

Perfect Mistake Study Guide

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Contents

[Perfect Mistake Study Guide.....](#) 1

[Contents.....](#) 2

[Plot Summary.....](#) 3

[How Far We've Come, Roomies, and Choose.....](#) 4

[Perks and The Craziest.....](#) 6

[Distraction, The Plan, Fear, Neophytes.....](#) 8

[Trek, The Weakest Link, Deadline, and Rigid.....](#) 10

[Very Soon, Tension and Super Spies.....](#) 12

[The Setup, Action, Insurance and Up in Smoke.....](#) 14

[Out of Control; Couples, Couples, Couples; Smooth; Backup Plan; Very Right; and Coming Together.....](#) 16

[Collateral Damage, Retaliation, Backfired, and Failures.....](#) 18

[The Bulldozer, The Spectacle, Arm Candy and Phase Two.....](#) 20

[The Tour, Necessary and Next.....](#) 22

[Characters.....](#) 24

[Objects/Places.....](#) 27

[Themes.....](#) 29

[Style.....](#) 31

[Quotes.....](#) 33

[Topics for Discussion.....](#) 35



Plot Summary

Ariana Osgood, an escapee from a women's prison, is happily enrolled at an elite school. She poses as Briana Covington, a girl that Ariana killed in order to assume her identity. Her life seems finally on track as she has a set of entirely new friends and a wealthy grandmother footing the bills. Ariana has gone to great lengths to secure this new life, including stealing from other students in order to pay off Kaitlynn Nottingham who also escaped with her. However, Kaitlynn shows up as a student at the school due to a large donation made with the money Ariana stole. Kaitlynn poses as Lillian Oswald and Ariana is not happy to see her. The girls wind up as roommates and Lillian begins making demands on Ariana.

Ariana and Kaitlynn are recruited by the secret society, the Stone and Grave. They are each given assignments to complete. Kaitlynn's assignment is to become a hero while Ariana's is to make a spectacle of herself. The problem is that there are five potential members and only four slots in the society. Kaitlynn begins demanding that Ariana eliminate one of girls competing for the slot and promises that she will kill one of them if it becomes necessary. Ariana knows Kaitlynn will commit murder if it suits her and sets out to find another way. She plants a cheat sheet on another of the pledges, Allison, but doesn't realize Allison has a problem with dyslexia and the plan fails.

Ariana begins to develop friendships with several of the other girls, including Brigit who is the princess of Norway. She also forms a mutual attraction with Palmer, who is the former boyfriend of another of Ariana's new friends, Lexa. Ariana denies her attraction with Palmer in public, fearing that she will anger Lexa, who Ariana believes is a member of Stone and Grave. Ariana fears that Lexa might blackball her from the organization. Ariana arranges for Lexa to meet another young man, hoping the two will begin dating, clearing the way for Ariana and Palmer to make their relationship public.

Kaitlynn becomes friendly with another of the potential Stone and Grave members, Tahira, and Tahira soon makes it clear she knows Ariana planted the cheat sheet and that Ariana is a thief. Ariana decides that killing Tahira is the only option left to her and she manages to steal Tahira's eip-pen during an extravagant event hosted at the Norwegian Embassy. Ariana then manipulates the appetizers being distributed so that Tahira eats a snack laced with peanut oil. She almost immediately collapses and it's only then that she realizes her pen is missing. Ariana stands back and watches as Tahira's situation becomes critical but Kaitlynn grabs the pen from Ariana's possession and rushes to save Tahira's life, thereby fulfilling her requirement for induction into the society.

Ariana realizes that Kaitlynn's decision to save Tahira wasn't prompted by the fact that they are friends and that it must mean she has killed someone else. She soon discovers that Brigit is dead, the apparent victim of a tragic fall down the stairs.



How Far We've Come, Roomies, and Choose

How Far We've Come, Roomies, and Choose Summary

As the story opens, Ariana Osgood notices Kaitlynn Nottingham's wedge sandals as soon as she sees her. Ariana immediately wonders where Kaitlynn got the money for such expensive shoes but quickly realizes she had given Kaitlynn the money. Ariana had stolen from her fellow college students at Atherton-Pryce Hall and had given the money to Kaitlynn. Kaitlynn was supposed to use the money to go to Australia but had bought her way into the exclusive school instead. Ariana is posing as Briana Covington, a girl Ariana killed before assuming her identity. Kaitlynn is using the assumed name of Lillian Oswald. Ariana's new friend, Brigit Rhygsted, a princess from Norway, agrees with Kaitlynn that Ariana looks faint and offers to get her some food. Ariana realizes that no one else knows she and Kaitlynn know each other and that Kaitlynn's presence is the reason Ariana looks upset.

The girls are part of a group of college students that includes Palmer Liriana, Christian Brooks, and Landon Jacobs. Landon is an international pop star and Palmer is the handsome former boyfriend of another of Ariana's friends, Lexa. Kaitlynn insists Ariana accompany her to the food tables. She says she used most of the money Ariana gave her to ensure a spot in the junior class at APH and a room at Privilege House, the dorm Ariana and her friends will soon be occupying. Ariana is furious and becomes even more angry when Kaitlynn says she knows Briana's grandmother is sending an allowance and that Ariana, posing as Briana, will now share that money with Kaitlynn.

Ariana thinks back to the time she'd known Kaitlynn when they were both being held at the Brenda T. Trumbull Correctional Facility for Women. She'd believed back then that Kaitlynn was "sweet and innocent," but that it had been an act. Kaitlynn pretends she's moved into APH because she wants to be friends with Ariana but Ariana knows better.

In "Roomies," Ariana and the other students moving into Privilege House meet in the middle of the APH campus for the formal move during "the dark of night." She meets up with her new friends, Lexa, Brigit, Soomie, and Maria. They are joined by Tahira Al Mahmood and Allison Rothaus. Ariana doesn't like Tahira or Allison. Maria says the boys live in the Alpha tower of the Privilege House and the girls live in the Bella tower. Ariana learns they each get to choose their own room but is warned to stay away from 2B because a student committed suicide in that room and it's usually used only for extra closet space. Ariana is urged by her friends to choose Kaitlynn as a roommate. Kaitlynn chimes in, pleading with Ariana so that she would look extremely rude if she refused.

In "Choose," Ariana is pleased to find the new dorm is opulent with a state-of-the-art gym, theater, and study area. Palmer enters the room where Ariana, Lexa, and the other



girls are. He speaks to both Ariana and Lexa and comments that it's "awkward." Lexa assures him they can remain friends but as soon as he's gone, she rushes to the bathroom with Ariana and Brigit in tow. She says she can't possibly remain in the same dorm with him. Brigit and Ariana tell her she'll find someone else and Ariana has to fight down her annoyance that Lexa is holding onto her relationship with Palmer. Ariana continues to be outwardly supportive. She tells that Lexa she's there to "help you avoid him or trash his room or hook up with his best friend" which makes Lexa laugh.

How Far We've Come, Roomies, and Choose Analysis

There is a great deal of background information provided in the first chapters but there are also a great many details that are left out completely or only hinted at. The reader has no idea the role Ariana played in getting her friends into position to move into Privilege House. It's coveted dorm and Ariana's friends are moving in because they won a race. It's revealed that Ariana somehow sabotaged the other team but not what she did to make her team win the race. It's also not revealed why or how Ariana killed Briana and assumed her identity. Another piece of history revealed but not explained is that Ariana caused the breakup between Palmer and Lexa in order to clear the way to date Palmer herself.

