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AICE Global Perspectives

Period 3

October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018

## 2. *Girls Like Us* Notes and Highlights

(Book Deconstruction)

 = Highlight

Blue text = Note

 = Highlight & Note

### Prologue:

**N1:** “She likes swimming, SpongeBob, Mexican food, writing poetry, getting her nails painted (light pink is her favorite color), and Harry Potter books (plus she thinks Daniel Radcliffe is “fine”). This Christmas, she really wants an iPod but would settle for some sweat suits, preferably pink.”

**Note:** As the opening line of the novel, it is quite fascinating how the author chose to use characteristics that appeal to others whom are approximately the same age as the first victim the reader meets, since almost everything is relatable in some way to other preteens until you get to the sex trafficking aspect of her life, which, unfortunately, is the only connecting element she has with other young girls. You’d think she leads a normal life until the description progresses.

**H1/N2:** “She’s much like any other eleven-year-old girl in America, except for one critical difference. Over the last year of her life, she’s been trafficked up and down the East Coast by a twenty-nine-year-old pimp and sold nightly on Craigslist to adult men who ignore her dimples and her baby fat and purchase her for sex.”

**Note:** The point regarding her being “much like any eleven-year-old girl in America” creates reason for suspicion and ambiguity regarding eleven-year-olds that you might see out and about, since you truly don’t know whether they’re in the industry unless they tell you and differentiate between a legitimate parental unit and a pimp without, nor you wouldn’t expect someone who hasn’t even hit puberty being sold for sex to adult men decades older, the one in the quote being “a twenty-nine-year-old pimp.”

**H2/N3:** “As the executive director of Girls Educational and Mentoring Services (GEMS) – the organization I founded to help girls and young women who have been recruited and trafficked into the commercial sex industry – I have a lot of late nights in the office.”

**Note:** Her passion regarding the issue of sex trafficking and desire to aid young women whom are involved is demonstrated by her actions in that she constructed a program

dedicated to helping them, as well as the time she dedicates to the program to further the mission.

**H3:** “Since we’re the only nonprofit in New York designed to serve commercially sexually exploited girls, calls like these are common.”

**H4:** “Meeting girls ages twelve, thirteen, fourteen years old had become routine, however sad and horrific.”

**N4:** “She vigorously denies that he knew she was eleven (despite the fact that I haven’t asked), and claims he thought she was eighteen.”

**Note:** This just goes to show the acknowledgement of the horrific nature of the buyer’s crimes, and how they’ve gone so far as to assume they could be caught and create false scenarios that are supposed to alleviate the situation. It also shows the acknowledgement by the girl as well, since she obviously anxious and trying to spill all the given information to make it not seem as bad, per instruction by her “boyfriend.”

**H5/N5:** “She’s been well-trained to give standard answers (her boyfriend didn’t know her age, she was just in D.C. visiting family, she has no idea why the cops thought she’d been sold) but it doesn’t take long to engage her in conversation about hotels I know in D.C. I throw out a couple of generic chain names and she’s excited to tell me which ones she’s stayed in, all the while adamantly sticking to her story that she was just ‘hanging out, chillin’ in the hotels with her ‘friends’”.

**Note:** It’s really sickening that there are “standard” answers that young girls are instructed to use should they be suspected of and taken in on the basis that they’re in the industry, especially since it seems to occur so frequently that it becomes obvious and that the workers are most likely trained to interpret them.

**H6/N6:** “And finally, Danielle begins to tell me about her experiences in the sex industry. Now she’s animated, confident to be the expert, schooling me on which johns are the best paying, which hotels are the nicest, which tricks you have to be careful of... She asks me about other hotels in Virginia and Maryland, naming districts I’ve never heard of, showing off her newfound knowledge as a seasoned traveler.”

**Note:** It’s truly horrific the amount of knowledge she, as well as other girls in the sex industry, has acquired from her experiences. The fact that a young girl is educating a grown adult whom has also been in her shoes is frightening as well, since the woman is learning things she didn’t realize that the girl knows, thus expanding the scale at which the sex trafficking industry is taking its toll on young girls and women daily.

## **Chapter 1:**

**H1:** “It turned out, though, despite my loyalty and Bonnie and Clyde mentality, that the police had scant evidence on my and then had violated my rights as a juvenile, thereby ensuring that the charges were eventually dropped.”

**H2:** “My time in jail had ultimately amounted to a couple of overnights for theft and three days for the bank robbery conspiracy, and even that had been limited to being held in the bookings of our downtown local precinct.”

