

## CHAPTER III

### RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Intrinsic Elements

##### 3.1.1 Character and Characterization

###### 3.1.1.1 Lara Jean

Lara Jean is portrayed as having a physical appearance more similar to her Korean mother than to her American father. This is supported by a quote from Lara Jean's monologue in which she considers herself "more Korean than white" (Han, 2014: 9). People also keep saying that she "look the most like Mommy" (Han, 2014: 9).

About her character, Lara Jean is the main character because in this novel, the story always revolves around her feelings and decisions. The story in this novel focuses on the conflict of her love letters being spread to all the boys she likes, and all the important scenes always happen through her. "What if Peter is just the beginning? What if . . . what if my other letters somehow got sent too? To John Ambrose McClaren. Kenny from camp. Lucas Krapf. Josh." (Han, 2014: 75). The following quote marks the beginning of various problems that will arise in Lara Jean's life. Her relationships with John Ambrose, Kenny, Lucas, and especially Josh and Peter, will turn Lara Jean's life upside down.

Han portrays Lara Jean through direct characterization as an innocent and well-behaved girl, as well as a judgey girl. In this case, Han describes Lara Jean's character directly through the words of Josh and Peter.

### 1. An Innocent and Well-Behaved Girl

From the beginning of the story, Lara Jean is portrayed by Han as an innocent and well-behaved girl. Because she was left behind by her mother who died when she was a child, Lara Jean always listens to her sister Margot's advice and does not want to cause more problems in her family if she acts badly. Han directly described Lara Jean as an innocent and well-behaved girl through Josh's line, in which he says that Lara Jean is "...sweet, innocent girl who likes to be at home with her family" (Han, 2014: 106). When in fact, girls in her age should already have a boyfriend and be enjoying life, especially since she lives in America, which is known for its freedom of expression

### 2. A Judgey Girl

Every love letter Lara Jean writes always conveys her true feelings towards the boys she likes. Her thoughts about these boys are written based on what she sees and feels, without knowing what the boys she likes are really like. This is especially apparent in her love letter to Peter Kavinsky, in which she one-sidedly claims that Peter has a sexually transmitted disease (STD). Peter directly addresses this judgmental attitude in the narrative: "I think you're judgey in general. That's a character flaw that you should work on. I also think you need to learn how to kick back and have fun" (Han, 2014: 145).

Additionally, Han also portrays Lara Jean's character indirectly as a shy girl, as well as a fainthearted girl and underestimated herself. In this case, Han portrays Lara Jean's character indirectly through the actions she takes in the novel.

### 1. A Shy Girl

Lara Jean's characterization as a shy girl is depicted through her action of writing love letters to the boys she likes. Rather than expressing her feelings directly or approaching someone she likes to be her boyfriend, Lara Jean prefers to write and keep the love letters containing all her feelings and thoughts about the boys she likes. When her letters are sent to all the boys, Lara Jean feels as if her world has been turned upside down because the letter means everything to her. She also considers her love letters to be strictly for her own personal use, not to be read by anyone else. "I'm sorry you got that letter. You were never supposed to see that. It wasn't meant for you to ever read. It was just for me" (Han, 2014: 283). This shows that she is really a shy girl and that it is very embarrassing for her to have her love letters read by others and herself.

### 2. A Fainthearted Girl and Underestimated Herself

Han also indirectly portrays Lara Jean as a fainthearted girl and underestimated herself. Lara Jean always feels useless as a second sister, especially since Margot's departure to study abroad left her feeling quite lost and having to be relied upon by her family. "Maybe I'm not ready for it yet. Maybe I'll never be ready. Maybe even when I'm old, my sisters or my dad will have to drive me around, because that's how useless I am" (Han, 2014: 35). This quote shows that she really underestimates herself before trying harder. In fact, Lara Jean is actually capable of acting bravely for herself

### 3.1.1.2 Peter Kavinsky

Peter Kavinsky is physically described as incredibly handsome and charming. Lara Jean describes his appearance as “a handsome boy from a different time” (Han, 2014: 38). Furthermore, Lara Jean adds to her description of Peter’s appearance as she watches him. “Peter Kavinsky, walking down the hallway. Like magic. Beautiful, dark-haired Peter.” (Han, 2014: 87).

Peter is a secondary character who plays an important role in the story’s journey because he is almost always present in every conflict caused by Lara Jean and is supported by him. For example, the fake dating that then makes Lara Jean truly fall in love, as in this quote: “Peter reaches into his backpack, pulls out a notebook, and hands it to me. I turn to a clean page and write at the top, Contract. Then I write No kissing” (Han, 2014: 116). It can be said that Peter is an important secondary character because Lara Jean is always with him during various important events, which becomes the main problem in this novel

Through direct characterization, Han clearly describes Peter as a cool and cocky guy. This description is written through what Josh and Lara Jean say about him. Josh and everyone else know that Peter is like “a ‘cool guy’ in a movie about high school.” (Han, 2014: 54). He is handsome, talented in many ways, has lots of friends, and very popular. He is the typical cool guy from the movies who makes it easy for people to fall in love with him. Besides, after dating Peter, Lara Jean admits that he’s a “... cocky and he can be obnoxious and he’s always late,” (Han, 2014: 248). These two quotes show that Peter is a cool guy, but also a bit cocky, because he’s popular at school.

On the other hand, through indirect characterization, readers can see that Peter is a caring guy through his acts of service. One example occurs during the school ski trip, when Lara Jean and Peter finish enjoying the hot tub. “He starts drying me off with the towel, my arms and legs. [...] He puts my coat on me last. He zips me right in.” (Han, 2014: 317). He is sweet to Lara Jean and makes sure she does not get cold after they spend time in the hot tub.

