

Wherever Nina Lies Study Guide

Wherever Nina Lies by Lynn Weingarten

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Plot Summary

"Wherever Nina Lies" by Lynn Weingarten is a young adult novel focusing around the efforts of sixteen year-old Ellie Wrigley to find her missing older sister, Nina. The novel begins with Ellie revealing the circumstances surrounding Nina's disappearance, that one day, she simply didn't come home. Ellie admits to feeling lost and listless, searching for a purpose. One day, while visiting her best friend Amanda at work, Ellie comes across one of her sister's drawings in a box of junk with a phone number on it. Ellie calls the number, and the person on the other end denies knowing Nina. Ellie and Amanda track down the person who dropped the junk off, and go to a house-wrecking party he is throwing. Ellie meets a boy there named Sean, who says he will be happy to help Ellie find Nina.

Ellie and Sean head to Nebraska. This is the last time Nina makes a purchase with her credit card. They discover another one of her drawings of a bus that leads them to Denver, Colorado. They then trace Nina to a tattoo shop she visited and worked at briefly, which leads them to a band that Nina catches a ride with. One of the members of the band, Peter, had feelings for Nina, and wrote a song about her. The lyrics contain a line that direct Ellie and Sean to San Francisco. Yet as the near San Francisco, Amanda and an unidentified stranger warn Ellie against Sean, but Ellie ignores the warnings.

At a motel, Ellie goes through some of Sean's things, and discovers that he has murdered his own stepbrother, Jason, whom was dating Nina. Sean wants to find Nina to kill her, and Ellie convinces Sean that she wants Nina dead, too. Both of them head to San Francisco, and track down some of Nina's friends, who are wearing t-shirts she designed. They direct Ellie and Sean to Nina. As Sean prepares to kill Nina, Ellie tackles him, and uniformed police officers swarm in to arrest Sean, who confesses to his crimes. Ellie and Nina then fly home to reunite with their mother, Jane.



Chapters 1-9

Chapters 1-9 Summary

In Chapter 1, Ellie Wrigley, sixteen, works with her friend Brad at a coffee and pastry shop, Mon Coeur. Brad is determined to find Ellie a boyfriend, but Ellie shrugs it off. Secretly, Ellie wants a boyfriend. A macho guy comes into the coffee shop and hits on Ellie, but she casually dismisses it. Two sisters come into the coffee shop, happy and enjoying one another's company. It disheartens Ellie.

In Chapter 2, Mon Coeur is located in the rich town of Edgebridge, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. Ellie's best friend, Amanda, also works there, at a used clothing shop called Attic. Amanda's family is well-off, and live two minutes away from the town. Ellie's family is less well off. Amanda is planning a party for that night, and so the girls dress up. They borrow clothing from the store, but always return it. In a box of junk, Ellie discovers a drawing done by her sister, whom Ellie has not seen in years.

In Chapter 3, Ellie recalls not being able to sleep for three nights following the disappearance of Nina, her older sister. Ellie has nightmares and believes her sister may be dead.

In Chapter 4, two years before the book begins, Nina Wrigley goes missing on June 24, having turned eighteen two months before graduating high school. Nina is an artist who draws on everything, and dyes her hair colors to match events in her life. Before she graduates, she dyes her hair blue for the graduation gown color. Ellie and Nina's father has left them, and when Nina turns sixteen she begins sneaking out at night, to return smelling of alcohol and smoke. Their mother, having to work late, can never keep a hold on Nina. When Nina vanishes, their mother doesn't seem to notice. Ellie and Amanda print up missing sister posters, and put them up everywhere. But there are no real leads, it seems.

In Chapter 5, in the drawing, Ellie finds a phone number, which she knows that she is supposed to find. The male who responds say he has no idea who Nina is, and insists that Ellie has been put up to the call by his ex-girlfriend Deb. He then hangs up. Ellie and Nina go into Morgette's office, who is the owner of Attic, and review the surveillance tape. A guy a few years older comes and sells the box to Morgette, and puts something up on the community bulletin board before leaving. Ellie runs over to the board with Amanda. The flier put up is for a house-wrecking party, and Ellie is excited.

In Chapter 6, Amanda, ever the supportive best friend, goes along with Ellie to the party. Amanda cautions Ellie not to get her hopes up. Ellie talks to two girls to see if they've seen Nina, but they don't recognize Nina's picture. The house-wrecking party is full of alternatively-dressed and artistic people. No matter who she shows Nina's picture to, no one recognizes Nina. Eventually, Ellie meets a boy named Sean, who came to the party because someone put a flier on his windshield. Ellie explains how after she left the



coffee shop she found the flier as well. Ellie also comes across the guy from the surveillance tape, who informs her he sold a box of old things from the basement. The guy brings her downstairs, intent on making a move on her, but Ellie knees him between the legs and runs back upstairs.

In Chapter 7, Ellie goes back upstairs, and smashes a wall with a sledgehammer. She then rushes outside as screaming starts, and a fire engulfs the house. She and Amanda decide to leave.

