

The Weight of Silence Study Guide

The Weight of Silence by Heather Gudenkauf

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Plot Summary

"The Weight of Silence" by Heather Gudenkauf tells a story about a parent's nightmare. When Calli, a seven-year-old selective mute and her seven-year-old best friend go missing, an investigation ensues.

As the story opens, Calli has to go to the bathroom, but she is scared to go downstairs because her father might be there and see her. He is getting up early to go on a fishing trip with a friend. Finally, she can't wait any longer and she goes downstairs. He sees her and she notices that he has been drinking. In his drunken state, he accuses her of being the child of his wife's childhood sweetheart. Instead of going fishing with his friend, he literally drags Calli off into the woods to see the house of the man that he thinks is the girl's real father.

On that same day, very early in the morning, Martin and Fielda discover that their daughter is missing. They call the police and begin an investigation. A year before the girls' disappearance, another girl had been taken from her house. The police had found her, days later, dead. The local sheriff calls for help and the family members in both households are interrogated. They look for clues and talk with the press.

Griff, Calli's father, becomes even more physically abusive and she runs away. She goes into a part of the woods that she is not familiar with in order to escape from him. Meanwhile, her brother comes looking for her.

Near the end of the day, she stumbles upon her friend, Petra, who is badly beaten and nearly unconscious. Griff also stumbles upon the scene and tries to persuade Calli to go home with him. While he is doing this, Ben, Calli's brother, comes across them and thinks that his father is responsible for beating up Petra. He sends Calli off to get help. She comes out of the woods and speaks one word. It's the first time that she has spoken in four years. She says Ben's name, making him a suspect.

Calli goes to the hospital with her mother and Martin and the deputy sheriff climb up the bluff to rescue Petra. A helicopter comes and takes the girl away to a city hospital, and they go down the mountain with Ben. Griff has disappeared. Martin decides to go back to kill Griff. Ben goes to the hospital to join his mother and sister.

Antonia, Calli's mother, goes to the house to get her daughter some things and she goes to the edge of the woods. Her husband comes out and drags her into the woods. They fight, and the police show up. Griff has a gun, and the police shoot and kill him in self defense.

Calli tells what she saw, and the families realize it wasn't Ben or Griff. The man who abused Petra was a student that Martin's family had befriended. Six years later, things are almost back to normal. Calli is a typical teen going to school and playing in sports. Petra didn't fare so well, but she is alive. Her family moves away and the girls still keep in touch.



Section 1-850

Section 1-850 Summary

"The Weight of Silence" by Heather Gudenkauf tells a story about a parent's nightmare. When Calli, a seven-year-old selective mute and her seven-year-old best friend go missing, an investigation ensues.

Antonia and Louis see someone running out of the woods and tries to embrace the silent person. She is so happy to see her, but the girl goes right past her to the deputy sheriff. The girl speaks for the first time in three years.

Calli wakes up very early in the morning. She hears her father downstairs as he gets ready to go different. She has to go to the bathroom badly, but there is only one bathroom in the house, and if she uses it, her father will see her. Calli looks around her room to distract herself and sees her school materials. She is about to go into second grade. She loves school, but she doesn't like how the teachers are always trying to get her to talk. Her kindergarten teacher thought she was just shy until she began having accidents.

The nurse at school, Mrs. White, was very kind when Calli had her accidents. She would document the accidents. She notifies Calli's mother after nine accidents, telling Calli that she is going to do so, but reassuring Calli that the girl is not in trouble. The Solution-Focus Team of educators test Calli, and can't find anything wrong with her aside from the muteness. They decide to teach her American Sign Language so she can tell others when she has to go to the bathroom.

Calli really needs to go to the bathroom now. She thinks about going in her trash bin, but she knows she will worry her mother if she does this. She considers climbing out the window to go outside, but she knows this is dangerous. Calli decides to try sneaking to the bathroom without her father seeing her. She hopes her father has already left. Life is more peaceful without him around.

Some days her father is happy and fine. Other days he had beer cans all around him, and it was best to avoid him on those days. Calli would run to Willow Creek Woods to play on those days. She wouldn't come home until he was gone.

Her father is there and he hears her this time. He starts off nicely, greeting her in a friendly manner, then he ridicules her for her muteness, calling her "dumb like a retard." His friend Roger comes by to pick him up, but he tells Roger to go on without him. He'll catch up later. Her father tells Roger that Calli needs some "daddy time." He grabs Calli and starts dragging her into the woods. She has an accident, and urine floods down her leg.

Petra can't sleep because of the heat. Her necklace is sticking to her. She hears a noise outside and checks it out because she is scared. Now she isn't scared, and she decides



to go out to it even though she knows she shouldn't. She rationalizes that it's all right since she is going to be with an adult outside. She plans to come right back in.

Calli's father dragged her off, but she knew where she was in the woods. She also knew there wasn't much chance of anyone else seeing them in the woods. She knew they weren't near Deputy Sheriff Louis' home. She wasn't sure if this was a good thing or a bad thing. Her feet were scratched and hurting, but she knew her father would cause problems at the deputy's home. Calli was trying to figure out how to get away from her father. As they go through Willow Wallow, the author notes that Calli's mother, Antonia, played with children in the area. Calli picnicked with her mother and brother, Ben. They made up stories, climbed trees, and felt happy. Griff, her father, was the opposite. He was the kind of man who dragged his daughter off while he was drunk.

Martin and Fielda cuddle close together in spite of the heat. They've only been separated twice in 14 years of marriage. Martin remembers meeting her. He was a professor, and she was a waitress at Mourning Glory. After a year, she threw a muffin at him to get his attention. Martin gets out of bed and goes to check on Petra. She isn't there. She isn't downstairs, either. He wakes up Fielda to tell her and the two hunt for the girl then call the police. Deputy Sheriff Louis comes to their house to discuss the situation.

A noise wakes up Antonia. She remembers that Griff is gone on his fishing trip. Someone bangs on the door, and she is annoyed. As she walks down the hallway she thinks about her children. Louis and Martin are at the door. They ask if Petra is there then ask to talk with Calli. Antonia realizes Calli is missing, also. After searching her house, the adults wonder if the girls have gone off together. It's six in the morning. Martin points out that his daughter has been missing since at least 4:30 AM. Louis asks if Griff might have taken them fishing, and Antonia laughs at that idea. He doesn't like children enough to do that. Ben suggests that the girls went into the woods.

Ben wakes up from a dream in which he is helping Calli climb a tree then can't join her because he can't climb it himself. He feels guilty that his sister is missing because he feels responsible for her. Ben remembers when he let her down in the past. He also remembers that he left Tootsie Rolls under her pillow as a way to apologize.

Griff falls asleep still holding Calli's arm. She thinks about Ben and things he has taught her about the woods. Griff wakes up and asks her which way to go. She leads him to the sheriff's house. They see the sheriff's wife in the yard. She's talking on the phone angrily. Overhearing her conversation, they realize that everyone thinks Calli and another girl are missing. Calli wonders who the other girl is.

Martin has searched all of his daughter's favorite places. He remembers the night Petra was born. He reflects on his own childhood. He was poor until his father asked for his help on the farm. Using his gift for words and numbers he got the family's accounts in order. They weren't rich, but they were better off than they were. Martin remembers holding Petra for the first time. He feels as if he has let his family down now that his daughter is lost.



Louis calls in to say that he thinks the situation is more than just two girls running off. The sheriff wonders if it's similar to the McIntire case, which was an abduction and murder of a 10-year-old named Jenna McIntire.

Petra is trying to keep up, and they won't stop. Finally, she hears a voice calling to her.

As the day goes on, Griff is getting more quiet, and Calli is getting nervous. She remembers good times with her brother as her father starts rambling on about his wife's supposed relationship with the sheriff. He shoves Calli away, and she tries to talk with him. She remembers good times with him, too. Griff starts kicking her. She runs away.

The family is barred from Calli's room so the police can sort through things. Martin is extremely worried about Petra, but Antonia isn't as worried about Calli because she knows her daughter is forever running off. Antonia kept trying to call Griff on his cell phone, but he wasn't picking up. She doesn't want to call her brothers because she feels that it's too frightening to put the fact that Calli's lost into words is too frightening. She has faith that Ben will find the girls.

Martin and Louis hope to find the girls at Antonia's, but they aren't there. He notes how beautiful Toni looks. Antonia says Ben is out looking for the girls. They discuss the situation while drinking iced tea. Antonia explains that the woods is like a second home to Calli. Martin says Petra isn't allowed into the woods without an adult. Louis suggests that they let the public know that the girls are missing. They discuss the unique friendship between Petra and the mute girl. Petra always seems to know what Calli needs. They are kindred spirits. Toni looks for Calli's shoes and realizes the girl is barefoot. She looks scared, and Louis reaches out to comfort her.

Ben searches all the regular areas in the woods. He wonders if his father did take the girls fishing with him, and he recollects a time when his dad took him fishing. They had a good time. He doesn't really think his father took them with him, though. He remembers what a good sport his little sister is. He isn't sure why she stopped talking when she was four and he was nine. It was very sudden.

Griff chases Calli as she runs away. His rage reminds her of that day in December when she was four. Her mother was seven months pregnant with her sister, and her father came home drunk. While they were arguing, he held Calli tightly, scaring her. Griff accidentally knocked Antonia down the stairs then got angry because Calli wouldn't stop crying. He whispered something to her then left. That evening her mother gave birth to a dead girl. Now, from her hiding place, Calli sees a man, but she remains hidden because she doesn't want the man to hand her over to her dad.

Section 1-850 Analysis

This section is written as if Antonia is talking to the girl. As the novel opens, the reader has no idea what is going on, but there are clues. A woman sees a dirty girl coming out of the woods and is filled with relief. This implies the girl was missing. The girl is silent, but the woman is used to that. She shows love for the girl by thinking that she would



never force the girl to say a sound, but she is so thrilled to have the girl back in her arms. The girls doesn't go to her arms, however. The woman isn't upset. She is proud that the girl is being smart. Something has happened that is traumatic enough to get the girl talking again. She says one word, and the word is powerful enough to distress Petra's father. The scene is emotionally mixed. The woman feels horrible for Petra's father, but she is relieved to see the girl, and she is very joyful and thankful that the girl talks after three years of silence.

