

Sia Study Guide

Sia by Josh Grayson

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Plot Summary

In the novel *Sia* by Josh Grayson, the main character Sia Holloway is seventeen years old on the day she wakes on a park bench with no memory of how she got there or her previous life. While her first instinct is to reach out to a police officer for help, she hesitates. She has a feeling that there is some reason she doesn't want to return home. When night falls on her first day alone, Sia is befriended by a homeless woman named Carol who helps her learn how to navigate the perils of the streets, how to find food, and how to look out for other homeless people. The friendship blossoms, and Carol urges Sia to seek help finding her family. Sia remains against the idea.

After about a week, Sia and Carol have fallen into a routine. Sia is waiting for food at a local soup kitchen when one of the volunteers confronts her. The young man shouts at Sia, telling her she has no right to be here. Fearful, Sia rushes from the building and is struck by a cab. She wakes in the hospital to find that her name is Sia Holloway and that she is the only child of a wealthy couple. Her father is in films and her mother a former model. Still without memories, Sia is taken home where she struggles to equate herself with the incredible home, lavish life, and closet filled with designer clothes. She pushes herself to return to school, hoping as the doctor predicted that a normal routine might jog her memories. But, she soon realizes that her so-called friends are cruel and ruthless and that Sia had been the leader of this group prior to her amnesia.

Sia also comes to realize that her idyllic home life isn't what it seems to be. Her mother is an alcoholic. Her father's film studio is struggling to the point of collapse. As Sia begins to interact with the family's housekeeper, she realizes that she's played no role in helping her family succeed. Armed with a determination to help rather than harm, she encourages her mother into rehab, spends time with her father, and volunteers her help gathering donations for the victims of an earthquake. As she makes changes in her own life, those around her watch to see whether Sia will revert once her memories return.

She breaks up with her perfect boyfriend, drops out of the cheer leading squad, begins to make new friends, and distances herself from the cruel crowd she'd so eagerly led before her amnesia. As her relationship with one particular boy named Kyle gains ground, Sia wants to follow her heart. However, Kyle refuses, fearing that Sia will return to her previous lifestyle once her memory returns. Along the way, Sia changes the lives of others as she leads by example.

While Sia is helping distribute water and candy bars to those impacted by the earthquake, a little girl's impulsive hug opens the gates, allowing all of Sia's memories to return. She finds herself more determined than ever to live a life with which she can be happy. A screen writer turns Sia's story into a movie script which saves the family from bankruptcy. With her share of the movie's take, Sia and Kyle open a soup kitchen run by Carol. Each prepares for a happy life.



Chapters 1 - 4

Summary

Chapter 1

As the novel *Sia* by Josh Grayson begins, Sia wakes to a touch on her cheek and shoos away a fly. She is on a park bench and is immediately a bit dizzy. She sits still for a moment and realizes she doesn't know where she is. That's followed by the strange sensation of ear buds, and she realizes she doesn't recognize the iPod or her clothes. She searches for a purse but doesn't find one. As she searches her mind for a memory of how she came to be in the park, she realizes she doesn't have any memories at all, even of her own name. She sees the name "Sia" on the play list of the iPod and guesses that must be her name. She walks to a nearby pond and looks at her reflection. She sees that she is an attractive girl and guesses she is probably a senior in high school or a freshman in college.

Sia is uncertain what she should do next. She almost asks one of the other joggers in the park for the name of the park, hoping that will stir a memory, but she finds she's afraid. She sees a police officer and begins in his direction but a feeling makes her falter. She considers that the police might be looking for her already because she's some sort of criminal. She can't discount the fact that she might be a drug dealer or worse. She finds herself at ease with the decision not to talk to the police and believes that to be a sign that she's doing the right thing. She's hungry but has no money. She is harassed by a group of boys and struggles not to show her fear as she sets out at a run away from them. She wanders for at least an hour and winds up deeper in the city, having discovered she's in Los Angeles when she passes Dodger Stadium.

By now, she's so hungry that her stomach is rumbling at the sight of a traveling restaurant called "Me So Hungry."

Chapter 2

Sia is confronted by a man who introduces himself as Bill and offers to buy Sia's lunch. She begins to refuse but he says he tries to do "one good deed a day" and asks to buy her meal, saying it will be his good deed for the day. Sia gives in and thanks him for the chicken burrito. Bill takes Sia back to his Cadillac to eat. There's a girl inside who introduces herself as Bill's niece. Sia is calmed by the girl's presence and takes a seat inside. The girl gets a phone call and pleads for permission to take it outside, which Bill grants. Sia soon realizes it had been a set up. Bill tells Sia he can help her get a job providing "entertainment" for wealthy men. Sia tries to leave the car, but Bill locks the door. Sia has to fight her way out of the moving vehicle and tumbles to the curb, more frightened than ever.



She runs for a long time and suddenly realizes that it's going to rain soon. She finds a bridge for shelter. There are homeless people huddled around. Sia finds herself seated near the edge where she is soon drenched and cold but unable to fight off sleep. She locates a bottle and breaks off the end, holding tight to the neck as a makeshift weapon.

Chapter 3

Sia is startled when a woman begins covering her with newspapers. Fearful at first, Sia lashes out at the woman who says Sia is right to be armed and on guard, but she assures her there's nothing to fear. She introduces herself as Carol and tells Sia she will be warmer if she layers on some newspapers as a blanket of sorts. Sia admits that it helps, and Carol says that company also helps ward off the cold. She takes Sia's hands, warming them in her own. Sia is moved to tears by the kindness.

Sia finds herself wanting to confide in this woman. Carol believes she's heard every story possible; but, she admits that she hasn't heard of anyone suffering amnesia as Sia has done. Carol produces a bit of bread, and Sia eats hungrily. Carol says the bread is from a soup kitchen where she often eats. She pledges to help Sia find some food and some warmer clothing the following day. Sia falls asleep with Carol promising to keep watch over her.

Chapter 4

Carol wakes Sia early the next morning, saying they have to be gone before the police arrive to chase them away or take them to a shelter. Sia wonders why Carol would choose to sleep outside if there's a shelter available, but Carol says only that the shelters are dangerous and are to be avoided. They make their way to the soup kitchen where there's already a line waiting for the meal. Once the line begins moving inside, Carol stops to talk to a man she calls Tito. She compliments him on the new cans in his buggy. He doesn't speak but smiles a snaggle-toothed smile that makes Sia cringe. Carol later says that Tito was a lecturer at UCLA and a father, but he "worked so hard that he lost his mind" and his family left him.

After they've eaten, Carol leads Sia outside where she introduces Sia to Mike, a young teenager who has an assortment of small electronics for sale. Mike buys Sia's iPod for eighty dollars. Sia and Carol go to the Salvation Army where Sia buys clothes more appropriate for her new life. She also buys a backpack and two sleeping bags, giving one to Carol. She offers Carol the remaining money, but Carol urges her to keep it somewhere safe in case she needs it later.

Analysis

One of Sia's opening thoughts is that her clothing is far too skimpy. She doesn't feel comfortable in the clothes, though the clothing is her typical attire. This is the first indication that Sia has undergone a dramatic change and that she will be examining all aspects of her life in the coming weeks. At this point, it's merely a case of being uncomfortable in an outfit that has typically been considered completely appropriate.



It's not clear why Sia becomes so convinced that she won't talk to the police other than her personal thoughts that the police might already be looking for her because she's a criminal. It seems possible that on a completely subconscious level, Sia is seeking to distance herself from the life she's left behind and that she already knows she doesn't want to return to it.

Carol mentions a shelter, and Sia can't imagine why Carol wouldn't prefer to stay in a shelter rather than on the streets or under the bridge. Carol says the conditions in the shelters are often more dangerous than being on the streets. She points out that if she's outdoors, she also has fresh air to breathe. She says this just as a truck passes them, "belching" out smoke. There seems to be some humor in Carol's statement though the author doesn't dwell on it. It could be that Carol is simply pointing out that even though things are tough outdoors, they're more difficult and dangerous in the shelters. Another aspect of Carol's statement is that "nobody cares about nobody." Carol is a naturally caring and giving person, and Sia soon realizes that many of the homeless people tend to look out for each other, at least as far as their meager resources allow. Sia hasn't yet begun to understand the plight of the homeless. It's only later that she comes to realize that there are dangers in many things that should be safe.

Sia's first trip to the soup kitchen is something of an experience. She sees a great many homeless people, and most are courteous to each other. She has her first encounter with a former professor named Tito who is filthy and bedraggled. When they are in the line for food, Carol advises Sia to be friendly to the servers because it sometimes prompts the servers to hand out larger portions. Sia takes Carol's advice but notes that some of the volunteers serving seem hostile to her. She's cleaner and obviously accustomed to a better lifestyle than most of those in the kitchen. Sia says the volunteers look at her as if she doesn't belong there. She says if she doesn't belong there, she doesn't know where else she does belong. It's disquieting to Sia, and it's the beginning of her quest to find a place for herself.

