

# To All the Boys I've Loved Before



## INTRODUCTION

### BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF JENNY HAN

Jenny Han was born and grew up in Richmond, Virginia, to Korean immigrant parents. Though she started writing at age seven, she also felt the pressure that she suggests many children of immigrants feel to pursue a “practical” profession, such as medicine or law. But her parents supported her writing aspirations. While working on her MFA at New York University, Han worked in a bookstore in their children’s section and also spent several years as a school librarian. This immersed her in the world of children’s and teen lit. She wrote and published her first novel, *Shug*, at the same time as she was finishing graduate school. Since *Shug*, Han has written several trilogies, including *The Summer I turned Pretty* trilogy, *Burn for Burn* trilogy, and *To All the Boys* trilogy. *To All the Boys I've Loved Before* was Han’s first novel that featured an Asian American protagonist, and it catapulted her to fame. She was involved in adapting and producing all three of the Netflix films. Han lives in Brooklyn, New York.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Lara Jean is very caught up in her own world, so she doesn’t make any observations about what’s going on in the wider world. However, she is very cognizant of the pressures facing upper-middle-class high school students in the mid-2010s, such as the pressure to participate in as many extracurricular activities as possible in the hope of being accepted to a prestigious college. She mentions that Margot is a National Merit Scholar, which means that Margot got very high scores on the standardized PSAT test (a practice for the SAT that, for high-scoring students, also offers scholarships). Though Lara Jean’s identity as a Korean American isn’t a huge focus of the novel, she does complain on Halloween that there are few Asian American characters to dress up as, aside from Cho Chang from the *Harry Potter* series. Indeed, it took several years for *To All the Boys* to be adapted into a film as several studios insisted on making Lara Jean white, something that Jenny Han rejected outright. But the fact that the 2018 film adaptation of *To All the Boys* became one of Netflix’s most popular offerings (and that other films with predominately or entirely nonwhite casts, such as the adaptation of Kevin Kwan’s novel *Crazy Rich Asians* and Marvel’s *Black Panther*, were box-office and critical hits) suggests this is beginning to change. In interviews, Han has noted that she’s been happy to see Asian American girls dressing up as Lara Jean for Halloween in the years since the film came out.

### RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Jenny Han continues Lara Jean’s story in two follow-up novels, *P.S. I Still Love You* and *Always and Forever, Lara Jean*. And though Han is best known for the *To All the Boys* series, she’s been a force in the children’s and young adult literature world since she published her first novel, *Shug*, in 2006. *To All the Boys* shares many similarities with novels like Julie Buxbaum’s [Tell Me Three Things](#) and Nicola Yoon’s [Everything, Everything](#)—both are young adult romances featuring protagonists working through the loss of a parent. Han credits her success as a writer of teen romances to J.K. Rowling and the *Harry Potter* series, which she suggests legitimized children’s literature as a genre and established books for kids as ones worth purchasing in hardcover. She also credits Stephenie Meyer, whose [Twilight](#) series popularized teen romances. Han has also said that Louisa May Alcott’s classic [Little Women](#) inspired *To All the Boys*—she was curious about what a story focusing on a character like Beth (who’s a homebody due to illness) would look like.

### KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** To All the Boys I've Loved Before
- **When Written:** 2013-14
- **Where Written:** Brooklyn, NY
- **When Published:** 2014
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary
- **Genre:** Young Adult Novel, Romance
- **Setting:** Virginia
- **Climax:** Margot overhears Peter and Josh fighting and learns that Josh kissed Lara Jean
- **Antagonist:** Genevieve, gossip, fear
- **Point of View:** First Person

### EXTRA CREDIT

**Cake vs. Books.** Like Lara Jean, Jenny Han loves to bake—she’s described it in interviews as comforting and a nice break from writing. Baking, she says, is predictable, which makes for a nice change: since she doesn’t outline any of her books, writing isn’t at all predictable.

**Self-Portrait.** Jenny Han got the idea for *To All the Boys I've Loved Before* because, as a teen, she used to write goodbye love letters (that she never sent) when her relationships ended. She wondered what would happen if, somehow, they did get sent.



## PLOT SUMMARY

A few days before 16-year-old Lara Jean's big sister, Margot, leaves for her first year of college in Scotland, Margot tells Lara Jean that she broke up with her long-term boyfriend, Josh. Lara Jean can't believe it—Josh and Margot belong together, and to make matters worse, Lara Jean used to be in love with Josh. But she keeps Margot's secret over the next few days as she, Daddy, and her nine-year-old sister Kitty help Margot get ready to go.

Margot has been taking care of Daddy and her younger sisters since Mommy died six years ago. With Margot gone, Lara Jean is going to have to become more responsible—and Lara Jean is nervous about that. To deal with her feelings about Josh, Lara Jean pulls down the **hatbox** Mommy gave her. In it are five letters she wrote to five boys as an exercise to help herself stop loving them. She adds a postscript to her letter to Josh, since she realizes she's still in love with him.

Mere hours after Margot gets on her plane for Scotland, Lara Jean, who's a nervous driver, gets in a car accident. A former friend and current classmate, Peter Kavinsky, stops to help her, but Lara Jean waves him on—he's going to see his girlfriend, Genevieve, who is popular, frightening, and controlling. Josh comes to rescue Lara Jean. Later, as Josh hangs out with Lara Jean and Kitty, Lara Jean teases Kitty: Kitty wants a dog, and Lara Jean knows Kitty would like to name the dog Josh since she also has a crush on Josh. Though Lara Jean doesn't spill Kitty's secret, Kitty gives her the silent treatment for days in retaliation for teasing her.

Things turn upside-down a few days after school starts. Josh admits that Lara Jean was his first crush, rumors circulate about Peter and Genevieve breaking up, and Peter approaches Lara Jean during gym—he got the letter she wrote to him years ago. Lara Jean is distraught. Her hatbox, and the five letters in it, are gone. When Josh knocks on the door that night and asks to speak to Lara Jean, she hides. But at school the next day, when Josh tries to confront her again about her letter, Lara Jean lies that she has a boyfriend, leaps into Peter's arms, and kisses him. Over the next week, Lara Jean and Peter come up with a plan. They're going to pretend to date each other to throw Josh off and to make Genevieve jealous. They come up with rules and draw up a contract. Since neither of them has a crush on the other, they believe this will be easy.

Since Lara Jean's car is still being repaired after the accident, Peter starts to drive her to school. He shows up at her house the first day in his two-seater Audi, but when Lara Jean begs him to drop Kitty off as well, he starts driving a van. Over the next week or so, the letter Lara Jean wrote to Kenny from camp gets returned unopened, and Lucas Krapf gives his letter back to Lara Jean—he's flattered, but he's gay. He encourages her in her relationship with Peter. Lara Jean doesn't tell Margot about

dating Peter. She keeps a close eye on Genevieve, waiting for Genevieve to do or say something nasty. Nothing happens.

One of the requirements of Lara Jean and Peter's pretend relationship is that Peter has to write Lara Jean a note every day. But when Peter shows up at Lara Jean's house one Friday night, ready to take her to a football game and then a party, Lara Jean has to admit she didn't read the note inviting her out. And she's in the middle of making six-dozen cupcakes for the PTA bake sale at Kitty's school. When Daddy gets home and meets Peter, he insists on finishing the cupcakes and tells Lara Jean to go to the party. As Lara Jean searches through Margot's clothes for a sweater, though, she finds a letter to Margot from Josh. From it, she learns that Margot and Josh broke up because they had sex. Even though Lara Jean's best friend Chris insisted they probably had slept together, Lara Jean can't believe it—she and Margot had a pact to wait. She doesn't know Margot at all.

The party is stressful. Lara Jean is pressured into telling Genevieve that she and Peter got together the week before school started, which is the story that they agreed on, but Genevieve is clearly upset. Lucas points out to Lara Jean that Peter and Genevieve obviously care for each other still, since they fight at the party. In the car on the way home, Peter says he wishes Genevieve didn't have such a hold on him.

The next weekend, Lara Jean has a great time accompanying Peter to an estate sale (his mom, Mrs. Kavinsky, owns an antique store and wants antiques from the sale). She also has dinner with Peter's family. But Lara Jean starts to feel less secure in her relationship with Peter as he continues to seek out Genevieve. To make matters worse, Josh doesn't like Peter and insists that Lara Jean could do better. The rivalry between the boys escalates on Halloween, when Lara Jean dresses as Cho Chang from Harry Potter. She and Josh didn't coordinate, but he dresses as Harry Potter—which makes Peter, who dresses as Superman, angry.

During a virtual dinner with Margot, Kitty spills the beans that Lara Jean is dating Peter. Margot is aghast; Peter cheated on a test in middle school and isn't smart, according to her. Lara Jean wishes Margot could just be happy for her.

Lara Jean continues to find herself caught between Josh and Peter. She agrees to go with Josh to the diner, where they used to go with Margot—but Peter is angry that Lara Jean and Josh hung out in public, and Josh continues to say that Peter is "douchey" and will take advantage of Lara Jean. Lara Jean finds herself liking Peter more and more, so she lets him convince her to sign up for the school ski trip. She's nervous, though, when she hears that lots of kids have sex and skinny dip in the hot tub on the ski trip. She convinces Chris to come with her, both for emotional support and to annoy Genevieve.

When December first rolls around, Lara Jean, Kitty, and Peter start work on the annual Christmas Cookie Bonanza, where the

Coveys make dozens of cookies. They decide to try some new cookies this year, though Josh drops by and begs them to make his favorite cookie. Lara Jean feels odd making cookies without Margot, and she feels even worse about getting the Christmas tree before Margot gets home. But Kitty begs to do the tree early, and Daddy agrees.

Josh helps the family decorate—and while he and Lara Jean are alone, he says that she should've told him she had a crush on him years ago. He kisses her. Lara Jean tells Peter about the kiss the next day and Peter is enraged. But when Lara Jean and Josh talk about their kiss, Lara Jean has an epiphany: she's not in love with Josh anymore. Deciding that she's accomplished her goal of getting over Josh, Lara Jean tries to break up with Peter, but he convinces her to keep up the charade until after the ski trip.

Margot flies home the next day. She's clearly upset that her family started Christmas Cookie Bonanza and put up the tree without her, and she says mean things about Peter. To make things worse, Margot decides the family should throw their first **recital party** since Mommy died, an event that Lara Jean always hated as a kid. Margot seems unwilling to accept that both Lara Jean and Kitty have grown up and matured since she left, which makes Lara Jean angry.

Finally, it's the day of the ski trip. Lara Jean insists on sitting with Chris on the bus instead of Peter, since she figures that Peter and Genevieve are going to get back together on the trip. But this makes Peter angry. He ignores her all day at the lodge until, finally, Lara Jean confronts him. They argue—and Peter admits he's fallen for Lara Jean over the course of their pretend relationship. Lara Jean's first reaction is to lash out in fear and anger, but then she realizes that she likes Peter too. She goes to talk to him in the hot tub, confesses her feelings for him, and they kiss. Lara Jean is ecstatic—until the bus ride home the next morning, when Genevieve shares that Peter is telling people that he and Lara Jean had sex in the hot tub. It's clear that Genevieve is the one spreading the rumor, but Peter doesn't do much to shut it down. Lara Jean refuses to talk to him.

Once she's back home, Lara Jean she deletes Peter's number and throws away all the notes he wrote to her. When Kitty gets the puppy she's been asking for, Lara Jean wishes she were young enough still that a puppy could fix all her problems.

The recital party is set for the day after Christmas. The party seems to be going well until Peter shows up; Kitty apparently invited him. He asks Lara Jean to speak privately, but Josh joins in their conversation. The boys exchange insults and then Peter notes that Josh kissed Lara Jean. Margot overhears and runs to her bedroom, sobbing. She feels like Lara Jean betrayed her.

The next few days are tense at Lara Jean's house. Finally, Daddy seeks out Lara Jean and says that while he thinks she's too young to have sex, he made her a doctor's appointment so she can be safe. Lara Jean knows that Margot told Daddy she's

been having sex to hurt her, so once Daddy leaves, Lara Jean confronts Margot. She reveals that she knows Margot and Josh had sex. The girls scream at each other, but then Lara Jean admits she looks up to Margot and just wants Margot's approval. Margot admits that she's upset because it seems like her little sisters don't need her as much as she thought they did. The girls make up.

On New Year's Eve, Margot and Daddy go out to parties. Home alone with Lara Jean, Kitty admits that she's the one who sent Lara Jean's letters months ago and stole her hatbox. She gives Lara Jean the hatbox back and inside, Lara Jean discovers all the notes from Peter that she tried to throw away; Kitty pulled them out of the trash and saved them. Reading them, Lara Jean feels like they are a love letter, and so after she and Kitty light sparklers at midnight, she starts to write Peter a love letter in return.



## CHARACTERS

### MAJOR CHARACTERS

**Lara Jean Song Covey** – The 16-year-old protagonist of the novel, Lara Jean is a high school student in Virginia. She has two sisters, Margot and Kitty, and her father, Daddy, is a single dad—Mommy died in an accident six years ago. Lara Jean prizes her relationships with her family members over anything else, and she fears intimacy and romantic relationships. Because of this, when Lara Jean has had crushes in the past, she wrote letters to the boys to help herself get over them and then stored the letters in a **hatbox** that Mommy gave to her. Lara Jean's life turns upside-down when Margot leaves for school in Scotland and, days later, Lara Jean discovers that her letters were somehow sent to her former crushes. This poses a problem, as her current crush is Josh, who was Margot's boyfriend until days before Margot left. To throw Josh off, Lara Jean embarks on a pretend relationship with another letter recipient, Peter Kavinsky. The pretend relationship seems like a great idea to Lara Jean, as she's a skilled liar and doesn't believe that a pretend relationship is going to be difficult. But complications arise as Lara Jean develops real feelings for Peter and realizes she no longer loves Josh. Lara Jean's fear of intimacy, though, keeps her from admitting her feelings to Peter until almost the end of the novel. Over the course of the novel, Lara Jean starts to come of age. She feels pressure to step into Margot's shoes and act as a mother figure to Kitty, in addition to keeping the household running. She also must navigate a changing relationship with Margot. It's a shock when Lara Jean discovers that Margot had sex with Josh before they broke up, thereby breaking a pact that the sisters had made years ago. Lara Jean and Margot ultimately make up when they admit how much they admire each other and acknowledge how much pressure they're under to keep their family running smoothly. Lara Jean also decides to be brave and truthful by

writing Peter (whom she's not speaking to at the end of the novel) a real love letter, which she plans to send.

**Margot Song Covey** – Margot is Lara Jean and Kitty's older sister. At the start of the novel, she's 18 and is preparing to leave for St. Andrew's College in Scotland. Margot is driven, organized, and extremely smart. She was a National Merit Scholar in high school and regularly volunteered at various places, such as on a Habitat for Humanity building site and at the local nursing home. Lara Jean credits Margot's maturity and organizational skills with the fact that the Covey family has remained so functional after Mommy's death six years ago—without a mother, Margot stepped into that role and parented her younger siblings. The only fun teenage thing Margot seemed to allow herself was a boyfriend: she'd been dating Josh, the Coveys' neighbor, for two years, but she breaks up with him days before leaving for Scotland. According to Mommy, it's best to go to college without a boyfriend at home. To Lara Jean, Margot represents everything she's supposed to be—mature, caring, and brave. She desperately wants to make Margot proud, which is why Lara Jean decides to enter into the pretend relationship with Peter. Lara Jean knows she can't date Josh, as that would be betraying Margot. As far as Lara Jean is concerned, the sisters' loyalty to each other is more important than anything else. Because of their loyalty, in middle school, Lara Jean and Margot made a pact to not have sex until they were either married, or 21 and in love. Lara Jean must reevaluate her perception of Margot when she discovers that Margot had sex with Josh. Things are tense between Margot and Lara Jean when Margot returns home for Christmas. Margot hates Peter, and she's upset that her family started on Christmas traditions without her. Things come to a head when Margot discovers that Lara Jean and Josh kissed. When the girls make up a few days later, Margot admits that it was painful to realize that Lara Jean and Kitty didn't need her as much as Margot thought they did.

**Kitty Song Covey** – Kitty is Lara Jean and Margot's little sister; she's nine years old. Kitty looks more like Daddy than like Mommy. She was only three when Mommy died, so Kitty doesn't remember anything about Mommy aside from what her older sisters have shared with her. Kitty is sharp, blunt, and Lara Jean describes her as "shameless." She desperately wants a dog—her dream dog is a male Akita—and persistently pesters Daddy to try to convince him to get her a dog for Christmas. She also regularly critiques Lara Jean's clothing choices or her hair to try to steer Lara Jean toward "better" fashion choices. But Kitty is also loving and social; she forms close relationships with Josh and later with Peter, treating them like older brothers. Though Lara Jean adores Kitty, she also treats her little sister with some caution, as Kitty is known for holding strong grudges and lashing out in anger. At the end of the novel, Lara Jean learns that in retaliation for jokingly threatening to tell Josh that Kitty had a crush on him, Kitty stole Lara Jean's

beloved **hatbox** and sent the private letters inside. Kitty makes a point to apologize for betraying Lara Jean's trust—and she gives the hatbox back to Lara Jean with all the notes Peter wrote to Lara Jean (that Lara Jean tried to throw away) inside. She also gets a puppy, Jamie, for Christmas, and is thrilled to take on the responsibility of caring for him.

**Daddy** – Lara Jean, Margot, and Kitty's father is an ob-gyn and a widower; Mommy, his wife, died six years before the novel starts. Though he's kind, loving, and adores his daughters, he's a somewhat distant presence in their lives because he works such long hours. Prior to Josh and Margot's breakup, Daddy adored Josh and Josh often helped Daddy around the house with various chores. Daddy doesn't stop loving Josh once he and Margot break up, but he does grieve Josh's diminished presence in the months after. Since Mommy died, Daddy has relied on Margot to keep the household running and to get Lara Jean and Kitty where they need to be. When Daddy is home, he encourages Lara Jean in particular to have fun (he's very supportive of her relationship with Peter) and he seems to feel some regret about how driven and family-focused Margot was before she left for college. In an attempt to keep his Korean American daughters connected to their Korean heritage, Daddy regularly hosts Grandma (Mommy's mother, who's Korean) for holidays like Thanksgiving and cooks Korean food. However, when Daddy tries to cook *bo ssam* for the girls, it's inedibly salty—a sign of his distance and inability to truly be there for his daughters. Kitty pesters Daddy throughout the novel for a puppy for Christmas and, ultimately, the family adopts a puppy named Jamie.

**Mommy** – Lara Jean, Margot, and Kitty's mother died six years before the novel begins. She was Korean and was extremely close with her daughters. The four of them were the four Song girls; Song was Mommy's maiden name. Mommy died after falling and hitting her head while mopping. Her death was a traumatic experience for Lara Jean, as she felt young and inadequate—especially since Margot, who was 12 at the time, was the one who found Mommy and then called 911. Lara Jean and Margot talk about Mommy regularly, and Margot in particular often shares advice from Mommy with Lara Jean and Kitty. When it came to gifts, Mommy made a point to get her daughters all the same items, just in different colors. So Lara Jean treasures the vintage **hatbox** that Mommy gave her—it's the only gift Lara Jean received that was a single item just for her, and not one of a set.

**Josh** – Josh is the Coveys' neighbor and has been Margot's boyfriend for the last two years. She breaks up with him right after the events of the novel begin, days before she leaves to attend college in Scotland. The entire Covey family adores Josh, since he's kind, generous, and forms close relationships with every member of the family. He helps Daddy with outdoor chores, plays kid games with Kitty, and is a close friend to Lara Jean. But unbeknownst to Josh until the first week of school,

Lara Jean has been nursing a crush on him in some form or another since his family moved in next door five years ago. Lara Jean suggests that Josh is the exact kind of person who would have a crush on Margot: he's smart, applies himself to school, is very honest, and is a bit nerdy (he loves *Lord of the Rings*). He also had no idea that Lara Jean had a crush on him—though after he receives her letter, he confesses that before dating Margot, he had a crush on Lara Jean and even thought about kissing her at several points when they were young teens. Knowing that dating Josh and giving in to her crush would be betraying Margot, Lara Jean concocts an elaborate plan with Peter Kavinsky to pretend to date each other to throw Josh off and return Josh and Lara Jean's relationship to normal (that is, friendly). This works, to some degree—but Josh is insistent that Peter isn't a good enough romantic partner for Lara Jean, and he expresses interest in dating Lara Jean even if it does hurt Margot. To this end, he even kisses her while helping her decorate the Christmas tree. Ultimately, the novel ends with Lara Jean believing that her relationship with Josh will be okay—they'll return to being friends, and she ends the novel knowing she doesn't love him anymore.

**Peter Kavinsky** – Peter is a classmate and former close friend of Lara Jean's. He's popular and extremely handsome, and he was Lara Jean's first kiss in eighth grade. After the kiss, Lara Jean nursed a crush on him and ultimately wrote him a love letter to help herself get over him. It worked, and since eighth grade, Peter has been dating Genevieve and he and Lara Jean aren't really friends anymore. They reconnect at the start of their junior year of high school, about a week after Peter and Genevieve break up and Peter receives Lara Jean's letter. To cover up Lara Jean's crush on Josh (and so that Peter can annoy Genevieve and make it seem like he's over her), he and Lara Jean decide to pretend to date. Lara Jean enters into the pretend relationship with Peter thinking of him what many of her friends and family members think of him: that he's a "douche" lacrosse player who isn't very smart or ethical. And though Peter is struggling in chemistry class, admits to cheating once on a quiz, and sometimes says rude or flippant things, Lara Jean discovers that he's far more than his reputation. Indeed, Peter turns out to be generous, kind, fun-loving, and respectful—so much so that Lara Jean ultimately falls in love with him. Peter pushes Lara Jean out of her comfort zone and encourages her to face her fears surrounding intimacy, romance, and being honest with another person. But this is all made difficult for Lara Jean because Peter doesn't seem to fully let go of Genevieve; he continues to see her throughout his pretend relationship with Lara Jean and he sometimes compares Lara Jean to Genevieve. Lara Jean is extremely angry with Peter when Genevieve spreads the rumor that the two had sex in the hot tub on the ski trip—and Peter doesn't go out of his way to deny it. Though they aren't speaking at the end of the novel, Lara Jean ultimately realizes she loves Peter and decides to write him a real love letter.

**Genevieve** – The antagonist of the novel, Genevieve is the most beautiful and popular girl in Lara Jean's grade and, until the start of the novel, Peter's girlfriend. She's also Chris's cousin, though the two are nothing alike. Many kids at school are terrified of her, as Genevieve is known for getting exactly what she wants and, if other people get in her way, making their lives miserable—a year ago, when Peter dated a girl named Jamila, Genevieve spread such nasty, racist rumors about Jamila that Jamila's parents put her in private school. She's been dating Peter for several years and it's common knowledge amongst their classmates that the two are sexually active. But, right before school starts, rumors start to fly: Genevieve and Peter broke up, and Genevieve has a new, college-age boyfriend with whom she's been cheating on Peter. For much of the novel, Genevieve is an ominous peripheral presence. Peter continues to see Genevieve, and Lara Jean consistently compares herself to Genevieve. Because of this, Lara Jean feels like Genevieve is a part of her relationship with Peter. Lara Jean fears that Genevieve is going to do or say something nasty to hurt her for dating Peter. Ultimately, Genevieve spreads the rumor that Lara Jean and Peter had sex in the hot tub on the ski trip. But despite this, the novel also offers clues that Genevieve isn't as one-dimensional and nasty as Lara Jean thinks she is. Peter suggests that she's a different person when you get to know her, and Peter's little brother, Owen, insists that Lara Jean wears more makeup than Genevieve (suggesting that Genevieve might not be so put-together in private). Further, Genevieve admits that when she and Lara Jean were friends in elementary and early middle school, Genevieve was jealous of Lara Jean and her close-knit family—an indicator that Genevieve's home life isn't happy or supportive.

**Chris** – Chris is Lara Jean's best friend and Genevieve's cousin. Lara Jean describes Chris as her exact opposite: Chris is sexually active, attends lots of parties, drinks and smokes, and is generally impulsive. And while Chris's reputation as a partier precedes her at school, Lara Jean is quiet and shy. Despite their differences, Chris and Lara Jean get along great—Lara Jean says that she and Chris get each other in a way that they don't get other people. They've been friends for at least five years. Though Chris isn't always the most reliable friend (Lara Jean suggests she's like a stray cat in that she comes and goes as she pleases), when Chris is around, she's extremely supportive of Lara Jean. She encourages Lara Jean to step outside her comfort zone and is supportive of her dating Peter; Peter, she says, is surprisingly "decent" and won't pressure Lara Jean into physical activity she's not ready for. However, some of Chris's support for the relationship stems from the fact that while she and Genevieve are cousins, Chris detests Genevieve and is more than willing to support Lara Jean if it angers or annoys Genevieve. The rivalry between Chris and Genevieve is also what finally convinces Chris to come on the ski trip—Genevieve is organizing it.

**Lucas Krapf** – Lucas is a boy in Lara Jean’s grade and the recipient of one of her letters. Lucas is gay, but Lara Jean didn’t know that when she wrote her letter to him—she thought he was mysterious and was intent on figuring out what kind of girls he liked. He’s always impeccably dressed in edgy clothes. For a week or so after Lucas gets Lara Jean’s letter, he stays quiet about it because he doesn’t want to embarrass her. But once he does offer her the letter back, Lucas establishes himself as an important information source going forward. He, for instance, implies that he dislikes Genevieve, so he encourages Lara Jean to keep ahold of Peter—and he says it’s a bad thing when he and Lara Jean see Peter and Genevieve fighting.

**John Ambrose McClaren** – John Ambrose is one of the boys who gets a love letter from Lara Jean. Lara Jean wrote the letter after they kissed during an eighth-grade game of spin the bottle, but since John Ambrose moved away before they started high school, she hasn’t seen him in about three years. A few months into her pretend relationship with Peter, Lara Jean decides to track down John Ambrose and manages to do so at a Model UN meeting that her school hosts. He looks exactly like she expected—clean-cut, rosy-cheeked, and very serious—and he recognizes Lara Jean. Lara Jean leaves the meeting after only saying hi to John Ambrose, though she continues to think fondly of him.

**Jamila Singh** – Jamila is a girl who Peter briefly dated a year or so before the novel begins; she doesn’t appear in person in the novel. She was the most beautiful girl in Lara Jean’s class, after Genevieve, and Peter dated her while broken up with Genevieve. Genevieve spread racist and sexist rumors about Jamila in retaliation, and this resulted in Jamila’s parents putting her in private school. Lara Jean thinks of what happened to Jamila as an example of what happens when a person crosses Genevieve and makes the mistake of dating Peter.

**Mr. Clarke** – Mr. Clarke is an elderly man whom Lara Jean meets at an estate sale. His daughter is putting him in a nursing home seemingly against his wishes. To spite her, he lets Lara Jean dig through and take items from his daughter’s vintage clothing collection—and he calls Lara Jean by his daughter’s name.

**Ms. Rothschild** – Ms. Rothschild is the Coveys’ neighbor across the street. She lives alone and is habitually late for work. While they wait for their ride in the mornings, Lara Jean and Kitty count down to when Ms. Rothschild inevitably spills her hot coffee all over herself in her hurry to get in her car.

**Kenny Donati** – Kenny Donati was the first boy that Lara Jean wrote a love letter to; he doesn’t appear in the novel at all, as his letter gets returned to Lara Jean’s house unopened. He and Lara Jean attended summer camp together when they were 12, and he made Lara Jean laugh.

## MINOR CHARACTERS

**Mrs. Kavinsky** – Peter’s mother owns an antique shop downtown. She always dresses in “fancy” clothes while she’s working, so it’s a shock for Lara Jean to see that the Kavinsky house is what she’d describe as normal or even casual. Mrs. Kavinsky is divorced. She likes Lara Jean, according to Peter.

**Owen Kavinsky** – Owen is Peter’s 12-year-old little brother. Lara Jean observes that he’s not as easygoing as his brother, though he’s just as obnoxiously cocky. Interestingly, Owen accuses Lara Jean of wearing more makeup than Genevieve—a possible indicator that Lara Jean doesn’t know Genevieve all that well.

**Gabe** – Gabe is one of Peter’s friends and a teammate on the lacrosse team. Lara Jean enters into her relationship with Peter believing that all lacrosse boys are unintelligent and “douche,” but Gabe proves himself to be exactly the opposite. He adores Lara Jean and gives her the nickname “Large.”

**Darrell** – Darrell is one of Peter’s friends; he’s also on the lacrosse team. Lara Jean initially thinks that all lacrosse boys are unintelligent and “douche,” but she realizes that they’re actually kind and a lot of fun.

**Steve Bledell** – Steve is a wealthy kid at school; he lives in a mansion and hosts parties there.

**Grandma** – Lara Jean’s Grandma is Mommy’s mother. She’s Korean and joins the Covey family for Thanksgiving. Grandma is adamant that Daddy needs a girlfriend.

**Charlie Blanchard** – Charlie is one of Lara Jean’s classmates. Chris flirts and spends time with him on the ski trip.

**Coach White** – Coach White is the gym teacher at Lara Jean’s high school. He chaperones the ski trip.

**Ms. Davenport** – Ms. Davenport is the female teacher who chaperones the school ski trip. She likes to think of herself as being in the know when it comes to student gossip.

**Emily Nussbaum** – Emily is Genevieve’s best friend.

**Jamie Fox-Pickle** – Jamie is the puppy that Kitty receives for Christmas.



## 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.



## FAMILY, RESPONSIBILITY, AND GROWING UP

*To All the Boys I’ve Loved Before* introduces readers

to 16-year-old Lara Jean a few days before her life turns upside down. Days before she starts her junior year of high school, her beloved older sister Margot leaves for college in Scotland. But things get much worse on the first day of school, when Lara Jean discovers that someone mailed the five private love letters she wrote to her past crushes. As Lara Jean navigates the aftermath of having her letters sent out and figures out who she is without Margot around, she slowly starts to come of age and become more independent—something that’s essential, as Daddy is a single father who works long hours as an ob-gyn and often isn’t home. So now, Lara Jean has to take on adult tasks Margot used to perform, such as making baked goods for the PTA bake sale at Kitty’s school and grocery shopping. *To All the Boys I’ve Loved Before* shows that to some degree, becoming more responsible and independent is a normal and expected part of growing up. But for Lara Jean, Margot, and Kitty in particular, this independence and responsibility also reflects their family’s dysfunction.

Margot and Lara Jean were forced to grow up and become responsible at an early age. Lara Jean explains that their mother, Mommy, died suddenly six years ago after a household accident. Prior to her death, Lara Jean implies that she and Margot were able to be irresponsible children: Mommy cared for them, soothed them when they were upset, and mostly put up with their incessant bickering. But in the hour or so after Mommy’s death, Lara Jean and Margot cemented their new, more adult roles as Margot called 911 and Lara Jean kept three-year-old Kitty entertained in front of the TV. The loss of their mother, in other words, catapulted 12-year-old Margot and 10-year-old Lara Jean into adult, caregiving roles long before they became legal adults. This setup continues into the novel’s present. Up until the day Margot leaves for college in Scotland, she keeps a detailed family calendar, does the family’s grocery shopping, and shuttles Kitty to and from school and swim meets, all in addition to keeping up with her schoolwork and extracurricular activities. Lara Jean also takes on a number of household chores and cares for Kitty—all of which is necessary, as Daddy continues to work long hours for his job. So, while the girls’ independence and maturity are impressive, and perhaps unusual, the novel shows that these qualities stem from necessity.

