

Skin Deep Study Guide

Skin Deep by Kenna White

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Plot Summary

Jordan Griffin is a young woman living on her own in Seattle when, as the assistant editor for a magazine, she's assigned a story about an elusive and reclusive photographer, Reece McAllister. Reece is a former broadcast journalist who has given up the action of the job to become a photographer of wildlife and scenery in the region. Jordan makes contact with Reece the first time at a showing of her work. There, Jordan discovers Reece has a horrific, disfiguring scar that runs down her face and disappears into the collar of her shirt. She is initially shocked and Reece taunts her for her reaction. Jordan asks for an interview but Reece refuses and cuts the encounter short. Jordan later discovers Reece is to be at a local restaurant and pool hall, and makes arrangements to meet her best friend and cousin, Hope, there. She finds Reece but again, is unsuccessful at securing the interview.

Back in her office, Jordan is challenged by her editor to go after the story again. Jordan discovers Reece is planning a camping trip and goes to Reece's cabin where she is initially met with hostility. She eventually convinces Reece to allow her to tag along on the trip. During the days in the wilderness, the two women begin to bond, both emotionally and sexually. Reece finally consents to the interview and tells Jordan stories of her adventures as a journalist. She says the scar is the result of an accident and forbids Jordan's attempts to delve into Reece's relationship with her former lover, supermodel Pella Frann.

Jordan and Reece continue to grow into a relationship of friendship and sexual attraction. They have sex several times and it seems their relationship is progressing, though Reece continues to feel that Jordan - a beautiful young woman - is setting herself up for ridicule because of Reece's disfigured face. Meanwhile, Jordan sets out to write her story and discovers that Reece's scar was actually the result of a brutal attack by Pella, who had a mental breakdown because of her intense fear of losing her beauty due to age. Jordan toys with the idea of using the sensational story in her article but decides to honor Reece's request for privacy on this point. However, her editor, Susan, hacks into Jordan's computer and alters the story, using all the sensational details Jordan had discovered during her research. Susan's version is printed and Jordan is horrified.

Jordan quits her job because she is so angry at Susan's unethical actions. She goes to Reece, fully expecting to find that Reece will never forgive her. However, she discovers that Reece was able to see the change in the writing at the point where Susan altered Jordan's story. It's only then that Reece admits she sits on the magazine's board of directors and that she's called for Susan's dismissal. She offers Jordan the editor's job.

Meanwhile, Jordan and Reece begin to grow into an emotional and sexual relationship. Though Reece has trouble trusting because of the tumultuous relationship with Pella, they eventually find common ground and begin a life together as the story comes to a close.



Chapters 1 through 4

Chapters 1 through 4 Summary

As the story opens, Jordan Griffin is headed to work. It's raining as usual in Seattle, Washington. Jordan is a journalist. Her previous job had been with the Mountain States Cattlemen's Journal and had enjoyed her job as assistant editor, though it wasn't a glamorous position. She'd worked there four years when Northwest Living Magazine advertised for an assistant editor's position and she loves her new job. Jordan is now living in a metropolitan city with plenty of opportunities for socializing and a job she loves.

She arrives at her office and greets the secretary, Lisa, who advises Jordan to go directly to her morning meeting. There, Susan Mackey demands her biscotti - which Jordan had picked up on her way to the office - before Jordan even sits down. Also in the room is Mark Bergman, managing editor who has the experience Susan, as senior editor, lacks. There's an extended discussion about the pros and cons of various places where pastry and coffee are available. Jordan finally breaks in, hoping to get the meeting back on track. She's very busy and wants to get to work.

Mark makes an assignment for Jordan to get an interview with a woman named Reece McAllister. Nicknamed "Race," she covered dozens of wars, disasters, and other dangerous stories for Global News Network. The magazine published a story about her couple of years earlier. Jordan asks why there's to be another story on Reece and learns she is now doing outdoor photography, focusing on local scenery and wildlife. Jordan is supposed to find out why Reece gave up her lucrative, fast-paced career for photography. Susan says there are rumors of an accident about the time Reece broke up with her former girlfriend, supermodel Pella Frann. Jordan also discovers Reece has turned down every interview. Reece is having a photography show at a gallery on Cherry Street, and Jordan is to be there.

In chapter two, Jordan makes Susan angry when she refuses a dinner invitation, then meets up with her casual girlfriend, Mia. She notes that their relationship isn't overly serious though the sex is good and they enjoy each other's company. She says Mia is completely predictable, from how much wine she'll drink to how much she'll tip and the sex following dinner. In chapter three, the sex is less satisfying the usual and Jordan finds her mind wandering. Mia quickly falls asleep afterwards and Jordan sleeps on the couch, lonely but accepting that Mia isn't the person to fulfill her.

In chapter four, Jordan arrives at the Rose Hall Gallery and finds another reporter just leaving. Jordan spies Reece and says her name. When Reece turns to face her, Jordan gasps at the horrific scar running down Reece's face. Jordan tries to stop staring but can't. Reece is rude in return and reveals that she's already talked to Mark and Susan, and refused their requests for an interview. The conversation goes downhill from there and Jordan leaves without the interview. The next day she goes to the gallery and



pretends interest in some of Reece's work, asking the gallery owner about the methods Reece used. The owner doesn't know the answer to Jordan's questions but says she'd heard Reece make plans to meet friends at a local restaurant, the Garage, on Monday evening. Jordan calls her cousin and friend, Hope, and suggests they meet there as well.

Hope is also a lesbian and is in a devoted relationship with a woman named Barbara, a flight attendant. Hope arrives and helps Jordan change her clothes to choose something more in keeping with the atmosphere at the Garage. They arrive and Hope offers to teach Jordan how to play pool. Hope is teaching Jordan some of the basics when Reece McAllister arrives. Jordan is horrible at the game and Reece begins to teach her some of the basics. Just then Reece turns toward Hope, who gasps aloud at the sight of Reece's scar. Reece smirks and leaves the building. Jordan goes after her. Reece tells Jordan to give up on the story and refuses to go back inside. Jordan knows she won't give up.

Chapters 1 through 4 Analysis

Very early in the book, the theme of lesbianism is brought to the forefront. This remains a constant theme and drives a great deal of the action throughout the story. In chapter two, Susan walks Jordan to her car and asks her out. When Jordan refuses, Susan invites Jordan to go home with her. Susan's constant efforts to get Jordan to go out with her indicate Susan is also a lesbian.

Jordan is leaving the office very early in the story when she and Susan have a discussion about a photograph that won't work for an upcoming piece. When Susan wants to see the photos on Jordan's computer, she has to have a password. Jordan tells Susan the password is "applesauce." It seems an innocent interchange between the two women with Susan making a final decision that isn't what Jordan wants. The section could very well be an effort on the part of the author to begin explaining the relationship between the two, and it does accomplish that. However, much later in the story Susan will use the password to get back into Jordan's computer and alter Jordan's story about Reece without Jordan's knowledge or approval.

Jordan explains her relationship with Hope. They are first cousins, their mothers are sisters, and both are only children. They grew up together and became close friends. Jordan says she was the first to admit to her family and friends that she was a lesbian and that Hope initially seemed interested in a boy in their grade, though she later said it was his sister who caught Hope's attention. The question of whether the girls influenced each other to choose this lifestyle is not addressed though those with questions about lesbian choices may wonder if that was a factor.



