

# **The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants Study Guide**

**The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants by Ann  
Brashares**

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## Plot Summary

The story, *Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*, by Ann Brashares, opens up with Carmen, a young teenaged girl, buying a pair of jeans from a thrift store. The pants not only fit Carmen, but her best friends, Lena, Bridget, and Tibby, who are shopping with her. They all remark that this seems odd since none of them have the same body type at all. The jeans are the least of their worries at this moment. They are upset because they are not going to get to spend the summer together as they have for the past fifteen years.

Carmen is going to be going to South Carolina to visit her father for the entire summer, while Lena is going to go to Greece with her sister to visit their grandparents. Bridget is going to go to a soccer camp in California, and then in Mexico, while Tibby will stay behind in Maryland where she has a summer job lined up. After their shopping they stop to talk about their summer plans and how they will stay in touch. They go to Gilda's Gym, where their mothers had met one another before any of the girls were even born and have a friendship ceremony. They decide that they will take the pants that seem to fit all of them so well, and each will send the pants to one another throughout the summer. This way they can stay in touch, remember one another, and have a little piece of home with them. They part ways and their summers begin.

Tibby, who stayed behind to work at a summer job at Wallman's hates her job after only a week of it. As a result, she decides that she will document the complete agony of the ordeal in a 'suckumentary' about it that she will show her friends in devastating technicolor. Carmen reaches South Carolina with hopeful expectations, only to learn when she's picked up at the airport that her father has gotten engaged and his new fiancé has two teen stepchildren, who are now going to be part of her summer. Their names are Paul and Krista, and are very Anglo Saxon, whereas Carmen is part Puerto Rican and feels very out of place all of a sudden. Lena isn't faring any better as her grandmother immediately tries to set her up with a boy that lives in the neighborhood, named Kostos. Lena wants nothing to do with him and doesn't trust him at all. Bridget finds that she has a crush that is developing with her soccer coach, Eric.

Tibby shares about an incident that happened at Wallman's while she was working there her first week. A young girl, whom she would later find out was named, Bailey, collapsed on the floor in the store. Reacting quickly, Tibby ended up going with her to the hospital where she found out that the girl had leukemia. In order to keep her mind off of things in the ambulance and in the hospital, Tibby had told Bailey, who was twelve, about her 'suckumentary'. Tibby agreed to let Bailey, when she was well, help her make the film. Now, she writes, she is regretting that offer.

Carmen hates South Carolina, and she hates her new family even more. As a result she's rude and sullen. She is tired of hearing about the wedding plans, Lydia's ex-husband, and watching her father act goofy. Bridget, in California, tries to turn up the charm a notch or two whenever Eric, her coach is around. She finally convinces some of her teammates to go with her to a bar in town, and while she's there she sees Eric



and is able to dance with him. However, the next day when she is on the field, she is too aggressive with the ball and Eric yells at her, upsetting her.

Lena passes the time in Greece by working on her painting, spending time with her grandparents, and taking long walks through the beautiful countryside. One of her favorite spots takes her near a beautiful blue pool of water, isolated from the main traffic. One day she decides to go for a swim, naked, and while she's there, she looks up to see Kostos looming over her. She screams, gets out, grabs her clothes and hastily puts them on, then runs home. When she enters the house so disheveled her grandfather thinks that Kostos has tried to force himself on her and goes ballistic. He goes over to Kostos's grandfather's house and punches him. No one talks to anyone after that, and Lena finds that now she misses speaking with Kostos.

Meanwhile, Tibby and Bailey begin work on the film. Their first interviewee is named Brian McBrian. Tibby didn't think he would make a very interesting film subject, but he was a very animated speaker and she is pleasantly surprised. Next, they go to visit a woman named Maragert, who'd worked for decades at the local theater. At first, Tibby thinks that she will be able to use Margaret's interview as a way to include a humorous element into the work, but after the interview, she realizes that the woman is actually very lonely, and it makes Tibby feel bad.

Carmen goes to try on bridesmaid's dresses with Lydia and Krista. None of them fit her, but all of them look great on Krista. Finally, upset beyond belief, Carmen insults Lydia and storms out of the dress shop. She expects that her father will give her a lecture, or that Lydia will at least yell at her when everyone gathers back at the house. But, instead, everyone acts as if nothing even happened. This ticks Carmen off even more and she runs out of the house, wishing she were home in Maryland. She half hopes that her father will come after her and then they will have their good talks like they used to. He doesn't. When she comes home she sees that they've already started supper without her. Angered again, she picks up a huge rock and hurls it through the kitchen window at them. Then, without a backwards glance she gets on a bus and starts her way back to Maryland.

Bridget decides to take things to a new level with Eric and sneaks into his cabin. She slides into bed next to him. Still groggy, Eric doesn't realize at first what is going on, but once he does he tells her to get out. Still, Bridget thinks that because he didn't report her that he must have liked having her near him. She isn't wrong, and in a few days she has had sex with him. She's ill for a few days afterwards and then on the day of the soccer match she screams at the head coach, then leaves before the game is over. Eric comes to look for her, to talk to her about what happened between them, but Bridget doesn't want to talk.

Carmen, now back at home in Maryland, feels guilty about what she did. She sends some money to her father so that he can fix the window. She calls him and tells him why she was angry and how she feels that he is replacing her and her mother with a new family. He invites her to the wedding anyway, and at first she tells him that she will not come. However, the day before the wedding she gets on a plane and attends the



wedding. Afterward, they agree to always say what is on their minds and to be honest with one another in the future.

Lena is frustrated and that is causing her to be unable to focus on her painting. Kostos has been ignoring her and she finds herself shocked that it upsets her so much. She decides to take a walk and when she passes by her 'secret' pool, she sees Kostos skinny dipping. It is then that she realizes that he hadn't been spying on her before when she was there, but that this had been his secret swimming spot, too. She goes home and is able to paint again. Later, her grandmother tells her that Kostos's family were killed many years ago in a car accident and that he lives with his grandparents as they are all that he has. Lena paints a picture of Kostos.

Tibby becomes worried when Bailey doesn't meet her at Wallman's to do another interview. It isn't like her not to show up, so Tibby calls her house and finds out that Bailey has had to go to the hospital. She goes to the hospital but can't see Bailey. Bailey's mother tells her that Bailey has come down with an infection that she might not recover from. Tibby goes home to find that her guinea pig, Mimi, has died. Upset, and not able to deal with so much life and death in one day, she puts the guinea pig's body in the freezer. The phone rings and she can see that it is from Bailey's mother. She just doesn't want to speak with her and ignores her. Carmen is over one day and overhears the voice message from Bailey's mother. She tells Tibby that she should go to the hospital. Feeling guilty, Tibby goes and finds out that Bailey is not going to make it. Two days later Bailey dies. Tibby goes to the funeral, and then, when she returns home, she takes Mimi out of the freezer and buries her near the spot where Bailey was buried.

Lena's sister, Effie, happens across the painting of Kostos and urges Lena to tell Kostos how she feels. Effie reminds her that they are about to leave to go back to Maryland. Lena decides to give Kostos some of her paintings and goes to find him. She gives him the paintings, then tells him how she feels. He kisses her and they share the remaining days in Greece together. Lena learns that Bridget is not doing well in Mexico, and so she reroutes her airline ticket and goes to Mexico to help Bridget pack to get home.

The summer is over and the girls are all back in Bethesda, Maryland where they have gathered to have a birthday party at Gilda's Gym. Each of them agree to write journal entries of their time wearing the pants and their adventures. They each begin sharing their summer with each other and they watch Tibby's film.



# Prologue

## Summary

The prologue introduces the central symbol: the jeans. It is told in past tense, first person, and is the only portion of the book that is told this way. One of the main protagonists, Carmen, reminisces about finding the jeans and what it came to mean to the girls over the span of one summer. Carmen describes what they looked like and says that they were just the right color of blue, just stiff enough, just soft enough. In fact, she knew when she saw them that they would be perfect and she didn't even bother to try them on. Carmen goes on to share that her three best friends, Tibby, Lena, and Bridget, were going to be spending the summer apart from her, that year. Tibby would be the only one staying in Bethesda, Maryland, while Lena was going to Greece to visit her grandmother, and Bridget would be going to a soccer camp in Baja, California, Mexico. Carmen lamented the separation saying that they'd known each other their entire lives, and had never spent a summer apart before. Carmen mentions that the girls most likely knew each other before they were born as all of the girls' mothers were best friends and were pregnant all at the same time. Their mothers had called their group the September Girls, but Carmen thinks that the real September girls are her and her current friends, because as adults none of the girls' mothers were close friends anymore. Their mothers had met while they were taking an aerobics class at Gilda's Gym for pregnant women.

In this prologue, Carmen states that she and her friends have vowed never to allow life to get in the way of their friendship and that the Pants became their vow to each other to always stay close. Carmen says that at one point she'd almost thrown the pants away, but she's glad that she didn't because the pants were to play a large part in their lives that summer. The upcoming story is a story of their friendship, life, love, and of course, the Pants.

## Analysis

The fact that this initial introduction is told by Carmen indicates that she may be the leader of the girls. She establishes the fact that she was the original owner of the jeans, and indicates what the meaning behind the jeans is. The reader is also shown who the main characters will be: Lena, Bridget, and Tibby, and what their different summers will be like. The reader learns a little about the girls' background, and how they know one another. It is clear through her viewpoint that she considers herself the 'glue' that keeps all of the girls together, and that she feels confident enough to introduce the girls and speak about their lives with some authority. The theme of Friendship is established in this prologue.



## **Discussion Question 1**

What is the central symbol introduced in this prologue, and what is its significance?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Discuss the theme of Friendship and what it might mean for the rest of the novel.

## **Discussion Question 3**

Who is Carmen and why is she significant?

## **Vocabulary**

fantastic, magical, thrift, callously, fanatical, flagrant, tragedy, yearned



# Chapters 1-2

## Summary

### Chapter 1

This chapter starts out with all of the girls hanging out in Carmen's bedroom. They are all talking about their summer plans and how much they will miss each other. Tibby is the most upset as she isn't going anywhere for the summer and has taken a summer job in town, which she's already hating. The others try to make her feel better and that makes her even angrier. Spying the jeans that Carmen has just bought, she asks if she can try them on. Carmen agrees and Tibby puts them on. She finds that despite the fact that she and Carmen are built differently, the jeans look fantastic on her. Lena tries them on next, then Bridget, whose athletic build practically guarantees that they won't fit. But they do. In each case, despite the fact that the girls are all different heights, weights, and shapes, the jeans look great on all of them. Tibby remarks that they are 'magic' jeans.

The girls decide to hold a friendship circle and go to Gilda's Gym in honor of their parents' meeting and their first official meeting. They light candles and form a circle, then place the jeans in the middle. Carmen declares that the pants belong to no one and all of them. They vow that the 'traveling' pants will go from one to the other throughout the summer. They decide to call themselves the 'Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants'. Tibby has brought her camera and videos everything to make it official. Each girl will keep the jeans for two weeks in the summer, then forward them on to the next member of the club.

### Chapter 2

Tibby is the first girl that receives focus in this chapter, and the reader learns that she has a guinea pig named, Mimi. Tibby shares that when she was 12 she had felt sorry for Mimi as she had to stay in her cage all day long. Sometimes, though, she says she envies Mimi because her life is simple. Tibby gets on her bike and heads to work at Wallman's, which is a large chain superstore. On her way there she sees Tucker Rowe, her crush. She's embarrassed that he's seen her in her Wallman's uniform. Later that night she cuts a small piece off of her uniform's shirt and sends it to Bridget so that she can see how hideous the material is.

Bridget has arrived at soccer camp. She asks her bunkmates if they want to go for a swim, but they turn her down. Feeling friendless and homesick she goes swimming by herself. However, things begin to get better when she goes to dinner that night and a couple of girls sit with her. They end up going down to the beach and falling asleep on the beach watching the stars. She wonders if her friends are seeing the same stars as she is.





Lena is beautiful and knows it, but it bothers her when people try to be her friends (other than the girls that have known her since before birth). When someone in Greece approaches her to be her friend, she is immediately rude, much to her Grandmother's embarrassment.

Carmen is on a plane heading to South Carolina where she is going to spend the summer with her father. She admires the organization of everything on the plane and thinks about how messy her father's apartment will probably be. As she only sees him on big holidays, each time they are together it is a celebration. She decides that she'll keep his apartment clean for him all summer. She anticipates getting to know her dad better. Carmen settles back into the plane's seat and writes a letter to Tibby telling her how much she misses her.