This extra responsibility at home causes Lara Jean and Margot to feel intense loyalty to their blood family members—and sometimes keeps them from growing up or becoming independent in other ways. Lara Jean, for instance, bases many of her decisions on what Margot would think. Lara Jean looks up to Margot and wants to impress her whenever possible. And this desire to impress means that Lara Jean (and, for that matter, Margot) hasn’t participated in many normal teenage activities, such as going to parties, dating, or going on the school ski trip. Put another way, because Lara Jean feels such pressure to impress and support her family members, she opts

out of other opportunities that might broaden her social circle. Both Lara Jean and Margot also use this familial loyalty to control (or attempt to control) each other’s behavior. When Margot breaks up with Josh, for instance, Lara Jean makes a desperate attempt to change Margot’s mind by noting that Daddy and Kitty are going to be very upset. And though Margot doesn’t purposefully try to control Lara Jean while she’s in Scotland, Lara Jean also knows that she can’t do what she wants—date Josh, or even admit her crush on him—without inviting Margot’s anger and disappointment.

Ultimately, though, the novel shows that as teenagers grow up, it’s important to develop their identities as their own people, and to start to shift their loyalties away from their families of origin. Margot does this early on, at the start of the novel, by going to college in Scotland. Moving several thousand miles away gives Margot the time and distance to figure out who she is and what she wants, without having to constantly answer to her family members or consult with them before making decisions. But this comes with its own pain. When Lara Jean and Margot have their final fight, Margot admits that she thinks of herself as being the sole person responsible for keeping the family functioning smoothly—which doesn’t turn out to be as true as Margot thought it was. Lara Jean and Kitty both become more mature and independent over the course of the novel and manage to get through their days just fine without Margot around, both because they’re each getting older and because without Margot at home to do things for them, they naturally have to become more independent. For the most part, the book presents this process as something that’s very normal but also exceedingly difficult emotionally. But when the novel ends on New Year’s Eve (which for years has been a stay-at-home holiday for the Coveys) with both Daddy and Margot at parties, it offers hope that Lara Jean, Margot, and Kitty have started to move away from their family of origin and will continue to mature and navigate their relationships to their family going forward.



### LOVE AND FEAR

At the start of the novel, 16-year-old Lara Jean has never been in a romantic relationship before, though she has been in love with exactly five boys over the last few years. This changes suddenly when the secret letters Lara Jean wrote to those boys get mailed, and to deal with the damage, Lara Jean embarks on a pretend relationship with one of her former crushes, Peter. This is a difficult prospect for Lara Jean—she’s generally unwilling to admit it, but she’s afraid of being in a relationship and of falling in love with another person. As the novel progresses, though, it shows that it’s normal—especially for teenagers in their first relationships, like Lara Jean—to be afraid of romance and intimacy. This is true whether that fear stems from what others might think of one’s relationship, uncertainty surrounding

physical intimacy, or an unwillingness to be totally honest with another person. However, *To All the Boys I've Loved Before* also shows that navigating this fear and nervousness often gets easier as young people mature, become more confident in themselves, and learn how to be honest—both with their partners, and in terms of what they want from a relationship.

Lara Jean has made it a habit to ignore her own romantic feelings because she's afraid of intimacy. Indeed, Lara Jean's five love letters—which she wrote to help herself get over five crushes, and which she characterizes as “exorcisms”—are the biggest indicator that she's not comfortable with romantic feelings. By writing the letters and getting over her crushes, Lara Jean essentially absolves herself of having to take any risks, such as telling a boy she likes him. Instead, she believes that the letters allow her to simply make her feelings go away and move on with life as usual. Later, when Lara Jean has been pretend-dating Peter for several weeks, the two discuss why she's never been in a relationship before—and Lara Jean admits that she's afraid of having to be in a relationship with someone who has thoughts and feelings of their own. It's much easier for her, in other words, to simply ignore her emotions than it is to try to negotiate a relationship with another person—no matter how much she might like that person.

This fear of intimacy stems in part from Lara Jean's dysfunctional family structure. Lara Jean has a close relationship with both of her sisters, Margot and Kitty, but an especially close relationship with Margot. Indeed, the girls are so close and rely on each other so much that the two made a pact in middle school to not have sex until they were married, or until they were 21 and in love. This pact shows that the sisters prioritize each other first and foremost—essentially denying each other intimacy with a romantic partner ensures that the sisters will remain each other's primary support person. In addition, the stipulation that the girls should be married before they have sex shows how highly they value family—they essentially insist that they need to have created their own new nuclear families before experiencing physical intimacy. But more broadly, the forced independence that Lara Jean and Margot experience as a result of only having a single dad to care for them means that they're generally uncomfortable relying on people other than family for anything. Put another way, they're so used to taking care of themselves and of each other that the thought of letting someone else in is difficult for them to fathom.

Lara Jean's relationship with Peter, however, shows her that romantic relationships don't have to be so frightening—if she's honest with herself and with her partner about what she wants. Lara Jean and Peter initially enter into their relationship to throw off Josh (whom Lara Jean has a forbidden crush on) and to annoy Peter's recent ex, Genevieve. At first, the relationship is anxiety-inducing only because the whole thing is a sham, since Lara Jean doesn't actually have feelings for Peter. But

things become tense as Lara Jean finds herself developing feelings for Peter, especially since she's too anxious to tell him how she actually feels. It's telling, then, that Lara Jean's happiest moment of the novel is when she finally *does* admit her feelings to Peter. In that moment, she finally feels confident, in control, and as though she's getting what she wants out of her relationship—and, surprisingly for her, kissing Peter isn't as frightening as she'd feared. Intimacy, she discovers, doesn't have to be so scary and high stakes. This is also why it's significant that the novel ends with Lara Jean beginning a real love letter to Peter, one that she presumably intends to send to him. Though the book ends without resolving what happens between Lara Jean and Peter (who aren't speaking at the end of the novel), this letter shows that Lara Jean has learned the importance of being honest and speaking up for what she wants in a romantic relationship.



### SOCIAL STRUCTURE, REPUTATION, AND HIGH SCHOOL

It's devastating for 16-year-old Lara Jean when five love letters she wrote to boys she used to love are somehow mailed without her permission. Three of the boys (Josh, Peter, and Lucas) go to her school, and Lara Jean is mortified when the boys approach her about the letters they received, in part because Lara Jean thinks of herself as a “Quiet Girl” who doesn't get much attention from her peers. But when Lara Jean decides to kiss Peter in the crowded school hallway to confuse Josh, she suddenly finds herself thrust into the spotlight. As Peter and Lara Jean embark on their pretend relationship, Lara Jean pays close attention to how her position at school changes, and she becomes more aware of how the broader social structure functions. The novel ultimately shows that the social structure at Lara Jean's high school is built on assumptions, rumors, and sometimes, a bit of truth; it's a system where it's almost impossible to tell who anyone actually is or what they're actually like. And while the novel offers little hope that the school's social structure will change, it does show that it's possible to overcome this damaging system by getting to know people and not making assumptions about them.

Throughout the novel, Lara Jean makes it clear that people's reputations are extremely important—they're often the only thing other people know about them. For instance, Lara Jean describes her best friend, Chris, as promiscuous, impulsive, and wild. To most people who don't know Chris well, that reputation is all Chris is: she's the girl who got drunk and did a striptease on someone's roof at a party freshman year, and she's the one who had sex on the ski trip. Similarly, Lara Jean makes assumptions about other people, such as when she implies that Peter and his friends on the lacrosse team are all “douchey” and not good students. Judgments like these, the novel shows, keep kids from getting to know one another on a deeper level, and they create an environment where rumors and assumptions



rule. This is why, for example, Lara Jean and Peter enter into their pretend relationship—they know that their classmates wouldn't expect Laura Jean to be Peter's first choice of romantic partner, so it's an ideal way for them to annoy and confuse Genevieve, Peter's recent ex-girlfriend. But this environment is also why, later, Genevieve is able to successfully spread the rumor that Lara Jean and Peter had sex in the hot tub on the ski trip, thereby damaging Lara Jean's reputation as a "Quiet Girl."

However, the novel also makes it very clear that a person isn't just their reputation. One example of this is Lara Jean's friendship with Chris. Chris might have a colorful reputation at school, but Lara Jean suggests that she and Chris still get each other in a way that other people can't. Put another way, Lara Jean knows that Chris is more than her reputation as a promiscuous partier; Chris is also a good, supportive friend. Over the course of her relationship with Peter, Lara Jean realizes that this is true of him as well. She tells several people that Peter "isn't what you think," meaning that he's not unintelligent and "douche-y," as most people assume. Rather, Peter is kind, generous, and willing to get Lara Jean out of her comfort zone. He encourages her to take risks and grow—all things she never would've known about him had they not begun their pretend relationship.

With this, *To All the Boys I've Loved Before* suggests that getting to know someone on a deeper level is one way to combat high school's cutthroat social structure. Knowing someone on a personal level—not just by their reputation—can help stamp out rumors. For instance, when Genevieve starts spreading the rumor that Lara Jean and Peter had sex in the hot tub, Lara Jean immediately gets texts from Josh (a close family friend and a former crush) saying that he doesn't believe them. With this, Josh starts to push back on the rumor by not spreading it—and, perhaps, by countering it when he hears others talking about it. Further, the novel also shows that getting to know someone more personally can also make them less of a one-dimensional villain. As Lara Jean sees it, Genevieve spreading rumors about her is unforgivable. But Genevieve nevertheless becomes a more sympathetic villain by admitting that when she and Lara Jean were friends as children, Genevieve envied Lara Jean's tight-knit family and involved parents. A picture emerges of Genevieve as someone who lashes out and hurts others because she herself is hurting—which doesn't help Lara Jean get over her hurt and betrayal, but it does make Genevieve a more sympathetic and complex character for readers. Thus, while the novel doesn't go so far as to suggest that getting to know people more intimately is going to solve all the problems with reputation and social structure at Lara Jean's school, it nevertheless suggests that relying on rumor and reputation to judge others denies people the opportunity to meaningfully connect with their classmates.



## LIES VS. HONESTY

When 16-year-old Lara Jean discovers that the private goodbye letters that she wrote to five former crushes were sent out without her

permission, her first thought is to lie about them—to claim that she never loved the boys, and that she never wrote the letters in the first place. With this, the novel establishes Lara Jean as a person who sees lying as a useful tool to escape embarrassment. As she then embarks on her pretend relationship with one of the letter recipients, Peter, Lara Jean and Peter struggle to keep their many lies straight—and eventually, they struggle to discern what's a lie in their relationship and what's the truth, as their fake relationship leads them to develop real feelings for each other. Their relationship shows how lies tend to spiral out of control. Lying, the novel suggests, may seem like a good means to an end—but the truth will inevitably come out. And, in most circumstances, it's actually kinder and more beneficial to tell the truth.

Lara Jean's lifelong history of lying has taught her that lying is an effective way to confuse people and gain control over her life. As a kid, Lara Jean lied all the time—but, she explains, the trick to lying effectively is to make sure one's lies are at least somewhat based in truth, and to tell as few people as possible. With this, Lara Jean shows from the beginning that while lying might seem like an effective means to control parts of her life, it's far more complicated than just telling a lie and going with it. The more complex a lie is, and the more people know about it, the more likely it is that something is going to go wrong. So, when Lara Jean is confronted with difficult, emotional, and frightening situations, her first thought is to lie—in the past, it's been a good way to make things go her way and protect herself from embarrassment. And in the case of her pretend relationship with Peter, the lie seems easy: the only part of their relationship that's a lie is the fact that they're romantically interested in each other.

However, the novel shows that lies like this tend to spiral out of control. Lara Jean is distraught when first Kitty, then Peter's mom Mrs. Kavinsky, and finally Daddy and Margot learn about their pretend relationship. Bringing their families into the lie means that Lara Jean has more people to lie to and more things to keep straight. Put another way, she recognizes from an early stage in the pretend relationship that things aren't going to go as planned. But the most unexpected part of her relationship with Peter is that, despite her best intentions, Lara Jean falls in love with Peter. As she spends more time with him pretending to be his girlfriend, she comes to treasure his daily notes, the way she feels special when he buys her frozen yogurt, and the occasional kisses that they share. The relationship starts to feel real to Lara Jean, which makes the lie even more difficult for her to manage.

The novel's conclusion suggests that the truth tends to come out—and that, generally speaking, this is for the best. For Lara

Jean, it's freeing and exciting to finally decide to be brave and profess her feelings to Peter, once he admits that he too has fallen for Lara Jean. Being honest with Peter leads to Lara Jean and Peter kissing in the hot tub on the ski trip—something that Lara Jean never expected to happen, but an experience that she treasures, nevertheless. In her mind, it's the result of being brave and honest, and of advocating for herself in terms of what she wants out of a romantic relationship. And when it comes to Lara Jean's difficult relationship with Margot once Margot comes home for winter break, the girls eventually discover that the only way to get through their discord is to be honest about all the things they'd previously lied about. For Lara Jean, this means telling Margot everything about her letters and her fake relationship with Peter; for Margot, this means facing up to the fact that she had sex with Josh but never told Lara Jean, and admitting that she doesn't feel as needed in her family anymore. Only by admitting that they lied and finally telling the truth do the girls make up—and pave the way to be more accepting and open with each other going forward. *To All the Boys I've Loved Before* doesn't go so far as to suggest that telling the truth fixes everything—Lara Jean and Peter still haven't made up by the end of the novel, and it's implied that Lara Jean and Margot still have some work to do to repair their relationship. But it does suggest that although lying might be a good way to avoid embarrassment in the short term, being honest makes relationships stronger and more fulfilling for those involved.

truth, be brave, advocate for herself, and listen to what she wants—all signs of her growing maturity. And when she finally does get her hatbox back at the end of the novel, this time filled with all the notes Peter wrote her over the course of their pretend relationship, Lara Jean realizes that the hatbox can now help her move forward into adulthood. Peter's notes feel like a real love letter—and Lara Jean decides to write him a love letter in return, one that she plans to send rather than store in the hatbox. In using the hatbox to store love letters from another person, rather than her own private letters to get over boys, Lara Jean finally comes of age and symbolically opens herself up to love.



## THE RECITAL PARTY

The recital party symbolizes Lara Jean's resentment toward Margot. Lara Jean explains that though the family hasn't hosted a recital party since Mommy died six years ago, she's always hated them. The parties consisted of Lara Jean and Margot dressing up in matching Christmas dresses and playing piano for Mommy and Daddy's friends and neighbors, and to Lara Jean, it seemed like an event designed to make Margot seem better and more accomplished than Lara Jean. While Lara Jean wasn't a skilled pianist and was relegated to playing easy pieces, Margot was capable of performing difficult pieces and got to play the more fun Christmas music. Because of this, Lara Jean outright refused to participate in the last recital party her family held. She couldn't stand the thought of looking so unaccomplished and inadequate next to Margot, who seemed perfect and put together.

So in the present, when Margot insists on holding a recital party while she's home for her Christmas break, Lara Jean is understandably wary—Margot already seems so accomplished for attending school in Scotland in the first place, and Lara Jean feels self-conscious about her pretend relationship with Peter (which Margot doesn't support) and her lack of drive compared to her older sister. Then, when the party takes a turn for the worse and Margot overhears Lara Jean, Peter, and Josh's argument (and hears that Josh kissed Lara Jean), it makes Lara Jean look even worse in comparison to her sister; Margot, after all, comes away from the conversation believing that Lara Jean betrayed her by *purposefully* kissing Josh. But none of this strife is totally visible, or is understood by the adults at the party, including Daddy. This speaks to how well-hidden Lara Jean and Margot's rivalry is to outside observers.



## SYMBOLS

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



## THE HATBOX

The hatbox that Mommy gave Lara Jean represents Lara Jean's immaturity at the start of the novel, and her process of growing up as the novel progresses. Lara Jean uses the hatbox to store her love letters, which illustrates her youth and immaturity. The five love letters in the hatbox aren't love letters in the conventional sense; rather, she wrote them to *stop* herself from loving the five boys. As the novel progresses and as Lara Jean and Peter's pretend relationship evolves, Peter suggests that the way Lara Jean framed her letters shows that she's too afraid and immature to let herself be in love—the fact that she wrote the letters and hid them in her hatbox is proof, to him, that she's unwilling to take the brave, mature step of getting to know another person intimately.

Because of this, it's telling that Lara Jean only begins to grow up once the hatbox disappears and her letters get sent out. Without this crutch to rely on, Lara Jean has to learn to tell the



## QUOTES



Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Simon & Schuster edition of *To All the Boys I've Loved Before* published in 2018.

## Chapter 2 Quotes

☝ When Margot decided to go to college in Scotland, it felt like a betrayal. Even though I knew it was coming, because of course she was going to go to college somewhere far away. And of course she was going to go to college in Scotland and study anthropology, because she is Margot, the girl with the maps and the travel books and the plans. Of course she would leave us one day.

I'm still mad at her, just a little. Just a teeny-tiny bit. Obviously I know it's not her fault. But she's going so far away, and we always said we'd be the Song girls forever.

**Related Characters:** Lara Jean Song Covey (speaker), Mommy, Kitty Song Covey, Margot Song Covey

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 8

### Explanation and Analysis

As Lara Jean explains to readers that her older sister, Margot, is going to college in Scotland in a few days, she also shares her thoughts on Margot's choice. Lara Jean is struggling because, on one hand, Margot going to study anthropology in Scotland makes perfect sense. Margot is driven, good at academics, and has always been the sort of person who would get accepted to a prestigious college like Saint Andrews. She's also a planner, especially when it comes to travel—so given all of this, Lara Jean doesn't feel like she should be surprised that Margot is leaving.

What makes this hard is the fact that Lara Jean, Margot, and their little sister Kitty are all extremely close. And Margot in particular fills a maternal role for her sisters: she's the one who makes sure that everything at home is organized, that Kitty has treats for her school's bake sale, and that Kitty and Lara Jean make it to their various engagements. So, Lara Jean isn't just losing a sister when Margot leaves in a few days. She's also losing the person who has played a major role in keeping her life together for the last six years, since the girls lost their mother. Part of what Lara Jean resents here is that without Margot around, she's going to have to step into that maternal role—something that Lara Jean isn't yet comfortable doing.

Lara Jean also implies that she believes that in order to have a close relationship with her sisters, they all need to be geographically close to one another. In Lara Jean's mind, it's impossible to be the Song girls if Margot is halfway around the world in a different time zone, living a totally different life. This reflects Lara Jean's general discomfort with change, particularly when it comes to her family structure.

In her ideal world, nothing would change in her family. But if nothing changes, then none of them—least of all Lara Jean—will ever be able to change and grow into adults.

☝ We three Song girls have an unspoken pact: to make life as easy as possible for Daddy. But then again, maybe it's not so unspoken, because how many times have I heard Margot say, "Shh, be quiet, Daddy's taking a nap before he has to go back to the hospital," or "Don't bother Daddy with that; do it yourself"?

**Related Characters:** Lara Jean Song Covey (speaker), Daddy, Kitty Song Covey, Margot Song Covey

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 10

### Explanation and Analysis

When Lara Jean introduces Daddy to the reader, she explains that she and her sisters take it upon themselves to make being their father easy for him. With this, Lara Jean shows that while Daddy might on paper be the parent in charge of the family, he's actually not as in charge of things as he might think. Rather, his daughters are conspiring to support him, so that he can apply himself to his job as an ob-gyn rather than have to worry about them.



This speaks to the way that Lara Jean, Margot, and Kitty have become very independent at a young age, mostly out of necessity. Lara Jean doesn't give any background as to why exactly they decided they need to make things easy for Daddy, or who made that decision. She makes it seem like it was mostly Margot's idea—the responses she lists from Margot make it seem like Lara Jean and Kitty would go to their dad for more things, if Margot would let them. With this, Lara Jean shows how Margot has encouraged her sisters to be independent, think for themselves, and take the pressure off Daddy.

Lara Jean also alludes to some tension in her relationship with Margot as she muses about whether or not this pact is unspoken. Saying first that the pact is unspoken suggests that that's the idea—Margot shouldn't have to tell Lara Jean and Kitty to do things for themselves. But there's some tension there, since Lara Jean implies that it's pretty often that Margot has to remind her sisters to be self-sufficient. She and Margot seem to have different ideas regarding how independent the girls should be, and how much they should rely on Daddy to help them or do things for them, which shows that even close-knit families have conflicts.

## Chapter 8 Quotes

☛☛ But now I have to do better, because I'm responsible for driving Kitty around. Though truthfully, Kitty is better with directions than I am; she knows how to get to loads of places. But I don't want to have to hear her tell me how to get somewhere. I want to feel like the big sister; I want her to relax in the passenger seat, safe in the knowledge that Lara Jean will get her where she needs to go, just like I did with Margot.

**Related Characters:** Lara Jean Song Covey (speaker), Margot Song Covey, Kitty Song Covey

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 33

### Explanation and Analysis



As Lara Jean prepares to get in the car and drive for the first time after Margot leaves, she explains that she's a nervous driver but has to get better at it—she can't let Kitty down. The fact that Lara Jean is a nervous driver speaks to how Margot has made things easier for her sisters. Lara Jean has never had to grow up and face her fears when it comes to driving, because Margot has always been there to drive her places. And to Lara Jean, that was a good thing—it's a dynamic that she wants to recreate that for Kitty. But the fact remains that because Margot did so much for her sisters, Lara Jean now finds herself at a disadvantage: she hasn't had much practice driving, and now she's one of the family's primary drivers. That's a lot of responsibility all of a sudden, and Lara Jean is feeling the pressure.

The fact that Lara Jean feels like Kitty is, in this way, more mature than she is makes the situation even more uncomfortable. While Lara Jean struggles with navigating and driving assertively, Kitty knows how to get places in town. Knowing this, it seems unlikely that Kitty would “relax” in the car anyway; she seems far too busy and interested in participating. So, it seems that Lara Jean's desire to make this a relaxing, comforting experience for Kitty reflects what Lara Jean would've wanted for herself, rather than what she knows Kitty would actually like.

## Chapter 9 Quotes

☛☛ I'm working on a Josh-and-Margot page. I don't care what Margot says. They're getting back together, I know it. And even if they aren't, not right away, it's not like Margot can just erase him from her history. He was such a big part of her senior year. And, like, her life. The only compromise I'm willing to make is I was saving my heart washi tape for this page, but I can just do a regular plaid tape instead. But then I put the plaid tape up against the pictures and the colors don't look as good.

**Related Characters:** Lara Jean Song Covey (speaker), Josh, Margot Song Covey

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 44

### Explanation and Analysis

Lara Jean is working on a scrapbook for Margot, which she plans to give to her as a Christmas gift. By insisting outright that Margot and Josh are getting back together, Lara Jean shows that she's far more interested in going along with what she believes is right and true than she is in listening to what Margot has to say. Margot, of course, is the one who makes decisions about her own life and her relationships, so it can be read as an overstep that Lara Jean isn't willing to listen to Margot.

Further, Lara Jean seems to believe that Margot can't “erase” Josh in part because she's so concerned with how life looks and feels rather than what life actually is. In her mind, it's only right that Margot get back together with Josh; they're a perfect couple, as far as she's concerned, and they belong together. This is why she insists on using her fancy heart washi tape rather than the plaid—going with the plaid wouldn't look as aesthetically pleasing, and Lara Jean is most concerned with making her life look as lovely as possible. This page more generally seems to be a way for Lara Jean to convince Margot to get back together with Josh: Margot and Josh look picture-perfect on the page, after all.

## Chapter 10 Quotes

☛☛ It's strange to be the one in the front seat now. The view isn't so different from the backseat. In fact, everything feels good and normal and the same, which is a comfort.

**Related Characters:** Lara Jean Song Covey (speaker), Margot Song Covey, Kitty Song Covey, Josh

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 48

### Explanation and Analysis

Lara Jean and Kitty have just gone to see a movie with Josh. This is the first time that the sisters have been out with Josh since Margot broke up with him and left for Scotland, so this is the first time that Lara Jean has gotten to sit in the front seat with him—before, that was always Margot's spot. Because of that, this is a defining moment for Lara Jean. To

her, being in the front seat rather than the back represents becoming more mature and moving into adulthood. And it's significant that Lara Jean is only able to have this defining moment with Margot on a different continent—Margot was, to some degree, keeping Lara Jean from coming of age. With Margot gone, Lara Jean now has the opportunity to sit in the front seat, both literally (as in this case) and metaphorically as she steps into her new role as a caregiver for Kitty.

Then, it's interesting that Lara Jean notes how normal it feels to sit in the front seat. With this, she begins to learn that life milestones may not always be dramatic and flashy. So, she's realizing here that, perhaps, growing up isn't going to be as climactic and difficult as she thought it might be. At least in a situation like this, it's very anticlimactic.

## Chapter 16 Quotes

☝☝ You kissed me for no reason. Even though I knew you liked Gen, and you knew you liked Gen, and Gen knew you liked Gen. But you still did it. Just because you could. I really want to know: Why would you do that to me? My first kiss was supposed to be something special. I've read about it, what it's supposed to feel like—fireworks and lightning bolts and the sound of waves crashing in your ears. I didn't have any of that. Thanks to you it was as unspecial as a kiss could be.

**Related Characters:** Lara Jean Song Covey (speaker), Genevieve, Peter Kavinsky

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 69-70

### Explanation and Analysis

In her goodbye love letter to Peter, Lara Jean accuses him of kissing her for no reason. This, she insists, is why she hates Peter so much: he stole her first kiss and ruined it.

Lara Jean starts to pick apart some of the particulars of her school's social structure here. Already, even in middle school, Genevieve emerges as someone people don't want to cross. Lara Jean implies that as a less popular girl, she doesn't have nearly as much power in this situation as either Genevieve or Peter. For instance, note the language Lara Jean uses to describe how the kiss unfolded. Peter kissed her, and all Lara Jean could do was accept it—he had all the power. Genevieve, on the other hand, was a popular girl and the known object of Peter's affections. So, in Lara Jean's view, Genevieve's mere existence complicated matters by making her kiss with Peter less special.

Then, Lara Jean also makes it clear here that she idealizes romance and has a very specific idea in her head of how romantic milestones should unfold. Being kissed by Peter, who supposedly likes someone else, doesn't line up with the "lightning bolts" and "waves crashing" that Lara Jean imagined—and she becomes angry when reality doesn't match up with her imagination. This starts to explain why Lara Jean is so confused about romance in the novel's present. She has specific ideas about how things should go, but those ideas aren't necessarily based in reality. So, part of Lara Jean's maturation process entails coming to terms with the fact that her dreams don't always match up to reality.

## Chapter 17 Quotes

☝☝ Not that anything exciting happened, for instance an impromptu game of spin the bottle or seven minutes in heaven—two possibilities for which us girls had prepared for with gum and lip gloss. All that happened was the boys played video games and us girls watched and played on our phones and whispered to each other. And then people's moms and dads were picking them up, and it was so anticlimactic after all that planning and anticipation. It was disappointing for me, not because I liked anyone, but because I liked romance and drama and I was hoping something exciting would happen to someone.

**Related Characters:** Lara Jean Song Covey (speaker), John Ambrose McClaren, Peter Kavinsky

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 73-74

### Explanation and Analysis

Lara Jean sets the stage for her middle school kiss with Peter: she and her female friends expected a lot more out of this hangout than what they got, though Lara Jean did ultimately get her kiss at the end.

Lara Jean makes it clear that she and her female friends expected this mixed-gender hangout to pan out differently than how it did. They expected to have the opportunity to experiment with physical intimacy—something that, judging by Lara Jean's tone, was very interesting to the girls at the time. This speaks to how the novel suggests it's normal for young people to hold up these milestones—such as kissing during a game of spin the bottle or wearing a strapless bra for the first time—as something extremely important and meaningful. Having never kissed someone before, and having lots of ideas about what that might be like, means that these events start to take on outsize importance in the girls' minds.

However, the girls are disappointed to discover that this hangout wasn't going to be exciting, romantic, or dramatic. Rather, it was boring—the boys ignored the girls, and the girls chatted among themselves and were disappointed at the end. Growing up and achieving these milestones, this suggests, is sometimes anticlimactic.

For Lara Jean in particular, this also shows how much she thrives on drama and romance, and how much she wants her dreams to come true in real life. It was especially disappointing for her when nothing happened to anyone, as she had a very specific idea of how this event should've unfolded. And this makes growing up more difficult for Lara Jean, as she finds herself consistently disappointed that adult milestones aren't as earthshattering as she hoped they'd be.

## Chapter 28 Quotes

☝☝ I never knew it before, but I think maybe all this time I've been invisible. Just someone who was there. Now that people think I'm Peter Kavinsky's girlfriend, they're wondering about me. Like, why? What about me made Peter like me? What do I have? What makes me so special? I would be wondering too.

I am now a Mysterious Girl. Before I was just a Quiet Girl. But becoming Peter's girlfriend has elevated me to Mysterious Girl.

**Related Characters:** Lara Jean Song Covey (speaker), Genevieve, Josh, Peter Kavinsky

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 138

### Explanation and Analysis

On one of the first days that Lara Jean and Peter spend time together as a fake couple at school, Lara Jean realizes that associating with Peter is changing her reputation amongst her classmates.

Being in a pretend relationship with Peter forces Lara Jean to consider her school's social structure and her place in it like she hasn't ever had to before. Prior to dating Peter, Lara Jean was quiet and inconspicuous, and she didn't think that anyone cared about her or what she did. Now, though, she realizes that people *are* watching her and wondering about her, and that they generally care about who she is and what she's doing. It's intoxicating for her to suddenly be a "Mysterious Girl" after being ignored for so long—in some ways, Lara Jean just wants attention and recognition from her classmates.

However, Lara Jean is perhaps overestimating how much

people care about her and what she's doing. She discovers this time and again over the course of the novel: for instance, it turns out that Josh doesn't care so much about Lara Jean's letter, and that Genevieve doesn't seem as interested in her relationship with Peter as Lara Jean and Peter hoped she'd be. In many ways, this just reflects Lara Jean's youth—she's the center of her own universe, and it's difficult for her to conceive of the possibility that nobody cares about her as much as she thinks they do. And given that Peter falls into this same mindset throughout the novel, this perhaps suggests that thinking this way is typical for young people, and that recognizing one's relative unimportance to others is part of coming of age.

## Chapter 29 Quotes

☝☝ "Yup, I think that's judgey. I think you're judgey in general. That's a character flaw that *you* should work on. I also think you need to learn how to kick back and have fun."

I'm listing all the ways I have fun—biking (which I hate), baking, reading; I consider saying knitting but I'm pretty sure he'll only make fun of me [...]

**Related Characters:** Lara Jean Song Covey, Peter Kavinsky (speaker), Margot Song Covey

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 143

### Explanation and Analysis

Lara Jean and Peter are having dinner at the local diner, and Lara Jean insists that it's a character flaw that Peter makes everything into a joke—something he finds offensive.

Peter and Lara Jean's relationship is still very new at this point, so Lara Jean isn't willing to consider changing her point of view. This is in part because she's spent her entire life idolizing Margot and doing everything that Margot wanted her to do—which included choosing responsibility over fun a lot of the time and judging people who made the opposite choice. So, Peter is introducing Lara Jean to an entirely new way of thinking about life and how she spends her time—one that she's not yet ready to accept, given how much she misses Margot and idolizes her big sister.

Lara Jean is also trying hard to impress Peter, and she does so in part by lying. She lies by insisting she likes biking when she doesn't, and also by omitting that she enjoys knitting. Lara Jean isn't yet comfortable being herself and taking pride in what she likes, so in her mind, the only way to get around that is by not being truthful. This speaks to how

insecure Lara Jean is more generally. In addition, this shows that Lara Jean lies without thinking about the potential consequences of her lies. Assuming she continues to date Peter, he'll eventually figure out that she's not actually interested in biking, and he may figure out she knits as well. This affects Peter's ability to trust Lara Jean, as her constant lies mean he never knows if she's telling the truth or not.