Chapters 5 and 6

Chapters 5 and 6 Summary

In chapter five, Jordan is in the weekly meeting with Susan and Mark when they ask about her interview with Reece. Jordan says she hasn't gotten the information yet and Susan asks if Jordan is giving up. Susan lines up reasons the story is important and Jordan says she's willing to try again. Jordan finds that Reece lives in Bellevue and heads there. A neighbor named Gloria says Reece has gone to her cabin at Greysome Point and that she's probably going camping in the woods to shoot more photos. Back at the office, Jordan tells Susan she wants to travel to Greysome Point, hoping she'll have better luck with Reece there, away from the crowds.

Jordan calls Hope for a "crash course" in camping. Hope offers to lend her all the things she needs except boots. They agree to meet at an outdoor supply store for Jordan to pick up the items and buy her boots. Hope gives Jordan lots of advice and information, including the need to filter water. Jordan says she hopes to be with Reece for the entire camping trip but says she will check in with a ranger if Reece has already left and she has to follow her.

In chapter six, Jordan arrives in the area and, using a map, finds the road to Reece's cabin. She immediately worries, noting the road is more like a "deer trail." She encounters "no trespassing" signs almost immediately. After she's driven for awhile, she finds a sign indicating "trespassers will be shot," followed by the question, "do you feel lucky." She begins to consider going back but knows she can't possibly turn the car around. The road is in poor shape and trees grow right up to the edge, meaning it would also be difficult to back out over the long distance.

Just then, she encounters Reece who is furious. Jordan says she'd willingly get out of the car and let Reece "beat" her, except that she can't even open the doors because of the trees by the road. Reece directs her to a wider spot in the road and then announces to Jordan that she's calling the police, reporting Jordan for trespassing. Reece leaves and Jordan attempts to turn around but quickly becomes stuck. By now, it's raining and Jordan is faced with difficult decisions. She doesn't believe waiting in the car is a good option and darkness has fallen. She has a flashlight but drops it in the mud and it stops working.

Jordan finds Reece's cabin and asks to use the restroom. She asks Reece to decide up front if the use of the restroom is also a crime. Reece suggests she use the bathroom behind a tree and Jordan is appalled. Reece allows her inside and directs her to the restroom.

When Jordan finishes, Reece tells her to leave. Jordan points out that her car is stuck but Reece says she doesn't care how - or if - Jordan manages to get it free. Jordan is trying not to cry, believing Reece won't respect her if she shows weakness. It's raining



harder and suddenly a flash of lightning is followed by the crash of thunder. Jordan is startled and falls off the porch. Reece is immediately concerned, and Jordan plays up her disorientation. Reece brings Jordan a hot drink but Jordan says it wouldn't be a good idea to drink anything hot if she's going to have to walk back to her car in the cold rain. Reece says Jordan can stay and takes her to the bathroom where she provides dry clothing and leaves Jordan alone to shower.

Chapters 5 and 6 Analysis

It could be argued that Jordan is somewhat dishonest at points in the story, especially early on. When she is in the gallery talking to the owner about Reece, she assures the gallery owner that she isn't with a newspaper or a television station, obviously indicating she isn't with the media at all. While she's technically telling the truth, most readers will likely find it to be dishonest. The second case is seen after Jordan falls off Reece's porch. She is stunned for a moment but when she gets her bearings, she asks if she was struck by lightning, playing up her injuries to a dishonest level. Reece is then very worried about Jordan and her natural tendency to protect others comes to play so that she insists Jordan stay the night.

Jordan feels foolish when she gets her car stuck, breaks the flashlight, and falls. She hates looking weak in front of Reece, believing she will lose any hope of having Reece's respect if she doesn't remain strong and independent. However, Reece responds when Jordan falls off the porch. It remains a common action between the two women as their relationship grows. When Jordan is hurt or injured, Reece immediately steps in, trying to protect Jordan from anything painful. This becomes another issue in their relationship because Reece's scar is so severe that people stare at her and often make rude comments. Reece fears this will be hurtful to Jordan and really wants to protect her from that as well. The only way to protect Jordan from that is for the two of them to not be seen together, and Reece seeks distance from Jordan later in the story in order to protect Jordan.

The fact that Jordan is self-confident and something of a star in her professional life makes it more difficult for her to face challenges in her personal life. When she's thrown into a strange situation - camping in the woods - she is fearful of looking silly in front of Reece. It's an interesting aspect of Jordan's personality and one that becomes something of an issue for them later.



Chapters 7 and 8

Chapters 7 and 8 Summary

In chapter seven, Jordan explores Reece's cabin, which includes a locked door that keeps Jordan out of one room. She then lies down on the couch and falls asleep while Reece is gone to collect Jordan's car. When Reece returns, cold and wet, she lets Jordan sleep while she showers. Jordan wakes and is surprised to find that it's after eight o'clock. Reece sets out to prepare a meal using the vegetables from her refrigerator. Jordan knows she has some prepackaged meals in her car, but Reece shares her salad with Jordan. Afterward, Jordan insists on doing the dishes and Reece allows her.

There is a lengthy scene in which the two women share a glass of cognac in the living room. There is a fire in the fireplace and the conversation turns to Jordan's role as a reporter. Reece challenges Jordan, asking if she's ever ridden Seattle's public transportation. Jordan insists she has but Reece points out the people who use it daily, in all kinds of weather, aren't impressed when there's a new statue in front of the transportation office. Reece says those people often have to give up food when they have to take a bus because their budgets are already stretched so thin. She is obviously passionate about the subject, a fact that doesn't escape Jordan.

Reece knows Jordan has camping gear and warns that she be careful on her trip. Jordan hints that she wants to go camping with Reece and reveals Reece's next-door-neighbor had said Reece planned to camp. Jordan fishes for Reece's destination and Reece gives it, then says Jordan is not going camping with her. Jordan says she can camp wherever she chooses and Reece realizes Jordan will follow alone, a dangerous situation for someone who obviously doesn't know how to camp. Jordan knows she's won and asks what time they'll be leaving. Reece says she will leave early and warns that she won't wait for Jordan.

In chapter eight, Jordan wakes to the smell of coffee. Reece says she's leaving in ten minutes though Jordan objects, saying she can't be ready in ten minutes. Reece says Jordan is welcome to stay behind but Jordan promises to be ready on time. Reece frowns when Jordan says she doesn't want to wear a hat and again when she discovers Jordan is wearing new boots that haven't been broken in. Jordan tries to thank Reece for taking her along but Reece says she's only allowing it because Jordan would get lost on her own, causing extra work for the park rangers.

They arrive and Reece sets out, leading the way and announcing they can be at their campsite by five if they don't waste time. Jordan is amazed because Reece had said it was only a couple of miles to their camp but she now discovers the terrain is rugged and that hiking is time-consuming. They arrive at the campsite and Jordan carefully watches Reece as she sets up her own tent. Reece offers help but Jordan insists she has it under control. Reece suggests Jordan turn her tent right-side-up and Jordan



makes a mess of that effort. Jordan slips away to use the bathroom and when she returns to camp, her tent is set up. Reece heads off to take some photos, insisting Jordan remain at the camp and build a fire. Jordan does so, though Reece laughs at how small the fire is when she returns. Jordan eats a prepackaged meal Hope had provided, hating the taste and watching Reece eat a wonderful soup she'd made for herself.

