

The One & Only Study Guide

The One & Only by Emily Giffin

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Plot Summary

The One and Only is the story of a 33-year-old woman named Shea Rigsby and the ups and downs of her personal and professional relationships over the course of a year. Shea grew up in a small Texas town called Walker where she was befriended by the Carr family. Coach Clive Carr is the head coach of the local college football team and Shea idolized him as a girl growing up. Mrs. Carr, who has died from cancer as the story opens, was a typical Southern wife and mother who faithfully supported her husband and children, Lawton and Lucy, who remains Shea's best friend. Shea's own parents are divorced and Shea has never had a close relationship with her father who now lives in New York with his wife, Astrid, and their daughter, Bronwyn.

Shea grew up in Walker where she became a football fanatic, went to college at Walker and even now works in the Walker college athletic department. Shea reaches a point in her life where she wonders if she is doing what she should be doing. Her job has become routine, she is dating a man named Miller who is not Mr. Right but she does not know how to end the relationship. The one constant in Shea's life is Coach Carr to whom she looks for guidance and inspiration. Coach Carr advises Shea to find a better job and helps her to connect with the Sports Editor at the Dallas Post where she gets a writing job covering the Walker College sports program. Shea breaks up with Miller and begins a romantic relationship with a former Walker classmate, Ryan James, who is now the star quarterback of the Dallas Cowboys football team. Ryan is the catch of a lifetime, and although Shea begins to have feelings for him, she cannot help but think about Coach Carr in increasingly romantic ways.

Before long, it is revealed that the NCAA is investigating Walker for improprieties which are not named. Shea learns that Ryan's father had purchased a new car for a receiver on the Walker team when Ryan went to school there and that could be just the tip of the iceberg of inappropriate activities. Shea continues to date Ryan who pushes for a closer relationship even though he has just come out of a divorce. Shea wants to love Ryan but her feelings are complicated by more romantic feelings about Coach Carr. Ryan's ex-wife visits Shea to tell her about Ryan's abusive and violent behavior but Shea does not see this side of him.

All those in Walker are vested in the current football season in which Walker remains undefeated and gets to go to the Cotton Bowl. Shea and Coach Carr share their feelings for each other but are not sure how to act on them and what the impact of any relationship will have on their families. Ryan's violent side comes out when he accuses Shea of continuing to see Miller and he attacks her in her apartment one night. Coach Carr intervenes and Ryan spends some desolate days trying to get Shea back after she breaks up with him. Lucy catches Coach kissing Shea's hand at a Christmas event and is devastated that Shea could consider her father for a romantic partner. Lucy issues an ultimatum to Shea that she can have a relationship with Coach or a continuing friendship with Lucy, but she cannot have both. Shea quits her job at the newspaper because she can no longer be impartial where Coach Carr and the Walker football team are concerned.



Shea visits her father in New York over the Christmas holiday and tries to envision a new life away from Texas. Shea returns to Texas and reconciles with Lucy and stays away from Coach Carr. Walker wins the bowl game and Lucy apologizes to Shea, giving Shea permission to date her father.



Chapters 1 - 3

Summary

The story begins at the funeral of Mrs. Carr who had succumbed to cancer after only 10 months. Mrs. Carr was the mother of Shea Rigsby's best friend, Lucy, as well as Shea's mother's best friend. Before she died, Mrs. Carr had stated that she wanted Shea to marry her son, Lawton, but that was totally out of the question for Shea. Shea prays for the Carr family including Mrs. Carr's husband, Coach Carr, the legendary football coach at Walker University, in Walker, Texas. Shea recalls the fond memories she has of the Coach when she and Lucy were young girls and Shea spent so much time at the Carrs' home and learning all about football from the Coach. Lucy never cared for football and this set her apart from the relationship Shea had with the Coach. Shea notes how good the Coach looks at the funeral and also spots her boyfriend, Miller, one of the Coach's former players.

After the funeral, Lucy wants a quiet gathering at the Carr home but even Lucy's husband, Neil, cannot remove the people who have gathered there by the time the family arrives home. Lucy especially does not want to see Miller because she thinks he is immature and the completely wrong person for Shea.

In Chapter 2, Shea rides with the Coach from the cemetery to his house. Conversation is halting as Shea does not know what to say to the Coach who is now a widower. The conversation eventually turns to football and Signing Day when recruits sign up to play for a university.

Lucy remembers how she virtually grew up in the Carr household as Lucy's best friend. Shea was born on February 22, 1980, the night that the U.S. Olympic team defeated the Soviet Union in the semifinals of the Winter Olympics in Lake Placid. This game was called Miracle on Ice and Coach always said that it was a foreshadowing of Shea's athletic life. Shea's and Lucy's mothers immersed the girls in Walker football mania when they were little and Shea's interest increased while Lucy had no interest even though her father is the iconic football coach. In high school, Shea participated in sports while Lucy was a cheerleader but they remained best friends. When it came time for college, Shea naturally went to Walker while Lucy went to Walker's rival, University of Texas, to be as far away from the Walker football mania as possible.

On the night of Mrs. Carr's funeral, Shea and her mother remained with the family to reminisce about Mrs. Carr. The conversation eventually turns to Miller and how no one thinks he is appropriate for Shea because he is immature and just an aimless gym teacher. Shea tries to defend Miller but all the others say he is not marriage material and she needs to drop him. Lucy thinks Shea should be married to a doctor or lawyer and be a stay-at-home wife but Shea has never been interested in that idea.



In Chapter 3, it is a gloomy February and 1 month after Mrs. Carr's death. Shea begins to take stock of her own life and is dissatisfied with her low level job, her unsatisfactory relationship with Miller and her rundown car and apartment. The only thing Shea really likes about her life are her clothes which come from Lucy's clothing store. Shea's job as assistant sports information director entails reporting Walker sports stats to the media but she would rather have a job reporting sports news. Leaving her job at Walker would also mean leaving Coach Carr and Shea does not know if she can do that because of the big impact the Coach has had on her life.

Shea recalls the volatility of her home life growing up. Shea's parents met when Shea's mother was fresh out of college working at a bank in Dallas and her father was a Wall Street investment banker in town working on a deal. They fell madly in love and Shea's mother soon became pregnant. Unfortunately, Shea's father was already married with a pregnant wife but he moved to Texas to be with Shea and her mother. After a few years, Shea's father began seeing his first wife, Astrid, and eventually divorced Shea's mother and moved back to New York to be with Astrid and their daughter, Bronwyn. Shea's mother had a nervous breakdown and went to a treatment center for 6 weeks. Shea stayed with the Carrs and delighted in their normal family life and the never ending presence of football.

As the years progressed, Coach Carr became the only male figure in Shea's life and her admiration for him bordered on hero worship. Coach Carr was revered by everyone associated with Walker football and Shea hated that she had to share him with the public.

One day Shea receives a note in her office that Coach Carr wants to see her. Coach Carr tells Shea that Frank Smiley, the sports editor of the Dallas Post, is looking for a reporter and Coach has recommended Shea. Shea is not sure she wants to leave Walker but promises to call Smiley. Coach also tells Shea that she is too good for Miller and should not be wasting her time with him.

Analysis

The author establishes the setting for the story as Walker, Texas, a small college town consumed with football. The time period is 2013. The story begins with an ending, the death of Mrs. Carr, a beloved mother and wife of the college football coach, Coach Clive Carr. Coach Carr is a Walker College alum and has risen to an iconic position at the school during his 30-year career. Shea is more like a daughter to the Carrs than just their daughter, Lucy's, best friend. Shea's natural interest in football and sports positions her as a favorite with Coach Carr, much to the chagrin of Lucy who does not like all the fanfare surrounding football. Shea is presented as a bit of a tomboy interested in and playing sports, while Lucy is very ladylike in her demeanor, interests and style.

The author begins the story in the present but reverts to the past via flashbacks in Shea's mind where she recalls portions of her life such as growing up close to the Carr family and the painful story of her parents' divorce. Shea is the result of an indiscretion



between her already married father and her young mother. When Shea's father decided to return to his first wife, Shea lost her father's regular presence in her life and was forced to participate in events involving her half-sister, Bronwyn, which is a source of anger and jealousy. Shea's mother never recovered from the divorce from her husband and was mentally unstable for quite awhile. Shea sought comfort in the stability of the Carrs' home and grew even closer to the Carr family which considered her to be one of their own.

Coach Carr is well respected in the football community but Shea elevates him to hero status probably because of the lack of her father in her life. Coach Carr provides the guidance, encouragement and inspiration that Shea needs and her dependence on him grows as she gets older.

Mrs. Carr's death has provided Shea with the opportunity to examine her own life and she determines that it is lacking in many aspects. Shea is 33-years-old and lives in a basic apartment, drives a late model car, dates an immature gym teacher, and works in a job she has long outgrown. Shea's job in the athletic department at Walker is the only one she has ever had and it now seems unimportant and not relevant for a woman Shea's age. True to form, it is Coach Carr who encourages Shea to interview for a new job and to take a hard look at Miller's role in her life. Shea will always consider the Coach's advice to be solid so she determines to make the changes he has suggested: she will interview for the Dallas Post reporter job and will break up with Miller.

Discussion Question 1

Why do people think that Miller is no good for Shea?

Discussion Question 2

In what ways has Shea shown that Coach Carr has been a father figure throughout her life?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Mrs. Carr's death launch Shea into introspective mode about her life?

Vocabulary

grieving, magenta, undertones, convey, decisive, dissenting, condolences, grudge, benchmarks, cajoled, crotchety, catastrophe, pendulum, ruffraff, droves, chivalry, unison, bungalow, momentous, voluminous, foreshadowing, amid, boisterous, felony, traitorous, infraction, critiques, vague, emasculating, dirges, chronology, sordid, solace, adulation, giddiness, alma mater, fibbed, demeanor



Chapters 4 - 6

Summary

Despite her promise to Coach a few weeks ago, Shea does not call Smiley or break up with Miller, not sure if she is afraid of rejection or being lonely. But one night after a movie date, Shea tells Miller that she does not want to see him anymore. Shea tells Miller that their relationship just does not feel right, that they are just hanging out until someone better comes along. Miller accepts the break up but asks Shea if they can still have sex, a question that validates that Shea has made the right decision about ending the relationship.

Shea calls Lucy to tell her that she has ended her relationship with Miller and Lucy is thrilled. Lucy says that she is at her Dad's house and that that feels weird to say now that Mrs. Carr is gone. Shea tells Lucy that Lucy should continue to say "her parents" home because Mrs. Carr is irreplaceable.

In Chapter 5, Shea and her mother are helping Lucy sort Mrs. Carr's belongings to decide what to keep and what to give away. Lucy catches Shea fluffing up her hair when she hears Coach Carr arrive home and Lucy says it would be weird if Shea is primping for the Coach. Shea tells Coach that she has called Smiley and broken up with Miller and Coach is pleased. Shea tells Coach again how sorry she is that Mrs. Carr has died and he is grateful for her concern. Lucy gives Shea a pair of new black suede pumps that Mrs. Carr had purchased right before her cancer diagnosis.

In Chapter 6, Mrs. Carr had always made a big production out of Lucy's birthday each year but this year is obviously different and Lucy cannot help but be overwhelmed with grief. Lucy declares that she does not want to celebrate her birthday this year but Shea and Lucy's husband, Neil, decide at the last minute to have a family dinner for a small celebration. Coach has forgotten about Lucy's birthday which has sent Lucy into a day of sobbing. Neil had to call the Coach and remind him to come to dinner which Lucy thinks is unforgivable given the circumstances. When Coach arrives, Lucy's 5-year-old daughter, Caroline, chastises him for forgetting Lucy's birthday. When pressed, Coach says that his day had been difficult due to some issues related to a recruit named Reggie Rhodes but he does not elaborate.

Analysis

Even though Coach Carr has advised Shea to call Smiley about the reporter job and to also break up with Miller, Shea has not done either one. Shea shows typical human behavior in that she may be afraid to change the security she feels in her life even though she is not progressing. Changing jobs will mean leaving Walker and Coach Carr and proving herself outside this relatively sheltered world. Shea is also hesitant to break up with Miller even though he is immature and has no plans to make a commitment to



Shea. Shea is normal in that breaking up will leave her lonely and she is not sure she can deal with that. The search for love is an important theme in literature and Shea exhibits that when she dates Miller, however, she realizes that she needs more from a partner and she breaks up with Miller putting her on the search for love once again. When Shea ultimately makes these two decisions to change her life, she is making mature choices that will advance herself professionally and personally.

Lucy is also exhibiting very human behavior related to missing her mother on her birthday. Lucy's behavior may seem self absorbed and a bit immature, but Lucy is still grieving the loss of her mother and feels abandoned. The fact that Coach has not remembered Lucy's birthday just adds to the feeling of abandonment Lucy feels this year. Perhaps it would help Lucy if she were to step back from her own feelings for a moment and consider that her father is also grieving the loss of Mrs. Carr and that she should be more tender with him instead of accusatory.

