

Out of Breath Study Guide

Out of Breath by Rebecca Donovan

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Plot Summary

Out of Breath by Rebecca Donovan is the story of a young woman who is traumatized by her past. Emma Thomas is a sophomore at Stanford who alienates herself from society because she feels that she causes havoc in other people's lives. She has fled her hometown and her high school boyfriend because she believes that his life will be better without her.

Emma Thomas is plagued by guilt. She has been emotionally abused by her mother all of her life. This has made her believe that she is not loved and not worthy of anyone's love. Her friends try to help her overcome her feelings of guilt, but do not know the circumstances that have led her to run from her previous life.

Emma has been at Stanford for two years and has kept to herself during this time. Her roommates help her start to get out and she begins to drink. Emma has never drunk alcohol before because her mother is an alcoholic. She now uses it to find the courage to face going to parties. The alcohol leads her to do things that she would not normally do.

The suicide of her mother leaves Emma very emotional. She must travel back to her hometown for the funeral and sees Evan, her former boyfriend. He takes care of her when she becomes drunk at her mother's wake. Emma still has feelings for Evan, but feels she is not worthy of him. Evan still cares for Emma and cannot let her leave his life once again. He goes back to California with her and her best friend to try and find closure. For the last two years, he has been miserable trying to forget her and for not knowing why she left.

Emma and Evan rekindle their relationship in California. They cannot enjoy their future, however until Emma faces her past and realizes that she is a strong, intelligent woman who is worthy of anyone's love. Emma has secrets that she fears to tell Evan. She believes if he knows he will not want to be with her. Knowing that the only way to break free of the past is to own up to her mistakes, she tells Evan how she kept a murder a secret for a friend. The friend has recently turned himself in and is now in prison.

Evan has a difficult time accepting this, but he loves Emma and is willing to attempt to understand her reasoning. He realizes that she had a difficult childhood and her feelings of loyalty are a bit skewed. Together they face the demons that plague her and start a new life together.

Prologue, Chapter 1, 2

Summary

Prologue

In the prologue, Sara McKinley is helping Emma Thomas move into her new room. She is sharing a house with her three friends Serena, Meg and Peyton. Sara is spending her sophomore year of college studying in France and has to see Emma before she leaves. Because she does not want to inconvenience her boyfriend with a long distance relationship Sara has broken up with Jared, a decision he is not taking very well.

As Sara helps Emma unpack she comes across a black boot box, which she is attempting to open when Emma stops her by slamming the lid shut. It apparently contains something that Emma does not want anyone to see nor does she want to see it for herself. She asks Sara to put it away and not let her know where she put it. Sara does as Emma asks and while her friend is out of the room she hides the box. Sara asks Emma if it all right if she tells Meg something of Emma's background. She wants someone to look after Emma while she is in France and has chosen Meg as the best stand-in. Sara is worried that Emma will close herself off from everything. Emma assures her friend that she will be fine.

Chapter 1

In Chapter 1, Pandora's Box, it is New Year's Eve and Sara calls Emma from France. Emma misses Sara, especially since she was used to her spending school breaks with her in California. Those times made the distance between them bearable. Her roommates kept her from spending all of her time studying or playing soccer.

Emma plans to stay in her room for New Year's Eve while her roommates all have plans for going out. Meg comes to borrow a pair of boots from her. Peyton begs Emma once last time to go to a party with her. Instead of the boot box Meg gets the box of mementos that Emma does not want to see. Peyton lunges for the contents, taking them out and brandishing them. Painful memories flood Emma's mind before she can stop them and she cannot breathe. Emma is finally able to spring forward and grab her possessions from Peyton, putting them back in the box and closing the lid. Emma is consumed by the feelings and memories of her past and goes for a run, music blaring to help herself regain control.

The run is not enough numb Emma's anguish and she realizes she needs help. She agrees to go to Peyton's party with her. Emma does not usually drink, but chooses to do so at this party. She needed to be numb quickly and hopes the alcohol will give her the desired effect. Peyton introduces Emma to her friend Tom's best friend, Cole. She talks to him briefly, but excuses herself to get another drink. Emma had promised herself that she would never drink since her mother was an alcoholic, but the pain from her past



forced her to seek whatever means necessary to extinguish it. Emma continues to drink and meets a guy from the band, Gev. She becomes drunk and reaches the numbness she desires. Emma eventually follows Gev back to his house a few houses down and they get into the hot tub. They move to Gev's bedroom where he provides her with a t-shirt and shorts. She passes out as Gev begins to kiss her unable to care what was happening or to stop it.

Chapter 2

In Chapter 2, No Do-Overs, Emma wakes up in Gev's bed. She surmises that they have had sex due to the fact that she is not wearing any clothes and there is an empty condom wrapper on the nightstand. She remembers very little of the night before and is appalled by what she has done. Emma is experiencing the effects of a hangover for the first time. As she leaves the house, she finds her clothes and phone and calls Peyton, who has slept on the couch where the party took place and meets Emma outside. The two girls sleep until noon then go to get breakfast. They meet Meg as they are leaving, and she accompanies them. Meg is astonished when she finds out that Emma became drunk at the party and had sex a strange guy. Emma is ashamed of her actions and does not want to tell Sara about it when she calls her later. Sara talks to Meg instead and agrees never to talk about it to Emma about it.

Meg tries to talk to Emma about what happened at the party. She lets her know that everyone makes mistakes and her indiscretion with Gev could be completely forgotten. Meg is the only one that knows about Emma's past abuse. Emma does not know how much Sara has told Meg and neither girl mentions it. Emma knows that she trusts Meg. She reminded her of Sara from the first moment they met. They play on the soccer team together and Meg never questioned Emma's withdrawn personality, but seemed to feel compelled to look after her just as Sara always had. Although Emma values Peyton and Serena as friends it is Meg that she trusts and who she is sure will be the one to keep her from going over the edge. Emma desperately wants to believe that what happened with Gev can go away, but deep down she believes that it is just one more bad mistake she has made in life and it will continue to haunt along with the others.

Analysis

Emma has many secrets that she is trying to hide from. This worries Sara. She does not want Emma to cut herself off from those around her, but feels that without her around Emma will shut herself off to the world. Emma spends her time by herself because she does not want to connect with anyone. Her roommates try to get her to go out with them, but she is reluctant and it is unclear why Emma does not want to connect with others.

Emma panics when her roommates open her box of mementos. The memories are too much for Emma to face and she feels unable to breathe. She goes for a run to outrun her thoughts and feelings, but this does not work. She needs a way to numb all of her thoughts and feelings. She agrees to go to a party with Peyton to try to escape her



feeling and ends up drunk and in bed with a boy she does not know. Emma makes bad decisions and this is seen in the way she reacts at the party.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Sara reluctant to leave Emma? What does she ask permission to do? Why do you think she does this?

Discussion Question 2

What is in the boot box that Meg inadvertently opens? What are the consequences to Emma of that box being opened?

Discussion Question 3

Why do you think Emma does not want to tell Sara, who is her best friend, about her New Year's Eve night? How does Emma feel about what she has done?

Vocabulary

Temperament, incapable, overcompensating, verge, minuscule, sobriety, inquisitive, unfathomable, flayed, onslaught, guttural, opted, feigned, clarity, mundane, putrid, repulsed, cryptic, indiscretion, demeanor, gravitating.

Chapter 3, 4, 5

Summary

Chapter 3

In Chapter 3, New Year, New Experiences, Emma begins the new quarter of school, and everything seems like it is back to normal on the surface. Once again she dives into her studies, but underneath she feels that things are different. Peyton, however, begs her to go to another party with her. The other girls agree to go, so Emma gives in. The girls try to show Emma that she can have alcohol without getting drunk from it. Serena and Emma share a love of music with fast beats and heavy guitar. They often go to enjoy the bands at the club where Serena's boyfriend James, an education major, works as a bouncer.

At the party, Emma tries Jell-O shots for the first time. Peyton meets up with her friend Tom whom she only sees at parties and with whom she has not exchanged numbers, but wants to. Cole is also at the party. He expresses surprise that she is at her second party. Emma tells him she is trying new things since it is a new year. She tells him she is going to try stage diving next. Once she says it, Emma discovers she actually wants to do it. She finally sees her opportunity and slips away from Cole.

Emma runs into Gev again looking for her friends. She signals Meg to save her and she and Serena immediately come to Emma's rescue. Gev goes away and Peyton eventually joins them. She is upset that Emma has ditched Cole again. Emma finds out that Peyton has been trying to set her up with Cole for some time. He is Tom's best friend and she needs an in with Tom. As the girls disperse to dance and get more drinks Emma is left on her own briefly and Gev returns. Emma is ecstatic when she learns from Gev that he passed out the night they were together and they did not have sex. In her relief and happiness, Emma goes up to Meg and pushes her into the pool. Meg takes Emma with her. All of the girls get kicked out of the party. On the way home, Peyton tells Emma that she gave Cole her phone number.

Chapter 4

In Chapter 4, Blind Leap, Emma finds the picture of Evan's hand that she inadvertently took when they were together. She took his camera and ran with it and a picture of his hand was taken as he tried to get the camera back. She realizes how much she misses him since she had not let herself feel anything since she had left him. Emma is trying to make herself breathe when Serena comes into the room. She looks at the photo, but she does not say anything about it or Emma's apparent reaction to it.

Emma and Serena go to the club to listen to a band. James is there working. Serena asks him if he will let Emma stage dive. Emma wants an adrenaline rush and feels it would be better than resorting to alcohol. James warns her that girls usually get groped



when they do it. Emma is reluctant after that. However, when Serena mentions falling backwards, which would require a great deal of trust that the person will be caught by the crowd, Emma agrees to do it. Although James does not understand her need to stage dive, he agrees to allow her to do it. The two girls do a few shots to help Emma get up the nerve. When the time comes, Emma falls backward onto the crowd. They catch her and move her along to the edge where she is rejoined by Serena. Afterward Serena has to save Emma from a guy trying to take advantage of her drunken state to get her to go to a party. Serena realizes she messed up and gave Emma too many shots, making her drunk. When she wakes up the next morning with another hangover, Emma vows to never drink again.

Chapter 5

In Chapter 5, Not Boring, Emma is studying at the library when she meets Cole again. She is amazed to see him again after she had ditched him twice. He asks her how her list of new things is coming and mentions seeing her stage dive at The Grove. He talks to her a bit longer, but decides to leave when he thinks his time is up. He walks away without saying goodbye, leaving Emma watching him go.

Cole calls Emma on a Saturday night. She is headed to the library to study and he asks her to meet him somewhere. All he asks for is fifteen minutes of her time on her way to the library. She agrees to meet him at a place called Joe's. When Emma arrives she reminds him he only has fifteen minutes. He asks her what is next on her list. The first thing that comes to her mind is skinny-dipping. Cole begins to show too much interest in Emma so she decides it is time to leave. She regrets meeting him. Cole follows her out of the bar. He convinces her to walk with him for the remainder of his fifteen minutes. She tells him to tell her something about himself that is worth knowing. He tells her that he listens to silence. He listens to things people do not say and is able to figure out what is happening below the surface of the people around him. He admits that he knew when his parents were getting a divorce before anyone else. Cole tells Emma she has a lot to say, but he has not quite figured what it is. Emma is uncomfortable with his observation. Cole suggests that they see each other again, but Emma does not quite agree.

For the following week, Cole sits across from Emma at the library. He does not say anything or acknowledge her in any way, but he merely works on his upcoming paper. When he is finished for the day, he closes his books and leaves without saying a word. On Friday night, however, he asks her if she wants to get something to eat. She declines, and he suggests the next day. Emma tells him she does not date, and Cole tells her that he was not asking her for a date, just to get something to eat. She declines again, but she feels guilty when he begins to walk away. She agrees to meet him the next night.

Analysis

Emma tries to go out more to be less unsociable as the New Year dawns. She wants to shed her past and become a new person. Drinking is new to her and the girls try to



show her how to enjoy it without going too far. Emma uses it, however, to make herself forget and be able to socialize. Emma is reluctant to enter into a relationship with Cole. Her past haunts her and though the reader does not know what has happened we can see that it scarred Emma deeply making her want to avoid an emotional connection.

Emma stage dives to prove to herself that she can do what she sets her mind to and does not have to be afraid. Serena encourages her because she wants her friend to embrace life again and is happy that she is trying new things and coming out of her self imposed exile.

Cole likes that Emma is different and wants to date her. He thinks that getting to know her is worth the hardships that she puts him through. His persistence pays off when she agrees to meet him.

Discussion Question 1

Do you think Emma's friends help her as much as they should? How do they let her down and what could they do to be of more help to her?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Emma want to go stage diving? What does she think it will do for her? What effect does it have for her?

Discussion Question 3

Why is Cole so persistent when Emma is obviously not interested? What does he mean when he say he listens to silence? What do you think he would learn from Emma if he listens to her silence?

Vocabulary

Why is Cole so persistent when Emma is obviously not interested? What does he mean when he say he listens to silence? What do you think he would learn from Emma if he listens to her silence?

