

Thoughtless Study Guide

Thoughtless

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Plot Summary

Thoughtless by S.C. Stephens is a story about a young lady named Kiera Allen who falls in love with Denny Harris, an assistant teacher in her college. Harris had come there from Australia with his aunt. At first, he was there to help his aunt get settled. Then, he decided to stay. Their relationship is Kiera's first serious relationship, and she has eyes for no other. Then, Denny is offered an internship in Seattle. It takes little time before Kiera's life is in turmoil and her emotions in upheaval.

Before they move to Seattle, Denny and Kiera date for two years. Kiera is still living with her family, and Denny is living with his aunt. When Denny is offered his dream job, Kiera works quickly to secure a scholarship in Seattle and makes the decision to go with him, despite her family's disappointment. Denny and Kiera drive from Ohio to Seattle and move in with Denny's friend Kellan Kyle. Kellan, a talented singer in an up and coming band, sees something in Kiera and Denny that he has never seen before – love. Having come from an abusive family life, Kellan is fascinated and intrigued by the relationship that Denny has with Kiera. He sees in them the kind of life he has always longed to be part of, and without warning, falls for Kiera himself. Looking back at it all later, he believes that his feelings for her began almost immediately. The result is an unbearable tug of war with Kiera in the middle.

When Denny is asked to take a contract out of town for his firm, helping to set up a new office for them, Kiera is unable to follow. She now has a job of her own working in Pete's, which is the same bar that Kellan and the D-Bags play at each weekend. She is attending school on a scholarship. When she first hears Denny's news, Kiera is upset. However, since it is only for a short time, she agrees and Denny leaves. At first, she and Kellan engage in harmless flirting which makes the loneliness she feels a little easier to bear. Then one day Denny calls and announces that he has been offered a promotion and has accepted a two year contract to stay where he is. He can't understand why Kiera is devastated, and in tears she tells him that she will not wait that long, breaking up with him. It is only moments later that she is crying in Kellan's arms. From there, her feelings become more confused than ever. She sleeps with him for the first time, believing that she and Denny will never be together again. What she doesn't expect is that Denny will quit his job in order to be with her. When he shows up, she is faced with making the most difficult decision of all. Whom should she choose? She realizes that she loves them both, but her confusion and inability to choose will almost cost her both men. It brings Denny and Kellan to blows. Kiera tries to intervene and ends up in the hospital. For a time, they both say goodbye to her, neither willing to sacrifice more than they already have. In the end, the depth of her love will help her get through the ordeal, although at times she doesn't know how she will survive.



Chapter 1: Meetings

Summary

Chapter 1: Meetings

Thoughtless by S.C. Stephens is a story about a young lady named Kiera Allen who falls in love with Denny Harris, an assistant teacher at her college. Denny is Kiera's first serious relationship, and she has eyes for no other until he is offered an internship in Seattle. In a short while, Kiera's life is in turmoil and her emotions in upheaval.

The drive is long by any standards, but especially as Kiera has never been more than 60 miles from home. Kiera and Denny leave Athens, Ohio, and head for Seattle to the dream internship job with a leading ad agency that Denny was offered. Luckily, Kiera manages to arrange a full scholarship to Seattle's University of Washington. The goodbyes are tough, but all Kiera can think about is the fact that she will finally be living with Denny. Until now, Kiera has lived with her parents and Denny with his aunt.

Once in Seattle, Denny heads to Pete's bar to pick up house keys from his friend, Kellan. When they get to Pete's, Kiera notices the lead singer first. They make their way across the bar to where Sam, the bouncer, is standing. Denny introduces Kiera and takes the keys from Sam, giving a nod to Kellan as he ushers Kiera out. Kiera asks who their roommate is and Denny tells her it's Kellan. Kellan begins a song that stops them both in their tracks with its beauty, and Kiera acknowledges that he has a great voice. The song is so powerful that Kiera wishes she could stay and listen. She realizes that living with Kellan will be interesting.

They manage to sort out which room is theirs and take advantage of a rare moment of privacy for them. In the morning, Kiera rises quietly and showers. The towel is small and thin, but she wraps it as best she can and opens the door where Kellan is standing in his doorway in his boxer shorts. Even fresh out of bed he looks great. Kiera is embarrassed as Kellan shakes her hand, smiling. She excuses herself as soon as she can to get dressed. Denny wakes and asks her if she is sure about the move. She reassures him telling him that she belongs wherever he is.

Analysis

Kiera would rather have flown to Seattle instead of having gone by car, but Denny doesn't want to leave his car behind. He convinces her that the drive will be fun. Kiera's family is disappointed when they say goodbye as her family had been certain that both she and her sister would attend Ohio University. The transfer to Seattle to the University of Washington threw them, but since Kiera managed to get a scholarship, they can hardly complain. They say their goodbyes, and Kiera tries not to smile, thinking about the fact that even though she may miss her family, she will finally be living with Denny. For the past two years, they had lived apart – Denny with his Aunt and Kiera with her



family, so that they could save money, but now if they wanted to save money they would have to live together. Kiera could hardly wait.

The drive turns out to be much more fun than she thought. Denny provides entertainment and helps to create memories that make her smile. They finally make their way to Pete's bar to pick up the keys, and Kiera gets her first look at the band. Four guys perform, but she only notices the leader singer. Though he's wearing simple clothes, he's very handsome. She sees him as a rock god. As he flirts with the women in the crowd, he's smooth, sexy, and charming. The two guitar members of the band look enough alike to be brothers. They, too, are good looking, but not as outstanding as the leader.

Denny introduces her to Sam, and they pick up keys. Kiera doesn't like meeting people for the first time. She usually feels self-conscious, and she believes that she is just average. By the time they are leaving, Kiera has decided their roommate is most likely the drummer, but when she asks on the way out he tells her that it is the singer. The song is soft and slow. They head to Kellan's house, find their room, and take advantage of some seldom had private time together.

The next morning, Kiera wakes early, still tired from traveling, but otherwise refreshed. She moves carefully, so as not to disturb Denny, and makes her way to the bathroom. She showers and discovers that the only towel available is small and threadbare. She opens the door and notices Kellan's door is open and he is standing in it looking at her. She is momentarily distracted by how incredibly good looking he is before mumbling a greeting and dashing back to the room where Denny lies sleeping. Denny wakes and asks her if she's sure about her decision to come with him. She assures him that she wants to be with him as she climbs back into bed with him.

Discussion Question 1

What contributes to Kiera leaving Ohio to accompany Denny to Ohio?

Discussion Question 2

What is Kiera's first impression of their new roommate?

Discussion Question 3

What is it that keeps striking Kiera about her new roommate and what does that suggest?

Vocabulary

Intoxicating, picturesque, impending, reverence, internships.



Chapter 2: D-Bags

Summary

Chapter 2: D-Bags

When Denny and Kiera finally make it downstairs, Kiera notices again how sparsely the house is decorated and resolves to do something about it. Kellan offers coffee which Denny refuses. Kiera accepts, and Kellan brings her one with cream and sugar. He sits down with her and they chat for a while. She asks him why he sings with such sexual overtones, and he laughs. This irritates and embarrasses her. He finally apologizes and asks Kiera if his singing offended her. She insists it didn't, but it seems a bit excessive all the same. They talk about Denny and how they both met him, and Kellan says he owes Denny a lot, but doesn't elaborate. Denny takes a shower. They unload the rest of the car and then head to the pier to Pike Place Market, enjoying the beauty of the city. Kellan goes to Pete's where he and the band will be playing, and invites them to come. They agree, he says he will meet them there. On the way, Denny tells Kiera why Kellan considers him as family. They meet again at Pete's where Kiera is introduced to the rest of the band. Pete mentions that his waitress Traci quit, and Kiera volunteers her services which Pete gladly accepts.

Analysis

Later, when they emerge, Denny formally introduces Kiera to Kellan, much to Kellan's amusement. When Denny goes out to the car to get any remaining food there might be, Kellan asks Kiera why she came to Seattle. She asks him why he sings the way he does. She's referring to how sexual in nature it seems. He laughs, thinking she was going to say something else and then explains that he finds that people respond to it. He agrees to keep her criticism in mind. Afterward, she and Denny go shopping on the pier at Pike's Place Market. Kiera can't imagine being any happier. After putting things away, they sprawl in front of the television, Kiera quietly reminding herself to do something about the utter lack of anything personal in the house to make it a home. Curled up with Denny, she naps until movement wakes her. Kellan is on his way out and invites them to join him at Pete's for their nightly performance. They agree; when they arrive, Kiera learns that Pete just lost a waitress. She asks for the job. To her surprise, he agrees immediately. After less than one day in the city, she has a job.

Discussion Question 1

What question does Kiera surprise Kellan by asking about his performance on stage and how does he respond?



Discussion Question 2

What is Pete's problem and how does it become a solution for Kiera?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Kellan consider Denny to be as close as family?

Vocabulary

Flirtatious, mortification, contraption, sustenance, pronouncement.



Chapter 3: New Job

Summary

Chapter 3: New Job

The band is amazing, and Denny pulls Kiera onto the dance floor. They play a slower song. Then, after another fast one, Kellan pauses to introduce his new roommates to the crowd and to announce that Kiera will be working at Pete's starting Monday. As soon as Kellan says goodnight to the crowd, he is surrounded by girls who vie for his attention. Denny and Kiera go home. They don't hear Kellan when he comes home later.

Kiera is surprised to discover Kellan in the kitchen before her the next morning, coffee already made. That night Kellan goes out while Denny prepares for his new internship beginning the next morning and Kiera works to distract him. Morning comes quickly, and she kisses Denny goodbye, Kellan is mimicking her behavior and laughing. He offers to take her to work later, saying he can be her first customer.

Jenny helps her get settled, and Kiera spends the first evening following her and getting used to the routine. After awhile, Kellan leaves to help the band set up at another bar and wishes Kiera luck. Later, Denny shows up for a few minutes just before heading home, insanely pleased with his new job. Kiera finishes for the night, and Jenny gives her a ride home.

Home life quickly resolves into a routine of sorts. It takes a week before Kiera begins to relax at work, accepted by all including the band. Griffin is crude as always, seeming to understand so that it bothered her and to the amusement of the others, and trying to make her mad enough to swear at him. Kellan joins in the fun, eyes twinkling and Rita warns her to stay away from him, telling her he'll rip her heart out. Kiera tries to fall back on the roommate status, but Rita swears that even having Denny around won't be enough to stop Kellan if he decides that's what he wants. Regaining her composure, Kiera assures her that it matters to her.

Analysis

Kiera can't believe how good the band is, and she is astounded that with how good looking Kellan is as well that someone hasn't already laid claim to him. Denny takes her out on the dance floor where he dances close to her. They are comfortable and easy together, but Kiera finds herself looking to the stage more and more as the evening progresses. Kellan winks at Kiera when he catches her eye. Shortly after, he introduces them to the crowd and informs them that Kiera will be there a lot starting Monday. Kiera is embarrassed, blushing deeply by then and wishing Kellan would stop, but instead he asked them all to be nice to her, especially Griffin. As soon as he says goodnight and sits down on the stage, he is swarmed by his adoring fans that bring him drinks, sit on



his lap, and play with his hair. Denny and Kiera leave, stumbling into bed when they get home.

The next morning, Kellan surprises Kiera by being up before she is. He looks as perfect as always, irritating her somehow until she remembers that Kellan's life for the most part had been no picnic. He asks her what she thought of the show and whether or not it was less offensive to her. Only then, to her surprise does she realize that Kellan had indeed toned down the sexual overtures on stage. She admits that it was much better. Kiera and Denny spend the day relaxing and preparing for Monday. Kiera is nervous about starting at Pete's because she has never been a waitress in a bar before now. The guys take turns quizzing her about different drinks. Denny displays nervous behavior before his first day, too. He organizes and reorganizes his briefcase. He selects the perfect clothes for his first day. Kellan takes Kiera to Pete's for her first shift, and she gives him a quick peck on the cheek to thank him when he leaves. Kiera works, shadowing Jenny and later cleaning and painting over graffiti.

A routine is soon established. Denny is thrilled with his new job. After a week, Kiera is comfortable at Pete's. Kellan and his band come in frequently and tease Kiera relentlessly. Rita notices their interaction and warns Kiera about Kellan, but Kiera insists that they are just roommates.

Discussion Question 1

What does Rita warn Kiera about and how does she respond?

Discussion Question 2

How does Kiera react to Denny's news and new assignment?

Discussion Question 3

What job is Kiera given that gives her insights into the band and her customers, and in what way?

Vocabulary

Captivating, cavorting, mortified, indecently, intimidating, accentuate.



Chapter 4: Changes

Summary

Chapter 4: Changes

Working opposite shifts means that Kiera and Denny spend little time together other than the weekend afternoons before her shift or her nights off during the week. Denny comes in with Kellan frequently and before Kiera knows it, it is July. Denny is called into work on July 4th, so Kiera spends the day tanning outside. Later, he comes into Pete's during her shift and when the fireworks start, they all shift outside to watch until Pete calls them back to work.

Two weeks later, everything changes. Kiera is at work, watching Griffin as he reveals his newest tattoo when Denny comes in and tells her that he has been asked to set up the new office located in Tucson. Kiera is stunned to learn he'll be gone a couple of months or so, knowing that with school starting in less than a month she cannot follow him this time. She goes from angry to upset, and asks when he'd have to leave. When he starts apologizing for having to leave on Monday, Kiera snaps out of it and tells him it is okay and that everything will be fine. Denny heads back to the office and Kiera goes back to work. When Kellan asks her if she is okay, the tears start again. He pulls her into his arms, ignoring the looks as she sobs into his chest. When she calms down, Kellan joins the band on stage and Kiera returns his smile. She hangs around after work, not ready to talk to Denny. Kellan sits down beside her and offers her an ear and a ride home. She accepts the latter.

The ride home is silent until Kiera tells him that Denny is leaving. Kellan seems to understand right away and tells her that he hopes everything works out for them. Once home, she crawls into bed with Denny. They talk about him leaving. Monday comes sooner than she is ready for, and Kellan takes them to the airport, putting his arm around her when Denny's plane leaves and the tears start again. Kellan spends the day with her, and Kiera replays the goodbye in her mind. Later at Pete's, Rita teases her about being alone with Kellan now. Kellan drives her home again, and the phone rings minutes after they get back. Denny and Kiera talk and laugh for hours.

Analysis

Kiera would rather have flown to Seattle instead of having gone by car, but Denny doesn't want to leave his car behind. He convinces her that the drive will be fun. Kiera's family is disappointed when they say goodbye as her family had been certain that both she and her sister would attend Ohio University. The transfer to Seattle to the University of Washington threw them, but since Kiera managed to get a scholarship, they can hardly complain. They say their goodbyes, and Kiera tries not to smile, thinking about the fact that even though she may miss her family, she will finally be living with Denny.



For the past two years, they had lived apart – Denny with his Aunt and Kiera with her family, so that they could save money, but now if they wanted to save money they would have to live together. Kiera could hardly wait.

The drive turns out to be much more fun than she thought. Denny provides entertainment and helps to create memories that make her smile. They finally make their way to Pete's bar to pick up the keys, and Kiera gets her first look at the band. Four guys perform, but she only notices the lead singer. Though he's wearing simple clothes, he's very handsome. She sees him as a rock god. As he flirts with the women in the crowd, he's smooth, sexy, and charming. The two guitar members of the band look enough alike to be brothers. They, too, are good looking, but not as outstanding as the leader.

