

# **Confessions of a Shopaholic Study Guide**

**Confessions of a Shopaholic by Madeleine Wickham**

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# Plot Summary

*Confessions of a Shopaholic* is the tale of Rebecca Bloomwood and her journey through financial stress and growing up. The novel follows Becky as she tries to find herself among her friends and tries to find herself in the busyness of everyday life. Becky finally is able to find her space, realizing that pleasing others is less important than pleasing herself first.

Becky Bloomwood is a writer for *Successful Saving*, a financial magazine. Though Becky does her job well enough, exerting as little effort as possible along the way, there is a problem. Becky spends money on anything that catches her eye, and has created substantial debt for herself in the process. Instead of curtailing her spending, Becky finds solace in spending, creating more problems for herself in the process.

Becky Bloomwood spends her days writing at *Successful Saving* and her spare time shopping to fill a rapidly growing sense of emptiness in her life. Though Becky does not recognize it as such, shopping has become a quick fix for her when things get her down. From the beginning of the novel, it is clear that spending is a problem for Becky. The first chapter finds Becky opening her Visa bill and discovering that she has spent almost seven hundred pounds more than she had thought. As Becky goes over her spending, the rationalization that Becky is able to employ in order to justify her purchases is introduced.

The novel details Becky's desperate attempts to make more money, or save more money, while avoiding the phone calls and letters from the bank and her credit card companies. Becky employs every excuse she can think of, from claiming ill to simply throwing her bills in a nearby dumpster. Becky's schemes to make more money, either by making frames at home, or taking a part time job in a clothing store, also backfire on her, throwing her into a depression that can only be assuaged by more shopping. The entire novel seems to be a vicious cycle.

Becky's personal life is as confusing as her financial state. An attraction to Luke Brandon, a wealthy businessman, seems unlikely to go anywhere. Despite the two spending a wonderful day together shopping, a misunderstanding between the two about Luke's girlfriend leaves Becky feeling a fool, angry at letting herself feel for someone who is out of her league. Becky's sense of self worth directly affects her spending, creating more problems for her as the novel progresses.

Becky's schemes also include dating the wealthy cousin of her roommate, Suze. Suze encourages Becky, though in reality Becky is attracted to Tarquin's wealth and how having a relationship with him would end her financial problems. Though Becky is desperate for a solution, she cannot bring herself to accept money from Tarquin when he tries to make a donation to the fictitious charity that Becky discusses. This shows that Becky is basically an honest person, but one who creates sticky situations for herself when she bends the truth.

Becky's life spins out of control and she runs to the safety of her parent's home where she still cannot manage to tell the truth, instead telling her parents that she is being stalked by Derek Smeath, the banker in charge of her overdraft account. While at her parents, Becky discovers that her casual demeanor has caused the neighbors, Martin and Janice Webster, to lose out on a twenty thousand pound windfall from their investment company. Becky is devastated, realizing that she is responsible for the situation. Calling on an acquaintance from the press, Becky writes an article about the Webster's and Flagstaff Life. The article brings Becky to the attention of Morning Coffee, who would like her to appear on the program. Becky also draws the attention of an angry Luke Brandon, who represents the company.

Becky and Luke appear on Morning Coffee, where Becky, though nervous, states her case in such a way that Luke Brandon changes his views and agrees that Flagstaff has acting badly. Becky performs so well that the producers ask her to accept calls from viewers about their personal finances. Becky is brilliant in the role and is offered a recurring spot on the program. Her joy is short-lived when Derek Smeath appears on the scene, but Becky finally realizes that running from her problems will only make things worse. Becky makes arrangements to meet at the bank and solve her financial problems.

Becky meets with Luke at the Ritz, a business meeting that turns into a wonderful evening where the two talk for hours. The connection that Becky has felt for Luke all through the novel is clear to the reader. At the end of the evening, rather than saying good night, the two spend the night together. In the morning Becky realizes that she is going to miss the appointment with Derek Smeath once again. Rather than run as she always has, Becky acts responsibly, finally becoming the adult that she never thought she would be.



# Chapters 1-5

## Chapters 1-5 Summary

Before chapter one, a series of letters that span the two years since Rebecca Bloomwood graduated from Bristol University are presented to the reader. The letters are from Endwich Bank. The first extends overdraft protection for two years. The following two letters, dated two years later, remind Rebecca that her overdraft protection is coming to an end and express sadness at Rebecca's broken leg, asking her to contact the bank when she is recovered.

In chapter one the reader is introduced to Rebecca Bloomwood. Becky sits at her desk, unwilling to open her Visa bill. Becky mentally goes over her purchases and calculates her bill, figuring she will owe about three pounds. Under the watchful eye of her co-worker, Clare Edwards, Becky opens the bill to discover that she has spent over nine pounds. Becky reads the bill, trying to remember where she spent all the money. A brief flash of hope that she had been the victim of a crime is dashed when Clare reminds her that she has visited a certain store and made a purchase there. Becky remembers stopping in Millets and buying a present for a colleague who left the office and charging the gift so that she could have cash handy. The pressure Becky feels at her financial situation is interrupted by Clare asking if she has finished the article she is writing. Becky is a journalist at Successful Savings, a financial magazine.

Becky's boss, Phillip, calls her to his office. On the way, Becky imagines what Phillip might want and convinces herself that she is going to be offered a raise. Phillip asks Becky to attend a press Conference at Brandon Communications instead, and Becky is barely able to contain her disappointment.

In chapter two, Becky stops to buy a Financial Times on the way to the press conference. To Becky, having the FT, as she calls it, tucked under your arm makes you look intelligent enough without having to prove it. Becky is about to skim the magazine when she catches her reflection in the window of Denny and George and gets distracted by her outfit instead. Becky notices a sign announcing a sale and has to go into the shop. Denny and George never have sales and their scarves are coveted everywhere. As Becky spends quite a bit of time in the shop yearning for the merchandise, the sales girl recognizes her and shows her a scarf that Becky has wanted for ages. Becky readies to purchase the scarf but realizes that she has left her Visa card at the office. The sales girl agrees to hold the scarf until closing and Becky rushes to the press conference, intent on returning for the scarf after retrieving her credit card.

Becky arrives at the press conference and sees her friend and fellow financial journalist Elly Granger talking to a few men. Becky is startled to be greeted by Luke Brandon, the handsome and intelligent owner of Brandon Communications. Becky is intimidated by Luke because he is so intelligent, something that is always commented on in the news. One of Luke's assistants, Alicia, arrives and begins discussing some financial news, and



Becky tries to act as if she knows what Alicia is talking about. Luke appears amused and Becky plays it off and leaves to join Elly.

Becky receives a call from Phillip asking her to retrieve a report from the Social Security Committee on her way home. Becky panics, trying to figure out how she can do what her boss asks and still get her scarf. Becky realizes that she can pay cash for the scarf but is short twenty pounds. Elly is unable to lend it to her and Becky declares that she needs the money louder than she realizes. Luke Brandon speaks up from the front of the room and asks why. Becky quickly replies that her aunt is sick and she is going to buy her a gift. Luke passes a twenty pound note to Becky through the crowd and the press conference continues.

After the press conference, Becky rushes to Denny and George and purchases her scarf. Leaving the shop, Becky is stunned to run into Luke Brandon, who comments that Becky's aunt must be very trendy if she likes Denny and George. Becky agrees and panics when Luke asks her aunt's name. The only name that Becky can come up with is Emintrude.

At the end of chapter two, another letter from Derek Smeath, the manager of Endwich Bank is presented, expressing concern over Becky's glandular fever and requesting that she call his assistant, Erica Parnell, when she is better.

