

Tell the Wolves I'm Home Study Guide

Tell the Wolves I'm Home by Carol Rifka Brunt

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Plot Summary

Tell The Wolves I'm Home: A Novel by Carol Rifka Brunt is a heartbreaking tale about a young girl named June who discovers that her favorite Uncle Finn, who is also her godfather, has AIDS and is going to die. Before he dies, Finn, who is a world renowned artist, paints a portrait of June and her sister Greta which she later learns he titled "Tell The Wolves I'm Home."

Finn dies feeling that the painting is unfinished. His partner had promised Finn that he would see to it that the painting was finished, and he does. June is devastated by Finn's death. In her own private misery, she doesn't recognize that she is not alone in the struggle to let Finn go. As a man who touched many hearts, Finn is missed terribly by her mother, her sister, his partner, and the world that mourns the loss of his contributions to the art world.

When June first meets Finn's partner Toby, she does so in secret, knowing that her family would not approve. In fact, June had been told that Toby was directly responsible for Finn's death. As June gets to know Toby, she learns that this is not the truth, but simply a concession Toby made in order to ensure Finn would still be able to see his nieces. Toby, also inflicted by this terrible disease, gets to know June after Finn's death. He had been hidden from her and Greta for the entire time as a punishment and condition that June's mother placed on Finn for being part of their lives. Her daughters were never to know Toby, to see Toby, or even hear of his existence. In this way, she has a focus for the anger that she feels against the disease that is taking her brother from her.

June is compelled to understand what her Uncle Finn saw in Toby. While she at first resents him simply because she has been programmed to do so, she soon understands that he was a large part of her Uncle's life. In fact, the more she learns about Toby, the better she understands. The drama unfolds slowly for June, who continues to slip out in secret to meet with Toby. Her sister Greta is slipping further and further into an abyss. Drinking herself into a regular stupor, she vents her anger at an Uncle who always seemed to favor June and at the world. Despite her Uncle Finn's death, June did not return to the inseparable bond they once shared. Greta's anger reveals itself in dozens of mean and insensitive barbs and behaviors, including several incidents in which she orchestrates June finding her in the woods. She is covered in leaves and too drunk to get home alone. Eventually, this family will reveal all, and June will find a way to bring Toby into their midst for his final hours, finding selflessness and love in herself and those around her.



Chapters 1 - 3

Summary

Tell The Wolves I'm Home: A Novel, by Carol Rifka Brunt, is a heartbreaking tale about a teenaged girl named June who discovers that her favorite Uncle Finn, who is also her Godfather, has AIDS and is going to die. Before he dies, Finn, who is a world renowned artist, paints a portrait of June and her sister Greta, which she later learns he titled "Tell The Wolves I'm Home". Fourteen-year-old June and her 16-year-old sister, Greta, are taken to Finn's apartment in the city regularly, during which Finn continues his portrait of the girls. While they are there, sitting patiently, their mother spends her time in Finn's kitchen, making tea and organizing his cabinets to pass the time, unable to sit with him; unable to watch her brother die.

This time the girls sit for an hour and a half, listening to Mozart's Requiem - a secret passion that June and Finn share. On the day Finn finally shows them the painting for the first time, he tells them to look deeply into it. June immediately notices that he painted her slightly in the foreground, although they hadn't been sitting that way. Greta holds a sprig of mistletoe over June and Finn. In an instant, he sees her hesitation, and tenderly kisses her on the top of her head. At home later, she will shower three times and still secretly wonder if she is at risk of catching AIDS from that simple contact. Despite her fears, she still dreams of all that is possible, or impossible, despite what was right or wrong.

June likes to go into the woods behind the middle and high school buildings, walking until she can no longer hear the traffic. She especially likes to follow a brook to her favorite place - a crumbling stone wall where a rusted old bucket is nailed to a tall maple for sap. Once there, she likes to imagine she is in England, in the Middle Ages. She dons an old Gunne Sax dress of Greta's and a pair of black leather boots Finn bought her during a medieval festival she went to him at the Cloisters. Finn is the only person June has ever told about her fantasy, and about how she wishes she could turn back time.

The portrait is never really given to June and Greta because Finn never officially finishes it. He keeps asking them to return, even though he is only working on the background. The only one who complains is Greta who insists she has better things to do with her Sundays, but June is glad she can spend more time with Finn. In January, the girls become tax orphans again as their parents, both accountants, immerse themselves in an ever busier schedule until the season is finished. It has been that way since they were children and they are both used to it now.



Analysis

It is late December of 1986, a week before Christmas, in a time when AIDS and HIV are tragic, sexually complicated diseases that often spell a death sentence for the sufferer. The social stigma attached to the disease only complicates life more for those afflicted, and for their loved ones, as the fear of contracting the disease often trumps good sense or compassion. June and her older sister, Greta, visit with their Uncle Finn who is painting their picture. It is a way for Finn to give them something of himself before AIDS takes his life, and also an excuse to spend more time with his favorite niece, June. For a long time, June has ignored his illness, refusing to believe he is sick or to accept that his illness would take him from her, but now she finally understands that she will never be able to live with him when she grows up; and that AIDS isn't just a rotten mistake that someone made when diagnosing her favorite uncle.

Greta and June's mother had refused to let them go to Finn's at first, thinking it was macabre that they should sit there knowing each time could be the last time they see their uncle, and he them. Finally, she relents though, unable to deny him the company of the girls which is the only thing he asks of her. Subconsciously perhaps she was using the girls as a way to punish him for the position he now found himself in. June watches her sister on the way to Finn's, studying her as a way of avoiding thoughts of Finn and the reality of his situation, struggling with the whole concept of AIDS. It is a subject her family does not discuss, and one that her mother, Danielle, seems embarrassed to admit is afflicting Finn, almost as though she thought he'd brought it on himself.

Now, just a week before Christmas, Greta pulls out mistletoe and threatens to hold it over June and Finn. Greta knows full well that her threat scares June, catching her between her fear and lack of understanding of AIDS and her unwillingness to spoil the special relationship that she and her Uncle Finn share by flinching or pulling away in fear. Greta enjoys making people uncomfortable, and picking on June is her way of displaying her jealousy of the relationship June and Finn share. June tries to brush it off, as neither of them know much about AIDS or how it is transferred or contracted, but there is still a great deal of room for her private fears.

When they get to Finn's apartment, their mother makes tea, using a spectacular Russian teapot that Finn saves for 'only the very finest' company. Danielle hardly ever looks at her brother, still struggling to accept his illness herself. On their last visit June had already noticed how much thinner Finn was. This time, he tells them it won't be long now as they are sitting for him, and the dual meaning of the sentence isn't lost on either of the girls. That day is also the first time Finn shows them the painting, telling them to look at it closely. They do, and June sees that he's painted her slightly in the foreground even though that isn't the way they were sitting. She doesn't want it to be finished, however, because that would spoil her opportunity to keep coming back. Finn intuitively knows what June is actually saying and agrees that perhaps it isn't quite done. Later June thinks about her feelings for Finn. She hasn't been able to admit to anyone that she loves her Uncle, and has long dreamed of growing up and spending the rest of her



life with him, not just as an Uncle, but in a much more personal and intimate way. Right or wrong, she can't help how she feels and knows how deeply she will miss him.

June loves to go into the woods by herself. She has a special place that she goes to where in the silence of the forest, she can transport herself to another time and place. Finn introduced June to the Medieval Arts and it was one of special things that they shared - a love for the time period. June often wishes she could turn the clock back so she could live in those days instead believing it to be a simpler time in many ways. June loves that in medieval times survival was simply a matter of knowing your surroundings, and she was much more comfortable with that idea than with trying to navigate the often complicated and confusing time period she currently lives in. June isn't the social butterfly her sister is, and she finds it difficult to fit in with her peers. Next to Finn, they all seem so immature to her. Since returning to that time period or any other is impossible, she does the next best thing - donning clothing as close to period correct as possible, and isolating herself far enough in the woods that she can almost believe she is there. Finn is the only one she'd ever told about her times in the woods.

June and Greta are never actually given the painting since officially, it was never finished. Greta stops going to Finn's in January, despite June's reminder that soon Finn will be gone. Greta knows that June is Finn's favorite and makes no secret of the fact that she feels as though her presence isn't really required or desired by either of them. It is clear to the reader that Greta is jealous of the close relationship that Finn and June have. Instead, Greta implies that June is still too young to be a part of whatever she is doing. Tax season begins again - and during those seasons in the past, Greta had looked after June. They were close in those days, but now, Greta snaps at June when she reminds her of them.

June tries to get her mother to allow her to go to Finn's alone, but Danielle keeps putting it off until 'next time' maybe. To June it almost feels as though she is competing against her mother for what little time Finn has left.

Discussion Question 1

What are the prevailing attitudes towards HIV/AIDS in this time period?

Discussion Question 2

What struggle does June wrestle with where Finn is concerned and how does Greta exploit this?

Discussion Question 3

How do June, Greta and their mother each feel about the painting Finn is doing of the girls and why?

Vocabulary

Macabre, magnificent, convinced, menacing, cloisters, revolting, medieval, officially, trundling.



Chapters 4 - 6

Summary

Of all the schools in the area, the school attended by June and Greta puts on the best musicals each year. This year Greta is cast as Bloody Mary in the play *South Pacific* because she sings very well and she can be made to look Polynesian. June is at home alone the first time that Toby calls. She hangs up and he calls back, telling the answering machine he is calling about Finn. June dials her Uncle's number, and the man picks up so she hangs up.

June learns that Finn is dying from AIDS when her mother takes her to the Mount Kisco Diner. June and her mother sit in a booth with dessert in front of them when her mother tells her that her favorite person is the whole world is dying from AIDS.

Finn's funeral occurs on a Thursday one week after the phone call that rattled June. When they get to the funeral home, a man sitting on a low brick wall across the street upsets her mother. When June asks who it is, Greta finally tells her that he is the one who killed their Uncle, shunning him, and loudly announcing that he was not invited. Their father tasks them with making sure the man doesn't come in, and he doesn't try. At the funeral home, June realizes that she is hardly entitled to feel the kind of grief that she does although in her mind, her mother and grandmother have that right.

Analysis

June is at home alone the first time Toby calls asking to speak to her mother. It is the first time that the author introduces Toby, and it is clear from June's reaction that she had no idea who Toby was before that. Finn kept this secret from her despite how close they were. June offers to take a message and is shocked when the man addresses her by name, revealing that he obviously knew much more about her than she did about him. She is suddenly so inexplicably frightened that she tells him to call back later and hangs up. Remembering every horror show she's ever seen, she goes through the house locking windows and doors and when the phone rings again, she lets the machine pick it up. The same voice quietly apologizes for frightening her. She listens as he admits he is calling about her Uncle Finn, and for a brief moment, June feels a glimmer of hope that has no basis in reality because she knows that Finn is gone. Despite that, she calls his home number anyway, desperate to believe that his death was all a terrible mistake, even now. A man answers and for a heartbeat she almost convinces herself Finn is there, but when she says his name into the phone quietly, the same voice sadly admits he is not Finn before June hangs up. She hides in her room, not wanting to deal with any of it.

June remembers Greta viciously telling her that she knew about Finn's illness long before her. June knows that Greta was probably telling the truth, even though her



intentions were mean when she revealed that little tidbit. Greta hadn't been there when June had found out the truth about her Uncle. Over dessert in a diner, June's mother told her that her Uncle Finn was dying. She could have delivered this truth with more tact, perhaps starting by mentioning the fact that he was very sick, but June's mother doesn't sugar coat it. In a surreal moment, the cheerful waitress arrives with pie and June can't believe she had even ordered it by then.

Finn's funeral is a closed coffin affair for which June is grateful, having worried about how she would handle things otherwise. Arriving at the funeral home, June's mother is panicked and angry sounding when she tells their father that Toby is there. June still isn't sure who the man is and asks, but Greta is at her meanest when she tells June to shut up. Once the two girls are alone, Greta reveals that she holds the man personally responsible for Finn's death. It is clear by her attitude that she truly believes this, and resents him for it. June understands that he must have been Finn's boyfriend, but she can't recall ever having met him or why her Uncle would keep such a big secret from her. Instead, she resolves to believe that her sister didn't know about him until then either, sure that if she had, Greta would have taunted her about it. Inside, June knows that no one really knew how she felt about Finn and she struggles to contain the degree of sorrow she feels, knowing that the rest of her family wouldn't understand the depth of her loss. Sadly, the one person who can relate to the emptiness she feels is the one man that everyone is telling her is responsible for her uncle's death.

Discussion Question 1

Why is it most likely that Finn never revealed Toby to June?

Discussion Question 2

What seems to be the most likely reason that Greta is so short and impatient with June?

Discussion Question 3

Why is Toby reluctant to go in to Finn's funeral?

Vocabulary

Choreographer, tapestry, entombed, suffocate, renaissance, taunted.



Chapters 7 - 9

Summary

June walks through the woods, this time going further than she usually did. Lying down in the snow, her thoughts are a jumble of Finn, his cremation, the funeral home, and Toby. She hears a long and mournful howl and sits up as a second voice joins it. Then, more voices join. Their voices seem to come from everywhere. For a brief moment, she is transported to the Middle Ages - a time when wolves would hunt and consume people foolish enough to be caught in the woods. She tells the woods she isn't afraid, and then she runs back to the school.

One morning, not long after Finn's funeral, Greta stops June on her way down to breakfast and invites her to a party being thrown by one of the people doing the lighting for South Pacific. June hesitates, because she and Greta haven't been close for some time, but then she agrees on the off chance that more was going on than met the eye. Besides, June tells herself, Greta will be gone in six months, having received early acceptance to Dartmouth, and it was really her last year with her. Greta promises to help her with makeup excited that she has agreed.

and then announces that they are back like they used to be and that she would help her to forget all about Uncle Finn. Without thinking, June tells her she doesn't want to forget Finn, and Greta's face changes. The joy is gone, replaced with loathing and repulsion.

Part of the problem between Greta and June is their different godparents. Their mother had explained that Finn simply wasn't ready when Greta's turn came, but he was with June. Greta felt as though June got lucky and she missed out.

Analysis

June loves to be in the woods after a fresh snowfall most of all, when all evidence of other people is covered with a fresh white layer hiding the garbage left behind. It is easier to believe she is someone special even if she knows she isn't. She pretends to be a boy, as only boys are sent out to hunt and provide, and creeps through the woods looking for deer sign, trying not to think about Finn and the secrets he kept from her. This is the first time that the author introduces wolves into the story, howling in the woods and bringing June out of the forest at a run. She wishes Finn had been buried instead of cremated so that she had somewhere to go to be close to him. She remembers Toby outside the funeral home and considers their relationship, envying the man for having what he had with Finn although she doesn't know him. Until Finn died, June hadn't realized she was lonely.

The relationship between the sisters is revealed when Greta invites June to a party and June is immediately suspicious. Her sister is not one for acts of kindness toward her these days, so she suspects a hidden agenda. June has always felt like somewhat of a



social misfit next to her more beautiful sister Greta. June is a bit of a loner who doesn't particularly like crowded environments and usually comes away from such events feeling as though she's made a fool of herself. Part of that likely stems from the fact that she is built like her father - stout and big boned while Greta is gorgeous. Greta is also more of a social butterfly, fitting in easily wherever she goes, regardless of the crowd which is surprising since she is younger than all of her classmates. Normally, that might have made a child insecure, but she had kept this secret from her peers, even getting help from their mother who quietly adds a candle to her cake each year to perpetuate the illusion that Greta is older when in truth she'd just skipped a year. June and Greta had drifted apart when Greta started high school, leaving June in middle school behind her. Greta made new friends while June spent time with Finn. When Finn died, Greta believed that her relationship with June would go back to the way it used to be. This begins in her mind with the party invitation when she makes the mistake of telling June that soon she'll forget all about Finn. The idea is unthinkable to June who immediately insists that will never happen. Later, she'll regret that she ever said it out loud because in a blink, Greta retreats into herself again and they return to the sisters who hate each other.

Being a Godparent is a responsibility that some take much more seriously than others. In this chapter, the author reveals the disparity that can occur between siblings when one has godparents who are that in name only while the other sibling has a godparent who takes the responsibility seriously. In this story, Finn is more than June's uncle. He is also her godfather - a fact that Greta has always been jealous of. She resented the idea that when she was born, her parents didn't feel as though Finn was responsible enough to be her godfather, and instead had selected the Ingrams for the task. When June was born, her parents had a change of heart as it appeared as though Finn was settling down a bit. It wasn't so much that the Ingrams were bad godparents, but more that they just never really took the role seriously, while Finn seemed to revel in the idea. In fact, he'd taken it so much to heart that her mother told Greta that even if she'd been born second, she would not have asked Finn a second time. In her mind, Finn took the job much too seriously, and her mother believed that it might not be so good for June to spend so much time with Finn. When both girls visited with Finn, Greta always felt like a third wheel, as though she was intruding on something special. In this way, the sisters have always had the building blocks for resentment and when Finn died, Greta truly believed that her younger sister June would automatically revert to seeing her as the big sister she looks up to again, just like it was before Finn involved himself in her life.