The author uses the literary technique of foreshadowing in this section in several instances. When Lucy is distressed at calling her family home her father's home instead of her parents' home, Shea tells her to continue to call it her parents' home because Mrs. Carr can never be replaced. This foreshadows events that will come later in the book where Lucy does feel that Shea intends to take her mother's place in the Coach's life. There is also foreshadowing in the gift of Mrs. Carr's black suede pumps that Lucy gives to Shea. By the end of the story, Lucy will have to come to terms that there may be someone who will be able to fill Mrs. Carr's shoes and that someone is Shea. Shea also gives herself away when she fluffs her hair when the Coach arrives home, foreshadowing their upcoming revelations of attraction to each other. There is also foreshadowing in the mention of trouble related to Reggie Rhodes in that it will soon be revealed that the school is being investigated by the NCAA for impropriety. The Coach does not reveal the nature of the trouble but the reader should be aware that something more is coming related to the topic.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Shea hesitate to call Smiley at the Dallas Post and to break up with Miller?

Discussion Question 2

What are some of the reasons that Shea has for breaking up with Miller? Are they legitimate?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Lucy feel even further alienated from the Coach on her birthday?

Vocabulary

lingering, curt, grunge, delusions of grandeur, pang, constituted, kindred, foyer, tentative, composite, chic, splayed, lavish, diligence, adamant, proposition, acquiesced, alluded, reprimanding, entrench, mischief, rhetorical, faux



Chapters 7 - 9

Summary

A month later Shea attends Walker's annual spring game and runs into Ryan James, a former Walker football star and now the quarterback of the Dallas Cowboys football team. Ryan comes from a wealthy Texas oil family and has recently divorced Houston socialite Blakeslee Meadows. After exchanging pleasantries, Ryan gives Shea his phone number and asks her to call him sometime.

Lucy is ecstatic that Ryan has given Shea his phone number because that catapults Shea into the social stratosphere. Shea thinks Ryan was just being polite but Lucy contends that he is interested in Shea and urges her to call him. The next day Ryan texts Shea asking if she would accompany him to a charity event on Friday night. Shea responds that she will go and Ryan calls her happy that she does not play the typical dating game and make him wait for a response. Ryan flirts with Shea and she is not sure how to respond, reminding herself that Ryan is still her former classmate as well as being one of the most famous quarterbacks to play the game of football. Shea's mother is thrilled to learn that Shea will be going out with Ryan, considering the date a feather in her cap for having raised such a beautiful daughter.

In Chapter 8, Shea receives a lunch invitation to meet with Smiley about the reporter's job. Shea calls Coach Carr with the news and he counsels her on how to conduct herself at the meeting to impress Smiley. When Shea meets Smiley she thinks that he is impatient with her and is meeting with her just to do a favor for the Coach. As the lunch progresses, however, Shea answers Smiley's questions with thoughtfulness and insight and it is clear that she has impressed him.

In Chapter 9, Shea heads to a beauty salon to get her hair and makeup done in preparation for her date with Ryan. Later that evening, Shea meets Ryan at the Ritz and he is stunned at how gorgeous Shea looks. Shea and Ryan have a good time at the charity event and end up at his house at the end of the evening, something Shea had told herself earlier would not happen. Shea awakens in Ryan's bed the next morning but does not remember much of what happened after arriving at Ryan's the night before. Shea checks her phone and realizes that she had placed 2 calls to Coach Carr the night before when she had been drunk. Ryan tells Shea that she had told the Coach that she loved him and Shea is mortified.

Analysis

It seems that suddenly Shea's life is improving in the two areas that had been pretty lackluster just a few weeks ago. Shea's interview with Smiley starts out slow but she wins him over with her sports knowledge and views on life. It seems as if Shea is a woman Smiley could tolerate in his office and she feels pretty confident that she has the



job. Shea's love life is dramatically improving too when she runs into Ryan James and he later invites her to accompany him to a charity event. The invitation will do wonders for Shea's self esteem as well as the perception that people have of her if she dates such a popular and eligible athlete. Shea is totally aware of Ryan's good looks, charm and money and proceeds cautiously at first but ends up going home with Ryan after the event. Shea had been so drunk that she made inappropriate phone calls to the Coach and even told him she loved him. Being drunk has allowed Shea to say things that she normally would not. Ryan is not concerned about what Shea has said to the Coach because Ryan considers the Coach to be an old man, but before long it will be revealed that Shea does have feelings for the Coach which go beyond affection for a father figure. Shea is relieved, however, to learn that she and Ryan did not have sex the night before but it is not flattering that she was too drunk to remember. Perhaps Shea is star struck being around Ryan but she is not making good decisions which could backfire on her.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Shea suspicious of Ryan's advances toward her?

Discussion Question 2

Why would Shea call Coach during her evening out with Ryan? Are her true feelings getting the best of her?

Discussion Question 3

in what ways does Shea finally win over the crotchety Smiley during the lunch interview?

Vocabulary

sentiment, grandiose, socialite, prodding, psycho, autism, exhaustive, symmetrical, loblolly, unearthed, accentuate, incident, contradiction, disorienting, devastating, quest, affiliation, debutante, eviscerated, elitists, forfeiting, misogynistic, wooed, defiant, due diligence, diehards, reprimanded, cakewalk, trilby, instantaneously, contradict, begrudgingly, phenomenal, partisan, forgo, gnarly, jubilant, tousled, disdain, blunt, quaint, corroborated, sauntered, aspirational, socialite, mirage, surreptitious, flirtatious, parquet



Chapters 10 - 12

Summary

On Monday morning Shea goes to Coach Carr's office to apologize for her drunken phone calls to him over the weekend. Coach had not been offended but he cautioned Shea about being out of control. Coach tells Shea that she has a good heart and a good mind and she should be careful with both.

Shea has not heard anything from Smiley so she sends an email telling him how much she would like the reporter job. Ryan has reported to training camp in California but he and Shea keep up racy communications via text messages. One day Shea sees a stern looking woman emerge from the university's compliance office and Shea asks J.J. if she is associated with the NCAA. J.J. tells Shea that the woman is conducting a preliminary investigation at the university regarding recruiting and drug allegations, as well as eligibility and academic allegations.

In Chapter 11, Lucy invites Shea and her mother for a family weekend at the Carrs' home at Lake LBJ. After dinner one evening, the group plays Trivial Pursuit with Coach and Shea teaming up to win. On the morning of their departure, Shea joins Coach with coffee on the porch and his usually congenial manner turns angry when he talks about the NCAA investigation. Coach states that right now the probe is centering on things such as tutors writing athletes' papers, boosters wining and dining recruits and professors handing out better grades than deserved. Coach is especially angry because the NCAA profits from the amateur college athletes by such things as making teams wear and use gear with corporate logos and charging the national television companies millions of dollars to broadcast the March Madness basketball games each spring. Shea listens to Coach's rants and wants to believe that he has never been involved in any impropriety but has just a hint of doubt in her heart.

In Chapter 12, it is a couple days after the weekend at Lake LBJ and Shea's favorite day, the beginning of football practice and the official start of the football season. Shea is both excited and nervous in that the Walker team is positioned to have a great season but she is afraid of what the NCAA investigation may do to that.

Shea stops in to visit Lucy at her store and Lucy shows Shea a tabloid newspaper with a picture of Ryan and his ex-wife at an outdoor cafe. Lucy is concerned that perhaps Ryan and his ex-wife are reconciling but Shea is not sure how to react.

When Ryan returns from California, Shea invites him to her apartment and they make love. When Ryan says goodbye to Shea the next morning she is not sure if she is special or just another sexual conquest.



Analysis

Shea is trying to get more control over her life, but, ironically she keeps making inappropriate choices. Calling the Coach when she was drunk is bad form and she tries to make up with an apology but the Coach is confused by her behavior. He has tried to guide her throughout her life and she should show better judgment at this point in her life. It is almost as if Shea has been released from everything that has bound her such as her job and Miller and she is now acting with abandon. There could be something psychological going on with Shea, too, in that she is dating Ryan but would prefer to be with the Coach and she can only express these feelings when inebriated.

The NCAA investigation has inserted itself into the idyllic world of sports at Walker and for the first time ever, Shea considers the possibility that the Coach may have been involved in some improprieties in the past. Although she has nothing to base her feelings on, it is possible that the Coach's extreme reaction to the investigation has tipped off something in Shea that makes her think that Coach knows more than he is letting on. It is ironic that everyone around the college athletes seems to profit from them while they cannot make a dime, but these are the rules of amateur collegiate sports and everyone knows that going into it. Sports are big business even at the college level and it is possible that Coach has benefited at some point but that remains to be seen.

Coach is not the only man in Shea's life who may be hiding something. The photo of Ryan with his ex-wife could be cause for concern, but just like she treats Coach, Shea decides to not address the issue and see what comes from it. Perhaps this passive attitude would be good in some situations but it might be better if Shea could get to the bottom of things and begin to fully take control of her life and who she lets into it.

Discussion Question 1

What advice does Coach Carr give to Shea when she goes to his office to apologize for calling him while she was drunk? Is it sound advice?

Discussion Question 2

How does Shea really feel when Lucy shows her the tabloid photo of Ryan and his ex-wife together?

Discussion Question 3

What is it about Coach Carr's rant over the NCAA investigation that makes Shea think there may be more to it than he is letting on?

Vocabulary

obsessing, bashful, crux, emphasis, mocking, substance, inextricably, proclamation, diehard, compliance, allegations, coincidence, pontoon, roster, euchre, flustered, stymied, deadpanned, rout, lofty, pittance, ferret, tinge, miffed, reconciling, gauge, intimidating, nestling, nonchalant, gaze



Chapters 13 - 15

Summary

It is the night before Walker's first game and Lucy calls Shea to chat and they talk about the coach's game day superstitions such as buying Big Red gum only from the Parkit Market and catching a cricket after drinking a strawberry milkshake. The following night Shea arrives at the football stadium early because she loves the sacred feel of the place prior to a big game. Shea's thoughts are consumed with hopes of Walker achieving a championship season. Walker wins the game and Shea mentally notes that there are only 11 games to go in the season including the national championship game.

Walker wins the next game too and Shea runs into Smiley in the locker room afterwards where he gives her an envelope containing a formal job offer with the Dallas Post.

In Chapter 14, Shea meets Lucy and Neil after the game at a bar called the Third Rail known for great chicken wings and country music. Ryan shows up unexpectedly and Lucy is giddy in his presence, wondering why Shea does not act happier to see him. Ryan is the most eligible bachelor in the country and Lucy thinks Shea should be more demonstrative in order to catch him. Ryan lets it slip in conversation that Shea had called Coach the night of the charity event and Lucy is immediately suspicious. Ryan covers and says that Shea wanted to talk to him about Heisman Trophy winners and Lucy is pacified. Lucy tells the group that she got the job at the Dallas Post and that she'll be covering the Walker sports program.

The next morning at Ryan's house Shea wonders whether Smiley's offering her the job could be a set up because he wants someone on the inside at Walker to cover the NCAA investigation. Shea then rationalizes that she is being paranoid and that if anything negative should happen at Walker she is just the reporter to clear the school's name.

In Chapter 15, Shea calls Smiley to formally accept the reporter job and Smiley tells her that she has to be objective about Walker now that she is a reporter. Shea stops in to tell Coach that she got the job and he invites her to watch the Cowboys game on TV with him tonight. Shea accepts, disregarding the tickets Ryan had given her to watch the game at AT&T stadium.

Shea texts Ryan and tells him that she cannot make it to the game because she has to work and then heads out to meet Coach at the Third Rail. After awhile Miller arrives and Coach invites him to sit with them. Miller playfully taunts Shea for dating Ryan after breaking up with him and in an attempt to protect Miller's feelings, Shea claims that she and Ryan are just friends. Miller then asks Coach about the NCAA investigation which he has heard from the sociology professor he is now dating. The NCAA claims that Walker breezes its athletes through the sociology department because it is easy and



they can earn good grades and still continue to play sports. Before long Coach tires of Miller's accusations and excuses himself to go home.

Analysis

The author provides a descriptive perspective of how people view college football as Shea arrives early at the stadium. She likens the quiet and majesty of the pre-game environment to a spiritual experience which is true for many people who are devotees of the sport. It has almost become a theme in the book that football is a religion to the people of this college town and most of them never leave it behind such as Shea, Miller and Ryan. In that regard Coach Carr is godlike and they revere him for his mere presence and longevity with the Walker football program.

In a bit of foreshadowing, Lucy's senses are heightened when it is revealed that Shea called Coach on the night of the charity event Shea attended with Ryan. Lucy has always been envious of Shea's relationship with Coach but somehow this phone call seems different as if Lucy can sense that there might be something else going on. Before long, Lucy's fears will be realized.

