

# Kissing Girls on Shabbat Discussion Questions

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The content based on English version

**Explore Kissing Girls on Shabbat by Sara Glass with our discussion questions, crafted from a deep understanding of the original text. Perfect for book clubs and group readers looking to delve deeper into this captivating book.**

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## Chapter 1 | 1. First Night | Q&A

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pages 8-13

[Check The Kissing Girls on Shabbat Chapter 1 Summary.](#)

1. Question:

What does the act of taking off the wig symbolize in the context of the chapter?

Removing the wig represents shedding the expectations and pressures of society, particularly the expectations of beauty and femininity. It is a moment of vulnerability and authenticity, allowing the protagonist to connect more deeply with her true self beneath the image crafted for others.

2. Question:

How does the protagonist feel about the transition into married life?

The protagonist experiences a mix of anxiety and excitement as she steps into marriage. Despite the years of preparation through teachings and advice, she finds herself unprepared for the reality of the first night, feeling a sense of dread and uncertainty about consummating the marriage.

3. Question:

What role do the family and cultural traditions play in the protagonist's experience?

The family and cultural traditions create a framework of support for the protagonist, preparing her for this significant life change. Their efforts are evident in the ceremonial aspects like the wedding and the bridal suite, but also emphasize the weight of expectations she must navigate.

4. Question:

What is the significance of the character Yossi's actions during the first night?

Yossi's nervousness and vulnerability mirror the protagonist's feelings, illustrating the shared experience of apprehension in their new marital relationship. His reaction—putting on his plaid pajamas again after an awkward encounter—highlights the discomfort and the pressures they both face in fulfilling societal expectations of intimacy.

5. Question:

How does the protagonist's reflection on the night reveal her inner conflict?

As she navigates her emotions of fear, sadness, and humor about the absurdity of the night, the protagonist's reflections reveal her deep-seated conflict between societal expectations of marriage and her own feelings of dread about intimacy. She wishes to share her true feelings with a friend but recognizes that the burden of those feelings prevents her from doing so.

6. Question:

In what way does this chapter address themes of societal expectation and personal identity?

The chapter illustrates the tension between societal expectations of marriage and personal identity. The protagonist is caught between the person she has been taught to be and her true self, grappling with how to reconcile these conflicting identities on a night that is supposed to mark a joyous beginning.

7. Question:

What can be inferred about the protagonist's relationship with her mentor and teachers?

The protagonist's interactions with her mentor and teachers suggest a reliance on their guidance for navigating the concept of wifehood. However, the stark realization that she feels unprepared highlights the limitations of this guidance in addressing the emotional complexities of intimacy and marriage.

8. Question:

What emotions does the protagonist feel as she suddenly finds herself alone with Yossi?

The protagonist feels a rush of anxiety and trepidation as she faces the reality of being alone with Yossi, feeling her heart racing. This moment underscores her feelings of isolation and the burden of expectation, as she grapples with the intimacy she is expected to engage in.

## **Chapter 2 | 2. Unholy | Q&A**

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pages 14-27

[Check The Kissing Girls on Shabbat Chapter 2 Summary.](#)

1. Question:

What internal conflicts does the narrator experience regarding her feelings for Dassa?

The narrator feels a mix of attraction and guilt towards Dassa, grappling with the teachings of her ultra-Orthodox upbringing that condemn same-sex love. She desires Dassa but struggles with the idea that this love is deemed sinful, which creates an emotional turmoil as she tries to reconcile her feelings with her religious beliefs.

2. Question:

How does Dassa's presence impact the narrator's perception of herself and her surroundings?

Dassa's presence awakens a sense of desire and self-awareness in the narrator. The narrator initially sees herself through the lens of guilt and societal expectations; however, Dassa's confident demeanor and untraditional appearance challenge the narrator's views, making her feel both alive and conflicted.

3. Question:

What does the encounter between the narrator and Dassa in the classroom symbolize?

Their encounter symbolizes a moment of awakening and temptation. Dassa's unconventional style and approach ignite curiosity and desire within the narrator, representing the struggle between the pull of personal desires and the constraints of their religious upbringing.

4. Question:

How do the societal expectations of the Hasidic community influence the narrator's choices?

The societal expectations of the Hasidic community deeply influence the narrator, leading her to hide her feelings for Dassa and maintain a facade of traditional behaviors, such as participating in the shidduch process. These norms create an internal conflict, where she is drawn to Dassa yet fears the repercussions of being true to her emotions.

5. Question:

In what ways do the characters cope with the fear of judgment from their community?

The characters cope with fear by meeting in secret, framing their relationship as a friendship first, and avoiding behaviors that would draw public scrutiny. They employ a mix of denial and rationalizations to maintain their connection while adhering to community norms.

6. Question:

What is the significance of the 'test from God' as mentioned by the rabbi?

The 'test from God' signifies the intense scrutiny and judgment the characters face regarding their love for each other. It frames their relationship as a challenge to be overcome, rather than a natural expression of love, further entrenching their fear and guilt about their feelings.

7. Question:

How does the narrator's view on love and sin evolve throughout this chapter?

Initially, the narrator views love as something sacred, to be reserved for God alone, and sees her attraction to Dassa as sinful. However, as her feelings grow, she begins to question these beliefs, feeling a deep connection and longing for Dassa that contradicts the teachings she has been raised with.

8. Question:

What emotional responses are triggered by physical intimacy between the narrator and Dassa?

Physical intimacy triggers a mix of desire, guilt, and shame within the narrator. While she feels euphoric and connected to Dassa, the fear of divine punishment and societal rejection looms, complicating her feelings and leading to a profound internal struggle.

9. Question:

What does the narrator's reluctance to acknowledge her feelings for Dassa indicate about her character?

The narrator's reluctance to acknowledge her feelings reveals her deep-seated conflict between her desires and her indoctrinated beliefs. It highlights her struggle for self-acceptance and the fear of losing her community and identity if she openly embraces her love for Dassa.

10. Question:

In what ways does the narrator's family and community shape her understanding of sin and morality?

The narrator's family and community instill a strict view of sin and morality that equates love between women with sinfulness. This upbringing shapes her understanding of herself as a sinner for her feelings, reinforcing a sense of shame and pushing her to conform to societal norms despite her true desires.

## **Chapter 3 | 3. Her Body Is Bible | Q&A**

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pages 28-52

[Check The Kissing Girls on Shabbat Chapter 3 Summary.](#)

1. Question:

What internal struggle does the narrator face regarding her relationship with Dassa and her forthcoming marriage to Yossi?

The narrator wrestles with her deep emotional connection to Dassa, juxtaposed against her obligations to marry Yossi, a man she barely knows. She experiences guilt and anxiety over her feelings for Dassa while being pressured to conform to societal expectations of marriage within her religious community. This conflict highlights her desire for freedom versus the fear of divine judgment and community rejection.

2. Question:

How does the narrator perceive the matchmaking and dating process in her culture?

The narrator views the matchmaking process as impersonal and transactional. She feels like a product being packaged and marketed, where her personality and desires take a backseat to societal norms and expectations. This commercialization of personal relationships adds pressure on her, making her feel inadequate as she compares herself to her peers.

3. Question:

What significance does the narrator place on the concept of sin in her life, particularly regarding her relationship with Dassa?

Sin is a central concern for the narrator, especially in the context of her forbidden relationship with Dassa. She grapples with the nuances of sin, questioning whether emotional pain inflicted on her lover through neglect or betrayal is more sinful than the act of same-sex love itself. This internal dialog underscores her struggle between her religious beliefs and her authentic feelings.

4. Question:

What role do the narrator's sisters play in her life, particularly regarding her dating life?

The narrator's sisters actively participate in her match-making process, acting as intermediaries who gather information about potential matches. They provide both support and pressure, reflecting traditional familial expectations about marriage. Their involvement showcases the cultural significance of familial duties in shaping personal relationships in her community.

5. Question:

What does the narrator's feelings towards Yossi reveal about her view on love and marriage?

Her feelings towards Yossi are marked by a sense of duty rather than genuine affection. She views marriage as a necessary step to fulfill her religious obligations and societal expectations, indicating that love might be secondary to the societal framework in which

she operates. This pragmatic approach to marriage contrasts sharply with her passionate feelings for Dassa.

6. Question:

How does the narrator describe her experience of shopping for wedding attire with Dassa, and what does it reveal about their relationship?

During the shopping trip, the painful irony of celebrating her upcoming marriage while simultaneously mourning the loss of her relationship with Dassa is palpable. While they try to prepare her for her new role, their emotional connection becomes evident as Dassa exhibits jealousy and sadness. This juxtaposition emphasizes the weight of societal norms against personal desires and the painful compromises the narrator faces.

7. Question:

In what ways does the narrator's relationship with religion complicate her personal choices?

The narrator's relationship with religion is fraught with conflict; she feels bound by strict religious norms that dictate her actions and relationships. While she strives to be a devout daughter of God, her burgeoning self-discovery and love for Dassa lead to questions about faith, sin, and morality. The struggle to reconcile these aspects of her identity creates a complex emotional landscape that influences her choices regarding love and marriage.

8. Question:

How does the wedding preparation serve as a metaphor for the narrator's internal conflict?