Discussion Question 1

What are your initial thoughts about Sia's life and her instinctive reasoning that she doesn't want to go home?

Discussion Question 2

Describe how Carol and Sia come to be friends. Why do you believe they gravitate toward each other?

Discussion Question 3

Who is Bill? What does Sia learn from her encounter with him?



Vocabulary

miasma, donning, chides, belches, shuffling, obvious, intimidating, apologetic, snarl, lecturing



Chapters 5 - 8

Summary

Chapter 5

Sia and Carol settle into a routine. They go to the soup kitchen for breakfast and supper each day. They collect soda cans to sell at the recycling center. One day they go into a public restroom where Carol urges Sia to use paper towels to wash herself. Carol says they'll have more luck picking up odd jobs if they're cleaner. Sia is immediately on guard, worried that the work Carol has in mind is something like Bill suggested but Carol assures her it's nothing like that. Sia tries to comb her hair into order but finds it's too tangled. She dunks her head under a faucet and uses hand soap as shampoo. She's just finished when a woman and two small girls enter. The woman is horrified and ushers the girls out, saying they'll go somewhere cleaner. The girls ask about Carol and Sia, but their mother says they are "nobody." She makes a comment about being too lazy to work that mortifies Sia, but Carol ignores it. Another day, someone spits on Sia when she's napping under the edge of a bush. Carol again advises Sia to find forgiveness for ignorance.

Chapter 6

Carol and Sia continue to sleep under the bridge most nights. Sia notes that the bridge has become a safe haven, away from those who spit and criticize. But, one night a group of boys attacks a homeless man named Patch, beating him mercilessly. Sia wants to return to Patch's aid, but Carol warns against it. Sia suggests calling the police, but Carol says the police won't do anything about it. They run away and hide between dumpsters near the mall for the remainder of the night. Carol seems more worried about Sia and suggests they seek out help. Sia again refuses, noting that she becomes increasingly afraid at the thought that her parents might want to find her.

Sia asks how Carol came to be homeless. Carol says she and her husband were happy. He was a clerk in a store and was shot trying to defend money from the robbers. Carol soon lost her home and her job. At the soup kitchen that day, everyone is quiet, thinking back on Patch's attack. Sia finds herself beginning to relax a little. She has now been living on the streets for eight days. She says that she can't continue to depend on Carol indefinitely. Carol goes to the restroom, leaving Sia alone. She takes a bite of the bread on her tray while she waits for an empty seat. She's amazed at how delicious the bread tastes. Just then a seat becomes available. As Sia turns toward it, she bumps into one of the volunteers, a male teenager. He is enraged. He asks if Sia believes the soup kitchen is a joke. He tells Sia she has "no right to be here" and orders her out. She can't think past his words and rushes for the door, running into the path of an oncoming taxi.

Chapter 7



Sia wakes in a hospital room to the sound of hospital equipment. A doctor calls her Sia Holloway and begins discussing her injuries. She tells the doctor she has no memories prior to just more than a week ago. Sia is curious when the man and woman arrive claiming to be her parents, but she finds she has no memory of either of them. Sia's mother introduces herself as Janet Holloway and Sia's father as Raymond. The doctor says that, having done some research and making some phone calls, he believes Sia is suffering from a fugue-like amnesia, brought on by stress. He says there's no way to know how long it will be until her memories return. The doctor says she can return home soon and that she should get back to her normal routine, including school, right away.

Chapter 8

Sia hopes to feel relief at having been reunited with her parents, but the relief doesn't come. She observes her mother as they head home in a Range Rover. Her mother is beautiful, and Sia can see a resemblance between them. Her mother admits that they were worried and asks why Sia didn't seek help from the police. Sia tries to explain, but her mother doesn't want to hear about her time on the streets. Sia says Carol was a huge part of her survival, but her mother cuts into the explanation, saying that Sia's best friend Amber has called. They arrive at the house, and Sia says it is a mansion. She can't believe only she and her parents live there along with the housekeeper Beatriz. Beatriz greets them and takes Sia to her room where she starts a shower and chooses an outfit for Sia to wear. Sia is amazed by the huge bedroom closet filled with clothes and by the cabinets filled with makeup and hair products. She goes downstairs after pulling her hair into a ponytail and putting on no makeup.

Analysis

The homeless man named Tito is not a major character in the story, but he does play a role in Sia's self-discovery. Tito was once successful. Apparently, he drove his family away and "lost his mind" by spending so much time at work. Now he never speaks and seems to be completely disconnected with society. Carol, however, never stops trying to make a connection with him, and she's sometimes rewarded with at least a smile. Carol says she sometimes gives Tito a couple of cans to sell when he seems to be "down." Sia can't imagine him being any more down than he is on the first day they meet. However, one day after Patch's attack she suddenly realizes what Carol meant. She really sees Tito and sees the pain he's suffering. Sia gives Tito a can she'd found earlier and he's initially a little suspicious at this interaction with a stranger but Carol introduces her and Tito repeats Sia's name. Carol says it's the first time she's heard him speak. It's interesting that Sia is the one to later make an even deeper connection with Tito, and that is only possible because she opens herself to the possibility of seeing him.

The reaction of Sia's parents when the doctor says Sia must get back into her routine, including attending school, says a great deal about them. Her father says Sia can't possibly do well in her classes if she has no memory and that she can't be allowed to fail during her final semester. Her mother responds with a secretive wink, saying they'll talk to Sia's teachers and that there are few major tests to be taken before the end of



the year. It's obvious that she's accustomed to getting her own way with everything, even down to insisting that Sia get good grades on the final semester of school.

Discussion Question 1

From the information at this point, what kind of life did Sia have prior to her amnesia?

Discussion Question 2

Who is Tito? What is his role in the story? Why is Carol kind to him?

Discussion Question 3

How is Sia returned to her parents?

Vocabulary

warden, escalates, subdued, intimidated, decadent, malice, prognosis, frantic, illicit, fugue



Chapters 9 - 12

Summary

Chapter 9

Sia arrives downstairs for lunch with her mother who comments on Sia's lack of makeup. She's amazed at how "fancy" the meal is served. She learns there is a tennis court and swimming pool on the grounds and that she has a new car, a gift for her previous birthday. Sia questions her mother and discovers the family has a film company. Janet says Sia wants to be an actress, but Sia says she now can't imagine being in the spotlight on that level. Janet says Raymond has been on the lookout for an appropriate role for Sia. Sia thanks Beatriz for the wonderful meal. It's obvious that Beatriz is not accustomed to the praise. Sia announces that she plans to go to school the following day just as Beatriz announces she has guests.

Chapter 10

Two of Sia's friends arrive. Amber Van de Camp introduces herself as Sia's best friend. Stacy Powers is a "bubbly brunette" who says she, Amber, and Sia are "besties." Amber agrees to continue leading the cheer squad until Sia gets her memory back. Sia is relieved. Sia's mom then suggests that Sia should have a little time with Duke. Sia sees a very handsome teenage boy waiting to talk to her. She is amazed that he is her boyfriend. He pledges to give her time to recover her memory but says he doesn't believe it will take "forever." Sia asks how they began dating, and Duke tells the story of saving her the night after junior prom when Sia swam out too far at the beach. He says they are "perfect together." Sia is head of the cheer squad, and Duke is the star quarterback. He says everyone wants to be just like them. Sia is unable to respond fully when he kisses her, but he doesn't seem to notice and promises that everything will work out. By now, Sia has seen the beautiful home, her handsome boyfriend, the BMW she was given for her birthday, and other aspects of what she believes should have been a perfect life. She wonders again about the reason for the stress that caused her amnesia.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 opens with Sia preparing for school. She's nervous but determined. She dresses, but she isn't happy about the clothing choices. She thanks Beatriz for the breakfast which surprises Beatriz, though not as much as the previous day. She initiates a conversation with her father about his film company, and her parents cite a few successes. Her mother suggests she allow John, the family chauffeur, to drive her to school, and she accepts. Her mother gives her two hundred dollars "for lunch," saying she should spend it on whatever she likes. Amber and Stacy immediately intercept her and are aghast at her clothing and lack of makeup. They take her in hand, forcing her to change shoes and add jewelry and makeup. Stacy reveals that her parents are makeup



artists, and Sia is amazed at Stacy's skill. As Stacy and Sia talk, Stacy reveals that Sia feigned her near-drowning to attract Duke's attention because Sia learned that Duke was about to ask Amber out.