### 3.1.1.3 Josh Sanderson

Physically, Josh Sanderson is described very well by Lara Jean because she knows him so well. He is described as a man with “brown hair. Not a special brown, just regular brown. Green eyes that go muddy in the center.” (Han, 2014: 26-27). Furthermore, even though he is not an athlete like Peter, Lara Jean says that Josh is a strong man, as in the quote: “He’s on the skinny side, but he’s strong. I know because I sprained my ankle once by the old baseball field” (Han, 2014: 27).

Josh is a secondary character who supports the main conflict in the novel. Lara Jean's love letter, which she writes for him and then sends, drags Josh into Lara Jean's problems. This love letter strains their relationship and causes Josh to experience a dilemma regarding his relationship with Margot and Lara Jean “Ever since I got that letter, things have been messed up between us.” (Han, 2014: 282). Without Josh's character, the conflict in this story does not exist and Lara Jean does not feel guilty towards her sister, Margot.

Through direct characterization, Josh is portrayed as an ordinary boy who does not stand out physically. This is clear from Lara Jean's description of him: “I would say he's just ordinary. He looks like the kind of guy you'd expect would be

good at computers” (Han, 2014: 26). Even though he is just an ordinary guy—unlike Peter, who is cool and popular—Josh has his own unique charm through his intellectual side.

Meanwhile, Josh’s indirect characterization is shown through his actions as a patient and supportive guy towards Lara Jean’s younger sister and Lara Jean herself. This is evident in the following quotes: “Kitty loves Josh because he’ll play cards with her and not get bored. Or at least pretend to not get bored” (Han, 2014: 1) and “... my heart does this pause, and I forget to breathe, and just for that one second I’m dizzy. [...] he says, “Do you want me to be there when you tell your dad?” (Han, 2014: 41). This proves that Josh is a patient young man; he’s willing to spend time playing with Kitty and voluntarily offers to help support Lara Jean as she deals with her father.

#### **3.1.1.4 Margot Covey**

Margot Covey is Lara Jean’s older sister, with whom she shares the same ancestry. She is described as having the same physical features as their Korean mother. However, Lara Jean specifically mentions in her monologue that Margot has features that differ from hers, such as “her high cheekbones and dark eyes.” (Han, 2014: 9).

Margot is a secondary character because she appears at the beginning and near the end of the novel. She serves as a major contributing factor to the development of the conflict in Lara Jean’s love relationship because Lara Jean writes love letters to her boyfriend, Josh. When she finds out that Josh kissed Lara Jean at their house the conflict in Lara Jean’s life reaches a climax. “It’s not true, is

it? Please tell me it's not true." [...] "How could you?" she asks, and her voice trembles. The hurt in her eyes makes me want to die." (Han, 2014: 337). Based on these events and Margot's role, Margot is considered a secondary character.

Through direct characterization, Han directly portrays Margot as a "good girl" through the description in Lara Jean's monologue. "Margot is a good girl, and I guess Kitty and I have followed her lead" (Han, 2014: 10). It is clear that ever since their mother died, Margot has to be a good girl so she can be a role model for her younger siblings, since they no longer have a mother to guide them. In addition, through indirect characterization, Han also indirectly portrays Margot as a maternal and bossy girl because, as the eldest child, she takes on her mother's role. "Margot says, "as long as you behave. And you both have to take care of Daddy. Make sure he doesn't work too many Saturdays." (Han, 2014: 22-23). This quote shows that she really takes charge of and pays close attention to their family's household affairs, just like most mothers do.

### **3.1.2 Setting**

#### **3.1.2.1 Geographical Setting**

##### **3.1.2.1.1 The Covey's House**

The Coveys' house is where Lara Jean, her father, her younger sister, and her older sister live. This house is the most important setting because it is the location of many crucial scenes in the novel. Lara Jean, who is described as not having much fun, spends most of her time at home with her family and doing activities for herself, such as watching movies, rearranging her closet, reading books, or cooking. "She

plops down on the couch on her belly and asks me, “What’d you do last night?” “Nothing. I just stayed home.” “And?” “I organized my closet.” (Han, 2014: 96).

She takes on the responsibility of managing the household after her sister Margot leaves to study abroad. “First-day-of-school breakfast was always a big thing with my mom, and then Margot took over, and now I guess it’s my turn.” (Han, 2014: 63). She spends her time writing love letters to the boys she likes in her room and keeps them in a hat box in her room. “I go to my room and I find my special writing pen, the one with the really smooth inky black ink. I take out my heavy writing paper, and I begin to write” (Han, 2014: 59). This house becomes a safe place for Lara Jean to keep her love letters and then express her feelings, making a character development where she no longer depends on Margot advice.

#### **3.1.2.1.2 High School**

High School is the next place after the Coveys’ house, which serves as one of the most frequently appearing settings in the novel. Although the name of Lara Jean’s school is not mentioned directly by the author, the place where Lara Jean attends school is where she is forced into faking a relationship with Peter in order to avoid Josh and make Josh believe her new relationship status. “This is the first time I’ve walked down the school hallway holding hands with a boy.” (Han, 2014: 112).

