

# **Sister, Sister Study Guide**

**Sister, Sister by Eric Jerome Dickey**

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## Plot Summary

"Sister, Sister" by Eric Jerome Dickey is a novel about the lives of three African-American women and their struggle to find themselves and men who truly appreciate them. Valerie's husband's indifference causes problems in their marriage, and she begins dating Daniel. Inda learns that her boyfriend, Raymond, is cheating on her with two different women, but she meets Michael and befriends Chiquita who was also dating Raymond but begins seeing Brown, Inda's younger brother. "Sister, Sister" is an intriguing novel that follows the intertwined lives of these three women as they leave undeserving men in their pasts and find men who are capable of recognizing their worth and appreciating their strength, thus teaching the women to do the same.

When Valerie attempts to seduce her husband, Walter, his indifference causes her to flee to her sister, Inda. Chiquita and Raymond argue over a female who calls his phone, and he strikes her. Valerie and Inda go to a dance club where Valerie is plagued with guilt after meeting and dancing with Daniel. After a wonderful date, Inda and Raymond argue when a female calls him, and she leaves. The next day, she calls Wiley, a man from the personal ads in the newspaper, and when she drives to Long Beach to meet him, she detours by Raymond's house to leave a note. Inda meets Chiquita on her way to Raymond's, and when Chiquita produces a key to Raymond's apartment, Inda realizes he has been unfaithful. Chiquita catches Raymond in bed with Gina, his fiancée, and leaves in tears, followed shortly by Inda. Valerie feels guilty after meeting Daniel at the theater, breaks off their contact and returns home to her husband. When Inda stops for a walk at Shoreline Village, she runs into and befriends Chiquita.

When Valerie confronts Walter about the issues in their marriage, he tells her he does not even like her, so she packs and leaves. She buys a gas container and flammable liquid because she has nothing to lose. During dinner, Inda and Chiquita talk about past failed relationships, and Michael, a painter on the docks, flirts with Inda and gives her his card, but she leaves it on the table at the restaurant. At a nightclub, Inda runs into her brother, Brown, and introduces him to Chiquita. She goes outside for some fresh air and runs into Michael who she learns is Wiley from the personal ads, and they kiss for a while. Alone in the club, Chiquita sees Raymond and goes to him. When Inda returns to the club, she finds Chiquita gone, and Brown joins her when she gets into a fight with Raymond and Gina. After ensuring Walter is asleep, Valerie sneaks into her house and soaks him and the carpet with the liquid in her gas container, telling him she is going to burn him when he awakes. Back at the hotel, Inda prevents Chiquita from going after Raymond, and Chiquita spends an innocent night with Brown as they comfort one another's pains.

Since Valerie diluted the gas with water, Walter does not burn, but she tells him to get out of her house before leaving. When Walter calls the police, Valerie drives toward Canada, but she turns around because she has unfinished business. While Inda, Chiquita, Michael and Brown hang out, Chiquita tells her secrets to Inda but is interrupted when Brown informs Inda that Valerie tried to kill Walter and is now missing. Inda, Chiquita and Brown rush to Valerie's house where they try to figure out where



Valerie is. Valerie goes to Daniel's house and seduces him. She calls Inda a few days later. After Valerie returns, the three couples hang out for a couple months until Chiquita stops coming around. Soon after moving in with Valerie, Inda catches Valerie in bed with Daniel and decides to give herself to Michael. In a mall in Long Beach, Inda runs into Chiquita with Raymond, and later, she drives by Raymond's house to leave a note on Chiquita's car, which professes undying friendship. Encouraged by Inda's note, Chiquita visits her momma in Memphis and lets go of her past hurts. When Walter begs to reconcile, Valerie meets him but refuses to forgive him for how he treated her. After a perfect weekend with Michael, Inda returns home where Chiquita waits to assure Inda that she is back for good. Chiquita also reconciles with Brown. Valerie is just friends with Daniel who is back east for school because she is regaining her freedom and finding herself, and she is finally happy.



# Section 1: Chapters 1-4

## Section 1: Chapters 1-4 Summary

"Sister, Sister" by Eric Jerome Dickey is a novel about the lives of three African-American women and their struggle to find themselves and men who truly appreciate them. Valerie's husband's indifference causes problems in their marriage, and she begins dating Daniel. Inda learns that her boyfriend, Raymond, is cheating on her with two different women, but she meets Michael and befriends Chiquita who was also dating Raymond but begins seeing Brown, Inda's younger brother. "Sister, Sister" is an intriguing novel that follows the intertwined lives of these three women as they leave undeserving men in their pasts and find men who are capable of recognizing their worth and appreciating their strength, thus teaching the women to do the same.

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In the first chapter, Valerie knows that Walter is not impotent, so she assumes that something must be wrong with her, and she hungers for his attention. Before he comes home from work, Valerie showers and dresses in a negligee to await him nervously, but when he comes home an hour later than usual, he notices nothing as he showers and goes to bed. When Valerie wakes in the middle of the night and attempts to arouse her husband, he pushes her away, claiming to be tired. In Chapter 2, he yells at Chiquita and tells her to open the door, but she refuses because she does not want him to hit her again. He had left his phone on the nightstand last night when he came in from Los Angeles, and when it rang at 6 a.m., Chiquita answered the phone to hear another woman demand that her man be put on the phone. When he walked in the room and tried to wrestle the phone away, he threw Chiquita on the bed, and her lip got hit somehow. Protesting that he does not know how his ex-girlfriend got his cell phone number, he insists that she is overreacting, but Chiquita tells him to get out. He cannot believe she is kicking him out and tells her to call him when she comes to her senses. Chiquita cries as she blames herself for answering his phone and tries to convince herself that she has no reason to be upset. In Chapter 3, Valerie wakes to hear Walter cheering for a football game. When she descends the stairs to the den and asks why he keeps pushing her away, he ignores her. As Valerie drives away from the house, she notices an attractive man jogging, and when he waves, she blows her horn and drives away smiling until she reminds herself that she is married. In Chapter 4, Chiquita cannot sleep as the sun rises. A male flight attendant she works with phones to ask her to pick



up a two day flight to Memphis, but she refuses because she does not do Memphis. Next, her lover phones and claims she is pushing him away though he loves her. He reminds her of everything he has done for her and asks why she suspects him of cheating. As Chiquita thinks of the reasons for her suspicions, he offers to help her find her own place near LAX if she transfers to Los Angeles. Chiquita hangs up because he is missing the point; she does not want to live with him, but he did not even offer.

## Section 1: Chapters 1-4 Analysis

In the first chapter, Valerie is upset by the fact that her husband does not pay much attention to her. She prepares for him to come home from work and attempts to seduce him, but her attempt fails, and this foreshadows problems in Valerie's marriage. In the second chapter, Chiquita is introduced, and several things become apparent about her. First, her childhood was not easy, second, she is unsure of herself, and finally, her lover is probably cheating on her. Even though a woman called his phone and he managed to hit her lip, Chiquita tries to believe his claims that the girl is unimportant and convince herself that she has no reason to be upset. In the third chapter, the tension between Valerie and her husband continues. He completely ignores her when she tries to address the issue. She notices an attractive neighbor when she leaves her house, and this foreshadows a romance in her near future. In the fourth chapter, Chiquita accepts the fact that her lover is not going to return. Her refusal to fly to Memphis indicates that her past painful memories took place in Memphis. When her lover phones, he accuses Chiquita of pushing him away. With the ring and his suggestion that she move to Los Angeles, Chiquita shows that she wants and simultaneously does not want their relationship to progress, and this indicates that she may have issues with commitments or her personal feelings. Though she does not want to live with him, she wants him to offer.



## Section 2: Chapter 5-8

### Section 2: Chapter 5-8 Summary

In Chapter 5, Valerie reaches her sister's apartment in Diamond Bar fifteen minutes after leaving home. Inda, half asleep, opens the door and complains about Valerie's early arrival. Valerie tells Inda to get dressed and get in the car because they are going to Venice since she needs to talk to someone. In Chapter 6, Valerie and Inda park and walk the half mile to Muscle Beach and find a spot in the sand. While Inda naps, Valerie thinks about her choices. She had quit college during her senior year to follow Walter when he thought he had a shot at the NFL, but she never threw it in his face when he did not make the teams because love made her do that. When Valerie tells Inda that she is going to hook up with someone else, Inda does not believe her. Valerie admits "it's hard loving somebody when they don't love you" (page 42), so Inda tells her to leave him, but Valerie cannot because she loves him. Inda insists that Valerie needs to meet somebody new and suggests that they go out tonight because Walter might remember how to appreciate Valerie if she stops being so available. After playing on the beach, Valerie drives home while Inda sleeps the entire way. In Chapter 7, Walter is gone when Valerie gets home after 5 p.m., and she wonders where he went. After taking a nap, Valerie calls Inda and agrees to go out. She leaves a note for Walter because she still has a trace of hope for their relationship. After picking Inda up, Valerie drives to the jazz club at the Radisson in San Bernardino. Valerie turns down several dance offers before they get inside and sits alone at a table, feeling awkward and rhythmless as she watches Inda and wonders about Walter. A tap on her shoulder causes Valerie to turn and see her attractive neighbor who asks her to dance, so Valerie agrees and dances to several songs with him. Her neighbor introduces himself as Daniel Madison, and when he holds her hand and feels her wedding ring, he says it is just his luck. Feeling guilty, Valerie pulls away, but Daniel pulls her back to him to finish the song. Then, he kisses her cheek, thanks her for dancing with him and heads toward the lobby where the bathrooms are located. Valerie waits a while for Daniel, but she spends the rest of the night at a table when he does not return. When Valerie and Inda leave, Valerie finds Daniel's phone number under her windshield wiper. In Chapter 8, Inda tells Valerie to call Daniel, but Valerie insists it is too late. Instead, she calls Walter, but his voice is harsh and unconcerned. As Valerie pouts, Inda dials Daniel's number and hands the phone to Valerie. Daniel recognizes Valerie's voice immediately. He left because he felt that he had made a fool of himself since she makes him nervous because he has been watching her for so long. He lives a few miles away and makes it a habit to jog past her house after seeing her outside one day. Daniel admits to having a crush on Valerie, and he claims he left his number on her car to apologize for being disrespectful and coming onto her since she is married. Daniel is divorced and has no girlfriend. Since Inda keeps telling Valerie what to say and ask, Valerie asks Daniel to meet her at Denny's in twenty minutes. In disbelief and shock, Inda forbids Valerie to talk about Walter and promises to cover for her if Walter calls. By the time Valerie changes her shirt and fixes her hair and makeup, she is already ten minutes late.