This section is written in third person omniscient in past tense. Although it's third person, it delves into Calli's thought processes. The reader gets to meet the mute girl in this section. It's August in Iowa. Calli lives in a decent house with her parents. She has her own bedroom and a chenille bedspread. She has materials ready for school. This shows that someone in the girl's life cares. She loves school even though the adults in school don't understand her muteness. She has accidents, but it doesn't appear to bother her. The teachers and nurse are understanding and supporting.

It's very obvious in this chapter that Calli wants to avoid her father if at all possible. However, when it comes to a choice of distressing her mother or facing her father, she chooses facing him. This shows that she really cares about her mother and her mother's feelings.

Calli's father has a drinking problem. He is moody as a result of this. When he's not drinking, he's a wonderful father, but when he is drinking Calli tries to stay away from him. The problem each day is that she never knows when she goes downstairs whether or not he is drinking alcohol. At the end of the chapter, the reader realizes that the father doesn't believe her really is Calli's father, and he's bitter about the fact.

The section about Petra is written in the first-person present tense. The reader finds out that it's very hot, and the girl hears something outside. She has a strong enough sense of self to face her fear as she goes over to see what is making the noise. Something she sees calms her, showing familiarity. She is drawn enough to whatever she sees that she is willing to break rules she knows she ought to follow to go outside to meet it.

This is written in the third-person past tense. Calli knows the woods much better than her father does. It's unclear whether he's lost because he's drunk or because he just doesn't know the woods like she does. They pass through areas that hold good memories for Calli. Her mother is shown in stark contrast to her father. Her father grips her tight and doesn't care about the fact that she is barefoot, and her feet are getting scratched. Her mother plays with her, encourages imagination, and provides food. In this chapter the reader learns that Calli is seven-years-old.

The next section is in the first-person present tense. Martin and Fielda have been married for 14 years, and he still loves her passionately. This section depicts a very close family and offers insight into Martin's character. He loves his life and his family, and when his daughter is missing, Martin doesn't worry about embarrassment or looking like an unfit parent. He calls in for help as soon as he can.



The following section is written in first-person present tense. Antonia wakes up to a sound she thinks is thunder. Her first response is to wake her children so they can enjoy it together. This shows their closeness and love for nature and for each other. She realizes her husband is gone. This shows a distance in their relationship since she didn't get up with him to see him off on his trip. Antonia reflects on the roles of the men in her life. She is in awe of her daughter and feels as if she doesn't really know how to take care of the girl due to her male-dominated background.

Louis and Martin are at the door, and Louis betrays a special closeness to her when he mentions her name. He is the only one who calls her Toni. As Antonia invites them in, she is embarrassed by all the beer cans littering the place. Even when she is under stress, Antonia thinks about her children. She notices Ben's hair needs cutting, and she is concerned about hiding spots for the children's games. Both Ben and Antonia show that they aren't too nervous about the girls. In fact, Ben isn't even going to start looking for them until he finishes his paper route. Nobody objects.

Written in the first-person past tense, Ben talks to Calli in his section. He has a symbolic dream where he is taking care of her and is concerned for her, yet he can't keep up with her. He was only a child himself when he was put in charge of her, but he still takes the responsibility seriously. He remembers a time when he shirked his duties and left her to her own resources. He tried to make her feel better by giving her candy under her pillow. They didn't discuss the situation.

In this section, the reader gets the first inkling that Calli is ashamed of the fact that she has accidents. As she stays trapped by her father, her mind wanders, and the reader sees how much she admires her brother. He has taught her a lot, and they have good times together. When her brother gets hurt, her mother takes care of him. Now Calli is hurt and hungry, but all her father cares about is finding the Sheriff's house. He asks for her help, and she has the option of lying. As much as she doesn't want him to find the place, it's better than staying in the woods with him. They arrive in time to hear the sheriff's wife accusing her husband of running off to help Antonia. Calli is relieved to know that her mother is aware that she is missing, and she is concerned about the other girl. She wants to get home where she can be cared for.

Martin knows his daughter, and he knows where she plays. He came from a hard-working yet poverty-stricken background. Always academically inclined, Martin felt as if he let his father down until he figured out how to use his talents to help the family. He is a good provider now, yet when his daughter is missing, he takes the loss personally, feeling as if he has let his family down.

This section is written in the first-person present. This story takes place in a small town, and it's obvious. Louis has a bad vibe about the situation, and his co-worker believes him. They don't stand on ceremony or follow a rulebook. They immediately begin calling others for help based on the vibe. Although it's a small town, crime isn't a stranger. A young girl was abducted and killed a year before.



This is a one-page chapter that shows something is wrong with Petra's plan. She knows what she saw outside her window and was comfortable enough to go out for a greeting. Instead of staying there, the characters ran away from her, luring her away.

Calli went into the woods with her father because he had never hurt her. This changes in this section as Griff lashes out at her physically. She runs away from him.

It seems as if the reality of the situation isn't reaching through to Antonia. She can't believe her daughter's room is being taped off. She is basing the scenario on past situations. Calli was always wandering. As she filters through a mental list of people she should contact, the reader realizes that Antonia is very much alone. She doesn't want to voice that there is a problem because then she would have to accept that this was true. The reader can't help but wonder if this is symbolic of Calli's muteness.

The upbringing of the girls is highlighted in this section. They are from different backgrounds - Calli is encouraged to play in the woods and Petra is kept away from it unless she is with an adult. There is a subtle friction between Martin and Antonia, both both are grateful for the friendship between the girls, who seem to balance each other. Both parents are on edge and react when it seems as if others are judging their parenting abilities.

Ben is determined to find his sister. Even though she sometimes annoyed him, she is very special to him. He feels very protective of her, and a little bit lost on how to deal with her. He doesn't know why she stopped talking, but it took a bit of light out of his world.

All Calli wants to do is get home, and she is terrified her father is going to catch her. She hides and reflects on her situation. Griff's anger flashes Calli back to the night she stopped talking when she was four. The night had begun well with Calli and her mother discussing baby names. Griff came home drunk and began accusing Antonia. In his drunken rage, he didn't care that he was scaring young Calli, just as he didn't care about her in the woods. His jealousy took over, causing harm to those around him. He whispers to Calli, and the words he said haunt her to the present day in the woods. She is so terrified of him that when she sees a man who might help her, she continues hiding because he might return her to her father.



Sections 851-1604

Sections 851-1604 Summary

Fielda waits at home while Martin is working on the business end of finding their daughter. Martin has the difficult task of putting up fliers. As he puts them up, he understands that people might think of him as a suspect. Still, his memories of his daughter make every inconvenience worthwhile. He remembers how everyone loves her, and he thinks of how she reaches out to help others. She is creative in her solutions.

Although Antonia doesn't have friends, she still reaches out to call everyone she can think of regarding the missing girls. She and Martin have different parenting styles, as the reader sees earlier in the book. However, they both have the same reactions to this situation. They loved their children with a passion and are greatly distressed by the disappearances. They feel that others are judging them, but ignore the responses and keep contacting others in hopes of finding the girls.

She reflects on the fact that she wasn't proactive enough when Calli first stopped talking. In a way, her daughter began to go missing then. She expresses doubt over the relationship between her husband and Calli for the first time when she realizes that she never asked Griff what he told the girl. She never asked Calli, either. She is very appreciative of Ben. He supports her more than her husband.

Calli is protecting herself from life's harshness when some of life's beauty lures her out of her hiding. She and the fawn are mirrors of each other - dancing around each other, wondering who they can trust.

This section demonstrates the personal and professional passion Louis has for the case. He is quick to call in extra help. A city boy relocated to the country, he knows this is more than he can handle alone. The image of little girl reminds him of the mother he fell in love with when they were both young children, the same age as this little girl.

Ben sees himself as the family protector when his father is away. In retrospect, he wonders what his father was like when he was gone. The man would beat on him to try to make Calli talk. Ben knows Calli felt horrible about this. She let him down, and now he is letting her down by not finding her and keeping her safe.

All the talking is beginning to irritate Fielda and Martin. They want action. Fielda is visibly falling apart, and Martin tries to protect her even as he wants to rush out and physically start searching. The police have been through this before, and even though it's excruciating, they know they must conduct detailed interviews so they don't spend useless time hunting in the wrong direction. When Martin blows up, they understand. Fielda and Martin grieve together as a single unit.



Although he was originally from the city and he went to college in the city, Louis shows that he is a country man at heart. His job isn't easy, and he knows the horrible things that could happen to Calli and Petra. He separates himself from his personal thoughts and thinks objectively about the situation, doing what must be done. He has a personal dislike for Griff and informs Fitzgerald about the man, but he doesn't go into great detail. He just warns him about Griff's violence and emphasizes that the warning is based on rumor, but might prove true. By the end of the chapter, Martin and his wife had gotten their emotions back under control and were ready to work with Louis and Fitzgerald again.

All her time in the woods helps Calli as she fights off fatigue, hunger, and thirst. She knows which berries are all right to eat and what to avoid. She also knows to find shade and shelter when she sleeps. Calli is in unknown territory, yet her desire to avoid her father prevents her from going back into familiar territory. Hunger and thirst are better than facing him now that he has crossed the line and hit her.

Ben wants to get out into the woods to search for his sister. He knows she loves it there - a thought that is emphasized by her box of treasures. The cotton in the box shows a whimsical side of Calli and her mother. It's reminiscent of their imaginative play in the woods mentioned in previous chapters. Ben knows his sister well enough to realize that they share the same wishes - at least when it comes to having their father disappear from their lives.

Antonia cares for her son, making sure he eats. She reflects on her life choices, realizing that Louis was all she ever needed. When she felt abandoned by him, she cut him off, ending up on the path that led her to a very unhappy marriage. She knows that Griff has a good side to him, and part of her loves him. However, his drinking is more important to him, and it turns him into an unlovable man. Antonia can't help thinking she destroys everything she is a part of even though her children adore her.

