

Raiders Night Study Guide

Raiders Night by Robert Lipsyte

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Plot Summary

"Raiders Night" by Robert Lipsyte tells the story of a promising young football player who is unexpectedly faced with an extraordinarily challenging moral issue during his senior year. He is torn between doing what's right for the person involved, what's right for the team as a whole, and what's right for his own future.

Matt seems to have everything going for him. He is the co-captain of his football team, popular, and good-looking. His father pays for him to take steroids to buff up and help the team be the best it can be, but it's not all rosy. Matt can't stand his father and wants to get away from him. He gets an opportunity to have a break from his father when he joins his team for a week of football camp. It's something he is really looking forward to. This year, a new, promising player is joining them. Matt sees the boy's natural athletic ability even as the boy boards the bus. The other co-captain, Ramp, isn't pleased about the new player.

At camp, Matt feels differently than he did in previous years. The social scene doesn't excite him as it used to. He immerses himself in the football and enjoys his solitude when he gets it. Ramp and his friends continue bullying Chris, the new player. Chris stands up to them and displays phenomenal athletic ability. It makes Ramp even more angry, and at the freshman initiation, he rapes Chris with a bat, stunning Matt and the others. They don't know what to do. Back at home, Matt tries to block out the incident, yet he and his friends are still wondering what they should do about it. There is dissension among the team members as the season begins.

When school starts up, things go according to routine, but Matt feels that something is different. The team isn't playing as well as they used to and Ramp continues to take measures to divide team members by planting malicious gossip. Mandy, Matt's former girlfriend, is jealous and upset about the time he is spending with Sarah.

Chris doesn't show up for practices, and the coach asks Matt to talk with him. Mr. Koslo sends a limo to take the two boys to a Yankees game so they can relax and talk. Matt tells Chris to put the past behind him and really become part of the team. They need him. This fact is true since the team is falling apart thanks to rumors of homosexuality and police questioning about drug deals and what might have happened to Chris at camp. Matt realizes the adults know more than they are letting on, but they hint that everything has to be kept quiet or the team will fold.

Ramp and Chris are giving the team a pep talk when Chris comes in and aims a gun at Ramp. When Ramp taunts him, he turns the gun on himself. Matt tackles him as the gun goes off, and he lives but is sent to the ICU. Matt and Sarah visit him there and find out that no-one else has visited. Matt decides to tell the coaches what happened and discovers that they already know. He and his friends realize that they need to get the story out even though it might shut the football season down.



Chapters 1-6

Chapters 1-6 Summary

"Raiders Night" by Robert Lipsyte tells the story of a promising young football player who is unexpectedly faced with an extraordinarily challenging moral issue during his senior year. He is torn between doing what's right for the person involved, what's right for the team as a whole, and what's right for his own future.

In Chapter 1, Matt enters the gym in the early afternoon. He loves how the women look at him as he walks through the regular machines and up to the second floor where there are machines for serious workout. His buddies follow him. In the workout room, Monty, the owner of the gym meets him and tells him there is a new shipment.

It's perfect timing since they are about to go to football camp. The upcoming season is looking good, and the guys discuss the season as they get steroid shots and work out. Matt feels the bond of brotherhood as Brody, Monty, Tyrell and Pete work out with him. They are going to do whatever it takes to win. Ramp knocks on the door as Matt gets his shot. He's ready for his turn.

In Chapter 2, the game is already going by the time Matt gets to the ball field. He and Brody make sure everyone sees them as they stroll through the sands with their football. Junie, Matt's brother, calls out to him. After making plans to meet up with Brody later, Matt wanders through the stands. A kid from the school newspaper tries to get him to set up an interview, but he brushes him off and says he has to do it after camp.

Junie greets him enthusiastically, and they set out to watch the game together. Matt explains parts of the game to his brother, who is older than he is in age, but much younger mentally. His dad's team is Rydek Catering. When the umpire makes a call the umpire doesn't like, he makes a big scene and yells at the caterer. His team wins the game, and the boys are relieved to know their father will be happy.

In Chapter 3, Matt goes to a party with Brody. His girlfriend, Mandy, is out of town. As they wander into the room, Brody calls out that the party can start now that the Matt, the team captain, is there. Matt learns that there is a transfer sophomore coming in to play football with them. Ramp isn't happy about it. Matt thinks about how much Mandy would have loved the party. She loves being the center of attention. He feels as if he is in a fog and wonders whether he feels that way because of the steroids, the beer or the pain pills he is taking. Tyrell offers him some pot, and he doesn't want to seem like a wimp so he takes a toke.

He gets a headache, and a girl he talks with tells him she will get him some ibuprofen. The cellphone rings, and Matt figures it's probably Mandy. He doesn't answer the call. He can't remember who was going to get him the medication. Matt goes outside and finds a girl waiting for him. She hands him the pills, reminding him that it's ibuprofen.



In Chapter 4, Matt is having a dream about taking a dirty convertible through a car wash with the top down when he realizes it's his dog licking his face. His father says he wants to talk with him before he leaves for camp. Matt thinks about the night before. He had come in right before the sun rose.

At breakfast, Matt's dad talks about wanting to do a barbecue at camp. Matt doesn't want him to do it. They talk a bit about football, and make plans for Matt's drop-off. His mother says they will work it out.

In Chapter 5, Matt's mother is in the car with the boys trying to explain her husband's behavior. Junie points out that their dad is not angry, he's just trying to scare them so he gets his own way. When their mom questions who told him that, Matt says he did. His mother asks when Mandy is coming back from cheerleader's camp, and he says that she is coming back that night.

They stop by Brody's house. Mrs. Heinz is gorgeous, and Matt tries to control himself. The moms talk as the guys get ready for football camp. When they are ready, they all say goodbye. Brody talks to Matt about how he got lucky the night before. Matt says he can't remember the girl's name. Brody tells him that her name is Sarah Ringe, and another girl thinks that Sarah is stalking him.

In Chapter 6, by the time Matt and Brody pulled into the parking lot, most of the team was already loaded. They were getting on the bus when a Lexus screeched into the parking lot and a large kid came out to join the team. He carried his heavy bag as if it were nothing. Matt asked who he was, and was told that it was the new sophomore, Chris Marin. Ramp and his buddies started harassing the boy as he got on the bus. As the bus went down the highway, the coach stands up to address everyone. It's the same speech he gives every year so Mike puts on his headphones and drifts off.

Chapters 1-6 Analysis

In Chapter 1, the reader is introduced to the main character, Matt. He is a confident young man who loves to be the center of attention. This is shown in the way he relishes the way women look at him as he saunters through the gym. Even though he appreciates their looks, he is focused on honing his body for football, doing whatever it takes to build the bulk with steroids and tough workouts. When other guys join him in getting the drugs, he feels the bond of brotherhood. He knows there are negative side effects to taking the steroids, and he's proud of himself and his teammates for being willing to pay the price as a sacrifice for a successful season.

Chapter 2 really shows the family dynamics. Matt's father is playing in a baseball game that he wants his whole family watching. This shows some arrogance and pride as he makes his entire family shuffle their schedules to be there to watch him. Matt yields to his father's wishes because he does attend the game. However, he also shows that he wants to do his own thing as he arrives at the game late. His mother doesn't play a big role in the chapter. She is mentioned when she wants to find out if he is going to be



home for dinner, and he says that he is going out to a party, and she is mentioned again after the game when they go out for a group family hug. A key figure in the chapter is Matt's older brother, Junie. It becomes apparent that the boy is mentally handicapped, but Matt is very patient with him and loves him a lot. He takes the time to explain the baseball game. When their father gets aggressive on the field, he tries to comfort his brother. All the family members are relieved when the father's team wins the game. They know this will put them in a good mood. All Matt cares about is getting way.

