

The Lying Game Study Guide

The Lying Game by Sara Shepard

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Plot Summary

As the story opens, Sutton Mercer is lying in a bathtub in an unfamiliar room. She can't remember how she came to be there but she also can't remember much of anything about her life. Then a girl enters the bathroom and Sutton tries to make her presence known. The girl completely ignores her and it takes only a little longer for Sutton to realize she's dead. The girl in the bathroom is Emma Paxton. Emma and Sutton are identical twins and were separated, apparently at birth or as very young children. Sutton was adopted by an affluent family while Emma remained with their mother. Sutton has apparently led the life of an indulged child and has turned out to be a selfish teenager. Emma lived with her mother, who showed signs of manic depression, until she was about five, and has been shuffled from one foster home to another.

Emma is in a foster home when the son of her foster parent shows his mother a "snuff film" featuring Sutton, though it appears to be Emma. Emma does some research and discovers Sutton's identity. She finds her sister on Facebook and leaves a message with the suggestion they might be twins. Emma receives a reply a short time later with a meeting place and time. She assumes the message is from Sutton. Sutton knows that isn't the case but is unable to share that information with Emma. Emma is also warned not to tell anyone of her existence, warning that it might be dangerous. She shows up on time but Sutton never appears. Emma is suddenly confronted by several of Sutton's friends who are on their way to a party. Emma, recalling the message that revealing her identity could be dangerous, decides to go along with the situation until she can meet with Sutton in person. She concludes her evening at a party with Sutton's friends and is dropped off at Sutton's house. She locates Sutton's bedroom and falls asleep. The next morning, she tries to explain the situation, first to Sutton's parents and then to the police, but discovers that Sutton has been so volatile and wild that no one believes her.

Then she receives a note that indicates Sutton is dead and that she'll be killed if she doesn't continue to play along. Feeling she has no other option, she decides to look for Sutton's killer. Meanwhile, Sutton is tied to Emma and has begun to have a few memories. Both Emma and Sutton come to realize that Sutton was not an angel and that she'd hurt a lot of people with her reckless pranks and selfishness. Emma comes to believe Sutton's sister Laurel may be Sutton's murderer but the evidence isn't complete. Emma decides she should run away but a teenager named Ethan Landry becomes the only one to realize that Emma isn't Sutton. Ethan pledges to help Emma solve Sutton's murder and she returns to Sutton's home with that in mind.



Prologue through Chapter 3

Prologue through Chapter 3 Summary

In the prologue, Sutton Mercer wakes in a claw-footed bathtub. She doesn't know where she is or how she came to be there. She has very limited memory other than her name and that she lives in Tucson, Arizona. She believes someone might have "slipped" her some kind of drug. She hears a boy's voice call out for Emma and a girl who is also in the bathroom answers that she's busy. Sutton looks down at her body and says it looks as if she's "flickering on and off," solidifying the idea that she's been drugged. She speaks to Emma but Emma doesn't respond, even when Sutton yells. She looks at Emma's face in the mirror and realizes they are exactly the same in appearance. She also realizes she can't see herself in the mirror. She feels herself slipping into an even "fuzzier" state and forces herself to concentrate. She then realizes she's dead.

In Chapter One, Emma is in the home of her foster family in Las Vegas. With Sutton's proximity to Emma, she becomes privy to Emma's thoughts and memories. She realizes Emma's childhood was lived with her erratic mother, Becky. Becky had often been fun-loving, shouting answers to the puzzles on "Wheel of Fortune," and other times spending hours crying on the couch. Sometimes Becky took Emma shopping, buying her "two of everything." When Emma questioned the reason for two pairs of the same kind of shoe, her mother would say it was in case one got dirty. When Emma was five, she'd gone for a sleepover with friends. The next morning there was a note under the door of the friend's home from Becky. She had gone "on a trip." That was thirteen years earlier and Emma had spent the intervening years in foster care.

Emma has been living with this foster family for two months. The family is a single mother, Clarice, and her teenage son, Travis. Emma has tried to get along with Travis who is pushy and mean. With two weeks until her eighteenth birthday, Emma is nearing the end of her tenure in foster care. Clarice has agreed that Emma could stay with her until graduation and Emma is counting down the months to that goal. Travis is smoking marijuana when he realizes his mother is home. He throws what's left of the joint under Emma's chair. She covers it with her shoe.

Clarice says someone took two hundred, fifty dollars from her room. She says it was a tip from Bruce Willis and that he signed one of the bills. Travis says he'd seen Emma in Clarice's room earlier in the day. Clarice denies it and points out that she has a job. She works operating the roller coaster at New York New York casino. Travis says he has something to show Clarice and that he'd wanted to do so in private but now feels there's no choice. Using his iPhone, he shows Clarice a video. Emma and Sutton watch as well. The video is of Sutton but the resemblance is so close that Clarice believes it to be Emma. Sutton is wearing a necklace and someone pulls it tight around her neck, choking her until she passes out and falls over. Emma objects that she isn't the girl in the video but Clarice doesn't believe her.



In Chapter Two, Sutton realizes she's the girl in the video but has no other memories - where or when it happened. Clarice asks Emma if she participates in the choking for fun and Travis suggests it's a way to get high. Sutton thinks over the situation. She knows she's adopted and admits that having a twin is a possibility. Just then Travis knocks over Emma's tote bag and a wad of money falls out, one of the bills signed by Bruce Willis. Clarice counts it and realizes fifty dollars is missing. Emma says Travis put it there. Clarice wavers but it's evident she isn't going to believe her. Clarice says Emma can remain with them until her birthday but then she has to leave. Emma is heartsick but then realizes she has a "long-lost sister" and feels hope.

In Chapter Three, Emma goes to her room and begins packing while she talks to a friend she'd made in a previous foster home. She stops what's she's doing and searches for the video Travis had found. The name of the video is "SuttonInAz" and Emma does a related search. One of the top hits is a Facebook page for Sutton Mercer in Tucson, Arizona. Emma looks over Sutton's page and can find no differences in their appearances. She learns about Sutton, including that she attends Hollier High School. She looks at Sutton's pictures and notes that she has lots of friends. There's a family photo of Sutton's parents and her sister, Laurel. Emma also watches several videos attached to Sutton's site. There's a copy of a flyer about a missing boy, Thayer Vega, and a note posted a few hours earlier by Sutton indicating she sometimes wished she could run away. Sutton considers the post and realizes that people may not yet know she's dead. Emma sends Sutton a message, suggesting they might be sisters. Shortly after midnight, Emma receives a message back. The message sender claims to be Sutton, indicates there is some kind of danger and she can't reveal her identity, and suggesting they meet at Sabino Canyon in Tucson the following evening.

Prologue through Chapter 3 Analysis

When Sutton is forcing herself to concentrate upon her first awareness in the bathroom, she detects a pain in her body followed by a complete relaxation of her muscles - the memory of her death. She also remembers a person standing over her after she's dead. At this point, this is Sutton's only memory of her death. She can't remember when she died, how she died or who killed her. Additional memories will arise over the course of the book but she won't recover all her memories during this installment of the series.

