

Only the Good Spy Young Study Guide

Only the Good Spy Young by Ally Carter

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Plot Summary

This novel for teens, primarily young women, is the fourth in a series about trainee spy Cammie Morgan. In this entry, Cammie finds herself the target of kidnapping attempts, taking the lead in missions to retrieve important information and drawn further into her complicated relationship with cute fellow trainee spy Zach. As it builds to an explosive climactic confrontation between Cammie and operatives of the evil Circle, the narrative also explores themes related to friendship and loyalty, identity, and the tension between entrapment and dreams of freedom.

The novel begins with Cammie enjoying a relaxing vacation with her best friend Rebecca and her family in London, England, a vacation interrupted by the unexpected appearance of Joe Solomon, one of Cammie and Rebecca's favorite teachers from the The Gallagher Academy for Exceptional Young Women. Even while he and Rebecca are being surrounded and confronted by CIA agents anxious to take him into interrogative custody, Solomon gives Cammie an urgent message, jumping into the Thames River once the message has been delivered.

After a brief but intense period of interrogation in London (in which she is interviewed by an operative she describes as "hot"), Cammie and Rebecca are returned to school in America, where they are reunited with their best friends and fellow trainee agents Liz and Macey. At first, neither Cammie nor Rebecca reveal what happened in London, having been told by several adult operatives to keep it all secret. But when the operatives learn that Solomon's replacement at the Academy is none other than the man who interrogated Cammie in London, an MI6 agent named Edward Solomon, Cammie and Rebecca break their silence and tell their friends everything.

The four operatives then begin an investigation into both Townsend and the meaning of Solomon's mysterious message. In this they are aided by the unexpected, often mysterious intervention of Zach Goode, a trainee spy from the Blackthorne Institute for Boys on whom Cammie has a passionate crush. Zach eventually reveals that he is in secret contact with Solomon and that there is a journal hidden in the basement of the Academy that he (Solomon) wants Cammie to have. She and the other operatives plan and execute an excursion into the vault where the journal is kept, discovering as they're decoding it that it was in fact written by Cammie's presumed-dead father, Solomon's best friend and ally in a covert operation to break the Circle.

Zach then tells the four Gallagher Girls that there is, in fact, a second journal kept in the caves deep beneath the Blackthorne Institute. With the help of Cammie's mother and several other adult operatives, Zach and the Gallagher Girls execute an excursion into the caves. Zach and Cammie retrieve the journal and come face to face with Solomon and several Circle operatives who are torturing and interrogating him. Zach and Cammie are captured, and one of the operatives reveals that she is Zach's mother! Quick thinking on the part of Zach and Solomon enables Cammie to escape, the cave behind her exploding. In a final encounter, Cammie is momentarily prevented from attempting to escape further when Zach's mother suggests that Cammie's father is



actually alive, but Cammie makes a last-ditch effort to get away, and jumps into a nearby river. She is rescued by her own mother and Townsend who take her to a hospital where she learns that both Zach and Solomon survived the explosion.

After handing over the retrieved journal to Zach, Cammie resolves to leave the Academy and to go in search of the answers to the many questions in her life such as why the Circle is after her, whether her father is alive, and what she can do to prevent the Circle's power and influence from becoming even more expansive. In doing so, she hopes that removing herself from her friends and loved ones will keep them safe from the danger that seems to seek her out no matter where she goes.



Chapters 1, 2 and 3

Chapters 1, 2 and 3 Summary

This novel for teens, primarily young women, is the fourth in a series about trainee spy Cammie Morgan. In this entry, Cammie finds herself the target of kidnapping attempts, taking the lead in missions to retrieve important information, and drawn further into her complicated relationship with cute fellow trainee spy Zach. As it builds to an explosive climactic confrontation between Cammie and operatives of the evil Circle, the narrative also explores themes related to friendship and loyalty, identity, and the tension between entrapment and dreams of freedom.

In Chapter 1, while ice skating in London, England with her best friend (and fellow trainee spy) Rebecca, narrator Cammie has a surprise encounter with very attractive (and fellow trainee spy) Zach. Their flirtatious conversation reveals that Zach is looking for one of Cammie's teachers and another fellow spy, Joe Solomon, who has missed several appointments for making contact. Cammie wants to contact her mother or Rebecca's parents, further conversation indicating that they too are spies and would know more about Solomon's disappearance than either Zach or Cammie. At that moment, Rebecca's parents call for Cammie to join them. She back calls to them and then turns back to Zach, but discovers that he's already disappeared.

In Chapter 2, as she takes off her skates, Cammie wonders whether to tell Rebecca's father Abe about the missing Joe Solomon, but then decides not to. Solomon, she reasons, can take care of himself. As Abe chats about the ravens who live in the Tower of London (referring to the myth that if the trapped ravens leave the Tower, England will cease to exist), Cammie has a strong intuition that there is something in the crowd of skaters that she needs to be aware of, but can't quite pinpoint it. As she remembers dangerous encounters in her past, she also becomes aware that the communicator in Mr. Baxter's ear is issuing a warning. Her fearful intuition intensifies, and then the lights go out.

In Chapter 3, in the rush of panicked tourists, Cammie loses her grip on Mr. Baxter's hand and is instead pulled free by Joe Solomon. He gets as far as London Bridge with her before they're surrounded by both Baxters and several other operatives, all of whom urge Solomon to let Cammie go and go with them back to CIA headquarters in the United States where, Abe Baxter reveals, Solomon is wanted for questioning. As the other operatives close in on Cammie, who realizes that she and Rebecca are the only two people there who trust Solomon, Baxter tries to convince him to give himself in. He refuses, making Cammie promise that no matter what happens, she'll "follow the pigeons". As London Bridge starts to open, the operatives become more desperate for Solomon to let Cammie go, and Solomon becomes more insistent that she keep her promise. Cammie finally agrees and Solomon lets her join the Baxters, jumping into the Thames River to make his escape.



Chapters 1, 2 and 3 Analysis

The first thing to note about this book is that it is the fourth in a series featuring the same central character, Cammie Morgan, some of the same supporting characters of Rebecca Baxter, Zachary Goode, and Joe Solomon and the same basic situation of Cammie being pursued, for unknown reasons, by the mysterious and ruthless Circle. This means there are several references to situations, people, and past events that readers of the previous books will recognize but which readers unfamiliar with the series will not. In other words, the new reader will spend a substantial portion of time and energy playing catch-up, wondering what all the events and circumstances Cammie glancingly refers to are actually all about. Would it be better to read the other books first? Probably, since readers familiar with the series will, in all likelihood, find themselves on excitingly familiar ground, the reminders of past events and circumstances welcoming them into the middle of a story, not a beginning. New readers will, in all likelihood, feel as though they've missed something and, to a degree, somewhat lost.

That said, this section does contain a beginning of its own - specifically, the initiation and/or triggering of this book's particular plot, what might be described as a sub-plot for the series as a whole. This is the plot involving renegade spy Joe Solomon, the questions about his strange behavior driving the events of this book's narrative from this point on. A key point to note is his comment to Cammie about "following the pigeons", a comment that she clearly doesn't understand in the moment in which it's made or for several chapters following. The comment does, however, foreshadow the revelation of its actual meaning in Chapters 19 and 20.

Meanwhile, Here it's important to note the difference between the reader feeling lost because of the history of the series, and lost because of the events of the plot. The latter is clearly intended - the reader is meant to be in the same boat as Cammie and her friends, or at least a similar boat, in that reader and characters alike are all wondering about and/or inquiring into Joe Solomon at the same time. The former sort of feeling lost has to do with what amounts to the new reader being left out of a conversation between Cammie and past readers, a conversation full of references familiar to those who know what happened but which are ultimately mystifying and alienating to readers who don't.



Chapters 4 through 7

Chapters 4 through 7 Summary

In Chapter 4, in the back of a disguised van driving her and Cammie to an undisclosed location, Rebecca demands that her parents explain what just happened, insisting that Joe Solomon is one of the "good guys". The Baxters don't respond. The van passes into a tunnel, the walls of which open to admit the van and its passengers into Baring Cross Station, a secret CIA / MI6 (British Intelligence) headquarters. There, Cammie and the Baxters are met by other spies, several of whom blame the Baxters for what happened while others busy themselves trying to find Solomon. Meanwhile, Cammie is taken away for questioning.

In Chapter 5, after being kept alone and waiting for a couple of hours, Cammie is eventually visited by a British operative (whom she happens to find attractive) who demands to know what Solomon said to her on the bridge. Cammie, who feels as though he's treating her disrespectfully, demands to know his security clearance and tells him her mother (Rachel Morgan) is the head of the Gallagher School where she trains. The operative indicates that he knows who both Cammie and her mother are, and again demands to know what Solomon said on the bridge. Cammie tells him about Solomon's pigeon comments, adding that he was scared and that she is angry about Solomon being treated like some kind of threat. The operative tells her that Solomon IS a threat, that she doesn't know him at all, and that he's never going to be her teacher again.