It is noted that Briana and another of the students, Lexa Greene have a history. The two attended summer camp together but apparently weren't so close that they kept in touch because Lexa doesn't realize Ariana isn't Briana. She does, however, remember some details about Briana. When Ariana suggests she'll help Lexa trash Palmer's room or "hook up with his best friend," Lexa says that sounds more like Briana. She still thinks she's talking to Briana and says she isn't as outgoing as she was when she was younger. Ariana has gone to great lengths to assume Briana's identity and has the proper documentation.

Ariana's manipulations are evident from very early in the book. She says she has chosen Lexa to be her best friend. When Lexa is in the bathroom crying over Palmer, Ariana is irritated on several fronts, including that Lexa isn't yet over Palmer and that she's put Ariana in the position of being the caring friend. Ariana spends a great deal of time and energy trying to manipulate people and events to suit her ends.



Perks and The Craziest

Perks and The Craziest Summary

In "Perks," Ariana and Kaitlynn are in their dorm room. Kaitlynn laughs in her sleep, a habit Ariana remembers from when they were in prison. She wonders what Kaitlynn, a "scheming psychopath," has to laugh about and she wishes she could simply move on with her new life without Kaitlynn's presence. Ariana considers killing Kaitlynn in her sleep but believes she, as the roommate, would be the first suspect. She knows the authorities would quickly realize Lillian Oswald didn't even exist and the next piece of information would be that Ariana is not who she's pretending to be. Ariana knows the other pieces of information would quickly come to light as well, including how she'd faked her own death and sunk Briana Covington's body in Lake Page after killing her.

There are four bedrooms on the top floor of the Bella tower and Ariana says she's at least pleased that she has a better view than Tahira and Allison. Ariana leaves the bedroom, unable to stand listening to Kaitlynn any longer. She goes to a communal bathroom and notes that the room isn't as modern as the rest of the dorm. She is giving herself a pep talk, reassuring herself that she can get back into control of the situation, when someone enters the room. She's afraid it's Kaitlynn and begins to search for a weapon with which to defend herself from the attack she expects. She is trying to pick up the trash can when Palmer enters the room. He says he'd discovered she wasn't in her room and had been looking for her. Ariana momentarily hesitates, thinking about Lexa, but then she gives in and they kiss for a long time. Palmer suggests they move to the lounge area but Ariana realizes someone might see them, including Lexa. She puts him off, saying she has to go, and thinks that she has to figure out what she should do next.

In "The Craziest," Kaitlynn is preparing to take entrance exams and asks Ariana for advice. Ariana refuses to answer, making it clear she's ignoring Kaitlynn. Ariana notes that she's going to find a way to get everything she wants, including Kaitlynn being gone, Lexa being her best friend and Palmer being her boyfriend. She reminds herself to be patient. Kaitlynn calls Ariana by her real name which makes Ariana angry, but she still refuses to talk. Kaitlynn then says it's obvious by Ariana's silence that she's not in the mood to talk about where she went in the middle of the night, making it clear she knows Ariana left the room. Ariana is immediately on guard, fearing Kaitlynn knows she met Palmer and will tell Lexa.

The other girls arrive and Brigit turns the conversation to the NoBash, a social event at the Norwegian Embassy. Maria says the event includes dignitaries, media, and "metal detectors ever since that dude from Brazil managed to sneak in that scary collapsible sword." Ariana continues to listen to explanations and learns that it's a very exclusive event. She fears that they're warning her that she won't be invited but then learns that Brigit has already planned to invite Ariana.



The girls are still in Ariana's room when Tahira receives a package. It's from a socialite named Lissa Braverman and Tahira makes a show of opening the package but then throws a fit when she discovers peanuts are inside. Tahira says she's allergic to peanuts and Lexa later reveals the allergy is so serious that Brigit carries an epi-pen everywhere she goes. Brigit says she hates the fact that she has to invite Tahira to the NoBash, but that Tahira's father is ruler of Dubai and that she and Brigit are rivals. Brigit asks Ariana to keep an eye on Tahira to learn what Tahira is wearing to the NoBash.

Perks and The Craziest Analysis

Ariana's actions and emotions are conflicting from one moment to the next. She has manipulated the situation so that Lexa and Palmer split up. When Palmer makes a move to bring their newfound attraction into the open, Ariana refuses. She seems to be concerned, at least to some degree, about Lexa's feelings, which makes little sense because she is the reason they are no longer together. Ariana admits that she wants Palmer to be her boyfriend and Lexa to be her best friend, and that she split them up to meet these goals. But when Palmer and Ariana kiss in the bathroom, Palmer suggests they go to the lounge area instead. Ariana knows they might be seen there by anyone, including Lexa, and "Ariana's chest flooded with guilt." She seems to have an extremely warped sense of what's right and how much responsibility she has to take for her actions.

The morning after Ariana's meeting with Palmer in the bathroom, Ariana is angry that Kaitlynn knows Ariana left the room the previous night. Ariana knows she won't have but a moment alone and wishes there was a lock on the door. She cites the school's policy forbidding locks on any of the doors and notes that it's not working in her favor at this moment. However, she says it was a help to her when she'd slipped into other students' rooms in the weeks prior, stealing in order to give Kaitlynn the money she'd demanded them.

Ariana realizes the rivalry between Brigit and Tahira means she shouldn't be Tahira's friend, and tells Brigit she's seen Kaitlynn hanging out with Tahira, hoping that news will make Brigit keep Kaitlynn at bay. This is just one example of how far Ariana will go to manipulate people and events to suit her purposes.



Distraction, The Plan, Fear, Neophytes,

Distraction, The Plan, Fear, Neophytes, Summary

In "Distraction," Ariana and the others stop in the dining hall to allow Maria to get espresso. Ariana sees Palmer there and realizes this is where he's been spending his mealtimes, apparently in an effort to avoid Lexa. Palmer invites Ariana to have lunch with him but she begs off, saying it's "too soon." He agrees but asks that she not keep him waiting too long. Maria is talking to Ariana later and says she believes Palmer is being "fickle," and that he's simply decided he wants to see someone else. Maria says Lexa has spent a great deal of time analyzing Palmer's comments and the situation, which makes Ariana believe Lexa has not yet prepared to move on. Ariana and Maria discuss the fact that they need to create a distraction to get Lexa's mind off Palmer.

Ariana sees Kaitlynn talking to Tahira. Kaitlynn catches up with Ariana and says she wants an invitation to the NoBash. Ariana suggests Kaitlynn secure her own invitation but Kaitlynn says that's why she has Ariana around.

In "The Plan," Ariana is in English class and is instructed to discuss a book from the summer reading list with the person next to her. She turns to find a very handsome African American boy who introduces himself as Conrad Royce. Ariana notes he is wearing mud-spattered running shoes, as if he's been for a recent run. Conrad turns their conversation to Hemingway and they have a discussion about the author and some of his work. Ariana enjoys the intelligent conversation and thinks she'd be attracted to Conrad if she weren't already decided on Palmer. She gets a text from Lexa and comes up with the idea that she needs to get Lexa and Conrad together. Conrad reveals that he spent most of his summer learning about his family's wine business in California and Ariana begins working out how she can bring Conrad and Lexa together.

In "Fear," Ariana discovers she has to work hard to close the gap academically. She hasn't been in a classroom in two years and is struggling to catch up with her classmates. She studies at the Jonathan Hayes Memorial Library that night until the librarian forces her out. She apologizes for staying so long but the librarian commends her on her diligence. As Ariana is walking back toward Privilege House, she realizes someone is following her. She receives a text from Lexa, announcing a party in their room. Suddenly, all the lights on campus go out and a black bag is pulled over her head.