In Chapter 8, at work the next morning, Brad knows something is the matter with Ellie. Amanda shows up, and says she will have people over that night to use the hot tub. Among them will be Eric, Amanda's almost-boyfriend. Amanda urges Ellie to get over the past, but Ellie says she can't, and it causes a moment of hostility between the two. Amanda leaves after Ellie declines the invitation to her house that evening. Then Sean from the party the night before comes in. Brad intervenes and asks Sean to give Ellie a ride home, since Amanda will not be giving her a ride.

In Chapter 9, Sean confesses that he has come looking for Ellie to make sure she was alright following the fire the previous evening. Ellie is touched, and explains the entire situation with Nina. Sean explains that some things you simply don't get over, and they become a part of you. Sean also explains that his own brother has died, and Ellie invites him into her house to see Nina's drawing. Sean believes their meeting is fate.

Chapters 1-9 Analysis

Lynn Weingarten's novel "Wherever Nina Lies" begins with sixteen year-old Ellie, who reflects on the disappearance of her older, artistic sister, Nina. Ellie feels as though she exists without a real purpose, but the discovery of a drawing by Nina with a mysterious phone number propel Ellie into a search for Nina. In some respects, the seeking out of Nina rivals the Arthurian legend of the Holy Grail, the Cup of Christ, which will bring purpose to one's life. Nina serves as the Holy Grail of sorts. In other words, just as the Grail becomes the purpose of the lives of the Knights, so too does Nina become the purpose of the existence of Ellie. Like the Knights, Ellie will have her own challenges and trials to overcome.

Ellie begins her search locally, seeking out clues about Nina's disappearance. This leads her to move in the same circles of artists, transients, and alternative-culture people thorough which Nina once moved. Far from being helpless, Ellie demonstrates her capacity for action by defending herself against unwanted advances at the party. This demonstrates to the reader that Ellie is not totally powerless, and her decision to confront the disappearance of Nina further demonstrates Ellie's independence, as well as the strength of love and family between the two sisters.

The insertion and appearance of Sean into the picture as mysteriously as the deletion and disappearance of Nina further complicates the mystery that is about to unfold. The reader does not yet know whether Sean's sudden appearance is one to be trusted or

suspected. Sean's character also either proves to be a complementary half to Ellie, or the means of her undoing by telling her exactly what she wants to hear.



Chapters 10-18

Chapters 10-18 Summary

In Chapter 10, Ellie brings Sean up to his room to explain about the drawing and finding the number on the drawing. Sean suggests that perhaps Nina opened a credit card account, and that they could try to get in online using Nina's social security card number. They go into the spare bedroom -which is Nina's old room. Ellie's mom comes home from her nursing shift, and Sean introduces himself. She then goes to sleep. Meanwhile, Ellie successfully finds an online account for Nina. There are two charges: One in Edgebridge, the other for Sweetie's Diner in Pointview, Nebraska. Sean suggests going to Nebraska. They also find Nina's passport.

In Chapter 11, Ellie recalls a visit to her aunt's house when she was twelve, and Nina when she was fourteen. They pretend they are from France, but five days into the trip, Nina meets Nick, around whom the rest of their time revolves.

In Chapter 12, Sean says he will drive Ellie to Nevada. Amanda calls, to patch things up, and see how Ellie is doing, during which time Ellie reveals her plans. Amanda questions Ellie about Sean, whose last name is Lerner, Sean attends Beacon Hill Prep School. Amanda is suddenly worried and annoyed because she didn't know about Ellie having met Sean. They hang up, and keep driving.

In Chapter 13, around one in the morning, Sean and Ellie see a sign for Sweetie's Diner and pull off on the exit. They go inside, where a waitress named Rosie comes to take their order. Rosie doesn't recognize Nina's picture when Ellie shows it to her. Rosie also explains that because the diner is on the highway, most people aren't repeat customers. As Sean and Ellie eat, Sean tells Ellie that they will find Nina. Ellie then excuses herself to go to the bathroom. On the mirror in the bathroom is one of Nina's drawings, of a boy and bus 257 -the same bus that is parked outside the diner. Sean and Ellie race out to drive after the bus.

In Chapter 14, Ellie and Sean rush to the car and follow the bus. Sean explains that by helping Ellie search for Nina, he feels like he is doing something, feeling powerless after the loss of his brother. Ellie recalls there was a sign a month before Nina left that she missed. In Nina's room, Ellie had found a note with "I Love You" written over and over again, a note which had been crumpled up and tossed on the floor.

Ellie and Sean follow the bus to Denver, Colorado. Ellie tries to imagine being her sister, seeing what her sister would have seen. She sees a welcome bulletin board, with an ad for Bijoux Ink tattoo parlor. Bijoux is the name of Nina's old dog. Ellie decides she needs to go to the shop, but she and Sean need to sleep first.



In Chapter 15, Ellie and Sean go to the Travel Route Inn, pretend to be eighteen, and rent a room with twin beds. Sean falls asleep immediately, but Ellie watches him sleep for a few moments before falling asleep herself.

In Chapter 16, Ellie has a strange dream about Nina going missing once more, and Ellie asks her where she's been. Nina says she's been here all along, selling balloons. Ellie wakes up as Sean is getting dressed, and she begins to realize she is attracted to him. She pretends to be asleep when Sean wakes her up. Amanda calls, saying that mutual friends say that Sean is a freak, has no friends, has a girlfriend, and makes out with his girlfriend's picture every night before bed. Amanda insists that Ellie come home because Amanda is now dating a new guy who has a hot friend, but Ellie doesn't want to hear it, and hangs up.