## Analysis

### Chapters 1-2

The symbolism of the jeans is established in these early chapters as the readers see that each girl has tried on the jeans and found them not only wearable, but flattering. The jeans represent their friendship and the positive influence they all have on each other. Though they are all very different, the friendship (like the jeans) works for everyone. Their differences don't matter to the jeans, nor to each friend. When they put on the Pants, they are reminded about their friendship. The ceremony that they engage in at Gilda's Gym is also significant in that this is the place where their pregnant mothers met in a class, and where the girls actually came into contact with one another, even before they were born. Because of this the girls determine that their bond is stronger than most and they vow to remain in touch with one another throughout the summer.

The fact that Tibby brings her camera with her to the ceremony indicates that she is the creative and artistic one of the group. The reader also understands that she is embarrassed that she isn't traveling like her other friends for the summer, and that perhaps she isn't as well off financially as the others are. This is indicated when she must ride her bike to work and wear the Wallman's uniform, which she detests.

The reader sees that Lena is extremely beautiful but that sometimes she wishes she weren't pretty. It makes her suspicious of everyone, especially boys, who want to befriend her. She believes her looks set her apart and keep her apart from people who otherwise would treat her differently.

Bridget is depicted as outgoing and athletic. This is evident when she attempts to make friends with people right out of the gate when she arrives at camp. Even when she is rebuffed, she goes on with what she has planned, which indicates that she doesn't let things like that stop her from enjoying herself. Later, as she is gazing at the stars with a couple of girls from camp, she is reminded of Carmen who would get why Bridget thinks the sky makes her feel small.



Carmen, the reader learns, is the deep thinker. She also feels things more deeply than the others. In fact, she's not half way into her plane's flight when she starts writing a letter to her friends to tell them how much she misses them, already. It is also clear that Carmen likes things to be organized and neat, where she can know what to expect. The symbolism of the plane tray and snacks comes in here when Carmen pauses to appreciate the orderliness of it all. She realizes that it brings clarity and control and a feeling of security. When she takes part of the items with her, it is suggesting that she is taking some of the organization and 'security' with her to her fathers.

The theme of Friendship is introduced here as the reader sees how strong the bond between the girls is. The fact that each girl pauses in the middle of what she is doing to think of the other girls indicates how much they care for one another and how much they depend on the support of the other girls. The jeans are a physical representation of that friendship.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Discuss the symbolism of the jeans.

## **Discussion Question 2**

Discuss the theme of Friendship.

## **Discussion Question 3**

Compare each of the four girls to each other.

## **Vocabulary**

canvas, urged, baffled, deflated, fiddled, garbled, atmospheric



# Chapters 3-4

## Summary

### Chapter 3

In Greece, the reader sees that Lena and her younger sister, Effie, are exploring their grandparent's home. It is painted a bright blue with a yellow door, which Lena finds beautiful. Both Lena and her sister are still battling jet lag, and neither girl speaks Greek. Luckily, their grandmother speaks English. However, their grandfather can't speak English, and Lena wishes that they'd learned at least a little Greek. She remarks that the view from her bedroom window is amazing and has a view of the caldera. Somehow she feels as if she is safe and at home there.

Tibby sits through an orientation lecture at Wallman's with Duncan Howe, her immediate supervisor. She can tell that for some reason he doesn't like her. She decides that she doesn't care and that all of her adventures will be good material for her film that she's going to make over the summer. She's decided to call it a 'suckumentary'. Once out on the sales floor she has to deal with a snobby saleswoman with extremely long fingernails. One of Tibby's first tasks is to set up a cardboard display so that she can stack deodorant on it. She works on it for a while and realizes that it isn't going to hold together without some tape. She goes to find some and soon the display is up and stacked. Quite proud of herself she heads for home, forgetting that she's put the tape in her pocket. As she passes through the doors the alarms go off and her supervisor, Duncan, accuses her of stealing merchandise. She explains what she had been doing and he lets her off with a warning. She decides that she really hates her life at that moment.

There is a small section included involving Lena. She has written a letter to Carmen saying that she'd arrived in Greece but that her grandparents are really strangers to her and her sister. Lena shares that her grandfather can't speak to them at all, and that they are kind but don't feel like family yet. She's not sure that she even loves them.

### Chapter 4

Lena is outside with an easel and her paints. She is trying to paint a picture of the sunset, but it isn't going well. Frustrated she goes back to the house where her grandparents have cooked a feast for them. Lena puts on the special Pants (jeans) for that first meal. Effie helps their grandmother in the kitchen and Lena feels herself becoming jealous. She wishes that she could be more outgoing like her sister and says that she knows that people like Effie better between the two of them because she's friendlier.

Her grandmother sees her in the Jeans and asks her to please put on something nicer as she's invited someone to dinner. Sighing heavily Lena trudges back up into her room



to oblige. She knows her grandmother is trying to set her up with someone and she hates it.

Carmen's plane has landed. Her father, who the reader finds is named Albert, scoops her up into a big hug. After they get Carmen's luggage and they get into the car, Carmen begins to fill him in on everything that she'd done the past year. The reader learns that Carmen and her father both like to play tennis, and that he's interested in her grades. Though he doesn't say anything, Carmen thinks that something is different but she can't put her finger on what.

Instead of pulling up to an apartment, they stop at a large nice-looking house. He tells Carmen that he moved out of his apartment and into a house for a good reason: he's getting married. Carmen and Albert go into the house where a stunned Carmen meets Lydia, Albert's fiancé, and her two children, Krista, who is about Carmen's age, and Paul, who is 18. Carmen is shown to the 'guest' bedroom and already Carmen begins to regret this trip. She writes a letter to Bridget to tell her about all of the surprises and how her entire summer is ruined because she realizes that there will be no 'alone' time for her and her father.

## Analysis

### Chapters 3-4

Carmen and Lena have both landed in family situations that leave them feeling uncomfortable and blindsided. Both had expectations that weren't met. For Lena, it was meeting grandparents whom she'd expected to feel some sort of love for, but doesn't. The stories that she'd grown up hearing about them had allowed her to develop her own fantasy about her grandparents, a fantasy that was challenged by the reality of actually meeting them. They are, in reality, total strangers to her.

Carmen's summer is also blasted out of the water of expectation when her father blindsides her with the fact that not only has he moved out of his apartment into a house, but that he's getting a whole new family. It is easy to see that Albert has gravely miscalculated his daughter's capacity to embrace change. Additionally, it is likely that he believed that because he loved both groups and they loved him, that he could be a bridge between the two. Unfortunately, this was not a good assumption on his part as Carmen sees the whole arrangement as a betrayal. When she is shown to the guest bedroom it is apparent that she is the outsider in her own father's home.

The theme of Family arises for both Lena and Carmen as they struggle with the definition as it applies to their various family members. Carmen's father is remarrying, so Carmen wonders where that places her in relation to her father. Lena had expected to instantly feel some sort of bond with her grandparents, but finds that she has none. The suggestion by the author, here, is that just because one is related doesn't necessarily mean that one will like one's family members, have affection for them, or be



obligated to embrace them on a deep level. Both girls struggle with the traditional definition of 'family' when it is challenged with modern day complications.

Tibby, whom we learn is into grunge style and sports a nose ring, has to deal with her supervisor, Duncan. He instantly judges her because of the way she dresses, even though Tibby, herself, is often guilty of doing the same thing. She fails to see the irony of the situation when she is accused of stealing the tape. Tibby is completely convinced that her summer is going to 'suck' that she decides to create a 'suckumentary' to document the summer of suckage. Tibby's quick to judge nature is evident, also, in the way that she looks at the saleslady with the long nails as a slacker, and maybe a Jersey Shore wannabe. But, when someone turns the tables and judges her for her appearance, she becomes instantly hostile. It is clear that she hasn't learned the lesson, yet, nor does she fully appreciate the irony that has been presented to her.

## **Discussion Question 1**

How have Lena and Carmen's summer expectations been disrupted?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Discuss the theme of Family.

## **Discussion Question 3**

How is Tibby judgmental and how does it come back on her?

## **Vocabulary**

diaspora, unabashedly, manifesto, smock, podium, miraculously, crucial



# Chapters 5-6

## Summary

### Chapter 5

Lena changes her clothes and meets Effie on the stairs going down. She tells Lena to get over herself that the boy, Kostos, is very cute. Lena frowns, but agrees when she sees Kostos that he is cute. However, all of her past experiences with boys have suggested that all boys care about are looks. Grandma tells Lena that Kostos plays soccer and that the next year he will be going to college in London, England. Lena tries to look unimpressed. She goes on to tell Lena that Kostos is visiting his grandfather for the summer, too, and is helping him run his forge.

They live a few doors down, Lena's grandmother continues. Lena tries to talk to him but Kostos seems unwilling to answer questions about his family, which seems to confirm Lena's conclusions. After dinner, Lena goes back upstairs, leaving Effie to continue to entertain Kostos. However, when she comes back down later, he is still there. He tries to talk to her, and asks her if she wants to go for a walk. Lena quickly tells him no.

Bridget is taken with the new coach, Eric, at soccer camp. He's in his second year of college at Columbia, so he's really not that much older than Bridget. However, there is a strict policy against coaches and players dating. Connie, who is also one of the coaches, divides the girls up so that they can start learning how to play as a team. Bridget is placed on team three and is instantly rewarded by Eric looking at her. Bridget writes to Carmen and tells her about Eric, and the fact that she thinks that Eric really likes her blonde hair.

### Chapter 6

Meanwhile, back at Wallman's, Tibby is seriously wondering what it will be like when she dies. Will she go out in a blaze of glory, or just fade away to be found shriveled in a corner of Wallman's. There is a sudden crash in one of the aisles that disrupts her morbid musings. She rushes over to see that a young girl has collapsed onto the floor. She yells for someone to call 911 and tries to figure out who the girl is. She finds a wallet but there's no ID in it, though the girl looks as if she is about 10 years old. In minutes the EMS team arrives and ask Tibby what happened. She hands them the wallet and they immediately assume that she stole it from the little girl, and maybe hurt the girl. Tibby argues with them and explains that she was looking for contact information. They put the girl on a stretcher and start to wheel her out and Tibby tells Duncan that she's going to ride along with the girl just until the girl's parents show up.

In South Carolina, Carmen is shocked yet again when her father's new family sits down to have dinner and everyone bows their head to say grace. Carmen becomes instantly angered as she recalled one of the breaking points between her parents had been his



staunch refusal to become Catholic. During the meal, Krista remarks that Carmen doesn't look like her father and Carmen snaps back at her that her mother was Puerto Rican. It becomes clear to Carmen that she hates this new family and she's had enough. Before the meal is finished, she leaves the table to call her mother. She tells her mom that she's being replaced by a new family and that she hates them. She finds herself wanting to say that she hates her dad, too, but she just can't bring herself to say it.

Bridget has been watching Eric and has noticed that he goes out for a run in the early mornings. She gets up early one morning and catches up to him on his run. They run together and talk. They learn about each other's families. Bridget finds herself lying to Eric, telling him that she is sixteen, when she is really fifteen. And, she tells Eric about her mother, who died a year previously, which is something that she seldom ever shares with anyone. Eric is understanding and sympathetic and Bridget is in heaven.

## Analysis

### Chapters 5-6

Just as in the last chapters, Carmen and Lena have been compared, in these chapters the comparison is between Tibby and Bridget. Both are outgoing and unapologetic for their demeanor or candor. They both become instantly involved whenever there is a situation at hand. This is most apparent when Tibby helps the young girl that has collapsed in the store. Likewise, Bridget has instantly started trying to make friends, and even though some of them have turned her down, there are others who've warmed up to her. She is also unafraid to go for what she wants. As an athlete the reader knows that she is highly competitive, and having set her sights on Eric, she is undeterred by the rules and regulations. Both girls view rules as suggestions and show in these chapters that they will readily break them.

Bridget breaks the rules because she is often emotional and impulsive. Tibby breaks the rules only after she's considered what is for the greater good. Between the two of them, however, their immaturity is evident and demonstrates the theme of Coming of Age. They are growing up and one of the moral and ethical situations that have faced both girls is how to determine when one should or shouldn't break the rules. It is apparent that once either girl makes up their mind to do something they can't easily be dissuaded.

Most of the chapters have quotes that give some meaning or clue as to what will occur in the chapter it precedes. The one for Chapter 5 states that 'Love is War: easy to begin, hard to end.' This seems to pertain to Lena's situation the most. She meets Kostos and wants to like him, even though she believes that all boys are interested in is a physical relationship. However, when he asks her to go for a walk, she believes her suspicions are confirmed. Then, Bridget sets her sights on Eric and makes the first of several romantic overtures. Eric, who is wary, asks her what her age is and she lies. While the 'war' part of love hasn't begun, it is clear that the battle lines are clearly being drawn.



