

Rush (The Breathless Trilogy) Study Guide

Rush (The Breathless Trilogy) by Maya Banks

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Contents

Rush (The Breathless Trilogy) Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Prologue through Chapter 5.....	5
Chapters 6 through 10.....	8
Chapters 11 through 15.....	11
Chapters 16 through 20.....	14
Chapters 21 through 25.....	17
Chapters 26 through 32.....	20
Chapters 33 through 37.....	23
Chapters 38 through 44.....	26
Characters.....	29
Symbols and Symbolism.....	31
Settings.....	33
Themes and Motifs.....	34
Styles.....	36
Quotes.....	37



Plot Summary

Rush, a novel by Maya Banks, is part of the author's Breathless Trilogy. It is a story of a wealthy, successful man who insists on dominating the women in his life in every sense of the word and how he finally learns to open his heart to love.

Mia Crestwell is the much-younger sister of Jace, who has protected and taken care of her since their parents died many years ago. Jace's two best friends and business partners, Gabe and Ash, have watched Mia grow into a beautiful young woman. When Gabe sees her at a social event, he decides that he must possess her. He presents her with a thick contract that would give him complete control over every aspect of her life, including very graphic and demeaning sexual acts. After thinking it over, Mia, who has not carved out a career for herself and is drifting through life, agrees to the unusual arrangement. They agree that her brother and Ash can never learn about it.

The relationship proceeds, with Gabe demanding constant sex that he alone controls. He makes her his administrative assistant so he can have access to her at all times. He is kind to her in some ways, buying her a new wardrobe and providing a car and driver to take her everywhere.

As their relationship proceeds, Gabe finds himself becoming obsessed with Mia. He begins to have tender feelings toward her that he did not expect. When his ex-wife suggests that he has been in love with Mia for a long time, he becomes upset about the idea of losing the careful control he prides himself on, leading to a terrible mistake. Their contract stipulates that Gabe can share Mia with other men if he chooses, and while they are on a business trip to Paris, he decides to exercise that clause to prove to himself that he does not have feelings for her. He ties her hands and feet, then forces her to have oral sex with him while three business associates watch, then he ties her to a coffee table and allows them to touch her sexually. Just as he is about to change his mind, he hears her scream for him as one of the men tries to force his penis into her mouth and slaps her when she refuses. After throwing the men out, Gabe apologizes profusely but sees by Mia's vacant stare that she might never forgive him. However, she does forgive him after making it clear that she expects there to be no other people in their relationship and he agrees.

Back in New York, Mia is shocked when the man who attacked her approaches her on the street and shows her graphic photos taken of the incident. He threatens to publicize them if she does not get information on the bids his competitors submit, but after much soul-searching, she tells Gabe the whole story. He is touched that she did not betray him; so, he takes care of the problem.

Gabe finally begins to give in to his feelings for Mia and they agree to tell her brother about their relationship so they can bring everything into the open. Unfortunately, just hours before they plan to tell him, Jace and Ash walk in on another bondage situation in which Gabe is spanking Mia with a crop and Jace begins to beat him up. Mia is shocked when Gabe refuses to explain the situation to her brother and Ash, but instead coldly



tells her their relationship is over. A few days later, Gabe confesses to Jace that he is in love with Mia and wants to marry her. After he convinces him of his sincerity, Jace agrees.

After pursuing an angry Mia for a few days with no success, Gabe enlists Jace and Ash to bring her to the Christmas tree at Rockefeller Center, a place with great meaning for her, and he proposes to her in front of a large crowd of people. Mia accepts and the story ends with the two of them agreeing that they will go home and work on starting a family.



Prologue through Chapter 5

Summary

Prologue through Chapter 5

Wealthy, successful Gabe Hamilton has had his eye on Mia Crestwell for a long time and now he has decided to make his move. There are a couple of problems though. Mia is thirteen years his junior and the younger sister of his best friend and business partner. Then, there is the contract he wants her to sign, turning over her entire life to him and his sexual proclivities, which are decidedly kinky. Rush is Book One of the Breathless Trilogy by Maya Banks.

In the book's Prologue, a young woman named Mia leaves her apartment, gets into a waiting car with a driver and heads toward midtown Manhattan, clutching a well-thumbed contract. It involves being together with a man named Gabe, who would control, possess and own her. Her roommate, Caroline, says she should not do it if it stresses her out this much, but Mia goes. On the ride, she thinks of her brother, Jace, and feels guilty for keeping such a huge secret for him. Arriving at the HCM building, she goes to Gabe's office and when she sees him, she thinks of everything he promised for their relationship – safety, security, comfort and protection – if she agreed to cede ultimate power to him. Suddenly she feels light and when he sees her he kisses her passionately and says he did not think she would come.

Chapter 1 takes place four days earlier at the grand opening of the latest hotel built by Gabe Hamilton and his two best friends Jace and Ash. All three are 28 and very wealthy and successful. Gabe watches Mia arrive at the event wearing a sexy dress and he thinks he will burn in hell for the thoughts he has been having about her for several years. Now that she is twenty-four, she is old enough for what he wants. He intends on pursuing her. When they speak, Mia is flustered because she has always been attracted to him, but thinks he sees her only as Jace's little sister. He tells her that Jace has already left, then they dance and he takes her onto the balcony and kisses her passionately. As he puts her into a car and sends her home, he tells her to be in his office the following morning at 10 sharp.

In Chapter 2, Mia tells Caroline about her evening with Gabe. Meanwhile, Gabe is in his office, fingering a contract he has prepared for Mia. He recalls that he and his ex-wife Lisa had shared consensual sexual kinks. But, when she divorced him, she made him sound like an abusive bastard in the media. He no longer enters a relationship without full disclosure. Ash and Jace stop by before leaving for a business trip to California, accompanied by a beautiful woman they plan to share, and again Gabe feels guilty about his plans for Mia in light of his friendship with Jace.

In Chapter 3, Mia arrives at Gabe's office feeling nervous and intimidated. He offers her a job as his personal assistant, then makes it clear that it would also be a sexual



relationship, saying he will own her body and soul. When he gets her to admit that she wants him, he gives her a thick contract and asks her to read it over the weekend and return on Monday morning with her answer.

In Chapter 4, Mia sits on a park bench and reads the contract, which requires her to be available to him at all times and cede all power to him in every aspect of her life in exchange for all her physical and financial needs being met. She notes that there is not mention of her emotional needs. While there are not a lot of specifics regarding sex, the contract does say bondage, restraint, and pain play will be involved at his discretion. It implies that she will be asked to sleep with other men also. Mia's head is swimming when she goes to her job at a pastry shop. The pastry shop's owners, Louisa and Greg, like her very much. After the lunch crowd leaves, Gabe comes in and again urges her to quit this job that is not worthy of her. He kisses her before he leaves. The chapter ends with Mia sharing with Louisa and Greg that she needs to tell them something.

In Chapter 5, Mia tells Caroline she quit her job because Gabe offered her one, but she does not tell her the rest. Meanwhile, Gabe is working late when his mother calls to complain about his father, who has left her after nearly forty years of marriage and is sleeping with countless young women, all of which is detailed in the society pages. Gabe arranges to take her to dinner over the weekend, hoping to get her out of the house and back into life. He gets out his phone and looks at a photo he secretly took of Mia, thinking that he will do whatever it takes to possess her.

Analysis

The book's first chapters introduce the main characters and set up the plot. Mia is depicted as somewhat innocent, having lost her parents several years earlier and since then been protected and sheltered by her older brother Jace. Like the heroines in nearly all books of this genre, she is uncommonly beautiful and sexy, but in an unassuming kind of way that makes her that much more alluring to men. She has been well educated thanks to Jace. Although she has a graduate degree, she continues to drift without having a sense of purpose. For this reason, she has little sense of self-assurance, making her susceptible to Gabe's offer. She gets financial support from her brother and emotional support from her roommate Caroline, and there are hints that Caroline has a dark past with men but no details are provided.

