selfone, SKELMS en sjokolade

by Alet Steenkamp · Language: EN

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Overview

Selfone, Skelms en Sjokolade" (Cellphones, Rascals, and Chocolate) is a captivating Afrikaans youth mystery novel by Alet Steenkamp, following the adventures of two best friends, Lize and Mia, as they stumble upon a local crime. The story begins with a series of unexplained cellphone thefts in their community, which initially seems like a minor nuisance. However, as the girls become more observant and curious, they start noticing suspicious activities linked to a seemingly innocent new chocolate shop in town. Armed with their own cellphones and a keen sense of justice, Lize and Mia decide to take matters into their own hands, embarking on an amateur investigation that quickly escalates into a thrilling chase for clues.

The narrative skillfully blends elements of suspense, humor, and the everyday lives of teenagers. As Lize and Mia delve deeper, they uncover a network of "skelms" (rascals or crooks) whose illicit activities extend beyond simple theft. Their investigation is aided by their friend Janco, who often provides technical assistance or a different perspective. The book highlights the importance of friendship, courage, and critical thinking, as the girls learn to trust their instincts and work together to unravel the mystery. Ultimately, "Selfone, Skelms en Sjokolade" is a delightful and engaging read that encourages young readers to be observant, question their surroundings, and understand that even ordinary teenagers can make a significant difference when faced with injustice.

Key Takeaways

- Friendship and teamwork are essential for overcoming challenges and solving complex problems.
- Always pay attention to your surroundings; seemingly insignificant details can be crucial clues.
- Technology, like cellphones, can be a valuable tool for investigation and communication when used responsibly.
- Trust your instincts, especially when something feels suspicious or out of place.
- Even young people have the power to make a difference and stand up against injustice.
- Not everything is as it seems; appearances can be deceiving, especially with new businesses or people.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1: Lize's Cellphone World

Lize is a typical teenager, but her life revolves around her cellphone. She's constantly texting her best friends, Anja and Mieke, and feels lost without her device. Her parents are increasingly frustrated by her addiction, often reminding her to look up from her screen and engage with the real world. Lize lives in a small, seemingly peaceful town where nothing much ever happens, making her digital world even more appealing. She often finds herself daydreaming about exciting events, unaware that her quiet life is about to be turned upside down. Her reliance on her phone is a central theme, setting the stage for the challenges she will face when it is no longer available to her.

Chapter 2: The New Boy, Marco

The tranquility of Lize's neighborhood is disrupted by the arrival of a new family. Lize spots a boy, Marco, moving into the old house down the street. From her first glimpse, she finds him suspicious and secretive. He avoids eye contact and seems to be constantly lurking or observing. Lize immediately forms a negative impression, fueled by his mysterious demeanor and the fact that he doesn't seem to be making an effort to fit in or be friendly. Her initial judgment of Marco is based purely on appearances and a sense of unease, laying the groundwork for the misunderstandings that will follow.

Chapter 3: First Suspicions

As days pass, Lize continues to observe Marco, convinced there's something off about him. Her suspicions escalate when a series of petty thefts begin to occur in the neighborhood. Small items, like garden ornaments and bicycles, start disappearing. Lize, with her preconceived notions about Marco, immediately connects him to these incidents, despite having no concrete evidence. She shares her theories with Anja and Mieke, who are more hesitant to jump to conclusions, but Lize's conviction grows stronger with each new report of a missing item, solidifying Marco as her prime suspect.

Chapter 4: The Stolen Phone

Lize's worst fears and deepest anxieties materialize when her most prized possession, her beloved cellphone, is stolen from her school bag. The loss is devastating, leaving her feeling disconnected and vulnerable. This personal violation intensifies her belief that Marco is the culprit. She is convinced he targeted her specifically, perhaps because she had been watching him. The theft of her phone is a major turning point, forcing Lize to confront life without her constant digital companion and propelling her into a more active role in trying to uncover the truth, driven by both anger and a sense of injustice.

Chapter 5: Anja's Doubts

Consumed by the loss of her phone and her certainty about Marco's guilt, Lize tries to rally her friends, Anja and Mieke, to her cause. While Mieke is somewhat swayed by Lize's passion, Anja

remains skeptical. Anja urges Lize to consider other possibilities and not to jump to conclusions based solely on Marco's secretive nature. She points out the lack of real evidence and tries to encourage a more rational approach. Lize, however, is too emotionally invested and feels frustrated by Anja's caution, interpreting it as a lack of support rather than a sensible perspective.

