

Seventy-Two Derwents



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF CATE KENNEDY

After studying at the University of Canberra, Cate Kennedy spent time working in community development in Australia. She went on to spend two years volunteering with community programs in Mexico, an experience which helped inspire her early work, including the poetry collection *Signs of Other Fires* and the memoir *Sing, and Don't Cry: A Mexican Journal*. She later returned to Australia, where she has taught creative writing at the University of Melbourne and elsewhere. She has published several collections of poetry and short stories, such as *The Taste of River Water* (2011), *Dark Water* (2012), and [Like a House on Fire](#) (2012), as well as a novel, *The World Beneath* (2010). She currently lives in Victoria, Australia.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Domestic violence has been characterized by Rosie Batty, a domestic violence activist, as “epidemic” in contemporary Australia. An Australian Bureau of Statistics survey conducted in 2016 found that one in four women and one in thirteen men had experienced violence from a partner since the age of 15. Moreover, the same survey showed that “two-thirds of men and women who experienced physical assault by a male did not report the most recent incident to police,” indicating that even these statistics may underestimate the severity of the situation. Finally, the survey reported that one in six women and one in ten men experienced physical and/or sexual abuse before the age of 15.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Much of Kennedy’s work approaches themes similar to those covered by “Seventy-Two Derwents.” *Dark Roots*, published in the same year, includes stories about dysfunctional personal relationships and family trauma. Her novel, *The World Beneath*, likewise focuses on strained dynamics of power and identity in a parent-child relationship. Her stories tend to focus on individual relationships, using a sober, minimalist style to expose the hidden tensions beneath apparently calm surfaces. In this sense, it recalls the work of authors like Raymond Carver, who also used the short-story as a medium to explore and question the foundations of intimacy, as he does in his story “Cathedral.”

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** “Seventy-Two Derwents”

- **When Written:** Unknown
- **Where Written:** Victoria, Australia
- **When Published:** 2012
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary
- **Genre:** Short story
- **Setting:** Australia
- **Climax:** When Shane attacks Tyler and her family, Tyler’s mother stabs him.
- **Antagonist:** Shane
- **Point of View:** First person

EXTRA CREDIT

Award Winner. *Seventy-Two Derwents* is the last story in a larger collection of short stories called [Like a House on Fire](#), which won the Steele Rudd Award and was shortlisted for the Stella Prize.

Make Your Own. Derwent is a real company, and their 72-box of sketching pencils is available for order online.



PLOT SUMMARY

The narrative is taken from the journal of a young Australian girl named Tyler who is in Grade 6. She explains that she received the journal from her schoolteacher, Mrs Carlyle, who gave them out to the class to encourage the students to practice writing about themselves. She briefly describes Mrs Carlyle’s **pet budgies** and mentions that her teacher promised to give her a bird of her own should one of the birds lay some eggs.

Tyler lives with her mother and her older sister Ellie, but her mother’s boyfriend, Shane, is around a lot and even showers at their house. When Tyler’s mother asks her what she thinks of Shane, Tyler flashes back into the past, recalling a time when she asked her mother for money to get a McDonald’s hamburger, but her mother insisted that she sit in the kitchen and wait for her to prepare a burger from scratch. Once the burger was done, Tyler’s mother demanded that Tyler confirm that her burger tasted far better than a McDonald’s burger. Tyler writes in her journal that she’s learned to always say whatever her mother wants to hear.

Tyler then returns to the present. Shane has come over for dinner, and watches TV with Tyler. He repeatedly prods her about her romantic life, but she distracts herself by fantasizing about the set of **seventy-two Derwents**, a kind of high quality artist’s pencil, that she’s been pining for. She recalls showing

them to her grandmother in the art store and asking for them as a birthday present. Shane then attempts to repair Tyler's mother's car, but seems to do more harm than good.

Tyler flashes back to Christmas two years prior, recalling how much she loved a handmade doll she received from her Aunt Jacinta, despite her mother's scorn for it. Her estranged older brother, Zac, joined them for part of Christmas day, but treated their mother coldly and left as soon as possible. Tyler fondly recalls a holiday card she received from Jacinta, which included Jacinta's phone number. Back in the present, Tyler finds Shane watching TV, where he insists on showing her his foot tattoo. Tyler describes how uncomfortable she feels around Shane. On Tyler's birthday, her grandmother gives her a set of colored pencils, but they are not the Derwents she wanted. Tyler has a small birthday celebration with family. Ellie promises they'll have a better one next year.

Tyler's mother works on a set of handmade dolls to sell in a local store. She had to borrow money from Ellie to buy the necessary supplies, including a special pair of **sewing scissors**. Tyler explains to her journal that Ellie works hard in school and saves money in order to be able to escape life with their family. When Shane comes over, Ellie sleeps in Tyler's bed and promises to buy her a set of Derwents someday. The next day, Shane offers Tyler a candy bar, promising to regularly bring her "surprises" as long as she can keep them a secret.

Ellie and Tyler help their mother finish her dolls. She decides to keep Tyler home from school the next day so that she can continue to help; Tyler agrees, despite the fact that she would rather go to school. That night, Tyler catches Shane watching her sleep; he goes away after she asks him what he's doing. When Ellie comes home from work, she makes Tyler promise to tell her, not their mother, if Shane does anything that makes Tyler feel uncomfortable (a feeling Tyler describes as having stones in her stomach).

Later, when Shane asks Tyler to give him her urine (which the story implies is for a drug test that he's unprepared to take), Tyler feels the same feeling of stones in her stomach come back. She is frightened by the request but agrees. The next day, Mrs Carlyle asks if any students would like to volunteer to submit their journals. Tyler writes that she has impulsively decided to submit hers, since no other students did.

The narrative resumes two days later, after Mrs Carlyle has returned Tyler's journal. Mrs Carlyle holds her after school and explains that she's reported the contents of Tyler's journal to the authorities. She offers to drive her home, but Tyler wants to visit Mrs Carlyle's house and see her budgies. Mrs Carlyle agrees, taking her to visit her house before driving her to the mall to meet Ellie.

The next day, Shane comes into the house screaming for Tyler, accusing her of causing him to violate the terms of his parole. As Shane threatens to kill Tyler, her mother looks on helplessly

as Ellie puts herself between Tyler and Shane. He throws Ellie into the wall. Tyler is certain that her mother won't defend her, but her mother finally gathers her resolve and demands that Shane leave the house, drawing her sewing scissors from her bag. Shane grabs a knife and threatens to stab her. She stabs him in the stomach with the scissors before he has the chance to make a move. Shane collapses in shock and begins to cry, and Ellie embraces her mother.

The narrative flashes forward, and Tyler begins writing to Mrs Carlyle, informing her that her mother gave her permission to spend Christmas with her Aunt Jacinta and that Ellie bought her the Derwent pencils. She explains that she is going to put the journal in Mrs Carlyle's mailbox, and asks her to keep one of her budgies for her.



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Tyler – A young Australian girl in Grade 6, Tyler is the protagonist and narrator of the story, which is framed as a series of entries in her journal. She has a conflicted relationship with her mother, whom she doesn't trust to care for her, and fears her mother's abusive boyfriend, Shane. She is particularly close with her older sister, Ellie, as well as her teacher, Mrs Carlyle, who gives her the journal as part of a class assignment. Tyler takes to journal-writing enthusiastically, recording intimate details of her home life, which is dysfunctional at best and unsafe at worst. Eventually, she elects to show her journal to Mrs Carlyle, thereby revealing the abusive and illegal aspects of Shane's behavior, igniting a chain of events which eventually culminates in her mother kicking Shane out of the house and stabbing him in the stomach with **sewing scissors** for hurting her girls. Afterwards, Tyler continues writing in the journal, revealing that her life and her personal relationships change for the better after Shane's expulsion from the house. She is normally a quiet, reserved girl, reluctant to express her needs and wants to others. She is a gifted artist, and spends much of the story dreaming of a set of high-quality artists' pencils (the **Derwents** for which the story is named), which she receives as a Christmas gift from her sister at the end of the story.

Ellie – Ellie is Tyler's older sister, and one of the few sources of security and stability in her life. She is several years older than Tyler, and works part-time at Subway after school in order to earn money for herself and the family. She is extremely protective of Tyler, checking in on her regularly, bringing home food for her, and offering to let her sleep in her bed. She is openly resentful of both her mother, who she sees as an irresponsible caregiver, and her mother's boyfriend Shane, whom she fears will try to abuse Tyler. She has a boyfriend named Luke, but is careful to keep him away from her family.

She feels little attachment to her mother and aspires to escape her home life, but implies that she intends to stay connected to the house as long as Tyler still lives there in order to ensure that she's safe. Because she is older than Tyler, she is more directly perceptive to the threats in her life—whereas Tyler never directly expresses why she finds Shane so threatening, Ellie's warnings to Tyler imply that she is acutely aware of the possibility of sexual abuse. In this sense, she plays an important role as a caretaker in Tyler's life. At the end of the story, she buys Tyler a set of the **Derwent pencils** she desperately wants.

