

Summer Sisters Study Guide

Summer Sisters by Judy Blume

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Plot Summary

Summer sisters Victoria Leonard and Caitlin Somers began spending their summers together beginning the summer after their sixth grade year of school. Their very different lives are chronicled in the novel "Summer Sisters" by Judy Blume. As the oldest child in a middle class family shy, quiet Vix thought she had been visited by a fairy godmother when the popular and vivacious Caitlin asked her to spend the summer at her family's island house. Although the lives of the two girls took very different paths, they remained loyal to one another and their promise of friendship.

Vix's distant mother, Tawny, did not want her daughter to go to the Vineyard with Caitlin when Vix first asked her mother for permission. It was Vix's father, Ed, who convinced Tawny to let the girl go. Tawny felt that once her daughter had experienced the life of the rich, she would never be the same. Once she was on the island, Vix discovered it was not what she had imagined. The house in which Caitlin's father lived was dark and dirty. He did not supervise his children closely. Caitlin would go for days without taking a bath or changing her clothes. Despite these shortcomings, Vix remained in awe of Caitlin. The two talked about boys, particularly Von and Bru, a cute pair of cousins they met at the Flying Horses, a famous carousel on the island. The girls also experimented sexually with one another and compared the changes in their bodies.

Things changed on the island when Caitlin's father married Abby. Caitlin was angry because of the changes the woman brought to her father's house. She also saw the woman as competition for her father's affection. The addition of Abby to the family had a different affect on Vix. Abby was the mother Vix had always wished she had and Vix was like the daughter Abby wanted. Abby arranged for Vix to get a scholarship to a private school and then helped her get accepted to Harvard University. Meanwhile, Caitlin and Vix had begun dating Von and Bru. The relationship between Vix and Bru became serious the summer Vix turned seventeen. It was also this summer, however, that Vix and Caitlin had their first real fight. At a party for Vix's seventeenth birthday, she believed Caitlin intentionally manipulated circumstances to make Vix kiss Von, believing she was making out with Bru. Caitlin and Vix reconciled only because Vix's younger brother Nathan died. Caitlin was the one to tell Vix the news and go with her back to Santa Fe for the funeral.

After high school, Caitlin and Vix's lives went two different ways. Vix was dedicated to her goal of getting a degree from Harvard and making it on her own even though Caitlin tempted her with trips abroad. Caitlin, who claimed to be studying abroad, spent her tuition money jumping from country to country. When she called Vix, she claimed she was having glorious adventures while living the high life. Vix, meanwhile, struggled to make the grades in school as she tried to keep a relationship with Bru. Even though Bru proposed to her, she ended their relationship when he refused to go to New York or even Boston so she could get a job in her chosen profession.

Years after her breakup with Bru, Vix gets an excited phone call from Caitlin. She's getting married and wants Vix to be her maid of honor. Vix gets physically ill when she



learns that Caitlin will be marrying Bru, but agrees to Caitlin's request that she participate in the ceremony anyway. The night before the wedding both Caitlin and Bru approached Vix with their concerns they were making a bad decision. Vix's encounter with Bru leads to a late night fling where they have sex one last time. Vix didn't feel as guilty after Caitlin tells her the morning of her wedding that she and Bru cheated on Vix just after Nathan's funeral. Caitlin, like Vix, had also lost her virginity to Bru.

Caitlin and Bru have not been married long when Maizie, their baby girl, is born. Shortly after the child's first birthday, Caitlin leaves Maizie with Caitlin's father and Abby. The next time she contacts them, she is in Paris. Years pass with no word from her until Vix receives an invitation to celebrate Caitlin's thirtieth birthday with her. She goes and the two spend several days together before Caitlin asks about Maizie. She asks Vix when Vix will learn that Caitlin is just self-centered and doesn't care about anyone else. Vix argues with her that isn't the Caitlin she knows. When the two part, Caitlin says she is trying to decide if she should accept a proposal of marriage. She plans to go out on her sailboat to consider the proposal and will let Vix know what she's decided by the time Vix gets back to New York. Vix never receives an answer from Caitlin. Caitlin's sailboat is found drifting a few days later and Caitlin is never heard from again.



Prologue — Part 1: Dancing Queen; Chapter 3

Summary

In the Prologue, Victoria Leonard answers the phone at the public relations firm where she works. It is Caitlin. Caitlin invites her to her wedding, wants her to be her maid of honor. When Victoria learns that Caitlin is marrying Bru, she feels sick and weak. She agrees to come, but runs to the bathroom to throw up as soon as she hangs up the phone. At the airport four weeks later, Victoria hugs Caitlin and the memories of their summers together come back. It's almost as if they've never been apart.

In Chapter 1 shy, quiet Vix was stunned when Caitlin Somers asked her if she wanted to spend the summer with her family on an island. Later at home, Vix talked to her mother, Tawny, about the trip while Tawny was bathing Nathan who had muscular dystrophy. Tawny told Vix that she and her father would discuss the trip. It was finally Vix's father who made Tawny agree to let Vix go. She wanted to hug her father but knew the gesture would embarrass them both. It became her best childhood memory, usurping the time her father had let her be the first to try out a new shower he'd installed.

Vix didn't know much about her family's history, only that her mother had left home the day she graduated from high school. She'd supported herself working for a lawyer. When Vix's father, Ed Leonard, got out of the service, the two were married. They began trying to have a family. The first three babies were stillborn but then they'd had three healthy children: Vix, Lanie and Lewis. Nathan came last. The family did well until the insurance company for which Ed worked went bankrupt. He was out of work for almost a year. Tawny got a job working for the Countess and Ed finally found a new job as a hotel manager.

They day the girls were to leave Caitlin rode to the airport with the Leonard family. As Vix said goodbye to Nathan at the airport, she noticed a woman staring. The woman looked away when Vix caught her eye. On the plane, Vix discovered Tawny had packed her a lunch.

Tawny chided herself for fixing Victoria a lunch and fussing over her. She knew Victoria would be different when she returned from her summer with Caitlin. She was surprised Victoria would leave Nathan so easily. She realized she would miss Victoria's help over the summer because Victoria did what needed to be done to help Nathan, unlike her other two siblings.

Ed believed Tawny expected too much of Victoria. He remembered his own childhood with his mother expecting him to be the man of the family. He had always wanted a real family but felt their troubles in life had made Tawny hard. Despite its difficulties, he accepted his life as it was.



In Chapter 2 Vix didn't learn until the plane landed that Caitlin had an older brother, whom she called Sharkey, or a dog. The island also was not the tropical paradise she'd imagined. Instead of palm trees there were pine trees and oaks. The phone was ringing when they walked in the house. Tawny demanded to know why Victoria hadn't called, but wouldn't let her tell her they'd just arrived.

As Phoebe prepared for her trip, she thought to herself that she wasn't really a bad mother to Caity, just not a really good one. Her son was a mystery to her. She hoped they would appreciate one another one day. She thought about the girl that Caity took to the island with her, remembering that the friend she took the prior year had lasted only ten days.

In Chapter 3, Vix began practicing selective truth telling when her parents called. The house was dark and messy. Caitlin and Sharkey rarely changed their clothes. Caitlin didn't bathe and rarely even changed her underwear. Caitlin's father, Lamb, didn't seem to notice his children smelled. When it rained Caitlin and Vix found the book "Ideal Marriage and Love Without Fear." They read aloud from it and looked up the words and phrases, most of them sexual, with which they weren't familiar.

One day the two walked to the north beach where they made a pact to never be ordinary. They invented a game, in which they called themselves Vixen and Cassandra, Summer Sisters. They made believe they were the sexiest women on the Vineyard. They had what they call the Power as they'd discovered the pleasant sensations they got if they rubbed themselves between the legs.

They made trips to the Flying Horses, the oldest carousel in the country, to see Von, an attractive teen who worked there. During one visit, Von introduced them to his cousin, Bru. One night the girls went to the carousel but Von wasn't working. Caitlin told Vix she'd seen him in an alleyway with a woman holding on to his 'package', the girls' name for a male's sexual parts. That night, they pretended to meet Von as one of them played Von while the two rubbed against each other.

Lamb remembered the night that Caitlin was born. He'd fallen in love with her that night. He missed Caitlin when she was gone. He never dreamed Phoebe would take her halfway across the country. As he watched her ride the carousel, he believed she would always be young and innocent.

Analysis

The groundwork for a good deal of the novel is set in this first set of chapters. The two main characters — Victoria and Caitlin — are introduced and the basics of their family's lifestyles are set out. Victoria comes from a working class family while Caitlin's family appears to be wealthy. Before meeting Caitlin, Victoria had never seen the ocean and had never flown in an airplane. Both of these things are unremarkable to Caitlin. These differences in Caitlin and Victoria's ways of life will add to a major theme in the novel, that of the differences in families from different socioeconomic classes. Victoria's family



had seen hard times with her father having lost his job when the insurance agency for which he worked closed down. Victoria's mother had been forced to take a job to help support the family. Meanwhile, it did not appear that Caitlin's father, Lamb, had a job as he spent the summer with his children on the Vineyard. Phoebe, Caitlin's mother, appeared to have plenty of money as she prepared for a trip to France to celebrate being without her daughter.

Family and the differences in families is another theme that will be important in the novel. Caitlin and Victoria come from different types of families in ways other than just their socioeconomic levels. Victoria's parents are still married though they've had a rough marriage with three stillborn children and money issues. Tawny seemed to know that if she allowed Victoria to go to the Vineyard with Caitlin that she would lose her daughter. This idea on Tawny's part foreshadows the distance that will grow between Victoria and her family as Victoria gets older and spends more and more time with Caitlin and her family. Phoebe, however, doesn't seem to be as concerned about her children. She had custody of Caitlin while her ex-husband, Lamb, had custody of their son, Sharkey. Caitlin spent each summer with her father on the Vineyard. Phoebe seems glad to be free of her daughter in the summer as she wanted the chance to be her own person. Brother/sister relationships are also important in the theme of family. Victoria and her brother, Nathan, are very close. Even after Vix had already gotten on the plane, Tawny noted that Nathan's thoughts were still on how much he'd miss his sister. Vix's other siblings don't seem to care too much that she'd gone. Caitlin, on the other hand, doesn't seem to be close to her brother at all. She was more affectionate with the family dog than she was with her brother.

Although Vix and Caitlin are two very different types of people, this summer signals the beginning of a friendship that will last their entire lives. Even after Vix spent some time with Caitlin and was disgusted that her friend didn't wash or change clothes, she was still fascinated with her. She believed that being friends with Caitlin was the best thing that had happened to her and that their friendship would change her life forever. She was not wrong.

Notice also that as the girls were approaching puberty, they began experimenting sexually with each other. Vix was more physically mature than Caitlin. She already had the beginning of breasts and was growing pubic hair. The girls also discovered the pleasant sensations they could get if they rubbed each other between the legs. They took turns pretending to be Von, a boy who worked the carousel, so they could rub against each other. Notice also that it was in this section of the novel that the girls were introduced to Bru. Bru is the man whom Caitlin tells Vix that she will be marrying in the Prologue of the novel. It appears that Vix has had some sort of past with Bru as she becomes physically ill when she gets the news of the upcoming marriage.

Notice also the structure of the novel. The Prologue is set in the present tense. The time period is the summer of 1990. Chapter 1, however, goes back 13 years to 1977 and is told in the past tense. Although the novel is written from the third person point of view with an emphasis on Victoria, there are sections of the novel where other characters' views are voiced. These sections, which begin with a reference to the character whose



thoughts are being recorded, are in the third person point of view but are written in the present tense.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the Prologue of the novel. What is its purpose? What hints does it give about the path the novel will take?

Discussion Question 2

Compare and contrast the families and backgrounds from which Victoria and Caitlin come. Are there any similarities in their backgrounds? What are some of the differences?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the references to the girls' obsessions with their own bodies. Do they act as normal prepubescent girls or are there lesbian overtones in their behaviors?

Vocabulary

tarmac, sashayed, decongestant, scrappy, genuinely, dystrophy, contraption, definitely, garbled, faux, countered, laminate, exotic, jodhpurs, envisioned, sultry, console, revulsion, fixation, conjured, antics, impulsive, rejuvenate, obvious, concoction, fraction, turrets, vamped, sinewy, rancor



Part 1: Dancing Queen; Chapters 4-6

Summary

In Chapter 4, Vix felt guilty when Lamb asked if she missed her family. She realized she hadn't even thought about any of them except Nathan. Lamb commented about how quiet Vix was and assumed she was like his son, Sharkey. When Caitlin insisted that Vix was nothing like Sharkey, Sharkey asked her how she would know.

Sharkey was angry because of the negative attention the rest of the family was giving to his life. He claimed that while he might be alone, he wasn't lonely.

One day, Lamb took Vix, Caitlin and his friend Trisha to see the ocean. When they arrived at the beach, Trish took off her shirt. Vix was surprised at the size of Trish's breasts and nipples. Trish noticed Vix's embarrassment and decided it was better to leave her clothes on even though they were at a nude beach.

Trish chided herself for taking off her shirt and surprising Vix so badly. She felt like she could never do anything right around Lamb. She'd always thought Lamb married Phoebe instead of her because of Phoebe's money. When Lamb had returned to the island with Sharkey after his divorce from Phoebe, she'd raised the boy as if he were her own. Now that Lamb had a new girlfriend, she rarely saw Sharkey. Lamb had, however, set Trisha up in her business.

In Chapter 5, Lamb went to Boston for a day. He was unable to return that night because the airport was fogged in. Vix was surprised he'd leave them alone. It stormed so badly that night that Sharkey had even slept on a sleeping bag in the floor of the girls' room. The next morning when Lamb brought his new girlfriend and her son, Daniel, into the house, it was a wreck. Lamb called a cleaning service then took them all on a tour of the island. Vix tried to be interested in what Lamb and Abby were talking about through lunch even though the other kids sulked.

Lamb believed Abby was wonderful. He was thinking of a future with her.

Lamb showed his pleasure in his newfound love by singing in the outdoor shower. The happier he got, the unhappier Caitlin was. One day, Vix heard Daniel complaining to his mother. Daniel had wanted to bring a friend but his mother wouldn't let him. When the group went out in the evening for mini golf and ice cream, Daniel started asking his mother again to allow him to invite a friend. Abby agreed only when Lamb said it was okay. Loud, slovenly Gus Kline came two days later.

Even though she and Lamb had only known each other for four months, Abby was determined not to let his children or hers mess up their new found relationship. Caitlin had tormented her about the relationship between her father and Trisha but Lamb had convinced her there was no longer a relationship.



In Chapter 6, when the girls returned to the island the following summer, Caitlin was furious the house had been renovated. Vix thought it looked great. In her room, Caitlin threw things, broke things and knocked things off shelves in her anger. As she waited for Caitlin to finish her tantrum, Vix remembered her mother telling her to keep her feelings to herself and never show her disappointment.

Vix got her period that summer. She was proud that she'd gotten her period before Caitlin got hers. They walked to town to get supplies. They met Trish who asked how Lamb and Abby were doing. Caitlin told her she wished her father had married Trish instead. On the way home, Caitlin decided they should hitch a ride, a decision that made Vix uncomfortable. When Von and Bru stopped to pick them up, however, Vix got in as well.

That night in the tub Caitlin noticed Vix's developing breasts and asked what they felt like. They hadn't seen each other since the previous summer and Vix had been afraid Caitlin would have found a new summer sister, especially since Caitlin had begun attending a private school. The year had been a hard one for Vix's family. Through the school year, Tawny had been short with Vix, calling her impudent and impatient. She'd heard her mother saying that the Countess was in bad health. Tawny knew that if the woman died, she would be out of a job. Tawny seemed to take her frustration and worry out on Vix. Lanie told Vix after one particularly bad incident that Tawny hated Vix because she got to escape. Everyone hated her for that reason.

Nathan had insisted that she take his puppet, whom he'd renamed Orlando, to the island with her. She promised him that one day, she would take him to Disney World. Nathan told her that he'd missed her the previous summer. She'd felt guilty, but not guilty enough to stay home.

Analysis

Love and relationships develop as a theme in this section of the novel. In this particular section the emphasis is on Lamb and his newly found love, Abby. The short segments that focus on Trish, Lamb and Abby all give insights from that characters' perspective into the relationship. Trish feels as if Lamb should begin a relationship with her, as she had helped him raise Sharkey. Trish and Caitlin consoled each other on Lamb's choice for his new wife. Notice that when Trish had been told by Lamb that he was getting married again she had threatened to kill herself. Apparently, the two had a very serious relationship for many years but Lamb refused to commit to Trish. Meanwhile, Abby was thinking about a future with Lamb even though she'd sworn to herself she'd never be dependent on another man again.

A note on the developing theme of the differences in people from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Trish indicates that she had tried to do the money thing, but that it hadn't really made sense to her. She believed that Lamb had married Phoebe because of money. Even though the impression is given that Caitlin's father has money, notice that when Abby and her son come to the Vineyard for the first time, Daniel



complained about the house. Vix overheard the complaints and thought about how poor Lamb appeared to be. She noted that they drove around in beat up cars and even ate poor with little or no meat in the house. However, it appeared that Lamb did have money coming from somewhere as he'd been able to set Trish up in business in order to appease her when he refused to marry her.

Despite the close friendship shared by Vix and Caitlin, there seemed to be a developing rivalry. Vix was developing physically at a much faster rate than Caitlin. She felt that Caitlin was jealous of the way things were going in that department, especially since Vix had gotten her period before Caitlin. Although Caitlin didn't seem angry or upset with Vix, Vix felt a certain amount of pride because she'd gotten her period first. Notice also Caitlin's fascination with Vix's pubic hair and her disappointment that her's hadn't begun to grow yet.

Note also Vix's surprise at how her friend acted when she saw the renovations done to the house on the Vineyard. Vix liked the improvements but Caitlin threw a tantrum, somewhat like a small child might have done. As Caitlin was throwing her fit, Vix thought about how her mother had taught her not to show her disappointment in public, a lesson that Vix thought it might be a good idea for Caitlin to learn. Unlike Caitlin, Vix liked Abby and tried to show her respect for the woman.

Notice also in this section that Vix's home life seemed to be getting more and more difficult for her. Her mother worked as a caregiver for a woman who doesn't seem to care if she lived or not. Tawny was stressed because she knew that if the woman, who was called simply the Countess, died, her job would be over. Tawny took her frustration out on Vix, giving the girl another reason to want to leave her own family and stay with Caitlin's. Vix had also been told by her younger sister Lanie that the entire family hated her because she got to escape. The only person who seemed to tie Vix to her family was her handicapped brother, Nathan.

Discussion Question 1

Consider Sharkey's idea that he might be alone but that he isn't lonely. What is the difference between being alone and being lonely?

Discussion Question 2

Consider Caitlin's reaction to her father's new wife. How should Caitlin have treated her new stepmother? How might Abby go about developing a relationship with Caitlin?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the short sections in the novel that are written from the viewpoint of characters other than Victoria. How do these snippets of information add to the story?



