

# Firekeeper's Daughter



## INTRODUCTION

### BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF ANGELINE BOULLEY

Angeline Boulley is an enrolled member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians and grew up in Sault Ste. Marie, where *Firekeeper's Daughter* takes place. Her father is a traditional firekeeper (a person who strikes ceremonial fires). After graduating from Central Michigan University, Boulley held several jobs related to Native education, including serving as the Director for the Office of Indian Education at the U.S. Department of Education. *Firekeeper's Daughter*, which took her about a decade to write, is Boulley's first novel, and it was published in 2021 to great critical acclaim. She received support to write the novel from the organization We Need Diverse Books; she participated as a mentee in their mentorship program in 2019. Though she no longer lives in Sault Ste. Marie, Boulley still lives in Michigan.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In interviews, Boulley has said that she set *Firekeeper's Daughter* in the early 2000s for several reasons. First, early-aughts GPS and cellphone technology was such that it was plausible, for instance, to have Daunis and Jamie fall totally off the grid on Sugar Island, due to there not being many cell towers yet. During this time, tribal casinos and per-cap payments were particularly lucrative, allowing Boulley to explore the impact of the per-cap payments in the novel. Boulley also notes that it was during this time period that methamphetamine production exploded in the United States—meth was, at this time, overtaking most other hard drugs in popularity. Additionally, Boulley references the early stages of the opioid epidemic in the United States, which began in the 1990s as doctors began prescribing more opioids (like oxycodone, which Daunis mentions by name) and presenting them as safe and non-addictive. More generally, though, Boulley has said that she wanted to write a story that presented American Indians in the modern day, rather than presenting them as figures that existed in the past and no longer exist. There are more than 500 tribes and nations registered with the U.S. government (and many more that aren't formally recognized), each with their own traditions, belief systems, and enrollment rules. As Daunis notes, American Indians (and Indigenous Canadians as well) still suffer from the trauma that the U.S. government inflicted on them through colonization and creating the reservation system. Daunis also mentions the residential school system several times, which was a system of boarding schools that sought to assimilate Native children into mainstream white culture—while forcibly removing them from their families and

forbidding them from speaking their native languages and practicing their belief systems. Children in the schools were often abused and sometimes disappeared. Recent headlines have reported discoveries of mass, unmarked graves near residential schools, which the Interior Department is investigating.

### RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Boulley cites several books and authors as particularly impactful on her own writing. She's said she admires other Native writers in Canada and the U.S., like Eden Robinson (*Trickster*) and Cynthia Leitich Smith (*Hearts Unbroken*). It's also possible to read nods to Canadian author Cherie Dimaline in *Firekeeper's Daughter*. Dimaline's debut novel, [The Marrow Thieves](#), is a post-apocalyptic novel in which non-Native people have lost the ability to dream, and the residential school system has been resurrected to facilitate harvesting bone marrow from Native people, who can still dream. *Firekeeper's Daughter* is also one of many novels that explores how youth sports can create situations ripe for abuse, entitlement, and a lack of accountability among young players and adult coaches, facilitators, and fans alike. Fredrik Backman's [Beartown](#) focuses on hockey in Sweden, while the Australian novel [The Story of Tom Brennan](#) by J. C. Burke portrays youth rugby. Within the novel itself, Granny June adores author James Michener, who was known for sweeping multi-generational epics such as *Hawaii* and *Tales of the South Pacific*. Daunis also reads James Faulkner's [The Sound and the Fury](#), quotes from (though she hasn't read) [The Art of War](#) by Sun Tzu, and avoids reading Jane Austen ([Pride and Prejudice](#), [Emma](#)) altogether.

### KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Firekeeper's Daughter
- **When Written:** 2010–2020
- **Where Written:** Michigan
- **When Published:** 2021
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary
- **Genre:** Young Adult Novel, Thriller
- **Setting:** Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, 2004
- **Climax:** Daunis and Ron return to the trailer on Sugar Island and rescue Jamie.
- **Antagonist:** Travis Flint is the initial antagonist, but Daunis discovers many others over the course of the novel including Grant Edwards, Mike Edwards, Dana Firekeeper, and Levi. Meth remains an antagonist throughout.
- **Point of View:** First Person

## EXTRA CREDIT

**Hands-On Research.** In addition to speaking with Native FBI agents and drug prosecutors as part of her research for *Firekeeper's Daughter*, Boulley also attended a government-run workshop in which she, like Daunis, learned to make meth.



## PLOT SUMMARY

Eighteen-year-old Daunis feels like her world is falling apart. In April, her Uncle David died, and, six weeks later, her grandmother, GrandMary, suffered a stroke. Daunis's Anishinaabe nokomis, Gramma Pearl, always told Daunis that bad things happen in threes. So, to prevent the third bad thing from happening and to make her emotionally fragile Mom happy, Daunis decides to stay in Sault Ste. Marie and attend Lake State University with her best friend, Lily.

When Daunis's half-brother Levi, the captain of the Supes, the local junior A hockey team, asks Daunis to show new Supe Jamie around, Daunis finds herself falling for Jamie.

Unfortunately, Jamie has a girlfriend out of state. Daunis shares local history with Jamie and tells him a bit about herself and her family: her dad was a local hockey star bound for glory, but he got Mom pregnant when Mom was 16. He had sex with, impregnated, and ultimately married Dana, Levi's mom and the local tribal judge. Dad has been deceased for more than a decade. Daunis explains that she's a descendant of the local Ojibwe tribe, but she's not an enrolled member because Dad isn't on her birth certificate. Jamie is Cherokee, but he didn't grow up around family.

Daunis guides Jamie around the powwow that weekend. At the powwow, Lily's ex-boyfriend Travis, who's been cooking meth since Christmas and is clearly in rough shape, insists on speaking to Lily. Things come to a head at a party: Daunis watches Travis shoot Lily and then shoot himself. After watching Jamie's cool response, she realizes—and Jamie confirms—that he's an undercover federal agent here to investigate a meth cell.

Three days after Lily's death, Jamie and Ron (who's Jamie's boss but is posing as his uncle and a high school science teacher) tell Daunis about their investigation. Uncle David died of a meth overdose, but he wasn't an addict: he was the FBI's confidential informant and was researching hallucinogenic mushrooms. The FBI began the investigation after kids in Minnesota used meth and experienced a group hallucination; the feds believe that the drug, meth-X, is being manufactured in the Sault by a Native person who is adding traditional medicines. Daunis agrees to take David's place as the CI and to pose as Jamie's girlfriend, which gives her cover to take a "romantic weekend" away with him—but in reality, they go to a federal drug lab and learn to make meth. They get home in time to attend Coach Bobby's Labor Day barbeque, where a former

classmate, Heather, offers Daunis various drugs. Daunis refuses.

Over the next week, Daunis struggles with starting college due to her grief over Lily and anger over seeing her ex-boyfriend, TJ. A former hockey teammate, Robin, gives Daunis a pep talk, and Daunis finds solace in driving Lily's Granny June to the Elder Center for the Elder lunch and in canvassing nearby Duck Island for mushrooms. On Duck Island one day, Daunis discovers Heather's body. Daunis also realizes that Uncle David, who kept detailed notebooks, must've kept one during his final months. If Daunis finds it she can figure out what exactly he was looking for, but if the notebook exists, it's missing.

The Supes' hockey season starts that weekend, and Daunis makes her debut as a hockey girlfriend. After the game, she and Ron meet Grant Edwards, goalie Mike's dad. He invites Daunis and Ron to try out the fans' Booster Bus, and he also invites them to the Sunday hockey dinner, ostensibly so Mike can help Daunis set up a new phone. Daunis wants to go to the dinner in part so she can search Grant's home office; he's a wealthy attorney and might be involved with the meth cell. However, Mike thinks Daunis is genuinely interested in him. He kisses her without consent and gets angry when she refuses his advances. She leans into Jamie for emotional support. Over the course of the evening, Daunis also shares with Ron and Jamie that a few years ago, Travis accidentally blinded a woman with a BB gun, and the community ostracized him after he fessed up.

Daunis shows up at the Elder Center on Friday to what seems like an intervention. Her Auntie Teddie has put together the paperwork for Daunis to apply for tribal enrollment—and 26 Elders give Daunis affidavits supporting her enrollment. That afternoon, Daunis and Ron take the Booster Bus to an away game. Ron reveals that he can tell that Jamie and Daunis are getting too emotionally invested in their pretend relationship, though when he's not watching, Daunis continues to get close to Jamie. At the game the next night, Daunis is enraged when she discovers souvenir pucks with poorly printed dream catchers on them, which Grant donated to support Native kids. Later, the news spreads that Robin died of a meth overdose. Daunis encourages the Supes to honor her by organizing a benefit hockey game for her the same weekend as Shagala, the annual benefit dance for the Supes. Grant behaves disturbingly toward Daunis throughout the weekend.

When she gets home, Daunis runs into Robin's mom, Mrs. Bailey, who shocks Daunis when she reveals that Robin wasn't a student at Lake State—she was addicted to painkillers and then meth. Daunis spends the next day turning in her tribal enrollment paperwork. She runs into Stormy, another Supe, at the tribal enrollment office and offers to drive him to his parents' house on Sugar Island so he can look for his passport so he can go with the Supes to see a game in Canada. She also agrees to lend Levi her debit card, which is connected to their

shared account, so he can buy himself and his friends dinner. But when Daunis calls to check and make sure there's enough money in the account, she's shocked. She and Levi usually keep a couple hundred dollars in it, but there's more than \$10,000 in it now. When Daunis realizes that Levi is 18 and now gets \$36,000 per year in per-cap payments, she convinces herself that he can't be involved in the meth cell.

Daunis has been dreaming about Lily's death for weeks now, and each time, she remembers more of that night. Now, she remembers that Travis had been talking about the "Little People" being angry with him—so she approaches Leonard Manitou, an Elder whom the Little People rescued when he was a child, to ask about the mythical beings. Leonard says the Little People sometimes get angry; they once yelled at his cousin for sniffing gas. That afternoon, she confronts Levi about the money in their account. He's able to dispel her fears, invites her to invest in a business venture with him, and promises to look for Dad's **scarf**, which Daunis would like for her birthday. Daunis tracks down Uncle David's notebook and finds that he discovered mushrooms didn't make meth-X so potent; he clearly didn't intend for the FBI to get this information. Daunis realizes what meth-X really is: Travis added "love medicine" that he'd initially offered to Lily to the meth. The love medicine made it potent, and the Little People, which are real, scolded the kids in Minnesota—in other words, the kids weren't hallucinating. She tells Jamie and Ron that the mushrooms are a dead end and turns over David's notebook after tearing out the pages detailing his mushroom research.

That Friday is the benefit game for Robin, and it's also Daunis's 19th birthday. Daunis plays and gets injured, though she hides it until after she's visited with friends and family afterwards—and after both Grant and Auntie share that Tribal Council voted to let Daunis enroll. After the game, Jamie drives Daunis to the ER, where she reveals that she's not playing college hockey due to nerve damage from a surgery meant to correct a serious shoulder injury. They then go to a lakeside beach and have sex, though Daunis panics when Jamie tells her he loves her. Shagala is the following night. Daunis is having a great time, but then things take a turn for the worse. Ron says Jamie proposed getting close to Daunis to boost his career, TJ tells Daunis he broke up with her because Levi threatened him, and Grant rapes Daunis. After Daunis punches Jamie in the face, Ron drives her home. That night, Daunis dreams of Lily's death again—and she remembers that before he shot himself, Travis admitted he didn't actually shoot the BB gun years ago. Levi did.

The next morning, after checking the emailed bank statement from her and Levi's shared account, Daunis discovers Levi is the meth cell's mule: he's been transferring money to an account in Panama in her name. She sneaks into Levi's house and confirms her suspicions with the last year's paper statements—and in her search, she also finds Dad's scarf, which Levi has clearly

been keeping from her. When Daunis gets home later, Mom reveals that Levi dropped off two boxes of birthday gifts in Daunis's bedroom yesterday. One gift is a framed photo of her, Levi, and Dad. The second gift contains the smelly dream catcher hockey pucks, which are filled with meth.

Just as Ron texts Daunis to ask if she's seen Jamie since last night, Dana knocks on the door and explains that she's afraid Levi is in trouble. But this turns out to be a ruse: Dana drugs Daunis, and Daunis wakes up hours later with Jamie in a trailer on Sugar Island. Nobody knows where he is, as there's no cell service here and his tracking device won't work. Over the next few hours, Daunis discovers that Mike, not Levi, is in charge of the meth cell, and that Dana kidnapped David. Ultimately, Levi takes Daunis off of Sugar Island himself; the cell wants her to make meth for them. Several Elders notice Daunis looking afraid on the ferry and help Daunis escape. Believing she can trust him, Daunis asks Coach Bobby for help—but he reveals that he's involved in the cell too and will hurt Mom if Daunis doesn't cooperate. Daunis crashes his car and returns with the police to Sugar Island and Jamie. She nearly dies, as the car crash lacerated her liver.

Daunis wakes up in a hospital room. GrandMary has recently died. Over the next few days, Daunis discovers that Mike has disappeared and that the feds won't press charges for her kidnapping or for Grant raping her. She also tells Jamie that he needs to figure out who he is before they can be in a healthy relationship.

Ten months later, at the following year's powwow, Daunis reveals that Levi and Stormy are taking the fall for Mike's crimes (Mike is still at large), and Coach Bobby is testifying against Levi. She's received several postcards from Jamie, and she plans to attend the University of Hawaii to study ethnobotany while also apprenticing with Seeney Nimkee to learn traditional medicine. Granny June takes Daunis to a ceremony for Native sexual assault victims, and Daunis dances for the first time since David and Lily's deaths. She's ready for the next chapter of her life.



## CHARACTERS

### MAJOR CHARACTERS

**Daunis Fontaine** – The novel's protagonist, 18-year-old Daunis is a former hockey player trying to find her way after graduating high school the spring before the novel begins. Daunis's Mom is white, and Dad was a member of the Sugar Island Ojibwe tribe, though Daunis herself isn't enrolled in the tribe. Daunis deeply connected to her Ojibwe heritage, spiritual beliefs, and customs, however, and ultimately enrolls just before her 19th birthday. Though Daunis is convinced that attending the local university will prevent what her Gramma Pearl would say is "the third bad thing" from happening

(Daunis's Uncle David recently died, and her grandmother GrandMary had a stroke), the third bad thing happens anyway: Daunis witnesses Travis, who's addicted to meth, kill her best friend, Lily. As Daunis gets drawn into the FBI's undercover investigation into the local meth cell as a confidential informant, she struggles with her feelings for Jamie, a young agent posing as a high school student and her boyfriend. Much of her maturation occurs as she learns that being a strong Nish kwe means accepting uncomfortable truths—such as that her half-brother Levi is involved in the meth cell, and that when white, wealthy Grant Edwards rapes her, her status as a Native woman means she has no legal recourse. She also learns that real love means wanting the best for someone even if that means not being together, so she ultimately refuses to continue a relationship with Jamie when the investigation concludes.

**Levi Firekeeper** – Levi is Daunis's brother; they share a father, Dad, but his mom is Dana. He's three months younger than Daunis, but Daunis still looks up to and adores him, and he regularly stands up for and protects her. As the captain of the Supes, Levi is considered Sault Ste. Marie's "golden boy" who can do no wrong. He's attractive, charming, and extremely skilled on the ice. However, Daunis begins to hear disturbing things about Levi, such as that he threatened to injure her ex-boyfriend TJ and even asked Travis to take the blame when Levi accidentally blinded a woman with a BB gun. Eventually, this culminates in Daunis realizing that Levi is involved in the local meth cell, has taken steps to implicate Daunis, and has even been transferring drug earnings to a bank account in Panama using Daunis's identity. All of this, combined with the fact that Levi has been actively hiding Dad's **scarf**, which Daunis has coveted for years, makes Levi's betrayal particularly painful for Daunis. Still, she realizes that he's disturbingly used to getting his way and letting other people take the fall—he even asks Daunis to tell the police that he's been forced to participate in the meth cell. Still, she realizes it's not entirely fair that he and Stormy Nodin suffer legal consequences and jail time while Mike, the meth cell's leader, escapes.

**Lily** – Lily is Daunis's best friend; her ex-boyfriend, Travis, shoots and kills her at the powwow a week after the story begins. Lily is small in stature, but she's bright, vivacious, and attracts attention for dressing all in black, including with black lipstick. She also attracts attention for her "creative" parking: rather than parallel park, she often parks her Jeep on the curb or the grass. Like Daunis, Lily is a descendant, rather than an enrolled member, of the Sugar Island Ojibwe Tribe. Due to her grandfather being from a tribe in Canada, she wasn't able to meet the blood purity standards. She and Travis had been on-again, off-again for almost a year at the time of her death; she broke up with him when she discovered he was cooking meth and tried to break things off for good when he offered her "love medicine" on Valentine's Day. As Daunis gradually recovers her memories of the night Lily died, she realizes that Lily had a firm

grasp that real, healthy love means wanting what's best for their partner, even if that means breaking up. Daunis also realizes that Lily died trying to protect Daunis. Following Lily's death, Daunis discovers that Lily suffered sexual and physical abuse prior to coming to live with Granny June in sixth grade.

**Travis Flint** – The initial antagonist of the novel, Travis is Lily's on-again, off-again boyfriend. He's been using meth for about a year and cooking it for about nine months, which precipitated his and Lily's initial breakup. He shoots and kills Lily and then himself at the powwow in August, as he refuses to accept Lily's unwillingness to be with him. Prior to getting involved in drugs, Travis was a funny and wildly smart boy who took lots of upper-level science classes with Daunis. He also played hockey. Daunis eventually discovers that Travis began his downhill slide into addiction when Levi convinced Travis to take the blame for accidentally blinding a woman with a BB gun, something that caused the community to shun Travis. He began using and then cooking meth, and on Valentine's Day, he offered Lily a "love medicine" (an unspecified traditional medicine he believed would save their relationship). After Lily refused, adding the love medicine to meth is how Travis created the highly addictive meth-X. As Daunis gradually remembers more about the night Travis shot Lily, she comes to realize that Travis didn't love Lily: he just wanted to control her. Still, Daunis sees Travis as a tragic, misguided, and sympathetic figure, especially once she learns how Levi ruined Travis's reputation.

**Mom** – Daunis's mom became pregnant with Daunis when she was 16, and Daunis believes for much of the novel that her birth (and the fact that Dad married and had another baby, Levi, with Dana) ruined Mom's life. Mom's parents, GrandMary and Grandpa Lorenzo, were some of the most powerful people in town, and so they refused to let her put Dad on Daunis's birth certificate and questioned many of Mom's parenting decisions. Though Daunis has seen Mom stand up to her parents on Daunis's behalf, Daunis nevertheless sees Mom as emotionally fragile and mentally unwell—since Mom's brother David's death, Mom has started cleaning the house late at night and talking to David in the made-up language the siblings created. Daunis finds Mom annoying and overbearing—Mom likes to do things like run baths and make tea for Daunis, but she tends to hover. It's not until the end of the novel that Mom assures Daunis that Daunis didn't ruin her life—Mom insists she made her own choices to get where she is. Mom seems to more easily come to terms with GrandMary's death after making this realization, and she ultimately realizes that supporting Daunis in going away to college in Hawaii doesn't mean she'll lose her daughter forever.

**GrandMary** – GrandMary is Daunis's grandmother on her Fontaine side. She recently suffered a stroke and now lives in the assisted living facility EverCare. Though Daunis loves GrandMary, she also has complicated feelings about her grandmother and her grandmother's legacy. GrandMary is

from one of the wealthiest and most powerful families in town, and she's notorious for hating Native Americans. She doesn't see Daunis as Native, however, and actively tried to keep Daunis from connecting with her Firekeeper side (including refusing to let Mom put Dad on Daunis's birth certificate, making it much harder for Daunis to enroll in the Tribe). GrandMary also refused to acknowledge that Uncle David was gay and picked on Mom for Mom's weight, though Mom successfully forbade GrandMary from ever saying anything untoward to Daunis about Daunis's size. GrandMary ultimately dies while Daunis is unconscious in the hospital at Ann Arbor. Following her death, Daunis is able to make peace with the fact that GrandMary, despite her faults, loved her.

**Auntie Teddie** – Auntie is Daunis's aunt on her Firekeeper side. She has, throughout Daunis's life, kept Daunis connected to the Ojibwe community and traditions, and she has supported Mom emotionally. Though she used to be known for fighting and her substance use, in the present, Auntie is happily married to Art, has twin daughters Perry and Pauline, and is well-respected in the community as the director of the tribal health center. Daunis greatly admires Auntie and wants to be a strong Nish kwe like her, so it's not always clear to Daunis why Auntie won't, for instance, let Daunis participate in blanket parties. Really, Auntie wants to protect Daunis and would rather Daunis take advantages of the privileges Daunis has as a light-skinned person with financial means. Daunis and Auntie begin to grow apart over the novel, as Daunis begins keeping secrets from Auntie when she agrees to be the FBI's confidential informant. This creates strife at first, though Auntie ultimately acknowledges that Daunis is an adult who can make her own choices. She continues to keep Daunis connected to Ojibwe traditions, including by helping Daunis enroll in the Tribe just before Daunis's 19th birthday.

**Uncle David** – Uncle David is Mom's brother and, until his death in April, was the science teacher at Sault High. Daunis adored her uncle—he encouraged her curiosity and trained her to critically think through problems and gather evidence. He often found himself at odds with his mom, GrandMary, as he was gay, and she believed he'd eventually grow out of it. Though Uncle David died of a meth overdose, Daunis learns he wasn't addicted: he was a confidential informant for the FBI and his death was likely the result of foul play. As Daunis takes over his role in the investigation and continues his research into the hallucinogenic mushrooms the FBI thinks were added to meth-X, she thinks often of his advice and what he'd think of things. Ultimately, by finding the notebook David kept during the last few months of his life (which details his mushroom research), Daunis discovers that David didn't want the FBI to know that the mushrooms weren't what made meth-X so potent. It's not until Daunis is kidnapped herself that she realizes Dana Firekeeper kidnapped Uncle David, and that Mike gave David meth to "incentivize" him to cook meth for the meth cell. Mike

believes, but can't say for sure, that David injected too much meth on purpose, taking his own life rather than cooperating with the cell.

**Jamie Johnson** – Jamie is a junior officer with the Bureau of Indian Affairs assigned to go undercover as a high school senior in the Sault as part of a meth investigation. He poses as Ron's nephew. Jamie immediately attracts attention in the Sault because he's handsome, a skilled hockey player, and has a mysterious scar on his face—one that Auntie insists is too straight to be accidental. Daunis is genuinely attracted to him, though their budding relationship becomes complicated when Jamie reveals he's an undercover agent. It gets even more complicated later, when Ron reveals that it was Jamie's idea to get close to Daunis to boost his career. Still, Jamie and Daunis have a lot in common and have genuine feelings for each other. Like Daunis, Jamie is Native, though he's never been involved in his Cherokee community due to having been adopted out as a baby. As time goes on, Daunis comes to realize that though she loves Jamie and knows he loves her, they must find their ways separately—and Jamie must figure out who he is before he'll be capable of having a healthy, loving relationship. Though Jamie reveals that he's actually 22, Daunis learns nothing else real about him, not even his real name.

**Ron Johnson** – Ron is the senior FBI agent assigned to the Sault with Jamie to investigate meth-X and the associated meth cell. He's Native and insists to Daunis (and seems to genuinely believe) that it's necessary for Native Americans to work for the FBI and other federal agencies, as they're better positioned to help tribal communities. However, Daunis isn't ever entirely convinced he's right, as Ron seems disrespectfully uninformed about, for instance, how the kids in Minnesota have (or have not) recovered after taking meth-X. In general, though, Ron is professional, focused, and very transparent about his and Daunis's respective roles in the investigation. Because Ron is so upfront about who he is and what his goals are, Daunis comes to see him as trustworthy and not someone to hate. Ron also takes major issue with Jamie's conduct during the investigation, both because he fears for Jamie's safety and because it may compromise the investigation. Daunis suspects, but doesn't know for sure, that once the investigation ends, Ron and Auntie remain in contact and that Ron is the one who keeps Auntie informed on how legal proceedings for Levi and Stormy are going.

**Dad** – Daunis's dad, Levi Firekeeper, Sr., died when Daunis and Levi were seven. He was an Ojibwe hockey player bound for fame and glory when he got 16-year-old Mom pregnant and, a few months later, impregnated Dana, Levi's mom, while drunk at a party. He broke both of his legs in a car accident that night, something that haunts Mom to the present day: though she was driving, Dad took the blame and said he was. This injury ended his hockey career, and Grandpa Lorenzo and GrandMary used their political clout to keep him from getting a job in Sault

Ste. Marie. Daunis has fond memories of her father and wants nothing more than to have a **scarf** she remembers him using to pull her and Levi around on the ice. However, Daunis also refers to Dad as “the king of Guy Lies,” as he’s the first man who ever lied to her: he said he was going away for a while and that he and Daunis would have a great life when he returned. However, he died in a logging accident and so never came back for her.

**Mike Edwards** – Mike is a Supes hockey player who ultimately turns out to be an antagonist and the leader of the meth cell in Sault Ste. Marie, but Daunis spends much of the novel viewing him as an entitled, if loyal, friend of Levi’s. He’s a hulking boy and is the Supes’ goalie. While he’s an extremely talented player, he’s not infallible: his dad, Grant Edwards, berates Mike in public whenever Mike does happen to miss a goal. Mike spends most of his time hanging out with Levi and Stormy, so Daunis never expects that he’s involved in the meth cell (as she can’t imagine until she finds undeniable proof that Levi is involved). But Mike ultimately shows that he’s smart, ruthless, and drunk on the power he has as the cell’s leader. He’s responsible for David’s death and has no qualms about scaring, hurting, and even killing Daunis and Jamie once he kidnaps them. In the end, Mike runs away, presumably to Canada. This means he never faces any consequences for his crimes—Levi and Stormy take the fall for him.

**Grant Edwards** – One of the novel’s antagonists, Grant Edwards is Mike’s dad and a wealthy attorney in Sault Ste. Marie. He also runs the Booster Bus, as he’s a huge Supes fan. Daunis has always found him a little smarmy and not very nice (she’s seen him berate Mike in public for not saving goals). But his behavior escalates in the novel’s present—especially once he insists that Daunis calls him Grant instead of Mr. Edwards. He spends weeks invading Daunis’s personal space and creepily staring at her, though Daunis struggles to avoid him as she believes that he’s part of the meth cell. Finally, at Shagala, Grant tricks Daunis into coming back to his hotel room and then rapes her. During the assault, he reveals that “hockey girls” are his “weakness” and that he also had a sexual relationship with Robin (whether or not that relationship was consensual is never made explicit, but Daunis assumes it wasn’t). He also implies that he got Robin addicted to opioid painkillers and offers to get some for Daunis. It ultimately turns out that Grant isn’t involved in the meth cell, and he’s never prosecuted for raping Daunis due to the fact that he’s white and raped Daunis, an enrolled tribal member, on tribal land. He and his wife, Mrs. Edwards, divorce once Mike disappears.

**Stormy Nodin** – Stormy is a Supes hockey player and one of Levi’s friends. He’s also involved in the meth cell. Stormy is a skinny kid whom Daunis doesn’t always like much—she notes several times how annoyed she still is that Levi made her go to Shagala with Stormy last year. However, she also feels sympathetic toward him, as Stormy’s dad and his mom, Shawna, go back and forth between struggling with drug use and being

involved in their son’s life and tribal affairs. Because of this, Stormy lives most of the time with Levi and Dana. His degree of involvement with the meth cell remains somewhat mysterious, though in the end, he’s the only one to actually turn on Mike and Levi—Daunis arrives at the kidnapping trailer just in time to see Stormy cut Jamie free of his chains. Still, Stormy refuses to testify against Levi, Mike, or Coach Bobby in court; indeed, he refuses to say anything in English and so is held in contempt of court. This means he’ll stay in jail, essentially serving time on Mike’s behalf while Mike goes free.

**Judge Dana Firekeeper** – Though Dana ultimately turns out to be an antagonist involved in the meth cell, Daunis generally likes and admires her for much of the novel. This is despite the fact that as a young woman, Dana manipulated Dad into having sex with her and getting her pregnant with Levi—Dad ultimately married Dana, leaving Mom to raise Daunis on her own. Despite this complication, Daunis loves Levi (which Dana appreciates) and admires Dana for being the first Native Tribal Judge in the Sault (previous Tribal Judges were white). However, it ultimately turns out that Dana is involved in the meth cell and is responsible for kidnapping Uncle David and then Daunis. TJ also reveals that Dana has been allowing what should be straightforward meth cases to close without charging guilty parties, while cracking down on alcohol-related and other crimes in the Sault. For her crimes, Dana is fined the maximum amount for miscarriages of justice, stripped of her title, and subjected to a banishment hearing. Opinion in the Sault is split on whether she’s getting off easy, or whether she’s being used as an example of what happens to powerful women who step out of line.

**Coach Bobby** – Coach Bobby is the Sault High varsity hockey coach and a business teacher—and eventually, Daunis discovers he’s involved in the meth cell. This is totally unexpected for her, though, as Coach has always been wildly supportive of all hockey players, particularly female players like Daunis and Robin who played on a boys’ team. It’s unfathomable to Daunis that Coach would see no issue with kidnapping Daunis (and before her, Uncle David) and threatening Mom to encourage Daunis to cook great meth after protecting and supporting her for years. Still, once his involvement comes to light, Daunis realizes she missed some of the signs that he was involved, such as an apparent recent influx of money and the fact that he’s known for investing in various business ventures. Despite his involvement, Coach Bobby ultimately agrees to be the “star witness” and testify against Levi—something that gives Daunis recurring nightmares.

**Granny June** – Granny June is Lily’s grandmother; she’s a tiny old lady and has been Lily’s legal guardian since Lily was in sixth grade. Daunis and Lily love and admire Granny for her wit, sage advice, and occasional references to having committed felony crimes in her younger years. After Travis shoots Lily, Daunis

continues to care for Granny June and drive her to the Elder Center on Sugar Island for lunch every day. To thank her for her care, for paying for Lily's funeral, and for being such a good friend to Lily, Granny June gifts Daunis Lily's Jeep. Later, Granny June submits an affidavit supporting Daunis's application for tribal enrollment. At the end of the novel, Granny June also takes Daunis to the pansy ceremony for Nish women who've experienced sexual violence—and she reveals that she'd been bringing Lily every year since Lily came to live with her.

**Heather Nodin** – Heather Nodin is one of Daunis's classmates; Daunis finds her body on Duck Island, though it's never explicitly made clear how Heather died (or, possibly, was killed). She's seen in the community as something of a tragic poster child for how per-cap payments can lead to abuse and manipulation, as for much of her childhood, her biological father, Joey Nodin, refused to acknowledge she was his daughter. But when per cap started, he set Heather's mom up for a drug bust so he could take custody, enroll her in the Tribe, and then take her per-cap checks. Heather's situation led to the Tribe changing enrollment rules to try to protect other kids, but it wasn't enough to help Heather: Daunis explains that Heather has seemed lost and unaffected for years, and when Daunis speaks to Heather at a bonfire, it's clear Heather is heavily using drugs and is selling drugs of various types.

**Robin Bailey** – Two years older than Daunis, Robin was the first girl to make the Sault High varsity hockey team and later became Daunis's mentor. Daunis looks up to Robin and thinks highly of her—so it's shocking when Robin dies of a meth overdose. Following her death, Daunis learns that Robin became addicted to painkillers and then started using meth. Though Daunis had seen Robin most recently at the Lake State campus, Robin's parents insist that Robin wasn't enrolled; Daunis later assumes that Robin was on campus to deal drugs to students. Robin's final years and months begin to look even more tragic when Daunis discovers that Robin was also involved in a (presumably coerced) sexual relationship with Grant Edwards, who implies that he was providing her painkillers.

**TJ Kewadin** – TJ is Daunis's ex-boyfriend and a Tribal police officer. He's several years older than Daunis. Daunis resents and almost fears him for much of the novel, in part because she has no idea why he broke up with her—not long after they started having sex, he ended things without explaining why. Though she's hostile to him for much of the novel, at Shagala, TJ attempts to prove his truthfulness and enlighten Daunis by telling her that Levi is bad news, and that anyone associated with him, including Jamie, is also untrustworthy. He reveals that he broke up with Daunis because Levi threatened to injure him and “end football” for him. Later, Auntie shares that TJ was the officer to raise the fact that Dana was letting people who ended up in her courtroom on meth charges go, while harshly

prosecuting other, more minor crimes. Because of this, Daunis eventually comes to see TJ as a good guy and let go of the pain he caused her during their breakup.

**Seeney Nimkee** – Seeney is one of the youngest Elders in the Sugar Island Ojibwe tribe. Daunis fears her for much of the novel, as Seeney once made her cry by pointing out that Daunis and other young people were being disrespectful to the Elders. However, Seeney emerges over the course of the novel as an unexpectedly committed supporter of Daunis: she provides an affidavit to support Daunis's application for tribal membership, helps Daunis escape from Levi on the ferry, and eventually asks Daunis to be her apprentice and study traditional medicines under her. She fully supports Daunis attending college at the University of Hawaii and studying ethnobotany, since as she sees it, Native Americans have always had to adapt and learn new ways of studying.