In Chapter 13, the author uses figurative language when she writes, "We all watched, mesmerized, as ten yards turned into twenty, then forty, then sixty. It was an exclamation point of a play, a wake up call to anybody left in the country who was still calling him overrated." Obviously, the play the athlete made is not called an exclamation point; the author wants the reader to understand that it is remarkable and something that, if written, would have an exclamation point after it.

Also in Chapter 13, the author writes, "The cheerleaders unfurled their enormous teal W banner and built pyramids to the football gods." This is an allusion to the pyramids in Egypt which were built for Egyptian gods and the author is comparing the cheerleaders' athletic pyramid formation as an icon for the football gods to those structures built in ancient Egypt. This is not only figurative language but another nod to the premise of football as a religion that permeates the book.

Discussion Question 1

Coach has several superstitious behaviors he does before football games because he thinks they will bring him good luck. Why does he believe in superstitions?

Discussion Question 2

Is Shea being paranoid in thinking that Smiley is setting her up as an insider during the NCAA investigation at Walker?



Discussion Question 3

Shea thinks that the Walker stadium just before a game is almost sacred. What does she mean by that?

Vocabulary

optimistic, rituals, duration, ritual, aesthetic, sacrilegious, jitters, unfurled, infuriating, dubious, proximity, quipped, giddy, palpable, stern, chivalrous, ambush, sputtered, scoffing, realignments, barrier, nuanced, lackluster, allegiances, mere, awkward, gesture, ruthless, clamored, chortled



Chapters 16 - 18

Summary

Shea leaves the Third Rail and texts Ryan congratulating him on winning the game. Ryan invites Shea to his house and as she is driving her thoughts drift to sitting at the Third Rail with Coach and what a good time they just had. Shea admits to getting butterflies in her stomach when she is near the Coach and she is beginning to think that it is more than being close to a football icon. Before she reaches Ryan's house, Shea has to admit to herself that she has strong feelings for Coach Carr. Shea spends the night at Ryan's house and the next morning Shea tells Ryan that she had been with the Coach the night before in a professional capacity. Shea also mentions that Miller stopped in at the bar and Ryan is instantly mad, jealous that Shea is still seeing Miller behind Ryan's back. Ryan makes Shea promise that she won't date anyone else because he wants her all to himself.

In Chapter 17, J.J. and his wife throw Shea a going away party and Shea is surprised to see that Ryan is there when she arrives. Coach also shows up and Shea feels a thrill being close to him again and is disappointed when he leaves after a half hour. Coach asks Shea to come outside to his car because he has a gift for her and Lucy spots her returning to the party and wonders where Shea has been and who gave her the gift. Lucy insists that Shea open the gift and Shea knows that Lucy is wondering what Coach was able to find for Shea when he had forgotten her birthday not too long ago. Shea opens the gift to find a framed newspaper article that Shea had written about Walker 20 years ago. Ryan then presents Shea with a gift of diamond earrings.

In Chapter 18, Shea starts her new job at the Dallas Post. Smiley shows Shea around and introduces her to another reporter named Gordon Chambers who works on social media for the Dallas Cowboys. Smiley assigns Shea her first story of the upcoming Walker-Baylor game due tomorrow morning. Later that evening, Shea interviews Coach via text messages about the Baylor game and is able to submit her first assignment on time.

The next day Shea meets Lucy for lunch at the football field and Lucy confides that she thinks the Coach is seeing someone because she had been at his house and he was texting someone for quite awhile the night before. Shea tries to determine whether Lucy would be upset if Coach were seeing someone and Lucy says that she thinks that Coach should at least wait for a year after his wife's death to start dating someone new. Lucy tells Shea that someone recently questioned Lucy as to whether the Coach could ever be interested in Shea's mother and Shea quickly denies that that is possible.



Analysis

Shea has finally identified her romantic feelings toward the Coach. Everything she has felt for him all these years has led her to this moment and she is temporarily stunned to come to this realization. It seems as if Coach may be coming to the same realization about Shea too. His gift to her at the going away party is thoughtful and sentimental as opposed to the flash of the diamond earrings given to her by Ryan. It seems that his conversations with her tips just a little too far toward the romantic and he has more than just a passing interest in what is going on in her life. Coach will not do anything to intervene in Shea's relationship with Ryan but it almost seems as if he is biding his time until Ryan is gone which is the expected behavior of a playboy star athlete. Ryan, on the other hand, is beginning to show his tendency toward jealousy when he interrogates Shea over the possibility that she could still be seeing Miller. This is foreshadowing of what is to come in Shea and Ryan's relationship as the story extends.

There is also foreshadowing in Lucy's questioning Shea about whether she thinks the Coach could be seeing someone. Lucy would not be mad or upset but does not think it appropriate for the Coach to date anyone until a year after her mother's death. Lucy's reaction will be quite different when the situation becomes a reality later in the story. It is also interesting to note how Shea is immediately jealous when Lucy tells Shea that she thinks the Coach is seeing someone. Lucy thinks she may have competition and is relieved to know that the texts Lucy is suspicious of were those Shea shared with the Coach. In that same vein, Shea is quick to state that the Coach could never be interested in Shea's mother when Lucy brings it up. Shea is both shocked and proprietary about the idea of anyone, let alone her own mother, having a relationship with the Coach.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Coach's gift of the framed article more valuable to Shea than the diamond earrings given to her by Ryan?

Discussion Question 2

Ryan seems to get angry at the very mention of Miller's name. Why would he be so jealous of Shea still talking to Miller?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Shea not want to pursue the idea of the Coach connecting with her own mother?

Vocabulary

wistful, strategy, choppy, maneuver, shameless, far-fetched, generic, mode, patriarch, ensuing, tactical, prep, agitated, cursive, drab, contend, objective, partition, nod, rapport, quell, inauspicious, mundane, transgression, disclose, concur, imply, bellowed



Chapters 19 - 21

Summary

Walker narrowly beats Baylor with a score of 21-20 and Coach is upset at his players' lack of discipline throughout the game and is even curt toward Shea when she asks him a question at the press conference. Later that night, Shea texts the Coach and apologizes for asking a dumb question after the game and he responds and apologizes for snapping at her. Coach then calls Shea to talk about his frustrations at such a hollow victory and asks Shea if she would like to meet him at the track for a run and she agrees. Shea can sense that her being with the Coach is making him feel better as they run their laps around the track. Shea feels the familiar tug of longing when the Coach looks at her and wonders if he feels anything at all for her and reasons that nothing will ever come of it.

In Chapter 20, Smiley assigns Shea a story on Reggie Rhodes, the new recruit for Walker. Shea interviews people in Reggie's life who all agree that he is an outstanding young man. When Shea talks to Reggie himself he reveals that he came to Walker for several reasons but the main one was to play football for Coach Carr. The next day, Smiley interrogates Shea about what she knows about any NCAA investigation at Walker and he chastises her when she states that she has heard rumors about it and never mentioned it to Smiley. Smiley gives Shea 24 hours to produce a story on the NCAA investigation.

Later that evening, Shea asks Ryan if he thinks there is any truth to the NCAA allegations at Walker and Ryan thinks that there probably is. When a team consistently wins at such a high level, there is reason to believe that there is cheating going on somewhere. Shea tries to defend Coach Carr but Ryan contends that the Coach must look the other way when inappropriate activities occur. Ryan then tells Shea about a player named Cedric Washington who played at Walker with Ryan and who drove a Cadillac at school. There was no way that Cedric's poor family could have provided that for Cedric; someone bought it for him and the Coach never challenged it.

The next day Shea submits her story to Smiley and it simply states that Walker is under investigation by the NCAA but the charges have yet to be identified and the school is cooperating fully. That evening Shea tells Coach about the article that will run and he tells her that she is only doing her job.

In Chapter 21, Shea's article runs in the paper and she gets all kinds of messages from friends and colleagues who are in shock that she could have written such a piece about Walker. That evening Shea's mother comes to her apartment and wants to know if the allegations about Walker are true and Shea tells her that they could possibly be. Shea's mother is incredulous because there is no way that Coach Carr could ever cheat. Shea's mother tells Shea that the Coach never cheated on Mrs. Carr, a rarity in the world of high profile football. She also says that Mrs. Carr gave up her life for the



Coach, forgoing a singing career on Broadway in order to be the Coach's wife. Shea's mother recalls that when Shea's father left Walker to live in New York, she was jealous of him because he was getting out of Texas. Later that evening the Coach texts Shea and tells her not to worry about the article.

The next day Walker beats Louisiana State in Baton Rouge and Shea can see a renewed enthusiasm in the Coach.

Analysis

Even though Walker has beaten Baylor, the Coach is not happy with the sloppy play from the team. He even says that he would rather lose if the team plays well. Shea does not quite believe that but she also cannot believe how curt the Coach is with her during the press conference. Shea is no longer in the protected Walker bubble now that she works for the Dallas Post and she has difficulty remembering that she does not get preferential treatment during these official events.

It is becoming clear that the Coach thinks about Shea in more than a familial or professional capacity. When the Coach is down about the Baylor game, it is Shea he contacts to spend time with because she is the one who can cheer him. Shea loves the way that the Coach makes her feel special but is unsure how to proceed because she is not sure what the Coach's intentions are. Shea rationalizes that nothing can really come of these feelings that are building.

Shea is in the difficult position of having to report on the NCAA investigation at Walker and knows that she could possibly be responsible for doing damage to Walker. Shea just hopes that Coach Carr is the stand up guy he has always seemed to be. Because she is new in her job at the Dallas Post, Shea is also finding it difficult to be objective about Walker. Life at Walker, especially football at Walker, has been such a huge part of Shea's life that it is hard to separate herself. Shea could find herself in trouble though because it did not occur to her to tell Smiley about the NCAA investigation rumors. Shea is in a protective mode about Walker and not doing her job as a reporter.

Shea's faith in the Coach is shaken a bit twice in circumstances related to the NCAA investigation. First, Coach does not come right out and deny any wrongdoing when he and Shea are talking about the investigation. He fluidly talks about everyone knowing right from wrong but never comes right out and states that he has never done anything inappropriate during his years of coaching at Walker. Shea had had hopes for some denial from the Coach and when he does not, it plants a seed of doubt in her mind. Ryan also makes Shea question the Coach's activities when he tells her that the Coach is not the hero Shea believes him to be and that the Coach chooses to look the other way when improprieties occur at the school. Shea is angry to hear this about her idol but Ryan is able to back up his statements with facts and Shea's position begins to weaken.



Discussion Question 1

In what ways does Shea display her lack of objectivity at her job when it comes to Walker?

Discussion Question 2

Why is Shea so angry at Ryan when he says that the Coach is not the hero that Shea always thought him to be?

Discussion Question 3

Why does the Coach tell Shea not to worry about the newspaper article she wrote?

Vocabulary

fumble, articulate, pivotal, supplanted, vent, chivalrous, ridiculous, physique, reciprocated, hype, ostentatious, humanizes, somber, accusatory, context, outlandish, substantiated, distractions, adamant, trickle, serial, affirmation



Chapters 22 - 24

Summary

Walker football is now ranked fifth in the country and the Dallas Cowboys are doing well too so Shea and Ryan are in really upbeat moods. Shea has moved a few personal items into Ryan's house and they start spending more time together. Ryan even gives Shea a key to his house so she can come whenever she likes. One evening Shea cooks dinner for Ryan for the first time and he is genuinely appreciative. Ryan then offers Dallas Cowboys tickets to Shea so that she can take her father, Astrid, and Bronwyn when they come to town for Thanksgiving. Ryan's parents will also be seated in the Cowboys suite and it sinks in to Shea that Ryan wants her to meet his parents.

Shea soon tells her mother and Lucy that things are getting serious between her and Ryan and they are both thrilled. Shea invites her mother to the Thanksgiving game too and she is curious about Shea's father's reaction to the news that Shea is dating such a famous football star. Later that night Shea calls her father to tell him that she is dating Ryan and invites him, Astrid and Bronwyn to come to Dallas for Thanksgiving.

In Chapter 23, Ryan tells Shea that she may soon hear some things about him that are not true. Ryan's ex-wife, Blakeslee, has found out about Ryan's dating Shea and is angry about it and may try to retaliate. Ryan admits that he still talks to Blakeslee sometimes and that they had had lunch together in the summer and that is where that tabloid photo came from. Shea tells Ryan that she is not mad but secretly wonders if she and Ryan are meant to be together. The next day Shea receives a call from Blakeslee who tells Shea that Ryan has a really bad temper and can be abusive. Blakeslee tells Shea that Ryan grew up in a household where his father was abusive to his mother and Ryan and that the father is the source for a lot of Ryan's anger and behavior. Blakeslee gives Shea some examples of how controlling and jealous he can be and warns Shea to be careful. Blakeslee mentions that she wishes Ryan's previous girlfriend, Tish Termini, had warned her before she got involved with Ryan. Shea talks to Lucy about what Blakeslee told her and Lucy suggests that Shea talk to the Coach for advice about Ryan but Shea does not think this is the right thing to do.

