

# **Love Warrior Study Guide**

**Love Warrior by Glennon Doyle Melton**

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# Summary

The following version of this book was used to create this guide: Melton, Glennon Doyle. *Love Warrior*. Flatiron Books, 2016.

*Love Warrior*, by Glennon Doyle Melton, is a memoir describing Melton's marriage nearly coming to an end due to infidelity and the road she traveled back to happiness. More than that, it is the story of the way human beings relate to one another based on the roles society has assigned to them.

In the Prelude, Melton describes the day of her wedding to Craig. She is pregnant and her family is in attendance. She hopes being married will make her into a better person.

Part One of the memoir deals with Melton's life up to the point of her marriage to Craig. Part One, Chapter One goes back to examine Melton's childhood and the years before her marriage. She knows that she was loved as a baby. She remembers the way other people treated her mother because of her beauty and that at a young age she realized that there are rules that pretty girls are supposed to live by. At age ten, Melton feels ugly and fat. She becomes bulimic and by the age of 13 her parents are desperate to help her.

In middle school, Melton learns to act a certain way to fit in with the other girls and be liked by the boys. She calls this having a representative, whom she says she put forward into the world so that the real her could stay safely inside.

In tenth grade, Melton has sex for the first time. It seems impersonal and like something that happens to her rather than something she participates in.

In her senior year, Melton is admitted to a mental hospital. After high school she goes to college and joins a sorority where the rules are the same as they are in high school. She begins drinking and taking drugs.

In Chapter 2, Melton has graduated from college, but she still drinks every night. She meets Craig and they begin dating. She gets pregnant and has an abortion. After that, she drinks even more heavily and her parents tell her that she must stop or they cannot be a part of her life. They schedule an appointment with a priest for her.

In Chapter 3, Melton goes to the church. There she sees a picture of Mary and feels connected to her. When she talks to the priest she feels like he cannot understand her.

At the beginning of Chapter 4, Melton has been sober for a few weeks, but she eventually lapses back into drinking. She discovers she is pregnant again and believes that God is telling her she is invited back into living and that she is worthy of being a mother. She knows she must get sober, so she calls her sister who takes her to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting.



Melton tells Craig she is keeping the baby. She moves forward by approaching her sobriety minute to minute and focusing on making the next right choice.

Craig proposes and Melton says yes.

Chapter 5 begins at Melton's wedding to Craig. After the wedding they go to a hotel and Melton hopes sex will feel different now that she is married. It does not and she thinks she will be lonely forever.

Part Two of Love Warrior takes place from the start of Melton's marriage to the time point when the marriage breaks down. Part Two, Chapter 6 starts with Melton learning to be a wife by watching commercials with wives in them. She packs Craig's lunches and decorates their apartment.

Craig and Melton go to the doctor and are told that their baby appears to have Down's Syndrome. They resolve to love the baby the way he is. When the baby is born, he does not have the condition. They name him Chase.

As Chase grows, Melton feels as though she and Craig are growing apart. She is unable to connect with Craig through conversation and he only wants to connect through sex, which does not work for her. Craig asks her to watch pornography with him, but afterward she feels disgusted and tells him to get all of the pornography out of the house.

Melton and her husband have two daughters, Amma and Tish. She stops working and stays home to raise her children. Motherhood is exhausting and she feels resentful toward Craig.

In Chapter 7, Melton discovers her love of writing and her sister encourages her to keep doing it. She develops an online following which gives her the connection she cannot find with Craig.

Melton contracts Lyme's disease which prompts the family to move to Naples, Florida where the weather eases her condition.

In Chapter 8, Melton uses the family computer to write and discovers that Craig has downloaded pornography onto it. She is angry and he says he will go to therapy. Melton goes to one of his appointments with Craig and he reveals he has been having sex with other women. Melton tells him to leave. She worries about what a divorce will do to her children.

Chapter 9 starts after Melton's sister has flown in to help her and Melton has told her children about the separation. Melton vacillates between divorcing Craig and staying with him. Her sister advises her to wait to make a decision.

Melton joins a church, but discovers it is a very patriarchal church when a woman approaches her and tells her that God does not want her to divorce. Instead, she is supposed to help her husband through this difficult time. Melton leaves the church.



Chapter 10 takes place at Christmas time. She tells Craig she is going to file for divorce and he tells her that he will never move on and that he is determined to win her back. He tries to show her he is changing by being helpful with the children and volunteering at a women's shelter.

Melton decides she needs to get away for a while and goes to the beach. On the beach she feels connected to God and safe. Her mother tells her she has always loved the beach and she feels as though she has learned something true about herself. Melton decides she needs to get help for the sake of her children and any relationships she might have in the future.

Part Three of the memoir deals with Melton's healing journey. Chapter 11 begins with Melton seeing a therapist. Ann, the therapist, tells her that it is unlikely she will never be in an intimate relationship again, but does not pretend that doing so will be easy.

In Chapter 12, Melton decides to go to a yoga class. She likes the way she does not have to make decisions when she is there and believes her body is teaching her mind something about staying anchored. During a hot yoga class, Melton has an epiphany about the way she has spent her life running from loneliness.

Craig is also seeing the therapist and he tells Melton he wants to practice talking. He takes notes so he will not forget anything Melton tells him.

In Chapter 13, Melton takes a class that teaches her to heal through breathing. The instructor tells the class that all they need to do to be with God is to breathe. Melton has an experience in the class that makes her realize that God loves her and has always loved her. She decides that if she is going to extend grace to other people the way God has given her grace, she cannot exclude anyone, including Craig and the women he slept with. She goes home and tells Craig about the experience because she wants him to know that God has already forgiven him and loves him. However, she tells him her forgiveness will take longer.

Melton thinks about the way religion has always taught her that women are to be helpers for men. She looks up the original word used for women in the Bible and discovers it is ezer, which means warrior.

In Chapter 14, Melton goes to a speaking engagement. Afterward, a woman approaches her and suggests she try a church in Naples that seems like it would be a good fit. Melton and Craig go to the church and feel at home there. Melton begins teaching Sunday School.

Ann advises Melton to try to slowly reconnect with Craig physically. She tells Melton that she must tell Craig how she feels in the moment instead of hiding it. Melton tells Craig that his hugs make her feel trapped, so they practice hugging in a way that feels less demanding to Melton. They go on a date and Melton kisses Craig, but tells him she is not ready for more.



Chapter 15 takes place 18 months after Melton learned of Craig's infidelity. She watches him coach her children's soccer teams and feels a little jealous over the way the other women look at her handsome husband. She also realizes that she respects him for staying and working on their marriage.

Melton decides she is ready to have sex with Craig again. She hopes it will be different this time. During sex, she and Craig communicate and when it is over, they both feel different and Melton feels like it was an expression of love.

One day Amma dances around the kitchen acting sexy which prompts a conversation between Melton and her daughters about what sexy means and how being pretty and being beautiful are two different things. She tells them that pretty is defined by the rules of society, but beauty comes from inside.

In the Afterword, Melton and Craig stand on the beach alone and renew their vows.



# Prelude and Part One: Chapters 1-2

## Summary

Love Warrior, by Glennon Doyle Melton, is a memoir that chronicles the story of Melton's marriage and the crisis she and her husband faced when infidelity entered into their relationship. As Melton tells her story, she reveals truths about how the roles society has assigned to men and women affect the way they relate to one another.

The Prelude begins on the day of the author's wedding to Craig. The wedding takes place in Craig's childhood backyard. Melton stands with her father at the end of the aisle waiting for her moment to walk in and watching Craig. She thinks that this is the day she will become something new, just as she has been trying to since she decided to have the baby she is carrying and to get sober.

The author walks down the aisle and sees her sister watching her. She knows that her sister is there for her, just as she has been since they were children. When the wedding is over, the author hopes that as Mrs. Melton she will be a better person.

Part One, Chapter 1 starts with Melton talking about how she was loved as a baby. She knows she was loved just like her daughter is loved, but she wonders how her daughter still ended up on her bed worrying about being bigger than the other girls. She knows her daughter is really asking how she will survive as she is in this world.

The memoir turns back to when the author is age four. Her father is a football coach and her mother takes her and her baby sister, Amanda, to the football games. They are treated with deference because they are the coach's family. As a child, the author recognizes that her mother is treated differently because she is beautiful. People tell her mother that she is beautiful, too, so she thinks she must learn to act a certain way because of the responsibility of being beautiful. Her parents tell her she is smart, too, but she realizes very early that people are sometimes put off by her intelligence.

When Melton is ten, she is at her grandmother's house. Her cousins are playing, but she does not join in. She feels heavy and alone. She had thought her cousin Caren would give her a makeover that would make her beautiful again, but she is disappointed by the results.

The ten-year-old Melton goes upstairs to take a bath because when she is in the bath, she feels safe. When her bath is over, she feels heavy again. That night she sees a television show in which a woman binges on ice. The woman then goes into the bathroom and vomits. The author believes she has found what she has been missing and begins bingeing and purging.

At the age of 13, the author's parents are desperate to end her eating disorder. They find cups of vomit in her room. Her dad tells her he loves her, but she tells him that he is lying because no one could love someone who looks like her.



After middle school her skin begins to clear up and she finds clothes that she thinks hide her fat. She believes she can now pretend to be like the other girls. She creates what she calls her “representative” who goes into the world, but keeps her safe inside.

When she is in tenth grade, Melton has sex with her boyfriend Joe. Afterward, she feels like sex is not personal and she tells her friend that it is just something that happens to her. When her friend has sex for the first time, she tells the author that it was wonderful.

The author attends Joe’s graduation party and his parents give him a box of condoms. Joe goes on a beach weekend with his friends. A few days later a friend comes and tells her that Joe was accused of rape and arrested. She and her friends decide to treat the matter as though the girl is the one in the wrong. One year later, Melton breaks up with Joe and when he is upset, she wonders why since he is not losing anything worth having.

During her senior year, Melton enters the cafeteria one day wearing a tight dress and wondering how to fit in. She ends up eating too much and then running to the bathroom to vomit. When she realizes people are staring and she cannot find an empty bathroom, she runs to the counselor’s office and asks them to call her parents because she needs to be hospitalized.

Melton’s parents take her to a mental hospital where she is admitted. Her sister looks frightened and unsure of what to do. After they part, she finds a piece of paper in her suitcase with lyrics to a song written in her sister’s handwriting.

