

Synopsis of The Mason Jar

Prologue

The story opens with Savannah Hadley reading *Pride and Prejudice* by a fire in The Dove pub, overlooking the Thames River in London. Originally from Colorado, Savannah is a single, successful businesswoman, working as a leading art curator at Sotheby's. During her lunch break on a Friday, she receives a phone call from New York City.

Savannah's best friend and old college roommate, Joanna, informs her that she has just read about Savannah in a book. Savannah assumes it is related to her work with Sotheby's, but Joanna clarifies, "No. It's a novel about you. It's by Clayton Fincannon" (Savannah's former college boyfriend). Joanna assures Savannah not to be alarmed; that Clayton's book is the most beautiful story she's ever read. One week later, Clayton's book is in Savannah's hand, which she reads on her couch in her flat.

Part 1

The book is written in first person, and the scene opens with Clayton (nick-named "Finn") and his grandfather, sitting in rocking chairs on the grandfather's front porch on their family's farm in Tennessee. Finn (the narrator) explains the role of the Mason jar on his grandfather's desk: a jar where he and his grandfather leave letters for each other.

Finn has just finished a five-year commitment working with street orphans in Kenya. He's home now and they are discussing Savannah. Finn's grandfather is a retired literature professor from Vanderbilt. During their conversation about Savannah, Finn's mind is taken back to his college years at Pepperdine, and the love story begins.

Finn and Savannah meet on a shuttle in January, on Pepperdine University's campus in Southern California. Their mutual love for world travel, education, and working with orphans, deepens their attraction. Savannah shares her dreams of attending Sotheby's in London, and Finn shares his dreams of pursuing his PhD at Vanderbilt.

As their relationship develops, Savannah must return home for her birthday party in Colorado, and she invites Finn to join her. They fly to Colorado for one evening only, where they meet Savannah's parents. During dinner, Savannah receives a phone call from her parent's home phone. She excuses herself to take the call, and afterward, acts differently toward Finn.

After their return to Pepperdine, Savannah wavers between affection for Finn and pulling away from him emotionally. Three days later, during a picnic, Savannah explains to Finn that she is leaving him to reunite with an abusive ex-boyfriend.

Finn returns to the family farm that following weekend to clear his mind, where he and his grandfather have a lengthy conversation concerning sacrificial love. As Finn leaves for California to participate in his graduation, Finn's grandfather leaves a letter for Finn in the Mason jar to comfort Finn.

(It is after this letter that award-winning author, Diana Bold, reported that she sat the manuscript down and cried. She then remained awake until dawn to finish it.)

One excerpt from the letter reads as follows:

We can love even when we know that love will never be returned. We are allowed to love someone even if that person is gone. What we miss is their presence, but that doesn't mean we must stop loving them. Loving is not the same as holding on, because "holding on" implies that

we hope the loved one will come to their senses and return. Love is an action based on free choice despite the consequences. Love only becomes painful when it demands something in return. And though it may take time, you will find joy in loving those who might not even be aware of your love.

Part 2

Everywhere Finn travels in Malibu, memorable scenes of Savannah linger. Feeling lost, with no future plans, and with graduation approaching, Finn grows depressed and fatigued. Finn's Cross Cultural Studies professor, Dr. Daniels, informs Finn that disaster has struck in Kenya. Joseph Koney and his rebels have slaughtered hundreds of people, and orphans are living on the streets. All the humanitarian organizations are busy in other areas, and missionaries have called Dr. Daniels, asking if he knows anyone who can help.

Given Finn's former experiences with orphans, Dr. Daniels asks Finn to go. Against Finn's wishes, he feels compelled to take the mission, and does so with the understanding that it will only be for a summer. However, Finn stays five years. Through these five years, Finn struggles to let go of his love for Savannah.

During his last day in Nairobi, government agents visit Finn and request his help to lead the U.N. into Congo to establish relationships with the villagers. They must find Joseph Koney's hideout, and send in a mercenary team to assassinate him. Africans suspects other Africans as being spies, thus the embassy considers Finn as a choice leader. After Finn refuses, a sergeant informs Finn that Koney enters northern Uganda every Christmas and cuts off arms, ankles, and noses, to instill fear and respect, and remind people that he's still in power. Finn still refuses, and returns home as planned.

As Finn tries to settle in Tennessee, a home that once offered security, it now seems like a foreign land: pointless, dry, boring, and empty. It is not the same home, state, or country. Unable to shake away his experiences in Africa, coupled with his memories of Savannah, Finn writes a heart's cry on paper, and leaves it in the Mason jar on his grandfather's desk. Later, the grandfather reads it and invites Finn to visit with him for a talk on his porch.

The grandfather encourages Finn to write Savannah, which Finn does, sending the letter to Colorado. While awaiting Savannah's response, and to relieve his depression, Finn visits his former college roommates in California. While away, his grandfather calls Finn to inform him that a letter from Savannah has arrived, and asks Finn if he wants it to be read to him over the phone. Finn replies no, but encourages the grandfather to read it, and that they can discuss it upon Finn's return.

When Finn returns from California, his grandfather is in the hospital, having suffered from a stroke. Finn and his grandfather have some loving, parting words, before the grandfather passes away. Some of those words include the grandfather telling Finn that if he continues pouring himself out in love for others, he will find the healing he seeks. This foreshadows Savannah's response, one that will not bring reconciliation. Finn returns to an empty house, and finds Savannah's letter (opened) on his grandfather's desk. Savannah writes that she has been over Finn for many years, and rarely thinks on their time together.

While cleaning out his grandfather's study, Finn finds the Mason jar shattered on the floor opposite his grandfather's desk, which symbolizes the book's theme of Brokenness.

The following day, Finn receives a phone call from Vanderbilt, and they offer him his dream: A full scholarship in pursuit of his Ph.D., as well as a position as a professor. As *The Mason Jar* closes, unable to forget the embassy's cry for help, Finn turns down the offer from Vanderbilt and returns to Africa, indefinitely.

Epilogue

Savannah closes Finn's book, and calls her dad in Colorado for advice on whether or not to return to Pepperdine for her reunion, since Finn will be there. Finn is unaware she has read his book, and that she will be attending the reunion. Finn's book does not revive Savannah's feelings for him, but she realizes how valuable an open, communicative friendship between them could bring to their lives. Touched by Finn's love for his daughter, Savannah's dad encourages her to seek a new relationship with Finn as a sister and friend.

At the college reunion weeks later, Savannah comes face to face with Finn, and they have a conversation. This conversation, filled with themes of loyalty and forgiveness, concludes the book.

(The conversation cannot be included here.)