## Section 2: Chapter 5-8 Analysis

In Chapter 5, Valerie shows her close relationship with her sister by turning to Inda in her time of need. Although Inda complains about the early hour, she agrees to go with Valerie, demonstrating that she reciprocates her sister's love. At the beach in the sixth chapter, Valerie thinks about the choices she has made because of Walter, and resenting his attitude toward her now, she tells Inda that she is going to have an affair, but Inda's disbelief proves that Valerie is not the unfaithful type. As Valerie tells Inda about the problems in her marriage, Inda alludes to her ex-husband, Andre, comparing his actions to Walter's, and this foreshadows the dissolution of Valerie's marriage. Inda maintains that Valerie should meet someone new and suggests they go dancing tonight which foreshadows Valerie meeting someone new at the club. Valerie returns home in Chapter 7 to find her husband gone. Before going out with Inda, she leaves a note for Walter because she is not yet ready to admit that her marriage is over. Valerie feels very uncomfortable at the jazz club until Daniel, her attractive neighbor, asks her to dance. Valerie is obviously drawn to him, and this adds to the earlier foreshadowing that she will soon find an extramarital romance. Though Daniel leaves early, he leaves his number, continuing the foreshadowing. Walter's indifference is apparent when Valerie calls him in Chapter 8, so Inda phones Daniel and hands the phone to her sister. Valerie and Daniel flirt on the phone, and he tells her a little about himself. Because Inda continually interjects questions and comments into the conversation, Valerie asks Daniel to meet her at Denny's. Inda is shocked by her sister's behavior, and Valerie's tardiness makes her attraction to Daniel quite apparent.





## Section 3: Chapter 9-12

### Section 3: Chapter 9-12 Summary

In Chapter 9, there are only two other people in the restaurant as Valerie joins Daniel at a booth. Daniel explains that he is going east to graduate school in three months, having been forced to start from scratch after his divorce. He tells Valerie that his divorce was caused by his wife's infidelity. They talk and flirt comfortably until 4 a.m. When Valerie calls Inda and Inda tells her that Raymond is visiting, Valerie tells her sister to watch her back as she fingers her wedding ring while looking indecisively at Daniel. In Chapter 10, Daniel puts on music as Valerie's eyes explore his nearly empty apartment. Uncertain, Valerie asks if she should take her clothes off, and Daniel asks if she loves her husband and whether her husband loves her. When Valerie admits that she loves her husband but does not know if he loves her, Daniel says she is unhappy just like him and hugs and reassures her. Feeling stupid, Valerie offers to leave, but Daniel could use the company. As they lay in bed and cuddle, she asks if it is scary to start over, and he says yes "but sometimes you have to step back to make enough room to run forward" (page 73). He kisses her, and they drift to sleep. In Chapter 11, Valerie returns to Inda's apartment around noon and finds a note that says Inda is at church in Los Angeles. She borrows clothes from Inda and laughs when she sees a pack of empty condoms on the nightstand. In Chapter 12, everything is much better between Inda and Raymond. They own the evening the following Saturday night with Raymond being spontaneous and romantic. As they return to his apartment and enter his bedroom, his phone rings, and Raymond answers and speaks with a hushed voice. He does not announce or look at Inda, and her arousal disappears when she hears the high-pitched voice on the other end of the phone. After hanging up, Raymond explains that it was his best friend, Gina, and evades Inda's jealous questioning. Inda packs her belongings and calls Valerie for a ride.

### Section 3: Chapter 9-12 Analysis

Valerie and Daniel flirt comfortably with one another at Denny's in Chapter 9. Valerie's interest in his divorce shows that she has admitted to herself that a divorce might also be necessary for her. It is ironic that Daniel divorced his wife for cheating on him, but he is flirting with another man's wife. When Valerie learns that Raymond, Inda's boyfriend, is at her sister's apartment, she decides to go home with Daniel, though her attention to her wedding ring suggests that she feels guilty about her decision. In Chapter 10, Valerie is nervous at Daniel's house, and when she bluntly asks if she should get naked, he asks if she loves her husband and whether her husband loves her. Though Valerie loves Walter, she is unsure if he still loves her. She feels stupid and attempts to leave, but Daniel convinces her to stay and cuddle. Valerie enjoys the cuddling, especially since she knows that Daniel does not feel obligated to cuddle with her since they did not have sex. Valerie returns to her sister's apartment in Chapter 11 to find that her sister has reconciled with Raymond. Valerie thinks of her childhood, showing the type of



family she has which contrasts sharply with Chiquita's childhood memories. Inda provides the voice of the narrator in Chapter 12 as she informs the reader that she and Raymond get along much better during the next week; however, after a perfect evening, they argue when his best friend, Gina, calls him. This scene and situation parallels the earlier scene with Chiquita and her lover, drawing a connection between the two men. Like Valerie had, Inda turns to her sister in her time of need for a ride home.



## Section 4: Chapter 13-16

### Section 4: Chapter 13-16 Summary

In Chapter 13, Inda drinks coffee while waiting for Valerie to pick her up. When Valerie arrives, she curls up to sleep in the passenger seat, but Inda wants to talk. Valerie pretends to be asleep at first but then raises her head and confesses that Walter has started sleeping in another bedroom and she has not heard his voice for a week. When Inda invites her sister to lunch the next day, Valerie claims she has to work and go grocery shopping. She also claims she has not talked to Daniel because she is married. Inda worries about her sister. In Chapter 14, Inda sits on her bed angrily. She looks at the personal ads and gets angrier when she realizes Raymond did not even call to make sure she got home. She finds no hope in the personal ads. Raymond calls at 5 a.m. to ask if Inda is home, and she hangs up on him. In Chapter 15, Inda wakes at noon and decides not to waste the sunny day. She breaks down and calls a man, Wiley, from the person ads, but it is awkward. He says looks do not really matter; he is much more interested in a person's soul. After talking for a bit, Wiley asks to meet Inda, and she agrees to call him back in a couple hours to possibly set something up. In Chapter 16, Inda stops by Valerie's house on her way to the city, but her sister is not home. After hitting traffic, Inda learns that the police are making everyone detour south, toward Long Beach where Raymond and Wiley live. She can take a hint.

### Section 4: Chapter 13-16 Analysis

When Valerie picks Inda up in Chapter 13, the two women briefly discuss the problems in their romantic relationships, but when Inda suggests they hang out the next day, Valerie makes excuses for why she is unavailable, though Inda does not believe her. Valerie also insists that she is no longer seeing Daniel because she is married, and Inda seems to accept this but is still worried about her younger sister. In Chapter 14, Inda is angry that Raymond has not called to make sure she got home, and his lack of concern indicates that he may not be fully committed to Inda. She shows her desperation by looking at the personal ads, though she internally mocks herself at the same time. When Raymond calls much later, Inda hangs up on him, indicating that she is still angry. In Chapter 15, Inda relents and calls one of the men from the personal ads. His name is Wiley, and he asks her to meet him. Inda says she will consider it and call him back, though she is not thrilled with the prospect of dating another man who is from Long Beach like Raymond. Inda shows her love and concern for Valerie when she stops by Valerie's house in Chapter 16. She takes it as a sign that she should meet Wiley when the police direct traffic toward Long Beach.



## Section 5: Chapter 17-19

### Section 5: Chapter 17-19 Summary

In Chapter 17, Inda decides to swing by Raymond's house and leave a note asking him to return her t-shirt since she is in the area. When she realizes she does not have paper or a pen, she asks a girl parking a blue Miata to borrow the utensils. The girl, Chiquita, offers to loan them to Inda from the house. They walk down the street, laughing and chatting. Chiquita walks up to Raymond's door and searches for her keys. Refraining from anger, Inda acts like it is her first time in the apartment. When Chiquita walks in the bedroom, she screams and runs past Inda, out the front door. Raymond chases her, and his eyes bug out when he sees Inda. Another girl exits the bedroom and introduces herself as Gina, Raymond's fiancée. When Gina learns that Inda is not Raymond's sister as he had claimed, she gives up her denial and starts crying and hitting Raymond while Inda watches. In Chapter 18, Valerie drives to the Ahmanson Theater in downtown Los Angeles and heads toward the showing of *Miss Saigon*. She considers going home but finds her seat next to Daniel in the theater instead. Valerie becomes engrossed in the musical love story, but when the promises of forever change because the man's love changes and the woman commits suicide, Valerie cries, shattered by the ending. Ignoring Daniel's concern, she rushes outside, and when he follows her, she tells him that she cannot see him anymore. Daniel agrees though he is obviously hurt, and when Valerie looks at him, she sees "in him what she wished she could see in Walter" (page 127). She asks to stop by his place before going home to her husband. In Chapter 19, Valerie tells Daniel to kiss her as she steps inside his apartment. As they kiss, she tightens her fists to extinguish the desire and frustration from her life. She pulls away, gathers her belongings and rearranges her clothes and makeup. While she says it was nice meeting Daniel, he silently stares at her like he is trying to memorize every detail like she had done when she took her last stare at him. Daniel agrees when Valerie asks him not to jog by her house again, and they say good-bye to one another.

### Section 5: Chapter 17-19 Analysis

In Chapter 17, Inda decides to leave a note for Raymond since she is near his house. Ironically, she meets Chiquita, connecting the two women for the first time in the narrative, and when Chiquita invites Inda to the house to borrow paper and a pen, Inda is shocked when Chiquita produces keys for Raymond's apartment. Chiquita is even more shocked when she walks into the bedroom to find Raymond in bed with Gina, his fiancée. While Chiquita runs away in tears, Inda stands in the doorway and confronts Raymond. This scene allows the reader to realize that Raymond has been cheating on both Inda and Chiquita, and it also serves to compare and contrast Inda and Chiquita by virtue of their reactions. In Chapter 18, Valerie meets Daniel at the theater, and though she has doubts during her drive, her guilt vanishes as soon as she is with him. Unfortunately, the show they watch seems to parallel Valerie's current situation with Walter, and after it ends, she tells Daniel that she can no longer see him. She asks to



stop by his house before returning to her husband. When she stops by Daniel's house in Chapter 19, Valerie tries to release all of the desire and frustration from her life before returning to Walter. Daniel and Valerie both try to memorize each other's features before saying good-bye for the final time.