Denny introduces her to Sam, and they pick up keys. Kiera doesn't like meeting people for the first time. She usually feels self-conscious, and she believes that she is just average. By the time they are leaving, Kiera has decided their roommate is most likely the drummer, but when she asks on the way out he tells her that it is the singer. The song is soft and slow. They head to Kellan's house, find their room, and take advantage of some seldom had private time together.

The next morning, Kiera wakes early, still tired from traveling, but otherwise refreshed. She moves carefully, so as not to disturb Denny, and makes her way to the bathroom. She showers and discovers that the only towel available is small and threadbare. She opens the door and notices Kellan's door is open and he is standing in it looking at her. She is momentarily distracted by how incredibly good looking he is before mumbling a greeting and dashing back to the room where Denny lies sleeping. Denny wakes and asks her if she's sure about her decision to come with him. She assures him that she wants to be with him as she climbs back into bed with him.

Discussion Question 1

What do the customers and staff of Pete's go outside to see?

Discussion Question 2

What exciting news does Denny have for Kiera and how does she react?

Discussion Question 3

What does Kiera discover is surprisingly different about Kellan compared to most guys she knows?

Vocabulary

Disproportioned, excruciatingly, confiscated, inappropriately, ominous.



Chapter 5: Lonely

Summary

Chapter 5: Lonely

Kellan helps Kiera pass the time alone, teaching her guitar and even taking her shopping when it's necessary. Denny calls two or three times a day, and Kiera finds herself living for each call. With Denny's encouragement, Kiera joins Kellan at Razors where the band is playing, and she actually has fun in the small and intimate venue. She begins to spend more time with Jenny, shopping for things to spruce up the house, even finding a poster for Kellan's room. He laughs when he sees their decorating project, and invites Kiera to join him at Pete's for a bite to eat. The rest of the band shows up later and joins them and Kiera watches how they interact with fans. The only one who seems to be just watching like Kiera is Matt. Afterward, he takes her home again. She checks the answering machine to discover that no calls have been missed. Kellan offers to show Kiera around the campus, and Kiera gratefully accepts.

That Sunday Kellan tours the campus with her and tells her which building is which and what is taught inside. Kiera can't believe how lucky she is. A week later, after another night in which Denny hadn't called, Kellan takes her to Bumpershoot. They drive back, and Kellan drops the boys off at Pete's. They ask him if he's joining them, but he tells them he is taking Kiera home instead. That garners a warning from one of them. Kellan drives home and wakes Kiera up gently asking her if she'd had fun. She thanks him, admitting the day was great, and he offers to get them pizza. She agrees, and they spend the rest of the night watching *Princess Bride*. He carries her upstairs asleep and gently tells her goodnight.

Analysis

The first week drags on for Kiera without Denny. Kellan does his best to distract her, even taking her shopping where he serenades her through the store, singing to the canned music and grabbing her to dance with her down the aisle to the amusement of customers. Kiera joins Kellan at Razors when the band plays there. On the way home he softly sings the last song the band played again. She asks him if it has special meaning – as it was also the first song she'd heard him do that stopped her in her tracks at Pete's when they first arrived. He admits that it means a lot to him, but he doesn't elaborate. Kiera starts spending more time with Jenny, shopping for things to fix up the house. Kellan invites her to Pete's for supper and they sit there together alone. Rita watches them and makes Kiera uncomfortable until the food and the rest of the band show up. They treat her like one of the group, although Griffin gives Kellan a thump on the shoulder to congratulate him on what he is sure is Kellan's conquest of Kiera. Griffin appears to be in some kind of strange competition with Kellan where girls are



concerned. Matt is the only one who sits back, seeming shy. Kellan takes Kiera's hand and heads to the pool room.

By the time Denny does call the following evening, Kiera is irritated with him. Kiera forgives him the first time, but just a few nights later it happens again. The next day Kiera sorts out her schedule, signing up for European Lit, Microeconomics and a class on Human Sexuality. When she leaves the office she finds Kellan waiting with an espresso in each hand. Kellan takes her to Bumpershoot and stays with her the entire day, ignoring or passing up on opportunities to alter his state of mind. After a long day and evening Kiera naps on Kellan's shoulder. When Kellan drops the guys at Pete's, Kiera hears one of the band warn him about her after Kellan tells them he'll take her home rather than join them for a couple of drinks. Kiera keeps her eyes closed until they get home, and then tells Kellan he can join the boys at Pete's if he wants. At first, Kellan gets a nervous look on his face, but Kiera recovers her gaffe. Knowing he'd be embarrassed if she'd heard their conversation about her, she asks, "That is where the boys went, wasn't it ? " He smiles and relaxes, offering to order pizza instead. They watch a movie as they eat the pizza. Then, he picks up her sleeping form and carries her to her bed. When she wakes as he is putting her down, she reminds him that they still haven't seen the Space Needle and he promises to take her another day, telling her goodnight softly.

Discussion Question 1

How does Kellan make starting school easier for Kiera?

Discussion Question 2

How does Kiera spend her time while Denny is gone, and what is the result?

Discussion Question 3

What is the first indication that Kellan has more than just passing feelings for Kiera?

Vocabulary

Serenading, mortifying, remorse, reiterated, dalliances.



Chapter 6: Coming Together, Breaking Apart

Summary

Chapter 6: Coming Together, Breaking Apart

One night at Pete's Griffin decides to dance with everyone, and to save Kiera from him, Kellan takes her out onto the dance floor himself. That night, Anna calls from home having received the photos she sent of herself, Denny and Kellan, and Anna doesn't disguise her interest. When Kiera lets slip that Denny is gone, she seems to want to come even more. Kiera suggests winter break and the constant questions about Kellan bother Kiera so she begins to talk to her sister about Griffin instead, selling him to her.

The next day, after two days of silence, Denny calls. He seems distracted and is called away shortly after to a meeting. After a bad dream, Kiera gets up to find the entire band watching television, and the show is so steamy that she almost slips and kisses Kellan as they are cuddled together. She feels stupid and embarrassed at first, but Kellan behaves normally, and the weekend passes with no further gaffes on her part. When Denny calls, Kiera is angry at first, but after talking to him about everything except the slightly more than appropriate intimacy she and Kellan had developed, she is left with only the smallest knot in her stomach. The next morning, Kellan offers to take Kiera to school on her first day. He walks her right to her class, and she gives him a peck on the cheek. He picks her up later and insists on walking her to class every day that week making it easy for her. By then, it had been five days since she talked to Denny and he hadn't even called to see how school was. She decides to call him. When she does, he tells her that Mark offered him a permanent job and that he's accepted it, trying to convince her that in just two short years when school was finished for her, she could join him there. He tells her how he can visit, and it will fly by, but she fumes and tells him to forget it. She tells him she is staying in Seattle and they are done, slamming the phone down and unplugging it. She pours herself a glass of wine and drinks it down; refilling it again just as the door opens and Kellan comes in. He looks at her and asks if she is okay. When she says no, he offers her tequila. By the time they've shared the fourth shooter, she is laughing. She shares the next salt and lime with him and then kisses him, pulling away slowly.

Analysis

Kellan and Kiera's bond deepen after the evening at Bumpershoot. Kiera and Kellan are comfortable just holding hands or just sitting next to each other. He is content to put his arm around her or spend time at home with her. Their friendship deepens beyond where Denny would likely be comfortable, but Kiera misses Denny less. That night Kiera wakes from a bad dream and goes downstairs to find Kellan with the rest of the D-Bags.



Griffin sits on one edge of the couch, and Kiera sits on the other. Kellan smiles and sits between them, and Kiera just naturally snuggles up beside him, tucking her knees. Kellan puts his arm around her knees and nudges her smiling as she puts her head on his shoulder, smiling back. Griffin jokes that when the band breaks up, he plans to switch to God Rock making Kiera spit out her mouthful of beer in surprise. Then Griffin turns on a movie that is sexy enough to be porn. It is so disturbingly explicit that both Kellan and Kiera are affected. Kellan faces her, leaning so close that their lips almost meet. Instead of kissing her, Kellan rests his forehead against hers and resists the urge to kiss. Then, he takes her into the kitchen. They manage to go back to normal, offering to talk about her nightmare. Taking a breath to collect herself, she says goodnight to him and goes back upstairs. Kellan behaves normally the next day, and the weekend is filled with hugs, cuddling on the couch, and holding hands. Kiera is addicted to having him close.

On Monday, he takes her to school, walking her all the way to her class and waiting for her when it is done. Finally, after five days of silence, she calls Denny and he reveals the reason for his absence. The job offer has been extended and is permanent. Worse still, he accepted. He tries to make her understand, telling her it is his dream job and begs her to help him make it work, but Kiera is angry. She thinks about how far she moved for him, and how now he is just deserting her. Finally, she tells him to just forget it, they are through. She hangs up the phone and unplugs it, and then guzzles most of two water glasses full of wine before Kellan comes home. Sensitive to her moods, he asks if she is okay. When she admits she isn't, he brings out the cure for heartache – a bottle of tequila. They share shot for shot until brazenly Kiera grabs his hand and licks the salt from it, then using her mouth she takes the lime from his lips, lingering there. He takes his shot straight and pulls her to him again.

Discussion Question 1

Where does Kellan take Kiera and what do they do there?

Discussion Question 2

What does Kiera do when Denny tells her he's accepted a full time job, and what gives her the strength to do it?

Discussion Question 3

What is Kellan's cure for heartache, and what does it really do instead?

Vocabulary

Consoling, voraciously, alluring, incredulously, inordinately.



Chapter 7: Mistakes

Summary

Chapter 7: Mistakes

Kiera wakes the next afternoon, hung over, naked, and in Kellan's bed. She finds her clothes and replays the entire evening. Then she gets ready for her shift at Pete's. The band isn't there, and when they file in Kellan isn't with them. Jenny sees Kiera's distress and sends her home. She climbs into bed and is woken soon after by footsteps on the stairs. Sure that it is Kellan ready to evict her, she keeps her eyes closed. A hand rests on her arm, and the voice that calls her name softly is Denny's. She tells him how sorry she is, and he holds her. When he is asleep, Kiera gets up quietly and goes downstairs. She hears a soft knock on the door and opens it to see Kellan being supported by Sam. He tells Kiera he found Kellan on his doorstep too drunk to move. She helps him upstairs and into the shower fully dressed. After hosing the worst of the night off him, she helps him back to his room. She leaves him to get himself into bed, and stands outside his door watching through a crack until he is down on the bed and his breathing is even. Then she goes in and covers him up, bursting with questions but knowing this isn't the time to ask them. She brushes his hair back from his eyes and he opens them, focusing on her for a moment. He tells her not to worry because he won't tell Denny.

Analysis

Slowly, the night before comes back to Kiera after she wakes in Kellan's bed, and she makes it to the bathroom before heaving. There is no sign of Kellan. Her mind replays the evening, remembering how she begged him to take her to his room. She manages to make it to work, but her mind is not on her job and she breaks down when the band comes in as usual but Kellan isn't with them. Jenny finally sends her home. She wonders if Kellan will throw her out now or just ask her to leave like he did with his last girlfriend. She crawls into bed, miserable, and wakes shortly afterward when Denny calls out her name. She realizes he's quit his job and lost his internship to be with her and can't believe he came back for her. Somehow she manages to push back her guilt and remorse long enough to respond to his physical needs but later, after he falls asleep, she is wide awake. She goes downstairs. Shortly after, Sam brings Kellan home looking terrible. He'd found him on his doorstep, he tells Kiera. Kiera helps Kellan get upstairs, and he smells so bad that she takes him into the bathroom first and showers him, fully clothes. Then she helps him back to his room and leaves. He gets undressed and falls onto the bed, and Kiera can't help but watch from the doorway, admiring his perfection even then. When his breathing is even, she goes into the room again and pulls the sheets around him. When with sudden clarity he tells her that she shouldn't worry because he won't tell Denny.



Discussion Question 1

What is Kiera's demeanor when she wakes up in Kellan's bed, and would she have behaved differently had Kellan still been there?

Discussion Question 2

Why is Kiera afraid to face Kellan the next day, and what is this fear based on?

Discussion Question 3

Who brings Kellan home and what does Kiera do?

Vocabulary

Vehemently, coherent, reprimanded, suffocating, permeated.



Chapter 8: The Asshole

Summary

Chapter 8: The Asshole

In the morning Kiera is stunned to see Kellan in the kitchen, but this time he looks terrible. As quietly as she can, she asks if he's okay and offers him coffee, wondering where he'd gone the night before and if they were still okay. When Denny gets up, Kellan announces he is going to lie down again. After he leaves, Denny asks Kiera if she and Kellan were alright while she was gone and for a moment, she almost tells him. He reminds her that he is without a job now, and plans to start looking immediately.

After he leaves, Kiera gets ready for school. When she returns, Kellan is watching television, and she sits in the living room with him, not wanting the awkwardness between them to continue. He tells her he needs to get his car and Kiera mentally chastises herself. When he comes down, she approaches him again, apologizing for his parents and he quietly tells her it's okay. She kisses his cheek and he goes out to meet Griffin who pulls up almost immediately. He turns and sees her watching from the window,. Shaking his head, he gets into the car. Denny returns from job hunting. He was unsuccessful, but he cheers up for Kiera. He takes her to work and even offers to help her when she reminds Jenny that she owes her half a shift. The next morning Kiera comes down to find Kellan already there. The strangeness between them continues, and it is clear to Kiera that what had happened between them had damaged something special.

Later, at school, Kellan's one time fling Candy begins pumping her for information about Kellan. Then, two of Candy's friends approach and grill her for the remainder of the class about Kellan and his habits. The next morning, Kellan isn't there, having not returned from the night before. Each day seems a bit worse than the day before. Finally, Kiera tries to talk to him, but Kellan is not receptive. He makes her feel as bad as possible and as cheap as possible before getting up and leaving. He doesn't return that weekend.

Analysis

It is hard for her to crawl back in with Denny. In the morning, Kellan is in the kitchen and Kiera is surprised to see him. He looks terrible. She asks if he's okay, and he returns the question. Her answer isn't a surprise, but he didn't expect her cheerful response. Kiera quietly gets him coffee and as per his instructions, laces it liberally. Kiera isn't sure why Kellan got so drunk, not realizing that he'd come home earlier and seen Denny's coat, and knew that Kiera didn't choose him. She sips her coffee and tells Kellan that she hopes there are no misunderstandings about their night together. His assurances that there are no misunderstandings is flat and cold, and Kiera can only pray that she hadn't



ruined their friendship. Denny comes down and asks Kellan if he is okay, and he tells him that he actually needs to lie down. After he leaves, Kiera wrestles with telling Denny the truth, but decides against it again. Denny reminds her that he has to look for work and she is irritated at first, thinking that they would spend the day together, but she bites it back reminding herself that he left everything for her. He kisses her, telling her how lucky he is to have her and she is again awash with guilt. She gets ready to leave and there is no sign of Kellan until she leaves the house. Then she turns around to see him watching her leave.

Kiera struggles to keep her mind on school wondering how badly she's damaged her friendship with him. When she gets home, Denny is still job hunting, and she tries to engage Kellan in conversation to reduce the weirdness now between them. She asks him who he rents the house from and he admits that it belongs to him. His parents left it to him when they died in a car crash. She goes over to sit beside him and he looks as though he needs a hug but when she gives him one, he trembles, stiffening. She pulls back to look at him, and he excuses himself and gets up. Kiera tries to stop him but he tells her there is nothing to say. He cleans up and comes down again just in time for Griffin to pick him up. He stands on the walk, and looking back he sees her watching him through the window, and shakes his head as he gets in. Denny is home and dejected twenty minutes later. Kiera gets ready for work and Denny takes her in. Jenny is stunned to see him there, and hugs him, telling him what a mess Kiera was the day before. Kiera reminds Jenny that she owes her half a shift, and sends her off.