Louis and Fitzgerald are at Antonia's house. He sees the situation personally while Fitzgerald sees it professionally. He's a cop, but he's not very physical. He plays by the rulebook, and Griff knows this. It's the reason he isn't out searching for Calli right now. He's going by the book, interviewing and setting up procedures.

Even though Ben is a young boy craving his father's attention, he can't seem to get his father's approval. He remembers his failure on the soccer field. Ben wishes his father would yell at him, but he's just quiet. Silence plays a big role in this novel. Ben's father's silence is hard to deal with and so is Calli's silence.

Antonia is a country girl, and the new cop doesn't look very country. She is relaxed and seems flippant with her answers. She seems to be blocking the reality of her daughter's absence. Instead of seeing the police as a help, she feels judged until Louis pulls her aside to stress the importance of taking the questions seriously. Due to her connection with him, she is able to let down and show some of her insecurities about the situation.



Petra is Calli's strength in school, but now we see that Calli is Petra's strength as well. The reader begins to understand the girl's character more now. She is kind-hearted and willing to risk unpopularity to help others. She is also resourceful socially, but she isn't very resourceful physically. She can help other accept Calli, but she can't assuage her own thirst.

Ben and Louis both know how close the relationship between Louis and Antonia. This makes Ben skittish, and it makes Louis jealous. The reader isn't sure if it's because Griff has a son that looks like him and Louis doesn't or if it's because he wishes Ben were his son. Up to this point in the story, Ben comes across as kind, caring, nurturing, and protective. In this section the reader sees a different side of him. He is reminded of something unpleasant in his past, and he lashes out.

Antonia, who thinks she ruins everything, is just to run in and protect her son. She is getting tired of the police "help" and is ready to take matters into her own hands. She is left alone to her thoughts, memories, and un-fulfilled wishes. Antonia turns to nature to soothe herself and sees evidence that proves that the police were right to be concerned. Instead of trying to deal with this new evidence on her own, she hurries to inform the police, even though she doesn't appreciate the way they are dealing with the situation.

Fielda and Martin's marriage and love for each other seems so perfect, but in the section the reader discovers that it wasn't always ideal. The reader also realizes that Petra was the child that Fielda always wanted although it seemed like parenthood would never happen for them. This makes this situation all the more tragic. They waited so long for her, and now she's gone. Martin let Fielda down in the past regarding children, and now he's letting her down again in his mind.

Sections 851-1604 Analysis

Martin goes home and tells his wife they still haven't found their daughter. They decide to put fliers up around town. Martin goes to his office and thinks about everything that occurred that day. He remembers how Petra loved playing under his desk while he worked. His co-workers and students all love seeing the girl. Martin remembers one student, Lucky Thompson, who was particularly distressed, and Petra came up with an idea to help him.

Antonia calls everyone she can think of, trying to get information about the girls. She feels as if others are judging her when they hear the news. She feels like she should have put up signs when her daughter lost her voice, too. Antonia reflects on the way they took Calli to a doctor and a counselor. She wonders what Griff said to Calli the day her daughter died.

It's very hot out, and Ben comes out of the woods. He didn't find Calli, and he apologizes. After a cool drink, he plans to go out searching again. The police call. They can't get a hold of Griff or Roger. As Louis talks on the phone, Antonia suddenly realizes



that her husband might be a suspect. Louis reassures her that he will be there during all questioning. He tells her he reported the girls' missing status to the National Crime Information Center. He has also notified the Bon the Lookout bulletin for the county. Ben and Antonia get ready for the police to show up and question them.

Calli is still in hiding, scared to come out when she hears a noise. It's a fawn. Both scared, the girl and the fawn take tentative steps toward each other.

Louis continues his search strategy, appointing David Glass, a reservist, to park between the homes to gather information and be a point person. He remembers when he and Toni met when they were seven. He had moved in from Chicago and felt out of place. On his first day of school he saw a daredevil girl on a sled and fell in love. Now, in the present day, a visitor interrupts his reminiscing. It's Agent Fitzgerald from the state police.

Watching everyone set up for the search, Ben is amazed at the fuss Calli is creating, even without saying a word. He remembers how Calli seemed disappointed whenever he slept at a friend's house. He only did that when his father was home because he never wanted to leave his mom and Calli home alone without protection. He thinks about how his father tried to get Calli to talk. When she didn't Dad became angry. He would hit Ben so Calli would be forced to talk, but she couldn't make the words come out. Ben knew she felt horrible about that because he found Tootsie Rolls under his pillow for the next two weeks.

The police question the parents, and Martin can see that Fielda is barely holding together. They hadn't seen Petra since the night before. She went to bed and was reading then came to Fielda for help reading a word. Martin didn't understand why they were being questioned like this. Fielda doesn't want questioning, he wants active searching. The police ask for a list of everyone Petra interacted with during the past year. Fielda realizes that the police think this might be more than a case of girls wandering off. The police state there are some similarities to the McIntire case. Martin comforts his wife as she slips to the floor in distress. He asks the police to leave.

Fitzgerald can't stand the sound of the cicadas outside. It was hard to show the link to the McIntire girl, but it was necessary. Louis talks about bringing in search dogs and organizing a formal search. Upon questioning, Louis suggests they look closely at Toni's husband as a suspect. He points out that Riff is a drinker it's rumored that he has a violent streak. Martin comes outside the house to invite them in and say that they are ready.

Calli went deeper into the forest than she had ever gone before. She was very thirsty, but didn't want to go back the way she came because she didn't want to run into Griff. She ate some berries to assuage her hunger. She decided to climb upward so that she could see where she was and how to get home. Before she climbed, though, she took a nap.



Ben has to stick around to talk to the police. He doesn't like being by himself or seeing his sister's room taped off. His mother is sifting through Calli's treasure box, finding pieces of nature in it, including dandelion fluff. Antonia reminds him that the fluff is for making wishes. Ben thinks he knows what his sister would wish for: to be able to speak again, for a dog, and for their father to go back to work in Alaska and never come back.

While she is making lunch, Antonia remembers a time when she and Louis were younger. They would get a drink at a cafe where Fielda worked. Fielda tried to be her friend, but she was too engrossed in Louis to have more friends. Later, after her marriage, Fielda tried to befriend her again, but Antonia avoided her, not wanting Fielda to discover what her husband was really like.

Antonia and Louis made love by the river when they were 16. They wished on dandelion fluff. She wished for a yellow house. Three years later, he was away in college and she married Griff.

Fitzgerald and Louis are back in Antonia's kitchen. Louis thinks back to the night Antonia had her dead baby. He had gone to the bar to tell Griff what happened. When he was in college, he went home to visit and ask Calli to come back to Iowa City with him. She said no because she was seeing Griff. Louis drove 40 miles then stopped for gas, and Griff came out of the shadows, warned him off Antonia, and beat him up. Now, at the bar, Louis told Griff that his wife was in the hospital. Louis had to drive the drunk man over to the hospital. Griff asked what Antonia said about the evening then told Griff she had fallen down the stairs but had said she was all right before he left.

Ben remembers playing soccer when he was younger. He wasn't very good. He was too big and not very athletic. The coach made him goalie. One time his father came to his game, and a ball made it past him into the goal. His father walked away, nothing bothering to stay and see that they won the game 4-1. Back at home Griff never mentioned the game, which seemed worse to Ben than if his father had yelled at him.

Antonia welcomes Louis and Fitzgerald into her house. She isn't taking the situation very seriously, still thinking the girls have just wandered off. She answers questions about Roger and Griff, who they still can't get a hold of. Antonia tells them what Calli was wearing the previous night and explains that the girl doesn't speak. Louis tells Fitzgerald that she stopped talking after she saw her mother fall down the stairs and lose the baby. Louis talks privately with Antonia and warns her to take the questioning seriously.

The little girl is lost. She wishes she was like Calli, who would know what to do. Back in kindergarten, she heard that Calli didn't talk and discovered that it was true. She ate with Calli, and the other kids began to shun her. She became Calli's voice, instinctively knowing what Calli wanted. Petra wishes Calli was with her in the woods.

Louis sees Ben and is jealous of the fact that the boy looks so much like his father. His own son looks like his wife. Fitzgerald interviews the 12-year-old boy. He tells them how good his sister is. They are close. He says he hangs out with his sister because she



doesn't have many friends due to her muteness. Fitzgerald mentions that most people think he's a nice boy, but Jason Meechum's parents think differently. This upsets Ben who starts saying that they need to start searching for Calli in the woods because that's where she always goes. When Fitzgerald points out that she might not have had a choice about leaving, Ben runs.

Antonia hears the loud voices and hears the Meechum name. She angrily confronts Fitzgerald. She defends her son. Fitzgerald apologizes and explains that he has to look at cases from all angles even if it upsets people. He emphasizes that he is organizing a search and points out that they won't authorize people to search after dark when she says she will send out a team herself if Calli isn't found by evening. He warns her that the media will arrive soon, and suggests that she welcome them since they can be helpful in the search. A crime lab team is also on the way to check out her room.

Antonia is left alone. She goes to her garden to do some weeding. In the shed with her supplies, she notices the yellow paint for her house. It's been sitting there for 13 years. As she settles in to work in the garden, she notices the imprints of a child's feet and a man's boot in addition to drag marks. She runs to the house to tell an officer and call Louis.

The police recommend that Martin and Fielda stay with family or friends. They go to her mother's home. Fielda looks old for the first time. He wants to sleep, but knows he needs to stay alert to search for Petra. He doesn't like being considered a suspect, but knows it's procedural so he gets fingerprinted and answers questions. He remembers how horrible he felt the second time he was separated from Fielda.