It is at this school that she finally dares to go to the cafeteria, hangs out with people like Peter’s friends, and gains popularity because she is dating Peter. “Where are we going?” I ask him. “Cafeteria.” I’m about to protest, but before I can, he says firmly, “We need to start hanging out in public more. The caf is where we’ll get the

most bang for our buck.” (Han, 2014: 135). Although Lara Jean initially wants to refuse to go to such a crowded place at her school, due to Peter's persuasion, she was forced to go with Peter and ends up becoming familiar with crowded places such as cafeterias.

### 3.1.2.1.3 Steve Bledell's Mansion

For the first time, Lara Jean goes to a party held by her school friend, Steve Bledell. “WE'RE STANDING AT THE FRONT door of Steve Bledell's mansion.” (Han, 2014: 183). The party is held at Steve Bledell's mansion and is attended by many people, including Genevieve, Peter's ex-girlfriend. At first, Lara Jean refuses to attend because she has to make cupcakes for Kitty's PTA bake sale, but Peter immediately comes to pick her up and asks her father for permission, which ends up forcing Lara Jean to attend the party.

Lara Jean is scared because she rarely goes to crowded places like high school parties, and she is especially afraid of Gen, who will surely do something to her since she is Peter's current girlfriend. Moreover, everyone is curious to see Gen's response to herself, as if she is an easy target for the moment they have been waiting for.

“I look around the room, just to have something to do, and see Gabe and Darrell, and they wave at me very nicely, but they don't come over. It feels like everyone is waiting and watching, waiting and watching to see what Genevieve will do.” (Han, 2014: 184).

Luckily, Lara Jean is able to act bravely so she will not appear scared in front of Gen and her friends who were intimidate her. The party held at Steve Bledell's mansion marks the beginning of Lara Jean's courage in fighting her fears, especially her fear of Genevieve.

#### **3.1.2.1.4 Lodge**

The lodge is where all the participants of Lara Jean's school ski trip stay. The lodge is described as very comfortable and convinces Lara Jean, who initially refused to go on the ski trip because she hates skiing, to agree to go. Peter persuades her with the following words: "the lodge has a big stone fireplace and big comfy chairs. You can sit and read for hours. And they sell the best hot chocolate. I'll buy you one" (Han, 2014: 253).

This lodge has a hot tub, which later becomes an important place where Lara Jean confesses her feelings to Peter and they kiss there. "He pulls me into the water so I'm sitting in the hot tub too, and my nightgown is soaked now but I don't care. I don't care about anything. I never knew kissing could be this good" (Han, 2014: 315). This hot tub also causes Lara Jean and Peter to have a huge fight because they are accused of having sex when in fact they only kiss.

#### **3.1.2.2 Time Setting**

##### **3.1.2.2.1 Autumn: The Beginning of Junior Year**

In the U.S., fall is the season that marks the start of the new school year. The story in this novel begins as Lara Jean is entering her junior year after summer break. Many people around her suggest that this year is very important for her life because, to them, "It's kind of everything. You don't get a do-over." (Han, 2014: 151). One of her friends, Chris, even tells Lara Jean to do more fun things, considering that Lara Jean's life is very flat. This aligns with the quote: "This is your junior year, beotch. This is when it's supposed to get good. French some guys, live a little, you know?" (Han, 2014: 17). And it is in this year that Lara Jean's life

begins to undergo significant changes, from her love letters being spread around to her finally dares to enter into a contract relationship with the most popular boy, Peter Kavinsky.

### **3.1.2.2.2 Winter: The Holiday Season**

The conflict in Lara Jean's life begins to arise as the winter season comes and snow starts to fall. This period is also marked by Christmas and New Year's Eve celebrations. When Lara Jean has a huge fight with Peter after their kiss leads to them being accused of having sex in the hot tub, she feels grateful for the Christmas break, as it allows her to avoid everyone. "Thank God and Jesus for Christmas break. At least I have ten days before I have to go back to school and face everyone." (Han, 2014: 325). After a major conflict with Margot at the Christmas recital party, they eventually make up. As the New Year is celebrated, Lara Jean finally realizes her feelings for Peter by writing a love letter to him, which serves as the novel's conclusion. "I start to write. Not a goodbye letter. Just a plain old love letter. Dear Peter . . ." (Han, 2014: 355).

### **3.1.2.3 Emotional/Atmosphere Setting**

#### **3.1.2.3.1 Romantic**

Several romantic moments can be felt through Peter's actions towards Lara Jean and vice versa. Although their relationship is based on a mutually beneficial contract, there are times when readers feel that their actions and words are sincere. Lara Jean makes lunch for Peter, teaches Peter material he does not understand, and even kisses Peter on the cheek because of his kindness to Kitty. Likewise, Peter willingly changes his car to pick up Lara Jean and Kitty, and always writes notes to

Lara Jean every day. “Halfway through class he sends me a note. He’s drawn spiderwebs around the edges. It says, I’ll be on time tomorrow. I smile as I read it.” (Han, 2014: 232). The notes Peter writes always make Lara Jean happy, even though it is originally used as an agreement in their dating contract.

The peak of their romantic moment comes when Lara Jean confesses her feelings to Peter in the lodge’s hot tub and they finally confess their feelings to each other. Readers can feel the intimate romantic atmosphere because they are alone in the hot tub and they kiss with narration that makes readers’ hearts flutter. “Peter’s holding my face in his hands, kissing me. “Are you okay?” he whispers. His voice is different: it’s ragged and urgent and vulnerable somehow.” (Han, 2014: 316). Moreover, this romantic and intimate kiss was the first time they did it without being forced by a contract after they both confess their love for each other, supporting a deeper romantic atmosphere.