## Chapter 33 Quotes

☝ She doesn't know how it is with sisters. Margot and I, we made a pact, back in middle school. We swore we wouldn't have sex until we were married or we were really, really in love and at least twenty-one. Margot might be really, really in love, but she's not married and she's not twenty-one. She'd never go back on her word. With sisters a pact is everything.

**Related Characters:** Lara Jean Song Covey (speaker), Josh, Margot Song Covey, Chris

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 159-60

### Explanation and Analysis

Lara Jean and Chris are discussing whether Margot and Josh had sex. Chris is certain they have, but because of a pact Lara Jean and Margot made when they were kids, Lara Jean is certain Chris is wrong.

This pact shows several things: first, it shows how much Lara Jean and Margot rely on each other and on their nuclear family in general. Denying each other physical intimacy with another person means that in many ways, the girls will have to continue being each other's closest relationship—even if one of them is “really, really in love” with someone else. This reflects the girls' discomfort with romance and physical intimacy—it doesn't seem like it's a big deal for Lara Jean to promise to not have sex for a long time, in part because of how uncomfortable she is with the idea of opening up to another person.

Then, it's also interesting that what makes sex acceptable, per the pact, is that the girls are married. With this, the girls again show how much they value family. Stipulating that they have to be married before they can have sex essentially means that the girls have to create their own new, nuclear families before being physically intimate with another person. Being family, the girls imply, makes intimacy acceptable and okay—otherwise, intimacy is dangerous and undesirable.

## Chapter 35 Quotes

☝ “We can still talk to each other,” I say. “Nothing's changed.” That's the biggest lie I've ever told him, even bigger than the lie about my so-called dead twin Marcella. Until a couple of years ago Josh thought I had a twin sister named Marcella who died of leukemia.

“Okay. I feel like...I feel like you've been avoiding me ever since...”

He's going to say it. He's actually going to say it. I look down at the ground.

“Ever since Margot broke up with me.”

My head snaps up. That's what he thinks? That I'm avoiding him because of Margot? Did my letter really make that little of an impact?

**Related Characters:** Josh, Lara Jean Song Covey (speaker), Peter Kavinsky, Margot Song Covey

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 166

### Explanation and Analysis

One day after school, Josh catches Lara Jean outside and asks if they can talk. Lara Jean has recently begun a fake relationship with Peter in order to confuse Josh, since Josh recently got Lara Jean's letter admitting that she was once in love with him (and still is, unbeknownst to him).

This passage shows how much Lara Jean relies on lies and deception. The lie that nothing has changed between her and Josh seems to easily roll off her tongue—and this is because she's used to telling lies. She's even skilled at telling big ones, such as about her dead twin sister Marcella. While the lie about Marcella borders on ridiculous and humorous, the lie about everything being fine with Josh is far more meaningful. She and Josh have been friends for years, and Lara Jean wants nothing more than for her lie to be true. But seeing two of Lara Jean's lies next to each other makes it clear that Lara Jean indiscriminately lies about everything, with no thought for how she's going to deal with the damage the lie does or how far-fetched that lie might be.



Then, when Josh insists that this is about Margot breaking up with him, Lara Jean again has to confront the fact that the world does not actually revolve entirely around her. She's so caught up in trying to mitigate the damage done by having her letters sent out that it's inconceivable to her that everyone else involved isn't entirely focused on them. For Lara Jean, this is offensive and shakes her belief that she's doing the right thing by pretend-dating Peter. Her pretend relationship with Peter was, after all, supposed to throw

Josh off the scent and make it seem like Lara Jean doesn't like him. But now, it looks like Lara Jean didn't need to get so upset about her letters being sent out, as it seems like she's the only person who's still thinking about them.

## Chapter 37 Quotes

☝ I volunteered to bake six dozen cupcakes for Kitty's PTA bake sale. I did it because Margot's done it for the past two years. Margot only ever did it because she didn't want people to think Kitty's family wasn't involved enough in PTA. She did brownies both times, but I signed up for cupcakes because I thought they'd be a bigger hit.

**Related Characters:** Lara Jean Song Covey (speaker), Mommy, Daddy, Margot Song Covey, Kitty Song Covey

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 172

### Explanation and Analysis

Lara Jean is baking cupcakes for Kitty's PTA bake sale one Friday night. As Lara Jean explains her reasoning and Margot's reasoning for participating in the bake sale at all, it becomes clear that both girls are very concerned with making sure they look good to others. They don't want Kitty to have a hard time at school because her family seems uninvolved, or to make it seem like Kitty doesn't have support at home because she doesn't have a mother. This also illustrates another way that Margot in particular has had to grow up far before she was a legal adult, just because Mommy died. Without Mommy around (or Daddy around, for that matter) to take on baking treats for the bake sale, it fell to Margot to make sure that this task got done.

Lara Jean chooses to follow in Margot's footsteps in part because of how much she admires her. In order to impress Margot, Lara Jean believes she needs to demonstrate that she can do everything that Margot did to keep the family running smoothly—and ideally, she should do it better. This is why she chooses cupcakes instead of brownies; Lara Jean thinks of cupcakes as being more impressive and a way to show everyone at Kitty's school that Kitty's family is now more involved than ever.

## Chapter 38 Quotes

☝ “I guess I said no because I was scared.” [...]

“Of Tommy?”

“No. I like Tommy. It's not that. It's scary when it's real. When it's not just thinking about a person, but, like, having a real live person in front of you, with, like, expectations. And wants.” I finally look at Peter, and I'm surprised by how hard he's paying attention; his eyes are intent and focused on me like he's actually interested in what I'm saying. “Even when I liked a boy so much, loved him even, I would always rather be with my sisters, because that's where I belong.”

**Related Characters:** Peter Kavinsky, Lara Jean Song Covey (speaker), Kitty Song Covey, Margot Song Covey

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 192

### Explanation and Analysis

Lara Jean and Peter are sitting in Peter's car after a post-football game party one Friday night, discussing love and relationships. He's just asked Lara Jean why she's never had a boyfriend, and why she turned down Tommy's invitation to homecoming.

Lara Jean's reasoning shows how uncomfortable she is with intimacy, both emotional intimacy and physical intimacy. It's most comfortable for her to daydream about being in love and being in relationships—this is why she does things like scrapbook about Margot and Josh's relationship, for instance. If she's dating a real person, then she has to deal with someone else's thoughts and “expectations,” which might butt up against her own—and Lara Jean prefers things to be neat and easy, if at all possible.

But what's even more comfortable for Lara Jean than imagining a relationship is being with her sisters. Lara Jean, Kitty, and Margot all prioritize their relationships with one another over their relationships with anyone else. But for Lara Jean in particular, saying that she belongs with her sisters is a way for her to just sidestep the issue of her discomfort with emotional intimacy. Her family functions as an easy excuse in her mind; if she says she needs to be with her family, she clearly can't be with a boy instead.

However, despite Lara Jean's discomfort with intimacy, this is nevertheless an intimate moment with Peter. Peter genuinely wants to know how she feels, and he's listening carefully. And in a rare moment of honesty, Lara Jean tells him what she wants and what she's afraid of. Intimacy, this suggests, might not be as frightening as Lara Jean thinks it is—and experimenting with it is, perhaps, the best way for



her to figure that out.

## Chapter 41 Quotes

☛☛ Around ten he sends a text that says, *Sorry something came up. I can't come over tonight*. He doesn't say where he is or what he's doing, but I already know. He's with Genevieve. At lunch he was distracted; he kept texting on his phone. And then, later in the day, I saw them outside the girls' locker room. They didn't see me, but I saw them. They were just talking, but with Genevieve it's never *just* anything. She put her hand on his arm; he brushed her hair out of her eyes. I may only be a fake girlfriend, but that's not nothing.

**Related Characters:** Lara Jean Song Covey (speaker), Genevieve, Peter Kavinsky

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 216

### Explanation and Analysis

Lara Jean and Peter are supposed to study together tonight, but Peter backs out two hours after he said he'd be at Lara Jean's house. This is a major blow for Lara Jean, as she'd been looking forward to studying with Peter and spending more time with him. But him standing her up is even harder to accept because she believes she knows what Peter was doing instead of studying with her: hanging out with Genevieve, his ex-girlfriend. This, Lara Jean believes, is proof that Peter is still romantically interested in Genevieve, and that he will return to her the first chance she gets.

However, Lara Jean never actually talks about any of this with Peter. Rather, Lara Jean is quietly observing Peter and Genevieve and making assumptions about them and what they're doing—which means it's impossible to know for sure what's going on between them. In particular, Lara Jean's intense fear of Genevieve also makes it seem to her like Genevieve is trying to win Peter back. This train of thought begins to suggest that Lara Jean is jealous—which makes it seem like she's falling for Peter. Though she's not willing to admit it yet, this foreshadows that their sham relationship is going to become more difficult to manage, as Lara Jean's pretend relationship with Peter is starting to feel real.

## Chapter 43 Quotes

☛☛ Halfway through class he sends me a note. He's drawn spiderwebs around the edges. It says, *I'll be on time tomorrow*. I smile as I read it. Then I put it in my backpack, in my French textbook so the page won't crease or crumble. I want to keep it so when this is over, I can have something to look at and remember what it was like to be Peter Kavinsky's girlfriend. Even if it was all just pretend.

**Related Characters:** Lara Jean Song Covey (speaker), Genevieve, Peter Kavinsky

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 232

### Explanation and Analysis

It's Halloween; Peter and Lara Jean have spent the morning fighting about their costumes and Peter's chronic lateness. In this moment, Peter's notes—which he's contractually obligated to send to Lara Jean as part of their quest to annoy Genevieve—start to feel real and meaningful, and not just like tools to annoy Genevieve. Lara Jean wants to keep this particular note because in it, Peter demonstrates that he cares and wants to make this relationship good and fulfilling for Lara Jean. He's willing to change, and he's willing to promise on paper, if it makes her happy. Having never been in a relationship before, this is all new territory for Lara Jean—and it feels more meaningful in part because this is her first time receiving a note that makes her feel this way.


Lara Jean also makes it seem like while she's fully aware that she's only pretending to be Peter's girlfriend, things are starting to feel real. She's experiencing real emotion over getting this note, just as she experiences emotional distress when he's late to pick her up for school. She's taking the relationship seriously, even if it's pretend. And this has major implications for the future of their relationship, especially since it's supposed to end in a few months. This suggests that their relationship might be evolving into something more, becoming genuine and not just a sham.

## Chapter 45 Quotes

☝☝ My heart races the whole way home. But we make it, no accidents and nobody honking their horn at me, and that's the important thing. And the ice cream is fine, only a little melted on top. It will get easier each time, I think. I hope. I just have to keep trying.

I can't stand the thought of Kitty being scornful of me. I'm her big sister. I have to be someone she looks up to, the way I look up to Margot. How can Kitty look up to me if I'm weak?

**Related Characters:** Lara Jean Song Covey (speaker), Margot Song Covey, Kitty Song Covey

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 239

### Explanation and Analysis

When the grocery situation at home gets dire, Lara Jean finally works up the courage to drive to the store with Kitty (Lara Jean is a nervous driver, so this is a big deal for her). But though making it to the store and home again is frightening and emotionally distressing for Lara Jean, she can't deny that she did it—she can, when push comes to shove, successfully drive a car and get both herself and Kitty around town. And, as this was a grocery shopping trip, Lara Jean can provide for her family.


Lara Jean struggles with driving in part because of her own anxieties—but at the same time, Lara Jean hasn't had to practice driving before because Margot did all the driving before she left for school. So, in a way, Lara Jean is starting from a disadvantage, as she's having to learn how to do all these things, like drive, for the first time without Margot. In this sense, Margot hasn't necessarily done a good job of preparing Lara Jean for the future and to be independent—in some ways, she's actually made it more difficult for Lara Jean to be mature and self-sufficient.

Lara Jean, for her part, desperately wants to create for Kitty the kind of sisterly relationship that she had with Margot. Lara Jean wants to be like Margot in that she's trustworthy, reliable, and levelheaded—and interestingly, Lara Jean characterizes being anything other than like Margot as “weak.” With this, the novel shows how Lara Jean is also setting herself up to fail. She believes that because she's not exactly like Margot, she's failing. And though Lara Jean is no doubt struggling with certain things, she's also not giving herself credit that she perhaps deserves. She has, after all, just faced her fears and accomplished the task of grocery shopping without much issue.

## Chapter 48 Quotes

☝☝ “He's not what you'd think. People are so quick to judge him, but he's different.” I'm surprised to find I'm telling the truth. Peter *isn't* what you'd think. He is cocky and he can be obnoxious and he's always late, true, but there are other good and surprising things about him too. “He's...not what you think.”

**Related Characters:** Lara Jean Song Covey (speaker), Josh, Peter Kavinsky

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 248

### Explanation and Analysis



Lara Jean and Josh are eating at the diner and discussing Peter, whom Josh doesn't think is good enough for Lara Jean. The fact that Lara Jean discovers that what she has to say about Peter is true shows that Lara Jean has gotten to know Peter on a deeper, more personal level through their pretend relationship. There might be something to his reputation—he's late, he's too cocky, and she does find him obnoxious, all things that other kids at school note about him over the course of the novel. But Lara Jean also knows now that Peter is more than that. Peter is kind and sensitive; he makes Lara Jean feel safe admitting when she's afraid and what she doesn't know. And Peter has also shown that he's willing to make changes to make Lara Jean happy, so he's proven that he's not be totally selfish. Though Lara Jean can't articulate all of this effectively to Josh, she's privately learning the value of getting to know someone on a personal level, and not just believing the rumors that circulate around school.

## Chapter 49 Quotes

☝☝ “Good,” he says, and he takes my hand, and he closes my locker door, and he walks me to class like a real boyfriend, like we're really in love.

How was I supposed to know what's real and what's not? It feels like I'm the only one who doesn't know the difference.

**Related Characters:** Peter Kavinsky (speaker), Josh, Lara Jean Song Covey

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 257

### Explanation and Analysis

Lara Jean and Peter are ending their discussion of the fact

that Peter kissed Lara Jean in front of Josh yesterday—and unbeknownst to Peter, Lara Jean enjoyed the kiss.



Lara Jean’s relationship with Peter is becoming increasingly confusing as time goes on. While Lara Jean began the relationship with no feelings for Peter, and even resenting him a bit, she now treasures the time they spend together and enjoys how they interact with each other. Moreover, she did enjoy the kiss they shared yesterday—something that surprises her because she fears physical intimacy, and didn’t want to kiss Peter if he wasn’t her real boyfriend.

So, Lara Jean’s lie—that she likes Peter—is starting to come true. This makes things very confusing, as Lara Jean fears that she’s the only one who can’t keep track of what’s true and what’s a lie. With this, her pretend relationship with Peter and the lies that keep that relationship going start to spiral even more out of control. Lara Jean has already learned that she can’t totally control her feelings—so in this sense, she’s not in control of her lies about Peter, since she genuinely does like him.

## Chapter 51 Quotes

☝☝ Grandma gives me an approving look. “Good girl,” she says, and I feel warm and cozy inside, like how I used to feel after a cup of the Night-Night tea Mommy used to make me when I couldn’t fall asleep at night. Daddy’s made it for me a few times since, but it never tasted the same, and I never had the heart to tell him.

**Related Characters:** Lara Jean Song Covey, Grandma (speaker), Kitty Song Covey, Margot Song Covey, Daddy, Mommy

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 265

### Explanation and Analysis

On Thanksgiving, Lara Jean and her grandma (Mommy’s mom) discuss whether Lara Jean would be okay if Daddy started dating. While Lara Jean doesn’t have a problem with Daddy dating, what makes her feel even happier is pleasing Grandma with her approval. With this, the novel shows that Lara Jean desperately craves adults in her life making her feel “warm and cozy,” as Grandma does here. Mommy was able to do that with the “Night-Night tea” she made Lara Jean when she was alive, and Grandma is able to do that by praising Lara Jean. But Daddy, Lara Jean implies by omitting any mention of him doing the same here, isn’t necessarily able to make her feel this way. Instead, as when he can’t


quite get the Night-Night tea right, Daddy consistently falls short and isn’t always able to effectively support his daughters.

But because of the unspoken pact between Lara Jean, Margot, and Kitty, Lara Jean never feels okay telling Daddy that he’s falling short and that she needs something more or different from him. Within their family, the deal is that the girls make things easy for Daddy and support him—rather than letting him, as the adult parent in charge, support his daughters. So, while this passage is meaningful because it shows how close Lara Jean is with her grandmother and how much she misses Mommy, it also implicates Daddy for not being able to effectively care for his daughters.

## Chapter 59 Quotes

☝☝ Is this how people lose touch? I didn’t think that could happen with sisters. Maybe with other people, but never us. Before Margot left, I knew what she was thinking without having to ask; I knew everything about her. Not anymore. I don’t know what the view looks like outside her window, or if she still wakes up early every morning to have a real breakfast or if maybe now that she’s at college she likes to go out late and sleep in late. I don’t know if she prefers Scottish boys to American boys now, or if her roommate snores. All I know is she likes her classes and she’s been to visit London once. So basically I know nothing.

**Related Characters:** Lara Jean Song Covey (speaker), Kitty Song Covey, Margot Song Covey

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 294

### Explanation and Analysis

Margot has just returned home from Scotland, and things are tense between her and Lara Jean. This makes Lara Jean wonder if her relationship with Margot has changed forever.

Before Margot left for college, she and Lara Jean were extremely close, as Lara Jean details here. They knew what the other was thinking, and they knew how to support each other. But since Margot left, the girls haven’t spoken much—and as Lara Jean says, this means that she doesn’t know much about Margot’s day-to-day life, or what she thinks and feels these days. For Lara Jean, this is very unsettling; for years, she’s prided herself on how close she is with both Margot and Kitty. Now, it’s frightening to consider the possibility that all of that is changing, and that



Lara Jean is now on her own.


Part of this is because Lara Jean sees familial bonds as things that don't necessarily change. In her mind, sisters will always be sisters, which means they'll always be close and know what the other is thinking. So, as Lara Jean realizes that this isn't true, she has to reconsider what it means to her to be Margot's sister. And not knowing everything about each other doesn't make them any less related—but it does mean that they're not as good of friends as they used to be.

## Chapter 60 Quotes

☛ When my mom was alive, every Christmas we'd have what she called a recital party. She'd make tons of food and invite people over one night in December, and Margot and I would wear matching dresses and play Christmas carols on the piano all night. People would drift in and out of the piano room and sing along, and Margot and I would take turns playing. I hated real piano recitals because I was the worst in my age group and Margot was the best. It was humiliating to have to play some easy "Für Elise" while the other kids had already moved on to Liszt. I always hated recital party. I used to beg and beg not to have to play.

**Related Characters:** Lara Jean Song Covey (speaker), Mommy, Margot Song Covey

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 287

### Explanation and Analysis

When Margot suggests the family throw a recital party for the first time since Mommy died, Lara Jean explains to readers why she's not excited about this. To Lara Jean, the recital party has always been about one thing: showing everyone that Margot is better at everything than she is. Especially since Lara Jean is already feeling like Margot isn't willing to accept that Lara Jean is competent and responsible now, the recital party seems like an even worse idea. To Lara Jean, it's a way for Margot to lord her power and perfection over her sisters and situate herself in front of the neighbors as the one who's in charge and in control.

So now, as in the past, the recital party throws the girls' differences into sharp relief. But Lara Jean also doesn't consider that the recital party seems to be meaningful to Margot and was clearly very meaningful to Mommy as well.

For Margot, it was an opportunity to show off. For Mommy, it was an opportunity to be proud of her daughters and share their talents with all her friends and neighbors—for her, it might not have been about highlighting all the ways in which Margot is supposedly better than Lara Jean. This is harder for Lara Jean to consider, though, because of how sensitive she feels about Margot's return and her own feelings of inadequacy.

☛ Margot groans. "Puppies are so much work. You have to let them out to pee like a million times a day. And they shed like crazy. You'll never be able to wear black pants again. Also who's going to walk it, and feed it, and take care of it?"

"Kitty will. And I'll help."


"Kitty is so not ready for the responsibility." Her eyes say, *And neither are you.*

"Kitty's matured a lot since you've been gone." *And so have I.* "Did you know that Kitty packs her own lunch now? *And she helps with the laundry?* I don't have to nag her to do her homework, either. She just does it on her own."

"Really? Then I'm impressed."

Why can't she just say, *Good job, Lara Jean?* That's it.

**Related Characters:** Lara Jean Song Covey, Margot Song Covey (speaker), Daddy, Kitty Song Covey

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 298-99

### Explanation and Analysis

When Kitty falls asleep on the couch one night, Lara Jean and Margot argue over whether they should try to convince Daddy to get Kitty a puppy for Christmas. This argument highlights how difficult it is for Margot to let go of her role as the oldest, most mature, and most knowledgeable sister. She lists all the reasons why a puppy is a bad idea, and she makes it clear that she doesn't think her sisters are ready for that much responsibility.

But what Lara Jean has to say about Kitty's new willingness to take on household tasks suggests that Margot's arguments are more about Margot's own desire for control than about Kitty's readiness for a puppy. Kitty has indeed grown up a lot since Margot left, and as Lara Jean notes, she now performs household tasks without help or reminding. These are things that Kitty didn't do when Margot was around, and Margot seems unwilling to believe that Kitty has actually changed that much. If Margot can convince Lara

Jean that Kitty is still an irresponsible child—or otherwise assert her own assessment of Kitty as true—then she doesn't have to acknowledge how much both of her sisters have changed over the last few months.

Then there's also the subtext in this conversation: Margot doesn't want to acknowledge that Lara Jean has done a fine job over the last few months of keeping the family's daily life running smoothly. Admitting this would mean acknowledging that, in a way, everything Margot used to do the family was unnecessary—her sisters could've done things for themselves, and Margot could've spent her time differently. So, refusing to let go of her power is a way for Margot to justify her role in the family and ensure that she feels needed and necessary.

## Chapter 62 Quotes

☝☝ But...is he right about me? Do I only like boys I can never have? I've always known Peter was out of my reach. I've always known he didn't belong to me. But tonight he said he liked me. The thing I've been hoping for, he said it. So why didn't I just tell him I liked him back when I had the chance? Because I do. I like him back. Of course I do.

**Related Characters:** Lara Jean Song Covey (speaker), Genevieve, Margot Song Covey, Josh, Lucas Krapf, Kenny Donati, Peter Kavinsky

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 312

### Explanation and Analysis

On the ski trip, when Peter confesses to Lara Jean that he actually likes her, Lara Jean lashes out and refuses at first to tell him that she likes him back. Then, she goes to her room and wonders why she did that.

Lara Jean isn't totally aware of it, but her reasoning comes back to her discomfort with intimacy. It's scary for her to consider letting a boy in, being honest with him, and being vulnerable. But to a degree, Lara Jean has done this with Peter over the course of their fake relationship. Though they're only pretending to be boyfriend and girlfriend, Peter has still pushed Lara Jean out of her comfort zone, given her a safe space to voice her fears, and made her feel special and loved. Having done this with him already suggests that being emotionally intimate with a boy isn't as scary as Lara Jean thinks it is. It's only scary now that she's on the cusp of being in a real relationship with Peter.

Peter's words also offer some insight into the coping

mechanisms of sorts that Lara Jean has developed to avoid emotional intimacy. He identifies that Lara Jean, perhaps unwittingly, develops crushes on boys she can't actually date. Kenny from camp went home after camp, for instance; Lucas eventually came out as gay; Josh was dating Margot until a few months ago; and Peter, as a popular boy at school and Genevieve's boyfriend, seemed similarly out of reach. Liking these boys in particular means that, in theory, Lara Jean will never have to do the work of facing her fears and figuring out how to be in a relationship with someone. But as she discovers here, this method doesn't always work. Peter *does* like her, and now, she has to decide whether to be honest with him or continue to lie and avoid her fears going forward.

It's a major turning point for Lara Jean that she's willing to be honest with herself here about what she wants. This is the first time she admits outright that she likes Peter and wants to be with him. And this, the novel suggests, is the first step to Lara Jean being in a relationship that will be happy and fulfilling for her.

## Chapter 67 Quotes

☝☝ I've never seen her so happy or so patient. She spends all of Christmas day trying to teach him tricks and taking him outside to pee. Her eyes never stop shining. It makes me wish I was little again and everything could be solved with a Christmas Day puppy.

**Related Characters:** Lara Jean Song Covey (speaker), Peter Kavinsky, Margot Song Covey, Mommy, Jamie Fox-Pickle, Kitty Song Covey

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 331-32

### Explanation and Analysis

On Christmas, Lara Jean is pleasantly surprised when Kitty proves herself to be so dedicated to her new puppy, Jamie Fox-Pickle. The fact that Kitty is so good with and dedicated to Jamie shows that Lara Jean was right earlier: Kitty has matured. Kitty is ready to take on the responsibility of caring for another living being in much the same way that her sisters have cared for her for the last six years, since Mommy died. Though Kitty is still a young child, she shows here that, like her older sisters, she's also had to grow up much faster than she might have if Mommy hadn't died.



But even if Kitty is more responsible than Lara Jean and Margot thought, Lara Jean muses that Kitty is still obviously

immature—a warm cuddly puppy solves all Kitty’s issues. The same can’t be said for Lara Jean’s issues (she’s currently not speaking to Peter and is dealing with false rumors that she and Peter had sex in the hot tub on the ski trip). These problems are bigger and more complex than anything Kitty is dealing with, and a puppy won’t solve them. It’s a privilege, Lara Jean suggests, to be as young as Kitty and to have one’s problems fixed so easily. Growing up isn’t exciting—Lara Jean finds that her problems only get more complex and difficult as she gets older and has new experiences.

## Chapter 70 Quotes

☝☝ “You know what Mommy would always say to me?” She lifts her chin higher. “‘Take care of your sisters.’ So that’s what I did. I’ve always tried to put you and Kitty first. Do you have any idea how hard it was being so far away from you guys? How lonely it was? All I wanted to do was come back home, but I couldn’t, because I have to be strong. I have to be”—she struggles for a breath—“the good example. I can’t be weak. I have to show you guys how to be brave. Because...because Mommy isn’t here to do it.”

**Related Characters:** Margot Song Covey (speaker), Josh, Daddy, Mommy, Kitty Song Covey, Lara Jean Song Covey

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 346

### Explanation and Analysis

During Lara Jean and Margot’s final fight, Margot explains exactly why she took on the role she did in the family. Margot makes it clear that in her mind, she was stepping

into Mommy’s role. If Mommy wasn’t around to take care of her daughters, Margot reasoned, that responsibility was going to fall to her.

This, Margot explains, has had a number of consequences. Over the last six years, Margot has denied herself many experiences because she felt like she needed to stay home and take care of her sisters, rather than allow herself to experience new things. But rather than seeing this as a bad thing to resent, Margot instead took this on as her identity. It became a point of pride for her that she was able to care for her sisters—and this made leaving for college in Scotland far more difficult than it might have been otherwise.

But the other thing that made going to Scotland difficult was the simple fact that Margot is herself still a kid in a lot of ways. She’s only 18 or 19, just barely a legal adult, and she’s been far away from home for the first time in her life. Though it seemed like it was her responsibility to continue to care for her sisters by modeling bravery, Margot took that to mean that she couldn’t express any of her difficult emotions about leaving. This explains why, earlier in the novel, Lara Jean couldn’t find any trace of worry in Margot’s face—Margot was trying her best to hide her feelings.

The fact that Lara Jean and Margot are having this fight at all speaks to how unhealthy and, perhaps, unnecessary it was for Margot to take on this role as much as she has. This has meant that Lara Jean and Kitty can’t support Margot—they don’t know what she needs, after all. She’s hidden her true emotions from her sisters, just as Lara Jean hid her feelings for Josh and a number of other things over the course of the novel. But the novel offers hope that because Margot is finally willing to be truthful here, she and Lara Jean will be able to come to a better understanding of each other and move forward into a healthier relationship.



## 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.

## PREFACE

Lara Jean likes to save silly things, like souvenirs and ribbons. The most important things she saves, though, are her love letters. She keeps them in a teal **hatbox** that Mommy bought her, and the love letters are ones that she wrote herself. There are five, one for every boy she's ever loved. She writes like the boys will never read the letters, because they never *will* read them. Then, she seals and addresses the letters, and puts them in her hatbox. They're not exactly love letters; rather, Lara Jean writes the letters when she doesn't want to be in love anymore. She thinks of them like "exorcisms" designed to set her free—in theory, at least.

*Lara's habit of saving these love letters in such a special place makes it clear that she likes the idea of being in love. However, she writes these letters to help herself get over the boys rather than to tell them how she feels. This suggests that while the idea of intimacy and romance might be nice, she's not comfortable with taking action—there's no indication that she has any romantic experience beyond writing these letters.*



## CHAPTER 1

Josh is Margot's boyfriend, but the entire family is in love with him. Daddy loves Josh because as a single dad of three daughters who's also an ob-gyn, he's constantly surrounded by girls. Kitty loves Josh because he plays kid games with her without getting bored. Margot loves Josh because everyone else does.

*Lara Jean's family is close-knit and welcoming—everyone loves Josh, even though he's Margot's boyfriend. Margot loves Josh simply because everyone else does, which suggests that Margot values her family's approval of her decisions. Notably, Lara Jean (the narrator) doesn't mention how she feels about Josh, though it's not yet clear why.*



Margot is sitting on the living room floor. Kitty is creating a collage of dogs (she desperately wants a dog for Christmas), and Margot and Josh are on the couch. When a commercial for perfume comes on, Lara Jean sits up suddenly and suggests they meet in Paris for spring break. Josh assures Lara Jean that Daddy would let her go—especially if Josh comes too. As the older kids discuss their Paris trip excitedly, Kitty whines that she wants to go too. Though she's nine, too old sit in people's laps, Kitty crawls into Margot's and begs to come too. Margot assures her it could be a family vacation.

*Again, Josh might be Margot's boyfriend, but he's close with the whole family, so it's seemingly normal for him to hang out with Margot's sisters as well as her. And Kitty inviting herself along on the Paris trip shows that nobody is happy to be left out—when it comes to Lara Jean's family, everyone is involved, or nobody is.*



Later that night, Margot is on her computer in the kitchen while Lara Jean makes snickerdoodles, Kitty's favorite. Kitty isn't speaking to Lara Jean after the Paris discussion. Out of nowhere, Margot blurts out that she broke up with Josh. Her voice is calm, and she looks fine—Margot is *always* fine. Lara Jean is incredulous, but Margot says that she's going to college at Saint Andrews in Scotland—there's no point to having a boyfriend here. Lara Jean argues that Josh loves Margot more than anything, but Margot notes that Mommy once told her to not go to college with a boyfriend. Lara Jean always listens when Margot brings up Mommy; she wants to remember her better. Poor Kitty's only memories of Mommy are the ones her sisters have shared with her.

Lara Jean tries to convince Margot to go make up with Josh, but Margot only asks when the cookies will be ready. Stubbornly, Lara Jean says she's certain Margot and Josh will get back together; they love each other too much. However, she knows this isn't true. When Margot finishes something, she's done. Lara Jean wishes she could be more like Margot in this regard. Later, Lara Jean leaves a plate of cookies on Kitty's pillow and then looks out her bedroom window. Josh's light is still on next door.