In "Neophytes," Ariana asks where she's being taken and discovers Kaitlynn is also in the car with her. The two of them are alone in the car momentarily and Ariana says she believes the FBI has caught up with them. Kaitlynn disagrees, saying the FBI would simply have arrested them. Ariana says it could be an effort to keep their arrest secret because of the wealthy and well-connected people who patronize the school. They don't travel very long before they're taken out of the car and Ariana discovers she and



Kaitlynn are standing next to Brigit, Tahira, and Allison in a clearing in the woods. She suddenly realizes they are being tapped by a secret society.

Two figures lead the discussion though Ariana notes they are making an effort to hide their identities. The female tells the five girls there are only four slots, and that each will be given a task. They are warned against talking with others about the organization. They are warned they must be creative and that no one who takes the easy road will be granted admission into the organization. They are also told seniors are not tapped, meaning this is their final chance for admission. The scene is lit only by a fire and when it's extinguished, the girls are in darkness. They are told to start walking back to campus.

Distraction, The Plan, Fear, Neophytes, Analysis

The Stone and Grave is apparently mentioned prior to this book because Ariana quickly figures out what's happening when they arrive in the clearing. They are asked if they accept a challenge to become members and all do. The male informs them that membership in the society, the Stone and Grave, ensures their success in life and Ariana knows that membership in this organization will also erase her past. Ariana feels she has to be in this organization in order to complete her dream of a wealthy, privileged life. She also immediately realizes that Kaitlynn will come to the same conclusion. She doesn't plan to help Kaitlynn but knows Kaitlynn is a natural-born survivor and that she'll likely end up as a member of the society, even if Ariana doesn't help. The idea that that two of them will be forever connected by this bond makes Ariana sick.



Trek, The Weakest Link, Deadline, and Rigid

Trek, The Weakest Link, Deadline, and Rigid Summary

In "Trek," Kaitlynn takes the leadership role as the five girls begin the walk back to campus. Several times there are arguments over whether they are going the right way. At one point, Tahira makes a point of questioning Kaitlynn again and Kaitlynn snaps. When Tahira responds, Kaitlynn suddenly seems to realize she can't make Tahira into an enemy because she might need her later, and she apologizes. Brigit and Ariana compare assignments. Brigit's is to "embarrass the crown prince of Jordan at the NoBash" and Ariana's is to "make a spectacle" of herself.

As they continue the walk, Kaitlynn is leading, Allison and Tahira are walking together and talking, and Ariana and Brigit are walking together. Kaitlynn calls to Ariana to join her and Ariana is angry, but does. Kaitlynn talks quietly so she can't be overheard. She says it's "obvious" she has to be in Stone and Grave and demands that Ariana drop out of the running, ensuring the other four a spot in the organization. Kaitlynn says Ariana has established an identity for herself but that Kaitlynn's identity as Lillian is fictitious. She says the Stone and Grave will help her create one because they protect their members. Ariana refuses and Kaitlynn says the Plan B is to kill one of the other three. Ariana refuses to consider the idea and Kaitlynn says she'll do it on her own, and that she might just kill Kaitlynn. Ariana suggests sabotaging someone instead. Kaitlynn says she'll give Ariana a chance to do that before taking matters into her own hands.

In "The Weakest Link," Ariana begins working on a plan to eliminate Allison or Tahira from the slate of possible members of Stone and Grave. She wants to ask Soomie and Maria, who she believes are already members, but remembers the warning not to discuss the situation. She decides to try for an indirect approach. She tells the two there's something she wants very badly but that there are people standing in her way of achieving it. Maria and Soomie say the answer to that problem is to "take out the weakest link." Ariana immediately assumes the girls mean she should sabotage one of the people standing in her way and begins to try to decide how to accomplish that. She considers Kaitlynn but fears Kaitlynn will retaliate by either turning Ariana in or killing her. Ariana settles on Allison and realizes it will be relatively easy.

In "Deadline," Kaitlynn catches up with Ariana on her way to class with the announcement that she and Ariana will be in the same history class. Kaitlynn is gushing with enthusiasm and Ariana is just angry. They are in a stairwell and Ariana considers knocking Kaitlynn down. She thinks it would be put off as merely a tragic accident. She is on the verge of making the move when she bumps into a boy and realizes it's a stupid idea. Kaitlynn asks if Ariana has a plan for eliminating one of the other Stone and Grave candidates. Ariana assures her she does but that she needs time to get the details worked out. Kaitlynn says Ariana has until the night of the NoBash, and that she'll take



the situation in hand that night if it isn't resolved. Kaitlynn again hints that the victim might be Ariana.

In "Rigid," Ariana decides it's time to take control of the situation. She is growing angrier at Kaitlynn's presence and is upset that she's letting Kaitlynn ruin every aspect of her life. Ariana is ready to move forward on her plan to eliminate Allison from competition but she needs Brigit's help. She finds Brigit trying on a dress for the NoBash with a tailor working on the hem. Brigit complains the dress is too long but the tailor says she has to wear heels, a fact Brigit hates. Ariana tells Brigit her plan to play a prank on Allison to get back for being difficult when the two had been roommates.

Brigit reveals that some of the other girls, including Lexa, have remarked that Ariana is "rigid." Lexa remembers Briana as a fun-loving person and Ariana is not living up to that aspect of Briana's character. Brigit says she believes that's why Stone and Grave assigned Ariana the task of making a spectacle of herself. Brigit then reveals she has a surprise for her friends at the dance studio at eight that evening. Ariana then reveals her plan to Brigit and thinks that it's good to have "real friends" again.

Trek, The Weakest Link, Deadline, and Rigid Analysis

When Ariana and the others are asked by the Stone and Grave leaders if they are willing to accept the challenge, only Tahira and Brigit answer. They are asked again and all five answer. This is the first clue that Brigit has been tapped before but not accepted.

Ariana is a little upset by her task for the Stone and Grave. She has pointed out several times that Briana's personality is "over the top" and that she's a showoff. This seems to be opposite of Ariana's natural tendencies and she says she hates that about Briana. Ariana's task is to "make a spectacle" of herself and she sees this as a horrible task to complete. Ariana seems to believe that Lexa is an important member of the Stone and Grave and that she could have made their tasks less humiliating. Brigit accepts the task, saying the "Stone and Grave wants what it wants," and apparently indicating her willingness to do whatever it takes.

Ariana is living a stolen life and has not yet realized she'll never be completely at ease in the situation. She is talking to Maria and Soomie about how to get what she wants, hoping to get advice about Stone and Grave without actually asking her questions. Maria says she knows Ariana is able to get whatever she wants because of where she is at this moment. Ariana arrived on campus posing as Briana and, in a short period of time, is accepted on campus and living in Privilege House. Ariana detects a note of something in Maria's voice that makes her think Maria might know something about her true past. It's not clear whether that's the case, or whether Ariana is simply fearful of being caught.



Very Soon, Tension and Super Spies

Very Soon, Tension and Super Spies Summary

In "Very Soon," Ariana is headed to the café when a door opens and she's grabbed. She almost screams but discovers it's Palmer. They kiss for a long time and he says again that she can't keep him waiting too long. Ariana assures him she has plans to introduce Lexa to a "new man" at lunch the following day. Palmer asks for the identity and Ariana is immediately worried that he's jealous. She reassures herself that Palmer wants to be with her but doesn't tell him who this new man is.

In "Tension," Ariana leaves the room that evening to meet Brigit and the others. Kaitlynn isn't invited and is upset. She insists she be allowed to go along but Ariana refuses, saying she needs time to work on getting the others to accept Kaitlynn. She says the last thing Kaitlynn needs is to begin looking like she needs the others' friendship. Kaitlynn reluctantly agrees.

