

FREDRIK BACKMAN

#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF  
*ANXIOUS PEOPLE*

# BRITT-MARIE WAS HERE

"Backman's truest,  
most satisfying  
book to date."

—*Paste Magazine*



# ESL 360

# BOOK CLUB

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Chapters 6 -8

11 February 2026

## Weekly Book Club Assignments, Group A (10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.)

Week	Date	Reading	Ira	Flavia	Maria	Lisa	Mariana	Banu	Fatemeh
2	28 Jan	Ch 1-3	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Time Keeper
3	4 Feb	Ch 4-5	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Time Keeper
4	11 Feb	Ch 6-8	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Time Keeper
5	18 Feb	Ch 9-11	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Time Keeper
6	25 Feb	Ch 12-14	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Time Keeper
7	4 Mar	Ch 15-17	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Time Keeper
8	11 Mar	Ch 18-20	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Time Keeper
	18 Mar	NO BOOK CLUB — SPRING BREAK							
9	25 Mar	Ch 21-23	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Time Keeper
10	1 Apr	Ch 24-26	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Time Keeper
11	8 Apr	Ch 27-29	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Time Keeper
12	15 Apr	Ch 30-32	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Time Keeper
13	22 Apr	Ch 33-34	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Time Keeper
14	29 Apr	Ch 35-36	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Time Keeper
15	6 May	Ch 37	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Time Keeper
16	13 May	Ch 38	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer & Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Time Keeper

## Weekly Book Club Assignments, Group B (11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.)

Week	Date	Reading	Monica	Cristy	Esmeralda	Yulianna	Lily S.	Yariela	Lily L.
2	28 Jan	Ch 1-3	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker
3	4 Feb	Ch 4-5	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer
4	11 Feb	Ch 6-8	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker
5	18 Feb	Ch 9-11	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder
6	25 Feb	Ch 12-14	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter
7	4 Mar	Ch 15-17	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer
8	11 Mar	Ch 18-20	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist
	18 Mar	NO BOOK CLUB — SPRING BREAK							
9	25 Mar	Ch 21-23	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker
10	1 Apr	Ch 24-26	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer
11	8 Apr	Ch 27-29	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker
12	15 Apr	Ch 30-32	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder
13	22 Apr	Ch 33-34	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter
14	29 Apr	Ch 35-36	Word Artist	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer
15	6 May	Ch 37	Connection Maker	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist
16	13 May	Ch 38	Summarizer	Deep Thinker	Vocab Builder	Sound Spotter	Character Analyzer	Word Artist	Connection Maker

# 60-SECOND SUMMARIZER

## MARIANA

### Chapter 6

In chapter Six, Britt-Marie continues to remember her past. She also keeps trying to adapt to the town and the people. The city is in crisis, disorganized, and dirty. People speak badly about the town. Many of them don't have jobs. They talk about money problems and closed businesses. The city appears abandoned. The soccer field is closed, but the kids keep playing. This shows that the town is poor, but people still try.

Britt-Marie goes inside the recreation center. The building is old, dirty, and quiet. Britt-Marie begins cleaning everything. Cleaning makes her feel calm and in control. In a rare moment of frustration, she destroys a coffee percolator with a mop after struggling to use it and breaks down in tears. Britt-Marie doesn't like change, but she stays and tries to adapt to her new life.

# 60-SECOND SUMMARIZER

## MARIANA

### Chapter 7

In Chapter Seven, Britt-Marie thinks a lot about her past, especially about her life with Kent. She realizes that Kent's dreams were always more important than hers. She spent her life helping him look good. Kent did not do the same for her.

She also spent her life caring for others, cleaning, and doing things "the right way." Over time, her marriage lost love, and she became lonely.

At the same time, Britt-Marie meets a woman called Somebody, who is loud and very different from her. Britt-Marie feels insecure, nervous and out of place but stays polite. She does not like asking for help and prefers to do things on her own.

During a conversation with Somebody, Britt-Marie unintentionally reveals that her sister, Ingrid, died when they were children.

Britt-Marie buys furniture from IKEA for the recreation center. Even when help is offered, she refuses. Building the furniture herself is important to her because it gives her control and independence.