In Chapter 6, Cammie and the Baxters are shuffled from one safe-house to another, surrounded by guards at all times. At one point, they end up at a well-kept castle where, in the middle of the night, Cammie is awakened by a familiar voice. When she tracks it down, she realizes it belongs to her Aunt Abby, another spy now talking with the Baxters. With the help of the now-awake Rebecca, Cammie climbs into a dumbwaiter and is lowered down to the kitchen, where the adults are talking about how none of them knows who Joe Solomon really is, commenting that the Circle has operated the way it is for years, and hinting that there are things that Cammie can never know. As Cammie ponders the meaning of their words, she realizes the dumbwaiter is slipping, and before she can help it, she falls into the kitchen and interrupts the adults' conversation.

In Chapter 7, Cammie and Rebecca are both brought into the kitchen, where they challenge the Baxters and Aunt Abby to reveal what they know about Solomon. Eventually, Abby reveals that one of the Circle operatives who came after Cammie on "Election Night" was caught and revealed that Joe Solomon was a double agent, working for both the Circle and the CIA. Abby further reveals that Solomon was recruited by the Circle when he was young and at school "at Blackthorne." When Cammie demands to know why her mother couldn't come to see her herself, Abby ends the conversation, reminding the girls that they have to go back to school the next day.



Chapters 4 through 7 Analysis

The size, scope, and nature of both the organization (the CIA) and the situation (its battle with the Circle) with which Cammie is involved is revealed further in this section, in which she and the reader both become aware that the encounter with Solomon has far more serious implications than Cammie originally imagined. In this sense, the writing of the book functions well as a mystery, the revelation of a truth leading to more questions, answers to those questions leading to more questions, and so on. Through this structural technique, the reader is drawn further and further into the truths at the core of the narrative which, by the time the story comes to its end (in forty two more chapters), reveal questions of their own.

Meanwhile, a particularly noteworthy element in this section is the appearance of the British operative, his unnamed appearance in Chapter 5 foreshadows his later unnamed appearances in Chapter 9 and 10 and his eventual identification as British spy Edward Townsend, assigned to be Solomon's replacement as instructor of Covert Operations at the Gallagher Academy. Another piece of foreshadowing occurs in Abby's reference to the Blackthorne Institute for Boys, a reference that foreshadows events in Chapters 37 through 40.

Finally, a couple of points of information - a "dumbwaiter" is a mechanical device which, through the use of a rope and pulley system attached to a shelf, enabled the movement of food from cellar kitchens to dining rooms on an upper floor. In Chapter 6, Cammie hides in the shelf and is lowered by Rebecca down into the kitchen, presumably hidden by the doors that usually concealed the dumbwaiter from the rest of the kitchen, so she can hear the conversation. Meanwhile, the reference to "Election Night" refers back to one of the other books in this series, specifically to an event referred to several times throughout this book but ultimately un-described in any detail. The implication of all these references is that the happenings of Election Night made it clear to Cammie how much actual danger she was in from the Circle and which, as a result, triggered the security measures under which she chafes and struggles throughout the narrative.



Chapters 8 through 10

Chapters 8 through 10 Summary

In Chapter 8, after a series of plane journeys, the Baxters and Aunt Abby take Cammie and Rebecca back to the Gallagher Academy, the final leg of their journey involving a lesson in evading surveillance when Mr. Baxter suddenly veers off the main road. He takes them down rough country terrain, then runs their limousine up a ramp, through the air and into a lake. There, the car spouts a propeller that drives it through the water into an underground cavern. Once ashore, the Baxters and Aunt Abby say goodbye to the girls, Aunt Abby reminding Cammie to be careful and strong.

In Chapter 9, Cammie and Rebecca are greeted by the stern Professor Buckingham, who tells them that their adventures in London are completely classified and not to be discussed. The two friends are then reunited with another friend, brainy Liz, who angrily tells them how worried she's been about them. As they make their way to their dorm tower, Cammie and the others are surprised and dismayed at how much has changed about the Academy - all the secret passages have been blocked off, and there is a great deal more security. When they arrive at their dorm room, Rebecca notices there is someone hiding in their bathroom. A fight ensues, with another Gallagher Girl, Macey, helping them subdue the man who, it turns out, is someone Cammie knows.

In Chapter 10, Cammie and her friends make their way to the Grand Hall for the Welcome Back Dinner, Cammie having revealed that the man in the room was the agent who interrogated Cammie in London. This makes Macey ask why Rebecca broke their agreement to not leave Cammie alone. When Cammie asks what she's talking about, Macey eventually confesses that Cammie's group of friends had agreed to protect her. This, along with the happy noises coming from the Grand Hall, makes Cammie realize how important life at the Academy is to her. When Cammie and the others arrive at the Grand Hall, the room falls silent, and Cammie realizes everyone is looking at her. Some awkward conversation with other friends and awareness that the Grand Hall is more secure than ever leads Cammie to realize things at the school have changed a great deal, and that no one else knows about Solomon being a double agent. This realization deepens when Professor Buckingham takes Cammie's mother's place for the opening of the Welcome Back dinner and leads the students in a pledge of allegiance to the ideals of Gillian Gallagher, the spy for whom the school is named. Later in the evening, Buckingham introduces the man who is going to take Solomon's place - Edward Townsend, the man who interrogated Cammie in London and who inspected her room. Further uncomfortable conversation about what happened in London between Townsend and Cammie leads Cammie to confess the truth about Solomon to her friends.



Chapters 8 through 10 Analysis

Important elements in this section include the dual-faceted reappearance of the British operative from Chapter 5 and the sense that the life Cammie used to believe was safe and secure has irrevocably changed. Then there are a couple of vivid representations of one of the book's central themes - its consideration of the value of friendship. Here this theme manifests in two ways actively and verbally. Finally, there are also developments in another of the book's main themes - its explorations of layers of identity. This particular theme manifests, in this section, in the appearance of Townsend, whose threatening appearance in the dorm room later gives way to the revelation of his true identity and purpose in the Grand Hall and in the chapters beyond.

Finally, it's important to note that throughout the narrative, there are references to several other narratives, references that encompass both style and substance. The car that turns into a submarine, for example, is clearly an echo of the James Bond style of narrative, in which spies are equipped with an astonishingly inventive, somewhat unlikely, but appealingly fanciful range of gadgets and equipment. Then there are any number of references to the Harry Potter novels. These include the secretive school with its secret passages, special classes, colorful teachers, and gifted students, a central character with both a mysterious past and a close circle of friends and allies, and the mysterious, determined pursuit of that central character by the forces of evil. In Chapter 10, there is even a large hall in which there is a feast to mark the beginning of the school year. Finally, there are references to other works of fiction aimed at teenaged girls, books that seem to suggest that almost everything experienced by the central character is colored by feelings of attraction to attractive boys. Some might view all these references as simply following generally accepted, and often successful, narrative patterns, which others might view them as what are called "hommages" or respectful honorings of near-archetypal narrative elements that have gone before. Others might view them as a kind of disrespectful, unoriginal borrowing. However these references are viewed, they certainly combine to create a welcoming sense of familiarity to the reader.



Chapters 11 through 14

Chapters 11 through 14 Summary

In Chapter 11, back in the dorm, after Rebecca has told Liz and Macey everything that happened in London, conversation reveals that Blackthorne (where Solomon was recruited by the Circle) is the school where Zach goes, that Zach has always been nearby whenever Cammie has gotten into trouble, and that Cammie is now worried that Zach too has been recruited. Cammie also tells the others about Solomon's demand that she "follow the pigeons", and the others try to convince her that Solomon truly cared for her, Macey referring to his genuine concern for her (Cammie) on "Election Night". The girls worry about why Cammie's mother isn't at the Academy, but Cammie realizes there's hope in this situation - Edward Townsend is not only hot, but seems to know things.

Chapter 12 begins with the first of a series of interjections of "Covert Operations Report", bold-typed narrative summaries of the activities of Cammie and her three allies - Liz, Rebecca and Macey. This first report concludes with an expression of determination to make Townsend reveal what he knows. On the first day of classes, several of the other girls at the school speculate that Solomon is on an undercover mission with Cammie's still-absent mother. Meanwhile, Cammie and the others attend Covert Operations class, now being taught by Townsend.

In Chapter 13, when Cammie arrives late for class, having been unaware that it has moved from its previous location in the school's Sub-Level 2, she discovers that the entire class is sitting silently, waiting for Townsend to speak. Eventually he does, interrogating them about Joe Solomon and responding dismissively to almost all their answers. Finally, Cammie fires off a series of observations she's made about Townsend, explaining that she and the others were taught to do so by Solomon and making a pointed comment about Townsend not having good enough clearance to go into Sub-Level 2. Townsend comments pointedly that he'll make sure he sees all the school he needs to see, and dismisses class early.

