

A Study Guide prepared by IYC Tutor Byron Eden

**Summer of Secrets**

By Paul Langan

Themes: Shameful secrets, embarrassment, vulnerability, being used, pregnancy

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As you read this book, Summer of Secrets, please make a list of all words that are used in the book that you do not know the meaning of. Bring your list to class each week, along with your copy of the book and this study guide, and we will resolve vocabulary words that you find. **You really should read another Bluford series book, Until We Meet Again, by Anne Schraff, before you read this book.** It tells the story of Darcy Wills and her interactions with Brian Mason, which is the foundation for this book, Summer of Secrets. Darcy Wills is a central character in several other Bluford series books that you might also enjoy, including: Lost and Found, A Matter of Trust, and Blood is Thicker.

**CHAPTER 1**

1. (p.1) This book starts with Darcy Wills's Mom saying "I can't do this again, Carl. I don't have the strength, not without Mama." (p.3) "For weeks, Mom had walked around in a daze, sometimes, it seemed, on the verge of tears." (p.7) "I'm too old for this, and I don't want to be in this situation. I just can't do it again Carl. I just can't." I correctly guessed what was going on in the life of Mrs. Wills as I read this first chapter. What are your thoughts as to what is going on? Have there been times in your life when you heard only part of a story, and therefore came to a wrong conclusion about something?
2. (p.12) Darcy recalled an incident way back in the fifth grade. "It was then Darcy knew her father would always keep her safe. Would protect her when she needed it. Would never allow anyone to hurt her. Dad had proved that again when Brian attacked. He had saved her. He had stopped Brian from going any further. He had found her and brought her home". Is there anyone in your life that has helped protect you, and kept you safe?
3. (p.13) "Darcy still could not shake the damage Brian had done, the crack he had put in her world, one that left voices deep inside her which she could not silence. 'You're not safe' the voices said. 'Boys can't be trusted. The world is dangerous. Your father won't always be there to protect you'." Is there anyone that might look at you and say that you can't be trusted?

**CHAPTER 2**

1. Darcy is now working at a local ice cream parlor, called Scoops. (p.14) "The same day Dad mentioned Scoops, Liselle Mason had called to ask Darcy to come back to work babysitting. She assured Darcy that her brother Brian was far away in Oakland and that he would be there all summer. Still Darcy refused the offer, breaking into a cold sweat at the sound of Liselle's voice. There was no way she would go back to Liselle's apartment. Not after what happened. Never." Some

- incidents in our lives plant seeds that stay deeply buried for a very long time. Brian's attempt to rape Darcy was just such an incident. Have there been any incidents in your life in which seeds were deeply buried inside of you?
2. (p.17) A yellow Mazda pulls up outside of Scoops. The girl accompanying the man was Darcy's former best friend, Brisana Meeks. How was Brisana dressed? Brisana tells Darcy how she met her boyfriend Duane, who is back from college for the summer.
  3. (p.21) "Last summer, Brisana talked about girls who were too forward with their boyfriends in public. 'Low-class', she would call them. Now she had become just like them". Do you know anyone like this?
  4. At pizza, Darcy met her current best friend, Tarah, and told her about how much Brisana had changed. (p.24) Tarah mentions that she had seen Darcy's sister, Jamee, who was currently dating whom?
  5. (p.26) Tarah invites Darcy to a July 4<sup>th</sup> picnic, and plans to introduce Darcy to her cousin, Troy. "Darcy new Tarah had no clue why the idea of meeting a boy bothered her. Tarah didn't know about Brian, or her nightly terrors, her inability to sleep...The memories were bad enough. But the idea of others, her friends, knowing how vulnerable she had been was ten times worse. It filled her with shame, making her blush." Why is it sometimes very difficult to share personal information with others?