## CHAPTER 2

The next morning, before Daddy and Kitty come downstairs, Lara Jean points out that they're going to be very upset that Margot broke up with Josh. Margot sighs that Josh isn't going to be coming over often once Margot leaves for Scotland anyway. Lara Jean watches closely as Margot makes coffee—Lara Jean will have to learn how to do it. Margot suggests that she just won't tell Kitty and Daddy.

To Lara Jean, it felt like a betrayal when Margot decided to attend college in Scotland. She saw it coming, but still. Lara Jean is still a bit mad, especially since they promised they'd be the three Song girls forever. Margot is first, Lara Jean is in the middle, and Kitty (Katherine on her birth certificate) is last. There used to be four Song girls, when Mommy was still alive. Song was Mommy's maiden name. Margot and Lara Jean look more Korean, like Mommy; Kitty looks more like Daddy. Mommy died six years ago, when she slipped and hit her head after mopping and never woke up. Twelve-year-old Margot found Mommy and called 911, while 10-year-old Lara Jean looked out for three-year-old Kitty.

*Margot is starting to move away from her family and gain some independence: she's going to college thousands of miles away from home, and she broke up with the boyfriend that everyone adores. To Lara Jean, though, this is ridiculous. She seems to believe that true love really can conquer all, even a long-distance relationship during one's first year of college. But Margot is taking advice from different sources, such as her mother, who isn't around anymore.*



*Again, Lara Jean thinks idealistically about love—it's inconceivable to her that Margot and Josh would actually break up while they're still in love. And Lara Jean continues to pressure Margot to make a different decision, even when Margot clearly isn't interested in considering other options. Lara Jean seems to believe (or at least hope) that she has some say over Margot's choices. This is, perhaps, another aspect of their family's closeness.*



*Telling Margot about how upset Daddy and Kitty will be about the breakup is a way for Lara Jean to try to pressure Margot into going against her own desires and prioritizing what will make the rest of her family happy. But Margot is becoming more independent, which is why she suggests not even sharing the news.*



*Margot's choice to go to school in Scotland feels like a betrayal to Lara Jean, which again emphasizes how close the sisters are. This is also made clear by the origin of the "four Song girls." The sisters' close relationship isn't just because they love one another; staying close with one another is also a way to keep Mommy's memory alive. Mommy's death also catapulted Margot and Lara Jean into more adult, caregiving roles, long before the girls were legal adults.*





People often wonder how Daddy does it as a single dad of three girls. Margot is the answer; she's an organizer and a good girl. Daddy tries his best, and the girls have an unspoken pact to make things as easy as possible for Daddy. Lara Jean sometimes wonders what it'd be like if Mommy hadn't died, but Margot doesn't see the point in those thought exercises.

When Daddy and Kitty come downstairs, Margot and Lara Jean get them coffee and breakfast. Kitty is still ignoring Lara Jean. When Daddy says he's going to Costco later and asks if he should get enough dinner food for Josh, Margot just tells him no.

### CHAPTER 3

It's the last few days of summer break, and Margot is going to leave for Scotland soon. Margot is driving Lara Jean and Kitty out of the neighborhood when they see Josh run past, training for track. Kitty tells Margot to turn around and invite Josh to join them, but Lara Jean insists it's a girls' day. The girls spend the morning at Target and then return home for lunch. Kitty has a swim meet later. Daddy misses the meet because he's busy delivering a baby, but Kitty wins two first-place ribbons. She doesn't ask why Josh didn't come to her meet until they're in the car on the way home. Lara Jean makes up a story about Josh having to take a last-minute shift at the bookstore.

Margot suddenly suggests they get frozen custards, successfully distracting Kitty. Lara Jean argues with Kitty about how much custard she can reasonably eat, and Margot muses that they probably don't have frozen custard in Scotland. When Lara Jean says Margot can have custard at Thanksgiving, Margot reminds her that she won't be home until Christmas. Thanksgiving is going to be different this year, since Margot usually does the turkey and the casseroles. Lara Jean doesn't know how to cook a turkey, and she suddenly feels panicky about not having Margot around. How can they be the Song girls without Margot?

### CHAPTER 4

Lara Jean's oldest friend is Chris. Chris is nothing like Margot: she smokes, hooks up with boys, and has been suspended. In sixth grade, they both liked stationery and movies, but by eighth grade, Chris would come to sleep over, sneak out to meet boys, and then return before dawn. She comes and goes when she feels like it—she sometimes appears in the magnolia tree outside Lara Jean's window. She and Margot can't stand each other.

*Lara Jean and her sisters have had to grow up very fast because of Mommy's death. Margot now seems to function as a mother to her younger sisters, and she's been in that role since she was 12 years old. She reads as more mature and pragmatic than Lara Jean by refusing to engage in thought exercises about what might have been.*



*Again, Margot and Lara Jean are shown to be caregivers in their family, as they prepare breakfast for Daddy and Kitty. They share the household workload with their father, essentially stepping into the role of the mother they lost.*



*Margot still hasn't told Kitty that she broke up with Josh, which is perhaps an attempt to protect Kitty from the heartache of losing someone she loves. Meanwhile, the fact that Daddy is too busy at work to attend Kitty's swim meet drives home that the girls are mostly on their own and must rely on one another. Lara Jean and Margot make parenting easier for Daddy by stepping into motherly role with Kitty.*



*Lara Jean's idea of family is very specific: it entails her dad and her sisters all living at home and looking out for one another. When Margot goes away to school, Lara Jean is going to have to reevaluate this idea and figure out how to be a good sister and daughter without Margot to lead the way. This illustrates how much Lara Jean looks up to Margot, especially when Lara Jean mentions cooking at Thanksgiving—Margot has, for years, shown Lara Jean what it means to be mature and in control.*



*The implication here is that as a rising high school junior, Lara Jean still likes stationery and movies, while Chris has long since moved on. Chris is, in this sense, more experienced than Lara Jean, as she's experimenting with substances and boys. Lara Jean, by contrast, is mainly focused on supporting her family.*



Chris invites herself over and is in the living room with Lara Jean when Margot gets home. Margot and Chris argue about Chris not using a coaster for her drink, and then Margot flounces upstairs. When Chris sarcastically asks if Josh is going to light candles for Margot once Margot leaves, Lara Jean reveals that they broke up. Chris insists Margot can't possibly be sad—Margot doesn't have “normal human emotions.” Then, she suggests that Margot's absence will be good for Lara Jean. Lara Jean should kiss some boys and live, and not just at the nursing home where she volunteers with Margot. Lara Jean insists the old people at the nursing home are awesome, but Chris remains unconvinced.

*Chris is being sarcastic here, but she also makes some significant assumptions about Margot—such as that Margot doesn't feel her emotions, just because she's more uptight than Chris is. With this, Chris equates truly living and having fun with emotional openness and freedom. She also frames Margot's departure as something that will help Lara Jean grow—now, Lara Jean will have to figure out who she is without her big sister around all the time.*



## CHAPTER 5

Kitty and Lara Jean are helping Margot pack; Margot leaves tomorrow. Margot can't decide which coat to take and ultimately decides to take two. The girls bicker good-naturedly, and then Margot sits down with her sisters and says that nothing is changing. They're the Song girls forever. Daddy appears in the doorway and starts to lug Margot's suitcases downstairs. Daddy has been on a cleaning spree for the last few weeks, probably because Margot is leaving. He's gotten rid of all sorts of things, much to Lara Jean's annoyance.

*Saying that they'll be the Song girls forever suggests that Margot believes the sisters can remain emotionally close, even as she moves far away. Meanwhile, Daddy's cleaning spree shows that everyone in the family, not just Lara Jean, is struggling with the upcoming change. Cleaning, organizing, and choosing what items stay in the house is a way for him to feel more in control as his daughters grow up and move further away from him, emotionally and physically.*



Lara Jean makes Margot promise to actually come home for Christmas, and Kitty complains that Lara Jean is mean. Lara Jean studies Margot's face for any emotion or fear—but she sees nothing. The girls all sleep in Margot's room that night. Once Kitty is asleep, Margot asks if Lara Jean has ever been in love. Before Lara Jean can answer, Margot says she wishes she'd fallen in love more than once in high school. Then, in an instant, she falls asleep.

*Given how together Margot seems, it might come as a surprise that she has regrets about how she conducted herself during high school. This could signal to Lara Jean that following in Margot's footsteps might not be the most fulfilling path. This is especially true since Margot seems to imply that to some degree, she thinks Chris is right: teenagers should live more and have more fun than Margot had.*



Lara Jean wakes up in the middle of the night. Margot isn't in bed, so Lara Jean gets up and looks out the window. Josh and Margot are out there, and Josh is crying. From their body language, Lara Jean can tell Margot hasn't changed her mind. Lara Jean goes back to bed, feeling like she witnessed something too intimate. She wonders what it'd be like to have a boy cry over her—specifically Josh. Lara Jean has been in love once before, with Josh.

*Because Lara Jean is so convinced that Margot and Josh belong together, it's even more emotionally difficult to see them in such obvious distress. But she also shares another reason why this is so distressing: she used to be in love with Josh. It's no doubt even more hurtful and confusing to see her sister hurt a boy Lara Jean herself loved.*



## CHAPTER 6

Two years ago, Josh was helping Lara Jean with her math homework in the library, and then he said he needed advice: he likes someone. Lara Jean hoped it was her, but she realized it couldn't be. She couldn't figure out who it might be, and the librarian shushed them before Lara Jean could ask questions. It never occurred to Lara Jean that Josh liked Margot, though Josh is exactly the kind of guy who'd like Margot. He reads comic books, is skinny, and is good at school. It wasn't surprising that Josh would like Margot, but it was surprising that she'd like him back.

Margot came home later that day with oddly bright eyes and announced that Josh liked her. Lara Jean was shocked and tried to hide her envy and despair from Margot. That night, Lara Jean wrote her letter to Josh and in an instant, "it was over." She hasn't thought of him romantically since then, because he and Margot are made for each other. Back in the present, Margot finally comes back to bed. She's crying, and Lara Jean knows she and Josh will get back together.

*In this passage, Lara Jean shows how common for her it is to make assumptions about people. It's unclear why, at this point, she doesn't think it's possible that Margot would return Josh's feelings. Regardless, though, Lara Jean clearly has very firm ideas about who Josh is, who Margot is, and the kind of people they're "supposed" to like. This also implies that Lara Jean's other assumptions might not all be correct; she was wrong here, after all.*



*By essentially allowing Margot and Josh to date each other without putting up a fuss, Lara Jean demonstrates how much she cares for her sister. She was willing to suppress her own feelings for Josh if it meant making Margot happy. Now, having to pivot and accept that Josh doesn't make Margot happy is hard for Lara Jean to accept, which is why she fixates on Margot and Josh getting back together.*



## CHAPTER 7

The next day, Daddy, Kitty, and Lara Jean drive Margot to the airport. Margot insists on going in all by herself, but Daddy refuses. She hugs and kisses everyone, saving Lara Jean for last. Margot tells Lara Jean to take good care of the others; she's in charge now. Lara Jean keeps looking for signs that Margot is going to miss the family as much as they'll miss her, but Margot continues through security without looking back. Lara Jean cries all the way home. At home, she wonders what Daddy and Kitty will do in two years, when she goes to college. Lara Jean decides to go to a local school and maybe even live at home, at least for the first semester.

*Lara Jean is constantly watching Margot to see if she's upset or afraid—but she gives no indication that she's asked Margot how she feels about all of this. So, Lara Jean may not have a full picture of what Margot is feeling—she's only assuming. Meanwhile, with Margot gone, Lara Jean now has to step into the primary caregiving role for Kitty. Given how much Lara Jean has relied on Margot for the last six years, this is a frightening prospect—it's a lot of responsibility.*



## CHAPTER 8

Chris calls that afternoon and tells Lara Jean to meet her at the mall; she needs Lara Jean's opinion on a leather jacket. Lara Jean is a "skittish driver," so she tries to refuse, but Chris points out that Lara Jean has to practice in order to get better. Now, Lara Jean is in Margot's car, driving. She hates changing lanes and going fast, and she always gets lost. She's never had to learn how to get places, since Margot always drove—but now Lara Jean has to do better, since Kitty will need someone to drive her places. But it feels silly to use a GPS; Lara Jean should know how to get around town.

*The car symbolizes independence and maturity—and Lara Jean, as a "skittish driver," isn't quite ready to handle the responsibility yet. Her hesitation to take over Margot's role is also a sign that Lara Jean isn't yet comfortable with being the oldest sister at home. Without Margot, though, Lara Jean knows she has to step up, whether she's ready or not, because Kitty needs her.*



Everything is going well today—until Lara Jean takes a shortcut and gets lost. At a four-way stop sign, Lara Jean looks both ways and speeds ahead. She feels a car crash into her on the right and screams, unable to breathe. When she gets out, the other driver demands to know if Lara Jean was texting. Seeing that she's close to tears, the driver says his car is fine and offers to call someone for Lara Jean. Lara Jean refuses, and the man drives off.

Lara Jean sits on the curb and stares at the car. She's wrecked it after two hours. She sobs; Daddy and Margot will be disappointed. Finally, Lara Jean calls Josh and asks him to come get her. He says he'll be there soon. A minute later, Lara Jean's classmate Peter Kavinsky pulls up in his fancy black Audi and asks if she's okay. Lara Jean waves him off when he gets out of the car, but he sits down next to her. They used to be part of a gang of friends that included John Ambrose McClaren, Genevieve, and sometimes Chris. They all used to live close together, but since then, most of the kids have moved to new neighborhoods. Lara Jean, Genevieve, and Peter aren't friends anymore, so this is weird.

Peter's phone buzzes; it's Genevieve, his girlfriend. Lara Jean wonders what it's like to have power over a boy, like Genevieve has over Peter. Peter offers to call Triple A, but Lara Jean refuses. As he gets back in his car, Lara Jean notes that Peter looks like a handsome World War I soldier. He was also Lara Jean's first kiss four years ago.

Josh shows up a minute later, angry that Lara Jean didn't give him the right address. He calls Triple A, and then they sit in his air-conditioned car. Lara Jean almost climbs into his backseat, until she realizes Margot isn't here. They discuss that Margot will be angry about the accident, and Lara Jean swears Josh to secrecy. As Lara Jean wonders how to tell Daddy, Josh asks if Lara Jean is going to ignore him now that he and Margot are broken up. Lara Jean tries to crack jokes, but Josh looks ready to cry. He asks if he can still hang out with her, Daddy, and Kitty; he'd hate to lose them. The tow truck arrives, and they head home. Josh offers to help Lara Jean tell Daddy, but Lara Jean knows she has to take responsibility.

## CHAPTER 9

Daddy isn't too mad, but the car needs a special part from Indiana or Idaho. In the meantime, Lara Jean will have to catch rides with Josh or take the bus. When Margot calls later that night, Kitty seems poised to tell her about the car. Lara Jean shushes her, so Kitty lies that Daddy and Lara Jean got into a fight. They discuss dinner and Margot's new roommate.

*For Lara Jean, getting into a car accident because she made a mistake (not stopping at the stop sign) reinforces that she's not ready to drive—or, for that matter, to be a responsible big sister to Kitty. Growing up and becoming more confident and responsible clearly isn't going to be a smooth process.*



*The fact that Lara Jean calls Josh to come get her instead of her father speaks to how disconnected Daddy is from his daughters. And as Lara Jean thinks about how much her group of friends has changed over the last few years, it shows that even if she still feels young and immature, her world is still changing. It's uncomfortable for her to have Peter with her, as it feels like a return to a different era.*



*Refusing Peter's offer to call Triple A reflects Lara Jean's discomfort relying on anyone but family and Josh for help. And describing Peter as being so handsome makes it seem like Lara Jean thinks he (or guys like him) are out of her league.*



*The fact that Josh is the one who calls Triple A drives home how uncomfortable Lara Jean is asking for help from people she doesn't trust completely. This means she has a very small pool of people to draw on when she's in need. Her support network is even smaller now that Margot is in Scotland. Meanwhile, Josh reveals that the breakup has been just as hard on him as it's been on Lara Jean.*



*In Lara Jean's mind, disappointing Margot is the worst thing that could happen—especially when she's already disappointed Daddy. However, not telling Margot about the accident is a lie by omission. Going this route shows that Lara Jean sees lies and omitting important information as a good way to not embarrass herself.*



After dinner, Lara Jean texts Chris. When she doesn't get an answer, Lara Jean decides to work on a scrapbook she's making for Margot. It's an involved process, but Lara Jean loves it. She's currently working on a page about Josh and Margot. Lara Jean is convinced they'll get back together—and even if they don't, Josh was still a huge part of Margot's life. Margot can't just forget him. She's applying some fancy heart-print washi tape when Daddy appears in the door and invites Lara Jean to watch a documentary with him. Unwilling to move everything downstairs, Lara Jean declines. She starts a sister page and includes a photo of all three girls and Mommy. Kitty is picking her nose in it.

*Memorializing Margot and Josh's relationship in the scrapbook makes it seem like to Lara Jean, how a relationship looks on the outside is more important than how the relationship feels for the people in it. Even though Margot has said the relationship is over, Lara Jean isn't willing to believe it—instead, she's actively trying to encourage Margot to get back together with Josh. Declining to watch the documentary with Daddy shows that it's not just Daddy who's distancing himself from his daughters—his daughters also distance themselves from him.*



## CHAPTER 10

Margot has always insisted that junior year is the most important year of high school. Lara Jean figures that if that's true, she should get her pleasure reading in now, before school starts. She's on the front porch reading a British spy romance from the 1980s when Josh comes out of his house to get the mail and then walks over to say hi. He invites Lara Jean and Kitty to see a movie later and teases Lara Jean about her “trashy” novel.

*Lara Jean seems to have every intention of making Margot proud and doing what Margot says, if she's trying to get her pleasure reading in now. This makes it seem like per Margot, Lara Jean won't have any time to do fun things once the school year starts. But Lara Jean also doesn't seem as academically driven as Margot, as evidenced in part by this “trashy” novel.*



Kitty is thrilled to see a movie with Josh. She sits in the middle, and Josh and Lara Jean smile at each other over her head. Margot always sat in the middle at movies, too, not wanting Lara Jean to feel left out. She's a really good big sister like that, but Lara Jean still sometimes felt left out. Now that Lara Jean is the one in the front seat with Josh instead of Margot, she realizes it's not so different to be in Margot's spot.

*It's a bit of a shock for Lara Jean to realize that although she's growing up, and certain things are new and different, some parts of her life still feel the same. This starts to show Lara Jean that Margot perhaps isn't so different from her, even if Margot seems far more mature and put together.*



Chris calls Lara Jean later while Lara Jean is painting her toenails. Chris is obviously at a loud party and shares that Genevieve dumped Peter Kavinsky—she's been cheating on him with a college guy. Lara Jean met Chris through Genevieve, because Chris and Genevieve are cousins. They fight all the time and look nothing alike. Chris was wild during freshman year, to the point that Genevieve forced Peter to shut down rumors about Chris's promiscuity. Lara Jean thought that was nice, but according to Chris, Genevieve only did it to help her own reputation.

*The revelation that Genevieve and Peter broke up suggests that the social structure at school is going to be in flux once the school year starts. The backstory about Genevieve and Chris also speaks to how important students' reputations are to them—no matter why Genevieve asked Peter to shut down the rumors about Chris, the fact remains that she was trying to preserve someone's reputation (either her own or Chris's).*



## CHAPTER 11

Daddy makes lasagna on Sunday, and Josh joins the family for dinner. Lara Jean feels bad when she sees Josh tense up at the mention of Margot. After dinner, since Daddy cooked, the kids clean up. When they're finished, Josh, Kitty, and Lara Jean watch TV in the living room while Kitty works on her dog collage. Josh asks Kitty what kind of dog she wants—she wants a male Akita. But she hesitates when Josh asks what she'd name the dog. Lara Jean knows why, so she teases Kitty and says the dog will be named after a boy Kitty likes. Kitty kicks at Lara Jean so hard she rips one of her dog pictures. Josh carefully tapes it back together, and Kitty takes her collage upstairs.

Lara Jean knows she deserves the silent treatment from Kitty, since Kitty has a crush on Josh. Once Kitty is gone, Lara Jean feels terrible. Margot wouldn't have done something so mean. She tells Josh that Kitty just likes a boy at school and says that she had crushes when she was nine. Josh wants to know who, and Lara Jean says she liked Peter Kavinsky. Josh almost gags—Peter is a “cliché” and a “cardboard cutout of a ‘cool guy.’” In return, Lara Jean reminds him that he had a crush on Ms. Rothschild, their neighbor who used to mow her lawn in a bikini top.

Then, Josh says Ms. Rothschild wasn't his first crush—Lara Jean was. He let her ride his scooter that one time when they were 12 and 11, so obviously he liked her. He says he got over the crush when Lara Jean crashed the scooter. As they head for the door, Josh thanks Lara Jean for being here for him during the breakup with Margot. Josh leaves, and Lara Jean can't help thinking that if she and Josh were dating, she'd never break up with him.

## CHAPTER 12

Lara Jean goes back in time to explain how her family met Josh. She, Margot, and Kitty were having a teddy bear tea party on the lawn. It was Lara Jean's idea, even though she and Margot were too old. She said it was for Kitty, since after Mommy's death the year before, Margot never said no to Kitty. Lara Jean was pouring tea when Josh climbed up on the fence. A month before this, when Josh's family moved in, the girls had written Josh off as a potential friend since he's a boy. But Kitty greeted Josh, asked his name, and invited him to play. Lara Jean didn't know how important Josh would become to her then, but she's not sure what she could've done differently had she known.

*Lara Jean is becoming a bit more empathetic as she notices Josh tensing up. But even as she's becoming more aware of others' emotions in some situations, she's still not above teasing her little sister—seemingly about something that's very important to Kitty, given Kitty's intense reaction to the teasing. So, Lara Jean is in a sort of in-between state in terms of her development, where she sometimes does the mature thing and at other times struggles to be mature and kind.*



*All three Covey sisters love and adore Josh, who seems to be the one male who's regularly present and supportive of them. It's unclear if Josh actually knows Peter well, so what he has to say about Peter is likely based on rumors and first impressions. So, it's hard to tell if Josh's assessment is correct or overblown.*



*Josh's willingness to admit that he used to have a crush on Lara Jean shows that he clearly trusts her. It's important that he makes it very clear he got over that crush quickly, as this reassures Lara Jean that he's not going to try to date her now, and in doing so, harm her relationship with Margot.*



*The grief Lara Jean felt after Mommy's death seemingly made her even less interested in growing up. Rather, she wanted to be able to feel like a little kid again and take comfort in childhood games, like tea parties. The fact that the girls were ultimately able to make friends with Josh after writing him off offers an important lesson: writing people off as potential friends based on factors like sex can rob people of opportunities to form close, meaningful relationships.*



## CHAPTER 13

Lara Jean thought she was over Josh. When she wrote her letter to him years ago, she said goodbye—letting Margot have Josh as her way of thanking Margot for putting everyone else first. Now, though, Lara Jean can't help but think that she loved Josh first, and that she'd never leave him if they were together. It feels "traitorous," especially since Margot hasn't even been gone a week. Deciding there's only one thing to do, Lara Jean decides to add onto her letter to Josh with a postscript. She adds on that she still loves Josh—and that this is a huge problem. When she's finished, Lara Jean puts it in her diary rather than her **hatbox**. She's not sure she's done yet.

*In Lara Jean's mind, it's not necessarily a bad thing that she gave up on Josh when he and Margot started dating. Rather, she thinks it was noble and mature of her. But now, she has to confront the possibility that trying to make herself get over Josh so suddenly hasn't actually worked. In this way, Lara Jean's goodbye letters may be convenient and easy ways to deal with difficult feelings, but they don't seem particularly effective in the long run.*



## CHAPTER 14

Kitty is still angry with Lara Jean and ignores her all morning. Finally, though, Lara Jean convinces Kitty to at least growl at her. But then, Kitty flounces away. Lara Jean decides to organize her outfits for the first week of school and is in the middle of it when Josh texts her. His text gives her a thrill, so she has to remind himself that he's off-limits. Josh invites Lara Jean on a bike ride—a Margot thing, not a Lara Jean thing. She declines and says she has to help Daddy around the house, so Josh offers to help Daddy. Lara Jean makes up a random excuse, hoping he doesn't show up to help. She fixates on him saying that she's keeping him going. She wants to help, but it's hard.

*Lara Jean subconsciously wants to talk to and hang out with Josh. But she has to balance these feelings against the fact that Margot would be hurt if Lara Jean got romantically involved with Josh. So once again, Lara Jean is eschewing her own desires to keep the peace in her family.*



## CHAPTER 15

Lara Jean loves beginnings, so she wakes up happy on the first day of school. She makes fancy pancakes, which is a tradition in the family—though this is Lara Jean's first year as the cook. Kitty meanly tells Lara Jean that she looks like a farm girl and refuses to braid Lara Jean's hair. Lara Jean gives Kitty her lunch, which includes all her favorite things, but Kitty just sniffs. Then, Lara Jean grabs her bag and runs outside to Josh's car. On the drive to school, they discuss Kitty's grudge and whether Lara Jean is as good of a big sister as Margot is. The answer is obvious: she isn't.

*Since Margot left, Lara Jean has been adamant that she has to grow up and fill Margot's shoes. But here, when she and Josh acknowledge that she's not as good of a big sister as Margot, it seems like Lara Jean is setting herself up for failure. It's also possible that there's more to Margot than just being the perfect big sister, though Lara Jean doesn't seem to consider this.*



## CHAPTER 16

A few days into the school year, Lara Jean is walking the track with Chris for gym class. She notices that Peter Kavinsky keeps looking at her. Finally, he runs over and asks to speak to Lara Jean privately. Chris stalks off, annoyed and curious. Then, Peter says quietly that he doesn't have any STDs. Lara Jean is flabbergasted as Peter says, clearly furious, that he doesn't always take the last slice of pizza like Lara Jean claims in her letter. Lara Jean did write Peter a letter years ago. She closes her eyes; this is a nightmare. When she opens her eyes, Peter is holding her letter in his hands.

Peter says the letter came in the mail yesterday and tries to talk about its contents, but Lara Jean feels ready to faint. She says she wrote the letter years ago and doesn't remember what she said (this is a lie). Lara Jean snatches it away, shaking. Then, concerned, Peter says he didn't mean to steal Lara Jean's first kiss. Lara Jean laughs that it's "ancient history" and races to the girls' locker room. There, she reads the letter.

In the letter, Lara Jean writes that she refuses to call Peter by his last name. She asks if he knew she'd fall in love with him when he kissed her. He must've, because he thinks everyone loves him, and that's what Lara Jean hates about him. She hates it because it's true. Then, she lists his worst qualities, like taking the last piece of pizza and being too good at everything. She accuses him of kissing her even though he liked Genevieve and Genevieve liked him back. Lara Jean wanted her first kiss to feel special, but it didn't. He must've kissed her to "do mind control" on her and make him seem beautiful and great.

Then, Lara Jean lists the reasons she likes Peter: he's kind to the stinky kids, and he still sings in chorus. She liked him for seventh and eighth grade. It was hard hearing Genevieve talk about him all the time, so it was a relief when Genevieve moved. Now, at the end of eighth grade, Lara Jean is proud to be over Peter—she's never going to love him again. If she ever kisses him again, she knows she won't fall in love. Rather, she'll catch an STD.

*It's unclear how Peter got ahold of Lara Jean's goodbye letter, given that she believed it was private and that he'd never see it. Now, he has—and Lara Jean suddenly has to deal with the ramifications. The fact that Peter decides to confront Lara Jean about the letter at all shows how caught up he is in his reputation. Lara Jean apparently wrote that Peter has STDs (likely to convince herself that he's undesirable). And given that Peter is one of the most popular guys in school, he's likely worried about how an accusation like this could affect his image.*



*Lara Jean's first thought when confronted with this situation is to lie—to her, this seems like the best way to escape embarrassment. Peter, though, starts to look more compassionate when he tries to address the accusation that he "stole" Lara Jean's first kiss. But this, too, could also be in service of his reputation—he also doesn't want others to think of him as predatory.*



*In her letter, Lara Jean seems emotional and perhaps immature. This makes sense, given that she never expected Peter (or anyone else) to read this letter—she thought it was a safe space where she could let out all her emotions. Lara Jean also seems to take aim at the fact that Peter is popular at school. He seemingly has no qualms about stringing two girls along, he's entitled, and he's "too good" at things. These things could be true, or they could simply be false judgments that are rooted in jealousy.*



*Lara Jean might resent Peter for his popularity, but she acknowledges that at least in some ways, he deserves to be so popular—he's a genuinely nice kid, if a bit entitled. This shows that she knows him on a deeper level, which makes sense given that the two were part of the same friend group at this time. So, her assessment of him, while written in an emotional and immature tone, is possibly more balanced than it would be otherwise. Her comment that she'll catch an STD from Peter, however, doesn't seem to be based on fact—rather, it seems like a false accusation rooted in Lara Jean's jealousy of Peter and Genevieve's relationship.*





## CHAPTER 17

Lara Jean would love to crawl into a hole and stay there. She still remembers that day in John Ambrose McClaren's basement. It was one of her first boy-girl hangouts, and Lara Jean was wearing a strapless bra for the first time. It felt different, and the girls were all prepared for kissing with lip gloss. But the boys just played video games until parents started to arrive. When Lara Jean and Peter were the last kids downstairs, Peter said her hair smelled good and then kissed her. After that, Peter was all Lara Jean could think about.

Lara Jean realizes that she has to find her **hatbox**—what if her other letters to John Ambrose McClaren, Kenny from camp, Lucas Krapf, and Josh were sent too? Lara Jean tells her gym teacher, Coach White, that she threw up, and he excuses her. She runs the entire way home and starts tearing her bedroom apart. The hatbox is missing. Josh texts and asks if Lara Jean needs a ride home, so Lara Jean turns her phone off.

The only thing Lara Jean can think of to do is call Margot. Margot picks up, but she clearly just woke up. She can tell something is wrong, but Lara Jean hesitates. She decides not to burden Margot with this—that's what Margot would do. Lara Jean tells Margot to go back to sleep. She hangs up and makes herself an ice cream sundae to eat in bed.

## CHAPTER 18

Later, Lara Jean wakes up to Kitty standing by her bed, informing her that there's ice cream on the sheets. Kitty says that Daddy wants to know what Lara Jean wants for dinner. Realizing that Daddy might've gotten rid of the **hatbox**, Lara Jean leaps up and runs downstairs. But when she asks Daddy about the box, he's confused—though he acknowledges it could've gone to Goodwill. Lara Jean falls dramatically to the floor and refuses to let Daddy pull her up. He suggests they look around the house again, and he offers to check Goodwill tomorrow. When he asks what was in the box, Lara Jean says it was "only everything." He suggests an ice cream sundae before dinner, but Lara Jean doesn't answer. She doesn't want to think about Josh reading the letter.

As Lara Jean does dishes after dinner, Josh rings the doorbell and asks Daddy if he can speak to Laura Jean. Panicking, Lara Jean races out the back door and into the neighbor's treehouse. She, Chris, Genevieve, and their other friends used to hang out there years ago. Lara Jean waits until she sees Josh go back to his house and then heads home.