Chapter 6, 7, 8

Summary

Chapter 6

In Chapter 6, *A Thousand Words*, Sara calls Emma in the middle of the night from France. She is sobbing because she read an article in the *New York Times* that said that Jared was engaged. Emma looks the article up on her laptop and sees a picture of Jared Mathews holding onto the hand of a girl wearing an engagement ring. Emma also sees Jared's brother, Evan, in the background of the photo with Catherine Jacobs on his arm. She is a girl who has also wanted Evan for herself, and the photo seems to show that she finally got him. Emma becomes sick at the sight of the picture. Sara, worried about Emma, calls Meg, who finds her being sick in the bathroom. Emma pulls herself together to be there for Sara. She stays on the phone with Sara for the rest of the night and Meg stays there with her.

Sara calls again a couple of hours later ranting that Jared keeps calling her, but she refuses to talk to him. Emma listens mutely to Sara's raging and keeps her own pain to herself. The photo of Evan has affected her as much as the one of Jared affected Sara. It brings back memories of the past. Emma remembers him calling to her as she left him lying beaten on the floor of her mother's house. Her emotions threaten to overcome her so she readily agrees to go for a run with the girls. While on the run Peyton tries to question Emma about Cole, but Meg distracts her. Emma runs ahead of the other girls pushing herself to the point of almost collapsing, trying to outrun the emotions trying to consume her and take away her breath. Serena sticks with her as best she can. Needing a way to get to relief Emma suddenly asks Serena to go with her to get a tattoo. Serena readily agrees. The tattoo Emma wants is from a drawing she made a year before. She decides to have it put on her left side, above her hip. Serena tells her it is going to be extremely painful. That is exactly what Emma wants to help her escape the other pain she is feeling. In the desire to get her tattoo Emma does not meet Cole at The Alley as she said she would.

Chapter 7

In Chapter 7, *Worlds Collide*, Emma's quarter is ending at school and all of the other girls are going away for break. Sara is concerned about Emma being left all alone. The week of final exams Peyton comes to Emma and tells her she is going with her to Santa Barbara for break. Peyton says that she does not want to stay at her aunt and uncle's by herself and Emma is coming with her. Emma knows that Sara had a hand in arranging this with Peyton. She is less than thrilled when Peyton lets her know that Emma will be attending parties with her. Peyton tells her that there has to be a balance between fun and school. Emma agrees to put herself into Peyton's hands since she is ready to have some fun and is tired of being miserable.



The next morning Peyton tells Emma that they are going to a party the following night. Tom, who also has come to Santa Barbara has told Peyton about a party down the street from him. Peyton and Tom are finally going on an official date that very night. That night Emma gets a text from Peyton that she is staying the night at Tom's. The next day Peyton still has not returned, but gives Emma directions to the party that night and orders to use her car and wear a dress. Emma goes shopping for an outfit and applies makeup.

At the party Emma looks for Peyton, but cannot find her. She goes to the bar and orders a drink. The guy behind the bar is staying at the house. His name is Brent and he gives Emma the impression that he knows her. Emma finally finds Peyton, who is with Tom. Cole is also at the party and not very happy to see Emma after she stood him up. She gets away from him and goes to a different bar where the guy there also seems to recognize her. Once she gets her drink she decides to find Cole and talk to him. He expresses his anger at her and wants to know why she is bothering to talk to him. She accepts his hurt and anger and takes him to get a drink. A different guy is tending the bar and greets her by name. She is rather disconcerted at this point that so many guys at the party seem to know her. This guy's name is Nate and he seems to expect that Emma will recognize his name, but she does not. Another guy comes and greets Emma. He refers to her as Evan's Emma and tells her that Evan was at the house over break and he had left only last weekend. Emma realizes that all of these guys were Evan's friends that he went to school with when he lived in San Francisco. She remembered that Nate was his best friend.

Emma walks away from the guys and begins to hyperventilate. She makes her way unsteadily through the people at the party. She begins to do shots of tequila and drinks a cup of vodka at the same time. She meets up again with Cole and continues to drink, eventually becoming drunk. Peyton is busy with Tom and leaves Emma under the care of Cole, who guides her out of the house. His dad owns a house down the road. He knows all of the guys staying at the house and has met Evan as well. Cole takes Emma back to his house and she passes out on the couch.

Chapter 8

In Chapter 8, Capturing the Silence, Emma wakes up with another hangover in Cole's house. Emma goes outside onto the deck. The day is gloomy with a chilly breeze. She is drawn to the water and wants to float on its surface. While Cole is busy making breakfast she makes her way across the beach and to the water. Emma undresses completely and wades out into the frigid water. She lays on her back, kicks her feet and moves farther from shore. A calm descends upon her. She briefly wonders what it would be like to give up and surrender to the silence. A wave takes her and carries her to shore where Peyton is waiting with a towel. She has brought Emma's bag with her, hoping to convince her to stay at Cole's so that she and Tom can have some alone time together at her aunt and uncle's house.

Due to a foggy day Emma is forced to spend the day in the house with Cole. She is drawn to boxes of puzzles on a nearby shelf. She had never done a puzzle before and it



seemed like something that could keep her mind busy. Cole asks to join her and she concedes. They spend the day listening to music, not talking and putting the puzzle together. They eventually take a break to go out for dinner. Uncomfortable with Cole's close proximity and how it is making her feel Emma texts Peyton to come and get her. Peyton begs her to hang on for one night and Emma agrees.

At dinner Emma encourages Cole to talk about his family. He tells her about his four sisters. He, in turn, asks her not about her family, but about her closest friend. She tells him about Sara. Once they are back home again Emma is nervous about being alone with Cole because she likes him and she does not want to like him. She apologizes to him for getting drunk the night before and tries to explain, but he does not need one. Cole agrees with her that she needs to find a different way of coping with life than alcohol. Emma decides to turn in early and read until she falls asleep. The two say goodnight to one another.

Analysis

Sara is upset that Jared is engaged when she dumped him. Emma can understand her pain and tries to help her friend through her pain. To always remind her of the pain and guilt that she feels Emma has a tattoo placed on her side of a drawing that she drew the year before. Pain helps her deal with her emotions.

Emma is suddenly confronted by her past when she winds up at a party in Santa Barbara at Evan's best friend's house. The guys are nice to her, but Emma deals with the situation by getting drunk to dull the pain she feels when she thinks of Evan. When she thinks of her past, she has difficulty breathing. This shows the trauma she feels at remembering what she has done. Emma tries to push Cole away because she does not want to have feelings for him. She is scared to have feelings for anyone because she does not want to hurt them and she has had too much hurt and abandonment in her own life.

Discussion Question 1

What happens to make Emma suddenly decide to get a tattoo? What does she think getting a tattoo will do for her?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Emma decide to go skinny-dipping frigid water? What is she seeking? What does she contemplate while floating in the water? What does she gain from the experience?



Discussion Question 3

Emma has tried very hard to discourage Cole, so why does she decide to talk to him at Nate's party? How does Emma's feelings about Cole change in Santa Barbara? Why is Emma afraid to be alone with Cole?

Vocabulary

Acrid, exuberant, desolation, oblivious, drastic, compromise, spectrum, feigning, rhetorical, obligation, epic, daunting, amorous, deliberating, contradicted, ire, reverberated, paraphernalia.

Chapter 9, 10, 11

Summary

Chapter 9

In Chapter 9, Feeling Again, Emma gets up late. She has had trouble sleeping due to the fact all that she could think about was Cole sleeping in the room across from her. Emma expects Peyton to arrive at any time to pick her up and packs her things in preparation. Cole is working on the puzzle and tells her that Peyton has went to Catalina for the day with Tom. Emma is stunned by this pronouncement and cannot hide it. She is panicking at the thought of spending another day with Cole. He assures her he is not insulted if she does not want to hang out with him and tells her he had plans to go surfing anyway. Emma calms down somewhat and joins him at the puzzle. He asks her what is next on her list. She admits that she has been making it up as she goes along. Emma asks him to choose the next item for her. He asks her what her criteria is and she tells him anything that makes her adrenaline surge. It has to be something that makes her forget about everything else. He says he will give it some thought.

The two continue to work on the puzzle and talk about music. Emma realizes they have more in common than she thought. Cole says that he can go surfing tomorrow and that he will hang out with her today. Once again Emma panics since she really wants to spend time with Cole, but she is afraid that she will end up hurting him. She agrees to spend the day with him and they go to the zoo together. When they return to the house Emma goes for a run. She realizes that she is starting to feel again, and this scares her. Emma does not believe that she is worthy of letting anyone get close to her. She believes she will only cause those she cares about harm.

As Cole and Emma have dinner on the deck, she realizes that a lot of their time is spent not talking. Cole never pushes her into talking about herself and seems content with the silence between them. There is an energy between them that Emma senses. It said more between them than words. After dinner they return to working on their puzzle. Cole tells her that he has thought of the next item on her list. He says it is something that will make her forget everything. Cole then kisses Emma. He is right, and she forgets everything but the kiss. She is not even breathing or thinking. That night Emma lies in bed torn apart by the remembrance of that kiss. It has started a craving within her that she was afraid she could not suppress. She decides that she needs to leave and get away from Cole, thus denying herself the temptation. Emma dresses and packs her bag. She goes to Cole's room to ask him to drive her to Peyton's. She ends up staying in his room and talking. Emma tells Cole that she is afraid that she will hurt him because she is so messed up she cannot let anyone get close to her. She tells him that she should walk away, but he asks her not to, at least for the week. She agrees to stay.

Chapter 10



In Chapter 10, Predictable, Emma wakes up the next morning beside Cole. Emma is content lying on top of the blanket with Cole safely out of temptation underneath. He asks her why she stood him up that night. She tells it was because she got a tattoo. He accepts the answer after surveying her in studied silence. Emma shows him the tattoo. She got it to remind her of a certain time. Cole asks her if it hurt and does not understand her answer of not enough. He asks her to go surfing with him, and she agrees.

Cole spends the day teaching Emma how to surf. She enjoys the experience and agrees to go again the next day. Peyton calls Emma that night to arrange to pick her up, but Emma tells her that she can spend the week with Tom. She acts as if she is going out of her way for Peyton, and her interest in Cole is nonexistent. Emma realizes that she should walk away from Cole, but she cannot help herself. In the mornings, Cole taught Emma to surf and then surfed himself. In the afternoons, they would work on the puzzle or read. Sometimes, Emma would go for a run. At night she would lie next to him, but on top of the blanket. Each night Cole would touch Emma's tattoo causing her skin to tingle with electricity. After Cole fell asleep for the night, Emma would quietly slip away to her own room, in an effort to make herself feel less guilty about not walking away from Cole completely.

Peyton and Tom drop by on their last day in Santa Barbara to see if they want to go to a party that night. Peyton is happy that Emma and Cole seem to be getting along very well and ignores Emma's denial that there is not anything special between the two of them. The party is too loud and crowded for Emma and Cole so they go for a walk on the beach. Cole asks her why she does the things on her list when she does not really have a list. She says she wants to feel alive. Cole does not understand this since he thinks she is the most alive person he knows. The air between them sparks with unspoken attraction. Emma asks Cole why he has never kissed her again. He says that he is afraid that if he does he will not want to stop. He is afraid that once they get back to school everything will be over. Cole asks her if she is ready for that to happen. Before Emma can answer they are interrupted by an inebriated Peyton.

The next morning Emma and Cole drive home in silence. It begins to rain. Less than a mile from her house Emma gets out of the car when they stop at a light and begins to walk in the pouring rain. She remembers another boy she left rather than destroy his life and she chooses to spare Cole the same pain. Emma is not far from her house when Cole comes running up behind her. The sight of him soaking wet and looking at her with questioning intensity loosens her resolve and Emma gives in to her desire for Cole. Emma ignores her guilt and the warning in her head that what she is about to do is wrong. She pulls him into the house and they run up the stairs. They have passionate, intense sex that takes away all of the emptiness that Emma usually feels inside. After it is over Cole tells Emma that he is not ready for their relationship to end. Before she can answer Peyton calls for Emma and is about to enter Emma's room. Serena stops her, telling Peyton that Emma is not alone.

Chapter 11



In Chapter 11, What Are You Afraid Of, Emma goes along with her friends on a float trip. Students from Stanford as well as several different colleges all come together for this particular camping trip for a weekend. Emma is not looking forward to the experience and her friend Sara wants to know why. She fears that it is because of Cole. Emma and Cole have been seeing one another for two months and Sara wants to assure Emma that is all right to be happy. She does not need to beat herself up that she is enjoying life. Emma, however, confides in Sara that it is the fact that they are sleeping in a tent that has her panicking. The last time she was in a tent was with Evan and it was the last time she had truly been happy. She does not want to sleep in a tent with Cole. Sara makes the reasonable suggestion that they sleep in the SUV together instead. Sara is happy that Emma is dating again, but Emma denies that she is dating Cole. She will soon be joining Emma in California for the summer.

