Pachinko

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF MIN JIN LEE

Min Jin Lee was born in Seoul to a father who was a Korean War refugee and college-educated businessman and a mother who was the daughter of a well-known minister. After immigrating to the United States at age 7, she grew up in Elmhurst, Queens. Lee's parents ran a wholesale jewelry shop in Manhattan's Koreatown, where she and her sisters sometimes helped out. Lee studied history at Yale, followed by law at Georgetown. After practicing law in New York for two years, she began studying and practicing writing while raising her son. She wrote many short stories and novel drafts about the Korean diaspora as early as 1996, but her first novel, *Free Food for Millionaires*, was published in 2007. That same year, her family relocated to Tokyo, allowing her to collect oral histories from dozens of Koreans living in Japan, and she finished writing the draft that would be published as *Pachinko*. *Pachinko* has received many accolades, including being a finalist for the National Book Award for Fiction. Lee is currently working on her third diaspora novel, *American Hagwon*, and will be a writer-in-residence at Amherst College from 2019-2022.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Korea was under Japanese rule from annexation in 1910 until the capturing of the Korean peninsula by American and Soviet forces in 1945. On March 1, 1919, a demonstration of Korean resistance took place. The demonstration was partly inspired by U.S. President Woodrow Wilson's speech outlining Fourteen Points of national self-determination earlier that year. At the demonstration, 33 activists gathered at a restaurant in Seoul and read aloud a declaration of Korean independence. Japanese military support was called in to suppress peaceful public protests throughout the day; several thousand demonstrators were killed, and many more were injured and arrested. After the Japanese surrender at the end of World War II, Korea was divided into the North (Soviet-backed) and the South (U.S.-backed). While many Koreans repatriated, those who remained in Japan were of ambiguous nationality and faced social and political discrimination since they were not regarded as Japanese citizens, and the united Korea they'd known no longer existed. Today, descendants of Koreans who immigrated to Japan before 1945 constitute the second largest ethnic minority group in Japan.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Like *Pachinko*'s focus on the challenges faced by second- and third-generation immigrants, Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* (2003) tells the story of a second-generation immigrant's struggle to understand his Bengali-American identity. Similarly, Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* (1989) also describes the efforts of subsequent generations to understand the choices made by immigrant parents. Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* (2016) explores the struggles of multiple generations of a family to survive in contexts of colonialism and oppression, and, like *Pachinko*, grapples with the themes of identity, gender, and family life. John Steinbeck's *East of Eden* (1952), another multigenerational family epic, highlights relationships between spouses, parents and children, and siblings as they deal with questions surrounding wealth and poverty, morality, and identity in California's Salinas Valley.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *Pachinko*
- **When Written:** 2007-2017
- **Where Written:** Tokyo and New York
- **When Published:** 2017
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary
- **Genre:** Historical fiction
- **Setting:** Yeongdo, Korea; Osaka, Japan; and Yokohama, Japan
- **Climax:** Noa confronts Sunja when he learns that Hansu is his father.
- **Antagonist:** Koh Hansu
- **Point of View:** Third-person omniscient

EXTRA CREDIT

An Old Style Modernized. Min Jin Lee chose the third-person omniscient narrator for *Pachinko* because of the prominence of this style in her beloved nineteenth-century novels (especially in authors like Bronte, Eliot, Trollope, and Dickens), and because she believes it best serves the kind of "community narrative" she writes—in which she reveals the thoughts and perspectives of both major and minor characters. She comments that it was important to her that the novel's narrator "be fair to each perspective because the Korean-Japanese are so seldom written about in English."

Oral History Fictionalized. While interviewing many Korean-Japanese in the process of researching *Pachinko*, Lee repeatedly heard stories of sacrificial first-generation matriarchs who often supported their families by selling homemade goods in open markets. Wanting to understand the

world of these women led Lee to create the character of Sunja.

PLOT SUMMARY

At the turn of the twentieth century, in the small Korean village of Yeongdo, an aging couple begins taking in lodgers for extra money. When Korea is annexed by Japan in 1910, much of the country becomes impoverished, but the couple still manages to establish a successful boardinghouse. Their son, Hoonie, who has a cleft palate and twisted foot, even makes a successful and happy marriage to a woman named Yangjin. However, Hoonie dies of tuberculosis when his beloved daughter, Sunja, is only 13.

When Sunja is about 17, she becomes pregnant—months earlier, she'd fallen in love with Hansu, a wealthy fish broker who'd begun speaking to her in the market. However, he refuses to marry her, explaining that he already has a wife and children in Japan. Hansu offers to support Sunja financially and be with her when he's in town on business, but Sunja refuses to be Hansu's mistress, even though as an unwed mother, she'll be disgraced in the eyes of society.

Meanwhile, a well-dressed, sickly young pastor, Baek Isak, arrives at the boardinghouse. Yangjin and Sunja recognize the signs of tuberculosis and nurse Isak back to health. When Isak is well, Yangjin confides in him about Sunja's vulnerable situation, and he decides to propose to Sunja—offering his name to her and her baby is the only thing he can do to help. Sunja agrees to marry him.

After they're married, Isak and Sunja move to Osaka, Japan, living with Isak's brother Yoseb and sister-in-law, Kyunghee. Soon, Sunja gives birth to a son, Noa. Despite poverty and systemic injustices against Koreans, the family manages to get by in Ikaino, Osaka's impoverished Korean neighborhood. About six years later, Sunja and Isak have another son, Mozasu. World War II is underway, and the Japanese government requires everyone, including Christians, to worship the Emperor in weekly Shinto ceremonies. During one of these ceremonies, Hu, the sexton in Isak's church, recites the Lord's Prayer as an act of resistance, leading to Isak's arrest as well. While Isak is imprisoned, Sunja and Kyunghee start a successful food cart in the Ikaino market. Soon, a restaurant manager named Kim Changho hires them to cook for him, relieving their financial burdens. Three years later, a starved, sick, and tortured Isak is finally released from prison in time to die at home.

Near the end of the war, Hansu reappears, explaining to Sunja that he owns Changho's restaurant, and he arranged for her to be hired after Isak was jailed; he'd tracked her down after she pawned the gold watch he'd given her when she was a girl. He warns her that Osaka will be bombed soon, and he arranges for Sunja and her whole family to flee to a farm in the countryside, where they will be safe and well-fed. He even tracks down Yangjin and reunites her with her with her daughter and grandsons. Later, he also rescues Yoseb after he is critically injured in the Nagasaki bombing.

After the family is resettled in Osaka, bookish Noa works hard to get accepted to Waseda University, and Mozasu takes a job at Goro's **pachinko** parlor in order to stay out of trouble. Mozasu quickly thrives and begins working his way up in the industry. After Noa finally gets accepted to Waseda, Sunja approaches Hansu for help in paying for his tuition. Hansu refuses to give Sunja a loan, explaining he's already paid all of Noa's fees and gotten him an apartment. Sunja feels stuck, hating to accept Hansu's continued interference, yet wanting the best opportunities for Noa.

One day, Noa's then-girlfriend, Akiko, points out his obvious resemblance to Hansu. Noa confronts Sunja and is distraught to confirm that Hansu is in fact his father, believing that after a lifetime of trying to rise above racist taunts, his tie to a yakuza irrevocably taints his blood. Noa drops out of Waseda and moves to Nagano to begin a new life in which he passes as Japanese. He runs the business office of a pachinko parlor, marries a woman named Risa, and has four children. For 16 years, he successfully lives as a middle-class Japanese family man, but after Hansu and Sunja track him down in 1978, he commits suicide after claiming that "yakuza blood" "is something that controls you."

Mozasu marries Yumi, a Korean seamstress, and they have a son, Solomon. After Yumi is killed by a drunk driver, Sunja leaves behind her confectionery stand, now a successful shop, and moves in with Mozasu to care for Solomon. Mozasu raises Solomon in Western schools and wants him to work for an American company someday. By the time Solomon is a teenager, Mozasu is dating Etsuko, a Japanese divorcee. Solomon is in love with Etsuko's troubled daughter, Hana, until he goes away to Columbia University, where he dates a Korean-American girl named Phoebe. Phoebe returns to Tokyo with Solomon when he lands a good job at a British investment bank. However, he's fired after Goro helps him track down an elderly Korean woman who's holding up a real estate transaction; his boss, Kazu, is spooked by Solomon's yakuza connections. Phoebe dumps Solomon after he declines to move back to the United States and marry her.

With the encouragement of a dying Hana, Solomon goes to work for his dad's pachinko business. Although Mozasu hadn't wanted Solomon to be part of the tainted gambling industry, Solomon trusts that his father is an honest man, and he now doubts he'll ever be able to rise above his outsider status in Japanese society. At the end of the novel, Sunja visits Isak's grave and learns from the groundskeeper, Uchida, that Noa had visited the grave until his death, confirming that despite his anger at Hansu and his grief over his "yakuza" blood, he still loved Sunja and honored her and Isak's sacrifices for him.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Sunja Baek – Sunja, the family matriarch, is the only surviving child of Hoonie and Yangjin. She is born in Yeongdo, Korea, around 1916. She is doted on by Hoonie, who dies when she is 13. As a girl, Sunja assists her mother in the boardinghouse. She is short, sturdy, and "more handsome than pretty." She is energetic and has an infectious laugh, but becomes quieter and more thoughtful after her father's death. While doing the marketing in Busan, Sunja draws the attentions of Koh Hansu. They begin meeting in secret, and within a few months, Sunja is pregnant. When Hansu offers to keep her as his mistress, however, Sunja refuses. Baek Isak proposes marriage to her instead, and they move to Osaka to live with Yoseb and Kyunghee. Sunja gives birth to Hansu's son, Noa, followed by Isak's son, Mozasu, six years later. To support the family while Isak is imprisoned, Sunja starts a kimchi cart in the open market. Unbeknownst to her, Hansu then arranges for Kim Changho to hire her and Kyunghee to cook in his restaurant. She reluctantly accepts Hansu's help in fleeing to the countryside during World War II and later in financing Noa's education at Waseda University. She always cares for Hansu, though she also resents his recurrent interference in her life, especially after Noa learns the truth about his parentage and becomes estranged from the rest of the family. Eventually, Sunja's confectionery stall in the market becomes a successful shop, but she spends her later years caring for her grandson Solomon when Mozasu becomes a single father, and then nursing Yangjin before she dies. All her life, Sunja regularly visits Isak's grave and is comforted to learn that Noa did the same until he died.

Koh Hansu – Hansu is a native of the Korean island of Jeju but lives in Osaka, Japan. A fish broker with ties to the yakuza, the organized crime syndicate in Japan, Hansu is rumored to be "unimaginably rich," and everyone calls him "Boss." Hansu, who is 34 at the beginning of the novel, notices 16-year-old Sunja in the Busan market and rescues her from a group of Japanese boys who are sexually harassing her. He begins meeting with her in secret whenever he's in Korea, and after he finds out she's pregnant with his son, Noa, he offers to set up her and Yangjin in a nice house so they no longer have to work. But when Sunja hears about Hansu's existing family in Osaka, she refuses his offer. However, Hansu remains an ongoing presence in Sunja's life, keeping tabs on her after she moves to Japan and quietly intervening when she needs help—such as arranging a job for her in Kim Changho's restaurant, enabling the family to flee to the countryside during the American bombing, and financing Noa's university education. Noa doesn't find out that Hansu is his father until he is an adult, at which point he cuts ties with his entire family and eventually kills himself, believing he can't be cleansed of his "yakuza" blood. Though Hansu has ongoing feelings for Sunja, he mostly uses people for his own purposes, and he also has a violent side, unfeelingly beating a mistress, Noriko, nearly to death at one point. He and Sunja last see one another at Yangjin's funeral; now a widower, he suggests marriage, which Sunja refuses.

Baek Isak – Baek Isak, born in Pyongyang and the son of the founders of a church in North Korea, arrives at Yangjin's boardinghouse in the winter of 1932, on his way to Osaka, Japan. He has always been sickly and is ill with tuberculosis when he arrives in Yeongdo; Yangjin and Sunja nurse him back to health. As a child, he hated being seen as an invalid and now wants to see the world. A humble, idealistic man strongly influenced by his activist brother Samoel, he also wants to make a difference somehow. When he learns of Sunja's pregnancy and vulnerable position, he proposes marriage, wanting to help her by giving his name to her and her child. They move to Osaka after Pastor Shin marries them and live with Isak's brother Yoseb and sister-in-law Kyunghee. Isak works as an associate pastor at the Hanguk Presbyterian Church but makes very little money. After sexton Hu is arrested for saying the Lord's Prayer during a mandatory Shinto ceremony, Isak is sent to jail, too, where he refuses to recant his faith and is brutally mistreated for three years. He is released just in time to briefly reunite with Sunja and his sons and then die at home. Subsequent generations of Korean Christians revere Isak as a martyr, and Sunja and his sons faithfully visit his grave for decades thereafter.

Noa Baek – Noa is the son of Sunja and Hansu and the adoptive son of Isak. He is born in Osaka and grows up trying to be the perfect Japanese student, downplaying his Korean identity as much as possible. Noa has Isak's mannerisms and scholarly abilities, but his face looks just like Hansu's. In contrast to his brother, Mozasu, who's always getting into trouble, Noa strives to blend into Japanese culture as much as possible, and he finally succeeds in getting accepted to Tokyo's prestigious Waseda University. Hansu insists on paying for his tuition, housing, and fees. When Noa's college girlfriend, Akiko, points out Hansu's resemblance to Noa, he learns the truth of Hansu's paternity from Sunja and is distraught that he has "yakuza" blood. He drops out of Waseda and begins a new life in Nagano, going by the Japanese name Nobuo Ban and passing as Japanese. Despite wanting to become a high school English teacher, he begins running the business office in the Cosmos **pachinko** parlor, where he eventually dates and marries Risa Iwamura and has four children. He continues living as a middle-class Japanese family man for 16 years, having no contact with his family, until Hansu tracks him down and Sunja visits him, after which Noa kills himself. Later, Sunja learns that even while he was estranged from the family, Noa continued visiting Isak's grave—he'd given Dickens volumes to Uchida, the cemetery groundskeeper there.

Mozasu Baek – Six years younger than Noa, Mozasu is Sunja's

and Isak's only surviving biological child. Unlike his scholarly, obedient brother, Mozasu beats up anyone who mocks his Korean ethnicity. When he's 16, Mozasu gets a job in Goro's **pachinko** parlor in order to stay off the streets, and he quickly distinguishes himself in Osaka's pachinko industry. He becomes manager of his own parlor by the time he's 20 and eventually becomes a millionaire parlor owner in Yokohama, though he strives to be honest and avoid darker yakuza ties. Mozasu meets Yumi at Totoyama's uniform shop, and they begin dating; he ultimately proposes to her in John Maryman's English class. They have one son, Solomon, whom Mozasu raises as a single father after Yumi dies. Mozasu sends Solomon to Western schools, dreaming that he'll be an "international man of the world" and work for an American company. When Solomon is a teenager, Mozasu begins dating Etsuko Nagatomi, though she never consents to marry him. At the end of the book, Solomon asks for a job in Mozasu's pachinko company.

Solomon Baek – Solomon is Mozasu's and Yumi's son. After Yumi's death, he is raised by Mozasu, his grandmother Sunja, and Mozasu's girlfriend Etsuko. Mozasu dreams of his son becoming a "man of the world" and sends him to English-speaking schools and Columbia University. Because Solomon has always socialized with Americans and other Westerners, he's sometimes chattier and more open in public than a typical Japanese or Korean person. When he's 14, he falls in love with Hana, Etsuko's daughter. At Columbia, he dates Phoebe, who's Korean-American, but they break up after Phoebe fails to adjust to life in Tokyo and Solomon won't propose marriage. Solomon gets a good job with the Tokyo branch of a British investment bank, but he's fired after Mozasu's and Goro's yakuza ties contaminate a critical real estate transaction. With the encouragement of Hana, whom he still loves, Solomon then goes to work for his father's **pachinko** company.

Yoseb Baek – Yoseb is Isak's older brother. He has been living in Osaka with his wife, Kyunghee, for the past ten years when Isak and Sunja arrive to live with them in 1933. Yoseb is good at languages and a gifted mechanic, but he's forced to work as a biscuit factory foreman for little money. Yoseb feels the weight of responsibility for supporting his own and Isak's families, as well as their parents back in Korea, and hates to accept help from anyone else, be it Kyunghee, Sunja, or Hansu, whose presence in Sunja's and Noa's lives he always mistrusts. During World War II, Yoseb goes to work in a Nagasaki factory while the rest of the family shelters in the countryside, and he receives devastating injuries in the Nagasaki bombing, preventing him from working to support the family ever again. He is angry and withdrawn after Isak's death and his wartime injuries, but he remains a beloved uncle to Isak and Mozasu, having never had children of his own.

Kyunghee Baek – Kyunghee is Yoseb's wife, classically beautiful and "tenderhearted to a fault." To her ongoing sorrow, she is unable to have children, but she pours her energy into making a comfortable home amidst the squalor of Ikaino, Osaka's Korean ghetto. When Isak brings his bride to Osaka, Kyunghee and Sunja quickly develop a lifelong sisterly bond. Though Yoseb has always forbidden his yangban wife from working outside the home, she cooks kimchi and other confections for a food cart which Sunja runs in the Ikaino market. Later, both women work as cooks in Kim Changho's restaurant. After the war, Kyunghee faithfully nurses the injured Yoseb and later cares for a dying Yangjin. Changho falls in love with Kyunghee, and Yoseb gives his permission for them to marry after he is dead, but Kyunghee refuses.

Hoonie – Hoonie is born in Yeongdo, a Korean fishing village, near the end of the nineteenth century. He is his parents' only surviving child. He has a cleft palate and a twisted foot; he also has a thoughtful temperament and is respected by the other villagers. Though he had not expected to marry, he is matched with Yangjin when he is 28. They have a happy marriage, and he dotes on his one surviving child, Sunja. Hoonie dies of tuberculosis when Sunja is 13.

Yangjin – Yangjin, Hoonie's wife and Sunja's mother, is born into a poor family in Yeongdo. She is matched with Hoonie as a teenager, and the two have a happy marriage, although she loses several children before giving birth to Sunja. Yangjin takes over the running of the boardinghouse after Hoonie dies. After Sunja becomes pregnant with Hansu's child, she allows Sunja to marry Isak and move to Osaka, where she'll have a chance for a better life. During World War II, Hansu finds Yangjin and reunites her with Sunja and her family in Japan. Yangjin helps with Sunja's confectionery business and lives with Kyunghee until she dies of cancer in 1979.

Kim Changho – Changho is an employee of Hansu, a pleasant-looking, polite young Korean man with poor eyesight. On Hansu's orders, he gives Sunja and Kyunghee a job cooking side dishes in the restaurant he manages. He lives with Sunja's family in the countryside during the final years of the war. Upon returning to Osaka, he has the "filthy" job of collecting extortion fees from merchants for the yakuza. Changho is in love with Kyunghee, and though Yoseb encourages them to marry after his death, Kyunghee declines his offer. Changho then goes to North Korea and, after a few letters, isn't heard from again.

Yumi – Yumi is a seamstress who works in Totoyama's uniform shop. She had a difficult childhood as the daughter of an alcoholic prostitute and a pimp. She and Mozasu begin dating when Mozasu comes for a fitting in the shop. Yumi is an avid student of English in John Maryman's class, and her biggest dream is to start a new life in America someday. After she and Mozasu marry, Yumi suffers two miscarriages and, accustomed to hard work, struggles to remain on bed rest during her third pregnancy. She gives birth to Solomon. When Solomon is three and a half, Yumi is killed by a drunk driver, pushing Solomon to safety at the last moment.

Etsuko Nagatomi – Etsuko is Mozasu's girlfriend after Yumi's

death, when Solomon is a teenager. Etsuko, a native of Hokkaido, is divorced and owns a restaurant in Yokohama. Before meeting Mozasu, Etsuko engaged in a series of affairs and fears that her three children, especially Hana, will never escape the shame she's brought on them. At the same time, she repeatedly turns down marriage proposals from Mozasu because she doesn't want to further shame her family with ties to Korean **pachinko**. Nevertheless, Solomon loves her as a maternal figure, and she stays faithful to Mozasu. Hana, who struggles with drinking and engages in degrading sex work, has a stormy relationship with Etsuko and runs away for several years, but Etsuko hires an investigator to track her down, and they are reconciled before Hana dies of AIDS.

Haruki Totoyama – Haruki joins Mozasu's class at school at age 11, and he's ostracized because of his home life—a disabled brother and an abandoned single mother—and the inaccurate rumor that he's a burakumin. Mozasu is drawn to his fellow outcast, and they become best friends. Haruki is romantically attracted to Mozasu and other men, but he never reveals this, though his wife, Ayame, once sees him having sex with another man in a park. Haruki and Ayame take in Haruki's brother, Daisuke, after his mother's death. Haruki studies at the police academy and becomes a highly ranked detective in Yokohama. He has a lifelong bond with Mozasu's son, Solomon.

Goro – Goro is a **pachinko** parlor owner in Osaka who gives 16-year-old Mozasu a job to keep him off the streets. He's a "fat and glamorous Korean" who loves beautiful women. He can also be generous, especially to poor and elderly Koreans, such as when he patronizes the struggling Totoyama's uniform shop and lifts her family out of poverty. He makes Mozasu manager of his seventh parlor when Mozasu is only 20. He remains lifelong friends with Mozasu and Haruki, but his yakuza ties contaminate Solomon's real estate deal at work, ultimately costing Solomon his job.

Totoyama – Totoyama is Haruki's and Daisuke's mother. She was abandoned by the boys' father after Daisuke was born, and her family is inaccurately rumored to be burakumin. She runs a struggling seamstress shop, but Goro's patronage soon allows her business to grow and thrive. Mozasu's wife, Yumi, and Haruki's wife, Ayame, both work for Totoyama.

Daisuke Totoyama – Daisuke is Totoyama's son and Haruki's younger brother. He was born with a misshapen head and intellectual disabilities, and his father abandoned the family at his birth, leading others to ostracize the family as cursed. After Totoyama's death, Haruki and Ayame take Daisuke into their home and arrange for him to receive special tutoring.

Hana – Hana is Etsuko's teenage daughter. She and her mother have a troubled relationship. At 15, Hana gets pregnant and has an abortion, then lives with Etsuko and befriends Solomon. Hana uses alcohol and sex to stifle her sadness and low self-esteem. She and Solomon sleep together until she runs away to Tokyo, where she takes various jobs engaging in degrading sex work until she contracts AIDS. She and Etsuko reconcile, and Mozasu, Sunja, and Kyunghee visit and pray for her while she's dying in the hospital. Solomon, whom she's always loved, also visits her, and she encourages Solomon to work for Mozasu after he gets fired, telling him that people like the two of them will never be accepted by mainstream Japanese society.

Phoebe – Phoebe is Solomon's girlfriend at Columbia University and moves to Tokyo with him after college. Phoebe is Korean-American. She gets along well with Solomon's entire family, who hope they'll get married soon, but struggles to adapt to life in Japan and, as an outsider, chafes at anti-Korean policies and attitudes in a way that Solomon doesn't. Phoebe breaks up with Solomon after he gets fired and declines to go back to the United States and marry her.

Pastor Yoo – Yoo is the pastor of the Hanguk Presbyterian Church in Osaka, where Isak works as associate pastor. He is an older man suffering from glaucoma. A childless widower, he has raised Hu as a son. He reluctantly permits his congregation to participate in mandatory Shinto ceremonies even though he believes the ceremonies are idolatrous. He is imprisoned when Hu defies the Emperor during one ceremony, and he dies in jail a couple of years later.

Hu – Hu, a Chinese orphan, was left at the Hanguk Presbyterian Church by a Japanese officer and raised as a beloved son by Pastor Yoo. He serves as the sexton (custodian) of the church. Hu mouths the Lord's Prayer during a mandatory Shinto ceremony, gets arrested along with Pastor Yoo and Isak, and later dies of mistreatment in jail.

Tamaguchi – Tamaguchi, 58 years old, runs a sweet potato farm in the Japanese countryside, living there with his wife and two sisters-in-law. He has grown rich by commanding illegal prices on the yakuza-controlled black market, working for Koh Hansu. Hansu shelters Sunja and her family on Tamaguchi's farm during the American bombing of Japan.

Samoel Baek – Samoel is Isak's and Yoseb's older brother. He participated in the March First Movement, a 1919 Korean independence uprising, was beaten by police, and died as a result of his injuries. Samoel's death has a big impact on both Isak and Yoseb. Isak vows to live a braver life in honor of his brother's memory.

Akiko Fumeki – Akiko, Noa's first girlfriend and Waseda University's campus radical, comes from a wealthy Japanese family and is studying to be a sociologist. She is "brilliant, sensual, and creative." Noa is attracted to Akiko's willingness to reject conformity and to disagree with her professors—the opposite of his own habits. Akiko prides herself on being open-minded enough to date a Korean, in contrast to her racist parents. When Noa realizes this, he dumps her, but not before Akiko fatefully points out that Hansu is obviously Noa's father, as the two strongly resemble one another.