She was obsessed with having a child, and it wasn't happening naturally. He cruelly called her on it, telling her to stop. He hadn't noticed she was slipping into depression. They went to a doctor appointment, and the doctor wanted a sperm sample to test. Martin said maybe they just weren't meant to have children. Fielda drove off, leaving him to walk home. She didn't show up all day. He searched for her and found her passed out in the car. He took her to the hospital where they pumped her stomach since she had ingested pills. Martin knew he failed his wife. She didn't talk to him for two weeks. They forgave each other, and now, 10 years later, they were missing their daughter. He feels as if he let Petra down by letting her get taken from his home.

This section adds more dimension to Ben's character. He isn't just a sweet boy with an abusive father. He has his own temper and he uses it when provoked. He knows he doesn't want to be like his father, and he feels remorse for his actions.

Calli's dream is filled with symbolism. It shows who she trusts and who she doesn't. It also demonstrates that her latest run-in with her father has led her to a point where she psychologically sought out a safe haven - the fawn.

In a small town, politics can get particularly sticky. There is an undercurrent of small town drama in the inner workings of the police department, yet it doesn't interfere with their professionalism. In this section, the reader gets even more insight into the



relationship between Toni and Louis. They split because she felt abandoned. She wants simple things - to stay in one place and have a yellow house. Her mom dies, her dad is leaving, and now Louis is going. It shows why she was quick to rebound with a relationship with Griff who was staying around.

The parents of the girls initially seem lost in the investigation. Martin finds out about the footprints after he goes and questions the police. Fitzgerald then sits them down to discuss the case. Martin knows he should tell Fielda, and he wants to protect her. Fitzgerald emphasizes that telling the truth about it all is the best way to help. He tells Toni to find a new home for the night, and she has a hard time thinking of someone to stay with, emphasizing her lack of friends. She mentions that she could stay with a neighbor. Fielda shows up and is inundated by the press. Up to this point she seems fragile, but now she seems to develop a new strength.

We see another example of Ben's love for Calli, and insight into another time he lost his temper. In both cases, he was protecting his family when he lost his temper. In both cases, he regretted lashing out, but he didn't regret the results. In both cases he ran off after losing his temper. His mother was there to comfort him in both cases.

This section shows the friendship between Petra and Calli in even more detail. They are filled with child-like imagination and wonder as they play. Their innocence is a stark contrast to the situation they are now facing. Family and friends play with them, encouraging and supporting them. Even Lucky's dog joins in the fun.

When things went wrong, Petra would help Calli, She helped her at the beginning of their friendship as she helped Calli socially. Now she comes to the rescue again when Calli is treated unfairly by a substitute teacher. She goes to Mr. Wilson for help. In a bit of foreshadowing, Calli's mom tells her daughter that someday she might need to be there to help Petra.

The parents go out to face the press in a united front. It's only after the conference that they fall apart and start attacking each other verbally. Antonia knows her husband is a mean drunk, but she still feels strongly that he isn't the problem in this situation. She really does love him at a certain level. The life she ended up with isn't ideal, but she thinks it's all worth it because she has her children.

It's easy to blame others in a stressful situation. The reader sees this as Martin and Fielda verbally attack Antonia. In the case of Mrs. McIntire and Louis, the reader understands that she blames him partially for her daughter's death. The tragic event tore them apart, and now there is a tentative truce as they are faced with a new horror. The cases have many similarities.

Calli is led partially by fear and partially by intuition up the bluff where she finds a silver necklace. The reader will remember the necklace mentioned earlier in the book. It's the one Petra always wears. What she sees next horrifies and instead of facing it head-on, she retreats, hides, and mentally goes to her safe place.



Fielda is becoming even stronger in the face of the events. She is ready to take matters into her own hands in regards to the media. Martin thinks about Griff and a situation in his past where he saw a mean side of Griff. He also saw that his daughter recognizes the harsh behavior, and it made her sad for her friend. While Calli was having a hard night with her family, Petra is being lovingly celebrated. She even gets to eat Lucky's cherry as he joins them in their celebration. Martin is ready for more action, too. He wants to go into the woods.

Griff finally finds Calli. He is trying to persuade her to come with him when he notices Petra. He seems genuinely surprised and horrified. His daughter is terrified of him, and his son crashes into the scene, not believing him either. His past actions have turned them against him to the point where sending Calli off by herself seems to be the safest option.

Ben isn't sure if he made the right decision, but he knows he is right to protect his sister. It seems as if he made the right choice as his father comes to attack him. The boy is becoming a man, however, and the violent streak he might have inherited turns back on the man who raised him.

In this chapter, the reader sees how Antonia relies on Martin. Even though she is married to Griff, her thoughts and dreams are with Louis. She knows it's wrong, and she forces her mind back to her reality.



Sections 1605 - 2477

Sections 1605 - 2477 Summary

Ben runs off into the woods. He is very distressed about what the police are implying - that he might have harmed Calli. He would never do that. He was always a mild type of guy, but one day he was struggling with math problems at school. Jason Meechum called him a retard several times, and it tipped Ben over the edge. He threw his chalk at the bully, hitting him right between his eyes. When he ran home after the incident, his mother comforted him. At school Jason and his friends taunted Ben saying that his mom was sleeping with the sheriff. Ben threatened Jason when he caught him alone, but denied doing so after Jason reported the incident. Now, Ben mentally tells the missing Calli that he would never hurt her. He isn't like their father. He vows to find her and bring her back so everyone knows he isn't the violent type.

Calli isn't sleeping well. It is hot, and the mosquitos are biting her. She dreams that she was flying. As she flies, she is trying to escape her father. She follows a fawn as it led her somewhere. People grab at her, but don't get a firm hold. She recognizes many people from her life grasping at her, but she can't find Ben. The fawn leads her to a beautiful water hole, which is perfect because she is extremely thirsty, but she can't fly down to get the water. She finally sees Ben, who seems to instinctively know what she needs. He throws water up to her. She flies up and into the sun then wakes up, disoriented.

Since she is so thirsty, she decides to head downward, toward water. As she walks down the bluff she thinks about her school counselor, Mr. Wilson. He doesn't try to force her to talk. Instead, he gives her a beautiful journal and some colored chalk. In her dream she saw him pointing at something in one of the journals, but she doesn't know what it was.

Louis and Fitzgerald separate to work on different parts of the search. He thinks about Sheriff Harold Motts, who is close to retiring. Louis is thinking of running for sheriff in the next election and has the support of most of the people in the department, but Deputy Logan Roper does not approve. Louis thinks it's because Roper and Griff are friends. They were five years ahead of Louis and Antonia in school.

During their senior year of high school Toni and Louis talked about their future. He wanted to go to college, and she didn't. When he told her he was leaving, she cut him off saying that everyone left her. She wouldn't listen when he told her he would come back. They broke up in December, and she wouldn't respond to phone calls or come to the door. They became strangers. Four years later, he met Christine and married her.

Back at the station, Officer Tucci gives him more information on the case. They ran some names and most are clean. They can't find any information on Lucky Thompson, and he isn't answering his phone. They are still checking on teachers and the school



counselor, Charles Wilson. Another teacher, Sam Garfield, left his former job because he had an affair with a student. Louis is told that Antonia found footprints. Roper is over there checking it out. Mrs. McIntire called twice to offer help.

Louis talks with Fitzgerald and warns him that Roper, who is close to Griff, is checking into the footprints. He points out that Roper is a decent cop, but this might be a conflict of interest. Fitzgerald understands and suggests that Louis go, but Louis points out that he might have a conflict of interest as well due to his past relationship with Toni. Mrs. McIntire shows up in the office. He tries to figure out what to say to her.

Martin can't sit still anymore. He drives off and notices all the activity at the Clark's. He usually likes the quietness of the neighborhood and loves how everyone knows each other. He and his wife won't let Petra go to the Clarks' house when Griff is home, but they don't tell her why. They tell her Calli needs time with her dad. A media van drives past as Martin joins the police and Antonia. They fill him in on what's going on. He wants to tell his wife what's up. The police tell Antonia she now has to leave her home since now it's considered a crime scene. She thinks she can stay with her neighbor. They agree to speak with the reporters in an hour. Martin hears a commotion and sees his wife making her way through reporters. They mention that Jenna McIntire's mom is in town and ask if there is a connection in the cases. Fielda almost faints but pulls herself together.

Another time Ben was upset was when he nine and Calli was four. He was upset because his mom kept bribing Calli, trying to get her to talk. In his anger he tells his mom that if she wants to find out why Calli isn't talking, she should talk to Dad. He ran out after yelling at his mom and climbed a tree. His mom and sister hunted for him, and Calli found him. She waved at him, but didn't point him out. Mom must have noticed him, too, although she didn't let on that she did. Later, she placed food and a pillow and blanket under the tree without talking to him. He slept in the tree that night, and Mom stopped trying to bribe Calli to talk.

As Calli walks downward and found a meadow, she thinks of Petra. She and Petra would gather flowers and Petra would plan weddings with her dolls. Lucky and his dog, Sergeant, attended one of the weddings. Calli gave Sergeant flowers to wear in his collar. They played tag later. It was a happy day. Now, in the meadow, she misses Petra. The girl always seems to know what Calli needs. Once they had a substitute who wouldn't let Calli go to the bathroom. Petra went and reported the incident to the school counselor who took care of the situation. Antonia told Calli to always be there for Petra because her friend might need her someday.

The parents of the missing girls are trying to figure out what to tell the media. The three go out to face the press as a unit. The police also answer questions. They say they haven't been able to contact Griff or Roger yet. The press ask if they are suspects, eliciting a gasp from Antonia. They ask about a connection between the girls and Jenna's case. Antonia hasn't heard this connection yet. After the conference Martin and Fielda ask about Griff, and get angry because they knew he had been drinking. They verbally assault Antonia, and she tries to kick them out. The police ask them to get



along, and the parents apologize to each other. Antonia reflects on meeting Griff and marrying him. She thinks it's worth it because of her children.

Louis invites Mary Ellen McIntire into his office as he reflects on her tragic case. She really wants to help. In the past she blamed him for not finding her daughter soon enough. He promises to call her if they can use her help. There is a new peace between them.

