

Long Time Coming Study Guide

Long Time Coming by Sandra Brown

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Plot Summary

Marnie Hibbs is working in her yard when Law Kincaid arrives. He continues to accuse her of attempting to blackmail him, and she continues to argue that she knows nothing about the five letters he's received from her address. He says that the letters are a demand for money and a public acknowledgement of his son or that the fact that he fathered a child will be released to the public. Marnie has just said again that she hasn't written the letters and that she doesn't have a child when a teenage boy rushes into the room and calls her "mom."

In actuality, Law Kincaid is the teenager's father. David was the product of a summer romance between Law and Marnie's sister, Sharon. Sharon, only sixteen at the time, convinces Law that it's all right to have sex even though he doesn't have a condom as she is on the pill. That's a lie and one that will come back to haunt Sharon. Her father, a preacher, forbids an abortion and they won't allow Sharon to give up the child for adoption. Sharon is indifferent about David and it's up to Marnie to care for the child, which she does. When Sharon is killed in a car wreck, Marnie, only eighteen herself, assumes custody and David's care.

Marnie has always loved Law though she was only fourteen that summer David was conceived. She follows Law's career and she and David watch as Law's spaceship, the Victory, is launched. Law's memories of the summer romance are eventually stirred and it takes some time for him to accept that he is David's father. Marnie's mother has put it together - the timing of Sharon's pregnancy matched to the time the sixteen-year-old spent on the beach with Law Kincaid. From her room in the rest home, Marnie's mother drafts letters demanding money and threatening to publicly humiliate Law by making it know that he has an illegitimate son. The letters have Marnie's return address and he confronts her believing that she's written the letters. When he decides that she's telling the truth and had no part in that, the two begin having problems on two fronts - who will have custody of David and what will come of the intense sexual awareness of each other? Law finally realizes that he's the "dumb son of a bitch" who broke Marnie's heart and she admits that she's loved him since that summer, seventeen years earlier. Law asks if he can change David's name and if he can change Marnie's name. He says that it simply took him longer to catch up but that he has arrived at the point of loving her.



Chapters 1 and 2

Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

Marnie Hibbs is working in her yard when Law Kincaid arrives. He continues to accuse her of attempting to blackmail him and she continues to argue that she knows nothing about the five letters he's received from her address. He says that the letters are a demand for money and a public acknowledgement of his son or that the fact that he fathered a child will be released to the public. Marnie has just said again that she hasn't written the letters and that she doesn't have a child when a teenage boy rushes into the room and calls her "mom."

Law is an astronaut and Marnie says that's why she recognizes him, but it's not entirely the truth. She also knew Law some seventeen years earlier when the two families spent the summer vacation near each other.

Marnie is an artist and does freelance work for various clients. She's actually waiting for a client when Law arrives and she first thinks that Law is Mr. Henderson. Marnie is in the yard, working in the flowerbed and feels at a disadvantage, because she is in grubby clothes.

David's words upon entering the house are a comment on Law's Porsche. Law's reaction to David is to see Marnie as a liar, because she's just finished insisting that she doesn't have a son. Marnie immediately notes that resemblance between Law and David and says that David can easily see what he'll look like in twenty years, indicating that Law is David's father. David assumes that Law is at the house, because Marnie is using Law in the design she's proposed for the Houston telephone directory. When the doorbell rings again, David rushes off to answer and Law notes the resemblance. He kisses Marnie while David is out of the room but is lounging against the desk when David returns with Mr. Howard, a potential client.

Law says that he's taking David for a ride and the two leave. With Mr. Howard present, Marnie doesn't believe she can make a scene and allows David to go. Mr. Howard asks how long she's known Law but Marnie is obviously reluctant to discuss it and Mr. Howard allows it to drop. When David returns, he's excited about Law's Porsche and Law says that if he can't be flying in a plane he wants to feel that he is. Law signs David's poster of the Victory - the spaceship Law served on - and then David leaves for soccer practice. When he's gone, Law asks if he is David's father. Marnie says, "He's my son," stressing the word, "my." Law says that someone had to have fathered him and asks again. Marnie says that he is.

Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

It's obvious from the first moment that Marnie knows Law Kincaid and he picks up on the fact that she called him by his first name but then drops the idea without pursuing it.



The timing of David's entrance is classic and is designed to bring the scene to a climax. The reader will soon learn some important facts, including that David is actually Marnie's nephew but is Law's son.

Law insists that he doesn't believe that David is his, but does say that he sees the resemblance. Then he tells Marnie that he doesn't remember sleeping with her. He says that he might have forgotten a face but that he'd never forget the way a woman feels in his arms, pulls her to him and kisses her. Marnie and Law are both shaken by the kiss. When David leaves with Law, Marnie wants to cry out for him to return but doesn't, because Mr. Howard is there. She's obviously torn. She needs the job that Mr. Howard is seeing her about but she seems to see Law as a threat to her relationship with David.

It seems to take Law only a short time with David to begin to believe that he could be David's father. He sees not only the physical resemblance, but also other things that they have in common. They are both athletic, for example. Though David will continue to question this to some degree, it won't be long before he's ready to admit that David is likely his son.



Chapters 3 and 4

Chapters 3 and 4 Summary

Marnie is leaving to visit her mother in the rest home but Law insists that he'll take her. On the way, Law continues to say that he can't understand why he doesn't remember sleeping with Marnie. He also mentions her size, saying that she seems too small to carry a child. When they arrive at the rest home, Marnie tells him that she doesn't know who could have sent the letters, that she never wanted him to know about David, and walks away believing that will be the end of it. She stays with her mother for an hour and when she leaves the room, she finds Law waiting for her. Law says he wanted to continue their conversation but first asks Marnie about her mother. Her answer is short - "she's dying." Law then asks if he and Marnie met in Galveston. He remembers Sharon but says he didn't know she was only sixteen that summer. He also remembers that their father was a preacher and that Marnie refused to join in on any of their adventures - including drinking beer.

