

The Rosie Effect Study Guide

The Rosie Effect by Graeme Simsion

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Plot Summary

Happily married to the woman of his dreams, scientifically minded Don Tillman accepted, albeit hesitantly, the next step in their relationship: Fatherhood. In the novel "The Rosie Effect" by Graeme Simsion Don struggled to come to terms with fatherhood and his role as the husband of a pregnant wife. Being a logical thinker and not particularly socially adept, Don got himself into a variety of messes with both his wife and members of the law. He was arrested for videotaping kids at a playground and then was tagged as a terrorist when he attempted to join Rosie on her flight to Australia because he hoped to keep her from leaving him. Themes in the novel include relationships, parenting, secrets, problem solving methods and the social stigma put on people who are different.

When Don was first told by Rosie that he was going to be a father he ran from her instead of letting her witness him have a meltdown. He struggled with a way to tell Rosie he was happy about the baby without lying to her. He was also stressed because he'd told his friend Gene, whom Rosie hated, that he could stay with them since his wife had kicked him out. Rosie had already laid down some ground rules for her pregnancy. First, Don was to keep her from getting stressed and second, she didn't want any technical discussions of her pregnancy.

Don solved one of his problems quickly by arranging for he, Rosie and Gene to live in an apartment owned by George. George had purchased a three-bedroom apartment below his with plans to use only one of the bedrooms as a beer cooler. He also hired Don to monitor the cooler to make sure it was cooling properly. In the arrangement he set up, Rosie and Don got to live in the apartment rent free. Don used one of the bathrooms in the new apartment as his office. He used the tiles to keep up with his baby's development in vitro, allowing him to keep up with its development but not bother Rosie with the technical aspects of the pregnancy.

Don's next order of business was to prove to himself he would be a good father. He'd suffered a blow when a stranger had told him to do the world a favor and not have any children after she'd interacted with him only a short while. Don's personality, which kept him from forming emotional bonds easily and caused him to be socially inept, was often interpreted negatively by others. Gene suggested Don visit a playground to watch children play. Because he was videotaping the children and because he didn't have a child playing, Don caught the attention of the police. Because the officers interpreted his move to keep them from touching him as being threatening, he was arrested. This began his problems.

Although the officers didn't think that Don was a danger he had to refer him to a psychiatric clinic for evaluation. His appointment was going well until Don's friend Lydia took over his case. She insisted he bring Rosie to see her. Knowing he had been ordered by Rosie not to stress her, Don decided not to tell her about the arrest. He employed a friend's wife to impersonate Rosie.



Meanwhile, Rosie was becoming more and more frustrated with Don's insecurity about being a father and his attempts to help her with her pregnancy. Rosie also began struggling with her own doubts about Don's ability to be a father as well as her own insecurities associated with raising a child. Rosie finally made the decision to leave Don and go back to Australia to have her baby where she would raise it by herself. In a last ditch effort to save his marriage, Don bought a ticket so he could join Rosie on her flight. Because he took no bags with him, Don was tagged as a potential terrorist. The plane on which he and Rosie were riding was turned around because it was suspected Don might have put a bomb in Rosie's bags.

Back in New York, Rosie had the opportunity to go with Don to a party hosted by Don's department at Columbia. Among the videos shown during the presentation was one of Don allowing a baby to play on him during a research project. Rosie realized there was a side to Don that she'd never seen before. Back at the apartment friends gathered for an impromptu celebration of how much Don had helped them despite his social ineptitude. While watching the movie "It's a Wonderful Life" with the group, Don could only think about how big of a hole Rosie was going to leave in his life. Before the end of the evening, Rosie explained to him that she had decided not to leave.



Chapters 1-3

Summary

In Chapter 1, Don was confused because there were two glasses of orange juice on the table on a day that it was specified he and Rosie could drink alcohol. Rosie asked Don what he was cooking. He thought about how different he was from his wife. They were at two different ends of the spectrum in their preferences for order. The only area in which Rosie was organized was in her medical studies. In all others she was disorganized. Don, on the other hand, was highly organized.

In Chapter 2, Don explained how his week had been disrupted even before the orange juice incident. A resident of their apartment building, Jerome, had added a purple shirt to a load of Rosie and Don's clothing, turning their clothes purple. Rosie had no luck when she tried to talk to the man so she asked Don to stand up for her, putting Don in a situation in which he didn't want to be. Worse was the fact that Don had learned his friends Gene and Claudia were separating because of Gene's infidelity. Claudia had thrown Gene out of the house. Gene told Don he was taking a sabbatical from his job in Melbourne as a professor of psychology. Don had arranged for Gene to take his sabbatical at Columbia, the university where Don worked. He planned to tell Rosie he'd told Gene he could stay with them. He had looked forward to the alcohol in order to help ease his anxiety about giving her the news. To take care of the problem, he added vodka and ice to the orange juices. Rosie appeared for dinner wearing a white dress. Don handed her a glass of juice. She raised her glass to toast him and said they had something to celebrate. When she took a drink, however, she spit the juice out. As she was rinsing the juice from the dress she told him they were pregnant.

In Chapter 3, Don struggled to process Rosie's announcement. They had not talked about or planned the pregnancy. He was unable to compose himself so he ran. Unfortunately he met Jerome in the elevator. Jerome believed Don was attacking him and defended himself causing Don to use his martial-arts skills to keep Jerome from hurting him. Don followed Jerome for a while. He finally decided to go to the apartment of his friends, Dave and Sonia, in Queens. He was no longer angry. He wondered how he could explain his reaction to Rosie as he had never told her about the meltdowns he sometimes had. He didn't believe he had a mental illness, just that he was better at logical reasoning than interpersonal skills.

Once Dave and Sonia were assured that Rosie had not been injured, they asked him about his meltdowns. Sonia called Rosie to ensure she was okay and learned Rosie was pregnant. Dave and Sonia both congratulated Don. Afterward, Dave asked Don if he would go with him to see a client for whom he'd built a beer cellar. Back at home Rosie greeted Don with a hug. Don decided it was best to wait until later to tell Rosie about Gene.



Analysis

These opening three chapters of the novel set up the conflict that will be dealt with through the remainder of the story. The major conflict is the struggle Don faced with his rigid, scientific personality when his wife, to whom he was still becoming accustomed after more than ten months of marriage, announced she was pregnant.

One of the major themes of the novel springs from how Don's brain worked. He was a scientist and tended to deal with his life in a logical way instead of from an emotional stance. He says of himself: "My innate logical skills were significantly greater than my interpersonal skills" (p. 20). While he pointed out that without people who thought scientifically there would have been no penicillin or computers his experience proves that people with similar mental wiring were not always socially accepted by society, a problem that Don faced. He pointed out that he had never allowed psychiatrists to label him with a mental illness even though there were several who believed he suffered from mental issues. He does admit that when things get too difficult for him to handle he suffered from emotional disturbances that he called meltdowns. He suffered one of these meltdowns when Rosie surprised him by telling him that she was pregnant even though they had not planned the pregnancy.

Don is very different from the average person. He liked to plan out his life from meals to activities. Even though Don was not allowed to plan sex, he had learned he could easily predict when it would happen based on his actions. Although Don was different, notice there is also information included in this section of the novel that indicated that Rosie was also different. One of these differences that gave Rosie trouble when dealing with other people was her direct approach to communication. Because of her direct form of communication people to whom she spoke often believed she was being confrontational.

Another theme of significant value that is introduced in this section of the novel is that of the problem solving methods that Don used. He liked to work things out logically. This logical way of thinking is demonstrated by the way that Don narrates the story. In several places just in these first three chapters Don lines out and numbers reasons to explain everything from why he acts as he does to how many friends he had. Spreadsheets seem to be Don's favorite way of exploring the options open to him in any particular circumstance and deciding which one was best for him. Note, however, that in some situations, such as the issue with Rosie's towel, Don had learned that he must accept she would not always put it away as he desired.

Because he had an unusual personality, it stands to reason that Don would also have trouble with relationships. In telling his story he said of himself that after ten months and ten days of being married he was still adjusting to being so close to another human being. Don did note, however, that after having lived with Rosie he had noticed he had an increased ability to empathize, or understand the feelings of other people, than he had before their relationship. He believed it was incredible that he and Rosie were so dissimilar yet they were such a successful couple.



One thing to notice in this section of the novel is Rosie's mention to Don that they needed to consider buying a second fridge because theirs was so crowded.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss Don's personality. Why was marriage such a challenge for him?

Discussion Question 2

After Rosie told him she was pregnant, Don had what he termed a "meltdown." Do you believe these meltdowns are a sign of mental illness? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the way Don solved problems. Do you agree with him that a spreadsheet is an invaluable tool for problem solving?

Vocabulary

spontaneity, precipitate, compatible, compromise, rectify, proximity, protocol, aesthetics, recurrence, algorithm, divulge, ludicrous, sabbatical, libido, empathy, appropriation, articulation, equilibrium, ectopic, preemptive, mandatory, omission, paraphernalia, conceded, innate, extenuated, euphorically



Chapters 4-6

Summary

In Chapter 4, Rosie was nauseated the next morning. Don suggested she not take any medicines for the sickness. He suddenly realized there was a possibility Rosie might have drunk alcohol before she knew she was pregnant and was worried about any damage that might have been done. Rosie made a comment that cortisol, caused by stress, could also hurt the baby so it was Don's responsibility to make sure she wasn't stressed during her pregnancy. She asked for a massage.

When Don went with Dave to inspect the beer cellar Dave told him that George, the man who wanted it built had rented the apartment below his own with plans to use only one room for the cellar. During the inspection, George asked about the temperature at which Dave was setting the cooler. Dave gave an incorrect temperature and Don corrected him. George agreed to let Don look after his beer and make sure the cooler was working properly.

Back at home the superintendent of Don's building warned Don that Jerome had registered a complaint against him. Don explained the laundry situation but the superintendent didn't take his explanation into consideration. The superintendent threatened Don telling him that he didn't want any weird people living in the building and that he was very close to being evicted.

In Chapter 5, Rosie talked about the baby over dinner keeping Don from telling her about the Gene issue. They decided to call the baby Bud, an acronym for baby under development. Don segued into a discussion of Gene by telling Rosie they should buy a fold-up bed. When Rose criticized him, Don said they needed the bed because Gene would be coming to stay. Rosie was angry. The following morning Rosie seemed to be in a better mood so Don tried again to talk to her about Gene. Rosie spoke first telling him that Gene could not stay there.

That night the couple was scheduled to work at the Alchemist. Rosie left early because she did not feel well. By himself, Don got them fired when he suggested a lady should not drink alcohol because he believed she was pregnant. On the way home Don decided not to tell Rosie they had been fired. He also sought a solution to the problems he was facing. As he rearranged items in his refrigerator, he decided they needed to get a bigger fridge. He called George.

Chapter 6 begins with a description of how people generally like surprises. Rosie especially enjoyed surprises. Don decided to plan a surprise for her. After she left the apartment to go to work Don began packing. He and Dave took Rosie and Don's things to the apartment where the beer cellar was located. George said he would let Rosie and Don to live in the apartment at no charge. The only drawback was that George and his band practiced in George's apartment occasionally. Along with moving Rosie and Don's



things into the apartment Don and Dave also moved the beer into the cooler. As he unpacked, Don decided to use one of the three bathrooms as an office. At the apartment later, Rosie was impressed by the view. She was also impressed that Don had been able to arrange her cosmetics exactly as she had them in her old apartment. Rosie was pleased they didn't have to pay rent and suggested she could give up her bar tending job. Don suggested they both give up those jobs. As they ate, Rosie asked Don how he felt about being a father.

Analysis

One of the major problems begins to arise between Don and Rosie. Don was still struggling with accepting Rosie's pregnancy but she expected him to be able to tell her that he was happy about the situation even though it had thrown him off course first because he didn't like surprises and second because he had wanted his life to run on a preplanned time schedule.

The theme of how different Don's way of thinking was from others is expanded in this section of the novel. One of the most significant examples that demonstrates how differently Don's mind worked is found when he dealt with the Loud Woman in the bar. He had been tasked with choosing a cocktail that fitted each of the personalities of a large party of people. Don stopped himself from telling the Loud Woman that the drink he would choose for her was a two-faced cheater. The reader initially believes that Don might not have named the drink for fear of hurting her feelings. In reality, that possibility never crossed Don's mind. Instead, he realized she was pregnant and shouldn't be drinking at all. That was the only reason he changed his drink recommendation for her to a nonalcoholic one.

Notice also Don's reaction when the Loud Woman referred to him as Rain Man, an autistic character in a movie. Don noted to himself that he and Rain Man had nothing in common. Instead of getting upset, he chose to ignore the comment. It wasn't the first time Don had been referred to in an insensitive manner because he was different. His apartment manager had also been very pointed in telling Don that he didn't think he was normal and was instead some kind of weirdo. A couple of other odd things to note about Don's personality include his habit of estimating the ages and body mass indices of the people he met. He additionally admitted to the reader that he was incompetent when it came to predicting human reactions.

In this section of the novel Don believed he had solved a variety of the problems that were causing him stress in one swipe. Remember that Rosie had once suggested to him that they needed to get a bigger refrigerator. In this section of the novel his mind correlated the beer cellar with a bigger refrigerator. The new apartment was rent free, making up for Don getting both he and Rosie fired from their cocktail jobs and had plenty of room to let Gene live there until he could find a place of his own.

In this section of the novel Don tells his reader that he has learned through his relationship with Rosie that reason had to take second place to harmony. Don struggled



with this when he agreed to allow his best friend, Gene, move into the apartment where Don and Rosie lived. Don invited Gene before he talked to Rosie about the situation, a mistake he realized he had already made. However, Don also noted that Gene was his friend. He didn't feel he could turn him away. He called George and made arrangements he hoped would help Rosie to deal with living with a person she did not like in order to allow him to help his friend. Notice that although he was feeling overwhelmed, Don also went along with Dave to help out with the beer cellar. By researching the proper temperatures at which beer should be stored Don not only helped out Dave by ensuring he'd get paid for his job but also unwittingly helped himself out by giving him leverage to ask George to allow him and Rosie to live in George's downstairs apartment.

Notice in this section of the novel Rosie's approach to Don's advice about not taking drugs for morning sickness because they could penetrate the placenta and harm the baby. Rosie joked with him by telling him she wouldn't take any thalidomide, a medicine known to cause birth defects. As he continued to point out drugs — including alcohol and caffeine — that could harm the developing baby Rosie asked him to stop because he was stressing her out.

There are two things the reader should note in this section of the novel. First, remember Rosie's instructions to Don that she must not get stressed out. Next, remember that when Don tried to talk to her about the development of the fetus at that point in her pregnancy, Rosie's told him that she didn't want technical commentary throughout her pregnancy. Both these "rules" will be important later in the novel and are the building blocks for the problems that Rosie and Don create for themselves.

Discussion Question 1

Research the effects of alcohol use on a developing fetus. Why did Don think it was so important that Rosie stop drinking?

Discussion Question 2

When Don was trying to come up with a solution for his problems, he referred to a need to cut the Gordian Knot. To what does this refer?

Discussion Question 3

If you were Rosie, do you think you would have been happy with your husband's decision to move to a new apartment without discussing it first? Is this a sort of double standard on Don's part that it's okay for him to surprise her with a life change but not okay for her to surprise him with a life change?