During chapter 3, the reader realizes that Matt is abusing drugs. The reader already knows that he is taking steroids, but it's also apparent that he is taking painkillers and mixing them with alcohol and marijuana. He goes to a party without his girlfriend when she is away at cheerleading camp. His popularity shows as people call out to him, but he isn't thrilled with the scene, and is happy to be there without his girlfriend. He notices that a girl is crying after she had gone off with Ramp. When Matt asks about it, Ramp says that she is a drama queen who wanted attention, and now she got it. Matt is in such a fog with all the drugs he has taken that he has a hard time focusing on people and doesn't even recognize himself in the mirror at one point. A girl comes to his rescue, taking him away from the party scene.

As Chapter 4 begins, Matt's in a fog again, but this time it's because of the confused dream. His father shows his dominance in the family as they have breakfast together, and he insists on deciding with his son will eat even though the mother offers a choice. The father is a caterer, and he wants to do a meal during football camp. Matt is against this idea, but he doesn't voice his opinion. He just suggests that his father do the barbecue when they get back. When his says that it's not a team thing and Matt points out that his father isn't on the team, his father gets angry. Matt considers going up against his father physically at some point, and he realizes that he could take his father.

In Chapter 5, even though the father is harsh with his sons, the mother tries to defend him. Matt doesn't buy it. When they go to Brody's house, it's apparent that their friendship is intergenerational. The mothers spend time talking with each other as the older boys pack and Junie plays with the dogs. When it's time to leave, Matt's mother goes against her husband's wishes by letting Matt take the car. On the way to the bus, Brody warns Matt that the girl he was with the night before has an agenda.

In Chapter 6, football camp is now routine for Matt, and he has an established place on the team. He is comfortable enough with the situation that he doesn't mind arriving late, and he still has a place reserved for him on the bus. The new student appears, and Ramp views him as a threat. He bullies the boy somewhat subtly, and Matt notices but does nothing about it. This foreshadows trouble to come.



Chapters 7-12

Chapters 7-12 Summary

In Chapter 7, the other kids on the bus get out excitedly when they arrive at camp, which was an old army base. The seniors take their time. Everything looks familiar, and although they groan about the upcoming tough training, Matt knows they are all happy. Ramp assigns everyone to their quarters, and Matt notices that Chris looks a little lost in spite of the cocky expression on his face. He doesn't know anyone. Ramp tells him to caddy for two other players, telling him that freshman always carry the seniors bags on the first night. Chris points out that he's not a freshman, and Matt intervenes by grabbing his own bags.

Matt remembers what it was like when he first came to camp. He wasn't comfortable with the proximity and lack of privacy. However, by his second summer everything was completely comfortable. He has a single room, and is happy to have an escape from all the activity around him. Matt decides not to join the others for card playing. Before he knows it, it's the next morning and they are ready to work out. Chris has no problem keeping up with the training, and Ramp continues harassing Chris.

After lunch, the coach runs through some plays. The team goes out onto the field to play some football, and Ramp goes after Chris. Chris leaves him in the dust and goes across the goal line. Tyrell is shaking his head at Matt. It doesn't do well to make Ramp look bad. He will be out for revenge.

In Chapter 8, everyone is talking about Chris. He is an amazing athlete. Ramp continues to ridicule him. That night everyone seems exhausted at dinner except for Chris. Matt wonders if he is just hiding how badly he's hurting. The next day, Ramp and his friends continue hitting Chris hard on the field. He bounces right back up or evades them. Coach Mack pulls Matt aside and asks him to talk with Chris, telling him that he needs to tone it down because he's trying too hard. Matt is reluctant to do it, but he knows he has to. He doesn't get a good opportunity to talk to the new kid for a while.

At dinner, the seniors pick a freshman to wait on them. Ramp chooses Chris, and Matt intervenes. He takes Chris outside and talks with him as the coach requested. When they go back inside, he tells Chris to serve him. He goes back to his room after eating, and he doesn't feel well. Mandy calls him, upset because she heard about his going off with another girl at the party. He hangs up on her. He goes back to join the team as they watch videos of the previous seasons. After viewing all the mistakes of the past, they burn the tapes and start chanting "Raiders Rule." Matt leaves them to go back to the barracks. He doesn't really care about the games not related to football. He wants to focused on practice. He thinks about a time when his father took him to see a sports psychologist. The man was actually helping him until the psychologist talked to his father. His father decided the psychologist was a quack.



In Chapter 9, the third and fourth days at camp are busy, hard, and fun. The players work well together and their bodies are getting more fit. On the fourth day, Lance and Chris go up against each other one - on - one. Ramp takes the other boy down, but the boy whispers something the other students can't hear, and it wipes the smirk off of Chris's face. Matt ignores them and focuses on his football. Matt is asked if he wants to be a cornerback. He wonders what his father would think about that, and knows that if his father is against the idea, he knows he will do it in a heartbeat. He wonders if his father is going to do the barbecue.

The coach tells him that he should put on another 20 pounds. The two of them know that they are talking about steroids but don't talk about it directly. Matt makes a mental note to ask Monty about upping his dosage. At the end of the fourth day, Matt realizes his father isn't going to show up for the barbecue. He is both relieved and disappointed. He doesn't want his dad to come, but he also feels as if his father let him down by not following through on his promise. He finds out later that his father didn't come because case his the team lost the quarterfinal.

Matt steps in on the Raider Games because he feels as if he should as the team captain. He remembers a time when he used to enjoy the games. This is the night the captains are in charge.

Chapter 10 - Ramp sets up a ceremony to initiate the new members into the Raider brotherhood. Chris looks confused but joins the freshman after hesitantly seeking visual confirmation from Matt. Matt and the others remembers the pranks played on them. Ramp locks the doors and says it's tea bag time. He, Boda, and Hagen drop their pants and underwear as they cup their genitals. They blindfold the recruits, tie their hands behind their backs, and tell them to lie on their backs and open their mouths. Matt remembers his disgust when he was a freshman and had this done to him. He knows it's all right though because later he discovered that he had been slapped in the face with a hotdog and a leather sack of little rubber balls. It ended out being a bonding experience with his teammates.

When Ramp comes to Chris, he doesn't use the hotdog. He urinates into the other boy's mouth. Chris kicks him, and Ramp jumps on him. Chris fights him off, still blindfolded and with his hands behind his back. While he is on his knees. Ramp yanks down Chris' pants and rapes him with a bat. Matt feels paralyzed. Tyrell pushes through the linemen close to Chris and Ramp while Chris sits on his knees, bleeding and trying to remove the bat with his tied hands. Tyrell removes the bat and turns on Ramp, telling him he crossed the line. Chris runs off toward the woods. They look for him for a few yours, but can't find him. They decide to tell the coaches what happened the next morning if Chris hasn't shown up by then.

Chapter 11 - Matt doesn't think he will be able to sleep that night, even with medication. The next day Chris is by the bus, but he doesn't talk to anyone or make eye contact with them. Matt thinks about talking to him, but decides against it. He thinks the other boy probably wants to be left alone. The ride home is unusually quiet, and Pete asks Matt what they are going to do. He doesn't know how to answer and just says, "We'll see."