When Ariana arrives at the dance studio, she discovers the room has been converted into a spa. She's greeted by Satia, who says she's Ariana's masseuse for the evening. When Lexa arrives, she's greeted by Dirk who is to serve as her masseuse and told this is "step one" of their plan to help her get over Palmer. She asks what's next. They don't tell her but Ariana says she's sure Lexa will like it. Lexa seems pleased by the attention.

In "A Gift," Ariana awakes with an incredible sense of well-being. She congratulates herself for quickly becoming ensconced in the right clique as she wakes. She opens her eyes to find a jewelry box beside her bed and immediately anticipates what it might be. As she opens the lid of the box, a hank of hair flutters to the floor. She quickly realizes it's her hair and she runs to the mirror to find it's very conspicuous. There's a note in the box as well with the words "NoBash," obviously pointing out that Ariana has only a few days left to complete Kaitlynn's assignment.

Ariana forces herself to regain control of her emotions even as she's realizing that Kaitlynn cut her hair without waking her, meaning she could easily kill Ariana in her sleep. Suddenly there's a scream and Soomie has also had a hank of hair cut during the night. Allison is the next to make the discovery. Ariana's box is the only one to contain a note. Lexa promises to help Ariana fix her hair for the day and Ariana pledges not to let Kaitlynn take control again.

In "Super Spies," Ariana goes to the office of the counselor, Mr. Pitt, on the pretense of asking for a SAT study guide. Just as he's about to get the item for her, Brigit enters, asking for help with the copy machine. Mr. Pitt leaves the office to help Brigit. As soon as he's out of the room, Ariana rushes to his computer and searches for Allison's file where she discovers Allison has all B's with the exception of a D in chemistry. She has the information she wants but can't resist looking at Palmer's file as well. She is



interrupted by Mr. Pitt's return. When she meets up with Brigit later, she says she now only needs a copy of Allison's handwriting in order to finish the prank.

Very Soon, Tension and Super Spies Analysis

When Satia asks Ariana if there are any areas of her back that need special attention during her massage, Ariana says her neck and shoulders are very tense. Satia suggests it's from the long hours of study and Ariana agrees. However, she thinks to herself that Kaitlynn is the real reason for all the stress. She refers to Kaitlynn in her thoughts as "the murderous psycho who'd trying to ruin my life." This is another example of Ariana's inability to consider her own actions wrong while condemning Kaitlynn.

Ariana's attempts to manipulate others to suit herself is seen again when she's searching for Allison's grades on Mr. Pitt's computer. Ariana gets the information she needs but then can't help searching through Palmer's file as well. She discovers the list of colleges he plans to apply to. She plans to attend Princeton and immediately begins to consider how she might manipulate Palmer into attending Princeton as well.



The Setup, Action, Insurance and Up in Smoke

The Setup, Action, Insurance and Up in Smoke Summary

In "The Setup," Ariana discovers that Kaitlynn is spending some time with Tahira, apparently very friendly with the other girl. Ariana sees Lexa talking with April Corrigan who is involved in a number of activities, is the editor of the school newspaper and what Ariana calls a "serious overachiever." Soomie disagrees, saying April is "unfocused" and Maria says April has no idea what direction she plans to go with her life. Landon Jacobs arrives and he and Maria verbally spar a little. He says Maria plans to change the world by dancing and she says he's trying to accomplish the same thing with his pop singing. Maria and Landon are secretly seeing each other and barely make eye contact during this exchange. Ariana comes to the conclusion that Lexa and April are friends because they are both in Stone and Grave.

Conrad joins Ariana's group for a meal and he and Lexa are soon talking. Conrad shows up and Ariana realizes he wants to know who she's setting Lexa up with. She's a little worried at his reaction but when Ariana and Palmer meet each other's eyes, Palmer gives her a big smile and a sign of his approval.

In "Action," Ariana wakes that Friday to find another jewelry box on her nightstand. She tries to convince herself to ignore the box but can't. She opens it to discover nail clippings and only then realizes her fingernails have been clipped. When she realizes that Kaitlynn has clipped her fingernails without waking her, Ariana is physically ill and throws up. Ariana hears Tahira and Brigit shouting and knows she has to take action to ensure Kaitlynn's spot in Stone and Grave in order to put an end to this.

In "Insurance," Ariana leaves school the following day though she knows she needs to attend class. She arrives at a bank downtown and asks to take out a safety deposit box. An older man named Bernard helps her with the paperwork then leads Ariana into a room with her security box and instructions on how they will lock it up once she's finished. Ariana writes a lengthy missive, explaining how she came to be at this point and how Kaitlynn has made threats. She provides information about Kaitlynn's whereabouts and urges the reader to look at Kaitlynn if Ariana is killed. She is given two keys to the box and plans to send one of them to Briana's "trusted personal maid" along with instructions that the box should be opened if she dies. She also plans to tell Kaitlynn what she's done.

In "Up in Smoke," Ariana returns to the dorm and prepares to tell Kaitlynn about the letter. Kaitlynn drops the letter on Ariana's bed. She says she'd been curious when Ariana left school that day, so had followed. While Ariana was getting her hair done, Kaitlynn took the key and Ariana's identification and returned to the bank where she



convinced someone to give her access to the safety deposit box and removed the letter. Ariana can't stand the thought of spending the night in the room with Kaitlynn. She goes to Lexa's room and spends the night on the couch, saying that she's tired of Kaitlynn's snoring and wants only to have a good night's sleep.

The Setup, Action, Insurance and Up in Smoke Analysis

Ariana continues to look for ways of eliminating Kaitlynn's presence in her life and continues to discard each as impractical or impossible. When Ariana sees April and Lexa talking, she imagines they are discussing the fact that several of the girls had hanks cut out of their hair. The general consensus is that members of a rival society cut the hair of three of the pledges and Ariana jumps to the conclusion that Lexa and April are talking about that topic. Ariana considers for a moment that she might simply tell them that Kaitlynn is to blame but she knows Kaitlynn will turn Ariana in as well. Ariana's effort to use a letter to threaten Kaitlynn also backfires. It's interesting that Ariana is afraid of Kaitlynn and is willing to do whatever it takes to get whatever she wants from anyone other than Kaitlynn.



Out of Control; Couples, Couples, Couples; Smooth; Backup Plan; Very Right; and Coming Together

Out of Control; Couples, Couples, Couples; Smooth; Backup Plan; Very Right; and Coming Together Summary

In "Out of Control," Ariana wakes the next morning to Lexa's shouts. They discover more jewelry boxes, this time with clippings from their toenails. This time Kaitlynn appears with a box of her own, obviously trying to make sure no one suspects her by pretending to be another of the victims.

In "Couples, Couples, Couples," Ariana is angry when she sees Kaitlynn talking with Palmer. Later, Brigit asks Ariana's opinion about Kaitlynn, obviously wondering if she should invite her to the NoBash. Ariana suggests Brigit get to know Kaitlynn better and make her own decision. She suggests they invite Kaitlynn on their shopping spree, planned for all the girls to buy their dresses for the NoBash, and the others agree.

In "Smooth," the girls go shopping. Brigit hates heels and is very unsteady in them, but she's urged by the others to buy a pair of shoes that have three-and-a-half inch heels. Brigit argues but Kaitlynn says that princesses have to wear high heels. They convince Brigit to try on the heels and she's very tottery. When it seems she might still refuse, Kaitlynn says she's already seen Tahira's shoes and that these are much better. That piece of information prompts Brigit to buy the shoes. Maria agrees to help Brigit learn to walk in the shoes.

