

# **Reckless Study Guide**

**Reckless by Cecily Von Ziegesar**

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# Plot Summary

This novel for young people is the third in the "It Girl" series of novels, inspired by the popular "Gossip Girl" series and featuring one of its important characters, Jenny Humphrey. In this particular novel, Jenny and several of her fellow students at Waverly Academy find themselves caught up in a convoluted web of romance, sex, rivalries, and illicit partying. As events unfold, the narrative explores themes related to the importance of self-respect, the tension between honesty and secrets, and the nature of responsibility.

The narrative begins as Jenny and her artsy boyfriend Easy, her driven friend Brett, her self-centered roommate Callie, her enemy Tinsley, and the rest of the students at the upper class Waverly Academy prepare for Trustee Weekend. Traditionally, Trustee Weekend has provided an opportunity for students to party while faculty and administration are busy courting the wallets and goodwill of donors and parents. At first, this particular Trustee Weekend promises to be no exception, as one of the boys (hard partying Heath) has ordered several kegs of beer for a big party. When the kegs arrive, Tinsley helps Heath and freshman Julian hide them, one on the roof and the rest under the bed of her mysterious, frequently absent dorm neighbor. Unknown to the boys, however, Tinsley has a party for the girls of her dorm, Dumbarton Hall. The party comes to an abrupt end, however, when the girls are caught. In punishment, the Dean confines all the girls in Dumbarton to their dorm for the weekend, and orders them to write an essay about what it means to be a responsible Waverly Owl. This brings everyone's plans for a party during Trustee Weekend to a similarly abrupt end.

The Dean's decision throws several romantic entanglements into disarray. Jenny is disappointed not to be spending time with Easy (which is just fine with Callie, Easy's resentful ex-girlfriend and Jenny's roommate), while Brett is unhappy about having to miss an opportunity to be with her boyfriend from another school, Jeremiah. Tinsley, for her part, is upset that she's going to be unable to follow through on her surging crush on Julian. When the Dumbarton girls gather to decide how they're going to approach the weekend and writing the essay, they agree to make the best of the faculty's absence (for Trustee Weekend activities) and have a party anyway. When the boys get word, they find a way to make their way into the forbidden dorm.

As the party gets underway, Jeremiah surprises Brett by showing up, Easy surprises Callie by making out with her, Julian surprises Tinsley by making it clear he's as into her as she is into him, and everyone is surprised by the unexpected arrival of a mysterious girl and the unexpected depths of Tinsley's neighbor, the bookish Kara. Once it's discovered that the mysterious girl is not in fact a teacher, the party resumes in the Dumbarton Common room, where a game of "I Never" quickly gets out of hand. Several secrets are revealed, several relationships are shaken up, and several parties are forced to face the uncomfortable results of previous bad choices.

In the aftermath of the party, and as various couples struggle to put themselves and their relationships together, four Dumbarton girls (Jenny, Brett, Callie and Kara) make a



pact to help each other gain both self-respect and the respect of others. This, and the story of how they came to the realization of the value of self-respect, makes up the essential content of the essay they present, as a group, to the Dean. The self-absorbed Tinsley, however, is much more focused on her future with Julian, a future which she seems to believe will be a lot of fun.



## Part 1, p. 1 - 26

### Part 1, p. 1 - 26 Summary

"Reckless" is the third novel in the "It Girl" series, inspired by the popular "Gossip Girl" series and featuring one of its important characters, Jenny Humphrey. In this particular novel, Jenny and several of her fellow students at Waverly Academy find themselves caught up in a convoluted web of romance, sex, rivalries, and illicit partying. As events unfold, the narrative explores themes related to the importance of self-respect, the tension between honesty and secrets, and the nature of responsibility.

"Waverly Owls Do Not Kiss Boys in Public" As her advanced drawing class comes to an end, Jenny reflects on how great it felt to be recognized as talented and subsequently .invited into the class. She also reflects on how joining the class enabled her to spend more time with Easy Walsh, now her boyfriend. Easy joins her as she walks out into the rainy afternoon (see "Quotes", p. 5). As the two of them banter about spending more time together, narration describes how Jenny has been forced to room with wealthy Callie, Easy's ex-girlfriend, as part of the consequences handed down to Callie (and her best friend/former roommate Tinsley) after breaking school rules in the aftermath of a wild party. As Jenny nears her dormitory, Easy kisses her goodbye, commenting on how cute she is. Jenny reflects on how hurt Callie must be by having lost someone as wonderful as Easy, but also thinks that having Easy to herself is worth it.

"Owl Net" Online conversation between Alan (another boy at Waverly) and Tinsley suggests that Tinsley knows a secret about her ex-boyfriend, that she believes secrets are powerful, and that Alan needs to stay on her good side.

"A Waverly Owl Takes Advantage of Fortuitous Events" Thoughtful Brandon Buchanan is woken from a brief nap by boisterous Heath Ferro. As Brandon gets ready to go to squash practice, narration describes how he and Callie had broken up and how he still worries about her (see "Quotes", p. 13). His reflections are interrupted by a phone call from his father, who tells Brandon to make arrangements for a dinner out with the Dean on the Friday of the upcoming Trustee Weekend. Afterward, Heath comments that Trustee Weekend means the students are free to party, and starts making arrangements to have liquor brought onto campus.

"Owl Net" Online conversation between "Sage" and "Benny" refers to Sage having "made out in a shower stall in the boys' locker room", Sage keeping the name of the boy she was with a secret.

"A Waverly Owl Does Not Rummage in Her Roommate's Belongings - She Might Find Something" After dozing her way through history class and taking a nap, Callie gets ready to go to the gym, the exercise (she thinks) being as good as her mother's anti-depressants for lifting her mood. As she gets ready to go, she reflects on how much she misses Easy and resents Jenny. Searching for something to hold back her freshly cut



hair, she looks through the things on top of Jenny's messy dresser and discovers a charcoal self-caricature of Easy. She angrily crumples it up and then scatters Jenny's hairbands all over the room, storming off to Tinsley's room to complain about Jenny. She stops short, however, when she sees that Jenny is already there, leaving a note for Brett, who is Tinsley's roommate. Before either of them can say anything, Tinsley comes out, and Jenny runs off. Tinsley assures Callie that Jenny will "get hers", but Callie reflects that all she (Callie) really wants is Easy.

## Part 1, p. 1 - 26 Analysis

As the narrative begins, several important circumstances and relationships are established - that is, communicated through exposition. These include both the immediate histories of the large cast of characters and their present circumstances (i.e. the complicated relationships so many of them seem to be in, the impending festivities of Trustee Weekend). At the same time, the groundwork is laid for several future complications. The references to Easy's lingering feelings for Callie foreshadow their eventual hooking up (Part 8), while the references to Brandon's dinner with his dad foreshadow the surprising circumstances of that dinner (Part 4), and Jenny's concern about Callie foreshadows their eventual reconciliation (Part 10). Perhaps the most important piece of foreshadowing and/or exposition in this section is the reference to Heath's kegs of beer, which sets the narrative's primary plotline (i.e. the Trustee Weekend parties) in motion.

Other important points to note about this section include the reference to Jenny's hairband (which she eventually discovers, in Part 6, but without understanding what happened or why) and the various chapter titles, which function on two levels. The first is as a somewhat satirical, comic commentary on what seems to be a fairly strict set of rules for behavior at Waverly Academy. It feels very strongly that somewhere in the background of the school, and of each student attending it, there is a handbook detailing the very specific ways in which a Waverly Owl is to behave. The chapter headings serve as an often witty, often pointed, slightly exaggerated but ultimately relevant commentary on not only the required behavior, but often times behavior that actually BREAKS the rules in question. This, in turn, is the second level function of the chapter titles, their ironic and/or genuine commentaries on the events of each chapter. For further consideration of this aspect of the work, see "Topics for Discussion - In a brief, one or two sentence statement ..."

The other element introduced in this section, and continued throughout the narrative, is the frequent interjection of "Owl Net" conversations, emails and comments. Aside of being a fairly accurate representation of contemporary modes/means of communication, they also provide occasional insights into, and commentary on, recent events or events about to come. In other words, they contain elements of plot and/or character development. Occasionally, they also interject elements of thematic interest. An example of this particular use of the Owl Net material is Tinsley's reference to secrets - see "Themes - The Tension between Honesty and Secrets".



## Part 2, p. 27 - 52

### Part 2, p. 27 - 52 Summary

"Owl Net" An email from Brett to her sister refers to her (Brett's) feelings for Jeremiah, a boy at a rival school, to how "unbelievable" he's been, and to how she's planning to "reward" him soon.

"The Field House is Available at Scheduled Times for Waverly Owls to Practice Indoor Athletics" After discovering that her field hockey practice has been cancelled, Brett arranges to meet with Jeremiah. Curled up on a mat in the empty auditorium, Brett reflects on how she's now ready to tell him that the story she told about losing her virginity (see "Quotes", p. 22) was a lie. She also reflects on how she came close to having a relationship with a teacher (Mr. Dalton) but Tinsley stole him from her, on how Tinsley has kicked her out of her (Tinsley's) "club", and on how she (Brett) hasn't been spending as much time with Jenny (her best friend) as she'd like. She also reflects on how much she's looking forward to spending time with Jeremiah at his school's homecoming, and to losing their virginity together.

"Owl Net" An email from Heath to his liquor supplier confirms delivery arrangements for six kegs of beer to arrive in time for the upcoming Trustee Weekend party. In a second email, Heath calls in a favor from freshman Julian, asking him to help unload the beer.

"A Waverly Owl is Always Willing to Lend a Hand to a Fellow Owl in Need" Awake late, Tinsley perches on her window sill, blowing the smoke from her cigarette outside and thinking about how angry she is because of Brett's disloyalty (making friends with Jenny, not telling her about the semi-relationship with Mr. Dalton - see "Quotes", p. 38). As she's thinking about how much she wants Brett to be her friend again, and on how Brett has to make the first move, she (Tinsley) sees Heath and Julian struggling with the kegs of beer. She convinces them to store one keg on the roof and the others under the bed of the mysterious girl in the room next door (who, for reasons Tinsley doesn't understand, showers at midnight). As the kegs are being moved, Tinsley flirts with Julian, and resolves to make him her boyfriend ...