At home, Matt is happy to discover that the house is empty. He goes for a run, waving his phone at home. When he gets back to the house, he notices messages on his cell phone from his father. He deletes them without listening to them.

Chapter 12 - The Welcome Home rally seems to be quieter than the ones in the past. Chris isn't there, but Mandy is. As Matt walks off the field, people keep stopping him to talk to him. Someone asks if he heard about one of the football players getting caught with a stash of marijuana. His father is there, and he isn't happy that Matt didn't get back to him by returning the phone calls. Sarah comes up to them and introduces herself to his father. Back in the gym, the team members are working out and discussing the marijuana report. They wonder if it's Tyrell.

Chapters 7-12 Analysis

In Chapter 7, Matt is excited to be back at camp, but it's obvious that he is there for the football and not for the social aspect of camp. He remembers being as excited to join his teammates in camp as a freshman, but now he is happy that he has his own single room. He doesn't even join the other seniors or a card game in the evening. It's all about the football for him. At practice, Chris shows that he's going to be one of the best, and this makes Ramp very upset. He and his friends constantly put the new kid down, and Matt pretends that he doesn't see anything amiss. Chris stands up to the bullies on his own, just like he did as he boarded the bus.

In Chapter 8, everyone is sore on the second day, but that doesn't stop the bullies from hitting Chris hard whenever they can. He continues to fight back to a point where the coach talks to Matt, asking him to tell Chris to ease up a bit. It's interesting to note that the coach doesn't want to be the bad guy, but instead, he puts Matt in charge of the situation. Matt is reluctant to talk to Chris, but when he finds a good opportunity, he does it. He saves Chris from Ramp's bullying after he talks with Chris, and that creates a bond between the two.

Later, the team is bonding as they discuss mistakes of the past and look forward to the future. Matt finds himself emotionally detached from it all. He has had some psychological problems before. In fact, his father had taken him to one of the best sports psychologists around. However, when the psychologist pointed out that he was under too much pressure, his father decided to call the shrink a quack and never had Matt go back to him again.

In Chapter 9, Chris continues to hold his own throughout the week, and Matt is enjoying camp. The coach discusses plans for the future and positions he might want to play in college. At the end of the chapter, Matt has a feeling that something bad is going to happen.

In Chapter 10, Matt is feeling very conflicted as they gather together to initiate the freshman and new people. In this occasion he is a silent observer, but he feels Chris's attention. There is nonverbal communication between him and the new student. Matt



knows that the initiation process isn't fun, but it does create a bond. He feels that things will be all right since he is in the room. However, things get very out of hand. Instead of rushing in to protect Chris, he freezes. Ramp implies that part of the situation is his fault, saying that he gave the okay. Matt knows he didn't approve of any of this. He just thought it was going to be the regular fun. Matt and his friends go out after the injured boy, and they can't find him. Instead of continuing to search or even notify the adults, they decide it's better for them to go back and get some sleep. Matt persuades himself that if he had run off, he wouldn't have wanted anyone to find him.

In Chapter 11, Matt tries to persuade himself that the situation isn't as bad as it seemed, but he isn't totally able to persuade himself. The ride to camp was noisy, and the kids were excited. The ride home is very different. Even though the others were blindfolded and didn't see what happened, everyone knows something is wrong. Nobody talks about it. Back at home, Matt embraces solitude. He leaves his cell phone at home by accident when he goes off for a run, and he is happy when he realizes that he doesn't have it with him. When he gets home, his closest friends have called him, his father has called him, a girl has left her number, and there were three click - offs from private numbers. His friends don't expect to hear back from him, and they were just checking in. He shows his lack of respect for his father by deleting the messages without listening to them. He considers that the girl who left her number might have been Sarah, and he speculates on the private numbers. He doesn't want to think about it, and the reader knows that most likely the calls are from Chris. Matt doesn't know how to deal with the situation so he avoids it. He tries to pretend everything is fine just as he did on the bus and when Chris was bullied at Camp.

In Chapter 12, things are different at school. The rally seems quieter than usual to Matt, although he's aware it might just be his perception of it. The reporter who tried to talk with him at the baseball game appears once again asking questions. At first, Matt thinks he is talking about what happened at camp and wonders how he knows about it, but he realizes that he's talking about something else. Sarah comes over and talks to different members of Matt's family, finding instant bonds with them, and Matt discovers that someone on the team is accused of stashing drugs. He heads to the gym for a workout session, finding solace in building his muscles.



Summary and Analysis For Chapters 13-18

Summary and Analysis For Chapters 13-18 Summary

In Chapter 13, Chris is looking pale and thin when he shows up for practice. He says he had a stomach bug. Matt tries to make eye contact to make sure the boy is all right, but he can't get Chris to look at him. Ramp continues verbally harassing Chris. Pete tells him to lay off, and Matt tells Pete he was right on. When Pete asks Matt why he didn't back him, Matt says they need to be a team. Pete walks off.

School starts again, and it's going decently. The family is talking together, and Junie mentions that Sarah likes Matt. His mother is concerned about whether or not he has officially broken up with Mandy. She reminds him that it's important to treat people right.

In Chapter 14, Matt is at a barbecue thrown by Brody's parents. All the big wigs are there. Sarah is helping out, and she works well with Junie. Ramp is at the party and asks if the others think Pete is gay.

Matt hears his father talking with other adults about colleges and scholarships. He just wants to get far away. Freddy comes over to talk with him about Chris. He was part of Chris' tryouts in June. Ramp had told Freddy that Chris is gay. He wonders why the boy is missing practices, and Matt says Chris had a stomach virus.

Chapter 15 - It's the first big game of the year. He feels a disconnect between himself and the other players. The coach yells at them in the locker room. Chris is there in the locker room, but he doesn't sit near anyone. Matt feels as if the boy is trying to catch his eye, but he ignores him. The second half isn't going well either. Matt goes all-out and puts the game back on track. After the game, Matt's dad asks what happened, even though they won. He tells his son to stop being such a pussy. Brody asks Matt if he is going to Terri's party that night, and he says he will. Brody warns him that Mandy is going to be there.

Chapter 16 - Matt invites Sarah to the party and goes to pick her up. She lives in an ugly condo near the highway. At the party, Mandy is furious that he brought Sarah. She attacks Sarah, and Matt instinctively blocks the attack. Mandy ends up hitting him, hurting herself. He tries to help her as she falls, and she claws his cheek. Ramp laughs at the situation.

Chapter 17 - Sarah and Matt drive around for a while. Sarah wants to clean his cut so they head back to her condo. Her mother is out of town working. After she cleans the cuts, they start making out. She sees the bruise he received during the football game and gives him some special salve for it.



Sarah says she wants to be there for him then admits that they all have problems. She says that she lied and in reality, her father left her and she lives in poverty with her mother who works for Wal - Mart. Her father isn't the only problem. Sarah realizes that her father is a piece of work as well. She says how much she admires the way he takes care of his brother.

After they talk a bit about Junie, Sarah comments that he must be strong to deal with all that he does without becoming a druggie. He tells her about the steroids, surprised at himself for talking about it. They talk about their dreams and start making out. He can't get hard, though. This has never happened to him before. He apologizes to Sarah, and she is understanding, but he can't believe it. He feels ashamed and decides that he needs to leave immediately.

As he drives home, Matt has a hard time focusing. A cop pulls him over for weaving. The policeman recognizes him from the game and lets him go.

Chapter 18 - Strange emails are popping up in Matt's inbox. He didn't want to deal with them today. He cuddles with Romo then goes downstairs to watch football then baseball. He remembers when he had to make a choice between the two sports since training for each was so different. His father pushed the football until he caved, but he misses the baseball.