**Art** – Art is Auntie's husband. He's Native and Black, so he suffers more intense racism and bigotry than other enrolled tribal members do—he was once held at gunpoint at the Canada border due to his race. However, he's highly respected in the Sugar Island Ojibwe community, as he's a firekeeper. This means that he tends ceremonial fires for sweat lodges, funerals, and other ceremonies. He dotes on his wife and daughters, Perry and Pauline, and is a calming, strong presence in Daunis's life.

**Grandpa Lorenzo** – Grandpa Lorenzo is deceased, but he was Daunis's grandfather, GrandMary's husband, and Mom's father. He and GrandMary were bigoted toward Native Americans, so they were incensed when Dad, who was Ojibwe, got Mom pregnant—so using their power as one of the wealthiest couples in Sault Ste. Marie, they kept Dad from ever being able to get a job in town. Grant Edwards now owns Grandpa Lorenzo's antique office furniture.

**Mrs. Edwards** – Grant's wife and Mike's mom, Mrs. Edwards, is a stylish, middle-aged lady. Several years ago, she bought GrandMary's clothing boutique and all of Grandpa Lorenzo's antique office furniture. Daunis generally likes Mrs. Edwards, especially when Mrs. Edwards orders Daunis the perfect garment for Shagala: a revealing red jumpsuit. It's unclear if she's aware of Grant's infidelity or not, but in the year after the novel ends and after Mike disappears, she and Grant divorce.

**Macy Manitou** – Macy is one of Daunis's former classmates. She's full of herself, sexy, and has a knack for dispensing cutting insults with just enough truth to them to be devastating. Still, despite antagonizing each other off and on throughout the novel (and throughout their childhoods in the Sault), Macy and Daunis do show they care about each other: Macy helps Daunis in the locker room after Daunis reinjures her shoulder, while Daunis warns Macy to stay away from Grant Edwards. At the end of the novel, it's a relief when Daunis realizes that Macy didn't attend the pansy ceremony associated with the powwow, indicating that Macy hasn't suffered sexual abuse.

**Maggie** – Maggie is Lily’s mom, though at the time of Lily’s death, she hasn’t been involved in raising Lily for many years. Indeed, Lily often refers to herself as Maggie’s “practice baby”; after Lily, Maggie had another daughter who’s a bit younger than Lily, and in the present, she has two toddlers. Maggie was never supportive or particularly kind to Lily. She had multiple boyfriends and regularly took her emotional turmoil out on Lily when relationships didn’t go well. And though her role in or knowledge of it remains unclear, Lily was sexually abused while living with her mom. Despite Maggie’s faults, though, Auntie encourages Lily and Daunis to give Maggie grace: after all, Maggie’s mom was the only one of three sisters who didn’t commit suicide after suffering abuse in the residential schools.

**Mrs. Hammond** – Mrs. Hammond, or Mrs. H, is the secretary at Sault High. Though she’s generally kind to Daunis, she also reveals that she’s wildly bigoted—she once tells Daunis that she hopes Daunis will go away to college, as Daunis isn’t like “those other Indians” who, she believes, are poorly prepared academically and socially to succeed in college because they’re Native.

**Angie Flint** – Angie Flint is Travis’s mom. She’s responsible for bringing meth to the Sault, and so she’s known to some as the “Meth Queen.” Angie already had an awful reputation thanks to the time she spent thousands of dollars throwing a party at the casino and then applied for emergency assistance from the Tribe to pay her utility bills. Despite bringing meth to the Sault, Angie’s role in the meth cell remains unclear to the end of the novel. Daunis initially suspects that Angie is responsible for David’s death, but this turns out to not be true.

**Minnie Mustang** – Minnie Mustang is Macy’s great-grandmother and one of the Elders, so named for the red Mustang she bought when she turned 75. She’s extremely opinionated and has an ongoing love-hate relationship with Granny June: they play cards together, but they also bicker constantly. Minnie helps Daunis escape Levi on the ferry.

**Joey Nodin** – Joey Nodin never appears in the novel, but he’s fathered several children in the Sault, including Heather Nodin and Ryan. He didn’t care about his kids until the casino began distributing per-cap payments—and then he set up Heather’s mom to lose custody and took custody of Heather himself, all so he could claim her minor per-cap payments.

**Megan** – Megan is dating one of the Supes and takes Daunis under her wing when Daunis begins dating Jamie. Daunis finds Megan alternately exhausting and kind, though ultimately bigoted: Megan reveals a dream catcher tattoo on her belly, which is meant to “honor Indians” and is supposedly okay because one of Megan’s ancestors was an “Indian princess.”

**Stormy’s Dad** – Stormy’s dad is an opinionated, hard man who vacillates between being involved in Tribal affairs and Stormy’s life, and being totally checked out when he and his wife, Shawna, are using drugs heavily. Daunis tries to keep him at

arm’s length as he sees her as Zhaaganaash and an outsider, even after she becomes an enrolled member.

**Ryan** – Ryan is a boy who graduated with Daunis. He always acted like a stereotypical bigoted Zhaaganaash and would work Native kids up about treaty rights and differing hunting laws for Native and non-Native people. However, at a hockey game, Daunis overhears that Ryan is applying for Tribal membership, which he can do because his dad is Joey Nodin.

## MINOR CHARACTERS

**Gramma Pearl** – Gramma Pearl is deceased; she was Daunis’s Anishinaabe nokomis. Daunis adored Gramma Pearl and has internalized many of Gramma Pearl’s teachings and bits of advice, such as that bad things come in threes and that it’s possible to cure an earache by pouring one’s urine into the infected ear.

**Jonsy Kewadin** – Jonsy is TJ’s grandfather and one of the Elders. Daunis goes bottle hunting at the local landfill with him, and though they don’t spend a ton of time together, she often hears his advice in her head. He helps her get away from Levi on the ferry.

**Leonard Manitou** – Leonard is Macy’s grandfather and an elder who frequents the lunches at the Elder Center. Daunis approaches him to ask him about the Little People, as when he was a small child, he got lost in the snow and the Little People protected him for two days.

**Shawna Nodin** – Shawna Nodin is Stormy’s mom. She and her husband, Stormy’s dad, experience good periods when they’re heavily involved in Tribal affairs, ceremonies, and Stormy’s life—but they also regularly go on “benders,” when they heavily use drugs.

**Perry** – Perry is one of Auntie and Art’s five-year-old twin daughters. She’s more physical and active than Pauline.

**Pauline** – Pauline is one of Auntie and Art’s five-year-old twin daughters. She’s obsessed with princesses.

**Chief Manitou** – Chief Manitou is Macy’s dad and the chief of the Sugar Island Ojibwe Tribe.

**Dr. Bonasera** – Dr. Bonasera is Daunis’s doctor at the local Sault hospital. He’s been caring for her since she injured her shoulder several years ago, and he cautions Daunis to not play hockey anymore so she doesn’t risk further nerve damage.

**Dr. Roulain** – Dr. Roulain is the doctor in Ann Arbor who cares for Daunis after her liver laceration.

**Jen** – Jen is Jamie’s made-up girlfriend; she does not actually exist.

**Mrs. Bonasera** – Mrs. Bonasera, or Mrs. B, is the head nurse at EverCare.

**Mrs. Bailey** – Mrs. Bailey is Robin’s mom.



## TERMS

**Anishinaabe/Nish/Anishinaabemowin** – *Anishinaabe* translates to “Original People” (that is, Indigenous Americans in general), but **Daunis** explains that she and her peers usually use it to refer to the tribes that lived around the Great Lakes, such as the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi. *Anishinaabemowin* refers to the language the Ojibwe tribe speaks.

**Blanket Party** – A blanket party is how Nish kwe get justice when a man mistreats a woman in the community. The woman’s cousins take the man into the woods rolled in a blanket and beat him.

**Miigwech** – *Miigwech* is the Anishinaabemowin word for thank-you.

**Nish Kwewag/Nish Kwe** – *Nish kwe* is a shortened translation of “Anishinaabe woman.” **Daunis** prays daily to be a strong Nish kwe, like **Auntie Teddie**.

**Nokomis** – *Nokomis* is the Anishinaabemowin word for grandmother.

**Ojibwe** – **Daunis** is a member of the Sugar Island Ojibwe tribe.

**Per Cap** – Per cap refers to the yearly payments that enrolled tribal members receive; the money comes from casino profits. Minors are eligible for payments, but they receive less than adults. **Daunis** explains that per cap can be good and bad: it injects much-needed money into the community, but it also motivates some people to inappropriately seek legal custody of enrolled minors so as to claim that minor’s checks.

**Semaa** – *Semaa* is tobacco, which is given as an offering to elders, Creator, and other deities.

**Zhaaganaash** – *Zhaaganaash* is the Anishinaabemowin word to refer to white people.

court, with no regard for how this might devastate the Sugar Island Ojibwe community. Daunis, on the other hand, wants to follow her tribe’s teachings, which consider the long-term consequences of one’s actions, focus on healing, and protect traditional medicinal knowledge that she fears the FBI would misuse or misunderstand. Despite their differing views, though, Ron, Jamie, and Daunis all ultimately agree that getting justice is in no way simple. How, and whether or not, a person receives justice is tied to a variety of identity markers such as their sex, legal affiliations, and status in the community.

It’s devastating for Daunis to discover that one of the meth ring leaders is her beloved half-brother, Levi. Daunis gradually discovers that Levi, the captain of the Sault’s elite youth hockey team, has used his status as the town’s “golden boy” to avoid taking responsibility for various crimes—and has routinely allowed friends to take the fall for him. Levi’s involvement and that of his mom Dana, the first Native Tribal Judge in the area, show Daunis how easily power corrupts—and how the very people tasked with carrying out justice, whether they be Native like Dana or federal agents like Ron and Jamie, can easily fail. Still, Daunis also realizes it’s not right that Mike, the white hockey player at the top of the meth cell, escapes, suffering no consequences for drug crimes and potential murder—and leaving Levi and another Native player to potentially serve years of jail time. Finally, Daunis has to grapple with the painful fact that due to how tribal and federal laws interact, her status as an enrolled tribal member leaves her with no legal recourse when wealthy and white Grant Edwards rapes her on tribal land. This makes it painfully real for her how little justice Native women historically get for the crimes committed against them, particularly when white men are the aggressors. Justice, Daunis discovers, is in no way straightforward or guaranteed—and it’s seldom, if ever, actually fair.



## GENERATIONAL TRAUMA AND BIGOTRY

When federal FBI agents Ron and Jamie ask 18-year-old Daunis to help them in an undercover investigation into a suspected meth cell, Daunis is suspicious and conflicted. This is because she’s well aware that the federal government has an awful track record when it comes to its dealings with tribal communities. So, while Daunis understands the need to figure out who’s making and selling the meth that’s decimating her community, she’s less convinced that federal agents—even those who are Native themselves—are truly capable of helping. This highlights one of the novel’s main ideas (and main conflicts): that the government’s treatment of Native communities has led to rampant distrust and misunderstanding between federal and tribal entities (and between non-Native people and Native people), which has manifested in the present as bigotry and cultural insensitivity. This, combined with the unhealed generational trauma that Daunis and the Sugar Island Ojibwe



## THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don’t have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



## JUSTICE

In *Firekeeper’s Daughter*, Daunis, an 18-year-old Ojibwe teen, finds herself caught up in an undercover FBI investigation into a suspected meth cell whose product has been decimating her community for a year or more. The investigation is emotionally difficult for Daunis, as she realizes that she and FBI agents Ron and Jamie are working toward very different goals. Ron and Jamie want to root out the meth cell members and prosecute them in federal

members live with, makes working with the FBI in a manner that's respectful to Daunis's cultural beliefs difficult, if not impossible.

Throughout the novel, Daunis enlightens readers to the various ways these conflicts play out. She details how it's only in the last few years, since per-cap payments to enrolled tribal members started, that more talented tribal kids have been able to afford to play hockey or figure skate. But still, Daunis and other Ojibwe hockey kids face bigotry and discrimination, as when Daunis's high school secretary observes that Daunis isn't like other tribal kids who, she believes, are socially inept and poorly prepared to succeed in college. Daunis also notes that the last residential school closed only two years before her birth, and the trauma these schools caused continues to reverberate throughout her community. Auntie, for instance, cautions Daunis and Lily to give Lily's mom Maggie some grace, as Maggie's mother was the only sister in her family who *didn't* die by suicide after suffering abuse in the schools. Finally, Daunis also recognizes that it's bigotry that leads the FBI to not pursue charges when members of the meth cell kidnap her—though they press charges for Jamie's kidnapping, as he's a federal agent. This impresses upon Daunis her own "invisibility and expendability," and it paints a grim picture that suggests that the relationship between tribes and the federal government—and between tribal members and white people—isn't going to improve anytime soon.



### CEREMONY, PRIDE, AND HEALING

As Daunis's Sugar Island Ojibwe community weathers various painful incidents, including drug-related deaths, murder, and sexual assault, Daunis becomes increasingly disillusioned with the formal and legal options that ostensibly seek to offer justice and healing. Instead, Daunis discovers time and again that her cultural traditions and ceremonies, though they're not usually legally meaningful (in the federal government's eyes), offer her and her peers catharsis, comfort, and ways to feel pride in their identities and traditions. For instance, Daunis remains intrigued throughout the novel by blanket parties—nighttime outings where a sexual assault victim's female family members kidnap the victim's aggressor and beat him in the woods. A blanket party doesn't force the man to pay monetarily for his crimes, but it does allow women to reclaim power and control over their bodies. And in some situations, as when wealthy and white Grand Edwards rapes Daunis, the novel implies that participating in a blanket party and other ceremonies for sexual assault victims is the only way a Native woman can get any sort of justice, due to how tribal and federal laws make it extremely difficult to prosecute white men who commit crimes on tribal land.

Daunis also describes how various other ceremonies and events, such as attending funerals, dancing at powwow, and

offering semaa (tobacco) with her prayers offer people a chance to grieve, heal, and take pride in their identities as Indigenous people. Traditional ceremonies like funerals, Daunis comes to understand, offer a comforting framework for both the deceased and those still living to process trauma—it helps Daunis feel better, for instance, to know what Lily's spirit is doing on the four days after her death. And though Daunis insists that powwows aren't ceremonies, Daunis still finds that dancing at the powwow at the end of the novel—the first time she's danced in a year and a half, as part of her mourning process for Lily and her Uncle David—is restorative. What's more, dancing makes her feel prouder of who she is and where she comes from than almost anything else she does over the course of the novel. In this way, *Firekeeper's Daughter* shows that ceremonies and traditions provide Native communities the healing and justice that the formal government justice system has systemically and historically denied them.



### LOVE, HONESTY, AND RESPECT

As undercover FBI agents Ron and Jamie investigate a suspected meth cell in Daunis's tribal community, Daunis considers what makes love real, healthy, and valuable—and what makes it dangerous and not love at all. Ultimately, with the help of her Elders' teachings and her own experiences, Daunis decides that love is only love if it's respectful and honest, and if a person in a relationship genuinely wants what's best for their partner—even if that means ending the relationship. Daunis first begins to come to these conclusions in the year before the novel's main story begins, as she watches her best friend Lily navigate ending a relationship with Travis, who becomes addicted to meth. Both Daunis and Lily are aghast when, on Valentine's Day, Travis offers Lily "love medicine"—a mysterious traditional medicine that, the young women realize, is actually "bad medicine" and a way for Travis to try to control Lily. This desire, Daunis realizes, means he doesn't actually love Lily; if he did, she believes, he'd let her go and focus on recovering from his drug addiction (which the novel frames as his attempt to self-medicate his emotional pain surrounding the breakup). Travis's eventual choice to murder Lily and then take his own life highlights how selfish Travis's brand of supposed love is: he doesn't respect Lily's wants or needs and instead prioritizes his need to have Lily for himself—or to ensure that no one else can have her.

As Daunis navigates a relationship with undercover agent Jamie in the novel's present, she finds herself going through many of the same struggles that Lily did. Though Daunis and Jamie are attracted to each other and genuinely care about each other, neither of them can escape that Jamie isn't who he says he is (aside from the fact that he's 22, his true identity is never revealed) and began a relationship with Daunis to help the investigation and boost his career. Eventually, Daunis decides to take to heart Granny June's warning that

relationships rooted in dishonesty and disrespect will remain that way. Daunis insists that Jamie must do what Travis couldn't: figure out who he is and how to be honest with himself and a partner before entering a relationship. Focusing on honesty and respect even when it hurts to do so, the novel suggests, is the only way for a relationship to be healthy and fulfilling for both parties.



### COMING OF AGE

*Firekeeper's Daughter* is, at its heart, 18-year-old Daunis's coming-of-age story. Over the course of the novel, she matures from a naïve (though also quick and incisive) teenager into a young woman who knows what she wants—as well as her limitations. The novel ties Daunis's coming of age to the experience she gains throughout the few months that federal agents Ron and Jamie spend in the Sault conducting an undercover operation into a suspected meth cell, an experience that shows Daunis that growing up and gaining knowledge can be both painful and fulfilling. Daunis begins the novel desperate to be included in adult traditions such as blanket parties (a practice in which women beat men who have assaulted tribal members), something her Auntie Teddie sees as indicative of Daunis's naivete. Auntie implies that Daunis doesn't understand the true significance of a blanket party because she's too focused on how appealing it is to be able to beat a man who has wronged one of Daunis's peers. It's not until Daunis learns that Grant Edwards, a wealthy white man who raped her on tribal land, won't be prosecuted in federal court for his crime that Daunis understands that the blanket party is really an imperfect solution to various horrific problems facing Native women. But it's only after Daunis's horrific assault forces her to grow up before she's ready to do that she fully understands that to be adult, female, and Ojibwe is to be extremely vulnerable.

Part of growing up, Daunis also finds, is being willing to accept uncomfortable truths, especially about people she loves. When she discovers that her half-brother Levi is running the meth cell in the Sault, Daunis is heartbroken. But she also realizes that the adult thing to do is to not allow herself to explain away Levi's behavior and the incriminating trail of evidence she finds—some of which he plants to frame her. The novel frames Daunis's mature response to her white grandmother GrandMary's death as another symptom of Daunis's burgeoning maturity. When GrandMary dies at the end of the novel, Daunis feels at peace with two truths: that GrandMary was notoriously bigoted toward Native people—and yet adored her Native granddaughter. Being an adult, Daunis discovers, means becoming comfortable with discomfort and with moral ambiguity, particularly when it comes to one's relationship with family members.



### FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

Though 18-year-old Daunis's dad has been deceased for more than a decade, she nevertheless comes from two close-knit and supportive families.

On Mom's side, the Fontaine side, Daunis grew up with her mom's support as well as that of her grandmother GrandMary and her Uncle David. On the Firekeeper side, Daunis is extremely close with her Auntie Teddie and Auntie's family, which connects her to her Ojibwe heritage and community. Much of Daunis's growth over the novel happens as she finds her place within her family and within her Ojibwe community—and learns that she doesn't have to act independently all the time. Rather, the novel proposes that being part of a family and a community means being willing to offer help to others, in addition to accepting support as needed. Daunis is struck by the fact that she can indeed rely on her community after her half-brother Levi and the meth cell he's involved with kidnap her—Elders, even those Daunis didn't think liked her all that much, help Daunis escape without her even explicitly asking for help. This, the novel implies, is just what community members do for one another, just like Daunis sees it as her duty to drive Granny June to the Elder Center for the community lunch every day. But while support can mean physically being there and supporting someone, Daunis also discovers that families and communities can support members by letting go. Daunis spends much of the novel caring for Mom, who's mentally and emotionally fragile and (Daunis believes) requires her constant presence. However, by the end of the novel, Mom is finally willing to accept that Daunis going away to college in Hawaii is good for Daunis, and that supporting her daughter in this endeavor is one of the kindest things Mom can do. Being a good, supportive family or community member, the novel suggests, means offering the support a person actually wants—and in some cases, being willing to let a person go.



### SYMBOLS

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



### DAD'S SCARF

Daunis's changing relationship to her dad's green scarf, and the information she learns about its origins, symbolize her coming-of-age journey and her growing comfort with accepting shades of gray. Early on in the novel, Daunis shares with readers that she has fond memories of Dad skating with her and her brother Levi, pulling them around on the ice with his jade-green scarf. In Daunis's understanding, the scarf is a purely positive symbol she associates with her dad and her childhood innocence.

Because of this, it's difficult for Daunis to cope with the fact

that while Levi is pretty sure the scarf is at his house, he doesn't know where it is and believes it was actually blue. Though Daunis loves Levi, she senses that they remember things differently—and that perhaps, Levi doesn't even treasure these memories of skating with Dad nearly as much as Daunis does. But as the novel progresses and as Daunis discovers that Levi is actually involved in the local meth cell, the scarf comes to symbolize the fact that Daunis must embrace a more mature understanding of her brother and of her family—one that acknowledges that Levi and other family members are capable of selfishness and even evil. It's shocking for Daunis to discover the scarf (which is indeed green) hidden in Levi's closet, as this tells her that Levi has been lying to her about its whereabouts and qualities for years. She sees Levi's dishonesty as the ultimate betrayal, one that, combined with Levi's involvement in the meth cell, forces her to see her brother in a new light.

However, when Daunis confronts Levi about the meth cell and the scarf, Levi also shares more background information about the scarf itself that somewhat changes Daunis's understanding of it. The scarf, Levi says, was a gift from Daunis's Mom to his mom, Dana. The scarf, which is the color of Mom's eyes, was intended to remind both Dad and Dana that Dad initially promised love, marriage, and a life to Mom, and that Dad went back on that promise when he had sex with Dana, impregnated her, and married her. The scarf, Daunis comes to realize, can symbolize many different things. It can continue to represent, for Daunis, happy and uncomplicated memories of skating with her dad. But for other people, like Mom, Dana, and Levi (who's terrified of wearing the scarf for fear of upsetting Dana), the scarf can represent pain, loss, and betrayal. In this way, the scarf's multiple meanings mirrors Daunis's realization that she can continue to love her family, even as she acknowledges that the people she loves are capable of selfishness and evil.



## QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Henry Holt and Co. edition of *Firekeeper's Daughter* published in 2021.

## Chapter 1 Quotes

☞ My Zhaaganaash and Anishinaabe grandmothers could not have been more different. [...] Their push and pull on me has been a tug-of-war my entire life.

When I was seven, I spent a weekend at Gramma Pearl's tarpaper house on Sugar Island. I woke up crying with an earache [...]. She had me pee in a cup, and poured it into my ear as I rested my head in her lap. Back home for Sunday dinner at GrandMary and Grandpa Lorenzo's, I excitedly shared how smart my grandmother was. *Gramma Pearl fixed my earache with my pee!* GrandMary recoiled and, a heartbeat later, glared at my mother as if this was her fault. Something split inside me when I saw my mother's embarrassment. I learned there were times when I was expected to be a Fontaine and other times when it was safe to be a Firekeeper.

**Related Characters:** Daunis Fontaine (speaker), Mom, GrandMary, Dad, Grandpa Lorenzo, Gramma Pearl

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 10-11

### Explanation and Analysis

Daunis is at EverCare visiting GrandMary, who has recently had a stroke, when a bird flies into the window. Daunis then takes this opportunity to describe the differences between her white (Zhaaganaash) grandmother, GrandMary; and her Anishinaabe grandmother, Gramma Pearl; and how these differences have complicated Daunis's identity since she was little.

In this anecdote, Daunis recalls a time that Gramma Pearl cured her earache with urine (which Daunis later explains is sterile and so can be used as an alternative to hydrogen peroxide). Young Daunis finds this exciting and extremely clever, so she's itching to tell her white grandparents about the experience—but GrandMary's disgusted reaction makes Daunis feel small and ashamed of her identity as a Native American. This exposes GrandMary's bigotry, first and foremost; she rejects Gramma Pearl's methods not just because pouring urine in someone's ear might seem weird to her, but also because a Native person is doing it.

Shooting Mom the dirty look, meanwhile, suggests that GrandMary resents Mom for having sex and conceiving a baby with a Native American man (Dad), thereby forcing GrandMary to acknowledge the Native people in her community and the fact that they sometimes do things differently. Part of the reason Daunis feels the "split" inside her is because she adores her mother (who has always supported Daunis's connections to her Firekeeper family members), and it hurts her to see her mom punished and



made to feel bad in this way. So, even if GrandMary isn't explicitly scolding Daunis here or making her feel bad, Daunis still feels terrible because GrandMary is being cruel to her mom, someone Daunis loves unconditionally.

All of these complex feelings culminate in intense and ever-changing expectations when it comes to Daunis's identity and her behavior. Note her language as she describes the push and pull between her Fontaine and Firekeeper sides: it's "expected" of her to be a Fontaine, but it's only *sometimes* "safe" to be a Firekeeper. Essentially, Daunis often feels pressure to act like any other member of her white, affluent Fontaine family. Getting to relax and act like a Firekeeper, on the other hand, is a privilege that Daunis doesn't often get to enjoy.

## Chapter 11 Quotes

☛ Auntie overheard us talking and sat us down. She talked about the boarding school that Granny June's daughters had been scooped up and taken to. Years spent marching like soldiers and training to be household domestics. They had the Anishinaabemowin and cultural teachings beaten out of them. When they came back to Sugar Island, one of the girls had scarred palms that looked like melted plastic, and she ran into the woods at the sound of a kettle whistle. Her sister was afraid of men and had to sleep with her back against the wall. Auntie had told us, *When you criticize Maggie, just remember she was raised by one of those sisters, the one who didn't kill herself.*

**Related Characters:** Daunis Fontaine, Auntie Teddie (speaker), Lily, Granny June, Maggie

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 100

### Explanation and Analysis

At Lily's funeral, Daunis recalls how once, when Lily was complaining that she was her mom Maggie's "practice baby," Auntie reminded the girls to give Maggie some grace and have some sympathy for where Maggie came from. What Daunis and Auntie are referring to in this anecdote are the historical residential schools, which were often some combination of church-run and government-funded boarding schools. Native children were forcibly taken from their families, forced to speak English and abandon their religious and cultural teachings, and received training ostensibly intended to help them assimilate into mainstream white culture. As the fates of Granny June's two daughters suggest, this was often not what happened—the schools were notoriously cruel, and many

children suffered abuse. And though Granny June's daughters were lucky enough to return home, many kids who were able to return to their families had been so cut off from their languages and culture that they struggled to reassimilate into their tribes—or, in other cases, were unable to make it in white society due to widespread prejudice against Native Americans.

The residential schools, Auntie makes clear to Lily and Daunis, still affect how Native Americans live and see the world in the present, even though the schools themselves have been closed for about two decades. Even if Lily isn't totally aware of it—the residential schools and the trauma they caused her family play a major role in her mom's behavior and her fractured, often neglectful family (it's later revealed that Lily suffered sexual abuse while living with her mom as a kid). Just because the residential schools closed, Daunis and Lily realize, doesn't mean that they don't still impact life daily for Native Americans.

## Chapter 14 Quotes

☛ Maybe it isn't about helping the FBI, but about protecting my community. Can I do one without the other? If I don't sign on, they will find someone else to be their confidential informant.

Jamie is right—I know science and Ojibwe culture. I also know that I am strong enough to do this. There is one more thing I know...My definition of being a good Secret Squirrel is not the same as theirs.

Maybe there isn't one investigation taking place, but two. Theirs. And mine.

I sign the agreement.

**Related Characters:** Daunis Fontaine (speaker), Uncle David, Jamie Johnson, Ron Johnson

**Related Themes:**    

**Page Number:** 131

### Explanation and Analysis

Daunis is at the regional District Attorney's office, trying to decide whether to sign the forms that will make her a confidential informant (CI) for the FBI's undercover investigation into a meth cell in the Great Lakes region. Daunis is initially hesitant to sign because she's suspicious of the federal government—the government, after all, set up residential schools that systematically tried to destroy Native culture and languages. She and her community are

still dealing with the trauma those schools caused. Further, in her experience, the FBI isn't actually great at helping Native communities, despite purporting to want to help. Indeed, as the novel progresses, and Daunis watches Jamie consistently express that he believes the FBI can swoop in and fix the drug problem in Sault Ste. Marie, she realizes he has no understanding of how the FBI's supposed fix might make things difficult for the community going forward.

Thus, Daunis comes at helping the FBI from a slightly different angle. She knows that her loyalty is, first and foremost, to her community; it's up to her to make choices that will benefit her community now and for future generations. In this way, Daunis casts herself as something of a shield between the FBI and the Sugar Island Ojibwe Tribe, as she realizes she has the power to decide what and how much information to share with the FBI. She also goes on to try to educate Jamie and Ron about where their focus should be (on healing, not just prosecuting people involved in the drug trade). And as Daunis notes here, it's essential that someone do this work and educate the FBI, because whomever they approach next to be a CI might be way less willing to protect the community than she is.

kids in Minnesota ended up in the emergency room after taking the meth-X, they hallucinated that small men were menacing them—and they also kept asking for more meth. As Ron, Jamie, and the FBI see it, whatever hallucinogenic compound has been added to meth-X has the power to bring on group hallucinations. They also see the (presumably) Native person who's cooking the meth as someone who is willingly abusing traditional medicinal practices for their own gain (to create a form of meth that's wildly addictive and therefore ensuring a continued customer base), thereby turning the mysterious producer into someone who appears unspeakably evil.

As Daunis begins to unravel the mystery of meth-X and conducts research into both hallucinogenic mushrooms and Ojibwe folklore, she comes to a very different conclusion about what's going on—and one that the novel suggests is the more correct conclusion. She eventually realizes that it's not hallucinogenic mushrooms that make meth-X so potent, though the novel never reveals what compound has this effect. She also discovers that the kids in Minnesota weren't hallucinating the small men: the mythical Little People, small forest-dwelling men who occasionally scold Anishinaabe people for meddling with "bad medicine" (addictive substances), actually visited the kids and yelled at them for taking meth-X.

That Ron and Jamie are so unwilling to see anything but what they want to see highlights the cultural divide—and the lack of trust—between the overwhelmingly white federal agencies and the Native communities that these government agencies have historically abused. Daunis also recognizes that Ron and Jamie's unwillingness to expand their worldviews keeps them from feeling or expressing genuine empathy for the Native people they supposedly want to help. For instance, it's not until long after the investigation concludes that Jamie is willing or able to give Daunis an update on how the kids in Minnesota are doing, despite Daunis asking repeatedly for updates. The kids' story thus encapsulates the federal government's narrow worldview. It also shows that holding tight to such a narrow reading of a story prevents them from being genuinely helpful.

## Chapter 18 Quotes

☝️ “The FBI had been investigating meth activity. The incident in Minnesota was unusual enough for the FBI to look into the different substances being added during production.”

“Do you know how the kids are doing now?” I hope their community has good resources to help them.

When Jamie admits he doesn't know, it reinforces how different we are. The FBI is interested in learning what caused the group hallucination. I want to know if the kids are okay.

**Related Characters:** Daunis Fontaine, Jamie Johnson (speaker)

**Related Themes:**     

**Page Number:** 157-158

### Explanation and Analysis

Daunis has just asked Jamie how the kids in Minnesota, who ended up in the emergency room after taking a highly addictive version of meth the FBI is calling meth-X, have fared since their visit to the ER. The kids in Minnesota triggered the FBI investigation into meth in the Great Lakes region. Ron and Jamie believe the meth in the region is laced with hallucinogenic mushrooms and is produced by a Native person who knows traditional medicines. When the

## Chapter 20 Quotes



☝☝ Pausing in the doorway, I watch Mom massaging lotion on her mother's toothpick legs. She exhausts herself looking after GrandMary, who wasn't always kind to her.

What if it's a strength to love and care for someone you don't always like?

Mom was adamant that Uncle David hadn't relapsed. I know now that he didn't, but even if he had, she would have continued to love and support him.

What if my mother is actually a strong person disguised as someone fragile?

**Related Characters:** Daunis Fontaine (speaker), Mom, GrandMary, Uncle David, Dad

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 180

**Explanation and Analysis**

Daunis has just arrived at EverCare to visit GrandMary, and she's beginning to wonder if perhaps Mom isn't as "fragile" as Daunis has always believed. Throughout Daunis's life, she's witnessed GrandMary say and do cruel things to Mom, such as saying mean things about Mom's weight and Daunis's size, refusing to allow Mom to put Dad on Daunis's birth certificate, and making it clear that if she had her way, Daunis would have nothing to do with her Firekeeper relatives. In this passage, Daunis implies that prior to this, she thought that Mom's willingness to take GrandMary's cruelty—and then go to such great lengths to make GrandMary's last weeks at EverCare so comfortable—as weakness.