Tyler and Ellie's Mother – An ambiguous and complicated figure, Tyler and Ellie's mother dominates a great deal of her daughters' lives. Ellie and Tyler are the youngest of her five children; earlier, she had two boys, Zac and Dylan, and a daughter, Tegan. Zac and Dylan both had juvenile criminal records, ran away from home, and ultimately grew up with other families; Tegan was taken away because of abuse by Tyler's mother's previous boyfriend. With her remaining two children, she is both warm and domineering, affirming her affection for them but constantly demanding their affirmation and support. She relies heavily on her children: both Ellie and Tyler commit a great deal of time to helping her make handmade dolls to sell in a local shop, and she receives an unspecified part of Ellie's wages from Subway. She resents her sister (Aunt Jacinta) and mother (Tyler's grandmother), convinced that they look down on her. She goes to great lengths to overlook Shane's threatening and entitled behavior, seeking to keep the relationship intact at all costs. However, after he throws Ellie against a wall and tries to attack Tyler, she stabs him in the stomach with **sewing scissors** and kicks him out of the house, overcoming her insecurities for the sake of her daughters' safety.

Shane – The antagonist of the story and Tyler's mother's boyfriend. He has a criminal record, which Tyler's mother does not explain, and is currently on parole. He begins exhibiting predatory behavior towards Tyler immediately after meeting her, asking prying questions about her dating life and watching her while she sleeps. He attempts to cultivate a confidential relationship with her, bringing her candy but insisting that she keep it a secret, thereby attempting to isolate her from her mother and older sister. Eventually, he attempts to use this relationship to take advantage of Tyler by asking her to give him her urine, which, the story implies, he plans to submit as a substitute for a parole-required drug test. She complies, but records their exchange in her journal and turns it into her schoolteacher, Mrs Carlyle, who reports the incident to the authorities, causing Shane to lose his parole. He comes back to the house and immediately attempts to attack Tyler, beating Ellie and threatening her mother in the process. Tyler's mother eventually stabs him in the stomach with **scissors**.

Mrs Carlyle – Tyler's Grade 6 school teacher, who is gentle and kind. Tyler feels particularly close to her, treating her as both a

source of stable authority and a role model. She gives Tyler the journal in which Tyler supposedly writes the story's narrative, probably intended as an exercise in creative self-expression. Because of her deep trust in Mrs Carlyle, Tyler eventually lets her read the contents of her journal, despite the fact that she was not required to turn it in. After reading about Shane's abusive behavior, Mrs Carlyle swiftly contacts the authorities. She owns an aviary with **pet budgies**, which are an object of fascination for Tyler. She promises Tyler one of the eggs, indicating her affection for her, and takes Tyler to visit it after notifying her that she'd reported the contents of her journal to the police. After Shane is out of the picture, Tyler concludes her journal by addressing Mrs Carlyle directly and promising to keep writing in her journal, indicating that their relationship becomes even stronger.

Zac – Tyler and Ellie's older brother. Ellie tells Tyler that he ran away from their mother with his brother Dylan after both had accumulated a criminal record. They then attempted to find their father, who was apparently a poor caretaker, before going on to live with other families. He briefly visits his mother, Tyler, and Ellie at Christmas two years before the story's start, coldly rebuffing all his mother's attempts to cultivate a closer relationship. After he leaves, his mother expresses her resentment towards him for preferring his father to her.

Aunt Jacinta – Jacinta is Tyler's aunt on her mother's side. She appears only briefly in the story, and Tyler does not have much contact with her outside of the holidays; however, Tyler seems to imagine her as a more stable alternative to her mother. She gives Tyler a handmade doll as a Christmas gift. Tyler's mother mocks the doll, but Tyler appreciates it deeply. She also sent Tyler a holiday card expressing her affection for her niece, which Tyler continues to treasure. She also included her phone number in the card, despite the fact that Tyler's mother already knows how to contact her, implying that she worries about Tyler's well-being. Tyler's mother resents Jacinta, and suspects her and Tyler's grandmother of having called Child Services, leading them to take away her older daughter Tegan.

Tyler's Grandmother – Tyler's grandmother on her mother's side. Tyler's mother resents her for favoring Jacinta throughout their childhood, and suspects her or Jacinta of having reported her to Child Services. Tyler's grandmother takes Tyler shopping for her birthday, and Tyler asks her for a set of **Derwent pencils**; however, she buys Tyler another brand of colored pencils instead, disappointing her granddaughter and indicating that she does not pay close attention to her wishes.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Georgia – Tyler's closest friend in her class. She never appears in person in the story, but Tyler wishes she could have her over to her house. She owns a set of the **Derwent pencils** which Tyler wants so badly.



THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



RELATIONSHIPS AND INTIMACY

Cate Kennedy's "Seventy-Two Derwents" stresses the difficulties that the narrator and main character, a young girl named Tyler, encounters in

maintaining intimate relationships with the people in her life. In different ways, nearly every character in the story tries to become close to her. However, while some try to build these relationships out of genuine care and concern for Tyler, others attempt to take advantage of her. In this sense, the story shows explores both healthy and dangerous forms of intimacy, and highlights the difficulty of telling them apart from one another. The story consistently characterizes healthy intimacy as based in selfless concern for each other's well-being; unhealthy intimacy, on the other hand, is based on one person's desire to exploit the other to selfish ends.

Throughout the story, Tyler's older sister, Ellie, tries to be close to her in order to protect her from their mother's predatory boyfriend, Shane. Because Ellie's interventions are rooted in selflessness, it's clear that the girls' relationship is one of Tyler's few healthy attachments. Ellie repeatedly goes out of her way to encourage Tyler to feel close to her in order to protect her from Shane, as it's implied that Ellie suspects him of being sexually abusive. At one point, she wakes Tyler up, offers her part of her sandwich, and offers her the chance to sleep in her bed. When Tyler turns her down, Ellie asks to sleep Tyler's bed instead. As Tyler has previously caught Shane sneaking into her bedroom at night, it seems that Ellie's persistence reveals a desire to protect her sister through safety in numbers. Plus, because so many people with mixed intentions try to control Tyler, Ellie recognizes that she has to *make* Tyler feel close to her rather than taking their relationship for granted, and commits to doing this work on Tyler's terms--like sleeping in Tyler's bed--rather than her own. When the two girls are tucked into Tyler's bed, Ellie asks, "hey, did Shane do or say anything weird today? [...] does he get you to sit in his lap? If he does anything like that you come and tell me straight away." Through this conversation, Ellie attempts to remind Tyler that she can come to her confidentially if she needs help. Furthermore, it's clear that Ellie has little to gain from her relationship with Tyler. For that reason, the effort she puts into becoming close to Tyler can only be attributed to genuine concern for her well-being. This demonstrates how healthy intimacy, in the story, is characterized by the willingness to sacrifice for others from whom one has nothing to gain in

return.

On the other hand, Shane also commits significant effort to making Tyler feel close to him. However, his intentions, unlike Ellie's, are clearly predatory: he wants to trick Tyler into considering him her friend in order to hurt her, thereby exploiting her to his own advantage. In this sense, he exemplifies a dangerous kind of intimacy, showing how the appearance of closeness can disguise an unhealthy dynamic of control. Like Ellie, Shane tries to create a sense of confidentiality between himself and Tyler, promising to leave her "surprises," like chocolate in her bed, as long as she promises never to tell anyone. And even though Tyler doesn't seem to trust Shane, she "can't help" but smile when he speaks to her in a voice that "is all soft and like you're best friends." That Tyler is on some level swayed by Shane's charm speaks to how difficult it can be to differentiate between healthy and unhealthy intimacy.

Ultimately, Shane tries to exploit this confidentiality by asking Tyler to give him her urine so that he can submit it to his parole officer for a drug test. He frames the request as an innocent prank: "[i]t's just a surprise trick I'm playing. [...] it's just for a surprise. You can't tell anyone." When Tyler attempts to object, Shane says, "I thought you were my friend, I thought you would be a good person to ask, because you can keep a secret." In trying to woo Tyler with "secret[s]," Shane attempts to isolate Tyler from others in her family--and thus make her vulnerable, rather than keep her safe. Furthermore, when Tyler reports that Shane asked her for her urine, he attacks her, confirming that his previous friendliness was merely an attempt at self-serving manipulation.

Finally, Tyler's relationship with her mother is a particularly confusing attachment which shows the difficulty of cleanly separating healthy intimacy from its unhealthy, dangerous counterpart. Tyler's mother displays genuine care for her, but also exploits her, fails to listen to her, and forces Tyler to support her in her insecurities. For example, early in the story, Tyler recalls asking her mother for money to get a hamburger from McDonalds (called "Macca's" in Australia). Tyler's mother responds by insisting that Tyler wait for her to prepare a burger from scratch, later demanding that Tyler agree that her cooking is better than fast food. In her journal, Tyler notes that she simply wanted something to eat quickly. This moment, though seemingly minor, shows the ambivalence of her relationship with her mother: on the one hand, cooking Tyler a burger was a way for her mother to take care of her; on the other, it also meant turning the simple fact of Tyler's hunger into a selfish referendum on her ability as a mother, demanding that Tyler affirm her self-image rather than listening to her and attending to her immediate needs. Because of this ambivalence, Tyler is unsure that she can rely on her mother. When Shane turns violent, Tyler is immediately convinced that her mother won't help her, and she even confides in her journal that she hated

her mother at that moment. Although her mother eventually gathers the courage to defend her, Tyler's lack of faith in her shows the strained, unpredictable quality of her relationship with her primary caretaker. Ultimately, the entangled presence of these three types of relationship in Tyler's life--one caring, one exploitative, one somewhere in between--shows the difficulty of determining who is safe to be close to.



POWER AND POWERLESSNESS

One of the story's major preoccupations is the question of power in a girl's life: who holds it, how it works, and what its effects are. Tyler, who is about

ten or eleven years old, struggles to cope with the way power is split between different authority figures who pressure her in different ways. These conflicts raise a question that Tyler wrestles with throughout the story: how to define herself when authority figures are pushing for her to act in ways which support their own definitions of her. In this way, the story shows how the feeling of powerlessness can have a splintering effect on a young woman's psychology.