The wedding preparation represents not only the external convergence of expectation and obligation but also symbolizes the internal turmoil she faces. The act of preparing to become 'Yossi's wife' while her heart belongs to Dassa highlights the tension between personal desire and societal duty, making the preparations fraught with emotion and ambivalence.

9. Question:

What does the narrator's experience in her bridal instructor's class reveal about her understanding of marriage?

The bridal instructor's class frames marriage as a holy act, devoid of personal feelings or desires, which deeply unsettles the narrator. The clinical instructions about intimacy starkly contrast with her romanticized notions of love, showcasing a dissonance in her understanding of marriage versus the reality she is being prepared for. This dissonance deepens her anxiety and sense of entrapment.

## 10. Question:

What does the metaphor of the countdown chart reveal about the narrator's perspective on her engagement?

The countdown chart underscores the narrator's sense of urgency and impending loss of agency. It quantifies the remaining time before she is bound to someone she feels little connection with while also representing a countdown to the end of her relationship with Dassa. This chart becomes a symbol of her dwindling freedom and the pressure of societal expectations.

## Chapter 4 | 4. Maybe I'll Pray | Q&A

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pages 53-63

Check The Kissing Girls on Shabbat Chapter 4 Summary.

### 1. Question:

What is the significance of the cleansing ritual described at the beginning of the chapter?

The cleansing ritual is a powerful metaphor for Sara's desire for spiritual renewal and forgiveness. It represents her hope to start her new life as a bride free of past sins, seeking God's grace to purge her feelings of guilt and moral ambiguity. The imagery of scrubbing her soul and immersing in rainwater underscores her need for transformation and purity as she embarks on a significant life change.

### 2. Question:

How does the author express the conflict between Sara's inner desires and her religious obligations?

The conflict is vividly illustrated through Sara's internal dialogue throughout the wedding ceremony. She longs for a connection with God while also feeling tempted by her forbidden thoughts of Dassa. This duality showcases her struggle between her religious commitments and her genuine feelings, emphasizing the tension between tradition and personal desire.

### 3. Question:

What does the tabernacle in Sara's heart symbolize in her marriage?

The tabernacle symbolizes her intention to create a sacred space dedicated to God within herself, transcending her feelings towards her husband, Yossi. It represents a commitment to uphold spiritual values and a desire to offer part of herself as a sacrifice for a higher purpose, even if that means marrying without love.

### 4. Question:

How does Sara's experience on her wedding night reflect her emotional turmoil?

Sara's experience on her wedding night is marked by profound discomfort and fear, as she braces for the physical act that contradicts her emotional state. The anticipation of pain and her reluctance to engage with Yossi highlights her inner conflict and unresolved feelings, revealing her struggle to reconcile her commitment to her marriage with her cravings for someone else.

5. Question:

What emotional and psychological themes are prevalent in Sara's interactions with others following her wedding?

Themes of shame, stigma, and the fear of vulnerability are prevalent in Sara's interactions. The sense of being 'damaged' and the anxiety about her sister's mental health create a barrier in her communication with Yossi. Sara grapples with the fear of being misunderstood and the weight of familial issues affecting her identity, reflecting a broader struggle with self-acceptance and societal judgment.

6. Question:

How does the relationship between Sara and Yossi evolve throughout the chapter?

Throughout the chapter, Sara and Yossi's relationship evolves from a formal union dictated by cultural and religious expectations to an awkward partnership marked by misunderstandings. Yossi's initial tenderness gives way to discomfort as Sara's past and their differing understandings of intimacy surface, illustrating the challenges of blending personal history with shared future in a traditional marriage.

7. Question:

What role does prayer and spirituality play in Sara's journey?

Prayer and spirituality serve as a lifeline for Sara, providing her with a means to seek forgiveness and guidance amid turmoil. Throughout the chapter, her whispered prayers reflect her desperation for connection with God and her yearning for purity. This spiritual dimension emphasizes her internal struggles and reinforces the importance of faith in navigating life's complexities.

8. Question:

In what ways does the setting of the wedding ceremony enhance the themes of the chapter?

The wedding ceremony's setting—a traditional hall surrounded by family and community—contrasts sharply with Sara's internal chaos. The joyous atmosphere filled with rituals and blessings underscores her isolation and confusion about her desires. This juxtaposition amplifies the themes of obligation versus personal longing, highlighting how societal expectations can sometimes overshadow individual emotions.

9. Question:

What does Sara's reflection on her identity as 'Mrs. Schwartz' signify?

Sara's reflection on her identity as 'Mrs. Schwartz' marks a pivotal moment of self-realization and acceptance of her new role, despite her underlying insecurities. It indicates her transition from an individual with a troubled past to a married woman, capturing the complexities of her self-perception and societal expectations, while also confronting the weight of her family's lineage and her own struggles.

10. Question:

How does the chapter illustrate the concept of external versus internal expectations in relationships?

The chapter illustrates this concept through Sara's conflicting feelings about her marriage. Externally, there are expectations related to the marriage ceremony and adherence to religious practices, while internally, Sara battles her past and personal desires. This conflict between societal norms and her true feelings creates a poignant narrative about the struggle for authenticity in the face of traditional pressures.

## **Chapter 5 | 5. Sound of Silence | Q&A**

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pages 64-87

[Check The Kissing Girls on Shabbat Chapter 5 Summary.](#)

1. Question:

How does Malka cope with the silence and absence of joy in her home after Shani's departure?

Malka retreats to the corners of her home, finding solace in the musty spaces under the stairs and behind closets. These physical hideouts symbolize her emotional need for comfort and a temporary escape from the chaos around her. She immerses herself in books, dreams, and memories, trying to create new experiences with her younger sister, Mimi, as a way to fill the void left by Shani.

2. Question:

What does Malka's environment reveal about her family's emotional turmoil post-Shani's illness?

The environment is heavy with silence and disconnection. The house becomes a space of mourning, where past family dynamics have shifted dramatically. Malka observes her mother's lethargy and her father's attempts to maintain normalcy through routine, yet the core emotional warmth that characterized their family life has diminished. The home, once filled with laughter, now echoes with tension and unspoken fears.

### 3. Question:

What significance do the conversations between Malka and her mother reveal about family dynamics concerning illness?

The conversations expose a lack of open communication regarding Shani's illness. Malka's mother responds evasively to Malka's innocent questions about Shani's health, indicating a protective instinct that paradoxically causes more confusion and fear for Malka. The family's efforts to maintain secrecy suggest a deep-seated struggle to confront their issues, ultimately showcasing how illness and mental health challenges ripple through family relationships.

### 4. Question:

In what ways does Malka's experience with the psychologist help her understand her family situation better?

Through her sessions with the psychologist, Malka begins to piece together the reality of her family's struggles with mental illness. The psychologist's gentle probing and recognition of Malka's fears allow her to articulate feelings she felt compelled to suppress. This support helps Malka address her anxiety about potentially inheriting similar mental health struggles and fosters her understanding of her family's complexities.

### 5. Question:

What does the ending scene at the restaurant symbolize about Malka's transformation?

The ending scene highlights Malka's internal conflict between her past self and her present circumstances. As she navigates her wedding celebration, pretending to embody the happiness expected of her, the moment symbolizes a turning point: she's put on a facade that society and familial roles demand while feeling an overwhelming disconnection from her true self, and particularly from her sister, Dassa.

### 6. Question:

How did Malka's perception of happiness change throughout her experiences, particularly in relation to Dassa?

Initially, Malka equates happiness with familial warmth and connection, but as she faces her family's dysfunction and her sister's absence, her notions of happiness become tainted. At the wedding, she grapples with Dassa's question about her happiness, illustrating that achieving external milestones does not equate to true emotional fulfillment. Malka's struggle reflects a profound evolution of understanding, where she recognizes the complex layers of happiness that include memories of joy overshadowed by sadness.

### 7. Question:

What role does imagination play in Malka's coping mechanisms throughout her childhood?

Imagination serves as Malka's refuge amid her family's turmoil. As she plays with her sister Mimi, recreating their old games under the dining room table, she attempts to bring joy back to her fractured world. This imaginative play not only acts as a coping mechanism but also as a method for Malka to hold onto the memories of her childhood, seeking to restore some semblance of normalcy despite the harsh realities outside her make-believe world.

8. Question:

How does the narrative convey the theme of loss and recovery within the family structure?

Throughout the narrative, loss is a pervasive theme, illustrated not only by Shani's physical absence but also by the emotional void it creates in the family dynamics. Each family member responds differently to this loss, causing further fragmentation. Malka's journey towards recovery is depicted through her gradual understanding of mental illness and her efforts to build a new identity amidst disarray. The text suggests that acknowledgment and communication about loss can facilitate healing, however challenging that process may be.

## **Chapter 6 | 6. Watch Me Burn | Q&A**

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pages 88-110

[Check The Kissing Girls on Shabbat Chapter 6 Summary](#)

1. Question:

What challenges did Malka face in her relationship with Yossi after their wedding?

Malka faced significant challenges in her relationship with Yossi after their wedding, including feeling isolated and disconnected from him. Yossi's strict adherence to the laws of niddah, during which physical contact is restricted, left Malka feeling lonely. He avoided looking at her during that time, fearing any contact that could be deemed inappropriate, which deepened Malka's emotional struggles as she transitioned into married life. Additionally, Yossi's dismissive attitude towards her concerns, training her to prioritize his authority, and the societal expectations of their community added layers of complexity to their dynamic.