"Owl Net" Easy's father emails to make arrangements to meet him for dinner on the Friday of Trustees' Weekend, asking Easy to bring Callie.

"A Waverly Owl Never Forgets who his Girlfriend Is" In a quiet few minutes before going in to write an exam, Easy reflects on how much he would prefer to be out riding his horse to his private sketching place (see "Quotes", p. 46). He then calls his busy lawyer father, revealing that he (Easy) and Callie have broken up. His father angrily tells him to bring her anyway. After hanging up, his contemplations about his difficult relationship with his father are interrupted by Callie, come to fetch him for the exam. His thoughts on how pretty she is and on how much he misses her lead him to ask her to come to dinner the following Friday and she accepts, saying she knows it would make it easier for him



and adding that she'll tell Jenny. Easy realizes he hadn't thought about Jenny at all, but also realizes that Callie is better prepared to handle his often-aggressive father better than Jenny. As he and Callie go into the exam, he develops "a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach, and he suspected it wasn't entirely due to the history exam he was about to flunk".

## Part 2, p. 27 - 52 Analysis

One of the novel's three primary thematic considerations, the tension between honesty and secrets, makes its first important appearance in this section, specifically in the character and situation of Brett. She has, up to this point, been telling Jeremiah that she is sexually experienced, primarily to make herself seem more attractive. As narration reveals, however, she is not, although she has come close (with Mr. Dalton, as narration also reveals, but much later in the work). The consequences of keeping her actual level of sexual experience (i.e. her virginity) a secret come back to haunt her later, at the same time as, ironically enough, the consequences of Jeremiah's lying about his own sexual experience (i.e. saying he's a virgin) come back to haunt HIM. In other words, they are both lying, and both are forced to face the hurtful results of admitting the truth, a situation that seems to offer the thematic contention that keeping secrets from a beloved is ultimately and inevitably hurtful. This situation, in both circumstance and outcome, is paralleled in the experiences of Easy, who conceals the truth about his (admittedly confused) feelings for Callie from Jenny and who faces the hurtful consequences when that truth is (partially, but still maliciously) revealed by Tinsley (Part 9). To look at this section in another way, the situation and information revealed in these chapters foreshadow events later in the narrative when the truths hinted at here are eventually (inevitably?) revealed.

Meanwhile, important elements of plot in this section which also serve as foreshadowing include the delivery, concealing, and manipulation of the kegs of beer, the arrangements made for yet another pre-Trustee Weekend dinner, and the references to Tinsley's feelings for Jeremiah, all of which play a defining role in upcoming action..





## Part 3, p. 53 - 77

### Part 3, p. 53 - 77 Summary

"Owl Net" Tinsley sends an email to the members of her girls' club (see "Objects/Places - Café Society" ) inviting them to a party on Friday night and promising them some of Heath's beer.

"When Not Invited to a Party, a Waverly Owl Makes her Own Fun" On the night of the Café Society party, Brett and Jenny hang out in Jenny's room (which, narration comments repeatedly, Jenny used to share with Tinsley). As they're giving themselves manicures and pedicures, Brett teases Jenny about how interested she (Jenny) is in Easy. Their conversation is interrupted by Callie, who comes in and gets changed for the Café Society party. Narration indicates that Callie is paying a little more attention to Jenny than she has recently, but describes the conversation between Brett and Callie as seeming friendly, but as having nasty, pointed undertones. After Callie leaves, Jenny comments that things seem to be better between the two of them, but Brett worries that things aren't as they seem (see "Quotes", p. 59).

"Owl Net" An online chat between "Yvonne" and "Kara" refers to their not being invited to Tinsley's party, while in a second chat, "Sage" invites "Emily" to the party and tells her to "kiss Tinsley's ass".

"A Waverly Owl does not Alight upon the Roof of Any School Building" As the members of Café Society gather on the roof, Tinsley reflects on how angry she is that Brett doesn't seem more upset at being excluded. Meanwhile, as Callie arrives, Tinsley realizes that the party is pretty boring, and impulsively decides to invite the other girls in the dorm (but deliberately excluding Callie and Brett). A short time later, the girls are on the roof drinking and dancing, Tinsley thinking lustfully about how nice it would be if Julian was there. A whistle and a cry from below alerts the girls to the impending presence of a teacher and they scatter. As she runs away, Tinsley suddenly remembers they left the beer keg behind.

"Owl Net" During online conversation between Emily and "Celine" (one of the regular members of Café Society), the girls worry about whether they're "screwed" as a result of being found at the party. Meanwhile, online conversation between Yvonne and Tinsley reveals that Dean Marymount is checking all the girls' dorm rooms, and that Yvonne said that Tinsley was with Callie. Finally, an email from Dean Marymount calls all the residents of the dormitory to a meeting of the school's Disciplinary Meeting.

"A Waverly Owl Accepts her Punishment with Grace and Aplomb" Brett and the other girls from the Dumbarton Dormitory gather to hear the judgment of Dean Marymount and the Disciplinary Committee. Marymount announces that even though he knows not all of the Dumbarton residents were at the party, he can't identify who was and who wasn't. So, he says, in order to preserve the decorum of the school during Trustee'



Weekend, he's placing ALL the residents of the dorm under house arrest for the weekend. Brett reacts with anger, as this was the weekend she was due to impress Jeremiah's family and schoolmates. Another member of the committee informs the girls that on the following Monday, each is to turn in an essay on what they've each learned about what it means to be a responsible Owl. Brett thinks to herself that "a responsible Owl shits all over Tinsley Carmichael".

"Owl Net" Tinsley and Callie resentfully discuss their punishment, Tinsley referring to the other kegs of beer that have been secretly stashed and saying that "a responsible Owl does not let an opportunity like this go to waste."

### **Part 3, p. 53 - 77 Analysis**

The first important point to note about this section is the reference to Tinsley's club, Café Society, a clear and vivid manifestation of several aspects of Tinsley's character - her snobbery (based on wealth and/or class), her desire for power, and her determination to wield that power over as many people as possible. All of these, the narrative strongly suggests here and throughout the narrative, are motivated mostly by maliciousness. It's important to note, however, that it's possible even in this section to get glimpses of at least a degree of insecurity beneath the maliciousness. In this section, the insecurity is implied, and might not even be noticed if the events of this chapter, and perhaps of the novel as a whole, are not viewed in light of comments in Part 10, where narration at one point refers to Tinsley's reluctant awareness that she's not good at relationships. For further consideration of this aspect of the narrative, and of Tinsley's character, see "Topics for Discussion - What is your reaction to ..."

The other important point to note about this section is primarily plot related, specifically the imposition of (house arrest? lockdown?) on the girls of Dumbarton Hall, a circumstance that sets the pressurizing stage for events to come. There is also the additional "punishment" of the essay, the thematically relevant question it raises (what is responsibility?) being eventually answered in the novel's final pages (see "Themes"). Finally, there are the obstacles that the lockdown places in the paths of the various characters and their relationships, obstacles being (in narrative terms) elements of story that simultaneously block a character's striving to achieve his or her goals while, at the same time, increasing his/her determination to realize them. Perhaps most importantly, the appearance of such challenging obstacles as the lockdown heightens the reader's interest in how the obstacles can be circumvented or overcome. The lockdown places particular obstacles in the paths of Jenny, Brett, Tinsley and Callie, and the respective boys they're all involved with. Since the reader has already been made aware of how desperately important all the relationships are to the respective characters (i.e. the stakes they're each/all facing), the reader is even MORE intrigued by questions of what's going to happen next - in other words, drawn even further into the narrative.



## Part 4, p. 78 - 100

### Part 4, p. 78 - 100 Summary

"A Worthy Owl Always Notices his Girlfriend's Nails, Even if his Thoughts are Elsewhere" The next day (Friday), Jenny encounters Easy, who has been outside sketching. When she tells him about the house arrest, she says they can still have dinner before it kicks in. He tells her that he has to have dinner with his dad, neglecting to tell her that he's going with Callie. Jenny says she understands, and is even a little relieved when Easy talks about how confrontational his dad is. He and Jenny walk into class, Jenny wishing she could kidnap Easy and keep him in her dorm room all weekend ...

"Owl Net" Brett sends an email telling Jeremiah what happened, revealing that she's been put in charge of collecting all the essays on Monday. She hopes that she and Jeremiah will be able to spend some time together soon. Then, in an online conversation, Heath asks for Tinsley's help in getting the other kegs, saying it's part of her penance for using one of his kegs. Meanwhile, Tinsley tells Brandon (in another chat) that she's joining him and Julian for their dinner with Dean Marymount. She then tells Heath that she's not going to help him with the kegs.

"A Waverly Owl is Always Fashionably Late" Tinsley and Callie arrive at Le Petit Coq, which is the nicest restaurant in the area and packed with parents visiting for Trustee' Weekend. After assuring Callie that she'll be fine, Tinsley goes into the restaurant and joins Brandon, his father, Dean Marymount, and Julian, whom she finds strangely attractive (see "Quotes", p. 91). After thanking Brandon for inviting her, Tinsley responds to Mr. Buchanan's question about weekend activities at the Academy (fully aware of Marymount's discomfort) not with news about the house arrest but with conversation about the film society which, conversation reveals, she started. As the talk turns to some particularly heady films, and as Julian expresses his interest in the subject and Mr. Buchanan orders some wine, Tinsley thinks this might not be such a bad evening at all.

