

The Sun is Also a Star



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF NICOLA YOON

Nicola Yoon was born in Jamaica in 1972 and grew up in both Jamaica and Brooklyn, New York. She received a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from Cornell University, though an elective creative writing class sparked an interest in writing. She attended a master's program at Emerson College for creative writing, though she spent twenty years as a programmer for investment firms. In 2015, Yoon published her first novel, *Everything, Everything*, after the birth of her daughter, who is biracial. Yoon's husband, David, drew the illustrations for the novel. Yoon and her family have been very involved with the organization We Need Diverse Books, a group that works to increase and promote diversity and representation in literature. The Yoon family lives in Los Angeles, California.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Much of the legislation that guides Natasha's immigration experience was put into place with the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act. The act added civil penalties, such as fines, for people who refuse to depart the US voluntarily, as well as increased the amount of time immigrants are ineligible for various forms of relief. Since the mid-2000s, the US has actually moved away from voluntary departure in favor of other forms of removal. Though the total number of immigrants who were removed and then returned have decreased since then, this shift has remained controversial as the total number of deportations actually rose. *The New York Times* article that Daniel mentions in the novel was part of the *Modern Love* column written by Daniel Jones. It was published in January of 2015 and, as Daniel explains, provides a brief overview of a study in which researchers developed a set of 36 questions intended to foster closeness and intimacy between research subjects. The 1997 study, *The Experimental Generation of Interpersonal Closeness*, was conducted by Arthur and Elaine Aron. Despite the success that Natasha and Daniel had using the questions, the Arons have been careful to note that within the parameters of their study, it's difficult or impossible to gauge whether or not strangers who use the questions actually begin or maintain romantic relationships, though it is true that two of their initial research subjects did marry.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Nicola Yoon has been very vocal about the need for literature, particularly young adult literature, that represents issues of

diversity not as the problem (as in a novel like Becky Albertalli's *Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda*, where the conflict revolves around a gay teen coming out), but that presents characters' diversity as fact, unproblematic, and not as what the main thrust of the novel is about. Yoon's first novel, *Everything, Everything*, falls into this category, and other books that the organization We Need Diverse Books promotes include Margarita Engle's *Enchanted Air* and Brandy Colbert's *Little and Lion*. As romantic young adult fiction, Yoon's *The Sun Is Also a Star* shares a number of thematic similarities with novels by John Green (*An Abundance of Katherines*; *The Fault in Our Stars*), and it shares a narrative style very similar to the one that Rainbow Rowell uses in *Eleanor and Park*. The novel also mentions many poets, including Emily Dickenson, Warsan Shire, and Robert Frost, as well as Lorraine Hansberry's 1959 play *A Raisin in the Sun*.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** The Sun Is Also a Star
- **When Written:** 2015
- **Where Written:** Los Angeles, California
- **When Published:** 2016
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary
- **Genre:** Young Adult Romance
- **Setting:** New York City, post-2015
- **Climax:** Daniel admits he doesn't want to go to Yale, and Natasha discovers her family will be deported.
- **Antagonist:** Both Natasha and Daniel's fathers are antagonist figures, and the reader understands that the attorney Jeremy Fitzgerald is an antagonist as well. In a more overarching sense, all the characters battle hopelessness and loneliness, as well as racism, poverty, and the US immigration system.
- **Point of View:** First person and third-person omniscient

EXTRA CREDIT

Political Poetry. Daniel's made-up dream job of being an "official poet" to world rulers isn't as far-fetched as Natasha thinks, and a number of similar jobs have existed throughout world history. Persian rulers often kept poets at their courts to write poems of praise or to record events in verse, and the poets were sometimes considered friends and companions of the rulers they served. Shakespeare's plays also served political purposes, while characters such as the fool in *King Lear* (and real-life "fools" and minstrels) were often poetically inclined entertainers.

Love and Science. The lead researchers and designers of the 36 questions, Arthur Aron and Elaine Aron, married in the late 1960s and have been married since. Arthur Aron's relationship and the lack of scientific study about love and relationships in the late 1960s inspired his life's work and eventually, his famous study.



PLOT SUMMARY

Despite her mother Patricia's protests, seventeen-year-old Natasha gathers her phone, **headphones**, and physics homework and heads for the USCIS building in Manhattan. Her little brother, Peter, gleefully packs boxes while blaring Bob Marley, and her dad, Samuel, just looks angry. They're undocumented immigrants and are being deported today. Natasha believes this is her last chance to convince anyone to let her stay in the US. At the USCIS building, the security guard, Irene, takes her time looking through Natasha's things, making her late for her appointment. She lingers over Natasha's phone case, which is the cover art for Nirvana's album *Nevermind*. Later, Irene listens to the album and after researching Kurt Cobain, she decides to commit suicide. It's something she's been thinking about for a while. Meanwhile, a new agent, Lester Barnes, agrees to see Natasha. She's distraught at his apathy, but finally, he gives her a business card for Attorney Jeremy Fitzgerald, an immigration lawyer in town. She secures an appointment for later that day.

Meanwhile, Daniel prepares for his admission interview for Yale. His mom, Min Soo, was very upset after Daniel's perfect but mean older brother, Charlie, was forced to withdraw from Harvard, so she's pinning her hopes on Daniel getting into Yale so he can be a doctor. Daniel doesn't care much for being a doctor; he wants to be a poet. Charlie happens to walk into the kitchen right as Min Soo tells Daniel to not be like Charlie, and Daniel decides to escape the house early and take the train into the city for a haircut before his appointment. The conductor stops the train a few stops away from Daniel's, and he tells his passengers to go find God. Daniel decides to walk the rest of the way and let fate guide him. He sees Natasha walk into a record store called Second Coming Records and decides to follow her, since it seems like a sign.

In the record store, Natasha sees her cheating ex-boyfriend, Rob, making out with a girl named Kelly. Kelly is stealing records, which astounds both Natasha and Daniel. When Rob approaches Natasha, Daniel accuses him of stealing and scares him off. Natasha has no interest in making friends and leaves the store without introducing herself to Daniel. He follows her out of the store and watches her get lost in her music at a red light. When Natasha steps off the curb, she doesn't notice a white BMW running the light. Daniel pulls her back and they fall, breaking Natasha's headphones. Daniel invites Natasha to get coffee with him, and she grudgingly introduces herself and

agrees. At the coffee shop, they ascertain that Daniel is Korean American and Natasha is Jamaican, and Natasha loves science while Daniel is a poet at heart who believes fully in true love. He looks up a study that found 36 questions that can supposedly cause two people to fall in love, and he decides to make Natasha fall in love with him "scientifically."

Natasha and Daniel begin working through the questions as they walk uptown for Natasha's appointment, which she refuses to tell Daniel about. They're obviously attracted to each other, though Natasha doesn't want to admit it. At the office building, Natasha is sad when they part ways but they both reason it's for the best. At Attorney Fitzgerald's office, Natasha learns from his paralegal, Hannah Winter, that he was hit by a car that morning and won't be in until later. Natasha returns to the lobby where she finds Daniel, who postponed his interview. The two decide to go to Harlem so that Daniel can deliver a money pouch to his dad, Dae Hyun, at his store. Natasha is unsurprised when she discovers that Dae Hyun owns a black hair care store, as Koreans own most black hair care stores. Daniel initially asks Natasha to wait outside so they can avoid Dae Hyun's offensive racism, but Daniel decides to ask Natasha to come in anyway. In the store, Charlie taunts Natasha and Daniel, while Dae Hyun tries to offer Natasha, who wears her hair in an Afro, a relaxer to "make her hair not so big." Daniel finally drags Natasha out of the store, mortified. Natasha laughs at the absurdity of it, but she is touched when Daniel sincerely tries to apologize for the racism in the world.

Natasha accepts Daniel's invitation to have lunch at his favorite Korean restaurant. On the train into the city, they talk about their complicated relationships with their fathers. Natasha doesn't ask any embarrassing questions about the food, though the waitress does rudely refuse to bring her a fork. She doesn't understand why Daniel tells people he's from Korea when he was born in America. After they eat, Daniel leads her next door to do norebang, or Korean karaoke. Norebang is done in small booths instead of a large room, so it's far more intimate. Daniel sings an ABBA song and is a skilled singer and performer. Natasha does a horrendous rendition of a very depressing Soundgarden song and after, she and Daniel kiss. Natasha feels emotion like she's never felt before; she was worried she was incapable of love after discovering she wasn't so upset about Rob. The kiss is intense and finally, they stop. Outside on the street, Natasha has to remind herself that the hustle and bustle of the city is real life, and she begins to shut down on the train to the Museum of Natural History. Daniel wants to know what she's afraid of, which begins a fight as they reach Central Park. Daniel is angry that Natasha won't admit that there's something between them, and he can barely comprehend it when Natasha tells him that she's an undocumented immigrant set to be deported in mere hours. They angrily part ways.

Natasha goes to the museum anyway and looks around the Hall of Meteorites. She finds the idea that two people falling in love

is significant ridiculous in light of all the small things that had to go right to create the universe. Daniel writes sad poetry, and the narrator finally explains what happened between Natasha and her dad as Natasha returns to Attorney Fitzgerald's office. Samuel came to the US to be an actor but soon became disillusioned and stopped auditioning. Finally, a few months ago, he got a part in **A Raisin in the Sun**, his favorite play. Patricia had been unimpressed and had flat-out refused to attend opening night. After the play, Samuel drank too much and was charged with a DUI. In the process, he told the officer that he was undocumented, thus bringing about the deportation notice. Attorney Fitzgerald is confused as to why Samuel would ever do such a thing, but he believes he can reverse the notice. In her relief, Natasha decides to go back to Dae Hyun's store to try to locate Daniel and tell him the good news.

Daniel returns to his dad's shop to confront Charlie. As he and Charlie fight, Daniel understands that Charlie failed at Harvard because he was suddenly not the best anymore. After their fight, Dae Hyun tells Daniel that if he doesn't agree to go to Yale to become a doctor, he won't offer any financial help. The narrator explains that Dae Hyun just wants to give his sons a better future after his own experience of poverty in Korea, and he has very definite ideas about how that's best done. Daniel decides to return to Natasha's building in Manhattan with the hope of finding her. Unknowingly, the two cross paths at the Manhattan subway stop, and they both give money to a street violinist. When Natasha reaches the store, Charlie agrees to give her Daniel's phone number, which the narrator asserts is the only nice thing he'll ever do. When she calls Daniel, he's thrilled to hear from her, and he apologizes for trying to insert himself in her business. Natasha takes the train back to Manhattan to Attorney Fitzgerald's building, which Daniel realized is the same building where he needs to be for his interview. They discuss all the coincidences of the day, though they disagree whether they're fate or just coincidences. When Natasha tells Daniel that she might be able to stay in the country, she's so overcome with joy that she decides to call Lester Barnes to ask him to thank Irene, as Irene holding her up that morning is what set off the chain of events that brought her to Daniel and to Attorney Fitzgerald.

Daniel signs in for his appointment and leads Natasha to the roof. The door is locked, but a security guard who has clearly been smoking happens to come off the roof. Natasha scolds the man for smoking. She reminds the man so much of his late wife, and Natasha and Daniel remind him of how he and his wife used to look at each other, that the guard allows them onto the roof. Natasha and Daniel kiss and then begin working through more questions. Daniel explains that he believes God is the name for all the interconnected good parts of all people, while Natasha tells Daniel about dark matter, which keeps the universe from flying apart. Daniel insists that dark matter is

love.

Daniel is late for his interview with Attorney Fitzgerald. When he enters the office, Hannah Winter is crying, but Fitzgerald ignores her and calls Daniel in. Daniel notices Natasha's file on Fitzgerald's desk, and he and Fitzgerald have a frank conversation during which Daniel admits that he has no interest in going to Yale, while Fitzgerald confides in Daniel that he's cheating on his wife with Hannah Winter. Fitzgerald admits that he wasn't able to save Natasha, and the narrator explains that instead of calling a judge, Fitzgerald spent his afternoon with Hannah. Later, he'll decide to leave his wife for her. Daniel is distraught and decides that he needs to tell Natasha himself. He finds her in the lobby, where she ignores Attorney Fitzgerald's calls and cries when Daniel tells her what happened. Daniel declares that he'll accompany her home and then to the airport.

Natasha is ashamed of how rundown her neighborhood is, and she chafes under the stares that she and Daniel attract. At the apartment, Daniel is ashamed when he realizes how poor Natasha's family truly is. The apartment is in total disarray because of the packing, and Samuel is angry that Natasha has been gone all day. Natasha finally confronts her dad and tells him that when they get to Jamaica, he has to actually try to make it as an actor and can't live in his dreams anymore. Natasha and Daniel take a cab to the airport together, and they stare into each other's eyes for four minutes as the final part of the study. They tell each other they love each other before Natasha gets on the plane.

Daniel and Natasha try to keep in touch, but soon grow apart as Natasha tries to assimilate into Jamaican culture. Daniel attends Hunter College part time, while Natasha discovers she loves physics. Natasha never knew that she saved Irene's life by making the phone call to Lester Barnes, as it gave Irene the strength to call a suicide hotline and get help. She becomes a flight attendant and ten years later, she recognizes Natasha on one of her flights. After a moment, Natasha recognizes Irene, and she realizes that Daniel is sitting mere seats away.



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Natasha Kingsley – Natasha Kingsley, an undocumented immigrant from Jamaica, is one of the seventeen-year-old protagonists of the novel. She came to the US when she was eight years old with her mother, Patricia, to join her father, Samuel. The family overstayed their tourist visa and have been in the country since. Natasha adored her passionate, artistic father when she was a child, but over the last several years, her love and respect for him slowly waned as she realized that his dream of becoming a famous actor was never going to come true. In response to her father's failures, Natasha turns to math

and science as an alternative to passion, as those subjects have lucrative career opportunities as well as little room for error or emotion. Natasha meets Daniel as she's attempting to overturn her family's Voluntary Removal notice, a cause she takes up because she identifies fully as American and believes that Jamaica holds nothing for her. Though she's initially rude and brisk with Daniel, she finds him extremely attractive, and by the end of the day, she comes to see that there's value in his love of poetry, emotion, love, and religion. At the end of the day, Natasha's family is forced to leave the country, but not before Natasha finally confronts her father about his neglect of their family. She informs him that he needs to start living in the real world and stop living in his dreams—something she had been unable to say to him before meeting Daniel and learning from him.

Daniel Bae – Daniel Bae is one of the novel's seventeen-year-old protagonists. He's a second generation immigrant who very comfortably inhabits a space between being fully American and fully Korean. While he loves Korean food and speaks Korean with his parents, he also craves the life of a “normal” American teenage boy. Though his true love is poetry, he initially plans to attend Yale and become a doctor to appease his parents. Daniel has a good relationship with his mother, Min Soo, and he has mixed feelings about his father, Dae Hyun—his father doesn't support his love of poetry, berates Daniel (when he speaks to him at all), and pushes Daniel to achieve a version of the American dream that hinges solely on financial success. Daniel believes wholeheartedly in love and destiny. He meets Natasha in Manhattan because an evangelical train conductor instructed his passengers to get off the train to go find God, and Daniel decides it's a perfect opportunity to let destiny lead him. Though he's attracted to Natasha, her disdain for love, destiny, and anything she considers unscientific presents problems for Daniel. He makes it his goal to convince her of the existence of love and make her fall in love with him scientifically, using questions from a scientific study on love. Through his daylong relationship with Natasha, Daniel comes to realize that he has no interest in following his father's plans for him and finally admits that the thought of being a doctor makes him feel anxious and trapped. As he becomes more confident that he and Natasha are meant to be, Daniel confronts both his father and his abrasive older brother, Charlie, about their poor treatment of him.

Samuel Kingsley – Samuel is Natasha and Peter's father and Patricia's husband. He believes he has a God-given gift for acting and is meant to be a famous actor. The glowing reviews his performance as Walter Lee Younger in *A Raisin in the Sun* received in Jamaica were what inspired him to move to the US to become a famous Broadway actor. However, Samuel has very thin skin and couldn't handle the constant rejection he received when he auditioned in the US. After Natasha and Patricia joined him in New York, he took a job as a security

guard and stopped attending auditions altogether. He became depressed and eventually gave up on his dreams entirely. As Natasha pulled away from him during this time, he also couldn't understand her anymore—her love of math seemed foreign and strange. Two months before the start of the novel, Samuel had the opportunity to once again act as Walter Lee Younger in a small production of *A Raisin in the Sun*. Patricia refused to attend, but Natasha believed her father's performance in the play was phenomenal. That night, Samuel drove home drunk and was charged with a DUI. Believing America had nothing more to offer him, Samuel intentionally told the police officer about his immigration status, bringing about his family's deportation. Natasha resents him for this, as she believes he ruined her life. She also hates him because she overheard him tell Patricia that his family is the reason he couldn't follow his dreams. On the night they leave for Jamaica, Natasha tells Samuel that he needs to start “living in the real world” and actively try to make a living an actor and support his family.

Dae Hyun Bae – Dae Hyun is Daniel's dad. He's a private and quiet man who emigrated from South Korea with his young wife, Min Soo. He decided to leave Korea when he realized that taking over the family crab-fishing business would keep his family in poverty. With the help of a cousin in America, Dae Hyun opened a black hair care store in Harlem, which has allowed him to comfortably support Min Soo and their two sons, Charlie and Daniel. Dae Hyun keeps his impoverished past a secret from his sons, as he believes that poverty is somehow contagious and even hearing about it might infect them. Instead, he insists that both his sons go to Harvard, which he believes is the best school, and become doctors. When Daniel admits he doesn't want to be a doctor, Dae Hyun threatens to withdraw all financial assistance and later makes good on this promise. Dae Hyun is extremely proud of his South Korean heritage, but he is also deeply racist—even though he operates a store that caters to the black community, he thinks very little of his customers and is openly racist to Natasha. Daniel admits that he loves his father, but Natasha can tell that he's ashamed of him as well.

Charlie Bae – Charlie is Daniel's abrasive, rude older brother—the narrator insists that being awful is something Charlie never grows out of. Charlie is ashamed of his Korean heritage and especially his Korean family, to the point that he refuses to eat Korean food and even pretends he doesn't understand the language. He especially hates Daniel, who is able to comfortably accept his Korean and American identities, and mocks him every chance he gets. Charlie is home in November, when the novel takes place, after being forced to withdraw for two semesters from Harvard, where he was attending school to be a doctor. Both Dae Hyun and Min Soo are distraught and angry about this, and Charlie chafes under all their negative attention. He overhears his mother telling Daniel to not be like him, which makes him even angrier. In the

future, he drops his Korean middle names to become Charles Bay and becomes a corrupt politician. However, he does one good thing in his life: he agrees to give Natasha Daniel's phone number, though he does it because he knows his parents will shift their negative attention to Daniel for having a black girlfriend.

Patricia Kingsley – Patricia is Natasha's mother. She is very close to both of her children, Natasha and Peter, and over the last nine years that she's lived in New York, she's become increasingly disillusioned with her husband, Samuel. While she wanted to support him and see his acting dreams come true (and by extension, see his dreams finance her dreams to own a house), she eventually gave up on his dreams of being an actor. For the last few years, she's singlehandedly supported her family. She's constantly tired and overworked, and Natasha notes that Patricia's greatest fear is getting her hopes up and having them dashed. She encourages Natasha to accept their order for voluntary removal, and the novel implies that Patricia believes there will be more and better opportunities for her family back in Jamaica. Five years after the Kingsley family returns to Jamaica, Patricia dies of an unnamed disease.

Min Soo Bae – Min Soo is Daniel and Charlie's mother and Dae Hyun's wife. Daniel loves his mother dearly and believes they have a strong relationship, as he feels comfortable enough with her to write poetry in her presence. She is distraught when she learns that Charlie was kicked out of Harvard, and she supports her husband's insistence that both of her sons become doctors in order to achieve the American dream. Three years before the start of the novel, Dae Hyun bought Min Soo an oil painting set, and Daniel learns that she used to be a skilled painter. Daniel often wonders if his mom regrets getting married and having children, as he believes that not having those familial ties would've allowed her to be a successful painter. Though she is proud of her Korean identity and acts in ways the novel says are uniquely Korean, Min Soo also understands the importance of allowing her sons to embrace their American identities. She does this by giving her boys American first names (coupled with Korean middle and last names) and later, supporting Daniel when he refuses to become a doctor.

Attorney Jeremy Fitzgerald – Jeremy Fitzgerald is considered the best immigration attorney in New York City, and he agrees to see Natasha and do what he can to help reverse her deportation notice. However, his day begins to take unexpected turns when Donald Christainsen runs into him with his car in the morning, injuring him and precipitating his realization and eventual confession that he's in love with Hannah Winter, his paralegal. Though Jeremy makes several appointments to help Natasha, he doesn't attend those appointments and instead spends the afternoon at a hotel with Hannah. As such, he's unable to reverse the deportation notice. Daniel realizes in the evening that Jeremy is the one who is supposed to conduct his interview for admission to Yale. During their interview, Jeremy

encourages Daniel to mess up while he's young and the consequences are minimal, while also encouraging him to consider Yale as a stepping-stone. Though he doesn't tell Daniel the truth about why he couldn't help Natasha, Daniel is still distraught. Later, Jeremy chooses to leave his wife for Hannah, causing lasting emotional damage to his children with his first wife.

Irene – Irene is an extremely depressed young woman who works as a security guard in the USCIS building, which Natasha visits. She takes her time looking through people's belongings, as that often causes them to look at her—these brief moments of connection keep Irene's crushing loneliness at bay. After spending a week checking Natasha into the building, Irene finally decides to investigate Natasha's phone case, which is the album art for the Nirvana album *Nevermind*. Though Irene doesn't like the cover, she later listens to the album and researches the tragic life of Nirvana's lead singer, which causes her to decide to commit suicide. She ends up not following through after Lester Barnes informs her that Natasha called to thank her (Irene was slow to check Natasha in, which made Natasha late to her appointment and consequently allowed her to run into Daniel). Irene doesn't know what Natasha meant to thank her for, but she seeks help and eventually lives out her childhood dream of becoming a flight attendant. On one serendipitous flight, she's the one to reconnect Natasha and Daniel ten years after Natasha saved her life.

Peter – Peter is Natasha's nine-year-old brother and Samuel and Patricia's son. He's shy and doesn't feel fully at home in the US. He's thrilled to move to Jamaica, even though he's the only American citizen of the Kingsley family. After moving to Jamaica, Peter truly finds himself and a sense of community he never dreamed was possible.

Lester Barnes – Lester Barnes is a case officer at the USCIS building in Manhattan. He agrees to see Natasha when she's late for her appointment with her usual case officer. Though Mr. Barnes appears uncaring and unfeeling for Natasha's plight at first, after she yells at him about his questionable use of the Jamaican word "irie," he refers her on to a hugely successful immigration attorney named Jeremy Fitzgerald.

Donald Christainsen/the BMW Driver – Donald Christainsen is a grief-stricken, alcoholic man who drives a white BMW. Distracted and intoxicated, he almost hits Natasha when he runs a red light, and later in the day, he hits and injures Jeremy Fitzgerald. The reader learns that he drinks to deal with his grief surrounding the recent death of his daughter, who was killed by a driver who was texting.

Hannah Winter – Hannah is Jeremy Fitzgerald's paralegal. She is a beautiful woman whom Natasha thinks looks as though she could be a princess. In reality, Hannah loves fairy tales, though she thinks of herself as a minor character in her own story. She's madly in love with Jeremy and finally gets her happy

ending when he decides to leave his wife for her.

The Waitress – The waitress is a middle-aged Korean woman who works at Daniel's favorite Korean restaurant. She rudely refuses to give Natasha a fork and tells Daniel to teach her to use chopsticks, but the reader later learns why she behaves this way: her own son married a white girl, and her husband refused to allow their son to maintain a relationship with them because of that choice. Because of this, the waitress believes that people like Natasha—that is, non-Koreans—"take" Korean children away from their families.

Rob – Rob was Natasha's boyfriend in high school; they dated for eight months and four days. They began dating after Natasha helped him in their AP Physics class, and Natasha generally liked dating him. He cheated on her with a blonde girl named Kelly. In the present, Natasha finds that his qualities she once found charming—specifically, his smile and his ability to convince his partner of his virtues—now seem stupid and shallow, and she can't fathom why she ever liked him.

Joe/The Security Guard – Joe is a security guard in Jeremy Fitzgerald's building who allows Daniel and Natasha to go on the roof. He spent his life making plans to travel and fully enjoy retirement with his wife, and was devastated when she died mere months into their retirement. He smokes cigarettes and overworks himself to cope with his grief.

MINOR CHARACTERS

The Conductor – The unnamed conductor drives Daniel's train into the city in the beginning of the novel. After his unexpected divorce, the conductor discovered Christianity and takes it upon himself to evangelize to his train passengers. His newfound religion fills him with joy and purpose.

Kelly – Kelly is a blonde girl whom Rob cheated on Natasha with. She and Rob attempt to steal records at an independent record store, which Natasha and Daniel witness.

Bev – Bev is Natasha's best friend and the only person aware of Natasha's immigration status as of the start of the novel. During the novel, she's touring colleges in California with her mother and rarely responds to Natasha's messages and calls.

Natasha and Daniel through their whirlwind, one-day romance in New York City. Both are immigrants: Daniel is a second-generation Korean American who very comfortably inhabits the gray area between being fully Korean and fully American, while Natasha's family illegally immigrated to the US from Jamaica when she was eight years old. Unlike Daniel, however, Natasha considers herself fully American. Through the differing experiences of Natasha, Daniel, and their respective families, the novel explores multiple iterations of the immigrant experience and what it means to identify, secretly or otherwise, as an immigrant. In doing so, the novel ultimately proposes that there's no one right way to be an immigrant or an American, and that attempting to impose one's "right" way of being an immigrant on someone else has heartbreaking consequences.