2. Question:

How did Malka's expectations of motherhood clash with her experiences?

Malka's expectations of motherhood were initially filled with joy and anticipation after learning she was pregnant. She envisioned a loving bond with her child, but when she experienced a miscarriage, her expectations were shattered. The emotional turmoil of

losing her baby led to feelings of failure and grief, making her question her worth as a mother. After the birth of her son, there were also conflicts involving Yossi's emotional distancing from her, which made her feel like she was only fulfilling her role as a mother rather than being seen as an equal partner in their family.

### 3. Question:

In what ways did Malka navigate the cultural expectations imposed on her?

Malka navigated the cultural expectations imposed on her by conforming to the norms of her community while grappling with her internal struggles. She engaged in activities like cooking traditional meals, adhering to modesty in dress, and fulfilling the role of a dutiful wife, all of which were expected in her ultra-Orthodox lifestyle. However, beneath the surface, she began to challenge some of these norms, particularly regarding her own aspirations and the emotional distance in her marriage with Yossi. She sought validation beyond societal expectations by considering her education and emotional well-being.

### 4. Question:

What role did spirituality and religious beliefs play in Malka's journey?

Spirituality and religious beliefs played a pivotal role in Malka's journey, serving as both a source of comfort and constraint. Her Jewish faith dictated many aspects of her life, including her interactions with Yossi during the niddah period and her views on motherhood and sacrifice. She frequently turned to prayer and religious practices as a way to cope with her grief and losses, believing that adhering to her faith would ultimately lead to blessings in her life. However, her strong adherence to these beliefs also contributed to her feeling of helplessness when faced with personal tragedies and the emotional rigidity in her marriage.

### 5. Question:

What is the significance of the mikvah in Malka's narrative?

The mikvah holds significant importance in Malka's narrative, symbolizing ritual purity and the complexities of her marriage. It represents the intersections of her religious obligations and personal struggles, especially during her niddah periods when she felt isolated from Yossi. The act of immersing in the mikvah was a moment of renewal for Malka, but it also highlighted her emotional distress as she sensed a disconnection from Yossi, who strictly adhered to observing their rituals. The mikvah thus becomes a metaphor for her journey from despair towards a hope for reconnection and fulfillment in her role as a wife and mother.

### 6. Question:

After experiencing personal losses, how did Malka's perspective on her family's expectations change?

After experiencing personal losses, particularly the miscarriage, Malka's perspective on her family's expectations began to shift. Initially, she adhered to the rigid values imposed by her community, focusing on fulfilling her role as a pious wife. However, as she reconciled her grief, she started to question the fairness of these expectations, especially regarding her aspirations for education and emotional intimacy in her marriage. Malka's desire for personal fulfillment grew stronger, leading her to consider pursuing further education and prioritize her own needs and emotional health, indicating a subtle yet powerful shift in her identity.

## Chapter 7 | 7. Mad World | Q&A

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pages 111-131

### Check The Kissing Girls on Shabbat Chapter 7 Summary.

1. Question:

What internal struggles does Sara face upon entering college?

Sara grapples with feelings of being an outsider due to her traditional upbringing, contrasting sharply with her peers who dress provocatively and have a carefree demeanor. She longs for normalcy and acceptance, which conflicts with her commitment to her religious values and identity.

2. Question:

In what ways does Sara feel pressured by societal expectations?

She feels pressure to conform to a modern college lifestyle that promotes secular values and behavior, such as casual dress and liberal social interactions, which starkly oppose her background and values.

3. Question:

What is the significance of Sara using her second name, 'Sara', in college?

Using her second name allows her to create a more adaptable identity in the secular environment of college, helping her distance herself from her old life and the expectations tied to her birth name, 'Malka', while still holding onto her heritage.

4. Question:

How does the experience of motherhood influence Sara's academic life?

Motherhood adds a layer of complexity to her college experience as she juggles her responsibilities to her baby and her studies. The fatigue and emotional demands of being a new mother often hinder her ability to focus and engage fully in her classes.

5. Question:

What pivotal conversation does Sara have with Yossi regarding family planning?

Sara expresses her fear of becoming pregnant again so soon after having Avigdor, stating she feels unprepared for that responsibility, indicating cracks in their marital communication and her desire for more agency in her life.

6. Question:

How does Sara's perception of her marriage change throughout this chapter?

Initially, Sara is hopeful for love and connection but becomes increasingly disillusioned as she confronts Yossi's expectations. This leads her to question the effectiveness of their marriage and whether it can be saved.

7. Question:

What role does Tikva play in Sara's life during this chapter?

Tikva serves as a bridge between Sara's two worlds, offering friendship and support while navigating college. She represents a possible path of embracing both religious and academic identities, encouraging Sara to reconcile her roles.

8. Question:

How does Sara react to secular topics discussed in her classes?

Sara experiences a mix of curiosity and discomfort, often feeling scandalized by discussions on topics like sexual pleasure and gender rights. These conversations challenge her beliefs and push her to confront her preconceptions about the secular world.

9. Question:

What is a major theme in Sara's interactions with her classmates?

A major theme is the clash of cultures; Sara's traditional beliefs conflict with the liberal attitudes of her classmates, highlighting her isolation and struggle to find common ground while pursuing her education.

10. Question:

How does Sara's experience in her social work class contrast with her home life?

In social work class, Sara is exposed to the realities of mental health issues and societal problems, which is starkly different from her sheltered life at home, leading her to reflect on her responsibilities to her community and her own identity.

11. Question:

What does the chapter reveal about Sara's understanding of her own identity?

The chapter shows Sara's struggle between her traditional Orthodox identity and her evolving self at college. She feels torn between her commitment to her faith and the new ideas and experiences she encounters, indicating a critical point of growth.

## Chapter 8 | 8. Girl on Fire | Q&A

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pages 132-152

### Check The Kissing Girls on Shabbat Chapter 8 Summary.

#### 1. Question:

What crucial perspective does Professor Deana provide about marriage?

Professor Deana suggests that marriage should be a renewable contract, lasting five years, after which individuals can decide to renew or not. This challenges traditional views on lifelong commitment and inspires reflection on the nature of modern relationships.

#### 2. Question:

How does Malka's viewpoint on her marriage to Yossi change throughout the narrative?

Malka begins to question her marriage as she compares her husband to secular standards, feeling trapped between her upbringing and her evolving identity. Her growing awareness of her needs versus societal expectations becomes a central theme.

#### 3. Question:

What emotions does Malka experience during her childbirth, and how do they relate to her marriage?

During childbirth, Malka feels a mix of fear, longing, and pain, symbolizing her larger struggles within her marriage. The pain of labor intersects with her emotional turmoil regarding intimacy, love, and connection with Yossi.

#### 4. Question:

What is the significance of Malka's yearning for a gentle touch during her labor?

The yearning for a gentle touch represents deep emotional needs unfulfilled in her marriage. It highlights her desire for love, affection, and validation, contrasting sharply with her experience of intimacy with Yossi.

#### 5. Question:

How do Malka's past traumas and cultural heritage influence her perception of motherhood?

Malka's dreams about danger and confinement reflect her inherited trauma from her family's past as survivors. This legacy impacts her feelings of vulnerability and responsibility as she navigates motherhood in her current environment.

6. Question:

In what ways does Malka assert her voice in her decisions regarding childbirth?

Malka begins advocating for herself during pregnancy, insisting on discussing medical decisions with Yossi and expressing her needs. This marks a pivotal moment in asserting her autonomy against traditional gender roles.

7. Question:

What does Malka's realization about her need for autonomy signify in her relationship with Yossi?

Malka's recognition of her need for autonomy signifies a critical turning point; she grapples with the limitations imposed by her marriage, establishing her longing for independence and self-identity.

8. Question:

What does the childbirth experience reveal about Malka's relationship with her husband?

The childbirth experience highlights the emotional distance in their relationship, as Yossi is portrayed as detached and focused on external approval rather than on supporting Malka's emotional or physical needs.

9. Question:

How does the theme of motherhood intertwine with Malka's personal struggles?

Motherhood becomes a battleground for Malka's identity, as she confronts her struggles with her marriage, societal expectations, and her own past trauma, shaping her journey toward empowerment and self-discovery.

10. Question:

What transformation does Malka undergo by the chapter's end regarding her identity?

By the end of the chapter, Malka undergoes a profound transformation, realizing she is done being a mere vessel for others' expectations. She seeks to reclaim her autonomy and question the confines of her marriage.

## **Chapter 9 | 9. Crossroads | Q&A**

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pages 155-174

## Check The Kissing Girls on Shabbat Chapter 9 Summary.

### 1. Question:

What challenges does a woman in Orthodox Judaism face when seeking a divorce?

A woman cannot initiate a divorce on her own and must wait for her husband to grant it. This can leave her feeling powerless and trapped, as she may not have the autonomy to pursue her own happiness or future.

### 2. Question:

How does the author view her initial decision to get divorced?

The author sees her initial decision as lacking meaning and power, equating it to an unrealistic dream. She feels that without rabbinic permission, her choice holds no real weight.