The theme of False Appearances is demonstrated in both Tibby's situation and Bridget's. Bridget is misrepresenting herself as she tells Eric that she is older than she is. Tibby gives the appearance of being a hardened and bitter teen, when in reality she is highly creative, sensitive, and caring.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Discuss the theme of Coming of Age.

## **Discussion Question 2**

What is the moral and ethical dilemma that Bridget is facing and what has she concluded?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Compare Bridget to Tibby as far as their willingness to break rules.

## **Vocabulary**

appreciatively, ceramic, caldera, orientation, barrage, possessions, palette, bustle





# Chapters 7-8

## Summary

### Chapter 7

Lena finds breakfast uncomfortable because she and her grandfather can't speak to one another. She takes peeks at him when he isn't looking and she believes that they have some of the same features, like the same nose. Afterward, she puts on the Pants and goes outside with her easel and paints. Without meaning to she runs into Kostos who starts to talk to her, but she immediately turns on her heels and walks away from him.

There's a short entry where Bridget has sent a note to Tibby telling her that all of the people at soccer camp are preps. She says none of them can come close to the friends she's left behind and that she misses them all terribly. She confesses to Tibby that she's in love with her coach, Eric, however, and that regardless of the rules she's going to pursue the relationship.

Tibby returns to Wallman's after going to the hospital and she realizes that she's still in possession of the girl's wallet. She's found out that the girl's name is Bailey Graffman, so is able to go and look up the last name in the phone book. There is only one listed, which is lucky, and she goes to the house to give back the wallet. Bailey is back home at this point and Mrs. Graffman tells her to go on up to Bailey's room. Like everyone else, Bailey judges her and accuses her of taking her wallet to steal her money. Tibby argues back with her and a shouting match ensues. Then, Bailey's mother yells up for Bailey to take her medicine, and when Tibby goes to get the meds to bring to Bailey, she sees that they are for leukemia. Bailey becomes sullen and angry because she can see that Tibby is now trying to be nice because she knows she's really sick. Tibby learns that the girl is actually 12 years old, but looks younger because of the cancer.

In South Carolina, Carmen has gone with Paul and Krista to a party. She knew she'd have a bad time, and she is. Just to stir things up she tells Paul's girlfriend, Kelly, that she's living with Paul. She doesn't bother to correct or add to that information and sits back to watch the fireworks.

### Chapter 8

The reader sees Tibby in her home where she's helping her mother feed her younger brother, Nicky. There is also another young toddler in the house, named Katherine. Tibby wants to tell her mother, who gave up a career as a sculptor to become a real estate agent, about everything happening to her at Wallman's but she figures that her mother is just too busy. The reader learns that Tibby's father has just become a private lawyer and that he is just getting his business going.



At soccer camp, Bridget is still stalking Eric. In the cafeteria she waits for him to get up from the coach's table to go for more food and she casually ends up there next to him. They talk on their way back to their respective tables. Once she parts ways with Eric, and sits down with her teammates at their table, all of the girls tell her that they are impressed and assume that she and Eric are involved. She doesn't correct them. Later that night she writes to Carmen and tells her that things are progressing with Eric and that she'd been sightseeing in the local area.

The time for Lena to send the Pants on to the next member of the club has come, and to make her last day count for something she takes her longest walk yet. She happens upon a beautiful crystal clear pond. Unpacking her paint set and easel she begins painting, but soon the hot sun and the allure of the water are too much and she goes skinny dipping. She hasn't been in the water too long before she hears a commotion at the top of the bluff. When she looks up she sees Kostos standing there looking at her.

Angered, she gets out, grabs her clothes and yells at Kostos. He tries to explain something to her but she doesn't want to hear it. He apologizes behind her but she is angry beyond words. Her clothes are only half on her when she gets back to the house. When her grandfather takes one look at her he has Lena's grandmother ask what happened. Lena says that Kostos isn't the nice boy that she said he was. Thinking the worst, the grandfather storms out of the house.

## Analysis

### Chapters 7-8

Both Carmen and Tibby have backgrounds that consist of their parents going through radical changes. Where Carmen is concerned, her father's sudden embrace of religion upsets her terribly, making her think that he hadn't loved her mother enough to change. Tibby's mother used to be a creative spirit, less traditional, but fun. Now, of course, her mother has become stable, calmer, and more organized. The backstory on both families comes out, too.

From all accounts, Tibby's parents were once new age types that declined to embrace capitalism, and instead lived with few material goods. However, with the addition of new children to the family, both Tibby's mother and father gave up those lifestyles to embrace a way of life that would afford them more money. Neither girl can understand why they would change so drastically, moving into more structured lives and occupations.

Carmen had expected her father to be just as he was each time she visited him. She imagined making a 'home' for him when she arrived. Instead, that job has been taken over by another woman and it upsets Carmen. She still sees many of the items from her childhood that she made or gave to her father, such as the candlestick holders, but many of the things that she'd done to decorate his apartment have been cast aside for more modern, fashionable items. In her father's old apartment, Carmen knew her role,



and felt needed and wanted. In this new home, she's a guest, staying in the guest room. She feels unwanted, unneeded, and certainly not a part of the family.

Tibby also has the additional family members to deal with. Because of the wide difference in their ages, it is apparent that Tibby has had to make room for additional siblings as well. They are much younger than she is and it has put her in a position of caring for them. This new responsibility for the family makes her feel as if she can't share her own struggles with her parents as they are already stretched thin by their new careers and new, younger, members to the family. Tibby went from being the only child for fifteen years, to having to share her home with two squalling infants.

The theme of Family is demonstrated in this chapter as the reader sees both Carmen and Tibby dealing with their feelings of belonging within their own family units. Tibby knows where she fits in with her family and feels needed and loved, but Carmen does not, especially where her father's new family is concerned. Lena is also having troubles on this front as she can't communicate with her grandfather. Thus, the definition of Family is uncovered a little more: family is where a person feels wanted and needed, heard, and welcomed.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss the definition of Family as it is offered in these chapters.

## Discussion Question 2

Why is Carmen so upset with her father's new situation?

## Discussion Question 3

Discuss why Tibby might feel out of place in her own home?

## Vocabulary

awkwardly, delineating, savored, sequined, undetectable, carousel, conveyor, cuffed, diminished



# Chapters 9-10

## Summary

### Chapter 9

Back in South Carolina things haven't gotten any better at her father's house. Carmen still resents the 'replacement family' that she believes her father has assembled and is forcing her to endure. She purposely ignores Krista's plea for help with her summer math homework, and instead goes to play tennis with her father. She has labeled Paul's girlfriend, Kelly, with the nickname 'Skeletor', which upsets Paul. Carmen writes to Bridget telling her that Paul really hates it when she tries to make Skeletor jealous. Carmen writes that she could care less.

Bailey recovers and makes an appearance at Wallman's while Tibby is working there. Bailey instantly starts teasing Tibby about her Wallman's smock that she has to wear. Tibby agrees that it is hideous and agrees to go with Bailey out for ice cream after work. She originally only says that she will go because she feels sorry for Bailey, but later, after they get to the ice cream shop, she finds herself really enjoying hanging out with the younger girl. Tucker Rowe walks by and Bailey makes fun of his hair style. Tibby laughs.

Bridget talks her teammates into going to a bar in the town that she's heard about. The reason Bridget wants to go is because she's learned that all of the coaches go there to unwind. Her gambit pays off as Eric is there with many of the other coaches. Bridget and the other girls start dancing on the dance floor and Bridget can tell that Eric is watching her. She gets him to come out and dance with her. The other coaches join in, too. At one point Eric and Bridget pair off, but then Eric backs away telling her that they can't be that close together. Later that night, she writes to her father and asks him to mail her some of her nicer clothes.

A loud commotion in the front room brings Lena and Effie out of their room. Though they can't understand what is being said, Kostos grandfather and Lena's grandfather are obviously in a heated discussion. All of a sudden, while Lena watches in horror, her grandfather punches Kostos's grandfather and they begin to wrestle with one another on the ground. Kostos runs up and separates the men and he takes his grandfather home.

### Chapter 10

As they walk to the tennis courts, Carmen and her father talk about the wedding and what it means to Lydia. He tells her that Lydia's first wedding ended up being a quick trip to the city hall because Lydia's mother had passed away just a few weeks before. Carmen also learns, though she wishes she hadn't, that Lydia's first husband was abusive and an alcoholic. Knowing all of this makes Carmen ashamed of the way she's



been acting and she decides that she will try to be nicer to everyone. This resolution doesn't last long as Albert suggests that they postpone their tennis game for a few minutes more while they go to watch Paul play soccer, first.

Bridget can't sleep, so she gets up and goes for a swim. The dancing with Eric is still playing over and over in her head. She fantasizes about him and becomes so obsessed with him that even while she's playing soccer later that morning she tries to show off for him. Molly, her team's coach, becomes furious with her for hogging the ball all of the time. Bridget realizes what she's doing and apologizes.

Watching Paul play soccer Carmen can tell that Albert has parental feelings towards Paul. He seems proud of Paul's ability at soccer, which Carmen has to admit is pretty good. Lydia meets them at the sidelines, upset and in tears because the reception hall she had counted on has suddenly become unavailable. Albert tells Carmen to catch a ride home with Paul, and then goes back to the house with Lydia, leaving Carmen sitting on the sidelines wondering what just happened. Paul offers to play tennis with her after his game is over and she is very aggressive, beating him a couple of games straight.

## Analysis

### Chapters 9-10

The use of sports as a smaller motif are introduced in fuller development in this chapter. The author uses sports to provide the added opportunity for both Bridget and Carmen to mature and consider things about themselves that they would otherwise never have considered. Especially in this chapter, it is shown that Bridget, while a star player, doesn't understand teamwork, and why it is important to give other people a chance to be in the lime light. She is undisciplined in her energy, her thought process, and the impulsiveness that she shows on the field is the same impulsiveness and lack of regard for the rules that she uses in pursuing Eric.

Likewise, tennis has been a shared and common love for both Carmen and her father. It's the one thing that they still begin to do that reminds Carmen of the 'old days'. However, the several times they've tried to play tennis, to reconnect, something that would have reassured her, she's had to accept that she is not the only child in her father's life any more.

The theme of False Appearances continues to be demonstrated in Chapter 10 when Lena does not bother to correct her grandmother or to give any further details in regards to what happened at the pond between her and Kostos. She has been purposely avoiding him, even prior to the swimming incident, and Lena has almost become determined to sequester herself from everyone. Even eating breakfast with her grandfather is an act of isolation since he doesn't speak her language, nor her, his. It is very telling when she witnesses the fight between the two men and doesn't run to stop it, offer an explanation, or become involved in any way that would make things better.



Of all the girls, Bridget is easily the most reckless. There have been a number of instances when she has broken the rules. She often goes swimming alone, talks the girls into sleeping alone on the beach with her, breaks curfews, and encourages the others to go with her to a local bar. At the height of her reckless behavior is her dogged pursuit of Eric, even though he has made it clear that it is not allowed. It is clear that most often she acts without thinking. In fact, the only time she stops to think is when her coach gets angry at her for hogging the ball and showboating. She is even confounded by the way she acts and she questions herself and her motivations for doing what she does.

This goes hand in hand with the theme of Coming of Age. This is a crucial turning point for any teen, considering one's actions and the possible future ramifications. She catches a glimpse of how she must look to the others and is ashamed. While both Tibby and Carmen have learned some things that make them a little more sympathetic to both Bailey and Lydia, neither girl is willing to give up their resentments or judgements just yet.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Who is the most reckless of the girls, and why is she so impulsive?

## **Discussion Question 2**

With the new information about Lydia, how does Carmen feel about the situation now?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Discuss the theme of Coming of Age as it is demonstrated in this chapter.

## **Vocabulary**

scandalized, vanished, peered, antifraternizing, droned, sterile, emerged



# Chapters 11-12

## Summary

### Chapter 11

Lena and the rest of the family end up having to take Grandpa to the hospital to get his face stitched up. While there, some of Grandpa's blood splashes on the Pants and Lena goes to wash it off. She feels badly for the entire misunderstanding between the two older men, and she promises herself that once everything calms down she will straighten it all out.