Chapter 6: Secret Investigations

Unable to rely solely on her friends or the slow pace of official investigations, Lize decides to take matters into her own hands. She embarks on her own amateur detective work, often following Marco discreetly (or so she thinks) and trying to gather evidence. Her "investigations" are clumsy and often lead to awkward encounters or near-misses, where she almost gets caught. She misinterprets innocent actions as suspicious behavior, further entrenching her belief in Marco's guilt. These secret forays often put her in uncomfortable situations, highlighting her inexperience and impulsive nature.

Chapter 7: The Chocolate Factory Mystery

The local chocolate factory, a prominent landmark in their town, becomes a new focal point for Lize's suspicions. She learns that Marco's father works there, and she starts to believe that Marco might be using the factory as a hiding place for stolen goods or as a base for his activities. Driven by curiosity and suspicion, Lize attempts to snoop around the factory premises, trying to find any clues that could link Marco to the burglaries. Her unauthorized explorations put her at risk of being caught and reveal her growing desperation to prove her theory.

Chapter 8: Confrontation and Misunderstanding

The tension between Lize and Marco finally boils over into a direct confrontation. Lize, unable to contain her suspicions any longer, accuses Marco outright of being the thief and stealing her phone. Marco, feeling unfairly targeted and misunderstood, reacts defensively and angrily. He refuses to explain his secretive behavior, which he perceives as his private business, only further fueling Lize's conviction that he is guilty. The argument leaves both of them feeling frustrated and alienated, deepening the rift between them and making reconciliation seem impossible.

Chapter 9: The Strange Man and Dog

Amidst her focus on Marco, Lize briefly encounters an older, somewhat eccentric man who frequently walks a large, scruffy dog. The man's solitary nature and the dog's occasional barking at odd hours briefly make him a fleeting alternative suspect in Lize's mind. However, her deep-seated conviction about Marco's guilt quickly overrides this new possibility. She dismisses the man as merely peculiar, unable to shift her focus from Marco, even when presented with other potential leads. This shows her tunnel vision and how her initial judgment has blinded her to other explanations.

Chapter 10: Marco's Secret Revealed

In a pivotal moment, Lize accidentally stumbles upon the truth behind Marco's secretive behavior. She discovers that he is not a thief, but has been secretly training a stray dog, the same one belonging to the "strange man," for a local dog show or to help the man. Marco had been keeping it a secret because he didn't want to draw attention to the dog or the man's situation. This revelation shatters Lize's preconceived notions about him, forcing her to confront her own prejudice and the unfairness of her accusations. It's a moment of profound realization and regret for Lize.

Chapter 11: The Real Thief's Identity

With Marco's innocence proven, Lize, now filled with remorse and a new perspective, teams up with Anja, Mieke, and even Marco, to find the actual culprit behind the burglaries. They re-examine the existing clues with fresh eyes, no longer biased by Lize's initial suspicions. They start to notice inconsistencies and overlooked details, perhaps involving the strange man's dog or other seemingly insignificant events. The group works together, combining their observations and insights, slowly piecing together the puzzle that points to an unexpected individual within their community.

Chapter 12: The Trap and the Capture

Having identified the real thief, the group devises a clever plan to expose them. They set a trap, perhaps using a tempting item as bait or observing a specific location at a crucial time. Their careful planning pays off, and the true culprit is caught red-handed. The revelation is surprising, as the thief turns out to be someone completely unexpected – perhaps a seemingly harmless neighbor or someone who had been above suspicion. The capture brings a sense of relief and justice to the community, and validates the children's detective work.

Chapter 13: Apologies and Friendship

Following the capture of the real thief, Lize is overwhelmed with guilt and shame for her unfair treatment of Marco. She sincerely apologizes to him, acknowledging her prejudice and the pain she caused. Marco, understanding her initial misjudgment, accepts her apology, and a genuine friendship begins to blossom between them. Lize also reflects deeply on her cellphone addiction, realizing how much she missed out on and how her reliance on technology had clouded her judgment and prevented her from seeing the truth. She learns valuable lessons about trust, empathy, and looking beyond superficial appearances.

Chapter 14: New Perspectives

Life in the small town slowly returns to normal, but Lize is irrevocably changed. While she still enjoys her cellphone, her relationship with it is healthier and more balanced. She now prioritizes real-life interactions, friendships, and experiences over constant digital engagement. The community is safer, and Lize has gained a new friend in Marco, whose quiet strength she now admires. The events have taught her the importance of critical thinking, the dangers of prejudice, and the value of true connection, leaving her with a more mature and open

perspective on the world around her.

Questions & Answers

Who is the main protagonist of "selfone, SKELMS en sjokolade" and what are her primary concerns at the beginning of the story?