"Owl Net" Jeremiah sends an email to Brett telling her to not worry about missing their weekend together, that he's planning a romantic evening for her the following weekend, and to "be a good Owl"

"A Waverly Owl knows that a Beautiful Dinner Guest can be an Excellent Distraction from Awkward Conversation" Easy struggles to make conversation with his overbearing father, and also struggles with a degree of guilt over not having invited Jenny (see "Quotes", p. 96). His thoughts are interrupted by the arrival of Callie, who turns on the charm for the abrasive Mr. Walsh. As conversation continues, Mr. Walsh takes shots at his son's artistic and creative interests, but Callie (much to Easy's surprise) defends him firmly. As Mr. Walsh responds with surprised near-agreement, Easy starts to wonder what it would be like to be back together with her.



## Part 4, p. 78 - 100 Analysis

Complications in relationships are the focus of this section, the events of which manifest the narrative's central themes. The tension between honesty and secrets plays out primarily in the Easy/Callie plot, with their lack of reference to Jenny and Easy's re-awakening to Callie's attractiveness increasing narrative tension there. There is similar tension in the Tinsley plot, as she keeps the secret of what's going on at Dumbarton from Brandon's father. Narration here reveals that she's doing so with an eye not towards preventing the Dean from becoming embarrassed, but with the intention of using that prevention as a means of wielding power over the Dean - in other words, she keeps him from being embarrassed, therefore he owes her. Finally, that tension also manifests, albeit in a less overt way, in the Brett / Jeremiah storyline, with the reader (sensing? knowing?) that because Brett is lying about her sexual experience, it's only a matter of time before she has to face the consequences.

Meanwhile, and on another level of action and meaning, in this section the narrative begins to subtly and carefully layer in explorations of one of its other primary themes. This is its consideration of self-respect, evident primarily (if in a limited way) in the Easy plotline. Unable to fight for his own goals, ideals, and sense of purpose in the face of his domineering father, Easy begins to realize, as the result of Callie's expression of opinion about his art, that there might actually be support out there for his self-defining dreams and practice of being an artist. Here it's interesting to note that an aspect of this thematic exploration is the importance of other people's reinforcement of / support for a sense of self-worth. This aspect of this particular theme is most vividly in evidence in the work's final moments, when the four central female characters (Jenny, Kara, Brett and Callie) resolve to support each other in their individual expressions of self-worth. This, and Easy's experience in this section, raise an interesting question - how dependent IS a strong sense of self-worth ON the support of friends? See "Topics For Discussion - How important is it to have ..."

Finally, the reference to Tinsley's film society foreshadows the reference in Part 10 to the way she and Julian spent the evening following the breakup of the party - watching one of their mutually admired favorite films.



## Part 5, p. 101 - 118

### Part 5, p. 101 - 118 Summary

"Owl Net" A mass email from Dean Marymount reminds the residents of Dumbarton Hall that the lockdown begins that night, and that anyone caught breaking the lockdown will be expelled. A subsequent email from Brett calls the Dumbarton residents together for a meeting in the common room the following morning to discuss their essays.

"A Waverly Owl Listens to Suggestions from her Peers" A grumpy Brett joins all the other Dumbarton girls (including Tinsley, Callie, Jenny and a mysterious Girl in Black whom Brett doesn't recognize) to discuss the essay. After brief conversation about what the essay includes, Tinsley reveals the existence of the other kegs, hidden under the bed in the room next door (see "Part 3"). At that the Girl in Black (Kara) jumps up, expressing her unhappiness at her room having been entered without her knowledge or consent. Narration reveals that Brett admires Kara for standing up to Tinsley. Meanwhile, plans are going ahead with the party, with Yvonne suggesting that everyone dress up in the clothes of one of the other girls. The others are excited by the idea, and Brett realizes that while a party won't make up for missing her time with Jeremiah, it might not be bad. She then tells the other girls to email her their ideas for the essay - "maybe they could all just compile their thoughts and make one essay".

"Owl Net" In a series of emails, Tinsley invites Heath and several other boys (including Easy, Brandon, and Julian) to the party, Kara tells Brett she might as well go to the party since "the kegs are already in her room", and Brett tells Emily she's coming over to look at her clothes.

"A Waverly Owl Knows that Working Cooperatively with his Peers is an Excellent Way to Bring About New and Creative Solutions" When Brandon arrives in the Waverly dining hall, he immediately notices the absence of the girls. When he sits at a table with his buddies (including Heath, Easy, Julian and a couple of others), he discovers that the others have noticed the absence as well, and are not happy. Heath says they need to find a way to get to the party, suddenly recalls hearing that there is a series of tunnels linking the various buildings in the school, and theorizes that the guys can use them to get to the girls. Brandon is doubtful, but Heath insists they all work together to find them, assigning each one to search a particular area ...

"Owl Net" Easy sends Jenny an email saying he'll be coming into her dorm for the party. He then has an online chat with Callie, who flirtatiously talks about how much fun she had with Easy's dad and about how much all the girls are looking forward to the arrival of the boys.



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## Part 6, p. 120 - 142

### Part 6, p. 120 - 142 Summary

"A Waverly Owl Knows who her Dorm-mates Are - In Case it Comes In Handy" Narration reveals that while the Dumbarton girls have been going in and out of each other's closets all day in search of clothes for the party, Tinsley has found nothing to wear. She wonders, as she's going to check on the kegs in Kara's room, what she's going to do. When Kara sees her, her response is unenthusiastic, and Tinsley is somewhat resentful (see "Quotes", p. 120) but only until she sees the stash of fabulous, unique clothes in Kara's closet. Kara reveals that her mother is a designer, but hasn't made a name for herself yet. Admiring the stylishly funky clothes and recognizing that Kara is a beauty in the making, Tinsley insists she (Kara) wear one of the dresses, takes one herself, and heads back to her room, promising to do Kara's makeup later. Outside her room, however, Tinsley makes arrangements to meet Callie, forgetting about Kara.

"Owl Net" An email from Heath to the other guys tells them where and when to meet in order to get into the girls' dorm, while an email from another of the girls to Brett suggests that the lockdown is a good thing - money not spent on outside activities can later be used to buy vodka. An email from Jenny to Brett reveals that she (Jenny) has discovered the hairbands all over the room, and asks if Brett wants to get ready for the party together.

"It Is Common Courtesy for a Waverly Owl to Knock Before Entering" Alone in the room she shares with Tinsley, Brett reads her favorite book ("Catcher in the Rye") between bouts of missing Jeremiah (whose football game she listened to on the radio) and feeling like she doesn't want to go to the party. Kara arrives to have her makeup done by Tinsley, but because Tinsley isn't there, Brett does it instead, the two women finding common ground in their shared affection for the book. Jenny arrives, and as the three young women are making final preparations for the party, they are surprised by the secretive arrival of Jeremiah. Brett welcomes him into the dorm, the other two leave, and Brett and Jeremiah have a sexy reunion. They are interrupted by the arrival of Tinsley (who, unlike Kara, did NOT knock before coming in), and who makes pointed comments about Jeremiah's presence. As anger flares inside Brett, Jeremiah hints that they'll finish what they started "later".

"A Waverly Own Knows When to Confide in Her Roommate and When to Keep Quiet" As Jenny heads back to her room to put the finishing touches on her makeup, she reflects on how much she would have liked to be friends with Callie (see "Quotes", p. 138). She arrives at her room to find Callie there, dressed casually but looking beautiful. For a moment, things seem to be opening up between the two women, as Callie senses that something is wrong and Jenny, eager to be friends, confesses to being nervous about whether Easy is going to come to the party. Callie, who had been going out with Easy for years and who knows more about him and his life, explains the circumstances



behind his unreliability - a rebellion against the overly strict rules of his parents. The sudden intimacy between the two women almost makes Callie feel guilty enough to tell Jenny about being at dinner with Easy the night before, but she (Callie) chooses not to - why make things worse, and why spoil the pleasure of having a sweet little secret between her and Easy?

## Part 6, p. 120 - 142 Analysis

The novel's thematic interest in the tension between secrecy and honesty plays out in several ways in this section. First are the developments in the Easy/Callie/Jenny triangle, in which questions of how much truth to tell and how many secrets to keep are raised and play important roles in defining the relationships between the three characters and also forthcoming events in their narrative line. Perhaps more importantly, though, there is Tinsley's discovery (made, by the way, in the context of the secret presence of the keys in Kara's room) of a part of Kara's life that she (Kara) keeps secret. Here it's interesting to consider the reason why, a reason that plays out later in the narrative - specifically, Kara tries on one of the dresses, but feels so uncomfortable, so unlike herself, that she takes it off and instead puts on clothes that both feel and look (according to narration) more like herself. In other words, Kara is a prime positive manifestation not only of the value of having a sense of identity and self, but of doing what it takes to both maintain and protect it. In other words, here the secret Kara keeps is a positive, a manifestation of who she is - or perhaps it is in fact a kind of honesty, an expression of truth about, within, and because of her sense of self. Two sides of the same coin, an ambivalence about the relationship between honesty and truth that provides an interesting texture to this aspect of the work's themes.

There are two final points to note about the developments in and around Kara's narrative line. The first is the contrast drawn between her relatively secure sense of identity and the superficiality of those around her, specifically the flighty Tinsley and the vodka-drinking poster in the Owl Net section. There is a sense of things that matter about Kara, that things DO matter, to her and for her. She is, in short, a character against which the self-absorption of Tinsley and some of the other girls might be measured and, to varying degrees, found wanting. The second point to note about the Kara plot in this section is that other characters (Brett and Callie) seem to be developing a parallel sense of self-worth and self-respect (Jenny, it could be argued, already has some sense of self-worth, but it is, it seems, nowhere near as established and/or secure as Kara's). Here it's interesting to note that events in this section (i.e. the discoveries and connections being made by these women) foreshadow the end of the novel and the pact they make with each other (Part 10).





## Part 7, p. 143 - 169

### Part 7, p. 143 - 169 Summary

"A Waverly Owl Knows that Every Door Has a Key" With the help of student/janitorial assistant Lon, the guys (including Brandon, Easy, Heath, and Julian) make their way through an underground tunnel towards Dumbarton. Narration reveals that Brandon has been fantasizing about Tinsley since the dinner the night before. Heath teases him about his feelings for Callie, whom Easy defends, leading Heath to question whether he (Easy) really cares about Jenny who, narration further reveals, Brandon has ALSO been having fantasies about. Eventually, the guys find their way to Dumbarton, and join the party.