### CHAPTER 3

1. Tarah's boyfriend, Cooper Hodden, then joined Darcy and Tarah at the pizza shop. Coop tells them that he has had the worst day. Why?
2. (p.29) "It's Duane Nye. If I have to work with him all summer, I think I'ma go crazy. I don't care if he's in college. Me and that punk are gonna have problems". "For the past two summers, he had worked as an assistant at Nye's Garage, an auto repair shop not far from his house. Darcy knew he planned to become a mechanic". (p.30) "Dude lied and got me in trouble". What did Duane do to get Cooper in trouble?
3. (p.32) "Something in Darcy's mind clicked. Darcy had never met Duane Nye, but the description sounded familiar. Too familiar". (p.33) "He's the one who's goin' out with Brisana Meeks." Why is this even more important to Darcy?
4. (p.35) "Worse was the idea that Tarah and Cooper had talked about hooking her up with Tarah's cousin. Like she had become some kind of charity case, someone to be pitied. But what bothered Darcy most was what she couldn't bring herself to admit to Tarah or Cooper. The invisible grip that Brian's assault had on her life". (p.38) "Just the idea of Jamee being alone with a boy made Darcy's head pound with worry. She could almost see someone like Brian trying to get Jamee alone. It was as if her nightmare had been recorded on a tape that played over and over in Darcy's head". Darcy's previous experience with Brian is having an effect on her relationship with everyone else. Have you ever had any experience that plays over and over in your head, like the nightmare Darcy has?

## CHAPTER 4

1. Darcy calls Brisana and asks her to meet at the mall, so that Darcy can tell Brisana of her concerns over Duane. (p.44) “Yo, ladies, you wanna sit here with us? I’ll buy you lunch’, said a young light-skinned guy with dreadlocks sitting at a round table with his friends”. (p.45) “Don’t worry about it, Darcy. It’s no big deal’, Brisana said, following her away from the food court. Darcy nodded, saying nothing about the sudden wave of dizziness that swept over her, the nervous tremors in her hands, or the loud pounding in her chest. She had been coming to the mall with Brisana since middle school. Guys were always yelling stuff to them”. “It was all harmless back then, but now it made Darcy feel threatened, unsafe”. (p.46) “Darcy knew it had to do with nightmares. With Brian.” Keeping Darcy’s secret inside of her is producing physical reactions. Did this boy say anything that was inappropriate?
2. (p.51) Brisana tells Darcy “You know what Duane said to me? He told me he loved me. We were at the beach in his car, and he looked at me with his dark eyes and said it. I didn’t know what to say.” Have you ever told someone that you loved them, when in truth you were just trying to score?

## CHAPTER 5

1. (p.54) On the way back from the mall Darcy realized that she “could not ignore what was happening, and Darcy knew it had everything to do with Brian. If only she could rewind it somehow like a movie and skip it altogether. But Darcy knew that couldn’t happen, that the incident had changed her.” Is there anything in your life that you would like to simply “rewind” and skip that part altogether?
2. We learn that Dad’s hours have been cut, and he is now only able to work part-time instead of full-time. Yet, something else appears to be bothering Darcy’s parents. Do you have an idea of what the problem is, at the heart of the matter?
3. (p.67) The chapter ends with Darcy getting a phone call...from whom?

## CHAPTER 6

1. What news does Hakeem share about his father’s problems with cancer? (p.69) “There is more Darcy”. What is the surprise news that Hakeem shares with Darcy? (p.70) “How could she ever tell him about the time she spent with Brian Mason? Would he be disappointed or blame her for what happened? Would he somehow see her differently? Think less of her because she had allowed Brian, for a time, to touch her? It was a secret she would have to keep.” Darcy’s great news about Hakeem now turns into an added burden because of her secret. Do you have a huge secret like Darcy’s that you fear to share with anyone?
2. The next morning Darcy woke up to the sound of women’s voices. Aunt Charlotte was heard to tell Darcy’s Mom “I can’t believe you let yourself get into this position again, Mattie. At your age?” Does this comment tell you anything more about what this problem is?

3. At the ice cream parlor Darcy saw a yellow sports car pass by. A pretty girl wearing a UCLA t-shirt came in and ordered two mint smoothies, the same drink Brisana and Duane had ordered earlier. (p.73) “Alarm bells were going off in Darcy’s head.” When Darcy asked Brisana about this new girl (p.76) she is told “Darcy, that was his cousin, okay. Duane was picking her up after class”. (p.77) Yet “Coop said Duane was showin’ off all day, bossin’ him around in front of some college girl. And from what Coop saw, those two ain’t cousins, unless they’re kissin’ cousins!” What is Darcy supposed to believe?
4. Tarah tells Darcy that she suspects that there is something bothering Darcy, yet Darcy refuses to open up and share her fears with Tarah. (p.80) “The secret with Brian was a kind of cancer, spreading its way into her closest friendships.” Who is your closest friend? Do you have any secrets that you have kept from this person?