By using her power as a mother to pressure her children into affirming her own ego, Tyler's mother robs her daughter of autonomy, teaching her that she is powerless over her own circumstances. For example, when Tyler's older brother, Zac, visits their family over Christmas, he repeatedly rebuffs their mother's attempts to be close to him, leaving as soon as possible. Tyler's mother copes by badgering Ellie to confirm that her brother was always an "ungrateful little shit." This shows how children's mother copes with her personal insecurities by attempting to force those over whom she has power--her daughters--to support her, ignoring their own perspectives in the process. She acts this way with Tyler as well: at one point, she makes Tyler stay home from school in order to help her sew dolls she plans to sell at a local store. She frames this demand as a generous day off, but Tyler writes that she would have actually preferred to go to school. She agrees to stay home only because she knows that refusing her mother's authority would be disastrous. By projecting her own desires onto Tyler rather than trying to ascertain what Tyler wants for herself, the girl's mother robs her of the freedom to develop her own opinions and desires. She thereby teaches Tyler not to express herself, weakening the young girl's ability to speak out and defend herself when Shane attempts to exploit her. In this sense, her mother uses her power over Tyler to render her helpless.

Shane uses his authority to different ends than Tyler's mother, expressly seeking to control Tyler through fear and manipulation. However, he is protected by Tyler's mother, which leaves Tyler at the mercy of both adults in her household. Shane sexualizes Tyler from the beginning, asking inappropriate and prying questions about her relationship status and watching her as she sleeps. These behaviors establish his

domineering, threatening personality, and cause Tyler to fear him. The amount of time he spends in the house causes Tyler to feel terror in her own home. Moreover, the fact that her mother continually defers to Shane adds to his power over the household, leaving Tyler unsure that anyone would stop him if he tried to attack her. Ultimately, the type of unchecked predatory power that Shane wields leaves Tyler feeling helpless and alone. The necessity of appeasing both Shane and her mother creates a deep conflict in Tyler's life. On the one hand, Shane makes her fear for her safety; on the other hand, Tyler feels unable to act on this fear by articulating it, since her mother discourages her from expressing any needs that contradict her own desires. The compounded effects of the power these two figures hold over her leaves her torn.

Flanked on all sides by heavy-handed authority figures, Tyler is forced to constantly be on guard, unsafe even inside her own thoughts. At one point in the story, Tyler admits to Ellie that she often dreams she is being hunted by a wolf: "He's coming for me and his eyes are on fire and he's looking everywhere for me but he can't find me." This dream suggests that she feels hunted by predatory forces she cannot fight--particularly Shane, given that she describes the wolf with male pronouns. She becomes afraid of returning home after school: when her teacher, Mrs Carlyle, offers to personally drive her home one day, Tyler says that home is the last place she wants to go. This consuming terror has a suffocating effect. She finds it impossible to tell even trusted confidantes, like Ellie, about Shane asking for her urine: "just thinking about it makes the stone come up into my chest and neck and it jams my throat shut so I can't talk, she writes." This shows that fear and uncertainty have become the dominant emotions of Tyler's life. These emotions derive from the power others hold over her, severely limiting her autonomy. In this sense, Kennedy, through Tyler, demonstrates how pernicious unchecked power can be in a child's life--especially when wielded by caregivers. Authority figures who exploit their power can effectively stamp out the vitality of the people they are supposed to guide and nurture, leaving their charges scared, helpless, and floundering.



REPRESSION

Throughout the story, Tyler struggles to identify and express her feelings. She sometimes feels intense waves of negative emotion--which she often describes as a feeling of "rocks" in her stomach--but she is unable to articulate or process this feeling, and she does her best to conceal it. She does this partially out of concern for her own safety: she knows that some of her emotions, if she expressed them, would provoke negative reactions from the unstable adults in her life, so she's learned to bottle up her feelings. Tyler struggles intensely with the gap between the intensity of her feelings and the limits of what she's able to express, which speaks to the psychologically destructive impact

of unnamed, buried pain.

Tyler constantly has to choose her words carefully in order to take care of the emotional needs of the people around her—especially her mother—and pays little attention to her own emotional needs in the process. Reflecting on the time her mother repeatedly insisted that she confirm that her cooking is better than McDonalds, Tyler implies that she felt like a trained animal: “you need to say the same thing over and over until the dog gets it.” This experience teaches Tyler that her own thoughts matter less than her ability to successfully respond to cues in ways that please others. The McDonalds incident forms a pattern with other moments in the story, such as the time Tyler’s mother asked her to stay home from school to help her finish a sewing project, despite the fact that Tyler wanted to go to school. Here, too, Tyler ignores her own desires for the sake of paying attention to her mother’s—she has learned repression as a habit. Life with her mother has therefore taught her the unimportance of her own feelings, leading her to disregard them whenever they come into conflict with the feelings of others.

Tyler’s inability to express her thoughts and opinions in smaller ways—like with the McDonalds incident—leads her to struggle to identify and express her more serious feelings. For instance, when Ellie mentions that she has bad dreams, Tyler considers confessing the same, as she often has a bad dream about a male wolf—a thinly veiled symbol for the predatory Shane—hunting her down. However, instead of saying this, she makes a vague statement about sometimes feeling like she has a “stone” in her stomach. Tyler’s search for metaphorical language shows how difficult she finds it to express her feelings straightforwardly and in her own terms. She is unable to account for why certain experiences trigger certain feelings, but can only disjointedly describe how terrible certain things in her life make her feel. This struggle is, the story implies, is a result of her learned habit of repressing her feelings. By necessity, she has learned to avoid her emotions rather than confront them.

For Tyler, the difference between her feelings and her capacity for expression translates into conflict between the intensity of her emotions and the need to remain externally calm. While watching the Simpsons with Shane, Tyler observes that “things happen [in cartoons] that aren’t true. Like a cat will be running along and will go through the wall and there will be an exactly cat-shaped hole left behind in the wall. Mum’s old boyfriend Gary threw a bottle at the wall once and it didn’t leave a shape like that it just smashed.” Tyler’s preoccupation with cartoons indicates an alignment between the impossible way they represent the world and the impossible things Tyler feels inside of herself—for instance, the feeling of having “stones” in her stomach. She has been taught to avoid expressing these intense, frightening feelings in order to keep the peace. This creates an intense gap between what she feels and what she’s

able to say aloud. That gap shows the damaging psychological effects of repression. Tyler has been forced to ignore her own feelings for a long time, building them up inside without an expressive outlet. That repression produces a jarring distance between her intense emotional life and the calm surface of her everyday reality, a distance that feels as great as the distance between the world of cartoons and objective reality.



TRUST

Because of the difficulty of distinguishing people who care for her from people who want to take advantage of her, Tyler has a hard time knowing who she should trust. She feels the need to express her thoughts, but she’s unable to find an appropriate outlet aside from a private journal, which she fills with details about Shane’s shady behavior, her mother’s questionable parenting, and her own feelings of crushing anxiety. Finally, she takes a leap of faith by submitting her journal to her sixth-grade teacher, Mrs Carlyle, despite the risks entailed by that submission. This moment, and the events leading up to it, shows the vulnerability involved in trust and stresses the amount of blind faith required to put one’s well-being in the hands of another.

Tyler’s inability to confide in anyone other than a journal shows how difficult she finds it to trust other people and how badly she needs an emotional outlet. She begins writing a journal without conscious reflection about her reasons for doing so, noting that it was merely a class assignment. However, it quickly becomes clear that other students are not writing as much as she is. Moreover, she writes about extremely private feelings—things she won’t admit to other people in her life—indicating that Tyler finds the journal significantly more useful than the other students. The eagerness with which she takes part in the assignment shows that she needs an outlet for her intense, accumulated emotional energy. However, her inability to confide to any outlet other than a private journal shows how difficult she finds it to trust other people.

Tyler submits her anonymous journal to Mrs Carlyle without consciously thinking through the potential consequences of that submission, describing it as a decision made on impulse. She claims that she turned in her journal simply because it occurred to her to do so while alone in the classroom; moreover, she reacts with shock when Mrs Carlyle informs her that she’s reported its contents to the authorities. This shows that she hadn’t considered—or, perhaps, hadn’t allowed herself to consider—the practical consequences of her actions.

However, Tyler’s knowledge of how dangerous it can be to express oneself make it unlikely that she did not understand these consequences. She already knows that child protection took her sister Tegan away from her mother. Moreover, Tyler’s life at home, tiptoeing around her mother and Shane, has made her far more sensitive than most children to the risks of speaking one’s mind. For these reasons, it seems implausible

that Tyler would overlook the consequences of giving her teacher access to something as personal as her journal. It makes more sense to conclude that she stuffed down her rational fear of the consequences of her actions for the sake of an irrational act of blind trust.

Given that Mrs Carlyle is one of the only adult authority figures with whom Tyler feels safe, it also makes sense that Tyler would choose to be vulnerable around her above all others. Generally, Tyler distrusts teachers: she mentions that she never wants to tell teachers when she likes something, because they use that knowledge “to make you do something they want.” However, she specifically excepts Mrs Carlyle from that rule, showing the special place she holds in Tyler’s life. This affection was likely a major influence on Tyler’s decision to submit her journal, an act of personal bravery which shows the depth of her faith in Mrs Carlyle. In submitting her journal, Tyler forces herself to overlook the potential consequences of her actions in order to ask for the help she so desperately needs, showing the depth of her faith in her teacher. In this sense, the story portrays trust as an expression of blind faith in the goodness of another person rather than the result of careful planning and calculation.