*Lara Jean makes it clear that this hangout was anticlimactic for most of her friends. Growing up and achieving milestones (like first kisses) may seem exciting before they happen—but as Lara Jean and her friends discovered here, these milestones might not be all they're cracked up to be.*



*Realizing that the hatbox is missing implies that Lara Jean's problem is bigger than just Peter getting his letter—she may have many more disgruntled and confused boys to deal with. Turning her phone off and ignoring Josh speaks to Lara Jean's emotional immaturity—she's unable to think rationally and face her problems head-on in the moment.*



*Having her letters sent out represents a loss of control for Lara Jean. So, it seems like the only thing to do is to ask for help from the one person Lara Jean trusts completely: Margot. However, Lara Jean also recognizes that Margot is growing up and moving on, so in this situation, she decides it's better to try to deal with things herself.*



*Daddy's response to Lara Jean asking about the hatbox shows again how distant he is—he doesn't seem to grasp just how important the hatbox is to Lara Jean. Offering to make her a sundae when Lara Jean has already done that for herself also shows that while Lara Jean may be struggling to act mature and in control right now, she's nevertheless doing what her family has taught her to do when she's upset. She doesn't need Daddy to sooth her anymore, in other words—she can do that herself.*



*Again, it's perhaps immature for Lara Jean to run away from Josh—especially since she runs to a treehouse where she spent a lot of time as a kid. It's more comfortable for her to revert to the past than it is to face her difficult and embarrassing present situation.*



## CHAPTER 19

The next morning, Lara Jean wakes up with a plan. All she has to do is avoid Josh forever. There's also a chance that whoever mailed the letters didn't mail Josh's, and Lara Jean wants to be optimistic. At breakfast, Daddy promises to check Goodwill for the **hatbox**. Kitty asks what was in the box, but Lara Jean says that's private. Then, Kitty asks if Lara Jean will be mad at Daddy forever if he can't find the hatbox. She answers her own question: Lara Jean never holds grudges. Kitty and Daddy joke that the box contained berets and tease Lara Jean for leaving early. She's taking the bus.

## CHAPTER 20

What happens next is like “a slow-motion train wreck.” Lara Jean is trying to unjam her locker when Josh appears out of nowhere. He looks shocked, holds up her letter, and asks what it is. Lara Jean feels like she's floating and says she wrote it a long time ago—probably middle school. Josh points out that she mentions an event that took place only a couple years ago, so Lara Jean laughs to keep from crying. Josh asks if Lara Jean did or still does have feelings for him and asks why she never said anything. Suddenly, Lara Jean feels like she's 14 again, walking next to 15-year-old Josh, and it seemed like he was going to kiss her. Lara Jean picked a fight so he wouldn't.

Lara Jean blurts out that she's dating someone, to both her and Josh's surprise. She insists that she was confused when she wrote the letter a long time ago and begs him to not tell Margot about it. As Lara Jean walks away, Josh asks who she's dating. Just then, Lara Jean spots Peter Kavinsky walking down the hallway. Lara Jean races for Peter, leaps into his arms, and kisses him. He kisses her back. When Lara Jean pulls away, she thanks him and then runs away.

It takes two class periods for Lara Jean's heart to slow down. She clearly didn't think this through—picking Peter as her fake boyfriend was the worst idea, especially since he and Genevieve are an “institution” despite being broken up. Lara hides all day until gym class. When it's over, she waits for Peter outside the locker room. He's the last one out of the locker room. Lara Jean says the kiss was a joke, but he asks if it's related to the letter. Kindly, Peter says Lara Jean is cute “in a quirky way,” but he's not ready to date so soon after breaking up with Genevieve.

*While humorous, Lara Jean's insistence that she needs to avoid Josh forever could also read as immature. He's her neighbor, classmate, and friend; it'll be hard to ignore him forever, and it's arguably unfair to do so given that he may not know why she's avoiding him. Learning that Lara Jean never holds grudges offers some hope that she'll be able to move forward from this situation without too much fuss.*



*Everything Lara Jean says and does here—from lying about when she wrote the letter, to the memory of picking a fight with Josh so he wouldn't kiss her—suggests that she's afraid of intimacy, particularly with Josh. This is, of course, complicated by the fact that Lara Jean still has feelings for Josh; it's not like she can laugh about having had a crush on him in the past. But Lara Jean still feels like the feelings are off-limits, so she's willing to do anything, such as lie about them, to make them go away.*



*Here, Lara Jean reveals what she's really concerned about: Margot finding out about Lara Jean's feelings for Josh. Lara Jean's choice to impulsively lie about having a boyfriend and kiss Peter shows that her lies only create more problems. Now, she has to figure out how to handle the fact that she's done something unexpected with a popular boy, in a crowded school hallway.*



*Now that Lara Jean has some time and space to think about it, she realizes she's done something to majorly upset the school social structure. There's no way, she believes, that she can get away with pretending to date Peter when he and Genevieve are so connected and so popular. Going to talk to Peter does show that Lara Jean is capable of acting maturely, at least when she's pressured to do so.*



Lara Jean's mouth drops open. This is so insulting. She insists she doesn't like Peter—she kissed him exactly because she doesn't like him, and someone else sent out her letters. Peter picks up on the fact that he wasn't the only one to get a letter. Lara Jean says there were five letters, and she actually likes one of the boys. With prodding, she admits she likes Josh and explains that she told Josh that Peter was her boyfriend. Peter says Lara Jean is funny and asks what she's going to tell Josh, now that Josh thinks they're dating. Lara Jean says she'll figure it out.

*Peter's reaction to learning more about what's going on may mirror the reader's: Lara Jean's predicament is presented as somewhat funny, and it's unclear how she's going to get herself out of this mess. But with this, Peter also highlights the fact that because Lara Jean's first impulse is often to lie about things, she has a lot of work to do to fix them. She is, perhaps, creating even more problems and heartache for herself by relying on lies.*



## CHAPTER 21

Chris calls Lara Jean and as soon as Lara Jean picks up, she asks if she really kissed Peter Kavinsky “like a maniac.” Lara Jean can't decide if she wants to lie or tell the truth; the truth is so embarrassing. She admits she kissed him, and Chris notes that Genevieve will come after Lara Jean now—she still “thinks she owns his ass.” Chris promises to try to protect Lara Jean, but Lara Jean is still frightened. Once Chris hangs up, Lara Jean thinks that Margot would think the letters were pointless, though Margot would also help Lara Jean figure out how to deal with this. But Lara Jean can't tell Margot anything.

*Again, the fact that Lara Jean has to think so hard about whether to lie or tell the truth to Chris shows how much she relies on lying. Deciding whether to lie seems like a normal part of her thought process. Choosing not to tell Margot about this debacle is, in its own way, a lie of omission—which suggests that later, Lara Jean is going to have to deal with the consequences of not telling Margot. Chris makes it clear that kissing Peter is going to come with consequences, potentially very bad ones, given how popular and powerful Genevieve is.*



A while later, Lara Jean invites Kitty to play a game, but Kitty says she's going to a birthday sleepover. Kitty wants to know what crepes are (the birthday girl's mom is making crepes for breakfast) and then dashes off to find her pajamas. Lara Jean cuddles one of Kitty's stuffed animals and mopes; even her little sister has Friday night plans. Once Kitty leaves, Lara Jean throws herself into organizing her shoes and writing Margot a letter. She only writes about inconsequential things. As she writes, Lara Jean wishes she had more friends. Maybe if she weren't so lonely, she wouldn't have kissed Peter and told Josh Peter was her boyfriend.

*Margot's absence makes it even clearer to Lara Jean that she'd be happier with more people to rely on. Leaning on Margot was great while Margot was around, but now, Lara Jean doesn't feel able to trust Margot with her current secret. And though Lara Jean's relationship with Chris is fulfilling in its own way, she implies that having one friend outside of her nuclear family isn't enough to fulfill her. With this, Lara Jean identifies one way that she can improve her happiness going forward.*



## CHAPTER 22

Lara Jean wakes up on Saturday to the sound of Daddy mowing the lawn. She considers painting her bedroom to shake things up, but Margot is the only one who's painted a room before (when she volunteered with Habitat for Humanity). To avoid having to help with yardwork, Lara Jean cleans the downstairs and brainstorms how to get out of her current predicament.

*In this passage, Lara Jean presents Margot as someone virtuous (in that she volunteered with Habitat for Humanity) and skilled (since she knows how to paint rooms). In contrast, Lara Jean is none of those things, which she sees as a sign of her immaturity. She also seems to think of herself as less capable than Margot.*



Lara Jean is folding laundry when Kitty gets home. Kitty describes the Nutella crepes she ate and asks why they never have Nutella at home. Lara Jean notes that Margot is allergic to hazelnuts, but they can get some now that she's gone. When Lara Jean asks how much Kitty misses Margot on a scale of one to 10, Kitty gives a six point five—she's been too busy to miss Margot much. Kitty suggests that Lara Jean stay busier, so that she doesn't miss Margot so much.

*There might be some upsides to Margot being gone, such as being able to have Nutella at home without putting Margot in danger. It also seems like Kitty is so happy with Margot's absence because she's not old enough to be competing with Margot in anyway. While Lara Jean must constantly compare herself to Margot and take stock of where she falls short, Kitty isn't old enough to have to worry about that.*



Lara Jean is tickling Kitty in retaliation when Daddy comes inside with a letter that was returned to sender. It's Lara Jean's letter to Kenny from camp. Lara Jean rips open the letter and reads it. Her letter mentions a joke Kenny made about minnows, and then Lara Jean writes that Kenny made her feel better about being far away from home. When she's done, Lara Jean thinks that this is the first love letter she wrote, and she's glad it came back to her—though it wouldn't have been the worst thing if Kenny had gotten the letter.

*The letter to Kenny is very different in tone from the one Lara Jean sent to Peter. It's sweet and kind, and Lara Jean doesn't resort to writing out all of Kenny's faults to get over him; camp ending was seemingly enough to help end her crush. In this way, the letter is perhaps less embarrassing than the one Lara Jean wrote to Peter. It also helps that Kenny doesn't go to Lara Jean's school, so Lara Jean would never have to deal with the embarrassment of seeing him in the hallways.*



## CHAPTER 23

Daddy likes to cook Korean food on his days off (or he goes to the Korean market and buys ready-made food). He doesn't want his daughters to lose connection with their Korean side, but food is the only way he knows how to do that. Tonight, Daddy made *bo ssam*, which is brined pork shoulder wrapped in lettuce. He sets the table with the pretty dishes and texts a picture of the table to Margot. Then, he suggests that Lara Jean invite Josh over; Josh loves Korean food. Lara Jean pretends to text Josh, says he can't come, and calls for Kitty.

*By describing Daddy's efforts to keep his daughters in touch with their Korean heritage, Lara Jean presents her father as someone who's trying his best to support his daughters. However, his suggestion to invite Josh shows how little he actually knows about his daughters' lives—he seems unaware that Josh and Margot are broken up. And Lara Jean lies about texting him without hesitation, again showing how normal lying is for her.*



Daddy continues to ask about Josh coming over, but Lara Jean snips that there's no reason for him to visit now that he and Margot are broken up. Daddy clearly had no idea they broke up, but Kitty distracts him by racing to the table and serving herself. Lara Jean and Daddy sit down, and Daddy insists they have to pray before they eat. Then, Lara Jean takes a bit of the *bo ssam*—it's incredibly salty. Kitty and Lara Jean insist the food is great, but Daddy thinks it's a bit too salty.

*Insisting to Daddy that the too-salty *bo ssam* is great reads as part of Lara Jean and Kitty's quest to make things as easy as possible for their father. Eating the meal anyway means that Daddy doesn't have to find something else for the family to eat. But the inedible meal also shows his inability to complete household tasks like cooking for his daughters.*



Just then, Josh texts Lara Jean and asks if they're having Korean food—he saw the light on in the living room and he'd like to come over. Josh adores Korean food and always hangs out with Lara Jean's Korean grandma when she visits. Lara Jean muses that every woman in the family adores Josh; Mommy would've loved him, too. Kitty reads Josh's text aloud and Daddy says Josh should come, but Lara Jean announces that Josh isn't a part of the family anymore. Kitty says that they can still be friends with Josh, and Daddy agrees—Josh and Margot might still get back together. Near the end of the meal, Josh texts, "never mind."

All weekend, Lara Jean and Daddy experiment with how to make the *bo ssam* edible with little success. Kitty points out that this wouldn't be an issue if they had a dog to eat the meat. After dinner on Sunday, Lara Jean takes a neighbor dog for a walk; she's pet sitting for the dog's owners. As she's walking, Josh jogs up behind her and asks how things are going with Peter. Lara Jean tries to look sad and says they broke up this morning; he's too into Genevieve to date her. Josh looks confused and says he saw Peter earlier and Peter said nothing of the sort.

In a shrill voice, Lara Jean asks what Peter said. Josh explains that Peter shared that he really likes Lara Jean, which surprised him because Lara Jean doesn't seem like Peter's type. Offended, Lara Jean says she's not as pretty as Genevieve, but Josh says that Lara Jean is just innocent and likes to stay home. Lara Jean snatches her phone out of her pocket and pretends to take a phone call from Peter as she stalks away from Josh.

## CHAPTER 24

In chemistry class, Lara Jean passes Peter a note asking why he told Josh they were "a thing." After class, Peter finds Lara Jean and says he just did her a favor—she could thank him. Lara Jean does and thinks to herself that he's insufferable. Lara Jean says that she's already told Josh they broke up because "Genevieve has you whipped," but Peter glares at her and insists it's not true. Lara Jean says there's a rumor that he has Genevieve's name tattooed on his butt, but Peter leaps away when Lara Jean reaches for his shirt to confirm.

*Lara Jean has other reasons for not wanting Josh over (her letter and the fact that Josh now knows she has a crush on him) aside from him and Margot being broken up. But the breakup provides a convenient excuse, so Lara Jean's other problems go unnoticed by her family. Further, attempting to cut Josh out of the family shows how intent Lara Jean is on staying close with her nuclear family and not letting anyone else in.*



*Again, Lara Jean's lie backfires—she doesn't seem to consider that Peter might decide to go along with the lie. By roping Peter in, Lara Jean's lie has gotten too big for her to manage all by herself. But Lara Jean tells this particular lie in the first place because it's normal for her to assume things about Peter and his relationship with Genevieve.*



*This is surprising and offensive for Lara Jean on several levels. She clearly underestimated Peter, as it seems like he's playing along with her lie. And Josh shows that he has a very distinct idea of the kind of person Lara Jean is—and it's shocking to him that she might be willing to step outside of her comfort zone.*



*Lara Jean speaks as though Peter isn't totally his own person capable of making his own decisions because of his relationship with Genevieve. She's making a number of assumptions here—there's no telling what Peter and Genevieve's relationship was like. Again, Lara Jean's assumptions are keeping her from taking Peter seriously and getting to know him.*



As Lara Jean giggles, Peter snarls that he and Genevieve aren't together, and that their breakup was mutual. Lara Jean hastily backtracks and insists that Genevieve and Peter will be back together soon, since they were each other's first sexual experience. Peter is shocked that Lara Jean knows he and Genevieve had sex. Then, Lara Jean notes that nobody can date Peter anyway, after what happened to Jamila Singh. Peter dated Jamila for a short time last year, and Genevieve spread such awful rumors about her that Jamila's parents put her in private school.

As Lara Jean chatters about Jamila and Genevieve, Peter suggests that they let people—Genevieve especially—think that they're dating for a while. It'll get the point across to Genevieve that she and Peter aren't together anymore. Lara Jean is dumbfounded and says she doesn't like Peter like that, but Peter says that's the point. Lara Jean points out that Genevieve will "kill" girls who are close to Peter, but Peter dismisses this and says pretending to date will help them both out. Sweetly, Lara Jean says she doesn't want to be Peter's girlfriend, whether or real or pretend. She changes her mind when Peter says that Josh definitely believed they were together.

## CHAPTER 25

Peter is in the school parking lot when Lara Jean gets off the bus the next morning. He rolls his eyes when she notes that her car is in the shop and grabs Lara Jean's hand to walk into the building. Genevieve's best friend, Emily, does a double take. Through gritted teeth, Lara Jean and Peter argue over whose hand is responsible for the sweat. Finally, they get to Lara Jean's locker—and Peter tries to kiss Lara Jean. They end up bumping foreheads, and then Lara Jean sees Genevieve coming. She races away.

That afternoon, Lara Jean lies on her bed and relives the "horrible kiss-that-wasn't." She's not sure she can pretend-date Peter, and she decides to bike to his house to tell him. Lara Jean borrows Kitty's bike and helmet and heads over. Nobody's home, but just as Lara Jean is getting ready to text Chris for a ride, Peter drives up. They sit on the front porch and Lara Jean says they need to iron out their story. She suggests that they say they got together last week, when he helped her after her car accident. Peter says that story won't work; he and Genevieve hooked up right after he stopped to help Lara Jean. Lara Jean says the story works regardless.

*By bringing up the fact that everyone knows Peter and Genevieve have had sex, Lara Jean introduces readers to an important element of her school's social structure: kids are acutely aware of what others are doing sexually, and can, in some cases, use that knowledge to control one another. It seems like that's what Genevieve did to Jamila: she weaponized the possibility that Jamila and Peter were sexually involved in order to bully and humiliate Jamila.*



*Peter's suggestion shows that he believes he and Lara Jean can play the social system, just like Genevieve did when she spread rumors about Jamila. People wouldn't expect him to date Lara Jean, so it'd turn heads and change the conversation for a while. But for Lara Jean, this prospect isn't so simple. Given what happened to Jamila, it follows that she wouldn't want to risk angering Genevieve. Her fear of Genevieve seems genuine; in a way, Genevieve has real power to control other kids.*



*It clearly doesn't take much to attract attention at Lara Jean's school, which is exactly what she and Peter want. Now, the conversation will be about their (pretend) relationship, rather than about Josh or about Peter's relationship with Genevieve. However, this doesn't mean that Lara Jean isn't still nervous about intimacy—which is why it's so unsettling when Peter tries to kiss her.*



*Lara Jean is ready to call off the pretend relationship until Peter actually shows up. Even if she doesn't have a crush on him anymore, she still seems interested in pleasing and impressing him, which she can do by playing along. She also makes it clear that she knows something about how to manage lies: she and Peter have to figure out what their truth is, so that people don't get suspicious.*



Then, Lara Jean says they have to set ground rules. She says she doesn't want to kiss and asks for a paper and pen. Peter rolls his eyes, but he pulls out a notebook for Lara Jean. He insists they have to be able to do something physical, or his friends will think he's weird, so they decide he can put his hand in Lara Jean's back pocket. Then, Lara Jean admits she's never had a boyfriend before, and she wishes she were doing these things with a real boyfriend. Peter says they can skip some stuff—like him paying for her food, buying her flowers, or walking her to class.

Annoyed, Lara Jean asks what Genevieve wanted Peter to do when they were dating. Peter says she wanted him to write her notes, which he thought was unnecessary. Lara Jean realizes that Genevieve didn't want notes—she wanted love letters. Peter announces that he'll write Lara Jean a note every day, since it'll annoy Genevieve. They decide that Lara Jean has to go to a few parties with Peter, and they can't watch rom coms or "dumb action movies." They set their phone lock screens to pictures of each other and agree to never talk about their agreement. Lara Jean says they have to be done with this charade by the time Margot gets home for Christmas. They both sign the contract, and Lara Jean bikes home.

## CHAPTER 26

Lara Jean is at the bookstore where Josh works, getting a book for English class. She sneaks up behind Josh and then, giggling, says that she and Peter are back together. She feels like they can talk about everything, like books, movies, and "the usual stuff." Josh remarks that he didn't think Peter was into reading and then goes to help a coworker. This wasn't the reaction Lara Jean wanted, but she figures that things can go back to normal now.

## CHAPTER 27

Over dinner, Daddy announces that Margot called while Lara Jean was out earlier. Dinner is salad, toast, and cereal; Lara Jean needs to go to the grocery store. She's only spoken to Margot twice since she left, and Margot seldom responds to emails. What if Lara Jean was dead? The least Margot could do is respond to emails daily. Dad says that Margot is going to try out for the shinty club team; shinty is, apparently, like field hockey. Lara Jean thinks this is boring, so she suggests they send Margot a care package. Kitty immediately runs and fetches a picture she drew of Margot petting an Akita.

*For Lara Jean, this pretend relationship is very bittersweet. It's difficult for her to fathom having to do all these physical things with a boy she doesn't actually like, since she's never been in a relationship before. This speaks to how big of a deal physical intimacy is in her mind. But on the other hand, being a fake relationship makes things easier, since there's no emotional connection to make things messy.*



*Genevieve starts to look a little more human to Lara Jean when she realizes that Genevieve wanted real love letters. Lara Jean frames this as something normal and understandable, which makes Genevieve less like a totally evil character. Then, Lara Jean again shows that her family is what's most important to her by dictating that this has to be over by the time Margot gets home. Lara Jean believes that her fake relationship with Peter will prevent her from doing something she regrets with Josh and, in turn, save her relationship with her sister. So in her mind, Margot can't know about it.*



*Lara Jean and Peter may have made a bit of a miscalculation: Josh's reaction suggests that others don't care about their pretend relationship as much as they thought. This doesn't quite register for Lara Jean in this moment, but it does suggest that the pretend relationship is going to be more meaningful for Lara Jean and Peter than anyone else.*



*Lara Jean is struggling to figure out how to live without Margot. She's never had to grocery shop on her own, let alone know how to do anything else without Margot's help. But, notably, Lara Jean is bored to hear about Margot. For now, at least, Lara Jean misses how Margot can help her, but she isn't interested in Margot as a person or what's going on in Margot's life.*



Kitty asks for a critique of her drawing and smiles when Daddy compliments the dog—she’s clearly trying to get him to agree to getting a dog. Lara Jean lists the other things she’s going to send Margot. Daddy notes that Margot asked specifically for her brown boots—the boots Lara Jean wore last week and wanted to keep. He offers to mail the box tomorrow morning, but Lara Jean says she’s in the middle of knitting a scarf. Daddy convinces her to skip the scarf.

That night, Kitty slips her Christmas list under Lara Jean’s door. Unsurprisingly, she asks for a puppy. Lara Jean decides to get Kitty the ant farm, but she also decides to talk to Daddy about the puppy—a dog would help Kitty adjust to having Margot gone. Lara Jean slips into Kitty’s room, climbs into bed, and suggests they get a kitten instead. Kitty refuses a kitten and says she’ll take care of the puppy all by herself. Lara Jean agrees to talk to Daddy about a puppy if Kitty agrees to help out more around the house. It’s time for her to learn to do laundry.

On Sunday night, Lara Jean gets a call from an unfamiliar number. It’s Peter. Lara Jean asks how he got her number. After an awkward silence, Peter offers to drive her to school in the morning.

## CHAPTER 28

In the morning, Lara Jean wakes Kitty up early and begs for a braid crown. Kitty agrees to a side braid and then falls back to sleep, so Lara Jean agonizes over what to wear. Kitty is in the kitchen, ready for school, when Lara Jean gets downstairs. Kitty reminds her that she has a field trip today, so she has to get to school early. Lara Jean didn’t check the family calendar, so she forgot about this. She tells Kitty to come outside and wait with her.

Kitty and Lara Jean are outside waiting for Peter. They watch their neighbor, Ms. Rothschild, spill her hot coffee on her hand as usual (she’s always in a rush). Peter pulls up in his black Audi, and Lara Jean asks if he can drop Kitty off. They argue, since the Audi only seats two, but Lara Jean insists Kitty can ride on her lap. Peter relents, and the girls climb in. Kitty introduces herself as Katherine, and it’s immediately obvious that Peter and Kitty admire each other. She shrieks, though, when Peter says he’s Lara Jean’s boyfriend. Kitty calms down when she learns that Margot doesn’t know yet. As she jumps out of the car, she demands to hear the whole story later.

*Just as when Kitty discovered that Margot’s absence meant they could have Nutella at home, Lara Jean is also discovering good things about Margot being gone—such as being able to borrow her clothes and shoes. In other words, although Margot leaving has disrupted the way their family functions, her absence also gives Lara Jean a bit more freedom.*



*Lara Jean might not think she’s as good of a big sister as Margot was, but she’s still interested in making sure Kitty feels secure and cared for. Lara Jean doesn’t seem like she’s all that interested in a dog, but because it’s important to Kitty, she’s willing to set aside her own feelings and talk to Daddy about it.*



*Given Lara Jean’s surprise at getting this call, it seems like she wasn’t expecting to have much contact with Peter outside of school. Her lie is already getting bigger and more involved than she intended.*



*Margot is conscientious and responsible, so it’s unlikely that she would have forgotten something like Kitty’s field trip. This difference between the two older sisters likely contributes to Lara Jean feeling unconfident in her new role as Kitty’s stand-in parent.*



*For Lara Jean, there are bigger problems here than safety: she has to get Kitty to school, or Kitty is going to be disappointed and upset that she missed her field trip. When Kitty introduces herself to Peter as Katherine, it suggests that Kitty is going through the same kinds of growing pains as Lara Jean is. She gets to decide whether she’s going to go by her youthful nickname or the more mature Katherine.*





Peter and Lara Jean argue about whether it's okay to tell their families they're dating, and they discuss that Genevieve hasn't said anything yet. Once Peter parks at school, he leads Lara Jean to the cafeteria, where more people will see them. Sure enough, as soon as Lara Jean and Peter walk in, Genevieve "beams lasers" at Peter. Peter tries to steer Lara Jean to the table where his friends and Genevieve are sitting, but Lara Jean drags him to an empty table instead. She lies that she's not afraid of Genevieve.

As Peter grabs Lara Jean's hand and traces lines on her palm, she accuses him of "creeping her out" and declares that Peter has no experience with girls in general—just Genevieve. But Peter shrugs and notes that regardless, everyone is watching them. Lara Jean feels itchy, but she kind of likes the attention. Then she meets Genevieve's eyes and shivers. Genevieve has been scary since they were kids; one time, when Lara Jean was over to play, Genevieve wouldn't let Lara Jean leave.

It's time for class, so Peter ushers Lara Jean out of the cafeteria. She loves the feeling of this. It seems like now, suddenly, people are curious about her—she's become a "Mysterious Girl" and not just a "Quiet Girl."

After school, Lara Jean takes the bus home. A sophomore asks what's up with her and Peter, but Lara Jean ignores the girl. Instead, Lara Jean reads Peter's note, which just says that she did a good job today. As Lara Jean smiles, though, she hears the sophomore tell a friend that it's "weird" Peter would like her, since she's not pretty like Genevieve.

At home, Lara Jean puts on a nightgown and lies in bed until dark, ignoring Chris's calls. Kitty comes in and asks if she's sick and then asks what's for dinner. Lara Jean remembers it's her night for dinner and asks Kitty if she has money for pizza. Kitty is good at saving money and is happy to lend it out, but she also charges interest. Lara Jean decides she should ask Daddy about getting her a credit card for groceries, like Margot had. Kitty agrees to buy the pizza if Lara Jean tells her about Peter, but Kitty isn't impressed by Lara Jean's story. Fortunately, Kitty talks about her field trip over dinner and doesn't mention Peter. Later, Lara Jean finally picks up her phone. It's Chris, wanting to know everything. Lara Jean promises to tell her tomorrow.

*Again, even though Lara Jean feels Genevieve's "lasers," it doesn't seem like anyone cares about her relationship with Peter as much as Lara Jean and Peter do. As they discuss whether their families can know about their relationship, it's another indicator that their lie is already spiraling out of control.*



*People might not care as much about their relationship as Lara Jean thinks they will, but they're attracting attention, nevertheless. Lara Jean is likely going to become more popular at school simply by associating with Peter. But when she recalls how frightening Genevieve has always been, it shows that there may be consequences to suddenly becoming closer with the popular crowd.*



*Popularity is, at this point, intoxicating for Lara Jean. She's never been anything but quiet and well-behaved before, and now she realizes she might want to be more than that.*



*Other kids are making assumptions about Lara Jean, just as Lara Jean makes assumptions about others. This seems like a widespread practice at Lara Jean's school, and it means that kids don't truly get to know one another—they just rely on rumor and hearsay.*



*Lara Jean is so caught up in her personal struggles that she forgets that it's her responsibility to make sure Kitty eats dinner. This creates tension between Lara Jean's familial loyalty and her ability to grow up as her own person outside of her family. Importantly, though, Lara Jean comes up with a concrete plan (getting the credit card) that will give her some power and agency within her family, while also helping her feel more mature and in control.*



## CHAPTER 29

Lara Jean goes to her first football game that Friday with Peter and his friends. She's exhausted by 9:30. Suddenly, Peter throws an arm around her. Lara Jean notices Genevieve cheering with the cheerleaders, giving Peter a look. Once the game is finally over, Peter invites Lara Jean to come to a party with him. She refuses. But when Peter passes a diner on his way to take Lara Jean home, she agrees to get food with him. When Lara Jean used to come to the diner with Margot and Josh, they always sat in the back by the jukebox and got specific dishes every time. It feels odd when Peter insists on sitting up at the front.

The waitress knows Lara Jean and asks where Margot and Josh are. Peter rolls his eyes. Once the waitress is gone, Lara Jean asks why Peter hates Josh. Peter insists he doesn't hate Josh, but Josh did tell on him for cheating in seventh grade. Lara Jean's stomach twists, especially when she sees that Peter doesn't feel bad for cheating. She tries to tease him, but her attempt falls flat. Peter suggests that Lara Jean stop judging people, and then their food comes.

As they eat, Peter asks who else got letters. Lara Jean lists the boys: Peter, Josh, a boy from camp named Kenny, Lucas Krapf (whom Peter insists is gay), and John Ambrose McClaren. Peter is incredulous about John Ambrose, who moved away after eighth grade. Lara Jean hasn't heard from him, and she's a little sad—he's the most important boy she's loved, since he's so sweet. Lara Jean wonders aloud where John ended up, and Peter tries to tease her, but then pulls out his phone to call John Ambrose. Lara Jean tells him not to and then copies John Ambrose's number into her own phone; she'll call when she's ready. Later, that night, she pictures what it would be like to date John Ambrose.

## CHAPTER 30

On Saturday afternoon, Lara Jean and Margot are on the phone. Margot is pestering Lara Jean about getting her applications in for a spring internship, a process Lara Jean hasn't even started yet. Margot says that Lara Jean needs to take initiative and take her junior year seriously. Lara Jean feels ready to cry, and Margot backs off. The conversation shifts; Lara Jean decides not to tell Margot about Peter and says truthfully that she hasn't seen Josh much.

*Dating Peter is opening Lara Jean up to a whole new social world, one where people go to sporting events on Fridays rather than organizing their shoes. Navigating all these changes is exhausting for Lara Jean. And it becomes even more difficult when they go to the same diner where Lara Jean used to go with Margot and Josh, because even this feels different than it used to. Lara Jean can't escape that her social life is changing.*



*The fact that the waitress recognizes Lara Jean and asks after Margot and Josh shows just how often the three of them were at this café, which helps explain why Lara Jean feels so unsettled about being here with Peter—this is totally new territory for her. Meanwhile, Peter starts to seem less desirable to Lara Jean when he admits he cheated once. This could perhaps be read as hypocritical, though, since Lara Jean herself is dishonest with the people she's closest to.*



*Given the way that Lara Jean talks about John Ambrose, it seems like the letters didn't work the way she expected them to. It seems like she still has feelings for him or could again with very little prompting. So the letters, in this case, might help Lara Jean feel more in control of her emotions and keep her from having to do the frightening work of being in a relationship with someone. But when push comes to shove, they don't work—and she still has to figure out how she feels about these boys.*



*Margot makes it seem like Lara Jean has no choice but to be just as involved and successful in school as she was, which is a lot of pressure for Lara Jean. But Lara Jean also wants to impress her sister, which is why she doesn't say anything about Peter.*



## CHAPTER 31

Kitty and Lara Jean are on the front steps, waiting for Daddy (who's supposed to take Kitty to school) and Peter. Finally, Peter pulls up in a tan minivan. He calls for Kitty to get in, too, just as Ms. Rothschild comes out of her house and spills her coffee. The girls giggle as they climb in. Josh heads out to his car just then, and Kitty shouts hello at him. Then, Peter asks why the girls were laughing. Lara Jean tells him about Ms. Rothschild, and Peter deems it "sadistic" that they think her spilled coffee is funny. Kitty adores the new word. She readily gives Peter a high five and lets him have the rest of her Korean yogurt drink. Peter loves it and asks Lara Jean to bring him one tomorrow, "for services rendered." Lara Jean glares at him, but Kitty says she'll bring him one.