Matt hears his mom and Junie come home so he locks himself in his room and begins to deal with the emails. After reading some of them and discovering they are filled with negative comments, he deletes them all without reading them. He takes another pill to help him through the day.

His father wants to talk with him and asks what is going on. He wonders what his dad knows. They talk about football. Dad says it's too bad Chris didn't work out and asks why he didn't start. Matt says the new boy was sick. Dad smirks and suggests that maybe he is just scared.

Summary and Analysis For Chapters 13-18 Analysis

Chapter 13 - Chris is back, but Matt doesn't trust that he is all right. He tries to catch the boy's eye, but Chris won't look at anyone. Still, Matt doesn't make any effort to reach out to the boy. He doesn't even stand up for him when Ramp begins bullying Chris once again. Later, when the family is discussing Matt and his relationships, Matt's mom points out that it's a big deal to treat people right. She is talking about his romantic relationships, but the reader knows that it's also about the relationship among the football players.

In Chapter 14, Matt might be going through common events and occasions in his life, but ever since camp, things are different. He finds himself drawn to Sarah even though he knows Mandy is the best looking girl in school. Ramp continues to cause trouble, trying to plant gossip and rumors. Matt isn't going to fall for it. They talk about the upcoming game, and the reader is reminded that the team is looking really strong this



year. Matt is reminded of Chris's talent when he talks to Freddy, but he knows that things are different now.

In Chapter 15, the first game of the season starts out poorly, which isn't surprising since the team is not as cohesive as it once was. The coach yells at them in the locker room, but nobody wants to address the real issues of why they are doing so poorly. Matt is all about football, and he puts his entire body and soul into the game, making some amazing moves that cause him physical damage, but also help the team win the game. His father still isn't satisfied with his performance and criticizes him. Matt had a battle on the field, he is still having battles at home, and he is about to face another battle at night since Mandy is going to attend the party he's going to.

In Chapter 16, even though he knows that Mandy is going to be at the party, Matt still invites Sarah. The girls get into a fight, and Matt inadvertently hurts Mandy while trying to protect Sara. Ramp, always a troublemaker, laughs at the situation.

In Chapter 17, up until this point in the story, Sarah has come across as a kind nurturer. Now she shows that her life isn't that easy, either. Mandy is all about appearances, but Sarah really cares about Matt at an emotional level as well. He tells her things that he has never told others, and she makes him feel comfortable. When he can't get hard, she doesn't ridicule him. It bothers him more than it bothers her. He is feeling ashamed and out of control and almost wishes that the policeman would actually give him a ticket, but instead, he is let go. He remembers a time when his father was showing him off to his friends as if he were a trophy. Even though he was only a little kid, his father gave him a cigar, which made him sick. When the boy was sick, they laughed at him. In contrast to Sarah and her nurturing spirit, his father only used him.

In Chapter 18, there are so many negative elements piling up against Matt in his life that he doesn't want to be with anyone. He contrasts football and baseball, knowing that he prefers baseball. He feels that it is a much cleaner sport. It is what he wanted to become part of, but he allowed his father to railroad him into a football career. This disgusts him.

Matt doesn't like dealing with e-mail, preferring to talk to people in person or on the telephone. His inbox is full of messages, and they are all hateful. He doesn't know whether the e-mails are referring to his relationship and the way he is treating Mandy, or if they refer to this situation with Chris. Instead of facing the e-mails head on, he just deletes the majority of them, unread. His dad comes home and wants to talk with him. He has a feeling that his dad knows more than he's letting on, but he doesn't know what his father knows. They talk about football, and his father brings up Chris's name. Instead of telling his father what really happened, he says that Chris was sick. His father smirks and makes Chris out as a weak character. Matt still doesn't stand up and tell his dad what really happened, showing that hem himself, is the weak character.



Summary and Analysis For Chapters 19-24

Summary and Analysis For Chapters 19-24 Summary

In Chapter 19, Matt notices that school seems different. He is used to being the humble hero in the school—ever popular and helping those who were more prone to be bullied. Now, he feels much smaller, as if he is the prey. Sarah calls out to him in the cafeteria, but he ignores her. Pete mentions that Chris is going to miss practice because he has to go to a doctor in the city. Practice goes poorly, and coach Mac ends it early, signaling for Matt to come to his office. The reporter is outside the office, and Coach Mac tells him that he is too busy to answer questions.

When they are in the office, Coach says they have a problem. He says that Chris is missing too many practices. He wants Matt to talk with Chris so he can encourage the other boy to participate with the rest of the team. He tells him that tomorrow Mr. Koslo is going to send a car to take Chris and Matt to Yankee Stadium to watch a game. This will give them a chance to bond in a situation where Chris feels more comfortable. The coach also mentions that the Penn State scout was impressed with how Matt played in the game. Matt mentions that he thought the scout didn't show.

As Matt leaves the office, he thinks that the coach knows something but doesn't want them to know how much. The reporter is still there as he leaves the office and hands Matt his business card saying that he would like to interview him about possible dissension on the team. He asks if something happened at camp and offers to do the interview by e-mail. Matt throws out the card. He knows information has gotten out about camp, but he wonders what people really know.

Sarah is next to his car in the parking lot. She hands him some cream for his bruise. She also invites him to her next concert, but he says he isn't sure he can go. When she says that she e-mailed him, he tells her that he deleted his e-mails without reading them. She says that she has been getting the nasty e-mails as well. She thinks that the campaign of e-mails is from Amanda. She also mentions that she has to get some touchup for her car. When Matt looks at her car, he notices that someone has gouged his playing number on her vehicle.

In Chapter 20, Matt and Chris climb into the black limousine that is sent for them. Matt doesn't know what he's going to say to Chris, but Chris seems friendly and a little bit cocky. He is more like his old self. They talk about baseball, and Chris mentions that his father took him to Shea stadium all the time. Chris asks about the man who sent the limo. Matt feels like Chris wants to talk, and he finds himself telling Chris that he has got to get past the past.



Chris says that his mom doesn't like the area and says that they might move since she's been having a hard time since his father died in Iraq. Matt tells him that the coach is designing a new offense around Chris, and Chris mentions that he doesn't know if he can play yet since he is still weak. He says the doctor gave him some pills to help him relax, and he asks if Matt has ever done that. Matt asks Chris if he has ever taken steroids, and Chris responds that he was looking into it this year. Matt agrees to talk with him more about it and tries to sell Chris on becoming a more integral part of the team.

They enter the stadium, and Matt remembers his former passion for baseball. Coach Dorman warns them not to get any ideas about baseball because now they're football players. He tells the boys that Mr. Koslo wants to say hello to them because he is leaving before the game starts.

In Chapter 21, the boys are brought up to the skybox, which was bigger than Sarah's living room. A business party is going on, and Chris grabs some wine off a tray then pours it into a water glass. Matt pops a Vicodin. Coach Dorman pulls Matt aside and asks how Chris is doing. He says the boy has a lot of issues, and his mother has been having a hard time since his father went away. Matt is confused since he thought the father was dead. He remembers that Ramp mentioned that Chris' father is in prison. Dorman says that the mother is messed up and she is trying to convince Chris that something happened to him when he was at camp. Dorman emphasizes that they have to make Chris feel as if he's part of the team.