But now, Daunis is beginning to suspect that part of growing up, being an adult, and being part of an imperfect family means loving people who are sometimes bigoted and cruel. Similarly, she realizes that Uncle David wouldn't have been less deserving of love and support, even if he had relapsed and started drinking alcohol to excess again. With this, she realizes that people—and family members in particular—don't have to earn someone's love by being perfect. On some level, Daunis already knows this, as evidenced by the fact that she loves Mom despite her flaws. As Daunis makes these connections and realizations, she continues to come of age and to form a more nuanced understanding of how to be a loving, supportive family member.

## Chapter 22 Quotes

☝☝ "She used to be Heather Swanson," I say. "Everyone knew her dad was Joey Nodin, but he denied it. Supposedly he threatened Heather's mom when she asked for child support. But once the casino opened and the Tribe started paying per cap, Joey claimed paternity and enrolled Heather in the Tribe. People say Joey paid her mom's shady boyfriend to set her up for a drug bust so she would lose custody. The custodial parent gets the kid's minor money."

**Related Characters:** Daunis Fontaine (speaker), Jamie Johnson, Grant Edwards, Heather Nodin

**Related Themes:**    

**Page Number:** 197

**Explanation and Analysis**

A day or two after Daunis discovers Heather Nodin's body washed up on Duck Island, Jamie visits to share that in his and Ron's view, Heather's death isn't suspicious. Daunis shares some of Heather's history with Jamie to try to convince him that her death is indeed suspicious.

Through this story, Daunis begins to highlight how Native women and girls have historically been written off, undervalued, and even abused. As Jamie sees it, Heather has no value to the investigation because she seems like a stereotypical drug-addicted teen girl, not like anyone who actually had anything to do with the meth cell. But to Daunis, this undervalues Heather. Heather has spent her whole life, Daunis tries to explain, knowing that her valuable is dependent on how much money she can bring in for her parents, which mirrors how Jamie sees Heather's life (and death) as only worth caring about if it matters to the investigation.

More generally, Heather's story allows Daunis to illustrate how legal systems intended to help Native folks—such as the per-cap system that pays enrolled tribal members a portion of casino proceeds—can have horrible unintended consequences. The system was meant to inject much-needed cash into a struggling community. And while it's done that, it's also made some people (such as girls like Heather) far more vulnerable to exploitation and neglect than they would be otherwise, because it gives people financial incentive to control them legally. Heather's story foreshadows how Daunis's enrollment in the Tribe later has both positive and negative consequences. For instance, as Daunis is Native, the federal government chooses not to pursue charges when white Grant Edwards rapes her on tribal land. Like Heather, Daunis's Native identity, which should have given her purpose and pride, leaves her more

vulnerable to certain kinds of abuse and exploitation.

## Chapter 23 Quotes

☝ “Your kiden needed protection from bad dreams?” I raise an eyebrow.

She laughs while zipping her jeans. “Dream catchers are sexy.”

When Lily and I were on Tribal Youth Council, we all played a game called Bigotry Bingo. When we heard a comment that fed into stereotypes, we’d call it out. Dream catchers were the free space. Too easy. There were so many others, though.

*You don’t look Native.*

*Must be nice to get free college.*

*Can you give me an Indian name for my dog?*

Maybe-Megan’s tattoo would have been good for another square: Native Americans as a sexual fetish. The more she talks, the more squares I mark [...].

“I’m honoring Indians,” she says in response to my lingering scowl.

“Plus, I’m part Indian, so it’s okay.”

“My great-grandma was an Indian princess.”

*Lily, we have a winner!*

**Related Characters:** Daunis Fontaine, Megan (speaker), Lily, Mrs. Hammond

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 210

### Explanation and Analysis

When Megan, a white girl who’s dating one of the Supes players, shows Daunis her dream catcher tattoo (which is on her lower belly and extends into her pubic hair), Daunis isn’t impressed—she’s offended. Megan shows Daunis her tattoo because she expects Daunis to think it’s cool and acceptable, and this betrays how little Megan understands about Ojibwe culture. Dream catchers are traditional Ojibwe objects which are made to protect infants and children from harm. However, beginning in the 1960s and 70s, Native Americans in general began to adopt dream catchers and dream catcher imagery. Later, non-Native craftspeople took an interest in dreamcatchers, and many Native Americans consider this a form of cultural appropriation. As Daunis explains here when she details why a dream catcher is a free space on her imaginary Bigotry Bingo board, the dream catcher is no longer associated with what it actually means—it’s a catch-all

symbol for Native culture. Megan’s explanation of why her tattoo is actually okay highlights that she doesn’t know or understand what she’s talking about. And this, in turn, causes her to be unintentionally bigoted and racist.

Through her explanation of Bigotry Bingo, Daunis makes it clear that people usually don’t understand that they’re being bigoted when they say insensitive things. This, of course, doesn’t make something less bigoted, but it does speak to how much Daunis and other Native Americans have to put up with from well-meaning or curious white people. That Megan doesn’t back down or seem to understand that her dream catcher tattoo isn’t something to be proud of suggests that she’s not going to try to change her behavior to be more respectful to and understanding of Native cultures any time soon—which means that Daunis will continue to put up with this sort of thing from Megan and other people who share her ignorant worldview.

## Chapter 26 Quotes

☝ I have wanted this ever since I understood that being Anishinaabe and being an enrolled citizen weren’t necessarily the same thing.

My mind races, remembering Granny’s unsuccessful efforts to get this for Lily.

I can become a member. Except...It changes nothing about me.

I am Anishinaabe. Since my first breath. [...]

My whole life, I’ve been seeking validation of my identity from others. Now that it’s within my reach, I realize I don’t need it.

“Miigwech.” I take a deep breath. “But I don’t need a card to define me.”

“I know you don’t, Daunis. But think about,” Auntie says. “This is a gift from your dad.”

[...]

Granny says, “Your decision isn’t just about you. It’s for your children. Grandchildren.”

**Related Characters:** Daunis Fontaine, Auntie Teddie, Granny June (speaker), Dad

**Related Themes:**     

**Page Number:** 237

### Explanation and Analysis

A week before Daunis’s 19th birthday, Auntie presents Daunis with paperwork so Daunis can enroll in the Sugar



Island Ojibwe Tribe before the deadline. Daunis, however, isn't convinced that she should do this, even though it's something she's wanted her whole life. This represents a huge turning point for Daunis, as she realizes her identity is something that she gets to dictate. What other people think of her, or what legal affiliations she has, don't actually have to change how she thinks of herself.

However, Auntie and Granny June push back on Daunis's initial refusal. As Auntie sees it, joining the Tribe is going to allow Daunis to honor her deceased father and do something that he would've appreciated. It'll bring her closer to members of her Firekeeper family who, though already dead and gone, are still part of the community. Granny, on the other hand, encourages Daunis to think about future generations when making her decision. Does Daunis really want her children—whom Daunis would likely raise surrounded by Ojibwe culture and religion—to have to work extra hard to enroll in the Tribe? Essentially, it may be enough for Daunis to know that she's Anishinaabe without formally recognizing that, but per Ojibwe teachings, Daunis should be thinking about how her decision will impact her children, grandchildren, and future generations. Ultimately, this is enough to convince Daunis to enroll in the Tribe.

highlights how systems set up to help Native Americans—such as having strict rules guiding who can enroll to prevent non-Native folks from trying to join and take advantage of services—end up having some unintended consequences. Lily, like Daunis, faced discrimination and ostracization from some Tribal members because she wasn't enrolled. And she wasn't able to enroll in the first place because of technicalities: she was, as Daunis explains here, fully Native, just not the right kind of Native to please Tribal Council and justify her inclusion in the local tribe. Not being able to enroll had consequences, such as not being able to collect per-cap payments and not being able to vote in Tribal Council elections.

Of course, as Daunis learns later, enrolling also has consequences—Daunis's rapist, Grant Edwards, doesn't face consequences for raping Daunis because she's an enrolled member of the Tribe, and the rape occurs on tribal land. Modern legal systems, Daunis and Lily's stories show—even those intended to help Native Americans receive support, community, and other services—often come with negative, unintended consequences that Native people face due to some aspect of their identity or affiliation.

●● Each tribe has the sovereign right to determine who is a member. My best friend couldn't get enrolled because of the way the Sugar Island Ojibwe Tribe's enrollment office calculated Indian blood quantum: fractions of Indian blood based on lineage. Granny June's first husband was from a First Nations band in Canada, so Lily's pedigree didn't meet the standard. Too many ancestors from across the river, not the right kind of Indian blood. Granny filed an appeal with Tribal Council, telling them, *No one told me I wasn't supposed to snag on that side of the river. We were here before that border existed. Every one of you got cousins over there.* But Council rejected her appeal for Lily's membership application.

**Related Characters:** Daunis Fontaine, Granny June (speaker), Lily, Grant Edwards

**Related Themes:**    

**Page Number:** 243

### Explanation and Analysis

Daunis has recently been gifted the paperwork and documents that will allow her to apply for Tribal membership, something that Lily desperately wanted but was never able to get. Here, Daunis thinks about why, exactly, Lily wasn't able to enroll. As she does so, Daunis

## Chapter 28 Quotes

●● “Hold on. When you say ‘we,’ you don’t mean you and me. You mean the FBI,” I say, mouthing the initials while pretending to rub my nose so no one can read my lips. “Jamie, don’t you remember what my aunt told us about making some workers stay late to fix the owl T-shirts? They learned about the problem and had ownership in the solution? [We](#) have to fix it. The community, not the”—my hand hides my mouth from the room again—“FBI.”

**Related Characters:** Daunis Fontaine (speaker), Auntie Teddie, Jamie Johnson, Ron Johnson, Robin Bailey

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 258

### Explanation and Analysis

Daunis and Jamie are hanging out after an away game at which everyone learned that Robin Bailey died of a meth overdose. Daunis has just encouraged the Supes to put on a benefit game for Robin that would fund addiction services, but Jaime thinks this is unnecessary and a distraction. Jamie comes at the investigation from a very different place than Daunis does. As a federal agent, he believes that he, Ron, and the FBI are heroes who will swoop into Daunis's

community, root out the “bad guys” who are cooking and selling the meth that’s been killing people, and then leave Sault Ste. Marie better than they found it. Daunis, however, sees this as naïve and misguided—after all, even if the feds prosecute people involved in the meth cell, there are going to be unintended consequences that the FBI isn’t thinking about. And in Daunis’s estimation, the people who will be able to best anticipate those consequences and come up with ways to mitigate the damage, are community members like Daunis and the Supes. They know the community; the FBI doesn’t.

To support her position, Daunis brings up an incident at the Tribal Health Center. Several employees put owls on T-shirts promoting a vaccination campaign, not realizing that in Ojibwe culture, owls symbolize death. Auntie Teddie insisted that those employees who made the mistake figure out how to make things right, thereby ensuring that they’d learn and not make the same mistake again. Jamie, Daunis believes, needs to do much the same thing: he needs to learn to see and understand the community in which he’s working, and the only way to do this is to ask for help from the community. As an outsider, he’ll need an insider’s viewpoint if he really wants to help the community, and this is something that only Daunis and other community members can provide.



## Chapter 34 Quotes

☝ “Once your mother is feeling better, I hope you’ll rethink staying home. I know Indian kids struggle in college because they’re not prepared academically or socially, but Daunis, you’re not like them.”

Words truly do fail me. All I can do is gape at her in disbelief.

“Well, I don’t mean anything bad about Indians.” Mrs. Hammond looks around anxiously. “You know I’m not prejudiced.”

**Related Characters:** Mrs. Hammond (speaker), Daunis Fontaine

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 310

### Explanation and Analysis

Daunis has gone to the high school to fetch some things out of Uncle David’s classroom. The secretary, Mrs. H, advises Daunis to go away to college as soon as she can, because Daunis isn’t like “Indian kids” who aren’t prepared for college. Mrs. H has shown signs of being bigoted before, as when she asked Ron if he was the new “Indian science

teacher” when she first met him. Referring to him in that way suggests that Mrs. H sees his Native identity as the most important thing about him, while here she expresses clearly that she believes Native Americans aren’t as smart or socially adept as their white counterparts. These remarks demonstrate that Mrs. H is indeed prejudiced, even if she says she’s not. For that matter, it’s not a compliment for her to say that Daunis is “not like them,” “them” being other Native kids who attend Sault High. Daunis is, in fact, a lot like those kids—they’re her peers, her friends, and her community members. She therefore considers it an insult when Mrs. H talks about Daunis’s friends in this way and suggests that Daunis has nothing in common with them, especially now that Daunis has applied to become a member of the Tribe and become even *more* like those kids in a legal sense. Mrs. Hammond’s casual bigotry highlights the types of microaggressions that Daunis deals with on a daily basis.

## Chapter 36 Quotes

☝ I am overcome with deep gratitude as I sit here next to Auntie before the fire. Auntie has shown me how to be a strong Nish kwe—full of love, anger, humor, sorrow, and joy. Not as something perfect: She is a woman who is complex and sometimes exhausted, but mostly brave. She loves imperfect people fiercely.

**Related Characters:** Daunis Fontaine (speaker), Levi Firekeeper, Mom, GrandMary, Auntie Teddie

**Related Themes:**     

**Page Number:** 328

### Explanation and Analysis



After Auntie stages an “intervention sweat” in a sweat lodge for Daunis, Daunis reflects on how important a mentor Auntie has been to her. Auntie, Daunis realizes, has shown her how to love people who aren’t perfect, such as GrandMary. After seeing Auntie love people who are imperfect (including Daunis herself, who is, at this point, lying to Auntie about her role as a CI), Daunis is better able to come to an understanding of how she can think about her relationships with imperfect people. When it comes to GrandMary, for instance, Daunis realizes that she can love GrandMary and also acknowledge that GrandMary is notoriously bigoted toward Native Americans—that both can be true at once.

More generally, this passage also lays the groundwork for

how much Daunis idolizes Auntie and uses her as an example of what a good, strong *Nish kwe* (Anishinaabe woman) is like. At this point in the novel, despite the connections Daunis is making and the nuance she's gaining, she still idealizes what it means to be a strong *Nish kwe*. It's not until later, when Daunis learns that Levi is involved with the meth cell, that she's able to accept that being a strong *Nish kwe* means doing extremely difficult things—including turning her own brother in to the authorities.

☛ When Lily told Travis that she was done for good, he pulled out a gun. Love is not control. If he had truly loved Lily, he would have wanted her to have a good life. Even if it wasn't with him. Instead, he did the opposite of love. Travis steadied the gun in his hand and thought only of himself.

**Related Characters:** Daunis Fontaine (speaker), Lily, Travis Flint, Auntie Teddie, Jamie Johnson

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 331

### Explanation and Analysis

Following a conversation with Auntie about “bad medicine” and what makes love real, Daunis better understands what went wrong in Lily and Travis’s relationship—and what ultimately led Travis to decide to kill both Lily and himself. Travis, Daunis realizes, didn’t have a healthy outlook on love. As she implies here, Travis wanted to control Lily and keep her for himself, which is why he ultimately chose to take her life. By killing Lily, he ensures that she can’t have a good life and can’t find happiness with anyone, something that Daunis realizes is extremely selfish.

It’s important for Daunis to come to these realizations as she navigates her relationship with Jamie. Though Jamie doesn’t mean to ever cause Daunis harm, Daunis also understands that Jamie ends up harming her physically and emotionally due to the circumstances of their relationship (which begins as an act to help the investigation). Still, Daunis sees Jamie’s desire to continue their relationship after the investigation’s close, despite the harm he’s caused her, as a different kind of selfishness. Thanks to what Daunis learns from Lily, she realizes that she must do what’s best for her: encourage Jamie to figure himself out and allow Daunis to do the same, even if they must do so apart from each other.

## Chapter 37 Quotes

☛ Somehow, Travis had come across a love medicine. The kind of bad medicine that Auntie warned me against asking too much about.

When Lily refused to try the love medicine, Travis must have added it to a batch of meth [...]. What he thought was a love medicine was actually the opposite of love. Real love honors your spirit. If you need a medicine to create or keep it, that’s possession and control. Not love.

A couple of weeks later, on a rez in Minnesota, a group of kids tried it [...]. Every single one got sick. Not lovesick for some girl they’d never met, but infected with an insatiable desire for more meth.

I can do my part to protect our medicines, while trusting that there are those in the community who are doing their part to preserve and protect many different medicine teachings.

**Related Characters:** Daunis Fontaine (speaker), Lily, Travis Flint, Auntie Teddie, Jamie Johnson, Ron Johnson

**Related Themes:**    

**Page Number:** 334-335

### Explanation and Analysis

Having recently read Uncle David’s secret journal detailing his work for the FBI, his research into hallucinogenic mushrooms, and his conclusion that mushrooms aren’t to blame for meth-X’s dangerous potency, Daunis puts the pieces together and realizes what she must do next.

Once again, Daunis details what makes love real and healthy: respect and honesty. Travis wanted to use some sort of “bad medicine” to try to control Lily, which made their relationship fundamentally unhealthy. Now, though, Daunis realizes that Travis added this medicine to the meth, which had the unintended consequence of making the kids on the Minnesota reservation sick enough to warrant a trip to the emergency room. It’s worth keeping in mind that when Travis offered Lily the love medicine initially, he framed it as something that was going to reinvigorate and strengthen their relationship—he either didn’t know, or was being willfully cagey, about the fact that the love medicine would give him control over Lily. This highlights the very likely possibility that Travis wasn’t following Ojibwe teachings to think seven generations ahead when he offered the medicine to Lily, nor when he added it to the meth (the point of that teaching is to think of others and of possible unintended consequences, which Travis clearly didn’t do). The path Travis took through the meth cell, in other words, separated him further from his community and

his culture.

Then, Daunis realizes that she doesn't need all the information (such as what exactly the love medicine is) to make the right choice about what to do next. She already doesn't trust the FBI and senses that they won't have the discretion or the respect to handle information about traditional medicines (good or bad) appropriately. Thus, Daunis decides to rely on unknown community members who are trying to protect knowledge about "bad medicine" from getting into the wrong hands; meanwhile, she must also do her part to ensure that the FBI doesn't learn of the love medicine's existence. Daunis sees this as a way for her to protect her community while also leaning on her community for support.

To make things worse, it's only a few minutes after Daunis thinks this heartwarming thought that Levi, her brother and the Supes' captain, angrily remarks that the Supes players played terribly, noting that the game was an opportunity for the players to work on their teamwork. Daunis finds this particularly selfish—as she notes here, the game was supposed to be about honoring Robin—it wasn't intended to be an extra practice session for the Supes. With this, it begins to seem as though Daunis's idea of community doesn't entirely align with others' ideas about community. Community members may be willing to rally around hockey and their beloved local teams, but that doesn't necessarily bring people together, foster understanding, or help the marginalized Native people when a game isn't happening.

## Chapter 38 Quotes

☝️ Hockey brings my community together. Native and non-Native. All ages. All neighborhoods. Here in Chi Mukwa, a community recreation building funded by the Sugar Island Ojibwe Tribe, everyone stands united for our teams. I just hope they remember today was for Robin Bailey.

**Related Characters:** Daunis Fontaine (speaker), Levi Firekeeper, Mom, Robin Bailey, Mrs. Hammond

**Related Themes:**    

**Page Number:** 343

### Explanation and Analysis

After the benefit hockey game that was supposed to honor Robin Bailey (who recently died of a meth overdose) and raise money for addiction treatment programs, Daunis is overwhelmed with pride and happiness as she sees how hockey unifies the people of Sault Ste. Marie. Though Daunis mostly focuses on her smaller, more insular Ojibwe community, here she extends her idea of community to include the white residents of Sault Ste. Marie—people who are just as excited about hockey as the local Native residents are.

However, the novel on the whole makes it clear that the entire Sault Ste. Marie community isn't as robust and supportive as Daunis's good feelings lead her to believe in this moment. For instance, her white grandparents' bigotry led to them making sure her dad couldn't get a job after Mom, their daughter, got pregnant with Daunis. Daunis also experiences microaggressions and bigotry from a number of community members, from Supes' girlfriends to her high school secretary.

## Chapter 40 Quotes

☝️ "I'm not just some emotional entanglement," I say. "Jamie and I can handle being part of the investigation and having something that's not so neatly defined."

Ron shakes his head. He's frustrated, I think, but what else can he say about it?

"Daunis, you do get that there is no actual Jamie Johnson, right? There is just a rookie officer who will do anything it takes to redeem himself after his first UC assignment went to hell. Including using you."

"What do you mean?"

"Jamie was the one who proposed that he get close to you."

**Related Characters:** Daunis Fontaine, Ron Johnson (speaker), Lily, Travis Flint, Jamie Johnson

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 366

### Explanation and Analysis

Ron pulls Daunis aside at Shagala to scold her for having sex with Jamie the night before—and to tell her that Jamie is using her to boost his career. In the beginning of this passage, Daunis demonstrates how much she's come to trust Jamie. While she's regarded Jamie and Ron with skepticism due to their being FBI agents, she insists here that she trusts Jamie and knows him well enough to conduct a genuine relationship with him alongside their fake relationship.

Ron, however, essentially calls Daunis naïve and childish when he notes that Jamie Johnson isn't even Jamie's real name—Jamie hasn't told Daunis his real name (all she knows

that's true about him is his age, 22, and that he's Cherokee). Ron also makes it clear that even if Jamie and Daunis have developed feelings for each other, Jamie is still deceiving her in important ways that make a real, honest, fulfilling relationship functionally impossible. The revelation that it was *Jamie* who suggested getting close to Daunis in order to help the investigation and boost his career is just icing on this cake: it shows Daunis that Jamie's initial interest in her was wildly selfish and not at all genuine. Ultimately, knowing this leads Daunis to decide that she and Jamie can't be together until he's learned to engage honestly with himself and with a partner. Their emotions for each other can be real, but thanks to what Daunis has learned from Lily and Travis's doomed relationship, Daunis knows that trying to make things work with Jamie would be futile and painful.

## Chapter 42 Quotes



☝️ What if I ask for something I shouldn't? I could be a bird asking Creator for love, only to be so enamored of my new mate that I fly into a clean window and break my neck.

Everything has strings attached. Unintended consequences. The shove from behind that you never saw coming.

Flakes of semaa flutter from my trembling hand.

My prayer ends with a confession: *I'm scared.*

**Related Characters:** Daunis Fontaine (speaker), Auntie Teddie

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 382-383

### Explanation and Analysis

The day after Shagala, Daunis gets up to run and finds herself paralyzed with fear when she tries to decide what to ask Creator for today (normally she would ask for something like love, courage, or honesty). This moment of indecision is framed as a turning point in Daunis's coming-of-age journey. Prior to this, Daunis asked for what she thought she needed. Sometimes this was exactly what she needed and sometimes it wasn't, and Daunis's pattern of asking for things without fully understanding what she was asking for is something the novel suggests indicates Daunis's youth and naivete.

Now, though, Daunis is beginning to mature and to realize that she doesn't know what she doesn't know. While she can try to think ahead and anticipate the various consequences that might come from asking for something like love, for instance, she also describes here how easy it is for things to

go awry and end up hurting her. So, when Daunis instead decides to ask for nothing and tell Creator that she's scared, it reads as extremely mature. Thanks to Auntie's mentorship, Daunis knows that adults aren't perfect all the time and don't have to know everything. And now, Daunis is acting much more like an adult herself.

## Chapter 43 Quotes

☝️ My heart skips a beat.

I tip the basket upside down. Staring at the floor where Dad's scarf lands.

Green, like my mother's eyes.

Levi kept it from me. He had it all along.

**Related Characters:** Daunis Fontaine (speaker), Levi Firekeeper, Dad, Judge Dana Firekeeper

**Related Themes:**   

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 391

### Explanation and Analysis

Daunis has been digging through Levi's bedroom for bank statements, which ultimately reveal that he's the meth cell's mule. As she looks through Levi's things, she finds Dad's scarf, something that she's been open about wanting for some time—and which Levi has, Daunis now realizes, been purposefully keeping from her.

While it's heartbreaking for Daunis to discover that Levi is the meth cell's mule, it's almost more painful for her to find that he's been hiding Dad's scarf from her. Daunis has spent her entire life loving and idolizing her brother—and believing that he has her best interests at heart. Now, though, she has no choice but to accept that he's hurting other people with his involvement in the meth cell. Her discovery also shows that Levi is willing to hurt a close family member with his lies. Daunis has previously insinuated that she's been asking Levi about Dad's scarf for years; her discovery of the scarf is especially painful because it shows her that Levi has been deceiving her for way longer than he's been involved in the meth cell. Put simply, this is proof that Levi has never been the loving, generous brother Daunis has always assumed he was. Rather, he's always been flawed and, on some level, willing to cause others pain if it suits his interests.

●● *Nibwaakaawin*. Auntie told me the translation, breaking down each part of the word so it made perfect sense: To be wise is to live with an abundance of sight.

My whole life I've wanted to be like my aunt. The way a person dreams about being a ballerina, but not of broken toes and years of practice. I wanted to be a strong and wise *Nish kwe*, never considering how that abundance of sight would be earned.

I wanted to find out who was involved in the meth madness that took Lily and Uncle David. Robin and Heather, too. And the kids in Minnesota who got so sick from meth-X.

The person I was searching for this whole time was Levi.

Wisdom is not bestowed. In its raw state, it is the heartbreak of knowing things you wish you didn't.

**Related Characters:** Daunis Fontaine (speaker), Levi Firekeeper, Lily, Travis Flint, Auntie Teddie, Uncle David, Heather Nodin, Robin Bailey

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 392-393

### Explanation and Analysis

Daunis returns home after digging through Levi's room and discovering that he's the meth cell's mule. Now, she realizes what it really means to be an adult and to be wise: accepting that she won't always learn pleasant things.

In this passage, Daunis suddenly realizes how naïve she's been up until this point. Likening it to wanting to be a ballet dancer but not understanding how much painful work that takes, she explains that she's always idolized her aunt and has never fully understood what makes Auntie a good, strong, kind *Nish kwe* (Anishinaabe woman): accepting uncomfortable truths and then doing the right thing. This is especially hard for Daunis to accept because since she got involved with the FBI's investigation, she's vowed to not be suspicious of Levi and his friends, whom she's always believed were good and couldn't possibly be involved in the meth cell. Now, though, she realizes that in order to grow up and save her community, she has no choice but to accept that Levi is indeed part of the meth cell—and take appropriate action to stop him. Daunis can't allow the fact that Levi her brother to get in the way of her task, as she understands that she must prioritize her community's health (and the health of other communities, such as the one in Minnesota where the kids got sick after taking Levi's meth) over her loyalty to Levi.

## Chapter 52 Quotes

●● I thought I had no resources on the ferry, except for one lone Elder. But one led to another, and another. A resource I never anticipated during my time of dire need.

I'm reminded that our Elders are our greatest resource, embodying our culture and community. Their stories connect us to our language medicines, land, clans, songs, and traditions. They are a bridge between the Before and the Now, guiding those of us who will carry on in the Future.

We honor our heritage and our people, those who are alive and those who've passed on. That's important because it keeps the ones we lose with us. My grandparents. Uncle David. Lily. Dad.

**Related Characters:** Daunis Fontaine (speaker), Levi Firekeeper, Lily, Auntie Teddie, Uncle David, Seeney Nimkee, Minnie Mustang, Leonard Manitou

**Related Themes:**    

**Page Number:** 453

### Explanation and Analysis

Having successfully rescued Jamie, Daunis considers how grateful she is for her community, especially her Elders who enabled her to escape from Levi and the meth cell and then get help.

It's possible to read the events that Daunis is reflecting on as a consequence of her burgeoning maturity. The novel linked Daunis's earlier willingness to admit that she didn't know what kind of help she needed to her increasing maturity. Here, she reflects on the fact that by not asking Creator for something specific in her prayers, and by not making assumptions about what she needed, she was perhaps more open than she might have been to accepting the unexpected help she ultimately received. Essentially, she learns how to accept all that life throws her way, even if it's not what she expects or thinks she needs.

Then, Daunis details how exactly the Elders and those who have died fit into Ojibwe ideas about what makes community. Daunis's Elders have taught her most of the things she's needed to know over the course of the investigation, from how the mythical Little People function to the fact that it's smart to leave "bad medicine" alone. This helps Daunis with the investigation, but it also gives her the tools and knowledge she needs to grow up and ultimately take her place as an adult in the Tribe.

Daunis has also relied heavily on insight from those who have already passed, such as Lily and Uncle David. Through her gradually expanding memories of the night Lily died, Daunis learns what makes love real and healthy. From Uncle

David's notebook detailing his private research into hallucinogenic mushrooms and meth-X, Daunis discovered that hallucinogenic mushrooms weren't to blame for meth-X's potency—but that David didn't want the FBI to figure out what was to blame, so as to protect traditional medicinal knowledge that the FBI might abuse or misunderstand. Taken together, this passage highlights how Daunis's community is made up of people of all ages, including those who are deceased. By honoring, learning from, and remembering all these different people, Daunis further integrates into her community and honors her community as well.

help tribal communities, regardless of whether Native or non-Native agents are involved. If agents aren't Native, they'll be swooping into communities they know nothing about and trying to impose their own way of thinking and doing things onto Native communities. If they're Native like Ron, meanwhile, community members like Auntie and Ron's cousins may not trust them, believing that the agent is a sellout who's likely bought into the FBI's way of doing things and is therefore unable to really help them.

☝ I am so tired. The weight of my expendability is crushing. Not everyone gets justice. Least of all Nish kwewag.



## Chapter 55 Quotes

☝ “Does your family know what you do? Going undercover in tribal communities?”

“They know I work for the FBI,” Ron tells her. “My sister thinks it's dangerous. My cousins think I'm a sellout. I do this work because we need good people working at the agencies that help tribes.”

Auntie snorts. “Scariest words ever spoken: ‘I'm from the federal government and I'm here to help.’”

**Related Characters:** Auntie Teddie, Ron Johnson (speaker), Daunis Fontaine

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 468

### Explanation and Analysis

Ron has come to visit Daunis in the hospital a week or so after the meth cell kidnapped Daunis and Jamie. Auntie Teddie is interrogating Ron, as he's finally shared his real name, his tribe, and more about the people he works for.

As Ron explains why he works for the FBI, he makes it clear that he genuinely wants to help tribal communities. On some level, this expresses his understanding that the FBI historically hasn't done anything great for tribes—if they had, they wouldn't necessarily need an American Indian person on staff to advocate for tribal communities. Still, Ron's family's reaction and Auntie's response suggest that Ron is fighting a losing battle. Auntie implies that no matter what tribe Ron comes from, distrust between Native Americans and the federal government runs too deep for him to be able to make much of a difference.

Auntie's sarcastic tone suggests that while Ron's intentions may be noble, in practice, the FBI is limited in its ability to

**Related Characters:** Daunis Fontaine (speaker), Jamie Johnson, Ron Johnson, Grant Edwards

**Related Themes:**    

**Page Number:** 473

### Explanation and Analysis

Earlier in the novel, Grant Edwards raped Daunis. In this passage, Daunis has just learned that her status as an enrolled tribal citizen and the fact that the rape occurred on tribal land means that the federal government gets to choose whether to press charges against Edwards—and they've decided not to seek justice for Daunis. In this moment, Daunis realizes how vulnerable she is to abuse and exploitation due to her status as a Native woman. While American women of all races and ethnicities suffer sexual violence, the laws governing how tribal governments and local, state, and federal governments interact means that American Indian women who are enrolled in a tribe don't have the same options when it comes to seeking justice as their unenrolled counterparts.

The federal government has historically treated Native women as expendable, and Daunis sees the fact that they won't prosecute Grant Edwards as proof that she's given up some degree of privilege by enrolling in the Tribe. Following this, Daunis insists that Auntie organize a blanket party to punish Grant for raping her, signifying Daunis's final coming-of-age moment. She realizes that blanket parties aren't just an excuse to beat men who have wronged Native women—they're an imperfect solution that doesn't fully solve the problem of the federal government not prioritizing the health and safety of Native women.

## Chapter 56 Quotes

☝☝ He cries. I don't soothe him. He needs to feel this, and I need to hear it. Investigations involve real people. Informants face real risks. Developing real feelings for me doesn't wash away that he was willing to use me, a girl he didn't know, to pursue a case and get a career boost.

**Related Characters:** Daunis Fontaine (speaker), Jamie Johnson

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 475

### Explanation and Analysis

Jamie has finally come to visit Daunis in the hospital; he's just apologized for everything that happened to her. Daunis sees Jamie's tears as restorative and healing: they tell her that he understands he did something wrong and feels bad about it. More importantly, Daunis believes Jamie is finally learning that his job might be something that he sees as noble and good, but his job and his work puts normal people, like herself, at risk. Essentially, Jamie finally has to accept the many unintended consequences of working with the FBI and the BIA, something that incidentally is an important tenet of Ojibwe culture.

Daunis also has finally accepted that Jamie isn't necessarily the person she wants as her forever romantic partner, at least not now. At this point, she's still reeling from the fact that he was willing to put her in serious danger to please his bosses, something that isn't kind, thoughtful, or generous. This eventually leads Daunis to tell Jamie that he needs to figure out who he is and what work he'd rather be doing before they can be together romantically. If they're to be in a relationship with each other, it must start honestly and respectfully, not the way their current relationship started (with deceit and the intention to exploit her).