In chapter three, Becky arrives at her flat in Fulham and finds her roommate, Suze, doing yoga. Suze opens her eyes and demands to see the new purchase from Denny and George. Becky and Suze met when Suze worked for Brandon Communications while trying her hand at public relations, another job she failed at miserably. Though Suze wishes for a career, she can't find her place in life. Her family is wealthy, so there is no rush for Suze to find work.

The two chat and Becky tells Suze that she is no longer seeing James, a man she had met a few weeks back. Becky had embarrassed herself when she discovered that James did not want to have sex before marriage during a rather forward moment on Becky's part. James had not called since.

Becky panics when Suze tells her that the tax bill has come and her share is three hundred pounds. Suze then informs Becky that Erica Parnell has called and Suze had informed her that Becky was at work. Becky panics, and tells Suze that she should have told the woman she was sick with glandular fever. Suze questions if Becky is overdrawn, and though Becky plays it down, Suze tears up the check for three hundred pounds and tells Becky to pay her when she can.

Becky wakes in a panic about the amount of money she owes to so many. Trying to figure out how to save the money to pay it back leads to a dream of winning the lottery. Becky decides the lottery is the best option and buys tickets on her way to her parents' house. Choosing her numbers carefully, it takes Becky no time at all to imagine seeing her numbers announced on television and how she will spend the money.



In chapter four, Becky arrives at her parents' home and prepares to make coffee while they argue about the Royal Family. Becky sees the real estate section of the newspaper and is angry at the prices of homes in areas where she will live when she wins the lottery. Her mother enters comments on Becky's skirt, which Becky states cost far less than the real price. Though Becky's mother constantly buys new things for the house, Becky knows her mother would overreact to the cost of her clothing. Becky automatically reduces the real price of things when her mother asks.

Becky's father enters and asks if Becky is looking to buy a flat. Becky says she can't afford it, and her father tells her the only solutions to money problems are to Cut Back, or Make More Money.

Becky and her mother head to a craft fair, where Becky plans on buying nothing but manages to convince herself that she is actually saving when she makes several unnecessary purchases. Arriving home, Becky runs into Martin and Janice Webster, her parents' next door neighbors. Though the Websters are pleasant, they are convinced that Becky has a crush on their son Thomas. The two tell Becky about the flat that Thomas has bought, then ask her advice on moving their investments with Flagstaff Life. Becky vaguely remembers hearing something about the company but can't remember more than that party they threw in Soho. Becky says the company is quite good but to get the recommendation of a financial advisor before deciding, then heads into the house.

Becky and her parents watch television and Becky watches the lottery drawing, prepared to win millions. Shocked when her fantasy of winning does not come true, Becky decides to save sixty pounds a week and pay off her debts herself. Chapter four ends with a letter from another collector reminding Becky that her payment has yet to be received.

In chapter five, Becky begins her new life of saving money by buying a book called Controlling your Cash. Excited by the prospect of saving, Becky tracks all of her purchases and controlling her spending. Despite her best efforts, Becky easily finds reason to spend money and justify her purchases.

Becky visits Image Store to pick the cover photos for the magazine and meets Elly there. Becky is excited when Elly tells her that she has an interview but Elly plays it down, as the job is as an investment banker. Becky is shocked, as Elly hates finance as much as Becky does.

Becky arrives home after work and shopping and enters her purchase in her diary, anxious to see how much she's saved now that she is trying. Amazingly, Becky discovers that she has spent almost 180 pounds in one day.

## Chapters 1-5 Analysis

The reader is introduced to Rebecca Bloomwood, known as Becky, the main character of Confessions of a Shopaholic. Rebecca is a writer for Successful Saving, a financial



magazine in England. Despite the fact that Becky works at a magazine dedicated to saving money, it appears that she has trouble with the concept herself. Becky is obsessed with shopping and buying, equating the feeling of a newly purchased item with eating after starving for days, or waking up and realizing it is the weekend.

It is clear within a very short period of time that Becky has a problem with spending and can rationalize any type of purchase.

The novel begins and is interspersed with letters from different financial institutions requesting that Becky return their call in regards to her accounts. The novel is written in the first person and Becky communicates directly with the reader, regarding her feelings about her spending and her accumulating debt. As the novel progresses, the dialogue becomes more frantic.

The reader gets a firsthand view of how Becky deals with her finances when she considers throwing her Visa bill behind her desk rather than deal with the trauma of discovering how much money she has spent over the past month. Becky's spending is out of control; however, she manages to rationalize her purchases and promise herself not to spend as much. Her promises last as long as it takes for her to run across her first sale at Denny and George, a shop that is famous for its scarves.

Becky secures the promise of the shop girl to hold the scarf after discovering that her Visa card is at the office and proceeds to a press conference at Brandon Communications, the public relations firm owned by Luke Brandon, a young and handsome businessman often discussed in the newspapers. Becky is flustered when greeted by Luke, always feeling as if Brandon can read her mind. Becky's seemingly extreme reaction to Brandon reveals that she might have some feelings for the man, though at the time she appears to dislike him. Still focused on the scarf waiting for her, Becky receives a call from her boss that will change her plans for picking it up. Deciding to pay cash, Becky asks a friend to loan her twenty pounds and gets flustered when it is not to be. Speaking more loudly than she had intended, Becky attracts the attention of Luke Brandon, who loans Becky the money when she claims it is to buy her sick aunt a present.

After the press conference, Becky retrieves her prize only to become more flustered when met outside the shop by Luke Brandon, who asks after her aunt. Becky makes up a name and leaves as quickly as possible, feeling caught in the act.

The reader is introduced to Becky's roommate, Suze, who owns the flat the two share. The flat was a gift from Suze's parents when she turned twenty-one, so it is clear that Suze is in better financial shape than Becky. Despite the difference in their backgrounds and financial situations, Becky and Suze get along very well, especially because Suze loves the things that Becky buys almost as much as Becky.

Becky heads to her parents for the weekend, and though she is worried about the money she owes, now, including Suze in her list of debts because her roommate tore up her check meant for the taxes, she believes the lottery to be her answer. As always,





Becky works things out in her head to her advantage. Before Becky has even chosen her numbers, she plans a party to celebrate her winnings and decides who she will lavish the money on. When the winning numbers are drawn and Becky does not win, she honestly feels rejected, amazed that the lottery had the nerve to take her money from her.

Becky once again decides to control her spending and buys a book to help her, determined to get things on track. Despite this, Becky can still rationalize any purchase and does so throughout her first day "saving." The shock Becky feels when she discovers that she spend nearly two hundred pounds in one day does not stop her for long: she simply steams ahead.

The letters that are interspersed among the chapters give the reader an idea of what Becky will do in order to avoid the problems she is having with money. The excuses she presents, including illness and broken bones, are met with patience by Derek Smeath, the bank manager, but one can assume that the correspondence will escalate.



# Chapters 6-10

## Chapters 6-10 Summary

In chapter six, Becky moves forward with her plans of saving money, refusing to be discouraged by her spending of the day before. Packing a lunch and heading to work, Becky is pleased with herself until lunch hour arrives and she has nothing to fill her time.

Deciding to head to Smith's and copy a curry recipe, Becky heads to the shops, thrilled just to be near the hustle and bustle. At Smith's, Becky assists a woman who is looking for ideas for a gift then covertly begins copying a recipe. A shop clerk interrupts her and Becky inadvertently marks the book with her pen. When the clerk insists on calling the manager, Becky is flustered and simply buys the book, already spending more than she has planned for the day.

That evening, Suze's cousins, Fenella and Tarquin arrive to celebrate Suze's birthday. Becky thinks that they are strange people, but Suze loves them. The evening starts fine, with the group sharing drinks, until Becky answers the phone to discover Erica Parnell from Endwich bank on the line. Becky hangs up, stunned, and convinces the group to head out to Terrazza in order to avoid the ringing phone.