Natasha and Daniel's lives are both shaped by the facts surrounding their parents' immigration to the US. Daniel's parents, Dae Hyun and Min Soo, emigrated from South Korea soon after their marriage. Natasha's parents, Samuel and Patricia, came in waves: Samuel arrived in the US when Natasha was six, and Natasha and her mother followed two years later. Aside from the fact that Daniel was born in the US while Natasha wasn't, the difference that sets the two apart the most is that Daniel's parents came to the US legally, while Natasha's parents overstayed a tourist visa and lived under the radar for years to evade deportation. The fact that Natasha isn't a legal resident is anxiety-inducing in a number of ways and deeply influences how she conceptualizes her identity as an American. She clings to her American identity and wholeheartedly rejects her Jamaican roots, as she believes that doing so is the only way for her to make it in the US. She's proud of the fact that she doesn't have a Jamaican accent and insists that she doesn't remember anything of her childhood in Jamaica—her memories of the US take precedence. Because of these things in particular, she believes that Jamaica holds nothing for her, given how fully she identifies as an American. This belief in particular is what leads her to take matters into her own hands and fight her family's deportation notice, which they received prior to the start of the novel after Samuel received a DUI.

Even though Daniel's parents are US citizens, they exhibit a similar amount of anxiety as Natasha does about being "properly" American, even as they cling tightly to their identities as Koreans. They want Daniel and his older brother, Charlie, to attend the best college (in their eyes, Harvard), marry Korean-American women, and become doctors so they won't have to worry about money. Though Dae Hyun is the only one to name it as such, both he and Natasha experience the anxiety they do because of their intense belief in the American dream. Though the Bae and Kingsley families define the American dream somewhat differently (the Baes focus overwhelmingly on achieving financial success, while the Kingsleys came to the US in the first place because of Samuel's



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.



IMMIGRATION AND THE AMERICAN DREAM

The Sun is Also a Star follows seventeen-year-olds

desire to be a famous actor on Broadway), both families ultimately conclude that the American dream either doesn't exist or doesn't exist exactly how they want it to. The Baes must come to terms with the fact that neither of their sons go on to become doctors (though Charlie does become a successful but corrupt politician), while Samuel, extremely disillusioned with his chances in the American entertainment industry, refuses to fight his family's deportation notice. For Natasha, the American dream is very simply to become passably American, as represented by the "good" fake social security card her mother purchased for her in Florida. Until Samuel was charged with the DUI, the card would've allowed Natasha to achieve all the milestones of a college-bound US citizen: financial aid, a degree, and eventually, a job. This suggests that though the immigrant experience isn't necessarily easy for anyone, it's especially risky and difficult for those without the luxury of citizenship, and further, that it's the marker of citizenship that enables someone any real chance at achieving some semblance of the American dream.

For the Bae family, the American dream simply ends up taking a slightly different route—their sons become successful and achieve financial success in their own ways—while for the Kingsley family, the consequences of their immigration status means that the American dream very literally doesn't exist for them, no matter how strongly Natasha identifies as an American. By showing a variety of characters who identify as Americans in wildly different ways and to very different degrees, the novel makes it abundantly clear that there's no one correct way to be American. However, by illustrating how successful those different characters are at being American, and how successful they are at achieving some semblance of the American dream, the novel suggests that being American and pursuing or achieving the American dream are often not one and the same. Regardless of the fact that the US is supposed to represent opportunity for all, in reality, those opportunities exist only for a select few.



PASSION VS. REASON

Natasha and Daniel represent two ends of a personality spectrum: Natasha is rational, scientific, and logical to a fault, while Daniel is a hopeless

romantic and a poet. By exploring how Natasha and Daniel use what they learned from each other over the course of their one day together in New York to add more meaning and fulfillment to their lives, the novel suggests that passion and reason don't have to be enemies, as Natasha initially assumes. Rather, the novel suggests that it's more fulfilling and ultimately more successful to strike a happy medium between the two. Further, the novel shows that while reason absolutely has its place, having passion is important and can in some cases be life-saving.

Natasha spent her childhood watching her father, Samuel, who

is extremely passionate about theater and acting, slowly crumble as director after director declined to cast him. This rejection ultimately sent Samuel into a deep depression that, in the present, sees him spending his days locked in the bedroom, reading and memorizing scripts, while Natasha's mother, Patricia, works long shifts at low-paying jobs to support their family singlehandedly. Though Natasha idolized her father when she was a child and was even considered to be a "dreamer" like him, his despondency at not being able to pursue his passion turns him into an angry, sad, unknowable figure. As such, Natasha turns to science, math, and concrete subjects to find comfort and stability in her life. Though she tries to understand her father even as his depression worsens, things change when Natasha overhears a conversation between her parents in which Samuel blames Patricia, Natasha, and Natasha's brother, Peter, for keeping Samuel from pursuing his dream. Though this is an awful thing for any child to hear, the already scientifically and rationally inclined Natasha interprets her father's words and life trajectory to mean that he would choose passion over a "sensible" job that would support his family any day—a choice that Natasha has seen to be unsuccessful, unfulfilling, and impossible to maintain in a world where bills need to be paid. This all illustrates that what Natasha insists is a distrust or a dislike of passion is actually a *fear* of passion. After seeing the hurt her father's passion caused her family, Natasha believes that it's simply safer and better in the long run to make practical choices that are guaranteed to yield good results, rather than take a chance on following a passion.

Unlike Natasha, Daniel embraces his passion for poetry regardless of its practicality. He chooses poetry in part as a response to the example set out by his parents, just as Natasha chooses to be overwhelmingly rational in response to her father's unsuccessful pursuit of passion. Daniel's father, Dae Hyun, admits at several points that throughout his sons' lives, he's been purposefully cagey about why exactly he wants them to do the "correct," practical thing and attend prestigious schools to become doctors. Because Daniel never learns the reasoning behind this or, indeed, anything of what his parents' lives were like in South Korea, he's left believing that Dae Hyun is simply misinterpreting the American dream. He thinks his father believes there's only one way to achieve success—and that one way has nothing to do with passion. The reader, however, learns the truth: as a young man, Dae Hyun actually *did* reject what he was "supposed" to do. The first time his father took him out on a fishing boat as a teenager to prepare him for a life in the family crab-fishing business, Dae Hyun felt the same crushing anxiety about a life as a crabber that Daniel feels when he thinks about life as a doctor. Instead of becoming a crabber, Dae Hyun accepted help from a cousin, moved to New York, and opened a black hair care shop. The novel states that this is one of the most acceptable and, in some cases, lucrative markets for Koreans for a variety of economic and

legal reasons. Even though Dae Hyun didn't choose the "correct" route set out for him by his father, he did choose a route that was far more likely to ensure financial security. In turn, an even greater sense of financial security is all he wants for his sons, he sees Daniel's love of poetry as a direct attack on this. As far as Dae Hyun is concerned, pursuing one's passion is something that one earns the right to do *after* one achieves financial success through practical means, as evidenced by the fact that he bought his wife, Min Soo, a painting set so that she could follow her passion of painting only after they achieved a certain degree of success through their business.

As Daniel and Natasha learn about each other over the course of the novel, Natasha is the one who goes through the most dramatic changes. Daniel teaches her that passion doesn't need to be an evil, destructive thing, which leads her to both ask her father to try harder to pursue his passion as well as discover her own: physics. When Irene, the flight attendant and narrator of the epilogue, notes that the adult Natasha has dyed pink tips on her hair, it also suggests that Natasha began following her dreams and accepting that frivolous and non-serious things can make her happy—dying her hair pink is something she admitted to Daniel that she was interested in doing during their day in New York. Though the novel doesn't state outright what Daniel becomes in adulthood, he does reject his father's wishes for him to be a doctor and earns an English degree from Hunter College, which doesn't even merit a place on his parents' list of "best schools." He also doesn't seem to look the part of the starving artist, per Irene's description of him. In this way, the novel allows both Natasha and Daniel to discover a happy medium between passion and reason—a middle road that allows both to find happiness, fulfillment, and a degree of financial success far greater than if they'd chosen simply one or the other.



INTERCONNECTEDNESS AND DESTINY

The Sun Is Also a Star begins by explaining that according to famed scientist Carl Sagan, in order to make an apple pie from scratch, one must invent

the entire universe and the entirety of human history—he defines "scratch" as the absence of everything. By beginning the novel in this way, Yoon asserts that everything, from humans to their history, is intrinsically connected. Per Sagan's example, the existence today of apple pies hinges on everything from the Big Bang to the emergence of farming and the ensuing discovery of butter. By beginning the novel this way, and by then building in structural elements that allow the reader insight into how different events and characters connect to each other, Yoon makes it very clear that everything in the world of her novel is connected to everything else. This interconnectedness is what can create chains of events that can, in retrospect, be read as the work of fate or destiny.

Daniel believes wholeheartedly that the world is connected by

energy and love as represented by some sort of divine being, and he believes that everything is possibly predestined. Despite the fact that Natasha is a scientifically minded and nonreligious person, she does believe that everything in the universe is basically connected—though her reasoning and evidence differs significantly from Daniel's. In Natasha's understanding, the fact that the universe exists at all is the work of random events that just happened to coincide with each other in such a way that caused significant events in world history to happen. Essentially, though everything is connected, it's connected only by chance, not through the work of any guiding force.

To suggest that Daniel's worldview is somewhat more correct, Yoon often describes the same situation or occurrence from multiple points of view—first from a perspective where the occurrence appears random and happenstance, and then from the perspective of the other person in question in the given event. This is most notable in the case of Donald Christainsen, who appears to Natasha and Daniel to be nothing more than a distracted driver of a white BMW who almost hits a similarly distracted Natasha. However, when Yoon includes a chapter from Mr. Christainsen's perspective, the reader learns that he's not just distracted for no reason: he's drunk and overcome with grief for his daughter, who died two years ago in an accident involving a driver who was texting. In the case of Donald Christainsen, he also doesn't stop influencing Daniel and Natasha's lives after almost hitting Natasha. Later in the day he actually hits and injures the attorney Jeremy Fitzgerald, who is supposed to both advocate for Natasha's immigration issue *and* interview Daniel for admission to Yale. This shows clearly that even if Natasha and Daniel never learn the name or the story of the man in the white BMW, he still has the power to change their lives, for better or for worse. By providing this backstory, Yoon suggests that people's lives absolutely connected to each in myriad ways that may seem mysterious to an outside observer but, when considered in the context of the wider world, reveal a more obvious sense of cause and effect.

Even if Natasha's rational nature means that she disagrees with the existence of destiny for scientific reasons, the fact that most of the novel's characters, including her, experience the feeling that what's happening must be predestined suggests that destiny exists within the world of the novel, whether the characters believe in it or not. However, the novel ultimately suggests that scale is an important factor when looking at the role of destiny in one's life, particularly in regards to time: one of its final conclusions is that the ability to identify "destiny" often doesn't emerge until many years have passed and many events have taken place that lead to an ultimate conclusion. Though Daniel and Natasha conclude at the end of their day in New York City that they must not have been destined to be together, since Natasha's family ultimately leaves the country, their meeting ten years later on an airplane suggests that it

wasn't that they weren't destined to be together whatsoever; they just weren't destined to be together until much later in their lives. This turn of events, especially when considered alongside the role that Donald Christainsen and others play in Natasha's day in New York, suggests that within the world of the novel, destiny absolutely exists. However, the ways in which destiny plays out over the course of hours, months, and years, depending on the events in question, suggests ultimately that seeing or believing in destiny is a matter of perception. Though destiny affects everyone, destiny exists differently for those who look for it—and those who look for it and truly believe are able to find a unique sense of comfort and acceptance.



ISOLATION VS. CONNECTION

In part because *The Sun Is Also a Star* offers vignettes into the lives of seemingly minor characters that somehow influence the lives of

Daniel and Natasha, the novel makes the claim that all humans are, in many ways, however small, connected to one another. Though *The Sun Is Also a Star* espouses a cosmic sense of connection, this is ultimately shown to be very different from actual human connection in the form of friendship, love, or familial relationships. Overwhelmingly, the novel suggests that such connections are necessary for happiness, while isolation is a recipe for tragedy and disaster.

Though Natasha shares a strong relationship with her mother, Patricia, and a close friendship with Bev, a girl from school, this doesn't necessarily keep her from feeling alone in her family and in her greater community. Her love of math and science set her apart from her more artistically inclined father and brother, and Bev is the only person outside of her immediately family with whom Natasha shares that she's not a legal citizen of the US. In the case of Natasha's relationship with Samuel, the reader learns that Natasha actively sought isolation from him after she overheard a fight between her parents in which Samuel accused his family of being the reason why his acting career is unsuccessful—insisting, essentially, that their familial bond is a burden. Rather than reach out to her father, Natasha draws even deeper into herself and often wears **headphones** to isolate herself from anyone who might enter her world. Though she clearly resents her father for what she believes he "did" to their family (not getting a job and spending his days locked in his room, reading plays, and thereby keeping the family impoverished), the isolated world she creates for herself through her headphones and her love of math and science exists in very much the same realm as Samuel's habit of staying home and reading. Both are acts of isolation intended to separate the person in question from their family, though it's worth noting that both Samuel and Natasha do what they do to protect themselves from hurt. To this end, Natasha at one point tells Daniel that she'd like to be a data scientist and work, alone, interpreting data and numbers—things that, in her opinion,

don't have the power to hurt her in the way that people do. This shows that in some cases, people withdraw as a coping mechanism—though it's also important to recognize that Samuel's isolation offers him no tools to remedy his situation, and Natasha's isolation similarly makes her unwilling to trust others who may have the power to help her.

When Natasha meets Daniel, they very soon begin working through a series of 36 questions that one scientific study suggested can cause two strangers to fall in love in a matter of hours. In doing so, Natasha allows herself, for the first time, to fully open up to another human being and form a close, intimate connection. This connection is notably a source of strength for both Natasha and Daniel. Through the process of sharing their very personal thoughts, ideas, and beliefs with each other, both of them begin to look more closely at themselves and the people around them. This in turn leads them to make changes to their beliefs that the epilogue implies led each of them to live happier, more fulfilling lives. In Daniel's case, he refuses to become a doctor (going against the grain of his parents' expectations) and instead, decides to pursue his passion of poetry. Natasha, meanwhile, finally stands up to her father and tells him that it will no longer be acceptable for him to sit at home alone—he too must seek human connection in his own life and begin trying again to land acting jobs in Jamaica. All of this coalesces to show that Daniel and Natasha's relationship is much more than a fleeting romantic distraction: the connection, trust, and confidence they developed gave them the power and wherewithal to change their lives and the lives of others.

Though the thrust of Natasha and Daniel's relationship is the primary focus of the novel, it also illustrates an extreme version of the relationship between isolation and interconnectedness in the subplot concerning Irene. Irene is a security guard at the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) building in Manhattan, and she desperately wishes that anyone passing through the doors would look at her. She eventually decides that her loneliness is too much to bear and plans to commit suicide. After Irene makes this decision, however, she's saved by a simple act of kindness from Natasha: in her joy and hope that her deportation notice will probably be overturned (a turn of events that she attributes to Irene holding her up that morning), Natasha calls the agent who helped her at the USCIS building, asking him to thank Irene. Even though Irene has no idea why Natasha called to thank her, that sliver of connection gives Irene the courage to seek help. She later goes on to follow her childhood dream of becoming a flight attendant, and takes great pride in her ability to comfort lonely or scared people on her airplane. Eventually, she's the one who draws Natasha and Daniel's attention to the fact that they're on the same flight—illustrating very clearly that for some, human connection isn't just something to take for granted. Rather, it's something that has the power to give people the will to live.



SYMBOLS

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



HEADPHONES

Natasha's hot pink headphones symbolize her desire to shut herself out from the rest of the world. Although the headphones were a gift from Samuel and therefore a demonstration of his love and affection, Natasha views them as a tool to isolate herself and ignore the novel's overwhelming assertion that all beings are somehow connected to each other. It's telling, then, that Natasha allows herself to connect with Daniel after her headphones break—their absence means that she can no longer ignore that she does indeed have ties to others.



A RAISIN IN THE SUN

The play [A Raisin in the Sun](#) symbolizes Samuel's life and hardships. Natasha's dad acts in two productions of [A Raisin in the Sun](#) in his lifetime, once in Jamaica and once in New York City, as the play's protagonist, Walter Lee Younger. Thematically, [A Raisin in the Sun](#) deals with many of the same things that Samuel deals with in his life: racism, dreams, hopelessness, and ultimately, the meaning of home. The play and specifically the role of Walter Lee Younger provide a window into Samuel's mind in a way that's separate from Natasha's very biased narration. By considering Samuel in terms of this play, which represents both the highest and lowest points of Samuel's life, it's possible to read him far more sympathetically than Natasha ever allows. He, like Walter, believes his dreams are impossible, mostly because of rampant racism and a sense of homelessness.



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Random House edition of *The Sun is Also a Star* published in 2016.

Chapter 4 Quotes

☝ She glances up at me again but shows no sign that she recognizes me, even though I've been here every day for the last week. To her I'm just another anonymous face, another applicant, another someone who wants something from America.

Related Characters: Natasha Kingsley (speaker), Irene

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 17

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Natasha thinks about how Irene, a security guard at the USCIS building in Manhattan, must see and recognize her. Natasha's interpretation shows that she believes at this point that there isn't much of a connection between herself and Irene—or indeed, between herself and anyone else. She sees herself as existing in a bubble of isolation, which in turn explains why she's so willing to lean on science and hard facts to give meaning to her life.

Though Natasha is wrong about herself existing in isolation, Irene actually does exist in isolation due to clinical depression. When the novel begins to explore this divide through the lens of immigration specifically, it suggests that in many ways, having anything to do with immigration can be isolating. Natasha, as an immigrant, views herself as alone, while Irene and others who govern immigration rules and policy feel just as isolated.

Chapter 8 Quotes

☝ In the end, she chose both. Korean and American. American and Korean.

So they would know where they were from.

So they would know where they were going.

Related Characters: Charlie Bae, Daniel Bae, Dae Hyun Bae, Min Soo Bae

Related Themes:

Page Number: 16

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, the narrator explains how Min Soo came up with her sons' names. They're composed of American first names and Korean middle and last names to give her sons a foot in each world. This begins to show that part of being an immigrant is having to make compromises like this, particularly when considered in terms of Daniel's later assertions that people will think whatever they want to about him, just because he looks Korean. Essentially, Daniel doesn't become an American in the eyes of his white peers just because he has an American name; the experience of being an immigrant doesn't escape him just because he was



born in the US.

Min Soo's decision also shows that, as a character, she's far more sympathetic to the immigrant experience and the pressure to assimilate with the dominant culture in order to make it in America. This casts her as a far more sympathetic figure to Daniel's artistic plight and later, with his break with behaving in a distinctly Korean way. It suggests that she led the charge of accepting Daniel for who he is—an American—because she was the one responsible for giving him his name and treating it like a tool to find a home in America.

Chapter 10 Quotes

☝☝ One day in the future, the meaning of irie will move on, and it will become just another word with a long list of archaic or obsolete definitions. "Is everything irie?" someone will ask you in a perfect American accent. "Everything's irie," you will respond [...] Neither of you will know about Abraham or the Rastafari religion or the Jamaican dialect. The word will be devoid of any history at all.

Related Characters: Samuel Kingsley, Lester Barnes, Natasha Kingsley

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 26



Explanation and Analysis

After explaining the history of the Jamaican word irie, the narrator suggests that the definition of the word will one day move on to become something entirely unrecognizable and devoid of history. While this suggestion may eventually come to pass, the novel overwhelmingly insists that even if people are unaware of the history of something, including the definition of irie, the word doesn't actually exist outside of that history. Essentially, the original definition of the word doesn't cease to exist, simply because someone is unaware of what it is. Further, that original definition still plays into how someone uses the word, meaning also that definitions are never truly obsolete. This reinforces the idea that everyone and everything in the world of the novel is connected in a number of seemingly mysterious ways, and further, that nobody can escape history.

Chapter 34 Quotes

☝☝ Maybe I should give up. I don't know why I haven't yet. The universe is clearly trying to save me from myself. I bet if I looked for signs about parting ways, I would find them.

Related Characters: Daniel Bae (speaker), Natasha Kingsley

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 87

Explanation and Analysis


As Daniel follows Natasha, moving quickly, through New York City crowds, he reasons that if he looks, he'd find several signs telling him to leave her alone. Even though Daniel and the novel overwhelmingly ascribe to a belief that everyone's actions are predestined, this passage shows that there's a distinctly human element in how people interpret destiny, and that human element functions differently depending on how someone looks at a situation. This becomes more important later in the novel when Daniel suggests that it takes time in order for patterns and a sense that destiny was working to come to light, but this passage primarily shows the recognition that people do have some power to make what they want out of their lives and control their destiny. It represents a middle road between Natasha's flat-out rejection of the idea of destiny and Daniel's belief that it exists.

Chapter 37 Quotes

☝☝ When they say the heart wants what it wants, they're talking about the poetic heart—the heart of love songs and soliloquies, the one that can break as if it were just-formed glass.

They're not talking about the real heart, the one that only needs healthy foods and aerobic exercise.

Related Characters: Natasha Kingsley (speaker), Daniel Bae

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 102

Explanation and Analysis

Natasha and Daniel share a "moment" on the street as they walk to Natasha's appointment, Natasha begins to recognize that she wants to be with Daniel, despite her disbelief in concepts of destiny and true love. When Natasha recognizes that there are two different "hearts," it's a symbolic representation of her own struggle over the course of the novel to reconcile her love of reason with her secret desire to be a passionate person. She believes the world would be easier to understand and navigate if the



rational and reasonable world (and heart) was the only one, but her own feelings make it clear to her that that's simply not the case. Her mention of soliloquies and love songs in particular suggest also that Natasha isn't ignorant of the world of poetry and art. Rather, she is somewhat knowledgeable about that world, which in turn suggests that she has reasons as to why she wants to rely on science and rationality to guide her life instead of emotion as represented by poetry.

Chapter 40 Quotes

☝☝ Does he want to know how it feels to be undocumented? Or how I keep waiting for someone to find out I don't belong here at all?

Probably not. He's looking for facts, not philosophy, so I write them down.

Related Characters: Natasha Kingsley (speaker), Hannah Winter, Attorney Jeremy Fitzgerald

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 112

Explanation and Analysis

In Attorney Fitzgerald's office, Natasha deliberates over what to put on her forms about her immigration situation. When she chooses to write down facts instead of her more emotional experience of being an immigrant, it shows that, at this point in the novel, she still devalues (and believes others also devalue) emotional or passionate experiences in favor of hard facts and figures. As the reader will later discover, this is because Natasha has been hurt by emotion and passion before, and she no longer trusts it. Despite this, when it later comes to light that Attorney Fitzgerald actually does want a more emotional account of Natasha's experience so that he can better humanize her, it shows her that there is value in acknowledging one's emotions and recognizing that they're important and, even more importantly to this situation, have the power to exact change in the world.

Chapter 46 Quotes

☝☝ America's not really a melting pot. It's more like one of those divided metal plates with separate sections for starch, meat, and veggies.

Related Characters: Natasha Kingsley (speaker), Dae Hyun

Bae, Daniel Bae

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 128


Explanation and Analysis

As Natasha and Daniel deliberate outside Dae Hyun's black hair care store over whether or not Natasha should go inside or not, Natasha realizes that Dae Hyun is probably racist, and that America isn't as idyllic for immigrants as one would like to think. This recognition shows that immigrants don't just face prejudice from the dominant white culture—immigrants are just as capable of oppressing other immigrants as their white counterparts are. Further, within the context of the Korean-African relationship at play between Dae Hyun and his customers, it shows that Dae Hyun is perfectly willing to profit off of people that he, in reality, thinks very little of—and even when his entire business is selling them products that are very personal and help his customers shape their identity. This shows too that connections between cultures and people aren't contingent on people liking each other. People can be bound by history and economics, and those bonds are equally as strong as more emotional and purposeful bonds like Natasha and Daniel share.

Chapter 47 Quotes

☝☝ When Natasha decides to wear hers in an Afro, it's not because she's aware of all this history. She does it despite Patricia Kingsley's assertions that Afros make women look militant and unprofessional. Those assertions are rooted in fear—fear that her daughter will be harmed by a society that still so often fears blackness.

Related Characters: Patricia Kingsley, Natasha Kingsley

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 130

Explanation and Analysis

The narrator explains both the history of African American hairstyles and the history of Natasha's personal choices regarding her hair. This makes it clear to the reader that even though Natasha isn't aware of the hundreds of years of history informing how black hair is perceived, she's not exempt from the history. More importantly, much of history devalues Natasha's heritage to the point of fear, illustrating another way that cultural connections influence how

different cultures think about themselves and how they present themselves to others. Patricia's fears are based in what she's learned over the course of her own life that has shown her that natural black hair can be dangerous and a barrier to forming connections with others, showing the reader again that connections are not always positive.

Chapter 60 Quotes

☝ "Doesn't matter. People always ask where I'm from. I used to say here, but then they ask where are you really from, and then I say Korea. Sometimes I say North Korea and that my parents and I escaped from a water dungeon filled with piranhas where Kim Jong-un was holding us prisoner."

Related Characters: Daniel Bae (speaker), Natasha Kingsley

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 157

Explanation and Analysis

While Natasha and Daniel have lunch, Daniel explains that many people don't care that he's a natural born US citizen and instead want to hear that he's from Korea. This shows how white Americans' misconceptions about the world isolate immigrants and keep them from truly becoming a part of the culture. This in turn adds more credence to Natasha's assertion that America isn't truly a melting pot, if only because people don't allow it to be so.

The fact that Daniel implies that he's able to get away with telling such a fantastical story suggests that North Korea in particular is especially thrilling for white audiences, and the people he's telling this to are less interested in actually learning about Daniel and more interested in feeding their own misconceptions about him and the wider world. This in turn shows that even though people are certainly connected, it takes effort to actually become fully aware of one's connections to others and recognize how those connections influence others.

Chapter 69 Quotes

☝ Of all the ways today could've gone, I couldn't have predicted this. But now I'm sure that everything that's happened today has been leading me to her and us to this moment and this moment to the rest of our lives.

Even Charlie's academic probation from Harvard feels like it's part of the plan to get us to this point.

Related Characters: Daniel Bae (speaker), Charlie Bae, Natasha Kingsley

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 175


Explanation and Analysis

After Daniel and Natasha's first kiss, Daniel has reason to truly believe that fate and destiny brought them together. When he goes on to piece together the events that led him to this point and identify instances of cause and effect, it begins to link the opposing ideas of determinism (the idea that people actually have choices that influence their future) and the novel's overwhelming belief in destiny. In this way, the novel comes to suggest that neither view is wholly correct; rather, people do have some power to identify events that make destiny seem more real.