### 3. Question:

What societal pressures does the author face regarding her desire for divorce?

The author faces significant pressure from her family and the community, who view divorce as a sign of failure and express concern for her children's well-being. They perpetuate the belief that a broken home is worse than a troubled marriage.

### 4. Question:

What does the author realize about her role as a mother during her struggles?

As she navigates her difficult situation, the author discovers she is a much better mother than she previously believed. Without the constraints of her marriage, she allows herself to be more present and nurturing with her children.

### 5. Question:

How does the author articulate her experience of abuse within her marriage?

The author struggles with defining her experiences as abuse, feeling the need to frame her narrative in a way that would resonate with her community while grappling with feelings of guilt and the desire for autonomy.

### 6. Question:

What does the author's decision to contact Rabbi Levi signify?

Contacting Rabbi Levi signifies her search for hope and support outside her marriage. It also reflects her longing for a voice that understands her plight and can help her navigate her situation.

### 7. Question:

In what ways does the author confront the stigma around divorce in her community?

The author confronts the stigma by acknowledging her feelings, seeking support from those who can understand, and ultimately fighting against the narrative that encourages women to endure unhappiness for the sake of tradition or family.

8. Question:

What transformation does the author undergo throughout this chapter?

The author transitions from feeling powerless and trapped in her marriage to finding strength in her decision to seek divorce, ultimately reclaiming her voice and prioritizing her well-being and that of her children.

9. Question:

What role do the rabbinic authorities play in the author's journey toward divorce?

Rabbinic authorities often reinforce the traditional views that complicate her ability to divorce, pushing her to seek permission rather than supporting her autonomy, thus highlighting the struggle between personal happiness and communal expectations.

10. Question:

How does the author's perception of happiness evolve in this chapter?

Initially, she views happiness as being tied to familial and communal acceptance, but as she asserts her need for separation, she begins to realize that true happiness is linked to her well-being and the safety of her children.

11. Question:

What does the author wish she had regarding her autonomy in her marital relationship?

She wishes she had had the right to make decisions about her own body, such as using birth control, which would have allowed her to have a greater sense of control over her marriage and personal choices.

## **Chapter 10 | 10. Far Away from Here | Q&A**

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pages 175-195

[Check The Kissing Girls on Shabbat Chapter 10 Summary](#)

1. Question:

What does Rabbi Shemaya represent for Malka in her difficult journey?

Rabbi Shemaya represents compassion and understanding in a world filled with pain and conflict. He is the 'meadow' after Malka navigates the tumultuous and difficult path of divorce, providing her with warmth, respect, and a sense of safety, allowing her to express her feelings about the struggles she faces.

## 2. Question:

How does Malka's perception of Yossi change during their mediation session?

Initially, Malka perceives Yossi as a chaotic force, perhaps needing her to hold things together. During mediation, she becomes shocked by his apparent inability to commit to any parenting schedule, realizing how much she had been holding him together and recognizing her own strength in contrast to his instability.

## 3. Question:

What does Malka's experience at the therapist's office signify in her journey?

Malka's experience at Genevieve's office symbolizes her growing autonomy and strength. By allowing herself to be vulnerable in a supportive space, she affirms her rational decision-making and consistently shows her dedication to her children's well-being, which further empowers her as she approaches the divorce.

## 4. Question:

What inner conflict does Malka face regarding her religious beliefs and personal desires after her divorce?

Malka battles with the tension between her commitment to her religious beliefs and the yearning for personal freedom. As she grapples with the restrictions imposed by her faith, she dreams of a life unconfined by traditional values but feels a deep responsibility towards her children's upbringing, leading to an emotional struggle for her identity.

## 5. Question:

What significance do the lyrics from Sarah McLachlan's song have for Malka?

The lyrics resonate deeply with Malka as a promise to herself to be strong despite her pain. They offer her a moment of catharsis; as she cries, she recognizes the importance of self-commitment and resilience, marking a transformative moment where she begins to reclaim her identity after years of feeling repressed.

## 6. Question:

How does the trip to Aruba represent a turning point for Malka?

Malka's trip to Aruba represents a pivotal moment of liberation for her. It's a celebration of her newfound freedom and identity, where she begins to embrace her authenticity. The experiences on the beach and in the nightlife allow her to explore herself outside the

constraints of her past, offering her a glimpse of a life where she can be true to herself.

7. Question:

What does Malka's final act of covering her hair on the plane symbolize?

Malka's decision to cover her hair again symbolizes her struggle between her personal aspirations and adherence to her religious identity. It reflects the conflict she faces between wanting to be true to her newfound self-expression and the fear of losing custody of her children if she deviates from religious norms, encapsulating her journey of negotiation between faith and autonomy.

## **Chapter 11 | 11. Sweet Madness | Q&A**

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pages 196-215

Check The Kissing Girls on Shabbat Chapter 11 Summary

1. Question:

What does the author express about the feeling of freedom after their Aruba trip?

The author describes a profound sense of freedom that arises after their trip to Aruba, contrasting it with the feelings of confinement and loss of identity upon returning to Lakewood. The trip triggers an awakening to the possibilities of life outside marriage and the constraints of their community, leading to a yearning for self-discovery.

2. Question:

How does the author respond to the internet ban imposed by the rabbis in Lakewood?

Faced with the scarcity of information in Lakewood due to a town-wide internet ban, the author takes bold steps to obtain unfiltered access by seeking to establish a cable internet connection. This reflects their desperation for knowledge and a connection to the outside world, despite the perceived dangers of such choices.

3. Question:

What significance does the act of getting a haircut have for the author?

The act of getting a haircut symbolizes a pivotal shift in the author's identity and freedom. Removing the wig signals a rejection of the constraints imposed by their community and a daring move towards embracing a more authentic self, showcasing their desire to break away from traditional expectations.

4. Question:

What is the relationship between the author and Shani, and how does it evolve throughout the chapter?

The relationship between the author and Shani is initially strained, marked by a lack of communication and secrets. However, as Shani opens up about her struggles with mental illness, they find common ground and understanding. Their bond strengthens through shared experiences and the liberation of expressing their true selves, highlighting the importance of sisterhood.

5. Question:

Why does the author seek legal divorce paperwork, and what does it symbolize?

The author seeks legal divorce paperwork as a necessary formality to validate their separation from a marriage that has become untenable. This pursuit symbolizes a critical step towards empowerment and independence, indicating the author's commitment to reclaiming their life and identity.

6. Question:

How does the author experience a sense of duality in their exploration of the outside world?

As the author navigates the outside world, they experience a duality of emotions—excitement mixed with guilt and fear of societal judgment. While they revel in new experiences, they remain cautious, ensuring that their exploration of freedom does not lead to repercussions within their community.

7. Question:

What does the chapter reveal about the challenges of mental illness within the family context?

The chapter highlights the stigma and secrecy surrounding mental illness within the family. Shani's struggles with bipolar disorder and the tension they cause reflect a broader societal challenge, underscoring the need for openness and acceptance in discussing mental health, and the burdens placed on family members to conform and protect reputations.

8. Question:

In what ways does Shani's journey parallel the author's quest for identity and freedom?

Shani's journey, filled with battles against mental illness and societal expectations, parallels the author's quest for identity and freedom. Both sisters grapple with the constraints of their upbringing and seek to forge their own paths. Their respective struggles and revelations become a source of shared understanding and strength, ultimately supporting each other's journeys.

9. Question:

How does the author's perception of their sister change over time?

Initially, the author views Shani's life as chaotic and secretive; however, as they reconnect and share experiences, the author begins to see Shani as a resilient and colorful individual who bravely navigates her challenges. This shift in perception fosters a sense of admiration and solidarity between them.

10. Question:

What does the author learn about the importance of sisterhood in times of personal struggle?

The author learns that sisterhood provides a unique support system during times of struggle, offering a safe space for vulnerability and expression. The bond with Shani exemplifies the power of familial connections in overcoming personal hardships, cultivating resilience, and facilitating growth.

11. Question:

How does the author's exploration of secular culture impact their sense of self?

The author's exploration of secular culture serves as a catalyst for discovering a more authentic self, challenging the constraints of their background. Engaging with new ideas, experiences, and identities awakens a desire for independence and self-expression, transforming their understanding of who they can become.

## **Chapter 12 | 12. I Can Kiss Away the Pain | Q&A**

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pages 216-239

Check The Kissing Girls on Shabbat Chapter 12 Summary.

1. Question:

What does the protagonist's experience with Match.com signify about her personal transformation?

It signifies a turning point where she begins to reclaim her identity and autonomy after years of feeling lost in the confines of her previous life and marriage. By actively seeking connections, she is taking control of her desires and needs for emotional intimacy.

2. Question:

How does the protagonist confront her fears about dating again?

She approaches it with caution, conducting research to ensure her safety and define her boundaries. Her determination to meet Cathy in a neutral space reflects her desire for a fresh start while acknowledging past traumas.

3. Question:

What role does the mikvah play in the protagonist's journey?

The mikvah symbolizes ritual purification and her attempt to reconcile her spirituality with her desires. It serves as a mechanism to mentally prepare her for a new relationship, indicating her quest for both physical intimacy and spiritual acceptance.

4. Question:

How does the protagonist's relationship with Cathy differ from her past relationships?