ESCAPE

In the story, Tyler’s older sister, Ellie, expresses how much she wants to escape their family life, admitting that she’s only stayed as long as she has in order to protect Tyler. While Tyler is less direct, she implies that she, too, longs for a similar sort of escape. This longing is implied by her fixation on two objects. First, Tyler lovingly describes a handmade doll given to her by her aunt Jacinta, whom she seems to see as an idealized alternative to her mother. Tyler’s love for the doll shows her discontent with her mother as caregiver, allowing her to imagine another version of her current life. Second, Tyler fixates on a seventy-two pack of **Derwents**, a kind of high-quality artist’s pencil, which lend the story its name. She wants these pencils for two reasons: first, as a way to develop her artistic talents; second, because their reliable, durable craftsmanship distinguishes them from the instability of her other material possessions and personal relationships. If Tyler’s love for her aunt’s doll reflects her desire for another version of the present, then her longing for the pencils reflects her desire for a different kind of future, one in which she escapes her current life in order to explore and develop her desires on her own terms.

Ellie repeatedly asserts how desperately she wishes she and Tyler could escape life with their family. When her mother admonishes her to set a good example for Tyler, Ellie responds by saying “I’m setting her the best example I can, which is how to get the fuck out of here.” This outburst shows both the intensity of Ellie’s discontent with life in the house and the depth of her concern for her sister’s well-being. Although Tyler never responds directly to this sentiment, she carefully records

it in her journal, which suggests that it might resonate with her. Although Tyler herself is less outspoken than Ellie about longing for an escape, Tyler’s affection for the doll Aunt Jacinta made for her indicates that Tyler shares Ellie’s desire to escape their home life. Thinking about her aunt allows Tyler to imagine another, better version of their home, and a safer version of her own childhood. Though her mother laughed at the present when Tyler received it for Christmas two years ago, Tyler recounts in her journal how beautiful the doll was, and how nice her aunt smelled when she hugged her afterwards. Although she focuses on her gratitude for the doll rather than directly expressing her love for her aunt, Tyler’s deep gratitude for the gift seems to indirectly imply her desire to be close to Jacinta. Moreover, when Shane becomes violent at the end of the story after he learns that Tyler reported him to the authorities, Tyler’s first thought is of the possibility of calling Jacinta. This indicates that she sees her aunt as a kind of refuge, a safer version of her life at home. Tyler’s mother, in contrast, resents Jacinta: she scornfully accuses her of arrogance and pretension, and suspects her of having reported her to child protective services. The fact that Tyler fixates so positively on her aunt despite her mother stressing the immense differences between Jacinta and herself indicates that she thinks of her aunt as an escape from life with her mother.

The intensity of Tyler’s wish for a set of Derwent pencils reflects her desire for a different life in the future, one which grants her autonomy over her own circumstances and freedom of self-expression. As the pencils Tyler currently uses are “student quality,” the Derwent pencils, which “are for real artists,” would take Tyler’s talent to the next level. In this sense, possessing the pencils would help Tyler develop unique skills and express herself creatively in her own terms. In the midst of her musings about the Derwent pencils, Tyler writes, “I think sometimes about what you would have to do to be an artist, for example how would you make money.” Already it seems that Tyler’s vision for her future—potentially becoming an artist and supporting herself financially through her creative talents—is bound up in the tin of seventy-two Derwents. However, the significance of this wish goes deeper. Tyler dwells at length on the permanence and durability of the pencils, observing that “even when you sharpen them they feel special, the wood is so soft and it peels back to leave the pencil good as new.” These qualities contrast sharply with the instability of Tyler’s life at home, and the satisfaction Tyler finds in watching the sharpened pencil become “good as new” hints at a desire for a new beginning in her own life. In this sense, the pencils help Tyler imagine what a better future might feel like.

Later, Tyler imagines what it would feel like to use the pencils, comparing them to a holiday card she received from Jacinta: “I would feel special and proud to have them, like when Aunt Jacinta wrote in her letter, we think you’re wonderful.” This shows that Tyler thinks of the pencils in connection with the

same sort of escape she associates with Aunt Jacinta, imagining them as a tool to help her feel like a different, happier sort of person. Where Aunt Jacinta offers Tyler an idealized escape from her current life, the Derwent pencils help her imagine the unbounded potential of the future.



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



DERWENT PENCILS

The Derwent pencils that Tyler pines for throughout the story symbolize the open-ended potential of the future. Tyler is a talented amateur artist who enjoys sketching. Her teachers recognize this talent as something that makes her stand out from other children her age; however, since her mother sees no point to pursuing it, Tyler is not given the resources necessary to develop her potential. Consequently, she becomes fixated on the Derwent-brand colored pencils her friend Georgia owns and the creative possibilities they offer. She dwells at length on their craftsmanship: the pencils' durability sharply contrasts to the instability and insecurity of her life at home, and the fact that they can be cleanly sharpened whenever they go dull seems to promise unlimited new beginnings. When Shane tries to violently attack Tyler, the first thing she thinks of is the pencils' richly evocative names (such as "scarlet lake" or "oriental blue"), showing how the thought of exploring the Derwents' vast spectrum of colors and shades offers her a mental escape from a present over which she has little control. Moreover, Tyler has few opportunities to express herself openly, and is often forced to provide the answers which adult authority figures like her mother and Shane want to hear in order to keep the peace at home. The Derwent pencils implicitly promise the possibility of autonomous self-expression: they are a tool with which Tyler could someday express herself creatively on her own terms, free from adult interference. In this sense, they channel Tyler's hopes for a different kind of life. It's also fitting that the person who buys the pencils for Tyler at the end of the story is her sister Ellie, who desperately wants a better life for herself (hence her dedication to school and part-time job) and for her beloved little sister Tyler. In finally buying Tyler the pencils once Shane is out of the picture, Ellie seems to be sending the message to Tyler that she is free to step into a new beginning and a new life.



SEWING SCISSORS

Tyler's mother's sewing scissors symbolize her fraught relationship with her daughters, Tyler and

Ellie. Throughout the story, she spends much of the story working on a set of handmade dolls she hopes to sell in local stores. This business project sometimes verges on an obsession: her sewing materials take up the whole kitchen table, forcing Tyler and Ellie to do their homework elsewhere, and Tyler's mother even keeps Tyler home from school one day so that her daughter can help her with the work, despite Tyler's reluctance to miss school. Among these sewing materials are a pair of special sewing scissors which Tyler's mother was only able to afford by borrowing money from Ellie, who has a part-time job at Subway. The girls' mother is fiercely protective of the scissors, repeatedly warning Tyler not to touch them or use them for school projects.

In this way, the scissors symbolize the way that Tyler's mother's emotional life overshadows that of her two daughters, whose own needs and wants are constantly subordinated to those of their caregiver. However, when Shane attacks Tyler and Ellie at the end of the story, Tyler's mother pulls the scissors out of her apron and uses them to stab him in the stomach, risking her own safety in order to defend her girls. Ellie embraces her shortly afterwards, resolving (at least temporarily) the tension that's existed between her and her mother for much of the story. Because of the scissors' significance as a symbol of her exploitation of her daughters, the mother's willingness to sacrifice them for her daughters' safety demonstrates a major shift in her character: she ultimately overlooks her own self-interest in order to take care of her children.



MRS CARLYLE'S BUDGIES

Tyler's interest in Mrs Carlyle's pet budgies reflects her broader hope to find loving relationships with other people. Since Tyler is so fascinated by the birds, Mrs Carlyle promises to give her a chick should the adult female bird lay eggs. Tyler is enamored of the idea of raising a bird of her own, reflecting her hope to one day be able to nurture something on her own terms. Furthermore, after Mrs Carlyle tells her she's reported the contents of Tyler's journal to the authorities and offers to take her home, Tyler immediately asks to go to Mrs Carlyle's house instead, to visit the aviary.

At the end of their conversation about Tyler's family circumstances, Tyler asks, seemingly out of nowhere, if the mother budgie would bite her if she put her hand in the nest; Mrs Carlyle confirms this, but is visibly sad as she does so. At a moment in which her own family situation seems more insecure than ever, Tyler finds hope and safety in the birds' ability to care for their offspring, and seems to wish she could play a role in that process by putting her hand in the nest. Mrs Carlyle's sadness in confirming that the mother would bite her shows that she recognizes the tragedy in the fact that Tyler's circumstances don't allow her to experience healthy, loving relationships in own family, and that she senses the intensity of

Tyler's desire to build this sort of relationship.



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Read How You Want edition of *Like a House on Fire* published in 2013.

Seventy-Two Derwents Quotes

“Mrs Carlyle has two budgies, a boy and a girl, and they have built a nest. If they have baby budgies and if I’m allowed she will give me one. You have to wait until they’re old enough to leave the nest before you can take them away from their parents because they need special looking after. In my mind I can picture this ... after she says this, when I walk back into class and down to my desk, I feel my skin buzzing like someone stroked it.”

Related Characters: Tyler (speaker), Mrs Carlyle

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 225-6

Explanation and Analysis

Tyler fantasizes about receiving one of Mrs Carlyle’s baby budgies to take care of. The thought of receiving a bird excites her greatly, making her feel like her skin is “buzzing.” This excitement shows two aspects of Tyler’s character. First, it demonstrates her happiness at being singled out for special attention by Mrs Carlyle, a mentor whom she deeply respects. While her relationship with her mother sometimes makes her feel like her needs are neglected, Mrs Carlyle’s attention makes her feel special and cared for. Second, it shows Tyler’s eagerness to nurture the bird, indicating a desire to incorporate more loving, nurturing relationships into her life. Since she is unsure how deeply her own mother cares for her, her fixation on building a caring relationship with another living thing on her own terms shows a desire to explore how alternatives to her relationship with her mother might feel.