Emma has a childhood memory of her mother, Becky, forgetting her at a Circle K store. Becky had gone off and left Emma behind and Emma recalls the sick feeling when she realized what happened. A store clerk had given Emma a popsicle while she waited for Becky to return, which she eventually did. Emma remembers the episode as she's looking at Sutton's Facebook page. She has the idea that if Becky could forget one child at the Circle K, she might have left another somewhere else.



Chapters 4 through 7

Chapters 4 through 7 Summary

In Chapter Four, Emma disembarks a Greyhound bus in downtown Tucson. She talks to her friend Alexandra, telling her she's going to meet Sutton. Sutton suggests she might have the opportunity to live with Sutton but Emma says it's too early to suggest such a move, even though she's fantasized about that very possibility for the entire trip. Emma has left most of her belongings, including the money she has saved, at the Greyhound bus station in Las Vegas. She takes a taxi to the meeting place at Sabino Canyon, arriving right on time. She watches several people arrive but doesn't see Sutton. She sees a man she recognizes from Sutton's Facebook photos as Mr. Chamberlain, the father of one of Sutton's good friends. He greets her, saying, "W-what are you doing here, Sutton?" Emma remembers Sutton's warning that revealing her identity might be dangerous so she doesn't. She is vague with her answers to his questions and he talks for only a brief time before leaving. A few minutes later, as she's really beginning to worry about Sutton, she feels what she believes to be the barrel of a gun in her back and is ordered to walk. Sutton wants to know who is threatening Emma but realizes she can see only what Emma sees.

In Chapter Five, Emma is released and discovers the kidnapping was a trick played on her by her friends. The "gun" was a lipstick tube. Sutton is elated to see her friends, including Madeline and Charlotte. She tries to make her presence known but isn't able. Emma still doesn't reveal her true identity but says she has something to do. They point out she's supposed to be at Nisha's party and virtually drag her along. Emma hopes Sutton will put in an appearance there and goes with them. She sends Sutton a text, saying she's at the party with Sutton's friends, and urges her to send instructions. Emma realizes Sutton is very popular and continues the charade. She meets Sutton's boyfriend, Garrett, recognizing him and others from the photos on Sutton's Facebook page.

In Chapter Six, Emma gets a text and hopes it's from Sutton, but it's Clarice, saying Emma should call if she needs anything. While she's outside reading the message, she sees another young man looking into a telescope. She learns he's Ethan Landry and talks to him for a few minutes. Sutton suddenly has a flash of a memory about Ethan but can't get more from it than the idea that she'd been both humiliated and grateful for something he'd done. Emma realizes she likes him and she invites him to the party but he declines. Some of her friends seem amazed that she was talking to Ethan. Emma feels she has to justify her actions. She says she believes she's had too much to drink and Charlotte offers to drive her home. Emma accepts and Sutton is relieved, believing they'll find more answers if she is in her own home.

In Chapter Seven, Charlotte says she's planning a party soon. She says it will be fun because her mother won't bother them and her father is "still" out of town. Emma,



remembering seeing the man in the park she'd thought was Mr. Chamberlain, questions it and Charlotte says he's been in Tokyo for more than a month.

Charlotte drops Emma at the Mercer house and Emma hesitates on her way to the door. Charlotte makes it clear she's going to wait until Emma is safely inside. Emma turns over a rock near the door and is surprised to find there actually is a key hidden under it. She opens the front door and goes inside. She hopes she might find Sutton inside, perhaps having fallen asleep. She finds a door with a placard with Sutton's name hanging from the knob and goes inside. She sends Sutton another text, saying she's in her room and adding that she's begun to be worried. A second after she sends the message, she hears a chime and realizes Sutton's phone is in the room. She scrolls through Sutton's messages but feels guilty and reads only one. Emma next sends Sutton a message on Facebook, hoping Sutton is on a computer in another part of the house. Emma does look in Sutton's closet and finds a stack of papers, one titled, "My Family History." Sutton had written that she's adopted and knows nothing about her birth mother. She doesn't find the necklace Sutton was wearing in the movie in which she was choked and supposes that Sutton might have it on. Emma becomes still and falls asleep, bringing an end to Sutton's consciousness as well.

Chapters 4 through 7 Analysis

The meeting with Mr. Chamberlain is mentioned only in passing but it seems it might be important. Emma later learns that Mr. Chamberlain is supposed to be out of town on the day Emma sees him in the park. Charlotte seems a little upset when she talks to Emma about her father being in Tokyo and Emma describes it as "a crack in her armor." Emma is later attacked and warned not to reveal Sutton's death while she's inside the Chamberlain house. It seems feasible this is an important clue though it's downplayed in the book. The reader doesn't learn the identity of the killer in this book and it's left to the reader to decide whether the meeting is important.

Emma has left the majority of her possessions at the Greyhound bus station but when she arrives at Sabino Canyon she has a bag with her identification, a little money, some clothes and a few other things. While she's at the party, she keeps looking over toward the park and plans to return to pick up those things when Sutton arrives. Eventually, she looks over and the items are all gone. This is probably another clue though there's no indication in this book as to who picked up her things.

Emma holds to the hope that she and Sutton will have a wonderful reunion and that they'll become close. Emma has felt an emptiness because of the lack of personal long-term connections in her life. She has put a great deal of hope into the idea that Sutton will fill that gap. There is the obvious problem with that - Sutton is already dead. However, Sutton's true nature will soon be revealed and it seems unlikely that Sutton would have filled that gap in Emma's life even if she had been alive. Each time Emma moves to her next place, she hopes she'll meet Sutton there and that Sutton will be waiting.

The early confrontation between Emma and Sutton's friends seems to be typical of their interaction. It will soon be revealed that this kind of prank is common, to each other and to others. It seems incredibly harsh.



Chapters 8 through 11

Chapters 8 through 11 Summary

In Chapter Eight, Sutton's mother wakes Emma, calling her Sutton and telling her she's going to be late for class. Emma realizes Sutton hasn't come home. Now she's very worried and tries to tell Mrs. Mercer her true identity, but Mrs. Mercer doesn't believe her. Sutton watches and notes that even her mother doesn't realize Emma isn't Sutton. Mrs. Mercer sends Laurel upstairs to get Sutton's bag, saying she doesn't trust that Sutton won't fall back asleep. Sutton listens as Emma continues, trying to explain the situation. Sutton admits that it does sound unbelievable. Mrs. Mercer points out that Sutton's birthday is in two weeks and asks if she can earn it, "just once."

Laurel says she's going to drive them to school and Mrs. Mercer asks if Sutton has left her car at a friend's house. Feeling she has no choice, Emma takes Sutton's bag and purse and heads outside. Laurel hands her a note, saying it was left on the windshield of her car. Emma opens the envelope which says, "Sutton's dead. Tell no one. Keep playing along ... or you're next." Emma tries to hide her emotions as Laurel drives. Just then, Sutton comes up with a memory.