With Cathy, there is a sense of mutual respect and understanding that contrasts with her previous relationship. Cathy represents the possibility of love without the weight of traditional expectations—allowing her to explore her identity in a more accepting space.

5. Question:

What internal conflict does the protagonist face regarding her feelings for women versus adhering to religious beliefs?

She grapples with the fear of sinning and the repercussions it may have on her life and custody of her children. This results in a tension between her emerging sexuality and the strict guidelines of her community, forcing her to reflect on the balance between personal happiness and religious adherence.

6. Question:

How does the protagonist's relationship with her children influence her decisions?

Her children are a constant reminder of her responsibilities and the stakes involved in her choices. They motivate her to consider how her actions could impact their lives, pushing her to weigh her selfish desires against the stability and welfare of her family.

7. Question:

What does the protagonist learn about herself through her experiences of love and desire?

She learns that her desires are valid and important to her identity, while simultaneously realizing that love can be redefined and that happiness can coexist with the complexity of her role as a mother and an individual seeking fulfillment.

## **Chapter 13 | 13. I Like the Way It Hurts | Q&A**

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pages 240-262

[Check The Kissing Girls on Shabbat Chapter 13 Summary](#)

1. Question:

What does the author imply about the struggles of single motherhood and the self-image of a mother raising children alone?

The author conveys a deep sense of fear and responsibility, illustrating the emotional toll of being a single mother. She feels the need to maintain a calm front for her children, despite her internal struggles and fears about their safety and well-being. Her description of checking on her children nightly highlights the anxiety and protective instinct that define her role, revealing a complex picture of strength intertwined with vulnerability.

## 2. Question:

Why did the author feel the need to keep her emotions compartmentalized? What was the impact of this coping mechanism?

The author believed that managing her emotions was necessary to navigate her chaotic life, balancing motherhood, work, and personal challenges. However, this coping mechanism led to exhaustion, as she struggled to suppress the fear and anxiety she experienced. The impact was a sense of being overwhelmed and unable to process her feelings fully, which eventually surfaced in various ways, such as through her interactions with others and her choices.

## 3. Question:

How does the author depict her relationships with men in her life? What themes arise from these experiences?

The author's relationships with men reveal themes of vulnerability, power dynamics, and the quest for connection amidst personal chaos. Her initial relationship with Isaac portrays a cautious bond where professionalism masks deeper fears. With Ben, the relationships oscillate between excitement and danger, highlighting the thrill of intimacy against a backdrop of fear. The complexity of these male interactions underscores her struggle to find balance, acceptance, and a sense of identity amidst her past trauma.

## 4. Question:

What is the significance of the author's experience with the rabbi and her decision to seek an abortion?

The encounter with the rabbi symbolizes the conflict between her personal needs and the expectations of her religious community. Her decision to seek an abortion, despite its moral and spiritual implications, echoes the desperation to maintain custody of her children and preserve her role as a mother. This incident reveals the societal pressures she faces, showcasing her struggle for agency in a world that seeks to control her body and choices. Ultimately, it reflects her fight for autonomy amid restrictive norms that exacerbate her sense of isolation.

## 5. Question:

In what ways does the narrative explore the theme of escaping from reality through relationships and distractions?

The narrative illustrates how the author seeks escape through her relationships with men, nightlife, and reckless behavior. She engages in thrilling encounters as a means to momentarily forget her fears and responsibilities. The contrast between her mundane life as a mother and the excitement of her escapades reflects a yearning for freedom and identity beyond her role as a caregiver. These relationships become both a refuge and a source of further complicating her emotional landscape, revealing the dual desire for liberation and the risk of losing herself.

6. Question:

How do the author's actions reflect her feelings towards her inner conflicts and the external pressures she faces?

The author's actions demonstrate a profound struggle between adhering to societal expectations and seeking personal fulfillment. Her risk-taking, like engaging with Ben and seeking thrills in nightlife, shows her desire to break free from repression while simultaneously battling guilt and fear of judgment. The contradiction between her need for connection and playfulness contrasts sharply with her deep-rooted fears as a mother, creating a tension that permeates her choices.

7. Question:

What role do the author's children play in her narrative of self-discovery and personal struggle?

The author's children are central to her narrative, serving as both her anchor and source of profound anxiety. They embody her motivations—her desire to protect them drives her actions, while their presence weighs heavily on her emotional state. Their well-being is intertwined with her self-worth, creating a constant battle between her identity as a mother and her personal desires. This duality amplifies her internal conflicts, and the love she bears for her children is both a source of strength and an emotional burden.

8. Question:

What does the author's description of the crash symbolize in her journey?

The crash serves as a pivotal moment of reckoning for the author, symbolizing both a literal and metaphorical collision in her life. It represents the chaos of her existence and the breaking point of her carefully maintained composure. The aftermath prompts reflection about her choices, as well as the fragility of her situation, highlighting a turning point where she begins to confront the reality of her circumstances and the need for change.

## **Chapter 14 | 14. Help Me Unravel | Q&A**

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pages 263-280

[Check The Kissing Girls on Shabbat Chapter 14 Summary.](#)

### 1. Question:

What does the narrator learn about their father during their conversation in the warehouse?

The narrator learns that their father, Abba, has also experienced hardships in their marriage and felt a sense of sacrifice for their children's well-being. This moment reveals a vulnerability in Abba, shattering the idealized image the narrator had of him. They come to understand that their father, much like themselves, has endured challenges and has made sacrifices, which deepens their relationship.

### 2. Question:

How does the narrator's struggles impact their perception of financial independence?

The narrator grapples with the reality of financial independence post-divorce. They realize that asking for help or support does not equate to weakness, challenging their prior beliefs that they must solely rely on themselves. Their conversations and experiences highlight the tension between wanting to be self-sufficient and the reality of needing support, especially after recognizing the financial burdens they face.

### 3. Question:

What pivotal moment leads the narrator to recognize their lack of control in their life?

The pivotal moment comes when the narrator crashes their uninsured car and is faced with the realities of their situation—an officer's strict demeanor contrasting with their attempts to appeal for sympathy exposes their vulnerability. This incident compels them to confront their lack of control, leading to an emotional breakdown that underscores their struggle to balance parenting, work, and personal responsibilities.

### 4. Question:

Why does the narrator feel inadequate after receiving rejection letters from PhD programs?

The rejection letters challenge the narrator's self-perception, leading them to question their intelligence and worth. They had linked their success in academia to an escape from their failures in marriage and motherhood, so these rejections symbolize not just a setback in their career aspirations but also a personal failure, deepening their internal struggle with self-identity and validation.

### 5. Question:

What does the narrator recognize about the importance of community and support?

Throughout the chapter, the narrator learns that community and support are crucial to navigating life's hardships. The stresses of single parenthood coupled with financial constraints lead them to appreciate how connections with others can provide practical

assistance and emotional comfort. The narrator's interactions with friends, family, and community members reveal that relying on others can foster resilience and a sense of belonging.

#### 6. Question:

How does the narrator's approach to parenting reflect their financial struggles?

Despite financial struggles, the narrator strives to create a joyful and impressionable environment for their children, making efforts to present a façade of stability and abundance, such as building traditions like Bakery Day. This reflects their determination to shield their children from the harsh realities of their situation, prioritizing emotional support over financial worry, and showcasing their dedication as a parent.

#### 7. Question:

What motivates the narrator to pursue a graduate degree despite the challenges?

The narrator is motivated by the need for financial independence and the desire to redefine their identity beyond their past failures. Pursuing a PhD symbolizes hope for a better future for themselves and their children, driving them to overcome obstacles and seek acceptance into programs, demonstrating determination despite previous setbacks.

#### 8. Question:

How does the narrator's experience with law enforcement highlight broader societal issues?

The narrator reflects on racial dynamics in their interaction with law enforcement, recognition that had their identity been different—particularly their skin color—they could have faced more severe consequences. This acknowledgment connects personal experiences to broader systemic issues facing people of color, emphasizing the urgent need for equity and justice within the legal system.

## **Chapter 15 | 15. Where Do Broken Hearts Go? | Q&A**

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pages 283-300

[Check The Kissing Girls on Shabbat Chapter 15 Summary](#)

#### 1. Question:

What should one do when faced with a loved one in crisis, especially when their mental health is a factor?

It's crucial to first validate their feelings and concerns, even if their perceptions may seem distorted due to illness. One should act quickly and seek help, ensuring the safety of all involved. For example, in the text, Malka immediately responded to Shani's urgent plea

for help, despite her own doubts about the situation's reality. She reached out for support, demonstrating the importance of collaboration and connection during such crises.

## 2. Question:

How can familial relationships be strained during difficult times?

Family dynamics often become complex in stressful situations, such as dealing with mental illness or domestic issues. In the chapter, Malka reflects on her deteriorating relationship with her sister Hindy, caused by past conflicts, including her divorce. Such experiences illustrate how crises can exacerbate existing rifts or misunderstanding, urging the need for compassion and open communication to maintain family ties.

## 3. Question:

What is the impact of societal judgment on women who choose to leave a difficult marriage?

Women, like Shani in the story, often face significant societal pressures and judgments when they decide to divorce, particularly within their communities. The fear of abandonment by family or community, as experienced by both Malka and Shani, can lead to deeper feelings of isolation and struggles with mental health. This emphasizes the necessity for supportive environments and understanding, rather than condemnation.