The next morning, Kellan smiles at her when she comes down, but the smile never reaches his eyes. He offers to fill her when the coffee is done, and then leers as he offers her cream, pouring it and telling her to let him know when she is satisfied. Kiera can't face him. He asks her if she and Denny are 'back on' and she admits they are, blushing. He asks if she plans to tell him, and she says no. She can't help but ask what happened to him the other night, and he grins at her wickedly. Kellan isn't there the next morning, and Kiera misses his company. She wonders if, perhaps, she's too close to him, knowing that a lot of their behavior would have been considered inappropriate. Though Kellan spends little time at home, it is hard to avoid him at Pete's, and she struggles with Rita's flirting with him. She has a hard time understanding why she misses him so much. Kellan's behavior tells her just how much damage she's done. He is snide, cold, and unfriendly, and his sexual banter is mean and unnerving. When she tries to talk to him about it, things only get worse. He tells her that while he and Denny are friends, she is merely his roommate. Then, he walks away.

Discussion Question 1

What does Kellan tell her when she tries to talk to him? How does he describe his feelings for her?



Discussion Question 2

What single comment made by Kiera answers all of Kellan's questions? Why does Kiera think this is the right thing to say to him?

Discussion Question 3

What conclusions does Kiera draw from Kellan's behavior? What efforts does she make to correct the issues?

Vocabulary

Contemplated, excruciatingly, accentuate, dejected, reminisced.



Chapter 9: The Espresso Stand

Summary

Chapter 9: The Espresso Stand

Denny begins his new job but it is nothing like the good job he gave up to return to Kiera. He has been given a cell phone, and as the intern is expected to answer it and respond to any and all requests. When Max calls again on his time off, Kiera is frustrated, and Denny responds in kind. He leaves, and Kellan notices and offers to get her another drinking companion - Griffin perhaps? Angry, she tells Kellan he was the biggest mistake she ever made. He leaves shortly after. When she gets home, Denny is waiting and apologizes to her, and feeling marginally better the next morning, she apologizes to Kellan. Denny tries to be less unhappy and Kellan makes himself scarce until one morning when she comes down to find Denny and Kellan talking. Denny asks her to take the night off, announcing they'll all be going out. Kellan says he'll meet them there. Kellan is there before them, and Kiera tries to ignore his quiet, sullen attitude by having fun with Denny. Denny's phone rings, and then dies. So, he goes to find a land line to call work. Kellan gets up and announces he's done, suggesting to Kiera that she tell Denny he had felt sick and left. He walks out. Kiera follows him, calling to him in the parking lot. He turns and tells her he is leaving Seattle. Kiera panics and begs him not to go, tears streaming. He tries to explain but can't. She begs him not to leave her. She grabs him and kisses him and he finally stops resisting her. He backs her to an espresso stand and takes her inside. Her brain seems to retire, and she gives in to her need for him. When they are finished, her brain returns and she sobs while Kellan asks her why she didn't let him do the right thing and leave. She sobs harder and leaves him kneeling there.

Analysis

Denny's new job is not at all like the one he quit. This employer doesn't appreciate his ideas or intelligence and makes it clear that they know it. He hates it, but will never admit it to Kiera. Kellan is still avoiding Denny, rarely saying more than a few words to him. His supervisor, Max, takes great pleasure in calling Denny in to pick up his dry cleaning, or go to Starbucks on his behalf. Kellan notices and comments that she and Denny don't look too happy, and recommends someone else for company. Angry, she tells him that he was her biggest mistake, and immediately wishes she could take it back when she sees his face go cold. She didn't want to belittle the time they shared. Kellan avoids them for a while, but then suddenly one day invites Denny and Kiera out with him to hear friends of his at the Shack. Kiera asks him quietly if he is sure, and he insists he'd like to spend one evening with his roommates. His manner is sad and withdrawn, and Kiera is worried. Halfway through the night, he confirms her concerns by announcing he is leaving. Denny is at the bar making a call to work, and Kiera catches Kellan in the parking lot. He admits that he can't be there with them and is leaving the



city. Kiera breaks down and begs him not to leave her. She kisses him, awakening the passion in them both until they are unable to ignore the heat. He leads her into an espresso stand where he makes love to her with strength and passion. When they finish, her brain registers what she's done. She sobs as she is getting dressed. He sits on the floor and asks her why she didn't just let him go. She sobs harder and leaves him there.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Kiera concerned when Kellan invites her and Denny to go to the Shack for a night out?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Kellan tell Kiera that he is unable to stay at The Shack?

Discussion Question 3

What happens when Kellan announces that he is leaving Seattle?

Vocabulary

Perspective, instinctively, belittling, compensate, melancholy, flippant.



Chapter 10: Hot and Hotter

Summary

Chapter 10: Hot and Hotter

Back inside, she tells Denny she isn't feeling well, and he takes her home without question. Waking the next morning, she hears Kellan and Denny laughing. Denny offers her breakfast, and then coffee which she refuses. Denny leaves the room to watch television. Kellan teases her softly, reminding her how compellingly she asked him to stay. He touches her cheek. All of her arguments are momentarily lost, which makes him smile. Even her assertion that she chooses Denny doesn't stop him. Kellan asks her if she still wants things between them kept a secret from Denny, and she tells him she does. She goes upstairs to shower, ignoring Kellan's offer to join her, and then goes to work. Pete's is different during the day, and Kiera is enjoying the experience until Kellan comes in. He comes up behind her and puts his hand on her upper thigh, still bruised from their encounter. After turning to see him, she is unable to follow through with the slap that she planned to deliver. She brushes his hand away instead, trying to stop her body's response. His behavior is intimate and teasing, enjoying her obvious discomfort. When he finally finishes eating, he goes to Kiera and slips a bill into her pocket before she has a chance to give him a check. She pulls it out. Seeing that it is a fifty, she angrily follows him outside and confronts him, throwing it at him when he tells her it is for everything she's done for him.

At home later, she finds a twenty dollar bill with his apology, assuring her he meant nothing by it. The next morning she goes downstairs. Kellan kisses her neck and whispers good morning to her. She shivers as he puts his arms around her. She tries to push him away. He continues to flirt with her, finding moments when Denny is out or turned away. Kiera has no idea what to do because Kellan is getting bolder by the day. Finally, she tells him that he needs to back off. Kiera is hardly sleeping. One afternoon Kellan asks her if Denny was her first. She admits that he was, and Kellan tells her that he doesn't want to hurt her or Denny. He promises to tone down his behavior, but admits that he needs the friendly flirting. Kiera tries to adjust, but never knows who is behind her kissing her neck. Denny is overly sweet and only makes her guilt more acute.

Analysis

When Kiera goes to the kitchen the next morning, Kellan and Denny are talking and laughing. As soon as Denny leaves the room, he begins to tease her, using sexual innuendo and suggestive and lurid comments quietly so that only Kiera will hear him. He tells her that he's decided after the previous night that maybe she does want this. It is worth it for him to stay to figure it out. From there Kiera's life is turned upside down. Kellan is openly flirting with her, kissing her when Denny isn't looking or is in another



room. He makes suggestions, and uses innuendo that makes Kiera blush repeatedly. In fact, even just thinking about Kellan can raise her blood pressure and ignite a need in her that she has trouble understanding. He makes offers to her, suggesting coffee with raised eyebrows knowing that Kiera's mind goes immediately to the espresso stand, and grins at her wickedly, aware of everything he is doing to her. When she asks him to stop, he doesn't believe that she wants to, and her body betrays her again and again. Finally, he admits one day that he needs at least to maintain their normal, friendly flirting relationship. He promises to try to keep it to that, but strays over the line now and again anyway, despite her objections. He always apologizes but she isn't always sorry. Denny comes into the room when she is sleeping, and kisses her softly. At first, she isn't sure who it is. He worries when he sees her flushed face, a response to what and whom she was thinking about. He makes her dinner and then approaches her with a heated look in his eyes. She hasn't been with him since her encounter with Kellan. She works to set aside her guilt and answer his need.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Kellan decide to stay in Seattle?

Discussion Question 2

What causes Kellan to run to her aid in the bathroom? What is the outcome?

Discussion Question 3

What does Kellan tell Kiera that he needs from her? What question precedes this announcement?

Vocabulary

Morbidly, wallowing, emergent, assumption, delirium.



Chapter 11: The Rules

Summary

Chapter 11: The Rules

After a sound sleep, Kiera goes downstairs. She puts her arms around Kellan and surprised he returns her embrace. They talk about and agree on ground rules. Anna calls and suggests coming up for a visit that weekend, but Kiera resists. She tells her to come for winter break instead but her resistance is suspicious, so she finally relents. They decide on a date three weeks ahead, and teasingly, Anna asks if she can sleep in Kellan's room. Kiera suggests a cold shower, and they hang up laughing. Once off the phone, she explains her reluctance to Kellan, telling him he is 'man-flavored candy' to her sister which he thinks is amusing. She makes him promise that he won't sleep with her. Things go back to normal between them. Kiera is happy, and she can't keep from smiling. This attracts the attention of Kate who assumes that Denny is behind her happiness. Maybe, he had proposed to Kiera. When Kellan comes into Pete's, her goofy grin grows and remains with her for the weekend. Their time together is filled with hand holding, snuggling in front of the television, or just holding each other and talking. There are some moments, however, when Kellan and Kiera still struggle to maintain the boundaries and remain within the rules she set out. One of those occurs during what begins as a back rub, and Kellan asks her to excuse him while he gathers himself, apologizing and telling her that he's trying.

Analysis

Kiera is confident that maybe she can reclaim her friendship with Kellan now that the lines of propriety were drawn. She goes down for coffee and tells him that she has some ground rules for their 'friendly flirting'. She insists that any touching has to stay innocent, or stop. He agrees and their relationship goes back to what it was like before Denny returned, but of course none of that flirty behavior happens in Denny's sight. When he goes to work in the morning, they cuddle on the couch in front of the television, holding hands, and talking. Kellan starts taking her to school again and picking her up. Kiera can't help but think that life is perfect. She walks around with a grin on her face which increases whenever she thinks of Kellan and the warmth of his touch and his voice. When they are together, it is as though the rest of the world doesn't exist. The only times she gives Denny any thought are when she considers where he is in relation to where she and Kellan are or when he'll be home and her time with Kellan will be over. She also thinks of Denny when either she or Kellan finds that it's a little tough to stick to boundaries and rules.

Discussion Question 1

What are the rules that Kiera sets out for Kellan? What rules does he set out for her?



Discussion Question 2

At this point, which of the two men seem to have captured Kiera's full attention? Why?

Discussion Question 3

What are the dangers of the relationship that Kiera and Kellan are allowing themselves, and how would this affect Denny if he were to discover them?

Vocabulary

Insomnia, indecently, alluring, objectifying, renegotiate.



Chapter 12: Innocent

Summary

Chapter 12: Innocent

Each morning, Kiera rises early to enjoy her alone time with Kellan. Despite being up late for work each night, the thought of him downstairs in the morning has her up and filled with happy anticipation each day at the thought of being close to him. She goes up to Denny who is getting ready for work, and he tells her about his boss, apologizing for complaining immediately afterward. She tells him she loves him for putting up with it all just for her and he assures her that he would take much worse in order to be with her. Kellan takes her to school, walking her to class and meeting her afterward with espresso in hand. Alone for the evening, Kiera goes to bed early and wakes the next morning, heading to the kitchen and Kellan only this morning Kellan isn't there. She makes her coffee. When arms encircle her from behind, she snuggles into an embrace and almost says hello to Kellan when she realizes that Denny is the one holding her. He tells her he has to get ready and pulls her upstairs and into the shower with him. He helps her to strip and for a short time, Kiera forgets all conflicting emotions. When they finally get downstairs, Denny says good morning to Kellan and goodbye to Kiera. Denny makes a suggestive comment, and Kellan pales in the kitchen. When Denny leaves, she tries to apologize but Kellan stops her. She holds him. She is filled with guilt that it bothered him, but she is unsure why. By the time he drops her at school, things feel normal between them again. Later at home they are lying on the couch in the arms of each other when she asks him if he is with another woman when he is out. When he asks why she has asked the question, she admits that though she has no right, it would bother her. She asks him to do her a favor by being open if he is with someone else. She asks him where he went after their first time, but he doesn't answer, taking her to work instead. They have a bite to eat and play a game of pool before her shift starts.

Analysis

Kiera's natural clock seems determined to have her up early, largely because she so enjoys the time that she and Kellan have alone. One morning, she asks him if it will bother him if she sleeps with Denny. He tells her that it will, but that he understands that she isn't his, and he has no say in the matter. Kiera is so filled with emotion that she has to ask him to give her a minute while she pulls herself together and he complies, surprised that she is the one asking. The urge to kiss him is so strong that it takes a while before she can overcome the sudden need and desire she is filled with. She goes up when she hears Denny, and talks briefly with him about work. His unhappiness is obvious, but he assures her that he loves her so much that he would put up with much worse to be with her. Though meant to be endearing, the words are enough to fill her with guilt as they say their goodbyes.



Kellan drives her to school and picks her up, teasing her with an espresso and her affinity for good coffee. She goes to bed early, at home alone and the next morning is up early, looking forward to her time with Kellan but he isn't there. She pours her coffee as arms embrace her from behind. She snuggles into the embrace and says good morning, stopping just short of adding Kellan's name as she realizes it is Denny's embrace she is returning. He takes her upstairs and coerces her into joining him in an intimate shower. After, when she walks him to the door to go to work, he makes suggestive comments that make Kellan pale. She knows that she's hurt him and for reasons she can't explain to herself, she feels guilty. He takes her to school as usual, and she skips her second class in favor of spending more time with him. He tries to teach her guitar, holding her from behind to show her chords and fingering. She loves his touch. Afterward, they lie on the couch in the arms of each other. She closes her eyes and falls asleep there. She sleeps comfortably until he wakes her an hour before Denny is supposed to return.

Kiera asks Kellan if he is seeing another woman on the nights he doesn't come home, and he asks if it would bother her. She admits that while she has no right to feel that way, it would. Acknowledging that they can only be friends, she asks him not to hide other women from him if he is seeing someone. He smiles and suggests she simply relax the first of her rules and she stays serious. Finally, he admits that most of the time he is just with other band members. Then he takes her to work early so they can grab a bite and plays some pool. Jenny notices that they are getting along much better than they had been and comments, making Kiera resolve to be more careful around her where Kellan is concerned.

Discussion Question 1

What mistake does Kiera almost make that would bring her behavior out into the open? What would be the likely ramifications if she did?

Discussion Question 2

What question does Kiera ask Kellan? What is her request?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Kiera feel guilty after an intimate session with Denny? What does that say about their relationship, despite everything?

Vocabulary

Allure, respective, endearing, effectively, enticing, seductively, languidly, atrocious.



Chapter 13: A Bad Idea

Summary

Chapter 13: A Bad Idea

The following evening is busy at Pete's and Kiera is groped by a middle aged man who is sitting with a friend. She tries to disengage herself which only makes him laugh. All of a sudden, he is pulled off of Kiera. Kellan, looking dangerous, tells the man that his behavior is unacceptable, and coldly suggests that the man leave and not return. The man suddenly turns and lunges with a knife in one hand. Kiera yells to Kellan and Griffin, Matt and Evan all engage in one way or another, but Kellan lands a punch on the large man's jaw that sends him sprawling. Kiera thanks the guys for jumping in, and Evan asks Kellan if he's okay. A three inch cut along his ribs is thankfully not deep but is still bleeding steadily. Kiera suggests a hospital, but Kellan insists he is fine so she takes him to the bathroom to tend to his wound. She gently cleans him up, seeing that the cut is deeper than she first thought.