In Chapter 17, Ellie and Sean go to Bijoux Ink, and Ellie tells the girl at the counter, Eden, that she is looking for Nina. She shows Eden the picture of Nina. Eden's face softens, then Eden denies knowing her. Sean urges her out of the shop., telling Ellie something isn't right. Ellie thinks maybe Eden is trying to protect Nina from something or someone, and goes back inside.

Ellie talks to a guy named Ron, telling him she is interested in a tattoo. Because she and Nina look alike, Ellie shows Ron Nina's passport, and Ron accepts it. Ron brings Ellie to Petra, who will help Ellie decide on a tattoo. While Petra goes to get tattoo books, Ellie looks at the walls of the room, covered with photos of clients. In one picture is Nina, with the boy from the mirror drawing at the diner. Ellie takes down the photo, opens up the frame, and stashes the photo under her shirt. She then leaves and tells Sean about the photo, and explains that at one point, Nina worked at Bijoux. The guys in the photo appear to be some sort of band, so they go across the street to a music store called Bottom Forty.

The guy at the counter at Bottom Forty identifies the band as Monster Hands, and directs Sean and Ellie to the M section of the store. In the M section, they meet a boyfriend-girlfriend duo named Jamie and Jamie, who are purchasing the last Monster Hands CD. Ellie asks to look at it, but the Jamies won't budge. But they are excited when they see the photo from Bijoux in Sean's hands, and offer to trade a photocopy of the drawing for the new Monster Hands album cover for it. The drawing has been done by Nina. Monster Hands has one more show in Phoenix at a place called Spit Pavilion before going to Europe for two months. The four agree to go to Phoenix together in exchange for the photograph, and the Jamies agreeing to help Ellie and Sean get backstage. Sean kisses Ellie to demonstrate to the Jamies that they are also a couple, and Ellie is beside herself with happiness.

In Chapter 18, Ellie is still stunned by the kiss, while Sean carries on as if nothing has happened. His phone rings twice, but he silences the phone without even looking at it. Ellie thinks it might be his girlfriend, but then decides not to think the way Amanda does. Brad calls and Ellie explains the situation to him, and asks to have the next day off work. Brad agrees happily. Jamie and Jamie come out of their apartment buildings with duffel bags, and are ready for the trip.



Chapters 10-18 Analysis

Ellie's background as a single mother who is distant because she works so frequently, a missing sister, a loyal and dedicated best friend, and a good workplace friend -serve as a base from which to launch her search. The distant mother provides a lack of parental concern over Ellie's decision to commence a search, the missing sister the cause for the search, the dedicated best friend a cautionary warning against the search, the workplace friend an unwitting enabler of the search, and the mysterious appearance of a boy the motivation and catalyst of the search.

The search begins in the direction of Nebraska, heading west. The United States of America has long symbolized freedom and second chances, and the the American West -especially to Americans themselves- is synonymous with freedom and second chances. Ellie, who now has her purpose, seeks freedom out west, and the chance to reunite with her sister - a second chance at family, so to speak.

Through diligence, and through the insistence of Sean, Ellie is able to trace Nina through Nebraska and Denver, to a band called Monster Hands. Yet, at the same time, the reader's doubts about Sean are reinforced by the loyal Amanda, who cautions Ellie against Sean. But Ellie ignores Amanda's warnings.



Chapter 19-27

Chapter 19-27 Summary

In Chapter 19, while Sean and Ellie drive, Jamie and Jamie get into some sexual activity in the backseat. The four of them eventually decide to stop for the night.

In Chapter 20, Sean brings them to a very fancy hotel, where he rents two \$450-a-night rooms. The Jamies are amazed at Sean's wealth.

In Chapter 21, Sean and Ellie are both happy not to have to room with the Jamies. Sean explains his mother is inordinately wealthy, but is in a mental hospital. His father is remarried, and Sean is spending all the money he can before his stepmother does. His father has power of attorney over his mother, meaning he has access to all of her money. Sean admits to missing the memory of how his mother used to be.

Sean and Ellie order room service, getting cheeseburgers and champagne. Ellie asks about Sean's girlfriend. Sean explains there was a girlfriend once, but it didn't work out. Sean and Ellie then kiss.

In Chapter 22, Ellie wakes up and Sean is gone. She wonders if they really did make love the previous evening, or if it is only in her head from being drunk. The room is clean and spotless. Ellie showers, and when she gets out, Sean is there with breakfast sandwiches. He makes no acknowledgment of the previous night, and announces they'd better get moving.

In Chapter 23, Ellie feels like her and Sean are strangers now. Ellie wonders what Nina would do in her situation, or if Nina was even in a situation like it.

Chapter 24 - Sean, Ellie, and the Jamies arrive in Phoenix. At the show, the Jamies reveal they have traveled all the way there to sell unofficial merchandise for the band, and that they have no connections with the band. On line for tickets, the girl in front of Ellie and Sean reveals that the Jamies are well-known for their scams. Inside, Sean disappears in the crowd, and Ellie meets a boy named Danny with whom she dances. Ellie keeps reminding herself that she is there for Nina, not Sean, and that what happened with Sean means nothing -although she can't quite convince herself of that.