## 4. Question:

How does loving someone with mental illness challenge one's sense of responsibility?

Loving someone with a mental illness can create feelings of guilt and self-doubt, especially when decisions must be made regarding their care. Malka wrestles with her obligation to protect Shani and her children while also dealing with her own emotional turmoil. This duality forces loved ones to constantly balance their caregiving role with their own mental health needs.

## 5. Question:

What lesson can be drawn about handling grief and trauma?

The text illustrates that processing grief and trauma takes time and significant effort. Malka's journey shows how focusing on small, nurturing actions—like caring for children or sharing cake—can provide moments of relief amidst ongoing struggles. It serves as a reminder that healing is not linear, and finding fragments of joy and connection is essential in the journey.

## 6. Question:

Why is it important to distinguish between mental illness and a person's character?

The story emphasizes the distinction between a person's mental health struggles and their inherent worth or character. Shani's actions, influenced by her bipolar disorder, do not define her identity. Understanding this separation can promote empathy, allowing family members like Malka to support without judgement, recognizing the complexity of mental health.

7. Question:

What role does community support play in personal crises?

Community support is vital during personal crises, as seen when Malka and her sisters gather to help Shani and her children. A network of supportive relationships can provide stability, practical help, and emotional reassurance during turbulent times. This highlights the importance of fostering connections and community for those facing challenges.

8. Question:

How does the author use the theme of motherhood to convey deeper messages about love and sacrifice?

Motherhood in the chapter illustrates deep love and the sacrifices mothers make for their children. Malka's protective instincts for her sister's children reflect the instinctual drive to shield loved ones from harm, even as she navigates her own challenges. This theme underlines the profound responsibilities of motherhood intertwined with personal struggles.

## **Chapter 16 | 16. God Bless the Broken Road | Q&A**

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pages 301-317

[Check The Kissing Girls on Shabbat Chapter 16 Summary](#)

1. Question:

What realization does the author come to about love and attraction during her first date with Eli?

The author realizes that the Hollywood version of love doesn't exist for her. While she wants to feel attracted to Eli, she finds that her body does not respond to him in the way it does when she sees depictions of romantic love in media. This leads her to question whether she can manufacture feelings for him based on intellectual compatibility rather than physical attraction.

2. Question:

How does Eli's behavior during the date influence the author's feelings towards him?

Eli's soft voice and his priority toward his son's well-being during their date endear him to the author. She recognizes his commitment to family and begins to feel a flicker of attraction, seeing him as a potentially good father for her children, which sparks a desire to invest emotionally in their relationship.

### 3. Question:

What role does Eli play in the author's life after they begin dating?

Eli becomes a supportive partner and the author's most enthusiastic cheerleader. He encourages her academic pursuits, comforts her during times of grief, and actively participates in family life, demonstrating commitment both to her and her children.

### 4. Question:

How does the author react to her fears regarding her past and her potential future with Eli?

The author grapples with her fears of not being perceived as an ideal partner due to her past and her bisexuality. Despite her worries about rejection, she decides to be open and honest with Eli about her history, which leads to a deepening of their connection and reassures her of his acceptance.

### 5. Question:

What are the author's feelings about marriage as she prepares for her wedding to Eli?

As she prepares for her wedding, the author feels conflicted. On one hand, she loves Eli, but she acknowledges that her reasons for marrying him are not entirely wholesome. She feels pressure to conform to societal expectations and seeks stability for her future and children, even as she worries about losing parts of herself in the process.

### 6. Question:

What moment during the wedding symbolizes the author's transition into her new life with Eli?

During the wedding ceremony, the moment that symbolizes the author's transition into her new life occurs when she sees their blended family gathered together at the head table. This act signifies their unity and acceptance as a real family, encompassing both their children and themselves, marking a significant shift in her identity and aspirations.

### 7. Question:

How does the author reflect on her past and present as she stands at the altar?

At the altar, the author reflects on the contrast between her chaotic past and her hopeful present. As she gazes at Eli and their children, she begins to imagine a future filled with love and stability, realizing that she can create a new narrative that embraces both her

history and her aspirations.

8. Question:

What does the author ultimately learn about love by the end of her wedding day?

By the end of her wedding day, the author learns that love can grow and evolve over time. While she may not have initially felt the butterflies she expected, she recognizes the depth of their connection and the importance of partnership, commitment, and family in shaping a meaningful relationship.

## **Chapter 17 | 17. Landslide | Q&A**

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pages 318-334

Check The Kissing Girls on Shabbat Chapter 17 Summary.

1. Question:

What does the author reveal about the identity struggles faced when moving to the Five Towns?

The author expresses anxiety about fitting into the socially sophisticated environment of the Five Towns after moving from more conservative Jewish neighborhoods. She worries that her roots and upbringing might make her appear out of place among the affluent, modern Orthodox community. This struggle reflects common themes of identity and belonging, especially when transitioning to a new social context.

2. Question:

How does the protagonist's relationship with Eli illustrate the theme of acceptance?

Eli's unconditional love and support for the protagonist play a crucial role in her journey towards self-acceptance. He reassures her during moments of insecurity, particularly concerning their intimacy after her struggles with her past. Eli's patience and understanding signify a safe space where the author can gradually heal and embrace her new life.

3. Question:

What role does community play in the protagonist's development in the Five Towns?

Initially, the protagonist perceives the Five Towns community as shallow and focused on appearances. However, as she integrates more, she becomes aware of the underlying struggles within families and learns to appreciate the supportive network present in her new environment. This shift highlights the importance of community beyond superficial judgments and showcases personal growth through understanding.

4. Question:

What challenges does the protagonist face regarding her religious practices and personal history?

The protagonist grapples with her religious practices, specifically regarding mikvah rituals that trigger painful memories from her past marriage. Her experiences reflect the complex intersection of personal trauma and religious obligations, prompting her to confront her fears and ultimately find a way to move forward within her new marriage.

5. Question:

How does the author portray the transition from a focus on material wealth to deeper personal connections?

Initially observant of the material affluence surrounding her in the Five Towns, the protagonist gradually shifts her focus toward genuine relationships and the inner struggles of those around her. This transition signifies a movement away from valuing social status to recognizing the importance of empathy, connection, and support within her community and family.

6. Question:

What significance does the hurricane have in the narrative?

Hurricane Sandy serves as a pivotal moment in the story, symbolizing both destruction and rebirth. It allows the protagonist and Eli to connect on a deeper level, stripping away external concerns and presenting an opportunity for intimacy and emotional bonding. Their experience during the storm emphasizes finding strength and solace in each other amidst chaos.

7. Question:

How does the author illustrate the complexities of blended family dynamics?

The protagonist navigates the challenges of being a stepparent and balancing relationships between her biological children and Eli's. Through her insights into their interactions and the support from Eli, the author paints a multifaceted picture of blending families, emphasizing both the joys and struggles of creating a combined household.

8. Question:

What messages about healing and resilience are conveyed through the protagonist's experiences?

The protagonist's journey illustrates that healing is a gradual process filled with setbacks and revelations. Her ability to confront past trauma while building a new life signifies resilience. The narrative conveys that acceptance, patience, and the support of loved ones are vital components in overcoming personal struggles.

9. Question:

What does the protagonist learn about self-identity through her relationships in the Five Towns?

Through her relationships and experiences in the Five Towns, the protagonist learns that her identity is multifaceted and not solely defined by her past or societal expectations. She gains strength from the acceptance and love of Eli while also establishing her individuality, showing that one's sense of self can evolve with new experiences.

10. Question:

What does the narrator's final revelation about Shani signify in the context of mental health awareness?

The narrator's shocking news of Shani's suicide underlines the serious issue of mental health struggles that can often remain hidden behind a facade of normalcy. It emphasizes the importance of support, awareness, and open discussions about mental health within communities, suggesting that even those who seem to thrive may be silently battling their demons.

## **Chapter 18 | 18. Beyond the Door | Q&A**

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pages 335-354

[Check The Kissing Girls on Shabbat Chapter 18 Summary](#)

1. Question:

What does the interaction between Felix and the narrator reveal about handling grief, especially in the presence of children?

Felix's struggle to tell his children about Shani's death highlights the difficulty of navigating grief in front of the young, who also experience confusion and loss. The narrator suggests that it's okay for children to see their emotions, as this humanizes the experience of grief. Holding Micki as she cries shows the narrator's understanding that vulnerability can be a powerful part of support.

2. Question:

How does the narrator's decision to maintain a lie about Shani's death affect her relationships with Micki and Adam?

The choice to tell a somewhat sanitized version of the truth about Shani's death reflects the narrator's instinct to protect the children from emotional pain. However, this lie also illustrates the complexity of grief, indicating a deeper understanding that children, particularly Micki, may sense there is more to the story, creating a barrier in fully connecting with her.

3. Question:

In what ways does the shiva period serve as both a time of mourning and family bonding for the sisters?

During the shiva, despite enveloping sorrow, the sisters reminisce and share laughter over memories of Shani, creating a paradox where grief fosters deeper familial bonds. This communal experience allows them to not only honor Shani's memory but also support one another, illustrating how mourning can bring families closer together.

