

Sisterland Study Guide

Sisterland by Curtis Sittenfeld

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Plot Summary

- The following version of this book was used for the creation of this study guide:

Sittenfeld, Curtis. *Sisterland: a novel*. New York: Random House, Inc., Kobo eBooks. Web. 17 June 2016.

Sisterland, by Curtis Sittenfeld, is about twin sisters Daisy and Violet Schramm. The story begins in St. Louis where the Schramm sisters were born and still live – at least for some of their adulthood. Daisy, who now calls herself by a version of her middle name, Kate, married Jeremy Tucker and has two young children; Rosie who is two and Owen who is a few months old and still nursing. Her sister Violet is still single, but is dating an IT consultant named Stephanie. Bi-sexuality is new to Violet, and at first Kate is discouraging, believing it is a phase that will pass and will unnecessarily complicate her life, but she soon learns she is wrong. A small earthquake sets the tone for the city when Violet reveals that Guardian, her spirit guide, says a much more powerful one is coming on October 16th and people should prepare. Some people believe, some don't.

Jeremy Tucker and Courtney Wheeling work in the same department at Washington University. Jeremy and Kate are close friends with Hank and Courtney Wheeling. Since their daughter Amelia and Rosie are close in age, when Kate runs into Hank at a music class for their children, they become fast friends. From then on, they spend most mornings together which is ironic, as their respective spouses do as well.

The story follows the two sisters, with segments that delve into their past to explain how some events came to pass. Both Kate and Violet are gifted with precognition, although Kate has tried to leave that part of her life behind. This is explained in a flashback of Daisy in high school when she faced mockery and abuse from her peers after they learned of her abilities. Violet has a vision about a coming earthquake and the spirit guide she calls Guardian advises her to let people know. She tells Kate who wakes with October 16th in her head. She shares the day with her sister, having worked from the strength of combined visions in the past. Violet agrees it could be the day, and informs the media. She ends up at the center of a media frenzy which includes appearances on the Today show; the hiring of a PR consultant and much unwanted attention for Kate as well.

The girls had helped out in the past. Most famously, they'd had visions that led to the rescue of missing boy Brady Ogden who had been gone for over three months before combined visions from led to his discovery just hours before Kate's marriage to Jeremy. Many people take Violet's prediction seriously. Kate gets a premonition as well, waking up to the certainty that October 16th is a date of great importance and interprets this as the day the earthquake will occur.

As the day of the coming quake nears, Kate argues with Jeremy about a conference he is scheduled to attend on that weekend, wanting him to stay with her and the children, but he refuses to take it seriously and goes anyway. While he is gone, Kate is sitting

with Hank on the night of the predicted quake and he uncharacteristically kisses her. This leads to an episode of adultery that will change their lives in many ways.

While there is no earthquake on that day, Violet's prediction saves lives; and Kate loses something she can never regain. On Jan 12th, Haiti suffers a strong earthquake causing large loss of life. Several earthquakes follow; one in Chile, one in Japan, Indonesia, China and Turkey. Geologist Courtney Wheeling claims the earth is always busy.



Chapter 1

Summary

It is September 2009, and after nursing her son, Owen, at 2 a.m., a full 14 hours after the argument she'd had with her sister Violet, Daisy lies awake in bed stewing about it. She hadn't meant to imply that being straight was necessarily easier than being gay, but somehow Violet held it up as an example that her sister was uptight and homophobic. Daisy believed that Violet was only dating women now because she was struggling with weight issues since quitting smoking and women tended to be more forgiving of an extra few pounds than men were as a rule.

When the bed begins to shake, at first Daisy thinks her husband Jeremy is turning over, but the rocking keeps on until it wakes him as well. The shaking stops and they gather the kids together into their room with them, allowing them to sleep in their bed for the rest of the night. Jeremy checks the FEMA site on line and learns little, but in the wake of the earthquake, Daisy is calm and centered – a far cry from how agitated she'd been just before it occurred. Now, her argument with Violet seems insignificant. Kate's power had abated to a point where she no longer considered herself psychic these days, but she should have known what was coming.

Analysis

Daisy Kathleen is the main character in this story although, as she is also the narrator, her name is not given until Chapter 3. The story begins as Daisy lies in bed rehashing the argument she'd had with her twin sister Violet at lunch during which Violet tells her she has a date with a woman the following day, openly admitting she likes both men and women. The argument ensues between the sisters as Violet clearly struggles for Daisy's acceptance, and Daisy stoically appears to be trying to set an example as a capable wife and mother. Violet makes no secret of the fact that she thinks Daisy's life with children is every bit as complicated a choreography of child rearing as any of the possible complications that might arise from her being in a same sex relationship in Missouri and says so, but Daisy shuts down and no longer wants to discuss the issue.

Fourteen hours later, the fact that Daisy is still dwelling on the argument she had with Violet reveals not only that it is an issue that is as yet unresolved, but also foreshadows further conversation on the issue of same sex relationships. Violet suggests that Daisy is harboring prejudice where gay relationships are concerned. Violet tries to draw a parallel to Daisy's friend Hank, who is black insinuating that Daisy's feelings about gay relationships and black people culminate in an overall uptight personality. This comment also suggests that the subject of race may come to the forefront again.

Daisy and Violet are no longer identical twins but they still share a great deal of intimacy that extends beyond sisterhood as suggested by the author when both girls flush at the



same time and Daisy posits that she should have known since her cheeks were flaming. Despite the comment that they were more identical at one time than they are now, Daisy and Violet still know each other well enough to get under each other's skin and poke at sensitive areas such as Daisy's veiled intimation that Violet was unnecessarily looking to complicate her life and Violet's comment that Daisy's life with her children was every bit as complicated and that Daisy was just embarrassed by her sister. The two sisters live very different lifestyles and have different ideals.

Daisy is a mother and a wife, and takes both of those positions seriously. What Violet sees as a constant inconvenience to schedule and life, (as is evident in the rant she gets into after Daisy suggests dating men might be less complicated), Daisy sees it as the choreography of motherhood and is dedicated to the cause.

Perspective is brought into focus when Daisy and her husband Jeremy become aware of an earthquake and spring into action. They ensure the safety of the children first, and while Jeremy checks for emergency updates and information, Daisy lays with her children in bed knowing that is right where she is supposed to be. The calm that comes over her as she is reminded of her duty to protect her children is enough to bring her disagreement with Violet down and into focus.

Precognitive abilities are a theme in this segment as the main character Daisy is introduced, and it is suggested that although she "no longer considered herself truly psychic, she should have been able to anticipate what would happen next" (18). This also foreshadows an event of some magnitude in Daisy's future.

Discussion Question 1

What does Daisy try to suggest to Violet in the restaurant, and why is Violet upset by her sister's comment?

Discussion Question 2

What kind of mother is Daisy and what evidence is there in Chapter 1 to back up your assessment?

Discussion Question 3

How do Jeremy and Daisy respond to the earthquake and what information do they learn?

Vocabulary

choreography, figuratively, primitive, nurturing, insularity, conventional, homophobic



Chapter 2

Summary

Daisy and Jeremy perform their morning routines, and when Daisy gets downstairs Jeremy explains that her father had called asking that she take him grocery shopping the following day instead so that he can drive Violet to her date. Trying not to be difficult, Daisy mentions that Violet could also take a cab before asking him what kind of food Jeremy could grill for them for his birthday that evening. He insists he doesn't care, so Daisy tells Jeremy to pick up steaks when she gets off the phone.

Rosie knocks on the Wheeling's front door as Daisy gets Owen out of the stroller. Hank answers and asks Daisy if she knows that her sister is on television. Daisy's anxiety rises as Hank explains that both Violet and his wife, Courtney, were being interviewed. Daisy watches the recording. Courtney comes on the screen first, calm and composed, and is about to downplay the most recent seismic event, when the camera goes to Violet who insists that an extremely powerful earthquake is coming soon, claiming "Mother Earth is very restless" (24) at the moment. Daisy thinks that Violet looked deranged and says so. The television focuses on Courtney again and she reassures the audience that the earth is always busy. The reporter signs off leaving Daisy feeling embarrassed for her sister who came across looking like a flake.

Daisy and Hank continued their morning routine, taking Amelia to preschool three mornings a week after first walking to Kaldi's for coffee and then taking the children to the park on DeMun Avenue. Daisy watches how Amelia's behavior influences Rosie, and considers how Hank has influenced her as well. It was Hank who had taught her tricks for feeding children and dealing with diaper rash; he had been her adviser for car seats; told her where to find the best story hour and has a way with children that is informative without being condescending that she truly admires. Hank claims he and Courtney want a child just as easy going as Owen is and Daisy laughs, reminding him that her son still nurses every four hours and will not sleep through the night.

Hank advises her to let him cry it out, and, standing there, she realizes that her sister had publicly admitted she had been warned another quake was imminent. She asks Hank if they are prepared for an emergency, but he admits they aren't although at the same time he admits he believes that some people have ESP or psychic precognition. Daisy laughs it off, ignoring the opportunity to admit her secret to him. Despite two years of friendship, and the fact that she spent more time with Hank than with Jeremy, she had not found the courage to tell him about her own psychic abilities. Hank wonders if Violet will have Daisy's support along with his own, and she assures him that of course she will support her sister, another opportunity for disclosure missed.



Analysis

The dynamics of Daisy's life continue to come into focus as her daily routine is examined and certain truths revealed but not exposed. Daisy talks to her father who postpones their shopping trip so that he can drive Violet to her date. Violet has not told her father that her date is a woman, uncertain how her father will take the news and choosing instead to just ignore the issue until it becomes something she has to deal with. This avoidance and refusal to be open about her preferences for dating hints that this may come back to her later.

Friendship is a strong theme in Daisy's life. Hank is introduced as a house husband in his relationship while his wife Courtney works with Jeremy at the University. Their two-year friendship has been a source of balance and useful information as well as good companionship as is evident when Daisy considers how much of what she knows as a mom had come to her via Hank, comparing that to how Rosie seemed to emulate Amelia's behavior. Daisy explains how she admires and respects the way Hank talks to children without condescension.

Psychic abilities are a theme in this segment, as Violet goes on the air as a self-proclaimed psychic and predicts the coming of another quake. Daisy contemplates how she and Violet used to share these abilities, until Daisy had deliberately destroyed hers. The secretive nature of her relationship to psychic phenomena suggests that she may not only wish for a return of her ability but that her abilities will be revealed as well.

Secrets are something both twins have. Violet keeps her bisexual dating a secret, not telling their father although he will be providing transportation for her the next day. Daisy keeps secrets from Hank, not admitting she shared the psychic abilities her sister had, and inferring that as a teenager it was impossible for her to even imagine living a life where she could escape that part of herself. Hank gives Daisy multiple opportunities to reveal herself and by not doing so, she is beginning to feel distinctly dishonest.

Family is also a strong theme as both Daisy's and Hank's family structures are examined. Hank and Courtney are expecting their second child, despite having decided to have only one child and then later being a little slow to conceive. Their difficulties, combined with the fertility treatments that Courtney has taken foreshadow a possibility of further complications in this pregnancy.

The family theme continues as Violet's father provides the transportation for Violet when she is meeting her date, supporting her decision not to drive regardless of the reasons and Daisy tells Hank that she intends to support Violet as well, despite the fact that it aligns her with a life she has tried hard to put behind her. At the end of Chapter 2, Amelia refers to Daisy as Kate, giving the first indication that she had made changes in her life that point to her personal identity and recognition. Using a shortened version of her middle name, Kathleen, even Hank refers to her as such from this point forward, but her new name and her sister's psychic fame foreshadow a likely confrontation with Daisy regarding their senses in the future.



Discussion Question 1

In what way are Hank and Daisy like Amelia and Rosie and what examples support this?

Discussion Question 2

Why is Daisy so fearful of revealing that she and her sister Violet shared psychic abilities when they were younger, and what changed that?

Discussion Question 3

What qualities does Daisy admire in Hank and why?

Vocabulary

epicenter, inclination, destitute, nascent, deranged, impeccably, eccentric



Chapter 3

Summary

Daisy and Violet's mother had no idea she was carrying twins until the day that she delivered them. She was 37 weeks along, and had gained 70 pounds. Her obstetrician ordered the x-ray that revealed the twins and after breaking the news to her, their father was called and her water was broken. A problem with the epidural left their mother with numbness on only one side of her body, and unable to give her more, she had to endure the delivery. After it was over, she swore she would never have another child. It took five days before Daisy was finally named.

Both girls loved hearing the story of their birth despite the fact that the story was never one to be followed by love and affection from their mother to them. There seemed to be no joy in their mother, and rather than consider two children as twice as much to love, she resented the fact that she was now stuck with two. Daisy often wonders why her mother made everything so difficult. Of course she could see her father's complicity as well. He'd proposed to her without really knowing her, simply because she was beautiful.

Their father was 39 when he proposed to their 23-year-old mother just three months after they'd met when he was on business in St. Louis. He left his life in Nebraska behind and moved to St. Louis. It took until Daisy had children of her own before she began to understand her mother. The family home on Gilbert Street was a source of constant aggravation to their mother who complained year round about one thing or another, but the real issue had nothing to do with the home. The truth was that their mother had no use for their father and, in fact, didn't like him. She didn't find anything about him interesting; she had no respect for him; and she showed her children by her actions every day that he was a disappointment to her. Everyone fell into one of two categories where their mother was concerned: snobby or low-class.

Daisy was four when she woke screaming the first time. She'd dreamed about a fire and was inconsolable. She clearly remembers the feeling of dread and vulnerability. Their father came in and sang to them until his comforting voice managed to lull her back to sleep. The following night, a house part way down the block burned to the ground. During a family dinner a few months later, Violet asked her parents why Aunt Erma's heart hurt. She didn't seem distressed, but adds that she fell down. More than a week later, a call came to tell them that Erma had died of a heart attack. Their father realized then that it is both girls who "have the senses," and their mother's response was one of abject disgust as she turned to him and asked him what he expected her to do about it.



Analysis

The author employs multiple flashbacks to tell the story of Daisy and Violet's life, the first occurring in this chapter. By switching from the present to the past, the author is able to fill in critical details that explain how events in their lives came to pass.

Daisy tells the story of the births of her and her twin sister Violet Kimberly, revealing the difficulty her mother had with their delivery. Despite the complications, the girls loved hearing the story of their birth. It never occurs to them how loveless the story is until Daisy has children of her own and begins to appreciate just how withdrawn and unhappy their mother was.

Daisy continues to describe how her parents met, and how her father came to propose to their mother. Both girls are fond of one particular photo showing their parents under the arch, smiling. Daisy remembers her mother as a woman who had little use for anyone, including her own husband and as such she complained constantly about the house and their environment. Daisy intuitively knew that it was their father she really hated.

The beginning of Daisy and Violet's psychic abilities occurs when they are still preschoolers. At the age of four, Daisy dreams a house burns down, and a few days later it does. Weeks later Violet has a premonition that their Aunt Erma's heart hurts and that she had fallen down. Just over a week later, that premonition also comes true and their father realizes they are both gifted. This is a time in their lives in which everything changes for Daisy as she becomes aware of the fact that their mother harbors strong negative feelings where she and Violet having "senses" are concerned. When their mother realizes that both girls have the ability, she sounds as though she is disgusted by the information, and almost as though she just lost the hope she'd held out that that at least one of her girls would be normal.

Resentment is strong in Daisy as she recalls her childhood, and the behavior of their mother who seemed to resent not only their father but everything else about her life as well. She displayed no loving gestures, no happy anecdotes, and no dreams for the future. She was cold, unhappy and distanced herself from the girls and their father.

Depression is touched on, although not directly addressed as such. The behavior described by Daisy clearly reveals that their mother began her emotional slide into depression as soon as they were born but it also seems her condition was seriously exacerbated once she understood that both of her girls had "senses." While not identified by name, Daisy describes her as emotionally detached, unhappy with her life and her home, inaccessible and withdrawn. This is a direct contrast to the happy and smiling couple the photograph reveals before their mother became pregnant.



Discussion Question 1

How does Daisy describe her parents' relationship, and what understanding does she come to as an adult after having children of her own?

Discussion Question 2

When do Daisy and Violet first begin showing signs that they are psychically gifted, and how does their gift reveal itself to each girl?

Discussion Question 3

Based on Chapter 3 alone, what appears to have been the most important factor in Daisy and Violet's mother's life and what comments are made that support this?

Vocabulary

hyperventilating, retrospect, enthralled, guileless, accentuated, vulnerability



Chapter 4

Summary

When Violet calls Daisy, she says nothing about their argument over lunch, having allowed a day or two to pass and tempers to cool. Instead, Daisy's first remark concerns the fact that Courtney is pregnant. Daisy tells her that they haven't gone public with the information yet, and asks her if she is sure a large earthquake is coming. Violet assures her she is, but has no idea when. She asks Violet if she will call and give them any warning she can so that they can get the kids somewhere safe and Violet assures her she will. Daisy makes suggestions as to Violet's wardrobe for her date.

Later Daisy and Jeremy talk about Violet and Courtney's interview on television, and she can't help but ask him if he is embarrassed to be married to someone related to the psychic weirdo, but he assures her he isn't. They talk about Violet's lesbian date and again he reassures Daisy that even if her sister is bi-sexual or gay, it doesn't mean that she is. Then he tells her that he's been asked to speak at Cornell. When she reveals her concern that he might be away with a possible earthquake on the horizon, he reminds her that he has an AEPS conference in October as well. Jeremy tries to reassure her, but Daisy believes that if Violet's prediction is correct, it won't be embarrassing, but she'd rather be embarrassed and safe than ignore the information. This conversation supports earlier foreshadowing that Daisy's past and her psychic ability will collide with the life she is living now.

They are cleaning up after dinner when a knock at the door reveals Courtney. Wearing running shoes and a t-shirt under a hooded sweatshirt, she is still pretty. She tells Daisy that she just came over to tell her that she shouldn't feel weird about the interview. After all, she can't help what her 'wackadoodle' sister says or does. She goes on to comment on Jeremy's invitation to Cornell, and then mentions that Amelia was requesting meat in her diet. As Courtney and Hank are both vegetarians, she was hoping to convince her carnivore friends into coming out to dinner with them. Jeremy jokes about it. Then Courtney changes the subject, asking Kate (Daisy) how she feels about a celebrity relationship she had heard about suggesting they would make lovely children. They confirm dinner plans and Courtney once more reassures that there were no hard feelings with regard to the interviews done. After she leaves, Jeremy tells Kate to do her thing and then join him in the living room for their nightly ritual ice cream. Kate gets up and puts a 'go bag' at the door and then joins him.

Analysis

Familial relationships are a strong theme as Violet calls Daisy and their conversation is one that makes no mention of their recent argument which reveals their lack of coping skills for disagreements... they ignore them. It is how they have always behaved in the past, and Violet begins her conversation on the phone to Daisy by talking about



Courtney's pregnancy rather than discuss the way they'd previously spoken to each other. The familial bond transcends any argument they have. Instead, they have an understanding that their relationship is more important, and stronger than any disagreement they might have. Daisy has also made it clear to her husband that she has no intention of moving away from the area while her father is still alive, implying a bond with family that even matrimony can't overcome.

Violet's lack of interest in her date is evident by the fact that she is talking to Daisy when in just eight minutes their father is due to pick her up. Daisy reminds her of the time, and makes wardrobe recommendations, which implies acceptance of Violet's choices as she helps her try to make a good impression.

Spirituality is a subject that is at once an intimate bond the twins share and a chasm between them as well. Violet embraces her spirituality and the gift of foresight that she and her sister both have. She calls the spirit guide that she believes is helping her "Guardian," and believes he is responsible for the visions and messages she receives. Daisy has not embraced this gift in adulthood and has instead become uncomfortable about the entire subject. Although Daisy supports the validity of her sister's abilities, and is willing to acknowledge Violet has this gift, Daisy continues to hide her feelings and her abilities from the people in her life - with the exception of Jeremy of course - even though Hank makes it clear that not only does he accept the premise, but believes in precognitive possibilities.

Commitment is also important as Daisy asks Jeremy if he is embarrassed by her sister's interview. Jeremy reveals his commitment to his marriage with Daisy, and accepts her and her family as they come as is evident when his solution to Daisy's anxiety is ice cream and normalcy. Daisy's commitment to Jeremy is what prompted her honesty with him where her own psychic abilities, preferring a full disclosure marriage to beginning the relationship with a secret.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Violet call Daisy and what does the timing of this call reveal about Violet?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Jeremy's coworker Courtney stop by and what does Daisy think her motivation is?