Cole comes to see Emma and finds her lying on the roof. She has been thinking about a past moment with Evan and has to pull herself together when Cole appears. He is afraid of heights and is not very happy to be up on the roof. He asks her why she is on the roof. It is because of the silence that she likes lying on the roof. Lying next to Cole, Emma wonders why she is allowing herself to continue being with Cole. She had tried over the past two months to end it, but the sexual energy between left her unable to do so. Emma asks Cole why he wants to stay with her. Cole knows that Emma might walk away any day, but he seems willing to risk it. He likes the fact that she is comfortable with silence and does not constantly want him to talk about his feelings. He enjoys being with her even though he does not know a great deal about her. Cole is ready to listen whenever she is ready to talk, though. Emma tells him that they are not dating and that she cannot give him anymore than she already is. He accepts that and is willing to settle for them just hanging out.

At the campground, Cole is perfectly happy to sleep in the SUV since it lends them privacy. The camp is crowded with students from a variety of colleges each staked out in their own particular areas. Emma awakens and has unbidden memories of Evan. To fill the emptiness this brings she has sex with Cole. She realizes her need for him is unhealthy and not good either of them, but she is unable to deny it for herself or him. They meet up with Peyton, Tom and Meg. They are all going canoeing. Cole makes the mistake of taking Emma's hand. He immediately releases it when she stiffens. They did not act like a couple at any other time and she is afraid that this trip will cause complications in their relationship and Cole will want what she cannot give him. The three couples get their canoes and take off down the river. They find a spot to have lunch. It reminded Emma of a cave without its roof. Other students were there wading, floating or having lunch on the small beach. There are some students jumping into the water from a high cliff and Emma is drawn to it, her blood coursing at the thought of jumping. She joins the others for lunch, but her attention is continually drawn to the cliff. She excuses herself and makes her way to the cliff. Emma finally reaches the narrow ledge suspended out over the water. She makes her way out onto the ledge, working up the courage to jump.



Analysis

A great deal of what Emma feels toward Cole is sexual attraction. With his kiss she finds a new adrenaline rush that silences everything. She likes the way it makes her feel, and her need for him is almost like an addiction. Cole helps her to forget. Emma knows that she will eventually hurt Cole, just as she did Evan. She tries to do what is right, but she is too weak to give up something that gives her so much pleasure and makes the world bearable.

Emma will never feel the same way about Cole that she did about Evan. He, however, seems to think that he can change her and make her see him as more than just someone to hang out with and with whom to have sex. Cole tries to do the things that normal couples do like hold hands, but Emma disengages when he tries once again reminding him of where they stand.

Once again Emma is irresistibly drawn to something dangerous that can give her feeling of being alive that she craves and the adrenaline rush to forget her woes. She does not seem to care how dangerous it is to jump off of a cliff into water that is possibly strewn with hidden rocks. Emma does not assess the danger to herself and all she can think about is the thrill it will give her. It is not apparent whether or not she realizes that she could possibly die from such a fall or if it is just a risk she is willing to take. Just as when she contemplated letting the water take her when she is skinny dipping perhaps part of Emma wishes that the fall would silence the voices forever.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Emma afraid to give in to her attraction to Cole? What does she think will happen if she does?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Emma finally succumb to her feelings for Cole? Should she have allowed herself to get involved with him rather than listen to the warnings in her head? What more could she have done to prevent it?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Emma feel so compelled to make her way to the cliff where the jumpers are diving into the water? What does she want from his experience? Is it just the adrenaline rush or does she have a death wish?

Vocabulary

Pallor, inadvertently, recluse, exuded, tedious, erratic, enraptured, dissipating, suppress, piqued, staving, indifferently, boisterous, escalation, reminisced, candor, feigned, exclusivity, disheveled, remnants, traversed.

Chapter 12, 13, 14

Summary

Chapter 12

In Chapter 12, Emma is standing on the cliff edge thinking of Jonathan. She was not afraid. She is a hollowed out version of who she used to be. Cole calls out to her and asks what she is doing. He says she will kill herself jumping from that height. Emma jumps off the cliff. She is at peace in the air, but once she hits the water pain shoots through her. She fights to reach the surface and a voice in her head tells her not to bother. Emma breaks the surface and looks up to see Cole hovering at the edge of the cliff.

Emma is hurt and swims toward the shore. Cole jumps in to help her to the shore. She wants to go back to the camp to nurse her wounds. She wraps her leg in a towel before Cole can see the gouge below her knee. He sees the blood in the bottom of the boat and makes her let him see it. She goes to the first-aid station and has her wounds cleaned and bandaged. There is tension between her and Cole. Cole is angry with Emma because she could have killed herself. He goes for a walk to clear his head.

Emma sits in the camp and hears guys from USC talking about a party at Jonathan Reeves. She thinks of what she said to him to drive him out of her life. She asks the guys if they have Jonathan's email because she knows him, but was not able to make it to his party and wants to say goodbye before he leaves for New York. They forward her the email. The email includes a number. Jonathan is the only one who ever understood her. She believes they will always be bonded by their destructive ways.

Emma sends Jonathan a text asking how he is. He texts her back and tells her that he needs to make amends. He would like to hear her voice, but cannot talk. She is worried about what he is going to do and tries to call him. He does not answer. She texts him asking him what he is planning to do. He tells her it is too late and to please forgive him. Emma tells Cole that she must leave and asks to borrow his SUV. He lets her borrow the car. Emma feels guilty leaving him there, but she must find Jonathan.

Chapter 13

In Chapter 13, Emma returns to the house the next day after trying to find Jonathan. Cole is there waiting for her. He asks where she went. She tells him to fix things with a friend, but she was too late. Guilt eats at her for how she left things with him two years ago. She feels that she has messed up. She apologizes to Cole for acting the way she did and he apologizes for being angry. Cole takes her inside and to her room and they have sex.



Cole is worried that Emma wants what they have to be over. She tells him that she cannot let him in and that is not fair to him. She makes him promise that he will leave her and walk away before she hurts him. He promises not to let her hurt him.

Anna, Sara's mother, calls Emma to tell her that Emma's mother is dead. She took her life late last night. Emma goes frigid. Suddenly she realizes that Meg, Peyton and Serena are in the room and Cole is hovering in the doorway and Luke and James were in the hall. Sara's mom called Meg to check on Emma. Emma has to go back to Connecticut for the funeral. Cole offers to go with her, but she says no. She does not want to go and does not want him to miss his classes. She tells him Sara will be there and she will be fine.

Sara calls her while she is waiting at the airport. Sara assures her that she will pick her up at the airport and everything will be fine. Emma refuses to stay in Weslyn. Sara tells her that her parents expect Emma to stay at their house. Emma refuses. She will only stay at the motel on the outside of town. After boarding the plane, the two men sitting next to her buy drinks and give them to her because she looks terrified. Emma arrives in Connecticut drunk.

Chapter 14

In Chapter 14, Sara calls her, and Emma says she is outside of a bar in the airport. Sara is surprised she was drinking. Emma says she cannot do this. Sara talks her through the airport to the baggage claim where she is waiting. Emma looks horrible. Sara is worried because they are going to meet her mother. They meet her at the funeral home.

Emma does not remember what happened at the funeral home. Sara needs to pick up her bag at her house, but Emma makes her drop her at the motel because she refuses to go into Weslyn. Sara is appalled at the motel. She does not want to stay there, but it is the only place Emma will stay. Once Sara leaves, the events of the afternoon fill Emma's head. To relieve the memories, she finds a guy by the pool to buy her some vodka. She gets a cup of ice and sits by the pool waiting for Kevin to return. She drinks to stop the thoughts in her head.

Emma steps into the pool and sinks to the bottom. She stays calm as she feels the pressure in her chest begin to build. She hears yelling and looks up and can see Sara's red hair. She pushes to the surface. Sara gets Emma back to the room and under the shower. She tells Emma that there are people who care about her and will be there for her. If she keeps pushing people away, she will end up alone one day. Sara says she will not let Emma end up like her mother. Emma throws her out. Sara apologizes, but Emma will not hear her.

Analysis

Emma jumps from the cliff to prove to herself that she can do it and that she is strong enough for anything. Cole gets upset because he is scared that she could have seriously injured herself and that she thought nothing of his feelings. She did what she



wanted without thinking of the consequences. The experience makes her think of Jonathan. Hearing the USC students talking about him makes her want to talk to him and make peace with a part of her past. Making amends for his past is also what Jonathan is doing. This scares Emma, and the reason is not known. It scares her enough to take Cole's SUV and drive to the airport to try and stop Cole so the reader gets a sense that Emma may have good reason to be running from her past.

The death of Emma's mother takes a lot out of Emma. One gets the sense that returning to her hometown is more upsetting to Emma than her mother's death. This shows the type of relationship she and her mother had and perhaps a reason for her traveling across the country to go to college. Sara's concern for Emma is apparent and her surprise that Emma is drinking is understandable since Sara knows that Mrs. Thomas was an alcoholic. She used alcohol to deaden her feelings as Emma is doing now. Sara does not want her friend to become like the woman who tortured her throughout her young life.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Emma leave the campground to look for Jonathan? Why is she scared about what he will do?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Emma not want to stay in Weslyn? Why is she scared to go home? How does alcohol help her?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Emma throw Sara out of the hotel room? What is her relationship with her mother?

Vocabulary

Dissipated, caustic, resonance, writhe, distraught, evidently, acrid, futile, irreparable, semblance, askew, vanquished, succumbed.

Chapter 15, 16, 17

Summary

Chapter 15

In Chapter 15, Emma stands in the corner of the funeral home away from everyone. She hears someone say, did you hear she hanged herself. She tied a rope around a banister and jumped breaking her neck instantly. Emma has a headache from the vodka she drank the previous evening. Sara asks how she is and Emma tells her that she needs a break. Sara tries to get her to eat something.

Emma is upset because she feels the people do not know the woman they are mourning. Seeing the people happy and talking about her mother as if she were a good person puts Emma on edge. She takes a glass of ice and sneaks into the office that she was in the day before at the funeral home. Her tote is in the closet. She finds her vodka bottle in the tote and pours her a drink.

Evan comes to Emma's mother's funeral. He wants to talk to Emma, but does not feel this is the right place. Sara is not happy he is there. She does not think Emma should see him. She tells him that Emma is different.

Vivian Mathews, Evan's mother, offers her condolences to Emma as does his brother, Jared. She looks around for Evan confident that if his mother and brother were there he would be there. Evan sees Emma from across the room and cannot believe that she is still breathtakingly beautiful. A girl tells him that Emma is hung over and she cannot believe he is there after what she did to him. Jared tells Evan that Emma was looking for him. Evan does not know if he should talk to her. Sara avoids Jared.

Emma goes back to the office to avoid Evan. She takes her mother's ashes with her when she goes to the office. She hears the funeral director and hides in the closet. She stays in the closet and drinks talking to her mother's ashes. Emma calls Cole. She is drunk. She tells him she is drinking in a closet with her mother. He asks where Sara is. He is concerned that she is locked in a closet drinking.

Sara and Evan find Emma passed out in the closet with her cell phone in her hand. Sara picks up the phone. She talks to Cole and assures him she will take care of Emma. Sara is concerned about getting Emma out without her mother seeing her. Evan asks why she is staying at a motel and not at Sara's house. Evan refuses to let her stay in the motel. It is a dive. He offers to take Emma to his house. He says if he is helping she is staying at his house. Sara does not understand why he would want to do that after what Emma did to him. Sara will only let Emma go if she can stay with her.

Sara agrees and helps Evan get Emma into his car. She then leaves to get their suitcases from the motel. Evan looks across at Emma. She looks peaceful, and he knows he is in trouble.



Chapter 16

In Chapter 16, Evan carries Emma into his mother's house. He tells Jared she was passed out in a closet. He is concerned that this is not the right place for Emma. Evan tells him that Sara will be staying there too. Jared is not thrilled with that idea. Jared is concerned that this is not the place Emma would want to wake up.

Evan's mother is also concerned about what Emma's reaction will be when she wakes. She understands that he had to do something when he found her passed out, but how will he deal with her leaving again. She says it is his decision, and she will not interfere. Mrs. Mathews greets Sara and tells her she is welcome in their home and Evan and Jared will get her anything she needs. Jared appears and says it is late and he is going to his room.

Emma wakes up and realizes where she is. She is not happy. Sara tells her to relax that it is only for one night. Emma says she is not supposed to be there. She is not supposed to be in yesterday. After Emma goes back to sleep, Sara tells Evan that bringing Emma there was a bad idea. He questions what happened to her. How could she allow her to drink? Sara angrily turns on him and tells him that if he did this as a way to get back at Emma for hurting him then they would leave now. Evan apologizes to her.

Emma has not been told the details of her mother's death because she arrived drunk at the airport. Evan asks if she has a drinking problem. Sara says she has a life problem. She is just broken.

Emma wakes during the night and cannot stay in her room any longer. It has too many memories. She sneaks out of the house. She goes to the oak tree in the yard and runs her hand along the trunk. She has always loved this tree. She climbs on the swing Evan made for her and begins to swing. Evan follows Emma from the house. He watches her with pleasure as she swings in the swing he made for her. He wants to go talk to her, but knows she does not want to be here so he keeps his distance. In this girl he sees the girl he knew and wants to find out what happened to her.