In Chapter 14, some weeks later, Cammie and her fellow operatives have, according to one of their Reports, found out nothing that indicates what Solomon meant by his reference to pigeons. They've also found out that Townsend has an active history as a CIA operative but recently disappeared from the active record for an extended period. Cammie and the other operatives resolve to do everything necessary to find out what Townsend knows.

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Chapters 15 through 18

Chapters 15 through 18 Summary

In Chapter 15, following another Covert Operations report describing how little Cammie and her friends have learned about Townsend, narration describes the Operatives' successful implementation of a plan to drug Townsend with a truth serum invented by Liz. While they're following him as they're waiting for the serum to take effect, they overhear his conversation with a fellow teacher in which he discusses the dangers of trying to get into Sub-Level 2, and insists he needs to get down there soon. Shortly afterwards, the serum takes effect, and the Operatives learn that Townsend is there to track Solomon, that Cammie's mother is being detained by her own agency, and that Solomon is believed to be responsible for the death of Cammie's father.

In Chapter 16, Cammie storms outside, followed by her friends. As they try to comfort her, Cammie insists that they have no idea how she feels. Macey reminds her that Macey knows, and Cammie calms down, vowing to find her mother and ask her. She's interrupted by a woman saying "Ask me what?"

In Chapter 17, in the privacy of the office, Rachel explains to Cammie that she was detained for questioning by the CIA, as was everyone who knew Solomon. She was there the longest, she adds, because she knew Solomon the longest. She also explains that she couldn't be with Cammie through all the difficulties of the trip to London even though she wanted to, and tells Cammie, who protests that she still believes Solomon, that the best operatives make the best liars". Finally, she tearfully tells Cammie that Solomon is never coming back", making Cammie wonder whether her mother is talking about Solomon or Cammie's father.

In Chapter 18, the next day, Townsend arrives late and disheveled for class, apparently feeling the aftereffects of the truth serum. His initial plan is to let the students occupy themselves, but when the class is visited by Rachel Morgan (who says she likes to drop in on new teachers and see how they're doing), he begins a lecture on the Circle of Cavan. The Circle, he says, was allegedly formed by Irishman Joseph Cavan following his apparent death at the hands of Gillian Gallagher. Cavan formed the Circle, Townsend says, in order to gain power and money that the Circle recruits its agents almost entirely from other espionage agencies and that he has no idea why the Circle continues to pursue Cammie. He also says that he's the man who tracks all the double agents and exposes them, concluding his lecture with the comment that Circle operatives could be anywhere.

Chapters 15 through 18 Analysis

This section contains another reference to a previous book that is neither developed nor explained. As with other unexplained references, it tends to leave a reader unfamiliar



with the rest of the series uncomfortably out in the cold. On the other side of the coin, where information and/or exposition ARE provided, is the story of how the Circle came to be formed, which provides not only important contextual information but also a slightly deeper insight into the character and intention of Townsend. His comments about the pervasiveness of the Circle's double agents are, for their part, another manifestation of the narrative's thematic interest in issues related to identity.

The conversation between Cammie and Rachel, meanwhile, adds an interesting layer of implied meaning to Cammie's relationship with Solomon. While the fact that Solomon was Cammie's father's best friend is referenced several times throughout the narrative, Cammie's comments in narration in Chapter 17 take a slightly different tack, suggesting that for both Rachel AND Cammie, Solomon is viewed as something of a substitute for the missing father and husband, albeit perhaps subconsciously. In addition, the references in Chapter 17 to Cammie's father never coming back also serve as foreshadowing of the comments made at the conclusion of Solomon's journal that Cammie's father disappeared (but no body was ever found) and by the female double agent in Chapter 41 that suggest that Cammie's father is, in fact alive. Finally, the references to Rachel's tearfulness while talking about Solomon foreshadows Cammie's discovery of the two of them holding hands in Chapter 45, again a reference to the possibility that Rachel views Solomon as a substitute for her husband.



Chapters 19 through 23

Chapters 19 through 23 Summary

In Chapter 19, after wandering aimlessly through the school for several hours and refusing to let herself cry, Cammie's thoughts are interrupted by teacher Mr. Smith, making an unexpected patrol. Cammie finds herself confessing her uncertainty about Solomon, commenting that when he was talking to her on London Bridge, she thought he was "crazy". Smith says that Solomon may have been many things, but was never crazy. After he goes, Cammie thinks more about the conversation with Solomon, and realizes he seemed lost, not crazy. As she's climbing the stairs to her dorm, her attention is caught by a flock of pigeons flying in and out of the top of a tower and she remembers how Solomon told her to "follow the pigeons".

In Chapter 20, along with Liz, Rebecca and Macey, Cammie climbs to the tower where the pigeons are roosting, finds a secret entrance, and goes into a room lined with blackboards covered in codes. As they argue over whether Solomon was sane when he was writing down the codes, Cammie realizes that one of the birds has a message for her, a message asking her to meet with the sender at a familiar place and to send the pigeon with confirmation. Cammie realizes it's both foolish and dangerous to follow the note's directions, but realizes she has no real choice.

In Chapter 21, as Cammie tries to figure a way out of the building to meet Solomon, Rebecca urges her to think about the consequences if the other operatives are right and he IS working for the Circle. Cammie insists that she has to follow through on this mission, and the others reluctantly agree to back her up.

In Chapter 22, Liz sneaks Cammie and the other operatives out of the building in the back of a mini-van she is using to test an enhanced-mileage engine. When they get to the center of town (Roseville), the other operatives set up a secure perimeter, leaving Cammie in the top of the library bell tower. As she's reflecting on how small the square looks and how vulnerable she feels, she is surprised by the appearance in the square of "a tall figure with broad shoulders."

In Chapter 23, the reader learns that the figure is Zach, and that he is surprised that the girl in the square is not Cammie, but Macey disguised to LOOK like Cammie. Eager to see him, however, Cammie races down from her hiding place, in spite of Rebecca's warnings to stay put, and confronts Zach herself. He confesses that he's in contact with Solomon, that Solomon is on the run from both the CIA and the Circle, that there's a book that both sides want, that Solomon needs Cassie to read it before the agencies do, and that it's kept down on Sub-Level 2, where Solomon's class usually is. Finally, Zach reveals that Solomon was the man who rigged the extra and unbreakable security on the Sub-Levels.



Chapters 19 through 23 Analysis

The narrative's thematic interest in the value of friendship and loyalty is explored again in this section, this time through the actions and attitudes of Cammie's friends who display a determination to back her up and support her even as she's getting into a dangerous situation that she knows she's not supposed to be in. This theme also manifests in the actions of Zach Goode, who displays a loyalty to Solomon and his intention that, interestingly enough, Cammie and the other girls seem less connected to, as their suspicious and uncertainty begin to overwhelm their sense of trust and loyalty.

At this point, it might be useful to acknowledge a key component of the author's narrative technique - specifically, the shaping of each short chapter to a point of suspense, confrontation and mystery. Over and over again, consistently and effectively, the author draws the reader further into the story by creating a powerful, almost inescapable question at the end of each chapter that the reader cannot help but want to have answered. Here it's important to note that these questions are clearly tied into the experience and point of view main character and narrator Cammie. The vivid example in this section is the end of Chapter 22. She only sees the figure emerging from the shadows as male and having "broad shoulders." In other words, she is narrating only what she sees and experiences in an immediate way that places the reader in the moment with her, that moment's true nature being revealed to the reader in the same way and at the same time as it's revealed to Cammie. Yes it's a device, a convention, a carefully chosen and shaped work of writer's craft. It's also tied into the experience of the character, which makes this particular application of a commonly used technique that much more effective.



Chapters 24 through 28

Chapters 24 through 28 Summary

In Chapter 24, Cammie comments in narration that Solomon didn't actually design and install the security measures in the school's sub-levels, he just rigged them to go off if the sub-levels were infiltrated. Meanwhile, Macey and Liz try to convince Cammie that it's only a matter of time before they get into the basement, but Rebecca realizes there's something more to Cammie's continuing anxiety - her feelings for Zach, whom Rebecca says cannot be trusted. Later, when Townsend is leading her class to their next assignment, Cammie is surprised to learn that he plans to take them off the school grounds. When she reminds Townsend that she is not supposed to leave the premises, Townsend patronizingly tells her that he's taken precautions because she's "special." Cammie then hurriedly joins her classmates in Townsend's van.

In Chapter 25, after a two hour ride, Cammie and her friends arrive at an amusement park, where Townsend assigns each of them to get a piece of information or an object from the park's guests, none of whom are operatives. As the Gallagher Girls go about their assignments, Rebecca stays with Cammie, until Cammie convinces her that there are enough guards about to keep her safe from potential Circle kidnapers. Rebecca goes off, and Cammie pursues her assignment - following a laborer in order to get impressions of some of his keys. She eventually follows him off the grounds and into a storage shed where, much to her surprise, she is spoken to.