In "Backup Plan," Ariana asks Kaitlynn why she has to be friends with Brigit, Lexa, and the others. Kaitlynn says she chose them for the same reason Ariana did - they're the most popular and important clique on campus. She then points out that Tahira and Allison will likely be sister members of Stone and Grave, meaning they'll end up being friends in the end anyway. Kaitlynn says she believes all the others are probably already members of Stone and Grave. Kaitlynn then suggests Ariana choose one she'd like to be rid of. Kaitlynn suggests Soomie, though she isn't among the five pledges, hinting it would still create a spot in Stone and Grave and pointing out it would probably clear the way for Ariana to graduate at the top of their class. Ariana assures Kaitlynn none of the girls will have to die in order to ensure Kaitlynn's acceptance into Stone and Grave.

In "Very Right," Ariana goes to Palmer's room despite her worries. She notes that being with him is "very right" and in those moments, nothing else matters. In "Coming Together," Brigit produces a sample of Allison's handwriting and Brigit painstakingly copies notes for chemistry class. Earlier that day, Kaitlynn had left Ariana a note with a



printout of pictures of Lexa, Soomie, Maria, and Brigit, each with a red slash across their necks and with a reminder that only six days remain before the NoBash. Lexa drops by and says she and Conrad are spending a day together.

Out of Control; Couples, Couples, Couples; Smooth; Backup Plan; Very Right; and Coming Together Analysis

The relationship between Maria and Landon is apparently supposed to be secret and it's not clear how Ariana knows definitively that the two are seeing each other. It's also apparent to Ariana that Soomie wants to date Landon but Landon is not interested. It's never made completely clear in this book why Maria and Landon can't openly be together. Ariana's reaction to the situation is another example of her selfishness and greed. She says that it must be horrible for Soomie to be so much in love with Landon and not know that he's dating her best friend. Ariana doesn't acknowledge that this is the exact same situation in which she is arranging to date Palmer even though she knows Lexa likes him.

The entire situation with the high-heeled shoes is presented in a way meant to make the reader pass over the information as merely a description of a shopping trip. In actuality, Kaitlynn has apparently come up with a plan of her own in case Ariana doesn't eliminate someone from the competition. She says that she's seen Tahira's shoes but there's no indication that she's telling the truth about that.



Collateral Damage, Retaliation, Backfired, and Failures

Collateral Damage, Retaliation, Backfired, and Failures Summary

In "Collateral Damage," Ariana posts herself in a bathroom of one of the buildings. She has a cheat sheet that she's created to look like Allison's handwriting with chemistry notes. She remembers that this plan means Kaitlynn won't kill anyone in order to clear a spot in Stone and Grave. She also knows there will be a scandal. She hears the tone announcing the end of class and goes into the hall just in time to see the chemistry teacher, Mr. Chen, opening his door. Just as Allison steps into the hallway, Ariana is positioned to shove another student into Allison. Ariana drops the cheat sheet, which was positioned between her book bag and her body, so that it's on the floor among Allison's possessions. Ariana then moves on down the hall and stops to watch. As Allison is picking up her things, Mr. Chen sees the cheat sheet. He questions Allison and she denies that it's hers, but he obviously doesn't believe her. Ariana thinks the entire situation had been "almost too easy."

In "Retaliation," Ariana attends a meeting of the school newspaper and April is very impressed with her ideas. As they are leaving the meeting, they note a crowd gathered and stop to talk to Palmer who reveals someone put hundreds of coconuts in the room of Martin Tsang, a student who is literally afraid of coconuts. Ariana is convinced Palmer is the culprit. Ariana notes this is obviously a means of retaliation against the members of the Fellows that Lexa believes is responsible for cutting the girls' hair and nails. She figures this is a sure sign that Palmer is a member of the Stone and Grave, as she'd suspected.

In "Backfired," Brigit is practicing walking on her high heels when Allison and Tahira arrive, laughing together. Allison reveals that she'd been let off the hook about the cheat sheet because she is moderately dyslexic and Mr. Chen knows she couldn't possibly have created a cheat sheet that had no mistakes with sixes and nines. She also reveals that her task was to "sabotage a pledge from another secret society" and that she'd blamed the cheat sheet on the girl Ariana had shoved into Allison. The girl, Justina Cruz, is the daughter of a famous movie star and Allison says she's certain that Justina has been tapped and, by turning the tables, has completed her task. Ariana knows this means Kaitlynn will take matters into her own hands and fears it means she'll kill someone.

In "Failures," Ariana wakes with a cut on her leg. Kaitlynn is sitting nearby with a knife. The cut is fairly serious and there's a great deal of blood. Kaitlynn says Ariana has done nothing but waste time. Ariana says again that she'll take care of the situation. Kaitlynn is angry and imagines using the knife to kill Ariana.



Collateral Damage, Retaliation, Backfired, and Failures Analysis

Ariana is very intelligent. When she is creating the cheat sheet for Allison, she notices that many of the sixes and nines are incorrect. Ariana believes she's making the cheat sheet better by correcting the mistakes. When she finds out she's actually ensured that Allison isn't blamed for the cheat sheet, she's furious and has to work very hard at controlling her temper. This reaction is seen repeatedly throughout the book. Whenever Ariana is very angry or upset, she reminds herself to regain control and then focuses on controlling her breathing. It seems likely this is the result of some previous psychiatric therapy but the source is not explained in this book.

After Ariana learns that the cheat sheet idea has not produced the desired results, Brigit says aloud that their plan "backfired." Lexa asks what happened and Brigit tells the entire story. Lexa's reaction is to be angry, pointing out that the cheat sheet could have had serious repercussions. This is about as close as Ariana comes to being caught at her manipulations. It's not clear whether Brigit realizes the seriousness of the situation or what her reaction might have been if Allison had actually been punished for the cheat sheet. Later, Ariana reminds herself of Lexa's holier-than-thou attitude as justification for the way she's manipulating Lexa's life. Ariana wonders after Lexa's tirade if it's possible that sabotaging Allison could have been a mistake. She also wonders if Soomie and Maria were trying to sabotage her. Ariana's thoughts and worries become convoluted as she tries to figure out the motivations of others and constantly looks for possible attacks.

There's an interesting thought after Kaitlynn cuts Ariana's leg. Ariana wants to kill Kaitlynn on the spot but is afraid of what will happen. Instead, she reminds herself that the "universe had a way of working these things out" and that Kaitlynn would eventually face justice. Ariana says she hopes she'll be there or have some role in bringing Kaitlynn to justice. What's interesting is that Ariana has killed Briana and moved into her life, manipulated people who call her friend, and cheated, but she doesn't seem worried that the universe will demand justice for any of her actions.



The Bulldozer, The Spectacle, Arm Candy and Phase Two

The Bulldozer, The Spectacle, Arm Candy and Phase Two Summary

In "The Bulldozer," Ariana spends a little time with Palmer despite her constant concern that Lexa will see them. She rationalizes that she deserves a little time to flirt after Lexa's lecture over the cheat sheet. Palmer tells Ariana she reminds him of a bulldozer in her willingness to go after whatever she wants. She is upset initially by the analogy but later decides she likes it. Later, Ariana encounters Tahira who says she knows Ariana created the cheat sheet. Ariana doesn't react and Tahira goes on, saying she knows Justina Cruz would never have had the guts to oppose Allison and Tahira. Ariana says Tahira doesn't have proof and Tahira says she doesn't need proof. She then says she isn't going to turn Ariana in "for this" and reveals she knows Ariana is the one responsible for a series of thefts earlier in the year. Ariana steps back as soon as Tahira says this, indicating her guilt. Tahira then says she knows the Stone and Grave frowns on members tattling on each other, but that she might be justified in this case.

Tahira then reveals that her task is to "humiliate a donor" and that she'll target Ariana unless Ariana stays away from her. With that, Tahira leaves and Ariana realizes she's going to have to eliminate Tahira from the competition.