The author meets a girl who says her parents sent her to the hospital because she is a liar. She knows that they are the way they are because they cannot tell the truth about how they feel.

Doyle Melton’s roommate in the hospital is Mary Margaret, who is anorexic. They bond and Mary Margaret temporarily takes the place of the author’s sister and they confide in one another. The author suggests they are like canaries in a mine and see the bad stuff before others do.

The author returns to school during homecoming week and she is nominated to the court. When she rides in the parade, she feels like her representative is there and no one really knows her. She has been voted Leading Leader and thinks it makes sense because she knows how to follow the rules to be popular.

When she enters college, Melton joins a sorority because she knows how to behave there. The only difference between the sorority and high school is that the “hidden rules are publicly acknowledged” (40). Many of the women in the sorority are openly bulimic. Melton dates a boy from a fraternity and thinks she has fooled everyone into thinking she is one of the beautiful girls.

Her frat boy boyfriend is a nice person away from campus, but on campus he is held to the rules and made fun of for saying he loves her. She feels like she is always getting ready for something and her life devolves into a ritual of drinking, partying, and sleeping.





In Chapter 2, the author has graduated from college and lives in a town house with her friends, Dana and Christy. She teaches third grade and is a good teacher in spite of the fact that she needs to sober up each morning. She and her friends drink every night and she usually blacks out.

One night she meets Craig during a bar crawl. He is older than her and went to her high school. He is very handsome and surrounded by beautiful women. Craig was Dana's neighbor growing up, so she goes to say hello. Craig remembers Melton and she is surprised and awkward. Later, she runs into Craig again when she is drunk and more confident. They end up back at his place where they have sex. After that, they are together constantly. Craig tells her he loves being with her because she makes him feel like he is all she cares about. She keeps her feelings to herself because she knows the rules.

Shortly before Thanksgiving Melton discovers she is pregnant. She and Craig decide to have an abortion. Craig takes her home afterward and she tells him it is fine for him to go to a party that night. She sits on the couch and drinks. When her roommates come home and find her she tells them she had an abortion.

After that night, Melton starts drinking even more and begins missing work. When her dad discovers she has several DUIs, he tells her he went to a priest to ask for help surviving being her father. The next day her mother calls and tells her to come over right away. They stage an intervention and she realizes they are giving up hoping for her to get better. Her parents have made an appointment for her to see a priest. She thinks that God is a new approach.

## Analysis

Melton begins her memoir with a Prelude section. In the Prelude, she talks about what is in many ways, an ideal wedding. She is dressed in a beautiful gown with her hair and nails done to perfection. Her father walks her down the aisle while her mother and sister look lovingly on. Yet, Melton indicates that everything is not right by allowing the readers glimpses of what is going through her mind as the wedding ceremony progresses. She feels like she is wearing a costume and she is acutely aware that her dress is a bit tight because she is pregnant. This Prelude sets the reader up for what is to come, which is the story of a marriage that by outward appearances is perfect, but on the inside it is not. Melton's use of the Prelude draws readers in and entices them to continue reading.

Melton ends the Prelude section with an italicized section, which is a technique she uses to present her inner-most thoughts to readers. In this section, she tells readers that she once thought marriages started on the day of the wedding, but she now knows better. This statement sets the reader up to hear about Melton's life before the marriage and indicates that there are things there that will affect her relationship with Craig. One interesting phrase she uses to describe her marriage is "terrible magic," which is at once an indicator of bad things to come, but also presents a sense of hope and the idea that whatever bad things happened were necessary to get to a better state.



In describing her wedding day, Melton also talks about becoming something different through her wedding. She seems to believe that her wedding will somehow transform her into a new person, someone who is better. The idea of “becoming” is something that Melton returns to often as she tells her story.

Melton reveals a great deal about herself in this section of the book. She tells the story of her struggle with bulimia at the age of ten. This would seem almost unbelievable if Melton had not first explained the way her mother was treated because of her beauty. Melton notices at a very early age that people treat her mother with deference and often comment on what a beautiful family they are. She perceives that her mother treats beauty like a responsibility and Melton thinks she must also learn to act a certain way because of the way she looks. However, she also quickly learns that society wants pretty little girls, but is uncomfortable with smart ones. This is the first introduction of one of the themes Melton writes about, the idea that pretty and beautiful are two different things. In this case, society values young Melton as a pretty child, but when she reveals the inner beauty of her intelligence, they are uncomfortable.

At the age of ten, Melton no longer feels like the beautiful little girl she once was. Instead, she sees herself as overweight and unattractive. Her perception of herself causes her to withdraw from other children her age. She takes refuge in the bath where she can sink under the water and feel lighter, but says that she is always forced to come back to the surface and be in her body again. Melton will return to this idea of diving deep to hide her true self later in the book.

Melton's view of herself as a child is colored by the rules she has observed and believes she is to follow, which is another of the themes in *Love Warrior*, that society expects certain roles of women and men and that they conform to the rules of those roles. She believes that girls are supposed to be small and pretty, but she no longer fits that role. Her inability to fit into the rules causes Melton to seek a way to numb her discomfort and leads her to bulimia. Bulimia allows Melton the comfort of eating without getting bigger and further breaking the rules of what a girl should be. Perhaps one of the most disturbing images Melton presents in the story of her childhood is that of the cups she hides in her room. She states that each night she takes two cups to bed with her; one is filled with food and the other is empty so that she can vomit into it. The notion of such a young child stashing cups of vomit around her room in an attempt to hide her bulimia is at once horrifying and heartbreaking.

As an adult looking back on her childhood, Melton has concern for her own daughter who comes to her and asks her why she is bigger than the other girls and therefore different. She knows that her own fears and the fears of her daughter have nothing to do with whether or not a daughter receives love from her own parents. She knows that she was loved as a child and that her daughter is loved, too. Instead, Melton suggests that her fears and those of her daughter are put upon them by the world. She states that she knows the real questions her daughter is asking are “How will I stay small like the world wants me to? And if I keep growing, how will anyone love me?” (12).



When Melton is in her teen years, she understands there are even more rules for girls to live by, and they seem to revolve around what makes them popular with other girls and especially with boys. She creates what she calls her “representative,” which is a version of herself that she feels fits into the role society has set for her. This representative conforms to what is considered attractive and acts in a manner that is considered acceptable. Her development of a representative does work for her in that it makes her popular. Yet, clearly having a representative self does not work for her in a more important sense since her bulimia continues and she feels as though no one knows her. In fact, Melton is eventually admitted to a mental hospital for a time during her high school years.

Melton’s description of her time in the mental hospital contains a metaphor that she uses to explain her behavior and that of others who self-harm. Melton tells her roommate in the hospital that they are like canaries who sense the danger before everyone around them, and that is why they do the things they do. This metaphor refers to canaries that were used in mines to warn of toxic levels of gas. When the canaries showed signs of distress, the miners knew there was something wrong in their environment. Melton’s use of this metaphor suggests that perhaps she and others like her are simply reacting to the toxic nature of the environment, or society.

Melton’s desire to fit into the role set for her by society also leads her to be sexually active at a young age. Melton dates an older boy named Joe whom she has sex with when she is in the tenth grade. She tells her friend that sex was nothing special and that it did not feel personal to her. Instead, she describes it as something that is done to her. Because Melton states that no one really knows her as a teenager because all they see is her representative, it would stand to reason that Melton feels that sex with Joe is impersonal because Joe does not really know her. This early experience with sex shapes Melton’s future attitude toward sex as being one of her duties as a woman and something she must do to make men happy. Later, when Joe is accused of rape, Melton and her friends make the decision to treat the victim as though the alleged rape was her fault. This ties into the idea that sex is a woman’s duty to a man, which perhaps makes it easier for Melton and the other girls to blame her.

When Melton goes to college she observes that the rules of society are the same there, except that they are public. She joins a sorority because she knows how to fit in there, or at least her representative does. Her college years lead Melton into alcoholism. She drinks every night and often to the point of blacking out. Alcohol, like food, has become a way for Melton to numb herself. When she meets Craig at a bar, she is not yet drunk enough to feel confident and able to talk to him. She sees Craig as something akin to a Greek god in that he is handsome and athletic. When she sees him he is surrounded by beautiful girls, so she is certain he is out of her league. However, after several more drinks, she becomes brave and they end up going back to his place and having sex. This quick jump to a physical relationship hints at one of the problems that Melton and Craig will later encounter in their marriage when Melton learns of Craig’s infidelity.

During her college years, Melton becomes pregnant. When she tells Craig that she wants to have an abortion, he takes her to the clinic and stays with her through the



procedure. However, when he takes her home, he mentions a party that is going on and it is clear that he wants to be somewhere else, so Melton lets him go. This scene plays into the theme of the roles set for men and women. In this case, Melton is expected to stay home and deal with the consequences of the abortion while Craig is able to simply move on with his life. Melton writes of the abortion saying, "I am supposed to be sad, somber. So I will sit here in the quiet and do my time while Craig goes free because there is no abortion etiquette for him" (36).

Melton's heavy drinking leads her parents to set up an appointment for Melton with a priest. This appointment allows Melton to introduce an element of faith and spirituality, if not religion, into her writing. Melton states that her father goes to see a priest not to ask for prayers for his daughter, but to help him to survive being her father. This statement frightens Melton because it makes her see that her problem is so bad that her parents are on the verge of giving up on her.

## Vocabulary

transformed, fraudulent, behalf, irrefutable, reverence, repelled, solitary, bulimia, breach, trendy, eerie, peripheral, inconsistencies, profusely, epiphany, compelling, imposters



# Part One: Chapters 3-5

## Summary

Chapter 3 begins with Melton arriving at the church to see the priest. She immediately feels comforted by her surroundings. She sees a picture of Mary holding her baby and she feels like Mary understands and accepts her.

The priest comes out and takes her to his office to talk. She tells him about the abortion and the drinking, but she feels uncomfortable and wants to go back to the picture of Mary. She does not feel like the priest understands what her life is like. He tells her she has to repent. Melton asks who she should apologize to, but feels like her whole life has been an apology and nothing has ever changed. He gives Melton some words to pray to earn her forgiveness, but she feels like Mary gives forgiveness for free.

When the priest dismisses her, Melton goes back to the picture of Mary and sits before it until the priest tells her she has to leave because they are closing. She sinks her hands into the holy water before leaving and licks it from her fingers. She cries and realizes that she is not acting and actually feels sad.