Ellie attempts to go backstage, but is stopped by a security guard. She pretends to be Nina, and the band sends word to let her back. The band members realize right away Ellie is not Nina, but Ellie explains she is looking for Nina, and the band relaxes. One of the members, Peter, fell for Nina, but Nina didn't reciprocate. They say Nina traveled with the band for a few days, but then got out at a large house with a snowboard, because she had to say goodbye to someone. Peter thinks Nina had a boyfriend. The band then continued on. Peter asks Ellie if she wouldn't mind giving a copy of their new album to Nina, since the album uses her artwork, and his phone number Ellie agrees. Peter also gives Ellie the address of the house in Big Sur.



In Chapter 25, Amanda shows up as the crowd is thinning out to surprise Ellie. Amanda has spoken to Brad, and decided to fly out to Arizona to be with Ellie. Ellie introduces Amanda to Sean, and there is mutual distrust between them. The entire situation is awkward. Ellie decides not to tell anyone about her conversation with the members of Monster Hands.

In Chapter 26, Ellie, Sean, and Amanda check into a fancy hotel, and Amanda urges Ellie to come down to the pool with her. At the pool, Amanda asks Ellie what is going on. Ellie explains she is looking for Nina, and Amanda is worried about her. Amanda thinks Sean has ulterior motives. Sean overhears the argument and then jumps into an elevator. Ellie races after him. Up in the room, Sean shows them both an old newspaper clipping about the drug overdose of his brother. Ellie tells Amanda to leave.

In Chapter 27, Amanda leaves. Sean thanks Ellie, and the two of them head to bed together. Sean tells Ellie that it is fate.

Chapter 19-27 Analysis

More information about Sean is given to the reader, including the inordinate wealth of his family, and the mental illness of his mother. In passing, Sean appears to have had a hard-luck life, but the cautious reader identifies inconsistencies in Sean's behavior that raise concern. Among those inconsistencies are Sean's attitude before and after the night he and Ellie have sex. There is no real explanation given, giving the cautious reader pause to consider that perhaps Sean's mother's mental illness is something genetic. Indeed, Sean's inability to communicate his actions of coming and going also prove to be of concern for the reader.

At the same time, the snake-like nature of the Jamies increases as they abandon Ellie and Sean in Phoenix to sell contraband Monster Hands t-shirts. Peter, from the band, gives Ellie her next set of clues, which the sudden appearance of Amanda -a move of loyalty and dedication- negates Ellie's desire to reveal her new findings about Nina. Despite Amanda's best attempts to warn Ellie that there is something about Sean that is not right, Ellie sends Amanda home in anger. Everything seems to be heading along an inexorable course: a new love, the rejection of a best friend, and the dismissal of an old life. One wonders if Nina experienced the same thing. Sean's declaration that everything is fate appears to be holding fast.



Chapter 28-36

Chapter 28-36 Summary

In Chapter 28, Sean has a nightmare, presumably about his brother. Ellie holds him all night.

In Chapter 29, Brad calls the next morning. Ellie hasn't called out of work, and Amanda has swung by to see Brad. Brad is now worried about Ellie. Ellie's phone dies, and she uses Sean's phone to call her mother, to say she is staying at Amanda's. Sean suggests continuing their trip, and he will pay for it all. He suggests his family's vacation house and the Grand Canyon, but Ellie wants to keep looking for Nina. She shows him the address, and Sean's face turns red. He wonders whether finding Nina's drawing was really fate working in favor of them meeting one another. But Ellie wants to keep looking, and Sean agrees hesitantly. He tells Ellie he loves her.

In Chapter 30, Ellie and Sean begin driving toward the address. They make a stop at a gas station. Ellie believes she is falling in love. At the rest stop, Sean says his father knows a private investigator, one whom Sean has contacted to help find Nina. Sean tells her that Nina has died.

In Chapter 31, Ellie recalls a night her parents were arguing, and she and Nina put on earmuffs. They also turned on the shower and sang, "Happy Birthday", to drown out their parents' fighting.

In Chapter 32, Ellie is in shock following the news that Sean gives her of Nina's death. Sean tells Ellie that Nina was working as a stripper, began dating a gambler, who got into it with the wrong people, and was shot to death one night a year before. Ellie wants to speak to the investigator, so Sean calls him back. The investigator doesn't answer, so Sean leaves a message.

In Chapter 33, Ellie is crying, imagining what Nina's final moments must have been like. Sean tells Ellie he will be there for her through it all.

In Chapter 34, Sean brings Ellie to the Grand Canyon Cactus Lodge, Ellie wants to call everyone, but Sean tells her she doesn't have to. Sean also tells her they never have to go back if she doesn't want to.

In Chapter 35, Ellie can't sleep so she goes out to Sean's car to read the lyrics on the Monster Hands album. One song is called, "Where Nina Lies". One of the lines of the lyrics talks about going as far as Nina can go, which is part of a joke between Nina and Ellie from a commercial about shipping packages as far as they can go -to San Francisco. While there in the car, Sean's cell phone goes off with an unavailable number. Ellie answers it, tells whoever it is to leave Sean alone, but it is a hushed voice who warns Ellie that it is not safe with Sean. Ellie dismisses it as a practical joke and



hangs up. Sean suddenly appears next to the car, and tells Ellie it is time to let things go.