In Chapter Nine, Sutton puts in an appearance from behind a big rock where she'd changed into her swim suit. She and friends, including Garrett, Madeline, Charlotte, and Laurel, are at a hot spring that is technically off limits to them. Sutton notes they always find a way to get what they want. Sutton calls her friends in for a photo but Laurel isn't in the picture. When Laurel complains, Sutton says she'd planned it. Laurel's feelings are obviously hurt. Sutton has a new necklace. She'd found it in her box of baby mementos and doesn't know the significance but has pledged she won't take it off. On this day, Laurel has a new necklace of her own that is very similar to Sutton's. Sutton grabs the necklace, breaking the chain and throwing it into the woods. Laurel tears up and runs into the woods. Sutton feels guilty and follows. She calls for Laurel just as she feels a hand on her shoulder and something cutting into her neck. A "raspy voice" warns her not to scream. That's the end of Sutton's memories for the moment.

In Chapter Ten, Emma considers the situation on the way to school. She returns to the thought of the film in which Sutton had apparently been strangled and wonders if that's how she died. They pass the police station on the way to school. As soon as Laurel stops the car, Emma leaps out and rushes back to the police station. Emma tells the first officer she sees the entire story. That officer calls for Detective Quinlan who says he doesn't believe her. Emma then discovers that the police have a file on Sutton. She has called in several false reports, including one in which she insisted she'd heard a baby crying in a dumpster. Emma tries to find the video of Sutton being strangled but it's been removed from the site. Quinlan then takes Sutton's identification from the bag Emma's carrying and says he's taking her back to school. He says if he sees her again he'll increase the fines on her car and let her spend a night in jail.



In Chapter Ten, Emma goes into the restroom and tries to pull herself together. She gives herself a pep talk, saying she can pretend to be Sutton until she figures out what's going on. She considers that anyone could have left that note on Laurel's car, including her classmates. Her first class is German. Emma knows only a couple of words in German and fails to answer roll call correctly. The teacher refers to her as "Devil child" and warns that she won't put up with Sutton's pranks. Emma overhears a conversation between two students indicating Sutton had almost been arrested over the summer, that her car was impounded for unpaid tickets, and that they weren't surprised by those facts.

Sutton watches as Emma tries to figure out what's going on. She wishes she'd left clues to help Emma along and admires Emma for paying attention to details and trying to figure out what to do. Emma uses Sutton's iPad to create a list of details she knows at this point. She happens to find a photo of Laura with Thayer Vega. Police seem to be treating Thayer as a run-away. Emma wonders why he ran away or if - like Sutton - he's actually been killed. Emma wants only to go home as soon as the final bell rings but is ushered off to tennis practice. There she discovers that Sutton and Nisha are co-captains. One of their duties is to distribute uniforms and Nisha insists on handing them out. When she hands Emma the last uniform in the box, it's obviously much too small. Nisha says that's the penalty for not helping get the uniforms in order the previous day. Many of the other girls giggle about it and Emma is upset that Nisha would be so mean. Charlotte says there will be payback against Nisha, very soon.

Chapters 8 through 11 Analysis

Sutton remembers those who were present at the hot spring, including Garrett. She remembers that she's attracted to him because "he's a little damaged." Garrett gets a phone call from his mother and steps away from the pool to talk. Charlotte points out that Garrett has "good reason" to be so closely attached to his mother. The rest of this is never revealed and there's no other indication of what Sutton remembers about Garrett being damaged or why he's so attached to his mother.

Sutton recalls that her friends have welcomed Laurel into their midst at least partly because of Thayer Vega. When Emma goes to the police station, she sees a flyer indicating Thayer's disappearance. Thayer is Madeline's brother and Emma has seen photos of Thayer with Laurel. It seems possible that Laurel and Thayer were involved in a relationship but the details are not revealed during this book, nor are the details of Thayer's disappearance.

Emma is grieved at the thought Sutton could be dead. She initially tends to believe the note, both the information that Sutton is dead and that she's next if she doesn't play along. However, when she learns from the police that Sutton has made false reports and had problems with police, she begins to consider a new theory. That theory is supported by the idea that Sutton and her friends have played such elaborate and sometimes dangerous pranks on each other. Emma eventually comes to wonder if



Sutton is alive, has set up this entire charade, and is simply off somewhere having fun while no one knows she's missing so no one is looking for her.

It's noteworthy that Emma is embarrassed by all the negative attention on the first day of school but Sutton would likely have flaunted that attention.

At one point, Emma thinks that Sutton's friend Charlotte has a physique more like a wrestler than a teenage girl. Even though she didn't say it aloud, she feels bad for having thought it - both facts that Sutton is privy to. Sutton believes the thought wasn't any worse than some of the things Sutton herself had done, though she can only remember the incident in which she'd thrown Laurel's necklace. She has a feeling, however, that there are many more instances that she can't remember.



Chapters 12 through 16

Chapters 12 through 16 Summary

In Chapter Twelve, the Mercer family gathers for dinner. Laurel has been angry at Sutton because Sutton promised her a ride to Nisha's party but then apparently left without her. As dinner is about to begin, Emma finds an origami swan by her plate with a note from Laurel, saying she's forgiven the slight. Mrs. Mercer says the tennis coach called with news that Sutton was "off her game." Emma says she must be a bit rusty and her father says it's because she didn't practice over the summer.

At one point, Sutton's dad, Dr. James Mercer, is staring intently at Emma and she believes he must know she isn't Sutton. Then he says he's just noticed a small scar on her chin and wonders when she got it. Emma was actually with her mother at a fast-food restaurant playland when she'd fallen. Her mother was on a crying binge herself and Emma had to go to her before Becky had even noticed she was hurt. She doesn't say any of that but says her father must not know her as well as he thinks. Her mother teases, asking if it's because she isn't Sutton at all but is "some girl named Emma," referring to Emma's efforts to make her identity known that morning.

In Chapter Thirteen, Emma decides to put in some time practicing her tennis at a nearby park. She gets a call from Alex but indicates she's staying with her newfound sister for a few days. She hates that she's lying to Alex. When she arrives at the tennis courts she sees what she believes to be a body but discovers it's Ethan Landry, lying on his back on the courts and looking at the stars. He offers to play with her and they do so for about a half hour. Emma asks why he didn't come with her to Nisha's party and he admits he thought it might have been a prank. He says he doesn't care for Sutton's friends and Emma personally thinks she doesn't either. Sutton watches the exchange. Though she can't remember anything specific, she believes Ethan has more to do with her life than he's letting on.

In Chapter Fourteen, tennis practice is cancelled Thursday afternoon. Garrett asks if she'll go out with him and she hesitates. She can't help but believe he'd have realized she wasn't Sutton if he was truly in love with Sutton.