## Chapter 57 Quotes

☝☝ Powwows are not ceremonies, and yet there is something restorative about the gathering of our community. The collective spirit of our tribal nation coming together, sharing songs and fellowship with others. It's our annual powwow, the third weekend in August, and my community needs healing now more than ever.

**Related Characters:** Daunis Fontaine (speaker)

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 479

### Explanation and Analysis

About 10 months after the main action of the novel, the story picks up at the annual powwow. Daunis then goes on to explain what's happened to the people involved in the meth cell and how her community has fared since the FBI concluded its investigation into meth-X.

Here, Daunis lays out the differences between a formal ceremony and an event like a powwow, which is restorative and healing despite not being a formal ceremony. A ceremony like a sweat lodge or a funeral, as Daunis has explained previously, has a very specific spiritual purpose and specific events that need to happen. Still, those ceremonies bring people together in much the same way that the powwow does, and Daunis acknowledges that it's possible to get some good out of gatherings even if they're not formal ceremonies. In a way, this mirrors Daunis's earlier insistence that hockey brings the Sault Ste. Marie community together in a really profound way: hockey is its own sort of gathering, and though it's not a ceremony, it still unites people around a common goal. Getting the community together, this shows, plays a vital role in healing.

☝☝ As my aunt tells the story, a large basket is passed around the inner circle. I take a yellow pansy and pass the basket to Auntie. I watch as women approach the fire, each one offering a pansy.

As I release the pansy, I think about what Grant Edwards did to me and say my silent prayer. There is comfort in watching the smoke rise to the full moon.

When I return to my seat, Granny June holds my hand.

"Liliban was thankful each year that you weren't here," she says.

"Wait. She was here?" My heart breaks.

"Yes, my girl. Ever since she came to live with me."

I cry for my best friend and the secrets she wanted to protect me from.

**Related Characters:** Daunis Fontaine, Granny June (speaker), Lily, Auntie Teddie, Grant Edwards

**Related Themes:**     

**Page Number:** 481

### Explanation and Analysis

On Friday night of the annual powwow, Granny June takes



Daunis to a ceremony for Native sexual assault survivors. First, Daunis's experience at the ceremony highlights how important ceremonies like this are. Being around women who have suffered in similar ways and offering her pansy to the fire allows Daunis to find some peace after Grant Edwards raped her. However, it's still worth keeping in mind that even though this ceremony brings Daunis some emotional peace, but it still doesn't give her any legal recourse. Though Daunis might feel better after attending this ceremony, Grant Edwards never has to answer for the crime he committed.

Then, Granny June shares that Lily attended this ceremony every year—implying that Lily had suffered childhood sexual abuse (she came to live with Granny June in sixth grade, so the abuse would've occurred sometime before then). This helps Daunis increase her empathy for her friend while also making it clear how naïve Daunis was when Lily was alive. Lily heavily implied at several points that her life before coming to live with Granny June wasn't happy or safe. But Daunis, who grew up with privilege in a safe and comfortable home, wasn't able to fully grasp that Lily was alluding to having suffered physical and sexual abuse in her mom's home. Daunis realizes now that Lily was trying to protect her by keeping this abuse a secret, but it's still painful for Daunis to learn.

☝ I am overcome with a mixture of emotions. Sad that their innocent eyes are open to the trauma that still impacts our community today. Angry they must learn these truths in order to be strong Anishinaabeg in a world where Indians are thought of only in the past tense. Proud that they—smart, sturdy, and loved—are the greatest wish our ancestors had, for our nation to survive and flourish.

**Related Characters:** Daunis Fontaine (speaker), Auntie Teddie, Art, Perry, Pauline

**Related Themes:**    

**Page Number:** 485

### Explanation and Analysis

Perry and Pauline have just started telling Daunis about the residential schools, which Daunis takes as a sign that Auntie and Art have decided the six-year-olds are old enough to learn about the horrific abuses that Native Americans have suffered at the hands of the United States government throughout history. Though Daunis finds it sad that Perry and Pauline now know about the residential schools, she also realizes that learning about the schools is essential if the twins are ever to become strong *Nish kwe* like their mother and Daunis.

Over the course of the novel, Daunis has learned that part of being a mature adult is being able to accept uncomfortable truths and then do the right thing with that information. Perry and Pauline, by learning their culture's history, must accept uncomfortable truths—that people who look like them have been abused, murdered, and kidnapped by the government, and that being Anishinaabe isn't just happy events like powwows and sweat lodges. Rather, it's knowing their history, all of it, and making sure that future generations are able to honor the past while also moving forward into the future. This is why Daunis also notes that she's proud that Perry and Pauline, as kids, represent her tribe's future. They're growing up in a stable home with parents and a community who love them, and they're well positioned to grow into strong *Nish kwe*—and then guide others to the same place.



## SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

## CHAPTER 1

The narrator (Daunis) dresses in running clothes before sunrise and leaves a pinch of semaa (tobacco) on the eastern side of a tree. She prays to Creator and asks for *zoongidewin*, courage, today—she'll need it after her run. Then, Daunis stretches and recites the anatomical names for all her muscles (in preparation for her college Human Anatomy class in the fall) before running through Sault Ste. Marie and the Lake State campus. She pauses to admire Sugar Island, her favorite place, and recites the Anishinaabemowin name for it, like her dad taught her.

Daunis continues on until she reaches EverCare, a long-term care facility. She greets the head nurse, Mrs. Bonasera, and heads for her grandmother, GrandMary's, room. GrandMary had a stroke six weeks ago, and she's been here since then. Daunis's mom is already here, rubbing rose-scented lotion into GrandMary's arms. At first, GrandMary rolls her eyes at Daunis's skimpy shorts under an oversize t-shirt, but then, her gaze goes vacant. Daunis studies the photographs in the room, including the last one taken of the four Fontaines: Mom, GrandMary, Uncle David, and Daunis. It was taken at Daunis's last hockey game. Soon after, in April, Uncle David died and GrandMary had her stroke. Mom doesn't smile now. She stays up all night cleaning the house and talking to David in the secret language she and her brother created—unaware that Daunis can understand it.

Daunis applies lipstick to GrandMary's lips and moments later, GrandMary seems to come back. Quickly, Daunis announces that she's deferring admission to University of Michigan and enrolling at Lake State for freshman year. GrandMary has always wanted Daunis to be a doctor; this, GrandMary believed, would redeem her after the "Big Scandal of Mary and Lorenzo Fontaine's Perfect Life." Daunis wants to be a doctor and has been happy to play along, but it doesn't seem right anymore after David's death and GrandMary's stroke. GrandMary seems to understand, and Mom embraces Daunis—Daunis staying home is what Mom has wanted all along.

*The novel's opening shows readers what's most important to Daunis: honoring her Anishinaabe spiritual beliefs and language skills, anatomy, and Sugar Island. It's not yet clear what Sugar Island's significance is, but the novel will get to this in due time. The note that Daunis will need courage later suggests that even at this early point, her circumstances require her to deal with difficult things that test her resolve.*



*The fact that GrandMary suffered a stroke and is now living in a nursing home may explain why Daunis needs courage: it sounds like life has been really difficult for her family since Uncle David's death and GrandMary's stroke. Mom, in particular, seems to be struggling a lot. That Daunis can understand Mom and David's secret language—unbeknownst to her mother—suggests that Daunis may be doing more to care for Mom than is perhaps normal for a teenage daughter to do. Daunis's love for and loyalty to her family also shines through here. It seems important to her to work visiting GrandMary into her daily schedule, even if GrandMary isn't always aware of the visit.*



*Again, it shows how connected Daunis is to her family that she decides to stay home and attend a local college rather than go away for school. Though GrandMary understands, Mom seems the main beneficiary of Daunis's choice. This suggests that Daunis feels some responsibility to care for her mom. Mentioning the "Big Scandal" that destroyed Daunis's grandparents' "Perfect Life" creates some tension, as what exactly this scandal is seems somewhat shrouded in secrecy.*



Suddenly, a bird flies into the window. Gramma Pearl, Daunis's Anishinaabe nokomis, would say this is a bad sign; GrandMary would say it's just chance. Daunis has been caught between these two worldviews her whole life. Once, Gramma Pearl poured Daunis's urine into Daunis's ear to cure an earache. Daunis felt ready to die when she excitedly detailed how clever Gramma Pearl was at the next Fontaine Sunday dinner and saw how embarrassed Mom was. Sometimes it's safe to be a Firekeeper, but other times, Daunis must be a Fontaine.

Daunis watches Mom lotion GrandMary's legs. Mom is convinced that GrandMary will recover, and a week ago, Daunis overheard Mom telling David that she'll fade away when Daunis goes to college. Daunis knows she's all Mom has left; Daunis's birth changed (and possibly ruined) Mom's life 18 years ago. Daunis also knows, thanks to Gramma Pearl, that bad things come in threes. Uncle David died, GrandMary had a stroke two months later, and now, if Daunis stays home, she can stop the third bad thing from happening. Daunis kisses Mom and GrandMary, then she sprints home.

## CHAPTER 2

Several hours later, Daunis's best friend Lily pulls up in her Jeep, with tiny Granny June riding shotgun. Daunis and Lily have been friends since sixth grade, and they've bonded over the fact that neither of their skin tones are on the "Acceptable Anishinaabe Skin Tone Continuum"—Daunis is pale, while Lily is reddish-brown. As Daunis folds her six-foot frame into the backseat, Granny June suggests Daunis ride in front. But you just don't make an Elder accommodate you, so Daunis refuses. Now, it's time to drive Granny June to lunch at the Nokomis-Mishomis Elder Center and then head to work.

On the drive, Daunis shares that she told Mom and GrandMary about her college decision. Granny June is incensed and says that "some boats are for the river and some are for the ocean." Daunis agrees, but she's not sure what kind of boat she is. She's happy to attend classes with Lily at Lake State, but she's also sad to not have the opportunity to escape the gossip that has haunted her her whole life—that her dad, Levi Firekeeper, an "Indian [...] with potential," got Mom (who's from the richest white family in town) pregnant. Dad broke his legs in a drunk-driving accident, ending his career. Mom went to Montreal and returned with three-month-old Daunis to find Dad married to someone else with a new baby.

*Daunis comes from a white family on her mom's side and a Native family on her dad's side. This has made life somewhat difficult for her, as it seems like her Fontaine family members don't accept Native wisdom or medicinal knowledge as real—they find it embarrassing. So, Daunis constantly feels like she must hide parts of her identity in order to please and comfort those around her. Still, she clearly believes and finds solace in Native traditions; the bird hitting the window seems very significant to Daunis.*



*Daunis casts herself as the wiser, more pragmatic one between her and her mom: she believes GrandMary isn't going to recover, while Mom seems to believe in miracles. Part of this practicality, it seems, is believing that she has the power to stop the third bad thing from happening. However, the bird hitting the window ominously suggests that Daunis might be incorrect, if it indeed is a sign of bad things to come.*



*This passage further establishes Daunis's place (and Lily's) in the local Native community. Though neither girl fits in visually or physically due to their skin tones, they still honor community rules, such as that it's inappropriate for them to ask Granny June to accommodate them. They also show Granny June their respect by driving her to the Elder lunch, rather than making her figure out her own transportation.*



*As Granny June sees it, Daunis is a boat made for the ocean; that is, she should be traveling far away and doing great things. That Daunis isn't sure what kind of boat she is, though, indicates that she's still figuring out who she is and what kind of person she wants to be. What she does know, though, is that she'd ideally like to get away and escape this gossip, which is presumably the "Big Scandal" she mentioned in the previous chapter. Her Fontaine grandparents' bigotry shines through again, as referring to Daunis's dad as an "Indian [...] with potential" implies that they don't believe most American Indians have potential at all.*



Passing a billboard for today's Tribal Council election, Lily gripes that Daunis's Auntie Teddie should've run for office. After the girls help Granny June out at the senior center, Granny June says that she and Teddie have felonies and have had sex with too many men to get elected. The girls laugh as they head for the Chi Mukwa Arena, where Lily parks on the grass. Noticing Daunis scanning the area for TJ, her ex-boyfriend who's now a tribal police officer, Lily asks if Daunis invited him to their party this weekend. Daunis retorts that unlike Lily, she doesn't get back with her ex every weekend.

The arena is also a polling center, and one woman offers Lily and Daunis cookies—but pulls the plate back when another lady says that the girls aren't enrolled. Daunis and Lily are just descendants of the Sugar Island Ojibwe Tribe, as Lily doesn't meet the minimum blood-quantum requirement and Daunis's dad isn't on her birth certificate. They gripe about not wanting the cookies anyway, but they both licked their lips. They enter the arena and part ways to find their respective groups of kids enrolled in the summer childcare program.

## CHAPTER 3

That afternoon, Daunis gives her group a language lesson as they put on hats and scarves for free skate with the Sault Ste. Marie Superiors hockey team. The Supes are an elite Junior A league team—they're basically gods. Levi, Daunis's younger brother and a high school senior, is the team captain. He and a new player are skating with Perry and Pauline, Daunis's six-year-old cousins. Daunis skates over to them, ignoring the new player introducing himself as Jamie Johnson, and then pulls her cousins around the rink with her scarf. Dad used to do this with Daunis and Levi; his **scarf** was jade green. Daunis doubles back toward the boys and turns to stop, spraying them with ice shavings. Jamie looks shocked.

Perry falls and gets back up again, but Pauline pleads with Daunis to help her. Remembering Dad's advice, Daunis tells Pauline to get up herself and scolds Jamie when he helps Pauline up. From across the ice, Lily makes a lewd gesture at Daunis—she, like everyone else, is enamored with mysterious, handsome Jamie. Daunis isn't convinced he's worth it, though the scar on his face is intriguing. As the twins skate away and Levi skates over, Daunis reveals that she's staying in town to attend Lake State. Levi spins Daunis around, overjoyed, and says he'll bring the beer tomorrow night. He skates away.

*Lily and Daunis seem to think that Granny June is playing the mention of her and Auntie having felonies for laughs, but it's not clear that this is true—she may be more serious here than the girls give her credit for. This then raises the question of what those felonies are and why Granny June and Auntie committed them in the first place. Then, Daunis's remark about Lily being in an off-again, on-again relationship reveals that Lily is having romantic troubles.*



*Not being enrolled in the Tribe is an emotionally difficult thing for both Lily and Daunis. Though they don't want to look desperate (hence saying they didn't want the cookies anyway), they both clearly crave belonging to the Tribe in a formal, legal sense. Not being enrolled shows too that it's not just the girls' skin tones that make them feel like outsiders—they're outsiders on paper, too.*



*Describing the Supes as "basically gods" lets readers know that the boys involved have special privileges and are universally loved and revered in the Sault. Indeed, that the Supes are skating with the kids makes it seem like the kids are getting to hang out with actual celebrities. Daunis seems like a skilled skater herself, so spraying the boys with ice shavings reminds everyone (readers and characters alike) that the Supes are just human, even if they do occupy a special place in the Sault.*



*Dad looms large in Daunis's life; he connects her to her Firekeeper and Anishinaabe heritage, but his advice also guides Daunis's day-to-day life. Lily's lewd gesture, and Daunis's interest in Jamie, reminds readers that these are two normal teens interested in boys and relationships. Daunis, however, reads as potentially more practical than Lily in this regard, if she's not convinced that Jamie is "worth it."*



Jamie says he wishes Daunis was a senior, but at least she won't have to suffer through his uncle Ron's science class. Daunis's nose tingles; she explains that Ron is taking her Uncle David's job and that David is dead. Privately, Daunis is angry at David for how he died. Mom fainted when she heard the news and insisted that David had only ever drunk alcohol; he'd never used other substances. Jamie offers his condolences.

From the edge of the ring, Teddie motions for Daunis. Jamie and Lily follow. Teddie introduces herself to Jamie and asks what tribe he's from. He says he's Cherokee, but he didn't grow up around family. Then, Teddie asks Daunis to take the girls for the afternoon. Something came up at work: someone ordered T-shirts with owls on them saying "Be wise. Immunize!" Jamie is confused, so Daunis says owls are there when people cross over after death—so they're a terrible mascot for a vaccination campaign. Teddie says it's their responsibility to the community to fix this, so they're rush-ordering new shirts. She leaves. Daunis watches Jamie lift Pauline up. He's clearly had pairs figure skating training, like Daunis—GrandMary insisted on it, but she allowed Daunis to play hockey, too.

Almost angrily, Lily says it's a shame Daunis insists on keeping "Hockey World" and "Regular World" separate and so won't even try to get Jamie to break up with his girlfriend. Just then, Lily's ex-boyfriend, Travis, appears and calls for Lily. Lily skates away, and Daunis blocks Travis from coming onto the ice. He insists he's clean, but Daunis refuses to move. Unlike all the guys (like TJ) who have lied to Daunis, Daunis can tell Travis is telling the truth. He says he'll do anything to get her back. Remembering what Lily said he did—offered her a "love medicine"—Daunis tells Travis to get clean for himself, not for Lily. He agrees, looking almost like the happy, smart boy Daunis used to be friends with.

## CHAPTER 4

Later that evening, Daunis borrows Mom's car to drive Pauline and Perry to Auntie's house on Sugar Island, where Daunis also plans to spend the night. On the ferry, Daunis hunches down to avoid Seeney Nimkee, an Elder who once made Daunis cry. Daunis spends the next few hours playing with the twins, helping get them to bed, and then chatting with Auntie. She tells Auntie she's worried about her class schedule, but Auntie tells Daunis not to worry—Daunis's name is on a dorm, after all. Daunis's stomach sinks.

*Jamie, of course, has no way to know that his uncle is taking Daunis's uncle's job. But it's clear that this is a really sensitive subject for Daunis, particularly since she shares so little with Jamie and is pretty cagey about what she shares with the reader. It seems likely that David died due to some sort of substance use or abuse, and that the particulars of his death seriously shook Daunis's family.*



*Because Jamie didn't grow up around his Native family or community, he understands little about Native animals' significance—owls are sinister in this culture, not wise. As Teddie sees it, this is a regrettable mistake that could've been avoided had the person who ordered the shirts had more cultural education. But that aside, it's her job to make sure that the vaccination campaign succeeds, and that means not putting out T-shirts that associate vaccines with death. Her decision shows that doing the difficult thing is worth it if it means keeping people safe and healthy.*



*For now, Lily seems totally uninterested in giving Travis the time of day, but Daunis still feels compelled to protect her friend and make sure Travis doesn't continue to push Lily. If Travis is insisting that he's "clean," this means he's likely struggling with drug use or addiction of some sort. Still, Daunis seems to sense that Travis doesn't care about getting well because it'll make him healthier and happier. His goal is getting Lily to agree to get back together with him, which leads Daunis to question his commitment to getting and staying clean. Modifying one's behavior for someone else, in other words, isn't something the novel suggests is the best, most motivating reason to do so.*



*Daunis's evening with Auntie and the twins shows readers that she's connected to and close with both her Firekeeper relatives and her Fontaine relatives. But it also highlights that Daunis doesn't necessarily feel like she fits in in either family. Auntie noting that the Fontaines have donated enough money to Lake State to get their name on a dorm reminds Daunis that she's way better off financially than her Firekeeper relatives.*



Art, Auntie's husband, enters the kitchen just as Daunis's phone buzzes with a text from Jamie, asking if it's okay if he comes to Daunis's party. This wasn't supposed to be a real party; Lily and Daunis were just going to celebrate Daunis's Lake State decision at GrandMary's empty house and help themselves to the liquor cabinet. But Daunis asked Levi to get them beer, so it's going to be a real party. Art chuckles at Daunis's expression and Auntie jokingly says it's probably the new Supe, Jamie—and she notes that his scar is too straight to be an accident. Daunis says Jamie's uncle is taking David's job, which is so unfair. Auntie reminds Daunis that fairness isn't one of the Seven Grandfathers (love, humility, respect, honesty, bravery, wisdom, and truth) that guide the Anishinaabe way of life.

When Auntie and Art go to bed, Daunis thinks about Jamie. He's a skilled player who made the team despite being a nobody, and he's Cherokee but isn't connected to his community. Daunis wonders what that's like. She's a local through and through—the Firekeepers are one of the oldest families on Sugar Island, while GrandMary's people were some of the first French fur traders. Still, Daunis sometimes doesn't feel like she belongs. She texts Jamie that he can come, wondering if Levi had an ulterior motive by giving Jamie her number. He usually does.

Daunis jerks awake in the middle of the night when Auntie comes downstairs, whispering in a harsh voice about a blanket party. Hearing this, Daunis gets up, ignores Auntie's glare, and follows her aunt. Blanket parties are what happens when a man mistreats a woman—the woman's cousins take him into the woods and beat him. Daunis is desperate to go, but Auntie almost spits as she tells Daunis to go to college, “snag Jamie,” and live her nice life. Auntie leaves. Daunis has heard the rumors, usually funny ones, about Auntie's fighting days—but this situation isn't at all funny.

## CHAPTER 5

Daunis wakes in the morning with Perry snuggled next to her and Pauline whispering loudly for pancakes. Daunis rolls off the couch to make pancakes and is relieved to see Auntie's car in the drive. The twins are finished and in front of the TV when Art and Auntie finally come downstairs. Auntie avoids making eye contact with Daunis; whatever happened last night, it was important. But Auntie, clearly regretful, hugs Daunis when Daunis is ready to go. Later, Daunis tells Lily about the blanket party as they move valuables to safe spots at the big house. They hope that the woman feels safer now.

*Daunis doesn't seem to dwell on Auntie's comment too much, if only because Jamie is genuinely distracting. The way the party has expanded makes it seem like Daunis and Lily are, perhaps, losing control of their evening, which may lead to unintended consequences. When Auntie notes that Jamie's scar wasn't accidental, it suggests there's probably more to Jamie than Daunis knows, and it makes him even more mysterious. As Auntie reminds Daunis of the Seven Grandfathers, she encourages Daunis to lean into Anishinaabe customs and beliefs to deal with her grief. These customs, if Daunis follows them, can offer comfort.*



*Daunis and Jamie have a lot in common due to them both having one Native parent, but they still differ in important ways in terms of their experiences. Despite sometimes feeling like she's on the outs, Daunis is also pretty connected to the Anishinaabe community on Sugar Island. Also worth noting here is that Levi is, apparently, a bit manipulative—a quality he may have developed due to the special treatment he gets as a Supe.*



*Auntie's anger and refusal to let Daunis attend the blanket party is confusing for Daunis. Daunis feels like going is going to feel good, right, and just—she'll be protecting one of her community members, after all. But Auntie subtly implies that blanket parties actually shouldn't have to happen at all—that is, they wouldn't happen if Native women had some of the privileges that Daunis, as a well-off and light-skinned woman, has.*



*For now, Daunis defers to Auntie and doesn't press her on what happened during the blanket party. In this sense, Daunis still respects Auntie's authority and treats her like an adult authority figure; despite being 18, Daunis doesn't see herself as an adult on equal footing with her aunt. As Daunis and Lily discuss the blanket party, they touch on the main point of the ritual: to make a wronged woman feel safe. Still, it's worth noting that a blanket party doesn't give a woman any legal recourse.*



Levi drops the beer off around eight and then leaves to get his friends. Lily is clearly enraged; she says that this was supposed to be just a few friends, not a hockey party. When Daunis mentions that Jamie is coming, Lily tells Daunis to kiss him. Daunis begins drinking grappa and reminds Lily that Jamie has a girlfriend. Lily says that Daunis needs to kiss someone; TJ was two years ago. Then, she says she's just upset because Levi makes everything about himself, and this night was supposed to be about them. Daunis reminds Lily that they'll be away from Levi when they start college in three weeks.

Two hours later, Lily scolds Levi for playing music too loudly, and Daunis offers Jamie her bottle of grappa. She offers to give him a tour of the house, and a girl tags along. The girl is clearly an anglerfish—a wannabe hockey girlfriend; anglerfish bite their mates and fuse with them, and Daunis finds hockey girlfriends just as pathetic. Daunis gestures wildly at the house's features, but she stops briefly in front of her, Mom, and David's framed senior portraits. Realizing the girl left the tour, Daunis tells Jamie to be better than a tourist and to pronounce Sault correctly: it's pronounced "soo," not "salt."

Levi bounces up to Daunis and says he has a favor to ask of her: would she be Jamie's Supe ambassador? Since Jamie has a girlfriend, it'd keep the "puck sluts" away from him. When Daunis growls at the slur, Levi says she and Jamie can go running together and she can show him around. He tells Jamie that Daunis was on the boys' varsity hockey team, and she was the valedictorian. Daunis says this sounds like a setup, but Jamie says he's helping her and avoiding catfights among the other girls. Plus, Daunis is a "total badass" like Teddie. Flattered, Daunis agrees to be Jamie's ambassador.

## CHAPTER 6

Jamie shows up in Daunis's driveway two days later for a morning run. Daunis leaves her semaa and prays, and she then studies Jamie: he's her height, but so lean that she outweighs him. Jamie observes that Daunis is close to Levi, but Daunis shrugs that Levi is annoying. Then, she asks about Jamie's family. Jamie has no siblings, just divorced parents and his uncle Ron. They begin their run through the Lake State campus; Jamie notes Daunis's last name on the new dorm. Behind the student union, where they can see the river, Daunis stops and points toward Lake Superior and then points out Sugar Island. When a freighter's horn surprises Jamie, Daunis tells him about the series of government-owned locks. The development destroyed Anishinaabeg villages, but Daunis says that's a story for another day.

*Lily is way less accommodating of the hockey "gods" than Daunis is; Daunis may be more relaxed about it because Levi is her brother, and she loves him. Still, it's interesting that Lily accuses Levi of making everything about himself, as this further develops Levi as a self-absorbed person. Lily also makes it seem like Daunis has had bad luck in love for the last few years. She sees Daunis moving on from TJ as the best way to change that luck.*



*To girls in the Sault, Jamie represents a prime opportunity. There's social currency to gain by being a hockey girlfriend, so Daunis realizes lots of girls are going to want to woo him and ignore that he already has a girlfriend. To some degree, Daunis is doing much the same thing (she also is developing a crush on Jamie), despite her distaste for hockey girlfriends. But since she sees the Supes more as people and less as gods, she can interact with him more normally than the other girls do.*



*Levi shares more background information that helps explain why Daunis doesn't treat the Supes like gods: she also played hockey and was good enough to get onto the boys' varsity team. He's flattering her, and ultimately, it works: Daunis agrees to do what Levi wants her to do, even if she finds him annoying and his use of sexist slurs wildly offensive. Part of her agreeing, though, likely also has to do with her budding crush on Jamie.*



*It can be true both that Levi and Daunis are close, and that Levi is annoying—Daunis has made this pretty clear already as she's described Levi and her relationship to him. Daunis's economic privilege comes to the forefront again as Jamie observes her family name on the dorm. Still, Daunis's main focus seems to be on introducing Jamie to Anishinaabe history and how the federal and state governments have systematically destroyed (or at least changed) life for Native people in the area. This introduces readers to one of the novel's main conflicts: the way that Native communities and government entities interact.*



Jamie, however, refuses to share anything about himself, so he and Daunis resume discussing local customs. Daunis explains that Anishinaabe means “Original People,” but it usually refers to the Great Lakes tribes. They speak Anishinaabemowin, and Daunis warns Jamie that Levi will soon ask him to ask her for a Nish nickname. Jamie reveals that Levi already wants him to ask how to say “Scarface.” By now, they’ve reached the nursing home; Daunis explains that GrandMary is there. Jamie surprises Daunis by asking how she is, but Daunis isn’t ready to share. Later, Daunis calls Lily, and they discuss where Jamie might’ve come from—and what the deal is with his girlfriend.

It’s raining the next morning, so Jamie and Daunis run on treadmills at the Chi Mukwa fitness center. Wanting to be respectful, Daunis asks Jamie to tell her whatever he wants about himself. He says his dad is Cherokee and his parents divorced; Uncle Ron is the only family member supportive of hockey. Daunis thinks Jamie must be so easy to be around because their stories are so similar and notes that Jamie also did figure skating. Jamie is shocked Daunis identified this, but Daunis explains that GrandMary insisted that Daunis learn to figure skate. After their run, Jamie drops Daunis off at EverCare—and he’s still there when she’s done visiting. In the car, Jamie reveals that his girlfriend’s name is Jen. Her dad’s in the military, so she gets what it’s like to move a lot.

Jamie’s presence seems to blur the line between Hockey World and Regular World. By Friday, Daunis looks forward to their runs. Smiling as they run through downtown, Daunis shares that once, Levi and Travis sold sweetgrass to tourists and claimed theirs was magical. Jamie asks if Stormy, another hockey player, was in on it too, but Daunis explains that Stormy’s dad wouldn’t let Stormy help. She says there will be sweetgrass at the powwow this weekend, offers to show Jamie around the event, and explains that the boys stopped selling the sweetgrass when the casino opened and per capita started. The per capita system seems to offend Jamie, but Daunis says it’s just like companies paying shareholders. Adults get about \$36,000 before taxes, and minors get a third of that.

Daunis explains that she, however, gets no money because she’s not an enrolled tribal member—her dad isn’t on her birth certificate, thanks to her Fontaine grandparents. She and Jamie observe that being Native is hard: it means different things to different people, and some people will never think Daunis is “Native enough.” When they reach EverCare, Daunis invites Jamie to meet GrandMary. Inside, Jamie greets GrandMary in French, shocking Daunis.

*Recall that Levi and Daunis share a father; their dad is Native. It’s interesting, then, that Daunis seems to embrace Anishinaabe culture and know the language far more and better than Levi, despite both of them having similar backgrounds. Indeed, Levi seems to see being Native as more of a fact to prop up his public image, not as something to fully embrace. Jamie, however, seems more interested in being respectful: he’s been told to ask how to say “Scarface,” but he doesn’t actually ask. He’d rather Daunis volunteer this information, suggesting either that he’s uncomfortable with Levi’s demand—or that he already values his relationship with Daunis more highly than his with Levi.*



*Jamie is, perhaps, not used to being around people who are intimately familiar with the different skating styles that hockey players and figure skaters develop, so Daunis identifying his figure skating history is a bit uncomfortable for him. For now, though, it’s unclear if he’s uncomfortable because of shame or some other reason. As he describes his relationship with Jen, Jamie highlights that he’d like to connect with people who understand what he’s going through, as a kid who’s moved around a lot. In that sense, Daunis isn’t his perfect partner: she’s lived in the Sault her entire life.*



*Daunis seems to see the sweetgrass anecdote as charming and humorous, but it’s also worth noting that Levi and Travis played into racist stereotypes about Native Americans by selling “magical” sweetgrass to (presumably white) tourists, even if they did so for their own gain. The per-capita system was established and legalized in 1988, and it allowed certain types of tribal casinos to disburse payments to enrolled tribal members. As Daunis sees it, it’s a way for Native communities to support their members. Jamie, however, seems to embrace the stereotype that Native communities are shamefully awash with gambling money. This stereotype often (and often incorrectly) links per-cap payments to rampant drug use and unemployment on reservations.*



*Daunis implies that GrandMary and Grandpa Lorenzo actively kept Mom from putting Dad on Daunis’s birth certificate, thereby making it significantly harder for her to officially be a part of the Tribe. This suggests that they would rather Daunis be less Native; Daunis and Jamie, meanwhile, both struggle with feeling like Native folks would like them to be more Native (whatever, exactly, that means).*





## CHAPTER 7

Daunis wakes up on Saturday excited: the powwow is later, and she tells GrandMary about her and Lily's plans to go to the campus bookstore to price textbooks. After the bookstore outing, Daunis brushes off Mom's request that Daunis let her know if she and Lily make plans for after the powwow—Mom will be concerned if she learns about Jamie, so Daunis plans to say nothing. Later, Daunis hops into Jamie's truck, fields raunchy texts from Lily, and answers Jamie's questions about per cap. She says some people judge others for how they spend their money, but it does do good things, like allow kids to go to college or families to buy houses and cars. Per cap also helps more Nish kids play hockey and figure skate—when her dad was a player, the Firekeepers had to take up a collection for gear.

As Daunis ignores another raunchy text from Lily, Jamie asks what happened to Daunis's dad. Daunis explains that Mom was 16 when she got pregnant, and Dad was "a poor Nish from the rez on Sugar Island." Her parents got in a car accident the night Mom told Dad about her pregnancy, and Dad broke both his legs. They didn't heal right, and because Grandpa Lorenzo was the mayor of Sault Ste. Marie and disliked Native Americans, Dad couldn't get a job. He left for a job and died in a logging accident when Daunis and Levi were seven. Daunis refuses to elaborate further, despite Jamie's confusion—he notes that Daunis herself is Native.

Jamie parallel parks like an expert at the powwow grounds and notices Daunis casually flip off TJ in his police car. Daunis doesn't share how TJ dumped her a month after they started having sex and then ignored her. Instead, she says she dislikes law enforcement and explains how anyone who's visibly Nish gets searched at the Canada border—and how Art, who's Nish and Black, had a gun pulled on him in front of Teddie, Perry, and Pauline. Now, Daunis goes to Canada for Teddie since she has light skin and a Canadian birth certificate.

