dinner. Joshua tells them how his father gets the jobs, which jobs he has done, and how the whole voice over industry works. Joshua then tells them that he is an actor himself, that he has had small parts in commercials and some television work, including an after school special. Elsa is especially impressed by this information.

After dinner, Elsa asks Joshua to help her get work in commercials. Joshua sets up an appointment between Elsa and his agent, meeting her before the appointment to help her practice a dramatic reading she has been asked to prepare. Joshua finds Elsa's performance lacking, but it turns out that her looks are enough for the agent to take her on. Joshua tells Elsa that he will help her learn the ropes, meeting her at each of her auditions to help her go over her lines. For months Joshua helps Elsa, fantasizing the eventual beginning of their relationship. However, Elsa finally decides she does not need Joshua's help anymore. Not only this, but Elsa tells Kyle what Joshua has been doing, causing a falling out between the two friends.

One afternoon Joshua and his father do a radio program acting out the play *The Chosen*. Afterward, Joshua is full of questions about Judaism for his father. Joshua learns that his father was a cantor in his synagogue and that his father wanted him to do it as a career, but he refused. Joshua also learns about the prejudice his father suffered while in the Navy during Korea. In the end, Joshua's father asks him to define what it means to be a Jew. Joshua comes up with a list of character traits, including confidence and a knowledge of what must be done.

Over the next few months, Joshua runs into both Elsa and his father at auditions. Joshua adds another trait to his list when he becomes aware of his father's flirtations with casting directors, committed. Then one day, Joshua sees Elsa at an audition for



chewing gum. Elsa begs Joshua to do the audition with him, which requires kissing, so she will not have to kiss a stranger. Joshua agrees and finally gets his wish, at least partially.

Middleman Analysis

This story is the story of a young man who is struggling with his own identity. At thirteen, Joshua has discovered his Jewish heritage, but is confused over his father's refusal to practice his religion. Joshua explores this religion through his friends, especially one friend whose father suffered at the hands of the Nazis as a young man and returned with the American military in order to take revenge on those who so horribly injured his family. Joshua defines what it means to be Jewish through the courageous acts of this man even as he finds his own father lacking. Joshua loves his father, but the more he gets to know him as a man the more he finds him lacking in character.

As Joshua explores his own identity, he also becomes friends with another young man whose father he greatly admires for his success, his devotion to family, and his overall manliness. Joshua has found, in these two fathers, men he wants to emulate and become as a man.

Joshua is also in love in this story. Joshua pursues Kyle's older sister with a relentlessness that is admirable in a child so young. Joshua uses his knowledge of acting and auditions to create a dependency on him for this young girl. However, the girl soon sees through it and humiliates Joshua. However, based on the character traits he has learned from others' fathers, Joshua does not become discouraged. In the end Joshua gets what he wants, his first kiss with the girl of his dreams.



Ladies and Gentlemen

Ladies and Gentlemen Summary

Sara is a writer who has been in Nashville interviewing Reese Witherspoon during the filming of a new movie called *Cell*. Finished with her interview, Sara should be on her way home to her husband and two sons, but on the set of the movie she ran into a man she once knew in college, a man with whom she shared a romantic evening and always wondered where it might have led. They had dinner together and Thom promised to come to Sara's hotel room, but was delayed by work. Instead, Thom has invited her to meet him in Los Angeles. Sara is now rushing to the airport in an attempt to catch her flight to L.A.

Catching the plane with surprising luck, Sara is forced to take a seat in the back. A man who had been in the window seat of the tight row graciously gets up and allows Sara to take his seat, while he takes the seat in the middle. As the flight begins, Sara opens her laptop and begins going over the article she is writing on her Witherspoon interview. The man looks at the screen and asks her about the interview. When Sara mentions the movie Witherspoon is working on and how much she enjoyed the script, he tells her that he is the writer, Peter Handel. Sara asks him about the script and another she heard he had also written that is also currently in production.