## CHAPTER 7

1. Darcy woke up in a nightmare, in which she relived the panic of being in Brian Mason’s apartment. Have you had nightmares in which you relive something that still bothers you?
2. Darcy, Jamee and Mom went to the cemetery to visit grandma’s grave. (p.85) “Divided by their thoughts, the three of them stood together in front of Grandma in respectful silence.” Do you ever have conversations with deceased relatives?
3. Darcy then attends the July 4<sup>th</sup> picnic, where she is to join Tarah, and her cousin, Troy. (p.91) Cooper arrived saying “If I see Duane Nye here, I’m gonna bust him. I don’t care how many cops are in this park”. “Dude blamed me for stealin’ twenty dollars from the cash register. I know he took the money, but Mr. Nye wouldn’t believe me. He made me clean up the whole shop to make up for it”. What kind of future does Cooper face working in a shop where they don’t trust you?
4. (p.93) “Darcy spotted Jamee and Desmond. They were kissing each other”. “Part of her wanted to protect Jamee. But she knew Desmond was the nicest boy her sister had ever dated. And kissing in the park was normal. It was only kissing. Still the scene disturbed Darcy, making her feel an uncomfortable mixture of concern, fear, and worry”. Why is Darcy so upset about seeing her sister kissing Desmond in the park?
5. (p.95) “Darcy felt Troy’s hand gently wrap around her”. “It was as if Troy had suddenly disappeared and Brian Mason had taken his place.” Do you think that Troy might have done things differently if only he had known about the things that bothered Darcy so much? If you had a girlfriend that you knew had been previously raped by someone else, would it affect the way you approached dating this girl?
6. This chapter ends when Cooper screams, “There he is! I gotta do this now.” What is Coop going to do to Duane?

## CHAPTER 8

1. (p.100) “Cooper spun around and lunged at Duane”. (p.101) ““Let him go, Cooper’ Darcy said, unable to stop herself. Troy tried to grab her then, seizing her wrist and pulling her away. ‘Stay out of it, Darcy’, he said. ‘It’s dangerous’. Though Darcy knew Troy meant well, his grip hurt her, triggering a memory of when Brian forcibly grabbed her wrists and demanded she calm down, even as he refused to let her go. The pressure of Troy’s fingers clenched on her wrist produced the same pain, the same sensation, the same panic. She couldn’t control the scream that suddenly roared from her lungs, the horrific flashback that replayed in her mind, or the sudden kick she sent into Troy’s groin.” The emotions that Darcy has kept locked up deep inside of her have finally come out, with Troy being the victim this time. Have you ever been the innocent victim of someone’s anger over something that you had nothing to do with?
2. Duane said that Brisana could be a witness for a police report that Cooper had jumped him. But Brisana said “I don’t know what I saw”. Why would she refuse to support Duane?
3. When Darcy gets home she gets a phone call from Brisana, asking if they can meet the next day. What do you think this is about?

## CHAPTER 9

1. The next day Brisana met Darcy at Scoops. (p.114)What did Brisana want to tell Darcy in confidence?
2. Brisana tells Darcy that when she told Duane that she might be pregnant he said “Ain’t mine” “He said it wasn’t his problem. It’s like you tried to tell me. He’s a player. He just wanted one thing, and he got it.” Are there some people who would say that you are just a player?
3. When Darcy gets home Mom and Dad and Jamee are all waiting. What is the news that finally is shared with the entire family?

## CHAPTER 10

1. (p.127) Despite the family joy over the news of Mom’s pregnancy, Darcy says “Jamee’s right about me. I do have problems”. (p.128) “Darcy shook her head, no longer able to hide her own dark secret, her fears. ‘Something happened to me that day... That day I was attacked by Brian’. ‘I’m just not the same, Mom. I can’t sleep. I get nervous when I’m around guys, and I’m scared all the time’. ‘I need help Mom’.” What kind of relief do you think came to Darcy to share this secret with her family?
2. (p.130) Darcy called Tarah. “Without holding anything back, Darcy recounted the whole story about Brian Mason, from the moment they met to the time he attacked her”. (p.131) When Darcy had finished Tarah told Darcy “You shouldn’t keep secrets from the people that care about you. We’re just here to help. That’s why God made us friends and put us in this crazy world together”.