Risa Iwamura – Risa is the head filing clerk at Cosmos Pachinko in Nagano. When Risa was a teenager, her father, a doctor, committed suicide after accidentally causing patients' deaths. Her family is ostracized as a result. She and Noa get married, though she never knows about his Korean roots, and they raise four children together before Noa commits suicide.

Ayame – Ayame is the foreman of Totoyama's uniform shop, and she manages the shop while Totoyama is dying. On Totoyama's wishes, she marries Haruki. After Totoyama dies, Ayame sells the shop and begins taking care of Daisuke, for whom she arranges special tutoring. Ayame finds out she's infertile after a few years, and there isn't much intimacy in her marriage with Haruki. In her late 30s, she discovers that Haruki is sleeping with other men, and she briefly explores sex with another woman, but ultimately stays with Haruki.

Kazu – Kazu is Solomon's boss at Travis Brothers investment bank. He was educated in the United States and adopts a fraternity boy persona. He takes Solomon under his wing, inviting him to exclusive poker games, and encourages him not to settle for being mediocre. After he takes Solomon aboard an important real estate deal, he seeks Solomon's help in dealing with a stubborn holdout, an elderly Korean woman who doesn't want to sell her property to his Japanese client. After Solomon enlists Goro's help, the woman dies of a heart attack a few days later, and Kazu fires Solomon, saying the transaction has been tainted by yakuza involvement.

John Maryman – Maryman, a Presbyterian pastor, is Yumi's and Mozasu's English teacher. He was born in Korea and adopted by Americans, raised in a loving and wealthy family in the United States. He moves to Japan out of a desire to minister among the oppressed Korean community there. He enjoys teaching English to Koreans because it gives them another language to speak together that isn't Japanese. Maryman has more stereotypically American cultural traits, such as a love of teasing his students. Such teasing results in Mozasu proposing to Yumi in front of the English class one day.

Pastor Shin – Pastor Shin is the pastor of a church in Busan, Korea. Isak consults with him about his plans to marry Sunja. After years of personal loss and a government crackdown, Pastor Shin is wary of Isak's idealism. However, though he's initially stern toward Sunja, he consents to marry the two.

Bokhee and Dokhee – Bokhee and Dokhee are sweet-natured, orphaned sisters who work as servants in Yangjin's boardinghouse. When Sunja gets married, they envy her new life in Japan and give her a wedding gift of carved wooden ducks. During World War II, the sisters go to China seeking work and are never heard from again; they are likely exploited by Japanese soldiers.

Professor Kuroda – Kuroda is Noa's literature professor at Waseda University. She is a small, soft-spoken woman who was raised and educated in England. She loves the novels of George Eliot and is very fond of Noa. After one lecture, during which Akiko disagrees with Kuroda's interpretation of *Daniel Deronda*, Noa begins sitting next to Akiko in class, which causes Kuroda to feel rejected.

Uchida – Uchida is the kindly groundskeeper of the cemetery where Isak is buried. At the end of the novel, he chats with a tearful Sunja and comforts her with the information that Noa visited Isak's grave until the end of his life and even brought Uchida copies of Dickens's works in translation, encouraging him to go to school.

MINOR CHARACTERS

The Chung Brothers – The three Chung brothers are fishermen who live in Yangjin's boardinghouse. They enjoy talking politics over dinner.

Jun – Jun is the village coal seller in Yeongdo, who enjoys gossiping with his customers and accepting snacks from them.

Mrs. Jun – Mrs. Jun is the wife of Jun, the coal seller. She is a market ajumma, selling seaweed. She advises Sunja that a woman's life is inevitably filled with suffering.

Takano – Takano is the manager of the Cosmos **pachinko** parlor in Nagano. He hates foreigners, but he hires Noa because he thinks Noa is Japanese. Noa's diligence quickly wins his favor.

Chiyaki – Chiyaki is a flirtatious Japanese girl who works in the sock store in the Ikaino market. Mozasu gets in trouble for punching a man who's bothering her, then is offered a **pachinko** job by Goro.

Noriko – Noriko, 18, is one of Hansu's many mistresses. When she annoys him during Yumi's funeral, Hansu beats her, permanently damaging her face.

TERMS

Ajumma – A Korean term referring simply to a married or middle-aged woman. In *Pachinko*, the word often refers particularly to the women who sell homemade wares in the open market. **Sunja** grows up buying goods from and chatting with market *ajumma*s like **Mrs. Jun** in Korea, and she becomes a market *ajumma* herself when she starts selling kimchi in Osaka's Ikaino market.

Burakumin – The term *burakumin* refers to Japanese people who are viewed as outcasts at the bottom of the traditional social order. Sometimes people are classified as *burakumin* because of their "defiling" occupations (like being undertakers or butchers). Historically, *burakumin* suffered from severe social stigmas and discrimination. Traditionally, there have also been ties between *burakumin* and yakuza membership. In *Pachinko*, even the unsubstantiated rumor of being a *burakumin*

is enough for someone to be ostracized, as happens to **Haruki Totoyama** and his family.

Yakuza – The yakuza are members of organized crime syndicates based in Japan—in other words, gangsters. **Hansu** and **Kim Changho** are associated with yakuza organizations, and the pachinko industry traditionally has yakuza ties as well, so the livelihoods of both **Sunja**'s sons are linked to the yakuza to some degree. Because Koreans are so heavily discriminated against in employment, some Koreans work for the yakuza and yakuza-affiliated industries out of desperation. Even though **Yoseb** suspects and despises Hansu's yakuza ties before anyone else does, the family relies on Hansu's connections to regain their property and rebuild their home after the war. The suspicion of yakuza contamination sinks **Solomon**'s real estate deal at the end of the book.

Yangban – Upper -class. **Isak**, **Yoseb**, and **Kyunghee** are of *yangban* lineage, whereas **Sunja** comes from a peasant family. In *Pachinko*, class lineage shapes attitudes about the options available to women—for example, Yoseb thinks it's inappropriate for a *yangban* woman like Kyunghee to work outside the home.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

SURVIVAL AND FAMILY

In *Pachinko*, Min Jin Lee's novel of a Korean family's intergenerational struggle to survive under Japanese colonialism, many characters display remarkable ingenuity and grit in their efforts to thrive in hostile circumstances. From a remote turn-of-the-century fishing village to wartime Osaka, characters make decisions about business, marriage, religion, and self-identity which don't just impact the individuals involved, but shape subsequent generations for good or ill. Though her central characters have various ambitions and even look at "survival" differently, they are all motivated by devotion to family; through this, Lee argues that even apparent "failure," when pursued out of love for others, can represent enduring success.

Sunja learns from the struggles of her thrifty forebears—especially her grandparents and her own parents, Hoonie and Yangjin—seeing that it's possible to achieve success even in the midst of difficult circumstances. After Japan's annexation of Korea in 1910, rent becomes unaffordable, so Hoonie's parents move out of their bedroom in order to make space for more lodgers in their home. Because of their thrift and resourcefulness, they are able to establish a prosperous boardinghouse even as much of Korea grows poorer; as a result, even Hoonie, who has a cleft palate and twisted foot, is able to make a respectable marriage because of his family's relative wealth. By the time the Depression hits Korea in the 1930s, Hoonie's wife, Yangjin, is a 37-year-old widow who must learn to "handle money, deal with her suppliers, and say no to terms she did not want […] [she was] no longer the shoeless teenager" who'd arrived on the boardinghouse doorstep to be Hoonie's bride. When she can't raise the rent for her struggling boarders, she stretches meals out of the household's meager food supplies. Her daughter, Sunja, watches and emulates her mother's practices while she grows up, preparing her to take similar initiatives when she's on her own. From generation to generation, the family at the center of the novel passes down the idea that one can craft a successful life even in times of hardship through a combination of frugality and resourcefulness.

Sunja's husband, Isak, and Isak's brother, Yoseb, represent different kinds of ambition and approaches to survival. Isak, a Christian missionary from Pyongyang, has lost his older brother, Samoel, who was brutally mistreated by Japanese police after participating in an uprising against colonialism. At that time, Isak "decided […] that he would live a braver life." In later years, however, "bravery" for Isak looks like quietly surrendering his life for his loved ones, ensuring they're able to build a legacy that outlasts his own lifespan. After Yangjin and Sunja nurse the frail man back to health in their boardinghouse, and Isak learns of Sunja's pregnancy and disgraced position, he decides to ask her to marry him. To a fellow pastor, he explains, "This is what I can do for them: give the woman and child my name. What is my name to me? […] Maybe my life can be significant—not on a grand scale like my brother, but to a few people." Isak has never expected a long or conventionally successful life, but he can use what little he has—his status as a man with a "name" to bestow—to make someone else's future more hopeful. After Isak is imprisoned for disrespecting the Emperor and finally comes home on the brink of death, he tells Sunja that "my life wasn't important." In a moment of characteristic humility, he doesn't think about his rescuing Sunja from disgrace, but about his adoptive son and Sunja's labors to support the family in his absence. Because Isak doesn't see his survival as ultimately important, he is content to see that his family has the means to thrive after he is dead; to him, his family's survival and the legacy that will go on after him is the most important kind of survival one can strive for.

Though he, too, was affected by his brother Samoel's martyrdom, Yoseb takes the inverse lesson from it—that surviving so as to support one's family is the most important thing. Yoseb thinks that, no matter whether Japan or China prevails in the current war, Koreans will be caught between them; "so save your own ass—this was what Koreans believed

privately […] let your kids learn Japanese and try to get ahead. Adapt. Wasn't it as simple as that?" After Isak is jailed, Yoseb reflects that he doesn't "see the point of anyone dying for his country or for some greater ideal. He understood survival and family." Yoseb works long hours at a thankless job so that his wife and nephews have the chance to survive, adapt, and "get ahead." In other words, Yoseb's survival is critical to his family's.

When Yoseb sees his brother's ravaged body after Isak is released from prison, he says in anguish, "My boy, couldn't you just tell them what they wanted to hear? Couldn't you just say you worshipped the Emperor even if it isn't true? Don't you know that the most important thing is to stay alive?" Isak's resistance is the opposite of Yoseb's outlook on survival, so his brother's sacrifice seems pointless to him. Both men uphold the importance of a family's survival, but Isak didn't see his own survival as critical to that goal, whereas Yoseb believes himself to be a stronghold that is helping his family to survive and even thrive.

After Yoseb receives devastating burns in the aftermath of the Nagasaki bombing, he's embittered—"he was a man who had done everything he could for his family—this had happened to him because he had gone to work." He finds himself stuck in a horrible impasse: "the only thing [he] had wanted to do was to take care of his family, and now that he was helpless to do so, he could not even die to help them." The irony is that he had earlier told Isak that "staying alive" was the most important goal, but now he believes that neither living nor dying will help his family. Despite Yoseb's bleak conclusion, the novel implies that if it hadn't been for his persistence, his family would never have survived this long in hostile Japan.

Pachinko contains many other models of striving for survival, like the gangster Hansu's black market dealings and Sunja's son Mozasu's efforts to overcome prejudice by accumulating wealth. However, the success of later generations invariably builds on the resourcefulness of Sunja and her family, the sacrifice of Isak, and the faithfulness of Yoseb. Although each of these characters have different conceptions of and approaches to survival, they all prioritize helping others and see other people's survival as just important as their own, if not more so. And though many of these characters appear to "fail" in their quest for success—after all, Isak dies and Yoseb loses hope—the novel argues that because helping others was always their primary goal, their failures should actually be viewed as successes.

IMPERIALISM, RESISTANCE, AND COMPROMISE

After Japan annexes Korea in 1910, the country increasingly falls into poverty, and Koreans must cooperate with the occupying Japanese in order to get by in daily life. The situation is not much better for Koreans living in Japan, like Sunja and her family; the Japanese look down on Koreans as troublemaking, dirty criminals and severely limit their activities. *Pachinko* portrays various scenarios in which Koreans struggle for survival in an imperial context, including dealing with the black market, practicing their religious faith, and establishing identities as Japanese-born ethnic Koreans. Through these stories, Lee argues that "pure" resistance to or compromise with imperialism is rare; rather, individuals make the best choices they can within specific circumstances, holding onto their identities as best they can.

For Koreans trying to survive under Japanese imperialism, reliance on the yakuza, the heavily Korean organized crime syndicate, reflects Koreans' vulnerable position within Japanese society as a whole. For example, Korean fishermen have little choice but to cooperate with the ambiguous, often sinister, intermediary role of yakuza men like Koh Hansu. In Busan, where Sunja grows up, fish brokers like Hansu work as go-betweens with Japanese officials and accordingly have the power to enrich or impoverish Korean fishermen. They are seen by ordinary Koreans as "arrogant interlopers who made all the profits from fishing but kept the fish smell off their smooth white hands," yet the fishermen are forced to stay on good terms with them for their livelihood.

Sunja's and Kyunghee's employment is also yakuza-dependent. In Osaka, after Sunja and Kyunghee have worked for years for restaurant manager Kim Changho, Sunja is shocked to learn that Hansu owns the restaurant—and that he had created the job specifically for her because he knew she needed money. Hansu also uses his connections to shelter Sunja's family in the countryside during the war, finding them work with a farmer who sells produce to the black market. When Sunja, Kyunghee, and Yoseb move back to Osaka after the war, Hansu's lawyer helps them reclaim their property, and his construction company rebuilds their house. At this point, Hansu's connections are so interwoven with their lives and survival that Sunja takes them for granted, and her family no longer asks too many questions about the implications. Though they are never comfortable being put in the position of relying on shady intermediaries, their survival as a family isn't possible without it.

Koreans' intense vulnerability in Japan also hinges on religion. For Korean Christians living in Japan, like Isak and Sunja, Christian faith is closely aligned with the struggle for Korean independence, so Christians are targets of persecution. In some ways, the Church cooperates with imperial rule, but individuals still resist and suffer terribly as a result. Thus, the novel emphasizes that neither wholehearted compromise nor staunch resistance are viable solutions in an imperial landscape. In some places, Christians have been specifically rounded up and forced to participate in Shinto ceremonies honoring the Emperor. Under duress, the Korean Presbyterian Church decides that participating in the ceremony is "a civic duty rather

than a religious one." Pastor Yoo, the head of Isak's and Sunja's church, believes that the ceremony is essentially idol worship, but that, nevertheless, his congregation should participate "for the greater good." While this could be seen as a compromise, it's also a survival measure, since resistance would almost certainly mean the church's extinction.

Hu, a rescued orphan who serves as the congregation's sexton, mouths the Lord's Prayer during one Shinto ceremony, and when he's caught, the pastors, including Isak, are implicated for unpatriotic resistance along with him. After his release from prison years later, Isak soon dies, and he's revered for generations as a martyr for his faith. There's a certain ambiguity about Isak's martyrdom—after all, he willingly joins the Shinto ceremony and doesn't openly resist himself. Yet, once jailed, he patiently endures years of maltreatment and doesn't recant his beliefs. Like other Korean Christians, Hu, Pastor Yoo, and Isak uphold their faith with as much integrity as they can find under terrible external pressures because imperialism makes it impossible for them to compromise neatly or resist completely.

Sunja's sons, Noa and Mozasu, each wrestle with this heritage of resistance and compromise in their own ways: "Noa said that Koreans had to raise themselves up by working harder and being better. Mozasu just wanted to hit everyone who said mean things." In other words, Noa is more compromise-minded, while Mozasu has a heart for resistance, but neither man's strategy proves entirely effective. Isak's dying advice to young Noa is that "Wherever you go, your represent our family, and you must be an excellent person—at school, in town, and in the world." In his mind, Noa harmonizes this with what he's been taught by his Japanese schoolteacher, that he has a duty to help "make Koreans good children of the benevolent Emperor." Noa bears this dual pressure from the time he's a small child, going by his Japanese name at school, mastering the language, and revealing as little as possible about his family background. But above all, he "wanted to be Japanese." Though Noa succeeds, eventually building a new life in which he passes as Japanese for years, he finally commits suicide; his nephew believes Noa did this "because he wanted to be Japanese and normal." This suggests that Noa's effort to compromise with Japanese culture is ultimately a failed strategy.

In contrast to his brother's efforts to rise above others' prejudice, Mozasu doesn't try to be a "good Korean" by Japanese standards, but instead begins working his way up in the gambling business, eventually becoming the millionaire owner of several **pachinko** parlors. Because pachinko is regarded in Japan as a "dirty" business that only Koreans are fit to run, Mozasu's career choice represents a rejection of the pressure to be a "good Korean" (or Japanese, for that matter). In the end, neither Noa nor Mozasu fully resists or compromises with the anti-Korean Japanese culture into which they're born. They each resist the expectations of the dominant culture by leveraging their respective talents as best they can, but in the process, each gives something up as well—Noa tries to erase his Korean roots, and Mozasu supports a "tainted" industry.

Throughout the twentieth century, Korea and expatriate Koreans must deal with the long aftereffects of imperialism, both at home and in their ambiguous noncitizen status in Japan. Through her characters' struggles for survival, interacting with institutions like organized crime, the Church, and the gambling industry, Lee shows how much imperialism can limit people's choices—most often, her characters must make the best of many bad choices in order to live in peace.

IDENTITY, BLOOD, AND CONTAMINATION

Throughout *Pachinko*, characters are haunted by questions concerning their identity—questions made more difficult by a conformist Japanese society that often sees difference, especially Korean difference, as a matter of contamination or "dirty" blood. In some ways, this problem only becomes more acute in the generations after Sunja settles in Japan; her children and grandchildren must work harder to understand their difference as their lives become more tangibly rooted in Japan than in Korea. For both Sunja's son, Noa, and her grandson, Solomon, Korean blood appears to be something that inevitably limits their horizons and curtails their happiness. Lee shows that, while Sunja maintains that "blood doesn't matter," racist ideas about blood *do* affect people's opportunities in life and can have a devastating impact on their sense of self.

When, as a college student, Noa finds out that the yakuza Hansu is really his biological father—not Isak, as he has believed all his life—he is devastated, believing this parentage makes him "dirty," reflecting the idea that blood can impact one's sense of self. Sunja tries to explain to Noa that "blood doesn't matter" and that Isak had chosen to be his father in Hansu's stead. Noa protests, "Yakuza are the filthiest people in Japan [...] I will never be able to wash this dirt from my name [...] How can you make something clean from something dirty? And now, you have made me dirty." He explains that all his life, he's tried to escape the relentless Japanese taunt that Korean blood is dirty and criminal; now that he knows the truth about Hansu, Noa believes he is tainted after all. Sunja wants Noa to accept that Isak's fatherly devotion is stronger than Hansu's questionable ties, but Noa can only see that his blood—and his hard-won identity—have been sullied.

Noa ends up dropping out of Waseda University and moving to Nagano, where he starts a new life passing as Japanese. He lies about his ethnicity in order to get a job as a bookkeeper at a **pachinko** parlor. He later marries a Japanese woman named Risa who is similarly "tainted" by family scandal, "effectively

unmarriageable" because her father, a doctor, had committed suicide after inadvertently causing the deaths of some patients. In other words, once he resigns himself to a tainted self-image, Noa gravitates toward circumstances—the shady pachinko industry and a "compromised" woman—that confirm what he believes about himself based on his blood.

Confirming this sense of a self-fulfilling prophecy, after Sunja, with Hansu's help, finally tracks Noa down years later, he still remains bitter about the "problem" of his blood, saying, "I suppose having yakuza in your blood is something that controls you. I can never be clean of [Hansu]." Moments after Sunja leaves, Noa commits suicide, apparently unable to bear the tension between his feigned and actual identities any longer.

When Yangjin is dying, she tells her daughter Sunja, "you brought shame on your child by having [Hansu] as his father. You caused your own suffering. Noa, that poor boy, came from a bad seed [...] Mozasu came from better blood. That's why he's so blessed in his work." Sunja, on the other hand, doesn't believe this: "Seeds, blood. How could you fight such hopeless ideas? Noa had been a sensitive child who had believed that if he followed all the rules and was the best, then somehow the hostile world would change its mind. His death may have been her fault for having allowed him to believe in such cruel ideals." Perhaps because of her own experience of getting a second chance through her marriage to Isak, Sunja doesn't believe that one's roots should determine their entire life and identity. Even still, she realizes that society brutally suppresses such freedom and that blood does matter to her society.

As late as the 1970s, ideas about "contaminated" Korean blood persist in Japanese society, shaping the life of Sunja's grandson, Solomon. Mozasu explains to the teenaged Solomon that ethnic Koreans living in Japan have no real homeland; at government discretion, they can even be deported to a land (Korea) they've never seen, because they can't be Japanese citizens. In light of this homeless state, Mozasu cherishes certain ambitions for Solomon—that his son will speak perfect Japanese and perfect English and end up working for an American company. Notably, Korea or Korean identity doesn't figure into these plans in any way; Solomon, he hopes, will bypass the obstacle of his blood by becoming a "citizen of the world" instead.

When Solomon's first love, Hana, who is Japanese, is dying of AIDS she contracted while working as a prostitute, she tells Solomon, "It's a filthy world, Solomon. No one is clean. Living makes you dirty [...] you should stay here and not go back to the States, and you should take over your papa's business. Become so rich that you can do whatever you want. But, my beautiful Solomon, they're never going to think we're okay." Like his uncle Noa, Solomon seems to feel a kinship with women who are contaminated in the eyes of society. Based on her own outcast status, Hana tells him that, no matter how hard he works, Solomon will never overcome society's rejection of him; so, unlike his uncle and other well-meaning Koreans, he should accept his lot and not try. In accordance with this advice, Solomon ultimately *does* join his father's pachinko business; hence, in a way, he makes peace with the colonialist Japanese logic that his blood is contaminated, even though two generations of his family have spent their entire lives in Japan.

All his life, no matter how hard he tries to deny it, Noa "[carries] the story of his life as a Korean like a dark, heavy rock within him." And Solomon ends up losing his job when his father's yakuza connections taint a critical real estate transaction, joining his father's pachinko business despite Mozasu's higher ambitions for him. These sad endings appear to confirm the fatalistic idea that blood determines who people are and what they do. However, Min Jin Lee offers a glimmer of hope at the end of the book when it's revealed that, until he died, Noa faithfully visited Isak's grave to honor his adoptive father. This suggests that, on some level, even Noa hearkened to Sunja's plea that "blood doesn't matter."

LOVE, MOTHERHOOD, AND WOMEN'S CHOICES

Early in *Pachinko*, teenaged Sunja chats with a seaweed seller in the Busan market. The lady tells her, "A woman's life is endless work and suffering [...] It's better to expect it, you know. You're becoming a woman now, so you should be told this. For a woman, the man you marry will determine the quality of your life completely. A good man is a decent life, and a bad man is a cursed life—but no matter what, always expect suffering." This quote encapsulates much that happens to female characters in *Pachinko* as they go through life—engaging in sexual and romantic relationships, having and relating to their children, and making choices for themselves and on behalf of others. Sunja's experiences are emblematic for the book as a whole, since her choices help determine the paths for subsequent generations; she never passively submits to her circumstances and continually fights for herself and those she loves. By portraying Sunja as the novel's heroine, Lee demonstrates that, though it might be true that "a woman's lot is suffering," women have the ability and agency to respond to suffering with hard-won strength and wisdom.

Sunja's decision to be Hansu's lover, but also her self-respecting decision to reject the role of being his lifelong mistress, sets in motion the rest of the novel's events and reveals how women have the power to act with wisdom and strength in the face of hardship. When Sunja and Hansu become lovers, naïve young Sunja doesn't have a category for their relationship. In her experience, men and women are not supposed to be friends, but Hansu isn't her "sweetheart," either; she assumes this because he never approaches her mother for permission to marry her—"his interest in her did not always make sense." Nevertheless, his desire for Sunja thrills her, and his stories of foreign travel widen her horizons. She is happy to discover she's carrying his child.

From Hansu's point of view, Sunja can simply be his kept woman, enabling him to maintain families in both Japan and Korea. But Sunja can't accept this and is grieved and insulted when he hands her some cash to buy food for herself and the baby: "She had believed that he loved her as she loved him. If he did not marry her, she was a common slut who would be disgraced forever," and her child would simply be a "bastard." She remembers the way her humble father, Hoonie, had cherished her and her mother, and she can't imagine contenting herself with a pseudo-marriage with Hansu. Based on this self-respect, she rejects his offers, fully knowing how few opportunities she'll find elsewhere, especially being "disgraced" by a pregnancy out of wedlock. Despite the painful circumstances she finds herself in, Sunja responds with strength and dignity, pointing to the novel's overarching message that women, burdened and downtrodden as they may be, have a profound capacity to respond to suffering with strength.