Discussion Question 1

How do the Ingrams compare to Finn as godparents to Greta and June respectively and how does that impact each girl?



Discussion Question 2

Why was Finn selected to be June's godfather, and not Greta's, and did it matter? If so, how?

Discussion Question 3

What are the dynamics of June and Greta's relationship?

Vocabulary

Molecules, cremated, misjudged, enunciating, betraying, condescending, repulsion.



Chapters 10 - 12

Summary

On the Tuesday after the funeral, the portrait is finally taken out of its black garbage bag and viewed for the first time. Greta, June, and their mother stand staring at every detail, and June notices an addition, but says nothing. Danni insists they frame it and takes the girls to Mr. Trusky's where he tries again and again to please everyone but without success. June and her mother return the following day and manage to find a frame immediately but when June is reluctant to leave it behind with Mr. Trusky, he promises to stay late and have it back to them the following day. True to his word, he is back the next day and though her mother and father both like the results, June doesn't.

Two weeks after the funeral, a mailman comes when June is home alone. He asks her to sign for a parcel. She does and takes it up to her room. Inside, she discovers Finn's Russian tea pot and remembers how he'd told her that it was for her and meant to serve only the very best people. It takes until she has the lid unwrapped as well before she realizes that there is no return address on the package. A note in the lid simply says "For June" on the outside. June thinks about the mailman, remembering the guy at the funeral and how Greta called him a murderer. She grabs the note and heads for the woods.

The note is an introduction from Toby, apologizing for scaring her and suggesting they meet. June sits under a street lamp in the parking lot at school reading it, and then she goes into the woods. She goes further than usual, finally sitting and trying to read the note again, but it is too dark. Passages of it come back to her, like the one that says she is the only one who misses Finn like he does. She almost tears the note up.

Analysis

In this chapter the author again examines the relationship between the sisters and how it has changed. The portrait Finn painted is finally unwrapped, and Greta, June and their mother stand looking at it for some time, each absorbing something different from it. Like all good artwork, the painting draws them in. Greta doesn't see the need to have it framed, but her mother insists. She stands between the girls, seeing all of the talent her brother had, and regretting what she now viewed as the waste that the end of his life brought. She tries to hide her emotions from the girls, much as that generation had all sheltered their children, hoping to keep them from feeling pain or regret.

June can't put a finger on what exactly is different about the painting, but she knows something has changed. She thinks back to Finn's last comment when he apologized to her for not being able to get it right. He had promised her that 'they' would keep at it. At the time, she took that to mean that she would continue to sit for Finn but now she isn't sure. Finally, she realizes what has changed. Five buttons have been added to the front



of her t-shirt. They don't appear to have been painted by Finn, and somehow the addition makes her sad. They find a suitable frame, but June balks as Mr. Trusky explains his need to keep the portrait for a few days. June doesn't want the painting to be taken from them even for a short time because it is her only link to Finn so he promises to have it back the next day. Good as his word, he returns, but although everyone else seems pleased with the result, June is not. Now looking at it, she feels as though she and Greta are trapped inside it, crammed into the frame together.

This chapter examines the relationship between Finn and his sister Danielle a bit closer, revealing pet names they used for each other, and ways that they communicated their love for each other without actually committing to the words themselves. Finn tries to give Danielle his Russian teapot, wanting her to take it for June's sake but to Danielle, Finn passing his teapot on to her or June is an admission that he will not be with them any longer, or has given up. If the teapot stays, Finn will still be there. As such, Danielle forbids June to take it as well. Finn understands however, calling her a silly, silly old woman. Despite the teapot staying with Finn, he dies before they can get together again, and June doesn't see the teapot until Toby impersonates a mailman to deliver it to her. He includes a note to break the ice in the hopes that she will meet with him. Toby is looking for someone who shares the devastating loss he feels, and he knows that June is the only one.

Toby wants to meet with June, but he recommends that she doesn't share his note or request with her family. The author touches on the kind of prejudice faced by not only AIDS/HIV sufferers, but by association those who love them and care for them. In the time period this novel takes place, partners of AIDS/HIV sufferers were often ostracized; accused of murder; and left to suffer the loss alone. In this story, June recognizes Toby is right and doesn't mention his contact with her to her family. Instead, she reads the note over and over, thinking about the things he wrote. Part of her felt as her family did - Toby had killed Finn. His death was all Toby's fault. Another part of her recognizes that he is the only one who misses Finn like she does. June can hear the wolves howling as she thinks it all through, and in her current state is ready to join them.

Discussion Question 1

What affect does the painting have on June, Greta and Danielle when it is unwrapped and why?

Discussion Question 2

What is the significance of the Russian teapot and what instructions came with it from Finn? From Toby?

Discussion Question 3

What problems might arise from Toby's attempt to contact June and why?

Vocabulary

Beveled, garish, shimmied, distressed, beneficial, squinting.



Chapters 13 - 15

Summary

Later that evening, June asks her mother what will happen to Finn's apartment. Danielle takes June into the living room where the portrait of June and Greta hangs, and tries to explain to June that Finn had a 'special friend' who now lived in the apartment. Seeing the distress it causes her to discuss the matter, June decides against telling her about Toby's note and agrees to drop the subject to her mother's relief.

Greta tells June that the party is finally happening and that she's already arranged for June to be able to get out by telling their mother that June was needed to help with the play. She sits through the rehearsal in the dark, watching as they go through each scene again and again. When Greta does a routine, the director Mr. Nebowitz tells the rest of the class that she is the standard they should strive for. June is amazed as her sister takes a comical bow.

June spends more and more time in the woods after Finn's death. She misses the times he used to call to invite them out and remembers how once she'd even taken a train to meet him and go to the Cloisters with him. She takes Toby's note into the woods with her and reads it over and over, finding it harder and harder to slip into her Medieval mindset like she usually did. Instead, she considers more seriously the idea of meeting Toby.

Analysis

The effect of tax season on June and Greta is lightly touched on as Danielle uses the time before bed to do the kinds of things that by mid-March would sit waiting while she and their father sat exhausted on the couch. June waits until Greta isn't around before asking her mother about Finn's apartment. Danielle begins by describing her love for her baby brother Finn, but follows that statement by insisting that Finn didn't always make the choices he should have or care what others wanted him to do. It is clear here that she is referring to Finn's relationship with Toby and that it had been a bone of contention between them. Danielle tries to explain the relationship between Toby and Finn to June, clearly uncomfortable about the fact that Finn lived with another man (referring to him as Finn's 'special friend'), and now she was forced to discuss it with her youngest daughter. She is clearly relieved when, recognizing her obvious distress, June backs out of the conversation graciously instead of discussing Toby's note with her. While June wants to know more about Toby, she didn't want to embarrass herself by revealing the depth of her true feelings for Finn. While waiting in the living room, June considers the painting and Greta who she compares to a geode - ugly on the outside, but sometimes a surprising inside. Since the painting has been hung in the living room, June has caught her mother staring at it on several occasions, muttering and examining



it from all perspectives. It is a direct contrast to her behavior at Finn's where she showed no interest whatsoever in it, and almost seemed repulsed by it.

In this segment, June lies to her parents for the first time about where she will be. Actually, Greta tells them the lie so that June can attend the party being thrown by one of the girls working on the play. Greta even suggests June bring Bean along, likely to ease her discomfort and give her someone to talk to while she was there. This points squarely to the distance that has come between the girls and that exists between the parents and the girls as June has had little to no contact with Bean in some time. In fact, they hadn't been friends for years. June had actually tried to explain it to her mother, but Danielle still saw them as the way they used to be when they were younger - an affliction most parents share as their children turn into teenagers.

The author also reveals some insight into how June feels about herself in this segment. June describes herself as a 'weird girl' who didn't want to admit to her mother that she was an outcast and that her peers weren't exactly lining up to invite her out. In June's mind, she is a social reject who was beyond just shy. Sometimes she fears she'll go her whole life without finding someone like herself - someone who could love without sex, and express their depth of emotion with something as simple as a kiss on the cheek. June also tries to talk to Greta about Toby hoping that if she catches her off guard, she will reveal something important. Greta's attitude is predictable. She insists that Toby gave Finn AIDS on purpose, and now reaps the rewards living in his Upper West Side apartment. Greta is pleased to be able to tell June anything that will undermine her precious Uncle Finn or the man he loved. Still, hearing her talk about Toby, June knows she can't tell Greta about the note or the teapot either.

Later, the party is cancelled and June is relieved. Besides being socially inept, she also doesn't drink or smoke, so her presence at a party would be stilted at best. June watches Greta through rehearsals, noting the directors use of her as an example of the quality of craft they should all strive to attain. Greta is free and goofy on stage, relaxed in a way that June hasn't seen her in some time. June watches her with the smart and popular kids, looking happy and fitting in despite the fact that it is obvious, at least to June, that she is younger than the rest are. After rehearsals, he again singles Greta out for a conversation in the office. June waits for her in the stands and is surprised when Ben Dellahunt approaches her. The author has chosen now to introduce him as the assistant stage manager, and the only one who has taken the time to say a word to June. June admires him, but has little time to talk, as Greta returns and is ready to leave. Greta's attitude foreshadows issues with the play or her place in it, but she is in no frame of mind to discuss it.

June spends a great deal of time in the woods after Finn dies, preferring to be there than sitting at home remembering the times Finn would call and invite them out. She recalls the day Greta accused her of being in love with Finn, claiming it was a well known fact. Greta's jealousy of the relationship that Finn and June share is obvious as she does all she can to drive a wedge of doubt in June's mind by telling her that even their mother is suffering as a result of June's untamed heart. The idea that more people know how she really felt about her uncle is horrifying to her and the only defense June



can think of is to remind Greta that Finn was gay and everyone knew it. Greta is not silenced however, and with meanness typical of her where June was concerned these days, she announces that of course she'd never claimed that Finn loved June. Again, June is left speechless. Greta's comments have the desired affect for a while as June tries to keep her distance from Finn when they are at the Cloisters later, but she can't help but respond to her Uncle Finn. She imagined herself and Finn as monks who spent the day transcribing or illuminating manuscripts without talking, but still able to communicate the depth of their love for each other simply by look alone. In June's mind, her love for Finn and his for her was pure and unspoiled regardless of what other tongues wagged about. Death is briefly mentioned here as Finn asks June what she thinks happens after they die, and June is honest, unaware that he is concerned for his own future. Thinking about it later, she wishes she'd said something other than that she believed we just faded to black and were done. June is beginning to reconsider meeting Toby.

Discussion Question 1

How does Danielle respond to June's questions regarding the disposition of Finn's apartment and why?

Discussion Question 2

How do the Cloisters affect June when she and Finn go, and what things does she like so much about them?

Discussion Question 3

How does Toby's note change June's behavior in the woods and why might that be the case?

Vocabulary

Riffle, misshapen, grimaced, exasperated, retardation, charisma, illuminating, precarious.



Chapters 16 - 18

Summary

On Sunday morning, June is getting ready to go to the mall when Greta calls everyone into the living room. She found a note in the New York Times drawing her attention to an article inside and reads it to everyone. It includes a half page photo of their portrait and an expose about Finn. It describes the painting titled 'Tell The Wolves I'm Home' and discusses Finn's lack of contribution of late to the art world. The article goes on to say that the location of the piece is unknown - a slide having been anonymously submitted to the paper. June goes to the mall with childhood friend Beans and her friends. Once there, she ditches them and heads off on her own to see Amadeus at the local theater, promising to meet up with them at three. During dinner later, the family decides that it must have been Toby who send the slide in, but in June's mind, it is just one more mystery.

The next day, June goes to the library to make a copy of the article for herself so that she can read it on her own. The librarian, Mrs. Lester insists that she make two copies so that one can be put on the notice board. Then June takes it into the woods, walking until she can hear the wolves before sitting down to read it. The article shows a self portrait of Finn that sold for over \$200,000 in 1979, and Sotheby's speculates that this newest one could fetch as much as \$700,000. When she gets home, the portrait is gone. It has been locked in a vault in the bank.

Having put their father's yearly birthday dinner off because of Finn's funeral, tax season, and rehearsals for Greta's play, they finally go to Gasho of Japan. On the way, June remembers other birthday dinner occasions, including her mother's when Finn had given her a sketchbook with a tiny pen sketch of her on the enclosed note. Then he'd folded his napkin into a butterfly and given it to Greta. That night, the dinner is strained and quiet. On the way home, June thinks again about meeting Toby. The day he'd suggested is only three days away.

Analysis

Greta calls the family into the living room as June is getting ready to go to the mall with Bean and her friends. June and Bean had no desire to spend time together, but neither wanted to have friendship counselling given to them by their parents so they'd agreed. June would go to Amadeus while Bean and her friends hung out instead. First, the article is read by Greta. Announcing they are famous, she begins reading. The article mentions the portrait of June and Greta; a self portrait Finn had done; and bemoans the lack of offerings from him in some time. It refers to the portrait as a work of art that shows an artist who was fully emotionally and intellectually engaged with his subjects. His death as a result of AIDS is mentioned and Greta is horrified that she could be linked even to the word itself. The article also mentions his missing years, speculating



on the motive for his withdrawal from public life. The article is an obvious point of contention for both Danielle and Greta, so June's father burns it before June even has a chance to look at it as though by burning it he could fix the issues left unresolved by Finn's death. The wonder about who submitted the slide and information, and June believes she knows who it is. She instinctively knows that only Toby would know what the piece had been titled.

June manages to procure a copy of the article, and it describes Finn's self portrait in detail. The portrait is described as a sincere gesture without irony, one that makes the viewer believe the artist had nothing left to give. In it, Finn paints himself with his beating heart in his hands offered to a crocodile pool; and a scar over his chest that reads EMPTY. A poignant statement from a man who at the time obviously felt a lack of love in his life. The word empty across his chest clearly suggests he has nothing left to give, and the pool of crocodiles could easily be a reference to the general public and their hunger for more of his talent. This is perhaps a subtle suggestion by the author as to why Finn left the public eye, opting for seclusion. June is surprised to find the portrait has been put into a bank vault and shudders involuntarily as she imagines herself down there in the dark, glad for her sister's company.

For a while, the public fusses over the Elbus family, as they generally do for anyone who finds themselves in the public eye, however temporarily. Only their mother seems to enjoy the attention while the rest of the Elbus family cringes as they are put before others, embarrassed by the extra attention. The author uses Mr. Elbus' birthday as the cause for the family dinner, but reveals the loss the family feels without Finn, feeling the loss of him acutely in this environment where close contact was almost a larger than life experience. No one really wants to go, but the event is a somber affair crammed with memories of happier times. Some of Finn's impact is revealed here as he plays mediator to one; mentor to another; and just spreads his joy for life around them. Without him, the event is subdued. Again June considers and reconsiders meeting with Toby, knowing it is too late now to tell anyone about his note. June, still suffering more acutely the loss of Finn than perhaps the rest of her family is, feels more inclined to meet with Toby as each day passes. She is willing to overlook the obvious danger for a chance to learn more about Finn, and in the process, keep him with her a little longer.

Discussion Question 1

How does Greta respond to the public attention their portrait is getting and why?

Discussion Question 2

How does June feel about meeting with Toby; what would you do in her place and why?

Discussion Question 3

Why is the painting taken to a bank vault; who is impacted the most by this and why?

Vocabulary

Diversity, conceptual, credence, emergence, anonymously, irony, mantel.



Chapters 19 - 21

Summary

Greta tells June that the party has been scheduled again, and it is planned for the same night as she is supposed to be meeting Toby. It is supposed to be held in the woods behind the school and Greta asks June if she is still coming. June tells her to go ahead promising she'll meet her in the woods later.

Despite the reasons June lists that she should hate Toby, she can't bring herself to do so. Then she remembers that Toby was the one that was with Finn when he died, and the list begins to work.