Bailey shows up at Tibby's home, surprising her. She tells Tibby that she thought about their conversation the other day and that she'd like to help her with her film. Tibby says that it's not possible because she hasn't even started it yet. Bailey comes up to Tibby's room where she sees Mimi. She tells Bailey that she always wanted a pet but that her parents wouldn't let her because of her illness. Tibby feels guilty and promises Bailey that she can help with the film. Later, as the girls continue talking, Bailey asks why Tibby's brother and sister are so much younger than she is. After Tibby explains, Bailey tells Tibby that she was probably just her mom and dad's experiment. Tibby is insulted at the comment, but forgives her when Bailey shares that she already has an interview subject lined up for the next day.

Carmen tries to make amends for her behavior, and when Krista isn't looking, she finishes her homework for her. Paul sees her do it, but doesn't speak up when Krista asks who did it. Paul leaves to visit his father, and Albert tells Carmen, as they finally play tennis, that neither Lydia, nor Krista, have anything to do with Lydia's first husband. Carmen is angry again, wondering how they could just cut off all ties like that.

### Chapter 12

The quote beginning this chapter is from a Sears Roebuck catalog, urging the reader to look throughout the catalog if the listing is not found in the index. This reflects the fact that each girl mentioned in this chapter finds herself having to scrutinize past actions and how they are shaping present actions.

Tibby is dubious about the first film subject that Bailey has found. His name is Brian McBrian and he is a video game player, whose claim to fame is that he is the high scorer most of the time. Tibby thinks that his very description spells LOSER, so maybe he will film well and be a laugh riot. When they arrive Bailey begins setting up the equipment which surprises Tibby. Brian says hi to them and while Bailey is setting up tells Tibby about his favorite game, Dragon Master. Despite what she had thought earlier, Tibby actually finds herself interested in the game. They film Brian while he plays.





Meanwhile, in Baja, Bridget is still obsessed with her coach. She finds him jogging one morning and joins him. He tells her that she played too aggressively in the scrimmage the day before, and that Molly had had every reason to call her out for it. Bridget agrees and tells him that she was just trying to impress him. They stop jogging and he tells her pointedly that he thinks she is really nice but that she is just too young for him. Bridget doesn't take the hint and tells him that the rules don't matter to her. Eric says the rules do matter to him and jogs off. Later, Bridget goes sightseeing with the team and they visit a volcano called the Three Virgins. Bridget writes Carmen and tells her that if it had been called the Four Virgins, she'd have taken a picture and sent it to everyone.

## Analysis

### Chapters 11-12

The theme of Coming of Age is demonstrated in the situation with Lena. She knows that the right thing to do is to tell the truth, even if it is difficult, but she is unwilling to do so because she is afraid of people being upset with her. She is still not mature enough to grasp the larger picture; that Kostos's reputation is now ruined, the friendship between her grandfather and his long time neighbor has been damaged, and that past experiences shouldn't handicap a person when it comes to determining their worth. Lena is beautiful but instead of embracing it, she is self-conscious and has very low self-esteem. Her ability and willingness to trust anyone is something that keeps her from having a good relationship with her grandparents, with Kostos, and with herself.

Carmen's anger at Krista and Lydia for their perceived abandonment of Lydia's first husband is unrealistic to the reader, but to Carmen, it makes perfect sense. She is, of course, sublimating and displacing her anger and feelings of abandonment by her own father, on Lydia and her children. The theme of Family is demonstrated again as family dynamics lie at the heart of Carmen's disquiet. She doesn't have enough life experience to understand the nature of a divorce or breakup. She's never had a boyfriend, and has never experienced anything of this sort. So, her perception of how things should be, even after a divorce are immature at best.

Perhaps as a result of her illness, Bailey seems to have a good sense for finding interesting people for Tibby to film. She cuts to the chase and seems to see people for who they are, sizing situations up with striking frankness. This is evident when she talks directly to Tibby about her parents and their mid-life change of direction. Additionally, expecting to find a geeky boy playing video games, she instead, finds someone who is driven, ambitious, and incredibly talented at what he does. In many ways, then, Bailey sees people as they really are and not the façade that they place up around them. Something that Tibby knows she needs to learn if she is to be a good film maker.

Tibby's film is becoming a symbol of Tibby's perspective of the world. At the beginning she is set to create a film that is every bit as sarcastic and snarky as she is, devoid of compassion for the subjects she would feature. However, it is Bailey's ability to see through people's masks that allows Tibby to gain a newer perspective on the world, one





that includes admiring someone's ability and talent...something that until she met Brian, she never truly had. The theme of Coming of Age makes a small appearance in this scene as for the first time Tibby is able to engage in some empathy and to realize that she often judges people unfairly.

## **Discussion Question 1**

What is Bailey's ability that allows Tibby to gain a different perspective on her film making?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Discuss the theme of Family and Coming of Age in these chapters.

## **Discussion Question 3**

Discuss Lena's character and why she can't bring herself to tell the truth about Kostos.

## **Vocabulary**

verify, Mensa, proofs, tormenting, placid, capability, scrimmage, forge



# Chapters 13-14

## Summary

### Chapter 13

Carmen is asked by Lydia and Krista to go with them to the dressmaker to pick out bridesmaid's dresses. Just as in almost every occasion when she is introduced, people have a hard time seeing how Carmen is related to the blonde hair blue eyed family. When the dressmaker makes similar comment, Carmen snaps that her mother is Puerto Rican. The dressmaker makes things worse by fussing that Carmen's bridesmaid's dress doesn't fit. Thinking that the dressmaker is making disparaging remarks about her curves, Carmen leaves the dress shop.

The Pants have arrived from Greece and are now in the possession of Tibby. Bailey tells Tibby that they look fantastic on her. Tibby gives Bailey the quick version of the Pant's history. When Bailey asks about Bridget's mom, all Tibby will tell her is that Bridget's mother suffered from depression. Bailey is much better, and asks if she can work on editing the film during the day while Tibby is at Wallman's. Tibby agrees.

Margaret, an older woman who works in the movie theater, is the subject of their next interview. Having worked at the theater for more than thirty years, Margaret has memorized many of the movies and can quote lines from many of them. Tibby doesn't immediately judge Margaret when she meets her, but is braced for some sort of oddness. What she gets, instead, is insight into loneliness, as it strikes her that all Margaret has are the movies. She notices that Margaret is small and withered and most likely has no one to even watch the movies with.

Pushing things to the limit Bridget sneaks into Eric's cabin in the middle of the night. She is all the way in the cabin when she stumbles and makes a noise, waking Eric up. He confronts her, but is still half asleep. They are close for a few tense moments, but Eric tells her that she has to leave before anything happened that they would both regret. Bridget agrees but takes his words to mean that he is very interested in her. She recalls something that her family therapist had said about her, that she was rash to the point of recklessness.

### Chapter 14

A shorter chapter, the reader sees Bailey offering herself up to be interviewed by Tibby for the movie. She tells her to ask her deep and probing questions and that she will answer them truthfully. Tibby asks her what scares her the most and Bailey tells her that she is afraid of running out of time. She says it takes time to figure out people, or for people to figure her out. Tibby boxes up the Pants and sticks a note in the box for Carmen. She says that the Pants look great on her, but other than that, the jury is still out on if they are magical or not.



Lena breaks down and tells Effie what really happened and Effie feels badly for everyone, especially Kostos. Things have gotten worse between the two families and Lena's grandmother is sad to have lost her longtime friends. Effie urges Lena to do the right thing and Lena tells her that she means to very soon.

Carmen receives the pants and puts them on before going down for supper. She decides that she's going to stand up for herself when they start to lecture her about her behavior at the dressmaker's shop. Totally ready to do 'battle' she enters the room. No one says anything. Lydia continues to work in the kitchen, her father doesn't look up from his paper, and the others continue with what they are doing, too. Angry, and feeling invisible, she storms out of the house.

## Analysis

Self-titled a 'suckumentary' Tibby had originally envisioned her movie featuring 'loser' types of people. She thought it would be great to feature human oddities. However, what she has now discovered is that people who seem quirky and eccentric are often people who have the most interesting stories to tell, and who may be hiding a sad story. Tibby's feelings of superiority that she started the summer out with have been replaced with a more mature outlook. This demonstrates the theme of Coming of Age, as well as an introduction to the theme of Identity. She's beginning to determine who she really is, and the one thing that she now knows she is not, is superior. Her worldview and perspective had been mean-spirited and until now, she had not realized it.

Bridget's impulsiveness may have its roots in psychological issues. The reader learns that her mother suffered from severe depression, and that Bridget has seen a therapist that warned her about her impulsive and reckless behavior. Her obsession with Eric, her aggressive tendencies on the ballfield all point to a desperation that maybe even Bridget isn't aware of. This offers the reader another view of Bridget; one that sees her as not only reckless because she is carefree, but a recklessness that is borne out of a self-destructive tendency...one that might have been inherited.

The theme of Identity is most noticeable in Chapter 13 when she goes to the dress shop with Lydia and Krista and the tailor is shocked that Carmen is dark skinned and related to the family. The racist remarks, or insinuations are hurtful and serve to underscore Carmen's already crumbling sense of self. She doesn't look like her father and her body type is different from her step sister's. The fact that the dress doesn't fit her is symbolic of the fact that the life that her father has created for himself, doesn't fit her, either.

The theme of Coming of Age is also presented when all of the girls' summers are considered as a whole. All of the girls went into the summer with one way of viewing the world and others around them. Those ideas are challenged and tested over the summer. Carmen realizes that try as she might she isn't like the new family that her father has embraced, and she has to face racism in the South. Lena is forced to cope with the root cause of her distrust of men and boys, and to see how her unwillingness to let anyone get near her is damaging to everyone involved. Tibby has realized that her



narrow and spiteful view of the world is immature and that the people she has been making fun of are human beings with feelings, stories, and dreams of their own. She has learned empathy and compassion. Bridget is beginning to catch brief glimpses of herself and is beginning to realize that she might need help in keeping herself from going too far with things.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Who is Margaret and what does Tibby realize about her that is different from what she originally assumed?

## **Discussion Question 2**

What is Bailey afraid of and why?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Discuss the theme of Identity as it is exemplified in these chapters.

## **Vocabulary**

cranky, unibrow, caricature, curvaceous, repentant, patented, halfheartedly



# Chapters 15-16

## Summary

### Chapter 15

Carmen, when she exits the house storms off into the woods behind. She paces for a while, hoping that her father will come after her and she can tell him what is on her mind. But he doesn't. After a couple of hours she makes her way back to the house, concerned that maybe her father might have called the police. To her dismay, when she gets closer to the house she sees that all of her father's new family are sitting around the kitchen table having dinner, as if nothing has happened at all. Impulsively she picks up a rock from the ground and pitches it through the window.

Carmen sees her father's horrified face before she turns and runs away. She knows that she will never fit in with this group of people. She runs back into the woods and stays until it is dark. Then, she sneaks back into the house, takes her things, gets to the bus station and heads home. She arrives home and sends the Pants to Bridget along with a note that says she hopes the pants will give her some 'good sense'.

Lena shares that she's tried to find Kostos to apologize, but other than nodding at her once when she waited on him outside of the forge, he's pointedly ignoring her. Bridget writes to Tibby and tells her that she adores nature and being outside.

### Chapter 16

Bridget believes that Eric is the one she wants to lose her virginity to. She tells some of her teammates that she's going to be with Eric that night. There is a soccer match that afternoon and Bridget purposely makes certain to share the ball and to play as a team for a change. Her coach makes her play defense, but in the last minutes of the game she has a chance to make a goal and she goes for it, making the play of the game.

Before she is ready to get up and go to work Tibby hears Carmen outside of her door. She lets her in and Carmen throws herself into Tibby's arms. She tells her everything that happened in South Carolina, ending with the broken window. Tibby calms her down and then asks why she hates them all so much. Tibby says that maybe she's not as mad at Lydia and her kids as much as she's angry with Albert. This makes Carmen angrier and she leaves.

## Analysis

The symbolism of the broken window surfaces in both chapters. The view of family life through the window, the picture without her in it, is different from what Carmen has grown up with and she reacts out of anger, hurt, and jealousy. Tibby is right in her assessment, in that Carmen is really angry at her father for his choices. She is upset



that her father doesn't even seem to notice that she's missing. The fact that he seems happier with this new family, in a way that he never was with Carmen and Christina, is doubly upsetting to her. She is too immature to be able to feel happy for him, and she lashes out. The window is broken, and the picture destroyed for Carmen. While she's aware that it can be mended, she's not sure she wants to see it fixed.