Chapters 7 and 8 Analysis

After Jordan is out of the shower and settled in, she thanks Reece for the use of her sweatpants, then says they are comfortable and that she'll have to buy herself a pair. Reece is amazed that Jordan doesn't own sweatpants. Jordan says she has some, but that they're made of nylon. This is only one of many aspects of the story the average reader may find unbelievable. It's not clear whether Jordan is putting on an act or if she really hasn't ever worn sweatpants. Even if her current lifestyle doesn't include sweatpants, it seems impossible that she's never had them.

Jordan and Reece stop for coffee and Jordan overhears two women talking loudly about Reece's scar. They are very rude in their comments. Then one of the women obviously checks Jordan out and she turns her back on the women, calling Reece "sweetheart" and giving the impression she and Reece are in a devoted relationship. Back in the truck, Reece asks what Jordan meant by the "sweetheart" comment, but Jordan doesn't explain. This is the first of many times Jordan sets out to save Reece from comments like this and is a statement of her character. Though she and Reece are off to a rough start, Jordan is protective of Reece very early in the story.

The two women who encounter Jordan in the convenience store are apparently lesbians as well. This is another of the unbelievable aspects of the story. While the urban area is a progressive place where the lesbian lifestyle would be generally accepted, it seems unbelievable that Jordan would happen to encounter this pair of lesbian women in the rural park area. It is reasonable that Jordan would surround herself with like-minded friends but it seems she never encounters a woman who isn't lesbian.



Chapters 9 and 10

Chapters 9 and 10 Summary

In chapter nine, they go to bed in their individual tents. Jordan asks to go with Reece to take photos the following morning but oversleeps, waking just as Reece returns. Reece says they're moving their camp that day and insists Jordan eat something for breakfast while they begin their next walk. Jordan almost falls during a difficult section of trail, saving herself by holding onto a tree until Reece rushes to help her regain her footing. They stop for a rest and Jordan almost falls into a thorny bush. Reece steps in, grabbing Jordan and pushing her away though it means Reece falls into the bush herself. Reece is covered in thorns and Jordan feels horrible at having caused the accident. Jordan begins the tedious task of pulling the thorns out of Reece's body. The process is grueling and Jordan seeks to divert Reece's attention by talking about other things. She asks what happened to Gloria, Reece's neighbor, who Jordan had noticed has a prosthetic leg. Reece says Gloria lost her leg to cancer. Reece has to take off her shirt and bra so that Jordan can get to the thorns, and Jordan notes the scar goes all the way down to her right breast. When the thorns are all out, Reece steps into an icy stream, allowing the cold water to wash away the blood and cool the open wounds before Jordan pours antiseptic onto her skin.

Chapters 9 and 10 Analysis

While Jordan is pouring on the antiseptic, her fingers linger on the scar, wondering what caused it. Reece seems aware of Jordan's touch but allows it without comment. The scene grows sexual as Jordan notes that Reece's body is beautiful. Jordan imagines Reece holding her tenderly and Reece doesn't break the spell for long moments. It's already obvious that Reece wants to keep her personal life private from Jordan and the rest of the world. Jordan looks on Reece's willingness to allow Jordan to look at her naked body as a gift.

Jordan is aware of Gloria's artificial leg while she is talking with her at Reece's house. However, she doesn't mention it to Gloria at the time and only asks Reece about it when she is digging the thorns from Reece's body. It is mostly a diversionary tactic, Jordan's efforts to keep Reece's mind off the pain. However, Jordan has already noted that Reece and Gloria seem closer than just casual neighbors. Jordan wonders if it has anything to do with the fact that both women are disfigured.



Chapters 10 through 12

Chapters 10 through 12 Summary

In chapter ten, Reece sets a grueling pace on the next leg of their hike, apparently seeking to put some distance between herself and Jordan, both physically and emotionally breaking the bond that seems about to form. Jordan chides herself for allowing the unprofessional fantasy she'd indulged in earlier. Reece tells Jordan they have to continue to hurry because there's going to be a rain soon. Jordan sets up her own tent this time and is nearly in tears by the time she's finished, enduring the rain that's coming down harder by then. Jordan wants to hide in her tent but Reece insists she find a rain suit and help with the camp chores. Jordan does so.

A short time later, Jordan's phone rings. She's amazed to have signal and Susan wastes no time asking if Jordan has gotten her interview. She warns that Jordan had better get the story soon. They have dinner, this time Reece insisting Jordan eat her stew while she eats the prepackaged meal. Jordan, who is claustrophobic, dreads getting into the small tent even more tonight because it's raining and she won't be able to leave the flap open. She remains by the fire until midnight when Reece asks why she isn't sleeping. Reece quickly guesses Jordan is claustrophobic and insists she share Reece's tent.

Later that day, Reece and Jordan argue. Reece accuses Jordan of "prostituting herself" in order to get the interview she wanted so badly. When Jordan objects, Reece points out that Jordan has gone camping when she obviously doesn't like it or know anything about it, just so she can have the opportunity to talk Reece into the interview. Jordan points out that Reece wasn't born with a love of camping and that she deserves the same chance to experience something new. Reece seems to hesitate at this assessment but continues to refuse to talk to Jordan about her story. Jordan then points out that Reece would have gone to the same lengths for a story assignment and Reece admits that's true. Jordan promises to let Reece tell the story any way she wants, and to tell only what Reece is comfortable sharing. Reece agrees to the interview.

In chapter eleven, Reece begins to tell her story. She says her parents were killed when she was three. She lived with an elderly aunt for awhile but was later shuffled among several foster homes. She says she worked her way up in the broadcast journalism field and that she hated covering natural disasters most because there is no enemy to blame for the situation. She describes her first meeting with Pella Frann and says Pella - a supermodel - was always trying to help Reece look her best, though Reece didn't think lipstick was necessary or appropriate in desert war zones. Reece says Pella was several years older than she and that her retirement and their separation occurred around the same time. Reece says her scar was nothing more than an accident. She says she "went through a place glass window" and blames it on being clumsy. Jordan asks whether Reece and Pella separated before or after the accident and Reece makes it clear that Pella is to be left out of the article. Jordan agrees.



In chapter twelve, they decide it's time for bed but Reece heads into the woods to the bathroom. Jordan goes another direction but gets turned around and can't find her way back. She realizes she can't keep wandering around or she'll be even more lost, so she sits down to wait. She hears Reece coming but discovers it's a mountain lion. Just as she's afraid the cat is going to attack, Reece arrives with a flashlight and the cat runs away.

The following morning Reece reveals that they'll soon be back at the Ranger's Station. Jordan hadn't realized they'd made a circle. They arrive back at Reece's cabin that evening. Jordan isn't invited in and realizes Reece wants to be alone. She thanks Reece for the trip and the interview and gets into her car to head back to the city.

Chapters 10 through 12 Analysis

Jordan tries to thank Reece for having saved her from falling in the thorn bush but Reece brushes it away. Reece says she was the "logical choice" because she already has scars and a few more from the thorns won't matter. It's another case of Reece's efforts to act as if she doesn't care what people think about her appearance.

Jordan's claustrophobia is detrimental to her ability to function in some typical places. She hates the elevator in her office building but manages to handle it by standing at the outer wall, which is glass, so that she doesn't feel quite so enclosed. The morning after she sleeps in Reece's tent for the first time, Jordan is zipped into her sleeping bag and panics when she can't get it. This is all building to a situation in which Jordan will predictably have to overcome her fear in order to save Reece.