June recognizes Toby right away. He is thin, and looks younger than Finn. June watches him for a while, taking care not to be seen and wonders what Finn saw in him. She peeks down at him again, deciding she won't meet him after all, but, at that moment, he sees her and waves. They board a southbound train and sit facing each other and talk until they get to Grand Central. Then they both get off and Toby gives her a bag telling her it is from Finn. He admits there is more, but he didn't bring it for fear she wouldn't come to see him again if he did. Then he hands her a pile of money and tells her was Finn's in case she needs anything. He tells her she is welcome anytime, and she can call if she ever needs anything at all. She admits that she might call him some time. He watches until she is gone.

Analysis

Greta informs June that the party is on while June is in the shower, and that she already told their parents that June would be helping out with rehearsals again. June agrees to meet her in the woods behind the school, happy that for once she'd know more about the place than Greta. She pokes Greta through the curtain, initiating a tickle fight that has them both giggling like they used to as children. What once came easily and frequently is now a fleeting glimpse of the sisters that they used to be that only happens now and then.

As is often the case when a loved one dies, those left behind will cast about for understanding, looking for the reasons that their loved one was taken; looking for a place to put blame for the loss felt. The author shows June's attempt to understand her uncle's death as she searches for ways to blame Toby and even to hate him for recent events. At first, she finds that difficult to do, but when she remembers that Toby was the one who held Finn in the end, and was with him when he died, she finds resentment close to the surface. June did her best to ignore Finn's illness until it could no longer be denied, and at that stage only coped with it by believing she would be that one special person that he would want with him at the end. She resents the fact that in her mind, Toby took that from her.



The pull June feels to meet Toby stems largely from her desire to know Finn as much as it is possible to know someone. She believes that Toby may be able to relate information to her that will extend her understanding and her ability to keep Finn in her heart and memory for as long as possible. Since learning that Toby is living in Finn's apartment, and he admits that he feels the loss of Finn as acutely as she does, June hopes to absorb more of her uncle through him. Despite this desire, she still fears Toby on some level. First of all, he is a stranger to her, if not to her Uncle Finn; according to her family, Toby killed Finn by giving him AIDS on purpose; and of course there was always the chance that he could give it to her. Despite that, she meets with Toby and can't help smiling at him and responding to him despite promising herself that she would hate him for what he did. Toby simply wants to talk to someone who loved his partner with the same intensity that he did, and June is surprised to realize that he is as nervous and insecure as she is about their meeting.

Discussion Question 1

Why does June feel that she needs to prepare herself for her meeting with Toby and how does she do that?

Discussion Question 2

What emotional investment do both June and Toby share and what motivates them both to want to meet each other?

Discussion Question 3

In what ways is Toby a surprise to June?

Vocabulary

Angling, gangly, fidgeting, helix, suburbs, concourse.



Chapters 22 - 24

Summary

Most of the cast of *South Pacific* is in the woods, and even a good deal of the crew. June can hear Greta and then sees her tipping a bottle to her mouth. Ben Dellahunt introduces himself again and offers her a beer. He invites her to go for a walk and when the howling begins, June argues that it might be wolves although Ben insists they've been gone for a long time. He takes her hand and suggests they go and find them but June likes not knowing for sure. He explains a bit about *Dungeons and Dragons*, and when they get back, Greta is gone. She finally finds her under a pile of leaves at the base of the maple she usually went to. By the time she finds her, everyone else is gone. She piggybacks Greta for as long as she can, thinking about how it had been the other way around when they were children. When Greta is coherent enough, she puts her down and lets her stumble home and into bed.

Inside the bag from Toby is four cassettes of Mozart's *Requiem*, each a different version, and a note. She remembers the day that she and Finn had bought them together. The note is from Toby, thanking her for meeting him and saying they have so many stories they could share with each other. He says he is usually home, and everything is the same. She is welcome any time. The money he gave her is over seven hundred dollars and she puts it all in the back of her closet with the teapot.

In the morning, June's father shows them an article that discusses how a soldier knowingly gave three people AIDS and will likely be jailed for it. Greta agrees it is fair but June is more reluctant after having met Toby. Later that day, Danielle gives both June and Greta a key to the safety deposit box where the portrait sits so they can see it whenever they want to. After dinner, June mails the article to Toby. A few days later, she gets a letter from him, disguised as junk mail from the League of Young Falconers telling her that it didn't happen that way, and he hopes that helps somehow.

Analysis

June feels strange after her meeting with Toby; her perspectives skewed by her impressions of him versus the way her family feels about him. The whole cast and most of the crew from Greta's play is in the woods and the first person she talks to is Ben Dellahunt. Without reason, June feels defensive around him, as though she expects an attack and is prepared to repel him for it. Instead, Ben is congenial and friendly, flirting lightly with her. Although Greta is well on her way to intoxicated, June doesn't drink. Ben takes her for a walk, an invitation June accepts simply because it will take her away from the body of the party. They talk about the wolves, which he insists are long gone, although he plays along anyway. Ben tries to find common ground with her, but his free time is spent playing *Dungeons and Dragons*, something June knows nothing about and cares even less for.



June's life is too real, too acute for games these days. It is part of why she has such a difficult time relating to her peers. Spending so much time with Finn has given her an outlook and perspective that is more adult than most of her peers and she struggles just to relate to them in most cases. Meanwhile, Greta struggles to deal with her own life, locked in a private hell that she hasn't revealed to anyone yet. June takes the opportunity when Greta is drunk to ask her about the meeting with the director she'd had, and Greta admits that her opportunities were discussed. In this condition, she finally admits that her avoidance of Finn did not mean she didn't care, implying that Finn's death had hit her as hard as it had hit June.

Toby's gift from Finn is four cassettes of variations of Mozart's Requiem and a note from Toby telling her how grateful he was that she met with him. Just seeing the cassettes brings back a flood of memories. She remembers how they'd listened to them together, discussing the differences and the mystery surrounding the ending. The note also contains information that lays a lot of June's fears to rest. She was afraid that everything that made Finn who he was had been replaced, or changed, but in his note, Toby assures her that the apartment is exactly as she remembered and she is welcome anytime. June goes to sleep that night thinking about how this day had seemed longer than all of the rest, and that life was a series of worlds on top of worlds if that was the way you choose to see them. In one world, her family believed Toby should be jailed for killing Finn with AIDS deliberately while in another world, June met Toby and liked him. In one world, June is almost adult in her mind and heart while in another she is discussing dungeons and dragons with Ben. In one world, Finn was gone, while in another, he lived on in her, in Toby and in Greta as well.

June's father shows her and Danielle an article that advocates jail time for a soldier who had knowingly infected three people with AIDS. He draws a parallel to Toby but now that June has met Toby, she doesn't feel the same as she did before. Now, he seems sort of sweet and kind of lost, much like she feels and she finds herself identifying with him in more than one way. Later, Danielle gives them both a key to the bank's safe deposit box so that they can visit the painting any time they want. Greta assures her mother she will never go to see it, but June isn't sure. Later, thinking about the article again, June mails it to Toby, making sure her return address was on the envelope so he'd know it was from her, revealing a part of her that is still unsure and blames him. He sends her a note soon afterward, promising her that wasn't how things happened between them, and hoping it comforts her.

Discussion Question 1

Why does June struggle to relate to her peers and how might she change that?

Discussion Question 2

What emotional response does June's father perpetuate, and what might make him add fuel to this particular subject?



Discussion Question 3

Why does June send Toby the article and what does she hope to gain by it?

Vocabulary

Regretted, mongrel, alignment, hilarious, dismissively, ghoul, smirked.



Chapters 25 - 27

Summary

June remembers the day at the Cloisters, staring at the statue of the Virgin Mary holding Jesus with a missing head, when Finn had first proposed that he paint their portrait.

The next time June sees Toby, he is outside her school waiting for her. He invites her to get in. Seeing students swarming out of the building behind her, she decided it is best to do so. He accidentally squeals the tires, drawing more unwanted attention as she slinks down in the car. He tells her he was thinking about taking her to Playland. There was something there he wants her to see. She asks him if the car is Finn's. He tells her that although Finn bought it, he couldn't drive. He hands her a book of Finn's sketches, and she flips through them finding pages of bits and pieces of her - her knees on one, her mouth or elbows on another, and then Greta in pieces - her skirt, eyebrows, ears. One sketch is of the negative space between them, the shape almost looking like a wolf and in a flash of insight, she understands the title. They get to Playland, and walks to a booth titled 'Images of Yesteryear' where Toby talks her into having her photo taken in costume, even joining her. On the way home, he tells her a story about an outing he and Finn took, and by the time he was done, she found herself wishing she'd been there. Then he drops her off, again inviting her to come and see him at Finn's.

Greta is home alone when she gets there. Greta tells her that she is in big trouble. She asks where she's been. June lies, saying she was at the library, but Greta asks about the makeup she was still wearing from the photo shoot. She hurries through her soup and goes upstairs, looking again through the sketches, especially the negative space. When she falls asleep, she dreams of the wolves, and isn't afraid.

Analysis

When Finn first discusses painting a portrait of June and Greta, June is reluctant. To her, art was something that became a specimen; something to be analyzed and discussed. It clashes with her desire to be part of the background, blending into her surroundings so that no one notices her or singles her out. Knowing how good an artist Finn is, June is sure that her love for him will be obvious, and the whole world will know. Mostly, it makes her feel young and pathetic.

Although June is at first kind of excited that Toby came to her school to see her, another part of her is embarrassed as well. He tells her to get in, and she hesitates having had it drilled into her for her whole life that she shouldn't get into cars with strangers - something Toby still was to her. She looks around before getting in, to make sure no one she knows is paying attention. June realizes that her actions are abnormal for her and can't shake the feeling that perhaps she is doing something really wrong, but Toby has a warm smile, and Finn loved him. She agrees to go to Playland with him, but it isn't



the rides he has in mind. A million questions race through her mind, but she can't ask any of them without feeling stupid or embarrassed, so instead she apologizes for sending the article, knowing it was mean.

Toby shows her a book of sketches Finn had done in preparation for their painting; snippets of eyes, knees, legs and elbows. She recognizes her mouth and looks at the negative spaces that Finn taught her about. When she does, she realizes that the negative space between her and Greta is a howling wolf, explaining the title he'd given the portrait finally and she wishes she could tell him that she'd seen it. They decide to have an old fashioned picture taken, but the photographer argues that they choose costumes from different eras. Toby tries, but is unable to convince the woman to take their photo, so he reluctantly changes, muttering his disappointment because it seemed to him that things were always so difficult without cause. When he drops her off, he tosses a penny into the parking lot, citing it will be good luck if it is heads. It is tails but June doesn't think Toby needs to know, and pretends it is heads.

Greta confronts her as soon as she gets back, noticing makeup on her face from the photo shoot. Tax season is at its busiest and their parents are not home. June hadn't removed the make-up, enjoying that it made her feel like someone else for a change, and perhaps even better than she usually did. Part of June wants to reveal the sketches if for no other reason than to remove the smug look from Greta's face, but instead she went upstairs as soon as she could to escape further interrogation. In her room, she thinks about Finn, tracing the negative space wolf in the sketch book until she falls asleep and dreams of wolves. In her dream, the wolves were after her, ready to divide her up between them, but she stands her ground. The wolves talk about taking her heart and her eyes, perhaps symbolic of her love and ability to see clearly.

Discussion Question 1

How does June feel about art and how does that reflect in her reaction to Finn's offer to paint her portrait?

Discussion Question 2

What is the significance of the outing Toby takes June on?

Discussion Question 3

What is negative space and why is it important?

Vocabulary

Splintery, analyzed, speculated, pathetic, imprint, technically, constellations, candelabras, intricately.



Chapters 28 - 30

Summary

On the way to school the next morning, Greta again asks June where she'd gone the day before, but June isn't forthcoming. After school, June goes to the bank to see the portrait. At first it looks the same, but then she sees a small skull on the back of Greta's hand. When she is leaving, Mr. Zimmer confirms that only she and Greta have a key to the box, and June realizes that Greta had to have painted the skull.

On Saturday, an envelope arrives for June from the Young Cheesemakers of America. She knows it is from Toby, and opens it to find the picture from Playland. A note inside tells her she can cut him out if she wants to. The next morning, Greta comes down and is called the budding starlet by Mom and Dad, after a call they got from Mr. Nebowski who informs them that she is being recommended for a part in a Broadway production of Annie in the role of Pepper.

One night, they are all watching television. After the show 'Family Ties' ends, Danielle makes popcorn and the news comes on. After she returns, a story about a judge in Yonkers comes on. He took his entire court proceedings out to the parking lot because the man being sentenced had AIDS, and he felt it would be safer than to confine them all inside with those germs. An article follows it about a new drug called AZT that now helps those with AIDS survive. It would be available in six months. Danielle walks out as the news of the drug continues and June's father, usually unfazed by most things, angrily turns the television off.

Analysis

A quick analysis of South Pacific by June cites two examples of love in the play 'South Pacific' which are unrequited because of prejudice. She concludes that it is intentional, showing opposites attract, but her limited experience with love makes her believe that in searching for a partner, we would more likely search for someone who has the same interests. June goes to the bank after school, curious as to how much she has changed since Finn's death, implying that the impact of his death changed her so acutely that she believes she will be able to see her former innocence through Finn's eyes. The bank manager reveals that his friend has AIDS which tells June that the problem is perhaps not as isolated and remote as she might have thought, and eases her discomfort perhaps somewhat that her Uncle Finn died of AIDS.

June considers herself in the portrait, the five black buttons jumping out at her first. They still don't look like Finn's work. She sees fewer changes in herself than she expected, and though she looks at it from all angles, she struggles to find and hold onto the howling wolf that she knows is between her and Greta. When she notices the skull



for the first time, she knows it is a new addition. At first she can't imagine how it had been added, but the manager assures her only she and Greta have keys.

June continues to keep Toby a secret from her family. A part of her is enjoying this special relationship she has with him that no one else can intrude on. Perhaps it is her way of reclaiming some of what was special about her relationship with Finn. A part of her also enjoys the intrigue and the fact that they are passing information, notes, or photos back and forth to each other in front of her family without their knowledge. Toby writes on the back of their Playland photo that June can cut him out if she wants to, giving her permission and his acceptance if she wants to delete him in this way. June learns that Greta was recommended for a Broadway production of Annie, but Greta isn't thrilled. While acutely aware that her parents believe that this is an opportunity of a lifetime, Greta already feels like her life is spinning out of control. She doesn't want to be forced into growing up a year earlier still, missing her final year. Finally, Greta agrees, but since she was pushed ahead in school as a child, and pretended to be older than she was her entire life, she finds that now she is thrown into adulthood much sooner than she is perhaps emotionally prepared for.

A news broadcast is seen by the entire Elbus family one evening. The author again encapsulates the time period of this novel, showing how misunderstood both AIDS itself and the transmission of AIDS is concerned. A judge had moved the entire proceedings outside because the accused had AIDS, citing it would be safer for everyone. This kind of misinformation or fear mongering by people in positions of authority helped to lend credibility to the statements and behavior. Of course this only perpetuated the myths surrounding AIDS and its transmission.

Discussion Question 1

In what way does June disagree with the premise of the two sub-stories in South Pacific and what does she base her opinion on?

Discussion Question 2

What issues is Greta faced with as she considers accepting the role in Annie?

Discussion Question 3

What kind of problems would a news broadcast like the one the Elbus' watched perpetuate and why?

Vocabulary

Crypt, desperation, sepia, authenticity, segued, orphan.



Chapters 31 - 33

Summary

Forty one days after Finn died, June tells Toby she will come for a visit. She is on a mission to get whatever Finn has left for her. He tells her to take a taxi from Grand Central to the apartment. When the taxi pulls up, Toby is standing in the entrance waiting for her. The only difference in the apartment is that it no longer smells of lavender and orange. June asks Toby where all his things are, and he tells her they are all mixed together since he and Finn had lived together nine years. Then he gives her a box wrapped in blue paper from Finn which she tucks into her bag. He asks if she is hungry, and before they leave, he gives her a box that he says Finn told her she should have if she ever came back. They go out for food at the Imperial Dragon where he makes her a napkin butterfly like Finn used to, and she refuses it, asking him where he learned it. He tells her from a book when he was a child. They agree that he will pick her up again on a Thursday and he gets her back into a cab.

On the train, June opens the gift from Finn. It is a book called the Medieval Woman, An Illuminated Book of Days. Unable to face what Finn might have written, she flips to the middle to find his penned note. In it, he tells her Toby has no one and that he is good and kind. He begs June to look after him and promises to haunt the Cloisters for her if he is able. Opposite is a painting called Nurse Feeding Sick Man. The rest of the ride is a blur of life that doesn't fit.