When Carmen returns home and seeks out Tibby, it is apparent that both girls have changed over the summer. Tibby doesn't react as Carmen expects that she will. Instead, Tibby asks her pointed questions and looks at the situation from a more mature standpoint. This upsets Carmen as she thinks that Tibby is judging her. In some ways she is. Tibby's newer, broader perspective, due in large part to her time spent with Bailey, has taught her that life is too short and that they all have amazing lives. She has realized that there are some things that are just not worth getting upset about. She's able to see what Carmen can't and while she is sympathetic she can't support her friend's assertions that Lydia and the rest are evil.

The theme of Identity is demonstrated in this chapter as the reader sees that Tibby has matured into someone who sees a larger picture, and understands that things are not black and white. Carmen, still in the middle of the process, refuses to see an uncomfortable truth and as a result leaves angrily. The theme of Coming of Age is also presented in this scene as it is clear that Tibby has matured, and Carmen has yet to get to that point. Part of the maturity process is acknowledging uncomfortable truths about oneself. Both Lena and Bridget also have that discovery to make.

## Discussion Question 1

Why doesn't Carmen's dad run into the woods after her?

## Discussion Question 2

Compare Tibby to Carmen in Chapter 16.

## Discussion Question 3

Discuss the theme of Identity.

## Vocabulary

fidgety, wrinkly, instinctively, transparent, pried, lopsided, confounded, glutton



# Chapters 17-18

## Summary

### Chapter 17

Lena tries to paint but finds that she just can't get things right. She finally decides that maybe if she goes back to the secret swimming place that maybe she'll be able to paint better there. Once there for a while she hears splashing and she looks over the edge where she sees Kostos swimming naked. He sees her and she realizes as she hurriedly packs up her stuff to leave that this must have been his private spot all along and his finding her that day had been purely a mistake.

Bridget writes a letter to Lena saying that she's about to do something important, life-changing, even. She is restless after she writes the letter and goes for a walk. She thinks about what she is about to do, then thinks about her brother, Perry. She is suddenly very tired and just wants to see Eric. She goes to his cabin where he sees her approaching from the window. He meets her on the porch and they walk into the woods. He tells her that he shouldn't be with her, but they kiss anyway. And then it goes further. Later, after she goes back to her cabin she cries. In all of her fantasies about Eric, it has never included what happened after the kissing. She's not sure how she feels about what happened.

Carmen is wakened by the phone and answers it. It is her mom's boss, who is a lawyer and has no problem calling her at any time of the night or day. Carmen tells him that her mother isn't home and hangs up. She realizes that she's angry with her mother and it shocks her. Her father's wedding is in three weeks but since she left he hasn't called, not even once. She feels a little guilty for just running off, but she's sure that her mother has called to tell him that she's okay. Maybe Tibby was right in some of what she was saying, she considers.

### Chapter 18

Lena is still despondent about the entire situation. Her sister has fared well in the Greek islands and has a new boyfriend. Lena is certain that she will always be the happier of the two of them. She feels badly about Kostos, and starts to draw a picture of him. She is so engrossed that she doesn't notice that he is standing outside of the window. When she turns and sees him he walks away.

Bridget wakes to a barrage of questions from her bunkmates who know she sneaked out to meet Eric. Feeling terribly exposed she tells them that nothing happened and tells them to get out of her face. She skips breakfast and misses the afternoon match. When lunch rolls around, she's still not hungry.

Carmen decides that she needs to pay for the broken window, so she puts her saved money in an envelope. She also wants to write a letter to include, but finds that she



can't manage to write one without sounding angry. She just decides to mail the money without the note.

Lena knows from the letters that she's been getting from Bridget that something is wrong. She is worried about her. She goes down to see her Grandmother and asks her to tell her about Kostos and why he ended up living with his grandparents. Grandmother tells Lena that Kostos's family lived in New York. Kostos's little brother and his family went for a drive in the country, without Kostos. They were in an accident and died. Kostos came to live with his grandparents in Greece after that. Lena tells her grandmother the truth and dissolves into tears. She realizes that other people, despite great sadness and hurt in their life, are still willing to risk falling in love. Both Kostos and Bridget, who'd both lost parents, were still able to reach out. She is ashamed of her choices.

## Analysis

### Chapters 17-18

The section that features Bridget is serious in nature. With her usual abandon and disregard for the consequences, Bridget is brought to a full and complete stop. It has been a game for Bridget, one that she had intended to win. When she does gain his attention, and then has a physical and intimate encounter with him on the beach, she can no longer act as she has previously. She inherently understands that she has crossed through a rite of passage and she's unable to deal with it emotionally. The author does not depict what exactly happened, but only alludes to it. Nor does Bridget speak of it with anyone.

Lena has always considered her extreme beauty as a curse, something that would prevent her from finding true love and happiness. But, she realizes that her introverted ways and her shyness have kept her from also experiencing true joy. Because of her beauty she can't blend in or be one of the crowd. She always stands out. What she admires the most in Kostos is his willingness to risk loving again, even though it can mean getting hurt again, too. She realizes that her inner beauty needs to be the same as her outer beauty. The pictures that she paints, at one point, lack 'light' she says. This is symbolic of her life lacking light, too. The painting shows her inner beauty, something that she is too shy to do herself.

The pond is symbolic of freedom, a freedom that they both enjoy. Kostos swims there to forget the death of his family and the expectations of his family to do something great with his life. Lena went there to swim and shed the baggy clothing she prefers to wear, clothing that hides her body's naturally beautiful curves. In the pond she is herself.

The theme of Coming of Age is apparent in this section as Bridget must come to terms with the very adult step she has taken. Likewise, Lena has begun to realize that she has hurt many people with her silence. She is ashamed and it is this realization that pushes her forward toward the mature decision to tell her grandmother the truth.





The theme of Identity is also demonstrated in this chapter as both Bridget and Lena struggle with a new facet of their own identity. Lena realizes that she will be a lonely person if she doesn't get over the fact that she's physically beautiful, but that it shouldn't mean that she should keep people at arm's length. Bridget has learned that there are consequences to one's actions and that the rules are sometimes put in place to protect people from themselves.

## **Discussion Question 1**

How is Bridget dealing with what happened to her?

## **Discussion Question 2**

What does Lena realize about herself?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Discuss the theme of Coming of Age in these chapters.

## **Vocabulary**

intimacy, deductibles, allergic, barged, blithely, impervious, sputtered



# Chapters 19-20

## Summary

### Chapter 19

Back at camp, Bridget starts to write a letter to Carmen to give her the address and tell her how to send the Pants, but she just can't seem to get started. There is so much she wants to say, and so much that she's too embarrassed to say. She goes out to sit on the porch of her cabin. Eric drops by shortly after and talks with her. He apologizes for what happened and says it was his fault. This makes Bridget angry and she goes back into the cabin, slamming the door. She is finally able to finish the letter to Carmen.

Carmen is the subject of Tibby and Bailey's documentary this time. Carmen tells Bailey that she doesn't think that Tibby will want her to still come over and film because they had a fight. Bailey says it doesn't matter if people love one another. Carmen comes over and is immediately put on the spot when Bailey asks her questions about the wedding and about her dad. Midway through the interview Carmen starts crying saying that she's not angry at her dad. Bailey puts a hand on her shoulder and tells her that it is okay to be angry with him.

Tibby gets off of work the next day and goes home to find that Bailey isn't there, which is unusual. She goes to Bailey's house where a neighbor tells her that Bailey has had to go back into the hospital. She bikes over to the hospital, telling herself that everything will be fine. It isn't. When she arrives Bailey's parents tell her that Bailey's dying. The cancer has come back, and on top of that she has an infection. It doesn't look good. Tibby cries all the way home.

### Chapter 20

Lena writes to Carmen about how she and her grandfather have eaten breakfast together in silence all summer. She vows to learn a little Greek so they can talk before the summer ends.

Lena finds that her paintings have come alive, again. She revisits some of the earlier spots where she'd tried painting once before. One of those places is the Olive Grove. She is there for a while and feels completely free and at peace with herself for once. She decides that she will give this particular painting to Kostos and then will offer him an apology.

Tibby is still so upset about Bailey that she calls in sick to work the next day. She tries to play with Mimi the guinea pig, but when she taps on the cage she sees that Mimi is not moving. She picks Mimi up and she knows that her guinea pig is dead. It is just too much and so she puts Mimi into a paper bag, then puts it into the freezer. She starts to write a letter to the other girls, but is just too distraught to do it.



Lena sends a note to Carmen telling her that she's had enough with sitting back and letting life roll over her. She's decided to learn some Greek so that she can speak with her grandfather. Carmen, meanwhile, has cried herself out and goes to tell her mother that she is upset and angry with her father. She wants her mother to explain to her why it is easier to be mad at everyone else but the one person who was truly making her upset. Her mother said that it is easy to be angry with people she trusts. Carmen thinks she understands.

Tibby receives a phone call from Bailey, but she can't bring herself to answer it. She lets the answering machine pick it up, but even then, she turns the tv up louder so she won't have to hear Bailey's voice.

The final match of the season is being played but Bridget's head is not in the game. She attends and realizes that her clothes don't fit her because she's lost so much weight. She has no energy and her teammates, who are used to her energy and leadership on the field, are confused and angry when she only plays halfheartedly. Molly her coach yells at her and Bridget screams back at her. Then, she walks off of the field in the middle of the game.

## Analysis

### Chapters 19-20

Everything is coming to a convergence in these chapters. The recurring motif of the letter writing is focused upon in these chapters. The letters have served as their connection to one another and to who they are. As the girls begin to attain new understanding of the world and themselves, the letter writing becomes harder. What is telling is that it is Tibby and Bridget that have the most trouble writing the letters. This is because they are also the two girls who have the most trouble dealing with emotions. Tibby used to laugh at emotional people, and Bridget didn't have time to consider them until now. Faced with their own looming crisis they can't write about them in the letters because they can't even verbalize them to themselves or to anyone in their family.

The thread of death, not quite a theme in this novel, shows up several times in the book. Most notably when the reader learns of Bridget's mother's death, Kostos's family, Mimi, and now, Tibby's friend, Bailey. The fact that Tibby can't bury Mimi, let alone acknowledge that she is dead shows her unwillingness to face the unbearable truth....that Bailey is going to die. Tibby had known that Bailey had Leukemia, but Bailey had never seemed sick, and so it was easy to pretend that she didn't have any problems. Now, of course, that illusion has been shattered.

Bridget is not faring well. The reader learns that she has lost weight, is not eating, and has taken to staying in bed all day long. Her teammates are at a loss as to why she is acting the way that she is and as a result they don't play as a cohesive unit on the field. This frustrates the coach who yells at Bridget. Already emotionally fragile, Bridget explodes at her coach and walks off of the field. The encounter doesn't seem to have



been the instigator of this change in Bridget, but rather it has dredged up something that Bridget has kept hidden or suppressed for many years. What this is, the reader isn't told.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Discuss how the idea of 'death' has been a common thread throughout the novel.

## **Discussion Question 2**

How is Tibby handling Bailey's hospitalization?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Why does Tibby put Mimi into the freezer?

## **Vocabulary**

hardship, fatality, finality, basal, carcinoma, leukemia, placate, demonstrative, flamboyant



# Chapters 21-22

## Summary

### Chapter 21

The opening quote is from Ralph Waldo Emerson and says 'What you do speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say.' The reader sees Tibby still ignoring the calls from the Graffman family, who leave a message begging her to please come and visit Bailey. Tibby curls up on the couch, not able to handle the pain that she is feeling about Mimi and about Bailey. She doesn't know what to do.

Carmen decides that she needs to call and have a talk with her father. She knows that she should probably apologize, but she also knows that if she does that, her father will just forgive her and nothing will change. So, instead of apologizing, she tells him how he has bitterly disappointed her, how she was treated by the dress shop lady while Lydia just stood there, how she feels replaced by his new Anglo family. She bitterly sobs into the phone and asks him why he had to leave them and why he never came to visit her more. When she is finished she sits silent allowing the tears to flow down her face. Then, she realizes that the noise on the other end of the line is her father. He's crying as well. Then, he apologizes to Carmen, which shocks her. They finally have the true and honest discussion that they should have had a long time ago.

Later, Carmen goes to visit Tibby but she tells Carmen that she doesn't feel well. While she's standing there Mrs. Graffman (Bailey's Mom) calls and leaves another voice message. Carmen hears it and gives Tibby grief, and then she hands her the Pants. Realizing that Carmen is right, Tibby puts on the Pants and rides up to the hospital. She hopes that she isn't too late. She finds Bailey's room and goes in. Her friend is hooked up to a lot of machines and there are a lot of tubes. Bailey is asleep, but Tibby takes her hand and holds it, anyway.