"Owl Net" An email from Yvonne celebrates the party as an opportunity for the girls of Dumbarton to bond, while in an online conversation, Benny urges Callie to hurry up and join the party - Easy has arrived and is looking, Benny says, REALLY cute. In another online conversation, Jenny reveals she'll come to the party as soon as she's finished sending an email to her dad.

"A Waverly Owl Knows How to Take Constructive Criticism" Easy makes his way to Jenny's room, his thoughts going back and forth between her and Callie. After he surprises her while she's finishing her email, they kiss for a while, Easy thinking of how nice it is to hold her. They sit on their bed and talk, conversation revealing that Easy had failed the history exam, that he had been given a makeup assignment, and that he had spent the day doing other things (working on his art, playing computer games). When Jenny worries about the possibility of him getting into trouble, Easy feels a moment of resentment, feeling like she's being as picky and demanding as his father (see "Quotes", p. 158/159). Jenny senses his discomfort and goes out to get them some drinks. When she's gone, Easy remembers what it was like to be with Callie ...

"A Waverly Own Knows that Time Does Not Heal All Wounds" As Jenny makes her way to Kara's room, she worries about the sudden unease that seems to have come up between her and Easy. She also notices that much of the party seems to have disappeared, and then notices why - a young woman, not familiar from Dumbarton, is walking through the halls. Jenny hurries to Kara's room, wondering if the girl is a teacher. When she arrives, Jenny is happy to see that Kara's shelves actually have books on them, narration commenting that in most of the girls' rooms, the shelves are lined with shoes. When Kara's and Jenny's conversation about books gets to Kara's comic book collection, the closet door suddenly opens to reveal Heath, who comes out and excitedly introduces himself as someone else who loves comics. Jenny watches, intrigued, as Kara becomes increasingly angry, eventually revealing that Heath, who has no idea who she is, bullied her in her first year and caused her to leave school. When she sees that he's clueless, and that he still thinks she's hot, she throws a beer in his face and shoves him out her door. When Kara asks whether Jenny thinks she went too far, Jenny says she was happy to see Heath taken down a peg. Reflecting on how



miserable she (Jenny) was in HER first year, she tells Kara that she (Jenny) would have been nice to her if they'd known each other in first year ... but then further reflects on how she avoided the unpopular girls in the hopes of being friends with Brett and Tinsley and the others. "I'm a bitch, she thought. I'm one of them."

## Part 7, p. 143 - 169 Analysis

Although the book's thematic interest in questions of responsibility has lain somewhat dormant for a while, it emerges almost in passing in this section, as Easy's participation in the party is clearly portrayed as an abdication and/or avoidance of responsibility. A question must be asked, though, about the kind of responsibility being avoided, and here the narrative gets into not one but two of its key thematic questions. The responsibility Easy is avoiding is clearly an imposed one, one not connected to his own sense of self-worth and/or identity. In creating this circumstance for Easy, the narrative raises the question of what, after all, is the more IMPORTANT responsibility - to oneself (i.e. one's inner identity) or to one's duties (i.e. one's outer identity and/or purposes). Over the course of the narrative, the book seems to be coming down squarely on the side of the former, as witness its final moments ... but then the question becomes this. Is the abdication of such external responsibilities, such as the choices made by virtually all the characters, valid as long as it's done in the spirit of defending, protecting, and/or living up to one's INTERNAL responsibilities to oneself?

Other elements to note in this section include the first of several appearances of a particular motif, or visual image - specifically, that of closets and other small, enclosed spaces (i.e. the shower stall in which Tinsley and Julian find themselves in the following section). On one level, the closets are simply a common, accessible place to hide from what everyone believes is the invading teacher. On another level, though, it's possible to see a certain metaphoric value in the motif - things are put away in closets, perhaps not hidden, but not always in plain view. They are, in other words, both a secret and a truth that is not necessarily kept out in the open. The motif of closets, therefore, which shows up here and, perhaps even more notably in the following section when Callie and Easy make out in a closet, can be seen as representing and/or foreshadowing the uncomfortable but necessary and important emergence of secrets and truths. The truth of the relationship between Kara and Heath, as revealed here, is one such secret, with the eventual outcome of that revelation (and indeed of the Easy/Callie revelations to come) is that ultimately, the secret is better revealed, in order for healing and growth to truly begin.

Finally, there is the unexpected appearance of the mysterious girl, a character who plays not only a catalytic and/or transformational role in terms of the party, but does so in terms of the lives of the other characters and the narrative as a whole in future sections.



## Part 8, p. 170 - 196

### Part 8, p. 170 - 196 Summary

"A Waverly Owl is Not Afraid of Skeletons - Living or Otherwise - In Her Closet" Trying to take a few minutes for herself in the room she shares with Jenny, Callie is visited by nosy Benny, who suggests that life with the girl who stole her (Callie's) boyfriend (Easy) must be hell. Callie says it's not that bad, insisting that Jenny never stole Easy but that that things weren't right between Callie and Easy to begin with (see "Quotes", p. 172). Benny leaves, doubtful but accepting that Callie feels as she does. When Callie looks in her closet to get some more comfortable shoes, she's shocked to discover Easy hiding there. He makes room for her on the closet floor, and she snuggles in beside him. As they start kissing, she feels like things could not be more perfect ...

"Waverly Owls Take Hygiene Extremely Seriously" Tinsley goes in search of Brandon and Julian, looking forward to thanking them for the good time the night before. Just as she's catching sight of them, she gets a text from Heath saying there's a teacher alert. As she hurries Brandon and Julian into a nearby bathroom, narration reveals that she's aware Brandon is into her, that Brandon is nervous about being with her, and that she and Julian are into each other. Brandon watches as Julian and Tinsley flirt while discussing the bathroom's recently renovated décor, and leaves the room as they step into a shower stall together, Julian unexpectedly turning it on and drenching Tinsley in cold water. Tinsley, half angry and half turned on, wrestles with him, suddenly aware that in spite of his attractiveness, he's still just a freshman.

"A Waverly Owl Doesn't Judge Someone By Their Shoes" As he stalks angrily away from Tinsley and Julian, Brandon wonders why he and virtually everyone else in the school is so drawn to Tinsley. He rounds a corner and comes face to face with the young woman who, narration reveals (by her description) is the same stranger spotted by Jenny in Part 7. Brandon immediately finds her intriguing and attractive (although not crazy about her sandals, which he considers to be too "granola"). Conversation reveals that she is looking for Jeremiah, that the girl's name is Elizabeth, and that she's looking for the party to get started. The increasingly mesmerized Brandon accompanies her on her search through the hall as she rouses everyone else in the dorm back to partying, wondering "where the hell she'd been his whole life".

"A Waverly Owl Knows that Where there's Incense, There's Fire" Alone in her room with Jeremiah, both of them in their underwear, Brett lights some incense and lies down on her bed with her boyfriend, the two of them touching and talking intimately. Brett finally confesses that she is, in fact, a virgin like Jeremiah. He says it's okay, and Brett says she's ready to be with him. They're interrupted by a knock on the door. As Jeremiah clumsily hurries to hide, he bumps his foot and cries out in pain. The door opens and Elizabeth comes in, followed by Brandon. Elizabeth and Jeremiah recognize each other, Brandon and Brett both sensing a deep awkwardness in the room. Eventually Elizabeth and Brandon leave, leaving Brett and Jeremiah to pull themselves together. As they're



getting dressed, Brett wonders what's going on, but then Jeremiah tells her again how sexy she is, and she feels a bit easier - although "as she pulled her shirt over her head," narration comments, "she couldn't help wondering what he wasn't saying".

## Part 8, p. 170 - 196 Analysis

Several important narrative and thematic motifs recur in this section. First is the motif of the enclosed spaces (i.e. Easy and Callie in the closet, Julian and Tinsley in the shower). In both cases, the spaces are places in which secrets are simultaneously discovered (by the characters involved) and concealed (from the other characters). Both circumstances can, in turn, be seen as manifestations of the novel's thematic interest in the tension between secrets and honesty, as is the confrontation between Brett and Jeremiah (in which Brett finally reveals a truth that is no longer a secret) and between Jeremiah and Elizabeth (which hints that Jeremiah, in his turn, has been KEEPING a secret). This last incident also foreshadows events in the following sections, in which the nature of the secret Jeremiah has been keeping comes to light, to the both his and Brett's regret.

Other important elements here include the appearance and description of Elizabeth (who, like Kara, is portrayed as being self-secure enough to dress and behave exactly how she wants) and sudden developments in the character of Brandon (who, up to this point, has been singularly under-developed as a character). Here it's important to note the parallels between his experiences and those of the girls who end up impressed by, and connected with Kara. In both sets of circumstances, a strong sense of self-worth is portrayed as being attractive (and, in the case of Elizabeth, quite sexy). Finally, there are developments in the character of Callie who, like the boy she kisses in the closet, seems to be having some kind of awakening to herself and her feelings, but doesn't quite know what to do with them. The decision essentially gets made for her in the following section, in which she and several others are forced to confront secrets and truths they've been struggling to keep secret for quite some time.