Chapter 12

Sia arrives at history class taught by Mr. Barrow. Sia is uncomfortable with the makeup and shoes. She hates being the center of attention when Mr. Barrow insists that students commit to helping Sia through this "difficult time." After class, Amber calls for the attention of all the students there and threatens dire consequences unless they all "treat her right." After that, Sia sees the young man who had confronted her at the soup kitchen. Sia asks Amber for the boy's name, and Amber informs Sia that he is Kyle Parker, a "loser" who always "smells like bread." Amber grabs one of Sia's arms, and Stacy grabs the other. They head to their algebra class. Several football players greet her, prompting Duke to pull her close for a kiss.

At lunch time, Sia chooses a burger and fries. Amber is horrified, saying that Sia can't possibly eat something so unhealthy. She insists Sia go back for a salad, but Sia refuses. When the situation comes to a head, Amber points out that a "fat cheerleader is harder to throw." Sia realizes from the confrontation that Stacy is afraid to disagree with Amber and then realizes that almost everyone in school is afraid of Amber. Sia announces that she's not going to be participating in cheer. Amber says she might not be able to return later, but Sia says she accepts that possibility.

Just then a boy falls to the floor in front of Sia. Sia is horrified to discover that Duke tripped the boy on purpose, prompting everyone to laugh. Kyle comes to the boy's aid. While Sia is angry, the others turn their talk casually to other people. Sia sees that they are deliberately malicious. After school, Sia again refuses cheer practice and refuses Duke's offer to drive her home. She sees Kyle outside and apologizes for Duke's behavior. Kyle isn't says that Duke should apologize to the boy, whose name is Ben. Kyle says that he's realized yelling at Sia at the soup kitchen made her run into the street where she was injured, and he apologizes for that. He reveals that his family has a bakery. They donate bread to the kitchen regularly, and he volunteers there.

Analysis

Sia begins to sense that there is something wrong from her first meeting with Amber and Stacy. Stacy pushes herself forward, making herself part of the three "besties," though Amber has already introduced herself as Sia's best friend. Stacy then announces that she "would die" without Sia. This is the kind of drama that Stacy loves because she believes it puts her in the spotlight. Sia's mother says that Amber has taken over as captain of the cheer squad in Sia's absence. She says that she's certain that Amber will be "relieved" to have Sia back in that role. That's when Sia sees the first hint of Amber's jealousy. Though Amber verbally agrees, Sia believes she sees "something dark" in Amber's eyes. It's later revealed that Amber is jealous of Sia and hates that Sia seems to be the one always in control of situations.



Discussion Question 1

What are your first impressions of Sia's best friends and of Duke? Why?

Discussion Question 2

What is the significance of Sia's friends' reactions to her appearance?

Discussion Question 3

What is Sia's reaction when Duke trips the boy in the lunchroom? Are you be surprised to learn that Sia would once have laughed at Duke's action?

Vocabulary

rhetorical, martyrdom, tangible, quirks, manipulative, albeit, smug, mortifying, incredulous, gusto



Chapters 13 - 15

Summary

Chapter 13

John arrives to pick up Sia. She wants to seek out Carol; but, she discovers that John has instructions not to allow her to go anywhere where homeless people might be. Sia is angry to discover that she has been part of such a cruel, self-centered group. She's now angry at the limitations placed by her parents. She arrives home and offers to help Beatriz with the evening meal. She has to insist before Beatriz gives in. Sia finds herself calming as she chops vegetables and talks about Beatriz and Beatriz's life and family.

They hear a crash, and Beatriz rushes toward the living room. Sia pushes past her to find her mother, too drunk to stand. She rants, gushes about how much she loves Sia, apologizes for being a poor mother, sobs because they are about to lose everything, and berates Beatriz because they are out of liquor. Beatriz and Sia balance Janet between them and lead her upstairs. They put her to bed. Sia then asks Beatriz to explain what her mother's rambles meant. Back in the kitchen, Beatriz explains that the film company is in danger of bankruptcy. She says Janet and Raymond are in counseling, but the marriage is obviously in trouble. Beatriz says she feels strange telling all this to Sia. She rationalizes that Sia knew all about it before she lost her memory. Sia tells Beatriz that she needs some time alone and leaves the house.

Chapter 14

Sia recalls the day at school and is amazed that it could have gotten even worse after her arrival at home. She notices a bakery on her walk. The name is BooBoo's Bakery, and she recalls that she and Carol had dreamed of what they would buy if they had money to go inside. She enters and is shocked to find Kyle behind the counter. He explains that the bakery is owned by his parents. Sia orders several pastries and takes a seat, but she's soon berated by some other students who say Sia would never have eaten the pastries before her amnesia. Sia asks one outright if she was a "snob like Amber" and receives confirmation. One of the girls says Sia made their lives miserable. She is so upset that she doesn't hear them leave the shop. She vows that she will change and will never again be as alone as she is at that moment.

Sia buys a huge bag of assorted pastries and tells Kyle she's going to see her friend, a homeless woman. Kyle is worried about Sia making the trip to the bridge alone and urges her to reconsider. When she won't, he asks that she at least be careful.

Chapter 15

Sia is frightened by the first homeless man she meets and is relieved to find Kyle has followed her. He reluctantly follows her as she goes to the bridge. She hands out pastries and asks several people if they've seen Carol. None have. She comes to Tito



and gives him the rest of the pastries. He says Carol has not been around since Sia left. Sia writes her phone number on the bag and asks Tito to give it to Carol if he sees her.

Analysis

Sia's realization that her life at school is not perfect comes as something of a shock to her. She is not accepted for who she is. Instead, she is expected to fit a mold, acting in specific ways and doing specific things. When she shows up at school without makeup, her "friends" are horrified and immediately take her in hand. When she chooses to eat a hamburger, Amber berates her for the decision. Later, Sia comes to realize that her life at home is also not as perfect as some people think. She learns that her mother is an alcoholic and that her father's business is in jeopardy. She also discovers that her parents are on the brink of a divorce. While Sia doesn't yet know many of the details, she's soon going to realize that she has done nothing to help her parents or her home life. Furthermore, she has created many of the problems in her life simply by being self-centered and malicious. This comes home to her in a dramatic way when she is in the bakery and encounters some of Kyle's friends. They are brutally honest with her when she asks if she was as mean as Amber seems to be. They inform her that she was the ringleader. They seem somewhat subdued at her changing attitude, but they are not yet willing to accept that she might be genuinely changed. It's during this moment of heartbreak that Sia realizes the worth of true friendship. A desire for friendship is a major theme of the book and drives a great deal of the action after this point.

The encounter with Tito is fairly brief; but, it's important because he is changing under Sia's gentle friendship. When Sia sees Tito at the soup kitchen, he barely speaks. Carol says that she's seldom heard him talk. However, when she meets him at the bridge, Tito tells Sia that Carol hasn't been around since the day Sia left. Sia gives Tito the remaining pastries; and, it's obvious that this gesture touches him more deeply than Sia could have imagined. Later, Sia meets with Carol and learns that Tito has begun talking much more.

Sia returns to the bridge after dark one night because she desperately wants to talk to Carol. There are two important aspects of this scene. The first is that she's seeking Carol whom she sees as the one person who would be a friend and offer advice on her new situation. The other is that Sia's impression of the bridge has changed in the brief time since she was sleeping there with Carol. When Sia and Carol returned there in the evenings for a place to sleep, Sia felt a safety in the numbers and a kinship to the others who sought out this place. After she has returned home, Sia's impression of the bridge is very different. She is afraid as she approaches it. When a homeless man approaches her, ranting about the end of days, she's more afraid than she would have been with Carol at her side.



Discussion Question 1

How does Sia begin to realize that she was not a nice person prior to her amnesia? What's her reaction?

Discussion Question 2

Why is friendship such an important part of life?

Discussion Question 3

What is Sia's reaction when she returns to the bridge with the pastries? Why does she feel differently about the bridge now?

Vocabulary

placidly, revulsion, pensive, reckless, incoherent, flickers, mutters, coils, coax, tremble



Chapters 16 - 19

Summary

Chapter 16

Sia knows she can't do anything else to try to find Carol tonight. She and Kyle head back toward the bakery. Kyle says he can't imagine Sia's nightmare during her time on the streets. Sia says Carol took care of her. Kyle imagines that's why Sia wants to find Carol now. Sia says that's only part of the reason. She needs Carol's wisdom as she deals with problems in her life. Kyle doesn't understand. He cites Sia's lavish home, famous parents, and social life as being perfect. Under Sia's questioning, Kyle says his own life is good, but it doesn't compare to Sia's. He says he is the middle of five children. Sia admits she is spoiled, and they talk about their lives, school, and family. Back at the bakery, Kyle offers to take Sia home on his motorcycle, and she accepts. At first she's afraid, but she loves the feel of his strong body when she wraps her arms around him. She enjoys the ride. She arrives home to find her parents frantic with worry and furious. Her mother stops in the middle of her tirade to throw up on the lawn. After her parents have returned to the house, Sia asks Kyle if her life still looks so perfect.