Gabe is introduced as much more complex character than Mia. He grew up with wealth but has gained his own money and position without the help of his family. He clearly has a very dark side, as evidenced by his need to dominate women in all ways, including sexually, and his determination to possess Mia as if she were a piece of art, yet his warm relationship with his mother speaks to a gentle, more human side as well.

Although Mia has not yet accepted Gabe's offer when this section ends, the author has set up the potential for conflict in a number of areas, including between Gabe and his partners, between Mia and Jace, and between Gabe and Mia.



Discussion Question 1

Describe Mia's life up to this point. Why do Jace, Ash, and Gabe feel protective of her? Why do you think she has been unable to settle into a career and a focused life?

Discussion Question 2

Why is Gabe so cautious when it comes to having a relationship with a woman? What has happened in his past to change the way he sees women and relationships?

Discussion Question 3

Describe the relationship among Gabe, Jace, and Ash. What binds them together? How does Gabe's potential relationship with Mia threaten to affect their relationship?

Vocabulary

Rumpled, exaggerated, usher (verb), melancholy, angst, revive, emanate, cede, euphoric, capitulation, preoccupation, luxurious, tendril, predatory, inevitable, endure, insurmountable, tout, deluded, inordinately, spurn, coherent, exasperation, fixation, dissipate, resignation, tantalizing, erratic, explicit, contemplate, tutelage, finesse, saunter, initiate, debacle, staunch, consensual, conspicuous, wary, antagonize, imperious, intimidate, mundane, eclectic, dismissive, indolent, elicit, nuance, adhere, autocratic, rapport, unfettered.



Chapters 6 through 10

Summary

Chapters 6 through 10

In Chapter 6, Mia arrives at Gabe's office and says she has decided to accept his proposal but she has a few conditions. She questions him about giving her to other men and he says he would never do anything she was absolutely uncomfortable with. When she asks about a safe word, he says "no" will be sufficient if she is truly frightened or uncomfortable. He also agrees that he will be faithful to her, and they agree that Jace must not know about the sexual part of their relationship. When Gabe says Caroline can cover with Jace, Mia is surprised he knows about her roommate and realizes he has been paying more attention to her than she realized. Feeling that perhaps she has gained a little power in the relationship, Mia signs the contract and hopes she will not live to regret it.

In Chapter 7, Mia spends the rest of the day in human resources filling out the paperwork for her job as Gabe's assistant, then going to a clinic for testing to comply with the contract. She is surprised at her high salary and resolves to save all she can because she knows Gabe will tire of her in a few months. She arrives at her apartment to find Caroline waiting along with their friends Chessy, Trish, and Gina, all of whom question her about Gabe. They decide to go to a club to celebrate Mia's new job and as she is getting ready, she receives a text from Gabe, telling her to rest the next day but be at his apartment at 7 p.m.

In Chapter 8, Mia arrives at Gabe's apartment and they eat a steak dinner he has arranged. Afterward he orders her to undress for him as he sits in an armchair and watches, then he has her sit on his lap and brings her to orgasm with his hand, demanding that she say his name when she comes. Afterward, he carried her to bed and controls the sex completely, including the position of her hands above her head and the fact that she must keep her eyes on him at all times. She obeys and the sex is amazing, and afterward she gets his permission to touch him and feels happy when he says she is beautiful and his.

In Chapter 9, Mia sleeps in Gabe's arms, which is something he usually does not allow a woman to do after sex with him. He feels guilty because he had said he would ease her into their sexual relationship. Then, he had lost control of his desires. When she wakes up and moves to leave, he tells her to call Caroline and have her pack an overnight bag, which his driver will pick up. She teases him by asking if he will make her call him master or sir, and although he wants her again, he finds himself enjoying the casual banter. They discuss when they first became attracted to each other and when she says he was her teenage crush, he becomes alarmed and warns her not to fall in love with him, which offends her and he says he will not bring it up again. Finally he can



no longer control himself and he takes her again, and afterward he thinks that he is a selfish bastard, but he wants to be better with her.

In Chapter 10, Mia falls asleep and awakens to find Gabe putting her on her knees in bed and tying her hands together behind her back. He says that they will have anal sex eventually but that she is not yet ready for that. After getting her very aroused and making her beg, he brings her to orgasm, then they take a shower together and he takes her to bed so she can get a few hours of sleep before work.

Analysis

Although much of the text in these chapters consists of graphic descriptions of the sex between Gabe and Mia, there are a few other revelations. In Chapter 6, Mia proves that although she is agreeing to the extreme terms of their contract, she does have some standards when she balks at the idea of being handed over to other men against her will and the lack of a safe word in case things get out of hand. Gabe does not completely capitulate to her concerns. Instead, he reassures her in somewhat vague terms. His actions hint that these issues might come up again later in the novel. Mia is also realistic enough to know that the relationship is bound to be a short one based on Gabe's track record, so she decides to be practical and use the opportunity to save money and perhaps get some business experience that will serve her later.

The later scenes in Gabe's apartment are primarily descriptions of their sex acts, but the author does begin to show a slightly different side of Gabe. While he is still, in his words, a selfish bastard who takes pleasure whenever and wherever he wants it, he already has begun to feel differently about Mia. He allows her to sleep in his arms and admits that he enjoys it. Although he still treats her primarily as a sex object, he realizes that his feelings for her are more gentle and caring than he had anticipated.

Discussion Question 1

What concerns does Mia bring up before signing the contract? How does Gabe respond? Why is Mia satisfied with his reaction?

Discussion Question 2

Why do you think Mia agrees to go along with Gabe's arrangement? What intrigues her about it? What frightens her?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the scene in Chapter 9 when Mia and Gabe talk about when they first began to notice or become attracted to each other. Why does Gabe become distressed when she says he was her teenage crush? How does Mia react to his response?



Vocabulary

Allay, entail, primal, cower, furrow, cusp, speculate, irrefutable, omission, embark, sordid, compliance, predatory, consternation, savor, contemplate, affix, exhilaration, implicitly, initiate, inevitable, stint, ponder, curt, crevice, pelt (verb), sequester, impending, validation, indomitable, tantalizing, inundate, albeit, assuage, unfazed, vulnerable, discernible, taut, sporadic, emanate, ferocity, reciprocate, ascribe, riveted, sated, assent, rectify, volatility, banter, pensive, alleviate, scorn.



Chapters 11 through 15

Summary

Chapters 11 through 15

Chapter 11 opens the following morning as Mia and Gabe get ready for work. He orders her not to wear underwear at any time she is with him, including in the office. When they arrive at work, a desk for Mia has been placed in Gabe's office and although he has made it clear that sex in the office will be a regular thing, he gets right to work instead. He gives Mia a thick folder with information about a number of people important to the business and tells her to memorize all the information so she can help him charm them to get their money and support.

In Chapter 12, Eleanor, the company's receptionist, takes Mia around the office and introduces her to the other employees, most of whom raise an eyebrow when they realize she is Jace's sister and Gabe's personal assistant. Afterward, Mia is in a bathroom stall when some other women come in and begin talking about her brother and Ash, revealing that they are into threesomes. They also discuss rumors that Gabe makes his women sign a contract and one woman reveals that she picked the lock on his office, went through his desk and saw the boilerplate contract. Back in her office, Eleanor brings lunch for Mia and she worries that people will see that she is treated differently and that she is not much different than a prostitute.