Discussion Question 3

What conflict does Daisy try to negotiate a resolution to, and what crisis is at the heart of the issue in her mind?

Vocabulary

imploded, visualization, logistically, consensus, colloquium, emanated, impassive



Chapter 5

Summary

Daisy reflects on when she and Violet were in the eighth grade, and Marisa Mazarelli invited Daisy to her slumber party. Several hours afterward, the first wave of uneasiness had hit Daisy. Violet disliked Marisa, and had informed Daisy that she'd seen her cheating on a math quiz the day before. Violet and Daisy were seldom apart for more than a few classes, and never partook in outside sports or activities but despite that, they did not consider themselves to be friends throughout elementary and middle school. Their mother's generally suspicious nature prevented them from joining anything so they played together out of necessity, making up games and watching a great deal of television. As such, the girls grew up as each other's best friend, supporting each other and sticking together even against their mother if the necessity arose. Discipline meted out to one child generally involved volunteered discipline from the other as one twin supported the other even during difficult times. They had only one real friend growing up. Janie Spriggs lived a block away and her older brother Pete who has Down's syndrome seemed to be the only one who could tell the girls apart, suggesting he saw more than most.

As the girls got older, they continued to avoid social activities, but it was collusion on their parts as they tried to hide the fact that their mother was suffering from depression. In the beginning, the girls would come home from school to find her in a darkened room in bed where she would remain until their father came home. At first the girls thought she was sick, but she sent them away and as supper time neared, the girls made dinner using a card from their mother's recipe box. This pattern of covering for their mother continued daily until they left for college. Daisy makes this same meal for Jeremy once, but the smell of it brings her to tears over dinner.

At Marisa's slumber party, Daisy was on her way to her sleeping bag when Marisa set up her new Ouija board. Questions about boys were asked and the answers forced into existence. When Marisa asked who the first person in their group to die would be, Daisy stopped her already instinctively knowing that it was Brynn, but telling Marisa the questions were too sad. Marisa instead asked if Violet gave Mike Dornheiss oral sex, and once again the answer came to Daisy immediately. When Daisy suggested that she should be careful with the board, Marisa accused her of being afraid, and then disparaged Violet. Daisy fought back telling Marisa to ask the board if her father was having an affair which effectively ended the birthday party. Daisy laid in her sleeping bag for an hour before finally making her way up to Marisa's room to apologize. When Marisa told her to get out, Daisy revealed that she and Violet have ESP despite how their parents had cautioned them about revealing their senses. Daisy offered to help Marisa get answers to her questions, and Marisa asked her if Jason liked her.

Daisy quickly became Marisa's new best friend, going over each day so the two of them could sit with the Ouija board. Most of the time, a presence was there to help Daisy



answer, and she just guessed when it wasn't. Daisy helped Marisa become more attractive to Jason Trachsel, learning his preferences for her. Within three weeks Marisa and Jason become a couple. The second time that Jason brought Alex along with him to Marisa's, he kissed Daisy – twice. Daisy never asked the board questions. She already knew more than she wanted to, and believed her role was simply to assist Marisa.

When Jason started cheating on Marisa, Daisy told her, but Marisa didn't want to hear it. For the first time in over a month Daisy went home instead of to Marisa's after school. Daisy was surprised to discover that Violet wasn't home, and by the time she finally arrived 20 minutes later Daisy knew the truth. She confronted Violet, horrified that Marisa might discover Violet was the one Jason was seeing, but Violet didn't care.

Daisy and Jason both kept their distance from Marisa for the following week. The next Monday Marisa went to Jason's house, let herself in and found him straddling Violet. She walked out without a word. The next day, Violet feigned illness and stayed home. Marisa confronted Daisy asking her loudly how her ESP was working. Daisy could feel the presence of the entity that had been helping her, and in that moment realized for the first time that the presence she felt was malevolent and the answers were not without cost. Marisa informed everyone in the locker room that Daisy and Violet were psychic, insisting they talked to the devil and that they were witches. Daisy argued but lamely. From then on, they were referred to as Witches One and Two and worse. On the weekend, Daisy was approached by a group of girls she didn't know and asked if she was "the witch." Daisy hid at home for most of the summer. In July, an envelope came with a single piece of paper inside that called her a freak and insisted she would go to hell.

In grade nine, Daisy dated senior Dan Edwards. He was nice and had a good sense of humor. Three months later, they lost their virginity to each other and he gave her a gold necklace with her birthstone in a pendant. Daisy continued to date Dan until her sophomore year.

Daisy spent the rest of her time in high school trying to prove how normal she was although other students occasionally asked her if she was a witch causing the teasing to resurface for a time. When she was accepted at the University, she began to use her middle name, hoping that no one would ever connect her to the witch Daisy Shramm. Violet went to Reed College in Portland instead, but she didn't last long. Marisa attended Saint Louis University and it was 15 years before Daisy sees her again.

Brynn, who attended the same slumber party at Marisa's that Daisy did, died in 1998 in a hiking accident. Daisy hadn't given her much thought, but after her death she remembered an encounter with Brynn that revealed how generous her soul was. She didn't know much about karma or fate, but the indications were that Brynn had lived a good life.



Analysis

Marisa Mazarelli is introduced in the second flashback of this story as one of the popular girls who went to high school with Daisy and Violet. As the adult narrator, Daisy reveals that Marisa was a pivotal player in her life, although it wasn't apparent at the time. The middle school-aged Violet isn't disturbed by the fact that she is not invited to Marisa's sleepover, instead calling Marisa's character into question by revealing she has seen her cheating on a test. The young Daisy is so eager to be accepted that she accused her sister of jealousy rather than actually listening to what she is saying.

Experiences and how they change people are clearly revealed in this segment, as Daisy and Violet each reach a crossroads in their psychic lives. While both girls have always felt a "presence" that helps reveal certain truths to them, they come to experience their gifts differently. While Daisy is exposed and ridiculed by her young peers when they realize she had psychic ability, Violet somehow manages to stay out of the fray.

The familial connection is barely palpable after Daisy leaves Violet to attend the birthday slumber party at Marisa's. Marisa's party seems designed to drive a wedge between the girls and manages to do so easily, as Marisa commands all of Daisy's time afterward. Daisy refers to herself as "unsentimental as a child" when remembering this time period in her life. While there may be some jealousy involved in Violet's behavior at the time, it is clear that this is also the only way that she could drive her own wedge between Marisa and Daisy.

This flashback continues to highlight the remarkable connection that Violet and Daisy have even in high school, although as adults they maintain that they weren't close as kids. Despite this assertion, Daisy's narrative reveals that they actually spend so much time together during those teenage years that they even invent several different, creative games in which they employ humor while playing "Commercial" as well as deductive reasoning while playing "Person." They also connect as teenagers over movies and music, watching them together and making special snacks. Their similar tastes give them a companionship that goes bone deep and unspoken. The bond they share is strong enough that it puts them together against the world when confronted, and an example of this is revealed when Violet tells an off-color joke and, after being slapped across the face, is sent to her room. Daisy could have chosen not to get involved, but instead she joins Violet in exile.

Relationships are examined in this chapter as a teenage Violet uses her gift much in the same way as Marisa asks Daisy to - competing to gain Jason's attention. Jason's likes and dislikes are uncovered and acted on as Marisa tries to ensnare Jason's attentions. Violet plays the same game, and encourages Jason as well in the hopes that she can undermine what Daisy is doing for Marisa. Violet admits this, but not before Daisy discovers that she is the person Jason has been seeing behind Marisa's back.

Daisy narrates how she and Violet are affected when their mother first begins to withdraw into depression. Daisy and Violet feel compelled to cover for their mother by cooking the meals for their father before he gets home and keeping up with the laundry



until they go to college, never revealing that they are responsible. While the girls mean well, their actions ironically are a contributing factor to their mother not getting help for her depression.

Janie Spriggs is introduced briefly as the only real friend Violet and Daisy experience growing up. Janie's brother Pete, who has Down's syndrome, forces Daisy, Violet and their parents to reexamine their expectations and predisposed notions where disability is concerned. Although the Schramm family and others consider Pete to be retarded, the reality is that only his ability to communicate is impaired. Daisy reflects on how Pete is the only one in the girls' childhood who can tell her and Violet apart. This implies that Pete pays attention to details in a more complete way than other characters do and reveals that people are wrong in their assumptions where his mental capacity is concerned.

Social isolation is a concept explored in more detail as Daisy reveals how their mother's illness keeps them from participating in social or school events when they are younger, and later continues to affect them as they play unwitting roles in helping to hide their mother's depression from their father and the rest of the world. It is unknown at this stage in the story as to whether or not Daisy's father is aware of his wife's mental state, and foreshadows a time when he will be forced to deal with it. The author clearly shows how parenting can directly influence how a child evolves and eventually copes as an adult.

Psychic abilities and the part they play in Daisy and Violet's life are revealed in more detail in this chapter as Daisy explains her decision to pull away from the gifts she has and refuse to acknowledge them even to friends, as Daisy's decision to misuse the gift in her teenage years results in nothing but grief and the feeling that she must change her name and move away. On the other hand, Violet has embraced her gift and continues to use it to serve the greater good.

Discussion Question 1

What is the basis for Marisa's friendship with Daisy and how does this relationship progress from beginning to end?

Discussion Question 2

What gift to Marisa reveals Daisy's gift and why is this something that would interest Marisa?

Discussion Question 3

What does Marisa do that has long term consequences in Daisy's life and what are those consequences?

Vocabulary

asymmetrical, intermittently, retrospect, colluding, complicity, adolescence, melodramatic



Chapter 6

Summary

Daisy is unable to sleep after Owen's two o'clock feeding, worrying about Violet's prediction of another earthquake and considering the possible consequences. Later that morning, she tells Hank that she wants to buy a minivan, asking him if he'd do some advanced shopping with her. She describes how after shopping, she'd loaded Owen and Rosie, but struggled to get the rest of their groceries into the sedan. She neglects to mention that the probable cause was more likely the six gallons of water, extra diapers and batteries that she'd purchased 'just in case' and added to her usual list. She continues to sell the minivan idea by adding that they could all go out together if either of their vehicles would accommodate three child seats. The possibility of a coming earthquake is enough to have Daisy considering breaking the pact she made with herself when Rosie was a baby that she would not use her psychic ability again.

Daisy is making their father's birthday cake when Violet calls and she immediately presses her for more information regarding the coming quake, but Violet doesn't know any more than she did before. She suggests Daisy try to relax, telling her she doesn't feel as though their time on the earth is up. Violet asks if she can go in on a gift with Daisy for their father, but the photo of his grandchildren isn't suitable for her to piggyback on, so she asks if Jeremy can make a stop with her on the way but Jeremy is picking up their father as well. Daisy suggests she give their father an IOU for something fun. Owen hollers and she goes up to change him. The phone rings again, and Hank tells Daisy that Courtney had just been told the baby she is carrying has Down's syndrome. He tells her they will see a genetics counselor the following week to determine how severe. Daisy resists the urge to tell him how sweet Janie's brother Hank is but instead offers to drop off dinner for them, but Hank knows it is their father's birthday and extends their congratulations before hanging up.

Daisy calls Jeremy immediately and shares the sad news, hoping he can set aside the rest of his day and come home, wanting his calming influence to ground her. Jeremy is unable to break away, but suggests she take a deep breath. Rosie's voice comes across the monitor and before she goes up to get her, Daisy calls Violet and tells her if she is ready now, she'll take her to the mall.

After browsing for some time, Violet decides to buy their father a pair of velour slippers and as she pays for them, the cashier recognizes her from the interview she'd done. Violet admits that she hopes she is wrong, and gives the cashier a business card from her wallet when she pays. On the way back to the vehicle, Violet detours to get a coke, leaving Daisy waiting with both children for almost 20 minutes. When Violet gets back to the car, she is excited and wants to share the identity of a phone call she'd received, but Daisy isn't receptive, so Violet doesn't reveal her information until later. While the family eats steak to celebrate their father's birthday, Violet tells the family that she's been invited to be a guest on the Today Show the following week. Daisy knows how excited



Violet is and they all discuss the coming interview while Daisy privately wonders who is more horrified by the news – herself, Jeremy or their father. She can't bring herself to congratulate her sister, so instead she asks her what she'll wear.

Analysis

Psychic abilities are in the forefront beginning with Daisy's concerns regarding Violet's prediction. Part of her wants to try to use her own gifts again, but she is convinced that if she invites her extra sensory perceptions back in, she will be unable to silence them again. Motherhood and Daisy's responsibilities to her children are also at issue as she considers how any mother would approach the issue the same way and, like her, would be willing to do anything to potentially save their children.

Fear is a strong motivator as Daisy considers the possible consequences of a large earthquake and imagines the degree of damage that might occur. She contemplates leaving St. Louis entirely, but convinces herself that there would be no devastation and no lasting chaos. She wants to believe that neighbors will help neighbors. Daisy has an optimistic view of how the general population might deal with a catastrophe.

Friendship and its value is examined as Daisy leans on Hank to help her to convince Jeremy that they should get a minivan. Somehow, she isn't able to go to Jeremy and talk to him about the situation. The strength of their friendship is also revealed when the first person Hank calls after talking to his wife about the results of her tests is Daisy. He tells her that their unborn child is likely afflicted by Down's syndrome and discusses how devastating the diagnosis is. This is a conversation that his wife would prefer he had not revealed to anyone.

Marriage and the strengths that come from long term relationships play a role as Daisy calls Jeremy at work, and asks him if he can come home. While unable to do so, she knows that her request is enough to reveal to her husband that she is anxious and fearful. Jeremy also knows that he can't accommodate every anxious request Daisy makes and instead they discuss how horrifying the information must be for Hank and his wife. Jeremy is obviously Daisy's stabilizing force.

Family continues to be shown as important on several fronts, beginning with the Shramm patriarch's birthday celebration. Hank's information makes Daisy want to draw those she loves in closer to her in the hopes that she can protect them from everything bad in the world, and it brings home to her just how fragile life can be. The connection and strength of family is shown in little gestures of support, such as when Jeremy comments that he should be so lucky when Violet says she feels like his sister wife and in larger gestures such as the one that has the family remaining supportive when Violet announces her coming interview on the Today Show. Despite Daisy's assessment that their father will be embarrassed, or that Jeremy is likely horrified that he is connected by marriage to Violet's prediction or even her own misgivings, no one disparages Violet.



Recognition is an ongoing issue for both Daisy and Violet as Violet's familiarity increases. She is first recognized by a cashier at the mall, and hands out her business card to Daisy's embarrassment. Daisy looks for any sign that the cashier is disgusted by Violet's card, but sees none. Again this points to Daisy's experiences with Marisa and the expectations she has regarding psychic abilities because of how she was ridiculed for her talents. Violet continues to be recognized when the Today show calls her and invites her to be a guest on their show. Daisy is silently horrified by the idea that her sister will be made a laughing stock in the public eye - an assumption again related to her own past history. She doesn't share these feelings and instead tries to be supportive like the rest of the family.

Discussion Question 1

In what ways is Daisy embarrassed by her sister and why?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Daisy decide she wants a minivan, and how does she support her new quest?

Discussion Question 3

What does Hank reveal to Daisy, and how does she handle and accept the information he shares with her?

Vocabulary

indistinguishable, pillaging, emasculated, proclamations, affirmation, accusatory, explicitly



Chapter 7

Summary

In this flashback to earlier years, Daisy describes her high school graduation, and how her boyfriend's parents snubbed her and her family. She recalls how she and Tom had argued, and how she'd walked out on her own graduation ceremony after Tom's parent's refused to be introduced to her family. Daisy saw this as a snub and told Tom that he was a wimp and walked away from the graduation party.

Later, she settled into Mississippi University or 'Mizzou' as it was known by those who attended, calling herself "Kate" and in a manner completely unlike the Daisy she once was, joined a sorority and became a Theta sister. There, she met and began dating Ben. Kate was just beginning to make friends when Violet showed up claiming to be taking a self-imposed hiatus from Reed. Kate took her out for pizza where Violet admitted that she'd had a transcendent experience – a visit from a being of light that she called Guardian who promised her that she wasn't meant to suffer. She'd left school the following day.

Kate told her sister she could stay, hoping she wouldn't and still unsure what her sister's agenda was. It wasn't long before Violet began to attend random classes, and Kate told her that she would have to either return to Reed or go home. Finally, Violet admitted the truth. She'd been asked to withdraw from the semester at Reed because she'd stopped attending classes weeks earlier. She couldn't go home either because if she did, she would continue to sleep with Mr. Caldwell, their teacher from high school. Kate was stunned by her sister's admission.

They argued and Kate walked away, deciding to go to Ben's barbecue. Lauren noticed her workout clothes and assured her she looked cute but as evening approached she got cold. Ben offered to loan her a jacket and she followed him to his dorm room where he turned and kissed her, nudging her over to his bed. He finished before entering her, and acutely embarrassed, he asked if she planned to tell Lauren but she assured him she wouldn't before he suggested they hang out again.

Later, she asked but her roommate Heather hadn't seen Violet. In the morning, Kate woke to Violet who took her out into the hallway where she admitted that she'd gotten into some trouble. She tells Kate how she'd watched television until a group had come in claiming they had the television room reserved for a workout, and asked her to leave. As they argue, the movie Violet was watching ended and, calling one of the girls selfish, she threw the remote at her, hitting her in the jaw and drawing blood. Campus security arrived and Violet was handcuffed and taken to the university police station. After interviewing her, they released her and told her to expect a letter from the Office of Student Conduct. Violet had never admitted she wasn't a student, and had given them Daisy's name instead.



When the letter arrived the next morning and warns "Daisy" to schedule a meeting with a Conduct Officer, she does so immediately and then calls Ben to ask him if he'll drive her to St. Louis and back so she can get Violet home. They arrived in the late afternoon, their mother stunned to see them at the door. Violet immediately told an off color joke and Daisy said goodbye, leaving her parents to deal with Violet. Her mother warned her that she was putting on weight before she left, and on the way back Ben asked her if Violet had been diagnosed with a mental illness.

Ben and Kate stayed together until after graduation and then moved in together in Chicago. Before Kate returned for Thanksgiving, Violet had moved out of their parent's home and was sharing a place with Patrick. She still saw Mr. Caldwell occasionally, who lost his teaching position when four other girls came forward with claims that he'd been intimate with them as well. For Violet's actions in the common room, Kate received a year of probation and the violation stayed on her record for five years. She told no one the truth. Immediately after this incident, Kate had eight inches of her hair cut off so that she would never be confused with Violet by the girls Violet had argued with.

Violet and Daisy shared the dreams they had for their lives. Violet wanted to go to Reed, then join the Peace Corps and fall in love with an African tribesman. Daisy questioned the African tribesman and Violet revised her wish to include Berkeley and law school. Ironically, as they had this discussion, Daisy had a vision of Jeremy for the first time, and while he was standing at a distance and in profile, she still had no problem recognizing him when they met. She could already feel how kind he was. As they joked back and forth, Daisy confessed that she didn't want children of her own, claiming that she had no wish to pass their "senses" on to any offspring.

Later, when her first child was born, Daisy tried to formally withdraw from her "senses" and psychic abilities, hoping to bargain them out of her children's lives in the process.

This revealed just one of many ways in which the girls, while identical twins, were not identical in thoughts or dreams. Daisy also revealed that she hoped to live anywhere but St. Louis which further exemplified how differently the girls thought and foreshadowed the fact that although she might leave for a time, it was likely that she would return home to live at some point in the future.

Analysis

Daisy's flashback in this chapter tells how peer pressure and the difficulty of fitting in continue to play critical roles in her life from her high school days through college. She recalls her developing relationship with Tom Mueller, and how Tom's mother's refusal to meet her family offends Daisy. While Daisy's first response is shame that her family apparently doesn't measure up, she graduates to anger quickly. The experience is reminiscent of her brief "friendship" with Marisa. Daisy knows that Tom's mother has heard rumors that she and her sister are gifted with precognition, and that is largely the reason for her disapproval. The combination of her experience with Marisa and Tom's mother's attitude sets a precedent that changes Daisy's opinion of her gift, and makes



her want to hide it from everyone. Her desire for acceptance is much more important than her gifts.