In Chapter 24, Walker beats Florida State and Coach tells Shea to call him later that evening. Shea has seen Ryan a few times since her conversation with Blakeslee and has tried to ignore Blakeslee's warnings. Shea calls Coach but gets no answer so she decides to go to Taco Bell to grab some dinner. Coach calls while Shea is in the drive thru so she offers to bring him some tacos. Coach tells Shea to pull into the garage when she gets to his house so that no one will see her car there.



Analysis

It appears that Shea and Ryan's relationship is getting more serious and Shea is surprised that Ryan wants her to meet his parents over the holiday. Ryan states that he wants to be exclusive with Shea and she is beginning to be more comfortable in the relationship. But then things get stirred up when Ryan tells her that she may be hearing some negative things about him and she is now on edge. Shea tells Ryan that she is not mad that he continues to talk to Blakeslee but deep down she is not sure she believes that. Shea's doubts are further put into motion when Blakeslee calls to tell Shea to watch out for Ryan's bad temper and jealousy. Shea has experienced some of Ryan's jealous behavior when he overreacted about her seeing Miller at the Third Rail and accused her of still sleeping with Miller. All this flashes through Shea's mind as Blakeslee is talking to her but she does not reveal anything to her.

Shea does not mention her conversation with Blakeslee to Ryan because she does not want to stir up any angry behavior but she cannot help but wonder why Ryan is allowed to still talk to his ex-wife on a regular basis yet Ryan gets mad and jealous if Shea even mentions Miller's name. Clearly there is a double standard at play here but Shea refuses to address it. Perhaps she knows how Ryan will react and does not want to endure his wrath or maybe she inherently knows that her heart does not belong to Ryan and that the relationship will not be permanent and not worth the effort of addressing critical issues that could seriously impact a long-term relationship.

There is some foreshadowing in the story when Blakeslee tells Shea that she wishes that Ryan's girlfriend before her, Tish Termini, had warned Blakeslee about Ryan's jealous outbursts and abusive behavior. More will be revealed about Ryan's relationship with Tish, as well as the Coach's role in the situation that will test Shea's feelings about both men.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Ryan think it is OK to talk to Blakeslee on a regular basis but Shea cannot even mention Miller's name? Discuss why this is a situation of a double standard.

Discussion Question 2

What is the significance of Ryan's inviting Shea and her family to meet his family at the Cowboys game over the Thanksgiving holiday?

Discussion Question 3

Do you believe Blakeslee's story about Ryan's jealousy and bad temper? Is she authentic or just jealous that Ryan is dating someone new?



Vocabulary

astounded, momentum, credence, contention, gallant, paranoid, gratitude, rivalry, smug, condescending, coy, preclude, garnered, venture, awkward, disdain, smirking, subdued, theory, ornate, shrug, standoff, persona, evading, endorsements, babbled, denigrating, terrain, aspersions, eked, favoritism, unorthodox



Chapters 25 - 27

Summary

Coach lets Shea into the garage when she arrives at his house and she can tell that he is nervous. The conversation naturally turns to football and then the NCAA investigation and Shea shares Ryan's theory that all winners cheat at some point. Coach tells Shea that it had been Ryan's father who bought Cedric Washington the Cadillac so that Ryan would have a good receiver when playing as quarterback for Walker. Shea then wants to know how much the Coach knew about the deal and he tells her that he questioned Ryan and his father at the time and they denied knowing anything about the source of the car. Cedric had told the Coach that the car belonged to his uncle and that was the end of the story.

Coach changes the subject and asks Shea about the progress of her relationship with Ryan and she downplays the depth of their involvement. Shea asks the Coach if he might be considering dating anyone anytime soon and he looks into Shea's eyes and tells her that he is close. It is now clear to Shea that the Coach has romantic feelings for her. Shea and the Coach think that Lawton would be OK if his father dated someone but that Lucy would have a difficult time with it.

In Chapter 26, the Coach kisses Shea on the cheek before she leaves his house and she is so dazed that she does not realize that she has left her purse at the Coach's house until she is home. Shea calls the Coach the next morning and then heads to his house to retrieve her purse. Shea is panicked when she sees Lucy's car at the Coach's house because she does not know how she will explain why she has come to the Coach's house on a Sunday morning to get her purse. Coach explains that Shea had brought tacos to him after the game and simply forgot her purse. Lucy is mildly unsettled at the explanation and then launches into the Coach's promise to attend church with her, something he has obviously forgotten. Lucy leaves without the Coach and he and Shea talk about how upset she is with their close friendship.

Later that afternoon Lucy shows up at Shea's apartment, upset that the Coach has moved his wedding ring from his left hand to his right and she is afraid that this means that he is dating someone. Lucy apologizes for being grumpy earlier at the Coach's house and admits that she is jealous of the relationship the Coach and Shea share.

In Chapter 27, Shea's father, Astrid and Bronwyn arrive in Dallas and Shea promises to meet them for a drink after work. During the day, though, Shea recalls disastrous events with Astrid and tells her father that she has to work and can't meet them this evening. When Shea talks to Ryan he suggests that she spend the night at his house while he is away at a game but Shea is not crazy about staying in that big house all alone. Shea promises to call Ryan before going to sleep tonight and heads off to the Third Rail. Shea has a good time talking to some old friends who are in town for Thanksgiving. Miller shows up and he and Shea have a good time talking, drinking and playing pool. Miller



reveals to the group of friends that Shea is in love with the Coach but they do not believe it. Shea is a little bit drunk by now and calls the Coach, asking him to come to the Third Rail but he cannot so she leaves her car close by and Coach comes to pick her up.

In Coach's car, Shea realizes that she has left her credit card at the Third Rail so she texts Miller to buy himself a drink on her. Coach takes Shea to her apartment in spite of her protests that she wants to go to his house. Shea asks the Coach why Lucy does not want Shea and the Coach to spend time together and he replies that he thinks Lucy knows that there are strong feelings between Shea and the Coach.

Analysis

Coach is nervous when Shea comes to his house because he has feelings for her and he wants her to park in the garage so that no one will see her car. Coach is on the verge of sharing how he feels with Shea but he does not want to run any risks of Lucy or anyone else seeing Shea's car at his house late at night. If the Coach did not have feelings for her, it would not matter to him who saw Shea's car and what they thought about it. It seems that Coach is just biding his time while Shea's relationship with Ryan runs its course, which Coach does not think will last long. The Coach periodically asks Shea about her relationship with Ryan under the guise of sports but he is secretly trying to gauge how much longer Shea will be involved with Ryan so that he can share his feelings for her.

Shea is delicately trying to find out if the Coach has had any part in indiscretions at the college, primarily for her sake and their long time friendship. Her probing does not seem to have any professional motives, she just wants to know that her hero has been a good guy like she always thought he was. The Coach does admit that he questioned people about Cedric Washington's Cadillac but never really tried to pinpoint the source of where the car came from and didn't think it was right to probe too hard. Did Coach do all he should have given the circumstances? He knew that Cedric's family could not have afforded to give him a car like that yet he stopped questioning at the first level. Should Coach have probed deeper given that he was responsible for the football team and its players and that any signs of impropriety should have been investigated thoroughly? Shea is not sure how to respond or how she feels about what the Coach has told her about the situation regarding Cedric.

Finally, Coach gives Shea the signal that he has romantic feelings for her and Shea is not sure how to respond other than to ask what Lawton and Lucy would think about his dating someone. Shea knows the answer to her own question but tries to feel out the Coach's response to determine how willing he is to declare his feelings for Shea to the world. The feelings shared between Shea and the Coach have become obvious to everyone else, including Miller, but Shea tries to deflect for as long as she can.



Discussion Question 1

Does Shea feel like the Coach had probed the episode of Cedric Washington's new Cadillac enough? What do you think the Coach should have done in those circumstances?

Discussion Question 2

What does Lucy know about Shea and her father at this point? Is she upset simply because Shea and the Coach have always shared a close relationship? Or is there something else that is bothering her?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Shea feel such animosity toward Astrid?

Vocabulary

teal, uncharacteristically, diagonally, estranged, discredited, implied, bribe, unbiased, impromptu, beleaguered, nonchalantly, gumption, utter, significant, unleash, accusatorial, shrill, angst, surreal, inquisition, absurd, appeased, pleasantries, pretentious, whatsoever, distraction, sequestered, gruesome, antagonist, gratuitously, bristling, commingling, boisterous, incredulous, lilt



Chapters 28 - 30

Summary

Shea's first thought the next morning is that she forgot to call Ryan last night. Shea grabs her phone and realizes that she has missed several texts from Ryan who are increasingly agitated. Shea calls Ryan and leaves a voice message that she is sorry about not calling and wishes him good luck in the game today. Coach calls Shea and she apologizes for being drunk last night and he offers to take her to get her car. Coach shows up at Shea's apartment with coffee and donuts. As Coach opens Shea's car door, he asks her if she is aware of what is going on between them and she replies that she is. Shea tells Coach that Ryan is mad at her because she did not call him last night and Coach tells Shea not to let Ryan control her.

Shea changes clothes and heads to Dallas to meet her dad, Astrid and Bronwyn before the big Cowboys game. Bronwyn's husband, Wiley, has come along and everyone exchanges pleasantries, Shea feeling inferior to their sleek Manhattan style. The group arrives at the stadium and meets Ryan's parents in the VIP suite. Shea is nervous about all the personal interactions and also worried about Ryan still being mad at her. As the game progresses, Shea can tell that Ryan is emotionless on the field and he is not playing well. Shea thinks this is probably the worst game of Ryan's career and his father is openly derogatory about Ryan's playing. Ryan is injured during the game and has to be helped off the field, enraging his father who continues to berate Ryan's abilities.

In Chapter 29, the Cowboys lose by 28 points, their worst Thanksgiving Day game ever. Shea, her father, Astrid, Bronwyn and Wiley arrive at the Four Seasons to meet Ryan and his parents for dinner. Ryan greets Shea with a kiss and is cordial to her family, even posing for pictures before dinner. Ryan's father berates him publicly at dinner making everyone else extremely uncomfortable. When the conversation turns to the NCAA investigation at Walker, Ryan's father is so insulting that Shea wants to know if he was the one who bought the Cadillac for Cedric Washington years ago. Mr. James says that he might have and wants to know where Shea heard that but she refuses to say. Dinner mercifully ends and Ryan asks Shea to come over to his house.

In Chapter 30, Shea arrives at Ryan's to find him venting angrily about the day's events and then he turns on her, demanding to know where she was last night and why she did not call him like he told her to do. Shea tells Ryan that she had gone to the Third Rail to see some old friends and she lies when he asks her if Miller had been there. Ryan won't let the topic go though and continues to grill Shea about when she saw Miller last. Ryan tells Shea that he could not sleep last night because he kept picturing Shea with Miller, a thought which is preposterous to Shea. Shea now knows that Ryan blames her for his bad performance in today's game because he did not get enough sleep last night.

Shea repeatedly apologizes and she also tells Ryan that she left her credit card at the bar and he is not happy that she had been running a tab. Ryan tells Shea that if she is



going to be his girl that means that she needs to be available for him the night before a big game. She continues to apologize for being thoughtless and promises that it won't happen again. Ryan tells Shea that he loves her and he demands to know whether she loves him. Shea tells Ryan that she loves him but she is pretty sure it is a lie.

The next morning Shea's father calls and asks if the two of them can have breakfast before he leaves for New York. Shea's father questions Shea about whether she is happy and she admits that she likes Ryan but thinks she is in love with Coach Carr. Shea's father is understandably shocked and thinks that Shea is probably infatuated with Coach Carr because he was a father figure to her when she was growing up. Shea's father also advises her to let Ryan know as soon as possible if he is not the one for her.

Analysis

The author uses the technique of foreshadowing regarding Ryan's anger and jealousy issues. When Shea tells the Coach that Ryan is mad at her because she did not call him the night before, the Coach tells her not to let Ryan control her. The Coach knows something about Ryan's behavior toward women that will come out soon in the story and he is trying to warn Shea for her own good. Ryan's behavior over Shea's not calling him seems to be a bit over exaggerated. People sometimes get busy or things happen that prevent them from making a phone call. People make mistakes but Ryan does not allow for any human flaws. Shea has no idea that a phone call from her would have such an impact. Apparently, Ryan was not able to sleep because he had not heard from Shea but the reader wonders if he actually needed to talk to her or if he needed her to obey him. Either way, Shea apologizes and it takes quite awhile for Ryan to calm down. He then tells Shea that he loves her, but what does love really mean to someone like Ryan? Does it mean that she is the one he would like to control? Or is he interested in a more authentic relationship based on respect, integrity and generosity? Ryan practically demands that Shea tells him that she loves him and when she does, she knows that she is probably lying which is setting a bad precedent. Coach is probably right when he says that Ryan is used to getting what he wants and in this case, he want Shea to do what he says and that is a formula for disaster.