There is a special festival that Lena and her family attend. After the gathering is over and people start to go back to family parties, Lena goes up to her room to watch her grandparents and Kostos's grandparents having a good time together, again. She is happy that everyone knows the truth now. She sees her sister with her new boyfriend, Andreas. Everyone is dancing and having fun. Lena feels the tears on her face but she doesn't know why she should feel sad. Later, as she stands looking up at the moon from her window, she sees her grandfather doing the same thing. She realizes that of all of them, she is the most like him. This makes her feel encouraged that maybe she will eventually find true love, too.

### Chapter 22

Later, after the partygoers have left, Effie comes into the room she shares with Lena to get a change of clothes. She sees the painting that Lena has done of Kostos and



realizes that her sister is in love with the boy. She sternly tells her sister to tell him how she feels before it is too late.

Tibby falls asleep next to Bailey and in the morning, Bailey wakes her up. Tibby tells her about Mimi, and Bailey tells her to go to work. Tibby doesn't want to go, but she convinces her that Duncan needs her at Wallman's. Carmen is waiting for Tibby in the hallway when she goes to leave. She has brought her a change of clothes. She changes into her Wallman clothing and gives the pants to Carmen.

Carmen goes to the airport, buys a ticket, and flies to South Carolina to attend her father's wedding. She eats the apple from the orderly tray instead of saving it for a later time. She goes into the church where the wedding will be taking place and sits in the back. She sees her father and the rest of Lydia's family at the altar with her father and she feels guilty. She knows that she should have agreed to be a part of it. Her father sees her as he is leaving the church with his new bride on his arm.

Bridget went back to her cabin and now everyone is worried about her. Eric comes by and asks her to go for a walk with him. On the beach he tells her that he is so sorry that he hurt her like he did, that he didn't realize that she was a virgin and hadn't ever had sex before. He says that she acted so much older than she was and that he really liked being with her. He tells her that he wishes that they were both just a little older, when age would not make that much of a difference, because he really does care for her. Bridget seems unaffected by his words, however.

## Analysis

### Chapters 21-22

The quote by Emerson underscores the theme of False Appearances, where people say one thing and do another. This is true of the girls. Bridget said and acted as if she were sexually mature and ready to have a romantic summer fling with Eric. However, in reality, she was not ready and now is having to deal with the emotional fallout. Tibby said that she was Bailey's friend and knew about the cancer, but in the end, she wasn't acting like a friend. It took another one of her friends to help her to see the situation clearly. Carmen, herself, acted as if she didn't care, when in fact she cared so deeply that she was hurt and wounded severely by her father's actions and inactions. Lena has acted as if she didn't care for Kostos but in reality has been in love with him all summer.

The symbolism of the Pants weaves its way throughout the novel, but is prominent in these two chapters. As a symbol of their solidarity and friendship, it serves to give first Tibby, and then Carmen, the courage and strength to follow through on some tasks that they didn't want to do.

The theme of Love is touched upon in this chapter as it focuses on Lena and her feelings for Kostos. Effie, who is the younger of the two sisters, is able to clearly see what Lena is not willing to see...that she is in love with Kostos. She knows that Lena will



forever regret not telling him how she feels and she verbalizes what Lena cannot...that she cares for him. Lena hears what her sister is telling her and agrees.

Bridget also went looking for love, the romanticized childish sort of love, and instead, received a mature and adult type of interaction that she was unprepared for. The description of the interlude leads one to believe that she may have been assaulted before in some way, but nothing is ever said about it. However, what is evident is that Bridget went searching for love in a rash and reckless way, and it speaks volumes to the reader, especially the younger readers, that there is a steep price to be paid for leaping without looking.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Discuss the theme of Searching for Love.

## **Discussion Question 2**

Why did the author include the quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson?

## **Discussion Question 3**

What advice does Effie have for her older sister when she sees Kostos's painting?

## **Vocabulary**

immaculate, wearied, bawling, abound, fortitude, railing, paltry



# Chapters 23-24

## Summary

### Chapter 23

In South Carolina Albert is overjoyed that Carmen came for the wedding. He makes sure that she is included in all of the pictures, though Carmen protests as she's only wearing the Pants. At the reception she dances with Paul, and he tells her that Kelly really was a Skeletor. He says that they broke up. He tells her that she makes her father very happy, even if she doesn't know it. Carmen goes and dances with her father who promises to always be upfront with her about things. Carmen agrees to do the same. Once she goes home she sends the Pants to Lena, telling her that both she and Tibby have found the Pants to be of definite help.

Tibby finishes up at Wallman's, calls her mom and tells her that she's going to hospital, then heads over to spend time with Bailey. Tucker Rowe is near where her bike is parked and notices her for the first time. He asks her if she wants to get a coffee sometime, but she tells him that she isn't interested. She realizes as he saunters away that she's very over him. The lady with the red nails comes out and tells Tibby that she knows that Bailey is sick and where Tibby's been going. She tells her that she's a nice kid.

Lena gets the Pants in a package on the very last day that she's in Greece. She puts them on to give her the courage to speak to Kostos. She goes to find him and finds him working at the forge. He goes over to where she is and they go and sit down on an old wall. Lena shows him the painting and he is surprised and impressed. Lena starts to say what she meant to say, but the words seem to get stuck in her throat. She manages to apologize, again, for the problems with their grandfathers. Finally, she just keeps talking until she finds that she's telling him everything, including how she feels about him. Impulsively, she kisses him, and to her delight, he kisses her back.

### Chapter 24

When she leaves Bailey at the hospital, Tibby goes to the arcade to find Brian McBrian, the first subject that they interviewed. She tells him what has been going on and he is sympathetic. He offers to show her how to play his favorite game, Dragon Master. He tells her that he already knew about Bailey and had rigged a special game controller for her to use in the hospital.

Lena has breakfast with her grandfather one last time. She feels badly that she hasn't learned to speak Greek very well. Still, she consoles herself with the fact that the silence is not uncomfortable any longer. Then, her grandfather speaks English to her, very brokenly. He tells her that she is his girl, and pats her on the arm. Lena grins, and realizes that she does love her grandparents, after all.





Using the special controller that Brian rigged for her, Tibby helps Bailey play Dragon Master. But during the games Tibby can tell that Bailey is failing. Several times she would miss things and then a couple of times she asked when Tibby was coming back over. Later, she asked about Brian, when Tibby had already told her about Brian. She looks up at Tibby and tells her that she's tired, then hands the controller over to Tibby telling her to keep playing the game.

Bridget writes to Lena, telling her she feels "strange." She writes again to say she's frightened. The letter really bothers Lena and she thinks about it all the way home on the flight. She alters her flight plans and decides she will stop in Los Angeles to fly the rest of the way home with Bridget.

Tibby receives a phone call from Mrs. Graffman. Before Mrs. Graffman can say anything Tibby knows that Bailey has died. A few days later she goes to the funeral. Afterwards, unable to rest, she gets out of bed, goes down to the freezer and takes Mimi's body out of the freezer. She gets on her bike and takes Mimi to the cemetery. She digs a small hole next to Bailey's grave and buries Mimi. Tibby sobs heavily, all over again. When she's spent, she vows to not take life for granted to 'keep playing the game' for Bailey's sake.

Lena lands in Los Angeles and goes to Bridget's camp where she finds her still in bed. She manages to get her to come out on the porch where she gives Bridget the Pants. She tells her to put them on first, before they talk. Bridget does, and begins to tell Lena what happened. She says that she feels better just having Lena there.

## Analysis

### Chapters 23-24

The theme of the Importance of Friendship is most apparent in these last chapters. All of the girls are coming back together again and each has changed from their time apart. All have matured in some way or another. Through it all the idea of their friendship, symbolized by the Pants, has sustained them and given them strength and courage. It is this support of loyal and trusted friends that allows each girl to take on new roles and attempt to deal with situations that ultimately mature them and usher them into adolescence.

All of the friends experience death in one way or another. Obviously, Tibby deals with it the most directly, but each of the others also are touched by it. It causes all of them to view life a little differently, and they all have to learn how they best deal with grief. Lena learns of Kosto's family's death, and this changes the way she views him. Bridget is still dealing with the loss of her mother and without her there, her friends fill in that role on occasion, such as when Lena came to her at the camp.

Carmen experienced a metaphorical death in that her relationship, or her fantasy relationship, with her father died. It wasn't a real relationship, she realizes, and was a way for them to avoid talking about what really needed to be said.



The Search for Love turns out nicely for Lena in the end, who finally finds enough courage, thanks to the Pants, to tell Kostos how she feels. One cannot help contrasting this early love and the outcome with the encounter that Bridget had with Eric.

Tibby discovers that Bailey had befriended each and every person that, at first, Tibby had ridiculed as pathetic losers. At the end of the story, she had also come to like them. Thanks to Bailey, she has learned to see the inner beauty of people, and does not judge.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Compare and contrast Bridget's first encounter with love, and Lena's first encounter with love.

## **Discussion Question 2**

Discuss the theme of the Importance of Friendship.

## **Discussion Question 3**

How has death touched all of the girls in one way or another?

## **Vocabulary**

sensible, absence, awe-inspiring, crudeness, dribble, agony, saturated



# Epilogue

## Summary

Epilogue

Carmen talks about the big end of the summer birthday party celebration that they hold at Gilda's Gym. They have all written a summary of their summer directly on the Pants in black ink. They do this because all of their experiences, they feel, have somehow separated them. They are becoming reacquainted with one another, sharing everything that happened to them. They watch Tibby's film together.

## Analysis

Epilogue

The separation that the girls endured over the summer served to mature all of them in some way or another. However, back together again, they reaffirm their friendship and what it means to them all. They all acknowledge that there is too much to tell in its entirety and that it's okay that they keep some things private. The theme of the Importance of Friendship is once again touched upon in this closing chapter, indicating that this friendship will last for many years to come. What they've learned through this summer of separation is that despite great distances they can still depend on the others to care and to be there for them.

## Discussion Question 1

Discuss the final thoughts the girls have on their friendship.

## Discussion Question 2

Why don't the girls tell every detail about their summers to each other?

## Discussion Question 3

What have the girls learned about themselves over the summer?

## Vocabulary

frankness, candid, transformation, demanding, unrelenting, reflection, horrifying, yelping



# Characters

## Carmen Lowell

Carmen begins and ends the novel, in part because she emerges as the leader of the group, and because she is the deepest thinker of the four girls. She is also the original owner of the Pants, and it is her idea to use it as a common symbol of their friendship. Before any of the others fully realize it, Carmen has already intrinsically understood the powerful force that true friendship offers.

Carmen's parents are divorced, something that she has always struggled and wrestled with. She was not privy to the reasons that her parents split up, and at the opening of the book, it is clear that once her father left them, he remained out of her life with the exception of big holidays. Carmen is half Puerto Rican, which brings up identity issues for her throughout the novel. Living in two worlds, straddling two cultures, she often finds herself simultaneously belonging, and not quite belonging, to either group.

When she goes to spend the entire summer with her father, something she's never done before, even though she is fifteen years old, she is faced with this clash of cultures when she sees that her father's world has expanded to include an entirely new family, ready made with blonde haired, blue eyed children. Her difficult reconciliation and acceptance of the situation propels her into a level of maturity that allows her to see her parents in a different light, and to finally make peace with where she fits in.

## Tibby Tomko-Rollins

Tibby is the rebel of the group, choosing to dress in grunge style clothing, and piercing her nose. Because of her choice of attire, many people judge her on her appearance, which makes her angry. Ironically, she does the same thing to people that she sees around her. It isn't until she befriends a young leukemia patient, Bailey, that she begins to gain a more mature perspective on people, and to develop compassion and empathy for others.

Of the four girls, Tibby is the only one not traveling for the summer. She takes a job at the local chain superstore called Wallman's. Most of her first weeks at Wallman's are spent ridiculing the people that work there, or come into the store to make purchases. She labels most of them as pathetic losers. In tribute to the horrible summer that she's already sure she's going to have, she decides to create a documentary, which she sarcastically calls her 'suckumentary'.

Tibby meets Bailey when the younger girl collapses in Wallman's. Tibby rides with Bailey in the ambulance and waits at the hospital until her parents arrive. She later goes to Bailey's home to return the girl's wallet and Bailey's mother invites her in. The two girls become friends and Bailey, who has made peace with her impending death, teaches Tibby important lessons about living.



## Lena Karigalis

Lena has never known her grandparents, but has grown up hearing so many wonderful stories about them. She and her sister, Effie, go to spend their summer in Greece with her grandparents. Lena is strikingly beautiful and turns heads wherever she goes. This upsets her, and as a result she dresses in the baggiest clothes she can find, most days. She also distrusts men in general because she believes that they are only interested in her outsides, and not her insides.