At the start of Chapter 4, the author has been sober for two weeks. She tries to stay so busy that she outruns her addiction. Craig tries to help, but without the alcohol, they feel separated. Craig insists they go to a party one night. When they arrive, Melton feels like she is back in high school. She feels like she cannot fit in without drinking so she asks Craig to take her home. She starts drinking again and soon is drinking until she blacks out every night.

One morning she wakes up and feels sick. She vomits and then goes to the drugstore for a pregnancy test. The test is positive and she decides to have the baby. She feels as though someone thought she was worthy of being a mother and that perhaps God believes in her. She knows she needs to get sober to have the baby. She calls her sister and asks for help.

Melton's sister takes her to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting and she feels like she can stop pretending around these people. Afterward, she goes to Craig's to tell him about the baby. When she tells him, she realizes that how he feels about her is no longer the most important thing. She has decided to stop hurting herself and that she will never feel unworthy again.

The next day Craig and the author go to tell her parents about the baby. After they leave, they talk about how they will move forward. The next morning, she finds a note from her father taped to her front door assuring her that "everything will be okay" (77).

Melton approaches her sobriety moment by moment, urging herself to make the next right decision. She reads books on pregnancy to remind herself that she has been



invited. She starts listening to music and finds that it no longer makes her feel sad. She knows she is starting to get better.

Craig proposes and the author says yes. Craig gives her a beautiful ring that he pays for using the money from a savings account that he started when he was 12. She feels like she is beginning again and will be something new.

In Chapter 5, Melton and Craig are getting married in Craig's childhood backyard. Her father walks her down the aisle and she sees her mother and sister. She feels loved. When she looks back at the people gathered she has a momentary feeling of confusion because she is not sure this is a happy occasion. She resolves to be strong.

The reception is held at the author's parents' house. Afterward, they drive to a hotel and the author feels like people know they are pretending. When they have sex, she hopes it will feel different, but it does not. She feels as though she will always be lonely.

## Analysis

This section (Part One: Chapters 3-5) of the book begins with Melton's visit to a church to see the priest her parents have set up an appointment with. While one might expect the priest to have the greatest impact on Melton's outlook, it is the picture of Mary and her baby that affects Melton the most. Upon entering the church and seeing the picture, Melton instantly feels a connection with Mary. She feels as though Mary, as a woman, can understand her feelings and what she has been through. Yet, when she goes into the priest's office, Melton feels an instant disconnect. She is certain there is no way he could understand her or her life. This scene is an example of Melton's theme of God talking to individuals, thus making faith a personal thing. Clearly Melton's parents were able to forge a connection with the priest since they sent her to see him, but for Melton, it takes the divine feminine to reach her.

The scene with the priest leads Melton to use a metaphor involving an ice cream truck. She recalls a time when she was young and an ice cream truck came to her street. While the vendor was selling treats from the front, someone broke into the back of the truck and was handing them out for free behind the vendor's back. Melton's encounter with Mary and the priest reminds her of this incident. She compares the priest to the vendor because the priest instructed her to say certain prayers to earn her forgiveness, and she compares Mary to the person giving out the free treats because she feels as though Mary forgives her for free.

Melton again returns to the idea of God speaking to individuals when she discovers she is pregnant again. This time, she feels like the pregnancy is a message from God and that God is telling her that she is worthy of love and of being a mother. The message she receives is so personal and specific that Melton writes this, "The God I decide to believe in is the God of the bathroom floor. A God of scandalously low expectations. A God who smiles down at a drunk on the floor, wasted and afraid, and says There you are. I've been waiting for you. Are you ready to make something beautiful with me?"



(51). As she sits on the bathroom floor and agonizes over the pregnancy, Melton remembers the picture of Mary and that Mary, too, was a frightened, unwed mother.

Melton's discovery that she is pregnant leads her to take getting sober very seriously. Her approach to sobriety introduces the theme of getting through a crisis by just making the next right decision. Melton states that she does not approach being sober one day at a time, which is a common approach in 12-step sobriety programs. Instead, she says, "I tell myself that I will do only the next right thing, one thing at a time" (54). This approach to crisis will recur as Melton faces other difficult situations in her life.

Her pregnancy also allows Melton to make a slight shift in her role as a woman. When she learns of her pregnancy she realizes that Craig is no longer the most important thing in her life, which is a leap away from her previous feelings that Craig's (or any man's) opinion of her was nearly all that mattered. However, she is still conforming to the rules set for her by society since she is now fitting into the role of a woman as a mother.

In this section, Melton also introduces the idea that people need to be their own heroes rather than relying on others. She does this through her decision to have the baby and to get sober. She states that she will not allow herself to feel unworthy again and that she will stop hurting herself. While Melton introduces the idea here, it will be years into her marriage before she truly begins to live this out.

The final scene of this section brings the book back around to the Prelude since it occurs on Melton's wedding day. Melton returns to the idea of becoming something new as a wife. As part of this becoming, Melton expects sex with Craig once they are married to be different somehow, but is disappointed to find that it is not. She still feels disconnected and worries that she will be lonely forever. Her unease both during her wedding and on her wedding night foreshadow the trouble that is to come in their marriage.

## Vocabulary

muster, incense, exasperated, exposed, accountable, repent, disapproval, basin, sober, strategy, mutual, wallowing, representative, overwhelming, worthy, nonsensical, distract



## Part Two: Chapters 6-8

### Summary

In Part Two, Chapter 6, Melton learns to be a wife by watching commercials on television that have wives in them. Craig and Melton go to the doctor and are told that it appears their baby will have Down's Syndrome. They go to the library and do research. They decide not to have any further tests done on the baby and are proud to be making parenting decisions together. When the baby is born they name him Chase and he does not have Down's Syndrome. When they get ready to take the baby home, the author is surprised to find that her pre-pregnancy pants do not fit.

As Chase grows, Melton realizes she and Craig are growing apart. She cannot connect with Craig through conversation, which is her way of building a relationship. She feels like Craig forgets important things that she tells him about herself, so they have no shared memory to build upon. Craig's way of building a relationship is through sex, but the author cannot connect that way either. She feels like sex is just one of her duties as a wife.

One night, Craig suggests they watch pornography together in an attempt to get Melton to enjoy sex. The women on the screen seem angry and exhausted, just like her. After they have sex, she remembers being in college and doing drugs with her boyfriend. In the mornings, she would feel frightened, and each night she would drink, do drugs, and binge to forget. She finds herself feeling lost like that again. The next morning she tells Craig that she wants him to remove all of the porn from the house.

They go on to have two baby girls, Patricia and Amanda, who they call Tish and Amma. She is confused by the way she is still lonely even though she has a family. She knows she and Craig are good parents, but they are not good partners. She wonders if they will stay together.

In Chapter 7, Melton participates in a "25 Things" event on Facebook where she shares 25 things about herself. She begins by sharing that she is a recovering bulimic and alcoholic. The responses she receives are overwhelmingly positive and many women are able to relate to her struggles. She is inspired to keep writing because it lets her reveal her true self.

Melton becomes ill with Lyme's disease. They move to Naples, Florida because the weather there helps the author to feel better and get healthy again.

In Chapter 8, Melton's laptop gets a virus so she uses the family computer to write. When she logs in she discovers a file full of pornography. She is furious that Craig has downloaded pornography on the computer that their children use. She wonders what the pictures would teach her children about what it means to be a man or a woman. She confronts Craig and he agrees to go to therapy.





A few months later, Melton goes to one of Craig's therapy appointments with him and he reveals he has been sleeping with other women since the start of their marriage. The therapist asks Craig why he chose to reveal the affairs and he says that he has seen how his wife is getting healthy by telling the truth and he hopes that he can, too. He also says that he sees that people love her even with her issues and he wants people to know him and love him.

The author leaves the office and goes to her minivan to pick up her children from school. She suddenly hates the car because it represents what a fool she has been to think her life as a mom and wife was good. Melton wonders what the problems between her and Craig will do to the children. She sends her representative forth and smiles at strangers and waves at teachers while she gets the kids. She does not tell them anything, but says that Craig had to leave on a business trip.

After the children are in bed, Melton breaks down in tears. She wonders what she will do next. She writes lists of questions she can answer and questions she cannot answer. Then she thinks about how disaster literally means the loss of light and crisis means to sift out the bad. She knows she needs to find light, so she writes about what she knows. She decides this is not a disaster, but a crisis and that she can get through by just doing the next right thing.

## Analysis

This section primarily serves to describe Melton's marriage to Craig after their children are born and some of the issues that are present. Melton explains that after Chase's birth, she feels an even greater disconnect with Craig, in spite of the fact that they work well together in parenting their children. She recognizes that they are good parents from the start, even before Chase is born. When they discover that Chase may have Down's Syndrome, both agree that they will treat the condition as just an aspect of who their son is and rule against any further testing that may harm the unborn baby. They recognize this as working together to make parenting decisions and feel proud of the way they are handling the situation. Melton acknowledges their ability to be good parents despite their inability to be good partners to one another.

One of the reasons for the disconnect is the different ways in which Melton and Craig forge an intimate relationship with other people. For Melton, intimacy comes through conversation. Her method of connecting does not work with Craig, though, because he is not good at conversation. When she tells him important details of her life, he forgets about them. As a result, they have nothing to build future conversations on. Craig, on the other hand, creates intimacy through sexual contact. Melton is unable to connect in that manner because of her feelings toward sex and what it means to her as a woman. Craig tries to connect with Melton in his way by asking her to watch pornography with him. However, Melton's reaction to the video further enforces her feelings toward sex. She sees the women as looking angry and exhausted, just the way she is. She likely recognizes that the women in the video are playing their roles as women and following the rules society has set about what is sexy, which is to serve the needs of the men in



the video while subjugating their own needs. Later, when Melton finds pornography on the family computer, she worries about what her own children would learn about their roles if they saw the pictures.

This disconnect between them leaves Melton feeling even more lonely. When she stops working to raise their three children, her loneliness grows and she wonders how she can be lonely when she is surrounded by family. Melton's confusion over her feelings of loneliness may stem from the role she feels she needs to play as a wife. After marrying, Melton learns to become a wife by watching commercials with wives in them. She takes on wifely tasks like packing Craig's lunch and decorating the house. This plays into the theme of society's role for women. Melton believes that to be a good wife, she must conform to the rules and do what a good wife is supposed to do, which is to serve her husband and mother her children. This leaves her little time to care for herself or develop her own interests. That is, until she discovers writing.