The author also uses irony in the situation where Shea's father calls to meet her for breakfast before he returns to New York. He wants to know if Shea is happy in her life, whether she likes her job, and if she really loves Ryan. Shea cannot help but think how her father really does not have the right to ask her because he essentially abandoned her early in her life. When Shea needed this type of input as a girl and young woman, her father was living with Astrid and Bronwyn and Shea and her mother fended for themselves. Shea views the talk as a nice gesture but ironically, it is too little too late because Shea needed her father years ago and he was not available to her.

The theme of betrayal arises in this section in the not so obvious example of Shea's father's relationship with Astrid and Bronwyn. Shea lost her father's steady presence in her life when her parents divorced and when her father moved to New York to be with



his new wife and daughter, Shea could not help but feel betrayed. Shea seems to have come to terms with it though by the end of the story but Shea's mother has not. Shea's mother enjoys verbal jabs at Shea's father and Astrid which shows that the hurt of betrayal is still alive. Some people like holding on to hurts throughout their lives but being a victim only hurts the person who feels the hurt. It is best to move on from negative circumstances and find positive ones to fill that place where betrayal no

Discussion Question 1

In what ways does Ryan's father show that he has a bad temper and possible abusive tendencies? Was Blakeslee right about how Ryan got his rage from his father?

Discussion Question 2

Ryan tells Shea that he loves her and needs her. Does his type of love seem like a healthy way to conduct a relationship?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Shea find it ironic that her father tries to give her advice about her love life and being happy?

Vocabulary

agitated, rambling, awash, lush, outstretched, smirk, inkling, emboldening, legitimized, aloofness, impeccable, valet, nuance, succinct, embedded, self-righteous, exasperated, ellipses, undertones, collective, maternal, perilous, menacing, overeager, oblivious, irate, chirpy, crept, vulnerable, disloyal, vague, vapid, implication, spiel, sarcasm, perceptible, relented, furious, diatribe, caustic, articulate, evade, phenomenon, sugarcoat, deadpanned, esteemed, gaze, convoluted



Chapters 31 - 33

Summary

It is the day that Walker plays Texas, the final game of the season and Shea is a nervous wreck hoping that Walker will earn an undefeated season. Shea tries to get the game in perspective but is so nauseous that she vomits in a trash can at the stadium. Shea had nothing to worry about though because Walker defeats Texas 28-0. After she completes her article about the game, Shea heads to the Third Rail where she joins Lucy, Neil, Lawton and Ryan who are already celebrating.

In Chapter 32, Miller arrives at the Third Rail and declares out loud that he has Shea's credit card from the other night. Ryan is instantly angry and grabs Shea by the arm and leads her to another part of the bar where he interrogates her about the credit card and how Miller got it. Shea had told Ryan before that she had not seen Miller that night but she is caught in her lie. Ryan's anger increases and he strengthens his grip on her arm, not letting her go. Shea apologizes and tells Ryan that she only lied to him about not seeing Miller because Ryan had been so upset about the Thanksgiving game and she did not want to make things worse. Ryan is now shaking Shea in anger accusing her of sleeping with Miller and not listening to her protests. Lucy intervenes and Ryan leaves the bar in fury and Shea leaves soon after.

When Shea arrives home, Coach calls and can tell that something is wrong with Shea. Shea tells him that she and Ryan had another fight which got ugly. Coach offers to come over and Shea takes a shower realizing that she has to break up with Ryan. When Shea emerges from the shower she sees Ryan sitting on her bed.

In Chapter 33, Ryan tells Shea that her door was unlocked so he let himself in. Shea dresses hurriedly and Ryan apologizes for his behavior. Ryan swears that he would never do anything to hurt Shea but his behavior becomes more threatening when the topic of Miller comes up again. Ryan wants to make love but Shea does not and Ryan accuses Shea of inviting Miller over to her apartment to comfort her tonight. Shea demands that Ryan leave because their relationship is over. Ryan quickly overpowers Shea and throws her onto the bed and refuses to let her up. Coach Carr arrives and he and Ryan fight. Ryan accuses Coach of also sleeping with Shea and calls the Coach a hypocrite because Coach only sees what he wants to see. Coach calls Ryan a disgrace and Ryan leaves the apartment.

Analysis

The story reaches its climax on two fronts in this section: Walker attains an undefeated season and Ryan proves that he is an abuser. Shea has a sense of foreboding on the day of the big Walker vs. Texas game but her apprehension is misplaced. Walker easily annihilates Texas; it is her relationship with Ryan where the real sense of dread enters.



Ryan is completely unrealistic in his expectations of Shea and overreacts to the credit card incident. The fact that Ryan is not willing to hear what Shea is telling him proves that there is no trust in the relationship and there is nowhere for it to go from here. Ryan's insecurities and need for control are deep and Shea has tried to be a good partner to him but his issues are too overwhelming for Shea to manage. She needs to end the relationship not only for lack of trust issues, but also because Ryan has physically abused Shea and statistics show that abuse only escalates, it never declines.

Fortunately Coach arrives to save Shea before the situation with Ryan escalates and Ryan is also physically and verbally abusive to her. This is a critical turning point in the story because Shea knows that she cannot proceed with Ryan and that Coach is the man who actually cares for her and wants to protect her. Shea can no longer play both men with her emotions and it is time that that stops; it is just unfortunate that things had to get so ugly to accomplish that.

The domestic abuse theme is important here. Throughout the story, Ryan's controlling behavior and exacting demands on Shea were indicators of control and anger issues but now they have escalated to full blown abuse. Ryan has led a charmed life and no one has ever stopped his behavior until now and chances are he would have continued to abuse Shea verbally and physically if she had not put an end to it.

Discussion Question 1

Why is the day of the Walker vs. Texas game both the best and the worst day of Shea's life so far?

Discussion Question 2

Is Shea now a domestic abuse statistic because of Ryan's treatment of her?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Ryan call the Coach a hypocrite?

Vocabulary

spoiler, mediocre, philosophical, petty, impartial, emasculated, bovines, befalling, precarious, jubilant, pessimistic, buoyant, colleagues, dense, potential, distorted, whimper, rationalizations, conjure, elation, fatigue, emphasis, sneered



Chapters 34 - 36

Summary

After Ryan leaves, Shea and Coach talk about what just happened and Shea also decides to tell Coach about Blakeslee's phone call to her and all the controlling things Ryan has done lately. Shea and Coach sit on the couch and hold hands and Shea tells Coach that she does not want to be another person in his life that he feels he needs to take care of and that she does not want him to feel that she is his daughter. Shea tells Coach that she wants more from him than friendship and that she has deep feelings for him. Coach pulls Shea to him and tells her that she should start calling him Clive. Coach tells Shea that he has feelings for her too and that he realized it on the night at the lake when the family was playing Trivial Pursuit and on other occasions but never knew for sure until tonight.

In Chapter 35, Ryan leaves Shea several voice messages begging for forgiveness. Shea realizes that she must see Ryan in person to make sure he knows that their relationship is over and she also wants to return the diamond earrings. Shea wonders if she would be feeling as strong if the Coach were not in the picture now. Lucy calls to see how Shea is and tells Shea she will come over to talk. Shea then calls the Coach to tell him that she is going to tell her everything about Ryan but not about Coach coming over last night. Coach agrees that it is not the right time to tell Lucy about the two of them.

When Lucy arrives at Shea's apartment, Shea tells her that Shea's relationship with Ryan is over. Lucy thinks Ryan needs help and wonders if Shea can't still work it out with him but then Lucy sees the marks and bruises that Ryan had inflicted on Shea's arms. Shea also tells Lucy about how Ryan let himself into Shea's apartment and attacked her, leaving out the part where Coach rescued her. Lucy persists in wanting to know if Shea loves Ryan enough to want to help him and finally Shea tells Lucy that she does not love Ryan to the point where she would let his violence be a project in her life.

In Chapter 36, it is 2 days later and Shea has enlisted Lucy and Neil to accompany her to a restaurant in Dallas so that Shea can formally break up with Ryan and return the diamond earrings. Ryan is surprised to see that Shea has brought people with her. Lucy and Neil move to a different table so that Shea and Ryan can talk privately. Ryan apologizes for his behavior and Shea says she forgives him but Ryan is surprised to learn that Shea is breaking up with him. Shea tries to return the earrings but Ryan won't accept them. Ryan admits that he needs help and that he doesn't want any other woman but Shea. Ryan is adamant that he loves Shea and that he will never hurt her again but Shea stays firm in her position even when Ryan is on the verge of tears. Shea makes Ryan promise that he will get some help and then leaves the restaurant.



Analysis

Shea and the Coach have reached a turning point in their relationship, both being very up front with their feelings for each other. In an act that will change the scope of things, Coach asks Shea to call him by his name, Clive, which is a signal that it is OK for her to be close and intimate with him now. The events of Shea's evening show the vast difference in how a person who loves someone should behave with that person. Ryan claims to love Shea but yet he is very controlling and verbally and physically abusive toward her. Coach, on the other hand, truly cares for Shea and that obviously shows in the way he rescues her from Ryan but also in the way that he refuses to kiss her and take advantage of her vulnerability on this night. Love should be generous and kind and it should never hurt, emotionally or physically.

Lucy does have a few moments of self doubt prior to breaking up with Ryan, however, and could easily cave in to Ryan's pleas for forgiveness. She also wonders if it would be so easy to break up with Ryan if she did not have the Coach proclaiming strong feelings for her and waiting to see where a new relationship might take them. It seems that Shea is a strong person, though, and would never let anyone hurt her even if that meant being by herself. Women need to understand that men are wonderful partners when the relationship is built on trust, honor and integrity but if those things are not present, there really is no relationship and she is wasting her time and love in the wrong place. Lucy is an example, though, of how some women think that a woman needs a man in her life regardless. Even after Shea shows Lucy her bruises, Lucy still wants to know if there is a way that Ryan can get help. Lucy wants to salvage what she can for Shea because in Lucy's mind, Ryan is the best Shea will ever get and it would be a shame for her to lose him over something that can be resolved. Fortunately, Lucy has never been the recipient of abuse and she cannot fully grasp what Shea has experienced. It is to Shea's credit that she is smart enough and strong enough to extricate herself from a situation that has the potential to be really explosive and damaging.

Discussion Question 1

Why does the Coach tell Shea that she should probably call him Clive now?

Discussion Question 2

Would Shea have been able to break up with Ryan if she didn't have Coach standing by ready for a relationship with her?

Discussion Question 3

What difference would anger management therapy made in Ryan's life?

Vocabulary

disheveled, calibrating, aftermath, erratic, accusatory, saccharine, fabricate, demonizing, anemic, embroil, profusely, technicality, flippant, escalate, flustered



Chapters 37 - 39

Summary

Shea visits Coach in his office and they kiss for the first time in an intimate embrace. Coach tells Shea that he is proud of her for the way she managed the situation with Ryan but that they still need to tell Lucy about their new relationship. Coach is going on recruiting trips soon and then it will be Lucy's Christmas tree trimming party so they tentatively decide to wait until after the holidays.

In Chapter 38, Lucy hosts a tree trimming party at her house for her family and Shea. Shea and the Coach try to avoid eye contact as the evening progresses. Shea is proud of Lucy who seems happy in spite of this being her first Christmas without her mother. After Caroline puts the star at the top of the tree, Lucy states that Caroline has an announcement and Caroline tells the group that she is going to be a big sister. Everyone is thrilled and Shea now realizes the source of Lucy's contentment.

Shea and the Coach work at cleaning up the kitchen while Neil and Lucy tuck Caroline in bed. Thinking they have a little bit of time before Lucy and Neil return, Shea and the Coach move to the family room for a few moments alone. While they talk, the Coach moves Shea's hand up to his lips and kisses it just as Lucy returns. Lucy is shocked and tells Neil what she has seen when he returns. Lucy wants to know if something is going on between Shea and the Coach and they clumsily reveal that they have started seeing each other romantically. Shea confirms that it is all very new and that nothing improper happened when Mrs. Carr was still alive. Lucy is very upset and excuses herself to go to bed.

In Chapter 39, Coach and Shea are driving home separately and call each other about Lucy's reaction to their news. Coach thinks that Lucy will have to forgive them eventually but Shea thinks that Lucy will forgive Coach because he is her father but she will not be able to forgive Shea. Shea follows Coach to his house and Coach tries to reason that it might be best for Lucy to know about them now because there will never be a perfect time. Shea worries that they have upstaged Lucy's news about the baby.

Coach tells Shea that several years ago, Ryan's girlfriend at the time, Tish Termini, had come to see the Coach because she had tried to break up with Ryan and he raped her. Coach had advised Tish to go to the police but he wasn't sure if she was telling the truth because she did not have any bruises. Coach also had heard that Tish had a bad reputation and Ryan was the golden boy at Walker. Ultimately Coach did not believe Tish and did not do anything to help her. Coach said that he did talk to Ryan but he denied what Tish said and Coach did not take the issue any further. Shea is not sure how to feel about what the Coach has told her because perhaps if he had intervened, things may have been different for Ryan and his future girlfriends.