Vocabulary

awe, pathetic, opted, lewd, pelting, tousle, slovenly, surly, ironic, renovated, spinnakers, sisal, retching, impudence



Part 1: Dancing Queen; Chapters 7-11

Summary

In Chapter 7, Lamb threw a party for Abby when she earned her MBA. Caitlin whispered to Vix that Abby probably wouldn't ever get a job because she had a meal ticket. During a rainy week, Sharkey irritated Vix when he breathed down her neck as she put together jigsaw puzzles. Gus, meanwhile, called her cough drop. She believed he was the most irritating person she'd ever met.

The girls continued to work on their sexual education. When Caitlin brushed her teeth she practiced sticking her toothbrush as far down her throat as she could without gagging so she'd be able to give oral sex when the time was right. She claimed she'd seen Phoebe in the act of giving oral sex. Caitlin was straightforward in her flirting. When the girls went to play mini golf on Vix's birthday, Bru was working the counter. The two girls couldn't help laughing when he asked what color balls they wanted. Vix liked Bru and pushed Caitlin to tell her which one she'd choose if she had to make a decision between Von and Bru. Caitlin chose Von, a decision that relieved Vix because she was interested in Bru. At the conclusion of the chapter, the girls had a ceremony on the beach where they buried Vixen and Cassandra. They no longer felt right about experimenting with their Power together.

In Chapter 8, Vix learned that Lamb had been raised by his grandparents. His parents were killed in an automobile accident when he and his sister were only babies. During the summer, Grandmother Somers and Dorset, Lamb's sister, visited the family. Grandmother looked refined but even Vix was rankled when Grandmother commented about what the Jew, referring to Abby, did to her house.

Grandmother Somers tried not to think about the memories the island brings to her. She and her husband had gotten custody of the babies just as they planned to begin their retirement. He had been angry with her because she took the children in. He'd died soon after, leaving her in charge of raising the two children on her own. Now she was angry because Lamb had let his new woman take charge of what she still considered her house.

Dorset wished her grandmother would die so Lamb could take charge of the arrangements. She wanted to be free of grandmother's control over her.

Vix went with Dorset to run errands. Von was working at the fish market where they got their fish. Von got the order, and then handed Vix a paper bag for Caitlin. Outside, Vix saw Bru sitting in his truck. They talked for a minute before Dorset called her away. Caitlin sucked in her breath when she opened the bag Von had sent for her. It was a fish head.



In Chapter 9, Vix endured a tense lunch with the Somers family and Grandmother. When Grandmother criticized doctors in Florida because they were of the Jewish persuasion, Lamb chided her.

Grandmother confessed she was having fun playing with her family, making them uncomfortable with her comments. She believed as pretty as Caitlin was that she would marry well but noticed Sharkey, whom she called Bertie, is odd.

Dorset also noticed how much fun her grandmother was having with the family. She wondered where her Percocet was and thought about the boy in the fish market. If she could find her vibrator, she would think of him while using it.

Sharkey, meanwhile, thought his entire family was a joke. He wondered what Vix, the outsider, thought about the family. More than anything he wanted to get back to his job at the gas station. He was hoping his father would let him buy a Datsun truck in which he could drive away from his family.

Vix was surprised that Caitlin was able to hold in her anger until after her grandmother left. She'd gone to the kitchen telling Abby she didn't know how Abby stood the "prejudiced old bitch" (80). Both Abby and Lamb were shocked at what Caitlin said. Lamb sent Caitlin to her room. When Abby told Caitlin she appreciated the concern, Caitlin snapped she wasn't talking about Abby personally. Vix realized from the conversation that Lamb felt he had to hold his tongue around his grandmother because he was afraid she'd cut off his supply of money. She remembered her mother telling her that the rich were different. Vix agreed with her mother but thought the only difference was that the rich had more money.

Abby realized from Caitlin's attack on her father that Caitlin had a social conscious. She'd also been surprised by the girl when they visited the cemetery where Lamb's parents were buried. Abby had found a Jewish portion of the cemetery where she mentioned that she could be buried. Caitlin had posed the question why Abby couldn't be buried anywhere she wanted to be since all Christians served the same God.

In the summer of 1979 Vix didn't feel guilty at all about leaving that summer because Nathan would be attending a two-week camp for the disabled. Vix also had a secret to share that summer. During the school year she'd used some of her babysitting money to take swimming lessons.

After Gus scared her in the pond while swimming, Vix tried to ignore Gus and Daniel until one night in the ticket line at the movies the two pretended to be spastic after seeing some children they thought were retarded. Vix yelled at the two for thinking people with physical disabilities were retarded. When the boys wondered what they'd done, Caitlin told them Vix's brother had muscular dystrophy and was in a wheelchair. Vix ignored both Gus and Daniel until two days later when Gus apologized. Vix was still angry until Gus kissed her on the cheek, telling her that he really was sorry. Gus and Daniel gave Vix a late birthday gift of a completely red jigsaw puzzle. They make a bet that she couldn't finish it in a week. Vix finished it.



In Chapter 11, Vix wondered if Abby knew how much she wished Abby were her mother. She wondered why Phoebe and Caitlin had split their children up the way they had. She knew that even when nature was in charge, parents didn't always get the kids they were meant to raise. Tawny visited the island that summer, traveling with the Countess. Abby planned to talk to Tawny about allowing Vix to go on a scholarship to the same private school Caitlin attended. Tawny was allowed an afternoon off to spend with Victoria. Away from home, Tawny seemed different, more relaxed.

Tawny was glad she came with the Countess to the island. She felt better than she had in a long time. She wondered when it was that she had felt attracted to someone other than Ed. She decided to make herself up for dinner that night.

Analysis

One of the focal points of interest in this section of the novel is Grandmother Somers' visit to Abby and Lamb's house. Grandmother Somers seemed to think she was entitled to loyalty from her grandson and granddaughter because she raised them. She had no filter when she dealt with her children, saying whatever she wanted to them and not caring how much it hurt. She knew they wouldn't talk back to her or disagree with her because she held the power of money over them. Even Caitlin held her tongue while she was around her grandmother. The children neither love nor respect their grandmother they only put on a show because they don't want to lose their lifestyle to which they are accustomed.

Meanwhile, one of Sharkey's thoughts during the family dinner is quite interesting because he wondered what Vix thought about his family. Vix's opinion of the Somers' family was later shared with the reader, as Vix thought about her mother telling her that the rich were different from other people. From her experience so far with Caitlin's family, the only difference she could see was that the rich had more money. Caitlin's parents, just like her own, didn't get along with or show any respect to the people who had raised them. Just like Vix's parents, both Lamb and Dorset seemed to want to get away from Grandmother Somers as quickly as they could. Dorset has buried her unhappiness in drugs while Tawny's mother had taken her unhappiness out on Vix.

Notice in this section that Vix pressed Caitlin to say if she liked Von or Bru better. Vix's loyalty to her friend made her want to be sure that they two didn't have their eye on the same guy. Vix's attempt to try to nail Caitlin down this early in their relationships with Von and Bru may indicate that Vix has some idea that Caitlin may try to take Vix's crush away from her just for spite. This foreshadows the coming marriage between Bru and Caitlin that has been mentioned in the Prologue of the novel. Even though Vix did try to clear a path for her and Bru, Caitlin still wound up taking Bru away from Vix. Along the topic of relationships, notice also Vix's dislike of Gus. At one point she indicated she thought he was the most irritating person on the face of the Earth. Gus, however, does things to get Vix's attention, like pulling her under water when she's trying to swim. Notice also that after he'd angered Vix so badly with his disrespectful



actions and words about physically handicapped children, he kissed her on the cheek. Unlike Daniel, he seemed truly sorry that he'd upset her.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the symbolism of Vix and Caitlin's burial of Vixen and Cassandra.

Discussion Question 2

Discuss Tawny's statement to Vix that the rich were different from other people. Why does Vix realize the rich are different only because they have more money than other people?

Discussion Question 3

What do you think it means that Tawny has decided to dress up for dinner on the island? Why do you think she's worried about attracting another man?

Vocabulary

rampant, pustule, convulsed, piqued, pathetic, glassine, contemplating, absurd, refined, intrude, closure, edible, cormorants, persuasion, relic, octogenarian, prejudiced, naive, disdain, ambled, profound, alternately, scrupulously, lulled, cloying, maillot, annotated, spastic, raved, consolation, amanuensis, pungent, envied



Part 1: Dancing Queen; Chapters 12-14

Summary

In Chapter 12, during her visit with Lamb and Abby the Countess smoked and drank even though the smoking sent her into a coughing fit. She decided to take a walk and asked Lamb and Vix to escort her.

Lamb remembered walking into the bathroom to find the Countess soaking in the tub. He was only four or five. She invited him into the tub with her and played with him with his tugboat. She also let him touch her breasts.

The Countess, Charlotte, had been his mother's best friend. Lamb choked up thinking how his mother would be the same age as the Countess. During their walk, she took Vix's hand and kissed it, telling her to live for the moment. Back at the house, she called Tawny her savior. She wished only that Tawny didn't have the albatross of a family.

Tawny was resistant to the idea of Vix going to a private school, even on a scholarship. Tawny pressed Vix, wanting to know if she wanted to go to the school. The Countess broke in saying there were too many kids in public school. When Tawny said she'd have to talk to her husband, the Countess replied she was glad she didn't have a husband with whom she had to verify every decision.

In Chapter 13, during the summer of 1980, Vix told Caitlin they should get jobs. Caitlin didn't seem to understand that Vix didn't have an unlimited amount of money to spend, like Caitlin did. The summer prior, Caitlin, had upset Vix when she told her that they wouldn't be friends at Mountain Day.

During the previous school year, Vix had dreamed of Bru. That summer the two had little social contact, but he'd given her a giant panda bear at the fair. She slept with the bear every night. She'd had a kidney infection during the school year. Caitlin had come to see her. Vix assumed Caitlin believed her actions had made Vix sick.

Back in the summer of 1980, the girls got a job babysitting for the son of television stars Tim Castellano and Loren D'Aubergine. Tim went to the beach with Vix, Caitlin and Max about two weeks after they'd started the job. He called Caitlin "Spitfire" and offered to put lotion on her back. Vix didn't like the way the man was paying special attention to Caitlin. He even asked her to go with him for a dip. On the way home, they stopped by a house being built because Max liked to watch construction. Von and Bru were part of the construction crew. They came to say hello to Caitlin and Vix. When Von slung Caitlin over his shoulder, Tim suddenly decided it was time for them to go home.

During the summer Vix and Caitlin watched a movie about a woman who gave up a relationship for a career. Vix argued the heroine could have had both but Caitlin was determined the man would have made the woman miserable.



One night after babysitting, Tim offered to drive Vix and Caitlin home. Instead of taking them to their house, he drove to the beach and stopped the engine. He told Caitlin he didn't want them hanging out at the construction site anymore as he thought she was giving them the wrong idea. Vix spoke up saying she thought he should take them home. When she discovered the doors of the car were locked and she couldn't get out, Vix vaulted over the seat of the car and grabbed the keys. Tim was angry and wrested the keys away from her. He took them home and Vix pushed Caitlin out of the car. Caitlin was excited because she thought Tim liked her but Vix told her his feelings were lewd.

In Chapter 14, Vix thought Abby and Lamb had the perfect relationship until she heard them arguing one day about the girls' habit of hitching rides. Vix felt guilty because the two were having an argument over something she had done. Abby and Lamb left the house saying they'd talk about the issue the following day. Daniel said he believed his mother would not last another six months. When Caitlin voiced her pleasure, Daniel told her that she was the reason that his mother was miserable.

Daniel was angry about the way Caitlin and the others were treating his mother. He planned to go to her and pledge his loyalty. He didn't want Lamb and the money, only for her to be happy.

Sharkey broke up the fight by taking Vix and Caitlin to a pizza place in his truck. At the pizza place, the three watch as a girl broke up with Bru. She called him immature and threw a beer in his face. She was crying. Vix swore to herself that she'd never let a man make her feel that bad.

Analysis

Family becomes a major theme in this section of chapters as Vix began to get mixed messages about the importance of having a family. One of these messages came from the Countess. This woman had been the best friend of Lamb's mother. She had chosen not to have a family but instead had five dogs whom she loved like children. Her opinion was that children were ungrateful and a burden. She confused Vix because when she talked to the girl in private she referred to her as a precious child but when she talked about Tawny's family, the family of which Vix was a member, the Countess referred to this family as an albatross around Tawny's neck. Later, Vix and Caitlin watched a movie in which a woman had to choose between her career and a family. The woman chose her career. Vix argued the woman could have had both, an argument that will be important later in the novel. Caitlin, however, believed the woman made the right decision in not staying with the man and choosing her career. She believed the man would have made the woman miserable.

Although Vix had always thought that Lamb and Abby had the perfect relationship, she witnessed a fight between the couple in this section of the novel. To Vix's embarrassment and dismay, the two are fighting about Vix and Caitlin's habit of hitchhiking in order to travel to different places on the island. Remember that when



Caitlin first suggested to Vix that they hitch, Vix was against the idea. She allowed Caitlin to talk her into the activity against her will but had come to the point where she thought nothing of the activity. With the memory of Lamb and Abby's argument fresh in her mind Vix saw just a short while later an argument between Bru and his girlfriend. She made a vow to herself that she would never allow a man to make her feel as bad as Bru had made his girlfriend feel or Lamb had made Abby feel.

Caitlin and Vix's friendship hit some rocky spots in this section of the novel. While Vix had been honored that Caitlin continued to choose her to come with her to the island each year, she was devastated when Caitlin announced to her that when they were at school, she wanted to have her own friends and own space. Vix seemed to believe that Caitlin was breaking the basic rules of friendship. In fact, when Caitlin was at Mountain Day, she would often act in ways that Vix had never seen her act before and seemed unlike Caitlin. It was not until Vix got sick with a kidney infection that Caitlin came to her and gave a sort of apology for the way she'd treated her.

The theme of the difference between socioeconomic classes is developed in this part of the novel as well. For instance, when Vix suggested that she and Caitlin get a summer job, the only reason Caitlin could see that Vix would want a job was because she was bored. She didn't understand that Vix didn't have an unlimited amount of money to spend as Caitlin did. Notice also that when Lamb and Abby had their fight where the children could hear them, Daniel stood up for his mother. He planned to offer his loyalty to her despite the money they might lose if she were to break off the relationship with Lamb. Another issue of socioeconomic differences came up when Abby suggested to Tawny that Vix be allowed to attend Mountain Day on a scholarship. Tawny seemed to think that allowing Vix to accept a scholarship would show that they were willing to depend on other people's charity. When she talked to Ed about the situation, however, he had another, more reasonable argument. He believed a better education would give Vix a better chance at having a good life. Vix was happy that her father took her side in the matter but wished that he would be more outgoing in his leadership of the family. Notice that when she believed that she heard her father murmur that after she got the good education, the rest would be up to her, Vix promised herself that she would not let this opportunity go to waste.

This idea that Vix was determined to make the most of the opportunities offered to her brings another theme in the novel to the surface. Each of the characters are given situations in which they can make good choices and better themselves, or make bad choices that might lead to their demise. While Vix was trying to make good choices and better herself, some characters, like Tawny, were making bad choices. Although she was still married to Ed, some of the Countess' free spirit seemed to be rubbing off on Tawny. While she was on the island Tawny had decided to fix herself up and think about men other than Ed. Tawny's ideas about other men are the first steps in the destruction of Vix's family.



Discussion Question 1

Do you think it was a good idea for Vix's parents to allow her to accept the scholarship and attend Mountain Day School? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the Countess' ideas about husbands and family. Compare them with the comments made by Caitlin and Vix after they watch the movie about the woman seeking a career. How are the viewpoints of the three women similar? How are they different?

Discussion Question 3

How did the argument that Vix witnessed between Abby and Lamb affect her? How was she affected by the fight she saw between Bru and his girlfriend?

Vocabulary

albatross, miffed, broached, incredulous, demonstrative, obligations, feverish, mortified, impersonator, seductive, mesmerized, lewd, undulate, oblivious, patronize, repulsive



Part 2: Rapture; Chapters 15-17

Summary

In Chapter 15, Caitlin and Vix spotted Von and Bru throwing a Frisbee on the beach. Caitlin ran to join them while Vix hung back. When Caitlin had come back from a spring break skiing trip, she'd told Vix she'd lost her virginity to a ski instructor. Back on the beach, Caitlin threw the Frisbee at Vix. Vix managed to catch and return it before Bru tackled her. He told her he'd let her up if she promised to be good. She didn't promise but he let her up anyway, bringing her a beer and sitting down next to her. He ran a finger down her neck and arm, making her desire him. He asked if she was scared of him. Later that evening as she sat back against him, snuggled between his legs, she asked him if he was scared of her. He said he was and Vix almost believed it was true.

In Chapter 16, Caitlin was furious when Abby bought a pair of Jack Russell terriers after Sweetie's death. The summer the dog passed away, Caitlin had been obsessed with death. She woke Vix one night asking if she was afraid of death. Vix suggested it might be like the play "Our Town" where dead people watched the living ones. Caitlin seemed concerned that she'd be invisible. Vix tried to go back to sleep but Caitlin woke her again telling her she'd made the decision that she was "cutting out before it all falls apart ... before I'm old and ugly and nobody wants me" (143). Caitlin tried to make Vix promise she'd go with her but Vix pretended to sleep and wouldn't answer.

This summer, however, Caitlin was obsessed with sex. She flirted with Von and even made passes at Daniel and Gus. One day when Vix saw Gus without a shirt, Vix was repulsed with herself by wondering how it would feel to press herself against his chest.

Gus was attracted to Vix the night he'd seen her wearing only a thin t-shirt, showing the outline of her breasts. He'd kept his distance from Vix in the years past because he was older than she.

In Chapter 17, Vix and Caitlin were working that summer for the cleaning company Dynamo. Caitlin appeared proud of herself for learning how to clean.

Abby, meanwhile, was stressed because there were five teenagers in her house. She worried about what Caitlin and Vix were doing with boys. Gus and Daniel thought they didn't have to follow the rules. Sharkey was the only one Abby thought she didn't have to worry about.

One day, Abby let Vix try out her new kayak. On the way to the pond, she told Vix she thought if she had a daughter, she'd be like Vix. Vix accepted her compliment. Abby tried to counsel her on drugs, sex and drinking, and then gave her a stack of college catalogs. Although she knew Abby was trying to help her prepare for her future, Vix was only interested in her nights with Bru.



Analysis

In this second part of the novel, entitled “Rapture” the girls were now seventeen. Their focus turned from experimenting sexually and pretending they were sexy to being sexy. Caitlin told Vix she was no longer a virgin and Vix assumed this meant that Caitlin was open for business in that department. Vix finally began the relationship she’d been dreaming of with Bru. Caitlin was dating Von but still had time to make passes at her stepbrother and his friend. Meanwhile, Vix was getting conflicting vibes from Gus, who has had a crush on her for several years.