In Chapter 26, Joe Solomon urges Cammie to leave with him. She refuses, a sudden surge of rage leading her to shout at him about his joining the Circle and killing her father. Even while she's registering the grief and regret in his face, she's aware that there are other people coming into the shed, a woman and Townsend who, Cammie comments in narration, "was looking at Joe Solomon and me as if Christmas had come early". Solomon tackles Solomon and the woman and Cammie runs past them out the door, realizing even as she's running that she has no idea who to trust any more.

In Chapter 27, Cammie races through the amusement park, realizing that the operatives she thought were there to protect her are running towards the storage shed. She reaches the top of a hill, looks back, discovers that the operatives have captured Solomon, and realizes that the whole situation was a trap - for Solomon. Zach appears, comments on how stupid Solomon was to get caught, explains to Cammie that he (Solomon) came to protect her and, after kissing her, urges her to read Solomon's journal. He then disappears as Cammie's fellow operatives arrive.

In Chapter 28, Cammie likens the silence in the back of the van to the silence that she remembers from the days after her father's death. Back at the school, several of the girls are discussing how they missed identifying Solomon as a spy when they are interrupted by a confrontation between Cammie's mother and Townsend who is intimidated enough by Rachel's anger to explain just how detailed his security



arrangements around Cammie were. As he leaves, he comments that Solomon is never going to hurt Cammie, or anyone else, ever again. Rachel comments that "Solomon is the least of Cammie's worries." This leads Cammie to greater resolve than ever to retrieving Solomon's journal.

Chapters 24 through 28 Analysis

The incident of Cammie's encounter with Solomon at the fun fair raises several questions that the narrative never actually answers. How did Solomon know about Townsend's plan? How did Townsend know that Solomon would know, and how did Townsend know that Solomon cared about Cammie enough to put himself into what he must have known would be significant danger? How did Zach know any of this, and why didn't he do anything to defend Solomon? How come Rachel, who seems to be at least as high up in the CIA hierarchy as Townsend, didn't know about the plan? If she did, how come she allowed it to happen, given that Cammie was being used as bait and that she and the other members of the CIA know that Circle double agents could be anywhere. Ultimately, there is the sense about this entire sequence that it exists independently of the overall logic of the narrative, coming across more as an arbitrary suspense raiser than as an organically, logically motivated and developed plot point.

That said, there are a couple of noteworthy thematic developments in this section - specifically, important explorations of the novel's thematic interest in the value of friendship and loyalty as manifested in Cammie's relationships with her friends, particularly with Rebecca. Meanwhile, the dark side of friendship and loyalty, the pain and anger that results from when such loyalty is betrayed, manifests in Cammie's fury at Solomon who, she believes, felt the same loyalty towards her father as she feels, for example, for Rebecca.



Chapters 29 through 32

Chapters 29 through 32 Summary

In Chapter 29, after three weeks of planning, Cammie and her three fellow operatives (Liz, Rebecca and Macey) execute their late-night plan to get into Sub Level Two. They start by sliding down a very narrow air shaft that, Cammie comments, only someone the size of a Gallagher girl could get through. They then begin their disabling of the security system, but the klutzy Liz accidentally sets it off. A glass wall reveals that a cascade of water is about to flood the room as Liz hooks up a laptop to disable the laser security. Cammie and Macey successfully work the wall's security system to stop the flood as Liz, just as successfully, disables the lasers, and the operatives are welcomed into the next level.

In Chapter 30, for a moment, Macey and Rebecca are distracted by some of the intriguing archived material in Sub-Level 2, but soon enough they are helping Liz get to the top of the shelf where Zach had said Solomon's journal was stored. Cammie notices a sound, and quickly theorizes that Townsend is on his way in to investigate. The operatives take action to delay him as Liz grabs the journal and comes down. She then leads the other operatives back to the air shaft, where they use the winch and pulley system that got them down to get them back to the surface.

In Chapter 31, the operatives climb out of the shaft and into a full blown security alert. They race for the house, where Cammie is surrounded by protective professors, including Townsend, who asks where they were and what's in Liz's backpack. For a moment Cammie is terrified that the journal is about to be discovered, but is reassured by a glance from Macey that it's safe - Liz's backpack has nothing in it but school supplies. Once she has been reassured the school is secure, Rachel orders the girls to bed - but in their dorm, Cammie and the operatives look through first a note left by Solomon and then through the journal, which they realize is in code. A moment later, though, they realize the code can be broken if they use the writing on the blackboards in the pigeon tower as a reference ... a reference that will tell them what the journal, in the handwriting of Cammie's father, not Solomon, actually says.

Chapter 32 consists of entries from the journal, written in the same style as Cammie's Covert Operations Reports, which describe how Operatives Solomon and Morgan (Cammie's father) undertook a covert operation to uncover and break the Circle. The Journal describes how they came to realize how many Circle operatives there were and how far into other organizations they'd infiltrated, how they operated independently of the CIA, and how the CIA suspected their involvement and put Solomon on desk duty. Finally, the journal describes how Solomon and Morgan arranged for Morgan to meet with a contact in Greece to gain more information, how he never arrived, and how he seemingly disappeared.



Chapters 29 through 32 Analysis

Among the noteworthy elements in this section is the tension-filled description of the incursion into Sub-Level 2 which is, in spite of the technical skill in which the author develops suspense, more than a little illogical. The descriptions in previous chapters of how vicious and unbeatable the system is make it seem much more challenging than it actually turns out to be. The beginning of Chapter 31, meanwhile, contains a significant omission on the part of Cammie, who so prides herself on her attention to detail. She fails to notice that there is no way Townsend, whom she believes was trying to capture them while she and the other operatives are breaking into Sub-Level 2, could have gotten back into the school as quickly as he did if he had, in fact, been the person pursuing them. This, in turn, relates to another point of relative illogic - the fact that Rachel, who is later revealed to be the actual pursuer in Sub-Level 2, IS at the school and could NOT have made it back in time, or looked clean (particularly since, as is later revealed, she'd been taking a jackhammer to a concrete wall). Finally, the narrative never explains where the journal was hidden when Liz was forced to empty her backpack, or whether the breach that ups the escape ante for Cammie and her friends was actually caused by Cammie (probable) or whether it was caused by something else.

All that said, the contents, as introduced by Cammie's content at the end of Chapter 31, are very intriguing, and are in many ways a manifestation of the novel's thematic interest in the nature of identity. The journal entries, in fact, portray both Solomon and Cammie's father as having different aspects to their identity than any of the operatives, or many more mature operatives (like Abby and the Baxters) actually knew. The ending of Chapter 32 is particularly noteworthy, in that it never actually says that Cammie's father was/is dead, an important omission that foreshadows the point at the end of Chapter 41, at which Zach's Circle-operative mother suggests that he is, in fact alive.



Chapters 33 through 37

Chapters 33 through 37 Summary

In Chapter 33, Cammie takes the journal to show her mother, but is stopped outside Rachel's door by Townsend, who reveals that he knows he was drugged and has been watched, that Rachel has been called away, and that Solomon has been freed by the Circle from the custody of the CIA, at the cost of several CIA lives. That night, Cammie dreams she is dancing with her father, a dream from which she is woken by a deep voice speaking to her.

In Chapter 34, Zach, who convinces her to not wake her roommates and to go for a walk with him. When they get to one of the classrooms, Zach tells Cammie that yes, the Circle has Solomon, and that the Circle is not happy that Solomon tried to get out from under their influence. He also insists that he doesn't know why the Circle wants HER, but promises to help her find out. She angrily asks him why the Circle hasn't hurt him in all the times he's helped her escape, and he tells her it's best that she doesn't know. She loses her temper at him. He taunts her about not being able to hurt him, but then she points out the three other Gallagher Girls behind her, and says that they might.

In Chapter 35, the conversation between Zach, Cammie and the other Gallagher Girls reveals that "in the last two hundred years no one has come closer to bringing down the Circle than Mr. Solomon" and Cammie's father. That, they reason together, is why the Circle wants him and Cammie - since her father's journal now belongs to Cammie, the Circle needs to know what SHE knows. Zach then confesses there's another journal, one kept by Solomon ever since he was recruited by the Circle and now hidden at Blackthorne. This leads Zach and the Gallagher Girls to decide to break into Blackthorne and retrieve it themselves. Their plans are interrupted by the arrival of Cammie's mother, who demands to know why Zach left her office.

In Chapter 36, in the back of Liz's van, Cammie is very aware of Zach's nearness, but decides to not react. After several hours of driving, the four operatives, Zach, and Rachel arrive at an isolated gas station, where they rendezvous with Mr. and Mrs. Baxter and with Abby. Brief conversation reveals that the agent trying to get into Sub-Level 2 at the same time as the operatives was Rachel, and that none of the adults are going on the Blackthorne mission. The adults then leave to patrol the perimeter of the school grounds, leaving Zach and the Gallagher Girls to walk into Blackthorne.