By this time, Emma has begun using Sutton's phone, believing it would be suspicious if she didn't answer the calls that were coming in. She has also looked over Sutton's room and found a small chest with "The Lying Game" written on it. The chest is locked and she hasn't been able to break in.

Just as Emma is trying to get out of going with Garrett, Madeline arrives and suggests they go shopping. Emma agrees and they head for the mall. Madeline reveals that the police are calling off the search for Thayer, saying he's a runaway and there's nothing else to be done. Emma had read through Laurel's Facebook posts at the time of Thayer's disappearance. She hadn't mentioned it at all. Emma tries to reassure



Madeline saying runaways often find other groups of runaways and "do alright" together. In truth, Emma had run away from an abusive foster home when she was eleven and has first-hand knowledge. Pretending to be Sutton, she says she read it somewhere.

In the mall, Emma suggests they go to a shop called Bellissimo Secondhand. Madeline is initially reluctant. It's the kind of shop Emma would visit but that Sutton wouldn't. Emma decides she can't lose all aspects of her identity. They look around and Emma finds a pair of Gucci sunglasses that Madeline buys. They see Nisha and Madeline reveals there's a plan in place to get even with Nisha for saving the tiny uniform for Sutton.

In Chapter Fifteen, Emma, Madeline, Charlotte, and Laurel arrive early at the school the following morning. There's an elaborate set up that looks like a crime scene with a great deal of blood around Nisha's locker. She arrives and a police woman walks up, saying she has to see inside Nisha's locker. When Nisha opens the locker, the officer finds a bloody knife. When she insists Nisha open the upper door, a balloon shaped like a banana floats out with a note that says, "gotcha." The girls had hired an actor to play the role of police officer and set up the scene. Emma argues to call off the prank around the half-way point but the others say Sutton herself has "done worse." As they leave the area, Charlotte warns Nisha not to tell. A few minutes later, the others look to Emma for approval. Charlotte says she'd known there had to be something special to kick off the year's "Lying Game." Emma realizes after the prank is over that Sutton and her friends might have done a prank that pushed someone into murdering Sutton. Sutton still can't remember but fears Emma might be right.

In Chapter Sixteen, Emma talks with Ethan about the prank. She says she believes the prank went too far and Ethan says that's the hallmark of all their pranks. Emma considers the possibility of leaving town. She believes that if she weren't around, Sutton's absence would be noted and people might start looking for her. Sutton wonders what would happen to her - whether she'd continue to follow Emma or simply disappear. Emma takes Laurel's keys and heads for the Greyhound bus station. She plans to catch a bus but realizes there are flaws in the plans. If people find Laurel's car in the station parking lot, they'll assume she bought a ticket, someone will probably remember her and they'll assume Sutton is a runaway rather than starting a search for her body. Just as she's come to this conclusion, her phone rings. Laurel wonders where she is but doesn't seem mad that her car is gone. They hear an announcement on the bus station public address system but Emma says she was just driving by the station and rushes back to the parking lot. She notes a car on the street and the driver - a woman - is staring at Emma. Sutton realizes that whoever killed her is watching Emma and applauds Emma's caution.

Chapters 12 through 16 Analysis

At one point during dinner, the conversation turns to the Vega family. Mrs. Mercer says she's always found the family "odd." She cites fights that Mr. Vega would have with Thayer, "right out in public." Emma hopes to gather more information but Mrs. Mercer takes a look at Laurel and changes the topic. She next mentions Charlotte

Chamberlain's mother, citing the fact that Mrs. Chamberlain has been in the news a lot recently for christening boats on an Arizona lake. Dr. Mercer points out that her dresses are "interesting" but Mrs. Mercer says they're "inappropriate."

Emma spends more time on Sutton's Facebook page, looking for clues about Sutton's life. She finds a post there in which Sutton had included a picture of Garrett with a note that he was wearing the shirt Sutton bought for him. Sutton senses Emma's disapproval and is initially defensive but then is able to step back and look at it realistically. She wonders about her motives for choosing what Garrett wears and whether it could have been because she needed to control everyone around her.



Chapters 17 through 20

Chapters 17 through 20 Summary

In Chapter Seventeen, Laurel drives Emma to Charlotte's for a sleepover. There's a security gate at the entrance to the property. Charlotte, Laurel, Emma, Madeline and two other friends, Gabby and Lili, are there. Gabby expresses her displeasure that she and Lili are sometimes the brunt of the jokes from the Lying Game but that Sutton and the others have decreed the membership be limited to the four and refuse to let them in. They play a drinking game and Emma learns more about Sutton. From what she learns, Emma comes to realize it's possible Sutton has set up this entire situation as a prank, part of the Lying Game. Emma goes to the bathroom to think. She refuses to allow Sutton the satisfaction of scaring her. Sutton herself believes it's possible and realizes she might have fallen victim to an elaborate prank. Sutton feels bad for Emma and wishes she could show Emma she's really dead, but is a helpless observer. Just then the electricity goes off and the darkness sparks another memory for Sutton.

In Chapter Eighteen, Sutton remembers the scene at the hot springs in which she'd been warned not to scream. She was tied up and put in the trunk of a small car. She considers that it might be a prank by her friends but doubts that, saying she and her friends know how far they can go. She's taken from the trunk but the memory abruptly ends again.

In Chapter Nineteen, Sutton watches as Emma tries to find the door to Charlotte's bathroom. She finally does just before Mrs. Chamberlain walks in. She notes the electricity doesn't seem to be off in the rest of the neighborhood. The other girls believe Sutton has somehow turned off the power to the house. Emma still holds to the idea that Sutton might be behind the entire situation. She hopes Sutton will allow her to stay with the Mercer family for awhile once she reappears. The power is back on and the girls watch television until Emma is the only one still awake. She slips downstairs to the kitchen for a drink of water. She's there when someone grabs her from behind, puts a hand over her mouth and warns her not to scream. The voice is raspy and says that Sutton is dead. It also asks why Emma had planned to leave town when she'd been warned not to. Then a necklace is pulled around Emma's neck and pulled tight. She's released but told to count to a hundred before she looks up. She begins counting but stops when she hears a door slam. She realizes the necklace is the same one Sutton was wearing in the video and accepts that Sutton really is dead. Emma checks the alarm system which is still reading, "armed." The alarm record indicates it was armed shortly after eight that evening and hadn't been disabled, even when the power went off.

In Chapter Twenty, Emma and Laurel arrive home and Emma is obviously very upset. Sutton is also upset. She wonders how her best friends and her sister could have gone so far as to kill her. She knows she hasn't always been nice but wonders if there are things she'll learn about herself that are even worse. Emma works through the details and considers Sutton might have been dead prior to Emma's attempts to contact her. It



could have been the killer who lured Emma to town. Emma decides she has to get the Lying Game box open and is finally able to pick the lock. She finds a notebook inside and wonders about the ethics of reading it. Sutton just wants Emma to get started reading.

