

# **What Happened to Goodbye Study Guide**

**What Happened to Goodbye by Sarah Dessen**

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# Plot Summary

What Happened to Goodbye by Sarah Dessen tells the story of a teenage girl named Mclean Elizabeth Sweet who lives with her father after a divorce. Since her father is a restaurant consultant, the pair constantly moves around. As they settle into the town of Lakeview, Mclean realizes that she is happy there, but she knows she probably won't stay.

In every town Mclean and her father move to, Mclean creates a new identity. She uses a form of her name and creates a persona. She's not sure which person she really is. When she moves to Lakeview, she finds herself using her real name for the first time. Mclean makes new friends and settles in, but all the while she is aware that she will most likely have to move on soon. Mclean is particularly drawn to the boy who lives next door. He's a genius who is trying to live a "normal" life. She also meets a girl who is considered an outcast by others. When Mclean befriends her, she finds there are many amazing facets of the girl's personality and experiences that Mclean appreciates. Since Mclean is friends with others, they, too, begin to get to know the other girl, showing a growth in acceptance and friendship.

As she tries to adjust to this new life, Mclean is struggling with her relationship with her mother. The three had been a tight-knit family until the mother met another man, who she eventually married. Now in addition to a new father, who happens to be famous in the world of basketball, Mclean also has young twin siblings. She doesn't understand where she fits in her mother's world and turns her back on her mother when her mother tries to reach out to her.

In desperation to see her daughter, the mother tries to gain custody of her, and this forces Mclean into a compromise position where she is forced to see her mother more. As she spends more time with her, and as she sees and appreciates the different lives of her new friends and their families, Mclean begins to realize how much she misses her mother and also begins to see how much her mother truly loves her.

Mclean knows that the restaurant her father is working with is really struggling, and she finds out he has to break the news that it is going to be shut down. It seems as if her world is falling apart. This time she actually cares about the people in the restaurant and has a connection with them and the town. As she struggles with her own identity and her feelings for her new friends, her new friends discover her past identities. She runs away to a place with happy memories. As she is crashing, her mother and father show up, tipped off to her whereabouts by the boy who asked her to be his girlfriend. Her parents realize how much she has been struggling and offer her the love and support she needs.

Everyone works together to work on relationships and work and school issues, and Mclean finds out who she really is.



# Chapters 1-4

## Chapters 1-4 Summary

What Happened to Goodbye by Sarah Dessen tells the story of a teenage girl named Mclean Elizabeth Sweet who lives with her father after a divorce. Since her father is a restaurant consultant, the pair constantly moves around. As they settle into the town of Lakeview, Mclean realizes that she is happy there, but she knows she probably won't stay.

### Chapter 1

Mclean and her father eat at a restaurant called Luna Blu. The restaurant is obviously in trouble. The service is poor, and the food is subpar. The father's job is working with restaurants. He goes into struggling restaurants and either fixes them up, or shuts them down. This means they are on the road frequently. Each time they arrive in a new town, they stop at the restaurant he is supposed to take charge of and order the same foods. The father feels that the most basic foods tell the most about a restaurant.

After they eat, they pay well then leave. Mclean begins to settle their belongings into their house while her father goes back to the restaurant and formally introduces himself. The main character explains how she changed her name and her persona in every place they moved. First she is Eliza, who is pretty similar to her natural self. That had been in Montford Falls. Next, in Petree, she is known as Lizbet. In that town, she had worn black, put her hair in a tight bun, and wore bright lipstick since she hung out with the drama and dance crowd. She is extremely dramatic. In the next town, Westcott, she calls herself Beth. In this town she is the direct opposite of Lizbet. She is conservative and joins different clubs, becomes a member of the student counsel, and helps with bake sales and other social activities.

Mclean explains how she got her name. Her father is a huge basketball fanatic, and she is named after his favorite coach. She describes how her parents had an extremely happy marriage until the famous basketball player, Peter Hamilton, became the replacement coach. Mclean's mom fell in love with him, and her family split up.

Mclean is thinking about all of this as she settles into the new house. She is startled as she finds a young man her age in her house reading. He apologizes for startling her, then leaves.

### Chapter 2

Mclean is in the kitchen cooking. Although her father is a chef, the last thing he wants to do when he gets home from his job is cook so she takes over the duties. She realizes that her mother had never been a very good cook, always trying to throw together something out of a "cream of" type of soup. This gets her thinking about her mother and the entire situation she left. Mclean remembers how surprised she had been when she



found out her mother had left her father for Peter. He doesn't cook, either, but he lives in a huge house and has someone else cook for them. The house is a basketball lover's dream, which is so ironic since her father would love it, yet her mother lives in the house. Mclean recalls the shock she felt when she found out her mother was pregnant (Peter was the dad) with twins, and that this new shift in her family precipitated the divorce.

She had lived with her mother and Peter for a while, yet never felt that she fit in. When the lawyers were negotiating her custody, she realized that she had a choice. She chose to live with her father, and her mother felt very betrayed by this decision. Mclean found this very ironic. She likes traveling with her father, but finds that she sometimes misses her mother. Usually it is when she is cooking. She fondly remembers how she and her mother would go on holiday to the beach and stay in a mildewy-smelling hotel.

Mclean is very familiar with the pattern that occurs in each restaurant her dad works with. There is always someone who is opposed to the changes that need to be made. In this restaurant, that person is Opal. Mclean goes to the restaurant to talk with her father about their new place and the fine details of living there. As she leaves, she runs into Opal and tells her that her name is "Liz." Back at the house, she signs into a social networking account where her former friends are commenting on her abrupt disappearance. Mclean realizes that she prefers to avoid saying goodbye. It's not as messy when you just leave. She gets ready to make an account for her new persona. As she does this, her mother tries to contact her over the computer. She ignores her mother.

Mclean is asleep and wakes up to find that there is a party going on next door. She joins the party and meets some kids her age. It is the spring semester of her senior year. She knows she will be in college the next year. Police raid the party, and she runs. She is saved by the boy next door. He pulls her into a cellar shelter where he introduces himself to her as Dave. She tells him her name is Mclean.

### Chapter 3

In Chapter 3, Mclean goes to Jackson High for the first time. She finds that it is very similar to all the other schools that she had been to. Her teacher calls her by her real name, and she tries to clarify with the new identity, but she never gets the chance. After class she goes to the guidance office where she sees some parents discussing the school and their child. Mclean sees Riley sitting on a bench outside the office. Mclean goes to talk with her and Riley gets up and starts talking to a boy in the hallway. Mclean realizes that it is Dave. His parents had almost taken him out of the school, but they have agreed to let him stay as long as he keeps up with his University courses.