The next morning, she cleans the wound again and puts another bandage on it. Denny walks in and asks what happened. He tells Denny that a drunk pulled a knife on him, and they joke about it. Denny makes breakfast, and Kellan sneaks one more hand hold before leaving the room. Again, Kiera has a twinge of guilt that she can't explain. The next day Denny apologizes to Kiera, telling her that he has to go away for work, but only for one night. Kiera immediately begins to think about the time that she will have with Kellan. They had spent a great deal of time together as a threesome of late, and she smiles thinking about the stolen moments behind Denny's back. Anna calls and they talk for some time. Denny kisses her and goes to bed, but Kiera doesn't say goodbye until Kellan comes home and then she melts into his arms. Kiera and Kellan are drinking coffee the morning that Denny is leaving and he asks her to stay with him. He swears he only wants to hold her through the night, promising innocence and she agrees even though a part of her knows that it isn't a good idea. Denny finally leaves and Kellan puts his arms around her. Kiera realizes that she isn't upset that Denny is leaving. That night Kiera puts on an extra sweater for safety and climbs under the covers in Kellan's bed while he stays above. He wraps his arms around her, and she snuggles into him. But, it doesn't take long for her to realize she can't stay in his room and remain innocent with their flirting. She gets up and retreats to her room, despite the sadness she sees on his face as he promises he can do better. In the morning, he apologizes again. She allows him to lead her into the kitchen, knowing that what they were doing was dangerous.

Analysis

Kiera is bothered by an unruly customer and his friend at Pete's during her shift. When the man gets carried away, grabbing Kiera intimately every chance he can, Kellan and the rest of the band come to her rescue. Kellan, taking the lead, advises the man to



leave and suggests he doesn't return, and the man turns on Kellan, catching him in the side with a knife. Kellan is bleeding but won't go to the hospital, so Kiera takes him to the bathroom to bandage him. When she is finished, she pulls him in for a hug, thanking him for intervening, and while in his arms, Jenny checks in on them to see if he is okay. Embarrassed, Kiera backs out of Kellan's arms and mutters an excuse as Kellan insists he is fine, and manages to act innocently.

The next morning during coffee with Kellan, Kiera again cleans and dresses his wound, and is just smoothing the bandage gently over his ribs when Denny comes in. Kellan leaves the room and Kiera feels a twinge of guilt but can't isolate who for and why. Denny tells Kiera that he has to go away for a night over the weekend for work, and apologizes, but oddly this time Kiera isn't upset to hear it. In fact, part of her is already thinking ahead to the uninterrupted time she will have with Kellan. She has to work to keep the inappropriate smile off her face. When Denny finally leaves, Kellan wraps his arms around her. He asks her to sleep in his bed with him, fully clothed and innocent of course, and she agrees although with some trepidation.

That night at work she finds herself grinning for no reason. She can't stop thinking about the night ahead, and can't help but notice the looks Kellan gives her while on stage. When the night is finally done, he takes her home. She climbs into his bed, and he lies on top of the bedding, drawing her into his arms. She snuggles with him but can't help responding to the closeness and her own desire. She tells him she's going to her room and he begs her to stay, promising to do better, but she tells him she just can't. The next morning, he knocks on the door and apologizes to her, asking her to forgive him for stepping over the boundaries. She softens and lets him lead her into the kitchen, knowing full well that their harmless flirting is anything but.

Discussion Question 1

What injury does Kellan suffer and why?

Discussion Question 2

What does Kellan suggest when he discovers that Denny will be gone for an entire night? How does Kiera respond?

Discussion Question 3

How do Kiera and Kellan spend the night? What conclusions does Kiera draw?

Vocabulary

Gyrating, inexplicable, dejectedly, assumption, comprehend.



Chapter 14: Tipping Point

Summary

Kiera and Kellan spend their free time taking an Amtrak north. They come back later that day, both aware that the opportunity they'd enjoyed would likely not happen again for some time. Kellan takes her to Pete's and she gets a ride home with Jenny later, knowing Denny would be home. Kellan isn't home when she gets there, leaving her feeling empty and she crawls into the bed with Denny. A few days later, Kiera and Kellan talk about his father's abuse, and the pain in his face is so intense that she kisses him softly, and he returns her kiss. Before either of them can control it, they are overwhelmed by each other, and she backs off, telling him that she can't continue to hurt them both. Kellan begs her not to leave him, not to stop what they have, and Kiera relents again. Still, their feelings are so strong for each other that they are unable to keep things platonic. Finally, she tells him that they have to stop, and that she has no feelings for him, even though it is a lie. She sees the pain in his face as he leaves and is gone for the rest of the day. The next morning she reminds Kellan that her sister is arriving the next day and tells him she is sorry about how they left things. She asks if they can be just friends. She is afraid of his answer. She warns him again about her sister and how flirtatious she is, and he promises to be there for her. He also agrees to keep his promise not to sleep with her.

Analysis

After trying to sleep in the same bed the night before, things change between Kiera and Kellan again, their gestures and looks somehow even more intimate that they were before. The emotional lines keep blurring more and more and Kiera is both bothered and excited by the prospect. A couple of days later, Kiera is sitting with Kellan in the park near school, and she asks him about his relationship with his father, but Kellan is reluctant to discuss it. He finally admits that his father became much more violent after Denny left. Later at Pete's she is amazed by his casual confidence, wondering how much of it was an act. They use every opportunity they can to gently touch, caress, be near to each other, but that only leads them into trouble. In short order, their 'innocent' touches become less innocent, and the desire they both feel for each other makes it increasingly difficult to maintain their distance. A kiss meant to ease sorrow leads to a kiss that creates passion, and soon Kiera finds herself telling Kellan once again that they have to stop the flirting before it gets out of hand. This comes on the heels of an emotional and uncontrolled moment when Denny is sleeping and Kellan pulls Kiera into his room to talk to her. Too close to ignore, Kiera's lips and Kellan's meet, and the passion they have for each other ignites. Kiera manages to stop at the very last moment and push him away, but when she goes into her room where Denny is, he tries to engage her interest, but all Kiera can think about is Kellan. Denny complains, citing how long it had been and Kiera realizes that what she is doing isn't fair to either one of the men she loves. She tells Kellan the next morning that they have to stop. She also



reminds him that her sister is coming, and of his promise not to sleep with her. Kellan assures her that he hasn't forgotten that, or anything else that has happened between them.

Discussion Question 1

What happens as a result of the night Kiera and Kellan almost spend together?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Kiera once again tell Kellan that they have to stop the not so harmless flirting?

Discussion Question 3

Why is Kiera so concerned about her sister coming to visit and especially where Kellan is concerned?

Vocabulary

Intoxicated, involuntary, visitation, indignantly, offensive.



Chapter 15: Clubbing

Summary

Chapter 15: Clubbing

Anna arrives early and Kiera watches her flirt with Kellan at Pete's throughout her shift, as she waits for Denny to come and take Anna home. Anna refuses to go with him so Denny offers to stay until Kiera is off and then take them both home, but Anna has other ideas. At the end of the night, she gets into Kellan's car with him instead. Denny sleeps on the couch while Anna bunks with Kiera for the night. The next day Kiera and Anna go shopping, then they all go out to Spanks for an evening of music and dancing. Kellan gets them all tequila shooters and when Kiera takes the lime from Denny's mouth, much as she'd done with Kellan on the first night she'd slept with him, it is his turn to be less than amused and takes Anna out onto the dance floor. Denny takes Kiera to dance shortly afterward. When he gets warm, he heads off to get another drink and Kiera is surprised to feel a hand slip around her waist. She can't help but nestle into his embrace, all pretenses between them gone. All at once, he pushes her away, and she turns to see Denny returning. Filled with the heat from Kellan's embrace, she kisses Denny with passion and begs him to take her home. He does and she takes him to bed, imagining it is Kellan. The next morning, she wakes and goes down to the kitchen for something to drink, feeling guilty as she remembers the abandon with which she enjoyed Denny and hoping Kellan didn't hear them. When she gets downstairs, neither Kellan nor Anna are home. Wondering what is going on, and where they are, her anger builds as she remembers how he promised her. She goes back to bed.

Analysis

Anna surprises Kiera by showing up at Pete's a day earlier than planned and it only takes ten minutes before Kiera is already wishing the visit were over. Kellan seems amused that Anna's flirting is irritating Kiera, and the only one who seems even more irritated is Griffin. When the band goes back on stage, Anna makes her way to the front, and watches the performance. At Kiera's request, Denny tries to take her home, but Anna has no intention of leaving. Denny promises to wait until Kiera's shift is over and take them both home afterward. Kiera continues her shift, trying not to be angry about Anna's flirting with Kellan, and when the time comes to go home, Anna gets into Kellan's car. Thankfully, his Chevelle is there when Denny and Kiera pull up. When they go in, Anna is making it clear that she likes Kellan, irritating Kiera further still. The next day Anna buys a little black dress to wear dancing later. They all go to Spanks and the evening begins with Tequila shooters brought by Kellan. He seems to be enjoying her discomfort until he witnesses her with Denny. He takes Anna out onto the dance floor and Denny and Kiera soon follow. When Denny leaves Kiera to get himself another drink, Kellan comes up behind her, wrapping his arm around her waist. She melts into his embrace. Their feelings escalate, breath coming quicker, all pretenses of harmless



flirting gone now. She kisses him, and then despite where they are, she begins to unbutton his shirt, ever more aware of their building need. When he suddenly pushes her away, she is confused until she sees Denny heading her way. Filled with the heat of Kellan's embrace, she kisses him passionately and surprised, he responds. She begs him to take her home and he does. Closing her eyes, she thinks of Kellan and gives her passion for him to Denny. The next morning, she emerges feeling guilty for her exuberance the night before, and feeling guilty, she hopes Kellan didn't hear. What she doesn't expect is to find both him and Anna still gone. Angry and convinced that Kellan broke his promise to her, she goes back to bed.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Kiera so jealous of her sister Anna? Why is she worried about her visiting?

Discussion Question 2

What happens at Spanks that almost exposes Kiera and Kellan's secret?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Kiera feel guilty when she gets up the morning after their night at Spanks?

Vocabulary

Provocatively, exuberance, demurely, pretensions, lasciviously.



Chapter 16: Rain

Summary

Chapter 16: Rain

Kellan returns around lunch time just long enough to drop Anna off before leaving again. When Kiera doesn't want to hear about her night with Kellan, or talk about her own night with Denny, Anna asks her if she is okay. She blames tiredness, and Anna smirks. Denny makes lunch and then they take Anna to the airport. She asks Kiera to thank Kellan for her, telling Kiera it was the best night of her life and she wishes she could stay. Kellan still isn't home and doesn't show up until he comes into Pete's the following night, giving her a small nod on the way by. Thinking about Anna's comments, Kiera all but ignores the band's table until Kellan finally corners her in the hallway. He says they should talk, and Kiera disagrees angrily. The rest of the night is a fog.

When the night is over, she finds herself without a ride. At first, she asks Griffin who flatly refuses when he realizes no sex will be offered. Kellan offers her a ride, but she turns him down and storms out leaving her purse and jacket behind in her haste. She is regretting that decision in the dark and the rain when Kellan pulls up. He insists on her getting in the car. When she continues to refuse, he parks and gets out. He picks her up and takes her to the car, trapping her next to the open door. His proximity overwhelms her again. She kisses him; then, she slaps him hard across the face. She gets into the car, considering getting out the other side, but he climbs in with her. He pushes himself on top of her, and she can immediately tell how badly he wants her. Emotions conflict in her as he is torn between wanting him and thinking of his broken promise. When she brings it up, he asks what she expected, winding him up like that and then leaving him with her. She almost gives in to his insistent embrace and touch. However, using their old code, she tells him she needs a minute. He gets out of the car, gasping and trying to get on top of his need and desire. He knows that she is struggling, too. He stands in the rain until Kiera goes out to get him. Angrily, he gets back in, telling her that she is a tease and she should have let him go when he wanted to. Once home, a soaking wet Kellan goes up ahead of her. Denny is already asleep. As she passes Kellan's room, she hears him softly sobbing. She goes into his room, closing his door behind her. She holds him until he cries himself to sleep in her lap. Then, she quietly covers him up and leaves the room, going back to the room she shares with Denny.

Analysis

Kiera hears Kellan return, drop Anna, and leave again. Anna is eager to share the night's events with Kiera, but Kiera is angry and doesn't want to hear about it. She covers, telling her sister that she didn't get much sleep. Anna takes that wrong and congratulates her. Denny makes them lunch and then they take her to the airport. She



tells Kiera that she wishes she could stay longer, telling her that last night was the best night of her life, only making Kiera angrier. Kellan doesn't come home that day.

The next time Kiera sees Kellan is at Pete's the next night. Still seething, she hardly serves the table at all. Kellan finally corners her in the hallway and tells her that they need to talk. Kiera tells him she hates him and they have nothing to talk about. She pushes past and goes through the rest of the night in a fog. When it's time to leave, everyone but Kellan and Griffin are gone.

Kellan is amused when Kiera asks Griffin for a ride home. Without 'compensation' Griffin isn't interested in helping her. Kellan offers to take her. Still angry, Kiera strides out of Pete's, leaving her purse and jacket behind. She immediately regrets her haste when she is standing in the rain, and she tries to remember how far it is to walk back to Kellan's. He pulls up alongside her and asks her several times to get in before he finally gets out. He gets into the passenger side with her, pressing himself against her and showing how much he wants her. She tells him she hates him, but he assures her she doesn't. For awhile, they argue while their bodies send signals of desire and need. When she finally insists that he stop, Kellan is almost beyond being able to. He gets out of the car and stands in the rain, kicking his tires and yelling at the night until Kiera finally gets out and begs him to get back in. Angry now, he tells her she is a whore and a tease. She gets back in the car, sobbing until he finally joins her. He apologizes, but the damage is done. She tells him how much she really hates him now, and the ride home is silent. He gets out as soon as they get there. By the time she goes in, he is already in his room. She almost keeps walking past his room, but the sound of his sobbing surprises her. Instead, she goes into the room. Her heart is breaking for him. She holds him until he sobs himself to sleep on her lap. Then, she quietly covers him and goes back to her own room.

Discussion Question 1

When does Kiera first confront Kellan about sleeping with Anna? How does he respond?

Discussion Question 2

What does Kellan tell Kiera when she tells him on the way home that she needs a minute?

Discussion Question 3

What sound surprises Kiera when they get home, and how does she respond?

Vocabulary

Conflicted, coherent, impulsive, vigorously, intoxicatingly, obscenities.



Chapter 17: Like It Should Be

Summary

Chapter 17: Like It Should Be

The next morning Kellan comes into the kitchen. He and Kiera declare a mutual truce. He pulls her into an embrace after they apologize to each other. He tells her that they have to stop, and she agrees, tears spilling down her face. He kisses her softly, telling her he still wants her but acknowledging that she's made her choice. He promises not to touch her again.

Kiera tries to focus her attention on Denny and on friends like Jenny and Kate. She calls her family more often, but none of that distracts her and neither do her classes. After some time has passed, Kiera wants to at least try being alone in the same room together, but Kellan insists they are too volatile. Besides, he already can't forgive himself for the way he spoke to her. Denny continues to be sweet and loving. Before work, he tells her that he's got the week over Christmas off and would like to take her home to Australia to meet his parents. The thought of being without her family for Christmas is one thing, but the idea of being without Kellan is horrific.