Chapter 17

In Chapter 17, Evan wakes up on the wicker chaise on the porch wondering where he is. He remembers Emma and finds her curled on the grass under the oak tree. He carries her inside without disturbing her. Emma wakes up in bed. Cole calls her to see how she is doing. He will pick her and Sara up at the airport in Santa Barbara the next day. She becomes ill and collapses heaving in the bathroom. Sara comes to check on her.

Evan stays behind from the church to help Sara get Emma ready. She has not eaten since leaving California so she is wobbly on her feet. Analise stops by to see Evan. She is surprised that Evan is going to Emma's mother's funeral. He could not imagine not going.



Sara gets Emma dressed and gives her sunglasses to cover her bloodshot eyes. Evan and Sara must support her because Emma is so weak from not eating. Emma becomes upset in the car. The death of her mother finally hits her. Sara assures her that she can get through the funeral. Evan and Sara help her into the church and to the front pew.

Emma is asked to come up and say a few words. Sara is concerned. She is afraid of what Emma will say. Emma says that her mother has shaped her in many ways and she is who she is because of her. Tragedy was familiar to her. She lost her husband and she lived her life in pain. She hopes she has now found peace now that she is with him. Emma walks from the pulpit and down the aisle out of the church. Evan and Sara follow after her. The town car is gone when they make it outside.

Analysis

Emma does not want to feel so she drinks vodka to deaden her senses. She sees returning to Connecticut as stepping back into her past and she has worked hard to run away from her past not to confront it. Seeing Evan awakens all of the guilt that she feels about leaving Weslyn. Evan does not like seeing Emma without any light in her eyes. This is not the strong, intelligent girl that he fell in love with during high school. This is a shell of a person he once knew. He wants to know what has happened to Emma and why she left him two years ago without a word.

Evan still has feelings for Emma and is protective of her so takes her to his home when Emma passes out at the funeral home. Evan's family is concerned for Evan because they know how Emma has hurt him in the past and do not want him to be hurt again. His mother questions his motives and knows that Emma will not be happy to be in the house.

The Mathews' house has too many memories for Emma, so she sneaks out to the oak tree in the yard. It is the one place where she feels at peace. Evan follows her and is happy that she can find some peace in her troubled life. He wishes he could go to her and hold her to help her through her pain, but knows she would not accept or want his support.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Evan help Sara with Emma?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Emma not want to be in the Mathews' house? What memories does it hold for her? What does it mean when she says that she is not supposed to be in yesterday?



Discussion Question 3

Why is Sara scared of what Emma will say when she goes up to the pulpit at her mother's funeral? Why does Emma leave the church after speaking about her mother?

Vocabulary

Repercussions, sardonically, elixir, roused, scoffed, succession, predicament, compression, agape.

Chapter 18, 19, 20

Summary

Chapter 18

In Chapter 18, Evan finds Emma. He wants her to let out all of her emotions and stop fighting them. She will not cry for her mother. She feels she does not deserve her tears. Her mother chose to end her life, and Emma will not cry for her now after all the pain she caused her in her life. Evan takes Emma to Sara's house where people have gathered after the funeral. She goes immediately upstairs with the burger and fries they bought on the way because Emma was starving. Emma apologizes to Sara for her behavior over the past two days.

Sara's mother, Anna, has a talk with Emma. She tells Emma that they will always take care of her, but she believes she should see a therapist to help her sort out her feelings. She worries about Emma and only wants her to be safe. Emma asks Anna if her mother really hanged herself. She confirms that she hanged herself from a banister. She did not leave a note. Emma thanks Anna for being so kind to her and her mother and apologizes to her for her behavior.

Sara thanks Evan for all of his help. He asks her if he and Jared can drive her and Emma to the airport the next day. Sara reluctantly agrees. Jared and Evan arrive the next day to drive the girls to the airport. Sara's father is reluctant to let them in. Emma is not happy with the arrangement. Sara and Emma are both surprised when Evan pulls a bag of his own out of the trunk. He is staying with his friend, Nate, in Santa Barbara. Jared is concerned about his brother spending time in Santa Barbara with Emma. Nate will not be at the house for a couple weeks so Evan will have Nate's house to himself. Emma is upset because Nate's house is down the street from Cole's, and Evan knows Cole.

Cole is at the airport to pick up Emma and Sara. Evan is surprised to see him. Cole greets Evan, and Evan tells him that he is spending the summer at Nate's house. Cole offers Evan a ride to Nate's house.

Chapter 19

In Chapter 19, Emma is mad at Cole for what she sees as betrayal for giving Evan a ride and then inviting him to dinner. Emma takes her stuff to the guest room, and Sara questions if they are sharing the room. Cole has her put her stuff in his room. Emma is thrown off balance by Evan's presence. It brings her past into the present. Sara asks about Cole and Emma's relationship. She tells her that they are not dating. They have not slept in the same room together.

Evan asks why Cole was not at the funeral. Cole tells him that Emma did not want him there. Emma and Sara can hear them talking about Emma. Emma does not like that



they are talking about her. Cole tells Evan that he will be there for Emma now and he does not have to worry about her. Evan tells Cole that he has just come to get closure because he and Emma's relationship did not end well.

Emma leaves the house and walks out onto the beach. Evan follows her. She tells him that he should not be there. He should be in Connecticut. Emma tells him that he is supposed to hate her. Evan does not understand why he is supposed to hate her. He tells her he just needs closure. Evan does not hate Emma he hates Jonathan. He makes her give him a reason why he should hate her. He flinches when she asks him how his birthday was, but a grin emerges. He wants her to let him try to forgive her. He strikes a deal with her. He wants to give her two weeks to convince him to hate her, but she must talk to him and answer his questions so that he can try to forgive her. In the end, he will either hate her or have the closure he needs. She agrees to his proposal. Cole comes to check on Emma.

Evan does not like leaving Emma with Cole, but he is happy that she will finally talk to him and he can find out why she chose Jonathan over him. When he gets to the house he finds that Emma's roommates have arrived. Serena gives Evan a ride home. She thanks Evan for being there for Emma at her mother's funeral. She tells Evan that they are going to fix Emma.

Chapter 20

In Chapter 20, Cole apologizes to Emma the next morning for being a jerk the day before. He did not touch her that night in bed because he was jealous of Evan and blamed her. Emma tells her that she has nothing to be jealous of and that she did not like how he treated her the night before. They have makeup sex, and Cole asks her to spend the day with him.

Evan comes to Cole's house, but finds only Sara and Emma's roommates at home. Peyton is only too happy to tell him that Emma is out with Cole. She does not try to hide her dislike of him. Evan makes his escape by telling them he is going for a run.

The girls go out on a girl's night out. They are supposed to meet Meg and Peyton in Carpinteria. Serena is driving and stops to pick up Evan. Serena had invited him along that afternoon. Sara asks if Emma is okay with Evan being there. She says yes. She did give him two weeks. They stop for drinks before the movie in the park. Sara says she will not be drinking so Emma will not be the only one. Emma says she does not have a drinking problem. Sara admits that Emma's drinking scares her. Emma's mother was an alcoholic.

Peyton is not happy that Evan is along. When the chocolate desserts arrive, Evan gets a look of aversion. His house smelt like chocolate the night Emma left and he cannot eat it anymore. She laughs at his tortured expression. Evan leaves the table. Emma follows him and apologizes. He makes her give him another reason for why he should hate her. She tells him that Jonathan kissed her twice. He asks if she cheated on him.



She shakes her head, but challenges him with she never told him about the kisses. He asks if she left with Jonathan that night. She says no that she destroyed him.

Cole interrupts their conversation. He sees Evan and says he thought it was girls' night. Emma does not like his jealousy. Cole is drunk and Emma does not like it. Evan asks Serena what she meant when she said that Emma and Cole were not dating.

Analysis

Emma will not mourn for her mother because she does not think that she deserves her tears. She does not like being faced with her past and the choices that she made. When Evan follows her and Sara to Santa Barbara, she sees her past and her present colliding and does not know if she can handle that. The person she is now is not the person that Evan knew. She does not let anyone close to her and says she is not dating Cole because that would mean an intimacy that she is not willing to commit.

Evan's presence in Santa Barbara causes tension. Cole is jealous that Evan was there for Emma in Connecticut when she did not want him there. Peyton does not like Evan and believes his presence threatens Cole and Emma's relationship. Emma is confused about his being there. He is part of the past that she left behind and thinks that he should hate her, but she also still has a connection to him that she does not want to admit.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Emma so upset that Evan is staying at Nate's house for the summer?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Peyton not like Evan? What is her relationship with Cole?

Discussion Question 3

Why is Cole jealous of Evan? Why does Serena tell Evan that Cole and Emma are not dating?

Vocabulary

Havoc, nonchalant, reflective, persona, malicious, tentatively, heeding, infectious, oblivious, laden.



Chapter 21, 22, 23

Summary

Chapter 21

In Chapter 21, Evan watches Cole with Emma with displeasure. Peyton is rude to Evan and tells him that Emma and Cole have sex all the time to make him jealous. Serena tells him to ignore Peyton. She likes Evan and plays foosball with him. Sara prefers Nate's house to Cole's.

Evan talks to Meg about Emma. He wants to understand what is going on with Emma and why her friends are so protective of her. Evan becomes concerned that Emma is not the same confident, strong woman that he used to know. Evan asks Emma to walk on the beach with him. He tells her that his friend Nate is coming in early, but it will not affect their two weeks. Then he asks her for another reason he should hate her. Emma tells him because she left him in a house beaten. She heard him call out to her, but still left him. He sees how tormented she is by her decision and cannot hate her. He asks where she went when she left him laying there. Emma went driving and then back to Sara's house. She told them she needs to leave and two days later was on a flight to California.

Emma tells Cole that she needs to go to New York to see a friend who is in trouble. She wants him to cover for her because Sara would not like her going. Emma wants to see Jonathan. He agrees to cover for her and take her to the airport.

Chapter 22

In Chapter 22, Emma cannot sleep so gets out of bed early and sits out on the deck so as not to disturb Cole. Evan comes running along the beach unable to sleep as well. He invites her to run with him. Emma enjoys running and Evan sees it brings her peace. As Evan leaves he sees Emma strip off her clothes and go into the ocean. He wants to go toward her, but backs away when he sees Cole come onto the deck with a towel. Evan jogs away without being seen.

Cole tells her he is going surfing with the guys and will back in the afternoon to take her to the airport. When she is showered and dressed, Emma finds a note from Sara saying she has gone to buy picnic food for a picnic on the beach. She wonders how Sara will react when she disappears without telling her.

Sara goes to Evan to borrow a car to go shopping. She apologizes to him for being mean to him. She does not like the two week proposal that Evan has with Emma. She believes it will be a disaster. Sara invites him to join them for the picnic and tells him that Emma is at Cole's house now alone.



Emma begins packing for her trip. She starts by sifting through the mail that Anna, Sara's mother, handed her before leaving Weslyn that she finds in her tote. She finds a letter that she opens and reads. Evan finds Emma severely distraught. Her body is trembling and she can barely breathe. He takes the letter from her hand and reads it. It is a letter from her mother blaming Emma for her suicide. She claims Emma has caused only pain in the lives of everyone she has touched. She cannot see how she can even look at herself in the mirror. Evan is disgusted by what this woman can do even in death. Evan lays Emma down next to him holding her and telling her not to listen to her mother.

Chapter 23

In Chapter 23, Sara comes back after shopping to find Evan and Emma lying together on Cole's bed. Evan has her read the letter. Sara is appalled and takes the letter away and burns it. Sara crawls into bed on the other side of Emma and tries to help soothe her. They hold onto her and let her cry. They both want to protect her.

Sara is worried that the letter will push Emma over the edge. She says she has barely been existing since leaving Weslyn. She worries that she will pull away from everyone. Cole returns from surfing and is told what happened. Evan tells Sara that he did not come to Santa Barbara to get Emma back, but to find out why she left. He needs closure to move on with his life. Sara does not believe him.

Evan and Sara watch over Emma, while Cole sleeps in the spare room. Emma feels completely numb like she is infested with blackness. She just stares and they feel that she does not even see them. She is not eating or talking. They do not know how to reach her. Cole has to get out of the house. He does not know how to handle the situation. Evan has a plan to help Emma and leaves to prepare it.

Analysis

Evan does not like seeing Emma and Cole together. Peyton blames Evan for Emma's lifelessness since she has been in California. She wants to protect Emma from him. Serena believes that Evan is the best thing for Emma. Meg wants to protect Emma and Evan is confused why everyone is so protective of Emma. The Emma that he knew was confident and strong and would not need protection. The reader learns part of the back story between Evan and Emma. She left him after he was severely beaten and gets on a plane to California. Evan's sense of confusion is understood as he tries to get answers on why Emma left him.

Emma's mother's emotional abuse does not end with her death. The letter she sends her daughter is devastating to Emma. Evan and Sara cannot believe Mrs. Thomas could be so evil to her daughter. They cannot understand the relationship between Emma and her mother. They do not know how to reach her because they cannot understand why her mother would do this to her and how this is affecting Emma. She



has all ready cut herself off from part of her life and they feel she will severe the ties she has with them to protect them from her.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Mrs. Thomas blame Emma for her suicide? What kind of relationship did Emma have with her mother?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Sara apologize to Evan about how she has been treating him? Why does she not agree with Emma's actions two years ago?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Peyton not like Evan? Why does Serena want Evan to get back with Emma?