Further, the fact that Daniel can specifically go back and identify all these events is an initial reminder that the role of destiny doesn't always make perfect sense on a small timescale. Rather, in order to truly see how events are related and how they influence each other, it's necessary to pull back and look at a span of months (and later, years) to see how events connect and how destiny plays out.

☝ I was so surprised by that. I thought I knew everything about my mom—about both of them, really—but here was this secret history I didn't know about. I asked her why she stopped and she waved her hand in the air like she was wiping the years away.

Related Characters: Daniel Bae (speaker), Dae Hyun Bae, Min Soo Bae

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 180

Explanation and Analysis

Daniel mentions his surprise at learning that his mom used to paint. However, even though that is clearly something that Daniel didn't expect to learn about his mom, he seems even more surprised that she won't tell him about it. This provides further evidence for the novel's assertion that all people are influenced by the history of others, whether or not they know that history. In the case of Min Soo's painting, neither Daniel nor the reader ever learn anything more about her painting except that she used to paint. Regardless, it's possible to infer that Min Soo is more sympathetic to

Daniel's poetic nature because she too is an artistic person, and that she'll later be more accepting of Daniel's decision to not attend Yale in favor of an English degree elsewhere also because of her recognition that the arts and passion are important.

Chapter 80 Quotes

☛ In modern times, the sisters have largely disappeared from the collective consciousness, but the idea of Fate hasn't. Why do we still believe? Does it make tragedy more bearable to believe that we ourselves had no hand in it, that we couldn't have prevented it? It was always ever thus.

Related Characters: Natasha Kingsley, Daniel Bae

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 201

Explanation and Analysis


The narrator explains the history of the three sisters of fate, and wonders why it is that people still tend to cling to an idea of fate. The narrator ultimately proposes that there's a sense of freedom in letting go of control of one's life; a belief in God or a greater power enables a person to live more freely exactly because they don't believe they can control what happens. Daniel buys into this way of thinking; the belief that something is or was conspiring to bring Natasha to him allows him to eventually decide to give up on his parents' dream of him going to Yale. Natasha, who makes a very strong claim that she doesn't believe, eventually comes around to this way of thinking. She discovers that giving up some control does allow her that comfort, as believing herself solely responsible for what happens in her life is exhausting.

Chapter 81-82 Quotes

☛ The sheer number of actions and reactions it's taken to form our solar system, our galaxy, our universe, it's astonishing. The number of things that had to go exactly right is overwhelming.

Compared to that, what is falling in love? A series of small coincidences that we say means everything because we want to believe that our tiny lives matter on a galactic scale.

Related Characters: Natasha Kingsley (speaker), Daniel Bae

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 203

Explanation and Analysis

In the Hall of Meteors, Natasha lays out why she thinks falling in love isn't all that extraordinary when compared to the entire rest of the universe. Natasha's perspective is useful to examine the fact that people can interpret past events very differently. For Daniel, what Natasha is talking about would absolutely be evidence of the existence of fate or destiny. Because he believes in that kind of connection and overwhelming, guiding logic, it would only make sense to him that some divine being had a hand in the creation of the universe. Natasha, on the other hand, prioritizes science and is unwilling to place her trust in anything she isn't sure is real, whether that be love or a divine power. That unwillingness to believe is, notably, based in Natasha's fear of trusting anything that proves itself to be at all unreliable, like passion or family.

Chapter 83 Quotes

☛ Yes, she'd been frustrated with him for years, but that one moment showed us all how far apart they really were now. Even Peter, who sides with my mother in all things, flinched a little.

Still. You couldn't fault her. Not really. My father had been dreaming his life away for years. He lived in those plays instead of the real world. He still does. My mother didn't have time for dreaming anymore.

Neither do I.

Related Characters: Natasha Kingsley (speaker), Patricia Kingsley, Samuel Kingsley

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 208

Explanation and Analysis

Finally, Natasha explains what happened to cause her to think so little of her father: he chose to live in his head instead of in the real world, a choice that she attributes to his love of theater and his desire to be an actor. By specifically focusing on how Samuel's decision affected Patricia, Natasha picks at how someone's misguided passion and inability to see reason have the power to isolate that


person and destroy any sense of connection they might've had with friends or family. Essentially, Natasha doesn't dislike or distrust passion because she believes passion is inherently evil. Instead, she sees that leaning on passion begins someone on a dangerous path towards neglecting other relationships that she believes are more important, such as familial relationships and ultimately, her family's relationship to the US. It was Samuel's love of theater that eventually led to his DUI and the deportation notice, which allows Natasha to connect this passion to the destruction of her life.

Chapter 86 Quotes

☝☝ Should I tell him about my father's aborted dreams? Should I tell him that I think dreams never die even when they're dead? Should I tell him that I suspect my father lives a better life in his head?

Related Characters: Natasha Kingsley (speaker), Samuel Kingsley, Attorney Jeremy Fitzgerald

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 213



Explanation and Analysis

During her meeting with Attorney Fitzgerald, Natasha mulls over what to tell him about her father. As she lists what she could tell him, Natasha shows that she recognizes that at least in the case of her dad, passion is a way for him to deal with the harsh realities of the real world. Theater, and specifically the play *A Raisin in the Sun*, allows Samuel to escape to a world where he's respected and not discriminated against because he's Jamaican. However, in that world, Samuel might find some degree of comfort, but he also becomes increasingly and dangerously isolated from his family. Overwhelmingly, the novel proposes that Samuel's dreams weren't the dangerous part of his trajectory; rather, it was his isolation that the dreams ended up causing that brought on all the Kingsley family's problems.

Chapter 91 Quotes

☝☝ I open my mouth to ask for more facts and specifics. I find them reassuring. The poem comes back to me. "'Hope' is the thing with feathers." I close my mouth. For the second time today I'm letting go of the details. Maybe I don't need them. It would be so nice to let someone else take over this burden for a little while.

Related Characters: Natasha Kingsley (speaker), Daniel Bae, Attorney Jeremy Fitzgerald

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 233

Explanation and Analysis

Natasha decides she won't ask for specifics when Attorney Fitzgerald explains that he'll be able to help her. Instead, she uses what she's learned from Daniel and turns to poetry. The line she thinks of is from a poem by Emily Dickenson, and the simple fact that Natasha is familiar enough with the poem to recall it in a time like this suggests that whether she wants to admit it or not, poetry has the power to encapsulate emotion in a way that science cannot compete with. In this emotionally charged time, it's more comforting for Natasha to lean on poetry and the arts than it is to worry over facts and figures. This shows that Natasha is finally beginning to come to a happy medium between passion and reason, as she seems to recognize here that poetry has its place and isn't a bad thing at all.

Chapter 107 Quotes

☝☝ Before these buildings were buildings, they were just the skeletons of them. Before they were skeletons, they were crossbeams and girders. Metal and glass and concrete. And before that, they were construction plans. Before that, architectural plans. And before that, just an idea someone had for the making of a city.

Related Characters: Natasha Kingsley (speaker), Daniel Bae

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 268

Explanation and Analysis



Up on the roof of Attorney Fitzgerald's building, Natasha muses to herself about the history of the city around her. As she does, even if she's not fully aware of it, she recognizes

that the entire history of the city is part of it and by extension, part of her. This shows that she's finally beginning to understand that Daniel is correct, and all people and events are somehow connected and constantly influencing each other. However, the fact that she still thinks of the city in terms of plans and inanimate objects shows that she still relies heavily on her love of science and rational subjects to guide how she thinks about the world. It's telling that she doesn't necessarily consider the human elements that make New York City what it is, aside from the recognition that the buildings began as ideas.

Chapter 108 Quotes

☞ "I think all the good parts of us are connected on some level. The part that shares the last double chocolate chip cookie or donates to charity or gives a dollar to a street musician or becomes a candy striper or cries at Apple commercials or says I love you or I forgive you. I think that's God. God is the connection of the very best parts of us."

Related Characters: Daniel Bae (speaker), Natasha Kingsley

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 272

Explanation and Analysis

Daniel explains to Natasha how he thinks of God, and specifically, how his idea of God differs from the fire and brimstone version that Natasha despises. The fact that Daniel interprets connections between people as being a divine power shows just how powerful he (and the novel as a whole) believes connection is. Further, he makes little distinction between simple connectedness between people, as what's created when someone views a commercial that thousands of other people have seen, with actually creating an intimate connection with someone else, as in sharing a cookie or volunteering. By not creating a sense of hierarchy about these different kinds of connections, the novel is able to assert once again that the connections themselves matter more than the specifics.

It's also worth noting that he mentions giving to street musicians, something that both he and Natasha did—but as far as the reader knows, they're unaware that they both gave money to the same musician. This illustrates the idea that people don't have to know all the specific ways they're connected to each other in order to be connected; the connection itself is powerful enough to not need to be obvious.

Chapter 111 Quotes

☞ Sometimes I think my mom's worst fear is being disappointed. She combats this by trying her hardest never to get her hopes up, and urging everyone else to do the same.

Related Characters: Natasha Kingsley (speaker), Patricia Kingsley

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 285

Explanation and Analysis

As Natasha texts her mom, who is annoyed with her for being out all day and out of communication, Natasha muses about how and why her mom is the way she is. Natasha mentioned previously that her mom and Peter were the "non-dreamers" of the family at first, which possibly explains why she's unwilling to get her hopes up. However, the novel also leaves room to read into Patricia the possibility that, like Natasha, she had her hopes and dreams dashed by someone close to her, possibly even well before she ever met Samuel. Because the novel espouses a cosmic connection between all people, she very easily could be influenced by someone the reader isn't aware of but, nonetheless, exists as a very real and very present figure in Patricia's understanding of the world. This shows too that everyone is influenced by everyone else's history, even if that history isn't visible.

Chapter 113 Quotes

☞ "My parents are immigrants. They moved to this country for a better life. They work all the time so my brother and I can have the American Dream. Nowhere in the American Dream does it say you can skip college and become a starving artist."

Related Characters: Daniel Bae (speaker), Charlie Bae, Min Soo Bae, Dae Hyun Bae, Attorney Jeremy Fitzgerald

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 291

Explanation and Analysis

Daniel explains to Attorney Fitzgerald why his parents want him to be a doctor and are unsupportive of his dreams of being a poet. Notably, Daniel connects his parents' immigration status to the way that they think of the American dream as being something purely financial.

Though Daniel still doesn't know it, his parents have good reason to push their sons to do well for themselves financially—they know what it's like to be poor and how difficult it is, while Daniel grew up relatively well off and has no idea of the consequences of poverty. However, this also shows that Daniel is still very much trapped by his family history, even though he doesn't know all of it. It continues to influence how he views the world and plans on moving through it regardless, reinforcing again the interconnectedness of people with each other and with their cultural histories.

☞ "Yes," I say. "He would." But not because he's evil. And not because he's a Stereotypical Korean Parent. But because he can't see past his own history to let us have ours.

Related Characters: Daniel Bae (speaker), Dae Hyun Bae, Attorney Jeremy Fitzgerald

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 292



Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Daniel explains that his dad will deny him financial assistance if Daniel chooses to not attend Yale to be a doctor like his dad wants him to. When Daniel recognizes that his dad isn't evil for wanting what does, he shows that he understands that his dad is guided by a history that is entirely foreign and unknown to Daniel. Similarly, Daniel's desires are equally as foreign and unknown to his dad. This divide and the isolation that both Daniel and Dae Hyun feel as a result of this impasse is, ultimately, what causes their strained relationship throughout the novel, which asserts once again that isolation brings about negative consequences. Sometimes they're deadly consequences and other times, as in this case, those consequences are simply that a father and son cannot form a true connection with each other. The novel does offer the remedy for this situation: Dae Hyun would need to recognize that though his history influences his sons, it doesn't need to be their only guiding force.

Chapter 120 Quotes

☞ From this distance, the city looks orderly and planned, as if all of it were created at one time for one purpose. When you're inside it, though, it feels like chaos.

Related Characters: Natasha Kingsley (speaker), Daniel Bae

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 313

Explanation and Analysis

When Natasha has a view of Manhattan from further away, she observes that the city looks very neat and tidy, while the opposite is true from within it. This adds more credence to the novel's assertion that a major part of destiny has to do with time and scope. When Natasha feels as though the city looks chaotic from the inside, it mirrors thoughts expressed by both her and Daniel that their one day in the city appears similarly chaotic and strange when taken in terms of being simply one day. However, once the novel zooms out to offer a perspective that takes years, travel, passion, and other interconnected minor characters into account, it becomes clear that their one day in New York did and does make sense—but it can't do that without the extra time and space.

Chapter 122 Quotes

☞ "What I care about is you, and I'm sure that love is enough to overcome all the bullshit. And it is bullshit. All the handwringing. All the talk about cultures clashing or preserving cultures and what will happen to the kids. All of it is one hundred percent pure, unadulterated bullshit, and I just refuse to care."

Related Characters: Daniel Bae (speaker), Dae Hyun Bae, Natasha Kingsley

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 317

Explanation and Analysis

Natasha and Daniel walk through Natasha's neighborhood, attracting stares because of their respective races, and Daniel informs Natasha he doesn't care what people think. What Daniel espouses in his monologue is the idea that America should be more of a melting pot than it is, and more specifically, that it shouldn't think of its immigrants as curiosities. Rather than seeing their relationship as something absurd, Daniel wants others to view him and Natasha as people and recognize that race aside, they're both people with emotions and the desire to be together. Taken together, this offers another instance of the US not treating its immigrants particularly well, especially when

considered alongside Natasha's observation that the US very much wants to keep its different populations separate. In this way, the novel shows that even though these cultures are absolutely connected in a number of ways, the specific climate in the US keeps them from being able to truly connect and see each other as people.

Chapter 129 Quotes

☝☝ Because everything looks like chaos up close. Daniel thinks it's a matter of scale. If you pull back far enough and wait for long enough, then order emerges.

Maybe their universe is just taking longer to form.

Related Characters: Natasha Kingsley, Daniel Bae

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 340

Explanation and Analysis

As the narrator describes what happens to Natasha and Daniel in the years following their day in New York, they note that Daniel never bought into the idea that they weren't meant to be. Rather, he wonders if their version of "meant to be" simply operates on a different time scale than he and Natasha hoped when they were seventeen. In this way (and given the fact that Natasha and Daniel meet again ten years later), the novel makes it abundantly clear that destiny absolutely exists, and Daniel is right—being able to recognize it as such is simply a matter of scale, not a question of whether it exists or not. The fact that Daniel never gives up also reinforces his love of passion and his belief in destiny. He never gives up on the possibility that he and Natasha are meant to be together, while the narrator implies that though Natasha wonders, she does eventually give up Daniel as a possibility.



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.

PROLOGUE

The narrator explains that according to scientist Carl Sagan, if a person wants to make an apple pie "from scratch," one must invent the entire universe. From a state of nothingness, or "from scratch," one must invent the Big Bang, the planet Earth, fire, agriculture, and cows. To make the pie good, one must invent the arts, and to make sure that the recipe can survive generations, one needs the printing press and the Industrial Revolution.

For most people, creating a pie "from scratch" means creating it from separate ingredients. However, Sagan points out that creating something "from scratch" means creating it from nothingness. To truly create a pie from scratch, then, one must first invent the universe and all of the conditions that make the ingredients able to exist, and then the person can make the pie from said ingredients. At the core of Sagan's claim is the idea that everything in the world is interconnected—that's why people can thank something as seemingly unrelated as a printing press for pie's existence. Notably, this introduction also makes the case that the arts and the sciences are both important for humankind's survival.



CHAPTER 1

Daniel writes a fake news headline about a teen accepting his destiny to become a doctor. He insists that it's his brother Charlie's fault that his summer has been so absurd. Charlie got kicked out of Harvard, and Daniel's parents, Min Soo and Dae Hyun, are extremely upset. Daniel almost feels bad for Charlie.

The headline that Daniel writes indicates that he's a writer with a flair for the dramatic, while his parents' emotional reaction to Charlie getting kicked out suggests that his family holds high standards for Charlie and probably for Daniel, too.



CHAPTER 2

Natasha's mom, Patricia, tells her that it's time to give up. Her dad, Samuel, just frowns and says nothing. Peter, Natasha's nine-year-old brother is the only happy one: he blasts Bob Marley as he packs, and he's excited to live in Jamaica. The entire family is in the living room of their apartment, which Natasha and Peter share as a makeshift bedroom. Natasha's half of the room is still filled with belongings, while Peter's is mostly empty.

It will later come to light that Peter is the only member of his family who is an American citizen; therefore, his joy at moving to Jamaica suggests that he doesn't feel as though he fits in in the US and perhaps doesn't feel forced to move to Jamaica in the same way that his family does. Peter's response suggests that the US is a difficult place to live, both for natural-born citizens and immigrants.



Natasha believes Patricia is right, but she grabs her **headphones** and her physics textbook anyway. Peter reminds her that since they're leaving, she'll never have to turn in her homework. Natasha explains that she's going to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (UCIS) building in Manhattan. She and her family are undocumented immigrants, and they're going to be deported tonight. Natasha believes this is her last to chance to convince someone—or maybe fate—to let her stay, though she doesn't actually believe in fate.

The way that Natasha talks about fate suggests that she views it as a last-ditch thing that might help her, not something that sensible people such as herself typically believe in. This reinforces that the situation is dire, and she's willing to do things that are out of character for her in order to keep her family in the country.



CHAPTER 3

Daniel lists the reasons Charlie is an asshole. Up until the Harvard debacle, Charlie had been good at absolutely everything. He's a "man's man," which, according to Daniel, means that Charlie is an asshole all of the time, and he's also ridiculously handsome. Daniel says that all of this would be fine if Charlie was nice, but Charlie is smug and a bully. To make matters worse, Charlie doesn't like Daniel.

Often, bullies are lonely or are victims of bullying themselves, which suggests that despite Charlie's popularity, he's likely very lonely. However, the fact that he got kicked out of college shows that there are major consequences for taking one's own pain out on others.



CHAPTER 4

Natasha puts her personal items—phone, **headphones**, backpack—into a bin before she walks through the metal detector. She doesn't smile as the guard, Irene, checks Natasha's items. Irene flips over Natasha's phone case, which is the cover art for the Nirvana album *Nevermind*. That album has been Natasha's lifeline since the immigration debacle began; she finds comfort in hearing Kurt Cobain voice her pain. Natasha reasons that Irene probably hates her job, especially since Irene gives no indication that she recognizes Natasha.

Even as Natasha will go on to insist that passion is silly, her narration here suggests that she's passionate about 90s grunge music like Nirvana. This is, in part, because that music is often deals with loneliness, and it's comforting to know that there are other people out there experiencing similar sadness and pain. Although it's clear that Natasha is lonely, it seems like she's isolating herself to deal with it, which will only exacerbate the problem.



CHAPTER 5

The narrator says that Natasha is wrong about Irene: Irene needs and loves her job, as it's the only thing that keeps her loneliness in check. She takes her time looking at items to force everyone who goes through security to look at her. When people greet her, she feels as though she expands—though she never responds. Most of all, Irene wishes that she could take her gloves off and actually touch the items in the bins.

Irene illustrates an extreme case of loneliness: she's clearly depressed as a result of her isolation, and importantly, she recognizes that human connection has the power to save and heal her. In longing to take her gloves off, it seems that Irene wants to break down the barriers that keep her from fully connecting with the world around her. In addition, Irene's job at a place that deals with immigration issues suggests that immigration is lonely for people on both sides.



Last night was awful for Irene. She felt as though her loneliness wanted to swallow her whole. Irene recognizes Natasha when she sees her: she's been there every day for the last week. When Natasha looks up at Irene, Irene feels better. She thinks that Natasha looks just as desperate as she feels, and she smiles and greets Natasha in her mind. As Irene studies the Nirvana phone case, she thinks the picture of the baby is indecent and feels as though she's the one underwater. She wants to confiscate it, but has no reason to.

The Nirvana album cover in question is a photo of a nude baby in a pool, swimming towards a dollar bill. Here, the fact that Irene derives this type of connection from a stranger's phone case suggests that opportunities for human connection appear in unlikely places.



CHAPTER 6

Daniel explains that Charlie stopped liking him when Daniel was six and Charlie was eight. Daniel hadn't yet figured out that he was just an annoying younger brother, so when Charlie rode off on his new bike with his older white friends, Daniel chased them. Finally, Charlie hopped off his bike and stood waiting for Daniel.

Daniel had tried to call Charlie "hyung," a Korean title for younger brothers to use to address their older brothers. When the word slipped out, Charlie turned red with anger. His friends teased him about a "secret Korean code," and Daniel watched Charlie clench his fists. When Charlie told him to get his own friends and stop following him around like a baby, Daniel wished that Charlie had just hit him instead. Charlie grabbed his bike, informed his friends that his name was Charles, and pedaled away. Daniel never used the word "hyung" again.

This vignette shows that at one time, Daniel idolized his older brother and desperately wanted a relationship with him. In the present, this rejection indicates that Daniel still likely holds this lack of affection against Charlie.



Notice that Charlie isn't just rejecting his brother; he's also rejecting his Korean heritage by rejecting "hyung" and stressing his American first name to his white friends. This suggests that Charlie is ashamed of his heritage and thinks that he needs to shed it in order to fit in and thrive in America. His friends' taunting suggests that he might not be wrong about feeling so much pressure to assimilate.



CHAPTER 7

The narrator explains that Daniel is right about Charlie: he's an asshole to the core. In time, he'll settle into being mean. However, before he marries, becomes a politician, changes his name to Charles Bay, and betrays his wife and constituents every chance he gets, he will do one good and selfless thing for Daniel. It'll be the last good thing he ever does.

Charlie's future suggests that his isolation in the present has dire consequences. Also note that the narrator's interpretation of his life as a politician bears no resemblance to what politicians are supposed to do: connect and serve people.



CHAPTER 8

Years before in South Korea, when Min Soo and Dae Hyun fell in love, Min Soo never imagined they'd end up in America. Dae Hyun had always been poor, but he had a cousin in New York City who offered to help. In New York, Min Soo and Dae Hyun did well. When Min Soo discovered she was pregnant, she worried over what to name her baby. In Korea, family names come first and contain one's family history. In America, the family name comes last, and Dae Hyun says that shows how Americans value individualism.

Min Soo's struggles to name her child illustrates that simply immigrating to the US successfully doesn't mean that an immigrant then has an easy life. Instead, an immigrant's life involves constantly having to reevaluate how one fits into the greater culture, while still honoring their heritage.



Min Soo worried and worried over whether to give her son an American or Korean name. The narrator explains that names are powerful, as they work like a map to show someone who and where they are. Min Soo compromised: she gave her sons American first names and Korean middle and last names. In doing so, she made sure her sons would know where they were from and where they were going.

Min Soo's naming decision shows that she believes that there must be some degree of assimilation to achieve success, providing some rationale as to why Charlie feels the way he does.



CHAPTER 9

When Natasha finally approaches the receptionist, she's late. The receptionist insists that Natasha will have to come back, even when Natasha desperately explains that Irene held her up. The receptionist refuses to call Natasha's case officer, even when she begs. Before a security guard can approach her, a tall black man agrees to take Natasha. He introduces himself as Lester Barnes and insists he can learn everything he needs to from her folder.

Natasha studies Mr. Barnes's desk as he looks through her folder. She grabs a business card and wonders if all the files are color-coded. After a minute, Mr. Barnes asks Natasha why she's here. She explains that her caseworker asked her to come back, but Mr. Barnes unemotionally informs her that the deportation will stand and pushes a box of tissues towards her. Natasha tells the reader she didn't cry when her dad told her about the deportation or when she found out that her ex-boyfriend, Rob, was cheating on her.

Natasha steels herself to not cry as she heads for the door. She turns around and in a small voice, asks if she's really going to have to leave. Mr. Barnes begins to say something about Samuel's DUI, and Natasha asks why she has to pay for her dad's mistake. Mr. Barnes insists that Natasha is still in the US illegally and mentions that he's been to Jamaica. He says that it's beautiful, and everything is "irie" there.

Natasha thinks that she's been angry since the beginning of time—at Samuel, at Rob for insisting that they should still be friends, and at Bev for being so concerned about frivolous things. Mr. Barnes using "irie" is the last straw. She takes off her **headphones** and asks him about his vacation. He never left the resort because his wife didn't want to. Natasha asks if his wife was concerned about safety or poor people. She says that someone probably gave Mr. Barnes some marijuana and told him what "irie" means, but Natasha insists that that's not a country.

Natasha asks what she's supposed to do in Jamaica, where she knows no one, doesn't have an accent, and already has a life in the US. She tells the reader that now, she even has a "good" fake social security card that'll allow her to apply for college and financial aid. She asks Mr. Barnes what she's supposed to do for college and accepts his offer of tissues. Finally, Mr. Barnes asks her to wait.

The emotionless nature of those who work in the USCIS building (at least as far as Natasha's perception is concerned) casts the US immigration system as cold and unfeeling—much the way that Natasha insists she wants to be. The immigration system, then, suggests that Natasha's way of moving through the world isn't the "right" way.



What bothers Natasha about Mr. Barnes is his adherence to rules and regulations, along with his dismissal of emotion—the reader will soon learn that, ironically, these are the very things Natasha prizes. Once again, this implies that Natasha will have to change her way of thinking, especially since these cold and emotionless people are, thus far, wholly unhelpful.



When Natasha connects her dad's DUI to this chain of events, it shows that all of these things are connected—and that such connectedness is not always a good thing. Mr. Barnes uses a Jamaican-English term, "irie," to explain that Jamaica is a nice, pleasant place.



Mr. Barnes' attempt to connect with Natasha backfires because his experience of "connection" was actually less a connecting experience and more of an isolating one. Resorts like the one Mr. Barnes probably stayed at give visitors a very narrow, inauthentic slice of Jamaican life. Such resorts promote themselves as authentic to local culture, though they're often highly curated and leave out important—and sometimes unsavory—parts of local culture.



Natasha doesn't necessarily dislike Jamaica—she just identifies far more with her American identity than her Jamaican one. Notice too that she's trying hard to close herself off to her Jamaican roots, even though she clearly still has them, perhaps as a protective measure.