At lunch, Mclean looks at the different groups of students trying to determine which ones would fit her new persona. She sends a text to her dad and discovers that things aren't going that great at the restaurant, but he has it under control. A student named Deb comes up and introduces herself to Mclean saying that she is part of the student hospitality committee. Mclean realizes that the girl is considered an outcast by the other



students. A girl named Heather "rescues" her from Deb, and Mclean ends up eating with Heather and Riley.

The conversation turns to Dave, and Mclean finds out that he is a boy genius who is trying to be normal so he attends the public school. He works at a local bakery, and he and his friends have plans for going on a big trip to Texas together.

After school, Mclean goes to the restaurant and hears her father talking on the phone with his boss, Chuckles. The restaurant is really struggling, but he feels there might be some hope for it. Opal is really fighting against any changes. Mclean overhears her complaining about the changes, but it doesn't bother her.

Opal receives a shipment, and it's a huge model of the town someone has to put together. Opal has volunteered to store it and put it together in return for use of the parking lot that she knows the restaurant needs. Mclean finds out that Opal is extremely dedicated to the restaurant, especially since she has been working there since she had been in high school. They decide to put the model in the upstairs over the restaurant. Mclean meets her neighbors, Dave's parents, when they bring over some healthy yet tasteless brownies.

#### Chapter 4

While Mclean is in school, she forgets to look at her caller ID before answering the phone. It's her mother. She spends a short time talking with her mother as her mother tries to persuade her to go to the beach house with her. This brings back memories of when they used to go to the beach before the divorce. They didn't stay anywhere fancy, but Mclean loved the time spent with her mother and the special bracelets that they bought when they were out together. She doesn't want to deal with her mother and says she will try to call back later.

She doesn't call back, and her mother leaves several messages on her cell phone. She also gets the message that her father has been injured and is in the hospital. She needs to run home and get some paperwork for him. This greatly unsettles her, and she asks Deb for a ride to the hospital. That is a big help to her, and Deb is able to calm her and handle the situation. Mclean really appreciates this.

They go to her house to pick up the insurance card, and Deb is very impressed with her home. She also loves the quilt that Mclean's mother made. This reminds Mclean about the special quilt made of baby clothes that her mother had given her when she moved out. She left it in storage. At the hospital, her father is doing fine. He just wants to get out and get back to work. Opal is keeping him company.

## Chapters 1-4 Analysis

#### Chapter 1



This story is written in first person from Mclean's point of view. In this chapter, the reader really gets to know her, understand her family situation, and is given insight into some of the confusion she feels about where she stands in life. She has moved many times, and in each place she tries on a different personality. She is very close to her father, and feels resentment regarding the fact that her family has been split up. In all fairness, she acknowledges that her life wasn't ideal, and her father was away too much. However, she blames her mother for falling in love with someone else and splitting up the family. Although she and her father were true basketball fans, she turns away from the sport since her mother married a famous basketball player who was once a hero to her.

The reader also gets a glimpse into the unique relationship she has with her father. She has chosen to remain with him after the divorce even though he travels around a lot. They talk easily, share the same interests, and work together as a team. As he works and she settles into the household, it feels as if she is an adult more than a child.

## Chapter 2

In Chapter 2, the reader finds out more about Mclean's parents and her living situation. Her mother is from a very wealthy family, and she had been attracted to the hard-working, young man she met in college. Mclean finds this very romantic, and loves how she completed the family. They had worked together as a team to keep a restaurant running.

Mclean's entire world is turned upside down when her mother leaves her father for the wealthy coach. With the twins on the way, she had felt as if her mother were starting a whole new world-one into which she didn't fit.

She feels sometimes as if she is trying to replace her mother as she helps take care of her father while they are on the road. Still, she feels that this is better than staying with her mother. The reader gains insight into how she felt about life on the road as they see her log into her social networking account with her previous persona. She reads comments from former classmates and friends, showing that she was popular and people really cared about her. They address her abrupt departure, and she hesitates, almost thinking about responding to them. Instead she logs out of the account and gets ready to create a new persona. She acknowledges that she would rather just move on without saying goodbye because it is a lot messier if you stay and say goodbye.

Although she isn't really a partier, Mclean decides to try attending the party next door. She meets other people in the area and learns a bit about the schools. When she instinctively starts looking at the stars, analyzing the sky, Mclean is reminded of her mother and some special times they had together stargazing. When Dave rescues her after the police arrive, she learns that he isn't exactly what she thought he was. She knew it was odd that he had been in her house when she arrived, she learns more about him, and she realizes he is truly a unique young man who has an unusual way of thinking. They get along well, and she instinctively introduces herself with her given name instead of the name "Liz," which she had given to Opal.



### Chapter 3

In Chapter 3, Mclean is becoming more immersed in her community. She tries to introduce herself in school, and for some reason can't get out a pseudonym. She realizes that her new persona is sticking as Mclean. This is pivotal because she knows she is not the same Mclean that she had been in the past, yet she knows that she is definitely Mclean in this town.

She is somewhat drawn to Riley who she met at the party. As she looks around for a social group to join, she shows that she has empathy for those who are not as popular as others, yet she also fits in with the popular crowd. Even at school when she is trying to figure out her own social standing, Mclean is still concerned about her father and what he is dealing with at the restaurant.

Although she knows that he is struggling at the restaurant with a person named Opal, Mclean does not get involved. She even helps Opal with the shipment that comes. Mclean misses having the basic family unit of mother, father, and child. However, when she meets Dave's parents, she is happy that she is not in his situation.

### Chapter 4

The theme of Chapter 4 is relationships. The reader gets a firsthand look at how desperately the mother is trying to make contact with Mclean despite the fact that she is constantly rejected. Mclean is so used to moving around that she is showing that she has a hard time truly connecting with other people. The reader already knows that she has been popular in her past schools, and that people still want to connect with her through social networking. It's interesting to see how Mclean is good at making acquaintances, but really holds off from true connection to anyone except her father.

This connection to her father is emphasized when she has a hard time controlling her fear when he is hospitalized after a very minor injury. This time, she calls Deb to help her and is surprised at how different she is from what Mclean expected. In the hospital, there's also a subtle shift in the relationship between Opal and the father. At the restaurant they are constantly fighting, yet Opal is the one who is there offering him support.