In "The Spectacle," Ariana walks into the dining room wearing a pink feather boa and huge white sunglasses. She is carrying a powerful speaker and climbs up on a table where she performs a song that has everyone in the room laughing and pointing. Ariana continues to remind herself this will ensure her admittance into Stone and Grave. When she's done, Brigit congratulates her on a job well done. After Ariana finishes singing, Lexa announces to Brigit that she's bringing Conrad to the NoBash.

In "Arm Candy," Ariana wishes Palmer would pick her up at her room but when he doesn't show up, she goes to meet the others. When she sees Palmer, she's impressed at how good he looks in his tux. She's almost immediately angry to see Kaitlynn flirting with him. Ariana asks if Palmer is her date for the event and he is obviously hurt, saying Ariana has never taken steps to make their relationship public. Just then Lexa arrives, butting into the conversation and asking Ariana to be Christian's "arm candy" for the evening since he's also without a date. Ariana allows herself to be led away. As they wait for the limos to arrive, Ariana sees an opportunity to drop her safety deposit box key into Tahira's clutch.

In "Phase Two," the limos arrive at the Norwegian Embassy where the NoBash is to be held. Brigit is to be the last to walk into the embassy and the walkway is flanked by media. Landon volunteers to be the first out and draws a great deal of attention as he works the crowd on the way to the door. Christian starts to step out with Ariana but she



refuses, saying she's no one's "arm candy." He recovers and makes the walk alone. Palmer seems pleased by her action and whispers that he would never call her arm candy as he alights. Ariana manages to wait until Tahira is about to approach the door, having arrived in another limo, before heading inside herself.

When they reach the security checkpoint, Ariana walks through without any problem. Tahira sets off the alarm and is delayed. One of the guards dumps Tahira's clutch on the counter and, as Tahira is making a scene, Ariana takes her EpiPen and walks away.

The Bulldozer, The Spectacle, Arm Candy and Phase Two Analysis

Ariana's choice of a spectacle seems rather tame unless the reader realizes that she absolutely hates this sort of situation. While Ariana is brash and overbearing, she also hates to give the impression that she's anything less than dignified and in control. The two sides of her personality seem in direct conflict with each other.

Ariana thinks back several times to her escape from prison and the fact that she'd helped Kaitlynn escape as well. Ariana tries to make herself seem honest and upright and one of the few ways she can accomplish this is to compare herself to Kaitlynn. When Kaitlynn threatens to murder someone in order to ensure her own place in Stone and Grave, Ariana is horrified. She says that murder isn't to be taken lightly and that it's only to be done in severe situations. What's ironic is that Ariana herself is planning to kill Tahira at the NoBash and she seems to have no qualms about her decision.



The Tour, Necessary and Next

The Tour, Necessary and Next Summary

In "The Tour," Brigit catches Ariana's attention and says she's completed her task. She was to embarrass the crown prince of Jordan and Brigit says she claimed she smelled dog poo and insisted everyone take off their shoes to check. The prince wears lifts and she says that it was obvious once he was barefoot. She laughingly says she should have called on him to teach her to walk in heels. Brigit agrees to take the others on a tour of the building and shows them a large room currently being remodeled. Kaitlynn finds a moment alone with Ariana and warns her that time is running out for her to make a spot in Stone and Grave. Ariana assures her she's working on it but Kaitlynn says that Ariana will be responsible for what happens next if she doesn't hurry up.

In "Necessary," Ariana pays careful attention to Tahira and the circuits being made by the waiters. When one young man comes by her headed in Tahira's direction, she tells him his shoe is untied. When he puts down his tray and bends to correct it, Ariana pours peanut oil over the items on the tray. When Tahira takes one of the canapés, she asks the waiter if it has peanuts and he assures her it doesn't. She wolfs down the treat and almost immediately begins to scream in panic. Her date knows the problem and quickly discovers the EpiPen is missing. Ariana is horrified but transfixed as she watches Tahira struggle. Ariana says it's difficult to watch but she knows it's necessary because of Tahira's threat to turn her in.

Just as it seems certain Tahira is about to die, Kaitlynn rushes out of the crowd, grabs Ariana's purse and hand the EpiPen over to a doctor who is trying to save Tahira. Ariana can't understand what could possibly motivate Kaitlynn to this act. She knows without a doubt that Kaitlynn isn't action on her friendship with Tahira but can't come up with another motivation. Kaitlynn is lauded as a hero and when she returns to Ariana's side, she reveals her task for Stone and Grave: "Be the hero."

In "Next," Ariana suddenly realizes she hasn't seen Lexa recently and believes this will be Kaitlynn's target. She rushes from the room in search of Lexa and quickly finds her, with Conrad. Ariana soon realizes Lexa is crying and Lexa reveals that Brigit is dead, apparently from having fallen down a flight of stairs.

The Tour, Necessary and Next Analysis

Soon after they arrive at the embassy, Palmer asks Ariana why she is so intent on being careful of Lexa's feelings. He says that people break up and begin dating other people all the time and he can't understand why this is any different. Ariana says it's different when the ex-girlfriend and the new girlfriend are best friends. Palmer then asks a perfectly reasonable question: How can Ariana and Lexa be best friends when they only became reacquainted a couple of weeks earlier? Ariana is shocked because she can't



imagine how Palmer could imagine anything less. In fact, Ariana has decided she and Lexa will become best friends and the situation has already become fixed in Ariana's mind as reality. Palmer's question, however, prompts concern on her part and she wonders if Lexa might not want to be her best friend. This is such a juvenile attitude that it seems out of character for Ariana unless the reader remembers that Ariana never cares what anyone else wants. She doesn't care now about Lexa's feelings but is suddenly fixated on the idea that Lexa might not fall in with her plans.



Characters

Ariana Osgood

A student posing as Briana Covington, Ariana is actually an escaped murderer who killed Briana and took over her identity. Ariana pretends to be upright and compares herself often to Kaitlynn, pointing out to herself how much better she is than Kaitlynn. Ariana is a complex, manipulative character. She is obviously very intelligent and can be focused when she needs to be. The irony is that she could likely have gone far in her personal life if she hadn't spent so much time and energy trying to manipulate people and situations. Ariana's constant manipulating leaves her also constantly worrying about the motivations of other people. For example, Ariana thinks two girls suggest that she try to get a potential member of the Stone and Grave in trouble to lessen the competition. Ariana later learns that such actions are prohibited and guarantee a blackball. She can't decide whether the girls were trying to get her in trouble or if they'd thought Ariana is smart enough to avoid being caught. The reader never learns the truth of the situation but the fact that Ariana spends so much energy worrying about it is a statement of her character. Ariana says killing is wrong but then sets out to kill one of their classmates when that action fits in with her plans. She seems at least somewhat upset at watching the girl die but says it's necessary and doesn't take any steps to save her. For the purpose of clarity, she is referred to as Ariana throughout this study guide.

Kaitlynn Nottingham

A student posing as Lillian Oswald, Kaitlynn escaped from prison with Ariana. Kaitlynn is even more manipulative than Ariana but she's also smarter in her ability to control Ariana, thereby controlling much more of the situation than Ariana is able to control. Kaitlynn is a sociopath and apparently kills Brigit in cold blood. Kaitlynn controls Ariana through fear and seems ready to carry through with her threats to kill Ariana if specific requirements aren't accomplished. Kaitlynn shows no real weaknesses throughout the book, probably because she is so completely in control. It should also be noted that the perspective is limited to Ariana, meaning Kaitlynn's personal thoughts are not revealed. Her fears are not presented to the reader. Kaitlynn seems completely cold-hearted, even compared to Ariana. While Ariana seems to want to become friends with Lexa and the others, Kaitlynn doesn't care and engages the others only to the point that it suits her purposes. Kaitlynn seems to always know what Ariana is doing and is able to thwart any plan Ariana has. This is seen clearly when Ariana writes the story of her escape from prison and her current problems with Kaitlynn, leaving the document in a safety deposit box. By the time that Ariana gets home, Kaitlynn has retrieved the document and presents it back to Ariana. Another example of this is seen when Kaitlynn foils Ariana's plan to kill Tahira.