The trail is hard to navigate, but Calli forces herself to stay on the path. As she hikes downward, she thinks she sees something, and it scares her. It is almost dusk. She finds Petra's necklace in the leaves, and she sees something that frightens her. She thinks of the fawn to calm herself.

Fielda and Martin are upset with the way the case is handled. Fielda confronts the police directly with her concerns. When they talk with reporters, Fielda asks them to keep running the story and offers pictures. Privately she and Martin talk, and Fielda states that she thinks Griff has something to do with the disappearance of the girls. Martin remembers a time when he witnessed Griff in a rage at parent/teacher conferences at school. Petra and Calli communicated a sad acceptance of the situation. Later, when Martin's family was out for ice cream, Lucky asked what they were celebrating, and they said it was their daughter's glowing conference. They invite him to join them. They talk about Griff.

Griff is there, calling gently to him until he sees Petra, who is is beaten up. He asks Calli what happened to the girl. He grabs some material from the bushes then throws up. Calli runs away while her father calls out to her asking if she knows who did that. He checks Petra for signs of life. Ben arrives at the scene and tries to protect Calli from Griff. He tells Calli to run. He tells her to go get help. Griff realizes his son thinks he hurt Petra. Ben sends Calli off to get help, telling her how to get home.

Ben can't believe he let his sister go by herself, but he knew he had to keep his dad away from her, and they couldn't move Petra. His father is furious and tries to attack him, but Ben has grown, and his father falls backward when he tries to tackle him. When his father tries to beat him, Ben fights back. When they calm down, Griff tries to explain that he is innocent. Ben thinks back to a time when he admired his father - before the beer changed him.

Antonia is worried about Ben now, too. She remembers how her mother encouraged her to read before she died. Her mother wanted her to marry Louis. Antonia read to her children even before they were born. In her dreams she is married to Louis, but she knows her reality is different when she wakes up. She decides to go out after Ben and notices Martin walking by. She goes out to meet him.



Sections 1605 - 2477 Analysis

This section adds more dimension to Ben's character. He isn't just a sweet boy with an abusive father. He has his own temper, and he uses it when provoked. He knows he doesn't want to be like his father, and he feels remorse for his actions.

Calli's dream is filled with symbolism. It shows who she trusts and who she doesn't. It also demonstrates that her latest run-in with her father has led her to a point where she psychologically sought out a safe haven - the fawn.

In a small town, politics can get particularly sticky. There is an undercurrent of small town drama in the inner workings of the police department, yet it doesn't interfere with their professionalism. In this section, the reader gets even more insight into the relationship between Toni and Louis. They split because she felt abandoned. She wants simple things - to stay in one place and have a yellow house. Her mom dies, her dad is leaving, and now Louis is going. It shows why she was quick to rebound with a relationship with Griff who was staying around.

The parents of the girls initially seem lost in the investigation. Martin finds out about the footprints after he goes and questions the police. Fitzgerald then sits them down to discuss the case. Martin knows he should tell Fielda, and he wants to protect her. Fitzgerald emphasizes that telling the truth about it all is the best way to help. He tells Toni to find a new home for the night, and she has a hard time thinking of someone to stay with, emphasizing her lack of friends. She mentions that she could stay with a neighbor. Fielda shows up and is inundated by the press. Up to this point she seems fragile, but now she seems to develop a new strength.

We see another example of Ben's love for Calli, and insight into another time he lost his temper. In both cases, he was protecting his family when he lost his temper. In both cases, he regretted lashing out, but he didn't regret the results. In both cases he ran off after losing his temper. His mother was there to comfort him in both cases.

This section shows the friendship between Petra and Calli in even more detail. They are filled with child-like imagination and wonder as they play. Their innocence is a stark contrast to the situation they are now facing. Family and friends play with them, encouraging and supporting them. Even Lucky's dog joins in the fun.

When things went wrong, Petra would help Calli, She helped her at the beginning of their friendship as she helped Calli socially. Now she comes to the rescue again when Calli is treated unfairly by a substitute teacher. She goes to Mr. Wilson for help. In a bit of foreshadowing, Calli's mom tells her daughter that someday she might need to be there to help Petra.

Antonia - 1996

The parents go out to face the press in a united front. It's only after the conference that they fall apart and start attacking each other verbally. Antonia knows her husband is a



mean drunk, but she still feels strongly that he isn't the problem in this situation. She really does love him at a certain level. The life she ended up with isn't ideal, but she thinks it's all worth it because she has her children.

Deputy Sheriff Louis - 2095

It's easy to blame others in a stressful situation. The reader sees this as Martin and Fielda verbally attack Antonia. In the case of Mrs. McIntire and Louis, the reader understands that she blames him partially for her daughter's death. The tragic event tore them apart, and now there is a tentative truce as they are faced with a new horror. The cases have many similarities.

Calli - 2130

Calli is led partially by fear and partially by intuition up the bluff where she finds a silver necklace. The reader will remember the necklace mentioned earlier in the book. It's the one Petra always wears. What she sees next horrifies and instead of facing it head-on, she retreats, hides, and mentally goes to her safe place.

Fielda is becoming even stronger in the face of the events. She is ready to take matters into her own hands in regards to the media. Martin thinks about Griff and a situation in his past where he saw a mean side of Griff. He also saw that his daughter recognizes the harsh behavior, and it made her sad for her friend. While Calli was having a hard night with her family, Petra is being lovingly celebrated. She even gets to eat Lucky's cherry as he joins them in their celebration. Martin is ready for more action, too. He wants to go into the woods.

Griff finally finds Calli. He is trying to persuade her to come with him when he notices Petra. He seems genuinely surprised and horrified. His daughter is terrified of him, and his son crashes into the scene, not believing him either. His past actions have turned them against him to the point where sending Calli off by herself seems to be the safest option.

Ben - Ben isn't sure if he made the right decision, but he knows he is right to protect his sister. It seems as if he made the right choice as his father comes to attack him. The boy is becoming a man, however, and the violent streak he might have inherited turns back on the man who raised him.

In this chapter, the reader sees how Antonia relies on Martin. Even though she is married to Griff, her thoughts and dreams are with Louis. She knows it's wrong, and she forces her mind back to her reality.



Sections 2478 - 3224

Sections 2478 - 3224 Summary

As Louis out of the meeting, he finds out that the man who was brought in was Charles Wilson, the school counselor. He had been found in Willow Creek Woods. He was walking his dog according to a statement, but there was no dog with him. Louis is called back to Mrs. Norland's home. He wonders if Wilson is the perpetrator, but it doesn't seem right to him. He wonders where Lucky Thompson is. He didn't show up for work that day. Louis calls in to say that he is going to be searching along Bobcat Trail.

Martin and Antonia are ready to go into the woods to look for the girls. They just have to figure out how to get past the press. They meet up with Louis and point out that it's going to be dark soon. They asked Louis to distract the reporters.

As Ben relaxes, he notices Petra move slightly. She isn't dead. He tries to get her to talk with him and reassures her that she is safe. She calls for her mother. He looks back at his father and realizes the man is gone. He cries as he feels that he let everyone down by letting the man escape. He stays with Petra to keep her safe.

Louis is getting ready to start the search when his wife calls. She is upset because he was supposed to take the day off. She wants him to spend time with their son, and she says that he is throwin the marriage away. As they talk, Calli comes out of the trees. He hangs up on his wife. Calli goes right up to Louis and speaks. Martin begins crying. Louis notices that Calli is holding Petra's underwear.

As Calli runs toward them, Martin notices that she is carrying his daughters necklace. When he hears what she says, he cries.

Antonia is incredibly relieved to see her daughter. She wants to hug her close. She doesn't even care if the girl never talk again. When Calli runs to Louis, it doesn't bother her because she thinks her daughter is smart to go to the man in the sheriff's uniform. When she hears her daughter speak, myriad emotions race through her.

As Calli runs for help, she sees a dog. It is dead. Feeling as if she is watched, she runs as fast as she can down the trail. She is concerned about her brother since she knows how mean her father can be. When she sees the adults she says, "Ben."

Martin is surprised that Ben did this. He asks Calli were his daughter is. He asked if she is all right. Antonia defends her son, and Calli signals that Petra is not okay. Martin sees his daughter's underwear, and he heads out into the woods after her. He doesn't wait for backup.

Louis tells Toni to wait as he heads out after Martin. They see the dead dog, and it's still warm. The two men ascend the bluff together. Louis warns Martin that it might be a dangerous situation when they get to the top.



Calli does everything she was supposed to do, and now she can rest. She is amazed that she spoke and nothing bad happens. She realizes that she should have said more. Calli takes comfort in her mother's arms and falls asleep.

Ben hears a noise in the woods and is worried that his father is coming back to kill him. He wants to protect Petra. It's Petra's father and the deputy sheriff. After he sees his daughter, the father comes flying at Ben. Ben realizes that he is getting blamed for her condition. Louis calls them over to the girl. Ben explains that his father did it. They call for a helicopter.

Antonia goes in the ambulance with Calli. She has faith that Louis will bring Ben home safely. She tells the medics that her husband is away on a fishing trip. Calli is checked out, and Antonia is reassured that the girl will be fine. They discuss her condition as a selective mute and offer some help. Antonia finds out that Griff is not fishing.

After the helicopter leaves with Petra, the men take four-wheelers down the bluff. Louis sees a figure in the trees and determines to come back later. Right now, he is intent on getting been to safety. He sends them to the hospital to join his mother and sister then goes back into the woods on foot.

Martin goes to tell Fielda what has happened. He wonders about his daughter and how much damage she has sustained. He plans to go back to the forest to take care of the monster who hurt his daughter. He plans to kill him.

Antonia works with medical personnel to take care of Calli. She tells Calli the familiar story of when she was born. The girl smiles. Suddenly, the little girl looks terrified. Antonia turns around to see her son, bloody and beaten. The doctor gave Calli a sedative, and she falls asleep before she can explain to them what is wrong with her.