Chapter 17

Beatriz offers coffee to Janet. Raymond berates Janet for her drinking, but Sia interrupts. She says that her mother doesn't need condemnation at this point. Sia asks for time alone with Janet and makes Janet see that rehab is the right choice. She agrees to check in the following day. Sia takes the news to her father and urges him to talk about his business. He confirms that they are nearing bankruptcy and that they could be forced to downsize their lifestyles. Sia says she doesn't care as long as her family is together. Raymond says Sia is right. The important thing is that they face the problems as a family.

Chapter 18

Sia arises to discover her parents have already left for rehab. Sia realizes that she might have had at least a small positive impact on her family. She wonders if she can do the same for her friends. Sia arrives at school, and Stacy immediately notices Sia doesn't have on makeup. Amber notes that as soon as she arrives; but, Sia refuses to allow them to put makeup on her. Kyle is waiting by Sia's locker with news that Carol will meet her that afternoon at Elysian Park. Without forethought, Sia hugs Kyle as a thank you. Duke arrives and shoves Kyle against a locker. Sia tries to break it up, but it takes Mr. Barrow's presence to stop the fight.

Chapter 19

Sia reacts, pushing Duke against the lockers and telling him she wants to break off their relationship. Duke asks if she's breaking up because of Kyle. Sia says it's because



she's sick of how Duke treats other people. Stacy and Amber try to stop the argument, but Sia is determined. The classes are awkward with none of Sia's former friends standing by her side. Despite that, she feels she's done the right thing.

Analysis

Kyle and Sia talk as they are returning to the bakery after seeing Tito and the others under the bridge. Kyle is relatively in tune with the homeless situation, especially compared to Sia's friends. However, even though he doesn't understand the situation as well as Sia, Kyle says that he can't imagine living homeless. He believes it means that a homeless person is all alone; but, Sia points out that's not the case. She can't make him fully understand the kinship felt among the homeless people.

The reaction of Stacy toward Sia's emerging personality change is very self-centered. That same reaction is seen again when Sia breaks up with Duke. Stacy doesn't want her world changed. That world has been centered on Amber and Sia. Having Amber and Sia at odds means Stacy has to adapt. She's so accustomed to being a follower that she really doesn't know how to do that. When Sia breaks up with Duke, Stacy feels somewhat the same. She eventually confronts Sia, saying that if Sia and Duke aren't together, her idea of a perfect love is compromised.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Stacy so upset over the fact that Amber and Sia are no longer spending time together?

Discussion Question 2

How does Sia react to the realization that her family is in crisis?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Sia break up with Duke?

Vocabulary

vicious, boggling, nibble, empathy, manic, aghast, condescension, gawk, mayhem, condone, imposing, fiasco



Chapters 20 - 22

Summary

Chapter 20

John picks Sia up that afternoon. She pleads with him to take her to Elysian Park; and, he agrees. When they go to find Carol, John stands guard a short distance away. Carol's first piece of news is that Tito is talking a great deal. Carol says that when she began searching for Sia, she found a "very nice housing center." The people there have helped Carol find a job and provide her a small apartment. She also reveals that Patch is on his way to recovery from his injuries. The boys who beat him up were not caught. Carol then asks Sia to catch her up, and Sia is amazed to realize this is the first time anyone has been truly interested in what she's feeling. Sia tells Carol that she can't meet the expectations. It feels wrong for Sia to complain about her life when Carol has so much more to concern her. However, Sia unburdens herself to her friend. She ends by saying that she doesn't feel as if she belongs in her life. Carol says Sia will have an opportunity to make up for some of her past mistakes. She says Sia will recognize the opportunity when it arises.

Chapter 21

Raymond and Sia have breakfast together. Raymond asks if she's seen Kyle. He is relieved when Sia says Kyle isn't interested in her. He says motorcycles aren't safe. Sia reveals that she's broken up with Duke. Raymond offers to talk about it but seems relieved when Sia says there's really nothing to talk about. They prepare for their first visit with Janet since she went to rehab. They leave the house together. On the way, Sia asks if they spent time together prior to her amnesia. He says that they were both very busy with their lives. He suggests that they should find more time to be together. Sia agrees. Sia offers to get a job to help with the family's expenses, but Raymond says he really wants her to focus on school. Raymond reveals that he's looking into purchasing a "promising screen play" that might be the company's answer to financial problems.

They arrive at rehab. Raymond is obviously nervous but rushes to greet Janet when she walks in. Janet tells them she's making good progress and believes she can beat the addiction, but she warns that it will take time. Jeff, Janet's counselor, introduces himself and calls for their family session to begin.

Chapter 22

The family spends an hour in counseling, and Sia feels wrung out afterward. Yet, she is thrilled that her mother is making such progress. They learn that Janet will have to stay at rehab a few more days. They are given a few minutes to say good-bye, but it's interrupted by an earthquake. They learn that it's an aftershock of a quake that did



major damage in San Francisco earlier that morning. They arrive home, relieved that their own house wasn't damaged.

Stacy arrives, angry that Sia hasn't reconciled with Amber. Stacy says Amber will never apologize to Sia and that it's up to Sia to take the first step. Sia says she is finally seeing clearly and doesn't care what Amber or anyone else thinks of her new choices. Sia reveals to Stacy that her family is facing a financial crisis and that she might not be welcome in Amber's circle anyway, if that happens. When Sia says she doesn't care where she lives or if there's lots of money as long as she has her family, Stacy is skeptical. Sia hopes that Stacy will gain some courage by watching Sia make changes in her own life. She agrees to keep their meeting a secret so that Amber won't be angry at Stacy.

Analysis

Stacy arrives at Sia's house. She is insistent on Sia apologizing to Amber. On the surface, it may seem that Stacy is hoping to help two friends mend their friendship, but her reasons are actually very selfish. Stacy wants her life to go back to the way it was prior to Sia's amnesia. Stacy is a follower, and she feels incapable of taking control of her life to make her own happiness. She depends on others to make her life happy for her. The tension between Amber and Sia means that Stacy is in new territory. She cites the fun she, Amber, and Sia have had in the past, getting manicures and shopping together. Sia says she's sure that part of their friendship was nice but urges Stacy to realize that she wants to make changes in her life. Stacy doesn't want to accept this, but she does seem to understand it on some level. Later, she spends some time with Sia, though she puts herself in danger of enduring Amber's anger by doing so. An interesting aspect of this scene is when Stacy says she "fits in" with Amber and doesn't believe she can do so anywhere else. Stacy is afraid to make choices on her own and fearful of making new friends. It's a serious problem that would plague her later in life. It's likely a very positive move for her that Sia forces her into making some decisions on her own now.

Sia doesn't have memories of her relationships with John and Beatriz before her amnesia; but, it has become apparent that she was every bit as mean and snobby to them as she was to everyone else. When she tells Beatriz she'd like to be called Sia instead of "Miss Holloway," Beatriz isn't certain, but she soon warms to Sia. Likewise, John is somewhat standoffish in the first days of driving Sia to school. However, he soon warms to her new outgoing personality.

Discussion Question 1

Describe Stacy as a character. What are her strengths and weaknesses?



Discussion Question 2

Describe the meeting between Carol and Sia. Why is this meeting so important to Sia?

Discussion Question 3

Who are John and Beatriz? How does Sia see her relationships with them beginning to change?

Vocabulary

vigilant, inconsequential, moping, prestige, pathetic, buoyant, fidgets, verge, reputation, blurts



Chapters 23 - 26

Summary

Chapter 23

Sia watches news coverage of the earthquake and learns that some thirty people are dead and thousands left without a home. In history class, Mr. Barrows announces that Kyle is launching an effort to raise money and supplies for the victims, as well as volunteers. Sia volunteers though Kyle is skeptical that she'll really help. Kyle and Sia begin soliciting volunteers; but, Sia feels that none of the popular students will volunteer because she's involved. Kyle says it isn't because of Sia but because those students are so self-centered they never take time to volunteer. Sia says she might seek out volunteers from her neighborhood. Kyle predicts she won't receive any help there, but Sia believes she might collect cash donations. Kyle suggests that Sia ask her parents. She tells him that the family is "struggling." Kyle says he'll call on his own friends to do the same.

Chapter 24

Sia begins canvassing her neighborhood. She meets a former Romanian model named Alyz who lives in a beautiful home nearby. Alyz reveals that she spends a great deal of time working for charities. She writes Sia a check for a thousand dollars. Alyz suggests for Sia to join her at for the Vanity Fair party following the Oscars where she predicts Sia can get much larger donations. Sia is initially hesitant. Alyz suggests Kyle, as the organizer of the drive, should join them. Sia is soon convinced that the plan could work.