At the restaurant, Becky is a bit put off by the table hopping that Suze, Fenella and Tarquin are doing until she spots Luke Brandon. Deciding to appear as popular as the others, Becky heads to Luke's table. Luke finally notices Becky and introduces her to his parents, who he is dining with. Luke's mother notices the Denny and George scarf that Becky is wearing and comments on it, causing Becky to realize the tale she had told Luke in order to purchase the scarf. Unable to think of anything else, Becky tells the Brandons that her aunt has died and left the scarf to her. Barely able to breathe, Becky escapes back to her table where Tarquin seems a bit tipsy and enchanted with Becky. Becky is not the least bit interested and tells Tarquin to leave her alone.

In chapter seven, Becky is startled to receive a card from Tarquin inviting her to dinner. Becky has no intention of dating Tarquin and heads out on her first weekend of saving money, planning on a day at the museum. Becky is shocked to discover that admission to the museum is no longer free, but "saves" money by buying an annual membership. After several boring minutes in the galleries, Becky discovers a gift shop and decides that she will do her Christmas shopping, even though it is only March.

Arriving home with her bags, Becky finds a card from Luke Brandon, expressing his pleasure at seeing her at Terrazza, and expressing his condolences over the death of her aunt. Becky has no idea how to take this, but wastes no time as she has to purchase the ingredients for her homemade curry.



Suze arrives home to find Becky stylishly turned out in a new apron and making curry with all the latest kitchen gadgets. The two discuss the card from Luke Brandon. Becky thinks that Luke is being polite, but Suze thinks there is something more going on.

Later, after much work, the two sit down to dinner, curry made by Becky herself. Before long the two are suffering from heat of the curry and Becky breaks down in tears. Suze is confused until Becky tells her of her debt. Suze suggests that Becky make frames at home in her spare time, and shows her an ad from a magazine. Becky is grateful to her friend and decides to send for the kit. That evening Becky goes over her budget and realized that she has spent almost eighty pounds more than she had planned.

In chapter eight, Becky discovers that Clare Edwards has been writing freelance articles and making plenty of money doing so. Becky decides that she will do the same and heads to the next press conference intent on making connections so that she can start earning money right away. Soon discovering that it is not as easy as she had thought, Becky falls into conversation with Eric Foreman, a writer for the Daily World. Eric tells Becky that he is there because the paper is doing a series of articles on whether money men can be trusted. Foreman admits that he does not know much about financial matters and Becky gives him a brief synopsis on how things run.

As the press conference gets going, Eric stands up and begins questioning those in charge about how much money they make and how they answer to people that have lost money on their investments.

Becky sees Elly, who tells Becky that she has accepted the job as a fund manger. Becky is shocked, and then shocked again when Elly tells her of the money she will be making and the clothing that she will wear. Becky decides that she will have to get a high powered financial job like Elly, then all her problems will be solved.

On the way home, Becky sees a sign in the window of Ally Smith advertising for weekend help. Becky rushes in and applies and is thrilled when she gets the job. Thinking of all the extra money she will have, not to mention the employee discount, Becky heads back to work. The phone rings and Becky answers to discover Derek Smeath on the line. Becky is flustered and tells Smeath that she will be paying one thousand pounds within a few weeks, then hangs up, wondering what she has gotten herself into.

In chapter nine, Becky heads home and finds her package from Fine Frames waiting. Settling in front of the television, Becky gets started making frames and extra money. After three hours, Becky has one completed frame that looks horrible, and she has gotten glue all over the place. Suze arrives and tells Becky that Tarquin has a crush on her, something that Becky already knows.

The week passes and Becky heads to her new job, excited about working in fashion, only to discover that she will be folding clothes all day. Becky isn't happy but does her job, thrilled when she sees a pair of zebra print jeans that she likes. Things go as well as possible until Becky sees a girl headed toward the dressing room with the jeans that



Becky covets. Becky tells the girl that she has too many items and takes the jeans, hiding them. When the girl returns for them she confronts Becky about taking them and the commotion draws the attention of the manager. When the jeans are discovered behind a curtain, Becky is let go.

Becky heads home, disgusted, and runs into Tom Webster and his girlfriend. The two chat until Becky discovers that Tom and his girlfriend seem to believe that Becky has a crush on Tom. Embarrassed and angry, Becky denies this, but realizes that the more she denies it the worse she sounds. Leaving the two, Becky heads to Starbucks, thinking of the things she will need, and how it is not wrong to treat herself after the bad day she has had.

In chapter ten, Becky wakes up to a room full of new purchases and feelings of guilt. Distracting herself, she readies for work and heads out the door. On the way out, Becky grabs her bills off the table, and once outside, she tosses them in a dumpster, forgetting about them as soon as they are gone.

Becky writes an article for work, desperate for more excitement and money. Tarquin calls and invites Becky to dinner, which she accepts, suggesting Saturday since Tarquin is leaving Sunday. Becky also decided to try for a new career and arranges for an interview with a head hunter the following day.

Becky meets with Jill Foxtton after filling out paperwork. The two women chat and Foxtton tells Becky of an opportunity in banking that is available now. To Becky's surprise, Jill suggests that Becky meet with the manager from the Bank of Helsinki immediately and they can wrap things up this very day. Becky feels a tug of dread, having written in her resume that she is fluent in Finnish. The dread grows and the two head down the hall and Jill introduces Becky to a man who greets her in Finnish. Unable to think of a thing to do, Becky turns and runs.

## Chapters 6-10 Analysis

Becky's life continues to spin out of control as she tries to get control of her spending. Becky's problem is that she can rationalize any purchase she makes, whether the purchase is made to save money in the long run, or because she has earned points on her credit cards for making the purchases. No matter how hard Becky tries to control herself, it seems that spending is easier than facing the consequences.

Becky's actions also give the reader insight into the problems that she has, and how they are self-created, for the most part. There are several examples of Becky getting herself into more trouble by trying to solve her problems, or by simply trying to fit into the activities around her.

Becky's solution to the bank calling her regarding her bills is to ignore the situation. This will be revisited throughout the novel, and each time the situation escalates. Becky moves beyond simply ignoring her bills, she takes to disposing of them, believing that once they are gone they are no longer her problem. Upon receiving a call from Erica



Parnell at the bank, Becky hangs up on the woman, then plans how to explain herself should the two ever speak again. Becky knows that she has to deal with the situation "some day", but as long as that moment of truth is not immediate, there is the possibility of some miracle taking place.

Becky also gets herself into a difficult situation when dealing with Suze's cousins, Fenella and Tarquin. Feeling a bit left out because of the close family ties, Becky tries to fit in, acting interested in things that she truly finds boring. Becky's false enthusiasm attracts the attention of Tarquin, a man that Becky has no interest in; however, Becky does not want to hurt Suze's feelings by brushing off her cousin.

Becky also finds herself in an awkward situation when she spies Luke Brandon with his parents while out with Suze and her cousins. Once again feeling left out because the others in the group seem more popular, Becky jumps at the chance to appear as popular. When Luke's mother notices the Denny and George scarf that Becky is wearing, Becky realizes too late that she had lied to Luke in order to purchase the scarf. Becky creates an elaborate story about the death of her aunt, rather than state that the fictional aunt simply gave her the scarf. This type of reaction from Becky when presented with any type of situation that might be confrontational is typical, and will land Becky in many difficult situations.

Throughout the novel, the reader will find that Becky is the type of person that must have instant gratification. Becky is also aware that she has serious problems when it comes to dealing with things, but seems unable to stop herself from getting into more trouble.