Melton's discovery of her love for writing allows her insight into the feelings of other women and their own struggles with conforming to the role set before them. She discovers that she enjoys speaking honestly about herself and her feelings and having her thoughts validated by others. Since conversation is her way of connecting, her writing lets her connect with other women online and eases her loneliness. In fact, she states that she finds her intimacy with other people rather than with her husband.

Her writing is one of the things Melton will use to save herself when her marriage is rocked by the revelation of Craig's infidelities. In fact, it also helps Craig to break from his role as a man in that Melton's writing is the impetus for his decision to tell her the truth. Craig sees that Melton's ability to communicate with others and share her feelings through her writing is healing for her. He hopes that by breaking the male role that discourages him from expressing his emotions, he can share this truth about himself and let others see his real self. Craig's admission of wanting to be known indicates that he, too, has been putting a representative into the world rather than revealing who he really is.

Melton's writing and love of words help her to redefine her marriage struggles. She discovers that the word "disaster" literally means "without light" and that "crisis" means "to sift." She clings to these definitions and decides that there will be light again, so her marital breakdown is not a disaster, but it is a crisis that will allow her to sift out the bad. When she writes a list about what she knows, she resolves to return to her method for recovery in which she just does the next right thing.

Melton includes mention of two symbols in this section of the novel that are worth noting. After Chase is born, she tries to put on her pre-pregnancy pants to go home from the hospital and they do not fit. The pants are a nod to the fact that Melton still struggles with body image issues and symbolize her desire to fit into the role of a thin and pretty woman. The second symbol mentioned is the minivan that Melton drives to pick her children up from school. She walks out to the van after finding out about Craig's affairs and hates the vehicle because it is a symbol of her life as a wife and mother. She feels like a fool for thinking that her life in these roles alone was good.



## Vocabulary

domesticity, cultured, precariously, stoic, materializes, scowling, simultaneously, ecstatic, jarring, revelation, mercy, reflexively, inconvenient, preprogrammed, sanctuary, perpetual, paralyzing



## Part Two: Chapters 9-10

### Summary

When Chapter 9 begins, Melton has picked up her sister from the airport and told her children about the separation. She is extremely angry and tells Craig it would be easier if he were dead. She becomes depressed and sleeps while her parents care for her children. She feels like her grief is a wall.

Melton tells her parents she is divorcing Craig and they are supportive. Her sister tells her she will be with her through whatever she does, but perhaps not making a decision right now is the best course of action. The author resolves to go back to just doing the next right thing.

She goes through the days listening to “the still, small voice” (110). She thinks that leaving Craig might mean staying with God and the light.

Melton explains six kinds of reactions to her situation: the Shover, the Comparer, the Fixer, the Reporter, the Victims, and the God Reps.

The author realizes she is lonely when she fills out the paperwork for her children’s school and has no one to list as an emergency contact, so she decides to join a church. Shortly after, she begins to feel like the church is not right for her. When a woman approaches her and tells her that divorce goes against God, she takes her daughter and leaves. She decides that God speaks to people directly and one at a time.

Chapter 10 begins at Christmas time. Melton and Craig try to fake Christmas cheer for the sake of their children. She tells Craig she is filing for divorce and he breaks down. He insists that he cannot move on and that he will win her back.

The author gets an email from a friend asking how her life without Craig is so far. She responds that she is frustrated because it is hard for her to do the things that Craig once did, like fix the air conditioner, pay the bills, or open a jar. A week later she receives a package from her friend containing a jar opener.

Craig tries to show Melton that he is trying to change. He cleans the van and leaves it with a full tank of gas. He sends an email with lists of the children’s upcoming appointments. He volunteers at the school and brings wrapped birthday presents for the children to give at parties they have been invited to. One day the author finds a letter addressed to Craig in the mailbox. The writing is clearly feminine. When she opens it, she discovers it is a thank you note for helping at a battered women’s shelter.

The children see a therapist. The author still has not contacted a lawyer to file for divorce. The children’s therapist tells her that she needs to make a decision because uncertainty is bad for the children. She decides it is bad advice to hurry her decision.



However, she does invite Craig to move back in because she is lonely. When he moves in, she feels resentful and his “return feels like an invasion” (121).

One day Melton takes Chase to the zoo. They see a lion in a cage and marvel at the way the bars allow them to get close to the lion without being afraid. The author realizes she has lost her bars and she just feels afraid. She starts acting more coldly toward Craig and finally tells him he has turned her into an actor and she is betraying herself.

One morning she comes into the kitchen and finds Craig making breakfast. The children sing and smile. They invite her to join them, but she knows doing so will mean she is “rejecting the gift inside of this crisis” (122). She no longer wants to play a role, so she books a room at a beach hotel and tells Craig she needs to get away for a while.

At the hotel, Melton feels best when she is close to the water. The beauty of the beach seems like a message and makes her feel safe and loved. She wonders if God can hold her together like the sky. As she watches the sunset, she thinks about the way light disappears, but it always returns. When she looks at the plants on the beach, she thinks about how they will die and then bloom again and believes that perhaps life and love are the same way.

Melton calls her mother and tells her about the beach. Her mother says that she loved the beach even as a small child. The author feels like she has learned a truth about herself.

The author turns the television on and puts on a home renovation show in which a couple buy a house and then discover it has a lot of issues, including bad wiring. The wife wants to leave and start over, but the husband wants to fix the house they have bought. The next morning she goes back to the beach and thinks she and Craig may be like that house with bad wiring and she has just been decorating the walls. She wonders if she needs to “unbecome” to make progress. She knows she must save herself for the sake of her children and any relationship she may have in the future. She writes a list resolving to go to therapy, watch sunsets, and wait a year to make a decision.

## Analysis

This section of the book deals with Melton’s initial reaction to learning that her husband has been sleeping with other women and the steps she goes through that bring her to a point where she is ready to work toward healing herself. Immediately after Craig reveals his affairs, Melton is extremely angry and even tells him she wishes he were dead because it would make things easier. She goes through a period of depression during which her supportive parents and sister step in to care for her children. During this time, she is indecisive about the direction she should take. She tells her parents she is going to divorce Craig, but then tells her sister that she is going to stay. Her sister recognizes that Melton is probably not at a point where she can make a rational decision, so she advises her to wait for a while. Melton uses this period to return to her theme of doing the next right thing to get through a crisis. She shows readers that making a big



decision too quickly can be detrimental, so she again shows that simply making small decisions and taking small steps can lead to a better outcome. She will return to this strategy repeatedly as she moves toward repairing herself and her relationship.

Though Melton does rely on her parents and sister to help her through, she does not abandon the theme of being one's own hero. Instead, she spends several pages showing how people's reactions to her situation make it necessary for her to be her own hero. She talks about six different kinds of reactions and how they are all harmful, making it clear that these are not people she can rely on to save her. She also relays an incident in which she writes to a friend and tells her how difficult it is to do the simple chores that Craig once handled, including opening jars. Her friend responds by mailing her a jar opener, so she is, in a sense, telling Melton that she will need to learn to rely on herself and handle things on her own. Finally, at the end of this section, Melton comes to the conclusion that she does need to save herself for the sake of any relationships she might hope to have in the future and also for the sake of her children. This represents a turning point for Melton in that she takes her situation into her own hands and recognizes that she must work on herself before she can hope to make a decision about her marriage.

Melton touches on the theme of the roles of men and women when she describes Craig's reaction to her announcement that she is going to file for a divorce. Craig breaks the rules for men when he cries and tells her he will not move on and that he will win her back. In fact, this section shows a major shift in Craig and his role in their marriage. Craig begins to "show up," as Melton says, and leaves her lists of the children's appointments and helps her by washing the van and purchasing gifts for the children to take to parties they are invited to. He even volunteers at a shelter for women and children. While these actions might be taken as merely an outward show put on for Melton's benefit, the fact that he does not tell her about his volunteer work indicates that he is truly working on making a change and not just trying to impress Melton. Even with this change, Melton still is not ready to return to her role as Craig's wife. When she sees Craig and the children happily together in the kitchen and they invite her to join them, she thinks about how easy it would be to step back into the marriage. However, she realizes that doing so would mean betraying herself and taking on a role rather than letting her true feelings be shown. Instead, she decides to spend some time away at the beach.

Melton's time at the beach has a spiritual feel to it, which plays into her theme of faith being personal. She feels a sense of peace when she sits by the water and it leads her to wonder about the creator of the water and the sky and how all things are held together by God. She begins to believe that if God can hold together something as big as the sky, God can also hold her together.

Prior to her time on the beach, Melton has an experience with a church that reinforces her personal beliefs about the way God communicates with people. When she is approached by a woman at the church who tells her that God does not want her to divorce and that she is to be a helper to her husband, she is instantly angry and upset. She is appalled by the way the church devalues women by relegating them to the role of



helper. After that, Melton decides that she will stop asking for advice and resolves again to take the next right step. Here she melds her theme of taking the next right step and faith being personal by writing, “God speaks to folks directly and one at a time, so I just listen and follow directions” (115).

During this phase of her life, Melton also talks about listening to a “still, small voice” (110). This phrase is commonly used in Christianity to refer to God speaking to an individual. The phrase directly relates to Melton’s theme of faith being personal since it supports the idea of God speaking to people one at a time in a specific manner. For Melton, the still, small voice also serves as the voice of her conscience and reminds her not to betray herself by taking on a role or sending in her representative.

Melton uses several metaphors in this section to help explain how she arrives at the decision to attend therapy and work on herself. One of the metaphors she uses is a lion in a cage. When she goes to the zoo with Chase, they are amazed at how close they can get to the beauty of the lion and still feel safe because of the walls of his enclosure. Melton thinks about this and realizes she does not feel safe with Craig at this moment in her life because she has lost her walls. In other words, she knows that he has gotten a glimpse at her true self and that frightens her. This leads her to attempt to distance herself from Craig by treating him more coldly. Her behavior is an attempt to put a wall between them again.

Another metaphor that Melton uses is the way the light disappears when the sun goes down, but always comes back in the morning. She reflects on this while she sits on the beach thinking about her marriage. She returns again to the fact that disaster means without light, but decides that she is never without light because it always comes back, just like the sun. Then she adds to the metaphor by reflecting on the way the plants on the beach will die in the winter and bloom again in the spring. She equates this to life and love in that there are times when a person will go through difficulties, but the difficulties will pass.