Vocabulary

meticulous, pejorative, envisaged, recouped, protocol, intercepted, clarified, interventionist, misogynist, metaphorical, component, dexterity, ambient, inarticulate, commence, remedial, autonomy, accost, feign, aesthetics, empathy, recalcitrance, contractually, impediment, acrid, attributes, culling



Chapters 7-9

Summary

In Chapter 7, Don went through a list detailing his changing opinions of fatherhood since he was a teen. There was an incident involving bluefin tuna that had recently changed Don's mind completely about his ability to be a father. In this incident, he had Sunday lunch with Isaac and Judy Esler. Rosie was not there. They had been joined by Seymour and Lydia, strangers to Don. When ordering, Judy suggested they all order a different entree and share. Don then made the mistake of ordering the bluefin tuna. Lydia grew angry because it was an endangered species and accused Don of being insensitive. The situation escalated to the point that Lydia was so angry she left the restaurant. Before she left she told Don to do the world a favor and not have children.

In Chapter 8, in the present Don was struggling to find a way to answer Rosie's question concerning how he felt about fatherhood. He was still considering his response when the doorbell rang. Don knew it was Gene. Rosie greeted Gene but made a point of asking how long he'd be staying and told him that she was pregnant. Shortly after Gene arrived, George began practicing his drums. It was nearly an hour before he stopped and Don could talk to Gene. Gene was convinced his marriage was over. He advised Don to tell Rosie he was excited about being a father. Later in the bedroom, he repeated to Rosie the statement Gene had instructed her to tell him about the baby. She hugged him.

In order to help himself deal with his stress, Don started what he referred to as the Baby Project. He turned the tiles in the bathroom into a whiteboard in which he could keep up with his meetings and activities as well as the changes the baby would undergo in vitro. He felt better about the situation after he'd logged his first four weeks of meetings and activities.

In a meeting with David Borenstein, the dean of medicine at Columbia, Don dropped the news that Rosie was pregnant before Rosie was ready to share the information. When they were alone, David told Don that when Rosie spoke to the university's counselor she would probably suggest that Rosie take time off from her studies for the baby. David suggested in their particular situation that Rosie take off a year because they didn't have local support. He asked Don not to tell Rosie it was he who had made the suggestion. Even though Don didn't tell Rosie who made the suggestion, Rosie still rejected it. She said she could take the baby with her to classes and rotations.

After Rosie went to work on her thesis Gene questioned Don again about how he felt about fatherhood. Don said he thought his primary job was to stay out of the way. Gene advised Don that was probably for the best especially since Rosie was so independent. He suggested Don go to a playground and watch children play in order to get some insight on how they worked.



In Chapter 9, Rosie asked Don to go and get her some smoked mackerel because she had a craving for that food. It was just after midnight. Nearly two and a half hours later Don finally located some mackerel and returned home. Rosie was asleep. Because he had so little sleep Don decided to take a day off to catch up on sleep and work on the Baby Project. He researched nutrition required for pregnancy and then went to Trader Joe's to make his purchases. After buying the groceries Don went to a playground on Tenth Avenue. He made notes in a notebook and even shot video on his phone. When all the mothers gathered together, and then made their children go to a different part of the playground, Don followed them. He was working on the video on his phone at this new location and didn't notice two police officers approach him. When one of the officers made him stand up Don automatically did an aikido move to get away from the man. As a result Don was arrested. When he asked what he had done wrong, Don was told adults were not allowed to be in that particular playground without a child under the age of twelve. After talking to Don, the officer sent to question him said he didn't think Don was a threat to children but couldn't let him go free. Don was sent him to Bellevue for a psychiatric evaluation.

Analysis

The theme of fatherhood and parenting is introduced in this section of the novel. The two incidents that help initiate the theme that will play out through the novel are mentioned in these three chapters. The first major incident that made Don doubt his ability as a father was the Bluefin Tuna Incident. The second incident sprang from Don's desire to be a good parent but led to him keeping a major secret from Rosie. This second incident was the Playground Incident.

Don admitted to his reader that he'd been concerned about being a father because he thought that because he was generally odd that he would be an embarrassment to his children. Rosie had convinced him differently but his opinion of fatherhood was changed when the social worker Lydia told him that he needed to do the world a favor and not have children. Even though he hadn't agreed with anything else she'd said during the group dinner he took her comment to him very seriously. In fact, it was almost a challenge to him to find ways to prepare himself for fatherhood. This decision that he needed to be more prepared for fatherhood led to the Playground Incident.

When Don went to Gene for advice about how to be a better father, Gene told his friend he should go to a park and watch children play. Just watching children play probably wouldn't have gotten him in trouble but he also took notes and shot video. He caught the attention of the mothers of the playing children. They apparently alerted the police. It was Don's unusual behavior went the police were questioning him that probably led to Don being arrested. Remember that Rosie had told Don his job was to keep her from being stressed. He knew if he told her he'd been arrested and had to undergo psychiatric evaluation it would cause her stress. For this reason, he chose not to tell her about what had happened at the playground.



Adding to the theme of being different, notice the number of faux pas that Don made during the lunch with Lydia First, he assumed that Lydia and Seymour were a couple. He also had trouble realizing when Seymour was making a joke. Don wasn't the only one making assumptions during the lunch. Note that Lydia made several assumptions about Don including accused him of having Asperger's and being insensitive. She assumed he didn't think about or try to do good things for the environment when, in fact, he did but also believed it was beyond the ability of one or even all humans to make a change in the environment with lifestyle changes. In fact, note the irony behind the outcome of Don's decision to order the tuna. Had he been with Rosie he would not have ordered it because he knew it would have offended her and begun an argument. Don took the opportunity of not being with Rosie to treat himself. Instead he got a worse tongue lashing than he probably would have gotten from his wife.

Note Don's reaction to Lydia's mention that he had Asperger's. Don had researched the disorder and recognized many of his personality traits. He didn't consider being labeled as having Asperger's a negative label, but didn't think he suffered with that syndrome. Don noted Lydia wasn't the first person to put a label on him that he didn't feel fit him. Over the course of his lifetime he'd also been told he had obsessive compulsive disorder, bipolar and schizophrenic. Note that Lydia also accused Don of being autistic, just as the Loud Woman had, and referred to him as Rain Man.

In the theme of problem solving Gene initiates what he referred to as the Baby Project in order to help alleviate his own stress. He not only decided to use the tiles in his bathroom/office as a whiteboard to keep up with his schedule but also began making sketches of Bud representative of the stage of development he had reached.

In the theme of relationships, notice that Don got started right away trying to find some way for Claudia and Gene to reconcile. He assumed the two wanted to continue to be together even after Gene assured him the relationship was over.

Notice in this section of chapters the mention that Rosie ate only sustainable seafood and no meat. Notice also that thus far, Rosie and Don don't seem to be seeing eye-to-eye on Rosie's medical schooling and the impact the baby might have on her learning.

Discussion Question 1

Since the Dustin Hoffman movie "Rain Man" has been mentioned twice in the novel in relation to Don, from what you know of Don do you think there are any similarities between him and Dustin Hoffman's character? What similarities do you find, if any? What differences?

Discussion Question 2

How did Lydia's comment to Don that he shouldn't have children effect him?



Discussion Question 3

Discuss why Don decided to lie to Rosie about the Playground Incident. What might have been a better course of action?

Vocabulary

venue, pejorative, leeway, formulate, incremental, abhorrent, malicious, benign, imperatives, protocols, notional, allocation, fetishize, precluded, optimum, obviate, metastudy, codified, communal, retrospect, protocol, visceral, incarceration, malice



Chapters 10-12

Summary

In Chapter 10, Don called Bellevue to make an appointment but was asked to call back the following day. At home, Rosie asked Don why he didn't meet her for lunch as they'd agreed. She asked Don to take Gene with him on their night out. Don and Gene met George on the street and asked him to join them also. Don wondered if he should ask the boys for advice about the Playground Incident. He gave only a vague description of what happened. Gene said Don should tell Rosie the truth while Dave said he wasn't the one to ask as his business was failing but he hadn't told Sonia. After a brief tangent, Gene told Don that he didn't need to tell Rosie if whatever happened didn't involve her. When George learned that Rosie was pregnant he told Don he shouldn't tell her what happened to keep from stressing her.

In Chapter 11, Rosie admitted to Don she was having trouble with the stats on her thesis. When Don offered to help, she refused his offer, telling him she needed to do her work herself. Meanwhile, Don tried to make an appointment at Bellevue but learned the next opening was not for eight days. He went to the clinic in person hoping he could get a walk-in appointment. He wanted to clear the subject up so he no longer had to lie to Rosie about it. The receptionist told him they didn't have a waiting list for walk-ins. Those in the clinic heard Don's arguments with the receptionist and agreed someone should see him. A counselor, Ms. Aranda, agreed to see Don. After hearing Don's story, Ms. Aranda laughed and said that Don probably wouldn't even have been arrested if he hadn't been so awkward with the police. She said she would write something up to send to the police and the issue would be put to rest. Don was relieved but realized someone was watching his session with Ms. Aranda. It was Lydia. She talked to Ms. Aranda outside the office then sat down with Don. She questioned him about how he and Rosie were coping with Rosie's pregnancy. Lydia told Don that Rosie was at high risk for developing post natal depression not only because she was an over achiever but also because she did not have a good mother as a role model, had no family close to support her and had an insensitive husband. Lydia threatened Don by telling him she would give the police a bad report about him and could report him to immigrations if he refused to do as she said. She ordered him to attend a class for fathers and also bring Rosie to the next appointment.

Concerned about his wife's mental state, Don decided to give Rosie a verbal version of the Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale to determine her mind set. He also decided to talk to Gene about moving out. He found Inge, the postdoc researcher who David had assigned to help Don, in Gene's office. Gene was talking to her about his research on human sexual attraction. Don took Inge to introduce her to the research mice. While in the lab he tried to warn her that she should avoid Gene socially. She rejected Don's advice, saying she was going to have a drink with Gene that evening.



In Chapter 12, Don began his questioning of Rosie's emotional status. From the responses he got, he decided Rosie was not at risk for depression. When Gene returned home that evening, Don asked if he had been drinking with Inge. Gene said he had but that it was just a social drink. Don thought about the two reasons he had to keep Gene from having a sexual relationship with Gene. First, one of the prerequisites of Gene being allowed to serve his sabbatical at Columbia rested on him being able to keep his hands off the students. The second was that if Gene could keep himself from having sex with another woman, Claudia might take him back. With the idea in mind that Claudia and Gene might get back together, Don contacted Claudia. She discretely told him she was seeing a special friend. Don tried to give her advice on reconciling her marriage, but Claudia cut him off. She warned him not to take his good marriage for granted.

Don had thought he could get Rosie to go to the counseling session with Lydia by suggesting they needed parenting advice. Rosie told Don that Stefan was helping her with her thesis and that she didn't have time to worry about a baby that was not due to be born for eight more months. In the course of the conversation, Don got the idea that Rosie's opinions of his child care abilities were the same as Lydia's. Rosie suggested Don could go talk to someone but that she was fine by herself.

Analysis

The Lydia Problem arose in this section of chapters. It becomes one of the major problems that divided Rosie and Don as Don decided it was in his best interest not to tell Rosie about the Playground Incident. Because he wasn't able to tell Rosie about the Playground Incident he also wasn't able to tell her about the Lydia Problem. This initiated the tangle of secrets that Don would find himself keeping from Rosie as the story progresses.

Note that when Don decided to keep the Playground Incident and the ensuing problems secret from Rosie that he did so with her best interests in mind. He'd been warned that it was his job to keep her from being stressed. He believed if he told her he had been arrested and was a suspected pedophile the news would have caused her to stress. Don didn't just take into consideration his own opinion when he decided not to tell Rosie about his arrest. He also sought advice from the members of his boys' group. Gene said there should be no secrets in marriage, a false statement as he had an affair and didn't tell his wife about it. Dave said he wasn't a good person to ask because he was keeping his own secret from his wife, Sonia. George at first avoided the question but later told Don that if his situation didn't affect Rosie, it was best not to tell her.

Don tried to use his problem solving skills to take care of the Lydia Problem in a way that would involve Rosie and not force Don to have to keep anything a secret from her. He thought that if he suggested they go to counseling he could not only take care of the Lydia Problem but could also make Rosie think he was interested in making positive steps in their relationship. Don's attempt to solve that problem blew up in face when Rosie refused to go to counseling. She told Don she didn't need any help.



Even though the baby is not due for several months, Don and Rosie are already at odds about the childcare issue of parenting. It had been suggested to Don that Rosie needed to take time off from her studies to care for the baby. He thought that was a good idea. When he suggested it to Rosie, she balked. She believed it was a sexist point of view since a man would not be expected to take time off from his studies to take care of a baby. When Gene, who had gotten involved in the conversation, asked Rosie if she planned to let Don take care of the baby she said that she planned to take it with her, an option that Don believed wouldn't work but didn't mention the problem to Rosie.

When Lydia met with Don it was obvious that she, as well, saw several problems for Don and Rosie as parents. First, she believed Don was insensitive. She interpreted everything he had to say about his relationship with Rosie with the preconceived notion that he was being inconsiderate to Rosie. Taken by itself Don's statement that he had spent the evening with his friends while he left Rosie to cook for herself seemed inconsiderate. The real story was that Don tried to cook for Rosie but she hadn't wanted to eat what he offered. She encouraged him to leave because she wanted time alone, and told him that she would order out. Because she operated on the preconceived notion that Don was insensitive to Rosie's needs, Lydia believed that put Rosie at a greater risk for post natal depression. She also saw problems on the horizon because Rosie's mother had died when Rosie was ten, leaving her with no mother figure.

In the problem solving theme in the book, notice that Rosie seemed very concerned that Don wasn't coping well with the pregnancy. In reality Rosie didn't seem to be coping well either. She was struggling to finish her thesis on time and didn't want to ask for help. Because she was living with Gene, who was technically her advisor, Don suggested she ask for an extension. Rosie's pride would not allow her to do that. She also didn't want Don to help her with her statistics. She considered his help "cheating" and didn't want Gene to know she couldn't do the work on her own. Notice in this section a first notice of Stefan, a man from Australia whom Rosie said had agreed to help her.

Discussion Question 1

Since Rosie thought it was cheating to allow her husband to help her with her statistics, how do you think she was able to rationalize allowing Stefan to help her?

Discussion Question 2

Do you think Lydia's concern about Rosie is sincere? Or do you think she's only trying to make things difficult for Don? Defend your answer with examples from the book.



Discussion Question 3

How do the men in Don's boys' group help him decide how he should handle the Playground Incident and the Lydia Problem? Do you think their advice was solid as they didn't know all the details of the problem?

Vocabulary

scenario, inquisition, palatable, hierarchy, psychopathic, pedophile, violated, concurrently, undermined, vernacular, compulsory, convener, protocols, adamant, fortuitously, antenatally, unobtrusively, intrinsically, situate, quantification, improvisation, diminution, celibacy, trivial, asynchronous, incubating, unambiguously, methodical



Chapters 13-15

Summary

In Chapter 13, Don broke down and told Gene about the Playground Incident. Gene thought the whole thing was humorous. He told Don he had to tell Rosie what had happened or face going to jail. Don decided there was an alternative, that he could hire someone to impersonate Rosie. Don talked to Sonia about filling the role. She was shocked at first but agreed to do it because Don had been so great in helping Dave with George and because she thought Lydia was out of place in requiring the sessions.