## Section 6: Chapter 20-23

### Section 6: Chapter 20-23 Summary

In Chapter 20, Inda stops at Shoreline Village for a walk before trying to drive home, and as she wanders near the docks, she sees Chiquita crying. Inda joins Chiquita and, when Chiquita asks why Inda is crying, tells her she was there to leave Raymond a note. They try to hug away one another's hurt, and a man painting caricatures on the dock asks if they are okay. Saying yes, they quietly walk to Chiquita's car, shaking their heads. In Chapter 21, Valerie feels guilty as she drives home, but having finally got the nerve, she enters her home and asks Walter if he loves her. He tells her "I don't even like you" (page 139). Frozen by his harshness, Valerie can only cry as Walter rages at her about her faults. She suddenly realizes she is alone, though she does not know when he leaves. She thinks of the past six years and everything she has done for Walter. Valerie does not understand why he blames her for his failures when she has sacrificed her life for him. Her heart hardens because the things he had said and done are unforgivable. In Chapter 22, Valerie leaves a message for Inda saying Walter left and she has to take care of this alone. She will call again if she manages to get away. She also leaves a message for Daniel that she wishes she could repeat the day and wishing him well in college. Valerie packs two suitcases and stuffs them in her trunk. In Chapter 23, Inda tells Chiquita about the first time she went through something like this with Andre, her ex-husband. When he started coming home late and claiming to work when he was scheduled off, Inda investigated on her own and caught him in another woman's bed. She snuck into the woman's apartment and pointed her gun at them. Inda told Andre to give her keys back, but she resisted shooting him because she knew the truth and there was nothing she could do about it. She realized she was too strong for him, and he needed a weaker woman to build him up. She left, fuming but in control, and realized she was never in love with Andre.

### Section 6: Chapter 20-23 Analysis

When Inda stops at Shoreline Village in Chapter 20, she runs into Chiquita and confesses that she was also dating Raymond. Instead of blaming each other, the two women blame Raymond, who is really at fault, and try to comfort one another. In Chapter 21, Valerie finally confronts Walter about his indifference, and he tells her that he does not even like her before yelling at her about all the ways that he believes she is lacking as a wife and as a person in general. After he leaves, Valerie releases some of the hurt and becomes angry. She packs in Chapter 22 after leaving obscure voicemails for Inda and Daniel. Chapter 23 returns to Inda who tells Chiquita the story of Andre, her cheating ex-husband, and this shows that Inda has dealt with a man's infidelity in the past.



## Section 7: Chapter 24-27

### Section 7: Chapter 24-27 Summary

In Chapter 24, Valerie's mind is hypnotized by Walter's abuse, but he will regret his unforgivable actions. Valerie buys a gasoline container and flammable liquid before filling her car with gas since it is a long, far drive if she makes it out of the house at all; however, that does not matter to her because she has nothing to lose. In Chapter 25, Inda and Chiquita eat at Parker's Lighthouse, a seafood restaurant in Shoreline Village. They share horror stories about past relationships as they eat and try to figure out how Raymond was juggling three women.. The caricature painter walks by and tells them he is glad they are doing better. As Chiquita teases Inda that the painter must like her, he returns, introduces himself as Michael and offers to sketch both of them for free. Inda flirts a little with him, and Michael leaves his business card. After he leaves, Inda gets a flashback of all her sour relationships, causing her to lose the positive feeling. She leaves his card on the table since "sometimes a fantasy was better than reality" (page 172). In Chapter 26, Valerie calls home at 11 p.m. and hangs up when Walter answers. She parks around the corner and waits until the lights go off around midnight. In Chapter 27, since Chiquita packed for the weekend and is not ready to go home to San Diego, Inda and Chiquita shop and get rooms at the Hyatt before going to a nightclub to release some negative energy. As they dance, Chiquita tells Inda that an attractive man is looking at her, but Inda begins taunting the man and making obscene gestures at him, causing Chiquita to look terrified. The man walks toward them and starts arguing with Inda, but when Chiquita tries to break it up, the man hugs Inda and kisses her cheek. Inda introduces her brother, Thaddeus, better known as Brown. After he chats with the women for a while, he walks away, and Chiquita says it must be nice to have a brother as a friend. When Brown asks Chiquita to dance, Inda decides to call Wiley and invite him to the club, knowing Brown will rescue her if it becomes necessary.

### Section 7: Chapter 24-27 Analysis

Valerie's pain and anger are evident in Chapter 24 as she buys a gasoline container and flammable liquid. Her purpose is obviously devious as she thinks that Walter will regret his actions, but her depression is equally obvious as she feels that she has nothing to lose. This chapter foreshadows Valerie's attack against Walter, and this foreshadowing is continued in Chapter 26 when she waits for him to go to sleep. In Chapter 25, Inda and Chiquita go to dinner and share their horror stories about past relationships; their shared experiences with Raymond allow these two women to meet and bond. During dinner, Michael approaches them and flirts with Inda, but when he leaves, she thinks about Raymond and other sour relationships she has had, so she leaves Michael's card on the table, doubting he would be any different. In Chapter 27, the two women go dancing at a nightclub, deciding to have fun together rather than allow Raymond to ruin their entire day. Chiquita is nervous when Inda begins taunting and making obscene gestures at an attractive man, but her fears are assuaged when Inda introduces her

brother, Brown. The interactions between Chiquita and Brown in this chapter foreshadows a romance between them. At the end of the chapter, Inda's relationship with Wiley is foreshadowed when she decides to invite him to the club.





## Section 8: Chapter 28-30

### Section 8: Chapter 28-30 Summary

In Chapter 28, Inda is surprised Michael is still out on the docks when she steps outside for some fresh air. She asks if he has a date tonight, and he tells her he was supposed to but someone was too busy. He sketches Inda for twenty minutes, and they talk, but she refuses to tell him her name. When he offers to shake her hand, they somehow end up kissing, and he gives her another business card after she tells him she left the first at the restaurant. As they say good-bye, Inda realizes that her awkwardness stems from misguided loyalty to Raymond. When she tells Michael her name finally, he walks back to her and reintroduces himself as Michael Wiley, the man from the personal ad. In Chapter 29, Chiquita enters an empty stall in the women's bathroom and imagines Raymond with Gina. She thinks about the signs of his infidelity and realizes that meeting Inda makes her want more for herself since Inda is such a strong woman. As she makes it back to her table, Raymond enters the club, holding hands with Gina, his fiancée. When Gina walks away, Raymond flirts with a few women. He sees Chiquita, grins and nods. She wants to leave, but she goes to him. In Chapter 30, Inda and Michael promise to try to get together tomorrow before she leaves Long Beach. Inda wants to do cartwheels as it is so rare to find an attractive man with so much potential. Inda returns to the club, but her heart drops when she sees Raymond and Gina. When she cannot find Chiquita, Brown tells her that Chiquita left for the hotel ten minutes earlier. As Inda makes her way to the exit, Raymond and Gina bump into her, and when Raymond smirks at her like she is a fool, she hits him. Then Gina starts yelling at her, so Inda pushes Gina who falls on her behind. Raymond and Gina argue, but when Raymond starts to say something rude to Inda, Brown yanks him off his feet and yells at him for treating his big sister that way. After a few minutes of fighting and arguing, three men pull Brown off Raymond who lays on the floor trying to breathe, and Brown tells Inda to come on.

### Section 8: Chapter 28-30 Analysis

During her walk in Chapter 28, Inda encounters Michael again, and they flirt for a while, though she refuses to tell him her name. They kiss, and Inda realizes her refusal to identify herself partially stems from some misguided loyalty to Raymond. When she tells Michael her name, he surprises her by repeating what she told Wiley about the pronunciation. He reintroduces himself as Michael Wiley, explaining that he only used his last name in the personals ad. Alone at the club in the next chapter, Chiquita goes to the ladies room for some privacy while she thinks of the pain Raymond has caused her. She admires Inda's strength and regrets succumbing to her pain, alluding to her momma in her thoughts which indicates again that she had a traumatic childhood. When she leaves the bathroom, she sees Raymond and Gina and cannot refrain from approaching Raymond when Gina walks away. The interactions between Inda and Michael in Chapter 30 make it apparent that their relationship may progress and have



as much potential as Inda sees in Michael himself. When she returns to the club, she finds that Chiquita is missing and learns from Brown that Chiquita returned to the hotel. As Inda tries to leave, Raymond and Gina run into her, resulting in a physical altercation. Gina's behavior causes her to contrast with Inda and Chiquita as she blames the other women for Raymond's infidelity. During the fight, Brown's love for his sister is demonstrated when he joins in to assist her.



## Section 9: Chapter 31-34

### Section 9: Chapter 31-34 Summary

In Chapter 31, Valerie sneaks through the sliding glass door at 2 a.m. on Sunday morning and tiptoes into the den where Walter is sleeping. Walter does not move as Valerie clears an escape path, soaks the carpet around him and fills two large cups. When she throws one cup on his chest and one between his legs, Walter wakes up and panics when he notices the gas container and matches. Valerie tells him that she is going to burn him since he burned her. In Chapter 32, Inda argues with Chiquita and takes her keys since she has drunk too much alcohol after confronting Raymond. Now she wants her keys to go back after Raymond because she is tired of being treated like this. Inda wrestles the keys away, and after grappling for a bit, Chiquita apologizes for acting like a fool and asks for a friend and a hug. After they calm down, they go to Inda's room where Brown is laying across one of the beds. He declines his sister's invitation to stay the night because he has personal things to do in the morning. After Chiquita and Brown leave separately, Inda does not want to be alone, so she calls Michael to thank him for the nice evening, but she still cannot sleep after she hangs up. In Chapter 33, Valerie strikes a match and throws it on Walter's crotch. He screams but soon realizes he is not on fire since Valerie watered down the gas. Valerie tells Walter that he needs to be out of her house by Tuesday or she will kill him next time. She returns to her car, surprised that Walter was too shaken to react violently. Valerie realizes she cannot go back or forward, so she traces a route to Canada on the map and drives. Miles later, Valerie turns around, enraged; she has unfinished business. In Chapter 34, Inda phones Chiquita's room when she wakes at 9 a.m., but the calls are being held though Chiquita has not checked out yet. Inda is scared as she walks to Chiquita's room, thinking Raymond may be there, but when she knocks, Brown answers the door, and Inda is shocked. Inda acts normal because they are both adults. Chiquita tells her that they just talked, but she really likes Brown.