Martin tells his wife that their daughter is alive. He says that he thinks the girl will be fine, but his wife should go to her. He asks his wife if she is up to driving to Iowa city on her own because he wants to help with the investigation. Mary Ellen McIntire offers to go with her. After they leave, he gets a gun.

Sections 2478 - 3224 Analysis

A new suspect comes to the forefront in this section. Some people are already blaming Griff while others are suspicious of Ben. Now the counselor at the school, Charles Wilson, has some incriminating evidence against him. Louis intuitively feels that something is wrong with the idea of treating Wilson as a suspect, but he doesn't let his emotions take over procedure. This is true to his character. When he gets the phone call, he is upset that it wasn't Toni on the other end. He is as tied to her mentally as she is to him.

Antonia is reassured by the fact that Louis is on his way. She is ready to go off on her own to search for the missing girls. Instead of waiting around for the police to tell them what to do, Martin and Antonio are taking matters into their own hands. Martin is a bit



out of his league because he doesn't know the woods very well. Louis and Antonia grew up in the woods and know exactly where to look.

Ben is used to taking care of his little sister, especially where his father is concerned. Now he transfers his care and concern to Petra. He is very grateful to the girl for her role in his sister's life. Now, when his father disappears, it's a hard hit for him. Even though his body is large enough to take on his own father, this section shows that Ben is still very much a little boy in need of his mother's comfort.

At the beginning of the book, the reader knows that Louis' wife is upset that he is running off to help Antonia. He clearly defines his priorities in this section when his wife calls him and complains that he isn't home enough for their son and warns him that he is a threat to their marriage. He is distracted by the events happening in Antonia's world, and he hangs up on his wife without saying goodbye. Calli appears and looks extremely distraught. She goes straight for help. Whatever she has seen and experienced has scared her out of her muteness.

While most of the adults are relieved and encouraged to seek Calli, Martin reacts differently. He immediately sees what is in her hand, and it fills him with fear. When she speaks, her single word causes the strong man to crumble.

As the reader sees the scene of the child coming out of the woods from Antonia's perspective, it almost seems as if she's describing a piece of art. All the horrible aspects of the situation seemed to disappear as the mother embraces her daughter and listens to her speak after the years of silence.

The horror of the day isn't over yet. Calli runs harder than she has before in order to get help. She wants to save her brother, she wants to help her friends, and she is also scared because she feels as if someone is watching her. She ignored her mother's outstretched arms because she is so desperate to get help, and she uses her voice for the first time in years. After stating her brother's name, she lapses back into silence.

Martin was surprised to hear Ben's name come out of Calli's mouth. He tries to get information on his daughter as he fights back jealousy. This girl is safe, but his is still missing. When he sees his daughter's underwear in the police car, it propels him into motion. He isn't waiting around for protocol or anything else. Even though he's not familiar with the words, he's on his way to go rescue the girl.

Louis knows that there is nothing that he can do to hold Martin back at this point. In an attempt to keep the man safe, he joins him. While calling for backup, he warns Martin that the situation is going to be tough when they get to the top, and his own safety is in jeopardy. He tries to remind Martin that he is trained in this type of matter

and Martin needs to respect protocol. Martin is moving ahead with an unnatural strength. All he wants to do is get to the top to help his daughter.

Everyone knows that Griff has a bad temper, and Martin and his wife had not excluded him as a suspect. Ironically, it's Martin's temper that sends Calli off into her mother's



arms for protection. Calli is excited that she communicated, and she is amazed that nothing horrible happened when she spoke. This implies that she did something or someone said something at some point that made her think that she would come to harm if she spoke. That said, she realizes that she should have said more. She is exhausted after all she has been through and doesn't say more. Her mother is now her safe spot, and she sleeps.

When Ben hears noises he is worried that his father has come back to kill him. Still, he is dedicated to protecting Petra so he stands firm. In this section, the reader sees how he is ready to face opposition like a man, but he is still very much a young boy. Throughout the novel, Louis has been dealing very professionally with the case. He shows flexibility in decision-making as he deals with the repercussions of individual choices such as Martin rushing up the mountain. He stays with Martin to keep him safe, but he doesn't lose track of his professionalism, and he calls for help so that now, at the top of the bluff, a helicopter is coming in to help Petra.

Antonia regularly shows that her biggest passion in life is her children. She is torn between the two now, and once again the reader is reminded of her faith in Louis as she goes off with Calli, trusting that Louis will take care of them. This trip to the hospital can benefit Calli in more ways than one. Not only will they be assured that she is all right, but medical personnel might also be able to assist her with her speaking. During this section, Antonia finally realizes that her husband is not out fishing. It's obvious that this comes as a shock to her. During the examination, Antonia is there to support her daughter even when it is unpleasant. She has been doing her best to avoid the realization of how traumatic the experience might have been for Calli, and she gives voice to her insecurities for the first time during the section.

The search is over for Martin, but Louis knows that his job is just beginning. He still needs to get Ben and Martin down the bluff safely, and he knows that there is a perpetrator on the loose. He notices something unusual in the trees, but he is compassionate and doesn't share this observation with the others. He just makes a mental note to go back and check it out. When he sends Ben off to his mother, he treats the boy in a fatherly manner.

Martin is flirting with shock. He isn't sure how he ended up on a four-wheeler after letting his daughter go. Everything is overwhelming. Although his daughter is damaged, he is very happy that she is still alive. He takes on the role of protector, knowing that his wife will play the role of a comforter. This mild-mannered man has turned a corner as he makes plans to go out to find the perpetrator and kill him.

Calli is finally getting some peace. She gets to rest, and her bruises and cuts are tended. Mother comforts her as she used to comfort her in the past with the story of her own birth. It makes her happy because her mother deliberately leaves out the harsh aspects of the story. The tranquility of the scene suddenly changes as Calli looks terrified. She is looking at her brother, and it's unclear to the reader and those in the room whether she is horrified because he reminds her of the traumatic situation or if it's because he looks so beaten up. In their attempt to protect her, the ones caring for her



lose out on some vital information as they give her a sedative, and she falls asleep before she can communicate what she is thinking.

Martin goes home and tells his wife what has happened, but he leaves out all the horrible details. He just says that she is needed over at the hospital so that she can be there to help their daughter. He asks if she can handle it alone, and his wife doesn't question she deeply. It's almost as if she doesn't really want to know what he is up to. Mrs. McIntire, who has been in this situation before, has insight into what he is doing. They leave, and he reaches for a gun he barely knows how to use.



3225-3896

3225-3896 Summary

Antonia looks at her daughter while her son is tended to. Even in her sleep, she shows signs of distress. Antonia decides to stay the night, but she wants to go home and get her daughter's favorite stuffed animal. A paramedic had offered to help her, and she figured she could get a ride to her house from the woman.

The police go through the words and look closely at the dead dog. Louis wonders if he let Wilson go too early. He checks in with Fitzgerald and finds out that Petra is unconscious but stable. Fitzgerald is upset with Louis for letting Martin go up the bluff, and Louis tries to explain that he didn't have a choice. He explains everything that happened, and Agent Simon decides that they need to go to the hospital to talk with Calli.

Ben is beginning to feel better. He is happy to be with his sister again. He wonders why she said his name when she came out of the woods. He remembers when she was born and how much everyone loves her. She always had a special bond with her father.

Antonia is heading home and she sees the group of police officers before she leaves the hospital. Christine, Louis' wife, is also there. She accuses him of caring for Antonia more than he cares about his own family. The police talk with Antonia and ask to talk with Calli. She says her children need rest right now and will answer when they are ready.

Louis talks with Christine, trying to explain that he needs to do his job. His wife tells him that she is leaving with their son. He follows her out of the hospital so he can kiss his son goodbye.

Martin is hiding from the police behind the Clark family's house. He sees someone come out of the woods. When Antonia comes out of the house, he is startled. She begins to walk toward the woods. Martin isn't sure whether he should warn her that someone is there or remain quiet.

The neighborhood is very quiet when Antonia arrives home. She hopes her daughter will talk when she wakes up. When she leaves the house, she walks toward the woods and hears Martin call out to her. He warns her about Griff, and she notices that he has a gun. Her husband comes up behind them and asks if she believes that he did it. He's very angry, and he grabs the gun from Martin, using it to hit Martin on the head. He says that he is innocent. Police sirens sound, and Griff drags Antonia into the forest.

Fitzgerald fills Louis in on the situation and tells him that Toni left. They discover that Martin is now missing. They need to find him so he can get permission for a surgery that Petra needs. Realizing that Martin is off looking for Griff, they head off to the Clark home.



Ben watches his sister sleep and remembers when she used to talk. He remembers the day that she became a mute. He wonders what she will do when she wakes up. He doesn't want to scare her again. When she wakes up, she smiles. He tells her a story about Princess Calli and Princess Petra, and through the story and her reactions to it, he tries to get information on what happened.

Martin realizes that he shouldn't have come out after Griff. He is happy when the police show up and tells them that Griff has taken Toni into the woods. He tells the police he was stupid, and he had a gun that Griff took from him. The police tell him that his wife is looking for him.

Griff drags Antonia into the woods and says he's going to hurt her. She tells him that she doesn't think he is guilty. He tells her that he is going to stop drinking. They remember the good times before he began drinking. He wants to run away, and she says the kids aren't in any condition to run. She tells him to go on, and she will tell the police everything. He accuses her of lying again. She panics. He whispers to her to shut up, and she suddenly realizes that he had said something to the daughter that made her stop talking.

Ben continues telling his story to the sister, getting more facts about what actually happened based on his sister's reactions. Dr. Higby sits in the room, listening. Ben realizes he has the story wrong, and tells his sister to finish the story because he can't.

Martin calls Fielda and finds out that his daughter is in surgery. He wonders what Calli and Ben would do if their mother never came back.

Fitzgerald and Louis go after Toni and Griff. They hear Toni accusing Griff of their child's muteness. Fitzgerald yells for Griff to drop his gun. Griff aims the gun at Toni's face, and Fitzgerald shoots him.