When he returned home, Rosie told Don she had probably overreacted to the idea of counseling. She said they could go if he wanted. Don refused as he had decided using Sonia to stand in for Rosie was a better idea. Before their first appointment with Lydia, Don met Sonia at a coffee shop to discuss how they should approach their role as a couple. When she told Don the story of how she and Don had met at that coffee shop she lied about when they'd first had sex. Don had heard the story and told Sonia Dave had lied to him but Sonia told him it was she who did the lying. Don wasn't surprised he didn't pick up on her lie but was afraid Lydia would be more perceptive.

The appointment seemed to go well until Sonia forgot she was Rosie and began talking about the frustrations she was felt toward her real husband. At that point she accidentally called Don by the name Dave, that of her real husband. Don lied to make up for Sonia's error and then became confused himself when Lydia asked him what he thought about Rosie's outburst. Don replied he'd have to process the new information. Lydia asked them to make another appointment. After the appointment Sonia apologized to Don for messing up. She said that she and Dave had tried for so long to have a baby but now that she was pregnant, he no longer seemed interested. Don knew it was because Dave was stressed about the problems his business was having. Don didn't share this information with Sonia. Before they separated, Sonia told Don that Lydia was right, that he did need to think more about supporting Rosie even if she claimed she wanted to be independent.

In Chapter 14, Don purchased a copy of the book "What to Expect When You're Expecting" in order to research pregnancy and determine how he could contribute more. Using the information he got from the book, he put together a meal menu based on Rosie's needs during pregnancy. When he began trying to get Rosie to eat the menu he'd put together, she balked. She wanted more smoked mackerel even though he told her that it wasn't good for her. He had prepared her a special mini meal that she refused to eat, choosing instead to eat parts of the meal he'd prepared from himself and Gene including the rare steaks and a sip of wine. When Rosie was sick the next morning, Don blamed the food she'd eaten the night before. Rosie told him she wanted to eat as she pleased, not from a preprogrammed meal plan that he had put together. In compromise, she asked him to make her a list of ten things she couldn't eat. Don took the opportunity



to ask Rosie what her doctor had told her about prenatal nutrition and was stunned when he learned she hadn't yet made an appointment.

In Chapter 15, Don and Rosie were without Gene for an evening because he had a date with Inge. Just as Rosie had put her arms around Don, he heard Gene's Skype ringing. He answered because he thought it might be Claudia calling with an emergency but it turned out to be Eugenie. She had been expecting her father to call her. Claudia broke in on the conversation when she heard Rosie was pregnant and said that Gene had been needed to help Eugenie with a problem. It turned out Eugenie's problem was not a science problem as she'd told her mother but instead a problem with others kids being mean to her. The conversation lasted nearly an hour. By the time he got to the bedroom, Rosie was ready for sleep.

Analysis

Relationships are a major focus in this section of the novel. Not only did Don put his relationship with Gene to good use to try to find a solution to the Lydia problem, he also developed a relationship with Eugenie, Gene's daughter. Another aspect of relationships that is introduced in this section of the novel is Sonia's desire for Dave to treat her like Don wanted to treat Rosie.

First in the theme of relationships, Don decided to try to take advantage of his relationship with Gene because he believed Gene's "social skills and manipulative abilities" p. 112 might help him come up with an answer to the Lydia Problem. Unfortunately, Gene couldn't offer any solution that didn't end with Don getting arrested or upsetting Rosie. Because his friend couldn't come up with a better solution, Don decided to enlist Sonia to impersonate Rosie. The interview with Lydia almost took a disastrous turn when Sonia forgot she was supposed to be speaking as Rosie and instead indicated to Lydia she wished she had more support in her pregnancy.

Although Sonia's slip in the interview with Lydia compounded the stress Don was feeling about the Lydia Problem, Sonia's take on her relationship with her husband adds a different point of focus for the novel. While Rosie was fighting Don's advice and refusing to eat the meals he fixed, Sonia wished her husband would show interest by researching nutrition in pregnancy and cooking a meal for her. While Rosie seemed to think that Don was suffocating her with too much information and too many rules, Sonia desired that sort of attention from her husband.

Also in this section of the novel notice Don's willingness to reach out to Eugenie and offer her advice in her situation even though he and Rosie finally had the apartment to themselves for a change. Don could understand Eugenie's difficulties with her fellow students because he'd faced the same troubles when he was in school. It seemed it was not so much Don's advice that made Eugenie feel better, it was just the sense that someone else understood her struggle and had survived similar circumstances.



In the theme of problem solving, Rosie still seemed willing to work with Don at this point even though it was apparent she was getting frustrated with him. She didn't like the idea that she was supposed to eat special meals or eat only certain foods. She rebelled against Don's advice by eating steak and drinking wine even though he had fixed her a pregnancy compatible meal. When Rosie was sick the following morning, Don told her it was because of the food she'd eaten the night before. At this point, Rosie offered a compromise. He could give her a list of ten specific foods that she was not to eat. She would agree to avoid those foods but he was not to meddle in her diet any more.

Note in this section that Don mentions that it was Rosie's choice to eat a pescatarian diet. As a result Rosie ate a vegetarian diet except she allowed herself dairy products and eggs. She also ate sustainable seafood. It was because of Rosie's choice of this amended form of the vegetarian diet that it surprised Don so much when she ate some of the steak he had prepared for himself and Gene.

Discussion Question 1

When Don told Sonia about his problem and asked her to impersonate Rosie she commented that Lydia was out of line in the way she was treating Don. Do you agree with Sonia? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Why was Don able to connect so quickly with Eugenie? What did the two have in common?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the differences between Sonia and Rosie's idea of desirable behavior from their spouses.

Vocabulary

deduce, absolved, consolation, plausible, delegated, parlance, insolvent, scrupulously, gullible, centrifugal, inauthentic, analogy, debriefed, estrangement, promiscuous, inept, scapegoated



Chapters 16-18

Summary

In Chapter 16, Eugenie contacted Don again by Skype. Eugenie told Don that Carl had said if his father ever came back he was going to kill him. Eugenie asked Don to talk to Carl about the issue. Don went to Rosie for advice. Rosie told him it was Gene's responsibility to talk to his own son. A couple of hours later, Don knocked on Rosie's office door and found she was agitated. She admitted to him she didn't know how she was going to get her work done in the three weeks she had left. Rosie did tell him she had scheduled an ultrasound and gave him the time and date. Because she was so stressed she said that if Don didn't let her have a glass of wine she was going to smoke a cigarette. Don gave her watered down wine but still imagined the alcohol reducing the baby's intelligence. He caught Rosie looking at him. She told him he'd made his point and asked for orange juice as well as help on completing her analysis.

While at the university, Don received a package from Phil Jarman, Rosie's father. Don opened it and found a diamond ring inside. It had belonged to Rosie's mother. Phil suggested Don give it to Rosie as an eternity ring on their first anniversary. He reminded Don that if he ever messed up he would come to New York and beat him up. Don made the comment that Phil was not impressed with him. Gene tried to help Don see the significance of the letter and gift. Gene told Don to imagine he was in the same position as Phil had been when his wife had been killed in the car wreck. He then asked him to imagine himself in Phil's role as Rosie married Don. When Don asked why Gene told him that it was because Phil was a father, as Don was about to be and needed to understand the emotion behind fatherhood. He also told Don they needed to make plans for an anniversary celebration.

In Chapter 17, Don's next venture was getting Rosie to exercise. He woke her up early so she could exercise at an indoor pool before work. Rosie refused saying she didn't like to swim. Meanwhile, Don was having no luck imagining himself as Phil Jarman. A dream where Rosie was in the scout vehicle of a spacecraft drifting away from him and Don could do nothing to bring her back, however, made him wonder if Phil woke from such nightmares to discover the world was exactly as he had dreamed it.

Don had begun making plans for he and Rosie's anniversary, under the direction of Gene. On the Saturday before their anniversary, however, Rosie slipped something under the door of Don's office/bathroom. A letter inside the notebook told Don that Rosie wanted to give him a surprise for their anniversary but didn't want to exceed his tolerance. Don had already looked at the first page of the notebook which stated Rosie was going to be in charge of their anniversary when Gene knocked on the door. Don discussed the book with Gene who took the book from him assuring him that Rosie wouldn't do anything to hurt him. On the day of their anniversary, Isaac and Judy Esler took Don to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. On the way home Don bought a single red rose. When he entered the house he believed his worst fear was realized when he saw



Rosie in the kitchen. He went to the kitchen to help but Gene accosted him and told him to let Rosie cook for him. He additionally advised Don to be agreeable with everything Rosie suggested. Rosie directed him to go onto the balcony where she had set a table for two. She was wearing the dress she's worn for their wedding. When Rosie pointed it out, Don realized she had recreated the scene from their first date.

Don was surprised how good the food was. She had even fixed bluefin tuna, his favorite, and quoted to him scientific reasons why it would not hurt her or the baby even though it was raw. They enjoyed talking and Don realized they hadn't had enough time to talk recently. He even shared with her the incident that had happened after she'd left him at the cocktail bar that night. When Rosie asked him not to keep anything from her, he wondered if he should tell her about the Playground Incident. He chose not to. Instead he gave Rosie her mother's ring. Rosie cried when she recognized the ring. Gene threw confetti over them.

In Chapter 18, Rosie reminded Don about her sonogram appointment. That night at dinner Rosie was angry. She pulled out an envelope which she handed to Gene telling him that was what she had done that day. Don had not realized he was supposed to go to the appointment. He then made the mistake of asking if there were any faults in the baby. That irritated Rosie even more. She told him she had a study group meeting the following day at their house. Rosie suggested Don and the guys could have their night out meeting that night.

They decided to go to George's for their night out because they could watch baseball there. They began talking about genetics. George said he couldn't understand why he had one son who was straight and another who was a drug addict. This prompted a discussion of whether genetics or the way a person was raised made a bigger impact on his personality. They wanted to open a bottle of wine but had no corkscrew. Don went downstairs to get his. He was surprised to find the apartment empty. Rosie was in bed asleep with a novel. A box for a small meat lover's pizza was on the floor.

Analysis

The major fault in Rosie and Don's relationship appears in this section of the novel. Rosie was angry with Don for not having attended the sonogram. Because he had not specifically been told he was supposed to attend, Don didn't go. Unlike the times before that Rosie had gotten angry with Don, there was no hint that she was willing to give him any leeway in his failure to act as she felt he was supposed to have acted. Just as the fallout from the missed sonogram appointment seemed to be a low point in Don and Rosie's relationship, the anniversary dinner that Rosie prepared was a high point for them. She recreated the night of their first date. She also told Don that although she loved what he did for her, she also needed to feel that she was not helpless or incompetent, things she'd been feeling recently because of the way he was treating her. Note in the description of the anniversary dinner that Don indicated his love for Rosie was so strong that it caused him to make a grammatical error.



In the aspect of parenting, Gene gave Don an exercise in empathy when he told him he should try to envision himself as Phil Jarman in the car when his wife was killed, and then that he should imagine himself as Phil Jarman entrusting his daughter, whom he had raised on his own from the age of ten, to Don. Gene's assignment to Don came after Don made the comment that he believed that Phil was unimpressed with him. Gene was trying to point out that in the large scheme of things, Don had not yet experienced a trauma with his family that compared to what Phil had suffered with his. He hoped to try to get Don to understand why Phil wasn't impressed with him yet.

In this section of the novel Don was faced with another problem with which he was expected to deal. Eugenie shared with Don that her brother, Carl, had said that if Gene ever came back, he wanted to kill him. Eugenie took the threat seriously. When Don turned to Rosie for advice, she told him it was Gene's responsibility to deal with his own son. Don wasn't ready to let the issue rest with that advice and still felt he needed to do something to help.

In the theme of secrets, Don finally told Rosie about the Loud Woman at the cocktail bar where they had once worked. He shared with her that his encounter with the woman had caused them both to be fired. Based on Rosie's positive reaction to this admission Don almost told her about the Lydia Situation but stopped himself.

Notice in this section of the novel the pizza incident. This night was the first that Don had really felt hurt by Rosie and her actions. She had lied to him telling him that she had a study group coming to the apartment and wanted him to go out with his friends. In reality, she'd only wanted some time away from him. During her evening alone, Rosie had also eaten a meat lover's pizza, a meal that was not compatible with her pescatarian diet.

Discussion Question 1

Why was it so surprising to Don when he found an empty meat lover's pizza box by his wife's bed?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the role that Gene was playing in Don and Rosie's relationship. How was he helping the two?

Discussion Question 3

What seemed to be the breaking point for Rosie in her relationship with Don? What signifies she'd finally taken all that she could stand?

Vocabulary

sonogram, proprietor, imperative, venue, scenario, ordinal, unalloyed, unpalatable, incompetent, protocols, communal, exacerbated, conciliatory



Chapters 19-21

Summary

In Chapter 19, when Don questioned Rosie she told him she'd just decided she wanted a meat pizza. She said she was tired of people telling her what to eat. She also advised Don she was doing yoga, specific for pregnancy, with Judy. Don felt she was telling him to mind his own business. He tried to explain he was only trying to help with her pregnancy by doing research. Rosie informed him she had everything under control. She also pointed out the book that Don had been using for his research and said it was basic. Don understood the Rosie wanted to proceed on her own. To prepare for their next appointment with Lydia, Don told Sonia that Rosie had last told him she wanted to deal with the pregnancy on her own. Sonia believed the change would seem false as it was the opposite of what they'd told Lydia at the first appointment. Sonia told Don that the way he was trying to treat Rosie was how she wished Dave would treat her. During the actual session, Lydia told Don that being a supportive parent was not about telling Rosie what to do. When Don announced he realized he needed fatherhood skills Lydia told him she would enroll him in the Good Fathers program. She was about to dismiss them when Don said he'd make another appointment.

In Chapter 20, Don lined out for himself four areas in which he felt he could make contributions to the pregnancy without interfering with Rosie's independence. When he drew his Tile 15 drawing of Bud, Don thought it was interesting that the baby's ears had moved from his neck area to his head and his eyes were now in the middle of his head. Don wanted to share the information with Rosie but she'd already asked for him not to give him any technical breakdowns. He decided instead to buy a stroller, modified to his specifications to make it safe. He additionally called his father for help in designing a soundproof crib so the baby wouldn't be disturbed by George's practice.

Don also talked to David about the possibility that he could witness or even participate in a birth. David didn't think he could set up an opportunity of that type. He did tell Don he wanted him to help with a research project dealing with attachment related hormones. The group claimed it wanted to see if a baby would benefit from having a parent of two sexes, just one parent or parents of the same sex. David wanted Don in the project to make sure it was free of prejudice. The women in charge of the program were not happy that a man was being introduced into a research project that had been an all women project. He got the feeling the women were trying to disprove an article stating that babies needed both a mother and father. Don wanted to talk to Rosie about the project but when he began the discussion Gene shook his head. After Rosie had left, Gene explained Don was invading Rosie's territory.