Despite this, Becky also seems to think that the resolution to her problems is just around the corner and will be easy to find. An example of this is the frames that Becky plans to assemble for extra money, something that she believes will be simple, but discovers that it is not. Becky's determination leads her to a job interview where she embellishes her resume, stating that she speaks fluent Finnish. Discovering that Finnish is exactly the reason for the interview, Becky runs, fleeing from her problems once again.



# Chapters 11-15

## Chapters 11-15 Summary

Becky rushes from the office and runs into Luke Brandon. Becky tells Luke that she is thinking about a career change and heads off, only to be called back by Luke who asks if Becky can spare some time shopping.

Becky and Luke have a wonderful afternoon, enjoying each other's company while picking out luggage at Harrod's. Becky has never considered shopping for luggage and enjoys the experience immensely. After shopping, Luke invites Becky to lunch and the enjoyable afternoon continues until Luke mentions that the luggage is for his girlfriend, Sacha.

Becky is mortified, angry at Luke for not being up front with her about the purchase. Luke tries to smooth things over, but Becky feels as if Luke is patronizing her. Becky leaves, telling Luke that friends respect each other and don't look down on one another.

In chapter twelve, Becky arrives home to find half of her frames completed by Suze. Suze has also made a frame of her own design that Becky assures her friend will be a hit in the shops. Becky is a bit depressed because she can't seem to find her way through life.

At work, Phillip tells Becky that she has to attend a press conference at Brandon Communications. Becky is not happy about seeing Luke again but decides to be strong and act aloof toward him if they run into each other. When Friday arrives, Becky dresses with her usual enthusiasm and heads to the conference.

Arriving at the site, Becky is greeted by a young woman who then alerts Luke to her presence. Luke approaches Becky, who becomes flustered and gets away as soon as she can. Looking for anyone to talk to in order to avoid Luke, Becky strikes up a conversation with a man and woman. To Becky's horror, she discovers that she is speaking to Erica Parnell and Derek Smeath from Endwich bank. To make matters worse, Phillip arrives and shortly thereafter Erica and Derek realize that Becky is the same woman who has been avoiding them for months. Smeath arranges a meeting with Becky for the following Monday and Becky leaves as soon as she is able to escape.

In chapter thirteen, Becky considers what she thinks are her three options. Attend the meeting with Derek Smeath and tell the truth, attend the meeting and lie, or simply run away. At home, Suze tells Becky that her frames are going to be featured in Vogue Magazine. Becky is happy for Suze, but once again feels bad for herself. Suze gives Becky a magazine containing the most eligible bachelors in England, one of which is Luke Brandon. Becky pages through the magazine and discovers that Tarquin is also on the list and immediately begins fantasizing about their wonderful life together.



Saturday evening Becky spends hours getting ready for her date with Tarquin. Though Becky has never been the least bit attracted to Tarquin, the thought of having his money as the solution to her problems is too much to pass up. Tarquin arrives and the two head out for the evening.

In chapter fourteen, Tarquin takes Becky out for pizza. Becky is a bit disappointed but is intent on having a good time and winning Tarquin's heart. Becky drinks plenty of champagne in order to make the evening a bit more bearable. Despite the fact that Becky cannot bring herself to hold Tarquin's hand, she is still mentally planning their wedding. Becky bends her thoughts and feelings to what she thinks Tarquin would like in a woman in order to impress him. Tarquin gives Becky a pin and suggests it would look nice on her scarf. Becky tells Tarquin the tale of her deceased aunt and creates a fictitious foundation in Aunt Ermintrude's name. Becky is shocked when Tarquin writes a check to the foundation for five thousand pounds. Though Becky knows the money would solve all her problems, she is unable to keep up the pretense and tells Tarquin to keep it until the foundation is set up. Tarquin burns the check while Becky sadly watches the paper burn.

Tarquin heads to pay the bill and Becky glances through his checkbook, only to find Tarquin watching her do so. Embarrassed, Becky acts as if nothing happened but is mortified at her behavior. Tarquin takes her home and the night is over.

Suze meets Becky at the door and Becky is afraid her friend will be angry at her behavior, but Becky discovers that Tarquin is a gentleman and did not tell his cousin of Becky's behavior.

In chapter fifteen, Becky wakes up depressed with the memories of her behavior the night before. Heading out to lose herself in the bustle of shoppers, Becky finds herself wandering around and buying things just for the sake of it. At the register, Becky discovers that her accounts are on hold for lack of payment. Mortified, Becky flees the store. Afraid to go home and face Suze, Becky realizes that her life is spinning out of her control and she can only go the one place she always can. Home.

## Chapters 11-15 Analysis

Luke Brandon appears in Becky's life again after her disastrous job interview, and it becomes clear to the reader that despite Becky's seeming disinterest in Luke, there is something between the two. When Luke asks Becky to go shopping with him, Becky agrees readily enough and the two share a fun afternoon. Becky does not feel self-conscious at all with Luke and finds that despite the differences in their lifestyles, they have quite a bit in common.

Things change for Becky when she discovers that the afternoon has been spent shopping for Luke's girlfriend. Though it seems that Luke had no intention of misleading Becky, that is exactly what happened. Becky is rightfully upset, feeling used and looked down upon. Though Luke tries to explain, Becky will have none of it and leaves, holding



her head high. Becky's feelings of inadequacy are repeated often throughout the novel. Becky feels that the world is passing her by and that she is a failure no matter what she tries to accomplish.

Becky's scheming and lies to get out of trouble begin to back up on her more rapidly. Though she is not happy about having to see Luke again at a press conference, Becky manages to hold her own until she inadvertently runs into Erica Parnell and Derek Smeath from the bank. Though Becky is almost away from them without being discovered, her boss, Phillip, arrives and the cat is out of the bag. A meeting is arranged, and Becky spends the weekend dreading Monday morning.

Becky's desperate plans also land her in trouble when it comes to Tarquin. Though Becky has no interest in the man at all, the fact that Tarquin is one of the richest eligible bachelors in the country is too much to pass up. Becky intends to have a good time and acts in her usual manner, pretending interest in things in order to appear more worldly and worthy. Becky does show her true colors when she refuses to take the check that Tarquin writes as a donation even though the money would solve her financial troubles. After Tarquin sees Becky looking through his checkbook, Becky realizes that she has sunk to a new low and needs to escape from the insanity her life has become.





# Chapters 16-20

## Chapters 16-20 Summary

Becky arrives home and informs her concerned parents that she is being stalked by a man named Derek Smeath but that she does not want to tell the police, she simply wishes to get away for a bit. Her parents agree to keep things quiet.

Becky's father reads an article in the paper about the takeover of Flagstaff Life and the fact that investors will be getting a windfall. Becky is pleased, remembering that Martin and Janice have invested in Flagstaff for years.

The following afternoon, Becky's happiness is shattered when Martin and Janice tell Becky that they switched funds before the takeover and will not be getting any money. The fact that her neighbors do not blame Becky at all considering how much stress she has been under makes Becky feel even more horrible. Becky's father informs her that Derek Smeath has phoned and Becky's misery is complete.

Later that day, Becky speaks with Martin and Janice again about their investments. Becky is furious that the couple has been taken advantage of and wants to expose the investment company for defrauding their customers. Becky calls Eric Foreman at Daily World and tells him about her neighbors and their story.

In chapter seventeen, Becky writes an article about the Websters, full of embellishments to make the couple look a bit more pitiful. While researching Flagstaff's position, Becky places a call to their representatives, Brandon Communications. Alicia, one of Luke's employees, brushes Becky off, infuriating her. After having given Flagstaff a chance to respond and been stonewalled, Becky faxes her article to Eric.

