

Two-way Street Study Guide

Two-way Street by Lauren Barnholdt

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Plot Summary

Two Way Street is a story about Jordan and Courtney, a couple who have broken up but nevertheless still have to go on a road trip together from Florida to Boston, where they are both going to college. Courtney thinks Jordan does not care about her, but he actually still loves her. He only broke up with her to keep her from finding out that her father is having an affair. When Courtney finds out, she is furious. However, Jordan explains that he was trying to protect her from being hurt. They reach college and at first Courtney wants nothing to do with Jordan. When she realizes that he is hurting too, she finally manages to forgive him.

Courtney is annoyed that her parents are still making her go on the road trip with Jordan. She has planned out a strict schedule so that they will not have to talk to each other much. In the car, however, they are soon getting on each other's nerves, and Courtney desperately tries to pretend that she has moved on and is not upset. She eats a bad calzone to convince Jordan that nothing is wrong, but then gets food poisoning and is sick. Jordan insists on stopping at a hotel, where he does his best to look after Courtney. Meanwhile, Jordan is still in love with Courtney and trying to hide it. He broke up with her because he found out his mother is having an affair with her father, and he did not want to have to tell her. He could not be with her while keeping such a big secret from her. Courtney's father has also been threatening and manipulating Jordan into silence. He now calls Jordan constantly to check up on how the trip is going.

When Jordan broke up with her, Courtney tried to get over him by kissing her friend Lloyd. She does not have romantic feelings for Lloyd, but now Lloyd believes that they are in a relationship. Jordan and Courtney are planning to stop off at Middleton on the way where Jordan's brother and Lloyd attend college. Courtney is dreading having to tell Lloyd that she does not want to be with him. She avoids doing this on the phone, trying to make Jordan jealous by pretending that she loves Lloyd instead.

When they get to Middleton, Courtney goes to Lloyd's room. However, she realizes that she has been using Lloyd and is overwhelmed by emotion. She quickly leaves. Meanwhile, Jordan has been kicked out of his brother's room. His brother is angry that Jordan kept their mother's affair a secret. Now Courtney has also found out the truth about Jordan's fake girlfriend. Jordan is sick of the problems caused by keeping the secret and so he decides to tell Courtney the truth. However, Courtney's father calls her first and tells her everything. She is furious that Jordan lied to her and books a room at a motel so that she can be alone.

The next morning Jordan picks her up and they continue their trip. Jordan tries to apologize but Courtney will not listen. When they reach college, she shuts her door in his face. She flirts with a different guy at breakfast the next day. Jordan leaves a message on her phone to say that he is done. She angrily goes to his room to tell him that this is her decision and not his to make. She lets him explain his side of things and then somehow manages to forgive him. He persuades her to stop running from her



problems and to call Lloyd and her father back so that she can deal with how she feels about them. They kiss and decide to face the future together.

There are also flashback chapters in the story that show how Courtney and Jordan began dating after flirting at a party and how they fell in love. Jordan walks in on his mother with another man and then later finds out that the man is actually Courtney's dad. Courtney's father bullies him into keeping it secret, but the guilt of this begins to grow as Jordan falls in love with Courtney. Eventually, after she tells him she loves him on a trip to Miami, he decides that he should break up with her rather than keep lying to her, as he still does not want to hurt her with the truth.

Flashback chapters also explore Courtney's friends, B.J. and Jocelyn, as they begin hooking up and then start a relationship. They have a much more fiery relationship than Jordan and Courtney share, but although they argue more, they seem stronger because they are more open about their feelings. During the road trip, Jocelyn becomes suspicious that B.J. is seeing another girl and so she trails him in her car. He thinks he is being followed by someone who wants to hurt him, and considers calling the police. Eventually, they resolve their problem and decide to be completely honest with each other. This is how Jocelyn finds out that Jordan faked his new girlfriend and she immediately tells Courtney. B.J. and Jocelyn provide some comic relief as well as some occasional words of wisdom in the story.



Courtney - the Trip, Jordan - the Trip, Jordan - Before, and Courtney - Before

Courtney - the Trip, Jordan - the Trip, Jordan - Before, and Courtney - Before Summary

Courtney and Jordan are going on a road trip together to college, which was planned before Jordan broke up with her. The story alternates between their different points of view, exploring how the couple met and began dating, and what split them up. Jordan reveals that he found out his mother was having an affair with Courtney's dad, but he kept this secret from Courtney. His guilt caused him to break up with her. During the trip, Courtney finds out the truth and is extremely angry. Jordan tries to make up with her, but it is not until they reach college that Courtney is able to forgive him.

Courtney arranges a three-day road trip to college with her boyfriend Jordan, but now Jordan has broken up with her. He is dating a new girl who he met on MySpace. Courtney's parents are insisting that she still go on the trip, so that she will learn that decisions have consequences.

Jordan arrives in his TrailBlazer and Courtney tells him off for being late. She has planned the itinerary for the trip in detail and is annoyed that Jordan does not appear to care about sticking to it. Jordan loads all Courtney's things into his car. He gets a call from his friend B.J. who tells him some gossip from a party the night before, that Courtney is now dating a boy called Lloyd. Courtney has been friends with Lloyd for a long time and used to have a big crush on him.

Courtney's father says goodbye to them and makes sure Jordan intends to remain quiet. It is obvious that he has a secret he wants to keep from Courtney, which Jordan knows. Jordan explains that this is the reason he broke up with Courtney, and that the MySpace girl does not actually exist.

The author switches to the past to show how Jordan first became interested in Courtney. They both attend the same party where Jordan is trying to hook up with a cheerleader called Madison. He doesn't want to seem desperate and so looks around for another girl to dance with. He sees B.J. hanging on to Courtney's leg. B.J. is very drunk and coming on to Courtney.

Meanwhile, Courtney has decided that tonight she will tell Lloyd she loves him. Unfortunately, she gets left alone at the party and ends up with B.J. hanging on to her leg. Jordan comes to her rescue and gets B.J. to leave. He talks to Courtney and then asks her to dance.



Courtney - the Trip, Jordan - the Trip, Jordan - Before, and Courtney - Before Analysis

These first chapters introduce the characters and set up the situation between them. Courtney is a generally quiet girl, who can come across as shy but does not see herself this way. She explains that she just does not like to speak until she is sure the other person wants a conversation too. She is therefore not very outgoing, and prefers to stick to a small circle of friends. She seems a little unsure of herself and self-conscious at points too, such as when she is afraid to make a fool of herself by dancing. She had a crush on a boy called Lloyd for a very long time, but has always been too afraid to tell him so. She does not like to take risks and was worried she might ruin their friendship. Courtney also seems to be a very organized and responsible girl. She likes to have things planned out and is not very spontaneous. She has planned out the trip with a strict itinerary and is annoyed with Jordan for messing it up. It is clear that she likes to be in control and that this is her way of coping with difficult or upsetting situations. The idea of change or unexpected events scares her a little.

In these ways she is very different from Jordan, who comes across as a very self-assured, confident, and outgoing guy. He is not as organized as Courtney, preferring to take things as they come and be a little more spontaneous. He understands that he cannot control everything, and finds the fun in this rather than letting it make him anxious. He is not as reliable as Courtney, is often late, leaves things until the last minute, and seems to be a little spoiled by his parents. At the party he is very focused on hooking up with Madison, and obviously has sex on the brain. He seems to be one of the popular crowd, and Courtney is surprised that he is even talking to her. Jordan is the kind of person who wants to stand out in a crowd and naturally wants to dance at a party. Courtney is the kind of person who is happy to stand in a corner and not draw too much attention to herself. However, she also does not want to look like a loner and would prefer to have someone to talk to. She is just as concerned about her image as Jordan, but in a different way. Courtney does not want to appear pathetic, clumsy or laughable, but also does not want to be the centre of attention. Jordan wants to appear cool and suave, and he wants people to admire him. He plays mind games with people in order to make himself seem better or more important than them. He talks to Courtney because he wants Madison to think that he is popular and desired. He also wants to show that he is not desperate for her attention. He wants to make her approach him rather than the other way around.

These are the kind of games he has to play if he wants to score with a particular kind of girl, like Madison, and so this is what he is used to when dealing with girls. However, when he talks to Courtney, she does not seem to be playing along. She is a little too shy or introverted to flirt with him, and refuses his offer to dance. This intrigues him, and he soon manages to manipulate her into dancing with him. It is also significant that he does not play the same games with her either. At first he pretends not to remember her name, but when she seems surprised at this, he confesses that he does remember her, and was just trying to seem cool. She laughs at this, and he laughs with her. Already, he is able to be much more natural and honest with her than he is with other girls. She also



seems interested in him. She is pleased that he is talking to her and does not want him to leave. She is flattered that a popular boy like him would come over to her, and grateful that he got rid of B.J. However, both of them are too focused on other people at this point to realize their attraction to each other. Jordan is still intent on hooking up with Madison, and is still playing games with her. Courtney is still focused on the idea of being with Lloyd. This sets up an intriguing question as to how two such different people, who are both determined to be with other people, manage to get together.

In the present, however, things are very different. Jordan and Courtney have been together and have broken up. It is clear that they meant a lot to each other, as they appear to know each other very well and to miss a lot about their relationship. Courtney is clearly not over Jordan yet and still wishes she could be with him. She is trying to be an independent and strong woman like the magazines tell her to be, but she spends too much time thinking about Jordan and wondering what he is thinking of her. She obsesses over small details, such as the exact wording to use in an email to him, and how she cannot pick a fight with him or he will know that she still cares. For the sake of her pride she wants to convince him that she is completely over him, as he seems to have moved on from her, but she cannot help snapping at him about the itinerary. By trying to convince him that she does not care, she is also perhaps trying to win him back. She wants to show him that she is strong and unavailable so that he will want her again. This is backed up by the fact that she is wearing sexy clothes, which we know from the chapters describing the party is not a normal thing for her to do. Even Jordan notices this and wonders if she is doing it on purpose to torture him. Courtney's reactions are all based on the belief that Jordan does not want her anymore, but in actual fact Jordan does still care a lot. He made up the MySpace girl for an excuse to break up with her, and is obviously keeping a secret for Courtney's dad. He explains that this is what made him break up with Courtney, and that he is bitter because he wishes he could still be with her. The reader is left wondering what this secret could be and why it caused their break up. The author creates a mystery here to hook the readers and draw them through the story.



Courtney - the Trip, Jordan - Before, Courtney - Before, and Courtney - the Trip

Courtney - the Trip, Jordan - Before, Courtney - Before, and Courtney - the Trip Summary

As Courtney and Jordan begin their journey, Courtney thinks about what his new girlfriend might be like. She then gets a phone call from Lloyd, which is awkward because she cannot talk about Jordan while he is in the car with her. She thinks about how she ended up kissing Lloyd, hoping that it would help her to get over Jordan. It was not how she imagined, and only made her miss Jordan more.

They stop for food and Courtney buys a sausage calzone. It's disgusting and she upsets herself thinking about Jordan's girlfriend and is no longer hungry. However, she forces herself to eat it so that Jordan will not think anything is wrong. Jordan tells her that there is a message on her MySpace page from Lloyd that suggests they are now together. Although Courtney does not actually want to be with Lloyd, she lies to Jordan that they are together. She then hurries to the bathroom and calls Jocelyn, asking her to read the message on her MySpace page. It is obvious from Lloyd's message that he thinks he and Courtney are an item now too. Courtney will be seeing him soon, as they are planning to stop off at his college on the way so that Jordan can see his brother. Now Courtney will have to explain to Lloyd that she does not want to be with him. Suddenly, she throws up all over the floor.

In the flashback chapters, Jordan is at the party dancing with Courtney. He is flirting with her when Lloyd comes up and looks annoyed. Jordan asks for Courtney's number, which she gives him. He then goes to find Madison, and finds B.J. instead, who tells him that Madison has left for another party. Jordan intends to take B.J. home, as he is very drunk, and then head to the party to find Madison. He decides to stop off at his house to reapply cologne, and walks in on his mother with another man. He is shocked and leaves. After that however, he is too upset to chase after Madison and calls Courtney instead.

Courtney left the party with Lloyd but another girl flirted with him and he dropped Courtney off at home first. She decided not to tell him how she feels after all. She is looking at Jordan's MySpace page when he calls to invite her out for breakfast. They go for pancakes, then Jordan suggests going to Wal-Mart but Courtney tells him to take her home instead as it is very late.



