

Snowfall Study Guide

Snowfall by Orhan Pamuk

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Plot Summary

"Snowfall" is the story of Caitlin Bennett, a successful writer of murder mysteries, who becomes the target of a serial killer herself. The heiress to a large fortune, Caitlin has always been comfortable, as well as having made a name for herself as a writer. However, at the beginning of the novel, she has begun to receive threatening letters from an unknown assailant. At first, she is quiet about these letters, until Caitlin is pushed in front of a truck and her editor, Aaron, reveals that the publishing house has also been getting them. As she recovers, Aaron has his brother, Mac, a former police officer, come to protect Caitlin even though the two have never gotten along well.

Meanwhile, the police work on solving not only the mystery of Caitlin's enemy, but also the murders of several women in New York City. They cannot seem to piece together the identity of the attacker. At the same time, a man called "Buddy" is the one who has been murdering them because they resemble Caitlin and he hates her so much.

Frustrated by her inability to do anything, and thinking that she will catch the attacker, Caitlin makes an announcement publicly that the man pursuing her is a coward. However, she underestimates Buddy, who sends a bomb to Aaron's office, seriously injuring Aaron. Beginning to fall in love, Caitlin and Mac go to visit Aaron in the hospital, where Caitlin befriends a little girl who has been traumatized by her mother's death. Caitlin and Mac are still trying to solve the mystery, and begin to connect the murders to Caitlin when they visit the police precinct and Caitlin faints, realizing that all of the dead women resemble her. They then make the link to Caitlin's father, and try to talk to his former secretary; however, she is brutally murdered before they can get to her. They then go to talk to Caitlin's father's lawyer, who reveals that her father had sent money every month to a woman in Toledo.

With some research, Mac discovers that this woman had had a child by Caitlin's father, and refused money from him, though he sent it regularly each month. However, he also discovers that the child is Neil, one of the police officers on Caitlin's case - also known as "Buddy." He goes to get Caitlin only to find that she has unknowingly gone with Buddy to his cabin. With other members of the police force, Mac goes to save Caitlin, though he has to kill Neil in the process.



Chapters 1-2

Chapters 1-2 Summary

"Snowfall" is a novel detailing the stalking of mystery writer Caitlin Bennett. Chapter One immediately begins with Caitlin opening a new piece of mail that threatens her. She has been receiving these threats for some time, and has not taken them too seriously, though she has alerted one of her deceased father's friends on the police force because of their menacing nature. However, she cannot spend too much time with the letter, because she has a television interview to promote her new book. After the interview, her publicist, Kenny, picks her up to take her home. Hopelessly in love with her, he asks her to dinner, but she refuses, wanting just to go back home. The action then cuts to a character called Buddy, who has been watching Caitlin, full of hatred. Walking away, he sees a brunette who resembles her, and brutally murders her.

In Chapter Two, the police comb the crime scene, but don't have any promising leads. Meanwhile, Caitlin wakes up and talks on the telephone with Aaron, her editor. He is also a close friend of hers, and they meet up to chat. He is shocked to find that Caitlin has been getting hate mail, because his office has also been getting it on her behalf. Upset, but not distraught, Caitlin leaves him to go buy groceries. When waiting to cross the street, though, Caitlin is pushed into oncoming traffic and hit by a truck.

Chapters 1-2 Analysis

The first chapters of "Snowfall" immediately plunge the reader into the drama of the plot, drawing upon several important elements of characterization and symbolism along the way. Caitlin is herself a mystery writer, yet is threatened by an anonymous writer. This is later mirrored by the fact that, although she has friends on the police force, the would-be assailant is actually a member of the squad himself. Chapter One also highlights the dichotomy of public and private that the book emphasizes, as Caitlin goes on television and tries to avoid discussing her personal life (here, her father). The chapter ends with a murder, demonstrating the seriousness of the attacker's threats, again underscored by the police investigation at the beginning of the following chapter. Caitlin is herself placed in harm's way as she is pushed in front of a truck at the end of Chapter 2.



Chapters 3-4

Chapters 3-4 Summary

Caitlin awakes to the paramedics taking care of her in Chapter 3. They realize who she is, and she asks them to call her editor. At the hospital, the detectives arrive, including one called Neil. They ask about her books, but she can't think of any enemies. Meanwhile, Connor, Aaron's brother (also known as Mac) is on vacation in Colorado but gets a call from his brother asking him to come act as Caitlin's bodyguard. He agrees to, reluctantly, for he has never gotten along well with Caitlin.