After a vivid dream about Kellan one night that even wakes Denny, she goes downstairs and finds Kellan in the kitchen with a blonde woman. The woman leaves in the middle of the night. When Denny wakes and begins to kiss her, he feels her stiffen up and sighs, giving up. In the morning, Kellan announces his intention to have friends over if they don't mind. More than a dozen people are there, including the girl on Kellan's lap and another one beside him. Kiera stays out of the living room for the rest of the party. Finally, only the two girls with Kellan are left, and Denny asks if she is ready for bed. She turns her back on him, ignoring him until he is asleep. Then she hears three sets of feet come upstairs. As quietly as possible, she goes downstairs, tears flowing. She stands at the counter and feels someone join her. Kellan asks if she's okay. Angry, she inquires as to whether he should leave his guests alone. He smiles, taking a can of whipped cream from the fridge. He reminds her that this is who he is and she belongs with Denny. Kiera spends the night on the couch, trying not to hear.

Analysis

The next morning after declaring a mutual truce, Kellan thanks her for staying with him the night before and apologizes for the things he'd said in anger earlier in the evening, assuring her that he would never do anything she didn't agree to. She tells him she knows, feeling equally responsible for leading him on. He tells her that she and Denny are good together and that he'll make things right. She forces the memory that Anna and Kellan had been together out of mind, but she still has no desire to talk to Anna. Kiera wants nothing more than to be able to hold and be held by Kellan again, but when



she approaches him about it, Kellan suggests that she go and hold onto Denny, insisting that he is the right one for her. When Denny tells her that he'd like to take her to Australia for their Christmas holidays, Kiera is terrified, sure that in some way they'll be able to tell that she is not worthy. She dreams about Kellan and having given in to their desire to be together. She dreams of getting caught in the act by Denny who remains unaware of her conflicting emotional state.

When he is asleep again, Kiera goes downstairs and discovers Kellan with another woman. He asks her to wait upstairs and reminds Kiera that she wanted him to be open about anyone he was seeing. She asks, and he admits that he doesn't even know her name, but it doesn't matter, he adds. The next morning, he announces his intention to throw a party. When she gets home from Pete's that night, she finds over a dozen people there. Two women are sharing Kellan's attentions. Upstairs later, Kiera lets her temper out on Denny, accusing him of wanting the same thing as Kellan. She ignores him until he is sleeping. Then she goes downstairs where she can cry in peace. Kellan comes in and asks if she is okay. He's looking for whipped cream for his 'company.' Kiera spends the night on the couch.

Discussion Question 1

What does Denny want to do with Kiera over the Christmas holidays? How does Kiera feel about it?

Discussion Question 2

Why is Kiera conflicted about the holidays? Why does neither option appeal to her?

Discussion Question 3

What behavior does Kellan revert to and how does he display his assurances that he will leave her alone from now on?

Vocabulary

Remorseful, captivating, reluctance, harlot, denounce, rebuttal, accentuate.



Chapter 18: Man Whore

Summary

Chapter 18: Man Whore

Kellan continues to bring home a different girl every night. At Pete's, Jenny tells Kiera that she is glaring at Kellan and asks if they are fighting. Kiera assures her they aren't. After five nights in a row of listening to Kellan with a different woman each night, Kiera snaps and asks Denny to talk to him. Denny flatly refuses, telling her she is overreacting. He suggests they try to drown them out instead, but Kiera is not in the mood. The next morning Kellan comes down after Denny leaves for work, and Kiera ignores him, still angry. Frustrated with her demeanor, he reminds her that he is only doing what she asked of him – keeping everything above board. Despite his behavior, she misses Kellan every day. At school, Candy approaches her and asks if Kellan is her boyfriend. She assures her he isn't and suggests that if she wants Kellan so badly, she should go to Pete's.

She is on the way home when the bus breaks down, and the driver insists they wait for a replacement. By the time Kiera gets home, she has ten minutes before her shift at Pete's starts. Intending to ask Kellan, she goes upstairs without thinking and pushes his door open, getting a full view of Kellan and his girlfriend of the moment. Disgusted, and angry, she goes downstairs and grabs Kellan's keys, taking his car to work. She laughed on the way in, even turning his radio to a polka station and cranking the volume before getting out. At work, her peppy attitude only lasts until Kellan comes in. One look at his face says it all. He strides over to her and puts out his hand, and Kiera finds the nerve to play dumb at first, but soon relinquishes them when Kellan tells her that they aren't and never were friends. Jenny approaches her when Kellan leaves and Kiera dissolves. In the back room, she confesses the truth to Jenny who had already suspected for some time. She asks Kiera if she loves Kellan and Kiera insists she doesn't. At the end of the night, Rita takes advantage of the fact that Pete had gone home early, and pours them all a shot. They drink it down, and one more after it. Jenny takes her home. To get even with Kellan, when he is in earshot of Denny and herself, she flirts and encourages Denny shamelessly. Kellan doesn't look happy.

Analysis

Kellan exorcises Kiera from his mind by going back to the person he was before he met her. He becomes a man whore, taking out different women every night, often bringing more than one home at a time. The women all seem happy with the arrangement, most leaving before the night is out. When Kiera confronts Denny, insisting that he talk to Kellan about his ongoing escapades, Denny does something he has never done before. He says no. He flatly refuses to talk to Kellan, and Kiera is unable to escape it. At home she has to listen to different women extolling his virtues loudly each night; at work she



has to put up with his blatant flirting with the women there, and at school she is approached by other students who want to know who he is and what her relationship to him is.

One incident occurs when she comes home late from school and has a limited window to get to work on time. She is desperate enough to ask Kellan, but when she pushes on the door to his room, she sees him in a compromising position with yet another young lady, and they are so engrossed that neither of them realizes she is there. Angry and jealous, she goes downstairs again and taking Kellan's keys, she drives herself to work. On the way, she is amused at what Kellan's response might be. However, her amusement only lasts until Kellan storms into the bar and demands his keys back. She tries to lightheartedly announce that as his friend, she didn't think it would be a problem to borrow his car, but Kellan assures her that they have never been friends. After he leaves, she breaks down and confesses most of it to Jenny who tries to help. After a couple of shots at the end of their shift, Jenny takes her home. The next day, Kiera decides to fight fire with fire, and as Denny is leaving for work, she turns on the charm and tries to convince him to be 'late' for work. He declines, but promises to make it up to her later, and she gives him a goodbye kiss that sends him to work thinking about later. She is happy to notice that Kellan isn't enjoying her performance at all.

Discussion Question 1

How does Kellan put Kiera in her place when she openly complains about his multiple partners?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Kiera take Kellan's car? What is his reaction?

Discussion Question 3

In whom does Kiera confide? What does she reveal about herself and Kellan?

Vocabulary

Physiology, enamored, incredulity, condone, vindictive.



Chapter 19: You're Mine

Summary

Chapter 19: You're Mine

Thanksgiving dinner is made by Denny, and Kellan leaves early, not joining them. Kiera calls her family and reveals that Denny wants her to go to Australia with him for Christmas. Candy takes Kiera up on her suggestion to find Kellan at Pete's, and he brings her home. On Monday at school Candy is smug. That night, Kiera snaps. When Kellan crudely asks her if after she marries Denny will he still be able to sleep with her, Kiera slaps his face so hard it is heard around the bar. She leaps at him again, but Evan holds her back telling her to calm down. Finally, Jenny grabs both Kellan and Kiera by the hand and takes them to the room in the back. While Evan keeps every one else away from the room, Jenny asks them what is going on. When Kellan realizes that Jenny knows what they've been hiding, he tells Evan the short version of it all, including the names he'd called her. They argue in circles, each calling the other names, blaming each other for their pain. Finally, Jenny and Evan step in, and Kiera learns the truth about Anna and how it hadn't been Kellan that slept with her but Griffin. Evan and Jenny leave to let them sort things out once they've both calmed down and began apologizing to each other. Kellan holds her, and tells her how much he missed her. She melts at his touch. Though her brain tells her she should stop, her body and her mouth have different ideas. He tells her that he loves her and wants her to be his. Kiera can hardly breathe, hearing the words she longed for. She tells him that she wants him, that she's missed him so much, and that she needs him. He tells her he can't go through her indecision again, but she promises him that she has no desire to change her mind. At that moment, she can't and won't say no to him. She says she is his, and he pours his heart out to her. They begin undressing each other, both wanting the same thing until Evan comes to the door and tells them that Denny is in the bar. Kellan kisses her deeply and sends her out to Denny breathless.

Analysis

Denny seems genuinely happy over Thanksgiving, while Kiera tries not to think about Kellan and what he might be doing. Kiera calls her parents and tells them that Denny wants her to go to Australia for Christmas. They are disappointed, telling her they already picked up tickets for them, but knowing Denny, he has done the same. Candy takes Kiera's advice and finds Kellan at Pete's coming home with him for a night of loud, vocal appreciation. Monday morning, her look to Kiera says it all and that evening, Kiera finally loses her cool. She begins by suggesting that Kellan try keeping it in his pants, knowing as soon as she said it that it was stupid. He laughs with some irony, asking her if she's truly going to be the one to lecture him about abstinence. He wonders aloud as to whether they will still get to be intimate after they get married. The slap that follows carries all of her strength and is heard from one end of the bar to the other. Kiera would



have kept at him, but Evan grabs her, telling her to calm down. Jenny also becomes involved. Before long, all four of them are in the back room. Jenny and Evan are referees until Kiera and Kellan finally finish hurling angry and abusive comments at each other and begin apologizing to each other instead. Left to their own devices, they cling to each other, each revealing the truth of how they feel for the first time. Kiera makes it clear that she wants him and won't send him away again. Kellan tells her that he loves her and has from the start. He wants to spend the rest of his life with her. His declarations take her breath away. They are close to getting carried away with emotion when Evan comes back. While they joke about his poor timing at first, all joking stops when he tells them that Denny is in the bar. Kellan kisses Kiera, and she goes out of the room to face him.

Discussion Question 1

What causes Kiera to slap Kellan in front of everyone at Pete's?

Discussion Question 2

What does Kiera realize she wants, and what does she tell Kellan?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Evan interrupt them?

Vocabulary

Inseparable, inebriated, abstinence, mediator, affronted.



Chapter 20: Confessions

Summary

Chapter 20: Confessions

Kiera ducks into the ladies' room to pull herself together. When she emerges, Denny approaches her carefully as Griffin hollers his approval where the slap was concerned. Denny asks her if she is okay, telling her the whole bar is talking about her and Kellan. She tells him that Kellan slept with Anna and broke her heart and she was defending her sister's honor. Denny swallows her story and decides to stay at Pete's for dinner. When Evan and Kellan emerge from the back room, he keeps his head down and quietly leaves the bar. Denny leaves after he eats, and Kiera manages to get through the night, after which Jenny offers her a ride home.

When they get out to the parking lot, Kellan is waiting. He kisses her until she is breathless, and then despite the hour, takes her to the Seattle Space Needle. There he holds her while they look over the city. He tells her some truths about himself and about her. He admits that he was pathetically lonely as a child until he discovered that sex could fill some of that void. He tells her that before her, no one had ever loved him. When he had first seen her and Denny together, he'd been mesmerized by their love for each other and how real it was. They talk through everything, both apologizing for hurting each other, both amazed at the depth of the feelings they have for each other. Finally, having aired everything, they head home. On the way there, he asks her what she told Denny at Pete's and then reminds her that Griffin has told everyone about his conquest of Anna and that it is only a matter of time before Denny learns that she lied to him. She begins to hyperventilate in the car, but Kellan promises her that he'll find a way to fix things.

Analysis

Kiera stands in the ladies' room until her panic subsides. While she realizes that she has to be honest with Denny, this is not the way that he wants him to find out about Kellan. She is both thrilled and terrified by the depth of Kellan's feelings for her. She feeds Denny a lie about Kellan sleeping with Anna and breaking her heart and it appears as though he believes her. Kiera feels sick. Kellan leaves and Denny stays for dinner. When he kisses her, she can't help but glance at Evan and feel bad for the position they've put him in.

Denny leaves after eating, and later Jenny offers her a ride home. They go outside, and Kellan is standing there waiting for her. Jenny says she'll cover for her, but only this once and suggests that she pick one soon. After thanking Jenny, Kiera goes over to Kellan. He takes her to the Space Needle where he reveals that he'd come home on the day that Denny had returned and heard them upstairs, knowing then that they had no



chance together. He tells her about his childhood, and how it affected his behavior with women ever since. He tells her about his mother and how she'd fallen for his father's best friend. He had been the product of that love, but his mother told his father that she'd been raped while he had been gone. His father had hated him from the day he was born as a result. When his friend had discovered his mother was pregnant, he left as well. As a result, his mother had hated him, too. In his whole life, he tells her, no one ever loved him. So, when she came along, he fell head over heels for her. They talk for a long time, each revealing intimacies about their feelings that the other couldn't have known. Finally, although neither wants to, Kellan drives them home. When Kiera reveals what she told Denny in the bar, Kellan tells her that her story won't hold. Griffin has already told too many people and it was only a matter of time now before he knew the truth. Kiera begins to panic, but Kellan promises her that he will find a way to fix things.

Discussion Question 1

What story does Kiera tell Denny to explain the slap the entire bar is talking about?

Discussion Question 2

Where does Kellan take Kiera and what insights into himself does he reveal while they are there?

Discussion Question 3

Why did Kellan's parents both hate him?

Vocabulary

Irrefutable, compromising, elongated, mesmerizingly, hyperventilate.



Chapter 21: I Love You

Summary

Chapter 21: I Love You

When the sun comes up, Kellan sends Kiera inside and leaves, telling her there is something he has to do. Kiera quietly gets a change of clothing and cleans up. Denny gets up and leaves for work, giving her a kiss goodbye that makes her feel guilty for betraying Kellan. She falls asleep on the couch and misses school, waking just in time to get ready for work. Kellan doesn't come in that night or the next, and he doesn't come home either. Every day Kiera becomes increasingly depressed. Denny tries to cheer her up before he leaves, but he doesn't ask about her mood. Kellan has been gone for almost a week, and Kiera is beginning to wonder if he is ever coming back.

When she comes out, she sees Kellan at the top of the steps and throws herself into his arms sobbing, telling him she'd thought he was gone. She tells him she loves him, bringing tears to his eyes. They spend the day in bed together. An hour before Denny is due, Kellan leaves promising to see Kiera that night at Pete's. When Denny comes home, he sits beside her and she bursts into tears, overwhelmed by guilt. When she finally settles, he quietly asks her if she wants a ride to work. Denny and Kellan sit together when they get to Pete's and remain that way for the rest of the night. At the end of Kiera's shift, Denny takes her home. She climbs into bed with Denny, but all she can think about is Kellan. She lies there for as long as she can and then quietly gets up. She opens Kellan's door and slides into bed beside him. She tells him that she loves him and wants him – now. He tells her that he thinks they should wait, but she doesn't have to work very hard to sway him. Afterward, they lie together until Kellan tells her it's almost morning and suggests she go back to her own bed. She tiptoes back into her bed with Denny. Though she is still overwhelmed with guilt, she doesn't cry until he stirs and interlaces their fingers.