One of the more interesting discussions that the girls have during this section of the novel was their talk about Caitlin losing her virginity. Vix asked if Caitlin loved the man to whom she’d lost her virginity and if she planned to see him again. Caitlin argued that love and sex were two different things. She told Vix she had sex just to see what it was like and get her first time out of the way. Vix believed this attitude toward sex was irresponsible. She planned for her first time to mean something.

Two sides of Caitlin are seen in this section of the novel. While at their job for the cleaning service, Caitlin worked hard. She seemed happy with herself for being able to learn to clean and make money. However, Caitlin had the idea that school didn’t have anything to do with real life. Though her teachers knew she was smart, they were frustrated with the girl because she wouldn’t apply herself and wouldn’t study for tests or turn in assignments on time.

Interesting in this section is that of all five of the children who lived in Abby’s house during the summer, Abby took a special interest in Vix. She tried to give her guidance and encouraged her to go to college. Abby had told Vix that if she’d had a daughter she imagined she’d be much like Vix. Abby may not only be taking Vix under her wing because she reminded her of the child she’d always wanted but also because she felt that Vix showed some real promise. In the theme of reactions to opportunities, this was the one time that Vix didn’t immediately jump for an opportunity she was being offered. She was much too distracted by Bru to worry about college.

Also interesting in this section of the novel is Caitlin’s obsession with death. She tried to make a suicide pact with Vix, but Vix refused to discuss the subject with her. This idea of Caitlin committing suicide before she got old, ugly and nobody wanted her will become important later in the novel. Notice also Caitlin’s concern with being invisible. She was disturbed by Vix’s description of death because she was afraid of being invisible, a fear she’d voiced in an earlier section of the novel. Vix seemed very dismissive both of her friend’s fear of being invisible and the seriousness of her thoughts about death.



Discussion Question 1

Consider the suicide pact that Caitlin tried to get Vix to make with her. How do you think Vix could have responded to her friend's request? Do you think Caitlin was serious about her decision?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss Abby's attempt to advise Vix. Why do you think Abby choose Vix as the teen she could advise? Support your answer with examples from the book.

Discussion Question 3

Discuss Caitlin's statement that school had nothing to do with life. For a person who was so unmotivated at school, why do you think she took to her cleaning job so quickly?

Vocabulary

cascaded, irresistible, mimic, indignant, jetty, feigned, flaunted, vibes, revolting, privy, discreet



Part 2: Rapture; Chapters 18-21

Summary

In Chapter 18, Von and Caitlin, and Bru and Vix spent their time in a shack they called Paradise. Bru and Vix would go to Bru's truck where they would lay on a shag rug under the truck's cap. Bru taught her about sex though he knew she was a virgin and didn't want to rush her.

Bru is caught up in how sweet Vix is. He likes the fact he's getting to train her in the ways of sex. When Vix had asked him about his prior girlfriend, he'd told her she wanted promises for which he wasn't ready. Von tells him Caitlin is hot as well. Bru has dreams where both Caitlin and Vix come on to him.

Caitlin told Vix she'd performed oral sex on Von. Although Vix tried not to show it, Caitlin's admission embarrassed her.

Sharkey follows the girls one night and worries that they will get into trouble. He wonders if he should tell Lamb. As he thinks about it, he wonders how he would feel if Caitlin and Vix climbed into the back of his truck. He is afraid he'll get an erection if he even looks at them.

Daniel feels sexual attraction to Caitlin as well. He knows she's leading him on when she bathes in the outdoor shower without using a washcloth. She sings as she bathes, knowing he's watching her. He's lucky he has a girlfriend, Bailey, to take his mind off her.

Abby asked where Caitlin and Vix went every night. They told her only that they were hanging out with friends. Vix made the mistake of telling Caitlin that Bru was in love with her. Caitlin tried to convince Vix that her fling with Bru was just a summer romance.

In Chapter 19, Caitlin planned a party for Vix's seventeenth birthday. She invited only Bru and Von. The four swam, and then shared a picnic dinner on the beach. Vix hoped Bru would make love to her that night. Caitlin brought a joint and the four passed it around. Vix was high by the time Caitlin announced she'd forgotten to give Vix her present. Inside a wrapped box was a delicate white dress. Caitlin convinced Vix to put it on. After Caitlin adjusted the dress, the two began dancing together. The boys joined them and suddenly Vix was kissing someone. She reached down and felt his erection through his shorts but when the voice said "Oh, baby" she knew something was wrong. It was Von, not Bru she'd been kissing. She ran to the ocean, lying down in the water, hoping it would carry her away. She heard Caitlin screaming. She heard them coming after her but she was swimming away.

In Chapter 20, Victoria dreamed of her own funeral. Her mother was angry because Vix had used drugs. She remembered being grabbed from behind in the ocean and drug back to the shore. She woke in her room at Lamb's house. She packed her things and



was about to leave when Caitlin woke. Caitlin asked her not to leave and ruin everything. Vix suddenly realized that Caitlin had orchestrated the entire evening but Caitlin claimed things had just gotten out of hand. Vix left a note for Lamb and Abby, and then took off walking. She'd made it halfway to the road when she heard a truck behind her.

Gus is woken up by Vix and Caitlin's argument. He'd been out early, having a fling with a married woman. He recognized Vix's walk when he heard steps in the hallway. He followed her in his truck, wondering where she was going.

In Chapter 21, Gus found Vix a job at the Homeport and drove her to the dock where she met Trisha. Trish agreed to let her stay there. As soon as she was alone, Vix burst into tears. She cried until she was exhausted, and then went to sleep. She woke to Abby and Lamb banging on the hatch. Abby begged Vix to come home but Lamb suggested Vix might need some time and space. Bru was waiting to talk to her when she finished her first night's work at the Homeport. He told her he felt they should forget about the night on the beach. Once they were back together, it was Vix who became the aggressor in their relationship.

Meanwhile, Trisha is getting calls two or three times a day from Lamb and Abby asking her to convince Vix to come back home. Trisha thought Lamb should be helping the two girls work things out. Vix had told Trisha she didn't want to talk about what happened.

Analysis

The relationship between Caitlin and Vix came to a climax and an explosion when things got strange at the seventeenth birthday party that Caitlin planned for Vix. The evening had been perfect until Caitlin pulled out a joint. The four of them got high, and then Caitlin pulled out a provocative dress, her birthday gift to Vix. Either intentionally or accidentally the couples got switched and Vix was mortified when she realized she was kissing and fondling Von. She tried to get away from how terrible she felt by running into the ocean. Vix's intent seemed to be just to get away from the uncomfortable situation in which she found herself but she could very well have drowned that night. Many questions that are never answered are raised concerning that night. Was Caitlin kissing Bru while Vix was kissing Von? Had Caitlin orchestrated the events intentionally? Was Von in on the plan and did he help in tricking Vix? What was Bru doing while Vix was kissing Von? Why didn't he stop her? These questions are never answered but Vix seemed certain that Caitlin had planned the ending of the evening. It was perhaps the first time she thought Caitlin had done something intentionally to hurt her.

Although Caitlin was having her own relationship with Von, she seemed jealous of Bru's relationship with Vix. The two were very close. Vix referred to telling Caitlin that Bru was in love with her as a mistake. She may have considered it a mistake because Caitlin began right away trying to tear down the relationship between the two of them. Instead of just being happy for her friend, Caitlin basically told Vix the relationship would be over once they left the island in the fall. The boys would move on to other girls, she told Vix.



Adding to the theme of family, notice in this section that Vix realized she was the odd man out in the argument she'd had with Caitlin. When Lamb and Abby had come to check in on her at the boat, she'd expected them to tell her she would no longer be receiving a scholarship from the family's foundation. They assured her that her scholarship was not in jeopardy but Vix still knew that if they had to choose between Caitlin and Vix, they would choose Caitlin because she was their blood relative.

Note also that while Trish sympathized with Vix, she also felt she knew where Vix's relationship with the family was headed. She remembered too clearly her own pain when Lamb had left her for someone more appropriate. She felt the lesson that people with money would burn you if they got a chance was one that Vix would learn sooner or later.

Meanwhile, Caitlin was making quite an impression on all of the males in the general area. Her own family members were not exclusions. She showered in a provocative manner where she knew she was in sight of Daniel, her stepbrother. Even though he tried not to, even her brother had trouble looking at Caitlin without getting an erection. Gus was even caught up in Caitlin's charm.

Interesting in this section is the interest that Gus took in Vix when he noticed she was leaving the house the morning after her argument with Caitlin. Although he could have just tried to go back to sleep, he instead followed her and drove her away from Lamb's house. He helped her to find a new job and settled her into Trish's boat before leaving her.

Discussion Question 1

Consider the incident at Vix's birthday party. Do you think what happened was an accident or had Caitlin planned the whole thing? Give reasons for your answer.

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the differences between Vix and Caitlin at this point in their lives.

Discussion Question 3

Do you agree with Trisha that Lamb should have helped the girls settle their differences? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

taunts, deceitful, scandal, rendition, parochial, mediocre, recruit, disoriented, lenient, aggressor



Part 2: Rapture; Chapters 22-25

Summary

In Chapter 22, even though Vix and Bru had tried to have sex, Vix was still a virgin. Bru had been afraid to push too hard and hurt her. One morning when weather had kept him from working they'd tried again, slowly with a lubricated condom. He'd broken her hymen but she didn't orgasm until the second time they had intercourse. When Trish learned that Vix and Bru were lovers, she made sure that the two were protecting themselves. She also asked if Bru was making it enjoyable for Vix as well.

Lamb didn't know what he should do to help mend Vix and Caitlin's situation. Abby nagged him to get Vix to come home. Caitlin had quit her job. Trish said Vix is okay.

After she'd been working at the Homeport for three weeks, the manager came to tell her someone wanted to see her outside. It was Caitlin, Abby and Lamb. Vix knew something was wrong. Caitlin told her that Nathan had died that morning. Lamb had already booked a flight home for her. Caitlin said she was coming as well. Vix shook her head but Caitlin begged Vix to let her be her friend. At home, Lanie told Vix that Nathan really hadn't been that sick. She told Vix they didn't know he was going to die.

In Chapter 23, Nathan's death changed everything for the family. Caitlin tried to get Vix to go back to the Vineyard with her for the final week of the summer but Vix refused. She asked only that Caitlin give Bru a message for her. Vix helped her father dispose of Nathan's things. He'd cried and run away when she said she wanted to keep some of Nathan's books. Lewis and Lanie went on with their lives as usual, seeming almost relieved Nathan was gone.

When Caitlin returned from the island she hand-delivered a formal sympathy card from Bru. Vix and Bru also exchanged Christmas cards. Tawny went with the Countess to Europe for three months. She seemed disinterested in her family when she returned. Caitlin talked about applying to Wellesley, claiming men were too much trouble and that she was thinking of becoming a lesbian. Vix reminded her that if she were a lesbian, she would be more distracted at Wellesley than a traditional college. Vix, meanwhile, applied to Harvard, Lamb's alma mater.

For her entrance essay Vix wrote about Caitlin as the most influential person in her life. When Tawny learned Vix had applied to Harvard, she accused Vix of letting Abby and the Somers family take over her life. Tawny slapped Vix when Vix told her they were showing an interest in Vix's future, which was more than what Tawny was doing. Tawny warned Vix that she wouldn't fit in at Harvard.

Tawny realized how hard she'd become when she slapped Vix. She was afraid she might be going crazy again. She was glad the Countess had recognized her symptoms



and taken her away to Europe before she'd hurt someone or herself. Ed told her he loved her and needed her but she didn't think anyone in her family really loved her.

The following day Tawny told Vix she should marry into money as well so she could take care of her family when they got older. Vix's father, meanwhile, argued in favor of Vix going to Harvard even before she knew she had been accepted. When Vix did learn she was accepted, she kept the news to herself while Lanie announced she was pregnant.

Abby was out of place at Caitlin's graduation at Mountain Day. The Countess introduced her to Phoebe and then left her alone. Abby wanted to run. Abby hadn't expected Phoebe to be so beautiful.

Phoebe, meanwhile, tried to contain her laughter, as she thought it would be Trish her ex-husband would marry, not this elegant woman. She thought of how she had regrets that her relationship with Lamb hadn't worked, but hadn't wanted to be a boring Yankee wife.

Tawny also felt out of place though she recognized many of the people at the party. She didn't trust Abby and was wary when the woman came toward her waving. She was glad that at least Phoebe knew the rules.

Lamb was proud of Caitlin at graduation. He was also proud of Vix who graduated second in her class. He considered her their summer daughter.

In Chapter 24, Vix had just learned that Caitlin would be going to Europe for the summer instead of going to the island. Abby and Lamb tried to get Vix to go along as well. She refused. Caitlin insisted it was because of Bru. In reality it was because Vix had two jobs lined up for the summer, determined to make her own spending money for college.

In Chapter 25, Vix asked Bru to meet her for the first time at the Flying Horses. She was riding an outside horse when he spotted her. He jumped onto the still moving carousel. She felt weak when he walked up beside her.

Bru felt he should say something to Vix about her brother dying but didn't seem to be able to come up with the right words. He thought about telling her about his mother dying but changed his mind. She'd had cancer. When she'd finally died, he'd tried to overdose on Aspirin and had to have his stomach pumped. Instead of talking, he kissed Vix instead, hoping that his kiss said what his words couldn't.

From that point on, Vix spent every moment with Bru or thinking about him. Abby worried that Vix was too serious about Bru and wouldn't follow through with her college plans though Vix assured her that she would. Vix admitted it was strange staying at Lamb's house without Caitlin there. She remembered the two of them having an argument about the meanings behind the quotes they'd chosen for their senior yearbook pages. Vix suggested they might be arguing because they were scared of being apart. Sharkey, Daniel and Gus were not there either, so she was alone in the house.



Bru had moved into a cabin and Vix stayed there often until late at night. She did not allow herself to stay the night with him, however. One night the phone rang at Lamb's house. Caitlin wanted to talk to Vix. She tried again to get Vix to join her on her trip. Vix refused again. Caitlin told her she wouldn't be coming back to the states in September. She'd decided to study abroad for a year.

Abby finally convinced Vix to bring Bru home for dinner. She and Lamb approved of him but reminded her she was young and had a bright future. By mid-August, Vix was exhausted. Abby asked her to take a week off to recuperate but Vix refused. On their last night together, Bru begged Vix not to leave him alone on the island.

Analysis

Vix was the only young person on the island the summer before she began college. She finally had the opportunity to be the only child of Abby, an opportunity for which she'd once longed. This particular summer, however, she was too tied up in Bru to really care.

Several interesting revelations are made about different characters in this section of chapters. For instance, the reader learns that Tawny went away to Europe with the Countess not because she just wanted to get away from her family but because the Countess had suspected she was having emotional difficulty after Nathan's death. What Vix interpreted as apathy toward her family when Tawny returned from Europe could have been the effects of a mood stabilizing medicine or anti-depressant that Tawny was taking.

Also, the reader learns that during the early years, while the girls were first getting to know Bru and Von, Bru's mother was dying from cancer. He may have seemed moody and detached during these first years because of the stress he was under at home. It is also learned that when his mother had died, he'd felt such grief that he'd tried to take his own life by taking on overdose of medication.

The major topic of these chapters is Nathan's death and the affect that it had on Vix and her family. The only positive that came from Nathan's death was that Vix and Caitlin reconnected with one another. Vix had at first tried to refuse Caitlin's offer of support but agreed to let Caitlin come with her when she begged Vix to let her be a friend to her. During the time that Caitlin was in Santa Fe helping out with the funeral, Vix noted that Caitlin acted as a perfect friend.

Furthering the theme of family, Vix's family seemed to disintegrate after Nathan's death. Tawny went away with the Countess, Vix's father mourned but kept to himself, and Lanie and Lewis became wild and inconsiderate. Vix mourned the loss of her brother. She wished she'd spent more time with him and accused herself of being selfish. She additionally felt guilty because she hadn't been able to take him to Disney World as she'd promised.

The theme of family is continued when the perspectives of different family members are shared on the day of Caitlin and Vix's graduation from Mountain Day. It is Abby's first



time to meet Phoebe. She is consumed with self-consciousness when she finds herself face-to-face with Lamb's first wife. Phoebe is polite to Abby but inwardly scorns her. Lamb is perhaps the only parental figure in the girls' lives who seemed to be paying attention to what was happening and feeling pride in both his biological daughter and his summer daughter.

Although Tawny claimed to have given up on Vix as a member of the family several times in the past, she continued to be scornful of her in this section of the novel. This time she did not approve of Vix's decision to apply to Harvard. Her statements fit in with the themes both of family and the differences in socioeconomic classes. She warned Vix that she would not fit in with the rich people at Harvard. She also accused Vix of letting the Somers' family take charge of her life instead of depending on her own family. Later, her mother seemed to consider apologizing to her daughter but instead made the snide comment that Vix should consider marrying a rich man as well. That way she'd be able to take care of her family. This statement will be important later on in the novel.

Notice also in this section that Vix stubbornly refused to allow the Somers family to send her on a trip to Europe. Her decision furthers the topic of taking advantage of one's opportunities even though Vix wasn't technically taking advantage of an opportunity in this decision. She passed up the opportunity to go to Europe, but took instead the opportunity to make money for herself. She knew she'd need spending money while in college and was determined to make it for herself. Despite her mother's beliefs, Vix was not trying to depend on the Somers family for her support. Vix was angered, however, when Caitlin continued to insist that Vix wouldn't come because she was too tied up in Bru. It was almost as if Caitlin believed if she taunted Vix enough that she would feel she had to prove Caitlin wrong, prove that she could be away from Bru, and go on the trip.

Discussion Question 1

Why do you think that Caitlin was so insistent that Vix go along with her on her trip to Europe?

Discussion Question 2

How did Nathan's death change things in Vix's family?

Discussion Question 3

Why did Tawny not want Vix to go to Harvard? Do you agree with Tawny about her insistence that Vix wouldn't fit in there? Why or why not?



Vocabulary

gamut, efficient, resented, blustery, mantra, dispose, console, commute, translate, karma, tapioca, exotically, ulterior, fare, vetoed, listless, vista, splayed, rousing, audible, cryptic, endearing, dissipated



Part 3: We Are the World; Chapters 26-29

Summary

In Chapter 26, Maia, Vix's roommate at Harvard, questioned Vix about Bru. Vix already hated her. Vix felt out of place at Harvard. She hated the way Maia asked questions endlessly and the way she chewed her fingernails.

Maia calls Vix a "creature." She is disappointed that this girl, who will hardly speak to her, is her roommate. Maia's mother tells her to keep trying. Paisley, their suitemate, thinks Vix is mysterious.

Vix struggled to decide what she should study in school. She was overwhelmed by the choices she had. At the beginning of October, Vix's father called to tell her that Lanie had her baby, a girl named Amber. She was offended when Maia referred to her sister as a statistic.

Caitlin called in the middle of the night saying she was in Rome. She said she might never come home. Even though Vix enjoyed being on her own, she felt a longing each time she talked to Caitlin. Maia complained about Caitlin calling in the middle of the night. Caitlin told Vix she called at that time because night rates were cheaper. Maia reminded Vix that in Rome it was the middle of the day when Caitlin was calling.