*Peter and Lara Jean's relationship might be pretend, but he's forming a genuine relationship with Kitty. He's teaching her fun new words, and in return, Kitty is more than willing to make sure he gets whatever food or drink he wants. And the fact that Peter drove his family's van, expecting to take Kitty to school in it, shows that he's taking his relationship with Lara Jean seriously. No matter his reasoning, he realizes that he has to earn Kitty's approval, or the relationship won't work.*



## CHAPTER 32

Lara Jean is trying to fix her hair before fourth period when Lucas Krapf approaches her. He says he thought she'd like to have "it" back and offers her the letter she wrote. Lucas insists Lara Jean doesn't have to explain herself; he was honored to get the letter, but he is gay. He asks her to keep it private, since he's not totally out yet. He also doesn't want to have to explain his sexuality to everyone, just like Lara Jean probably doesn't want to have to talk about being biracial with everyone. Lara Jean grins at Lucas. He gets her. They walk together to class, and Lara Jean just shrugs when Lucas asks about Peter.

*Lara Jean has already had practice dealing with the boys who got her letters, so dealing with Lucas isn't that hard. But Lucas also makes it easy for Lara Jean to recover from her embarrassment, as he's not a possible romantic partner for Lara Jean because of his sexuality. So, Lara Jean will never have to worry about what a crush on him might mean, and he's never going to like her back.*



In her letter to Lucas, Lara Jean compliments him on his exceptional manners. She laments that she doesn't know what kind of girls he likes and that she doesn't know anything "substantial" about him. But Lara Jean figures that since he's a writer, he has "deep reserves of emotion." She writes that Lucas is very special, and that more people should know how special he is.

*Like the letter to Kenny from camp, it seems like Lara Jean's letter to Lucas is mostly positive and kind. She doesn't have to lie to herself or make up rumors to get over him—rather, she just used writing him a letter as a form of closure. Some of Lara Jean's letters, it seems, do reflect that she got over the boy in question.*



## CHAPTER 33

Chris and Lara Jean hang out after school, eating popcorn. Lara Jean is aghast when Chris asks how far she's gone with Peter—she and Margot "aren't like that." They argue about whether Margot and Josh had sex. Chris thinks they did, but Lara Jean tells readers that she and Margot made a pact years ago to not have sex until marriage, or until they were very in love and 21. Margot wouldn't break the pact. But Chris insists that sex isn't such a big deal. Privately, Lara Jean wonders how scary sex would be.

*Lara Jean and Margot's pact to not have sex before marriage gives the reader more insight about their dynamic as sisters. The pact essentially ensures that the girls will be each other's closest relationships until they're older. Mandating marriage before sex also means that the girls will have to form their own new, nuclear families before experiencing physical intimacy, again emphasizing the importance of family for both sisters.*



## CHAPTER 34

The next afternoon, as Lara Jean helps Peter study for chemistry in the library, she asks if he thinks couples who have been together a long time have had sex. Peter insists he needs more information, such as age and how long they've been together. After Lara Jean answers, he says it's likely they have had sex and asks why Lara Jean is asking. Lara Jean says Chris believes this pretend couple has had sex, but Peter deems Chris a "train wreck." He watched her do a drunk striptease on a friend's roof freshman year. Then he asks why Lara Jean and Chris are friends, since they don't have anything in common.

In response, Lara Jean snippily asks what *she* and Peter talk about; it's not like they have much in common, either. Peter puts his head in her lap, and Lara Jean says he's in an obnoxious mood today. When he asks for a bedtime story, Lara Jean scolds him to not flirt. Peter sits back up to check his phone, and Lara Jean wishes she hadn't said anything.

*It's likely that Lara Jean is referring to Margot and Josh here when she asks Peter's opinion whether this couple has had sex. The fact that Lara Jean is asking in the first place hints that she might not totally trust Margot—after all, why else would she wonder if Margot has had sex, given their pact? Peter also clearly judges people, just like Lara Jean does, when he says that Chris is a "train wreck." To him, it's inconceivable that Chris might also be a good friend to Lara Jean.*



*Lara Jean is trying to be contrary here, but she also makes an important point: just because two people are very different doesn't mean they can't find anything to talk about. She and Peter (and she and Chris, for that matter) come up with all sorts of things to talk about, even if they're very different.*



## CHAPTER 35

Lara Jean is in French class staring out the window when she sees Josh heading for the bleachers with his lunch. She doesn't know why he's eating alone, since he has friends. But Lara Jean realizes Josh and his friends didn't hang out much last year, since Josh was with Margot and Lara Jean so much. If Lara Jean hadn't developed a crush on him, she could still be his friend. Maybe this is why Mommy told Margot to not have a boyfriend when she went to college. A romantic partner, Lara Jean realizes, is the only person you want to be with—and when you break up, you're all alone.

Since Peter has a lacrosse game, Lara Jean takes the bus home from school in the afternoon. As she's getting the mail, Josh gets home next door. He asks how long the car will be in the shop, teases Lara Jean about not liking to drive, and then offers to give her a ride when she needs it. He says that the two of them riding together would be more environmentally friendly than Peter picking Lara Jean up, anyway.

*In this moment, Lara Jean becomes a bit more mature and introspective. She starts to see Josh as his own person, one who's hurting, rather than the person who's turned her life upside down. And though she doesn't seem totally aware of what she's realizing, she also starts to see that Margot (perhaps unwittingly) kept Lara Jean and Josh from forming relationships with other people. And this, in turn, is making it harder for both of them to move on, as neither of them has much of a support system other than each other.*



*Josh is making every effort to keep things calm and casual between himself and Lara Jean, showing that he realizes how off-balance she feels after he got her letter. He's trying to make Lara Jean feel more comfortable and willing to trust him.*



Then, Josh awkwardly says that he wants to say something, but it feels weird. Lara Jean lies that nothing has changed, so they can still talk. Josh asks if Lara Jean has been avoiding him since he and Margot broke up. Lara Jean is shocked—this is about Margot and not her letter? Josh says he doesn't want to lose Lara Jean too. This annoys Lara Jean, since him saying "too" makes it clear that he doesn't return her feelings for him. He starts to bring up the letter, but Lara Jean cuts him off. She agrees to ride with him to school tomorrow and tells herself this is a good thing. They can go back to being friends.

After dinner, Lara Jean teaches Kitty how to do laundry. Kitty ends up liking it—she can fold clothes in front of the TV. Then, the girls get ready for bed together. Kitty asks if Peter might take them to McDonald's tomorrow morning, but Lara Jean tells Kitty not to get used to Peter. Josh is giving them a ride tomorrow. Kitty asks if Peter will be jealous. Though Lara Jean insists he won't be, when she texts Peter to say she doesn't need a ride, she doesn't tell him she's riding with Josh.

## CHAPTER 36

In his daily note, Peter invites Lara Jean to go get frozen yogurt at Tart and Tangy after school. Lara Jean agrees and accompanies Peter and his friends to Tart and Tangy. Peter insists on paying for Lara Jean's yogurt, since his friends are watching. Genevieve isn't here. In fact, she's been "disturbingly quiet" about Peter and Lara Jean's relationship. She's going to strike at some point. But Lara Jean enjoys her time with the boys—it's more fun than organizing her shoes.

When the group is done eating, Peter's friend Gabe says that if you say Lara Jean's name fast, it sounds like Large. He announces that he's going to call Lara Jean "Large" from now on, which is funny because she's tiny. Darrell agrees to the nickname as Gabe picks Lara Jean up and throws her over his shoulder. He spins her around and only puts her down when Peter says to. Peter assures Lara Jean that his friends love her; they all hated Genevieve. Lara Jean is thrilled to feel like part of a group.

*In Lara Jean's mind, everything is all about her—which is perhaps normal for a teenager but isn't entirely true. This is why she's so surprised to learn that Josh thinks she's acting oddly because of his breakup with Margot, rather than because of her letter. To Lara Jean, there's nothing more important than the letter. (That's why she's pretend-dating Peter, after all.) But that's clearly not what Josh is worried about. When she then lies about how she feels and what she thinks, Lara Jean's immaturity shines through even more.*



*Kitty is clearly growing up, since she so readily embraces the increased responsibility of doing laundry—and Lara Jean is also successful in her ability to teach her. When Lara Jean wonders seriously if Peter might be jealous, it suggests that on some level, she is beginning to take their relationship seriously—even if it is a sham.*



*Again, when Peter insists on paying for Lara Jean's yogurt after saying he wouldn't pay for things, it suggests that Lara Jean and Peter are far more concerned with what other people think of their relationship than they perhaps need to be. This is backed up by the fact that Genevieve has been so quiet—it's impossible to tell if she even cares.*



*The relationship is getting more emotionally complicated for Lara Jean. She may have entered into it for show, but she's also finding that she likes Peter's friends and enjoys being social. This experience shows her that she can experiment with the kind of person she is and try out new things. She might end up liking something that she never expected to.*



## CHAPTER 37

Lara Jean volunteered to bake six dozen cupcakes for the PTA sale at Kitty's school. Margot used to bake brownies for the sale just so people would think Kitty's family was involved. Lara Jean figured cupcakes would look better than brownies, but now she realizes Margot had the right idea—cupcakes are fussy and take forever. As she's measuring flour, the doorbell rings. Kitty refuses to get it, so Lara Jean opens it. It's Peter, and he laughs—she has flour on her face. He asks if Lara Jean read his note yesterday; they're supposed to go to the game. Lara Jean says she can't, since she has to finish the cupcakes.

Peter brushes past Lara Jean, takes off his shoes, and says his mom is making Rice Krispies treats. Lara Jean suggests they go to the game next Friday as Peter remarks that the house is just like he remembers; he used their bathroom once when a bunch of kids were playing in the neighbor's treehouse. Peter suggests that Lara Jean buy cupcakes, and when she refuses, he says Kitty should help—and he's going to help too. They can go to the party after the game. Lara Jean didn't read the note, so she didn't know about the party, either.

Lara Jean isn't sure she can go to the party, and she's not going to tell Peter that Daddy should be home soon to give permission. Peter groans that he needs Lara Jean—Genevieve hasn't said anything, and she might bring her new boyfriend to the party. And he helped her out with Josh. He offers to help with the cupcakes, so Lara Jean finds him an apron. As he dumps butter into the mixing bowl, they discuss what Lara Jean does on Friday nights. She's flustered and can't keep count of her cups of flour. Peter tries to take the measuring cup, but he ends up dusting them both with flour. He laughs and calls Lara Jean a grandma.

Lara Jean again tries to measure her flour as Peter asks why they don't hang out anymore. Lara Jean fumbles that things changed in middle school. In reality, Lara Jean just wasn't popular enough for Genevieve, so Genevieve cut her out of the group. To change the subject, Lara Jean shouts for Kitty. Kitty comes downstairs to say hi to Peter, but she refuses to help with the cupcakes. Peter and Lara Jean are measuring ingredients when Daddy gets home with Chinese takeout. Peter introduces himself, and Daddy seems happy to see him again; he remembers Peter from the old days. Daddy offers Peter food and agrees that Lara Jean can go to the party—he and Kitty will finish the cupcakes.

*Margot and Lara Jean's reasoning for participating in the bake sale may explain why Lara Jean is so caught up in appearances: Margot clearly was, if she was concerned about making their family look involved. When Peter shows up, Lara Jean realizes that she's going to have to make a choice as to where to show her loyalty: Peter, or her family. For now, at least, it's more important to her to keep up family appearances than play along with the pretend relationship.*



*Peter is trying to give Lara Jean a way to balance her familial obligations with her obligations to him, as his pretend girlfriend. But when Lara Jean admits that she didn't read his note earlier, it shows that she hasn't been so concerned with balancing these two things—she's just been caught up in taking care of her family.*



*Peter is still operating under the assumption that Genevieve is paying close attention and cares a lot that he's dating Lara Jean. So, to him, it's essential that they make an appearance at the party—he believes it'll annoy Genevieve. But again, it's hard to tell if Genevieve is spending any time worrying about Peter and Lara Jean's relationship, so he could be worried for no reason. When Lara Jean gets so flustered during this conversation, it suggests she's somewhat embarrassed that she's spent so much time at home rather than out being social—especially now that she's seen what other kids do on Fridays.*



*Though Peter cares a lot about what other kids at school think of him, he doesn't seem totally sure of where anyone else stands—it doesn't seem to occur to him that he and Lara Jean stopped hanging out before their pretend relationship because Genevieve didn't want them to spend time together. It's also significant that Lara Jean blames Genevieve for cutting her out. This suggests that Lara Jean was, in some ways, forced into becoming the "grandma" that Peter accused her of being—she might have wanted to stay a part of the group.*



Lara Jean runs upstairs to change. Right now, all her clothes look awful—she knows that Genevieve will inevitably be wearing the perfect thing. Peter knocks on her door, but Lara Jean sends him away. She needs more time to prepare for something like this. Finally dressed, Lara Jean runs to Margot's room to look for a sweater. In Margot's dresser drawer, Lara Jean finds a letter from Josh. She opens it and reads it. Josh writes that no matter what Margot says, she broke up with him because they had sex. Lara Jean stops reading—Chris was right about Margot and Josh. Lara Jean realizes she knows nothing about her sister and puts the letter back where she found it.

*It totally changes Lara Jean's view of Margot to learn that Margot and Josh had sex. It means that Margot broke the pact, which Lara Jean sees as a major betrayal. Her reaction is perhaps hypocritical, though, given that Lara Jean is keeping major secrets from Margot. Though Josh insists that Margot broke up with him because they had sex, it's impossible to tell if that's true or not, since none of them know Margot's private reasoning. But if it is true, it could be that Margot and her sisters are so used to relying on each other that it's difficult to let someone else in emotionally—it may have been easier to cut Josh out.*



## CHAPTER 38

At the door of Steve Bledell's mansion, Peter tells Lara Jean that all she has to do is act like she's in love with him. He pulls her hair tie out, fluffs her hair, and takes her picture—he needs evidence on his phone, in case Genevieve checks it. Walking into the party, Lara Jean feels proud to be with him. As soon as Lara Jean is in the mansion, Genevieve and Emily call to her. Peter suddenly disappears, so Lara Jean crosses the room to the other girls. It seems like everyone is watching to see what Genevieve will do.

*Being at this party with Peter is simultaneously thrilling and frightening for Lara Jean. Again, she enjoys the attention from other kids, but it's scary to have to actually talk to Genevieve. The way Lara Jean describes the tenor in the room suggests that Genevieve has a lot of power over her classmates—Lara Jean makes it seem like others will agree with whatever Genevieve's opinion is on Lara Jean and Peter's relationship.*



Emily asks how Lara Jean and Peter got together, and Lara Jean insists that whatever Peter said is the story. She's heard that Genevieve is a mean drunk, which makes her nervous. Seeing her hesitation, Genevieve says it's fine; she and Peter are over. Lara Jean admits that she and Peter got together right before school started but she sees Genevieve's eyes change. That was clearly the wrong answer. Genevieve is the kind of person you want to like you, even if you know she's cruel. She knows how to draw people in. Lara Jean waits for her response, but Genevieve just says it's "adorable" and changes the subject. Lara Jean excuses herself to go to the bathroom, and when she comes back, she sits on Peter's lap. She sees Genevieve glare and leave the room. Finally, some success.

*While Lara Jean observes that Genevieve's eyes change, it's not clear exactly why they change. Lara Jean is making assumptions about what Genevieve is thinking, none of which are possible to verify. Indeed, going by what Genevieve says and does, it seems to confirm that Genevieve doesn't care nearly as much that Lara Jean and Peter are dating as Lara Jean thinks she does. But Lara Jean engages in these mental gymnastics because she's so afraid of Genevieve—Genevieve, with her temper, encourages other people to be constantly on edge.*



Later, Lara Jean sees Genevieve and Peter talking in the kitchen. She doesn't notice Lucas come up next to her. She tells him she doesn't know what they're fighting about; privately, she hopes they're fighting about her. But Lucas calls her closer and says them fighting is bad—it means they still care for each other. He warns Lara Jean to be careful. Just then, Peter comes over to Lara Jean and tells her it's time to go.

*Lucas behaves in a way that suggests he's fully supportive of Lara Jean dating Peter; he doesn't want to see Genevieve and Peter get back together. So, he makes a point to give Lara Jean advice, as he recognizes that Lara Jean is somewhat naïve when it comes to navigating such a fraught love triangle.*



Out in the car, Peter says he hates Genevieve and asks what Lara Jean said to her. When Lara Jean admits that she said that they got together before school started, Peter groans—he and Genevieve hooked up that weekend. He won't answer what he and Genevieve were fighting about, but he does say that Lara Jean is doing a good job. Genevieve is jealous.

After a minute of silence, Lara Jean asks how Peter knew he loved Genevieve. Peter refuses to answer at first, but then says he's only 17 and is too young to know what love is. Lara Jean announces that Peter sounds like a grandpa and accuses him of avoiding the question. They pull up to Lara Jean's house and stay in the car. Then, Lara Jean says that Genevieve must have a hold on Peter. He doesn't deny it. Instead, he says he wishes Genevieve *didn't*. Lara Jean thinks that she herself probably belongs to her family, but that won't always be the case. She tells Peter that this whole relationship is just to prove to Genevieve that he doesn't belong to her.

Then, Lara Jean asks if there's a difference between belonging *with* someone and belonging *to* someone. Peter says that belonging *with* someone implies there's a choice involved. To annoy Peter, Lara Jean says that he must love Genevieve if he's willing to play along with their fake relationship. He notes that she's never had a boyfriend before, and so she doesn't know anything. Lara Jean says that's true, but she has been in love. Peter snorts and says that Josh is a "tool," and Lara Jean is silly for loving him. Angry, Lara Jean tries to leave the car. The door is locked.

Peter asks Lara Jean to stay and asks why she hasn't dated before. He knows, for instance, that she turned a boy down when he asked her to homecoming. Lara Jean admits she was afraid—not of that boy, but of being in a relationship with a real person. Peter is paying close attention. He asks how she's feeling about their relationship, and Lara Jean says she doesn't like him like that, so it's fine. They discuss the letter Lara Jean wrote to Peter. He seems to want to hear that Lara Jean still thinks he's attractive and kind, but Lara Jean fumbles her responses. Rather than apologize, she goes inside. The cupcakes are finished and look pretty good.

Margot emails Lara Jean that evening to ask if she's considered joining the literary magazine or Model UN. She also reminds Lara Jean that it's Korean Thanksgiving this weekend, so Lara Jean needs to call Grandma. Lara Jean replies that school is fine, she's looking into clubs, and she has everything else under control.

*Lara Jean and Peter already decided on the lie that they got together the week before school started; Lara Jean wasn't telling Genevieve anything unexpected here. But Peter now sees that this lie won't be easy or comfortable to manage.*



*It's a major moment of clarity for Lara Jean when she privately realizes that she belongs to her family. With this, she acknowledges that her loyalty belongs to them first and foremost. However, she also leaves open the possibility that someday, she'll enter into a romantic relationship that will cause her loyalty to shift. But because this hasn't happened to her yet, and she's not sure how that will feel, Peter becomes an important information source. As someone who's been in a relationship, he's experienced this before.*



*In the previous passage, Lara Jean did say she belonged to her family. Per Peter's logic, Lara Jean doesn't have a choice there—but she does have a choice when, in the future, she enters into a romantic relationship with someone else. Peter's insults toward Josh create tension within the love triangle, but this also shows how little Peter knows Josh. He's making assumptions, and it's hard for him to believe that Josh has earned Lara Jean's affection.*



*Lara Jean is becoming more introspective and emotionally aware. And, for the first time, she's willing to be honest about the fact that she's afraid of romance and intimacy. But still, even if Lara Jean might be falling for Peter, it's too frightening for her to tell the truth about what she's feeling, or to say something nice to him. Her first instinct, instead, is to insult him and push him further away, so that she won't have to face her fears.*



*Even from thousands of miles away, Margot is trying to make sure her sisters are taken care of and staying on top of things. However, it doesn't seem like this is entirely necessary—Lara Jean is managing to keep things working smoothly, at home and at school.*





## CHAPTER 39

Peter's mom, Mrs. Kavinsky, owns an antique store next to the bookstore where Josh works. Lara Jean stops in sometimes to visit a gold locket she loves, and years ago, Daddy bought Mommy a pin there. It was Mommy's favorite, so they buried her with it. Lara Jean is admiring the locket one afternoon when Peter appears from the back room. He says his mom is making him pick up some chairs a two-hour drive away tomorrow, and Lara Jean should come. Her presence will make it more fun. Lara Jean isn't convinced, but Peter says this estate sale should be fantastic. The owner isn't dead yet; he's just moving to a nursing home. Lara Jean agrees to go.

That night, Lara Jean packs sandwiches for her and Peter the next morning. Kitty joins her in the kitchen and says she likes Peter. He's different from Josh, but he's fun. Kitty insists that Lara Jean has to learn Peter's favorite food if she's going to be his girlfriend.

Peter was going to pick Lara Jean up at seven, but Lara Jean is still waiting at 7:30 the next morning. He finally shows up at 7:45—Lara Jean could've slept in another hour. As she climbs into the minivan, Peter apologizes and offers her a donut. It's the best donut Lara Jean has ever had. They discuss their favorite foods. Peter likes cinnamon toast, while Lara Jean likes cake. She offers to make him an olive oil cake sometime and then offers him a sandwich.

An hour later, Peter starts driving more aggressively and checking the clock. He explains that he's trying to beat the Epsteins, who are rival antiques dealers. At a stoplight, Peter spots them a few cars ahead. When the light turns green, Peter speeds onto the shoulder and past the Epsteins' car. They get to the estate sale first. Lara Jean is disappointed that the house looks normal, but Peter warns her that there could still be a bunch of great stuff. Inside, Peter approaches a man to purchase the chairs while Lara Jean looks around. A minute later, the Epsteins come in and ask if Peter got the chairs.

Lara Jean shows Peter a hot pink glass reindeer she found. He encourages her to haggle for it herself. The man at the table refuses to sell the reindeer without the rest of the set. Peter gives Lara Jean a look, so she asks the man again. He relents and lets Lara Jean take the reindeer for free.

*With Mrs. Kavinsky's entry into the story, Lara Jean and Peter pull yet another person into their lies about their fake relationship. Given how they're already struggling to manage their lies, this suggests that things are going to get even more difficult. But learning about how Peter helps his mom with her antiques business also humanizes him and makes him seem more complex. He's clearly not just a jerk, as Josh has suggested—he, like Lara Jean, is loyal to his family.*



*Kitty doesn't seem to be plagued by the same fear of intimacy that her sisters are; it's not as big of a deal for her to get close to Peter. In this way, she demonstrates a less stressful way of being in relationships.*



*Lara Jean might be annoyed that Peter was late, but it's not hard to forgive him when he comes prepared with donuts and makes a point to apologize. Lara Jean's annoyance also indicates that their pretend relationship is teaching Lara Jean what she wants out of a real relationship in the future.*



*Again, Peter is becoming more complex and interesting (both for Lara Jean and the reader)—he clearly has a longstanding rivalry with the Epsteins, and he takes helping his mom out seriously. Lara Jean continues to see that she can't judge Peter solely by his reputation at school.*



*Here, Peter pushes Lara Jean out of her comfort zone by encouraging her to haggle for the reindeer all by herself. This is new for Lara Jean, especially since Margot did so many things for her. In this way, Peter is helping Lara Jean become more confident and mature.*



As Peter leaves to move the van closer, Lara Jean admires some old photos on the wall. An old man behind her says the girl in the photos is his daughter, the one who's sending him to the nursing home. When he sees that Lara Jean has the reindeer, he says it was his daughter's favorite and offers Lara Jean some of his daughter's clothes—she's not here to help him move, anyway. Peter finds Lara Jean upstairs a bit later, digging through a trunk of vintage clothes while Mr. Clarke, the old man, sleeps. Lara Jean shows Peter her finds and thanks Mr. Clarke for the clothes. He calls Lara Jean by his daughter's name.

Lara Jean falls asleep as soon as she gets in the car and only wakes up when Peter says they're home. He thanks her for coming and then invites her to dinner tomorrow night—Mrs. Kavinsky wants to meet her. Lara Jean is aghast he told his mom about them, but Peter points out that Kitty knows about them. Lara Jean reminds him that their lies will get harder to manage the more people that find out. She knows because she lied all the time as a kid.

## CHAPTER 40

Since Mrs. Kavinsky always seems “fancy,” Lara Jean dresses up and puts mascara and lip gloss on for dinner with Peter's family. Oddly enough, Mrs. Kavinsky made pizza, and the house isn't too fancy. She's very nice. Peter's 12-year-old brother, Owen, is quieter than Peter, and much less polite. Over dinner, when Mrs. Kavinsky mentions that Mommy must love having three girls, Peter reminds her that Mommy passed away. Owen and Lara Jean banter and then, out of the blue, Owen notes that Lara Jean wears more makeup than Genevieve did. Lara Jean shrinks; Genevieve wears a full face of makeup every day, and Owen must be messing with her.

Later, as Peter is driving Lara Jean home, Lara Jean confirms that Peter's parents are divorced and asks how often he sees his dad. Peter says he doesn't see him often, but he doesn't really miss him. Rather, he misses how his dad took care of things. Now, his dad is doing that for his new family. Lara Jean says she misses Mommy, especially the way that Mommy used to wash Lara Jean's hair. She often wonders if Mommy would even recognize her if she saw Lara Jean now. A few minutes later, when Lara Jean gets out of the car at her house, Peter says that Mrs. Kavinsky liked her.

*Lara Jean is much too excited about the reindeer and the clothes to notice, but what Mr. Clarke has to say about his daughter shows that not all families are as close as Lara Jean's is. Mr. Clarke seems bitter that his daughter isn't here now, and that she's sending him to the nursing home—he seems to see this as a betrayal. His daughter's independence is difficult for him to accept.*



*Lara Jean and Peter are walking a fine line. It'd be odd, Peter suggests, if his mom didn't meet Lara Jean—but telling her about the relationship also means that more people are in on the lie. And from experience, Lara Jean knows that this is going to make things more difficult, since it'll be harder to keep their story straight.*



*Meeting Mrs. Kavinsky in her own home is another lesson for Lara Jean in not judging people before she gets to know them. Mrs. Kavinsky ends up being perfectly normal, not overly fancy like Lara Jean expected. Owen similarly judges Lara Jean for wearing makeup, and the way this embarrasses Lara Jean shows how making assumptions about people can be hurtful.*



*Both Lara Jean and Peter miss and crave their parents' love and care. To some degree, they both still want to be young kids, with parents who will take care of everything for them. Their nostalgic tone makes it seem like missing their parents is making it a bit harder for them to accept that they're growing up, as they lost that care and love before they were ready for it to disappear.*



This is exactly what Lara Jean wants to hear, since she wants to impress other people's mothers. She used to love going over to Genevieve's house because Genevieve's mom was stylish and gorgeous. Peter interrupts Lara Jean's thoughts by saying she definitely doesn't wear more makeup than Genevieve; her makeup always stained his clothes. Lara Jean muses that Genevieve seems to always be around in some form.

*It's possible that Lara Jean wants to impress other people's mothers because then those mothers might be more willing to comfort her and fill Mommy's role to an extent. What Peter has to say about *Meanwhile*, Genevieve seems to be looming over Peter and Lara Jean's relationship, in part because the main point of the relationship is to annoy her.*



## CHAPTER 41

During chemistry class, Peter asks Lara Jean if he can come study for their upcoming test this evening. So over dinner that night, Lara Jean tells Daddy and Kitty that Peter is coming over to study. Lara Jean sets up the kitchen for studying, pops popcorn, and bakes brownies. But as it gets later and later, Lara Jean realizes he's not coming. Peter eventually texts and says that something came up. Lara Jean knows what it is: Genevieve. He's been distracted all day, and Lara Jean noticed them talking and touching earlier in the afternoon. Lara Jean is hurt, even if her relationship with Peter is just a charade. And since things are better with Josh these days, maybe she and Peter should break up. She decides to take revenge.

*Lara Jean has come to trust Peter, which is why she goes all-out in preparing for their study session. But her enthusiasm and trust start to seem silly, or like a bit of a liability, when Peter doesn't show up. The fact that Lara Jean gets so upset believing that Peter has gone back to Genevieve suggests that on some level, even if she's not willing to admit it, Lara Jean is jealous.*



The next morning, Lara Jean asks Josh to drive her to school. Halfway to school, though, Lara Jean starts to worry—what if Peter had a good reason to ghost on her last night? Josh notices Lara Jean's mood and tells her to be careful; Peter is a “douche” who only cares about sex. Lara Jean is offended. She tells herself that Peter won't be mad as they get to school, and she heads for class. But during Lara Jean's first class, Peter appears in the hallway. Lara Jean excuses herself from class, and Peter snaps that he waited for her for 20 minutes earlier. If she was upset, she should've just said something.

*Lara Jean allows her emotions to get the better of her by taking revenge and asking Josh to drive her. Josh saying rude things about Peter is its own sort of punishment for acting rashly and immaturely—now, Lara Jean doesn't feel now like she can really trust either boy to actually support her or be there for her. And again, the fact that Josh says these things indicates that he's judging Peter without knowing him well.*



Lara Jean points out that Peter didn't show up last night and asks if he was with Genevieve. Peter says she “needed” him, and Lara Jean privately thinks that boys have no self-control. She insists there's no point to them pretending to date if he's going to go every time Genevieve calls. She asks Peter to apologize. He does, but he says he's always going to be there for Genevieve—even if she does have a new boyfriend. They get each other in a different way. Lara Jean knows they still love each other, but she sighs and doesn't push it. As she returns to class, things start to make sense. Her relationship with Peter isn't to help Peter move on from Genevieve. She's just holding Genevieve's place.

*The fact that Lara Jean is so upset about Peter insisting on seeing Genevieve is a sign that she's jealous. In turn, this is a sign that she's taking their pretend relationship seriously and is starting to develop feelings for Peter. This is no longer just a charade for Lara Jean; even if she's not willing to push Peter, she implies that she'd like to be in a relationship with him where they're actually loyal to each other. Though this conversation doesn't have a satisfying conclusion, it also shows Lara Jean that speaking maturely and openly with Peter about their relationship isn't so frightening.*



## CHAPTER 42

Josh's parents fight often, and when the fights are bad, Josh comes over to Lara Jean's house. It's not something they ever talk about. Tonight, Lara Jean can hear the fighting, so she turns on the lights. He shows up a half-hour later and watches TV while Lara Jean does homework. They discuss the upcoming spring play, and Josh encourages her to try out; it'd be good for her to take a risk, like Margot did by going to Scotland. Lara Jean makes a face and stops what she's doing when Josh says her world can be bigger than riding in Peter's car. She throws her highlighter at him, but Josh says that Lara Jean should just let people get to know her better.

Later, after Josh goes home, Lara Jean discovers Chris asleep in her bed. Chris wakes up when Lara Jean climbs in. When Lara Jean mentions that Josh was here, Chris insists that Peter will be jealous. Then, Chris suggests they "do something wild," like sneak out the old folks at the nursing home. Lara Jean refuses and, finally, Chris goes back to sleep.