Courtney - the Trip, Jordan - Before, Courtney - Before, and Courtney - the Trip Analysis

Courtney is getting caught up in her own games too much. She is trying to convince Jordan that she is over him and not still in love with him, while at the same time trying to make him jealous. She attempts to act nonchalantly about his girlfriend, when really it is making her feel sick to think of them together. She forces down disgusting food so that Jordan will not think anything is wrong. She is so afraid to show any vulnerability that she physically makes herself ill. She even tells Jordan that she and Lloyd are an item when she is actually worried about how to tell Lloyd that they are not. She is getting herself into a very confusing, stressful and upsetting situation. Things will only get worse for her until she is able to be honest with Jordan and Lloyd, and most of all with herself, about her real feelings. She is still hurting over Jordan breaking up with her, and she needs to realize that it is okay to admit this. Only then will she be able to start trying to move on. It is not fair to herself or to Lloyd to pretend, and she is only hurting herself by feeling the constant need to put on some kind of performance for Jordan. This is especially true as the reader can see that her behavior is not having the desired effect on Jordan, who is at best simply confused by it. The author shows that the kind of games boys and girls play with each other are really very silly, and that honesty is the best course.

This message is reinforced in the flashback sections, in which Courtney and Jordan's initial attraction to each other seems much more simple and honest. Jordan's behavior towards Courtney is different from the kind that he has with other girls because he does not seem to feel the need to play games with her. He goes to her when he is upset, because he needs a friend and someone to talk to. He is not after sex as he was with Madison, and so when he wants comfort he does not even consider finding Madison. This shows that right from the beginning he saw Courtney as different, as someone that he could have a more meaningful relationship with. He shows that he has noticed her and he is not afraid to tell her so, pointing out how she likes to text in math class instead of listening to the lesson. She also does not try to play games with him, instead talking naturally to him and being honest when she wants to go home. The fact that Jordan wants to make their 'date' last longer by going to Wal-Mart shows how much he likes her company, especially while he is in pain. Although he doesn't tell her what has upset him, her company is enough to help him feel better. The reader can begin to see why these two meant so much to each other. This means that the reader can better understand their actions during the road trip, and can be more invested in their relationship.



Courtney - Before, Jordan - Before, Jordan - the Trip, Courtney - the Trip

Courtney - Before, Jordan - Before, Jordan - the Trip, Courtney - the Trip Summary

In the flashback chapters, Jocelyn tries to warn Courtney not to fall for Jordan as she thinks he is a player. Jocelyn then tells Courtney that she hooked up with B.J. after the party. Meanwhile, Jordan thinks Courtney is deliberately ignoring him and is annoyed and intrigued at the same time. He runs after her after their math class and asks her if she wants to get food. They go to Taco Bell and then to Barnes and Noble, where Courtney teases Jordan about liking the reality show Laguna Beach. He gets a phone call from B.J. who is upset that Jocelyn is ignoring him. While he talks to B.J., Jordan thinks about how attracted to Courtney he is. She buys a box set of Laguna Beach to give it a chance and they leave. Half an hour later, they are kissing in his car.

In the present, on the trip, Jordan comes running when he sees Courtney getting sick. He helps her into the bathroom where she throws up in the sink for awhile. He then helps her back out to the truck where she has some water. Courtney's dad calls to check up and Jordan is annoyed because he's been ringing a lot.

After they keep having to pull the car over to let Courtney be sick, Jordan makes the decision to stop at a motel. He gets one room as he says she is too sick to be on her own, but makes sure there are two beds. Courtney calls Jocelyn, who is currently stalking B.J. because she is worried that he is cheating on her. Courtney tries to talk her out of it but she won't listen. Courtney says goodbye, then settles on one of the beds, and is soon asleep. She wakes up at 4 a.m. to find Jordan is asleep next to her with his arms round her.

Courtney - Before, Jordan - Before, Jordan - the Trip, Courtney - the Trip Analysis

These chapters are all about playing games and second-guessing. In the flashback chapters, Courtney wonders if Jordan is ignoring her on purpose to make her want him or whether he is just not interested. She pretends that she is not interested in Jordan when Jocelyn questions her about it, but Courtney is fooling herself, as she is secretly hoping he calls. Jordan is also wondering whether Courtney is ignoring him on purpose, assuming that she is playing some kind of game. Actually, Courtney is worried that Jordan is the one playing the games, and so does not follow things up with him in case he either rejects her or turns out to be a womanizer. Meanwhile, Jocelyn and B.J. both obviously like each other, but both are too scared of how they might look if they pursue the other further. This leads to both of them ignoring each other. Everyone is so



concerned about what games the other might be playing, and worried about getting hurt, that they constantly lie to each other and to themselves. They are always careful not to reveal their true feelings as this would make them vulnerable and cause them to lose the upper hand. This leads to a lot of confusion and misinterpreted feelings.

Jordan finds that Courtney's resistance drives him mad. He is annoyed with her and intrigued by her at the same time. He is so used to girls playing games that he does not know how to read Courtney. He thinks that girls should fall at his feet and that she should be pursuing him. This is what has happened to him in the past, especially with less popular girls like Courtney. He expected her to talk to him and possibly stalk him, and was preparing ways to avoid her. It came as a shock when he was the one being ignored. He even tells Courtney that other girls do sometimes ignore him, but always on purpose to make him think that they are not that into him because they really are. Courtney does not play these games; she ignores him simply because she isn't paying attention to him. Her more honest approach, as well as the hit his pride takes, is good for him. It forces him to see Courtney as a more genuine girl from those he is used to dating and this makes him appreciate her more. He still tries to fool himself that he does not find her attractive and that he is not on a date with her, but he is fighting a losing battle. He knows he likes her and soon he is kissing her.

In the present, Jordan still knows how much Courtney means to him, but is lying to her in order to protect her from some big secret that her father is keeping. This seems like Jordan is back to his old behavior of keeping things hidden and second guessing people when he should just be honest instead. Courtney is also desperately trying to hide her own feelings, even when she needs Jordan to lean on. Her sickness forces her to show some of her vulnerability, however, and she wakes up with Jordan's arms around her. The pair can lie to themselves as much as they like, but their hearts know the truth, and in sleep their real feelings are revealed.

Jocelyn is also playing games in the present. She suspects that B.J. may be cheating on her because she saw a girl's message to him on his MySpace page. Now she is trailing him in her car, watching to see where he goes and what he does. Courtney points out that this is slightly insane, and suggests just asking B.J. for the truth. Jocelyn does not want to do this because then he will think she doesn't trust him. Courtney points out that she obviously doesn't trust him, as she is currently stalking him to see where he goes. However, the point of what Jocelyn is doing is to stalk B.J. without giving away that she doesn't trust him. She is afraid to admit this insecurity and to show vulnerability, as it will give B.J. the upper hand and may upset him. This is a case where honesty would be much better, and it would be much easier to address the problem by having a mature and adult conversation about it, rather than lying and hiding. This kind of game playing can only lead to problems, as Jocelyn will find out later. There is not enough honesty and trust between partners, something that will become an important theme in this story.



Jordan - Before, Courtney - the Trip, Courtney - Before, Jordan - Before

Jordan - Before, Courtney - the Trip, Courtney - Before, Jordan - Before Summary

Courtney is horrified to find that she has been sleeping entangled up with Jordan. She pushes him off her and goes to the bathroom. She calls Lloyd to leave a message on his answer phone, but is surprised when he answers. He is annoyed that she is sharing a room with Jordan, but she lies that there was only one room left. He asks if she is okay and she assures him she is, and they say goodbye. Courtney lies down on the other bed from Jordan and goes back to sleep.

In the flashback chapters, Jordan kisses Courtney, then says goodbye for the day. He goes home and confronts his mother about her affair, and she begs him not to tell his father until she has had a chance to talk to him. He says he's not getting involved, and goes to his room.

Jocelyn talks to Courtney at school and tries to warn her about getting too attached to Jordan. Jocelyn thinks Jordan will only hurt Courtney. However, Courtney is already emotionally attached and is spending most of her free time with Jordan.

Meanwhile, Jordan is also getting emotionally attached. When Courtney asks him where their make-out sessions are going, he tells her that he wants to be her boyfriend. Just then, Courtney's dad comes home from a business trip and Jordan meets him for the first time. He is shocked to see that her dad is the same man he caught with his mother.

Jordan discusses this with B.J., who recommends not telling Courtney yet. Then, when Jordan is surer of how things are going with them, and with his mom and Courtney's dad, he can decide whether to tell Courtney the truth or not.

Jordan - Before, Courtney - the Trip, Courtney - Before, Jordan - Before Analysis

It is ironic that Jocelyn warns Courtney about getting emotionally attached to Jordan in the flashback chapters. She tells Courtney that Jordan is not emotionally attached to her and that he will only end up hurting her. To Courtney, it must seem as though this prediction has come true. However, Jordan is very emotionally attached, and he is hurting too. In fact, the very next line in the next chapter refers to Jordan being emotionally attached. Jocelyn is adamant that she will not make a similar mistake with B.J., yet in the present she is stalking him because she is so emotionally attached to him. Not only this, but Courtney has caused Lloyd to become emotionally attached to her, and is now lying to him while figuring out how she is going to break up with him. In



the flashback chapters, both Jocelyn and Jordan insist that emotional attachments are messy, and only lead to disaster. Given the evidence from the book so far, it would seem that they are correct. Both Jordan and Courtney are suffering; Lloyd has heartbreak on its way; Jocelyn is worried that B.J. is cheating; and everyone is lying to everyone else. At this stage of the story, a very cynical view of love is presented. It seems that romantic relationships just upset and hurt people or drive them to crazy behavior.

Jordan's character and attitude to life are explored further here. His attitude seems to be what causes most of his problems. He allows himself to be a little vulnerable with Courtney and admit that he wants a relationship with her, but he does not tell her the extent of his feelings. He also does not tell Courtney the truth about her father because he does not know if they will stay together long. He does not want to have to deal with this awkward situation if he doesn't have to. He also wants to protect Courtney from pain, not seeming to realize that it will hurt her more to have the truth kept from her, and that he owes it to her to tell her. He comes across as very lazy and selfish here, as he is only worried about how this situation makes things more difficult for him. He says that his philosophy in life is denial and avoidance, and this certainly does seem to sum up his behavior. He does not want to deal with this secret, and so avoids telling Courtney or his own father the truth. Even on the road trip in the present, Jordan is still denying and avoiding in every way he can. He has made up a fake girlfriend in order to break up with Courtney more easily, and so that he will not have to deal with her being mad at him because of the truth. He has picked the easiest way out and tried to convince himself that it is better for Courtney. He also seems to be denying and avoiding their awkward situation in the car, pretending he is friends with Courtney and that there is nothing wrong between them. He wants the road trip to be pleasant and cannot face dealing with messy emotions. He is a coward, and needs to learn to deal with problems head on instead of avoiding them. He also needs to learn the vital lesson that honesty is always the best strategy. Although Jordan is a sympathetic character, he comes across as quite unappealing in these chapters.



Jordan - the Trip, Jordan - Before, Jordan - Before, Courtney - Before

Jordan - the Trip, Jordan - Before, Jordan - Before, Courtney - Before Summary

Jordan is annoyed that Courtney has gotten dressed up for Lloyd and he cannot help thinking about them together. When his phone rings he pretends it is his girlfriend, hoping to make Courtney jealous. It is actually B.J. on the phone. B.J. tells Jordan that someone is following him and that he's scared it might be a gang intending to hurt him over some pot they bought a long time ago. Jordan suggests calling the police. When he hangs up, Courtney asks what's wrong and Jordan tells her that B.J. is being followed and will probably call the cops. Courtney asks Jordan to stop for food.

In the flashback chapters, Jordan is having dinner with Courtney and her father. Courtney's dad is acting like nothing is wrong, and they discuss how Courtney and Jordan are going to the same college. They then discuss the trip to Miami that Courtney, Jordan, Jocelyn and B.J. will be going on this summer. When Courtney goes to the bathroom, however, Courtney's dad drops his friendly act and tells Jordan that he cannot tell Courtney about the affair. He threatens Jordan, and tells him that if he tells Courtney the truth now, she will hate him for keeping it a secret from her this long. Jordan assures him that he is not going to tell Courtney.