In Chapter 13, Gabe returns to the office, locks the door and performs oral sex on Mia on his desk. After she is dressed again, she has trouble focusing on her work because she is so aware of his presence and she thinks about how hard it will be to find someone who can live up to him when their affair eventually ends. Gabe interrupts her thoughts to say that they are going to a cocktail party that evening and she will need to use the information she has been memorizing about various business associates.

In Chapter 14, Gabe takes Mia to a boutique and chooses some clothing for her to wear that evening, ensuring that the dress is sexy but not too revealing. Afterward they are in the car when Jace calls Mia. She does not mention the job but knows he will find out when he returns in a couple of days, and they plan to have dinner together. She expresses her concern to Gabe that she is being paid for sex but he assures her that she will have plenty of work to do. She tells him about the gossip she heard in the bathroom, including the fact that someone broke into his office although she does not know who it was, and he is furious and vows to fire the person. Back at his apartment, she performs oral sex on him but he is in complete control of everything.

In Chapter 15, Gabe is silent as they drive to the cocktail party, reflecting on the fact that he has no self control when it comes to her. Arriving at the party, he introduces her to the host, Mitch Johnson, and some other associates, and Gabe is impressed when Mia charms everyone by chatting about the information she has memorized about them.



Suddenly Gabe is shocked when his father enters with a young blonde named Stella. Gabe is cold to them and his father barely recognized the now-grown-up Mia, but presses Gabe to come to dinner at the new home he has purchased. Mia goes into the restroom and Stella joins her, surprising Mia by asking about rumors about Gabe's expectations of his women. When Mia refuses to discuss it, Stella presses her, saying that even though she is with his father, she wants to go after Gabe because he is younger and more virile. Returning to the party, Mia sees Stella begin to flirt with Gabe and he responds warmly. Mia is wildly jealous when Gabe dances with Stella and touches her suggestively, so she decides to go home and vent to Caroline.

Analysis

Mia knew her situation at the company would be tricky because of her relationship to Jace and the probability that people would think she was sleeping with Gabe, but things get more complicated than she expected in this section. While she was somewhat prepared for rumors about her and Gabe, she did not expect that others suspected that he made his women sign a contract and is particularly shocked when one woman confirms that she has seen the document. This sets up the possibility for a workplace intrigue element to the story to complement the sexual and personal plotlines.

Also in this section, both Mia and Gabe are forced to confront their growing feelings for each other, but in different ways. Gabe is a man who has always gotten what he wants and this continues to be the case as Mia complies with her contract to be submissive to him in all ways, but he is seeing changes in himself. While Mia is realizing the possibility that she is falling in love with him, his feeling for her at this point run more toward uncontrolled lust. However, for the first time he begins to feel guilty about his lack of control. Early on, he made a promise to take things slow and let her get comfortable, but he has to admit to himself that his behavior essentially constitutes rape because he has so little control over his lust. In the meantime, Mia is torn among a number of conflicting emotions -- the worry that she is essentially a prostitute, the sexual longing she feels for Gabe, the intrigue of the somewhat deviant sexual behavior he is introducing her to, and the gnawing feeling that she might be falling in love with him. Therefore when she witnesses his behavior with Stella at the party, her jealousy and anger come from the fact that she has feelings for him as well as the fact that he promised to be faithful to her while they are together just as the contract requires of her.

The story also takes on another nuance with the introduction of Gabe's father, setting up the possibility of further insights into his personality and background.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss Mia's complicated feelings about Gabe at this point in the novel. Have her feelings about him changed since the beginning? If so, how?



Discussion Question 2

Why is the discussion Mia overhears in the bathroom at work so disturbing to her? What new revelations make her uncomfortable and why?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Mia feel uncomfortable when Eleanor brings lunch to her office? What does she think this might imply?

Vocabulary

Maneuver, avert, famished, somber, stifle, innuendo, sumptuous, preoccupied, myriad, du jour, credence, admonishment, rueful, array, directive, consolation, assertion, submissive, ingrained, brusque, avid, reluctance, reverent, transpire, congenial, cordial, indulgent, entanglement, veer, ethic, ascertain, precision, undaunted, inexorably, illicit, incredulous, dissuade, intensify, bristle, exert, wane, thrall.



Chapters 16 through 20

Summary

Chapters 16 through 20

Chapter 16 finds Mia at her apartment telling Caroline about the evening, and she admits that Gabe is amazing in bed. The buzzer rings and it is Gabe, demanding that Mia come out immediately. She gets dressed and goes out to meet him, and he is furious as they drive to his apartment. When she says she is angry about Stella, she denies that she was jealous but says they are in a relationship and she will not share him. He responds by demanding that she go into the bedroom and strip, and when she does, he spansks her 20 times, which arouses her enormously. After a round of very rough sex, he is suddenly very gentle with her and she feels vulnerable and uncertain about the new parts of herself she is discovering, realizing that she should never consider what they have anything more than sex.

In Chapter 17, Gabe lies in bed berating himself for his treatment of Mia. He does not want to feel that he owes her an explanation for what happened with Stella, but she is different so he tells her that he let her come on to him because he wanted his father to see what kind of woman he was involved with. She asks what happened with his wife and he says they shared a relationship in which he had complete control and he does not know why she left because the relationship was consensual, but he will never forgive her for portraying him in court and the media as an abusive monster. After a long conversation, they have sex but this time Gabe forces himself to go slowly and treat Mia as she deserves. Afterward she asks about the contract clause about other men and he asks how she feels about letting him share her with someone else. She admits that the idea intrigues her but he admits to himself that he is not sure now that he could watch another man touch what is his.

In Chapter 18, Gabe's father arrives at his office unexpectedly and when they go to lunch together, he confesses that he made a terrible mistake divorcing Gabe's mother. He never stopped loving her, but simply felt old and he blamed her. Gabe urges him to talk with her but be prepared to work hard if he hopes to win her back. Meanwhile, Jace arrives early from California and is shocked to find Mia working for Gabe, but he accepts her explanation for everything. When Gabe arrives back at the office, Jace talks to him about it and warns him not to cross the line with Mia or hurt her in any way. Jace suggests that he, Gabe and Ash meet for drinks later and Gabe agrees although it means he has to alter his plans with Mia.

In Chapter 19, Gabe returns to his office and discovers that Mia has forgotten his demand that she not wear underwear. He has her take off her panties and skirt. He uses a crop to punish her for wearing underwear.



In Chapter 20, Gabe and Mia are both shocked when Eleanor buzzes in on the intercom to say that Lisa, Gabe's ex-wife, is here and insists on seeing him. Mia leaves, but stays outside the door to eavesdrop and hears Lisa saying she made a mistake and wants Gabe back. Ash arrives and when Mia says Lisa is there, both of them continue to eavesdrop until Lisa leaves, then they hurry into Ash's office, where Jace arrives after seeing Lisa in the hall. Jace and Ash think Gabe will not be taken in by Lisa but privately, Mia is not so sure. Ash invites himself to have dinner with Jace and Mia the following night, which Gabe learns about, causing him to tell Mia not to forget who she belongs to. In a show of power, Gabe demands oral sex, but Mia takes a more gentle approach, offering him the love she knows he will not ask for.

Analysis

Mia goes through a great deal of confusion in these chapters as she tries to navigate her strange relationship with Gabe. One minute she is confused, jealous and angry that he is apparently coming on to another woman but she continues to accept whatever treatment he offers her, whether it is an explanation for his behavior, punishment for forgetting his rules or more gentle sex focusing on her when he is in the mood for that. While she still believes their relationship will never be more than what it is, she is slowly seeing another side to him through his feelings for his parents and disappointment about their divorce because although he is very angry with his father and proclaims to want a very different relationship with his own women, he still misses and craves the loving marriage his parents once had.