In Chapter 21, Don invited Dave to go with him to the Good Father's program. Jack, the man teaching the class, asked for someone to share why they had been ordered to come to the class. Don shared he'd had two incidents, both precipitated by the pregnancy. When Jack asked the group what caused anger, Don began a lecture. Jack



stopped him. At the break, one of the men asked Don to show him some moves. As Don was demonstrating one Jack came up and tried to put Don in a choke hold. Dave told them to stop as Don avoided the hold. Jack's advice to the men was that they not get drunk and that they walk away from the source of their anger. Don pressured Dave to ask what they should do if they couldn't walk away. Jack couldn't imagine a situation from which a person couldn't walk away. After the class Jack asked Don if he could have gotten out of his choke hold. Don said yes and showed him how he could have done it. Jack made Don promise he would never hit a woman or a kid then told him he was not allowed to come back to class. He said he'd tell Don's social worker that he passed. At home, Don asked Gene if he'd worked things out with Carl. Gene said Carl refused to talk to him.

Analysis

In this section of chapters Don continued to use his highly structured problem solving skills to deal with three major problems facing him. These included the Meat Pizza Incident, the problem of getting Sonia to act like Rosie for the counseling sessions and the rift between Gene and his son, Carl.

The most straight forward of the problems that Gene faced in this section of the novel was that of the Meat Pizza Incident. Because he had been lying to Rosie about the Playground Incident Don understood Rosie's reasons for feeling she had to keep her desire to have time alone without him around a secret. What seemed to interest him most was her desire to eat the meat pizza. Their discussion about Rosie's decision to eat the pizza led to Rosie getting angry with him about trying to make her eat a certain diet. Notice that Don's inability to read people caused him a major disadvantage in this discussion. In the end, Rosie told him to back off telling her what she could and could not eat. He indicated he had only a vague sense that she was unhappy with him despite what she told him. Had Rosie said these words to anyone else, they would have had more than just a vague sense that she was unhappy with them.

Don's second problem in this section of the novel dealt with getting Sonia to act like Rosie had acted in her desire for Don to butt out of her life without raising any red flags to Lydia. The two managed to pull off the guise. Don had a breakthrough that he needed to begin trying to develop his own parenting skills instead of telling Rosie how to live her life. Amusing is that Sonia picked up on Lydia's indication their time in counseling was over. Don, however, wanted to continue because despite the stress caused by lying to Rosie, he believed the sessions were helpful because he'd finally realized what he needed to do as a father.

The third problem dealt with in this section of the novel is that of Gene's relationship with his son. Carl has said that if his father returned home, he wanted to kill him because of the way he'd treated their mother. Don had initially suggested to Gene that he needed to talk to Carl, but at this point in the novel Carl was still refusing to communicate with his father. Note the advice that Don gave to Gene. He told him that as scientists, they shouldn't allow themselves to be defeated by their problems. This



statement demonstrates that Gene thought that everything, including relationships, had straightforward answers that could be found if a person just thought about them long enough.

During a boys' night out meeting, the men's discussion turned to parenting. Their conversation focused on whether a baby's nature, its genetics, or its nurture, the way it was raised, had more impact on the type of human being that baby turned out to be. Interesting was that Gene tried to guess Sonia's personality based on her nationality and genetics. Dave told Gene he was wrong about Sonia's personality assessment based on her genetic background.

Also in this section of the novel Don is asked to work in a Lesbian Mothers Project. The intent of this project is to study the differences in relationships between the baby and its mother and the baby and its father.

One thing to remember from this section of the novel was that the teacher at the Good Father's class told Dave and Don he could not think of any instances that might make a person mad from which they would not be able to walk away. This will be significant later in the novel.

Discussion Question 1

After the Meat Pizza Incident, Don was ready to agree that dishonesty was the price of being married. Do you agree? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Can you think of any situations where a person might be pushed to anger from which they would not be able to walk away?

Discussion Question 3

Why would Jack, the teacher of the Good Fathers class, not allow Don to return to the class?

Vocabulary

carnivore, plausible, aggregating, negligible, histrionic, flamboyant, enumerating, patriarchy, paradigm, propensity, autonomy, acquisition, respite, obstetric, admonition, interspersing, tautology, synchrony, contingent, hypothetical, impostor, justification, paradoxical



Chapters 22-24

Summary

In Chapter 22, B3, Belinda, from the Lesbian Mothers Study, met Don at a coffee shop and told him about the initial evidence for the research project even though another one of the women had refused to tell him. B3 told him that the only people able to get the oxytocin to rise in the babies when they played with them was the fathers. In more recent experiments the playing was being changed so that it was more like cuddling. She suggested Don come back the following day but Don didn't take the hint. Although it was argued that it wasn't part of the study, one of the mothers allowed Don to play with her baby. B3 videoed while Don let the baby crawl over him. He enjoyed the experience. Don asked for the baby's oxytocin level to be tested. Back at home, the stroller he had ordered arrived. Rosie didn't like it. She called it the Hummer of prams.

As time progressed, the research project was going badly as all the other women in the project were refusing to let Don handle their babies. B3 sent him a message saying the baby he'd played with showed an oxytocin level that was through the roof. B1, Briony, meanwhile, sent a message to David asking that Don be taken off the study. Meanwhile, Rosie was getting more and more frustrated with Don. She been sleeping even less than usual because of the baby. Don told her it was because of the hot chocolate she drank in the night. This prompted Rosie to leave the bed and attempt to sleep in the chair in her office. Trying to be considerate, Don moved the mattress to that room.

In Chapter 23 when Gene discovered Don and Rosie weren't sleeping together he told Don that Rosie was sending him a message. He believed the problem had started when Don hadn't gone to the first sonogram. Don learned through Gene that Rosie had told Stefan she was having concerns about their marriage. Don planned to impress Rosie by attending the next sonogram appointment.

David finally found a doctor, Dr. Lauren McTighe, who would allow Don to watch a birth. It was a boys' night out so Don got permission for Gene, George and Dave to join him. It turned out Dr. McTighe was a veterinarian and was letting Don watch the delivery of a breech calf. The calf was born successfully but had a broken leg. Dave had been watching from the taxi. When he heard the calf would have to be put down if someone didn't agree to hand feed it, Dave said he'd do it to keep the calf from getting killed. The farmer decided to name the calf Dave and have his wife take care of it.

In Chapter 24, on the way home the friends stopped at a bar. They decided they should share a secret with the others. Gene's secret was that he had only had sex with five women. Don was shocked because Claudia had thrown Gene out of the house for having sex with an Icelandic woman when he hadn't really had sex with her at all. Gene believed that if he told Claudia the truth about himself she would no longer be attracted to him. Dave, meanwhile, told the other men the baby Sonia was carrying had been made with someone else's sperm. He wondered if he'd been avoiding Sonia and the



baby because he didn't want to put time into a child who didn't have his genes. When they arrived at the apartment building, George asked Don to come upstairs so they could talk. George applauded him for championing the men's group. He also told Don he believed it was his fault that his son had a drug problem. He thought he'd goaded his son into trying drugs and had started the addiction. Back in his apartment Don woke Gene and told him they needed to call Carl. Don started talking to Carl first, telling him that his father had lied to him about having slept with multiple women. He then put Gene on the screen. Gene told him the same thing.

The following Monday Rosie asked Don why he hadn't gone to work. He told her he'd taken off the whole day to go with her to her doctor's appointment. Rosie told him she'd already had her second sonogram. Rosie tried to determine if Don was really interested in the baby. She told him the baby was kicking. Don confirmed that it was kicking.

Analysis

It seems that everyone has a secret in this story. Don's keeping his arrest from Rosie. George believed it was his goading that caused his son to become addicted to drugs. Dave was worried about whether or not he'd feel any kind of attachment for the baby because it had been conceived using another man's sperm and for this reason felt like it wasn't really his. Of all the secrets, however, Gene's was the worst. He'd spent his life leading others to believe he'd had sex with a variety of women. In reality, he'd only had sexual relations with about five women. The other members of the boys' club believe that Gene should tell Claudia he really hadn't been as unfaithful as he put on. When they suggested Claudia might take him back if he told her the truth, he said he thought she liked the idea of him being desired by other women. She believed that was what attracted her to him.

While it appeared Gene didn't think the revelation of the secret of his multiple affairs would have any affect on his wife, he must have thought his son would take the news differently. When Don tried to get Gene to talk to Carl via Skype, Gene balked. Don instead was the one who talked to him. He told Carl that his father hadn't really had the number of affairs he said he'd had. Gene later admitted he had tricked Don into telling Carl that Gene's affairs were fictional. He said he'd done so because he knew that Carl would only have believed the truth about his lack of conquests if it had come from Don.

Notice also in this section of the novel that Don's relationship with Rosie continued to deteriorate. She had not been able to sleep well because the baby was getting bigger and she was having to use the bathroom often. Don criticized her one night for drinking hot chocolate in the night, which he believed made her have to use the bathroom even more often. She reasoned that the hot chocolate made her sleep. Their argument ended in Rosie going to sleep in her study. Although Don didn't see the major implications of the decision to sleep in the study, Gene pointed out to him that sleeping in the same bed was a major bonding ritual. He argued that Rosie was sending Don a message by sleeping away from him. Rosie also confronted Don about his interest in the baby. Even though he'd taken a day off on the day he believed the ultrasound was scheduled it



wasn't enough to make up for the damage he'd done by not going to the first ultrasound. It appears that Rosie has become convinced that Don was not interested in the baby or becoming a father.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the meaning of Don's spaceship dream.

Discussion Question 2

Why did Don believe it was so important for him to watch and even participate in a live birth? Were you surprised he agreed the birth of a calf was an acceptable substitution for watching the birth of a human baby?

Discussion Question 3

If you were Rosie would you share her opinion that Don was not interested in the baby? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

liaisons, transparency, serendipitous, exacerbated, aggregate, monogamous, aesthetically, karma, repugnant, ludicrous, hypothesis, synonym, erratically, goaded, unambiguously, illicit, patricide, inevitable, distended



Chapters 25-27

Summary

In Chapter 25, Don arranged a pregnancy compatible meal at a prestigious restaurant to celebrate Rosie's completion of her thesis. Rosie asked Gene to join them. At the restaurant the maître d' commented the reservation had been only for two but when Don said they could eat elsewhere the man said they could accommodate them. As they were waiting, the Loud Woman and a man entered the restaurant. They were 34 minutes late for their reservation. The maître d' told them their usual menu was being replaced by a pregnancy compatible meal. Don made a comment to the woman about the menu being ideal for her situation. She recognized him and called him the cocktail nazi. She and her date left. During their meal Rosie announced she had decided to defer her medical studies. Rosie said she planned to get a part time job so she could be self sufficient and perhaps to go home to Australia. Don realized she was not including him in her plans.

In Chapter 26, Gene explained to Don that Rosie felt he was compatible as a partner but not as a father. He said Don would have to prove that he was average enough to be a suitable father. He decided to talk to his boys group about the problems he and Rosie were having. They all agreed Don had messed up when he hadn't gone to the first sonogram but advised him not to give up. He next contacted Claudia. She told him that Rosie was looking for the perfect love. Since Don had disappointed her, she was now on a quest for another perfect love. She said since Rosie had problems with her own father she might have been subconsciously transferring those problems to Don. Claudia also told Don she had a new man in her life, Simon Lefebvre.

David congratulated Don on the work he had done with the Lesbian Mothers Project. The researchers had tried to change the results of their experiment by modifying the mothers' play so it was more like cuddling. Don confirmed their attempts at deception by sending a video of what they had termed "play" to the original Israeli researchers who agreed the form of play they were using was classified as cuddling. David congratulated Don for not allowing the women to force him out. A short time later, Rosie decided to host a party for her study group. She asked Don not to attend but he insisted. He believed the dean would have been impressed.

In Chapter 27, Gene gave Don tips on how to behave at the party. He told Don he'd refused to break his date with Inge as he believed this was the crucial one. Don prepared drinks and thought all was going well until George showed up just after 11 p.m. with his guitar case. Don thought it would be a disaster when George started playing and singing. Instead, they seemed to love his music, and were even singing along. Before the party was over, one of the girls told Don he was not what she was expecting. She thought he'd be a geek because of Rosie's personality. The girl also told Don that Rosie was using her pregnancy to get out of doing her clinicals. The girl



mentioned she understood there was some family trauma that made Rosie uneasy about the clinicals.

The Monday after the party Inge asked for a meeting with Don at a coffee shop. She told him Gene had tried to seduce her but that she thought of him only as a mentor. Later that day Don tried to talk to Rosie about the problem with her clinicals. She refused to talk to him, saying only that if she wanted to do her clinicals she'd find a way around her phobia. When he asked if she'd go see a play with him, she refused. Don next went to talk to Gene. He advised Gene to apologize to Inge as she was as embarrassed about what had happened as he was. Gene agreed to go to the play with him. Before they left, Don fixed dinner for Rosie and put servings for himself and Gene in the refrigerator. He struggled with the cling wrap. Rosie criticized him. Gene stood up for Don.

Don got an invitation to work a shift at the cocktail bar where he and Rosie had worked formerly. Hector had been fired as no one could put together a satisfactory whiskey sour for the owner's brother. Old clients were returning and asking for cocktails. He stayed until the bar closed. He expected everyone to be asleep when he came home but Rosie came out of her room when he arrived. She said she'd missed him and that they were all having a hard time.

Analysis

In this section of chapters Rosie announced her intention to leave Don. She made her announcement during a dinner Don planned as a celebration because Rosie completed her thesis. Even though Rosie didn't specifically say that she was planning to end the relationship, she said that she was planning to defer her medical studies and get a part time job so that she would be self sufficient. She additionally mentioned that she might go back to Australia. Even though he was not socially adept, Don recognized that Rosie's use of pronouns did not include him. Notice that Gene interrupted Rosie was she was trying to talk during the dinner. The reader has to wonder if Gene was trying to keep Rosie from making the announcement she wanted a divorce, an announcement that might be irreversible.

From what Don was able to gather, it was the question of his ability to be a parent that was the major problem Rosie had with him. He checked with his friends for advice. All agreed that he did have a problem but that he shouldn't give up. Don also talked to Claudia who told him the same thing that Gene had told him. She said that Rosie seemed to be looking to develop a perfect relationship with her baby. For some reason, Rosie had decided she couldn't have this perfect relationship if Don were involved. Claudia, like Gene, also suggested that Rosie was subconsciously remembering the problems that she had with her father and imagining that her baby would have the same problems with Don. Although the guys had tried to give Don some positive input on his problems with Rosie, Claudia told Don she was afraid that even if Don could somehow prove that he was average enough to be a father, it would not be enough to convince Rosie to stay with him.



Also in the theme of relationships, Don stepped in and helped Inge and Gene to salvage their friendship after Gene decided to hit on Inge and found that she wasn't interested. Remember that Don had suggested to Gene he stay away from Inge. He'd also warned Inge about Gene's habit of womanizing. Although Don could have easily told the two to work their problems out by themselves as he had tried to warn them, he instead tried to reconcile the two to one another. It was after Don helped Gene and Inge that Gene stood up for Don when Rosie lashed out at him for no reason. Don had just asked Rosie about her decision to defer her medical. He'd heard from one of the students in her study group that Rosie was struggling with a phobia about working with victims of traumas because of the car wreck in which her mother was killed. Don tried to talk to Rosie about her troubles but Rosie refused to talk to him. He must have struck a nerve, however, because it was immediately after that discussion that Rosie lashed out at Don because of the way he struggled with the plastic wrap.