She loves to paint and while she is in Greece has many opportunities to pursue her passion. It is through her art that her inner beauty gets a chance to shine, and in the end, it is her art that allows her to open herself to the possibility of finding true love.

Lena meets a boy while she is in Greece but a misunderstanding causes a summer full of anger, resentment, and unsettledness that leaves Lena feeling guilty and worthless. She also worries that she doesn't care for her grandparents, as they aren't as she expected. As the novel progresses, this changes, she summons the courage to correct the mistake that caused the problems in the first place, and Lena emerges with a greater understanding of who she is.

## Bridget Vreeland

Impulsive, aggressive, athletic, Bridget is the designated 'jock' of the group. Bridget's mother suffered from severe depression for many years and the reader learns that just the previous year, Bridget's mother died. Though the reader isn't given specifics, it is implied that she committed suicide. Bridget is extremely talented on the soccer field, so her summer will be spent in a camp located in Baja, California, Mexico.

Though Bridget makes friends quickly at camp, they are superficial at best. Her true friendship is with the three other girls that she left behind in Maryland. She also falls for one of the coaches working there, a young man of 19 by the name of Eric. They are both attracted to one another, but Eric manages to keep her at arm's length for most of the novel.

Bridget is used to pursuing and attaining any goal she sets for herself, and it is with this single-minded aggressiveness that she continues to pursue and seduce Eric. She watches him and arranges chances to meet up with him and talk. She even convinces the other girls to go with her to a bar in Baja where she knows that the coaches hang out after hours. Once there she and the other girls entice the coaches to dance with them.

Later, Bridget places herself in a situation with Eric and they have sex on the beach. Afterwards, she is devastated emotionally, realizing that she was not ready for such a mature act. It affects her soccer playing, and she becomes introverted and reclusive. It is only when Lena arrives that Bridget comes back to herself.



## Christina

Christina is Carmen's mom. She is Puerto Rican and works as a legal secretary to a lawyer who expects her to be on call at all hours. Though she is not very prominent, it is she who points out the reason that Carmen is unwilling to be angry at her father, providing the insight that Carmen needs in order to make things right for herself.

## Albert

Albert is Carmen's father. He blindsides his daughter on her first day in South Carolina by telling her that he has gotten engaged and that he will have a new family. It is evident that he cares deeply for Carmen, but that he also has the same tendency to avoid conflict rather than face problems head on. It is this tendency that Carmen finally overcomes when she confronts him about the years of anger and hurt that she's harbored over her parent's divorce.

## Lydia

Lydia is Albert's fiancée, who was previously married to an abusive alcoholic. She is very nice to Carmen, but Carmen rejects her summarily. Lydia has two teen children, who are both blonde and represent, at least to Carmen, everything she can't be.

## Krista

Krista is Lydia's youngest child. She is sixteen and doesn't do well in math. She reaches out to Carmen for some help, and eventually they learn to co-exist. Krista never sees her father, and has no desire to.

## Paul

Paul is Lydia's eighteen-year-old son, who is dating a girl named Kelly. Instantly, Carmen decides to make life difficult for Krista and Paul, and when they take her to a party, Carmen immediately tries to ruin things between Paul and his girlfriend. Paul seems to understand what Carmen is feeling and seems to cut her the most slack. He does go to spend time with his real father every month.

## Kelly

Kelly is Paul's girlfriend. She gets the nickname, Skeletor, from Carmen, who labels Kelly as a skinny mean girl. She's not wrong. Before the novel is out Paul has broken up with her.



## Bailey Graffman

Bailey is 12, but she looks 10 because of the leukemia she has been battling for many years. The Graffman family decides to allow her to try and live a 'normal' life, but the gamble doesn't pay off as in the end, she develops an infection that leads to her death.

However, during the time that she is alive, she manages to change Tibby's perspective towards people, and to teach Tibby what living truly entails.

Both Baily and Tibby have an interest in filmmaking, and work collaboratively on Tibby's film. It is this project that provides a scaffolding for the two to become friends. When Bridget dies Tibby vows to never take anything for granted again.

## Angela

Angela has incredibly long fingernails, which she keeps painted red. She works at Wallman's with Tibby, and she is one of the first people that the reader sees Tibby make a snap judgement about. Later, after she's matured due to Bailey's influence, she sees Angela in a different way, realizing that she'd never given Angela a fair chance.

## Duncan Howe

Duncan is Tibby's immediate supervisor at Wallman's. At first Tibby thinks he is an uptight rule nazi, but in the end, she is able to see him as someone whose job means a great deal to him.

## Margaret

Margaret is an older woman who works as the ticket taker at the local movie theater. At first Tibby thinks that she will be one of those characters that she can put in her film that will a laugh riot. However, when she interviews the woman she realizes that there's nothing funny about Margaret, and that she is most likely a very lonely woman.

## Tucker Rowe

Tucker Rowe is the idealized image that all four of the girls have for the 'perfect' boyfriend. He has the look and the style, and is popular. However, at the end of the novel, when Tibby has the chance to go out with him, she sees him as shallow and refuses the offer.



## Brian McBrian

Brian is one of the first people that Tibby and Baily interview. Again, Tibby thinks that she will be filming a total geek. However, once she starts filming him and speaking with him, she finds that he is not only highly intelligent, but that he is super talented. He is also a very happy person, which Tibby envies.

## Kostos

Kostos is a boy living with his grandparents a few doors down from Lena's grandparents. Lena's grandmother invites him over thinking that since he is around Lena's age that they can be friends. However, Lena keeps him at arm's length for most of the novel. Kostos was raised by his grandparents following a tragic car accident many years ago. Kostos is going to be attending University in London the following year. Kostos and Lena share a kiss at the end of the summer.

## Effie Karagolis

Lena's younger sister, who is 14, lives life more fully than her sister. She is the polar opposite of Lena. Vivacious, carefree, and charming, she ends up dating a Greek boy named Andreas.

## Grandma Karagolis

Grandma is Lena's grandmother, and is the only one of her grandparents that speaks English. She is a shameless matchmaker and makes no bones about wanting Lena to date Kostos.

## Grandpa Karagolis

Lena's grandfather is silent throughout most of the novel. He doesn't speak English, so his gestures and smiles are all Lena has to communicate with. At the end of the novel, however, he has taught himself enough English to tell her that he loves her and that they are alike.

## Eric

Eric is 19 and a sophomore in college. He has taken a summer job as a soccer coach at the soccer camp that Bridget attends. In a matter of days Bridget has convinced herself that she is madly in love with him, something that he constantly tries to discourage. Finally, he gives in to his feelings and he and Bridget have an intimate encounter. He feels horribly guilty about it and tries to apologize to her for it.



## **Molly**

Molly is Bridget's assigned team coach. She becomes upset on a regular basis with Bridget because Bridget likes to hog the ball and showboat, instead of being a team player.



# Symbols and Symbolism

## The Pants

The jeans that Carmen buys at the thrift store come to symbolize the strong and powerful influence that all of the girl's friendship has on them. Though they are all very different in temperament, shape, and size, even ethnicity, the jeans look good on each of them. This suggests that where friendship is concerned, differences don't matter as much as the similarities. More than that, each member wears the jeans in a little different way, reinforcing that their greatest gift to one another is the acceptance of who each member is as a person.

## The Plane Trays

Carmen takes a few items off of a plane tray when they are offered to her. She admires the organized and neat way that everything is arranged and in many respects this indicates her frame of mind and her personality. She has predetermined notions of what a family should be like, what a home should feel like, and it indicates that she does not like surprises, which of course she gets when she lands at her father's new home and meets his new fiancé and her two children.

## Mimi the Guinea Pig

Mimi is Tibby's pet guinea pig and represents how fragile life can be. When Mimi dies she also foreshadows Bailey's death. At first, Tibby can't deal with Mimi's death, any more than she can Bailey's impending death, so she puts Mimi in the freezer, effectively putting a hold on her emotional response to the problem. When Bailey dies, Tibby accepts the loss and is able to take Mimi out of the freezer and bury her next to Bailey.

## Documentary

Tibby's film represents her in many ways. At first the tone of the documentary is sarcastic and is geared toward making fun of people. However, with Bailey's direction, Tibby realizes that it is more interesting to truly film and 'hear' people's stories. The documentary, at the end, is thoughtful and compassionate, just as Tibby is.

## Lena's Painting

Lena's painting is representative of her internal landscape. She is beautiful on the outside, but yearns for others to see who she is on the inside. Her art is her way of doing that. It is very telling when, in Chapter 4, she says that there's just no light in her paint. That it is flat and dull. This is because she feels guilty about the problems she's



caused between Kostos's family and hers. In the end, though, her paintings come to life and when she gives one to Kostos, it is her way of sharing that part of herself with him. He responds by kissing her.

## **Brian's Video Game**

This game is a vehicle for self awareness, for both Tibby and for Bailey. When Bailey is so ill in the hospital, Brian rigs a controller so that she can play from her hospital bed online with both he and Tibby. Tibby realizes, while playing the game, that happiness can come from stringing small moments of pleasure together into longer span of time. Bailey's final bit of wisdom to Tibby is that she keep playing the game, because the thrill of playing it, is the ultimate win.

## **Tucker Rowe**

Tucker is a character in the novel, but he is also a symbol. He represents the 'ideal image' that the girls originally have for a boyfriend, but in the end, Tibby and the other girls, discard this idea for the reality that they all seek.

## **Sleeping Under the Stars**

This represents how huge life feels for the girls at that time.

## **The Secret Pond**

The pond in Greece is a place that represents freedom. Both Kostos and Lena use it as a sanctuary away from the pressures and expectations of the world and themselves.

## **The Broken Window**

Carmen sees the broken window and also realizes that she was still broken. She's not sure how she feels about that, but figures that it could be repaired. The window represents her relationship with her father. In the end, she puts money into an envelope and sends it so that he can fix the window.



# Settings

## Bethesda, Maryland

Though all of the girls are from Bethesda, it is only Tibby and Bailey who remain there for the summer. It is shown to be a nice sized town with a collection of interesting people, some that Tibby determines to capture on film. It is also the return point for all of the girls when their summer ends.

## Baja, California, Mexico

This is where Bridget's soccer camp is located. Since it is out of the country, an element of the exotic is introduced. This is where she aggressively pursues Eric and it has unintended consequences.

## Greece

This is where Lena and Effie spend their summer getting to know her grandparents. The landscape of the island where her grandparents live shows that it is quite beautiful with olive groves and hidden pools of blue water.

## South Carolina

Carmen flies to South Carolina to meet with her father. He has moved from Maryland and has been living in South Carolina for some time. He used to live in an apartment there, but surprises Carmen by telling him that he now has a house...and a new family. Carmen dislikes everything having to do with South Carolina, and ends up running into a racist dress maker while she is there that doesn't help her opinion of the place.

## Wallman's

This is the department store where Tibby works. She comes to know most of the people that she works with in a new way throughout the summer. This is also the place where she meets Bailey, a girl dying from leukemia who teaches her important life lessons.



# Themes and Motifs

## Friendship

Of all the themes inherent in the book, the theme of Friendship is the overriding theme. Though they value their friendship at the beginning of the novel, a more mature outlook towards it begins to develop when they spend their first summer apart since their birth. Their understanding of how powerful true friendship can be emerges throughout the entirety of the novel.

Carmen, when she arrives in South Carolina, to find that her father has adopted an entirely new family, immediately reaches out to her friends. She also finds that it is difficult being without them, and for the first time realizes how much all of them leaned on each other. The girls provide a sounding board for Carmen, who is the deep thinker of the group. Without them around, she bottles up her feelings which leads to the volatile confrontation and the breaking of the window at her father's new home. She understands how much they help her understand who she is and help her to hold on to her own self-identity.

Bridget doesn't express herself outwardly, but she is also extremely reliant on her friends. When her mother died, her emotional support system died, too. Because her friends know her background and her history, they are often Bridget's self-appointed monitors, telling her to be cautious, to think things through. Without them with her at camp, Bridget engages in activities and takes risks that they would never have allowed her to do.

Tibby's understanding of the true power of friendship is shaped by her short time with Bailey, a girl dying from leukemia. Tibby avoids being Bailey's friend for the longest time, but Bailey's enthusiasm for life and people becomes a curiosity for Tibby. Because of this, Tibby begins to view people differently, and to have compassion for those who are lonely, rejected, or displaced. More than ever she comes to realize what a true gift friendship is, because it means never having to be alone.