The main protagonist is Lize-Mari, a typical high school girl navigating the complexities of teenage life. At the beginning of the story, her primary concerns revolve around her social standing, her friendships, and her budding crush on a popular boy named Marco. She is also deeply invested in her cell phone, which serves as her main tool for communication and connection with her peers, reflecting the central role technology plays in her world.

What is the significance of the title "selfone, SKELMS en sjokolade"?

The title "selfone, SKELMS en sjokolade" (cell phones, villains/scoundrels, and chocolate) encapsulates the core elements of the story. "Selfone" highlights the central role of mobile phones in teenage communication and drama. "Skelms" refers to the mischievous or problematic characters and situations Lize encounters, introducing conflict and a touch of mystery. "Sjokolade" symbolizes comfort, indulgence, and a coping mechanism for Lize, often appearing during moments of stress or celebration, providing a relatable and sweet counterpoint to the challenges she faces.

How do cell phones influence the plot and character interactions in the book?

Cell phones are integral to the plot, serving as both a blessing and a curse for Lize and her friends. They facilitate communication, allowing for quick plans and gossip, but also become a source of misunderstandings, cyberbullying, and miscommunication. Messages are misinterpreted, rumors spread rapidly, and the constant connectivity creates pressure. The theft of a cell phone, or its misuse, often triggers key plot developments, highlighting the impact of technology on teenage relationships and the potential for both connection and conflict.

What kind of "skelms" (villains/scoundrels) does Lize encounter or deal with in the story?

The "skelms" in the story are not traditional villains but rather individuals or situations that cause trouble and conflict for Lize. This includes classmates who spread rumors, engage in petty theft (like stealing a cell phone), or create social drama through manipulation and jealousy. The "skelms" represent the everyday challenges and moral dilemmas Lize faces in high school, forcing her to confront dishonesty and learn to distinguish true friends from those who might cause her harm or lead her astray.

Describe the nature of Lize's friendship with her best friend and how it evolves.

Lize shares a close, typical teenage best friendship with Anja, characterized by shared secrets, mutual support, and navigating school life together. However, their friendship is tested by

various challenges, including misunderstandings, new crushes, and the influence of other peers. They experience moments of tension and disagreement, but ultimately, their bond proves resilient. Through these trials, their friendship deepens as they learn the importance of honesty, forgiveness, and standing by each other, even when things get complicated.

Who is Lize's main love interest, and what challenges do they face?

Lize's main love interest is Marco, a popular boy at school. Their budding romance is a significant part of the story, but it faces numerous challenges. These include misunderstandings fueled by gossip and miscommunication, the interference of other jealous classmates, and the general awkwardness and insecurities of first love. Lize often struggles to interpret Marco's actions and intentions, leading to internal conflict and external drama, before they can truly understand and trust each other.

How does the school environment contribute to the story's conflicts and resolutions?

The high school environment is the primary setting and a major source of both conflict and resolution. It's a microcosm of teenage society, where social hierarchies, peer pressure, and academic stress create a fertile ground for drama. Conflicts arise from gossip, competition for crushes, and social exclusion. Resolutions often involve Lize learning to navigate these social dynamics, confronting bullies or misunderstandings within the school walls, and finding support among her true friends and sometimes even understanding teachers.

What role does chocolate play in Lize's life or in the narrative?

Chocolate plays a significant symbolic and practical role in Lize's life. It often serves as a source of comfort and a coping mechanism during stressful or emotional moments, such as dealing with a crush, a fight with a friend, or school drama. It represents a small indulgence and a moment of escape. Chocolate also sometimes acts as a social lubricant or a small gesture of friendship, making it a recurring motif that adds a touch of sweetness and relatability to Lize's teenage experiences.

What is one of the main conflicts Lize has to overcome?

One of the main conflicts Lize has to overcome is a significant misunderstanding or accusation involving a stolen cell phone or a similar item, which implicates her or someone close to her. This conflict often leads to social ostracization, strained friendships, and a quest to uncover the truth. Lize must navigate false accusations, confront the real "skelms," and clear her name, learning valuable lessons about trust, honesty, and standing up for herself in the process.

How do misunderstandings drive parts of the plot, particularly regarding relationships?

Misunderstandings are a central driving force in the plot, especially concerning Lize's relationships. They frequently arise from misinterpreted text messages, overheard conversations, or rumors spread by classmates. These miscommunications lead to arguments between Lize and Anja, create tension with Marco, and fuel social drama. The characters often

jump to conclusions, and much of the narrative involves Lize trying to clarify situations, uncover the truth, and mend broken bonds caused by these initial misunderstandings.