As they talk, Peter tells Sara about his children, one daughter with his first wife and two with his second. Peter tells her that he is on his way to St. Louis where his daughter lives with her mother. Sara learns that Peter is going to the wedding of his ex-father-in-law, a relationship that has always been close but has been strained since the divorce. Peter tells Sara that his father-in-law has been married three times before, once to a woman who committed suicide, then a kind teacher who died in a car accident, finally to a woman who married him for his money. Finally he has found a woman he loves deeply and who loves him, inspiring Peter to believe his father-in-law will finally find some much deserved happiness.

Sara asks Peter how his first marriage ended. Peter admits that he had an affair. Peter tells Sara that his marriage did not end because of the affair, but he knew it was over when he had the affair. The plane lands then and Peter must go. He promises Sara he will tell someone on his next flight the rest of the story. As Peter leaves, Sara finds herself wondering if she really wants to go through with her affair, or if she would rather return to her family in New York.

Ladies and Gentlemen Analysis

In this story, Sara is a woman on the cusp of an affair. Sara has always wondered what it would be like to sleep with a man she once knew in college and has been given the chance to learn. Sara is rushing to Los Angeles to be with this man, but on the plane



she meets a man who tells her how his father-in-law suffered in his three marriages and how he himself lost his first wife after an affair. It is a sad story of loss and confusion that leaves Sara doubting her own resolve.

Sara begins to think of her two children, of the young son she adores and the chaos that fills her daily life. Sara thinks of her husband, of the affection that still exists in their marriage despite the growing resentment that has caused her to feel distant from her husband. Finally, Sara begins to think of the regrets in her life and tries to decide which regrets she can live with and which she cannot. In the end, the reader is left to guess which she chose, but with the impression that whichever choice Sara makes, her life will be irrevocably changed.



Characters

David Applelow appears in Futures

David Applelow is a man in his early forties who has spent most of his adult life moving from one job to another, each different from the one before. Applelow never finished college, never attempted to become a professional at a specific career. Instead, Applelow has allowed his life to float along on a current only he can sense. This unanchored life continues even now as Applelow fights to find a job after the theater group for which he worked as manager closed as the recession began to impact the group's founder.

Applelow goes to an interview for a job he read about in the newspaper. The advertisement for the job was vague, but Applelow believes it is a sales job and that his eclectic professional history will make him perfect for the job. Unfortunately, Applelow puts everything into getting this one job, even cancelling interviews with other companies and avoiding putting in applications elsewhere while he waits for word on this one job. When it turns out the job was a joke for a reality television show, Applelow suddenly realizes he has put all his eggs into a vanishing basket.

As Applelow tackles his unemployment problems, he meets his neighbor's son. Zach is as unanchored as Applelow, going wherever the urge pushes him. Zach is supposed to be in college, but he has told his mother he plans to go into the Air Force. However, Zach has not signed up for the Air Force, he has simply decided he no longer wants to go to school. In fact, Zach is considering going to California even though he has no plan, no job. Applelow recognizes in Zach the same indifference to life he had as a young man and tries to counsel Zach against it, but instead Zach steals the last of Applelow's money and runs off to California.

Roddy Thane appears in The Rest of It

Roddy Thane is an English professor at Hollins University. Thane is divorced, but he misses his ex-wife desperately and thinks about her almost constantly. Thane allows thoughts of his ex-wife to dictate just about everything he does, including where he lives, who he dates, and what projects he does for work. Thane is a desperately lonely man who cannot fully appreciate what life has in store for him without his wife. Not only this, but Thane cannot accept that his wife is gone permanently even though he knows that she is married and has two children with her new husband. For this reason, Thane possibly places himself in danger at the end of the story to prove he is not a coward.

Mike Donato appears in The Rest of It

Mike Donato is a janitor at Hollins University. Donato has lived an exciting life and likes to share his stories of this life with Thane. In fact, as the novel begins Donato tells



Thane the story of how he discovered a mass murder while transporting large amounts of cocaine on a boat. Thane is so impressed with Donato's stories, even as he doubts their veracity, that he offers to compile them into a book. Donato is so excited with this idea that he rushes to Thane's office on Monday to tell him how he has been harboring his cousin all weekend even as the police search for the cousin on suspicion of murder.