She reads many obscure entries and Emma can decipher only some of it. She then finds a card with the rules for the Lying Game, dated some five years earlier. The rules are that no one can know about the game, that each prank had to be more elaborate than the previous prank, and that no one could be hurt and no valuable possessions destroyed. To create a safety code, the girls were to say the words, "cross my heart and hope to die" as a means of indicating any given situation is not a prank. Emma also reads an entry dated two days prior to Travis's discovery of the video in which Sutton had indicated she believed someone was watching. She wrote that she knew the identity of her stalker but didn't reveal that in the journal. Emma looks through Sutton's emails and other messages. She accused several friends of following her and ordered them to stop. Emma types a message on Facebook, "Game on," and gets immediate responses from Madeline, Charlotte and Laurel who want to be included.

Chapters 17 through 20 Analysis

It's while Emma is at Charlotte's sleepover that she learns the Lying Game sometimes includes pranks on each other. She thinks about Sutton going limp during the video in which it appears she was choked. Emma suddenly considers the possibility that the video might have been an elaborate prank rather than a video of Sutton being attacked for real.

After she's strangled in the Chamberlain kitchen, Emma begins to put some important clues together. By the fact that the alarm has not been reset since shortly after eight that evening, Emma believes the killer is already in the house. Charlotte has said her father is out of town, meaning there should be no one in the house other than the six girls and Mrs. Chamberlain. The killer had Sutton's necklace, making Emma believe that Sutton is actually dead. Emma recalls talking to Laurel on the phone that afternoon while she was at the bus station. The killer's comment about Emma's attempt to leave town makes her certain someone knew she'd considered running away. She considers that additional proof that the killer is one of her friends, or a group of them, and that Laurel could be involved.

Emma shows some of Sutton's spirit when she makes the commitment to find the killer. She does this by typing "game on" on Sutton's Facebook page. Immediately, her friends answer the post, saying they want to be included.



Chapters 21 through 23

Chapters 21 through 23 Summary

In Chapter Twenty-one, Garrett and Emma go out. Garrett flounders when Emma says she wants him to choose where they eat and Emma suggests they buy the ingredients for a picnic. They go to Catalina State Park and set up their food. Emma uses the opportunity to fish for more information. She suggests that Charlotte has been acting strangely. Garrett says she should be more understanding, especially because he'd stopped seeing Charlotte in order to go out with Sutton. Garrett then says that Charlotte was "there for me during everything that happened with Louisa." Just then Emma hears the sound of a branch breaking. She and Garrett look toward the sound and Charlotte emerges from the hiking trail. Charlotte stops only for a brief conversation then walks away. Emma and Sutton each wonder if Charlotte could have been the killer.

In Chapter Twenty-two, Emma invites Madeline for a spa date, hoping Madeline will answer some questions if they're alone. They go to La Paloma and Emma asks Madeline where Charlotte was on the night of Nisha's party. Madeline says she can't remember but won't meet Emma's eyes. Madeline says Charlotte's attitude about Garrett is to be expected because Sutton tends to "destroy" guys. She says Thayer is an example. Sutton, listening to the conversation, can find no memory of something she might have done to Thayer. Madeline claims to have forgotten another appointment and leaves abruptly but forgets her cell phone. Emma scrolls through the messages and photos and discovers a picture of Laurel, seated on a large rock, wearing the necklace that was used to choke Sutton.

In Chapter Twenty-three, Emma is in class and continues to wonder about the photo of Laurel wearing Sutton's necklace. She thinks perhaps both the necklace and the photo are trophies of the murder which would mean both Madeline and Laurel are involved. That afternoon, Nisha insists that Laurel help her put name tags on the gym lockers of the tennis team members. The tags are all elaborate except Sutton's which is a plain square of paper with her name on it. As she's helping put them on the lockers, Emma discovers a note from Thayer to Laurel in her pocket. Nisha sees the note and says she'd heard Laurel was "ready to kill you for what you did." She then says that Sutton knew Laurel was interested in Thayer, then leaves abruptly. The information is enough to make Emma desperate for more.

Chapters 21 through 23 Analysis

The book is the first in the series but there are references to things that happened prior to the beginning of the first book. These will apparently be revealed in greater detail later in the series. One of them is Thayer's disappearance. However, there is a new twist revealed when Emma learns something happened to Garrett's sister, Louisa. The fact seems important and probably explains why Sutton thinks of him as "damaged." It



should be noted that a major component of suspense for many authors is misdirection. It's left to the reader to determine the significance of each of these details and to find other clues in the story, but their true importance won't be revealed in this book.

The photo of Laurel wearing Sutton's necklace seems to indicate she is involved in the killing as well. Sutton still struggles to remember but can't dredge up anything except an occasional brief memory.



Chapters 24 through 27

Chapters 24 through 27 Summary

In Chapter Twenty-four, Laurel reminds Emma of plans the girls have to go to Mr. Pinky's, a nail salon. Emma gives Laurel the note she'd found in her pocket. Laurel says she has lots more from Thayer and that it's "no biggie." She doesn't seem at all upset. Emma and Sutton at the same time come up with the theory that Laurel is no longer upset with Sutton for coming between Laurel and Thayer because she's already gotten her revenge by killing Sutton.

In Chapter Twenty-five, Emma knows Laurel could have sent the message pretending to be Sutton and asking Emma to come to Tucson. She recalls the message that Laurel said had been on her car but knows Laurel could just as easily have written the note herself. Laurel was on the phone with Emma when Emma was at the bus station, so Laurel would have known Emma was considering leaving town. She was also present at Charlotte's sleepover, giving her the opportunity to warn Emma again. Sutton, however, remembers red hair from the person who had pulled her from the trunk of the car sometime before her death. Laurel's hair is blond. Sutton admits her memory on that point could be faulty. Emma encounters Ethan again at the tennis courts. This time they just watch the stars and talk. Emma invites him to the birthday party for Sutton that's planned at the end of the week and Ethan agrees to attend.

In Chapter Twenty-six, Emma has a dream in which Becky appears to her. Becky warns her that she's mistaken about what she believes and that she's in danger. Emma wakes with Laurel standing over her. She begins to scream, saying Laurel is trying to kill her, which brings her parents running. Laurel points out the time - a minute after midnight - and says she'd only wanted to be the first to wish Sutton a happy birthday.

In Chapter Twenty-seven, there are dozens of guests at the birthday party. Sutton watches. She has memories of being friends with Laurel and wonders how they came to the point of being such bitter enemies. She admits that something about the situation doesn't feel right, but can't remember enough to say why she feels that way. Emma sees Ethan arrive. As she's making her way to him, she overhears someone say that it appears "someone still has a crush" on Sutton. Garrett arrives at her side, swoops her away from Ethan and kisses her.

Chapters 24 through 27 Analysis

The appearance of Becky in Emma's dream seems to indicate that Becky is dead as well. The details on this topic are also not revealed during this book.

The comment Emma overhears about Ethan having a crush on her is the first indication that there is something in their history. Garrett is obviously jealous as soon as he sees



Emma and Ethan together. He rushes in and kisses Emma - who he still believes to be Sutton - as an obvious show of possession.