In Chapter 4, Buddy enters the hospital, thinking about his mother's miserable last days as she wasted away from cancer. He wears a disguise, including a moustache and a lab coat. However, when trying to enter Caitlin's room, he sees a man in there and apologizes, saying that he is a doctor looking for another patient. Mac (the man in the room) goes to question the nurses and finds out that the doctor whose identity Buddy assumed is a gynecologist, yet asked for a male patient, in addition to being on the wrong floor. Caitlin awakes, and Mac calls Aaron to let him know what happened.

Buddy, meanwhile, thinks that he will have to wait. He breaks into Caitlin's apartment and installs a bug in her chandelier.

When Caitlin gets home, Kenny comes to visit her. When he comes up to her apartment, though, he sees that a lot of other people are there as well. Caitlin tries to get up, but breaks a glass, as she is still fragile. The next day, Mac installs a security system for her.

Chapters 3-4 Analysis

Chapters 3-4 are important in their introduction of Mac as a main character, as well as for the development of Neil/Buddy's character, who is at this point still known just by his nickname. The antagonism between Caitlin and Mac is immediately apparent; however, the two are importantly linked through Aaron, whom they both love. It is thus through him that Mac, acting as protector, comes to defend Caitlin from the yet unknown attacker.

Buddy's attempt to infiltrate the hospital and get to Caitlin again emphasizes the difference between interior and exterior, as the man's appearance as a doctor directly contradicts his actual character of murderer. This is once more emphasized when he places the bug in Caitlin's apartment, breaking into her internal world and trying to gain access to her movements and thoughts. This placement of the bug is placed in direct contrast to Mac's actions, as he installs other electronics - a security system - for the purposes of protecting Caitlin.



Chapters 5-6

Chapters 5-6 Summary

Detective Neil comes over to investigate in Chapter Five, and Mac answers the door. He tells Neil about what happened at the hospital, and how strange it was that a "doctor" wouldn't turn the light in a patient's room on. The detectives go to the hospital to investigate. Caitlin gets up to find that Mac has cooked for her; they discuss the detectives and Mac, a former police officer, notes that he is not impressed by Neil. They end up in a fight. In the same chapter, Buddy is at the gym, where even his trainer notes his aggression. He then goes to a diner and spots a woman like Caitlin. He follows her out into the night and she says that he'll have to pay, implying that she is a prostitute.

Chapter Six opens with a new crime scene, in the subway, where the prostitute has been murdered. Some detectives think she might have been a prostitute, but they are not sure. Back at Caitlin's apartment, Mac awakes, having dreamed of a former girlfriend of his who died of cancer. Caitlin is typing, working on her next novel, and it is snowing again. He apologizes to her and they end up kissing. Aaron comes in not long afterward, to find them breaking apart; Mac makes a weak joke about child support, which Aaron does not entirely understand at this point.

Chapters 5-6 Analysis

Chapters 5 and 6 are important for several reasons: primarily, the developing relationship between Mac and Caitlin, but also the continuing violence of Neil/Buddy. Returning to this section after having finished the story and discovered that Neil is the killer, readers will note that both Mac and Caitlin give much away as they talk to the police officer, though Mac has the foresight to distrust him. This distrust is, of course, well founded as "Buddy" ends up killing a prostitute at the end of Chapter 5. Though readers may not know whether or not they can trust Mac himself at this point, the growing romantic relationship between him and Caitlin helps to assuage doubt, as he appears to have her best interests at heart.



Chapters 7-8

Chapters 7-8 Summary

In Chapter Seven, the detectives explore the latest victim's apartment, trying to link her to the first woman who was murdered. They discover her "black book," confirming that she probably was a prostitute. Two days later, Caitlin wakes up, unable to sleep from the cold and, when going to change the thermostat, finds Mac, who kisses her and sends her back to bed.

Buddy, meanwhile, examines the pictures he has on his wall of Caitlin, unhappy. He suspects, as well, that he hears a rat in his wall and goes to complain to the superintendent, who says that he can't do anything.

The next day, Caitlin and Mac are still around the apartment when Neil calls, just to check in.