Gabe receives shocking news from two unexpected visitors. First his father surprises him by announcing that he has made a mistake by divorcing his mother and further claiming he has not slept with any of the women he has been seen parading around town with. He is set up as the opposite of his son, whose sole reason for wanting a relationship with a woman is for sex, and furthermore, for kinky sex that he alone controls. This scene sets up a parallel later in the novel when Gabe realizes that he has lost Mia through his own boorish behavior and must grovel just as he advises his father to do if he has any hope of repairing his marriage.

A visit from his ex-wife Lisa also sets Gabe on edge and sets up the scene for a later visit that will have a profound impact on him and his relationship with Mia.

Finally, the revelation that Mia is working for Gabe goes reasonably well with Jace, but he provides plenty of warnings not to damage his sister in any way. Again, this sets up future scenes when the truth about the nature of the relationship is revealed. The discussion between Mia and Gabe about the other-men clause in their contract will also come back around at a later point.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Gabe not moved by his ex-wife's visit to his office? Why does he not give her the benefit of the doubt and assume that she might be sincere?



Discussion Question 2

Does Jace react as Mia and Gabe had expected when he learns she is working for the company? What are his concerns? Are they well-founded?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the relationships in Gabe's life: his relationship with his parents, with Mia, with Lisa, and with Jace and Ash. How does he feel about each of these people and how are his interactions with them different? How are they the same? Does the difference between his relationships with women and the previously happy marriage of his parents seem to give him pause for thought?

Vocabulary

Stalk (verb), uncompromising, confrontation, vehemence, hypocrite, repugnant, alleviate, revel, stave, abhorrent, lurk, perilous, semblance, inferno, exquisitely, scornful, chafe, ramifications, grapple, delve, naive, bemused, disgruntled, volatile, precarious, decadent, plague, stilted, defection, agog, cliché, reconciliation, deluded, scrutinize, saunter, capacity, nepotism, grimace, circumspect, debauchery, reprimand, assail, mar, mortifying, contemplate, ire.



Chapters 21 through 25

Summary

Chapters 21 through 25

In Chapter 21, Gabe and Mia are leaving the office when they run into Ash, who has returned for a file, but he does not appear to have heard them in Gabe's office. Ash and Mia flirt innocently and she thinks about how attractive he is but realizes nothing can happen between them. Back at the apartment, Mia gets dressed up and she and Gabe go to dinner, where he tells her about his father's regrets about the divorce. Later they dance very close and Mia loves the intimacy between them, feeling that she could fall in love with this version of Gabe. After sex in the car, Gabe drops her at his apartment and leaves to meet Ash and Jace.

In Chapter 22, the guys meet for drinks and Gabe tells them about his conversations with his father and Lisa. Jace says he has made some calls and learned that Lisa needs money because she has spent most of the divorce settlement, and Gabe assures them he can handle her. They discuss Mia and Gabe says she is doing a great job at work and tries to drop the subject. When he arrives back at his apartment, Gabe is ready for sex but is touched by the sight of Mia sleeping soundly so he just lies down beside her and thinks about how nice it feels.

In Chapter 23, at the end of the work day Gabe drops Mia off at her apartment and says his driver will pick her up in the morning. Caroline is thrilled to see her and Mia agrees to go with her and their friends to a club on Friday night, although she wonders if Gabe will agree to that. Caroline also tells her that she is interested in a guy named Brandon Sullivan, a bouncer at the club, but she is gun-shy because the last man she dated turned out to be married, so Mia offers to have Jace check him out. Mia has a great evening with Jace and Ash, but as they prepare to leave the pub, Erica Houston, the girl they took to California and later dumped, shows up and causes a small scene. Arriving at her apartment, Mia is pleased to get a text from Gabe, asking her to let him know when she is home safely.

In Chapter 24, Gabe arrives at his office early and takes a call from his mother, who tells him his father wants to reconcile. They talk for a few minutes and Gabe urges her to take her time and consider what is best for her. As he waits for Mia, he thinks that she has become an addiction for him. When she arrives, he inserts the last and largest of the anal plugs and after sex, he tells her that they will spend the weekend together, then she will accompany him on a business trip to Paris the following week. She is excited about Paris, but hesitatingly tells him she has plans for Friday night. He does not ask for details although it is his right, but agrees that she will come to his apartment on Saturday morning.



In Chapter 25, Mia goes out with her friends. Caroline is thrilled because Jace's background check on Brandon found that he was single and apparently a hardworking, honorable guy, and when they arrive at the club where he works as a bouncer, he gets them into the VIP area. They spend the evening drinking and dancing, and although Mia tries to pace herself, by 2 a.m. she is quite drunk when Brandon and Caroline put her into a cab. Checking her phone for the first time, she finds dozens of calls and texts from Gabe, who is waiting angrily at her building when she arrives. Once inside her apartment, she vomits. Then, she passes out and Gabe puts her to bed, thinking they will have a long talk in the morning.

Analysis

In these sections, the sex between Gabe and Mia becomes increasingly graphic. He is obsessed with possessing her sexually, and he is increasingly focused on the promise of anal sex, but at the same time he is beginning to experience other feelings for her as well.

More about Gabe's character outside the realm of sexual dominance is revealed through his relationships with his parents and business partners. He comes from a family of wealth and position, but apparently had a very normal childhood with loving, attentive parents, which makes their divorce devastating for him even though he was an adult at the time. Gabe's close relationship with his mother reveals aspects of his character that he hides from most people, as it is diametrically opposed to the way he treats other women. His disdain for his father's boorish behavior is ironic in light of his own private life, but for Gabe the difference is that his deviant behavior is carried on behind closed doors while his father has humiliated his mother through his public behavior. Gabe's relationship with his parents and his admiration for their marriage leave open the possibility that he might opt for a similar relationship in the future.

Gabe's feelings toward his ex-wife Lisa are also important to note. His sense of loss following their divorce does not stem from a loss of love but rather from the betrayal he felt when she lied about the nature of their relationship in the courts and media.

Chapter 22 highlights the deep friendship and loyalty among Gabe, Jace and Ash, setting up the degree of devastation that could result from Jace inevitably learning about the nature of the relationship between Gabe and his sister.

Gabe experiences continued personal growth in these chapters as he begins to admit to feeling more for Mia than he anticipated, but rather than giving in to those feelings, he resents them and pushes them down.

Discussion Question 1

How does the relationship between Gabe and Mia shift subtly in Chapter 21? How do both of them seem to feel about these changes?



Discussion Question 2

Compare the breakup of Gabe's marriage with that of his parents. What has been the effect of each breakup on Gabe?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Mia feel it is important to keep her club date with her friends? Why does she avoid telling Gabe the specifics about her plans?

Vocabulary

Reprimand, teeter, irrevocably, loathe, plummet, forte, finagle, inscrutable, cryptic, enigma, enticing, consternation, rueful, transcend, torrid, morbidly, venue, terse, monstrosity, reconcile, manipulative, coddle, discerning, riveted, alleviate, coherent, inception, relent, entrenched, caveat, paranoid, irate, suppress, indulgent, innocuous, interject, disquiet, crass, antsy, radiate, advocate, ironic, agitation, hedonistic, blatant, suffuse, discern.



Chapters 26 through 32

Summary

Chapters 26 through 32

Chapter 26 finds a very hung-over Mia awakening to an angry Gabe, who orders her to dress quickly. When they leave her apartment, she is surprised to find that he becomes very gentle, carrying her into his apartment and making breakfast for her, but after she has eaten his anger explodes and she is baffled about why. He explains that he was worried because he did not know where she was or if she was hurt or dead, and she apologizes for being thoughtless. He says his concern was for her safety, not a need to control her, but he also tells her that after both of them have a nap he will punish her for worrying him.