In chapter eighteen, Becky, her parents and the Websters wake early in order to read the article in the newspaper. Becky's head spins as Eric arranges to pay her for the article. A call from Luke Brandon throws Becky off her stride for a bit. Luke is angry at Becky's article, but Becky tells him that she tried to get information from Alicia and was not able to. Luke wonders if Becky wrote the article to get even with him for not telling her he had a girlfriend, and Becky explodes at Luke's ever imagining she would stoop to such a thing, then hangs up on him.

Eric calls Becky and tells her that Morning Coffee, the television program, would like her to appear on the show. Becky is stunned, realizing she will be on the show she watches whenever she gets a chance.

In chapter nineteen, a car arrives to take Becky to the television station, leaving her excited parents and neighbors at home. Becky arrives at the station and meets with Zelda, one of the producers. Zelda tells Becky that things are a bit crazy around as one of their regular segments has to be reworked. In hair and makeup, Becky tries to relax



until Zelda returns and informs her that her small piece on finance is now going to be a high powered debate with a representative from Flagstaff Life.

Zelda leaves Becky, who tries to rework her ideas. Becky looks around and is stunned to see Alicia in the room, followed by Luke Brandon.

In chapter twenty, Becky waits nervously for her time on the show. Going over her notes, Becky feels inadequate near the corporate efficiency of Luke and his employees. Trying to appear important and self assured, Becky is pleased when Zelda delivers a package to her backstage. Becky is embarrassed to discover a singing card and balloon from the Websters, but grows angry at Alicia's obvious sneer from across the room. Defiantly, Becky leaves the card playing and tells Zelda she is ready whenever she is.

## Chapters 16-20 Analysis

Becky's life is in complete turmoil and she flees to the home of her parents. Becky's parents love her and express their concern, though it seems that they get most of their ideas about what people need from watching daytime television.

Becky comes close to telling her parents the truth about her problems, but in the end cannot. It seems that Becky does not want to be a disappointment to her parents, and it is clear that Becky is disappointed in herself. Throughout the novel, Becky has been at a loss as to which direction she is headed, and seems to jump from idea to idea almost constantly. Becky sees her friends moving on in life, stepping forward into mature adulthood, but can't seem to find her way.

Becky tells her parents that she is being stalked by Derek Smeath, rather than confess her bad judgment and inability to pay her bills. Becky's history of running away from her problems seems to be continuing.

Things change when Becky discovers the situation with Martin and Janice Webster. Though Becky could not have known what Flagstaff Life was planning, she feels responsible for not paying attention when her neighbors questioned her about their savings. Knowing that her advice, or lack of it, led her neighbors to change their investments, and having the Websters treat her with kindness and understanding is too much for Becky to bear. Becky finally shows some resolve and motivation by contacting Eric Foreman and writing an article for the Daily World, detailing the Webster's plight.

Becky works harder than she ever has and produces an article to be proud of. Despite trying to get information from Flagstaff, Becky is unable, as Alicia, Luke's assistant, once again treats Becky as if she is a joke. Becky is not deterred, instead pouring her anger into the article. When it is published, Becky receives a call from Luke, who is angry. It is clear that Luke is even more angry when he discovers that Becky had tried to gather information from the company.

Becky's life continues to change rapidly as the article draws the attention of Morning Coffee, and they ask Becky to appear on the show. Becky is nervous but pleased, once

again spinning fantasies while the day moves around her. When the show has to be rearranged and Becky's spot becomes a debate with Luke, Becky still manages to hold herself together, using her anger at Alicia's obvious sneering to motivate her.



# Chapters 21-24

## Chapters 21-24 Summary

Becky takes her spot on stage with Luke and the hosts of Morning Coffee, Emma and Rory. Becky is flustered at first, but grows angry as Luke spins the situation to make Flagstaff Life look better to the public. Becky angrily attacks Luke, stating that Flagstaff Life deliberately misled its customers, encouraging them to change their investments to avoid paying them. Luke argues for a bit, but to Becky's surprise he relents and agrees with her, stating that Flagstaff had acted poorly.

When the segment is over, Luke asks Becky if she would like to get together to discuss business later, at the Ritz. Becky is confused and asks about Sacha. Luke tells Becky that Sacha packed the suitcase they had shopped for and left him. Before the conversation can go further than Becky's accepting a meeting, Zelda appears and asks Becky to stay on, so that viewers can call in with financial questions. Becky is floored, but Luke encourages her, then leaves her to work.

In chapter twenty-two, Becky stuns herself by giving advice to the callers who phone the studio. It seems as if all the information she's written over her time at Successful Saving has been in her head all along. A caller phones in and talks about how much debt she is in, and how she can't control her spending. Becky realizes that she is the same type of person, and tells the woman to call the bank and ask for help. As Becky speaks, she glances around the studio and sees Derek Smeath staring at her. The segment ends and Becky panics, planning an escape. Becky stops, realizing that she has to face her problems, and goes to meet Smeath. Derek is amazed at Becky's segment advising people on finance, and Becky begins to get angry until she realizes that she has been acting irresponsibly for months. Begging forgiveness, Becky arranges a meeting with Derek in the morning, intending on solving her dilemma once and for all.

In chapter twenty-three, Becky arrives home to a pile of bills and Suze, excited about Becky's television performance. Becky pages through the bills, not worried for once. Taking her own advice about acting responsibly, Becky promises to handle things, and with her new job on Morning Coffee, this will be easier.

Suze tells Becky that Tarquin had dropped off a letter and Becky discovers a ticket to the opera. Becky is tempted, but tells Suze the truth, that she is just not interested in Tarquin. Suze takes it well and then helps Becky pick out an outfit for her meeting with Luke. Suze suggests shopping and is floored when Becky tells her she is not in the mood. The two spend the remainder of the day getting Becky ready to meet Luke.

Becky arrives at the Ritz and meets with Luke, intent on being businesslike. Becky is a bit upset when she realizes that Luke's business might have been affected by his appearance on Morning Coffee, but Luke assures her that his customers feel that his honesty is more important than painting a false picture. Luke informs Becky that Alicia



has been jumping since he discovered that she had brushed off Becky, and when Becky makes a casual comment about whether Luke has been jumping because of her article, she is shocked to hear Luke say he has been jumping over Becky for some time.

The meal goes on all night and the restaurant closes. Luke suggests they stay at the Ritz and books two rooms. Becky is a bit disappointed. The two head upstairs, but as they reach their rooms the attraction between them proves too much and they kiss. Becky realizes that there will be no more business on this night.

In chapter twenty-four Becky wakes after a luxurious night with Luke and watches television. An advertisement for sunglasses catches Becky's eye and she begins to order them, unable to help herself. Luke comes out of the shower just as Becky realizes she will never make the meeting she has scheduled with Derek Smeath. Luke asks if Becky is alright and she realizes she is. Taking the phone, Becky calls to leave a message for Derek Smeath, and finally, takes control of her life.

At the end of the chapter, two final letters appear. One is from Fine Frames, congratulating Becky on completing the frames so wonderfully and inviting her to conduct a class for others. The other is a letter from Derek Smeath, thanking her for her deposit of one thousand pounds toward her overdraft. Derek postpones their meeting, stating that the state of Becky's finances has improved substantially, but that he will be keeping an eye on things and will call her if he needs to.

## Chapters 21-24 Analysis

Becky's nervousness disappears quickly as she understands what Luke is saying on the air. Angry and defensive, Becky lashes out, defending her neighbors and stating her case. To Becky's shock, Luke agrees. The feeling that Becky gets when Luke looks at her thrills her but confuses her as well. Afterward, the suggestion of a business meeting is a bit out of nowhere, and Becky cannot stop herself from asking about Luke's girlfriend. Becky also cannot help the little thrill she feels when Luke informs her that Sacha has left him.