There's an entertaining scene on the second night Jordan and Reece share a tent. Jordan wakes first the following morning, which is unusual. She is facing Reece and lies still, simply watching Reece sleep. She admires Reece's eyelashes and other features. Then Reece asks if Jordan is watching her sleep. Jordan answers that she is and Reece asks, "Am I doing it right." Jordan doesn't laugh but asks if it bothers Reece. Reece responds that she understands they are in the wilderness and there aren't a lot of opportunities for entertainment. The exchange is evidence of their growing relationship.



Chapters 13 through 15

Chapters 13 through 15 Summary

In chapter thirteen, Jordan telephones Reece and asks to borrow videotapes of Reece's televised news reports. Reece arrives the following afternoon. She discovers Jordan's car is in the shop and offers to give her a ride home. They decide to go for dinner first and Reece takes Jordan to a seafood place, Harry's Crab Shack. It's very casual and Jordan enjoys both the food and the atmosphere. She says she'll have to come back again and Reece says she'll bring Jordan again. Reece then says the next time, they'll have oysters on the half shell, referring to the fact they are an aphrodisiac. The sexual tension rages and they leave, catching the ferry for the city. On the ferry, Reece pulls Jordan in for a kiss. She apologizes, saying it could be the ruin of a perfect evening. Jordan says it's a great addition to a perfect evening.

In chapter fourteen, Reece and Jordan arrive on the mainland. They sit in the car for awhile in Jordan's drive and begin kissing and fondling each other. They rush into the house and have sex on the floor just inside the door. Jordan asks Reece to stay the night but Reece declines.

In chapter fifteen, Jordan calls Reece and discovers she's in the middle of some housework. Jordan asks Reece to come to her house for dinner and Reece counters with an offer to take Jordan out. Jordan says she needs to go over some of the notes for the story and asks Reece to join her at her house. Reece agrees. The dinner is almost ready when Reece arrives. They take in the sunset from the balcony and Reece is complimentary of Jordan's efforts. Jordan asks Reece to recount the three most interesting people she met as a reporter. She cites Fergie and Hillary, then says the third is Sally Smithfield, who became pregnant at fourteen and was kicked out by her parents. Sally married her boyfriend and they had fourteen kids together. When ninety-six, she graduated college with a degree in physical education, and died a few days after graduation. Reece says the "kicker" of the story was that Sally discovered her in forties that she was gay and had a lesbian partner for almost fifty years.

After dinner, they return to the kitchen where the sexual tension again comes to the forefront. After they have sex, Jordan asks Reece to spend the night and Reece agrees.

Chapters 13 through 15 Analysis

The sex scenes are fairly graphic in detail and the obvious intention is to emulate erotica romance. The author is reasonably successful in this endeavor and it's noteworthy that while the language is sexual, there are few curse words involved. The result is that it seems the relationship between Jordan and Reece is thoughtful and kind rather than just sexual in nature.



There's a conversation between Reece and Jordan at Harry's about the angle Jordan will take with the story she's writing about Reece. Jordan says she plans to hone in on the idea that the small-town girl went off to the important job but has returned home. Reece hates the idea, saying no one will read that story. She compares it to the farmer who has a donkey that will do any task, but the farmer always has to hit the donkey first, just to get his attention. Reece says the story has to begin with the idea that Reece became disfigured and left the important job because of it. Jordan objects but Reece says Jordan won't get anyone to read the story unless she grabs their attention immediately.

Jordan spends a great deal of time for her encounters with Reece. She preps, hoping to look nice each time they are going out together, and she's rewarded when Reece seems to notice. This isn't limited to her time with Reece. When Jordan is going out with Mia early in the story, she is also happy when Mia notices that she looks nice. Jordan also spends a lot of time preparing for the dinner she cooks at her house for Reece. She makes the house look nice and opens lavender potpourri. She then begins to fiddle with the lighting and can't decide how dim to make the lights. It seems Jordan is nervous and excited, and she's obviously setting the stage for another sexual encounter with Reece.



Chapters 16 through 18

Chapters 16 through 18 Summary

In chapter sixteen, Jordan telephones Reece and asks if she can return the video tapes. Reece says she's headed to Greysome Point and invites Jordan to join her. They make plans for Jordan to leave work early the following day for a weekend together. Susan arrives in Jordan's office seconds after the phone call ends and asks Jordan to stay late to work on a piece that is shorter than had been expected. Jordan refuses which makes Susan angry. Jordan then reminds Susan she's taking off early the following day which makes Susan angrier. Jordan stands her ground for several minutes, refusing to be bullied into taking on additional assignments, but then caves in and agrees to add five hundred words to an article written by another reporter. She quickly discovers the article is more like a thousand words short.

It's very late before she gets to bed and she's back in the office early, rushing to get her work complete so she can head to Greysome Point. The following morning, Susan suggests Jordan write yet another article, and Jordan listens but refuses to do more work. She is soon on her way to Reece's cabin. When she arrives at Reece's drive, she discovers the "no trespassing" sign is in place but there is a sticky note attached that reads, "Except Jordan Griffin," which makes Jordan smile. Reece greets Jordan on the cabin porch and they kiss almost immediately. Reece teases Jordan, saying she's sure Jordan is only after a story. Jordan says she already has the interview and that she's now hoping for something completely different from Reece.

They have sex and talk for awhile before preparing to go to dinner at The Landing. They arrive in chapter seventeen and Reece recommends the steak. Jordan agrees to Reece's choice and they order. Reece then thanks Jordan for spending the extra time getting ready to go, saying she is beautiful. After dinner, Reece announces they are going to play pool. Jordan is no better at it than she had been the night they met at the Garage, and Reece sets out to teach her the basics. It's soon evident that Jordan has no talent for the game and Reece suggests they dance instead. They dance to a couple of songs before being interrupted by Brandy, a woman who knows Reece. She insists Jordan dance with her but makes a rude comment about Reece's appearance once she and Jordan are on the dance floor. Jordan is furious and slaps Brandy, who slaps her back and knocks Jordan down. Reece steps in and Brandy screams obscenities at them as Jordan and Reece leave.

In the truck on the way home, Jordan has a serious talk with Reece about her appearance, pointing out that she isn't disgusted by the scar and that she believes Reece is a beautiful woman. Jordan challenges Reece, asking if Reece sees disgust in her eyes and Reece admits she doesn't. Reece counters, saying she's had "trophy" dates in expensive settings, but that she's never had more fun than when she was camping with Jordan. Jordan then challenges Reece, saying she loves Reece and asking if Reece loves her in return. Reece denies it and begins driving back to the



cabin. On the way, Jordan contemplates the situation. She doesn't want to spend the night with Reece as they'd planned, but wants to go home and cry.

When they arrive at the cabin, Reece says the ferry doesn't run at night, that it's a long drive, and that Jordan would be foolish to start the trip so late. Jordan says she's done lots of foolish things. Reece asks her again to stay and Jordan knows the sex would be good, but says she doesn't want to make love to Reece knowing that she's in love with her and that Reece doesn't return that love. Jordan leaves, planning to be on the first ferry the following morning.

In chapter eighteen, Jordan is at work and closes her door with the hope that she will be left alone. She is having trouble thinking about anything other than Reece. Hope invites Jordan to lunch and she agrees. Once there, Jordan spills the story of her love for Reece and the fact that Reece doesn't return it. They talk for awhile with Hope turning from playful questions about the sex to serious concern when Jordan reveals the truth. Hope then asks if Jordan really wants to be with Reece. Jordan says she's very confused but that she does love Reece. Hope says the only option open to Jordan is to "go get her." After Hope leaves, Jordan thinks about the situation and continues back to the fact that Reece doesn't love her.