Law convinces Marnie to have coffee with him. They stop at a diner where a waitress recognizes Law. Law continues to question Marnie about Sharon. She says that Sharon wanted to have an abortion and that she'd confided in Marnie as she always did. Marnie, against her sister's wishes, tells their parents in order to stop the abortion. Marnie then says that her parents refused to allow Sharon to have an abortion and that they all loved David. She says that Sharon was killed in a car accident when David was four.

Law says that he remembers having sex with Sharon but that he's always been careful about condoms. Marnie says that Sharon had told her of a time when Law wasn't prepared and that she'd lied, saying that she was on the pill. Law continues to be skeptical and Marnie says that it doesn't matter, because she doesn't want anything from him and their lives will go on as before. Law points out that someone wrote him the letters, meaning that someone has the ability to ruin his career and to embarrass David. Marnie says that she will do whatever is necessary to protect David and asks Law to take her home.

When Law arrives home, Venus and Suzette are waiting for him. He notes that both are blond, both were brown-eyed but that the two-legged one was angry and the four-legged one was ecstatic. Venus is Law's dog and Suzette says that they'd had a date, though Law says he'd forgotten. In fact, Law says that he doesn't remember where he met Suzette and isn't overly polite as he gives her the brush off. She leaves and he slips into the hot tub, thinking about David. He realizes that having a son will change things - including he option to have a "blond bimbo" waiting for him at home.

David asks Marnie why Law was visiting. Marnie says that she'd called NASA asking permission to use Law's face in her proposed design for the telephone book and that they must have sent Law to check her out before granting permission. Marnie tells



David that they'll likely never see Law again. As David leaves the room, Marnie thinks about Law. She'd always had some minor fantasies that Law would return to her life, but says that in those daydreams it was something catastrophic that brought them together - David needing a kidney, for example. Instead, it was a series of letters. Marnie knows that her love for Law has been unrequited and fears that her love for David is now threatened.

Chapters 3 and 4 Analysis

It's interesting to note that Marnie seems to have difficulty grasping what David means to Law. She sees only that losing David to Law would be a blow and doesn't want that to happen. She is also worried about what would happen to David if Law becomes part of his life then gets bored and stops seeing David. Through all these concerns, Marnie doesn't consider that Law would want to be part of David's life or that he would feel he had missed out on the first years of David's life.

Marnie remembers much more of that summer and of Law than Law remembers. Marnie cites a day when they were in the water and Law told her of his plans to join the astronaut program. She says that she was proud of him when she learned that he had made it. Marnie is also pleased when she discovers that Law remembers at least some of that summer.

As Law is considering what having a teenage son will do to his life, he suddenly realizes that he's thinking as if it's true. He says to himself that the kid probably isn't even his but doesn't seem to believe it. Law's attitude on this front will continue to waver. Sometimes, he is convinced that the boy is not his son. Then he acts as though he believes Marnie when she says that David is his son. Law will eventually request a blood test and it will be some time before he's willing to simply accept what Marnie has told him is the truth. It's interesting that Marnie doesn't at all doubt that David is Law's son and says that's because Sharon told her everything. Marnie believes that Sharon would have told her about any previous lovers, just as she told about Law. It's also interesting that Marnie has followed Law's career and says that she was proud of him each time he made a particular accomplishment.



Chapters 5 and 6

Chapters 5 and 6 Summary

Marnie is just going in to watch David and his team, the Tornadoes, play a soccer game when Law catches up with her. He buys her a soda, buys popcorn for himself and the two of them take seats together. The Tornadoes are down, one to nothing, and then score to tie the game. With literally seconds left to play, David scores the winning point. As the game is being played, Law and Marnie talk about David. He says that his career would be damaged by the public scandal if the person writing the letters told the media that he is David's father. Marnie admits that she hadn't - until that moment - really considered what it could mean to Law. Law joins the team and several parents and fans for pizza after the game. During the drive, David tells Law that his teenage friends think Marnie's attractive. He says that he once had to hit a guy because of what he said about Marnie. He is candid about the fact that she's not really his mother and Law uses the opportunity to ask about his father. David says that he never knew his father but that Marnie's always told him that it doesn't matter - that it's not where you came from that's important, but where you're headed.

At the pizza place, Law and Marnie sit on the outskirts of the group. Law asks Marnie if she's been married. When she says that she hasn't, he says that he understands that having David around would cramp Marnie's opportunity at romance. She says that it's the opposite - that a romantic relationship would cramp her relationship with David. Law again says that he hasn't yet conceded that David is his son though Marnie assumed that he had because of his presence at the game. He says that he's heard of a blood test that he wants to have run. While it won't prove that he is absolutely David's father, it will determine whether it's a possibility. Marnie says that David had a recent physical and that his blood test results are on file. She tells Law that she won't object to the tests. They leave the pizza place and Law passes up the turn to the stadium where Marnie's car is, going instead to his own home.

At Law's house, David strips to his briefs and dives into the pool, swimming several laps. Venus is excited by David's presence and runs up and down the pool as David swims. Law suggests that David take Venus for a walk, and they leave. Law then says that he plans to go skinny-dipping and invites Marnie along. She declines but does agree to go find a bathing suit that will fit from the cabana. She dives in and discovers that Law is naked. He says that he prefers to swim naked and calls her "Goody Two-Shoes" for refusing to go along. Marnie accuses him of playing a daring game - making out with Marnie when David might return at any second. Law declares that he's attracted to her and that's the reason he's making passes at her.

At home, Marnie recalls that her eyes have always lent seriousness to her face and that has made people think she's more serious than she really is. She recalls posing for a sculptor and thinks that Law would be shocked to know that she'd posed nude while she was an art student. The sculptor had declared she had a sexy mouth. When he touched



her mouth, she'd instantly thought of Law touching her mouth during that summer at Galveston. She responded to the sculptor, thinking of Law, but had never returned to pose for the sculptor again.

Chapters 5 and 6 Analysis

As Law enters the stadium, a man says that he thinks he knows Law. He looks at him closely then decides that he's seen Law in the sporting goods department at Wal-Mart. After watching the number of people who truly do recognize Law, Marnie is amused by this. Law says that it happens "just often enough" to keep him humble.