Analysis

At daybreak, Kellan leaves, and Kiera cleans up and quietly goes downstairs. The decision that faces her is overwhelming. Denny comes down and tells her he loves her. She returns the sentiment. However, try as she might, she doesn't feel the same way about Denny as she does about Kellan. She wonders if it is already too late for them. Denny goes to ,and Kiera falls asleep on the couch, missing school. She doesn't wake until shortly before her shift at Pete's. When she gets there, Jenny asks about Kellan, and she tells him that Kellan is deeply in love with her. Jenny is glad that Kellan finally told her, but tells her that she needs to make a choice. Kellan doesn't come home that night, the next day, or that night either. Despair settles in on Kiera. Every morning she gets up and goes downstairs, hoping to see Kellan's smile and hear him say good



morning to her. Every morning she is disappointed, and her despair deepens. Denny tries to cheer her up, but when he gets no response, he finally gives up.

On Friday, Denny tells her he loves her as he is leaving for work, and she tries to summon the same feelings for him as she has for Kellan but without success. She goes upstairs, wanting little more than to curl up into a ball and cry. Instead, she gets ready for school and when she opens the door to go downstairs, Kellan is just reaching the top stair. She throws herself into his arms, sobbing as he reassures her that he would never leave without saying anything. She tells him she loves him causing his eyes to tear as well. She doesn't go to school, climbing into bed with Kellan instead. This encounter is slow, filled with love and emotions so deep they can hardly be expressed with mere words. Kellan wants her for himself, but Kiera isn't ready to break Denny's heart. Just before Denny is to return, Kellan leaves telling Kiera he'll see her at Pete's. When Denny comes home, she is again overwhelmed with guilt and cries in his arms until she can hardly breathe. Denny tells her it's okay, but he doesn't question her sorrow. Instead, he offers her a ride to work. She accepts. Denny approaches Kellan at Pete's and talks to him about Anna. Kellan doesn't reveal the truth. After work, Denny takes her home and they climb into bed without talking. She waits until he is deeply asleep and then tiptoes into Kellan's room. She begins to undress, and Kellan asks her what she's doing. Though he thinks it's a bad idea and says so, she still manages to gain his eager participation. Kiera doesn't return to Denny until daybreak.

Discussion Question 1

How long is Kellan gone after he tells Kiera he has something he has to do?

Discussion Question 2

What advice does Jenny offer Kiera when Kiera tells her about Kellan?

Discussion Question 3

In which two ways is Kiera suffering from a guilty conscience?

Vocabulary

Ethereal, stoically, emboldened, ultimatum, melancholy.



Chapter 22: Choices

Summary

Chapter 22: Choices

When Kiera goes downstairs, Kellan tells her that what they did the night before can't happen again. He wants her to leave Denny and be his, out in the open for everyone to see. Before he leaves to go to Evan's, he tells her to think about the decision she needs to make. Then, she lies down on the couch and sobs until she is asleep.

When she wakes, Denny comes in looking beaten and tortured. He asks her if he did something wrong, telling her that he feels a wall between them. He asks her if Kellan's lifestyle is so disturbing to her that she doesn't want to have him as a roommate anymore. Kiera says that she hardly sees him, so it is fine. He asks if it is him then. When she says no and puts her arms around him, he asks her to move to Brisbane with him. He admits that there is a great job waiting there for him and that they could get married. He kisses her deeply. Then, he picks her up and carries her upstairs. While lying in bed afterward, Kiera is consumed with guilt, knowing that her behavior would kill Kellan if he knew. He begins to question her recent sadness. To stop him she tells him she will go to Australia with him.

Denny takes her to work. He stays and sits in with the band. Kellan comes in; after awhile, he gestures discretely to the back hallway. Kiera goes to Jenny to ask her to let her know if Denny is looking for her, and Jenny reluctantly agrees. Kellan puts an out of order sign on the women's washroom and leads her inside, immediately asking her if she is going to Australia with Denny. When Kiera admits that she agreed so that she could buy herself time, Kellan is hurt and angry. He asks if she agreed to marry him as well, but she tells him that she didn't answer, which only makes things worse. When he asks if Kiera slept with Denny as well, Kiera can't answer. Kellan tries to filter his anger and plead his case. Jenny enters telling Kellan it's time to go on and letting Kiera know that Denny talked to Griffin and knows the truth about Anna. Denny brought up the fight Kiera and Kellan had over Anna and Griffin explodes, saying Kellan had nothing to do with Anna. Denny knows she lied. Kellan goes on stage. The last song he sings is one of love, loss, and leaving. Kiera knows he is singing it to her. Denny doesn't approach her until her shift is over. He takes her home and takes her to bed. Kiera waits until he is asleep and then slips out to Kellan's room. She begs him not to leave once again, and then tells him the truth. She chooses him. She can't live without him. He tells her he will make her happy.

Analysis

When Kellan sees Kiera later in the kitchen, he tells her that their behavior can't continue. He wants her to choose. He can't bring himself to keep sneaking around



behind Denny's back, and wants Kiera to have the honorable man he can be. He wants to be a better man and his behavior with Kiera the night before was anything but honorable. Finally he is making her choose. He tells her that they can have it all. He wants to kiss her in public, fall asleep with her wrapped in his arms, and doesn't want to feel guilty for loving her or expressing the way he feels to her. All said, he simply isn't able to continue sharing her. She asks what he'll do if she doesn't choose him, and he tells her he'll leave them alone to live happily ever after, but that he'll miss her every day. They both cry and Kellan tells her they would be amazing together. Kiera still needs more time, and Kellan agrees, but won't wait for ever. He goes to Evan's, promising her he will see her that night. She gets on the couch after he leaves and cries herself to sleep.

When Denny sits beside her, he looks defeated and tortured. He asks her if he's done something wrong, and she assures him he hasn't. Still not convinced, he holds her and asks her to move to Brisbane with him when her schooling is done. Kiera is numb. Australia is so far away. He talks about them getting married there and about the good life they can have. To stop him from asking her any more questions, she agrees to go to Australia with him, and he immediately cheers up. He takes her to work and sits with the band. Kellan manages to catch Kiera's eye, and they meet in the bathroom where he immediately asks her if she told Denny she was going with him to Australia. She is flustered and tries to explain that she only said yes to stop him from questioning her further and to buy her some time. He tells her that she should have thought before she spoke. He wonders aloud if she agreed to marry him as well. The silence from her tells Kellan more than he wants to know. He asks her if she slept with him, and she doesn't want to answer. Kellan is angry. He asks her how she wants to schedule their interludes, or does she want them both together? Kiera asks him to filter himself and he backs off, apologizing. She tells him she just doesn't know how to choose, and Kellan kisses her deeply, pleading his case. Jenny arrives and tells them that Kellan is wanted on stage and Denny has been talking to Griffin. They both know that means that Denny knows the truth now. Panicking, Kiera doesn't know what to do, and Kellan tells her all they can do is go back to work.

Denny says nothing to her, but the look on his face is speaking volumes. When Kellan begins the last song of the evening, Kiera immediately knows it was penned for her. It is a song about loss; about betrayal; about how she is everything he needs but that he failed her, and now all he can do is leave. After work, he takes her home, still silent. Kiera stands listening, unable to hear the customers beside her who are trying to order. Kellan continues to sing about how he'll think of her every day, no matter how far away he is. Then, he returns to the goodbye chorus, and Kiera comes apart. Jenny grabs her arm and tells her that Denny is watching, pulling her into the kitchen where she dissolves. Denny approaches Kellan after the set, and asks a serious question. Kellan looks at Kiera and smiles, shaking his head. Denny takes her home and is silent. He doesn't say a word about her lie or her emotional breakdown at work. She climbs into bed and waits for Denny to fall asleep. Then she goes to Kellan again. He tries to tell her to leave, but she doesn't. He knows who she is going to choose, and he is planning to leave. She begs him to hold her, and he does. Lying in his arms she begs him again not to leave. He tells her that he wishes that he'd met her first, or that she'd choose him,



and she tells him that she does. He stares at her for a moment, hardly daring to believe he'd heard correctly. Kiera has finally realized that Kellan is the one she wants to be with. He rolls over and kisses her with intensity. Then he undresses her, telling her how happy he is going to make her.

Discussion Question 1

What does Kiera do to get Denny to stop questioning her? Why is that a colossal mistake?

Discussion Question 2

What does Denny find out when he is talking to Griffin, and what does he do about it?

Discussion Question 3

What does Kiera finally decide to do and who is the first one to know after her?

Vocabulary

Honorable, grievous, resignedly, vehemently.



Chapter 23: Consequences

Summary

Chapter 23: Consequences

Kiera lies in bed with Kellan, finally having made her choice. She gets up quietly and slips her clothes back on, going back to her room. Denny doesn't move. Eventually, she dozes off. When she wakes up, all she wants to do is see Kellan. She goes downstairs and walks straight into his arms, telling him she missed him. Kellan separates from her and tells her they should talk about Denny, just as he is coming into the room, having heard his name mentioned. Kellan quickly covers by inviting them to a gig, but Denny insists that they will both be staying home. Kellan breaks the silence and leaves the two of them alone. Kiera naps off and on, knowing Denny is watching her, his eyes dark and introspective.

Later, when Kellan returns, Denny suggests they all go to the Shack and go dancing. Kellan agrees, and they finish their meal in silence. Kiera can't bring herself to tell Kellan why she hadn't told Denny about them yet. On the way to the Shack, he asks her if she's thought about Christmas break. They sit together silently at a table until Denny's phone rings and after answering it, he apologizes to Kiera telling her that his boss wants him, and asking Kellan if he can take her home. Denny kisses her deeply, and elicits a response from Kiera that she can't help. Kellan shifts in the seat beside them. After Denny is gone, Kellan asks Kiera if she'll spend winter break with him. She thinks about the day she met Denny as Kellan goes on exploring all the things they could do if they went to Canada over winter break. Realizing the Kiera isn't paying attention, he asks her if she wants to go home, and she nods. He walks her out, and Kiera takes note that Denny's car is actually gone. Kiera is still thinking about Denny and about the first time they'd been intimate. Kellan is still talking softly to her. She stops and tries to tell Kellan she needs more time. He tells her he can't. She has to choose now. She blurts out her choice – Denny. He kisses and gives her a delicate silver chain with a guitar hanging on it. In the center of the guitar is a diamond. It is stunning. He tells her it is to remember him by, and she tells him she loves him. He kisses her, and she hears the gate behind them. Denny asks Kellan what is going on, and he tells Denny that he was kissing her goodbye. Denny asks Kellan if he did more than kiss her, and he quietly admits he has – twice. He adds that he wanted her every day. Denny hits him. After Kellan gets up, he tells Denny he won't fight him. Denny hits him again and again, and Kellan does nothing to stop him or to block the blows. Once Kellan is down, Denny begins kicking him and screaming at him. Kiera stands there mute, doing nothing to stop it. Kellan's arm cracks and a rib or two breaks, but Denny is so far beyond rage there is no stopping. Kellan tells Denny he's sorry, but he loves Kiera, and Kiera loves him. Denny snaps. Denny lines up to kick Kellan in the head, and Kellan only has eyes for Kiera. He doesn't see it coming, but Kiera does and dives in front of him to shield him from Denny. The kick, already on its way, catches Kiera in the side of the head, and her world goes black.



Analysis

Kiera lies in Kellan's bed watching him sleep, loving the peaceful look on his face. She gets up, dresses, and returns to Denny's bed. Finally, she dozes off. But, the moment she wakes, all she can think about is Kellan. She goes downstairs and walks straight into his arms, telling him she missed him. He adds that he didn't like waking up without her. Then he pulls away from her and tries to tell her that they need to talk about Denny. Hearing his name, Denny comes in and Kellan manages to cover by asking them out, but Denny is adamant that they will not be going anywhere. Kellan gets the unspoken message and goes out, hoping that Kiera will use the time to talk to Denny. She doesn't. In fact, she avoids it despite the fact that he sits in the living room brooding as he watches her.

When Kellan returns later, he looks at her. Kiera shakes her head letting him know she hasn't said anything yet. They eat dinner together, and Denny suddenly suggests that they go to the Shack and go dancing. Kellan agrees but with obvious reservations. At the club, Denny gets a call from work and apologizes, asking Kellan to take Kiera home. Then he leaves them alone. Kellan asks Kiera if she'll spend winter break with him, and goes on to talk about the things they can do, but Kiera isn't listening. Her mind is replaying her relationship with Denny from the until now. Noticing her lack of attention, Kellan asks her if she wants to go home. They go out the doors, and Kellan is still talking to her softly, but she still isn't hearing. She continues to replay all of the sweet and tender moments she's had with Denny since their beginning and realizes that Denny is her safety zone. Kellan is more emotional, and she thinks about how they've argued. She knew Denny would never cheat on her, and she wondered what Kellan would do when the passion was gone. She stops suddenly and tells him she can't because she needs more time. He struggles not to be angry and tells her to choose – now. She does – Denny. Stunned, he promises not to make trouble. He admits he should have left long time ago, knowing that Denny was always the choice she would make. He tells her that he has to leave, and will call Jenny to come and get her. She almost begs him to stay yet again, but he stops her before she can. When she hears the gate behind them she doesn't have to turn. The look on Kellan's face says everything. Denny walks up and asks what is going on. Kellan tells him he was kissing Kiera goodbye. Denny questions the extent of their involvement and when he learns that Kellan slept with Kiera, he loses it. He begins beating on Kellan who won't so much as defend against the blows. Kiera stands to one side mute while Kellan apologizes to Denny. He also admits that he loves Kiera and she loves him. Denny gets even wilder, and Kiera hears bones snap as he kicks Kellan now on the ground. Kellan looks at Kiera and doesn't see the final kick coming, but Kiera does and knows if it connects with Kellan, it will be devastating. She jumps in front of Kellan and takes the blow herself. She is unconscious almost immediately after Denny's foot connects with her temple.



Discussion Question 1

What opportunity should Kiera have taken advantage of where Denny is concerned? Why doesn't she?

Discussion Question 2

What does Denny do when he is called into work from the Shack where the three of them have gone for a night out?

Discussion Question 3

What does Denny do when he discovers the truth about Kellan and Kiera?

Vocabulary

Surreal, luxuriated, introspective, accusatory, imperceptible.



Chapter 24: Guilt and Regret

Summary

Chapter 24: Guilt and Regret

Kiera wakes in the hospital and Denny strokes her face, drying her tears and telling her she is okay. Denny admits that he thought he'd killed her. Kiera notices Kellan standing at the door, his arm in a cast and his face a mess of purple and blue bruises. Kellan nods at Denny and leaves. Kiera wants to call him back but instead talks to Denny who admits he wished she'd told him from the start. He's going back to Australia alone. He leaves and later a light touch on her cheek wakes her. Kellan looks terrible, but his smile is warm. Though he's decided to stay in Seattle, having taken a lot of crap from Evan for almost leaving without even considering the band, he tells her he needs her to move out. Kiera cries herself to sleep. The next time she wakes, Anna is sitting on the bed. She tells Kiera that Denny had called after he'd hurt her and that she'll be her roommate until Kiera is done with school. They talk about her visit and Kiera reveals the lie Kellan told her about sleeping with Anna.

Denny returns that evening and tells Kiera he will leave his car for her. She tells him that she and Anna will be finding a place together. Anna returns, having secured both an apartment and a job at Hooters like she wanted. When Jenny and Kate come in, Kiera tells them she won't be returning to Pete's but promises their friendship will continue. Griffin comes in to pick Anna up and Kiera is finally taken off the IV machine. Denny comes in again later, and through her tears, Kiera can see Kellan standing just outside the door which only makes her cry more. Denny tells her he helped Anna to move her things, and they talk about Kellan and his history with women. He tells her that after he'd kicked her, and they'd established she was still breathing, Kellan had insisted Denny leave so that he wasn't arrested. Kellan told the authorities they'd been mugged. She tells Denny how sorry she is, and he agrees, telling her the same. They fall asleep together, murmuring apologies. In the morning, Kiera knows that somehow their friendship will survive.