In Chapter Eight, Mac tells Caitlin that he's sent copies of the letters to a woman he knows who can come up with a profile. Later, Buddy, outside, sees Caitlin and Mac walking out of the apartment. They go and buy pretzels from a street vendor, despite the cold. She has been teasing him about his history with women, and they end up fighting. Mac wonders if he could ever be with her. On the way back home, Mac stops to talk to the doorman, Mike. However, Caitlin is already upstairs and has opened up her latest package, which contains a dead rat.

Chapters 7-8 Analysis

Chapters 7 and 8 make earlier plot lines and symbolism more complicated, as several seemingly unrelated clues come into play. The fact that the earlier victim was indeed a prostitute actually has no bearing on the case, as the detectives will discover when they later connect the murders to the victims' physical similarities to Caitlin. However, a good part of Chapter 7 is devoted to the detectives exploring the victim's apartment, following the wrong trail. This is highlighted by Buddy in his apartment, frustrated by the rats. Readers should note that Neil also calls Caitlin "just to check in." This foreshadows his involvement in - and, indeed, instigation of - the crimes.

The dead rat, though it appears to be loaded with meaning as a symbol, is nothing more than an indication of Buddy's hatred for Caitlin. However, it does speak to a deeper, underlying psychosis as well.



Chapters 9-10

Chapters 9-10 Summary

In Chapter Nine, Kenny comes over to Caitlin's apartment with a present for her, but finds the police and Mac there and leaves the present without seeing her, upset that he is the last to know. Aaron watches the dynamic between Mac and Caitlin, wondering what might be there. Neil, meanwhile, is provoking Mac, who used to be a cop. Listening to their dialogue, Caitlin realizes that the man who's writing to her has no real power - he's just a writer. She starts to come up with a plan on her own. Later, Mac kisses Caitlin, who he desperately wants to protect, and Aaron nearly sees them, laughing at his brother, who he thinks has always been attracted to Caitlin.

Caitlin is at the doctor's office at the beginning of Chapter Ten, where she has her stitches removed. Mac waits for her, and then asks where she wants to go; she tells him FAO Schwartz, the toy store. However, she starts crying on the way there, and they go home. She is still upset when they get home, but begs him to have sex with her so that she can feel something different. He succumbs, and they make love.

Buddy is still balancing what he feels to be his two lives. In his dreams, he only remembers his mother's suffering, and how he had to kill her out of mercy when the pain was too great for her to take. He wakes up and goes to the market, where there is another brunette who slightly resembles Caitlin.

Caitlin, meanwhile, wakes up from her own dream. She has been remembering the cruelty of her father, and how he refused to let her go out with a boy called Charlie when she was a teenager, because Charlie's father's company was failing.

Chapters 9-10 Analysis

Kenny's anger at the beginning of this section is a red herring for readers, as it throws him and his motivations into question and presents him as a possible suspect for the murders and her stalking. Nevertheless, his frustration is proven to be innocent by what follows.

This section is notable in that Caitlin realizes the importance of the written word for her attacker. However, she also underestimates it, as she pegs him as someone who is unable to actually act. This is, in fact, similar to her own situation - not as a novelist, as she believes, who creates, but rather as a helpless victim in the scenario Buddy has created. This reinforces the importance of the interior/exterior duality, as does Buddy's thought that he seems to be living two lives. This dichotomy is further highlighted by Caitlin's intense dreams, again blurring the lines of reality.



Chapters 11-12

Chapters 11-12 Summary

In Chapter Eleven, Caitlin comes up with her own plan for revealing the culprit, and calls Kenny to discuss the plot. She tells him about the dead rat, and asks him to schedule interviews for her. He is surprised, knowing how much she normally hates doing publicity. Meanwhile, Mac makes Caitlin pancakes for breakfast, unaware of her plans. Back at the latest crime scene, the police discover that this last victim was not raped. The father of the victim (the owner of the store) is present, and tells the officers that he can't understand why the meat case was open. The officers notice that there is a security tape, however, and take it with them. Back at headquarters, their captain is angry for the lack of progress they've made on the case, and they are pleased to present him with the tape. Nevertheless, when they watch the tape, the officers cannot see anything, as the perpetrator is hidden from view.

A reporter calls Caitlin's apartment in Chapter Twelve, but Mac picks up and scares him away. He then calls Neil, only to find that he's not in, and decides that he and Caitlin should go to the police station anyway. However, when they leave Caitlin's apartment, they find a mass of reporters outside. Caitlin answers some of their questions, making the statement that her attacker is just a coward. Mac realizes that she is the one who leaked the story, and scolds her harshly. They get to the station only to find that none of the officers working their case is around, though Detective Amato is upstairs. Caitlin and Mac go to find him in the case room where the murders of the three women are being studied. The second Caitlin walks in, she notices that the women all resemble her, and faints. Mac connects the dots for the officers. When Caitlin wakes, she realizes the stupidity of what she's done, seeing that there is real danger in store for her.