“Mrs Carlyle told us that when you are training your dog you need to say the same thing over and over until the dog gets it. He wants to do the right thing, he just doesn’t know it at first. She says it’s the same with training a bird to talk, you have to say the same thing again and again so they learn. That’s true and maybe it’s true for people too.”

Related Characters: Tyler (speaker), Tyler and Ellie’s Mother, Mrs Carlyle

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 226

Explanation and Analysis

Here, Tyler remembers what Mrs Carlyle taught her class about training animals. This quote comes immediately after she tells the story of the time her mother refused to let her get McDonalds because she insisted on making a burger for Tyler herself, despite the fact that Tyler was hungry and the McDonalds burger would have been much quicker. Her mother repeatedly insists that Tyler confirm that her home-cooked burger tastes better. Tyler does not directly explain why she connects that story with her knowledge of animal training, however, this quote implies that such moments make her feel like an animal trained by her mother. Like the dog, Tyler “wants to do the right thing, but just doesn’t know it at first.” By repeatedly insisting that Tyler say what she wants to hear, Tyler’s mother teaches her to respond to fixed cues in order to keep the peace, ignoring her own feelings in the process. This makes her feel more like a pet than an autonomous human being. Her indirect way of conveying this feeling--“maybe it’s true for people too”-- shows her reluctance to state her thoughts directly, even in her own diary.

“In cartoons time passes really fast and sudden. Also, things happen that aren’t true. Like a cat will be running along and will go through the wall and there will be an exactly cat-shaped hole left behind in the wall. Mum’s old boyfriend Gary threw a bottle at the wall once and it didn’t leave a shape like that it just smashed.”

Related Characters: Tyler (speaker), Tyler and Ellie’s Mother, Shane

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 229

Explanation and Analysis

Tyler writes this thought while describing her experience watching *The Simpsons* with her mother's abusive boyfriend Shane. Shane repeatedly prods Tyler about whether she has a boyfriend, making her feel uncomfortable. She answers the bare minimum to his questions and distracts herself by paying attention to the cartoons. Here, she dwells on the fantasy world of the cartoons, in which characters can treat each other quite violently without real consequence. She contrasts this to her experience of real violence, and the hard, undeniable reality of her mother's previous boyfriend throwing a bottle against the wall. This comparison allows Tyler to express her fear of Shane without directly voicing her suspicions of his abusive character: she does not directly state her impression of him, but by bringing up her mother's previous abusive boyfriend, she implies a similarity between the two. Furthermore, it shows how violence has impacted Tyler's perception of the world: she is unable to accept the show's cartoon-world, as she is distracted and preoccupied by the threat of real, physical violence, which she seems to associate with Shane.

☝ I said I love her, I love her crown, thank you. Aunty Jacinta leaned over and gave me a hug and she smelled so nice, not like perfume but just cups of tea and shampoo, and she said softly she doesn't have to be Cinderella, Tyler, you can give her a new name if you like. Then my mum jumped up and said are we allowed to have a glass of wine or do we have to say grace first round here.

Related Characters: Tyler (speaker), Tyler and Ellie's Mother, Aunty Jacinta

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 232

Explanation and Analysis

Tyler describes her reaction to the handmade doll she received as a Christmas gift from her Aunt Jacinta. She conveys how much she loves the present, but the way she describes Jacinta—"she smelled so nice, not like perfume but just cups of tea and shampoo"—implies that a large portion of her love for the doll is indirectly love for her aunt. Jacinta's suggestion that Tyler rename the doll shows that she respects Tyler's independence and autonomy: she refuses to force a name on her, but wants her to have the

freedom to choose a name herself. This presents a direct alternative to Tyler's mother, who ignores Tyler's wishes when they fail to correspond with what she herself wants. By jumping up and interrupting the moment with a sarcastic comment ("do we have to say grace first round here"), Tyler's mother shows that she feels threatened by the intimacy between Jacinta and Tyler, and thereby subordinates her daughter's happiness to her own insecurity once again.

☝ When she and Mum fight Mum says set your sister a good example, and Ellie says I'm setting her the best example I can, which is how to get the fuck out of here.

Related Characters: Tyler (speaker), Tyler and Ellie's Mother, Ellie

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 239

Explanation and Analysis

This quote shows how Ellie and Tyler's mother understand the nature of their respective relationships with Tyler. Tyler's mother exploits Tyler's presence for her own ends: when Ellie challenges her authority, she attempts to use Tyler to force Ellie to back down, admonishing her to set a "good example" for her sister. Although she pretends to issue this warning for Tyler's benefit, it's quite evident that she has only her own self-interest—her desire for Ellie to stop fighting with her—in mind. Ellie answers this challenge by turning it around on her mother, claiming that she is doing the best she can for Tyler by teaching her independence with an eye towards enabling her to eventually leave her home life behind. In this sense, she truly does have Tyler's interests in mind (as she understands them). This shows both the distinction between what Tyler's mother and Ellie want for Tyler and the respectively selfish and selfless ways they use their power over her as authority figures.

☝ I didn't know Ellie has bad dreams too. Sometimes I dream of a wolf. He's coming for me and his eyes are on fire and he's looking everywhere for me but he can't find me. I don't tell Ellie about this but I say sometimes I feel like I have a stone inside my stomach. Ellie doesn't say anything for a while then she says, hey, what are those pencils called that you like? I tell her Derwents and she says we'll get you those, you wait.

Related Characters: Ellie (speaker), Shane, Tyler

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 240

Explanation and Analysis

Here, Tyler recalls a conversation between herself and Ellie in bed one night. She confesses that she has disturbing dreams of being hunted by a wolf, showing how unsafe she feels at home: the wolf chasing her parallels both her mother's way of repeatedly demanding that Tyler say and do the things she wants in order to affirm her own ego and the direct threat to her physical safety she senses from Shane. Her refusal to admit these dreams to even Ellie, her closest confidant, shows how stifled she feels: she has become so used to repressing her own thoughts and feelings that she is no longer able to express them to another person even in a safe environment. Instead, she uses indirect, metaphorical language to express how badly she feels, describing a "stone inside [her] stomach." Ellie responds not by addressing this confession directly, but rather by promising to buy her the Derwent pencils she wants so badly. This shows both the sincerity of her love for Tyler--she cares about what Tyler wants for herself, and will do her best to help her get it--as well as her recognition of the necessity of giving Tyler more outlets for creative self-expression, such as art.

☝ Just before when I was going to bed Mum said let's have a secret, you don't have to go to school tomorrow, Tyler. I will ring up and tell them you are sick and you can stay here and help me finish the Plushies. It is the same as when Shane leans down and whispers, grown-ups can make their voices go all soft and excited like it's a big special secret to share just with you, they know just how to make kids feel happy but it's never what you think. I felt the stones in my stomach because I remembered that tomorrow is the first orientation day for Grade 6s to go over to the senior campus to visit but I just said yes.

Related Characters: Tyler (speaker), Tyler and Ellie's Mother, Shane

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 243

Explanation and Analysis

Tyler's mother spends much of the story working on a set of handmade dolls, Glamour Plushies, which she aims to sell to local stores. However, she has trouble making the dolls, struggling with both the sewing technique and the effort to make them aesthetically appealing. Here, she effectively forces Tyler to stay home from school in order to help her finish working on them, although Tyler indicates that she would rather go to school for orientation day. Disappointed, Tyler compares her to Shane: both make a habit of manipulating others into helping them. This shows why Tyler feels unable to express her true thoughts and desires: she constantly fears that they will be subject to manipulation by adults. Not wanting to disrupt the peace of the household, she feels unable to do anything but agree to her mother's wishes, showing how little space Tyler has to pursue her own desires.

☝ I said if I put my hand into the nest now would the mother bird bite me? And she looked so sad at me and nodded. We fed the birds and then she drove me back to the mall.

Related Characters: Tyler (speaker), Mrs Carlyle

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 257

Explanation and Analysis

This quote comes from Tyler's visit to Mrs Carlyle's house after Mrs Carlyle reads her journal and reports its contents to the authorities. Tyler asks to see her aviary, and Mrs Carlyle agrees. Although Mrs Carlyle attempts to explain her actions--why she reported the journal, the nature of mandatory reporting, what Tyler should expect next--Tyler asks, seemingly out of nowhere, what would happen if she put her hand into the birds' nest. This request, at such an unexpected moment, is an indirect way for Tyler to express her desire to find caring relationships outside of her family. Asking whether she could put her hand into the birds' nest amounts to asking for escape: the ability to partially immerse herself into the life of another family (Mrs Carlyle's budgies) and to no longer need to worry about her own difficulties at home. Mrs Carlyle's sadness in confirming that the mother bird would bite Tyler shows that she recognizes this aspect of Tyler's request: sometimes, she seems to say,

having pure intentions is not enough to avoid being hurt; moreover, escape is simply not that easy, and, as unfortunate as it may be, Tyler still has to confront her problems at home.

“My pencils have student quality written on the packet but the Derwent pencils are for real artists and that is why they’re special. I would feel special and proud to have them, like when Aunty Jacinta wrote in her letter, we think you’re wonderful.”