In Chapter 27, Mia apologizes again about causing Gabe worry, then he administers her punishment with a leather crop, which is painful but also causes her to become aroused. Afterward they have anal sex, then he gently washes her in the shower.

Chapter 28 takes place on Monday as Gabe and Mia are at the office preparing for their trip to Paris. When Mia goes out to get lunch for them, Lisa arrives and again tries to convince Gabe to reconcile but he refuses. Mia arrives with the food, but quickly leaves when she sees that Lisa is there, then Lisa accuses Gabe of wanting Mia for years and asks if he is in love with her. She threatens to warn Mia about what she is getting into and asks what it is worth to Gabe for her to not talk to Mia, but Gabe explodes and says she will be banned from the office building from now on. After Lisa leaves, he broods about what she said and cannot discount her observations. Gabe is quiet during the flight to Paris and after they arrive, so Mia takes advantage of the opportunity for a shower and nap since she has already memorized all the information on the potential investors they will be meeting with. They are French developer Stephane Bargeron and American developers Charles Willis and Tyson "Tex" Cartwright.

In Chapter 29, dinner with the prospective investors goes well as Mia charms all of them and they obviously lust after her. Gabe continues to think about Lisa's question and he decides to prove to himself that his obsession with Mia is not unbreakable by exercising the clause in the contract about other men. When Gabe and Mia arrive at their hotel suite, he orders her to strip, then restrains her arms and legs with a satin rope. The three men arrive and after discussing business, Gabe orders Mia to perform oral sex on him as the men watch. Afterward, he ties her to the coffee table and tells them they can touch and pleasure her, but not penetrate her or hurt her in any way.

In Chapter 30, Gabe immediately regrets his decision as the men begin to touch Mia. He turns away and just as he is deciding to put a stop to it, Mia cries out for him and he turns to see Charles trying to force his penis into her mouth. When she refuses to allow it, Charles backhands her across the face and Gabe begins to beat him, then forces all



three men to leave. He unties Mia, who is bleeding and in shock, and apologizes profusely, feeling devastated that he had allowed and even encouraged this to happen. She allows him to help her shower and get her into bed, but she says nothing and her eyes show only fatigue and defeat. She allows him to put his arm around her as she falls asleep, but Gabe lies awake wondering if she can ever forgive him or if he can forgive himself.

In Chapter 31, Mia awakens to find that Gabe has ordered breakfast. He says he has cancelled their business engagements and arranged a flight home the following morning, but today he will take her to see all the sights of Paris. She eagerly agrees, even though she knows that afterward she will have to say things that might end their relationship. They spend a perfect day and evening enjoying the city, then both are reluctant for it to end because they must now face reality.

In Chapter 32, Mia tells Gabe how much she hated what happened the previous night and says that the only man she wants to touch her is him, regardless of the contract, adding that if it happens again she will walk away forever. Again he apologizes and when she asks why he did it, she says it was because he is a coward, which she does not understand. She is still puzzled about his mood since they left New York and his behavior in Paris but she forgives him and says she is not going anywhere as long as it is just the two of them. He agrees and she asks him to make love to her. Later during the night, she awakens and asks if she can touch him, then for the first time she takes control of their sex and he is overwhelmed and overcome that she touches a part of him he'd thought was inaccessible.

Analysis

Gabe shows another side of himself in Chapter 26 when he expresses genuine concern for Mia's well-being. He makes her see that her actions were foolish, drinking so much without having food in her stomach, and going home alone in a taxi when she was not in full control of her faculties. However his new gentle side disappears again in the following chapter when he beats her with a leather crop, stating that it is meant as punishment for what she did wrong, but he also intends for it to arouse her sexually and it does. He finally gets the anal sex he has been craving and Mia finds it strange but also pleasurable, so she is gradually coming around to a point of enjoying his rough and sometimes twisted sexual practices.

Lisa's second trip to Gabe's office is a significant one. On her first visit, she merely annoyed him by suggesting that they reconcile. But, this time she sees Mia and realizes that they are in a relationship. The very fact that she discusses Mia with him sets off his anger. However, when she asks if he is in love with her, his feelings reach an entirely new level. He realizes that he treats Mia differently than he has treated other women with whom he has had the same arrangement. But, at this point he is not prepared to admit that he might actually have loving feelings toward her and to have that suggested by his ex-wife, of all people, puts him into a very dark and dangerous mood. It is for that reason that he determines to prove to himself, and presumably to everyone else, that he



does not have feelings for her by humiliating her in front of his business associates and then letting them touch her. Even though he sets limits by telling them not to penetrate her, the situation is no less frightening for Mia and it becomes even more so when Charles tries to enter her mouth and hits her for refusing.

Mia's behavior the following day is perplexing, to say the least. Rather than insisting on going home immediately, she allows Gabe to squire her around Paris and buy her lavish gifts even though she intends to have a serious talk with him later. Most female readers will find this hard to condone or understand. His subsequent apology and statement that he behaved the way he did because he is a coward speaks to his fear of admitting his feelings for Mia, but since he does not fully explain, she continues to be puzzled by his behavior.

Discussion Question 1

Why do you think Mia agrees to explore Paris with Gabe after what happened the night before? Do you agree with this decision? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Lisa's discussion with Gabe affect him so much? She visited him before and he simply reacted with anger. What was different about this time?

Discussion Question 3

After their discussion on their last night in Paris, what is the significance of Gabe and Mia's lovemaking? Why is this different from other times they have been together? Why is it important to the development of the characters?

Vocabulary

Trudge, rant, euphoria, dubious, tentative, enlighten, vulnerable, immense, molten, deceptive, impale, methodical, grovel, temper (verb), calculating, livid, discount, transpire, curt, panoramic, dismissive, lucrative, competitive, extensive, rehash, refute, adamant, delve, tantalize, proclivity, reprehensible, desolation, respite, ultimatum, agitation, fervent.



Chapters 33 through 37

Summary

Chapters 33 through 37

In Chapter 33, Mia is thrilled at the way things are going with Gabe since Paris. He is loving and protective of her, and rather than telling her what he expects her to do, he asks her. On this day, he says that since the contractor for the new project will be selected next week, he will be returning to Paris soon and asks if she wants to go and she eagerly agrees. She goes out to get lunch for them and as she is returning to the building, Charles, the man who assaulted her, appears and pulls her aside. He demands that she give him information on the other bids so he can come in low and get the job. When she refuses, he shows her cell phone pictures of her during the events in Paris, and he says that he will release them publicly if she does not cooperate. Shocked and soaked from the rain, she returns to the office and Gabe sends her home to get dry, and she hates the fact that she is lying to him by not telling him what happened.

In Chapter 34, Gabe gets home to find Mia sleeping on the couch in the dark. It looks like she has been crying. He wonders if she is sick, but she does not appear to have a fever. As he watches her sleep, he thinks about how much she means to him. Finally, he wakes her and gives her some soup. She assures him she is fine except for a headache. As she falls asleep in his arms, she says she does not regret her decision to be with him even for a moment. He thinks it sounds almost like a prelude to a goodbye.

In Chapter 35, Mia arrives at Gabe's office even though he told her to stay home and rest. She is clearly upset and says she must tell him the truth about what happened the previous day. She tells him everything, and he sees the bruises on her arms from when Charles grabbed her. He is incensed; but, he is also incredibly touched that she came to him for help rather than betraying him as most people would have done, particularly since the entire situation is his fault. He comforts her and sends her home to wait for him, saying he will ensure that Charles Willis never threatens her again.