Vocabulary

Snidely, vigilantly, quipped, dissipated, accentuated, mesmerized, staving, invigorated, psyche, volatile, delved, induced, unfathomable.



Chapter 24, 25, 26

Summary

Chapter 24

In Chapter 24, Evan makes Emma get out of bed. He takes her to Nate's house where he has set up an easel so that she can paint. He believes that this will help her heal from her mother's words. Cole does not know that Emma paints because she has not painted since being in California. Painting helped her work out her grief when her father died. Sara and Evan wait for Emma to emerge from the room.

Emma finished and while she showers, Sara and Evan look in to see what she has painted. She painted the oak tree in Evan's backyard and the swing he made for her. It is the one place that will always be there for her.

Chapter 25

In Chapter 25, Emma and Evan go running. She still feels the blackness within her. Evan asks if she is coming to the party Nate and the guys are having. He tells her he is ending their two weeks because he does not want to make her tell him things that she does not want to. She can tell him when she is ready if she wants to tell him.

Emma is upset that Evan has ended their two weeks. Sara assures her that Evan has not given up on her. Evan watches Emma at the party. She watches with displeasure as girls flirt with Evan. Cole catches Evan looking at Emma and does not like it. When Emma dances with Cole she realizes that she no longer has a reaction to Cole's touch. He notices it as well. He leaves her standing on the dance floor.

Emma goes to Evan's room after the party. They are both a little drunk. She lays on his bed and he lays next to her. He admits he would like to kiss her. She tells him that she left him in Weslyn to protect him. She kept hurting him and he kept coming back to her so she left so he did not have a choice to return. Evan comforts her as she cries.

Chapter 26

In Chapter 26, Evan wakes up with Emma beside him. Sara texts him asking if he has seen Emma. He tells her she is with him. Evan gets up to intercept Sara so that she does not just burst into the room. Emma takes his leaving as he is letting her go and leaves through the sliding glass doors.

Evan assures Sara that nothing happened between him and Emma. Sara catches up to Emma. She tells Sara that she went to Evan to tell him why she left two years ago. Emma believes that Evan will never forgive her. Sara tells her he just needs time.



Nate questions Evan what happened. He does not want Evan hurt again. He saw what Evan went through when Emma left him. Evan is leaving for the airport and wants to see Emma before he goes, but does not have time before his flight.

Sara gets a call from her mother saying that her grandfather has died. She has to leave for the funeral in New Hampshire. After Sara has left, Emma finds that Cole has left. He left a note saying that he is walking away before she hurts him. Emma feels that she is all alone.

Evan realizes that he has Emma's phone. Evan is meeting with his mother and Jared. Emma goes to see Evan at Nate's and is told that he left for the airport hours ago. Sara calls Evan to see how Emma is. Evan tells her that he is in San Francisco and she tells him she is in New Hampshire for her grandfather's funeral. He tells her that he has Emma's phone, but they are not worried because they believe she is with Cole. He promises to check on her when he returns the next day. He calls Nate to go check on Emma because he has a nagging feeling of worry.

Evan confronts his mother about a letter that Emma gave her before she left Weslyn. She will not tell him what it said because it was given to her in confidence. Their mother tells them she is selling the house in Weslyn. Evan is devastated because it is the only true home he has known. Jared leaves to go to be with Sara at the funeral.

Emma's phone receives a text. It is from Jonathan. He is hurt that she has reached out to Jonathan. He decides that he cannot give up on what she means to him.

Analysis

Emma is slowly overcoming her grief and becoming closer to Evan. Cole sees this and ends up leaving. Emma does not believe that Evan can and should forgive her. She blames herself for so much she does not see how he can get past it. Evan just wants to understand why she left him and why she is reaching out to Jonathan. Sara tries to convince Emma that Evan is not giving up on her, but just needs time to process that she left him to protect him from her disastrous life.

Emma believes so little in herself that she believes that Evan has left her when she discovers he has left for the airport. She feels abandoned and alone. Her greatest fear is to push everyone in her life away and to be totally alone.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Cole leave after the party at Nate's house? How could he be hurt by Emma?



Discussion Question 2

Why does Emma believe that Evan has left her? Why does she believe his silence is a way of pushing her away?

Discussion Question 3

Why has Emma not painted while she has been in California seeing as it seemed to be an important part of her life in Weslyn?

Vocabulary

Inclination, vantage, redemption, solace, concession, blatantly, demeanor, intricate, cohesive, assuage, progression, averted, receding, cynicism, initially, interjected, poised, adamantly.

Chapter 27, 28, 29

Summary

Chapter 27

In Chapter 27, Emma stares out at the ocean thinking of all the comments her mother made to her over years. She thought that she has escaped them and that finding success in college would silence the doubt in her. Now she is alone and the remarks swirl in her head. She goes for a swim to get them to stop. She sinks to the bottom thinking to end her life. She hears someone tell her to hold onto life.

She swims to the surface with a new lease on life. She lets go of her insecurities. She begins to run along the beach to get away from who she was. She ends up several miles down the beach. She falters near a group of surfers. One is a girl she knows from school. They offer her water and a ride to Nate's house.

Evan goes to Cole's house when he comes back from San Francisco. He finds the house empty and that Cole's stuff is gone. Nate calls him and tells him that Emma is at his house. She is dehydrated. He explains that a friend found her on a beach a ways off and brought her to his house. She refuses to go to the hospital. Emma is overheated and dehydrated. Emma is surprised to see him because she thought he left. He told her he did not leave. The bottoms of her feet are red and raw so Evan bandages them up for her.

Sara calls and Emma tells her that everyone left so she went for a very long run. Sara apologizes for not taking her with her. They decide with Cole gone they need to find somewhere else to spend the rest of the summer. Sara wants Evan to stay with Emma until she gets back. Emma is to spend the night with Evan and his friends so they decide to spend the night on the beach with a bonfire.

Chapter 28

In Chapter 28, Emma has to be carried to the beach because of her feet. They are bandaged and covered with a pair of tube socks. The guys tell stories and ask Emma if she can surf. She says she can and Evan is elated. He loves to surf. The next morning Evan finds Emma sitting by the water's edge. She tells Evan that she does not want the past to define her anymore.

Evan and Emma go to see a real estate agent about a house. Emma tells him that she wants a three bedroom house on the beach. The agent is rude to them because he does not believe they have the money to rent a very nice place. Emma is insistent that she wants to see a three bedroom house on the beach. The real estate agent relents and takes them to see the house. It is a large white house and Emma knows she is trying to put them in their place. Emma sees the wall of glass facing the ocean and says she'll take it without stepping into the house. She offers a card for the deposit and tells

her she will be hearing from a Charles Stanley who will handle the arrangements. Evan is confused. Emma does not even know the cost or what the house looks like.

Emma confides in him that her father left her a trust that she had access to when she turned eighteen. Charles Stanley takes care of it and helps her with whatever financial needs she has. Emma is confused that he is not upset about her not telling him about the trust before, but he never reacts how she thinks he will.

Chapter 29

In Chapter 29, the house turns out to be a marvel. Marble counter tops, Jacuzzi tubs, and a huge master bedroom with its own patio are just a few of its features. Evan and Emma fall in love with the house. Nate invites everyone to have dinner with him the next day. His mother and his cousins are coming over and he wants other people there to suffer with him. Sara and Jared will be coming back and can also join them. Evan questions why Jared is coming back with Sara. Evan tells her that Jared went to Sara's grandfather's funeral and they are returning together. Jared was not engaged and he and Sara have made up their differences. Evan's father had tried to force the engagement, but it was not true and Evan's mother left his father because of it. Emma asks why his father never liked her. Evan tells her she did not deserve the way his father treated her. She did not fit the image of the girl his father wanted for him. His father wanted a girl named Catherine for him. Evan tells her that he never dated Catherine, but Emma does not want to hear about her.

Analysis

Emma also gives in to her mother's abusive ways by killing herself, but something in her makes her fight back. She has to let go of her insecurities and her mother's hate so that she can live her life. Emma tries to outrun who she used to be, but she cannot run away from herself. She can only face up to who she is and attempt to discover who she wants to be.

Evan and Sara feel guilty for leaving Emma especially after learning of her ordeal. She has issues with abandonment from her father's death and suddenly being without the friends who are always there for her leaves her feeling desperate and alone. She has only her thoughts and they are not comforting. The ordeal, however, makes Emma stronger and she is determined to become a better person.

Emma and Evan become closer and their relationship helps Emma in her healing. They share feelings and trust one another. This helps their relationship and makes Evan feel a part of her life again.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Emma abort her suicide attempt? What makes her not want to give up on her life?



Discussion Question 2

Why does Emma rent the house on the beach without looking inside? Why does she feel that the real estate agent needs a comeuppance?

Discussion Question 3

How does Emma feel about Evan's father? Why does she not want to think about Evan with Catherine?

Vocabulary

Disdain, barrage, subdue, incapable, unfathomable, succumbed, emanating, evasively, retaliation, tenacity, eclectic, resignation, emphatically.



Chapter 30, 31, 32

Summary

Chapter 30

In Chapter 30, Emma confides in Evan that it has been the most intense two and half weeks of her life and she is overwhelmed and scared. She tells him she has received a letter that she believes is from her father's mother and she cannot open it. She disowned Emma's father because he and her mother were not married when Emma was born. Evan offers to read the letter for her.

Emma's niece and nephew miss Emma and her grandmother thinks it would be beneficial to the children to see her. Emma is upset that her grandmother does not want to meet her or apologize for not being part of her life. Emma cries because she misses her niece and nephew. Evan comforts her and she tells him that she wants him to help her pick out a surfboard and wetsuit. Evan is thrilled to do it.

Emma wakes to find Evan curled against her back and their hands intertwined. She slips out of bed to go to the bathroom. Evan wakes up out of a nightmare. He tells her he has had nightmares since she left. They have to do with her being gone. She feels it is her fault. Evan tells her that Emma never gave him a choice. She just left taking away his choice of whether to stay with her. She never gave him the choice to decide if she was worth loving. She wants him to get mad at her, but he cannot.

Chapter 31

In Chapter 31, Evan comes back from his run and is shirtless. Emma cannot look at him because it makes her heart quicken. He admits that her legs do the same to him. She puts on a pair of short shorts to taunt him. They make a truce that Evan will put on a shirt and she will cover her legs.

Evan has gotten a vehicle because he has transferred to Stanford. It was always his first choice. She knew the transfer deadline was months ago so he was planning this before he saw her again.

Evan helps her pick out a surfboard and wetsuit. Emma taunts Evan by picking up skimpy bathing suits to try on. When she goes to pay for her board, the clerk tells her it is all ready paid for and she can pick it up in a few days. When questioned, Evan says he paid for it as a celebration that she can surf, but it is really a birthday present for her, but she never celebrates her birthday.

Emma asks Evan if he has his camera. She wants to spend the afternoon painting and thinks he should take pictures. He has not taken pictures since she left him. He gets his camera and goes off to take pictures, while she paints. Emma feels the two of them getting closer.



Sara and Jared arrive at the house. They agree to go to Nate's for dinner. Sara laments that Emma does not have any dresses. Sara chooses white shorts and a blue halter top to wear for dinner. Sara tells Emma how she and Jared talked everything through and are back together. Emma tells her how she and Evan are getting along. Sara is worried that they slept in the same room together.

They escape after dinner as soon as possible to get away from Nate's cousins. Evan and Emma read together when Jared and Sara disappear upstairs. Evan does not want to go to his room near theirs for fear of what he will hear. Evan tells Emma that his mother is selling their house in Weslyn. His father is making her as part of the divorce. Emma and Evan both have good memories of the house. Emma asks Evan to stay in her room for the night.

Chapter 32

In Chapter 32, Evan hides in the bathroom when Meg and Serena arrive the next morning so that they will not be caught in bed together. He listens as the two girls and Sara question Emma about Evan. They want to know what is going on between the two of them. She tells them she is not ready to attempt a relationship yet. The girls want to go shopping to get Emma dresses.

Emma gets on to Evan for listening to their conversation once the girls have left the room. He sneaks out of her room through the patio so as not to be seen. Sara seems him and knows he has come from Emma's room. She asks if there is anything going on between him and Emma. He assures her that there is nothing. He tells her that Emma is healing and becoming a better person and she is letting him in and trusting him. Sara tells him that he needs to tell Emma what happened to him after Emma left him two years ago.

They get ready to go to a party at Nate's. Emma wears jeans instead of the dresses they bought on their shopping trip. Sara is appalled. The girls question Emma why Evan has a car in California and she tells them that he is transferring to Stanford. Sara tells her that Evan would have gone to Stanford out of high school, but his parents would not let him. They put him on lock down and would not give him access to his money or allow him to have a car. They only eased the rules last summer. Sara assures Emma that it was not her fault. It was his parents' choice.

Analysis

The letter from Emma's grandmother makes Emma feel that her grandmother does not want to see her, but she is writing for the sake of Emma's niece and nephew. This makes her feel alienated from her family and makes her miss her niece and nephew even more.