# 60-SECOND SUMMARIZER

## MARIANA

### Chapter 8

In Chapter Eight, Britt-Marie remembers a bad accident from her childhood. Their car collided with a green truck; her sister Ingrid died because she wasn't wearing a seatbelt, while Britt-Marie survived because she had buckled hers, hoping her mother would notice her being "good".

Her family never talked about it. Now she is sixty-three years old and lives in a quiet place called Borg. She does everything alone. Order and routine make her feel safe.

Britt-Marie goes to the shop with Somebody and a boy. They talk and joke. Britt-Marie feels confused, but she wants to follow the rules. She pays correctly and asks for a receipt. She feels proud.

Later, Britt-Marie thinks about rules, money, and the past. Somebody talks about people who are gone. Britt-Marie thinks about Kent and feels sad, but calm.

At night, Britt-Marie goes back to the recreation center. It is quiet and dark. Britt-Marie starts a "bargain" with the rat living in the recreation center. She begins feeding it Snickers bars in exchange for mutual "care" of their bodies when they die.

Britt-Marie talks calmly to the rat. She explains death and remembers her sister Ingrid. She thinks in a practical way about the body and smells. The rat eats the chocolate and says nothing. Britt-Marie does not ask questions and lets things be.

# DEEP THINKER

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## MARIANA

### Questions:

- 1- In what ways does Britt-Marie try to stay in control of her life in these chapters?
- 2- How do her interactions with Somebody show her discomfort with other people?
- 3- What do Britt-Marie's memories of Kent reveal about how she lived her marriage? Do you think Kent is a toxic person?
- 4- Why is it important to Britt-Marie that she builds the IKEA furniture herself?
- 5- How do small actions (shopping, asking questions, refusing help) show Britt-Marie beginning to change?
- 6- What does the rat represent in chapters 8? Why do you think Britt-Marie talks to it calmly?
- 7- Why does Britt-Marie explain death and baking soda to the rat? What does this say about how she understands life?
- 8- By the end of chapter 8, do you think Britt-Marie is stronger than she was before? Why or why not?

# 60-SECOND SUMMARIZER

LILY S.

After a difficult welcome, Britt Marie decides to work and heads to the recreation center. Despite the rough start, she is determined to make the best of her new situation. She observes the local team for the first time and realizes that the children don't play soccer very well. They are incredibly bad. If they hit something, it's because they were aiming for something else.

When she enters the recreation center she looks around and notices that there is dust everywhere; on the floor she can see the tracks of the rats on it. She cleans, as she always does, when facing emergencies in her life. She keeps cleaning until the sun has gone down.

During the night she stays awake. She doesn't sleep because the sofas in the recreation center are filthy. The hotel is in the town, 12 miles away, but she doesn't have a car for now.

She thinks her duty is not to take care of kids; her duties are just to clean an empty building day after day. Britt Marie, who loves things to be clean, befriends a rat, establishes a regular routine, talks to it, tells it things and leaves it notes.

She remembers well everything about life in its most fragile and powerful moments. Britt Marie's sister Ingrid died. After the funeral, her father abandons them and the mother develops depression. Britt Marie believes her parents would have preferred Ingrid to survive instead of her, despite her diligent housework.

Britt Marie reflects on her marriage. She knows that there was a time when Kent no longer cared. She stays home raising his children, supporting him and in his career, never dreaming on her own path. Britt Marie is self-aware and committed to making Kent look good; he never does the same for her, and in fact her dreams are overshadowed.

# DEEP THINKER

LILY L.

1. Why does Britt-Marie continue to strictly follow rules and maintain order even in Borg, where people live very differently? How does this behavior help her cope with her inner fears or insecurities?
2. Why do you think Britt-Marie begins to care about the children and the soccer team, even though she initially tries to distance herself from them?
3. How does life in Borg challenge Britt-Marie's beliefs about what is "proper" or "acceptable," and why might the author want to show this conflict?