She hides the book in her closet with the rest of the items from Toby and Finn, hoping she can forget about it, but it doesn't work. There is no forgetting. Later, convincing her mother and father she wasn't feeling well, she goes up and reads through her new book, looking to see if there are any other hidden messages. But, there aren't. When Greta gets home from rehearsal, she goes to her room to talk, but she soon realizes that this is something Greta doesn't want to know. She goes to bed keeping her secrets to herself.

Analysis

Six weeks after Finn's death, June decides to go to his apartment and reclaim whatever he wanted her to have from Toby. An unspoken desire to keep Finn alive in her mind likely drives her instead of Toby's interpretation that she reached out to him and they will be able to be friends. She lies to her parents about where she will be - something she would never have even considered before Finn's death. Donning perfume which makes her feel like she is wearing a disguise, June goes to the apartment where Toby waits. He is wearing a sweater that belonged to Finn which somehow feels like a betrayal to June. By wearing his clothes, Toby is replacing June's memory of Finn in that sweater with a mental picture of Toby and an unconscious part of her is resentful. Somehow Toby knows that June fears everything of Finn will be gone from the apartment and he



knows she is relieved that it hasn't changed, but that opens up another avenue she had never considered.

June asks Toby where his stuff is, as though boxes wait to be unpacked somewhere and he tells her it is all mixed together as he and Finn had lived together nine years. It is an astonishing revelation, as June now questions everything she knows about Finn. The guitar picks are his, Toby tells her, and she remembers how she loved playing with them when she was young thinking they belonged to Finn. They both move pieces around the chessboard randomly, neither wanting to admit to the other that they don't know how to play as unthinkable things are brought into light. Toby admits to having been jealous of June but guesses that when Finn died, there was no need to continue feeling that way. They go out to eat, Toby covering them with a large black umbrella, symbolic of the shroud of death that forms the glue of their association. When he folds origami at the table, another wonderful memory of Finn is clouded by reality. Instead of gaining memories of Finn to keep him alive, bits and pieces of her memories of him are assaulted, or erased. She is sad that what she thought of as Finn wasn't him at all. Toby seems to sense this and promises this is the hardest visit, implying she'll continue to come. By the time she leaves, she can't imagine wanting or needing anything from Toby.

On the way home, June thinks about the myriad of opportunities she had to learn about Toby over the years, but June is selfish about her time with Finn, and doesn't even want to think about him spending time with anyone else. Her relationship was one in which she couldn't imagine anyone intruding. When she opens the gift Toby gave her from Finn, she finds a perfect example of who they were to each other. Skipping to the middle to avoid anything he might have written for now, she stumbles right into his message for her, as though he'd known what she would do. The message he leaves her begs her to help him; to look after Toby because he has no one; that Toby is good and kind and everyone is so wrong about him. The words are written next to a nurse feeding a sick man, and though the nurse looks as panicked as the man is sick, she continues to help - the message from Finn obvious.

June is surprised when Ben meets her in the grocery store. She is caught pretending to be a medieval kid dumped in our time and just blurts out what she is doing. Ben claims to like the idea after a second's hesitation, sharing her imaginative ideal. He is the first person other than Finn in her life who has ever shared her enthusiasm for the time period or the games she plays with herself. At home later, she almost tells Greta about Toby, wanting her advice where Finn's instructions were concerned, but Greta misunderstands her false starts and thinks she has a secret boyfriend. She counsels June not to do anything stupid, talking about sex, and offers to help with her makeup. Another party is being held by cast and crew, and Greta insists June come, telling her Ben will be there too. For a few minutes, they are sisters again, and June wonders if they are finally finding some common ground - boys, sex, and crushes. They were normal things, unlike her real life which is filled with a strange man in the city, secret Playland visits and cries for help from Finn.



Discussion Question 1

What is June afraid of where Finn's apartment is concerned and is her concern validated?

Discussion Question 2

Why are the revelations June learns over a chess game with Toby so disturbing to her?

Discussion Question 3

What sacrifice does Finn ask of June posthumously and how does June feel about it?

Vocabulary

Meteoroid, falconry, velocities, tangent, curriculum, pretentious, plectrums, mediocre.



Chapters 34 - 36

Summary

June goes to watch Greta during her audition, running into Ben Dellahunt first, which gleans a knowing smirk from Greta. June watches her. Even though her performance is half hearted, she is flawless.

June is still in her pajamas when her mother comes in and announces they are going shopping for jeans. June convinces her mother to tell her a story about Finn, but then they argue about who should have the right to grieve more. Later, June tells her mother she'll be helping Greta with rehearsals, mollifying her somewhat.

June decides to go see Toby on Monday, getting a pass out of gym period by using a female excuse. Toby is thrilled. The apartment is a mess, and she tries not to notice, telling herself that he needs someone. They talk, and he tells her the truth behind their illness. She learns that Toby is a noble and decent human being. Toby shows her the room that Finn created for him so that he had somewhere to go when Finn was busy with June or Greta, and June realizes that all of this is her mother's fault. He shows her his flea circus, and he is a perfect showman. June tells him about the Cloisters and what she likes about them. He then walks her back to Grand Central Station. She finally asks Toby about the buttons on the portrait, and he admits that it was his contribution. He describes that final day, and June, picturing it, cries. He holds her and cries with her there on the street.

Analysis

June wants to be able to tell Greta that she came to see her dance. She runs into Ben in the costume room first, and ends up passing Greta on the stairs. June wants Greta to see her, wants her to know that she accepted her invitation, but all Greta sees is that June is leaving the room Ben is still in, reinforcing Greta's impression that June and Ben are somehow involved. June watches her sister perform, but notices that the performance is lackluster. It appears as though all the joy Greta got from acting was taken when she was pushed into accepting the role in Annie. Like most passions in life, the author shows that the things we enjoy most in life can become as tiresome and confining as a leash if we are forced to indulge them beyond what is enjoyed.

June hates shopping and has no desire to go with her mother, unlike Greta who is allowed to go with her friends, but while she lies in bed complaining, her mother begins to go through her closet. Remembering the tea pot, book and picture, as well as the money and notes from Toby, June changes her tune before her mother can search further and agrees to go. As they wait for the train, part of June wishes that she could turn time back to the days before Finn died, when things still felt normal. Danielle invites June to Horn and Hardart for lunch, but June refuses as it was one of the places she



and Finn went to together. Danielle thinks that by taking June to the places where she remembers Finn the strongest, she can somehow begin to cover the sadness that lingers in them by replacing them with new memories. To June's horror, she even suggests the Cloisters, but June doesn't want to discuss it at all. Finally, she bargains with her mother, telling her that if she shares a childhood memory of herself and Finn, June will agree to go to Horn and Hardart.

The conversation turns to Toby when June asks why Finn stopped painting, and June is surprised by the degree of venom that comes with it. Danielle reveals that she made Finn choose between Toby and his nieces, and the idea makes June sorry for Toby. Danielle goes on to describe a relationship between her and Finn as children, which is much like the one she and Greta had: their parents also absent much of the time, the author acknowledging the fact that often patterns repeat themselves despite our best intentions. Her mother is angry with her most of the day, but is mollified when later at home she announces she is going to help Greta again with the play. Danielle is happy that June is making an effort to be less morose.

On Monday June goes to see Toby, who is obviously happy to see her. She keeps reminding herself that he has nobody. They talk about how Toby insisted that Finn allow his family to believe he had given Finn AIDS, even though it wasn't true. His sacrifice for Finn, so that Finn can spend time with June and Greta is one that reveals much to June about who Toby is and she suddenly realizes that Toby loved Finn so much more than she did. She can't help but ask if Finn ever did his portrait, and Toby, grinning, takes her down to the storage room. Inside, it had been converted into a place where Toby could go when June visited, complete with armchair, curtains for privacy, and dozens of canvases Finn had done over the years. She learns a great deal about who Toby is, and the more time she spends with him, the more she appreciates what Finn saw in him. Toby describes the last day of Finn's life, how the black buttons came to be and June cries without shame. The buttons were symbolic of Toby's efforts to 'fix things' after Finn had died, feeling that if he was able to do at least that much, things would be okay. Of course they weren't.

Discussion Question 1

Why stops Greta from performing at her best on stage?

Discussion Question 2

How does Danielle think June should deal with her grief over Finn and why?

Discussion Question 3

What does June learn about Toby and his relationship with Finn that changes her opinion of Toby and in what way?

Vocabulary

Disinterested, derelict, proportion, orthopedic, illuminated, defective, tentative.



Chapters 37 - 39

Summary

Late the same night after having seen Toby, June creeps downstairs to call him and tell him that she'd lied about her story about Finn. She promises to give him a real story the next time, and he again promises that he is there for her, if she needs anything. He says goodnight, and she uses her own blood to seal an oath to Finn, promising to look after Toby so that he won't be alone; sealing the promise with a drop of her blood pressed against the words of Finn's request.

Beans creates the posters to advertise South Pacific, doing a commendable job. June goes to the bank after school and adds her own touches to the painting - lines of gold through both Greta's and her hair. Then she puts it back again, now changed by her, Toby and Greta.

Greta asks what June will wear to the party, offering to help her get ready, and June suggests she should tidy herself up as well. Greta gets angry, insisting that she knows June wasn't at her rehearsal like she told their mother she would be, and that it was only a matter of time before her secret was found out. That night, their father brings home Trivial Pursuit and they spend the evening playing. After her mother and Greta leave the room, June asks her father about Toby. He shares details with her that she didn't know, making her feel sorry for Toby. In the process she learns more about her mother than she ever knew as well.

Analysis

Once June is back at home, she pictures Toby in Finn's apartment, and realizes that Finn was right. His note, telling her that Toby was all alone was the truth. She vows to be there for Toby, sealing her promise in blood on the page.

June goes to the bank after school and knowing now that Toby had painted the buttons on her t-shirt, she looks at them in a new light, seeing them with the love and emotion that went into each one. Now, they gleam like pearls to her. She traces the skull on Greta's hand, knowing it to be her contribution, and then smiling, knowing that Finn would love what she was doing, she pulls out some gold paint and adds highlights to their hair, wanting it to look similar to the illuminated manuscripts of the angels at the Cloisters. She wants the painting to beam with the intensity of the love she feels for Finn, and complete the circle of contributions already made. Now it has a bit of Toby, Greta and herself with Finn. She slides it back into its case, catching a glimpse of the wolf in the negative space as she does.

Greta talks to June about the upcoming party, but June's apparent lack of interest makes her angry. When June claims she hardly knows Ben, Greta insists she is only trying to help but June admits that she had never considered the fact that Greta would



want to help her. The comment is an honest one, made without thinking, but it offends Greta who responds by insisting June won't be able to keep her secret for much longer. Then she stomps off and refuses to talk to her.

After school, their father brings home Trivial Pursuit, and wins the game they play after dinner. Then June and her father talk, and she asks him about Toby. He tells her how Finn had left Danielle behind, despite a childhood filled with dreams of them both going to New York to become famous artists together. In a way, history is about to repeat itself again as Greta is readying to leave for Broadway and her role in Annie. In this case, Greta is resentful, not wanting to go while in Danielle's case, Danielle had been the resentful one, receiving postcards from Finn as he traveled the world.

Discussion Question 1

How does June feel after her visit with Toby, and what does she do about it?

Discussion Question 2

What do each of the secondary painters add to the portrait of Greta and June, and what is the inspiration for each addition?

Discussion Question 3

How does Danielle feel about Toby and are her feelings justified? Why, or why not?

Vocabulary

Calculus, prestidigitator, enthusiasm, unsuitable, imaginable, nonsense, exaggerated, universe.



Chapters 40 - 42

Summary

The next morning, June leaves school as soon as she can and catches the train to Toby's. He plays music for her and, when she asks, he reveals that it is him playing the guitar, and she gets another glimpse of what her uncle saw in him. Then he reveals he is dying and explains the freedom it gives him. She asks him about his past, but he deflects by saying they should go out. They walk to Riverside Park, and he tells her a bit more of the reasons that her mother hates him so much. June begins to feel sorry for her mother. She begins to understand more. Realizing that her time with Toby is limited, she knows that if she is to do a grand gesture of some kind, it will have to be soon. She calls him that night and asks him where he's from in England.

June goes to Greta's rehearsal, but finds her performance less convincing than the last time. She decides to go into the woods before the party, realizing she will have to keep an eye on Greta. June lights a cigarette and considers how to get Toby home to England for a visit, hoping to have a positive impact on his remaining days. Soon, people from the play begin to arrive. Finally, Greta shows up. Unaware that June is watching, she takes a bottle from her pocket and takes a long pull. Ben comes up behind June and asks her about the wolves, claiming it is a D & D's quest. She gives him general directions to where she first heard them. Before leaving, he kisses her and then leaves. Turning back to the group, June realizes Greta is gone. June looks for her, even returning to the school, but when she comes back the police are raiding the party. Then, in sudden insight, June returns to the spot she found her the first time and she is there, buried in leaves again. In a drunken stupor, she takes June down memory lane again as June struggles to get her home.

The next day the Ingrams threw their annual 'near the end of tax season' barbecue. June and Greta sit on the swing set, bored, while the adults play Trivial Pursuit. June shows her the D&D's die that Ben gave her. Greta tells her she can drop the act because she'd seen Ben leaving the party with someone else. Surprised, June tries not to react to the knowing smirk on Greta's face, but she finally spouts off that she has an older boyfriend in town. They smoke and drink and do whatever they want. Greta calls her a liar before revealing that she's followed her into the forest, spying on her many times. Filled with rage, June joins the adults and pretends to be engrossed in the game until it's time to go.

Analysis

June decides that she will be the friend that Toby needs, and even begins taking risks to go and see him by cutting classes. June has come to accept that Toby was responsible for some of the things she loved about Finn, and at times she even sees Finn coming through in him. She is beginning to realize some of the things that her uncle saw in



Toby. Toby reveals he is dying, but he tells her that it gives him the freedom to do whatever he pleases. Toby doesn't reveal how long he has left, saying only that he takes life one day at a time. The author does a good job of describing the idea of death from the perspective of someone who has little time left, Toby patiently explaining the secrets of life as he sees them. He tells June that if you do your best to be the person that you want and hope to be every day, you will have no regrets if your time comes sooner rather than later. June encourages Toby to tell her about his past, but he sidesteps the issue and intuitively she realizes that he likely never will. Their time is now. Toby does however reveal the issues Finn and Danielle faced as children, and then as young adults that set the stage for their current emotional dynamic, explaining that sometimes people get stuck in the ruts they place each other in emotionally, and don't know how to climb out again. That is how it was for Finn and Danielle, and part of why he painted their portrait - to put June and Greta together forever. June wants to give Toby one big thing, a dramatic gesture, but has no idea what that would be until after this visit. It is her version of a bucket list for Toby - something she hadn't been able to do for Finn.

Greta is slowly unraveling but the only one who seems to notice is June. Greta is drinking more, and more often, and her performance on stage is lackluster at best. While during the first rehearsal, June is able to feel the character Greta is playing, her most recent performance lacks authenticity and June doesn't feel as engaged as she did the first time. June goes into the woods but her ability to pretend she is from another age eludes her. She lights a cigarette, surprised to acknowledge that she isn't fearful - not of the woods; the upcoming party Greta has once again roped her into; or anything else for that matter. Somehow, the experience with Finn and now Toby had taken the last of her childhood with it. Now she is an adult who smokes, who had tasted brandy, and most importantly, who has someone to look after.

Later, after June finds Greta drunk and alone in the woods again, she walks her sister home. The relationship between the girls is fragile, and Greta finally admits she is struggling as well, and resents that the only time June seems to care about anyone is if they are dying of AIDS. She asks June if she got AIDS, would June have time for her then? Would she be special enough, or tragic enough for her then? Greta scares June especially when she admits that she is scared as well, of everything. For a moment, the alcohol and cover of night allows the sisters to be real with each other again.

June watches her parents at the annual Ingrams' barbecue. Her mother laughs and June can't resolve in her mind the two people she now knows her mother to be - one sad and desperate and the other strong and normal. She considers what she'd learned from Toby about her mother's childhood with Finn, and wonders if they were anything like she and Greta were now. Greta is back to being mean and vindictive, telling June that Ben left the party with someone else, making June feel stupid for having for just one moment felt like she was normal. June responds by insisting she doesn't care, adding that she has a boyfriend, but in the city and older than Greta even. She insists they smoke, drink and do whatever they want. Greta is angry, so angry that June knows she believes her. Greta can't resist one more poke at June's armor, telling her that she knew all about her special place in the woods, having watched her frequently, and



making fun of her. In her anger, all June can do is toss the Dungeons and Dragons die that Ben had given her across the lawn and storm off. The magical moment from the night before, when the sisters had almost found their way back to each other again, is gone.