### Section 9: Chapter 31-34 Analysis

In Chapter 31, Valerie enters her house and douses Walter and the surrounding carpet with liquid. She cannot understand what she ever saw in him as she looks at him, and when he wakes, she tells him that she is going to burn him like he burned her. In Chapter 33, Valerie throws a match on the liquid soaking Walter's crotch, but it is extinguished quickly by the water she used to dilute the gas. Valerie had considered but decided against killing Walter because she sees no reason to give him more of her life than the six years she has already lost. After telling him to get out of her house, Valerie leaves while Walter calls the police. Valerie has nowhere to turn so she heads to Canada, but she soon turns around, deciding she has unfinished business. In Chapter 32, Inda prevents Chiquita from driving drunk to confront Raymond. After coming to her sense, Chiquita apologizes. Brown says he is going home and leaves Inda's hotel room shortly after Chiquita does. Inda's phone call to Michael indicates a blossoming



relationship between them. When Inda phones Chiquita's room the next morning, she worries that Chiquita called Raymond, but she is more surprised when Brown answers the door. Chiquita assures her that nothing happened and that she was not using Brown; she really likes him. Chiquita's optimistic view of romance reminds Inda of Valerie.



## Section 10: Chapter 35-37

### Section 10: Chapter 35-37 Summary

In Chapter 35, Brown had followed Chiquita from Inda's room, and they talked in the hallway for thirty minutes before Chiquita invited him to her room. She told him about Raymond, and he shared some of his problems about growing up in an interracial family. Since he is tired and has been drinking, Chiquita offers to share her bed, but they both sleep on their own sides. She wakes in the middle of the night to see Brown crying by the window, and when she asks what is wrong, he tells her about Gwen, a girl he dated a few months earlier who died of a stroke. They kiss and get back into bed, but Brown stops their contact because it will not solve anything. They cuddle, and she tells him that she does not know who her father is but refuses to talk about it any more. When Raymond calls to say he loves her and asks her to come over to talk, Chiquita hangs up feeling a different kind of pain. She and Brown lay in bed, rocking each other and saying it will be alright. In Chapter 36, Inda, Chiquita and Brown meet Michael in Belmont Shores for brunch. They relax, and Michael begins to loosen up and flirt with Inda after drinking some champagne. He tells her that he likes her, and she reciprocates the feeling. In Chapter 37, Chiquita feels a sisterly magnetism toward Inda but worries that she cannot maintain her end of the bargain if their friendship continues the way it has begun. She feels guilty and thinks she owes Inda the truth after Inda has been so good to her. Inda joins Chiquita in the ladies room while the men go to a record store. Chiquita confesses that she lied to Inda; her mother is not dead. She never lived with her momma and only saw her a few times. Last winter, she went looking for her, and her momma asked for money. When Chiquita asked who her daddy was, her momma agrees that it was Tommy Williams, a man who everyone thought it was but who died when Chiquita was a baby. Chiquita gave her momma \$60. Her momma asked why she does not call her "momma", so Chiquita asked why her momma never contacted her. When Chiquita admitted to coming because "I'm your daughter. And I wanted you to be my mother" (page 251), her mother's cold indifference hurt her so she left. Chiquita never wanted to marry or have children because she did not want to give her mother anything, even indirectly. Inda tells Chiquita not to let her mother ruin her because she is a nice young lady and has already given that past pain too much power. Someone runs up the stairs and knocks on the door. Brown yells for Inda, telling her it is an emergency; Valerie tried to kill Walter and then ran away and is missing.

### Section 10: Chapter 35-37 Analysis

In Chapter 35, Chiquita explains that she and Brown had spent the night talking about their problems, and she invited him to stay the night because he was drunk and she would feel guilty if something happened to him. Though they begin kissing, Brown stops because it will solve nothing. He laments that it is hard to be a man because society expects men to feel nothing, but Chiquita says it is harder to be a woman because they are supposed to feel everything. She shows considerable strength by hanging up when



Raymond calls to apologize, and Brown and Chiquita spend the rest of the night cuddling and comforting one another. In Chapter 36, Inda, Chiquita and Brown meet Michael for lunch, and Inda and Michael confess that they like each other. In the next chapter, Chiquita feels uncomfortable around Brown because she likes him so much. She also worries about her ability to be a good friend to Inda. When she gets a chance alone with Inda, Chiquita tells her new friend about her childhood and how she does not really know her momma. This fulfills the earlier foreshadowing concerning Chiquita's childhood. Inda encourages Chiquita to let go of her past pain and to talk to her momma. The chapter ends when Brown tells Inda that Valerie tried to kill Walter and has disappeared.



## Section 11: Chapters 38-42

### Section 11: Chapters 38-42 Summary

In Chapter 38, Inda rushes into the hallway with Chiquita, and Brown repeats the message about Valerie and Walter. Brown worries whether Valerie would hurt herself, and Inda tells him they need to hurry and leave. Inda gives her card to Chiquita. It is hard to say good-bye, but Valerie is in serious trouble. When they leave, Inda stops at a red light, and Chiquita pulls up next to her and says she is following her because she wants to make sure Inda is okay. In Chapter 39, as Inda, Brown and Chiquita arrive at Valerie's house, Moms and Pops pull in also. They discuss what is going on, but no one knows much. Moms is very worried. Walter has not been seen since yesterday, and when Chiquita asks if anyone has his folks' number, Inda remembers that she has it at her house. Inda, Chiquita and Moms head to Inda's apartment while Pops and Brown go to the train station. Flying away from her sister's house, Inda nearly collides with a U-Haul, but she makes a quick U-turn when she recognizes the driver as Walter. In Chapter 40, Walter claims that he does not know where Valerie is, and when he insults his wife, Chiquita has to prevent Inda from attacking him. The conversation gets louder after Walter tells Valerie's family to get off his property while he and his brothers start taking furniture out of the house and refuse to answer any questions. When Moms starts to cry, Inda goes to her car to get her gun, but police arrive before she reaches under her seat. In Chapter 41, Valerie drove toward Canada with no destination on the night she left, but she turned back when she reached Pasadena. She rang Daniel's doorbell twice before he answered and surprised him by kissing him. When he returned from moving her car into the garage, Valerie was naked on his bed and began kissing him. In Chapter 42, Valerie finally calls Inda on Wednesday night, and Inda furiously tells her how worried everyone has been. On Monday, Valerie had withdrawn all the money from Walter and her joint accounts and taken advances on all his credit cards, and she sent the money to Inda to keep for her. After Inda explains everything going on, Valerie yawns serenely, promises to be in touch and hangs up. She looks at Daniel who is still sleeping and thinks about how kind and affectionate he is. She cuddles up next to him and goes back to sleep.

### Section 11: Chapters 38-42 Analysis

Inda's love and concern for her sister are obvious as she questions Brown about Valerie's behavior. She gives her number to Chiquita, finding it hard to leave the girl but knowing that her sister is the priority. Chiquita displays her loyalty by insisting upon following Inda to Valerie's house. Moms and Pops arrive at Valerie's house as Inda, Brown and Chiquita pull up. The close relationship between the parents and their three children is seen through their interactions and everyone's concern for Valerie. Chiquita tries to comfort Inda and suggests Inda check if Valerie left her a voice message, but as they drive toward Inda's house, they turn around quickly when Inda sees Walter driving a U-haul towards his and Valerie's house. Walter is very rude to his in-laws in Chapter



40, but Inda's intention to get her gun is thwarted by the arrival of the police. Chapter 41 reverts to Valerie and explains that, after threatening Walter, she had returned to Daniel's house and seduced him. In Chapter 42, Valerie accesses all of Walter's finances, leaving him broke. She finally calls Inda and lets her know she is okay, though she still does not tell her sister where she is. Valerie's appreciation for Daniel is apparent as she thinks of how kind and affectionate he is before cuddling up next to him and returning to sleep.





## Section 12: Chapter 43-45

### Section 12: Chapter 43-45 Summary

In Chapter 43, Valerie, Daniel, Brown, Chiquita, Michael and Inda hang out during the next couple months. Chiquita refuses to talk to Inda about her mother anymore, so Inda drops the subject. Inda moves in with Valerie to help with bills. Valerie studies a lot and spends a few evenings each week with Daniel, but she eventually stops spending much time with him or even letting him come to her house. Walter begins calling Valerie and begging to reconcile, and Valerie thinks about it since he is her husband. Chiquita begins making excuses for why she cannot come around, and Inda can tell Brown is hurt because he is in love. After spending an evening with Michael, Inda returns home to find Valerie sleeping on the couch. Valerie wakes, rushes upstairs and does not return. When Inda hears Valerie whimpering in her room, she walks in to find Valerie in bed with Daniel. She shrieks and runs to her room. A few minutes later, Valerie comes to Inda's room and asks to borrow condoms. Inda teases her, and they giggle. Inda is happy for Valerie, and the situation makes her want to give herself to Michael. She calls Michael and explains that she will become emotional and expect him to be there for her if they make love, but he claims that is what he is hoping for. Inda says he will see her again Friday night, Saturday morning and Saturday night. In Chapter 44, Inda is excited for Friday and arrives early to meet Michael, so she stops by the mall. She sees Chiquita who looks beautiful. A funny look crosses Chiquita's face when Inda mentions Brown, and then Inda sees Raymond and understands. She begs Chiquita not to leave Brown hanging and asks if she has handled her business yet. Chiquita has not but says she will one day with a shamed look on her face. Inda "wanted to rescue her, but you can't help somebody who don't want to be saved" (page 291). It hurts Inda to say goodbye to Chiquita, knowing it will be final. She admits that she wants to curse her out and is again hurt by Chiquita's cold distance. Inda rushes away as Raymond strolls toward them. As she leaves the mall, she sees Gina enter and head toward the area Chiquita was, but she keeps walking because it is not her business. In Chapter 45, impulse takes over, and Inda parks in front of Raymond's building. She holds a brick in each hand and places them on his front steps. She does not see the point in destroying his car either. Inda realizes that she is there for Chiquita, not Raymond, because love for Chiquita has her in tears since she does not want to see her friend get hurt again. Missing her friend, Inda writes a note and leaves it under Chiquita's windshield wiper. In the note, Inda tells her that she will always be Chiquita's friend no matter what happens or who she is with, and the note advises Chiquita to be strong, safe and careful.