CHAPTER 10

The narrator explains that the word “irie” has its roots in patois, the Jamaican dialect and in the Rastafari religion. Bob Marley, a Rastafarian, helped spread the word around the world. According to its original definition, the word means that one is “all right” with their god and the world—it connotes having a contented spirit.

To people who don't know all that, irie simply means that someone is “all right.” Natasha wonders about some dictionary definitions that are marked obsolete, and thinks that the original definition of irie is gone. Samuel has begun using irie and other Jamaican slang for the first time since he moved to the US, and he acts happy now. Natasha can tell that it's just an act.

Natasha believes that words should act like units of measure and not be allowed to change. She knows that if she leaves the US, all of her friendships will disappear. She'll feel like a stranger in Jamaica and wonders how long it'll take to pick up a Jamaican accent. The narrator muses that someday, Americans may use irie with perfect American accents, and the entire history of the word will be gone.

By stepping out of the narrative to explain the history of the word “irie,” the narrator makes the case that people cannot escape from their histories. Just as all people are connected, people are also connected to their histories, no matter what.



Natasha is clearly uncomfortable with change—in this case, the evolution of the word “irie.” This suggests that her love of science and math is also a love of unchanging mathematical rules and scientific laws. However, new scientific discoveries means the field is changing daily, so there is no way for Natasha to fully escape change.



Considering Carl Sagan's assertion in the prologue, and the novel's assertion that people are always connected to their history, this final suggestion isn't entirely true. Even if one day, no one knows the word's rich history anymore, that doesn't mean the history suddenly ceases to exist.



CHAPTER 11

Daniel writes headline stating that he's trapped in a “vortex of expectation and disappointment.” He notes that the one good thing about Charlie's overachieving nature was that he never had to be particularly good at anything. Now, his parents are putting pressure on Daniel. Daniel recounts a conversation he's had many times with Min Soo since summer started, in which she asks him about his grades, and tells him he's not a little boy anymore when he explains his grades are still mediocre.

Later, Daniel has an interview with a Yale alumnus. Yale is only the second best school according to his parents, but Daniel refused to apply to Harvard. Min Soo is making mandu dumplings for him as a special treat, and Daniel sits at the kitchen table, writing a poem about heartbreak. He's struggling since he's never had his heart broken, but he thinks it's luxurious to write at the table: Dae Hyun doesn't approve of poetry. Daniel keeps up his side of the conversation but is surprised when his mom says in Korean to not be like Charlie.

Grades are a way to quantify things that are arguably not entirely measurable, so it's understandable that Daniel is indifferent about his grades. This suggests early on that Daniel's passions don't exactly align with those promoted in the normal school system. In turn, this explains why he's struggling with his parents' new attention: unlike Charlie, Daniel is not an overachiever.



Min Soo's scathing mention of Charlie suggests that she's beginning to come to terms with the fact that her sons aren't guaranteed to do exactly what she wants them to, which is a natural part of growing up. This is also evidenced by the fact that Daniel feels comfortable writing poetry at the table, even if it presumably has nothing to do with Yale and the education his mother wants for him.



Charlie walks into the kitchen in time to hear Min Soo say this. Min Soo blushes in shame and embarrassment. She offers Charlie mandu, even though he refuses to eat Korean food and pretends to not understand Korean. Daniel knows that Charlie heard and understood. When Charlie is gone, Daniel asks his mom to give Charlie a break. He knows that it must be awful for Charlie, working all day with Dae Hyun at their black hair care store, as their father surely berates Charlie when there are no customers around.

Min Soo opens up the mandu basket, and Daniel watches her clean her steamy glasses. She asks why Charlie failed, and Daniel thinks she looks prettier and younger without her glasses. He thinks that Charlie probably has never thought that their mom is pretty, especially since all his girlfriends have been chubby blondes. Daniel thinks that maybe nothing caused Charlie to fail. He thinks that maybe Charlie doesn't actually want to be a doctor, but the Bae children aren't allowed to change their minds.

Min Soo insists that her sons have it too easy in America but turns her attention back to Daniel. As she serves him a plate of mandu, she reminds him to cut his ponytail before his interview. Daniel decides to leave early so he's not stuck having more uncomfortable conversations, and his mom gives him Dae Hyun's money pouch to take to the store.

Daniel goes upstairs to get dressed and stops in the doorway of the spare bedroom to admire Min Soo's paintings. He explains that three years ago, Dae Hyun surprised her by hiring help for the store and buying her an oil painting set. She's been painting ever since. Daniel wonders if his mom might've been an artist if she'd never left Korea or had him and Charlie. Once Daniel is dressed in his suit, he kisses his mom goodbye and decides to pretend that he can be whatever he wants.

CHAPTER 12

Natasha thinks people say that everything happens for a reason specifically when things are bad but not as bad as they could be. Patricia likes to say it, but she hasn't said it about the deportation. Samuel has been saying that one can't see God's plan, and Natasha wants to tell him that hope isn't a life strategy. However, she doesn't want to talk to him at all. Natasha believes that people say things like this to make sense of the world, but in truth, life is random. She insists she's a realist.

Daniel depicts his dad as a difficult, unknowable figure with intensely high standards that neither of his sons seem to be able to meet. This suggests that Dae Hyun has definite ideas about how one goes about achieving the American dream, and he's not open to any interpretations that contradict his own.



The fact that Daniel views his mother as a human who is capable of being attractive shows that he has a deep connection with her and admires her, while Charlie is isolated from the dynamic. The mention that all of Charlie's girlfriends were white shows that Charlie is also isolating himself from Korean culture, not just his family.



Despite the fact that Daniel's parents want their sons to succeed in America, Min Soo suggests that America isn't actually all that conducive to success. This begins to imply that the American dream isn't the same for everyone, nor is it equally accessible to all.



Notice that Daniel very clearly ties his mom's immigration to the US and her familial responsibilities to the fact that she didn't pursue painting. This shows early on that Daniel has a very strong sense of cause and effect, which is one of the ways the novel suggests that destiny becomes apparent.



Natasha isn't wrong; many people do believe in destiny, hope, and religion because it helps them make sense of a world that can often seem random. The fact that Natasha is derisive of this practice suggests that she doesn't find it comforting or useful. However, believing that everything is random allows people to abdicate responsibility for their actions.



However, Natasha allows that several things happened that call her disbelief in fate into question: had Irene not made her late, she wouldn't have met Mr. Barnes; had he not said "irie," she wouldn't have had her meltdown; had that not happened, she wouldn't have the business card of an immigration lawyer. Natasha wants to thank Irene when she leaves the building, but Irene is busy. Natasha checks her phone and texts Bev, feeling jealous that Bev is touring colleges without her. She looks at the card for a Jeremy Fitzgerald. Mr. Barnes had called him a long shot. Natasha reasons that long shots are always bad moves, unless they're the only moves available.

Natasha's interpretation of long shots shows that she takes great care to construct an environment for herself that's safe and predictable. However, like Daniel in the previous chapter, Natasha is willing and able to connect events together in a chain of cause and effect, which ultimately creates the sense that destiny is at work. This opens Natasha up for developing a different relationship to destiny.



CHAPTER 13

When Irene takes her lunch break, she downloads the Nirvana album *Nevermind* and listens to it three times through. Like Natasha, she hears Kurt Cobain voice her own misery, but she lets his words take her to a very dark place. She looks Cobain up online and discovers that he committed suicide, and she decides to commit suicide as well. She writes her suicide note: "Oh well. Whatever. Nevermind."

Irene's suicide note takes a line from the Nirvana song "Smells Like Teen Spirit." Her decision to commit suicide after learning about Cobain's suicide shows that not all connections are positive; some, when combined with one's own isolation, can be deadly.



CHAPTER 14

As soon as she's out of the USCIS building, Natasha dials Jeremy Fitzgerald's number. The receptionist sounds like she's in a construction zone, and Natasha hesitates when the woman asks for her issue. She explains to the reader that she's only ever told Bev that she's an undocumented immigrant. However, Natasha tells the receptionist about coming to the US when she was eight, the DUI, and Lester Barnes's referral. The woman books Natasha an appointment.

Telling the receptionist the truth about her issue is the first time in the novel that Natasha is forced to trust and connect with others, and therefore marks a turning point in her development. When the woman is able to book an appointment, it suggests that honesty and vulnerability can yield positive results.



Natasha has several hours before her appointment. She considers walking by her school to see it for the last time. Instead, she decides to walk to Attorney Fitzgerald's office near Times Square and stop at her favorite vinyl store on the way. She puts on nineties grunge rock and listens as she walks.

Natasha cares deeply about this type of music, which illustrates the fact that she is passionate, and emphasizes her loneliness—the grunge rock voices her own loneliness and emotions.



CHAPTER 15

Samuel moved to New York City when Natasha was six years old. He was supposed to establish himself as an actor on Broadway and then send for his family. Natasha remembers listening to Patricia call him in America, and after a year, Samuel's voice changed. He didn't sound happy, and his accent was slipping. Patricia began saying they weren't a family anymore.

Samuel came to the US to follow his dreams and, by extension, the American dream: the idea that someone can work hard and pull themselves up by their bootstraps, achieving fame and financial fortune along the way.



After two years, Natasha and Patricia flew to America. Natasha didn't know what it meant to be undocumented: she'd never get to go home again. At the airport, Samuel seemed happy to see her, and he still obviously loved her. He found his family a one-bedroom apartment in Brooklyn and took a security job working the graveyard shift, thinking he could audition during the day. This never happened. There were no parts, and the Jamaican accent wouldn't go away completely. Samuel never got used to the constant rejection. He began to wonder whether he or his dreams would last longer.

Thus far, the American dream hasn't worked out for Natasha's family, and Samuel appears to no longer believe in it. His frustrations about his accent in particular suggest that the American dream is only possible for certain people. Notably, it's Samuel's inability to provide for his family that causes him to lose hope and withdraw, which links success to connection.



CHAPTER 16

Daniel writes a headline about a "resigned" local taking the train to the end of childhood. He admits he's being dramatic, but he feels as though he's speeding towards a miserable adulthood. He feels as though he'll never read or write poetry again and, instead, will have deep thoughts on serious subjects.

Daniel's dramatic nature is a testament to his poetic nature. He also seems to believe that there's no middle ground between being a doctor and being a poet, leaving him room for growth.



Daniel works on his poem. With three stops to go, the train stops. The lights go out, and after five minutes, the conductor gets on the loudspeaker. He begins preaching to his passengers, explaining his own religious experience and encouraging his passengers to accept God. When one man yells for the conductor to drive the train, the conductor goes silent. After a minute, the train moves to the Times Square station. Before he opens the doors, the conductor tells his passengers that the train is now out of service, and they should all go look for God. Daniel muses that there's no time in anyone's schedule to find God.

To many people, the conductor's odd behavior would seem to be just that—an odd blip in their day with little consequence. However, it's worth noting that the conductor is trying very hard to cultivate relationships with his passengers, with God, and between God and his passengers. The apparent lack of enthusiasm for the conductor's approach suggests that not everyone is open to or wanting this kind of connection.



CHAPTER 17

Natasha insists that human beings aren't reasonable creatures, as they're ruled by emotions instead of logic. She thinks that the world would be better if logic ruled, especially since after her phone call to the attorney's office, she's started hoping for a miracle. She notes that she doesn't even believe in God.

Natasha believes that there's no middle ground between rationality and passion; as far as she's concerned, the two ideas do not exist on a spectrum. However, her change of heart suggests she might be wrong about this.



CHAPTER 18

Four years ago, the conductor's wife announced that she didn't love him anymore. After the divorce, the conductor wondered what he could believe in if he couldn't believe in his own wedding vows. He kept the TV on but muted at night. One night, he saw a man addressing a room full of attentive people. The conductor unmuted the TV, and the next day, he researched Evangelical Christianity. It appealed to him, especially the parts about being born anew and sharing the gospel with others. This is why he spoke to his passengers. He feels pure joy in his belief that his life has meaning, and that God has a plan for him.

For the conductor, forming a connection with a higher power was a lifesaving change in his life—which he then attempts to pass on to his passengers.



CHAPTER 19

Daniel decides to walk to his barber, since he's letting the universe dictate his actions today. He wonders if God is on the street, but as soon as he exits the station into Times Square, he reasons that God would never hang out there. Daniel keeps an eye out for a sign as he walks and tries to open the doors to a church. It's locked. He sits down on the steps and watches as passersby across the street make their way around a black girl (Natasha) swaying on the sidewalk. She has big pink **headphones** on and looks entirely lost in her music.

At this point, it's somewhat unclear if Daniel actually believes in signs and religion, or if he's just looking for excuses to not think about his interview. When Daniel finds the church locked, it's a symbolic way to turn him away from a divine connection and towards a human one in the form of Natasha. In addition, notice how Natasha uses her headphones—they shut her off from the world.



Natasha opens her eyes. She looks embarrassed and hurries on her way. Daniel wonders what she's listening to, and thinks that only poetry makes him feel like she seemed to. He thinks he'd give anything to be passionate about being a doctor, but he feels ambivalent. As Natasha walks away, Daniel sees that "DEUS EX MACHINA" is printed on her jacket. When she walks into a store called Second Coming Records, he decides it's a sign and follows her.

Keep in mind that Daniel's first interpretation of Natasha is that she's possibly just as passionate about music as he is about poetry. This reinforces just how much Daniel values passion and the arts, given that this value is enough to cause him to follow a stranger through town.



CHAPTER 20

As Natasha hurries into the record store, she hopes that nobody in there saw her "having a moment" with her music. Natasha heads for the trip-hop section but stops when she notices a couple making out: her ex-boyfriend, Rob, and a girl named Kelly. Natasha wonders why they're not in school and thinks that Rob doesn't even like music. She hears Patricia's voice saying that everything happens for a reason, and even though she doesn't believe it, she feels like there must be some explanation for this horrible day.

Natasha's thought process in reference to her mother suggests that she's well aware that believing in destiny and God give people comfort, while her desire for an explanation suggests that she may be open to this type under the right circumstances.



Natasha wishes Bev were with her, as if she'd been here, Natasha wouldn't have entered the record store. As she continues to watch the furiously kissing couple, Kelly reaches out and slips a record into her bulky jacket. Natasha can barely believe it as Kelly snatches another record. Suddenly, Natasha hears someone next to her (Daniel) ask if the couple is really just going to steal. Natasha ignores him. To herself, she wonders if any employees can see this.

Daniel suggests that they tell the staff, but Natasha explains that she can't: the thieves are her boyfriend and his girlfriend. At Daniel's incredulous look, Natasha explains that he's her ex-boyfriend. Rob waves, and Natasha wonders how she possibly could've dated him. She turns to Daniel and asks if Rob is coming over. She suggests they make out, but Daniel blushes and doesn't seem to realize it's a joke.

When Rob greets Natasha, Daniel immediately asks why he and Kelly were stealing. Rob puts his hands up as Daniel reminds him that this is an independent record store, and it's hard for small businesses to survive when people steal. Rob doesn't stop smiling until Natasha points out that employees stopped Kelly. Rob rushes out the front door, and Kelly finally hands over the stolen records and leaves.

Daniel smiles and says that catching Rob and Kelly was fun. He looks at Natasha, and Natasha feels as though she's smiled at him before. He introduces himself and offers her his hand. She takes it, doesn't offer her name, and puts her **headphones** back on. She tells him to have a nice life and leaves the store.

CHAPTER 21

Daniel's writes a headline about a would-be Casanova shaking a girl's hand and then offering her a home loan. He feels ashamed that he shook Natasha's hand and thinks that Charlie would've been unbelievably charming. He would have Natasha dreaming about their half-Korean, half-African American babies.

When Natasha flat-out ignores Daniel, even though they clearly agree that Kelly and Rob's actions are awful, it shows how Natasha actively works to keep people out by not acknowledging them. Though this is a self-preservation technique, it also has the potential to keep Natasha from important opportunities and experiences.



Despite Natasha's desire to distance herself from others, her slipup about Rob suggests that she still groups him with her, even months after their breakup. This suggests that as much as Natasha would deny it, she likely does crave connection with other people.



Daniel's comments about small businesses point to a larger trend: small businesses in general struggle to compete with larger companies, if only because they don't have the connections that the larger companies have. This then represents another facet of the consequences of isolation.



Here, Natasha's decision to use her headphones to end the conversation makes it clear that she has no interest in connecting with Daniel—her headphones allow her to isolate herself from everyone.



It's worth noting that as a quality, charm helps people feel seen and heard. The fact that Charlie is so charming suggests that he's aware of the positive possibilities of connection, he just chooses to misuse it.



CHAPTER 22

Outside, Natasha spots Rob and Kelly and watches them. She knows that Rob is surely explaining to Kelly that he's not actually disloyal. Natasha and Rob sat next to each other in AP Physics and after she helped him pass a quiz, he asked her out. Natasha muses that she liked being a couple, and she *did* like Rob. She'd felt ashamed when he cheated, but she never understood why he didn't just break up with her. Despite that, Natasha got over him quickly, which concerns her. She wonders how she can trust something that seems to end as quickly as it begins.

Even though Natasha had an intimate relationship with Rob, she still believes that she was relatively alone and isolated within that relationship. This could be the case for a number of reasons, but it does begin to illustrate that Natasha isn't keen to trust people with her private self, and it's very possible that she purposefully keeps parts of her hidden that keep her from truly connecting.



CHAPTER 23

The narrator explains that the half-life of a substance is the amount of time it takes to lose half of its initial value. In nuclear physics, it's how much time it takes for unstable atoms to lose energy by emitting radiation. In love, the narrator says the half-life is how long it takes for lovers to feel half of what they used to. The narrator says that when Natasha thinks about love, she thinks that nothing lasts forever. She believes that love has an immeasurably small half-life and when it's gone, it's like it was never there.

Natasha admits at several points throughout the novel that Rob was her first boyfriend, and she also purposefully kept him at arm's length. This shows that Natasha's habit of keeping people away makes her feel as though actual connections with people don't actually exist, given what she thinks about the half-life of love.



CHAPTER 24

Natasha stops at a crosswalk ahead of Daniel, and he assures the reader that he's not following her. She has her **headphones** on and is lost in her music. Daniel is right behind her as she steps off the curb. She doesn't notice that a white BMW is running the light. Daniel pulls her backwards, and they fall on the sidewalk.

Daniel's narration suggests that he already feels very close to Natasha despite the fact that he doesn't even know her name, illustrating a very different and entirely opposite worldview than the one Natasha holds.



Natasha notices her screen is cracked and remarks that the guy in the BMW almost killed her. Daniel asks Natasha if she's okay. She asks if Daniel knows how long she's had "this," and he realizes she's cradling her broken **headphones**. She looks ready to cry, and Daniel offers to buy her another pair. He's desperate to make her stop crying—he can't help but cry when someone else cries. She refuses as Daniel tries to make her laugh, and he tries to hide his tears.

Daniel's tendency to cry when others cry is another way the novel shows that people are intrinsically connected—Daniel very literally feels and experiences others' emotions as his own. Notice too that now that Natasha's headphones are broken, she has to actually talk to Daniel and is also showing him actual emotion while she does so.



CHAPTER 25

Donald Christainsen used to work in insurance, so he knows the price of priceless things like human lives. He knows the price of running over a young woman who isn't paying attention would be much less than the price of his daughter, who was killed by a driver who was texting. When he got the news of his daughter's death, his first thought had been what the driver's insurance would pay.

Donald Christainsen pulls over and puts his head on the wheel. He touches his flask and thinks that people don't get over things like this. His daughter died two years ago, and the grief has taken everything: his marriage, his ability to feel, and his sobriety. He's not sure what the universe was trying to tell him when it took his daughter, but he learned that nobody can put a price on losing everything.

The way that Donald thinks about "the price of priceless things" suggests he'd like to think of the world like Natasha does, where it is easily quantified and not ruled by emotion. Indeed, his first thought after his daughter's death shows that he did, at that point, think that way.



In the present, Donald seems to understand that a strictly rational way of thinking doesn't actually work in the face of overwhelming grief and emotion. This foreshadows Natasha's eventual shift to view the world more like Daniel does, and decide that emotion isn't that bad.



CHAPTER 26

Natasha thinks it's weird that Daniel looks ready to cry and thinks that new **headphones** could never replace her now broken ones. Samuel bought them for her not long after she moved to the US. He bought gifts for Natasha and Peter on layaway, even though he couldn't afford them. Natasha thinks she didn't care why he bought them; she just loved the headphones and worshipped her dad. She thinks her headphones are the only thing that know that she hates herself for no longer worshipping her dad.

The history of Natasha's headphones shows very clearly that even though she tries to hide it, she is an emotional person who at one point had a very deep connection with her dad. This makes it clear that her disdain for destiny and passion is a front and a way to protect her from feeling painful and unwanted emotions.



CHAPTER 27

Daniel thinks that he's never noticed anyone the way he's noticing Natasha. Her hair looks like a halo, and her eyes are beautiful. He studies her face, thinking it's a good thing that she's too sad to notice how shallow and horny he is. When Natasha looks up from her **headphones** and meets his eyes, he feels a sense of déjà vu, but like he's experiencing something that will happen in the future. He can see himself and Natasha at every point in their future lives.

Natasha's emotions about her headphones work to isolate her, while Daniel's attraction to Natasha actually makes him feel deeply connected to her. This begins to illustrate the ways in which different emotions influence if and how people feel connected to each other. This passage also specifically shows that sadness is isolating.



CHAPTER 28

Natasha grumpily asks Daniel if he was following her, and he suggests that maybe he was meant to save her life. She ignores this and tries to evade him when he asks for her name. Finally, she tells him her name. They stand awkwardly as Daniel looks at her. When she calls him out, he blushes, and she notices that he's handsome and even has a sexy ponytail. Natasha thinks she'd like to tease him to make him blush.

Now that Natasha's headphones are gone, she's forced to engage with Daniel. The fact that she receives instant gratification by noticing how attractive he is will possibly help her believe that connecting with others isn't necessarily a bad thing, even if it is uncomfortable at first.



When Daniel accuses Natasha of staring, she asks why he's wearing a suit. He explains that he has an interview with a Yale alumnus, and invites her to get something to eat or drink. When Natasha asks why he wants to get something to eat, he remarks that she owes him her life now. She darkly says that he doesn't want her life.

Though Natasha has no real reason to tell Daniel about her immigration situation at this point, not telling him here sets a dangerous precedent for the future. In this way, it shows that not connecting and confiding in someone can have horrible consequences.



CHAPTER 29

Daniel leads Natasha to an independent coffee shop. He orders something complicated, and Natasha orders black coffee. Daniel decides to not make a joke about it in case she thinks it's racially insensitive. She insists on paying and doesn't smile when Daniel jokes about the price of a life.

Even though Daniel resists the joke for good reasons, their respective coffee orders to reveal a lot about their personalities: Natasha is no-nonsense and just wants caffeine, while Daniel craves something rich and interesting.



They sit down at a table, and Daniel asks Natasha if she needs to be somewhere when she pulls out her phone to check the time. She admits she does, but says nothing more. Daniel feels as though he has no more bravery left to ask her questions. He wonders if he seems awkward or like a jerk to her. Natasha asks if Daniel is still happy he saved her since she's not being very nice, and he notes that he doesn't have a time machine to go back and not save her. He's aghast when Natasha asks if he would go back and not do it.

It's important to note that Natasha's phone is a tool for her to use to not connect with Daniel, even as it does keep her connected to Attorney Fitzgerald and her appointment. Natasha's question about the time machine makes sense given what the reader knows about her; it's likely a purely theoretical ask, not an emotional interrogation.



Natasha goes to the restroom, and Daniel pulls out his notebook. When she returns, she makes a joke about Daniel being a poet. Embarrassed, he thinks that his fleeting moment of déjà vu was nonsense: he'll marry a Korean American girl like his parents want him to, become a doctor, and be perfectly happy. Daniel thinks, however, that something about Natasha makes him think his life could be extraordinary, but he reasons that it's better to part ways. Dae Hyun would never be comfortable with him dating a black girl.

Daniel appears to conceptualize the future his dad has set out for him in much the same way Natasha views science and rational thought: it's the path of least resistance, with presumably the least emotional fallout. Essentially, Daniel is struggling to reconcile his love of emotion (his sense of déjà vu) with the promise of boring stability.



Daniel asks Natasha what she'd do with a time machine, and she seems engaged for the first time. Daniel realizes she knows a lot about time travel when she declares that it's complicated. When she mentions the grandfather paradox, he pretends to know what she's talking about, but she sees right through it. She explains it to him: if Daniel had an evil grandfather, he could either go back in time to kill him before his grandfather met his grandmother and then Daniel would not be born, or he could go back in time to kill his grandfather at a time when Daniel's birth is already assured, and then he'd still make the time machine—but his grandfather would be dead. Through this conversation, they ascertain that Natasha is Jamaican and Daniel is Korean.

It's worth noting that time travel's complexity aside, it's also not real—and Natasha's apparent interest in something that's not real indicates that there's more to her than just a love of science, provable things, and rational thought. She very clearly has interest in something entirely speculative, which foreshadows her eventual acceptance and acknowledgement of Daniel's way of looking at the world. She's also very passionate about time travel, which again shows that her distaste for passion is just a front.



Daniel insists they're ignoring the grandfather paradox, and Natasha begins to explain another issue with time travel. As Natasha chatters on, Daniel thinks she's extremely cute. He can't think of anything to say when she's done, as he finds he can't truly think and look at her at the same time. He mentions a Japanese phrase to the reader that refers to the feeling of knowing that you'll love someone eventually. Daniel thinks he feels that way about Natasha, but he's sure she doesn't return the feelings.

Again, Daniel's overwhelming sense that he and Natasha are supposed to be together suggests that within the world of the novel, destiny is real and certainly has a hand in bringing Natasha and Daniel together—especially since Natasha, who claims to not believe in destiny, felt the same way.



CHAPTER 30

Natasha admits to the reader that she didn't tell the truth about what she'd do with a time machine. She'd ensure the best day of Samuel's life doesn't happen to save her future. When Natasha is finished explaining the science of time travel to Daniel, he looks like he's in love. She's surprised he hadn't heard of the complications of time travel, but reasons that she wrongly assumed that he's nerdy because he's Asian. She tells the reader that she's not an appropriate partner for anyone, especially since she doesn't like temporary and non-provable things like love.