Sisterhood and the solidarity that comes from that special relationship is again examined as Violet elects to spend the night with her sister, rather than return to their graduation party, choosing to support her rather than celebrate without her. Months later Daisy dreams of being in a lecture hall and sees a girl with a pixie haircut that she later realizes is her. Daisy wakes from her dream with a strong desire to call Violet, and Daisy still surprised her when she looks up and Violet isn't there at meal times, or in the dorm room when she returns.

Heredity is a subject of much conversation between Daisy and Violet in this flashback as they try to decide where their gifts originated. Daisy believes that their gifts likely come from their mother and as such, she decides she doesn't want children of her own. She doesn't want to put them through the stigma of having that dubious gift. Violet, however, believes that their mother and father are as clueless as they could be where senses are concerned, unable to attribute this heredity from either one. Daisy also remembers her experiences cruising around with her sister on the night of their graduation as the very thing that she will see in the future as being irretrievable – a time of youth, dreams, and confidence that is combined with an almost complete lack of responsibility.

The disparity of dreams and desires begins when Marisa takes advantage of Daisy's gifts and then reveals her secret to her peers in school. This isolates Daisy socially. It is a prime example of how experiences can shape and change the direction of life. Daisy is taken advantage of, and teased where her gifts are concerned which makes her resent the fact that she is different. The more she uses her gift, the more she recognizes that it is a malevolent presence that "helps" her. As such, she voluntarily withdraws from her senses when her first child is born, hoping she can bargain it right out of her children's existence.

Discussion Question 1

What events can be directly attributed to Daisy's withdrawal from her psychic self, and why?

Discussion Question 2

How does Violet detrimentally affect her sister's experience at college and why does Daisy cover for her?

Discussion Question 3

What does Ben ask Daisy about her sister that offends her, and why is the question so upsetting to her?

Vocabulary

precociously, indeterminate, prescience, pretentious, transcendent, ostensibly, desecration



Chapter 8

Summary

Hank sends Kate a text confirming dinner at a pizza place where customers can watch their pizza being created. When they have a moment alone, he asks Kate if she told Jeremy about Courtney's pregnancy or the Down's syndrome diagnosis, and she tells him she hadn't. He worries that he should have kept quiet about it, and admits, near tears, that Courtney has already made up her mind. When Jeremy and Courtney return after watching pizza creations with the girls, Hank and Kate still haven't ordered. Courtney does so immediately, bringing four pints of beer back with her, and revealing in this action that Hank is right. She has already decided.

Kate wakes in the middle of the night with a date in her mind and realizes the earthquake Violet predicted will occur on the 16th of October. She waits until morning to call Violet and ask her if the timeline sounds correct. Violet admits it could be. She asks Kate to help her with her wardrobe for the Today show, and Kate does. Later at Macy's she helps Violet try on a variety of shirts and tops, none of which seem right. Kate suggests Violet wear one of her elegant maternity tops.

Violet talks about Stephanie – the girl she is dating, and comments that she is considering relearning how to drive. Kate agrees to help her, and also promises to help with her make up before her interview. The next morning Kate gets up early and is on her way to Violet's before five. Although somewhat squeamish about the reason for Violet's interview, Kate also feels a certain excitement over the fact that Violet will be appearing on national television. Violet is so nervous that she almost cancels. Kate does Violet's makeup in the living room and when she goes to change into Kate's silver shirt, producer, Bill Sichko arrives with cameraman and sound man. A few minutes later, Stephanie shows up with coffee and encouragement.

Kate listens in and can't help but admit that Violet is terrific and manages to field questions from Matt Lauer capably and confidently. She reveals the date Kate discussed with her as a more accurate prediction, now only two weeks away. Matt asks how she gets her information, and she tells him about the entity she refers to as the Guardian. She assures the audience she has no intentions of running before the quake, and that she benefits in no way by revealing her prediction. After the interview is done, Stephanie says she can hardly wait to hear the whole interview and Kate realizes that she had somehow listened in on Violet's mind – something she'd promised herself she would never do again. Stephanie invites Kate and Violet out to breakfast and suggests the Four Seasons. They make arrangements to meet there and Kate volunteers to take Violet home afterward. Jeremy calls Kate to say he'd watched the taping and adds that Violet was good. He comments on the date prediction, but Kate says nothing to reveal her part in it. He reminds Kate the sixteenth is his conference in Denver and invites Kate and the kids to come along for a mini vacation.



A woman approaches their table just as they are finishing and asks if Violet was the woman she'd seen on television. Stephanie asks her if she wants Violet's autograph, but she declines and leaves. Stephanie tells her to get used to the attention. Stephanie picks up the tab and as Kate takes Violet home, she admits she likes her. They talk about her and although Kate gives the equivalent of her blessing on the relationship, Violet reminds Kate that she'd warned Violet in the beginning that a homosexual lifestyle is complicated and it would be easier with a man.

Later at home, Kate calls Hank knowing that he and Courtney had gone to the genetic counselor, and when she goes over, he admits that Stephanie is definitely going to terminate her pregnancy. Hank would rather they considered their options more carefully, but Courtney's mind is made up. Jeremy calls while they are talking and tells Kate that their mail box is filled with people who'd seen Violet's interview. Some are flakes; some accuse her of yelling fire in a crowded theater; and others are calls from family, friends and reporters. When she hangs up, Hank suggests they watch the interview and tells Kate he might be able to get Violet a decent publicist. Though Kate is reluctant, Hank convinces her that it is a practical move.

Analysis

Disability becomes a pivotal issue in Courtney and Hank's life as they struggle with the news that it is probable their unborn child is afflicted with Down's syndrome. Courtney immediately presses to terminate the pregnancy. Hank is not as ready to make such a permanent decision, but at dinner, Courtney picks up a beer for herself as well as for the rest of the table, speaking volumes about her decision and the finality of the subject in her mind. The author uses Courtney's pregnancy as a vehicle to promote pro-choice, quietly offering up his support on the subject, while examining some of the controversies that surround it.

Emotions are strong as Courtney struggles with her decision and takes her frustrations out on Kate indirectly by picking on Violet revealing that the decision to abort their child isn't an easy one for Courtney either. Attacking Kate's family is her indirect way of attacking Kate - something neither of their husbands would stand for without a response of some kind. While the comments seem innocuous at first, they quickly become mean. Courtney asks if there is a test psychics have to pass behaving much like Marisa once had. Kate is forced to defend both herself and Violet but even the fact that Violet has been invited to be on the Today show the following week is fuel for Courtney who adds her contempt for the program as well. She refers to Violet as a "public health threat" just as the waiter arrives putting an end to the conversation and later comments that there has always been evasiveness to Kate that bothers her.

Sisterhood and the strength of the bond it brings is ongoing as Kate helps Violet get ready for her interview, despite her personal feelings on the subject. Even though part of her is horrified by the prospects of what her sister might say and how it might affect her or her family, at the same time a part of her is excited about that Violet will be interviewed on television. Violet leans on Kate for emotional, moral and even fashion



advice. The writer introduces irony when, as Violet and Kate are out shopping, Kate becomes stuck in a shirt, splitting a seam while her larger sister who struggles with weight issues looks on, and lends her aid in exfiltrating her sister from the garment trying not to laugh.

Relationships are of ongoing importance as Violet struggles to find her comfort zone with Stephanie (Violet fears that Stephanie is a nester, and ready to U-Haul her way into Violet's life); Courtney and Hank struggle with the unique and horrifying situation they find themselves in (Hank wanting to keep the child she is carrying and Courtney having definitely made up her mind not to) while Kate and Jeremy try to maintain a normal relationship throughout it all.

Friendship continues to be important and to impact Hank and Kate's life as Hank finds himself leaning on Kate's friendship while he tries to cope with the conflicting emotions he feels concerning his wife and the child she carries who it is revealed has Down's syndrome. As such, she wants to terminate the pregnancy but Hank is conflicted.

Publicity is a subject of much controversy in this story as Violet prepares to appear on the Today show. This is an ongoing issue that separates the twins as Violet welcomes the attention while Kate has spent most of her adult life trying to hide the fact that she also shares this gift. Violet acknowledges that most people would rather nurture a latte rather than spend the equivalent amount of money on their spiritual health – a statement that clearly makes Kate uncomfortable and reveals just how fearful she is of being put in the same category as her sister is. Violet sees the publicity as a good thing on two fronts. First, she is able to share her information and perhaps convince people to prepare in advance for the coming quake, and she also gains some notoriety which may improve her customer quotient. Kate believes that putting a spotlight on her talents is a mistake and fears being seen in a different light and with less respect by friends and peers. This is part of the reason that she made the pact with herself when her daughter was born to set her gifts aside.

Senses come strongly into play especially when Kate realizes that she was able to hear both sides of the interview despite the fact that only Violet had an earpiece to hear Matt through. She realizes that without intending to, she had listened in through Violet's mind, making it clear that she is not in control over whether or not she keeps her gifts. Another example of her senses bleeding into her safe and normal life is the date that she acknowledges feels like the date of the coming quake – information she woke up simply knowing despite the fact that she hadn't actively sought to learn it from the gifts she has.

Discussion Question 1

How does Courtney respond to Kate when she informs her that Violet is going to be on the Today show, and how does this conversation get started?



Discussion Question 2

What is the full impact of Courtney's decision where her pregnancy is concerned on their parental status now and in the future?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Jeremy call Kate upset and why does she feel as though she has she been unconsciously preparing for this moment her whole life?

Vocabulary

contemptuous, dispassionately, dissuading, ambivalence, implicitly, titillated



Chapter 9

Summary

In another flashback, Daisy describes how her life conspired to have her returning to St. Louis despite how desperately she'd wanted to leave it behind. In fact, Kate seldom went home even just to visit once she'd started college. In a phone call, her father admitted to her that her mother had fibromyalgia and was on medication that tired her. She rarely got out of bed, never cooked and her father's diet had been reduced to frozen dinners while her mother existed on juice and crackers with spreadable cheese. Kate's mother was unable to attend her graduation and as such, her father was also absent although Violet and Patrick surprise her by showing up.

Kate and Ben rented a one-bedroom apartment together after graduation and even hosted Thanksgiving for their friends. In December, her father asked her to come home for a couple of days, but she begged off primarily because she and Ben had recently shopped for engagement rings and a proposal at her parents' house was unthinkable. On Christmas Eve, her mother went to bed and when she remained silent 20 hours later her father entered the bedroom to discover she had passed away. When Violet arrived, the EMT's were already there but Kate was unaware of her mother's death for another full day. She spent Christmas with Ben's family and while there she experienced a gut wrenching sadness that she mistook for seasonal sorrows. She looked at the photos of Ben's family, smiling and having fun and realized how different they were from her family. Feigning a headache, she went to bed early, Ben's expression confirming that he had planned to propose later that evening. She dreamed of Violet yelling to her and in the dream she ignored her. On Boxing Day, she discovered Violet's email asking her to call her back immediately and when she did, Patrick told her about her mother's death. Ben drove her home.

The funeral for her mother was the first that Kate had ever attended. They went back to the house for lunch afterwards, and Kate began to seriously consider her relationship with Ben. Violet wondered if their mother would try to contact them from the other side. Six weeks later, Kate announced her intentions to return to St. Louis.

Her father wasn't surprised when Kate arrived but Kate was stunned by the "for sale" sign on the lawn and realized he'd probably already disposed of the only thing she wanted from her mother – her Christmas albums. Her father asked her where Ben was, and she admitted he wasn't with her but that she still intended to stay. He didn't seem to care that she'd come home, and continued his usual schedule regardless of her presence. He did, however, ask her to show him how to grocery shop and this request would begin a weekly habit that lasted for years, although the days of the week they went on occasionally varied.

Patrick moved out of the apartment he and Violet shared and she then suggested that she and Kate should live together. Kate accepted, provided that Violet promised not to



contact the Guardian while at home. This surprised Violet, but she agreed. They found a duplex near the new job Kate landed as a caregiver for 96-year-old widow, Mrs. Abbott. Though lucid, she slept most of the hours that Kate was there, and Kate just watched over her until her replacement arrived. During the first week of her new job, Kate remembered the presence that had revealed itself to her with Marisa's Ouija board and began to fear it may return during the night. She kept her job for 14 months which felt more like years. By then, Kate had realized the presence she was afraid would appear was not the same one that came to Marisa's, but her mother's spirit.

One night, as Kate headed home from working at Mrs. Murphy's, she was followed by a black man in blue scrubs. She tried not to panic, but debated whether she should go home, or flag down a passing car as he continued to walk behind her. Ten feet from their duplex's front door she turned towards him, terrified. He walked past her and entered the opposite suite. Humiliated, she let herself in and dissolved into tears, considering what a mess she'd made of her life. Later, Violet laughed when Kate told her about it, making Kate feel better.

Violet and Kate went to a New Year's Eve party held by Nancy, and Kate was surprised to discover that she enjoyed the experience. They played charades and used a Burning Bowl Ceremony to eliminate negative influences in their lives. Afterward, Kate went home with Maxwell. Violet intended to hook up with Jeff Parker – the Scary Black Man who lived next door, but that didn't happen for still another couple of weeks. In February, Mrs. Abbott mistakenly called Kate by her mother's name Rita. Kate was speechless and began to look for work elsewhere.

Kate dated David for a while but Violet made her promise not to make any decisions about him until after Christmas because that was when she would meet the man she truly should marry. Violet wished her a Happy 2000 and kissed her on the mouth.

Analysis

Family continues to be of pivotal importance on several fronts in this story. Kate's father reveals their mother's diagnosis of fibromyalgia. Kate is too surprised and cowardly to ask him much about it. Kate seldom returns home to visit even after she and Ben are living together, discovering that taking Ben to what she describes as the "mausoleum she'd grown up in" is a mistake. By taking him along, she sees the unhappiness of the household she had grown up in reflected through his eyes, and it is harder for her to gloss over the memories in her mind. Despite not wanting to go home, Kate can't help but compare her parents to the clients she's taken care of in the nursing home in Chicago. She wonders if her relationship with her parents would have been better had she made the same efforts with them, feeling a certain amount of guilt that she had not. In truth, she had not been able to get out of her parent's home fast enough wanting nothing more than to leave it all behind.

Escapism is clearly what Daisy has in mind when she changes her name to Kate and tries to reinvent herself. Living with Ben, she tries to create the kind of home life that



she'd always wanted but never had. They invite friends over for Thanksgiving and she takes the time to create meals from scratch rather than settling for prepared foods. She is proud of herself when she composts the leftovers in the bin behind the building and feels a smug sense of reassurance that she has left her old life far behind her. This foreshadows an equal certainty that she is not actually as far from home as she believes, in her mind or otherwise.

Relationships continue to be of ongoing importance in this chapter as reality and Kate's dreams meet and collided. She considers the points of contention between her and Ben but although important, they are not what drive Kate from him. Kate realizes that her life and Ben's life are just too different. She sees his happy upbringing, and the love his family all still have for each other and is acutely aware that she doesn't fit in with him and his family any more than he will ever fit in with the dysfunction of her home life. As such, she ends the relationship, and makes the decision to go home and help her father. Regret and insecurity enter Kate's life as she second guesses the decision she made to leave Ben and return home. It seems clear her father does not need her, and for a short time, Kate flails, uncertain as to how to proceed.

Sisterhood and the importance of the strength of the relationship between the twins once again asserts itself as Violet comes to Kate's rescue for a change. Usually Kate is the one bailing Violet out, or is the stable one who offers advice, but this time Violet offers Kate a shared living arrangement with her, and enables Kate to find her feet again.

Fear encroaches on Kate's life when she begins working for Mrs. Abbott, and shortly after doing so begins to have the unreasonable sense that the presence from Marisa's Ouija board will find her there and make an appearance. She has no idea what will happen then, but she is convinced that the presence will be filled with contempt for Kate since Kate has tried to shut it out of her life. Later, Kate admits to herself that it isn't the presence from Marisa's that frightens her at Mrs. Abbott's house – it is her fear that her mother may have appeared to her.

Depression plays a small role in this segment as it briefly looks as though Kate will follow in her mother's footsteps when Violet comes home unexpectedly one late afternoon to find Kate already in pajamas, drinking wine from a coffee cup. Violet points out that Kate's biggest problem is the fact that she is single, and suggests that she is her best when there are others who depend on her in one way or another.

The value of senses and precognition are ongoing as the author reveals that despite Kate wanting to distance herself from the abilities that defined her in childhood, she still views them as critical in life and believes in the ability Violet has. Kate describes how she upon her beginning a relationship with David, Violet makes it clear to Kate that she shouldn't make any rash decisions where David and their relationship was concerned, telling Daisy that she was destined to breed and wouldn't meet the man she should marry until Christmas four months later. This foretelling by Violet is typical of the kinds of visions or information she receives.



Discussion Question 1

Why does Kate avoid going home for Christmas, and what events contribute to her decision to move back to St. Louis without Ben?

Discussion Question 2

What issues bother Kate in her job at Mrs. Abbott's house, causing her to transfer elsewhere and what does she realize once she has done so?

Discussion Question 3

Who tells Kate not to marry David, and what are the arguments given for and against this marriage?

Vocabulary

fibromyalgia, mausoleum, arbitrarily, encapsulated, desegregation, erratically, existential



Chapter 10

Summary

After Violet's prediction of another more powerful earthquake and her appearance on the Today show, dozens of reporters from around the world begin calling. Kate tells Violet about the publicist Hank recommended and promises to get her number. Kate calls Hank and learns that \$15,000 dollars will secure her services for 30 days. Jeremy picks up Violet who helps herself to a beer while Kate tells Jeremy the cost of the publicist and asks if they can pay for it. Jeremy thinks she is kidding, but Kate continues talking and when Violet returns to the room she announces that she and Jeremy have decided to pay for it. She does not have the courage to look at Jeremy when she says it.

Publicist Emma Hall immediately takes control and asks Violet to write a personal statement while her assistant gets to work on a web site for her. Jeremy takes the children upstairs. Violet admits that Emma sounds terrific and they sit down and watch the Today show interview again together. Kate realizes that Violet's ability is much stronger than hers which has waned with lack of use. Violet's friend Nancy picks her up for drinks and Kate reminds her not to talk to reporters or weirdos when she goes home. The public continues to have conflicting reactions to Violet's prediction.

After she leaves, Kate locks up and sets the alarm, dreading the confrontation she knows is coming. She finds Jeremy sitting up in bed obviously angry. She wonders if he would be as angry if she were still bringing in a monthly income. He asks Kate how much she thinks they have in their savings account, and instead of the \$20,000 she believes is there, Jeremy informs her that they have less than \$11,000. Jeremy comments that he would have preferred that she impulsively bought them a flat screen television, and Kate realizes that he is going to forgive her. She climbs in bed and kisses him, and as they make love he tells her how much he loves her. Later as she nurses Owen, she wonders if they should leave town.

Violet has trouble writing her personal statement so Kate does it for her the next morning. After reading it to Violet, she asks Kate to insert a few things and when it is done to her satisfaction, Kate sends it to Emma along with a photo of Violet. While still online, she orders a waterproof flashlight, crank radio, and first aid kit along with a propane stove.

Violet reads some of the comments online as well, and both Kate and later Emma advise her that she should quit reading them. Emma reminds Violet not to grant any interviews while she finalizes arrangements for her to appear on the Today show again and asks how they'd feel about her coming for a visit so that she can see "Vi's St. Louis". Emma flirts with Hank when he comes over without Courtney who wanted to lie low before the procedure she had scheduled for the next day. By the time everyone leaves, Kate and Jeremy are exhausted.



The next day Courtney terminates her pregnancy and the day after that she returns to work.

Analysis

Senses and precognition continue to clash with science as the date of Violet and Kate's shared prediction nears. The overall public has mixed reactions to Violet's earthquake warning – some taking it seriously while others are convinced it is a hoax. The professors at the Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences are adamant in their response that earthquake prediction is impossible and that there is no such thing as an earthquake season.

The author clearly outlines the building frenzy both surrounding the media as dozens of reporters from places as far away as Australia, Amsterdam, Israel and England are seeking interviews and the general public opinion and response which alternates between reactionary and disbelief. It becomes harder for Kate to avoid public connection as she is invariably connected to Violet despite her desire to avoid the public eye.