### Section 12: Chapter 43-45 Analysis

Chapter 43 summarizes the next couple months of the characters' lives. Valerie and Daniel, Inda and Michael, and Chiquita and Brown are established as couples, and the six of them frequently hang out together. Inda shows support for her sister by moving in with Valerie to help with bills. Valerie begins to pull away from Daniel when Walter starts



begging her to reconcile. Chiquita stops coming around, and Brown is heartbroken, as is Inda over the loss of her friend. Finding Valerie in bed with Daniel convinces Inda to give love another shot, so she talks to Michael about what it will mean if they sleep together and he seems amenable to her demands. Because she is so excited for her plans with Michael in Chapter 44, Inda arrives in Long Beach early and decides to go to the mall. When she sees Chiquita with Raymond, she realizes the reason for her friend's absence. Inda is angry and hurt, but Chiquita brushes her off. In Chapter 45, Inda goes to Raymond's apartment, intending to destroy his car and break some of the windows in his apartment, but when she realizes that the pain that brought her there is about losing Chiquita, she changes her mind. The love and friendship Inda feels for Chiquita is demonstrated by the note she leaves on Chiquita's windshield, promising eternal friendship.



## Section 13: Chapter 46

### Section 13: Chapter 46 Summary

In Chapter 46, it rains all night in Memphis but stops right before Chiquita stops in front of her momma's house. She rereads Inda's note because the words have become her strength. Weeks ago, Chiquita told Brown about the first time she came to Memphis and felt betrayed when he suggested she may have come on too strong, so she left him and returned to Raymond where she was comfortable since she felt nothing. She did not realize how much she missed Brown and Inda until she saw Inda at the mall. The way they are as a family makes her realize how much she is not part of a family, and she made an excuse to leave because she did not feel needed. She is still amazed by how welcoming Valerie's family was when Valerie finally returned from hiding out. She watched them and wanted to be like them; mostly she wanted to talk to her momma even if it was only for five minutes. When Chiquita read Inda's note two nights ago, she put Inda's bricks in her trunk, called off of work for two days and headed to Memphis because she is "tired of carrying this pain with [her]" (page 303). Yesterday, she left a note on her momma's door saying she would hate for one of them to die without ever having a conversation and she will be parked outside first thing in the morning. As Chiquita sits in front of her momma's house, Mr. Wilson, her momma's husband, waves her up and allows her into the living room. When he asks why Chiquita came to Memphis, she tells him she wants to see her momma and find out about her father. She has even written a list of things she wants to talk to her momma about. Mr. Wilson notes that Chiquita is different from Bae-Bae and though Chiquita did not know her mother always lived in Memphis, Bae-Bae always knew where her daughter was. Mr. Wilson wants Chiquita and Bae-Bae to let the past be. Bae-Bae cried the last time Chiquita left, and it pained Mr. Wilson to be unable to comfort his wife. He calls for Bae-Bae, and Chiquita looks around the room while she waits. She notices that the hallway is filled with pictures of her growing up and turns around to come face to face with her momma. Bae-Bae wears a dress and has fixed her hair and makeup, and Chiquita is touched by her momma's efforts. Both of their eyes tear up, but neither woman cries. Chiquita hands her momma a tulip, and Bae-Bae offers her daughter breakfast. Bae-Bae asks about Chiquita's life and, learning about Raymond and Brown, does not understand why her daughter left a good man for a pie-dog. Chiquita admits that she is scared. Bae-Bae looks over Chiquita's list of questions while they eat in silence, enjoying their only peaceful moment together. When they finish eating, they walk to Chiquita's car while Mr. Wilson stands in the door, guarding what is his.

### Section 13: Chapter 46 Analysis

Chiquita is encouraged by Inda's letter and takes the words as her strength. She flies to Memphis to finally confront her momma. In this chapter, Chiquita also explains that she had distanced herself from Brown because she felt betrayed when she told him about her first visit to Memphis and he suggested she might have come on too strong. She



really misses Inda and Brown, but she had also distanced herself because their close familial bond had forced her to see how much she was lacking a family. She decides to talk to her momma because she is tired of carrying the pain with her. Taking Brown's suggestion that she may have come on too strong, Chiquita leaves a note on her momma's door the first night to warn her that she will return in the morning because she really wants to talk to her. When Chiquita returns in the morning, Mr. Wilson invites her inside where he questions her about her purpose in visiting. He is obviously very protective of his wife, but he wants Chiquita and Bae-Bae to reconcile because he knows it hurts Bae-Bae that she does not really know her daughter. Chiquita can tell her momma loves her when she notices that the hallway is lined with photographs of Chiquita throughout her life. When she comes face to face with her momma, Chiquita is touched that Bae-Bae made an effort to dress up for her visit. As Bae-Bae asks about Chiquita's life, the reader can see Chiquita growing as a person when she admits she is scared to be with Brown because she likes him so much, rather than continuing to blame her mother for her mistakes. They share their first peaceful moments together while eating breakfast before leaving in Chiquita's car.



## Section 14: Chapter 47-49

### Section 14: Chapter 47-49 Summary

In Chapter 47, Chiquita and Bae-Bae park in front of Big Momma's, Chiquita's grandmother and Bae-Bae's mother, old house. Both of their faces are filled with memories. Bae-Bae tells Chiquita to listen because she will only tell this once and let it rest after today. Bae-Bae got pregnant when she was 14, and her Daddy beat her, causing her to lose the baby, and threatened to put her out if she ever got pregnant again. When she got pregnant again at 17, she returned home to find a suitcase and \$20 on the front porch. She shacked up with the man who got her pregnant and who she wanted to marry, but when he stood her up at the courthouse, she learned that he had a wife in Tupelo and he left Bae-Bae, never to return. Big Momma told Bae-Bae to bring Chiquita to her parents since the baby had no place on the streets, and her parents convinced Bae-Bae to sign custody of her daughter over to them. She did what she felt was right for her little girl. The next time Bae-Bae saw Chiquita, her daughter treated her like a stranger and called her grandparents Momma and Daddy. When Chiquita says "I'm sorry, Momma", Bae-Bae tells her that she has not "earned the right for you to call me momma" (page 318). When Bae-Bae asks what Chiquita's degree is in, Chiquita admits that she did not finish school but plans to return soon because she would still rather be a physical therapist though she likes her job at the airline. After they pull away, Bae-Bae tells Chiquita that none of it was Chiquita's fault and Chiquita is the only thing she ever did that turned out right. Chiquita pulls over to cry, releasing all the tears she owed her momma because she never got the chance to be her momma. Bae-Bae patted her little girl maternally until she stopped crying. In Chapter 48, when Mr. Wilson explains what a pie-dog is, Chiquita thinks of Raymond; however, she cannot hate him because he served a purpose. Without him, she would never have met Inda, and without meeting Inda, she would never have talked to her momma. When time comes for Chiquita to leave, Bae-Bae will not walk her to the car because she hates watching her leave, but Chiquita is welcome to visit anytime she wants. As Mr. Wilson hugs Chiquita, he tells her not to forget where her momma is. Mr. Wilson and Bae-Bae watch as Chiquita drives away, already freed from the pain because she now has answers and a momma. Now, she needs to correct her other wrongs. In Chapter 49, Valerie meets Walter at the mall police station without telling anyone. She stops in front of him wordlessly, giving him five minutes to talk. She listens as he talks about their marriage, his uncertainty about the future and his fears. He apologizes and expresses the desire to fulfill her dreams, but Valerie says she can fulfill her own dreams. Walter wants to reconcile, but she refuses; she would kill him if he hurt her again. Valerie walks away, saying his five minutes are over and she will see him in divorce court.

### Section 14: Chapter 47-49 Analysis

Chiquita and Bae-Bae drive to the house where they were both raised, and they both have obviously suffered from their separation as their mutual pain is transparent. Bae-



Bae informs her daughter that she will only tell her this once before beginning her story. Bae-Bae explains that her daddy kicked her out when she got pregnant with Chiquita, and Chiquita's father was married and left Bae-Bae. Bae-Bae let her parents raise her daughter because they convinced her that it was best for Chiquita since Bae-Bae could not provide for her, but the next time Bae-Bae saw her child, Chiquita treated her like a stranger. They talk a little more about general things, but Chiquita finds Bae-Bae's story difficult to believe at first because Big Momma and Daddy were so good to her, but she soon realizes that they may have been very different parents to Bae-Bae than they were to Chiquita. When Bae-Bae says that Chiquita is the only thing she ever did that turned out right, Chiquita cries and allows her momma to comfort her for the first time. In the next chapter, Chiquita realizes that Raymond served a purpose in her life; he indirectly introduced her to Inda who convinced her to talk to her momma. As Chiquita leaves Bae-Bae's house, both women express the desire to see each other again, providing hope for their relationship to continue in the future. Her conversation with her momma allows Chiquita to let go of her past hurts, and she plans how to fix her other mistakes, indicating a reconciliation with Brown and Inda. In Chapter 49, Valerie agrees to meet Walter so he can beg her to forgive him. She listens, and he is astounded by how coldly she treats him which is ironic given his previously indifferent treatment of her and their marriage. Despite Walter's pleading and promises, Valerie refuses to forgive him, and she leaves after telling him she will see him in divorce court.