Comic relief in this section came in the form of the Loud Woman, the woman who had gotten Don fired from his job as a bartender. Don again tried to warn the woman that the cheese she wanted to eat at the restaurant was possibly poisonous to the baby. She was angry to learn that the restaurant was serving a pregnancy compatible meal. Don saw himself as championing the baby's health while the Loud Woman believed he was only meddling in her life. Remember that this woman was apparently some well-known singer and actor. Apparently the paparazzi had gotten word the woman would be dining at that restaurant that night as they surprised Rosie and Don with a cacophony of flashes going off when they left the restaurant. It was not until after they'd taken their pictures that the photographers realized they'd taken pictures of the wrong woman.

Discussion Question 1

Why do you think Rosie refused to talk to Don about her phobia?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss Don's act of getting the restaurant where he, Rosie and Gene had a celebration dinner to cook a pregnancy compatible meal. Do you think a restaurant would really change its entire menu for one diner?

Discussion Question 3

What is your opinion of Rosie's decision to separate from Don. Do you think she is making a mistake? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

prestigious, anomaly, analogous, degustation, cognizant, renunciation, chaste, vindicating, stimulate, reciprocated, aggregately



Chapters 28-30

Summary

In Chapter 28, Don attended an antenatal briefing with hopes of impressing Rosie. Besides criticizing the lack of nutritional value in the offered snacks, Don kept his mouth shut until a mother asked for the statistics about breech births. Heidi said she couldn't quote the statistics but Don could and did. Don also engaged in a discussion of breast feeding and pointed out for babies to get the full extent of immune benefits from breast feeding they needed to co-feed their babies. On the subway Rosie told Don to shut up when he continued to talk about the topic. She added he had embarrassed her.

Don decided he needed more counseling so he waited for Lydia after work. After he told her the whole story, with the exception of Sonia acting as Rosie, Lydia laughed at his predicament. She told him she had recently lost a patient and her baby to postpartum depression. That was why she had treated him as she had. Based on what she knew of Rosie (Sonia) Lydia felt there was no risk even though Don wasn't the most sensitive of men. Don questioned if there would be a risk to a woman who didn't have the supports Sonia had. Lydia advised him a woman in that situation would probably be better off with no husband as an insensitive husband might encourage her not to get the help she needed.

In Chapter 29, Don researched the desirable attributes of a father. He determined he was violent, he drank a good deal of alcohol which made him more susceptible to meltdowns and he lacked empathy making him insensitive to a child's needs as well as Rosie's needs. The only aspect of his life that Don believed was positive was his social support system. He created a spreadsheet and determined that he was very unsuitable as a father. He also researched the failure of marriages because of a pregnancy and the best action to take. He put together a speech and jogged home. When he arrived at home Rosie cut him off before he had a chance to present his speech. She said she didn't think they'd work together well as a family. They decided she would stay at the apartment for the time being while he would move in with Dave and Sonia. That night, Rose came into Don's bedroom and laid down in bed with him. She told him he didn't have to leave. Don noticed she didn't say she wanted him to stay.

When he arrived at Sonia and Dave's apartment the next day Sonia first wanted him to go back and work things out with Rosie. When they arrived at the apartment Gene was there but Rosie was not. Don went to Rosie's study to see if he could find a clue as to where she might be. She found Skype messages where Rosie had told someone with the screen name of 34 that her relationship with Don was over. She wanted to know if that person would still have her, especially since she was pregnant. Rosie walked into the office. She told him there was another man. Dave drove Don back to his apartment. Don believed it was Stefan with whom Rosie had been communicating.



In Chapter 30, Don noticed what a disaster Dave's office was and believed the mess was the reason his business was failing. He volunteered to file all of Dave's paperwork. He spent two days to cleaning up Dave's files and scanning all the paperwork into the computer. Although Sonia didn't know anything about Dave's accounting program, she answered the questions Don had. They learned he had more than 9,000 invoices that were past due. Sonia made some calls to collect on the past due amounts.

At dinner, Sonia asked Dave about making a purchase and asked if they had the money. He estimated they were owed between \$20,000-\$30,000 dollars. The next morning Sonia was angry with Dave because he seemed to have so little to show for his work. As Don thought through the problem he realized that Dave had probably not created invoices at all in some cases. Sonia worked with him. At the end of the day they determined Dave owed no outstanding bills but they were owed more than \$53,000. After Sonia recovered from her surprise she asked Don if it had been Lydia who had told Don he wasn't right for Rosie. When he answered it was, Sonia told Don he was making a mistake. She told him if he wanted it to work, which he said he did, he needed to take Rosie to dinner and talk about it.

Analysis

Even while his own marriage was failing Don took steps in this section of the novel to help his friend with his own marital problems. Don was hearing from both Sonia and from Dave that their problems were caused by Dave's job as an independent worker in refrigeration. Dave believed his business was headed for bankruptcy but he hadn't told his wife about his fears. Sonia suspected Dave was having trouble with his business because each time she asked for money she was told there was none. Don realized the problem lay in Dave's inability to stay current in his paperwork. With the help of Sonia he scanned all of Dave's paperwork into his computer and then discovered there were many jobs for which Dave hadn't even created invoices. Once he'd gone through all of Dave's paperwork he discovered that Dave was not going bankrupt, instead he was owed more than \$53,000.

Also in this section of the novel Don went to Lydia for advice. It seems he had some deep determination that he had to have her approval before he could believe that he was really able to be a father. As he had done several times in the past, Don tried to get Lydia to provide help with his problem by describing only parts of the situation and not giving Lydia the whole picture. Based on his relationship with Rosie/Sonia, Lydia thought Don would do fine as a father. When Don gave her a hypothetical situation where he presented Rosie as withdrawn Lydia told him that in that case that woman would probably be better off without a husband.

Even with Lydia's advice that Rosie would be better off with no husband than an insensitive one, Don gave himself a chance for redemption. He decided to list the characteristics that made a man a good candidate for fatherhood. Once he'd made his list he believed the only two aspects he had that could be considered positive ones



were his honesty and his support system. Based on his own research and Lydia's opinion of his situation Don decided that Rosie really was better off without him.

Discussion Question 1

Do you think Don should have taken Lydia's belief that Rosie would be better off with no husband than an insensitive one as seriously as he did?

Discussion Question 2

In what way was Don's original lie — his choice not to tell Rosie about his arrest — still haunting him?

Discussion Question 3

Why was it significant that Don helped out Dave and Sonia even though his own marriage was in trouble as well? What does that say about Don's personality?

Vocabulary

anagram, homophone, roster, intercepted, paradoxically, reflective, inevitability, formulaic, intrinsic, plausibility, aversion, unambiguous



Chapters 31-33

Summary

In Chapter 31, Gene, Inge and Don worked together to get a reservation for Don and Rosie at the Momofuku Ko. As he walked up to the apartment building to meet Rosie, a man approached holding two cups of coffee. When Don saw that the man planned to wait until Don had entered his access code so he could slip into the building, Don kept him from doing so. On a whim Don asked the man if he was there to see George. The man said he was George's son, the recovering drug addict. Don accompanied him to George's apartment. There was no answer. The man said he'd wait, which Don didn't think he could allow. He also believed if the man left, he wouldn't come back.

At his own apartment Rosie opened the door when Don knocked. Don made the excuse that he had come to check the beer. When he left quickly, Gene followed him. Don said he was having an emergency and asked Gene to take care of Rosie. On the street Don spotted George (the Prince) and kept him from getting in the taxi. He told him the Prince would buy him dinner while they waited for his father to return. He had recognized in the Prince the same feeling he'd had when he teetered on the edge of depression. He told the Prince he had once been so depressed he'd considered suicide, the Prince asked Don to tell him about it.

At the restaurant, Don learned that the Prince didn't blame his father for his drug addiction. When his father has suggested it, he'd researched drugs and decided the best one to use would be lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD). He was hooked after taking only one tablet. He said that even though he'd managed to get off the drugs, he'd wasted the best years of his life. He had no job, no wife and no children. At that point Gene texted Dave from a cafe and commanded Don to join him and Rosie. Don asked the Prince if he wanted to hear some music. The Prince agreed and the two went to the cafe where Gene and Rosie were eating. Ironically, it was the band the Dead Kings that was playing. Don told the Prince he hadn't know in advance his father's band was playing there.

When the band took a break Don went to talk to George and Gene. Gene said he'd help only if Don made an effort to patch things up with Rosie. He also made Don promise he'd break a rule of the cafe by recording what was about to happen on his phone. The band got back together and played one song. Then George said his son would be joining them on the next song. When that song was over Don and Gene told George the change was permanent because the Prince needed a job and because George owed his son a favor because he had destroyed his son's life.

In Chapter 32, one day while Don was in the apartment checking the beer he asked Rosie a question about the Lesbian Mothers Project in which he'd been involved. He told her they didn't want to publish the results and wanted her help in understanding why. Before he left, Rosie told him that she had a flight to Australia the following day.



When Don went to check the beer that night Sonia told him they were going to see Lydia first. They were to meet at the apartment Don had shared with Rosie. Gene would be take Rosie out. Shortly after Lydia arrived at the apartment, the band began practicing upstairs. Lydia asked how the baby would sleep. Don showed her the crib. Sonia suddenly seemed extremely uncomfortable and asked to use the bathroom. After a few minutes, Sonia called from the bathroom and said she had a problem. Don went into the bathroom with her and determined her umbilical cord was prolapsed. He called 911. The problem was worse because Sonia believed her labor had started. Don told her he felt he could do what needed to be done to save the baby but would have to examine her.

Just as Don was about to start his examination, Rosie and Gene came home. Don explained the problem. Rosie ordered everyone out and did the examination herself. When she came out she said they needed someone who knew what to do there now. Don insisted he knew what to do but needed her help. Rosie had to push the baby's head back inside to keep it from crushing the umbilical cord. The band started playing but stopped about ninety seconds later. George, the Prince and the rest of the Dead Kings along with a journalist and photographer came into the apartment. Shortly after the paramedics arrived as well. Lydia was surprised that Don was not going to the hospital with Sonia. It was only after Don made introductions that he realized he needed to call Dave.

In Chapter 33, Don straightened out the confusion between Rosie, Sonia and Lydia. Rosie was not happy when she learned that Gene had known all along about the Playground Incident and what had happened after it. The journalist came back and asked for the story of what had just happened. After the interview Don did not feel Sally, the journalist, had gotten an adequate grasp of the story. When Rosie said she had been unable to get in touch with Dave to find out how things were going Don told her he'd gotten a text saying they had done an emergency c-section and the baby, a girl, was fine.

The group got distracted when they began discussing why Sonia would be willing to impersonate Rosie for Don when Gene pulled them back to the important topic. He told them that Don didn't think he was going to be a good father. Don's belief he wouldn't be a good father had led Rosie to think he didn't want to be a father. When Lydia defended herself saying she didn't offer advice Gene stopped her and informed her that Don was leaving Rosie because Lydia had told Don that he was bad for Rosie. Don reminded Lydia that she'd said he was unsuitable as a father even before the Playground Incident. Lydia said she'd been irritated by Don that day and realized now that Don could do anything he put his mind to. She warned them, however, that parenting would not be easy. When she left, Gene walked with her. Don and Rosie finally were alone. Rosie told him she wanted to bring up a child without him telling her what to do and always being right. She told him she had even put together a spreadsheet that proved she needed to go back to Australia.



Analysis

Don's actions seemed unthinkable in this section of the novel as he put aside the plans on which he'd worked so hard in his attempt to get Rosie to reconcile with him. Just as he had in other sections of the novel, Don saw someone in trouble and realized he needed to help that person. Even Gene, whom Don had helped before at the expense of his own marriage, thought Don was crazy for passing up what might have been his last chance to set things right with Rosie.

Don, however, recognized a desperation in George's son that he had seen in himself. He believed that if George (the Prince) didn't get to see his father that he was planning to kill himself. Although Don didn't have the emotional ties that would help him to understand a person in that situation he did have personal experience in depression. George the drummer already lived with the belief that he had caused his son to be a drug addict, Don didn't want him to have to deal with his son's suicide as well.

Remember when the guys had their discussions of nature versus nurture. George had wondered why one of his sons was a drug addict and the other was straight. He asked the question rhetorically as he had already decided that it was his fault that his son had begun using drugs. He thought he had goaded him into his drug use. During Don's conversation with the Prince, however, Don learned that the Prince had instead decided for himself that he wanted to do drugs. He picked LSD as his drug of choice. After his first hit, he was addicted and could not get off the drugs. The Prince told Don he did not blame his father for getting him addicted to drugs but was upset with himself for wasting the best years of his life. He described his feelings of hopelessness because he had no job, children or wife to Don.

The Prince's problem was solved in this section of the novel though it was really a matter of him being in the right place at the right time more that it was because of any great problem solving skills on Don's part. Gene was angry with Don for not going on his date with Rosie as he had planned. He called Don and demanded that he come to the cafe where he and Rosie were listening to live music. When Don and the Prince showed up at the cafe it turned out it was the Dead Kings, the band of which George was a member, that was playing there. Once Gene learned what was happening it was he who arranged the switch so that he could trick George into giving his job to his son.

Also in this section Don was finally forced to come clean about his decision not to tell Rosie about his arrest when Sonia (pretending to be Rosie) went into labor in Don and Rosie's apartment while having a session with Lydia. It turned out that Sonia had called Lydia and arranged a meeting with her. She told her that Don had decided to split up with her based on what Lydia had told Don during his prior meeting with her. Instead of a calm conversation aimed at getting the couple back together, however, Lydia got a good deal more than she had bargained for.

Three things are significant in the story of Don helping save Sonia's baby. First, Lydia had to admit that Don was capable of doing anything to which he set his mind. Second,



Rosie had to face her fear of dealing with people who were suffering with a trauma and third, Rosie had to admit that she and Don worked well together as a team.

Of course the comic relief in this section is the resulting confusion of Lydia when she saw how Don treated Sonia when she was in labor and then as Lydia met the real Rosie. Don was forced to come clean to Rosie and explain why he had acted as he had. Amusing also in this section is the fact that it was Don who not only remembered in the excitement to let Dave know Sonia was in labor and to check in with him to see if the baby and Sonia were okay.

Notice also that despite what Rosie learned about Don in this section of the novel and what he helped to teach her about herself, that she could overcome her phobia of traumas, she still planned to divorce him. In keeping with her husband's problem solving method, Rosie had put together a spreadsheet lining out the pros and cons of dissolving their relationship. Although it seemed at one point Rosie was considering changing her mind, she told Don that she wanted a relationship with her baby that was only hers. She didn't seem to be able to deal with the stress of having Don tell her every time she messed up. She admitted he was usually right when he pointed out her flaws but didn't want to live her life with her mistakes constantly being pointed out to her.

Discussion Question 1

Why is it significant that Don found it more important to help his friend reconcile with his son than to focus on his own marriage?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss Rosie's reasons for wanting to leave Don. Do you think these reasons are good enough reasons for her to give up on her marriage?

Discussion Question 3

What does it say about Don that he was able to help Sonia and the baby the way he did? Would he have been able to save the baby had he not researched births the way he had?