Lena also realizes something about friendship. She realizes that true friends see beyond the physical and like a person for who they are on the inside. When she is apart from her friends, she retreats into herself as she doesn't trust that the people who are around her to like her for who she is, and not what she looks like. Her friendship with the girls is reinforced as she realizes how much she appreciates the fact that they allow her to be who she is and that they are able to look past the superficial.

## Coming of Age

All of the girls are fifteen at the beginning of the summer, and as such are facing issues and situations that they have not faced before. Carmen must begin to view her father, not as the man that left her and her mother, but as a man who has a right to be happy



again. She also must learn to see him as a man capable of making mistakes and having weaknesses, and loving him anyway. This takes most of the book for Carmen to come to terms with, but when she does, remarkably, she also develops a stronger sense of self than before.

Tibby's transformation occurs because of her short time spent with Bailey. In Bailey she finds someone who is open and brutally honest about life, love, and happiness. Her sense of self is fully developed and it is something that Tibby envies about her, among many things. Through Bailey's influence, Tibby comes to a place of acceptance, not only of her friend's death, but of the differences in all people. She is able to see that the variety and wide diversity that exists among people is actually a strength and not a weakness. As a result, Tibby becomes less sarcastic, less rebellious, and is able to be compassionate, empathetic, and caring.

Both Lena and Bridget have crisis of personality. Lena is painfully shy owing to the fact that she is stunningly beautiful, which she views as a curse. As a result, with the exception of her friends, Lena distrusts anyone wanting to be her friend, in particular, men and boys. This has made her a very lonely person. Her search for love is thwarted by this immature vision and conception of the world. It is only when she sheds it and reaches out to Kostos that she begins to move toward the type of maturity that will lead to happiness and love.

Bridget, who is admittedly, the most outgoing of all of the girls, still has her feet firmly planted in immaturity. The attitudes and actions that brought her through fifteen years of life are still her operating style, but in this instance, they betray her. She begins to have feelings for Eric that she has not had for any other boy, and without a mother to ask questions of, or to guide her, she proceeds under her own steam. The results devastate her and she learns her lesson about being impulsive.

## Looking for Love

All of the girls are looking for love in the novel, but not all of it is of the romantic variety. Carmen, for example, wants to be closer to her father. However, she has never understood or forgiven him for leaving her or her mother. As she's gotten older she's never asked him about the divorce, and he's never broached the topic; both of them patently avoiding the topic. However, it is this very avoidance that has hurt their relationship and made love and trust between father and daughter difficult. Carmen is only able to find this connection with her father when she is able to summon the courage to confront him with her deeply held feelings of hurt and anger, and then, to accept him for who he is.

Tibby starts out the novel fixated on Tucker Rowe, the high school crush, and every girl's dream. However, what she eventually realizes is that she's not been necessarily been searching for romantic love as much as a sense of connection, and of making a difference in someone's life. When she meets Bailey she attains this, and not only gains that connection, but develops a sense of self-worth for herself and for others.



Lena desires very much to be in love and to have someone appreciate and like her for who she is, both on the outside and on the inside. Kostos, initially, represents everything she's come to distrust, and as a result she holds him at arm's length. Overcoming her own preconceived notions about love and males, in general, allows her to open herself up to the possibilities that are out there.

Bridget also pursues love, but in her case it seems to come from a case of desperate need, the need to lose herself in something so big and romantic that she doesn't have to face her inner demons. This is part of the reason that she plays soccer so aggressively and puts her full attention into it. However, when she achieves her goal of being with Eric, it does not have the intended results.

Looking for love is shown to be a bumpy road for all of the girls. Both Carmen and Lena manage to reach their destination and goal, and find some measure of happiness because of it. The girls have learned what it means to have an open and honest line of communication with someone. While Tibby does make that connection, it is severed by Bailey's death, leaving her to make new associations and decisions. It can't be overlooked that the author seems to have compared the relationship that developed between Lena and Kostos, to Bridget and Eric. Whereas one encounter is filled with tenderness and care, the other is filled with guilt and secrecy.

## Family

The role of family is very important in the structure of the book, though all of the girls have very different backgrounds. Tibby still has two parents at home, as does Lena. The other two girls do not, one having experienced a death, and the other a divorce. However, the need for family, for an anchor is important as the girls' individual stories unfold.

It is clear that each girl's family has had a hand in shaping who they are. Bridget's life-view has been shaped by the tragedy of her mother's death (most likely a suicide) just the year before. That it was related to depression also gives the reader some insight into Bridget's reaction toward the end of the story. Bridget worries that she might be like her mother, and it frightens her to the point that she acts rashly. As a result, her outgoing behavior, her identity as a jock and a party girl, all stem from her inability to deal with her mother's death.

Tibby has also been shaped by her family. She mourns the family dynamic that included only the three of them. With the addition of her two new siblings, who are easily 12 years younger than her, her ordered world is shaken. Her parents also go through a change and are no longer who they were when Tibby was younger. There is so much change surrounding her family dynamic, that Tibby struggles with her own. It has made her rebellious, cynical, and bitter in some regards.

Both Lena and Carmen's stories center on their family. Lena goes to Greece to meet grandparents that she's never known, while Carmen goes to spend the summer with her



father, whom she's never gotten to know fully. Lena struggles to figure out how she fits with her grandparents, how she should feel towards them, and how she is related to them. It is her identification with her grandfather that gives Lena the assurance that she belongs.

Carmen's expectations are centered around wanting to have a better relationship with her father. Unfortunately, it doesn't play out as she intends. Instead, she has to reevaluate her place in his life, and her definitions of family are rewritten.

## False Appearances

All of the girls project false appearances to the world, but not to each other. The friendship allows all of them to be themselves, and to allow others into their world. The false appearances take all sorts of forms throughout the book.

Bridget is one of the first, and chief culprits, of the false appearances. She lies about her age to Eric, pretends to be more mature than her years, and as a result it backfires on her in unforeseeable ways. The false sense of self that she projected landed her in a position that was the exact opposite of what she had hoped to attain.

Tibby is also a master of false appearances. She projects an image of the rebellious creative spirit, but in reality, she is a fifteen year old girl who feels displaced by two new siblings and her parent's midlife career changes. When people see Tibby they immediately assume that she is a drug user and a thief. This is played out in the first few chapters when she begins working at Wallman's.

Later, the false appearances are linked to false assumptions when Tibby continually judges people by their appearance. She assumes things about people before she knows the truth about them. Later, of course, she is able, like Bailey, to see through the masks that people throw up, to see the true beauty of the person inside.

## Identity

All of the girls struggle with their sense of self. Who they are, who they want to be, and who they are expected to be continually collide. Often, in their attempts to reconcile all of the pressures, they make choices that lead to disastrous consequences.

For example, Lena doesn't believe that she fits in with her family in Greece. She is not charming and talkative like her sister, and she doesn't even look that much like anyone else in her family. It is only when she begins to observe her grandfather and get to know him that she begins to understand where her quiet nature comes from. Because she is so beautiful, it sets up an interesting chain of events that stem from her refusal to be viewed as only a pretty girl. When she begins to focus on her paintings, and stops worrying about what others think, she attains a level of understanding for herself. This allows her to have the courage to tell the truth about what happened with Kostos, and it allows her to open her heart up to the possibility of love.





Carmen's identity is challenged almost from the beginning. Half Puerto Rican, her dark looks and dark hair are a stark contrast to the new Anglo family her father is marrying in to. She sees this as a direct rejection of her and her mother. As a result, she struggles to figure out just where she fits in to her father's life, and who she is as a whole. She doesn't like being the emotional hot head, but finds herself thrust into that role often. It is only when she confronts the root cause of the anger that she is able to gain back her sense of self and have a serious discussion with her father.

Both Tibby and Bridget face their own sets of problems, both of them revolving around a death. It shakes them both to their core, and rearranges all of their previously held ideas about who they are and where they fit in, in their families, and with their friends. Tibby comes to the realization of who she is by the end of the movie, and is able to move on. Bridget, the reader is left wondering, is still quite fragile and damaged at the end of the book.



# Styles

## Point of View

The point of view shifts, depending on the chapter. It may be either first person, an unnamed narrator, speaking in a third person limited viewpoint. The author purposely uses this constantly shifting point of view to mimic the topsy-turvy world of a young teen girl. Most of the first person narration occurs with Carmen, whose viewpoint both opens and closes the book. She tells the reader about the acquisition of the pants, the determination to use it as a symbol of their friendship, and about the Sisterhood.

Other chapters are written in third person, limited, and feature the other girls. It allows for more detail to be included and tells the story objectively. In those chapters that feature an unnamed narrator, the interior thoughts of the girls, only, are featured. Additionally, the author utilizes letters that the girls write to one another. These are written in first person.

## Language and Meaning

Consistent in tone, this book is written in an almost conversational way. Often humorous, sarcastic, and insightful, the language changes slightly depending on which character is being featured. So, for example, when the chapter is focused on Tibby, the language is hipster, sarcastic, and irreverent, whereas when it is focused on Bridget, the tone and pacing is fast, disjointed, and highly unrealistic.

## Structure

The book is comprised of 24 chapters, a prologue and an epilogue. All of the book moves forward in a tight linear fashion with no flashbacks. The author uses the four girls and their separate stories to form a cohesive story that moves the story forward towards a convergence at the end.



## Quotes

Nowadays our mothers act like friendship is an elective—falling somewhere down the list after husbands, children, career, home, money.

-- Carmen (Prologue)

**Importance:** Carmen talks about how all of the girls knew one another since before they were born as their mothers were all in an exercise class for pregnant women. She laments that their mothers didn't value their friendship more, and believes that they don't see the value of friendship.

Tonight we give the Pants the love of our Sisterhood so we can take that love wherever we go.

-- Bridget (chapter 1)

**Importance:** Bridget says this as the friends are consecrating the Pants as the symbol of their love for each other.

She'd decided the morning after the vow of the Pants that she was going to record her summer of discontent in a movie - a suckumentary, a pastiche of lameness.

-- Tibby (chapter 1)

**Importance:** This is how Tibby views the world and is also what motivates her to do the movie in the first place.

The sunset burned with a billion watts of light. There was no light in her paint."

-- Lena (chapter 4 paragraph 1)

**Importance:** This quote indicates that there is no light or life in Lena's emotional life, either. The art represents her, so when she says that there's no light in her paint, she really means in her own life, too.

Her parents used to talk about simplicity all the time, but nowadays they seemed to spend all their time getting new stuff and not having very much time to play with it."

-- Tibby (chapter 8 paragraph 12)

**Importance:** This shows Tibby's concern about her own identity. Her parents used to be free spirits and unconcerned about material things. Now, everything has shifted completely.

Carmen felt guilty. Why was she being this way? Why couldn't she stop, and be nice?"

-- Carmen (chapter 10 paragraph 3)

**Importance:** This is the first time that Carmen realizes that she's being mean to her father. She knows that she shouldn't feel the way that she does, but she can't seem to help herself.



I do," Carmen confirmed. "My mother is Puerto Rican. She speaks with an accent. She says a rosary."

-- Carmen (chapter 13 paragraph 8)

**Importance:** This is how Carmen responds when the dressmaker makes a racist comment.

Her father wasn't looking for her. He wasn't calling the police. He was sitting at the dining room table, with piles of roast chicken, rice, and carrots on his plate."

-- Carmen (chapter 15 paragraph 10)

**Importance:** This is when Carmen realizes that her father wasn't going to come looking for her, and has gone on with his dinner...like he's apparently going on with his life.

This time he was naked and she was clothed, but like last time, she was the one shrinking and blushing and he was the one calmly standing there."

-- Lena (chapter 17 paragraph 8)

**Importance:** This is where Lena realizes that the secret swimming place is really Kostos's place and that she's been mistaken all along about Kostos.

I should have sent you away last night. I shouldn't have followed you when I saw you pass by my door. . . . I was wrong. I take responsibility."

-- Eric (chapter 19 paragraph 8)

**Importance:** Eric tries to apologize for letting his feelings run away with him. Bridget isn't in a place where she can receive it well, though.

Why wasn't your old family good enough? Why did you move away? Why did you promise me . . . we'd be closer than ever?"

-- Carmen (chapter 21 paragraph 20)

**Importance:** This is a pivotal point for Carmen when she confronts her father about his new choices, and his old choices.

Maybe happiness didn't have to be about the big, sweeping circumstances, about having everything in your life in place."

-- Tibby (chapter 24 paragraph 21)

**Importance:** Tibby realizes this when she spends time with Brian and realizes an important lesson about inner peace and happiness.