## Section 15: Chapter 50-52

### Section 15: Chapter 50-52 Summary

In Chapter 50, Inda and Michael own the perfect evening. They have dinner, go to a movie and find a secluded spot on the beach where it is nice for Inda to get so much deserved and sincere attention. She gets too engrossed, and just as she reaches climax, a flashlight shines in her eyes. After scolding them, the police officer asks to talk to Inda; she smiles and tells Inda that she will be back in about an hour, so they should clear the area of their mess and be gone by then and keep it down because noise carries. Michael and Inda cuddle on the blanket and listen to the waves crash as Inda think how Michael is like the sunshine after her storm of bad relationships. In Chapter 51, Inda leaves Michael's house in a great mood on Sunday, and when she arrives home, Valerie comes outside and says she has a surprise for Inda and makes her promise to be open-minded. When Valerie goes inside, Chiquita comes out and gives Inda a fresh tulip. Inda refrains from yelling at her friend because she knows that "sometimes even when you know it ain't right, you have to go back until you're strong enough to leave" (page 346). Chiquita tells Inda she saw her momma and they are friends now. She apologizes for disappearing, but now she has her strength and her freedom and is back for good if Inda has room for another sister in her heart. Inda nods, seeing the truth, that Chiquita has been set free from a lot of pain and confusion. When Chiquita called Brown, he yelled at her too but then told her to stay here because he is coming by after church. Chiquita is scared but will not run away again. In Chapter 52, Valerie's house has become a home, and she loves it. Yesterday, Valerie put an ad in the newspaper to rent out her third bedroom, but Chiquita called and said she would move in if her work transfer went through because Valerie's house is close to the college where she was accepted. They will work it all out when Chiquita and Brown return from the week they are spending in Atlanta and Memphis. Daniel has finally left for school. A few minutes later, the mailman delivers a postcard and small gift from Daniel in North Carolina. In the postcard, Daniel wishes Valerie good luck on her finals and offers to pay for her to visit him one weekend because he misses her. Inda comes downstairs and reads the postcard from Daniel and asks if Valerie is going to visit him, but Valerie says no because he is getting too serious. She has only been officially single for a few weeks and she is happy. She told Daniel to keep in touch and let her know if he ever comes back to California after he graduates; then, if they are both still single, they might get together, but Valerie is dating in the meantime so he should not wait for her because a relationship is not on her five year plan.

### Section 15: Chapter 50-52 Analysis

In Chapter 50, Inda says that she and Michael owned the perfect evening and her description contrasts to when she said this earlier about her date with Raymond. She and Michael do everything that she wants to do and Inda feels truly appreciated. The police officer frightens them at the beach, but simply tells them to be gone within the



next hour or so. As Inda lies on the beach in Michael's arm, she uses an extended metaphor to compare her relationship with Michael to the horror of her past relationships, basically stating that Michael is like the sunshine after her stormy past, but without the past, she would never have been able to truly appreciate him. In Chapter 51, Inda returns home in a great mood to find Chiquita waiting for her. Chiquita apologizes and Inda shows her sisterly affection by accepting the apology. They catch up on one another's lives. Chiquita has called Brown and he is coming to Inda's house after church to talk to Chiquita; this foreshadows a reconciliation between Chiquita and Brown. Furthermore, Chiquita's growth as a person is evident when she states that she will not run away again, even though she is scared. The final chapter recounts how well Valerie is doing even though Daniel has left for graduate school. The foreshadowing from the previous chapter is fulfilled by the fact that Brown and Chiquita are on vacation together. Chiquita's friendships with Inda and Valerie also continue as she plans to move in with them in order to be closer to her college. Inda's relationship with Michael continues to go well and Valerie is enjoying her freedom and newfound strength.





# Characters

## Valerie Sinclair

Valerie Sinclair is one of the main characters in "Sister, Sister". She is the sister of Inda and Thaddeus, and her siblings' nickname for her is Red. She is 5'7" and weighs 135 pounds. Valerie has been married to Walter for six years and dropped out of college during her senior year to follow him when he thought he had a chance at becoming a professional football player for the NFL. When Valerie's attempt to seduce her husband fails, she visits her sister, Inda. They decide to go dancing at a jazz club in San Bernardino where Valerie meets and dances with Daniel. Later that night, she meets him at Denny's to talk after he leaves his phone number on her windshield. After meeting him at a theater in Los Angeles, she feels guilty and decides to stop seeing Daniel, returning to her husband instead. When she confronts Walter about his indifference, Valerie is very hurt when he tells her that he does not even like her, let alone love her. She packs and leaves. Then, she buys a gas container and flammable liquid.

Valerie returns to her neighborhood, and after making sure Walter is asleep, she sneaks inside their house and douses him and the carpet with the liquid. When Walter awakes, Valerie tells him that she is going to burn him like he burned her. The match she lights goes out when she throws it on Walter because she had decided he was not worth wasting more years of her life on and had diluted the gas with water. Valerie tells Walter that she will give him a divorce, but she is keeping the house. She leaves and heads toward Canada but turns back because she has unfinished business. Valerie visits and seduces Daniel, and her family is worried about her since they do not know where she is for several days. She withdraws all of the money from her joint accounts with Walter and takes cash advances on all of his credit cards. When Valerie returns to her home, her family greets her happily, and Inda moves in with her. Though Walter begs for a reconciliation, Valerie refuses to forgive him and continues sleeping with Daniel. Valerie is happy as she regains her freedom and finds herself, and she is just friends with Daniel since he is going to school out east; however, she admits that they may get together if he returns to California after graduation and they are both single.

## Chiquita

Chiquita is one of the main characters in "Sister, Sister". She is twenty-five years old and lives in San Diego. She is a flight attendant with a short, reddish, texturized Afro and light skin. A white nurse in the hospital gave her her name when she was born. Chiquita has only seen her mother a few times during her life because she was raised by her grandparents until their death, after which she was sent from relative to relative. She dates Raymond and has keys to his apartment. Chiquita and Raymond argue after a female calls his phone at 5 a.m., and she kicks him out of her apartment because he hit her. On her way to Raymond's the next day, she meets Inda who asks to borrow a



pen and paper, but when Chiquita walks into Raymond's bedroom, she finds him in bed with another woman, Gina, so she screams and runs from the apartment. Later that night, she runs into Inda again on the docks at Shoreline Village, and they become friends after Inda admits that she has also been dating Raymond. After dinner, Chiquita and Inda go dancing, and Chiquita is frightened when Inda instigates a fight with an attractive man who Inda then introduces as her brother, Brown.

While Inda takes a walk outside, Chiquita sees Raymond enter the club with Gina, and she walks up to him when Gina goes to the ladies room. She returns to her hotel room and, after consuming vast quantities of alcohol, decides to go after Raymond, but Inda prevents her. Chiquita talks to Brown, and he spends an innocent night with her at the hotel as they comfort one another's sorrows. The next day, she tells Inda the truth about her past and the time she tried to visit her momma in Memphis but was rejected. When Brown and Inda learn that Valerie is missing, Chiquita follows them to Valerie's house where she offers her assistance as much as possible. After a few months, she stops hanging out with Inda, Valerie and Brown, and she resumes dating Raymond. She is embarrassed and ashamed when she runs into Inda at the mall while she is with Raymond. Later that day, Inda leaves a note on Chiquita's car which promises friendship, and this note becomes Chiquita's strength. She calls out of work for two days and flies to Memphis to talk to her momma. After learning about her momma's life, Chiquita is able to let go of her past pain. She returns to California and obtains forgiveness from Inda, Brown and Valerie. She begins dating Brown again, enrolls in college and plans to move in with Inda and Valerie.

## Inda

Inda is one of the main characters in "Sister, Sister". She is the older sister of Valerie and Thaddeus, and her siblings call her Black. She narrates a large portion of this novel and has a very outgoing personality and attitude. Inda dates Raymond, but they fight constantly about his lack of proving his commitment. Inda accompanies Valerie to a jazz club in San Bernardino and encourages her sister to meet Daniel. Raymond visits her that night, and the next weekend, they have a wonderful date which ends when they argue about his best friend, Gina, calling him. After receiving a ride home from Valerie, Inda looks through the personal ads in the newspaper and calls Wiley who she agrees to meet later that night. On her way to meet Wiley in Long Beach, Inda detours by Raymond's house to leave a note. She asks to borrow a pen and paper from Chiquita who surprises Inda by walking into Raymond's apartment. Angry at the realization that Raymond has a fiance and another girlfriend, Inda stops at Shoreline Village to take a walk on the docks before returning home. Here, she encounters and befriends Chiquita.

During Inda's dinner with Chiquita, Michael flirts with Inda and gives her his business card which she leaves on the table at the restaurant. Inda and Chiquita go to a nightclub where Inda introduces Chiquita to her brother, Brown, before taking a walk on the docks for fresh air. On the docks, Inda runs into Michael who sketches a picture of her, and they kiss. They kiss more when Inda learns that his last name is Wiley and he is the man from the personals ad. When Inda returns to the nightclub, she sees Raymond and



Gina and gets into a fight with them. At the hotel, she prevents Chiquita from going after Raymond, and Inda is shocked to find Brown in Chiquita's hotel room the next morning. While hanging out with Michael, Brown and Chiquita, Inda learns the truth about Chiquita's past, but she worries when Brown tells her Valerie has tried to kill Walter and is now missing. Inda rushes to Valerie's house and threatens Walter when he arrives. She is relieved when her younger sister calls her several days later, and she moves in with Valerie when she returns. Inda misses Chiquita when Chiquita stops coming around and is shocked when she sees Chiquita at the mall with Raymond. That night, she leaves a note on Chiquita's windshield, promising eternal friendship. Inda has a perfect weekend with Michael and returns home to find Chiquita waiting to apologize. Inda's relationship is going very well, and she hopes that Valerie will visit Daniel in North Carolina.

## Walter Sinclair

Walter Sinclair is Valerie's husband who treats her coldly and indifferently after six years of marriage. He is handsome, broad-shouldered with a football build and was a football player in college who did not make the NFL. Walter is 6 feet tall and weighs 240 pounds. He now sells exotic cars for a living. When Valerie confronts Walter about how he has been treating her, he tells her that he does not even like her and blames her for his failures. He is frightened when Valerie threatens to burn him, but later, he begs Valerie to forgive him because he realizes what a good woman she is.

## Daniel Madison

Daniel Madison lives near Valerie and jogs past her house fairly often because he has a crush on her. He is a clean-cut, pretty man around thirty years old with short stylish hair and light sideburns. He is 5'9", has caramel-colored skin and an agile, runner's build. Valerie dances with Daniel at the jazz club in San Bernardino, but after meeting him a few times, she breaks it off because she feels guilty since she is married. After Valerie separates from Walter, she begins seeing and sleeping with Daniel. Daniel treats Valerie very well, but they are just friends since he goes to graduate school in North Carolina; however, Valerie admits that they might get together if he comes back to California after graduation and they are both single.