## Part 9, p. 196 - 213

### Part 9, p. 196 - 213 Summary

"A Waverly Owl is Smart Enough not to Kiss and Tell" Making out with Callie on the floor of her closet, Easy feels so guilty about Jenny that he breaks things off and heads out, wondering what's wrong with him (see "Quotes", p. 197). He finds Jenny in the hallway, wraps an arm around her, and leads her into the common room where several others (Tinsley, Brett, Kara, Heath, Jeremiah, Brandon and several others, including a girl narration indicates is Elizabeth) are waiting. As Callie arrives, the group initiates a game of I Never, and Easy takes note as several secrets are revealed. One of the earliest is relatively harmless, such as the point at which Jenny reveals that Heath had a drink thrown in his face. A potentially damaging secret is revealed accidentally, such the fact that Elizabeth and Jeremiah are among the people who indicate they've had sex (narration hinting that it was with each other). Easy is interested to note that for some reason, this makes Brett upset. Meanwhile, the fact that Tinsley and Brett are among those who a revealed to be virgins makes several people angry at the fact that they've been led to believe that Tinsley and Brett are NOT virgins. This is particularly true of Callie, who resents what she sees as the lies Tinsley has told. Deflecting attention from her, Tinsley reveals that Easy took Callie to dinner with his father instead of Jenny. As Easy restrains his anger with Tinsley, he tries to explain to the shocked Jenny, but is unable to. She rushes out of the room, followed by Kara. Brett also runs out, followed by Jeremiah. Callie goes up to Tinsley and calls her "a total bitch". As Easy reflects that it was "about fucking time" someone called Tinsley that to her face, Tinsley stalks out.

"A Waverly Owl Knows that a Successful Relationship is Built on Honesty" Brett tries to take angry refuge on the roof (see "Quotes", p. 209), but is followed by Jeremiah. They argue over their past mistakes. They talk about how Brett's acting on her heavy crush on a teacher led her to breaking up with Jeremiah, how Jeremiah's vulnerability and need for comfort led him to his friend Elizabeth, and how the two of them ended up having sex. They accuse each other of lying, each of them knowing that what the other is saying is true but also saying they only lied because they didn't want to hurt the other one. "They'd both lied to each other," narration comments, "and now they were in this ugly mess of their own creation." Eventually, Brett tells Jeremiah to leave.

"Owl Net" An online conversation between Kara and Yvonne reveals that it was Yvonne (who hadn't been recognized by Easy in the common room) who asked the question that triggered all the upset, and that she's attracted to Heath. Kara tells her she could do much better elsewhere.

"A Responsible Owl Stands Up for Herself - Even in the Face of a Very Hot Guy" Alone with an upset Easy in the common room, Callie starts to clear up the party mess, concerned that a teacher will come by and realize what's been going on. Feeling sorry for Jenny (see "Quotes", p. 214), she berates Easy for handling the situation so badly. He acknowledges that he mishandled his situation, leading Callie to insist that he has to



work out his feelings, otherwise neither she nor Jenny will be interested in being with him.

"Owl Net" Flirty online chat between Alan and Alison results in Alison refusing Alan's invitation to run around naked in the tunnels, saying that secrets don't stay secrets for long at Waverly.

## Part 9, p. 196 - 213 Analysis

As discussed in "Style - Point of View", one of the more engaging elements of the narrative is how its perspective frequently shifts from character to character. One of the more effective uses of this shifting point of view shows up in the first chapter of this section, narrated entirely from Easy's point of view. The limiting of the narrative perspective in that way makes for interesting reading, as Easy observes what happens without knowing why things are going the way they are. The reader DOES know, however, a situation that engages him/her in, for example, Brett's reaction to the revelation about Jeremiah and Elizabeth in a different way than if the event was described from a more objective perspective. It's a particularly intriguing twist on a technique that has, up to this point, functioned on a fairly straightforward level.

The most important element of this section of the narrative, however, is the explosion of truths and secrets erupting from within the boundaries of the game "I Never" (see "Objects/Places"). Here the book's thematic interest in the tension between secrets and honesty reaches a point of climax, marking the book's overall climax as well (i.e. the point of highest emotional, narrative, and/or thematic intensity). Emotions run very high as a result of the secrets brought out into the open. Relationships, and the narrative of those relationships, all take irreversible turns towards change as the result of the events in the common room, events that trigger the individual and relationship transformations that begin in the confrontation between Brett and Jeremiah, continue with Easy and Callie, and conclude in the following section with Jenny. Each of these confrontations, in turn, manifest and solidify the book's thematic contentions on the value of honesty, the importance of self-worth, and the nature of responsibility. Those contentions can be summed up this way - tell the truth, no matter what the consequences, know who you are and be proud of it, and take full responsibility for acting on both sets of circumstances. That said, certain elements in the following section (i.e. between Tinsley and Julian) provide a vivid, telling contrast to the contentions here.

All this, needless to say, makes the comments in the chat between Alan and Alison anti-climactic, ironic, or both.





## Part 10, p. 219- 241

### Part 10, p. 219- 241 Summary

"A Waverly Owl is Not Afraid of the Dark - And Sometimes Embraces It" Having fled the common room, Brandon and Elizabeth hide out for a few minutes in a stairwell, struggling to find something to say until Brandon has the idea of inviting Elizabeth to the tunnels. As they're making their way down, Elizabeth tells Brandon about her relationship with Jeremiah - that Jeremiah was crushed by his breakup with Brett, that Jeremiah sought comfort in talking to Elizabeth, that the intimacy of the moment took them further than they planned, that they're not together, and that Elizabeth wanted to check Brett out. Meanwhile, Brandon is becoming more and more attracted to Elizabeth, telling her that he's concerned for Jenny because she's a friend but eventually saying he doesn't want to talk about other people anymore. By this time they're in the darkened tunnels, lit only by Elizabeth's lighter. As she asks what he DOES want to talk about, she blows out the lighter and they kiss.

"A Waverly Owl Always Tells the Truth, except When It's Wiser Not To" Jenny flees to her room, her head spinning with thoughts of Easy, Callie, and her own doubts. Kara comes in to comfort her, reassuring her that they might not know all the story yet. Callie looks in, and Jenny says she can join them, adding that she doesn't blame Callie for Easy's actions but asking whether anything happened at or after the dinner. Callie explains that it was probably easier for Easy to deal with his dad with her there, and Jenny reflects on how Callie is always going to have known Easy longer than her. Callie, meanwhile, realizes that to tell Jenny the truth about what she (Callie) did with Easy in the closet would only make things worse, and that she doesn't need to do that. Shortly afterwards Brett arrives, and the four young women (Jenny, Cally, Kara and Brett) make a pact that they're going to respect themselves and each other so that guys will respect them. They also plan to work the idea into the essay on being "a responsible Owl" due the following Monday. As the young women make their pact, Callie reflects on how nice it is to feel like she's not so alone.

"A Responsible Owl Knows How to Keep a Secret - Especially if it Means He Gets to Keep the Girl" As Tinsley and Julian arrive on the roof, narration reveals that they've spent the couple of hours since the confrontation in the common room cuddled up watching one of Tinsley's favorite films. Tinsley, strongly attracted to Julian but uncertain that being with a freshman is a good idea, is surprised when he draws her closer and hints at kissing her. Even though she doesn't want to ruin her "first kiss" anticipation (see "Quotes", p. 234), she finds herself compelled to kiss him, narration revealing Tinsley's gratitude and relief that he hasn't said anything about her behavior in the common room. When Julian comments that no-one will believe what's happening between them, Tinsley insists that he say nothing, pointing out that relationships at Waverly always come under the microscope, a pressure that most of them can't handle. When Julian asks whether it's because she's afraid of dating a freshman, she says it's not, even though on some level it is. The bigger problem, narration reveals, is that



Tinsley feels she's not good at relationships, and she doesn't want to mess this one up. Julian asks whether anyone ever says no to her. "Rarely," she says.

"Owl Net" Brett sends an email to the Dean and copies the other students. She acknowledges responsibility for the actions that got the Dumbarton girls locked down, suggesting that even though they weren't all guilty they realized, over the weekend, that they WERE guilty of identifying themselves only as labels. She also lists a new series of definitions of what it means to be a responsible Owl (see "Quotes", p. 239). An online chat between Benny and Brett reveals that, at least for now, Brett believes what she said in that email, that Benny has come to admire Kara, and that Brett believes all the Dumbarton girls might have the spark of individuality that Kara has, and that Benny admires.

## Part 10, p. 219- 241 Analysis

There are several important points to note about this section, many (most?) having to do with commentary and/or explorations of the book's central themes. The first important point is the connection made between Brandon (portrayed in the narrative, at least in Tinsley's view, as uptight and conservative) and Elizabeth (who is portrayed as something of a free spirit, secure in herself and in what she believes). The sense here is that Brandon, who is to a significant degree under the orders of his dictatorial dad, finds the independence and confidence of Elizabeth stimulating, both emotionally and sexually. In other words, the narrative seems to be making the thematically central point that a strong sense of self-worth, such as that evident in Elizabeth, is a powerful and attractive characteristic. There is an echo here of similar experiences of some of the other characters, particularly the young women (Jenny, Callie, Brett) to Kara, portrayed as having a similar sense of self and a similar free spirit and also as finding Kara's attitudes and perspectives inspiring (witness the events described in the final Owl Net section).

Meanwhile, the book's thematic interest in the tension between secrets and honesty comes to the forefront in the scene between Tinsley and Julian, in which Tinsley's previously stated opinion that secrets are powerful (Part 1) once again comes into play, the power in this case being two fold - her own power over Julian, and her power over her image. Here it's important to note the previously discussed ("Part 3, Analysis") glimpse of insecurity in Tinsley, specifically the narrative reference to her not feeling as though she's good in relationships. There's the sense in this moment that, at least to some degree, her need and determination to keep secrets is a mechanism of self-protection, a device to cover up a LACK of self-worth (in contrast to the strongly portrayed sense of self-worth in characters like Kara and Elizabeth). The point is not made to suggest that Tinsley's cruelty, selfishness and capacity to manipulate should be ignored or excused - on the contrary, her getting away with much of the trouble she's caused manifests a second dark side of a second theme (the importance of taking responsibility). The glimpse of vulnerability, however, does suggest that Tinsley at least has the POTENTIAL to be as self-aware, and as responsible, as some of the other characters seem to be becoming. At the same time, it's important to note that Callie, in



her conversation with Jenny and the others, continues to keep a secret, ostensibly for the greater good and the positive value of not hurting someone else (i.e. Jenny). This seems to suggest that the book's apparent emphasis on the importance of honesty is not absolute.