Analysis

Denny kisses her forehead when Kiera wakes, telling her she's been in the hospital for two days, unconscious for most of it. He asks her how she could do such a thing to him, but the nurse comes back and when she leaves, Kiera asks where they go from here. He kisses her temple gently and says 'nowhere'. He tells her there is no point in denying that they are no longer together. He can't be just a safety net. She sobs and he holds her carefully crying too. Finally, he pulls away, promising to check on her the next day. He stops at the door and talks to someone, offering his hand and after a final smile for her, he leaves. Kellan wakes her gently later and they talk about what happened. His smile leaves as he describes how he wanted Denny to hurt him like they'd hurt Denny.



When he asks Kiera what her plans are, she knows the horrible truth. She's lost them both. He refuses to be her consolation prize and later she thinks it all through, knowing she made mistakes all the way along. Anna decides to come to Seattle and look after her little sister. When she asks, Anna admits that Kellan hasn't left the hospital, so in love with her that he simply wanders the halls waiting for improvement in her condition. He isn't coming back to see her though, she adds, saying that he'd told her he 'needed a minute'. Kiera understands their code for he needs more space. Anna finally tells her all about her night with Griffin, to Kiera's embarrassment.

Denny returns later, and when Kiera tells him about moving in with Anna, he wants to ask about Kellan, but doesn't. Kiera tells Jenny and Kate she can't come back to Pete's, unable to be that close to Kellan, and Jenny understands. They talk about maintaining their friendship. Denny helps Anna move Kiera's things out of Kellan's and with Denny staying at Sam's, Kellan is now alone at home. Kiera and Denny manage to talk things out, and he admits that his rage was beyond his ability to control, and that Kellan had saved him from jail and charges. They apologize to each other. Kiera hopes that they will remain friends somehow through all of this.

Discussion Question 1

How long is Kiera unconscious? What happens to Denny as a result?

Discussion Question 2

What visitor helps Kiera to pull herself together despite the circumstances?

Discussion Question 3

What do Denny and Kellan decide to do where Kiera and their lives are concerned? Why?

Vocabulary

Speculative, consolation, atrocious, desolation, exorbitant.



Chapter 25: Goodbyes

Summary

Chapter 25: Goodbyes

Kiera is allowed to leave the hospital the next morning. Jenny comes in and Denny arrives not too long afterward. Two hours later, she is in her new apartment. Her heart clenches when she notices the chair from Kellan's, knowing it was the only comfortable piece of furniture he had. A new routine emerges in the next week. Jenny comes often with Kate, and Griffin often comes home with Anna after work. Denny stops by every night as well, and Kiera tries not to bring up subjects that are upsetting such as Kellan, their fight, or their relationship. The only thing that lights up his eyes is the thought of going home, and Kiera tries not to fear that day. Within days, Kiera is taking him to the airport. She is stunned to see Kellan there and watches as he puts his hand out to Denny. Denny shakes it, and she watches as they struggle for closure that won't be permanent. Then Kellan gives him a quick hug and walks away. Denny tells her he'll always love her and kisses her goodbye. When he turns the corner, her knees buckle and she goes down. But, before her head hits the floor, something stops it. Though she can't see him, her senses recognize the unique smell of Kellan. Kiera realizes she'd fainted and Kellan had stayed. She throws her arms around him. He stiffens at first. Then, he just rocks her on the floor and tells her things will be okay. She sobs as the plane leaves, and Kellan stays with her until she is under control. He pulls himself from her. He makes sure she can drive and helps her to stand. She tells him she is sorry and was wrong. He kisses her and then forces himself to pull away again while he still can. Then, telling her he'll see her around, he leaves.

Kiera manages to get home. She cries herself to sleep. When she wakes, she showers and dresses, feeling marginally better and decides the best course of action is to throw herself into her school work, now woefully behind. Denny calls just before Anna and Kiera head home for Christmas. He tells them about his job and family. Anna helps her cover the remaining bruise, and she tears apart the apartment looking for the necklace Kellan had given her. She doesn't find it. They are back in Seattle before New Year's Eve, and Kiera finds a job in a diner with Jenny's roommate, Rachel. Matt often visits with Griffin, but when Kiera is in the room, all conversation about Kellan ends. Evan visits her at school one day. He gives her a massive bear hug, and admits that Kellan misses her. They talk about Kellan, and Kiera tells Evan he is the only one who will discuss him. She misses him, too, she says. Evan tells her how the band got together. From Evan, she learns more about Kellan's family, the home his parents left him, and how he responded to their deaths. She doesn't see the D-Bags often and never sees Kellan who stays hidden from her.



Analysis

After Kiera is released, Anna, Jenny, and Denny take her to her new apartment. She is overwhelmed when she notices Kellan's chair in the living room. She struggles to maintain her composure. Denny watches, curiously, and then makes her a sandwich for lunch while Anna leaves for work. In the next week, Jenny comes every afternoon, trying to convince Kiera she should come back to Pete's, but Kiera refuses to even go out. Anna suggests she should work at Hooter's with her, but Kiera is embarrassed by even the idea of wearing the necessary uniform. When Denny leaves, Kiera takes him to the airport, stunned to see Kellan there waiting. Without looking at Kiera, he holds out his hand to Denny who shakes it after only a slight hesitation. They say their goodbyes, and Kellan walks away without a word to her. Denny's plane is called and when he walks around the corner, the edges of Kiera's world fade and she feels herself going down. Something catches her before she hits the floor, and her other senses recognize Kellan even before her eyes open. She clings to him, hopeful for a moment that he's changed his mind about her, but one look at his eyes reveals the truth. The pain and distance are still there. He stays with her until she is able to drive, and then he leaves her there. She watches him leave, thinking it is the last time she will ever see him. Somehow, she makes it home where she cries herself to sleep. Finally, when she wakes, she begins to feel like herself. She throws herself back into schoolwork, determined to catch up. At Christmas, she and Anna go home to family but both are anxious to return to Seattle. When they do, Kiera manages to get work in a diner with Jenny's roommate Rachel, but she misses Pete's. She sees the rest of the members now and then, but never Kellan. He keeps his distance, and she lets him. The only one that ever talks to her about him is Evan, and he tells her that Kellan still misses her, and loves her. He reveals more about Kellan's history, surprising her with revelations about his family and the band's formation.

Discussion Question 1

What happens when Kiera says goodbye to Denny at the airport?

Discussion Question 2

What does Kiera decide to do with herself? Where does she concentrate her efforts?

Discussion Question 3

What details does Kiera learn from Evan where Kellan is concerned?

Vocabulary

Encroaching, reciprocating, obliterated, consolatory.



Chapter 26: Love and Loneliness

Summary

Chapter 26: Love and Loneliness

After three months without Kellan, Kiera still struggles. Anna is getting ready to go out one day when Kiera notices a sparkle on her neck. Kiera asks, and Anna tells her it was stuck in with her things. She sees Kiera's face and takes it off, realizing who it belongs to. After Anna leaves, she curls up on Kellan's chair and cries over a sad movie. It is just ending when the door opens and Anna bursts in, grabbing her by the arm and dragging her into the bathroom. She slaps makeup on her and shoves her out the front door.

She takes Kiera to Pete's despite her objections. Holding onto her hand, Anna walks her in the front door. Kiera sees that nothing much has changed. Jenny is happy to see her and looks towards the stage as she tells her how glad she is that Kiera is there.

Together, she and Anna pull her to the stage and stand with her in front of Kellan. His eyes are closed and he is singing a song that Kiera hasn't heard before, but from the crowds' reaction, one he has sung many times before. After a moment, she realizes he is singing about the fight in the parking lot, about his feelings for her, about loss and about unending love. He sings on, his eyes still closed and still Kiera can't look up at him. When she finally does, he is singing about how her face is his light and without it he is in the dark. Her tears flow free and Kiera stands there, hardly realizing that Jenny and Anna have let go of her hands and faded away. When the instrumental section comes, he opens his eyes and can hardly believe what he is seeing. With a look of awe on his face, he finishes the song, and then just stands there. Finally, Evan tells the room they are taking a break, and the band leaves the stage. Finally, he comes down to her level, and after a few moments, he leads her into the back hallway where they can talk uninterrupted. After much in the way of declarations, explanations and apologies, they decide to simply date. They go slowly, seeing movies, picnicking in the park, and holding hands, chastely kissing after date nights. It is three more months before they finally find themselves in bed again, and the absence has only made their time together sweeter. They stay together, promising each other that is how it will always be.

Analysis

By March, Kiera has gone three months without Kellan and she still berates herself daily for her stupid mistake, wondering how she could have been so scared that she could have pushed him away. Anna suggests that she should go to Kellan, who she admits is still so forlorn, but Kiera refuses. She is sure that all she does is hurt him. Anna tells her she's an idiot, but Kiera already knows that. She stays home, feeling sorry for herself, wondering how Denny is doing, and afraid to think about what Kellan is doing. She can't bring herself to think about him seeing someone else, but thinks that after hearing a partial comment about romance where he was concerned that he was at least trying to



move on. The thought hurt her to her core. Anna returns and in short order forces her off the chair, and helps her throw some makeup on before dragging her out of the apartment. Kiera tries to argue, but Anna reminds her that now she is doing the thinking for both of them. She drives to Pete's where she and Jenny manage to drag her to the stage and stand her in front of Kellan. He sings with his eyes closed and doesn't see her until she has been standing there for most of the song he is singing about her. When he opens them and sees her standing there, he can hardly believe it. When the song is finished, he manages to get down to her. To avoid fans and interruptions, takes her to the hallway to talk. It is difficult for both of them, but Kiera unequivocally declares her feelings, telling him that she didn't choose Denny. She ran to him in the end, fearful that what they had was so intense that it couldn't last. Kellan worries, unable to trust her and what she is telling him. They kiss, with the help of a jostle from behind from Anna, and Kiera suggests they take it slowly and just date at first. Kellan agrees. For the next three months they take it slowly, doing all the boyfriend/girlfriend things that they didn't do the first time around. They talk and even argue on occasion as they clear the air and hard feelings of their past. Three months later, they finally get back to the physical end of their relationship. They are as perfect together as always. This time they both know that they will never be apart again.

Discussion Question 1

What does Anna return to Kiera? How does it affect her?

Discussion Question 2

What makes Anna come back to the apartment? What does she insist on Kiera seeing?

Discussion Question 3

How do Kiera and Kellan manage to repair the damage they have done to each other?

Vocabulary

Alluringly, absconding, perpetual, enraptured, figurative.



Characters

Kiera Allen

Kiera is about five feet, five inches tall, has hazel eyes and thick, somewhat curly brown hair. Though not unattractive, Kiera doesn't feel as though she is anything special to look at, seeing herself as 'average.' Kiera meets Denny during her first year in college and they fell for each other immediately. Kiera has a heart shaped face, and a perky nose framed by high cheek bones. Though not as tall as her sister Anna, Kiera has an athletic figure and perhaps less average looking than she imagines herself. Kiera is inexperienced with men, and with love. Denny is her first love. As such, she has little to compare him to. Her love for him is unconditional until she meets Kellan. Then, despite her desire to be loyal and true to Denny who loves her, she falls for their roommate. It is increasingly difficult to stay away from him.

Kellan Kyle

Kellan is a local rock star who is the main singer of the band called D-Bags and is the owner of the house that Denny and Kiera will be staying at in Seattle. Kellan is easily described as 'drop dead gorgeous'. He has light, sandy brown hair that he styles in a wild and thick mess with long hair on top covering short and shaggy layers underneath. He dresses conservatively, most often wearing a simple t-shirt, jeans and heavy boots. He has a sexy smile and a voice that is alluring. He is handsome and knows it. He is also a terrible flirt. He sings to the crowd, playing the role and mentally undressing the girls in a way that makes their boyfriends draw them closer to themselves. Kellan is about six inches taller than Denny and his muscles are lean, long and clearly defined. His eyes are a shade of deep blue that seem impossible. Kellan also plays guitar in his band, but his is acoustic creating a nice blend with Matt who is also very good. Kellan grew up in an abusive situation where his father took great pleasure in regularly beating him and his mother. When they both die in a car accident, Kellan is not as devastated as he might have been with loving parents. As he never knew love, and never had anyone express or show it to him before Kiera, when she first arrives with Denny, it is an eye opener for him. To begin with, he watches them, seeing for the first time how good a relationship can be. He sees her dedication to Denny and knows what he has been missing.

Denny Harris

Denny Harris is described as beautiful by his girlfriend. Born in a small Queensland, Australia town, he is muscular and tanned but in a natural way. He has dark brown hair which he wears lightly styled in chunky but organized pieces. His eyes are also brown – a deep and dark color that sparkles. His accent is one that turns his girlfriends' knees to jelly. He met her when he was a teacher's aide. Denny left Australia to come to the



United States to help his aunt get settled when she received a job offer to work at Ohio University. His accent is still very strong, and it is one more thing that Kiera loves about him. Denny is referred to as brilliant and gifted by most of his professors. He quickly lands a dream internship for one of the leading ad agencies in the world. Denny likes to have just a bit of facial hair to age his baby face just a little. Denny and Kiera meet during his third year in college, and the attraction was immediate. He already knew Kellan by then, having been hosted as an exchange student by Kellan's family, and his bond with Kellan grew out of their companionship and his eventual intervention between Kellan and his abusive father. Denny is convinced that he and Kiera can make their relationship work even if it means giving up the career opportunity of a lifetime in order to be with her.

Matt

As the lead guitarist for D-Bags, Matt has blond, spiky short hair and light eyes and is Griffin's cousin. Matt is a considerate person who seldom participates in the sexual innuendo and teasing that goes on with the rest of the band. He is soft spoken, warm, friendly, and open.

Griffin

Griffin is the bass guitarist for D-Bags, he is also blond haired and has light colored eyes, and plays with an almost bored expression on his face. Griffin is a player. He loves women and they love him. While on stage, he plays to the women in the crowd, and enjoys their attentions immensely when they are on break or done for the night. He loves to extol the virtues of his many conquests, always trying to one-up the other members of his band. He is constantly trying to orchestrate conquests that Kellan has not had first and is jealous of Kellan's natural, boyish good looks and charm. Griffin becomes involved with Kiera's sister Anna when she comes to visit. He reconnects with her again when she moves to Seattle to live with Kiera.

Evan

Evan is the drummer for D-Bags. He has a kind face with big dark eyes and brown hair styled in a buzz cut. Even though he wears half inch gauges in his ears and his arms are covered in tattoos, he still manages to look like a big teddy bear. Evan meets Kellan when Kellan is hitchhiking down the Oregon coast.

Sam

Sam is a large man with a body that could be described as 'beefcake.' He works as a bouncer at Pete's and has a natural air of menace. He and Denny were friends in school.

Pete

The owner of Pete's is a well-dressed man in his mid-fifties with hair that is graying and a face that has a weathered look. Pete hires Kiera to work at 'Pete's.'

Jenny

Jenny is a pretty, silky haired blonde who works at Pete's. She is the first to welcome Kiera and show her the ropes. She has a sparkling personality. She is petite with pale blue eyes and a figure that many customers openly appreciate.

Rita

As the bartender at Pete's, Rita has always had a soft spot for Kellan, flirting with him shamelessly whenever she has the chance. She is an older woman who has blonde hair that Kiera doubts is the original color. Her skin looks somewhat leathery. It is easy to see that at one time she was attractive, but time was unkind. She loves her job and the gossiping that goes along with it.