In Chapter 36, Gabe goes to Charles' office and hits him, telling him that if he goes public with the photos Gabe will have him charged with rape. He also assures him that if he ever goes near Mia again, he will spend every penny he has to ruin him, then he returns home and tells Mia the problem has been solved. He also surprises her by suggesting that they stop hiding their relationship from Jace, and she agrees that they will tell him when he returns to town early next week. Then they plan to spend the weekend relaxing together.

In Chapter 37, Gabe and Mia have a good weekend together, but Gabe wonders what he will do for Thanksgiving later that week. His parents are working on reconciling but he still feels awkward around them and he does not want to be away from Mia. On Sunday night, he tells her that he wants her to try bondage again to see how



pleasurable it can be and forget about the horrible experience in Paris, and she agrees. He ties her to an ottoman and as things are proceeding, Gabe is oblivious to the sound of the elevator opening. So, he and Mia are shocked when Jace and Ash appear. The chapter ends as Jace's fist connects with Gabe's jaw.

Analysis

The problematic nature of Mia's relationship with Gabe surfaces again with Charles' blackmail attempt. Gabe's behavior has placed her in a compromising position in which photos were taken. The ramifications could be huge if the photos are released. Her first thoughts are of Jace and how shocked and humiliated he would be if such photos of his sister appeared in public, causing a much worse situation than if he merely learned about her relationship with Gabe. In addition, Gabe's ex-wife has already humiliated him publicly by telling lies about their consensual relationship during the divorce proceedings. Photos of this nature would forever cement in the minds of the public an image of him as a cruel, abusive man, something that would destroy his business and personal reputation. However, she does the right thing in the end by going to Gabe and letting him handle the situation, which he appears have done effectively.

Gabe's feelings for Mia continue to deepen through this situation as he realizes that most people would have taken the easy way out and given Charles the information he was requesting. Mia takes a different path for several reasons. She honestly does not want to betray Gabe because she cares about him and she realizes there would also be ramifications for Jace and Ash as well. In addition, she knows Gabe well enough by now to realize that no matter how low a bid Charles submitted, Gabe would never hire him for any kind of work after what happened in Paris, and Charles would then be angry and release the photos anyway. From the beginning, Gabe has promised to protect and take care of her, and he has lived up to that promise with the exception of the events in Paris that led to this incident, so she trusts him to do whatever it takes to protect her from this potential humiliation, and of course he will do it because he fully realizes he is responsible.

The section ends with a scene that has been inevitable from the beginning as Jace discovers Mia's relationship with Gabe in the worst possible way. It would be shocking enough to find them in bed together. But, seeing his sister tied to an ottoman and being beaten with a crop is a complete shock and potentially the end of their friendship and business partnership.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Mia not go to Gabe immediately when Charles tries to blackmail her? Why does she eventually decide to go to him?



Discussion Question 2

What clues exist indicating that Jace will discover Mia's relationship with Gabe?

Discussion Question 3

Do you think Gabe handles the situation with Charles effectively? Were there other things he might have done differently?

Vocabulary

Discern, absurd, exacting, demeanor, sluice, illicit, untenable, retaliate, integral, begat, concierge, exuberant, infinitely, besieged, insatiable, prelude, pensive, accelerate, menacing, vehemence, cordial, scrutiny, credibility, incoherent, conviction, stark, ensue, excruciating, bemusement, abrasion, meticulous.



Chapters 38 through 44

Summary

Chapters 38 through 44

In Chapter 38, Jace continues to rail at Gabe, asking if he wants Mia to think this is what a real relationship is like and that his twisted desires are normal. Ash takes Mia into the bedroom and puts a robe on her, but all she wants to do is get back to Gabe, who is thinking that Jace is right because he has treated Mia wrong from the beginning. When she returns to the living room, Mia refuses to leave with Jace and Ash, but Gabe is cold toward her and tells her to leave because their relationship is over. Her protests get no response, so she leaves with Jace and Ash, telling Gabe that one day he will realize that letting her go was a mistake, but it will be too late. In the car, she says that everything about their relationship was consensual and calls her brother a hypocrite because it is also not normal for two men to share the same woman as he and Ash do. She says she wonders if things would be different if they had been able to reveal their relationship as they had planned, and she wonders what she will do next as she refuses to return to HCM in any capacity.

In Chapter 39, they arrive at Mia's apartment and she asks Jace and Ash to leave, but before they do, Jace assures her that they will spend Thanksgiving together. After they leave, Mia tells Caroline the entire story, including the fact that Gabe clearly was falling for her and it scared him. Still, she says she deserves better even though she can do nothing about the fact that she loves him.

In Chapter 40, Mia gets back her old job at the bakery but makes it clear that she plans to look for other opportunities. Jace and Ash arrive to take her to dinner and Ash mentions that Gabe looked and sounded awful that day at the office. The guys have planned a trip to the Caribbean for the three of them over the Thanksgiving holiday and Mia tries to appear happy about it although she knows it will be difficult to go back to her old life on Monday.

Chapter 41 takes place on Monday morning as Gabe is brooding in his office, looking at his photos of Mia and thinking about how he took the away her joy and her smile. Devastated over losing her, he goes to Jace's office and says he is in love with her and wants to marry her. Eventually he convinces Jace that he is sincere and Jace, saying he only wants his sister to be happy, wishes him luck getting her back, adding that he will need it.

In Chapter 42, Mia reflects that she enjoyed the weekend in the Caribbean but she is sad that she is going back to work at the pastry shop rather than the job with Gabe, which she enjoyed. When she arrives home from work, Gabe is waiting for her. She refuses to talk to him. The next day, he shows up at the pastry shop and later sends



flowers, but she tells Caroline that she told him if he wanted her back he would have to crawl and he is not crawling yet.

In Chapter 43, Mia continues to receive flowers and gifts from Gabe, and he shows up at the pastry shop each day. By Friday, she is getting sick and has a high fever. She walks home in the cold and nearly collapses outside her apartment, but Gabe is there to pick her up and take her inside, where he takes care of her overnight. The next morning, he is gone but leaves medication and a note saying Jace will be by to check on her. Gabe goes to Jace's apartment and tells him Mia is sick, but he left because he has already pushed too hard. He asks Jace to take care of her because he has a ring to buy and other arrangements to make, and he asks Jace to bring her to the Christmas tree at Rockefeller Center on Monday night.

In the book's final chapter, Jace and Ash take care of Mia over the weekend. By Monday, she is feeling better, but she is surprised that she has heard nothing more from Gabe. She does not feel like going out on Monday night, but Jace and Ash insist and she agrees. She is thrilled when they arrive at the tree because visiting it has long been a tradition for her and Jace. There is a stage with a concert taking place and the three of them go to the front, where Gabe appears, gets on one knee and proposes to her. She accepts the proposal and ring, then blurts out that she wants babies, realizing they have never discussed children, but he says he wants them too. She thanks Jace and Ash for their understanding and support, then the guys begin to argue over who will be the baby's godfather and Gabe suggests that he and Mia go home and practice giving them a baby to fight over.

Analysis

Jace reacts the way any brother would be expected to, assuming that Gabe has taken advantage of his sister. His primary concern is that Gabe will soon toss Mia aside, as has been his custom all along, and that the relationship will have given Mia the idea that such twisted sexual relationships are normal, leading her to seek out similar relationships in the future and putting her in danger of getting involved with a man who will abuse her. He seems not to understand her point that while he does not share the same proclivities as Gabe, his own sexual relationships are equally abnormal, as he and Ash routinely engage in threesomes.