Marnie notes that she had been at the receiving end of several matchmaking attempts and that David's coach had asked her out. Her refusals were so lame that it seems he got the idea that she wasn't interested and stopped asking. Marnie says that he now has a girlfriend but Law says that the man has obviously settled for his second choice.

Marnie says that David always wanted a dog but that her mother didn't want a dog. It's a glimpse at the extent of Marnie's mother's rules over the family. Marnie says that she's considered allowing David to have a dog but that she simply hasn't had time to search for one since her mother moved out of the house.

At home in bed that night, Marnie recalls the scene in the swimming pool. She thinks that she might have given in to Law and to her own sensuousness except that David had returned, prompting Law back into his discarded shorts. One part of Marnie wants nothing else to do with Law while another side - the "permissive" side - continues to fantasize about what she might have done to him.



Chapters 7 and 8

Chapters 7 and 8 Summary

Law calls her and invites her to a formal dinner. It's two o'clock and the dinner is at eight, which in Law's mind means she has six hours to get ready. He says that it's her fault that he doesn't have a date, because he's been distracted since meeting David, that he has to go and that it would damage his reputation to go without a date. He also says he has the blood tests back and that they have to talk. Marnie agrees, makes a trip to the hairdresser and stops in an expensive shop for a dress. When Marnie says that she can't afford the dress, the owner marks it down, saying that it's simply perfect for Marnie and that she's still making money on the dress.

Law tells Marnie that the blood test indicates that he could be David's father though it's not conclusive. He says that he now believes that it's true. Marnie asks what he plans to do now but they are called to dinner and Law doesn't answer.

The next day, Law shows up while Marnie is working. He asks to take her to lunch and when she declines, he offers to cook lunch at her house. Marnie says he didn't come for lunch and Law admits that he is wondering what to do about David. They begin to go through picture albums. There are pictures of David from the day he was brought home from the hospital and under Law's questioning, Marnie admits that Sharon didn't really want the child. She says that her father forced Sharon to keep the baby to face the consequences of her action. Marnie says that her father lost his congregation because of Sharon's pregnancy and that he went to work for a publisher of religious books. Her father died soon after Sharon, who was drunk, caused an accident that took her life and the lives of two in the other vehicle. Law sees so many photos of Marnie with David that he correctly assumes that she'd actually been the one who raised David. Marnie says that David played Little League on a team called the Pirates, though he says baseball is his least favorite sport. Law says that he feels the same. She says that he goes to church, that he sticks with something until he masters it, and that he becomes easily frustrated when something doesn't come easily. Law then finds the photo of the day Marnie gained custody of David. As she was only eighteen when Sharon died, it was difficult.

Law says then that he'd come to see Marnie, because he is so attracted to her. He says that he spent the entire evening before watching her. Marnie says that they can't have sex, and Law continues to press her. She almost gives in but pushes herself away and well out of his reach.

Chapters 7 and 8 Analysis

When Marnie asks if the dress is "too much," David says it's "almost too little." She says that she wishes she had "more up here" and David says "boobs" aren't a big deal to



guys. Marnie says that he can try saying that again with a straight face, indicating the she's not really buying it. Later, David tells Law that he approves of the relationship between Marnie and Law and that he won't object if they sleep together. It's interesting that Marnie has created such an open relationship with David so that he feels he can talk about sexual issues with her and in front of her. That openness will later come out with Law when David asks why Law was so careless as to get a sixteen-year-old girl pregnant.

By admitting that he believes David is his son, Law is now faced with the reality that he's missed the first sixteen years of his child's life. He seems hungry for details and says that he wants to know how David grew up to be the young man he has become. While Marnie continues to be at least somewhat apprehensive about the situation, she commends Law for not simply dropping the subject and moving on as many men might have done.

Law seems to realize what the pregnancy did to Sharon's life but Marnie tells him that Sharon was a rebel and that she'd have eventually come to the same fate with someone else. When Marnie says that she'd always told David it was impossible for her to tell him about his father, Law asks if David accepted that answer. He says that David, being sensitive to the hurt the questions caused his mother, likely stopped asking for her sake rather than because he was satisfied with her answer. Marnie doesn't want to think that she might have done something to hurt David, but does accept that Law could be right.

As Law begins to realize the role Marnie played in David's life, he says that Sharon was a slut, that he recognized it from the beginning, and that Marnie paid for what he and Sharon did. Marnie says that the only way David could be any more her own son is if she'd been the one to have sex with Law.



Chapters 9, 10 and 11

Chapters 9, 10 and 11 Summary

Marnie tells Law to leave and he tells her that she should grow up. Then Law asks if she objects to his "handling" of her or the fact that he's a man. Law says that it seems David should have had a male role model in his life and accuses Marnie of refusing to have a man in her life even for David's sake. Marnie is angry at the insinuation and Law leaves with the threat that "it's not over."

Marnie and David are visiting Marnie's mother in the rest home. With David's birthday approaching, his grandmother has made a key ring as a gift. As Marnie replaces some toiletry items in her mother's drawer, she finds stationary and is suddenly certain that her mother wrote the letters to Law. At home, she comes to the decision that she should tell Law. She tells David that she's going out and arrives at Law's house to find that he's having a party. She passes a man in the flowerbed smoking a joint and couples in various stages of making out. She steps into Law's kitchen to find him sitting at the table with other pilots. They're talking about various exploits - mostly Law's - when he discovers Marnie's presence. He invites her to stay and makes a general introduction. Another pilot, obviously drunk, grabs Marnie and pulls her into his lap. He makes a crass remark about what can be expected of a woman as small as Marnie, prompting Law to jump to his feet and order everyone out of the house.

As everyone is leaving, another man comes out of the bedroom with Suzette who is not wearing a bathing suit top but has a towel tucked under her chin. After they're gone, Marnie offers to help clean up but Law says he has a maid who is well paid for the service. Marnie asks to see the letters and Law first asks if she doesn't believe him, then hands them over. Marnie says that the handwriting isn't like her mother's before the stroke, but that the stationary matches what she found in her mother's room. She apologizes for her mother's actions. Law says that he wants to spend "quality time" with David, which Marnie mocks. She says that she doesn't believe Law knows that quality time is.