Jamie apologizes and asks if Daunis ever wants to make a difference. Daunis says she wants to be a doctor and for now, she shops in Canada for her family for items they love. She observes that it must seem weird to cross a border for coffee and Sudafed, but it's normal here. Jamie admits he's never lived anywhere long enough to get used to a normal. Just then, three loud pops sound—and Jamie flattens Daunis to the ground.

*Daunis wants to keep Mom in the loop, but she's still extremely concerned with protecting Mom's emotions (hence not telling Mom about Jamie). The way that Daunis frames it, per cap is a really good thing. It has enabled some abuse, to be sure, but in general, it improves the standard of living for enrolled tribal members and gives kids in particular more opportunities (such as college and sports).*



*Daunis is being honest and open with Jamie as she shares her family history. But she's not the sort of person to spill everything to someone who's still pretty much a stranger. It's unclear if, in this case, this is related to Daunis's more private personality, or if it's because she doesn't want to get into the difficult gray area where her beloved grandparents are also sometimes bigoted and racist, including to her. Revealing that Dad is deceased also helps explain why Daunis clings so tightly to his advice: it's how she can remember and honor him.*



*Daunis, of course, can dislike TJ for all sorts of reasons. She can resent him for how he broke up with her while also disliking that he chose to become a law enforcement officer, making him complicit in some of the racist treatment that Nish folks suffer. In contrast, Daunis tries to make it clear that she uses her privilege for good, as by crossing the border for her family members.*



*All localities have their own quirks, which are normal to the locals. Daunis is helping Jamie begin to fit in by sharing what's normal here, and it's interesting that Jamie seemingly has no ties anywhere. This suggests that he's moved around a lot and perhaps doesn't have many connections to friends, family, or a community—he's on his own.*



## CHAPTER 8

Jamie gets off of Daunis; firecrackers caused the sound. The boys who set them off laugh as Daunis discovers her knee is bloody. Jamie apologizes, says he panicked, and removes his shirt to clean Daunis's knee. Daunis asks if he's lived in dangerous neighborhoods and remembers Auntie commenting that Jamie's scar wasn't an accident. Soon after, Jamie and Daunis find Pauline, Perry, and Auntie in their Jingle Dress regalia, and Auntie compliments Jamie's work cleaning up Daunis's knee. Lily approaches in her Fancy Shawl regalia, but the call for dancers to line up means she can't say something raunchy.

Daunis leads Jamie to the bleachers for the Grand Entry, when veterans bring in different state, local, and tribal flags, and dancers enter the arena. She tells Jamie what a lee-lee is (a whoop to honor or celebrate someone) and then begins to describe the dancers. There are multiple categories, and each dancer wears regalia that signifies various things about her and her family. The Grand Entry is the whole; each individual dancer and her regalia are the individual parts of the whole. When Jamie asks why Daunis isn't dancing, Daunis says she's taking a yearlong break to grieve Uncle David. She doesn't mind Jamie asking questions like this—and she silently reminds herself to not be “That Girl.”

After the Grand Entry, Lily and Granny June meet up with Daunis and Jamie; they'd like to sit together to watch Pauline and Perry dance in their competition later. The group discusses Shagala—the fancy dance the Sault Hockey Association puts on—and then Granny June asks Jamie if he'll take care of Daunis. Daunis insists he's a friend, not a boyfriend, but Jamie says he will. Granny June says that's good, since “things end how they start.” She disappears.

Travis suddenly appears beside Lily. Daunis puts herself between them and notices how rough Travis looks: he's already experiencing tooth decay, and there's a coffee filter floating in his soda bottle. Lily asks Travis to go, and he begs for her to talk with an edge in his voice. Jamie attempts to gently intervene, but Travis insults Jamie and Daunis. Travis only leaves when Lily promises to find him later. Lily then leaves herself, brushing off Daunis's attempt to hold her back and insisting that she can take care of herself. Jamie, to Daunis's relief, doesn't seem rattled. Daunis says Travis is a “Lost Boy” and is addicted to meth. Lily told Daunis not to tell anyone, but if Travis is drinking meth tea at a powwow, everyone will know soon enough. Daunis texts Lily, apologizing for grabbing her friend.

*Daunis is gathering information that suggests not just that Jamie has moved around a lot, but that he's also lived places where danger lurked around every corner. This is way outside of Daunis's lived experience, as she feels safe and comfortable in the Sault and seemingly wasn't going to react at all to the firecrackers. It seems to make Jamie appear more sympathetic to Daunis as well, as she seems to infer that he's recovering from the traumatic experience of living in such neighborhoods.*



*Daunis wants Jamie to fully understand and appreciate what he's seeing during the Grand Entry, so it's not a problem or offensive to her to have to explain things for him. As she describes how a dancer's regalia connects her both to the whole and to her past, she makes the case that the Sugar Island Ojibwe community isn't just comprised of the living—ancestors also play a part. Daunis also highlights how specific cultural grieving rituals, like not dancing for a year, can provide her comfort and a way to move forward after Uncle David's death.*



*Granny June seems like the sort to dispense somewhat cryptic (and not always serious) advice as she sees fit. But her warning that “things end how they start” is interesting, as it suggests that a relationship that begins with secrets or dishonesty of some sort will remain that way. On the other hand, things that begin honest are more likely to stay honest.*



*It's clear from Travis's behavior that his addiction struggles are getting worse. In addition to his obviously worsening health, his personality is also changing (Daunis has described him as having been happy-go-lucky and kind prior to getting involved with meth). In this passage, it's worth noting that both Daunis and Travis are fighting to control Lily (though Daunis is trying to protect Lily, a noble goal). Seeing Travis's behavior, Daunis decides that it's not worth it anymore to try to keep secrets. This offers some hope that she might be able to get some support from Jamie and eventually, from the wider community as she tries to help Lily and get Travis help.*



## CHAPTER 9

Feeling suddenly anxious, Daunis asks Jamie to go peruse vendor booths while she goes for a run. He says he'll come with; they can talk or not. Daunis is grateful for his company. She feels better after a sprint, and then she explains that Travis used to just drink at parties. Then he started using other drugs and eventually found meth thanks to his mom, who's known as the Meth Queen. Over Christmas break, Lily caught Travis cooking meth and now, it seems like so many people are using—people you'd never expect. Jamie seems nonjudgmental. Daunis feels relieved to share this secret, but she also feels like she's sharing too much. To change the subject, Daunis suggests a book for Jamie to buy. Then, they share an order of fry bread.

For dinner, Daunis and Jamie join Art and Auntie at their RV. While Jamie hangs out with Art at the grill, Auntie braids Daunis's hair and explains why Daunis couldn't come to the blanket party. She explains that she hates going, and she thanks Creator that Daunis doesn't have to. Hopefully, Daunis's light skin and money will protect her—Auntie can't hope the same for her Black and Ojibwe daughters. Daunis feels ashamed.

Jamie comes over with a plate for Daunis, and they discuss the “minor forty-niner” (the powwow party for minors) later. Daunis implies there will be beer, and Auntie says it's okay to have fun if you're smart—and throwing a party in town at her grandparents' fancy house wasn't smart. Auntie tells Daunis to stay at her house tonight. So, when Jamie and Daunis take the ferry to Sugar Island later, Daunis texts Mom and assures her that she'll be safe at Auntie's tonight. She then texts Lily, whom she hasn't heard from, asking what happened with Travis. Daunis warns Jamie to text his uncle now if he needs to; the island has terrible service due to the cliffs and caves. Supposedly, Al Capone even hid liquor here. She suggests Jamie invite Jen to Shagala, deciding privately to invite Lily so Levi doesn't make her go with Stormy again.

At the forty-niner, people are drumming and singing. Daunis downs two beers before Levi and his friends shout her awful nickname, Bubble, and approach. He puts his arms around Daunis and a girl named Macy and asks Jamie if his girlfriend is as great as these two. Jamie demurs and asks about the Bubble nickname. Macy crows that it's for “Bubble Butt” and dances away, cackling. Jamie tells Daunis that kids called him Urkel in middle school and grabs Daunis another beer. Daunis downs it and returns to the keg, where Levi asks if Daunis is going to try to have sex with Jamie tonight. When she says no, he asks if this is about TJ. Daunis tells him to leave it alone—or she has a lot to say about how he uses girls.

*As Daunis describes Travis's descent into addiction, she makes it clear that he's not the only person in the community struggling. He's just the closest person to her who's addicted, and so she's had more of an opportunity to see how meth has negatively transformed Travis's life (and also affected their peers, like Lily). Jamie's nonchalance could reflect that this isn't news to him, or that he's seen it before. Either way, though, Daunis seems to find his reaction somewhat surprising, which is something to keep in mind going forward.*



*Auntie doesn't elaborate or get explicit here, but she implies that Daunis, as someone who can pass for white, should take advantage of the privilege and the legal options she has if anything were to ever happen to her. A blanket party, in other words, is an imperfect solution to a problem, and for Daunis's health and safety, she shouldn't aspire to get involved.*



*This passage establishes several things that will be important going forward. First, Auntie takes an active role in looking out for Daunis; she wants Daunis to have fun and even break rules if she wants, but she insists that Daunis take precautions. Then, Sugar Island is something of a dead zone when it comes to cell service. Finally, though Daunis loves Levi, she finds him overbearing and pushy. It also adds tension that Daunis hasn't heard from Lily; it creates the foreboding sense that something awful is going to happen to Lily.*



*Daunis doesn't try to hide that she hates her nickname; at least, it seems obvious to Jamie that she doesn't appreciate Levi using it. Levi continues to look like not a particularly nice person, especially when Daunis insinuates that he doesn't treat his romantic or sexual partners very well. Jamie, on the other hand, comes off as kind and caring: though he's Levi's teammate, he doesn't try to suck up to Levi by using “Bubble.” Instead, he tries to build camaraderie with Daunis by sharing his own embarrassing nickname.*



Feeling suddenly overwhelmed, Daunis leaves the barn and vomits near Jamie's truck. When she looks up, Travis and Lily are coming down the path—and Travis is grabbing at Lily, who's clearly upset. He pulls a gun and points it at Lily, who notices Daunis. Travis points the gun at each girl in turn. Daunis is frozen; the boy she sat next to in AP classes is going to kill her. She can smell WD-40, pine, and cat pee. Travis swings the gun like a machete before pointing it at Daunis. As Daunis thinks of how devastated Mom will be, Lily reaches for the gun—and the gun goes off.

## CHAPTER 10

Lily falls to her back. Travis says something to Daunis, but she can't hear him—she can only hear the blast as Travis shoots himself in the temple. Daunis is certain she'll wake up in a minute and return to the barn, where she'll tell Jamie all her secrets. Jamie appears, calmly checks Lily's pulse, and then looks up with a sigh. Noticing Daunis, he ushers her into the truck and shushes her as she says "secrets" and "stranger." Daunis is certain that Jamie isn't who he says he is.

Jamie drives back the way they came, pulling over once so Daunis can vomit. He says there was nothing he could do for Lily. On her knees, Daunis remembers Uncle David telling her to piece together what she knows. In this case, she knows Lily is dead, that Jamie is lying about how he got his scar, and that Jamie doesn't like answering questions. Jamie also checked Lily's pulse like a first responder and responded to the firecrackers like a police officer or soldier would. Then it clicks: Jamie is a police officer. Daunis tells Jamie she knows he's an officer and then runs from him, bound for Auntie's house. But Jamie pursues Daunis and says she can't involve Auntie.

Furious, Daunis threatens to run into the woods; she knows them, and Jamie doesn't. But is that true? She didn't tell him where Auntie lives, after all. He insists on taking Daunis home to Mom and promises to talk. In the truck, he confirms that he's an undercover officer and implies that Ron is his supervisor, not his uncle. By now, they're in line for the ferry with dozens of other kids who all look dazed. The ferry pulls in with a bunch of law enforcement vehicles, and the kids all drive onto the ferry. Daunis checks her phone; she has texts from Mom, Levi, and one from Lily. She says she needs to call Granny June, but Jamie tells Daunis not to—she shouldn't talk to anyone right now.

*The writing style in this passage creates the sense that Daunis is so shocked and traumatized, she's not picking up on everything that's going on. Instead, she's focused on Mom (one of the people she loves most) and what initially seems like unrelated scents, like cat urine. However, certain methods of cooking meth can give off a smell like cat urine, so smelling that here highlights Travis's addiction problems.*



*Lily, not Daunis, dies in the altercation, and Travis takes his own life moments later. This is traumatizing and surreal for Daunis, especially when Jamie reacts so coolly to violent murder. This leads Daunis to suspect that Jamie isn't actually a high school student, though it's not yet clear who or what, exactly, he might be.*



*Daunis continues to remember and honor Uncle David by leaning so heavily on his advice and reminding herself what he'd do. In this sense, her family—deceased and living—guides her to the realization that Jamie isn't who he said he is. Notably, Jamie doesn't deny that he's a police officer and indeed, seems to behave exactly like one might expect an officer to behave. Learning this contributes to how traumatizing this evening is, as Daunis didn't just lose her best friend—she's also losing a guy she was beginning to develop feelings for.*



*It's wildly unsettling for Daunis to realize that Jamie is a police officer, as she has no idea how much he knows about her, the Sault, Sugar Island, or anything else about her home and community. This feels like something of a violation, especially when Jamie tells her not to talk to anyone. By doing so, even if it's for her own safety or for some other important reason, Jamie isolates Daunis from her community—the very people from whom Daunis wants support, and who Daunis wants to support in turn.*



As TJ approaches the car, Jamie asks for Daunis’s license and says he’ll talk. When TJ sees Daunis’s license, he leans down and asks if she’s okay. Daunis remembers him saying he loved her during sex, but she nods and stays silent. TJ tells Jamie to take Daunis home. A city officer escorts Jamie and Daunis to Daunis’s house. Before they get to the door, Jamie tells Daunis to stay quiet—he’ll explain things later. Mom pulls Daunis and then Jamie into a hug when she opens the door, and Daunis vows to herself to get answers from Jamie.

*As Daunis struggles to process Lily and Travis’s deaths and her revelation about Jamie, she also relives some past trauma—memories of sex with TJ seem at least uncomfortable, if not downright traumatizing for Daunis. Still, TJ seems to know that Daunis needs her family and community to feel better, hence making sure that Jamie takes Daunis straight home to Mom.*



## CHAPTER 11

As Mom gives Daunis a pill and water and helps her into bed, Daunis shivers. She remembers shaking during her coming-of-age fast, and how Auntie later told her that shivering is fine—you’re in trouble if you stop. Daunis wakes in the sunlight, Mom asleep next to her, and remembers Lily dying. She’d like to take another pill and go back to sleep, but she knows that Lily is beginning her four-day journey to the next world. Each day has a different purpose; today, Lily will mourn her family and friends. So, Daunis leaves semaa under the prayer tree, rejects Mom’s offer of a bath, and says she needs to go sit with Lily’s body and Granny June at the funeral home.

*Remembering Auntie’s advice about shivering helps Daunis focus on the fact that she’s still alive, despite her crushing grief. She still cares, and this means she has the emotional stamina to face her grief and spend time with others who are also experiencing grief. As Daunis leaves the semaa and begins to explain what Lily’s four-day journey entails, it seems to give Daunis comfort. This highlights how set grieving rituals help the living make sense of their grief; it gives them a framework and a way to find closure.*



At the funeral home, Daunis hugs Granny June and studies Lily’s body in the casket. Nothing feels real. She looks around for Auntie, but Auntie must be at home with Art, tending the ceremonial fire. Art comes from a different community, but like Daunis’s family, he also learned firekeeping duties: firekeepers strike fires for ceremonies, funerals, and sweat lodges. Art must be tending Lily’s fire, which will stay lit for four days and then burn forever in the other world.

*Though Auntie’s absence is painful, it’s still comforting for Daunis to know that Auntie is at home, helping with Lily’s ceremonial fire. Art’s role in the funerary proceedings also highlights how communal death is for Daunis’s Ojibwe community: lots of non-family folks in the community emerge to play specific ceremonial roles and help everyone grieve.*



On the second day, Lily’s mom, Maggie, arrives, insisting she had to buy her kids church clothes before she could come. Daunis is angry—Mom would be glued to the casket if Daunis were dead. Lily always referred to herself as Maggie’s “practice baby,” but Auntie told Daunis and Lily to remember that Maggie was raised by the only sister in her family who didn’t die by suicide after being beaten and abused at the residential schools. Now, Daunis reminds herself to not judge Maggie too harshly.

*Daunis has a really specific idea of what a parent’s love for their child should look like. However, she also has to remind herself here that the generational trauma caused by the residential schools still affects people in her community and how they express their love. Auntie seems to imply that Maggie might be the daughter of the least traumatized sister, but that doesn’t mean she didn’t have a traumatic upbringing—and Lily, two generations on, continued to pay the price.*



When Daunis takes the ferry to Sugar Island later, she thinks about Lily’s journey today: Lily will atone for every living creature she harmed during her life. Noticing that a bunch of Travis’s cousins are in the car next to her, Daunis thinks of how Travis will have to atone for taking Lily. Daunis hopes that Travis’s second day lasts an eternity and is painful, but then she reminds herself to think good thoughts for Lily.

*Again, Daunis continues to take solace in Ojibwe grieving rituals. It’s nice to know what Lily’s doing, and though Daunis acknowledges it’s not kind, it’s also satisfying to know that Travis is going to have to face up to all the pain and suffering he’s caused.*



## CHAPTER 12

On Lily's third day, she learns about the next world. Daunis sits next to Lily's casket and thinks through what she knows about Jamie, who presently shows up with Ron. Ron is a bit older than Mom and clearly Native. He introduces himself as a senior agent with the FBI, and Jamie reveals that he's a Bureau of Indian Affairs officer. Daunis is wary; these agencies seldom make things better for tribes. Jamie and Ron invite Daunis to come with them and talk about their investigation, and Daunis accepts. As they drive to the high school, Daunis finds she can't stop thinking about Lily. She tries to pay attention to Ron telling her about how in his last case, he gave a murdered Native woman's family answers 25 years after her death.

The school secretary, Mrs. Hammond, embraces Daunis and asks if Ron is the new "Indian science teacher." Ron says he's Native and introduces Jamie, and after some more chit-chat, he leads Daunis and Jamie to Uncle David's old classroom. Once Daunis is seated at the desk, Ron says that he and Jamie are part of a joint American and Canadian investigation into an uptick in drug trafficking, mostly of meth, in hockey towns in the Great Lakes region. Daunis struggles to focus; she's lost in her memories of Travis when he was a smart, driven kid. She insists that meth is everywhere, but Ron says they've found meth laced with hallucinogenic mushrooms that only grow in various nearby places. Daunis knows Travis only started cooking meth in December, but meth has been a problem longer than that. Who's responsible?

Daunis asks why they're in Uncle David's classroom, but she remembers how David didn't show up for Easter dinner. GrandMary figured he'd relapsed; two weeks later, someone found his car. The toxicology report showed he'd died of a meth overdose. She asks if Ron thinks David was cooking the meth, but Ron says David was their CI—a confidential informant. He continues, explaining that David thought someone he knew was manufacturing. David's death was suspicious, Ron explains, and his death triggered the undercover FBI operation. Daunis is shocked and ashamed; she doubted her uncle. Mom never did. She sobs.

*Daunis's and Lily's spirits are on similar paths right now, as they're both learning about their new worlds. (Lily's is the afterlife, while Daunis learns about what's going on in secret with her own world.) Daunis's skepticism is well-earned; the FBI and the BIA are, after all, federal agencies and part of the same government that created the residential school system, moved Native Americans onto reservations, and systematically tried to wipe out Native people and culture. Knowing how many Native lives the government has taken, it's not much consolation that Ron helped one Native family find closure.*



*Though Mrs. Hammond helps Daunis feel like things are normal, it's also impossible to ignore her bigotry when she asks if Ron is the new "Indian" science teacher. To her, he's not just a science teacher, like Uncle David was; his Native-ness precedes any other identity markers. There's a connection here between how Mrs. Hammond refuses to see anything else about Ron other than his Native identity, and how Daunis perceives that Ron and Jamie are erroneously attributing meth problems to her Native community. Meth was, in fact, the hard drug of choice at the time the novel is set (2005), and it impacted communities of all ethnicities.*



*The revelation that Uncle David was trying to help the FBI eradicate meth from the community, not that he was addicted, is a bombshell for Daunis. It reminds her that there's always more to people than meets the eye. The fact that GrandMary doubted David, however, points to some possible deeper dysfunction in the Fontaine family, as GrandMary clearly thought David couldn't be trusted to not abuse substances. Daunis sees it as a reflection on her own moral standing that she agreed with GrandMary in this context.*



When Daunis is done crying, Ron explains that last February, after a Superiors hockey tournament, kids on a Minnesota reservation got really sick. The meth was highly addictive and caused them to hallucinate—a group hallucination. The FBI is calling it meth-X. Ron says they’re trying to identify distributors so they can work back to the manufacturers. David, Ron says, was worried about Travis—and Daunis was a person of interest too. Jamie explains that they saw Daunis’s science fair project about traditional chokecherry pudding’s medicinal properties; she knows Ojibwe culture *and* science. They believe the manufacturer is similar, though they know it’s not Daunis—she has a trust fund and so no motive. Daunis realizes they want her to take David’s place as the CI.

*Notice that as Jamie describes Daunis’s credentials, he purposefully differentiates between Ojibwe culture and (implied) standard, non-Native science. For now, Daunis seems willing to brush Jamie’s opinion aside, but differentiating between Ojibwe culture and non-Native science ignores the fact that there are plenty of Anishinaabe tribes and practitioners who do understand the science behind their remedies—their remedies exist for a reason, after all. This siloed view (differentiating culture from science) highlights Jamie’s unwillingness to see the validity and the importance of Anishinaabe cultures, adding more credence to Daunis’s skepticism that the federal agencies running this investigation will actually be able to respectfully help her community.*



## CHAPTER 13

Realizing that Jamie has tricked her, Daunis leaps up and demands that Ron take her back to the funeral home. When they get there, Ron says that the investigation will bring closure and healing to Daunis’s community, and Daunis has the power to help. She slams the door on him. The following day, Daunis is still angry. She sits next to Granny June for the funeral. It’s Lily’s fourth day; today, Lily will say goodbye and then cross over. Her ceremonial fire will go out in this world and light in the next one. Mom and Auntie sit behind Daunis and Granny June. Mom has been hovering annoyingly since Lily’s death.

*As Daunis sees it, the very fact that Ron and Jamie are undercover is a sort of betrayal. They haven’t been open about who they are or what they want, and now, they have the audacity to ask Daunis to work with them. Of course, the fact that they’re federal agents, the very sort of people who have over the last few centuries caused major harm to Native communities, further complicates this huge ask.*



Only two Tribal Council leaders are at the funeral. This makes sense, since Lily was a descendant, not an enrolled member. The rest of the council is at Travis’s funeral; his family is huge and powerful on Sugar Island. Auntie leads a Catholic prayer in Anishinaabemowin, and Daunis wonders why Granny June always talked about the residential schools taking children—but not *her* children. Throughout the service, Daunis wonders what she should do about Ron and Jamie’s proposition. She sobs as the casket closes—she was supposed to stop the third bad thing, Lily’s death, from happening. Instead, she was with Jamie.

*Though Daunis seems to resent that Lily doesn’t get more support from Tribal Council while (supposedly undeserving) Travis does, it’s also worth noting that Travis became addicted to meth despite being from a big, powerful family. Any privilege he might’ve gained from his family, in other words, didn’t protect him from drug addiction. In considering Granny June’s silence, Daunis notices again how the residential school system has damaged families and caused trauma that reverberates through multiple generations. Meth is, perhaps, one of those traumas.*



In the parking lot, Daunis's grief and rage intensifies when she sees Angie Flint, Travis's mom. Levi tells Daunis not to do anything, but Daunis tells Angie to go away and pay her respects elsewhere. Jamie finally leads Daunis away, but Daunis snarls at TJ, who's been watching the scene. Jamie tells Daunis that this will only keep happening—and she knows he's right. Realizing this might someday affect Pauline and Perry, Daunis stops. She takes off the black stilettos that Lily forced her to buy, says a prayer and offers some semaa, and then puts sprigs of *giizhik* (cedar) in her shoes. She's going to be an informant, and she needs all the help she can get so she can learn the truth about Travis, Lily, and Uncle David.

*Looking around at peers like Levi and TJ, it appears as though Daunis's generation has already made choices about how it will interact with meth; Levi, as far as Daunis knows, has chosen to not get involved. Nor has TJ used his role as a police officer to actively work to get meth out of the community. But Perry, Pauline, and other small children haven't been able to choose how they will interact with meth. Daunis essentially decides that it's her responsibility to these future generations to work with Jamie and Ron. She must make the world better for the twins, and, in doing so, she'll get justice for Lily and David.*



## CHAPTER 14

Daunis runs the next morning. Everything feels normal—except she misses running with Jamie and resents that fact. At EverCare, Mom is reading Jane Austen to GrandMary, as usual. Daunis never liked Jane Austen much; Lily always talked about books with the adults. Daunis tells Mom that she's spoken to her boss, who told her she doesn't have to go back to work. She says she's running errands today, but she doesn't tell Mom that she's going with Ron and Jamie to Marquette to visit the U.S. Attorney's Office.

*Daunis is still grieving Lily, and part of this is seeing all the places where Lily will never again be, such as here at EverCare chatting about Jane Austen with GrandMary and Mom. This realization makes Daunis appreciate Lily more for what Lily brought to the community—and it suggests that Daunis may decide at some point to try to step up and fill some of those roles.*



Ron and Jamie pick Daunis up a bit later. Daunis and Ron exchange *The Godfather* jokes, and then Daunis insists that "Secret Squirrel" training starts now. Jamie doesn't get the reference, but Ron does. He says Daunis can only speak about the investigation when he or Jamie say it's safe, and he warns that they'll only tell Daunis what she needs to know. They can't direct her to do things—like search hockey players' bags for burner phones—but she can volunteer information. Ron turns into a driveway, which leads to a three-car garage. It's a drop-off spot where Daunis can drop trash bags from hockey players. Daunis refuses to take trash and promises herself that she won't snoop on Levi or her friends. Still, Ron gives her a garage door opener.

*Despite the generational difference, Ron and Daunis share way more cultural references than Daunis and Jamie do. Secret Squirrel was a cartoon character originally from the 1960s who appeared on television again briefly in 1993, so there were opportunities for both Daunis and Ron (depending on his exact age) to watch Secret Squirrel shows as children. When it comes to the garage and the veiled request that Daunis collect Supes' trash, Daunis begins to realize that this isn't all fun and games. She may be asked to do things that go against her conscience—and for now, at least, her loyalty is to Levi and the local boys she trusts.*



Ron resumes the drive to Marquette and says that Daunis will have to learn how to make meth. She and Jamie will take a trip to a federal lab soon. Daunis realizes Jen isn't real—but still, she's more disturbed about a trip with Jamie and people thinking she stole him than she is about learning to make meth. Ron says it's Daunis's choice whether she wants to pose as Jamie's friend or a girlfriend, but he can't join them on the trip. Daunis must develop the appearance of a relationship with Jamie so they don't tip people off.

*Daunis cares deeply about her reputation, especially the bits of it that she can control. For instance, she can behave in such a way that won't result in people labeling her as a boyfriend stealer. But now, to help the investigation, Ron is saying that she must at least consider allowing her reputation to slide. This may have long-term consequences for Daunis if it damages her standing in the community.*





At the Attorney's office, a higher-up reads the CI instructions to Daunis. Basically, Daunis is supposed to voluntarily give truthful information, and she shouldn't do anything illegal. (This is confusing; Ron said she was going to learn to make meth.) The higher-up mentions that any payments will be taxed, and Daunis scowls that she doesn't want to be paid. Ron says they want information on the team, the Tribe, and the Sault. They need information on the traditional medicines Travis might've been adding to the meth. The pen they give Daunis to sign the forms is heavy and fancy, and this whole thing feels wrong. Daunis knows it's not right to experiment with traditional medicines for the FBI. Thinking of what Lily, Auntie, and Gramma Pearl would do, Daunis realizes she's the only one who can help. She can do things her own way. She signs.

*From the beginning, the CI agreement doesn't seem to prioritize Daunis or her Ojibwe community—it prioritizes the investigation above all else. It's unclear, for instance, if Daunis would perhaps get in trouble for learning to make meth, even with Ron's blessing, since as far as she knows, doing so is illegal. Further, and most disturbingly for Daunis, it's clear that the feds aren't interested in respecting traditional medicines and Ojibwe culture. So, Daunis realizes that she and the feds are coming to this investigation with very different perspectives. As a member of the local Ojibwe community, Daunis cares about the investigation successfully getting rid of the meth that's decimating her community. But she also knows that she must honor her roots and protect traditional knowledge, a heavy task.*



On the way home, Daunis daydreams like she hasn't in years. She used to daydream about Dad being at Levi's hockey games, but now, she dreams about shopping for books and school supplies with Lily. Coming back to the present and noticing the signs for Tahquamenon Falls State Park, Daunis tells Ron to stop. She leads them to the waterfall's observation deck and explains to Ron, who's awestruck, that the water is brown because of tannins leaching from the cedar swamps. Daunis volunteers that cedar is a cleansing, purifying medicine. Then, she admits that she's honoring her grieving traditions, so she can't collect medicines for a year. She'll find information another way.

*By telling Ron and Jamie about cedar's medicinal properties, Daunis attempts to show them that her culture is richer than just whatever compound was in the meth-X. Cedar, incidentally, is described as the exact opposite of the compound in meth-X; it's "cleansing" while the nefarious compound reads as contaminating. This explicitly highlights that traditional medicines aren't just harmful. Finally, as Daunis explains why she can't collect medicines, she makes it clear that her loyalty is to her Ojibwe culture. It offers her these restorative traditions that help her heal. The same cannot yet be said for the investigation, as Daunis doesn't trust it'll help.*



Ron accepts this, but he asks if Daunis might apply for tribal membership by her birthday on October 1. It might help. Daunis refuses and asks what Uncle David found out about the investigation. Ron says that David was collecting mushrooms on Duck Island, but he wouldn't tell them exactly where he was looking. Privately, Daunis wonders why. Were the FBI following him? Are they going to follow her? Daunis and Jamie race up the stairs back to the parking lot, and Daunis flips Jamie off. As Ron arrives with the car keys, she tells Jamie that they're not friends and will only speak about the investigation.

*Daunis doesn't elaborate, but she seems to see Ron's request that she enroll in the Tribe as purely convenient for him and for the investigation. However, enrolling will affect Daunis legally and will change how others in the community see and treat her; it's not something to take lightly. This misguided request, then, seems to encourage Daunis to consider whether the FBI has her best interests at heart (and whether they actually cared about David). For now, it seems like they don't—so it'll be up to Daunis to protect herself.*



## CHAPTER 15

Granny June calls the next morning and asks Daunis to take her to lunch at the Elder Center; she'll bring the Jeep. On the ferry, she offers Daunis her semaa pouch to offer to the river; since the river flows constantly, it's a new river every time, and they should honor their journey. Daunis holds Granny June's hand as they enter the Elder Center and realizes why Granny June asked her to come—for moral support. They greet Minnie Mustang (so named for the red Mustang she bought when she turned 75) and Daunis gets in line behind Jonsy Kewadin, TJ's grandpa. She fixes Granny June a tray and then tells Minnie about her college classes.

Daunis gets herself some food just as Auntie walks in. Daunis's throat closes up. Auntie supposedly has felonies—would telling her about the investigation put Auntie in danger? Daunis decides that since Auntie has a happy life now, it's better to stay quiet. After lunch, Daunis hangs out as Granny June and Minnie play cards. Jonsy asks if anyone wants to go bottle collecting with him, and Daunis overhears Auntie telling someone that she's joining Daunis and Granny June in not collecting medicines for a year. Daunis should've prayed for respect this morning—it's her job to protect and respect others during the mourning period. Remembering how talkative Jonsy is, she asks if he still needs a collecting buddy.

## CHAPTER 16

Daunis drops the Jeep and Granny June at Granny June's house and then holds out the keys. But Granny June says she knows Daunis paid for Lily's funeral, so she'd like Daunis to keep the Jeep and drive it around. Jonsy interrupts the moment by saying he has places to be, so Daunis gets back in the Jeep and follows his Lincoln to the old landfill. When they get there, he pulls out a bin filled with "treasure hunting" supplies. He rolls his eyes as he puts on and offers Daunis gloves and a breathing mask; TJ must be getting on his grandpa about safety.