Griffin appears in The Suicide Room

Griffin is the first person narrator of *The Suicide Room*. Griffin is a college student in the eighties as the story begins, but as narrator he makes it clear to the reader that he is looking back on something that happened in the distant past. Griffin's tale is filled with stories of death. As a young man, this seems an antithesis to Griffin's current location and age. However, death continues to be a theme of the story as Griffin continues. Not only literal death, as in the death of the girl in 9E and Will's death, but also the death of the relationships that Griffin is in as the story unfolds. Griffin is involved with Alyssa because he desired to possess the most desired girl at school, but when she admits her love to him Griffin no longer wants her. Griffin is also involved with Casey, Will's girlfriend, a relationship that may have directly led to Will's death. The reader is unsure if Griffin learned anything from the experience of seeing Will die, but he does admit that it was a defining moment in his life suggesting that perhaps it changed everything in Griffin's life.

Casey appears in The Suicide Room

Casey is Will's girlfriend in *The Suicide Room*. Casey is a troubled young girl whom the reader initially sees as a gentle, kind girl but quickly learns that she has a lack of morals and a temper. It is rumored that Casey once hit Will on the head because of a rumor that he had cheated on her. Then the reader learns that Casey has been sleeping with Griffin for some time. However, Casey clearly continues to love Will despite whatever tensions have caused her to turn to Griffin. Casey becomes jealous when Will openly flirts with Alyssa and worries for him when Will begins his trip around the outer edge of the dorm building. Casey is a complicated girl who becomes something of a serial cheater, ruining her future marriage by cheating on her husband with a business associate of his.

Will appears in The Suicide Room

Will is a college student in *The Suicide Room*. Will is in a contest with another college student to see who can pull the most outrageous prank or stunt. It is Will's turn as the story unfolds. Will threatens to commit suicide as his prank, but then decides that he will only walk around the ninth floor of the dorm building on the two inch ledge. Will nearly makes his goal, but falls after seeing his girlfriend in the arms of his friend. Will falls, but the reader does not know if he fell on purpose, if he tripped, or if he was pushed. The reader, however, is left with the impression that Will knew his girlfriend was untrue to



him and that the stunt might have been a way of getting attention, not to commit suicide. However, it is possible Will committed suicide in the most dramatic way he could.

Lisa appears in In The Basement

Lisa is an intelligent woman who was once a college roommate of Maria's, a character in *In the Basement*. Lisa could have chosen almost any career and done anything she wanted, but Lisa had a problem focusing and sticking with a single project. In the end, Lisa marries a man who is destined to be untrue to her and to have two children whom she is too rich to have to raise on her own. Lisa buys a dog with the intention of training it herself, but ends up locking the dog up in the basement every day because she is not patient enough to teach it not to use the bathroom in the house. Lisa and her dog are symbolic of Nicholas' inability to finish his dissertation and the narrator's inability to finish his novel, although these characters make fun of Lisa and show outrage at what she has done to the dog.

Caleb appears in When in Rome

Caleb is a lawyer with a younger brother, Kevin, who is always in some kind of trouble. Caleb and Kevin had a falling out when Kevin nearly caused Caleb to be arrested for cocaine possession, causing them to not speak for several years. However, when their parents died, Caleb and Kevin reached out to one another, building something of a relationship again. Caleb wants to have a relationship with his brother and he wants to help him when he is in trouble, but Kevin makes it difficult. When Kevin does ask for help, Caleb suffers a broken nose in a mugging and learns that the mugging was a setup on his brother's part in order to steal fifty-thousand dollars from his employer. Caleb turns the other cheek this time, but the reader is left with the impression that this is the only time Kevin will take advantage of Caleb in such a way.

Joshua appears in Middleman

Joshua is a young actor who began private school in 1980 as a thirteen-year old-seventh grader. Joshua works as an actor and it is this that has paid for his schooling. At his new school, Joshua meets two young men with whom he becomes good friends. One friend, Abe Herman, teaches Joshua about Judaism. Joshua's father is Jewish, but he does not practice his faith and has not taught his children about it. For this reason, Joshua learns everything he knows about the religion from Abe and his family. At the same time, Joshua befriends Kyle Duckworth whose family teaches him about manhood and romance. Joshua falls for Kyle's older sister, Elsa, and spends a great deal of the story using his connections in the entertainment industry trying to seduce her. In the end, Joshua gets what he wanted, learning that commitment to a goal can help him reach that goal.