# VOCABULARY BUILDER

## BANU

### 1. **QUEUE** (/kju:/ — KYOO)

...“There’s a queue in the corner shop. Or the pizzeria. Or the post office. Or the car workshop. Or whatever it is.” ( chp 8)

(noun)-- a line of people or things waiting for their turn. “I had to wait in a long queue at the Bakery just to buy a loaf of bread.”

(verb)--to line up or wait in order. “If you queue 15 or 20 min. you will get free brand spanking new cooking implements.”



### 2. **STUMBLES** (/ˈstʌm.bəlz/ — STUHM-buhlz)

...“Britt-Marie stumbles on the threshold.” ( chp 6)

(verb)--To trip or lose your balance while walking. “He stumbled while walking in the dark.”

(verb)--To make mistakes or have difficulty doing something. “My little cousin stumbles over his words when he gets nervous during class presentations.”



# VOcabuLARY BUIlDER

## BANU

### 3. **THRESHOLD** (/ˈθreʃ.hoʊld/ — THRESH-hohld)

...“Britt-Marie stumbles on the threshold.” ( chp 6)

(noun)--The entrance or doorway to a building or room. “The bride and groom paused on the threshold of their new home before he carried her across.”

(noun)--the point at which something begins or changes. “I’m on the threshold of graduating college, which feels both exciting and terrifying.”

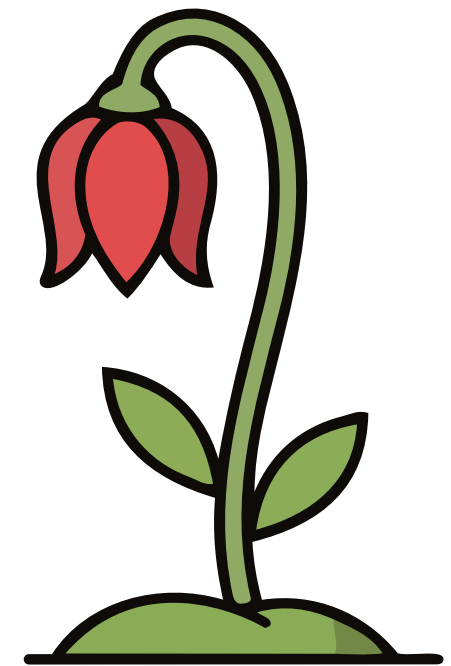


### 4. **WILTS** (/wɪlts/ — WILTS)

...“suddenly one day you wake up and it’s in full flower. It works the same way when it wilts—one day it is just too late.” ( chp 7)

(verb )--To droop, sag, or become limp, usually describing plants that need water; “My basil plant wilts every afternoon in the hot sun, but it perks back up after I water it.”

(verb)--people losing energy or confidence. “The team’s enthusiasm wilts when they fall behind early in the game.”