Discussion Question 1

How does spending time with Toby change June's opinion of him and in what way?

Discussion Question 2

How does Toby feel about dying and why?

Discussion Question 3

What happens that undermines the relationship between Greta and June again at the Ingram's barbecue?

Vocabulary

Inevitable, appalling, mediocrity, deported, regretted, coincidence, impolite, nauseated, translucent.



Chapters 43 - 45

Summary

President Reagan delivers his first speech about AIDS on April Fool's Day, and basically suggests that teenagers especially should stop having sex. June has to be careful on April Fool's Day. It used to be that she and Greta would pull something on their parents, but in the last few years things had changed and now it had changed to Greta against her. Last year, June hadn't been taken in, and this year she is on guard but nothing happens. Toby sends her a tape of himself playing the guitar and a note that says he'll teach it to her.

June continues her clandestine meetings with Toby. The next time she goes, he has cleaned up the apartment, making an effort for her sake, and she suggests they go down to look at Finn's paintings. He leads the way. There are between thirty and forty canvasses. June goes through them slowly, and after the first ten abstracts, she finds one titled 'Wishing You Here (23)'. From then, all the paintings resembled postcards of places in America, done in colors that are just slightly surreal. In each one is a representation of Toby in one form or another, some making her laugh out loud. June begins going to see Toby as often as she can. He tries to teach her how to operate the flea circus, and they walk from Central Park to Chinatown where they share a huge drink called a Volcano Bowl, served on fire. It is the first time June has ever been drunk. Leaving, she begins to feel as though Toby likes her just for her.

June finds her passport and puts it in her backpack. Danielle suggests June make her own lunch, missing an opportunity to mother her one last time before leaving, and they exchange looks of disappointment – Danielle's because June won't make her own sandwich and hers back for so many reasons.

Analysis

AIDS is gaining ground and the President finally decides that he can no longer remain quiet about the issue. He suggests that teenagers should refrain from having sex, and June has no trouble with that concept, unable to understand what is so important about sex anyway. Her concept of love is uncomplicated and pure, and she is convinced that love and sex are not interchangeable. She recalls times with Finn, their love so strong that it was difficult to know where one of them stopped and the other started.

April Fool's Day is another example the author uses here to describe how the relationship between the sisters had changed, going from a day when they played tricks on their parents together to a day that June has to be wary of Greta for the mean and often unforgivable tricks she would play on her such as telling her Finn was dead.

The author compares the word clandestine as understood by June to a pale little girl in a white dress with hair the color of autumn leaves as well as using it to describe the



relationship Toby and June have. She brings him a faux bonsai, a Japanese maple twig in dirt, symbolic of his reference to Karate Kid the previous time they'd seen each other. The author points out here that despite June's previous misunderstanding of relationships and how she fit into them, such as with Greta, Bean or Ben and maybe even with Finn, June is still willing to take a chance and let down her guard with Toby, believing that he likes her for who she is as opposed to what she can offer him of Finn. The more time June spends with Toby, the more she learns about herself, about Finn, about her mother, about Greta and about life. Toby's generosity knows no bounds and his understanding for June and how she feels makes her more compassionate and considerate of him and his life with Finn. With Toby, she laughs until she cries, cries until she laughs, hurts until she thinks the world will end, and all she can do now is think about how she can give even a bit of that back to him while she can.

June has had to grow up so abruptly with the loss of Finn, and the distance she feels from Greta that part of her just wants to return to the child for a while and let someone else be the adult. When her mother asks her if she is buying lunch at school, June asks for a PBJ sandwich instead, missing the days when her mother would take the time to do those things for her, but instead, her mother insists that at the age of fourteen, June can do that for herself. It seems as though the whole world wants June to grow up. What Danielle doesn't know is that June found her passport and took it, and if she had any idea of what June had in mind, she would have been just as quick to point out that June was only fourteen, and still had lots of time to grow up. It is a conundrum that most young teenagers are caught in - too young to be independent and too old to be looked after by their mothers. That her mother would deny her this small thing is just one more in a circle of disappointments June feels.

Discussion Question 1

How does June define love, and how does that fit in with the President's speech regarding AIDS?

Discussion Question 2

What was the reason that Finn stopped showing his art in public and what kinds of paintings are stored in the basement?

Discussion Question 3

How does June try to reclaim a small bit of her youth and what makes her feel like she needs that connection at this stage?

Vocabulary

Clandestine, technique, bonsai, intricate, manicured.



Chapters 46 – 48

Summary

June invites Toby to see a movie with her set in medieval times, and he warns her that since he isn't Finn, he might not like it, but agrees to go. When she steps out of the pantry from which she made the call, she sees Greta sitting at the kitchen table with all of the items June had hidden in the back of her closet. She asks her if she knows how much trouble both she and Toby are in. She tells June that Toby is only pretending to be her friend so that he'll feel less guilty about giving Finn AIDS. Part of June falters, but when Greta picks up the teapot to pour herself a cup, June loses her composure, telling Greta she hates her. They begin fighting just as they hear their mother's car pull in. Greta grabs a garbage bag and sweeps everything into it while June ducks into the bathroom with the teapot, hearing Greta tell her mother how she is feeling better, and explaining the garbage bag as having cleaned her room. Later, she comes into June's room to tell her that Toby is a jailbird and met Finn while he was in prison, adding that if June promises not to see him again, she'll leave her alone. June tells her she doesn't care. After, June goes outside to retrieve her things from the garbage where Greta put them, and finds that she'd opened it all up and buried it under a weeks' worth of garbage. The only salvageable items are the Playland picture and even that was ruined. Her Book of Days from her backpack was fine, as was the teapot and she still had the money Toby gave her, but June is devastated.

June tells Toby she can't come because she has over a month's worth of journal entries to do; but, when Toby offers to help, she decides to take him up on it, making him promise not to distract her. He turns out to be more of a help than a hindrance, and they take turns coming up with ideas until they get to the day on which Finn died. They both wanted to skip over February 5th, and for a brief moment, it estranges them again. Then, they are both sorry. That night, June dreams of wolves who know where she lives.

June left a box behind with Toby during that visit telling him to open it after she went home. It had the top of the teapot Finn gave her and her passport with a note taped over her picture suggesting they could go to England. She keeps thinking about a few days during which she could get things absolutely right.

Analysis

When Greta discovers that June has been seeing Toby secretly, and accepting gifts from him, she realizes that June will never go back to the little sister that she hoped would happen after Finn's death. She had waited a long time for that to happen, time during which their close relationship was replaced with June's feelings for Finn and the special times they spent together. Greta barely gets past her jealousy of June's relationship with Finn when she learns that she has to begin putting up with yet another



special relationship with Toby. It was just too much, so she lashes out, saying the meanest and cruelest things she can think of. The most difficult part for June is the shred of truth that is in what Greta says, and knowing this Greta undermines Toby at every opportunity. She lords her new-found information over June telling her that she is really scraping the bottom with this friendship.

Despite June's feelings in the beginning, she and Toby are becoming fast friends. He even helps her with overdue homework, turning a difficult task into one filled with laughter and imagination instead. Of course, reality has a way of seeping into life when you least expect it, as is the case when, while working on June's school project, Toby and June reach the day that Finn died. Neither of them want to fill that space, each so raw inside still that nothing seems right. Frustrated, and angry, June yells at Toby, immediately regretting it and they apologize to each other. They both value their new friendship, each knowing the depth of each other's loss, and seemingly the only ones in the world who do. June leaves a box behind for Toby to open after she's left.

The box June leaves for Toby contains the top half of Finn's teapot. By giving it to him, June hopes that he understands that she is saying that he is one of the very best people that Finn told her should be served with it. Her passport with a note suggesting they go to England together is also in the box. She has a picture in her mind of the visit they will have, and though she knows it will get her in more trouble than anything ever has, she doesn't care. This time, she is determined to get things absolutely right for him. Part of her probably wishes she'd now understood Finn and his situation better, and regrets the opportunities she'd missed to do this for him, but living up to his wishes that she be there for Toby almost makes up for it in some small way. Her concerns for how her family will feel when she goes with him are secondary to how much she wants to get this right, knowing only too well that there will be no second chances.

Discussion Question 1

How does Greta feel when she discovers June's secret stash and what does she do about it?

Discussion Question 2

What reasons might Greta have for not revealing June's contact with Toby to their parents immediately?

Discussion Question 3

What grand gesture does June decide on, and why does she feel the need to do this?

Vocabulary

Distraction, mantel, substitute, pummel, disrespectful, abbreviation.



Chapters 49 – 51

Summary

Just before the end of tax season, June is working on a jigsaw puzzle Finn gave her when her father comes home early because of a stomach bug. She gets him ginger ale, and they work on pieces together for a while. She asks why he became an accountant, and he tells her that it was for her and Greta. June realizes that in less than two weeks, her parents would be home more often again.

June begins to notice that Greta never looks at her anymore. She never sits with her friends, and seems to spend a lot of time alone. Making an effort, June goes to one of her rehearsals. Ben waves her up to the balcony where he and two others are in the lighting booth. She goes up, and watches Greta as she self-destructs on stage. Ben reminds her of the kiss in the woods and June tells him not to worry, that she won't tell Tina, and gets up and leaves. After school, she waits for Greta, wondering how she can get her sister to tell her what is going on. When Greta doesn't come out, however, June walks home through town, taking the long way for a change.

Almost a week after they work on the journal together, June is at Toby's again, and asks him what he thinks about the England plan, telling him about the things she sees in her head that they can do, but Toby tells her he is sorry that her idea is impossible, giving her back her passport. He tries to explain first of all that there is a problem with her age, and that once she left, she'd never be able to come home. She tries to tell him that Finn wanted her to take care of him, and he smiles at first, and then bursts out laughing. Finally, embarrassed, she opens the book and shows him the proof, and he tells her he isn't laughing at her. He goes to a large blue vase and takes out a note. In it, Finn begs him to 'take the very best care of my only girl'. She reads the note again and again, confused at first, and then realizing that everything Toby had done for her was because Finn asked him to. He was doing what she was trying to do – what Finn wanted. She cries in his arms until finally she feels better and they manage to laugh a little at themselves. On the way home, June realizes that Finn loved her and also that Greta was right, Toby only spent time with her because of Finn.

Analysis

June's relationship and contact with Toby has initiated a growth in her that has her thinking more about others and how they feel than herself. She offers to do whatever she can to help her father when he comes home with a bug, and he recognizes the change in her, but has no idea why. She talks to him about the choices he made in his life, specifically his job choices, and wonders about life. In her mind, she compares it to a tunnel that narrows with the choices you make, beginning with endless possibilities, and continuing until you are crushed by the choices you make. She thinks about Finn and how it seemed as though he did whatever he wanted. For a moment, she thinks



that maybe Toby is right. You have to be dying to understand truly what you want. For the first time she wishes she could extend tax season, not wanting her parents to be home more often yet, as that would interfere with the free time that she spends with Toby.

June has mostly forgiven Greta for her behavior, and for having thrown her prized possessions in the garbage. She's gone from angry with her to concerned for her as she recognizes that Greta is pulling further and further away from everyone and everything. Even her performances on stage are beginning to look like she is ready to self destruct. June doesn't understand the reasons that her sister is imploding, but tries to make an effort to fix things. She is determined to lie to Greta if she must to make her feel better, but Greta doesn't come out and June misses the opportunity to try, so their inner turmoil with each other continues.

When June and Toby finally discuss her idea, Toby tells her that while sweet, it simply isn't possible for several reasons. June feels deflated. This was supposed to be her one grand gesture - the thing that made up for the fact that Finn was gone and Toby was dying too. It didn't seem fair that it wasn't possible. She tries to explain that Finn asked her to look after Toby for him, and learns to her surprise that Finn had instructed Toby the same way. June is confused and feels stupid but Toby assures her that everything will be okay even though she knows that it won't be. She wishes she could channel some of Finn's love back for Toby, hugging him close, but after she leaves, Greta's barbs come back to her. She thinks about what motivates Toby to be her friend, and hears Greta's voice telling her that Toby doesn't care about her and is using her. As usual, Greta had figured out that Toby was only spending time with her because Finn had asked him to. This is just one more example of Greta's harsh honesty in June's mind.

Discussion Question 1

What parallel does June draw where life and the choices one makes are concerned? How does she come to this realization?

Discussion Question 2

Why is June worried about Greta and what has she noticed of late that no one else seems to have?

Discussion Question 3

How does June's perception of her friendship with Toby change and what happens that causes this shift?

Vocabulary

Primaries, manicurist, immensely, extensions, psychotic, amends.



Chapters 52 – 54

Summary

June and Greta become part of America's Most Wanted when Newsweek magazine runs an article about missing treasures. They number sixth in a list that includes the following: a Revolutionary War painting from the 1700's; an Andy Warhol; two sculptures; and an American flag with only twelve stars on it made before the one created by Betsy Ross. In the photo shown, the buttons on June's t-shirt are conspicuously absent, and the article is about a man who is attempting to assemble an exhibit he calls 'Lost and Found' if he can get enough of them together. He is quoted as saying the items exist because they have either been discussed or photos of them have been seen, but they continue to be nothing more than 'ghost works' until they are truly revealed. The idea of the guy finding them makes June shudder. Danielle comes home with the article and announces she's decided to call the guy. June argues for keeping it secret, but her parents insists that Guy probably only wants to see it. The next day, June goes to the bank and taking out the portrait fearfully sees that it is even worse as Greta has added bright red to her lips making her look almost fearsome. Finally understanding that this was Greta's form of communicating with her, June takes out the gold paint from her back pack and carefully paints Greta's nails gold.

Toby and June go to the Bronx Zoo together after telling her parents that she thought she was getting the same bug as her father had. When they get there, June leads him to the monorail. On the way home, she tells him that she knows he met Finn in prison. Knowing that unless he told her, she would imagine the worst of him, he reluctantly tells her how he was ambushed in the train station as he was busking, and how in an effort to save the guitar that was all that remained of his grandfather from Spain, he pushed one of the young men who fell onto the tracks and lost both his legs. As a result, he was sent to prison where Finn came to teach art classes. He tells her how they fell in love, and how Finn saved him; how he waited for Toby to get out of prison before leaving. When he tells her that both he and Finn knew that she was in love with Finn, June wants to die. She spends the next forty five minutes in silent hell, and when they are a block from her house, she forces herself to pretend nothing happened. They make arrangements to meet the following Tuesday.

That Saturday is the opening night for South Pacific. Greta looks terrible, and confesses her wish to leave it all behind and be like June instead. They manage to bridge their differences slightly, and June even agrees to go to the cast party later. When her mother comes in a little later and insists on going to the bank to get the portrait, June does all that she can to put it off but is unsuccessful. Luckily, they are permitted to bring it home in the safety deposit box because of its value, and for a short time the explosion that June knows is coming is delayed. She goes up to her room and continues to make the Mother's Day card she started for her mother, wishing she could turn time back in so many ways.



Analysis

June and Greta realize the implications of the changes they'd both made to their portrait when their mother admits she has already called the man who is seeking the 'lost treasure'. June tries to argue for keeping their privacy as it is their faces and adds that Finn painted it for them and they should be able to decide how or if it is displayed, but her parents see no harm in simply showing it to the man who is searching for it. Just like a child caught coloring on the walls, June panics at the thought of how her parents will respond when they see the portrait. June goes to the bank, part of her hoping that the changes she, Greta and Toby have made will be hardly noticeable, or perhaps that if they are, she will be able to repair them somehow. Instead of blending in however, the changes glare at her. Gold highlights catch the light and reflects it back at her, and she realizes that there is no hope of fixing it. Then June notices the extra red added to Greta's lips. Now, it appears as though she is frowning, and looks almost fearsome instead of natural the way Finn had painted her. June takes out the Playland picture and puts it beside the portrait, examining herself before and after Finn's death, and decides that she looks stupid in both. She is glad she can't see herself, knowing she would see the same stupid expression on her face now. She finally understands that Toby wouldn't want to go to Europe with her. In fact, she is surprised that he would pretend to like her at all. Again, Greta's words echo in her head. She closes her eyes and recites the Requiem over and over until the feeling of dread begins to pass. Then, she imagines Greta sitting there and painting. In a sudden need to have her sister hear her, she pulls out the gold paint. Slowly and carefully, she paints Greta's fingernails gold, understanding that on some level, they are communicating still though not with words.