*Even with Lily gone, Daunis remains connected to her friend's grandma and to the other elders who frequent the Elder Center. It's a surprising moment for Daunis to realize that Granny June, despite being a venerated Elder, needs moral support—it reminds Daunis that Daunis can indeed support her Elders in various ways. Supporting the Elders, in this sense, helps everyone in the community feel supported and invested in the group.*



*In many ways, Daunis is very mature and adult. She's participating in a federal investigation, and by not telling Mom or Auntie about that, she's prioritizing something much bigger than herself over her need for authority figures' support. Still, though, Daunis is at the beginning of her coming-of-age journey, and she has a lot to learn. Here, she realizes that she doesn't always know what the best choice in a given situation is—sometimes, she'll only figure that out well after the fact. So, it's yet to be seen if bottle collecting with Jonsy will turn out to be the right choice.*



*For both Granny June and Daunis, the Jeep symbolizes Lily—it was something she loved, and many of her quirks were tied to her vehicle. By giving the Jeep to Daunis, Granny June ensures that this iteration of Lily will stay alive and continue to kick around in the community, a thought that comforts both of them. Noticing Jonsy's safety precautions, Daunis discovers that she's not the only person her age to take a keen interest in looking out for the Elders: TJ is doing the same.*



Jonsy leads Daunis through the landfill and says they're looking for old glass bottles, preferably with hats (lids). Singing Finnish folk songs (his mother was from Finland), he moves aside a piece of corrugated metal. Daunis asks if he should've checked for spiders, but he says nothing lives here. People weren't thinking seven generations ahead when they started dumping stuff here, poisoning the ground. Daunis finds a brown "kidney and liver cure" bottle, which Jonsy pockets. Then she points to the storm rolling in. As they head back to the car, Daunis notices a new trash bag among all the old junk. Suddenly catching a whiff, she flashes back to Travis waving the gun in her face and the stench of meth. Jonsy tries to inspect the bag, but Daunis pulls him away and tells him to leave it. Once Jonsy drives away, Daunis returns for the bag.

*Jonsy introduces an important idea when he describes the landfill's origins. It's not enough, he implies, for someone to think only of their Elders and their ancestors—they must also think about how their choices are going to influence future generations. Creating a landfill years ago has created a problem for Daunis's generation and those that will come after her, as they won't get to enjoy what was once a natural area. Instead, they'll have to contend with the pollution. Identifying the bag of meth byproducts here makes it clear that the pollution is particularly dangerous—and is getting worse as meth production in the area ramps up, creating more toxic waste.*



## CHAPTER 17

Lily keeps blankets in the Jeep; Daunis uses them to swaddle the garbage bag. She heads home for the garage door opener, but it starts hailing before she gets there. So, she pulls over and calls Jamie to tell him she's hauling trash. He says he'll meet her where she's parked. Daunis giggles about the absurdity of the situation and starts to text Lily. When Jamie opens the Jeep door and sees Daunis's expression, he tells her to let him drive. Remembering Gramma Pearl, Daunis remembers learning that Gramma Pearl cured her earache with urine because urine is sterile and a hydrogen peroxide substitute. What would Pearl think of this situation? Would she believe Daunis is trying to help by partnering with the very government that tried to take her to the boarding schools?

*For a moment, Daunis feels like Lily is helping her solve the mystery and help the investigation. But Daunis can't escape for long the crushing reality that Lily is dead—and that she's involved in the investigation in the first place to try to get justice for her friend. Jamie, for all his faults and deceptions, seems to genuinely care about Daunis's wellbeing, hence his insistence on driving. This gives Daunis the opportunity to ponder how, exactly, she should think about her role in the investigation. She knows that Ojibwe medicine practitioners have come to many of the same conclusions conventional science has, such as that something sterile (whether that be urine or hydrogen peroxide) will cure an earache. But it's not clear yet if being able to identify these similarities is enough to justify Daunis cooperating with government entities who have, in the past, seriously harmed her community and family.*



Jamie drives to the garage, drops the bag on a countertop, and then joins Daunis to huddle in a blanket. Daunis explains that Gramma Pearl loved storms and coached little Daunis through talking to the thunderbirds and the ancestors during storms. Jamie inches closer, and Daunis lets him comfort her.

*Daunis and Jamie begin to connect as she shares more about her culture with him. She's not willing to acknowledge it here, but she is falling for Jamie—and this seems like as good an opportunity as any to get close to him and get the comfort she desires.*



Ron arrives a bit later and tells Daunis to not involve local or tribal police. Then, Jamie carefully unpacks the bag of drain cleaner, brake fluid, tubing, and empty cold medicine packages. Jamie explains that Canada doesn't restrict medicine sales, and Daunis remembers Jamie asking her about buying stuff in Canada. Ron asks if Daunis would be willing to go to the drug lab next weekend over Labor Day. Thinking of what Gramma Pearl would do, Daunis says she and her boyfriend will spend a romantic weekend in Marquette.

*Telling Daunis not to reach out to local or tribal police further disconnects Daunis from her community. To be sure, she's made it clear that she doesn't trust or like tribal police much—but TJ, for all his faults, is a part of her community. As Daunis accepts this and agrees to go to the drug lab, she aligns herself more with the feds, though she does this believing that she can nevertheless help her community by doing so.*



## CHAPTER 18

Daunis tells Mom she's attending a geology seminar at Michigan Tech, and she tells Auntie she and Jamie are going for a romantic getaway. Auntie isn't happy about this and tells Daunis to be careful.

On Tuesday, Daunis spends an hour sitting in the campus bookstore parking lot, but she can't bring herself to go in. She then goes to say goodbye to her summer program kids and keeps herself busy so she doesn't dwell on the trip to the drug lab. The next day, Ron calls and asks if Daunis will be okay sharing a hotel room with Jamie. There will be two beds, but this way Levi will think Daunis and Jamie are dating. This is an uncomfortable thought for Daunis.

On Saturday, Daunis is halfway to Marquette with Jamie before she asks how Levi took the news of the trip. Jamie says Levi was pleased, which shocks Daunis—Levi always gets overprotective when Daunis starts seeing someone. Levi just said that they should be back by Monday for Coach Bobby's Labor Day bonfire cookout. At the hotel, Daunis catches a glimpse of Jamie's ID, which has his fake name. He refuses to tell her his real age as they drop their things in the hotel room and then head for the lab.

First, Daunis and Jamie watch a documentary about meth's history. Daunis finds it sorely lacking. It describes the government giving it to World War II soldiers so they could stay awake longer, but it doesn't say anything about how meth destroys people and communities. Now, it's the most abused hard drug in the world. As the video ends, the lab tech excitedly asks if Daunis and Jamie are ready to make meth. When Daunis snaps that this isn't fun, he tones it down. They don protective equipment and then start with the most complicated and time-consuming process. Daunis finds the science equipment and processes soothing.

*Neither of Daunis's explanations, of course, is the truth. But as Daunis makes the choice to lie and begins to function wholly independently from her family, she begins to come of age.*



*Daunis is still struggling with her grief for Lily. Now that the funeral is over, there aren't many formal traditions Daunis can follow to help get some closure—she's on her own. Learning she'll share a room with Jamie highlights for Daunis how fake their relationship really is. It's all for show, and that, more than anything, is what seems to bug Daunis about the arrangement.*



*It raises red flags for Daunis (and should raise flags for readers, too) that Levi doesn't react in an expected way to learning about the trip. This begins to suggest that Levi may have an ulterior motive for pushing Daunis and Jamie together, though what that motive is remains a mystery for now. Similarly, Jamie keeps everything about himself and his true motives a secret. This keeps him and Daunis from genuinely connecting, since they're connecting over a lie (that he's actually a high school student and that they're genuinely interested in each other).*



*Daunis has seen firsthand how devastating meth is. So, it seems like a terrible mistake for the documentary to leave out the kind of impact meth has had on communities like hers. Essentially, she wants a more holistic view of meth and what it is, not just the sanitized view the documentary presents. The lab tech's enthusiasm also doesn't help, as he seems so far removed from the realities of meth use and abuse that he behaves offensively. The video and the tech highlight the fact that Daunis and Ron and Jamie are coming at the meth investigation from two very different viewpoints: Daunis wants to help everyone, while Ron and Jamie just want to find the "bad guys."*



On the way back to the hotel, Jamie asks Daunis where she'd like to eat. Daunis can't get the smell of cat pee and nail polish remover out of her nose. She asks what Jamie can tell her about the kids from Minnesota and their hallucinations. He says they came to the ER wanting more meth, but they were also scared and had hallucinated that men were chasing them in the woods. They all refused to speak once their parents arrived, and their behavior was odd enough to attract the FBI's attention. Daunis asks how the kids are doing now, but Jamie doesn't know. Back in the hotel room, Daunis showers and gets out to discover Jamie ordered pizza. She contacts Mom and Auntie to let them know she's okay and refuses to talk to Jamie about their day.

Daunis falls asleep and dreams about the night Travis shot Lily. She watches Lily walk away from Travis and can smell the acetone and urine on him. Lily reaches out for the gun, and Travis shoots her. Travis says something, but Daunis can't hear—and then he shoots himself. Daunis wakes up panting and able to smell and taste the chemicals on Travis.

Daunis wakes up with her period and cramps the next morning. She washes the stain out of her sheet and tells Jamie she needs to run by herself today. Since Daunis is on her Moon, she doesn't offer semaa during her prayer—women are powerful when they're menstruating. Auntie says they carry power and medicine within them during this time. Daunis feels better after her run. At the lab, the tech shows her four simple methods for making meth and then teaches her some meth slang. Jamie asks about gangs in the Sault, but Daunis says there aren't any. They look at some paraphernalia and then inspect what they made yesterday. Daunis's meth is better than Jamie's.

After Daunis showers, Jamie says they should go to the Italian restaurant Levi suggested so their story checks out. Sighing with exasperation, Daunis changes and accompanies Jamie to the restaurant. Once they're seated, Jamie says he's actually 22. Daunis wonders to herself why she can't play along now; she did so well in the meth lab. She says she'd rather not know anything real about him from now on. They eat dinner in silence. To an outsider, it looks like they're on a bad first date.

*Daunis sees the fact that Jamie knows nothing about how the kids in Minnesota are doing now as offensive. For Daunis, Jamie's ignorance drives home the fact that Jamie is focused on one thing—finding the distributors and makers in the Sault—and not on actually helping people and communities who need help. This is a lot of weight for Daunis to carry, which is partially why she refuses to speak to him about their day. It's difficult for her to reconcile her desire to help with his desire to accomplish his goal and leave again, with no thought for the long-term consequences.*



*As Daunis continues to dream about Travis shooting Lily, she's regularly retraumatized—watching her best friend die doesn't get easier. Now that she knows more about meth production, though, she gets more information as part of the dream. In this case, that's the smell of meth production.*



*Though her period is physically uncomfortable for Daunis, knowing that she's more powerful right now and has medicine within her helps her feel better about her work with the investigation and at the drug lab. In this way, the novel highlights the power of Daunis's cultural beliefs to make her feel secure and competent. It doesn't hurt either that Daunis is already well-versed in lab practices, which is likely why her meth is so much better than Jamie's. Daunis has Uncle David to thank for this, reminding her again that she's connected intimately to both her Fontaine and Firekeeper family members.*



*Daunis is getting comfortable with the version of Jamie she knows, the one who's not actually 17 or 18 but is just mysterious. Learning his real age might be the only truthful thing she knows about him, but it means she has to keep track of his two different identities—which complicates the fake relationship they're trying to build. For now, it doesn't seem like their relationship, fake or otherwise, is going anywhere, given their struggle to connect over dinner.*



## CHAPTER 19

The drive home seems to take forever, and Daunis keeps hearing Lily's voice in her head, telling her that she's not allowing herself to experience new things. Jamie finally asks about Coach Bobby, and Daunis explains that he's the Sault High hockey coach and a business teacher. He's always stood up for Daunis and her right to play hockey with the boys, though Levi also taught Daunis some choice insults to use as needed. They then negotiate "relationship patterns." They agree on holding hands and giving kisses on the cheek, but Daunis tells Jamie he can't touch her hair (it reminds her of TJ). The atmosphere gets somber when Daunis asks how Jamie got his scar, and he explains that someone held him down and cut him. Daunis uses one of Levi's insults to lighten the mood before they reach Coach Bobby's lake house.

Daunis and Jamie approach the party on the shore, eliciting teasing whoops from party attendees. Coach Bobby is flipping burgers under a gazebo, and Daunis introduces him to Jamie. Coach Bobby gruffly says Daunis is an exceptional player and should be playing for Michigan. Daunis almost believes herself when she says it's time to try new things.

Ten minutes later, Levi, Stormy Nodin, and then Mike Edwards join Daunis and Jamie at a picnic table. Daunis teases the boys when they taunt her about having sex with Jamie, and then Levi gently asks Daunis about Granny June gifting Daunis Lily's Jeep. Daunis relaxes, suddenly realizing how tense she's been. Then, Levi says he and the guys would like to run with Daunis and Jamie in the mornings—and Daunis knows Levi is just thrilled that she's finally allowing Hockey World to infiltrate her Regular World.

Later that afternoon, Daunis's stomach cramps; she excuses herself to use the bathroom in Coach Bobby's cabin. She hasn't been here in a year, and Coach Bobby has renovated his kitchen with fancy appliances. When night falls, it's time for the bonfire. As Coach Bobby sets up fireworks, Daunis snags seats for herself and Jamie by the fire. Macy slides into Jamie's seat and mocks Daunis for "stealing Jamie," but Heather, one of Stormy's cousins, tells Macy to go away.

*Lily's implication, as Daunis sees it, is that Daunis is actively keeping herself from connecting with Jamie—and that letting herself get to know him might not be such a bad thing. Even from the next life, Lily continues to be an important member of Daunis's community and dispense advice to her friend. Daunis also sees Coach Bobby as an important mentor and community member, given how he's supported her over the last several years. And though Jamie's past remains mysterious, he reveals that he's suffered significant physical and emotional trauma and so is, like Daunis's community, recovering still.*



*At this point, it's left ambiguous why exactly Daunis isn't playing hockey at Michigan, but Daunis doesn't seem entirely sold on the path she's chosen. This implies that there's something about her past that Daunis isn't sharing with Jamie, Coach Bobby, or readers.*



*Things start to fall into place for Daunis when it becomes clear that Levi is just happy she's willing to let different worlds mingle. This suggests, though, that Levi has wanted for some time to possibly play a bigger part in Daunis's life, something that perhaps hasn't been possible with her clear divisions between Hockey World and Regular World.*



*Daunis doesn't offer any judgment about Coach Bobby's renovations, but if he can afford such fancy appliances, it's clear he's either been saving up or has come into some money. Not asking questions, moreover, highlights how much Daunis trusts her former coach.*



Heather stinks of marijuana, and she's dressed oddly for a bonfire in capri jeans that are held together with safety pins down the side and platform flip-flops. When Daunis thanks Heather, Heather's laugh is empty—she's clearly using drugs. Heather pulls out two baggies, one of Molly V (Molly with Viagra) and the other of rolled joints, and offers some to Daunis. Daunis refuses and reminds Heather that Lily just died because of drugs. Heather storms away. Later that evening, Daunis refuses to tell a story (Auntie always says they should wait until there's snow on the ground to tell stories), so Macy tells a funny one about Creator handing out gifts to all the animals and humans.

*Note that none of Heather's baggies include meth, at least not that Daunis can tell. This makes it clear that while meth is certainly a problem in the Sault, there are also other drugs circulating. Daunis's refusal to tell a story is a way of honoring her culture and her ancestors' wisdom. Macy's choice to tell a story anyway, then, shows that there are lots of different ways to be a part of the Tribe—and not everyone is as immersed in the traditions as Daunis is.*



## CHAPTER 20

Jamie is in Daunis's driveway the next morning like no time has passed since their last run. He asks why Macy referred to Daunis as "Firekeeper's daughter" at one point last night, and she explains that it's a reference to the story of the original Firekeeper's daughter. She'd start her day by singing and raising the sun into the sky, but it's kind of annoying because her whole identity is based on her relationships to her dad, her husband, and then her sons. She has so much responsibility and no name of her own. As Daunis and Jamie begin their run, Daunis decides to start leaving Firekeeper's Daughter out when she introduces herself to Creator each morning—she's being hypocritical. She also decides to give Firekeeper's daughter her own name, Zaagaasikwe.

*Though Daunis generally finds comfort and solace in Ojibwe stories, this doesn't mean she doesn't think critically about those stories. As she engages more critically with the story of Firekeeper's daughter, she begins to come of age and hold a more nuanced, mature view of how she'd like to interact with her culture. She is, after all, a Firekeeper's daughter too—her dad's last name was Firekeeper. But here, she decides that she doesn't need to define herself by her relationship to her dad; she—and the Firekeeper's daughter in the story—can both be their own people and still support their community.*



Reaching Levi's house, Daunis explains that Stormy lives here too because Stormy's family is "messed up." Dana, Levi's mom, has been caring for Stormy for years now. As Levi and Stormy join Daunis and Jamie, Stormy heckles Daunis for her trust fund. Daunis knows that both she and Stormy feel weirdly about money; Dana has been depositing Levi's per-cap check into a savings account for him, something Stormy's mom Shawna doesn't do. Shawna is instead known for the time she threw a huge, expensive party and then applied for emergency assistance to pay her bills.

*Daunis makes the case that there are healthy, supportive, functional families in the Sault—and then there are families like Stormy's, where kids must seek refuge elsewhere in order to get consistent support. So, while Daunis feels weird about money because it's uncomfortable to know she's better off than her peers, Stormy feels weird about money because he has almost no power to make financial choices for himself—and his mom's choices have tended to hurt him, not help him.*



Mike joins the group, and the guys make fart jokes. Daunis ignores them and focuses on trying to keep up. Levi, however, tells the story of the time that he fell and hit his head, and Daunis sheltered him from the rain and accompanied him to the hospital. Privately, Daunis remembers that her relationship to Dana changed that day: Dana hugged her, and they both realized they loved Levi. The boys break into a sprint for the last quarter mile, leaving Daunis behind. When she finally catches up at the fitness center and collapses in the grass, Jamie runs over to kiss her on the cheek while Levi watches.

*Levi's story lets Jamie know how close Levi and Daunis are, and how protective Daunis has historically been of her little brother. Further, Levi's injury allowed Daunis to overcome and move past some of the familial trauma she's suffered (recall that Dad had married Dana by the time Mom got back to the Sault with baby Daunis, something that Daunis has framed as fairly traumatizing for all involved).*



Daunis walks to EverCare and then watches Mom rub lotion into GrandMary's legs. She wonders silently if Mom is stronger than she looks—is it strength to love and care for people you don't like, and to believe in people like Uncle David? Daunis kisses Mom, tells GrandMary that today's her first day at Lake State, and heads home to get ready. But as Daunis finally reaches her first class, she can't help thinking that Lily should be here—so when the teacher tells students to leave if they're not interested, Daunis does. She goes to the student union in search of water, but she runs into TJ. He's wearing a cologne that Daunis bought him, so she throws her macroeconomics textbook at him. Infuriatingly, he barely reacts.

Robin Bailey appears. Firmly, she picks up the textbook and steers Daunis into the student union, saying that Daunis has to get over TJ and not let guys have so much power over her. Robin is two years older than Daunis. She was the first girl to make the Sault's team, and she and Daunis played together for two years. Now, Robin suggests that Daunis take two classes, whatever Lily was most excited about (American Literature) and whatever she's most excited about (Plant Morphology). She gives Daunis her number, and they cross their arms like they used to cross their hockey sticks before games.

While Daunis is in line at the Elders' lunch one day, Jonsy asks her about the trash bag they saw at the landfill. Daunis denies taking it. She offers to help Jonsy's brother redeem an iTunes gift card and is there when announcements are read: the Youth Tribal Council will come on Thursday to help Elders set up cell phones, and Heather Nodin is missing. By Friday, Daunis is taking only two classes and spending her afternoons on Sugar Island with the Elders. She decides she can ask Elders about medicines while she helps them. She learns that bodies sometimes wash ashore on Sugar Island, that Leonard Manitou believes the "Little People" kept him safe when he got lost for days as a kid, and that mushrooms grow on Duck Island, near Sugar Island. Ron said David had been looking there.

## CHAPTER 21

On Saturday, Daunis drives to Sugar Island. She passes a billboard with Heather's senior picture and the Tribal Police phone number on her way there. When Daunis steps out of the Jeep, she's suddenly flooded with a memory of Dad carrying her to his favorite fishing spot. Pushing the memory away, she thinks of Jonsy and gets to work. She marks out a grid by tying yarn to trees at regular intervals and then begins collecting fungi in each square. Daunis hopes to find something that isn't in Uncle David's mushroom books or in an online database. She can almost hear David telling her what to do as she explores.

*Daunis is coming to a new understanding of her mom. In this new view, perhaps Mom is stronger than Daunis has given her credit for—and so, perhaps, Daunis doesn't need to worry so much about caring for Mom. As Daunis begins college, her life seems to momentarily fall apart again as she confronts Lily's absence and the fact that she's more upset about the breakup with TJ than he is. Note that Daunis is upset in part because she has no idea why or how TJ is able to keep his cool—he just seems to not care. Not knowing heightens her own unease.*



*Even though Daunis felt unmoored in the last passage, now, her community seems to converge on her to put her back on track. With Robin's pep talk and the hockey conventions (crossing their arms like they used to cross their hockey sticks), Daunis once again feels like she's part of something bigger and has the strength to go on. It helps, too, that Daunis clearly admires Robin and how well it seems Robin is doing in college.*



*Heather, recall, offered Daunis drugs at the bonfire several days ago—so her disappearance may be connected to the investigation, if not just generally concerning. As Daunis spends more time with the Elders, she expands her community and gains important insight that may genuinely help the investigation. This shows Daunis that she can indeed do things her way; she doesn't have to help the investigation the way Ron initially asked her to (by experimenting with mushrooms and meth herself). However, it also seems ominous to learn that bodies sometimes wash ashore on Sugar Island, especially knowing already that David's death was likely the result of foul play.*



*Sugar Island (and Duck Island) is Daunis's home, and so it's laden with memories of Daunis's childhood. Now, Daunis is beginning to make Duck Island mean something slightly different as she continues Uncle David's research on the island. She's forging her own path as she systematically hunts for mushrooms, pulling in the wisdom of her Anishinaabe Elders and from Uncle David.*





After a quick snack, Daunis begins a new section. She comes across a patch of pansies, one of Gramma Pearl's favorite ingredients for medicine. Daunis has always loved them and got through her coming-of-age fast by imagining some nearby pansies were keeping her company. A raven darts by, and Daunis remembers Macy's story from the bonfire. According to Gramma Pearl, Gaagaagi—the raven—never got his own gift from Creator because he was too busy causing trouble. But by watching the other animals use their gifts, Gaagaagi learned exactly what each animal could do and could then help them work together and solve their problems. His gift was problem-solving. Daunis asks the raven how he'll help her, and then she smells it. Heather Nodin's body is just beyond a nearby boulder.

*Symbolically, this passage is hefty. The pansies connect Daunis to her community and to her medicinal knowledge, and the fact that they got her through her coming-of-age fast also ties them to her maturation. Gaagaagi's story, meanwhile, is about a being finding their place in the world, much as Daunis is trying to do right now (helped along by pansies and by her Elders' wisdom). Finding Heather's body, then, suggests that growing up isn't going to be easy or pleasant for Daunis. In fact, it's going to be heartbreaking and traumatic.*



## CHAPTER 22

Daunis bursts into Auntie's house on the phone with a 911 operator; she only just got service. She shouts that she didn't need to take Heather's pulse because Heather was obviously dead. Auntie takes the phone from Daunis, tells the operator that they'll meet the police at the Duck Island caretaker's cabin, and squeezes Daunis in a calming hug. Daunis remembers listening to a story on the radio with Coach Bobby about calming animals this way prior to slaughter. Soon after, Daunis leads a bunch of officers and EMTs to Heather's body, though she refuses to get close to it. Back at the cars, TJ asks Daunis why she was out here earlier. She promptly vomits on his boots and says she was working on a school project. Realizing she needs to call Mom and probably Jamie and Ron, Daunis says she has to call her boyfriend.

*Finding Heather's body may have represented a turning point for Daunis's maturity, but she still needs support and help from authority figures like Auntie (and in Daunis's mind, from Coach Bobby). But recalling the radio story about calming slaughter animals also suggests that Daunis feels some connection to the animals—suggesting she feels out of control and possibly in danger. Still, Daunis knows she has a responsibility to get the police and other first responders to Heather's body, so she's able to maturely pull herself together enough to get this help for Heather.*



Over the weekend, Daunis allows Mom to baby her. She texts Jamie to come over on Sunday, and before he arrives, Daunis prepares Mom. Mom has just suggested that maybe *Hocus Pocus* is a bad movie choice since there are dead people in it, and Daunis inadvertently makes Mom cry by rolling her eyes. As Daunis hugs her crying mother, she says that Jamie is more than a friend and is a good person. She also asks for some privacy, so Mom goes downstairs after greeting Jamie. Then, Daunis moves Mom's baby monitor next to the TV (Mom has the other receiver downstairs) and drags Jamie to her bedroom.

*Daunis has clearly suffered some trauma after finding Heather's body, but she's not so unnerved that she can't get through a lighthearted Halloween movie like *Hocus Pocus* that includes graveyard imagery and (humorous) dead people. As Daunis moves the baby monitor, she denies Mom the ability to surveil her and treat her like a much younger child. In all ways, then, Daunis is insisting to Mom that she's more grown-up than Mom gives her credit for and that she is capable of making her own decisions.*



There, as Jamie pets the cat, Herri, Daunis shares that Heather offered her marijuana and ecstasy laced with Viagra at the bonfire. Jamie says that Heather's death wasn't suspicious, according to Ron, but Daunis says drowning in September is suspicious. She also says that Heather used to be Heather Swanson—until the Tribe started paying per cap and Joey Nodin, her biological dad, claimed paternity and set Heather's mom up for a drug bust. As the custodial parent, he gets Heather's money. Heather's case even spurred the Tribal Council to insist that non-tribal parents must have their babies DNA tested before those babies can be enrolled.

Jamie perks up at the revelation that one can find their tribe through DNA testing, but Daunis says it's not a simple ancestry spit test. The local tribe requires paternity blood testing. Their first idea was to use hair, but there's a violent history of Native people's hair being taken from them. The blood is fraught—lots of Native blood has already been spilled—but blood also connects kids to their language and their history. By now, Jamie seems disinterested. He says that he doesn't want to say bad things about Heather, but it seems in character for her to have had bags of marijuana and crystal meth. Daunis says she still deserves to have someone care about her—and she didn't see any meth in Heather's baggies.

Jamie refuses to let Daunis accompany him to talk with Ron. She's angry enough to throw the baby monitor at him as he steps out the door, but Macy's car turns onto Daunis's street. Daunis didn't pray for bravery this morning; she prayed for Heather to find love in the next life. Still, she hugs Jamie from behind and kisses his neck.

Once Jamie leaves, Daunis goes inside to deal with Mom, who's crying. Both Daunis and Lily are (and were) good at reading people, but Lily always insisted that their abilities to read their mothers were very different—Mom, for instance, didn't take it out on Daunis if things went badly with a boyfriend. Daunis hugs Mom and tries not to roll her eyes as Mom sobs that Uncle David can't walk Daunis down the aisle.

While Mom naps, Daunis can't bring herself to finish *Hocus Pocus* on her own. She's fidgety and keeps hearing Uncle David in her head, telling her to "Work the problem" and think like a scientist. He always appreciated Daunis's curiosity—once, when GrandMary told Daunis that curiosity killed the cat, he quipped that satisfaction "revived her." Suddenly, Daunis remembers that David kept detailed notebooks. Certainly, one is filled with his research on the investigation. He probably found something he wasn't supposed to know, and that's why he's dead.

*Though Ron and Jamie ostensibly want Daunis's help so she can give them insight like she does here, Jamie still seems pretty convinced that Ron is right. Heather's story exposes one of the issues with per cap in that it creates a situation where adults can take advantage of children who suddenly have monetary value. The changes the Tribe made to its rules and system makes it clear that that kind of abuse is in no way something it condones; per cap is supposed to help people. Still, this makes the case that there are always unintended consequences for any action.*



*It's unclear if Jamie's disinterest is genuine or feigned, but either way, he's concerningly unworried about Daunis's explanation of the various traumas that Native communities have suffered at the government's hands and how those traumas continue to impact Native communities today. Instead, he seems far more interested in writing Heather off as an inconsequential drug dealer. In Daunis's understanding, this isn't respectful to Heather—Heather deserves to have her death investigated, and if her body was found with meth, it seems increasingly likely her death is related to the meth cell.*



*Daunis discovers once again that she can't predict the future; she can only make choices based on what she knows. And, even if she might've needed some extra bravery today, she's still doing something far more selfless by praying for Heather.*



*The implication here is that Lily suffered a lot while living with her mom—and that Daunis perhaps didn't grasp how dangerous Lily's life was. Even now, Daunis doesn't seem to fully comprehend that Lily suffered either physically or emotionally when her mom was unhappy, while Daunis is simply annoyed that her mom is so upset.*



*Daunis is coming to the investigation with an Indigenous perspective, so she values thinking ahead, making choices that help the community, and valuing lives like Heather's even if they maybe aren't pertinent to the investigation. But that doesn't exist separately from Daunis's scientific background. She can call on her scientific training when it seems necessary to do so, highlighting again that Daunis has a foot in both worlds.*



## CHAPTER 23

Mom and GrandMary packed Uncle David's things away in GrandMary's basement after he died, so Daunis leaves Mom a note and heads over there. The house smells clean; Mom still has cleaners come twice a week so it's ready for GrandMary to return home. As Daunis finds the "office" boxes, she remembers how GrandMary believed David would outgrow being gay, so she let Mom box David's bedroom. If Daunis had died, would GrandMary act the same about Gramma Pearl's ash baskets and the Jingle Dress regalia? It's so complicated to love someone but dislike parts of them. David had a problem with alcohol and decided years ago that sobriety was for him. When he started acting weird, Daunis suspected he had relapsed. Mom never believed that. Still, there are no notebooks from the year he worked with the FBI.

Daunis thinks of Uncle David and Heather all week. Granny June thinks Daunis has afternoon classes, but really, Daunis spends every afternoon foraging for mushrooms. On Friday, the fall leaves are distractingly beautiful, and Daunis isn't looking forward to the first Supes game tonight. She returns to the spot on Duck Island where she found Heather's body and remembers how Heather has, for years, been checked-out and vacant. It got worse once the Tribe started per-cap payments. Still, she was the only girl Daunis didn't envy at the Daddy-Daughter Dance—Uncle David took Daunis, while Heather went with her mom's current boyfriend. Auntie always told Daunis that girls need a man in their lives to tell them they have value. Did Heather hear something different?

Daunis arrives at the hockey game during the first intermission, as the other anglerfish girlfriends skate onto the ice to toss T-shirts and souvenir pucks to fans. To Daunis's surprise, the other girlfriends welcome her warmly, especially a girl whose name might be Megan. During the second period, Daunis studies Jamie's skating: he was clearly a figure skater. Levi, like Dad, skates like a commanding hockey player. Daunis almost bursts with pride watching him, and she remembers how supportive he always was of her hockey career. Now, she realizes she's helping the investigation for Levi and the Supes, in addition to Uncle David, Lily, the Tribe, the Sault, and the kids in Minnesota. Daunis's good mood evaporates after the game when, in the bathroom, Megan shows off her new tattoo: a dream catcher on her lower belly to "honor[] Indians."

*GrandMary had very specific ideas of who her children (and grandchildren) should be, and she was happy to ignore and minimize the parts she didn't like. This is uncomfortable for Daunis, as it forces her to accept that her grandmother, someone she loves, genuinely doesn't like a huge, intrinsic part of who Daunis is. Deciding that it's just "complicated" to love someone like GrandMary, though, is a pretty mature take on the situation—it leaves room for Daunis to come to a more nuanced understanding as she gathers more information.*



*In this passage, Daunis considers her own privilege. As she wonders if Heather didn't hear that she was valuable from adults around her, it highlights that this isn't something that all kids, male or female, get from caregivers. Indeed, simply given the contours of Heather's story (that her dad took custody when he realized that would let him take Heather's per-cap payments), it seems likely that Heather learned that her value was based on what she could do for others, not that she was valuable simply for existing.*



*Up to this point, Daunis has engaged with the Supes as a fan, as a hockey player from another team, and as a player's family member. She clearly doesn't think highly of the other girlfriends, as she sees them as pathetic and needy—and yet, their kindness surprises her. Still, her main focus is on the players, specifically on Levi. Watching Levi skate connects Daunis emotionally to Dad, and this in turn helps Daunis feel more connected to her entire community—blood and otherwise. However, Megan's tattoo highlights that Daunis can't escape bigotry and casual racism, even from people who are otherwise nice to her.*



Daunis finds Ron in the lobby. As Mike's parents wave them over, Daunis whispers that Mr. Edwards is a defense attorney and runs the Booster Bus for superfans—which has a waiting list, annual fees, and supposedly, an NDA. Mrs. Edwards, who bought GrandMary's clothing store, introduces herself first, and then Daunis introduces Coach Bobby and Mr. Edwards to Ron. Mr. Edwards insists Daunis call him Grant now that she's graduated, and she asks about the Booster Bus. Grant offers to let them try it out next weekend. As Grant drones on about the game, Jamie, Levi, Stormy, and then Mike join the group. Stormy's parents aren't here—they must be "on a bender"—so Daunis compliments his performance.

