

# WAKE

LISA McMANN

## Author Commentary on Chapter One

Page 1. SIX MINUTES\*. This first section titled “Six Minutes” was not in the original rough draft. But I felt like there was something missing – something that would indicate to a reader that this book was for teens. Something that would plunge the reader into the thick of the story from the first word. And so “Six Minutes” was actually the last chapter written, even though it is the first chapter of WAKE.

Page 2. That’s for damn sure.\* A lot of people comment on the writing style of WAKE. Short, incomplete sentences are scattered throughout the book. That the book is written in third person, present tense, makes the style even more unusual. Kind readers call it poetic, lyrical. To be honest, I never intended WAKE to be lyrical or poetic. (Though I’m thrilled if it does!) Others ask, “Why did you write it like this?” And all I can say is, I don’t know. That’s just how it came out from the first moment I began writing. (And if you wish to know what I wrote at that first moment, it’s the section at the top of page 68.)

Page 3. But no one is there for her to thank.\* Here, the first hint that Janie will eventually have somebody on her side, though readers won’t make this connection to that someone until much later in the book. This might be one of those sentences that means little on the first read, but makes perfect sense on the second read.

Page 4. Evening, December 23, 1996\* Nearly every notable event in WAKE has a date or a time stamp. Time is so important to Janie. Though the reader doesn’t always see it, Janie is constantly checking the time, because once she gets sucked into a dream, she has no idea of knowing how long she’s been in that dream until it’s over. Janie can’t control much about her ability/curse, and not knowing how long she’s been in somebody’s dream would make it even worse. Especially when she’s somewhere where others could notice her in the dream state.

Page 5. They laugh and point at the bald man in his underwear.\* Who hasn’t had the “I went to school/work in my underwear” dream?



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Page 6. Janie's mother sips from a flask in her ratty old purse.\* Our first glimpse at what Janie's home life might be like. Throughout WAKE, Janie's mother is an extremely minor character, making Janie very much a loner who basically has to survive on her own means. So even at age eight, when Janie experiences her first episode getting sucked into the bald man's dream, it doesn't even occur to Janie to say anything to her mother about the strange thing that just happened.

Page 7. Sixth grade makes her throat hurt.\* This is one of my favorite lines in WAKE. I was trying to think of a short line for that spot that would completely describe what sixth grade feels like for a lonely girl like Janie. I vividly remember sixth grade. It's the year when kids turn mean and it's definitely no longer okay to cry in public. So we force our hot tears back, and they burn our throats all the way down.

Page 8. (first paragraph) They look happy.\* Janie notes that her mother looks happy in a dream – it's an unusual sight for Janie, because Janie's mother never looks happy now. Too, Janie wonders who the man in the dream is, though Janie knows that people in dreams might not exist in real life.

Page 9. Pretty enough to make a difference.\* Ain't that just the sad truth?

Page 9. "Hi," she says. "I'm Carrie Brandt."\* I love the character of Carrie! She is a welcome relief to the doom of Janie's predicament. Carrie is fun and well-liked by all the socio-economic classes in school. She says what she thinks with confidence. There is a Carrie in every school, isn't there? There was one in mine. A happy-go-lucky, against-the-odds popular girl who didn't put any stock in popularity when deciding who her friends would be. Soon after Janie and Carrie meet, though, Janie begins to wonder if Carrie has a secret, too.