Chapters 11-12 Analysis

Caitlin's risky plan to go public with her attacks highlights important character traits in Chapters 11 and 12. Though she is extremely clever, Caitlin can also be more foolish than she should be in her spontaneous revelations, and puts herself more at risk. She later discovers this, as she is able to see what the detectives have missed: that the anonymous murderer, seemingly killing for no reason, is actually after her. Note that the inside/outside dichotomy also comes into play during these chapters; Caitlin believes she can outsmart the assailant while she is at home, and even in front of her apartment, yet at the police station, out of her comfort zone, she has to confront material that shows her that she was wrong. The videotape, showing only part of what happened during the other woman's attack, underscores this sense of partial knowledge.



Chapters 13-14

Chapters 13-14 Summary

Chapter Thirteen opens with officers interrogating Caitlin even further. They ask about enemies, and Mac in particular asks about her father. However, Caitlin doesn't know of any specific enemies, but thinks that her father's former secretary, Juanita, might know of something. Mac also reveals that his profiler friend has gotten back to him, and says that the attacker has a grudge of some kind. When Neil challenges Mac's source, Mac tells him that his friend is in the FBI. He watches the tape with the police of the last crime scene, and notices that the attacker's reflection is present in the meat case. Nevertheless, nobody can see many specifics that would help to identify the attacker any further. The action then cuts to Buddy, who is furious at Caitlin's taunting in the press.

In Aaron's office, the editor receives a package that he opens, and a bomb goes off. His secretary then calls Caitlin to tell her, and Caitlin breaks down, blaming herself.

In Chapter Fourteen, Caitlin and Mac wait at the hospital as Aaron is in surgery. She keeps blaming herself. The detectives are also present; nobody has been able to track down Juanita, in New Jersey. Mac reveals to Amato that Caitlin leaked the story herself. Meanwhile, Caitlin befriends a little girl called Katie, who at first refuses to speak and is drawing angry pictures. Her father tells Caitlin that she and her mother were in an automobile accident. With slow, patient work, Caitlin gets Katie to start using colors and to open up a little bit. Mac realizes that he is falling in love with her. By the end of the chapter, Aaron is out of danger, though still not well, but when deciding who should go see him, Mac and Caitlin have a fight that turns out to be about her money.

Chapters 13-14 Analysis

Neil/Buddy becomes provoked beyond his limits in these chapters, and ups the ante as he feels more helpless and out of control. The police are closing in on him - which he knows, being one of them. When the detectives note that they can see a reflection in the meat case, the action immediately goes to his character, who is already furious at Caitlin for taunting him in public. Of course, he is reacting just as she thought he would - until he actually takes action and sends a bomb to Aaron. This further emphasizes the heinousness of his crimes, as Aaron has been presented as an extremely likeable character, and completely innocent of any wrongdoing.

Caitlin's actions in the hospital reinforce her vulnerability, but also show her strength, as she helps the distraught girl to cope in small ways.



Chapters 15-16

Chapters 15-16 Summary

Caitlin is furious with Mac in Chapter Fifteen, and goes home cursing him, even in the shower. Once there, though, she thinks more and more about Katie and starts to cry. Mac comes into the shower with her and tells her that he loves her, comforting her.

Buddy, at the same time, is getting more frustrated as his "target" gets harder to reach. He thinks about having killed Juanita.

Finally, Aaron is in the hospital with his eyes bandaged, though he should be fine, eventually. Caitlin tells Mac to call Aaron's boyfriend, David, whom he has been very private about. Mac does, and thinks more about Caitlin, though he is still worries about how much money she has in comparison to what he has.

In Chapter Sixteen, Aaron is nearly ready to go home, and his brother waits with him, thinking about love and the obstacles to being with Caitlin. He calls the precinct to talk to Detective Amato, only to discover that Juanita has been found dead, with her tongue cut out. Not knowing how the killer could have known about Juanita, Mac realizes that Caitlin's apartment is bugged. With the help of the doorman, Mike, he gets a ladder and extracts the bug from the chandelier, showing Caitlin. They forgive each other for their earlier fight, and Mac speaks about their future together.