*Josh's parents' fight shows again that not all families are as close-knit and calm as Lara Jean's is; her family dynamic is, perhaps, outside the norm. When Josh encourages Lara Jean to try out for the school play, he's trying to get her out of her comfort zone, just like Peter has done. But it's more difficult for Lara Jean to follow the advice when it comes from Josh, in part because she knows him so well.*



*Chris seems to have a much better understanding of how a relationship dynamic works—but it's hard for Lara Jean to take her advice seriously, since she and Peter are only pretending to date. It's hard for Lara Jean to know whether Chris is right, given that her feelings about her relationship with Peter are so muddy.*



## CHAPTER 43

Asian girls don't have many options on Halloween. Lara Jean was Velma from *Scooby-Doo* last year, and everyone thought she was a manga character. Now, she's decided to stick with Asian characters, so this year she's dressed as Cho Chang from *Harry Potter*. As she waits for Peter before school, Josh comes out of his house—dressed as Harry Potter. They both laugh, and Josh offers to take Lara Jean to school, but she declines.

Peter is late, as usual. As Lara Jean gets into his car he asks if she's an anime character. Lara Jean snaps that she's Cho Chang, but Peter gives her a blank look. He's not dressed up; he explains that he's changing before the school assembly. Lara Jean doesn't ask what his costume is. She's angry, and he doesn't ask what's wrong. Finally, she snaps that she wishes he wasn't always late. They argue, and Lara Jean says she's not going to ride with him if he's late.

*Because of Lara Jean's close and friendly relationship with Josh, she doesn't think anything of seeing him dressed as Harry Potter. Dressing as an Asian character is a way to try to control what kind of attention she gets from her classmates on Halloween. This makes it clear that while Lara Jean's biracial identity might not be a huge focus of the novel, it's still something she has to think about, and it sometimes affects how her classmates see her.*



*Lara Jean discovers here that she can do everything in her power to influence how other people see her, but she won't always be successful. The success of this costume rests on most of her classmates being familiar with the *Harry Potter* series, which Peter clearly isn't.*



Chris (dressed as Courtney Love) and Lara Jean sit in the theater balcony during the costume judging. Peter and his friends are dressed as superheroes; Peter is Spiderman. Genevieve is Catwoman. Peter and his friends win for best group costume, and Genevieve wins best individual costume for her grade. After the assembly, Peter finds Lara Jean at her locker. Just then, Josh walks by and pretends to shoot a spell at Lara Jean. Lara Jean retaliates with a spell of her own. Then, Peter says it's "weird" that Lara Jean is wearing a couple's costume with someone else. Lara Jean rolls her eyes, but she says it wasn't planned and, anyway, nobody cares about her costume.

Peter is adamant that people notice that Lara Jean is dressed like Josh, but Lara Jean insists she has no choice. If she dresses as anyone else, they'll think she's a manga character. Peter says he could've been a Harry Potter character if they'd talked about it—and Lara Jean realizes that he's never read the books. He insists he read the first two, but it's been a while. Lara Jean tries a silencing spell on him, and they end up chasing each other down the hall trying to tickle each other. By the time they get to chemistry class, Lara Jean can't stop giggling. During class, Peter passes her a note promising to be on time tomorrow. Lara Jean saves it. Later, she wants to be able to remember what it was like to be Peter's pretend girlfriend.

## CHAPTER 44

When Peter drops Lara Jean at home after school, Kitty races for Peter and invites him inside. He agrees. Once they've finished some snacks, Kitty suggests she and Lara Jean show Peter "the dance," a dance that Margot and Lara Jean choreographed a few summers ago. Neither of them are good dancers. Peter encourages Lara Jean to show him and, finally, Lara Jean agrees—as long as Peter dances next. Lara Jean and Kitty take their places and dance. Peter laughs and claps, and then he asks Kitty to teach him the moves.

Lara Jean happily watches Peter and Kitty dance—until she realizes that Kitty shouldn't get too attached to Peter. He's temporary. So, when she walks Peter to his car later, she says he shouldn't come over anymore, so that he doesn't confuse Kitty. Peter jokes that he wants joint custody of Kitty after this is over. Impulsively, Lara Jean kisses him on the cheek and insists she kissed him in thanks for being nice to Kitty.

*Peter, his friends, and Genevieve winning awards for their costumes cement their statuses as popular kids. Lara Jean and Chris, meanwhile, sit in the balcony, as they aren't nearly as popular and have no reason to be seen by everyone else. But Peter also suggests that Lara Jean is more popular, or at least more noticeable, than she thinks she is. Dating Peter puts her on other people's radar, and now she has to pay more attention to what their peers might think.*



*When Lara Jean and Peter are honest with each other and note what they'd like the other person to do, they find that it's not so hard to come to an understanding and make up. Indeed, this seems to make this day even more meaningful—making up makes Lara Jean feel warm and happy, and it makes her want to hold onto this feeling of being Peter's girlfriend. So, although their relationship is fake, their dynamic as a pretend couple isn't all that different from that of a real couple. Furthermore, Lara Jean's desire to remember what it feels like to be Peter's pretend girlfriend indicates that she's developing real feelings for him.*



*Spending time hanging out like this makes Lara Jean and Peter's relationship start to feel more real and more secure. This becomes clearer when Lara Jean agrees to dance in front of Peter—he's able to make her feel secure and comfortable stepping outside of her comfort zone. Their relationship can be fun—it doesn't have to be stressful or scary.*



*Things are starting to get difficult for Lara Jean. She's having a great time with Peter, but she also can't let herself forget that this is all just pretend. Lara Jean's impulsive kiss shows how out of hand her feelings are getting—physical intimacy has been frightening in the past, but now that she feels more comfortable with Peter, it's not so scary.*



## CHAPTER 45

Lara Jean has to go to the grocery store; the food situation is dire. Margot's car is fixed. Lara Jean tells herself that she has to practice for when Peter and Genevieve get back together, and she no longer has a ride to school. So, she tells Kitty to come with her, and they get in the car. Kitty scolds Lara Jean for driving so conservatively, but she helps Lara Jean check her blind spot to change lanes. On the way home, Lara Jean changes lanes all by herself—and nothing bad happens. They make it home just fine. Lara Jean hates that Kitty can't rely on her like she can rely on Margot. That night, Lara Jean makes Mommy's special veggie rice balls for her and Kitty's lunches tomorrow.

*Lara Jean may feel like she's struggling to grow up and be as responsible as she thinks she should be, but her coming-of-age process is complicated. Mommy's death caused Lara Jean to grow up in some ways, while Margot taking charge meant that Lara Jean didn't have to grow up in others. So, in some areas—such as driving—Lara Jean is starting from a disadvantage. But yet, Lara Jean still finds that she can care for Kitty.*



## CHAPTER 46

At lunch the next day, Peter, Darrell, and Gabe love the rice balls and eat most of them. When there's only one left, Lara Jean offers it to Peter. But Peter, presumably remembering the accusation that he always eats the last slice of pizza, tells Lara Jean to take it. Lara Jean feeds it to Peter instead—and in that moment, she forgets that their relationship isn't real. Peter notices and asks why Lara Jean looks sad, but Lara Jean makes a joke of it. He offers to buy her more food later, since he and his friends ate most of her lunch. Lara Jean also insists that she needs to start driving herself. She needs to practice—and Peter can sleep in if she drives herself.

*Lara Jean's relationship is starting to feel increasingly bittersweet. She's certain that things are going to end, and that Peter isn't really interested her. But at the same time, she also finds herself falling for Peter. This makes their lie even more difficult—because now, their relationship doesn't feel so much like a lie. While this is sad for Lara Jean, though, her fear of intimacy means that she takes this emotion and channels it into making herself more independent.*



## CHAPTER 47

Lara Jean, Daddy, and Kitty are having a virtual Sunday night dinner with Margot. They're eating pizza, while Margot is eating a salad. Margot scolds Lara Jean and Daddy for not feeding Kitty more vegetables. When Daddy notes there will be spinach with dinner, Kitty asks for a green juice instead—according to Peter, that's the healthiest way to eat spinach. Lara Jean freezes, and Margot's eyes go wide when she learns Lara Jean is dating Peter Kavinsky. Margot says that Peter cheated on a test and is "douchey," like all the lacrosse guys—and he isn't good for Lara Jean.

*This conversation shows how easy it is for a lie to come out in casual conversation. It doesn't seem like Kitty was trying to be mean and out Lara Jean; Peter just so happens to be a part of her life now, and it's normal for her to talk about him. To Margot, though, this seems like a betrayal, especially since Peter supposedly isn't good enough for Lara Jean. Margot is, in a sense, reacting to the fact that Lara Jean is making different choices than Margot herself would have.*



Lara Jean says Peter isn't like the other lacrosse guys and stew in silence. Why can't Margot be happy for her, or at least pretend to be? And why is she saying all of this stuff in front of Kitty and Daddy? Lara Jean asks Margot to give Peter a chance, but Margot doesn't answer. Instead, she asks about Genevieve. Lara Jean explains they broke up months ago. After a minute, Margot says Peter isn't very smart. Angrily, Lara Jean says that not everyone can be a National Merit Scholar like Margot. Margot has no right to talk to her like this.

*Margot is saying this in front of Kitty and Daddy because she and Lara Jean have a habit of trying to get the other to conform by encouraging them to not upset their other family members. Lara Jean did much the same thing earlier, when she told Margot that Daddy and Kitty would be upset about her breaking up with Josh. As the girls fight, they discover that not supporting each other's decisions is an easy way for conflict to creep into their relationship.*



Lara Jean asks Kitty if she likes Peter. Margot is aghast that Kitty has hung out with Peter and asks if they've been riding in Peter's two-seater Audi. Kitty says innocently that he drives the van, but she wants to ride in his Audi. Margot looks skeptical, and Lara Jean wants to end the conversation.

*Kitty seems to be just as skilled of a liar as Lara Jean (she has, after all, ridden in the Audi), which begs the question of what else she might be lying about. But she also encourages Margot to stop making assumptions about Peter, since she enjoys spending time with him.*



## CHAPTER 48

Josh texts after school and invites Lara Jean to go to the diner after school, "like old times." Though Lara Jean thinks that old times would mean Margot was with them, this might be a nice change. They sit in their usual booth by the jukebox, and Lara Jean wonders what Margot is up to in Scotland. She takes Josh's quarters and puts on Margot's favorite song on the jukebox. They both order their usual dishes.

*Lara Jean is still uncomfortable with everything else going on in her life, so going to the diner with Josh, "like old times," is a way to try to recreate the past. It's supposed to help her feel like nothing has changed—but instead, she discovers that it's impossible to ignore that things have changed. Margot, for one, isn't here.*



To break the awkward silence, Lara Jean asks if Josh has spoken to Margot at the same time as he asks how things are going with Peter. Josh says he thinks Margot is homesick, since she calls occasionally. Lara Jean says she hasn't gotten that impression, and she's pretty sure she's not willing to go to college so far away. Josh muses that they're definitely not going to Paris now. When their food arrives, he offers Lara Jean his first sip of milkshake, as usual.

*Lara Jean and Josh haven't really had to negotiate their relationship to each other without Margot around, so this is all new for them. Margot is the main thing they have in common, and it seems like they're focusing on her to avoid acknowledging the awkwardness between them.*



Josh asks again about Peter. Lara Jean doesn't want to lie—but as she says that Peter is sweet and "not what you'd think," she realizes it's true. He might be chronically late and obnoxiously cocky, but she likes him. Josh doesn't look convinced, so Lara Jean says that Kitty loves Peter. Though Lara Jean has been thinking the same thing, it hurts when Josh says that Kitty shouldn't get too attached. After Josh says this, the atmosphere changes, and Lara Jean thinks that nothing will ever be the same.

*Josh has dropped hints that he might still have a crush on Lara Jean, which may explain some of his skepticism when it comes to Peter. Lara Jean is able to come to the conclusion that she truly likes Peter because she's finally gotten to see him for who he really is, not just for his reputation. Josh, though, hasn't gotten to that point.*



Suddenly, Josh apologizes for what he said and says he's just jealous. Lara Jean feels immediately warm toward him and notes that Kitty still loves Josh best. Then, Josh notes that there's a *Lord of the Rings* marathon at the theater this weekend. He invites Lara Jean but then suggests he'll take Kitty instead. Lara Jean privately wonders if she and her sisters are interchangeable in Josh's mind. A bit later, Genevieve comes into the diner with a little kid; she volunteers to tutor elementary kids. Genevieve takes in Josh and Lara Jean and then waves. She looks happy, which Lara Jean knows is bad news.

*Lara Jean has already observed that Josh is lonely these days, with Margot gone and Lara Jean keeping him at a distance. He wants friendship and someone to hang out with, just like Lara Jean does. Genevieve's appearance reminds Lara Jean that she can't escape the purpose of her pretend relationship with Peter: to annoy Genevieve.*



At dinner later, Peter texts and asks Lara Jean to at least not hang out with Josh in public. Lara Jean reads the text under the table and wonders if Peter is jealous. Daddy and Kitty interrupt Lara Jean's reverie; Daddy says that he likes Peter, and that Peter is very taken with Lara Jean. Kitty concurs. She notes that Peter always looks at Lara Jean to make sure she's having a good time. Then, Daddy starts to tear up as he says that Margot took on so much, and it's nice to see Lara Jean making new friends. Lara Jean feels like it's a lie. Then, Daddy asks Kitty to never grow up. Kitty says she won't if Daddy gets her a puppy. Lara Jean vows to talk to Daddy about the puppy. She admires Kitty's shamelessness.

*Though Daddy and Kitty aren't aware of the circumstances surrounding Lara Jean and Peter's relationship, they may still be able to offer some important insight into their relationship. Daddy seems to pick up on the fact that Lara Jean is falling for Peter, and that Peter seems to return her feelings. When Daddy starts to tear up, it suggests that while he may have appreciated Margot's help, he still wants his daughters to enjoy their youth. He's aware that they're choosing to take care of the family rather than pursue their own interests.*



## CHAPTER 49

Peter and Lara Jean study at Starbucks the next afternoon. On the way home, Peter asks Lara Jean if she signed up for the school ski trip. She hasn't, so Peter begs her to come—it'll be fun, and even if she's not a good skier she can sit in the lodge, drink cocoa, and read. Lara Jean agrees to go.

*Deciding to go on the ski trip, despite not liking skiing, is a mark of how much Lara Jean likes Peter. This also represents her stepping outside of her comfort zone, something that would no doubt please Daddy.*



Once Peter has dropped Lara Jean off, she realizes she left her bag with her house keys in his car. Daddy and Kitty aren't home, and the spare key is inside. Josh has a spare key, so Lara Jean tosses rocks at his window and asks for the keys. Rather than just throwing them down, Josh comes outside—and tells Lara Jean that Peter isn't trustworthy or good enough. He says Lara Jean is like a little sister to him, and he's worried. Lara Jean is enraged. Just then, though, Peter comes around the corner to give Lara Jean her bag. He asks if Josh is still outside and then kisses Lara Jean on the mouth. She's stunned—and she likes it.

*Josh's behavior seems especially odd given how, at the café a few days ago, he seemed fully committed to doing his best to support Lara Jean and Peter's relationship. This sharp turnabout begs the question of what, if anything, has changed for him. Then, it's significant that Lara Jean enjoys Peter's kiss so much. Kissing was one thing they agreed not to do, and the fact that she likes it shows how real this relationship has become for her.*



At her locker the next morning, Peter tells Lara Jean that he's not going to kiss her again; she doesn't have to worry. Lara Jean is disappointed, but she tries to keep a neutral expression. Peter laughs and says he can tell Lara Jean was worried. He assures her it was just to pester Josh and then takes her hand to lead her to class. Lara Jean wonders how she's supposed to tell what's real and not. It seems like she's the only person who can't tell.

*Peter doesn't seem fully aware of why, exactly, Lara Jean looks worried. In reality, she's worried because she'd like Peter to kiss her again. But because she's not honest with him about her feelings, Lara Jean starts to doubt herself and their whole relationship. To her, given Peter's behavior, it seems unlikely that he's falling for her in return.*





## CHAPTER 50

When Lara Jean asks Daddy to sign the ski trip permission slip, he's thrilled. She's been unwilling to ski since she got stuck in the splits when she was 10. When Lara Jean tells Margot that evening, she's surprised and warns Lara Jean to be careful. Lara Jean figures Margot was warning her about skiing, but the next day, Chris explains why Lara Jean should be worried: the ski trip is a "school-sanctioned booty call," and everyone has sex. There's a hot tub, and people skinny dip. Lara Jean is worried. Peter won't try anything with her, but will she have to sneak into his room to keep up their charade?

Anxious, Lara Jean begs Chris to come on the trip. Chris refuses and insists that Peter isn't going to pressure Lara Jean to have sex or anything—he's actually pretty decent, aside from the fact that he dated Genevieve. She elaborates that Peter and Genevieve had been having sex for a long time, and muses that maybe she should tell their grandma about Genevieve's promiscuity. She declares that she's glad Lara Jean "stole" Peter and warns Lara Jean to not ski alone on the trip—Genevieve is organizing the whole thing. Chris agrees to come when Lara Jean notes that Chris's presence will make Genevieve mad.

*The fact that Lara Jean didn't know that everyone has sex on the ski trip speaks to the fact that she's a social outsider at school. Knowing this, the ski trip seems even more significant. Not only is Lara Jean stepping out of her comfort zone, but she might also have to pretend to be okay with physical intimacy, something that still makes her very anxious.*



*Chris encourages Lara Jean to realize that Peter isn't going to suddenly change just because he's on the ski trip. He hasn't pressured Lara Jean into anything yet, and Chris insists that he's not going to start now—Lara Jean can trust him. But this passage also introduces the idea that kids can use one another's sexuality to punish one another, something that does make the ski trip seem risky from a social standpoint.*



## CHAPTER 51

On Thanksgiving, Daddy cleans the turkey and then goes to pick up Grandma, Mommy's mom. His mother, Nana, isn't coming—she wouldn't have nice things to say about the food. Lara Jean tries to be "jazzy and inventive" by putting orange peel and dill in the green beans. Kitty isn't impressed. She asks for broccoli or mashed potatoes. Lara Jean realizes she forgot to buy potatoes, so she tells Kitty to call Daddy and ask him to get some.

Lara Jean cooks the turkey upside down and for too long—Kitty is concerned about salmonella. Grandma seems to enjoy the meal. She pesters Daddy about dating and later, while she's doing dishes with Lara Jean, asks if she'd be okay if Daddy had a girlfriend. This is something that Lara Jean and Margot have discussed at length, and generally, they're fine with the idea—depending on the woman. She tells Grandma she wouldn't mind.

*It's a mark of Lara Jean's growing independence that she's taking control of the Thanksgiving meal and is trying to make it her own. Kitty might not be impressed, but Lara Jean is also trying to change an old family tradition, which doesn't always go over well. Lara Jean's willingness to experiment shows that she trusts her family to support her as she tries new things.*



*Though Lara Jean makes no note of it, she successfully cooks her first Thanksgiving meal—and it's edible and her family enjoys it. This is a huge milestone for her, and as with some other milestones, Lara Jean doesn't really acknowledge it as such. Growing up can sometimes be anticlimactic, as it is here.*



## CHAPTER 52

Christmas Cookie Bonanza starts December 1st, as usual. Lara Jean, Kitty, and Peter are in the living room going through cookbooks for cookie recipes to bake. There are the cookies they bake every year, but they're deciding on new ones to try as Daddy makes turkey sandwiches in the kitchen. Lara Jean and Kitty are tired of turkey—and Kitty notes that if they had a dog, it could eat the rest of the turkey. Peter suggests they make a fruitcake cookie. Lara Jean insists fruitcake is disgusting, but Peter explains that one of his aunts makes a good fruitcake called Christmas Memory fruitcake. Lara Jean exclaims that “A Christmas Memory” is a short story by Truman Capote. After she recaps of the plot, Peter declares it “depressing” and scratches the fruitcake cookies off the list.

The doorbell rings, and Kitty runs to get it. It's Josh, and he joins the others in the living room. Peter invites him to sit and is so friendly that Lara Jean is shocked. Josh asks if they're making his favorite cookie this year, but Peter says the list is already set. Kitty reads the list out loud and notes that they're not making fruitcake cookies. Daddy pops his head in to say that he wants fruitcake cookies, which makes Peter very happy. As Lara Jean teases Peter, she notices that Josh looks left out. Feeling bad, Lara Jean promises to consider his favorite cookie.

Later, after Josh is gone and Kitty is upstairs, Peter says he bets Josh figured out what Lara Jean's Halloween costume was going to be so he could match. Josh, Peter insists, is in love with Lara Jean. Lara Jean says that's not true, but Peter says that once he and Lara Jean are broken up, Josh will try to win her over. Unconvinced, Lara Jean jokingly bets a million dollars that Josh and Margot will get back together when Margot is home later. When they shake on it, Peter pulls Lara onto the couch next to him. She thinks he might kiss her, but the moment ends when Kitty comes downstairs.

## CHAPTER 53

Over breakfast, Kitty asks if they can put up their Christmas tree over the weekend. Lara Jean secretly wants to put up the tree too, but she notes that Margot might be mad if they do it without her. Daddy says they can do it, so they drive out to the tree farm on Saturday. Josh helps Daddy get the tree into the house and then stays to help decorate. Josh mediates an argument over what color lights to use and then, when Daddy is at the store buying more lights, he accidentally breaks an ornament.

*Christmas Cookie Bonanza allows Lara Jean and Kitty to meld an old tradition (the bonanza itself) with some new traditions, such as trying out some new cookies this year. And having Peter around is a change, as he's never been a part of this celebration before. The fact that everyone seems to be having fun shows that changes like these can be positive or even unnoticeable. Rather, adding new people to the mix and trying new foods are just parts of growing up and expanding one's social circle.*



*Lara Jean picks up on the fact that there's a lot of tension between Peter and Josh, even if they're doing their best to keep the peace. This suggests that Lara Jean is going to have to contend with the boys' rivalry at some point—especially if she's going to continue her relationship with Peter much longer. And things are made even harder because Lara Jean does want to continue her friendship with Josh, awkward as it might be.*



*Again, it's becoming more and more obvious that Lara Jean and Peter are developing real feelings for each other. And what Peter says here shows that he is jealous of Josh, even if he's not willing to say it in so many words. It's hard for Lara Jean to believe Peter, though, because believing that Josh would try to win her over would severely complicate things—and Lara Jean likes things to be neat and easy to understand.*



*Lara Jean is discovering that life doesn't stop for her or her family just because Margot isn't here. She, Daddy, and Kitty will continue living their lives and observing these family traditions without Margot. But again, some things do still feel the same, such as Josh helping Daddy and the girls with the tree.*



As Lara Jean cleans up the glass, Josh notes that she acts different around Peter—not like herself. He warns her to be careful. Then, he asks why Lara Jean never said anything about liking him, long before he and Margot started dating. She should've told him. Lara Jean insists it wouldn't have made a difference and says that Josh has never liked her; he's just jealous, especially since Kitty likes Peter better. Josh looks angry, admits he's jealous, and kisses Lara Jean. Lara Jean gapes at him and then runs to her room. Margot will be home in a few weeks, and Lara Jean just cheated on her fake boyfriend.

*Josh fell in love with a specific version of Lara Jean, one that perhaps doesn't exist anymore. And now, Lara Jean has to deal with some of the consequences of not being truthful throughout her life. Josh implies that the two of them could've dated, had Lara Jean been truthful. Josh's kiss also becomes one more secret for Lara Jean to keep.*



## CHAPTER 54

Lucas is waiting for Lara Jean after third period. He has something important to share: he saw Peter leaving Genevieve's house last night, and Genevieve just broke up with her college boyfriend. She's trying to get Peter back, and Lara Jean shouldn't let her. Lara Jean knew that this was going to happen—Peter is going to go back where he belongs.

*Lucas's information doesn't inspire Lara Jean to be truthful with Peter in an attempt to get him to stay with her. Rather, she sees this as proof that their relationship isn't real, and that she's just holding Genevieve's place until Peter goes back "where he belongs."*



Lara Jean initially plans to keep Josh's kiss a secret. But when she sees Genevieve and Peter walking together, she changes her mind. In chemistry, she writes Peter a note saying he was right about Josh; Josh kissed her. Peter stiffens but doesn't write back. Once class is over, Peter angrily asks what happened. He says it's ridiculous that Josh kissed his girlfriend and vows to confront him. Peter asks Lara Jean if she kissed him back. She asks why it matters and asks Peter to not talk to Josh.

*Given how angry and jealous Peter is that Josh kissed Lara Jean, it seems likely that he is falling for her—and that he's just as confused about where their relationship stands as Lara Jean is. But again, because neither of them is willing to be totally truthful about their feelings, they're unable to resolve this argument.*



## CHAPTER 55

Josh is waiting for Lara Jean on her front porch when she gets home. He asks to talk, so Lara Jean sits next to him. Josh says they should decide what to do before Margot arrives, and he should be the one to tell her. Aghast, Lara Jean says they can't tell Margot. He insists he doesn't want to keep secrets from her, but Lara Jean says if they were going to say anything, she should tell Margot. She's Margot's sister; Josh was "just her boyfriend." Hurt, Josh says this is hard for him too. Things have been a mess since he got Lara Jean's letter. She's gotten to say everything, and now she's dating Peter, and he can't stop thinking about her. Peter isn't good enough—no one would be.

*Lara Jean sees lying as a good way to avoid embarrassment and heartache, which is why she recoils at the suggestion that she and Josh tell Margot about their kiss. But her unwillingness to tell Margot also stems from the fact that Lara Jean prioritizes her familial relationships over romantic ones. This is why she says Josh was "just" Margot's boyfriend, a word choice that makes it clear she sees Josh as lesser when compared to a sister.*



Josh says he remembers one night when he and Lara Jean were walking home from a friend's house. Lara Jean remembers; her feet hurt. Josh says he almost kissed Lara Jean that day, but then he forgot about it. Lara Jean notes that Josh wasn't supposed to get the letter, but he suggests it's fate—they're supposed to be together. Lara Jean says that's not true. She's surprised to realize she believes that. She doesn't love him anymore. She loves someone else.

Lara Jean asks Josh to promise to not tell Margot about their kiss. Margot wants to hang out with Josh and do a day in D.C. when she's home, and Lara Jean says that sounds great and insists they have to act like everything is fine. If they do that, everything *will* be fine.

*This is a big moment for Lara Jean as, finally, she admits to herself what she wants: a real relationship Peter, not Josh. And as she experiences this moment of clarity, Lara Jean also feels far more secure about what she wants to do going forward. She can use her own desires to guide her actions and help her make better decisions.*



*Lara Jean believes that as long as she keeps up with her lies, her life will remain neat and tidy. But there are a lot of moving parts and people tangled in this lie. Things might not be fine, if only because it's harder to control a lie that involves so many people.*



## CHAPTER 56

The next afternoon, Lara Jean finds Peter in the weight room. It'll be better to break up here, not in his car. Lara Jean is going to miss being his pretend girlfriend, and she's going to miss Gabe and Darrell. They're not as "douchey" as people think. So, when she finds Peter, she tells him it's time to "fake break up." She's talked to Josh, things are going back to normal, and Margot will be home soon. Lara Jean pulls out their contract and prepares to rip it in half, but Peter asks if she's still coming on the ski trip. Lara Jean says she can't—she doesn't want to witness Genevieve and Peter getting back together. But Peter insists, so Lara Jean gives in. She wonders if this is what being in love is like.

*Because Lara Jean knows that she loves Peter and no longer has a crush on Josh, her next steps seem obvious to her: break up with Peter, nurse her broken heart, and watch him get back together with Genevieve. With this, Lara Jean shows that on some level, she's no longer comfortable lying about her feelings to Peter. She also shows that she's learned she can't judge people solely on their reputation, as when she laments that Gabe and Darrell aren't "douchey" like most people think they are.*



## CHAPTER 57

The next morning, one of the all-school announcements is that the school is hosting a Model UN scrimmage this weekend. John Ambrose McClaren was on his middle school's team, so Lara Jean wonders if he's still involved. At lunch, she brings it up with Peter. He thinks it's hilarious that she's going to confront John Ambrose, but he insists he won't go with her. She says she wasn't going to invite him, which offends Peter—he accuses her of talking to other guys before they've even broken up, but he admits he's impressed.

*It's a sign of Lara Jean's growing maturity that she decides to seek out John Ambrose on her own and find closure that way. In a way, this is an admission that Lara Jean's letters didn't actually do their job. If she wants to truly get over her crushes, she's going to have to figure out how to do that in some other way. To Peter, though, this presents a bit of a challenge—will John Ambrose emerge as a threat, as Josh has?*



Lara Jean kissed John Ambrose at a party in eighth grade, during a game of spin the bottle. She was thrilled until after the tiny peck of a kiss, and then she was disappointed. Lara Jean expected more—but maybe now she'll get a chance, and maybe it'll help her forget Peter.

*Again, it's significant that Lara Jean isn't sitting down to write another goodbye letter to Peter that he'll never read—she knows that in order to get over him, she needs to find new ways to deal with her difficult emotions.*



## CHAPTER 58

Lara Jean walks into school on Saturday, wondering what to say to John Ambrose. She figures she'll just slip in the back and watch, but then a delegate in the back holds up a piece of paper and asks Lara Jean if she's a page. Lara Jean doesn't know what a page is, but she sees other people delivering notes, so she delivers notes for a while. Then, she approaches a delegate and realizes it's John Ambrose. He's clean-cut and looks serious—exactly what Lara Jean expected. She takes his paper and whispers hello, and he looks at her with surprise and recognition. Later, when Peter texts and asks if Lara Jean saw John Ambrose, Lara Jean lies that she didn't. She's not sure why—she's just happy that John Ambrose remembered her, and she wants to keep that knowledge for herself.

*In this chapter, Lara Jean starts to realize that it's fulfilling to be honest with herself about her feelings and deal with them rather than trying to avoid them. In this case, that means seeing John Ambrose and then keeping it for herself that this happened—if she tells Peter, she'd have to account for her time and put into words how she felt about it. This is a secret of sorts, but it doesn't work the same way that Lara Jean's other secrets have. This one makes her feel good and fulfilled, rather than afraid she'll be found out.*



## CHAPTER 59

Daddy, Lara Jean, and Kitty go pick up Margot from the airport. Margot cut her hair into a bob, and Lara Jean lies that it makes Margot look older. When they get home, Lara Jean is excited to show Margot the cookies she and Kitty made, but Margot is upset that they did Christmas Cookie Bonanza without her. Lara Jean points out that if they'd waited, they wouldn't have had time to bake them all. She offers Margot an orange creamsicle cookie, but Margot is upset there aren't any molasses cookies. Margot is also upset they decorated the tree without her. She insists it'll be dry by Christmas, even though Lara Jean says she's watering it with Sprite like Grandma said to. This feels oddly like a fight.

*The implication here is that Margot's new haircut actually makes her look younger. This symbolically suggests that Margot, by leaving, has stepped down from her role as the big sister in charge of everything. Now, that's Lara Jean's job. This is a difficult proposition for Margot, who seemed to expect to get home and be able to step right back into her role as the family's decision-maker. It's unsettling for her to see that Lara Jean has done just fine without her—and so she lashes out.*



Margot excuses herself to take a nap. Lara Jean thinks that it's hard when someone's been gone for a long time. At first, she tried to save up everything to tell Margot, but now she's forgotten most things, and they can only catch up on the biggest news. Lara Jean thinks she should've told Margot months ago about when Daddy slipped on a banana peel; if she were to bring it up now, it wouldn't be funny. Lara Jean never thought she and Margot could lose touch, but now, Lara Jean realizes she knows nothing about Margot or her life in Scotland. Margot doesn't know much about Lara Jean, either. Does Margot feel the distance too?