They all go back downstairs to watch the game. As they leave the stadium, Matt tells Chris to make the right choice and become part of the team. Chris asks Matt if he trusts Koslo. Matt asks what Koslo offered, and Chris says he can't tell him. He leaves the limo without saying good night.

In Chapter 22, Matt doesn't really notice the pink star on the outside of his locker, but he does see the pornographic pictures of men inside his locker. He's angry, but he controls himself. Chris isn't there for practice that day, but Matt has a great practice anyway. After practice he congratulates Tyrell, but Tyrell just walks away.

At dinner, Dad talks about Koslo and Chris, and Matt wonders how he always knows so much about what's going on behind the scenes. His father tells him that Koslo said he would help Chris with college if he stayed on the team. Matt doesn't talk about it. His father asks him if there's any truth to what the mother is saying - that something happened at camp. Matt won't give him a straight answer. He escapes the table to go to his room where he checks his e-mail and finds another nasty e-mail. This one is a pornographic gay picture with his face and Chris's face edited on. The next day, in school, he wonders if anyone else got the pictures or had seen his locker.

Tyrell tries to talk with him, but he ignores his friend. He wants to keep his mind clear. After practice Matt goes to the gym to work out, and he finds Tyrell in the parking lot when he leaves. Tyrell asks him if he is the one who started the rumor that he sold weed. He says the cops pulled him out of class to question him.



In Chapter 23, Matt visualizes himself shutting down. This is a trick he does for games, but now he does it to get through the day. All he wants to focus on is football. Chris shows up for the game and sits on the bench even though he didn't go to practice. Nobody talks to him. Matt plays an excellent game and knows he should feel excited, but he doesn't feel anything after it's over. The reporter comes to question him after the game and asks him if what happened at camp is still on everyone's mind. The manager comes over and kicks the reporter out. The reporter reminds Matt that they could do the interview by e-mail. He gives Matt his business card, and this time Matt keeps it.

At dinner, Dad asks what's up with Tyrell. He says it won't be good for the team if Tyrell is busted for bringing dope from the city. He starts talking about Chris, and Matt blurts out that the boy got hurt. A coach from Rutgers is going to come to talk with Matt, and Dad tells Junie to go downstairs. Matt says he's not ashamed of his brother, but his father says that it's better for him, and he will understand someday. The interview with the coach goes well.

In Chapter 24, generally the week before homecoming is crazy, but this year it's a bit slower. Tyrell is unusually quiet, Pete is jittery, and Brody, who is usually calm, seems extra alert. They aren't talking to Matt much, and he feels alone. When he goes to leave, he finds his brother waiting by the car. Junie has a recorder with him. Sarah's friend Daniel is teaching him to play the instrument. Matt drops this brother off at the house then heads over to the gym. Monty says the cops have been around asking questions. They are asking about Tyrell, and they also asked about Chris. Monty asks Matt if there is anything he needs to know about Chris.

That night, after dinner, Dad tells Matt that he has to talk with him. Matt braces himself for a lecture or ultimatum, but instead, his father says that he has been on his case too much recently. They talk about football for a bit then Dad asks him what happened on Raider Pride Night. Matt says it was a Raider thing, and his father says that it should stay in the locker room for the benefit of the team. Later, when he checks his e-mail, Matt has two messages that stand out. One is from Mandy, wanting to get back together. The other is from Chris. He wants to talk with Matt. Matt shuts down the machine.

Summary and Analysis For Chapters 19-24 Analysis

In Chapter 19, Matt is used to being one of the elite in his school, but now instead of feeling on top of his game, he feels very small. Chris isn't showing up for practices, and the team needs Chris. The coach selects Matt to be the mediator.

When Matt first met Sarah, he was warned that she might have an agenda. Now, when he is confused and feeling like less of a person, she won't let him go. He tries to ignore her, but she puts herself in a position where he can't ignore her. Someone has vandalized her car by scratching his uniform number onto it, but instead of trying to fix it, she asks permission to keep it. This shows that she isn't ashamed to be connected with him. She's also not going to bow to adversity.



In Chapter 20, in the limousine, Matt finds himself torn between what's best for another human being and what's best for the team as a whole. He feels insecure and doesn't know what to say to Chris. This gets him analyzing his own life, and he thinks about choices he has made. This is particularly pertinent because he is attending a baseball game, and he has a deep love for baseball although he gave it up when he chose football under his father's pressuring.

He and Chris get along fine in spite of his worries. He knows he has to talk with Chris about what's going on, and he has a feeling that Chris wants to talk to him as well. However, neither approach the real issue directly. Instead, Matt finds himself advising Chris to forget the past and move on.

In Chapter 21, even though Chris and Matt are given the royal treatment, Matt finds himself unable to completely enjoy it. He doesn't know who he can trust as he filters through differing stories presented to him by different people. Chris says his father is dead, and the coach says the father went away. Ramp had mentioned that Chris's father is in prison. Mr. Koslo talks about football pranks, and Matt knows that the pranks got out of hand this time. On the way home, Matt talks about paying the price and doing whatever it takes to make a good team. He says this without enthusiasm as if he is starting to wonder if what he's saying really holds true.

In Chapter 22, Matt has already had to deal with some nasty e-mails, and now he goes to school to find nasty images in his locker. He feels as if he has losing his position in school, and his friends are drifting further away from him. He goes to the gym to work out, and when he comes out, one of his closest friends accuses him of betraying him. He professes his innocence. Tyrell symbolizes everything that is happening to them. They are all out of control.

In Chapter 23, a solid athlete, Chris knows how to focus on a game. Now he has to use all his strategy of focus just to get through a day. He hones in on his football, not caring about anything else. The reporter keeps showing up, and it's starting to wear on Matt. This time, when he gets the boy's business card, he keeps it.

Matt's dad pushes his son to do all he can to impress the college recruiters. Dad doesn't care who gets hurt in the process. This is shown when he hides Junie as the recruiter comes to talk with Matt. He says it's for Matt's own good and that someday he will understand.

In Chapter 24, everything still seems different at school, and the week before homecoming is more subdued than usual. Matt has to deal with some emotional relational conflict as Mandy tries to get back together with him. He sees how Sarah is making an impact on his life as well. Junie goes around delightedly playing the recorder Sarah's friend set him up with. The situation with the females isn't the only emotional battle he has to face. When he converses with his father, Matt gains further understanding of the fact that his father knows a lot more than he's letting on. To make things even more chaotic, Matt finds an email from Chris telling him that he wants to

talk. Just as he has done in the past when he doesn't know what to do, Matt ignores the boy who is reaching out for help.



Summary and Analysis For Chapters 25-30

Summary and Analysis For Chapters 25-30 Summary

In Chapter 25, three days before homecoming, Coach Mac pulls Ramp and Matt out of class. He questions them about the rumors going around, and Ramp says that Chris is trouble. Ramp tells the coach that he couldn't handle the tea bagging at camp, and Matt wonders what he should say. The coach says that Chris's mother has hired a lawyer saying that the boy was sexually assaulted. He tells the boys to tell the others to keep quiet about everything.

Mandy comes up to Matt after he leaves the field house and apologizes to him. She had put the pornographic pictures in the locker after Ramp gave them to her. She invites him to homecoming then on a trip to her parents' beach house. He says that he will call her.

In Chapter 26, Sarah calls that night while he's home studying. She invites him to homecoming, and he tells her that he is already going with someone. He is on his computer when he gets an instant message from Chris telling Matt that he needs to talk with him and asking him to call right away. Matt doesn't know what to do. He decides to deal with the situation after homecoming. Right now, he needs to focus on the game. He ignores Chris.