Publicity is a primary conflict between the sisters when a media explosion follows Violet's public prediction. Emma Hall is introduced as a confident and friendly woman who is in control. Emma is not at all embarrassed when she tells Kate her fee and adds that if she comes to St. Louis, those charges will be extra. Cost for her services is prohibitive, and Kate briefly reevaluates the tax bracket that the Wheeling family must be in as Emma's fee seems normal to them. Kate knows that her sister won't be able to come up with the funds so in a moment of uncalled for desperation, she announces that she and Jeremy will be happy to pay Emma's bill for Violet.

There is considerable irony in this situation as Kate reacts to Violet's prediction with fear for how it will affect everyone else - something she does largely because she has had personal experience in that arena. It was Kate who once told her classmates that she and Violet had psychic senses, and that experience had backfired in spectacular fashion. Now those experiences color how she deals with her sister's public prediction and the fallout that comes afterward.

Equality is a subject worthy of mention as the author touches on the financial discrepancies that are often evident in relationships where either a husband or wife stays home to raise children while their partner is the sole supporter. Kate wonders if she and Jeremy would be arguing about paying for the publicist if she were still generating a tangible income, but as a stay-at-home parent, her financial contribution to the relationship is negligible. The disparity of income between Jeremy and Kate is one that many couples with young children are forced to deal with, and the strain of one income loss changes the value of the contribution the stay-at-home parent is making. As such, the stay-at-home parent is often left feeling as though they are no longer as valuable as before as is the case with Kate.



Fear is a driving factor that is increasing as the date of Violet's prediction nears. Kate who can't help but feel fearful for her children who are wholly dependent on her for their very survival. She is acutely aware that she is responsible for their safety, and that thought plagues her as the date of Violet's prediction nears. Kate's growing fear makes her wonder if she should try to convince Jeremy not to go to the conference in Denver.

Sisterhood and the strength of that relationship is again shown as Kate describes a kind of closeness with her sister that she hasn't felt since they were children. Again the irony is obvious as Kate feels closer to Violet now that there is a media frenzy surrounding her and her prediction while for most of her adult life, Kate has tried to avoid anything connected to senses or her ability with them. Still, Kate balks when Emma negotiates Violet's reappearance on the Today show and mentions adding family background along with photos which is something Kate tells her she wants nothing to do with, despite having already lost any chance of maintaining her anonymity from Violet and her predictions.

Jealousy is briefly introduced as Emma visits St. Louis and they all gather at Kate and Jeremy's home. Courtney stays home and Kate is less than thrilled to see Emma flirting with Hank which seems to indicate that Kate has some proprietary feelings where her friend Hank is concerned. This foreshadows further issues between the two friends.

Abortion affects not only the Wheeling household as the couple directly involved, but also impacts Kate and Jeremy. When Courtney terminates her pregnancy, Hank reveals how deeply disturbed by the decision he is when he talks to Kate. He tells her about how he had taken Amelia to the park and another child had approached and asked her where her sister was. Tearfully, he admits that he'd thought Courtney was carrying a girl and his mixed emotions indicate that he may have tried to keep the child regardless of the medical diagnosis.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Kate's decision to pay for Emma Hall's publicity expertise make Jeremy angry, and what prompts Kate to go ahead with these plans even though she knows he is?

Discussion Question 2

How does Violet respond to the magnitude of the publicity she is getting, and how is her attitude different from Kate's where the prediction is concerned?

Discussion Question 3

How does Kate's decision to pay for Emma Hall's services compare to Courtney's decision to terminate her pregnancy and how do their spouses cope?

Vocabulary

disingenuous, condescending, altruistic, rudimentary, gratuitously, proximity, delusions



Chapter 11

Summary

Kate recalls how she and Jeremy first met and how he'd invited her out for the first time. She was still seeing David at the time, and handled her break up with him badly. She remembers her first date with Jeremy, and how at the time she had considered stopping their relationship before it even got started, presuming that like her other boyfriends, he had had a charmed childhood, but she changed her mind and decided to accept his invitation for a drink. They talked and she learned that his past was as confusing and traumatizing as hers was. She realized then that he was perfect for her, and ended up in bed with him afterward. On their first anniversary, she tried to explain to him that her life with him felt like something that came right out of a Christmas carol, and that on their first date she had almost told him she didn't want to see him again - something that Jeremy revealed he had intuited.

Two months into their relationship Kate admitted to Jeremy that she occasionally had premonitions and recalled how he had responded. At first he had joked about it, much like most people did, but when he saw how serious she was, he sobered and listened to her, trying to understand. She told him about the problems she had with Marisa when she was in middle school, and assured him that her premonitions were as much a part of her past as she could make them.

Kate continued to test his worthiness for a long term relationship after fleeting comments about marriage were made by asking him how he felt about adopting children from another country. While fine with the idea, he added that he really wanted children of his own. Kate revealed her fear that her children might be psychic but Jeremy wasn't convinced that her senses were hereditary. Now and then the subject came up again and Jeremy insisted that he thought they'd make great children together and he wasn't particularly concerned if they were born with senses or not, any more than he would be concerned if they could sing or were nearsighted. He added that having senses did not define who she was.

While Jeremy was away in Vancouver presenting a paper, Kate woke up one morning convinced that she would have two white babies. She called him to tell him, and added that they shouldn't wait too long. The news was exciting to Jeremy. Rosie was born four years later when Kate was 31 and Owen followed just two years later.

Analysis

Kate recalls how her relationship with Jeremy evolves, and the events that lead up to the decision to have natural children rather than adopt as she had previously had her heart set on doing.



Senses again play a pivotal part in Kate's life as she recalls how she recognizes Jeremy when she first meets him as the man she had seen in her premonition years earlier. Despite that, her opinion of him at first is that he seems too perfect for her – much like both Ben and David had been and she almost ends the relationship before it has a chance to begin. She makes the presumption that he comes from a happy home and is too well-adjusted to live with someone who suffers the kind of dysfunctional childhood that she has had. Jeremy senses her withdrawal at the beginning of their relationship, and is surprised when, despite her desire to withdraw, she agrees to have a drink with him. When Kate learns that his parents divorced when he was a child, she realizes his childhood was traumatic as well, and as such finally believes that they are compatible and might have a future together. Despite this, Kate's ongoing internal battle of senses and how they fit into her life continue.

Heredity is a strong theme as Kate continued to believe that it is unfair of her to pass on her questionable gifts to her children. Kate has always presumed the simplest answer is not to have biological children at all. As such, she grills every boyfriend she has as to whether or not he is willing to adopt children from another country. Jeremy appears to be willing, but at the same time wants to have children that are a part of them both. He assures her that even if they are born with senses, their lives do not have to be governed by them any more than Kate's life was.

Irony is again employed here as this argument appears to sway Kate and help her to decide to have biological children when every indication so far has revealed that Kate is unable to distance herself from her senses no matter how hard she tries. They still continue to assert themselves in her life as is evident when she wakes with the certainty that she will have two white children. When Kate tells Jeremy about her premonition, he claims to have had one as well. He tells Kate that they are going to be a great couple and make each other happy, but in another example of irony, when Jeremy voices this comment Kate is disappointed in him for the first time as the comment reveals a distinct disregard for the senses she has, minimizing them and making light of a situation she takes very seriously. Her premonition about having two white babies is also suspect, as it does not preclude the fact that Kate may have other children besides.

Discussion Question 1

What does Kate share with Jeremy that she never told Ben or David and why does she decide to share this with him?

Discussion Question 2

How does Jeremy respond when Kate reveals that she wants to adopt children?

Discussion Question 3

How does Jeremy describe the way he feels about Kate's psychic abilities?

Vocabulary

accretion, aggregate, retrospect, infraction, inundate, hereditary



Chapter 12

Summary

Kate and Jeremy are watching television when they hear a squeak from one of the baby monitors. Kate goes upstairs anxiously, and waits for several long minutes outside Rosie's door but hears nothing more. She reminds herself that she is slipping into a nervous pattern and that moments like these are why she is no longer wants to be psychic. When Kate goes back downstairs, Jeremy comments on how quiet Rosie has been and Kate promises that things will improve after the day of the prediction.

Jeremy suggests Kate get a manicure when Kendra comes next and she doesn't reveal that she only leaves Rosie with Kendra. She continues to tell herself that running errands with Owen alone is easier, but the truth is that Rosie loves the time she spends with Kendra and Kate isn't ready to leave Owen with Kendra yet. This is a secret she keeps from Jeremy however.

Jeremy reminds Kate of his upcoming conference that Thursday, but Kate wants him to claim he had a family emergency and stay home. Jeremy says Courtney is going despite having just terminated a pregnancy and asks her to consider the possibility that neither she nor Violet were psychic and that their predictions had been nothing more than luck or circumstance. He even suggests that she bring the children and fly to Denver with him.

Jeremy adds that since she derives so little pleasure from her senses, she should just let them go. Kate hasn't revealed that she'd done just that two years earlier. Increasingly angry, she reminds him that Violet is not the only one who has a track record that can be proven and cites several examples. Jeremy reminds her of how she had almost cancelled their wedding when Brady Ogden was missing. Although she and Violet had been right about the boy, Jeremy insists they cannot put their lives on hold.

On the twelfth, Kate takes the children to Wydown Park and just after arriving, Violet calls to say she is at the house. Kate tells her where they are, and Violet begins to walk there while Kate follows Rosie around, Owen still strapped to her chest. Rosie runs over to a couple, and following her Kate realizes the woman is Marisa Mazarelli. Violet finally arrives out of breath, recognizing Marisa as well. Kate goes to a bench more private to feed Owen while Violet plays with Rosie. Moments later they return because Rosie has stepped in dog feces. Violet flatly refuses to help her clean up. Before Kate can free herself, Rosie smears the feces in her hand and runs off. Kate gives chase but before she catches up, Rosie falls face first onto the concrete and begins to shriek. Kate sits Rosie down to clean her up when to her surprise Marisa comes over and offers them a ride to the hospital. Kate accepts a ride home instead. When they get there and disembark, Marisa calls to Kate and asks if she can call her. Kate agrees.



When Kate finally gets Rosie settled, Violet asks her the question she'd come over to ask. She tells Kate that she is going back on the Today show, and the producer wants Kate to join her. Kate says there is no way she is going on television with Violet. They argue and Violet accuses her of being selfish. Angry now herself, Kate tells her how much Emma is costing them and then tells Violet to get out. Before she manages to get shoes on and actually leave, both Kate and Violet say hurtful things to each other.

Analysis

Parenting styles and differences are examined as Kate and Jeremy use a baby monitor to enable them to hear their children if they wake at night. Still, Kate feels compelled to check on Rosie when she hears a sound, even though Jeremy suggests that they wait and see if any noise continues. Kate tells herself that she wants to be upstairs just in case Rosie needs her, but she can't stop herself from going in to check on her even when no other sounds follows. Kate reminds herself of her tendency to slip into paranoia where her children are concerned. In truth, imagining every sound as something to worry over is part of why Kate had tried to set aside her senses in the first place. The fact that she worries something might be wrong does not necessarily mean that something was. Not everything that comes to her mind is psychic premonition, and when her children were born, she often had to remind herself that sometimes overprotective parenting was all that was at play.

Fear continues to plague Kate when Jeremy reminds Kate that he has a conference to go to and the timing will mean that he is in Denver when the quake is due to occur. Kate tries to talk him out of it. She had been telling herself that he would change his mind and was convinced that he had probably already cancelled his reservation, sure that he wouldn't go to Denver with so much going on at home. Jeremy tries to explain the reasons he is still going, reminding Kate that she'd made a deal with him that if he cancelled his Cornell talk, she would be alright with him going to Denver. Despite that, she finds his demeanor insulting and arrogant. Jeremy tries to diffuse the situation, but Kate isn't amenable, her fear of the possibilities overwhelming her common sense.

Senses and how they affect Kate's life continue to play an important role in this story. Kate realizes that Jeremy never really believed in her or Violet's psychic abilities and does not take them or her seriously. He proves this to her when he puts her on the spot, telling her that if she really is psychic, she should tell him there and then whether or not a quake is going to happen. She tells him that she believes a quake will happen on the sixteenth, but Jeremy insists that while there is a chance, he believes it is infinitesimal, again downplaying her psychic talents. The scientist in Jeremy goes on to explain probabilities, statistics and cites confirmation bias as more likely. He draws a comparison between her senses and a girl he used to know who although normal inside, had blue hair. He calls Kate's senses her "blue hair."

Flashbacks are ongoing throughout this story as Kate's history clashes with the present when she takes her children to the park and recognizes Marisa sitting with her boyfriend. Kate is content to pretend they don't know each other but when Rosie falls



and splits her lip, Marisa offers them a ride. Kate accepts, although reluctantly, and is mollified somewhat by observations she makes such as the lack of a wedding ring on Marisa's finger, the disorganized clutter of her vehicle and by Marisa's apparent lack of offspring. As these are all hallmarks of success in life where Kate is concerned, she sees herself in a much better place than her former classmate. When Marisa drops her off at home, she asks her if she can call her foreshadowing a future meeting when Kate may be asked to "perform" again.

Sisterhood and the strength of the relationship the twins have with each other is tested when Kate and Violet get into a full blown argument when Violet asks her to appear with her on the Today show and Kate refuses. Violet calls her selfish and Kate throws Emma's fee in her face. The argument escalates when Kate challenges Violet's lifestyle, assuming she still hasn't grown up and Violet reminds her that not everyone is interested in raising children, challenging the standard by which Kate measures success. Kate responds by arguing that having Violet pass judgement on her is the equivalent of having a cave man correct her grammar. She tells Violet to leave, but it is clear that this confrontation is not over.

Secrets and how they can potentially impact a relationship is touched on as Kate reveals that she is keeping secret from her husband the fact that she never leaves Owen with Kendra and Rosie, taking him along with her instead. Despite having an opportunity to reveal the truth about the situation, she opts to remain silent.

Discussion Question 1

How does Jeremy describe Kate's psychic abilities and how does she feel about his assessment?

Discussion Question 2

What is Kate's impression of how Violet's prediction is being received by most people and what factors seem to back that up?

Discussion Question 3

What two secrets has Kate been keeping from Jeremy and how do they now impact her life with him?

Vocabulary

impending, culpability, perspective, infuriating, countenance, infinitesimal, hypocritical



Chapter 13

Summary

Kate flashes back to the events that led up to her wedding with Jeremy. Despite having decided to hold the wedding in Mendocino, the costs continued to add up. Kate and Jeremy had dinner with his boss, Leland, and wife, Xiaojian, who assured Kate that if they were planning to have children she would soon be forced to choose between them and a career. While still in the restaurant, Tom's brother Laird approached their table, saying how surprised he was to see Kate since he had just been discussing her and the fact that she and her sister had "crazy psychic powers." Jeremy deflected him and after he left Xiaojian asked Kate if she was the good or the bad twin. She says the bad one.

Jeremy was surprised by the fact that Kate carried credit card debt, and was still paying off her student loan. He paid off the student loan as an advance wedding gift, telling her she could consider herself exempt from their combined expenses until her credit card debt was also settled. Kate felt as though her education in preparation for adulthood was lacking in many ways.

Violet revealed that she had a sense about what happened to a missing boy named Brady Ogden. She was sure that he was taken by a postal worker and though gone for three months, he was being held in an apartment perhaps in Chesterfield. She wanted to see if she could find the place and Kate agreed to do so but suggested they also call the police. The next day she and Violet drove to Chesterfield where eventually Violet asked her to take the Woods Mill Road exit. She asked Kate to pull into Terrace View Apartments, a complex of three large buildings and even Kate could feel something ominous. They left and that night Kate woke with the certainty that Brady was taken by a copy shop employee and could clearly see his name tag read "Derek," that he was clean shaven, in his forties and had a blonde crew cut. She called Violet to tell her what she'd "seen" and Violet suggested Kate call the police using her name. Kate does so.

Kate took her father grocery shopping and he asked her if she would be offended if rather than help her pay for her wedding, he helped Violet to buy a house. He admitted that he was unable to do both, and Kate assured him that it was fine. Back in the car, he gave her the charm bracelet her mother used to wear. Later, Violet called to say a detective had called and was coming over. She asked Kate to join them. Detective Tyler McGillivary questioned Violet for an hour and then asked her to come down to the station. Later, Violet told Kate that they were respectful and even drove around Brady's neighborhood with her where she clearly heard Guardian tell her that he needed her help.

Kate told Jeremy she thought they should postpone the wedding until the issues with Brady Ogden were resolved. Jeremy was stunned and finally told her that if she did not marry him now, there would be no wedding, insisting that he would not be dragged to crazyville with her. They flew to California and the next day guests began to arrive.



Violet kidnapped her for a five minute bridal shower where they did Bridal Ambrosia shots and penis confetti was thrown. Just before the ceremony the next day Violet burst in to tell Kate that they had found Brady and arrested his kidnapper. The news was all over St. Louis. The wedding went off without a hitch, Kate's father sang in place of a toast. The part Kate remembered most clearly was walking down the aisle and the feeling of amazement that Jeremy wanted her as his wife.

Analysis

Kate recalls the brief period before her wedding to Jeremy and how her senses almost convince her to call off her marriage for the time being. Since she and Violet are both inundated with information regarding a missing boy, and Kate feels the celebration of her marriage to Jeremy can take a back seat temporarily while she and Violet help to rescue the young man. Jeremy is adamant that if Kate is not prepared to walk down the aisle with him then, it will not happen at all. Kate is convinced and the ceremony is conducted without problems.

Adulthood and responsibility are examined by Kate when she realizes that while she has school and credit card debt, Jeremy not only is debt-free but also has stocks. Jeremy decides to pay Kate's student loans off as a wedding gift to her, leaving her with only \$4,000 of credit card debt which he generously tells her she can pay off before contributing to their living expenses. Again this is a glaring example of how differently they were raised. Kate realizes how little she learned from her parents about being an adult as Jeremy reveals the disparity in their financial situations. At that same time, Violet lives on her own for the first time in her life and discovers that she enjoys the experience. This is also clearly an experience that should have happened earlier in her life, but without proper education in that area, neither of the twins have felt adequately prepared for life.

The importance of the pivotal role motherhood plays in a child's life is touched on as Jeremy's boss's wife, Xiaojian, informs Kate that she cannot possibly hope to have both children and a career, and assures Kate that if she tries, she will fail both. Xialjan is convinced that being a good mother meant staying at home to raise your children and anything less is a disservice to one's offspring. This ideal is not always a practical one for new parents financially speaking and Kate feels some resentment over the liberties the woman takes with her comments concerning Kate's ability to juggle motherhood and a career.

Visions and their impact on Kate and Violet's life continue throughout this story, but more specifically in this flashback segment as both Violet and Kate have precognitive visions that relate to the disappearance of a young boy three months previously. Although Kate tries to hide from that part of herself and refuses to give it free rein in her life, she is unable to prevent the visions from coming. She is also forced to acknowledge that without these visions, Brady Ogden might never have been found. The psychic abilities that Violet and Kate both share are discussed in front of Jeremy's boss in the restaurant when Tom's brother Laird recognize Kate and come over. When Kate asks



him, Jeremy jokes about this afterward, claiming he was not worried about marrying a witch and secretly hopes it will help get him tenure. This foreshadows a coming confrontation between them where this subject is concerned, as it is the second time that Jeremy has belittled Kate's psychic abilities.

Marriage and the importance of that institution is revealed as Kate recalls how she almost cancels her wedding to Jeremy because of Brady Ogden and the visions she and Violet get. Jeremy is less than understanding. He makes it clear that he does not want this event to set a precedent for the rest of their lives and as such, he delivers an ultimatum. Marry him now or not at all, which forces Kate to admit that her marriage to Jeremy is more important than her visions.

Discussion Question 1

How do Violet and Kate contribute to the discovery and rescue of Brady Ogden?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Kate want to postpone her wedding to Jeremy at the last moment, and how does Jeremy handle the situation?

Discussion Question 3

What does Kate's father contribute to the wedding as the father of the bride, and how does he explain his decisions to Kate before the wedding?

Vocabulary

prohibitively, proximity, ominousness, precedent, absolution, syllogism, disingenuous



Chapter 14

Summary

On the morning of October thirteenth Kate settles the children and begins the process of preparing for the coming earthquake, taking things off walls and lugging them and the standing lamp down to the basement for safety. She had already boxed up their dishes. Then Kate makes a shopping list for Target and when Kendra arrives, Kate takes Owen with her once again. At Target, the cashier tells her that they are out of bottled water, and each shipment they get immediately sells out again.