In Chapter 36, Sean is in the shower and Ellie goes to call her Mom. But she notices that there are no calls to the investigator from the phone. The unavailable number calls again, and Ellie answers. The person identifies himself as Max, who Ellie had called the other day from the number on the drawing, and says that he and Sean both know Nina. But Sean comes out of the shower, and Ellie is forced to hang up. Ellie suddenly realizes Max's number is the same number that Sean called the previous Saturday. Ellie suddenly wonders if Sean lied to her about Nina being dead. While she thinks, Sean takes the drawing with the phone number from Ellie, and flushes it down the toilet. Ellie is powerless to stop him.

Sean tells Ellie that she needs to let some things go. She notices there are white scars on Sean's arm. They are actually scars of letters that spell out "Nina". Ellie immediately excuses herself to shower and asks Sean to get food while she is bathing. Sean agrees, happy to complete the task.

Chapter 28-36 Analysis

Amanda, ever the loyal best friend, refuses to quit, going to Brad to tell him that Sean is not all he's cracked up to be. With pressure mounting on three sides, Ellie seems trapped. Her friends want her home, Ellie needs to find Nina, and Sean insists that Ellie doesn't ever have to go home. Indeed, the pressures around her present their own challenge, one that is emotional in nature.

In a moment of crisis, the search appears to come crashing down, as Sean announces that Nina is dead. This leaves Ellie beside herself with grief and horror. Yet her grief and horror becomes even greater as she discovers that Sean is exactly what Amanda and Brad have warned her about when she discovers Nina's name carved into his arm. This brings to mind the mental disorder of Sean's mother as well.

Fate, as Sean declared, may be ringing. Ellie doesn't seem to have a chance.



Chapter 37-45

Chapter 37-45 Summary

In Chapter 37, Ellie searches Sean's messenger bag while he is gone and finds dozens of papers and photos. One is a drawing intended for Jason -Sean's brother -but Sean has scratched out "Jason" and replaced it with his own name. There is a photo of Nina and Jason. The other pages are undelivered letters to Nina from Sean, about Sean wanting to be there for Nina. One is a letter talking about the police asking Sean where Jason would have gotten heroin; another details an unnamed deed Sean committed out of love for Nina. Ellie realizes Jason died the day Nina disappeared. Sean comes back, and Ellie rushes to put everything back, and pretends to get out of the shower. Sean tells Ellie he will always be there for her.

But then Sean realizes Ellie has been in his bag. He puts his hand on her shoulder, and asks her if she loves him. Sean says things won't be alright, and then he ties Ellie up. He tells Ellie that Nina made him do what he did. He leaves to go to his car, and his phone rings again. Ellie kicks it open and begs for help. She hears a familiar voice, but then Sean returns, and Ellie kicks the phone under the desk. Sean returns, gun in hand. He confesses to injecting his brother with an overdose of heroin because of Nina, and then he admits to searching for her to make things right. The address Ellie has been given by Peter is for the vacation house. Sean then decides it is time to kill Ellie, because she knows the truth.

In Chapter 38, Ellie says she loves Sean, which catches him off guard. She says she went through his things because she is insecure. She says that Sean can do whatever he wants to Nina. Sean relents, and says he still has to go to San Francisco to make things right with Nina. He asks Ellie to go with him, and Ellie agrees.

In Chapter 39, Sean drives them toward San Francisco. He realizes he can't find his phone. Ellie suggests going to Haight Street when they get to San Francisco.

In Chapter 40, Ellie and Sean walk down Haight Street. Eventually they come across people wearing t-shirts with Ellie's face drawn on them. One of the people direct Ellie and Sean to Nina's address. A girl behind them wearing sunglasses looks them over as they leave.

In Chapter 41, Ellie and Sean go to the address. The door is unlocked, and they go in, and go to find Nina standing in the middle of a room full of drawings. She is shocked to see them both. Sean pulls out the gun, and something inside Ellie snaps. She throws all her weight against Sean, knocking the gun from his hand, knocking him to the floor. Instantly, five uniformed police officers come out of nowhere, guns drawn. They cuff Sean and take him away. Nina and Ellie embrace.



In Chapter 42, at the police station, Ellie confesses everything to Detective Bryant -and so does Sean. Nina says that everything is finally over.

In Chapter 43, Ellie and Nina are flying home. Nina sketches Ellie while they are on the plane. Their mother is taking the day off work to meet them at the airport. Nina explains everything that happened. She met Jason at the location of the house-wrecking party. Jason then introduces Nina to his stepbrother, Sean, who has some problems, but who Jason says is really a good kid. Sean develops a stalker-like crush on Nina, writing her long letters. Nina goes to the party house with Jason for his birthday party with Max. She gets him a snowboard, and they agree to go on a trip to his his family's vacation home in Big Sur. Sean shows up for the birthday party, having walked 20 miles, and Nina decides to spend the night at the party house. Jason agrees to get her in the morning.