It's telling that Natasha links her dad's "best day" directly to their deportation. This suggests that she believes fully in a system of cause and effect in the universe, though she's unwilling to refer to it as fate or destiny. Meanwhile, her misconception about Daniel shows that everyone is capable of making assumptions about people different from themselves.



Natasha admits to the reader that she's not sure she's capable of love. When she was with Rob, she never felt like the songs said she was supposed to. Very seriously, Natasha tells Daniel to not fall in love with her. He sputters. When Natasha explains she doesn't believe in love, Daniel insists that it exists whether one believes in it or not. He says that poetry, love songs, and marriage prove that it exists. Natasha counters that it's impossible to test love in empirical ways, and that a misguided belief in love is how people avoid admitting that life has no meaning.

Natasha's reasoning is decidedly unscientific; no scientist would take a sample size of one seriously. This again begins to show that Natasha probably has other reasons for not wanting to believe in love. Questionable scientific practices aside, her experience with Rob is a convenient way to justify what she wants to believe is true.



Natasha declares that she's fine not believing in fate or destiny, and Daniel laughs. He seems almost happy about her nihilism and admits he finds it interesting. Natasha closes her eyes and listens to the Pearl Jam song playing in the shop. When she opens her eyes, Daniel says he knows how to get her to fall in love with him scientifically.

It's also worth noting that within the world of the novel, it doesn't matter if someone believes in destiny or not; it still works on them. This shows that Natasha can absolutely believe whatever she wants, but it doesn't change the truth of the world she lives in.



CHAPTER 31

The narrator explains that the multiverse theory is one possible solution to the grandfather paradox. The theory states that every version of someone's past and future *does* exist in an alternate universe. Essentially, whenever someone makes a choice, millions of universes spring up in which they made different choices. The narrator says that per this theory, there's a universe where Samuel doesn't ruin Natasha's life, one where he does but Natasha can fix it, and one where Natasha can't fix it. Natasha isn't sure which universe she's living in.

The multiverse theory proposes that there are millions of interconnected worlds—and further, that they connect through science. This shows that emotional pursuits and rationality aren't necessarily at odds. According to the theory, Natasha could have a million different emotional (or unemotional) relationships, all with different outcomes.



CHAPTER 32

Daniel's headline reads that he's using science to "get the girl." He explains that there was actually a study in which researchers put two people in a room to ask each other increasingly intimate questions and then stare in each other's eyes. The test subjects eventually got married. He looks up the study and finds the 36 questions, thinking he's not above science.

Daniel misrepresents the study a bit; there were many test subjects, not just two, and only one pair got married. His misrepresentation, however, mirrors how Natasha talks about her relationship with Rob, which shows that she and Daniel have a lot in common.



CHAPTER 33

Natasha is both skeptical and intrigued when Daniel tells her about the study. Daniel asks what marriage is for if love doesn't exist, and Natasha says that it's about mutual self-interest and the benefit of the next generation. She thinks that Daniel keeps getting cuter. He asks what the ingredients for love are, and Natasha suggests mutual self-interest and socioeconomic compatibility. Daniel offers his own ingredients: friendship, moral compatibility, intimacy, physical attraction, and the mysterious X factor.

Though Natasha's ingredients for love are unsurprisingly rational, what she says also offers some insight into what she likely has observed about her parents' relationship. This suggests that her parents' relationship doesn't include actual love or attraction at this point. Given how she used to idolize her dad, a loveless marriage could be especially hard for Natasha.



Daniel asks if he can have the day to make Natasha fall in love with him. She says he can have an hour until her appointment, and then she has to go home. She ignores him when he asks what the appointment is, and finally says that she's not going to tell him. Natasha almost admires his tenacity.

Natasha's unwillingness to tell Daniel about her appointment indicates that it's actually immigration and deportation that's in opposition to their budding romance, not reason.



CHAPTER 34

Daniel and Natasha argue over which questions to choose, and Daniel insists that they can't skip the staring exercise. They choose three questions from the least intimate category, two from the medium-intimacy category, and four from the category of most intimate questions. They come up with ten questions since for one question about their mothers, Natasha insists they need to talk about their fathers as well.

Natasha's insistence that they talk about their dads as well as their moms shows that she absolutely believes that her relationships with both her parents are important and worth consideration. This, in turn, suggests that she's possibly not as isolated from her family as she'd like to think.



Natasha checks the time and curses that she needs to go. Daniel tries to follow her through the crowds. He reasons that if he were to look for signs that he should abandon her, he'd probably find them. When he catches her at a crosswalk, Daniel decides he's not going to cut his hair, and Natasha reminds him that she's heading uptown for her appointment.

After a few blocks, Daniel pulls out his phone, and Natasha mocks his belief in love. Daniel encourages her to think of it as an experiment, and suggests that it's okay for researchers to experiment on themselves if it's for the greater good. Natasha laughs.

CHAPTER 35

Natasha admits to the reader that Daniel was smart to use science against her, and she observes that he's too optimistic, earnest, and good at making her laugh. He asks their first question: if and how she'd like to be famous. Natasha asks Daniel to go first, and he says he'd be a famous "poet in chief." His job would be to offer wise and poetic counsel to world leaders. Natasha is skeptical, especially when Daniel insists that poetry can save lives.

Natasha says that she'd be a benevolent dictator. She recognizes she won't be able to please all her subjects, so she suggests that Daniel could comfort the losers with poetry. Natasha checks her phone and thinks of all the other multiverses out there, and how those might've played out. Daniel interrupts her reverie to ask her secret hunch about how she'll die. Natasha says that black women in the US are most likely to die of heart disease at age 78.

Daniel tugs Natasha back from the curb, and she thinks it feels familiar. Daniel believes he'll die by gunshot at a gas station or liquor store, trying to do something heroic. They laugh, and Natasha turns them towards Eighth Avenue. Daniel stops to take off his jacket, which Natasha thinks seems weirdly intimate. He asks to put it in her backpack, which seems even more intimate. Natasha notices how broad his chest is and thinks that his eyes are kind of beautiful. She wonders what he wears normally and then wonders what Jamaican boys wear. She feels suddenly sad at the thought of adjusting to a new culture.

Despite Daniel's belief in destiny, he does note here that he could interpret anything he likes as being predestined. This adds a distinctly human element to the novel's exploration of destiny, and suggests that spotting destiny is in the hands of the person looking for it.



When they decide to bend scientific conventions to suit their own needs, it shows that both Natasha and Daniel are willing to compromise when it's in their own best interests.



Remember that Natasha said outright that Nirvana's Nevermind has been her lifeline through the deportation struggle—whether she wants to admit it or not, poetry in the form of song lyrics is absolutely getting her through this trying time.



The fact that Natasha allows Daniel a place in her dream job world suggests that she does feel a connection with him and is even willing to rework her imagination to find a place for him. Further, being a benevolent dictator is far-fetched and somewhat silly, showing too that Natasha does have an emotional and imaginative side.



Natasha's continual feelings of familiarity add credence to the novel's insistence that destiny is real, and it continues to build up her strange sense of connection to Daniel. The fact that everything they do together feels somehow intimate also throws aside her belief that she's incapable of love, as she's clearly capable of experiencing attraction, emotion, and a sense of intimacy with someone—just not Rob.



Natasha informs Daniel that Asian American men are most likely to die of cancer. He asks if Natasha truly believes she's going to die of something boring, and she insists that dead is dead. Finally, Natasha admits that she's afraid of drowning in the deep end of a hotel pool. Daniel is floored; he doesn't see how someone born in Jamaica doesn't know how to swim. He offers to teach her and teases her about her dislike of chlorinated pools. She laughs and tries not to wish that he could actually teach her to swim.

CHAPTER 36

When Natasha asks Daniel again about his suit, he explains again that he has an interview with a Yale alumnus. He says he's not nervous because he doesn't really care. When Natasha asks if his parents are making him apply, he explains that his parents are first-generation Korean immigrants, which means that it doesn't matter what he wants in life.

When Daniel admits that he doesn't know what he wants, Natasha seems to shut down. Daniel asks her what she wants to be. She replies that she wants to be a data scientist, which means she'll analyze data and interpret the results. Daniel asks if she's always wanted that job, Natasha insists that her life isn't destiny; the job suits her personality. She insists she's not passionate about it and doesn't need to be.

Natasha seems confused when Daniel insists that life is really long to do something that she's not passionate about, and she counters by insisting that life is longer when one's dreams will never come true. She states that only a tiny fraction of creative people are successful. Daniel declares that Natasha sounds like Dae Hyun, but Natasha suggests that he's just looking out for him. Daniel wonders if Natasha realizes how passionate she is about not being passionate.

Natasha asks if he's serious about being a poet. Daniel mockingly says he'd never consider such a thing, and then says that it's ridiculous to think that they know what they want at age seventeen. He wishes he could live multiple lives at once and insists that his current track goes on forever, all the way through med school, marriage, children, and death.

Daniel declares that humans are capable of doing so much and dreaming so big, there's no reason to settle. Daniel and Natasha look into each other's eyes, and Daniel sees something in hers. It seems like Natasha is going to take his hand, and he has the sense that they're meant to be, but Natasha walks away.

The fear that Natasha developed as a result of coming to the US shows that even though she identifies as American, coming to the US cost her a beautiful and important part of her Jamaican identity. This develops the idea that being an immigrant, even if one is happy in their new country, isn't easy—and it often forces immigrants to make major changes to themselves.



When Daniel mentions that his parents believe the way they do because they're immigrants, it suggests that immigrants must in some ways try harder or do things differently in order to make it in the US



Once again, Natasha rejects passion and destiny even though she's clearly passionate about math and science and believes in cause-and-effect relationships.



Again, the fact that Natasha is aware of the success rates of creative and artistic people suggests she has some personal stake in knowing about them, and she may have good reason for believing creative pursuits aren't worth her time. However, her belief is absolutely rooted in fear of being financially unstable.



Daniel espouses a way of living that allows teens to experiment and actually be passionate, which the reader will later learn is a product of his financially stable upbringing.



The sense of déjà vu that Daniel feels again suggests that destiny is real within the world of the novel. However, Natasha's ability to walk away shows that there is absolutely human choice involved in how things unfold.



CHAPTER 37

Natasha thinks she doesn't want to be having this moment with Daniel. She believes the "poetic heart" isn't trustworthy, as it says that all a person needs are love and dreams and totally neglects the fact that people need food and shelter. Regardless, Natasha feels like her heart wants Daniel, no matter how stupid he's being. She wonders if there is such a thing as destiny, but walks away without taking his hand.

Natasha's reasoning provides more evidence for the assertion that she leans on reason because she wholly understands—and has experienced firsthand—the consequences of not having money. In her defense, studies have shown that money problems are some of the most destructive problems within romantic relationships.



CHAPTER 38

The narrator says that there are three stages of love, each one orchestrated by chemicals in the brain. The first stage, lust, is brought on by testosterone and estrogen. The second, attraction, is fueled by dopamine and serotonin. Dopamine makes people feel happy together, while a drop in serotonin levels makes people obsessed with each other. The final stage, attachment, happens with the release of oxytocin and vasopressin. Both are released after sex and help people bond. Natasha knows that love is just chemicals, so she wonders why Daniel feels different.

When the novel discusses the science of emotion in this way, it makes it clear that emotion and rationality aren't at all at odds with each other—they inform and influence each other. This mirrors the novel's overarching message about passion and reason (that one should strive for a happy medium between the two) and shows that even on a molecular, scientific level, this still holds true.



CHAPTER 39

Daniel thinks that he does not want to go to his interview, but it is fast approaching. He thinks about the moment he and Natasha shared and wishes they could talk about it. They finally reach a massive skyscraper. He offers to wait for Natasha outside, and she sternly tells him no. Daniel thinks that this is the voice she'll use to discipline their future children.

When Daniel continues to see his future with Natasha, the novel makes the case that time is connected in the same way people are: they all influence and inform each other, and it's absolutely possible to pick out elements of one's future in the present.



Daniel wonders if Natasha is a convenient excuse to derail the future his parents set out for him, but reasons that she's right; there's no future for them since she clearly doesn't like him. He agrees to go, and Natasha seems surprised and even disappointed.

The fact that Daniel appears to be looking for an excuse to not go to Yale indicates that he believes he needs a reason other than that he simply doesn't want to.



CHAPTER 40

Natasha didn't expect Daniel to give up so easily and she didn't expect to feel disappointed. She reasons that she can't worry about him, as her future will be decided in moments. They awkwardly stand together, not really saying goodbye, until Natasha remembers Daniel's jacket and pulls it out of her backpack. She notes that he looks like he could work in the building, which doesn't flatter him like she meant it to.

For Natasha, the draw of the American dream is still stronger and more powerful than the connection she feels with Daniel. However, it's also worth noting that she seems more emotional about him than about her appointment, suggesting that their relationship may have more sway than the US



Daniel looks sad, and they awkwardly decide to hug. Natasha lets her head rest on his shoulder and lets him truly hold her for a moment. She doesn't look him in the eye when they pull apart. She thinks about him all the way up to the office suite of Attorney Jeremy Fitzgerald.

The sense of comfort and relief Natasha feels when Daniel holds her tells both her and the reader that the connection she feels with Daniel is something powerful and ultimately positive.



The office is under construction, and the paralegal looks pale and frazzled. She has bad news: Attorney Fitzgerald was hit by a car and he won't be back until the afternoon. Natasha is crushed. The paralegal pushes forms at Natasha, and it takes Natasha a while to fill them out. She wonders what, exactly, Attorney Fitzgerald wants to know—if he wants to know what it feels like to be undocumented. Natasha settles for facts and hands the forms back.

When Natasha begins to wonder if someone is actually interested in the emotional side of her situation, it shows that she's already beginning to learn from Daniel that emotion and passion aren't bad things. However, when she decides on facts instead of emotions, it shows that she still has a long way to go on this journey.



The paralegal flips through the forms and tells Natasha she needs to add more—"Jeremy" needs material to humanize Natasha. Natasha writes about how hardworking and patriotic she'd be, and thinks that Daniel would be proud of her. She wonders if he'll do the right thing and become a doctor, and if he'll wonder what happened to her, too.

The paralegal's guidance makes it abundantly clear that emotion is actually useful and can be used to create change—something that gives Daniel's way of looking at the world more credibility. Natasha's thoughts about Daniel suggest that she's beginning to accept their connection as fact.



The office phone rings. It's Attorney Fitzgerald. The paralegal shakes with relief as happy tears fill her eyes. Natasha can tell that the paralegal is madly in love with him. When she gets off the phone and looks through Natasha's revised forms, she says that she thinks Natasha will be okay, and that Jeremy never loses. She says that there's hope. Natasha thinks of a poem from her English class, specifically the line "'Hope' is the thing with feathers." She thinks that she finally understands what that line means.

As Natasha begins to see that emotions and non-scientific pursuits have their place, "soft" things like poetry begin to seem like they actually have a place. Notice, however, that Natasha is willing to allow this kind of thought when her emotions are happy. This begins to show that she's not anti-passion or anti-emotion all the time. She just feels that way when the emotions are negative.



As Natasha leaves the office, she wonders at her newfound desire to hold onto hope. She remembers overhearing her parents fighting a few weeks ago. Peter hadn't wanted to know what she overheard. She thought he was silly at first, but later wished that she could un-hear what her parents said. Natasha considers telling her parents the news, but she really wants to talk to Daniel. She wishes she'd been nicer and gotten his phone number, and finally admits that there was something between them.

Natasha conflates her version of the American dream and its impending success with Daniel; this suggests she thinks that fantastical love can be part of that dream.



CHAPTER 41

Hannah thinks of herself as living in a fairy tale, though not as the star. She thinks that she's a minor character, like a cook or a handmaiden. When she met and began working for Attorney Jeremy Fitzgerald, she finally began to think that she could be the star of her story. He was her one true love, even if he was a married man with children. She never thought that he'd return her affection—until today.

The shift that Hannah undergoes when she begins working for Attorney Fitzgerald illustrates clearly that love has the power to fundamentally change how a person thinks about their lot in life.



CHAPTER 42

Earlier in the day, Jeremy Fitzgerald was hit by a distraught insurance agent driving a white BMW. The experience was just enough to make him consider his life and admit his mortality—as well as the fact that he's in love with his paralegal, Hannah Winter. Later today, he'll return to the office, take Hannah in his arms, and wonder what it'll cost to love her.

The fact that Daniel Christainsen (the man who almost hit Natasha earlier that day) hit Attorney Fitzgerald reinforces the idea that all people are connected in myriad ways that might seem mysterious.



CHAPTER 43

Daniel's headline reads that he "chose poorly." He admits to the reader that he rescheduled his interview for later, though the receptionist said she needed to reschedule it anyway. Now, he sits in the lobby and waits for Natasha. He reasons that Natasha is either an heiress or needs legal help. As Daniel watches her walk out of the elevator, he decides that rescheduling was worth it; there's something between them. He watches her look for someone or something. Daniel wonders if she's looking for him.

The fact that Daniel's interviewer needed to reschedule when Daniel wanted to reschedule anyway adds more weight to the possibility of the existence of destiny, since it seems as though the world is conspiring to make sure Natasha and Daniel get to spend more time together.



CHAPTER 44

Natasha feels hollow when she doesn't see Daniel in the lobby or outside. She doesn't want to leave the building. She makes it clear that she doesn't believe she and Daniel were meant to be, but she was looking forward to maybe going on a date with him. She wonders how his interview is going and takes one final look around that seems almost instinctive. When she notices Daniel, she reasons that her subconscious spotted him when she looked around the first time.

When Natasha reinterprets her "instinctive" look around the lobby as being the work of her subconscious, it shows her trying very hard to deny the existence of destiny. Instead, she tries to make it make sense in terms of science, which she still believes will never change or betray her.



CHAPTER 45

Daniel watches Natasha approach and is somewhat disappointed when she asks him straight out what happened to his interview. He tells her the truth: he moved it so that he could spend time with her. She won't tell him anything about her appointment except that she has to come back at 3:30 P.M. When Daniel notices her shiver, he helps her into her coat. It feels intimate, like they've been doing that for a long time.

Natasha's caginess about her appointment suggests that her inability to achieve the American dream is possibly shameful for her. This again shows the issues immigrants face as they try to make it in the US, as being there and trying to fit in is an emotional process.



Natasha asks if Daniel is jeopardizing his future, and Daniel insists he doesn't care—his instinct says that Natasha is worth it. Daniel thinks that he really wants to go cozy up with Natasha, but he needs to deliver the money pouch to Dae Hyun. Natasha agrees to accompany him to Harlem, even though Daniel knows this is a bad idea. He explains to the reader that his dad is weird: he only talks to customers and berates his sons, and he will know something is up. Natasha assures Daniel that all families are strange.

Daniel's use of "instinct" mirrors Natasha's use of the same word, which in turn suggests that there's more at work here than simple coincidence. The way that Daniel describes his dad suggests that his dad is, in some ways, isolated like Natasha is. However, it's yet to be seen if he's attempting to protect himself like she is.



CHAPTER 46

Natasha thinks that Harlem feels like an entirely different country than Manhattan. She doesn't know why she's surprised when he stops in front of a black hair care store, as Koreans own most black hair care stores. The old posters show professional black women with chemically treated hairstyles, and Natasha thinks Patricia thinks treated hair is better. She wasn't happy when Natasha decided to wear an Afro, but Natasha just wants to have choices.

As the novel will go on to say outright, Natasha isn't aware of the rich history of African hair—she operates as though she exists outside of that history when she says she just wants choices. However, her mindset denies the novel's assertion that people are wrapped up in their history no matter if they are aware of it or not.



Daniel is absurdly nervous. He asks Natasha to wait outside, and Natasha reasons that everyone is embarrassed by their family. Natasha wonders if Daniel is actually embarrassed by her, or is afraid his parents will be ashamed of her. She thinks that America isn't really a melting pot. She feels as though she and Daniel are having a moment she never expected to have with him.

Natasha's comment about the melting pot shows that the idyllic vision of a united, race-blind America absolutely doesn't exist, given that Daniel's dad is presumably racist. This shows that immigrants are also complicit in racism and denying the American dream to other immigrants.



CHAPTER 47

The narrator explains that in fifteenth-century civilizations in Africa, different hairstyles could signify wealth or mourning, and hair in general was considered a passageway for spirits into the soul. When Africans were sold into slavery, this history disappeared. Slave traders shaved their captives' heads, depriving them of their identity. After slavery ended in the US, African Americans strove to have hair that was as European as possible: straight and smooth. People developed straightening products, and now, the black hair care market is worth more than a billion dollars per year.

It's important to recognize that hair was (and still is) a symbol for the many different ways that people are connected to each other (like mourning another person) and to their gods. Once again, the novel highlights how everyone and everything is connected across time and space. Similarly, the desire for European hair shows that having a very visible connection to Europeans is a way to connote power and acceptability.



However, the African American community has constantly debated the question of hair. The narrator says that when Natasha decided to wear an Afro, she didn't make that decision because she knew the history, and she did it even when Patricia said that Afros make women look unprofessional. Patricia's arguments are rooted in a fear that Natasha will be hurt by a society that fears blackness. In addition, she also saw Natasha's Afro as a rejection of her—though the narrator insists that decisions like Natasha's are ones that all teens make. Natasha's Afro took three years to grow in, and she did it because it's beautiful.

Notice Yoon's choice of language at the end of the chapter—she insists that Afros are beautiful, not that just Natasha thinks so. This is a very overt way to remind the reader that while world cultures are all connected, they must also be thought of as equally rich in different ways. Essentially, though it acknowledges the connections between cultures, it also works to celebrate difference.



CHAPTER 48

Daniel's headline reads that he's just as much of an asshole as Charlie. He instantly regrets asking Natasha to wait outside. He wishes he could go back in time and not say it, and reasons that if they're going to be together, he's going to have to deal with Dae Hyun's racism. Daniel wishes he could just fall in love without having to deal with all the hard stuff.

Here, the novel presents standing up to racism as both the logical right thing to do, as well as the way for Daniel to show his emotional connection with Natasha—illustrating again that rationality and emotion don't have to be at odds.



CHAPTER 49

Natasha thinks that she'll be fine waiting outside, and she totally understands. Deep down, however, she wants Daniel to choose her, even though it's awfully early in their relationship for that sort of thing. She wants him to be noble, even though she thinks nobody is truly noble. Regardless, she agrees to wait outside.

True to form, Natasha tries to reconcile the rational (avoiding conflict) with the emotional (her desire for Daniel). The fact that she simply reasons that nobody's noble shows how much she still leans heavily on rationality.



CHAPTER 50

Daniel thinks that when a person is born, God or aliens should give them free passes to do things over or take things back. He wishes he could change what he said. He knows that Natasha will understand, but Daniel thinks he can't do it. He asks to try the moment again, and Natasha smiles a huge smile that makes Daniel feel as though everything will be worth it.

Natasha's extremely positive reaction to Daniel's decision shows that emotion and reason are absolutely not at odds. Further, it suggests that marrying the two can bring about positive emotions for even the most rational people.



CHAPTER 51

Natasha watches Dae Hyun ring up a customer. He ignores her and Daniel, but silently and mysteriously communicates to Daniel that he should wait to bring the pouch. Daniel grips the pouch tightly and nervously leads Natasha to the back to get a soda. They walk down the aisle of dyes, and Natasha stops to examine a box of pink dye. Daniel notes that it doesn't seem like her style, and Natasha hates that he's right. She wonders if she's too predictable and boring.

Natasha's assessment of her own predictability suggests again that she doesn't necessarily want to be so rational; it's just a coping mechanism. The pink dye, something that's definitely frivolous and will do nothing but make Natasha happy, shows that she's unhappy with the way she looks at the world now.



Natasha pats her hair and tries to act mysterious, but only feels self-conscious about her hair. Daniel sincerely says that she'd look beautiful with a pink Afro. Natasha explains she'd only dye the ends. Suddenly, Charlie interrupts Natasha and Daniel. They jerk apart and drop the box of dye. Natasha thinks that Charlie is handsome, but she isn't sure she likes him as he sneers and asks who she is. Natasha introduces herself as a friend of Daniel's. Charlie pretends to be glad she's not a shoplifter, and explains that they get many shoplifters in "a store like this."

Daniel angrily takes a step towards Charlie, but Natasha grabs his hand. Charlie gleefully notices and celebrates that this means their parents will no longer care about his academic issues. Natasha calls Charlie an asshole. Charlie asks Daniel where he thinks this relationship can possibly go, and Natasha asks Daniel to drop off the pouch so they can go. Daniel turns around to come face to face with Dae Hyun. He already saw Natasha and Daniel holding hands.

CHAPTER 52

Daniel thinks he'd love to light Charlie on fire, but he tries to focus on Natasha's hand. Dae Hyun asks what he's doing in Korean, and Daniel makes sure to answer in English as he hands his dad the pouch. Charlie offers to translate the Korean for Natasha, and Dae Hyun reminds Charlie that he doesn't understand Korean. Charlie insists he gets by, and his dad asks if that's why Charlie failed out of Harvard. Charlie tells Natasha that his dad is calling him stupid. Daniel can tell his dad is unspeakably angry.

Dae Hyun puts on his storeowner face and asks Natasha if she wants something. She tries to politely refuse. Dae Hyun leads them to the chemical aisle and offers Natasha a tub of relaxer, telling her it'll make her hair not so big. Natasha explains that she likes it big. Charlie makes an innuendo about the size of Daniel's penis, and Daniel voices the joke for the group. He throws the pouch at his dad and leads Natasha out, flipping off Charlie as he does.

CHAPTER 53

Natasha laughs hard at what happened in the store. She thinks that families are the worst as Daniel drags her towards the subway station, and when they get there, he apologizes. Natasha cannot let go of the memory of Dae Hyun shoving relaxer at her. When she finally calms down, she agrees that the situation was horrible. She starts laughing again and Daniel finally smiles. Natasha insists that tragedy is funny.

Charlie's comments again show that immigrants aren't all in it together to achieve the American dream; his comments hinge on the racist stereotypes that black people are more likely to steal. This shows that even though the black hair care store is a way for Daniel's family to achieve financial success, they do so by catering to people they think very little of.



The assertion that Natasha's presence will distract Charlie and Daniel's parents makes it very clear that they, too, are racist and view black people as a means to financial success, not as people worthy of respect in their own rights.