Calli remembers seeing a man holding a beaten up and barely-conscious Petra. The man asks her to help him get Petra down the bluff. She goes closer to him, and he grabs her arm. A large bird skims his shoulder, startling him. He lets go of Calli, and she falls down. When she gets back up he is gone. Calli realizes that she knows the man. He has a funny name and a dog. Now, in the hospital she says his name. It is Lucky.

Ben is proud of his sister for finishing the story. He feels badly for blaming his father and for beating him. Calli doesn't stop talking. Calli tells Ben that he saved them. It makes him feel good.

Louis goes back to the station to write up his report. He calls Wilson to apologize for inconveniences the department cost him. Wilson's dog came home. Louis goes to the hospital and sees Toni. They go together to tell the children about Griff.

When they tell the children that their father is dead, the children just accept the fact without tears, anger, or questions. Antonia, herself, feels relief. She is ready for new beginning.



Martin has to stay in the hospital because he has a concussion from the gun hitting his head. He calls to check on his daughter, and she is out of surgery. Martin apologizes to Antonia for suspecting her husband. Lucky is in the same hospital since he was badly injured when he fell after the bird startled him on the bluff.

It's now six years after the girls went missing. Calli remembers that dark day. It was the same day she felt that she had permission to use her voice again. Petra had stayed in the hospital for a long time, and Calli would go visit her. Her family moved away a year and a half later. Life is more difficult for Petra after the incident. The trial was especially difficult for the family since they had treated Lucky like a friend. They discovered that Petra had disappeared because she saw Lucky and his dog Sergeant out her bedroom window. She went out to say hello, and man grabbed her when they were well into the woods. Lucky killed Sergeant when the dog tried to protect Petra.

Now Calli and Petra still write each other. Ben is ready to go to college in the fall, and they are still close. He wants to be a police officer. Louis comes over a lot, and Calli wonders if her mom and Louis will get married. They still live near the woods, but Calli doesn't go into the woods often anymore. It's no longer safe place. She asks Wilson what he was pointing to in her journal when she had her dream. It's a picture of a bottle with notes coming out of it. It's her voice.

3225-3896 Analysis

Antonia looks at her daughter and sees how the events have taken a toll on the little girl. She wants to make her daughter is comfortable as possible so she decides to go home and get the girl's blanket and stuffed monkey. The doctors are very good with the children, and Ben is able to laugh. Antonia is so happy to hear his laugh, grateful that it isn't taken away like her daughter's voice was taken away years before. She needs a ride home, and she remembers a paramedic who was kind to her, offering help. In the past, when people offered to help her, she didn't let them because she was worried that they would find out about her home life. Now she reaches back to people who are reaching out to her.

Louis realizes that perhaps he didn't make the best decision by going out into the woods after the perpetrator on foot at night. He realizes that he did it because he is trying to be some sort of superhero to impress the woman he really loves. Fitzgerald calls him on it, and the two argue. He tries to explain that the circumstances aren't textbook, and Fitzgerald points out that he has too many personal connections to the case. They realize that hunting in the woods will do them no good, and they really need to talk to Calli.

Ben is feeling better and he is still determined to protect his sister. He is worried that she will be scared of him when she wakes up. Ben remembers when she was younger, and she was very fussy. Her father was the only person who could comfort her. This is ironic since he is the member of the household that causes so much damage.



Even though her daughter is found, another family went through the same experience and there is nothing she can do about it, Antonia still feels as if she is a terrible mother for letting anything happen to her children. On her way out of the hospital, before she goes to her house she sees Christine, Louis' wife. The woman is confronting her husband, stating that Louis cares more about Antonia's daughter than his own son. Fitzgerald wants to talk with Antonia's children, but she is still very protective. She knows her daughter needs some sleep before she can answer anything.

This case is like the proverbial straw that broke the camels back in Louis' marriage. It was critical for Louis to be at work, but he has spent so many years catering to Antonia that his wife doesn't believe him and feels abandoned by him because Antonia's children are involved in the case. Louis doesn't seem very upset to see her go, but he follows her outside so that he can kiss his son goodbye.

Martin is in a situation he never would have guessed that he would find himself in. He is avoiding the police as he looks for a perpetrator. He is certain that it is Griff. Part of him knows that he is being unreasonable, but his instincts are taking over, and he wants revenge. He sees someone come from the woods right as he sees Antonia come out of the house. This presents a conflict. Does he give into his anger and attack or does he warn Antonia?

All day long the Clark house was filled with activity, now it's deserted. Antonia remembers a time when she was young, and the house looked wonderful. That was when her mother was alive. Now, the house looks a bit neglected, although the flower beds are well tended. As she goes outside, she is drawn to the woods. Martin warns that Griff is there. As he accuses her husband, her husband comes up behind her asking who she's going to believe. She is filled with fear. He grabs her and drags her off into the woods even as he protests his innocence.

Louis has a choice of following his wife or following Toni. He wants to go after Toni until he sees the other police looking at him. The police think that she is covering something up, but he knows her better than the others and disagrees. A call comes in, and they realize there are big problems at the Clark house.

Once again the reader sees the contrast between the man Ben it is growing into and the boy that he still is. He wants Calli to wake up so that he doesn't feel so alone, and he is beginning to feel guilty about the fact that he beat up his father. He thinks back to when they were younger and Calli used to talk. When Calli does wake up, she is happy to see him, and it makes him feel really good. He thinks about when he used to tell her stories, and he gets the bright idea to tell a story about the events that just occurred. Calli doesn't talk, but she agrees and disagrees with parts of his story by nodding or shaking her head. There is a witness in the room observing how the story goes and gauging her reactions.

After Antonia is dragged off, and Martin is hit on the head with the gun, he seems to be coming to his senses. He realizes that he made a really bad move by coming out after Griff. He admits this to the police and gives them all the information he can about what



just occurred. He has been so busy with his revenge, that he didn't think about his wife and daughter for a while. Now he is desperate to talk to them.

Griff is panicking. He knows he is innocent in the situation, but he knows he also looks very guilty. Antonia swears that she will help him, and he wants to believe her, but he doesn't totally trust her. Even though he remembers good times with her and talks about running away with her, he still continues to drag her away. When he whispers frantically in her ear, telling her to keep quiet, she has a flashback to the night her baby died, and she realizes that he said something to Calli right before the girl became mute. Antonia is always trying to avoid reality, and this time she realizes that in states that out loud. She accuses her husband.

Ben continues to tell his story and as things get intense, Calli stiffens up. He realizes that he is wrong in the way he is narrating, but he doesn't know how to make the story right. He asks his sister to take over the storytelling. He's giving her the power of words.

After Martin reconnects with his own family and learns that his daughter is doing decently well, he is taken to the hospital himself. He has been judging Antonia's family for most of the novel, and now he seems to think of her children as humans. He wonders what will happen to them if anything happens to their mother.

Fitzgerald and Louis go after Griff and Antonia. Fitzgerald is having a hard time moving in the dark, but Louis knows where he's going. He also knows Antonia well enough to know that she will stay on the path. They come across the couple in time to hear them fighting. Antonia accuses Griff. He thinks that she is saying that he hurt Petra when she is really stating that he was at fault for making Calli stop talking. There is confusion at the scene as the police show up and Griff aims his gun at Antonia's face. He doesn't realize that is not loaded, and neither do the cops. Fitzgerald kills Griff, and Louis is happy that it wasn't his bullet that did it, but he is also glad the man is dead. He knows that this isn't the place or time for him to comfort Antonia, and he does his job by calling for backup and an ambulance.

Calli flashes back to the scene at the top of the bluff. She thought she could trust the man she saw there, but he betrayed her just as he betrayed her friend. Remembering the scenario, she opens her mouth and lets words slide out once again. She tells her brother who she saw at the top of the bluff.

Ben is so proud of his sister for finishing the story. He feels guilty for accusing his father, but his sister emphasizes that even though the father didn't do the actual deed, his behavior still wasn't right. As this section closes, Ben asks Calli what she wants to watch on television, and she answers. It's a sign that life will go back to normal, as it should be.

Louis' world has completely changed in the past 24 hours. He lived through the horror of seeing the love of his life at gunpoint, and his house is now empty since his wife and son left. In a way, he identifies with Griff. Griff lost his family due to his drinking problem, and he lost his own family because of his obsession with Antonia. When he goes to



support Antonia, she asks him to come with her to tell the children about their father. They go in together as a unit.

The family members react to Griff's death in a similar manner. They accept it, but they also realize that their life without him is much better. Antonia feels guilty, realizing she should have removed her children from the situation earlier. She realizes that this is a beginning for her and for her children.

When Martin chose to go after Griff, he separated himself from his family. Now the separation is lengthened due to a concussion. In the hospital, he has time to consider the entire situation. He and Antonia discuss the events and their responses to what happened. Instead of sniping at each other, they communicate as friends.

The events that took place in the woods changed everyone's lives forever. Calli lives the life of the standard teen, but she still has physical and mental mementos of that day. She has a new wariness for the woods, and Petra has moved away. The reader finds out that Louis and Antonia did not immediately jump into a marriage, but they still spend time together frequently. Calli thinks about her father, and she sees what the alcohol did to him. She also comes to an understanding that her voice never truly left her. Mr. Wilson noticed that she had her voice represented in her drawings.



Characters

Calli

Calli is a seven-year-old selective mute. She loves to go into the woods to play with her mother and brother. She enjoys having picnics and playing under the willow branches. She also likes being with her father, but only when he is sober. When he has too much beer, he is mean, and she is scared of him. Calli is a bright girl, and although she won't talk, and she has accidents regularly, she is able to hold her own in classwork. The teachers teach her some basic sign language so she can communicate when she has to go to the bathroom. Calli is very good friends with Petra. They play with their dolls together, and Petra always seems to know what Calli needs. Calli has a treasure box in her room and it contains elements of nature it, including some fluff to make wishes on.