At school, Jordan tells B.J. that he loves Courtney. B.J. tells him that he has to tell Courtney the truth about her dad, but Jordan is afraid to, and freaked out by Courtney's dad's behavior. Meanwhile, Jocelyn tells Courtney that she has had sex with B.J. Courtney then admits that she loves Jordan and plans on having sex with him on the Miami trip.

Jordan - the Trip, Jordan - Before, Jordan - Before, Courtney - Before Analysis

These chapters highlight the crazy problems that can arise from dishonesty and distrust. Jordan is annoyed that Courtney appears to be dressing up for Lloyd. She keeps looking at herself in the mirror and asking Jordan how her hair looks. This is probably partly an attempt to make Jordan jealous, but the reader knows that it is also because she is very nervous. She is actually dreading seeing Lloyd, not excited about it as Jordan assumes. In turn, Jordan tries to make Courtney jealous by pretending to talk to his fake girlfriend on the phone. Courtney pretends not to care, but the reader knows how much she does. The reader has seen before how Courtney has used music, or rummaging in her bag, as an excuse to appear uninterested in Jordan when she thinks he is talking to his girlfriend. Now Jordan suspects she might only be pretending to



listen to her music so that she can actually listen to the conversation. From Courtney's earlier behavior, this does seem likely. Nevertheless, Courtney pretends that she cannot hear Jordan, even when he asks her to pass him his headset. He cannot plug the phone into the car speakers as then Courtney will know that he has been talking to B.J. the whole time. Both of them are pretending and lying so hard, they almost cause themselves to have a car accident. Meanwhile, B.J. thinks he is being followed by someone who wants to hurt him, but the reader knows it is actually just Jocelyn, who wants to pretend she trusts him even when she does not. Because of this, she could end up being arrested by the police. All of this shows how crazy people can be when they are playing games with each other or trying to hide things from each other, and how dishonesty can lead to all kinds of problems. The heavy use of dramatic irony, in which the reader knows what everyone is feeling but the characters do not, helps to highlight this message, as well as adding humor.

In the flashback chapters, the reader learns what caused Jordan's misguided plan not to tell Courtney the truth. He realizes that he loves Courtney and is now desperately afraid to lose her. He knows that if he admits the truth now, she will hate him for keeping it from her for so long. He is confused and does not know what the best course of action would be, and so allows himself to be manipulated by Courtney's father. Both of these men are afraid to tell Courtney the truth because they do not want to lose her. They are both pretending it is for her own good, but both of them are thinking about themselves rather than her. Courtney's dad even threatens Jordan into silence, although the reader can see that Jordan does not need much persuasion. He does not like to deal with difficult situations and has already decided it would be easier not to tell her the truth. Courtney's father certainly does not seem to be thinking about his daughter when he threatens her boyfriend to make him keep secrets from her. The two most important men in Courtney's life are letting her down here, and this makes the reader feel very sorry for her, as well as very exasperated with Jordan.

The reader knows that Courtney and Jordan are both in love, as seeing events from both points of view allows insight into how all the characters are feeling. Courtney and Jordan do not yet know how the other feels, and this is frustrating for the reader as they can see that both are too scared to admit their feelings. The reader also knows, from reading the sections of the story set during the trip, that the secret Jordan has is going to split them up. The reader knows how much they will both be hurt, and the kinds of messed up behavior that it will lead to on the road trip. It is amazing that what started as such a small secret has blown so out of proportion. Courtney and Jordan are both in love, and yet this secret will end their relationship. This is what happens when someone does not tell the truth; the situation escalates until something very bad comes of it. If Jordan had been honest from the start, all this could have been avoided. Jordan sees this himself, but now he is in too deep, and he believes that there is no way out of the situation. He continues keeping the secret, thinking this is the best way to deal with it, when really it will only make matters worse.

Understanding the past through reading these flashback chapters helps the reader to understand why Jordan and Courtney behave as they do in the present. There were such strong feelings between them, but at the same time there has always been a huge

secret driving a gulf between them. There has always been dishonesty, and Jordan has always been holding something back. They both love each other, but neither ever really understood the way the other felt. The reader can see why both of them are hurting so much now, and why they are acting in the slightly childish ways that we have seen so far.



Courtney - the Trip, Jordan - the Trip, Courtney - Before, and Jordan - Before

Courtney - the Trip, Jordan - the Trip, Courtney - Before, and Jordan - Before Summary

Jordan and Courtney stop for food and Jordan goes inside to order. Courtney rings Jocelyn and tells her that B.J. knows he's being followed and is thinking of calling the police. Jordan gets back with the food, and Courtney tries to nonchalantly suggest that he tell B.J. not to call the police. She then tries to convince Jordan that it might be a good idea not to stop at Middleton to see Lloyd and his brother after all, as their schedule has been thrown a little off track. Jordan does not agree, however.

Lloyd rings Courtney and seems a little jealous of Jordan. She reassures him that she is not having a good time on the trip. When the call is done, Jordan asks her if she's really not having a good time, and says he would like to be friends. She realizes that she does not want this, as she wants to be his girlfriend or nothing. She then opens up her burger and sees that Jordan has remembered the cheese, something he usually forgets. She is suddenly overwhelmed by all the little things she loves about him that are no longer 'hers,' and bursts into tears.

Jordan waits for Courtney, who has run to the bathroom in tears. He calls B.J. and tells him that he thinks it is Jocelyn who is following him, since Courtney's questions about it were suspicious.

In the flashback chapters, Courtney, Jordan, Jocelyn, and B.J. are in Miami on their summer trip. They are all going out, but Jocelyn and B.J. get into a big fight and Courtney and Jordan decide to slip away and leave them to it. They go to the beach, and Courtney tells him that she is ready to sleep with him. She then says that she loves him, and Jordan cannot say it back even though he loves her too. He feels like it would be wrong while he is keeping a big secret from her. He simply says 'thanks,' and then looks away before he can see the look on her face. They go back to the house.

Courtney - the Trip, Jordan - the Trip, Courtney - Before, and Jordan - Before Analysis

Courtney remembers all the little things about Jordan that she noticed when they were together and these make her feel very sad. Jordan does the same, showing how close they both were and how well they really know each other. She knows when Jordan is annoyed and doesn't want to admit it because he will feel as though he has somehow lost if he does. He knows when she is upset and pretending not to be. Throughout the trip they have often picked up on each other's behavior and known when the other is



messing with them or trying to make them jealous. Courtney remembers how Jordan likes honey and mustard sauce, even though she thinks it is disgusting, and how he always forgets to put cheese in her burger. She becomes overwhelmed with this, realizing that she will no longer be able to think of any of these things as 'hers' anymore. These little things remind her of all the times she spent with Jordan and all the things that made her love him, even if they irritated her at the time. They are part of him and so all these little things make up the person that she loves. This makes her very sad. This is why when she realizes that he has actually remembered the cheese for the first time that she bursts into tears. She is already emotional thinking about the break-up, and has been desperately holding her feelings inside so that Jordan does not see, which only makes her feel worse. This finally pushes her over the edge. This is some very accurate psychology from the author, as when people are separated from the ones they love, it is often these funny little things that they pick up on and miss.

In the flashback chapters, love is beginning to come into both Jordan and Courtney's, and Jocelyn and B.J.'s relationships. This is making it harder to keep secrets, and harder to 'separate the emotional from the physical' as Jocelyn lectured Courtney about doing. It is ironic that Jocelyn claimed her own relationship is so free from this problem, as in these chapters it is clear that Jocelyn and B.J.'s relationship is extremely emotional and fiery. They are constantly arguing because they care about each other so much, and because their emotions are always running so high. They are both very tempestuous and impulsive people. However, although it is Jocelyn and B.J. who always seem to be fighting, it is Jordan and Courtney who break up over the trip to Miami. Courtney tells Jordan that she loves him, and Jordan does not dare say it back, even though he does feel it. He feels too guilty, now that things are getting so serious and Courtney clearly trusts him so much. He feels as though he does not deserve her, as he has been keeping a secret from her all this time. Instead of being honest, he simply avoids the situation again, which is Jordan's primary tactic when things get difficult. He does not respond, leaving Courtney feeling as though she has pushed things too far and been rejected. This is a very cruel and hurtful thing for Jordan to do to her, and once again he shows himself to be a bit of a coward in difficult situations.

In earlier chapters, it was Jordan and Jocelyn who insisted that the emotions should be separated from the physical in order to enjoy a relationship free from pain and problems. Now Jordan finds that it is impossible to separate the emotional and the physical, just as Jocelyn has found this out too. However, although it is Jocelyn and B.J. who seem to have a less stable relationship, it is their relationship that survives. This is because theirs is based more on truth, despite Courtney thinking the opposite. B.J. and Jocelyn will tell each other when they have a problem, and when they suspect something or disapprove of something they will come right out and say it. This is what leads to such dramatic fights. Courtney thinks that her relationship is going well, and that it is open and honest, but Jordan has actually been keeping a large secret from her all this time. This has driven a rift between them that only Jordan knows about. This is why, in the end, Jocelyn and B.J.'s relationship lasts where Jordan and Courtney's does not. This is doubly ironic, as in the chapters set in the present, Jocelyn seems to be sacrificing all this by spying on B.J. without him knowing, instead of simply talking to him about her worries and issues. This is what the old Jocelyn would have done, and it is a

shame that secrecy, game-playing and second-guessing have found their way into their relationship too.



Courtney - the Trip, Jordan - the Trip, Courtney - the Trip and Jordan - the Trip

Courtney - the Trip, Jordan - the Trip, Courtney - the Trip and Jordan - the Trip Summary

Courtney is crying in the Burger King bathrooms when Jordan calls through to see if she is okay. She comes out, and tells him that she is just upset because she hasn't seen Lloyd for awhile. Jordan points out that it has only been two days, and she lies that it seems like longer because she is in love with Lloyd.

As they are driving, Courtney gets a phone call from Jocelyn, who tells her that B.J. caught her stalking him and that they have had a big talk about everything, being completely honest with each other. She is happy because he was not sneaking off to see Katelyn, but she did also learn a secret that she needs to tell Courtney. She tells her that Jordan made up the MySpace girl. Courtney is now upset because she thinks Jordan needed an excuse to break up with her simply because he does not love her.

They arrive at Middleton. Jordan leaves Courtney to go to his brother's room, telling her he will meet her in the car park tomorrow. He goes to see his brother, Adam, but Adam is not pleased to see him. He yells at Jordan for not telling him about their mother's affair, and for not telling their father. Now their mother is leaving their father for Courtney's dad. Adam slams the door in Jordan's face, and Jordan is forced to leave.

Courtney goes to Lloyd's room and sits with him awkwardly. He kisses her and then tells her that he realizes now that he has had feelings for her for a long time. She is suddenly overwhelmed by how wrong everything feels and tells him that she can't do this. She leaves, and goes back to the car park in the hope that she can find Jordan and persuade him to let her stay the night in his brother's room. However, when she gets there, Jordan has gone.

Jordan has checked into a motel. He calls B.J., who admits that he told Jocelyn that Jordan made up the MySpace girl. Jordan knows that Jocelyn will have told Courtney. He gets a call from Courtney's father to check in, and shouts down the line that it is over and that he is not keeping the secret from Courtney anymore. He hangs up.

Courtney - the Trip, Jordan - the Trip, Courtney - the Trip and Jordan - the Trip Analysis

In this chapter, Courtney and Jordan's games and lies are really starting to backfire on them. Courtney ends up in a room alone with Lloyd, feeling very awkward. He clearly has feelings for her, and tells her so, and seems very excited about their relationship. Courtney just feels sad that there is nothing actually between them, and worries about



how to tell him the truth. She has used Lloyd as a means to make Jordan jealous, and has fallen into a relationship with him accidentally because she was too scared to tell him how she honestly feels. This is extremely unfair to Lloyd and very selfish of her as she never really considered his feelings before now. She ends up having to leave his room, and now has nowhere to stay. Jordan is in a similar mess, as he has been kicked out of his brother's room and has nowhere to spend the night. This is the result of the secret that he kept about Courtney's father and his mother's affair. Now his mother is leaving his father for Courtney's dad, and Jordan's brother is annoyed that Jordan knew about this and said nothing. If he had told his father, he might have been able to spare all of them a lot of pain and feelings of betrayal, as the situation would have been resolved sooner instead of dragging on for months. Jordan's brother is angry because Jordan has been cowardly and selfish, and he knows that he deserves this reaction. Both Jordan and Courtney are now suffering for their misguided decisions and selfish behavior.