# Chapters 5-8

## Chapters 5-8 Summary

### Chapter 5

When Chapter 5 begins, Mclean wakes up to the sound of people playing basketball. She goes into the kitchen, and a ball rolls through the door. It is a wild throw. Her phone rings, and it's her mother who is extremely concerned because Mclean had never called her back the previous day. Mclean explains that her father had been in the hospital and she forgot. This makes the mother very upset. She talks about how upset she is that Mclean is always traveling around and has to act as a caretaker to the father, even having to leave school to get insurance papers.

During the phone call, Mclean gets increasingly upset, and when the ball rolls away once again, she throws it at the basket making a very complex shot that completely impresses Dave and his friend who are playing basketball outside. She hangs up the phone, and they try to get her to play basketball, but she isn't ready.

Later, at the restaurant, Mclean meet other workers. One is a very smart man who is brilliant at crossword puzzles. A group of tough-looking teens arrives, and the reader discovers that they are there to do community service by putting together Opal's model. As soon as she signs their papers, they leave.

At school, Mclean is getting ready to sit by herself at lunch. Heather calls her over to answer a question and to eat with them. Mclean sees Deb and calls her over, surprising everyone. The girls asks her the same question, and she has a great answer, impressing them.

Mclean goes home, and she sees Riley at Dave's house. She goes inside her home, and her stepfather contacts her by computer and asks her to meet her mother for a game. She agrees. After the call, Mclean heads outside to take out the garbage. She sees Riley there, and Riley tells her that Dave seemed interested in her. Mclean tells Riley that she isn't ready for anyone to be interested in her at this point in her life.

### Chapter 6

On the day of the game, Mclean is supposed to have breakfast with her father, but he is too busy with work. She hasn't told him that she is going to the game. When he asks her to meet him for lunch, she realizes that she has to tell him that she is going to be with her mother. She goes to the restaurant to tell him and finds out that Dave is going to work on the model. No-one else shows up to help them, so they start working on it together. He's good at putting the models together and confesses to playing with models regularly when he was a child.



Jason comes to join them and so does Tracy. A reporter interviews them and takes pictures of them. Lindsay, the town Councilwoman, comes in for her photo opportunity. She is Opal's nemesis and has been since high school. She ups the deadline for when the model needs to be finished.

McLean tells her father that she has plans for the afternoon and explains about going to the game. Her dad encourages her to go see her mom and says that it's a good thing. She feels as if she is betraying him. When she goes upstairs to get her jacket, she runs into Dave who finds out she is going to the game. She's not very excited about it, but he is extremely enthusiastic and tells her how lucky she is. She invites him, but doesn't explain to him how she is going to get them into the game.

## Chapter 7

McLean sees her mother before her mother sees her, and she is struck by the change in her mother. McLean had always loved how her mother left her family's wealth for her poor husband. Now, she is clothed in wealth again, and it feels unfamiliar to McLean. When her mom sees her, she is very loving, and she is very gracious towards Dave. He is still concerned that they won't be able to get into the game since McLean hasn't explained the situation to him. Once he realizes what is going on, he is clearly in awe.

McLean's twin siblings are inside with their babysitters. They don't really know her. After the game, McLean explains that David is her next door neighbor. He is raving about the game and doesn't seem to understand why she isn't into it until she points out that Peter is her stepfather. Not her real father.

When her mother asks about hobbies, McLean explains about the model they are working on. Dave explains that he is working on it as a community service project because he had been stupid and he was drinking at a party. This leads to a discussion on the difficulties of being a parent and being a kid. McLean feels like she is getting judged.

On the way home, McLean explains the family situation to Dave. As they talk about parents, David explains that his parents are scientists, and he had had enough credits to go to college after ninth grade. His parents are upset at him for not following that course. He tells her about the trip to Texas that he plans to go on with his friends. Now his parents might not let him go because of the party even though he only had one beer. David encourages McLean to try to understand her mother. He comforts her.

## Chapter 8

McLean is very late going to school on Monday morning, and no-one is around except for Riley when she goes to her locker. She tries to pull a mirror off her locker door, and she's injured in the process. Riley helps her to the nurse, and they have a discussion about friendship. Riley is very close to David and does want to see him hurt. McLean says that she doesn't make friends because she moves so much, and Riley contradicts her saying that she has a ready made friends there. McLean is surprised to see that she is right.



At lunch, Mclean feels that everyone is staring at her and her injury. Some wild stories are around regarding the injury. Some even say she was hit as a result of jealousy due to a love triangle.

When she gets home from school, her father and Opal are laughing together on the couch. They say they are doing work, but they keep laughing. They begin to sober up as they begin to discuss the restaurant. It is not doing well.

That evening David brings over some soup to make Mclean feel better. When he sees her kitchen, he realizes that most of the cupboards are empty thanks to her nomadic lifestyle. She explains that she has lived in four towns in two years. He thinks it must be hard on her, but she disagrees and says that she finds it freeing. He points out that she doesn't make friends who could be here 2 AM-the kind of person you can call any time of night no matter what and count on them. He asks if she is going to leave again, and she admits that she doesn't know. In the fall, she will go to college, but she doesn't know is going to happen before then. After Dave leaves, Lindsay calls. She wants Mclean's father to call her back.

## Chapters 5-8 Analysis

### Chapter 5

In this chapter, the author seems to be focused on introducing new characters and propels the story along. The relationships also get a little bit deeper. It's in this chapter that Mclean meets a man named Jason who works in the kitchen as a short order chef. He is amazing at crossword puzzles. The reader also learns that the model project is now a community service project.

For the first time, the reader gets a glance into Peter's personality. Until this point, he always seems to be portrayed as the basketball hero who has fallen short. In this chapter, he is a real man who cares about his wife. Mclean shows some compassion by agreeing to meet up with her mother at a basketball game.

Her inner turmoil is shown rather than told throughout the chapter as she contemplates playing basketball again and realizes that she isn't ready. This symbolizes how she feels about the divorce and her own life. She's just not ready to play yet. This is further emphasized when she realizes that the boy next door might be interested in her, and although she thinks he's wonderful, she's not ready to get involved with anybody.

### Chapter 6

The whole town is excited about the basketball game, but Mclean has no interest in it. Although she was obsessed with basketball when she was younger, the entire situation with her stepfather has completely ruined the game for her. She is very reluctant to meet up with her mother. In fact, she is so reluctant that she doesn't tell her father until the last minute. She feels as if she is betraying him.