Emma doesn't at this point know the Mercer family history. She has heard of cases in which a couple adopts a child and is then able to conceive on their own and wonders if this is the story in the Mercer household.

There are actions that seem to contradict Emma's belief that Laurel was in on Sutton's murder. Laurel seems to dote on Sutton and her efforts to be like Sutton will be further revealed the first time Emma goes into Laurel's bedroom. While it could be an act, Laurel's efforts gain Sutton's approval seem - at least on the surface - to be genuine.



Chapters 28 through Epilogue

Chapters 28 through Epilogue Summary

In Chapter twenty-eight, Garrett tells Emma his gift to her is in her room. She arrives to discover the room is filled with candles and that Garrett is obviously expecting to have sex with her. Emma stops him which makes him angry. She rushes out of the room and finds herself in Laurel's room. The room is eerie in that it's almost an exact replica of Sutton's room, even down to the photos of Sutton's friends. Emma goes through posts on Laurel's computer and finds endless videos of pranks. Sutton watches as Emma goes through them, feeling sicker by the moment. She realizes that the pranks were cruel and that lots of people were hurt by them.

Emma locates another video - a copy of the video of Sutton being strangled. This one includes sound. Sutton is tied to a chair, bound and gagged. She's wearing the necklace. Madeline, Charlotte and Laurel each appear on the screen at various moments. They go through the choking scene and when they turn her loose, Sutton slumps over, falling with the chair onto the ground. She's breathing but barely seems conscious. The camera falls with her and Charlotte, Madeline and Laurel are obviously panicked. Then someone new arrives on the screen and removes the blindfold and gag just before the camera goes dark. Suddenly, Emma realizes the help she'd had stepping into Sutton's life had been no accident. The girls had cleared the way to help her fit in as seamlessly as possible. Emma hears Garrett searching for her. He's joined by others and Emma jumps from Laurel's window.

In Chapter Twenty-nine, Charlotte, Madeline and Laurel are outside searching for Sutton. Emma runs away and encounters Ethan. She asks him to take her away from the house and he agrees.

In Chapter Thirty, Emma asks Ethan to take her to the bus stop. Ethan makes a wrong turn and eventually stops on a gravel road. Emma is panicked all over again and pleads with him to let her go. He refuses. He says he knows she isn't Sutton - that she can't be. He asks her to tell him the entire story. Suddenly, Sutton has another memory.

In Chapter Thirty-one, Sutton remembers the moments of being choked. She eventually gives up fighting and realizes she's about to die. Then she's on the ground and Ethan Landry is standing over her, releasing her from the blindfold and gag. Sutton then remembers Madeline, Laurel and Charlotte emerging from the woods and saying, "gotcha." Ethan tells the three that it wasn't funny and that Sutton could have died. Charlotte takes control, accusing Ethan of being a stalker. As Ethan is leaving, Sutton mouths the words, "thank you." He mouths back, "you're welcome" and leaves.

In Chapter Thirty-two, Emma asks if Ethan is the one who killed Sutton and if that's how he knows she isn't Sutton. Ethan seems shocked to learn that Sutton's dead and Emma pours out her story. She says she wants to get away but Ethan says that's a bad idea.



He points out that if Sutton's body is found, it will be evident that Emma was an imposter and the blame will fall on her. He suggests the real killer is trying to frame Emma. Ethan promises to help if Emma will stay and try to solve the murder. Ethan also says that Sutton survived the night after Madeline, Charlotte and Laurel took the video of Sutton being choked. He says she left the scene alive that night.

In Chapter Thirty-three, Emma returns to the Mercer home with a new resolve. She's determined to take control of the situation. Emma stops to talk to Laurel. Laurel says she is afraid her sister is mad. She says Charlotte believes Emma might have been in Laurel's room and that she "might have seen something." Emma confirms she was in Laurel's room and says she did see "something." She then puts her hands around Laurel's neck as if to choke her, but then turns loose and acts as if it were a joke. Dr. and Mrs. Mercer arrive and have the family birthday cake. When Emma is blowing out the candles, she wishes she can find Sutton's killer. Sutton makes the same wish.

In the Epilogue, Sutton hangs around the bedroom that night as Emma is preparing for sleep. She says she doesn't know who killed her yet but knows there are lots of suspects, including those who were pranked and those who were excluded from the foursome who made up the "Lying Game."

Chapters 28 through Epilogue Analysis

Emma finds herself in Laurel's room and is disturbed by Laurel's attempts to emulate Sutton. The fact that Emma knows nothing about the family history increases the mystery here. The room could be - as Emma believes - Laurel's attempt to study Sutton in preparation of taking over her entire life. That indicates a motive for murder. It could also be that Laurel dotes on her sister and emulates her because she wants to be someone Sutton admires. As is the case with many of the scenes in this book, it's left to the reader to decide. There's another similar description seen when Sutton recalls the scene in which she was choked by Charlotte, Madeline and Laurel. When Charlotte and Madeline emerge from the bushes, they're a little subdued but remain cocky and sure of themselves. However, Sutton remembers that Laurel looked like she was about to cry.

There could be another case of misdirection seen when Ethan reveals that he's certain Emma isn't Sutton. No one else has questioned Emma's identity and when she's tried to tell others, no one believes her. Even the family dog, who Emma felt sure would go crazy when he saw her, accepted her as Sutton. Ethan's statement that she can't possibly be Sutton could be an indication that he knows about Sutton's death. He denies it but it's left to the reader to decide.



Characters

Sutton Mercer

Sutton is just short of her eighteenth birthday when she's murdered. She wakes to find herself tied to her twin sister, Emma, with only sketchy memories and a great deal of time and information missing. Sutton watches as Emma learns of Sutton's existence and is lured to a meeting spot. She continues to watch as Emma struggles to connect with Sutton and later, to find Sutton's murderer. As the events unfold, Sutton comes to realize she wasn't a nice person while she was alive. It's soon revealed that she played a great many practical jokes that were far past what should have been an acceptable level of mischief. Sutton's jokes had gone so far as to involve police. Her reports, including that a baby had been crying in a dumpster, prompted police to create a file. That file comes to be Emma's downfall when she tries to report the likelihood that Sutton is dead. Sutton also watches as her friends play practical jokes on others that are cruel and create pain. She eventually recalls an incident in which she'd snatched a necklace from her sister and thrown it into the woods. She wonders - as does Emma - whether someone's revenge for one of these acts could have resulted in Sutton's murder. It also becomes evident that Sutton has broken the hearts of several boys along the way. Sutton doesn't like herself very much when she sees herself from the detached position of being dead. While she was alive, she was spoiled and selfish, but doesn't realize that until she is looking at the situation from Emma's perspective.