Slightly later on, Buddy is shown getting frustrated at a non-descript workplace. Meanwhile, Caitlin decides to go see her father's former lawyer.

Chapters 15-16 Analysis

Caitlin's feelings for Mac, and his for her, stand out as particularly mixed given the single-mindedness of Neil/Buddy, who is certain of his target and more and more obsessed with her each moment. His feelings are constant but deluded; the real love growing between Caitlin and Mac is presented as an alternative, though still passionate, way of feeling.

Mac also begins to zero in on the killer, highlighting his importance to Caitlin and their use to each other as partners. As Chapters 15 and 16 progress, they build to the climax, as Buddy is placed in more specific, if still unknown, circumstances, and as Caitlin thinks of another source of information to help her solve her mystery.



Chapters 17-18

Chapters 17-18 Summary

Chapter Seventeen details Caitlin's visit to her father's former lawyer, Mr. Abernathy, in a nursing home. Mac accompanies her. Though Abernathy is at first hesitant to speak about his former client, he does reveal that her father's private affairs should be detailed in his accounts, and that he sent \$2,000 a month to a woman in Toledo. On the way back to New York City, Caitlin reveals that she can't drive and Mac teases her that she'll have to learn in Atlanta (though he has not yet asked her to move there). Once back at Caitlin's apartment, Mac talks to Aaron, who will be fine. He then discovers, when talking to the police, that the tape has been returned from the lab. Neil calls the apartment and says he'll come to pick up Caitlin so that she can identify some of the unknown figures there. Meanwhile, though, at the police station, the other detectives notice somebody familiar in the tape itself

Mac calls different numbers in Ohio to find the woman, Georgia Calhoun, that Caitlin's father paid each month in Chapter Eighteen. Eventually, he finds her niece and her sister, and discovers that Georgia died, but that she had had a baby out of wedlock. He asks for the name and finds that it was Joseph Neil Raymond. Panicked, Mac calls the police station to find that Neil isn't there. Amato and Mac put everything together and realize that Neil is the attacker.

At the same time, Caitlin is trapped in a police car with Neil. He tells her that this is payback, because her wealth should have been his, and she apologizes. She tells him he could do a DNA test, but their father was cremated. He also tells her that she was adopted, so he can't even prove that they are related to one another.

Meanwhile, the police go to Neil's apartment to find pictures of Caitlin everywhere. However, they also find a rent bill and see that he's been paying rent on two different properties.

Chapters 17-18 Analysis

In Chapters 17 and 18, "Snowfall" reaches its climax. Here, the reader sees for the first time that the police officer Neil has been Caitlin's pursuer all along, a fact that is doubly upsetting because he was supposed to be her protector. Moreover, the novel presents the reasons for Neil/Buddy's attacks before revealing his identity, by having his aunt explain the circumstances, and through the help of Devlin's lawyer. This makes Neil's attacks more comprehensible to the reader, if still heinous.

The revelation that Caitlin was adopted is another important element in the plot, for it helps her to resolve some of her complicated feelings regarding her father, and understand his position even better. She sees, for the first time, that mental illness ran in his family, and he was just doing everything he could to protect his own family from

that influence. At the moment, however, she is stuck in Neil's cabin, about to be raped and murdered by him; the tension mounts as the police figure out where the two of them are.



Chapter 19 and Epilogue

Chapter 19 and Epilogue Summary

In Chapter Nineteen, Neil binds Caitlin up at his cabin, and says that he'll "screw" her. She tells him that her father sent his mother two thousand dollars a month, but he says that he never benefited from this - thinking that perhaps it was because of his mother's hatred of charity, but saying nothing. Then, Caitlin hears sirens, and the police arrive to find that she is all right.

In the epilogue, Aaron and David come over to Caitlin's apartment for dinner; Mac is there too. Kenny has moved to LA, and Mac proposes to Caitlin, asking her to move to Atlanta to marry him (she accepts). Katie and her father then show up at the door, with a picture of Barney to show their gratitude to Caitlin for what she did to help the little girl.

Chapter 19 and Epilogue Analysis

Chapter 19 and the Epilogue simply serve to wrap up the plot's loose ends. Here, Neil dies, shot by Mac, and Caitlin is set free. Importantly, the epilogue shows that the two have been able to happily continue their relationship, as well as providing a happy ending for Katie, the young girl from the hospital.