# VOCABULARY BUILDER

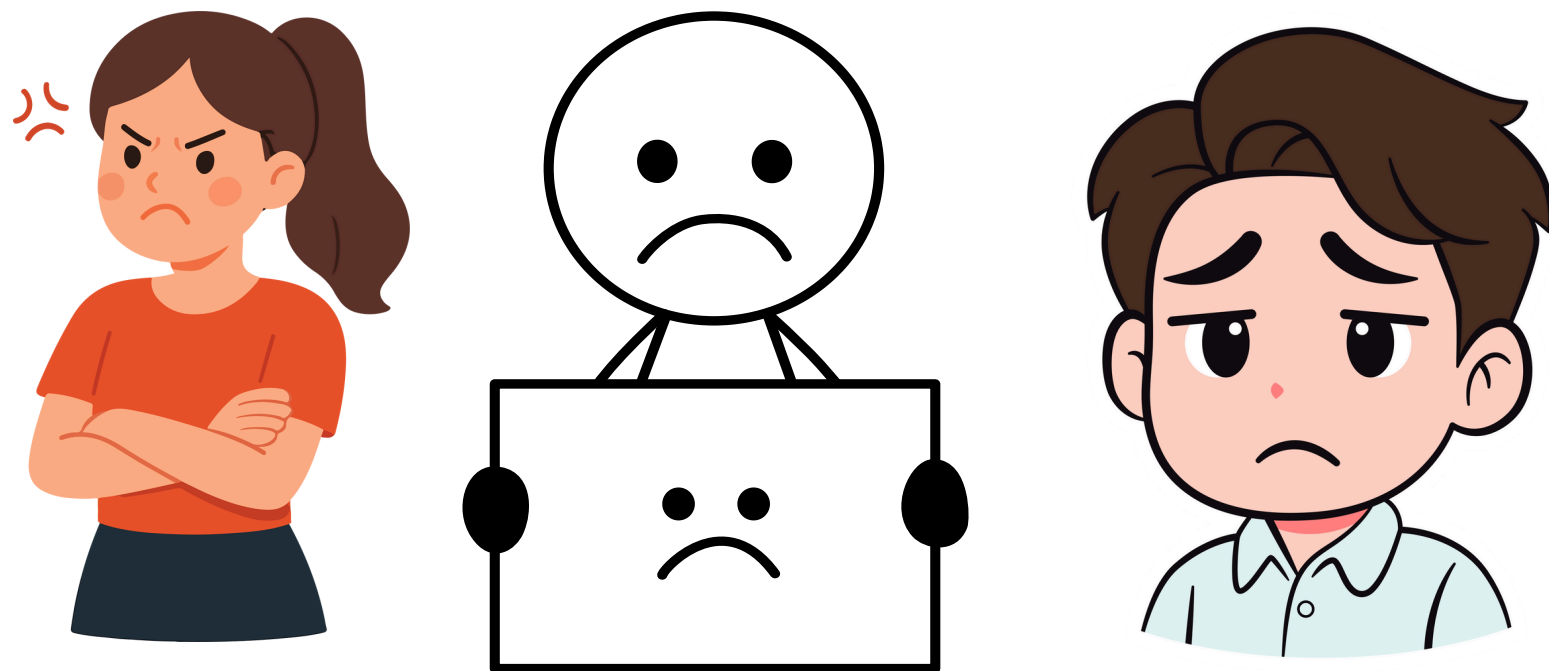
## BANU

### 5. **OFFENDED** (/ə'fɛn.dɪd/ — uh-FEN-did)

... “she was offended that he hadn’t even checked to see if she was standing close enough to hear.” ( chp 7)

(adjective)--feeling of being hurt, upset, or insulted by something someone said or did. “My friend was offended when I forgot her birthday, even though it was a genuine mistake.”

(verb)--the action of hurting or insulting someones feeling. “I didn’t mean to offend you, but I can see that you’re offended.”



### 6. **ACQUAINTANCE**

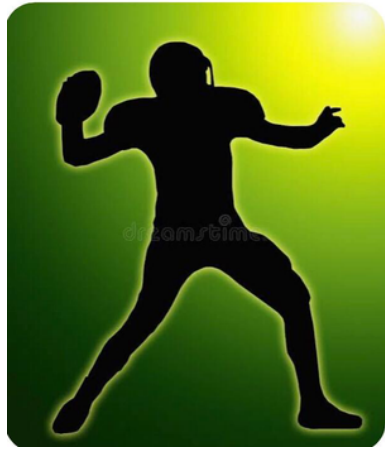
...“She made no friends of her own, just the odd acquaintance, usually the wife of one of Kent’s business associates.” (chp7)

(noun)--A person you know slightly but who is not a close friend; someone you've met but don't know well. “I ran into an acquaintance from my old gym at the grocery store, and surprisingly, we had a warm, friendly conversation.”



# VOCABULARY BUILDER

MONICA



**aiming** - directing something to an specific target.  
“We were not aiming at you”.



**fumbles** - to touch, move, or hold something in an awkward or unsteady way.  
“Britt Marie fumbles after her list in the handbag”



**nag bag**- An annoying person that complains about everything or who has a "bag" full of endless complaints and reminders.  
“She found she have neighbors who call her nag bag”

# SOUND SPOTTER

IRA

## 1. threshold [θrɛʃhoʊld] THRESH-huhld

Britt-Marrie stumbles on the threshold (p.38)

bottom part of a doorway or entrance

## 2. furious [fjʊəriəs] FYOOR-ee-uhs

... but she knows that her mother, silently furious, never forgave them for saving the wrong daughter (p.56)

extremely angry

He was furious when he found out the truth.