In Chapter 27, the co-captains give the team a pep talk in the locker room, and Matt notices that Chris isn't there. Ramp talks about the troubles the team is facing with all the gossip going around. He encourages them all to focus on being a team. Chris walks in saying he has a question. He has a gun and says he is going to kill Ramp. Ramp challenges him. Matt tries to talk with Chris, encouraging him to put the gun down. Chris doesn't allow himself to get distracted. Ramp continues antagonizing the boy with the gun. Chris cocks the hammer and puts the barrel of the gun in his own mouth. Matt yells out for him to stop then launches himself at Chris, knocking the barrel out of his mouth. The gun goes off, and Chris sprawls on the floor with blood everywhere.

In Chapter 28, the cops come in and talk to Ramp and Matt before their fathers get there. When Matt's dad gets there, he points out that the boys are heroes. They discuss how they are going to deal with the media, and Matt's father asks about homecoming. The principal seems annoyed and answers that there will be school, but the dance will most likely be canceled. His father says that he is referring to the game, which is a community event.

As they head outside, Matt notices the reporter who is always hounding him for an interview. The boy is talking with the other news reporters. He says he isn't going to talk to any of the reporters.



In Chapter 29, when he gets home, there are reporters outside the house. Matt goes in without talking to them. His mom begins to cry and comments on the blood. He says the blood got on him when he turned Chris over to see if he was breathing. Chris is alive, but the doctors don't know how much brain damage he suffered.

Matt's father wants to come up with a plan to deal with the media. Matt walks away, feeling nauseous. He knows he needs to focus, but he doesn't know what he should focus on. He wants to go work out, but he doesn't want to talk to anyone at the gym. He decides to go for a run instead. After he has run for an hour, some kids his age approach him. He realizes that he is wearing a Raiders T-shirt and that he is running at Chris's old school. The kids recognize him from TV.

Matt asks the kids why Chris left their school. That they said he left because some kids were giving him a hard time after his father went to jail for stealing from his company. Matt finds out that his team is going to play at the homecoming game, but the game is going to be at a neutral site.

Everything is going to go on as normal, but he realizes that he let Chris down. As Matt is driving home, a truck comes right at him, and he considers driving right into the truck. He swerves at the last second after the truck blasts its horn.

In Chapter 30, the kids at school treat Matt like a hero, and he knows that it's all wrong. Counselors are on hand to talk with the students. One student asks if their tests would have picked up Chris's homicidal tendencies. Matt knows that Chris didn't deal with homicidal tendencies. He thinks it's more like a delayed self-defense. The coach asks if Matt is okay, and he says his brain is just wandering. They aren't allowed in the locker room because it's a crime scene. Matt notices that his father has his catering van parked outside.

Coach Mac gives the team a pep talk, encouraging them to focus. Tyrell talks with Matt, and they wonder what they should do. Matt gets a phone call. It's Sarah telling him to hurry to the cafeteria because something is wrong with Junie. His brother is on the floor, having a fit. Their dad is nearby, looking confused. Matt goes over to his brother and comforts him until the fit is over. Dad asks Matt to take Junie home. Sarah tells Matt what happened. Their father had come out of his meeting, arguing with the principal. Junie was playing his recorder, and his father screamed at him. This upset Junie so much that he twisted the recorder too hard and fell into his fit. Matt asks Sarah if they can meet up later that evening.

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Summary and Analysis For Chapters 25-30 Analysis

In Chapter 25, the situation with Chris is getting more intense. The coach brings the co-captains in to talk, and Ramp makes up a story about what is going on, making Chris look like a weakling. Matt doesn't stand up for the new boy. The coach tells them that



there is going to be an investigation, and he encourages the co-captains to keep the team together and quiet. After they talk with the coach, Matt tells Ramp off.

In Chapter 26, Matt continues to show his interest in baseball as he does his homework in his room and keeps an eye on Yankee game. Mandy has asked him to homecoming, and now he gets a phone call from Sarah. She is inviting him to homecoming as well. He tells her he's going with someone, and she says it's no problem and hangs up. He doesn't like that. Chris contacts him again, asking him to call, and he knows that the boy is feeling pressure. He is feeling pressure as well so he deletes the message, abandoning Chris once again.

In Chapter 27, even though Matt and Ramp are at odds, they have to stand together as a unified front in front of the team. They're talking about team unity when Chris comes in. He has cracked under all the stress, and he aims a gun at Ramp. Matt tries to talk to him, but Chris won't listen to him. This is ironic since Chris has been trying to get Matt to talk with him for a while, and now that Matt is finally talking, Chris won't listen.

Ramp doesn't cower and he continues bullying Chris verbally even though the gun is pointing at him. Chris can't go through with the deed and turns the gun on himself. Matt, who has frozen in all the previous horrible situations, suddenly springs into action and uses his football skills to tackle Chris as the weapon fires. It saves the boy's life.

In Chapter 28, the policemen are talking with the co-captains when their fathers show up. Matt's father immediately spins the story so that the kids are perceived as heroes. The police and the principal are trying to focus on the investigation, but all Matt's father cares about is whether or not they are going to have the homecoming football game. Ramp agrees with the father, and the reader sees how similar the two bullies are.

In Chapter 29, once again, Matt shows how different he is from his father. He does everything he can to get away from the media while his father embraces it. He wants to go work out at the gym, but his place of comfort has become a place he wants to avoid. He goes to a place where he knows he can exercise, and he realizes that he is in Chris's old territory. After he talks with some other kids, he learns more about Chris. For the first time, he blames himself for the situation Chris is in. The other boy's life is destroyed because he sat around thinking about himself.

In Chapter 30, everyone treats Chris like a hero and he feels extremely fake. He's coming to terms with what's really important in life. As he's thinking about all of this, he gets a phone call telling him that his brother is in trouble. His father is right there next to his brother. Matt discovers that not only did his father not know how to help his Junie, but he is the one who caused his brother's fit. Sarah is there to help Junie, and Matt decides to hook up with her later. He's getting his life and priorities in order.



Summary and Analysis For Chapters 31-35

Summary and Analysis For Chapters 31-35 Summary

In Chapter 31, Matt is early for his meeting with Sarah, but she is already there. She praises him for how he dealt with Junie, and he tells her that he learned to focus in football. They talk a bit about their fathers and about Junie. They also talk about that time they were together, and he couldn't get hard. Sarah tells him that she really cares about him. Matt points out that what she really cared about was beating Mandy. She admits that that is how it all started, but it changed.

In Chapter 32, Matt and Sarah go to visit Chris in the hospital. Chris's mother thanks Matt for saving her son's life. She said that nobody has come to visit except for the police. He goes in to talk with Chris. The boy is hooked up to tubes and is not responsive. He tells Chris that he will be there for him.

After they go out of the hospital parking lot, Sarah questions why no one else came to visit him. Matt tells her that they want Chris to die. He tells her that they hurt him. She knows about the rumors, and Matt says that he let it happen.

Sarah suggests that he tell the truth to the coaches. Matt decides to talk to the guidance counselor. Sarah won't go home. She says she will follow him to the school and wait in her car.

In Chapter 33, Matt goes into the field house to talk with Dorman. He tells the man that he went to the hospital and discovered that Chris was under arrest. Dorman tells him it's for attempted murder. Matt points out that the boy had his reasons for his actions. When he tells Dorman that the boy had been raped, the man tells him it's a serious charge and asks who else knows about it. He asks if Matt talked to anybody outside the team, and Matt says no. He knows he is lying, but he doesn't want Sarah involved. Dorman tells him that they have to come up with a plan for dealing with this and thanks him for coming to him.