Finally, there is the summing up of the "lessons" the Dumbarton girls have learned from their experiences (see "Quotes", p. 239). This is, in many ways, a clear and vivid summing up of the simultaneous, thematically central, personal transformations the characters have undergone over the course of the narrative. It's important to remember, however, that partly because this is only the third in a lengthy series of books and partly because these characters are who they are and function in the social environment that they do, whether the changes are actually going to take.



# Characters

## Brett

Of the book's large cast of characters (in terms of dramatic narrative, it would be described as an "ensemble" cast), Brett is arguably the main, or central, character - the protagonist. It is Brett who initiates much of the book's action (many of the other characters are primarily RE-active), it is Brett who undergoes the most significant journey of transformation, and perhaps most importantly, it is Brett's journey that most clearly and thoroughly embodies the narrative's primary themes. It is she who has the most significant experience of dealing with the consequences of dishonesty (both her own and her boyfriend's). It is she whose experience manifest the importance of responsibility (not only does she assume leadership for the creation of the essay, but she also, at the novel's conclusion, accepts her share of the responsibility for the breakup of her relationship). Finally, it is Brett, more than any other character, who learns the importance of self-respect, having lacked self-respect so much that she compromised her own personal integrity (i.e. told lies to her boyfriend) in order to get, and keep, what she wants, or thinks she wants.

All that said, the character of Brett has several other components that set her apart from many of the other characters. She seems to be less materialistic, more outspoken, more independent, and less superficial than, say, Callie or Tinsley. She is also more worldly than Jenny and more sophisticated than Kara. She is also, however, flawed. She doesn't stand up for herself when faced with Dean Marymount's edict confining the girls to their dorm, she goes along with the idea of filling the time while under confinement with a party, and, as discussed, she lies to her boyfriend and, somewhat hypocritically, reacts very badly when she discovers that he, in turn, has been lying to her. In short, she is a multi-faceted, complicated young woman, intriguing and, in many ways, quite vulnerably human.

## Tinsley

If Brett can be described as the novel's protagonist, then Tinsley is very clearly and unarguably the novel's antagonist. The antagonist opposes the protagonist's actions and triggers conflict, but also (in many cases) opposes the protagonist's ideals and values. Where Brett learns responsibility, self-respect, and the value of honesty, Tinsley is irresponsible, disrespectful of herself (in that she serves only her desires rather than opening herself to who she really is and what she needs), and fundamentally dishonest and manipulative. There are times, however, when she is NOT dishonest, and goes too far in the direction of barefaced truth. This is most particularly, and most dramatically, true about her viciously motivated revealing of the truth about Easy and Callie in Part 9. Yes, she is honest, but because she uses honesty as a weapon to hurt rather than a means to heal or open, her honesty is corrupt, an embodiment of the dark side of honesty, if you will. Further - Tinsley (unlike Blair) is materialistic, judgmental, interested



in knowledge solely for the power over other people it could bring her, and worldly and sophisticated for the same reasons. An interesting side to Tinsley, or at least a possible side, is a sense of insecurity. As previously discussed, there is a passing reference in Part 10 (specifically triggered by her burgeoning intimacy with Julian) to her not being good at relationships. This, in turn, might raise the question in the reader as to whether Tinsley's "mean girl" attitude and actions are in fact a self-protective mask. It's important to note, however, that the narrative never really explores this question, leaving it up to the reader to draw what inferences are possible from this very brief, somewhat self-knowing, but ultimately manipulative glimpse into what lies beneath Tinsley's surface.

## Callie

Governor's daughter Callie is Tinsley's best friend. She is also Jenny's roommate and Easy's ex-girlfriend. Wealthy and judgmental, superficial and mean (although not as mean as Tinsley) Callie behaves resentfully and nastily towards Jenny at first. Over the course of the narrative, however, she comes to realize that Jenny actually a nice girl and good person, particularly in contrast to Tinsley, whom Callie realizes is actually quite nasty (her reference to Tinsley as a bitch is a powerful moment in the narrative, in Callie's experience, and in the other characters' experiences of BOTH women). Callie's joining of the "self-respect pact" in "Part 10" marks a significant step forward into maturity and open-mindedness, although there is some question as to whether it will actually take - in other words, whether Callie's superficialness, self-centeredness and nagging judgmentalness are too ingrained to be overcome. Finally, there are hints throughout the narrative that Callie might have some kind of eating disorder, possibly anorexia. These hints include references to her obsession with being thin, with not eating, and with being obsessed with clothes and body image. Again, the narrative never explicitly states that she is, but as is the case with Tinsley's insecurity, leaves the implication open for the reader.

## Jenny

Jenny is a character from another series of books (the Gossip Girl series, developed by the same author) who has been "spun off" into her own series. In this book, however, her role is slightly less central than in other books - she is important and does develop, but as noted above, in terms of development and function, Brett is more significant and more influential. Jenny is described throughout the narrative as being "nice". Sensitive and generous-spirited, particularly towards her roommate Callie (who used to be dating Easy, the young man Jenny is now involved with), Jenny is often bewildered by events and attitudes around her. She is a bit of an innocent, a bit of a babe in the woods, and is easily hurt, easily taken advantage of, and somewhat hesitant about standing up for herself. Eventually, however, after the experiences of the party and after seeing Kara stand up for herself with the obnoxious Heath, Jenny seems to realize there is at least the potential to, and reason for, developing more of a backbone. The final moments of the book seem to suggest she will.



## Easy

Easy is Jenny's boyfriend, attractive and easygoing. A sensitive artist from a family of aggressive lawyers, Easy struggles to find his own way in the image conscious, relationship-conscious world of his family, of Waverly Academy, and of the girls of Dumbarton Hall, two of whom (Callie and Jenny) he is involved with at the same time. He's got a good heart, but is confused about where it's leading him.

## Jeremiah

Jeremiah is Brett's boyfriend, the star quarterback for a rival school (St. Lucius). Seemingly thoughtful and gentle, he at first tells Brett he's a virgin, but when she discovers that he is not (and he, in turn, discovers that she IS, contrary to what she told him), their mutual dishonesty drives a wedge between them. Jeremiah and Brett both feel bad about their lack of respect for each other and for themselves, and learn a lesson about both self-respect and truth from their experiences.

## Elizabeth

Elizabeth is a friend of Jeremiah's from St. Lucius. She appears late in the narrative during the Trustee Weekend party, and because she is unfamiliar to everyone, she is believed to be a teacher, leading everyone to hide any evidence of the party from her. She eventually reveals herself to be something of a party girl, her independent-mindedness appealing to the buttoned down Brandon in a big way. On the other hand, her previous sexual experience with Jeremiah, when Jeremiah had told Jenny that he is a virgin, creates difficulties in their relationship and, in turn, can be seen as a manifestation of the narrative's thematic interest in the tension between secrets and honesty.

## Brandon

Studious, uptight Brandon seems to be playing a fairly minor role in the narrative for about two thirds of the book, coming to life (both personally and as a character) only when he meets Elizabeth, whose individualistic, independent streak intrigues him and turns him on. His reaction to her might, in fact, be seen as an example of the book's portrayal of self-respect having a domino effect - see "Themes - The Importance of Self Respect".

## Heath

Party boy Heath is Brandon's roommate. Heath's plans to bring in kegs of beer so the students can party during Trustee' Weekend sets in motion the chain of events that leads to the House Arrest of the Dumbarton Girls, and to the secret party that takes



place while that house arrest is underway. Perhaps most importantly, his plans are also the trigger to the eventual confrontation with Kara that serves as one of the clearest manifestations of "the importance of self-respect" theme in the book.

## Julian

First year Julian is a friend of Heath's, and the object of Tinsley's lustful attraction. He is portrayed as being sexy and charismatic, but quite immature - at least, compared to Tinsley and the boys. He is also portrayed as being quite malleable, fully prepared to have a relationship with Tinsley solely on his terms. It could be argued, in fact, that in a novel which is, on some level, about self-respect, he is a character who provides a powerful, telling contrast - in other words, those who develop self-respect are seen more clearly by being juxtaposed with Julian who, at this point, has none.

## Kara

Kara makes her first appearance in "Reckless" as Tinsley's mysterious (and at that point unnamed) dorm neighbor who, for some reason (never given) has been given permission to break curfew and use the shower when everyone else is in bed. This is the reason why Tinsley feels she can store Heath's kegs of beer in her room. Later, she is revealed to have both a strong will of her own, a significant insecurity, a love of books (that leads her to bond with Brett), and a mother who's an inventive designer (which leads her to bond with Tinsley). Most significantly, she is also revealed to have a powerful, strongly motivating streak of self-reliance / respect that, in turn and in another example of the work's "self-respect domino effect", triggers changes in Brett, Jenny, and eventually Callie.

## Yvonne, Benny, Celine, Sage

These four young women are members of Tinsley's "girls' club" (see "Objects/Places - Café Society"). They are as superficial, self-indulgent and judgmental as Tinsley, although not quite as mean.

## Alan, Lon

These characters appear very briefly, but play significant roles in the narrative. Alan is one of the boys who comes to the party, bringing with him a supply of marijuana (which, narration suggests, is his usual contribution to the party atmosphere and, in many ways, the only reason people have him around). Lon is another student who works off his tuition and fees as a janitorial assistant - in other words, he's not as wealthy as the other boys, and it shows in their treatment of him. It's his keys, as discovered by Brandon, that enable the boys to find their way into Dumbarton for the party.



## **Jefferson Walsh, Collin Buchanan**

Walsh is Easy's father, a successful, strong willed, and forceful lawyer. Mr. Buchanan is Brandon's father, elderly and absent minded, preoccupied with the needs of his much younger wife and very young twin sons. Both men are domineering and willful, imposing their desires on their sons and essentially running their lives, much to their sons' resentment.