Becky is amazed when Zelda asks her to participate in a call-in segment about personal finance. Becky is further amazed when she realizes that she does indeed know about the subject and loves participating. Things get a bit odd when a caller states her problem about debt and spending and Becky realizes that she is the same type of person. Derek Smeath's appearance almost pushes Becky over the edge until she finally takes personal responsibility and makes arrangements to meet with Smeath the following day.

Becky continues her honesty when she arrives home and tells Suze that she cannot meet Tarquin. Suze's understanding is a relief to Becky, who realizes that she has been creating more problems for herself by not being honest about her life. Becky's new attitude does have something to do with her new job working on Morning Coffee as a



special guest on finance. Becky has finally found her place, and is moving forward instead of backward.

The meeting with Luke turns out to be an evening of enjoyment, a repeat of the day the two had spent shopping. There is an obvious connection between Becky and Luke, one that they both recognize. Luke's suggestion that they stay at the Ritz cements this fact, despite his booking two rooms. The two spend the night together, and Becky's happiness in the morning is proof that there has been an attraction between the two all along.

Becky remembers her appointment with Smeath, and for the first time does the right thing by calling to reschedule. It is clear that Becky has finally gotten her life on track. The two letters at the end of the chapter, specifically the one from Derek Smeath, prove that Becky is finally moving forward.



# Characters

## Rebecca Bloomwood

The main character in the novel, Becky is a financial journalist for Successful Saving magazine in London. In her twenties, Becky began writing for financial magazines after finishing school simply because no one else would hire her. Despite her obvious lack of care for the work that she does, Becky must have some type of handle on her job as she was recruited from another magazine to Successful Saving and has been working there for over a year.

Becky is flighty and irresponsible and has a spending problem. Unable to resist the many beautiful things she sees, Becky simply buys them, though she really has no need for them. Buying things on credit gets Becky into trouble, as the banks and credit card companies are beginning to call and send letters requesting payment on her accounts. Becky manages to fend them off with some creative excuses but it is clear that something is going to have to give in her life.

Becky's solutions to her troubles are as flighty as she is; winning the lottery, making frames for a work-at-home company and taking a part time job in a clothing shop are among her financial attempts.

Becky eventually realizes that her life is spinning out of control, and when she discovers that her casual attitude has affected her neighbors, she knows that things need to change. Becky writes an article about the Martin's financial situation that catapults her into the limelight, bringing her to the attention of the media and of Luke Brandon.

Becky finally realizes that she needs to be responsible for herself and her actions, and that she is growing up and moving forward in life, like her friends and associates. This knowledge helps Becky to settle into things, rather than run from them, or to buy things to make her feel better about herself.

## Luke Brandon

Luke Brandon, a self-made man, is a bit of an enigma in the novel. Though he is not featured much, it is clear that he is important to Becky. The owner of Brandon Communications, Luke is the public relations representative for many different financial firms, so he and Becky run into each other from time to time. The first time Brandon and Becky meet in the novel it is clear to the reader that there is an attraction between the two. As the situation is seen through the eyes of Becky, the reader only has her opinion of the meeting. Becky seems to both admire and detest Luke at the same time. Luke, in return, seems to like Becky, and pay her a bit more attention than others.

Luke asks Becky to help him shop for luggage and the two have a wonderful time, until Luke tells Becky that the luggage is for his girlfriend. Becky takes exception to this,



assuming that Luke has used her and treated her badly. It seems that Luke is innocent of this, but is unable to express his feelings to Becky. Things get a bit complicated between the two when Becky writes her article about Flagstaff Life and Luke mentions that Becky might be looking for revenge. Becky is offended and angry and Luke quickly realizes that he is off the mark.

Luke shows his integrity and honesty when he agrees with Becky, that his client, Flagstaff Life, acted without care toward its client. Luke's honesty shows the reader that he is essentially a good man as Becky is a good woman.

## Derek Smeath

Derek Smeath is the man in charge of Becky Bloomwood's overdraft at Endwich Bank. Though this does not seem to be an important character as things go, it is clear that in Becky's life, and therefore in the novel, he is important. Interspersed throughout the chapters are several letters to Becky from both Derek and his assistant, Erica. Derek spends the better part of six months sending Becky letters regarding her overdraft and trying to contact her by phone in order to resolve the situation. He is met with excuses that range from Becky not getting the letters to Becky breaking her legs.

Derek Smeath runs into Becky at a press conference and manages to arrange a meeting regarding her situation, a meeting that Becky does not attend because she has finally reached the end of her rope in regards to her stress level. Despite Becky's constant excuses, Derek continues to try and contact her, finally appearing on the set of Morning Coffee when he sees Becky on television.

Though his job cannot be easy, especially when dealing with Becky, Derek maintains a sense of professionalism until meeting Becky on the television set. After hearing Becky's pleas for understanding, Derek bursts out laughing, finding it impossible to believe that Becky truly means to change her ways. Though he has every reason to doubt her, Derek once again makes arrangements for a meeting, and in the end is satisfied when Becky finally makes her payments and becomes more responsible.

## Suze

Becky's roommate, Suze is a child of wealth, with her apartment purchased for her by her parents for her birthday. Despite Suze's upbringing, she is down to earth and truly cares for her friends. Suze is at a bit of a loss as to what to do with her life, having tried several different careers that did not suit her. Despite this, Suze continues to try and find her place.

Suze finds her calling by creating frames for Becky, after Becky signs up to create frames as a work at home opportunity. Suze not only completes Becky's frames, but creates her own, which leads to photo opportunities in Vogue and other magazines.





## Tarquin

Tarquin, Suze's cousin, is a bit odd, having grown up surrounded by family wealth in Scotland. Tarquin and Suze share a familiar language with Fenella, Tarquin's sister. Tarquin is attracted to Becky, and though Becky is initially turned off by Tarquin, she changes her mind when she realizes how wealthy Tarquin is. Despite her desire to be wealthy, thus solving all her financial problems, Becky is unable to take advantage of the situation.

## Fenella

The sister of Tarquin and cousin of Suze, Fenella is from Scotland. Fenella is as strange as Tarquin, sharing a language created in their youth. Though Fenella is a bit odd, she is a good person who loves Suze and Tarquin.

## Phillip

Becky's boss at Successful Saving, Phillip often presents Becky with the opportunity not to work, either by sending her off to pick the cover photo for the magazine or to cover press conferences.

## Elly

Becky's friend and fellow financial journalist, Elly wakes Becky up to the fact that there might be more to life than struggling to get by. Elly gives up on being a journalist and takes a job in the financial sector, making more money and more importantly, buying better clothes. Though Becky originally thinks that Elly is settling, she soon realizes that Elly is moving forward in life while Becky is stuck in a rut.

## Clare Edwards

Becky's co-worker, Clare, is annoyingly efficient. Becky does not like Clare because she is committed to her job and takes it seriously. Becky learns that Clare is earning quite a bit of money by writing freelance articles under a different name, giving Becky the idea that she too can write and earn money.

## Erica Parnell

Erica is the assistant to Derek Smeath at Endwich Bank.



## **Martin Webster**

A neighbor to Becky's parents, Martin asks Becky's advice about an offer from his investment company. Becky shrugs off the question and the result plunges Becky into a new direction.

## **Janice Webster**

The wife of Martin, Janice also believes that Becky is a financial expert and takes her advice when it comes to their finances. Janice is very understanding when Becky informs her neighbors that she has lead them astray.

## **Emma**

One of the hosts of Morning Coffee.

## **Rory**

The co-host of Morning Coffee

## **Zelda**

The producer of Morning Coffee.