Emma Paxton

Emma is five years old when her mother leaves her with a friend and doesn't return. She spends the next thirteen years being shuffled from one foster home to another. She is scarred by the situation and feels alone and lonely. As a foster child, Emma has learned to become whatever kind of person is most likely to get along in any given situation. That stands her in good stead when she's cast into the role of her twin sister. As Emma puts her life on hold and her safety on the line, Sutton wonders if she would have done the same - evidence of the differences in the girls' personalities. Emma realizes it was a twist of fate that put her in the foster care system and Sutton as the daughter of this affluent family but she isn't really bitter about that. She does feel cheated that she never had a chance to get to know Sutton or to live that kind of life. As Emma puts her detective skills to work, she learns a great deal about Sutton and finds she doesn't like much of what she knows. In many ways, the girls are complete opposites. Emma is serious and wants to go to college though she knows it will be a difficult endeavor. Emma is on the verge of running away but comes to agree that she must remain and try to find Sutton's killer.



Ethan Landry

A young boy who is something of an outsider, he is the only person who realizes there is something dramatically different about Sutton when Emma steps into her life. Ethan pledges to help Emma find out who killed Sutton.

Garrett

Sutton's boyfriend, he's a member of the soccer team. He's handsome and popular but is obviously intent on pleasing Sutton. Garrett apparently doesn't notice anything different about Sutton when Emma steps into her place. Sutton recalls that Garrett is "damaged" but can't remember why.

Laurel Mercer

Sutton's sister, she is a little younger and seems desperate to fit in with Sutton's friends. She seeks Sutton's approval and seems to copy everything Sutton does. As the book comes to a close, it seems that Laurel could have been the one who killed Sutton.

Madeline Vega

One of the four-member Lying Game group, Madeline is with Emma at the spa when Emma questions her about Charlotte's whereabouts the night of Nisha's party and seems upset at the line of questioning. She points out that Sutton is not kind to the guys she dates.

Charlotte Chamberlain

One of the four-member Lying Game group, Charlotte's family is very wealthy. She hosts a sleepover a few days prior to Sutton's birthday and Emma discovers pictures of Garrett, the first clue that Charlotte and Garrett were dating prior to Sutton's arrival on the scene.

Thayer Vega

The brother of one of Sutton's best friends, he has been missing for weeks by the time Emma enters the picture. There is evidence that he and Laurel are more than friends prior to his disappearance.



Travis

The eighteen-year-old son of Emma's foster family when she discovers Sutton's existence, Travis is constantly trying to catch a glimpse of Emma while she's undressed. It's Travis who finds the video of Sutton being choked which brings Emma to find Sutton. Travis steals money from his mother and puts most of it in Emma's bag, making his mother believe Emma stole it.

Nisha Banerjee

Co-captain with Sutton on the tennis team, she and Sutton obviously have problems dating back prior to Emma's arrival. Nisha's mother has died and when Sutton's friends play a prank on her, putting fake blood in her locker, a memento of her mother is ruined. Emma can sense the pain as Nisha tells her about the loss.



Objects/Places

Tucson, Arizona

This is the city where Sutton lives.

Las Vegas

Emma lives in this city with a foster family when Sutton is killed.

Hollier High School

Sutton is attending this school when she's killed.

New York New York Casino

Emma is working here while she lives with Clarice in Las Vegas.

Sabino Canyon

Emma is supposed to go here to meet someone she believes to be Sutton.

Greyhound Bus Station

Where Emma stashes her money and clothing when she goes to meet Sutton.

Catalina State Park

Where Garrett and Emma go for a picnic shortly before Sutton's birthday party.

Bellisimo Secondhand

This is where Emma and Madeline go shopping and where Madeline buys the Gucci sun glasses.

La Paloma

This is the spa where Emma and Madeline are when Madeline reveals that Emma has broken the hearts of several guys.

The Lying Game

This is a game played by Sutton and her friends. There are four members and the rule is that each prank must be more intense than the previous prank.



Themes

The Connection between Sutton and Emma

The twin connection is an important part of the story because it sets the scene for Sutton to oversee Emma's efforts to find Sutton's killers. Emma and Sutton have never met and don't know the existence of the other until after Sutton's death. Sutton finds herself attached to Emma upon her first moments of consciousness after her death though she doesn't initially know why that connection exists. Emma is willing to accept the theory of a twin sister because she's sometimes felt that connection prior to considering the possibility that she and Sutton are twins. The fact that they are almost identical makes it possible for Emma to step into Sutton's life without alerting anyone to the swap. Emma notes that being twins hasn't made them identical in tastes and actions. Despite their connection, the girls have developed very different personalities, probably at least partly because of their lifestyles and home lives. A minor example of this is seen when one of her friends hands Emma a cup of coffee, apparently prepared the way Sutton would have liked it. Emma doesn't like it at all. The girls' eating habits are also different. Emma remembers coming in second in a hot dog eating contest and Garrett points out that she's gained a few pounds. A more important example of the difference is seen with their actions. Sutton and her friends have played incredibly cruel tricks on others and Emma finds it disturbing. An interesting aspect of this is seen when Sutton begins to see her life from an outside perspective. She realizes the pranks were cruel and doesn't like what she's coming to know about herself.

Peer Pressure

It seems that Laurel and Sutton are affected by peer pressure in their own ways and that the actions related to peer pressure may have a direct link to Sutton's death. Laurel is impacted by peer pressure because she wants desperately to fit in with Sutton's friends and believes the key to doing so is to be exactly like Sutton. She seeks to live her life like Sutton, trying to fit in with Sutton's friends and participating in the pranks of the Lying Game. She has also mimicked Sutton's room. In Sutton's room, there are displays of pictures that are important to Sutton. Laurel's room has many of the same photos, though Laurel is not in those pictures. Sutton herself seems not to be led by peer pressure so much as to be the one who sets the pace for her friends. When her friends put together the elaborate prank on Nisha, they look to Sutton for approval. The extent of this peer pressure is seen in the fact that Charlotte remains Sutton's friend even though Sutton came between Charlotte and her boyfriend, Garrett, then began dating Garrett. Ironically, Dr. and Mrs. Mercer object to Laurel and Sutton spending time with Madeline and Charlotte because they believe Madeline and Charlotte are bad influences. They don't realize that Sutton is the ringleader of the group.



The Need for Friendship

The need for friendship is a recurring theme seen throughout the story in the lives of many of the characters. Sutton's friends are important examples. When Charlotte, Madeline and Laurel play the elaborate joke on Nisha, they look to Emma - who they believe to be Sutton - to see if she approves of the joke. They need friendship and believe performing pranks and doing things Sutton would approve will earn them that friendship. Laurel is a bit extreme on this point, mimicking many things Sutton does. Laurel seems to want Sutton's friendship more than anything else. Emma is an example of this theme as well though in her case it's because she's spent most of her life lacking in long-term friendships. Sutton is different on this point to some degree in that she's the ring leader while she's alive. She seems to have less need to try to recruit friendships than the others because she's so completely in control of most situations. But after her death, she spends a lot of time analyzing her actions and life prior to her death.