Sara appears in Ladies and Gentlemen

Sara is a middle aged woman who has always regretted not sleeping with a specific man in college. For this reason, Sara quickly commits to an adulterous rendezvous with this man when she runs into him years later. However, after speaking to a man on the airplane, Sara finds herself wondering which regrets will plague her more, cheating on her husband or not having taken the chance to consummate a love affair with her old college crush. The reader never learns her decision, but realizes that whichever choice she makes will change her life irrevocably.



Objects/Places

Moneyappears in Futures

Applelow withdraws all his money from the bank and keeps it hidden in his apartment. However, Zach has seen where he keeps the money and he steals it from him to fund his trip to California, something Applelow indirectly told him to do.

Sucka Punchappears in Futures

Sucka Punch is the name of the reality prank show that set up Applelow in Futures, convincing him he had landed a good job only to yank it away by revealing their prank.

Lettersappears in The Rest of It

Thane finds letters written between the couple who own the house where he is living that chronicle the man's bouts of depression and his wife's struggles to deal with it.

Newspaper Articleappears in The Rest of It

Thane sees a newspaper article about the murder of a woman in the newspaper after Donato tells him about rescuing his cousin keeping him safe after he murdered his wife.

9Eappears in The Suicide Room

9E is the room in which a student hung herself Will's freshman year at the university. Will takes Alyssa to this room to give her a sort of psychological thrill.

Dog Kennelappears in In the Basement

Lisa keeps her dog in a kennel in the basement because she ran out of patience in attempting to potty train the dog.

Novelappears in In the Basement

The narrator has been working on a novel for some time in In the Basement, but has failed to make progress. This is a point of tension between the narrator and his wife.



Grocery Bag appears in When in Rome

Kevin carries more than fifty-thousand dollars in a grocery bag at the end of When in Rome. The money belongs to the restaurant where he works. Kevin is taking the money home in order to protect it from robbery. However, Kevin and Caleb are mugged on the way home and the money is stolen. Caleb later learns that Kevin set up the robbery.

Blackberry appears in When in Rome

Caleb returns to Kevin's apartment to retrieve his forgotten Blackberry and discovers the lie surrounding their mugging. Caleb learns that Kevin set him up to provide an honest witness to the mugging.

Commercial Sides appears in Middleman

Commercial sides are snippets of dialogue that a potential actor reads in order to audition for a part in a commercial. Joshua and Elsa rehearse with many commercial sides in Middleman.

Reese Witherspoon Interview appears in Ladies and Gentlemen

Sara has gone to Nashville to interview Reese Witherspoon. While on a plane to St. Louis and Los Angeles, Sara meets a man who begins a conversation with her by commenting on her notes for the interview.

Witherspoon/Clooney Movie appears in Ladies and Gentlemen

While flying to Los Angeles to meet a man with whom she hopes to have an extramarital affair, Sara runs into the writer of a Witherspoon/Clooney movie called Cell about which she has just interviewed Witherspoon .

Themes

Death or Loss

Several of the stories in this collection deal with death or loss in some way. The most obvious story that deals with the theme of death is *The Suicide Room*. In *The Suicide Room*, the narrator begins by describing tales of death that four friends share with one another. The first deals with a car accident in which a young girl saw her boyfriend drive his car full of passengers over a cliff. In another, one of the girls talks about her brother's brain injury at birth as a type of death. The narrator tells a story that he has made up of how his grandfather caught on fire while lighting a cigar. Finally, the other boy in the group tells the story of how his aunt died while sitting vigil at the bedside of her dying husband. These stories are serious, though the reader must wonder how true they really are, but they leave the kids telling them in gales of laughter because of the illegal drug they are smoking at the time. This gives the reader a sense that these kids do not take death seriously. This theme continues as they break into what they call the suicide room, a dorm room where another student committed suicide several years before. At the end, one of the boys jokes about committing suicide and ends up falling to his death, changing the lives of his friends in irrevocable ways.