#### **3.1.2.3.2 Silent and Empty**

When Lara Jean is angry at Peter for not protecting her reputation when they are accused of having sex in the hot tub at the lodge, Lara Jean does not contact Peter and Peter does not contact Lara Jean either. They argue and do not communicate after recital day at the Coveys’ house. Furthermore, she also argues with Margot because Margot knows that Josh kissed Lara Jean. This silence and emptiness are compounded by Lara Jean hoping for a snowstorm, as if it mirrors her own feelings of not wanting to do anything. “OUTSIDE MY WINDOW, SNOW IS falling in clumps that look like cotton. The yard is starting to look like a cotton field. I hope it snows all day and all night. I hope it’s a blizzard.” (Han, 2014: 342).

The silent and empty atmosphere of this narrative reflects reality, because almost all humans who get problems in their lives will feel like they do not want to do anything.

After the argument, Lara Jean begins to miss Peter and ponders a lot because she hopes Peter will contact her. Readers can also feel the atmosphere of silence and emptiness when Peter does not appear together with Lara Jean because part of the novel describes Lara Jean and Peter's relationship. The author describes this silence and emptiness through narration: "I don't know! Maybe I miss someone." "You miss Peter? Or Josh?" I hesitate. "Peter." Despite everything, Peter. "So call him." "I can't." (Han, 2014: 349). In this narrative, Lara Jean cannot even do anything when she misses Peter, yet she is hindered by her arrogance and emotions. She is so angry that her anger ends up turning into emptiness.

### **3.1.3 Conflict**

#### **3.1.3.1 Lara Jean's Internal Conflict with Herself**

Lara Jean is dealing with an internal conflict because she has romantic feelings for several boys, but at the same time, she is afraid to express her feelings. Since love is a feeling that arises beyond our control, her inability to express these feelings creates an inner conflict within her. Furthermore, Lara Jean has developed feelings for her own sister's boyfriend, Josh. When Margot and Josh break up, her desire emerges to make Josh hers. "I can't stop myself from thinking it: If you were mine, I would never have broken up with you, not in a million years" (Han, 2014: 55).

Fortunately, Lara Jean is able to control her feelings because she believes in strong moral values—dating her older sister’s ex-boyfriend is simply wrong. In the end, she feels guilty and ashamed toward Margot, even going so far as to call herself “dirty” and unfaithful. “Thinking these kinds of thoughts, feeling these kinds of feelings, it’s more than disloyal. I know that. It’s downright traitorous. It makes my soul feel dirty.” (Han, 2014: 58).

To cope with her unspoken feelings of love, Lara Jean chooses to express her love in a safer way, by writing love letters and keeping them in a hat box in her room. “When I’m done, I put the letter in my diary instead of in my hat box. I have a feeling I’m not done-done yet, that there’s still more I need to say, I just haven’t thought of it yet.” (Han, 2014: 59). This action seeks a safe path so that Lara Jean remains safe and her feelings can continue to be expressed.

When her love letters spread to the boys she likes, Lara Jean is suddenly faced with a huge problem. Her love letters are never meant to reach those boys, especially Josh, the boyfriend of her sister. Lara Jean, trying to protect herself from Josh, who keeps chasing her for answers, follows her instincts and suddenly pulls Peter—who just walks by—in for a kiss, just to convince Josh. “I don’t even know how my body knows how, because I’ve for sure never touched a boy like this in my life.” (Han, 2014: 87). Finally, after that impulsive kiss ends, Lara Jean immediately experiences a new internal conflict because, to her, bringing Peter closer and kissing him to win Josh over is a bad choice.

“If I had thought it through, I would have made up a boyfriend and not picked an actual person. More specifically, I would not have picked Peter K. He is literally the worst person I could have picked, because everybody knows him.” (Han, 2014: 88).

Lara Jean's internal conflict grows more intense due to her decision to choose Peter as her fake boyfriend. Peter, who is comfortable with physical contact in public, makes Lara Jean feel uncomfortable. However, since she needs Peter to avoid Josh, Lara Jean eventually finds a solution by drawing up a dating contract and setting boundaries on the physical contact between her and Peter. "Peter is allowed to put a hand in Lara Jean's back jean pocket. "But no more kissing," (Han, 2014: 117).

After entering into a contractual relationship with Peter, Lara Jean then experiences internal conflict with herself because she finds it difficult to acknowledge her true feelings for Peter. Her contract relationship with Peter, which is essentially a fake one, confuses her as to whether she should feel comfortable and enjoy all the attention that comes with being Peter's fake girlfriend. At first, she feels that they were just mutually beneficial partners. Lara Jean wants to avoid the boys who receive her love letters, and Peter wants to make his ex-girlfriend, Genevieve, jealous.

She is afraid that their relationship will end because she enjoys being Peter's girlfriend and does not want to lose the activities they usually do together. This can be seen in the narrative: "I'm going to miss riding around in his car. It was starting to feel like home. I'm going to miss being somebody's pretend girlfriend." (Han, 2014: 284). Lara Jean truly enjoys her life as Peter's fake girlfriend, and she, who is initially unfamiliar with Peter and his friends' life, begins to consider them as her home. This feeling of joy causes her to experience an inner conflict once again, and

she is forced to hold back her feelings because she still believes that Peter will get back together with Genevieve.

Over time, Lara Jean begins to get carried away by her feelings and begins to develop real feelings for Peter. Yet, she still believes that Peter has not moved on from Gen. “But aren’t you still in love with Genevieve?” (Han, 2014: 310). When Peter confesses his feelings and says he likes her, Lara Jean is still in conflict with herself, wondering whether she should accept Peter’s declaration of love or not. Even though she knew she also likes Peter, there is always the obstacle of Genevieve that prevents her from thinking clearly.