Melton also watches a home renovation show that she relates to her marriage. The house on the show is full of faulty wiring, which leads the wife to want to just leave it and start over. The husband, however, wants to work on the house. Melton realizes that their marriage is like the house with its faulty connections and she is the wife wanting to leave while Craig wants to stay and work on things.

## Vocabulary

ambushed, literally, emerge, engage, scaled, crept, wisdom, betray, palatable, declarations, clarity, universal, definitive, agenda, patronizing, patriarchy, dependent



## Part Three: Chapters 11-13

### Summary

In Part Three, Chapter 11, Melton is at the therapist's office. She feels as though she is wearing a costume. She recently cut off her long hair because she felt like she had been trying to look a part for a long time and wants to know who she really is.

In previous therapy sessions, the author had always tried to reveal as little as possible to convince the therapist she was fine. This time, she truly wants help. The therapist, Ann, asks her to tell her story and she at first thinks she needs to control what she says, but then realizes she is too tired to do so. Instead, she tells Ann about her marriage and asks what the chances are that she will want another relationship in the future. The therapist is honest and tells her that people are made for relationships, but she does not pretend that it will be easy. Melton insists that if she is ever in a relationship again, she will not have sex because she is tired of letting men control her body. Ann tells her that if she denies her sexuality, her life will be less full than it could be. Ann advises her to breathe before she thinks when she feels anxious.

That night, Melton looks in the mirror and thinks back to when she was ten and first developed bulimia. She knows that she worried about being judged by what people saw instead of who she really was. She had known there were rules for being female and her body did not let her follow those rules. She learned to escape first through books, then through food, and then through alcohol, drugs, and sex.

Melton reflects on the way Amma calls it "being underwater" when the author is in deep thought. She feels as though she is always floating above her life or sinking way beneath it. She knows that she resents Craig's needs for affection as an interruption. Now she thinks that the price of denying her body has been loneliness and that it has prevented her from truly being in love. After snuggling with Tish and enjoying the warmth of her dog lying next to her, Melton realizes she wants to love an equal partner.

In Chapter 12, Melton decides to go to a yoga class. Upon entering the room, she smells the incense and considers it proof that God is present. She enjoys the way the instructor tells her what to do and that there are no decisions to make. Yoga makes her feel like her body is teaching her mind to view pressure as a way of staying anchored. She knows she will always encounter pain, but decides to be stronger every time she does.

One morning Melton is in the kitchen getting breakfast for the kids. Craig walks in and touches her hand, making her recoil. When Amma sees this, she cries. Instead of acknowledging her pain, Melton holds her and tells her everything is fine. Later, she regrets not letting her daughter be real about her feelings.





Afterward, Melton goes to yoga, but her regular class is full and she accidentally winds up in a hot yoga class. She is asked to set her intention for the day and she responds that she just wants to sit on her mat and “make it through whatever is about to happen without running out of here” (148). The yoga instructor takes her seriously and tells her it is okay to just sit, so she does. While she sits, she is flooded with memories of her life with her husband and children. She resolves not to run and continues to sit. She cries and, at the end of the class, the instructor tells her she has taken the warrior’s journey. It reminds her of a quote from a book by Pema Chodron.

Melton realizes she has been running from “hot loneliness” all her life (149). Her feelings have been normal, but she has seen them as shameful, which made her numb herself with food and alcohol. She knows, too, that men have the same sorts of struggles, except that they are taught to deny their emotions. This leads to an understanding of why she and Craig have been unable to connect. She knows she cannot avoid pain any longer because pain is a necessary part of life and being human. Instead of looking for ways and people to fix the pain, she needs someone to stand with her through the pain and knows that she must do the same for her children and for others.

Melton feels hungry, so she goes to the kitchen where she finds Craig. He is excited to make a meal for her. They sit down to eat and, for the first time, she eats until she is full without considering what she should or should not be doing. When she looks at Craig, he is happy about her appetite.

That night, Craig asks her to practice talking with him. Ann had told him that he needs to learn to have conversations with people. He admits to the author that talking has always been difficult for him because he worries about saying the wrong thing. Melton admits that she feels the same way about being touched. As they talk, Craig takes notes so that he will not forget what his wife tells him. They talk and laugh and she wonders if this is what love is like. Craig tells her to go to bed and take care of herself.

Chapter 13 begins with Melton waking up and wondering if she has overslept. When she goes downstairs, Craig has the children ready for school and tells her he will drive the carpool that day. When they leave, she wonders what she should do with her day. She remembers she has been told repeatedly to breathe, so she does a search on the computer and finds information about learning to breathe as a means of healing.

Melton goes to a breathing class. The instructor, Liz, tells the class that they can call God whatever they choose and that all they have to do to be with God is to breathe. This is revolutionary information for the author. She learns to breathe from her belly and when she does she has an experience that feels as though she is part of the sky. She knows she is loved and has always been loved. She wonders about extending grace to others the way she has received grace from God. She knows that if she is to extend grace, she cannot make exceptions to who she gives it to, including Craig and the women he slept with.



Melton goes home and tells Craig about the experience. She tells him he has already been forgiven by God, but that her forgiveness will take longer. She wants him to know that he is loved no matter what.

Melton goes to her room and thinks about the way religion has always taught her that women were made as helpers for men. She looks up the original translation for the word used in the Bible for woman and discovers it is ezer, which literally means warrior. She knows that women really are warriors because they are the ones who stay when something goes wrong. She thinks she never needed Craig to be her hero because she is strong enough.

## Analysis

Part Three of the memoir discusses Melton's healing process. To this point, she has been working toward being ready to heal, but it is in this section that she truly takes control of the process. Her process is comprised of three parts: mind, body, and spirit. Though Melton does not come out and say this at the beginning of this section, she later acknowledges to her therapist that she is made of three parts and those three parts must all be working.

The healing of her mind is accomplished in part through writing, but also through working with a therapist. When Melton enters the therapist's office, she feels herself dropping back into her role as a woman. She does not like the way she looks and initially wants to control the conversation so that she does not reveal too much of her real self. But, she quickly decides that she is too tired and that she really wants help this time. Melton immediately likes Ann for the way she talks to Melton without patronizing her. She is straightforward and tells the truth even if it is not what Melton wants to hear. And, Melton likes that she breaks down the likelihood of ever being in a relationship again using numbers. Perhaps this appeals to Melton because it speaks to her intelligence in a way that she does not often experience in society, as she noted early on in the book that smart women make people uncomfortable.

Through her therapy with Ann, Melton explores her role as a woman and finds the courage to step outside of that role. She tells Ann that she never wants to have sex again because she is tired of letting men control her body. This indicates that Melton is ready to break rules and reclaim herself. Of course, Ann is honest with her and tells her that is not likely to be the case since she will be denying a part of herself if she denies her sexuality.

Melton again explores the theme of the roles of men and women when she comes to realize that Craig was taught to play a role just like she was. She writes, "Just as I'd understood the rules for girls, surely he'd absorbed the rules for boys—that emotions are forbidden, that to be a successful boy he needed to 'buck up and be a man'" (151). She has a flash of Craig as a child and knows that he used porn to stuff down his feelings in the same way she used food to stuff down hers.



Though Melton is making steps toward becoming herself instead of her role, she has a set back when Amma cries at seeing her shrink away from Craig. Rather than letting Amma acknowledge that all is not right in her world, she holds Amma and tells her everything is fine and then quickly brushes the situation aside. Later, she regrets her actions and knows that she should have let Amma feel her pain. This harkens back to Melton's representative telling people she was "fine" when she was not. In telling Amma that she is "fine" she has shown Amma that women should conform to the role.

Melton's therapy sessions with Ann also allow her to reflect on the idea that being pretty is different from being beautiful. In an attempt to find her true self, Melton cuts off all her hair. Her hair symbolizes the way she has been trying to look the way that world says she should in order to be attractive. However, before entering Ann's office, Melton suddenly feels self-conscious about her hair and the way she is dressed. She no longer fits the image and so she doubts herself.

During her therapy sessions, Ann is one of the people that encourages Melton to breathe, which leads her to one of the key elements of her spiritual healing, a breathing class. Melton is astounded to hear the instructor say that she can call God whatever she wants. This is new to Melton because her experiences with church have always been as a patriarchy with rules that required that God be referred to as male. This speaks to her theme of faith being personal because she has now learned that she can make her own choice about who God is to her.

While at the breathing class, Melton has an experience that is almost supernatural when the instructor tells the class they can connect to God through breathing and then teaches them to breathe from their bellies. Melton has what can only be described as an out of body experience in which she suddenly knows that she is loved and always has been. This, too, lends itself to the theme of faith being personal since she knows that God loved her even when she was at her worst. This gets Melton to thinking about grace and realizing that she needs to extend grace even to the people she is angry at, like Craig. This shift in her feelings toward Craig signifies Melton's movement toward spiritual healing.

Melton's work toward healing her physical self gives her an opportunity to delve into the theme of being one's own hero. Melton's desire to reconnect with her body starts after she has the sensory experiences of snuggling with her child and her dog. She realizes that she does want to be able to physically connect with others, and this is a sign that she is ready to start working on reclaiming her physical self. Melton tries yoga at first as a way to fill her time, but then discovers that it offers her a rest from having to make decisions about her life. She is able to just be in her body during the class because the instructor tells her what to do. This allows her to reconnect with her body and she is surprised when her body starts to teach her mind. She talks about the way that her body uses pressure to support itself and decides that she can do the same with her life.

Melton's experience in a hot yoga class leads her to the realization that she can be her own warrior and no longer needs to run from the "hot loneliness" that has permeated her life (149). Melton cites a passage from a book by Pema Chodron called When



Things Fall Apart. Chodron is a Buddhist author who is renowned for her writings and teachings. Melton turns to the words of this fellow author to help herself understand what she has been experiencing after the hot yoga class reduces her to tears and the instructor tells her she has taken the journey of the warrior. When asked what her intention for the class is, Melton responds, "My intention is just to stay on this mat and make it through whatever is about to happen without running out of here" (148). While Melton is literally speaking about the yoga class, she is speaking metaphorically about her life. In the end, she knows she just needs to stay in the moment and not be afraid or run from what the future brings. She needs to be her own hero and just stand for herself.

Finally, Melton claims her right to be her own hero when she researches the original word used for woman in the Bible. Her discovery that the original word is ezer, which means warrior, brings the realization that she is strong enough to do for herself. She does not need Craig to save her - she is already a warrior.