In another, the loss of parents has caused two brothers to reach out to one another even when distance is probably the best thing for these radically different men. This story, *When in Rome*, is about two brothers, one a lawyer and the other a restaurant manager and constant loser. The lawyer made a promise to his father before his death that he would be there for his brother when he needed him most. It turns out that when his brother needs him most, it is to set him up in a fake mugging, leaving him with a broken nose. Not only has this lawyer lost his parents, but he finds himself on the outside with a brother he recently begged to begin their relationship anew, leaving him lost in the sibling relationship as well.

Another story that deals with loss is *Futures*. In this story a middle aged man has lost his job, but he is directionless and he puts all his efforts into one job interview that he believes will be the answer to all his prayers. The man suffers a rude awakening when he learns the interview process was a prank orchestrated by a reality television show. Not only this, but an anchorless young man he was trying to help has stolen the last of his dwindling funds, leaving him completely destitute. Despite this, the man chooses not to tell the young man's mother about his crime, preferring to control this one last thing in his life that he feels he can control. In this way, death and loss feature prominently in these stories.

Family

Family is a direct theme in several of the stories in this collection. In "The Rest of It," the English professor, Thane, makes every decision in his life based on what he thinks his



ex-wife might have thought of it or because someone involved reminds him of his ex-wife. Thane is miserable, but most of that misery stems from his determination to hang on to the memory of his ex-wife.

In "When in Rome," Caleb is determined to be available to his brother no matter what even though his brother nearly ruined his life years ago by throwing a bag of cocaine at him as the police were pulling their car over for a traffic stop. In the end, Caleb is badly beaten and left with a broken nose as his brother involves him in a staged robbery to steal more than fifty-thousand dollars from his employer. The only reason Caleb was there was because his brother asked him to be.

In "Middleman," Joshua is thirteen and just beginning to discover who he is. As Joshua gets to know some kids in his new school, he begins to learn what it means to be a Jew and what it means to be a man from his friends' fathers. Joshua learns from his own father as well, but he finds his father wanting. For Joshua, it is all about everyone else, not what his actor father shows him at home and at the many auditions they often find themselves attending together.

Finally, in "Ladies and Gentlemen," Sara has spent most of her adult life regretting a night of passion with a man in college that left her wanting more. Sara has often wondered what might have happened had they continued their encounter. Therefore, when Sara is given a second chance to have a romance with this man, she jumps at it despite her husband and children waiting for her at home. A chance encounter with a man who has been in her position and made the wrong choice leaves Sara trying to decide which regrets she can live with and which she cannot. The reader is left wondering if Sara chooses her family or her lover, making family a major theme of this and the other stories mentioned in this collection.

Lack of Direction

"Futures" is a story of a man who is unanchored, who has allowed life to lead him down a current only he can see into a life that has left him washed ashore in middle age, struggling to find a good job that will provide for him as he begins to move into old age. Even as this man struggles to find a new job, putting all his hope in one set of interviews, he tries to give advice to a young neighbor who reminds him of himself at that age. This man believes that he has changed, that he is no longer aimless, only to find himself without a job and with his meager savings stolen by the same boy he was attempting to help.

"In the Basement" is a story of aimlessness. Like "Futures," "In the Basement" is filled with men who seem to allow life to happen to them rather than taking the reigns and controlling their own lives. Nicholas tells the story of Lisa, a woman who could never finish a project, who could never stick to one thing, even leaving an innocent dog locked up in the basement rather than put in the effort to potty train it. Nicholas and the narrator of this story laugh and ridicule this woman, but the reader soon realizes that the narrator believes Nicholas is just as bad as this woman, if not worse in that he allows his



pregnant wife to provide for the family while he pretends to finish his dissertation in philosophy. It is not until the end of the novel, as the narrator continues to belittle Nicholas in his mind, that the reader learns that the narrator also struggles to complete a novel. All three characters are the same, but none seem able to admit it to themselves making a lack of direction a theme of these stories.