This is contrasted with Jocelyn and B.J.'s relationship. When Jordan told B.J. that Jocelyn is the one following him, he did not try to use this information against Jocelyn, or get hurt by it. Instead, he went straight to her and had an honest conversation with her. They discussed their feelings and their relationship openly, like adults, and all their issues have now been resolved. They are now happy and their relationship is even stronger as a result. The message here is clear: trust in and be honest with those you love, and do not try to manipulate, play games with or second-guess others, as this will only lead to further problems. Honesty is always the better course over lies and pretence, as lies and secrets will always backfire in the end.

Thankfully, both Courtney and Jordan seem to have taken this lesson on board now. Jordan realizes that it would be better to tell the truth after all, as he sees how complicated things have become as a result of his lies and secrets. He sees how these only end up hurting people, especially Courtney. He tells her father that he will not keep the secret any longer and means to tell Courtney the truth. Meanwhile, Courtney has realized how selfish she has been to lead Lloyd on. She was thinking only of her own awkward feelings, and trying to make Jordan jealous. She is dismayed at her own behavior and ashamed of herself. She knows she cannot keep pretending to Lloyd, so tells him that she cannot do this anymore. It is a positive sign that both Courtney and Jordan are learning that playing games and pretending can only lead to trouble. Now that Jordan has decided to come clean, the truth can finally come out and Courtney can begin to understand everything that has happened. Only then can she begin to heal and move on.



Courtney - the Trip, Jordan - Before, Jordan - the Trip, and Jordan - Before

Courtney - the Trip, Jordan - Before, Jordan - the Trip, and Jordan - Before Summary

Courtney tries to get into Adam's building but the door is locked and no-one will let her in. She goes to the student union and buys a pink lemonade, which she drinks on a bench outside. Her dad rings, and says that he has something important to tell her.

Jordan goes to Lloyd's room to find Courtney, but she isn't there. As he is leaving, he sees her sitting on a bench and goes over to her. However, she already knows about the secret and that he kept it from her. She yells at him, tells him she is done and doesn't want anything to do with him, then walks off.

In the flashback chapters, Jordan decides to break up with Courtney, as he cannot face being with her while keeping such a big secret. He also does not want to tell her the secret and risk ruining her life. He tells her that he is not a relationship person and wants to be free to date other people. She leaves his house without saying a word.

Later, Jordan is at the mall when he runs into Courtney's dad. He lies that he has a new girlfriend now. Courtney's dad assumes that their planned road trip to Boston is not going ahead, but Jordan insists that it will. He tells Courtney's dad to make sure she still comes on the trip or he will tell the truth about his affair.

Courtney - the Trip, Jordan - Before, Jordan - the Trip, and Jordan - Before Analysis

In these chapters, the author makes use of flashback to create a parallel between the past and present. The readers see two situations in which Jordan has let Courtney down, and both times she has walked away from him. In the past, he broke up with her because he did not want to tell her his secret. She left his house in silence. Now she has found out that he kept the secret from her, and she feels completely betrayed. Not only did he feel the need to keep it from her, but he even broke up with her because of it and then lied to her, causing her a lot of grief, self-doubt and pain. He has hurt her so much worse than if he had told her the truth in the first place. The reader can see how painful the break up was for both of them, but now the situation has escalated and there is so much more behind Courtney's anger. Now she is not silent, but yells at Jordan and tells him that she is done with him. She cannot see herself ever forgiving him for this, as he has let her down in so many ways. Comparing past and present shows how much pain and trouble can come from what began as a small secret.



Jordan tried to spare Courtney pain, but ended up hurting her more. He thought he was doing the best he could for her, as he could not stay with her when he was lying to her, but he did not want to ruin her life with the truth either. Jordan may have acted a little cowardly and selfishly, but he thought he was acting in Courtney's best interests, which allows the reader to feel a little sorry for him. It is obvious that he loves Courtney a lot, and that their break up caused him a lot of pain. The reader can also see that he was confused by Courtney's father's attitude, and can understand that things spiraled out of control too quickly for him to handle. He was also hurting because of his own mother's betrayal, and her refusal to talk to him properly about it or to apologize for her behavior. Jordan is at fault, but the parents are more at fault. They should have been honest with their children from the start, and not asked Jordan to keep such a big secret for them.

Most of all, however, the reader can feel a lot of sympathy for Courtney here. She was already in a slightly fragile emotional state from everything she has been through recently, and has now found out that the two most important men in her life let her down so badly. She was already hurt by the break-up, but now knows that it was for such an appalling reason. She feels completely betrayed and cannot trust Jordan or her father again very easily. By showing the reader a flashback of Jordan talking to Courtney's father in the mall, the reader can also begin to see Courtney's dad for who he really is. Jordan tells him that he must ensure Courtney still comes on the road trip. This reminds the reader of the beginning of the story, in which Courtney is annoyed that her parents are forcing her to go on the trip. After reading Jordan's conversation with Courtney's dad in the mall, the reader sees this beginning in a new light. It was actually Jordan's insistence that made Courtney go on the trip, not her parents' idea. It was not meant to be a lesson in learning responsibility after all, but simply a desperate attempt by Courtney's father to keep his secret. At the time Courtney was grateful for how supportive her father had been about the break-up, for taking her side and saying he never liked Jordan. Now the reader knows that this was actually because he was glad to be rid of Jordan, thinking his secret would have a better chance of remaining hidden. He was being selfish, not supportive. He could see how much the break-up, which he caused, was hurting his daughter, and yet he still did not tell her the truth. This is despicable behavior, and highlights just how much he has let Courtney down. He is selfish and manipulative and poor Courtney is only just learning this now. By combining these chapters in this way, the author succeeds in making the reader feel very sorry for Courtney.



Courtney - Before, Courtney - the Trip, Jordan - the Trip, Courtney - the Trip, and Jordan - the Trip

Courtney - Before, Courtney - the Trip, Jordan - the Trip, Courtney - the Trip, and Jordan - the Trip Summary

Courtney books into a hotel and sits and thinks about everything. She decides that it would be better to carry on with the trip with Jordan so that she will get to college in time for orientation. She calls him to make sure he is still going to drive her. He wants to come and get her straight away, but she will not tell him where she is and insists that he wait until morning.

Jordan calls B.J. and tells him the situation, and B.J. points out that maybe this is all a good thing, because it means Jordan can try to get Courtney back. Courtney calls him in the morning and tells him which motel she's at, which happens to be the same one Jordan is at. He picks her up, and they continue the journey again. Courtney gets a phone call from Jocelyn, who tries to persuade her that Jordan might have believed that he had good reasons for keeping the secret, and that things are not always black and white. However, Courtney is not ready to hear his side yet, and refuses to talk to him on the trip.

They arrive at college and are greeted by one of the welcome committee. Jordan helps Courtney unpack her stuff, then tries to talk to her again. She shuts the door on him.

Courtney - Before, Courtney - the Trip, Jordan - the Trip, Courtney - the Trip, and Jordan - the Trip Analysis

Courtney is annoyed about the secret that her father and Jordan kept from her, but she seems to be more annoyed over their secrecy than upset about the actual affair. The affair is not pleasant for her to have to deal with, but it is something that does happen and that becomes easier to deal with in time. If Courtney's parents' marriage breaks down, she will cope with it and eventually learn to be okay with the new situation, and in the long run this will be better than two people who do not love each other staying together and lying to each other. However, because this secret was deliberately kept from her by her dad and by Jordan, to the extent that Jordan even broke up with her and invented a fake girlfriend so that he would not have to tell her, this makes the situation much worse. It feels to Courtney as if both men thought she could not handle



it, and treated her like a weak girl who would break down if she found out. This is what is so upsetting for Courtney, and it makes her feel as though she cannot trust either one of them ever again. She feels completely let down.

Courtney's father and Jordan think that she needs protection, but Courtney proves that she is strong and that she can take care of herself. She manages to get into the hotel even though the man at the front desk initially tries to turn her away. He tells her that he cannot let her in without seeing her I.D. but she knows that if she shows it, he will not let her in because she is not eighteen yet. She manages to persuade him by being firm. If she was a weak girl who needed others to protect her, she would have given up and called Jordan or her parents. Inside the hotel she thinks about the best way to get to college, and again decides not to call her parents but to continue with the road trip. She makes a mature decision here, based on the most sensible option, rather than giving in to her emotions and refusing to drive the rest of the way with Jordan. She appears to have learned the lesson that she needed to learn at the beginning, about taking responsibility for her actions and decisions, and sticking to the plans she has set in motion. In the flashback chapter, when her parents insist that she go on the road trip despite being upset with Jordan, she is annoyed. She calls Jocelyn, who tells her that she might learn something, and that sometimes people just have to put up with difficult situations and face them. Jocelyn's words of wisdom irritated Courtney at the time, as Courtney would rather have avoided anything painful and unpleasant. Now she appears to share Jocelyn's view, realizing that sometimes she just has to put up with difficult things to get where she wants to go. She has grown up and become more mature as a result of the road trip and the difficult truths she has had to face. Throughout everything Courtney has kept going and not broken down, proving that she is a lot stronger than others give her credit for.

When Courtney speaks to Jocelyn about Jordan keeping the secret from her, Jocelyn is sympathetic, but also tries to make Courtney calm down and see things from Jordan's point of view. Jocelyn points out that not everything is black and white and that there are often two sides to every story. She thinks Courtney should give Jordan a chance to explain. The reader knows that there are indeed two sides to the story, as the book has deliberately been presented from both points of view. Flashback chapters provide insight into why the characters behave as they do, and seeing events from different people's eyes shows how easily things can be misinterpreted. Courtney has been hurt and betrayed, but the reader has seen what led Jordan to do this. He was confused and out of his depth. He made one wrong decision that escalated out of his control, and he was manipulated by Courtney's father. He tried to do what was best for Courtney, and even though he got things very wrong, at least he had always loved her and had her best interests at heart. Whether Courtney ultimately decides she can trust him again or not, she should at least give him a chance to explain and talk to her, as Jocelyn suggests.

This is very mature and sensible advice from Jocelyn once again. The reader begins to understand that although Jocelyn can be unpredictable and impulsive, she can also be a lot more sensible and perceptive than her friend. The same is true of B.J. who often gives words of wisdom to Jordan throughout the story. It is a shame that both Courtney

and Jordan underestimate their friends as they might learn something from taking their advice now and again.



Courtney - After, Jordan - After, Courtney - After, and Courtney - After

Courtney - After, Jordan - After, Courtney - After, and Courtney - After Summary

Courtney goes to breakfast and sits at a random table. A guy called Ben tells her that she has accidentally sat down at the orientation committee's table and that she's in trouble. She realizes that he is kidding and that he's flirting with her. Jordan sees them sitting together and leaves a message on Courtney's phone to tell her that he is done and will not call her anymore.

That night Jordan goes out with his roommate and meets a girl who makes it clear that she is interested in hooking up with him. However, when he sees Courtney at the party with Ben, he realizes he does not want to be with another girl right now. He leaves the party.

Courtney gets back to her room and finds that her roommate has arrived. She is annoyed about the message Jordan left on her phone, as she feels that she is the one who should have the final say on ending their relationship. She tells her roommate that she is going to confront her ex-boyfriend.

Courtney knocks on Jordan's door and yells at him about the message he left on her phone. When one of the other students comes out of his room and tells them to keep it down, Jordan manages to persuade Courtney to come into his room. They argue a bit more, but then Courtney begins to soften and feel a little sorry for Jordan. She realizes that he is upset about his mother's affair too. He promises to handle things better in future, and they decide to face the difficulty of their parents together. They kiss, and fall asleep with Jordan holding Courtney.

The next day Courtney goes back to her room and her roommate comments that it must have gone well with her ex-boyfriend. They make plans to get breakfast together. Courtney decides to face her problems from now on, instead of running away, and calls her father first.