## Vocabulary

consists, obsessed, essentials, visceral, kindred, instinct, inevitable, isolated, hypothesis, verify, entity, yoga, treacherous, conduit, reliance, internalized, frantic



# Part Three: Chapters 14-15 and Afterword

## Summary

Chapter 14 begins with Melton traveling to Michigan for a speaking event. She gets on stage at the event and talks about her time in the mental hospital and her decision to be real. On the way out, a woman runs after her to tell her about a church in Naples that she thinks will be a good fit for Melton. Melton is skeptical, but thanks the woman. When she returns home, she drives by the church and then returns one day during service to look at the bumper stickers on the cars. She sees a lot of bumper stickers advocating for acceptance of people, so she and Craig decide to go to a service there.

The minister at the church preaches about removing barriers between people and God. He never refers to God as male and speaks honestly. Melton sees him as someone who knows how to talk about love. After the service, both Craig and the author feel like the church is right for them, so they return the next week. Melton speaks with the children's minister before bringing her children to church there. She tells the minister that they need a church that helps them love themselves without fear or shame. The minister asks her to help them teach the children that message. She agrees and teaches the children about faith and God's love.

Melton goes to therapy and tells her therapist about being a warrior and thinking of herself as a trinity of body, mind, and spirit. She has learned to love with her mind and spirit, but she still is not ready for sex. Ann suggests she start slowly and tell Craig what she is feeling in the moment.

The next day, Melton is outside with her dog when a garbage collector puts his fingers to his mouth to wolf whistle at her. She remembers what Ann said about expressing how she feels, so she calls out to the man not to whistle at her. He drops his hand and apologizes. Melton wonders if she can express herself that way to her husband.

That night Craig comes up and hugs her from behind. She tells him that it makes her feel trapped. Craig understands and says that it is true that he sometimes feels like he needs to hold on to her so she will not leave.

Craig starts leaving her notes to invite her to hug him and eventually to go on a date. It is clear that he is working hard on conversation and Melton's feelings toward him begin to change. She decides she wants to kiss Craig, but tells him first that it is not an invitation for sex.

Chapter 15 starts 18 months after Craig told Melton about his infidelity. Craig coaches Amma's and Chase's soccer teams. The soccer moms tell Melton they come to the games just to watch Craig; they do not know she is Craig's wife. As Melton watches



Craig interact with the children and hears the comments of the other mothers, she feels both affectionate toward Craig and jealous at the attention he receives. She knows in that moment that she respects Craig for doing the work to stay together. She thinks that their marriage is perfect if marriage is about two people growing together.

Melton decides she is ready to have sex with Craig. While he is in the shower she gets into bed naked and waits for him. When he comes out she thinks she is not being sexy, but then decides that being sexy is not about what the world defines it as. She looks at Craig and knows he is scared to, so she invites him into the bed. She prays silently for God to make sex different for them this time. When she feels Craig start to slip away during sex, she asks him to come back and he does. Afterward, they both agree that it felt different and Melton says it “felt like love” (187).

One day Amma dances around the kitchen trying to act sexy. Tish says that sexy is inappropriate and then asks Melton if sex is inappropriate. Melton tells her daughters that it is okay to be sexy, but that sexy is not what the world tries to tell them it is. Sexy is about being confident and being yourself. She tells them that beautiful and pretty are two different things. Pretty is about appearance and beauty is about what is inside. Beautiful women fill themselves with beauty by finding beauty in the world around them. Afterward, when the children are outside, she goes to her bathroom and washes off all her makeup and stands looking at herself in the mirror. She appreciates her body for the things it is able to do. Then, she goes to the bedroom and invites Craig to have sex with her.

In the Afterword, Craig and Melton stand on the beach alone and exchange vows. They have chosen to be together for the moment, but know that life has a lot of different paths. Melton believes that every path has both love and redemption. In the end, she decides to take the path of the Love Warrior and refuses to ever betray herself again.

## Analysis

In this final section of the memoir, Melton writes about the final steps of her healing and reconciliation with Craig. Melton returns to her main themes in order to show the ways she has changed, which allows her to interweave the themes to show how she has become a more complete person.

By the end of the memoir, Melton is able to express her sexuality with her husband in a healthy way. This is a result of being able to let go of the role she has been playing and accepting that there is a real difference between what the world considers pretty and what is true beauty. However, before Melton is able to have sex with Craig again, she first has to learn to be her own hero and speak her feelings in order to change a situation she is uncomfortable with. This step occurs after Melton tells Ann that Craig’s hugs sometimes feel like a trap and Ann encourages her to tell Craig that. At first, Melton worries that she cannot speak those words to her husband. However, just as Craig had to practice conversation, it turns out that Melton just needs to practice being a hero. She gets the chance to do so when a garbage collector starts to whistle at her and



she tells him to stop. Afterward, she decides that if she can speak her mind to a total stranger, surely she can do so with her husband.

Melton's simple conversation with Craig about the way he hugs her unexpectedly and too tightly is the first step toward their ultimate reconciliation. Craig respects how she feels and admits that he does sometimes hug her with the feeling that he must hold on to her so she does not leave. Their open lines of communication allow them to move slowly until Melton is ready to resume a physical relationship with Craig. Craig essentially dates his wife again. He writes her notes to invite her to meet him for a hug and eventually asks her out on a date. When Melton decides she is ready to kiss him, she is once again able to stand up for herself and tell him that the kiss is only a kiss and not an invitation for sex.

When Melton is finally ready for sex, she breaks free from the traditional role of a woman to resume that part of her relationship. Melton initiates sex with Craig by getting into bed naked when he is in the shower. She nearly slips back into her role when she thinks that what she is doing is not sexy, but then she reminds herself that what the world says is sexy is wrong. Craig steps away from the traditional role of a man when he shows nervousness and fear at Melton's invitation. Melton helps him to overcome this when she sees his fear and responds to it by reassuring him. In this instance, Melton is acting as Craig's hero. Before they have sex, Melton incorporates her spiritual healing by saying a brief silent prayer asking that God help them to be different this time. This prayer reinforces the theme of faith being personal since Melton has developed enough personal comfort with God that she can make such a private petition. Later, when Melton initiates sex with Craig again, she moves even further from society's idea of what is sexy and what a woman should look like when she washes off all of her makeup before inviting Craig into bed.

Melton speaks further about the theme of pretty and beautiful being two different things when she is presented with the opportunity to talk to her daughters about the idea after Amma dances around the house in a sexy manner. Melton tells her daughters that there is nothing wrong with being sexy, but that sexy is not what the world defines it as; being sexy is about being confident in themselves and being who they were meant to be. She goes on to explain that pretty is what the world defines as attractive. She tells them they can make the choice to be pretty according to what society says and hide their true selves by playing the role, or they can be beautiful. She explains that beauty comes from inside and that she fills herself with beauty when she looks at her daughters or watches a sunset. Her conversation with her daughter fully explains the theme and the conclusions she has come to about it.

Melton brings the theme of faith being personal back into the story when she is urged to try a church in Naples after attending a speaking engagement. Melton's initial reaction to the stranger's recommendation of the church is one of skepticism. Yet, Melton seems to feel like that part of her spiritual life has been missing. She and Craig had once been part of a church and she misses that. However, Melton clearly does not want to take a step backward by attending a church that might devalue her and her daughters. Her review of the bumper stickers on the cars in the parking lot during worship indicates that



the values of the people who attend there match with her own, so she decides to give the church a try. Melton is surprised by and pleased with the way the minister speaks about God and love. She likes his unapologetic nature when he talks about people being unaccepting of one another and the fact that he never uses a pronoun to talk about God. This is not enough to convince Melton that her children should attend the church, though. She is protective of her newfound feminism and wants to ensure that her children will not be instructed in a manner that reinforces the roles set forth by society for men and women. Instead, she wants her children to learn to love themselves just as they are.

Melton ends the book with a brief Afterword section. This section shows that she and Craig have reconciled by presenting a sweet and profound moment on the beach in which they essentially renew their marriage vows. Their simple statements of “here I am” express that they are truly now there for one another (193). They are no longer hiding their true selves and sending representatives into their marriage. Instead, they are both fully committed to being themselves with each other.

## Vocabulary

sensitive, ovation, adrenaline, denomination, procession, barriers, militant, congregation, humble, lapel, tolerate, inducted, dismembered, impersonal, ferocity, woozy, maneuver





# Important People

## Glennon Doyle Melton

Glennon Doyle Melton is the author of the memoir and the subject of the story. As a child, Melton learns destructive lessons about the rules that women must live by. She develops an eating disorder at a very young age. She uses food as a way to stuff down her loneliness and her perceived inability to fit in because of the way she looks. Her eating disorder causes her to be placed in a mental hospital for a time during her high school years. There, she feels safe and like she can finally be honest. When she is released from the hospital, however, she goes back to conforming to the rules for being popular with both the boys and the girls.

When Melton has sex for the first time, she feels very disconnected from the whole experience. She is never able to connect with men through sex, but instead feels like it is just a duty she must do for men to like her. She continues to feel this way even after she marries Craig.

While in college, Melton develops a serious drinking problem that leads to several DUIs and an abortion. Later, when she becomes pregnant again, she decides that God has invited her into life and decided she is worthy of having a child. She vows to get sober and tells Craig that she is having the baby.

Melton's marriage to Craig seems happy from the outside, but Melton is not able to shake the feeling of loneliness that she has always had. She connects to people through conversation, but feels like Craig does not pay attention when they talk. Craig tries to connect through sex, but sex is not a way that Melton is capable of connecting through.

When their marriage starts to fall apart following the revelation of Craig's infidelity, Melton realizes she has to work on making herself healthy for the sake of her children and herself. She goes to yoga classes to reconnect with her body and to breathing classes to connect to her spirit, and she begins to write to connect with her mind. Eventually her work with a therapist, through these classes, and through the online community she forms through her writing allow Melton to forgive herself and her husband so that they can move forward in their marriage.

## Craig

Craig is Melton's husband. He is handsome and athletic. Melton meets him in college while she is struggling with alcohol addiction. Craig stays with Melton through an abortion and through her drinking. When she announces she is pregnant for a second time and that she wants to have the baby, Craig asks Melton to marry him.