- Who are some of the people that care about you? Have you kept secrets from these people?
3. On their way to the clinic for a pregnancy test Darcy shared the secret of Brian's attack with Brisana. (p.135) "You were the only one who warned me about Brian. You tried to help, and I never listened. I'm just returning the favor". Have you refused to listen to help offered by a friend? Were they right?
  4. What were the results of Brisana's pregnancy test?
  5. (p.142) "The summer's secrets had finally lost their grip. The distance that once separated her from her friends and family had vanished like fog beneath the bright sun. While the scars from Brian's attack lingered, Darcy knew she would spend the summer dislodging them. She would heal". Do you have wounds that need to heal? What steps are you taking to bring about healing?

What did you think of this book, and why?

### **ALTERNATIVE ENDING**

I usually end my reading study guides by giving an opportunity to do some creative writing. I am going to ask you to write an alternative ending that is different from how the author ended this story. Please remember that there is no right or wrong ending, you can write whatever you wish. Be creative. Have fun. When you are finished I will show you an alternative ending that I wrote.

**ALTERNATIVE ENDING** to  
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By:

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As soon as the family dinner was over, and Mom's surprise pregnancy was announced, Darcy and Jamee were both relieved. Darcy was elated that her parents were both so supportive of Darcy's desire to obtain some help for the feelings that she had been hiding for such a long time concerning Brian's attack.

Weary after the family dinner, Darcy took the cordless phone, and went into her room and dialed Tarah's number. The first priority right now was to arrange for Brisana to have a pregnancy test to determine if she was in fact pregnant. As soon as Tarah got on the line she began talking non-stop. "I just got off the phone with Coop. You'll never believe what just happened. After the incident in the park, and the threats made by Duane, Coop got a phone call from Mr. Nye. Coop was really scared, especially when Mr. Nye told Coop that he wanted to have a meeting at the shop as soon as possible. Coop figured that he was going to be fired on the spot, and was going to have to turn in various tools and equipment that had been loaned to him. When he got to the shop there were new locks on the doors. That did not look good. But then...Mr. Nye holds out his hand to shake Coop's hand and says 'I owe you a big apology, Mr. Hodden. For weeks now I have had several employees telling me about how my son Duane is making it very difficult to get any work done around here. I really doubted it when everyone told me that he was lazy, and actually prevented others from being more productive in the jobs they were doing. Artie had the nerve to tell me that Duane was taking supplies from the shop, and using them on his car, with no records kept of these thefts. To prove to myself that they were all wrong in their accusations I went and had some hidden surveillance cameras installed. What a shock it was to me, to see that it was in fact my son that took the \$20 from the cash register earlier. I saw lots of things that have made me very angry. I have decided to fire my son, and ban him from ever stepping foot in this garage again. But now I got a problem. I need a new shop foreman, and in my opinion you are the best man I got. If you are interested I would like to give you a pay raise, and have you become the manager here when I am not around. What do you think?' Coop is just walking on air right now". "Wow, I can't believe it", I told Tarah. "I'm very happy for Coop".

Darcy and Tarah went on to discuss making plans for Brisana to have a pregnancy test done as soon as possible. The next day Darcy accompanied Brisana when she arrived at the clinic for the pregnancy test. As they left the clinic Darcy and Brisana walked past the Learning Spot Community Daycare Center which was part of the clinic building. When Tarah saw them she came over, and immediately saw the tears in Brisana's eyes. "Yeah, I'm pregnant. What a fool I've been", blurted Brisana. "What makes this worse is that Duane is the only man I have ever been with, yet he claims it is not his problem". With a smile, and a smirk on her face, Tarah said "You know Brisana, I may just know someone who can exert some influence over Duane, and convince him to accept responsibility for his actions". "This is not your problem alone."

As soon as Brisana left the building Tarah pulled out her cell phone and dialed a number. "Hi, Coop..."