From Dae Hyun's perspective, the presence of one mean, failing son and the other with a non-Korean girl likely represents failure on his part to point his sons towards achieving the American dream while also preserving their heritage. Both Daniel and Charlie are going against their parents' wishes here, which shows that the Bae parents have a very narrow view of what success looks like.



Though the reader is intended to interpret Daniel's actions as positive changes and a signal that he's growing up and coming into himself, in the eyes of Daniel's family, this is an act of rejection (especially since Daniel isn't at his Yale interview where he's supposed to be).



Natasha's comment about tragedy being funny begins to explain a little more her affinity for nineties grunge; tragedy often works with isolation as a theme, and Daniel was nothing if not isolated from his family and culture as he stood up to his dad.



Daniel puts Natasha's hand on his chest. She studies her fingers so she doesn't have to look at him. When she finally looks up, he sincerely apologizes for his family and for the history of racism, even when Natasha insists he can't do that. Natasha thinks that what happened was funny, but she understands that Daniel is ashamed. She insists that he's not Dae Hyun, but she knows it's an empty sentiment: nobody can escape their parents and their histories.

Natasha's acknowledgement that people can't escape their histories suggests that her attempts to withdraw from her family are indeed coping mechanisms, not anything she believes can actually separate her fully from her dad. This also shows that Daniel will have to answer for his dad and his culture's racism, even if Daniel himself isn't racist.



CHAPTER 54

The narrator says that it wasn't chance that led Daniel's family to the black hair care business: many South Korean immigrants, including Dae Hyun's cousin, own black hair care stores. The South Korean dominance of the market began in the 1960s, when South Korea banned the export of raw hair for wigs, and the US simultaneously banned the import of wigs containing hair from China. This meant that South Korea became the sole manufacturer of wigs, and eventually, this dominance expanded to the black hair care market in general. Now, it's estimated that South Korean businesses control 60-80 percent of the market. Dae Hyun isn't aware of any of this; he just knows that his children will do better than he did.

Again, this history shows that even if there's animosity between South Koreans and African-Americans, the two cultures are still intrinsically linked. Further, that link represents several facets of the American dream for both cultures (financial success for Koreans, and association with European standards of beauty in the form of relaxing chemicals for African-Americans). This shows that the American dream also isn't something that exists just on an individual level.



CHAPTER 55

Daniel feels as though it's a miracle that Natasha doesn't hate him. He invites her to get lunch at his favorite Korean restaurant. On the subway, he pulls out his phone to find more questions. Natasha scoots closer. Her hair tickles Daniel's nose, and he takes a sniff of it that's not at all discreet. Natasha, aghast, asks if he just smelled her hair. Ashamed, Daniel admits that he did. She asks him how it smelled, and he rambles for a moment about how good it smelled. He looks down and hopes he didn't scare her away.

As awkward as this moment is, the fact that Natasha seems more curious about Daniel's interpretation than offended suggests that the two are definitely becoming closer, especially given how physically close Natasha gets to Daniel.



CHAPTER 56

Natasha tries to remain "stoic and unaffected." However, she finds that she does like that Daniel said, poetically, that her hair smells like spring rain.

This change of heart shows that Natasha doesn't hate poetry at all. Instead, she hates that poetry blinds people to reality.



CHAPTER 57

Natasha moves closer to Daniel again, and Daniel wonders if part of falling in love with someone else includes falling in love with yourself. He likes who he is with Natasha. He reads the next question: how does she feel about her relationships with her mother and father. Daniel struggles to articulate how he feels about Dae Hyun. He loves him, but their relationship is fraught. He doesn't know how much is normal teenage stuff and how much has to do with the cultural divide. Natasha teasingly asks if Daniel just feels bad about it, and Daniel thinks it's a concise way to describe a very complicated situation.

Daniel explains that he has a good relationship with Min Soo, as they're both artistic. Natasha doesn't want to answer the questions, but agrees to give thumbs up or thumbs down for each parent. She gives Patricia a thumbs up and Samuel a thumbs down.

Daniel does have the added complication of having been born in the US, while Natasha has more in common with both of her parents simply by virtue of being all first generation immigrants. For Daniel, the American dream is an entirely different beast because he never has to deal with the struggle of actually getting to the US and becoming a citizen—that's something he received freely at birth.



It's worth considering that by telling Daniel about her parents, Natasha has to actually consider how she relates to her parents. Figuring that out seems to be as much a part of the problem as anything else, which is why she settles for a simple thumbs up or down.



CHAPTER 58

Natasha tells Daniel that it's hard to love someone when they don't love you back. She knows that he wants to tell her that Samuel certainly loves her and that all parents love their children, but Natasha knows that it just isn't true. She knows for sure that Patricia loves her, but she heard her father say that she is his greatest regret.

Natasha fails to realize that the presence of regret doesn't have to negate love; the two aren't mutually exclusive. In addition, her father could have been speaking out of frustration or anger and possibly didn't mean what he said. This shows that Natasha is experiencing more of an emotional reaction to her father's words than she'd like to admit.



CHAPTER 59

Samuel was certain that he was destined to be famous. When he met Patricia, he figured that she was part of God's plan too. He met her on a rainy day in Montego Bay when he ducked into a store where she was the manager. She was shy, and he couldn't resist her. He quoted poetry and sang for her, and he missed an audition to stay. Despite his attraction, some part of him told him to stay away. He saw two paths, and he wonders now if he'd chosen to leave Patricia and the store that day, if it would've made all the difference.

Samuel's mention of "two paths" is a reference to a poem by Robert Frost, which suggests that he might have more in common with someone like Daniel than he'd probably like to admit. This shows again that people can connect with each other across even cultural and generational divides, and further, that the arts are a major connecting force.



CHAPTER 60

Daniel imitates Min Soo and tells Natasha that Korean food is the best food. Daniel wonders if he'll still be able to get Natasha to fall in love with him, but reasons that he'll at least make her want to see him tomorrow. When they walk into the restaurant, the staff greets Daniel. Natasha asks him to order for her, and he rings the bell attached to the table. After he orders, Natasha remarks that the bell is genius and all restaurants should have one.

The complimentary side dish, panchan, arrives. Daniel braces himself to explain what it is, remembering a time a friend asked if it was dog, but Natasha doesn't ask. When the waitress hands Natasha chopsticks, Natasha asks for a fork. The waitress tells Daniel to teach his girlfriend to use chopsticks. Daniel explains that some people need things done their way, but Natasha insists that every culture does that.

The waitress arrives with seafood soup and two uncooked eggs. Daniel explains that it's called soon dubu, and Natasha mimics him when he cracks his egg into the soup. She takes a sip and deems it delicious, and then asks why Daniel calls himself Korean when he was born in America. He explains that people don't care where he's really from. He does sometimes tell people that he and his parents escaped from Kim Jong-un's torture chambers, but Natasha doesn't laugh. She asks why he does that, and Daniel insists that people will believe whatever they want.

Natasha agrees that the way people think of Daniel sucks, and Daniel explains he's used to it: his parents think he's not Korean enough, and everyone else thinks he's not American enough. Natasha says that she thinks Daniel should tell the truth about where he's from. Daniel loves that it's so simple for her. Natasha explains that for her, it's easier because she's not from America. She recounts the first time she saw snow. She stood up to stare at it, and her classmates mocked her. Then, on her first spelling quiz, she spelled "favorite" as "favourite," which is the proper English spelling. She brought her dictionary to school the next day to get her missed points back.

Natasha giggles, and Daniel thinks he loves watching her eat. He suggests they eat their now soft-boiled eggs together. They put the whole eggs in their mouths, and Daniel watches her eyes widen as the yolk pops. She seems to feel everything with her whole body, and he again wonders why such an obviously passionate person is so against passion.

Even if Daniel is a second generation immigrant, he clearly still respects and enjoys his parents' culture. This suggests that he comfortably inhabits a space between cultures where he can experience and enjoy connections with both—unlike Charlie, for example, who unhappily tries to reject his Korean roots.



Daniel's fear shows that he's not exempt from racism either, while the chopsticks debacle shows that Natasha is also at risk of experiencing judgment and prejudice. Note, too, that this happens all within an immigrant-owned restaurant, which suggests that even immigrant spaces aren't always safe.



When Daniel seems to imply that he can successfully make people believe his story about escaping from North Korea, it shows that he isn't above using people's misconceptions about the Korean peninsula as a whole for his own amusement, while also reinforcing that Americans aren't always interested in learning the truth about their immigrants or even fully allowing them to claim that they're American.



Jamaica is a commonwealth country, which means it observes British spelling conventions. This shows yet another way that multiple different cultures connect, as the US was also a colony at one point but rejected British spellings in an effort to differentiate from their parent country. Natasha then had to occupy a space between three separate yet connected countries, illustrating how immigration doesn't just include two countries. It, in many cases, includes many.



Food is an art form, and the fact that Natasha once again clearly enjoys it makes it clear that she's not actually as cold and scientific as she wants Daniel to believe. This suggests that something has happened to turn her away from the arts.



CHAPTER 61

The waitress, who has a Korean accent, says that Daniel needs to teach his girlfriend to use chopsticks. She explains that her son dated a white girl, and her husband didn't accept it. They didn't speak to their son for a year, thinking he'd finally see reason. He didn't, and now she misses him. When he finally called, it was to invite them to his wedding. Her husband said no, and finally, her son stopped begging. The waitress saw pictures of the wedding on Facebook, and saw photos of her son's son and then his daughter as well. Now, when Korean boys come into the restaurant with white girls, she gets angry. America tries to take everything from immigrants.

The waitress's husband believes that being Korean in South Korea and in the US should be one and the same. Remember Natasha's comment about the US not truly being a melting pot; the waitress's story is clear evidence that Natasha was right. This shows that for some immigrants, becoming connected with their new country isn't actually the goal. The waitress and her husband expected their son to exclusively date Korean girls, thereby rejecting the idea of a melting pot.



CHAPTER 62

There's less than two hours before Natasha's appointment and Daniel wants to do norebang, or Korean karaoke. Norebang is done in small rooms instead of in front of a crowd, and Daniel chooses one of the smallest rooms in the establishment next door. Natasha checks her phone. There are no texts from Bev, and she hopes that Bev hasn't forgotten her.

Norebang functions in this instance as a way for Natasha and Daniel to connect on a more intimate level, while karaoke fosters relationships between a much larger group of people. Natasha's worry about Bev suggests she doesn't trust any of her relationships.



Daniel rings a bell and orders dessert. Natasha loves it, and she realizes that she loves making Daniel happy. He pores over the songbook, and when Natasha tells him to just choose something, he insists that it's important to choose the perfect song. He unbuttons the top button of his shirt, rolls up his sleeves, and takes off his tie. Natasha thinks it feels like watching him fully undress. When he lets his ponytail down, she thinks that he's extremely attractive.

In the privacy of the norebang booth, Natasha has the opportunity to acknowledge her feelings for Daniel in a place that's safe and removed from the horrific realities of her life. This suggests that their romance is in many ways in direct opposition to Natasha's immigration issue.



Natasha asks Daniel if he's a good singer, and he very seriously tells her that he's fantastic. Natasha doesn't share that she's an awful singer. Daniel finally makes his song selection, "Take a Chance on Me" by ABBA. Natasha can't stop laughing as he mimes the lyrics. He's a very good singer, and Natasha thinks it's sexy. She admires his body and thinks that he's cheering her up in a way she never expected. When his song is over, a score of 99% shows up on the TV screen. Natasha groans that there are grades as Daniel hands her the microphone.

The fact that Daniel can so easily let loose suggests that he's naturally more inclined to try to connect with people, as he simply doesn't experience the same sense of embarrassment that many others do in a situation like this. This shows that Daniel and Natasha are operating on very different comfort levels when it comes to connection.



CHAPTER 63

Daniel wishes he'd thought about norebang earlier, since being alone in a dim room with Natasha is heaven. She flips through the songbook, too distracted to tell Daniel to not stare at her. When she leans over to punch in the code for her song, he notices marks from the couch on the backs of her thighs. She notices him looking at her, but Daniel doesn't care—he wants her to know that he wants her. He decides to get up and kiss her, but her song starts before he can. It's "Fell on Black Days" by Soundgarden, an objectively depressing song. Natasha loves it and belts every word. Her singing is horrendous.

When the song ends, Natasha looks shyly at Daniel and explains that she loves the song. When Daniel says that it's a bit sad, she insists that angst never hurt anyone. Daniel insists that Natasha can't possibly be full of angst, but she says she's just good at hiding it. When Natasha puts the mic down, Daniel pulls her towards him until she's in his arms. He tells her that her singing was awful and kisses her. He thinks the kiss feels like more than chemistry.

Natasha's song choice again suggest that she's not opposed to passion the way she'd like to be, she just likes to experience it privately. In this way, agreeing to sing for Daniel is a major step in Natasha's journey of realizing passion isn't a terrible thing, as it's the first time she's truly willing to be passionate and allow someone else to see it.



Natasha's admission that she hides her struggles is a major turning point for her, as it shows her finally beginning to confide in and connect with Daniel. Notably, this admission leads to their first kiss and their first real physical connection, which in turn connects a sense of trust to physical connection.



CHAPTER 64-67

Natasha feels as though she cannot possibly stop kissing Daniel. She feels his kiss everywhere in her body as he guides her down onto the couch. She wraps her fingers in his hair, thinking that she doesn't believe in magic, but this certainly feels like magic. Both Natasha and Daniel think that the kiss is amazing, and Daniel reminds himself that they cannot have sex in the norebang. He doesn't want to think that he'd ask a girl he just met to have sex on the first date, but he feels like that guy right now.

Notice that the kiss has the power to entirely alter Natasha's deeply held worldviews regarding magic, showing again how profound human connection can be. Daniel's thoughts, on the other hand, show that he believes there are ways to take connection too far, suggesting that he believes connection should have limits—at least at first.



CHAPTER 68

Natasha slides her hands down Daniel's back to his buttocks, which she thinks is amazing. He kisses her again, and she puts her hands on his shoulders to slow them down. She knows that if they keep going, it's just going to make it harder later. She decides they can't kiss anymore.

When Natasha stops the kiss because of "later," it suggests that she isn't fully convinced that Attorney Fitzgerald will be able to help her. She hasn't yet decided to give in to her emotions and trust other people.



CHAPTER 69

Daniel feels Natasha hesitate and realizes he's a little freaked out by how intense their kiss is. He pulls them to sitting and puts his forehead against hers, thinking that he could've never predicted the way this day has gone. He thinks that even Charlie's academic probation feels like part of a grand plan to connect him with Natasha, as it started the chain of events that led him to her. He kisses her nose and tells her that they were meant to be. Natasha pulls away, looking angry. Daniel suggests that they sing another song, and he can't understand what happened.

Natasha apologizes for running hot and then cold, and Daniel makes a joke. He insists that most poems are about sex, which Natasha finds questionable. Natasha says that she's seen a lot of poems about love, sex, and the stars, and wonders why there aren't more poems about the sun. She says the sun is arguably the most important star. Daniel vows to only write poems about the sun and returns to his assertion that most poems are about sex. He mentions a poem that tells virgins to have sex quickly in case they die.

Natasha laughs and then becomes serious. She suggests that the poet was actually suggesting that people live in the moment. Daniel asks Natasha to tell him about Samuel, and she finally agrees. She says that he seems to live with regret that somehow, he ended up with a wife and two kids. Daniel remembers when Dae Hyun gave Min Soo her painting set, and his dad had mentioned that she used to paint all the time. Daniel had been surprised to learn this secret history, but his mom wouldn't tell him about it.

Daniel confesses that he wonders sometimes if Min Soo made a mistake having him and Charlie, but he guesses that she's happy. Natasha shudders at the thought of living an entire life thinking you made a mistake. She asks Daniel why he wants to be a poet, and he says that he's not sure why, but it's the only way he can get his thoughts out. He says the only other time he feels that good is when he's with Natasha. Natasha kisses Daniel again.

CHAPTER 70-71

Natasha kisses Daniel to make him stop talking. She thinks that if he keeps talking, she'll love him, and she can't afford to do that. Kissing, however, is just another way of talking, so kissing him maybe wasn't the best idea. Daniel thinks that someday, he'll write an epic ode to kissing called "Ode to a Kiss."

It's telling that Daniel creates a chain of events going all the way back to Charlie to explain why he and Natasha are together. In this way, Daniel conflates cause-and-effect relationships (which Natasha already believes in) with fate. However, Natasha's displeasure at his use of "meant to be" suggests that she's still not on board with destiny, despite all the evidence to the contrary.



Natasha's suggestion that poets should write more about the sun alludes to a cosmic connection between all beings, as the sun is very much responsible for the fact that there's life on earth in the first place. Natasha essentially wishes that poets would acknowledge the actual source of that connection, while the connection manifests more as love or sex in Daniel's opinion.



Though the novel never fully explains Min Soo's relationship to painting, this offers another example of Daniel's history deeply influencing his life, even if he's not aware of it. Min Soo's affinity for painting and the arts is likely why she doesn't follow her husband and force Daniel to stop writing poetry in her presence, which suggests she's slightly more sympathetic to Daniel's case.



It's worth noting that the novel implies that Natasha would absolutely be making a mistake by not pursuing her relationship with Daniel, which suggests that she's beginning to use her dad's example to make positive changes in her own life. This adds a positive facet to her relationship with her dad.



The fact that Daniel's words are what's turning Natasha to his way of thinking suggests again that she's not actually against passion; rather, she's consciously and purposefully ignored passion to protect herself from harm.



CHAPTER 72

Natasha thinks that she and Daniel would still be kissing if their waitress hadn't returned. Natasha wants to take Daniel to the Museum of Natural History, her favorite place in New York. Outside the norebang, everything seems too bright, loud, and crowded. Natasha thinks she's not ready for the reality of the city yet. Then, she remembers that this *is* reality, and the norebang was an insulated place where they could live in fantasy. Natasha takes her hand away from Daniel to adjust her backpack and isn't sure if she wants to let him take it again.

It's not a coincidence that Natasha's favorite museum is a natural history museum, as it reinforces the idea that people are connected to their history regardless of whether or not they know about it.



CHAPTER 73-74

Daniel's headline reads that he's "incapable of leaving well enough alone." He and Natasha sit next to each other on the train, and he feels as though she's slipping away. He wants her to take his hand so that she's the one acknowledging what they have. Daniel vows to let the issue go but then asks her what she's afraid of. Natasha insists to the reader that she hates pretense, but she pretends to not know what Daniel is talking about.

Relying on pretense and not being truthful is a surefire way to destroy the connection that Daniel and Natasha have developed. It's worth noting that Natasha's discomfort with the "real world" has to do with her impending immigration meeting, which shows again that those concerns overshadow this intimate connection.



CHAPTER 75

Daniel meets Natasha's eyes in their reflection in the train window, and he tells her that they're meant to be. His voice is bossier than he intended, and Natasha gets up to stand by the doors. She's obviously angry, and Daniel deliberates whether to apologize or demand what her problem is. When they reach their stop, Natasha darts out of the station and turns on Daniel. She hisses at him to not tell her what to feel and then storms away. Daniel doesn't really want to fight with her, especially right next to Central Park.

Daniel's mention that he doesn't want to fight next to Central Park shows that he believes there are some places that should be insulated from the world's issues, and the park is one of them. In reality, the park is as much a part of the city and a connecting force for residents as anything else.



Natasha crosses her arms and says that there's no such thing as meant to be. She refuses to discuss the matter further. Daniel knows he's being unreasonable, but he persists. Natasha finally admits that she's an undocumented immigrant, and she's being deported. Daniel is stunned and can barely figure out what her words mean.

Though Daniel struggles to admit it, he finally experiences what Natasha has been experiencing all day: the crushing realization that his life and his connections can disappear in an instant due to one's immigration status.



CHAPTER 76

Natasha thinks that normally, she'd be embarrassed to fight in public, but she doesn't notice anyone but Daniel. He puts his head in his hands and Natasha wishes she could keep pretending. She thinks she should've told him from the beginning, but she didn't know that she'd feel this much.

It's noteworthy that Natasha identifies truth as being a major help to intimacy, given how secretive she's been all day. This shows again that her attempt to keep her issue private was a way for her to protect herself from heartache.



CHAPTER 77

Daniel says quietly that he postponed his appointment for Natasha. She incredulously asks if that's her fault, and Daniel thinks that he's not sure what he's accusing her of. Natasha insists that she warned him, but it wasn't his business. He says she should've told the truth. People start to stare, and Natasha disbelievingly asks if Daniel is falling for her. He can't answer, but asks why he can't fall for her. Natasha says that it's stupid and she told him not to, but Daniel cuts her off. He asks if she felt nothing while they were kissing, but Natasha insists that kisses don't equal forever.

Natasha closes her eyes. When she opens them, Daniel tells her to have a nice life and turns away. Natasha tells Daniel that he's just like Samuel: selfish, and like him, he believes the world revolves around his feelings and his dreams. Daniel retorts that he at least *has* dreams. Natasha insists that humans are just supposed to survive; dreaming is a luxury that not everyone has. Daniel accuses Natasha of being afraid of becoming her dad, and they both insult the other's worldview. Daniel tries to tell himself that maybe it's better this way, but he thinks he would've liked to see Natasha's hair with pink tips.

Daniel's wild leap to blaming Natasha for postponing his appointment shows just how lost he feels in this situation, as he's willing to grasp at straws to make things somehow make sense. It's also worth noting that Daniel was going to be asked to postpone the meeting anyway, which, per the logic of the novel, suggests that there's more at work here than just Daniel's desires.



It's true that for plenty of people, simply feeding themselves and caring for their families is enough of a struggle without adding far-fetched dreams into the mix. This illustrates the amount of privilege Daniel has, mostly because of his status as a second-generation immigrant. He has no idea how difficult the struggle for citizenship and belonging is when one is still rooted to another country.



CHAPTER 78

Natasha tells Daniel that he should go. She asks him if he's thinking about her at all, and if he's at all curious about her life as an undocumented immigrant. Daniel looks guilty, and Natasha tells him to follow his own advice and tell his parents he doesn't want to be a doctor. Daniel quietly says it's not that easy, but Natasha ignores him. She says that she hates poetry, but she once read a poem that said that you can't make a home out of human beings. Daniel says nothing. Natasha says that Charlie was right: they can't be together, and he doesn't love her. He just wants to someone to save him, and he needs to save himself.

Now that Daniel has turned on Natasha, it reinforces her initial worldview that the only safe way to move through the world is alone and isolated. This again shows that isolation is a coping mechanism for her because she doesn't believe that people are actually trustworthy. Daniel's silence suggests he knows he's wrong to blame Natasha, though the connection she makes to Charlie just adds insult to injury.



CHAPTER 79

Daniel's headline reads that he's convinced his life is "complete and utter shit." He watches Natasha walk away, wishing that he weren't falling in love with her. He thinks that his talk about fate and destiny is stupid, and that Natasha is right: life is made up of coincidences that people think mean something. Really, when you follow up on "destiny," it turns out it's all just silly. The idea of destiny is just a story.

It's worth keeping in mind Daniel and Natasha have still only known each other for mere hours. Per the novel's insistence that scale and time matter, there's still lots of time for this to resolve itself and for Daniel to be able to parse out how fate might work in this situation.



CHAPTER 80

The narrator explains that fate has always existed in the divine realm. The Three Sisters of Fate in Greek mythology are said to decide a person's destiny within three nights of birth. The first sister, Clotho, is a young maiden who spins out the "thread" of life. Her middle-aged sister, Lachesis, decides how long the life is, and what will happen during it. Then the crone, Atropos, determines how and when the person will die.

Though the three sisters no longer figure into people's beliefs, the idea of fate persists. The narrator wonders if it makes tragedy more bearable. Patricia believes that there's comfort in knowing that things are out of her hands, but Natasha and Dae Hyun believe in determinism: one action leads to another. Daniel lives somewhere in between. The narrator insists, however, that once Natasha and Daniel met, whether it was fate or not, their love was inevitable.

The discussion of the Greek interpretation of fate and destiny illustrates clearly how the idea of fate manages to still infiltrate people's lives, even if one doesn't actually understand how the three sisters necessarily functioned.



Again, Yoon's choice to say outright clearly tells the reader that within the world of the novel, fate and destiny exist and are somewhere in between true determinism and true destiny. Essentially, it's possible to pick out the cause and effect retroactively, but destiny still caused it.



CHAPTER 81-82

Natasha decides to go to the museum anyway and heads straight for her favorite part, the Hall of Meteorites. There, she finds her favorite meteorite, closes her eyes, and thinks it's hard to believe that it came from outer space. She thinks the room is her church, and this is where she would've taken Daniel. She would've asked him to write poems about the astounding number of things that just happened to go right in order to create the universe. Natasha thinks that falling in love doesn't even compare.

Daniel writes a poem called "Symmetries." he writes that he'll stay on his side, and an unnamed other person will stay on a different side.

For Natasha, the idea that the universe was predestined is just too much given what she knows about science. It's easier for her to see the creation of the universe as being brought about by related but random events, which shows that she still doesn't buy into the idea that everything in the world is somehow cosmically connected.



Later, the narrator will mention that Daniel will write poetry that's all about Natasha; this moment can be read as informing that future.



CHAPTER 83

Natasha explains that she and Samuel used to be inseparably close. They were the dreamers, while Patricia and Peter were the "non-dreamers." Natasha listened to her dad talk long after her mom and Peter stopped listening, but that changed when Natasha was thirteen. Patricia was tired of living in a one-bedroom apartment and making so little money. She often lamented her fate to Natasha.

Though it's important to keep in mind that Natasha viewed her parents' relationship through the lens of being a child, it's clear that Patricia was becoming and feeling more and more isolated in her marriage. Her association with Peter suggests that he's also still feeling isolated.



Then, Samuel lost his job. He said that maybe it was a blessing that would allow him to pursue acting, but he seldom auditioned. One afternoon, Peter and Natasha arrived home from school to find him in the living room, reciting lines from **A Raisin in the Sun**. Samuel was holding the script, even though he had it memorized. He was reciting a monologue about seeing his future stretched out, empty, in front of him. When he noticed his children, he seemed ashamed that they'd caught him, and he scolded them.