Brigit Rhygsted

The princess of Norway, Brigit is another of the students at Atherton-Pryce Hall. Brigit is genuine in most ways and seems honestly sweet. She likes Ariana, a fact that Ariana seems to realize. Brigit is unable to walk well in high heels but is convinced by her friends to buy a pair for the NoBash. She is found dead and it's assumed that Kaitlynn caught her off balance and pushed her to her death.

Lexa Greene

A student at APH, she is seeing Palmer until shortly before the action of the book occurs and later begins dating Conrad Royce. Lexa seems genuine in most ways and doesn't seem to be caught up in the drama Ariana always finds for herself. Lexa doesn't seem happy when she discovers Palmer paying attention to Ariana which Ariana believes is selfishness.

Palmer Liriana

A handsome student at APH, he is involved in a relationship with Lexa until shortly before the action of the story begins. Palmer is attracted to Ariana but seems willing to allow some time to lapse so that it doesn't seem he's moved directly from dating Lexa to dating Ariana.

Conrad Royce

He is a student who attends APH. He is athletic and handsome. Arianna meets him for the first time in a literature class. Ariana arranges for Conrad to be near Lexa several times so that the two eventually connect and begin seeing each other.

Tahira Al Mahomood

The daughter of the ruler of Dubai, she is considered a princess and is often in competition with Brigit for the spotlight. Tahira discovers that Ariana was behind the thefts that occurred before the beginning of the story and knows that she tried to frame Allison as a cheater. Tahira is allergic to peanuts and almost dies when Ariana manages to pour peanut oil on something that she eats.

Allison

Another of the students at APH, she is also being tapped by the Grave and Stone society. Allison and Ariana are not on good terms and Ariana decides to make it appear as if Allison was cheating on a test. The plan backfires and Allison is not held accountable for the cheat card that Ariana plants.



Maria and Soomie

Students who Ariana believes are members of the Stone and Grave, they offer Ariana advice when she's pondering how to clear the way for her own entrance into the society. Ariana believes the girls' advice is to sabotage one of the other pledges but later learns that to do so means she would be blackballed. She the wonders whether the girls were trying to sabotage her.

Landon Jacobs

A pop star who attends school with Ariana and Kaitlynn at the exclusive Atherton-Pryce Hall.



Objects/Places

Atherton-Pryce Hall

This is the school Ariana attends along with Kaitlynn.

Brenda T. Trumbull Correctional Facility for Women

This is the prison Kaitlynn and Arianna escaped from.

NoBash

This is the huge social event hosted by the Norway dignitaries and where Brigit dies.

Stone and Grave

This is the secret society that taps Ariana and Kaitlynn at the same time and which ultimately results in Brigit's death.

Privilege House

This is the name of the house where Ariana and her friends live because they win a competition.

Alpha Tower

This is the side of Privilege House reserved for the boys.

Belle Tower

This is the side of Privilege House reserved for the girls.

Norwegian Embassy

This is where the NoBash is held.

Washington, D.C.

This is where Atherton-Pryce Hall is located.

Jonathan Hayes Memorial Library

This is where Ariana is studying until a short time before she's tapped for the secret society.



Themes

Greed

Ariana and Kaitlynn are so greedy that each commits murder in order to achieve their goals. Ariana reveals that she had wandered through the campus, stealing a great deal of money prior to the opening of this book, in order to ensure that Kaitlynn had the money to leave the country. Ariana kills a young girl and assumes her identity in order to live her affluent lifestyle. Kaitlynn points out to Ariana that she's now comfortable with a trust fund and a wealthy grandmother willing to pay her way through life - all things Kaitlynn wants for herself. Both girls are ruthless when it comes to having luxuries and, ironically, Ariana believes she's worked to get where she is. Ariana tries to kill Tahira in order to clear the way for her own admission into the Stone and Grave. While she's watching Tahira die, she is transfixed and a little horrified, but makes no move to reverse the situation. Instead, she reminds herself that the murder is necessary and therefore, justified. Kaitlynn is equally willing to do whatever it takes to achieve her goals. It's noted that she killed a man which landed her in the prison and it's likely she killed Brigit in order to ensure her spot in the Stone and Grave. The other characters of the book, with the exception of Ariana and Kaitlynn, are all from wealthy families and have led opulent lives. They have never lacked for anything they want but several of them still exhibit attitudes of greed. This is seen especially in Tahira who makes sure everyone knows she's spent time with a wealthy socialite and who wants to be the beloved princess on campus and among their circle of friends. Most of them are also anxious to become members of the Grave and Stone because of the status and security that comes with membership. While the majority of these characters are not particularly interested in money, they are greedy for fun, status, and other non-tangibles.

The willingness to manipulate others

Kaitlynn and Ariana are queens at manipulating people and situations to suit themselves. Neither has any compunction about their actions, even when it's obvious they are hurting others. One of the earliest examples of this theme is seen in Ariana's decision to cause Palmer and Lexa to break up, clearing the way for Ariana to begin dating Palmer. Ariana is not a complete sociopath and seems to genuinely feel sorry for Lexa when Lexa is hurting over the breakup. But her concern for this friend isn't enough to make Ariana change her mind about her course of action. When it appears Lexa is going to continue moping over Palmer, Ariana sets out to introduce her to Conrad, hoping the two will begin dating which will make it possible for Ariana and Palmer to begin openly seeing each other. While Ariana doesn't take action on the information during this book, she also checks into Palmer's records to see what colleges he hopes to attend. When she notes several ivy-league schools at the top of his list, she makes it clear she'll arrange for him to attend Princeton, the college she plans to attend, so they'll be together. Interestingly, Kaitlynn manipulates some people and situations but apparently finds it easier to simply manipulate Ariana into doing all the work for Kaitlynn



to achieve what she wants. When Kaitlynn wants to go to the NoBash, she instructs Ariana to make sure she has an invitation.

The need to perpetuate lies

Ariana kills Briana Covington and assumes her identity. From the beginning, she's struggling to maintain that lie. Briana is something of an exhibitionist and Ariana is not comfortable in that role but soon discovers she has to find a way to live up to that side of Briana's personality. Ariana manipulates a great many situations and people and each time she finds she has to live the lies she's created. When she breaks up Palmer and Lexa, she hopes to clear the way to date Palmer herself. However, she's afraid to anger Lexa and so has to put her relationship with Palmer on hold. Arguably the biggest lie is that she is Briana Covington rather than a prison escapee. Ariana constantly fears that someone will figure it out or that Kaitlynn will reveal her true identity. With that threat hanging over her head, Ariana does Kaitlynn's bidding, even stooping to attempted murder. When Kaitlynn cuts the hair and nails of several people in the dorm, Ariana wants to tell the others Kaitlynn is behind it but knows she can't. Ironically, Ariana wishes the situation was different and that she could tell her friends the truth about Kaitlynn, even while she's hiding the truth about herself.