“I’ve always known he didn’t belong to me. But tonight he said he liked me. The thing I’ve been hoping for, he said it. So why didn’t I just tell him I liked him back when I had the chance? Because I do. I like him back.” (Han, 2014: 312).

### **3.1.3.2 Lara Jean’s External Conflict with Peter Kavinsky**

Lara Jean has an external conflict with her contract boyfriend, Peter Kavinsky, when Peter breaks his promise to study with Lara Jean, leaving her waiting for hours. Peter chooses to prioritize Genevieve, his ex-girlfriend, even though he should no longer care about Genevieve and should try to maintain the charade of a relationship between him and Lara Jean. This makes Lara Jean angry and question Peter’s commitment to their relationship, even though it is only a contractual relationship.

“So . . . where were you? Were you with Genevieve?” [...] He hesitates and then he says, “She needed me.” I can’t even look at him. Why is he such a dummy? Why does she have such a hold on him? Is it just the amount of time they’ve been together?? (Han, 2014: 219).

This first conflict with Peter proves that their relationship is still influenced by Genevieve, as Lara Jean realizes that she is not Peter's priority. This causes a slight gap in their relationship, even though Peter later apologizes and they make up.

Furthermore, another conflict Lara Jean faces occurs when Peter does not protect her reputation when they are both accused of having sex in a lodge's hot tub during their school ski trip.

In a quiet voice I say, "Everybody's saying how we had sex in the tub." Peter groans. "People need to mind their own business." He doesn't sound surprised, not at all. [...] "I don't know, maybe somebody saw us. What does it even matter? It's not true" (Han, 2014: 322-323).

Peter's casual attitude towards the gossip makes Lara Jean very angry and unwilling to meet or communicate with him. She hopes Peter will explain that they have not had sex at all and that it is just a misunderstanding. She hopes Peter will protect her and calm her down, but Peter does not do that. This conflict with Peter strains their relationship, because Peter does not try to understand Lara Jean and their trust in each other drops.

### **3.1.3.3 Lara Jean's External Conflict with Josh Sanderson**

Lara Jean has been friends with Josh for a long time, long before Margot starts dating him. The conflict between Lara Jean and Josh is caused by Lara Jean's love letter to him. In order to avoid Josh and not let Margot know that she used to like Josh, Lara Jean minimizes her interactions with Josh and chooses to date Peter instead. This makes their relationship awkward, and Josh feels like he has lost Lara Jean. "Josh was always with Margot and me. The trio. And now we're not even a

duo, and he's all alone. Part of it's Margot's fault for leaving, but I can see my part in it too—if I'd never started liking him," (Han, 2014: 164). This conflict leaves Josh feeling isolated because he breaks up with Margot and is replaced by Peter. Her love letter makes Lara Jean feel guilty because their friendship can no longer run smoothly.

At a certain point, Josh says that he likes Lara Jean and that Lara Jean should tell him that she likes him too. Lara Jean is angry because it is useless and now she no longer likes Josh.

"The stuff you wrote—you liked me before I ever liked her. Why didn't you just tell me?"  
I let out a breath. "What does that even matter now?"  
"It matters. You should have told me. You should have at least given me a chance." (Han, 2014: 276).

At this point, Lara Jean is very angry because Josh does not understand the situation and talks about how he actually likes her at her house. Moreover, Josh suddenly kisses Lara Jean, causing her to reject him, and making her even more convinced that she no longer likes him. "Because he's right there for the taking: I could kiss him again; I could make him mine. But I don't want him. I want someone else." (Han, 2014: 277). This conflict with Josh also makes Lara Jean realize her feelings for Peter. Without Josh's sudden kiss and her immediately rejecting him and getting angry, Lara Jean is never able to cut off her feelings for Josh forever.

#### **3.1.3.4 Lara Jean's External Conflict with Margot Covey**

The conflict between Lara Jean and her sister Margot begins when Margot goes to college abroad, causing their communication to decrease. Lara Jean keeps so many stories to herself since Margot leaves. This is evident in the narrative:

“There are big things I haven’t told her—how my letters got sent out. The truth about me and Peter. The truth about me and Josh. I wonder if Margot feels it too. The distance between us. If she even notices.” (Han, 2014: 295). There are so many stories that Lara Jean wants to tell Margot, but because Margot is so busy, she never has the right time to talk, and as a result, the stories just pile up and become stale. This makes Lara Jean feel a strange feeling that she has never felt before because she always tells Margot everything, and they both always know everything about each other.

Margot, who seems to dislike Lara Jean and Peter’s relationship, upsets Lara Jean by accusing and judging Peter as a bad person. She feels that Margot, who is studying abroad, has no right to judge Peter because does not know anything about him and does not know him personally.

“I definitely don’t think he’s a good guy for you. All of those lacrosse guys are so douchey.”

“Well, Peter’s not like those other guys.” I don’t understand why Margot can’t just be happy for me. [...] And it makes me mad, the way she’s saying all of this stuff in front of Daddy and Kitty. (Han, 2014: 243).

This conflict marks a change in their relationship from the beginning of the story. In this case, Margot still remains someone who knows what is best for Lara Jean, while Lara Jean is now able to choose what is best for herself without Margot’s decision.