Vix was so busy with her Harvard classes she didn't have time to visit the Vineyard. She even had to give up one of her jobs. Bru came to visit for a weekend but she was sick with a cold. When he got back home, he sent her a package with six different kinds of vitamins and minerals from a health food store.

In Chapter 27, the girls in Vix's suite often talked about sex. Maia got attention when she decided to have sex. Maia decided on Wally as the chosen one. Her suitemates showed her an educational video to prepare her. Maia announced she and Wally had laughed afterward, a reaction Vix had never had. Caitlin called Vix to tell her she'd had an affair with a woman who reminded her of Vix.

Paisley likes Victoria because she listens and evaluates, doesn't just talk. Paisley was impressed when Victoria invited her to have dinner at Abby and Lamb's house but she didn't understand the relationship between them. Vix describes them as her surrogate parents. Paisley didn't ask any questions. At dinner Paisley sat next to the Democratic State Chair. He was impressed by her thinking and encouraged her to join the young Democrats.

In Chapter 28, both Paisley and Vix are devastated when the Democratic Party lost the election by a landslide. Vix was angry with Caitlin when she learned her friend didn't even vote in the election. She's also upset because Bru wasn't as upset about the outcome of the election as she was. They argued about everything that Thanksgiving when she'd gone to the island to visit Bru. She thought about going to Barbados with



the Somers family but she decided to spend the time with Bru instead. They have dinner with Bru's family. Even though Vix thought she should feel comfortable with them, she wondered where she really belonged.

Phoebe admitted she was glad that Caitlin was back in school. She wished she'd gotten more education. She was upset with Caitlin when she picked up a guy their first night together and was out late. The next day, on the chair lift, Phoebe tried to advise Caitlin that she needed to be discriminating when it came to men. Caitlin basically ignored her advice.

Abby found that she was less concerned about Vix and Bru since Vix had left for Harvard. She, along with the rest of the family, wished that Caitlin would come home. Abby had overheard a conversation between Vix and Caitlin. Vix had scolded Caitlin for not being able to get over Abby, a remark that made Abby suck in her breath. She was relieved when Caitlin said her decision had nothing to do with Abby. Abby planned to get Caitlin to come back for a short time by planning a fiftieth birthday party for Lamb.

In Chapter 29, it had been two years since Vix had seen Caitlin when the two met for Lamb's birthday party. Caitlin encouraged her to spend the night. She also begged Vix not to abandon her during the party.

Abby had asked Sharkey to make a toast to his father at the birthday party. He told the group his father was wise enough to know when to leave things alone. The guests seemed to think the comment is meant as a snub but Sharkey intended it as a compliment. He noticed that when Caitlin stood up to talk, all the men drooled. She told them that Lamb was the best man she'd ever known.

Daniel recognized that Sharkey gave Lamb a proper toast. Lamb had gotten easily out of the uncomfortable position in which his daughter had left him. Daniel thought Lamb should run for office.

Gus didn't go to Lamb's party because he had a term paper due and his grandmother was dying. He called and wished Lamb a happy birthday. He also asked to speak to Vix. She couldn't hear him because of the party noise. He wished he could see her again.

After the party, in her bedroom Caitlin told Vix she must be able to tell she'd had an abortion. Vix questioned Caitlin, wondering if it was the producer Caitlin had told her about but Caitlin didn't seem to remember telling Vix about a producer. Caitlin changed the subject and asked Vix to spend her junior year abroad. When Vix said she couldn't Caitlin was suddenly angry, accusing Vix of being tied down.

Analysis

This third part of the novel makes a turn to focus on another major time in Vix's life. She was in college, trying to keep up with the focused, intensive studies as well as her love life with a man who had no interest in learning or studying. In this section the theme of love develops as Vix began to realize how different she and Bru were. They still love



one another but Bru seemed to feel he was being forced to take a back seat to her studies. Vix, meanwhile, was realizing how much there was to learn that she didn't know about. When she tried to talk to Bru about her feelings of being uneducated, he didn't understand what she meant and seemed to be offended by her statement. Remember that in past conversations with Caitlin, Vix was the one to support the idea that a woman could have a career and a family. Even though Bru wasn't technically a "family" and her college studies not technically a "career" Vix was learning how difficult it can be for a woman to try to divide herself between two aspects of her life, especially if the man in her life was resentful of the woman's career.

Notice that when Vix began her time at Harvard, she introduced herself as Victoria, not Vix. This change in preference indicates a desire on Victoria's part to seem more mature and more sophisticated than her nickname indicated. After all, Tawny has warned Victoria that she will not fit in at Harvard. This change in name preference is one of Vix's attempts to fit in with the people she believed she would meet at Harvard.

While Vix was in college, two years went by in which she did not see Caitlin at all. She made two new friends — Maia, whom she did not like at all at first, and Paisely, with whom Vix ended up being roommates. Maia was Vix's first roommate. Maia rubbed Vix the wrong way from the beginning of their relationship. She talked constantly and asked nosey questions. What Vix was most offended by was Maia's assumption that her family was a group of hicks just because they lived in New Mexico. She's also offended by Maia's comment that Lanie was a statistic because she got pregnant as a teenager. To Vix, her sister was much more than just a statistic even though the two were never close. Maia is a character who represented the stereotype of the people whom Tawny expected to attend Harvard.

Meanwhile, Caitlin's family seemed to be getting more and more frustrated with her and her behavior. Abby had to trick Caitlin into coming back to the states even for just a short visit. Even Phoebe, who has the reputation of being a flirt and having several boyfriends, tried to warn her daughter about her promiscuous behavior. Caitlin basically ignored her mother's warning. In her toast to her father, Caitlin managed to even give it a lewd tone as she noted her father was the best of all the many men she had known. In his thoughts about the party, Daniel gave Sharkey credit for giving a proper toast while he is impressed by Lamb's ability to get himself out of the uncomfortable position that Caitlin had put him into. The crowd seemed to take Sharkey's words about his father as criticism, that his father was distant, instead of the compliment that Sharkey intended. Notice that when Gus called the night of the party to wish Lamb a happy birthday that it was Vix he wanted to talk to.

Notice that when Vix asked Caitlin if it was the producer with whom Caitlin had a date who had gotten her pregnant, Caitlin doesn't seem to remember telling Vix anything about a producer. The reader has to wonder if Caitlin has really been doing all these fabulous and outlandish things she's been telling Vix that she has been doing or if she has been fabricating stories just to try to make Vix think she's doing all these out-of-the-ordinary things she always said she would.



Caitlin again asked Vix to go abroad with her. Vix again refused. The two argued as Caitlin was still determined that it was Bru who kept Vix away from her. This argument touches on a theme in the novel, as it is the difference in the socioeconomic classes from which the girls come that kept Vix from going abroad. Caitlin had plenty of money to spend overseas while Vix knew she would be going on someone else's money. Vix also didn't want to lose the opportunity she had as she studied at Harvard.

Discussion Question 1

Why do you think that Vix began using the name Victoria when she began attending Harvard? What does this name change symbolize?

Discussion Question 2

Consider the changes with which Vix was dealing when she began her studies at Harvard. What did she discover about herself? How did her time at college affect her relationship with Bru?

Discussion Question 3

Do you think that Caitlin was telling Vix the truth about the things that were happening to her while she was overseas? Why or why not? Give examples from the book to support your answer.

Vocabulary

tantalizing, innate, neurotic, coveted, analytical, surrogate, simplistic, miffed, aback, lapses, vigil, claustrophobic, abroad, genteel



Part 3: We Are the World; Chapters 30-34

Summary

In Chapter 30, Vix took Bru to her parents' home in Santa Fe. It wasn't until she was there that she learned Tawny had gone to Key West with the Countess. Her father decorated the house and cooked dinner. Lanie brought her two babies. Jimmy, her husband, didn't come. Lanie said he was probably at a friend's house getting stoned. Before she left, Lanie asked Vix for money. Even though Vix was short as well, she gave Lanie \$50. Lanie suggested she marry Bru while she could. When Vix asked Lanie why she didn't get out of her unhappy marriage, Lanie snapped at her, telling her she didn't know the situation.

Vix and her father visited Nathan's grave. Vix asked for some time alone.

As Ed watched Vix at Nathan's grave, he wondered what she was saying to her brother. He hoped she didn't feel bad about leaving Nathan alone in the summers because Nathan understood and had always stood up for her whenever Tawny talked bad about Vix. He remembered a camping trip where Vix had pushed Nathan downhill in his chair too fast and he'd fallen out. He remembered how scared she'd been that she'd hurt Nathan. Ed also wondered if Lanie had told Vix about his girlfriend, that Tawny said their relationship is over. Tears came to his eyes when he realized Vix was a young woman now. He chided himself because Tawny always called him weak when he cried. He wondered why he'd never been able to talk to his daughters and tell them how much he cared for them.

On the way home with Bru, Vix started crying and was unable to stop. Bru was patient with the tears at first but when the tears continued after a few days he began to lash out at her. When they arrived in Boston and he announced he thought they needed a break, Victoria didn't argue.

Bru had been looking for signs that Vix wanted to break up with him. He decided to get ahead of her and suggest it before she could. Still, he was surprised when she didn't argue with him. He unloaded on his uncle at home, and then went to see Star. The two had sex in the storage room of the health food store. When he slept, though, he dreamed of Vix.

In Chapter 31, when the Challenger space shuttle exploded, Victoria fell apart. She frightened Maia who went to get Paisley. Victoria finally told them that she and Bru had broken up.

Even though they'd gotten closer, Maia was still frustrated with Victoria's secretiveness. She wanted to help Victoria get through school and keep her scholarship. She didn't want Victoria to lose all her hard work on one guy. Meanwhile, Maia was at the medical clinic. She believed a spot on her foot was cancerous.



Caitlin called to say she was in Los Angeles visiting Sharkey. She'd run into Tim Castellno. Caitlin had promised then that one day she would finish what she had started with Tim. When Caitlin learned that Vix had a cold she suggested she transfer to L.A. where the two could room together. Vix reminded Caitlin she didn't want to transfer at the end of her junior year. When Caitlin asked how Bru was, Vix didn't tell her the whole story, only saying she was busy with school and didn't have time for a social life.

Sharkey wondered why Caitlin chose this time to come to L.A. His lab partner asked for an introduction but Sharkey refuses. She drew him away to a fancy restaurant where he commented about how quickly she'd go through her money if she ate regularly at places like that. He suggested she get a job or go back to school and do something with her life. Caitlin insists she was doing something with her life, just not what he was doing.

In Chapter 32, Vix enjoyed a spring break visit with Maia's family. Maia complained because she thought her family was controlling and intensely competitive. They also visited her cousin, Andy, a student in medical school. He told her he was attracted to her and she decided to follow her own attraction instead of her heart.

Maia was happy that Vix was finally seeing someone other than Bru. She wished her friend would stop blaming herself for their breakup.

Vix went back to the Vineyard for summer break only because she had a summer job. Paisley and Maia told her it would be a bad idea but Vix let them know Bru was already seeing someone else.

Abby was happy that Vix was coming back to the Vineyard. She'd been afraid when Vix broke up with Bru that they'd never see Vix again. Abby also hoped that Vix wouldn't get tied up in Bru again.

In Chapter 33, Bru came looking for her at the Dynamo office bringing her a bunch of peonies. She tried to be cool but when he hugged her, it was all over with. They had sex in his truck. In the process, the peonies were crushed making them release their scent. She could never smell peonies again without thinking of this moment. They tested each other through that summer. Both were honest about having other lovers during their time apart. At work, her boss offered to make her a partner in the cleaning business. Vix, however, wasn't sure what she wanted.

When they come for a visit, Abby's mother suggested to Abby that it isn't a good idea for Vix to be living with them. She seemed to think Vix would be a distraction to Lamb. Abby told her mother that Vix is like the daughter she never had, and that Vix is in love.

In Chapter 34, when Vix returned to Harvard for her senior year, Caitlin was on her way to Rio. Abby had encouraged Victoria to go to graduate school but Victoria was ready to get out of school. She'd changed her concentration to Social Anthropology and was doing a film thesis dedicated to Nathan. The film would feature disabled kids talking about their ideas of what heaven was like. Caitlin, meanwhile, called to say she was studying dance.



Vix enjoyed working with the children for her video but they made her miss Nathan. Abby tried to help. She kept her abreast of what was happening with all the kids, Daniel, Gus, Sharkey and Caitlin. She asked about a graduation party but Vix didn't have the time to think about it. She was trying to finish her thesis, keep up with her classes and look for a job. She finally got an offer from Dinah Renko. She was promised to be moved up in the company as soon as she was ready and was pressed for an answer right away. Vix said yes.

When Maia asked what Bru thought of her job offer during dinner, Vix knocked over her glass of wine. Paisley assumed she hasn't told Bru yet but believed that he would follow Vix anywhere.

Bru visited Vix the first weekend in May. They had sex, then walked along the banks of the Charles. He stopped in front of her, looking serious. When he pulled a jewelry box out of his pocket he told her they didn't have to get married right away. When she asked him to go to New York with her, or Boston, he refused. He told her she had to say yes to marriage and to island life. Vix knew she couldn't promise Bru the rest of her life, she still didn't know what she wanted. Bru thought Vix's hesitation was because she thought she was better than him now that she had a Harvard degree. He told her that she didn't get it.

Analysis

In this section of chapters, Vix struggled with her expectations of love and her expectations of herself. In order to help her deal with her insecurities about her relationship with Bru, Vix tried to look at the relationships of people she knew who had successful marriages. She wanted to know what made these couples work and survive when others didn't. At the beginning of the section, she was worried things were getting stale with Bru. After they broke up, and then got back together, things are nothing but stale. Even though Vix had always believed a woman could have a career and a family it appeared that was not as easy as she believed when she was a teen. Paisley had believed that Bru would follow Victoria anywhere, but he refused to go to New York or even Boston with her so she could have a career in her chosen field. Both of them seem stubborn, too stubborn to give up their ideal life to make things work between them.

Important in this portion of the book is Ed's section of text where he shares his thoughts about Vix's relationship with Nathan. Not only does the reader learn for sure through Ed's words that Nathan never resented Victoria her freedom, it is also learned that Nathan even stood up for his sister when Tawny would begin talking bad about her. Note also that Ed remembers a time when Vix had accidentally dumped Nathan out of his wheelchair because she'd tried pushing him down a hill too fast. Ed's memory is much like the dream that Vix had the summer back on the Vineyard after Nathan's death. Only in Vix's dream it was she who was dumped out instead of Nathan.

Also in this section Vix returned home to visit her family for the first time in three years. She cried on the way home because she was so distant from them and also because



she knew she could have been suffering just like they are. Her father has been left by their mother but still tried to pull off a family dinner. Lanie was full of anger and resentment for the way her life has gone. The amount of distance that had come between the sisters is apparent when Lanie snapped at her sister when she tried to give her advice. Even though Lanie was poor, living in a trailer park where people shot bullet holes in her truck, she didn't want any part of Vix's concern or advice.

Notice that while Vix's explosion after the Challenger blew up was believed by her roommates to have been caused by pent up grief from her breakup with Bru, there seemed to be more to it than that. At one point it is noted that Vix thought about the schoolteacher Christa McAuliffe who was on broad. Vix was angry because this woman had worked so hard to reach a goal just to have it all blow up, literally. Vix's melt down was probably in part caused by fear that even though she'd worked hard to ensure a good future for herself, all of her plans could fall apart at any moment by something she was unable to control. Meanwhile, contrast Vix's insecurity about the future with Caitlin's happy go luck life. She's in Rio studying dance, Vix learned.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the way the Challenger explosion is used in the novel. What does this tragedy represent to Vix?

Discussion Question 2

Describe the relationship between the girls at this point in the novel. How are their lives different?

Discussion Question 3

When Vix was a teen, she'd thought it was possible to have a career and a family. After her experience with Bru, she was learning that it wasn't that easy. Do you think the two could have made their relationship work if they'd wanted to? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

altitude, haggard, contorted, suppressed, hysteria, jeopardize, inkling, despicable, seduce, insecurity, stimulating, rivalry, mutual, assuage, dissuade, innovative, composite, coherent, articulated, castanets, anecdotes, nurturing, commotion, ventured



Part 4: Didn't We Almost Have it All; Chapters 35-38

Summary

In Chapter 35, Maia helped Vix and Paisley buy career clothes. Because of a stock market crash Maia lost her job on the very first day she wore one of the outfits she'd bought. After a short scare when hypochondriac Maia convinced herself she had ovarian cancer, she applied to law school. Caitlin dropped by the apartment in New York that Vix shared with Paisley and Maia. She had a brief conversation with Paisley in which Paisley sarcastically told Caitlin she was living out everyone's fantasy. In the cab on the way to Lamb and Abby's house Caitlin gave Vix an antique piano shawl as a graduation gift.

At the hotel, Caitlin asked to hear about Vix's job but went to sleep while she was talking. When Caitlin finally woke at noon the following day, she wanted to hear about Bru's proposal. Vix assured her she was finally over him. When she got back to her apartment, Paisley and Maia told Vix they could tell Caitlin was jealous of them.

Paisley realized she admired Vix for her loyalty to Caitlin as well as for having the strength to tell Bru she wasn't ready for marriage.

In Chapter 36, at Victoria's job at Squire-Oates she was in charge of editing tapes of corporate executives. She was in charge of catching the flaws of these executives so they could prepare to face press conferences with confidence. She wondered why the hair twisting Dinah didn't take her own course. Dinah left decision-making up to Vix, but took credit for Vix's good ideas. Vix didn't complain because she didn't want to lose her job. Meanwhile, Lanie had begun referring to Vix as her rich older sister. Vix was frustrated because Lanie didn't realize she was struggling as well.

Abby wished Daniel and Vix would get together. Lamb told her she should open a matchmaking service. Her hands were full, however, as she'd taken over leadership of the Somers Foundation.

Gus took a job offer to write for the "Oregonian." He met Caitlin in Seattle for drinks. She brought along two guys, James and Donny. When he asked how Vix was, Caitlin lies telling him she eloped with Bru, and then laughed, saying she was joking. He left as soon as he could.

In Chapter 37, Caitlin called telling Vix she had found the perfect place for them to live. Vix clarified, asking if she'd ever said she was moving to Seattle. Vix said she might visit the coming summer. Caitlin offered to send her a ticket but Vix refused. Meanwhile, Vix was bored with her job and had talked to Dinah about her boredom but her boss seemed unconcerned. She began looking for a new job, fearing that she could end up



like the bag lady that sang on the corner of Fifty-sixth and Sixth Streets. In three weeks she had an offer from the PR firm Marstello, which she accepted. Dinah didn't take the news well, firing her on the spot when she tried to turn in her resignation.

Caitlin called after midnight to tell Vix she was going into business with James and Donny. They were going to open a restaurant. Caitlin also said the two gay men had helped her to swear off of sex. Vix hadn't sworn off sex. She'd gone out on dates with the men Abby set her up with. One day as Vix, Paisley and Maia were preparing for the holidays one of the men she'd helped at Dinah's firm was on television talking about a plane crash.