Later Kate goes to Blueberry Hill and orders a hamburger with fries and a beer for lunch. When the waiter leaves, she turns to find Jeremy and Courtney standing there. They join her for lunch and Jeremy asks why Owen isn't with the sitter along with Rosie. Kate lies, and claims he was fussing and Jeremy seems disappointed that Kate isn't able to take herself for the manicure he thought she got weekly. He takes Owen from her so that she can eat, and when the waiter arrives with Kate's beer, he looks somewhat alarmed. Kate invites him to sample it, and Jeremy takes a sip and then to her surprise, he passes it to Courtney to try as well. They both decide to get one and no one mentions Violet or her prediction. When Owen really does begin to fuss, Kate is finally able to gracefully excuse herself.

When Jeremy comes home, he acknowledges how weird the lunch was, but claims that he and Courtney are not having an affair. In fact, Courtney had just told him about her abortion and asked him if Kate knew. Jeremy had lied and said no and adds that he doesn't like the fact that she is unaware that Hank had already told Kate.

Just before nine that evening, Marisa shows up on the doorstep and after apologizing for the hour, she asks to speak to Daisy. Kate introduces her to Jeremy and Marisa comments that seeing Kate in the park was fate adding that the guy she was with was her boyfriend Ryan. She gives Kate a bit of background on their relationship and then asks Kate if he ever plans to marry her. Kate is stunned, having thought Marisa had come over to apologize for the past, not pump her for personal information again. Marisa offers Kate her text number asking Kate to call her if anything comes to her on the subject.

After she leaves, Jeremy is about to pack when Kate again insists she doesn't want him to go. She becomes increasingly frantic when Jeremy tries to apply logic to the situation. Jeremy tries to joke about the situation, but Kate isn't amused. Jeremy finally admits that he doesn't really want to go either, but since everyone he works with is aware of the fact that Violet is related by marriage, they would presume he stayed home because he believed her, and he would lose all credibility in his department. He promises to keep his phone on and with him at all times, and to answer it no matter when she calls, but Kate isn't reassured. To add insult to injury, he is giving Courtney a ride to the airport as well and Kate can't help but notice the absence of all kid related



baggage which is a luxury she hasn't known since the children were born. Promising her it will be fine, he leaves.

Analysis

In this segment, premonitions continue to be of importance as Kate's confidence in Violet's prediction of a coming earthquake is more clearly revealed when Kate removes all wall hangings, photos and anything else that may become damaged, carting them to the basement for safekeeping. She buys paper plates and cups, having long since packed up half of the kitchen as well. The state of her preparations indicates that while she would prefer that her precognitive abilities simply vanish, she still places a lot of stock in the fact that Violet has seen an earthquake in their future. She also becomes increasingly frantic as she realizes that Jeremy still plans to go to his conference in Denver, despite how she alternates between begging him to stay, and being angry with him for still insisting on going.

Kate continues to keep secrets, and play emotional games with herself where her children and the sitter, Kendra are concerned. Despite assuring herself each time that next time she will leave Owen with Kendra as well, she consistently changes her mind when the day arrives and leaves Rosie at home with Kendra alone. Kate tells herself that it is to give Rosie a version of a play date with Kendra, but the fact that she keeps this a secret from Jeremy indicates that there is more to the fact that she seems unable to leave Owen behind. Jeremy still thinks she gets a manicure each week and enjoys some time without the children in a well deserved break but the ongoing decision to give Rosie time without them both continues.

Lies catch up with Kate and give her the opportunity to come clean when Jeremy and Courtney come across her and Owen when she stops for lunch at Blueberry Hill. Jeremy asks why she has Owen with her, and rather than just admit the truth – that somehow she hadn't been able to leave him with the sitter yet, she lies again blaming Owen for being fussy and therefore required her to take him.

Recognition and the impact it has had in Kate's life reveals how and why she has hidden from this part of herself since her days with Marisa. Despite her efforts to remain anonymous, recognition continues to follow her as she is pegged by the cashier at Target as the mirror image of the psychic. Marisa shows up on Kate and Jeremy's doorstep in the evening. Kate actually expects an apology of sorts for the past, but instead Marisa questions her about her current boyfriend as though nothing untoward had ever occurred between them. Jeremy watches the whole episode with growing interest as Kate explains that she can't help her. Jeremy gives her advice as to how to talk to her boyfriend Ryan herself. Ironically, Marisa intends to leave town for the predicted earthquake and is surprised to see that despite having taken her photos off the wall, Kate is remaining in St. Louis.

Jealousy is a new feeling for Kate as she becomes increasingly aware of Courtney's place in her husband's life when they inadvertently run into each other at lunch. Sitting



there with Owen, Kate is acutely aware of the fact that her husband is an intelligent, educated professor who would likely be discussing science or physics but for her presence. Instead, she can only offer up anecdotes of child rearing. She recalls an article that revealed a stereotype of smart men who like to be involved with intelligent women, providing of course that they aren't more intelligent than he is. For the first time, she feels like Jeremy's sweet but clueless wife and can't help but wonder if his insistence on going to Denver is anchored in his desire to spend time there with Courtney. She sees Jeremy give Courtney a look that appears apologetic as they join her, and it is just the beginning of small mannerisms that rub her the wrong way throughout lunch. When the waiter brings Kate the beer she ordered, and Jeremy questions it, she offers him a taste. He takes one and without thinking, passes it to Courtney for a taste as well. It is a gesture that seems overtly intimate to her, and irritates her. She asks if they lunch there often and both laugh which has Kate feeling even less friendly and more hostile towards Courtney.

Intuition is strong in Kate and Jeremy's marriage as is revealed when he calls her after their lunch and admits that although things were a bit weird, it isn't for the reasons she thinks, insisting he is not having an affair with Courtney. The admission embarrasses Kate for her lack of trust in him rather than reassuring her. This admission from him, along with their strained lunch together seems to foreshadow possible trust issues in the future. The whole situation makes Kate wonder if Jeremy has any lingering doubts where her friendship with Hank is concerned.

Discussion Question 1

Who catches Kate in a lie, and why doesn't she take that opportunity to come clean?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Marisa look Kate up, and how does Jeremy respond to Marisa's visit?

Discussion Question 3

What argument is Kate unable to defend against when Jeremy explains his insistence that he has to go to the Denver conference?

Vocabulary

paraphernalia, altimetry, virtuous, antipathy, assuaged, unrepentant, incrementally



Chapter 15

Summary

Kate has flashbacks of Rosie's birth and how Violet visited the hospital after she was born. Kate remembers the early adjustments to feeding schedules and considers the many firsts in Rosie's life including her first smile, the first time Rosie sleeps in her own room, and her first exposures to the public.

When the time came for Kate to return to the elderly care home and for Rosie to begin going to daycare, Kate noticed for the first time that some of the children had runny noses, and many of the toys appeared to have been chewed on. She dreamed that Rosie was looking out at her from a prison cell. As the weeks passed, Kate's anxiety came and went so Jeremy took Rosie to daycare in an effort to alleviate some of the stress Kate felt.

Jeremy's mother and stepfather visited a week after Rosie was born and his mother Carol came again when Rosie was five months old. Both Kate and Jeremy were surprised when she announced one afternoon that she was going to attend a seance. Kate knew immediately who was hosting it and decided to go with her. Violet was surprised to see her there and after making sure everyone had a drink, they began. She introduced Carol and Kate, delivered a prayer and a monologue that reminded them all that in the busy world they lived in they should still take the time to be playful. She went around the room, listening and supporting her clients with vague outlines and more direct suggestions to improve or enhance the situations they were in. Kate could not help but think that Carol was totally unimpressed by Violet and her gathering. An hour later they all joined hands and Violet offered a final prayer. On the way home Carol asked questions and remained surprisingly supportive.

When they returned to the house, Jeremy told her that Rosie was fussy but finally went to sleep. At three the next morning Rosie woke them crying with a fever and by six that morning Kate could see that one eye was puffy and pink, opening only about a third as much as usual. Her temperature was two degrees higher, over a 303 degrees, so after seeing Carol off at the airport they took her in to see the pediatrician. Diagnosed with cellulitis, the doctor suggested they take her to children's hospital just to be sure. She was given intravenous antibiotics, and Kate tried not to worry. They decided to keep her overnight and after rocking her to sleep, Kate put her onto the mattress gently. Jeremy raised the bars, clanging them and waking her. In that moment, Kate's dream came back to her. She clearly saw Rosie behind the bars that she had seen in her vision, and although Jeremy tried to calm both Kate and Rosie down, Kate was all but inconsolable. He insisted that Kate could not have prevented the issue. It took two full days before the antibiotics began to work, and the swelling in Rosie's eye went down enough for her to begin opening it.



Violet learned about Rosie from Jeremy and came to the hospital. It took another full day before Rosie was released and Kate never took her back to daycare, despite having prepaid a month's tuition. Instead, she quit her job, to the envy of her boss, and Jeremy told her they could manage on his salary alone provided that she stopped buying Rosie the \$50 Swedish pajamas online and just replenished her monthly clothes at Target.

For the entire summer in that first year, Kate's heart clenched with every little thing. She stopped leaving Rosie with Kendra, and hung around the house instead, refusing to leave her with anyone. When Rosie was eight months old, Kate went outside while she was napping and wrote the words "having senses" on a piece of paper. She burned it in a bowl, praying that it worked and eliminated her premonitions along with the constant dread she felt. She still had hunches, but now she questioned them. When she got her first speeding ticket with no inkling of it coming, she began to relax and go out without Rosie now and then. Eight months later, she was pregnant with Owen.

Analysis

Kate's expectations of motherhood are challenged. Instead of the life of tedium and inertia she'd prepared herself for, Kate discovered motherhood as a glorious experience. Kate develops other senses – those of motherhood. She notices threats to her new baby that she never noticed before such as other children's illnesses and how unreasonable it seems to her now that only two people should have the care and control of eight infants when it takes all of her attention and energy to look after just one.

Precognition is again revealed as strong in Violet as she continues to exhibit the strength of her senses, saying she knows that Kate is having her baby. Violet presents Kate with an antique perfume holder as a gift for her new niece. Surprisingly, it has a white and pink rose painted on one side, although Violet does not know at the time that Kate and Jeremy have decided to name their daughter Rosie.

Jeremy's mother and father are introduced. Family is an important theme in this segment as new parenthood brought Jeremy's parents to visit more often. Kate likes Jeremy's mother Carol, and was more than anxious when she announced that she was going to a seance. Kate wanted to attend so that she could keep Violet from making Carol change the way she sees her. Violet is surprised to see Kate as it is the first time she had ever attended. Still trying to hide her senses from the world, Kate endeavored to answer Carol's questions on the way there despite the fact that she was still having premonitions now and then. Kate comes away from the session with a new appreciation for what her sister does, and respect for the way she handles herself.

Parenting is revealed to be an emotional roller coaster for Kate, especially the first time Rosie becomes ill. A premonition comes to her of Rosie crying behind bars as though she is in jail. This later reveals itself to be a trip to the hospital and Kate becomes almost hysterical when she recognizes her vision in reality. A three-day stay in the hospital is required before Rosie is released and on the way to recovery from cellulitis.



The incident fills Kate with guilt that alternates with the terrifying reality that Rosie might not get better. When the doctor describes the possible complications including meningitis and cavernous sinus thrombosis, Kate bargains and pleads with the forces of the universe. She cannot help but compare and contrast the way she feels in that moment with her own mother must have felt, and for the first time contemplates the possibility that she may lose her daughter. The thought makes Kate contemplate suicide briefly and while most of the time Kate cannot believe her mother committed suicide, this is one time when she feels the possibility exists that perhaps she had. Kate wonders how her mother could have done such a thing when her concerns, though they may have been dire, had nothing to do with her children.

Guilt weighs heavily on Kate during this time as she feels responsible for the illness Rosie gets, and is angry with herself for going to Violet's home with Carol rather than staying home to monitor her daughter. The guilt still simmers in her when Violet arrives and innocently asks if they ever went to the hospital as children. Kate wonders if Violet is implying something about her parenting skills, which of course she is not. Kate compares her confidence in the competence of the doctors and nurses in the hospital to that of the flight crew of an airplane during turbulence, as both are out of her hands and terrifying at the same time as they are inspirational.

Budgeting is an important part of becoming an adult and Jeremy reinforces this issue when Kate quits her job to be a stay-at-home mom with Rosie. Jeremy doesn't argue or disagree, but after a careful look at his income verses their bills, he tells her that they can afford for her to stay home, but only if she refrains from buying any more of the expensive Swedish pajamas, especially since Rosie grows out of them each month.

Anxiety is high in Kate after Rosie comes home from the hospital. Kate is not only worried that something awful might befall her daughter, but also that her anxiety is justified because of her psychic talents which reinforce that she has reason to be anxious. She feels as though she has been betrayed by her instincts. Desperation sets in as Kate seeks a way to cope with her growing and unrelenting anxiety where Rosie is concerned. To fix the situation, Kate tries to eliminate her premonitions by writing down "Having senses" on a piece of paper and then burning it. This rite is one that she believes will help, despite a lifetime of dreams and premonitions. She still has them afterward, aware that the dental hygienist is being abused by her boyfriend for example, but now she feels confident enough to doubt her intuitions which gives her a sense of deniability where frightening thoughts are concerned.

Discussion Question 1

What outing has Carol planned during her stay with Jeremy and Kate, and why is Kate at all concerned about it?



Discussion Question 2

Why does Rosie end up in the hospital and in what ways do Jeremy and Kate handle things differently?

Discussion Question 3

How does Kate deal with the constant anxiety of parenthood after Rosie gets sick and how effective is her solution?

Vocabulary

intermittent, mollified, titillated, affability, reminiscent, lethargic, beneficence, plausible



Chapter 16

Summary

After Jeremy leaves for the airport, Kate sends Hank a text suggesting the park but he wants to go to Kaldi's for coffee first. When they meet, he admits that he's been invited to an earthquake party. Kate still has no intentions of appearing on the Today show with Violet, and Hank wonders if Violet will go on without her. Hank's behavior is light and flirtatious when he says goodbye. Later in the day Hank texts Kate to tell her that Violet is attending a private vigil at the Mind & Spirit Bookstore that evening.

After putting the children to bed, Kate tries to decide how to occupy her time. She has already organized emergency supplies in the basement, put important documents together in a plastic bag, stored the china and pulled down all the wall hangings. She decides to call her father and invite him to come over if he wants company, but he is giving Violet a ride to her event which starts at five. After hanging up, she hears a intermittent rattling in the kitchen, and sends a text to Jeremy advising him they have a mouse. He calls her back almost right away, and tells her where the traps are and how to set one up.

Hank calls seeking absolution for having eaten meat in Courtney's absence for the first time in ten years or more and Kate impulsively invites him and Amelia to stop by which they do. Hank asks her if she is okay, and Kate quietly wishes that he would stay, but tells him she's fine. After he leaves, she puts Jeremy's sleeping bag on the floor outside the children's room determined to camp out in the hall between the two rooms.

The next morning it is raining, and Kate wakes thinking that Violet is wrong. Relieved, she showers, and gets the kids up. Jeremy calls and tells her that his cousin from Minneapolis had just texted him wanting to know if Matt Lauer is really in Violet's living room. Kate turns the television in time to hear him ask Violet if she'll be embarrassed if she's wrong, but Violet claims she would be thrilled if that is the case. Jeremy asks her if she caught the mouse but the traps are still empty.

Kate decides to take Rosie Halloween costume shopping, and invites Hank to join them but before they can get going, she gets a call from Relax Massage asking her to come and get her father who has fainted. Hank offers to watch Rosie, and she gratefully accepts, taking Owen with her. Hank takes Rosie to Target for a costume and Kate retrieves her father and takes him home. When they get there, Hank calls her, and asks if she can come to him at Target. Rosie had loudly announced that Hank isn't her father, and security is holding him until she could be reached. Kate leaves immediately, and the security guard at Target asks her for proof of identification before releasing Rosie to her and letting Hank go. At home, Kate feeds the children and Jeremy calls sounding strange. He admits that maybe he was wrong and she was right, but Kate has no idea what he means until he tells her about the news on CNN regarding an eighteen wheeler which had crashed into the day care center Rosie used to go to. Only the driver was



injured because most parents had kept their children at home fearing the earthquake predicted for the day. Kate calms him down, and talks him out of leaving the conference immediately. They talk about the incident with her father. Kate makes a doctor's appointment for her father the next Monday and he agrees not to drive Violet to her vigil. He tells Kate then that when he woke that morning to rain, he'd been sure the earthquake wouldn't happen on that day, just as Kate had been. Kate is stunned by his admission.

Hank calls, having decided to skip the earthquake party and offers to bring over Chinese food. They eat and talk about the quake. Hank asks Kate directly if she'd ever had senses like Violet, but she tells him not like her sister does, trying not to burden him with her psychic history and the drama that surrounded it in the past. After dinner, they put all three children to bed and sit down with a beer. As they sit there watching television, Kate becomes aware of an inappropriate kind of tension between them. Owen wakes for a feeding, and while she tends to him, she realizes to her shock that she wants to sleep with Hank and knows she should get him out of the house fast. Heart pounding and overcome with lust, she sits down beside him at his invitation. Kate tries to think about Jeremy as she suggests they go to the zoo the next day. Hank agrees and they talk about the incident at Target and how it points to other similar issues in his life. She tells him about her psychic dilemma, filling him in on her past, and after talking for a while, he comments that kissing her would probably not be the best idea. Although she could have stopped everything right there, Kate leans forward and kisses him instead. They have sex on the couch, Kate comparing him without thinking to Jeremy, who didn't exist for her in those moments. She reaches a climax minutes before Hank who is still thrusting when the mouse trap in the kitchen snaps. Hank leaves soon after, and Kate is left to simmer in regret and surprise that she had ended her marriage so easily.

The doorbell rings after 11 and Kate lets Violet in. Violet had left the vigil by sneaking out the back door, and reveals she is relieved that she had been wrong. Kate tells her about their father and the massage parlor, and reveals that he had basically confessed that he had psychic senses as well. Violet is as stunned as she was. The news is still on television, and they watch the accident at the daycare center. CNN has the same opinion as Jeremy had. If Violet hadn't publicized her prediction, the children would have been there and would likely have been killed or at least injured. As such, Violet's prediction had saved lives. As they watch the segment, Violet beams and admits she drove herself over.

Analysis

Friendship and the pivotal role it plays in Kate and Hank's life continues to be revealed as they follow their normal morning routine, taking the kids to the park after a coffee at Kaldi's. Kate tells him about meeting Jeremy and Courtney at Blueberry Hill and Hank comments that she was finally busted for lying about not leaving Owen with the sitter. Kate admits that she covered that lie with yet another lie, telling Jeremy it was a one-



time thing revealing that Kate has more trust in Hank than she does in her husband. This foreshadows a possible conflict between Hank and Jeremy.

Psychic perceptions and their importance in Kate and Violet's life is shown as the anticipated earthquake is the subject of much discussion. Hank admits he was invited to an earthquake party and he and Kate joke about the juxtaposition of Violet appearing on the Today show in the morning, and attending a private vigil in the evening, embracing publicity first and privacy afterward. Kate thinks it is ridiculous. While some people are convinced the prediction is accurate, stocking up on emergency supplies and keeping their children home from school or daycare or even leaving town for the day of the prediction, others mock the idea that anyone could predict an earthquake in advance. Kate finally confesses her psychic past to Hank and tells him about how she'd wanted to adopt as a result. He asks if her children have shown any signs of ability and although they haven't, she admits that she feels as though she is waiting for another shoe to fall. When midnight arrives and no earthquake happens, Violet is not humiliated as she thought she'd be. Instead, she feels a distinct relief telling Kate that she'd dreamed of a church falling down, and dead bodies in front of it, describing the setting as perhaps Nigerian.

Flirtation vies for Kate's attention while denial reigns supreme. When Hank first begins to flirt with Kate, she either isn't aware of it or simply refuses to acknowledge the likelihood or the possible problems it might create at first. A simple gesture from Hank when he says goodbye has her considering her friendship with him after she is at home alone. When Kate invites him over later, she can't help but feel momentarily strange about him coming over when neither Jeremy nor Courtney is home. This on its own should have been enough to warn Kate that she was making a mistake, but she ignores the feelings she is having.