Chapters 33 through 37 Analysis

Important elements in this section include Cammie's questioning of why Zach is never attacked by Circle operatives and the revelation that there is a second journal. Both these elements can be seen as a further manifestation of the narrative's thematic interest in questions of identity, specifically that of Zach. That said, one very important



aspect of Zach's identity manifests quite clearly in this section - the fact that he is, as Cammie puts it, a very cute boy. The semi-encounter between the two of them at the beginning of Chapter 36 is an example of how the narrative, sometimes jarringly, juxtaposes the serious tone of its spy story with the flirtatious, semi-serious tone of its teen girl fantasies.

Also in this section, the narrative raises other logic questions that are never answered - what, for example, was Zach doing in Rachel's office and why was Rachel trying to break into Sub-Level 2? Was she in search of the journal herself? If so, why does she never ask to see it? Or was she simply trying to find out who set off the security system?



Chapters 37 through 40

Chapters 37 through 40 Summary

In Chapter 37, Zach and the Operatives make their way through a dark forest, ride down a raging river and navigate some perilous waterfalls before arriving at the barbed wire perimeter of the Blackthorne Grounds. Liz is left behind to hack into the electronic security system, Rebecca is left behind to handle the guards, and Macey is left behind to act as backup. Zach and Cammie infiltrate the grounds, with Cammie's narration describing how the covers of her and Zach's schools are very different) - the Gallagher Academy looks like a school for princesses, Blackthorne looks like a reform center for juvenile delinquents. In the few moments before they make their entry into the school, Zach and Cammie lie quietly together in the trees, their physical closeness triggering surges of feeling in Cammie strong enough to make her kiss him. She then asks where they're going. He tells her they're headed for "The Tombs."

In Chapter 38, Zach and Cammie make their way into the underground network of tunnels and caverns known as The Tombs. At one point they enter a particularly large cavern where there are mannequins with targets painted on them. Cammie's questions about what the room was used for, and Zach's unclear answers lead Cammie to realize that in the past, Blackthorne was used as a training base for assassins. Zach, however, insists that the school is no longer used for that purpose. Once they leave the large cavern, they make their way to a large room filled with filing cabinets and boxes. There, Zach immediately locates and retrieves Solomon's journal. He and Cammie are just on their way out when they hear approaching voices.

In Chapter 39, hiding in the shadows, Cammie and Zach move forward, and discover that Solomon is there, being interrogated by a woman Cammie recognizes as a Circle agent who had previously attacked her. As Cammie and Zach weigh their options for escape, they realize the woman is asking Solomon where Morgan's journal is, and that Solomon has led them to an explosive-lined room in the hopes that his death would result in their deaths as well. Preparing to run, Zach gives Cammie the journal, insisting that she should try to get away, and that he won't be hurt. As she's wondering why, they're discovered by three Blackthorne guards who take them to the woman, who taunts Solomon about bringing her "a present" and who reveals herself to be Zach's mother!

In Chapter 40, in spite of being held by guards, Zach reaches for Cammie, who furiously twists away, coming face to face with the taunts of his mother. Eventually, Zach gets close enough to whisper to Cammie to fight, and together they, with Solomon's assistance, fight off both the guards and Zach's mother. One of the guards pulls a gun on Zach, and his mother turns her attention from Cammie to the gunman, knocking the gun out of his hands towards Zach. As he grabs it and aims for the explosives, Cammie shouts for him to stop, but he yells for her to run, and then, just before firing the gun, says goodbye. Cammie runs, feeling the explosion behind her without looking back.



Chapters 37 through 40 Analysis

The action at the end of Chapter 40 builds to the novel's climax of the explosive revelation that Zach is the son of a powerful agent of the Circle. This is why he is never hurt while defending Cammie from the Circle since his mother's affection for him proves valuable for both Zach and Cammie but, on the other hand, also raises a logic question. If she is so apparently determined to save her son's life no matter what, how can she possibly be viewed as a valuable agent by the Circle if she's got such an obvious and therefore exploitable, vulnerability? It's also important to note, meanwhile, that the feelings of Zach's mother toward her son can be seen in a couple of interesting lights as a manifestation of the narrative's thematic interest in loyalty and as an example of parental protectiveness that has a parallel in the protectiveness of Rachel towards Cammie.

Other noteworthy elements in this section include another collision between Cammie's spy side and her teen girl side. While this and the other collisions, in the narrative, between these two sides of Cammie's personality can seem jarring, it may also be that they are intended to be perceived as manifestations of the narrative's thematic interest in identity - specifically, how the same person can have two such apparently contradictory sides to his/her personality at the same time.

Finally, it's interesting to note that when it comes to reclaiming both journals, those who seek them have to literally descend to the depths to find the truth.



Chapters 41 through 46

Chapters 41 through 46 Summary

In Chapter 41, Cammie rushes through the caves and tunnels, feeling the heat of the explosion and fire behind her. The sounds in her earpiece communicator become clearer and she shouts what she thinks is her location into it, but is surprised when she comes out of a tunnel and finds herself behind the falls, trapped and face to face with Zach's mother, who reveals that she is a former Gallagher Girl. Knowing that the Circle wants her alive, Cammie threatens to jump into the falls and then threatens to kill Zach's mother, who laughs and asks if she dies, who will take Cammie to her father. Before the words can register, Cammie remembers the trapped ravens and leaps into the falls.

In Chapter 42, Cammie is going through the falls and landing in the water. Cammie describes, in narration, feeling like there was no one she could ever trust again, needing to run and to hide, struggling when she was pulled from the water, and being wrapped in blankets. Her struggle finally ends when her mother runs out from the rescue helicopter and helps Townsend get Cammie inside.

In Chapter 43, in the helicopter, Cammie tries to tell her mother and Townsend what happened, but shock takes over and she falls unconscious. Later, in the Gallagher Infirmary, the recovering Cammie is interviewed by Townsend. She tells him everything that happened and everything she learned. He tells her that her fellow Operatives are all fine and that one survivor has been pulled from the burning mountain. He takes Cammie to see him, and she is able to recognize the mostly bandaged figure as Solomon. Townsend says that officially, Solomon is dead - there's no need for anyone to chase him anymore. As Townsend leaves, he returns the second journal to Cammie, and responds to her insistent question about whether he believes her father is alive with a firm "no."

In Chapter 44, Cammie is then visited by her mother, who admits it's too soon to say whether Solomon will survive but does say that he was saved from the fire by Zach, who is mostly unhurt and waiting outside. She adds that Zach will most likely finish his education at Gallagher, as there is no place safe for him anymore. Cammie asks her mother whether she believes her husband and Cammie's father is still alive. At first, her mother tries to make her believe he is most likely dead, saying that the Circle will say anything to get Cammie on their side. A moment later, however, she admits that she still has a degree of hope. Outside Solomon's hospital room, Cammie has a low-key reunion with Zach, giving him the journal. The reunion is interrupted by the arrival of Cammie's fellow operatives. When she turns to look for Zach, he's disappeared.

In Chapter 45, as Cammie's recovery continues, she and her friends try to make plans for the summer holiday, but they all seem to be too risky, with too much chance for Cammie to be kidnapped. Meanwhile, Cammie visits Solomon in the infirmary, and discovers her mother holding his hand. Later, Cammie and Zach have a conversation in



the pigeon tower, in which Zach explains why he never told Cammie about his mother and tries to get her to run away into hiding with him. For a moment or two she's tempted, but then tells him she can't run away with him and he tells her that he knows she can't.

In Chapter 46, Cammie's narration reveals that she's writing these final words of her report on the last day of classes before summer. She describes telling her friends that she loves them, and then confesses that she's made up her mind - she's going to do as Zach suggests and run away, but on her own. Too many people around her, she says, get hurt because of her, and allow that any more. She says she's going to leave her report behind for people to read, urges them to not worry, and says she's running towards answers about herself, her father, the Circle, and how she can stop them.

Chapters 41 through 46 Analysis

The novel's final section, its denouement or falling action, contains several important elements. The first is informational and has to do with the question of whether Cammie's father is actually alive. Zach's mother, and indeed the rest of the Circle, will say and do anything in order to get what they want, particularly when it comes to Cammie. The second important element of this section appears in both Chapter 41 and Chapter 46, specifically in the moments at which Cammie considers, and acts on, her actions in pursuit of freedom. Here it's important to note that throughout the novel, she has described herself as feeling trapped, as feeling the same way as she imagines the ravens feel, trapped as they are in the Tower of London. While Cammie's desire to no longer be, or feel, trapped is an undercurrent throughout the narrative, its importance relative to the search for the truth about Joe Solomon is underplayed, at least until the final moments of this section, in which that desire becomes paramount. It's also important to note that in these moments, the thematic consideration of identity becomes entwined with considerations of freedom, in that up to this point in her life, Cammie's identity has been defined by the fact that she is trapped. With her actions in Chapters 41 and 46, she is taking action to fundamentally re-define her identity, and claim a sense of self. There is one final consideration of identity in this section. This is the comment made by Townsend that the bandaged man (apparently Joe Solomon) is to have a new identity. Solomon, like Cammie, is leaving the past and its troubling identities behind and moving into an uncertain future although unlike Cammie, Solomon doesn't really have much of a choice.