## Raymond

Raymond is an attractive African-American man with dark skin, a texturized fade, freshly trimmed sideburns and a stylish goatee. He lives in Long Beach and gets caught cheating by Gina, his fiance, and his two girlfriends, Inda and Chiquita.



## **Michael Wiley**

Michael Wiley is 6'1" and 180 pounds. He talks to Inda on the phone after placing an ad in the personals as Wiley. He lives in Long Beach and paints caricatures on the docks, but he is also a license audiologist and hearing-aid dispenser. Michael and Inda begin dating, and he treats her very well.

## **Gina**

Gina is Raymond's fiance who is in bed with him when Chiquita walks into the room. She gets in a fight with Inda later that night at a dance club.

## **Brown**

Brown is Valerie and Inda's brother, and though his real name is Thaddeus, everyone calls him Brown which is his sisters' nickname for him. He is 5'11" and training to be a police officer. He runs into Inda and Chiquita at a nightclub in Los Angeles and defends his sister when she gets into a confrontation with Raymond and Gina. After spending an innocent night at the hotel with Chiquita, Brown begins dating and falls in love with her. He is upset when she stops returning his calls, but they reconcile after she goes to Memphis to talk to her momma.

## **Mimi**

Mimi is the white mother of Inda, Valerie and Thaddeus. She worries about her children a lot.

## **Pops**

Pops is the black father of Inda, Valerie and Thaddeus. When they were children, he nicknamed them Black, Red and Brown because he often forgets their names unless he is angry.

## **Andre**

Andre is Inda's cheating ex-husband. Inda confronted him with a gun when she caught him cheating, but he was not worth shooting because she realized she was not really in love with him.



## **Bae-Bae Wilson**

Bae-Bae Wilson is Chiquita's mother who lives in Memphis with her husband. Chiquita has only seen her momma several times in her life. When Chiquita finally visits her, Bae-Bae tells her how she got pregnant at seventeen years old and allowed her parents to raise Chiquita because she could not provide for her. Bae-Bae claims Chiquita is the only thing she has ever done that turned out right.

## **Mr. Wilson**

Mr. Wilson is Bae-Bae's older, protective husband.



# Objects/Places

## California

California is the main setting of "Sister, Sister", and most of the novel occurs in different cities throughout California.

## Los Angeles

Los Angeles is where Inda and Chiquita go dancing at a nightclub. It is near Long Beach where Raymond lives. It is also where Valerie meets Daniel at the theater.

## San Diego

San Diego is where Chiquita lives.

## Diamond Bar

Diamond Bar is where Inda lives.

## Radisson

The Radisson Hotel in San Bernardino houses the jazz club where Inda and Valerie go dancing and is also where Valerie first talks to Daniel.

## Shoreline Village

Shoreline Village is the boardwalk and beach where Inda stops before driving home after learning of Raymond's infidelity. This is where she furthers her friendship with Chiquita and where she meets Michael.

## Long Beach

Long Beach is where Michael, Raymond and Brown live.

## Memphis

Memphis is where Chiquita was born and raised. Her momma lives in Memphis still, and Chiquita visits her near the end of the novel.



## **Hyatt**

After learning that Raymond has been cheating, Ina and Chiquita rent rooms at the Hyatt.

## **Roscoe**

Roscoe is the name of Ina's gun, a .380 special.

## **Chino Hills**

Chino Hills is the name of Valerie's neighborhood.

## **Daniel's House**

Valerie runs to Daniel's house after attacking Walter and hides out there for several days.

## **Raymond's Apartment**

Gina, Ina and Chiquita find out that they are all dating Raymond at his apartment in Long Beach.

## **Chiquita's Apartment**

Raymond slaps Chiquita for answering his phone in her apartment.



# Themes

## Finding Strength

In "Sister, Sister", one of the most important themes present is the concept of finding oneself and one's inner strength. All three of the main characters demonstrate this struggle during the narrative, often in several different ways at once. When Walter, her husband, treats her indifferently, Valerie begins seeing Daniel, but feeling guilty, she breaks it off with Daniel and confronts Walter. Since Walter rejects and insults Valerie, she plans to make him regret his unforgiveable actions. Valerie buys a gasoline container and flammable liquid and sneaks into their house at night to douse Walter with the liquid. She frightens him and tells him that she will give him his divorce, but she is keeping her house. Later, Walter regrets his actions and begs for forgiveness, but Valerie stands strong and refuses to reconcile. Meanwhile, she resumes dating Daniel because he appreciates her and returns to college to improve her education. After Daniel moves to North Carolina for graduate school, Valerie tells Inda that she and Daniel are just friends. Valerie is regaining her freedom and finding herself, and that does not involve a relationship.

Although Chiquita returns to Raymond for a brief period after meeting Inda and Brown, she is encouraged by Inda's note and decides to want more for herself. She flies to Memphis and confronts her momma. This allows Chiquita to release her past pain and her feelings of inadequacy. She leaves Raymond for good this time, apologizes to Valerie, Inda and Brown, and returns to college. Chiquita also begins dating Brown again. Inda is strong throughout the novel, but she has moments of weakness. Though she leaves Raymond, she considers destroying his car, but she decides against it. She recognized her own strength for the first time when she caught Andre, her ex-husband, cheating on her and realized that she was too strong a woman for him. Inda has a problem with allowing herself to trust Michael after her recent experience with Raymond, but she finally reaches her strength and allows herself to rely on him; luckily, Michael does not disappoint her.

## Good Men Vs. Bad Men

The narrative of "Sister, Sister" extensively involves the romantic lives of the three main characters, Inda, Valerie and Chiquita. In the beginning of the novel, all three women are involved in relationships with men who do not appreciate them, but by the end, they find men who truly value them and recognize their worth. Valerie's husband, Walter, is indifferent towards her, and she begins dating Daniel, though she quickly feels guilty and breaks it off with him. After Walter tells Valerie that he does not even like her, she threatens and leaves him, then turns to Daniel. Valerie enjoys spending time with Daniel because he is affectionate and kind, plus he respects her and makes her feel like she is somebody important.





Inda and Chiquita both date Raymond and have similar experiences with overhearing him on the phone with Gina. After they catch him in bed with Gina and learn that he was also dating both of them, Inda and Chiquita leave Raymond. Inda meets Michael and has a difficult time trusting him, especially because of her past with Andre, her cheating ex-husband. Eventually, she allows herself to trust and rely upon Michael, and their relationship progresses into something beautiful which she compares to the sunshine after the storm of her past relationships. Meanwhile, Chiquita begins dating Brown, Inda's younger brother, but she is frightened by the intensity of her feelings for him due to her childhood and lack of a relationship with her mother. She returns to Raymond for a short while, but with Inda's encouragement, Chiquita visits and talks to her momma. After this, she apologizes to and reconciles with Brown. She is able to let herself have emotions after releasing her past pain. Each woman begins this novel in stormy relationships, but every one of them finds her own sunshine before the narrative is complete.

## Sisterly Love

A key aspect of "Sister, Sister" is the idea of sisterly love. This is present in the novel between biological sisters as well as between friends with a sisterly bond. When Valerie has problems in her marriage, she relies on her sister, Inda, to comfort her and offer advice. Likewise, when Inda is stranded at Raymond's after a fight, she calls Valerie to pick her up in Long Beach. After Valerie threatens Walter and disappears, Inda is very concerned when she hears about it and drops everything to rush to her sister's house. Inda threatens Walter, forcing Chiquita to prevent her from pummeling him, and once everything is sorted out and Valerie returns to her home, Inda moves in with her sister to help Valerie pay the bills.

After their experiences with Raymond, Inda and Chiquita quickly become very close friends, but Chiquita worries that she will not be able to maintain her end of the bargain in their friendship. The day after they meet, Chiquita confides in Inda about her childhood, a secret she has told no one else. Inda comforts Chiquita and tells her that she is too good of a woman to allow those past hurts to plague her. After Chiquita returns to Raymond, she is embarrassed when Inda sees them together at the mall. Later that night, Inda leaves a note on Chiquita's windshield, promising eternal friendship. These words become Chiquita's strength as she visits her momma in Memphis, and by releasing the pain of her childhood, she realizes that she must also correct her other mistakes. Chiquita apologizes to Inda, promising that she is there to stay this time, and asks if Inda has room in her heart for another sister.



# Style

## Point of View

The point of view in "Sister, Sister" alternates between a first-person point of view and a third-person point of view. The chapters that are told from Valerie's perspective are told from a first-person point of view which is omniscient as the narrator shares the thoughts and feelings of Valerie and other characters in these portions of the novel. The third-person point of view is used in the chapters told from the perspective of either Inda or Chiquita, and this point of view is limited as these characters can only report their own thoughts and feelings. In either case, the point of view is reliable.

The novel is written using a fairly equal distribution of exposition and dialogue. The exposition is used to show the actions, thoughts and emotions of the characters, while the dialogue demonstrates the interactions and relationships between the characters. It is a highly effective means of introducing the reader to the characters fully. The viewpoint of the novel alternates between Inda, Valerie and Chiquita, depending on whose name serves as the title to that particular chapter.

## Setting

This novel is set in the real world, specifically in the state of California with one detour to Tennessee. The three main characters are African-American women, and the novel focuses on how they see the world in relation to the culture in which they were raised. The majority of the other characters are also African-American, with the main exception being Mimi, the Caucasian mother of Inda, Valerie and Thaddeus. Significantly, Valerie and Chiquita both dropped out of college and return near the end of the novel after leaving unappreciative men and deciding to improve themselves. There is also a distinction in the novel between Inda and Valerie's close-knit family and Chiquita's lack of a family before she visits her momma in Memphis.