**H3/N1:** “Still, though I had no legitimate jail experience to speak of, I did know what addiction felt like, both to substances and men. I knew what it was like to live on the edges of society, to feel hopeless and to be homeless. I understood confusing domestic violence with love and always having to hustle to make the next buck (or in my case, pound).”

**Note:** This shows how her experiences give her insight because, despite being in England during her experiences in the industry, she can recall her own experiences with homelessness and hunger and the confusion that the girls in America whom she’s helping experience and empathetically provide nurturing support, whereas others are cited for deeming it “teen prostitution” under the inaccurate assumption that their situation is different.

**N2:** “With my long dark hair in a ponytail and my accent, according to the girls, I look “just like Sporty Spice, miss.” I’m not thrilled about being compared to the Spice Girl I think is the most awkward-looking, but after my initial horror, I see it as a workable hook.”

**Note:** Again, the correspondence young girls establish for her with pop culture gives her an entry ticket so-to-speak to inside a relative comfort zone that allowed them to find a connection and be more willing to open. As the author stated prior, it makes sense that young girls would prefer to disclose their experiences to someone they can trust, even if they resemble a figure in pop culture, than a complete stranger.

**H4:** “These high school adolescents [at Rikers Island High School for Girls] are sixteen to twenty-one and are charged with everything from shoplifting to murder although most, I’ll learn, are in for some type of drug charge, invariably holding for, copping for, or trafficking for a man or a boy who has escaped prosecution and is now suddenly too busy to visit or send commissary money.”

**N3:** ““My boyfriend tried to shoot me and I grabbed the gun and now I’m here cos I shot him by accident. But he was beating me every day and I was scared of him. I don’t understand why they didn’t lock him up before this all happened. I didn’t mean to kill him, I just wanted him to stop””.

**Note:** This can, in a sick and twisted way, relate to the relatively recent story regarding the girl who was kidnapped, escaped, and shot her captor, although she intended harm. It goes to show how unjust the system is when the actions of the true criminals whom were exploiting the girls are overlooked when the young girls retaliate out of fear and anger.

**H5/N4:** ““I thought I was going to die, but somehow I lived and managed to get out. And now I feel like you came here for a reason to tell me that I was supposed to live. I never heard no one talk about this stuff, and the stuff you did, that I did.’ She chokes up.”

**Note:** It's quite saddening to think that a young adult feels isolated and unable to connect with others due to her troublesome past, and the fact that Rachel (the author) was able to spark a reason for this young girl to believe that she has a purpose beyond her former exploitation makes this aspect of the novel a bit wholesome. Having no one to talk to about her past, even at the facility for survivors of similar pasts, seems unimaginably difficult to live knowing, since not hearing it discussed adds the taboo to the topic, though I understand why one wouldn't want to relive that horrific aspect of their life.

**H6/N5:** "...Everyone else, the counselors and stuff, they can be nice, but they have a luv-luv life. You feel me? A luv-luv life, they read about the shit we went through in some book – that's good 'n' all but you lived this shit. It's different, your life was like ours, some the same, some different but you been there, you feel me?"

**Note:** It wouldn't surprise me if the counselors and staff at the facility didn't have first-hand experience with the types of situations the girls have endured, but it's also quite sad to know that the girls don't have "proper" supporters whom can empathize, not just sympathize and have only a fraction of the comprehension gained from books. Also, while it's truly awful for the author to have gone through similar pain, the fact that she's referencing her experiences to connect and make these girls feel as though they can relate to her is incredibly important.

**H7:** "Over the months that she's incarcerated [for murder], before she's finally sentenced and sent upstate, we'll connect occasionally but we'll never be particularly close, yet her words will reverberate for months and then years to come. I'll never really hear the term *luv-luv life* again but it will stay in my mind as a perfect description of those who seem untouched by life's horrors and tragedies, for whom childhood memories conjure up joy and innocence, for whom the thought of family evokes comfort safety and for whom the word *love* remains undistorted and untainted by disappointment, by violence, by fear."

**H8/N6:** "I came to New York City in August 1997 to work as a missionary for an agency that works with adult women in the commercial sex industry, a job I've obtained not based on my sparse resume, which consists of being a waitress and a nanny, but rather on my rare admission that I've worked in the sex industry, too."

**Note:** When she says, "my rare admission that I've worked in the sex industry, too", does she mean that it's rare for her to admit it to people, or does she mean that it's rare to the employers of the job she had to have potential employees share that they've had the experience she has? I would understand why both occurring wouldn't be common, but her phrasing makes her meaning slightly ambiguous.

**H9:** "Nights are for street outreach. Daytimes I go to detention centers, shelters, and Rikers, where the girls and women who come in are scorned by staff and the other residents or inmates alike."