However, the conflict reaches its peak when Margot finds out that Josh has kissed Lara Jean, which makes Margot very angry. Margot does not speak to Lara Jean for days, except when necessary. Lara Jean is also angry with Margot because Margot tells her father that Lara Jean had sex with Peter. Lara Jean, who cannot

accept this, immediately goes to Margot's room and they have another big fight because Lara Jean brings up the fact that Margot has already been having sex with Josh.

“Just because you had sex with Josh, that doesn't mean I'm going to have sex with Peter.”

Margot sucks in her breath. “Lower your voice.”

I feel happy that I've wounded her too. I yell, “Now that Daddy's already disappointed in me, he can't be disappointed in you, too, right?” (Han, 2014: 344-345).

This big conflict ends with Margot being honest about the pressure she feels as the eldest child replacing her passed mother. With this conflict, the two of them are finally able to strengthen their sisterly bond so they can be honest and understand each other. They are also finally able to fix things after Lara Jean explains the real situation regarding her love letters and Josh's one-sided kiss.

## **3.2 Lara Jean's Anxiety in Her Love Relationship**

### **3.2.1 Realistic Anxiety**

Lara Jean experiences anxiety for which she can recognize where it comes from. The source is real and identifiable to her. The realistic anxiety she experiences is caused by the sudden pressure and changes in her life.

The first example of the pressure and life changes that she experiences is closely related to the love letters she writes. Lara Jean's life, which is once very peaceful without any boys in it, suddenly becomes one where she is pursued by the boys to whom she has written love letters.

Lara Jean is terrified to think of the worst-case scenario if her letter falls into the hands of the other boys, because suddenly her letter is in Peter's hands. “What

if . . . what if my other letters somehow got sent too? To John Ambrose McClaren. Kenny from camp. Lucas Krapf. Josh. Oh my God, Josh.” (Han, 2014: 75). This quote becomes realistic anxiety because she knows the external danger that is coming, which is caused by all the love letters she writes. And sure enough, her letters, which become an external threat to her anxiety, are sent to everyone, including Josh. “It got sent to me in the mail.” Josh jams his hands into his pockets. “When did you write this?” (Han, 2014: 85). The love letter she writes becomes the cause of her complicated love relationship, because she is forced to choose to have a fake relationship with Peter to avoid Josh.

The second example is the pressure from the people’s perspective who see her with Peter. Peter is a handsome boy who is very famous, has many friends, and everyone at school knows Peter Kavinsky. Meanwhile, Lara Jean is just an ordinary girl who focuses on school and only befriends Chris and a few others. If she walks with Peter, what will people think? Lara Jean is worried about the negative comments from people who will see her walking with Peter. “What people will say when they see me walking down the hall with Peter Kavinsky.” (Han, 2014: 111). Her anxiety about other people’s opinions made her hold back her feelings and actions towards Peter, especially in public. As a result, during the first week of their relationship, it is difficult for them to develop their relationship and it still feels forced and unnatural.

The last example is pressure from Peter’s ex-girlfriend, Genevieve. Gen, who has dated Peter for a long time, becomes an influential person in Peter’s life, and everyone at their school knows about it. Also, Genevieve was a beautiful, popular

girl who is many friends everywhere, in contrast to Lara Jean, who is very innocent. This can be seen in the following two quotes: “But you know Gen’s gonna come after you, right? They may be broken up, but she still thinks she owns his ass.” My stomach lurches. “Yeah. I know. I’m scared, Chris.” (Han, 2014: 92) and “Hello, I just got through explaining to you how Gen will kill any girl that goes near you!” (Han, 2014: 111). Her anxiety towards Genevieve’s pressure makes Lara Jean constantly compare herself to Genevieve. She becomes afraid to act like a real girlfriend to Peter, and when discussing her relationship with Peter, Lara Jean always brings up Genevieve, who is like a shadow in their relationship.

When she has a problem with Peter—who turns out to meet Genevieve even though he promises to study with Lara Jean—she is once again faced with the fear that Peter will always prioritize Genevieve over her, since she is just a contract girlfriend. “And really, what’s the whole point of this charade if he’s just going to keep going back to her anyway? What’s even in it for me anymore?” (Han, 2014: 2016). Genevieve always ends up being a roadblock in their relationship, because Peter is still helping Genevieve, who needs him, while Lara Jean does not dare to do anything.

The pressure and changes in her life that cause Lara Jean to experience this anxiety result in her love relationship with Peter becoming unnatural, full of suspicion and insecurity.

### **3.2.2 Neurotic Anxiety**

Lara Jean’s neurotic anxiety is caused by internal conflicts within herself that she is not aware of. An example of this is her inner conflict when she is anxious to

start a relationship. Lara Jean is always afraid to start a love relationship with someone, even though nothing bad happens if she approaches the boy she likes; there is no threat that could harm her. This is evident in Peter's annoyed words to Lara Jean in the narrative:

“You only like guys you don't have a shot with, because you're scared. What are you so scared of?”  
 [...] “I'm not scared of anything.”  
 “The hell you're not. You'd rather make up a fantasy version of somebody in your head than be with a real person.” (Han, 2014: 311-312).

This dialogue between her and Peter shows that her fear of starting a love relationship is unconsciously destroying her own love life. Her relationship with Peter remains stuck if Lara Jean does not dare to fight her fears, which should not be fear.

Lara Jean refuses to accept this reality and says that she is not afraid of anything, even though she does not realize that if she is not afraid to start a love relationship, all those love letters might not exist. And maybe she is not single all this time if she is just a little bit braver.