## **Dean Marymount**

The Dean (principal) of the college is well meaning but ultimately ineffectual, superficially forceful but easily manipulated, unwilling and/or unable to stand up for himself in any significant way.



# Objects/Places

## New England

The north-east corner of the United States, home to old families and old money, is the novel's geographical and social setting.

## Rhinecliff

This is the small New England town located near the Waverly Academy.

## Waverly Academy

The action of the narrative is set almost entirely within the boundaries of this upper class boarding school. The only time the action leaves the campus is in Part 4, when several characters venture out to a restaurant (see "Le Petit Coq" below).

## Owl

The owl is the school mascot for Waverly. The students there refer to themselves as owls.

## Dumbarton Hall

This is the dormitory where the girl students of Waverly all live, and the building to which they are all confined following the discovery of Tinsley's party on the roof.

## The Dumbarton Hall Roof

Generally unsupervised by teachers, the roof of Dumbarton Hall has been the setting for several illicit encounters in the past and, in this narrative, the setting for a couple of very important events - Tinsley's party (which triggers the Dumbarton Hall lockdown) and the confrontation between Brett and Jeremiah that sees the end of their relationship.

## Richards Hall

This is the boys' dorm at Waverly, where most of the young male students in the novel (including Heath, Brandon, Easy and Julian) live.



## Trustee Weekend

Once a year at Waverly, the administration hosts a weekend of activity for trustees, parents and financial supporters - Trustee Weekend. Traditionally, students at the school have used the fact that the otherwise directed attentions of administration and faculty are an opportunity to party. The action of the narrative is set during the two days' lead up to what turns out to be a very unusual Trustee Weekend.

## Tinsley's Club (Café Society)

Teen socialite power broker Tinsley has set up an exclusive club for wealthy, superficial, like-minded girls who meet her standards of status and willingness to submit their will to hers. Membership in the club is sought after by many, in the name of appearing "cool", but rejected by some (including Kara, Brett, Jenny and eventually Callie) in the name of defining their own individual identities and sense of self-respect.

## Le Petit Coq

This French restaurant, described by Easy Walsh as "pretentious Euro trash" is, according to narration, "the lone fancy restaurant in all of downtown Rhinecliff". It is the setting for an important scene early in the narrative where Easy and Brandon each have conflict-tense scenes with their parents and with attractive young women (Callie and Tinsley respectively)

## Marymount's Essay

As part of their punishment for breaking Waverly's rules about partying with the rooftop party, the girls of Dumbarton Hall are punished not only with a lockdown, but with the assignment of writing an essay about what they've learned, as the result of their punishment, about the responsibility of being a Waverly Owl.

## The Tunnels

Late in the narrative, as the boys of Richards Hall are looking for ways to secretly join the locked-down girls of Dumbarton Hall, they remember, and find their way into, a long-secret network of tunnels that link all the buildings on campus. In the book's final chapters, Brandon and Elizabeth explore both the tunnels and each other, the darkness and intimacy of the former eventually leading to, and/or triggering, physical intimacy in the latter.





# Themes

## The Nature of Responsibility

The primary, defining events of the narrative (the party on the roof, the illicit party in Dumbarton Hall, the climactic confrontation during the game of "I Never"), as well as many of the secondary events in the individual characters' story lines, are all grounded in an experience of irresponsibility. In the case of the first two incidents, characters break the rules of the school, designed to place students in a position of behaving WITH responsibility. In the case of the third and, in fact, in several situations throughout the narrative, characters break the break the rules of relationships (see "The Tension between Honesty and Secrets" below), acts of irresponsibility that, in almost all cases, result in regret or pain or anger, and sometimes all three. In other words, the characters learn the nature and value of responsibility as the result of a sharp, jarring experience with the opposite. For four of the central characters, the precise nature of what they've learned is grounded in the realization of how important it is to respect oneself, while for others, they (learn? discover? accept?) that there is something about themselves that's actually WORTHY of respect - see below, "The Importance of Self-Respect"). Ultimately, the narrative seems to be suggesting that the priority, in terms of behaving responsibly, is to have, and act on, a sense of responsibility to and for oneself, and that a sense of responsibility to others should, and ultimately will, emerge from THAT.

Finally, there is a close connection between the narrative's exploration of this theme and explorations of its two primary sub-themes, with each of the three serving as manifestations and/or triggers of the other.

## The Tension between Honesty and Secrets

The primary vehicle for the narrative's exploration of the nature and importance of responsibility is its (simultaneous? parallel?) exploration of the tension between honesty and secrets. Throughout the narrative, in almost every important relationship (primarily the Jenny/Easy/Callie triangle and the Brett/Jeremiah/Elizabeth triangle) and situation (the hiding of the beer kegs, the parties), when a character tells lies and/or keeps an important truth secret, the eventual revelation of the truth leads to painful consequence. This is true whether the revelation is accidental (i.e. the suggestion that Jeremiah and Elizabeth had been together) or deliberate (i.e. Tinsley's vindictive revelation that Easy had been out with Callie without telling Jenny), personal (i.e. the aforementioned romantic secrets) or communal (i.e. the secret party on the roof). In short, when truths are revealed after being withheld and honesty has been avoided, the inevitable result (at least in the narrative) is the ending of relationships, the ending of friendships, the ending of freedom, and/or the ending of at least a kind of peace, a kind of security. In other words, the narrative portrays not telling important truths as an inevitably painful manifestation of irresponsibility, while direct, open honesty is regarded as a positive value. One example is the positive interaction between Brandon and Elizabeth that



results when they admit to, and act upon, being attracted to each other. Another example is the bond that begins to arise between Callie and Jenny when they're honest with each other about their feelings for each other and for Easy (though here, there's some question about whether Callie's decision to not tell Jenny about the encounter she, Callie, shared with Easy in the closet is going to have good or bad results). Ultimately, though, honesty can also be seen as an important factor in the novel's exploration of what it sees as a second important component of effective responsibility, the importance of self-respect.

## The Importance of Self-Respect

At the novel's conclusion, four of its main characters (Brett, Jenny, Kara and Callie) make a pact to not only respect each other, but to manifest that respect by helping each other respect themselves. This decision is the result of each of them, in different ways, having been manipulated (by others like Tinsley or the boys of Richards Hall, or by their own needs, desires or fantasies) and, as a result, made to feel as though they have relatively little worth as anything other than something to be used. The pact is a manifestation of their mutual determination to not let themselves fall into that trap again, and in turn makes up the basis from which they construct the essay on responsibility they are required by Dean Marymount to write. For specific consideration of the circumstances (i.e. incidents that lead to a lack of self-respect) that lead each character to sign the pact, see "Topics of Discussion - Briefly discuss the ways in which the book's four main characters ..."

Meanwhile, this theme manifests in other ways as well - in the independence and confidence of Elizabeth (who seems to have a great deal of self-respect), in the awakening of Brandon to his own sense of self-respect (triggered by his relationship with Elizabeth) and in the similar awakening to self-respect experienced by Easy. This last occurs in the face of what might be described as a kind of contemptuous oppression by his father, who has little or no value for the work and ambitions of his artistically talented son. Easy, after being defended by Callie and supported by Jenny, seems to be beginning to develop a sense of self-respect and/or self-esteem that in many ways echoes those developed and/or discovered by the girls.

Finally, it's important to note that in several circumstances throughout the narrative, when a character manifests some self-respect and a sense of self-worth (i.e. Kara's confrontation with Heath in Part 7), it has a domino effect. As the result of witnessing what Kara does, Jenny is able to stand up for herself with Callie, who is also, it could be argued, inspired by Jenny's revelation of the Kara/Heath confrontation to stand up to Tinsley.



# Style

## Point of View

In the broadest terms, the narrative of "Reckless" unfolds from the third person point of view, with the author's narrative voice providing commentary and insight on the perspectives, experiences, feelings and insights of each of the main characters. What's interesting and engaging about the book, however, is the way that point of view shifts from character to character. In other words, the narrative is never entirely objective but alternatively subjective, with incidents being described and/or experienced according to the unique perspective of a particular character. While it's an effective and engaging technique throughout the narrative, the most notable and intriguing example of both its boundaries and its benefits is found in Part 9, during Dumbarton Hall's illicit party and the game of "I Never" (see "Objects/Places"). In that section, and as discussed elsewhere in this analysis, the action is observed and narrated from Easy's point of view, but can be interpreted from the more objective point of view of the reader who, from what has gone on before, understands more than Easy does about what is taking place and why. It's a very effective way to draw the reader both intellectually (i.e. figuring out what's going on) and emotionally (i.e. relating to the why of what's going on) to the action.

In terms of the work's thematic points of view (see "Themes" above), it could be argued that at its core, the book is fairly conservative in the ethics and morals associated with both the events of the story and the lessons/values taught the characters by those events. Deliberate lying, irresponsible honesty, rule breaking, and a lack of individual self-respect all either lead to unhappiness (in the case of most of the characters) or to being feared or disliked (in the case of bad girl Tinsley.) Here it's also important to note how sexuality is portrayed. In general, while the idea of having sex at the young age of the characters is presented as appealing, none of them actually DO it, a situation which, when juxtaposed with the above mentioned triggers of unhappiness, seems to suggest that sexuality, at this age, is another choice that could very well lead to uncomfortable consequences (to say the least).

## Setting

The narrative is set primarily in Waverly Academy, an expensive boarding school for the well-to-do in the north eastern United States (New England), traditionally a home for old families and old money. It could be argued, however, that the actual physical / geographical setting of the narrative is less significant than what the setting implies about the people who live there. The Academy's students are, with a few exceptions, children of privilege and wealth, used to getting their own way, accustomed to materialism and to being indulged. With this in mind, the setting can therefore be seen as both providing and defining a context within which the both the restrictions imposed by Dean Marymount on the roof top parties and the actions they take in defiance of



those rules (i.e. the secret party) are heightened. Granted, for young people of the ages of the characters here, rules are arguably MADE to be broken, but for these PARTICULAR characters, given their personal contexts and the physical setting that simultaneously reinforces and confines that context, rebellion is not remotely surprising (and unarguably makes for a better story). Rules are, in the eyes of most of them, for the poor people. In other words, setting in "Reckless" is simultaneously a defining characteristic for the characters (i.e. a reflection of their social and financial status) and an obstacle for them to overcome (i.e. a school in which rules are intended to be followed but, as mentioned above, ultimately made to be both defied and broken).