Shea tries to leave but she does not want to have any bad feelings between her and the Coach. Coach admits that he let Tish and other people down and he is sorry. Shea wants to make love but the Coach does not want to right now because they have some things to work through yet. Shea pushes the Coach and finally admits that she is angry that he had not reported the situation with Tish. Shea then challenges the Coach on the situation with Cedric Washington and the Cadillac. Then she launches into the investigation related to Reggie Rhodes. Basically, Shea wants to know what the Coach would do to win. Coach contends that he did what he thought was right at the time but he has learned a lot since then. Coach tells Shea that he did write a letter to Tish but there is nothing more he can do to right the situation. Coach knows that if the information were to come out now, the kids on his current team would suffer and they had nothing to do with it. Coach also does not want the press to get hold of the fact that he is dating Shea, a girl he practically raised who is now a reporter covering his team. Shea says she will resign from her job.

Analysis

Shea and the Coach finally connect intimately in a wonderful kiss which is the tipping point for their relationship. Ironically, something wonderful like a kiss will also bring anxiety to the couple when Lucy catches the Coach kissing Shea's hand in her family room. It is nice that Shea and the Coach are in love but it would have been more sensitive if they could have controlled their emotions while in Lucy's home. Knowing that Lucy will be upset about their relationship, the Coach and Shea should have held their emotions in check in order to not hurt someone close to both of them. The only saving grace for them in this situation is that Shea and the Coach did not act on any feelings they may have had while the Coach's wife was still alive. Lucy gives them credit for at least having this bit of propriety.

Betrayal is an important theme in *The One & Only*. The most obvious instance of betrayal is the budding romantic relationship between Shea and the Coach because of the perceived betrayal to the Coach's family. Lucy, in particular, feels betrayed by her father and best friend. Lucy is too hurt to see or understand at this point, but Shea and the Coach did not set out to hurt anyone, especially Lucy. They just happened to fall in love and there is no real rhyme or reason for that. Shea wants Lucy to understand that nothing untoward happened while the Coach's wife was still alive so there was no real betrayal there either. Lucy is still mourning the loss of her mother, though, and has never been very close to her father who always was more connected to Shea. This outward declaration of their feelings for each other feels to Lucy like she has been abandoned and betrayed.

Lucy has been very sensitive about the loss of her mother on all the holidays in the year since her death but she seems amazingly content at her tree trimming party. It is easy to understand her contentment when her pregnancy is revealed. Unfortunately, some of the best news of her life comes just before hearing some of the worst--that her father and best friend are romantically involved. Lucy will prove to be a stronger character than she has been given credit for up to this point.



Coach's revelation about Tish Termini's pleas for help a few years ago has both positive and negative impact on Shea. Shea is glad that the Coach has decided to be honest with her because honesty is the basis of trust in a relationship. However, Shea is shocked that the Coach did not do anything to help Tish at the time because he simply did not believe her story. This leads to questions about the role of a coach and the responsibility he or she has to all students, not just those on the football team. Tish was in serious distress and the Coach should have helped her get to the authorities in spite of his personal views of her but he did not. Unfortunately, this is often the case in abuse situations when people think the woman somehow provoked the man's rage in some way and ultimately brought about the abuse on herself. The Coach also let Ryan down because he could have helped Ryan get the appropriate counseling and anger management therapy he needed too. Ryan has had to live with several years of rage since this time and the Coach could have helped assuage that. A coach is looked up to as a leader and mentor to young people and his responsibility for Ryan's character should have extended past the activities related only to football. Tish and Ryan as people should have been more important than Tish, a girl with a questionable reputation, and Ryan, a star football player. Coach saw his duties from a higher level, that of loyalty to the school, parents, and the sports organization, but if the individuals who make up that organization are struggling with catastrophic flaws, then how good is the overall view?

The theme of loyalty shows in what the Coach says to Shea regarding whether or not he did enough in the Tish Termini situation. The Coach reveals that loyalty is more important to him than anything, even winning football games. The Coach says, "It's about loyalty. It's about commitment to the people you love. Your wife. Your family. Your friends. Your team. It's about giving it your all and doing the very best you can with what you have, in every moment you're in. And that's what I did that night in my office. That's what I do on the football field. And that's what I'm doing right now as I defend myself to the woman I love."

Domestic abuse is another important theme in *The One & Only*. Ryan's anger issues related to jealousy and control have impacted several lives including Shea's most recently. Ryan's behavior has never been challenged, though, because he has always been a big football star so he continues to perpetuate his abuse. In the Tish Termini situation, the Coach says that he did not believe Tish's story and when questioned, Ryan claims that he did not rape the girl. The Coach admits now that he was wrong not to have helped the girl but things were different then and he was trying to preserve loyalty to the team and the school.

Discussion Question 1

What feelings is Lucy likely feeling regarding Shea and Coach after learning about their relationship?



Discussion Question 2

How did Coach handle the situation with Tish Termini? Should he have done more or was he right to let it go?

Discussion Question 3

How would things have been different for Ryan and his future girlfriends if the Coach had intervened when Tish Termini came to him about Ryan?

Vocabulary

necessity, tentatively, nudging, grindstone, generic, disperse, faux, indignation, heirlooms, contrived, nouveau, accoutrements, sass, implications, antics, discombobulated, reckless, accusation, consensual, brink, subsiding, platonic, suppressing, verge, dubious, allegation



Chapters 40 - 42

Summary

Shea's mother calls Shea complaining of chest pains so Shea rushes to her house only to find that her mother is physically fine but angry that Shea has started a relationship with the Coach. Lucy had called Shea's mother with the news and Shea's mother tells Shea that what she is doing is completely wrong. Lucy has issued an ultimatum that Shea can either date the Coach or be her friend, she cannot have both. Shea's mother compares Shea to Shea's father who does anything that makes him happy in spite of how it may hurt other people.

Shea heads to the office and tells Smiley that she can no longer work there because she cannot remain objective where Walker is concerned. Smiley fires Shea but appreciates her honesty. Later that night, Shea calls Miller to ask him to meet her at the Third Rail. Shea tells Miller that she got fired and he wants to know if it is because she is sleeping with the Coach. Shea is shocked to hear that Miller knows about the Coach and he tells her that he tried to return Shea's credit card when she left it at the bar and he saw the Coach's car at Shea's apartment.

In Chapter 41, Shea attempts to call Lucy but Neil answers and tells Shea that Lucy is home and maybe Shea should just drop by on the chance that Lucy will speak to her. Shea arrives at Neil and Lucy's house and is met by a cold Lucy. Shea apologizes for hurting Lucy who feels that Shea's behavior is a huge betrayal. Shea states that she loves Lucy's family and would have never let her crush on the Coach get out of hand if Lucy's mother had lived. Lucy does not want to hear about Shea's love for the Coach and tells Shea to get over any feelings she has. Shea tells Lucy that she is aware of Lucy's ultimatum and that she is prepared to choose Lucy if choosing the Coach means Shea would lose her best friend in the world. Both women declare their love for each other but Shea cannot help feeling a little bit of hate for Lucy at this moment.

In Chapter 42, Shea is preparing for bed when Coach arrives at her apartment, fresh from a late night flight on his recruiting trip. Shea tells the Coach that she got fired today. Coach feels bad because he is part of the reason for her termination and offers to talk to Smiley but Shea does not want him to because her love for Walker would always be a conflict. Shea also tells the Coach about her discussion with Lucy and he respects that. Coach has also had a talk with Lucy who told him that she feels that the Coach has abandoned her. Coach thinks that he and Shea may have a chance at another time but suggests that Shea go on with her life. Shea contends that she will never love anyone else like she loves the Coach but he thinks it is better for them to do the right thing now.



Analysis

Lucy has gone to Shea's mother to share her misery, a pattern that she had probably established with her own mother. Shea and the Coach have disappointed Lucy and she wants someone to know her agony and so she turns to Shea's mother. Shea's mother is in true dramatic form, faking chest pains to get Shea over to her home quickly. Trust is important in every major relationship and Shea's mother does not always show good judgment, using drama instead of authenticity. Shea's mother tries to chastise Shea about her possible romance with the Coach because of their long term relationship with the Carr family; what Shea is doing is simply bad form. Shea's mother compares Shea to her father who does what he wants with no regard for who he may be hurting. Shea is hurt by that but there is a sting of truth to it which Shea cannot ignore.

Shea has always tried to follow the Coach's advice to deal with problems head on and she tries to do that in confronting Lucy about the ultimatum Lucy has issued. An ultimatum is never a healthy strategy in any relationship but Lucy is feeling like a wounded child and this is how she can control the situation for the time being. Lucy feels abandoned by both her father and her best friend during a time when she is still mourning the death of her mother. Sometimes people have to draw lines because they simply cannot take any more emotional hurt and this is how Lucy chooses to manage for the time being. Actually, Shea should not be surprised by Lucy's response because Shea's dating the Coach has so many elements that are typically frowned upon: the Coach is old enough to be Shea's father, he practically raised Shea, and he is the father of Shea's best friend. Shea's interest in the Coach is not necessarily wrong, but it is different from most acceptable forms of relationships and Lucy, especially, does not like things that are outside the lines of convention.

Neither the Coach nor Shea want to hurt Lucy so the Coach thinks it is best for now for Shea to get on with her life. Shea cannot imagine loving another man like she loves the Coach and this is where the title of the book comes from. The Coach is the one and only man that Shea is interested in and she cannot envision a life without him.

The theme of loyalty extends throughout the book but in particular with Shea's telling Smiley that she cannot work at the newspaper anymore. Her loyalties will always reside with Walker and she cannot be objective in her coverage as a reporter.

Discussion Question 1

Why did Lucy issue an ultimatum to Shea? What outcome did she expect?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Shea feel that she hates Lucy a little bit now even though she has said she loves her?



Discussion Question 3

What does Lucy, a grown woman and mother, mean when she feels that the Coach has abandoned her?

Vocabulary

contrived, naive, mitigate, diss, insular, narrative, hypocrite, implications, urge, unbridled, pertinent, perceptive, mellow, integrity, devastation, rookie, frantic, envious



Chapters 43 - 46

Summary

Shea shuts herself up in her apartment for 3 days wallowing in her misery but on the 4th day she is shocked when Lucy knocks on her door. Lucy wants to know if Shea is angry with her and Shea lies and says she is not. Lucy wants to know if Shea has talked to the Coach about ending their relationship and Shea replies that she did. Lucy also knows that Shea has lost her job so she hugs Shea and bursts into tears. Lucy tells Shea that she has had a miscarriage and Shea tries to comfort her, telling Lucy that she can have other children.

In Chapter 44, Lucy flies to New York on Christmas Eve to spend the holiday with her father and Astrid. Christmas Day is pleasant and Shea deflects the expected questions about Ryan and her job as Astrid talks about Bronwyn's fertility treatments and shopping. On Christmas night, Shea gets a call from Lucy who wants to tell Shea Merry Christmas and Shea is pained to hear Coach's happy voice in the background.

In Chapter 45, Shea extends her stay in New York through New Year's, going to restaurants, museums and even ice skating at Rockefeller Center. On the day of her departure, Shea and her father take a walk in Central Park and he tells her that he has some connections that might have some employment opportunities for Shea. Shea says that she will think about leaving Texas. Shea's father also tells her to follow her heart as far as the Coach is concerned. Shea's father also tells Shea that she has to go to the bowl game to watch Walker play because she has been a fan since the second grade.

In Chapter 46, Shea is at the Rose Bowl Stadium in Pasadena with Lucy, Neil, Lawton, her mother and Miller to watch Walker in the bowl game. Shea is irritable not only from anxiety about the game but because everyone else is acting like nothing happened to Shea and the Coach before the holidays. Walker does not play well in the first half of the game. After halftime, the sky turns a beautiful teal blue to match Walker's school colors and the team pulls out a win over Alabama. The Walker fans erupt in pandemonium and Shea joins the Carr family on the field for the trophy ceremony. Shea is surprised when Lucy pushes Shea into the Coach's arms, telling Shea that she was wrong and that Shea belongs with the Coach. The Coach is thrilled and Shea can tell that Lucy has apologized to him too, making him free to be with Shea. The Coach has to go to a press conference but promises to call Shea later that night.

Analysis

Shea and Lucy are both suffering major losses in their lives. Shea has just broken up with Ryan, has lost her job and now has been told that she cannot pursue a relationship with the Coach. Lucy is still mourning the loss of her mother, the shock of Shea and Coach's romance and now a miscarriage. Although they are both unhappy with the



other, as best friends, they are the only ones who can really comfort each other. While the first inclination is to withdraw when hurt by someone, Shea and Lucy have been friends for so long that each one is the only one who can completely understand and comfort the other. After the initial sting of the hurts subsides a little, common sense and a need for your best friend will take over. Shea and Lucy just need a little bit more time to heal and return to each other.