### **3.2.3 Moral Anxiety**

#### **3.2.3.1 Threats from the Moral Standards**

Lara Jean experiences moral anxiety due to the tension between her desires and her internal moral standards, which leads her to be haunted by inner conflict. Her conscience then punishes her for violating moral norms by making her feel regret and guilt.

An example of a threat from the moral standard is when Lara Jean falls in love with Margot's boyfriend. Lara Jean feels guilty for liking her sister's boyfriend,

Josh. Even though Lara Jean does not approach Josh and only pours her feelings into love letters that she keeps secretly in her hat box, for her, liking her sister's boyfriend is a huge betrayal of her family, especially her sister, whom she loves so deeply. "I'm a betrayer of the worst kind, because I'm betraying my own sister, and there's no greater betrayal than that." (Han, 2014: 58).

Lara Jean feels embarrassed and panicked because the letter has been sent to Josh, and she does not want to hurt Margot's feelings. She even makes sure Josh will not tell Margot about the letter. "Do you swear? On your life?" If Margot was to ever find out . . . I would want to die" (Han, 2014: 86)

The moral anxiety caused by the threat of her moral standards makes her afraid to love Josh, even after he breaks up with Margot. This anxiety causes her to be haunted by feelings of guilt and ruins her relationship with Josh.

### **3.2.3.2 Social Norm Pressure**

The social environment of Lara Jean's school and family causes moral anxiety in Lara Jean. For example, when she is suddenly accused by Genevieve of having sex with Peter in the hot tub at the lodge during the ski trip. This triggers everyone to gossip about Peter and Lara Jean. Genevieve exaggerated statement that the two of them were disgusting because there was "stuff" from them that might have mixed in the hot tub triggers Lara Jean's fear, as she has never experienced anything like this before.

"I'm sorry, but I think it's absolutely disgusting. I mean, sex in a hot tub—a public hot tub—is just . . ." She shudders. "God only knows what kind of stuff is floating around in there now. Families use that hot tub, Lara Jean. There could be a family in there right now." (Han, 2014: 320).

The social norm pressure experienced by Lara Jean causes her relationship with Peter to suffer and they stop communicating altogether because she feels dirty. She finds it difficult to enjoy her relationship with Peter as a good relationship again.

Moreover, her father and sister believe she has had sex, even though Lara Jean had not done so at all. They only kissed. But because the story that is spread is exaggerated and does not match the facts, she feels very embarrassed and afraid because her family judges her morals to be that bad. “It’s bad enough for strangers to think the worst of me, but I never thought my sister and dad would believe it.” (Han, 2014: 343). Gossip from school friends and judgment from Lara Jean’s family made her life, which should have been happy because she is experiencing a sweet teenage romance for the first time, become a source of fear and humiliation.

### **3.3 Lara Jean’s Defense Mechanisms in Her Love Relationship**

In this chapter, Lara Jean uses defense mechanisms such as projection, denial, and displacement as part of protecting herself from anxiety in her love relationship as explained in the previous section. Without waiting for advice or guidance from Margot, Lara Jean learns to protect herself and makes these defense mechanisms the starting point of her maturity.

#### **3.3.1 Projection**

Lara Jean uses the defense mechanism of projection when she experiences realistic anxiety. This realistic anxiety arises from the pressure she feels due to how people view her and Peter walking together. When Lara Jean first walks holding

hands with Peter at school, she is nervous because it actually makes her uncomfortable. Her hands are sweaty, but she transfers her nervousness by blaming Peter's warm hands for making her sweat. "At one point I try to let go of his hand, because mine is starting to feel sweaty, but he tightens his grip. "Your hand is too hot," I hiss. Through clenched teeth he says, "No, your hand is." (Han, 2014: 112).

By transferring her nervousness, reflected in her sweaty, hot hands, to Peter, Lara Jean is able to speak and behave normally in front of Peter and everyone who sees them at school. After successfully releasing Peter's hand with the excuse that it is "hot" she can at least feel calmer and less threatened. If she does not lie by saying that Peter's hand is hot, Lara Jean will feel so embarrassed that she might have run away from the place.

In addition, the realistic anxiety arising because of the pressure from Peter's ex-girlfriend, Genevieve, causes Lara Jean to use projection. She accuses Peter of still being in love with Genevieve, even though Peter has clearly said that he likes Lara Jean. She projects her own fear that she has truly fallen in love with Peter and that Peter will choose Genevieve over her.

"But aren't you still in love with Genevieve?"

Peter frowns.

"Why are you always bringing up Gen? I'm trying to talk about us, and all you want to do is talk about her. Yeah, Gen and I have history. I'm always going to care about her." He shrugs. "But now . . . I like you." (Han, 2014: 310).

Lara Jean, who is just an ordinary girl and not as popular as Genevieve, always feels inferior to Genevieve, who is very popular at her school. Lara Jean uses this projection to hide her feelings for Peter, who has been her fake boyfriend from the start because she wants to make Genevieve jealous. If she does not mention

Genevieve in Peter's confession of love, Peter might just be pretending, and she will be heartbroken because she truly loves Peter.

### 3.3.2 Denial

Lara Jean uses denial as a way to reject the facts about herself. She experiences denial when she faces realistic, moral, and neurotic anxiety. This defense mechanism is the method she most frequently uses to cope with the threat caused by her anxiety. First, realistic anxiety. The appearance of this anxiety comes from her life suddenly changing due to her love letters being spread around, which ultimately forces Lara Jean to make Peter her fake boyfriend to avoid Josh. As a result, her relationship with Josh feels awkward and distant. Josh senses this, but Lara Jean feels that everything is fine.