After that, Natasha and Samuel didn't do things together anymore. He began spending all his time in the bedroom, reading and reciting long and dramatic monologues. Patricia took extra shifts to make ends meet, and Natasha began working during the summers. Two months ago, Samuel managed to get a part in a small production of **A Raisin in the Sun**. When he told Patricia, she asked him flatly how much he was getting paid. Everyone was shocked that she reacted this way, but Natasha suggests that her mom wasn't at fault—her dad spent years living in plays instead of the real world, and neither Patricia nor Natasha have time to dream anymore.

CHAPTER 84

Samuel admits that he's somewhat afraid of Natasha now because of her unexplainable interest in chemistry and math. He's afraid that her world is now bigger than him. One night, after Natasha and Peter were asleep, he'd flipped through her math book. The strange symbols filled him with dread. After that, he felt as though someone had snuck in and taken his sweet daughter away when he wasn't looking. Sometimes, however, he'll catch a look from her that reminds him of when she was younger. It's a look that wants him to do more. He resents her for it, since he feels like he's already given up all his dreams for her.

CHAPTER 85

Daniel isn't sure what to do with himself. He thinks he wants to get a hobo outfit and a sign that says "what now, universe?" He feels as though the universe is an asshole and isn't paying attention, just like Charlie. As Daniel thinks about how Charlie ruined his chances with Natasha, he thinks of how much he hates him. He thinks that he's wanted to punch Charlie for years now, and now he has nothing left to lose.

The monologue that Samuel mentions allows the reader to gain a greater degree of insight into Samuel's thoughts: he appears to actually see his future as empty and devoid of meaning. When he scolds his children, it suggests that he meant this moment to be a private one, which shows that he's drawing into himself and no longer allowing others to witness his true thoughts.



Notice that Natasha gave up on passion and dreaming not because of something that happened directly to her, but because of something that happened to her father—someone she used to be close to. This reinforces the idea, though Natasha doesn't seem to realize, that she is actually intrinsically connected to others, given that someone else's experience can bring about this shift in her.



Samuel's fear of math and chemistry suggests that like Natasha, he believes that hard subjects like those are in direct opposition to passion and the arts. His language suggests that he's given up on trying to make his situation any better, and to cope, he's isolating himself.



It's worth recognizing that Daniel doesn't find the courage to confront Charlie until he decides that destiny doesn't actually exist, which suggests that Natasha isn't entirely wrong: for Daniel, there is newfound freedom in believing that he can cause things to happen with his own actions.



CHAPTER 86

When Natasha arrives back at Attorney Fitzgerald's office, his paralegal's eyes are glittering and she looks like she's been kissed. Flustered, she shows Natasha to Attorney Fitzgerald's office. When she opens the door, Attorney Fitzgerald stares right through Natasha at his paralegal, making Natasha feel as though she's intruding on a private moment. Finally, Attorney Fitzgerald greets Natasha and seems harried as he asks her to sit and explain her situation. Natasha wonders whether she should tell him about Samuel's "aborted dreams," or her own belief that even dead dreams don't die. She decides to start by telling him about the night that her dad ruined her life.

When Natasha notices the relationship between Hannah and Attorney Fitzgerald, it stands as evidence that she's taken some of Daniel's advice to heart and she's now slightly more tuned into the connections between others. To this end, it's telling too that she finally tells Attorney Fitzgerald the whole truth of what happened with her dad, especially since this seems to be the first time she's ever done so.



CHAPTER 87

Samuel had to buy three tickets for Natasha, Peter, and Patricia to come to the play. He bought Chinese takeout, and they ate at the kitchen table, something they never did. Patricia was silent. After dinner, Samuel held up an envelope and asked his family to come see him as the lead in **A Raisin in the Sun**. He handed everyone a ticket and looked happy for the first time in a long time. Natasha thinks that seeing her parents' flaws was like losing her religion, and she no longer believes in God or her dad.

As far as Samuel is concerned, [A Raisin in the Sun](#) is a very literal representation of all his hopes and dreams for his life. He is, essentially, influenced by the history encapsulated in the play—history that still affects Samuel as a black man in New York City half a century after the play was written.



Patricia called Samuel foolish and then walked to the bathroom and slammed the door. Later, she refused to go to the show. Peter and Natasha sat in the front row, and Natasha wished that she could say her dad's performance was mediocre—it'd explain the years of rejection if he'd been a poor actor. His performance was breathtaking.

Patricia is far too unwilling to trust Samuel with anything to acknowledge that this is something big for him, which shows that one can use isolation (both of oneself and of another) as punishment.



CHAPTER 88

Daniel offers a headline that says he thought the day couldn't get worse, but he was wrong. When he walks into Dae Hyun's store, his dad is busy but shoots Daniel a look that says there will be a conversation later. Daniel finds Charlie locked in the stockroom. Charlie sneers and makes a show of looking for Natasha. Daniel knows that Charlie is baiting him, but he doesn't back down. He tells Charlie that he came to ask him a question, and ignores Charlie's jabs to ask him what happened to make Charlie hate him.

The fact that Daniel is looking specifically for a reason for Charlie's animosity suggests that he desperately wants the perspective of time to make sense of their relationship. This shows Daniel attempting to make more sense of a deterministic way of looking at fate and the world, which suggests he's taking Natasha's beliefs to heart.



Charlie is surprised, but he just insults Daniel's appearance and asks him about his interview for the "Second-Best School." Daniel admits he doesn't even want to go to Yale and realizes Dae Hyun is behind him, listening. When the doorbell chimes Dae Hyun returns to the front of the store. Charlie insists he's just stronger, smarter, and better than Daniel. When Daniel asks Charlie if it turned out that he wasn't better than all his classmates at Harvard, Charlie's clenched jaw tells Daniel that he hit home.

Charlie gets close to Daniel and tells him that he doesn't like him because he's too Korean—he spits that they're not even from Korea, but it seems like Daniel is only Korean. Daniel is stunned and he discovers he pities Charlie, which makes Charlie even angrier. Charlie grabs Daniel by the collar and rants that nobody's going to treat him different because he writes poetry and dates a black girl. Daniel punches Charlie in the face. Charlie rushes Daniel, punches him in the stomach and the face, and only stops when Daniel knees him in the groin and Dae Hyun enters, yelling in Korean.

For Dae Hyun, hearing that Daniel doesn't share his version of the American dream is likely an earthshattering moment. This suggests that Dae Hyun will be forced to continue the process he's already begun of recognizing that both of his sons aren't the perfect Korean men he hoped to raise; the US is a part of them and has influenced their desires in meaningful ways.



Charlie sees his immigrant history as keeping him from being truly American—and that's something that's extremely difficult and offensive for him to live with. In Daniel's case, that same thing is annoying, but not life-ending. This shows again that the immigrant experience and the American dream manifest differently for all immigrants, and everyone deals with the challenges of trying to be American differently.



CHAPTER 89

Natasha wonders how many stories like hers Attorney Fitzgerald has heard. She picks up her story of the night Samuel ruined her life. After the show, the actors took their bows and the audience began to leave. Peter and Natasha waited for a half hour, at which point their dad walked back onstage. He stood there, staring at the empty theater. Natasha felt as though she could see his soul on his face.

When Samuel finally spoke, he didn't sound Jamaican at all and sent Natasha and Peter home. Afterwards, he drank with fellow actors. He drank too much, got behind the wheel, and hit a police car on the way home. He told the officer his entire story, and the officer called ICE. Attorney Fitzgerald looks confused and asks why her dad did that. Natasha tells the reader she knows the answer.

Even though Natasha doesn't name it as such, it's easy to infer that she sees that her dad is meant to be in the theater. In turn, this shows that when it comes to her dad's passion, Natasha can bring herself to believe in fate and destiny, as the evidence in favor of the theory is just too overwhelming to deny.



Samuel's lack of an accent when he sends his children home suggests that the play truly represented his sense of assimilation in the US, even if what it ended up telling Samuel was that he wasn't wanted (as evidenced by the barely-full theater).



CHAPTER 90

The chapter uses a dramatic script to recount a conversation between Samuel and Patricia. They're in their bedroom, and Natasha is hiding outside the door, listening. Patricia sits on the bed, her face in her hands, asking how they're going to pay for a lawyer. Samuel insists they'll figure it out. Patricia recalls how they met: Samuel came into her store and "wore her down," though he insists he was just courting her. She reminds him that he once said that all her dreams would come true, and they'd live in a big house. Patricia admits that she didn't believe him at first, and then he made her believe—he's a good actor.

Patricia essentially accuses Samuel of tricking into her marriage and into coming to the US, which shows that she's just as disillusioned with the American dream and their life together as Samuel is.



Samuel snaps. He says he's tired of hearing about Patricia's dreams instead of his own. He says that if it weren't for Patricia, Natasha, and Peter, he'd have everything he ever wanted. Samuel declares he regrets the day he walked into her store, because if he hadn't gone in, he'd be acting professionally. He tells Patricia he doesn't want to hear anything more about her dreams, as they're nothing compared to his.

Samuel's dreams are much more selfish than Patricia's, especially since he blames his failure on his family, which he actively created. Though the novel doesn't necessarily take sides, it implies that Samuel's early tendency towards isolation partially led to this heartbreak.



CHAPTER 91

Natasha doesn't tell Attorney Fitzgerald that Samuel believes she's his greatest regret, and instead tells him about their notice to appear in immigration court. Her parents went and didn't take a lawyer, since they heard that they didn't need a lawyer for the first appointment. At the hearing, the judge told them that they could accept Voluntary Removal or file for a Cancellation of Removal.

When Natasha neglects to mention Samuel's regrets and instead sticks with straight, unemotional facts, she ignores what she's already learned about emotion being important in a situation like this, as Attorney Fitzgerald needs to be able to humanize her.



Attorney Fitzgerald confirms that Peter is a US citizen, and Natasha continues her story. Her parents thought Peter could save them, so they hired a cheap lawyer to prove that being forced to leave the country would cause extreme hardship. This turned out to be impossible, and Samuel accepted Voluntary Removal at the hearing. The lawyer had said that they didn't have a good enough case to appeal, and suggested they leave so they didn't have a deportation on their records.

Peter's happiness at going to Jamaica suggests that he wasn't excited about being his parents' saving grace. For Natasha, she's passionate about staying in the US; for Peter, he's passionate about experiencing his country of origin and feels out of place in his birth country.



Attorney Fitzgerald asks why Natasha went to USCIS, and she admits she didn't know what else to do. To the reader, she admits that she was hoping for a miracle. As Natasha gets up to leave, Attorney Fitzgerald waves her back into her seat. He gestures to the construction and boxes surrounding him and mentions that the work was supposed to be done weeks ago. He shows her a framed photograph of his wife and children, the only thing he's unpacked, and tells Natasha that she's never out of options. He tells her he needs a few hours to see a judge, who will hopefully allow Natasha's family to stay a little longer. The poem about hope having feathers returns to Natasha, and she feels hope fluttering in her chest.

When Attorney Fitzgerald consults the photo of his family while talking to Natasha, it's a flag to the reader that something is up and points back to the way he looked at Hannah Winter when she showed Natasha in. This suggests that Attorney Fitzgerald is in the middle of his own familial issues and must figure out where he actually wants to have connections in addition to fighting for Natasha. In this way, Attorney Fitzgerald will test the limits of how many connections a person can maintain at once.



CHAPTER 92

Dae Hyun sends Daniel to get ice for his swollen lip and berates Charlie. Daniel sits down in the stockroom with an icy can of Coke, wondering why he postponed his interview and let Natasha leave. He wonders if she's right and if he does just want someone to save him. When Daniel hears his dad on the other side of the door, he opens it. Dae Hyun, genuinely confused, asks why Daniel thinks it matters what he wants. He says that all that matters is doing what's best so that Daniel never has to work in a store, as that's how Daniel will achieve the American dream.

Daniel is shocked; this is the most Dae Hyun has said to him at one time. Daniel is extremely curious why his dad wants the things he wants for his sons. Dae Hyun continues and wonders if he made it too easy for Daniel and Charlie, since they never grew up poor. Daniel feels like he almost knows his father and decides to tell him that he doesn't want to follow his plan. However, when Daniel opens his mouth, his dad cuts him off and says that if Daniel doesn't go to Yale to become a doctor, he can pay for his own college.

Daniel puts his jacket back on and moves to the front of the store. Dae Hyun tells him that the relationship with Natasha will never work out, but Daniel insists it will. Dae Hyun tells Daniel to do the right thing and holds Daniel's gaze for a moment. Neither are sure what Daniel will decide to do.

CHAPTER 93

Dae Hyun stands in his store, opening and closing his cash register, wondering if it's his fault that his sons are the way they are. He's told them nothing of his past because he believes it will protect them. He thinks that poverty is contagious, and he doesn't want them to hear anything about it. His sons think that money and happiness aren't related, but they also don't know what it's like to live in poverty.

When Dae Hyun was a teenager, his father began grooming him to one day run the family crab fishing business. The business never did well; his family only barely survived. Throughout his childhood, he knew that he'd take it over anyway. On the first day his father took him out on the boats, however, Dae Hyun hated it. It was cold, and he watched the frantic crabs clawing over each other, trying to escape. Dae Hyun thought that coming to America would've gotten rid of that memory, but it didn't. He thinks that the crabs would've done absolutely anything to escape.

Dae Hyun's frank leveling with Daniel shows that his greatest fear for his sons is for them to struggle financially. This reinforces what the novel has already implied: for Dae Hyun, the American dream is tied up entirely in ideals of financial success, and one's desires have little to do with that. This also underscores that Dae Hyun is not passionate about his store—it's merely a means to get by.



Dae Hyun's drastic ultimatum makes it clear just how important it is for him to see Daniel follow through on Dae Hyun's version of the American dream. In a way, Daniel does get to know his father through this conversation, as Daniel has the opportunity to understand that his dad isn't a bad person for wanting these things for him.



The fact that Daniel isn't sure what he's going to do suggests that he's becoming more comfortable with the possibility of determining his own path, both in terms of his academic future and of Natasha.



Dae Hyun understands that his experiences in Korea are influencing his sons, even though his sons aren't specifically aware of the history. This shows again that one's connection to their history exists regardless of whether or not one is cognizant of it.



The actual history of Dae Hyun's adolescence suggests that in the present, Daniel and Dae Hyun may be undergoing the same kind of shift that Dae Hyun underwent with his father, even though he never mentions how his father felt about his decision to leave Korea. This does provide some hope that Daniel will end up okay in the end, given the cyclical nature of history and how well Dae Hyun did by forging his own path.



CHAPTER 94

Natasha isn't sure how to feel. She checks her phone and finds a text from Bev: Bev loves Berkeley and thinks that the California boys are cute. Natasha tries to call, but Bev doesn't pick up. Natasha watches people enjoying their lunches and wonders how they can be so oblivious to the major changes happening in her life right now. She realizes she felt that way when her family got the deportation notice and when she discovered that Rob was cheating on her.

Natasha pulls out her phone again and dials Rob's phone number from memory. Surprisingly, he picks up and immediately informs her that what her "new dude" did earlier wasn't cool. She asks him why he cheated on her, and he begins to stammer, but she cuts him off. She assures him she just wants to know.

Rob stumbles over his words but finally says that he didn't want to hurt either hers or Kelly's feelings, and he didn't want to choose one or the other. Natasha finds this wholly unsatisfying, and thinks that Daniel would never think like that. She asks Rob if he believes in true love, and Rob reminds her that neither of them do. Natasha isn't sure anymore. Before she hangs up, Rob apologizes, and Natasha tells him to not cheat on Kelly. Natasha thinks that she should call her parents, but she finds she wants to tell Daniel. She thinks she wants to believe in true love.

When Natasha feels that sense of disbelief that nobody knows what's going on, it's because she instinctively feels as though she is connected to other people. She can only acknowledge it, however, during periods of high emotion like this one.



Here, Natasha briefly reconnects with Rob for the sake of closure, which will possibly push her closer to Daniel.



Indeed, Natasha is finally willing to admit she wants to have Daniel in her life only after she finds closure with Rob. This suggests that even if her connection with Rob was different and not nearly as strong or compelling as her relationship with Daniel is, it was still important in terms of how Natasha thinks about love and the influence of others on her belief in love.



CHAPTER 95

When Daniel leaves Dae Hyun's store, there's a young woman playing a violin outside. She looks bedraggled, but her violin is pristine. Daniel thinks the music matters to him, so he drops a dollar in her hat. He ignores the sign telling her story and thinks about what his dad said about the relationship with Natasha not working out. Daniel reasons that his dad might be right, but he wants to be with her, especially if today is all they have. He laments that he didn't get her phone number or her last name. He searches for her on Facebook and gets five million hits. Daniel decides to head back to her lawyer's office, hoping she's still there.

When Daniel ignores the violinist's sign, he's ignoring what is probably an emotional, compelling story. This shows that Daniel is now beginning to take some of Natasha's habits to heart. Meanwhile, the fact that both Natasha and Daniel decide to pursue each other at the same time shows that destiny absolutely exists.



CHAPTER 96

As Natasha approaches the subway station on Fifty-Second Street, she watches a couple, both with bright blue Mohawks, arguing. The woman looks enraged; the man looks exasperated. Natasha wonders if this will be the last fight. She thinks that they were once in love and might still be, even though it doesn't look like it now.

Natasha's interpretation of the fighting couple (namely, that she's not sure if they're still in love) shows that she understands now that reason isn't always going to be an effective tool for understanding something emotional, particularly when it doesn't include her.



CHAPTER 97

As Daniel enters the subway station in Harlem, he prays to the subway gods that he'll make it to his destination with no issues. He hopes that the time it took to give a dollar to the violinist didn't make him late. When his train pulls into the Fifty-Second Street subway station, there's a downtown train across the platform. While both trains are stopped, a flash mob dances on the platform. Subway passengers applaud as the dancers scatter, and people smile at each other. Daniel wonders if this was the dancers' intention.

The power of people's smiles here calls Natasha's earlier assertion that life would be easier if emotion didn't exist into question, as the flash mob clearly demonstrates that emotion and the ensuing sense of community are positive, powerful things. His mention of the violinist shows that he believes his actions there will be connected to and influence what happens in the future.



CHAPTER 98

Natasha turns around when she notices other people looking and sees a flash mob on the platform. She takes a few phone pictures and wonders why she's not, as she usually would be, thinking about why those dancers were dancing instead of doing something more productive. She reasons that if Daniel were here, he'd suggest that the dancers were trying to bring a little bit of wonder to everyday life.

When Natasha is able to actually put herself in Daniel's mindset and understand that the dancers did serve a purpose, it reinforces the idea that both are learning from each other. Further, it shows that Natasha specifically is learning that passionate pursuits like dancing aren't just silly.



CHAPTER 99

As Daniel races out of the Fifty-Second Street subway, he almost runs into a couple, both with blue hair, kissing furiously. People gawk at the couple and some make disapproving noises, but the couple makes Daniel extremely happy. He hopes their relationship lasts forever.

The couple is clearly the same one that Natasha saw, which allows the reader to recognize that even though Natasha and Daniel are far apart right now, their experiences still connect and inform each other.



CHAPTER 100

As Natasha walks towards Dae Hyun's store, she notices a hungry-looking young woman playing a violin. Her sign reads that she needs money to buy her violin back from a loan shark. Natasha puts a dollar in the hat right before the loan shark comes out to tell the girl that her time is up. She hands over the money and the hat, asks how much money she has left, and hugs her violin before she gives it back. The man agrees to not sell the violin if she returns the next day.

It seems uncharacteristic of Natasha to read the woman's sign, which suggests that she's doing so because she knows it's what Daniel would do. Once again, this shows that, despite their disparate worldviews, Natasha and Daniel are learning from one another.



CHAPTER 101

Daniel studies the directory in Natasha's building, but he can't figure out who she could possibly be seeing. He decides to check where his interview is, since it's in just over an hour, and discovers that his interview is actually in this building.

The coincidence that Daniel is seeing someone in the same building shows again that he and Natasha are connected in many mysterious ways, which per the novel's logic, is the work of destiny.



CHAPTER 102

When Natasha enters the store, she's surprised to find Charlie behind the counter. When she greets him, Charlie slams his phone down and takes a second to recognize her. His face and knuckles are red and swollen, and he sneers at her before making a joke about her coming back for the "better brother." She asks him for Daniel's phone number, and agrees when he asks if they got in a fight.

Charlie smirks, plays with his phone, and asks seriously if Natasha has a fetish for Korean boys. She insists she just likes Daniel, even when Charlie scoffs that boys like him are easy to come by. Natasha realizes that Charlie hates Daniel because Daniel clearly doesn't hate *himself*—he's more comfortable in his identity than Charlie ever will be. When Charlie asks why he should help, she reminds him that she'll absolutely get Daniel in trouble with their parents and he'll be able to watch and laugh. He does laugh, and Natasha thinks that Charlie has very few good parts to him. Regardless, he gives Natasha Daniel's number.

Approaching Charlie (or Dae Hyun, for that matter) sets Natasha up for embarrassment or heartache or both, so the fact that she's willing to do so shows just how much she values her connection with Daniel.



Natasha's realization about why Charlie is such a miserable person draws upon the intersection between isolation and the immigrant experience, as Charlie's misery stems from his attempts to cut himself off from a major part of his identity. Daniel, on the other hand, is able to exist as a whole and happy person because he accepts both the Korean and American parts of him. Again, this shows that there's no right way to be an immigrant, but it's easier for some than for others.



CHAPTER 103

Daniel almost drops his phone when it rings. He answers the strange number: it's Natasha. When she explains that Charlie gave her his number, Daniel begins to wonder if Charlie's playing a joke on him. She explains that she just left Dae Hyun's store, and Daniel explains that he's back at the lawyer's building. He says it was the only place he thought he might find her. He apologizes for being a jerk and says that her immigration issue wasn't his business. Natasha surprises him by saying that it was his business.

Natasha's statement that her deportation is Daniel's issue is a very overt way for her to tell Daniel that she believes in their connection, as new and unusual it may be. Daniel's distrust when he hears that Charlie was involved illustrates just how isolated both brothers are from each other, given that they don't trust each other to do anything nice or to foster a positive connection.



CHAPTER 104

Natasha finds Daniel sitting on a bench outside the office building. She feels strangely gleeful and her smile is huge as she slides onto the bench next to him. Daniel makes a show of covering his mouth with his notebook and explains that he got in a fight. When Natasha sees his bloody face, she realizes that he fought with Charlie. He refuses to tell her what they fought over, but does admit that it was about her.

It's worth noting that as Natasha and Daniel's relationship progresses throughout the day, they gradually move from connecting only with each other to forming other connections with other people as well. This shows that even a relationship between two people is still part of a larger web of connections.



Natasha apologizes for not telling him about her impending deportation, and Daniel admits he was just upset to learn that something uncontrollable was going to tear them apart after everything that brought them together. Natasha tells him about her trip to the museum and her thoughts on how small falling in love seems compared to the formation of the universe, but she's glad when Daniel doesn't agree with her.

When Natasha is glad that Daniel thinks differently, it suggests that she's finally becoming more comfortable with the fact that destiny can exist alongside determinism, and romanticism can exist alongside science and reason. She's developing a more balanced view of the world.



Daniel takes Natasha's hand, kisses her palm, and asks what her good news is. She explains that her lawyer thinks that he can fix her issue. Daniel is surprisingly skeptical, but Natasha cries hopeful, happy tears. She realizes that she wants to make a phone call and she calls Lester Barnes' office. She asks him to thank her security guard, Irene, since the fact that Irene held her up and made her late that morning started the entire chain of events and brought her to both Attorney Fitzgerald and Daniel.

Natasha's call to Lester Barnes is a way for her to pay forward her newfound sense of connection, as well as a way of recognizing that destiny was at work today. Though Natasha is entirely unaware, the fact that she saw Irene, remembered her name, and made this call will be an important event in Irene's life given how lonely Irene feels at this point.



CHAPTER 105

Daniel gleefully tells Natasha that his interview appointment is in the same building. He's excited to see how her overly scientific brain will deal with the coincidence. When he tells her that it's proof that they were meant to be, Natasha just takes his hand and follows him in. He signs in for his appointment and then leads her to the elevators so they can go to the roof and kiss in private. On the elevators, he thinks that he could never work in a building like this.

Again, when Natasha simply ignores Daniel's mentions of fate and destiny and follows him anyway, it's clear evidence that she's no longer threatened by his belief in destiny. The strangeness of the day has provided her the evidence to accept that destiny possibly exists alongside the meaninglessness of the universe.



When they get to the top floor, Daniel leads Natasha up a final flight of stairs to a door. It's locked and has a sign that says there's no roof access. Daniel says "open sesame" and miraculously, the door opens. It's a security guard who reeks of cigarette smoke. Daniel pleads with him to let them on the roof, but the man doubles over with a coughing fit. Natasha comforts the man and tells him he shouldn't smoke. The man says Natasha sounds like his wife.

When the guard mentally connects Natasha to his wife, it shows again that Natasha is part of a much larger web of connections, even with an older security guard who seems to have little to do with her at first glance.



Daniel shoots Natasha a look to leave the man alone, but she ignores him and tells the security guard that she used to volunteer in a pulmonary ward and his cough sounds terrible. Daniel fantasizes about her uniform as she demands the guard's cigarettes. The man gives Natasha the cigarettes. The man tells Daniel to be careful of Natasha and asks Natasha how she knows that he won't go out and buy more cigarettes. She admits she doesn't, and he suggests that life doesn't always go as planned. The man tells Natasha and Daniel to stay away from the edge and to have fun.

Natasha very clearly cares for other people, as evidenced both by the way she interacts with the security guard and the fact that she used to volunteer at a hospital. This again shows that Natasha hasn't always leaned on rationality as a crutch to keep her isolated; she once used her interest in science to help people. This is more proof that the world is made up of an interconnected web of people.



CHAPTER 106

Joe, the security guard, thinks that Natasha reminds him of his wife. This is why he lets Natasha and Daniel on the roof. He remembers how he and his wife used to look at each other the same way that Natasha and Daniel look at each other. Joe's wife died last year of cancer, six months after they both retired. They'd had so many plans for retirement and got to do none of them. He knows that Natasha is right that he shouldn't smoke, but he doesn't believe it matters if he works or smokes to death. Joe watches Natasha and Daniel look at each other and thinks that maybe he'll stop smoking and make new plans.

When Joe sees himself and his wife in Daniel and Natasha, it shows again that history is cyclical and the past constantly informs the present and the future, even if that relationship isn't always clear. It's worth noting that achieving retirement is part of the American dream, which shows that for someone like Joe, presumably a US citizen, the dream isn't necessarily possible for him.