Though Isak and Sunja's marriage is founded on "disgrace," and it ends in untimely tragedy, it is, ironically, one of the healthiest relationships in the novel—exemplifying a loving, equal partnership between a husband and wife. Despite great hardships, Sunja's courageous choice to say yes to Isak's proposal opens up greater opportunities for her, her mother, her children, and future generations in Japan. When Isak, while a guest at the boardinghouse, learns about Sunja's vulnerable situation, he decides he will propose to her, hoping to offer his protection to her and her baby—much like the biblical prophet Hosea, who knowingly married an unfaithful woman and was a father to her children. While even a fellow pastor is tempted to dismiss Isak as a "religious lunatic" for this idea, Isak never treats Sunja like a project or regards her as being indebted to him for his so-called sacrificial act. And Sunja enters their marriage with her eyes open, even though she isn't sure she can love him, believe in his God, or forget Hansu. She chooses him knowing that it's her best escape from a shameful scenario and the best hope for her unborn child, showing her ability to be strong in the midst of deep suffering.

After Sunja is widowed, she is willing to accept Hansu's involvement in her life for the sake of her sons, in spite of her pride and continued ambivalence about him. With Isak gone, she now regards suffering for her sons' sake as her primary role, and the rest of her choices in life flow from this. After Isak dies and Sunja learns that Hansu has been supporting her financially without her knowing it (having instigated her hiring at his restaurant), she chooses to accept his help in fleeing Osaka before the American bombing begins. Though she's initially resistant, she comes around to Hansu's view that "the world can go to hell, but you need to protect your sons." At this point in her life, her sons are all she has, and it's her job to fight for their survival and be strong for them.

As her own mother is dying, Sunja is disgusted and wearied by Yangjin's repetition of the proverb, "A woman's lot is to suffer." She wonders, "She had suffered to create a better life for Noa, and yet it was not enough […] Did mothers fail by not telling their sons that suffering would come?" She never resolves this question, and Lee never clearly passes an unambiguous judgment on the choices Sunja has made. Yet at the end of the book, it's clear that, despite irrevocable losses, Sunja is also surrounded by three generations of a growing, successful family who've beaten the odds in a hostile environment. None of this, good or bad, would have happened without Sunja's self-respect and courage as a poor young woman in a remote village, emphasizing how women—even if their "lot is to suffer"—have the unique capacity to respond to hardship with resilience, strength, and wisdom.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

PACHINKO

Pachinko, a popular Japanese pinball game played in gambling parlors, appears frequently in the novel, but it's not simply the business in which Sunja's sons, like many disadvantaged Koreans living in Japan, find employment. The game symbolizes the interplay of chance, ability, frustration, and higher purpose that govern life for Sunja's family. When Mozasu keeps getting in trouble for picking fights, Goro steps in and offers him a pachinko job to keep him off the streets. Goro is a master at manipulating the gaming machines—making adjustments "frustrating to the regular customers […] yet [with] just enough predictability to produce attractive windfalls, drawing the customers back to try their luck again and again." This attribute of pachinko—the constant possibility and occasional teasing hint of success, only to have one's best efforts frustrated—symbolizes the struggles of Korean immigrants to maintain a foothold within the dominant society. After Mozasu becomes a pachinko millionaire, his girlfriend, Etsuko, reflects that the maligned pachinko industry is a way of making money "from chance and fear and loneliness," yet the game itself points to people's undying hope that "[they] might be the lucky ones," an instinct that doesn't deserve to be mocked. Indeed, Mozasu's motivation for becoming rich is so that his son, Solomon, can have the best opportunities and won't be limited to jobs that others don't respect. Yet at the end of the novel, Solomon loses his finance job because of his family's possible criminal connections, and he comes to Mozasu for a pachinko job, believing the "game" of societal prejudice is rigged such that he'll never be seen as acceptable, no matter where he works. Thus pachinko makes a better life possible for the whole family, yet it also seems to limit their horizons.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Grand Central Publishing edition of *Pachinko* published in 2017.

Book 1, Chapter 1 Quotes

History has failed us, but no matter. [...]

In 1910, when Hoonie was twenty-seven years old, Japan annexed Korea. The fisherman and his wife, thrifty and hardy peasants, refused to be distracted by the country's incompetent aristocrats and corrupt rulers, who had lost their nation to thieves. When the rent for their house was raised again, the couple moved out of their bedroom and slept in the anteroom near the kitchen to increase the number of lodgers.

Related Characters: Hoonie

Related Themes:

Page Number: 3

Explanation and Analysis

This quote, found at the very beginning of *Pachinko*, sets the tone for the novel as a whole. Though the first line isn't attributed to any character in particular, it echoes a frequent saying of Hoonie's whenever he listens to political talk: "no matter." In a way, this seems naïve—after all, the events of history clearly *do* matter, greatly impacting individuals' lives. For example, when colonial power Japan takes over their homeland of Korea, Hoonie's parents can't afford the resulting inflated rent, so they rearrange their lives to accommodate more paying boarders. On the other hand, they carry on their daily lives with matter-of-fact dignity instead of troubling about power struggles beyond their control. Similar scenarios play out throughout the novel—World War II, the Korean War, and colonialism's legacy for the Korean-Japanese—but Lee always focuses on the desires and choices of individual characters, emphasizing their humanity and agency rather than seeing them as helpless pawns. In this way, the voice of Hoonie and ordinary people like him echoes across the decades, asserting that, even if they're forgotten by the larger forces of recorded history, their stories still deserve to be told.

Book 1, Chapter 4 Quotes

"Sunja-ya, a woman's life is endless work and suffering. There is suffering and then more suffering. It's better to expect it, you know. You're becoming a woman now, so you should be told this. For a woman, the man you marry will determine the quality of your life completely. A good man is a decent life, and a bad man is a cursed life—but no matter what, always expect suffering, and just keep working hard. No one will take care of a poor woman—just ourselves."

Related Characters: Mrs. Jun (speaker), Sunja Baek

Related Themes:

Page Number: 27

Explanation and Analysis

The speaker in this quote is Mrs. Jun, one of the market *ajummas* (middle-aged saleswomen) from whom Sunja purchases her daily shopping as a girl. On this particular occasion, she has just been talking to Mrs. Jun about her widowed mother's endless hard work in the boardinghouse she runs. In response, Mrs. Jun tells her that a woman's life is never-ending work and suffering. The idea that "a woman's life is suffering" is an often-repeated proverb in *Pachinko*. Sunja hears it from her own mother, from Kyunghee, and even from strangers on TV shows. Sunja comes to question the wisdom of this saying—even though she experiences a great deal of adversity in her own life, she rejects the sense of fatalism that the proverb upholds. Also, Mrs. Jun's warning about marriage turns out not to fit Sunja's life all that accurately. She has a wonderful man in Isak, but he dies prematurely after less than ten years of marriage, and her life is haunted by the "curse" of a bad man she doesn't marry, Hansu. With regard to both men, Sunja has to keep striving to make the best choices for herself and her children, rather than resigning herself to suffering or letting others' decisions determine her path.

Book 1, Chapter 8 Quotes

"The widow told me about her daughter only yesterday. And last night before my evening prayers, it occurred to me that this is what I can do for them: Give the woman and child my name. What is my name to me? It's only a matter of grace that I was born a male who could enter my descendants in a family registry. If the young woman was abandoned by a scoundrel, it's hardly her fault, and certainly, even if the man is not a bad person, the unborn child is innocent. Why should he suffer so? He would be ostracized. [...] Maybe my life can be significant—not on a grand scale like my brother, but to a few people. Maybe I can help this young woman and her child. And they will be helping me, because I will have a family of my own—a great blessing no matter how you look at it."

Related Characters: Baek Isak (speaker), Pastor Shin, Sunja Baek

Related Themes:

Page Number: 65

Explanation and Analysis

After Isak, staying at the boardinghouse, learns that Sunja is pregnant and that the baby's father won't marry her, he forms a plan to ask Sunja to marry him instead. In this quote, he tells Pastor Shin, pastor at a church in Busan, about his idea. According to the practices of the time, Sunja, as an unmarried woman, wouldn't be able to pass her name on to her baby, and both of them would likely face heavy social disadvantages and obstacles throughout their lives because of this. Isak, on the other hand, has a name he wasn't expecting to pass down—he grew up sickly and not expecting to live a long life, much less have a family of his own—so bestowing his name on Sunja and her child is an act of rescue, in a very real way. Isak's older brother, Samoel, was killed in the 1919 demonstrations for Korean independence. Isak doesn't believe it's his purpose to do something heroic on that scale, but, as he explains to Pastor Shin here, he does have the ability to help one specific family. Thus this quote is in keeping with the novel's theme of survival—of using the resources at one's disposal to fight for a better life, for oneself, but more especially for others.

Book 1, Chapter 13 Quotes

Isak's silence worried Yoseb.

"The military police will harass you until you give up or die," Yoseb said. "And your health, Isak. You have to be careful not to get sick again. I've seen men arrested here. It's not like back home. The judges here are Japanese. The police are Japanese. The laws aren't clear. And you can't always trust the Koreans in these independence groups. There are spies who work both sides. The poetry discussion groups have spies, and there are spies in churches, too. Eventually, each activist is picked off like ripe fruit from the same stupid tree. They'll force you to sign a confession. Do you understand?"

Related Characters: Yoseb Baek (speaker), Baek Isak

Related Themes:

Page Number: 106

Explanation and Analysis

On Isak and Sunja's very first night in Osaka after moving from Korea, Isak's brother, Yoseb, worriedly lectures him about the unique risks he'll face as a Korean living in Japan. He knows his idealistic younger brother and fears that Isak will associate with political groups agitating for Korean independence—the very thing that got their older brother, Samoel, killed 15 years earlier. The stakes are even higher in Japan, where Koreans are looked upon as troublemakers, and their rights aren't safeguarded if they're questioned or arrested by police. And Yoseb knows that Isak, prone to illness since boyhood, might not survive the deprivations of a Japanese prison for very long.

Yoseb's speech underscores a major difference between himself and Isak: Yoseb thinks in terms of daily survival for his family's sake, while Isak doesn't assume he'll live long anyway, so he doesn't hold his personal survival as critical in the long run. Also, Yoseb's lecture ends up being sadly ironic, since Isak doesn't seek out political activism, but he *is* implicated in someone else's politically subversive actions anyway and is jailed for many years.

Book 2, Chapter 1 Quotes

❝ "The police arrested them this morning—when everyone went to the Shinto shrine to bow, one of the village leaders noticed Hu mouthing the words of the Lord's Prayer when they were supposed to be pledging allegiance to the Emperor. The police officer who was supervising questioned Hu, and Hu told him that this ceremony was idol worshipping and he wouldn't do it anymore. Pastor Yoo tried to tell the police that the boy was misinformed, and that lie didn't mean anything by it, but Hu refused to agree with Pastor Yoo. Pastor Baek tried to explain, too, but Hu said he was willing to walk into the furnace. Just like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! Do you know that story?"

Related Characters: Hu, Pastor Yoo, Baek Isak, Yoseb Baek

Related Themes:

Page Number: 151

Explanation and Analysis

One day, some six years after Isak and Sunja settled in Osaka, Yoseb can't find his brother and eventually learns what's happened to him from some women praying in the Hanguk Presbyterian Church, where Isak works. During World War II, people in Japan were required to participate in ceremonies honoring Emperor Hirohito as a deity. Sometimes Christians were specifically rounded up and made to show their loyalty in such ceremonies. People found different ways of accommodating these demands; for example, Pastor Yoo, though believing the Shinto ceremony is essentially idol worship, allows his congregants to participate, knowing that if they don't, they'll likely be tortured and killed.

When Yoo's adoptive son, Hu, is caught resisting, it has a catastrophic effect on the church and Isak's family, as Hu and the pastor die in jail, and Isak is only released in time to die at home. In this passage, one of the church members quotes the story from the Old Testament book of Daniel in which three Hebrew youths were thrown into the fire for refusing to worship a golden image. Unlike the figures in the story, though, Isak hadn't set out to resist, and he isn't saved from harm. His situation shows the impossible choices with which minority groups like Korean Christians were faced under Japanese colonialism—neither resistance nor compromise offered a sustainable path.

Book 2, Chapter 2 Quotes

❝ Sunja cried out, "Kimchi! Delicious Kimchi! Kimchi! Delicious kimchi! *Oishi desu*! *Oishi* kimchi!"

This sound, the sound of her own voice, felt familiar, not because it was her own voice but because it reminded her of all the times she'd gone to the market as a girl—first with her father, later by herself as a young woman, then as a lover yearning for the gaze of her beloved. The chorus of women hawking had always been with her, and now she'd joined them. "Kimchi! Kimchi! Homemade kimchi! The most delicious kimchi in Ikaino! More tasty than your grandmother's! *Oishi desu*, *oishi*!'' She tried to sound cheerful, because back home, she had always frequented the nicest *ajummas*. When the passersby glanced in her direction, she bowed and smiled at them. ''*Oishi*! *Oishi*!"

Related Characters: Sunja Baek (speaker), Hoonie

Related Themes:

Page Number: 161

Explanation and Analysis

After Isak is imprisoned, Sunja is forced to find a way to earn income. She and her sister-in-law, Kyunghee, decide to make and sell kimchi in the open-air market, but at first, it's not as easy as it sounds. Sunja barely speaks any Japanese, and when she first arrives at the market with her food cart, the other sellers are hostile, and nobody responds to her first timid calls to attract customers. Plus, Kyunghee's husband forbids her from working outside the home, so although she helps make the kimchi, Sunja is on her own when it comes to actually selling it in the market. She begins gaining confidence when the Japanese butcher who's selling his wares next to her kindly buys some kimchi and deems it *oishi* ("tasty"). Soon Sunja is loudly hawking her delicious food to people passing through the market.

One of the most interesting things about Sunja becoming a market *ajumma*—which in this novel essentially means a married lady entrepreneur—is that finding her voice has a communal element; it's not just an individual endeavor. All her life, Sunja has interacted with *ajummas* selling in public markets, and by drawing on that deeply ingrained memory, she finds she knows exactly what to do to welcome others to her sales cart. She might have arrived alone and scared, but before the day is over, she's joined a community that transcends time and place.

Book 2, Chapter 3 Quotes

❝❝ Did Koreans want Japan to win? Hell no, but what would happen to them if Japan's enemies won? Could the Koreans save themselves? Apparently not. So save your own ass—this was what Koreans believed privately. Save your family. Feed your belly. Pay attention, and be skeptical of the people in charge. If the Korean nationalists couldn't get their country back, then let your kids learn Japanese and try to get ahead. Adapt. Wasn't it as simple as that? For every patriot fighting for a free Korea, or for any unlucky Korean bastard fighting on behalf of Japan, there were ten thousand compatriots on the ground and elsewhere who were just trying to eat. In the end, your belly was your emperor.

Related Characters: Yoseb Baek (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 173

Explanation and Analysis

This quote sums up Yoseb's thoughts on politics and how they affect everyday Koreans trying to survive under Japanese imperialism. Japan is currently at war in China, and since Korea is currently under Japanese control, Koreans don't have a clear side to support—they basically have to choose between their oppressors (Japan) or a larger country that can't be counted on to show them any greater kindness (China). In light of this, Yoseb thinks, Koreans must continue to look out for themselves. If they can't regain their own country, then they should make the best of things here in Japan—at the end of the day, one is accountable to one's own family and one's own need to eat. Yoseb's attitude is shaped by having lived most of a lifetime under colonial rule and watched people, including loved ones, be persecuted or starved in the pursuit of so-called higher ideals. His attitude also sums up the reality for many Koreans who, as much as they might prefer to fight for independence, simply don't have the freedom to act accordingly when the pressures of wartime colonialism lock them in a struggle for daily survival.

Book 2, Chapter 5 Quotes

❝❝ "What else can we do but persevere, my child? We're meant to increase our talents. The thing that would make your *appa* happy is if you do as well as you've been doing. Wherever you go, you represent our family, and you must be an excellent person—at school, in town, and in the world. No matter what anyone says. Or does," Isak said, then paused to cough. He knew it must be taxing for the child to go to a Japanese school. "You must be a diligent person with a humble heart. Have compassion for everyone. Even your enemies. Do you understand that, Noa? Men may be unfair, but the Lord is fair. You'll see. You will," Isak said, his exhausted voice tapering off.

"Yes, *appa*." Hoshii-sensei had told him that he had a duty to Koreans, too; one day, he would serve his community and make Koreans good children of the benevolent Emperor.

Related Characters: Noa Baek, Baek Isak (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 192

Explanation and Analysis

In this affecting scene after Isak's release from prison, the dying man offers his last words of advice to his eight-year-old adoptive son, Noa. Noa doesn't want to go to school that day, fearing his father will be dead when he returns, and Isak explains why he must; it's up to him to make the most of the opportunities Isak never had and continue developing his talents, no matter what terrible things his society puts in his way. Interestingly, Noa, who attends a Japanese school, hears Isak's advice in concert with what his teachers instill in him—that he needs to be a "good" or "model" Korean loyal to the Emperor. For the rest of Noa's life, he feels pulled between his father's charge to live humbly before his enemies and his own desire to blend in to the surrounding culture. Ultimately, he finds this tension impossible to sustain, ending his own life while trying to convince the world that he's an average Japanese family man. But he never forgets Isak, either, visiting his grave for decades after Isak's death, long after he's tried to erase any sign of his Korean roots.

Book 2, Chapter 6 Quotes

❝ "How did I know that you needed work? How did I know where Noa goes to school, that his math teacher is a Korean who pretends to be Japanese, that your husband died because he didn't get out of prison in time, and that you're alone in this world. How did I know how to keep my family safe? It's my job to know what others don't. How did you know to make kimchi and sell it on a street corner to earn money? You knew because you wanted to live. I want to live, too, and if I want to live, I have to know things others don't. Now, I'm telling you something valuable. I'm telling you something so you can save your sons' lives. Don't waste this information. The world can go to hell, but you need to protect your sons."

Related Characters: Koh Hansu (speaker), Baek Isak, Noa Baek, Sunja Baek

Related Themes:

Page Number: 199

Explanation and Analysis

After Isak's death, when Sunja and Kyunghee are working as cooks in Kim Changho's restaurant, Sunja receives one of the biggest shocks of her life—that Hansu, whom she hasn't seen for over a decade, has been secretly keeping tabs on her all along. He even created her current job, so she's been working for him without knowing it. Now, Hansu tells her that, contrary to propaganda, Japan is losing the war and will soon be subject to American bombing. He's giving her the chance to flee to the countryside with her family, a chance she wouldn't be likely to find without his resources and connections, however shady and criminal. Hansu's words bring several things to light—first, just how closely he's been monitoring the details of Sunja's and Noa's lives; second, that Hansu and Sunja have a strong survival instinct in common; and finally, the instinct that will motivate Sunja's choices from now on—the drive to protect her boys, even when it means cooperating with someone shady like Hansu whose help she's rejected in the past.

Book 2, Chapter 9 Quotes

❝ "I'm a businessman. And I want you to be a businessman. And whenever you go to these meetings, I want you to think for yourself, and I want you to think about promoting your own interests no matter what. All these people—both the Japanese and the Koreans [...] keep thinking about the group. But here's the truth: There's no such thing as a benevolent leader. I protect you because you work for me. If you act like a fool and go against my interests, then I can't protect you. [...] You lived with that farmer Tamaguchi who sold sweet potatoes for obscene prices to starving Japanese during a time of war. He violated wartime regulations, and I helped him, because he wanted money and I do, too. He probably thinks he's a decent, respectable Japanese, or some kind of proud nationalist—don't they all? He's a terrible Japanese, but a smart businessman. I'm not a good Korean, and I'm not a Japanese. [...] So I'm not going to tell you not to go to any meetings or not to join any group. But know this: Those communists don't care about you. They don't care about anybody. You're crazy if you think they care about Korea."

Related Characters: Koh Hansu (speaker), Kim Changho

Related Themes:

Page Number: 229

Explanation and Analysis

After the war, Hansu takes his employee and protege, Kim Changho, out for a drink. Changho has been attending socialist meetings and contemplating a move back to the newly formed nation of North Korea to help rebuild it. Hansu tries to reason with him, and in so doing, he reveals much about both his personal philosophy and his character. Basically, Hansu only believes in himself and looking out for his own advantage, not adhering to any philosophy or pledging allegiance to a leader or nation. No matter what group or ideology people align themselves with, Hansu believes, their motivations ultimately come down to maintaining power and advancing their own interests. Their followers' well-being only enters the equation insofar as it helps secure their own. So Changho can choose to justify his actions by whatever philosophy makes him happy—like the farmer Tamaguchi's exploitative potato sales—but in the end, Hansu tells him, he needs to put himself first. As it turns out, Changho does end up moving back to Korea, but it's out of heartbreak over Kyunghee, who rejects him, rather than out of political conviction.

Book 2, Chapter 10 Quotes

Mozasu knew he was becoming one of the bad Koreans. Police officers often arrested Koreans for stealing or home brewing. Every week, someone on his street got in trouble with the police. Noa would say that because some Koreans broke the law, everyone got blamed. On every block in Ikaino, there was a man who beat his wife, and there were girls who worked in bars who were said to take money for favors. Noa said that Koreans had to raise themselves up by working harder and being better. Mozasu just wanted to hit everyone who said mean things.

Related Characters: Noa Baek, Mozasu Baek

Related Themes:

Page Number: 243

Explanation and Analysis

As Mozasu and Noa grow up in Osaka's Korean neighborhood of Ikaino, they are dogged by the derogatory attitudes of some Japanese people, which hold that there are "good Koreans" and "bad Koreans." Mozasu's and Noa's responses to these attitudes actually help to illustrate the respective "types." Noa tries hard to be a "good Korean," to rise above prejudice by keeping his behavior above reproach and achieving as much as he can. In Noa's view, when Koreans break the law or engage in low-class behaviors, all other Koreans are dragged down with them, like one drop of ink in a glass of water. So, from his perspective, all Koreans have a responsibility to be "good" on the terms of Japanese society. Mozasu, on the other hand, is developing a reputation for being a "bad Korean"—getting into fights with people who make fun of him. He doesn't care about what society thinks; he just wants to stand up for himself and those he loves when unjust things are said. These divergent attitudes play out in the brothers' lives as adults, too—Mozasu is happy to make a fortune in pachinko, even though it's considered a "dirty" profession; Noa works so hard to align with Japanese cultural expectations that he begins to pass as a Japanese person, even becoming a citizen.

Book 2, Chapter 17 Quotes

Mozasu couldn't imagine being so quiet all the time; he would miss the bustle of the pachinko parlor. He loved all the moving pieces of his large, noisy business. His Presbyterian minister father had believed in a divine design, and Mozasu believed that life was like this game where the player could adjust the dials yet also expect the uncertainty of factors he couldn't control. He understood why his customers wanted to play something that looked fixed but which also left room for randomness and hope.

Related Characters: Baek Isak, Yumi, Mozasu Baek

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 292

Explanation and Analysis

When Mozasu is a young man, he begins dating a quiet Korean seamstress named Yumi. He's struck by the differences between them—while Yumi can sit still for hours making precise stitches, Mozasu thrives in a fast-paced, ever-changing environment. For Mozasu, too, pachinko is symbolic of his feelings about life in general. Isak had believed in divine providence, but Mozasu—who, it's worth noting, was only a toddler when Isak died—sees life as a blend of personal effort and chance. Much like Koreans' marginalized position within Japanese society, the pinball game looks "fixed," but there's still hope that a player will stumble across a big payout. This attitude about life is what keeps Mozasu working so hard to build successful pachinko parlors, even knowing that many factors in Japan are stacked against him. This insight into his players' psyches—their recurrent appetite for hope amidst mostly disappointing circumstances—is what makes him so successful at what he does.

Book 2, Chapter 18 Quotes

❝ Hansu did not believe in nationalism, religion, or even love, but he trusted in education. Above all, he believed that a man must learn constantly. […] It thrilled him that Noa could read and write English so beautifully—a language he knew was essential in the world. Noa had recommended books to him, and Hansu had read them, because he wanted to know the things his son knew.

The young man's extraordinary scholarship was something Hansu knew he had to nurture. Hansu was not sure what he wanted Noa to do when he graduated; he was careful not to say too much, because it was clear that Noa had some of his own ideas. Hansu wanted to back him, the way he wanted to back good business plans.

Related Characters: Noa Baek, Koh Hansu

Related Themes:

Page Number: 303

Explanation and Analysis

Though Min Jin Lee doesn't give as many insights into Hansu's mind as she does into other characters', this quote offers a rare glimpse into his motivations. At this time, Mozasu is a English literature student at prestigious Waseda University, an education which Hansu has insisted upon financing. From Hansu's thoughts on Mozasu's schooling, it's evident that he believes in education not as an end in itself, but as a key to success in the world—one that he himself has lacked, but which he now has the opportunity to nurture in his son. Not only that, but he wants Noa to do something remarkable when he graduates, and Hansu wants to invest in whatever that happens to be. This is in keeping with prior hints about Hansu's character—that he's interested in people mainly as means of advancing his own purposes. Noa, as Isak's only son, is a particularly special case, perhaps a way for Hansu to project a version of himself into the world as he's wished he could have been.