Lara Jean denies Josh's feelings that their relationship has grown distant and that they no longer talked or hung out like they used to. In fact, their relationship has indeed grown distant because Josh and Margot have broken up and Lara Jean's letter has been sent to Josh. "I want to say something to you, but I feel weird bringing it up. Which is also weird, because we've always been able to talk to each other." "We can still talk to each other," I say. "Nothing's changed." (Han, 2014: 165).

Lara Jean's denial anticipates the future of her relationship with Josh so that it can continue to run smoothly. She does not need to feel guilty all the time by clinging to the idea that their friendship is still the same as before. If she admits that their relationship has really changed and become awkward, distance will surely

occur and her whole family, especially Margot, will know that something is wrong between them.

The second event concerns the appearance of moral anxiety. Because she feels uncomfortable about having feelings for her own sister's boyfriend, even after Margot and Josh break up, Lara Jean denies Peter's claim about Josh likes her and has deliberately worn the same costume as Lara Jean on Halloween. She remains adamant that Josh is only for Margot and will get back together with Margot, even though Josh actually likes Lara Jean too. "No, he isn't. He loves my sister. He always has and he always will." (Han, 2014: 271).

Her choice to deny that Josh likes her is made so that she does not feel guilty because her sister's ex-boyfriend should not like her, even though Lara Jean is the one who likes Josh first. If she accepts the truth that Peter tells her, things will get even more complicated. The love triangle between her, Josh, and Margot. The choice between love and family is one she can never make. This will also hurt both Margot and Josh.

Neurotic anxiety is also the reason Lara Jean uses defense mechanisms. She does not realize that all this time she is afraid to try starting a love relationship and always denies the fact that someone likes her. Others have noticed this, especially Peter and Josh. The first incident is when Lara Jean denies her own feelings for Peter. Josh says that Lara Jean looks the same as the other girls around Peter, even though she does change when she is around Peter and has already shown signs that she is also falling in love with him.

"You act different around Kavinsky. Did you know that?"

[...] “You don’t act like you. You act like . . . like how all girls act around him. That’s not you, Lara Jean.”

Annoyed, I say, “I act the same as I always do. What would you know about it, Josh? You’ve barely ever even been around us.” (Han, 2014: 275).

To maintain her image as an ordinary girl who is not interested in popular boys like Peter, Lara Jean denies what Josh says. If she is honest with Josh and tells him that she has also changed like the other girls who like Peter, she will indirectly admit her feelings for Peter without considering that Peter is still involved with Genevieve.

When Peter confesses his love to Lara Jean, she accuses him of lying and says he must still be in love with Genevieve. Offended by Lara Jean’s words, Peter then says, “You only like guys you don’t have a shot with, because you’re scared. What are you so scared of?” (Han, 2014: 311). But Lara Jean actually denies Peter's statement by saying “I’m not scared of anything.” (Han, 2014: 311). She does not feel afraid of anything, even though, in reality, Lara Jean is actually afraid of being in a love relationship, as shown by the fact that she has never dated anyone and only fantasizes about writing love letters that she never sends to the boys she likes.

Even when she already confesses her feelings to Peter in the hot tub during the school ski trip, when they have a fight, Lara Jean again denies her own feelings that she is deeply in love with Peter but is too scared to make up with him. “Daddy lifts my chin and wipes the tears off my face. “You must really like Peter, huh?” “No,” I sob. “Maybe. I don’t know.” (Han, 2014: 343-344).

The shame and fear of being judged harshly for truly loving someone for the first time leaves Lara Jean confused about her feelings and denying her sincere love for Peter. If she says “Yes” to her father, she has to fully acknowledge that her

greatest sadness is caused by Peter, and her father will surely try to get her to fix her relationship with Peter, while at that time Lara Jean is still enveloped in emotion that does not want to contact Peter before Peter contacts her first.

### 3.3.3 Displacement

Lara Jean uses a defense mechanism called displacement when she experiences realistic anxiety. She transfers or vents her emotions onto something she feels is a safe target. First, she eats a lot of ice cream as a way to cope with her stress over losing her hat box and her letters being spread to all the boys she likes. “We hang up and I make myself an ice cream sundae right in the carton: chocolate sauce, whipped cream, chopped nuts. [...] I feed it to myself like medicine, until I’ve eaten the whole thing, every last bite.” (Han, 2014: 77).

By transferring her emotions to sweet foods, namely ice cream, and eating it excessively, Lara Jean can at least improve her mood and calm herself down so she does not experience excessive anxiety. She can also temporarily forget about her lost hat box. If she does not eat ice cream, Lara Jean will definitely be overwhelmed and severely stressed, or even cry in front of her family.

Lastly, she expresses her frustration with Peter for breaking his promise to study together. She releases her emotions on Josh by asking him to go to school, acting annoyed and making Josh wonder what is wrong. It is as if she involves Josh as a way to get revenge on Peter.

The next morning, I wake up still mad. I call Josh to ask him for a ride to school. [...]  
 Josh is looking at me with suspicious eyes. “What’s wrong?”  
 “Nothing.”  
 He doesn’t believe me, I can tell. “Did you and Kavinsky have a fight?”  
 “No.” (Han, 2014: 216-217).

Lara Jean does not want to get into a fight with Peter and takes her emotions out on Josh instead. She does this so that her morning will not start with an argument with Peter in his car. If she does not transfer her emotions to Josh, she will have to be honest about her hurt feelings because Peter breaks their promise and chooses to meet Genevieve instead. This will definitely affect their contractual relationship, which should not be influenced by personal feelings.