June takes Toby on a monorail ride, pretending not to notice how weak he is, and how slowly he moves. When he smiles through a bout of coughing, she worries for the first time what she would do if something happened to him there. Toby puts his arm around her and pulls her in close to the coat he is wearing and tells her to breathe in. Like magic, the smell of the coat bring Finn back to her. Toby holds her tight, and June can tell that he's crying. She closes her eyes and can almost believe that she has him back again. She thinks about all the different kinds of love there are. She considers how love is without rules and how it is possible to love the right person in the wrong way; how love can be so strong that even when it isn't supposed to be at all, it can consume you, and fill you so full that everything you think and do brings that person back to you. She figured that as long as no one knew, it was still okay.

Toby's tears fall down her cheek and touch her lips, but June is no longer afraid of AIDS or how she might catch it. She sees herself and Toby through someone else's eyes for a second, and a part of her knows how wrong they probably appear, but the rest of her just doesn't care. Their judgement wasn't important. When the ride is over, in a flash of inspiration, she asks Toby to give her Finn's coat and when he does she drapes it over the totem. It is her way of setting Finn free in a way, and by doing so, helping them both to move on like her mother told her she was supposed to, but the look on his face tells her that she's made a mistake. For Toby, there is no moving on; no life to look forward to, and she quietly unbuttons it and returns it to him, realizing how stupid the idea had



been. Greta was right – Toby only spent time with her because of Finn. Toby returns her passport to her, and it is just another reminder of how stupid she is.

On the way home, she tells him she knows about his time in prison, and he is compelled to tell her all of it rather than have her imagine the worst of him. Toby describes a dark time that Finn rescues him from, explaining how it all started; how secret and forbidden it all was in the beginning, and how he lived for every little contact with Finn. June has no trouble understanding the concept, feeling almost as though Toby is describing her feelings instead. When he describes the depths of his love for Finn, he realizes his mistake, and apologizes telling her they both knew she loved Finn. Embarrassed beyond words, June can only stare out the side window, wishing she were anywhere else until they were back. It is the worst case scenario for her that both Toby and Finn would know her secret.

South Pacific opens and June wonders if Greta is nervous. Greta admits she doesn't even want to do it. She feels as though a year of her life is being stolen when in reality she'd rather be just like June instead. In a rare moment of truth between the girls, Greta confesses the truth. Though everyone keeps telling her it is the opportunity of a lifetime, and she doesn't want to appear ungrateful, at the same time, she doesn't want to lose the remainder of her childhood either. She adds a generous helping of Vodka to her morning orange juice just thinking about it and swears she will not do Annie, despite the 'great' opportunity everyone insists it is for her. June promises to do what she can to help, but when Greta asks her if she'll come to the cast party afterward in the woods, June is truly stunned. She can't imagine why Greta would consider asking her in light of her recent behavior towards her. Greta reaches over and takes her hand, telling her softly that she likes the gold. In that moment, the barrier between them begins to come down. Greta asks if June still sees Toby, adding that she knows Toby has no one, but in a rare moment of fragility tells June that she has no one either. After she leaves, June goes to the bank with her mother to get the portrait. She still tries to dissuade her on the way, even hoping to stall the inevitable discovery if she can, but Danielle is determined to bring it home.

Discussion Question 1

What does June try to accomplish with Finn's old coat and why doesn't it go as she had hoped?

Discussion Question 2

How do Toby and Finn meet, and in what way is the beginning of their relationship similar to June's relationship with Finn?



Discussion Question 3

How does the relationship between June and Greta become less adversarial and what does Greta unexpectedly reveal to June?

Vocabulary

Condensed, monorail, proportion, fugues, irreplaceable, transfusion, vaporous.



Chapters 55 – 57

Summary

June dozes. She wakes and goes downstairs to find the portrait displayed with all of its changes. Her mother comes down and conveys her disappointment that June would go out of her way to deface her sister in such a way, believing that Greta had nothing to do with it. She tells her she is grounded and assures her that her time will now be structured and supervised, although she was still allowed to go to the play's opening. Danielle also tells her that as a result of her 'artistry' she is the single reason they will all forfeit the trip they would have taken with the money they were going to get for displaying the portrait.

June is given no opportunity to tell Greta she can't come later on, and she can tell when her sister goes on stage that she is drunk. Ben asks her if she is going to the Reed's house for the cast party. Surprised, June tells him she can't. She begins to wonder if Greta plans on going into the woods by herself. Worried, she races back up the stairs to send a message to Greta through Ben, but Ben tells her Greta left as soon as the curtain went down. June can't get the vision of Greta lying in the leaves waiting for her out of her head.

June sits in her room, listening to the thunder and worrying about Greta. Her parents call up to her regularly to ensure she doesn't sneak out, so instead she tiptoes into their room and calls Toby. She tells him about Greta, getting increasingly anxious, and explains where she will be waiting. Toby is nervous, knowing he will scare her, but she tells him to give her a message that their parents have seen the portrait. Though reluctant, he promises to go, for her. After hanging up, she thinks about what she's done and calls him back to call it off, but he is already gone. June goes downstairs and tells her parents she is sorry. She had told Toby to just help Greta get to the back door, and June would keep checking for her. Soon after, her parents went to bed, and June sits waiting. Then the doorbell rings.

Analysis

When June's mother sees the painting, she tells June that their biggest disappointment is not that June painted over Finn's work, but that she went to such extremes to deface her sister. June is surprised her mother and father would assume it was all her, especially when her mother assures her that Greta is much too busy to indulge in that kind of willful damage and stupidity. Her mother is convinced that June has way too much time on her hands unsupervised, and promises her that from here on in, all of that will change. Her father asks if the 'artwork' is a cry for help telling June that they hear her loud and clear. The restrictions placed on her will affect not only her time with Toby, but her ability to meet with Greta in the woods as well. To top it all off, they insist that June ruined the whole family's chance of a vacation that they would surely have been



able to take with the money paid to them to display the portrait. June doesn't reveal her sister's part in changing the painting, perhaps paying Greta back in some small way for not revealing June's contact with Toby. She also realizes that Greta is walking a fine emotional line at the moment, and adding to it would be unkind at best, and at worst, catastrophic. June is allowed to go to the play to support Greta, but the cast party afterward is out.

June is kept close to her father throughout the play, and has no opportunity to let Greta know she won't be coming afterward. It is obvious to June that Greta is drunk on stage and June is worried about her sister. She knows that there will be no one at the cast party who will look out for Greta, and remembering the last two times that she'd found Greta drunk and unconscious in a bed of leaves frightens her. In Greta's current state of mind, June knows that anything is possible, and her love and concern for her sister supersedes all pettiness or misunderstandings that they've had. June tries to let Greta know, but her sister is already gone by the time she gets free of her father for a moment. It doesn't help that Greta has vehemently stated that she will not do Annie, and June is partly afraid that her sister might try something drastic to get out of it all.

Unable to stop thinking of all the bad things that are possible, June finally calls Toby in desperation using her parent's phone upstairs. She is almost hysterical as she explains the situation to him, and she finally convinces him to go and get Greta. As soon as she hangs up, she has second thoughts, realizing she should have just told her parents but her reluctance came from having disappointed them so much already. June calls Toby back almost right away to cancel but he had already left. Instead, June goes down to where her parents are watching television and apologizes sincerely to them for the first time. Her mother draws her into the space beside her on the couch, happy to hear her say it. After the program they are watching is over, they go to bed and June continues to wait anxiously.

Discussion Question 1

What opinion do June's parents have of June and Greta, based on their assumptions where the painting is concerned?

Discussion Question 2

Why is June so worried about Greta, and what is her fear based on?

Discussion Question 3

Why does June choose to call Toby for help rather than involve her parents?

Vocabulary

Mythical, illuminated, cinched, implications, magnitude, repetitions, overture.



Chapters 58 – 60

Summary

When two officers are at the door, with Greta standing soaked between them, June tries not to panic or imagine the worst case scenario. She doesn't see Toby, and isn't sure if he found her or if he is still wandering around the woods in the storm looking for her. These questions are answered quickly when she is given Greta's soaking wet coat to take upstairs and put in the bathtub. It takes until she gets there before she realizes it is Finn's coat. She tries to catch her sister's eyes, willing her to look at her and see the alarm and hope that she would not leave Toby in a legal nightmare. The officers explain how Greta's scream drew them to her, and how they witnessed as Toby half carried her out of the woods. When frisked, they found June's passport in his pocket, which opened up still more questions and concerns. When June decides to try to explain it herself, Greta interrupts her and concocts a story that gets Toby off the hook entirely. June hurries up to create a message for Toby in the window, telling him to stay quiet. Then she turns out the light, praying things will be alright.

Quietly, Greta claims everything is her fault. She takes responsibility for Toby's presence, claiming to have been the one to go see him, and invite him to the party. She convinces the police that Toby saved her, and explains June's passport by claiming to have tried to get fake identification for June. It all sounds plausible, and saves Toby from immediate charges, but because his

After the police take Toby away, June strokes Finn's coat, apologizing over and over again. She lies in bed going over it all again and again in her mind thinking about how cold and wet he looked. She hears the sound of crying and creeps next door to Greta's room. Finally, June tells her everything. She explains how their mother had lied about Toby. They stayed up, talking till sunrise.

Early in the morning, June calls Toby at home, but no one answers. Finally, both girls sleep. At lunch Danielle wakes them and tells June that they want to move on. They want to do more familial things with them, recognizing that they haven't been there for them. June goes downstairs and Greta smiles at her – a real smile, and quietly tells her not to say anything, but she likes the portrait the way it is. June agrees.

Analysis

June's worst fears are put to bed when Greta is returned, flanked by two policemen. The author does a good job of instilling fear for Toby now who is being held by police pending further investigation. This was a scenario June hadn't considered when she involved Toby, never realizing that by doing so she might tangle him in such a way he can no longer free himself. While at one time she might not have cared that he was arrested or deported, knowing him now and considering him a friend, she is terrified of



what might happen. Then to her surprise, Greta tells a story that clears Toby of everything. Why she does this is not revealed but the impression is given that Greta is striving to repair her damaged relationship with June in this way. The fact that Greta is wearing Finn's coat; the one that Toby did not want to part with; is symbolic of the mission Toby was sent on - to save Greta. Finn's coat has saved him in a way, bringing Finn closer to him when he needed it and bringing comfort to both him and June simply with its presence. By giving it to Greta, he is in fact saving her (or trying to) both literally and figuratively speaking.

Toby's gift of Finn's jacket to Greta in the woods provides more than just symbolic comfort and warmth. It gives June just a fraction of an idea of Toby's love for her as well as for Greta as he shares what is one of his most valued possessions with her, taking it from himself in the process and knowing that he would be sacrificing it to the cause. June can't sleep for thinking about it all, and hearing Greta crying, she goes to her. The girls talk for a long time, finally able to share the pain and loss they are feeling. Greta lost Finn also, but the real loss to her came much earlier when her sister chose Finn over her as emotional contact and confidante. Greta mourned the loss of June long before Finn died, and then again when June's relationship with Toby came to light. Her loneliness is only compounded by the fact that she is expected to forfeit her senior year to play Annie, losing both family, childhood and her transition from childhood to adulthood in one small window of time. This led her to seek answers or relief in a bottle. When June calls Toby to retrieve Greta from the woods, she builds a bridge to her sister emotionally, and once the door is opened they are able to put aside the hurt feelings and differences.

The emotional bridge built by the girls during the night doesn't fade with the morning like June is afraid it will as the author continues to hint to the reader that the bond between these two sisters will overcome all obstacles. Their parents have somehow concluded that they are at least partially responsible for the events of late as they've been absent and not kept as close a rein on the girls as usual, but they are determined to change that, reinforcing their belief that they are still in control of the situation, and that simply their absence caused the issues they are dealing with. In reality, Greta and June are at a difficult transition period in their lives when they leave childhood behind and assume the mantle of adulthood which includes the making of decisions that may or may not coincide with parental instruction or guidance. Greta and June both agree that the painting looks good with the additions they've each made, but neither girl will risk admitting it to their parents, still unwilling to openly defy or bait them in such a manner. The gold additions especially seem appropriate to the girls, making them look like the sisters that Finn was so desperate to capture in his portrayal of them. The gold is not only angelic in its way, but also ties them together in a way that is intimate; valuable; precious; and lasting.

Discussion Question 1

What will Toby's involvement cost him and why was he willing to take the risk?



Discussion Question 2

How do June's parents feel about Toby after Greta's confession and why are their feelings so different from each other?

Discussion Question 3

What are some of the possible ramifications of the favor June asked of Toby and what is the worst case scenario for him?

Vocabulary

Immigrant, wringing, haggard, visitation, hapless, disguised.



Chapters 61 – 63

Summary

June keeps trying to reach Toby, but there is no answer – not Sunday or even Monday morning. After school, she runs into Ben in the library who tells her that the wolves exist no more. The Gazette reported that a pack of feral dogs were found and shot after complaints were filed. He invites her to his place to roll for a character in his game, and she agrees. She tries Toby again with no success. She goes home hoping for a note in the mailbox, but there is none.

June starts to wonder if she called Toby on purpose just to get him in trouble, to pay him back for being closer to Finn than she was and because they both knew about her feelings for her Uncle. As each day passes, she begins to feel more and more like her mother. She calls, and calls, and calls, but there is no answer.

Greta sits with her in the cafeteria at school for the first time, sharing her sandwich with her. She asks if June has heard from Toby. When she assures June he'll be fine, she tells Greta that he is sick.

After four days, June calls the police station and asks to talk to Officer Gellski who tells her that because Toby 'the AIDS' and was running a fever, the EMTs picked him up and took him to Bellevue in the city. She calls the hospital next and learns he is in room 2763, but he is unavailable. She tries again, calling him from outside after her parents are asleep. Finally, she reaches him. They both apologize to each other, and June can hear that Toby sounds awful. She asks when he'll be home, and he admits he might not be. She tries to tell him that things will be fine, willing him to believe it. Then, it dawns on her how stupid she is being. She tells him she's coming and to hang on. He tells her not to get into more trouble, and she looks up to see Greta looking down at her. June asks if she'll come, and she says she will. Greta drives, rolling her father's car out of the driveway quietly. June lights a smoke for them both, and Greta assures her that she'll find a way to make things work.

Analysis

June's life goes from fat to flat in a heartbeat. She and Greta are kept under strict scrutiny and everything that filled June's life of late is reduced to normalcy and immediate family as though none of it had ever happened. It seems to her as though everyone wanted to put it all behind them but her. She frantically searches for Toby, unable to reach him at the apartment, and feeling the loss of him acutely even though her relationship with Greta has greatly improved.

Ben's announcement that the wolves are no more is symbolic of the loss June is feeling especially as he reveals that what they actually were was feral dogs. The author uses this as another example of the loss June is already feeling, the wolves having



symbolized her link to medieval times and to Finn now non-existent as are her ties to him, one after the other. The dogs having gone feral as a result of their owner's death ties in to the theme of loss, love and survival. June agrees to spend time with Ben, and try playing his game surprising herself with how good it felt to be accepted and do something normal. June continues to hope for word from Toby, but hears nothing and even tries unconventional methods of proving to herself that she and Toby will still see each other again, but nothing seems even possible now.

As the lack of word from Toby continues, June begins to doubt herself more and more. She examines and then re-examines her motives for calling Toby that night and involving him, and finally concludes that she is wholly responsible. The reason that keeps snapping at her heels, the one the author compares to as wandering around 'dressed in wolf's clothing' is the idea that she did this out of jealousy. That somehow she felt compelled subconsciously to punish Toby for the love Finn had for him. All of her doubts push in as she thinks of them laughing at her depth of feelings for her uncle. She compares the darkness she fears is in her heart to the wolves in a dark forest and attributes the title of the painting as having some deeper meaning and insight into her personality feeling as though Finn knew her better than she knew herself. Finding common ground with her mother, she begins to understand that maybe she isn't as different or as pure of heart as she believed herself to be, and that deep down somehow she'd intended to set him up when she called that stormy night. Each day that she doesn't hear from Toby seems to reinforce her doubts about everything.

Greta understands June's heart better than anyone, and realizes that she is agonizing over the loss of contact with Toby and blaming herself for the position she put him in. Greta assures June that Toby is an adult who makes his own decisions, but June knows the truth is much simpler. Toby would have done anything June asked in order to live up to Finn's last request if it was in his power to do so. Finally, June calls the police and discovers Toby is in the hospital. The author again uses fear of AIDS typical of that time period as the arresting officer assures June that since Toby had 'the AIDS' they were eager to rid themselves of him as soon as possible. June believes that the worst possible scenario is that she can't reach Toby, but when she finally does, the truth is much worse than what she'd imagined.