Book 2, Chapter 19 Quotes

❝ Noa stared at her. She would always believe that he was someone else, that he wasn't himself but some fanciful idea of a foreign person; she would always feel like she was someone special because she had condescended to be with someone everyone else hated. His presence would prove to the world that she was a good person, an educated person, a liberal person. Noa didn't care about being Korean when he was with her; in fact, he didn't care about being Korean or Japanese with anyone. He wanted to be, to be just himself, whatever that meant; he wanted to forget himself sometimes. But that wasn't possible. It would never be possible with her.

Related Characters: Akiko Fumeki, Noa Baek

Related Themes:

Page Number: 307

Explanation and Analysis

While he's a student at Waseda, Noa dates his first girlfriend, a Japanese girl named Akiko who's known as the campus radical. He's attracted to her boldness in asking questions about everything, which contrasts with his own reserve and devotion to his professors. Their relationship begins to break down, however, as Akiko turns her persistent questioning on him, seemingly fascinated with Noa's Korean family background. Finally, he blows up in anger when Akiko tells him that it "doesn't bother [her] at all" that he's Korean, though it would bother her racist parents, and that she loves Koreans because they're handsome and hardworking. Her words make Noa realize that Akiko's not really in a different category from her anti-Korean parents at all. She sees herself as special for being willing to date someone like him, but Noa doesn't want to be viewed as "Korean," good or bad. At this moment he begins to realize that though he's always longed to be valued as just human, he's not going to find that in his relationship with Akiko.

"Yakuza are the filthiest people in Japan. They are thugs; they are common criminals. They frighten shopkeepers; they sell drugs; they control prostitution; and they hurt innocent people. All the worst Koreans are members of these gangs. I took money for my education from a yakuza, and you thought this was acceptable? I will never be able to wash this dirt from my name. You can't be very bright," he said. "How can you make something clean from something dirty? And now, you have made me dirty," Noa said quietly, as if he was learning this as he was saying it to her. "All my life, I have had Japanese telling me that my blood is Korean— that Koreans are angry, violent, cunning, and deceitful criminals. All my life, I had to endure this. I tried to be as honest and humble as Baek Isak was; I never raised my voice. But this blood, my blood is Korean, and now I learn that my blood is yakuza blood. I can never change this, no matter what I do. It would have been better if I were never born. How could you have ruined my life? How could you be so imprudent? A foolish mother and a criminal father. I am cursed."

Related Characters: Noa Baek (speaker), Baek Isak, Koh Hansu, Sunja Baek

Related Themes:

Page Number: 311

Explanation and Analysis

During his fight with Akiko, Noa's girlfriend had pointed out how clearly he resembles Hansu, something he'd failed to recognize before. He goes straight to Osaka to confront Sunja with this realization, crushed to confirm that he's the son of one of the "worst Koreans," a gangster. This is especially devastating for Noa because of how hard he's worked to be a "good," unobjectionable Korean who's not implicated in the "dirty" activities many Japanese people associate with them. He's tried to exemplify the kindness and humility of Isak, the man he'd believed to be his father. Now he learns that, as Hansu's son, he has yakuza in his very blood, something that he can never change no matter what he does, and a mockery of his lifelong efforts. Sunja, on the other hand, has always believed that it's possible to "make something clean from something dirty," as in some ways, that's exactly what Isak did for her by rescuing her from a disgraceful situation. She's seen Isak's loving fatherhood as more important than mere blood. But Noa, forced to counter racist attitudes all his life, sees blood as far more consequential. He carries this sense of being "cursed" to his grave.

Book 3, Chapter 4 Quotes

He believed that she'd been foolish for refusing to be his wife in Korea. What did it matter that he had a marriage in Japan? He would have taken excellent care of her and Noa. They would have had other children. She would never have had to work in an open market or in a restaurant kitchen. Nevertheless, he had to admire her for not taking his money the way any young girl did these days. In Tokyo, it was possible for a man to buy a girl for a bottle of French perfume or a pair of shoes from Italy.

Related Characters: Sunja Baek, Koh Hansu

Related Themes:

Page Number: 351

Explanation and Analysis

Later in the novel, Hansu drops into Sunja's life as he periodically does, picking up her and her little grandson Solomon from Solomon's preschool one day. As he watches Sunja prepare their dinner at Mozasu's house, he reflects on their history together. Even some 30 years after their affair, Hansu still thinks that Sunja should have agreed to be his "wife." Though he still has feelings for her, this goes to show that Hansu still doesn't fully understand Sunja and couldn't have given her the kind of respectful devotion she wanted. Unless Hansu could have provided for her within a marriage based on mutual love—like what she witnessed between Hoonie and Yangjin and experienced with Isak—Sunja didn't have a choice but to turn him down and to support herself and her family with as much dignity as she could. Hansu, however, seems to view love as something essentially transactive, as suggested by his thoughts on "buying a girl." This is foreign to Sunja and keeps her from giving in to Hansu, even when it seems like a rational choice.

Book 3, Chapter 5 Quotes

The marriage was a stable one, and eight years passed quickly. The couple did not quarrel. Noa did not love Risa in the way he had his college girlfriend, but that was a good thing, he thought. Never again, he swore, would he be that vulnerable to another person. Noa remained careful around his new family. Though he valued his wife and children as a kind of second chance, in no way did he see his current life as a rebirth. Noa carried the story of his life as a Korean like a dark, heavy rock within him. Not a day passed when he didn't fear being discovered.

Related Characters: Akiko Fumeki, Risa Iwamura, Noa

Baek

Related Themes:

Page Number: 358

Explanation and Analysis

After Noa finds out that Hansu is his father, he drops out of Waseda University and starts a new life in Nagano, cutting off contact with his family. He even begins passing as Japanese man, getting a job in a pachinko business and marrying Risa, a fellow employee there. Like other men in the story, such as Mozasu with both Yumi and Etsuko, Noa is drawn to a woman whom society views as "cursed"—in this case, the daughter of a disgraced man who killed himself. Noa seems to be drawn to her both out of sympathy and out of an innate sense that he deserves nothing "better." Though he and Risa are happy, Noa never entrusts her with the knowledge that he's Korean. And unlike his mother, Sunja, for whom marriage to Isak truly offered a new lease on life, Noa finds his marriage as at best a reprieve. He carries the "shame" of his heritage at all times, and when it finally comes back to haunt him 16 years later in the form of Sunja's visit, he ultimately commits suicide—the "curse" of his blood becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Book 3, Chapter 9 Quotes

"It is hopeless. I cannot change his fate. He is Korean. He has to get those papers, and he has to follow all the steps of the law perfectly. Once, at a ward office, a clerk told me that I was a guest in his country."

"You and Solomon were born here."

"Yes, my brother, Noa, was born here, too. And now he is dead." Mozasu covered his face with his hands.

Etsuko sighed.

"Anyway, the clerk was not wrong. And this is something Solomon must understand. We can be deported. We have no motherland. Life is full of things he cannot control so he must adapt. My boy has to survive."

Related Characters: Etsuko Nagatomi, Mozasu Baek (speaker), Noa Baek, Solomon Baek

Related Themes:

Page Number: 395

Explanation and Analysis

When Mozasu's son, Solomon, turns 14, he's required to register with the Japanese government for permission to stay in Japan. Even though he's never been to Korea and is a citizen of neither North nor South Korea, Solomon could technically be deported. Mozasu, who is normally not so reflective regarding questions of "fate," is emotional on this occasion. He feels ashamed that his innocent son has to be fingerprinted like a criminal for no good reason. He tells his girlfriend, Etsuko, that in order to survive, Solomon must simply learn to adapt to those things he can't control. In this he sounds much like his uncle Yoseb, who'd often said that adaptation was the only realistic strategy for Koreans at the mercy of such policies. Nevertheless, Mozasu still works hard to give Solomon every Western educational opportunity, hoping his son will have greater freedom to succeed. Like the players of pachinko who've made his fortune, Mozasu keeps coming back to hope, even when the game seems rigged.

Book 3, Chapter 11 Quotes

Why did her family think pachinko was so terrible? Her father, a traveling salesman, had sold expensive life insurance policies to isolated housewives who couldn't afford them, and Mozasu created spaces where grown men and women could play pinball for money. Both men had made money from chance and fear and loneliness. Every morning, Mozasu and his men tinkered with the machines to fix the outcomes—there could only be a few winners and a lot of losers. And yet we played on, because we had hope that we might be the lucky ones. How could you get angry at the ones who wanted to be in the game? Etsuko had failed in this important way—she had not taught her children to hope, to believe in the perhaps absurd possibility that they might win. Pachinko was a foolish game, but life was not.

Related Characters: Mozasu Baek, Etsuko Nagatomi

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 406

Explanation and Analysis

In this quote, Etsuko, Mozasu's girlfriend, reflects on Mozasu's business and the way it places him in a marginalized position within society. The main reason Etsuko won't say yes to Mozasu's marriage proposals is that she's already brought shame on her family by committing adultery several times and getting divorced, and she doesn't want to add insult to injury by marrying a pachinko

millionaire. Yet she thinks that her own father's livelihood hadn't been so different. It seems as if the only difference is that insurance is something that respectable middle-class people can sell, yet pachinko is a business for underclass Koreans—people for whom society has no place. Etsuko goes on to reflect that, while pachinko itself might be silly, the instinct to hope is only human. While Mozasu has gone to great lengths to instill hope in his own son, Etsuko believes she has failed to teach her own children, especially her rebellious daughter Hana, how to hope. She fears that instead, she's only taught Hana—who, at 15, already has problems with alcohol and will soon run away into prostitution—to act in ways that reinforce her self-loathing and shame. The example of Etsuko's family shows that in *Pachinko*, there are many ways that families can fall victim to society's rejection.

Book 3, Chapter 12 Quotes

❝ "*Go-saeng*," Yangjin said out loud. "A woman's lot is to suffer."

"Yes, *go-saeng*." Kyunghee nodded, repeating the word for suffering.

All her life, Sunja had heard this sentiment from other women, that they must suffer—suffer as a girl, suffer as a wife, suffer as a mother, die suffering. *Go-saeng*—the word made her sick. What else was there besides this? She had suffered to create a better life for Noa, and yet it was not enough. Should she have taught her son to suffer the humiliation that she'd drunk like water? In the end, he had refused to suffer the conditions of his birth.

[...]

Noa had been a sensitive child who had believed that if he followed all the rules and was the best, then somehow the hostile world would change its mind. His death may have been her fault for having allowed him to believe in such cruel ideals.

Related Characters: Kyunghee Baek, Yangjin (speaker), Noa Baek, Sunja Baek

Related Themes:

Page Number: 414

Explanation and Analysis

This quote sums up Sunja's grief and guilt over Noa's death, as well as the mindsets that help reinforce women's burdens throughout the book. When Yangjin is bedridden, she and Kyunghee love to watch a television program called *Other Lands*, in which Japanese expatriates from around the world are interviewed. One day in an episode of *Other Lands*, an ethnically Japanese lady in South America repeats the proverb, heard elsewhere in *Pachinko*, "A woman's lot is to suffer." Yangjin and Kyunghee echo the sentiment, but Sunja is disgusted by this attitude. She suffered all her life to create better opportunities for Noa, but in the end, her son gave up on life. Sunja wonders what the point of her suffering has been, and if she is at fault for having tried to shield Noa too much from suffering himself. If she hadn't, then maybe Noa wouldn't gone to such lengths—leaving his family, pretending to be someone he wasn't, finally taking his own life—to orchestrate an escape from suffering, an effort which ended up costing them all in the end.

Book 3, Chapter 20 Quotes

❝ "Japan will never change. [...] The *zainichi* can't leave, nee? But it's not just you. Japan will never take people like my mother back into society again; it will never take back people like me. And we're Japanese! I'm diseased. I got this from some Japanese guy who owned an old trading company. He's dead now. But nobody cares. The doctors here, even, they just want me to go away. So listen, Solomon, you should stay here and not go back to the States, and you should take over your papa's business. Become so rich that you can do whatever you want. But, my beautiful Solomon, they're never going to think we're okay. Do you know what I mean?" Hana stared at him. "Do what I tell you to do."

Related Characters: Hana (speaker), Mozasu Baek, Solomon Baek

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 462

Explanation and Analysis

When Hana is dying from AIDS, Solomon goes to visit her. He has just received the devastating news of his firing at work, due to his boss's fear of Solomon's family's connections with the yakuza. Hana, in a kind of summary statement for the whole of *Pachinko*, tells Solomon that there's no point in fighting ingrained societal attitudes that will never change. Just as the *zainichi* (a term for foreigners residing in Japan) will never be fully integrated into society, society will never accept divorced women like her mother or diseased women like herself. She urges Solomon not to try to become a businessman who's respectable in the eyes of society; instead he should stay in the family pachinko

business, following in his father's footsteps by doing so with honesty and integrity. But he shouldn't become rich out of a desire to win acceptance in society, like Mozasu did, because that will never happen. In a way, Hana's advice, and Solomon's subsequent choice to join his father's business, feels defeatist, but it could also be read as a rejection of the unyielding dictates of society, a decision to forge a good life on one's own terms.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 1

At the turn of the twentieth century, on the small Korean island of Yeongdo, an aging fisherman and his wife begin taking in lodgers for extra money. The couple has one son, Hoonie, who has a cleft palate and a twisted foot. In 1910, Japan annexes Korea. When their rent goes up, the couple moves out of their bedroom and sleeps in an anteroom to make space for more lodgers.

Right away, there is a juxtaposition between major world events and local, particular, seemingly insignificant people. The Yeongdo couple does what small things they can to improve their situation in the face of large-scale political change.

Hoonie's parents raise him to be "clever and diligent" because they don't know who will care for him after they're gone. One day, when Hoonie is 28, the village matchmaker visits his mother. Impressed by the relative prosperity of the boardinghouse, the matchmaker thinks that even Hoonie can find a healthy bride. She suggests Yangjin, a young girl from an impoverished family on the other side of the island. Hearing all this, Hoonie's mother tries to keep herself calm.

Because of Hoonie's birth defects, he and his parents expected him to be unmarriageable. But he is intelligent and hardworking, and his family runs a successful business, so with many Koreans struggling under colonial rule, he is considered to be a good match after all.

Soon, Hoonie and Yangjin are quietly married. After losing several children, Yangjin gives birth to Sunja, a daughter, who thrives. Hoonie treasures and dotes on the girl. When Sunja is 13, Hoonie dies of tuberculosis, and his wife and daughter are shattered. However, the next morning, Yangjin gets up as usual and goes to work.

Hoonie and Yangjin have a happy marriage, but their union is marked by sorrow until Sunja comes along. Hoonie's death devastates both women, but Yangjin does what is necessary—continuing to provide for her family in the midst of heartache.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 2

With the worldwide Depression hitting Korea, the winter of 1932 is an especially difficult one. At the same time, the widowed Yangjin has to learn how to run the boardinghouse on her own and be an employer. She can't raise the rent on her struggling boarders, so she stretches meals out of what scanty provisions she has.

Yangjin has to learn how to be a savvy, resourceful businesswoman under particularly difficult circumstances—newly bereaved and in an environment of overall financial struggle.

One evening, Yangjin listens as some boarders, the Chung brothers, talk politics over dinner. Japan is currently at war with China. The brothers boast on behalf of Korea's "elder brother," China, saying that Japan "is just a bad seed." The young Chungs have always lived under colonial rule, so they long for another nation to prevail where their own rulers have failed. Yangjin remembers how Hoonie used to listen to such talk, then sigh and say, "No matter." Regardless of the war's outcome, the next day's chores still need to be done.

By this point in the twentieth century, some Koreans have never known life without Japanese imperial rule, but it's a perpetual topic of discussion. The theme of "bad blood," which will be recurrent in the novel, is already present in the Chung brothers' comment about Japan. While Hoonie had paid attention to politics, he believed it had limited impact on daily living, and Yangjin, with her many cares, sees things the same way.

A young, sickly man from Pyongyang arrives at the boardinghouse door after a long journey. Yangjin is surprised by the sight of him—he's handsome and elegant in Western-style, professional clothing. The man introduces himself as Baek Isak and explains that his brother, Yoseb, had stayed here years ago. He's looking for a place to stay on his way to Osaka. Yangjin knows that an evidently wealthy man like Baek Isak would expect his own room, and she reluctantly explains that they have no space for him. At the last moment, however, she tells him there's just enough room for him to sleep beside the other lodgers, and he gratefully accepts.

The arrival of Baek Isak, who appears so different from the typical boardinghouse lodger, signals an impending change in the life of Yangjin's family. Because of Isak's Western-influenced dress, Yangjin knows he's from the upper class and would expect fancier accommodations. However, Isak gladly accepts what she's able to offer, suggesting his humility—and also hinting at how sick Isak really is at this moment.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 3

Baek Isak sleeps through the whole next day. The coal man, Jun, stops by for his payment and chats with Yangjin about the mysterious new boarder. He helped Isak find the boardinghouse the night before and explains that Isak is a Protestant minister, "the kind that marries," and is on his way to join his brother in Japan.

Isak's Christian faith is another thing that makes him an outsider, since Christianity is a minority religion in Korea, and even more so in Japan, at this time. Under colonial rule, some Koreans immigrated to Japan in search of better work opportunities, as Isak's brother Yoseb has done.

A week ago, Sunja had confessed to Yangjin that she is pregnant, and that the baby's father won't marry her. Nobody else knows, but Sunja and her mother haven't spoken since. But when they notice that the unconscious Isak has coughed up blood, they realize he probably has tuberculosis and must be moved to a separate room. Isak silently curses himself for having exposed the household to harm.

Because of Hoonie's death from tuberculosis, the signs of the disease would be instantly recognizable, and fearful, for the women. Interestingly, the idea of Isak possibly tainting the family will be disproven by his later actions.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 4

The novel flashes back to six months earlier, when Sunja first met the new fish broker, Koh Hansu. While Sunja's doing the marketing, Mrs. Jun, the seaweed seller, observes that Hansu is staring at Sunja. Hansu, wearing light-colored Western clothing, stands out from the other fish brokers "like an elegant bird." The fish brokers aren't trusted by the villagers because of their collaboration with Japanese officials, but the fishermen must stay on good terms with them, or run the risk that the brokers won't buy their catch.

Wealthy, well-dressed, and elegant, Hansu appears in Sunja's familiar world like an exotic species. He is clearly an outsider, not just because of his wealthy status, but because of his compromised position as someone who cooperates with the colonial Japanese while capitalizing on the labor of Korean workers.

Sunja ignores Hansu's stare and buys her seaweed. When she chats with Mrs. Jun about her mother Yangjin's hard work, Mrs. Jun tells her that "a woman's life is endless work and suffering" and that Sunja must expect this in her own life.

The open-air market, with its atmosphere of female entrepreneurship and familiar chatter, will continue to be significant in Sunja's life. Mrs. Jun's remark about women's suffering will also be a recurrent refrain. For now, though, the teenaged Sunja doesn't have enough experience to corroborate Mrs. Jun's claim.

From then on, Hansu "seemed to be everywhere," and he begins asking Sunja questions while she's doing her marketing. He sounds like "a strong person who [is] trying to sound gentle." She never answers him. Meanwhile, Hansu desires Sunja and finds something unique about her. He learns her routine and is confident that they will meet eventually.

Hansu's seeming "to be everywhere" sets the tone for his ubiquity later in the story and throughout Sunja's life. From early on, it seems that Hansu has the attitude of a powerful man who's used to getting what he wants and can afford to be patient.

One day in June, Sunja is walking home from the market when three Japanese high school boys start harassing her, stealing things out of her basket and making suggestive remarks. After one of the boys starts aggressively fondling her, Hansu suddenly appears, gripping the boy by the hair and menacingly threatening their lives in perfect Japanese. Although Hansu sounds Japanese, the boys can tell that Hansu is Korean "from his actions." One of the boys is so frightened he cries and wets his school uniform.

Sunja feels powerless in this situation, but because he's been keeping an eye on her, Hansu quickly swoops in to the rescue. Sunja doesn't understand Hansu's threats in Japanese and doesn't realize how menacing he sounds, but the boys do, and even though they'd been mocking Koreans moments before, they're terrified of Hansu's brute strength.

After Hansu forces the boys to formally apologize and sends them away, he tries to calm a weeping Sunja. He warns her never to walk alone in public, since the colonial government is looking for girls to send to China for the Japanese soldiers. Sunja knows he's right, since it's "always possible for a woman to be disgraced." He walks her to the ferry, but she's too shaken to thank him.

Sunja is overwhelmed by this encounter, partly because she's not used to seeing a Korean standing up to Japanese people with impunity. The fate of Korean girls cruelly exploited by Japanese soldiers shows how vulnerable a young woman can be, especially under colonial domination. Sunja's worries about "being disgraced" are ironic in light of what's to come between her and Hansu. Now that Hansu has started watching Sunja, he isn't going to stop.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 5

The next market day, Sunja thanks Hansu, and he asks her to meet him on the beach where she does the laundry. He tells Sunja she can call him *Oppa* (older brother). He asks her about her life and tells her about his childhood; Hansu grew up very poor and had to forage and steal to keep himself and his alcoholic father alive. Sunja and Hansu make plans to meet every third day when Sunja's doing the laundry. Sunja feels like everything has changed.

Hansu is already familiar with Sunja's weekly routine, something she naïvely accepts. By using endearments and confiding in her, Hansu forges a sense of intimacy between the two of them. Like Sunja's family, Hansu is familiar with being in need, but unlike them, he has stolen to survive. Sunja has never received this kind of romantic attention from a man before and takes Hansu's behavior toward her at face value.

For three months, Sunja and Hansu continue meeting on the beach every wash day, and Hansu tells her stories of his travels and brings her gifts from abroad. Sunja enjoys having someone to talk to about her life and is surprised by the sparks of attraction she feels. One day in the fall, Yangjin sends Sunja to pick mushrooms in the forest. Hansu asks to come along, since he's good at finding edible mushrooms. As they walk in the woods, Hansu tells Sunja, "You want to see a very bad man? Make an ordinary man successful beyond his imagination. Let's see how good he is when he can do whatever he wants."

Hansu patiently stokes Sunja's affections, and Sunja, never having had a confidant before, develops genuine feelings for Hansu. She doesn't know what to make of the new feelings she's experiencing. On another note, Hansu's words about success and wickedness foreshadow later developments in his own character.

Sunja is puzzled by their outing and by Hansu's continued interest in her, since Hansu seems like neither a friend nor a "sweetheart." After they have gathered mushrooms, Hansu begins touching her underneath her clothes, and Sunja lets him undress her. They have sex, and Sunja is shocked by how much it hurts. Hansu comforts her and calls her his "dear girl."

Though Sunja lets Hansu do what he likes, she feels conflicted about it and is confused as to the nature of their relationship.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 6

Sunja wants to marry Hansu and is soon pleased to discover that she's pregnant. After Hansu returns from a business trip, he surprises her with a gold pocket watch from London. When Sunja proudly tells him she's pregnant, Hansu tells her that he has a wife and three daughters in Osaka. He explains that he will take good care of Sunja, but he cannot marry her.

Having no frame of reference for any other possibility, Sunja has innocently imagined that she and Hansu will marry and establish a home and family together. She has never envisioned that Hansu is leading a completely separate life elsewhere. This moment shows just how sheltered Sunja is and how greatly Hansu has taken advantage of her.

Hansu, meanwhile, is excited about the possibility of a son, and he gives Sunja money for her food cravings. He thinks happily about having a wife and family in Korea; he has "come to depend on [Sunja's] innocence and adoration." He offers to buy Yangjin's boardinghouse so that the women no longer have to work. But Sunja drops Hansu's money on the beach, realizing how foolish she's been and how disgraced she now is; the boardinghouse will be "contaminated by her shame." She thinks about Hoonie, her beloved father, and how she's betrayed him by failing to respect herself. She tells Hansu she'll kill herself if he comes near her again.

Hansu's motivations regarding Sunja have been self-serving; he only thinks about what he can gain from her, and he can afford to do what he likes with her. He imagines she can be content to be his mistress, kept and supported by him. But Sunja feels completely insulted and disgraced by his intentions, knowing this isn't what her father raised her to be.

Hansu doesn't understand why Sunja is upset. He assures her that he will honor his obligations and that she is "someone [he] would marry." Sunja suddenly feels clear about everything—"she expected him to treat her the way her own parents had treated her." She knows they would never have wanted her to be some rich man's mistress. Sunja wants to know what Hansu will do if she gives birth to a son with deformities like her father. Hansu asks if Sunja was trying to get him to marry her "because you couldn't marry a normal fellow." Sunja runs home.