Style

Point of View

The story is presented in first person from Sutton's point of view but Sutton's perspective is limited by that of her twin sister, Emma. The twist on that perspective is that Sutton is dead from the opening pages of the book. The entire focus of the book is a quest to discover who killed Sutton. Sutton herself doesn't remember which maintains the mystery and the sense of suspense. Initially, Sutton is confused but comes to realize that she's dead. She has little control over what she sees or where she goes and is somehow tied to Emma. Sutton is not in Emma's body but can only go where Emma goes and can only see what Emma sees. An example of this occurs when Emma is in the kitchen of the Chamberlain house and the killer slips in behind her, choking her with her necklace. Sutton is present but can see only what Emma sees, meaning she can't see the killer. The majority of the book is presented in this manner. The exceptions are three chapters dedicated to Sutton's memories. Only Sutton is privy to those memories and she has no way to convey them to Emma. This further adds to the suspense. Typically, Sutton would likely have been defending herself, her actions and those of her friends. However, she is learning about herself from the outside looking in. Not only does she not remember the details of what happened to her, she doesn't remember much about her life at all. She is learning about her life through Emma's life and Sutton doesn't like what she sees.

Setting

The story is set in Arizona in modern times. The overall settings of Las Vegas and Scottsdale are real places as are some of the places mentioned, such as the casino in Las Vegas. The major settings of action in the book are not real but are realistic, believable, and appropriate to the story. One of the major settings is Sutton's home. Sutton's bedroom is described in great detail as is Laurel's bedroom. The similarities of the two are eerie and seem sinister in the context of Emma's suspicion that Laurel killed Sutton. Another specific setting is the home of Charlotte Chamberlain. The Chamberlains are very wealthy and their home has a security gate and security alarm. That makes the fact that Emma is attacked by the killer in the Chamberlain kitchen an important clue to the killer's identity. Other specific settings include Hollier High School, the home of Emma's foster family, a tennis court in a park near the Mercer home, a nail spa, a mall, a spa, and two parks. Depth of the descriptions are in keeping with the importance of the setting. The time setting is fairly easy to establish within a few years. The book is copyrighted in 2010 and that is the likely year of the setting. There are mentions of Facebook, iPads, and other technology that support this time setting though the exact year is not important.



Language and Meaning

The overall tone of the story is one of mystery and suspense. Sutton is already dead and there is no hope she will be saved. The focus instead is on the danger Emma faces as she tries to find out who murdered Sutton. The major negative aspect to the book is that it is not a stand-alone read in the series. The mystery of Sutton's killer is not solved. This may be frustrating to some readers. The book as a whole is written in a straight-forward manner. There will be few unfamiliar words for a reader with an average vocabulary. The story is aimed at young teens and the author's dialogue and word choices are overall appropriate for that audience. The book is divided between dialogue and narrative. The dialogue is presented in a typical manner and is realistic for the situation. The author presents conversations and actions of the characters so that most readers will have no trouble following the action. Some sections of the narrative are Sutton's thoughts and observations. These are presented in first-person which separates them from other action and from Emma's thoughts. There are three chapters presented from Sutton's memories and these are also presented in first person. There are a few curse words that some readers may find offensive but these are rare.

Structure

The story is presented in chronological order beginning with the moments following Sutton's death. The book is divided into thirty-three chapters with a prologue at the beginning of the book and an epilogue following the final chapter. The Prologue is an introduction of Sutton and her realization that she's dead. The Epilogue is Sutton's thoughts as she watches Emma go to sleep and hopes for new memories of her life and death - memories that don't come. There are three chapters presented strictly from Sutton's memories. These are presented in italics in present tense, a contrast from the past tense and normal font of the remainder of the book. These chapters lend clues to Sutton's death but don't reveal the killer's identity. The chapters vary slightly in length with most being between eight and twelve pages. Chapter titles are: Dead Ringer; That's Right, Blame the Foster Kid; You Know it's True if You Read it on Facebook; Reunion Interrupted; She Is Me; Who Can Resist a Brooder: The Bedroom Emma Never Had; Coffee, Muffins, Mistaken Identity; Imitation Is the Highest Form of Flattery; Every Guy Loves a Felon; Emma's First Family Dinner Dysfunction; The Body on the Ground; Vintage Emma; The Science of the Crime; Last Bus to Vegas; Never Have I Ever; Who's Laughing Now; Leaving is Not an Option; Dear Diary, Today I Died; Unrequited Spying; Dirty Secrets; Someone Was a Very, Very Bad Girl; Doesn't Every Girl Think Her Sister Wants to Kill Her?; A Late Addition to the Guest List; A Face from the Past; Happy Birthday, Now Die; Seduction and Murder Always Go Hand in Hand; The Great Escape; Someone Knows; Not Funny Bitches; The Bitter Truth; and Look Out, Sutton's Back.



Quotes

"I was dead." Prologue, page 4

"Even my own mother couldn't tell that Emma wasn't me." Chapter 8, Page 77

"And it's really bad enough that my parents - especially my dad - dote on her at home, meanwhile treating me like I'm a bomb about to detonate." Chapter 9, Page 91

"Actually seeing SUTTON'S DEAD written there on the paper in black and white made it undeniable. I was really dead." Chapter 10, Page 95

"But watching from above, I wasn't so sure about that. There was something about Ethan that made me think he had more to do with my life than he let on." Chapter 13, Page 135

"Maybe I'd been a prankster when I was alive, but from the other side, a staged murder definitely turned the proverbial stomach of a girl who'd just been killed." Chapter 15, Page 155

"But her jittery paranoia was for a good reason. After all, whoever killed me was watching her every move." Chapter 16, Page 167

"You've been a little ... different this week. Are you on a new diet or something?" Chapter 17, Page 169

"Keep being her until I tell you different. And don't try and skip town again or you're next." Chapter 19, Page 191

"Why would my own sister want to kill me? I obviously hadn't been the best sister in life - but how bad could I have been?" Chapter 22, Page 225

"Every prank we'd pulled was cunning - and cruel. We'd hurt a lot of people." Chapter 28, Page 271

"Sweet dreams, long-lost twin sister. I'll see you in the morning ... even though you won't see me." Epilogue, page 307



Topics for Discussion

Compare Sutton and Emma. How are they similar? How are they different? Which do you consider to be the better person? Why?

What is the "Lying Game"? What are the rules and who are the members? Why does this game become an important part of the story?

Who is Laurel? How is she connected to Sutton and Emma? What kind of person is she? In what ways does Laurel try to emulate Sutton? Why do you believe she does this? Support your answers.

List the people who are considered by Emma to be suspects in Sutton's murder. Why is each considered a suspect. Are there others who might be suspects that Emma hasn't yet considered? Who are they and why might they be suspected?

List the people who are considered by Emma to be suspects in Sutton's murder. Why is each considered a suspect. Are there others who might be suspects that Emma hasn't yet considered? Who are they and why might they be suspected?

Describe the two most important settings of the story. Why are they important? What happens in each? Are they realistic?