Courtney - After, Jordan - After, Courtney - After, and Courtney - After Analysis

Now that they are at college, both Jordan and Courtney decide to move on. Courtney meets another guy called Ben, who immediately begins flirting with her. When Jordan sees her with Ben he is annoyed and leaves a message on her phone saying that he is done. He begins flirting with another girl at a party. However, Courtney is fooling herself that the guys she is hanging out with are more mature. They seem to be taking



advantage of her freshman naivety more than anything. Jordan finds that he does not want to hook up with the girl who is interested in him, as he is still thinking about Courtney. When Courtney hears his message on her phone, he is all she can think about. Both were pretending to themselves that they would be able to move on, but both are still too wrapped up in their feelings for each other. When Courtney goes to Jordan's room, she thinks it is because she is angry with him for leaving the message. Really, she is just anxious to talk to Jordan again. It was okay when she said that things were over, but when he says that he is done, she does not like it. This seems to be because she was secretly holding out the hope that they might get back together. She is too angry to see this herself, but her heart still manages to lead her back to Jordan.

As they argue, Courtney begins to soften towards Jordan and her anger goes away. She realizes that he is upset about his own mother's affair, and that he is confused and hurting too. She thinks about what he must have gone through, having no-one to talk to about it and not being able to confide in his girlfriend. He admits that he handled the situation wrong, but assures her that he will never keep things from her like that again. She realizes that Jocelyn was right, that there are two sides to the story and that she cannot hate Jordan after all. She also realizes that she has made similar mistakes to Jordan. Neither of them deal with problems well. Jordan tries to deny and ignore them, and she runs away from them. Jordan points out that she has not even called her father or Lloyd back yet, as she does not want to deal with those difficult situations right now. Both Jordan and Courtney need to learn to face things instead of avoiding them, and now that they understand this, they can begin to do this together. They can start again, more honestly, and face their difficulties more maturely. Courtney immediately begins to do this, deciding to stop avoiding difficult decisions and start acting decisively and honestly. She chooses the most difficult conversation to face first and calls her dad. These last chapters prove how much Courtney and Jordan have changed as a result of everything they have been through in the last few days. It is clear that on their road trip from high school to college, both Courtney and Jordan have grown up significantly.



Characters

Courtney

Courtney is a teenage girl living in Florida, and is one of the main characters of the story. She has finished high school and will be attending Boston in the fall. As the story begins she is starting a road trip to college with her ex-boyfriend Jordan, who is also attending Boston. Jordan broke up with Courtney and is now dating a girl who he met on MySpace. Courtney is dreading the trip because she does not want to have to spend time with the boy she still loves, who hurt her so badly. However, her parents are forcing her to follow through with the plans she made while she and Jordan were still together, meaning this is her only way to get to college.

Courtney is a kind and friendly girl who the reader can relate to and sympathize with easily. She is often very quiet, and come can across as shy. She insists that she is not shy, but simply does not want to talk when she is not sure the other person wants to be bothered. However, despite her protest, Courtney does seem to be quite shy and insecure in some situations. She is surprised and secretly flattered when Jordan pays attention to her at the party, and even allows him to persuade her to dance, though she is initially too embarrassed. She cannot help being intrigued when Jordan asks her out for breakfast, and then when he keeps pursuing her at school. She is obviously not one of the popular crowd at school, preferring to stick to her own small circle of friends. Courtney is not the kind of girl who flirts with boys or plays games, which makes her very different from the other girls Jordan has been interested before. This intrigues him, and he begins spending more time with her. When Jordan pays attention to her it is exciting, but also makes her nervous, as she suspects that he has questionable intentions. However, she finds that she is attracted to him, and is soon starting a relationship with him. After spending time with him she falls in love, and begins to really trust him.

When Jordan breaks up with her, Courtney is devastated. She thinks that he ended things because they were getting too serious, and that he wanted to date other people. She also thinks that he has a new girlfriend who he met on MySpace. She feels like she was fooled after all, that Jordan is a typical male with questionable intentions, who dumped her when their relationship got too serious. This is incredibly hurtful, but also a little humiliating for her. She becomes intent on saving her pride by not letting him see how much he has hurt her. On the road trip she desperately pretends not to be upset, and tries to persuade Jordan that she has moved on and does not care what he does. This leads to a lot of lying and pretence, and forces her to analyze everything she does and says. This is exhausting and often confusing for Courtney. She tries to make Jordan jealous by pretending that she is in a relationship with her friend Lloyd now, but soon finds that she is leading on Lloyd and putting herself in an awkward situation because she actually feels nothing for him. She does succeed in making Jordan jealous, but Jordan is playing his own game of keeping his feelings secret, so Courtney does not know how strong an affect she is having. Poor Courtney is not quite sure what she feels



anymore; she is trying to convince Jordan that she does not miss him when in fact she is hurting deeply and desperately wants him back. She is trying to make him see the mistake he has made so that he will take her back, but at the same time her pride is wounded and she is not sure she really would want him back. Her emotions are all in a mix, and she is very confused. This makes her emotionally vulnerable, causing her to cry at small things such as the hamburger, which Jordan miraculously remembers to add cheese to. This is something he normally forgets, and this small gesture is enough to remind Courtney of everything she will never have with him again.

Courtney is not the kind of girl who usually plays games, and she soon finds herself wrapped up in her lies and pretence. She realizes that she has become something that she isn't. She sees that she has led on Lloyd, despite not having feelings for him, just to make Jordan jealous. This is horrible, as she has ended up hurting one of her best friends. She recognizes how pointless all her pretending has been. She decides to stop playing games and just tell the truth, and confesses to Lloyd that she cannot be with him. However, she still tries to run away from difficult situations, and does not give Lloyd the explanation she owes him. It is not until later, with the help of Jordan, that she sees how badly she deals with problems. She tries to avoid them rather than facing them, a trait she has in common with Jordan. As soon as she realizes this, she is determined to change, beginning with calling her father. She also manages to see Jordan's point of view for the first time, and lets go of her anger in order to forgive him. In the past, she has idealized people, particularly her father, Lloyd and Jordan. She is disappointed when none of them live up to her high expectations of them. Now, however, she sees that people make mistakes, and that their hearts can still be in the right place. In these ways, she has grown up a huge amount in the few days she has spent on the road trip. The difficulties she has been forced to face instead of avoid, and the truths she has learned, have helped her to change for the better. She is now more mature and a stronger person, more able to cope with college.

Jordan

Jordan is a teenage boy who lives in the same town as Courtney and goes to the same high school. He is also a main character in this story. He begins dating Courtney when he is attracted to her at a party. They plan a road trip to Boston, which is where they are both going to college.

Jordan is more outgoing and confident than Courtney, and seems to think of himself as a bit of a stud and a player. He is a little arrogant, and also a bit of a poser. He drives a TrailBlazer that his parents bought him, and freely admits that he is spoiled. When he first meets Courtney he is trying to hook up with a cheerleader called Madison. He is only interested in sex and not looking for a real relationship. He uses Courtney to show Madison that he is not desperate, and to force her to be the one to make a move on him. These are the kind of games he always plays with girls, and he is not used to any other way of acting. However, when he finds out about his mother's affair, he is no longer in the mood to chase after Madison, so he asks Courtney to go for breakfast with him instead. This shows that right from the start he has thought of Courtney as



someone he could talk to and have something more meaningful with, rather than as someone to score with.

As he spends more time with her, Jordan is intrigued by Courtney precisely because she does not play the same kind of games that other girls do. He is used to being flirted with by girls, or being ignored by them on purpose to try to make him interested in them. He arrogantly expects Courtney to behave like this too, but Courtney ignores him for different reasons. His pride takes a hit, and he becomes obsessed with getting her to pay attention to him. He begins to spend more time with her, and comes to like the fact that she is different and easier to get on with than other girls. He even finds himself thinking that he would be disappointed if she turned out to be a game player after all. He comes to appreciate Courtney for who she is, and soon realizes that he is attracted to her. He starts a relationship with her, and unexpectedly finds himself falling in love.

This has never happened to Jordan before, and he is not quite sure how to behave. This is how he ends up keeping a large secret from Courtney. When he meets Courtney's dad, he realizes that it is the man he saw having an affair with his mother. At first he is too shocked to say anything, then he does not want to have to deal with the difficult situation that will arise from telling the truth. He is not sure his relationship with Courtney will last at first, and when he does realize how committed to it he is, he thinks it is too late to tell her the truth. He does not want to hurt her, and feels the need to protect her. He does not realize that keeping this from her will hurt her even more. He cannot bear the thought of her hating him for lying, but he also cannot get deeper into the relationship when he is not being honest with her. For him, the only solution is to break up with her. This seems a little extreme and nonsensical, but to Jordan, everything has spiraled out of control to the point where he sees this as his only option. He thinks he is doing what is best for Courtney, but does not see that he is actually being quite selfish and cowardly. He cannot face the situation that would arise if he admitted to Courtney that he has been keeping a secret, so he avoids the problem instead.

This is typical of Jordan's attitude to life. He does not like to deal with problems so ignores them or avoids them instead. He even admits that his strategy is denial and avoidance. This is obviously not a healthy way to deal with things, and Jordan learns that it only leads to greater problems down the line. Because he does not want to deal with his mother's affair, he ends up angering his brother and being kicked out of his room, breaking up with Courtney and ultimately hurting her even more, and causing his own father more pain by not telling him the truth sooner. By the end of the road trip, Jordan has had enough of lies and pretence and decides to come clean. He has resolved to be honest from now on, and to face problems instead of avoiding them. Like Courtney, he has grown up. He now desperately wants Courtney back as he realizes what a huge mistake he has made. Eventually, she is able to see things from his point of view and to forgive him.



Jocelyn

Jocelyn is Courtney's best friend. She lives in the same town and attends the same high school. She and Courtney are very close, and try to help each other out in any situation. They call each other many times throughout the story, often providing some comic relief from the more tense atmosphere of the road trip.

Jocelyn is a much larger than life character than Courtney. She is more outgoing and often quite impulsive. She lets her feelings show and does not try to hide what she thinks. She does sometimes second-guess situations, but not to the extent that Courtney and Jordan do. She is generally much more open. This leads to some very dramatic arguments with her boyfriend B.J., but it also means that they can make up more easily and keep their relationship more honest. As a couple they are fiery and unpredictable, but also very strong. Even when Jocelyn is overwhelmed with insecurity and jealousy, and decides to stalk B.J., they are able to resolve their issues quickly and make their relationship stronger by talking things through.

Jocelyn is better at learning from her actions and mistakes than Courtney is, and also seems to be a little more perceptive. She understands that sometimes people make mistakes, and that there are always two sides to everything. She also realizes the importance of facing difficult situations instead of avoiding them, and that sometimes what is hard can make a person stronger. She tries to impart this wisdom to Courtney at several points in the story, and so, despite her sometimes crazy and often impulsive behavior, she comes across as quite a mature and reasonable character. She is also very protective of Courtney, trying to save her from being hurt. At first, this means trying to persuade Courtney not to date Jordan, who Jocelyn thinks is a player. Later, this means encouraging Courtney to forgive Jordan, as she realizes that Jordan really does love and want to protect Courtney in his own way, and that Courtney will be happier with him.

B.J.

B.J. is Jordan's best friend, and he is dating Jocelyn. At the beginning of the story he was coming on to Courtney at a party, but later the same night he hooked up with Jocelyn. This led to a relationship with her. B.J.'s real name is Brian Joseph Cartwright, but he prefers the nickname B.J. because of its sexual connotations. This sums up B.J.'s slightly immature attitude; in many ways he seems like a much younger, sex-obsessed teenage boy. Even Jordan considers him to be rather simple and not capable of understanding Jordan's complex feelings. B.J. takes things very literally and sarcasm often goes over his head. However, at the same time he can be very perceptive and sensible when others are wrapped up in the need to play games or hide their true feelings. B.J. is much more open than others, seeing honesty as the best course because it is the simplest. Like Jocelyn, he can also be very impulsive and fiery. They are a good match for each other.



Lloyd

Lloyd is Courtney's friend, who helps her out with math. She used to believe herself to be in love with him, and obsessed over what it would be like to be with him. Just when she decided to tell him how she feels, she met Jordan at the party and fell into a relationship with him instead. When Jordan breaks up with Courtney, she tries kissing Lloyd, hoping she will be able to move on by starting a new relationship. However, she soon finds that being with Lloyd is not as she imagined it, and that she does not have feelings for him after all. Nevertheless, she uses him to make Jordan jealous. When she visits him on the way to Boston, she suddenly realizes how wrong this is, and tells him that she cannot be with him after all.