## **Alicia**

An employee of Brandon Communications, Alicia treats Becky as if she were less than a person. Alicia's attitude results in Brandon Communications being pulled into the situation with Becky on Morning Coffee.

## **Eric Foreman**

A writer for the Daily World, Eric gives Becky the opportunity to write an article about the Webster's and their dealings with Flagstaff Life.



## **Objects/Places**

### **Successful Saving**

The magazine where Becky Bloomwood is a financial journalist.

### **Denny and George**

The specialty shop where Becky buys a scarf after borrowing money from Luke Brandon.

### **Endwich Bank**

The bank that handles Becky's overdraft account, overseen by Derek Smeath.

### **Bristol University**

The university which Becky attended.

### **Brandon Communications**

The public relations company founded and operated by Luke Brandon.

### **Controlling Your Cash**

A book by David E. Barton that Becky reads with the hopes of learning to control her spending.

### **Flagstaff Life**

The investment company that Becky's neighbors, Martin and Janice Webster, have invested with for many years. The Webster's are encouraged to change their investment plan, and as a result they lose out on quite a bit of money.

### **Morning Coffee**

The television show that Becky appears on with Luke Brandon to discuss the Flagstaff Life issues. Becky is hired on as a regular to discuss finances with callers after her appearance.



## **Fulham**

The area of London where Becky lives with Suze.

## **Daily World**

The newspaper that Eric Foreman writes for and where Becky writes an article about the Webster's situation with Flagstaff Life.

## **Smith's**

The bookstore where Becky buys the recipe book after marking the page while copying a curry recipe.

## **Terrazza**

The restaurant where Becky runs into Luke Brandon and his parents.

## **The Ritz**

The restaurant and hotel where Becky meets Luke after their appearance on Morning Coffee. The two wind up spending the night together.

## **Fine Frames**

The work at home company that Becky tries to make photo frames for in order to earn extra money.



# Themes

## Rationalization

Rationalization, or the justification of a decision or action by someone, is prevalent in the life of Becky Bloomwood, the main character in *Confessions of a Shopaholic*. Throughout the novel, Becky's spending and finances grow increasingly out of control. Becky does not seem to be able to stop herself from spending, something she does in order to make herself feel better. Though Becky cannot seem to find direction in her life, finding a great buy at a sale, or the perfect gift for a friend seems to bring her the happiness she craves. Becky is aware that her spending is a problem, but she is unable to stop. Rather than face the issue, Becky excuses it, rationalizing each purchase she makes, no matter how large or small.

An example of this is when Becky purchases a book in order to learn how to control her spending. Instead of taking the book and learning from it, Becky uses it as an excuse to purchase more, such as a travel mug, an apron, a cook book, a special notebook to track her purchases, and a kitchen full of appliances to help her save money by cooking at home, are just a few examples.

While Becky's friends move on in life and grow more responsible, changing jobs and buying starter homes, Becky spends her money foolishly, using her purchases to make her feel better. This leads to phone calls and letters from financial institutions that Becky avoids at all costs. Becky rationalizes that if the bills are not in her possession, then they really don't exist, so she disposes of them, or hides them out of sight. Becky makes excuses to collectors, from illness to discovering Jesus, in order to avoid the truth about her life. In this way, Becky uses rationalization as a defense mechanism, allowing herself to believe that she is not doing wrong by avoiding the truth.

## Honesty

Honesty, or truthfulness, is something that is lacking in the life of Becky Bloomwood. Whether Becky is telling white lies in order to feel as if she fits in or to feel better about herself, Becky's tales eventually become so elaborate that she is unable to remember what the truth is.

Becky's untruths are never intended to cause pain to others, though in the case of her parent's neighbors, the Websters, this winds up being the case. Martin and Janice think of Becky as a financial expert, something that Becky has never denied because it makes her feel better about herself. In this case, Becky casually acts as if she has knowledge of a company and the Websters make a decision based on Becky's comments. When it turns out that the Webster's decision causes them to lose quite a bit of money, Becky is devastated and feels responsible. Realizing that if she should have



been more honest from the beginning, Becky sets out to make things right, and help the Websters.

There are other examples of Becky's lack of honesty throughout the novel, including the many excuses she makes to others when it comes to her debt. Becky tells her roommate Suze that she is a 'bit behind' but will be fine, when in reality, Becky feels as if she is swimming upstream. Becky lies to Luke Brandon about buying her sick aunt a gift, when in reality she needs money to buy a scarf that is on sale. Though this lie is not horrible, it is an example of how Becky's words come back to haunt her. Running into Luke and his parents one evening, Luke's mother recognizes the scarf that Becky is wearing. Becky panics and informs Luke and his parents that her aunt has died and left her the scarf. While out with Tarquin, Becky again draws on her dead aunt, creating a fictitious charity that has been set up in her aunt's name.

It is clear at the outset of the novel that honesty is not something that troubles Becky. As the novel progresses and Becky's life begins to implode around her, however, Becky learns the value of being honest, not only with others, but with herself as well.

## Redemption

Redemption comes for Becky Bloomwood when she finally accepts that her life cannot continue the way it has. Though Becky's life is a mess and she is aware that changes have to be made, it is still easier for her to run away from the truth than face it. This changes when Becky discovers what her casual manner has cost her neighbor's, the Webster's.

Becky changes her life, facing a difficult situation for the first time, rather than avoid it by lying or running from it. Though there is little she can do to get the Webster's their money, Becky writes an article for the Daily World that brings national attention to the dishonesty of Flagstaff Life. The article presents Becky with the opportunity to appear on Morning Coffee and present her case against Luke Brandon, the representative of the company. Becky's appearance on the program makes her realize that she is not the failure she believes herself to be. Though Becky has always claimed to be "just getting by" when it comes to her understanding of finance, it is clear that Becky has simply not been applying herself.

The appearance on the program brings Becky face to face with Derek Smeath, the manager of Endwich Bank in charge of her overdraft. Becky finally realizes that she cannot run from the problems in her life. Stepping up, Becky makes arrangements to meet with Smeath and finally take responsibility for her actions and her debt. Becky's new position as financial expert on Morning Coffee provides her with the funds to pay her debts, as well as the emotional support she has needed to prove that she is not a failure.

# Style

## Point of View

Confessions of a Shopaholic is written in the first person from the point of view of the main character, Rebecca Bloomwood. The reader gains insight into the thoughts and feelings of Becky because of this viewpoint. The novel is written in a dialogue fashion, between Becky and the reader, with Becky's confessions giving the reader a behind the scenes look at what goes on in the life of Becky. This viewpoint and dialogue is extremely helpful to the reader as it gives one a direct link into the rationalizations that Becky presents throughout the novel. As Becky's life changes and spins out of control, the reader feels part of what goes on, creating an investment into the character.

The novel contains both dialogue and descriptive passages, however, because of the writing style, even the descriptions are a dialogue with the reader. The dialogue gives the reader an idea about Becky's interactions with others, specifically the way Becky deals with people in her life. The descriptive passages give the reader insight into the workings of Becky's mind, specifically how she feels about those around her and her own actions. As Becky's life spirals around her, the reader has a better understanding of Becky's feelings and motivations behind her actions.

## Setting

The novel Confessions of a Shopaholic takes place in England. The majority of the novel takes place in London, where Rebecca Bloomwood, the main character, works and lives. Becky works at Successful Saving, and portions of the novel take place while Becky is in the office. Though the office is not described in detail, the reader gets a sense of Becky's workday, and her lack of enthusiasm about her career.

Several other locations are visited throughout the novel, most within London. Becky lives in Fulham with her roommate Suze, a trendy neighborhood that Becky could not afford without the luck of finding a roommate with an allowance from her parents. Additionally, the novel visits Surrey, outside of London, where Becky grew up. Becky flees to Surrey and the home of her parents when her life becomes too much for her to bear.