Chapter 25

Sia arrives home to discover her father watching home movies. In the movie, Sia is very young with a smudge of dirt on her cheek and Amanda is playing in a mud puddle behind her. Sia is insisting to her father, who is filming, that she help the stray dog she's found. Sia can't believe she changed so much from that thoughtful child to the cruel teenager. Raymond says Sia changed dramatically around the time she hit twelve years old. The conversation turns to the fundraising. Sia reveals the plan she hatched with Alyz to attend the party. Raymond says he has extra tickets to the Oscars and the party afterward. He agrees that Sia and Kyle can have them. When Janet calls, she wants to know about Sia's day, and Sia tells her the plan for the Oscars. Janet directs Sia to her closet where there's a new golden gown, shoes, and jewelry for Sia to wear to the event. Janet says Sia must have a pedicure and manicure. She says she wishes she could see Sia; but, she knows there will be photographers.

Chapter 26

Amber offers Sia the opportunity to apologize. Sia refuses and suggests that Amber volunteer to help the earthquake victims. Duke is walking through the halls with Ashley.



Sia thinks that they are so comfortable together that they might have been seeing each other behind Sia's back.

That afternoon, Kyle, Sia, and Kyle's friends who are volunteering to raise money for the earthquake victims meet up at BooBoo Bakery. They pool their money. Sia has raised almost as much as Kyle and all his friends. Sia relates Alyz's plan for the party but meets with some opposition until his friends urge him to accept.

Analysis

Sia and Kyle discuss the fact that most students are caught up in their own lives. They are seldom willing to volunteer. Sia really takes time to consider the cliques at the school. She notes that every group has its own hierarchy and "rules." For the first time she really thinks about the reason some groups seem to feel superior to others. Sia is pointing specifically to her own former friends.

There is prejudice throughout the book. Kyle is no exception. However, his prejudice is reversed. When Sia suggests that she might go through her neighborhood, looking for donations and other help for their drive to help the earthquake victims, Kyle is skeptical. He points out that the people in Sia's neighborhood are traditionally "rich and lazy." He predicts that most won't "lift a finger" to help someone else. Sia sees it differently, predicting that at least some of them might be willing to make donations even if they aren't willing to physically volunteer. She turns out to be correct.

Sia watches as Duke walks with Ashley, obviously now a couple. She looks critically at Duke and sees that he is handsome, but there's a cruel streak in his eyes that more than accounts for his looks. At this point, Sia doesn't remember why she began dating Duke or what she saw in him. She wonders if she will remember all that once she regains her memories and if she'll think that she's ruined everything by breaking up with him. Amber has predicted that Sia will regain her memory and that she'll revert to the person she was prior to the amnesia. Sia hopes that she doesn't have to learn all these lessons again. She later worries that when she regains her memory she will lose all the memories of the time after her amnesia or that it will be a reverse of the amnesia in which her previous memories replace everything that happened in the time since the amnesia.

Discussion Question 1

What does Sia fear might happen when she gets her memories back?

Discussion Question 2

Describe Kyle as a character. What are his strengths and weaknesses?



Discussion Question 3

Sia is desperately trying to change her life. This is an example of what theme?

Vocabulary

appease, fickleness, affirms, clique, captivating, strident, impeccably, mesmerized, gape, elite



Chapters 27 - 32

Summary

Chapter 27

Sia goes to visit Carol at her new apartment. Carol shares a bathroom and kitchen with others, but she is obviously proud of her small room. She says that she feels safe there and is happy. She asks Sia about her own life, and Sia talks about the events of the past few days, including her work for the earthquake victims. They part when Carol announces she has to go to work.

Chapter 28

Sia spends the afternoon before the Oscars preparing, but she's very nervous. Raymond leaves early, saying he is meeting a screenwriter about a promising script. Alyz calls and reassures Sia that she's going to be fine. Beatriz checks in on Sia and helps calm her. Sia admits that Beatriz's serenity helps calm her. Stacy arrives and helps Sia with her makeup, assuring Sia that the gown is perfect. Kyle arrives and Sia is amazed at how good he looks in the tux. Stacy insists she take a photo of the two of them together before they leave.

Chapter 29

Sia tells Kyle that she doesn't remember any of the movie stars who will be at the event, though her parents have told her that she has met some of them personally. Sia plans to "schmooze and flatter" her way through introductions and urges Kyle to come to her rescue if he sees her falter. They arrive, John expertly navigating the traffic. Sia is afraid but Kyle leans in her door and urges her to join him. Photographers zero in on her and Kyle introduces her as the daughter of former model Janet Holloway and film producer Raymond Holloway. Sia notices other young woman posing for the photographers. She mimics them until Kyle rescues her, leading her into the auditorium. Both are awed by their surroundings. Sia talks to her father on his cell phone and discovers that his meeting has gone longer than expected. He promises to meet her at the party after the Oscars.

Chapter 30

Sia and Kyle join those attending the Vanity Fair party. Alyz joins them and tells Sia they first must gain some attention. She leads Sia onto the dance floor where Sia gives into the instinct and dances with Alyz.

Chapter 31

Alyz and Sia take a seat after several songs. Alyz soon leads Sia and Kyle through the crowd, introducing them to various actors and actresses and explaining the need for



help for the earthquake victims. Most readily take out their checkbooks and write checks for thousands of dollars.

Chapter 32

Kyle and Sia take time out to dance. Kyle announces that they have checks for almost one hundred thousand dollars, a figure they can barely grasp. Kyle admits that he hadn't expected Sia to really work at the project. They talk a little more and then kiss. They are in an embrace as the chapter ends.

Analysis

There is a great deal taken for granted in the story. Sia's friends take control on the first days, leading her to classes and offering direction. Despite this, it seems the author glosses over the difficulties. Sia doesn't seem to have much trouble going about her business. It seems that this situation in real life would have been much more difficult than it's portrayed here.

Sia describes the elegance of the auditorium where the Oscars take place. She and Kyle are in awe at their surroundings and Kyle sees many actors he recognizes from television and movies. One of those is Jett Blaze. Jett notices Sia and makes his way over to meet her. When he asks Sia's name, Sia tells him. But, Sia doesn't recognize him and she asks his name as well. It could have been embarrassing, but the actor and those near enough to hear the exchange take it as Sia's way of making a joke by pretending that she doesn't recognize him. It's just one example of some uncomfortable moments that occur throughout the evening, though Sia navigates it without embarrassing herself.

Discussion Question 1

What are some of the challenges Sia might face because of her memory loss? Do you believe the author adequately explores those difficulties?

Discussion Question 2

Describe Sia's experienced leading up to and attending the Oscars and Vanity Fair party.

Discussion Question 3

Why is Kyle afraid of allowing himself to become deeper involved with Sia?

Vocabulary

torment, serene, perspective, flit, immaculate, schmooze, intrigued, concept, havoc, sinewy, conspiratorially



Chapters 33 - 36

Summary

Chapter 33

Kyle suddenly steps away from Sia. He apologizes for kissing her, though Sia says she's glad he kissed her. Kyle says that he doesn't want to kiss her when she doesn't have her memories. He says she might change when that happens. Sia understands that, but her heart is breaking as he walks away. Sia wants nothing more than to follow Kyle, but Alyz arrives and announces that she has someone else she wants Sia to meet. She introduces Sia to Travis Dooley, the screenwriter who met with Raymond earlier in the evening. Sia forces herself to be polite to him, knowing he might hold the key to the future success of her father's company. Travis says Raymond revealed Sia's recent memory loss. He goes on to say that Sia's memory loss and her efforts on the fundraiser combine to make a "compelling story." He says he wants to write the story, but Raymond refused, fearing it would be too difficult for Sia. Travis says Sia's story is the kind of plot that makes a blockbuster movie. She thinks about the possibility for a few minutes, including that her entire life would be on screen for everyone to see, and agrees to it. She promises to clear the way with her father.

Chapter 34

Sia continues to go to school though life is somewhat difficult. Sia's photo winds up on the front page of the L.A. Times along with a story of the drive to raise money for earthquake victims. That afternoon, Sia arrives home to discover her mother has been released. Her parents are together in the living room. Sia spends some time talking with them, a situation that seldom happened in their previous lifestyle. Sia tells her father about meeting Travis Dooley and her desire to go through with the screen play. Janet agrees, and Raymond says he'll contact Travis.