Chapters 16 through 18 Analysis

After one of their sexual encounters, Jordan asks about one of Reece's recent girlfriends. Reece tells the story of meeting a girl in a lesbian bar and having sex with her in the men's room. She says she later found out the woman won a one-hundred-dollar bet by having sex with Reece. Jordan is appalled but Reece insists it meant nothing to her, and that she doesn't know many people who can say they were the subject of a bet of that size. This is another of Reece's efforts to downplay the impact of the cruelty she faces because of the disfiguring scar. However, when Jordan later asks Reece if she's worth a hundred dollars, Reece becomes angry and it's obvious that she's hurt by the statement. At one point, Jordan notes that Reece's scar turns pinker when Reece reaches orgasm and says that means Reece will never be able to lie about that.

When Jordan and Reece are in the truck on the way home from The Landing, they are very tense because of the fight Jordan had with Brandy. Reece says she should never have allowed Jordan to dance with Brandy and Jordan asks why Reece had allowed it. Reece says she doesn't know but it seems likely that she had been proud of being out with Jordan. During this conversation it's revealed the Reece believes Jordan slapped Brandy because Brandy had her hands "all over" Jordan. Reece shoves Brandy, believing she's protecting Jordan from the drunk woman. It seems likely that she would have reacted at least slightly differently if she had known what Brandy really said.



Chapters 19 through 21

Chapters 19 through 21 Summary

In chapter nineteen, Susan is pressing Jordan for the first draft of her story about Reece McAllister. Jordan sends a message that she's going to work from home and leaves the office. At home, she begins going through videos of Reece's reporting clips. One of the clips shows Reece interviewing Pella Frann and Jordan admits the woman is beautiful. She has a French accent and is impeccable in her clothing and appearance. As Reece conducts the interview, Pella occasionally stumbles over the English word and reverts to French. At one point, she throws out several French words and Jordan realizes the syntax is overly correct, as in textbook language rather than conversational French. Jordan knows a native-speaking Frenchman would not have used those words and it piques her interest in Pella's background.

The phone rings and Hope invites Jordan to a birthday party for Stephanie, the sister of Hope's significant other, Barbara. Hope says Stephanie chose the Garage for her party. Jordan knows she'll be remembering her encounter there with Reece and doesn't want to go, but gives in to Hope's request.

In chapter twenty, Jordan begins researching Pella Frann. She isn't certain what she expects to find, but starts with the modeling agency where Pella worked. An assistant there says Pella hasn't worked for about five years and that she's fully retired. Jordan says she'd like to get in touch with Pella and the assistant says Jordan needn't bother looking for her in foreign countries, then hangs up. Jordan then calls on the magazine's research department for help. A photographer who had worked with Pella years earlier recalls that Pella knew little about France. As Jordan continues her research, she wonders why Pella and Reece are no longer together.

In chapter twenty-one, Jordan arrives at the Garage to join Hope and her friends. They order pizza and Stephanie is well on her way to becoming drunk when Jordan asks her to dance, hoping to slow down her drinking. Stephanie becomes very vocal about a woman who she considers unattractive though Hope and Jordan try to tone down her conversation. They are gathered around the pool table a short time later when Reece arrives. A woman named Kelly asks Jordan to dance and Hope pushes her into accepting. Reece cuts in though Jordan momentarily wishes Kelly would refuse. Reece asks if Jordan is finished with the article and she says she's still working. Jordan offers to give Reece the first draft for approval but Reece declines, saying she trusts Jordan. Reece returns to the bar and Jordan follows. Reece offers to buy Jordan a drink and Jordan orders a margarita. Reece is drinking harder liquor and offers Jordan a drink. Jordan has several shots and is soon unsteady on the bar. When Kelly asks Jordan to dance again, Jordan declines. Reece suggests Jordan accept and points out that Kelly was obviously attracted to Jordan. Jordan is now completely drunk and is angry that Reece would try to fix her up with someone else. Jordan rushes outside and Hope confronts Reece. Reece promises to take care of Jordan and follows her to the parking



lot. Reece refuses to help Jordan find her car, instead taking her to Reece's truck, and drives her home.

Chapters 19 through 21 Analysis

During Reece's interview with Pella, Reece asks how long Pella has been modeling. Pella already said she became a model at age nineteen. If she had answered that question, she would have given away her age. Instead of answering, she changes the subject. This doesn't seem significant at the time but it is the first clue that there is a serious problem in Pella's attitude on aging. The fact that Reece is younger than she becomes an issue in their relationship and is the cause of the fight that results in Reece's horrific scar.

There is an ongoing reference between Reece and Jordan about the integrity of journalists. Reece has repeatedly said writers will "shoot her in the foot" if she grants an interview. When she comes to the point of trusting Jordan with her story, they reference that saying several times with Jordan promising she won't "shoot Reece in the foot" with the article.



Chapters 22 through 25

Chapters 22 through 25 Summary

In chapter twenty-two, Jordan wakes with a horrible hangover. She can't decide where she is initially but soon finds Reece who says Jordan is at her apartment. Reece recounts the evening for Jordan, teasing her a little by expanding on what really happened. Reece is indignant when Jordan asks if they had sex, saying she wouldn't take advantage of someone who is drunk. Jordan points out it was obvious to Reece she was becoming drunk and asks why Reece didn't stop her. Reece says she thought perhaps Jordan needed to let loose.

In chapter twenty-three, Jordan continues her research and discovers Reece's scar is not the result of an accident. She has discovered police records about the disturbance. Pella had gone into a rage, picked up a knife, and brutally attacked Reece. Jordan is now in a quandary, unsure what she will write and considering telling Susan there simply isn't a story to tell. Jordan reveals the entire story to Hope later that day. She says Pella had been unable to withstand the thought of growing older and losing her looks. She'd attacked Reece and then called for help while Reece lay bleeding on the kitchen floor. Pella was in the yard when the police arrived, screaming that she didn't mean it. Reece had refused to press charges and officials agreed as long as Pella sought professional help, which she had done. Jordan says she believes Reece is still trying to protect Pella from the public eye. Jordan says she's talked to Pella's counselors and that Pella has tried to commit suicide on each of her last two birthdays, and that she'll never be able to live alone again. Jordan says she now realizes that Pella took not only Reece's looks but also destroyed Reece's ability to trust in love.

Jordan spends the rest of the day working on the article about Reece. At the end of the day she has converted her notes and information into an eight-page article, complete with facts and sidebars and Reece's career.

In chapter twenty-four, Reece is walking along the coast. She's taking some photos but not really focused on the scenery as she usually would have been. She calls Tony, her business manager, and says she wants to leave the country for awhile. Tony asks why and guesses there is a woman involved. Reece admits it and says she has to get away for awhile. Tony asks if the woman is worth Reece's efforts and Reece says a relationship would not be fair.

In chapter twenty-five, Reece arrives in the offices of Northwest Living with a copy of the latest magazine. She demands to see Susan and when she learns Susan and Mark are in a meeting together, she pushes her way into the office. Mark is seeing the article for the first time which is titled, "Reece McAllister, a reporter without a future" and includes a full-page close-up of Reece's scar. Reece is furious, saying she provided only some of the information to Jordan and that she hadn't told Jordan anything about Pella's role in Reece's scar. The article also includes information about Pella's current state. Mark



asks for Jordan and finds out she's out of town on another story. Mark says they will print an apology but Reece says she doesn't want any more mention of the story, even an apology.