The set of Morning Coffee, a television program, is also an important site in the novel, as it is where Becky comes to the realization that she needs to take control of her life and face her problems rather than run from them. The Morning Coffee set is also where Becky finally stands on her own and speaks truthfully, rather than couch herself in white lies to protect herself.

The Ritz, in London, is the site where Becky meets with Luke Brandon over dinner and rediscovers her attraction for the wealthy businessman. It is at the Ritz that Becky



comes into her own, winning the man of her dreams by being herself, rather than what she thinks other wish her to be.

## Language and Meaning

The language of the novel is modern as it takes place in current times. The novel is set in London, England and the character speak English, though there are sometimes different words used than are used in Americanized English, such as "Tube" which is a subway system, or "flat" for apartment. Despite this, the novel is written so that it is clear to the reader what is being referred to and there is no confusion in the translation.

The characters are all intelligent people of differing ages and speak as such, though there are some areas where finances are discussed that can be a bit confusing to the reader. This seems to be intentional, in order to express the confusion that Becky Bloomwood feels as she struggles with her spending and finances throughout the novel.

As the novel is written in the form of a dialogue between the main character, Rebecca Bloomwood, and the reader, the language is presented as familiar, giving one a sense of being part of the events that take place, a participant in events, rather than simply watching what transpires.

## Structure

Confessions of a Shopaholic is broken down into twenty-four chapters of varying length, some as short as three pages and some as long as fifteen. Interspersed between the chapters are letters from Becky's many creditors requesting payment on her various accounts. The chapters are made up of both descriptive passages and dialogue, though for the most part the novel is a narrative to the reader by the main character, Rebecca Bloomwood, about her life and the troubles she has.

The plot of the novel revolves around Rebecca Bloomwood and her financial troubles. Becky is unable to stop spending money unnecessarily and winds up in debt, with creditors calling and writing almost constantly for payment. When things get too rough for Becky she returns to her parents home, hoping that her problems will not follow. While at her parents, Becky discovers that her neighbors have made a financially adverse decision about their finances after speaking to Becky. Becky finally takes responsibility for her actions and takes a stand for her neighbors, which pits her against Luke Brandon, an attractive man who deals with the company that Becky calls to the carpet. Becky manages to pull her life together, and in the process gets her finances and her love life back on track.

Confessions of a Shopaholic is an entertaining, fast-paced novel, written in such a way that the reader has an inside view of the life of Becky Bloomwood and her exploits. The urgency that Becky feels over her problems, either financial or personal, is clearly expressed, allowing one to feel the desperation of the main character. Despite the



seriousness of the issues the novel is light-hearted and funny, providing one with an enjoyable read.



## Quotes

"For thirty second I am completely motionless. Then, without changing expression, I stuff the bill back into the envelope. I honestly feel as though this piece of paper has nothing to do with me. Perhaps, if I carelessly let it drop down on the floor behind my computer, it will disappear. The cleaners will sweep it up and I can claim I never got it. They can't charge me for a bill I never received, can they?" Chap. 1, p. 9

"That moment. That instant when your fingers curl round the handles of a shiny, uncreased bag-and all the gorgeous new things inside it become yours. What's it like? It's like going hungry for days, then cramming your mouth full of warm buttered toast. It's like waking up and realizing it's the weekend. It's like the better moments of sex. Everything is blocked out of your mind. It's pure, selfish pleasure." Chap. 2, p. 27

"Mum's terrible. She's always buying new stuff for the kitchen—and she just gives the old stuff to charity shops. New kettles, new toasters...We've already had three new rubbish bins this year—dark green, then chrome, and now yellow translucent plastic. I mean, what a waste of money." Chap. 4, p. 43

"Christmas shopping! I can do all my Christmas shopping here! I know March is a bit early, but why not be organized? And then when Christmas arrives I won't have to go near the horrible Christmas crowds. I can't believe I haven't thought of doing this before. And it's not breaking the rules because I'd have to buy Christmas presents sometime, wouldn't I? All I'm doing is shifting the buying process forward a bit. It makes perfect sense." Chap. 7, pp. 92-93

"Has this man got no heart? As he starts talking about balances and overdrafts and agreements, I deliberately tune out so I don't hear anything that will upset me. I'm staring at the face wood-grain on my desk, wondering if I could pretend to drop the receiver accidentally back down onto the phone. This is awful. What am I going to do? What am I going to do?" Chap. 8, p. 117

"I swallow hard, feeling sick with humiliation. For the first time, I'm realizing how Luke Brandon sees me. How they all see me. I'm just the comedy turn, aren't I? I'm the scatty girl who gets things wrong and makes people laugh. The girl who didn't know SBG and Rutland Bank had merged. The girl no one would ever think of taking seriously. Luke didn't bother telling me we were choosing a suitcase for his girlfriend because I don't matter. He's only buying me lunch because he thinks I might do something entertaining like drop my fork, which he can laugh about when he gets back to the office." Chap. 11, pp. 161-162

"As I'm about to leave, a pile of letters comes through the letterbox for me. Several of them look like bills, and one is yet another from Endwich Bank. But I have a clever new solution to all these nasty letters; I just put them in my dressing table drawer and close it. It's the only way to stop getting stressed out about it. And it really does work. As I



thrust the drawer shut and head out the front door, I've already forgotten all about them." Chap. 12, p. 171

"Wait!" says Erica, her voice like a dagger. "We were hoping to have a little meeting with you, Rebecca. Weren't we, Derek?"

'Indeed we were,' says Derek Smeath. I feel a sudden trickle of fear. This man isn't like a cozy sitcom uncle anymore. He's like a scary exam monitor, who's just caught you cheating. 'That is,' he adds pointedly, 'assuming your legs are both intact and you aren't suffering from any dreaded lurgey?'" Chap. 12, p. 178

"I can do this, I tell myself firmly. I can be attracted to him. It's just a matter of self-control and possibly also getting very drunk. So I lift my glass and take several huge gulps. I can feel the bubbles surging into my head, singing happily 'I'm going to be a millionaire's wife! I'm going to be a millionaire's wife!' And when I look back at Tarquin, he already seems a bit more attractive (in a stoaty kind of way). Alcohol is obviously going to be the key to our marital happiness." Chap. 12, p. 193

"A nasty cold feeling is creeping over me. They took the decision to switch their money based on my advice, didn't they? They asked me if they should switch funds, and I said go ahead. But now I come to think of it...hadn't I already heard a rumor about this takeover? Oh God. Could I have stopped this?" Chap. 16, p. 223

"But today I do care. Today what I'm doing does seem important, and I do want to be taken seriously. This article isn't just about a press release and a bunch of numbers. Martin and Janice aren't hypothetical examples dreamed up by some marketing department. They're real people with real lives. That money would have made a huge difference to them.

I'll show Alicia, I think fiercely. I'll show them all, Luke Brandon included. Show them that I, Rebecca Bloomwood am not a joke." Chap. 18, p. 235

"Rebecca, you have the uncanniest knack of hitting the nail right on the head,' he says at last. 'That's exactly what some of our clients have said. It's as though we've given ourselves a seal of integrity.'" Chap. 23, p. 300



## Topics for Discussion

What seems to be Becky's biggest problem when it comes to her finances?

What creative ways does Becky come up with to solve her problems? Why do they fail?

Is Becky responsible for her neighbors situation with their investment company? Why or why not?

How does Becky's relationship with Luke Brandon change throughout the novel?

What does Becky do to upset Tarquin?

How does Derek Smeath finally track Becky down? What is the result?

Do you feel Becky has finally changed at the end of the novel? Why or why not?