Race and the ongoing disparity between black and white is examined in this segment as Kate leaves Rosie with Hank for a short time as she deals with a medical issue with her father. Hank, with Kate's knowledge, takes Rosie to Target to shop for a Halloween costume and while they are there, Rosie looks at an elderly gentleman and loudly proclaims "He's not my daddy." A customer mistakenly thinks Rosie is talking about Hank, and contacts security who promptly takes Hank and Rosie into custody until the issue can be resolved. While Hank morosely accepts the stereotypical response to a black man with a white child, Kate is mortified and angry but she can't help but remember other issues in which the fact that Hank is black had affected their behavior or plans. Later Hank will admit to Kate that perhaps marrying a white woman and having a baby half black and half white was a selfish thing to do and that Courtney was probably right when she told him that having a half black, half white retarded baby would be too many hurdles for any child to overcome.

Marriage, and the give and take that occurs in a relationship of that kind is considered by Kate as she and Jeremy exchange places emotionally. At first she had begged Jeremy not to go to the conference in Denver, fearing that she would have to face the possible chaos of an earthquake on her own with the children but although he recognizes her anxiety, Jeremy goes to the conference anyway. Later, when Jeremy



learns of an eighteen wheeler that had destroyed the daycare center Rosie had once gone to, he is so emotional that Kate is sure he is crying which is something he never does. He tells her he is coming home early, and rather than rejoice, Kate talks him out of it, assuring him that they are fine and he did not need to. She wonders if he realizes they had changed places emotionally.

Infidelity enters Kate and Jeremy's relationship as Kate and Hank cross the boundaries from friendship to bed partners. There is only one single incident, and Kate is acutely aware of her betrayal even before Hank finishes. By then, Kate has already crossed an ocean of regret and disbelief. He asks her after they redress if she is okay, and though she says she is, she is also aware that she probably just ruined her marriage. Despite this, when he immediately suggests he should get Amelia home, Kate feels rejected. After he leaves, she can't understand how such a destructive act could have come so easily to her and contemplates whether or not to tell Jeremy, knowing that whatever had happened, she and Hank were finished. In the kitchen, she disposes of the mouse that had snapped in the trap while they were having sex – an apt metaphor for what she had just done to her marriage.

Discussion Question 1

What is the main reason that Hank is detained at Target, and what other indicators does Kate remember that point to an ongoing issue for him from a strictly racial perspective?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Jeremy change his mind about Kate's anxiety where Violet's prediction is concerned and in what way does it cause them to temporarily trade places in their marriage?

Discussion Question 3

What does Kate do that might cost her marriage, and why does she do it?

Vocabulary

consolidating, amorphous, deign, acquiesced, retrospect, extricating, reconnaissance



Chapter 17

Summary

Kate remembers how she and Hank first reconnected in Rosie's music class when she realized first that one of the parents in the class was black and then recognized him as Courtney's husband. Several weeks later, Kate convinced Jeremy to join a class with her so that he could see how cute Rosie was, and he agreed, but tells her that he found the class to be tedious. At that point Kate realized that Jeremy could never be a stay-at-home dad like Hank. Kate recognized a certain amount of surprise in the other women that a man - and especially a black man - was present in the class. She ended up having to borrow a diaper from Hank, having forgotten to bring a spare, and he invited them to join him and Amelia at the Bread Company. It is quickly clear to Kate that she and Hank would become friends especially after he comments that while the department head for their spouses Leland Marcus seems okay, his wife is another story. Kate tells him about how she'd badgered her about being a working mother. Their conversation graduated to observations he made about stars Jessica Simpson and John Mayer, surprising Kate by adding that Courtney leaves magazines like US Weekly. He told her that he used to be a high school art teacher, and had reasoned that he could paint when Courtney came home, but that just didn't happen.

The two families had become quick friends and that rapidly developed into best friends. Hank and Courtney had passed on Amelia's old clothes for Rosie, and soon Hank and Kate were meeting up with the kids almost every weekday while Jeremy and Courtney began getting coffee together at work. Courtney invited Kate to become her running partner, telling her she runs about six miles a day starting at about five in the morning, but that is something beyond Kate's ambitions.

On the way home, Kate and Jeremy talked about their new friends, and Kate promised jokingly not to fall in love with Hank if he promised not to fall in love with Courtney.

Analysis

Race and racial observations are part of Kate's memories as she recalls how she first gets to know Hank. It is embarrassing to her that what stood out about Hank the first time they meet is not just that he is the only man in the children's music class, but also and especially that he is the only black person in the room.

Friendship is important in this segment as Kate shares her memories of the Wheeling's and how their relationship develops through the years, beginning with camaraderie that centered on the children they have, and growing from there to friendship and onward to good friends. It is ironic that Kate should tell Jeremy in the beginning of their friendships with Courtney and Hank that if he agrees not to fall in love with Courtney, she will agree not to fall in love with Hank.



Proprieties are considered by Kate when, after their first music class with their children, she stifles the instinct to invite them to join her and Rosie at a nearby smoothie place. The issue is resolved when Hank feels no qualms about inviting them to the Bread Company.

Parenthood is on Kate's mind as she finds herself comparing and contrasting Hank and Jeremy, seeing the differences between them and appreciating their strengths while understanding their weakness. Hank is a solid father with an easy disposition who competently cared for three-year-old Amelia while Jeremy, although a loving father and husband, and an excellent provider, does not have the patience to ever become a stay-at-home dad. This is an observation that Kate makes after taking Jeremy to a music class for Rosie.

Children and the love they inspire from their parents is discussed when Hank and Kate go to the Bread Company after the first music lesson. Hank comments that the depth of the love he feels for Amelia is terrifying, relating his feelings after Kate has told him about Rosie's bout with cellulitis and the hospital.

Discussion Question 1

What observation does Kate make during the first music class that foreshadows a possible tryst in their future?

Discussion Question 2

How does Hank end up as a stay-at-home dad, and how would Jeremy fair in his place with Rosie and Owen if he were a stay at home father?

Discussion Question 3

What does Courtney suggest in an effort to try to forge a friendship with Kate and how does Jeremy respond to her suggestion?

Vocabulary

ludicrously, culminated, reconfiguring, logistical, intimidation, interracial



Chapter 18

Summary

Violet helps herself to leftover Chinese food and Kate invites her to spend the night. She tells Kate about her experience driving and is able to laugh at how her prediction caused the mostly empty roadways that made the drive less challenging overall. They go upstairs and Violet gets into bed first. When Kate climbs in beside her, Violet bolts up and announces Kate reeks of sex, asking her if she is having an affair while Jeremy is out of town. Kate changes the subject and asks how Stephanie is doing. Violet admits she hasn't seen her since they'd argued about the way she'd handled a question from an interviewer who had presumed her mate was a male. Stephanie had listened to the interview and was furious that Violet hadn't corrected the misconception. Kate believes that if Violet apologizes, Stephanie will take her back. Finally, having had enough time to gather a response, she tells Violet that she and Jeremy had sex before he left.

They talk about Emma and how much her services cost. Kate asks if Violet managed to secure licensing fee payments, but Violet admits that although the Today show wanted to use family photos, she'd declined knowing that Kate wouldn't like it. Kate reminds her that Owen will be up in just two hours, and they finally drift off side-by-side much as they'd done in their younger years.

In the morning there are two texts and two voice mails from Jeremy along with one from Hank sent before he'd gone to bed. He asks if she is alright, and tells her that Courtney will be home around noon, suggesting they talk before then. Violet is still asleep so Kate leaves her a note which says she's gone for a walk with the kids. She heads over to Hank's where they sit in the back yard and although Hank still seems like himself, Kate is now acutely aware of the more intimate parts of her best friend. They talk and agree that trying to find their way in life together now would likely backfire on them. They decide a unified front is crucial regardless of whether or not they confess their indiscretion. Either way, Kate and Hank agree that the decision has to be the same for both of them. After some discussion, they both realize that telling their spouses would only assuage their own guilt and do damage to their relationships that may be irreparable. They decide they won't tell and agree that they will talk to each other first if one of them decides differently. Owen begins to fuss and Kate heads home with her children, unaware that her friendship with Hank is over and she won't see him again.

Violet is making breakfast when she gets back. They talk about the origins of the date Kate thought the earthquake would occur on - October sixteenth - and Violet understands how Kate could have made a mistake based on what had happened at the daycare center, but she can't understand why she felt the date was right as well. She can't conceive of Guardian steering her in the wrong direction, but admits that she never really got a distinct date. Kate doesn't want to think about the implications, and the fact that she'd upset the entire city because of the sense she'd had that something large



was coming. In a moment of narcissism, she'd never considered the warning was meant for her.

Jeremy is home on Sunday, and takes Kate upstairs right away when he learns that both children are in bed. After having sex with him, she bursts into tears and the matter only worsens as Jeremy tries to comfort her. He keeps telling her he knows, but of course he doesn't which only makes Kate feel worse.

Analysis

Guilt and the strength of that emotion surrounds Kate and her actions even before Hank goes home with Amelia. She prefers not to think about it at all if possible, inviting Violet to spend the night with her to distract her from the inevitable. Kate's guilt is even more profound when she and her sister climb into bed and Violet notices she smells of sex. Kate is grateful that the room is dark and Violet can't see her expression. A part of her wants to confess, but somehow that feels like even more of a betrayal to Jeremy. Instead, she tells Violet that she'd been with Jeremy before he left and hadn't showered since, a big part of her wishing it was true and that she could rewind the evening and do things differently.

Fear continues to play a pivotal role in this story as Violet finally overcomes her fear of driving when she borrows Patrick's car to drive to Kate's house that evening. It is her first driving experience in many years and she jokes about it the subject as she describes herself alternately coping, and then wondering if she's coming unglued. Thankfully, the roads were empty as a result of their earthquake prediction, she jokes.

Finances are still on Kate's mind as Violet acknowledges the steep rates Emma charges for her services. Part of Kate is hopeful that Violet might generate some kind of licensing fees as a result of her instant fame, and pay some of the money back but ironically now is when Violet discovers the value of integrity over income and refuses to capitalize on their family connection. Ironically, Kate is both proud of her sister and disappointed at the same time.

Relationships and their fragility are examined on all fronts in this segment. Hank and Kate talk about their fall from fidelity and decide how to move forward. Although Kate recognizes it almost before their actions are fully consummated, Hank also comes around to the reality that they won't walk into the future hand-in-hand. They both recognize that their brief fall from grace will not be repeated, and although they aren't aware of it yet, their infidelity will be costly in ways neither has yet considered. Stephanie and Violet's relationship is on the rocks after Violet mishandles an interview, allowing the reporter to assume that her mate is of the opposite sex without correcting the mistake for the record. She then fails to apologize to Stephanie afterward, not realizing how deeply Stephanie's feelings are hurt. Kate is convinced that an apology will go a long way to fixing their issues.



Family continues to be a steadying influence for Kate as she leans on Violet's presence to keep her from thinking too much about how she's possibly destroyed her own family. When Kate walks over to Hank's in the morning, they talk about how in another life their relationship might have been possible, but both of them now ironically rediscover the value of the family life they already have, and neither is inclined to do anything to make the situation any worse than it already is. Kate also understands and appreciates the irony of the fact that none of this had occurred to her the previous evening as she was breaking her vows to Jeremy. It is the mousetrap snapping shut in the kitchen that also snaps her out of the lust that had overwhelmed her common sense before Hank is even finished. She realizes that had Jeremy been with her on the couch instead of Hank, they would have stopped and laughed about the interruption, but Hank appears oblivious as he finally finishes.

Consequences form the basis for the conversation Hank and Kate have the following morning as they decide how to deal with their indiscretion. Hank reveals his hopes that he and Courtney make it through the rough patch they are in, and come out stronger for it. He tells Kate that he believes in her relationship with Jeremy as well. Once again the irony isn't lost on Kate. Both she and Hank have come to the same conclusion that their marriages are worth saving and protecting, but neither of them considered that the previous evening. Another way in which consequences play a vital role in this story relates directly to Kate's contribution to the earthquake prediction. When October the sixteenth comes and goes without so much as a tremble, and the daycare center is damaged instead, Kate realizes the hubris of her contribution, and the fact that she was at least 50% responsible for the panic and anxiety the prediction caused in St. Louis. She realizes that the consequences for her narcissism only reinforced her reasons for wanting to put her psychic ability behind her once and for all.

Honesty is challenged as Hank wants to ensure that he and Kate are coming to the same decision with regard to how honest they plan to be with their spouses. Hank can easily imagine a divorce in his future should Courtney become aware of what had happened, but Kate is almost sure that while the information would devastate Jeremy, the chances were good that he would stay with her and the children even if he was miserable for it. She wonders if she could convince him of the fleeting impulsiveness of the whole event. They decide that silence is their best option, and neither seems aware of the further reaching consequences of their actions. Their brief moment of lust will cost them a valuable friendship, and result in long term reminds of their fall from grace.

Predictions and senses are the subject of conversation when Kate gets back home. Violet considers the earthquake prediction and the reason Kate likely was so convinced that the date it was going to occur on was the sixteenth of October. She understands that Kate's connection to the daycare center likely played a large part in Kate's premonition, but can't understand why she would be misled by Guardian. Kate recalls how it hadn't been Violet who said the earthquake would be local, but the reporter who had interviewed her. As such, and combined with the fact that her date could be explained, the earthquake still loomed on the horizon.



Discussion Question 1

How does Kate distract herself from her recent infidelity, and why is she so eager to put it behind her?

Discussion Question 2

How does Hank want to handle their recent tryst and what is his reasoning?

Discussion Question 3

What does Kate do when Jeremy returns and how does he misinterpret her behavior?

Vocabulary

integrity, parallel, exuberance, impulsivity, absolution, retroactively



Chapter 19

Summary

The following week Kate leaves Owen and Rosie with Kendra for the first time together and then picks up her father for lunch and their weekly shopping trip. Violet meets them at the Hacienda and introduces her father to her girlfriend Stephanie.

Kate discusses having senses with her father, and learns that she and Violet had inherited the ability from him. He reveals other truths about having senses, including how they can be both a gift and a curse at times. He makes it clear that he prefers to keep his senses to himself, and for the first time reveals how his abilities had impacted his life.

For days Kate avoids places she and Hank used to go with the kids but then finally returns to DeMun Park. It is still days more before she stops anxiously looking for them each time they go. On the morning of Thanksgiving, Kate buys a pregnancy test and uses it when she gets home. It is positive and just in case, hoping there is a mistake, she uses the second test in the box but it yields the same result. She buries both tests in a garbage bag, knowing that the father could be either Jeremy or Hank. She considers the procedures she can take to learn the baby's paternity. While both carried a small amount of risk according to the internet, somehow the idea of finding out surreptitiously seems to compound how treacherous she already feels so she decides to have Violet do a reading for her instead.

When Kate gets to Violet's she explains the situation, coming clean for the first time. Violet asks why she doesn't do her own reading, and Kate tells her she isn't psychic anymore. Surprised, Violet closes her eyes and asks Guardian for help. Kate can feel the presence in the room when Violet makes contact and when she opens her eyes, Kate knows immediately. They talk about abortion and Kate reveals yet another secret she'd been keeping, telling Violet about Courtney, and explains that she simply can't abort this child. Violet plays out the possibilities, asking her if she plans to share custody with the Wheeling family, but Kate still hasn't thought that far ahead. Violet's last comment is to Kate informs her that she is carrying another son.

Later, when the children are settled in bed, Kate tells Jeremy that she loves him and confesses the truth about her and Hank's liaison adding that now she is pregnant with his child to get it all out in the open at once. After a moment of stunned silence, he questions how she can be so sure it is Hank's child and she admits that she'd asked Violet to do a reading. Jeremy is angry as well as skeptical. He questions whether Hank knows and she assures him that she hasn't told him. She volunteers that they only slept together once and apologizes repeatedly. Grasping for answers, he asks Kate if she thought he was having an affair with Courtney, and although it would have helped mitigate the circumstances, she opts to continue with the truth, admitting that she didn't believe he'd been unfaithful. They discuss the ramifications of having a dark skinned



son and Jeremy is openly hostile. Then he simply gets up and leaves, unsure if he'll return. Kate sobs herself out as the ramifications of the situation run through her mind again and again. Finally, she climbs into bed alone. Jeremy returns after midnight and climbs into bed facing away from her. The morning is subdued and before leaving for work Jeremy tells Kate to call and schedule a CVS. That night Rosie talks about her upcoming birthday party, and Jeremy leaves the room unable to hold in the volumes of his grief. Nine days later a CVS confirms Violet's reading. Dr. Rosenstein asks Kate if she is surprised when she reveals the outcome of the test, and Kate admits she isn't. They go through the days like sleepwalkers. Once they know for sure, they sit down and discuss the situation.

Later that night, when she comes in after feeding Owen, Jeremy calls her to him and tells her to disrobe. She understands somehow that this is a penance of sorts as he questions her about the night she had sex with Hank. His questions are increasingly crude and intimate, and Kate can only continue to tell him that there is no one but him in her life. Jeremy tells Kate how they are going to handle the situation, having already decided how they will explain a potentially black child to their friends and family. He insists that they leave the area, and that Hank not be told about the baby. Kate meekly agrees to all of the conditions he places on their future, just grateful that he still sees them as having one together.

At Christmas, Violet, their father and Jeremy's parents come for dinner and afterward Violet asks if she ever mentioned her dream of an earthquake was filled with black people. Kate wishes the subject would just go away. Three weeks later, a magnitude 7 earthquake hits Haiti, killing and injuring many. Violet calls admitting she'd already heard from Emma but claims she is done with media to Kate's surprise. Two days later, Kate and Violet's father has an aneurysm and dies on the way to the hospital. They host a small service without a reception. Later Kate and Violet clear out his apartment, and discover a letter from a neurosurgeon confirming that their father had a subarachnoid hemorrhage with considerable risk if he did not have further treatment which he had declined. Many questions are left unanswered.

Six weeks after the Haiti earthquake, Chile suffers a magnitude 8.8 quake and in March 2011, Japan suffers a magnitude 9 quake killing over 15,000 people. In March, Stephanie and Violet move in together. In April, Hank sends Kate a text congratulating her on her pregnancy. It is the first text he has sent her since the morning after their indiscretion. He asks if they need to talk, and she assures him they don't. Jeremy gets the job at Cornell, and they move in May but Violet tells her not to worry because she will always live in Sisterland.

Gabriel is born at the end of June, his skin only slightly darker than Rosie's. At the age of two, his complexion is noticeably darker and his hair curlier. Kate is acutely careful not to complain about Gabriel or his care, even when things are very difficult. When Gabriel is four months old, Jeremy decides to get a vasectomy.

In the spring after Gabriel is born, he asks Kate who his daddy is and Kate tries not to think of the ramifications. Jeremy gives Kate an envelope he'd taken from her father's



apartment the night he'd died and holding the photos she has a premonition of her children as adults. They are looking at photos of her and Jeremy and Rosie exclaims that she can't believe how young they look.

Analysis

Guilt remains strong in Kate as she begins to pay the cost for her one night stand with Hank. Jeremy offers to watch the children often, behaving as though he needs the atonement rather than Kate which only makes her feel worse than she already does. She still hasn't spoken to Hank or texted him since the morning after their sexual encounter.

Violet's prediction is slow to recede from the public eye and memory. Kate wishes that it would all just go away. She asks her father if he has senses and he admits he sometimes does but that they were stronger when he was a younger man. He asks that she not tell Violet and adds that he is more like her than Violet, preferring to keep them to himself and calling the ability they share a double-edged sword. How having senses affected their family is more completely revealed as further conversation yields that Kate's father hadn't told their mother until after they were married that he had precognitive ability. He admits that he had known his wife was carrying twins, although she had not believed him. The first time he had seen their mother he had a sense about her having twins, seeing them at toddler age in matching bathing suits. He'd always thought his wife would get better and would enjoy being a mother, implying that she never had. He claimed that she had never recovered from the fact that her family had disowned her after she left and taken \$60 from her mother's purse on the way out. She had never forgiven herself.

Infidelity and its consequences are examined in this segment as Kate asks for Violet's help when she wants to know whether her baby is Jeremy's or Hank's. Violet contacts Guardian and Kate is surprised that it is entirely different from the entity that she'd been in contact with Marisa for – this one seemingly compassionate and protective.

Honesty is tempered with reality as Kate discovers she is pregnant and a reading from Violet reveals it is Hank's son. Violet is shocked and speechless for the first time that Kate can remember, and Kate is forced to come clean with Jeremy. After he digests the truth, he delivers certain ultimatums that include keeping Hank from learning Kate is carrying his child. She tells him she doesn't want an abortion, but that if he insisted, she would get one if it meant saving their marriage.