Ed's stomach went sour when he heard Vix's voice on the phone. They didn't talk long. When he hung up, Frankie asked what it would take to get her to visit.

In Chapter 38, through Abby, Vix became involved in the School Volunteer Program. Her student D'Nisha Cross asked her one day if she had luck. The girl described luck as something that made good things happen to one that had it. Vix thought that it was luck that changed her life. She wondered sometimes what might have happened if she'd never met Caitlin. Vix believed in luck and had even planned a short trip to Atlantic City. She had an affair with a man while she was there but it didn't mean anything. At home she received a card from Caitlin saying Donny was sick and she'd call when she could.

Abby thought she and Lamb should get on a plane and go to Caitlin in Seattle. She knew Donny was sick with AIDS even if Caitlin hadn't said it. Caitlin sent them a postcard asking them not to leave messages on her machine and to tell Vix she was preoccupied. Vix was busy with three accounts at Marstello. One of them, her first major client, said she heard about Vix from Caitlin Somers.

Gus was surprised when Caitlin called him asking him to do something about the massacre. He didn't understand and tried to get her to clarify but she hung up on him. He wondered if he should call someone.

Analysis

Caitlin was acting more and more unbalanced in this section of the novel. Where she had asked Vix in the past to come visit her, she practically insisted that Vix was going to come live with her. Vix was confused by Caitlin's belief that Vix would be so quick to take up her offer of living together. Caitlin again offered to buy a ticket for Vix to come to her but Vix again refused to take the charity. Notice that although Caitlin seemed to want Vix to visit her, she didn't ever come out and say that she missed her friend. This behavior on Caitlin's part could be accounted for by her family's life style and the way she was raised. In Caitlin's family, a person showed their acceptance and love of a person by showering gifts and money on that person. Consider, for instance, Grandmother Somers. Family members were careful to stay in Grandmother's good graces so that she wouldn't punish them by withholding her money. It was a convoluted way to show one's affection, but it was what Caitlin had been taught by her family. As an adult, Caitlin



tried to show her affection to Vix by inviting her along on trips and adventures but Vix, in Caitlin's eyes, was refusing her offers of love.

Both Sharkey and Gus had unusual encounters with Caitlin in this section of the novel. Sharkey agreed to go to dinner with Caitlin. He was critical of her choice of a fancy, expensive restaurant and asked when she planned to do something with her life. Gus, meanwhile, had agreed to meet Caitlin for drinks. She brought along two gay men and seemed to enjoy tormenting Gus. When he asked how Vix was she tried shock factor and lied to him telling him she'd eloped with Bru. By the time he parted ways with Caitlin, he was ready to be away from her. She called him later when one of her gay friends was sick and demanded that he do something about the massacre. When Gus tried to find out what she was talking about Caitlin hung up on him.

Notice in this section that it is in one of the parts of the novel told from Gus' point of view that his encounter with Caitlin and her gay friends was described. Although the encounter could have been told to Vix by Caitlin, it appears that the author is using these sections in the novel told from different points of view not only to give other characters a voice in the novel, but also to give validity to Caitlin's stories.

Notice also in this section of the novel that Vix wondered about the idea of being grown up. As she had graduated from college and joined the work force, she wondered at one point she should consider herself grown up. She knew it was not when one had children because Lanie had children but was far from being grown up. She also didn't believe it had anything to do with getting a job, as Vix had a job and place of her own but still didn't feel grown up.

Also in this section notice that it was Maia whose hopes and dreams fell apart quickly after she left college. Even with a Harvard degree, it took only one bad day on Wall Street for her to lose her job. Maia was devastated only for a short while but soon picked herself up and decided to go back to school and become a lawyer.

Discussion Question 1

Consider Victoria's struggle with defining the idea of being grown up. What do you think that it means to be grown up?

Discussion Question 2

Do you agree with Vix; was it luck that changed her life? Could she have succeeded on her own even if she'd never met Caitlin?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the reaction that Ed had when Vix called him after she heard about a plane crash. Why do you think he reacted that way?



Vocabulary

entrepreneur, lithe, elitist, eclectic, concise, depressor, nurture, warped, chauvinistic, chronicler, eloped, discreet, deprived, chic, celibacy, abstract, aviation, junket, impulsive, hospice, contagious, ruthless, revisions, paranoid, plagiarize, apprentice, massacre



Part 4: Didn't We Almost Have it All; Chapters 39-41

Summary

In Chapter 39, a man named Will approached Vix at a fall fundraiser. They made out in a cab on the way home. They saw each other three times that week. Vix began to wonder what it would be like to marry a rich man. Even though she liked the attention, she found Will arrogant and sometimes boring. She knew she didn't love him. When he asked for her family history and she told him, he thought she was making up her story. On the way home she told him they were over. Paisley criticized Victoria for her decision to break up with Will. She thought Victoria was still hung up with Bru.

Meanwhile, Vix got a postcard from Caitlin saying that she'd seen death and that it was ugly. Vix tried to call Caitlin but her phone had been disconnected. When she called Abby, she was told Caitlin was at a monastery in Mexico. No one could call her. On New Year's Eve she got a call from Abby and Lamb who were on their way to try to see Caitlin. Daniel and Gus also called. They sounded smashed.

In Chapter 40, in March, Frankie called Vix telling her that her father was having chest pains. By the time she arrived in Santa Fe the doctors had done an angioplasty to remove blockage. Frankie told Vix they were lucky. Vix called Tawny to give her the news. Tawny didn't seem concerned and told Victoria the divorce was final enough. Vix hung up on her. She called Lanie next. Lanie asked if he would last the night and promised to come the following day. Lanie's kids played with the hospital bed until Vix offered to take care of them while Lanie visited her father. Over ice cream sundaes, Vix was surprised when Amber asked for a pony, and said her mother had told her that Vix was rich.

After her father was released from the hospital, Ed asked her where she thought she'd be in twenty years. He wondered if she'd be married, or be a career woman. He told her she was a good girl and that he knew she'd come when Frankie called. He asked about Caitlin and warned Vix she needed to stay in touch with her old friends. He asked if she'd called Tawny and laughed when Vix said Tawny had sent her love. Later, she saw Phoebe in the grocery store. Phoebe told Vix that Caitlin was at the Vineyard. Vix was so surprised she dropped the melon she was holding.

Phoebe was surprised that Vix didn't know Caitlin was back on the island. She wondered what game her daughter was playing and hoped that Caitlin and Vix do a better job with their daughters than their mothers did with them.

When Vix did call Caitlin, Caitlin said she was trying to give her life meaning. Caitlin told her Vix was seeing a shrink. When Vix commented she couldn't afford one Caitlin indicated that Abby could help her out. Vix sympathized for the loss of her friend and



Caitlin told her both of them died. Vix asked why Caitlin hadn't told her that she'd gone back to the Vineyard. She wanted to ask about Bru but couldn't bring herself to do so.

In Chapter 41, the two didn't talk again until June. It was during this phone call that Caitlin told Vix about her wedding and asked her to be maid of honor. Maia and Paisley came home to find Vix sitting in the floor looking at photo albums. She told them that Caitlin was marrying Bru. Maia encouraged Vix not to go to the wedding. Paisley thought she should go as closure.

Maia wondered what kind of guy would marry his ex-girlfriend's best friend. She thought she was right when she sensed that Caitlin was no good from the beginning. She planned to do everything in her power to keep Vix away from the wedding.

Paisley was shocked with the wedding, but thought attending would be a good way for Victoria to get over both Caitlin and Bru. She knew that nothing she or Maia have to say would affect her decision, that Vix's mind was already made up.

Analysis

It is in this section of the novel that Vix learns that Caitlin was getting married to Bru. The author repeats the information from the Prologue in Chapter 41 almost word for word with the exception that Chapter 41's events take place in the past instead of the present, as is the tense in the Prologue. Notice that when Vix shared her news with her roommates, they had differing opinions of how she should handle the situation. Vix, of course, had told Caitlin she would come. As soon as she hung up the phone she wished she hadn't spoken so quickly. Maia believed that Vix should call back and refuse the invitation and position as maid of honor. She believed it would be too hard for Vix to fulfill the role. Paisley, however, believed the wedding would finally give Vix a sense of closure on her relationship with Bru.

Also to notice in this section is Vix's encounter with Phoebe in the grocery store while Vix was in Santa Fe helping her father. Phoebe surprised Vix by telling her that Caitlin was back on the Vineyard. When Phoebe realized that Vix didn't know about Caitlin she wondered what kind of game her daughter was playing. Although Phoebe may claim she didn't know her daughter well, she seemed to be the one who was the least surprised by her antics. She even knew her well enough to know that Caitlin had something up her sleeve by going back to the island and not telling Vix.

Another important aspect of this section of chapters to think about is the obsession that Caitlin developed about death when her dog died. She'd gone so far as to try to make a suicide pact with Vix. Now, Caitlin had watched not just one, but two of her friends die. It was assumed they'd died of AIDS. After their death, Caitlin was so disturbed that she took refuge in a monastery. For someone scared of death and scared of disappearing, Caitlin must have been badly upset by the death of her friends. She tried to run away from everyone but Lamb and Abby had gone after her, apparently bringing her back to the island with them.



In this section of the novel, Vix dated a rich man. The story of their dating relationship and the end of the relationship adds to the theme of the difference between people of different socioeconomic classes. Will was well off and could have given Vix a very comfortable lifestyle. As she considered her feelings for him, the romantic and moralistic Vix realized that she didn't love Will. It was not until Will asked for information about her family and then thought what she was telling him was a made up story that Vix realized she didn't belong with him. Will had been so accustomed to being well off and being around people who were well off that he could not imagine Vix having come from the family from which she claimed to come.

Also in this section of the novel, Vix had another encounter with her own family. Her father had emergency heart surgery and Vix was the first one his new girlfriend, Frankie, called. Vix, who still cared for her family even though they were dysfunctional, went as soon as she heard the news. When she called her mother, Tawny refused to come. Her sister asked first why Vix had been called first and then if her father would last the night. At the hospital the next day as Vix tried to occupy her sisters' kids so that Lanie could visit her father, she realized the disturbing things that Lanie was teaching her children about Vix. The children informed Vix that she was rich but too selfish to give them any money. Notice that even after all the years that had gone by, Ed still realized it was Vix upon whom he could depend. After he was released from the hospital and was at home with Vix taking care of him, the two were finally able to talk about their lives in a way that was more familiar and relaxed than they'd ever been able to do before.

Discussion Question 1

Considering how upset Caitlin got when her dog died, does it surprise you that she was astorn apart as she was when her two gay friends died? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

What do you think it was that made Vix decide that Will wasn't the man for her? Do you think a person should marry for money, even if they don't love that person?

Discussion Question 3

Consider the author's choice to include, almost word for word, the information from the Prologue into the body of Chapter 41. Discuss how the reader gets a new perspective on what is happening between Caitlin and Vix now that they know the background.

Vocabulary

chiding, acquiring, palazzo, arrogant, benefactors, monastery, angina, angioplasty, chagrined, inseparable, vigil



Part 5: Steal the Night; Chapters 42-44

Summary

In Chapter 42, Vix feels like her whole life is flashing before her eyes the night of Bru and Caitlin's prenuptial dinner. Earlier that day, Abby had come to talk to Vix, asking if she was okay.

Abby wants to be happy for Caitlin but doesn't understand her decision. Lamb is pleased. He thinks Vix is happy for Caitlin and Bru as well.

Vix had intentionally chosen a dress with an attractive neckline for the prenuptial dinner but puts on a commemorative t-shirt given to all the guests. Vix sees Von with his wife, Patti, and their children. Patti complains about Von when she and Vix are in the bathroom together. Outside the bathroom Von tries to come onto Vix. She is able to get away from him when Caitlin and Bru arrive. She has the same reaction she has always had when she sees him but she manages to smile and lift a champagne glass as if to toast him.

When Sharkey asks if she is okay, Vix says she is fine but drinks another glass of champagne. Daniel and Gus are there as well. When Vix asks Gus where his girlfriend is, he tells her he doesn't have one, is still trying to get over her, his first love. Vix drinks her third glass of champagne. It goes to her head making her sick. Gus and Daniel escort her outside.

Daniel thinks Vix looks good but she isn't his type. He admits his mother has done well. His father even admits she's done well. He wonders if he's making the right choice working at his father's law firm.

Vix rests against a log on the beach as Gus and Daniel talk. Gus tells Daniel about a time when Caitlin had pulled him into her room asking him to put lotion on her back. She had pulled her suit down to her waist. Daniel said he'd always thought Caitlin would make something of herself. When the bells rang for dinner, Gus calls Vix cough drop and wakes her up telling her it is time for dinner. She sits between Daniel and Gus at the dinner, and then leans back against Gus during fireworks on the beach.

Caitlin drives Vix back to the bed and breakfast where she is staying. Caitlin pulls into the Tashmoor Overlook and tells Vix she isn't sure she wants to marry Bru. Caitlin even asks Vix if she had ever done anything she regretted. Vix didn't answer but Caitlin said she figures it will at least be a good party.

In Chapter 43, Vix goes for a walk. A man grabs her from the shadows. It is Bru. He tells her the marriage is a mistake. He begins kissing her, and then they wind up in Bru's cabin. She wakes just before dawn and slips out of the cabin. Back at the bed and breakfast she sees Phoebe's new boyfriend who looks at her as if he knew she hadn't sleep in her bed that night.



In Chapter 44, Vix naps in a rocker until Caitlin calls for her. Vix tries to help her with her veil but Caitlin stops her. She tells Vix she'd always wanted what Vix had. She explains she felt she had to prove she was sexier than Vix and could have any guy she wanted, even Bru. She adds there was something quaint about marrying one's first lover. She tells Vix she invented the ski instructor so Vix would think Caitlin had had sex first. She'd also never had sex with Von. As Vix tries to get her breath, Caitlin said it had happened after Vix had gone home for Nathan's funeral when Caitlin had given him Vix's message. Caitlin said she was jealous and wanted to prove that Bru was like all the other men. Caitlin claims she stayed away to keep it from happening again. The photographer interrupts their conversation. Caitlin shows Vix a wedding gift the Countess had sent her with a card telling her she could join the circus if all else failed. They laugh together. During the wedding, Vix is afraid Caitlin will pull something.

As Bru watches Caitlin coming toward him down the aisle, he remembers their first time. He realizes he was the first for both Vix and Caitlin. He wonders if his problem is that he loves both the girls.

The wedding goes off without a hitch. Bru dances with Vix. He tries to talk about the night before but she stops him. She thinks about asking Bru about the story of Caitlin losing her virginity to him but decides it doesn't really matter. Gus claims her for the next dance. Later in the afternoon, the cousins throw all of the wedding participants into the pond. When Vix emerges from the water, Gus meets her with a beach towel. Later, before Caitlin leaves for her honeymoon she asks Vix if she asked Bru about their first time. Vix lies and said she did.

Analysis

It is learned in this section of the novel that best friends Caitlin and Vix had more in common than they'd ever thought. Or at least more in common than Vix had ever known. Caitlin lied to Vix when she told Vix that she'd had sex with a ski instructor. Caitlin had taken advantage of the situation after Vix's brother had died and had sex with Vix's boyfriend. This seems like the ultimate betrayal. After Vix had gotten away from Caitlin and her exploits when she first believed Caitlin had set her up to be unintentionally unfaithful to Bru, Caitlin moved back into her role of best friend by actually being a good friend while in Santa Fe for the funeral. Vix, who still trusted Caitlin at this point, asked Caitlin to give Bru a message for her. Caitlin gave Bru the message a little too well and the two had sex. It wasn't until after the deed was done that Bru realized Caitlin was still a virgin. He was probably as shocked as everyone else would have been to learn that information.

All the time that Bru and Vix dated after she returned to the island after Nathan's death, Bru never mentioned to her that he and Caitlin had an affair. Even though he was honest with her about sleeping with Star, he never told her about Caitlin. All the time that he spends making Vix feel guilty because she was away from him while she was getting her education, and then her act of refusing his proposal because she wouldn't commit to living on the island, he carried the secret that he's slept with Caitlin. It almost seemed as



if it were another cruel jab on Caitlin's part when she did finally tell Vix about the affair. For the first time, Caitlin admits that she was jealous of Vix and wanted to prove that she was as good as her friend, even if meant taking things away from Vix. Meanwhile, Vix has cheated on Caitlin, having had sex with Bru the day before their wedding. She considered telling Caitlin what happened but doesn't get the chance as they are interrupted by the wedding photographer.

Notice in this section that even with everything that she has learned about Caitlin and everything she has learned about herself, that she has the ability to cheat on her friend, Vix and Caitlin remain friends even after Caitlin has made her confession to Vix. Vix doesn't even ask Bru about his affair with Caitlin as she figures it doesn't matter any more.

Notice again in this section that Bru has a portion in which his thoughts are shared as he watches Caitlin come down the aisle. Again since Caitlin has told so many lies and what she says is not trustworthy, the author may be using this section of Bru's thoughts as validation of the story that Caitlin has told Vix. Through his thoughts Caitlin's story is verified as he thinks about the day that Caitlin came back from Nathan's funeral and had sex with him. It does appear, however, that Caitlin did take advantage of the situation and play upon Bru's emotions in an attempt to seduce him.

Discussion Question 1

If both Bru and Caitlin thought their wedding was a mistake, why do you think they are both going through with it?

Discussion Question 2

In this section of chapters, Vix cheats on Caitlin. She later learns that Caitlin had cheated on Vix with Bru does this make them even? How strange is it that Bru was the first man either of the two girls had sex with?

Discussion Question 3

Consider the lies Caitlin has told so far in the novel. Has your opinion of her changed since the beginning of the novel? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

prenuptial, contempt, cringe, impeccably, condolences, betrayed, haughty, irresistible, unkempt, philanthropy, reminisce, boffs, jaded, verge, alteration, quaint, consummated, convulsed, requisite, dinghy, hoists



Part 5: Steal the Night; Chapters 45- Epilogue

Summary

In Chapter 45, Caitlin has a baby girl named Maizie. Vix drives to the naming ceremony with Gus. They've been seeing each other since the wedding. One night after a movie they'd gotten caught in a rainstorm. They'd gone to his place because it was closer. She puts on his robe, he asks if she is sure.

On Maizie's first birthday Caitlin seems distracted. Abby is the one to comfort the child when she cries. The next day Vix and Gus fly to Florida to see Tawny because her mother has asked her to come. Vix is introduced to Tawny's love interest and told she'll have enough in her trust fund from the Countess that she can survive without taking any of Ed's savings.

Tawny is proud of herself for finally telling Vix she is a good daughter and that she deserves the best.

Vix feels lucky with Gus. She knows she won't get bored with him or let him get bored with her. They've set their wedding for September.

A week after Maizie's birthday, Caitlin drops her daughter off at Lamb and Abby's house asking them to watch her while she goes shopping. She calls later to ask if they can keep the child overnight. When she next calls, she's in Paris. Two years pass without her return.

Bru feels he should have known that Caitlin would desert him. She'd been different as soon as the wedding was over. She never took to the baby and only wanted more and more sex.