Other important elements in this section include the glimpse of something other than friendship between Rachel and Solomon, and the lack of revelation about what's contained in the second journal. This lack of information is clearly a set up for the next book, as is the novel's final moments, in which Cammie declares her intention to run away. In this, there is perhaps one of the book's most evocative manifestations of the theme of loyalty. Cammie is doing what she's doing not only out of curiosity about herself and her past, but also out of loyalty to her friends, family, teachers, and allies. She is loyally doing what she needs to do to keep them out of harm's way.



Characters

Cammie (Cameron) Morgan

Cammie is the book's central character, its narrator, and protagonist. Her situation, attitudes towards that situation, and action taken as a result of both attitudes and situation define and motivate the book's action as well as manifest its central themes. She is intelligent but not beyond letting her feelings occasionally overwhelm both her intelligence and her good judgment, although there are indications throughout the narrative that she is becoming adept at finding a better balance between the two. She is also loyal to her friends and family, particularly those who have earned her loyalty. She is also, in some ways, naïve about the darker sides of human belief and behavior. She does seem to have a certain awareness of how bad people can be, but there is also the sense that the events in this book are the first time they have come so close to home. Yes she has been attacked before, but it seems as though those attacks originated from people in the anonymously evil circle whom she doesn't really know. The novel gives the sense that with the discovery of Joe Solomon's being a double agent, Cammie is, for the first time, encountering betrayal - someone she respects, admires, and cares for turns out to have a darker side than she could have possibly imagine. She struggles to fit what she knows with what she believes. In other words, she is starting to come of age and learn more personally experienced truths about how the world works.

Zachary Goode

Zach is the previously mentioned cute boy spy that Cammie is attracted to and finds powerfully intriguing, partly because of his looks, partly because of how he evidently cares a lot for her, and partly because of his mysterious habit of showing up and helping her when she's in trouble. As portrayed in the narrative, he is not a particularly deeply developed character, coming across for most of the book as more of a plot device than anything else. Only in the book's final chapters, in which the narrative reveals that his mother is one of the high up agents of the evil Circle, does the reader get a good sense of just how much more there is to Zach than meets the eye. Perhaps most interestingly, he triggers questioning and self-examination in Cammie that relates to one of the book's key themes - specifically, its consideration of loyalty and friendship. Zach's seemingly ambiguous loyalties (which, by the way, are also a manifestation of the novel's thematic interest in loyalty) cause Cammie, in order to work out who should receive her loyalty, to bconsider and examine what loyalty and friendship really mean. In other words, he is a catalytic character, causing and triggering transformation and growth without actually participating in it.



Joe Solomon

Joe Solomon is Cammie's former teacher at the Gallagher Academy, and a well-known, respected spy in his own right. The revelation that he is a double agent, working for both the CIA and the Circle, sends him on the run from Cammie, from the school, and from operatives on both sides who want to capture him, ensure that whatever secrets he has to tell are not told to the wrong side. His actions and attitudes towards Cammie embody and/or manifest the narrative's thematic interest in issues around loyalty and friendship, in that his determination to protect her, even while he's on the run, manifest quite a profound sense of loyalty. It must be noted, however, that those feelings may spring as much from his feelings towards her mother than anything else, feelings hinted at in the hospital scene late in the novel where Cammie's mother is seen holding his hand. On another level, Solomon and his situation also embody and/or manifest the novel's thematic interest in questions of identity. The revelation that what people believed him to be (a loyal CIA agent) is in fact a mask, and that he is in fact a double agent, comes as a troubling revelation not only to Cammie but to many other characters.

Rebecca Baxter

Rebecca Baxter is Cammie's best friend and a fellow student at the Gallagher Academy. Fearless, assertive, aggressive, and proudly loyal to Cammie, she is Cammie's staunchest and most secure ally, someone whose identity and loyalty is never in question. She is a manifestation of several of the narrative's key themes and a positive example of loyalty, friendship, and identity against which Cammie, and the reader, can measure all the other uncertain friendships and identities around her. Rebecca is also a thematically contrasting character in another way - where Cammie is essentially trapped by her circumstances, Rebecca is quite free, a circumstance to which Cammie, somewhat enviously, aspires.

Liz Sutton, Macey McHenry

Brainy Liz and beautiful Macey are Cammie's two other best friends at the Gallagher Academy and along with Rebecca, form her support team. They too are unquestioning in their loyalty and friendship, completely secure in their identities. They are powerfully defining/contrasting characters to all the unreliable uncertainty swirling around Cammie.

Cammie's Parents

Cammie's mother and father were/are both powerful and respected spies within the CIA. At the time of the narrative, Cammie's mother Rachel has been the headmistress of the Gallagher Academy, where Cammie goes to school, while Cammie's father has long been missing and presumed dead. Later in the narrative, however, Cammie is startled to hear it suggested that her father is still, perhaps, alive. Her determination to find out the truth defines the actions she seems, at the end of the novel, about to take in order to



finally, thoroughly, claim freedom for both herself and her friends/allies/colleagues who seek to protect her.

Abe and Grace Baxter, Abigail Cameron

The Baxters are Rebecca's parents, Abigail is Cammie's maternal aunt. All three are high-ranking and highly respected CIA operatives. All three are engaged in determined efforts to both keep Cammie safe and to track down Joe Solomon. They are powerful allies in Cammie's search for the truth of her identity and for freedom, and as such are manifestations/examples of the power and value of loyalty.

Professor Buckingham, Madame Dabney, Professor Smith

These are some of the teachers at the Gallagher Academy. They are portrayed as relatively minor characters, but are also portrayed as having a great deal of both professional and personal wisdom to offer.

Edward Townsend

Townsend makes his first appearance as an unnamed British agent who debriefs Cammie about her encounter with Joe Solomon on London Bridge. Later, he turns up at the Gallagher Academy as Solomon's replacement, unwelcome to all the girls but particularly to the resentful Cammie. He is portrayed as patronizing, opinionated, solitary and unfriendly, determined, and judgmental, but ultimately having compassion and integrity.

Gillian Gallagher, Joseph Cavan

Not much is revealed and discussed about these two characters, but they are nonetheless important and perhaps even mythic in terms of their status within the spy community. Cavan, an agent of dark forces, was defeated sometime in the relatively distant past by Gallagher, who went on to found the Gallagher Academy to train and encourage young women who, like her, were determined to combat the dark forces of greed, exploitation, and power. These, in turn, were embodied by Cavan and the "circle" of like-minded operatives he gathered around him and who, over the succeeding centuries, attempted to spread their power and control throughout the world.

Zach's Mother

Late in the narrative, as Zach and Cammie are on a perilous mission into the secret caves beneath the Blackthorne Institute, they encounter a group of Circle agents torturing Joe Solomon for information. They are being led by a woman who later is



identified as Zach's mother, and who is therefore the answer to one of Cammie's questions about Zach. Why, in all the conflicts with the Circle he has fought with her, has he remained unharmed? The answer is that his mother protects him. Zach's mother is portrayed, for the most part, as being quite ruthless with her only soft spot and vulnerability being her son. Zach's mother also raises doubts in Cammie's mind about whether her (Cammie's) father is really dead.



Objects/Places

London, England

The first chapter of the novel takes place in London, specifically around London's old Tower Bridge. The next couple of chapters take place in another London location, a secret underground center of operations for MI6.

MI6, the CIA

These two organizations are the primary intelligence (i.e. spy) networks in England and the United States, respectively.

The Circle of Cavan

The Circle of Cavan is a secretive counter-intelligence agency interested, as the novel outlines, in accumulating power, money and influence. Its operations extend across international boundaries - in other words, while intelligence agencies like MI6 and the CIA essentially function independently but (mostly) cooperatively, the Circle is essentially a single organization. One of its mysterious goals is to kidnap protagonist Cammie and use her, or the information the Circle believes she has, for some unknown purpose. In other words, the Circle is essentially the book's primary antagonist.

The Gallagher Academy for Exceptional Young Women

This is the exclusive and secretive girls school that Cammie and her friends attend, that is run by Cammie's mother Rachel, and where both Joe Solomon and Edward Solomon are teachers. The school is, in fact, a training academy for would-be intelligence agents.