When Reece leaves, Mark is furious with Susan. He asks why Jordan wrote the story in such a way as to hurt so many people. Susan seems to defend Jordan, saying she'd obviously thought it was a good story. Mark leaves a copy of the magazine on Jordan's desk, opened to the story about Reece. When he arrives the following day, Jordan is at her desk, looking at the article, and she's furious. Mark says he's disappointed in Jordan, and that he believed she had the judgment to do the right thing. Jordan says the article that was printed is not the article she turned in. Jordan immediately heads down the hall to Susan's office. Jordan asks Susan why she altered the story. Susan says she, as senior editor, has the right to do whatever she pleases. She says the story will sell lots of copies of the magazine and Jordan says she quits. She contacts another writer about the stories she's working on, clears the personal information from her computer, and heads out of the building. Mark tries to stop her but she gets on the elevator.

Chapters 22 through 25 Analysis

Jordan has dug up the entire story of Reece and Pella, but she confides in Hope that she wishes she hadn't learned the truth. Hope says Jordan is a good reporter and that she has done her due diligence on the story. Reece later echoes that thought, saying she isn't surprised that Jordan went after the truth about the story despite Reece's request that she leave it alone.

In chapter twenty-five, Reece accuses Susan of altering her story and Susan says she's done what is necessary for the good of the magazine. It was noted early in the story that Susan lacks the judgment and skills necessary to be the senior editor and that Mark's role is often to watch out for Susan's mistakes. However, it seems many of Susan's mistakes prior to this one were done out of ignorance. In this case, Jordan believes Susan has deliberately written the most hurtful and spiteful things she can find because she wants to hurt Reece and Jordan. Susan has become jealous of the relationship between the two women and says Jordan has gotten so close to Reece that she can no longer see the real story. Susan has made several passes at Jordan and invited out repeatedly, but Jordan always declines. As she's leaving, Jordan says she should have filed harassment complaints against Susan for her advances.



Chapters 26 through

Chapters 26 through Summary

In chapter twenty-six, Jordan goes to Reece's house and finds Gloria working in her yard. Gloria says Reece is upset because of the article and that she often goes to a spot near her cabin to think when she's upset. Jordan heads home, packs some clothes, and drives to catch the ferry. She pulls into the drive to the cabin and has continued to call Reece periodically throughout the day, with no answer. Jordan waits for awhile but remembers Gloria saying that Reece had a special place she goes to think. She pulls on her backpack and heads into the woods toward a nearby stream, believing that fits the description Gloria gave.

Jordan is calling out to Reece as she walks, and Reece's first words are for Jordan to get away from the edge of a cliff. Jordan discovers the ground has caved in and Reece is now stranded below and trapped by fallen debris. Reece encourages Jordan to go back to the cabin but Jordan is afraid she'll never find her way back, then back to Reece. Reece discovers an opening, apparently to a cave, and suggests it might open on the other side of the hill. Jordan searches and finds what seems to be the opposite end of the small cave. With no real options, she decides she'll go through the cave with the hope that she can help Reece free herself once she's through. Reece knows that Jordan's claustrophobia will make the travel through very difficult but Jordan insists and sets out.

Jordan reaches Reece and provides water and a granola bar. Once Reece is free, Jordan is faced with the realization that she's going to have to travel back through the tunnel to get back to safety. Reece points out that the hillside might cave again and that they have to go soon.

In chapter twenty-seven, Reece says it's too late for them to hike out. They bath in a cold stream and when Jordan loses her footing and panics, Reece helps her regain her footing and comforts her. Jordan begins to cry, saying she's constantly clumsy. Reece assures her she isn't and points out that Jordan just worked through a phobia to save Reece. Once they are clean and warming by the campfire, Jordan apologizes for the article, and for digging into Reece's past. Reece says she would have expected nothing less from a dedicated reporter. Reece makes it clear she knows that Jordan didn't write the story and that she forgives Jordan for her role in having the article published. Jordan asks if there's anything she can do and Reece says she wants Jordan to write a story about Pella and her life. Jordan says she no longer works at the magazine but Reece confesses that she sits on the magazine's board of directors and is part owner of the company. She says Susan has been fired and that there's an opening for an editor.

The conversation then turns personal and Reece announces that she's going on a trip. Jordan says she knows that Reece is running from their relationship. She says she's certain Reece is in love with her, or would be if she would only allow herself to be.



Reece says there will come a day when Jordan will be repulsed by the sight of her scar. Jordan threatens to cut her face to make them the same and Reece becomes honestly angry. She says she doesn't want Jordan to go through what she's been through and then finds she no longer has the will to fight her love. They fall into an embrace and kiss as they admit their love for each other.

Chapters 26 through Analysis

Gloria doesn't know that Jordan is the Jordan Griffin who wrote the article about Reece. When Gloria is talking to Jordan about the article, she says the magazine shouldn't have printed it and that Reece looked as if she'd been "stabbed in the heart" when she took the magazine out of her mailbox. Jordan tries to stand up for herself only a little, saying Ms. Griffin might not be responsible for the article and that she has heard Ms. Griffin is no longer with the magazine. Gloria goes on to say she blames the magazine's editors as well, and that she's cancelled her subscription.

Reece has confided in Jordan that she sought out plastic surgeons with the hope that she could have her scar at least partly repaired, but that the scar was so deep and formed in such a way that made it impossible. Reece is struggling with the same issues Pella struggled with, only Reece's problem is that the scar was caused by Pella. Both are unable to look past what they see as flaws in their own appearances though other people see each of them differently.



Characters

Reece McAllister

A television journalist who becomes a photographer after a brutal attack leaves her permanently disfigured. Reece is a strong woman who tries to behave as if the scar doesn't bother her but her actions indicate otherwise. When Reece is attracted to Jordan she tries to reject the attraction, partly because she has trouble trusting but also because she knows her scar attracts attention. She says Jordan has the right to be partnered with someone who is as beautiful as Jordan. Reece is quickly protective of Jordan even before she and Jordan connect physically. When Jordan is about to fall into a thorn bush, Reece catches her though it means Reece is battered by dozens of thorns. Reece's attitude regarding beauty is seen again when Jordan apologizes for causing Reece to be hurt. Reece says she would rather be hurt herself than to see someone as beautiful as Jordan harmed. Reece is a talented photographer and loves the outdoors. She has a cabin in a remote area and seeks time to be alone there. It seems she is often searching for a way to be alone and this is likely because she is hoping to save herself from public ridicule because of her scarred face. It also seems that Reece is sometimes intent on shocking people, probably to save herself the embarrassment of public ridicule. When she meets Jordan for the first time, Reece pulls her shirt aside, giving Jordan a full look at the scar and makes a point of making it clear she'd seen Jordan staring. When Jordan questions Reece about how she came to have the scar, Reece lies, saying it was an accident.