Vocabulary

sufficed, impostor, intonation, rudimentary, prolapsed, anatomy, incoherent, iterate, dissociating, contextual, surreal, rectified, eminent



Chapters 34-36

Summary

In Chapter 34, Rosie and Don slept in the same bed together that night. The next morning he asked for a copy of her spreadsheet. He hoped that she had made an error. Later, Gene and Don went to see Dave and Sonia at the hospital. Don told Sonia there was no change in the status of his relationship with Rosie. He even showed her Rosie's spreadsheet. Sonia criticized Rosie's use of the air ticket as a reason to break up. Gene said, however, he suspected Rosie's other man was not Stefan because he would run away from a baby. Don had noticed the spreadsheet didn't include any emotional factors in Rosie's decision. As he was trying to process the new information, Sonia asked him if he wanted to hold the baby whom they had named after Rosie. Going back to the spreadsheet, Gene and Sonia realized that if they took off the reason of the plane ticket, the odds were in Don's favor as Rosie had made a mistake mathematically. Dave walked in and Don immediately asked him if he had his car. He requested to be taken to JFK immediately.

In Chapter 35, Don booked a plane ticket online. He didn't pack any bags. On the ride to the airport Gene and Dave did role play with Don trying to help him decide what he should say to Rosie. They discouraged him from using any arguments based on the spreadsheet. At the airport, the security officer questioned Don and then pulled him aside for special interviews. Don was searched. He finally told the airline officials his wife was on the plane and he wanted to join her. They checked out his story and then arranged seats to be switched so Don could sit next to Rosie. Rosie was surprised when he sat down next to her.

He told her he loved her and that he realized the other man to whom she was referring was her father. Rosie said she appreciated what he was doing but she was going to Australia anyway. When Don called the flight attendant to tell her he needed off the plane she said it was too late. Don began to get frustrated because he realized he could have gotten off the plane if he'd lied and said he was ill. He knew he was facing a situation that might lead to a meltdown, one from which he physically couldn't walk away. He closed his eyes and breathed in an attempt to calm himself. The steward asked him to put his seat fully forward. Don had tried to do so but the seat was broken. The stewardess reached over him to work on the seat, distressing him even more. Don continued to breathe and began to chant. When Rosie asked if he was okay his mind had finally cleared.

In Chapter 36, Rosie went to sleep while the man in the seat next to Don was offered an upgrade. A man, Aaron Lineham, who identified himself as a federal air marshal took the empty seat. Don thought at first he was schizophrenic. He asked the man to see his ID. Lineham talked to Don for a few minutes and after Don agreed when Lineham asked him if he had decided to do something crazy to persuade his wife to stay he got on a communication device and said the situation was confirmed. The plane turned around



without Don's realization. As Lineham and Don discussed their fear of death an announcement was made that the plane was being turned around. The air marshal finally cut to the chase and asked Don if he had packed a bomb in his wife's bags. Don said there was no bomb but he knew the air marshal had to assume he was lying. The marshal asked Don to tell him his story. When he was finished, the marshal advised Don in the role of fatherhood, he needed to visualize himself as being where he wanted to be.

When the plane landed Rosie was surprised because she believed she'd slept all the way to L.A. Don told her they'd returned to New York because it was suspected there was a terrorist on board the plane. Rosie was at first afraid until Don told her that he was the suspected terrorist. At the airport Rosie and Don were sent to different interrogation rooms. Don tried to visualize himself as a parent. He realized all of his emotional response was to Rosie with none to any perception of the baby he could muster. After no bombs were found in Rosie's bags and Don signed a nondisclosure form he and Rosie were allowed to go. He and Rosie decided to stay the night in New York. Don suggested she call Phil but she said it wasn't necessary as Phil wasn't expecting her until January.

Analysis

The action of the novel reached a climax in this section as Rosie made good on her decision to leave Don. Don also made an important discovery about himself that helped him be able to explain to Rosie the difficulties he was having with the idea of adding a baby to their relationship. In true Don fashion, when he tried to surprise Rosie by getting on the same airplane as her to persuade her to stay with him, Don's behavior was considered suspicious and he was tagged as a terrorist.

It was Don's personality differences that caused him to be tagged as a terrorist when he tried to talk to Rosie before her plane took off. He wanted to get to the airport quickly so he took only his passport with him. Even though Gene had tried to talk Don into packing a bag to take with him Don had refused, saying he couldn't pack without a list. It was perhaps this absence of bags that the airline people found most disturbing. He was questioned and searched, making him late getting to the plane. Rosie had already boarded by the time he arrived at the gate so he had no choice but to board as well.

It was under these circumstances that Don found himself in a situation that was causing him stress and anger from which he could not walk away. He was frustrated because Rosie wasn't listening to what he had to say and refused to get off the plane even to talk further. His personal space was being invaded as a result of the closeness of the airplane seats. When it came time for him to try to get off the plane, the stewardess would not allow him to get off the plane. Don began trying to calm himself. Even the process of him calming himself led to more suspicion because the people near him interpreted his behavior as prayer in a foreign language.



The federal air marshal sent to babysit Don while the plane turned around told Don he was there to keep him safe. Although his purpose was not to give advice, the air marshal ended up advising Don on his situation with Rosie. He told Don he needed to try to visualize himself as being a father. Don later followed this advice while he was waiting to be allowed to leave the airport. He did not succeed in visualizing he and Rosie with a baby but it was when the second member of the airline staff entered the room in which he was waiting the proverbial light bulb went on in Don's head and he realized what it was about the baby that was causing him difficulty. While he dealt well with people on a one on one basis, adding a third person to the mix created stress for him as he had to try to define the relationship of those people to each other and to him.

In the theme of problem solving, Sonia and Gene noted problems in Rosie's spreadsheet, as Don would call them, faults in her logic. First, Sonia pointed out to him that Rosie should not be allowed to count the cost of the plane ticket as a reason for leaving Don. When she removed the plane ticket it was revealed that the spreadsheet results indicated that Rosie should stay with Don.

It is also in this section that Gene uncovered a secret that Rosie was keeping. He told Don that he believed Rosie was lying about there being another man. He especially didn't believe this other man was Stefan. Knowing Stefan as he did, Gene said Stefan would run from a woman with a baby, especially if it were someone else's baby. Gene also pointed out to Don that there was no mention of another man on the spreadsheet that Rosie had put together. By the time he talked to Rosie, Don had already figured out who the man with the Skype name of 34 was. It was Rosie's father, not Stefan as Don had at first suspected.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the behaviors Don exhibited that caused him to be tagged as a terrorist. Do you think it was legitimate for the security people to single him out just because he had no bags? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Consider the air marshal's advice to Don to visualize himself where he wanted to be. Do you think this was good advice? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss Don's discovery concerning his stress about the additional relationships the baby would add to his primary relationship with Rosie.

Vocabulary

fallacy, limerence, anomalous, usurped, denier, retrospect, mantra, delusion, centrifugal, amelioration, envisaged, subterfuge



Chapters 37-39

Summary

In Chapter 37, when Don and Rosie arrived home, Gene told Don he had plans for him between 5 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Hoping to make use of the little time they had together, Don talked to Rosie explaining to her that the multiplying of relationships from just her and him to multiple relationships involving the baby had confused him. He understood she needed the relationship with the baby for emotional reasons, but encouraged her not to throw away their relationship in the meantime. He said their lives, even with the baby, should include joint activities as well as intellectual stimulation. He told her that he planned to act as the champion of their relationship. Rosie thought about what he had to say but then went back to the idea that Don wasn't wired to be a father. Don reminded her that she hadn't thought he was wired for love and was wrong about that. He suggested she might be wrong again. Gene interrupted and asked them both to go to the medical school event.

Before they left, B1 called Don to say she couldn't believe what he'd done. She told him to look at the "New York Post" website. In his office, Rosie was there looking at the tiles on which he'd drawn diagrams of Bud. Rosie asked why he'd never shown them to her. He reminded her she'd told him she didn't want a technical commentary. Don pulled up the article Sally had written about his contributions to Sonia's birth. The article was full of errors and wrong information. Rosie told him that he was right about her phobia about dealing with Sonia. She also commented they'd made a good team.

In Chapter 38, at the party, Don was surprised to see that Lydia was there with Gene. As the dean began telling of the accomplishments of his fellow workers Don began to feel better about himself. The final video featured Don laying on the floor, letting the baby play on him. The people began laughing. Don felt Rosie beside him. She was gripping his hand and crying. When people began leaving, Rosie asked if they could stay for a minute. She asked the dean if she could see the DVD of Don again. He said she could have it.

When they arrived home Gene and several guests, including Lydia, George and Dave, met them. Rosie's father walked in from the balcony. Phil was surprised when Don got to him and hugged him before Rosie did. Gene said Phil was there when he'd gotten home. They gave Don the gift of a copy of the movie "It's a Wonderful Life." Gene announced they would be watching the film upstairs in George's apartment. Before they began the film his friends explained to Don that he was like George, the main character of the movie. They had both done a lot for their friends. As the celebration continued, they began calling friends to join them until George's apartment seemed like a real English pub. The movie was the first one that made Don cry. He was thinking about what a hole Rosie was going to leave in his life when she left. She had to explain to him that she had changed her mind.



In Chapter 39, Rosie and Don flew to Australia for Christmas. He had told her he would find some way to emotionally relate to Bud even though it might take some time. She voiced her fear that he might mess up her relationship with the baby. Phil had stayed in New York so Don and Rosie had eight days alone together in his house in Melbourne. They decided to stay in Australia for the birth. They also spent three days with Don's family.

Rosie had the baby on the second anniversary of their first date. Don was surprised to find he had an immediate emotional reaction to the baby. Even though the baby was a boy Rosie argued they couldn't continue to call him Bud. They decided on Hudson. It combined Hud (Human under development) as well as a connection to New York.

Analysis

It was the video of Don playing with the baby during the Lesbian Mothers Project that seemed to have the most impact on Rosie's decision to stay with Don. Remember at one point that Don had felt proud of himself because he'd had the ability to raise to baby's oxytocin level just by playing with it. The researcher who ran the test actually told Don the level was through the roof. He'd wanted to tell Rosie about the experience but had already been warned not to talk about the project as he would be invading Rosie's territory. When Rosie did see the video, however, she saw a side to her husband that she'd worried he didn't have. Had she been more open to him and less defensive throughout the entire pregnancy, she might have interpreted Don's technical interest in the baby, albeit odd, his way of showing he was interested.

In the theme of relationships Don's friends get together to have him watch "It's a Wonderful Life." They saw parallels between George, the main character in the movie, and Don. It was during this party session that Rosie really learned the ways in which Don had positively affected his friends and their relationships. He'd identified the problem with Dave's business. He'd helped save Sonia's baby. He'd helped Eugenie deal with the kids who were bullying her. He'd kept George's son from killing himself and reunited the father and son. He'd helped reconcile Gene and Carl.

Important to notice in this section of the novel is Rosie's surprise that Don had been drawing sketches of the baby as it developed. She was astonished at the time he'd put into his study of the development of the baby. When she asked why he didn't tell her about the sketches he reminded her that she'd told him she didn't want a technical commentary of the baby's development.

Note also that after Rosie and Don read the article in the "New York Times" together that Rosie told him he was right about her phobia. She said, however, that once she'd gotten involved in helping Sonia she had quickly recovered from the phobia.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the significance of the name that Rosie and Don chose for their baby.



Discussion Question 2

Discuss the reconciliation of Don and Rosie. What do you think had the biggest impact on Rosie's decision to stay with Don?

Discussion Question 3

Do you think Don was completely at fault in the break down of the relationship with Rosie? Did Rosie contribute to it as well?

Vocabulary

nostalgic, binary, impregnated, laureate, premise, acclimatize, alleviated, prestigious, pervasive, blatant



Characters

Donald “Don” Tillman

Don is the main character and narrator of this novel. He was the husband of Rosie. He was employed as a geneticist by Columbia University. Because he was a scientist Don thought in a way that was very logical. He had difficulty making emotional connections and described himself as being socially inept.

Even though he'd been married to Rosie for more than ten months he was still adjusting to being married. Because of a comment made by a virtual stranger, Don began to doubt his capabilities as a father. He spent the course of the novel proving to himself and to Rosie that he could be a good father. One of the activities in which Don participated in order to try to improve his fatherhood skills was watching children play at a playground. Because he acted awkwardly around the police who came to question what he was doing there, he was arrested as a suspected pedophile. This arrest led to a rift between Don and Rosie because Don was afraid if told Rosie about the arrest it would cause her stress. To make matters worse, Don's nemesis, the woman who had advised him not to have children, was his social worker. Even though her mind seemed set against Don, Don managed to change Lydia's mind about his ability to be a decent father. In the course of the novel Don also convinced Rosie that he would be a good father to their baby.

Sonia Belcher

Sonia Belcher was the wife of Dave Belcher. She worked at an IVF facility. She was pregnant at the same time Rosie was. Unlike Rosie, who was very independent and self sufficient, Sonia wished her husband would fuss over her. She was worried because Dave seemed so disinterested in the baby.

When Don got arrested for being in the playground with no child under the age of 12, Sonia agreed to impersonate Rosie. Don had asked her to do so because he didn't want to tell Rosie about what had happened and stress her.

When Don was organizing Dave's bills, Sonia asked him for figures that would tell her how much money her husband owed in his business and how much he was owed. They worked together to determine that he was owed more than \$53,000. After their baby was born, Sonia asked Dave to allow her to start doing his paperwork for him. He agreed even though he was hesitant about accepting her help.

When Sonia went into labor, she suffered a prolapsed umbilical cord. Unfortunately it happened at the same time she was supposed to be impersonating Rosie at a final appointment at Rosie and Don's apartment. Rosie arrived at home as Don was about to examine Sonia. She instead did the examination. Rosie and Don worked together to



save Sonia's baby from being damaged by a lack of oxygen because of the prolapsed cord. As a thank you, Sonia named the baby after Rosie.

Gene Barrow

Gene Barrow was Don's best friend. He was the husband of Claudia and father of Eugenie and Carl. Because she thought he had been unfaithful to her after his promise not to do so, Claudia had kicked Gene out of their home in Melbourne, Australia. He went to New York to live with Don and Rosie even though Rosie did not want him in their house.

In order to go to American Gene took a sabbatical from his job as head of the Department of Psychology in order to work at Columbia University with Don. He was a geneticist who specialized in evolutionary psychology. Before Gene moved in with Don and Rosie, Rosie had disliked Gene. He was her PhD supervisor in Melbourne. While he lived with Don and Rosie, Gene gave advice to each of them about how they should repair their marriage. It was also Gene who had given Don the advice that he should go to a playground to observe the way children acted. It was this advice that started the major secret that Don kept from Rosie, that he had been arrested and was in counseling because he was a suspected pedophile.

While in New York, Gene tried to seduce Inge, the postdoc researcher assigned to work with Don. After he met Lydia, the social worker who had given Don so much grief about being a bad candidate for fatherhood, the two began a relationship.

Lydia Mercer

Lydia Mercer was the social worker who became Don's nemesis after the Bluefin Tuna incident. Don met Lydia during a lunch with mutual friends and the two immediately got off on the wrong foot. Lydia became angry with Don because he ordered bluefin tuna, a fish that was an endangered species. She interpreted his behavior as being insensitive. Before she left the restaurant she told Don he should do the world a favor and not have children. This comment initiated in Don a fear that he would not be a good father.

When Don was referred to Bellevue after the Playground Incident, Lydia took over Don's case even though another counselor had already told him he was free to go. Lydia made Don bring his wife to counseling sessions, putting Don in the position of having to tell Rosie about his arrest and risk stressing her or getting someone to impersonate Rosie and making the web of lies he was spinning even more complex.

After Lydia saw Rosie and Don in action when Sonia's baby was in trouble, Lydia realized she had misjudged Don. She had thought he was so insensitive he would allow his wife to suffer from postpartum depression without even realizing it as another client of her's had. In that instance the mother had killed herself and her baby before anyone even realized she was sick.