Style

Point of View

The story is written in the third person from the limited perspective of Ariana. The reader is given insight into Ariana's thoughts and actions that is not revealed for any of the other characters. The extra information about Ariana is necessary for the reader to catch up on the details that led the characters to this point. It's when Ariana sees Kaitlynn for the first time in this story that the reader begins to piece together their history, including their escape from prison. The insight into Ariana's thoughts does not always assist the reader in figuring out what's going on however. For example, Ariana questions Soomie and Maria in a covert manner, hoping to find advice on how to deal with the competition for the Grave and Stone society. She believes the girls tell her she should do what she can to eliminate the competition and sets out to have Allison kicked out of school for cheating. When Ariana learns that the action could have gotten Ariana blackballed, she wonders if Soomie and Maria had given her the advice on purpose or if they'd merely expected that she was smart enough to avoid being caught. These questions occur to Ariana but are never answered. The lack of insight into others, especially Kaitlynn, is necessary in order for the author to keep the plot twists a surprise until the end of the story.

Setting

The story is set on a fictional campus in Washington, D.C. in modern times. The school caters to the elite and the writer seems determined to point out all the amenities offered. In some ways, the setting seems contrived in order to suit the action. There are several specific settings within the overall setting, several of these off the campus. Ariana goes to a bank where she writes an account of her prison escape and details Kaitlynn's threats. The bank and a store where the girls buy shoes are presented only in slight detail. The Norwegian Embassy is another of the settings off campus. The embassy is described in some detail as Brigit takes the girls on a tour. This setting takes on a particular importance when Brigit and Kaitlynn each finish the tasks they are assigned for membership in the Stone and Grave. This is also the site of Brigit's death. On the campus, there are only a few settings described to any degree. The Privilege House is one of those. As the girls are preparing to make the move to Privilege House, the author describes the building. There are two large towers, named Alpha and Belle - the former for boys and the latter for the girls. Ariana learns one of the rooms is seldom used as a dorm room because a student committed suicide there. There are other details, including the large windows that overlook the campus.



Language and Meaning

The story is written in a straight-forward style and action flows quickly. The book is one of a series and the reader who expects a true ending will be disappointed. Brigit dies which theoretically leaves a spot in the coveted Grave and Stone society and ensures that both Kaitlynn and Ariana are accepted. However, that action is not taken before the end of the book. There is no indication that Ariana and Palmer further their relationship or whether Lexa remains with Conrad. The overall tone of the story is one of drama and suspense. Some of the drama seems contrived. For example, there's a reference to a room in the Privilege House that is seldom used because a student committed suicide there. It seems this conversation is a precursor to some action in that setting but the room is not mentioned again in this book. There is a great deal of teenage drama and some readers may find this tedious. This drama pales next to the tension between Ariana and Kaitlynn. From early in the story, the reader senses there won't be a good outcome to the book and a great deal of time is spent explaining the trouble Brigit is having in her new shoes. The writer leaves the reader with many unanswered questions, including how Kaitlynn manages to kill Brigit and what impact this has on the future of both Kaitlynn and Ariana.

Structure

The book is divided into thirty-eight chapters that vary in length. The chapters are presented in chronological order and background information is presented through memories from Ariana's perspective. The chapters are each titled and the titles lend some clues about the contents of that chapter. For example, the chapter titled "Rigid" is an account of Ariana's discovery that some of the other girls consider her to be rigid. In the chapter titled "Arm Candy," Ariana is instructed by Lexa to partner with a particular young man and to be his "arm candy" for the evening. Chapter titles are How Far We've Come; Roomies; Choose; Perks; The Craziest; Distraction; The Plan; Fear; Neophytes; Trek; The Weakest Link; Deadline; Rigid: Very Soon; Tension; A Gift; Super Spies; The Setup; Action; Insurance; Up in Smoke; Out of Control; Couples, Couples, Couples; Smooth; Backup Plan; Very Right; Coming Together; Collateral Damage; Retaliation; Backfired; Failures; The Bulldozer; The Spectacle; Arm Candy; Phase Two; The Tour; Necessary; and Next. In the opening chapters, Ariana and Kaitlynn are introduced and the reader begins to learn their history. By the chapter titled "Perks," it's evident that Palmer is attracted to Ariana but she insists they not act on their attraction for fear of hurting Lexa. In Neophytes, Ariana and Kaitlynn are among the girls tapped by the secret society, Stone and Grave. By the time the reader gets to "Backfired," Ariana has tried to have Allison kicked out of school and the plan has backfired. In "Arm Candy," the group is headed for the NoBash event and in Necessary, Ariana tries to kill Tahira.



Quotes

"Back when Ariana and Kaitlynn had been cellmates at the Brenda T. Trumbull Correctional Facility for Women, Ariana had thought she knew how Kaitlynn's mind worked - had thought she was sweet, innocent, guileless - but it had all turned out to be a ruse" (How Far We've Come).

"Then eventually she would find a way to fix the Kaitlynn situation, find a way to have Palmer as her boyfriend and Lexa as her best friend. Find a way to get everything she wanted" (The Craziest).

"Her heart tingled with excitement and she sat back in her chair slightly, filled with an overwhelming sense of satisfaction. This is where she was supposed to be" (The Plan).

"Our membership runs deep in the veins of this country, in every university, every industry, every branch of government. As a member of Stone and Grave, your success in the world is guaranteed" (Neophytes).

"If she sabotaged Kaitlynn, then Kaitlynn might turn her in to the authorities - or worse, kill her" (The Weakest Link).

"Brigit was a good, honest friend. And it was good to have real friends again" (Rigid).

"After all, if Atherton-Pryce was taken away from her, if Palmer and Lexa and Stone and Grave and the rest of her friends were torn away, if her new picture of her future was obliterated, she'd have nothing left to lose" (Super Spies).

"A photo of Kaitlynn sleeping in her bed so that anyone who read this note would know what Kaitlynn looked like today. Different hair, different name, different style - same sociopath" (Insurance).

"Kaitlynn was much more than off the deep end; she was being pulled out to sea by a strong undertow. Ariana was not dealing with a person who could be reasoned with, a person whose moves could be predicted" (Out of Control).

"It wasn't until the heavy door slammed behind her that Ariana allowed herself one small, triumphant laugh, which was drowned out by the twittering gossip and



speculation that filled the hallway around them. It was almost too easy" (Collateral Damage).

"Sooner or later, Kaitlynn would get hers. The univers had a way of working these things out" (Failures).

"And as long as Ariana was certain Lexa could blackball her from Stone and Grave, she had to keep the girl happy. Palmer could blackball her too, of course, but she believed he was more of a gentleman than that" (Arm Candy).

"It was always difficult to watch someone die. Even those people who deserved it" (Necessary).

Topics for Discussion

Who is Ariana? Who is Kaitlynn? How are the two connected? What is revealed about how they came to be at the same school? What are their motivations? What effect does Kaitlynn's appearance have on Ariana?

What is the Stone and Grave? Why is it important to Ariana? Why is it important to Kaitlynn? How does their desire to become members drive the action in this story? What does each do in an effort to ensure a spot in the society? What is the result?

Compare Ariana and Kaitlynn. How are the two similar? How are they different? Which is the stronger of the two? Why?

Who is Brigit? Tahira? Allison? How are the three connected to Ariana? What are their roles in her life? What motivates her relationship with each?

Who is Palmer? What is his connection to Ariana? What keeps Ariana from dating Palmer outright? What are the lengths Ariana goes to in an effort to date him? What is the result of these actions?

Who is Landon? Who is Conrad? Who is Soomie? Who is Maria? Who is Lexa? What is the role of each in the story? Describe the relationship between each of these characters and Ariana, then compare that to their relationships with Kaitlynn.

What do you consider the most important theme of the story? List three examples of this theme. What do you consider the most important setting? List three things that happen in this setting.