Then, Daunis turns to Mike. His parents host Sunday dinners for the team during hockey season, and she suspects there might be clues in Grant's home office. She tells Mike he did a great job, but Grant casually says that Mike missed one. Quoting [The Art of War](#), Daunis suggests it's strategic to let a messenger live. Grant perks up at this (Daunis doesn't mention she learned this particular tip from watching *Mulan* with Perry and Pauline). But Daunis asks Mike if he'd help her set up a new BlackBerry, and Grant suggests she come for the Sunday dinner and do it then. She should bring Jamie and Ron. Daunis agrees and wanders away to escape Grant's disturbing gaze.

## CHAPTER 24

Ron drives Daunis and Jamie to the Edwardses' house. On the way, Daunis says that in addition to some players, Coach Bobby will be there—he and Grant got to be good friends after a shooting incident a few years ago. Travis, Levi, Stormy, and Mike were playing with a BB gun, and Travis accidentally shot a car window, blinding a woman. The boys wouldn't say who did it, but Coach convinced Travis to fess up. After that, people shunned Travis. Jamie and Ron are annoyed that Daunis didn't share this with them, but Daunis, angry at being asked to be a "snitch," lists several juicy tidbits about locals and says that it's not okay for them to come here and expect to just see bad guys. They haven't earned the Sault's stories.

*The fact that the Booster Bus exists at all speaks to how all-consuming hockey is in the Sault. And the possible NDA (non-disclosure agreement) tells Daunis that the superfans who participate in the Booster Bus may be using the group and the secrecy to cover up nefarious dealings, possibly with the meth cell. Daunis and readers are again reminded of how difficult Stormy has it. He doesn't have consistently supportive parents at home due to what seems like his parents' relationship to drugs or alcohol. But people like Daunis can help fill the gaps and make Stormy feel loved and supported.*



*Though Daunis gets exactly what she wants in this passage (an invite to the Sunday dinner), Grant's gaze suggests that not all is going to go well—indeed, his gaze seems predatory, or to at least bother Daunis. Part of what's going on here is that Daunis is re-navigating her relationships with people like Grant and even Mike, since she's an adult now, she and Mike aren't teammates, and Grant positions himself as a peer and not just her teammate's dad. It remains to be seen how Daunis's transition into adulthood will affect her relationships with the hockey crew.*



*It's worth noting that as far as Daunis knows, Travis blinding the woman was an accident—and yet, he suffered majorly for his actions. Is it just, the novel asks, that Travis paid so dearly when he didn't mean to hurt anyone? However, what's more important to Daunis in the moment is calling out Ron and Jamie for being disrespectful to her community. She's not going to just spill the Sault's secrets because they told her to—if they want to learn what this place is about and get to the bottom of the meth issue, they'll need to integrate into the community and develop some respect for it.*



At the Edwards house, Daunis identifies all the luxury vehicles belonging to Dana, Levi, Grant, and Coach Bobby, but she insists nice cars aren't suspicious and Coach won his in a poker tournament. It seems like yesterday Daunis was here as a player, but now, she holds hands with Jamie and realizes he sees all her friends as suspects. As stylish Mrs. Edwards tells people to eat at the table, Daunis thinks it makes sense that she bought GrandMary's clothing boutique. She remembers overhearing GrandMary saying once that Daunis was going to outgrow the sizes the boutique carried; Mom threatened to leave town if GrandMary ever said anything about Daunis's body to Daunis. She also insisted that Daunis get to see her Firekeeper relatives. If only Mom stood up for herself like she stood up for Daunis.

During the meal, Daunis makes sure she's right next to Mike—she's going to pretend to be interested in everything she says. As Grant gives Daunis a long look while lamenting that GrandMary won't be at Shagala, Daunis thinks he's "kind of a gross pervert." Mrs. Edwards says that she already ordered a dress for Daunis, so Daunis should come for a fitting soon. As the conversation moves on, Coach Bobby says it's not too late for Daunis to play national hockey. Daunis tries to hide how painful this conversation is. She can't follow that dream, but only Auntie knows why. Daunis brings up the NHL lockout (strike) to change the subject.

Finally, Mike leads Daunis to his bedroom to set up the BlackBerry. Daunis plans to leave something there so she can come back downstairs, as his bedroom shares a Jack-and-Jill bathroom with Grant's home office. They set up the BlackBerry, Daunis drops her old phone, and a few minutes after they return upstairs, Daunis heads back down to look for her phone. Daunis locks the bathroom door to Mike's room, turns on the fan, and then enters the office. She takes photos of Grant's bookshelves and then tries to access the file cabinet (the office furniture used to belong to Grandpa Lorenzo, so Daunis knows where the secret key is). But the key is gone. Hearing footsteps, Daunis tries to cover her prints in the plush carpet and then opens the door to Mike's room. He's right there, and he says he knows what she's up to.

*Similar to after the first Supes game, Daunis is unnerved by entering a familiar place with a new identity, as an adult. With this new identity comes new concerns: Daunis isn't a player, so she's less concerned about the game replays on the TV. Instead, she can focus on the interpersonal stuff going on between the various attendees. This also provides an opportunity for Daunis to realize again that Mom is stronger than Daunis tends to give her credit for, since Mom stood up to her own mom about not making Daunis feel bad for being six feet tall.*



*Though Daunis has known Grant for some time because she and Mike play hockey together, her assessment of Grant as a "gross pervert" seems to have changed since Daunis became an adult. That he continues to make her uncomfortable suggests that Daunis may be more vulnerable than she realizes, even though she is with people she believes she can mostly trust. Again, the novel teases something from Daunis's past that's keeping her from continuing to play hockey, and it's clearly something that weighs heavily on Daunis.*



*Daunis's failure to get Grandpa Lorenzo's old office furniture open symbolically highlights that Daunis has grown up—she no longer has access to things from her childhood, such as this cabinet. When this failure comes just before Mike concerningly insists he knows what Daunis is doing, it shows how lost Daunis is in her new adult role. She doesn't yet know how to bring certain things from childhood (whether that be her friendship with Mike or her grandpa's filing cabinet) into adulthood, and that's wildly destabilizing. In this situation, if Mike truly does know what Daunis is up to, it could even be dangerous.*



## CHAPTER 25

Her stomach flipping, Daunis says she came to use the bathroom and retrieve her phone. Mike looks amused—and he kisses Daunis roughly. When she resists, he angrily says she's been hanging on him all night and asks why she won't date him. He even says he's not afraid of Levi at all, and he says Daunis and Jamie won't last long. Suddenly, Mike becomes aggressive and says that Daunis isn't better than him, and Grant is right: girls are distractions. He leaves the room. Daunis is shocked by Mike's behavior; will she learn more unsavory things about her friends by helping with the investigation? Upstairs, Daunis lets Jamie put an arm around her. As she prepares to leave later, she tells the guys she wants to run on her own so she can go slower. Ignoring Levi's teasing, Jamie says he'd like to run with Daunis.

Daunis sits in the backseat with Jamie on the ride home, appreciating that he holds her hand. She thinks it's cute how excited he is about the Edwardses' house and the opportunity to analyze the Supes' games. When Ron pulls into Daunis's driveway, she tells them about the photos she took of Grant's bookshelf and that she couldn't access client files in the desk. In case Mom is watching (she is, the light turns on), Jamie walks Daunis to the door and kisses her jaw. Teasing him for his poor aim, Daunis allows herself to kiss his scar.

When Daunis steps outside for her run the next morning, Jamie isn't there. This is disappointing, as Daunis has been looking forward to seeing him since kissing his scar last night. This morning, Daunis feels hypocritical as she prays for honesty. Jamie arrives as she finishes stretching. As they take off, Daunis says she's skipping class to look for mushrooms today. Jamie tells her not to: she needs to go back to her life once the investigation is done, and maybe even go play hockey at Michigan. Daunis says that everything changed when Uncle David started helping the FBI, and she can't play hockey. She refuses to say why—he doesn't deserve to know about the "foolish" choice she made. Back at Daunis's driveway, Jamie says he should run with the guys in the future. They're just starting to accept him. She pretends not to care.

*Daunis hasn't said much about Mike up to this point, but she implies in this passage that she's always seen him as a pretty upstanding guy. His unwillingness to accept no for an answer and his aggression suggest that things have changed between them, and Mike himself is something of a predator. Daunis never expected to have to defend herself against people she considered friends, so this experience seriously shakes her up. Allowing Jamie to comfort her reminds readers (and Daunis) that Daunis does have some genuine feelings for him. It seems that when Daunis is suffering emotionally, she's more willing to turn to Jamie for support.*



*Jamie might be 22 and an undercover agent, but in this passage, he looks like any other high school hockey player—and Daunis finds that charming and attractive. She's learning true things about him, even if Jamie is ostensibly hiding most of his true self from her. When Daunis kisses Jamie's scar, she allows herself to feel her real feelings for him and try to gauge if he might also have genuine feelings for her.*



*Daunis wants to be honest with Jamie—she has genuine feelings for him. Still, she can't escape the fact that he's a federal agent and not a high school student; he's lying every day about who he is, and so their relationship is also built on a lie. Jamie tries to convey this to Daunis when he insists that she take her real life seriously so that once the investigation is over, she has options. He assumes one of those options is playing hockey in college, but Daunis continues to cagily tease the reason why she can't play hockey anymore. Still, he tries to show Daunis how he believes they should act and prioritize the investigation when he insists he should run with the Supes. This reminds Daunis of where his loyalties lie, which is painful.*



Daunis is almost done canvassing Duck Island, but the leaves are slowing her down—as is her promise to herself that she can skip class and deceive people, as long as she takes care of Granny June and the Elders. Taking Granny June to lunch eats into prime daylight, but it's worth it. Still, Daunis avoids Auntie, as she's afraid she can't lie well enough to deceive her. Later today, Daunis has one more engagement that will slow down her mushroom hunt: she and Ron are taking the Booster Bus to Wisconsin. As Daunis enters the dining room with Granny June, she stops suddenly: Auntie is next to Minnie Mustang. This looks like an intervention. What did Daunis do?

*Daunis is trying to figure out how much deception she can live with and what she can do to make the deception easier to swallow. Avoiding Auntie is necessary for Daunis because Auntie knows Daunis so well—the other Elders know Daunis, of course, but they haven't been such a constant presence in her life the way Auntie has. However, Daunis can't entirely escape her aunt, as she discovers when Auntie seems poised to stage an intervention.*



## CHAPTER 26

Anxiously worrying about what Auntie might know about the investigation, Daunis sits down. She burns with shame as Auntie says she didn't want to do “this” here, but Daunis has been avoiding her. Daunis opens an envelope with two photos in it, one of her, Levi, and Dad skating, and another of Dad holding her as a baby. Next, Daunis pulls out an application for tribal enrollment and a notarized letter from Mom stating that her parents wouldn't let her put Dad on Daunis's birth certificate. There's a family tree and affidavits from family members, insisting Daunis is Levi Firekeeper's daughter. Daunis has a week to submit the paperwork (until her 19th birthday), and Auntie says she and Daunis will have to take blood tests.

*Daunis comes into this feeling guilty—she knows dishonesty isn't a good quality, and she's avoided Auntie specifically because that seems easier than being openly dishonest with her. But when Auntie presents Daunis with the tribal enrollment application, it hits home in part because it shows Daunis just how much Auntie wants Daunis to be a part of something bigger. This, Auntie (and Mom, through her notarized letter) suggests, is where Daunis belongs, even if Daunis hasn't always felt like she's truly a part of the local tribal community.*



Daunis has wanted this for a long time. Being Anishinaabe and being enrolled aren't the same thing—but being enrolled won't change Daunis's identity. She says she doesn't need a card to define her, but Auntie says this is a gift from Dad. Granny June tells Daunis to think about her children and grandchildren—people must think seven generations ahead when making big choices. Daunis also thinks about the investigation. Maybe Daunis should be part of the investigation because unlike Jamie and Ron, she's thinking seven generations ahead. She agrees to enroll. Auntie notes that Daunis needs three affidavits from non-related Elders. Just then, Seeney Nimkee hands Daunis an affidavit, followed by Granny June, Minnie, and 23 other elders.

*Daunis is right in that having a card won't change who she is inside. But Granny June and Auntie suggest there's more to think about than just Daunis. This is a choice that will affect Daunis's future children, should she choose to have them. It's also a way for Daunis to honor Dad, highlighting again that the Sugar Island Ojibwe community is made up of the living, the dead, and those yet to come. Receiving the affidavits from so many Elders also shows Daunis that she has more support here than she realizes, even from people she didn't think liked her, like Seeney.*



Daunis laughs and cries on her way to catch the Booster Bus, where a woman who knows her accepts her check and offers her a beer. Daunis ignores Grant waving her over and sits next to Ron instead. Bus passengers are mostly Zhaaganaash; Nishnaabs are following in campers. Ron learns why when the sound system blasts “Don't Stop Believin'” and women begin jumping and screaming. One even flashes a truck driver. Daunis murmurs that these same folks say “Indians can't hold their liquor.”

*The Booster Bus, Daunis insists, is a lesson in white bigotry and hypocrisy: the same people who accuse Native Americans of being uncouth are just as capable of being inappropriately drunk in public and obnoxious. As she sees it, they're just being racist and trying to justify their own bad behavior by erroneously insisting that all Native Americans, by virtue of being Native, behave worse.*



Daunis replays the Elders handing her the affidavits as she tries to read *The Sound and the Fury*. Ron finally comments that she hasn't turned a page in 20 minutes. When Daunis says she barely understands what's going on, Ron helps her figure out what the book is actually about: time, rather than the individual events. This almost makes Daunis cry because Ron reminds her so much of Uncle David. She fears that eventually, she'll stop thinking about David and Lily every day. She knows this is just because "memories are fickle" and can fade, but she's afraid of going on without Lily.

*Ron is an interesting figure for Daunis because he's both a sort of enemy (as a federal agent) and an ally or mentor. Accepting his help here is difficult in part because it reminds Daunis that Uncle David and Lily are gone, and also because she won't be able to ask for their help again. Rather, she'll have to start reaching out to new people, like Ron in this case. It's also worth noting that Daunis observes how "memories are fickle" here. Each time she dreams about Lily's death, she remembers new pieces of the night—highlighting that memory is indeed unreliable and is particularly influenced by trauma.*



Daunis feels like she's in a fog until Grant slides in next to her at the game. Hearing a Zhaaganaash bring up per cap, Daunis considers leaving so she doesn't have to listen to their bigotry—but she's uninterested in crawling over either Grant or Ron. So, she sits and listens to people discuss a classmate of Daunis's, Ryan, enrolling in the Tribe. Ryan is notorious for riling up Nishnaabs, but apparently his dad is Joey Nodin. One man in the conversation, a lawyer, crows that as part of his payment for helping Ryan enroll, he gets a percentage of Ryan's per-cap earnings for a decade. Ron pats Daunis's arm, and she realizes she's clenching her fists. Daunis thinks of Lily, who couldn't enroll because her grandpa is from Canada—her blood wasn't pure enough.

*At the game, Daunis is a captive audience to Zhaaganaash bigotry and cruelty. When it comes to Ryan, the implication is that while he might be Joey Nodin's biological son, he hasn't been raised with any cultural or emotional ties to the Tribe. Instead, he's enrolling on what's essentially a technicality for the money. Daunis recognizes that this is wildly unfair when Ryan is, for all intents and purposes, culturally Zhaaganaash—and yet Lily, who was Ojibwe in terms of culture and blood, just didn't have quite enough blood to make the legal transition to enrolled member. Even these legal frameworks that are supposed to help Anishinaabe folks, this shows, don't always end up doing that.*



After the game, Ron quietly tells Daunis that he told Jamie to slow down the whole boyfriend-girlfriend thing. He says that new field agents sometimes let their emotions get the better of them, and he could tell on Sunday that either Jamie or Daunis wasn't acting.

*Daunis has been mostly letting herself feel her feelings for Jamie over the last couple weeks, so it shouldn't come as a shock to her that Ron noticed her doing this. However, it's still unclear whether Jamie is also beginning to drop the act and develop genuine feelings for Daunis.*



## CHAPTER 27

At the hotel, players are only allowed to spend one hour fraternizing with fans and girlfriends in the lobby. Ron is upstairs on the Boosters' party floor, so, curious what Jamie will do unsupervised, Daunis grabs his hand. They watch Levi imitate the players' performances from the game, but Daunis bristles when Levi says Stormy is "the baddest goon" from Sugar Island. She knows Dad was "the ultimate goon," but Levi seems to forget about Dad sometimes. He remembers Dad pulling them around the ice with a **scarf**, but he insists the scarf was blue, not green, and that he can't find it at his house. When Levi imitates Jamie, Daunis kisses Jamie and feels instantly terrible: Jamie almost flinches.

*Daunis treats Jamie like something of a science experiment in this passage, testing whether he's genuinely interested in her or is just playing a part. That he flinches away when Daunis kisses him suggests he's feeling something real—but what that is remains secret for now. Daunis associates Dad's scarf with wholly good things and memories, and she'd ideally like Levi to do the same. Levi, though, had his own relationship with Dad, and perhaps it wasn't as rosy as Daunis's was.*





Daunis leads Jamie to a quiet corner and says that no matter what Ron says, pretending to be romantically involved is the best way to help the investigation. Gulping, he asks what happens when someone finds out what tribe they're from. Daunis can only speak for Sugar Island (each tribe has its own rules), but she says enrolling kids with enrolled parents is easy. People have to enroll by their 19th birthday, though Sugar Island makes exceptions for kids who were adopted out. Seeing Jamie's eyes widen, Daunis realizes that's what happened to him. She says families search for babies who were adopted out, and there are healing ceremonies when members return. Other tribes likely do the same. Jamie thanks Daunis, and they share their first real kiss as they part ways in the elevator.

On the Booster floor, Daunis navigates the crowded hallway and jokes with Ron, who's clearly tipsy. As she reaches her room, the woman who flashed a truck on the bus leaves Grant's room looking a mess—and Grant, wrapped in a towel, looks wildly proud. Grant greets Daunis, and when she struggles to unlock her door, he helps her, noting that “The right moves make all the difference.” Daunis closes herself in. She has to avoid Grant for 22 more weeks.

At the game the next day, Coach Bobby scolds Daunis for lifting with her bad shoulder when she helps carry boxes of souvenir hockey pucks. The pucks in Daunis's box are blank except for smudged dream catchers on one side—and Coach explains that Grant donated them to a tribal youth program, but Grant wants to keep his donation quiet. Daunis is enraged.

During the game, Daunis squeezes in next to Megan and accepts a gift bag. It contains a jersey that reads DAUNIS; Megan explains that they didn't think it'd work to put Jamie, Levi, Stormy, and Mike's name on her jersey (girlfriends have their boyfriend's name on their jerseys). Daunis is touched. She proudly hands out pucks during intermission, but she notices people crying as they get texts. Daunis checks her phone. Auntie texted: Robin died of a meth overdose.

*When Jamie pivots from talking about the investigation to asking about tracking down one's tribe, it reveals that he's not actually thinking about the investigation right now. Rather, he's doing much the same thing Daunis is and is trying to find himself and where he belongs. The revelation that Jamie was adopted out of his tribe helps explain why Jamie didn't grow up immersed in Cherokee culture. Daunis is able to give Jamie hope that he can get back to his birth family and his blood relatives, and this brings them closer together, culminating in their real kiss. Note that this kiss violates the relationship rules they came up with earlier, showing clearly that their feelings are deepening.*



*Grant looks increasingly predatory as time goes on—Daunis infers here that Grant has sex with lots of women who participate in Booster Bus activities, and from his expression, it seems like he views these liaisons as conquests rather than as a fun time for all involved. What he says to Daunis, meanwhile, suggests he may be setting his sights on her next—even though her plans to avoid him make readers well aware that she isn't interested.*



*The revelation that Daunis has a bad shoulder may help explain why Daunis isn't playing college hockey right now. Learning that the pucks with smudged dream catchers came from Grant shows Daunis how little Grant thinks of Native Americans—if he valued Native people, he may have invested in higher-quality printing. It's interesting—and rather mysterious—that Grant wants to keep his donation quiet, so this is a detail worth keeping in mind moving forward.*



*Given Grant's bigotry with the pucks, Megan seems less offensive to Daunis right now. And Megan, for all her own unaddressed bigotry, shows that she does want to accept Daunis and bring her into the Supes girlfriend fold. Meth, though, continues to ruin happy moments like these and take the lives of Daunis's friends and family members, reminding her that she's here for a reason. Her job now is to figure out who's responsible for Robin's death.*



## CHAPTER 28

Daunis rushes to leave the bleachers, trying not to hear “vultures” saying that Robin was “one of the good Indians” and that “even the smart ones are dumb.” Her nose burns as she smells both Heather’s rotting body and everything from the night Lily was shot. Daunis can’t take it. She locks herself in a bathroom stall and sinks to the floor. The girlfriends try to get Daunis out and finally, one fetches Ron. Ron sits quietly outside the stall until security comes. To avoid a scene, Daunis leaves the stall and accompanies Ron to the hotel.

Ron leaves Daunis with Jamie in the lobby. Daunis leans against Jamie and observes the subdued players—but Levi announces not that it’s a tragedy Robin is dead, but that the Supes played poorly this evening. Daunis is enraged. But when she leaps to her feet, Jamie gives her a warning look. Levi asks for Daunis’s advice, but Daunis says that this is no way to mourn a former teammate. Levi hugs Daunis, and then he tells the room that she’s right. Mike suggests they hold a fundraiser, like a charity game, to support drug prevention programs. The Supes and Sault High could play each other, current and former players. As the players excitedly plan the fundraiser, Daunis cries: they do care.

Jamie hugs Daunis and quietly says this isn’t part of the plan. She argues that helping the community is good, but he insists they must stick to the plan. Daunis steps back. Jamie, she realizes, is an agent first. She tells him it’s up to the community to fix things, not the FBI, but he says the community hasn’t made any progress yet. Daunis notes that Jamie wants to save the community and then leave; he’s not thinking of the community. Remembering Robin saying that guys shouldn’t have so much power over a person, Daunis says Jamie might understand if he had a community. He’s clearly hurt, and Daunis feels awful.

That night, Daunis dreams about the night Travis shot Lily. Lily tells Travis to leave her alone and focus on himself—Lily can’t stand on her own if she always has to support him. Travis refuses and says he needs and loves Lily, but Lily insists need and love aren’t the same. At this, Travis pulls out the gun. Daunis jerks awake, the smell of sweat and chemicals in her nose. She hasn’t been able to remember Lily and Travis’s conversation before now. Just then, a text—an apology—comes in from Jamie. Daunis isn’t sure what he’s sorry for, but she says she’s sorry too. When he asks, she gives him her room number. They kiss in the doorway and Daunis tries to pull him inside, but he says they can’t and leaves. The next door opens: Grant pokes his head out and says Daunis’s secret is safe.

*The “vultures”—bigoted white people—essentially blame Robin for her own death; their racism reveals itself when they cite Robin’s Native identity as the reason for Robin’s choice to use meth. Hearing this reminds Daunis that she’s not surrounded by genuinely supportive people. Rather, the white Booster Bus participants would likely even turn on Daunis were she to make one wrong choice, even as they (perhaps only pretend to) accept her now.*



*Even though Levi ultimately does heed Daunis’s advice to grieve Robin’s death and treat it like the tragedy it is, it’s clear that his first thought is for his team and its prospects. And though this clearly offends Daunis, she seems to not fully grasp that this may indicate that Levi’s loyalties don’t lie with the Sugar Island Ojibwe Tribe or any of his and Daunis’s former teammates. Additionally, Daunis seems to feel comforted and proud when the Supes begin to plan the charity game to honor Robin, but the Supes themselves give no indication they’re getting the same feelings from it.*



*As Jamie sees it, a charity game is pointless because it’s not going to help the investigation. But Daunis doesn’t only care about the investigation. She, after all, has to live in the Sault long after the investigation is over, so she’s more invested than Jamie is in making sure the community heals practically and emotionally. Insisting Jamie doesn’t understand because he doesn’t have a community is a low blow, but it also reminds readers (and, clearly, Jamie himself) of how lost and alone Jamie is due to having been adopted out of his tribe.*



*Lily proposes to Travis that if a person really loves their partner, they’ll be willing to let them go—and because Travis doesn’t let Lily go, by extension, he demonstrates that he doesn’t genuinely love her. It’s interesting that this memory shows up immediately prior to Jamie and Daunis apologizing, kissing, and deciding not to go further. Their relationship is very different, given that Jamie is an undercover agent and the whole thing is ostensibly a ruse. Still, it’s impossible to ignore that they’re growing genuinely close to each other—and that other people are, disturbingly in this case, taking notice.*



## CHAPTER 29

Daunis is the first to board the Booster Bus in the morning. She saves Ron a spot, but Greg scoots in next to her. He says he always thought she was a good girl, but now he knows she's a bad girl and a rule breaker. He also admires people who make "interesting choices." When Ron boards the bus, Grant finds his own seat. Over the course of the ride, Daunis thinks about Robin. Robin was a Nodin and was well-liked—and she didn't seem like the sort to get mixed up in meth. Should Daunis try to press Stormy for information?

Ron slips Daunis a note listing all things the police found on Heather. It doesn't mention undergarments or her flip-flops, and it lists different drugs than what Heather showed Daunis. Daunis whispers to Ron that Heather offered her "ecstasy boner pills" and didn't have meth on her at the bonfire, but supposedly she was in Paradise after the bonfire. Her voice rises with excitement, so when Ron shushes her, Daunis says they need a secret language like Mom and Uncle David had. Suddenly, Daunis is certain that David *did* keep a journal of his time working for the FBI, but it's probably written in code and hidden. She has to find the journal so she can prove David's innocence to the Sault. For the rest of the ride, Daunis makes a plan. She won't share it with Ron or Jamie.

The Booster Bus gets back to the Sault in early afternoon, so Daunis hurries to Duck Island. One sample she collects is unrecognizable. As Daunis waits for the ferry, missed texts and calls come in from Jamie, asking where she is and if she's okay. Daunis calls and says she's been on Sugar Island, and he asks that she let him know where she's going for safety reasons—she found a body on Sugar Island, after all. She hangs up when it's her turn to drive onto the ferry. She ends up next to Robin's mom, Mrs. Bailey. Daunis gets out to hug her and shares that Robin helped her at school a few weeks ago. Confused, Mrs. Bailey says that Robin wasn't enrolled. She's been addicted to painkillers and started doing meth, and they were trying to get her into rehab.

*Greg's words to Daunis read as predatory and inappropriate: he's fetishizing Daunis for not following the rules keeping Supes and girlfriends apart. For now, he seems willing to give Daunis her space, but it remains to be seen whether he'll continue to respect her space. Thinking about Robin reminds Daunis that she can't expect to be able to tell everything about someone just by looking at them. Robin was more than her reputation and her family. Like Daunis supposedly has, she made an "interesting choice[]" (or simply an unexpected one) that ultimately resulted in her death.*



*It's clear to Daunis that Heather made contact with the meth cell between leaving the bonfire and her death, if only because Daunis is sure Heather didn't have meth when she last saw her. Ron seems less convinced, which may be because he, like Jamie, is a federal agent who sees what he wants to see when it comes to Heather: a lost girl who died a tragic death, not an important part of the investigation. When Daunis realizes that Uncle David's journal probably exists, she reorients herself to focus on her family and how they continue to help her, even from beyond the grave.*



*Interestingly, simply being a CI is dangerous, and yet this seems to be the first time that Jamie expresses genuine concern for Daunis's wellbeing. They're growing closer, and for now, it seems genuine. On the ferry, Daunis discovers that Robin wasn't the perfect mentor she thought she was: Robin struggled with addiction. Hearing this reminds Daunis that she can't judge people—there's always more to a person under the surface. It also makes it clear that Robin likely had something to do with the meth cell, given that she'd been a regular meth user prior to her death.*



## CHAPTER 30

Daunis drives home in shock. Was Robin on campus that day because she was dealing drugs? Daunis is ashamed to even consider it, but before contacting Ron or Jamie, she identifies her mushroom samples. One seems promising, but Daunis eventually identifies it. She stewes angrily for a minute before going to the kitchen, following the smell of Mom's warm cookies. Daunis asks if Uncle David kept his journals anywhere but his home office. She's just curious because she wonders what he was thinking about in those final months. Mom tenses, and Daunis wishes she could tell her mom more. Once the investigation is over, she can.

Mom and Daunis discuss that Uncle David spent most of his last weeks at school, but Daunis recalls that he organized element sample jars by the periodic table, not alphabetically. Was that to identify if kids were stealing? Privately deciding that's a dead-end, Daunis asks Mom how she felt about GrandMary selling Grandpa Lorenzo's office furniture when she sold the shop. Mom is obviously still upset about it, but in answer to Daunis's question, she says GrandMary turned over all the desk keys to the Edwardses.

Auntie and Daunis go to the hospital for blood draws; they go there instead of Tribal Health since Auntie is the director and people might think she's pulling strings to enroll Daunis. With her test results, Daunis then drives to the tribal enrollment office. Stormy is there because he can't find his passport and wants to know if he can get into Canada with his tribal ID. In theory, he should be able to, but border patrol doesn't always know the rules. He tells Daunis that the Supes are going to see a Greyhounds game tonight, so she offers to drive him to his mom's house to look for his passport.

Stormy makes an offering of semaa when he and Daunis are on the ferry, which surprises Daunis—but she reasons that when his parents are with it, they attend ceremonies. He becomes increasingly anxious as they get closer to his house, but Daunis waves him inside. She only goes in when Shawna Nodin invites her in and offers coffee. The house is clean, and Stormy's school photos and a poster from the Anishinaabemowin conference last year are on the walls. The poster image is a photo of teepees set up outside a boarding school; it's comforting to think that parents followed their stolen children, and maybe the kids heard songs and prayers and smelled the smudge.

*After realizing she incorrectly judged Uncle David, Daunis isn't willing to allow herself to do the same with Robin. This is why she's so intent on considering other reasons why Robin might've been on campus—she thinks writing Robin and David off indicates her own immaturity and naivete, and she'd like to approach this maturely and generously. Daunis appears to be treating Mom less carefully, though, when she asks about the journals, suggesting that she's realizing she perhaps doesn't need to baby Mom as much as she has in the past.*



*In order to unravel the mystery of how David died, Daunis finds herself trying to dig deeper into her family members' quirks and even their physical belongings (like Grandpa Lorenzo's furniture). Daunis is helping the investigation, but she's also working to figure out exactly what was going on in her family—and where she fits in.*



*Auntie and Daunis are well aware that Daunis has privileges plenty of other Tribal members don't have, such as an aunt in charge of the health center and a wealthy, white mom. While those things sometimes help her, now, she realizes they're not assets—they might hurt her case. Stormy's fear that he can't get into Canada with just his tribal ID is yet another instance of Native Americans suffering prejudice and discrimination, even when they follow all the rules.*



*Stormy's relationship with his parents is clearly fraught, given how anxious he is about seeing them. This reminds Daunis again of her privilege: not everyone in her community has consistently supportive parents at home. Still, that the poster is so prominently displayed in the Nodin home suggests that the Nodins do want to be there for Stormy, just as the parents in the photo were for their children. And the photo—which implies (rather than depicting outright) that there are stolen Native children in the school—offers some hope that despite discrimination and government policies designed to eradicate Native people and cultures, Daunis's culture will continue to thrive.*



Daunis tenses when Stormy's dad walks in. He's never liked her much, since he sees her as Zhaaganaash. He drinks a cup of coffee, smokes a cigarette, and then tells her about how GrandMary and her friends all tried to swindle Nish artisans, including his grandpa. Daunis doesn't know what to say—GrandMary has never liked Native people, though she loves Daunis. Just then, Stormy comes downstairs with his passport and asks Shawna for money for dinner. Stormy's dad hands over nine dollars; Daunis knows the family probably can't come up with more. On the ferry back, Levi texts and asks to borrow Daunis's debit card later. Daunis says he can, but he needs to treat Stormy, Mike, and Jamie.

Daunis drops Stormy off at Chi Mukwa, gives Levi her debit card, and lets Jamie give her an underwhelming kiss. A storm is rolling in, and Daunis lists the things she needs to do and figure out when she gets home. First, she needs to check the debit card's account balance—Levi can be careless. The most recent statement she finds is from last year, so she calls the customer service line. The customer service lady says that the mailing address is Levi's address and the current balance is \$10,856.77—way more than the \$400 Daunis and Levi usually keep in the account.

## CHAPTER 31

Is Levi involved in the meth cell? Still in shock, Daunis arranges to receive emailed statements and hangs up. Then, she does the math—and it would make sense that Levi has so much money in there, now that he's 18 and is getting \$36,000 per year in per-cap payments. She's ashamed for thinking the worst of him, just like she did with David. Still, something feels off, and she struggles to fall asleep.