Nina calls Jason the next morning, but he doesn't answer. Eventually, his mom picks up, and tells Nina their party killed Jason. She later learns about the overdose and realizes Jason would never do that. Sean continues visiting Nina. One day, Sean shows up when a girl from Texas has her arm around Nina. When the girl from Texas leaves, she almost gets killed because her brakes have been tampered with. Nina then realizes Sean is responsible for Jason's death, and so she tells the police. To keep everyone safe, Nina vanishes, goes to Big Sur with the snowboard in honor of Jason, and then goes to San Francisco, having finally let go.

Nina also tells Ellie that Max has been checking up on them for her, once a month, for the past two years. Nina overhears Ellie and Sean's plans on the phone after the phone has been kicked under the desk, and so Nina's friends look out for her, to protect her. And then the police are called.

In Chapter 44, back home, Ellie and Nina race off the plane to see their overjoyed mother, who is waiting for them with two bouquets of yellow flowers. She tells them they are both grounded, and they all laugh.

In Chapter 45, Ellie, Nina, Brad, Brad's boyfriend Thomas, Amanda, Amanda's boyfriend Adam, and Adam's friend Cody, are all in Edgebridge for fireworks on the Fourth of July. Max arrives and Ellie recognizes him. Nina has finished a new drawing of herself and of Ellie together. The fireworks begin.

Chapter 37-45 Analysis

Ellie confirms through Sean's belongings that Sean is not only responsible for the death of Jason, but that he is responsible for Nina's disappearance -a fact later confirmed by Nina, who disappears in order to protect her family. Nina's disappearance opens a circle of mystery to which Ellie's pursuit brings closure and the answer. Ellie's Arthurian Quest for the Grail -Ellie's search for Nina- comes to a successful conclusion.

The discovery of Nina also brings to light the mystery of her disappearance, and the reasons why she left. The circle Ellie has opened up by leaving her old life behind



-ignoring work, casting away friends -is a circle that is also completed as Ellie returns home to make things right. Furthermore, it is also revealed that Nina has had an old friend checking up on Ellie and her mother, just to make sure everything is alright. The closing of the mystery of Nina's disappearance also means that a new life of freedom without fear and without Sean's danger can begin. This is a real second chance.



Characters

Ellie Wrigley

Ellie Wrigley is a sixteen year-old girl who lives near Edgebridge, Illinois, and is the principal protagonist and narrator of Lynn Weingarten's novel "Wherever Nina Lies". Ellie is sweet and kind, honest and trustworthy, pretty, and is best friends with Amanda. The two girls are loyal and dedicated to one another. Ellie is haunted by the disappearance of her older sister, Nina, two year previous. Ellie works on Mon Coeur, a coffee shop, with her gay friend Brad. Ellie feels as though she has no purpose in her life, until she discovers an old drawing Nina made, with a mysterious phone number. The phone number propels Ellie into a search for Nina, beginning with a house-wrecking party where she meets a mysterious boy named Sean.

Sean proves to be a motivator and catalyst for Ellie, providing the genesis for her journey to find Nina. He accompanies Ellie, who is absolutely smitten with him, and begins to blow off work and sends her best friend home in anger in order to remain with Sean. It later turns out the warnings Amanda makes about Sean are accurate, as Sean has murdered his stepbrother Jason, and is intent on killing Nina for rejecting his love. Ellie and Sean track down Nina in San Francisco, where Sean attempts to kill Nina. Ellie throws herself at Sean to tackle him, allowing the police to arrest intervene and arrest Sean.

Ellie and Nina reunite with their mother after a flight back home. Ellie then makes amends with Amanda and Brad.

Nina Wrigley

Nina Wrigley is the older sister of Ellie Wrigley, whose disappearance sets the stage for the events in the novel "Wherever Nina Lies" by Lynn Weingarten. She is beautiful, artistic, and dyes her hair different colors to match events in her life. She meets Jason, begins dating him, and Jason introduces her to his stepbrother Sean, who develops a crush on Nina. When Nina rejects Sean's love, Sean murders Jason, and Nina flees across the country to San Francisco to keep her family safe. In San Francisco, Nina designs and sells T-shirts and is overjoyed to reunited with Ellie and her mother.

Jane Wrigley

Jane Wrigley is the single mother of Nina and Ellie Wrigley, who works as a nurse. She seems uncaring, cold, and distant, because she works long shifts in order to support the family. She is nevertheless thrilled and overjoyed when both of her daughters return home.



Mr. Wrigley

Mr. Wrigley is the father of Ellie and Nina, and the ex-husband of Jane Wrigley. Mr. Wrigley appears in the book as cold and combative, having abandoned his family long before the events of the book take place.

Amanda

Amanda is the beautiful, loyal, and dedicated best friend of Ellie who learns that Sean is a freak, and warns Ellie not to trust him. Amanda even flies to Phoenix to warn Ellie, but Ellie sends her home angrily. Amanda's loyalty is unbroken, however, as she asks Brad to warn Ellie about Sean. In the end of the book, everything is made right.

Brad

Brad is the gay friend and coworker of Ellie at Mon Coeur. He appears as a friend and confidante, urging Ellie to date Sean, and then later recanting.