Characters

Caitlin

The protagonist of "Snowfall," Caitlin is the heiress of a large fortune, left to her by her somewhat surly father. Though his presence in the book seems incidental at first, Caitlin's father ends up playing an enormous role in the events that befall her. Caitlin writes murder mysteries, and is very successful; this is immediately established by her presence on a television program. She is surrounded by men who admire and support her, including her editor, her publicist, and Mac, who ends up becoming her boyfriend. Nevertheless, Caitlin is tough, and likes to think of herself as self-sufficient, though she sometimes struggles to keep up this facade as her attacks become more and more threatening. Despite all of her experience writing mysteries, Caitlin is unable to figure out who is threatening her and why. Once she is abducted by Neil/Buddy, however, she deals with him calmly and forestalls him long enough for her rescuers to find her, again highlighting her cleverness and calmness under pressure. For most of the book, Caitlin is in some way injured, underscoring that she has been made vulnerable by circumstances and is not in herself naturally weak. At the end of the novel, Neil/Buddy reveals to her that she was adopted.

Mac/Conner

Like many characters in the book, Mac is actually a nickname for Conner. Aaron's brother, Mac is a former police officer who now works in security. When Aaron calls to ask for his help, Mac is in Colorado on vacation. As he comes to help Caitlin, however, he reveals more and more of his past, including the fact that he had a girlfriend who died slowly and painfully of cancer. This not only helps to explain his sometimes rough behavior with Caitlin, but it also provides him with more motivation to protect her, as he realizes his growing feelings for the writer. Like Caitlin, Mac is extremely stubborn. In some cases, such as when she is injured, this helps him to protect her. In other cases, it creates friction between them. The difference in their incomes also becomes a factor in their arguments, though they have set the issue aside by the end of the book - perhaps because Caitlin was adopted, or perhaps because, as the book implies, their feelings for one another overrode any material concerns. Mac is very intelligent and provides many of the important pieces in solving the case, particularly when he figures out how to use the security video footage of one attack to identify the killer when no other detective can.

Buddy/Neil

For the majority of the novel, the reader does not know that Neil and Buddy are the same person. In fact, other than in the structure of the book, there is little evidence that the seemingly benign police officer is actually a twisted killer. However, by looking at the



interlacing of scenes with Caitlin and Neil, and then those featuring Buddy, the reader can eventually pick up on tension developing between the two, mostly from Neil's end. If Caitlin had sensed this tension, of course, she never would have gotten into the car with him at the end of the book. Neil is an officer in the police force, who was scarred as a young child by the fact that his biological father "abandoned" him and his mother, forcing his mother to forgo proper medical care when she got sick years later. However, Neil's father (who is Caitlin's adopted father, hence his hatred for Caitlin) did actually send money to Neil and his mother each month, though Neil never saw any sign of it and later realizes his mother was probably too proud to accept it. Neil/Buddy is single-minded in his pursuit of Caitlin. Though he kills other women, they are all like Caitlin in some respect, though it takes Caitlin herself to see this. At the end of the book, Neil/Buddy dies, killed in the act of assaulting Caitlin by Mac.

Aaron

Caitlin's editor, Aaron is a sweet and mild character who very much loves his friend. A gay man, Aaron has struggled to tell his family about his sexuality, though it is revealed in the book. He is targeted by Neil/Buddy as a warning to Caitlin, but survives the mail bomb with minor injuries.

Detective Amato

A detective working Caitlin's case.

Boran Fiorello

A friend of Caitlin's father, and now Caitlin; a detective on the police force.

Kenny Liebowitz

Another police officer.

Devlin Bennett

Caitlin's father. A complicated man, Bennett earned a lot of money during his life, which Caitlin has now inherited. Because he knew that a streak of mental illness ran through his family, he never wanted biological children; hence, he adopted Caitlin. Though he did not want Neil, he apparently tried to support him and his mother throughout her life.



Ron Lowell

A television host.

Mike Mazurka

A police officer.

Paulie and Trudy

Police officers.

Uncle John

Caitlin's long-time chauffeur.

Sylvia Polenski and Angela Dubai

Neil/Buddy's victims.

Juanita Delarosa

Caitlin's father's former secretary; another of Neil's victims.

Katie

A young girl Caitlin meets at the hospital, who has been traumatized by the death of her mother in an accident.