California is the main setting of "Sister, Sister", and most of the novel occurs in different cities throughout California. Los Angeles is where Inda and Chiquita go dancing at a nightclub. It is near Long Beach where Raymond lives. It is also where Valerie meets Daniel at the theater. San Diego is where Chiquita lives. Diamond Bar is where Inda lives. The Radisson Hotel in San Bernardino houses the jazz club where Inda and Valerie go dancing and is also where Valerie first talks to Daniel. Shoreline Village is the boardwalk and beach where Inda stops before driving home after learning of Raymond's infidelity. This is where she furthers her friendship with Chiquita and where she meets Michael. Long Beach is where Michael, Raymond and Brown live. Memphis is where Chiquita was born and raised. Her momma lives in Memphis still, and Chiquita visits her near the end of the novel. After learning that Raymond has been cheating, Inda and Chiquita rent rooms at the Hyatt. Chino Hills is the name of Valerie's neighborhood. Valerie runs to Daniel's house after attacking Walter and hides out there for several



days. Gina, Inda and Chiquita find out that they are all dating Raymond at his apartment in Long Beach. Raymond slaps Chiquita for answering his phone in her apartment.

## Language and Meaning

The language in "Sister, Sister" is very casual and informal. The sentence construction, along with the vocabulary used, tends to be very improper and heavily fraught with Ebonics and ethnic terms. The language is very appropriate for this novel as its focus is largely on the race and subsequent culture of the main characters, three African-American women living in California. The language used in this novel aids reader comprehension as it immerses them in the culture and characterization of these three women. Furthermore, it allows the reader to better understand the characters' thought processes. Initially, it may be difficult for the reader to understand some of the terms that the characters use, but they are generally explained more clearly after their first use, allowing the reader a frame of reference for the remainder of the novel.

The language used in this novel serves to characterize the characters, especially in terms of their race and social status. The novel is written using a fairly equal distribution of exposition and dialogue, and the language aids reader comprehension by allowing them to fully get to know the characters in the novel, once they become accustomed to the style of language that is used. Overall, the language is easy to understand once the reader gets used to it, and it is very effective in portraying the society of Valerie, Inda and Chiquita in regards to their ethnicity.

## Structure

This novel consists of three hundred, fifty-four pages, divided into fifty-two chapters. The chapters range from one to twenty pages long, averaging about five pages in length. The chapters are numbered sequentially and titled according to the character whose perspective is used, being either Valerie, Chiquita or Inda. The majority of the chapters are short, though a few are substantially longer, and they are quite detailed. Most of the chapters occur over a period of a few minutes or days, but some of the chapters near the end summarize a period of several months.

"Sister, Sister" by Eric Jerome Dickey is a novel about the lives of three African-American women and their struggle to find themselves and men who truly appreciate them. Valerie's husband's indifference causes problems in their marriage, and she begins dating Daniel. Inda learns that her boyfriend, Raymond, is cheating on her with two different women, but she meets Michael and befriends Chiquita who was also dating Raymond but begins seeing Brown, Inda's younger brother. "Sister, Sister" is an intriguing novel that follows the intertwined lives of these three women as they leave undeserving men in their pasts and find men who are capable of recognizing their worth and appreciating their strength, thus teaching the women to do the same.

The pace of the novel is quite quick, and it is easy to read once the reader gets accustomed to the language and the alternating between the perspectives of the

different characters. The narrative is mostly linear with a few flashbacks, such as when Chiquita recalls her childhood and Inda shares the story of catching her ex-husband cheating. This novel is very interesting and entertaining, as it possesses a vast amount of comedy intermingled with the drama of these women's lives.

## Quotes

"Valerie knew Walter wasn't impotent. Not by a long shot. So, she figured it must be something about herself, something that she'd perhaps neglected, or maybe she wasn't trying hard enough." Narrator, Chapter 1: Valerie, page 5

"That accident made me think about when I saw my own momma get beat. A woman never forgot bullstuff like that. After I'd witnessed that with my own five-year-old eyes, I'd sworn that no lover man would ever touch me and live to tell about it. But I'd run away from my man as soon as I felt the pain." Chiquita, Chapter 2: Chiquita, page 12-13

"It's hard loving somebody when they don't love you. Especially when you in the same house, in the same bed." Valerie, Chapter 6: Valerie, page 42

"[Valerie] left Walter a short note letting him know where she was going because she didn't want to reciprocate his rudeness. Even though she was damn near spent by his mismanagement of their relationship, she still had a small trace of hope. Love makes you do that." Narrator, Chapter 7: Valerie, page 48

"We did Vegas. I guess that should've been an omen, getting hitched in a gambling place." Daniel, Chapter 9: Valerie, page 65

"[Valerie] wanted him to hurry and do something. It was at those peak lustful hours, somewhere between late night and early in the morning, and she was in another man's apartment, ready to give of herself or take of him. She was confused and didn't know which." Narrator, Chapter 10: Valerie, page 70-71

"I've never seen you with anybody. You're always riding by yourself. You smile, but it's not from the heart. You're not happy. Just like me." Daniel, Chapter 10: Valerie, page 71

"This freeway driving was just like my life: a maze." Inda, Chapter 13: Inda, page 91

"Shit, when a woman can't get a cat to stay in her life, something is wrong. That's got to be one of the seven signs." Inda, Chapter 14: Inda, page 95

"Exactly. Good. I'm glad you said that. I'd rather to get to know a person, find out what the foundation of their soul is really about... It don't matter what a person looks like because if you don't get along, you don't get along." Wiley, Chapter 15: Inda, page 99

"Now, correct me if I'm wrong, but when I left last night, Raymond didn't have a roommate, and as far I knew, I was the woman. But then again, I didn't have a key." Inda, Chapter 17: Inda, page 111

"It's like you said, we're not dating, and I don't get involved with married women, which means we won't be going anywhere together. But if we both happen to be at the same place at the same time, there's no reason for us not to be cordial." Daniel, Chapter 18: Valerie, page 124



"And emotionally I felt wore down to the ground. Hate to say it, but not even Inda liked being played like she was Boo-Boo the fool. But experience with my ex-husband had already taught me this shit don't go away that easily." Inda, Chapter 20: Inda, page 133

"Misery loves company. I just didn't know if I was the misery or the company." Inda, Chapter 20: Inda, page 134

"Valerie, there's nothing in you for me. It's been over for a long time. I know it and you know it." Walter, Chapter 21: Valerie, page 140

"I thought it would be hard to talk about, but nope. We just waved our hands and traded stories, sorta like brothas did when they got back from Vietnam. And our battles with relationships were definitely a war. Our tour of duty. Their lies were the shrapnel they left behind. All of which were painful at the time, but got to be pretty funny, after the fact." Inda, Chapter 25: Inda, page 165

"Trust me, if all a brotha can find to say is how good your ass looks and he's 'sho'll like to git wid dat', he got some ways to go. And that's just in the grammar department. Brotha needed to buy a vowel and rent a verb, then get a roll of duct tape slapped on that broken English." Inda, Chapter 27: Inda, page 176

"Then we kissed again. Or rather I kissed him. What the hell. As far as I know, you only live once." Inda, Chapter 28: Inda, page 192

"[Valerie] looked at him and wondered what she had seen in him in the first place. Now she saw him differently. He was unforgivably evil. Whatever it was about him that had made her love him so much for so long wasn't there. Maybe it was there, but had been numbed by his reprehensible words." Narrator, Chapter 31: Valerie, page 207

"I want you to sign a quitclaim deed on my house. I want your name taken off. I get my house, you get your divorce. If you don't leave, sleep with both eyes open." Valerie, Chapter 33: Valerie, page 218

"People die and you never get a chance to talk to them again. No matter what you wanted to say, it's a done deal." Brown, Chapter 35: Chiquita, page 232

"I felt a sisterly magnetism toward Inda. And I wondered if we remained the kinda friends we were starting to be, almost soulmate-best-girlfriends, if I could live up to my end of the bargain. Maybe she was the sister I'd always wanted. Or the mother I never had. Probably somewhere in between." Chiquita, Chapter 37: Chiquita, page 241

"Calling every day. Leaving messages. He wants to get back together... I have to think about it... I mean, he is my husband." Valerie, Chapter 43: Inda, page 280

"If I make love to you, if I let you inside this body, if we cross that line and become lovers, you know this will change everything between us. It'll be more than a friendship. I'll get emotional and start expecting you to be there for me." Inda, Chapter 43: Inda, page 288



"Sometimes you have to let people change and grow on their own, you have to back off and hope it turns out for the best." Inda, Chapter 45: Inda, page 294

"That's not the point. Everybody needs help... I needs a hand from time to time. Ain't ashamed to admit it either. Why you think Jesus had twelve homeboys? He needed some h-e-l-p." Brown, Chapter 46: Chiquita, page 298

"I was tired of carrying this pain with me. Tired of doing stupid bullstuff. I knew the life I wanted, knew who I was and who I wanted to be, but I still didn't know if I'd go up to the porch if my momma invited me." Chiquita, Chapter 46: Chiquita, page 303

"Next time I saw you, they had you calling them Momma and Daddy. Called me Miss Thompson and looked at me like I was a stranger off the streets. You was all I had and they took that away." Bae-Bae, Chapter 47: Chiquita, page 318

"You the only thang I ever done that came out right." Bae-Bae, Chapter 47: Chiquita, page 324

"But even as it shines on you and gives back what the storm had tried to take away, you realize that without the storm and cloudy days, you'd never really grow to appreciate the calm and the oh-so-nice feeling of peace. Without the darkness you'd never appreciate the warm sun on your face." Inda, Chapter 50: Inda, page 343

"I've only been officially single a few weeks. And I'm happy. I told him to keep in touch, study hard, and let me know if he ever comes back this way after he graduates. If I'm free, and he's free, then maybe we'll get together. If it's convenient and we aren't seeing anybody, and we're both healed, you know. But in the meantime, I'm dating, so don't wait for me. One thing at a time. I got shit to do and that's not on my five-year plan." Valerie, Chapter 52: Valerie, page 353-354

## Topics for Discussion

Compare and contrast Inda, Valerie and Chiquita.

What is the purpose of telling this story from three different perspectives? Why do Inda and Chiquita speak in first person while Valerie's story is told in third person?

Out of Inda, Chiquita and Valerie, whose life changes the most positively throughout this novel?

What is the relationship between Inda and Chiquita, and how does it change throughout the novel?

In "Sister, Sister", which character is your favorite, and why?

What role do the men play in "Sister, Sister"?

Describe the most dramatic thing that occurs in this novel. Defend your choice by explaining why you feel this particular event was more dramatic than the other events in "Sister, Sister".