Petra

Petra is a seven-year-old girl with a big heart. Everyone loves her wherever she goes. Her mother desperately wanted to have children and at first it didn't seem like she would have any. Petra was born years later and her father is an older father. She is considered a treasure and a blessing in their household. Her father is a professor, and he takes her to work where she creates drawings for others and makes them smile. She comes up with a job idea for a student who is concerned about finances. Petra is very close to Calli, and she is able ago communicate with her friend at a level where words aren't necessary. Petra's parents are protective of her and don't let her go off into the woods on her own. When she is in trouble, she calls for her mother.

Antonia

This character is Calli's mother. She has an abusive husband, but loves the fact that because of him, she has her amazing children.

Louis

This character is the deputy sheriff. He was Antonia's boyfriend in high school and still loves her.

Martin

This character is Petra's father. He is a professor who had a child when he was older. He is very conscious of his role as a family protector.



Fielda

This character is Petra's mother. She was desperate to have a child and overdosed once when she thought she wasn't going to have a child. She is the nurturer in the family.

Griff

This character is Calli's father. He is gone weeks at a time as he works in Alaska. He drinks too much beer and becomes abusive, beating on his family.

Ben

This character is Calli's brother. He is close to Calli and tries to protect her. Most of the time, he is kind and even-tempered, but he loses control and lashes out when people make fun of the ones he loves.

Roger

This character is the best friend of Calli's father. They were supposed to be off fishing together when the girls disappeared.

Lucky

This character is a student that Martin's family befriends. He plays with the girls and joins in family celebrations.

Jenn McIntire

This is a 10-year-old girl who was abducted and found dead in Ayer before these girls went missing.

Mary Ellen McIntire

This character is the mother of a girl who was taken from her home and murdered a year before Calli and Petra were discovered missing. She wants to help in the investigation any way she can.



Objects/Places

Pink Nightgown

This is what Calli was wearing when she disappeared.

Cowboy Boots

Calli loved wearing these shoes. She got them from her brother after tormenting him for them.

Gun

This is what Martin grabbed when he went out to find his daughter's attacker.

Antonia's Garden

This is an area where Antonia works to stay calm. It's where she discovers footprints that help in the investigation.

Journals

Mr. Wilson reaches Calli better than other counselors when he encourages her to use these instead of talking.

Willow Creek Woods

This is where Calli, Antonia and Ben like to go and play and have picnics.

Iowa City

This is where Petra is taken for treatment.

Necklace

This is an object that Calli has in her hand when she comes out of the woods. Petra was never without it.



St. Gilianus

This is where Martin worked as an economics professor.

Mourning Glory

This is where Fielda worked as a waitress when Martin first met her.

American Sign Language

Calli learned basic words in this so she could communicate with her teachers.

Beer

This is what Griff drank in excess. It turned him violent.



Themes

Relationships

In the case of missing, young girls and the ensuing investigation, relationships are critical. Kelly and Petra had a unique relationship in which they could get along with each other, play, and communicate without words. They both disappear at the same time, causing people to wonder whether they ran off together. In the past, Petra has always been there to help Calli. Calli's mother pointed out to her daughter that someday Petra would need her, and she should be ready to help her friend. This becomes very true when Petra is in trouble in this story. Calli has to go out of her element to save her friend.

The relationship between the deputy sheriff and Antonia also becomes a big part of the book. The former sweethearts are still drawn to each other, causing jealousy and anger in their spouses. This affects the investigation both positively and negatively. It's positive because Louis knows what Antonia is thinking and how she'd react to certain situations, but it's negative because it brings out the worst in Griff.

Relationships between friends and family are also important to the story. Antonia is left without many friends because most children don't want to play with a mute girl, and she doesn't want to invite anyone to her home where they might discover how mean Griff is.

The Martins are very friendly. Fielda's mother is there as a resource for them and they open their home to others. This is shown in the way they invite Lucky to family events and celebrations, even getting him a job with family members.

Abandonment

There are two types of abandonment that are highlighted in this book, and both are essential to the story. From the beginning of the book, the reader understands that Griff has become a parent that his family doesn't want to be around. He scares them and treats them horribly. He lashes out at them both mentally and physically. They're happy when he leaves to go off to his job in Alaska.

When he is around, they never know what he is going to do. He is fine - even loving and nice - when he has not been drinking, but once he starts drinking beer, then his personality becomes nasty, and he lashes out at them physically and mentally. When Antonia fell in love with him, it wasn't a problem. Over the years he began to drink more, and he lashed out more. He abandoned his family to pursue alcohol.

Deputy Sheriff Louis wasn't an alcoholic like Griff, but he too abandoned his own family. Everyone in town knows about the close relationship between Louis and Antonia. Although they aren't lovers, they are still mentally quite connected to each other. Louis



is constantly reprimanded by Christina for ignoring the needs of his wife and son in order to help Antonia. She eventually leaves him because she feels so abandoned.

Parenting Guilt

Antonia is consumed with guilt as she thinks of her parenting style. When her daughter goes missing, she thinks back on the years and is horrified by the fact that she kept her children in a dangerous situation. Martin and his wife accuse her for allowing Riff to be close to the girls when they suspect him of harming their child. Although Antonia feels horrible about her parenting, evidence shows that she is a wonderful mother. She is constantly caring for and nurturing her children. They come to her for comfort, and they appreciate the time that she spends with them playing in the woods.

Martin and Fields both feel that they have let their daughter down, too. Martin, especially, feels as if he let his daughter down by letting her get taken out of the house during the night. Both families feel judged by the general public when their children go missing. They feel as if the public is holding them personally responsible for neglecting their children to a point where they disappear during the night.

The two families are very different in their approach to parenthood, but they find common ground in the guilt that they feel when their daughters go missing. When Antonia talks with Martin near the end of the novel, they are able to express how they really feel about the situation and instead of blaming each other, they become friends.



Style

Point of View

One of the interesting aspects of this book is that it is written from many points of view. This sections that highlight Antonia's point-of-view are written in the first person in present tense. The sections in Calli's point of view are written in the third-person omniscient in the past tense. Even though it is the third person, her sections also delve into her thought processes. The sections from Petra's point of view are written in the first-person present tense. When Martin gets his point of view, it's in the first-person present tense even though it frequently covers events that have already taken place. However, when Ben's point of view is given, it is in past tense and he talks directly to the missing Calli. The sections with Deputy Sheriff Louis' point of view are also written in the first-person present tense.

Since the book is written using the points of view from so many people, the reader is given a clear and rounded picture of exactly what is going on. The reader knows what has happened to each of the girls before the police uncover their whereabouts.

Setting

This novel takes place in a small town in Iowa. This is important because it is a remote community where everybody knows each other. Crime is minimal, but it is beginning to creep into the area. The small-town atmosphere has kept Antonia from meeting people and developing friendships because she is concerned about what everybody will think about her husband. The sheriff department is small but efficient. Since it isn't a big city organization, they are able to bend the rules a bit. For example, Louis brings in help based on his own intuition rather than actual evidence, and his co-workers support him.

The novel takes place in the edge of a woods, which is also important. It makes the investigation all the more difficult. It also adds depth to the story showing that a setting that can be imaginative and magical can also become the setting for a child's (and parent's) worst nightmare.

Language and Meaning

This book is written from the point of view of many different characters. However, the language structure never varies. The author does not use unique voices for each character. The vocabulary for the older, educated father is very similar to the language used by the 7-year-old girls as well as the coarse, drunken father. The book flows well and is easy to read. There are interesting vocabulary words thrown into common sentences, which make the reading more interesting. For example, instead of stating that a character woke up with bed-head, the author wrote "my bed-mussed hair."

Structure

This novel is broken up into many sections. It has a cover followed by reviews claiming how wonderful the book is. These reviews are followed by the title page, a dedication page, then a page with a quote. A table of contents show the order of sections in the book. There are 82 sections including a prologue and an epilogue. These sections vary in length - some are extremely short while others go on for many pages. The epilogue is followed by a page of acknowledgments then a section of questions for discussion.



Quotes

Your chosen word doesn't make sense to me. But it doesn't matter, I don't care. You have finally spoken. (Kindle Location 141).

I felt a twinge of guilt in wishing her father away, but life was so much more peaceful with just the three of them. (Kindle Locations 204-205).

Having a little girl has been like following an old treasure map with the important paths torn away. These days I sit and *The Weight of Silence* (Kindle Location 365).

Everything is still, and it's nice. For a while. Then it gets kind of creepy, a quiet so big you yell just to hear your own voice, and the buried outdoors gives nothing back. (Kindle Locations 764-765).

I never asked Griff what he had said to Calli, and even worse, I never asked Calli. *The Weight of Silence* (Kindle Location 913).

When fairies dance upon the air, reach out gently and catch one, fair. Make a wish and hold it tight, then softly toss your pixie back to summer's night." Gudenkauf, Heather (2009-07-29). (Kindle Locations 1178-1179).

"...He said that dandelion fluffs are magical fairies. If you grab one before it hits the ground, the fairy will be so grateful she will give you a wish once you set her free." *The Weight of Silence* (Kindle Locations 1206-1207).

They say that being a mother is the most important job you will ever have. And it is very important. But it is even more important, I believe, to be a wife, a good wife." (Kindle Locations 2425-2427).

I mean, who you choose to walk with through life will be the most important decision that you will ever, ever make. You *The Weight of Silence* (Kindle Locations 2428-2429).

I think that's what's wrong with Mom; she doesn't say what she should when she should. (Kindle Locations 3567-3568).

"I'm no better than Griff was. He gave up his family for alcohol and it looks like I gave up my own family, as well. But for me it was because of a woman I had grown up with, one I couldn't ever let go." (Kindle Locations 3833-3835).

"This is what you were showing me in my dream. My voice." (Kindle Location 4008).

Topics for Discussion

What was the relationship like between Antonia and Louis when they were young, as they grew older, during the investigation, and years after the investigation?

What drew Petra out of the house? Do you think this is common for a seven-year old child?

Why wouldn't Calli talk?

What were some of the signs that showed that Griff was getting out of control as the children grew older?

What are some examples of foreshadowing in this story?

Why does Antonia stay with Griff and why does she defend him?

How does Griff respond to Antonia's loyalty?