At the restaurant, the place is in chaos. This is very symbolic because it reflects the state of her life. In the chaos, David and Opal are anchors with solutions and their calm, steady presence. As they work on the model, Mclean gets to know them a bit more, and she also learns more about other workers at the restaurant.

#### Chapter 7

The game is the big event in the town. Everybody's excited, and it's extremely difficult to get tickets. Mclean isn't excited about the game, though. She's too busy thinking about the relationships of her family, especially with her mother. David is with her sharing the experience. They discuss families and their situations. He encourages her to think about other people's sides of issues. Mclean is a little put-off thinking that he is defending her mother, but she also realizes that he is there to comfort her. They talk about actions and consequences. He is in jeopardy of losing his vacation and has already lost much of his independence thanks to a poor choice at a party. Mclean's own world is turned upside down because of the choice her mother made.

#### Chapter 8

It's not always easy living with one parent, and Mclean is late for school one day because things didn't line up right that morning. Riley helps her out when she is injured at her locker. She has a hard time believing that Riley is actually her friend even when Riley helps her after she'd been hurt.

The relationships in the book are shifting and deepening. Mclean has a regular crowd that she eats lunch with, and this includes Deb. Back at home, her father and Opal seem to enjoy each other's company. She and David are connecting at a new level, and she is drawn to him in spite of the fact that she doesn't want to settle down with anybody because she knows that she could easily be moving away again shortly. Meanwhile, it seems as if the councilwoman is trying hard to establish a relationship with Gus.



# Chapters 9-12

## Chapters 9-12 Summary

### Chapter 9

As Chapter 9 opens, Mclean wakes up to a snowy world. She is not very used to snow. Her father comments that hopefully this will keep Chuckles delayed at the airport so they have more time to get ready. The restaurant still isn't doing well. Mclean asks if he had gotten the message from the Councilwoman left the night before, and he admits that he's been trying to avoid her.

After her dad leaves, Mclean gets a phone call from her mother who is trying to get her to come to a party. Mclean loses her cool and for the first time confronts her mother about the choices that she made. Her mother comments that at some point Mclean is going to realize that she can't place all the blame on her mother.

Distraught, Mclean walks into town and finds herself in the bakery where David works, although he isn't working at that point. He walks in while she is eating. He drives her to school in his beat-up car that he has gotten back from his parents. She is reminded about her own car that she left behind. It was falling apart, but she had loved it. David tells the story behind his tattoo.

School gets out early and Mclean heads to the restaurant. She wants to work on the model, and she finds David and Deb there. Deb has a real gift for organization, and she sets them up so that they can work on the model and really make some progress.

By evening, everyone is in a good mood as they head downstairs for dinner. Chuckles comes in, and Mclean is very happy to see him. Mclean finds out that the prep cook once attended Harvard. Mclean realizes that she doesn't really want to leave this place.

### Chapter 10

David and Mclean work on the model at the restaurant as Chapter 10 opens. Her father is yelling downstairs. Mclean recognizes the sound and realizes that he is firing somebody. David and Mclean talk about life in a restaurant, and she talks about the difficulties in being an owner. They work for a while then go downstairs to eat, and the model is beginning to look more like a community to Mclean.

The next day when Mclean comes home from school, her father is home. He asks her what's going on between her and her mother. Her mother has talked to a lawyer and wants to re-work the custody agreement. Mclean is horrified. She doesn't want to visit her mom more often.

Mclean goes to the cellar in the back to think. She startles David who is out back working with his father. They are cleaning out the garage. She sees some of the toys he



played with when he was younger, including the tiny figures and soldiers set which made him so good at working with small pieces on the model.

The next morning Mclean goes to the bakery to sit and sort out her thoughts. She realizes that she doesn't want more battles. She calls her mom.

She offers to go to the beach house with her mother if her mom calls the lawyers off. The reader learns this as she is talking with David while playing a game of basketball with her. He had teased her until she started playing with him.

## Chapter 11

Chapter 11 opens with Mclean at the library looking up some town history. While she's there, she runs into Jason and gets to know him better. When it's time for her to go to the restaurant to work on the model, they walk over together. More of her friends join them upstairs. Riley invites everyone to have dinner with her family, but she warns them that her family is somewhat crazy.

Mclean thinks that the food is absolutely wonderful. Deb is overwhelmed by the invitation and the dinner since she has never done anything like that before. Mclean is in awe of the family interactions. She learns about the other teens and their families, and she thinks their families are wonderful.

After dinner, the father watches a basketball game, and the teens talk about the trip to Texas. They are pooling their money together to make the trip happen, and David has just received a bonus that pushes their balance over a thousand dollars. As the chapter closes, Mclean is wishing she lived in a real home with a real family like her friends.

## Chapter 12

In the beginning of Chapter 12, Opal and the other workers at the restaurant are discussing colors because they are thinking of opening the second floor when the restaurant is in a better position. Mclean offers her vote on colors. Now March, they have lived there for two months. For some reason this place is different from the other places where they have lived.

Mclean is surprised to discover that making plans to go to the beach with her mom isn't as horrible as she had thought. Her father starts dating the Councilwoman. David and Mclean are getting very close, and Mclean feels as if she is finally home for the first time in years.

Heather, Ellis, and Riley decide to join the team that is working on the models. They discuss spring break, and Mclean tells them that she is going to the beach with her mom. While they are working, Lindsay shows up and is extremely impressed by the progress. Mclean's dad is upstairs, also. Lindsay reaches over to grab his hand. Opal comes up stairs and sees the two holding hands and appears flustered. Things seem to be unraveling for Mclean, and she feels extremely temporary.



After working on the model, Mclean and David head home. She tells him that she's having eggs for dinner and finds out that they are not allowed to eat real eggs in his house. Dave and his father show up at her door asking to use the TV to watch a game. She gives them some eggs, and they are extremely grateful. As they watch the game, she notices her mom. Her mom's mind is obviously not on the game. She sees her mom make a phone call on TV, and picks up her own phone to answer the call. They agree to talk later after Mclean's guests leave.

## Chapters 9-12 Analysis

### Chapter 9

Mclean and her father have a definite routine for every place where they live. Already in this book, there are some signs that this place is different. Mclean gives out her real name, thanks to David she has spices in her cabinet, and now they have snow. Gus is a businessman, and he knows when a restaurant doesn't do well it needs to be shut down. In this chapter we find that he is doing everything he can to keep the restaurant open. He is happy about the snow because it might keep Chuckles at the airport longer so they have more time to make a good impression. He is really rooting for the restaurant.