Related Characters: Tyler (speaker), Tyler and Ellie’s Mother

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 248

Explanation and Analysis

Tyler imagines what it would be like to possess the Derwent artist’s pencils she focuses on throughout the story. Trying to describe the feeling, Tyler compares it to the feeling of reading a holiday card from her Aunt Jacinta in which Jacinta called her “wonderful.” This comparison shows pencils’ significance for Tyler. Owning them would boost her sense of self-worth: she is talented at drawing, and owning pencils which help her feel like a “real artist” would help her explore and develop a particular personal quality which sets her apart from others. Moreover, owning them would feel something like the way she feels when she registers her aunt’s affection for her; this simile shows that Tyler’s desire

to own the pencils is an indirect form of the desire to feel loved. Tyler’s wish for the pencils, then, is an indirect way of channeling her desire for bigger, more important things that have lacked in her life so far without stating those desires directly.

“If your budgie’s eggs hatch please will you call one of the babies Alicia. One day I will get an aviary and then I will come and get her, Mrs Carlyle. That’s my promise.”

Related Characters: Tyler (speaker), Mrs Carlyle

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 263-4

Explanation and Analysis

This quote, which closes the story, is addressed to Mrs Carlyle. It shows how Tyler has developed since the beginning of the story: while she previously felt uncomfortable confiding her private thoughts to anyone other than her journal, she is now willing to write directly to Mrs Carlyle. Now that Shane is out of her life, and her mother has proved her love for her by defending her, she feels safe enough to be vulnerable to another person. Moreover, it shows what sort of future Tyler wishes for herself: eventually, she aims to be able to return to her old life and adopt another living thing in need of love the way that she herself was in need of love for much of the story. This shows that she comprehends the nature of love in the story as a selfless act of sacrifice for another.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

SEVENTY-TWO DERWENTS

Tyler tells the reader that they are reading her journal. Her schoolteacher, Mrs Carlyle, has given the students these journals and asked them to update them on their own. Mrs Carlyle adds that she may read the journals, but promises that they will always be kept anonymous.

Tyler begins by indicating the personal nature of the narrative to follow, revealing that it was not originally intended to be read by others. The reader will find a deeply private account of her life and thoughts.



Mrs Carlyle tells Tyler about her two **pet budgies**. She promises that if they ever lay eggs, she will give one of their babies to Tyler after giving it time to mature. Tyler imagines how she would care for the birds.

Tyler begins her narrative by recalling a moment that made her feel special: her teacher singling her out for a special job, caring for birds, which requires maturity.



Mrs Carlyle explains that the mother bird pulls her own feathers out to line the inside of the nest, and adds that she put soft things inside the cage, but that the mother bird continued to pull out her feathers regardless, drawing on “instinct.”

By describing how the mother birds willingly harm themselves in order to prepare a good home for their children, Mrs Carlyle gives Tyler a picture of maternal care as an act of instinctive personal sacrifice.



Tyler writes that, if Mrs Carlyle does give her one of the baby **budgies**, she will name it Alicia, and she imagines trying to teach the bird to say its name. Mrs Carlyle cautions her that she’s not yet sure whether the birds will lay eggs, and she asks Tyler not to tell her classmates about her promise, since they might get jealous. Tyler is nevertheless very excited by the thought of the baby bird.

Tyler has already flashed forward, imagining how she would care for her pet bird and the sort of relationship that might develop between her and the pet. She is excited by the thought of herself as a caregiver with special responsibility for another life.



Later, Tyler’s mother asks Tyler for her opinion of her boyfriend, Shane. Tyler responds noncommittally. When Shane arrives for dinner, Tyler’s mother brags about her homemade chips and asks Tyler to affirm that her chips are the best.

The first time readers encounter Tyler’s mother, they see her asking for her daughter to affirm both the quality of her chips and the quality of her boyfriend, insistently seeking Tyler’s approval for her choices.



Tyler recalls an incident when she asked her mother for money to buy a hamburger. Her mother insisted that Tyler wait in the kitchen while she prepared a burger from scratch, then insistently pressed Tyler to agree that the homemade burger was better than what she would have gotten from McDonald’s. Tyler writes in her journal that she has learned to “just say yes.”

Tyler’s flashback is unexpected, and seemingly has little to do with the dinner narrative she has just begun. However, the burger story illustrates a central dynamic of Tyler’s home life: her mother relies on her to assuage her own insecurities, ignoring Tyler’s own desires in the process.



Tyler recalls Mrs Carlyle telling her class that training a dog to behave, or training a bird to talk, requires repetition so that the animal learns to respond to cues. Tyler reflects that the same technique might work on humans, as well.

Though she neglects to spell it out, Tyler implies that the way her mother treats her makes her feel like a trained animal in that her mother expects her to merely respond to cues on demand.



At dinner, Shane watches The Simpsons with Tyler while her mother prepares the meal. He asks her questions about her age, and prods her about whether or not she has a boyfriend, which makes her uncomfortable.

Shane and Tyler are alone for the first time in the story, and Shane immediately begins exhibiting sexually predatory behavior. Tyler attempts to focus on the cartoons in order to distract herself.



Tyler writes that she doesn't have or want a boyfriend—what she wants is a set of seventy-two **Derwent** artist's pencils. Her friend Georgia from school has a set, and Tyler describes their high quality and texture. She recalls taking her grandmother to the art store and asking for them as a birthday present, then she lists the evocative names for the pencils' different colors. She imagines sharing a set of her own with Georgia, and asking Mrs Carlyle to use her knife to scrape off some of their paint to write her own name on them.

Tyler reveals her deepest personal desire, which becomes a major occupation of the story: a high-quality set of artist's pencils. She frames this as an alternative to the erotic desire Shane attributed to her, highlighting the difference between what she actually wants and what others think she wants. She associates the pencils with positive figures in her life, such as Georgia and Mrs Carlyle.



Back in the present, Shane continues pressing Tyler to admit that she has a boyfriend. Tyler thinks about how strangely time and space work in cartoons, including how characters can run through walls and leave holes shaped like their bodies in the wall behind them. She recalls that her mother's old boyfriend Gary once threw a bottle at a wall in their house, but "it just smashed." Tyler continues thinking about the cartoons as Shane accuses her of blushing and presses her further on what she "gets up to" with her boyfriend.

Shane's continued badgering, and the discomfort it produces in Tyler, leads her to reflect on the ways she has witnessed violence. Recalling one of her mother's previous abusive boyfriends, she considers the cartoons' weird reflection of reality as distraction and escape from the present. This chain of thought indicates that Tyler senses a similarity between Shane and Gary.



Later, Shane is attempting to fix Tyler's mother's Subaru, and he complains about the quality of the car. Tyler adds that Ellie, her sister, is working at Subway that night. Shane fights about the car with Tyler's mother. Tyler fantasizes about crawling inside of a soft pasta shell like a hammock.

Tyler records the strained dynamic between Shane and her mother, in which Shane blames her mother for things which are not her fault, such as the quality of her car. Perhaps Tyler's mother's constant insecurity has something to do with Shane's meanness.



Tyler thinks about what she'd do if her friend Georgia came over to her house. She thinks about watching TV, roasting marshmallows, putting on nail polish, and doing homework with her. Tyler is always careful to do her homework, and she mentions how much she enjoys sketching, although her mother doesn't consider it a useful skill. She hopes that, if Georgia came over, her mother and Shane would leave them in peace.

Tyler's fantasies of escape lead her to think, once again, about playing with her friend Georgia. Imagining the activities they'd do together, she mentions for the first time how much she enjoys sketching, helping to explain why she wants the Derwent pencils. The fantasy shatters when she thinks of her mother and Shane.



Mrs Carlyle asks Tyler's class who's been writing in their journals. Since nobody raises their hands, Tyler doesn't, either. When a student complains about having nothing to write about, Mrs Carlyle suggests writing about earlier moments in their lives, including memories of Christmas.

Tyler describes a Christmas gift of her own, a doll that her Aunty Jacinta made by hand and gave to Tyler for Christmas two years ago. At the time, Tyler's mother laughed at the doll and attempted to make fun of it with Tyler's older brother Zac, who responded coldly. Tyler explains that three of her siblings, including Zac, no longer live with her family.

Tyler describes her gratitude when she received the doll from Aunty Jacinta, and how nice her aunt smelled. When Aunty Jacinta began helping Tyler think of names for her new doll, Tyler's mother got up abruptly.

On the way back from Christmas, Zac asked their mother to drop him off at the station, despite her reluctance to let him leave on Christmas day. Once he left, the kids' mother began complaining to Ellie, asking her to confirm that Zac was always an "ungrateful little shit." Ellie refused to confirm this, and her mother began to justify herself at length. Tyler describes her mother's resentment towards other members of her family, including Aunty Jacinta and Tyler's grandmother, and her mother's suspicion that one of them called Child Services to take away her daughter, Tegan.

Tyler recalls writing a card to Aunty Jacinta last Christmas. Her aunt responded warmly, calling her "wonderful" and sending Tyler her phone number, despite the fact that Tyler's mother already had it. Tyler decided to name her doll Calypso.

Watching cartoons on Saturday morning, Tyler sees Shane in front of the TV. Shane insists that she read his ankle tattoo, which says "live fast die young leave a pretty corpse." Tyler thinks it looks strange, and writes that she feels uncomfortable wearing pajamas while he's in the house.

Although Tyler has been making significant use of her journal, she feels pressure to conform to the rest of her classmates so as not to single herself out. This shows her reluctance to express herself.



In her next flashback, Tyler points to divisions in her family: after she reacts positively to a gift from her aunt, her mother immediately seems to feel threatened. Moreover, all her mother's attempts to bond with Tyler's older brother, Zac, fail.