After admitting his infidelity to Melton, Craig vows to win her back and works on himself to make that happen. He shows Melton his support and desire to change by being very helpful with the children and volunteering. When his own therapy teaches him that he has difficulty with conversation, he realizes that is because he has always been afraid of saying the wrong thing. He works on his conversation skills and eventually asks Melton to practice with him. He is patient with Melton as she goes through her own healing process, which eventually leads to the two reuniting.

## Chase

Chase is Melton's son. Melton learned she was pregnant with Chase while she was struggling with alcoholism. He is the reason she decided to get sober. While Melton is pregnant with Chase, her doctor tells her that it appears he has Down's Syndrome. Melton and Craig deal with this news together and are proud of the way they can work together to make parenting decisions. Chase is born without the condition.

## Amma and Tish

Amma and Tish are Melton's daughters. She worries about what they will grow up learning about what it means to be a woman. During the marriage crisis, Melton realizes she has been trying to protect her children from pain when she catches herself telling Amma that everything is fine when Amma witnesses Melton pulling away from Craig and starts to cry. Afterward, she vows that she will let her children feel pain and stand with them through it.

Toward the end of Melton's healing process Amma dances around the kitchen pretending to be sexy. Her actions prompt a conversation about what sexy really is and the difference between being pretty and being beautiful.

## Amanda

Amanda is Melton's younger sister. As children they were very close, but when Melton becomes bulimic their bond is weakened. However, when Melton is admitted to the mental hospital as a teenager, Amanda leaves her a note about being a hero and says she is there for Melton every time she is needed.

## Ann

Ann is the therapist who treats both Melton and Craig. She advises Melton to learn to breathe and to reconnect with her body. She also tells Melton to redevelop a physical bond with Craig slowly and to tell him how she feels along the way. She advises Craig to work on his conversation skills and on really listening to his wife.



## **Liz**

Liz is the breathing class instructor. She tells the class that they can call God anything they want and that all they have to do to connect with God is breathe. This is revolutionary information to Melton who had been taught to refer to God as a male and that there were rules about how one connects with God.

## **Mary Margaret**

Mary Margaret is Melton's roommate in the mental hospital. She is anorexic and she and Melton are able to be honest with one another. Melton tells Mary Margaret that she thinks they are like canaries in a mine who see the bad things first and that their behavior is like the singing of the canaries when they issue a warning.

## **Joe**

Joe is Melton's high school boyfriend and the first man she has sex with. The encounter leaves her feeling like sex is just something that is done to her and is her duty to him as a male. Joe is accused of raping another girl and Melton and her friends treat the situation as if the girl was at fault.

## **Dana and Christy**

Dana and Christy are Melton's roommates before she marries Craig. She goes out drinking with them every night until she blacks out. Each morning they tell her about what she did the night before.



# Objects/Places

## Cups

As a child suffering from bulimia, Melton takes two cups to bed with her each night. One is full of food and the other is empty so that she can vomit into it. Her parents find these cups and grow very concerned for her.

## Mental Hospital

While she is in high school, Melton is admitted into a mental hospital. While there she feels safe because of the small environment with rules to follow. She meets Mary Margaret, her roommate, and decides that perhaps they are the ones who are right about the real world and they see the bad things before anyone else, like canaries in a mine.

## Sorority

Melton joins a sorority in college because she understands the rules there since they are the same rules she lived by in high school, except they are out in the open. Several of her sorority sisters are openly bulimic and she knows she has to look and act a certain way to be liked.

## Picture of Mary

When Melton is sent to see a priest because of her drinking problem, she sees a picture of Mary and feels connected with her. She feels that Mary can understand her as a woman. When she meets with the priest, she feels like he cannot relate to her and she just wants to leave his office so she can go back to sit in front of the picture of Mary where she feels safe.

## Craig's Childhood Backyard

Melton and Craig are married in his childhood backyard. During the wedding, Melton hopes that being Mrs. Melton will change her into someone better and that she will not feel lonely anymore.

## Minivan

After learning of Craig's infidelities, Melton leaves the therapist's office and goes to her minivan to pick up her children. When she reaches the car she feels a sense of loathing



toward it because it represents what a fool she has been to think that her life as a mom and wife was a good life.

## **Pornography**

When Melton is unable to connect with Craig through sex, he suggests they watch pornography together in hopes that she will enjoy the sex more. Afterward, Melton feels disgusted and insists that all pornography be removed from the house. Later, after her daughters are born, Melton discovers that Craig has still been looking at pornography when she finds a file on the family computer. This leads to Craig going to therapy and the revelation that he has been sleeping with other women.

## **Naples, Florida**

Melton's family moves to Naples after Melton gets Lyme's disease. The warmer weather helps her to recover.

## **Ezer**

Melton discovers that the word originally used in the Bible for woman is ezer, which means warrior. This discovery prompts Melton to stop thinking of herself as someone put on the earth to help men, but as a warrior capable of being her own hero.

## **Yoga Studio**

During her healing process, Melton begins going to a yoga studio to learn to reconnect with her body. While attending a hot yoga class, Melton has the revelation that she has been running from "hot loneliness" her entire life.

## **Breathing Class**

Melton attends a class to learn how to heal through breathing after several different people tell her to breathe. At the class the instructor tells her that she can call God anything she wants and that she just needs to breathe to connect with God. She has an experience that makes her feel connected to God. She decides that God loves her and always has and resolves to extend grace to others the way that God showed her grace.

# Themes

## Women and Men Are Taught to Play Roles

Melton's memoir talks about the idea that women and men are taught to play roles, and those roles are governed by strict sets of rules. Even as a young child she knows that there are certain rules a girl is supposed to follow to be liked. Girls are to be small, pretty, simple, and pleasing to the people around them. She knows that showing her intelligence makes people uncomfortable because it makes her complicated. When her body begins to change in ways that do not allow her to conform to the rules, Melton tries to numb herself through binge eating, then purging so as not to grow any larger.

As a teenager, Melton discovers that she can hide her true self behind clothing and makeup by playing a role. She calls this role her representative and it allowed her to be liked without ever being truly known. She can hide her pain behind her representative by saying she is fine even when she is not. When she enters college, Melton continues to play her role by joining a sorority where the rules are the same as they were in high school, except that they are now out in the open. She observes that many of the women in her sorority are openly bulimic.

As an adult, Melton continues to follow the rules by learning how to become a good wife. She watches commercials to learn how to act like a wife. She makes lunches for Craig and decorates the apartment. When her children are born, she plays the part of a mother. None of these roles make her truly happy because she always feels as though no one knows who she is inside, which leads to a deep feeling of loneliness.

Another rule that Melton observes is that women are supposed to defer to men. She believes that sex is a duty she must perform to make men happy. She even goes so far as to stand up for her high school boyfriend Joe when he is accused of rape. She and the other girls make the decision to treat the victim as though she is at fault.

Later, when Melton's marriage is in crisis, she begins to realize that she is not the only one who has been conforming to her role; she sees that Craig has also been taught the rules for being a man. As a boy, Craig was taught not to express his emotions. Instead, he spent his days playing soccer and connecting with his physical side. When he grew older, Craig turned to pornography as a way of numbing himself. This inability to express himself is one of the major sources of conflict in the marriage.

## Recovering From a Crisis Requires Making the Next Right Decision

Melton explores the theme of recovering through making the next right decision as she struggles first with alcoholism and then with her failing marriage. When Melton learns that she is pregnant with Chase, she knows she cannot be a mother and an alcoholic.



She calls her sister who takes her to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. Twelve-step programs often use a one day at a time approach to sobriety, but Melton decides that does not work for her. Instead, she knows she has to focus on even smaller steps, so she resolves to just make the next right decision. This process works for her and she is able to get sober.

Later, when her marriage is breaking down and she is at her lowest, Melton remembers that her strategy of focusing on the next right thing worked for her when she was at her worst as an alcoholic. This is particularly important to her when she at first tries to make the huge decision of whether to stay with Craig or to leave him. Because she is at such an uncertain point in her life, she does not have the ability to make a major decision. Instead, she returns to just doing the next right thing. By doing this, she is able to find her way through the healing process. She takes the small steps of breaking from a church that is wrong for her, attending yoga classes, going to a breathing class, and then taking tiny steps toward a full reconciliation with Craig.

## **People Need to Be Their Own Heroes**

Melton explores the theme of being her own hero as she writes about her healing process and move toward becoming a Love Warrior. As a child, Melton learns that women need big, strong men to take care of them. She puts Craig in the role of her hero and subverts her own strengths. When she finds out about Craig's infidelities, he falls from the pedestal she has placed him on and she is left to fend for herself. She tells a friend that she is frustrated by the number of things she has difficulty doing without Craig, including opening her own jars. Her friend's response is to send her a rubber jar opener, which becomes a symbol of Melton needing to be her own hero.

Melton first decides to be her own hero when she decides that she has to heal herself for her own sake, the sake of her children, and the sake of any future relationships. She starts by going to therapy and revealing her true self so that she can receive the help she needs.

As she goes through the healing process, Melton grows more and more strong and confident in herself. When Ann tells her that she needs to tell Craig how she is feeling in the moment, no matter how uncomfortable that might be, she practices expressing herself by confronting a garbage collector who tries to whistle at her. When this works, she finds the courage to tell Craig how she feels about being hugged.

Melton finally accepts her responsibility to be her own hero when she learns that the original word for woman in the Bible is ezer, which means warrior. She comes to the realization that women have always been warriors. They are the ones who stay when a child is sick or a disaster strikes, so she knows she does have the strength of a warrior. When she is able to be her own hero, she no longer needs Craig to be that person for her.



## Faith is Personal

Melton explores the theme of faith being personal through her spiritual healing. She first writes of the personal nature of faith when she sees a picture of Mary holding her child. She feels an instant connection with Mary and feels that Mary can understand her because she is also a woman. When she meets with the priest, Melton does not feel like he can relate to her life and her problems. Instead, she just wants to get back out to the picture of Mary where she feels safe.

When Melton finds out she is pregnant with Chase, she feels like God is inviting her to live again and telling her that she is worthy of love and of being a mother. Melton feels like the message is very personal and specific. When she is frightened because she is young and unmarried, she remembers that Mary, too, was a young unwed mother. She talks about believing in a God who can believe in someone like her with all her faults and problems.

Melton's big epiphany concerning faith occurs when she attends a breathing class where the instructor tells her that she can call God anything she wants. This is revolutionary for Melton because she grew up believing in the church as a patriarchy where God is referred to as male and there are rules to follow. Instead, the instructor says she can connect with God just by breathing. She has an experience there that makes her feel as though God does love her and always has. She shares this knowledge with Craig hoping that it will help him to heal as well.