Mia is less humiliated by being caught in a compromising sexual situation than by Gabe's utter rejection of her and the fact that he refuses to stand up for her and their relationship. Gabe's reaction stems from his guilt over hurting Mia once again even though he has vowed to protect her. He seems to think he is doing her a favor by letting her go, but the better reaction would have been to speak up and take responsibility.

The book's ending wraps the story up in a neat package, as is the case with most romance novels, but like other novels of this genre, the story bears little if any resemblance to reality. The characters are stereotypes -- the man who is reformed by love and the woman who forgives the unforgivable in the face of a romantic gesture.



Discussion Question 1

How has Mia changed since the beginning of the book? How has Gabe changed? Do you think one has grown more than the other? Why?

Discussion Question 2

What does Mia mean when he calls her brother a hypocrite? Is she correct?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Gabe react as he does when Mia tries to get him to stand up for her and explain their relationship to Jace and Ash? How might the situation have been different if he had behaved differently?

Vocabulary

Assail, composure, quaver, encase, resignation, precarious, chagrined, relevance, unfazed, shambles, evident, thwart, prolong, bombard, manipulation, remedy, persistent, indicator, relentless, unnerve, exasperation, indulgent.



Characters

Mia Crestwell

The book's lead female character, Mia Crestwell, is a woman in her early to mid-twenties who becomes involved with her brother's friend and business partner, Gabe Hamilton. Mia is beautiful and intelligent, having graduated from a good college, but she is drifting, not having carved out a career. Her brother Jace, who is thirteen years her senior, has taken care of her and protected her since their parents died some years earlier, and because he has become quite wealthy, Mia has not been forced to become financially independent. While Jace pays for her apartment and other things, she works at a low-paying job in a bakery although she knows she is capable of more. It is partly her lack of direction that prompts her to agree to Gabe's bizarre contract, but she begins to come into her own not only through their personal relationship, but also her job as his assistant that is created to cover their sexual relationship.

Gabe Hamilton

Gabe Hamilton is a 38-year-old man who, along with his two close friends, has built a successful hotel empire. He has wealth and power, and a need to dominate women in every possible way, including sexually. He has been married and divorced once, and although his sexual relationship with his wife was consensual, she portrayed it otherwise in court and the media during their divorce, causing him to insist that each woman with whom he becomes involved sign a detailed contract giving him complete control over every aspect of her life.

Gabe has been attracted to Mia, the younger sister of one of his partners, for many years, so once she is old enough he approaches her about a relationship and she agrees to his contract. Although the relationship begins like any of his prior ones, he finds himself falling for her, which frightens him and causes him to hurt her deeply. Gabe has also been affected by the divorce of his parents and his father's subsequent public behavior, so despite his bizarre sexual habits, he displays a number of normal traits including a fierce loyalty to his friends and family.

Jace Crestwell

Jace Crestwell is Mia's older brother and one of the three partners in HCM, the company he owns with Gabe and Ash. He is very protective of his sister, having cared for her since their parents died some years earlier.



Ash

Ash is Gabe and Jace's best friend and business partner. He is a surrogate older brother to Mia.

Caroline

Caroline is Mia's roommate and close friend.

Lisa

Lisa is Gabe's ex-wife.

Charles Willis

Charles Willis is a business associate of Gabe's who tries to rape and later blackmail Mia.

Louisa and Greg

Louisa and Greg own the pastry shop where Mia works.

Chessy, Trish and Gina

Chessy, Trish, and Gina are friends of Mia and Caroline.

Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton

Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton are Gabe's parents.



Symbols and Symbolism

Gabe and Mia's Contract

Gabe refuses to enter into a relationship with any woman, including Mia, without having her first sign a contract giving him complete power and dominance over her. The contract also stipulates that she must allow him to dominate her sexually. It is very specific about the kinds of sexual acts she will be expected to participate in, including bondage and pain play.

Anal Plug

Gabe insists that Mia wear a series of anal plugs in order to stretch herself enough to accommodate anal sex with him.

Crop

Gabe uses a leather crop to inflict pain/pleasure on Mia during sex.

Underwear

Gabe refuses to let Mia wear underwear in the office as a symbol of his dominance over her.

Gabe's Photos of Mia

Gabe secretly keeps two photos of Mia on his phone to remind him of how beautiful she is and the fact that he possesses her.

Charles' Photos of Mia

Charles keeps secret photos of Mia's near rape in order to blackmail her into helping him get Gabe's business.

Car and Driver

Gabe provides a car and driver to take Mia everywhere she wants to go, thus giving him control over her at all times.



Restraints

On several occasions, Gabe uses restraints to tie Mia up during sex. Usually he uses them for their mutual pleasure. However, in the Paris hotel room, they are designed to humiliate her in front of the other men.

Christmas Tree

The Christmas tree at Rockefeller Center is an important symbol of Mia's close relationship with her brother Jace because he has taken her there every year since she was little. It is also the scene of Gabe's proposal.

Flowers and Gifts

In Paris, Gabe buys a number of gifts for Mia in an attempt to make up for his behavior the night before. Again, when he is trying to win her back, he showers her with gifts and flowers in a bid for forgiveness.

Settings

New York City

New York City is the home of Mia, Gabe, and the other primary characters in the book. Specific locations within the city where scenes take place include Gabe's office in the HCM Building, Gabe's apartment, Mia's apartment, various restaurants and nightclubs, and the streets of Midtown Manhattan.

Paris, France

A few chapters take place in Paris, France, when Gabe and Mia go on a business trip there. Specific locations include their hotel room and various tourist attractions.



Themes and Motifs

Domination

The primary theme of *Rush* is domination. Gabe Hamilton insists on total domination in any relationship he has with a woman, even requiring each woman to sign a contract to that effect. His domination includes having control over what she wears, where she goes, who she sees and very specific aspects of their sexual relationship.

His need to dominate a woman sexually is an important part of Gabe's personality because he enjoys sexual practices that many would consider deviant – bondage, inflicting pain, anal sex, and generally rough sex. He also insists that Mia look at him and say his name when she climaxes, and he reserves the right to share her with other men if he chooses.

While sexual dominance is central to Gabe's personality, he also exhibits the need to dominate his rivals in the business world. The only relationships he does not try to control are those he enjoys with his two business partners, Jace and Ash, and his parents.

As the story continues, Gabe's feelings for Mia enable him to let her in a bit more and he finds that he is able to enjoy some sexual experiences when she is in control. However, since this is such a foreign concept to him, it causes him to pull away from her and destroy their relationship.

Misogyny

It would be difficult to argue against misogyny as a major theme for this book. Poor treatment of women, including the need to dominate and even abuse them sexually, a lack of respect for their opinions and preferences, and a tendency to toss them aside when a man tires of them are all typical behaviors of misogynists, and the character of Gabe certainly fits that behavior.

Gabe also fits another characteristic often found in misogynistic men – the Madonna/whore concept. While he treats the women with whom he is sexually involved as sex slaves, providing for them financially during the course of the relationship but insisting on sexual acts that are degrading and even painful for them, he is inordinately close to his own mother, with whom he shares a very normal relationship. While his treatment of Mia in the office and in public is overtly respectful, he is, at the same time, degrading her by forcing her to wear an anal plug and no underwear, for example, and after he engages in extremely rough, painful sex with her, he suddenly becomes gentle and caring, helping her shower and clean up.



The Power of Love

As is the case with most novels that fall into the romance category, the power of love becomes a central theme in Rush. While Gabe's original attraction to Mia is strictly sexual and his intentions are to possess and dominate her, like the typical romance hero, he finds himself developing feelings for her. As a man who values power and control over any other quality, these growing feelings disturb him and he tries to push them aside, culminating in the Paris scene in which he attempts to deny his feelings by enabling his business associates to touch her while she is bound to a table.