The strength of Violet's precognitive ability is reaffirmed when an earthquake finally comes to pass. Earthquakes measuring from magnitude 8 to 9 occur first in Haiti, then Chile and finally in Japan which suffers terrible loss of life. When Gabriel is a toddler, Kate sees the first stirrings of senses in him, and tries not to read too much into it. Gabriel not only tells his mother that he knows her name is Daisy, but also that Rosie and Owen's daddy is not his daddy foreshadowing a conversation in the future that Kate and Jeremy knew from the start would be in their future.



Consequences continue for Kate as Jeremy decides that no one should know the truth except for the child when he is older. Until then, if he has darker skin they will explain it by claiming there is Greek blood on one side or the other. He also insists that they leave St. Louis and the Wheeling family behind. He asks his mentor for a job at Cornell, and her punishment will include a move of almost 1,000 miles to somewhere she's never been and she will leave her father and Violet behind. Still, she feels like she is getting off easy. She tells him that she hopes he will come to forgive her in time, and he agrees.

Forgiveness is also strong as Jeremy works hard to move past the infidelity of his wife and the betrayal of their friend Hank. He insists on being the only father of record, leaving the area for good and never revealing the truth to anyone. Kate agrees, feeling as though she got off easy under the circumstances.

Change is evident on several levels. Kate and Violet's father suffers an aneurysm and dies on the way to the hospital; Violet moves in with Stephanie and Kate and Jeremy get ready to move out of the area.

Friendship is one of the sacrifices that Kate is forced to endure as a result of her poor judgement and infidelity. The morning after Kate and Hank sleep together is the last time that Kate will ever see Hank, and the friendship is forever forfeit as a result of their combined indiscretion.

Family and its importance are evident as Kate and Jeremy work hard to put their marriage back together after her extramarital encounter. He treats Gabriel as though he is his own, as he'd promised he would, and finds a way to forgive Kate although she will never be without blame for some of the life they now lead. To ensure they can continue together, he insists they leave the area, and Kate agrees without reservation.

Discussion Question 1

How does Violet's prediction eventually come true and how does she respond when she is vindicated where the media is concerned?

Discussion Question 2

What are Jeremy's conditions for Kate where their future is concerned after he learns of her infidelity and the resulting pregnancy?

Discussion Question 3

What do Kate and Violet learn about their father that changes how they felt about their mother and themselves?

Vocabulary

presumably, inaudible, atonement, complicity, prescient, estranged, cataclysmic, venality



Characters

Daisy Kathleen Shramm/Tucker (aka Kate Tucker)

Daisy and her twin sister Violet were born in Kirkwood, Missouri in August of 1975 and lived at home with their parents until after graduation. Daisy and Violet both have their mother's blue eyes and light colored hair. As adults, Daisy and her sister both stand at five foot five.

As children, Daisy and her twin spend almost all of their time together. Their mother suffers from depression, and spends much of the days in bed, so the girls are left to amuse themselves, often making up games, listening to music or watching movies. Daisy and Violet attend Nipher Middle School. Despite having the constant company of her twin sister, Daisy yearns for acceptance and inclusion by her peers throughout her school years but when she finally comes to the attention of one of the popular girls, Marisa, she volunteers information about herself and her twin that ends up changing the rest of her life significantly. Daisy makes the mistake of telling Marisa that both she and Violet have psychic abilities - something their parents often warned them would be better kept quiet. At first Marisa behaves like Daisy's new best friend, but that quickly changes when Daisy is truthful about Marisa's boyfriend's infidelity. For the remainder of her time in school, Daisy endures teasing and negative recognition that makes her wish she had never had any special abilities at all. As an adult, Daisy describes this portion of her life as one of isolation and unhappiness.

When Daisy begins college, she attempts to put some distance between herself and her unhappy childhood. She changes her name, (using Kate - a shortened version of her middle name) in the hopes that she can avoid any connection with the "witch" Daisy Schramm from high school. After her mother dies, Kate moves back to St. Louis to help her father, only to discover that he doesn't really need her help. The only thing he asks her to do is to teach him how to grocery shop, so from then on, Kate takes her father shopping once a week. Kate dates several men before meeting the man she marries, but in each case she soon realizes that their lives are too perfect to mesh with her dysfunctional family and childhood, so she ends each relationship. She almost makes the same mistake with Jeremy, but then learns that his childhood was no picnic either. With that in common, she gives their relationship a chance.

As this story opens, Kate and Jeremy have been married for five years. They have two children. Rosie is two years old and Owen is still nursing. They live in Rock Hill, and the story is told with multiple flashbacks to Kate and Violet's childhood. Despite having tried to rid herself of her psychic abilities, Kate still occasionally has visions that continue to affect her life in one fashion or another. She tells Jeremy about her abilities, but he doesn't take her seriously which is ironic since it is because of a vision that she recognizes Jeremy and, after they are married, she has a vision of the two white children they ultimately have together. Up until that vision, she had been reluctant to have children at all fearing they might have the same abilities that she and Violet have.



Kate makes the mistake of sleeping with her best friend Hank while Jeremy is out of town, regretting it even before the act is complete. Although it happens only a single time, Kate becomes pregnant and DNA tests prove the child is not Jeremy's. He agrees to stay and raise the child as his own providing Kate accepts several conditions. One of them is that they move before the child is born.

When the baby, Gabriel, is two, he announces that he knows his mother's other name is Daisy, and asks her who his father is. Kate tries not to read anything into his insights. Kate has one more vision in which she sees their three children looking at a photo of her and Jeremy. They are adults and Rosie can't believe how young her parents look.

Violet Kimberly Shramm

Violet is Daisy's twin sister and when this story opens, they are both in their mid-thirties. Born in Kirkwood, Missouri in August of 1975, both girls have their mother's blue eyes and light colored hair but Violet tends to be heavier than Daisy throughout their lives. Violet describes herself as a psychic medium and lives in Rock Hill. Violet is the older twin by a few minutes but seems the least grounded of the two girls overall.

Like her sister Daisy, Violet leaves home to attend college, but discovers from the very beginning that she has made a mistake. After skipping many classes, she is asked to withdraw and reevaluate. At the same time, Violet has a transcendent experience in which she is bathed in light and hears a voice that tells her it is her guardian. The voice tells her she is not supposed to suffer, and that she is "on a journey of discovery." The following day she leaves college.

Violet continues to nurture her psychic gift into adulthood. When she has visions surrounding the kidnapped and missing Brady Ogden, she tells her sister that the boy is alive and needs their help. Together, they manage to point the police in the right direction, telling them where the boy is being held and by whom. Brady is found soon after. Violet continues to use her gift, holding seances and private readings. Violet meets a woman online and arranges a date with her.

When Violet is warned of a coming earthquake she discusses it with her twin and then takes her information public as Guardian had suggested in the hopes that the public will be better prepared. She interviews twice on the Today show and though some people decide to stock up on emergency supplies, others view her psychic visions with contempt and call her a public health threat. Despite that, when the day of the prediction arrives, most people in the area opt to either stay home or get out of town.

Though the day of the predicted earthquake comes and goes without a tremor, Violet is not dissuaded or discouraged. She continues to have visions of black people in front of ruined buildings. Violet's visions are usually correct and her information from Guardian reliable so when Kate learns for sure that she is pregnant after her one night stand with her best friend Hank, she turns to Violet for help. She asks her to tell her who the father is, but knows by her expression after contacting Guardian that the child is not Jeremy's.



Violet adds that the child will be a boy, and less than nine months later, Gabriel is born. A product of Kate and Hank, he is darker skinned than his sister and brother and has curlier hair.

Eventually, a cluster of earthquakes occur. The first is in Haiti, then in Chile, Indonesia, China and Turkey as well as one in Japan.

Rosie Tucker

Rosie is Jeremy and Kate's oldest child and at the age of two she is lively and precocious. Rosie likes to play with Hank and Courtney's daughter, Amelia, and they often spend their mornings in the park together with their parents. Rosie has developed a recent infatuation with a wooden puzzle piece that is supposed to represent baloney. She still pronounces lion as "nion" and she calls her bathing suit a "babing suit." Rosie also likes to hold up one spaghetti strand at a time whenever they eat it. Although not yet three, Rosie is definitely not a baby anymore.

Rosie spends one afternoon weekly with a sitter she loves named Kendra who plays with her and amuses her while Kate is supposed to be getting a manicure. Instead however, Kate hasn't been able to bring herself to leave Owen with Kendra, thereby spoiling Rosie's special time with her.

Jeremy Tucker

Jeremy is Kate's (Daisy's) husband and the father to their first two children Rosie and Owen. Born in 1970, he is five years older than Kate and grew up in Arlington, Virginia. Jeremy has one older brother. Jeremy's parents separated and divorced when he was only seven and he describes the experience as one of confusion and unhappiness.

Jeremy has intelligent eyes and long, straight fingers. He has a boyish, handsome face and a confidence that comes easily to him. Jeremy is a gentle and kind man who never has a harsh word to say about anyone. He gives little credence to psychic impressions or visions, and takes that part of Kate and Violet with a handful of salt and healthy pessimism. Jeremy works with Hank's wife Courtney at the Washington University in the geology department. Jeremy earned his PhD at Cornell and has recently been invited to speak at the Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences (AEPS) by his former adviser George Lukovich.

Jeremy's world is turned upside down when he learns that Kate has been unfaithful. To make matters worse, the only reason she confesses this to him is because the tryst results in her becoming pregnant. He ultimately decides to stay married to her, but with some conditions. Kate complies with all of his conditions, grateful they will save their marriage. When the child, Gabriel, is born, true to his word Jeremy raises him as his own.



Hank Wheeling

Hank was a art student and a Harvard undergraduate when he met his wife Courtney. Now, he is a house husband to their daughter Amelia and looking forward to the April birth of their second child. Hank believes in ESP and psychic phenomena, supporting Violet when she makes her public prediction that another quake is coming despite the fact that his wife - a scientist, believes her behavior is irresponsible and a public health risk.

Hank is ecstatic when he learns that Courtney is expecting for the second time but when Courtney learns their baby will have Down's syndrome, she terminates the pregnancy - a decision that Hank does not entirely support. Not long after Courtney terminates her pregnancy, Hank sleeps with Kate for the first and only time. The union produces a child that Kate learns is Hank's, but never reveals to him. After discussing what they'd done, their friendship is over although neither acknowledge or perhaps even realize this fact at the time. Hank never tells his wife. When he learns of Kate's pregnancy, he sends her a text asking her if they need to talk, but Kate says no.

Courtney Wheeling

Courtney is Hank's wife and is a professor of geophysics at Washington University. Courtney is 11 weeks pregnant and is due in April. Courtney and Jeremy work together and as friends and colleagues, they spend as much time together as their stay at home spouses do.

When Courtney learns that the child she is carrying will have Down's syndrome, she makes the immediate decision to terminate her pregnancy despite her husband's reservations. It is a decision that deeply disturbs Hank who likely would not have made the same choice.

Rita Schramm

Daisy and Violet's mother married at age 23, while her husband was 37 at the time. She is a beautiful woman, with just past shoulder length blonde hair that she wears parted in the center, thin upturned lips and high cheekbones. She has big blue eyes and is five feet five inches tall. Aside from her pregnancy, she's never exceeded a hundred and ten pounds, and likes to wear clothes that accent her small waistline.

Rita suffers from depression – a fact that her daughters help to conceal from the public and from her husband for years, covering for her by making the evening meals. She is also suspicious of everything and everyone, doubting the value financial or otherwise of Daisy and Violet participating in any extracurricular activities. She dies on Christmas eve, passing away quietly in her sleep.



Owen Tucker

Owen is Jeremy and Kate's youngest child and is still a nursing infant. Owen has not yet been left with Kendra, the sitter – a fact that his father Jeremy is unaware of.

Amelia Wheeling

Amelia is Courtney and Hanks' daughter and is a playmate for Rosie – Jeremy and Kate's daughter. When Hank and Kate first meet at the music class their children both attend, Amelia is about 18 months old and cute enough to be a model in Kate's opinion. Her skin is light brown, her eyes a darker brown and her hair is in a wiry ponytail on the top of her head. She also has unbelievably long and curly lashes.

Marisa Mazarelli

Marisa has long, dark and curly brown hair and brown eyes. She is one of the most popular girls at Nipher Middle School, attending it at the same time Daisy and Violet do. Marisa's parents own a large pizza chain in western Illinois and eastern Missouri and as such they live in a house that is newly constructed and even has a hot tub.

Marisa is the one largely responsible for Daisy turning away from her psychic gift. She uses Daisy to gain information about a boy she likes and when her relationship backfires, she tells everyone who will listen that Daisy and her sister are witches.

As an adult, Marisa sees Kate and her children in the park one day and offers her a ride home after Rosie falls and splits her lip. Later, she returns to Kate and Jeremy's home and asks Kate to tell her if her boyfriend will ever marry her. Kate tells her she no longer has those abilities.

Janie Spriggs

Janie lives just a block away from Daisy and Violet growing up, and is the only real friend that the girls have during their childhood. Janie's older brother Pete suffers from Down's syndrome but is the only one who is able to tell Daisy and Violet apart from each other consistently.

Stephanie

Stephanie is the woman that Violet has recently begun dating. She looks to be about five years older than Violet or Kate, gray hair threading through her brown bob. She is an attractive woman.

Stephanie is from Cave City, Arkansas, where she claims the best watermelon comes from.



Matt Lauer

Matt is the reporter for the Today show and is the man who interviews Violet remotely for her spot on the show.

Mrs. Abbott

Mrs. Abbott is the client for whom Kate works when she moves back to be closer to her father. She is 96 years old and although she is mostly lucid, she is seldom awake during Kate's 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. shift. Kate helps her into bed clothes and diaper, settles her into bed and ensure that her medications are put out along with crackers and a drink. Mrs. Abbott likes to listen to the radio while she sleeps.

Guardian

Guardian is the name of the spirit that Violet communicates with. A warm and supportive entity, it gives Violet advice, and at times warnings that it suggests she pass on to others such as the impending earthquake. Guardian first begins communicating with Violet 15 years before Rosie's birth.

Brady Ogden

Brady Ogden is a nine-year-old boy from Florissant who disappears three months before Kate's wedding to Jeremy. Violet gets a sense that he was taken by a postal worker and although being molested, he is still alive, held in an apartment complex perhaps in Chesterfield.

Brady is found because of the efforts of Kate and Violet who tell the police where to look and advise them that a copy clerk is responsible for his abduction. Brady is rescued just before Kate and Jeremy get married.

Emma Hall

Emma is the publicist that Hank recommends to Kate for Violet's intervention with the media. She is located in Los Angeles and has a strong British accent.

Emma charges \$15,000 dollars to handle Violet's publicity for her after her earthquake prediction makes the news. While good at her job, Violet doesn't benefit financially from the encounter at all, and neither do Kate or Jeremy who pay for her services.



Symbols and Symbolism

Commercial

Commercial is symbolic of the amount of time Daisy and Violet spent in each other's company and reflects their level of creativity. Commercial is a game that Violet and Daisy invent when they are in grade school. Played in the back yard, it entails assigning comical products to each other that they would then have to find a way to successfully advertise.

Person

Person is a game symbolic of Daisy and Violet's psychic abilities. It is significant in that it reveals the strength of their psychic abilities, as they are able to discern the identity of a person in three questions rather than 20, and reveals how early in their lives these abilities reveal themselves.

Person is a game invented by Daisy and Violet that is similar to 20 Questions but without questions. One of the girls concentrates on someone they know or a celebrity, and the other has three opportunities to figure out who the person is. Usually, they succeeded by the first or second attempt. Their mother is convinced this is a "bad game" and strongly discourages them from playing it.

Christmas Records

The collection of Christmas records is symbolic of better times - times of love when family got together and showed their love for each other. The records represent happiness and the value of life in Daisy's mind, as they were the only thing her mother seemed to value. Her collection included Perry Como, Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra and Nat King Cole and she played them often from November to January.

After Daisy's mother's death, the records are the only possession of her mother's that Daisy/Kate wants.

Superstition

Superstition is symbolic of the ethereal, and the twins' mother's superstitious beliefs are what made Daisy and Violet believe that their psychic gifts are passed down from their mother. Superstition shapes Daisy and Violet's mother's life to a degree. Although the family never attends church services of any kind, she believes in a number of old wives tales including throwing salt over your left shoulder if it has been spilled, and rather than seek a rainbow if the sun and rain share the sky, she insists the devil is getting married.



Burning Bowl Ceremony

The Burning Bowl Ceremony is a symbolic representation of the end of whatever information had been burned inside it. The Burning Bowl Ceremony is presented by Violet's friend Nancy at the New Year's dinner she hosts in which each person writes down something negative in their lives that they want to leave behind. Those sentiments are placed in the Burning Bowl – a ceramic bowl that is then held up and set ablaze. It represents the lengths that Kate goes to in order to set aside her psychic ability enough to cope with motherhood.

The Arch

The arch is symbolic of Daisy's high school graduation night and the superstition the girls believe in at that point in their lives. Violet insists that if a pilgrimage is made to the Arch on the night that they graduate, then they can make a wish lying down under the highest point and it will come true. The girls go to the Arch after leaving their graduation ceremony and Daisy makes a wish that she could live anywhere but St. Louis.

Bridal Ambrosia

Bridal ambrosia is symbolic of the hopes Violet has for the marriage of her sister to Jeremy. Bridal Ambrosia is the name of the shots that Violet arranges when she throws Kate an impromptu five-minute wedding shower on the night before she marries Jeremy.

Cellulitis

Cellulitis in this story is symbolic of the fragility of life and gives Kate a glimpse of what life could be like without Rosie.

Cellulitis is a bacterial infection that can be caused by a cold and it is what Rosie is diagnosed with before she is six months old.

Down's syndrome

Down's syndrome is used in this novel to demonstrate a pro choice versus pro life perspective, showing the thought process and feelings of both Courtney and Hank, who had different views on the subject. Down's syndrome is the defect that is revealed to be affecting the baby Courtney is carrying and is the deciding factor in her decision to terminate the pregnancy, despite how much she and Hank had wanted another child.



October 16th

October 16th is symbolic of the degree of narcissism that can come from having psychic abilities. Kate wakes knowing that October 16th will be significant, and mistakenly believes that this is the day the earthquake Violet predicted will occur. Later, when the day passes without a quake, she learns that instead the daycare center Rosie had attended was damaged by an out of control truck. She realizes that the date was only significant where she and a select group of parents was concerned, but by associating it with Violet's prediction, she had likely caused an entire city to suffer weeks of undue anxiety.



Settings

Kirkwood, Missouri

Kirkwood is where Daisy and Violet were born and where they still live – Daisy with her husband and two children and Violet on her own.

Terra Haute, Indiana

Terra Haute is where the epicenter of the 4.9 earthquake is that is felt by Daisy and Jeremy as well as others.

Starbucks

Located in Creve Coeur and not far off 270, Starbucks is where Violet is meeting her blind date for the first time.

Kaldi's Café

Kaldi's is how Hank and Daisy begin each morning with morning coffee.

DeMun Park (aka MILF Park)

DeMun park is on DeMun Avenue and is where Hank and Daisy take Rosie and Owen while Amelia is in preschool.

Omaha, Nebraska

Omaha is where Daisy and Violet's father lived before he met and married their mother, and then moved to St. Louis.

Nipher Middle School

Nipher Middle School is where Daisy and Violet attend middle school as children.

Kirkwood High School

Kirkwood is where Daisy and Violet attend high school.



Galleria

Galleria is where Violet goes to shop for a birthday gift for her father.

Schnucks

Schnucks is where Kate gets groceries, and shows her father how to shop when he asks her for her help.

Mendocino

Mendocino is where Kate and Jeremy decide to hold their wedding, hoping that by choosing a location out of town, they could keep the guest list to a minimum and save costs.

Florissant

Florissant is the town in which nine-year-old Brady Ogden goes missing from after going to intercept an ice cream truck.

Chesterfield

Chesterfield is the town in which Violet gets a sense that Brady Ogden is being held in an apartment complex.

Blueberry Hill

Blueberry Hill is the St. Louis landmark where Chuck Berry still regularly performs. This is where Kate goes for lunch and inadvertently runs into Courtney and Jeremy having lunch as well.