4. Question:

What internal conflict does the narrator experience regarding her mother's behavior during the shiva period?

The narrator grapples with her mother's pain and how it affects their estranged relationship. She understands her mother is grieving the loss of Shani deeply, yet feels frustrated and helpless in confronting the past pain and familial disconnect. This suggests a struggle to reconcile care for her mother with the realities of their complex relationship.

5. Question:

How does the narrator's journey through grief reflect on her identity and desire for connection?

The narrative reveals a longing for closeness that transcends familial ties, as the narrator reflects on potential romantic connections with women. This yearning illustrates her internal battle with identity, self-acceptance, and the intricate dynamics of grief, suggesting that loss has reignited a quest to understand her own desires and connections.

6. Question:

What role does the myth of the 'perfect family' play in the narrator's reflection on her sister's struggles with bipolar disorder?

The idealization of family unity and strength contrasts sharply with the reality of Shani's struggles, revealing how societal expectations can overshadow individual pain. This disillusionment drives the narrator to question the support provided to Shani, suggesting that families often fail to recognize how to effectively help members in distress due to their own preconceived notions of normalcy.

7. Question:

How does the narrator's perspective on therapy and support groups change throughout the chapter?

Initially, the narrator is skeptical about seeking help, reflecting on the depth of her trauma and grief. However, as she engages with support groups and therapy, she begins to acknowledge that addressing her psychological scars is necessary for healing,

highlighting a shift from isolation to recognizing the importance of community and professional guidance.

8. Question:

What does the story say about the impact of unsaid thoughts and hidden emotions in relationships?

The narrator's experience shows that unsaid emotions can create distance in relationships, as seen with her husband, Eli. Her struggle to communicate her grief leads to misunderstandings and feelings of disconnection, emphasizing that open dialogue about emotional pain is essential for intimacy and mutual support.

9. Question:

How does the concept of memory and nostalgia intertwine with the theme of grief for the narrator?

Memories of Shani bring both pain and sweetness, as they allow the sisters to reminisce about happier times. This blend illustrates how grief is not only about loss but also about cherishing past moments, suggesting that while the sting of death is profound, the love and joy shared in memories can sustain familial bonds.

10. Question:

What does the narrator's longing for different relationships signify about her emotional state?

Her yearning for connection with women signifies a deep-seated need for understanding and acceptance, revealing her desire for an emotional bond that feels more authentic to her identity. This highlights her internal struggles and the role that grief plays in catalyzing her exploration of self and relational dynamics.

## **Chapter 19 | 19. Only Human | Q&A**

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pages 355-380

[Check The Kissing Girls on Shabbat Chapter 19 Summary](#)

1. Question:

What internal struggles does the protagonist face in Chapter 19?

The protagonist struggles with grief after the loss of Shani, feelings of inadequacy, and the challenge of melding their family with Eli's. Additionally, there is an ongoing conflict between desire and guilt, particularly regarding her feelings towards women and her responsibilities as a wife and mother.

2. Question:

How does the Supreme Court decision about same-sex marriage affect the protagonist?

The Supreme Court ruling ignites a sense of longing and hope within the protagonist, as she witnesses the celebration of love and equality. However, it also deepens her internal conflict, making her feel disconnected from the joy surrounding the decision, as she grapples with her own unfulfilled desires.

3. Question:

What role does the tattoo she gets play in her healing process?

The tattoo serves as a form of self-affirmation and an acknowledgment of her identity, representing both her family and her pain. It becomes a symbol of her resilience and a mark of her journey towards embracing her true self amid the emotional turmoil she experiences throughout the chapter.

4. Question:

How does the protagonist's relationship with Eli evolve in this chapter?

The relationship shows signs of strain as Eli expresses feelings of neglect and fear of being unloved due to the protagonist's grief. Despite this, they attempt to create new beginnings by buying a house together, signaling hope, yet underlying tensions remain as they navigate their individual struggles.

5. Question:

What is the significance of the protagonist's professional achievements described in this chapter?

Her professional triumphs, such as completing her Ph.D. and establishing her own practice, symbolize growth and empowerment. These achievements contrast sharply with her personal turmoil, highlighting her ability to rise professionally while grappling with complex emotional issues in her personal life.

6. Question:

What metaphor does the protagonist use to illustrate her feelings towards her family and past experiences?

The protagonist considers her grief and trauma as something she wants to lay bare rather than cover up. The tattoo symbolizes this desire to openly acknowledge pain and identity instead of shoving experiences 'under the rug,' emphasizing her quest for authenticity and healing.

7. Question:

How does the protagonist's experience during the massage reveal deeper issues?

The massage scene serves as a pivotal moment where she confronts her own vulnerability and past trauma. It symbolizes the clash between her attempts at healing and the resurfacing of unresolved pain, representing the ongoing battle within her that she struggles to articulate.

8. Question:

What is the protagonist's response to Eli's fears about their relationship?

Initially, she dismisses Eli's fears with humor, trying to placate him, yet internally, she feels guilty and acknowledges that she struggles to provide him with the emotional security he needs.

9. Question:

How does the protagonist perceive her role in her family and community?

Despite her professional successes, she continues to feel the weight of her family responsibilities and the underlying expectation to maintain stability for her children and partner, revealing her inner conflict between personal fulfillment and familial duty.

10. Question:

What does the workshop led by Christine symbolize for the protagonist?

The workshop represents a turning point for self-discovery and empowerment. It offers a space for her to connect with others, embrace authenticity, and confront her desires, contrasting her previous experiences of repression.

## Chapter 20 | 20. More Than I Should | Q&A

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pages 381-397

[Check The Kissing Girls on Shabbat Chapter 20 Summary](#)

1. Question:

What does the narrator's journey through therapy reveal about the importance of self-acceptance?

The narrator's journey through therapy illustrates that self-acceptance is crucial for personal growth and healing. Initially, the narrator struggles with her identity, fearing the repercussions of admitting her attraction to women. Through therapy, she confronts her feelings and acknowledges her sexuality, which brings her relief. This acceptance allows her to shed the burdens of years spent lying to herself and others, ultimately paving the way for a more authentic and fulfilling life.

2. Question:

How does Eli's reaction to the narrator's revelation reflect societal pressures regarding sexuality and identity?

Eli's reaction to the narrator's admission of being gay signifies the deep-rooted societal expectations and pressures surrounding sexuality and identity. He experiences panic, fear, and anger, all of which stem from the potential loss of his family and the societal stigma of being connected to a partner who identifies as LGBTQ+. This showcases how societal norms can impact personal relationships and individuals' ability to embrace their true selves.

3. Question:

In what ways does the narrator connect her struggles with her children's well-being?

The narrator constantly reflects on how her internal struggles about her sexuality and happiness influence her children. She worries about the emotional impact her facade of a perfect marriage has on them, particularly her daughter, Shira. The narrator understands that by not living authentically, she is modeling a restricted emotional life for her children. This realization motivates her to seek change, recognizing that her happiness is crucial to fostering a healthy environment for her children.

4. Question:

What role does the symbolism of the dance floor at the Stonewall Inn play in the narrator's journey?

The dance floor at the Stonewall Inn represents liberation and self-discovery for the narrator. It marks a pivotal moment where she steps into a space of freedom and authenticity, allowing herself to fully embrace her identity without fear. The experience of dancing and engaging with other women symbolizes the joyful acceptance of her true self, contrasting sharply with her previous life, filled with constraint and dishonesty.

5. Question:

How does the theme of trauma influence the narrator's relationships throughout the chapter?

Trauma serves as a significant underlying theme that influences the narrator's relationships, especially with Eli. The narrator's experiences of past trauma, including the assault, create barriers in her intimacy and emotional availability within her marriage. This trauma shapes her interactions, leading her to question her feelings and the dynamics of her relationship with Eli, who struggles to understand her pain. The theme emphasizes the lasting impact of trauma on personal connections, as it complicates love, trust, and the capacity to engage openly with loved ones.

6. Question:

What is the significance of the narrator labeling herself as 'gay' after her encounter with another woman?

The act of the narrator finally labeling herself as 'gay' is a powerful moment of self-empowerment and clarity. It signifies her acceptance of her true self after years of confusion and societal pressure. Embracing this identity marks a turning point in her life, allowing her to envision a future where she can pursue genuine happiness and love, free from the restrictions of conformity. This decisive identification reflects not only personal liberation but also the universal struggle for LGBTQ+ individuals to assert their identities in a world that often imposes rigid definitions of sexuality.

7. Question:

How do the narrator's reflections on her relationship with her daughter highlight the consequences of living authentically or inauthentically?

The narrator's reflections on her relationship with Shira underscore the consequences of authenticity versus inauthenticity. Living a life that is not true to oneself leads the narrator to feel disconnected from her emotions and her daughter. She recognizes that her struggles and facade affect Shira's ability to express her own emotions, thus creating a cycle of guardedness. The narrator desires to break this cycle, hoping to model a life where her daughter can embrace her feelings and be free to express herself, highlighting the profound impact of authenticity on parenting and familial relationships.

8. Question:

What is the importance of the narrator's final decision to seek a life that reflects her true identity?