Emma is distraught by Evan's nightmares. It shows her how she has hurt him. She made an important decision without even talking to him about and he was devastated



by the consequences. Evan cannot be mad at her because he can see how messed up she is and cannot blame her for not wanting to get him mixed up with her drama.

It is sort of like old times when Sara and Jared show up. The two couples are once again together, but Emma and Evan's relationship cannot be as easily healed as Sara and Jared's. Emma's friends want Emma and Evan's relationship to work and for it to the two must talk about everything that happened to make Emma leave and what happened to Evan after she left. She did not make his life easier as she had planned.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Emma scared to open the letter from her grandmother? What is their relationship?

Discussion Question 2

Why do Evan's nightmares affect Emma negatively? Why does she feel his nightmares are her fault?

Discussion Question 3

Why do you think Evan's parents put him on lockdown and would not let him travel? What did they fear?

Vocabulary

Transpired, pertaining, abated, compulsion, admonished, facade, deliberation, presumption, reconciliation, interceded.

Chapter 33, 34, 35

Summary

Chapter 33

In Chapter 33, everyone heads to Nate's for a party. Serena takes Emma off to dance to the band, and Sara and Meg join them. Jared asks Evan how things are going with Emma. He tells him it is complicated. James, Serena's boyfriend, says that Emma is different. She is not predictable. Jared says that whatever Evan is doing is helping her. She does not look messed up.

Nika flirts with Evan at the party, but he is not interested. Serena comes and saves him and helps get him away from Nika. Meg pushes Emma into the swimming pool. This starts something, and everyone starts jumping in the pool fully clothed. Emma was distracted watching Nika talk to Evan, and Meg took her by surprise. Emma comes face to face with Evan in the pool. Emma asks Sara and Serena how they ended up not being thrown in the pool. Sara tells her that they knew better.

Emma and Meg have to leave because their clothes are soaked. Evan gives his car keys to Sara to drive back and goes with them. When he catches up with Meg and Emma they are stripping off their jeans and putting them in a trash bag. They inform Evan that there are not wet pants allowed in the car. He strips of his jeans and shirt and puts them in the bag as well. Meg gives him the keys to drive so that he and Emma are in the front seat together. Evan is distracted by Emma's legs on the drive. He lets the girls go in first and lags behind to give himself time to get control of himself.

They order pizza, and it arrives as everyone else returns from the party. They watch a movie, and Emma falls asleep. She wakes up to find herself in her bed with Evan behind her. She settles back in his embrace.

Chapter 34

In Chapter 34, Evan tells Emma that they should not sleep in the same bed anymore. It is too much for him not to do more than sleep. He takes his stuff to the guest bedroom upstairs. Sara comes to check on Emma when she sees Evan taking his stuff upstairs. Sara thinks they have had a fight. Emma tells her that all she can think about is having sex with Evan.

They have a lunch at their house. Evan overhears the girls talking about him and Emma. They think it is obvious that they love one another and they just need to be honest with one another.

Sara puts out a dress for Emma to wear. Evan nearly stumbles when he sees her. After lunch, the guys play football and the girls paint their toenails. Serena suggests that they play strip poker. Serena, Meg and Sara go off to plan a way to get Emma and Evan to



be honest with one another. Evan finds Emma sitting attempting to paint her toenails, but failing. He paints her nails for her.

Chapter 35

In Chapter 35, the girls get everyone to play strip poker with a twist at Nate's house. Whoever wins the hand chooses two people to either remove an article of clothing or answering a difficult question. Emma and Evan know they are up to something. Emma does not like how honest Evan is in answering their questions. He believes honesty will help. Jared wins a hand and chooses Serena and Emma. Serena chooses to remove her shorts and Emma chooses truth. He asks the question, if you could get away with one illegal thing, what would it be? Emma becomes pale and walks away from the table without saying a word.

Emma's mind flashes back to Jonathan punching a man and wiping a car from fingerprints. It is the one secret that she was able to close off and lock away. Emma and Sara walk back to the house. Emma had thought she was getting a chance to leave her horrible decisions behind, but she is painfully reminded of them.

Analysis

All of Emma and Evan's friends know that Emma is complicated, but they also see that since she and Evan have been together she is getting better. The jealousy that Emma and Evan feel when others talk to the other shows that their feelings for one another are growing. These growing feelings make Evan uncomfortable sleeping in the same bed as Emma because he fears he will step over the line and ruin what they are trying to accomplish. They are not ready for sex yet, but being beside her night after night is driving him nuts.

The girls come up with the strip poker game to make Evan and Emma be honest with one another. They just do not know the extent of the secrets that Emma is keeping and the game turns into a disaster. He leaves Emma feeling that she has made no progress in becoming a better person so sets her back a few paces in her recovery.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Evan not want to stay in the same room as Emma? How is their relationship progressing?

Discussion Question 2

Why do the girls set up the strip poker game? Why do they feel that honesty will help Evan and Emma to become closer?

Discussion Question 3

Why is Emma upset by Jared's question? How does it make her feel about her life and her progress so far in becoming a better person.

Vocabulary

Exuberance, retaliate, monochromatic, nonchalant, invasive, concurred, notorious, aversion, tenacity, repression.



Chapter 36, 37, 38

Summary

Chapter 36

In Chapter 36, Evan is upset about how Emma reacted to Jared's question during the game. He can't sleep. He lies on the hammock unable to intrude on her in her room. He wants to know what Emma is keeping from him. He believes it has to do with Jonathan. Evan never liked or trusted him. To be able to move forward with Emma, he has to know what has happened so that they can forgive and forget the past.

Emma keeps thinking about Jonathan and his secret. She holds it like her own. She can see the torment in his eyes when he confessed to setting his home on fire killing his family. She understands his hate so could not tell on him. Emma cannot sleep so she goes out to the deck and sees Evan lying on the hammock.

Evan asks her if she will tell him what her nightmares are about. He has seen her wake up screaming in the night and her torment haunts him. She tells them they were about dying. She would dream she was being killed in some way and would wake up before her last breath. It was about her helplessness in getting away from her mother. Evan had been with her when her mother tried to strangle her and tries to understand why her mother hated Emma so much.

She shows him the tattoo she got to help her hold on to life. Emma tells Evan that she does not want him to hate her, but to forgive her and want to love her again. First, she needs to forgive herself. She wants to deserve his love.

Evan tells her what happened after she left. He felt that she had chosen Jonathan over him. Emma says that Jonathan is just a friend. She cannot tell him what happened. Evan asks about the letter to his mother. She is surprised he knew about the letter, but he found the envelope, but his mother would not tell him what the letter said. He does not understand why she thought leaving would not hurt him. He tells her she could not have hurt him any worse. He was stuck going back to school with all of their friends who knew what happened and having to give her valedictorian speech. His parents made him go to Yale and would not let him touch his savings.

He was comforted by Analise. Emma is repulsed by this. He could not stop thinking about Emma and needed answers. He tells her that apart they do not live. They are only truly alive when they are together. He needed to let her know that they both have screwed up, but that should not affect their life together. He tells her that he loves her, and she admits that she loves him. However, she does not want to destroy his life.

Emma and Evan finally kiss, and it nearly leads to sex. Evan stops it before it goes that far. They both agree that they are not ready for that step yet. They still have more healing to do.



Chapter 37

In Chapter 37, Emma gets her surfboard and they make plans to go surfing the next day. Evan tells Emma that he needs to talk to her and they go for a run on the beach. He tells her that he is thinking of seeing someone for his nightmares and asks if Emma would want to go to. Emma has not had success with therapists in the past, so she is skeptical. She agrees to think about it.

Emma is anxious to have a good day. She wakes Evan up early to go surfing. They go swimming in the freezing water to wait for the fog to clear. Evan sits and admires Emma's surfing. He is happy that this is something that they can share. Evan tells her that they are meant to be together.

Sara and Emma talk after dinner. They are both happy. Emma thanks Sara for always being there for her. Evan asks how her birthday was and she tells him it is the happiest one she has had in thirteen years.

Chapter 38

In Chapter 38, they prepare for a party at their house for the 4th of July. Nate talks to Evan about Emma. He thinks she should be being honest with him and worries about Evan.

Serena finds a letter in Emma's tote and thinks she is leaving Evan. It is the letter that she gave his mother two years ago. She sent it back to Emma thinking she would one day want to share what it said to Evan. Serena is appalled that she left him a letter. Serena thinks she should have never left him. Serena thinks she should show him the letter and be honest with him.

Emma and Evan do not get to see each other during the party. They watch one another as different people talk to the other. Nate saves Emma from a guy who is chatting with her. They go for a walk and Nate. He expresses his concern about Emma and Evan. He sees Evan getting hopeful the more time he and Emma spend together so he implores her to tell him everything so that if it is something that will make Evan never want to see her again he will not be devastated like he was two years ago.

Emma finds Jonathan's texts on her phone. When Evan comes up to her she collapses to her knees. He believes it is because of what Nate said to her.

Analysis

Evan is consistently being blindsided from things in Emma's past. He cannot help her if he does not know what they are, but she will not talk to him about what happened. He tries to get her to talk about the past by bringing up her nightmares. He wants her to confide in him so that he feels she trusts him. He tells her what happened to him after she left because he wants her to know that her decision to leave and not destroy his life



actually destroyed his life. Evan does not do it to hurt her, but to make her understand that she needs to talk things through and come to a decision not just decide on her own.

Their relationship is slowly progressing as they share bits of themselves with one another. Nate is wary of their relationship because he saw what Emma's leaving did to Evan and he does not want his friend to go through that again. Emma has to tell Evan everything good and bad so that he can be the one to make the decision of whether to stay or go. She has to give him the choice by laying everything on the table.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Evan get angry with Jared over his question during the game? Why does he not go to Emma, but instead waits until she comes to him?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Emma not want to hear what happened between Evan and Analise after she left him?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Serena get so upset by the letter she finds in Emma's tote? Why is she appalled by Emma's leaving just a letter to Evan's mother when she left him?

Vocabulary

Sadistic, monotone, defeatist, intricate, waning, inexplicably, catastrophic, palpitating, divulge, agape, momentum.



Chapter 39, 40, Epilogue

Summary

Chapter 39

In Chapter 39, Emma tells Evan that she hated her mother, and she is glad that she is dead. She felt close to Jonathan because he understood being tormented and did not judge her when she said she hated her mother. She wants Evan to hate her mother as much as she hates her. She tells Evan that she almost gave up and walked into the ocean to end it all. Evan tells her to let him love her. Evan tells her that he loves her, and they have sex on the beach. In the morning, Emma tells Evan Jonathan's secret and leaves for New York to find him. He goes to Sara to see if she can find out from her father what happened. Emma thinks that Jonathan killed the man that broke into Emma's house. She helped him get rid of the body and lied to the police. The truth is that the man was beaten, but someone had shot him. He was a drug dealer and someone shot him for his money and drugs. Emma, however, thinks she is an accomplice to murder.

Sara discovers that Jonathan did kill his family by lighting the house on fire. He turned himself in and was sentenced to twenty-five years in a medium security prison. Jonathan's father abused him and Jonathan suffered psychological damage. Evan does not understand how Emma could not tell about Jonathan killing his family. He has Sara call Emma about the drug dealer and where she can find Jonathan.

Chapter 40

In Chapter 40, Emma goes to see Jonathan in prison. Seeing him brings her relief, but she does not like seeing him in prison. She receives a message from Evan and calls him. It has been five days since she heard from him. Evan lets her know that he loves her and will always stick by her. Emma is driving back to Santa Barbara, but Evan will not be there. He is going to Connecticut to clear his stuff out of his mother's house, which is being sold. When Evan goes to the house, he finds a tux on his bed and a note to put it on and go out back. Emma is at the swing in the backyard. She bought the house from his mother and a portion of Evan's trust fund paid for it, also. It is the beginning of the healing process for Emma.

Epilogue

In the Epilogue, Emma and Evan travel to Florida to visit Emma's niece and nephew. Emma finally meets her paternal grandmother. Emma greets her with a hug and is held tightly in return.



Analysis

Emma shocks Evan by telling him that she hated her mother. He knows of the abuse that Emma suffered, but to state that she does not care that her mother is dead gives him pause. He does not understand Emma's connection with Jonathan. Their abusive pasts link them in a way that nothing else could. Emma feels that she can trust Jonathan with her darkest thoughts and he will not think less of her. Evan has a stable family life and a loving and kind mother so cannot fathom what Emma has gone through and how she can hate her mother so much.

By going to see Jonathan, Emma seeks to put her past behind her and go forward with her future without the baggage of the hate that has been weighing her down. Emma must let go of her feelings of hatred and remorse so that she does not end up like her mother. Her healing begins with her visit to Jonathan and releasing the weight of his secret.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Emma trust Jonathan? What do they have in common?

Discussion Question 2

Why is Evan so upset when Emma confesses Jonathan's secret? What repulses him about her behavior?

Discussion Question 3

Why do you think that Emma finally tells Evan her secret? Is she trying to push him away or is she looking for redemption? Why?

Vocabulary

Expedited, implored, rampant, ethereal.