Hansu doesn't understand Sunja's feelings, because he's so accustomed to thinking about his romantic relationships in terms of what suits him. He thinks classifying her as "someone [he] would marry," hypothetically, is an honor, but to Sunja, it's cruel—all that matters is that he won't *marry her. She was raised with straightforward love and respect, so his behavior is foreign to her, and she was manipulated into thinking he's something he isn't. Hansu also shows how cruel he can be with his comment about Sunja's beloved father.*

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 7

At the boardinghouse, Baek Isak's health has improved dramatically. The village pharmacist clears him to travel to Osaka in a few weeks. When Yangjin accompanies the still weakened pastor in a walk along the beach, she confides in him that Sunja is pregnant. She explains that it would already have been difficult for Sunja to marry, but now it will be impossible, and her child cannot be registered under the family name. Isak is not shocked, and he asks if it would be okay for him to speak to Sunja. Although Yangjin and her family are not Christians, Yangjin agrees that it might help.

Yangjin instinctively trusts in the young pastor even though they don't share a common belief system. She finally confides her gnawing concerns for Sunja, whose father's disabilities already make her a difficult marriage prospect, and whose pregnancy out of wedlock virtually prevents any chance at marriage. Isak is concerned for Sunja, believes the best about her, and wants to help—all traits highlighting his gentle, compassionate nature. His concern for both women's feelings and welfare stands in stark contrast to Hansu's unfeeling personality.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 8

Isak had grown up with serious illnesses and hadn't expected much of a future; simply graduating from seminary had been an unexpected milestone. Isak's older brother, Samoel, had been badly beaten by colonial police after a Korean independence protest and died of his injuries. The outcome of these events is that Isak has been "almost inured to death" and believes that he must live a brave life in honor of his brother.

After a lifetime of being viewed as an invalid and living in the shadow of a heroic older brother, Isak doesn't cling tightly to his own survival and wants to make an impact with whatever time he has. The Korean independence movement of 1919, also known as the March First Movement, was brutally suppressed by imperial police and military, resulting in thousands of deaths.

Isak goes to meet with Pastor Shin, the pastor of a nearby church. They talk about Isak's impending journey to Osaka, where he'll work at a church, and the colonial government's crackdown on churches here in Korea. Changing the subject, Isak asks if they might discuss the Old Testament book of Hosea. In this book of the Bible, God makes the prophet Hosea marry a harlot and be a father to her children. The pastors discuss the fact that the story symbolizes God's enduring love for his children, even when they are most difficult to love.

The Japanese colonial government is unfriendly to Korean Christians, but this feels secondary to Isak right now. He obviously has some practical questions in mind—relating, it seems, to the pregnant Sunja—and is appealing to a beloved biblical story in order to make his case to his fellow pastor.

Isak tells Pastor Shin about Yangjin and Sunja's sacrificial care for him while he was suffering from tuberculosis and also explains Sunja's plight. He says that he wants to propose to Sunja, and if she says yes, he wants Pastor Shin to marry them before they go to Japan. He has decided that providing Sunja and her baby with a name is the one thing Isak can do for them. Pastor Shin, whose ideals have cooled since losing his wife and four of his children to cholera, feels incredulous. If he hadn't heard such good things about Isak, he would think the man a "religious lunatic."

Isak barely knows Sunja, so his gesture is a bold and risky one. Even his fellow pastor, disillusioned by personal suffering and political pressure, thinks Isak is terribly naïve. But in a context where Sunja and her baby would effectively be outcasts because of Sunja's lack of a husband, Isak's offer might be their best hope for a relatively normal life.

Isak tells Pastor Shin that he had been studying Hosea the morning before Yangjin spoke to him, and that he believes God is calling him to take this step. He hopes that his life can be important, perhaps not on a grand scale like Samoel's, but that he can still help a few people. Though Shin has reservations, he sees that Isak won't be dissuaded, and he agrees to meet with Sunja and her mother.

Pastor Shin isn't convinced that Isak's Bible study and subsequent conversation with Yangjin aren't just coincidence. However, he recognizes Isak's urge to make his life count, if only on a small scale, and he knows that Sunja will be in an incredibly vulnerable position without Isak's help.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 9

That night, Sunja lies awake thinking about her baby and about Hansu, who has left Busan. She knows that if only she'd agreed to be Hansu's mistress, she wouldn't be missing him now. Yet she also thinks of Hoonie's devoted love for her and Yangjin, and she can't imagine sharing a man she loves with another woman. Despite all this, she can't stop herself from missing Hansu.

Hoonie's faithfulness makes him the ideal husband and father in Sunja's mind, and Sunja knows she can't settle for what Hansu would provide her in contrast. Yet Hansu was her first love, and she can't ignore his impact on her, or the reality of what she's giving up by refusing his offer.

The next morning, a stunned and grateful Yangjin gives Isak permission to propose to Sunja. When she informs Sunja of Isak's intentions, Sunja is puzzled by his motivations, but immediately grasps this as a lifeline for herself, her mother, and her baby. The next day Isak and Sunja take a walk together, and on the Yeongdo ferry, Isak asks her what she thinks of his offer. Sunja expresses her gratitude. When Isak asks her if she thinks she can come to love God, Sunja agrees.

Sunja doesn't understand Isak's desire to marry her, but she doesn't have to deliberate long about his offer; she knows he is saving her and her mother from shame, and there will be no better future for her and her baby. Isak hopes that Sunja will come to share his faith, and Sunja agrees to try, even though she has little comprehension of it at this point.

Isak takes Sunja to a Japanese noodle restaurant, and they talk about their future life in Osaka. Isak asks Sunja if she thinks she can love him, and if she can try to forget Hansu. Sunja tells him she will do her best to be a good wife.

Sunja is already beginning to care for Isak and desires to be faithful to him, but she knows it won't be easy to forget Hansu. Isak seems to be realistic about this, too.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 10

A week later, Sunja, Yangjin, and Isak go to visit Pastor Shin. The pastor asks Sunja how she feels about marrying Isak. Sunja says she is grateful for Isak's "painful sacrifice" and will serve him as best she can. Isak seems troubled by this. When Pastor Shin asks Sunja if she repents of her sin and seeks forgiveness, Sunja cries, not really understanding.

Sunja feels indebted to Isak and wants Pastor Shin, an unfamiliar authority figure, to understand this. However, it seems that Isak wants Sunja to view him as a loving husband, not simply a benefactor. Sunja is also confused and intimidated by Pastor Shin's unfamiliar religious language, not knowing what response he's looking for.

Isak intervenes, saying that he believes Sunja will be a good wife and that the marriage will benefit him as much as it benefits Sunja. Pastor Shin relents, but he exhorts Sunja, "Be perfect, child. Every Korean must be on his best behavior over there [...] One bad Korean ruins it for thousands of others." Then he prays for Isak and Sunja and marries them within minutes.

Isak hates seeing Sunja put on the spot and instinctively tries to protect her, which again reveals his genuine and loving nature. Pastor Shin, on the other hand, wants to protect Isak from making a bad decision. Part of his concern stems from the pressures Koreans face under imperialism—in Japan, Koreans are already scorned and discriminated against, and thus Koreans must "Be perfect" as to not face even more prejudice and oppression.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 11

A few days later, Sunja and the boardinghouse's servant girls, sisters Bokhee and Dokhee, are doing laundry on the beach. The sisters speculate cheerfully about Sunja's future life in Osaka and give her a wedding gift, a pair of carved ducks. Sunja starts to cry, missing Hoonie. The sisters, who are orphans themselves, comfort her.

To Bokhee and Dokhee, Sunja's new life sounds exotic and exciting, but Sunja is coming to terms with the fact that she's about to lose everything beloved and familiar. She also misses her father, likely feeling that she's let him down and wishing he were here to comfort and guide her.

On the morning that Sunja and Isak leave for Japan, Yangjin and Sunja sit at the ferry terminal while Isak goes through customs. Yangjin has seen Hansu's gold watch, and Sunja ends up telling her the full story about him. Yangjin makes her promise not to see Hansu again, saying he's a bad man. Then she gives her Hoonie's mother's gold rings in case she needs to sell something for unexpected expenses. She gives Sunja last-minute marital advice and tells Sunja that it's now her job to make a good home for Isak and her child, who must not suffer.

Knowing she might never see her mother again, Sunja finally tells her more details about Hansu and their relationship. In response, Yangjin tries to impress on her daughter that Sunja's duty is toward Isak and her family now. Notably, Yangjin tells her that Isak and the child must not suffer no matter what, but she implies that Sunja, a woman, must expect suffering for herself.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 12

Yoseb Baek waits restlessly at the Osaka train station. He isn't surprised by his brother Isak's selfless act in marrying Sunja; as a boy, Isak used to give away much of his food to the household servants. Still, Sunja's circumstances are shocking. Yoseb's wife, Kyunghee, has warned him to reserve judgment until they meet their new sister-in-law.

The introduction of Isak's Osaka relatives—his brother Yoseb and sister-in-law Kyunghee—allows another perspective on Isak and Sunja's unconventional situation. According to Yoseb, Isak's sudden marriage, rooted in selflessness, isn't at all out of character for him.

Yoseb and Isak greet one another joyfully. Yoseb notices that his brother, whom he hasn't seen in 10 years, is no longer a boy. He had also met Sunja as a little girl, when he was a guest at the boardinghouse, but Sunja doesn't remember. She thanks Yoseb for his hospitality, and he thanks her and her mother, Yangjin, for saving Isak's life. He thinks that Sunja doesn't "look or talk like some village harlot." People stare at Sunja's traditional Korean clothing as the three head out of the station toward Yoseb's house.

In Japan, Sunja will face prejudices from multiple directions. Based on what he's heard of her circumstances, Yoseb assumes that Sunja will somehow look or act like a "harlot." Sunja also wears clothing in the traditional Korean village style, which causes her to stand out in a metropolis like Osaka.

As they travel toward Yoseb's house by trolley, Sunja takes in the sights of Osaka and remembers Hansu telling her about all these things. Before long, they reach the "misbegotten village" of Ikaino, the ghetto where the Koreans live. It's filled with poorly built shacks, ragged children, and animal odors. Sunja can't believe that Yoseb, a factory foreman, lives in such an impoverished setting.

In Sunja's mind, the glitter of Osaka is associated with her old lover, who'd promised to travel the world with her and give her all the best things. Instead, because of her rejection of Hansu, she's living in comparative squalor. Back in Korea, someone like Yoseb might have been fairly well off, but given racist imperial policies, he lives in a ghetto instead.

Yoseb explains to them that he and Kyunghee own their house, but nobody can know this. Most Koreans rent, and Japanese landlords won't rent them good properties. Sunja wonders how Hansu can afford to own many properties in Osaka. Kyunghee welcomes them warmly and ushers them into the house. Their small home is unexpectedly comfortable and inviting inside; Kyunghee, despite having grown up with servants, has taught herself how to keep a beautiful home.

In an impoverished neighborhood like Ikaino, knowledge of the Baeks' relative "wealth" in owning their home could invite envy and even crime. Under Japanese oppression, most Koreans have very limited options. In light of this, Sunja wonders how Hansu affords so much—little suspecting his criminal connections that will soon come to light.

Over tea, Yoseb lectures Isak about not being too generous toward neighbors or assuming that fellow Koreans are their friends. He explains that their house has been broken into, and that "bad" Koreans know that the police won't listen to Korean complaints. As Sunja helps Kyunghee prepare dinner, Kyunghee, who's barren, expresses joy over the coming baby and assures Sunja that they'll always be sisters.

The first night in Osaka sets the tone for much of Sunja and Isak's life in Japan. Colonialism sows mistrust and factionalism (disputes between smaller groups within one larger one) among the Korean population. Sunja and Kyunghee quickly form a sisterly bond, which will be a solace to both amidst poverty, loneliness, and struggle.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 13

After the family enjoys a long soak at the public bathhouse, Sunja feels hopeful about her new life. On the walk home, Yoseb continues lecturing his brother, warning Isak not to get mixed up in politics. He reminds Isak that he has his wife and child to think of, so he can't risk getting arrested for involvement in independence activities. Yoseb knows he sounds hysterical, but even though he remembers the goodness of life before colonialism, he's convinced that "protesting was for young men without families." Isak affectionately promises his brother that he'll behave.

Both Yoseb and Isak grew up with memories of their brother Samoel's involvement in anti-colonial protests, which cost him his life. But Yoseb, in contrast to the more idealistic Isak, has spent many difficult years fighting to provide for his family, and he believes that political involvement only makes that more difficult. He now feels responsible for Isak, too, and wants him to understand what's at stake.

Back at home, Isak and Sunja go to bed. Though they've been married for a while, they've never slept together, as the boardinghouse had no privacy. As they chat in the dark, Sunja hopes for a new beginning with Isak, and Isak admires Sunja's competence and instinct for survival.

Despite their lack of physical intimacy at this point, Isak and Sunja have been through a great deal together—coping with Isak's illness and Sunja's pregnancy. They've established a basis for trust in one another. In contrast, Sunja's relationship with Hansu had been based largely on Hansu's physical desire, and there'd been a stark power imbalance between them.

Despite Isak's uncertainty and Sunja's nervousness, Sunja finds herself responding to the gentleness of Isak's touch. She can't help comparing it to her times with Hansu, which were always hasty and focused on Hansu's needs, and Sunja had never been sure what it all meant. Now, she puts Hansu out of her mind, deciding that Isak "was her husband, and she would love him."

The genuineness of the growing bond between Isak and Sunja is reflected in the tenderness of their first time sleeping together. Sunja again makes a conscious choice to love Isak and devote herself to him alone.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 14

The next morning, Isak finds his way to Ikaino's Hanguk Presbyterian Church, where he'll be the associate pastor. There he meets Hu, a young Chinese man who'd been rescued and raised by Pastor Yoo as an orphan and now serves as the church's sexton. Pastor Yoo, who's suffering from severe glaucoma and can't see well, is counseling a pair of young siblings in his office, but stops to joyfully greet and bless Isak.

The church, with its humble and tenuous position within colonial Japanese society, will have a huge impact on Isak's and Sunja's lives, and Isak's arrival is a joyful development for its isolated pastor. As shown by Hu's devoted attachment to the congregation, it's a place of refuge for the outcasts of this society.

Pastor Yoo is counseling a girl of about 20 and her younger brother. They're from rural Korea and have come to Japan for work. The girl accompanies her married boss to restaurants for extra cash and sends the money home to her family; her younger brother says this is sinful. The sister maintains that she's willing to be disgraced in order to honor her parents. Since they don't know Japanese, they're stuck in low-paying jobs that barely cover expenses and the brother's schooling.

The situation of the young church members is not atypical for Koreans who've come to Japan in search of work. Their opportunities in Japan are quite limited, and they find themselves rationalizing scenarios they wouldn't have otherwise justified in order to get by and help their families back home.

Listening to this discussion, Isak feels foolish, realizing he's never had to worry about money. Pastor Yoo warns the girl that she needs to be careful of her virtue and that her boss might want more than dates later. Her brother can postpone his schooling and get a job to help so that his sister doesn't feel the need to earn cash by questionable means. He asks Isak to pray for the young people.

Isak realizes that in certain ways, he's been rather sheltered. The siblings aren't that much younger than him, but the situation in Japan forces them to face situations and make decisions that have never crossed his mind.

As Pastor Yoo, Hu, and Isak eat lunch, Pastor Yoo talks to Isak about his wages, which will hardly be enough to support one man. He'd been counting on Isak's family being able to support him, but Isak explains that his parents have had to sell off much of their land to pay the exorbitant colonial taxes. Isak feels ashamed by the realization that he'll have nothing to contribute to Yoseb's household. Pastor Yoo assures him that the Lord will provide for their material needs.

Isak has been naïve and short-sighted in his acceptance of this pastorate; he'd assumed his wages would be enough to support himself and Sunja. He begins to realize that the situation in Osaka will be even more challenging than he's bargained for.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 15

As the months go on, Sunja finds her life in Osaka "luxurious" compared to life in Korea, because she and Kyunghee only have to care for their husbands and themselves. She and Kyunghee continue to develop a close friendship, although whenever they're together in public, Sunja is aware of her plainness next to her beautiful sister-in-law, and her traditional clothing draws scorn outside of Ikaino.

For the first time in her life, Sunja doesn't have to work hard every day, and she has the chance to enjoy a sisterly bond. Throughout the book, Lee draws attention to unconventional, "plain" beauty like Sunja's, as well as the fact that it doesn't garner public approval like Kyunghee's more traditional beauty. Kyunghee is able to move more easily within hostile colonial society because of her classic beauty, whereas Sunja is easily pigeonholed as Korean.

One day as they do the marketing, Sunja tells Kyunghee she feels bad that she and Isak aren't contributing anything to the household expenses. Kyunghee hushes her, saying they need to be saving up for the baby, but she daydreams aloud about starting a kimchi business at the train station. She explains to Sunja that Yoseb won't let her work outside the home. Sunja realizes this means that, in Yoseb's view, a yangban woman shouldn't work, but it's fine for a peasant girl like herself. She thinks Kyunghee, who is sad and restless due to her childlessness, would be happier if she could work.

Kyunghee has her share of creative, resourceful ideas, but Yoseb has an old-fashioned, class-focused view of women working outside the home. Because Kyunghee is of upper-class (yangban) *blood, Yoseb thinks it's especially inappropriate for her to work to provide for the household. This is very different from Sunja's life, as before she moved to Osaka, she never had a choice but to work.*

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 16

One day two working-class Korean men appear at the door, flashing a document and saying that Yoseb is late on a payment. With interest, the payment is far more money than the women have at home. Kyunghee is intimidated, but Sunja thinks the men resemble the lodgers back home, and she speaks to them calmly, telling them to come back in three hours.

Sunja's working-class background allows her to see this situation differently than Kyunghee does; while Kyunghee finds the strangers frightening, Sunja deals with them as if they're a couple of cranky boarders from the boardinghouse.

Sunja and Kyunghee go to a Korean pawnbroker's office. Sunja gives the pawnbroker Hansu's gold watch and negotiates for a good price, remembering what Hoonie had taught her in the market. Kyunghee marvels at Sunja's calm demeanor, and the men in the office have never seen a woman speak with such boldness before. Finally they agree to buy the watch for the price Sunja wants.

Sunja's father had taught her to negotiate in the marketplace, and this allows Sunja to remain calm and not to be intimidated out of getting the price she wants for the watch. She's also more than willing to let go of Hansu's gift for the sake of helping her family; the fact that she's letting go of this piece of Hansu suggests that, by now, Sunja's loyalty lies with her husband, not her past lover.

Later, equipped with the money from the pawned watch, Sunja and Kyunghee go to the moneylender's office to repay the debt. The moneylender is a professionally dressed Korean, and his office looks respectable. When the man cancels their debt, the women learn that Yoseb took out the loan in order to pay for Sunja's and Isak's passage to Japan.

Sunja doesn't realize it now, but the moneylender's professional veneer hides connections with Japan's criminal underbelly—and with Hansu—which means that, ironically, selling the watch isn't *the severance of Sunja's bond with Hansu after all.*

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 17

That night, Yoseb is enraged and ashamed that the women went to the moneylender and repaid his debt for him. Privately, he wonders where Sunja could have gotten such an expensive watch and wonders if he should have allowed her into his home. He leaves the house in anger. Meanwhile, Sunja begins to have labor pains.

To Yoseb, having his wife and sister-in-law repay his debt feels emasculating, as if it's proof that he isn't capable of providing for his own family. Sunja's ownership of such an expensive watch also raises his suspicions, since it isn't something that an ordinary peasant girl would normally own. It makes him suspect that there's more to Sunja's story than he knows.

When Isak gets home, Sunja tells him that her mother had given her the gold watch. Isak takes this at face value and promises to explain to Yoseb, although he seems unsure. Then Sunja's water breaks. After a brief, ordinary labor, Sunja gives birth to a strong son. She cries for her own mother, Yangjin, all the while.

Isak doesn't know where the watch has come from, either, but he takes responsibility for the situation. Sunja gives birth to her and Hansu's son that night, just as the issues surrounding the watch have come to a head—suggesting that Hansu's presence in Sunja's life will linger.

Yoseb comes home the next morning, having spent the night in a bar fretting over his responsibilities to his family. When Isak speaks to him, Yoseb weeps and forgives him and Sunja. As the brothers walk to church, Isak asks him, as head of the family, to name the newborn. Yoseb names his nephew Noa—"because he obeyed and did what the Lord asked [...] because he believed when it was impossible to do so."

Yoseb feels he is under unbearable pressure to support not only himself and Kyunghee, but Isak's growing family and their struggling families back in Korea, in an unforgiving colonial environment. Yet forgiveness will be key to Yoseb's ability to bear this terrible weight. Though he is less forthcoming about his Christian faith than Isak, Yoseb's choice of name for the new baby (referring to the biblical story of Noah's ark in Genesis) reveals much about his own sustaining faith—he faithfully tries to do what's asked of him even when it feels impossible.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 1

The story jumps ahead six years. It is 1939, and World War II is underway. Yoseb arrives home from work one Saturday with a bag of taffy and calls for six-year-old Noa, who doesn't appear. He searches the house and finds it empty. Finally he walks to church and finds a group of middle-aged women fervently praying. They tell Yoseb that Isak, Pastor Yoo, and Hu have been arrested. Hu had been caught mouthing the Lord's Prayer during that morning's mandatory Shinto shrine ceremony.

Isak and Sunja's family has grown, and Yoseb has even occupied a fatherly role toward young Noa. Lately, however, Christians have been under increased pressure, required by the imperial government to honor the Emperor in Shinto ceremonies. Young Hu interprets these ceremonies as idolatrous and quietly resists, implicating the pastors as well.

Yoseb finds Noa sitting on the steps of the police station, holding his month-old brother, baby Mozasu. Inside, Sunja is weeping; she and Kyunghee aren't allowed to see Isak. Yoseb wonders why Hu made such a fuss about the compulsory ceremony. He speaks respectfully to the police officer at the front desk, explaining that Isak has just recovered from tuberculosis. The officer, thinking that "Koreans caused trouble, then made excuses," encourages the family to go home, since Isak will likely be detained for a long time.

Though Yoseb is a Christian, too, he can't understand why Hu would risk his own and others' safety by resisting what Yoseb sees as a harmlessly symbolic ceremony. He tries to show the police that he's reasonable, but the officer stereotypes him as just another "troublemaking" Korean.

Yoseb thinks that he "didn't see the point of anyone dying for his country or for some greater ideal. He understood survival and family." He and the family go home and speculate about what to do. They wonder how long Isak can survive in prison. They can take clothes and food to the jail the next morning, but they realize that, otherwise, they're on their own.

Having worked hard to support his family for all these years, Yoseb sees dying for ideals as a foolish waste—a contrast to his own brother, Samoel's, sacrifice for Korean independence. Isak is still sickly, and the family worries that he'll fare even worse than the average prisoner in wartime conditions.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 2

As the weeks go on, Sunja takes meals to the jail every morning, even though she doesn't know for sure if Isak receives them. Isak's things have been confiscated, their church has been shut down, and the police occasionally question the family. Even the Presbyterian Church has determined that participation in the Shinto ceremonies is a civic duty, not a religious one. Pastor Yoo believed it was a pagan and idolatrous rite, but he had encouraged his flock to participate anyway, believing that to do otherwise would invite certain death.

Pastor Yoo's and the Presbyterian authorities' position is a good example of Lee's argument that sometimes neither resistance nor compromise is a tenable option for people struggling under imperial pressures. Pastor Yoo is convinced that the required bowing at the Shinto shrine is unacceptable for Christians, but he can't ask his people to refrain, knowing that they'll almost certainly be arrested and possibly die behind bars—resulting in the church being wiped out. This is similar to Yoseb's assertion that he understands survival and family, but not death in service of an abstract cause.

Even Yoseb has to concede that, with Isak imprisoned, the household is desperate for cash, so he allows Sunja to peddle kimchi in Ikaino's open-air market, as long as Kyunghee does the cooking from home. When Sunja arrives at the market with her cart, the other *ajummas* are rude to her. She's relegated to an undesirable spot beside a butcher. She tries to remember what the market *ajummas* did back in Korea. She shouts to attract customers to her cart, but she feels mortified. At last the friendly Japanese butcher buys a serving of kimchi and praises the food, encouraging Sunja.

Under the circumstances, even Yoseb softens somewhat in his attitudes about the women working. Sunja feels exposed, lonely, and awkward as a novice ajumma, *but, like her mother before her, she does what she has to do in order to support her loved ones. She also draws on memories of the women merchants in the markets back home for strength and guidance. Notably, it's a Japanese man—in the butchering profession, which is viewed as unclean—who shows kindness to Sunja and encourages her.*

As the day goes on, Sunja gains confidence in hawking kimchi, imagining herself joining the company of market women she's been around for her entire life. By evening, she succeeds in selling the whole jar of kimchi, and soon, she's able to sell as much as she and Kyunghee can make. She starts taking a second cart with a coal stove to the market to sell roasted vegetables, homemade candy, and other snacks.