Mr. Ambernathy

Caitlin's father's lawyer, who helps her learn more about who might be attacking her.

Hank Bridges

Katie's father.



Objects/Places

New York City

The setting of the novel, where the major action takes place.

Atlanta, Georgia

Where Mac normally lives; Caitlin agrees to move here with him.

Toledo, Ohio

Neil/Buddy's hometown.

Letters

The means by which Buddy threatens Caitlin.

Cancer

The disease that took the lives of both Buddy's mother and Mac's former girlfriend, Sarah.

Cooking

The activity through which Mac and Caitlin bond.

War Room

The term for the room at the police station where the detectives keep photos and post important data on the walls.

Police Station

The locale for the detectives' work; also where Neil/Buddy works.

FAO Schwartz

A toy store where Caitlin initially wants to take Mac, but becomes too scared.



Convenience Store

The scene of one of Buddy's murders.

Diner

The place where Neil/Buddy sees the prostitute resembling Caitlin.



Themes

Family

Family, and its different manifestations, plays an important role in "Snowfall." Though Caitlin's relationship with her father is highlighted, the theme of family is also present in the relationship between Neil and his parents, between Mac and Aaron, and between Caitlin and the little girl she meets at the hospital. Caitlin's relationship with her dead father is by necessity a complicated one; he left her a lot of money, but was also cold and distant, forbidding her from dating people she wanted to. The revelation that she was adopted, later, actually helps her to resolve some of these issues. Neil supported his mother through a lot, on the other hand, including her struggle with cancer, at the end of which he had to kill her out of mercy. Still, Neil has a huge amount of unresolved anger towards Devlin, who he believes ignored his existence (though he later learns that Devlin sent money every month), and to Caitlin, who is not related to him by blood yet has the life that Neil thinks he deserves. This is the driving force behind the events of the book. However, positive images of family are also present in the book, especially in the relationship between the brothers, Mac and Aaron, who support each other and help one another out. Note, though, that even Aaron is uncomfortable telling his brother that he is gay. The most positive images of family are provided by Caitlin's relationship with Katie, as the two bond over their similar names, and Caitlin helps the little girl in small ways. In a sense, Caitlin has created a family of her own with the bond between her and the little girl.

Interior versus Exterior

The theme of interior versus exterior permeates the book, especially where Caitlin's public and private lives are concerned. Caitlin has worked very hard to keep her private life out of the spotlight. However, when she starts getting threats and is even pushed into oncoming traffic, she has to let the police know what has happened, which leads to Mac coming to stay with her, at her apartment - on the "inside." Similarly, Neil always feels that he is on the "outside," watching Caitlin at a distance. For this reason, the bug that he plants in her apartment is especially intrusive. Caitlin herself breaks the barrier between interior and exterior as she lets her publicist inform the papers of her attacks, and as she herself goads on the attacker; however, this is ultimately dangerous, as she has in effect eliminated her private sphere. Interestingly, Neil takes her to his private sphere - the cabin - to kill her, but this "sanctuary" is broken into by the police and Mac, just in time to save Caitlin.

Writing

Writing as an act of creation is an important thread in the book. Caitlin's writing is a sign of her healing, as she begins to get better after her accident. However, writing is also a



double-edged sword in "Snowfall." Caitlin is, after all, a murder mystery writer who ought to be able to figure out what has been happening to her. She can't understand it, though, and needs Mac's help to figure out where the attacks and threats are coming from. Her writing takes place in its own world, and doesn't translate to the exterior world. On the other hand, Neil's writing, which Caitlin notes is physically impotent, actually creates disturbances in the real world, as the police, Caitlin, and Mac all react to the threats. Of course, these writings all take place within the larger piece of writing - the book itself - inspiring reflection on the importance of writing, and the kinds of writing that can affect us as opposed to the kinds of writing that can affect others.



Style

Point of View

In "Snowfall," the point of view begins with Caitlin, though it shifts from character to character throughout the rest of the novel, providing a close omniscient narration. This allows the reader to understand the situation as a whole, from every perspective, even when it is not clear to the protagonists what is happening. This is particularly important in the case of Neil, who is difficult to understand. However, once the reader has access to his thoughts, it becomes clearer what his motivations are and what his actions will be. Though they are still difficult to comprehend, the story told from his point of view creates a more sympathetic character. Similarly, Caitlin's narration makes her a sympathetic character, whose vulnerability inspires the other characters to take care of her as much as possible. Finally, the complex relationship between Mac and Caitlin is more understandable when seen from both sides; Mac has had difficult relationships in the past, including with a girlfriend who died from cancer. Knowing this, the reader can better understand his hesitations about pursuing a life with Caitlin, and rejoice more in his final capitulation to his feelings.