## 3. devote [dɪ'vəʊt] di-VOHT

Because they saved the life of person who from that day devoted herself to just walking around being afraid of dying and being left there to stink (p.56)

give all or most time or resources, sometimes in a formal way

She devoted her life to helping others.

# SOUND SPOTTER

IRA

## 4. nonchalantly [nɑːnʃələntli] NON-shuh-luhnt-lee

“No bother for me,” says Somebody and nonchalantly rolls her wheelchair back and forth (p.42)  
in an indifferent and casual manner      He shrugged nonchalantly and walked away.

## 5. exaggerate [ɛgˈzædʒəˌreɪt] eg-ZAj-uh-rayt

“Baking soda for the lady!” says Somebody with an exaggerated theatrical bow at Britt-Marie (p.63)  
make something seem bigger or more important than it is  
Don’t exaggerate the problem to scare people.

# SOUND SPOTTER

CRISTY

## **Briskly (/ˈbrɪskli/ — BRISK-lee)**

Book: (page 36 Kindle) “Then she briskly turns around.”

Meaning: Energetic way

Me: I told my son briskly “Clean your room”

## **Hesitantly (/ˈhezɪtəntli/ — HEZ-ih-tuhnt-lee)**

Book: (page 37 kindle) “She stands hesitantly in front of the coffee machine.”

Meaning: Do somethin slow

Me: I speak hesitantly in English.

## **Acquaintance (/əˈkweɪntəns/ — uh-KWAYN-tuhns)**

Book: (page 41 Kindle) “She made no friends of her own, just the odd acquaintance.”

Meaning: a person one knows slightly, but who is not a close friend

Me: I have many acquaintance at school because I have 3 childrens.

## **Readily (/ˈrɛdəli/ — RED-uh-lee)**

Book: (page 42 Kindle) “But it will break more readily if it has burst a few times before.”

Meaning: Easily, Quickly

Me: My kids readily clean their rooms.

## **Titter (/ˈtɪtə/ — TIT-er)**

Book: (page 46 Kindle) “Somebody’s laughter slowly turns unto a titter”

Meaning: laugh in a light, nervousness, or embarrassment.

Me: Yesterday a friend made a mistake in the chorus, and we titter.

## **conceivable**

Meaning: Capable of being imagined or grasped mentally.

Me: “It’s conceivable that Cristy will come visit us in Texas .”

# CHARACTER ANALYZER

FLAVIA

## **Trait : INSECURITY**

### **What it means:**

Insecure people have difficulty making decisions and choices. They worry about making mistakes, bothering others, and being judged by others.

### **Evidence:**

- “She hasn’t made coffee in many years, because Kent makes very good coffee, and Britt Marie always finds it’s best to wait for him.” p-43
- “...not because she dislikes wine, but because if you say you like wine, people may come to the conclusion that you are an alcoholic.” p-51
- “...she always put her belt on, because she wanted her mother to notice.” p-55
- “Britt Marie had taken all morning to make the decision that she was going to buy and assemble a stool, so this...” p-57

Britt-Marie has followed the rules since she was a child. She thought in this way she could be noticed by her mother, and she still keeps doing it to have approval from others.

I think her obsession with organization, cleanliness and strict routines and rules are ways she tries to feel safe.

# CHARACTER ANALYZER

## ESMERALDA

Britt Marie is the main protagonist of the story; At the beginning of the story, we can only see a woman who is so rigid, obsessed with cleanliness, a person that doesn't like to be judged. She loves to control everything around her and strives for perfection because she worries about being judged by others. She is a difficult person to understand, due to several deep-rooted reasons related to her past experiences and her need to feel safe and secure in an unpredictable world.

Throughout the story, we discover that Brit-Marie has faced emotional challenges, in her childhood, and before that in her marriage. Her relationship with Kent was cold and unfulfilling, leaving her with a sense of abandonment and emotional neglect.

All the traumas she experienced in her childhood, from her sister's accident to problems in her marriage, have made her act this way. She develops an obsessive need to control her surroundings.