When Matt joins Sarah out in the parking lot, he tells her that they are going to have a meeting with the coach at school the next day. Sarah asks if Dorman seemed surprised, and Matt says "not really." They both realize that the man had known about it. They also realize that his father most likely knew about it. Sarah asks Matt if he wants to talk to somebody about it. She suggests the reporter. They kiss, and he decides to go home after working out and do something about it.

In Chapter 34, heading to the gym, Matt works out hard. Monty warns him not to destroy himself. He also tells Matt that he is going to keep the steroids away until everything blows over. Matt discovers that he doesn't really care. He asks about side effects out of



interest, and Monty says he will give him something to help if the symptoms get bad. Before he leaves, Monty tells him that he's a good kid, and he knows Matt will do the right thing.

Matt relaxes in the steam room. He wants to clear his mind without using drugs. He knows that the entire football season is at risk, and that would mean that colleges wouldn't look at the players.

When Matt gets out of the steam room, Ramp is there with Boda and Hagen. Ramp wants to know why he went to the hospital then talked with Dorman. He says they need to stick together. Matt tells him that what he did was wrong. He also confronts Ramp on all the nasty emails and rumors. Ramp says he does all the nasty stuff because he plays hard. He says the Raiders are going to go for Conference then State with or without Matt.

Tyrell steps up behind Boda and Hagen. Brody and Pete join him. Heller, Conklin and Patel also join them. They support Matt, telling Ramp that the Back Pack sticks together and aren't going down with Ramp. Matt says he has a meeting in the morning with the coaches, and Ramp says they were the ones who told him what Matt was up to. They want to "keep it in the family." The Back Pack discusses what they should do. They know they have to get the story out.

In Chapter 35, Dad is there at the door when Matt gets home. He says they need to talk. When they are alone he asks if the story is true. He tells his son to get tough and be a Raider. Dad tells him to think about the team, the family, the town, college, and businesses. He says that Chris is going to be fine and they have to leave the past in the past.

His dad blocks him as he tries to leave and Matt gets his dad down to the floor. Matt goes to his brother's room and tells him that he's going to help him get in shape. After that, he goes to his room, picks up the business card the reporter gave him, and turns on his computer. As he connects to the Internet, he calls Sarah.

Summary and Analysis For Chapters 31-35 Analysis

In Chapter 31, Matt begins to make some serious changes in this chapter. In the last chapter, he faces the fact that he is part of the problem in Chris' situation. Now, he makes some decisive moves. He meets together with Sarah and shares the story.

In Chapter 32, at the hospital, Matt is really reminded of the damage caused. He knows now that he has to tell an adult what really happened. Even though Sarah wants to join him, he knows he needs to face it on his own. Still, he's happy for her support as she waits in her car.

In Chapter 33, Dorman seems supportive as Matt tells tells the story. Matt notices that the man still seems to admire Ramp, though. By the time Matt leaves the office, he thinks that things are going to be addressed at the meeting the next day. He displays



naivety as he relates what has happened to Sarah, believing that things are going to get better. She is the one who points out the fact that Dorman hadn't even been surprised. He realizes that his father and Dorman knew all along, and he feels betrayed. Still, he continues to think that things will be fixed at the meeting.

In Chapter 34, once again, Matt heads to the gym for comfort. He wants to sort things out mentally, and for the first time in a long time, he wants to confront his situation head-on, without ignoring it and without taking drugs. He isn't upset when Monty says they are going to stop the steroids. This shows that he is no longer willing to put up with anything to help the team.

When Ramp confronts Matt, he doesn't back down. He thinks he is on his own and outnumbered, but he still stands up for what is right. His friends are there to back him. They decide to get the truth out, no matter what the consequences are. They will face the fallout together.

Chapter 35 - Matt gets home very late, and his mother is concerned about his safety, but all his father cares about is the story. Dad tells Matt to leave the past in the past, just as Matt once suggested to Chris. Now Matt knows that is a bad idea. He stands up to his father, but he doesn't bully him. Even when he physically has to put his father down, he holds off from punching his father. As the story ends, Matt is taking steps to get the story out, and he's doing it with Sarah's support.



Characters

Matt

Matt is in his senior year of high school. He's popular, good-looking, and a co-captain on the football team. Although he's a great football player, he has a passion for baseball as well. The only reason he didn't pursue this passion is because his father encouraged him to go after football. The training is entirely different for the two sports so he had to select one. Matt does not get along with his father at all. He can't stand the man and wants to get away from him, but he doesn't voice his opinions to his father. Instead, he internalizes them. He knows that he is physically strong and can take his father on, but he doesn't do it until the very end of the book.

Matt is completely dedicated to football and his team. He takes steroids to help him build a stronger body. He believes that's part of the price he has to pay to be good for the team. When he is confused or in situations he can't handle, he tends to freeze or walk away. He isn't good with confrontation.

Chris

Chris becomes part of the football team when he is in his sophomore year. He is the new kid at the school, and he has an amazing natural athletic ability. He seems sure of himself and is a bit cocky when confronted at first. He also has a sense of vulnerability. After Ramp attacks him, he runs off to deal with it on his own. He lies, saying that he is dealing with a stomach bug, rather than admitting what really happened to the rest of the team. He seems to look to Matt for guidance and tries to get Matt to talk with him. However, when they are face-to-face, he doesn't talk about real issues. He fabricates a story in which his father dies when in reality his father is in prison. When he is driven over the edge by Ramp's bullying, he goes after Ramp with a gun, but can't harm the other player. Instead, he ends up turning the gun on himself.

Brody

This character is one of Matt's close friends. He is always carrying a football and is part of the group called the Back Pack.

Monty

This character owns the gym and gives the team members steroids.



Tyrell

This character is another member of the Back Pack. He is quick to jump in and help Chris after he is attacked.

Pete

This character is also a member of the Back Pack. He is the most self-conscious of the group.

Ramp

This character is the other co-captain of the football team. He is arrogant and has a mean streak. He is jealous of Chris, and his bullying gets out-of-hand.

Junie

This character is Matt's older brother. He is mentally retarded.

Mom

This character is the family nurturer. She is quiet and doesn't stand up to her husband.

Dad

This character is the family bully. He is obsessed with Matt's football career even though he, himself, is a baseball player. He will do anything to help the team succeed.

Mandy

This character is Matt's former girlfriend. She loves being the center of attention.

Sarah

This character is a singer who wants a relationship with Matt. She is always there to support him.

Mrs. Heinz

This character is Brody's mom. Matt is physically attracted to her.



Romo

This character is the dog that is always with Matt's brother.

CoachMac

This character is in charge of the team, but he asks Matt to talk with Chris when things get tense.

Mr. Koslo

This character is the wealthy man who gives the team busses and sends a limo to take Chris and Matt to a baseball game.

Dorman

This character is a young backfield coach who is also a guidance counselor. This is whom Matt goes to with the real story.



Objects/Places

Gym

This is where Matt goes for comfort. He goes here to clear his mind when he is upset.

Rydek Catering

This is the business that Matt's father runs.

Ball Field

This is where Matt goes near the beginning of the story to watch his father play with his team.

Bus

This is what the football players take to camp. They get a nice one on years where they are projected to have a winning season. They get a regular one on years when they are not expected to win.

Camp

This is an old Army base where the football team goes for a week of intense training.

Sarah's House

This is a small and ugly condo near the highway.