Sunja perseveres in her difficult new role and quickly discovers a knack for it—buoyed by thoughts of the successful ajummas *she'd purchased goods from all her life. Within a short time, business is booming.*

One day, a few months later, a man named Kim Changho approaches Sunja's cart as she's selling candy and asks her when she'll have kimchi again. He explains that he manages the *yakiniku* (barbecue) restaurant near the train station and has heard about her excellent kimchi. He gives her his business card and promises to buy all the kimchi she and Kyunghee can make and procure scarce cabbage for them; they can even cook at his restaurant.

News of Sunja's and Kyunghee's excellent food seems to have spread beyond the market. At first, the significance of his offer doesn't sink in for Sunja; she's mainly attracted by the prospect of getting hard-to-find ingredients more easily. In any case, Kim's offer sounds almost too good to be true.

Sunja and Kyunghee take their cart, and a few weeks' worth of kimchi, to the restaurant. If Kim Changho follows through on his promise, they'll have a steady income, and lonely Noa, who's teased at school for smelling like garlic, might have an easier time. Kyunghee, scared to defy Yoseb, waits outside with baby Mozasu; Sunja has to go in alone.

Kim's job offer would potentially solve multiple problems for the family, who are suffering in many ways from Isak's imprisonment and their marginalized position. Kyunghee is still worried about upsetting her husband, though, so Sunja has to take the next steps by herself.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 3

Kim Changho isn't at the restaurant yet, so Sunja waits outside with Kyunghee. When the man arrives, he talks to both women about the terms of the job. Together, the women would earn almost twice what Yoseb makes at the factory. The restaurant would provide them with whatever ingredients they needed and sometimes send home meat and other rarities that have been lacking in the family's diet. The little boys can even stay at the restaurant while the women work.

For Sunja and Kyunghee, this job is an almost unimaginably good deal: they won't have to hunt for the ingredients that have become so scarce in wartime, they'll have access to much-needed extra food, and they won't have to worry about childcare. Best of all, they'll earn much more than they could hope to earn almost anywhere else, especially as Koreans in Japan. This unsought opportunity almost seems to drop from the sky.

That night, Kyunghee tells Yoseb, who's been more withdrawn and angry since Isak's arrest, about the job offer. Yoseb is so upset he can't speak. He is working two full-time factory jobs and earning half the salary of a Japanese foreman. No matter how hard he works, there's never enough money.

All Yoseb has ever wanted to do is care for his family, but it seems like everything in the world around him is conspiring against that simple desire. No matter how hard he tries, he repeatedly gets the message that he isn't enough.

Yoseb's boss talks a lot about Japan's current war in China. Yoseb reasons that no matter who wins, Koreans need to be ready to save themselves and their families. He knows about Kim Changho's barbecue restaurant, and that gangsters eat there late at night. He even went there to find a moneylender to get the loan for Isak's travel. He wonders which is worse: "his wife working for moneylenders or him owing money to them." He realizes there are simply no good choices for a Korean man.

Again, Yoseb feels that larger political developments aren't very relevant for Koreans, who must be prepared to fend for themselves at all times. Even though some of his objections to the women's jobs are rooted in sexist and class assumptions, it's easy to see why he feels humiliated: he is perpetually frustrated in his efforts to support the family, while the women get far better opportunities without even looking for them—and from suspicious sources at that.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 4

The narrative skips forward two years. It is 1942, and Noa is eight years old. Every day he carefully dresses and grooms himself before school to look like a middle-class Japanese child, not like "the unwashed ghetto children" of Ikaino. At school, he's a model student and speaks better Japanese than most of the native children. Privately, he no longer believes in God, and he dreams of becoming Japanese.

Even though Noa is only eight, it's clear that under the pressures of wartime imperialism, he's internalized the mockery and disdain he hears aimed at Korean children at his Japanese school. His family, focused on survival themselves, don't realize this. His father's plight has taken a toll on Noa's faith, and he wants to escape his ethnic identity altogether.

One spring day, Noa comes home from school and finds "a gaunt and filthy man" collapsed on the floor of his house. The man is too weak to stand, and he looks ill. Noa screams, assuming he's a thief or a burglar, then feels bad when he sees that the man is weeping. Noa offers him a coin from his pocket. He's shocked when the man—Isak—tells him he's his father. Noa brings Isak some water and covers him with a blanket, then runs to the restaurant.

Noa's father unexpectedly appears, obviously suffering from severe abuse and deprivation. Noa can't make sense of this terrifying apparition, which is a reminder of just how long Isak has been imprisoned.

Noa fetches Sunja from the restaurant, and she feels sorry when she realizes she's done nothing to prepare Noa for the possibility of his father's return or his death. When they get home, she sees Isak's shockingly aged, tortured appearance. She sends Noa to get Yoseb at the factory. When Isak wakes up, he tells Sunja how long he's imagined this homecoming; "how hard it must have been for you," he adds. Pastor Yoo and Hu both died yesterday.

Despite the terrible hardships he's obviously endured, Isak thinks first of what Sunja has been through in his absence, showing his deep commitment to her and his selflessness. The other men from the church have fared just as badly, emphasizing the shockingly poor—and even fatal—conditions at the prison.

At the biscuit factory Noa finds Yoseb and tells him the news. Yoseb knows he'll be fired if he leaves work early, so he sends Noa back with the promise that he'll hurry home as soon as he can. Noa doesn't understand why his uncle is crying.

Yoseb's boss would show him no leniency for this situation, and it could even be dangerous for Yoseb, already discriminated against for being Korean, to draw more attention to the fact that his brother was arrested for disrespecting the Emperor.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 5

Back at home, Isak, terribly feverish, drifts between dreams and consciousness. He struggles to speak to Sunja, telling her, "My life wasn't important." Having prayed ceaselessly for the family's provision, he wants Sunja to understand how thankful he is for her hard work and endurance. The two share happy moments talking about their growing sons.

For Isak, enabling Sunja to have a chance at a good life was the most important thing; he was never motivated by the desire for his own success. Each has given the other things they never expected to have: for Isak, sons, and for Sunja, a semblance of a happy family life after her disgrace.

When Yoseb gets home from work and sees Isak's condition, he asks in despair, "My boy, couldn't you just tell them what they wanted to hear?" Isak sleeps as Sunja, Kyunghee, and Yoseb spend the evening shaving his gray hair and beard, filled with nits.

In keeping with his attitude that survival is the most important thing, Yoseb finds Isak's suffering a terrible, pointless waste. He doesn't understand why Isak couldn't just let the Japanese believe that he worshipped the Emperor, even if it wasn't true. If he'd cooperated, he possibly could have stayed with his family.

The next morning, when Noa is reluctant to go to school, Isak speaks up, reminding him how much he'd longed to attend school as a sickly child. He tells Noa he must persevere, be diligent, and be forgiving; when people aren't fair, the Lord will be fair. To Noa, this sounds like what he hears from his teacher at school; that he must help his fellow Koreans be "good children of the benevolent Emperor." Isak tells Noa how brave he is—that "living every day in the presence of those who refuse to acknowledge your humanity takes great courage."

Even as a child, Noa is already pulled between two worlds, Korean and Japanese, and he doesn't have a clear way of distinguishing between them, so he harmonizes them as best he can. He will struggle with this tension for the rest of his life as he lives in the presence of his oppressors.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 6

In December, 1944, food provisions have become increasingly scarce because of the war, and even the restaurant is struggling. One day Kim Changho has a talk with Sunja and Kyunghee, explaining that the restaurant will close tomorrow. He asks Kyunghee to accompany him to the market. While they're gone, someone unexpectedly enters the restaurant. It's Hansu. Sunja asks him what he's doing there, and almost faints when Hansu tells her, "This is my restaurant. Kim Changho works for me."

Years after they've last been in contact, Hansu reappears in Sunja's life—only he's never really left. Sunja is shocked to learn that after making a concerted effort to forget him, she's really been working for him all along.

Hansu had tracked down Sunja over ten years ago after she pawned the gold pocket watch. He created the restaurant job for her after Isak was jailed. He also employs the moneylender who'd loaned Yoseb money, as his father-in-law is one of the most powerful moneylenders in Japan. He tells Sunja that she and her family must flee Osaka immediately, since, contrary to propaganda, Japan is losing the war, and the Americans will start bombing the city soon.

Hansu has been moving in the background of Sunja's life ever since she moved to Japan, watching her and silently intervening to provide for her needs, since she'd rejected his direct help. The pawned watch served as a kind of talisman, summoning him back into her life when she thought she was getting rid of his memory for good. Hansu's involvement explains the almost impossibly good deal Sunja and Kyunghee got from Kim Changho, but his links to moneylending cast a bit of a dark shadow over everything, too.

Sunja feels angry, realizing that Hansu has followed her like an invisible, "watchful shadow" all these years. She also realizes that he's worried about Noa's survival. Hansu tells her she can't waste this opportunity to flee, since "the world can go to hell, but you need to protect your sons." With Kim, she and her family can live with and work for a sweet potato farmer in the country. He tells her to be ready to leave that night and to leave everyone else if she has to.

Sunja is understandably upset. Hansu's hovering presence doesn't detract from her own initiative as a saleswoman, but she can't help feeling manipulated at the same time. She realizes that no matter what she does, their shared connection to Noa—Hansu's only son—will be a lasting bond between them. With Isak gone, Sunja's sons are both her greatest weakness and her strength, and now she realizes she'll do anything, even accept help from Hansu, to ensure they survive.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 7

That same day, Yoseb gets a job offer at a factory in Nagasaki, paying triple his current salary. The next morning, he packs up and leaves. Meanwhile, Changho transports the women and boys to Tamaguchi's sweet potato farm. Tamaguchi has been growing wealthy by selling his sweet potatoes on the black market since the war started, hence his connection with Hansu and his agreement to take in the Korean boarders. He quickly discovers that Sunja and her family are all excellent workers around the farm.

Given his struggles to provide for the family, Yoseb unhesitatingly takes the higher-paying job, even though it will mean being separated from them for a while. Hansu uses his black market connections to house Sunja's family. Tamaguchi is a good example of someone who has not only compromised with the wartime regime but capitalized on it.

Four months after their arrival on Tamaguchi's farm, Hansu arrives with Yangjin, who looks frightened, tired, and malnourished. Soon Sunja and Yangjin have a tearful reunion in the middle of the potato field. After eating dinner with Tamaguchi, Hansu finds Sunja's family finishing dinner in the barn that's been outfitted into living space. As Yangjin continues to weep with gratitude, Sunja wonders about Hansu's continual presence in her life.

Hansu uses his connections to bring Sunja's mother to safety in Japan; she has plainly suffered in Korea. Sunja's family is doing well on Tamaguchi's farm, although they live a separate existence from the Japanese members of the household. Sunja knows they wouldn't enjoy any of these privileges if it weren't for Hansu's interference.

Hansu sits and talks with the boys: formal, studious Noa is twelve, and chatty Mozasu is six. The boys are well fed and thriving. When Hansu asks Noa if he'd like to return to school after the war, Sunja wonders what the family will do then, as Yangjin's boardinghouse has been sold, and there's nothing left of Yeongdo. Hansu gives Noa some Korean comic books and encourages him to learn how to read them.

This is the first time Hansu has spoken with the boys, particularly with his own son, Noa. He encourages Noa's scholarly leanings and encourages both boys to learn to read Korean, something they wouldn't have studied in Japanese schools. Meanwhile, Sunja wonders what kind of future is open to the family—even with Hansu's help—since all they know in Korea is gone, leaving them rootless.

While the others are occupied with the comic books, Hansu and Sunja talk. Hansu explains that instead of just tracking down news of Yangjin, he'd thought it would be better to bring her to Japan, since things in Korea are very unstable. No one knows who will be in charge of Korea after the war, and there will certainly be confusion and bloodshed in the aftermath. Hansu says that he'll take care of himself—he'd never entrust his life to politicians. He promises he'll take care of Sunja and her family after the war, too. Sunja says she'll work to support her boys, since she doesn't know how to explain Hansu to her family.

Korea's colonized status leaves it especially vulnerable as the war winds down. Because he's so wealthy, Hansu is able to bypass the political turmoil and fend for himself in these unstable circumstances; those with less power won't be so lucky. Sunja doesn't want to benefit from Hansu's power, but for now, she's chosen to accept his help for her boys' sake, seeing it her duty as a mother.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 8

In the aftermath of the Nagasaki bombing, Yoseb is struck and horribly burned by a falling wall from a nearby building. Hansu's men finally track him down in the hospital and bring him to Tamaguchi's farm on an American military truck. Kyunghee drops to her knees beside Yoseb's stretcher when she sees his terrible condition, and everyone cries. Hansu gives her bandages and pain medicine with instructions on nursing him. Yoseb "had done everything he could for his family—this had happened to him because he had gone to work."

Though Yoseb's injuries are awful, he fares better than he likely would have if Hansu hadn't tracked him down and rescued him from the conditions in Nagasaki. Still, there's a terrible irony about the whole situation, as Yoseb is once again thwarted in his efforts to simply care for his family—something he'll never be able to do again.

Yoseb suffers, and he's in too much pain to contribute to the work on the farm. One day Hansu visits and finds Yoseb resting alone in the barn. Yoseb asks him, "You're the father of the boy, aren't you? […] That's why you do all this." He's observed that, although Noa has all of Isak's mannerisms, his face resembles Hansu's. Yoseb tells Hansu that it's wrong for him to be around Noa, when Isak has already given Noa a name. He hates Hansu, with "his unchecked confidence, reeking of a devilish invulnerability."

With Yoseb's matter-of-fact outlook on life, it's not surprising that he would pick up on the truth about Noa's parentage and confront Hansu about it. He despises Hansu because his wealth and position seem to protect him from the sufferings of ordinary people like himself.

Yoseb tells Hansu that they'll pay him back for everything he's done and that they'll return to Korea. Hansu tells him that Japan will never pay him for his work, that the Japanese are "pathologically intractable" in these matters, and that there's nothing left for them in Korea—"you're living for a dream of a home that no longer exists." He also tells Yoseb that both his and Kyunghee's parents have been shot by the Communists, but it's actually a lie—he hasn't bothered taking the risk of tracking them down, because "he didn't see how their lives could be useful for his purposes." He knows Sunja might follow her brother- and sister-in-law back to Korea out of a sense of duty, given the chance.

Hansu tries to get Yoseb to see that the homeland they knew doesn't exist anymore; it's been wiped out by the bigger forces of war and imperialism, and their hopes have no purchase on reality. But he also cruelly cuts off one of their remaining ties to home by flippantly claiming that their families are dead. Hansu uses people and their circumstances as long as they're useful for his own purposes (in this case, keeping Noa and Sunja within his reach). His conversation with Yoseb gives insight into the cruel depths of his character.

When Hansu coldly tells Sunja about the alleged fate of Yoseb's and Kyunghee's parents, Sunja finds him cruel and thinks that as she gets to know him, she realizes "that the man she'd loved as a girl was an idea she'd had of him—feelings without any verification." Hansu says that since they can't return to Korea, they need to start thinking about the boys' education; he'll pay for both to prepare for and attend Japanese universities. Sunja feels ashamed and powerless in her life, but Hansu tells her that refusing his help at this point is selfish, as she should be seeking every advantage for her sons.

Sunja sees Hansu's coldness, too, and realizes her girlhood love of him had been based on a fantasy. She feels helpless, not wanting to take advantage of Hansu's help, yet knowing there's no good alternative for herself and her boys. Hansu smoothly manipulates this sense of helplessness and reinforces the impression that she has no other choices.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 9

In 1949, after everyone has resettled in Osaka, Hansu gives Kim Changho the job of collecting fees from merchants in the market by the train station. In exchange for these fees, Hansu and his men give the store owners protection and support. Most owners consider such payments "just one more cost of doing business." Changho gets this particular job because he's so pleasant-looking and polite, "the clean wrapper for a filthy deed."

In postwar Japan, Korean merchants take it in stride to pay off gangsters—it's a necessary compromise in order to maintain their livelihoods in an environment where they're already disadvantaged. If they don't comply, they'll have to deal with someone far less pleasant than Kim Changho.

One night Hansu takes Changho out for a drink. He tells him that he knows Changho has feelings for Kyunghee. Changho has been living with Yoseb, Kyunghee, and Sunja. Hansu is worried that Changho is too attached to Kyunghee, though. Changho admits that he's been thinking of moving to North Korea. Hansu tells him he doesn't care if he attends socialist meetings, but he mustn't believe the lies about "returning to the motherland." Anyway, whether Changho returns to the North or the South, he'll be hated for having lived in Japan.

After working together and then living for years in even closer proximity, Changho has developed strong feelings for the unattainable Kyunghee. He's started going to socialist meetings to try to escape his feelings, but Hansu argues that returning to Korea—now divided between the Russians and the Americans—would be foolish, because no matter who's in charge, his longtime residence in Japan will cause him to be looked upon with suspicion, as contaminated. Koreans in Japan don't have a homeland.

Hansu goes on to say that Changho must always think about "promoting [his] own interests," never those of the group. He tells Changho that "[t]here's no such thing as a benevolent leader." "For people like us, home doesn't exist," he adds. At least in Japan, one knows what to expect. When someone has enough to eat, it's natural for him to start thinking about ideas, like patriotism or communism; but the people in charge exploit those who believe in their ideas too much. Nothing will fix Korea, so it's far better, Hansu argues, to focus on something he can have, like Kyunghee. For the time being, he pays for an expensive Korean prostitute for Changho.

Hansu imparts something of his own outlook to his protégé, Changho. He argues that looking to leaders is always a mistake; people should only look out for themselves, because nobody else will. When someone no longer has to fight for daily survival, they have leisure to pursue ideologies, but this makes them vulnerable to exploitation by leaders who don't really care about them or their ideas. It's better to dispense with such things altogether and focus on what's actually attainable.

Yoseb and Kyunghee's old house in Osaka had been destroyed in the bombing. When they returned from the countryside, Hansu's lawyer made sure that Yoseb's property rights were respected, and his construction company rebuilt their house to be bigger and sturdier.

The family accepts Hansu's help in regaining and improving their home without, apparently, raising objections about the questionable connections. Yoseb, despite his hatred of Hansu, knows his position otherwise is helpless. Like the marketplace merchants who accept the protection racket, the family accepts a measure of compromise in order to get by.

The prostitute doesn't distract Changho from his feelings for Kyunghee; he can't stop thinking about her. The next day, he walks Kyunghee home from the market. She tells Changho that Yoseb, who's always angry nowadays, keeps arguing with Sunja about the boys' schooling. He thinks they should attend the neighborhood Korean school so they can be prepared to move back to their homeland. Sunja knows they can't return, and anyway, Noa has ambitions of going to Waseda University. Changho longs to comfort Kyunghee in her distress, knowing his own situation is impossible; he can't be with her, and he can't stop loving her.

Yoseb, embittered by his sufferings, clings to the fantasy that a return to Korea is possible. Sunja knows their best hope is to continue making a life in Japan, where her boys now have roots and ambitions. As an outsider, Changho is a safe person for Kyunghee to confide in, but it's painful for him, since he knows she can never be his.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 10

A few years later, in 1953, Sunja can't sleep and gets up in the middle of the night to make candy to sell. Yangjin joins her. Sunja is trying to earn extra money for Noa's tutoring fees—he failed the entrance exam for Waseda University by just a few points. Between Noa's bookkeeping job, the women's food sales, and Changho's contribution for room and board, they're just barely getting by. Yoseb still won't let them accept money from Hansu for Noa's schooling.

Even with Noa's scholarly achievements, the entrance exam for prestigious Waseda is rigorous, and the fees for tutors are high. Though the family is faring better than most, thanks to the women's hard work and Hansu's help in the past, things are still difficult. For Yoseb, refusing Hansu's tainted help is one of the only ways he can still feel he's exerting his authority within the household, since he's unable to work.

The reports from Korea have been frightening—epidemics, starvation, and boys kidnapped by the army. Sunja knows that even with their struggles, they have a better life here in Osaka. Yangjin recalls the boardinghouse servant girls, Bokhee and Dokhee, and cries because she's sure they were exploited by Japanese soldiers, and she could do so little for them. Sunja cheers her mother with memories of Hoonie and talk of her sons.

Sunja and her family must face the reality that the Korea they remember no longer exists. Yangjin is tormented by the thought that she wasn't able to keep Dokhee and Bokhee safe; they haven't been heard from since the war. Sunja and her mother are still able to bond over and draw comfort from their love of Hoonie and Sunja's boys.

Mozasu hates school and struggles academically, stuck in a class of 10-year-olds even though he's 13. Noa is finished with high school and works for the Japanese man who's the landlord for most of the neighborhood. Though Noa could make more money working in a **pachinko** parlor, he prefers to work in a Japanese office and have a desk job.

Mozasu and Noa have very different experiences as they grow up, which impacts the development of their respective identities. Noa prefers to surpass society's expectations and fit into Japanese culture as much as possible, avoiding work that's seen as Korean and "dirty." Mozasu comes to reject these expectations altogether.

Mozasu mostly keeps to himself at school, but when the other kids taunt him for being Korean, he often beats them up. He's aware that he's "becoming one of the bad Koreans." Noa says that Koreans need to rise above all this, but "Mozasu just wanted to hit everyone who said mean things." Mozasu has no intention of becoming a "good Korean" like his older brother.

The brothers' attitudes toward the surrounding culture are established while they're still young. Noa believes that if he rises above prejudice, he'll finally be accepted. Mozasu refuses to play this game and survives by asserting his strength.

One day a poor Japanese boy named Haruki joins Mozasu's class. He's rumored to be a burakumin, but he isn't. He has a little brother with disabilities and was abandoned by his father, so people think his family is cursed. Haruki tries to fit in, but he's treated like a "diseased animal." Mozasu finally offers to sit with him at lunch, telling him it isn't his fault that people dislike him. From that day forward, they're good friends.

It's not just Korean kids who suffer ostracism; Haruki's home situation makes him a pariah even though he's Japanese. Mozasu is drawn to his fellow outcast and persuades him not to play by the majority's rules anymore.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 11

When Mozasu is 16, he's required to help Yangjin and Sunja with their candy cart in the afternoons because he's prone to getting into fights. One day he goes to visit Chiyaki, a flirtatious Japanese girl who works at the sock store in the market. When another man comes into her store and fondles her, Mozasu knocks some of the man's teeth out. The police come to Sunja's stall to question Mozasu. Mozasu tries to be deferential, knowing that Koreans who get in trouble can be deported. When Goro, the **pachinko** parlor owner who frequents the candy stall, sees the police, he vouches for the family and offers Mozasu a job in his parlor the next day.

Mozasu gets a big career break and a reprieve from school in an unexpected way. Goro, a pachinko man—hence someone who'd have criminal ties—likes Sunja and takes the opportunity to give a job to a Korean boy who's at loose ends. Pachinko is viewed in Japanese culture as a tainted industry, and, according to racist, imperialist logic, suitable only for Koreans.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 12

In six months of working at Goro's **pachinko** parlor, Mozasu learns more than in all his years of school. He loves his job. Goro is teaching him how to subtly manipulate the pins in the pachinko machines in order to affect the machine's payout. Goro is so good at this that customers are drawn back again and again, simultaneously encouraged and frustrated by the machines' patterns. He's teaching Mozasu the same art.

Mozasu finally finds an environment in which he thrives. The game of pachinko, or pinball, has a certain resonance with the Korean experience in Japan—one can discern enough of a pattern to think there's a greater plan at work and keep coming back hopefully, yet there's enough of an element of chance to repeatedly thwart one's hopes, too.

One day Goro decides that Mozasu needs nicer clothes, so he takes him to the small shop run by Haruki's mother, Totoyama. To Mozasu's amazement, Goro tells Totoyama that Mozasu is going to be his new foreman and needs uniforms. Totoyama has to leave the room to soothe her son, Daisuke, who's disabled and speaks like a small child even though he's nearly grown. Mozasu notices Goro looking troubled, and Goro gives Totoyama a generous wad of cash. Totoyama protests the excessive payment, but after the men leave, she sits down and weeps with relief—she'll be able to afford both food and rent this month.

Totoyama is clearly struggling, having to care for a son with profound needs while struggling to cover basic necessities. Goro displays a genuinely compassionate side when he overpays Totoyama—suggesting the complicated relationship that men like him occupy within their communities. Perhaps he responds to Totoyama's plight because of his own outcast status.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 13

Noa has finally gotten into Waseda University, but the happy news is marred by the reality that the family can't afford to send him—all their savings have been poured into care for Uncle Yoseb. Yoseb knows it would be better for the family if he were dead; he is "eating up [their] future." He is filled with regret for the suffering he's caused others.

Yoseb is once again filled with shame over his perceived failure to provide adequately for his family. Now, when Noa has achieved something so improbable, he can't even die to free them from the expense of caring for his continuing medical needs.