Chapter 35

Stacy arrives, crying. Janet and Raymond leave the girls alone. Stacy reveals that Amber had learned of Stacy's donation and had berated her for it. Stacy says Amber "crossed the line" by demanding Stacy stay away from Sia. Stacy says she stood up to Amber, yelling back, and that she feels she was only voicing what others were afraid to say. When questioned, Stacy says she actually feels good about the situation. Stacy asks forgiveness, and Sia freely grants it, saying that's what friends do. Stacy joins Sia and Kyle the next day and she's accepted, though some of them are a bit wary about Stacy's motivations at first. Stacy begins soliciting help from cheerleaders. Some of them agree. The fact that others are now involved prompts other cliques to join in, and Sia is amazed to see groups working together to raise more money. A local television station hears about the efforts and does a story on it. After the interview, Sia points out to Kyle that they'll be delivering their donations in just a few days. Then, he won't be



forced to spend time with Sia. Kyle says he's afraid and dares Sia to say she isn't. She says she's afraid about many things but that being with Kyle is one thing she's certain about.

Chapter 36

Sia becomes nervous about the cash donations she's holding and puts more than five thousand dollars in a box in her locker. Sia wakes the following morning and heads to school where a group plans to travel to San Francisco to deliver their donations. As the time to leave draws near, Sia goes to her locker to retrieve the money. She discovers the box is gone.

Analysis

Stacy sneaks over to the table where Sia and Kyle are taking donations and drops in some canned food. Sia realizes that Stacy is stepping outside her comfort zone to do even that much; but, Kyle is hateful about it. He snaps that Stacy has to sneak around because she's afraid of Amber's disapproval. While he's right to a degree, it's another example of Kyle's judgmental approach seen in a couple of other instances in the story.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Stacy feel she has to sneak in a donation for the earthquake victims? What does this say about the characters of Stacy and Amanda?

Discussion Question 2

Why is Raymond hesitant to allow Sia to tell her story to the screen writer?

Discussion Question 3

Why is Sia willing to tell her story to the screenwriter?

Vocabulary

surreal, improvised, facets, snide, psyched, qualms, inconsolable, ponders, phenomenal, hectic



Chapters 37 - Epilogue

Summary

Chapter 37

Sia is horrified to discover the money is missing. She searches everywhere and calls Beatriz to look in her room. Beatriz can't find it either, and Sia becomes convinced that she must have misplaced the money. She fears her memory is beginning to unravel in smaller ways now. She dreads telling the others about the lost money. She tells Kyle who points out that the money has to be somewhere and that it will turn up. He urges her to keep an eye on the fact that they are delivering two truckloads of supplies along with more than a hundred thousand dollars today. He says they'll locate the money and hand over the missing five thousand soon.

Chapter 38

Amber stops Sia and asks why Sia looks like she's about to cry. Sia refuses to show weakness in front of Amber. Amber says that it's "cool" that Sia worked on the fundraiser. She says that now that it's almost over, Sia can rejoin the group and "we'll try to get past all this weirdness." Sia says she plans to never again be the person she was before. She says she's happier now. She points out that they were different when they were little children and says she doesn't like that she has changed so much. She tells Amber that her family is in a financial crisis. She says that she wants to be friends with Amber, but only if Amber is able to accept Sia as she is now. Sia joins the others, and they begin the eight-hour drive to San Francisco. Sia wants to believe she can regain her connection with Kyle but accepts that it's over.

Chapter 39

Sia has an opportunity to be alone in the truck with Kyle. She reveals her frustration at having lost the money, but Kyle urges her to consider the positive accomplishments instead. They are driving along when Amber catches up with them, honking for them to pull over. They pull over, and Sia is surprised to find that Amber is frantic. She hands Sia the money she'd taken from Sia's locker.

Chapter 40

Amanda says she wanted to hurt Sia because she was hurt. Amanda says she and Sia always shared information, including locker combinations. Amanda asks forgiveness. Sia falters because she's so angry, but she catches a glimpse of Kyle. She remembers that others have forgiven her for her past transgressions, and agrees. Sia decides to ride the rest of the way in to the city with Amber. Amber volunteers to help hand out the supplies they brought. They unload the trucks and Sia notes that Amber is tentative at first but quickly warms to the task at hand.



Sia has a box of chocolate bars as a special treat to youngsters. A little girl impetuously hugs Sia's neck for the candy. With that hug, Sia is plunged into a state of recovered memories. She suddenly recalls everything and sees herself as a rebellious teen, angry with her parents and making others miserable. She's bitterly ashamed of what she's done and rushes to be alone for a few minutes. Kyle finds her there and she clings to him. He realizes what's happened and prepares to leave, promising to send Amber to her. Sia pleads with him to stay with her and tells him that she's fallen in love with him. They pledge their love to each other, and Sia promises that the return of her memories doesn't change how she feels about him. Sia is suddenly filled with the realization that she is where she belongs, finally.

Epilogue

Sia and Kyle are attending the University of Southern California. Sia is studying social work, and Kyle is studying business. The film of Sia's amnesia, aptly titled "The Cruellest One," is a hit. It puts the company back on an even keel. With their share of the proceeds, Sia and Kyle open a soup kitchen and put Carol in charge. Sia says she loves being with her friends but also likes meeting new people. Amber has become a shopper for celebrities, and Sia's father produced a reality show about her experiences. Sia says she and Kyle are happy together and that she knows her true calling is to fill her life with "as much love and joy as I can find."

Analysis

Sia hates that the money is missing, and her first thought isn't that someone stole it but that she misplaced it. She fears this is another sign that her memory is not working as it should. This leads her to be very fearful for her future. She is afraid that her mind is deteriorating in some way and that she might be headed for some sort of mental breakdown.

At one point, Carol tells Sia that they will always be friends, even if they are not always together. She says a true friendship happens when two people "walk in different directions" but don't grow apart. When Carol says this to Sia, Sia loves the image. When Sia says it to Amber, Amber pretends she doesn't understand. Sia isn't convinced and knows that Amber really does get it, even if she wants to ignore it. Sia asks Amber to think about it. It's probably this statement that makes Amber decide to return the money she took from Sia's locker.

The epilogue is a typical happy ending with a promise of more good things to come for Sia, her family, and her friends. The family is financially sound again thanks to the movie about Sia's experiences. Sia and Kyle are studying for rewarding careers, and even Amber has turned her passion into a successful career. In some ways, the novel's ending seems like a fairy tale with all of the characters living a wonderful life. Yet, it is appropriate for the story and the intended audience.



Discussion Question 1

What does Carol mean when she says friends can walk in different directions and still be friends?

Discussion Question 2

Why do you think that Amber returned the money to Sia?

Discussion Question 3

What do you predict for the lives of Sia and Kyle? Justify your prediction.

Vocabulary

faux, chatty, lopsided, nauseating, tentative, traumatic, pathetic, vibrant, tethered



Characters

Sia Holloway

Sia is a seventeen-year-old girl who loses her memory in what doctors determine is a fugue-like amnesia. She wakes on a park bench with no memories of her life prior to that moment. While her first instinct is to seek the help of a policeman, she hesitates. Though she can't figure out why, Sia fears the possibility of returning home. Her designer clothes and the iPod she carries are the only clues to her identity. She knows from the play list that her name is Sia and her clothes indicate that she's wealthy. Still, Sia believes on some level that she doesn't want to return home.

She is repulsed by some aspects of life on the streets but quickly befriends a woman named Carol who helps Sia learn to adjust. Carol offers wisdom and comfort, a friendship Sia desperately needs though she doesn't yet know why. When Sia returns to her life, she suddenly realizes that she is a cruel girl, leader of a group of snobby students who care nothing about others and who get their laughs from playing cruel pranks on other students. Through her amnesia, Sia discovers she hates that lifestyle and wants to make changes that will make her happy. Sia is a strong character, determined that she won't forget the lessons she learned after being struck by amnesia.

There's a side of her that fears she might have to learn those lessons all over again. She sets aside her concern and puts her energy into helping others. She changes the way she acts and reacts to her family's hired help, to the less-popular students, and to her parents. She becomes determined to become a contributing part of her family rather than the thoughtless, spoiled child. When the moment arrives and her memories return in a flood, she's deeply ashamed of herself but more determined than ever to hold onto the new life she's created for herself. Two years later, it's evident that she has.

Kyle Parker

Kyle is a high school senior and classmate of Sia. He doesn't live the entitled lifestyle of Sia and her friends. Kyle is the son of a business owner, the third of five children. He works in his family's bakery. In addition, Kyle volunteers his time. It's while he's working in a soup kitchen that he sees Sia for the first time after her amnesia. Kyle, believing that Sia is up to some prank, yells at her in the soup kitchen, prompting her to run outside and into the path of a taxi. It's this accident that reunites her with her parents and puts her on the road to self-discovery.

Kyle feels responsible for having gotten Sia hurt; and, he later apologizes. Kyle is the brunt of pranks and jokes from Sia's former friends. He is not one of the more popular students, but he has a solid base of friends of his own. Most importantly, he is happy with his life. When Sia volunteers to help with the fundraiser for victims of an earthquake, Kyle is skeptical, still expecting that Sia will eventually return to her old ways. He seeks



to protect himself from Sia even as he finds himself falling in love with her. It's his fear that he will be hurt that prompts him to distance himself from Sia, even while he is also falling in love with her. The moment Sia's memories return in an overwhelming flood, Kyle is there and holds her as she struggles to come to terms with herself. Kyle fully expects that Sia will turn away from him and the volunteer work she's begun and is surprised when that isn't the case.