Setting

The vast majority of the action takes place in New York City, around the present day (perhaps a bit earlier, in the 1990s, though this is unclear). Here, the bustling effects of the city have been muted by the snowfall, which has taken people off of the streets and created a more quiet - and more menacing - environment. The novel is often vague about the parts of the city that the characters frequent, though Caitlin does live near Central Park. However, places outside of the city also come into play: Mac lives in Atlanta, though is vacationing in Colorado when his brother calls. Eventually, Caitlin will move with him to Atlanta. They also have to go outside of the city to get clues to the murder's identity - the nursing home where Caitlin's father's lawyer stays, for example, or Juanita's home. Notably, Neil's cabin is also outside of the city. Finally, Neil grew up in Toledo, where Mac must make contact to figure out his true identity. This is far enough away from New York City that it becomes all the more plausible that Caitlin would never have met Neil as a child.

Language and Meaning

Three different kinds of language come into play in "Snowfall": everyday language, the language that the police officers use, and the language of mystery novels. Mostly, the novel is narrated in very straightforward terms, so that any reader could understand the action without having to reach for a dictionary. The sentences are short and easy to read, without complex language. The dialogue differs between and among the police officers, as they use their own abbreviations to figure out the murderer's identity (though



these are still comprehensible). The most notable departure from everyday language is in the letters that Neil sends. These have short, terse threats, much like one would expect to find in a murder mystery. Notably, we are not only reading a murder mystery, but a murder mystery about a mystery writer, further emphasizing the threatening nature of this language.

Structure

The book is structured into nineteen chapters and an epilogue. It goes at a quick pace, often splitting each chapter between several points of view, making the reader feel compelled to go forward. Similarly, the chapters get shorter as the book continues, using this technique to highlight the tension of the plot. This quick pace, as well as the shifts of narration, create a sometimes choppy and jarring narration that becomes even more so as the story develops. In this way, both the mystery and the book's subplots (such as the romance between Mac and Caitlin) gain in tension.



Quotes

"You will suffer for the sin." (Chapter 1, p. 7)

"In the split second before impact, she saw her own reflection in the truck's chrome bumper and screamed." (Chapter 2, p. 44)

"I didn't ask you to like her," Aaron said. "I just want you to save her life." (Chapter 3, p. 59)

"There is no patient named Benton, and the real Dr. Frost is a gynecologist." (Chapter 4, p. 69)

"Banging pans was the next best thing to wringing her neck." (Chapter 5, p. 97)

"He'd sworn to himself never to care for a woman that way again." (Chapter 6, p. 109)

"The euphoria of killing the hooker had passed, leaving him with the unpalatable fact that no matter how many substitutes he killed, his target still lived." (Chapter 7, p. 129)

"Her behavior puzzled him. He would have sworn she was more intelligent than this. How dare she be happy when her life was in danger?" (Chapter 8, p. 148)

"Just because Connor McKee had stepped between them - even if only figuratively - there was no reason to stop his pursuit." (Chapter 9, p. 159)

"I need to remember what it's like to know joy." (Chapter 10, p. 179)

"The sooner they corroborated their earlier facts, the closer they would be to finding the killer." (Chapter 11, p. 217)

"It had just occurred to him how outlandish it was to expect someone of Caitlin Bennett's caliber to fall for a man like him." (Chapter 12, p. 223)

"This man, whoever he is, has not only killed wantonly, but has invaded every aspect of my life." (Chapter 14, p. 261)



Topics for Discussion

Discuss Caitlin's apartment. How does the author describe it? In what way can the apartment be read as a symbol?

Contrast Mac and Caitlin's relationship to Kenny and Caitlin's. Why does Caitlin choose Mac, in the end?

Discuss Caitlin's relationship with her father. In what way did she benefit from it? How might it have disadvantaged her?

Compare and contrast "Neil" and "Buddy."

Why is snow important in the book? How does it serve as a symbol?

Family serves as an important theme in the book. Compare and contrast Caitlin's family with another familial relationship shown in the book.

Why does Caitlin decide to go public with her declaration? How does this help or hinder her case? Finally, how does it inform our understanding of her character?