Law is waiting when Marnie arrives home with groceries. He helps her unload the parcels and then begins to talk about what she's made him see. He says that even before she walked into his kitchen the night before, he had realized how superficial many of those people are. Marnie says that she doesn't believe he can actually make a change in his life. She says that she would have lied about David being his son if she had known that Law was going to insist on being part of his life. Law says that he's talked to an attorney and that he's been told Marnie has the upper hand. Marnie says that she'll fight to keep David with everything she has. She asks Law if he expected that she would simply give in on the only thing she has in her life. Law says that's the problem - that she should have more balance in her life instead of depending only on David. Then Law asks for the identity of the man who obviously hurt her so badly that she now can't allow herself to become involved with any man.



Chapters 9, 10 and 11 Analysis

Marnie sees that there's a woman seated on the chair behind Law, licking his ear and snuggling very close. She says that she wants to rush across the room and slap them both - a fact that amazes her, because she typically isn't at all violent. Law's reaction when the pilot makes his crass comment is also noteworthy. When Marnie points out that she didn't ask him to defend her, Law says that he'll let it go next time. The pilot, as he's being ushered out of the house, notes that he had no clue Marnie was somehow important to Law.

Marnie is judging Law by the lifestyle she sees - including the party she just broke up. She points out that Law can't even properly take care of a dog when she moves a bowl of jalapeno dip from Venus's reach. It's obvious that Marnie is suddenly aware of how precarious her position really is. David has the right to be with his biological father, and it's Marnie herself who has insisted that Law is that person. However, she says that Law might say that David is his son but that he is - in fact and as a matter of the law - Marnie's son.

Law begins his conversation with Marnie by asking if she has a peace pipe. He's trying to smooth things over but Marnie is having no part of it. It's important to remember that Marnie already has David and that any change will lessen her time with the teenager she's raised as her own son. Law has nothing with David at this point and anything he can get is an improvement. Marnie believes that Law is leading a wild lifestyle that wouldn't be good for David. Meanwhile, Law has decided that Marnie's quiet, reserved lifestyle also isn't good for David.



Chapters 12 and 13

Chapters 12 and 13 Summary

While Marnie is considering that she might be forced to fight for David, she gets a phone call from the ad man, Mr. Howard, who says that they've opted for another artist to design the phone book cover. When David arrives home, it's obvious that Marnie has been crying. She tells him about the phone book but he doesn't accept that there's nothing else wrong. He then finds Law's sunglasses and asks if he'd been there. Marnie admits that he was and David asks if she and Law are having an affair. Marnie says they are nothing more than acquaintances and David asks where she got the hickey. She then admits they kissed. Marnie can tell there's something on David's mind and she asks him to tell her. He asks if Law is his father. Marnie's mind flashes back over a lifetime of memories with David then says that he's correct. He then asks if she is his real mother but Marnie says that she was only fourteen that summer and that Law picked Sharon "over me." Marnie tells David that Law found out, because her mother wrote letters to him. David then asks for permission to call Law and he does. Within minutes, David says, "Yeah, I figured it out. Hi, Dad."

Law comes to pick up David and Marnie declines to join them for dinner. David tells Law that Marnie's proposal for the telephone directory was turned down and Law suggests that she scream, kick and throw a tantrum. He says she'll feel better but she says she'll just feel ridiculous. After David and Law leave, Marnie goes to David's room and begins collecting clothes for him.

At dinner, David and Law begin to connect and Law realizes that Marnie has done a better job raising a child alone than many couples. When they arrive at Marnie's, there are suitcases in the hallway. She suggests that David spend some time with Law and they both agree. While Law is excited, he does lay down some ground rules about the house. After David goes for a swim, he tells Law that Marnie has told him that he should always be respectful of girls. Law says he agrees but then David says, "You weren't with my mother." Law says that he doesn't have an excuse for his action with Sharon and that it was wrong. David says he's not angry, because he doesn't even remember Sharon but says that it would be different if Law hurt "my mom," meaning Marnie. He then laughs and says that he wouldn't even be alive if Law had used a condom.

Chapters 12 and 13 Analysis

David asks why Marnie had kept Law's identity a secret. He says that she should have contacted Law sooner and Marnie's heart aches for his hurt and for her part in it. It's not until David looks Law's number up in the phone book that he discovers they share the same middle name. Law also hadn't noticed. Marnie says that her parents selected the name David and she had suggested Joshua, because it was Law's middle name.



While Marnie does want David and Law to have time together, it seems that she also has opted to be excluded from this first dinner out together. There's no doubt that she's hurting and that she's worried that she'll completely lose David, but it seems that she's also being difficult. Her own hurt at this point is so strong that she can't be happy that David has reunited with his father.

As Law lies in bed the night after David comes to his home, he considers that it's been weeks since he had sex - an unheard of development. However, he decides that he doesn't want to do anything about it, because he's waiting for Marnie.



Chapters 14 and 15

Chapters 14 and 15 Summary

Marnie is cooking dinner for David's birthday, including decorating a cake. She plans to go with David to take his driving test but David calls and says that Law has arrived to take him. Marnie reassures herself that her gift for David is "going to put stars in his eyes." They finish dinner and Law offers to help clear the table for the cake. David says that since it's his birthday, he plans to remain at the table and do nothing more strenuous than belch. In the kitchen, Law presses against Marnie's breasts and she immediately responds. They kiss passionately before Marnie lights the candles and takes the cake to the living room. They eat the cake then David opens his first gift - a set of clothes from Marnie. Just as she's preparing to give him his second gift - a set of keys for a used car she bought - Law goes to the window and tells David that his gift has arrived. It's a new Lotus sports car and David is wildly excited. Marnie is angry that Law went to such lengths without consulting her. Then she tells him that he's never to tell David of her own gift, because it would only ruin his joy and make him feel guilty over his exuberant reaction. Law says that it hadn't been his intention to hurt her and that he'd simply been caught up in his new role as father.

The next morning, Marnie goes downstairs to find that the kitchen has been cleaned. Law will later say that he made her excuses to

David including that he'd intimated that it was "that time of the month." She is just making coffee when the phone rings and she's told that her mother has suffered another stroke. She's being transferred to a hospital.