Carol

Carol is a homeless woman who reaches out in friendship to Sia on Sia's first night on the streets. Carol is kind and compassionate. Sia seeks her out for her friendship and wisdom even after Sia returns to her affluent lifestyle. Carol is homeless because her husband was murdered while clerking in a store. Her nature is to give a helping hand to anyone in need, even when she has so little to give. Carol eventually gets a break, lands a job, and winds up with a tiny apartment of her own. When Sia and Kyle open a soup kitchen of their own, Carol takes on the duties of manager.

Janet Holloway

Janet Holloway is a former model and Sia's mother. She is beautiful and accustomed to a lavish lifestyle. When the family falls into despair and the financial situation looks bleak, Janet turns to alcohol as a means of escape. It's only when Sia threatens to leave her mother that Janet agrees to seek help. With that rehab experience, Janet leaves her dependence behind.

Raymond Holloway

Raymond Holloway is a film producer. Recent bad decisions have left his company near bankruptcy around the time of Sia's amnesia. Raymond is a loving father and husband but doesn't know how to reach his wife and daughter, especially once their family life begins to unravel. When a screen writer suggests that Sia's story should be made into a movie, Raymond resists because he fears putting his family through it. Even though the movie would provide the money to save his company, Raymond shows his love for his family by putting them first.

Duke

Duke is Sia's boyfriend prior to the amnesia. He is the star quarterback for the football team. Though he is very good looking, he is also cruel to others. Duke believes he saved Sia from drowning, but he later learns she had created the situation with the help of a friend in order to gain Duke's attention. Duke is possessive and it's his action when he sees Sia talking with Kyle that prompts Sia to break off their relationship.



Amber

As Sia's best friend since childhood, Amber is almost as cruel and heartless as Sia was prior to the amnesia. Amber seeks to humiliate Sia by stealing more than five thousand dollars raised for earthquake victims from Sia's locker. Sia urges Amber to remember their childhood friendship, and Amber gives the money back. Amber comes to realize from Sia's example that there's more to life than her petty concerns at school. She volunteers to hand out food to earthquake victims.

Stacy

Stacy is one of Sia's best friends. She is not a strong character and is often the follower. When Sia and Amber part ways, Stacy feels caught in the middle and follows Amber's lead. Sia feels sorry for her to a degree, but she realizes that Stacy has the ability to make her own decisions. Eventually, Stacy does stand up for herself. She strikes out at Amber and later stands up for her right to have friends outside Amber's small circle of approval.

Beatriz

Beatriz is the Holloway's cook and housekeeper. She is amazed by the change in Sia when Sia first returns home from the hospital. Beatriz soon becomes a friend and confidante to Sia. It's Beatriz who helps Sia as she begins to prepare for her night at the Oscars.

Alyz

Alyz is the Romanian model who lives in Sia's neighborhood. She helps Sia realize the possibilities of gathering donations during the Vanity Fair event and leads her through that process.



Symbols and Symbolism

Fugue Amnesia

A type of amnesia brought on by extreme stress. It causes Sia to lose all her memories as the story opens.

The iPod

Having lost all of her memories, Sia only has her iPod when she wakes up on a park bench. Sia sees that the equipment contains "Sia's play list," which provides Sia with her only clue about her identity. She sells it later for eighty dollars to a street kid in order to get clothes and sleeping bags for herself and Carol.

A Broken Bottle

A broken bottle is the weapon Sia holds close as she settles in for her first night under the bridge. When she threatens Carol with it, Carol assure her that having a weapon and being willing to use it to defend herself are good.

BooBoo Bakery

Kyle's parents own the BooBoo Bakery where Kyle works. Sia is able to go into the bakery and buy whatever she wants after she is taken home by her parents, a stark contrast to Sia's memory of standing outside the bakery with Carol, dreaming of what they might buy if they had money.

The Earthquake

The earthquake prompts Kyle to begin a drive to gather donations. It's also what brings Kyle and Sia to work together for a united cause.

The Oscars

The Oscars is a star-studded event attended by Sia and Kyle as a prelude to the Vanity Fair party where they garnered thousands of dollars in donations for the earthquake victims.



The Vanity Fair Party

The Vanity Fair Party is the party held after the Oscars. Kyle and Sia attend the party with Azyl to gather donations for the earthquake victims.

Rehab

Sia's mother goes to rehab for treatment of her alcohol addiction.

Elysian Park

Sia wakes with amnesia in Elysian Park. Also, Sia later meets Carol there to discuss the changes in their lives.

The Soup Kitchen

Sia goes with Carol to the soup kitchen for food. While volunteering there, Kyle confronts Sia. He believes that she's involved in some sort of prank.



Settings

Sia's Home

Several of the settings are described in great detail, including Sia's home. When she sees it for the first time after her amnesia, Sia compares it to a mansion. She is awed by the opulent furnishings and decorations. When she arrives in her own room for the first time, she's amazed by the size of the room and the fact that almost everything is pink. She has a huge closet with lots of clothes and accessories. In her bathroom, there is a chandelier. Sia is amazed by that piece as well as by the massive array of cosmetics and hair products in the cabinet. Other aspects of the home are also described in some detail, including her mother's lavish room and closet.

The Bridge

Sia sleeps at the bridge the first night. She doesn't feel safe there because of the other homeless people. That first night, it's raining and Sia is soon wet from the rain lashing in to her sleeping spot. After awhile, Sia begins to feel secure and at home here. That security is shattered the day a homeless man is attacked and brutally beaten by some young boys. This is also where Sia goes the night she is looking for Carol.

The High School

A great deal of the action take place at Sia's high school. It is a typical high school catering to an upper class neighborhood. The high school is not described in great detail other than the few facts that keep the story moving. There are lockers in the hallway as seen in the scene involving Sia and Duke's breakup.



Themes and Motifs

Coming of Age

Sia by Josh Grayson is a very typical coming-of-age story. The main character Sia has a life-changing event when she wakes without any memories and it's that event that prompts her into a serious evaluation of her life and choices. When Sia returns to school in an effort to regain her memories, she soon discovers that she doesn't like the person she was. With that knowledge and her recent experiences of the kindness of the homeless people on the streets, Sia makes a conscious decision to change her life and her choices. Once she's made that decision, she also becomes determined to change the lives of others as well. It's that decision that makes her confront her mother, driving her mother to agree to rehab for her alcohol addiction. The success of that choice pushes Sia to do what she can to help her father's struggling business as well. While Sia's life prior to the amnesia was solely focused on the possessions and wealth, she changes her focus to realize that those possessions are not as important as she'd previously believed. Sia points out to her father that it won't be the end of the world if the family moves to a smaller home or even an apartment, giving up the lavish lifestyle they've lived in the past. While most are skeptical that Sia's changes will remain once her memories return, she's determined not to have to relearn the lessons she's learned. As she steadily matures into a thoughtful young woman, she shares her lessons with others, changing the lives of some of her friends who had previously thought only of themselves.

Friendships

Friendships are an important part of life. Sia's life is no different. The friendships are occurring in high school, a traditionally volatile time in the life of a teen, but Sia and her friends are cemented in their roles until Sia's amnesia. What Sia doesn't understand until after her amnesia allows her to look at herself as an outsider is that the relationships she calls friendships are not true friendships. Those relationships are based on fear and cruelty to others, putting Sia and her friends in elevated positions by being unkind to those they consider beneath them. The fact that Sia is able to look at herself objectively after the amnesia puts her in a position to realize the lack of friendships and to change her life. One of the first things she does is seek friendships outside her normal circle. That includes Kyle and his friends, who are friends in the truest sense of the word. Once Sia has a taste of true friendship, first from the homeless woman named Carol and then from Kyle, she doesn't want to return to those previous practices. It's with this foundation that Sia begins reaching out to others. Through her effort to raise money for the earthquake victims, she finds others reaching out across the typical teenage boundaries. She notes that the students usually referred to as "geeks" or "nerds" are talking with football players. While none of those seem to erupt into mutual friendships, it does pave the way for those people, like Sia, to realize the importance of true friendships. As the story comes to a close with the epilogue, Sia says



she is firmly rooted in some friendships but that she also enjoys meeting new people and forming new bonds.