Melton puts her belief that faith is personal into action when she checks out a church that a stranger recommends to her at a speaking engagement. She knows she does not want to go back to a church where her children will learn shame or where she will be relegated to the role of man's helper. When she discovers that the minister preaches acceptance and love, the church feels like the right personal choice to her, so she joins and becomes a Sunday School teacher.

## Pretty and Beautiful Are Two Different Things

Melton writes about the theme of pretty and beautiful being two different things as she explores the way her own views of what a woman is supposed to be have shaped her life. As a child, Melton observes the way other people treat her mother because she is attractive. People often tell Melton what a pretty little girl she is, so when she gets older and her body starts to change, Melton believes she no longer fits that role and, therefore, is not worth loving. As a teenager, Melton discovers that if she wears the right clothes and styles her hair the right way, she can be accepted by other girls and be considered attractive by boys. As a result, she spends her life making certain she looks the way others want her to look.

When Melton's marriage crisis begins, she realizes she has been wearing the costume of a pretty girl for so long that she does not even know who she is or what she really looks like. Much to the shock of her hair stylist and her children, she cuts off her own





hair. Later, after Melton begins to learn who she is, she becomes more comfortable with her looks. She even initiates sex with Craig after washing off all of her makeup.

Melton is able to put her realizations about the differences between pretty and beautiful into practice when her daughters question her about whether or not it is okay to be sexy after Amma dances around the house in a sexy manner. Melton explains to her daughter that it is a good thing to be sexy, but that sexy is not what the world says it is. Instead, sexy is being confident about who you are and being yourself. She goes on to say that pretty is defined by the world, but beautiful comes from inside.

# Styles

## Structure

Love Warrior consists of a Prelude, 15 chapters, and an Afterword. The chapters are divided into Part One, Part Two, and Part Three. Part One is made up of chapters one through five and examines Melton's life up to the time of her marriage to Craig. Part Two consists of chapters six through ten and tells of Melton's marriage to Craig until the time when he reveals his infidelities. Chapters 11 through 15 comprise Part Three, which is about Melton's journey of healing and the reconciliation of the marriage.

The memoir begins on the day of Melton's wedding and then travels back into her childhood to discuss her early struggle with bulimia and her alcohol addiction. From there, the story travels forward in time with only brief moments of reflection on the past as they relate to something Melton discovers about herself as she examines her situation.

## Perspective

Love Warrior is told entirely from Melton's perspective, which allows her to openly and honestly discuss her thoughts and feelings. This perspective also helps the reader to understand Melton's feelings of isolation and frustration, especially since the reader does not know what Craig is feeling or what has led to his infidelities until he tells Melton. Melton is also able to project her thoughts and the lessons she has learned in the present on to her past so that she can more thoroughly explain her actions and feelings.

Love Warrior is told in the present tense, even when Melton is speaking of her childhood. Use of the present tense allows readers to travel with her through her story.

## Tone

Melton's tone throughout the memoir is reflective and wise. There is a sense of despair in Part One as Melton battles her poor self-image through bulimia and alcoholism. At her lowest points, her writing feels desperate and conveys her own sense of uncertainty with how she will continue to move forward through her difficulties. In Part Two when Melton is dealing with the possibility of divorce, her writing is infused with a profound sense of sadness and disappointment as she wonders how her children will fair and why she was unable to make her marriage work. Finally, in Part Three, Melton's tone becomes more hopeful and powerful as she begins to understand who she really is, forges a connection with God, and realizes that she must rely on herself for her happiness rather than waiting on others to provide it for her.



## Quotes

But this is what a bride is supposed to look like, and since the day I decided to become sober and a mother, I've been trying to become who I'm supposed to be.

-- Melton (Prelude)

**Importance:** Melton writes this when describing the day of her wedding to Craig. She describes her wedding attire as a costume and feels like she is dressed to play a part. This feeling will occur for Melton frequently as she struggles to find her true self. This feeling of not being who she is supposed to be causes Melton to engage in self-destructive behaviors and creates an inability to connect with her husband.

Every girl must decide whether to be true to herself or be true to the world.

-- Melton (chapter 1)

**Importance:** Melton writes this about her daughter says that she is bigger than other girls her age and wonders why she is different. As a child, Melton felt the same way and chose to follow the rules society sets for girls, which are to be small, quiet, and uncomplicated. This conversation with her daughter leads Melton to write about her own childhood and her struggle with bulimia from a very young age.

What I've found is a representative of me who's just tough and trendy enough to survive high school. The magic of sending my representative is that the real me cannot be hurt."

-- Melton (chapter 1)

**Importance:** This is the first instance in which Melton talks about sending her representative into the world. She creates this alternate version of herself to fit in with the rules of society, but as a result never feels like anyone truly knows her.

I do not know if I believe in Mary, but I believe in her right now. She is real. She is what I needed.

-- Melton (chapter 3)

**Importance:** This quote describes Melton's instant connection to Mary as a representative of the divine feminine. Melton is able to connect with Mary as a woman who was also a young, frightened, single mother. She does not feel this connection when confronted by the priest her parents have sent her to see. Instead, she spends her time in this office wishing to be back with the picture of Mary.

Something in me says yes to the idea that there is a God and that this God is trying to speak to me, trying to love me, trying to invite me back to life. I decide to believe in a God who believes in a girl like me.

-- Melton (chapter 4)

**Importance:** This quote occurs when Melton discovers she is pregnant for a second time. Her unexpected pregnancy helps her to connect with God and to feel as though



she is someone worthy of bearing a child and being a mother. This feeling of an invitation is very intimate and speaks to the theme of faith being a personal thing in which God talks to individuals. It is a theme that becomes prevalent in the book from this point forward. This is also the point in Melton's life when she makes a commitment to become sober for the sake of her baby.

When it's over, I feel afraid. It was supposed to be different, and it wasn't different.  
-- Melton (chapter 5)

**Importance:** Melton writes this of having had sex with Craig on her wedding night. After having sex for the first time in high school, Melton had described the experience to a friend as just being something that happened to her, and not at all personal. She feels as though sex is just a duty she has to perform to be accepted. She had hoped that when she and Craig were married it would be different and forge a stronger connection between them, but it does not.

The process of knowing and loving another person happens for me through conversation.  
-- Melton (chapter 6)

**Importance:** This quote describes one of the major stumbling blocks in Melton's marriage to Craig. She needs to connect with people by talking to them, but she feels like Craig does not listen to her when she tells him important things because he often forgets what she tells him. Craig, on the other hand, connects through sex, which does not work for Melton because sex does not feel personal to her.

Pain transforms one woman into two so that she has someone to walk with, someone to sit with her in the dark when everyone else leaves.  
-- Melton (chapter 8)

**Importance:** This quote occurs after Melton finds out that Craig has been sleeping with other women. This is an explanation of the way that women use their representatives to tell the world they are "fine" even when they are suffering. The representative puts everyone else at ease with her pain.

Words are the light I'll use to light my path. This is no disaster. This is simply a crisis.  
-- Melton (chapter 8)

**Importance:** Melton uses the words "disaster" and "crisis" to explain her situation. Prior to this quote, she explains that the word disaster literally means without stars, or without light. She explains that the word crisis comes from a word that means to sift. She has decided that she will not let her dissolving marriage be a disaster, but merely a crisis and she will use writing and communication as her way through it.

My fury is for every woman who has been taught that God is man and man is God.  
-- Melton (chapter 9)



**Importance:** This quote occurs after Melton is confronted at church by a woman who tells her that God does not want her to get divorced. Melton has been feeling uncomfortable at the church because it is very patriarchal. She has been told that women are to be helpers to their husbands and this makes her feel devalued as a woman. The woman's remarks make her angry and she takes her daughter and leaves.

I want to stay here forever, not making decisions, not thinking, not screwing anything up, concentrating only on where to put my hands and feet. I love not being God.  
-- Melton (chapter 12)

**Importance:** Melton writes this of her first experience with practicing yoga. She finds yoga liberating in the way that she does not have to think while she is there. Instead, she lives entirely in her body and it helps her to reconnect with her body so that, eventually, an intimate relationship with her husband is possible again.

I was right to want to be beautiful and sexy; I was just wrong to have accepted someone else's idea of what those words mean.  
-- Melton (chapter 15)

**Importance:** This quote occurs after Melton has a conversation with her daughters in which she explains that sexy is not what the world wants you to think it is; it is a woman who is confident in herself. She also tells them that there is a difference between being pretty and being beautiful. She tells them that pretty is what society defines as attractive, but beauty comes from the inside and beautiful women fill themselves up with beauty from the world around them. She has come to the conclusion that there was never anything wrong with her, only with what she was taught to believe by society.



## Topics for Discussion

### Rules for Men and Women

What rules does Melton observe concerning the roles of men and women during her childhood and teenage years? In looking at the world around you, where do you see these roles in play?

### Canary Metaphor

What does Melton mean when she talks about herself and others like her being like canaries? What is the history behind the metaphor? Is her use of the metaphor accurate? Why or why not?

### Mary

How does Melton react to the picture of Mary? What about Mary allows Melton to form such an immediate connection? How does her experience in the church shape her reaction to her second pregnancy?

### Healing of the Mind, Body, and Spirit

What does Melton mean when she sees herself as a trinity: mind, body, and spirit? What steps does she take to heal each of these parts of herself?

### Craig's Role as a Male

What realization does Melton come to about the role that Craig has been playing? How has that role lead to his use of pornography? Does Craig succeed in breaking out of the role? Why or why not?

### Churches

In what ways is the church that Melton and Craig attend after her speaking engagement a good fit for Melton? How does she know this might be the right church for her? What is different about it from churches she has been to in the past?

### Warriors

Explain Melton's choice of Love Warrior for the title of her memoir. What does being a warrior mean to Melton? How does she come to that determination?



## **The Difference Between Sexy, Pretty, and Beautiful**

What lesson does Melton teach her children about what sexy, pretty, and beautiful mean? What evidence is there that Melton has decided to stop merely being pretty and start being beautiful?

## **Breathing Class**

What epiphany does Melton have during her breathing class? How does she use this experience to change her attitude towards Craig? What does she tell him about what she has learned?

## **Renewal of Vows**

What is the significance of Melton and Craig saying their vows alone on the beach?