She believes that by adhering to strict rules and keeping everything neat, she can earn validation from others. This desire for approval stems from a long history of not feeling “good enough” or valued, which leads her to hold everything around her to a higher standard.

# WORD ARTIST

.....  
M A R I A

Ingrid and I are sitting next to each other in our station wagon. The car is white with brown wood trim on the outside and with grey fabric upholstery on the inside. Dad is driving. Mom is next to him, holding his hand. We are heading home from a tremendous party. We laugh as we talk about the friends and family we saw and all the delicious food we ate. There was bread and smoked brisket that tasted like hickory. The meat was so soft that it fell apart in our mouths. We drank tart lemonade and sweet tea. But my favorite was the dessert—two kinds of pie: apple and pecan.

I stare at Ingrid and see that she has not buckled her seat belt. She never does, even when mom tells her to. I then glance behind me, out the back window. I see a huge green truck. It is coming fast. Too fast! I try to scream, but no noise comes out.

Suddenly, I hear the sound of thunder and breaking glass. I see a red puddle beneath Ingrid's head, which is resting on my lap. I scream when I realize that half of her beautiful face is missing, and then everything goes black.

When I wake up, I see brilliant flashing red and yellow lights, and I hear the cry of ambulance sirens. Ingrid is lying on the ground. Her body is covered with a blanket, but I can still see part of her head, the part that is not missing. Even though her face is swollen and blue, she looks peaceful.

I know my life will never be the same again. In the depth of my heart, I feel guilty because it was my responsibility to take care of my sister. I should have screamed. I should have made her put her seat belt on.

# WORD ARTIST

.....  
YULIANNA

I'm in the kitchen, the only place where the light still works. The fluorescent light is cold and bright, making me feel small and lonely. Everything around me feels empty and temporary. Soccer balls are everywhere, on the walls and in the pictures, and every time I see one, I scrub it with a sponge, annoyed and tense, until the banging on the walls finally stops and the kids go home. When the noise dies down, the silence becomes heavy and uncomfortable. The refrigerator is almost empty, except for a bag of coffee. I wish I'd brought vanilla extract to mix with baking soda and make the refrigerator smell fresh. I hear the quiet whir and angry blink of the coffee maker. It looks modern and unfamiliar, which unnerves me. When it tips over and spills coffee all over my jacket, I feel awkward and upset. I feel out of place here; I hate change, and I don't want to change. I take all my anger out on the coffee maker, hitting it with the mop over and over again. After, I turn off the light so no one will think I'm still there, sitting in the dark with a towel in my hands, I won't cry, since I just cleaned up, and tears usually leave stains.

# CONNECTION MAKER

.....  
LISA

**Scene: “She stayed at home to take care of his children, without even dreaming of having any of her own.”  
(page 47)**

When I lived in my country, I had my own career that made me feel proud. I studied a lot, earned my degrees, and got promotions at work. I was a part of a leadership team, attending business meetings with coworkers and the board, giving so many strategic presentations, and speaking “in public” to all employees. My team used to say that I was the smartest manager that they ever had. I had my own money and lived an independent life. I felt confident, and I could solve problems by myself.

Then my husband was transferred to the USA. At first, I felt excited about that and hopeful. I had so many dreams, like living in a different country, learning another language, and meeting new people. I thought maybe in one year I could find a job. But when I arrived here, I realized how difficult it was. I felt scared of the language and the people. I felt completely frozen.

Like Britt Marie I decided to stay at home to care for my family, without even dreaming of having any of my own career goals.

After a few months, I tried to see the positive side. What I did I learn from it? I learned how to be a resilient person. I'm also grateful to stay at home, to take care of my family, my home, and my son as he grows up.

# CONNECTION MAKER

.....  
LILY S.

Britt Marie reminds me of my Aunt Lolita. She lived in a small town in the jungle in Peru. When she was in school, her mother and the older sister used to say she wasn't cut out for college because she had little aptitude. She finished her studies in school and left her town for the capital, Lima to live with her sister. Since she already believed she wouldn't be able to get a degree, she found herself relegated to taking care of her older sister's children and the house. Living in her sister's shadow, relegated to being a maid, she forgot to pursue her own dreams.