Rosie

Rosie was the wife of Don and mother of Hudson aka Bud. She was a woman who was driven, independent and highly intelligent. Despite her intelligence she was disorganized and at some point missed enough birth control pills that she became pregnant. She was very happy when she discovered she was pregnant but didn't realize how deeply the unexpected pregnancy would affect her highly structured husband.

As Rosie struggled with pregnancy, completing her thesis and going through medical school she became more and more convinced that Don would not be a good father because he was so strange and emotionally distant. She was also afraid that Don's strangeness would affect her relationship with her baby so she decided to go back home to her father in Australia. It was only after Rosie saw the video footage of Don playing with a baby during the Lesbian Mothers Project that she realized Don did have the potential to be a good, affectionate father.

Dave Belcher

Dave Belcher was a friend of Don who ran a refrigeration business. He was the husband of Sonia. Dave asked Don to go along with him when he did the final check on George's beer cellar and gave the man his invoice. Don impressed George when he was able to tell him the exact temperature at which his cooler should be set. Dave helped Don pack and move when Don decided he and Rosie should move to the apartment in which George's beer cellar was located.

When Don stayed with Dave and Sonia after he and Rosie split up, he helped Dave, who was unorganized and sloppy with his paperwork, organize his information on the computer.

Dave's wife, Sonia was also pregnant at the time of the novel. Dave was struggling with forming a connection with his unborn child because they had gotten pregnant using IVF and another man's sperm. Dave was worried he wouldn't feel an emotional connection to a baby he knew wasn't genetically his.

George Four aka The Prince

George Four, who is also called the Prince, was the son whom George the Third believed he had gotten addicted to drugs. Don happened to recognize the Prince as George's son when he was trying to get into the apartment building without a code. Don recognized that the Prince had come to the point in his life that he was depressed and considering suicide. Although he was supposed to have dinner with Rosie at a special restaurant in an attempt to reconcile with her, Don instead helped the Prince. During dinner the Prince told Don he didn't blame his father for his addiction to drugs.



Don took George to the cafe where Rosie and Gene were listening to music. Gene requested that George let his son have a turn at the drum set. After a successful song, Gene told George the switch in roles needed to be permanent, as the Prince needed a job and George owed it to his son for introducing him to drugs.

Judy Esler

Judy Esler was one of the people who attended the Sunday dinner when the Bluefin Tuna Incident took place. It was Judy who tried to redirect the conversation during the lunch when Lydia attacked Don for the entree he chose to order. Judy later apologized for Lydia's behavior. Judy was also Rosie's friend. When Rosie became pregnant she spoke with Judy about nutritional needs and asked her for advice about a doctor for prenatal care. When Don began harassing Rosie about exercise she told him that she and Judy were doing yoga together as a form of exercise.

George

George was the drummer for the band the Dead Kings. He was also the father of George the Fourth aka the Prince. George agreed to let Don, Rosie and Gene live in the apartment underneath his that he had bought in order to use one room as a beer cellar. He agreed not to charge Don and Rosie any rent as Don would be checking the beer cellar and making sure the refrigeration was working properly while he lived there. While living in George's apartment, Don helped reconcile George with his son, George the fourth, whom George believed he had gotten addicted to drugs.

Phil Jarman

Phil Jarman was Rosie's father. When Don told Gene he was concerned because Phil was unimpressed with him Gene tried to instill in Don some empathy for what Phil had to do as a father. He had been in the car when his wife had been killed in a car wreck. He'd raised Rosie alone.

Phil is important in this novel as he mailed his wife's ring to Don so he could give it to Rosie as a gift for their one year anniversary. Phil also agreed to let Rosie come home and live with him even though she was pregnant. At the end of the novel Phil traveled to New York in an attempt to help Rosie and Don reconcile.

Carl

Carl was the son of Gene and stepson of Claudia. He was a half brother to Eugenie. Because Carl had told his sister that he wanted to kill his father because of his unfaithfulness, Don felt Gene needed to talk to his son after he made the announcement he hadn't really slept with all the women he claimed he had. Based on



Carl's initial reaction Don didn't think they'd made much of an impact on Carl. Gene, however, believed that Carl had taken the information under consideration.

Eugenie

Eugenie was the daughter of Gene and Claudia. She was a half sister to Carl. Eugenie confided with Don because she was being bullied at school because she was so smart. Don understood how she felt because he also had been bullied at school. During one of their conversations, Eugenie told Don that Carl had said he wanted to kill his father, Don, because of Don's unfaithfulness to her mother.

Ms. Aranda

Ms. Aranda was the social worker who originally agreed to see Don when he arrived at Bellevue asking to be worked in to see a counselor. She listened to his story and was prepared to let him go because she understood his encounter with the police had been a misunderstanding. Lydia, however, saw Don talking to Ms. Aranda and insisted she be allowed to take over the case.

David Borenstein

David Borenstein was the dean of medicine at Columbia University. He was Don's boss. It was David who arranged Gene to spend his sabbatical at Columbia. He also arranged for Don to work with the Lesbian Mothers Project. It was footage taken during this project that made Rosie realize that Don did have potential as being an emotionally present father.

Jerome

Jerome was the man who believed he'd been attacked by Don in the elevator of their apartment building because Jerome had added laundry to a washing machine being used by Rosie turning their laundry purple. In reality, Don was having a meltdown and running away from Rosie because she had told him she was pregnant.

Claudia

Claudia was Gene's wife and the mother of Eugenie. Although Don tried to convince Claudia she needed to give Gene another change Claudia would not do so. She had instead began a relationship with Simon Lefebvre, the man who had been Don's co-researcher in Melbourne.



Inge

Inge was the postdoc researcher who David assigned to Don. Gene began seeing Inge socially even though she was much younger than he. He thought that she was interested in him sexually but it turned out that she saw him only as a mentor. Don advised both Gene and Inge on the situation and helped them to salvage their friendship.

Seymour

Seymour was the man who attended the Sunday lunch that turned into the Bluefin Tuna Incident. Seymour tried to stick up for Don as he said that the world needed people who had the attributes of being technical and truth tellers, as Don was.



Symbols and Symbolism

Orange Juice

The pair of glasses of orange juice that Don saw on the kitchen table on the day that he and Rosie had agreed they could drink alcohol was a sign that something was different. Don came to associate these glasses of orange juice with his wife's announcement that she was pregnant.

A Spreadsheet

The use of a spreadsheet was how both Rosie and Don determined what their best course of action was in a given situation based on the pros and cons of the situation. It was a problem solving tool. Don used a spreadsheet to determine if he would be a good father while Rosie used a spreadsheet to determine if she should stay with Don or go home to Australia.

Bluefin Tuna Sashimi

Don named a Sunday lunch with friends the Bluefin Tuna Incident after he attempted to order Bluefin Tuna Sashimi but was accused of being insensitive by a woman with whom he was having lunch. This meal symbolized Lydia's act of telling Don that he should do society a favor and not have children.

Smoked Mackerel

This food, cold-smoked mackerel, became an object of contention for Rosie and Don after Don realized the mackerel was not good for pregnant women. It came to symbolize the difficulties that the two had in deciding how Rosie should take care of herself while she was pregnant.

A Diamond Ring

Phil sent this diamond ring, which had belonged to Rosie's mother, to Don with the request that Don give it to Rosie as an anniversary gift. The ring represented Rosie's mother. It was also ironic because Don explained how the eternity ring, which this ring was to be, went on the same ring finger as the wedding ring. It went on after the wedding ring and was supposed to make it harder to remove the wedding ring. In Rosie's case, after her fingers swelled during her pregnancy, she couldn't remove her mother's ring, making it impossible to remove her wedding ring.



A Notebook

Rosie gave Don this notebook full of information about what she planned for them to do the night of their anniversary. She said he could look at as many, or as few, pages as he wished. The notebook symbolized Rosie's understanding of her husband's personality and her willingness to help keep him grounded.

A Soundproof Crib

Don called on his father's help to design this crib which would be soundproof but would still allow the baby to breathe. This crib represented Don's preparation for his baby. Although he wasn't emotionally excited as some believed he should be, he had thought about some of the more day-to-day needs of the baby, like a way for the baby to sleep even through George's band practice.

Air Fare

This air fare, which Rosie had purchased at the lowest rate and for which she was unable to get a refund, seemed to be her deciding factor in deciding that she did want to separate from Don. While Rosie seemed to think this was a good reason to separate from Don, others thought it was only an excuse.

A DVD

After the medical faculty party Rosie asked if she could have the DVD with the footage of Don playing with the baby. This footage symbolized Don's ability to positively interact with a baby even though both he and Rosie had questions about his ability in that role.

It's a Wonderful Life

It's a Wonderful Life was the name of the movie that Don's friends gave to him. They believed the story symbolized Don's life as the main character of the story had helped many of his friends without even realizing it, much like Don had done.



Settings

New York

New York was the place where Rosie and Don lived during the course of this novel.

Alchemist

The Alchemist was the name of the cocktail bar where Don and Rosie had once worked as a team before Rosie got pregnant.

Cellar in the Sky

The cellar in the sky was the name by which Don and Dave called George's beer cellar. After Don agreed to monitor George's beer for him he arranged for he and Rosie to move into the empty apartment in which the cellar was located.

A Playground on Tenth Avenue

It was at this playground on Tenth Avenue that Don was arrested for videotaping interactions between children playing there.

Bellevue Hospital

Bellevue Hospital was where the psychiatric hospital to which Don was referred was located. It was at this clinic that Don saw first Ms. Aranda and then later Lydia after he was arrested at the playground. Sonia attended some of these meetings with Don pretending to be Rosie so that Don wouldn't have to tell Rosie about his brush with the law.

Columbia

Columbia University was the school where Don worked and also where Rosie went to school. It was at this same university that Gene worked during his sabbatical from his school in Australia.

Lakeville, Connecticut

Don, Dave, Gene and George traveled to Lakeville, Connecticut to see a cow give birth to a calf in breech position. Don had requested to be allowed to see and perhaps participate in a birth in order to get the experience he thought he needed for Rosie's



delivery. A veterinarian was the only doctor David could get to agree to let Don watch and perhaps participate in a birth.

Momofuku Ko

It was at this restaurant that Don made reservations for himself and Rosie for a dinner during which he hoped he could reconcile with her. When he saw the condition in which the Prince was in, Don instead took him to the restaurant.

Cafe Wha

Cafe Wha was the place where Don took the Prince after they ate dinner. When they got to the cafe, they saw that George and his band were playing there. It was during the evening at the club that Gene told George that he needed to allow his son to take over his position so that the Prince could have a job.



Themes and Motifs

Being Different

The premise of the novel is that Don was different from the average person yet he still was able to maintain relationships. It was Don's difficulty with relationships that set him up for a good deal of the conflict that he faces. While Don was decidedly different, his wife Rosie also has personality quirks that make her difficult to handle.

Don's main problem was that he related to the world as if it were a science problem that needed to be solved. Although he thought things through very logically and did his research when coming to a decision about anything, he wasn't able to easily relate to other people on an emotional level. As he says of himself: "I was crippled — challenged — incapable of the feelings needed to drive normal behavior" (p. 318). Because of this lack of emotional drive Don had trouble being as excited as Rosie wanted him to be about the coming baby.

Meanwhile, Rosie had her own quirks that added to their troubles as a couple. Rosie had the need to feel she was competent and in control. Don's ability to research and follow the rules made her feel like a failure in some aspects. Even though she knew he was right about many of the things he was telling her, it challenged her sense of self worth to have him always being right. Rosie also had a tendency to be sneaky and secretive. For instance, it is suspected that she got pregnant intentionally even though she knew this unexpected pregnancy would shake Don to his core. She also surprised Don with the information about the baby even though she knew he didn't like surprises and didn't react well to them.

Problem Solving Methods

Because Don is a scientist, he generally turns to scientific methods to solve the problems that crop up in his life. His favorite way to solve problems was through the use of a spreadsheet. He used these spreadsheets to line out the pros and cons of different options and weight one option against the others. When Rosie decided it was best for her to leave Don and go home to Australia, she put together a spreadsheet. Sonia, Gene and Don all thought it was ridiculous that Rosie would need a spreadsheet to decide if she wanted to stay with her husband or not. They also disagreed with Don when he said he thought Rosie had perhaps put the spreadsheet together just to make him feel better. Ironically when Rosie and Don talked about their relationship later it turned out that Rosie had done just as Don suggested she had. She had put together the spreadsheet just so that Don would know she had thought her decision through.

When trying to solve problems Don also turned to his friends to help him with decisions. These guys probably tried to help Don the best they could but often Don did not give them all the details they needed to understand the situations he was facing. For



instance, when seeking advice from his friends whether or not he should tell Rosie about the Playground Incident Don didn't really give his friends a full picture of what had happened to him. For this reason they were unable to give the best advice.

Parenting

Parenting and the anticipation of parenting is a theme addressed in this novel. Both Don and Rosie worry about how Don will relate to the baby once it is born. Additionally, Don was told that Rosie was probably worried about her own abilities as a parent since she had a bad relationship with her father and her mother died when she was ten. The novel also addresses a tangent on this theme of parenting where importance of a father in the life of a child is discussed.

Don had trouble relating emotionally to other people and was aware of his emotional limitations. He worried that he would not be able to relate to the baby once it was born. This was one of the issues that Don and Rosie discussed after they were put off the plane in New York. Just as Don had surprised Rosie, and himself, by learning how to develop an emotional attachment to Rosie, Don told her that he might also be able to form an emotional attachment to a baby. It was when Rosie actually saw the video of Don allowing the baby to crawl all over him that she realized that Don really did have the ability and desire to be a part of their child's life.

Don was not the only one with hangups about being a parent. Rosie had not had good parental examples growing up. Her mother had died when she was ten. She and her father had a bad relationship when Rosie was a child even though they had reconciled to one another since then. Rosie told Don that she was afraid that Don would interfere with the relationship between her and her baby. It was almost as if she wanted to avoid any problems that might crop up in the relationship because of Don before they even had the chance to start.

A final note about parenting is the Lesbian Mothers Project. The project was used as a device in the book to get Don in a position where he could play with a child and be videotaped doing it so that video could later be shown to Rosie. The study also made a statement about the necessity of a father and a mother in a child's life. The lesbians tried to change the outcome of the study by adapting the play so that it was more like cuddling, thus proving that mother's could raise the oxytocin level of their babies through play. In reality, however, it was only males who could raise the level of this hormone through play when the play was done correctly.

Relationships

Relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children, and friends are all explored through the course of the novel. The focal relationship in the novel is the one between Don and Rosie. The other relationships in the novel are explored in relation to their importance to the focal relationship.



The relationships between husbands and wives is one of the major categories of relationships explored in the novel. Rosie and Don's relationship is at the center of this exploration as the two try to decide how to incorporate a baby into their marriage. The relationship between Sonia and Dave is used as a contrast to the relationship between Rosie and Don. While Rosie resented the things that Don tried to do for her and the advice he tried to give her, Sonia wished her husband would do those things for her. Gene and Claudia's relationship is included to show that some relationships don't survive.