The next evening, Marnie pulls into Law's driveway to give David the news that her mother has died. David is visiting friends and Law is home alone. He offers condolences and tells her that she should have called on them. She says that there was nothing anyone could have done and that she didn't want David to be forced to remain at the hospital all day. At Law's urging, she agrees to allow David to spend the night at his friend's house as planned. Marnie agrees to take a shower and have something to eat. Law makes sandwiches and as she's finishing her meal, Marnie becomes very drowsy. Law admits that he put something in her drink to help her sleep. She slips into a robe and goes to bed in a spare room. Law begins to tell Marnie a "bedtime story." He tells about a "prince - a damned good-looking guy" who thought he had everything until he met a peasant, toiling on her knees, who is really a princess in disguise. He says, "she doesn't know she's a princess" but that everyone else does. The prince, acting like a jerk, prompts the princess to put a curse on him so that he cares for no other woman. Law says that this prince then goes to the oracle and asks what to do. The answer, he says, is to figure out a way to get the princess to bed. By the time Law finishes, Marnie is asleep.



Chapters 14 and 15 Analysis

When Law takes David for his driving test, Marnie is sad. She tells herself that they hadn't intended to exclude her and that they'd actually been trying to be thoughtful by giving her more time to prepare for David's birthday dinner. Marnie's anger over Law's gift may seem unjustified, because Marnie also bought David a car. She tells Law that she's mad, because she believes Law is trying to "lure" David away from her. She says that if she were to be in the position to again decide whether to raise David, she'd make the same decision. She says that she doesn't regret any of it. She does, however, point out that Law hasn't been through the earaches and sleepless nights that most parents endure.

Marnie tells Law that she'd talked to her mother about the letters. Her mother actually wanted Law to be forced into the responsibility of caring for David as their family had had all those years. Marnie says she hadn't realized when her mother became so vindictive. She says that she's sorrier for her mother's own unhappiness than for her death. Marnie says that she'd wanted Law to know there was nothing else to worry about with regard to the letters. As they are talking, Law says that he's sorry for spoiling her surprise with the car. He says that he hopes she'll understand that he's new to the role of father and that he's bound to make some mistakes.



Chapters 16 and 17

Chapters 16 and 17 Summary

When Marnie wakes, she discovers that Law is in bed with her. She studies him and he says that he's been there all night but has slept little. Law seduces her and Marnie gives in. After the sex, they both drift back off to sleep. The next time they awake, it's because Venus is scratching at the door. Law gets up first and Marnie follows. She's halfway down the hall when she pushes open a bedroom door to find all David's things in the room. She also sees a television set and other material things that she could never provide for him. She says that she'd thought they had an understanding about the gifts and Law asks if he was supposed to take back the things that he'd already given David. He says that he thought they'd agreed that she'd allow him to make some mistakes along the way. When she says that Law is trying to seduce David away from her, he asks why he would do that. She says that it's because Law has to be "on top." Law responds by saying that less than an hour ago it was Marnie who was on top and "loving every inch of it." Marnie is just leaving the house when David arrives.

She gives him the news about his grandmother, tells him to get some sleep and that she'll see him later that afternoon at the funeral. At home later, Marnie considers where the situation has taken them. She knows that she can't compete with Law's ability to hand out gifts such as new cars and that "She couldn't. She wouldn't. Not any longer."

When Marnie is at home after the funeral, Law enters the room and offers to help with her zipper. She declines and asks about David's whereabouts. Law said that he told David he planned to have an adult decision and that David "wasn't invited." Law says that he and David have talked and that they want to have David's name changed legally to Kincaid. Law says that even with the threat of public exposure removed, he wants to acknowledge David. He says that he's already called his parents, that David has talked to them and that they're planning a visit. Marnie says that she's come to the decision that she won't fight for custody.

Marnie then offers an array of possible reasons that she gave in to the sex. She says that she needed the human contact after her mother's death and that she was looking for an outlet. Law listens then calls her a liar. He asks if she loves him and she admits that she does. She says that she's loved him since he was hiding out in a beach blanket with her sister. He says that it took him longer to catch up but that he loves her as well. Law then says that he should have talked first, because he also wants to change her name to Kincaid. Then Law says that he believes it can all be done by the same judge, taking care of two errands at once, because "downtown parking is always at a premium." He says that he wants her to be the mother of all the "future little Kincaids." He also says that he disobeyed his cardinal rule and that they had sex without protection. He says that if there is a little Kincaid "already nesting," he wants it to have legitimacy. Finally, Law tells her that he wants to continue his career. He says that it can



be scary at times but that flying is part of what he is. She tells him that she's tough - after all, she waiting half her lifetime for him.

Chapters 16 and 17 Analysis

There's no real indication as to why Marnie gives in to Law this time when she's rejected his advances before. Marnie's own feelings about David remain on the surface, making her vulnerable on that front. She truly believes that she's losing her son. She admits that Law's house with the pool must look like "paradise" to the teenager who is accustomed to living in an older house with plumbing issues. When she's at home alone, Marnie decides that she won't continue to compete with Law. She decides that she's going to give up the fight and allow David to move in with Law completely. It seems that Marnie has something of a martyr's attitude on this subject but it's also likely that she doesn't want to be in a position to be rejected by David. She seems ready to take this action so that he can't be the one to leave her.

It's interesting to note that whenever Law seems to be ill at ease or at a loss, he resorts to crass jokes. His comment that Marnie had been "on top" just a short time earlier and that she had "loved every inch of it," is an example of that tendency. He immediately apologizes, saying that it was uncalled for and not the correct time.

Marnie says that her decision to raise David hasn't been completely unselfish. She says that Sharon took up all her parents' time and energy and that they had little left for Marnie. When David is born, Marnie knows that she can have this child's undying devotion. She says that she gained as much as she gave by raising David as her own. Law says that she's being rather hard on herself.

Law once accused Marnie of running from life and she says that he is also running, just in a different way. She says that his fast driving, piloting the fighter jets and wild lifestyles were his ways of escape. Now he points out to her that those things are part of who he is and she agrees that she won't try to change those things.