Sean Lerner

Sean Lerner is the crush and stalker of Ellie Wrigley. Sean, who comes from a wealthy family, meets Nina through his stepbrother Jason, who is dating Nina. When Nina rejects Sean's love, Sean murders Jason and intends to kill Nina. He then uses Ellie to track down Nina, and as he prepares to kill Nina, Ellie tackles him. Sean is arrested and confesses his crimes.

Jason

Jason is the love interest of Nina Wrigley, and Sean's stepbrother. Jason introduces Nina to Sean, and when Nina rejects Sean's love, Sean murders Jason.

Max

Max is Jason's best friend, who keeps an eye on Ellie and Jane Wrigley after Nina disappears, at Nina's request. He comes in to Mon Coeur once a month for Earl Gray Tea.

Thomas

Thomas is Brad's boyfriend, and encourages Ellie to pursue Sean.



Objects/Places

Edgebridge, Illinois

Edgebridge, Illinois, is a wealthy suburb of Chicago. It is where the coffee shop Mon Coeur and the clothing shop Attic are both located. Edgebridge is where Ellie and Amanda work.

Mon Coeur

Mon Coeur is a coffee shop in Edgebridge, Illinois where Ellie and her friend Brad both work.

Sweetie's Diner

Located in Pointview, Nebraska, Sweetie's Diner is where Ellie and Sean travel to find Nina. At the diner, Ellie discovers a drawing on the mirror of an unknown person and Bus 457, bound for Denver.

Denver, Colorado

Denver Colorado is the destination of Bus 457. It is the location of a tattoo shop where Nina briefly visited and worked, as well as the place that Sean and Ellie find out about the band Monster Hands. It is also where they meet the Jamies who direct them to Phoenix, Arizona.

Phoenix, Arizona

Phoenix, Arizona, is the location of the Spit Pavilion, a local venue where the band Monster Hands perform. It is where Ellie learns that Nina asked the band to be dropped off at a vacation home.

San Francisco, California

San Francisco, California, is where Nina is hiding. It is where she works, creates, and sells T-shirts. It is also where Sean is captured by the police and Ellie and Nina reunite.

The Airport

The airport is where Ellie and Nina disembark to meet their mother and go home.



Nina's Drawings

Nina's drawings serve as clues throughout the course of the novel, which Ellie finds and follows from one place to the next.

Nina's T-Shirts

Nina's t-shirts are worn by her friends who give Ellie and Sean Nina's address. The T-shirts are how Ellie is able to find out where she might be able to find her sister.

Yellow Flower Bouquets

Yellow flower bouquets are what Jane Wrigley gives her daughters, Nina and Ellie, when they return home at the airport from San Francisco, California.



Themes

Love

Love is a major theme in the novel "Wherever Nina Lies" by Lynne Weingarten. It prevails in every single part of the book, in every place, and in every event. Love appears in two forms: real love and destructive love.

Real love exists between Ellie Wrigley and her sister, Nina, securing the bond of friendship and family between them. It is Nina's love for her sister, and for her mother, that compel her to abandon her former life in order to protect them from the violent and obsessed Sean. It is also Ellie's love for her sister Nina that compels her to seek Nina out, traveling thousands of miles to find her. It is also Ellie's love of Nina that compels her to essentially risk her own life by tackling Sean, to prevent him from killing Nina. Nina's love for Jason, likewise, sets the entire story into motion.

Destructive love also exists in the novel, between the persons of Sean and Nina, and Sean and Ellie. Sean is obsessed with Nina, declaring love to her, but it is a love that Nina rejects in favor of Jason. This destructive love prompts Sean to murder Jason, and then prompts Sean to seek to destroy Nina. The introduction of Ellie in Sean's life he believes to be fate, and he confesses his love to her as well, going so far as to desiring to kill her for finding out about his secret.

Family

Family is a major theme in the novel "Wherever Nina Lies" by Lynne Weingarten. Family bonds are strong, are strengthened by love, and exist in two ways in the book: real family, and family in form only.

Real family is seen through the Wrigleys, between Ellie, Nina, and ultimately, their mother Jane. It is a sense of real family that helps compel Nina to abandon Ellie and her mother in order to protect them against Sean. Yet it is also this bond of family that encourages Nina to leave clues behind, which due to the same bond of family, Ellie follows to find Nina. The triumphal return home of Ellie and Nina is completed with the presence of their mother, warm and happy to see them. She has taken a valuable day off of work -excessive work as the means to support her family being why Jane is so frequently absent- in order to see both of her daughters again. Real family also exists between Jason and Sean, the former hoping to help turn around the latter's life.

Family in form only exists in two places: the Wrigley patriarch and his family, and Sean and his family. Mr. Wrigley is absent from the story. He was combative and walked out on his family years before the events of the book. Sean, likewise, places no emphasis or value on his own family bonds, admitting his father doesn't care what he is up to, and calling his stepmother a "step-bitch." Sean likewise values family so little -perhaps



because of his obsession with Nina, or some mental imbalance- that he goes so far as to murder his own stepbrother, Jason, in order to achieve his own ends.

Friendship

Friendship is a major underlying theme in the novel "Wherever Nina Lies" by Lynne Weingarten. Friendship -real friendship, which consists of loyalty and dedication -exists predominantly between Amanda and Ellie, and to a lesser but still strong degree between Brad and Ellie.