Football

This is the sport that Matt plays and excels in. His father hopes it will be his ticket to college.

Baseball

This is the sport that Matt really wants to play. He thinks it's much cleaner than the sport he is currently involved in.



Computer

Matt doesn't like using this tool. It's how Chris tries to communicate with him.

Baseball Stadium

This is where Matt is taken so he can relax with Chris and get him talking. He is supposed to get Chris to rejoin the team after their time in this location.

Limousine

This is what Chris and Matt go in on their afternoon out together.

Nearmont High

This is the school that Matt attends.

Bergen Central

This is the school Chris attended before he went to Matt's school.



Themes

Adults Leading Kids Astray

One of the main themes in this book is betrayal by adults. At first it seems as if Matt is surrounded by adults who care about him and support him. His father pays for his steroids, and Monty measures the mediations carefully. They do this to help him build muscle and bulk so he can become a better football player. This will benefit him personally as college recruiters come around to check him out. The coach is also there to give Matt and his teammates pep talks, pushing them to do their best. It all looks good, but ultimately, Matt discovers that they are all betraying the kids they work with.

Supporting a drug habit is never good for the person who has to take the drugs. Also, Matt discovers that the coach and his father are only looking out for their own interests. This is clear as Matt recollects the way his father showed him off to friends when he was younger. He gives his son a cigar and doesn't care when his friends laugh at his son for getting sick on the cigar. Now, Matt knows that his father and coaches are well aware of the serious crime committed against Chris. Instead of standing up for what's right and helping the boy, they try to ignore what happened. They even threaten Matt, telling him to keep quiet or he will risk his own future.

Sports And Society

Sports play a heavy role in this novel. Matt is a football player, and his father plays baseball. Ironically, baseball is the sports that seems to draw Matt's interest, but his father pushes the football. Since football is the sport that Matt has chosen, he puts everything he has into it. He is co-captain of his team, and he works out hard to make his body better for playing. Many of his teammates, and he himself, use steroids to help build up bulk and strength. Sometimes the side effects of taking the steroids aren't so great. The users get pimples on their backs and have to deal with sudden bursts of anger. Still, they do it for the team, and Matt feels as if it actually builds a bond amongst the players.

The bond of brotherhood on the field is important for the players. It's part of the sport. That's why they have the initiation ceremonies during camp. When Ramp injures Chris, no one knows what to do. The bonding ceremony has gotten out of hand. Still, words of the terrible deed begins to slip out. Instead of dealing with the harsh reality of what has really happened, the team members and even the adults try to go on as if nothing happened. They don't want anything to jeopardize the football team in this season where they started out so strong. Matt's dad and other adults push to keep the homecoming game happening even though one of the players has just been shot.



What's Really Good For The Team

Throughout the book, Matt is struggling to find the balance of what's good for humans on an individual basis and what's good for the team as a whole. The messages he gets are very confusing. He knows that it's really important for team members to stick together. He is co-captain with a teammate he doesn't really appreciate, yet he puts aside his feelings for the good of the team. When Ramp goes too far, Tyrell stands up to him, but Matt freezes. Even though everyone keeps quiet about what really happened at first, it still manages to start splitting the team. The Back Pack members become more distant from each other. They don't play as well together.

As Matt gets to know more about Chris, he considers his role in all that happened. He realizes that supporting Ramp's actions, even in silence, does more damage in the long run. He makes the decision to come out with the truth, even if it temporarily hurts the team. To his surprise, he finds that he has the support of other team members in this decision. They bond in an entirely new way as he crates plans to set the story straight, showing that Chris was truly a victim.



Style

Point of View

"Raiders Night" by Robert Lipsyte is a novel for teens that is written in a third-person and subjective point of view. The subjective part is written from the perspective of Matt, a football team captain entering his senior year. This perspective is important in this story because it lets the viewer have a glimpse into Matt's feelings and thought processes while still being objective enough to see the entire picture. The events that occur in the story are brutal, and the objective point-of-view helps the reader understand what's happening while being able to somewhat disassociate from the horror of it all.

The subjective point-of-view shows a typical human reaction to the horrors. The reader knows what ultimately is the right choice to make and yet the initial reactions are real and not ideal. Matt has to go through more experiences and thought processes and find out who he really is deep inside himself before he can do what's right. The reader shares his journey in this third-person objective writing.

Setting

This novel takes place in a town that could really be anywhere so most readers can relate to the setting. Matt's school is large enough to have a football team, and it's close enough to the city for drugs to be a major issue and for Matt to be influenced by baseball. The reader knows he is near New York City since he talks about the Mets and the Yankees. The first major plot point in this novel occurs while the team is away at a camp. It's a remote area where the kids aren't constantly supervised.

It's a middle class area where the parents have to work, but many can afford catering. Sarah is embarrassed by her housing, but she is forced to live in a run - down condo after her father leaves her and her mother. Matt's family has more than one vehicle so he has the freedom to drive around when he pleases.

Language and Meaning

"Raiders Night" by Robert Lipsyte is a smooth read, geared to teenagers in its verbiage. The words are not difficult to understand, but the language is blunt and often crude. The book ends with a section in which the reader is warned that they are holding a banned novel. It's banned from schools in Texas, North Carolina, and Washington, D.C. The reason it is banned is because the author was so graphic in language and references to sex, steroid use, and recreational drugs. The book contains swearing and the author does not hold back when describing the rape scene.

Structure

"Raiders Night" by Robert Lipsyte begins with cover art followed by a title page and dedication. The Contents page shows that the book has 35 chapters. These chapters are labeled only by numbers and range in length. Some chapters are very short. The story is followed by a section of acknowledgements wherein the author explains how he met Mike Miletic, a man who was his coach and partner in creating this novel. He is an athlete and sports psychologist.

The Acknowledgements section is followed by the Warning! Section then an explanation from the author detailing why he wrote this book. This is followed by An Interview With The Author and a sneak preview of his book, "Yellow Flag."



Quotes

Taking the shots proved their commitment to the team and to each other.
Raiders Night, Chapter 1

"You are heading into Raider country now, a band of brothers going to eat, sleep, breathe football for the next five days" (Chapter 6).

"He was inside the zone, that calm, hushed place where time stood still, where everything was clear" (Chapter 8).

"Coaches never looked at you when they were pretending they weren't talking about steroids" (Chapter 9).

"They must suspect something, thought Matt. But they didn't really want to know. Like steroids—don't ask, don't tell" (Chapter 11).

"Your last season here, be proud of your team, make your team proud of you. Be bigger than the game..." (Chapter 12).

"Steroids are healing drugs. I can work out harder and repair muscle faster" (Chapter 17).

"Behind him. The words triggered an image that almost made Matt gag" (Chapter 21).

"He could visualize himself shutting down, an old trick he usually saved for games, but now he used it just to get through another day" (Chapter 23).

"He was a hero, and it felt bitter and wrong" (Chapter 30).

"Get the truth out, we can deal with it" (Chapter 34).

"Dad shouted, "Be a Raider!" "I am a Raider." Matt stood up. "I'm not your Raider" (Chapter 35).



Topics for Discussion

Why does Matt play football and not baseball?

What kind of relationship does Matt have with his father?

Why does Matt and his team think steroids were all right to use?

How does the adults in Matt's life betray him?

How does Matt respond when Chris reached out to him and vice versa?

Compare and contrast Mandy and Sarah. Why is Sarah more helpful to Matt in the long run?

Why do you think the author introduces Junie in the book?