In each place they live, Gus has a girlfriend. The Councilwoman is actively pursuing him, but he continues to put her off. Time is making its mark on Mclean, also. She loses it with her mother, brutally expressing her thoughts on the divorce. It's a painful moment for both of them, but for once everything is out in the open.

Her mother makes a statement that at some point Mclean is going to realize that all the blame does not lie at her feet. Throughout the book the reader regularly sees that people are not necessarily how one person perceives them. This is what her mother is saying, and in this chapter it is further emphasized as David talks about his tattoo, and as Mclean learns more about Jason.

### Chapter 10

Just as things are going pretty well for Mclean and she is starting to feel as if she has a real home, she begins to see signs that are familiar to her. She realizes that it's almost time for her to move on. This is unsettling to her and while she struggles to deal with these feelings, life throws her another curve. Her mother wants to see her more. As she thinks about it, she decides she doesn't want to live in disharmony and agrees to go to the beach with her mom. The beach is a healing place for the two of them, and they are able to open tentative communications with each other without hostility. After this happens, David, with whom she is developing a closer relationship, teases her and actually gets her to enjoy basketball again. It's a sign to the reader that Mclean is starting to heal.

### Chapter 11





In the book up to this point, Mclean seems very strong and very comfortable with the situation she has chosen to live in. She likes taking care of her father even though she knows it's not necessary, and she is constantly defending her lifestyle to her mother. However, in this chapter, she starts realizing what she is missing as she goes to her friends houses and sees what her friends' family lives are like. It gets her craving some stability.

## Chapter 12

The restaurant has been given a brief reprieve, and it seems as if there is hope. Mclean joins the others as they make decisions about decorating the upstairs should the restaurant expand. The model project is also going well thanks to teamwork. Everything is starting to look up for Mclean, but then she notices signs of change. Her father is in a relationship which usually happens before they leave a place. He also fires a worker, which is not a good sign. Things begin unraveling for Mclean, and she feels extremely temporary. She looks at the model enviously because it looks clean and orderly. She notes that it's because there are no people involved. While things are falling apart for her there, her relationship with her mom is getting a bit better. Dave and his dad come over to watch a game, and she sees her mother on TV. Instead of watching the game, her mom seems serious and Mclean sees her making a phone call. The call is to her.





# Chapters 13-16

## Chapters 13-16 Summary

### Chapter 13

Mclean is packing for trips to the beach as Chapter 13 opens. She is wondering what is going on with her father and Lindsay. Chuckles shows up, very excited, making many different references to Hawaii. Her dad goes to talk with Chuckles outside. Her mother calls, very excited about the trip. She reminds Mclean to pack a swimsuit. When her dad comes back in, Mclean tells him that she needs a swimsuit, and he gets upset at Chuckles for telling her about the job in Hawaii. This is a shock to her. She doesn't want to think about having to leave in five weeks. Her father tells her that she doesn't have to go, and she could go to live with her mom. It makes her want to cry.

She realizes that the restaurant is most likely not going to make it. Later that day David says that she should go out with him. He wants her to be his girlfriend. They go to the restaurant to work on the model, and Mclean realizes that her friends have discovered all her other identities on the social networking site. They confront her about it, and she finds that she can't explain it so she runs away. She tells her dad that since it's official that they're leaving anyway, she wants to leave immediately.

### Chapter 14

The trip with her mother is very different from trips in the past. Before, they didn't have any money, and now they are in an extremely fancy vehicle, and she is traveling with her young twin siblings. The house is a mansion on the water. The car trip goes well, and they arrive near dark. Mclean offers to help, and her mother hands her Maddie, who won't let go. Mclean takes the little ones down to the water while her mom unloads.

She doesn't have a swimsuit, and her mom tries to get one at the store, but it's closed. They finished unloading the car, and Mclean gets insight into her mother's life with the twins. They were up very early and are very active. Mclean checks her voice messages and find messages from her father who wants to talk with her and from her friends who are feeling badly about the confrontation.

She explores the house and finds her old car. She can't believe her mother kept it. She also finds all her other belongings that she thought were long gone. One of her mother's friends comes to the door. She owns the shop that was closed and has brought over some bathing suits. She overhears her mom talking with a friend saying that the situation is complicated and is too much to take on. She says it's a mistake since everything is different now.

Mclean realizes her mother doesn't really want her there. She grabs her belongings and her old car and drives away.



## Chapter 15

Mclean finds herself at the Poseidon. It's the hotel she had gone to with her family when she was younger. She gets into her room and begins to cry. She remembers the conversation about the 2 AM friend and calls Dave. When she explains what is going on, he says he will be there soon to help her. She waits for him and starts to look through her belongings that have been in storage for so long. She reflects on a time when her life was perfect, then looks through her yearbooks, pictures, and other paraphernalia from each of her different identities. Finally, she falls asleep.

When she opens the door in response to a knock, she expects to see David but finds her parents there instead. They come in and comfort her.

## Chapter 16

At the beginning of Chapter 16, Mclean is back with her friends looking at the model. They are almost done with it. She finds out that David was grounded the night that she called him, and it explains why he never showed up at the hotel. This also means that he can't take the trip to Texas. Mclean had wondered what had happened to him and thought that he had changed his mind. She feels terrible.

Back at the Poseidon she had woken up alone the morning after she called David. Her mom and dad were outside the room talking. They were upset at themselves for not realizing the stress she had been feeling since the divorce. She finds out that her father had known where she was because David had told him. The parents remind Mclean that they always love her no matter what.

Mclean tells her mother that she had overheard her talking, and her mother explains the situation. She hadn't been talking about Mclean at all. She had been talking about a party that she didn't want to have because she wanted to spend time with Mclean. They go out and have breakfast together as they make plans for the future. Mclean begins to realize that home isn't actually a specific location. It is about being with people you love. They decide that Mclean will not go to Hawaii, but will go back to Tyler. She isn't thrilled with the decision, but it is better than going to Hawaii.

Mclean begins to see her mother in a new light as she spends time with her that week at the beach. She realizes her mother hasn't changed all that much and that she really is still her mother. She also discovers that the quilt her mother had made for her had been made up from her own baby clothes so it had really been made with a lot of love. Mclean feels badly for treating her mother as she did after the divorce. They spend a lot of time reminiscing. Now, back in town with her friends, Mclean looks at the model and sees her own life.