Style

Point of View

Point of view differs within each of the stories in this collection. In "Futures," "The Rest of It," and "Ladies and Gentlemen" the point of view is third person. These stories have a clear protagonist who is the narrator of the story, the author telling their story in a distant, third person voice with only glimpses at their thoughts and emotions. These stories keep the reader at arm's length. In the other stories of the collection, "Middleman," "When in Rome," "The Suicide Room," and "In the Basement" the point of view is first person. In "Middleman" and "The Suicide Room," the bulk of the story is told in the past tense, the narrator allowing the reader to know that the events in the story took place in their past. "When in Rome" contains an anecdote from the narrator's past, but most of the story takes place in the present as does all of "In the Basement."

While the points of view differ in these stories, the narration is strong and clear in all of them. The author remains in the mind of one narrator in each story, never switching from character to character. Throughout the stories the author makes the source of the narration clear within the first few paragraphs, never leaving the reader wondering who is narrating or what their role is in the story. The author makes his characters very clear, developing them quickly and with a precision that leaves the reader with a clear impression of each narrating character from the first few pages of each story. For this reason, no matter the choice of narration, the author has presented a strong point of view that works well with each of his individual stories.

Setting

Each story is set in a different location. "Futures," "Middleman," parts of "When in Rome," and "In the Basement" take place in New England, mostly New York City or its outlying areas. In "Futures" and "In the Basement," the story takes place inside an apartment throughout the bulk of the story, or outside in a wintry landscape. "The Suicide Room" and "The Rest of It" both take place in university settings. The bulk of "Ladies and Gentlemen" takes place on a plane between Nashville and St. Louis.

The settings of most of these stories is simply background. The setting takes on significance in "The Suicide Room" first when the students enter room 9E because of its significance as a room where a suicide took place and later when one of the main characters falls from the ledge of the building. In "Ladies and Gentlemen" the setting is significant because Sara finds herself in an uncomfortable situation only to discover the man sitting beside her has some wisdom that will help her make a decision that is destined to impact the remainder of her life. In "In the Basement," the setting of Nicholas and Maria's apartment is significant because it personifies what the narrator sees as the problem in their relationship, just as the kennel in Lisa's basement represented a failure to them. In this way, the settings of these stories is important to the



overall plot of the novel. However, the settings of the other novels are interchangeable and not overly significant to the plot.

Language and Meaning

The language of the stories is English. The author does not include a great deal of slang in his stories, nor does he use odd grammar or other techniques to personify his characters. The author tends to stick to language that is an example of a higher education in most of the stories, especially the stories that center around characters who are highly intelligent and who have had a great deal of education. However, when the author's main character is a young man looking back on his teenage years, the author has toned down some of this language as would befit a character of such a background.

The language of the stories tends to support the education level of the main characters and their upbringings. The author does not use techniques that other authors might employ to show the slang or lack of grammar some of his characters might employ, instead keeping his language tight to the experiences of the characters who are telling the story. In this way the author helps give the sense of authenticity to his characters.

Structure

The book consists of seven short stories. Most of the stories are twenty pages or less, where others expand to nearly forty pages. The book begins with one of the longest stories, Futures, moving into stories that grow increasingly shorter, with the exception of one exceedingly long story toward the end of the book, until it ends with the story that bears the same title as the collection, Ladies and Gentlemen.

All the stories are told in a linear fashion, told with scenes that include dialogue rather than simply written out in exposition. Each story contains a clear beginning, middle, and ending, though some of the endings of the stories might cause the reader some pause as they try to understand what the author's intention might have been. Finally, the stories are self-contained, telling a full story that is not interrelated with the others in any way despite a common occupational thread among some of the characters.



Quotes

"Bring no suffering. Share no harm. He repeated these commandments over and over again, because these were the only things about his future that he could control."