Tyler dwells on the moment she received the doll, using its positive qualities to illustrate what she likes about her aunt Jacinta. Ever insecure, her mother attempts to disrupt their budding closeness.



Zac rejects the kids' mother once again, insisting on leaving even before the end of Christmas day, indicating how much he dislikes spending time with her. Tyler's mother reacts to this by turning on him as soon as he's out of the car, asking her other children to boost her wounded ego by insulting Zac, along with Jacinta and Tyler's grandmother. Tyler's sister, Ellie, refuses, showing her tense relationship with her mother. Clearly this home environment is quite toxic.



Jacinta's card to Tyler attempts to deepen Tyler's sense of closeness to her. By sending her phone number, she implies that she wants Tyler to think of her as an emergency resource separate from her mother.



By insisting that Tyler pay attention to his body, Shane continues his predatory behavior. Moreover, the quote on the tattoo further suggests that he has erratic or violent tendencies. Tyler increasingly fears for her safety.



On Tyler's birthday, Tyler's grandmother gives her a tin of colored pencils, but they are not **the Derwents**. Tyler compares their cheap, fragile quality to the Derwents' durability. Her mother promises that they'll have a party next year, and Ellie commits to making Tyler's next birthday a better one. Tyler mentions that Mrs Carlyle baked cupcakes for her in school earlier that day.

Shane does not attend Tyler's birthday because her mother hasn't introduced him to Tyler's grandmother yet. Ellie presses her on why she wants to keep him secret, and her mother says that she wants him to finish parole before she introduces him to the family. Tyler and Ellie play with toy disco balls in Tyler's bed, and she describes feeling "lovely and warm."

Tyler's mother claims that she will soon be hired for a sewing job. She sews with an overlocker that Jacinta gave her two years ago. She's working on a type of doll she calls "glamour plushies," which she hopes she can use to start her own business. Ellie presses her on her expensive **sewing scissors**, which the girls' mother bought by borrowing money from Ellie.

Tyler prepares dinner while her mother works. She then works on her school project in her room, since her mother's things take up the whole kitchen table. She apologizes to Mrs Carlyle for the poor quality of the coloring, explaining that she did it with the pencils she received from her grandmother.

Tyler describes her mother's dolls, comparing them to "cartoon monsters." She checks in on Ellie, who is doing her homework. She explains that Ellie works hard in school and maintains a part-time job in order to be able to go to university. Tyler recalls Ellie fighting with her mother by claiming she's setting a good example for her sister by showing her "how to get the fuck out of here."

Shane comes for dinner, and Tyler senses that he's in a "mean mood." He mocks her mother's dolls. Later, she hears her mother and Shane making noise in the halls. Her mother is laughing and seems happy, but the sound nevertheless makes Tyler feel like she has stones in her stomach. Ellie comes into Tyler's room, wakes her up, and brings her to sleep in Ellie's bed.

Despite the fact that Tyler had previously told her grandmother that she wanted the Derwents, she buys Tyler an inferior brand, showing how little most adults listen to Tyler's wishes. Mrs Carlyle and Ellie are more generous, helping her feel better.



The fact that Tyler's mother has not yet introduced Shane to Tyler's grandmother shows that she feels either nervous about the outcome of such a meeting or ashamed of her boyfriend. Ellie goes out of her way to have private moments of intimacy with Tyler, which Tyler enjoys.



Tyler's mother attempts to undertake a professional project, which shows how much she relies on others' help: Jacinta bought her sewing equipment, and she had to borrow money from her daughter to afford the scissors. Ellie seems to resent this imposition, deepening their rift.



Once again, Tyler's mother takes up an excessive amount of space in her daughter's life. Tyler's apology to Mrs Carlyle reflects her discontent with the tools and opportunities for self-expression available to her.



Tyler's mother's project is quickly going awry. Tyler describes some of Ellie's efforts to become independent of her mother. Ellie's statement that this behavior is meant to set a good example for Tyler shows that she feels a sense of responsibility towards her sister.



Once again, Shane treats Tyler's mother unkindly. Nevertheless, their romantic relationship remains intact, which disturbs Tyler and Ellie. Ellie, once again, takes responsibility, coming to comfort Tyler.



Ellie says she keeps a small stone under her pillow to ward off bad dreams. Tyler writes that she sometimes dreams of being hunted by a wolf, but doesn't tell Ellie. Instead, she tells Ellie that she sometimes feels like she has stones in her stomach. Ellie responds by promising to buy her **Derwent pencils** someday.

Mrs Carlyle tells her class that she once adopted a puppy that had trouble separating from its mother. Using an old clock, a fur collar, and a hot-water bottle, she tricked the puppy into believing its mother was in the cage with it; afterwards it learned to sleep on its own.

Mrs Carlyle mentions that the puppy liked sleeping in baskets of old laundry. Tyler compares the puppy cuddling with Mrs Carlyle's old clothes to the way people might cuddle with her mother's dolls. She recalls Ellie telling her that they once had a cat, but that it ran away. Ellie says she doesn't blame it.

Tyler's mother continues working on the dolls, complaining that Shane doesn't do more to help her. However, she never complains in front of Shane. While Tyler's mother is putting on perfume, Shane approaches Tyler and gives her a Mars Bar, asking her not to tell Ellie so that she doesn't get jealous. He promises to leave surprises in Tyler's room, under her pillow. Tyler smiles even though she tries not to, and hides the chocolate bar.

Tyler's mother seems dejected about her progress on the dolls, and Tyler writes that they look "creepy or dead." Ellie paints pupils in the dolls' eyes, though, and they immediately look much better. The girls' mother is relieved. Tyler compares Ellie's intervention to a magic trick.

Tyler's mother tells Tyler she'd like her to stay home from school the next day to help with her dolls, framing this as a special treat. Despite the fact that Tyler doesn't want to miss school, she agrees. That night, Tyler wakes up to see someone standing in her doorway. When she realizes it's Shane and asks what he wants, Shane pretends he was sleepwalking, then goes away.

Ellie and Tyler discuss different mechanisms for coping with the anxiety they feel in their home life. Tyler refuses to confess her dreams, but tries to describe her fear metaphorically. Ellie's promise indicates a desire to take better care of Tyler.



Mrs Carlyle describes creating a false substitute for maternal care for an animal that desperately craved it. After getting used to independence, the puppy no longer missed its mother. This resonates with Tyler, perhaps because of her own perceived lack of maternal care and the other mother figures in her life (Ellie and Mrs Carlyle) who help her not feel so alone.



This story helps Tyler think of her mother's dolls as another kind of false substitute for intimacy. Ellie's story of their runaway cat implies that their home life is unsuited to caring for vulnerable things or vulnerable people.



Tyler's mother is too afraid to challenge Shane directly, despite her obvious discontent with their relationship. Shane attempts to cultivate a private relationship with Tyler, trying to manipulate her into feeling safe with him. He specifically warns her not to tell Ellie, presumably worrying that she might intervene to keep Tyler safe.



Noticing that her mother is unable to satisfactorily complete the project on her own, Ellie puts aside their tense relationship to help her, immediately making a valuable contribution to her work. Tyler is in awe of her sister's accomplishment.



Hoping to complete her work more quickly, Tyler's mother manipulates Tyler into contributing her labor by pretending to give her a special reward. She never pauses to consider what Tyler herself wants. In the meantime, Shane's advances are becoming more overtly threatening.



Ellie is upset with her mother for keeping Tyler home from school, worrying that that this will mean Tyler is forced to spend more time with Shane. They fight, and her mother mocks Ellie's boyfriend, Luke. Ellie responds by pointing out that Shane's efforts to fix her mother's car have "ruined" it. This attack embarrasses the girls' mother. Ellie has Tyler promise to text her if "anything goes wrong" or if Tyler "get[s] the stones feeling."

Tyler and her mother work on the dolls all day. When Ellie comes home, she wakes Tyler up in bed, asking her whether Shane did or said "anything weird," and warning Tyler to tell her if Shane asks her to sit on his lap or "anything like that." Tyler asks why she shouldn't tell their mother instead; without explaining, Ellie reiterates sadly that Tyler should tell her, not their mother.

Tyler recalls Ellie telling her that their two older brothers, Zac and Dylan, were sent to live with other families after accumulating criminal records and running away to find their father, who turned out to be "hopeless." Tegan, their sister, left because their mother's previous boyfriend, Ian, abused her. Their mother fought with Child Protection to no avail. Tyler asks Ellie if she's saving up so she can afford to leave. Ellie responds by promising never to leave Tyler.

Some time later, Tyler asks her mother to drive her to the mall so she can try to buy individual **Derwents**. Their car has become unsafe since Shane attempted to repair it, but Tyler's mother dismisses her concerns. Tyler purchases five pencils. She recalls that her science teacher, Mr Godfrey, didn't believe she had done her sketches on her own and accused her of copying them. After she proved that they were, in fact, her own, he enlisted her to decorate the board for parent-teacher night and didn't apologize for doubting her. Tyler reflects that all teachers, Mrs Carlyle excepted, unfairly take advantage of students' passions to pursue their own ends. She thinks about wanting "special," artist-grade pencils instead of her student-quality ones.

Tyler and her mother visit the shop to which her mother sold the dolls. They aren't in the window, and her mother is humiliated, assuming that they had only put them on display for a short time to appease her. However, a shop worker runs outside and informs them that they've already sold out. Tyler's mother collects the money they've earned and buys donuts for Tyler and herself. Tyler wishes her mother bought her a **Derwent** pencil instead of a donut. The car won't start in the parking lot, which prompts her mother to break down crying. Through tears, she hands Tyler thirty dollars as her share of the profit from the dolls.