CHAPTER 107

Daniel looks out at the city, and Natasha teases him about writing a poem. He remarks that the city looks different, and Natasha wonders what he sees—all she sees are empty rooftops. She thinks of how the buildings used to be skeletons and before that, architectural plans. As Daniel pulls Natasha close, she asks what he writes in his notebook. He says he writes plans, and Natasha is overcome by how sexy he is. She asks if it'll hurt to kiss him, and reasons that it won't possibly feel as intense this time, but she's wrong. Natasha wonders why she's never felt this way about other boys and wants it to last forever.

Just as Joe saw his own past in Daniel and Natasha, Natasha sees that the city in the present is deeply informed by how it used to be in the past. She also recognizes the human element of the city in the form of ideas, which shows that she does believe that she's somehow connected to all the people who thought of, designed, and then built the buildings that make up New York.



Finally, Natasha pulls away and makes Daniel back up. She asks if all their kisses are going to be insane, and Daniel says he loves how direct she is. There are forty minutes before Daniel's interview, and Natasha asks if he has more "love questions." He mockingly asks if she's not in love with him yet.

Now, Natasha sees that the pairing of love and science through this study is indeed proof that passion and reason can coexist.



CHAPTER 108

Sitting on the rooftop and watching the sun begin to set feels magical to Daniel. He and Natasha hold hands and look through their list of questions. The next one is who they'd invite to dinner. Daniel says he'd invite God. Natasha is incredulous that Daniel actually believes in God, but he explains that his belief is more that God is the kind of connection they feel right now than a big man in the sky.

According to Daniel, God is a representation of the connections between people. Thinking back to the evangelical conductor, finding God is what allowed him to find a sense of belonging in the world.



Daniel says he thinks that everyone on earth is connected by little bits of good in them. Natasha grudgingly agrees that everyone has done one good thing in their lifetime, and Daniel continues. He says that he believes that God is the connections between the best parts of people, and Natasha calls him cheesy. She likes that he's thought about it, and Daniel thinks that he's never been able to articulate it so succinctly before. He asks Natasha if she believes in God. She admits she's not sure, but she definitely doesn't believe in a "fire and brimstone" God.

It's again notable that Natasha can deal with not entirely agreeing with Daniel's way of thinking without dismissing him; it shows that she's no longer thinking about only her one "right" way of doing things. Further, when she says she likes that Daniel has thought about it, it suggests that what she really likes is that he can come up with evidence, even if it's not purely scientific.



Daniel asks Natasha what she does believe in, and she says she's interested in why people think they need to believe in a God. She thinks science is wondrous and amazing. Natasha states that the universe is made up of approximately 27% dark matter, and she looks delighted when Daniel is confused. It takes her several attempts to explain, but Daniel eventually understands that there is, essentially, not enough gravity in the galaxy to keep it from flying apart, which means that there must be extra matter out there that keeps it together. That extra matter is dark matter.

After asking a few clarifying questions, Daniel declares that dark matter is love—it's the attracting, connecting force in the universe. Natasha is disgusted, but they both laugh. The next question is for each of them to say what they're feeling. Daniel says that in all honesty, he's horny, hopeful, and happy. Natasha admits that she's confused and scared, since she woke up thinking she was going to be deported and now, she might stay. She says that she feels as though she's known Daniel forever, and all of it makes her feel out of control. Finally, Natasha admits that she's also happy.

Natasha insists they need to wait to stare into each other's eyes, so Daniel asks Natasha to recall her most treasured memory. She says it was the first time Samuel let her eat ice cream out of a cone when she was four. She explains that he thought she was great then, but he doesn't now. Daniel's memory was putting aside his fear to accompany Charlie on a roller coaster to try to make Charlie like him. Daniel comments that both memories are about people they now dislike, and Natasha suggests it's because those people are now so different from who they were then.

CHAPTER 109

The narrator explains the evolutionary history of eyes: they began as simple light-sensitive cells, and eventually evolved into what we now know as eyes. Studies have shown that when people are attracted to each other, their pupils dilate at the sight of their love interest. Possibly, being able to stare into another's eyes is a display of trust, though it could also be a simple search for connection.

Natasha's mention of dark matter shows that what she's really fascinated in is the system of connections that hold the universe together, even if they don't seem like they should even be possible. This explains why she's been able to shift her thinking to view people as being connected as well, especially since the connections between people and within the universe are similarly mysterious.



Again, the fact that Natasha feels as though she's known Daniel forever is further proof that destiny and the idea of "meant to be" do exist within the logic of the novel, even for someone as logical as Natasha. Despite its existence, however, that doesn't mean that accepting it is entirely comfortable. This suggests that Natasha will have to continue to reckon with this in the future; her journey of discovery isn't over.



Daniel's observation about the content of their respective memories shows again that past histories continually inform one's present and one's future—he recognizes, essentially, that their dislike of Samuel and Charlie don't exist in a vacuum, and further, that he and Natasha are absolutely still connected to them even though they don't like them. Meanwhile, Natasha's comment reaffirms her deep dislike of change.



The novel makes several mentions of glances and expressions between characters that clearly communicate something. This adds credence to the idea that eyes exist not just to see, but also to connect with others. In this way, simply looking into a stranger's eyes creates a connection, adding more evidence to the assertion that all people are connected.



CHAPTER 110

Daniel is ten minutes late when he knocks on Attorney Fitzgerald's door. Nobody answers, so he opens the door and discovers a sobbing paralegal. She tries to wipe her eyes when she sees Daniel and insists she's fine, though she's clearly not. She points towards Attorney Fitzgerald's door and refuses Daniel's offer of tissues or water. She tells him to tell Attorney Fitzgerald that he's wonderful, but she has to go. She starts crying again, which brings tears to Daniel's eyes. This makes the woman stop, and he explains that he's a sympathy crier.

The paralegal says that if she'd known how "this" would end, she wouldn't have started. She says she used to love fairy tales because princesses never do the wrong thing. Attorney Fitzgerald's door opens and he ignores the paralegal and Daniel's hand.

The fact that Daniel is a sympathy crier suggests that some people are intrinsically more connected to other people than others, given that Natasha, for example, doesn't have such emotional reactions to others' emotions.



"This" presumably refers to Attorney Fitzgerald's affair with Hannah, which suggests that things are taking a turn for the worse as Fitzgerald and Hannah seek to isolate themselves.



CHAPTER 111

Natasha pulls out her phone and texts Patricia that she's coming home soon. Patricia is upset, as she has been trying to reach Natasha for hours. Natasha thinks that her mom's worst fear is being disappointed, and she combats this by never letting her hopes get too high. Natasha decides to wait until she gets a call from Attorney Fitzgerald before telling her mother what's going on.

In Patricia's defense, she has good reason to fear disappointment after Samuel's consistent failure to step up for his family. However, the fact that Natasha recognizes Patricia's habit now suggests that she understands that it's not necessarily a good one, given that it's isolating.



CHAPTER 112

Samuel says that some people are born for greatness. He got to use his greatness twice, both times in **A Raisin in the Sun**: two months ago in Manhattan, and ten years ago in Montego Bay. In Jamaica, the papers praised his performance. Now, that play is sending him back to Jamaica. When Patricia was upset that he told the cop everything, Samuel insisted he was just drunk, but he didn't say that he might've *meant* to do it—America is clearly done with him. He barely had an audience in America.

As symbolic and important as Samuel believes [A Raisin in the Sun](#) is, he shows here that he's willing to tweak its symbolism in order to make it tell him what he wants it to. In this way, Samuel uses the play like others use destiny to tell him what he wants to see or hear.



CHAPTER 113

Daniel notices that on Attorney Fitzgerald's desk is a file with Natasha's name on it. He explains that he knows Natasha as Fitzgerald rips the file away. Daniel declares that Fitzgerald saved his life because Natasha is "the One" and now, she's not going to be deported. Fitzgerald is incredulous and asks Daniel why he's even at the interview. Daniel admits, finally, that he his parents made him come, and he's not interested in pre-med or even going to Yale. He wants to be a poet, but thought he owed it to his parents to show up. Daniel explains that his parents are immigrants and want desperately for him to have the American dream, which, in their understanding, doesn't allow for being a starving artist.

Attorney Fitzgerald insists the American dream can mean many things, but is shocked when Daniel insists Dae Hyun will cut him off if he doesn't agree to become a doctor. Daniel thinks his dad isn't evil; he just can't allow his sons to forge their own path. Daniel asks Fitzgerald if he's ever done something out of obligation, and Fitzgerald plays with his wedding ring as he tells Daniel to mess up now when the stakes are lower. Daniel asks if he's having an affair with his paralegal, and Fitzgerald explains that it started and ended today.

Daniel asks if Attorney Fitzgerald is going to let his lover go, and Fitzgerald says they're *both* going to have to let their lovers go: he wasn't able to stop Natasha's deportation. Daniel barely understands. He becomes angrier and accuses Fitzgerald of not trying hard enough as Fitzgerald explains that there's nothing he can do. All that's left is to call Natasha, which Daniel insists he can't do. Daniel walks out of the office and says he doesn't care about Yale, and further, it doesn't look like Fitzgerald is happy after doing everything he was supposed to do.

CHAPTER 114-115

Jeremy Fitzgerald lied to Daniel: he couldn't stop Natasha's deportation because he spent the afternoon with Hannah Winter at a hotel. Fitzgerald will think constantly of Daniel over the next week and in a month, he'll begin the process of separating from his wife. He'll keep the promises he makes to Hannah Winter. His children with his first wife will never be happy in love. His children with Hannah will love without complication and without fearing its loss. For Hannah, her story ends with a happy ever after.

Daniel's admission that he came to the interview to appease his parents indicates how connected he feels to them, even if he recognizes that they all want different things for the future. It also shows that Daniel is willing to sacrifice some parts of himself to make his parents happy. On the other hand, admitting that he doesn't actually want to go to Yale shows that Daniel is finally coming into himself and choosing to define himself in his terms.



Given what Daniel has learned from Natasha, he's more comfortable now recognizing that his dad just wants to protect him from his own horrific history. Daniel understands that the history itself will remain secret and he may never fully understand, but regardless, the history is still a part of him.



Telling Daniel about this is a major breach of confidentiality laws on Attorney Fitzgerald's part, which shows how much of a connection he and Daniel were able to form in just the few minutes they spent speaking to each other. This in turn speaks to Daniel's ability in general to form connections that are meaningful and strong, even with complete strangers.



The narrator's assessment of how Fitzgerald's children with his first wife will end up versus his children with Hannah shows that one thing people do learn from their parents is how to love, and what love even means. This explains some of Natasha's hesitation at getting involved with Daniel, given that her parents didn't demonstrate a positive example of love.



CHAPTER 116-117

Natasha thinks about the coming winter when Daniel emerges from the building. He has a grim look as he approaches Natasha and tells her he loves her in a tone that tells Natasha he means it. Natasha is confused, and when her phone rings, Daniel tells her to not answer it. It's Attorney Fitzgerald. Daniel tells Natasha she can't stay, and her stomach sinks. Daniel tries to comfort her, but she makes him tell her exactly what happened first. After he tells her what Fitzgerald said about her deportation, Natasha listens to her voicemail. She wants the world to stop.

Daniel writes a poem about how hearts don't break, since they're not made of a hard material that can splinter or shatter. Instead, they just stop working.

When Daniel tells Natasha himself about the deportation, he ensures that she's going to hear the news from someone who actually cares about her and has a truly intimate connection with her—not from a clearly distracted and disinterested attorney. In turn, this shows that there are significant differences between the cosmic interconnectedness of the world and the intimate connections people form, and suggests the latter is better.



Notably, while Daniel's shifted perspective is still poetic, it shows a more scientific assessment of how hearts work—an indication of Natasha's impact on him.



CHAPTER 118

Natasha and Daniel sit outside. Finally, Natasha lets Daniel comfort her, and she says she needs to go home. Natasha thinks that it's possible to keep in contact, but they can't—their lives should be separate. She asks Daniel about his interview, and he answers unenthusiastically. Daniel says he's going to go to her apartment with her. He brushes off her concerns and insists that they're going to ignore that the situation is terrible. He's going to accompany her to the airport and then spend his life wondering what might have happened.

Natasha's insistence that they should live separate lives once she's in Jamaica again recalls the differences between the cosmic interconnectedness (which Natasha is now comfortable with having) and the intimate connection she and Daniel formed (which she wants to forego). Daniel's desire to wonder for the rest of his life suggests that he's not ready to let go; he still feels more connected than Natasha does.



CHAPTER 119

Natasha agrees to take Daniel to her apartment. As they walk, Daniel thinks of a headline in which he thwarts the US immigration system and stops Natasha from getting on a plane, but he knows it won't happen that way. He wonders if he and Natasha were meant to be, but only for one day.

As Daniel expands his definition of what "meant to be" can mean, it shows that he's taking some of Natasha's beliefs to heart and adding firsthand evidence to his understanding of the situation and the world.



CHAPTER 120

On the train to Brooklyn, Natasha throws out facts about Jamaica. Daniel asks her for a good thing she remembers about Jamaica, and Natasha admits that she misses the ocean. She suggests they finish their questions. Daniel asks Natasha to share an embarrassing moment. She admits that seeing Rob in the record store was very embarrassing, mostly because Rob cheated on her, and seeing him with Kelly makes Natasha feel as though she's not good enough. Natasha shares that she called Rob earlier and repeats what he said, and Daniel promises to beat him up if he sees him again.

Daniel asks if Natasha's parents cared that Rob was white, and Natasha admits they never met him. She tells the reader she didn't want Rob to see how small her apartment is. Daniel admits that his parents want him to date Korean girls, and they decide that both sets of parents just want to be able to understand their children's partners. They decide that it shouldn't matter, and Natasha offhandedly says that maybe their kids won't care. She quickly amends her statement to the next generation of kids, not specifically her kids with Daniel, but she feels as though she's mourning something she's not sure she even wants.

Natasha thinks about being on the roof earlier and imagines what the city will look like years in the future. She thinks she'll compare every skyline to that of New York, and every boy to Daniel.

Natasha's wistfulness about the ocean suggests that she will actually be able to shed some of the heartache and loss she experiences in the US and reconnect with her place of birth. It might even be a good thing, and she may even learn to swim again, something that she might never do in the US.



Natasha and Daniel recognize that their parents are narrow-minded and turn to their heritage in order to understand and connect with others. This makes it difficult—and even impossible—for them to connect with people who seem different.



Daniel will become part of Natasha's history and will consequently influence every part of her present and her future, whether she accepts it as truth or not.



CHAPTER 121

Daniel shares that his most embarrassing moment was earlier, in Dae Hyun's store. He suggests that everyone should get a "family Do-Over Card," which would allow someone to start over with a new family. Natasha lists all the reasons that would be a bad idea, and they wonder if they'd choose to switch out of their own families. Natasha finally laughs and says it'd be chaos if everyone could mess with everyone else's life, but Daniel thinks people already can do that.

Daniel is able to discern that people already have a great deal of power over each other's lives because he so deeply believes in the interconnectedness of all beings. He also understands that Natasha has fundamentally changed how he thinks about his life, even if he's not necessarily switching out of his family.



CHAPTER 122

As she walks with Daniel, Natasha is ashamed of her rundown neighborhood. She comments that people are staring at them, and he insists it's because she's beautiful. Natasha pulls Daniel into a lighted doorway to talk about why people are staring, and Daniel insists he doesn't care why people are staring at them. He says he cares about her, and people's concerns about their respective races are ridiculous.

The shame Natasha feels because of her neighborhood creates more similarities between her and Dae Hyun, which shows again that part of being a first generation immigrant is worrying about the financial struggles that come with moving to a new country and being an outsider.



Natasha pulls Daniel past a row of clapboard houses to a brick apartment building. Natasha warns Daniel that the apartment is small and messy. She leads him upstairs, thinking that if this were happening later, he'd already know some strategies for dealing with her family. When she opens the door, Peter is playing reggae. Patricia yells at Peter to turn off the music, and it takes her a second to notice Daniel.

According to the multiverse theory, which Natasha told Daniel about earlier, there is another universe where Daniel is meeting Natasha's parents at a more appropriate time. This shows how even these imagined histories influence the present; they're connected even if they're not real.



CHAPTER 123

Natasha introduces Daniel as a friend, and Patricia eyes him. Daniel looks around the living room and realizes that it's Natasha's bedroom as well. Peter introduces himself with a huge smile as Patricia tries to get Natasha to go to the other room. Natasha insists they can talk in front of Daniel, since he's her boyfriend. At just that moment, Samuel, a deep frown on his face, walks out of the bedroom. Daniel struggles to understand his accent, but he's clearly angry that Natasha has been gone all day.

Peter's smile and openness towards Daniel suggests that the two have more in common than Natasha might have let on when she mentioned that Peter was a "non-dreamer." Again, this illustrates the novel's assertion that while everyone is basically connected, intimate and close connections can be found anywhere.



Daniel sees hurt, anger, and disbelief on Natasha's face as she turns to Samuel. Natasha tells her dad she spent her day trying to fix his mistakes and keep the family in the country. Daniel nods when Samuel asks if he knows the situation. Samuel tells Natasha that Daniel needs to leave, since it's not his house. Natasha, even angrier, takes issue with this. She backs down when Patricia asks her to, but Samuel wants to hear what Natasha has to say.

When Samuel asks Natasha to share what she has to say, it appears to be the first time that he's leveling with her like an adult. This will bring about a fundamental shift in their relationship and make it one more of equals, something Daniel wasn't able to achieve with his own father.



CHAPTER 124

Natasha explains that she always lets it go when Patricia asks, but the combination of Daniel and Samuel's forced Jamaican accent makes her angry. She sputters that she heard him say that his family was his greatest regret, and when her dad's face falls, she's glad to see some emotion. She stops him from trying to explain, as she says that she knows how disappointing life can be. She tells her dad that he was amazing in **A Raisin in the Sun**, and it doesn't matter if he truly meant what he said—life isn't pretend.

Natasha is disgusted with her father's forced accent, which points to his intentional decision to have the family deported to Jamaica. Natasha's reaction to the accent also reaffirms that she feels at home in the US and like a stranger in Jamaica.



Natasha found that after hearing Samuel say he regrets her, all her memories of him were spoiled. She watches him cry and tells him that he doesn't get to regret them anymore, and that when they get to Jamaica, he has to actually try to be an actor and treat Patricia better. By now everyone is crying. Natasha's parents pull Peter into a hug and motion for Natasha to join them, but she hugs Daniel first.

The fact that Natasha's memories are spoiled shows that the present can also inform how someone interprets the past, reinforcing again the novel's assertion that people are intrinsically connected to their history, both past and future.



CHAPTER 125

Peter and Natasha's parents go ahead to the airport, and Daniel and Natasha take a cab together. In the backseat, they decide that if she weren't leaving, they would've worked out. Daniel says it would've taken Dae Hyun a long time to come around, and Natasha thinks of comforting Daniel on their wedding day about his dad's absence. She asks Daniel how many kids he wants and shares that she's not sure she wants kids at all. Daniel says he'd think about that.

Natasha tells Daniel he shouldn't be a doctor and confesses that maybe she won't be a data scientist after all—being passionate about something would be nice. After a moment, she asks how many questions they have left. They have two and then the staring exercise. When Daniel suggests they kiss instead, their driver reminds them that he can hear and see them. However, he leaves them alone while they kiss.

For the final two questions, Natasha isn't sure what she'd save from a fire, but Daniel would save his notebook. Natasha would find Samuel's death the most disturbing, and Daniel would find Natasha's death disturbing. He insists that she's part of his family, thinking about the multiverse theory. Somewhere, they're married and maybe have kids. Natasha finally tells Daniel she loves him.

For the moment, Daniel and Natasha's conversation about the future is purely theoretical, as they're choosing to not consider the fact that, given their beliefs in interconnectedness, things could still work out. This shows how negative emotions can cloud how someone thinks about their destiny and connections with those around them.



Everything Natasha says in this exchange shows how much she's changed over the course of the day. Now, she recognizes that passion is important and isn't in opposition to reason in the least. This will allow her to have a more nuanced and well-rounded view going forward.



Here, Daniel's jump to thinking about the multiverse theory shows that he also has also learned a lot from Natasha and considers science more than he did previously. He finds the idea that he's living many lives at once comforting, as he can have many different connections with many different people.



CHAPTER 126

Daniel sets a timer on his phone and holds Natasha's hands. Natasha thinks about what she knows about eyes, and Daniel tries to come up with the words to describe Natasha's eyes. Natasha relives her day while Daniel wonders if they'll meet again. In the last minute, they think about the hurt they're going to experience. When the timer goes off, they promise to keep in touch, but they know they probably won't. Natasha suspects that "meant to be" doesn't always mean "forever." They understand that love can change everything.

Even though Natasha and Daniel don't necessarily mean to keep their promises to stay in touch, making the promises now allows them to exist for a little longer within the confines of their intimate relationship. Further, and most importantly, they've both now learned that intimate relationships like the one they share are the most important things they can possibly strive for in life.



CHAPTER 127-128

Patricia holds Natasha's hand as the plane takes off, comforting her. Natasha looks at the stars, thinking that they're more than poetic—you can navigate using them.

When Natasha thinks of poetry first and then sets poetry alongside science, it shows again how Daniel helped her recognize the role of art.



Daniel ignores phone calls from his parents and thinks that maybe he won't go to college. He looks up and imagines Natasha's plane, and he thinks that the city has too much light pollution to allow someone to ever see the sky. However, he knows that the night sky gives off light, even if he can't see it.

Understanding that the sky is light even though he can't see it represents the cosmic interconnectedness of all people. Essentially, Daniel knows that Natasha is there and has feelings for him, even if they can't see each other.



CHAPTER 129

Natasha and Daniel try to stay in touch. However, their days soon fill up. Natasha enrolls in school and waitresses. Eventually, her Jamaican accent returns, and she learns to love Jamaica. As she does, she lets go of Daniel so she doesn't get ripped apart. Daniel decides to not go to Yale, and he works and studies English part time at Hunter College. He writes poems that are all about Natasha. He holds onto her as long as he can, but he feels her slipping away.

Even though Natasha was never a legal resident of the US, it's important to note that she felt like an immigrant in Jamaica when she returned. This points to the sense of rootlessness that some immigrants feel; even though she's connected to both countries, she can also feel alone and unwanted in both places.



Five years later, Patricia gets sick and dies. Natasha considers calling Daniel, but thinks it's been too long. Peter thrives in Jamaica, and years later, he'll name his daughter after his mother. Samuel acts in local theater productions and decides that he made the right decision in pursuing Patricia.

It's possible that Samuel understood after Patricia's death that having loved her and lost her was better than never having that connection in the first place, especially since he still has connections with his children.



Daniel's parents sell their store to an African American couple, live part-time in South Korea, and eventually come to terms with the fact that their sons aren't just Korean. Charlie graduates from Harvard and seldom speaks to his family. Daniel doesn't miss him.

The outcome of Daniel and Charlie's relationship shows that not all relationships are created equal; it's not a bad thing that they're no longer close to each other, even if they're still connected.



Natasha begins to wonder if she imagined what happened with Daniel, but thanks to him, she does find her passion studying physics. She thinks about what he said about dark matter and love being the same thing. Daniel struggles to make sense of that day too, and he mulls over the coincidences that caused them to meet. He knows that Natasha would point out that they didn't end up together after all, but he also remembers her telling him about all the small coincidences that led to the formation of the universe. He believes that everything looks chaotic up close, but that order might emerge if he pulls back.

Again, even without a more concrete explanation, Natasha's discovery of physics as her passion allows her to combine her love of science and reason with what Daniel taught her about passion. It allows her to find the middle ground she couldn't when she was seventeen. Daniel's belief that pulling back might bring clarity alludes to the novel's assertion that destiny needs scale to make sense, and suggests their relationship isn't over.



EPILOGUE

Ten years later, Irene hasn't forgotten the girl (Natasha) who saved her life when she was a security guard. One of the case officers, Lester Barnes, stopped to tell her that the girl had called to say thank you. Irene didn't know what for, but it saved her life. She'd planned to commit suicide that night but instead, she listened to the Nirvana album again. She thought of the girl and called a suicide prevention hotline. Eventually, she found therapy and medication.

Irene followed her childhood dream and became a flight attendant. She keeps an eye out for lonely passengers and comforts those who are afraid. Now, she checks the plane for anyone who might need her attention. She passes a young Asian man engrossed in writing, and notices a young black woman with a big Afro, the ends dyed pink. Irene stops in her tracks when she recognizes the girl who saved her life. She's wanted to thank this girl for ten years.

Once the plane reaches cruising altitude, Irene approaches the black woman and hesitantly tells her about that day in New York. Irene tells her about the message she left to thank her, and suddenly, it seems very important that this woman remember. Finally, the woman says her name is Natasha, and she remembers. The Asian man peers over the seat, his eyes full of love. Natasha meets his eyes and says, "Daniel."

Natasha's phone call very literally saved Irene's life, which reasserts the novel's insistence that human connection has the power to save and heal people. Simply being connected to other people because of a cosmic connection wasn't enough for Irene; it was only through an active reach that she lived.



Just as Natasha paid Irene's kindness forward by calling to say thank you, Irene now pays Natasha's kindness forward by caring for other lonely people. The fact that Natasha's hair is dyed pink suggests that ten years later, she's found a middle ground between frivolity and rational practicality.



When Natasha and Daniel come back together as a result of a connection Natasha made, it shows that Natasha's transformation into someone who values human connection was the most important transformation of the novel. It's unclear where the plane is going, but it's very clear that destiny was at work here, and Natasha and Daniel did just need scale to make it work.





HOW TO CITE

To cite this LitChart:

MLA

Brock, Zoë. "The Sun is Also a Star." *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 23 Jul 2018. Web. 21 Apr 2020.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Brock, Zoë. "The Sun is Also a Star." LitCharts LLC, July 23, 2018. Retrieved April 21, 2020. <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-sun-is-also-a-star>.

To cite any of the quotes from *The Sun is Also a Star* covered in the Quotes section of this LitChart:

MLA

Yoon, Nicola. *The Sun is Also a Star*. Random House. 2016.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Yoon, Nicola. *The Sun is Also a Star*. New York: Random House. 2016.