Characters

Emma Thomas

Emma Thomas is a sophomore at Stanford. She is on the soccer team and is studying to be a doctor. Emma suffered abuse from her aunt, who nearly strangled her to death and from her alcoholic, promiscuous mother. As a kid in Weslyn she made two very good friends, Sara McKinley and Evan Mathews. When Emma left Weslyn two years previously, she left Evan severely beaten by her friend Jonathan. She wanted Evan to find happiness without her because she felt she would only bring him pain and suffering. The cost of choosing to live without the man she loved caused Emma to lose interest in enjoying life. She spends most of her time studying and playing soccer. She does have an interest in music and goes with her friend, Serena, to clubs to listen to bands. Emma moves into a house with three friends for her sophomore year of college while Sara is away studying in Paris.

Emma's friends try to get her to have some fun and away from her books from time to time. Peyton consistently begs her to go to parties with her. Unfortunately, Emma discovers that if she drinks enough alcohol she can deaden the voices from her past that plague her and the mental pain that continually threatens to overwhelm her. The first time she gets drunk at a party she goes to the house of strange man and believes that she has sex with him. She later finds out that he fell asleep before anything could happen. After that her friends try to protect her from another such occurrence, but she does continue to get drunk. Peyton sets Emma up with a boy named Cole. Emma dodges Cole as much as she possibly can, but he is persistent. She does not want to get involved with anyone because she feels that she hurts everyone she gets close to. They eventually begin to see each other, but Emma prefers to see it as merely a physical relationship and not dating.

Emma's life changes when she is told that her mother has committed suicide. She goes to Weslyn for the funeral where she is supported by her friend Sara. She gets through the experience by getting drunk and has a fight with Sara since Sara believes Emma is at risk of becoming like her alcoholic mother. The two eventually patch things up. Emma also sees her old boyfriend, Evan, at the funeral as well. Evan travels to California on the same plane as the two girls. He is staying in Santa Barbara with his friend, Nate, and the girls are staying with Cole not far from Nate's house.

Emma is constantly thrown into contact with Evan. She wants him to hate her and move on with her life. She is afraid he will not be happy with her and that she will hurt him further. Evan does not give up and is there for her when she receives her mother's suicide note in the mail. Her mother blames Emma for her death and tells her she should never have been born. Evan and Sara help her get through the fugue state into which she is thrown. As time goes on Emma and Evan share confidences and tell each other what happened after that awful night when Jonathan and Evan fought. Emma finds herself falling in love with Evan all over again and finally decides to be completely



honest with him. She tells him the terrible secret she has been hiding for years. Jonathan beat a man who attacked Emma and they believed the man was dead. They disposed of the body and lied to the police about what happened. Evan is stunned and sickened that she kept such a secret and Emma leaves, thinking Evan cannot love her any longer. While she is away she finally talks to Evan and he tells her he loves her no matter what and he always will. While Emma has been away she has arranged to buy the Mathews family home. She has also spoken to Evan's mother who has given his savings as part of the payment so Emma and Evan both own the house. Emma has a bright future with the man she loves in a house that holds only fond memories for her.

Evan Mathews

Evan Mathews is Jared's brother and Emma's former boyfriend. The last time he saw Emma was two years ago when he fought with her friend, Jonathan, and the two left Evan on the floor of a house severely beaten. Evan believed that Emma had chosen Jonathan over him. For the next two years his parents kept him close to home making him go to Yale rather than to Stanford where he wanted. He was not allowed to travel and was given very limited funds to keep him close to home and away from Emma. This was due to the fact that Emma had written Evan's mother a letter telling her that she wanted Evan to be happy. In order for him to be happy, Emma had to be out of his life.

Evan sees Emma after two years separation at her mother's funeral. He then travels with her and Sara to Santa Barbara where he stays with his friend Nate, who has a house close to where Emma is staying at Cole's. Evan and Emma are often thrown together and slowly begin to work through their issues. Evan is still in love with Emma and wants her to be honest with him about everything. He learns that she did not leave with Jonathan the night that Evan was severely beaten. Emma confesses to him that she and Jonathan hid the body of a man she believed Jonathan had killed and lied to the police about it. She also confesses that Jonathan set the fire that killed his family. Evan is stunned by Emma's confessions and at first does not understand or sympathize.

Evan comes to realize that he loves Emma no matter what. Both of them love the Mathews house that Evan's mother is selling due to her divorce and they both wish to save it. Emma has fond memories of the swing Evan built her on the oak tree in the backyard. It reminds her of her father. Evan sees the place as the only home he has ever loved. Emma uses her trust to buy the house with Mrs. Mathews putting in part of Evan's savings so they own it together. The two can now look forward to a life together in the house they love.

Sara McKinley

Sara McKinley is Emma Thomas's best friend since Emma moved in Weslyn in the seventh grade. She knows about Emma's abusive family, her near death experience at the hands of her aunt, Carol, and almost ended her friendship with Emma when she left



Evan, beaten severely by her friend, Jonathan, on the floor of a house. The two patched up their friendship and Sara continued to look out for Emma even when she moved to California to attend school while Sara attended school in New York. Sara leaves to study in Paris and asks Emma's friend, Meg, to keep an eye on her since she is worried about Emma's lack of enthusiasm for life since she left Weslyn two years ago.

Sara is dating Evan's brother, Jared Mathews, but breaks up with him before she leaves for Paris so that they will not be tied down to one another while she is so far away. She is devastated when she reads in the paper that Jared is engaged. Sara refuses to talk to Jared even when he repeatedly calls. They eventually reunite when she returns to the US and Jared explains that he is not engaged. They get back together and spend a great deal of time in California with Emma and Evan.

Sara is wary of Evan's return to Emma's life at first. She believes that Emma is much too fragile to get involved once again and is afraid that interaction with Evan will only bring her friend further torment. She wants Emma to be able to release the pain and suffering of the past and be able to live happily, hopefully with Evan because Sara knows that Emma still loves him.

Serena

Serena is one of Emma's roommates. She dresses like a goth and shares Emma's love of music. They often go to the club where her boyfriend, James, is a bouncer to hear bands. Contrary to her appearance Serena is a very optimistic person and she believes that Evan and Emma should be together. She likes Evan and takes every opportunity she can to help him get Emma back.

Meg

Meg is one of Emma's roommates. While Sara is studying in Paris, Meg takes on the duty of looking after Emma. She encourages Emma to get out and experience life, but she cannot keep Emma from experiencing the perils of too much alcohol. Meg is wary of Evan when he returns to Emma's life and like her other friends is determined to protect her against being hurt again.

Peyton

Peyton is Emma's third roommate. She likes to party a lot and encourages Emma to join her as often as she can. She is determined to set Emma up with Tom's friend, Cole, and is happy when the two seem to be hitting it off. Peyton begins to see more of Tom as Emma sees more of Cole. She is not happy when Evan comes to Santa Barbara and jeopardizes Emma's relationship with Cole and thus she is very vocal about her dislike of him.

Cole

Cole is a friend of Peyton's friend Tom. Peyton tries to repeatedly set Emma up with Cole to help her get closer to Tom, whom she is interested in dating. Emma refuses at first, but Cole is persistent and Emma finally gives in. He teaches her to surf, a pastime she learns to love. She does not see their relationship as dating, but more as a sexual friendship. Once Evan begins to spend more time with Emma, Cole realizes that she does not care for him nor will she be able to, so he leaves before she can hurt him any further.

Jonathan Reeves

Jonathan Reeves is a friend from Emma's past in Weslyn. They share a bond of being from abusive families. He shared with her his deepest, darkest secret that he started the fire that killed his family. Jonathan beat a man, supposedly to death, when he attacked Emma in her house. Thinking the man was dead they hid the body and lied to the police about it. Sara later found out that the man was actually shot and killed by someone else. Emma has not seen him in two years and feeling guilty for the way she treated him the last time she saw him she tries to contact him. She is unable to find him, but receives a few texts. Feeling guilty for the crimes he has committed Jonathan turns himself in and is in prison when Emma finally tracks him down. He makes peace with both Emma and Evan, whom he beat up severely two years previously.

Rachel Thomas

Rachel Thomas is Emma's mother. She is an alcoholic who verbally abused Emma when drunk. She commits suicide by hanging herself from the bannister in her home. Emma receives a letter from Rachel after she has returned to California after the funeral. In the letter Rachel blames Emma for her suicide. She tells her daughter that she should never have been born and derides Emma for having never loved her own mother and thus making her life miserable.

Nate

Nate is Evan's best friend. His dad's house where he and several of his friends stay, including Evan is not far away from where Emma and Peyton are staying at Cole's dad's house in Santa Barbara. He saw what Evan was like when Emma left him and for the two years since that day. He is wary of Evan becoming involved with Emma once again and warns her not to break his heart again and leave him a wreck as she did last time. He begs Emma to be honest with Evan about everything so that they cannot keep secrets from one another and have a better chance of having a future together.

Laura Thomas

Laura Thomas is Emma's paternal grandmother. She has never met Emma since she disowned Emma's father when she was born because he was not married to Rachel. Her first contact with her granddaughter is a letter asking her on behalf of Emma's cousins Leyla and Jack if she would be willing to become part of their lives once again. Leyla, Jack and their father George have relocated to Florida since Carol, the children's mother, is in prison for trying to kill Emma. The two children remember Emma with love and miss her. Emma eventually travels to Florida to see the children and meet her grandmother for the first time.

Jared Mathews

Jared Mathews is Evan's brother and the boyfriend of Sara McKinley, Emma's best friend. Sara breaks up with Jared before she leaves to study in Paris, but she is devastated when she reads that he is engaged. She eventually learns it is a mistake, and the two get back together and spend a lot of time with Evan and Emma.

Symbols and Symbolism

Black Boot Box

Emma keeps a black boot box filled with mementos from her time in Weslyn with Evan. The memories are painful for Emma since she left Evan behind. She prefers not to look into the box, but she asks her friend Sara to hide it away where she does not know where it is.

Oak Tree and Swing

The oak tree and swing are located behind Evan Mathews' house where he built the swing for Emma. The swing is a reminder of her father, and she believes the oak tree and swing is the only place that will always be there for her.

Oak Leaf

Emma keeps an oak tree leaf from the oak tree in Evan's yard. She uses it as a bookmark, and it helps her to remember a time when she was happy.

Weslyn

Weslyn is the town in Connecticut where Emma is from. It is where her mother, friend Sara, and former boyfriend Evan live. It holds painful memories of abuse as well as good memories of friends.

Painting

Emma uses painting as a way to express what she is feeling. It helps her to work through painful memories, experiences, and emotions.

Running

Whenever Emma feels overwhelmed she likes to run, hoping to leave her problems behind her. During one long run on the beach, she is able to shed her past and contemplate the future with hope and the desire to be a better person.

Tattoo

Emma gets a tattoo that is from a drawing she created herself. It is to help her remember the past and not to be the person that she had been.



Alcohol

Emma's mother is an alcoholic and verbally abuses her while drunk. Emma begins to use alcohol to help her forget the painful memories of her past. She risks becoming dependent on alcohol like her mother.

Mathews House

Emma loves the Mathews house as much as Evan. Neither of them want to lose it, so they buy it together in order to keep the good memories they have there and to create all new ones.

Water

Emma spends a lot of time in the water whether it is surfing or swimming. She also has two episodes where she nearly allows herself to drown when she feels unable to go on with life.

Surfing

Emma's friend Cole teaches her how to surf. She instantly loves it. Later, she is able to share this love with Evan, who is an avid surfer.

Music

Emma loves listening to music and often uses it to drown out the voices in her head that remind her of her past life. Going to clubs with Serena to listen to bands is one of the few activities she permits herself to participate in when not studying.

Settings

Palo Alto, California

Palo Alto, California is where Stanford University is located. Emma Thomas and her roommates attend Stanford. Emma spends her time in Palo Alto studying and playing soccer. She does not have a social life. Her roommates attempt to get her to go out and she eventually reluctantly agrees.

Santa Barbara, California

Santa Barbara, California is where Emma and her friends vacation. Emma parties and tries to become a new person. She reconnects with Evan and they forge a new relationship while he helps her to confront her past.

Weslyn, Connecticut

Weslyn, Connecticut is the hometown of Emma Thomas. She goes back there unwillingly to attend the funeral of her mother. Emma does not want to stay in the city so stays on the edge of town her first night in Connecticut. After becoming drunk at her mother's funeral, she is taken to the Mathews house to recover. Emma stayed many times at the house when she was younger and finds peace on a swing that Evan made for her on an oak tree on the property. She ends up buying the house when Mrs. Mathews puts it up for sale. It is the place where she has had the most happiness in her life.

Setting 4

Setting 5

Themes and Motifs

Guilt

Guilt is a theme of the novel. Emma is racked by guilt over her past. It makes her sabotage her relationships with her boyfriends and her friends. She leaves her hometown of Weslyn and her boyfriend, Evan, behind because she believes she will destroy his life. By leaving, she does destroy him. When she discovers how she wrecked his life, she feels even more guilt.