Jordan Griffin

Jordan is a talented magazine writer who is in Washington and loves her life, though she finds herself lonely for a relationship. She is a very sexual person and the physical side of a relationship is important to her. She is also very loyal to her friends to the extent that she goes to a birthday party for a woman she doesn't like because it's important to her cousin, Hope. Jordan is a determined journalist and when Reece refuses to give an interview, Jordan follows her into the wilderness in an effort to wear Reece down and get the story. Jordan is shocked by the scar on Reece's face the first time they meet but she is drawn to Reece anyway. When Reece refuses to tell Jordan the truth behind how she came to have the scar, Reece sets out to find out on her own. She does discover that Reece was attacked by her lover and debates what she'll do with that information. She knows people will be interested in the true story but also believes it will harm both Reece and Pella, and decides to keep the story to herself, sticking instead to only those facts given by Reece. Jordan is horrified when she discovers Susan has altered her story to include the information about Pella's brutal attack on Reece, and she is so angry over the lack of ethics Susan exhibits that she quits on the spot. This is yet another example of Jordan's loyalty to her friends. Another facet of Jordan's personality is her insecurity. Despite the fact that she's successful and



beautiful, she feels clumsy and believes this is the main reason Reece continues to push her away.

Susan Mackey

The senior editor at Northwest Living magazine, she is vindictive and unprofessional. Susan steals the information Jordan gathers for Reece's story and rewrites it, including sensational information and photos about Pella's attack on Reece. She then tells Jordan that she's told the truth and ensured many people will buy with magazine.

Mark Bergman

An editor for the magazine, he is much more professional than Susan but unable to control her in some cases. Mark is upset when he sees the story about Reece and says the magazine is above such sensationalism.

Gloria

Reece's neighbor, she is loyal to Reece. Gloria is missing a leg as the result of cancer. It's Gloria who initially gives Jordan the information to find Reece's cabin at Greysome Point and who says she's cancelled her subscription to the magazine because of the horrible article about Reece and Pella.

Pella Frann

A super model who pretends to be French but is actually an American named Francis Pellagrino. She is Reece's partner for many years. Pella snaps as she begins to age and, unable to stand the thought of becoming ugly with age, brutally attacks Reece, permanently disfiguring her. Pella spends the next years in a mental institution and then in a halfway house. She attempts suicide every year on her birthday.

Hope

Jordan's cousin, she is able to set Jordan up with the items she needs for a camping trip when Jordan sets out to follow Reece into the wilderness. Hope is a happy person who puts forth the idea that she's a player, but she's actually in a devoted relationship with a flight attendant named Barbara.

Sally Smithfield

One of the three most interesting people Reece met as a reporter. Reece says Sally dropped out of school at fourteen when she became pregnant and had to marry, but



returned to college and graduated at ninety-six, dying just a few days after receiving her diploma.

Brandy

A woman Reece knows who insists she have a dance with Jordan at The Landing. Brandy is rude and forward which makes Jordan uncomfortable but when Brandy makes a rude comment about Reece's appearance, Jordan slaps her.

Kelly

A woman who asks Jordan to dance at the Garage and who grants permission when Reece cuts in. When Kelly asks Jordan for a second dance, Jordan declines but Reece says Jordan should have accepted, which makes Jordan angry.

Stephanie

The sister of Barbara, who is Hope's girlfriend, Stephanie asks to have her birthday at the Garage. Jordan dances with Stephanie with the hope that Stephanie won't get drunk so quickly. Stephanie makes rude comments about a woman she considers unattractive, which makes Jordan angry.



Objects/Places

Greysome Point

Where Reece has a cabin.

Seattle, Washington

Where Jordan lives and works as a journalist.

Northwest Living

The magazine Jordan works for as the story opens.

Cherry Street

The location of the gallery where Reece's photos are being shown as the story opens.

Mountain States Cattleman's Journal

Where Jordan works as assistant editor before moving to Seattle.

Biscotti

The pastry Jordan brings to Susan as the story opens.

Global News Network

Where Reece works as a journalist prior to the incident that caused the horrific scar on her face.

The Garage

The restaurant where Jordan arranges an encounter with Reece, hoping for an interview.

Harry's Crab Shack

Where Reece takes Jordan for dinner the night they have sex for the first time.

Bellevue

Where Reece lives in the city.



Themes

Beauty is only skin deep

This adage is an overriding theme in the story and is the catalyst that drives the entire story. Pella Frann is taught from an early age that her beauty is the ticket out of her ordinary life. She apparently struggles toward the goal of being a supermodel and when she arrives, she is unable to enjoy her success for fear of losing her beauty, which she sees as her only asset. As time passes, Pella finds herself unable to cope with the idea that she's aging. What most people would consider the natural progression of time, Pella sees as her downfall. There comes a time when she absolutely loses the ability to cope and apparently has a nervous breakdown. She attacks Reece and leaves her horribly scarred. All this happens prior to the beginning of the book, but Pella's attack on Reece and the resulting scar Reece carries with her drive the rest of the story. Reece's appearance is greatly altered by Pella's attack. The scar runs down her face and prompts many rude and shocked reactions. Jordan's reaction upon seeing Reece for the first time is also one of shock and she is unable to cover her horror. This is typical of how people react when they see Reece's face. When Reece and Jordan connect on an emotional and sexual level, Jordan finds herself falling in love for the first time in her life. Reece feels the same for Jordan but refuses to admit to the love because she believes Jordan will eventually be ashamed to be seen with her. Jordan tries to tell Reece - as Reece had tried to tell Pella - that physical appearance isn't the most important aspect of a person's character. In Pella's case, she is never able to believe that as a fact. Reece may not fully believe but she does come to admit her love for Jordan.

Journalistic curiosity

The journalistic drive is something Reece and Jordan share, each exhibiting a strong desire to tell the stories of the people they encounter. Jordan sets out to get the story about Reece without expecting the assignment to turn into anything more than a story assignment. When Reece refuses to grant the interview during their first meeting, Jordan manages to encounter Reece again, but again without success. Jordan is so determined to get Reece's story that she sets out on a camping expedition in an effort to have more time with Reece in a setting that Reece chooses. Another important aspect of this theme is seen when Jordan sets out to find the truth about Reece's scar. She sifts through a great deal of information and does extensive research before she discovers Pella Frann's background and the truth about Pella's attack on Reece. Jordan tells her cousin Hope that she feels guilty for having dug into Reece's past, but Hope assures Jordan that she's merely followed her journalistic curiosity. Jordan is then faced with the decision of whether to use the information. However, Jordan had agreed that she wouldn't use the information about Pella, and she doesn't. It's Susan who rewrites Jordan's story, adding in details about Pella that would be detrimental to Pella's fragile existence and ignores the rules set forth by Reece. Jordan is so angry over the situation that she quits her job the moment she finds out. She isn't certain Reece will forgive her



but Reece has spent years in the journalism business and understands the curiosity typical of journalists.

Love and sexual attraction

Jordan is in a casual relationship with a woman named Mia as the story opens. Jordan admits that the relationship satisfies only her desire for companionship and sex, but that she hasn't found the person who can fulfill her in all aspects of her life. After spending some time with Reece, Jordan admits to being sexually attracted to Reece and the two have sex after only a few encounters. As Jordan watches videos of Reece's days as a reporter, she finds the video of Reece interviewing Pella Frann for the first time. Reece is obviously attracted to Pella and it turns out that attraction is reciprocated. It's not until she's spent a great deal of time with Reece that Jordan admits to herself that she's fallen in love with Reece. One of the climaxes of the story comes when Jordan admits her love for Reece. Jordan and Reece are in the car headed back to Reece's cabin when Jordan makes the confession and Jordan expects Reece to return her love. Reece has fallen in love with Jordan but she refuses to admit it, believing that the relationship would not be the best thing for Jordan. Ironically, the fact that Reece is so concerned about Jordan is evidence of her love for Jordan. There are others in the story who exhibit this theme, though to lesser degrees and of lesser importance to the story. Jordan's boss, Susan, is constantly asking Jordan out and making it obvious she finds Jordan attractive. Jordan's cousin Hope is in a committed relationship with a woman named Barbara. Barbara's sister, Stephanie, laments the fact that she can't find a suitable relationship.