When Sunja again raises the possibility of letting Hansu pay for Noa's schooling, Yoseb is furious, reminding Sunja that he thinks Hansu's money is "filthy" and that it comes with the price of Hansu's ongoing involvement in Noa's life. Even though a loan from Goro, an advance against Mozasu's salary, wouldn't be "clean," either, Yoseb sees it as preferable to accepting money from a man like Hansu.

Yoseb knows the truth that Hansu is Noa's father, and he also wants to protect Noa from that knowledge. This explains why he'd be willing to accept money from Mozasu's pachinko work, which has underworld connections, too, but sees the connection to Hansu as unacceptable.

The next day, Hansu asks Noa and Sunja to come to his office in Osaka. Hansu is beaming with pride over Noa's achievement. Sunja asks Hansu for a loan, but Hansu tells her that he's already paid all of Noa's university fees and rented a room for him in Tokyo. Noa had wanted to work to pay for school, but Hansu tells them both that Noa has already worked so hard under many disadvantages; he should get to be a full-time scholar now. He tells Sunja he won't let his "own blood rot in the gutters of Ikaino." Sunja realizes that Yoseb is right about Hansu, but that she can't take this opportunity away from Noa.

Hansu has already taken the liberty of paying for Noa's schooling, making it much harder for the family to refuse. Whereas Yoseb feels Hansu's connection to the family is contaminating, Hansu implies the same about the family's connection to the poor Korean neighborhood. Sunja's pride is injured by Hansu's presumption, but she's ironically backed into a corner by Hansu's own earlier advice to her—to always put her sons first.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 14

One day in 1959, while Kyunghee is at church, Kim Changho is helping Yoseb do his therapy stretches. Yoseb tells Changho that he can marry Kyunghee after Yoseb dies, but he asks him not to take Kyunghee back to North Korea, because he doesn't trust the Communists. Changho finds Kyunghee as she's walking home from church and tells her what Yoseb has said. Kyunghee is stunned and turns him down, asking his forgiveness.

By this time, Changho has pined for Kyunghee for years. Yoseb, with characteristic clear-sightedness, has observed this and gives Changho permission to marry her, hoping he'll take care of her after Yoseb is dead. But the prospect of accepting another man's proposal while her husband is alive is too much for the faithful Kyunghee.

The next morning Kyunghee finds that Changho has left for Korea already. Sunja comforts her as she cries. Kyunghee explains that she couldn't have given Changho children, and that she doesn't feel it was right to have had two men care for her at once. Sunja wonders why "men get to leave when they didn't get what they wanted."

Kyunghee apparently did have feelings for Changho, but finds herself in an impossible situation; she can't love two men at once. In a certain way, this is similar to what Sunja went through, except that she chose to love one man in order to try to forget the other. Sunja observes that men tend to have more options in scenarios like this than women do.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 15

In 1960, after two years at Waseda, Noa is thriving. Studying full time feels like a luxury for him, and he spends almost all his time reading literature. He avoids other Koreans on campus, because they seem too political. He wishes he could be a leisured European country gentleman, surrounded by books and nature all the time. He's known on campus for being aloof.

After a lifetime of struggling to do his best in hostile environments, Noa finally has the luxury to be himself and immerse himself in what he loves. As before, he keeps to himself, and he avoids associating with anything overtly Korean or anything controversial.

One day, Noa is stopped on campus by the beautiful, intimidating campus radical, Akiko Fumeki. They chat about the novels of George Eliot, and Akiko teases him that their literature professor, Kuroda, is in love with him. That day in class, Professor Kuroda and Akiko get into an argument about the role of the Jews and Zionism in Eliot's novels. Akiko argues that in *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot is arguing not for the nobility of the Jewish people, but for the ejection of foreigners from England. Noa is impressed by Akiko's willingness to think for herself and disagree in public. The next time the class meets, Noa sits next to her.

Noa, who has always tried hard to conform, is attracted to Akiko because she's so different from him, even willing to differ from those in authority. The discussion about the Jewish people in Eliot's novel appears to have reference to the question of Korean people in Japan and the status of the Korean nation(s).

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 16

Mozasu is now 20. A tireless worker, he's been heavily involved in helping Goro's **pachinko** empire expand and thrive over the past few years. One day Goro tells Mozasu that he's going to be the manager of his new seventh parlor, and he takes Mozasu to get some new tailored suits at Totoyama's. Totoyama is now Goro's exclusive uniform maker, and she's been able to open a bigger shop and hire assistants. While being fitted for a new suit, Mozasu flirts with a pretty, aloof Korean girl named Yumi and finally persuades her to go on a date with him.

Mozasu's success looks very different from Noa's. He shows tremendous promise in a stereotypically Korean industry that's looked down upon in Japanese society—the opposite of what Noa seeks. He's also drawn to a Korean young woman. Thanks to Goro's generous patronage, Totoyama's business is doing well.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 17

It's 1961, and Mozasu and Yumi have been dating for more than a year. They attend an English class together three nights a week. One day Mozasu is waiting outside Totoyama's shop for Yumi when Haruki shows up. He's been studying at the police academy, and the two haven't seen each other in years, partly because Haruki has long had romantic feelings for Mozasu and thus tries to stay away from him.

Haruki feels the need to hide the nature of his feelings for his old friend, knowing Mozasu won't reciprocate them and that there isn't a place for such feelings in his society. Meanwhile, Mozasu's relationship with Yumi is thriving.

Yumi's and Mozasu's English class meets in a church and is taught by John Maryman, a jovial pastor of Korean birth who was raised by American adoptive parents. Yumi looks up to him, thinking he represents a better world for Koreans. Yumi was raised by parents who were an alcoholic prostitute and a pimp, and she spent many years fending for herself and her younger sister alone. She longs to make another life in America someday.

Yumi's experience as a Korean growing up in Japan was even more filled with deprivation and struggle than Mozasu's. She looks to the example of John Maryman, a Korean-American, for hope that she can escape her environment and have a happier life somewhere else.

John Maryman had enjoyed a privileged childhood with loving parents in Princeton, New Jersey, but he came to Japan because he felt sorry for the impoverished Koreans who are living there without a homeland. He enjoys teaching English to Koreans so that they can have another language that isn't Japanese.

As an outsider, Maryman sees the tenuous position Koreans occupy in Japan and the toll it takes on their sense of identity—they don't belong either to Korea or to Japan. He hopes that speaking English can give his Korean pupils a way to distinguish themselves and achieve something on their own terms.

During class that day, John Maryman teases Mozasu in English when he notices him staring at Yumi. Mozasu replies that he can't stop because he loves Yumi. Pastor John asks if they will get married. The class dissolves into laughter as Mozasu confidently declares that he will get Yumi to marry him. Yumi is mortified, but she can't be angry with him.

Mozasu's and Yumi's relationship develops very differently than previous romantic relationships in the novel. Where Yangjin's and Sunja's marriages took place in contexts of dire need, Mozasu and Yumi have the freedom to date and fall in love gradually. It's also noteworthy that this takes place while they're studying English together—something Sunja never had the leisure to do. It also shows that their ambitions, unlike the previous generation's, are not oriented back toward Korea.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 18

The following spring, Akiko, who's training to be a sociologist, won't stop asking Noa questions about his family. Noa resents her curiosity. Akiko is especially curious about Hansu, but Noa doesn't think it's appropriate for them to meet.

Noa resents being made to feel like a subject of study for Akiko. It seems as if she's more interested in him as a Korean than simply as a person.

Noa meets monthly with Hansu over a fancy meal of sushi. Hansu, who never went to university, asks him questions about his studies. He's trying to "nurture" Noa into something of his own making after graduation, though he's not yet sure what he wants him to be. Noa, on the other hand, doesn't really enjoy the luxurious meals; he prefers to eat like a "working Korean," eating tasty food quickly for fuel, not like an upper-class Japanese, lingering over exotic dishes.

Among the parents in the novel, Hansu is no exception in desiring his son to fulfill dreams that he himself was never able to fulfill. In fact, even more than the others, he wants to sculpt Noa into his own ideal, looking at him as a project; he has his own interests at stake in funding his son's education. While Noa is able to replicate the habits of wealthy Japanese, he doesn't feel comfortable with them, and he's very aware of his "Korean" preferences in this area.

To Noa's surprise, Akiko comes to the restaurant and invites herself into his private meal with Hansu. She claims Noa had insisted on her dropping by to meet his benefactor. Hansu is pleased, but Noa uncomfortably goes along with the lie.

Already feeling tense toward Akiko after that morning's conversation, Noa is even more put off by her presumption; she puts him in an awkward position by barging into his regular private meeting with Hansu.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 19

After Hansu leaves, Noa and Akiko have a fight. Akiko doesn't understand why Noa is upset that she came to the lunch uninvited. She asks him if it's because he's embarrassed that he's Korean. She tells Noa that while it might upset her racist parents that he's Korean, it doesn't bother her. In fact, she says, she can arrange for Noa to meet her whole family, because "they'd be lucky to meet such an excellent Korean," and it might change their perspective.

It starts to become clear that Akiko looks at Noa primarily as a Korean and secondly as a person. She still assumes the categorization of "good" versus "bad" Korean that Noa had to work so hard to escape and believed he'd left behind when he left Ikaino.

Noa realizes that Akiko will always see him as "some fanciful idea of a foreign person," and that being with him allows her to think of herself as a good, open-minded person. Noa doesn't want her to think of him as a "good" or "bad" Korean, but to see him as human. He realizes that this is what he's wanted more than anything all along.

Dating Noa allows Akiko to feel superior to her overtly racist parents, but there's something insidious in her attitude as well, which Noa detects. He realizes that she's always going to see him as a category, which is the very constraint he wants to escape, but which he keeps colliding with, both societally and personally.

Noa tells Akiko that their relationship is over. Then Akiko says, "He's your father, isn't he? […] He looks exactly like you. […] You just didn't want him to meet me, because you didn't want me to meet your yakuza papa." She asks Noa how else he could explain Hansu's chauffeur or the swanky apartment he rents for Noa. Noa just walks away from her, feeling that he loved her, yet he never really knew her. Shakily, he catches the first train to Osaka.

Akiko picks up on the resemblance that Noa has been too close to notice and draws some conclusions that seem to shock Noa to his core. Noa not only feels alienated from Akiko, but realizes there are other people in his life he hasn't really known, either.

Distraught, Noa goes to his mother's house and asks her for the truth about his relationship to Hansu. Sunja realizes that Yoseb had been right all along about the danger of Hansu's presence in Noa's life. Yet she hadn't known what else to do. Isak had believed that if Noa excelled, no one would be able to look down on him, and Hansu's help was the only thing that made university attainable. Sunja explains her relationship with Hansu and Isak's choice to be Noa's father, adding, "Blood doesn't matter." She has always trusted that, somehow, Noa would understand this.

In many ways, this moment—the long-delayed revelation of Noa's parentage—is the climax of the story. Sunja's choice to involve Hansu in supporting Noa is put to the test. Isak's attitude that Noa's success will outshine all other factors is shown to be questionable, too. Sunja has relied on her belief, like Isak's, that one's blood is ultimately not the determinant of happiness or success.

Sunja tries to explain that she has little contact with Hansu and doesn't know what he does for a living, but Noa insists that he's a yakuza, one of "the worst Koreans," and that Noa "will never be able to wash this dirt from [his] name." His entire life, he's heard Japanese speak scornfully of his Korean blood; now, he learns that he has criminal blood as well, which can never be changed. Sunja thinks that many of the Koreans work for gangs because they have no other options, but doubts that Noa will have compassion on such men. She asks Noa to forgive her, but he says she has ruined his life; he is no longer himself.

After spending his life working hard to rise above poverty and prejudice in Ikaino, Noa now feels that he does, in fact, have contaminated blood. The taunts he's heard all his life have been vindicated in a way, and this time, he can't escape those taunts by simply working hard or moving away. Sunja has been perhaps willfully ignorant of the extent of what Hansu does, and she takes it for granted that some Koreans must participate in organized crime in order to survive; but to Noa, there's no excuse for not resisting such a compromise. He feels that his entire sense of self is lost.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 20

A few weeks later, the family receives a letter from Noa, explaining the he's withdrawn from Waseda and begun a new life in a different city. He asks his family not to look for him and promises to continue to send them money and to repay Hansu as he's able.

For Noa, cutting himself off from the life he's known and starting over feels like the only way to deal with the intolerable tension between his old identity as Isak's son, his real identity as Hansu's son, and the longing to be "simply human" he's always wanted.

Sunja goes to Hansu's mansion and asks Hansu's wife, in broken Japanese, if she can speak to Hansu. Sunja cries, prepared to swallow her pride and beg Hansu to help her locate Noa. Hansu's wife thinks Sunja is a beggar and sends for a Korean garden boy to translate, but the boy doesn't know Hansu's whereabouts, either. He feels sorry for Sunja, who reminds him of his mother, and follows her to the train station to ask where she lives.

Sunja has never sought out Hansu so directly and plaintively before, but the disappearance of Noa—the child whose welfare has governed so many of her choices and struggles—is devastating for her, stripping away all her pride. She will do anything to get him back.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 1

Noa goes to Nagano because one of his childhood teachers had spoken fondly of the place. To a chatty café waiter, Noa introduces himself as Nobuo Ban—a Japanese name. The waiter suggests he try Nagano's best **pachinko** parlor for a job. The manager, Takano, doesn't hire foreigners, but the waiter says that won't be an issue for Noa, whom he assumes is Japanese.

To begin his new life, Noa travels to a city where he has no prior personal connections and immediately starts going by a Japanese name. These steps signal the lengths Noa's willing to go in order to sever ties to his old life, but they also fulfill his childhood dream of becoming Japanese.

Noa meets Takano and talks him into giving him a job. Noa has secretly dreamed of being an English teacher in a private school, and he's stunned to find himself working in the same business as high school dropout Mozasu. Noa gets to work and quickly wins over Takano. The parlor owner suspects that Noa is Korean, but he figures that as long as nobody finds out, it's okay.

Noa's abandonment of his literary dreams, after so much hard work, shows how desperate he is to start fresh. Given his scorn for the pachinko industry, his willingness to seek a job there is likewise shocking. But his diligence quickly pays off, and he continues to succeed in passing as Japanese.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 2

Mozasu's wife, Yumi, has lost two pregnancies in three years. During her third pregnancy, her doctor orders bed rest. Yumi is terrified, feeling that she has to work. Mozasu, who's making good money, tries to comfort her with promises that he'll take her to America for a visit after she has the baby.

Yumi has always had to fight for survival, so being unable to work is disorienting for her. She still hangs on to her youthful dream of moving to America, but Mozasu has good prospects in the pachinko business and isn't interested in leaving for good.

Sunja takes time off from her confectionary store to help around Mozasu's house. One morning when Sunja brings Yumi breakfast in bed, Yumi talks about her mother, who was abusive and only cared about drinking and getting money, and about her little sister who'd died while they were living on the streets. Sunja tells Yumi she has suffered too much.

Sunja's market stall has finally become a successful store. However, she drops everything to care for her family. Yumi has never had a good mother figure and finally opens up to Sunja. Some of her fears about motherhood may stem from her own difficult childhood, which had none of the love Sunja enjoyed even at the worst of times.

Soon Yumi gives birth to a son, Solomon. On his first birthday ceremony, Solomon grabs a yen note, which signifies that he's going to have a rich life.

Two generations after a poor and helpless Sunja left Korea, her descendants have a realistic hope of being wealthy; the struggle of Sunja's younger years will be foreign to Solomon.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 3

A couple of years later, Yumi is hit by a cab driven by a drunk driver and soon dies. She pushed three-year-old Solomon onto the sidewalk at the last moment, and he survived with only a broken ankle. Mozasu now regrets never having taken Yumi to the United States.

Yumi and Mozasu don't get to enjoy married life or parenthood together for very long. Yumi sacrifices herself for Solomon's safety at the last moment, instinctively giving up everything for her son.

Hansu comes to Yumi's funeral to pay his respects. His driver interrupts him to say that there's an emergency in the car. He finds his new 18-year-old mistress, Noriko, impatient to be taken shopping. Hansu hits her until she falls silent and her face is practically ruined, although she survives.

In a chilling juxtaposition to his kindness to Mozasu, Hansu attacks his young mistress for annoying him and seems not to mind if he does kill her. It's a rare glimpse into the darker depths of his character and a clear reminder that Hansu is only interested in people as long as they're of use to him.

Sunja continues living with Mozasu to help take care of Solomon. One day Hansu is watching them both from his car outside Solomon's school. He thinks of Sunja all the time and still desires her, even though, now past fifty, she is no longer beautiful. Hansu finally calls out to Sunja, and she is upset that she hasn't heard anything from him for six years, since she showed up at his house. She begins weeping that Hansu has destroyed her by ruining everything between her and Noa. Then Hansu tells Sunja that he's dying.

After the violent scene with Hansu's mistress, it's jarring to see him staring at Sunja and desiring her. She's never witnessed his dark side and has always stayed in his good graces, but the darkness has always been present under the surface. At the very least, however, Sunja regrets Hansu's continued hold over her life and the way it's damaged her relationship with her son. Hansu interrupts Sunja's accusations by dropping a shocking piece of news.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 4

Sunja and Solomon ride home in the backseat of Hansu's big sedan. Three-year-old Solomon invites Hansu to stay for dinner, to Sunja's displeasure. At Mozasu's Western-style house, Hansu watches Sunja in the kitchen and thinks she was unwise to have rejected his offer all those years ago. At the same time, he somewhat respects her for it.

Though Hansu has always kept close tabs on Sunja, this is the first time he's entered her home—in this case, Mozasu's house, which is notably American in style and shows he's both well-off and somewhat removed from his Korean roots. Hansu still thinks he knows what would have been best for Sunja more than 30 years ago.

Sunja notices that Hansu has aged well; he looks like a "handsome grandfather," not a yakuza boss. Meanwhile, she is aware that she looks like a poor, hardworking, prematurely aged woman. She's embarrassed to realize that she still wants Hansu to desire her, even a little. She's annoyed when Hansu admits that, while he's been diagnosed with prostate cancer, he's probably not going to die from it. At the same time, she's glad to hear it.

Sunja's feelings about Hansu remain heavily conflicted. Even after all that's happened, she still has feelings for him, to some degree, which she wants him to reciprocate.

Haruki has come for a weekend visit, and over dinner, Hansu offers Haruki his business card in case he's interested in transferring to a job in Tokyo's police precinct. Sunja watches, feeling suspicious of Hansu's help; he "was not an ordinary person, and he was capable of actions she could neither see nor understand."

Sunja has learned that Hansu's influence has repercussions far beyond a given moment, and his reach seems to constantly expand.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 5

In 1969, Noa has been living in Nagano, passing as Japanese, and running the business office of Cosmos **Pachinko** for seven years. He has paid Hansu back for his Waseda education and continues to send money to his family. He has finally decided to follow through on his boss's advice that a man of his age and position should be married.

Noa has succeeded in his childhood goal of integrating seamlessly into Japanese society. However, the price of integrating has been cutting ties with his Korean family and working in a business he doesn't respect.

Noa is attracted to a woman named Risa Iwamura, the head filing clerk at Cosmos. Her family, too, is touched by scandal: when Risa was a teenager, her father, a doctor, had dispensed the wrong medication to some patients, leading to their deaths. Her father then killed himself, leaving the family "both destitute and tainted." Risa is considered to be unmarriageable because of this tragedy.

Noa is drawn to a young woman who is as "tainted" as he thinks himself to be. Risa has been ostracized through no fault of her own because of her society's exacting standards, something she's powerless to overcome. Noa can easily identify with such circumstances.

Both Noa and Risa have been lonely for a long time, and when they marry, they develop genuine affection for one another. Soon, Risa becomes the highly competent stay-at-home mother of four children; though she has been expelled "from the tribe of ordinary middle-class people, she had effectively reproduced her own tribe."

Though Noa had pursued marriage out of a desire for a kind of respectability, he's been isolated for so long that he quickly discovers a refuge in family life. Though Risa no longer has an accepted place within her society, she carves out a place where she can thrive, much as Noa has done.

Though Noa loves his family, he is careful around them—he doesn't see his life as a "rebirth," as he carries his Korean past "like a dark, heavy rock within him." He lives in constant fear of discovery. He continues to read his beloved English literature, but otherwise maintains no ties to his younger self.

Noa's happiness in his new life has a hard limit. No matter how hard he tries, he can't escape the consciousness of his past or the fear that the people he loves will discover it.

One day Noa's family takes a trip to Matsumoto Castle, Japan's oldest existing castle. When the tour guide explains that the castle is thought to be cursed, Noa's six-year-old wants to know what a curse is. He tells Noa that if he put a curse on someone, he could always reverse it. Noa tells his son that it isn't so easy to reverse a curse. Then he takes the children for ice cream.

This vignette in Noa's family life hints at the burden Noa carries around and conceals from his family. Noa believes he is cursed because of Hansu. Though his little boy thinks of a curse as something in a scary story, Noa believes it's something real that can't so easily be gotten rid of.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 6

It's 1974 in Yokohama, and Haruki is now married to Ayame, the foreman of his mother's uniform shop, because it's what Totoyama had wanted. Ayame manages the shop while Totoyama is dying of cancer, and after she dies, Ayame stays at home to care for Daisuke. At almost 30, Daisuke still has the mental capabilities of a child and is devastated by his mother's death. Ayame arranges for a special education teacher to tutor him. When they move to a beautiful home in Yokohama, Mozasu easily gets Haruki a job in the local police precinct.

Haruki, who had experienced such ostracism as a child in Osaka, is also experiencing greater success, thanks in large part to Goro's help in promoting his mother's shop and Hansu's influence in securing him a job. Daisuke also benefits from opportunities he wouldn't otherwise have had.

One day while Daisuke is being tutored at home, Ayame goes to the bathhouse and then takes a shortcut home. As she walks through the park, she sees two men having sex among the trees. She feels shocked, but also wonders about the lack of intimacy in her marriage ever since the doctors deemed her infertile a while ago. She wonders if it's strange to have questions about these things at 37 years old.

It's the 1970s, and sexuality is beginning to be expressed in more public ways, but it's still startling and uncomfortable for Ayame, who begins to suspect that her marriage is atypical.

A few days later, Ayame walks through the park again, and a girl flirts with her. Ayame returns to her normal routine, but the girl is on her mind for months. One night she returns to the park and walks among the many couples having sex there, thinking about Haruki. Suddenly, to her shock, she notices that Haruki is there, having sex with a younger man. She waits at the park until he is long gone, and she's approached by the same woman as before. They start to make love, but Ayame recoils in disgust when the girl asks for money. "You have to pay for love!" the girl yells at Ayame as she flees the park. She goes to the bathhouse again and then returns home to Haruki and Daisuke.

After the shock of seeing Haruki with another man, Ayame takes comfort in feeling desired by someone, but is repulsed by the transactive nature of their encounter. Ayame wants real love and intimacy, but she fears they'll come at too high a price, so she returns to the familiar shelter of her marriage.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 7

A couple of years later, Haruki has to deal with the case of a 12-year-old Korean boy who committed suicide. The boy's parents show him a yearbook with derogatory comments about Koreans written inside. The boy's mother claims that things are better for Koreans now, but the boy's father wishes the boys who wrote those comments could be identified and punished. Haruki tells them there is nothing he can do.

Even though it's some 40 years after many Koreans settled in Japan, the same kinds of hateful comments are directed at them by some Japanese. Haruki feels helpless to bring solace or closure to the victim's devastated parents.

Haruki goes to Mozasu's **pachinko** parlor. He doesn't gamble recklessly, but he has an ample inheritance and can afford to indulge a bit. He finds the game comforting. He thinks about the boy who died; he had suicidal thoughts as a boy and still thinks about it sometimes, but couldn't do such a thing to Ayame.

Haruki's job gets to him, and he still deals with internalized self-hatred from his boyhood, even though his life has improved in many ways since then and he's now considered successful. Pachinko's continual promise of a lucky payout distracts and soothes him, as it does for so many customers.

Mozasu shows up, and when Haruki tells him about the boy, Haruki starts to cry. Mozasu tells him that he got the same kind of harassment as a kid and that things are never going to change—Koreans are called "Japanese bastards" in Korea, and in Japan, he'll always be a "dirty Korean" no matter how much money he makes. He reflects that Noa "got tired of being a good Korean and quit. I was never a good Korean." He reassures Haruki that he's doing okay now.

Mozasu appears to take his outcast status in stride—it doesn't matter where he goes, no nation will welcome someone like him, so he should just continue doing his best rather than trying to play a rigged game and fighting for acceptance that will never come. Although Haruki is Japanese, he, too, feels perpetually unable to meet society's standards.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 8

In 1978, Hansu picks up a well-dressed but matronly 62-year-old Sunja. He has located Noa, who has been living as a middle-class Japanese family man for 16 years now. Sunja is amazed to hear that Noa, like Mozasu, works in the **pachinko** business. Hansu's chauffeur drives them to Nagano to get a glimpse of Noa, though Hansu cautions Sunja against speaking to him.