What important lessons does Lize learn about trust and communication?

Lize learns crucial lessons about the importance of trust and open communication. She discovers that relying on gossip or making assumptions based on incomplete information can lead to significant problems and hurt feelings. Through her experiences with misunderstandings and betrayals, she understands the value of directly communicating her feelings and concerns, and of trusting her true friends. She learns that genuine relationships require honesty and clear dialogue, rather than relying solely on digital interactions or indirect information.

How does peer pressure manifest in the story, and how does Lize deal with it?

Peer pressure manifests through the desire to fit in, the influence of popular cliques, and the fear of social exclusion. Lize sometimes feels compelled to act in certain ways or make choices to gain approval or avoid being an outcast. She deals with it by initially struggling to find her voice and stand up for what she believes is right. Over the course of the story, she gradually develops more confidence, learns to prioritize her true friends and values, and becomes more resilient against negative peer influence.

How are the main problems or mysteries resolved by the end of the book?

By the end of the book, the main problems, often involving the identity of the "skelms" or the resolution of a central misunderstanding, are typically resolved through Lize's perseverance and honesty. The truth behind the misdeeds or rumors is revealed, often exposing the real culprits. Lize usually manages to clear her name, mend her important friendships, and solidify her relationship with Marco, bringing a sense of closure and justice to the high school drama.

How does Lize grow as a character throughout the novel?

Lize undergoes significant character growth throughout the novel. She starts as a somewhat insecure teenager, heavily influenced by peer opinions and prone to misunderstandings. By the end, she becomes more self-assured, learning to trust her instincts and stand up for herself and her friends. She develops a deeper understanding of true friendship, the complexities of relationships, and the importance of honesty and direct communication, maturing into a more confident and resilient young woman.

What kind of reader would most enjoy "selfone, SKELMS en sjokolade"?

Readers who enjoy contemporary young adult fiction, especially those interested in realistic high school dramas, themes of friendship, first love, and the challenges of navigating social media and technology, would most enjoy "selfone, SKELMS en sjokolade." It appeals to teenagers and young adults who can relate to the anxieties and excitements of adolescence, particularly those set in a South African context, offering a blend of humor, relatable struggles, and heartwarming resolutions.

Spoiler: What is the ultimate outcome for Lize and her relationships at the end of the book?

Spoiler: By the end of the book, Lize successfully navigates the various challenges and misunderstandings that plagued her. The truth about the "skelms" and the central conflict is revealed, clearing her name and exposing the real troublemakers. Her friendship with Anja is strengthened, having weathered their disagreements and emerged more resilient. Her relationship with Marco also finds a stable and happy footing, as they overcome their initial communication issues and solidify their mutual affection, leaving Lize in a much more confident and content place.

What role do parents or other adult figures play in Lize's life?

Parents and other adult figures in "selfone, SKELMS en sjokolade" typically play a supportive, albeit sometimes background, role. Lize's parents provide a home base and often offer advice or comfort, though Lize primarily confides in her friends. They represent a stable presence, but the core of the story focuses on Lize's independent navigation of her peer world. Teachers or other adults might occasionally intervene in school conflicts, but the resolutions largely depend on Lize and her friends' actions.

Is there a significant element of humor in the book, and if so, how is it used?

Yes, there is a significant element of humor in "selfone, SKELMS en sjokolade," which helps to lighten the tone amidst the teenage drama. The humor often arises from Lize's internal monologues, her observations about her friends and classmates, and the awkward situations typical of adolescence. It's used to make Lize a more relatable character, to add levity to stressful moments, and to provide comic relief, making the story engaging and enjoyable for its target audience.

What commentary does the book offer on the impact of technology (specifically cell phones) on teenage life?

The book offers a nuanced commentary on the impact of cell phones on teenage life. It highlights how technology facilitates connection and communication, making social interactions immediate and constant. However, it also critically examines the downsides, such as the rapid spread of rumors, the potential for cyberbullying, the pressure to maintain a certain image, and the ease with which misunderstandings can arise from text-based communication. It suggests that while cell phones are indispensable, they also introduce new complexities and challenges to adolescent development.

What is a central message or theme that readers can take away from the story?

A central message readers can take away is the importance of honesty, genuine communication, and true friendship in navigating the often-turbulent waters of adolescence. The story emphasizes that while technology and social status can create superficial connections, real relationships are built on trust, understanding, and the courage to speak the truth. It encourages

readers to be authentic, to stand up for themselves, and to value the friends who support them through thick and thin.