## Language and Meaning

Language is used in several intriguing ways in this section, beginning with the title (see "Topics for Discussion - In what ways does the book's title ...") and continuing with the chapter titles (see "Topics for Discussion - In a brief, one or two sentence statement ..."). Apart from those, the book's other important use of language is the frequent, almost constant, use of high-end, real-world brand names to identify the clothes, accessories, and other possessions of the characters. This aspect of the book is a carry-over from the series of books from which THIS series was spun off, the "Gossip Girl" series, in which both the narrative and its characters seem obsessed with identifying clothes and other items as being both expensive and enviable. Here as in the "Gossip Girl" series there is, at times, the sense that all this product placement (for lack of a better term) comes very close to being deliberately over-exaggerated, to the point of starting to come across as satirical. Satire is a form of humor in which a particular trait of an individual or group of individuals is exaggerated in order to point out how (empty? foolish? corrupt?) that trait actually is. In the particular case of the "Gossip Girl" and "It Girl" books, it could be argued that the constant inclusion of designer labels, etc. is satirical in intent, that its inclusion is connected to an authorial desire to, on some level, point out how superficial and shallow the characters - or more specifically, their PRIORITIES - actually are.

## Structure

Aside from the opening section, which contains a great deal of exposition (i.e. information necessary for the reader to have in order to understand the action that follows), the narrative unfolds in what might be described as a traditional, straightforward, linear fashion. Action leads to reaction, cause leads to effect, A happens which leads to B, reaction to B leads to C, and so on. Within that overall framework, each chapter ends with what might be described as a cliff-hanger or mini-climax, in which the situation leaves a question unanswered in the mind of the reader about what's going to happen next. These climaxes increase in intensity until the book's major climax, the game of "I Never" in Part 9. What's particularly worth noting here is that at the same time as almost all of the major characters are gathered in the same physical location, the game brings almost all of them to the same EMOTIONAL location as well, the point in their varied, respective narratives in which the various secrets they've been keeping



are revealed. As the events of this party bring many of the book's narrative lines, character journeys and thematic explorations (in particular, the thematically central tension between truth and honesty) to a head, manifesting at a point of high overall tension followed by an explosive release of emotional energy in the following sections. These, in turn, can be viewed (in literary terms) as falling action or denouement, in which the crises of the climax are resolved, questions are answered - and, in the case of this and other series, foundations are laid for questions to be resolved in the next book.



## Quotes

"Even though Jenny could already feel her hair frizzing in the dampness, she could appreciate the beauty of the chilly, drizzling rain. The Waverly quad still managed to look stunning - the grass looked unnaturally green, and the brilliant reds and oranges of the enormous oak trees were all cloaked in a lovely grey mist. It looked like a postcard. And she lived in it." Part 1, p. 5

"It always made Brandon sick to think about how little self-respect Callie had and how highly she esteemed the quite possibly sociopathic Tinsley. He couldn't help it - it killed him to see her acting like a mindless clone." Ibid, p. 13

"It was so hard to turn off feelings that had been alive and pulsing for over a year. Just because Easy suddenly decided he was better off with a silly little pink-cheeked sophomore with stripper-sized breasts, she was supposed to just get over it? It was hard." Ibid, p. 22

"[Brett] liked being the one who made the rules, the one who drew the boundaries, the one who had been there, done that." Part 2, p. 30

"And then the whole Mr. Dalton thing - Brett was practically sleeping with the guy and couldn't be bothered to tell her. Tinsley couldn't help trying to steal Mr. Dalton. Lack of loyalty in best friends drove her insane." Ibid, p. 38

"How could he be expected to hit the books when the leaves were changing color and Credo could smell the brisk scent of autumn and practically begged him to take her out riding ... he had to take advantage of it now. He didn't understand people who spent their whole lives doing things the THOUGHT they should do - they were never happy, were they?" Ibid, p. 46

"Callie seemed more Tinsley-like just now than Tinsley herself, and the idea of two Tinsleys walking around campus was truly terrifying." Part 3, p. 59

"...the thing about Easy was that just one look from him - one of THOSE looks - and she felt like Cinderella dressed in the most beautiful gown." Part 4, p. 80

"It was kind of crazy, but whenever she met his buttery brown eyes, she felt like they just saw right down to her bones, cutting through all the clothes and skin and bullshit. Did he do that with everyone or was it just her? It gave her the chills." Ibid, p. 91

"...Mr. Walsh had a way of trivializing everything Easy felt strongly about, and he didn't want to share Jenny with him yet. But maybe it was totally messed up that he was having dinner with his father and not even bringing up the new girl in his life. Or inviting her to dinner." Ibid, p. 96



"PLEASE. Tinsley was doing this nobody girl a fucking favor, allowing her to store the party refreshments in her room. No one even knew who she was before today. She could at least show a little gratitude." Part 6, p. 120

"From the very beginning, Callie had merely tolerated her until suddenly she became useful, and only then was she half nice to her. But Jenny didn't care - she knew Callie wasn't really as cold as Tinsley, and she felt like they might have ended up being really good friends if the Easy thing hadn't come between them. Was it completely naïve to think that Callie would eventually get over that?" Ibid, p. 138

"She didn't want him to get into any more trouble, which was nice. But didn't she ever take risks? What if someday Easy wanted to go, say, skydiving ... would Jenny try to talk him out of it or would she strap on a parachute and jump out of the plane holding his hand? He couldn't help wondering if Callie would be up for it." Part 7, p. 158/9

"For so long, she'd been furious with Jenny. It was easy to blame Jenny's perky boobs or sweet personality, but now I just seemed silly. If Easy had still been in love with Callie, no one would have been able to tear him away. And that was the hardest thing to accept". Part 8, p. 172

"Had he really made a mistake by breaking up with her, or was he just seeing Callie through rose-colored glasses now? Was he destined to be one of those assholes who only wanted the girls he couldn't have?" Part 9, p. 197

"The campus was quiet - patchworks of lights in the other dorms shone through the trees, and somewhere, at the other end of campus, the trustees were getting drunk off Dean Marymount's wine and having a grand old time." Ibid, p. 209

"... Jenny was nice. Jenny hadn't mentioned the fact that all of her hair bands had mysteriously disappeared, even though she must have noticed. Or the fact that Easy's sweet little drawing had also vanished. If their situations had been reversed, Callie would have certainly bitched about it. But Jenny was too nice to do anything." Part 10, p. 214

"Her favorite moments were the ones leading up to that first kiss - when you're not sure if it's going to happen or what it's going to feel like, when your nerves are all on edge, waiting for it. Sometimes - sadly, too many times, for Tinsley - the anticipation was better than the payoff. The kiss, and the guy, often disappointed her. And once the kiss was over and it was only so-so, the whole thing basically ended." Ibid, p. 234

"... it has come to our collective realization that 'a responsible owl' does not try to be someone she is not, even when wearing someone else's clothes; knows who her dorm mates are and who they are not; does not lie about herself, to others or to herself; says what she means and means what she says; [and] respects so that others will too. This is our collective answer. This is what we have learned this weekend and what we won't forget." Ibid, p. 239





## Topics for Discussion

In a brief, one or two sentence statement, summarize the relationship between the title of each chapter and the events of that chapter. Is the title ironic or genuine? What are the implications of the title for the characters and their situations?

In what way does the title reflect the actions and attitudes of the characters? What actions might be described as "reckless"? What do events taking place following acts of recklessness in the book suggest about the novel's thematic perspective on recklessness?

What is your reaction to the character of Tinsley, and to her actions? Do you agree with the suggestion (see "Analysis, Part 3" and "Part 10") that there is a degree of insecurity beneath her maliciousness and selfishness? Do you think that she is just plain self-indulgent and mean? Explain your answer.

How important is it to have the support of other people (friends, family, mentors, etc.) when struggling to develop a sense of self-worth? Is such a sense not defined by a lack of reliance on other people, but more by a strong sense of independent self-value? Or is finding that value in fact valueless if you have no support from others? Explain your answer.

An owl is traditionally a symbol of wisdom and insight. It's also a symbol of silent, skilful, deadly hunting. Discuss the ways in which these symbolic aspects of the owl, or more specifically the Waverly Owl, are reflected in the various characters, situations, and/or events of the narrative.

What do you think the phrase "The IT Girl" means? What is "IT"? In what ways is each of the central characters (Jenny, Tinsley, Callie, Brett, Kara) an "IT" girl? Which of them, do you think, is the main "IT Girl" of the narrative?

Briefly discuss the ways in which each of the book's four protagonists (Brett, Jenny, Callie, Kara) have their sense of self-worth eroded either by outside influences or by inner doubts and/or circumstances. Also discuss the ways in which their actions first reflect this lack of self-worth, and which actions, other than their signing of the pact, reflect their increased self-worth.

Discuss a situation in which your self-respect was challenged. Were you able to defend yourself? Or were you forced into humiliation? How did each experience change you? Discuss how important you think a healthy sense of self-respect is? Would you agree that Tinsley, in her attitude and actions, displays an unhealthy sense of self-respect? Why or why not?

Discuss a situation in which an act of irresponsibility on your part resulted in consequences from which you learned how important responsibility actually is. Then discuss a situation in which someone behaved irresponsibly towards you, and how that



incident affects you and your beliefs about what responsibility is and how it can / should manifest.

Discuss a situation in which keeping a secret, or not telling the truth, has backfired on you. Also discuss a situation in which telling the truth irresponsibly has resulted in difficulty, and telling a truth responsibly has resulted in positive change. How have these situations and experiences affected your experience with honesty and keeping secrets?