Roseville, Virginia

This is the small, quaint town near the Gallagher Academy.

The Pigeon Tower

A mysterious direction given to Cammie by rogue agent Joe Solomon leads her to investigate a tower on the Gallagher campus that pigeons fly in and out of. The tower is where Cammie and her friends discover the secrets of the code in which Solomon and her own father wrote their journals.



The Sub-Levels (Sub-Level 2)

Deep beneath the earth's surface, underneath the Gallagher Academy and sprawling some distance underground, the Sub-Levels are the place where the Academy's secrets, and also many secrets of the CIA itself, are kept. When Cammie and her allies start the new semester, the Sub-Levels are locked. They discover that one of the secret journals sought by both the Circle and Joe Solomon is kept in Sub-Level 2, and they plan/stage a daring operation to retrieve it.

The First Journal

This diary/journal was written by Cammie's father, Operative Morgan, and describes the efforts that he and Operative (Joe) Solomon undertook to investigate and break the Circle.

The Second Journal

This journal was kept by Operative (Joe) Solomon from the time he was first recruited by the Circle when still a student to the present time. It's kept in the caves beneath the Blackthorne Institute, but retrieved by Cammie and Zach in another daring mission.

The Blackthorne Institute for Boys

In the same way as the Gallagher Academy is a covert training center for young female espionage agents, the Blackthorne Academy is a training center for young male agents. Unlike the Gallagher Academy, however, which disguises its operations under a mask of privilege, Blackthorne is disguised as a detention center for juvenile delinquents.

The Tombs

In the same way as the Sub-Levels are concealed beneath the Gallagher Academy, the so-called Tombs (a collection of natural caves) are concealed beneath Blackthorne and within a nearby mountain. When Cammie and Zach venture into the Tombs to retrieve the second journal, Cammie discovers that they, and Blackthorne itself, were once used to train assassins.

The Ravens

At the beginning of the novel, Abe Dexter (see "Characters") tells Cammie about the ravens living in the Tower of London (see "Chapter 1"). Several times throughout the narrative, Cammie comments that she feels like the ravens, trapped and unable to leave.



Themes

Entrapment and Freedom

In many ways throughout the narrative, Cammie's attitudes, actions, and reactions are defined by her feeling of being trapped, both by the mysterious desires and ambitions of the Circle and by the desires of those around her to protect her from those desires and ambitions. She is constantly watched over by, and has her actions essentially controlled by, her parents, her friends, her teachers, and what amounts to the entire international espionage community. It's important to note, however, that other characters also have experiences of being trapped. These include Joe Solomon and Zach Goode.

As previously discussed, this theme is metaphorically evoked in the experience of the ravens in the Tower of London or birds trapped within the Tower's ancient walls and whose disappearance would herald the downfall of England. There is the implication throughout the narrative that if Cammie disappeared, the entire espionage community would, for some mysterious reason, experience a downfall of its own. At this point, it's essential to note that this metaphor extends into the novel's climax. Here, Cammie takes action that, in her mind, sets her apart from the ravens - she chooses to free herself, or at least to make an attempt to free herself, from all the constrictions that she feels are surrounding her, her life, and her friends. She literally spreads her arms like wings and takes to the air as she jumps into what she believes is the freedom afforded by the rushing river below. In other words, her action embodies the value of, and necessity for freedom, and at the same time manifests the book's second primary theme, which relates to explorations of issues related to secrets and identity.

Secrets and Identity

There are two primary manifestations of this theme in the narrative. The first has to do with the engine of the plot, the incident and/or circumstances that set its events into motion and which, to one degree or another, trigger and/or infuse almost every event that plot includes. This is the revelation, very early in the narrative, that Joe Solomon is a double agent, working for both the law-abiding CIA and the law-defying Circle. In other words, Cammie discovers that he is not who she thought he was, that he has been keeping a secret and has another identity. This discovery results in a powerful and almost overwhelming sense of confusion and betrayal. Whom can she trust? The second primary manifestation of this theme has to do with Cammie herself, in that she, on some level, has a second identity as well - the side of her that has something that the Circle wants to get hold of. Everything about her life, her identity, is defined by that fact. She encounters violence because of it, her every move is watched and often controlled because of it, the lives of her friends and family are defined by it, and her choices intended to search out the truth about both Solomon and herself are defined by her need to escape it. Other, secondary manifestations of this theme can be found in the characters of Rachel (Cammie's mother, who has knowledge and is motivated by



drives that she keeps secret from Cammie), Townsend (who is in a similar situation to Cammie's mother) and Zach (who has, in some ways, the biggest secret of all - his mother is working for the bad guys).

Here it's important to note, however, that there are contrasting characters in the narrative whose identity is entirely clear and trustworthy. These are Cammie's friends, who are unswerving and clear in their support and trust, and whom Cammie unconditionally supports and trusts in turn. They have occasional secrets, but they are open in their identities, and are defining contrasts to the characters and situations in which hidden identities pose such physical and emotional threats.

Friendship and Loyalty

The loyalty and friendship of Cammie's fellow Gallagher Girls is the primary manifestation of the novel's third major theme, its exploration of the value of friendship and loyalty. In a situation where Cammie frequently feels as there is no one she can trust or who is truly loyal to her and who in turn, inspires loyalty in her, the unswerving and unquestioned friendship of Rebecca, Liz, and Macey all serve as a touchstone. This conduct serves as an example of what Cammie is looking for and what she needs. Here it's important to note that there is a flip side to this loyalty. As previously discussed, that flipside is the betrayal or fundamental disloyalty, of Joe Solomon. Cammie's pain, anger, frustration and resentment, all of which motivate her actions throughout the narrative, are all triggered by her experience of having someone she believed she could trust turn out to be exactly the opposite. In other words, the narrative portrays both sides of the coin, both edges of the sword. Cammie is able to act the way she does because she feels power and strength as a result of the friendship and loyalty of her friends, but wouldn't have to do what she does if she hadn't felt the pain of betrayal as a result of the lack of friendship and lack of loyalty of Joe Solomon.

Other manifestations of this theme include the almost-in-passing glance at the pledge made by the Gallagher Girls at the welcome back banquet and the loyalty that Zach's mother feels towards her son and that essentially keeps him alive.



Style

Point of View

The story is told from the first person and past tense point of view, essentially as a covert operations report written by protagonist Cammie Morgan in the aftermath of her adventures. The most interesting aspect of this particular narrative point of view is that the language, imagery, and issues upon which she comments are expressed in the voice of a contemporary teenaged young woman. For example, the references to Zach's being a cute boy are almost simultaneously juxtaposed with references to how much danger both Zach and Cammie are either in or could be in as the result of their academic / professional situations. There is also a certain irreverence, a certain reluctance and/or inability to take things seriously that, at times, seems to undermine the relative seriousness of the situations in which Cammie finds herself.

In terms of the book's thematic point of view, there is the sense that all three of its primary thematic considerations are essentially moral. Yes, Cammie and her friends engage in violence and subterfuge, but they do so in the name of pursuing and defending freedom, both Cassie's personal freedom and that of the west as a whole. They are hurt and betrayed by experiences of lies and secret-keeping, which suggests that the morality of honesty is being advocated. Then there are the values of trust and integrity, particularly as embodied on the positive side by Cammie's friends and on the negative side by the initially untrustworthy Joe Solomon and the entirely untrustworthy mother of Zach Goode. Finally, there is the fundamentally American value of living a life of individual freedom, which Cammie struggles to realize throughout the narrative and which, as the novel comes to a close, she takes not one but two drastic actions to claim.

Setting

In terms of the work's setting in time, the novel takes place in the present day, in the contemporary world of cell phones, laptop computers, high tech gadgetry, and international spy/terrorist/counter-terrorist networks. The latter two elements have long been staples of the spy thriller genre. There is the sense, however, that with the frequent contemporary exposure (through the immediacy of modern media) to the operations of organizations like the CIA, as well as exposure to the miracles of modern technology, the once-fantastical aspect of these two elements seems to be much more grounded in everyday reality.

In terms of the work's setting in place, the primary setting is the United States of America whose reputation as a source of world-wide covert intelligence gathering and utilization is considerable. Within that broad-strokes setting are two other primary sub-settings, the Gallagher Academy and, to a lesser degree, Blackthorne Institute whose activities manifest that reputation.



In the case of this particular book, in which there is such a clear division between the so-called "good guys" and "bad guys," it's interesting to consider the question of the book's setting in morality, along the continuum of right and wrong. America and Britain are clearly seen as fighting on the side of what is right such as openness, integrity, honesty, and freedom. The Circle, on the other hand, is viewed as fighting on the side of evil - the accumulation of money, influence and power. It could be argued, however, that there is a significant irony here. The West and the United States in particular, are viewed as being both motivated and defined by exactly the same principles as the Circle - the drive to accumulate money, influence, and power. The question then becomes what is the difference between the Western quest for those qualities of life and the Circle's quest?