Style

Point of View

"Skin Deep" is written in third person from an omniscient perspective though there are some aspects of the perspective that are limited, mainly in an effort to retain the suspense and allow for the twist at the end of the story. The omniscient perspective gives the reader insight into the various characters. One such scene is in chapter seven when Reece returns from getting Jordan's car from where it was stuck in the woods. Jordan is asleep when Reece returns and she doesn't wake Jordan. There is only a short section that occurs before Jordan wakes, but it prompts the idea of Reece as a protective person. The perspective generally limited to Jordan and most of the time the reader sees only into Jordan's thoughts. These sometimes offer insights into Jordan's character. For example, there is a scene in which Jordan has spilled coffee on her pants. She is in the restroom trying to get the stain out when Susan appears. Susan insists Jordan pull off her pants so that Susan can get the stain out. Jordan does but is embarrassed at the way Susan looks at her. Jordan is a very sexual person but she is not interested in Susan, therefore isn't interested in sex with Susan. In many other cases, Jordan evaluates what she sees and the reader is privy to her thoughts on those topics, such as the scene in which Jordan is watching Reece's videotapes from her early days of reporting.

Setting

The story is set in modern day Washington State. Some of the places are real, and the state does boast wilderness areas such as the one described during the camping trip taken by Jordan and Reece. The main city, Seattle, is also real and many of the descriptions of the story are real or at least in keeping with the city. For example, Jordan refers to the city's Space Needle, which is a famous landmark. There are also references to trendy restaurants and pastry shops, all that could be real and are in keeping with the atmosphere of the city. There are also several specific settings, including Reece McAllister's cabin in the rural area outside Seattle. That cabin, though probably not real, is described in great detail and the reader may accept it as a real place. The details in some cases become tedious with the writer describing almost every aspect of a room. In the case of Reece's cabin, the author mentions the moose antlers mounted on the wall which could be an interesting detail if she'd stopped there. However, the writer goes on to describe the parchment lampshades and a myriad of other details including furniture style and the rug on the floor. Some aspects of these details speak to Reece's character, which could be important to the reader. Other specific settings include several restaurants, the office where Jordan works, and Jordan's apartment. Each are described in great detail and are believable and appropriate to the story.



Language and Meaning

The story is sometimes slow and ponderous, with too much attention paid to details that don't really matter. For example, there are several pages dedicated to the clothes Jordan chooses to wear to the Garage with her cousin Hope, and to Hope's efforts to helping her find something more suitable. The clothing is described in great detail and some readers may become bored with the scene. There is also an entire scene in which Jordan chooses boots. While both give the reader a look into Jordan's personality, it seems as if the author was showing off knowledge of how to choose the correct hiking boots and of what might have been in Jordan's wardrobe. There are also long sections of graphic sexual scenes which some readers may find offensive. The fact that many of the characters are lesbian may also offend some readers. That lifestyle is a main force behind the action of the story. The overall tone of the story is one of hope as Jordan seeks a mate who will fulfill her in every way and Reece seeks someone she can trust after being brutally attacked by her former girlfriend. The hopeful tone comes to a typical climax with the two women faltering in their budding relationship before reuniting. The story is, in many ways, too predictable though the author seems to seek to build suspense in several instances. The language of the story may be offensive to some readers. There are curse words scattered throughout "Skin Deep". These are generally used in conversation and are obviously meant to mimic conversation typical of these people in this time.

Structure

"Skin Deep" is divided into twenty-seven chapters of varying lengths. The action of the story flows in chronological order though there are historical details presented as mere facts. For example, Hope and Jordan are cousins and best friends. Their family connection and the details of how they came to live near each other in Seattle are presented as a series of facts that could be considered memories. The girls' mothers are sisters and Jordan and Hope are both only children. Each announced in high school that they were lesbians. Each had professional or educational goals that took them to Seattle. All this is presented merely as a matter of fact and as additional introduction into Jordan's relationship with Hope. Prior to the beginning of the book, Reece is brutally attacked by Pella Frann. This information is also presented as a series of facts discovered by Jordan during her research into Reece's life.

Chapter one is largely an introduction of Jordan and her life in Seattle as well as the story assignment that will be her first meeting with Reece. Chapters two and three are additional background on Jordan who meets Reece for the first time in chapter four. In chapter five, Jordan decides to get creative in her efforts to interview Reece and plans to follow her on a camping trip. Chapters eight through twelve cover the camping trip and the interview. Over the next few chapters, the relationship between Reece and Jordan begins to grow and in chapter seventeen Reece denies that she loves Jordan, apparently bringing the relationship to an end. There are several climactic points in the

remaining chapters, including chapter twenty-one in which Jordan and Reece encounter each other in a restaurant.



Quotes

"As a woman who usually found no difficulty in asking questions and saying the right thing, Jordan found herself speechless for the first time in her life. The disparity between the woman's shocking looks and her sensitive stare caught Jordan completely off-guard." Chapter 4

"I'm a common criminal stuck in the mud. I'm going to be attacked by wild animals and left for dead so the woman up the road can have me hung from the trees as a warning to other wandering reporters." Chapter 6

"You'll fall off a mountain or freeze to death. You'll break a fingernail and bleed to death." Chapter 7

"Jordan felt a cramp biting at the back of her leg and the straps of her pack digging into her shoulders, but she never complained or stopped. She knew Reece was still testing her and she was not giving in." Chapter 9

"If you don't get this story you can bet another magazine will. Promise her the moon, but get that story." Chapter 10

"Like any job, you work up through the ranks as a journalist, doing anything and everything they tell you to do." Chapter 11

"Or she could do the obvious third choice, scream and cry from panic at being lost." Chapter 12

"She knew they would be deep in the woods in her cabin but she wanted to look perfect for Reece." Chapter 16

"And I love the way you look. I don't see the scar." Chapter 17

"When the police pulled up, she was standing in the front yard, waving the bloody knife and screaming. The officer said she was saying things like she didn't mean it." Chapter 23

"Having slashed her own face and body in repeated self-inflicted attacks, Ms. Pellagrino is barely recognizable as the former supermodel." Chapter 25

"You aren't asking me to do anything, Reece. I'm doing this because I want to." Chapter 26

"You used journalistic curiosity to get the story. You did what any good reporter would do." Chapter 26



Topics for Discussion

Who is Jordan? Who is Reece? Describe how the relationship between them grows over the course of the story. What are the issues each faces that they have to overcome?

Who is Pella Frann? What is the issue Pella faces? How does this impact Reece? How does it then impact Jordan and why?

What causes Reece's scar? Jordan refers to the incident scarring Reece on the inside and the outside. What does she mean by this? Is she right? What are the long-term effects of the incident?

Describe the camping trip Jordan and Reece take. What are the misconceptions Jordan has about camping? Why is she willing to go on a camping trip anyway?

Compare the characters of Jordan and Reece. What are the obstacles each face in their efforts to find happiness? What are the strengths and weaknesses of each? Which is more likeable? Why?

Who is Hope? Barbara? Kelly? Gloria? Brandy? Stephanie? How is each connected to Jordan? How is each connected to Reece? What are the roles of each in the story?

What is the most important theme of the story? List at least two situations in which the theme appears. What do you consider the most important setting? Why?