The relationships between parents and children are also important in the novel. Again, the main focus of the novel is Don and Rosie's struggle to incorporate a child into their lifestyle. Their struggles are compared to the messes that have been made by parents before them. George, for instance, is a perfect example. He believed that one of his sons had turned into a drug addict because of his influence. It turned out this was not the case, the son blamed himself. Gene's relationship with his children, Carl and Eugenie, is another that is presented in the novel as a way that these relationships can be challenged. Eugenie missed her father but Carl was angry with Gene. It was not until Don told Gene that his father wasn't really as promiscuous as he wanted everyone to believe, that the two were able to reconcile.

A final group of relationships that is important in the novel is that between friends. In several instances in the novel Don does things for his friends because he knew they needed his help. His abilities to research and organize allowed him to be able to help Dave with George's beer cellar project. Don was also able to organize Dave's business paperwork so that he located a good deal of money for which his friend had not sent invoices. Although he was unsuccessful Don tried to get Gene and Claudia back together. He believed their relationship was worth fighting for and would not allow them to give up easily. When Don had his own relationship problems his friends bound together to return the favors and help him reconcile with Rosie.

Secrets

Secrets and the danger of keeping secrets is a theme in the novel. The issue of keeping secrets was a problem faced mainly by Don as he struggled to keep Rosie from being stressed during her pregnancy. Don's secret keeping began with his decision not to tell Rosie he had been arrested. From there he had to keep more and more secrets until he had, in his words, woven a web of deception.

Don, however, was not the only one who had a major secret. Gene also had kept it a secret that he was not really as promiscuous as he led others to believe. Don was concerned because it was Gene's lies about promiscuity that had caused his marriage to fail. Gene didn't think telling Claudia the truth about himself would make any difference in their relationship. When it came to his relationship with his son, however, Gene fixed the situation so that Don would be the one to tell Carl his father had been lying about his affairs. It was when Gene shared this secret with his son that their relationship began to heal.



Styles

Point of View

This novel is told from the first person point of view of Don Tillman. The fact that Don uses the pronouns “I” and “me” to refer to himself are proof that the point of view is from the first person. The use of the first person point of view is instrumental to the development of the challenges and themes in the novel. No other point of view could capture Don’s unique feelings and emotions as he tried to deal with acclimating himself to fatherhood and also trying to find a way to persuade his wife to stay with him even though he had his doubts about his abilities to be a good parent. The first person point of view allows the reader to see the situations in the novel through Don’s unique way of thinking and understand why he acted as he did in certain situations.

Language and Meaning

Just as Don was a precise and meticulous person, the language in the novel is very precise and meticulous. Don noted that his father had been meticulous about grammar usage and had passed his love for proper grammar on to his son. Notice that when Don told Rosie that she was the “most perfect woman” he was disturbed by his misuse of an absolute. If something is perfect, it’s perfect, no modifiers needed. He attributed his misuse of grammar to the strength of the emotions he felt for Rosie. Notice also that Don uses few, if any, contractions and avoids slang.

Another aspect of the language to note in this book is the medical and genetic terms used. It makes sense that since most of the major players in the novel are scientists or doctors they would use scientific jargon. The writer supposes the reader has some background in medicine or psychology as this knowledge would be necessary to understand some of the comments made. One example of this is Rosie’s reference to the drug thalidomide when Don suggested that she not take any medicines for morning sickness. The astute reader would probably infer that this medicine was probably not recommended for expecting mothers but one would not necessarily know that the medicine had been once used for morning sickness and had resulted in babies being born with serious deformities. The deformities were so severe the drug was taken off the market.

Structure

This 341-page novel is divided into 39 chapters. The story is told in a linear fashion with only a few flashbacks. The majority of the story is told through exposition as Don worked through the problems he faced as he tried to deal with his wife’s pregnancy. The most significant aspect of the structure is that it follows the same patterns as Don’s thought patterns. Just as he lined things out and numbered things as he thought out his

problems, Don's thoughts are similarly listed out and numbered, just as he might have done.



Quotes

Sex was absolutely not allowed to be scheduled, at least not by explicit discussion, but I had become familiar with the sequence of events likely to precipitate it: a blueberry muffin from Blue Sky Bakery, a triple shot of espresso from Otha's, removal of my shirt, and my impersonation of Gregory Peck in the role of Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird*."

-- Narrator (Chapter One paragraph 3)

Importance: Although sexual intercourse was the one thing in Rosie and Don's relationship that wasn't supposed to be scheduled, there were certain things that Don did that would preclude sex. Don's inability to schedule sex was significant because he like to schedule most everything about his life with his wife, Rosie.

Once again, I was struck by her extraordinary beauty and inexplicable decision to select me as her partner. And, as always, that thought was followed by an unwanted emotion: an intense moment of fear that she would one day realize her error."

-- Narrator (Chapter One paragraph 9)

Importance: Even after they'd been married for nearly a year, Don was still surprised that Rosie had agreed to marry him because he was so socially inept. His fear was that one day she would realize what a bad decision she'd made and decide to leave him.

Rosie habitually took a direct approach to communication. In speaking to me, it was effective, indeed necessary, but others frequently interpreted her directness as confrontational."

-- Narrator (Chapter Two paragraph 4)

Importance: Even though Don considered himself socially inept, it appears from this quote that Rosie also has some social issues. Her issue seems to come from the directness of her communication.

I am aware that not everyone shares my view of the value of planning rather than allowing our lives to be tossed in unpredictable directions by random events."

-- Narrator (Chapter Three paragraph 9)

Importance: As Don considered the idea that Rosie's pregnancy was the result of a failure to plan and stay organized, Don admitted that he was aware that not everyone enjoyed planning as much as he but enjoyed spontaneity. Because they hadn't planned the pregnancy Don considered their pregnancy "unplanned."

So your job for the next nine months is to make sure I don't get stressed. Say it: Rosie must not get stressed. Go on."

-- Rosie (Chapter Four paragraph 13)

Importance: After explaining that if a pregnant woman was stressed it could lead to



cortisol being — to the baby. This cortisol could cause the baby to be depressed later in life. For this reason, Rosie told Don it was his job to make sure that she did not get stressed.

I was happy in the way that I would be happy if the captain of an aircraft in which I was traveling announced that he had succeeded in restarting one engine after both had failed.”

-- Narrator (Chapter Four paragraph 25)

Importance: These are the words that Don thought to himself as he tried to find a way to describe a situation that might bring on a happiness similar to the happiness he felt knowing that Rosie was pregnant.

Also the name of a plant component. A precursor to a flower. Flowers are considered feminine. Your name has a flower connection. Bud is perfect.”

-- Don (Chapter Five paragraph 19)

Importance: In this quote, Don tried to convince Rosie why the name Bud was a perfect name to call their unborn baby.

The scene was set: unfamiliar people, a restaurant I had not visited before, no Rosie to monitor the situation and provide an early warning. In retrospect, disaster was inevitable.”

-- Narrator (Chapter Seven paragraph 7)

Importance: Don lined out the circumstances of a lunch after which a social worker told him he needed to do the world a favor and not have children.

If I had shared what I found physically attractive about Rosie, or women in general, I am sure it would have been judged as inappropriate. But people with better social skills have more leeway to take risks.”

-- Narrator (Chapter Seven paragraph 23)

Importance: Don indicated in this quote that he believed some of the negative reaction he got to any comment he made was because he was so socially inept. He believed a person with better social skills could have gotten away with some of the things he said with less criticism.

I'd say, defer the whole year. Or the baby will suffer, the study will suffer, she'll suffer. And let me tell you from bitter experience, you'll suffer too.”

-- David Borenstein (Chapter Eight paragraph 77)

Importance: This professor suggested to Don that Rosie should take off at least a year with the baby but would not allow Don to tell Rosie he had made that suggestion. Don believed that since David had children of his own, he knew what he was talking about. Rosie rejected the suggestion even though she didn't know who had originally made it.



I thought for a moment, then added, only because it might reduce the chances of jail and consequent low-quality food, dull conversation, and unwanted sexual advances, 'I'm somewhat socially incompetent'."

-- Don (Chapter Nine paragraph 59)

Importance: After asking for a tequila during his questioning at a police station Don tried to cover his tracks by telling the questioning officer that he was "socially incompetent" in order to explain why he acted as he did. The officer, however, had already noticed Don's shortcoming.

Even without the scientific evidence linking stress to Bud's future mental health, my companions had reached essentially the same conclusion as I had. The news needed to be withheld until the problem was resolved."

-- Narrator (Chapter Ten paragraph 68)

Importance: Because Gene, Dave and George agreed with Don that he shouldn't tell Rosie what had happened to him, even though they didn't know the specifics, Don decided he had come to the best conclusion to not tell Rosie anything about the Park Incident until after it was resolved.

My second attempt to book an assessment at Bellevue was a disaster. Brendan, the person the senior police officer had referred me to, was on stress leave, joining Rosie and me and presumably much of New York in needing to lower his cortisol to safe levels."

-- Narrator (Chapter Eleven paragraph 20)

Importance: Don's description of Brendan's stress leave demonstrates his dry sense of humor. The situation and the difficulty Don had when trying to interact with the receptionist at Bellevue was demonstrative of the challenges he had with interpersonal communication.

Carl's stepmother is a clinical psychologist. His father is head of the Department of Psychology at a major university. Now I — a physical scientist hardwired to understand logic and ideas ahead of interpersonal dynamics — had been selected to counsel their son."

-- Narrator (Chapter Sixteen paragraph 25)

Importance: Don pointed out the irony that he, a scientist with no interpersonal skills, had been chosen as the one to provide advice to the son of a clinical psychologist and the head of a Department of Psychology.

My love for Rosie was so powerful that it had caused my brain to make a grammatical error."

-- Narrator (Chapter Seventeen paragraph 81)

Importance: In his desire to tell Rosie how much he loved her Don had called her the "most perfect woman." Because his father had emphasized good grammar, Don knew



he'd just used a modifier to describe an absolute, a grammatical error. He believed it was the emotional strength of his love for Rosie that made him make the error.

Once, there had been no secrets in my life. And my relationships, albeit few, had not been in danger. I suspected a correlation."

-- Narrator (Chapter Twenty-two paragraph 12)

Importance: Don thought about the way increasing the number of relationships he had in life also increased the number of secrets he was keeping. His scientific mind made a correlation between the increased numbers of relationships and the increased number of secrets.

The trouble,' said Gene, 'is that the things that Rosie loves you for are exactly the things that make her think you're too . . . different . . . to be a father."

-- Gene (Chapter Twenty-six paragraph 6)

Importance: Gene hit the basis of Rosie and Don's problems when she correctly realized that the things that made Rosie love Don were also the things that made her wonder if he'd be a good father.

It was a notable milestone. Tonight, at least in this limited domain of social interaction, I had managed to convince a cool young person, and apparently her fellow students, even in the face of a preconception, that I was within the normal range of social competence. But I was concerned with how the preconception had arisen."

-- Narrator (Chapter Twenty-seven paragraph 39)

Importance: Don believed he'd done well when he managed to impress Rosie's friends at a party. He wondered, however, why the girl with whom he'd spoken for the first time that night had thought he was a geek.

As a potential father, I was manifestly unsuitable, and it was increasingly clear that I was no longer required in my role as a partner."

-- Narrator (Chapter Twenty-Nine paragraph 10)

Importance: When Don laid out his attributes and drawbacks as a father on a spreadsheet he realized that he was very unqualified to be a father. He felt his lack of qualification ruled out his ability to continue a relationship with Rosie.

Married couples shouldn't need to have secrets. I've told Dave that,' said the woman who had posed as an Italian medical student and told me not to tell Dave because he was a worrier."

-- Sonia (Chapter Thirty paragraph 22)

Importance: Don noticed how Sonia did not follow her own advice when she told him that married couples shouldn't have secrets. When Sonia had posed as Rosie, she had asked Don not to tell Dave because he was such a worrier.



I was not looking forward to this: the thought of intimate contact with a human female who was a close friend was causing a wave of revulsion, but I could not be responsible for failing to do everything possible to ensure the survival of the baby.”

-- Narrator (Chapter Thirty-two paragraph 87)

Importance: Even though he did not want to examine Sonia, he knew that he had to overcome his revulsion in order to save her baby.

I, Don Tillman, had woven a web of deceit. Incredible.”

-- Narrator (Chapter Thirty-three paragraph 15)

Importance: As Don tried to explain to Lydia that Sonia, who had posed as Rosie, was not his wife, and explain to Rosie why he'd asked Sonia to pose as her for counseling sessions, he realized he'd created a web of deceit, an action of which he didn't think he was capable.

You know,' said Gene, 'a statement like that is only possible in your and Rosie's relationship. You need to be together to protect the rest of us.'”

-- Gene (Chapter Thirty-four paragraph 32)

Importance: Gene told Don that he and Rosie needed to stay together just to protect the rest of society when he realized that Don thought Rosie might have made a spreadsheet listing the pros and cons of staying with Don in order to make Don feel better.

My nonstandard behavior was reasonably interpreted as increasing the probability I would do something else nonstandard, such as commit mass murder because my wife was leaving me.”

-- Narrator (Chapter Thirty-six paragraph 47)

Importance: Don's unique quality is described in this quote. He realized how odd he was and how odd his behavior seemed to other people. He recognized that the way he had acted had caused him to bring the suspicions on himself.

I was crippled — challenged — incapable of the feelings needed to drive normal behavior.”

-- Narrator (Chapter Thirty-six paragraph 82)

Importance: Just as his difficulty to connect with others emotionally had almost kept him and Rosie from getting married this same difficulty was also affecting his relationship with his unborn baby.

Incorrect. Not just a bit. You are the only person who has succeeded in understanding me. It commenced when you reset the clock so I could cook dinner on schedule.”

-- Don (Chapter Thirty-seven paragraph 16)

Importance: Don explained to Rosie that she had been the first person to try to



understand him and his need for planning and schedules. She had shown that she understood him when she reset a clock, allowing him to cook dinner on time.

My mother's ring is stuck on. It's a bit small and my fingers have probably puffed up a bit. If you want yours back you'll have to wait."

-- Rosie (Chapter Thirty-seven paragraph 90)

Importance: This statement made by Rosie about her swollen fingers keeping her from removing her mother's ring and hence her wedding rings was ironic when the reader considers Don's description of the eternity ring, which Rosie's mother's ring was worn as, and its purpose. He said the eternity ring would be put on the same finger as the wedding ring after the wedding ring. The eternity ring would have to be removed before the wedding ring could be taken off. In Rosie's case the eternity ring physically kept her from taking off her wedding ring.

It was not my destiny to raise children directly, but there was every possibility that one day a good father — someone who was making a valuable contribution to his child's upbringing — would choose not to drink alcohol to excess as a result of a genetic test that indicated he was susceptible to cirrhosis, and would survive to raise his child."

-- Narrator (Chapter Thirty-eight paragraph 10)

Importance: Don began to feel better when he thought that although he might not raise children personally, he might help another parent through the work and research that he did.

I remembered his promise to come over and beat the shit out of me if I screwed up. Obviously I had fulfilled that condition."

-- Narrator (Chapter Thirty-eight paragraph 35)

Importance: When Don learned that Phil had come to New York, he assumed his father-in-law had come in order to make good on his promise to beat him up if he did not do right by Rosie.

The story of the James Stewart character's struggles and near suicide was interesting and highly effective at manipulating emotions."

-- Narrator (Chapter Thirty-eight paragraph 62)

Importance: Don cried during the showing of the movie "It's a Wonderful Life." It was only movie during which he had been moved to tears.