Trisha chides herself for not having spent more time with Caitlin. She notices Bru looks dazed. He's already started a relationship with Star.

Although everyone thinks Vix should know where Caitlin is, she doesn't. Lamb hired a detective who found Caitlin in Barcelona. She has signed divorce papers. Victoria wonders why Caitlin left Maizie with Abby and Lamb.

Phoebe is surprised that Caitlin left Maizie. She didn't even abandon her children. She wonders what went wrong, knowing it wasn't because she wasn't loved enough. She plans to try to see Caitlin in Barcelona.

Lamb is sick because of what happened. She wouldn't even see him in Barcelona. He'll forgive her if she'll just come home.



Sharkey wonders what his family expected.

Abby is happy and relaxed while Lamb is stressed about raising Maizie. She's only afraid Caitlin will come back, wanting to take custody of Maizie even though she has signed over her parental rights to Abby and Lamb.

In Chapter 46 Vix gets an invitation to celebrate Caitlin's thirtieth birthday. Even though she is six months pregnant, she goes. Caitlin sets out the rules right away saying that Vix doesn't get to ask questions. One day Vix wakes up to see Caitlin watching her. She finally asks to be told about Maizie. Vix tries to show her some pictures but Caitlin says she isn't ready. It is not until the morning Vix is to leave that Caitlin asks to see the pictures.

As they talk, Vix tells Caitlin that she loves her life and has no regrets about Bru. She does wish, however, that Caitlin could have confided in her. When she tells Caitlin she wishes Caitlin had let her help her when she was in pain, Caitlin says she was never in pain, just self-centered. She admits she used Vix and that she has been a worse mother than even Phoebe. She tells Vix she is thinking of marrying again and will go out on her sailboat that afternoon to make a decision. She'll call Vix and leave a yes or no message to let her know the decision. Vix never gets that message.

In the Epilogue, Caitlin's family and friends dedicate a wildflower meadow to Caitlin. It has been a year since anyone has heard from her. No one knows what happened to Caitlin. They only know that she planned to go sailing and that her boat was found drifting two days later. Vix rides her bike to the meadow a few days after the ceremony. She allows herself to let go of her anger and yell at Caitlin for leaving them. She leaves a rock on the stone and tells Caitlin the next time she sees her she gets to ask the questions. She wonders if she'll get an invitation to spend Caitlin's 40th birthday with her. If she'll get to tell her friend how grown up she looks. She hopes Caitlin will respond that it is about time she looked grown up.

Analysis

Although the story ends with all of those who loved Caitlin uncertain about what has happened to her, there is enough closure in the story that it leaves the reader feeling a catharsis. Vix is finally happy with her life. She is married to Gus, the person who she once thought was the most irritating person in the world but has learned that the two are well suited for one another. There is closure in Vix's relationship with her mother. Tawny has met Gus and likes him. She's also told Vix that the Countess will be leaving her enough in a trust fund that she will be able to live comfortably. Remember back in the novel when Vix was thinking about going to Harvard. Tawny had been hateful to her daughter and had told her she should marry a rich man as well so she could take care of her parents when they were older. By making a point of telling Vix that she'll be able to care for herself in her old age, Tawny seems to think she's making up for all the years she's been so cruel to Vix. Tawny also is pleased with herself because she's finally opened up to Vix and told her that she was a good daughter all along. This act of



coming to terms with her daughter seems to take all of Tawny's emotional strength as Tawny thinks to herself that she has nothing left to give Vix.

Notice the differing reactions given from the viewpoints of most of the major characters about Caitlin's disappearance. Bru seems to not understand where the relationship with Caitlin went wrong after the wedding but notes that everything changed. He'd thought Caitlin would be happy with a baby but the baby only seemed to make her more unhappy.

Trisha is still stuck on Lamb even though she's found another man who makes her happy. She believes things would never have gone so badly if Lamb had married her instead of Phoebe. Notice that the caring Trish blames herself for what has happened because she believes she should have spent more time with Caitlin. Phoebe is disgusted with her daughter for abandoning her child. She is still self-centered, though; even as she indicates she'll be changing her summer plans to try to see Caitlin. She thinks of the trip to Barcelona, as if it were on the backside of the universe, a place she really doesn't want to go.

Lamb is the member of the family most blindsided by what Caitlin has done. Sharkey, however, is not surprised. He's always known his sister's true nature. For the first time in her life, Abby is happy. As her mother tells her, she finally has her little girl. While there are questions as to why Caitlin left Maizie with Abby, her act of abandoning the baby could be, as she tells Vix later, the best thing she could do for her child. Her action could also be an act of calling a truce with Abby. She's always resented Abby being added to the family and has refused to allow Abby to have any part in her life. However, it could be that now she is an adult, Caitlin realizes that Abby tried to be a good mother. She may realize that of all the people in her family, Abby is the best choice for a parent to raise her baby.

Also interesting in this section is Vix's decision to finally go visit Caitlin overseas even though she had been refusing to see her friend for so many years in the past. While Caitlin had to prove to Vix that she could have any man she wanted and be just as good as Vix in that way, it seems that Vix was trying to prove something to Caitlin as well. With all of her refusals to take charity and visit her friend, Vix has been trying to prove to her own family, as well as Caitlin, that she can make it for herself in life even though she doesn't have a rich family with a well-known name. The friendship between the girls suffers as the two try to prove themselves to each other instead of just concentrating on being friends.

Notice that even up to the end after Caitlin has left Bru and abandoned her baby, Victoria still refuses to let Caitlin talk bad about herself. When Caitlin describes herself as a "self-centered bitch who doesn't give a flying fuck about anybody but herself" (387). Vix refuses to agree with her. She tells Caitlin she has been grateful for her friendship, an aspect of their relationship that outweighs everything that Caitlin has done to her.

Even with the other aspects of closure offered by the final chapters of the novel, one detail of the story that remains open is the question of what happened to Caitlin. She



had, at one time, told Vix she planned to do away with herself before she became ugly and useless. Caitlin may have chosen this time to follow through with that plan. Since no body has been located, however, there is no way for Caitlin's family to know if that was the path she chose to take. There is also the possibility that Caitlin has just decided to run away from the mess she has made of her life and start again. She'd told Vix she had a proposal of marriage. There is the possibility she decided to accept this proposal and start fresh. With all the lies she's told in the past though it is hard to believe anything that Caitlin had to say was true. The author leaves Caitlin's fate in the hands of the reader, letting him decide for himself what might have happened to her.

Discussion Question 1

What do you think happened to Caitlin? Use information from the novel to support your answer.

Discussion Question 2

Consider Caitlin's claim to Victoria that she is self centered and manipulative. Do you think Caitlin's description of herself is fair? Why do you think Victoria refuses to see her friend's faults?

Discussion Question 3

After all the years that Caitlin tried to get Victoria to join her overseas for a trip, Victoria refused. Now that things have gone so badly for Caitlin Victoria agrees to see her. Why do you think it was not until this point in her life that Victoria tried to reach out to Caitlin in the way?

Vocabulary

tooling, tethered, ironic, simplistic, wanderlust, relinquishing, sector, influx, gregarious, pinafore, pore, infectious, commemorative



Characters

Victoria “Vix” Leonard

Victoria “Vix” Leonard is the main character and heroine of the novel. Her mother insisted on calling her by her full first name “Victoria,” while others called her “Vix,” a nickname that her mother said brought to mind a cough remedy. Gus, the man she eventually married, called Victoria “Cough Drop” up until Caitlin's wedding when the two began dating.

Victoria came from a middle class family that struggled to make ends meet. She thought her life was changing for the best when Caitlin Somers, a new girl in school, invited her to spend the summer with her and her family on the Vineyard. Being friends with Caitlin did afford Vix some opportunities that she would not have had access to on her own. Caitlin's stepmother arranged for Vix to get a scholarship to a private school so Vix could get a better education. She also encouraged Vix to go to college and helped her apply to Harvard.

Despite the opportunities that Vix was given because she was friends with Caitlin, these opportunities would not have worked out for her as well if she had not dedicated herself to her goals. Vix studied hard and graduated second in her class at the private school. She also dedicated herself to working part time jobs in the summer so that she could earn spending money for herself in college. Despite her mother's belief that Vix would let her rich friends take care of her and pamper her through life, Vix put effort into not taking advantage of Lamb and Abby's graciousness.

Because Victoria believed she could have both a career and a serious relationship, she struggled through college. She dated Bru, a boy whom she had met on the island. Although they were intensely attracted to each other physically, their similarities seemed to end there. As Vix studied at Harvard and wanted to talk about her classes and projects, Bru seemed more and more resistant to the idea she was getting an education. Finally, Victoria had the strength to break off the relationship when Bru when he told her he was not willing to move to a place where she could get a job.

Although Vix cheats on Caitlin with Bru the day before Caitlin and Bru are to be married, Vix never tells her friend about the affair. She doesn't mention it even after Caitlin tells her about her own fling with Bru after Vix's brother died. Despite all of the things that Caitlin had done to Vix and vice versa, Vix remains faithful to Caitlin even after Caitlin disappears. In their final conversation with each other Caitlin tries to get Vix to admit that Caitlin is self-centered and manipulative but Vix refuses to acknowledge those tendencies in her friend.



Caitlin Mayhew Somers

Caitlin Mayhew Somers is the daughter of Phoebe and Lamb. Her parents divorced when she was a baby. Because she was female, Caitlin was given to Phoebe while Lamb got Sharkey, Caitlin's brother. Caitlin spent the school year with her mother and her summers and vacations with her father. It was never a secret to Caitlin that her mother enjoyed her summers off from her responsibilities as a mother.

Because Caitlin was beautiful and vivacious, she attracted people to her, especially males. Even Vix was attracted by Caitlin and felt some fairy godmother had taken charge of her life when Caitlin asked Vix if she wanted to spend the summer with her. Once Vix stayed with Caitlin, she realized this girl had her failings but continued to adore her. Caitlin was undisciplined and even as a young teen had a habit of wanting to attract the attention of men much older than she was.

Unlike Vix, Caitlin came from a family where money was not a concern for her. When Vix suggested that they get summer jobs the only reason that Caitlin could see that Vix might want a job was because Vix was bored. She went along with Vix's plan to babysit only to humor Vix. The only job that it seemed that Caitlin really took to was the job with the cleaning service. She seemed to enjoy learning how to clean and took pride in being able to do her job well. In other areas of her life, however, Caitlin did not take this same kind of pride in doing a good job. Although she was intelligent, she never dedicated herself to school. She wouldn't study for tests and didn't turn in homework.

Although Caitlin had the opportunity, like Vix, to attend college after high school, she chose not to. Instead she spent her tuition money on a tour of the world where she flitted about from country to country. She claimed to learning about the culture and meeting interesting people but as time went by it was learned that Caitlin did quite a bit of lying about what she was actually doing during the time that she was overseas. The only productive move Caitlin seemed to make was her attempt to start a restaurant with two gay men she had met. This project was stopped when the men became ill with AIDS, and then died. Their death seemed to take Caitlin over the edge. She sought refuge in a monastery in Mexico. Lamb and Abby had to go to Mexico to bring Caitlin back to the island.

Once she was back on the island Caitlin decided to finish what she'd started with Bru, Vix's boyfriend, years before when Vix and Bru were still dating. Also Vix doesn't see it, Caitlin seems to be trying to rub salt in an old wound when she calls Vix to tell her that she's marrying Bru. She even goes so far as to make Vix her maid of honor. Just before the wedding Caitlin admits to Vix that she had sex with Bru the same summer that Vix's brother died.

According to Bru, Caitlin changes after their wedding. They have a baby, which Bru believes will help to ground Caitlin. Instead of being grounded, however, Caitlin abandons Bru and her baby just after the baby's first birthday. The next time the family hears from her, Caitlin is in Paris. Caitlin invites Victoria to come to Paris to celebrate her thirtieth birthday with her. Before Vix leaves, Caitlin tells her she's gotten a proposal



of marriage. She will let Vix know what she has decided by the time Vix gets back to New York City. Caitlin is never heard from again.

Tawny Leonard

Tawny Leonard is Vix's mother. Tawny insisted on calling her daughter Victoria instead of the nickname "Vix" that many of her friends used. She said she didn't want a daughter named after a cough remedy. Tawny was a very private person who taught Vix not to share information about her family freely with others. Years later, Vix's college roommate thought Vix was cold and hateful because she wouldn't share information with her. Tawny also did not like the members of her family to show their emotions. She told Vix that by letting someone see her cry gave them power over her. Similarly, she didn't want her husband to cry, even over the death of a child, because she thought it made him appear weak.

Tawny fought against Vix getting involved with Caitlin's family and felt that after Vix spent the first summer with that family she would be lost to them. Each step of the way, Tawny fought the opportunities the Somers family tried to give Vix, from private schooling to a degree from Harvard. When Tawny's husband lost his job, Tawny took a job as a nurse to the Countess. This job took Tawny away from the family for days and months at a time. She finally moved to Florida to live with this lady full time even though she was still married to Ed. The woman did not show much affection for her family. The only time she really showed Vix any love was when she packed her a lunch for the airplane ride. The rest of the time Tawny seemed to be either scolding Vix for something or belittling her. Lanie told her sister that their mother hated her because she got to escape. Nathan's death negatively affected Tawny and seemed to push her further away from her family. The Countess had noticed Tawny was not acting right and took her to Europe for treatment.

Maia

Maia was Vix's first college roommate. Vix though Maia was prejudiced and naive. She was irritated by the way that Maia called her sister a statistic when she learned the teen girl had given birth to a baby. Vix was also irritated by the way Maia talked constantly and chewed her fingernails. Maia saw Vix and her family as hicks. She disliked Vix because Vix wouldn't freely answer her questions about her family and her background. Maia was also a hypochondriac and believed every new spot or problem with her health indicated she had some dreaded disease.

Even though they didn't room together their sophomore year, Maia and Vix stayed in contact. They were actually better friends their second year in college than the first as they began to realize they had more things in common than they'd thought. The two even lived together after they left college.

When Maia learns that Caitlin has asked Vix to be her maid of honor at her wedding, Maia plans to do everything in her power to keep Vix from going to the wedding. Ever



since she had seen the picture of Caitlin in Vix's room Maia had thought Caitlin was news.

Joseph “Bru” Brudegheer

Joseph “Bru” Brudegheer is rarely called by his given name in this novel. He is most often called by his nickname, “Bru.” Bru was Von's cousin. Caitlin and Vix meet Bru one day when he was with Von at his job at the Flying Horses. Vix pushed Caitlin to make a choice between Von and Bru. When Caitlin chose Von over Bru, she was happy because she was interested in Bru.

Vix and Bru began dating when Vix turned seventeen. She lost her virginity to him. The two dated through her senior year of college. When he proposed to her she refused because he would not go to New York or Boston with her so she could get a job in her profession. Later, Bru proposed to Caitlin and married her after she'd spent just a few months on the island.

During wedding preparations, Caitlin comes clean and tells Vix that she and Bru had sex while Bru was dating Vix. Vix has her own secret as she and Bru slept together the night before the wedding. After Caitlin abandons Bru and her daughter Maizie, he marries Star.

Ed Leonard

Ed Leonard is father to Vix, Lanie, Lewis and Nathan. Ed was described as hard working but quiet and not forceful or authoritative. Even though Ed doesn't appear to be authoritative, Tawny always told Vix she'd have to talk to Ed before she could make decisions, like the trip to the island and the private school scholarship. Ed always encouraged Tawny to allow Vix to take advantage of the opportunities that were being offered to her. He saw the importance of good schooling and didn't see a problem allowing Victoria to accept a scholarship to a private school, or attend Harvard. Vix wished that she could talk to her father about her feelings, but always felt it would embarrass him. One instance in particular happened after Nathan's death when Ed broke down. Vix tried to comfort him but he ran from her. It was not until after he had a scare with his heart that Ed was really able to open up to Vix and talk to her as a father.

Gus Kline

Gus Kline is Daniel's friend from Chicago. When Gus first appeared in the novel he was described as being slovenly and loud. From the beginning, however, Gus had a crush on Vix whom he called “cough drop.” He found he was highly attracted to her when she turned fifteen but tried to contain himself because she was so young. He wondered if he could voice his attraction to her when she was seventeen but did not do so. The morning after Caitlin and Vix had their argument he followed her and gave her a ride away from Lamb's house.



Gus and Vix become reacquainted with one another at Caitlin and Bru's wedding. They begin dating after the wedding and are married soon afterward. Vix believes she is lucky to be marrying Gus and notes that everyone, even her mother, likes Gus. The two have just had their first child together at the end of the novel.

Nathan William Leonard

Nathan William Leonard was Vix's younger brother. He had muscular dystrophy. Of all Nathan's siblings, he was closest to Vix. Nathan was the only member of her family that Vix felt guilty leaving behind when she went to the island. It was later revealed by Vix's father that Nathan had never resented Vix for leaving him for her summer trips. Ed thought about how Nathan had even stood up for Vix when Tawny had badmouthed her. Nathan got pneumonia and died during the summer Vix turned seventeen. His death happened so quickly that her family was not able to get in touch with her quickly enough for her to see him before he died. Vix felt guilty throughout her life because she didn't spend as much time with Nathan as she would have liked to have. She had told him she would take him to Disney World, but never got the opportunity. When it was time for her to do her senior thesis, Vix dedicated it to her brother.

Phoebe

Phoebe is Caitlin's birth mother. Caitlin lived with her mother during the school year but spent her holidays and summer vacations with her father. Caitlin told Vix that her mother enjoyed her summers off. Phoebe would often take exotic trips during the summer, sending only one postcard to both her children. Phoebe was also Sharkey's birth mother, although she rarely saw him or spent time with him, as he lived with his father all the time. Phoebe didn't seem to really be bothered by the fact she didn't have much of a relationship with her children. She admitted to herself on occasion that she hadn't been a really good mother to Caitlin. In the end of the novel, however, Phoebe is shocked when Caitlin abandons her husband and baby girl, something that not even Phoebe had never considered doing.

Lanie Leonard

Lanie Leonard is Vix's younger sister. Lanie carried a chip on her shoulder because Vix got opportunities she did not. One day when Tawny was particularly hard on Vix, Lanie told Vix that Tawny hated her because she got to escape from the life they lived, that they all hated her. Lanie got pregnant as a teenager, about the same time Vix learned she had been accepted at Harvard. When Vix next saw Lanie, she had two children and was married to a man who did not work and was addicted to drugs. Vix advised Lanie she could get a divorce and live with their father but Lanie became angry with her. She told Vix she had no business trying to tell her how to fix her situation because she hadn't been around long enough to know anything about them. Later, Vix learned her



sister had told her children that Vix was rich and just too hateful and stingy to help them out.