Shea appreciates her father's offers of helping her find a new job but is hesitant to lean into his advice on following her heart when it comes to a relationship with the Coach. It was Shea's father's following his own heart that left Shea without a full time father in her life so while he may have been happy, there was emotional fallout for Shea and her mother. Perhaps Shea will intuit from her father that no person can make everyone in his or her life happy and if an unhappy person stays in a bad situation for the "right" reasons, there will be emotional damage for everyone. Again, Shea listens but just needs some time to feel her way through her current hurts before she makes any major life changes. The theme of forgiveness brings Shea's relationship with her father full circle. They have gone through many years of Shea's resentment because he left her and her mother and now he tries to give her some fatherly advice--too little too late--but Shea is an adult now and chooses to forgive her father instead of holding on to old grudges.

The theme of forgiveness closes out the story when Lucy forgives Shea for getting involved with her father, probably the biggest example of forgiveness in the story. After the death of her mother, Lucy has felt lost and then when the Coach reveals that he wants a relationship with Shea, Lucy feels completely abandoned. Lucy's first instinct is to issue an ultimatum to Shea: she can have Lucy or she can have the coach, but not both. Ultimately, though, Lucy comes around and realizes that the Coach and Shea are two people she loves most in the world and it is the right thing to do to forgive them and give them the chance of happiness like she has in her own life.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Christmas especially difficult for Shea this year?

Discussion Question 2

Shea's father tells her that she should follow her heart when making decisions in life. Is this good advice coming from him?

Discussion Question 3

What are some reasons that Lucy is so irritable at the bowl game in Pasadena?



Vocabulary

wallowed, viable, relentless, realistic, placard, convert, precludes, restrained, cynical, covertly, urge, modicum, overrated, groveling, pageantry, flawed, fallible, mythic, indelibly, trance



Characters

Shea Rigsby

Shea Rigsby is a 33-year-old woman who lives in a small Texas town called Walker. Walker is home to Walker University and Shea has been involved with the school directly and indirectly for most of her life. Shea's parents divorced when she was young and when her mother got ill, Shea stayed at the home of the Carr family and she remained a close part of their family ever since. Shea is devoted and loyal to the Carr family including Lucy, her best friend, and Coach Carr who is the iconic football coach at Walker University. Shea is a tomboy of sorts and loves being a part of this athletic family. Shea is also drawn to Coach Carr who serves as a father figure for Shea.

When Shea is old enough, she attends Walker and then gets a job in the athletic department at the school. When Mrs. Carr dies from cancer, Shea takes stock of her life and determines that her job is insufficient and her current boyfriend, Miller, a Walker alum, is not who she needs long term. Coach Carr advises Lucy to apply for a reporting job for a Dallas newspaper and she does. Shea also breaks up with Miller and begins dating the star quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys, Ryan James. At the age of 33, Shea is taking stock and making changes but she makes some choices that are not always mature. Shea has a tendency to drink too much sometimes and sleeps with men before establishing solid relationships. The most questionable choice she makes is to admit to romantic feelings about Coach Carr. Although neither Shea nor the Coach act on any romantic feelings for each other while Mrs. Carr is alive, their move toward a romance has implications that could hurt people close to them. To her credit, Shea does back away when she knows how Lucy feels about Shea dating her father. Shea has proven herself to be a very loyal person, both to the people she loves and to the university she loves.

Lucy

Lucy is the daughter of Coach Carr and Shea's best friend. She and Shea knew each other as little girls and have remained friends since. In contrast to Shea, Lucy is more refined and elegant with a quiet manner. Ironically, Lucy has no interest in Walker football in spite of being raised in a football fanatic home. To show her disregard for the sport, Lucy does not attend Walker but chooses to attend Texas instead just to be different. Consequently, Lucy and her father are not close and she grows to resent Shea's closeness with the Coach. Lucy was much closer to her mother who just died from cancer. Lucy's mother's death and not being close to her father have left Lucy feeling abandoned and she struggles to regain balance in her life.

Mrs. Carr was the epitome of a true Southern wife and other women took their cues from her including Lucy who admired her mother's sense of style and entertaining. Lucy owns a dress shop in Walker and tries to get Shea to be more feminine by selecting



clothes for her. Lucy loves her husband and daughter and wishes that Shea could find the same things in her life. When Shea dates a celebrity football star, Lucy is thrilled because this could be Shea's chance at getting a home and family.

Lucy and Shea's friendship is sorely tested when Shea and the Coach admit that they have romantic feelings for each other. Lucy's hurt is almost palpable and she issues Shea an ultimatum but ultimately, Lucy's love for her father and her best friend supersedes her own feelings and she gives them her blessing.

Coach Carr

Coach Carr is the iconic football coach at Walker University. He has had nearly 30 years of coaching after having attended the school before that. Coach loves his family but has never had a lot of time for them because he was building a winning football program at Walker. Coach met his wife at Walker when they were students and she was the traditional Southern wife who supported her husband completely. Coach is not especially close to his daughter, Lucy, because she does not share the family interest in football but he does enjoy Lucy's best friend, Shea. Coach prides himself on being a mentor and advises Shea that she needs to make some changes in her life and she follows his advice because she has always considered him to be a father figure. Their professional relationship then evolves into something more romantic which creates issues for those they love.

Coach values loyalty above everything else and does not want to hurt anyone, most of all his family, but he does so when Lucy is devastated at the news of the Coach's and Lucy's romance. Although the Coach is a hero in Walker football, he is aware of his faults and flaws which come to light when he tells Shea about Ryan's anger issues related to abuse of a girlfriend. Coach now feels bad about not intervening more at the time but felt that loyalty to his players and the football program took precedence over any personal issues. Overall, though, Coach is looked up to not only for his athletic leadership but personal mentoring and he is proud of both.

Miller

Miller is a former Walker football player whom Shea dates at the beginning of the story. Ryan accuses Shea of still sleeping with Miller during their relationship which ultimately leads to Shea's breakup with Ryan.

Ryan James

Ryan is a former Walker football star and now the quarterback of the Dallas Cowboys football team. Ryan dates Shea but they break up when Ryan's control and jealousy issues evolve into an abusive encounter.



Lawton Carr

Lawton Carr is Coach Carr's son. Before she died, Mrs. Carr had hoped that Lawton would marry Shea.

Neil

Neil is Lucy's husband and father to Caroline.

Shea's father

Shea's father left Shea and her mother when Shea was little. Shea's relationship with him has been sporadic but she has come to terms with who he is and what she can hope to have with him.

Astrid

Astrid was Shea's father's first wife whom he left for Shea's mother. Ultimately, Shea's father returns to Astrid and they remain married. Shea has never liked Astrid because she replaced her own mother but also because Astrid is a gold digger interested in only shallow pursuits like shopping and eating out.

Bronwyn

Bronwyn is Shea's father's daughter with his wife, Astrid. Shea always resented Bronwyn while growing up but now that they are adults, Shea can appreciate Bronwyn for who she is and that she was an innocent victim in the family dynamic as well.

J.J.

J.J. is the head of sports communications at Walker and Shea's boss while she is there.

Gordon Chambers

Gordon Chambers is a colleague of Shea's at the Dallas Post. He takes care of social media related to the Dallas Cowboys organization.



Symbols and Symbolism

Radio

Coach still listens to a radio in his truck, office and at home instead of using an iPod. This symbolizes Coach's ties to the past and his reticence to adopt new ideas which may or may not be better than what he is used to.

Black Suede Pumps

Lucy gives Shea a pair of new black suede pumps that Mrs. Carr had purchased just prior to receiving her cancer diagnosis. Shea loved Mrs. Carr and her sense of style and the shoes symbolize everything that Mrs. Carr symbolized.

Trivial Pursuit

Trivial Pursuit is a board game played at the Carrs' lake house and in which Coach and Shea partner and win. It is during this game that Coach first realizes that he loves Shea.

Cricket

The coach has a few superstitions and habits he follows related to winning football games. One night a cricket was keeping him awake in his hotel room so he went outside and caught it. The next day the Coach's team won and he now tries to catch a cricket on the night before a game.

Big Red chewing gum

The coach chews Big Red purchased only at the Parkit Market because that's where he bought it prior to beating Texas in 1985. Shea knows the little joke behind the gum and she buys it for the Coach as a gesture of familiarity.

Diamond Earrings

Ryan presents Shea with diamond earrings at her going away party at J.J.'s house. Shea contends that they are too expensive to keep but Ryan insists. The earring symbolize Ryan's wealth and what he is able to provide for Shea.



Framed Newspaper Article

At her going away party at J.J.'s house, Coach presents Shea with a framed article she wrote about Walker 20 years ago. Shea is touched by the sentimentality of the gift and that Coach had obviously put some thought into what to give her.

Credit Card

Shea is running a tab at the Third Rail on the night before Thanksgiving and leaves her credit card there by mistake. Ryan will later be jealous and angry when Miller returns the credit card to Shea. In Ryan's mind the credit card symbolizes what he perceives to be Shea's continuing involvement with Miller.

Tacos

Shea is in the drive thru at Taco Bell when the Coach calls her and she offers to bring him some tacos. This is their first real meeting when they approach the feelings that they have for each other.

Christmas ornaments

Lucy has combined her parents' Christmas ornaments with hers as a way of healing in her first Christmas without her mother. The ornaments symbolize the past Christmas holidays spent with her parents, the current holiday when new traditions are being formed and the future holidays as Lucy's family grows.



Settings

Walker, Texas

Walker is a small town in Texas and the site of Walker University. Those who are loyal to Walker love living there but some people such as Shea's father were anxious to leave. It is even revealed that Mrs. Carr wanted to live in New York and have a musical career but she gave it up to be the Coach's wife and live in the college town.

Dallas, Texas

Dallas is a major metropolitan city in Texas and the home of the Dallas Cowboys football team. Ryan's home is located there as well as Shea's job on the newspaper.

The Third Rail

The Third Rail is a popular bar among Walker fans and Shea and her friends gather there frequently. Shea accidentally leaves her credit card there one night and Miller returns it to her there a few days later. When Ryan witnesses Miller's returning the card to Shea, he immediately explodes with rage and is abusive toward Shea because he thinks she is still seeing Miller.

AT&T Stadium

AT&T Stadium is located in Dallas and is where the Dallas Cowboys football team plays all its home games. Shea invites her father, Astrid, Bronwyn and Bronwyn's husband to the Thanksgiving Day game at the stadium.

New York

Shea's father moved to New York when he left Texas and lives there now with his wife, Astrid and daughter, Bronwyn. Shea also considers moving to New York when she loses her job in Dallas and it looks as if her relationship with the Coach will not be progressing.

Coach's office

Many of the conversations held between Shea and the Coach are held in his office at the university. He tells her that she needs to take stock of her life and find a better job and break up with Miller.



Themes and Motifs

Loyalty

Loyalty is an important theme in *The One & Only*. The loyalty shown to Walker by its students, alumni and current staff is an obvious extension of the theme. Shea, the Carr family and all their friends are devoted to Walker, especially the football program. Shea even attends the college and stays to work there for 20 years. The entire town of Walker is dedicated to the school's football team and especially to Coach Carr whom has been elevated to hero status. The only one who is not completely immersed in Walker football is the Coach's daughter, Lucy, but she is completely dedicated to her father.

As Lucy's best friend, Shea is loyal to her and the Carr family because she practically grew up in their household. This loyalty will come into question, though, when Shea and the Coach test the boundaries of normally acceptable relationships. Both of them know that a romantic relationship between them will be hurtful to Lucy so they must weigh their loyalty to her with their burgeoning feelings for each other.

The Coach reveals that loyalty is more important to him than anything, even winning football games. The Coach says, "It's about loyalty. It's about commitment to the people you love. Your wife. Your family. Your friends. Your team. It's about giving it your all and doing the very best you can with what you have, in every moment you're in. And that's what I did that night in my office. That's what I do on the football field. And that's what I'm doing right now as I defend myself to the woman I love."

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is an important theme in *The One & Only*. No relationship exists on a straight line; there are always real and imagined hurts and slights because people are simply human. But to rise above the hurt is what matters and there are a few important examples of forgiveness in the story. A big example of forgiveness is when Shea forgives Ryan for his abusive behavior toward her. Ryan's anger issues have created problems throughout his life and most people have looked the other way because he is a football star. Even after Ryan roughs Shea up, Lucy wonders if Ryan can't be forgiven somehow. Ultimately, Shea makes the decision that she can forgive Ryan for his behavior but she cannot continue to be with him. "Deep down though I found myself wondering if I would be so unwavering without Coach as my safety net. What if he hadn't come over last night and confided his feelings? Would I still be deleting Ryan's messages? Or would I be slowly caving, rationalizing, paving the way to give him one more chance, and maybe one after that? Would I be telling myself that we were still on that slippery slope? That everyone makes mistakes and deserves forgiveness? Would I be anointing myself as his savior and telling myself that I could do what Blakeslee could not?"