Lloyd seems to wear nothing but polo shirts, which reflect his slightly unimaginative personality. Jordan finds him quite stuck up and boring. Jordan also observes that Lloyd is quite an arrogant boy who likes to have girls around him, stringing them along but never being with them either. This seems at least partly accurate, as Lloyd deliberately tries to keep Courtney close, gets annoyed by Jordan's attention to her, but then hooks up with another girl. However, later, he does seem to have genuine feelings for Courtney and is hurt when she does not respond as he wants. He is extremely jealous of Jordan and sees him as a big threat.

Despite claiming to care about Courtney, he does not seem bothered that she left his room, obviously upset, with nowhere to stay for the night. Jordan is annoyed at this attitude, and this also prevents the reader from feeling too sorry for him.

Courtney's Dad

Courtney's father is having an affair with Jordan's mother, and is the reason that Courtney and Jordan break up. He is not actually Courtney's biological father but a man who is dating her mother and has legally adopted her. As far as Courtney is concerned, he is her real dad, and she loves him as much as she loves her mom. She idealizes her dad, and appreciates his support during her break up with Jordan. What she doesn't realize is that he is having an affair, and has manipulated Jordan into keeping his secret for him. He insists on Courtney going on the road trip because he is desperate to keep Jordan quiet, but then lets Courtney's mother take the blame for it while pretending to be a loving and supportive father. He tells Courtney that he never liked Jordan, but in fact this is simply because Jordan knows his secret. He can see how much pain the break up has caused his daughter, knowing that it is his fault, but still does not try to fix things by telling her the truth. This is a complete betrayal, and he comes across as a very selfish and manipulative man. When Courtney does find out the truth she is annoyed with him, but more because he felt he could not tell her the truth than about the actual affair. She does not like the idea that her father thought she needed protecting, or that she is somehow too weak to handle the truth.



Courtney's Mom

Courtney's mother only appears briefly in the story. She insists that Courtney go on the road trip, telling her that she has to learn responsibility. Later, the reader finds out that it is Jordan's idea for Courtney to come on the trip, meaning that Courtney's dad must have persuaded Courtney's mother and then let her be the bad guy in the situation. Courtney describes her mother as a glamorous woman, and is at first surprised that her father would cheat on her with a serious lawyer like Jordan's mom. She then reflects that this might be precisely the point, that her dad wanted to be with someone different.

Jordan's Mom

Jordan's mom is having an affair with Courtney's dad. She is a serious and focused lawyer, who always seemed to be too intent on her career to have an affair. When Jordan finds her with Courtney's dad, she is a little too unapologetic and begs Jordan to keep her secret. She seems more intent on her own situation than on the pain she must have caused her son. She puts Jordan in a difficult position and never seems to try to talk to him about it properly. She comes across as quite selfish, like Courtney's father, but not nearly as manipulative.

Madison

Madison is a cheerleader that Jordan is trying to seduce at a party. He is trying to act nonchalantly in order to make her approach him, which is why he dances with Courtney. However, when he sees his mother with another man, he needs someone to talk to rather than meaningless sex. This is why he forgets Madison and calls Courtney instead.

Adam

Adam is Jordan's brother. Jordan goes to see him at Middleton, but Adam refuses to let him into his dorm room. He is annoyed that Jordan kept their mother's affair secret from him.

Ben

Ben is a guy on the orientation committee at Boston. He flirts with Courtney, and at first she is attracted to him. However, he seems to be more interested in using naive freshmen than actually dating her. Ben is soon forgotten when Courtney gets back with Jordan.



Objects/Places

MySpace

MySpace is a social networking website that was incredibly popular in the days before Facebook, and slightly less so now. People create profiles, add photos and message their friends on MySpace. In this story, everyone seems to use it, especially to check up on each other and to find out information. Courtney uses MySpace to try to find out more about Jordan's girlfriend, and Jordan thinks Courtney is in a relationship with Lloyd because of a message he left on Courtney's page. Because of things like this, MySpace fuels a lot of paranoia and second-guessing, which leads to some crazy behavior such as Jocelyn spying on B.J. There is evidence that the author disapproves of some aspects of MySpace, while recognizing its importance to young people. Jordan remarks that the internet has changed the way people interact for the worse and Courtney says that MySpace will drive everyone insane.

Jordan's TrailBlazer

Jordan's car is a TrailBlazer that his parents bought him. Jordan seems to be rather spoiled. He easily gets what he wants most of the time. The Trailblazer reflects Jordan's personality because he is a little bit of a poser who likes everyone to think he is more important, larger than life, and more popular than he really is. It also suits his macho image of himself quite well. The Trailblazer is Courtney and Jordan's method of transportation to Boston. Most of the present action of the story take place inside it, adding to the slightly claustrophobic atmosphere in these parts of the novel.

Hooking Up

'Hooking up' is the phrase used by the characters in this story to refer to casual kissing or sex, usually without feelings being involved, and without the expectation of a relationship. Hooking up seems to refer to anything from making out (kissing) to sex.

The Bellevue Motel

When Courtney finds out about the secret Jordan and her father have been keeping from her, she is extremely angry. She does not want to be anywhere near Jordan, so she books into the motel for the night. Unknown to her, Jordan also books into the same motel. This is ironic as Courtney cannot get away from Jordan even when she wants to, suggesting that they are meant to be together.



Parties

The teenagers in this story like to go to parties at each other's houses. These are events where they can drink and have fun, but primarily seem to be about hooking up, especially for the boys. It is at a house party that Jordan first becomes interested in Courtney and that B.J. and Jocelyn begin hooking up.

Courtney's Country Music CD

Courtney has recorded a country music CD so she does not have to listen to Jordan's rap for the whole trip. She plays this endlessly on repeat, and Jordan does not object because he knows he has really hurt Courtney by breaking up with her. Later, when he gets annoyed at the thought of her being with Lloyd, he switches to the radio and puts his own music on. Determining what music is played and at what volume becomes a power play between the two.

Rap Music

Jordan loves rap music, but Courtney hates it. This is one of the things about Jordan that irritates her, but that reminds her of him and the times they shared. As Jordan becomes more frustrated with Courtney on the trip, he begins to use his rap music as a means to annoy her. When Courtney reaches Boston she asks Ben, the guy who is flirting with her, if he likes rap music. She is using rap music to sum up Jordan and everything that she wants to avoid in a future relationship. At the same time, however, this just shows how much she cannot stop thinking about Jordan.

Lloyd's Dorm

Courtney and Jordan stop off at Middleton on the way to Boston, and Courtney visits Lloyd's dorm room. She is supposed to stay the night here, but she cannot face being near Lloyd when she knows she does not have feelings for him and is still hurting over Jordan.

Lloyd's Polo Shirts

Lloyd seems to wear nothing but polo shirts, which is something that Jordan notices and points out early on in his relationship with Courtney. When Courtney is in his room, she sees all his polo shirts hung up in his closet and suddenly realizes how ridiculous this is. It reminds her of Jordan and makes her miss him more. The closet full of nothing but polo shirts also seems to reflect Lloyd's slightly boring, unimaginative and predictable nature. It helps Courtney to realize that she really is not romantically interested in him at all.



Middleton

Courtney and Jordan stop off at Middleton to see Lloyd and Jordan's brother. However, both of them end up having to leave the rooms they should have been staying in, and now they are stuck in Middleton with nowhere to sleep. This is also where Jordan decides to finally tell the truth and where Courtney learns of the secret.

Boston

Courtney and Jordan are both attending college in Boston. They are on a road trip there from the town in Florida where they live. They finally reach Boston on the third day and Courtney tries to use this as a chance to move on. However, she soon realizes that it is not a change of boyfriend she needs, but a change of attitude. By the time that they reach Boston however, both Courtney and Jordan have grown up a lot.

Rest Stop Bathrooms

Courtney spends quite a lot of time in rest stop bathrooms on the trip, as it is the only place she can go to be alone from Jordan. She uses these opportunities to call Jocelyn, or to cry over Jordan. She is also sick in a bathroom after getting food poisoning from a calzone.

Courtney's Calzone

Courtney buys a calzone on the trip when they stop for food. It is disgusting, but she forces herself to eat it to prove that she is not upset. She gets food poisoning from it and is sick several times, forcing them to stop at a hotel. This is a very neat example of how the need to lie and pretend to Jordan only makes things worse for Courtney.

Courtney's Hamburger with Cheese

Jordan always forgets to get cheese on Courtney's hamburgers. When he buys her one at a rest stop and remembers the cheese, she is suddenly overwhelmed with emotion. It reminds her of everything that makes Jordan who he is and all the times they have spent together and how she can never think of him as hers anymore.

Miami

Courtney, Jordan, B.J. and Jocelyn go on vacation together to Miami, staying in a house owned by Jordan's family's friends. This is supposed to be a fun trip, but B.J. and Jocelyn quickly get into one of their big fights. Courtney wants to lose her virginity here to Jordan, and tells him that she loves him. Jordan is so guilty about keeping secrets

from her that he cannot say it back. This is where their relationship begins to break down, and Jordan begins to realize that it cannot continue while he is being dishonest.

Math Class

Courtney and Jordan have math class together, and Jordan has noticed that Courtney never pays attention but texts in class instead. She is texting Jocelyn, mainly about Lloyd. Later, Jordan becomes annoyed that she is ignoring him and tries to get her attention in math class. When he cannot do this, even after mentioning her to the teacher, he becomes very intrigued and runs after her after class, inviting her out again.



Themes

Honesty

Honesty is the main theme of this story. The message that the author wants to impart is that lies and pretence will only lead to greater problems in the end. Jordan has been keeping a very big secret from Courtney - one that caused their break up. He found out that his mother is having an affair with Courtney's dad. At first, he is too shocked to say anything, but then he began to worry about how to deal with the situation. He decides that it would be too much trouble to tell Courtney the truth, and that it is better to wait to see if their relationship lasted. By the time that he realizes that he is in love with her, it is too late. He has already been keeping the secret for long enough that she will probably hate him when she finds out. He cannot bear the thought of this, so he continues to keep the truth from her. He begins to feel so guilty about this that he thinks that the only solution was to break up with Courtney. This seems silly, as it would be probably much better and easier to just tell Courtney the truth at this point, but Jordan is too cowardly and selfish to do this. He does not want to have to cope with the difficult situation that would arise, and cannot bear to think of Courtney hating him for being dishonest. He just prefers that she think that he just does not want to be with her. He also persuades himself that this will somehow be better for Courtney, as the truth will hurt her too much.

Jordan's secret becomes a problem because it completely spirals out of control the longer that he tries to keep it concealed. At first he just does not want to deal with his mother's affair, but by the end, the secret has become a huge betrayal of Courtney. This causes him terrible guilt and leads to their break up. The break up in turn, leads to all the bitterness and awkwardness of the road trip, Jordan being hounded and manipulated by Courtney's father, and Jordan being thrown out of his brother's dorm room at Middleton. Now Jordan's brother is not talking to him, his family is falling apart, and he cannot be with the girl he loves. He has made up a fake girlfriend in order to give the break up some legitimacy, but now he finds himself having to lie about it a lot to Courtney.

Inevitably, she finds out, which makes her feel as though Jordan never loved her and just needed an excuse to get away from her. Jordan realizes how much pain and trouble has been caused by the secret and so he decides to come clean. After this, Courtney is extremely angry with him and will not speak to him. It is only through getting her to see his side of it that he manages to persuade her to forgive him. He promises to be honest in the future, and not to try to avoid or deny his problems as he used to. He has learned that dishonesty and denial only lead to greater problems and more hurt. He tried to protect himself and Courtney from the pain of their parents' affairs, but he only ended up hurting them much more. Courtney's father also thought he could protect Courtney from pain, and himself from her anger, but only caused greater hurt and feelings of betrayal. The reader can see that if Jordan and Courtney's dad had been honest from the start, things would still have been difficult, but much less painful for everyone involved.