Anna Allen

Kiera's sister Anna is the swan to Kiera. Kiera believes herself to be a mere duck. Anna is taller than Kiera - almost as tall as Denny. Anna is impulsive by nature, and has the same perky nose, high cheek bones and heart shaped face as her sister Kiera. Though they both have dark brown hair, Anna's is shiny and ripples like water when she walks. Her eyes are a deep green color and she is easily described as voluptuous. She arrives in Seattle with her hair mostly pinned up. The hair that is still down is dyed the same bright red as her dress. Anna is a provocative and adventurous spirit. She uses her voice and her sex appeal to get what she wants from men.

Rachel

Rachel is Jenny's roommate. She is a combination of Asian and Latin, and has latte colored skin with mocha hair. Her smile is charming. She is sweet like Jenny, but quiet like Kiera.

Scott

A shy man, Scott is the genius who runs the kitchen at Pete's during the day. He is a tall and lanky man who is unusually thin for a cook. His talent in the kitchen comes honestly by way of his father Sal.

Sal

Scott's father Sal is the original talent in the kitchen, teaching his son the art of creating the bar food that makes Pete's legendary.



Symbols and Symbolism

D-Bags (Douchebags)

The name of Kellan's band.

Chevy Chevelle Malibu

Kellan's muscle car.

Bumpershoot

A music and art festival that occurs at the Seattle Center.

SLS Advertising

The company that Denny finds work with after returning to Kiera in Seattle.

VW Vanagon

Griffin's van.

Amtrak

What Kiera and Kellan take up north for their free Saturday while Denny is gone.

Espresso Stand

Where Kellan and Kiera go when they are unable to stay away from each other in the parking lot at Spanks.



Settings

Queensland, Australia

Where Denny is from, and where he returns to when he and Kiera split up.

Athens, Ohio

Kiera's home town..

Ohio University

The University to which Denny's aunt had been offered a position. The offer prompts Denny to come with her to help her get settled.

Pete's

The name of the bar that Kellan and his band, the D-Bags, play at each weekend. Kiera gets a job as a waitress there.

University of Washington

The university in Seattle that Kiera manages to land a scholarship with so that she can go with Denny when he is offered a job in that state.

Pike's Place Market

The market on the pier that Denny and Kiera go to when they pick up food the day after arriving in Seattle.

Tucson

The location of the office Denny has been asked by his company to go and set up.

SLS Advertising

The company that Denny finds work with after returning to Kiera in Seattle.



Spanks

The dance club that Griffin recommends for Kellan and Kiera to take Anna.

Brisbane

The Australian city that Denny wants Kiera to move to with him.

Lake Union

The view Kiera has from her new apartment with Anna.

Pioneer Square

The location of the diner in which Kiera finds work after catching up on her school assignments.

The Shack

A venue where Kellan invites Denny and Kiera to join him.

Razors

An alternate venue that Kellan and the D-bags play.



Themes and Motifs

Relationship Dynamics – Trust and Communication

Trust and communication are the basis for any relationship. When either of these is lost, the relationship by extension is also forfeited. In this story, Kiera follows her heart and her boyfriend to Seattle when he is offered his dream job as an intern for a major advertising firm. With eyes for no one else, she manages to land a scholarship at Washington University. With hardly a backward glance, she leaves her family and friends behind. Her feelings for Denny are intensified, perhaps, by the fact that he is her first real love. She is thrilled that they will finally be living together under one roof. When soon after they settle into their new life Denny announces he has been asked to set up an office in yet another location, Kiera is angry and disappointed that he would leave her, knowing that with school about to start, she is unable to follow him. At first, she is determined to make the best of things. Denny's friend Kellan is a constant companion and shield against her loneliness, but his kindness, compassion and sensitivity slowly open a second door in her heart. It begins innocently at first. Kellan holds her when he sees her distraught, comforting her as any good friend would. He is a perfect gentleman, holding doors open for her, driving her to and from work, taking her on a tour of her new campus, and generally being there for her when she is lonely or frustrated. He puts his arm around her when they sit at home watching television, dances with her at Pete's to save her from Griffin's advances, and takes her out to keep her from becoming morose at home.

During this time, he falls in love with her. A small part of her recognizes that Denny would not approve of how close she and Kellan had become. What pushes them from friendship to intimate relationship is a telephone call from Denny in which he tells Kiera that he has been offered a permanent position where he is. He tries to convince her that in two years, when she is finished school, she can join him, but angry and lonely, she breaks off her relationship with him instead. From there, she runs straight into Kellan's arms. Assuming her ties with Denny are severed, she encourages him to fill the void she feels. Kellan has always been a one night stand man to a degree. Once he sees Kiera and Denny together for the first time, he realizes that their relationship is what he's been looking for his whole life. When Kiera shares his bed for the first time, he begins to hope that it is possible for him. Then, Denny returns the next day and tells Kiera that nothing is more important than she is to him. Kellan backs off quietly, saying nothing that will cause stress. Their feelings for each other are difficult to ignore once acknowledged however, and while Kiera doesn't want to hurt Denny, she finds that her feelings for Kellan are stronger than she is. The cornerstones of Kiera's relationship with Denny are lost the first time she accepts that Denny wouldn't approve of the degree of flirting done while he is gone, but she continues anyway. In that moment, she forfeits trust. It is perhaps a testament to her youth and inexperience that she fails to communicate the way she is feeling to Denny. However, once she lets Kellan into her heart, it is impossible to push him back out.



Omitting the Truth is Still a Lie

There are many challenges involved in maintaining a long distance relationship, not the least of which is the distance itself. When Kiera and Denny first attempt to do so, they begin on the right track. Denny calls her frequently, and they talk extensively about everything, holding nothing back. Denny is busy, his new job taking up considerable time and energy, but at the same time, he wants to share what is happening with Kiera. When Kiera begins to suspect that Denny would be unhappy with the bond that she is beginning to feel for Kellan, she avoids telling him the whole truth. It is her first lie of omission. Despite realizing that Denny would be displeased with her close contact to Kellan, she does nothing to stop or discourage it. In fact, the bond she has with Kellan grows daily in Denny's absence, as do her omissions. By avoiding the truth, she forges a relationship with Kellan that ventures beyond friendship by grand margins, and while she doesn't sleep with him at first, she is as close to him as she can be without doing so. Denny is also committing the sins of omission. While his motives are similar (he is trying to save Kiera's feelings just as she tells herself she is saving Denny's feelings by not admitting what is occurring between her Kellan), his actions reveal a guilty conscience. He calls her less frequently, going from calling her every day to leaving her wondering for five days in the end and justifies his actions by telling himself that she will support him as this is his big chance – the job of a lifetime. In the end, the secrets they keep from each other become stronger than they are and though Denny tries to salvage their relationship by returning to her and leaving his job behind, the damage is already done. Kiera and Denny cling to what is familiar, but omissions have a way of coming to light, and in the process Kiera loses them both for a time.

From Love and Trust to Guilt and Separation

Love and trust walk hand in hand. One cannot survive without the other. Kiera trusts Denny to look out for her when she leaves her family behind to join him in Seattle. It is part of why she feels so betrayed when he accepts the challenge of setting up a new office for his firm. Denny leaves anyway, trusting Kellan to look after Kiera. Kiera in return trusts Kellan to keep her from harm while Denny is gone, and to act as a surrogate boyfriend when her loneliness overcomes her sense of reason. Kellan has never trusted anyone where love was concerned; having grown up in a home with an abusive father and learned that love can be painful at an early age. His bond with Denny originates from an incident when as an exchange student in their home, Denny steps between Kellan and his father. Kellan trusts Denny from that moment forward, loving him like a brother. Despite the bond, when Denny leaves he pulls Kellan to one side and makes him promise that he won't sleep with Kiera. The relationship between Kellan and Kiera finally becomes so intense that neither can deny it.

Kiera is still bound to Denny, however. When he returns, choosing her over his job, she decides her feelings for Kellan are a mistake. Kellan doesn't feel that way. While massaging a certain amount of guilt over the way he feels for his best friend, Kellan backs off accepting the choice Kiera makes. He surrounds himself with meaningless



encounters and avoids his roommates, but Kiera is unable to stay away. She misses his touch, his smile, and his warmth despite Denny's presence. She even makes her way into his bed after Denny is asleep. Kellan loves her and struggles with her decision of Denny over him. He lives for every moment that they can steal. Finally, the sneaking around is too much for him, and he cuts Kiera loose. The one thing his love for her won't abide is sharing her with Denny. When Denny finally realizes that there is more to Kiera and Kellan's relationship than merely friendship, he sets them up and catches them. Ironically, he witnesses their goodbye, but he doesn't realize it. He follows it with a goodbye of his own. Kiera finds herself alone, having lost both men she loved so deeply.



Styles

Point of View

Thoughtless by S.C. Stephens is a story about a young woman who follows her first love to Seattle where his dream job is waiting for him. Told entirely in the first person from Kiera Allen's perspective, this story follows her as she leaves her family in Ohio to be with Denny. They drive to Seattle where Denny has already made arrangements for them to stay with his friend and surrogate brother, Kellan Kyle. Kiera isn't thrilled about the length of time it takes to drive there, but Denny makes it fun. Once they get to Seattle, they get directions to Pete's which is where Kellan and his band, the D-bags, are playing. They pick up house keys from the bouncer, Sam. They don't stay long, but Kiera's first impression of Kellan is that he is beyond gorgeous, and her first thoughts where the band is concerned is that they are surprisingly good. At the house, Denny and Kiera enjoy some time alone, and in the morning, Kiera officially meets Kellan. Kiera and Denny present something new for Kellan. Their relationship is warm, loving and happy – all things that he has never experienced either by watching her parents or through his own relationships. The more he sees of them together, the more intrigued he is. When Denny is asked by his boss to go to Colorado to help set up a new office, he is thrilled. It is a great opportunity for him, and though Kiera will miss him, she understands. He is supposed to be gone for two weeks, longer than they have ever been apart. Loneliness eats at her, and she finds solace in the company of her new roommate who takes her out, spends time with her at home when she needs it, and assures her that everything will be fine. What begins as harmless flirting becomes the most intense love affair that either Kellan or Kiera will ever know.

Language and Meaning

Thoughtless is written in regular, modern English, taking place mostly in Seattle, Washington. Of the three main characters, one of them, Denny Harris, is from Australia. The author, S.C. Stephens does a good job of blending some of the Australian sayings and quips into the dialog, without crowding so much in that it overwhelms the story or the other characters. Phrases such as "She'll be apples", meaning 'It'll be easy,' or "Ripper! Pash a bloke before joining him for a grog then, Sheila?" are peppered here and there throughout the story. Their meanings are usually clear enough but those that aren't, such as "Figjam" which is supposed to describe Kellan and the first impression he can sometimes make, although Denny quickly adds that Kellan isn't really one come with this kind of built in explanation. The term 'mate' is used a little more frequently as a combination of a term of endearment between good friends, and implies trust and equality. Stephens refers to Denny's accent several times, adding that it is an automatic lure for many women, and commenting on the fact that with an accent such as Denny's, many people tend to adopt or copy it when they are talking to him. This is something that Kellan never does to his credit, although he uses the term mate to refer to Denny even after their fight over Kiera.

Structure

Thoughtless by S.C. Stephens is four hundred and fifty four pages in length and is divided into twenty-six chapters that range in length from thirteen to twenty three pages with an overall average of seventeen pages in length. The chapters are each labelled with a number and name. The name reveals the most critical aspect or important segment of the chapter itself. For example, Chapter 1 is titled 'Meetings' and deals with Kiera and Denny's arrival in Seattle and the meeting of their new roommate and his band members, the D-Bags. Chapter 2 is called D-Bags, and it goes into some description and insight into the band. All chapters continue along the same vein where most of the titles are self explanatory.



Quotes

Anyway, I'd do anything for the guy, so when he called and said he needed a place to stay, it was the least I could do.

-- Kellan (Chapter 2 paragraph 40)

Importance: Kellan tells Kiera how Denny became like one of his own family when he stepped in to take a punch meant for Kellan from his father, and telling his father to leave Kellan alone. Kellan's gratitude is unending and this sentence reveals the depth of his feelings for his friend.

Baby, I was married and that didn't seem to faze him in the slightest.

-- Rita (Chapter 3 paragraph 133)

Importance: Rita tells Kiera that her involvement with Denny won't stop Kellan if he decides he wants her, but Kiera assures her that they are just roommates, and it would matter to her.

Ahhh, so he's traipsing about the desert and he left you home alone with hot-bod?

-- Anna (Chapter 6 paragraph 16)

Importance: Anna teases Kiera about being alone with Kellan, having seen a picture of him. She prods Kiera for more information.

Yes, I'm great.

-- Kiera (Chapter 8 paragraph 12)

Importance: These three little words, meant by Kiera as a positive thing, devastate Kellan. For her to be so happy now that Denny was back, making it seem as though what transpired between them didn't matter, is more than disappointing. Kellan is in love with her, and for one moment he dared to believe that she would be at least tormented by indecision, not eager to write it off as an unfortunate mistake that meant nothing to her.

You were the biggest mistake of my life, Kellan.

-- Kiera (Chapter 5 paragraph 21)

Importance: Kiera takes her anger with Denny out on Kellan when his smart aleck quips hit a little too close to home. The truth is that Kiera is confused. She can't quite admit to herself or to anyone else that what she feels for Kellan is ten times the intensity of what she feels for Denny.

I love you so much for putting up with your crappy job to stay here with me.

-- Kiera (Chapter 12 paragraph 19)

Importance: Since Denny left his dream job and career path to return to her when she



told him she wouldn't wait two years for him, Kiera feels a certain obligation to be there for him, to be loyal to him. This fact contributes to the guilt she feels when she spends time with Kellan.

I wasn't about to let him keep touching you like that.
-- Kellan (Chapter 13 paragraph 34)

Importance: Kellan is only partially teasing as he tells Kiera that if he can't have his hands on her than neither can anyone else. He tells her this after jumping in to rescue her from a low life who thought he was entitled to her.

I know you don't want to hear about it, but, God, last night was so unexpectedly amazing!
-- Anna (Chapter 16 paragraph 16)

Importance: Based on this statement, the fact that she and Kellan don't return until morning, and the fact that Kellan does nothing to dissuade her of the notion when she accuses him, Kiera is convinced that Kellan broke his promise to her and slept with Anna.

If you even ask him for one of those, you will be sleeping on the couch for a month.
-- Kiera (Chapter 18 paragraph 5)

Importance: Kiera is referring to a t-shirt Kellan is wearing. It is vivid red and simply said 'Will sing for sex'. The phrase is so offensive to Kiera largely because of her feelings for Kellan, that she takes her frustration and the blatant crudity of it out on Denny by telling him what the consequences will be if he ever wore one like it.

There was a time when I would have been fine with this. I would have taken any part of you that you wanted to give to me and found a way to deal with the rest...
-- Kellan (Chapter 22 paragraph 5)

Importance: Kellan is telling Kiera that he wants to be the kind of man that will be worthy of her love. It matters to him that she sees him as an honorable man – and it is the first time in his life that he's felt that way.

I wish you'd told me, Kiera... from the beginning.
-- Denny (Chapter 24 paragraph 20)

Importance: Denny talks to Kiera when she first wakes after he accidentally kicks her in the head during his fight with Kellan. He explains himself.

You were right, I was scared to let go... but I was scared to let go of him to be with you, not the other way around.
-- Kiera (Chapter 12 paragraph 88)

Importance: Kiera explains herself for the first time to Kellan, trying to make him

understand that her heart hadn't really chosen Denny in the end, She'd chosen Kellan, but her fear of the strength and depth of their feelings for each other had her terrified of choosing and then losing him once the fire burned itself out.