The importance of the narrator's final decision to seek a life that reflects her true identity is pivotal for her personal journey towards fulfillment and happiness. Choosing to embrace her sexuality not only represents an act of self-love but also signifies a commitment to creating a life unburdened by societal expectations and familial pressures. It empowers her to pursue genuine connections and to be a more authentic mother, fostering an environment where her children can thrive emotionally. This decision underscores the theme that living one's truth is essential for holistic well-being.

## **Chapter 21 | 21. Lose You to Love Me | Q&A**

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pages 398-411

[Check The Kissing Girls on Shabbat Chapter 21 Summary](#)

1. Question:

What does it mean to be honest with oneself in a relationship?

It means acknowledging and confronting the truths of your inner feelings, even when it's painful. In the chapter, the protagonist reflected on her own denial of her sexuality and how it affected her relationship with Eli, illustrating the importance of authenticity in maintaining a healthy partnership.

## 2. Question:

How can pain lead to personal growth?

The protagonist's emotional turmoil after confronting her relationship issues and family expectations allowed her to experience deep feelings, ultimately leading to a sense of release and newfound strength. Pain can catalyze self-discovery and bring clarity about one's desires and needs.

## 3. Question:

In what way can separation be a step toward healing?

Separation allowed the protagonist to seek an environment where she could begin to truly feel again, away from the burdens of a loveless relationship. It provided space for her to rediscover her identity and strength, indicating that sometimes, stepping away can be crucial to finding oneself.

## 4. Question:

How should one approach difficult conversations with loved ones?

The chapter illustrates the importance of patience and empathy in difficult conversations. The protagonist prepares to tell her children about the divorce, emphasizing the need for honesty while also being sensitive to their feelings. It suggests that such conversations should be handled with care, understanding, and openness.

## 5. Question:

What role does family play in one's personal decisions?

Family can exert significant pressure and influence personal choices, as seen with the protagonist's sisters who fear for her children's future. However, the journey of embracing one's truth often involves navigating familial expectations, highlighting that while family matters, one's fulfillment must also be taken into consideration.

## 6. Question:

Is it possible to love someone while knowing a separation is necessary?

Yes, as depicted in the chapter, love can exist alongside difficult decisions. The protagonist and Eli both express love for each other while recognizing that their relationship is not healthy. This reflects that love can coexist with the necessity of change for personal happiness.

7. Question:

How can nostalgia shape one's perspective on change?

Nostalgia plays a complex role in the protagonist's journey, as she reflects on her past happiness while facing the reality of her current situation. This evokes both grief and a hopeful vision for the future, showing that memories can be a source of strength and motivation during times of transition.

8. Question:

What is the significance of self-acceptance in the chapter?

Self-acceptance is a transformative theme in the chapter. The protagonist's realization of her sexual identity leads her to embrace who she truly is, which ultimately propels her toward a healthier future and exemplifies that accepting oneself can be liberating and essential for personal growth.

9. Question:

What lessons can be learned from facing societal expectations?

The protagonist's struggle against societal norms reveals that challenging expectations can lead to a more authentic life. It highlights the importance of prioritizing one's happiness over conforming to external pressures, suggesting that personal truth often requires bravery in the face of judgment.

10. Question:

How can children's perceptions influence a parent's choices?

The children's awareness of the tension in their home deeply affects the protagonist's decision to separate from Eli. Their honesty about feeling the strain underscores that children's emotional responses can guide parents in making choices that best serve the family's overall well-being.

## **Chapter 22 | 22. I Don't Even Know If I Believe | Q&A**

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pages 412-436

[Check The Kissing Girls on Shabbat Chapter 22 Summary](#)

1. Question:

What emotional challenges does the author face regarding her children's schooling after her divorce?

The author feels immense anxiety about her children's well-being in school, particularly with Avigdor facing a curriculum focused on divorce that deeply pains him. She worries about the impact of their family situation on their social lives and academic performance,

fearing the stigma and cruelty that children can display regarding divorce. Her concerns are compounded by the inadequacies she perceives in the school's educational approach and the potential detrimental influence of peer behaviors in high school.

## 2. Question:

How does the author address her son's discomfort with his school curriculum?

The author takes proactive steps by communicating with Avigdor's rebbe, expressing her desire for sensitivity regarding the divorce topic in lessons. She emphasizes the need for her son to feel safe and supported, advocating for accommodations that would alleviate some of his struggles.

## 3. Question:

What does the author aim to achieve for her children compared to her own upbringing?

The author strives to provide her children with the freedom to choose their paths, including educational opportunities that will prepare them for college and life beyond traditional expectations. She reflects on her own childhood where choices were made for her, and she is determined to give her children the autonomy to explore their identities and make their own decisions.

## 4. Question:

What changes does the author seek for her children's education?

The author identifies several schools with better educational support and curricula that align more closely with her children's needs. She applies to multiple schools while navigating the complexities of co-parenting with Yossi, facing challenges from both him and the school's policies regarding educational standards.

## 5. Question:

How does the author cope with her fears of losing custody of her children?

The author actively seeks legal advice and support, engaging with knowledgeable professionals to understand the implications of her decisions. She grapples with anxiety about the possibility of a similar fate as other parents who lost custody, highlighting the stakes involved in her fight for her children's educational needs and her right to parent them.

## 6. Question:

What is the significance of the support from the school and community in the author's life?

Support from the school is critical for both the emotional and educational stability of the author's children, as she navigates their aftereffects of divorce. Her sense of belonging in a community that understands her experiences as an ex-Orthodox mother provides her

with encouragement and a connection to shared histories.

7. Question:

What does the author realize about her role and capabilities as a mother through this journey?

The author recognizes her strength and willingness to fight for her children's happiness and autonomy. She transitions from a passive participant in their schooling to an active advocate, using her professional skills and experience to prioritize their needs and well-being.

8. Question:

How does the author portray the expectations and norms of the Orthodox community?

The author reflects on the constrictive nature of the Orthodox community regarding education and gender roles, showcasing the pressures to conform and the harsh judgments faced by parents who make unconventional choices, particularly in the context of divorce.

9. Question:

What does the author hope for her children's future?

The author hopes her children will emerge as independent individuals, equipped with the ability to make choices that reflect their true selves, free from the constraints that defined her own upbringing, allowing them to thrive in environments that support their unique needs and aspirations.

## **Chapter 23 | 23. Where Dreams Are Made True | Q&A**

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pages 437-469

[Check The Kissing Girls on Shabbat Chapter 23 Summary](#)

1. Question:

What is the significance of Sara's decision to not cover her hair after her divorce?

Sara's decision to stop covering her hair symbolizes her move towards authenticity and freedom from oppressive norms. It's a powerful personal choice reflecting her journey to embrace her true self after years of conforming to the expectations of her ultra-Orthodox community.

2. Question:

How does Sara's experience in the Manhattan Hebrew Academy influence her view on her children's education?

Sara's visit to the Manhattan Hebrew Academy showcases a progressive and supportive educational environment that significantly differs from her children's current school. The experience ignites hope for providing her children with opportunities for growth, including physical education and extracurricular activities, which were previously lacking.

3. Question:

What challenges does Sara face regarding custody of her children, and how does she plan to tackle them?

Sara faces the challenge of proving she can provide a better environment for her children outside the strict observance of her ex-husband's beliefs. With the advice of her attorney, Nina, she plans to establish a stable life in Manhattan and enroll her children in a supportive school, which may favor her in custody battles.

4. Question:

What does the concept of 'presumption in favor of the status quo' mean in Sara's legal situation?

The concept means that courts often prefer to maintain existing arrangements unless there's a compelling reason to change them. In Sara's case, by moving her children to Manhattan and enrolling them in school there, she could influence decisions in her favor regarding custody.

5. Question:

How does Sara's relationship with Nina provide her with strength during her legal challenges?

Nina acts as a supportive figure in Sara's life, offering straightforward legal advice that empowers Sara to take bold steps for her family's future. Nina's assurance and experience create a sense of hope and direction for Sara amidst her fears and uncertainties.

6. Question:

What does Sara learn about the religious obligations that once held her captive?

Sara realizes that the religious agreements she had adhered to were based on community expectations rather than legal grounds. This revelation allows her to understand that she can redefine her life and create a more authentic environment for herself and her children.

7. Question:

In what ways does Sara's view on Judaism shift throughout her journey?

Initially, Sara associates Judaism with oppression and rigid rules, but throughout her journey, she learns to embrace the freedom of choice, allowing her and her children to construct a more empowering and personal relationship with their faith.

8. Question:

What does Sara's final victory in the courthouse signify for her and her children?

Winning her custody case in the courthouse symbolizes a turning point in Sara's life, representing liberation from years of fear and oppression. It marks the beginning of a new chapter, filled with potential and opportunities, allowing her to parent her children without the weight of past restrictions.

9. Question:

How does Sara reconcile her past with her present as she moves forward?

Sara acknowledges her past experiences of fear and compliance, but she chooses to prioritize her children's happiness and freedom. Through this process, she learns to let go of her fears and embrace a future where her family can thrive independently.

10. Question:

What emotional impact does her decision to move to Manhattan have on her and her children?

The decision to move to Manhattan instills hope and excitement in Sara and her children, symbolizing a break from the past. However, it also brings anxiety about starting anew and the challenges that come with leaving their old life behind.