Characters

Marnie Hibbs

Marnie is a thirty-year-old single woman who has devoted her life to raising her nephew. She has carried a schoolgirl crush against her nephew's father, Law Kincaid, since she was only fourteen. Marnie is simply the kind of person who is willing to do whatever is necessary for the happiness of others, even when that means adjusting her own life. She is able to find happiness in her own life by way of the happiness of others and she is willing to admit that at least some of her sacrifices have been somewhat selfish. For example, Marnie says that Sharon was wild and it took all her parents' energy to deal with Sharon, leaving little time and attention for Marnie. When David is born, Marnie takes over his care. While it's necessary for the child's happiness, Marnie says that it's also for herself. She says that she knew, even at that very young age, that if she cared for the child and loved him, that child would grow up to love her as well.

Law calls Marnie "uptight," and to at least some degree, she is. She describes one romantic encounter while she was a college student, but says she was thinking of Law when it occurred. Marnie is actually longing for Law's embrace just as he is longing for hers, but continues to think of how she would feel when Law loses interest and leaves. Marnie takes her responsibility as a mother seriously, and Law believes she's overly serious about it.

Marnie works as a freelancer, which in itself requires discipline. She notes that they aren't wealthy but that she's been able to provide financially for David on what she makes from various projects. She is an art major, and it's Law who notes that Marnie has the talent to have made her mark in an ad agency.

Law Kincaid

Law is the man who comes to Marnie's house making accusations that she's been writing him letters saying that he has a son. From the moment Marnie recognizes him, she's forced to deal with memories of her own childhood love for this man. Law himself doesn't recognize Marnie until she begins to explain about Sharon. Law is living the life of a successful bachelor, and Marnie checks the society pages for mention of him. On the day he meets David for the first time, Law has a date with a woman named Suzette. He has given the woman the key to his house and his alarm code but had forgotten and admits that he doesn't even remember their earlier meeting at a party. On the day Marnie drops by Law's home to tell him that her mother wrote the letters, Law is having a party, and Marnie points out the various people - including the hippie who is smoking a joint in Law's flowerbeds. Law says that he doesn't know the hippie and that someone else must have invited him. That easy, laid-back attitude is typical of Law.



It's interesting that once David begins staying with Law, Marnie discovers that Law has many of the same rules for David. He tells Marnie that he's told the men at work that there's a teenager in the house and that his parties have stopped. Marnie believes that Law's interest in David is a passing phase and that he won't want to deal with the long-term impact of having a teenage boy in the house. Law himself quickly understands that he's falling in love with Marnie and that he wants to marry her.

David Hibbs

David is the son of Sharon Hibbs and Law Kincaid. David turns sixteen during the course of the story. He's athletic, well-adjusted and responsible. Law believes David has turned out as he has because of Marnie's involvement in his life. David is only four when his mother, Sharon, dies in a car accident. Marnie fought to gain legal custody of David though she's only eighteen at the time. David grows up in the home of his grandparents with Marnie in the role of "mother." David has naturally asked questions about his father but has come to accept the explanations - that it's impossible for Marnie to tell him who his father is. David guesses that Law is his dad after Law has been back to their home several times. David then makes the leap that Marnie might be his biological mother as well. He questions that, because he sees that Marnie and Law are attracted to each other. While David is enamored with Law, he remains concerned about Marnie as well. As the story ends, Marnie says that she knows she's lost David. Law says that he's certain David won't stay away many more days and might already be packing to return to Marnie's house.

Sharon Hibbs

Sharon is Marnie's sister and David's mother. Sharon was sixteen when she encountered Law, had a summer romance and ended up pregnant with David. Sharon wasn't particularly interested in David, and Marnie admits that she was never a real mother to him. Sharon is wild as a child. Her parents force Sharon to keep David saying that she had to live with the consequences of her actions. Sharon doesn't return to school, never holds a job and is drunk when she is involved in a car wreck that took her own life and the lives of two people in another car.

Marnie's Mother

Marnie's mother sends Law's letters from her current location in the nursing home. She is dying, having had several strokes and combating high blood pressure that makes another likely. The nurses are happy that she is writing letters but Marnie quickly figures out that the letters are to Law. She later says that she questioned her mother about them and that the older woman was filled with spite. Apparently, Marnie's mother wanted Law to be forced to take responsibility for David as she and her family had done for David's entire life. It's noteworthy that Marnie's mother must have known the level of devotion and love Marnie holds for David. She also must have known that it's possible



that Law would demand custody. Her motives are never made any clearer than her desire to force Law into the role of responsibility, but it seems possible that she might also have been worried about her daughter, who would now be left alone with a teenage son to raise. The woman dies of a stroke and Marnie says that she's sadder because of her mother's unhappiness than for her death.

Suzette

Suzette is the woman who's waiting at Law's house when he returns from Marnie's having just found out that David is his son. She is angry that he's late, tells him that they had a date for the evening and is even angrier when he gives her the brush off, asking her to leave. Marnie later meets Suzette who tells about the broken date. When Marnie and Law become involved, there are several references to "Suzette and her clone," meaning Suzette and all the blonds who were hanging around Law's house and the homes of the other astronauts.

The Unnamed Pilot

The unnamed pilot was the man at the party Law held soon after the first sexually-charged encounter between Marnie and Law. The man is obviously already drunk and says that he'd known there would be women at the party, but that he hadn't expected them to be as classy as Marnie. He then grabs her, pulling her onto his lap. When he makes a crass comment about small women, Law ends the party and asks everyone to leave.

Kris Campbell

Kris is the wife of another pilot. She introduces herself to Marnie when Marnie arrives unexpectedly at Law's house after discovering that her mother had written the letters. It's when Marnie says her own name by way of introduction to Kris that Law knows she's in the house.

Mr. Howard

Mr. Howard is the "ad man" who is considering Marnie for a job designing the cover of the Houston telephone directory. It's Mr. Howard's arrival that interrupts the conversation between David, Law and Marnie during their first meeting. Mr. Howard tries to question Marnie's relationship with Law, having recognized him as an astronaut, but doesn't push the issue.