The friends discuss how they are going to finish the model by adding little details. They want to show people and animals active on the model. Deb asks what Mclean is going to do now that the restaurant is closing. She tells her that she is going to have to go away, and she is upset about that. This time, Mclean promises to say goodbye before she leaves and to keep in touch after she is gone.



Both Opal and Gus are missing at the restaurant, and the workers are feeling betrayed. Mclean defends Opal saying that she loves the place. When she goes home, she sees Dave for the first time since she had gone to the beach. She tells him that she is going to talk to his parents, but he says it's all right. He is on his way to work on the model. He wants to work when Deb is not around because he has his own ideas for finishing it up. Mclean thanks him for being there for her.

When Mclean gets home, she realizes that someone is with her father. She finds him and Opal on the couch together laughing. Mclean is worried that he is going to hurt Opal, and she likes Opal, so she starts defending Opal and telling her father to be nice. Her dad lets her know that this time is different.

## Chapters 13-16 Analysis

### Chapter 13

Mclean's whole world is breaking apart at this point. She's getting getting ready to spend a week with her mother, and that's nerve-racking enough. She inadvertently finds out that she and her father are once again on the move. This chapter is filled with the ups and downs of life that are similar to the waves she is about to see at the cold shore. She enjoys seeing Chuckles, but he comes with tough news. She is concerned about her trip with her mother, but she is also looking forward to it and communications between them are much better. She realizes that the restaurant is not going to make it, and David tells her that he wants her to be his girlfriend. Her friends discover her past identities, and she realizes she's close enough to them that she feels like she has betrayed them. The ups and downs of this chapter are leading up to the climax, and the reader can feel it.

### Chapter 14

This is the most time that Mclean has spent with her mother in a long while. They're going to the shore just like they used to, but this time it's very different since they're going in the lap of luxury. Mclean gets a taste of what it's like to have younger siblings on a regular basis. Instead of being annoyed by her siblings, she doesn't mind them and helps take care of them. Maddie really seems to bond with her.

As Mclean gains insight into her mother's life, she also discovers that she has not been forgotten and pushed out of the family. Everything that she cares about has been carefully put into storage including her old clothes and her old car. They are waiting for her. Just when she is beginning to feel accepted, she overhears her mother talking to a friend and feels that her mother doesn't really want her there, so she runs away to the only place she can think of. She heads back to the Poseidon Hotel where they used to spend their wonderful vacations back when their family was a solid unit.

### Chapter 15



Chapter 15 is a major climax in the book. Mclean can no longer hide from herself, and she completely crashes. In doing so, she begins to discover who she really is and who really cares for her. She knows what friend to call, and her parents will take care of her reminding her of how much they love her. Instead of blaming her, they take some responsibility for her actions, blaming themselves for not realizing what she had been going through. She realizes that she does have a true family unit and it's filled with love.

#### Chapter 16

Back in town, Mclean realizes that while she has to leave, things are different this time. She agrees to say goodbye to her friends when it's time to go. She also learns the truth about David and the night she had called him. It makes her feel terrible. When she gets home, she discovers her father with Opal. Throughout this book she has always defended her father and understood his relationships and how he leaves people. This time is different because she actually cares about Opal. She immediately jumps to Opal's defense.



# Chapters 17-18

## Chapters 17-18 Summary

### Chapter 17

Deb is getting nervous because it's time to show off the model very soon. Things are turning out well. Opal has gone to her old bosses who have agreed to back her in purchasing the restaurant, which Chuckles is going to sell for a very reasonable price.

Mclean and her group of friends are putting the final touches on the model. Mclean thinks about how her father is once again packing, but this time it's different. He plans to come back, and he has a budding relationship with Opal. Mclean is packing, also. She thinks about David and how life is changing. Mclean notices something on the model right before it is displayed. She realizes what David has done. He has added her in many scenarios in the town model. She runs back to his house and notices a Gert in his car. Mclean realizes that David had been there at the Poseidon.

David sees her and explains that he had told her father where she was, and by the time he had gotten to the hotel, he had seen that her family was with her. He had turned around and gone home. His parents had found him as he came back and that's when he was grounded. They go back to the celebration, and Mclean feels as if she really belongs. She can't believe what David has done for her. They kiss for the first time that evening.

### Chapter 18

As Chapter 18 begins, the restaurant is about to open, but they only have one waitress. Mclean gets to work. She had stayed through the graduation and it is now summer. Her mother has come to help her pack, and she meets Opal. They get along very well. Mclean's mother gives Opal some advice on keeping a restaurant open. After packing, Mclean, her mother, and her father go next door to talk to David's parents. They explain what had happened that night at the Poseidon.

Mclean says her goodbyes, and she drives off with her mother trying not to cry. Her mother decides that she can't uproot Mclean again. They make a deal with Opal that Mclean will stay with Opal and help with the restaurant. This is why she is working in a restaurant during the summer. Deb also begins to work in the restaurant and is talented at it thanks to her organizational skills. The book ends with Mclean receiving the picture of her friends' hands in front of a sign saying "Welcome to Texas."

## Chapters 17-18 Analysis

### Chapter 17



The author jumps around from scene to scene keeping the reader on edge about what is really happening. Instead of finding out more about the relationship between Opal and Gus, the reader now is back at the restaurant at the beginning of Chapter 17. Things are working out for the restaurant, and Opal is going to take over. Everyone in the family realizes that Mclean needs to stop moving around so they set up a plan for her to live with her mother. She's all right with that at this point even though she would rather stay in town and discusses living with her friends.

Mclean also sees that her relationship with David is deeper than she had realized. All along she thought that she had been abandoned by him since he didn't show up at the hotel. Now she realizes that she was the one who inadvertently abandoned him. The relationship is stronger than that, though. When she apologizes to him, he tells her that she is worth it all. It had been the right thing to do even if he was going to lose his freedom. She is used to distancing herself from people, but she kisses David this time even though she knows she is going to have to say goodbye.

#### Chapter 18

The chapter opens in the summer, but then flashes back to a few months earlier. Everybody is rallying around trying to do the best for each other. All the loose ends are tied up as Gus goes off to his new job with plans to come back. The mother shows her love for her daughter by allowing her to remain where she is the most happy, and Mclean gets to stay with her friends and put her restaurant skills to work. With her parents' support, she explains things to David's father, and he is released from his grounding and is able to go on the trip with his friends.