Language and Meaning

As noted above in "Point of View," the book's narrative voice is very clearly that of its protagonist and narrator, teenaged trainee-spy Cameron (Cammie) Morgan. The vocabulary, the phrases, and the sideways glances into the conflict between raging hormones and ambitious self-actualization are clearly and vividly both reflective and evocative of contemporary young woman - or rather, contemporary writing about contemporary young women. Are real-world young women of Cammie's age as obsessed with "hot" young men as the narrative portrays Cammie and her friends as being? Do books like this, magazines, and music videos simply tell the public that young women behave this way? Is this portrayal of young women grounded in reality at all?

In terms of meaning, it's interesting to consider its three main themes in the light of what might be described as the broader picture of adolescence. It could be argued, in fact, that questions of identity, of constriction vs. freedom, and the importance of friendship and loyalty are, in many essential ways, the core experiences of anyone moving through their teenage years, whether young man or young woman, spy or not. In other words, it seems that the author is using the novel's specific situation and premise as a vehicle to explore some universal issues that just happen to manifest in this particular way for this particular teen, but which are, in actuality, at work in the lives of every teen.

Finally, there are occasions in the narrative where Cammie contemplates her situation in larger terms - that is, within the context of the human experience as a whole and not just her own personal experience. A good example can be found in the quote from p. 98, in which her comments can be seen as reflecting a question that many thoughtful people have contemplated at one point or another.

Structure

The novel's structure is essentially linear, both in terms of its plot and the story built around the plot. Cause leads to effect, action to reaction, choice to response leads to choice IN response. It is, in many ways, quite a traditional narrative. What makes the structure of this book particularly noteworthy is how the chapters into which both plot



and story are broken are themselves structured. They are mostly very short, they are mostly all packed with a substantial amount of action, and they each end on a point of considerable narrative tension. In other words, they each have a little bit of a climax at the end, concluding with an event and circumstances that raises a question that will, undeniably, draw the reader further into the narrative so that she will be desperate to know the answer to.

It's also important to note that, as previously discussed, this book is one of a series. This means that the character and/or narrative arcs of this book are part of a much larger set of overall character and narrative arcs. Yes, this book has its own beginning, middle and end, its own (to use traditional technical terms) set-up, complication, and resolution. But it's also important to remember that in terms of the series as a whole, this is also something else. Perhaps it's the end of the middle, or the beginning of the end. In any case, this book is clearly part of a bigger picture, the events of its final chapter drawing the reader, in the same way as the events at the end of its own individual chapters, into the events of the following chapter (i.e. the next book) in the series.



Quotes

"I am prepared for a lot of scary situations. After all, in the last year and half I'd been fake kidnapped once, almost truly kidnapped twice, targeted by one international terrorist organization and two incredibly cute boys. So, scary? Yeah, scary and I go way back." p. 1

"...our teacher wouldn't have walked onto that bridge if he hadn't had a way of getting off; he wouldn't have come to London if he hadn't had a way of getting out; and when Joe Solomon doesn't want to be found, there's not a camera, satellite, or operative on earth who can see him." p. 23

"Three seasoned and decorated operatives sat on the other side of the wall. Between them they'd probably mastered a hundred identities in a dozen countries. Names were just covers. Just legends. Hanging in the darkness, I wondered if anything about Joe Solomon was ever real at all. It felt as if the truth were slipping away from me, falling ..."
p. 33

"I didn't have a clue what my official title was or should be. International terrorist target? Teenage girl? Spy in training? Person who really, really wants to know what's going on?"
p. 45

"I was home. After weeks of running and hiding, I was finally home; but looking at my roommates, I remembered that being a Gallagher Girl isn't about a building. It's about a sisterhood. I remembered that I'd never really left." p. 57

"...when you're a spy, your life isn't defined by the lies you tell, but by the truths. A lie wouldn't change anything. I sat there, numb, knowing that the truth - the truth could set me free. And that was how I found the strength to whisper 'Mr. Solomon is the Circle'".
p. 62

"I know how it feels to be watched every second of every day. I know what it's like to trust few and fewer people until it seems like you are completely alone in the world. I know you think that the only things that are left in your life are the bad things. I know what you're feeling, Cam ... I know." p. 94 - Macey

"There are things that go unsaid between people, lingering under the surface for decades, for lifetimes. I've wondered sometimes if spies have more of those things or fewer. More, I think. There are just too many things that even the bravest people in the world aren't brave enough to say out loud." p. 98

"It is important to understand that, unlike most political and religious-based groups, the Circle of Cavan has no cause - no calling or purpose beyond profit and power. They are large enough to be dangerous, and small enough to slip through cracks. They are mobile, careful, and very highly trained." p. 105 - Townsend.



"...the truth of the matter is that a spy's life isn't about nevertaking chances. It's about taking chances that are worth the risk." p. 115

"The primary job of a field agent is to USE people - strangers, typically. Sometimes friends. Secretaries, neighbors, girlfriends, boyfriends, janitors, and little old ladies crossing the street. We use them all." p. 135 - Townsend.

"Some people think the key to strength is knowing how to hit - how to shift your weight, time your blow, land the punch just right. But that's not it. As I stood peering through the crowd at my mother and the man who had taken me out of the safety of the mansion, I knew real strength is NOT hitting when what you want to do most is kill." p. 156

"[Zach's] leg was pressing against mine, but I didn't think about how it felt, because my mother (who is a spy) was riding shotgun in the front seat, and my roommates (who were future spies) were surrounding us in the van. And besides, it doesn't take a lot of training to know that leg-pressing can seriously divert a girl from little things, like trying not to die." p. 206

"It's a rule as old as espionage itself: don't do yourself what you can get someone else to do for you. There are a million harmless reasons why a bunch of Gallagher Girls might break into Blackthorne (jokes, dares, pranks, etc.). For a bunch of grown-ups, not so much." p. 209

"It is a little known fact about covert operations that you will spend a lot of time with people you can't really trust. They may be traitors and liars. We call them assets or informants. But mostly, in those days, I called him Zach." p. 212

"I knew that despite the natural wonder of it, nothing about Blackthorne was beautiful; I knew that even in the sunshine, something about that place would always be a little dark." p. 217

"The school was not watching us this time. There was nothing playful in the tone. We were just two people kissing as if for the first time, as if it might be the last." p. 222

"...Joe Solomon had grown up and seen the light and spent his life trying to right the wrongs. But most people - I looked at Zach's mother, at the dark depths of her eyes - most never left the tombs." p. 242

"Operatives who always lie make the worst spies. Their intel is discounted, their missions are abandoned. There always has to be some truth among the scraps. Covert Operatives call it chicken feed. But in that room on that day, my mother simply called it hope." p. 254

"I couldn't lose the one person who didn't see HER when they looked at me. I couldn't lose that." p. 260 - Zach.



Topics for Discussion

Consider and discuss the metaphoric and/or symbolic values of the Operatives having to descend to deep, dark, underground places in order to get to the truth. As part of your considerations, research the traditional metaphorical meanings of caves.

Have you ever been in a situation where you been as trapped by circumstances beyond your control as Cammie does? How did being in that situation feel? What did you do to try and break out of that situation? If you did, how did it feel once you were free? If you didn't, how uncomfortable did the feeling of being trapped get?

What is your experience with friendships and loyalty? Have you ever had the kind of absolute support that Cammie receives from Rebecca and their fellow operatives? Have you ever had an experience of feeling as betrayed as Cammie believes she is by Joe Solomon? How did either / both those experiences make you feel? How did having such experiences change you?

In terms of the novel's interest in secrets and identity, discuss your experiences with having to keep secrets and/or assume different identities. Why was doing so necessary? How did living a second identity make you feel? Were you ever caught? What were the consequences?

Do you agree or disagree with the contention, discussed in "Style - Point of View" that the work's particular thematic and narrative explorations are, in fact, reflective of universal issues facing most adolescents? Why or why not?

Throughout the narrative, which clearly makes efforts to ground itself in a sense of real-worldliness, Cammie is portrayed as being almost as interested in boys (and men like the "hot" Edward Townsend) as she is in pursuing her studies and her apparent career path (see "Quotes," p. 1). Discuss whether this is an accurate portrayal of contemporary teenage reality (i.e. almost everything related to, or experienced in terms of, relationships with the opposite sex) or whether it is as much of a heightened, almost fantastical, portrayal of a young woman's life, beliefs and values as the Gallagher Academy and the world of trainee international spies.

Several times throughout the narrative, and as previously noted (see "Style - Language and Meaning"), Cammie's narration touches on issues / experiences that go beyond her own personal experience and into the broader experience of being human. See the quotes from p. 98, 115, 156, and 250 for examples. Take one of these quotes and discuss its implications for the broader human experience, referring to your own personal experiences as you explore the questions and/or issues implied in the quote.