Mind & Spirit Bookstore

The Mind & Spirit Bookstore is where Violet plans to attend a private vigil on the day of the predicted earthquake.

Target

Target is the store that Hank takes Rosie to so that they can shop for a Halloween costume and finds himself detained after Rosie loudly announces that another man is not her father, something the two year old had been doing of late.

Relax Massage

Relax Massage is located on Olive Boulevard and is the name of the place that calls Kate to tell her that her father fainted, but is fine.



Themes and Motifs

Race to Judgement

Hank Wheeling is introduced as Kate's best friend and Courtney's husband, but his introduction omits the fact that he is a black man which at first implies his race is irrelevant, but as the story evolves the author reveals that Hank's race impacts his life in frequently unpleasant and judgmental ways.

In the beginning of this story, Kate's sister Violet accuses her of being uptight when Kate suggests that dating a man would be easier than dating a woman, provided that a person had no preferences either way. Violet is the first to reference how history treated black people as though they had less value than white people, forcing them to ride in the back of buses and attend schools set aside specifically for those of color. This is a direct reference to how black people have been disparaged in the past and the author compares that disparity with the way gay people are thought of today.

The author first introduces Hank's race in Chapter 16 of this story, but the information is only volunteered after Hank is detained with Kate's daughter Rosie during a trip to Target. Kate is about to take Rosie to Target to find a Halloween costume when she gets a call requesting that she come and pick up her father at a massage parlor after he'd fainted. Hank offers to take Rosie to Target instead (an offer Kate gratefully accepts) never imagining he would find himself in custody until his guardianship of Rosie could be properly established. This may not have happened had Rosie been black, or Hank been white.

Kate no sooner gets her father home when her phone rings and Hank tells her he is being held by security after Rosie had loudly proclaimed that an old man she saw was not her daddy – something she'd been saying about any man she didn't know of late. Although Hank is accepting of the situation, though embarrassed, Kate is anything but. By the time she reaches Target, she has gone from anxious directly to angry. She is told by security that in the future she should take care to ensure that her children don't say things that might raise their concerns. Hank simply wants to forget about the whole thing and his attitude makes it clear that his race has been an issue in his life many times before.

While the incident at Target is easily enough resolved, the author is clearly pointing to a deeper issue of prejudice that is widespread even among those who would proclaim themselves racially blind. The incident reminds Kate of a time when they had walked their children together earlier in their friendship. They'd strolled through a semi-gated community together similar to the one that Mrs. Abbott had lived in and seen a golden retriever that Kate thought she recognized. The dog had an electronic collar and Kate believed she knew where it lived and insisted they take the dog home, not wanting her to be hit by a car. Hank seems hesitant about the idea at first, but Kate does not appreciate the cause of his reluctance. When they arrive at the house, Hank stops on



the sidewalk, suggesting she and Rosie approach the door alone. Kate still does not grasp why until he tells her that people who live in houses like this one would likely call the police before answering the door, unless they were expecting someone to show up to do yard work. Other than that, he guesses, they likely would not want him on their property. This is another way in which the author reveals the continuing disparity between white and black people despite how enlightened most believe we are now.

Though there was little conversation about race between them from that point forward, Kate was more conscious of the struggles Hank faced. Kate recalls other incidents, such as the day that Barack Obama became president and how Hank became quite emotional. At the time she did not think much of it because they had all become a bit emotional about the idea that they would have a black President. Many times, Kate would simply forget the differences between her – a white woman with white children in St. Louis as opposed to Hank who likely never forgot who he was or how his race affected his life.

This is a subject that is touched on once more by Hank later in the story as he sadly admits that he probably did not give much thought to how difficult life might be for a child born to a black father and a white mother. The realization is one that only occurs to him when his wife Courtney tells him that she won't bring a child into the world with those hurdles and the addition of Down's syndrome as well. The handicaps were simply too great in her mind. The author uses Courtney's decision to terminate her pregnancy as a way to introduce the difficulties that may be faced by the increasing number of mixed marriage relationships that now exist.

Psychic Impressions

Violet and Daisy are twins born with psychic abilities that they inherited from their father, and throughout this story, their psychic impressions affect their lives and those they love.

From early on in their childhood, both girls exhibit a talent for precognition. This becomes evident early on in their lives, beginning with the games that they make up and play together.

When Daisy is first invited to a slumber party without her twin sister, she is so surprised and pleased that she does not consider the reasons for the invitation. Marisa is a spoiled young lady who successfully manages to enlist Daisy's ongoing psychic advice after receiving a Ouija Board for her birthday and inadvertently discovering Daisy's ability.

From then on, Daisy is Marisa's best friend. Marisa seldom makes a move without consulting her, and uses the information Daisy can tap into in order to secure the attentions of a boy in school that she likes. When Daisy honestly reveals that the boy is cheating on her, Marisa calls her a liar and outs her as a witch in school. The stigma



that follows her after that is one that Daisy will spend the rest of her life trying to outrun, even changing her name to Kate.

In adulthood, Kate tries to rid herself of her psychic ability, finding that motherhood made it difficult to have visions or precognition as she could never sort out the difference between what was merely parental angst and what was a precognitive event. Despite her attempts to rid herself of this talent, Kate still has dreams and impressions. Just before she marries Jeremy, Kate and Violet combine efforts to find Brady Ogden, a boy who, at that time, has been missing for over three months. They are successful in helping the police locate him.

Violet continues to nurture her talent throughout adulthood relying heavily on a psychic helper she calls Guardian who answers questions and acts as a source of information. When Guardian warns Violet of a coming earthquake, and tells her to warn people, she does without question despite the circus caused as a result. Kate gets a strong impression of a particular date involved and Violet shares that date in conjunction with the news of a coming quake. Instead, on the date in question a large truck barrels through a daycare center that Rosie had been going to. Thankfully, because of the earthquake scare, the center is empty at the time.

Kate and Violet do not learn of the source of their psychic ability until their adulthood, always thinking that it originated with their mother. Instead, they learn that it is actually their father who passed this gift on to them. He confesses that, much like Kate, he'd always kept that part of himself to himself. He never liked the stigma that came with the ability and did not want publicity or recognition.

After the media circus surrounding her earthquake prediction, Violet begins to feel the same way about her ability as her sister and father do. Though the earthquakes she predicts do not occur on that day, they do begin not long afterward. Three large earthquakes occur - one in Haiti, one in Japan and one in Chile. The largest is the one that occurs in Japan, but there are a cluster of major earthquakes that occur in Indonesia and Turkey as well.

The Cost of Infidelity

The cost of infidelity is one that the author chooses to introduce near the end of this story, but is one of profound significance in Kate and Jeremy's life.

The main character in this story, Kate Tucker allows loneliness, weakness and momentary insanity to cloud her judgement when she responds to and encourages the kiss that Hank Wheeling gives her. Instead of doing what she knows is right, she closes her mind to everything but the moment she is in. She does not consider her husband Jeremy. If she had, she would have sent Hank home. She does not consider Hank's wife Courtney. She does not consider the consequences. All Kate thinks about in that moment is Hank. Even before the act is complete, Kate knows she has made a terrible mistake. She has betrayed the man she loves, and altered the friendship she had with



Hank forever. There is no going back. All that comes to her in sudden clarity in those few moments before the act is even done. It is the very beginning of the cost of her infidelity. Hank goes home, and Kate's sister arrives, spending the remainder of the night with her. Though the sisters share a gift of precognition, neither one of them senses the changes that are in the future.

Kate and Hank talk briefly the next morning. Hank knows a mistake was made. He tells Kate she's terrific, but of course he hopes his marriage to Courtney will work out. He also knows that if Courtney finds out, she will divorce him. Kate and Hank agree to keep the tryst a secret. Afterward, Kate avoids Hank. Where once they would go for coffee together every morning before, now they can't talk even face each other. She stops herself from using the phone in her hands. Her friendship with Hank has been ruined.

Thanksgiving comes and Kate buys a pregnancy test. Kate is pregnant, and needs to know who the father is. A reading from Violet reveals her worst fears. Hank is the father. Now Kate is forced to reveal the whole truth because her baby will be half black. There is no hiding that. Testing confirms this and Jeremy must accept Hank's child as his own, or leave the woman that is his wife. He chooses to stay, but only if they move, no contact is made and Hank never knows. This is the cost of infidelity. Of course the cost does not end there.

Gabriel is born and by the age of two shows remarkable cognitive skills. He asks his mother who his daddy is. One day, they will have to tell Gabriel the truth and the cost of one small moment of infidelity continues. One day Hank will meet his son, and Courtney will become aware of his indiscretion. The cost of their mistake will go on into the decades.

Sisterland

Sisterland is a place where twin sisters Daisy and Violet Schramm have lived all of their lives and it is a place that is exclusively theirs, providing them with support, strength and continuity throughout their lives.

The sisters have had their share of disagreements over the years, but nothing could ever separate them from each other but themselves. Daisy and Violet are forced from a young age to fend for themselves, and when their mother spends most of each day in bed, they begin cooking meals for their father before he comes home to cover for her. She never thanks them or compliments them.

Daisy, who goes by Kate as an adult, is a married woman with two children. Violet has no children and lives alone.

Despite such differences in their current statuses, they are still close and have been for most of their lives. The only exception to that was a brief time in college when Daisy first changes her name to Kate and wants to eradicate her past entirely. She especially wants to distance herself from any mention of senses, so when Violet shows up



unexpectedly, Kate isn't thrilled. Violet is a tie to her past life that she has no desire to reveal.

When their mother dies however, things change. Kate moves back to St. Louis ostensibly to help her father, but learns after she arrives that he does not really need her help. Though Kate and Violet have always presumed that they got their abilities from their mother, they are surprised to learn as adults that their abilities actually came from their father.

Kate supports Violet throughout the entire media frenzy that surrounds her earthquake prediction, even forcing Jeremy into paying a \$15,000 retainer to a PR consultant who does not help Violet recoup a dime. Even when the public is less than supportive after the earthquake does not occur on the 16th of October, Kate continues to support her sister. Further thought has Violet remembering that the victims are all black and a few weeks later, Haiti is hit hard by an earthquake.

Kate reveals just how much she believes in Violet's psychic ability when she goes to her for a reading to see if the child she is carrying is Hank's or Jeremy's and on the strength of her answer, she confesses her infidelity to Jeremy and tells him about the baby being Hank's. Violet supports Kate as well, refraining from judgmental behavior when she learns that Kate is carrying Hank's child. Instead, she is strong and tries to offer what help she can. When Kate is forced to move, she reminds her that no matter where she lives, they will always live in Sisterland.

Motherhood

The value of motherhood is a theme of some debate in this story as the author examines the pros and cons of parenting from several perspectives.

Twin sisters Kate and Violet live very different lifestyles. While Kate views marriage and motherhood as the ultimate symbols for success, Violet sees having children as a problem that some people create and then congratulate themselves for solving.

The importance of motherhood is also touched on when Kate is lectured by her husband's boss's wife who tells her that it simply isn't possible to be a good mother and have a career.

The author continues to point to the importance of motherhood in a myriad of ways throughout, showing the perspectives of mothers of all kinds including working mothers like Courtney whose husband takes the primary role at home while his wife is the bread winner.

In this story, Kate gets a close up look at the differences between being a working mother, and being a stay-at-home mom. When Jeremy and Kate announce their coming wedding, his boss and wife take them out for dinner to celebrate. Leland's wife asks Kate if they plan to have children and launches into her personal message that Kate will be able to do one or the other well, but not both. Those words will ring in her ears later.



When Rosie is born, Kate is thrilled with motherhood. She takes a generous maternity leave and finds a good daycare for their daughter well in advance. When she and Jeremy think Rosie is ready to be without her mother for short periods each day, they begin taking her to daycare. Kate is surprised by how many runny noses and chewed up toys she notices this time, wondering how long it will be before their daughter picks something up and becoming so distraught by the thought that Jeremy has to be the one to drop her off.

When Rosie does get ill and develops cellulitis, despite no concrete link to the daycare center, it is clear to Kate that it is the source of Rosie's illness. Her temperature spikes and one eye swells until it almost completely closes. Even the doctor is unable to see into the eye well enough to offer a definitive diagnosis at first. Rosie spends three days in the hospital and the day that she is released, Kate quits her job.

Being a stay at home mom changes things for Kate and Jeremy financially, but only in that she has to change her spending habits. In fact, the only thing that Jeremy insists has to change is the purchase of expensive baby clothes on line from Sweden. Other than that, he is happy to support them on his salary, and Kate can't help but agree with Leland's wife in hindsight. She is capable of doing one or the other well, but not both.

While Kate revels in the children she has and the family life she enjoys, she tends to have tunnel vision about being a mother, almost feeling as though any woman who hasn't had the experience simply could never know, and in some ways that may be true but Violet also makes it abundantly clear that her life is every bit as complicated with feedings and schedules as Violet's might be.

When Kate discovers she is carrying Hank's child, a part of her immediately knows that she can't possibly abort the baby. She offers Jeremy that option if it is the only way that he is willing to stay with her as her husband, but makes it clear that she does not want to end the pregnancy and would only do it if he insisted. She reminds him of how they'd both felt when they learned that Courtney had aborted her child, and can't picture doing so herself. Luckily her husband agrees.



Styles

Point of View

Sisterland, by Curtis Sittenfeld, is a fictional story told from the first person perspective of the main character, Kate Tucker (previously Daisy Schramm). Though the narrative is reliable and consistent with the main character, the story is told in multiple timelines, switching between the past and current time periods.

When the story opens, Kate describes her life in a current timeline. She is married to a university professor and has two young children. The first flashback she describes occurs in the third chapter, and contains information surrounding the births of her and her twin sister, Violet. In this flashback, Kate describes her mother's difficulties adjusting to parenthood, and discusses the first time that she and her sister's psychic abilities revealed themselves.

The following chapter reverts to the current time line again, but the pattern of alternating time from present to past continues for the remainder of the story. The chapters in which flashbacks are employed slowly move forward in their own time line so that when the story concludes, the time lines have come together.

Language and Meaning

Sisterland, a novel by Curtis Sittenfeld, is written in contemporary English, with little use of slang or expletives. The story is a narrative by the main character Kate and chronicles the major turning points in her life.

This is a story that deals with extra sensory perception, shortened to "having senses" by the family. Daisy and Violet begin showing evidence of having senses when they are still just young children. At the age of four, Daisy wakes screaming, inconsolable about a fire. The next evening a house partway down the street goes up in flames. In the same year, Violet asks her mother why Aunt Erma's heart hurts. Their great aunt Erma lived in Nebraska and the children seldom saw her. Violet mentions she fell down and later they learn that she'd had a heart attack. These episodes are the beginning of Daisy and Violet's senses which continue throughout their lives to varying degrees.

Senses and their impact on Kate and Daisy's lives are of considerable importance in this story. As such, there are episodes of seances, the use of Ouija boards, and ongoing references to readings which are all used to describe varying methods of communicating with spirits. Violet is in constant contact with a benevolent spirit she refers to as Guardian. She describes Guardian as a friendly spirit with good intentions. Kate's contact with the spirit world seems less benevolent. While Violet's contact with the spirit world is primarily used to benefit those around her, and attempted with only pure intentions and motivations, Daisy's first communications with the spirit world began in middle school to impress one of the popular girls. Her efforts resulting in contact with



an entity that is less than pure of heart, and Daisy soon learns the the entity she communicates with is actually malicious in nature. The differences between the entities is stark and contributes to the way the girls behave where their senses are concerned in adulthood.

Other subjects of importance include parenthood and the different styles of child rearing; infidelity and its effects on a marriage; as well as earthquakes and how the public reacts to possible impending disaster.

Structure

Sisterland, by Curtis Sittenfeld, is a fictional novel of just over 370 pages. It is divided into 19 chapters averaging just under 20 pages each. The shortest chapter represented is eight pages in length while the longest is 35 pages long.

Sisterland is structured with a split but forward moving timeline. The author begins with a description of Kate's current life, but beginning in Chapter 3, Kate begins to alternate between current timeline chapters and those that begin with her and her twin sister's birth and move slowly forward in alternating chapters while advancing the main timeline slowly alongside.

While difficult to keep details straight in this kind of writing, the author does a reliable job of maintaining the timelines and their representations. The story is structured to reveal the background that is responsible for the decisions Kate makes in adulthood. For example, in the first flashback, Kate describes how they came into their senses, describing them as frightening experiences. When this fear is coupled with the negative and disapproving reaction from their mother it creates an atmosphere that makes Daisy reluctant to even acknowledge her gift.

Sisterland describes the difficulties Kate and her sister faced throughout their childhood and into adulthood as a result of their senses. It also reveals why they are determined to follow visions that present themselves, even at times to their own detriment. For example, both sisters pool their efforts to locate Brady Ogden, a young boy who had been taken almost three months before and is begin held captive by his kidnapper. Together, the twins are able to locate Brady and tell the police not only where to find him but also the name and occupation of the man holding him.



Quotes

Children are nothing but a problem people create and then congratulate themselves on solving.”(13)

-- Violet (chapter 1)

Importance: Violet says this to Daisy in the restaurant after Daisy tells her that it might be less complicated for her if she sticks to dating men instead of both men and women.

ESP, psychic predictions – the world’s a pretty weird and cool place, so why is it impossible?” (29)

-- Hank (chapter 2)

Importance: Hank makes this comment to Kate (Daisy) as they discuss Violet's on-camera interview following the earthquake during the early morning hours. His admission "... there's a part of me that believes in that stuff" is a surprise to Kate and is important because it gives her a way to open up and reveal the truth of herself to her friend, but she is too afraid to take the chance even after he suggests that it is hubris to rule it out.

What do you suggest I do about it?”(38)

-- Rita Schramm (chapter 3)

Importance: Daisy and Violet’s mother makes this comment when it becomes clear that Daisy is not the only child that has precognition abilities, and Rita reveals that she resents anything regarding the girls that might require her participation or attention.

Do you think Courtney will tell other people in your department that the psychic weirdo is your sister-in-law?”(41)

-- Daisy (chapter 4)

Importance: Daisy asks Jeremy if he believes that Courtney will make his work life uncomfortable for him, asking really if the association is one that embarrasses him. This is a constant concern for Daisy.

Is Marisa's dad having an affair?”(58)

-- Daisy (chapter 5)

Importance: Daisy learns this information from the presence in the room that only she is able to hear. Marisa is bad mouthing both Daisy and Violet when Daisy loses her temper and gets even using information that she knew would hit a nerve.

Guess who got invited to be a guest on the Today show next week?”(82)

-- Violet (chapter 5)



Importance: Violet tells her family the news that she is going to be on television, enjoying the notoriety.

I want to adopt so they (my children) don't have senses."(89)
-- Daisy (chapter 7)

Importance: Daisy tells Violet the truth about her thoughts for the future, and wanting to do what she can to ensure that she doesn't have children with senses. It is a clear example of how different Violet and Daisy's experiences were.

You don't actually believe your sister's prediction, do you?"(115)
-- Courtney (chapter 8)

Importance: Angry about the results of her CSV test, Courtney takes her bad mood out on Kate, deriding Violet and her prediction, and forcing Kate to choose between supporting her sister or supporting her husband.

Guardian is a totally peaceful entity."(146)
-- Violet (chapter 9)

Importance: Violet tries to explain that the entity she communicates with means no harm, but Kate's experience with entities was not so nice and she wants Violet to promise she won't contact him in the house.

Maybe you shouldn't talk to any more reporters."(160)
-- Kate (chapter 10)

Importance: Kate tries to protect Violet knowing that the media can make life difficult and turn when things change. She wants to protect her from possible heartache in the future.

So basically being psychic allows you to get away with a life of crime."(185)
-- Jeremy (chapter 11)

Importance: Jeremy is flippant when Kate reveals her psychic ability and she resents the fact that he won't take the matter seriously.

We have these articles of faith about ourselves, but sometimes they're wrong. And for you, the senses, it doesn't bring you pleasure anyway, so why not just let it go?"(192)
-- Jeremy (chapter 12)

Importance: Jeremy suggests that Kate can't just give up the senses she has the same as she would give up eating ice cream or something else that requires nothing more than willpower revealing how little he really understood.

May the energies offer us their guidance and wisdom, and may we take time amid the hustle and bustle to listen to them, and to inhabit the refuge they offer."(260)



-- Violet (chapter 15)

Importance: As a closing prayer to one of her sessions, Violet offers these thoughts, the session impressing Kate as it is the first one she had ever attended.