Toby tries to tell her that he thinks his time has come, but June won't hear it. She can't believe that he won't go back to the apartment. Knowing that losing Toby is a more permanent reality, June begs him to hold on, telling him she's coming. Greta hears the conversation, and June trusts her enough to ask her to come. To her surprise, Greta agrees, continuing to be the sister June had long thought she'd lost. Their underlying familial connection is unmistakable, blood being thicker and more than evident in this case. A transition of sorts occurs as the girls' relationship now takes on a new dimension of trust and inclusion. Greta also learns that perhaps June has also matured, largely as a result of her time with Finn and Toby.



Discussion Question 1

What is the response of the police after Toby is picked up?

Discussion Question 2

What changes prove that Greta and June are now acting in tandem and in what way has their bond as sisters changed?

Discussion Question 3

What reality is June unwilling to accept and why might that be?

Vocabulary

Obligations, mortification, charisma, constitution, congruence, postulates, axioms.



Chapters 64 - 66

Summary

June and Greta stop at Toby's to get some clothing for him on the way, and by the time they get to Bellevue, it is almost two in the morning. Greta tells June to pretend she is Toby's sister from England and promises to wait until she is sure June gets in. When June finds his room, she enters, and he takes off the oxygen mask, smiling at her. June begins to cry, and he tells her to get out and try again. She pulls it together and goes in again, telling him she brought him some clothes after hugging him. She helps him sit up, and he tells her it isn't her fault – and that it would have happened anyway. He tells her things she didn't realize, letting her know that he'd done things for her behind the scenes her whole life. So in a way, they knew each other intimately. He wasn't just with her because Finn asked him to be there. He was there because they shared something beautiful. Finn was the first love for both of them. For the first time, June admits it out loud and feels better. Then, she knows what to do. She helps him get dressed, telling him she is taking him home to her house. They get into a cab with some help from the driver. On the way there, she tells him the mistletoe story.

Toby sleeps on the living room couch under the portrait and the watchful eyes of both girls. Greta had waited up for her, somehow understanding it all, and she sang softly for him, continuing when she sees him smile. The house came alive slowly, and when Danielle comes down she sees June sitting with her hand on Toby's head. After much conversation, and a lot of silence, Danielle goes to Toby, putting her hand on his head and stroking his soft hair. In the end, only she and June remain as Toby's body stills. Later, after Toby's body is gone, June tells Greta what she saw when she crept downstairs, unable to sleep. She saw her mother with a paintbrush in one hand and in small, careful strokes, adding a silver necklace to June's neck, and a silver ring with Greta's birthstone to Greta's finger. Finn had willed the apartment to both Greta and June after Toby died, giving them a secret place, but the room in the basement is something June keeps for herself. She has Toby's copy of the Playland picture framed and hangs it down there which is the only time she's been downstairs since his death. There is no funeral for Toby and no grave. They have him cremated just like Finn. On June's suggestion, his ashes are added to Finn's in an urn that Danielle keeps in her closet.

The guy from the Whitney gallery comes to examine the portrait. Afterward, he tells them all what a travesty it is that so much damage was inflicted. After calling it an abomination, he told them that a restorer could put it back to normal and that if he took it with him to the museum, he should be able to get it back to them within a month. When he finally returns it, two things that were added were still there – the additions Danielle made. The work had been so exceptional that the restorer couldn't tell it from Finn's work, so the necklace and ring remained. The portrait is hung above the mantel and only June notices that when the light hits it just right, the shadows of the buttons can still be seen.



Analysis

June anticipates feeling some connection to Finn when she and Greta head into town as she had never been in town late with anyone else but him, and it somehow seemed appropriate to her that something of his spirit would linger there, but it doesn't. In her mind, the city and Finn are still synonymous. They stop at Finn's apartment. (June still thinks of it that way, despite now knowing that Toby had lived there with Finn for years.) June is surprised to find it clean. This is Greta's first time to Finn's apartment since his death, and she now struggles with the strangeness of being there without Finn.

Once they get to Bellevue where Toby is, June tells Greta to go home, trying to minimize the degree of damage. Greta draws on her natural ability as an actress and coaches June as to how to get past the nurses, and June feels as close to her as she ever has at that moment, almost crumbling, but Greta lends her strength and June goes in. Toby is in very bad shape, and June struggles at first, but soon finds herself talking to him about England, their shared promise to Finn and more. He confesses his fear that he will leave the planet invisible if he doesn't admit his part in the background of her life all of the years she'd been coming over. His confession to her that Finn was the first love for both of them rocks her. For the first time, she admits her love for Finn aloud, somehow purging her of the guilt she'd been feeling.

In sudden inspiration, June decides to take Toby home. Her home. It is the gesture that she'd been hoping she could make - that one special something, and it feels right. As she is getting Toby ready to take home, she asks the question that is niggling around in her head. Was Finn really his first love too? If so, that meant that there is no way Toby could have given Finn AIDS and in fact it was the other way around. Toby doesn't want June to have a lesser opinion of the uncle she loved so much, and admits that even Finn never knew and the truth was that it just didn't matter. On the taxi ride home to the Elbus residence June holds a weakened Toby, having laughed and cried with him, and feeling a peace that she will remember and hate to have end.

Finn was June's first love, and in those last hours there is little question that Toby was her second. She wonders if she is forever destined to fall in love with men she cannot have. Toby sleeps on the couch while Greta and June watch over him. When Danielle gets up there is some initial discomfort, and after the necessary explanations, she accepts Toby's presence and the fact that he and June are friends. Danielle then finds a way to overcome the jealousy she felt where Finn was concerned. In that morning, she realizes how wrong she has been, and it is Danielle and June who sit with Toby as he takes his last breath, surrounded by love as was Finn at his end. After Toby was gone, and his body taken, the house is quiet - most everyone asleep. June quietly creeps downstairs to discover her mother adding a contribution to the painting herself. By adding some delicate jewelry, Danielle symbolically adds elegance, and parental pride to the details already so vividly in evidence as a result of Finn's talent. Despite Toby's assurances to June that his death resulting from complications due to pneumonia were an inevitability, June knows that she robbed Toby of the last two months of his life and



she carries the guilt like a stone. What counters that guilt is that she is just as sure that she did what her Finn wanted.

Finn's portrait of June and Greta is judged salvageable by the man who comes from the gallery, and he takes it away to a restorer. When the work is done, he returns it. June is surprised and pleased to see that the necklace and ring painted by her mother is still there, the restorer unable to tell the difference between Danielle's work and Finn's. It is obvious as he leaves that it disturbs him to have to leave it with such stupid people who obviously have no appreciation for the masterpiece they have, but it is hung back over the mantel where it belongs. June can still see the wolf in the negative space. When the light is just right, she can see that a ghost of where the buttons Toby painted still exist.

Discussion Question 1

What does June believe she deserves to be punished for?

Discussion Question 2

What secrets are revealed by Toby? Which does he ask June to keep? Why?

Discussion Question 3

What happens to Toby after he dies? Who makes the decision?

Vocabulary

Solemn, eclipsed, magnificent, perceptible, obliterate, revelation, intimidated.



Characters

Finn Weiss

Finn is June and Greta's Uncle and June's godfather. He lives with the love of his life, a man named Toby, in a Manhattan apartment. Finn has bird-blue eyes, and though always slight of frame, towards the end of 1986, he'd entered an entirely new realm of skinny. None of his belts fit anymore, so he used an emerald green tie to hold up his pants. Finn is an extraordinary artist of international renown. He also has AIDS. June remembers him as looking like a deflated balloon while Greta describes him as 'a small gray moth wrapped in a gray spider's web'. His lips are constantly chapped these days, shredded to a point where they would often bleed. His face is pale and his voice has become thin.

Finn's funeral is on a Thursday. Toby shows up, but isn't allowed to attend. This is because for many years June's mother has blamed him for Finn's illness and subsequent death. This of course is not true. In fact, the opposite is true. Toby had allowed Finn's family to believe that he was the root of all evil so that Finn could maintain a relationship with them and especially with his niece June whom he loved almost as dearly as he did Toby.

When Finn is close to death, he pens a note to Toby, begging him to look after June when he is gone, knowing that she will be lost. He also writes a note to June, asking her to look after Toby because he has no one and is all alone now that he is gone. This gesture brings the two people he loves together after his death for the first time.

One of the last artistic endeavors Finn decides to do is a portrait of June and her sister Greta. It is his way of ensuring that he can spend more time with them. He is never entirely happy with it however, and Toby promises to finish it for him, but Toby is not an artist. In the midst of his grief on the day that Finn dies, he paints buttons down the front of June's t-shirt. This is the beginning of additions that are made by June, Greta and finally their mother, Danielle as well. The artwork is considered so valuable however that a restorer is hired to fix it, and when it is returned, the only additions that still exist are the pieces of jewelry added by Danielle.

June Elbus

June is the youngest daughter and the hands down favorite of her Uncle and godfather Finn, who calls her Crocodile because he told her that she reminded him of 'something from another time' that lurks just watching and waiting before she finally makes up her mind about things. June loves the nickname. She sees herself as big and clumsy next to her sister, Greta. Finn introduces June to life in many forms. He teaches her how to soften the drawings of faces by using her finger to rub along the edges of the pencil lines, and to appreciate and then learn to love Mozart's Requiem, although she doesn't



believe in God. He also encourages her interest and passion of all things from the Middle Ages.

June is a loner, preferring to spend time on her own in the woods than with others her age. She wanders around, pretending that some unknown force has dropped her into a time period when life was in some ways more complicated, and in others much more simple. She imagines that her very life would depend on how well she knew the forest and interpreted her surroundings. June is self-conscious, and has little self-confidence. She doesn't believe that she has a great deal to offer anyone, and sees her sister as being the one with the social graces, and herself as an awkward young girl. When her uncle Finn dies, she loses her one real friend and for a while the world tilts on her, but then Toby insinuates himself in her life. In a short period of time, she learns that although Finn was her first, albeit forbidden, love of her life, Toby would be her second. Toby teaches her that life is not always what it seems, and makes her realize that he is not the evil man her mother portrayed him to be. She spends as much time as she can with him and not only regains her soul, but repairs the damaged relationships that exist between herself and her sister, and her mother and Toby as well. Her last grand gesture to Toby is to bring him home to her parents' home to spend his last day before AIDS takes his life as well.

Greta Michelle Elbus (aka Bloody Mary)

Greta is sixteen when this story begins in late 1986. She is the oldest of the two girls and has dark, sleek hair that shines to reflect the sun and dark eyes. She is able to sing extremely well and through June's eyes (and many others), everything about Greta is more beautiful than her surroundings, even her speech and the way she describes things. She is strong-willed and often terrorizes those less inclined to be by making them display affection even when they didn't usually do so openly.

Greta is on her way to becoming a fine actress. She is cast in a supporting role in the play *South Pacific* (as Bloody Mary) at school and her abilities on stage garner her a great deal of attention both in the school and in the acting world beyond. Greta is not as secure as she seems however. In fact, the more attention paid to her, the further she falls from the pedestal others would put her on. She lands a role in *Annie* as a result of a school play, but it requires her to abandon what she sees as her last year of childhood. So disturbed by this, Greta begins drinking, and retreats into a shell of her own. From within her misery, she lashes out at her sister, destroying items of emotional value to her in a desperate attempt to get her attention. When that doesn't work, she drinks herself into a stupor and waits for her sister to rescue her. In the end, she comes to understand her sister better, and together they act to make Toby's last day one of comfort and family.



Toby Aldshaw

Toby is the love of Finn's life and also is dying of AIDS. He is a tall, thin man who at first glance reminds June of Ichabod Crane. He appears to be younger than Finn, and June guesses him to be about thirty years old. He has a thin neck making his Adam's apple stick out. His hair has a soft appearance, reminding June of a dusting of baby bird's feathers and he has big brown eyes that make June think of a horse's eyes. Toby is English on his father's side and Spanish on his mother's side which accounts for his dark eyes.

Toby meets Finn while he is in jail, and Finn is conducting art classes for the inmates. Finn is Toby's first love, and through him, Toby contracts AIDS, but as a kindness to him and to ease the burden on him with his family, he allows them all to believe that he is the one who was responsible, which effectively shuts him out of their lives. Danielle will only allow her daughters to visit with Finn under the condition that he promises they never know Toby or see him when they visit, and he keeps his word. Finn creates a one room space for him in the storage room downstairs that is equipped with everything that Toby would need to be comfortable if he returns while the girls are still visiting. He hangs curtains, places chairs, tables, rugs, books and more to keep Toby from feeling the isolation. Toby's love for Finn is so great that he doesn't resent the isolation at all, and he is with Finn until Finn dies from his disease, despite growing sicker every day himself.

When Finn dies, he leaves Toby a note, begging him to look after his niece June for him, and Toby takes this request seriously. Despite being branded as the one to have killed her uncle, he manages to find a way into her life, explaining the truth to her eventually. When June learns that Toby met Finn in jail, he is forced to explain his incarceration as well, and does so reluctantly because it is a part of him that no longer exists. Instead, he tells June about her uncle and ensures that she is aware of the depth of love that he felt for her. Toby dies after honoring June's request to rescue Greta from the woods in the rain, and as a result contracting pneumonia. June and Greta sneak out of the house and bring Toby back to their home where he finally is able to make peace with Danielle before he dies.

Dannielle Elbus

June and Greta's mother, Danni is just a shadow of the person she once was. When Finn asks to be allowed to paint a portrait of the girls, she almost declines, telling him it is so hard to travel so far on a regular basis, but then she relents. Danielle and Finn are very close as children. They spend all of their time together as army brats, dependent on each other for everything, and when Finn leaves home, Danielle feels abandoned. She resents the fact that he leaves and manages to do all of the things they dreamed of. He becomes a famous artist, while she becomes and marries a tax accountant. Part of her never forgives him, but she takes all of this out on Toby when Finn finally returns



with him. She blames Toby for Finn's illness, for taking advantage of her brother and corrupting his gentle nature.

Danielle' hair was dyed a deep chestnut brown and had been since she was twenty-three when her hair went gray. She has kept it cut short ever since, and usually had a thin stripe of gray at the top where the newest hair grew out.

In the end, Danielle is able to see the error of her ways and has a brief opportunity to apologize to Toby as he spends his last day on earth on her couch with June and herself. The irony is that Danielle is every bit the artist that Finn was, and is in fact so good that a professional art restorer is unable to tell her work from Finn's on the portrait he last paints of her girls.

Father Elbus

June and Greta's father, an accountant, is a soft spoken and understanding husband and father. He tells June of the history of her mother and uncle, making clear the reasons for her resentment of Toby and underlying anger. As a result, June comes to understand her mother a little better, even feeling sorry for her instead of resenting her as she had before.

Ben Dellahunt

Ben is a junior in June's school and is the assistant stage manager for the school play that Greta is in. He always wears his hair tied back in a ponytail and June considers him to be pretty smart. Ben likes June, and does his best to convey this to her. He kisses her quickly at a party in the woods one night, and compliments her on her medieval footwear, trying hard to get her attention. He is heavily involved in the game Dungeons and Dragons, and he consistently invites June to take a chance on entering the game, offering to pave the way and make it easier to gain advantages in the game. Eventually, June has enough confidence to accept this invitation.

Mr. Zimmer

He is Dennis Zimmer's father. Mr. Zimmer has known June since kindergarten. He is also the man in charge of the vault at the bank where the portrait is being held. He has a face like a turtle and is at least two inches shorter than June.

Mikey Ingram

Mikey is Fred and Becca's son, and June and Greta have known him all their lives. Mikey has a port wine stain birthmark that stretches across one shoulder, and self conscious about it, he always wears a t-shirt - even in the pool. Mikey tries to kiss Greta



at one point, and Greta tells him it would be like incest since his parents were her godparents. But, if he wanted to, he could kiss June, she adds.

Fred Ingram

Mr. Ingram is Greta's godfather. He is a quality control manager at Pillsbury.

Becca Ingram

Becca is Greta's godmother.

Bean

Bean is a childhood friend of June's. They had grown apart over recent years, but June still uses her as an alibi or excuse to go out or to explain absences.



Symbols and Symbolism

South Pacific

This is the name of the play that Greta has a supporting role in.

Crocodile

This is the nickname that Finn gives June, telling her it is because she is like something from another time that lurks about, waiting and watching before making up her mind about things.

Requiem

This is a piece by Mozart that Finn introduces June to. Finn and June love it.

AIDS

This is the disease that Finn and Toby both have that takes their lives.

Middle Ages

This is the time period that June loves because of its simplicity and uncomplicated expectations.

Tell The Wolves I'm Home

This is the name Finn gives to the portrait he does of June and Greta.

Guitar Pickles

This is what Finn calls the jar of guitar picks he has on the shelf in his apartment because they are housed in a canning jar.