By the end of the story, Shea has also forgiven her father for not being present in her life due to divorce. Shea is no longer a child and can see past childhood wounds to view her father as a man and a person who was only seeking happiness in his life, just as Shea is doing now. Shea's father tells her to follow her heart regarding the Coach and at first, Shea is hurt because it is that way of thinking that hugely impacted her childhood, but as an adult she can see where her father is coming from.

Probably the biggest example of forgiveness in the story is that of Lucy's forgiving Shea and her father for their romantic relationship. After the death of her mother, Lucy has felt lost and then when the Coach reveals that he wants a relationship with Shea, Lucy feels completely abandoned. Lucy's first instinct is to issue an ultimatum to Shea: she can have Lucy or she can have the coach, but not both. Ultimately, though, Lucy comes around and realizes that the Coach and Shea are two people she loves most in the world and it is the right thing to do to forgive them and give them the chance of happiness like she has in her own life.

Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse is an important theme in *The One & Only*. Ryan's anger issues related to jealousy and control have impacted several lives including Shea's most recently. Ryan's behavior has never been challenged, though, because he has always been a big football star so he continues to perpetuate his abuse. The Coach admits to Shea that one of Ryan's girlfriends, Tish, had come to the Coach because Ryan had raped her but the Coach did not help Tish with any official charges against Ryan. The Coach says that he did not believe Tish's story and when questioned, Ryan claims that he did not rape the girl. The Coach admits now that he was wrong not to have helped the girl but things were different then and he was trying to preserve loyalty to the team and the school.

Shea finds the Coach's position difficult to understand though as she thinks, "... It had changed everything for Tish. It had also changed everything for Ryan. Maybe even for Blakeslee and me. Hell, it had changed the course of history. If Coach had believed Tish's story, at least enough to report it, the trajectory of Ryan's entire career would have been different. Even if ultimately cleared of the charges, he likely wouldn't have won the Heisman the following year, or gone nearly as high in the draft. It would have hurt Walker too. Without Ryan on the field, we certainly wouldn't have won the Cotton Bowl; and without that win, we might not have had the recruiting classes in the years that followed, success begetting success. Walker might not be on the brink of a championship this season, and Coach and I may not be sitting here tonight, in his kitchen." Shea is right in thinking that if Ryan had received the anger management counseling that he needed, the abuse he inflicted may not have occurred and many people's lives would not have been affected negatively. Shea forgives Ryan for what he did to her but she also tells him that she cannot continue in a relationship with him and that he needs to get help.

Domestic abuse is much more public now than it used to be and should always be reported. Regardless of the situation, no one should ever be abused or bullied either



verbally or physically. The author wants to make this important point and drives it home for readers of the story.

Betrayal

Betrayal is an important theme in *The One & Only*. The most obvious instance of betrayal is the budding romantic relationship between Shea and the Coach because of the perceived betrayal to the Coach's family. Lucy, in particular, feels betrayed by her father and best friend. Shea tells Lucy, "Losing your mother makes everything that much more difficult and complicated. And I'm sure you feel we were betraying you, as well as her." Lucy replies, "I do feel that way, Shea... This is a major betrayal." Lucy is too hurt to see or understand at this point, but Shea and the Coach did not set out to hurt anyone, especially Lucy. They just happened to fall in love and there is no real rhyme or reason for that. Shea wants Lucy to understand that nothing untoward happened while the Coach's wife was still alive so there was no real betrayal there either. Lucy is still mourning the loss of her mother, though, and has never been very close to her father who always was more connected to Shea. This outward declaration of their feelings for each other feels to Lucy like she has been abandoned and betrayed.

Another aspect of betrayal that is not so obvious is that of Shea's father's relationship with Astrid and Bronwyn. Shea lost her father's steady presence in her life when her parents divorced and when her father moved to New York to be with his new wife and daughter, Shea could not help but feel betrayed. Shea seems to have come to terms with it though by the end of the story but Shea's mother has not. Shea's mother enjoys verbal jabs at Shea's father and Astrid which shows that the hurt of betrayal is still alive. Some people like holding on to hurts throughout their lives but being a victim only hurts the person who feels the hurt. It is best to move on from negative circumstances and find positive ones to fill that place where betrayal now lives.

Search for Love

The Search for Love is an important theme in *The One & Only*. Everyone at some point searches for love, whether it is romantic, friendly or familial. The most obvious character who searches for love in the story is Shea. At the beginning of the book, she is dating a man named Miller whom she has known from her affiliation at Walker, but Miller has not progressed emotionally from their college days and Shea finds the relationship stagnant. Shea feels that there must be someone else out there for her who would better meet her emotional needs so she breaks up with Miller. Then Shea begins to date Ryan James, a football star who is also searching for someone to love as he is fresh from a divorce. Shea and Ryan do not have much in common other than football but they try to make the relationship work. Ryan quickly declares his love for Shea but she is more hesitant, perhaps because she is looking for something with more depth than Ryan is able to give her. Shea's search for love ultimately leads her to the Coach, who is her one and only, in spite of the obstacles that stand in the way of the relationship.



Some of the other characters are also in the process of searching for love in addition to Shea, Ryan and the Coach. Miller is also searching for someone to love especially after the break up with Shea. It seems as if Miller's criteria for love are a bit shallow, though, and he may find it difficult to find any authentic, long term relationship.

Shea's father is a perfect example of someone looking for love. He had been married to Astrid when he met Shea's mother, fell in love, and got married. That marriage ended in divorce, though, as Shea's father returned to Astrid to whom he is currently married. Shea's father is the perfect example of someone who thinks that love is imperfect or unsatisfactory and moves on but then realizes that each love is different and things may not necessarily be better somewhere else. Shea's father is also a good example of how the search for love can sometimes be a selfish thing but too many people stay in a relationship out of social convention instead of following their heart which leads to disappointment for all people involved.



Styles

Point of View

The story is told from the first person narrative point of view. This means that the author tells the story directly in her own words. As the narrator, Shea uses the pronoun of "I" throughout because the story is being told just as she sees it or experienced it. With the first person narrative point of view, the reader has access to the thoughts and feelings of the narrator only. What is going on in the heads of any other people in the story is only speculative as the reader does not have the privilege of seeing them.

As Shea goes from present day to flashbacks in the story, she still maintains the first person narrative point of view. The story is hers and the reader will learn only what the author wants him or her to learn. The first person narrative point of view tells the narrator's story and the reader must take into account who the narrator is to understand the perspective. For example, a child will see a story from a different perspective from that of an adult and the reader should make allowances for that.

An example of the first person narrative point of view is when Shea states, "I'm sorry, Ryan. I care about you. I always will. And I want you to get help and change for you. But this relationship just isn't right for me. And in some ways it probably never was," I said, feeling a little bit guilty for letting him think that this was all his fault. "I'm not sure we were ever really right for each other... I'm really sorry."

Language and Meaning

Because *The One & Only* is set in modern day, the language is current for the times. The author uses 21st century terminology and euphemisms in narration and dialogue to show authenticity. The author uses things like current movies such as *A Christmas Story* and *Jerry Maguire* and pop culture icons so that the modern day audience can relate to them. The language also mentions current slang such as *perf*, *fab*, *jeal* and *totes*. The language exhibits in current devices too, primarily, in the usage of text messages.

Because the story is set in Texas, the author uses terms that are native to that state. For example, when Shea greets her father, Astrid and Bronwyn who have arrived in Dallas and she says, "'Are y'all excited about the game?'" I asked, the y'all escaping my lips before I could remember to change it to the proper you all."

The author also keeps the language authentic to the characters. For example, Coach is a man of few words and takes his role to motivate very seriously. When he and Shea discuss when to tell Lucy about their new relationship, he says, "Yes. When the time is right, we just have to do it," he said in his intense, coaching voice. "Man up and do it."

Structure

The structure of a novel usually takes one of four forms: character, milieu, event or idea. And while a story can contain all four forms, one usually predominates. The *One & Only* takes the structure of a character form. These types of novels tend to show a character's personal growth as the story extends. A character structure shows transformation as being important as opposed to an event story which is more concerned with what a character does. It is easy to identify a character structure novel because there comes a point in the story when the main character reaches a point of frustration with life or a set of circumstances that are no longer acceptable for personal growth. The character then decides on changes, both small and dramatic, that will move the character's life in a different direction. The story concludes then when the character has resolved his or her issues and feels satisfied with the transformation or decides to stay in the current situation.

Shea's decision to transform her life early in the book is what propels the novel forward. The reader learns about her angst and the need to change and then follows along on her journey to find what she is looking for. After some twists and turns, disappointments and soul searching, Shea arrives at the conclusion that she belongs with the Coach and a life with him is what she has been searching for all along.



Quotes

The ants are my friends, they're blowing in the wind.
-- Mrs. Carr (Chapter 2 paragraph 61)

Importance: On the evening of Mrs. Carr's funeral, Shea and her mother are reminiscing with the Carr family and someone mentions how funny it was that Mrs. Carr always incorrectly sang the lyrics to Bob Dylan's song, Blowin in the Wind.

Come on in, girl!" he said, looking up from a depth chart, the starting players listed at the top, the secondary players' names handwritten below.
-- Coach Carr (Chapter 3 paragraph 27)

Importance: Coach Carr calls Shea "girl" throughout the story to show affection and this is the first instance of that occurrence.

Did you just fix your hair?" she said staring at me.
-- Lucy (Chapter 5 paragraph 6)

Importance: When Coach arrives home when Shea and her mother are helping Lucy sort through Mrs. Carr's things, Lucy stands taller and fluffs her hair when the Coach arrives home. Lucy challenges Shea on the gesture which is usually reserved for women who are trying to attract a certain man.

Bottom line, it's just a game, right? But it's our job to show that it's not just a game. It's a metaphor for life. If sports don't matter, then life doesn't matter.
-- Shea (Chapter 8 paragraph 52)

Importance: During Shea's interview with Smiley, she wants to let him know that reporting on sports goes beyond the immediate facts, that there is also the human story to consider and that's what makes sports so universally appealing.

Hell, yeah, you should be turning cartwheels. Ryan James is the most eligible bachelor in all of Texas, maybe the entire country. He is famous, funny, wealthy, athletic, tall, and painfully beautiful.
-- Lucy (Chapter 13 paragraph 35)

Importance: Appearances are important to Lucy and she thinks Shea would be so lucky to catch Ryan James yet Shea values people with deeper values and she is not sure she is as enamored with Ryan as Lucy seems to be.

That's it. Look. I can't control who walks into the Third Rail... And Coach invited him to sit down. It was no big deal. The three of us sat around watching you play. We were all happy for you. Miller was happy for you.
-- Shea (Chapter 16 paragraph 45)



Importance: Ryan is angry when he learns that Miller had been at the Third Rail with Shea and Coach and he accuses Shea of still sleeping with Miller. Shea does her best to deflect his anger and tries to reason with him.

I know you think he is the second coming of Christ, but the man isn't perfect. He may not be bankrolling his players, but I'm pretty sure he looks the other way now and then. He has to.

-- Ryan (Chapter 19 paragraph 52)

Importance: Shea has been pretty naive in her hero worship of the Coach and Ryan tries to get her to see that the Coach is not infallible and could very well have been involved in some improprieties at Walker over the years.

When he gets angry, he can be really mean. And violent. And scary.

-- Blakeslee (Chapter 23 paragraph 100)

Importance: Blakeslee tries to warn Shea about Ryan's jealousy and bad temper and advises her to be careful. Blakeslee feels bad about telling Shea these things but wishes that someone had told her prior to her getting involved with Ryan.

Jealous of you and Daddy. How close you are," she said. "He's my father, but sometimes I think he's closer to you.

-- Lucy (Chapter 26 paragraph 119)

Importance: Lucy knows that Shea and her father are spending more time together yet Lucy cannot yet sort out if Shea is just looking after the Coach like Lucy asked her to or if there is something else going on.

Ryan is used to getting what he wants. He fully expects to get what he wants... And, because of that, he usually does.

-- Coach Carr (Chapter 28 paragraph 81)

Importance: Coach tries to advise Shea to not let Ryan push her around. Ryan is popular, powerful and a star used to getting his own way and Coach wants to make sure that Shea wants the same things Ryan does before fully committing to anything.

I couldn't sleep, Shea. And I'm sure I don't have to tell you how important sleep is to performance.

-- Ryan. (Chapter 30 paragraph 41)

Importance: Ryan is angry at Shea because she did not call him the night before the Thanksgiving game and he is trying to blame his bad performance during the game on her.

It's about loyalty. It's about commitment to the people you love. Your wife. Your family. Your friends. Your team. It's about giving it your all and doing the very best you can with what you have, in every moment you're in. And that's what I did that night in my office.



That's what I do on the football field. And that's what I'm doing right now as I defend myself to the woman I love.

-- Coach Carr (Chapter 39 paragraph 178)

Importance: Shea wants to know if the Coach will do anything to win a football game and he says it has never been about winning, it is about loyalty. Loyalty is at the center of the Coach's personal code and he wants Shea to understand who he really is.