Noa has disappeared into Japanese society so effectively that it's taken this long for even Hansu to track him down. Ironically, his pachinko career is an effective disguise as well, since no one would have predicted that career path for him.

When Sunja sees Noa, she can't refrain from jumping out of the car. When Noa sees his mother, he is surprised by the relief he feels after all this time. He refuses to see Hansu, and the two of them go into Noa's office and talk. Sunja begs Noa to have mercy and visit his family. Noa says he can't, that "having yakuza in your blood is something that controls you [...] this is my curse."

After all these years, Noa continues to see himself as a victim of Hansu's blood, a circumstance he can never escape no matter how much he changes his life. He sees his employment in the pachinko industry as a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy.

When Sunja asks if it is so terrible to be Korean, Noa says that "it is terrible to be me." To Sunja's amazement, he tells her that he's become a Japanese citizen and even visited his "supposed motherland," Korea. He promises to call Sunja later and to visit the family next week. The next morning, Hansu calls Sunja to tell her that Noa shot himself a few minutes after she left his office.

Unlike Mozasu, who's found a way to live with the tensions in his life, Noa continues to be tormented by them. Seeing his mother seems to make Noa realize that he can't live with those tensions any longer. Even with a successful life and loving family, he can't escape the belief that his life is irreparably cursed.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 9

In 1979, Mozasu's girlfriend, Etsuko, a 42-year-old divorcee and restaurant owner, is preparing for Solomon's birthday party. She returns a phone message from her 15-year-old daughter, Hana. Hana tells Etsuko she's pregnant. Etsuko supposes this is fate, as she was pregnant with Hana's brother when she wasn't much older than Hana is now.

Many years after Yumi's death, Mozasu has found happiness with another woman. Etsuko has a troubled past, however, which she fears is inevitably being replicated in her teenage daughter's life.

In her native Hokkaido, while her children were in school, Etsuko had begun a series of affairs with men she'd dated in high school. Eventually, her husband discovered her infidelity, beat her, and threw her out. Gaining custody of her children was impossible, so she moved to Tokyo and fell in love with Mozasu, the only man to whom she's ever been faithful. When Etsuko's mother hears that she's dating a "**pachinko** Korean," she asks, "Haven't you done enough to your poor children? Why not just kill them?"

Etsuko, a serial adulterer, has made very different choices than other women in the story. However, her story also underscores the narrow options available to most women, as her choices cost Etsuko her children, while a man in a comparable position would likely not face such shame and ostracism. Her outcast status is compounded by her choice to date a "dirty" Korean.

Mozasu picks up Etsuko so that they can take Solomon to get his alien registration card. Like all Koreans born in Japan after 1952, Solomon will have to apply every three years for permission to stay in Japan. At first, Etsuko is distracted by thoughts of the abortion procedure she's scheduled for Hana. Then Mozasu surprises her with the gift of an ornate watch. He says it's a "mistress watch" since Etsuko has repeatedly said no to engagement rings. Etsuko cries and explains that she doesn't refuse him because she's ashamed of him, but because of her family. She thinks about the fact that she's turned her children "into village outcasts, and there was no way for them to be acceptable anymore." Mozasu refuses to take back the watch, and Etsuko marvels that they've made it this far.

There's a note of irony about the "mistress watch," since Hansu had given Sunja a similar watch decades ago. This time, though, it's a mark of Mozasu's devotion to Etsuko despite her repeated refusals. Etsuko, dwelling on thoughts of her struggling children, feels responsible for their failures and grieves having brought shame on her family. Like other men in the family, Mozasu is drawn to a woman who is "tainted," and his own "contaminated" background seems to give him patience with Etsuko.

At the Yokohama ward office, Solomon, whom his great-uncle Yoseb had named after the wise King Solomon, cheerfully volunteers his name's biblical origins to the clerk. The clerk just smirks that "Koreans don't have kings anymore." This riles Etsuko's temper, but Mozasu restrains her. While Solomon gets his papers, Mozasu sadly reflects that he cannot change his son's fate; Koreans "have no motherland," so Solomon must learn to adapt and survive. Watching Solomon get fingerprinted on his birthday, Etsuko wishes that she could "take Solomon's shame, too, and add it to her pile."

Having attended Western schools all his life, Solomon is sometimes chattier than is the norm. When the clerk makes a racially tinged remark in response, Mozasu shows a relatively rare moment of reflectiveness. Japanese-born Koreans like themselves are stuck between two nations and must expect to fight for survival, even though they've lived here for decades.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 10

On the way home, Solomon and Hana meet for the first time at Etsuko's restaurant, and Solomon invites Hana to his birthday party. When Hana comments on the luxurious birthday preparations, Etsuko points out that Solomon hasn't had an easy life, having gotten fingerprinted like a criminal on his birthday. Hana replies that nobody is innocent.

Solomon and Hana begin to forge a fateful friendship. Hana's conviction that nobody is innocent will be a recurrent theme in her life and her conversations with Solomon later on.

Etsuko and Hana have an argument. Etsuko tells Hana about the scheduled abortion and says that Hana shouldn't be a mother. Hana replies that Etsuko hasn't even tried to be a mother. Etsuko thinks that even if she's failed, being a mother is what will always define her. She points out that she's turned down marriage to Mozasu so that she wouldn't make things worse for Hana and her brothers. Hana laughs at this supposed "sacrifice," saying Etsuko only turned him down out of fear of judgment. Etsuko thinks that Hana is right; she doesn't want to be seen as a yakuza wife. Back at Etsuko's apartment, the two reconcile somewhat, and Etsuko says she will let Hana stay with her from now on.

As for other women in the story, motherhood is a painful, fraught subject for Etsuko. In her own way, she's tried to do what she thinks best for her children—distancing herself so as not to cause them further shame—but she fears Hana is right that she is also self-serving; marrying a pachinko millionaire like Mozasu would just confirm her tainted status in the eyes of most Japanese.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 11

Mozasu sends Solomon to an English-speaking international school, and most of his party guests are the children of prominent industry leaders and expatriates. This is by design—Mozasu wants Solomon to work for an American company and become "an international man of the world."

Mozasu doesn't want Solomon to grow up making the kinds of choices and compromises that he and Noa did. He hopes that Solomon will bypass these identity questions altogether, rising above societal limitations, by becoming a citizen of the world.

As they watch the children enjoying Solomon's birthday concert, Etsuko wonders why her family looks down on **pachinko** so much. Her father had sold pricy life insurance policies. She reflects that "both men had made money from chance and fear and loneliness." Yet she can't blame anyone for taking a chance on hope, and she regrets not teaching her children to do this.

One could look at both pachinko and insurance as rackets that allow people to exploit others' insecurities, but Etsuko also sees pachinko as a way of reaching out for hope—an instinct she hasn't passed along to her own children.

Late that night, as Etsuko and Solomon talk about the party, Etsuko washes the ink out from under Solomon's fingernails; it's left over from the registration office. They talk about Hana, and Etsuko explains that her children hate her. Solomon tells her, "Your kids hate you because you're gone. They can't help it." He goes on to tell Etsuko that she is a mother to him now, and she embraces him.

In a motherly gesture, Etsuko instinctively washes away the shameful memory of Solomon's fingerprinting. Solomon draws on his own experience of growing up without Yumi to console Etsuko, and he accepts her as the mother figure in his life now.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 12

Sunja returns to Osaka from Mozasu's and Solomon's house when Yangjin develops stomach cancer. Kyunghee has been nursing Yangjin ever since Yoseb died. One afternoon the three women watch Yangjin's favorite TV show, *Other Lands*, in which a woman interviews Japanese expatriates around the world. Yangjin and Kyunghee are big fans of the interviewer, Higuchi, who's rumored to have Korean blood.

All the women in the family have now spent decades living in Japan without a nationality that's unequivocally theirs. Watching the TV show together is an expression of that common bond, and also an indication of how much their lives have transformed since the turn of the century in Korea.

In this episode of *Other Lands*, Higuchi interviews an old woman whose parents had immigrated to Colombia from Japan. Reflecting on her difficult life, the woman remarks, "A woman's lot is to suffer." She has never been to Japan, but her greatest goal in life is to be a good Japanese woman.

The refrain about women's suffering is cross-cultural and echoes across time and continents. Sunja and the other women have a certain affinity with the woman featured on the show; although they've all lived in Korea, they still feel cultural pressure to be "model" Koreans in a foreign culture that doesn't really want them.

After the show, Kyunghee and Yangjin repeat the proverb about women's suffering. Sunja feels disgusted. She has heard this saying all her life, but she'd suffered for Noa, and it wasn't enough. Yangjin senses that Sunja is thinking about Noa. She tells Sunja that Sunja brought suffering on herself by being with Hansu. She says that Mozasu has been more blessed in his life because he came from "better blood." Later, Yangjin wants to tell Sunja she's sorry, but she feels too weak to speak.

Sunja is fed up with the command to "suffer" that she's heard from other women all her life. She wonders if the suffering ever ends and if it really achieves anything. She's hurt when Yangjin effectively blames her for Noa's death and attributes Mozasu's success to his superior blood. These ideas appear fatalistic and fruitless to her.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 13

Solomon and Hana are sitting together at Yangjin's funeral. Solomon tries to concentrate while Hana whispers questions about Christianity. Solomon is a Christian, having grown up with the stories of his grandfather Isak's martyrdom, but many Japanese think of Christianity as a cult. Hana has been staying with Etsuko, but she doesn't have much to do except follow Solomon around. Solomon feels both excited and nervous around Hana.

Solomon has grown up with the religious heritage passed down by his grandparents, but his Christian faith is yet another way in which he stands out as a Korean in Japanese society. Meanwhile, he doesn't know quite what to make of Hana.

Hansu, walking with a cane, approaches Sunja after the funeral. Sunja doesn't want to hold anything against Hansu anymore, but when he mentions that his wife has died and that he thought Sunja would marry him now, she flees in tears. She can't understand why Noa is dead and Hansu still lives.

Sunja will never be able to relate to Hansu in an uncomplicated way. Although good things have come of their connection—like Noa, and many things about her life in Japan—she wouldn't have lost Noa if not for him, either. It seems as if he will forever linger in her life, both helping and hurting her.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 14

After Yangjin's funeral, Hana and Solomon start secretly having sex. Even though Solomon is not yet 14 and Hana is 17, Hana starts training Solomon to be her ideal lover. Solomon is in love with her, and Hana is troubled, relying on alcohol and sex to make her happy. Solomon gives her all his money until it runs out. One day, Hana runs away to Tokyo and disappears, leaving Solomon a note in which she calls herself his "dirty flower."

Hana evidently struggles with her self-worth after growing up ostracized for having a divorced mother, and she tries to find happiness in sex with Solomon, whose innocence and devotion she enjoys. She sees herself as "dirty" because of her outsider status.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 15

Five years later, Hana, drunk, calls Solomon in New York, where he's attending Columbia University. She works as a hostess and prostitute, and Etsuko hasn't been able to track her down. Solomon loves his current girlfriend, Phoebe, but it's nothing like what he'd felt for Hana. Hana gives him a phone number to call him back, and Solomon gives the number to his father, worried that Hana is very sick. But the number turns out to be for a Chinese restaurant.

Hana continues to avoid her family and go down self-destructive paths, and Solomon still loves her years after they were together.

Eventually, Etsuko's investigator tracks down Hana working at a *toruko*, a place where women bathe men for money. Etsuko can't believe how much Hana has aged. She begs Hana's forgiveness, "believing that if she could just listen and suffer, then maybe her daughter could be saved." Finally Hana, weeping, lets Etsuko embrace her.

Like other mothers in the novel, Etsuko hopes that somehow her own suffering can redeem her daughter. At the end of her rope, Hana finally allows herself to be helped.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 16

In 1989, Solomon is back in Tokyo, having landed a good job at Travis Brothers, a British investment bank. Phoebe has followed him there, since they're thinking of getting married. Phoebe is unhappy in Japan and often complains of anti-Korean bigotry; for example, Koreans born in Japan are forced to choose to carry either a North Korean or South Korean passport, even though there was only one Korea when their families came to Japan. Solomon doesn't understand Phoebe's anger and sometimes finds himself defending the Japanese.

So far, Solomon is fulfilling Mozasu's dreams for him, having secured a job with a Western bank. He's surprised to discover cultural differences with his Korean-American girlfriend, Phoebe. Phoebe is far more attuned to historical anti-Korean prejudices, but Solomon, who's much more c into Japan, isn't as bothered by them, accepting them as part of life.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 17

Solomon regularly plays poker with his boss, Kazu, and some other guys from work. One night after a game, Kazu has a talk with Solomon, telling him it was dumb to have lost the game on purpose. He explains that in life, there's a tax on success and a tax on doing badly, but the worst is the tax on the mediocre, on playing it safe, which is heavier than one would think.

Solomon doesn't know where Kazu is going with his speech, but he seems to be taking a special interest in Solomon and to want to encourage him not to shy from risks or avoid standing out.

Kazu goes on to explain to Solomon that there's nothing worse than knowing you're just like everybody else, but this is what most Japanese want. Solomon realizes this is true; his uncle Noa had "killed himself because he wanted to be Japanese and normal." Kazu tells Solomon he shouldn't worry if other guys get on his case about his father's **pachinko** business. Solomon defends his father as "not some gangster," but "an ordinary businessman." Solomon tells him he doesn't have to explain; anyway, it's not as if most Koreans had much choice in their profession, given Japanese injustices. As Solomon catches a cab home, he wonders why Kazu is so worked up about this.

Kazu, who's Japanese, tells Solomon that Japanese culture is conformist, but that everyone knows Solomon is a wealthy Korean with pachinko connections, and he shouldn't try to resist that. Solomon, who'd never known Noa, grew up with the story that Noa had committed suicide because he could never blend in. At the same time, he sincerely wants to defend his father as "ordinary," too. Kazu doesn't buy this, believing that a family as successful as Solomon's would have had to achieve something unusual. Even Kazu implicitly looks down on pachinko. However, he's encouraging Solomon to own his uniqueness and not try to be just like his coworkers; mediocrity won't get him ahead. Solomon, who's had a fairly smooth and privileged path overall and hasn't faced overt prejudice in the same way his dad and grandparents did, doesn't quite see what his boss is getting at.

Next week, Solomon is the youngest guy who's put on a major real estate transaction to build a golf course in Yokohama. At the meeting, the client explains that all that's left is to get three remaining landowners to sign on. The last of these is an old woman who won't be bought out. After the meeting, Kazu asks Solomon to go for a drive with him. They drive to the woman's house and sit outside. Kazu asks, "So how do you get a person to do what you want when she doesn't want to?"

Kazu obviously wants something from Solomon in this deal and is offering him a chance to distinguish himself. The old woman who refuses to be bought out is reminiscent of a young Sunja, who refused to be "bought" by Hansu and whose will was only moveable when it came to protecting the ones she loved.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 18

One Sunday after church, Solomon and Phoebe visit Solomon's family. Solomon's childhood home, which was filled with American furniture when he was a kid, has now been redecorated by Etsuko to look like a "glamorous Buddhist temple." When they visit Solomon's family, Phoebe speaks Korean with the elders, Solomon speaks Japanese with the elders, and the couple speaks English with one another.

Solomon's childhood home represents a shift in aesthetic tastes from American aspirations to an artistic interpretation of the Japanese culture into which they've settled and found success. The mixing of languages shows how different Solomon's and Phoebe's upbringings have been, due to different family immigrations and historical patterns, even though they share the same ethnic background.

Sunja and Kyunghee warmly welcome Phoebe. Phoebe loves being around Solomon's family, who are more compact than her own scattered family, and "warm but [...] intensely watchful," missing nothing. The women are shocked when Phoebe tells them that her mother doesn't cook because she was always working, and growing up Phoebe only ate Korean food at a restaurant. Phoebe doesn't understand why a woman has to cook and is amused by the elderly ladies' fascination with her life. Sunja wonders what Solomon will eat if he marries Phoebe.

Phoebe notices how carefully Solomon's family keep their eyes on one another, perhaps not wanting to take one another for granted. For Sunja and Kyunghee, food was central to caring for their families and earning money to survive; it's been the constant backdrop of their lives, so Phoebe's flippancy about it amazes them. Food didn't have those same resonances for Phoebe's family, so Sunja's concern sounds quaint and rather sexist to her.

As she cooks, Sunja thinks that although she'd been taught that a woman's life is one of suffering, she doesn't want that for Phoebe. She thinks it's a wonderful luxury that they won't have to worry about war and poverty and can just enjoy having children, without laboring the way she and Kyunghee had to. She asks Phoebe when she and Solomon are getting married. Phoebe doesn't mind the question, since she's been wondering the same thing.

Sunja questions whether the assumptions about women's lives that have been passed down to her should really apply anymore. Having lived through so much, she just wants Phoebe and Solomon to be able to enjoy a happy life without having to suffer and strive to meet their basic needs.

In the den, Solomon and Mozasu talk about work. Solomon tells him about the old lady who doesn't want to sell her property. Mozasu says he can easily call Goro or Haruki to find out about her. Solomon notices that his father doesn't seem embarrassed about his **pachinko** career.

Solomon doesn't mind drawing on his father's pachinko connections for help with the holdup in the real estate deal, but he's feeling more conflicted about it than he used to. After talking with his boss about it, he can't take pachinko in stride as readily as Mozasu does.

The next day, Mozasu calls Solomon. Goro found out the old lady's identity; she's a Korean who refuses to sell to the Japanese. Goro says that he thinks the lady will sell her property to him, and then he'll sell it to Kazu's client for the same price. Solomon excitedly tells Kazu the news, and Kazu is pleased with Solomon's work.

After almost a century of colonialism and hostility between Japan and Korea, there's still enmity between the groups, coming out in instances like the old lady's resistance to selling her property. Solomon thinks that through his pachinko connections, he's found a loophole that will make everyone happy, even enabling his advancement at work.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 19

Solomon visits Hana in the hospital. She looks shockingly different, scabbed and skeletal. Even now, she flirts with Solomon, telling him she would have married him, but it's good that she didn't, because she ruins everything. Solomon still loves Hana and feels angry at the Japanese attitude that suffering is simply to be endured.

Solomon finds out that Hana is dying in the hospital, apparently of AIDS. He is surprised how much he still feels for her and wishes he could fix everything. Having spent so much time in America and Western-influenced environments, he's inclined to think things are fixable, and Japanese attitudes seem frustratingly stoic and resigned to him.

At work, Solomon can't concentrate. He wonders what would have happened if Hana had never run away. Suddenly Kazu comes into his office and tells him, "She's dead." Solomon is confused at first, thinking he's talking about Hana. Then he realizes Kazu's talking about the old lady who didn't want to sell her property. She died of unknown causes within a few days of selling to Goro. The client has canceled the transaction, and Kazu says he has to fire Solomon.

Hana was Solomon's first love, and he can't help wondering how things might have turned out differently if they hadn't gone their separate ways. The death of the old lady, which looks very suspicious even if completely coincidental, is a surprise, and his firing is a total shock, especially compared to his recent encouraging interactions with Kazu.

Solomon says that Kazu has no proof of any wrongdoing and that Goro has always been generous toward elderly people. Kazu warns Solomon not to tell him anything else, and that his client "wasn't looking for a run-in with the yaks" (yakuza). The transaction, Kazu declares, is "contaminated."

Solomon can't square Kazu's implications with the generous person he's always known Goro to be. He can't believe that Goro would be involved in an old lady's death, and in a way, it doesn't matter what really happened—it looks too suspicious for the client to go forward.

Kazu tells Solomon that he isn't being discriminated against, "something that Koreans tend to believe"; he says he has always been known for his preference for working with Koreans. He just doesn't agree with Solomon's father's tactics. As the Human Resources workers escort Solomon out of the building, he keeps thinking about Hana.

No matter what really happened with the elderly seller, the outcome is that Solomon is now made to feel that as the Korean, he's the "bad blood," the contaminant, in the group. It's something he's never really experienced before, and there is nothing he can do about it. As he leaves his office for the last time, his mind goes straight to Hana instead of to Phoebe, suggesting where his deepest affections lie.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 20

Solomon goes to the curry restaurant where Mozasu, Goro, and Haruki habitually eat on Wednesdays. He's visibly upset. Goro says he went to the old woman's funeral and that she'd died of a heart attack, and Haruki has heard no complaints about her death. Solomon explains that he was fired, but feels hesitant to say too much with Haruki, a high-ranking Japanese police detective, present; and he doesn't want to hurt the men's feelings. Goro understands Solomon's hesitation and assures him that he had nothing to do with her death, and that Kazu was just using Solomon for his Korean connections.

Solomon seems to be a little naïve about the way things worked for his father's generation, not quite realizing that all three men have benefited from yakuza connections in one way or another. The fact that he's relatively sheltered from such things underlines the extent of his father's success in pulling himself up from the bottom. Solomon will probably never know the full story of what's happened with Goro and the elderly Korean woman, but in any case, he's now experienced discrimination of a kind that he hasn't known before.

Phoebe doesn't answer the phone, so Solomon returns to the hospital to visit Hana again. Hana tells him that he should take over Mozasu's **pachinko** business. She says that his father and Goro are honest men, and anyway, nothing is ever going to change in Japan—it will never integrate Koreans like Solomon, and it will never accept diseased people like her. She tells him that Mozasu sometimes visits her and prays for her. She's known many elite men in her work, and Mozasu is better than all of them.

Hana has always been an outcast because of her family situation and now because of her illness. She's done "dirty" things with many outwardly good men who have society's approval. From this perspective, she assures Solomon that his father is a much better man than most, and he shouldn't pursue a "respectable" career out of a foolish hope that Japanese society will come around to accepting him.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 21

Phoebe seems almost "unruffled" by the news of Solomon's firing. She tells Solomon that she'd never liked Kazu's phony, fraternity boy act. Solomon thinks she's just prejudiced against the Japanese. Phoebe asks if they can move back to the United States; she hints that there are multiple ways to get citizenship. When Solomon doesn't respond, she immediately starts packing.

Phoebe hints that Solomon should marry her so that he can become a U.S. citizen. Even though everyone else seems to want them to get married, Solomon evidently doesn't, and Phoebe finally realizes this. Without the prospect of marriage, Phoebe sees no reason to stick around.

Solomon had loved Phoebe's confidence when they were at Columbia, but against the backdrop of Japan, she just seems aloof, and her emotional extremes seem too stark. He's also tired of her obsession with Japan's historical evils. Many of the most significant people in Solomon's life have been Japanese—Etsuko, Hana, and Haruki. In a way, he feels Japanese himself; there's "more to being something than just blood." Phoebe will never understand this, so they have to break up.

In Japan, Solomon's and Phoebe's cultural differences come out more starkly than they did in America, and they don't get along as well. Solomon belongs in Japan in a way that Phoebe never could, and in a way that earlier generations of his family couldn't, either. This sense of belonging confirms Sunja's belief that blood can't determine everything about a person's identity, though when she left Korea so many years ago, she wouldn't have imagined or sought the kind of life Solomon has achieved.

Solomon goes to his father's office and says that he wants to work for him. Mozasu is shocked; he'd sent Solomon to Columbia so that this wouldn't happen. He has never wanted anyone to look down on his son. Mozasu thought that people would respect him if he became rich. He doesn't want Solomon to have to fight for respect in that way. But Solomon picks up a ledger from Mozasu's desk and asks him to explain it. Finally, Mozasu does.

Mozasu worked all his life so that Solomon wouldn't face the kinds of limitations and scorn that he did. He's devastated when it appears that all of that effort has been for nothing. But for Solomon, working for his father isn't solely an act of defeat, but an acknowledgment of what Hana had told him—that his father is a respectable man who shouldn't be viewed in light of society's prejudices.

Sunja, who's now 73, still dreams about Hansu and wishes she'd forgotten him by now. She also still visits Isak's grave, finding him more approachable in death than in life. The week after Solomon is fired, she takes the train to Osaka to clean Isak's grave and speak to him. As she sits crying next to his grave, the groundskeeper, Uchida, comes over to talk to her. He tells Sunja that Noa used to visit Isak's grave, right up until 1978. He is sad to hear that Noa is dead. He says that Noa used to bring him copies of Charles Dickens's works in translation and had even offered to send him to school. He encourages Sunja to attend night school so that she can learn to read, too. Sunja smiles at him, then finishes cleaning the grave and goes home to Kyunghee.

Both of the men Sunja has loved are still present in her life in their own ways. When she visits Isak's grave, she regains a comforting connection with Noa, too. Even through all their years of estrangement, Noa still acknowledged and honored Isak as his father—even though he'd seemed to reject Sunja's pleas that blood didn't matter. Sunja is able to take a measure of consolation and closure from Uchida's story of her son's kindness. It can't undo the loss, but it shows her that Noa loved her and honored the choices she made for his sake, too.

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