The Store Clerk

The store clerk tells Marnie that she looks incredible in a particular dress. When Marnie checks the price tag, she reluctantly admits that she can't afford it and tells the clerk of her decision. The clerk pulls a pen from her pocket and marks the dress down to half price, telling Marnie that the dress is perfect and that she is still making a profit at that price.



Objects/Places

Houston

Houston is where Marnie Hibbs lives.

The Houston Telephone Directory

The Houston Telephone Directory is the project Marnie is working on, designing a cover. She isn't hired for this project but is later hired by the same agency for other projects.

Venus

Venus is Law's dog. Venus hates women but makes friends with Marnie when Marnie released the dog from the utility room following Law's party.

The Victory

The Victory is the spaceship Law Kincaid served on.

The Challenger

The Challenger is the space ship that explodes during lift off.

The Tornadoes

The Tornadoes is the soccer team David plays for.

The Pirates

The Pirates was David's first Little League team.

The Philippines

The Phillipines is where Law was stationed when David was five.

Galveston

Galveston is where Sharon and Marnie meet Law and where David was conceived.

NASA

NASA is the space program where Law is employed as a pilot.

Lotus

Law buys David a Lotus for his sixteenth birthday.



Themes

Love Endures

Marnie is an example of love enduring through the ages though she tells Law at one point that she'd had no idea a childhood crush would have stayed with her for some seventeen years. Marnie is actually just a fourteen-year-old girl when Law was making out with Sharon. Still, the two of them spend some time together over the course of that summer and Marnie makes an impression on Law, though he is much older. Marnie fell in love with Law then and that love remained a part of her throughout her life. She talks of an incident in which she is posing for a sculptor and the man touches her lips. His touch conjures up memories of Law, then many years past their one summer together on the beach at Galveston. When Law returns to Marnie's life, he's forgotten about that summer but her recollections prompt his own memories. He notes that he actually has more memories of Marnie than he does of her older sister, Sharon. Law says that he knew Marnie would grow into a beautiful woman but all he remembers of Sharon is that she was "willing." It seems likely that the seeds of love were planted in Law that summer as well though he never focused his attention on it as Marnie did. There's no real indication to what extent Marnie's love for David is tied to her love for Law, but it seems likely. There seems to be no doubt that Marnie would have loved Sharon's child as her own no matter who fathered that child, but that the fact of David's parentage probably made him more special in Marnie's eyes. That's borne out by the fact that Marnie helped name David, using Law's middle name as David's middle name. It's also interesting that Marnie always followed David's career though she was never even tempted to contact him.

Willingness to Sacrifice for the Happiness of Others

Marnie's life has been a study in sacrifice. She tells Law that from childhood, Sharon was wild and uncontrollable, meaning that she - Marnie - had to be the good child. When David is born, Marnie puts her own life aside so that she can become all the things a mother should be. She must have missed out on a lot though she does finish her education. Law realizes that she must have taken lighter-than-normal class loads in college so that she could be there for David, and that she'd opted for a career based from her home instead of a job at an ad agency.

While those things are all true, Marnie admits that she was also selfish in her desire to mother David. She says that Sharon was wild and it took all her parents' time and energy to deal with Sharon, leaving little attention for Marnie. She says that with David's birth, she realizes that there's a chance for her to have that unconditional love that she craves. Marnie tells Law that she knew that if she loved and cared for David, that he would return her love. In that way, she admits her willingness to "mother" David. However, that willingness resulted in a wonderful upbringing for the child. Marnie's unselfishness became the basis of security and trust that allowed David to become a



responsible, loving teenager. Law notes that Marnie had given him every advantage that it was in her power to give.

When Law steps ahead of Marnie and buys David an expensive sports car, Marnie is hurt. She'd worked hard to be in the position to give David a used car and is robbed of the opportunity. However, when Law finds out what happened, Marnie says that he's not to say anything about it to David, because it will only ruin his happiness over Law's gift.

The Tendency to Judge

Law is an attractive virile man and when Marnie continues to turn down his advances, he jumps to the conclusion that she must prefer women. Law himself would not turn down a sexual encounter and cannot understand why Marnie would want to. He questions her sexual preferences and goes so far as to say that he doesn't want his son raised in an atmosphere of this kind. Marnie herself is ready to judge Law. While it's true that he is living a life of the wild and free single man, Marnie believes that his interest in David will be nothing more than a passing concern. Marnie has judged Law by the fact that he was willing to have sex with her sister when Sharon was only sixteen years old, and that his activities are commonly included in the society pages. She's unable to see that Law's involvement with David immediately changes him. It's interesting that Law also judges Sharon. He calls her a "slut," and says that even at his young age he recognized that she was offering sex. When David asks Law about that, Law admits that he was also wrong but it seems that he places more of the blame on Sharon than on himself.

Marnie's parents judged Sharon for her indiscretion, as is the parent's duty. However, their judgment went a step farther and they refused to allow Sharon to have an abortion or to give the child up for adoption. Still a child herself, Sharon isn't that interested in David but is suddenly forced to become a mother - a role that she doesn't assume in all the ways that count. Instead, the judgment handed down in this instance means that Marnie has to assume the role of "mother," which she does. While Marnie doesn't at all regret it, she does admit that it changed her life. It's interesting that Marnie's father was also judged for his daughter's indiscretion. He is a preacher when Sharon becomes pregnant and the judgment of his parishioners pushes him from his position as pastor.

Finally, Marnie's mother judged Sharon's actions because of the impact on their own family. While there seems to be little doubt that Marnie's mother loves David, she writes the letters to Law, because she wants him to have to face the responsibility for David as she has been forced to for all those years.



Style

Point of View

The book is written from third person point of view but is limited almost exclusively to what Marnie knows. This is necessary for the successful introduction of the characters and the flow of the story. While it can be argued that it's overly limiting to not have knowledge of what others are doing and thinking, there would be less suspense for the reader. The fact that the point of view is limited actually helps the story flow in this instance. The exceptions to the limited point of view are designed to give the reader a look at what Law is feeling. For example, he tells Marnie that he's going to tell her a "bedtime story." He tells the story of a beautiful princess who puts a curse on the prince so that he doesn't want any other woman. When he finishes his story, Marnie is already asleep and hasn't heard the end. The reader has that brief glimpse into what Law is beginning to feel but it isn't a defining look that gives away the ending.