Lambert “Lamb” Mayhew Somers the Third

Lamb is the father of Caitlin and Sharkey. He loves his children but doesn't do much in the way of disciplining or nurturing them. He basically left them to raise themselves. In the second summer that Vix spent with the family Lamb had married Abby. Lamb was raised by his grandmother because his parents were killed in a car crash when he was an infant. The grandmother who raised him was wealthy and supported Lamb with money. Because he was afraid of losing the money his grandmother provided him with, Lamb refused to talk back to his grandmother even when she attacked his new wife. Caitlin lashed out at her father for letting Grandmother treat them the way he did. When Caitlin disappears, abandoning her husband and baby, it is Lamb who seems most devastated. He wishes only that his daughter would come home and take care of her baby.

Abby

Abby was the woman who Lamb brought to the island during Vix's first summer there. They got married and were living together on the island during the second summer. Abby had her hands full with five teenagers living in her house. She wanted to mother and take care of the children but was frustrated in her attempts. Although Caitlin despised Abby, Abby was the mother that Vix had always wished she had. Abby arranged for Vix to get a scholarship to the same private school that Caitlin attended. She later helped Vix get accepted to Harvard. When Caitlin decided to abandon her husband and baby, she left the baby with Abby. Abby had always wanted to raise a baby girl and loved Maizie. She is afraid only that Caitlin will come back one day and demand rights to her baby.

Lambert “Sharkey” Mayhew Somers the Fourth

Sharkey is the son of Phoebe and Lamb Somers. When the couple decided to divorce, Sharkey was sent to live with his father based solely on the fact that he was a male. When he was born his parents had intended to call him “Bertie” as his grandmother refers to him, but he had earned the nickname Sharkey because he was so fascinated with sharks as a small child. During the teenage years Sharkey was quiet and kept to himself. He had trouble living in the house with his attractive sister because he was always afraid he'd give away his attraction to her even though she was his sister. Sharkey is perhaps the only member of the family who is not surprised when Caitlin abandons Bru and her baby.



The Countess de Lowenhoff aka Charlotte

Most often called the Countess, this woman is the rich lady with whom Tawny got a job as a nurse. Ironically, the Countess had also been the best friend of Lamb's deceased mother. The Countess was a very outspoken lady who shared her love and her opinions freely. She offended Vix during a visit to Lamb's house by calling Vix a "dear girl" in one breath and then referring to Tawny's family, of which Vix was a part, as an albatross around Tawny's neck. The Countess had never married or had children. She scoffed the idea of a woman having to ask her husband's input before making important decisions in her life.

Regina Mayhew "Grandmother" Somers

Regina Mayhew Somers, the grandmother of Lamb and Dorset, raised both of her grandchildren after their parents were killed in a car accident. Grandmother felt entitled to her grandchildren because she'd taken the years she intended to enjoy in retirement to raise them. Grandmother was very rich and used her money to manipulate her family. She knew they were afraid that if they offended her she would disinherit them so she took a special interest in saying things that she knew would offend her family members.

Von

Von was the highly attractive boy that Caitlin and Vix first met when they saw him working the Flying Horses. Caitlin dated Von when they were teens but she claimed to have never had sex with him. He married a woman named Patti with whom he had two children. They were unhappy in their marriage. At Bru and Caitlin's wedding Von tries to come onto Vix.

Dorset

Dorset was Lamb's sister. She was raised by her grandmother. At the time in which she appeared in the novel Dorset was living with her grandmother again. She believed she would not really be able to live as adult until her controlling grandmother died. She was addicted to the pain medication Percocet. She had been married three times and had attended rehabilitation twice.

Somers "Maizie" Mayhew Brudegher

Maizie is the daughter of Bru and Caitlin. When Maizie is still an infant, her mother abandons her. The baby is left with Caitlin's father Lamb and her stepmother, Abby, somewhat like Lamb and Dorset had been left with their grandparents when their parents were killed in a car wreck. Caitlin even gives up her parental rights to Maizie.



Amber

Amber was the name of Lanie's first baby. When Vix talked to the child at the hospital after Vix's father had heart trouble, she was surprised at how many lies her sister had told Amber about Vix's life. Amber asked Vix if she could come live with her. Vix said she'd think about it when Amber was much older.

Tim Castellano

Tim Castellano is the 35-year-old television star that made a pass at Caitlin when she was fifteen. The man's habit of having relationships with teen girls was later featured in a magazine article. Caitlin claimed she planned to finish what Tim had started with her but it was not ever noted for certain if she had an affair with the man.

Lewis Leonard

Lewis Leonard was Vix's younger brother. As he got older he was described as being uncontrollable and wild. He signed up for a stint in the armed forces as soon as he was able, just like his father.

Daniel Baum

Daniel Baum is Abby's son. He did not want his mother to marry Lamb to begin with. He hated Caitlin and the way she treated his mother. As Caitlin got older, he hated her because she turned him on sexually and used her sexual attractiveness against him.

A Ski Instructor

Caitlin told Vix that she lost her virginity to a ski instructor during a ski trip. Caitlin later told Vix that she had lied about sleeping with the ski instructor. She'd actually lost her virginity to Bru.

Paisley

Paisley was a student at Harvard that was Vix's suitemate. She later lived in the same apartment with Vix and Maia. Paisley believed Vix should attend Caitlin's wedding to Bru as it might give her closure.



Trisha

Trisha is the ex-girlfriend of Lamb. She went with Lamb, Vix and Caitlin to the nude beach Gay Head where she shocked Vix by taking off her shirt. Later, Trish let Vix stay with her on her boat after Vix and Caitlin had a falling out.

Star

Star worked in a health food store on the Vineyard. It was from her that Bru bought the vitamins and minerals he sent to Vix. After Vix broke up with him Bru had an affair with Star. When Caitlin abandoned Bru after they were married. Bru married Star.

Frankie

Frankie is the woman that Vix's father, Ed Leonard, began dating when he and Tawny divorced. Vix met Frankie when she came to Santa Fe after her father had heart issues.



Symbols and Symbolism

A Laminated Shower

This new laminated shower stall is an important symbol in the novel as it reminded Vix of the first time she felt her father acknowledged she was important as a person. He had just installed the shower and all of the children were clamoring to be the first to try it out. Vix's father chose her to use it first because she was the oldest.

The Flying Horses

The Flying Horses, a carousel, is a symbol of the relationship between Bru and Vix. It was at this carousel that Vix first met Bru. When Vix returned to the island after her senior year in high school she arranged them to see one another the first time on this carousel.

A Fish Head

This fish head is a symbol of the attraction between Caitlin and Von. When Caitlin had learned Von was working at a fish market, she sarcastically asked him to save her a fish head. One day when Vix went with Dorset to pick up an order of fish, Von gave her a paper bag for Caitlin. The bag contained a fish head.

Neon Yellow Maillot

This swimsuit becomes a symbol of Vix's ability to surprise those around her with new abilities. She bought this neon yellow maillot the summer after she took swimming lessons. She wanted to surprise the Somers family with her new ability to swim.

A Delicate White Dress

Caitlin gave this dress to Vix on her seventeenth birthday. Vix was wearing this dress when she began kissing Von the night of the party when she thought it was Bru. The dress is a symbol of Vix's unintentional disloyalty to Bru.

A Bunch of Peonies

Bru gave these peonies to Vix when he tried to make up with her after their initial separation. The flowers gave off their scent when they were crushed beneath Vix as the two made love in Bru's truck. These flowers and their scent represented that day in the truck with Bru. Each time she smelled the scent of peonies, she remembered Bru.



Five Minutes in Heaven

Vix called her senior thesis “Five Minutes in Heaven.” It was a film dedicated to her brother Nathan. In the film Vix had several physically and mentally handicapped children describe what they thought heaven was like. Her act of dedicating the project to Nathan was a symbol of the guilt Vix felt for not spending more time with her brother when she had the opportunity.

A Pinstripe Suit

Maia bought herself this suit for her new job on Wall Street after she graduated from Harvard. On the first day she wore the suit she lost her job because of a stock market crash. The suit symbolizes the idea that it doesn’t matter how prepared one is for life, unexpected surprises can disrupt any plan.

An Antique Silk Piano Shawl

Caitlin gave this antique silk piano shawl to Vix as a college graduation gift. The shawl is a symbol of Caitlin’s extravagant personality.

A Commemorative T-Shirt

At Bru and Caitlin’s prenuptial dinner, guests are asked to wear a commemorative t-shirt with a picture of the couple screen-printed on it. All of these shirts surround Vix making her feel surrounded with happy images of Bru and Caitlin. The shirts are a symbol of Bru and Caitlin’s new love for each other but also remind Vix of her history with Bru.

Essay Victoria Wrote for Her College Application

Even the essay that Victoria wrote for her college entrance application paid tribute to her affection for Caitlin. Instead of writing about her parents, a teacher or another influential person, Victoria chose to write about Caitlin. Victoria later had this essay read during the family’s commemorative service for Caitlin. The essay represents Victoria’s undying affection for and loyalty to Caitlin.



Settings

Acequia Madre Elementary School

Acequia Madre Elementary School is the school at which Vix first met Caitlin. During one of her classes, Caitlin approached Vix asking Vix if she wanted to spend the summer with her.

Santa Fe, New Mexico

Vix and her family lived in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Phoebe, Caitlin's mother, moved herself and her daughter, Caitlin, to Santa Fe in the middle of the girls' sixth grade year. Vix's father continued to live in Santa Fe even after his wife left him. Vix returned to Santa Fe for Nathan's funeral after her last summer in high school. A three year stretch passed where she did not go home again until she visited one Christmas with Bru.

The Vineyard

Much of the action of the novel takes place on an island called the Vineyard, probably Martha's Vineyard. Caitlin's father had a house on the island to which Caitlin traveled each summer. Beginning the summer she was twelve, Vix began spending the summers with Caitlin on that island.

Mountain Day

Mountain Day is the name of the private school in Santa Fe that Caitlin attended. Abby arranged for a scholarship for Vix so she could attend the school as well. Vix graduated second in her class from this school.

Paradise

Paradise is the name of an old house that Bru and the construction company for which he worked was remodeling. As couples in their teens, Vix and Bru, and Caitlin and Von would go to this partially completed house to hang out, dance and make out.

The Chappaquiddick

It was on the Chappaquiddick that Caitlin arranged Vix's seventeenth birthday party with Von and Bru. Caitlin gave Vix drugs then arranged for Vix to make out with Von even though Vix had thought she was kissing Bru. After realizing she was kissing Von, Vix ran



off into the ocean. She argued with Caitlin the following morning, and then ran away from the house on the island, taking refuge on Trisha's boat.

Trisha's Boat

Trisha's boat is a rundown wooden sailboat named Island Girl. Vix stayed for awhile on this boat after she and Caitlin had a falling out. It was on this boat that Vix lost her virginity to Bru.

Harvard

Harvard University is the school to which Vix was accepted. It was at this school that she spent her college years.

New York

New York is the city where Vix lived after she graduated from Harvard and got her first job. Vix refused to marry Bru because he would not go to New York with her.

The Black Dog

The Black Dog is the restaurant where Caitlin hosted her prenuptial dinner the night before her wedding to Bru. It is in this restaurant that Vix successfully acknowledges Bru for the first time since she'd learned Bru was marrying Caitlin.

Venice

Venice is the city in France to which Vix travels to celebrate Caitlin's 30th birthday with her friend. This is the last place that Vix saw Caitlin alive.

A Wildflower Meadow Overlooking the Sea

It is in this wildflower meadow overlooking the sea that Caitlin's family organizes a commemorative service and erects a marker in honor of Caitlin.



Themes and Motifs

Friendship

Friendship is a major theme in this novel as the relationship between Caitlin and Vix is the basis of the novel. The author describes how this friendship begins, what keeps it going and the circumstance that it survives. Friendship between the two is exceptional not only because Vix and Caitlin have different personality types but also because they come from different backgrounds. Despite their troubles in life and the problems they face in their relationship, the two remain lifelong friends.

When Caitlin first asked Vix to spend the summer with her, Vix was surprised because Caitlin was so popular and vivacious while Vix was quiet and shy. Caitlin later told Vix she had decided to take a chance on Vix because she liked the clothes she was wearing. Vix thought this was an odd way to choose a friend, but was determined not to be a disappointment to Caitlin. During their first summer Vix was disgusted by Caitlin's lack of hygiene habits but remained in awe of her. Caitlin soon told Vix she was glad she gave Vix a chance as Vix had turned out to be a person who knew how to have a good time.

In the early days of their friendship the two experimented with and compared their own changing bodies. Vix was proud that she got her period before Caitlin believing that it made her more mature. From this point on a competitiveness seemed to develop on Caitlin's part to be first at everything. She even lied to Vix about losing her virginity so that Vix would think Caitlin was first to have sex. Even though Caitlin seemed determined to one up Vix, their friendship remained strong as Vix didn't really seem to care that Caitlin was more sexually active than she.

A major rift in the friendship between the two happened when Caitlin arranged a party for Vix's seventeenth birthday. While Vix believed Caitlin set her up to be unintentionally unfaithful to Bru, Caitlin claimed the party got out of hand. The day after the party Vix left the house, angry with Caitlin because she felt Caitlin was trying to sabotage her relationship with her boyfriend. The two reconciled after Vix's brother, Nathan died.

As the two get older, they remained friends even though they weren't as close as they were in the past. At the end of their story, even after Caitlin has married Bru and then abandoned him and her baby daughter, Caitlin still invites Vix to come celebrate her thirtieth birthday with her. Even though Vix could have declared her friendship with Caitlin over when Caitlin married Bru, Vix accepts the invitation. Caitlin has told Vix the truth about her relationship with Bru, even telling her about a one-night stand the two had while Vix and Bru were still dating. Vix also cheated on Caitlin with Bru the night before their wedding but never tells Caitlin. Caitlin is also truthful with Vix about the ways she believed she used Vix and their friendship to her benefit. Even after all that Caitlin has done to her, Vix remains supportive of Caitlin and refuses to admit she's ever noted any ill will on Caitlin's part.



Differences in Socioeconomic Classes

Another major theme in the novel is the differences in people who come from differing socioeconomic classes. Although Vix and Caitlin became friends before they were really distinctly aware of the differences in their families, the theme is strengthened early on by Tawny's fear that her daughter will be negatively influenced by the rich people with whom she was hanging out. As the girls got older, the differences between them dictated by the different financial states of their families began to affect their relationship more and more as Vix worked while Caitlin tried to tempt Vix away from her work and studies with fancy trips abroad.

When Vix's mother, Tawny, first learned that the rich Caitlin Somers wanted to take her daughter away for the summer, Tawny was afraid the time spent with these rich people would change her daughter forever. Tawny did not want to let Vix go, but her husband encouraged her to allow the trip. Interesting was that Vix's first summer experience with Caitlin's family on the island was not the rich getaway she was expected. The family had an old car. They lived in a dirty, rundown island home. Vix noted that they even ate poor with little meat ever served.

It was not until her second summer on the island that Vix really noticed the tension in the family caused by money. It was this summer that Caitlin's father, Lamb, married Abby. His grandmother, who had raised him, came for a visit. During her visit she belittled Abby and the other family members but Lamb did not stand up for his family because he was afraid his grandmother would cut his money off. Through the years, Vix watched as the family members fought with one another and kept their distance. In many ways this "rich" family was like her own family. Even though the Somers family had money, they were still unhappy. Her mother had told Vix that the rich were different, but the major difference Vix noticed was only that the rich had more money.

As Vix and Caitlin get older, the differences in their families' socioeconomic standings began to make more of an impact on their lives. Caitlin's family was able to afford to send her to a private school. When Abby suggested that she could arrange a scholarship for Vix to go to the same school, Tawny was offended. She didn't want to take what she saw as charity and pity, but her husband encouraged her to let Vix have the opportunity he knew the private school would give Vix.

While Caitlin had all the spending money she wanted without having to work, Vix began working after-school jobs so she could have some money for herself. When Vix suggested to Caitlin they look for summer jobs on the island, Caitlin could only think that Vix wanted a job because she was bored. She didn't understand the concept of having to work to pay one's own way. This difference in their financial standings became more of a problem between the girls when Vix decided to go to Harvard and Caitlin decided to go out and see the world. Vix had gotten scholarships to Harvard and wanted to be able to pay her own way in life. Instead of understanding her friend's determination to take care of herself, Caitlin tempted Vix with promises of fancy trips and thrilling adventures.



Each time Vix refused the free trips, Caitlin was offended. This mismatch over financial situations was perhaps the most dividing issue in the relationship between the girls.

Sexuality and relationships

The topics of sexual love and relationships comprise another theme in the novel as it was during their summers together that Vix and Caitlin experienced their first loves. The two met each other as prepubescent girls obsessed with their changing bodies. As they continued to spend summers together they transformed from girls who dreamed of being sexy to sexually attractive young women. The each met their first loves and had their first serious relationships while on the island.

It was during their first summer together that Vix and Caitlin began experimenting sexually. They did the things that all little girls do as they compared their bodies, experimented with make up and stuffed their tops, trying to imagine what they'd look like with breasts. They read from an outdated book they'd found in Lamb's house about the basics of sex. They'd even discovered they got pleasant sensations when they rubbed themselves between the legs. Their game that first summer was Summer Sisters, Vixen and Cassandra, a game in which they pretended to be the sexiest women on the island. As Vixen and Cassandra, they played out their fantasies about an attractive older boy they've met on the island.

As the two matured, they decided to have a burial service for Vixen and Cassandra. They realized they didn't feel right experimenting with each other any longer. They did, however, continue to keep their eyes open for Von and his cousin Bru. Vix was interested in Bru and had pushed Caitlin to make a decision between the two so she could feel free to fanaticize about Bru.

It was the summer they turned seventeen that the girls really became sexually active. For most of their lives together, Vix had thought Caitlin had lost her virginity first. Caitlin had lied and told Vix she had sex with a ski instructor during a spring break trip. After dating most of the summer, Vix finally lost her virginity to Bru just a few weeks before her brother died and she had to return home for his funeral. Though she didn't know it at the time, Caitlin had manipulated Bru after she returned to the island after Nathan's funeral. Bru had sex with her as well. It was this time that Caitlin really lost her virginity. Caitlin later told Vix the truth about when she really lost her virginity.

Later in the novel, Bru proposed to Vix but she turned him down because he would not travel to New York or even Boston so she could have a good job. After years of roaming the Earth and claiming she was having sexual relations with a variety of interesting people, Caitlin wound up back on the island where she and Bru got engaged. They were married but Caitlin abandoned Bru and their baby just a few years after their wedding.

While the focus of the novel is on the relationships developed by the girls, there are other relationships that are also studied in the course of the novel. For instance, Vix was



affected and upset by her parents as their marriage slowly deteriorated as a result of the strain caused by too little money and too much stress. Vix also watched as Abby and Lamb began their relationship with one another and kept it strong. She admired the strength in their relationship despite the stress caused by their attempt to blend a family of teens who were determined not to like one another and Lamb's grandmother holding the family inheritance over their heads.

Family

Family and the affect of one's family on his life is a theme in the novel "Summer Sisters." Both Vix and Caitlin come from different types of families, and both of their families have their own challenges. The story shows that whether a family is rich or poor, none are without struggles.