Courtney also does her own share of lying and pretending. In the flashback sections of the novel, the reader can see that Courtney is a more open and honest girl who does not play the kind of mind games that Jordan is used to. This is what initially attracts him to her, as she is much easier to get on with and he feels that he can trust her. However, in the present sections of the novel Courtney allows her hurt and her confused feelings to get the better of her. She becomes very analytical of Jordan's behavior and her own. She is determined to show him that she is over him when she clearly is not. She is forced to constantly pretend while on the road trip, a situation that is exhausting and makes her physically ill. Things might have gone better for Courtney if she had been honest about how much Jordan hurt her. Instead, she lies about her relationship with Lloyd, pretending they are an item when in fact she has no feelings for him. This annoys Jordan and causes him to react a little harshly towards Courtney, who really needs comfort. This is also extremely unfair to Lloyd, who actually does have feelings for Courtney. When she realizes that she is leading on her friend, she suddenly sees how much she has changed. She is constantly lying and pretending and she does not like what this is turning her into. She remembers that she was once very honest and resolves to be like this again. With Jordan's help, she also comes to see that she has a tendency to run away from problems, rather than facing them. She realizes that she has to be able to admit when she is hurting, and to tell others this. She knows she has been avoiding telling Jordan, Lloyd and her father the truth about how she really feels, and that she needs to stop doing this. She believes that only by being open and honest that she can resolve things. It is only when she actually faces Jordan and tells him why she is hurting and he explains things to her, that the two of them can begin to forgive and heal.

Jordan has always been a bit of a game player, seducing girls by pretending that he is not interested in them and leading other girls on to make them jealous. This is what he is doing when he begins flirting with Courtney at a party. He is actually trying to seduce a different girl called Madison by showing her that he is not desperate. However, he soon learns that games do not work on Courtney, and that she does not play any of her own. This is what attracts him to her, as she is so different from the girls he is used to. He likes her honesty and finds that she is someone he can talk to and enjoy spending time with. Jocelyn and B.J. also demonstrate how honesty and openness in a relationship are better than pretending and playing games. They have a very fiery relationship and are often arguing. However, they are actually surprisingly stable. This is because they tell each other when they are upset, and do not hold grudges, resentments or worries inside. By being open about their problems, they can resolve them more easily. Jordan and Courtney broke up because of the secrecy between them, but B.J. and Jocelyn, the more impulsive and argumentative couple, stayed together because of honesty.

Later, Jocelyn does give in to paranoia for awhile and begins stalking B.J. to find out if he is cheating on her. Courtney tries to tell Jocelyn that she is being silly, but Jocelyn is too worried to listen. When B.J. finds out, however, instead of being angry with Jocelyn, he makes her tell him what is worrying her. They have an honest and open conversation about their feelings, and so manage to resolve their issues. Their relationship is stronger as a result. Although Courtney and Jordan often make disparaging remarks



about their friends' intelligence and sanity, Jocelyn and B.J. do often speak out as the voices of reason in this story. They tend to be the ones who advocate honesty, or persuade the others to face their problems rather than run from them. More importantly, Jocelyn and B.J. demonstrate how honesty can keep even the unlikeliest couples together and strong. Courtney and Jordan demonstrate how dishonesty can break apart couples who otherwise seem made for each other.

There are Two Sides to Every Argument

As Courtney and Jordan go on an increasingly tense and argumentative road trip, the reader is shown that there are always two sides to everything. The author tells the story in chapters that alternate between Jordan and Courtney's point of view, with Flashback chapters to provide greater insight into their characters and current events. Events are sometimes recapped slightly so the reader can see Jordan and Courtney's take on the same thing. This allows the reader to observe how each one is thinking and why they act as they do, as well as how their actions affect the other person. Sometimes Courtney or Jordan's behavior makes the other person think one thing, when the reader knows that the opposite is actually true. For example, Courtney thinks Jordan does not care about her anymore, as he broke up with her and now has a new girlfriend. The reader knows this is not true at all, as Jordan is actually still in love with Courtney and thought that he was protecting her by breaking up with her. His 'girlfriend' is a lie and actually does not exist. When Courtney endlessly looks at herself in the mirror and readjusts her hair, Jordan thinks she is anxious to look nice for Lloyd. The reader knows that Courtney is actually nervous because she knows she has to tell Lloyd that she does not have feelings for him. Apart from creating dramatic irony, by providing both points of view the author also shows that appearances can deceive and that a character's motivations might not be as simple as they seem.

Providing both points of view also demonstrates for the reader how close Jordan and Courtney are, and how well they do actually know each other. Sometimes their behavior fools or confuses the other, but sometimes they know each other surprisingly well and are able to see through the pretence. For examples, Jordan suspects that Courtney is only pretending to listen to her music and is actually paying attention to his phone call. The reader knows that Courtney has done this before, and so it seems likely that Jordan is correct. This highlights how much history there is between them and reminds the reader that they are both still in love with each other. This is ironic, as the reader can see how well suited they are for each other. If only they both realized how much the other still loves them, they might have been able to resolve their situation sooner. The reader knows that there is a big secret standing between them, but by seeing both sides of the argument, the reader can also see that this is perhaps not such a big deal as it appears to the characters.

Jordan is an often ambiguous character in the story. It is hard to decide whether he is likeable or not, and whether he can be considered sympathetic. There are moments where the reader can feel very sorry for him, but there are also moments where the reader becomes very frustrated or even angry with him. He acts selfishly and cowardly



at times, but he also genuinely cares about Courtney and does seem to think he is doing what is best for her. He is confused and upset about his own mother's affair, and he is being manipulated by Courtney's slightly scary father. If events were only seen from Courtney's point of view, then Jordan would simply look like an unfeeling liar. By seeing Jordan's point of view, the reader can also see how much events are affecting him, and how much he is also hurting over the break up. He is still desperately in love with Courtney, and wishes he could have her back. This allows for a more realistic and mature assessment of Jordan's character. Yes, he has made a mistake, but the reader can understand how this happened and can see that he did not mean to hurt Courtney.

However, if events were only seen from Jordan's point of view, the reader might feel too sorry for him and frustrated with Courtney for not forgiving him sooner. The reader might also hate Courtney for leading Lloyd on. Seeing Courtney's point of view shows the reader how much Jordan has let her down, how important honesty is to her, and how betrayed she must feel by everyone in her life. They can also understand why Courtney used Lloyd to make Jordan jealous, and can see how confused and panicked, and later guilty, she is about this situation. The reader is forced to like and sympathize with both Jordan and Courtney, putting the reader right in the middle of the argument. There really are two sides to this matter, and the reader can only hope that Jordan and Courtney are wise enough to see this.

Thankfully, Courtney does manage to forgive Jordan. She is told by Jocelyn that nothing is ever black and white, which is advice she finds hard to listen to at first. She is too angry to try to see Jordan's point of view. However, when she does stop and let Jordan explain, she suddenly sees how much he does care for her after all. She thinks what it must have been like for him, having to deal with his mother's affair and feeling like he was unable to confide in his girlfriend about it. Courtney is still angry that he made a mistake, but now she sees that he regrets it, and that she has made her own mistakes too. She also avoids difficult situations, and perhaps she can see some of her own denial in Jordan's behavior. This is very mature of Courtney, proving how much she has grown up over the road trip. The ability to see others' points of view, and particularly to see both sides of an argument that you are a part of, is very difficult, and shows that she is willing to learn and change.

Courtney partly has Jocelyn to thank for this, who has learned herself that her own perceptions might be wrong. She thought B.J. was cheating on her, and so stalked him to find out. She did not consider that B.J. might have his own explanations and worries too. When they decided to talk about their issues openly and honestly, Jocelyn understood that she needs to listen to B.J. and respect his feelings too. This is how she is able to help Courtney do the same. The idea of there being two sides to every argument, then, is related to the theme of honesty. Only when two people are honest with each other can they understand each other and begin to forgive. Jumping to conclusions, second-guessing, and lying, will only cause a person to become too wrapped up in themselves, stopping them from understanding the bigger picture.



Growing Up

Both Courtney and Jordan grow up a lot on their road trip. Jocelyn and B.J. also grow up, but their transformation is more subtle, seen through the conversations they have with their best friends. Jordan begins the story as quite an immature boy who thinks about sex a lot, is not interested in a meaningful relationship, likes to be popular and cool, and thinks of himself as a bit of a stud. He likes to play mind games with girls, ignoring them to make them more interested in him, or using other girls to make them jealous. He seems to have little regard for others' feelings. When he begins dating Courtney this changes. He likes the fact that she does not play games and that she is easier to talk to than the girls he is used to. He begins to act more seriously and takes their relationship seriously as well. He even finds himself falling in love. However, he is keeping a big secret from Courtney simply because he does not want to deal with it. This spirals out of control and he is forced to break up with her rather than tell her the truth. Some twisted part of him thinks he is doing this to protect her, but his behavior comes across as quite selfish and cowardly to the reader.

On the road trip, Jordan is forced to see and take responsibility for the pain he has caused Courtney, and what it means for her to be kept in the dark about her father's affair. He sees the consequences of his actions escalating and slowly comes to realize that honesty is actually a simpler and better course than lying and pretence. He finally decides to tell Courtney the truth. He accepts her anger and still tries to look after her. He tries to win her back by persuading her to see his point of view. He even helps her to see that, like him, she tends to avoid problems rather than facing them. He is determined to be honest from now on, and not to use avoidance and denial as his main attitude to life. He has changed, and now wants to become a better person with Courtney by his side.

Courtney is much more mature than Jordan from the start. She does not go through such a dramatic change of character, so her growing up is more subtle and harder to see at first. She does not play games like Jordan does, and she already values honesty. However, she does have a tendency to protect herself by avoiding difficult situations, or running away from problems. The reader can see this on the road trip, where she is determined not to let Jordan see how hurt she really is. This is partly a matter of pride, but also because she does not want to have to deal with him or her own pain, and does not want to have to discuss the break up with him. She is denying her feelings to herself as much as to Jordan, trying to save herself from the hurt. This leads to her having to constantly lie and pretend, with the result that she is actually physically sick at one point. She tries to use Lloyd to make Jordan jealous, and then realizes that she is leading on a friend who cares about her, as she actually has no romantic feelings for Lloyd at all. Rather than tell Lloyd straight how she is feeling, she tries to avoid the conversation instead, giving noncommittal answers in phone calls with him, and running out of his room when they visit Middleton. It is here that she realizes she is changing for the worse because she is trying to play games with Jordan. She is lying and pretending and leading Lloyd on, and does not even recognize herself anymore. However, it is not until Jordan points out that she has a tendency to run from problems that she realizes



she has not even called Lloyd back. She has been pushing away her problems, with Lloyd, with Jordan, and with her father, not wanting to deal with them. She has been protecting herself, even though she is annoyed with others for trying to protect her. She immediately resolves to change, and to face her problems from now on. She does exactly this, starting with the hardest conversation and calling her dad. This proves how much she has grown up and changed. She also manages to have an honest talk with Jordan about how she feels, and surprises herself by being able to see things from his point of view. This allows her to finally forgive him. This is very mature behavior.

B.J. and Jocelyn are similar characters who begin as quite immature and impulsive people. They seem to only be interested in sex and parties, but soon fall into a relationship with each other. Courtney comments that their relationship is fiery and explosive, as they are always getting into arguments. However, this is because they tend to wear their emotions on their sleeves more than Courtney and Jordan do. Jordan and Courtney are more secretive, which eventually led to them breaking up. Jocelyn and B.J. appear to have remained strong, despite their slightly crazy behavior, because they deal with their problems and get them out in the open. Later in the story, Jocelyn becomes paranoid about B.J., thinking he may be cheating on her. She follows him, and he eventually finds out. Rather than arguing, they sit down and talk through their feelings and their concerns. This strengthens their relationship further. By doing this, Jocelyn is able to see the value of honesty, and of seeing things from another's point of view. She tells Courtney that not everything is black and white, and tries to persuade her to let Jordan explain himself. Earlier, she told Courtney that she might learn something from the road trip, and that adversity might make her stronger. This certainly proved to be true, as Courtney gained new strength and confidence from the trip. Although Courtney and Jordan often look down on their impulsive and crazy friends, it is often Jocelyn and B.J. who provide the most mature advice.