Setting

The book is set in a modern time frame and is likely in the Houston, Texas. There are some minor points that date the book though it's nothing that would be of major importance. For example, when Marnie's mother is in the hospital, David tries to call home and gets no answer. Marnie apparently has no cell phone, which at least to some degree dates the book. There are other similar points but none that provide an absolute time period for the book. Marnie is working on the cover for the Houston telephone directory and Law is involved in the NASA space program, making it reasonable to believe that the story is set in Houston. There are few descriptions of places other than the homes of the main characters, meaning that the setting could actually be anywhere. The characters reminisce about Galveston and it's assumed that is Galveston, Texas - a popular tourist destination with a beach. Again, the descriptions are vague at best meaning that the scene could be set almost anywhere. There are details of the homes of the two main characters. The settings are believable and the fact that there are so few details of the city doesn't really detract from the story. In fact, it could be argued that the story flows more quickly, because the writer focuses on the individual rather than the larger settings.

Language and Meaning

The book is written in a straightforward style that would be easily understood by an average reader. The story line is rather trite in some respects. The man and woman are wildly attracted to each other and the sexual tension is explosive but they are also antagonistic toward each other. In this case, the ordinary is broken up by the underlying facts - that Marnie has always loved Law and that they have a history. There are points that are easily predicted. For example, just as Marnie says that she doesn't have a son,



David runs into the room and calls her "mom." Similarly, David scores the winning goal for his team with less than a minute left on the clock. The sexual encounters are not overly graphic and it can be argued that they are necessary for the flow of the book.

There are few words that any reader is likely to find unfamiliar and most of those can be determined simply from the context of the sentence. The story moves well though their antagonism lasts until the very last pages, leaving the reader wondering how their problems can be resolved in the few pages remaining of the book.

Structure

The book is divided into seventeen chapters of varying lengths though none is more than twenty pages. The book is divided between exposition and dialogue. The dialogue is believable and almost any reader is bound to find some minor details that lend credence to the story. For example, David jumps and swats the ceiling of Marnie's bedroom as he's leaving the room. David, at sixteen, is tall enough to accomplish this feat and many teenagers of that size, age and athletic ability have paused to "swat the ceiling." Details such as that grab a reader and make the book much more believable. The book follows a basic chronological order. Past events are told through current events. For example, Law and Marnie sit down with a photo album in order to reveal details about David's childhood.



Quotes

"She wanted to stand and stare, but he was staring at her with unmitigated contempt, and no recognition at all."

Chapter 1, Page 4

"I was praying I wouldn't overflow by tee-tee bag."

- Law Kincaid answering the question what he was thinking during liftoff, Chapter 2, Page 19

"There were two individuals waiting for Law when he returned home. Both were female. Both were blond. Both were brown-eyed. One had two legs, the other four. One was angry. One was jubilant."

Chapter 4, Page 36

"The idea of having a son had probably appealed to him only because he had thought it was a package deal that came complete with an available female."

Chapter 6, Page 71

"I'll say this for you, Marnie, you know how to deflate what had promised to be a good, hard arousal."

- Law on Marnie's question of whether he would tell his parents about David, Chapter 7, Page 81

"We kept the reasons vague and emphasized that he'd be smothered in so much love he wouldn't miss having a father."

- Marnie, Chapter 8, Page 89

"The only way David could be more mine is if I'd been on that beach blanket with you instead of Sharon."

Chapter 8, Page 93

"Marnie wanted to cross the room and slap both of them very hard, an urge that stunned her, since previously she hadn't believed she had a violent bone in her entire body. The one and only time she'd ever spanked David, she had cried harder than he."

Chapter 9, Page 106

"When he reached his car, he leaned against the side of it and swore for a full sixty



seconds. What was it about this woman that brought out the very worst in him?"
Chapter 11, Page 127

"Law hadn't noticed the name on the hospital certificate when he saw it in the album. Marnie hadn't pointed it out to him because the fact that David bore his name seemed to seal his authority over his son's future."
Chapter 12, Page 137

"She loved him for not being a heel, and resented him for the same reason. Dealing with a heel would have been easier than dealing with a man you loved who was trying to rob you of your life's focus."
Chapter 13, Page 140

"You came into David's life bearing gifts. You're larger than life, magnificent, like some god. Parenting is easy when you're not the one who changes diapers or stays up all night with a kid's earaches. You never had to discipline him while your heart was breaking for having to. No, you missed all that, didn't you?"
Chapter 14, Page 161

"Because I don't owe anybody an explanation for an erection I had seventeen years ago!"
- Law saying how he planned to explain David, Chapter 15, Page 169

"I made veiled references to 'that time of the month.' That ailment always with it a certain hush-hush, mysterious aura that effectively intimates men from asking more questions."
Chapter 15, Page 172

"The princess retaliates by putting a curse on him. She binds him to all other women. He's about to die of terminal horniness, but the only woman he sees or wants is the princess."
- Law telling Marnie a 'bedtime story,' Chapter 15, Page 176

"I was the dumb son of a bitch who broke your heart."
- Law, Chapter 17, Page 194

"I figure a name change and a marriage could be handled by one judge. We'd be killing two birds with one stone. It would entail only one trip to the courthouse, and since parking space downtown is at a premium -"
- Law, asking Marnie to marry him, Chapter 17, Page 195



Topics for Discussion

What is Marnie's first reaction upon seeing Law Kincaid in her yard? How does she handle the situation? How does she sidestep his questions?

Who sent the letters Law is angry about? What are the contents of those letters? Why do you think that person sent them?

What kind of childhood did David have? What impact did David's birth have on Sharon's family?

What does Sharon plan to do when she becomes pregnant? What does Marnie do? Why?

Describe the sexual tension between Marnie and Law. What are Marnie's reasons for refusing Law's advances? What does Law assume?

Describe the "bedtime story" Law tells Marnie. What is he really saying?

How does David come to guess that Law is his father? What other conclusion does he draw? Why?

How does Law propose? What is Marnie's reaction? What does Law say about his career?