Amanda is best friends with Ellie, and always makes sure to include Ellie in all of her plans. She invites Ellie to parties she throws, and Ellie practically lives at her house. Amanda is frequently Ellie's ride to and from work, and is determined to help Ellie find a boyfriend. Amanda also embarks upon the quest to find Nina with Ellie initially, but later encourages Ellie to let it go. Yet, when Ellie and Sean travel across country, Amanda finds out more information about Sean, warns Ellie -and Amanda's friendship is so strong that she flies out to Arizona to meet Ellie (one could argue, risking her own life in the process being near Sean) and try and protect her. Even after Amanda is cast out and sent home, she warns Brad, who in turn warns Ellie to be careful with Sean. By the end of the novel, the friendship between Ellie and Amanda has been repaired.

The friendship between Brad and Ellie is also important. Brad covers for Ellie at work, and encourages her on her trip with Sean. Yet, when Amanda warns Brad that Sean is not all he is cracked up to be, Brad begins warning Ellie as well. By the end of the novel, Ellie and Brad have resumed their friendship.

Style

Point of View

Lynn Weingarten tells her novel, "Wherever Nina Lies" from the first person-perspective of the main character and protagonist Ellie Wrigley. This is done for three reasons. First of all, since the plot focuses around Ellie's search for Nina, it is only natural to focus the plot around her. Secondly, Weingarten enables the readers to form an emotional bond to Ellie with which they can relate, making the search for the elusive Nina that much more compelling. Finally, due to the horrifying nature of the search, and the joy of the discovery of Nina, the first-person perspective allows the reader to fully understand, from a subjective point of view, the thoughts, feelings, and emotions experienced firsthand by Ellie.

Setting

The setting of Lynn Weingarten's novel "Wherever Nina Lies" takes place in the American Midwest, West, and Southwest from the suburbs of Chicago to the streets of San Francisco. The American West has always represented freedom and second chances, just as America at large as represented freedom and second chances. Nina flees west to protect her family, and to be free; Ellie heads west seeking the chance to find her sister, and to be free of the mystery that hangs around her shoulders.

Language and Meaning

Since Lynn Weingarten tells her novel "Wherever Nina Lies" from the first-person perspective of Ellie Wrigley, a sixteen year-old girl, Weingarten writes in language that is simple and straightforward with a touch of poetic elegance commonly associated with the fairer sex. This serves to reinforce the quality of Weingarten's characterization and makes the character of Ellie convincing.

Structure

Lynn Weingarten tells her novel "Wherever Nina Lies" in forty-five chronological chapters. Due to the extent of the surrounding mystery and the search undertaken by Ellie, the simple structure is effective by making transitions between people, places, and events easier to negotiate.



Quotes

"For three nights after Nina vanished, I didn't sleep. I just lay in my bed, my head inches from the open window, the thick, humid late June air blowing against my skin like hot breath. Waiting" (Chapter 3, p. 16).

"I remembered you worked at the coffee place, so I figured I'd just come by and make sure you were alright. I hope that doesn't seem stalkery or weird seeing as we only talked for like thirty seconds" (Chapter 9, p. 67).

"Truth is, I'm worried that even hearing her voice will somehow break the spell that has made this all possible. Amanda has a way of bringing me back to earth, whether I want her to or not" (Chapter 12, p. 91).

"It was the expression on her face when she looked at Nina's picture. Her face got softer, or something, and she smiled the tiniest bit just for a second, like she was a little bit amazed and a little bit amused and she wanted to take care of her" (Chapter 17, p. 127).

"Only sometimes love makes people do crazy things" (Chapter 21, p. 163).

"'I'm worried about you,' she says. 'I can't watch you do this to yourself anymore. I mean I came all the way out here to make sure you're okay'" (Chapter 26, p. 198).

"'This is fate,' Sean whispers. 'This is fate, Ellie'" (Chapter 27, p. 206).

"The investigator found out about Nina," Sean says. 'She died.' Sean looks at me again. 'She's dead, Ellie'" (Chapter 30, p. 222).

"Nina is not the only one who can save us. Suddenly I am flying through the air screaming, 'LEAVE MY SISTER ALONE'" (Chapter 41, p. 283).

"And my mother is just staring at us, looking so soft and pleased and proud, it's like the drawing of her on Nina's wall is a portrait of her from just this moment" (Chapter 44, p. 306).



Topics for Discussion

Discuss the theme of family. Why are family ties so strong, especially between Ellie and Nina? How does this bond of family work out for them in the end?

What is the primary mystery of the novel "Where Nina Lies" by Lynn Weingarten. Is this disappearance, on the surface, straightforward? Why? How does the mystery deepen as the novel progresses?

Ellie and Nina's mother is described as distant and hardworking, which the girls conclude may be coldness. Is this accurate? Why or why not?

Describe the theme of love in the novel "Where Nina Lies" by Lynn Weingarten. Where does love appear? Where is it strongest? Where is it weakest?

Describe the theme of friendship in Lynn Weingarten's novel "Where Nina Lies". What is friendship like between Ellie and Amanda, and between Ellie and Brad? How do these friendships play out? Is there friendship between Ellie and Nina? How does this friendship play out?