*Before Margot returned home, it was easy enough for Lara Jean to imagine that Margot would fit right back in. But now, Lara Jean is discovering once again that people are unpredictable, and that her personal fantasies about how things will go don't actually work out in the real world. Especially since Lara Jean and Margot were so close before Margot left, this makes Lara Jean fear that things will never be the same between the two of them. Margot feels like an entirely different person now.*



Daddy makes spaghetti for dinner and, as they eat, Kitty asks Lara Jean what she's getting Peter for Christmas. In a mean tone, Margot says she can't believe Lara Jean is dating Peter; she doesn't like him. Daddy tries to diffuse the tension by announcing dessert. As he and Kitty fetch bowls, Margot says that Josh wants to see her later. She hopes he realizes they're broken up and doesn't try to see her all the time. Lara Jean thinks that's a mean thing to say and says that he understands the relationship is over. Margot seems surprised.

*Margot's defensiveness stems from the fact that she doesn't know exactly how Lara Jean has changed since she left. It's unclear to her why Lara Jean would want to date someone like Peter, and she has no way of knowing that Josh is currently trying to win Lara Jean over. Some of this is a product of Lara Jean's lies, which suggests that Lara Jean will eventually have to answer for some of this.*



## CHAPTER 60

Margot announces that this year, they should do a **recital party**. When Mommy was alive, she'd make a bunch of food, dress Lara Jean and Margot in matching dresses, and make the girls play carols on the piano for friends and neighbors. Lara Jean always hated them because she was terrible at piano and Margot was fantastic—and the last year Mommy was alive, Lara Jean refused to even put on her dress and spent the whole party in her room. They haven't had a recital party since then. Lara Jean tells Margot she doesn't want to do it, but Margot offers to plan it all.

Later, once Kitty has fallen asleep on the couch, Lara Jean tells Margot to let Kitty sleep and not put her in bed. She asks Margot to help her talk to Daddy about getting a puppy for Christmas, but Margot groans that puppies are too much work, and nobody will take care of it. She says Kitty isn't mature enough—and the implication is that Lara Jean isn't, either. Lara Jean insists that Kitty (and herself) have grown up and matured since Margot left. Kitty does laundry and packs her lunch now. Margot says she's impressed. Lara Jean seethes—she just wants Margot to praise her for keeping things going.

*For Margot, the recital party was a happy time where she got to show off and make Mommy happy. But for Lara Jean, the recital party is more complicated. In her mind, it was an event where it was glaringly obvious that Margot was better at everything and was, perhaps, even Mommy's favorite (since she was willing to play along).*



*Lara Jean is trying to treat Margot like an ally still by asking her to help convince Daddy about the puppy. But Margot seems unwilling to accept Lara Jean's insistence that both she and Kitty have matured over the last three months, far beyond what Margot expected. To Lara Jean, it feels like Margot is purposefully denying her any recognition, which only heightens the tension between them.*



## CHAPTER 61

On the day of the ski trip, Daddy drops Lara Jean at school early in the morning. He pulls an old pink hat of Mommy's out for Lara Jean and tells her to have a good time. As he drives away, Lara Jean sees Peter laughing with Genevieve. He gestures for Lara Jean to join him as Genevieve walks away. Peter snuggles Lara Jean close while watching Genevieve, but Lara Jean squirms away. As Ms. Davenport and Coach White search kids' bags for alcohol, Lara Jean texts Chris not to bring any alcohol and asks if she's even awake. Just then, Chris's mom pulls into the parking lot, and Chris stumbles out of the car. Lara Jean is relieved. Now, she can sit next to Chris, and Peter can sit with Genevieve.

Genevieve approaches Chris and insists that Chris can't come, since she didn't sign up for the trip. Peter comes over and encourages Genevieve to let it go, which just makes Genevieve angry (Chris says nothing and smirks). Finally, Chris says that Ms. Davenport said it was fine if she comes. Genevieve flounces away. Chris tells an exasperated Lara Jean that she stayed quiet just to annoy Genevieve—and she has tequila stashed in a shampoo bottle.

*While Lara Jean has made up her mind that Peter and Genevieve are getting back together on the ski trip, Peter hasn't given any indication that that's actually what he wants to happen. So again, Lara Jean's unwillingness to be honest and open with Peter is causing problems, as she's making assumptions about him that could easily be wrong. Also, because Lara Jean does have feelings for Peter, it's no longer fun or exciting to snuggle close to him just to annoy Genevieve.*



*As Genevieve's cousin, Chris knows how to easily wind her up. Peter and Lara Jean don't seem to grasp that Chris is doing this on purpose. This suggests that Lara Jean might not always be aware of when others (like Kitty or Margot) are doing things to purposely annoy her, as when Margot doesn't give Lara Jean any credit for keeping the household going.*



As they board the bus a bit later, Peter invites Lara Jean to sit with him. She insists she's sitting with Chris, but Peter says she has to sit with him—she's his girlfriend. Chris shakes her head when Lara Jean sits next to her, and Lara Jean frowns when she watches Genevieve sit next to Peter. She's tired of only kind of being his girlfriend. Chris warns Lara Jean to be careful of Genevieve and falls asleep.

When the bus pulls in at the lodge, Chris goes to snowboard with Charlie, a boy she started flirting with on the bus. Lara Jean would go snowboard with Peter, but he doesn't invite her. She goes to get lunch and tries to avoid Ms. Davenport, who's also eating. Ms. Davenport waves Lara Jean over and explains that she doesn't care about skiing; she's happy at the lodge. She asks why Lara Jean isn't on the slopes, especially since Peter is a great snowboarder. Lara Jean's heart squeezes. She's not ready to let Genevieve have Peter yet, so she announces that she is going to go outside.

## CHAPTER 62

Lara Jean feels like a strawberry marshmallow, since she's dressed all in pink. She clicks into her skis, starts down the bunny slope, and tries to concentrate. There are little kids whooshing past, and they scare her. Lara Jean keeps an eye out for Peter and finally spots him. She calls for him, and he seems to hear her, but he doesn't acknowledge her.

Chris heads back to the slopes after dinner. Lara Jean runs into Peter, Gabe, and Darrell in the hallway. They're in swim trunks. Gabe and Darrell say they missed Lara Jean earlier, but Lara Jean says Peter didn't respond when she called to him. Gabe and Darrell leave for the hot tub, leaving Lara Jean and Peter alone. Lara Jean asks if he's mad and notes that since he talked her into coming, he could at least speak to her. Peter bursts out that Lara Jean could've sat next to him earlier. She's flabbergasted that he's so upset about that, even when he says it's just what people who are dating do.

Lara Jean says she didn't realize it was such a big deal and promises to sit next to Peter on the way home. He agrees—and then says he brought special donuts for her. He ate them all. Then, seriously, Peter says he's started to like Lara Jean. He kissed her in seventh grade, and he's going along with this charade, because he thinks she's cute. Lara Jean asks if he's still in love with Genevieve. Peter acknowledges that he cares about Genevieve, but he likes Lara Jean. Lara Jean doesn't know what to do. She wants to be Peter's *first* choice, so she tells him that if Peter really liked her, he wouldn't also care about Genevieve.

*Since Lara Jean is pretending to be Peter's girlfriend, Peter believes that they should act in a certain way. But Lara Jean is getting tired of living this lie. She's not really in a relationship with Peter, and she believes she knows Peter and Genevieve are going to get back together, so it's becoming too emotionally taxing to play along.*



*Lara Jean appears to be even more of an outcast when she's the only person not out on the slopes, and it's embarrassing to have Ms. Davenport point this out. So, while deciding to go out onto the slopes is partially so Lara Jean can cement her hold on Peter, she also does so to conform with her peers. In this way, she starts to step outside her comfort zone: she's trying something new, and she's advocating for what she wants.*



*Lara Jean's timidity on her skis contrasts with the younger children's skill, which further emphasizes how unconfident she is both athletically on the slopes and socially among her peers. Peter, meanwhile, seems to be holding a grudge against Lara Jean for the way she rebuffed his advances earlier.*



*Lara Jean doesn't have any idea why Peter is so upset because she's been so focused on her own thoughts and emotions. It hasn't occurred to her that Peter might have real feelings for her too, and that she might've seriously offended Peter by refusing to sit with him on the bus. But Peter makes it clear that Lara Jean violated a standard expectation for boyfriends and girlfriends at their school, one that's very important to him.*



*Lara Jean hasn't had a boyfriend before, so she didn't have any way to know what was expected of her in this relationship, which began as a charade. So, Peter's admission is difficult for Lara Jean to handle. While she likes him back, she's not happy to hear this. Accepting that he likes her and taking him at his word would mean that Lara Jean would have to address her discomfort with intimacy. In this situation, it's easier to just accuse him of liking Genevieve.*



Lara Jean and Peter argue, and Peter gets angrier. He insists that Lara Jean chooses to fall in love with boys she doesn't have a chance at actually dating and asks what she's scared of. Lara Jean insists she's not afraid and accuses Peter of being angry that she didn't "die of happiness" because Peter said he liked her. Peter says Lara Jean would rather be with a fantasy than a real person, tells her to grow up, and leaves for the hot tub.

*Peter is angry and is responding rashly, but his accusation may have a kernel of truth. It doesn't seem like an accident, for one, that Lara Jean has befriended Lucas, who's gay and therefore isn't someone she can date. When confronted with a person who actually wants to date her, Lara Jean freezes up and gets scared—and she lashes out to protect herself.*



Lara Jean is shaking. In her room, she changes into her pajamas and gets in bed. Peter is so out of line, but is he right? Lara Jean has always known she couldn't have him, so why didn't she tell him the truth—that she likes him—when he expressed the same? He's not just a handsome boy. Lara Jean decides to be brave and fall in love, so she heads for the hot tub.

*It's a mark of how much Lara Jean has matured over the last few months that she can go immediately from thinking that Peter is being ridiculous to wondering if he might be right—and deciding to tell him the truth. This shows that Lara Jean is becoming more secure and confident in herself. She's no longer happy to rely on lies.*



## CHAPTER 63

Lara Jean passes people heading back to their rooms from the hot tub. Curfew is in 15 minutes, so she hopes Peter is still there before she loses her nerve. He's alone in the hot tub and seems perplexed as she takes her coat off and sits on the edge of the hot tub, putting in just her feet. She says she didn't know what to say earlier, but she likes him. Peter says he doesn't understand girls, and Lara Jean wonders if she messed everything up. She scoots closer and kisses him—and Peter kisses her back. He pulls her onto his lap in the water. Lara Jean can tell by his eyes that he'd do anything for her, and she feels powerful.

*By admitting that she likes Peter, Lara Jean shows that she's ready to start telling the truth, both to herself and to Peter. Furthermore, initiating the kiss means that Lara Jean has decided to at least try to put aside her fears of intimacy and ask for what she wants. And when Peter kisses her back, Lara Jean learns that being honest and intimate with someone won't inevitably end badly.*



Lara Jean kisses Peter again. Kissing feels amazing, and she loves how his back feels. Finally, Peter says they should go back to their rooms; it's after curfew. Lara Jean is freezing as soon as she stands up, so Peter towels her off and helps her into her coat. They kiss before they part ways.

*Being intimate with Peter isn't nearly as scary as Lara Jean thought it would be—perhaps Lara Jean has been blowing things out of proportion in her own mind. This experience begins to show her that it's okay to let others in.*



## CHAPTER 64

The next morning, as Lara Jean heads outside for the bus, she sees Peter. He grins and calls for her. But as they walk to the bus together, someone whistles, and it seems like everyone is staring at them—including Genevieve. Peter doesn't seem concerned as they settle onto the bus. Chris sits with Charlie; Lara Jean hasn't gotten to tell her about last night yet.

*The whistle and the stares suggest that people know something about Lara Jean and Peter. Peter's lack of concern may stem from the fact that he's just more comfortable with being the center of attention than Lara Jean is, because he's more popular.*





The bus stops at a diner for breakfast. When Lara Jean goes to the bathroom, Genevieve is there putting on lip gloss. As Lara Jean comes out of the stall, Genevieve said that when they were kids, she wanted to be Lara Jean. She loved Lara Jean's family and hated her own dad. Lara Jean asks why Genevieve stopped being her friend, then. Genevieve says that Lara Jean kissed Peter in seventh grade, even though she knew Genevieve liked him. She spits that it makes sense that Lara Jean and Chris are friends—though “at least Chris owns her sluttiness.” Genevieve says she knows Lara Jean and Peter had sex in the hot tub last night.

Lara Jean feels ready to pass out as Genevieve says that everyone knows, and it's disgusting. Lara Jean tries to choke back tears and says she and Peter just kissed, but Genevieve says Peter is telling people they had sex. Genevieve insists people are congratulating him because he convinced “sweet little Lara Jean” to have sex with him. She claims that Peter is just dating Lara Jean to make Genevieve jealous; he's using her. He'll never love anyone else but Genevieve, and who knows what'll happen now. Lara Jean runs out of the bathroom, sobbing.

## CHAPTER 65

Lara Jean can feel people staring at her as she gets on the bus. Chris slides in next to her and says she heard something “cray-cray.” Lara Jean insists it's not true as Peter stops next to her and asks if she's okay. When he hears that everyone is saying they had sex, he says that people need to keep to themselves. He's not concerned and insists the rumor doesn't matter, since it's not true. Lara Jean tries not to cry as Peter asks why she's mad. Chris tells him to find a new seat, but Peter touches Lara Jean's shoulder. Lara Jean flinches, and Peter finally leaves.

Chris counsels Lara Jean that it's never fair for the girl; the guys were probably congratulating Peter. She's not sure if he told people, but she says it doesn't matter—he probably didn't discourage others from talking about it. Chris says Lara Jean should let Genevieve have Peter. Genevieve gets on the bus last and, as she walks down the aisle, she whispers in girls' ears. The girls she speaks to stare at Lara Jean. Chris whispers, “bitch,” and Lara Jean sobs.

*In Lara Jean's letter to Peter, she placed the blame squarely on Peter—while Genevieve sees Lara Jean as the villain for kissing Peter. While it's impossible to know exactly what the truth is, it's clear that Lara Jean, Genevieve, and Peter all have different ideas of what happened that day—and they're using their interpretations to justify their fear or hatred of each other.*



*Earlier, Chris suggested that she should she tell her grandma about Genevieve's promiscuity. Now, Genevieve is punishing Lara Jean in much the same way, by spreading rumors about her sex life. There's sexism involved in this as well: Peter is being congratulated, while Lara Jean is the one taking the fall.*



*It's easy for Peter to say that the rumor doesn't matter, as he's not the one who will suffer the most because of this gossip. This rumor shakes Lara Jean so much, because in addition to not being used to all this attention, the rumor also suggests that she's sexually active—an idea that's both untrue and offensive to her, given her fears surrounding intimacy.*



*Given that Genevieve is whispering in girls' ears on her way down the bus aisle, it seems unlikely that Peter was the one spreading the rumors. Genevieve has taken revenge on Lara Jean, just as Lara Jean expected her to. Now, Lara Jean's reputation at school will change entirely. And because the popular Genevieve has so much power, it'll be hard for Lara Jean to control the damage.*



## CHAPTER 66

Kitty and Margot pick Lara Jean up at school. Lara Jean tries to stay upbeat, but Margot asks if everything's okay. Lara Jean says she's fine; she's just going to sleep through Christmas break. She turns her phone off when Peter texts asking to talk.

That night, while Margot and Lara Jean are wrapping presents, Margot decides to hold the **recital party** the day after Christmas. Carefully, Lara Jean suggests it's too last-minute, but she thinks the party might take her mind off everything. She and Margot discuss party foods and a guest list. Margot suggests they invite Peter and his family, but Lara Jean shakes her head. She refuses to admit that anything happened on the ski trip. Later that night, Margot sends virtual invitations and immediately gets five yes responses.

Lara Jean stays home as much as possible over the next day. She works on her scrapbook and waits for Peter to text. Josh does instead; he says he heard what happened and asks if she's okay. Lara Jean says it's not true, and Josh responds that he didn't believe it. Lara Jean decides it'd be best to take the Josh-and-Margot page out of Margot's scrapbook. That night, she stays up late waiting for Peter to reach out. At three in the morning, she throws away his notes and deletes his pictures and number from her phone.

## CHAPTER 67

As usual, Kitty wakes up before the sunrise on Christmas morning. Daddy makes waffles, and everyone takes turns opening presents. Margot loves her scrapbook, and Lara Jean is excited about her Scottish cashmere sweater. Santa (Daddy) clearly shops at Costco, since he brings printer ink and pens in addition to water guns. Kitty is disappointed there's no puppy.

As Daddy heads into the kitchen to attend to the waffles, the doorbell rings. He yells for Kitty to get it—and Kitty shrieks. Margot and Lara Jean run to see what's going on and discover a puppy in a basket. Kitty screams thank you at Daddy, and when she calms down, Daddy explains that he got the puppy from the shelter two nights ago. Ms. Rothschild has been hiding him and brought him over. He's a terrier mix, and Kitty decides to call him Jamie Fox-Pickle. She patiently spends the day taking him outside. Lara Jean wishes she were still little enough for a puppy to be able to solve all her problems. Peter never calls.

*After having Genevieve spread such nasty rumors about her, Lara Jean seems to decide that it doesn't pay off to be honest. It's better, she reasons, to just ignore her problems by sleeping and refusing to speak to Peter.*



*The recital parties of the past are still bad memories for Lara Jean. But this year's party might be exactly what she needs to reorient herself back to her family.*



*Because Josh knows Lara Jean well, he doesn't spend any time wondering if the rumor might be true—he's more than willing to ignore her new reputation. Choosing to take the Josh-and-Margot page out of the scrapbook shows that Lara Jean now recognizes things can change—they did for her, after all.*



*Christmas morning is a time for Lara Jean and her family to show each other how much they care. Daddy finally has the opportunity to support his daughters practically with the Costco gifts and the waffles.*



*Daddy might not be as distant from his daughters as it seems—he's clearly been paying attention to Kitty's demands for a puppy. And Kitty immediately demonstrates her maturity by taking Jamie Fox-Pickle outside, all by herself. For Lara Jean, though, this is bittersweet—she realizes that her problems are too big and complicated for a puppy to make her feel whole again. Being older, she realizes, isn't as fun as she might have hoped.*



## CHAPTER 68

When Lara Jean comes downstairs the next morning, everyone else is busy with **recital party** preparations. Margot is busy cooking with Daddy's help. She tells Lara Jean to clean the bathroom while Kitty works on decorations and snaps when Lara Jean complains. Later, Lara Jean dresses in mixed plaids, which is supposed to be fashionable. Kitty insists it's awful—Lara Jean looks like a bartender in Brooklyn, which she knows because she watches HBO. Kitty convinces Lara Jean to change and agrees to curl her hair. When she asks if Josh or Peter are coming to the party, Lara Jean says Peter isn't.

The **recital party** is in full swing. Margot is playing piano with her old piano teacher singing along, and Kitty and Josh are playing with Jamie. Just then, Peter walks in with a tin of cookies. Kitty launches herself into his arms and then leads him to the dessert table. Lara Jean scathingly asks why he's here, and Peter says Kitty invited him. When he notices Josh looking at them, Peter says he and Lara Jean need to talk. Lara Jean refuses and tells him to leave, but Peter steers her into the kitchen.

Lara Jean says she's upset because Peter doesn't care that people are saying they had sex in the hot tub. She asks if she actually told his friends the truth, or if he let them think they had sex. Suddenly, Josh appears in the doorway and calls Peter a "scumbag." Lara Jean tells the boys to quiet down as Peter insults Josh, and Josh says that this is what he tried to protect Lara Jean from. Peter points out that Josh kissed Lara Jean and the boys move toward each other, puffing their chests out.

Lara Jean realizes Margot is standing behind Josh. Margot asks Lara Jean to say it's not true, but Lara Jean can't answer. Lara Jean is ready to die. Josh tries to placate Margot, but she tells him to get out. She accuses Lara Jean of betraying her trust and runs upstairs. Lara Jean bursts into tears as Josh heads for the door. Peter tries to comfort her, but Lara Jean asks him to leave. Lara Jean hides in the bathroom and wishes Mommy were here.

When Lara Jean returns to the party, the adults are having a good time—except for Daddy, who's on the couch with Ms. Rothschild looking "mildly startled." He jumps up and asks where Margot is, but Lara Jean says she doesn't feel well. She tells Daddy to stay at the party; she'll go up to talk to Margot. Upstairs, Margot won't open her door or even answer. Lara Jean sobs in the hallway. Margot's silence is the worst punishment.

*The recital party gives Margot an opportunity to show off to the neighbors that she's still in charge and capable of throwing a fun party—so it's offensive to her when Lara Jean complains about having to help. Kitty is a little kid in many ways, but she reveals here that she knows more than she lets on; many HBO shows are for mature audiences. But still, Kitty wants to hear that things aren't going to change, which is why she asks if Josh and Peter will come.*



*Even though Kitty invited Peter, it feels to Lara Jean as though Peter is invading her private, safe space when he has no right to do so. In her mind, Peter hasn't demonstrated that he's trustworthy, so she wants nothing to do with him. And the look that Josh shoots Peter and Lara Jean suggests that the boys' rivalry might finally come to a head.*



*Neither Peter nor Josh has behaved perfectly, and they've both made mistakes in regard to their relationships with Lara Jean. But Lara Jean finds herself caught between the two of them here trying to mediate their argument, which keeps her from having a reasonable conversation with Peter.*



*Finally, Lara Jean and Josh's secret comes out—and as expected, Margot is very upset. Just as Genevieve blamed Lara Jean for her middle school kiss with Peter, Margot also blames Lara Jean without knowing the whole story. For Lara Jean, this makes her feel small and powerless, which is why she wishes for an adult like Mommy to appear and set things right.*



*For Lara Jean, it's devastating to have disappointed Margot. Lara Jean wants nothing more than to maintain a close relationship with her sister and earn Margot's approval, and now it seems unlikely that that's going to happen.*



## CHAPTER 69

Before Mommy's death, Lara Jean and Margot fought constantly. Once, Lara Jean borrowed Margot's doll to play with and ended up ruining her face with lipstick and toothpaste. Things changed after Mommy died, and everyone took on new roles. Margot and Lara Jean stopped fighting and threw themselves into taking care of Kitty, which was what Mommy always wanted. Now, in the present, Margot refuses to speak to Lara Jean. Kitty watches her sisters warily. Lara Jean is afraid that she and Margot will never make up.

*Here, readers learn that Mommy's death truly catapulted Lara Jean and Margot into early adulthood. Before she died, the girls were able to be children and engage in childish squabbles. But once Mommy was gone, that simply wasn't going to work anymore. In the present, the family seems to be going through another change like this, where everyone's role starts to shift and it's unclear how they'll move forward.*



## CHAPTER 70

It's snowing one evening when Daddy knocks on Lara Jean's door. He sits down and says they need to talk. Margot talked to him, and he thinks Lara Jean is too young to have sex. He asks if Peter pressured Lara Jean, and he doesn't seem to believe her when she says they haven't had sex. Daddy says he made an appointment for Lara Jean to see a gynecologist on Monday. Lara Jean cries and insists that this is all just a rumor, but Daddy says he knows it's hard to talk about sex with a dad and not a mom. Lara Jean insists that Mommy would believe her, and Daddy apologizes. He pulls her close and says that in his eyes, she's still Kitty's age.

*Once again, Lara Jean finds that rumors about her sexuality are being used to hurt and control her. Now she has to worry about disappointing Daddy in addition to being seen as promiscuous at school. This feels particularly cruel for Lara Jean, as now she's not making things easy for Daddy—which is what she and her sisters have spent years trying to do. Now, because he believes she's sexually active, Lara Jean becomes problematic rather than helpful.*



Lara Jean sobs that everything is a mess—Daddy doesn't trust her, Margot hates her, and she and Peter are broken up. Daddy assures Lara Jean that he trusts her, and that Margot spoke to him out of concern for Lara Jean. Lara Jean knows this isn't true—Margot is trying to hurt her. Daddy assures Lara Jean that everything will work out.

*To Daddy, it's unthinkable that Margot would be trying to hurt Lara Jean. That goes against everything he thinks he knows about his daughters. But because he's such a distant parent, he also doesn't grasp how betrayed Margot feels.*



Lara Jean thinks that sisters fight in a special way: they say things they can't take back because they're too angry to see straight. Once Daddy leaves her room, Lara Jean barges into Margot's room and says Margot had no right to talk to Daddy. Tightly, Margot insists that Lara Jean doesn't know what she's doing, and that Lara Jean has changed. Lara Jean retorts that she's not going to have sex with Peter just because Margot had sex with Josh. She shouts that this is convenient for Margot: since Daddy is disappointed in Lara Jean right now, he can't be disappointed in Margot.

*Even if Lara Jean is afraid that she and Margot will never make up, she suggests here that being family is a sort of insurance policy. She can have this fight with Margot and trust that everything will still be okay at the end of the day. Lara Jean also suggests that Margot's behavior is rooted in Margot being uncomfortable with sex. Making Daddy upset with Lara Jean for being sexually active (which isn't true) is a way for Margot to deflect attention away from herself.*



Lara Jean runs for her room, but Margot follows her in and locks the door. Margot wants to know if Josh shared that they'd had sex, and Lara Jean tries to explain everything. She says that she liked Josh first and swallowed it when he and Margot started dating. When she gets to the point of explaining that she was pretending to date Peter, Margot shakes her head and tells Lara Jean to stop. Lara Jean says she and Josh only kissed once, and he's still in love with Margot.

Her voice trembling, Lara Jean says Margot doesn't know how much Lara Jean looks up to her. Holding back tears, Margot says that Mommy always told her to take care of her sisters, so Margot did just that. She says it was horrible being so far away, but she had to be the good example and show Lara Jean and Kitty how to be brave. Lara Jean says she knows how much Margot did for them, but Margot continues that when she left, it hurt to discover that her sisters didn't need her as much as she thought they did. Lara Jean says that's because Margot taught her everything, and she apologizes. The girls approach each other and cry in each other's arms. Daddy appears in the doorway and asks if everything is okay.

## CHAPTER 71

Now it's New Year's Eve. Lara Jean's family always stays home, but this year is different. Margot is with some school friends in the mountains, and Lara Jean secretly hopes Josh will be there. Daddy is at a work party, and it's just Lara Jean and Kitty at home. They eat popcorn and discuss Lara Jean's sadness. Lara Jean insists she's just sad and doesn't know why. Maybe she misses Peter. Kitty tells Lara Jean to call him, but Lara Jean says she can't. She decides to tell Kitty the truth: that her relationship with Peter was a fake. After her private letters got sent, she was humiliated, and things got out of control.

Nervously, Kitty asks Lara Jean to not be mad—she sent the letters. Lara Jean shrieks, but Kitty says she was so mad that Lara Jean was going to tell Josh about her crush. She regretted sending the letters immediately. When Lara Jean asks how Kitty knew about the letters, Kitty admits to going through Lara Jean's things sometimes when Lara Jean isn't home. Remembering how she read Margot's letter from Josh, Lara Jean doesn't say anything. Kitty apologizes and starts to cry, but Lara Jean isn't ready to accept the apology yet. Kitty races upstairs and returns with the [hatbox](#).

*Finally, Lara Jean tries to come clean about everything. But while this is a positive for Lara Jean as it suggests she's maybe ready to give up lying, it doesn't do much good—her lies have gotten so out of hand and so convoluted that it's hard for Margot to believe Lara Jean is telling the truth now.*



*Margot might not have been ready to hear the truth about Josh and Lara Jean, but it's easier for her to talk about her relationship with Lara Jean and the rest of the family. Margot reveals that she's been under immense pressure to care for her siblings—and feeling like she's no longer needed forces her to rethink who she is and how much value she has. Lara Jean is also willing to tell Margot the truth: that she wants nothing more than her big sister's approval. For both of them, family is more important than anything else.*



*The fact that this New Year's Eve is different from past years highlights how the Covey family is changing. Lara Jean and Kitty are able to look after themselves at home, which speaks to their growing maturity. Margot and Daddy, meanwhile, are able to enjoy a night socializing with their friends and colleagues rather than worrying about overseeing the household. In these ways, the Coveys seem to be branching out and becoming less dependent on one another.*



*Though Lara Jean hasn't been aware of it, Kitty has been learning some of the same lessons about lying over the course of the novel. She suggests that she never expected to turn Lara Jean's world entirely upside down; she just wanted to hurt her for a moment, and things got out of control. But Kitty's being honest with Lara Jean sets the sisters up to have a more honest relationship going forward.*



## CHAPTER 72

Before Kitty was born, Mommy used to buy the same things in different colors for Margot and Lara Jean. Things got trickier when Kitty came along because of the age difference—and finding the same thing in three colors is hard. The **hatbox** is the only gift Lara Jean got from Mommy that was just for her. Lara Jean expected to find a hat inside when Mommy gave it to her, but Mommy said it was for Lara Jean's precious secret things.

Back in the present, Kitty apologizes, her chin trembling. Lara Jean is suddenly not mad and says that Kitty can keep the box for her own secrets, but Kitty refuses. Kitty says she put something in the box for Lara Jean. Inside the box are all of Peter's notes that Lara Jean threw away; Kitty thought they were important when she found them in the trash, and she only read a few. Lara Jean insists that she and Peter aren't getting back together, but Kitty tells her to read the notes and leaves the room.

Lara Jean starts to read the notes. Most of them are silly and inconsequential, but in one Peter says that Lara Jean looks pretty in blue. Lara Jean hasn't gotten a love letter before, but Peter's notes sure seem like love letters. Lara Jean thinks that she loves Peter. She sees who he really is, and vice versa. She wants to be brave going forward, like Margot is.

Just before midnight, Lara Jean takes Kitty, Jamie, and the sparklers outside. Kitty dances with her sparklers and plays with Jamie. Seeing Josh's light on, Kitty asks if he wants to light sparklers with them. Josh says he'll join next year. He smiles at Lara Jean, and Lara Jean feels like things will be okay. Josh will always be in her life, and it feels like things are the way they're supposed to be. Later, back in her bedroom, Lara Jean gets out her nice stationery and starts to write a real love letter to Peter.

*The hatbox was important to Lara Jean because it connected her to Mommy and her childhood. It made her feel special and loved in a way she didn't get to feel all the time, since she usually got the same gifts as everyone else. So, the hatbox became a place for Lara Jean's special things that also connected her to Mommy and her childhood.*



*Attempting to give Kitty the hatbox suggests that Lara Jean has come of age. She doesn't have a need for this connection to her childhood anymore, especially since she's gotten by just fine without the hatbox for the last few months. The revelation that Kitty saved Peter's notes offers hope that Lara Jean will be able to replace the letters she wrote with something more meaningful: letters from someone she loves.*



*Lara Jean and Margot might be taking different life paths, but Lara Jean can still use Margot as her guide and as an example. She can be brave, like Margot, but her bravery will naturally look different. In this case, being brave means being truthful about loving Peter and wanting to be with him.*



*Ending the novel with Lara Jean writing a letter to Peter (that she presumably intends for Peter to read) shows how much Lara Jean has changed over the course of the novel. Intimacy is still scary, but now Lara Jean is willing to face her fears, be truthful, and accept the challenges of being in a relationship. This open-ended conclusion leaves the reader with the hope that Lara Jean and Peter will be able to be honest with each other and continue to develop their relationship going forward.*





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