Appearances

Appearances are important to many of the people in the book. In some cases, the attention to appearances is a positive point; but, for the most part it shows a shallow self-centered outlook on what is important in life. Sia comes to hate her old ideas about appearances being so important. This is seen first when Sia arrives in her bedroom to discover the closet filled with clothes and the cabinet filled with makeup and hair products. She doesn't use any of the makeup and simply puts her hair in a ponytail before joining her mother for lunch the first time after her amnesia. Her mother comments on the fact that Sia looks different without her makeup, an indication that appearances are important to Janet. When Sia arrives at school for her first day after the amnesia, her friends take her in hand, providing makeup and a hairdo, as well as jewelry and different shoes, all because Sia's appearance didn't match their expectations. It takes a little time, but Sia stands up to this insistence after only a couple of days, refusing to allow her friends to dictate what she wears. Another important aspect of this theme is seen in Sia's father, who fears he is about to lose his film company. He tells Sia the family might lose their elaborate home and cars. Sia reminds her father that being together as a family is more important than appearances. She insists that they will survive anything as long as they remain together, and her father comes to agree.

The Vanity Fair party is on the other side of the spectrum. That event prompts Sia and Kyle to dress elaborately. Sia and Alyz capture a lot of attention as they play their roles, then use that attention to collect money for the victims of the recent earthquake.

Styles

Point of View

The story is written in first-person from the limited perspective of Sia. This means the reader learns the facts as those facts are revealed to Sia. The limitations are total with no one offering any real insight into the things that matter into Sia's life until Sia herself makes those discoveries. An important aspect of this is seen as Sia realizes that her friends are brutal and that she was once the most cruel of the group. She's dismayed by the knowledge but doesn't fully understand the depths of her cruelty until her memory returns. The story unfolds with Sia waking with fugue amnesia. She has no memory of her life and only learns her first name because it's on her i-Pod. She learns her last name when she wakes in the hospital and learns facts about her life and her parents as she stumbles across them or as they are revealed to her by family and friends. Sia discovers her father watching home videos and sees herself as a youngster, tending a puppy with her best friend Amber. The two little girls barely resemble the cruel young women Sia and Amber have become and Sia asks her father how the change came about. He explains that it was a personality shift when the girls reached their early teen years. That's all Sia knows about it until the moment her memories return. The limited perspective is appropriate and acceptable for the story. It is used by the author to build and sustain suspense.

Language and Meaning

The story is written in modern-day English and is divided into dialogue and narrative. The narrative is used to explain situations and events. Dialogue is used much the same way and also reveals details about the various characters. For example, Sia arrives at school to see one of her friends. Though she has no memory of this girl, she already knows her well enough to predict that her first words will be, "Oh my god," and they are. The dialogue is typical of that of modern teenagers and is obviously meant to give the story a level of realism. The reader with an average vocabulary will likely find few unfamiliar words and those that are new are typically explained through context. In some cases, dialogue is used to explain situations and provide information. This is seen when Sia asks Duke how they met. Duke describes a trip to the beach in which Sia swam out too far and Duke rushed to her rescue. That conversation is initially seen by the reader only as background, but Sia later learns that she had created the situation as a means of getting closer to Duke. That discovery makes Sia angry at herself, further defining the shallow, manipulative teen she had become. Both dialogue and narrative are appropriate to the story and audience.

Structure

The story is divided into forty-one chapters and concludes with an epilogue. The first chapter opens with Sia waking on a park bench to discover she has no memory of her life prior to that moment. In chapters one and two she tries to reconcile her current situation and comes to the conclusion that she doesn't want to go home though life on the streets is dangerous and frightening. In chapter two, Sia learns just how dangerous life can be when a man propositions her and almost succeeds in kidnapping her. In chapter three, Sia meets Carol and her life is changed forever as the kind woman helps Sia adjust to her new life, even though it lasts only a few days. In chapter seven, Sia is reunited with her family after being injured and taken to the hospital. By chapter thirteen, Sia has come to realize that she was a cruel bully prior to the amnesia and she hates the way she was. She learns that her friends are also mean and in chapter nineteen, Sia sets out to make changes, beginning by breaking up with Duke and finding new friends. In chapters twenty-nine and thirty, Sia and Kyle attend the Oscars and the party following, raising money for the earthquake victims. In chapter thirty-nine, Sia learns that Amber was responsible for stealing the money from Sia's locker and in Sia is faced with the decision of whether to forgive Amber. With Kyle's presence reminding Sia that she'd been forgiven for past hurts, she forgives Amber, putting the girls on the road to a recovered friendship though Sia warns that their lives will now be dramatically different. In Chapter 41, Sia's memories come back in a rush and she and Kyle pledge their love for each other. The epilogue shows events as they occur two years later, when Sia and Kyle are both at the University of Southern California, Kyle studying business and Sia preparing for a career in social work. They are continuing their work for the homeless even as they attend school. The story is in chronological order with pieces of information from Sia's past presented largely through dialogue.



Quotes

No matter what question I ask, the answers all point in one horrifying direction. I have no idea who I am.

-- Sia (Chapter 1 paragraph 7)

Importance: This is the moment Sia realizes that she's lost her memory, the event that prompts the rest of the action in the story.

But somehow, the spirit of gathering here at the end of a day, knowing no one will spit or urinate on me and that I'm relatively safe and among equals, feels oddly comforting. For me and many other homeless, the bridge has become home.

-- Sia (Chapter 6 paragraph 1)

Importance: Sia has been on the streets for several days at this point, and she has fallen into a semblance of a routine. Later, Sia revisits the bridge in her search for Carol and she's amazed at how frightened she is. The bridge takes on a totally different feel once Sia is no longer part of the homeless culture.

Not like forever, though.' He laughs, a full, confident sound.

-- Duke (Chapter 10 paragraph 34)

Importance: Duke has just assured Sia he's going to give her "all the time she needs" to recover her memories of him. Then, he adds this comment. The indication is that Duke doesn't believe Sia can possibly fail to remember him soon, which is a sign of his self-centered attitude that soon drives Sia away from him for good.

Have I been cruel and self-centered my whole life? Have I wasted all my years behaving like a spoiled brat?

-- Sia (Chapter 13 paragraph 7)

Importance: Sia has just completed her first day at school, and she's suddenly realizing that she wasn't a nice person prior to her amnesia. She had surrounded herself with equally cruel people.

It wasn't like that. These people all have each other.

-- Sia (Chapter 16 paragraph 7)

Importance: Sia is talking to Kyle who has just had a look at the people who sleep under the bridge. Kyle says he can't imagine being homeless because it means being "all alone." This need for friendship is an important theme in the book.

In just one day, I learned my friends are vicious and fake, my boyfriend is a jerk, my mother's an alcoholic, and the family is about to go bankrupt. A lot for a person to take in all at once, but it's not like I can set any of it aside to think about later.

-- Sia (Chapter 18 paragraph 1)



Importance: Sia is recounting all the bad things she's learned about her life and realizing that she must accept responsibility for her part in it and work to change it.

You can't let the past ruin or run your future, child. You know what you were, and that means you can go forward as someone else if you want.

-- Carol (Chapter 20 paragraph 46)

Importance: Carol is encouraging Sia to find her way in her old life but to do so as a new person. She wants Sia to understand that Sia doesn't have to act like she did before and that she can become a better person now that she's able to clearly see how wrong she was.

If you want to survive in that school, you have to do it her way. I mean, it used to be the same with you, right?

-- Stacy (Chapter 22 paragraph 56)

Importance: Stacy is pleading with Sia to make up with Amber because she wants everything to return to her version of normal. It's another reminder that Sia was a cruel person prior to the amnesia.

Just because someone is better off financially doesn't necessarily make them selfish. I'm learning that, and I'm determined to show Kyle that.

-- Sia (Chapter 24 paragraph 9)

Importance: Kyle made a statement to Sia that she couldn't expect help from her wealthy neighbors because they are all too selfish and lazy to actually help. This is another example of the prejudice that exists in this story. Sia is learning that she must fight against prejudice, even when it's against specific classes of people or cliques at school.

Life sure can throw some curveballs. Fortunately, I'm learning how to catch them.

-- Sia (Chapter 27 paragraph 27)

Importance: Sia is thinking about her life after talking to Carol. She's beginning to feel that she's back on track again

My feelings for you won't change, Kyle,' I tell him, though I'm well aware I can't promise that. Anything could happen.

-- Sia (Chapter 33 paragraph 13)

Importance: Sia is talking to Kyle just after their first kiss on the dance floor during the Vanity Fair party. Kyle pulls away and apologizes, saying he doesn't want to begin a relationship with Sia until she has her memories back. Kyle fears that she might revert to her former personality or that she might simply decide she doesn't like him. While Sia insists that won't be the case in her statement to Kyle, she secretly admits that it could turn out to be that way. She is afraid of losing Kyle.



How I felt entitled to walk over anyone who got in my way. I feel the swell of my ego as it grew and took control.

-- Sia (Chapter 41 paragraph 16)

Importance: Sia has suddenly regained her memories, and she's horrified as she realize how callous and hateful she has been to people.