The road trip itself is symbolic of growing up. It is a journey between two points, specifically between high school and college. Courtney and Jordan begin as young, sometimes immature teenagers who have a lot to learn. They end the trip as two people who have learnt a lot about themselves and are determined to change for the better. They understand that they still have a lot to learn, but will no longer run away from problems or difficulties. The process of seeing this, of growing up, has not always been easy. It has been a journey with bumps, stops and problems along the way, much like the road trip itself. In fact, the events on the road trip are largely what have helped Courtney and Jordan to become stronger and more mature. The road trip also reflects the state that Courtney and Jordan are in. They seem trapped between two points. They are not in a relationship anymore, but are still in love with each other. They are confused and do not know what the future will bring. They are in some ways still stuck in the past while looking to the future. They have problems and issues that remain unresolved, and a large secret that still needs to be revealed. In these ways they are in a symbolic limbo, just as they are in a literal limbo on the road trip between their starting point and their destination. In these ways, the author has chosen a very appropriate story line and setting for the exploration of her themes.

Style

Point of View

The story is told from two different points of view, that of the main characters Jordan and Courtney, and alternates between the two at random. It begins with Courtney, who is a fairly normal, kind and thoughtful teenage girl about to go to college. She is relatable to by the reader, and so easily becomes a sympathetic character. Jordan's point of view is given next. He is a more tricky character for the reader to like, as he is the one who broke up with Courtney, seemingly for a very callous reason. However, the author makes it quickly apparent that Jordan still loves Courtney, and that he felt he had to break up with her for reasons that got out of his control. He is hurting as much as she is, and so in many ways he is a sympathetic character too.

By proving both points of view and switching constantly between them, the author forces the reader to see both sides of the argument, and to understand why Courtney and Jordan react to each other in the ways that they do. The reader is put into a position of knowing more than either character does, creating a lot of dramatic irony and tension. Giving both points of view allows a unique insight into how a break up affects both partners, and how boys and girls react differently to some things but surprisingly similarly to others. It shows the reader that there are always two points of view, and that things are rarely ever black and white. This is one of the main messages of the story, reflected in the novel's title, 'Two Way Street.' The story is a two way street because it shows two different points of view to the same circumstances, but also because it incorporates sections from the present and the past to add depth to the situation and the characters. It is also a two way street because although both characters appear to be travelling in different directions, they are on the same road, as the reader can see that they are more similar than they would care to think, and that perhaps they may be destined for each other after all.

Setting

The story is set in two different time periods, the present and the past. Flashback chapters tell the reader what is happening in the past, which shows how Jordan and Courtney began dating, how they fell in love, and why they broke up. These are mainly set in the town in Florida where Jordan and Courtney live. The characters go to school, hang out at each other's houses, attend house parties, go to shops and restaurants, and occasionally go to the beach. One section is set in Miami, where Jordan and Courtney and their friends go for a summer vacation. Most of the settings are very normal places that teenagers would hang out, reflecting the fact that the characters have normal lives that the readers can relate to.

The present sections of the novel are set during the road trip from Florida to Boston, where Jordan and Courtney will be attending college. Most of the action and dialogue



takes place in Jordan's car, which is an expensive TrailBlazer bought for him by his parents, who like to spoil their children a little too much. The car reflects Jordan's slightly larger than life personality and his occasional tendency to be a bit of a poser. He listens to rap music, and seems to like to think of himself as a bit of a badass and a stud. The feeling inside the car is usually quite tense, as Courtney and Jordan do not have much to say to each other and tend to snap at each other when they do. They appear to be fighting a battle of not wanting to admit that they are upset and seeing who will be the first to show their real feelings. At the same time, there is an unspoken grudge about the breakup, and a secret that only Jordan knows lurking between them. This makes for a very chilly and tense atmosphere in the car. Courtney likens it to a suspense movie, in which the viewer is just waiting for something horrible to happen. This, combined with the fairly cramped and confined space inside the car, creates a very claustrophobic feel. Emotions are heightened and naturally arguments break out.

When Jordan and Courtney are not in the car, they are usually stopped at rest stops to get food or use the bathrooms. It becomes an unfortunate tendency for Courtney to end up in a rest stop bathroom either desperately calling someone, crying, or being sick. The slightly soulless and unclean feeling of the bathrooms only adds to Courtney's distress. She wants to be somewhere homey and comfortable when she is upset, but instead she is forced into unfriendly, public places, with only Jordan to comfort her.

The road trip itself seems to reflect the state that the characters are in. They are in a strange kind of limbo, stuck between high school and college, literally travelling from one to the other. They are in the middle of nowhere, not where they came from and not at their destination either. In the same way, their relationship is not what it was, which is emphasized by the flashback chapters, but neither does it seem to be entirely over or resolved. Jordan still loves Courtney and she still loves him, but neither is being honest with the other, and Jordan is still carrying a huge secret. Things are confused and unresolved. Even Courtney and Jordan are in a weird limbo in terms of who they really are. They are holding on to the past but at the same time want to let go, but they are also afraid to face difficulties and to look to the future. They are not quite children anymore, but they have not yet learnt enough to grow up. Finally, Courtney still does not know that her father is cheating on her mother, and that life as she knows it is a lie. When she finally learns the truth she will be able to deal with it and move on, but until then she is lost in the limbo of the secret that is being kept from her. The road trip, being neither here nor there but a two way street between two destinations, leading both backwards and forwards, perfectly reflects this confused state of affairs.

There are also sections of the story set at Middleton college where Jordan's brother and Lloyd are studying, and at Boston college when Jordan and Courtney finally arrive. It is significant that the huge secret that Jordan has been keeping finally comes out at one college, and that the issues surrounding it are resolved at another. College is where the characters can finally realize who they are meant to be and can begin to grow up.



Language and Meaning

The language in this story is mostly very simple and easy to read, reflecting the way that real teenagers talk. Because it is narrated in first person by both Courtney and Jordan, it contains a lot of slang words and phrases, colloquialisms, and swearwords. Courtney's way of speaking is notably different from Jordan's, as she tends to become very emotional and uses expressive language more than he does. Jordan's speech is more calm and to the point, with less meandering or rambling away from the main issue. Jordan also swears more than Courtney, uses more crude language, and thinks about sex a lot more than she does. In these ways, the author manages to create two convincingly different people who each have a distinct character and their own story to tell.

Structure

The story is told in chapters that alternate between Courtney and Jordan's point of view, and also between past and present. These are all interspersed together without any logical order or pattern. This might seem confusing at first, but the author has carefully planned each break in the point of view and each chronological break in order to provide the reader with information that they need. Sometimes this allows the reader to compare events in past and present, to see why characters behave as they do. Sometimes seeing things in past and present reinforces an important message, such as the importance of honesty. Switching between different points of view allows the reader to see how Courtney and Jordan cope with situations similarly or differently, and how there are always two sides to every argument. Sometimes switching in this way also increases tension or dramatic irony. The slightly jumbled feel of the novel is therefore necessary and effective, and the author prevents it from being confusing by keeping her chapters short. In some cases chapters are only two pages long, ensuring that the reader never forgets what is happening at any particular point in time.

Much of the book consists of dialogue and there is very little action. In fact, most of the memorable events of the story come from the flashback chapters rather than the present. This is because the author is not focusing on what happens so much as why it happens, and why people behave as they do.



Quotes

"All we hear about these days is being strong women and standing up for ourselves, and now look what I've done. I should totally be one of those true life stories in Seventeen. "I Built My Life Around a Boy! And Now I Regret It" (The Trip, p. 1).

"I was reading parts of it to my friend Jocelyn one time, and she interrupted me to say, "Actually if you need a book like that to tell you he's just not that into you, you're probably not the type that's going to actually be able to let go"" (The Trip, p. 6).

"I'm so over him. This is me, being over him. La, la, la" (The Trip, p. 8).

"The last thing I need is for him to think I'm upset about him breaking up with me. I've spent the past two weeks determined to show him I don't care, and I'm not going to screw it all up now" (The Trip, p. 10).

"Because, let's face it - no matter how much you tell yourself you're over someone, your heart knows the truth" (The Trip, p. 11).

"It's like some kind of suspense movie. Or like being in an alternate universe, where we're not really Jordan and Courtney, but some other people who don't talk to each other." - Courtney describing the tense atmosphere on the car journey" (The Trip, p. 67-8).

"People come and go, in and out of each other's lives like it's nothing. So I don't know how/why this should be a big deal" (The Trip, p. 69).

"...walking behind him is weird, too, because then it's like I'm not walking next to him on purpose, which may lead him to believe that he's actually affecting me, which I definitely don't want. For him to be affecting me, I mean. Or, for him to think that. Because he obviously is affecting me" (The Trip, p. 69).

"If I told Courtney what I knew, she would hate me even more than she does now. And having her hate me because she thinks I dumped her for another girl is much better than having her hate me because of what I know" (The Trip, p. 110).

"MySpace is seriously going to be responsible for everyone losing their minds" (The Trip, p. 117).

"Maybe she's a game player, one of those girls who makes you work for it. The weird thing is, I'm usually into that, but thinking about Courtney messing with my head is disappointing for some reason" (Before, p. 120).

"Emotional attachments are messy. They end with broken hearts and stalking" (Before, p. 133).



"Emotional attachments are for really stupid people, or for people who are much, much older and can deal with messy things like emotional attachments" (Before, p. 133).

"Again, denial and avoidance is really a great strategy, and saves everyone a lot of trouble" (Before, p. 135).

"Maybe it's because he thinks on such a simple level most of the time that he doesn't get bogged down by things like emotion and manipulation. He just figures out the best way to handle a situation, and then he does it" (Before, p. 142).

"I had my chance to tell Courtney when I first found out her dad was the one who was having an affair with my mom, and I didn't. And now, because she had this preconceived notion that I was kind of a dick, if I tell her now, it's going to come off like I am a dick" (Before, p. 160).

"She's looking in my eyes, and she's waiting for me to say it back, and I want to. I feel it. I do love her. But then I start thinking about her dad, and how I'm lying to her, and suddenly, I know I can't say it. I shouldn't say it" (Before, p.194).

"What am I doing? Messing with my best friend's head so that I can make some guy who made up a fake girlfriend jealous? That's completely and totally insane. It's like I don't even realize who I am anymore" (The Trip, p. 218).

"The information age is so psychotic - without the cell phone and Internet, I would be drama free right now" (The Trip, p. 221).

"I can't be with someone who loves me when I'm lying to her. I'd rather have her hate me for thinking I'm a typical male asshole than by keeping something so important from her" Before, p. 229).

"The irony of all this is that B.J. and Jocelyn, who should be the poster child for dysfunctional relationships, are going strong. They're hanging out, cuddling, probably having sex on a beach, while Jordan and I, who NEVER EVEN FOUGHT, are done" (Before, p. 240).

"I'm pissed the he was so selfish that he felt the need to keep things from me, just so he wouldn't have to deal with me being pissed off or upset. But most of all, I'm mad at Jordan. I'm mad that he didn't tell me what he knew, that he never felt he could be completely honest with me. I'm mad that he felt he needed to protect me, when I never gave him any indication I was weak." - Courtney explaining why she is mad at her father and Jordan" (The Trip, p. 246).

"I think about how people make mistakes, and how I lied to him about the Lloyd thing, and how emotions and heartbreak and love can really screw with your head" (After, p. 285).

"I told Jordan he has to stop protecting me, and now I have to stop protecting myself" (After, p. 288).



Topics for Discussion

Do you think Jordan is a sympathetic character or are his actions too difficult to forgive? Can you see his side of the situation? Was Courtney right to forgive him?

How does the structure and point of view of the novel reflect the events and messages contained within the book?

Discuss the theme of honesty in this story. Who is dishonest and who keeps secrets? What does dishonesty lead to and why is honesty shown as the best course?

How does the road trip relate to Courtney and Jordan's situation? In what different kinds of ways are they travelling and where are they going?

In what ways do Courtney and Jordan mature through the course of the story?

What roles do B.J. and Jocelyn play in the story? Do you like them?

Who is your favorite character in the story and why? Who do you dislike the most and why?

Do you think MySpace and the internet are partly responsible for the troubles in this book? Is the information age causing people to become too paranoid and dishonest? Can too much information be bad?

Who acts worse in this story: Jordan, Courtney's father, Jordan's mother, or Courtney in her behavior to Lloyd? What makes these characters act as they do and can they be forgiven?

How does this story represent the different way girls and boys act towards each other, both in a relationship and when broken up? In what ways are they similar? How do they 'play games' with each other and what kind of results does this usually lead to? Do you recognize any of your own behavior in the characters in this story?