# Characters

## Mclean Elizabeth Sweet

Mclean Elizabeth Sweet is a senior in high school. She has chosen to live with her father after her parents' divorce. Due to the nature of her father's job as a restaurant consultant, she moves on a regular basis. In each town they live, she creates a new identity for herself - Lizbet, Beth and Eliza. Mclean makes acquaintances easily but generally brushes off relationships that require a stronger bond. She is angry at her mother, blaming her for the breakup of the marriage. In many ways, she is mature for her age. She takes care of her father even though she knows that he can take care of himself. Mclean easily fits in with the popular crowd in school, but she also is open to reaching out and befriending the underdog. She is struggling to see where she really fits in life, trying to figure out who she is.

## David

David is the boy next door with whom Mclean becomes close friends. He is extremely smart, able to go to college after ninth grade, but wants to live a "normal" life as much as possible. His parents are both scientists and have high expectations for him. He doesn't always agree with them, but he shows a lot of respect for them. David, also known as Dave, isn't perfect. He is in trouble during the story because he had been drinking underage at a party. He is very patient with Mclean, supporting her when she needs support and encouraging her to look at the big picture and past people's obvious mistakes. He is hard-working but also knows how to have fun. In his quest to be "normal" he works in a bakery and saves his money to go on a trip with his friends.

## Gus

Gus is Mclean's father. He travels for his job and cares deeply for his daughter.

## Katherine

Katherine, also known as Katie, is Mclean's mother. She falls in love with another man so her marriage ends in divorce.

## Riley

Riley is one of the first characters in the book who befriends Mclean. She is there to help Mclean when she is injured taking a mirror off her locker. Dave is one of her closest friends, and she is very protective of him.



## **Heather**

Heather is part of the group which hangs out with Riley and Dave. She tries to save Mclean from hanging out with Deb, who she considers a loser.

## **Deb**

Deb is an outcast at school whom Mclean befriends. The more the kids learn about her, the more impressed they are. She has a very eclectic background and a gift for organization.

## **Ellis**

Ellis is Dave's friend. He plays basketball, but he isn't particularly gifted in playing.

## **Jason**

Jason works as a chef at the restaurant. He is a genius who once attended Harvard.

## **Tracey**

Tracey is a waitress at the restaurant. She has a lot of attitude yet sticks with the restaurant during tough times.

## **Opal**

Opal has worked in the restaurant since she was in high school. Mclean really appreciates her and tries to protect her from her father.

## **Peter Hamilton**

Peter Hamilton is a famous basketball coach. Mclean's mom leaves Gus for Peter.

## **Chuckles**

Chuckles is Gus' boss. He's a huge man who doesn't fit his name.

## **Maddie**

Maddie is one of Mclean's twin siblings. She is very young.





## **Connor**

Connor is one of Mclean's twin siblings. He is very young.

## **Lindsay Baker**

Lindsay Baker is the councilwoman whom Gus dates for a while.

## **Michael**

Michael is the surfer whom Mclean left without warning. He sends her a message that is the title of this book.

## **The Melmans**

The Melmans are the previous owners of the restaurant. They back Opal.



## Objects/Places

### Luna Blu

Luna Blu claims to be contemporary Italian with an old-fashioned feel, but it isn't very good. It's the restaurant Mclean's father is trying to help.

### Lakeview

Lakeview is the place where Mclean and her father had moved as the book started.

### Westcott

Westcott, Florida is the place Mclean and her father leave before they go to Lakeview.

### Petree

Petree is a suburb outside Atlanta where Mclean and her father had lived before Florida. It is filled with bachelors and businessmen and is quiet and cold and dark.

### Montford Falls

Montford Falls is the first place Mclean and her father lived alone. It is very family oriented.

### Tyler

Tyler is the college town with Defriese University as an epicenter. This is where Mclean lived with her mother and father before the divorce.

### Model

The model is a project Mclean and her friends work on throughout the book.

### Gert

The Gert is a bracelet that brings up happy memories for Mclean. She finds one in Dave's car, proving to her that he had been there to help her.



## **Poseiden**

The Poseiden is the cheap hotel where Mclean had gone with her mother when her family had been a unit.

## **Spices**

Spices become a symbol of stability. Mclean doesn't have any in the house because she doesn't want to pack them each time she moves.

## **Jackson High**

Jackson High is the school Mclean attends while living in Lakeview.



# Themes

## Identity

One of the main themes in this book is identity. Mclean struggles throughout the book to figure out who she is. In Montford Falls she had called herself Eliza and had been pretty much like her former self, but she had had a new confidence because she didn't care what happened to her. She had joined the athletic crowd in this school. When she had moved to Petree, she called herself Lizbet and had become a queen of drama. She had worn dark turtlenecks and pulled her hair into a bun and started smoking. She had enjoyed dance and drama. In her next town, Westcott, she becomes the exact opposite. Calling herself Beth, she had joined the student council, worked on the yearbook and school paper and tutored children. She had also helped organize fundraisers. By accident, in Lakeview she is known as Mclean, yet she knows that she is different from the Mclean she started out as. She bonds with the people in Lakeview in a different way than her previous towns. They slowly, steadily and inadvertently help her understand more about who she really is and what she stands for. She learns about what she is really looking for in a family and that she is very lovable exactly how she is. They support her and encourage her to accept their friendship. As the book progresses, Mclean's relationship with her parents also shifts, and they begin to see her different identities. Together, as a family unit, they help her come to terms with who she is and what is most important in life.

## Family

Another major theme in this book is family. Mclean had always felt that she was part of a storybook world. Her mother is from a wealthy background, but she had left it all for Mclean's father. Eventually, Mclean had been born, completing the package. Everything had been great until her mother had fallen in love with Peter and become pregnant with twins. Now Mclean has to come to terms with the fact that she is from a broken family and she has a mother who is wealthy once again. She also has little siblings who might be taking her place. Mclean's relationship with her father is very close, yet she knows it's a unique kind of family since she takes care of her father instead of him taking care of her. Her friends all have different kinds of family life, too. David's parents are very smart, strict and into top nutrition. Riley's family is very down-to-earth. Deb's life offers hints of a difficult family background. As Mclean looks at the different types of family, she begins to crave some stability and some peace in her own world. This helps her become more accepting of her mother. Her parents' divorce is amicable and Gus and Katie do everything they can to provide a perfect home for Mclean, but at first they don't really understand how hard she has taken the divorce. When it all comes out in the open, Mclean realizes that family is not about a house, but it's really about the love.