Russian Teapot

This is Finn's gold, red, and blue teapot with dancing bears etched into the sides reserved for serving tea to only his favorite people.



Sketchbook

This is a gift from Finn to Danielle on her fortieth birthday that comes with a small pen drawing of her done by Finn and a note that says 'you know you want to.' It is never used and ends up on a bookshelf in Greta's room.

Butterfly

Created out of a napkin by Finn for Greta at a restaurant where Danielle's fortieth birthday is celebrated.

Party

Greta invites June to attend a party with her as a way of helping her to forget about Finn. The party is to be held in the woods when it is finally scheduled.

Box 2963

This is the safety deposit box where Finn's portrait is kept.

Annie

This is the Broadway play that Greta is told she could get the part of Pepper in after Mr. Nebowitz puts in a good word for her.

Young Cheesemakers of America

This is the return address Toby uses on the envelope that comes with the photo they had taken together at Playland.



Settings

Manhattan

This is where Finn and Toby have their apartment.

Northern Westchester

Where June, Greta, and her parents live.

Cloisters

This is where Finn often takes June, attending the yearly medieval festivals, or just enjoying the atmosphere of the time period.

Phelps Street

This is the street where June, Greta, and their parents live.

Mount Kisko Diner

This is the place where Danni Elbus takes her daughter June to tell her about Finn's illness.

Woods

The woods behind June's school is where June spends most of her free time after Finn dies. It is where she likes to go and pretend that she has been transported in time to a Medieval period.

Gasho of Japan

This is the restaurant June's father selects to have his birthday dinner; it is complete with a Japanese garden and constructed by bringing a sixteenth century farmhouse from Japan and rebuilding it.

Sumac Avenue

This is where June decides to hide and watch for Toby at the train station below.



Neptune's Grotto

This is a place in Queens where tropical fish were sold and where Greta and June used to pretend to be invisible mermaids.

Bank of New York

Located on North Street, this is where Finn's portrait is kept in a safety deposit box.

Playland

This is where Toby takes June the first time he picks her up from school in his car.

Horn and Hardart

This is where June's mother wants to take her for lunch when they go out shopping for jeans, but the last time June had been there was with Finn and she can't bring herself to go.

12H

Hidden by a burgundy velvet cloth that hung like a full length curtain, 12H is the cage that Toby and Finn had for storage. It was converted into what resembled a Victorian parlor with a small crystal chandelier, an Oriental rug and two upholstered chairs. There is a wooden bookshelf filled with leather bound books, and two side tables with feet like lion's claws. It is the place Finn created for Toby to spend time in when June was visiting.

Riverside Park

Located along the Hudson River and extending to 158th Street, this is one of the places that June and Toby go.

England

This is where Toby is from.

North Yorkshire Moors

This town is where Toby is from; it borders on the North Yorkshire Moors.

Serendipity

This is an old fashioned ice cream parlour that Finn took June to for frozen hot chocolates on the Upper East Side.



Themes and Motifs

Sacrifice For Love

In this story, several characters sacrifice a great deal for the love they have of others. Toby sacrifices a great deal in order to keep the peace within Finn's family, and to make things easier for him. He loved Finn so much that he was willing to let his entire family believe that he was the one who infected Finn with AIDS, and he did so with forethought and knowledge, without caring whether or not Finn became ill. As a result, he was banned from any contact or knowledge of his presence where Finn's nieces were concerned. Whenever they were around, Toby was forced to leave the apartment and amuse himself elsewhere, sometimes even for days at a time. Still, he loved Finn so much that he did so without complaint. He took the burden of this lie without comment or correction. In actuality, the truth of the matter was something entirely different. Toby was not the one who brought AIDS to the relationship. His contact with Finn was his first contact with anyone - his first love. It was Finn who infected Toby with AIDS, and as a result, Toby was not only banned from half of Finn's life - the part that he spent with his family, and wore the burden of the accusations hurled at him, but he also had to nurse the love of his life as he slowly withered away and then died, knowing full well that this was his fate as well. His sacrifices for the sake of love are substantial.

Greta and June's parents sacrifice much also, although it is only briefly touched on during a conversation between June and her father. In a moment of honesty, June's father admits that he and their mother became accountants so that they could support their family; their children. June is just beginning to realize the depth of that sacrifice, and at this stage, she still hasn't learned that her mother was an artist in her own right as well. She could have been every bit as famous as Finn, but traded that in for a family life - a decision that she sometimes (though not often) seems to regret.

Greta also takes great risks when she steals her parent's car to take June to the hospital to see Toby. She understands the degree of trouble she will be in, especially considering the fact that she'd been brought home drunk by the police so recently, but still takes the chance and makes the sacrifice out of love for June. Greta doesn't want to lose her sister again, and now that they've found their way back to each other emotionally, she doesn't want to shut her out again or leave her to cope alone.

Throughout this story, sacrifice for love is a common and recurring theme.

Medieval Times vs Present Day

June enjoys spending time in the woods pretending that she is living in Medieval times. She wears period clothing, and approaches the woods as though her very survival is dependent on her ability to read the forest and her surroundings correctly. When asked why she prefers this time period to the current one, her answer is simple. In those times,



people didn't know it all. There were still things in life that could amaze and surprise you. There were still places that no one had ever seen before, and you were free to believe whatever you wanted without ridicule. You could believe in saints and dragons, and even make up stories about having had contact with them, and no one could say for sure that wasn't the truth. In Medieval times, no one was perfect, or was expected to be. Almost everyone was defective in some way, and had no choice but to function. If you became sick, there were no faults attached, it simply happened. By today's standards, life is much more complicated and unforgiving. There is no simplicity like there was in Medieval times. June could relate to days gone by, and she doesn't understand the current day as well.

What June doesn't add is that in her current time period, she feels out of step compared to the rest of her peers. Her sister is ahead of her in school just far enough now as a result of skipping a grade that June is on her own socially speaking, and she spends most of her time feeling like either an ugly duckling, or a wallflower that no one sees at all. June believes that for the most part, she blends in with the background, making little impact on her fellow students or teachers. She isn't fashion conscious, caring little if someone catches her dressed in medieval garb; or pretending that she has been transported through time and doesn't recognize anything.

The Importance of 12H

12H is the storage cage that was assigned to the apartment where Toby and Finn lived. When Toby decided to allow Finn's family to believe that it was his fault that Finn became sick, he became an outcast, and as a small way of compensating him for all that he sacrificed, Finn builds him a place where he can go and pass the time that Finn is spending with June or Greta. He hangs velvet cloth from all sides to make the inside private, and then created a room that reflected who Toby and Finn were. He began with a small crystal chandelier, and an Oriental carpet sits on the floor. There are upholstered chairs and a chaise lounge, along with a wood bookshelf and side tables that gave the room an overall Victorian feel. A bowl on the table is filled with small chocolate bars and another with crystal liquor bottles to accompany the crystal glassware. Books bound in leather fill the shelves, each a guide to life, trees, gemstones or other interests. The crowning touch is the myriad of canvases all created by Finn. It was his tribute to the love of his life - Toby.

Dying Without Regret

In this story, two characters die of AIDS. The first, June and Greta's Uncle Finn dies leaving behind his partner in life Toby. Finn doesn't reveal much of his death sentence to his nieces, preferring not to discuss it. Instead, he tries to live each day like it is his last, knowing full well that any one could be. After his death, June flounders. She and Finn had never really discussed how life would be after he was gone, and his death leaves a huge hole behind him in June's life. She tells Toby that she doesn't think Finn cared that he was dying but Toby corrects her. Toby reveals his illness, and makes no secret of the



fact that his time is limited, although he doesn't define by how much. Instead, he tells June how to live and die without regret. He carefully explains that the secret is to make sure that you are always the person that you want to be and hope to be, and give your best effort each day, you will come to the end without feeling as though things had been left undone. June believes that if you are happy every day, you won't want to ever die, but again Toby corrects her. He tells her that only the most unhappy people want to live longer, because they feel as though they haven't done all that they wanted to, and haven't had enough time. Most often, people like that feel shortchanged by life, but Toby prefers to give each day his all so that when his time comes, he will be as accepting of it as Finn was.



Styles

Point of View

Tell The Wolves I'm Home: A Novel by Carol Rifka Brunt is a story about love that transcends all boundaries and all facets of life. Told in the first person perspective by the main character, June Elbus, this story begins with the love two sisters feel for each other growing up, and reveals much of the interactions and secrets kept and revealed within the family as one generation passes on to another. As the youngest in the family, June's perspective is often immature and sometimes irresponsible, but her point of view is critical to the story development. By using June's point of view and perspective on this story, the author manages to deal with some very sensitive subjects in a tactful and educational way. The story June tells the reader is one filled with love, loss, fear and discomfort, blended with the depth of the ties that bind family together. It is a story of June's coming of age, in which she starts out as the baby of the family, but through her loss and grief, and then the friendship of Toby, she gains strength and the confidence to believe in herself. She takes chances, going into the city alone to see Toby; she keeps secrets, hiding her relationship with Toby, and the gifts from Finn from her family; she learns about the different kinds of love, beginning with her love for Finn and evolving to understand Finn's love for Toby, Greta's love for her and hers for Greta, and her parents love for them both. In all, June learns a selflessness that extends to include her entire family, bringing Toby home to them and inadvertently healing a wound that has festered for years between Toby and her mother in the process. It is clearly the author's intention to show that June's exposure to Finn and Toby and by extension their illness was largely a catalyst that helps June to be a better person, despite the lingering guilt she feels over Toby's end.

Language and Meaning

This story takes place primarily in a suburb of northern Westchester where the main character, June Elbus, lives with her mother, father, and older sister, Greta. While most of the story centers around their lives in that area, the school they attend and the woods behind it in which June lives out a fantasy life of Medieval times, there is a good section devoted to the city of Manhattan where her Uncle and Godfather, Finn lives with his partner Toby. Toby is from England, and much of his speech, while adapted to his new country now, still has remnants of the language idiosyncrasies that he left behind. The author also reveals that Greta prefers to listen to English music on the radio, where on WLIR they can hear *The Killing Moon* or the Echo and Bunnymen song for example. At first, when Toby calls the Elbus residence, June thinks of his voice as sort of watery, but as time passes June grows to like how Toby talks, describing how his use of the letter 'u' sounds more like the way June would pronounce 'oo's. It is an accent that is at first odd, but is so endearing to June in the end that she attempts to take Toby back to England as a last grand gesture while he is still able. She believes that she can get him back to



family who loves him so that he won't die alone, not understanding that by being there herself, she has already assured that won't happen.

Structure

Tell The Wolves I'm Home: A Novel by Carol Rifka Brunt is three hundred and fifty three pages in length. It is divided into sixty-six chapters which range in length from two to thirteen pages, with the average length being five pages. There are no sub-headings listed in these chapters, nor are they named or divided into segments. The story is told in such a straight forward manner that no further explanations or sub-divisions are required. The story begins with a flashback to the last weeks of Finn's life, when he paints a portrait of June and Greta revealing how at the age of fourteen, June learns that her Uncle is dying of AIDS. By chapter four Toby is introduced as he tries to make contact and talks to June for the first time. In chapter six, Finn's funeral is described and Toby is seen outside the funeral home. It is the first time that Greta tells June that Toby killed her favorite Uncle. Chapter seven reveals June's love for the woods and her experiences there while chapters eight and nine reveal Greta's jealousy of the relationship that Finn and June had including the issue of Godparents and Greta's feelings about them. Chapter ten discusses the portrait, and the first change noticed by June - the buttons painted by Toby. In eleven, Toby poses as a mailman to gain access to June even briefly, and to give her the teapot from Finn, revealing it's history and Finn's wishes for June to have it. In chapter sixteen, the Elbus family learns the value of the portrait and Danielle takes it to the bank where it is put in a safe deposit box. June doesn't meet with Toby officially for the first time until chapter twenty one when she meets him and rides the train with him. In chapter twenty six, Toby shows up at June's school and takes her to Playland where they have an old fashioned picture taken. This is the segment which reveals the importance of Finn's coat to Toby and why. June's friendship with Toby is evolving and he continues to reveal bits and pieces of Finn that she'd never seen before such as the sketchbook of pieces of her and Greta. This is the first time June sees the wolf in the negative space of their portrait. In chapter twenty eight, the second addition to the painting is noticed by June - a small skull on Greta's hand. June will alternate additions with Greta secretly and separately after that until the changes come to light. Before they are fixed however, even Danielle will take a turn, adding jewelry to both of her daughters before the restorer takes it away to fix it. While the story does flashbacks into June's life with Finn, explaining things they shared; interests they pursued; and events they attended, there is no confusion between past and present. The story ends with Toby's death; the apartment that Finn wills to his nieces and the restored painting returned with ghosts of the past still present.



Quotes

I'll hold this over you and Uncle Finn and then what'll you do?

-- Greta (chapter 1 paragraph 8)

Importance: Greta threatens to hold mistletoe over June and her uncle in an effort to make June uncomfortable. Greta resents that June has this close and intense relationship with what she considers to be the 'good' godparent while she is stuck with dull and uninterested godparents by comparison. Her resentment reveals itself often.

He's the guy who killed Uncle Finn.

-- Greta Elbus (chapter 6 paragraph 49)

Importance: Greta tells June this at Finn's funeral when Toby is seen standing outside of the funeral home, uninvited, shunned for the family's mistaken belief that he is the one who was responsible for giving Finn AIDS.

Now that Finn's gone, you and me....

-- Greta Elbus (chapter 8 paragraph 22)

Importance: In this comment, Greta reveals that she has been jealous of June's relationship with Finn, and feeling left out. She believed that with Finn gone, they would go back to the way they were before, close and dependent on each other.

I think you are perhaps the only person who misses Finn as much as I do, and I think just one meeting might be beneficial to us both.

-- Toby (chapter 12 paragraph 2)

Importance: In this note, Toby reveals himself, telling June that he understands the depths of her loss, and that he is a kindred spirit in that loss. His desire to meet her reveals his need to share that loss with her, perhaps in an effort to regain some of the light Finn brought to his life and now was so sorely missing.

The important thing to understand is that Finn was a free spirit and a good man, but maybe sometimes he was a bit too trusting.

-- Danni (June's mother) (chapter 13 paragraph 19)

Importance: In this comment, Danni reveals how she considers Finn's relationship to be a breach of trust. It shows that she never accepted his lifestyle choice. She blamed Toby for the fact that he made it.

You're in love with Uncle Finn.

-- Greta (chapter 15 paragraph 3)

Importance: Greta makes this accusation one Sunday after he calls, resenting that he



seems to have taken over her role as the most important person in June's life, and privately hoping AIDS takes him sooner rather than later.

Did you tell your parents you were coming?
-- Toby (chapter 21 paragraph 18)

Importance: Toby asks June if she is frightened by him, aware of what her parents have told her about him and worried that it clouds her judgement.

Maybe wolves from the north could just walk right down here to Westchester.
-- June (chapter 22 paragraph 22)

Importance: June tells Ben that the howling could be coming from wolves, defending the likelihood and enjoying the fact that it is a possibility.

So they were having a child prostitute look-alike day down at the library?
-- Greta (chapter 27 paragraph 7)

Importance: Greta confronts June when she has irrefutable proof that June is lying about where she was, and demands to know where she is going.

Being a romantic means you always see what's beautiful.
-- Finn (chapter 27 paragraph 15)

Importance: This quote is another example of how Finn was able to explain things to June so that she understood them, and how he knew her to her core, the real her hidden inside. This was an insight into June that no one else had.

If you let this pass, you'll go through your life and you'll get to my age and you'll sit in your kitchen thinking what a fool you were.
-- Danielle Elbus (chapter 29 paragraph 20)

Importance: In this quote, Danielle reveals her regrets that she left unfinished business, and the tone indicates that this likely has something to do with Finn and their relationship.

I've lived here almost nine years, June.
-- Toby (chapter 31 paragraph 46)

Importance: When June first visits Toby in Finn's apartment, she tries to separate what belonged to her uncle and what belongs to Toby, but he tells her how long he has lived there, changing everything she believed in before.

You're just a way to make him feel less guilty.
-- Greta (chapter 46 paragraph 30)



Importance: Greta's comment to June as a way of belittling the time Toby spent with her, revealing clearly her jealousy towards Toby and his relationship with June.

If you always make sure you're exactly the person you hoped to be, if you always make sure you know only the very best people, then you won't care if you die tomorrow.
-- Toby (chapter 40 paragraph 50)

Importance: Toby tries to reveal the importance of living life to its' fullest so that there are no regrets, as if by doing so he could convince her that he didn't really mind the fact that he was going to die.