Futures, pg. 46

"The man seemed to have an endless supply of these stories. Thane didn't care if they were invented or exaggerated. They had the ring of truth. Of real experience." The Rest of It, pg. 51

"Because the world seemed too wide, its fortunes too random, and its blessings too fleeting to honor one man's bravery—or to punish his cowardice. Yet in the end, something must be done." The Rest of It, pg. 70

"All of which is to say I didn't know what she was thinking." The Suicide Room, pg. 79

"You see, it turns out that Will was wrong about defining moments. We don't invent them; they happen to us." The Suicide Room, pg. 90

"He was so unyielding that in a strange way I admired him. He made no apologies. He just took." In the Basement, pg. 98

"I kept talking even after my eyes no longer held hers, Carla staring instead at her feet. And in that moment of weakness, I hoped that she might look on me afterward and feel lucky." In the Basement, pg. 105

"Regarding my brother, Kevin, my father would always say, 'You have to try to be available to him.'" When in Rome, pg. 106

"To make the space seem bigger, my parents had installed a mirror that covered the facing wall, which had the side effect of making me horribly vain. I looked at myself constantly." Middleman, pg. 133

"Like I said before, I was thirteen years old and on the cusp of many things: regret, for instance; wrong turns; manhood; disappointment galore. But I did something in that room that day that I've come to recognize is so rare as to be precious: I got in the moment." Middleman, pg. 158

"Take something for yourself, she thought, while you still can." Ladies and Gentlemen, pg. 163

"Yet it was the possible regrets that troubled her most, no matter what choice she made, the ones that would come to her later, in the night, and gnawed at her even now—starting with what you didn't take versus what you did." Ladies and Gentlemen, pg. 169



Topics for Discussion

Who is Applelow in "Futures"? Why does he cancel all of his interviews after meeting with Ms. Samuel? Who is Ms. Samuel? What does she tell Applelow about the job for which she is interviewing him? What about Ms. Samuel's attitude should have warned Applelow that something was wrong? What happens at the end of Applelow's final interview with Ms. Samuel and her boss, Dr. Love? How does this impact Applelow? Who is Zach? Why does Applelow try to help Zach? What is the result of this attempt to help? What do you believe the author intended with the ending of this story?

Who is Roddy Thane in "The Rest of It"? Why does he often welcome Mike Donato into his office? What stories does Donato tell Thane? Does Thane believe all of Donato's stories? Why or why not? Who influences Thane's decisions as the reader comes to understand them? Who does Donato tell Thane he is hiding at his house? What does Thane do about this? What does the end of the story imply about Thane's immediate future? What is meant by the title of this story?

Who is Griffin? Why is he talking about death with three of his friends in the beginning of "The Suicide Room"? Why does Griffin become annoyed at Casey when Alyssa begins flirting with Will? Why does Griffin not become annoyed with Alyssa? Why does Will suggest they break into the Suicide Room? What do they expect to find there? Why does Will threaten to commit suicide? Does he? What happens to Will? Why does the author feel the need to explain the futures of the other characters before revealing what happened to Will? How did Will's death impact each of the other characters?

In "In the Basement," who is Lisa? What is Nicholas' opinion of Lisa? Why is this ironic? What is the narrator's opinion of Nicholas? Why is the narrator friends with someone he clearly dislikes? Why does the narrator hold himself above Nicholas and Lisa? How is the narrator just like Lisa and Nicholas?

In "When in Rome," who is Caleb? Why does Caleb go to see his brother even though he is working? Why does Caleb feel a debt to Kevin? Why did Caleb previously attempt to choke his brother? What did Kevin do to warrant Caleb's reaction? Was Caleb wrong? Does Caleb feel guilt to this action? Why does Kevin set Caleb up in a fake mugging? What happens to Caleb during this mugging? How does Caleb learn the truth about the mugging? How does he feel about it?

In "Middleman," who is Joshua? Why does Joshua become so enamored with Judaism? Why did Joshua's father fail to keep up with his religion or teach it to his children? Why does Joshua become such a frequent visitor to the Duckworth household? Who does Joshua admire most in the Duckworth household? What name does Kyle call Joshua that causes him to question his father about their religious beliefs? What does Joshua learn from this discussion with his father? What finally happens at the end of the story? How does Joshua react to this?



In "Ladies and Gentlemen," why is Sara flying to Los Angeles? Who does she meet on the plane? What is the main topic of their conversation? How does Sara feel about what this man has to say to her? Why does Sara want to go to Los Angeles? What does she hope will happen there? Why does Sara reconsider her choice when the plane stops in St. Louis? What do you think Sara's final decision was?