## Appearances

A third theme in this book is appearances. There is a very strong message that most people are not really what you would expect. Mclean certainly isn't. Her friends in Lakeview have no idea that she has different personas in each town she moves to, and her parents have no idea that she is mentally struggling with the divorce situation. Deb is one of the most dramatic examples of deceiving appearances. She is very proper looking, a great organizer, and very well mannered, yet when she alludes to her life, it's far from perfect. She was not raised in a great part of town, she loves drumming and hard music and knows a lot about relationships and tattoos. In contrast, Riley and Tracey look tough, but they are very caring and loyal to their friends and work situations. Mclean is upset throughout the book because her mother seems so different. She's used to a laid-back mom with unkempt hair and casual clothes, yet now her mother has to keep up appearances as the wife of a professional coach. As she gives her mother a chance and gets to know her again, she realizes that her mother hasn't changed much at all. She is still the woman who loves her. The message of the book is also emphasized in characters such as Dave and Jason. Both are geniuses who live "normal" lives. David has chosen to attend a regular high school, and Jason is a short order chef who is a whiz at crossword puzzles.



# Style

## Point of View

In *What Happened to Goodbye* by Sarah Dessen, the author uses a first-person perspective in the narrative. The main character is a teenage girl named Mclean Elizabeth Sweet. Although her inner turmoil is situation-specific as she tries to come to terms with her parents' divorce, her feelings of trying to find her identity are universal.

Because it's first person, the reader gets an inside look into the life of the nomadic high school senior, understanding that her situation is not ideal, but is still a life she has chosen. The reader can see what Mclean is thinking and feeling as well as how she reacts to different people and situations. This is very important because she has a tremendous amount of internal growth between the first few pages of the book and the last few pages. This growth is a result of inner thoughts and reactions to the people around her who encourage her to be open in her thinking. Because it's first person, the reader can easily identify with feelings and relationships, as Mclean adjusts them slightly to match each unique experience.

While it's written in first person, there is quite a bit of dialogue, with each character having a unique voice. This helps the reader branch out and see the situations in which Mclean finds herself from different angles.

## Setting

Most of this novel takes place in the small town of Lakeview. The school is relatively small, and the people are friendly. Mclean and her father live in a decent house in a nice part of town. They spend much of their time at the restaurant with which Gus is working. The restaurant has two stories, and Mclean spends a lot of time in the upstairs portion of the restaurant where she and her friends work on the model. When she is not at home or in the restaurant, Mclean is generally at school or at the bakery where Dave works. The bakery is a cookie-cutter type of place that Mclean's father wouldn't appreciate.

When Mclean is with her mother, it's a different story. Her mother has married a wealthy man, and they have a four-storied house right on the beach. When she goes to basketball games with her mother, they are given some of the best seats in the house and a royal treatment.

Mclean runs away when she is in a crisis, and she goes to an old, dumpy hotel near her mother's house. It's a place filled with happy memories of previous vacations her family had taken before the divorce.



## Language and Meaning

This novel is written from Mclean's point-of-view, and it shows. The language is relatively simple with a few more difficult words thrown in. It's typical dialogue for a high school student.

The author steers clear of trendy talk, which could outdate a book. The book is heavy on basketball terms, which is very fitting since Gus and Mclean are obsessed with basketball. In fact, she is named after his favorite coach. Even though basketball terms and phrases are mentioned and alluded to throughout the book, a reader never feels lost even without basketball knowledge. This is because each of the terms is explained through dialogue or action in a very natural manner.

The author excels in showing rather than telling emotions, so a good portion of the book expresses language through behavioral reactions as well as dialogue.

## Structure

What Happened to Goodbye by Sarah Dessen is comprised of 18 chapters of varying length. Some chapters are approximately 10 pages long while others are over 30 pages. Each of the 18 chapters in the book is numbered, without having a specific title. There is a flower design under the written number of each chapter.

The book begins with Mclean in a new town. As she settles, the story jumps between real time and her past. This gives the reader a clear idea of why she is the way she is and why she reacts to her new town in the manner that she does.

Characters are introduced gradually so the reader really gets to know Gus and Mclean before moving on to meeting other main characters. In many cases, characters are introduced briefly, and they come back later to play a more important role. Almost like a screenplay, each scene and seemingly innocuous object becomes part of the story and storyline.

Near the end of the book, Mclean's life is falling apart. The scenes shift more rapidly, adding to the drama of the story. This builds tension. The resolution is pleasing and wraps up all the loose ends.



## Quotes

"What happened to goodbye?" Chap. 2, p. 29

"It had been easier, like always, to just disappear, sparing myself the messy details of another farewell." Chap. 2, p. 29

"All this forced niceness, dancing around a truth: now I'd broken the rules, that third wall, and let everything ugly out into the open." Chap. 9, p. 228

"Here, though, despite my best efforts, I'd somehow ended up being myself again: Mclean Sweet, she of the messed-up parents and weird basketball connections, Super Shitty and a U-Haul's worth of baggage." Chap. 9, p. 237

"How it felt to have the world moving beneath me, a hand gripping mine, knowing if I fell, at least I wouldn't do it alone." Chap. 9, p. 238

"After all these years of just passing through, I was beginning to finally feel at home." Chap. 12, p. 301

"There, the entire world was simple in miniature, clean and orderly, if only because there were none of us, no people, there to complicate things." Chap. 12, p. 308

"The farther down I dug, the older the things got, until I was down to my Mclean clothes, like layers of the earth being excavated." Chap. 14, p. 342.

"A moment later, there was another sound, too, distant but as recognizable as the waves outside. That of pages turning, one after another, a story finally being told." Chap. 15, p. 354

"It's only when you really dig down deep, go underground, that you can see who you really are." Chap. 16, p. 361

"It seemed like a ritual, something sacred, putting all of these pieces back away again, and when I slid the tops on, pressing them shut, the sound was not so different from the one made when you pushed a piece onto the model." Chap. 16, p. 363

"Your past is always your past. Even if you forget it, it remembers." Chap. 16, p. 368

"I felt something inside me open, like a new life beginning." Chap. 17, p. 394





## Topics for Discussion

Why did Mclean choose to live with her father, and how does this change her life?

How is Lakeview different from the other towns where they have lived?

Describe different ways basketball is highlighted in this novel. How is it used to portray Mclean's mental status?

Describe the evolution of Mclean's relationship with her mother throughout the book.

How does Riley make an impact on Mclean?

What is unique about Deb, and how is she important to Mclean and vice versa?

Describe how Mclean feels about the concept of family.