Emma tries to make Evan hate her to assuage her guilt. He does not want to hate her, but he wants to forgive her. Evan and her friends try to make her let go of her guilt and embrace her life. Her guilt makes her shut herself off from those around her feeling that she does not deserve happiness.

Her guilt is caused by the poor choices she had made in her life. She made these choices because she did not want to let people close to her. Emma believes that she causes pain in the lives of everyone she touches because her mother had lead her to believe that she is the cause of any problem. Mrs. Thomas' emotional abuse has left Emma scarred and unable to allow anyone close to her for fear of hurting them.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is a theme of the novel. Emma's mother has always told Emma that she is not worthy of anyone's love. She blames Emma for everything that has ever gone wrong in her life. When Mrs. Thomas commits suicide her suicide letter blames Emma for the all the pain in her life. She tells Emma that when she was born she took the love of the only person who had ever loved her. She felt that Emma's father loved Emma more than he did her and she blamed Emma for this. She claims that she destroyed their love.

Mrs. Thomas also laments that Emma was ever born. She feels that she has only caused pain to everyone in her life and questions how she can live with herself. She ends the letter by telling Emma that she is the reason Mrs. Thomas is committing suicide.

This emotional abuse has left Emma feeling she is not worthy of anyone's love or respect. She runs away from relationships when she feels that she is becoming too vested in the person's life because she does not want to cause them any pain. Her mother has made her believe that she is the cause of any problems in everyone's lives around her. This emotional abuse leaves her feeling alone and empty attempting to skate through life without making any connections to the people around her.

It takes the love of her friends and of Evan to overcome the hold that her mother holds over her. Even in her death, Mrs. Thomas makes Emma cower in fear of hurting those



around her. Her friends will not let her push them away, but fight to make Emma realize that her mother is wrong and that she is worth loving and worth fighting to protect.

Self-destruction

Self-destruction is a recurring theme throughout the novel. Emma has suffered through a great deal of abuse by her aunt and mother. She has left behind Evan, the boy she is in love with in order for him to find happiness that she does not believe he could have with her. It has been two years since that terrible night when Emma walked away from Evan, leaving him severely beaten on the floor of a house. She is slowly spiraling downward and becoming consumed by the guilt she has for all of the wrongs she believes she has caused and the lives she has ruined. Emma begins to seek ways to relieve her of the pain and voices that are slowly becoming stronger each day.

Emma begins to drink alcohol when she realizes the deadening effect it has on her senses and the voices of her abusers constantly belittling her in her head. In order to dull her senses she has to drink enough to make herself drunk. When she is drunk Emma makes bad decisions. She accompanies a guy she knows only as Gev to his house where she believes they have sex. She later finds out that Gev passed out before anything could happen. This event does not keep her from drinking to excess on future occasions, but luckily she is usually saved in time by one of her friends before anything untoward occurs. When she returns to Weslyn for her mother's funeral Emma gets drunk in order to make it through the funeral. Her mother was an alcoholic, who became verbally abusive when drunk and ended up committing suicide. Emma knows the effects of alcohol on her mother, but she continues to imbibe. After finding her passed out in a closet at the funeral home, her best friend, Sara, tells her that she is going to end up like her mother if she continues this behavior. This seems to have the hoped for effect on Emma and she does not get drunk again after that day.

Emma has several incidences when she comes close to drowning. While on a school camping trip she is drawn to a cliff where jagged rocks protrude out of the water down below. As if in a trance and before her friends can stop her, Emma jumps off the cliff. She survives the drop, but scrapes her leg against one of the rocks leaving a very painful and serious gash. Cole, who has witnessed the event, rushes to help her out of the water and back to camp. He is angry and confused by Emma's lack of concern for her own safety or life.

There are two instances where Emma enters the ocean swimming and almost drowns. In the second episode she has had a letter from her mother blaming Emma for her death. Her mother tells her she should never have been born and that because Emma does not love her she is killing herself. Emma has been left alone because Sara went home for her grandfather's funeral, Evan went to San Francisco to meet his mother and Cole decides that he has to leave before Emma can hurt him any further. Feeling completely alone and believing that everyone would be better off without her Emma swims out into the water and begins to let herself sink. She begins to give up on life and waits for death to take her. Luckily, on this occasion Emma is able to save herself. She



comes to her senses upon hearing Evan's voice in her head willing her to live. Emma leaves the water and begins to run as fast and as far as she can. She runs until she is dehydrated, her feet are bleeding, and she cannot move a step further. She collapses onto the beach near some surfers who know her, and they take her back to Nate's house. As Emma is running she feels herself shedding the weight of her past and all of the bad experiences that have kept her from enjoying life to the fullest. She now feels as if she can begin to live again.

Friendship

Friendship is an important theme in this novel. Emma has a tendency to be a loner and seek solitude, but she is able to collect a strong group of friends who all want to protect her. Not all of her friends know the details of her past life, which includes an abusive family. Sara and Evan are the only ones who know the full extent of what Emma has suffered over the years. Her friend, Meg, is told a small amount by Sara so that she can keep an eye on Emma while Sara is in Paris. Her friends Serena and Peyton do not know anything about Emma's past, but seem to realize that she is fragile and vulnerable. They all try to help her each in their own way.

Serena is there for Emma when she needs the adrenaline rush when bad memories threaten to overwhelm her. Serena supports her desire to go stage diving and even arranges it with her bouncer boyfriend, James. Neither of them question Emma's desire to throw herself off the stage trusting strangers to catch her, instead they seem to realize that she is different and her requests have an underlying urgentness to them that they cannot ignore. When Emma asks Serena to go with her to get a tattoo her friend agrees with alacrity and enthusiasm. She does not even question the suddenness of the decision or Emma's desire for the experience to be painful. Serena is the one friend who instantly likes and accepts Evan. She does not see him as a threat to Emma's happiness, but seems to realize that Emma needs Evan to make her truly happy, thus she does everything she can to put them together.

Meg stands in for Sara while she is studying in Paris. She tries to encourage Emma to get out and socialize, but also, along with Serena, to protect her from imbibing too much alcohol or from the consequences when she does get drunk. Meg is wary of Evan's return to Emma's life and lets him know it.

Sara, as Emma's best friend, is one of the few people who knows her best. She knows the abuse that Emma has suffered at the hands of family members and the toll this has taken on Emma. Even as far away as Paris Sara makes sure that someone is there to look after Emma in her absence. Her best friend is by her side when Emma's mother commits suicide and she has to return to Weslyn for the funeral. Sara is appalled when Emma is drunk at her mother's funeral and shows a growing reliance on alcohol to cope with life. She fears that Emma is heading down the slippery slope of alcoholism and would become just like her mother. Sara voices this concern to Emma causing a rift between them, but Emma realizes that she cannot use alcohol as a panacea any longer.

Sara and Evan are there for Emma after she reads the letter her mother mailed her before she committed suicide. They stay with her until she comes out of her trance-like state. Evan continues to give Emma as much support as she will allow and under the watchful eye of Sara. He gets her to open up to him about episodes from her past that she has kept a secret from everyone. Emma is afraid that Evan will not love her any longer if she confides him that she and Jonathan hid the body of a man and lied to the police about it. Evan does become angry with her for her complicity in Jonathan's crime and the fact that she did not tell anyone about it. Emma is sure that she has lost him, but once he has time to think Evan realizes that he loves Emma no matter what. He tells her this and he lets her know that he will always be there for her. They buy the Mathews house together since they both have fond memories of being there and plan to have a happy life.

Styles

Point of View

The point of view of the novel is first person. For the first fourteen chapters, the first person narrator is Emma Thomas, a young college student who is struggling to deal with her past. Starting in Chapter 15, the narration is split between Emma Thomas and Evan Mathews, Emma's high school boyfriend who reenters her life at her mother's funeral.

The story is told through exposition and dialogue. Emma's past and present are shown through her and Evan's viewpoints. Emma is guilt ridden about her past and does not want to acknowledge it. To have a future, she must face her past and overcome her demons. Emma's story leaves the reader spellbound and breathless.

Language and Meaning

The language of the novel is simple yet powerful. The book is intended for a general audience so the language is not difficult or formal. The sentences are simple and make the book quick and easy to read. The language is typical of a college student. The reader is easily drawn into Emma's story and her voice is powerful and authentic. The reader shares Emma's emotional distress and hopes for her recovery along with her friends.

Donovan uses imagery and provocative language to bring Emma's story to life, and the reader is taken along for the ride. It is a bumpy course that leads not only Emma breathless, but the reader as well. The chapters are short and concise. Emma's relationships are tumultuous, and short chapters show her erratic behavior and give the reader a sense of the chaos and nervousness that she feels about her past and how people will view her.

Structure

Out of Breath is comprised of forty chapters with a prologue and epilogue. The chapters are short and concise and the quick pace gives the reader a sense of the breathlessness that Emma consistently feels. It is a powerful novel that draws the reader in and makes them part of the story. It is an easy and quick read that is enjoyable.

The plot is simple. Emma Thomas is a college student who is trying to outrun her past. She was emotionally abused by her mother and has no confidence in her abilities and intelligence. Her mother made her feel worthless so she feels that she does not deserve love and runs away when she becomes too close to someone for fear that she will hurt them. Her high school boyfriend, who she hurt deeply when she left without a word,

attempts to show her that she is not worthless that she is a beautiful and intelligent young woman who deserves happiness. Evan helps her confront her past and offers her the forgiveness that she needs to begin her life again.

The novel is a quick read with short concise chapters. It shows the effects of emotional abuse on a child as she grows into an adult and has to deal with the insincerity and feelings of self worth. It is a story of a young woman who triumphs over her past with a few stumbles along the way to becoming a strong and confident adult.

Quotes

They're not boots.

-- Emma (Prologue paragraph Paragraph 9, pg. 2)

Importance: This is the reader's first sense that Emma has secrets from her past and is not comfortable discussing them.

You know I think you're cool. But I still don't get you.

-- James (Chapter 4 paragraph Paragraph 8, pg. 43)

Importance: This shows how Emma is viewed by others. They do not understand why she is so hard on herself. This is because she keep everything bottled up and will not deal with her feelings.

I am anything but boring.

-- Emma (Chapter 5 paragraph Paragraph 5, pg. 51)

Importance: Emma is explaining to Cole that there is not much to reveal about herself. It is not that there is not anything, she just does not talk about it.

It should be something that's all-consuming and makes me forget everything else. Strips me of every thought and whisks away the pain.

-- Emma (Chapter 9 paragraph Paragraph 12, pg. 95)

Importance: This quote shows why Emma is motivated to do things that are new and exciting. She wants a way to forget the pain she feels if just for a moment.

So that I know I'm alive.

-- Emma (Chapter 10 paragraph Paragraph 10, pg. 107)

Importance: Emma feels dead inside so taking risks by doing adrenaline pumping things makes her feel alive. It is the only time that she free and happy.

I'm not supposed to be here. I'm not supposed to be in yesterday.

-- Emma (Chapter 16 paragraph Paragraph 1, pg. 165)

Importance: Emma is haunted by her past and by being in Evan's house she is surrounded by the past. She is supposed to be running from the past not back entangled within it.

She's going to destroy you, Evan.

-- Analise (Chapter 17 paragraph para 11, pg. 173)

Importance: This quote shows how Evan's friends feel about Emma. She hurt him



deeply and changed his future. For him to go through that again would be detrimental to him.

Why did she hate you so much? What made her want to hurt you?

-- Evan (Chapter 36 paragraph Paragraph 8, pg. 371)

Importance: Evan is trying to understand Emma's relationship with her mother. He wants to know how a mother could treat her child with such cruelty. It gives the reader an idea of what Emma's life was like with her mother.

I need to figure out how to keep living--otherwise she should have killed me.

-- Emma (Chapter 36 paragraph Paragraph 11, pg. 371)

Importance: This shows Emma's frame of mind and how she views herself. She does not feel herself worthy to be alive. This concerns Evan that she should think that her life is worthless.

Jonathan understood. He knew what it was like to be tortured by hate until it becomes part of you. Our pain bonded us--allowed us to be honest with each other.

-- Emma (Chapter 39 paragraph Paragraph 7, pg. 405)

Importance: This quote shows how tormented Emma was by her mother and how that affected her in ways that no one knew. She bonded with Jonathan because his father treated him the same way and he understood and did not judge her hatred of her mother. It was an important link in her young life that she had someone who knew how she felt.

I promised. And I know he'd do the same for me.

-- Emma (Chapter 39 paragraph Paragraph 7, pg. 411)

Importance: This quote shows Emma's skewed sense of loyalty. She felt loyalty to Jonathan because he understood her feelings of hatred toward her mother and she could understand his motives for killing his family. If she had been pushed over the edge by her mother and killed her, she believes he would keep her secret. It shows the torment that she went through that she has no sense of family feeling and a skewed view of right and wrong.

I'm not the girl you fell in love with. She's gone. You have to decide if you can still love me. It's your choice now.

-- Emma (Chapter 39 paragraph Paragraph 4, pg. 412)

Importance: Emma admits that she has changed. She is trying to become a better person and is giving Evan the choice to stay with her or leave rather than running away from him. She wants it to be his decision because she took that choice away from him by running away two years ago. It shows how she has grown as a person.