Ellie, having noticed Shane's behavior around Tyler, fears for her safety. She notes the ways he manipulates their mother. Since her mother is unable to contradict these observations, she reacts defensively and lashes out against her daughter. Ellie does what she can to make sure Tyler's safe.



Ellie's first action on returning home from work is to make sure Shane has not hurt Tyler. Telling Tyler to come to her for help instead of their mother, Ellie implies that they can't trust their mother to intervene for them if Shane tries to hurt them.



Tyler provides more background about darker elements of her family's past. Her recollection of these incidents seems to back up Ellie's implication that their mother won't protect them against danger and abuse. Ellie reiterates both her independence from her family and the depth of her care for her sister.



Tyler begins acquiring Derwent pencils on her own, doing what she can to make up for others' neglect of her desire for them. She reiterates the link between the pencils and her own independence by recalling that Mr Godfrey didn't believe she was as talented an artist as she was: her sketching ability sets her apart from others. Afterwards, he exploits that ability for his own ends. In this sense, obtaining the Derwent pencils is, for Tyler, linked with the ability to use her talent towards her own ends.



Tyler's mother is shocked to discover how successful her dolls have been, having automatically assumed the worst. Buying Tyler a donut and sharing her profits is a way of thanking her for her help; however, the fact that she bought her a donut instead of a Derwent indicates that she still fails to consider what Tyler really wants. Their broken car reminds readers of Shane's continued negative impact on their lives.



Later, alone with Shane, Tyler passes him a call from his parole officer. Shane takes the call, then asks Tyler to do him “a favor” by urinating into a cup for him, claiming that it’s “just for a surprise” and a “trick [he’s] playing.” Tyler feels like she has stones in her stomach again. Although she is confused and frightened by his request, Tyler consents. She notes that she’s recording it in her journal because Mrs Carlyle encouraged them to describe things that “make us feel ashamed or like we want to cry.”

At school, Mrs Carlyle gently asks her students if anyone would volunteer to submit their journal. No students do, but when Tyler is waiting for Ellie to pick her up, she writes that she’s going to submit hers on an impulse.

Two nights later, after Tyler has gotten her journal back from Mrs Carlyle, Tyler wants to tell Ellie about Shane making her urinate in a cup, but she feels like she has stones in her stomach again and that she can’t speak. The next day, Mrs Carlyle asks Tyler to stay behind, and explains that she’s reported the contents of Tyler’s journal to the police. Tyler begins to panic. Mrs Carlyle offers to drive her home, but Tyler asks to go to Mrs Carlyle’s house to see her **pet budgies**.

Mrs Carlyle shows Tyler her aviary, adding that the **mother bird** has laid eggs, and that she still intends to give one to Tyler. Mrs Carlyle explains that she’s “bound by mandatory reporting,” and asks Tyler if she trusts her. Tyler says yes. Tyler asks if the mother bird would bite her if she put her hand in the nest; Mrs Carlyle sadly confirms this. Mrs Carlyle then drives her to the mall to meet Ellie.

Later, Tyler’s mother receives an apron from her Centrelink sewing course and proudly shows it to her daughters until Shane mocks it, after which she takes it off. From then on, she wears it only when he’s not in the house.

Later, Shane bursts into the house screaming for Tyler, complaining that he’s now violated his parole thanks to her tattling on him to her teacher. As Shane screams that he’ll kill her, Tyler buries herself in a laundry basket to hide. She feels like her “whole stomach [is] full of stones now gritting heavy together.” She tries to think of **Derwent pencils**.

Shane manipulates Tyler into helping him cheat on a drug test for his parole. Tyler doesn’t understand why he wants her urine, but she feels violated and afraid. By recording the incident in her journal, however, she shows that Mrs Carlyle has taught her to make an effort towards expressing her feelings, no matter how painful that effort is.



Tyler submits her journal to her teacher without giving it much thought. Though apparently reckless, this submission amounts to an act of faith in Mrs Carlyle.



Tyler still feels unable to confide directly to people she trusts, including her sister, but when Mrs Carlyle explains that she’s reported the contents of her journal, Tyler suddenly realizes the consequences of her actions, which she had either failed or purposely neglected to think through earlier. Mrs Carlyle attempts to calm her.



Mrs Carlyle attempts to remind Tyler of how much she cares for her by reiterating her promise. Seeing the birds reminds Tyler of the possibilities offered by healthy, nurturing relationships; however, Mrs Carlyle confirming that the mother bird would bite her shows that blindly reaching out for loving relationships could get Tyler hurt.



Tyler’s mother is proud of her achievements in her sewing course. Shane insults her, wounding her self-confidence. By wearing it when he’s not around, she attempts to keep some part of herself separate from his judgment.



Shane reveals that whatever friendliness he previously showed towards Tyler was a manipulative pretense. Tyler attempts to distract herself by thinking about the escape she associates with the Derwents.



Tyler's mother weakly attempts to calm Shane, but Tyler gathers that she won't do anything to defend her, which makes Tyler hate her mother. In the laundry, Tyler finds a "student of the week" badge her mother won in her sewing class. Thinking of **Derwent pencils** to steel herself, Tyler walks into the living room to confront Shane.

Tyler feels abandoned by her mother, which translates, for the first time, into open rage. However, thinking of her mother's achievement in her sewing class seems to remind Tyler of the possibility of a better life for her family, and gives her courage.



Ellie tells Shane she's called the police. Shane violently throws her against the wall, and Tyler observes that her sister didn't leave a body-shaped hole in the wall like in cartoons. Ellie quickly stands up again and grabs a chair. Their mother quietly tells Shane to back off. Shane begins insulting her, calling her "fucked in the head." Tyler thinks she'll be too weak to defend her daughters.

Ellie immediately attempts to intervene for her sister. Once again, Tyler observes that real-life violence is far more terrifying than the way it's portrayed on TV. When Tyler's mother begins to intervene, Shane insults her again in order to make her back down.



Shane begins insulting Tyler as well. Tyler imagines hearing Ellie's voice admonishing her not to respond, since responding would lead him to hurt them. Her mother says, "you'd better get out of here," but it is unclear whether she's telling Shane to leave or her daughters to run. Tyler presumes the latter.

Imagining Ellie comforting her gives Tyler the strength not to respond to Shane's insults. Her mother begins to intervene again, but not strongly enough to have an effect. Tyler presumes she's refusing to confront Shane.



Shane continues to mock their mother, claiming that Ellie hates her. Ellie shakes her head in denial. Her mother stares at her, then suddenly adopts a much firmer attitude, ordering Shane to get out and drawing her sharp **sewing scissors** from her pocket.

Shane asserts that Ellie doesn't love their mother. Apparently enraged by this attack, Tyler's mother turns definitively against Shane, threatening him with the same sewing scissors she bought with Ellie's money.



Shane grabs a knife and threatens Tyler's mother, telling her that he's stabbed others before. Tyler imagines Ellie telling her that it's an empty boast. Her mother quickly moves forward and stabs him in the stomach with the scissors. Instead of fighting back, Shane falls to the ground and begins to cry. Tyler's mother tells Ellie "to phone the police for real now"; Ellie embraces her.

When Shane threatens her in return, continuing his offensive boasting, Tyler's mother takes action. Suddenly, Shane's façade of toughened masculinity cracks to reveal a pathetic vulnerability beneath the surface. Ellie's embrace shows that she's finally convinced that her mother cares for her.



Tyler now addresses her journal to Mrs Carlyle, explaining that she's writing using the **Derwent pencils** she received from Ellie as a Christmas gift. She reveals that her mother offered to send her wherever she wanted, and Tyler asked to go to her Aunt Jacinta's house; her mother immediately agreed, and they spent the last two weeks of the term plus Christmas there.

Tyler turns the narrative from a private journal into something like a letter to Mrs Carlyle, showing that she's becoming more comfortable expressing herself. She now owns the Derwents and has a better relationship with her family, showing that others have begun paying attention to her desires.



Tyler realizes that Mrs Carlyle will no longer be her teacher in the following year, but recalls that she told her class that there is no set ending for a journal. Tyler says she's chosen to keep writing in order to prove her right. She remembers the afternoon at Mrs Carlyle's house, adding the previously excluded detail that Mrs Carlyle told her that true friends never ask for favors as a test. She thanks Mrs Carlyle for helping her. She concludes by stating that she intends to put the diary in Mrs Carlyle's mailbox, and asks Mrs Carlyle to keep a **baby bird** for her.

Tyler feels a deep sense of loyalty and gratitude towards Mrs Carlyle. She indicates that she's not only become more comfortable expressing herself, but also learned what to expect from healthy relationships. Asking Mrs Carlyle to keep the bird for her, she shows that she aims to return the favor by taking care of others in the future.





HOW TO CITE

To cite this LitChart:

MLA

Eberwine, Paul. "Seventy-Two Derwents." *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 26 Jun 2019. Web. 21 Apr 2020.

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Eberwine, Paul. "Seventy-Two Derwents." LitCharts LLC, June 26, 2019. Retrieved April 21, 2020. <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/seventy-two-derwents>.

To cite any of the quotes from *Seventy-Two Derwents* covered in the Quotes section of this LitChart:

MLA

Kennedy, Cate. *Seventy-Two Derwents*. Read How You Want. 2013.

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Kennedy, Cate. *Seventy-Two Derwents*. Sydney: Read How You Want. 2013.