Some of Gabe's tendencies can be traced back to the breakup of his marriage, as he wife lied about their relationship in court and in the media, causing him to come off as abusive and cruel. This is the situation that led to his insistence on having a binding contract with all women with whom he becomes involved, but his feelings for Mia continue to grow despite his best intentions.

As the book ends, the "hero" realizes the error of his ways and grovels in order to win the heart of his lady, proving that even the most hardened heart can be softened by love.

Styles

Point of View

Rush is written in the third person, providing a narrator who is not involved in the plot to tell the story. The narrator is omniscient and reliable, being able to describe not only the action that takes place, but also the thoughts and feelings of the characters. This is an appropriate voice for this type of book because it gives the reader insights into each of the character's thoughts and motivations at any given time. It enables the reader to observe their growth as it takes place.

Language and Meaning

Rush is written in a straightforward manner using standard American English. After a Prologue and five chapters that are written as a flashback, the remainder of the novel takes place in the present time and proceeds in chronological order.

Since it is a romance novel involving deviant sexual behavior, the book includes many extremely graphic sex scenes with corresponding language. Sexual acts (including bondage, pain play and anal sex) are described in vivid detail, so the book is not for the faint of heart or the easily offended.

Structure

Rush is divided into forty-four chapters plus a Prologue in which Mia makes her decision and goes to Gabe's office to sign the contract he has offered her. The first five chapters then provide the background leading up to that moment going back four days, and the sixth chapter begins telling the story in the present time again.

The chapters are numbered but not titled, and they are of varying lengths. The book contains a balance of exposition and dialogue, and it ends with a sample chapter from the next book in the author's series called The Breathless Trilogy.



Quotes

In essence, the relationship he's proposed would provide her with all of those things. Safety. Security, Comfort, Protection. He'd guaranteed all of those things. All she had to do was agree to cede ultimate power to him.

-- Narrator (Prologue)

Importance: This initially establishes the terms of the contract Gabe is asking Mia to sign.

Gabe fingered the contract he'd taken out and stared at the front page, silent as he contemplated the exact path he wanted to take with Mia. It was new for him to spend any time pondering how he handled his approach. He only did things one way. Straightforward. He treated his personal relationships as he did his business.

-- Narrator (Chapter 2)

Importance: This establishes Gabe's position and hints at the fact that his relationship with Mia will be different from the onset.

If she signed, she agreed to cede power to him not only in the bedroom, but in all aspects of their relationship as well. Decisions were to be made by him. She was his to command.

-- Narrator (Chapter 4)

Importance: This establishes the full extend of the power Mia is agreeing to cede to Gabe.

But I can assure you that I'm never going to do something that I feel you are absolutely uncomfortable with. My job is to be in tune with your wants, needs and desires.

-- Gabe (Chapter 6 paragraph Page 57, Paragraph 1)

Importance: This foreshadows the later scene in which Gabe breaks this promise in the most horrendous way.

He was not a cuddler. Not since he was married had he ever devoted any time to the more intimate parts of lovemaking. Not that he hadn't let women sleep over, but there was always a distinct separation, almost an invisible barrier between him and the other women. Mia hadn't given him much choice in the matter. As soon as he'd withdrawn from her body and cleaned them both, she'd snuggled into his side and fallen asleep. And he hadn't done anything to rectify the matter.

-- Narrator (Chapter 9 paragraph Page 85, Paragraph 2-3)

Importance: This establishes the fact that Gabe's relationship with Mia would be different from the beginning, and that he would allow her to take liberties he has not allowed from other women.



He was a selfish bastard. There was no question about that. He took his pleasure, took what he wanted. Always. But Mia made him want to be . . . better. He didn't want to be this savage monster that took without giving.

-- Narrator (Chapter 9 paragraph Page 93, Paragraph 1)

Importance: This marks the first time Gabe articulates to himself that he feels differently about Mia than previous women in his life.

She let out a sigh. It sounded so much simpler than she knew it was going to be. She was half in love with him already, and that was before sleeping with him. Some crushes just never went away. They built, instead, into something permanent, obsessive and all consuming.

-- Narrator (Chapter 13 paragraph Page 125, Paragraph 3)

Importance: This is the first time Mia admits to herself that she has genuine feelings for Gabe, which explains her willingness to enter such a strange, one-sided relationship with him.

He'd been furious over the lack of respect shown to Mia in the office by the other employees, but he was a huge hypocrite. He'd shown her a far greater lack of respect by treating her like the whore she feared she was.

-- Narrator (Chapter 15 paragraph Page 140, Paragraph 4)

Importance: In this passage, Gabe begins to get some initial insight into the difference between his treatment of Mia and his feelings toward her.

He was unpeeling her layer by layer, exposing a part of her she wasn't familiar with. It made her feel vulnerable and uncertain. What was she supposed to do with this new Mia?

-- Narrator (Chapter 16 paragraph Page 159, Paragraph 5)

Importance: Here Mia begins to see the changes in herself and the fact that she is becoming increasingly under Gabe's spell and vulnerable to him.

She paused and took in a deep breath. He could tell she was getting angry all over again, but he admired that she put it out there. She wasn't afraid of him, and he liked that. He didn't want a meet mouse, no matter that he wanted someone utterly submissive. There was a difference between submissive and spineless.

-- Narrator (Chapter 17 paragraph Page 161, Paragraph 7)

Importance: This begins to explain how Gabe differentiates between a woman who will let him dominate her in every sense of the word and one who has no opinions or thoughts of her own.

Not everyone will betray you, Gabe," she said quietly. "There are many who are loyal to you. You can't control everything. You can't control how someone feels about you. Or what makes them tick. You can only control how you react, how you act, how you think



and feel.

-- Mia (Chapter 17 paragraph Page 166, Paragraph 2)

Importance: Here Mia begins to get Gabe to understand a different type of control than the domineering kind he is accustomed to.

Then his expression grew serious. "You're not just a beautiful woman, Mia. I don't want you to ever forget that. You're more than that. Don't ever let me take so much there's nothing left.

-- Gabe (Chapter 21 paragraph Page 203, Paragraph 8)

Importance: This shows Gabe's growing feelings for Mia and his concern that he will end up destroying her, foreshadowing events that lead to exactly that scenario.

Gabe sat there a long moment, his cock still pulsing and twitching inside her. He raised his hands to cup her face and then he kissed her. It was a direct contradiction to the frenzied way he'd just taken her. It was long and sweet. Warm and so very tender. As if he conveyed by actions what he could never say in words. Would never say in words.

-- Narrator (Chapter 21 paragraph Page 211, Paragraph 8)

Importance: Here Gabe knows his feelings for Mia are growing, but he shows his determination that he will never let her know that or make himself vulnerable to her or any other woman again.

A chance to prove to himself that his obsession with Mia wasn't unbreakable. That he didn't love her. Didn't need her.

-- Narrator (Chapter 29 paragraph Page 275, Paragraph 1)

Importance: This is the fateful moment when Gabe decides to let his business associates have Mia.

The idea that he held such power over her should have contented him. It was what he wanted, wasn't it? Complete control. Her bending to his will. But instead it made him all too aware of the fact that he had the power to destroy her.

-- Narrator (Chapter 34 paragraph Page 322, Paragraph 8)

Importance: Gabe finally realizes that having power over a woman he actually loves is a double-edged sword.

Slowly, he was learning that it was okay to let down his barriers with her and allow her to see a part of him no one ever saw. Just as she trusted him, he also trusted Mia with his most protected asset." "His heart.

-- Narrator (Chapter 37 paragraph Page 344, Paragraph 6)

Importance: Here Gabe finally realizes that he will allow his feelings for Mia to emerge without being afraid of them.