Early in the novel, it is noted that Vix knew very little about her family background. She'd met her maternal grandmother, Darlene, on her deathbed and then the woman had nothing nice to say to Tawny or the children. Although Vix' parents were married during her childhood, their relationship was by no means a storybook love affair. They were a middle class family struggling to stay above water with four children, one of whom was disabled. Vix longed for love and affection from either of her emotionally frigid parents. She felt her father loved her, but he was unable to express his love. Vix never seemed sure her mother loved her until the end of the novel when Tawny finally told Vix she was a good daughter, giving Vix some closure on her relationship with her mother.

Life was different for Caitlin and her family. Her parents had divorced when Caitlin and her brother were still babies. Her parents had decided Lamb, the father, would get custody of their son, Sharkey, while Phoebe, the mother, would get custody of Caitlin. Even though her mother had custody of her, Caitlin spent her summers and holidays with her father. It was no secret to Caitlin that her mother liked having time off from being a parent. She enjoyed getting to travel and date without having to worry about a child. Lamb, on the other hand, doted on his daughter. He was very lax on discipline, however, even when Caitlin did things that were dangerous.

Also unlike Vix's family, Caitlin's family was well off. Their money stress did not come from a lack of money like Vix's family. Their money stress came from the person who was in charge of the family's money. Lamb had been raised by his grandmother because his parents were killed in a car wreck. His grandmother resented the impact the children made on her family and her retirement plans. With her grandchildren grown, this woman enjoyed tormenting them by holding their inheritances over their head as a way to manipulate them. Lamb had gotten used to letting his grandmother talk badly about him and had taught his children to do the same. Caitlin explained to Vix they must act the way they do in order to ensure they don't loose their money.



Reactions to Situations

A final minor theme in the novel is the way particular characters react to the situations that life hands their way. Three of the characters to notice in this respect are Vix, Caitlin and Tawny. Each character is given opportunities but the way they react to these opportunities helps to determine the outcome of their lives.

Vix was the character who responded most positively to the opportunities or situations in which she found herself. She took advantage of Caitlin's invitation to spend the summer with her even though she wasn't sure how that summer would turn out. That first leap of faith on Vix's part led her to the opportunity to attend a private school, a good college and get a good job. Even though Vix took advantage of the opportunity, she did not take advantage of the people who offered her the opportunity. She refused to take extravagant trips funded by the Somers family and insisted on working her way through college even though Abby and Lamb probably would have given her anything for which she asked.

Caitlin, like Abby, took advantage of opportunities that came her way but didn't discern if the opportunities of which she took advantage would make her a better person or not. Because Caitlin was a member of a rich family, she had a college tuition fund and a trust fund waiting for her. Instead of going to college, however, Caitlin chose to travel the world. She said she was studying abroad but appeared to just be having fun and blowing her money. When she returned to the island and married Bru, she could have had a decent life with her husband and daughter but could not be happy with them. Instead of staying, she ran away without telling anyone she was in trouble or needed help. Again, after her thirtieth birthday celebration with Vix Caitlin disappeared again. It was suspected she might have killed herself but no evidence of her death was ever found.

Even though Tawny was not a major character in the novel, the reader can still learn a lesson from her story. She had left her mother the day she graduated from high school hoping for a better life. When she and Ed married, it seemed they had found that better life. Times were hard with three stillborn babies but still Tawny stuck with her husband. The family seemed to begin coming apart when money became tight and Tawny had to find a job outside the home. She began working for the Countess, a free spirited woman who believed marriage and family were just means to tie women down. Nathan, Tawny's son who had muscular dystrophy died, sending Tawny into a bout of depression, but also freeing her to spend more time with the Countess. As Tawny spent more and more time away from her family with the Countess, the division in the family became bigger and bigger. Lanie got pregnant and Lewis joined the armed forces. The choices Tawny made, while they may have seemed necessary at the time, ultimately led to the destruction of her family.



Styles

Point of View

The majority of this novel is told from the viewpoint of Vix by a third person narrator. It makes sense for the novel to focus on Vix as Vix is the character who was being immersed into a lifestyle different from her own when she became Caitlin's friend. It was only through this close look into Vix's thoughts and emotions that the reader can get an idea of how her time with Caitlin was changing her and making her think about people from different socioeconomic standings and different types of families.

Although the majority of the novel does focus on Vix, her development and her thoughts as she and Caitlin grow and mature, the author also gives other characters in the novel opportunities to voice their own thoughts and emotions. Interspersed throughout the novel are short sections where the third person point of view changes its focus from Vix to other character in the novel. These sections are labeled with the name of the character who is the focus of that section. Interesting is that while the novel is told in the past tense, these sections that focus on other characters are told in the present tense. Note also that the only major character who is not given the chance to have her own point of view told at any point in the story is Caitlin.

There are several different functions that these short snippets of thoughts from other characters serve in the novel. The first function is to fill in information that the reader would not have been able to glean from Vix's thoughts alone. For instance, Vix was unaware that her brother, Nathan, talked back to his mother when Tawny bad mouthed Vix for leaving them each summer. The only way the reader would have to know how dedicated Nathan was to Vix was to have this bit of information included in a section told from Ed's viewpoint. Another function of these sections told from the viewpoints of other characters is to add verification to Caitlin's stories. For instance, by the end of the novel when Caitlin is preparing to marry Bru, she has told so many lies that the reader might question if she were telling the truth about her affair with him after Nathan's funeral. When Bru lets the memories of that time run through his mind as he watches Caitlin walk down the aisle at their wedding, the reader realizes that what Caitlin has told Victoria is indeed the truth. While the author could have allowed Vix to verify the truth by asking Bru about his relationship with Caitlin after Nathan's funeral, it would have interfered with Vix's willingness to overlook her friend's behavior, choosing to forgive instead of asking questions because the truth really didn't matter to Vix at that point.

Language and Meaning

There is nothing particularly exceptional about the language of this novel. It is very straightforward and enjoyable to read. There are a few sexually oriented phrases with which a reader, particularly a young teen, might not be familiar. There are a few foreign



phrases scattered through the novel but very few. One example comes from Chapter 42 where Phoebe refers to the t-shirts given out at Caitlin's wedding as "tacky, n'est-ce pas" (344). The English translation for the phrase is "tacky, is it not" a translation that can be inferred from context clues.

Structure

The 393 pages of this novel are divided into five large parts. Each part reflects a certain period of time in Victoria and Caitlin's lives. Each of these large part of the novel are titled with a song popular at the particular point in time that the corresponding section covers. These songs also relate to what was happening to the girls in the corresponding section. Part One, for instance, covers the time period from 1977-1980 before the girls had reached puberty. The section has the label title "Dancing Queen" the name of a song Vix believed she heard playing in the background each time she saw Caitlin. Part Two covers the time period between 1982-1983. It also shares its title with a popular eighties song "Rapture." In this section Vix and Caitlin begin their dating relationships with Bru and Von, the two island boys to whom they had been attracted. In Part 3, Victoria attended Harvard while Caitlin traveled the world in the years 1983-87. Another song title "We are the World" shares its title with this section of the novel. The fourth part of the novel "Didn't We Almost Have It All" is a song about a broken relationship corresponding with Vix's search for a new love after her breakup with Bru. This section covers the time period from 1987-1990. The fifth part of the novel "Steal the Night" corresponds with Bru and Caitlin's wedding, and is also the title of an 80's song. It is an ironic title for the section in which Bru and Vix "steal" the night before the wedding to have a final rendezvous.

Part One is the longest part of the novel, accounting for about 35 percent of the book. Part Two accounts for about 20 percent of the novel while the remaining parts are the novel are the shortest and are about equal in length. The Prologue is told in the present tense but Parts One, Two, Three and Four are told in the past tense. Part Five returns to the present tense.



Quotes

It's been more than two years since they've seen each other, and three since Victoria graduated from college and got caught up in real life — a job, with just two weeks vacation a year. No money to fly around.

-- Narrator (Prologue paragraph 15)

Importance: Vix thinks that Caitlin doesn't understand that she doesn't have life as easy as Caitlin does. It isn't as easy for her to drop what she's doing and go on a last minute trip as it is for Caitlin. A difference between the friends is also noted in this quote as Victoria is working a job to support herself while Caitlin has money to travel where she'd like.

Once Victoria gets a taste of another way of life, once she spends a summer with a girl like Caitlin Somers, she'll be lost to them, sure as a dog chews a bone. She knows it even if Ed doesn't.

-- Narrator (Chapter 1 paragraph 66)

Importance: From the first time that Vix asked to spend the summer with Caitlin, Tawny knew that her daughter wouldn't return the same person. She knew even at that time that the trip signaled the beginning of Victoria's pull away from the family.

He was so laid back he was practically horizontal.

-- Narrator (Chapter 2 paragraph 5)

Importance: During their summers together, Caitlin and Vix had few rules to follow. It was noted in this quote that Lamb, Caitlin's father, was easygoing to a fault. His children didn't bathe, clean up after themselves or even change clothes regularly.

Phoebe had told Caitlin that to be ordinary was a fate worse than death.

-- Narrator (Chapter 2 paragraph 13)

Importance: During their first summer together, Caitlin and Vix made a promise to one another to never be ordinary. Caitlin had been told by her mother that a person who was ordinary was not much better than one who was dead.

Then remember what I'm telling you. Keep your feelings to yourself. Don't ever show anyone your disappointment."

-- Tawny (Chapter 6 paragraph 15)

Importance: As Vix waited for Caitlin to calm down after she first saw the renovations her new stepmother had done to the house on the Vineyards, Vix remembered her mother telling her that she shouldn't let others know when she was hurting because it gave them power over her. She thought someone should have taught this lesson to Caitlin.



You know why she hates you?' Vix looked up from her notebook. 'It's because you get to escape,' Lanie said, trying to braid Malibu Barbie's hair. 'We all hate you for that.'"
-- Lanie (Chapter 6 paragraph 80)

Importance: One day after their mother was particularly tough on Vix Lanie told her sister that Vix was hated by her entire family because she had an escape from the family's troubles.

Good, Vix thought. Because she had already chosen Bru for herself.
-- Vix (Chapter 7 paragraph 62)

Importance: Early on in their relationship, Vix pressed Caitlin to choose between Von and Bru. She was happy when Caitlin said she liked Von best as Vix was interested in Bru.

Yeah ... right, she thought. They have more money.
-- Narrator (Chapter 9 paragraph 49)

Importance: So far, in Vix's experience with the rich in Caitlin's family, the main difference she had seen between the rich and the poor was that the rich had more money.

You weren't always born to the right parents. And parents didn't necessarily get the kids they were meant to raise.
-- Narrator (Chapter 11 paragraph 9)

Importance: Vix wondered about the arrangement that Caitlin's parents had made when they divorced with one child going with one parent while the other child went with the other. Vix realized, however, that children didn't wind up with the parents needed to raise them even when nature was in charge of doling out the children.

In her garden, unlike in real life, Abby's enemies could be identified and destroyed."
-- Narrator (Chapter 11 paragraph 13)

Importance: As Vix helped Abby weed her garden, she realized that in her garden Abby had the freedom to kill the enemies she found encroaching on her life.

Even though we're summer sisters and always will be, I have another life at Mountain Day, a life apart from the two of us."
-- Caitlin (Chapter 13 paragraph 14)

Importance: Vix was devastated when Caitlin insinuated to her that they would not be friends at Mountain Day as they were during their summers together.

For the rest of her life, every lovers' quarrel would remind Vix of this night, this night when anger crackled in the air. She vowed then and there no guy would ever make her feel that bad.



-- Narrator (Chapter 14 paragraph 44)

Importance: Vix watched as a girl broke up with Bru in public. She promised herself that she would never let a man make her feel that bad.

Vix hung back, watching, as if she were in sixth grade again, studying Caitlin for the secret to success.

-- Narrator (Chapter 15 paragraph 2)

Importance: When Vix and Caitlin saw Von and Bru playing Frisbee on the beach, Vix hung back as Caitlin charged into the game. She still admired Caitlin and tried to determine what it was that made Caitlin so attractive and appealing.

Vix had no intention of doing it just to get it out of the way.

-- Narrator (Chapter 15 paragraph 20)

Importance: When Caitlin told Vix that she'd had sex with a ski instructor just to get the first time out of the way, Vix thought to herself that she wanted her first time to be more than just an attempt to get it over with.

She would always be the daughter. And Vix would always be the daughter's friend.

-- Narrator (Chapter 21 paragraph 37)

Importance: After she and Caitlin had a falling out over what Vix believed was a trick on Caitlin's part to get her to cheat on Bru, Vix realized that if she and Caitlin ever parted ways, she would lose her affiliation with the family as the family's loyalties would be to Caitlin.

If a friend is someone you can depend on when life gets tough, then Caitlin was her friend, traveling home with her, holding her hand at the funeral, even staying behind at the house afterward to clean up the kitchen once those who had come to pay their respects had left.

-- Narrator (Chapter 23 paragraph 7)

Importance: During the time of Nathan's funeral, Vix believed that Caitlin had acted as a true friend to her. She had no way of knowing that when Caitlin delivered the message that Vix asked her to deliver to Bru, Caitlin and Bru had sex.

Instead of writing about a parent, a teacher, or a superstar like the other seniors, Vix wrote about Caitlin. She compared their friendship to a finely woven tapestry.

-- Narrator (Chapter 23 paragraph 41)

Importance: Vix was still enamored with Caitlin as she wrote about her friend for her entrance essay for Harvard.

Graduating second in her class from Mountain Day meant nothing at Harvard. It was a joke. She couldn't imagine why they'd admitted her. She was out of her league, to use



Tawny's expression.

-- Narrator (Chapter 26 paragraph 11)

Importance: For the first time in her life, Vix felt she was out of place at Harvard. All the other students were first in their classes, Vix's accomplishments dulled in comparison. She wondered why she'd even been accepted to the college.

But to Vix, Maia represented the worst of privileged suburbia. She found her naive and judgmental.

-- Narrator (Chapter 26 paragraph 22)

Importance: Although Vix disliked her first college roommate because Maia seemed judgmental and prejudiced, the two eventually find common ground and become friends.

The crowd grows quiet, like he's said something disrespectful when he meant to convey how lucky he feels that Lamb never pushed, that Lamb accepted him as he was, as he is.

-- Narrator (Chapter 29 paragraph 20)

Importance: While Sharkey had intended the words he said at his father's fiftieth birthday party to be complimentary, the crowd seemed to take them as a criticism.

If being in love means giving up your freedom, not to mention your opportunities,' Caitlin said, 'then I haven't missed anything.'"

-- Caitlin (Chapter 29 paragraph 66)

Importance: When Vix will not leave the United States with Caitlin, Caitlin blamed her unwillingness to leave on Vix's relationship with Bru. She told Vix that if having a relationship meant she had to give up her freedom, she wasn't interested.

You come back here once in three years and think you can fix everything just like that? You don't know shit about any of us.

-- Lanie (Chapter 30 paragraph 11)

Importance: Lanie lashed out at Vix when Vix came home for Christmas. When Lanie complained about her life Vix suggested she leave her lousy husband and move back in with their father. Lanie informed her sister she knew nothing about their lives.

Maia thought she was lucky. 'You don't have to live up to anyone's expectations but your own.'"

-- Maia (Chapter 34 paragraph 9)

Importance: At her home, Maia felt pressured by expectations from her family and sibling rivalry. She thought Vix was lucky because she didn't have to worry about living up to someone else's expectations.



Lanie didn't get that Vix was struggling, too. It was just a different kind of struggle, at a different level.

-- Narrator (Chapter 36 paragraph 13)

Importance: When Vix was back at home after her father's heart attack, she was surprised to learn the lies that her sister had taught her children about Vix and her way of life. She felt that Lanie didn't understand that she was struggling too, just in a different way.

Some people never get over their first loves. They spend their whole lives trying to recapture the thrill. Sometimes, after fifty years they get back together. They meet at some reunion or other and realize they were meant to be together."

-- Paisley (Chapter 37 paragraph 52)

Importance: As Vix struggled with her pain after her break up with Bru, Paisley indicated some people never got over the first person they really loved.

She's always known Victoria's fascination with the NBO girl would come to no good. From the day Victoria moved into their room at Weld South and set out those photos she knew.

-- Narrator (Chapter 41 paragraph 38)

Importance: When Maia first learned that Caitlin was getting married to Bru and wanted Vix to be her maid of honor, she knew that her concern that Caitlin was bad news for Vix had come true.

Caitlin isn't someone to get over. She's someone to come to terms with, the way you have to come to terms with your parents, your siblings. You can't deny they ever happened. You can't deny you ever loved them, love them still, even if loving them causes you pain.

-- Narrator (Chapter 42 paragraph 2)

Importance: Even though Caitlin had hurt Vix deeply by getting married to Bru, Vix still loved her friend.

That's not the way I saw it. You were the daughter Abby always wanted. You were worthy of the Somers Foundation scholarships. You even had breasts. So I had to prove I was sexier. I had to prove I could have any guy I wanted ... even Bru.

-- Caitlin (Chapter 44 paragraph 19)

Importance: After all of the years they had been friends, Caitlin finally admitted to Vix that she had been jealous of Vix. Caitlin told Vix she'd felt marrying Bru made her feel she'd finally proven she was just as good as Vix.

The attraction between them is so strong she's sure there will actually be sparks when he touches her.

-- Narrator (Chapter 45 paragraph 6)



Importance: Although the two had basically grown up together, it was years before Vix realized she was attracted to Gus, the friend Daniel always brought to the island. By the time they finally decide to have sexual relations, Vix believes there will be sparks when they touch.

So if all goes well, you won't have to worry about taking care of us when we're old. At least we can do that much for you."

-- Tawny (Chapter 45 paragraph 12)

Importance: Tawny tells Victoria that the Countess was setting up a small trust fund for her so that she could live out her retirement comfortably and leave her father his savings. Tawny believes this is the least she can do for her daughter.

Everyone assumes Vix knows more than she's saying, that Caitlin still confides in her. She can tell they don't really believe it when she swears she doesn't have a clue. She's in shock like the rest of them.

-- Narrator (Chapter 45 paragraph 44)

Importance: After Caitlin disappears, abandoning her husband and daughter, it is assumed that Vix knows where she is. Vix, however, has no idea where Caitlin is.

Why can't you see me for what I am?' Caitlin asks. 'A self-centered bitch who doesn't give a flying fuck about anybody but herself, who takes off when the going gets tough, who lies and cheats to get what she wants ... who lies to her best friend just to stay ahead of the game.'"

-- Caitlin (Chapter 46 paragraph 47)

Importance: During their last conversation, Caitlin tries to get Vix to admit that she knows that Caitlin is spoiled and self-centered. Vix, however, will not do so, insisting that description does not fit the Caitlin she knows.

She shouts and screams at Caitlin, going on and on about friendship and love, refusing to believe either that Caitlin is gone forever or that she, who was so terrified of disappearing, has orchestrated her own disappearance.

-- Narrator (Epilogue paragraph 10)

Importance: After Caitlin's commemorative service Vix unleashes her anger on Caitlin. She cannot believe either of the options, that Caitlin is dead, or that she has arranged her own disappearance.