When Daunis falls asleep, she dreams again of Travis shooting Lily. Travis points the gun at Daunis's face and asks if Daunis is real—the Little People won't leave him alone. At this, he slashes at the air before pointing the gun at Daunis again. Lily asks for the gun so Travis won't hurt Daunis. She puts her hand out, but Travis says that he can't do this without Lily and shoots her. Then, he tells Daunis that the Little People are mad at him, and he just wanted Lily to love him. She wouldn't try his drugs, so he added them to his "cookies." He puts the gun to his head.

*Stormy's dad is exactly the kind of person who stands between Daunis and being accepted into the Tribe, given that he'll always see Daunis as not Nish enough. Daunis knows that she might be GrandMary's granddaughter, but she is Nish and doesn't condone her grandmother's beliefs or actions. Part of Daunis's coming of age happens as she realizes that she can love GrandMary, but not love the things her grandmother believed.*



*That Daunis hasn't received a paper statement in a year and seems surprised by this implies that Levi changed the mailing address sometime last year. However, Daunis is far more concerned by the fact that there's suddenly way too much money in the account, suggesting that perhaps Levi is involved in the meth cell or some other odd financial scheme. At the very least, Daunis knows she needs to dig into Levi, though this will be emotionally fraught for her given her desire to give Levi the benefit of the doubt.*



*Again, Daunis sees it as a sign of her burgeoning maturity that she doesn't immediately assume that Levi is involved in the meth cell. But she's also ignoring the fact that he changed the billing address without telling her—and, for that matter, her gut is telling her something is wrong. It's not clear if Daunis is looking at the situation clearly or if she just thinks she is.*



*The Little People are a mythical race of forest-dwelling beings that appear regularly in Anishinaabe folklore. When Travis mentions the Little People being angry at him, it suggests that his broader Anishinaabe community is angry, perhaps for his involvement with meth. His desire for Lily to love him is understandable—it's pretty universal to want to be loved—but the way Travis goes about it, ultimately killing Lily, suggests that what he actually wanted was to control her.*



When Daunis jerks awake, she realizes she's remembering more about the night Travis shot Lily. She also recalls that Leonard Manitou has spoken about the Little People; she decides to ask him next time she sees him. Daunis becomes aware of Mom mopping outside her bedroom and talking to David in their secret language made up of French, Italian, and an invented language. Mom is saying that things would've been different had she told the truth. Daunis usually avoids listening when Mom talks about this, but tonight, she gets up.

Mom sobs about how she and Dad shouldn't have gone to the island, and how he clearly got drunk because he wanted to. Mom asks why she lied and said that *he* was driving. Gently, Daunis says it's because when Mom went to tell Dad about her pregnancy, she found him in bed with Dana. Daunis says Mom was 16 and afraid as she takes her mom in her arms, continuing that when Mom returned from Montreal, Dad was married to Dana and had Levi. Mom says that Dana got all the things Dad promised her. Daunis knows her dad is "The king of Guy Lies." He lied to Mom, and he was the first man to lie to Daunis. She was seven, and she hasn't recovered.

## CHAPTER 32

Robin's parents are Catholic, so her funeral takes place three days after her death. Daunis has seldom been to church since GrandMary said Native Catholics were like converted Catholics: lesser. She insisted Daunis was a Fontaine, not "one of them." During mass, Daunis muses that Robin clearly didn't take her own advice that nobody needs to be a superhero, and she wonders if Robin's addiction started when they were both injured during a game. Auntie refused to fill Daunis's prescription for oxycodone, but did Robin's parents fill hers? Remembering Robin cautioning her to not give her power to a guy, Daunis wonders who Robin gave her power to. She also knows that Jamie and Ron will see Robin as an addict and a dealer. Daunis must uncover Robin's story. That's the only way to help the investigation and the community.

Following the mass, Robin's uncle invites everyone to the burial, lunch, and the benefit hockey game on Friday, which is also Daunis's birthday. Daunis is playing on the Sault High team, and everyone in the community is pitching in. Saturday is Shagala. Skipping the funeral lunch, Daunis drives Granny June to the Elder Center and picks up semaa for Leonard Manitou on the way. Leonard isn't there.

*It's a sign that Daunis is maturing when she changes her behavior and, it seems, goes to Mom to comfort her. Running from or ignoring Mom when Mom was in this kind of a state previously suggests that Daunis was uncomfortable with her mom being so vulnerable around her. Now, though, Daunis is beginning to see Mom as more of a separate person, one who, like Daunis, is vulnerable and has made mistakes.*



*Prior to this, Daunis has given no indication that her dad was anything but upstanding and good. However, Daunis seems to know this story well and accept it as fact—so she knows that her parents weren't monogamous, and that this was very traumatizing for Mom. As Daunis accepts that her dad isn't the god she's made him out to be, she continues to come of age. However, whatever lie Dad told Daunis when she was little is left for later, though Daunis makes it clear that the lie has caused her lasting trauma.*



*Again, Daunis finds it not comfortable, per se, but easier to acknowledge that GrandMary wasn't perfect. She was bigoted and downright mean at times, but that doesn't mean she didn't genuinely love her granddaughter. Though the Catholic mass differs greatly from Lily's Ojibwe funeral, Daunis still finds the funeral restorative and takes the opportunity to reflect on what she knows. She knows that she, perhaps unlike Robin, had a family member willing and able to interrogate the doctor's attempt to prescribe addictive opioids (though at this point in time, doctors and drug companies continued to insist that opioids were safe and non-addictive). Robin, Daunis realizes, is a victim. And Daunis is the only person who can make Ron and Jamie see Robin as a victim, not as someone responsible for her own misfortune.*



*It's important for Daunis to honor Robin, but for now, she chooses to prioritize caring for the Elders. However, it's somewhat unclear if this is actually what's going on here, since Daunis seems so intent on speaking to Leonard. The investigation is the only reason Daunis wants to do this, suggesting that she may be applying herself more to this task now than she has before.*



Daunis barely listens to the Elders debate how to know if someone is fluent in Anishinaabemowin, and Leonard walks in just as they finish. When Daunis heads for Leonard, Auntie appears and intercepts her. Outside, Auntie quietly asks if Daunis is playing on Friday. Auntie says Robin wouldn't want Daunis to play, that Daunis is acting odd and losing her head over Jamie, and that TJ doesn't trust Jamie. Enraged, Daunis says she thought Auntie would be on her side.

The Elders are quiet when Daunis returns to the dining room—they all know Auntie yelled and that Daunis likely deserved it. But something is changing between Daunis and Auntie, since Daunis yelled back. Focusing on her task, Daunis sits next to Leonard, passes him the semaa, and asks to hear about the Little People. She follows Auntie's rules for asking for help—and kicks herself when, contrary to that advice, she prods Leonard to start his story in a specific spot. He describes getting lost as a five-year-old. The Little People led him through a huge boulder and then back again. He'd been gone two days.

Daunis has heard the Little People can be mischievous, but not malicious. She asks if they can be angry, and Leonard says a cousin used to sniff gasoline. The cousin said once that the Little People yelled at him, but Leonard says the cousin wasn't all there. He died when he accidentally lit himself on fire.

## CHAPTER 33

As Daunis heads to the ferry the next morning, she wonders if Travis was hallucinating or if he really saw Little People. And how can Auntie think Daunis is being foolish? TJ is so out of line. Daunis offers semaa to the river and asks for help, and then she waits in the lobby at Chi Mukwa. Studying a newspaper article about the benefit game later, Daunis is disappointed to see that Robin is barely mentioned, but there's a huge photo of Grant, who's sponsoring the game. As the Supes and other guys burst through the lobby doors, Daunis hides. A voice Daunis doesn't recognize asks who Jamie's girlfriend, "the Incredible Bulk," is. Daunis hears a crunch as Levi punches the guy, and Mike says Daunis is Levi's sister. Levi threatens to "end hockey" for the guy if he looks at Daunis.

*Recall that Auntie knows why Daunis isn't playing hockey in college; it seems possible that Robin also knew what happened. As Auntie sees it, Daunis is making a number of concerning choices right now that call Daunis's loyalty to her family and to the Tribe into question. However, Daunis doesn't like or trust TJ, so she's unwilling to take Auntie's concern seriously right now.*



*Daunis doesn't seem to fully grasp what's changing between her and Auntie, but she's growing up and beginning to engage with Auntie more like an adult, not like a kid under Auntie's authority. This is a difficult transition for both Daunis and Auntie. Still, Daunis knows she needs to continue following Auntie's advice as she speaks to Leonard, as Auntie is the expert on how to most respectfully engage with the Elders.*



*Leonard doesn't seem sold on the possibility that the Little People yell at Anishinaabe folks who get involved in dangerous substances. However, his cousin's story parallels Travis's, suggesting that perhaps Travis wasn't hallucinating or crazy—there may have really been something scolding him for his actions.*



*In some ways, Daunis is becoming humbler. She's praying for help, rather than something specific, suggesting she has no idea what exactly she needs—but she needs something. In other ways though, as when she writes off Auntie's concern, she actively chooses to not trust someone who's normally a trustworthy guide. When Daunis studies the article, it's disappointing to discover that though the game is ostensibly about Robin, whoever worked on the article isn't making that clear. The benefit game, in other words, might be just another Supes practice rather than a real community event. Finally, it's disturbing to see Levi behave so violently—and it's unclear if Levi is often this violent when he thinks Daunis isn't looking.*



Daunis has never seen Levi so enraged. As Mike notices her, Levi tells the guy he punched to apologize. As Daunis tells Levi how disturbing his behavior was, Jamie passes through the lobby, totally distracting her. Finally, Daunis says she came to ask why Levi is keeping so much money in their joint account. He says he's buying land in Ontario, but unlike Coach Bobby (who's always looking for investments), this investment will take off. Then, Levi asks if GrandMary is going to recover, and if Daunis plans to stick around or go to Michigan. If she stays, would she like to invest with him? Daunis says GrandMary always said mixing family and business is a bad idea, but Levi says they're special. They discuss Shagala, the benefit game, and Daunis's birthday, and Daunis says all she wants is Dad's **scarf**. Levi promises to look for it.

Daunis then goes to her dress fitting with Mrs. Edwards. She's shocked when Mrs. Edwards pulls out red, silky, fluttery pants—and the tailor wraps long pieces of red fabric over Daunis's bust to create the top. Mrs. Edwards says Daunis is the only person who can pull this off and talks her through how she should do her hair (hot rollers, which Daunis won't use), lipstick, and jewelry.

As Daunis pays, she gets a text from Auntie asking her to come tomorrow night at eight. Remembering how Auntie has kept Daunis connected to her Firekeeper side and was even the one to share the news of Dad's death, Daunis agrees. Daunis has never been excited to go to Shagala before. She wishes Lily, Uncle David, and Dad were here—and suddenly, she remembers that Uncle David's school desk has a secret drawer.

## CHAPTER 34

Fortunately, Ron's car isn't at Sault High. Daunis suspects Uncle David left a notebook for her in his hidden drawer. She tells Mrs. H that Mom is still having a hard time, and she'd like to get some of David's things out of his classroom. In the classroom, Daunis opens the big snack drawer that's now filled with file folders. When she was 10, David showed her how to pull out the false bottom with dissecting rods. Daunis does so now and discovers a blue notebook. Sticking it in her jeans, Daunis replaces the bottom and the file folders before Mrs. H appears in the doorway. Daunis pretends to have been crying and grabs David's rock collection. Then, Mrs. H says she hopes Daunis will reconsider going away to college—she's not like other "Indian kids" who aren't prepared socially or academically, adding that she's not prejudiced.

*The fact that Daunis is so disturbed by Levi's behavior indicates that as far as she knows, this isn't normal for him—at least when she's within ear or eyesight. There is, perhaps, more to Levi than Daunis realizes. Evidence for this possibility surfaces when Levi reveals that he's investing in land in Canada and invites Daunis to join him in this endeavor. It's pretty common advice not to mix business and family, so it's possibly concerning when Levi suggests that he and Daunis are different. He gives no indication of what, exactly, makes them different, suggesting that perhaps they're not.*



*Despite being related to Mike and Grant, who have been nothing but predatory and cruel to Daunis, Mrs. Edwards emerges as an unlikely ally in this passage. She understands how to dress Daunis in a way that makes Daunis feel shockingly good and sexy, which is framed as a huge gift to Daunis (she won't have to feel uncomfortable at Shagala, as it's implied she normally does).*



*Daunis is being pulled in several directions here. She's willing to reconcile with Auntie and visit, but she's also unusually excited for Shagala and about the investigation. This suggests that Daunis is at least a little bit distracted, which means she may prioritize the wrong things.*



*It's extremely satisfying for Daunis to discover the hidden notebook, as it makes her feel closer to Uncle David. However, the positive feelings she gets from this soon dissipate when Mrs. H, seemingly unwittingly, spews bigoted ideas about "Indian kids." Her implication is much like GrandMary's when it came to Catholicism; both women insist that Daunis is somehow less Native and is therefore better than her Native peers. Both women also express a belief that Native people are somehow naturally inferior to white people, which is bigoted and prejudiced, no matter what Mrs. H says.*





Daunis decides to read the notebook at EverCare, but she finds Mom sitting in GrandMary's room next to an empty bed, crying. Mom says GrandMary is fine, she's just overwhelmed. Daunis suggests they rent a movie and get takeout tonight, and Mom agrees. The next day, Thursday, Daunis drags out her errands with Granny June and picking up her dress until finally, she drives to GrandMary's house to read Uncle David's journal.

The journal begins in September of 2003, and it's mostly in English. Uncle David jots down questions students ask. Most students are identified by initials or a symbol; Daunis is a heart. In October, David started writing about a student identified by a light bulb. Daunis figures this kid is Travis, as he was brilliant and inquisitive. Around Thanksgiving, David recorded a question Light Bulb asked: would a poisonous plant tossed in compost poison the compost and then the crops fertilized with the compost? David spent the next month trying to help Light Bulb come up with testing strategies, but soon, he records that Light Bulb is skipping class. In December, David begins writing in code about mushrooms and Duck Island; about this time, Travis started cooking meth. In his January entries, Daunis finds David's code word for the FBI.

## CHAPTER 35

Daunis continues reading Uncle David's journal. Once he began working with the FBI, he started researching mushrooms and foraging on Duck Island. Daunis smiles—they canvassed the island in the same manner. In April, David found a parasitic mushroom that grew on a hallucinogenic host; the parasitic mushroom might also be hallucinogenic. However, it turns out it isn't, and Uncle David writes that there is no connection between mushrooms and "bad medicine," or meth. Daunis knows that David wanted her, not the FBI, to know this information. The last entry mentions that David went to see Light Bulb's mom on Good Friday. Mom reported David missing two days later. Daunis sobs with grief. In the formal dining room, she thanks David for giving her the clues and the tools she needs.

*Seemingly instinctively, Daunis wants to be surrounded by supportive family as she prepares to dive into Uncle David's journal. Even if it's just sitting with GrandMary (who can't respond) or in GrandMary's house, Daunis wants to feel like she's not alone. This highlights how much Daunis relies on her family to support her, even if she can't loop them in about what she's doing.*



*The journal's beginning seems innocuous enough—it seems clear that the FBI hasn't approached David yet when he begins. It's worth noting that while Daunis assumes that Light Bulb is Travis, she and the FBI both assume that Travis wasn't the only Sault High student involved in the meth cell—so this student could be anyone. Metaphorically, Light Bulb's question about the compost is interesting. It's possible to read it as questioning whether mentors or helpers—compost, of sorts, for developing young people—can contaminate those youths. This in turn raises the question of what adults, if any, are involved in the meth cell.*



*Essentially, what Uncle David discovers through his research is that the FBI is incorrect: mushrooms aren't what make meth-X so potent. David also seems, like Daunis, concerned for the community, hence his choice to go visit Light Bulb's mom, presumably to intervene and try and help the student. It's especially difficult for Daunis to realize that David died trying to help, as it reminds her of the kind, loving, and caring person David was—and that she wrote him off at the end, when she suspected he'd begun drinking excessively again.*



Daunis drives to Jamie and Ron's house and invites them for a walk. She decides to pump them for information. She begins by saying that she's finished canvassing Duck Island, but if the FBI began working with Uncle David in January and the kids in Minnesota got sick in February, they won't find the same mushrooms. Daunis asks how the kids are doing now, and she asks what their hallucinations were like. Ron says they hallucinated small men coming after them. Daunis privately knows what happened: the Little People, which are real, scolded the kids, but the FBI attributed the kids' stories to something hallucinogenic in meth-X. There was something else potent in that meth.

Trying to hide her excitement, Daunis asks what to work on next and asks for a clue. Then, she realizes Ron already gave her one weeks ago, when he told her that he couldn't tell her to search the hockey team's bags for burner phones. Back at Ron and Jamie's house, Ron goes inside and Jamie leads Daunis behind the Jeep. Daunis is hungry for a kiss—but Jamie kisses her forehead and says he knows what she was doing. Daunis has no idea what Jamie thinks he knows. As Daunis turns onto her street, she sees Auntie in the driveway—Daunis forgot her promise to visit at eight, two hours ago. As soon as Daunis pulls in the drive, Auntie gets out and says that Daunis can drive herself to Sugar Island or ride with her.

## CHAPTER 36

Daunis drives the Jeep to Sugar Island and offers semaa to the river on the ferry—she needs help, as she has to put the clues together and figure out what Jamie meant, not sit for a lecture. At the house, Auntie leads Daunis to the clearing, where Art is tending the fire for a sweat lodge. Auntie snaps that it's an "Intervention sweat"; she made this ceremony up. Daunis puts on the cotton skirt Auntie offers here and then she and Auntie smudge themselves with the female variety of sage. She crawls into the sweat lodge, or the *madoosiswan*, behind Auntie, praying for humility. Daunis "gives [her]self up," knowing she's part of something bigger.

After, Daunis and Auntie sit by the fire eating hominy soup and blueberry galette. Daunis privately remembers her "berry feast." She got her first Moon at age 13, and she decided to do a berry fast. Daunis couldn't eat berries, her favorite fruit, for a whole year, and Auntie even tested Daunis by taking her blueberry picking. At the end of the year, all of Daunis's Nish kwe relatives came to celebrate her passage into womanhood. Now, Daunis is grateful to Auntie, who's shown her how to be a strong Nish kwe. Still, Daunis knows she can't tell Auntie what's going on.

*Ron, despite being Native, seems to totally write off the possibility that the kids' hallucinations were anything but hallucinations—discrediting Anishinaabe culture and beliefs. And again, he doesn't answer when Daunis asks how the kids in Minnesota are doing, highlighting that communities' long-term health isn't his focus. He just wants to find the meth and whoever's peddling it. This highlights the difference in Daunis's and Ron's approaches: Daunis is willing to look through a Native lens. This is something Ron is ostensibly trying to do (he made Daunis the CI, after all), but practically, he's failing.*



*Keep in mind that Daunis is acting as she talks to Ron and Jamie together. She's working hard to convince them that pursuing David's mushroom research is a temporary dead end because she trusts David—not the FBI—with the information that mushrooms aren't contaminating meth-X. This, of course, raises the question of who or what David is trying to protect by hiding this information, but it seems possible he's simply trying to protect other Native traditional medicines that the FBI might misunderstand or abuse. In this way, he continues to look out for Daunis.*



*Daunis doesn't fully grasp what Auntie is doing until she gets to Auntie's property and realizes they're here to sweat. This is meant to connect Daunis to her culture and reorient Daunis to the people who Auntie believes should have Daunis's loyalty: her family and the Tribe (rather than the FBI). When Daunis is willing to "give [her]self up," she concedes that she has, perhaps, lost sight of what's most important—and if only to repair her relationship with Auntie, entering the sweat lodge and participating in this ceremony is important.*



*The ceremonial sweat, even if it was Auntie's creation, leads Daunis to turn her attention to the other ceremonies that have made her feel fulfilled, supported, and accepted by the community. She realizes now that she can't simply ignore Auntie, the person who's taught her so much about being a strong woman. Rather, Daunis should take Auntie's advice and examples and with those, make her own choices.*



When Daunis notices a plate of food that Art left at the edge of the woods, Auntie says it's an offering for the Little People, who came to check on them. Daunis asks if the Little People would get angry if they discovered people messing with things they shouldn't, but Auntie says that most people who know about "bad medicine" won't leave it for others to find—they respect its power and want to protect others. Auntie tells Daunis to be careful when she asks about the "old ways," and she shares a saying about bad medicine: "Know and understand your brother but do not seek him." After they both offer semaa to the fire, Auntie tells Daunis to trust herself to listen to the things she learns that make sense and leave the rest behind.

Daunis senses her relationship with Auntie changing—she's moving ahead into womanhood, and Auntie is letting her. Auntie says she's glad Daunis is figuring things out early and describes a guy she dated before Art, who just wanted to control her. Now, she knows that love honors both people's spirits in a relationship. Privately, Daunis thinks of Lily's final words to Travis, that they needed to be their own people and that she couldn't keep supporting him. Travis, Daunis realizes, didn't really love Lily. He didn't want her to have a good life. He wanted to control her, and he killed her out of selfishness.

Rather than sleep at Auntie's, Daunis drives home. While she waits for the ferry, she reads through Uncle David's mushroom research and tears out those five pages. It'll look like David didn't finish his research. She knows now that the kids in Minnesota didn't hallucinate—the Little People visited them and told them to leave the bad medicine alone. But if the FBI continues to search for a hallucinogenic mushroom, they'll leave other traditional medicines alone. Daunis burns the five torn-out pages and offers semaa as the ferry crosses the river. She thanks Creator for trusting her with information and with the responsibility of protecting her community. Now, she's pretty sure she knows how Travis created meth-X.

## CHAPTER 37

Daunis thinks back to when Lily broke up with Travis over Christmas break. He made lots of grand gestures that sometimes convinced Lily to try again, but they kept breaking up. He began to lose weight and his good looks. Then, the day before Valentine's Day, Travis offered Lily "love medicine" to take on Valentine's Day. Lily refused and weeks later, Travis looked like a true addict—he was using meth-X.

*Auntie essentially lets Daunis know that her sleuthing during the Elder lunches hasn't been all that sneaky; Auntie can tell she's up to something. Interestingly, though, Auntie doesn't tell Daunis to stop. She just tells Daunis to be careful and implies that Daunis should become one of those who seeks to respect "bad medicine" and protect others from it. Further, she implies that Daunis should trust her gut, something Daunis has only done some of the time thus far. Interestingly, Auntie uses the same term as David—"bad medicine"—suggesting that David was, perhaps, more versed in Native medicinal practices than Daunis realized. At the very least, it seems like David tried to do what Auntie encourages Daunis to do here—he was helping the FBI to try to protect others from "bad medicine."*



*Auntie respects Daunis's ability to make her own choices, even if she doesn't entirely agree with those choices. However, she still has advice to dispense. It's possible to apply Auntie's advice to relationships, as Daunis does as she considers Lily and Travis. However, it's also worth considering whether the FBI (and by extension, Ron and Jamie) is also trying to control Daunis and exploit her, rather than respect her wishes and keep her safe.*



*Neither Daunis nor David trust the FBI to properly understand or appreciate whatever bad medicine was used to create meth-X. Mushrooms, they seem to assume, are something the FBI can understand—hallucinogenic mushrooms have long been of interest to the government's drug-control efforts. Realizing what David intended to do and helping him complete his mission helps Daunis feel closer to her family; it also helps her feel as though she's doing something meaningful to help her community.*



*It remains mysterious what the "love medicine" actually is, but the fact that good and honest Lily refused it suggests that it's some sort of bad medicine. And what exactly it is, the novel suggests, is beside the point: Daunis's main goal now is to keep this information out of the FBI's hands for fear they'd abuse it.*



Daunis knows now that Travis added the love medicine to meth, but the love medicine wasn't what he thought it was: it gave a person control, which isn't love. The kids in Minnesota who took meth-X didn't get lovesick for girls, but for more meth. Daunis knows she must protect the knowledge of the love medicine. She drops Uncle David's notebook in Ron and Jamie's mail slot, feeling good that they'll only learn what they need to know.

When Daunis races out her front door the next morning, Jamie greets her with a "happy birthday." Daunis prays for love this morning and wonders what Dad thought the first time he held her. Midway through their run, Jamie says that Ron is going to Marquette to enter Uncle David's notebook as evidence. They discuss Daunis's birthday plans and Daunis asks what Jamie meant when he said she was being clever. He explains that she was too calm, and he knows she's hiding things—there were only 145 pages in David's 150-page notebook. Jamie suspects the FBI will figure it out soon. Daunis asks if Jamie can trust that she removed information the FBI doesn't need, but he simply asks if Daunis can trust him.

## CHAPTER 38

Emotions wash over Daunis as she enters the locker room—she's excited to play hockey one last time, but seeing Robin's locker is sobering, and it's hard when Auntie texts that she can't bring herself to come watch. Daunis and Macy exchange insults, but they cross their hockey sticks once they step onto the ice. As the game begins, Daunis feels cool and in control. The Supes are better players individually, but Daunis's teammates know how to read one another. In the final period, Stormy crashes into Daunis. She lands on her shoulder to stabbing pain, and Coach Bobby pulls Daunis out immediately. Macy soon joins Daunis on the bench and comments that Jamie is a great player. Daunis can only wonder if Jamie is truly on her side.

The guy who replaced Daunis is doing an awful job, but Coach Bobby refuses to let Daunis back on the ice. Macy teases Daunis; she's injured and wouldn't be able to do anything, anyway. Daunis and Macy's team barely loses, yet Daunis can tell that Levi is enraged by his team's performance. In the locker room, Daunis texts her doctor and Macy helps her out of her gear. Macy's heatless taunts help distract Daunis from her pain. When she enters the lobby, Daunis is overwhelmed by the "community love" she feels. Hopefully, people remember today was for Robin.

*Thanks to Auntie and to her memories of Lily, Daunis comes to a healthier understanding of what love is and should be. It's not about control, she realizes; it's about wanting your partner to be okay, even if that means breaking up. Love medicine, which is bad medicine, on the other hand, gives a person control, not a way to honestly and respectfully connect with a partner.*



*Daunis begins her birthday on top of the world and feeling connected to the people (alive and deceased) who love her, like Dad and Jamie. However, Jamie accuses Daunis of not following the rules, something that puts their fake relationship in jeopardy (if Daunis isn't going to cooperate, there's no reason for them to keep pretending for the investigation's sake). But neither can ignore that their feelings for each other are becoming increasingly strong and genuine, leaving it open to speculation whether they'll be able to reconcile their relationship's beginnings with how they're feeling now.*



*Daunis clearly loves hockey. It's restorative for her; in this sense, it's its own kind of ceremony. However, playing hockey today is emotionally difficult given that Daunis can't ignore the people who are missing who should be there, like Robin and Auntie. The ceremony, in other words, isn't nearly as meaningful without the people there to give it meaning. And things take a turn for the worse when Daunis injures her shoulder. The seriousness with which Coach Bobby pulls Daunis off the ice suggests this isn't a new injury; this is, perhaps, something he's seen before.*



*In the locker room, it becomes clear that Daunis is seriously injured and needs all the help she can get. When Macy—a girl Daunis emphatically doesn't like—helps Daunis, it drives home that the local Ojibwe community is willing to prioritize one another's health and safety over personal conflicts. And it helps Daunis feel a bit better when she notices the "community love" in the lobby. It tells her that others feel the same way she does.*



Daunis finds Jamie, who says in an awed voice that he had no idea Daunis was such a great player. She pretends her shoulder doesn't hurt that bad as Stormy, Mike, and Levi join them, and Levi notes that the point of the game today was to get the Supes to gel. Daunis is enraged and remembers again Robin's advice to not let a guy have so much power. Was Robin referring to Levi? But Daunis is distracted when Levi tells Jamie about Daunis's old shoulder injury, and Grant appears and says that Tribal Council met today—Daunis is a member now. Daunis feels ill. Why is Grant so interested?

Fortunately, Daunis notices Art, Auntie, Mom, Pauline, and Perry across the lobby—and Auntie is smiling. Warning Jamie to not mention her shoulder, Daunis lets Auntie hug and congratulate her on becoming a tribal member. As Jamie jokes with Art and plays with the twins, suddenly it seems like everything is perfect. For a moment, Daunis can pretend Jamie's a real high school student, and that she's headed off to play hockey at a Michigan school. They'll live together at college and offer semaa each morning. A tear falls down Daunis's cheek: Jamie is 22 and a federal agent. Finally, Daunis lets Jamie lead her to the Jeep. He asks where she'd like to get dinner, and she asks him to take her to the emergency room.

In the exam room, Jamie helps Daunis out of her sweatshirt and into the hospital gown, kissing her hurt shoulder. Doctor Bonasera arrives a moment later and finds that Daunis's shoulder isn't dislocated. But he pulls out a pen, and Daunis asks if they have to do this now—Jamie doesn't know. Sighing at Dr. B's pitying look, Daunis lets Dr. B run the pen down her upper arm to just above her elbow. That's where she can feel it; from her shoulder to that point, she's numb.

## CHAPTER 39

Dr. Bonasera reminds Daunis that after her surgery complications from last summer, she risks nerve damage every time she hurts her shoulder. For readers, Daunis explains that the summer before her senior year, Auntie (who's legally able to make medical decisions for Daunis) secretly took Daunis to Ann Arbor for a surgery intended to fix her shoulder instability. She wanted to be able to play on the varsity team and play in college—but that's not what happened. Back in the present, Jamie looks at Daunis almost angrily and asks why she played at all. She says her team lost because her sub was so awful.

*Even though the Supes players planned this game specifically to honor Robin, Daunis realizes that they don't actually care about her—they're treating the game like a more competitive than normal practice session. Things continue to unravel as Daunis wonders if Levi bothered Robin the same way he bothers her now, and when Grant expresses untoward interest in her becoming a tribal member. Given how predatory he's been toward Daunis in past weeks, it seems likely he has some nefarious reason.*



*Remember that Auntie is aware of the reason Daunis can't play college hockey, which now seems related to her previous shoulder injury. So, Daunis tries to hide from Auntie that she made a mistake in playing tonight, just as Auntie said she would—she doesn't want to worry or disappoint her aunt. To add to this emotional turmoil, Daunis struggles with the knowledge that she is falling in love with Jamie, regardless of how their relationship began. She wants a life with him, but she realizes that this is all just a lie, given that he's a federal agent, not a real high school student.*



*By letting Jamie in on the extent of her shoulder issues, Daunis finally comes clean with him. This moves their relationship onto more honest footing, as she's actively hidden the truth from him prior to this. That she feels okay doing this suggests that she's growing to trust him more, a sign of their deepening relationship—despite the fact that it is, in part, still an act.*



*The fact that Auntie was willing to seemingly go behind Mom's back to get Daunis this surgery speaks to how close and supportive of each other she and Daunis are. She's historically gone out of her way to support Daunis's dreams, which helps to explain some of why Daunis has been so conflicted about deceiving Auntie in the present. But it also shows that Daunis is no stranger to deceiving loved ones to achieve her end goal, which is also what she's doing by serving as the FBI's CI.*



When they're done at the emergency room, Daunis insists on getting cheeseburgers and a strawberry shake from the drive-in. Then, she instructs Jamie to drive down a trail in the woods, which ends at a clearing with a view of Sugar Island across the river. They kiss, eat, and watch the freighters make Kelvin wakes (V-shaped waves) on the river. As they kiss, Jamie asks if he can touch Daunis's hair. TJ used to do that, and Daunis hasn't been ready to let anyone, let alone someone just acting, touch her like that. But Jamie is being genuine now, so they kiss and lie down together.

Snuggled together, Jamie asks why Daunis played tonight when she knew she was risking nerve damage. Daunis answers truthfully: she feels close to Dad when she plays, and she couldn't resist the opportunity to imagine Dad cheering for her. Then, she says she'd like to have sex with Jamie. He'd like the same, but he notes that they don't know how this is going to end. Daunis says she'd like to just focus on them tonight. Jamie agrees. They fetch the condoms Lily kept in the Jeep's glove box, and the sex is perfect until Jamie says he loves Daunis. Daunis scrambles out of the blankets, dresses, and stays bent over, trying not to cry.

Jamie, confused, confirms that saying he loves Daunis ruined everything. Daunis says she knows about "Guy Lies," and everyone, especially Jamie, has lied to her. She remembers fishing with Dad and shares the memory with Jamie: the last thing Dad ever said to her is that he was going away and when he came back, they'd have such a good life together. Love, Daunis says, is a promise—and it's an awful lie when a person doesn't keep their promises.

## CHAPTER 40

Jamie drives Daunis back to Chi Mukwa and his car. When they get out of the Jeep, he hugs Daunis and says that their relationship and their love exists separately from the investigation, and he's not going anywhere. He asks her to squeeze his hand whenever she feels upset and tells her again that he loves her.

When Jamie arrives to pick Daunis up for Shagala the next night, his jaw drops upon seeing her. The jumpsuit is perfect, thanks to Mrs. Edwards. At the Jeep, Jamie offers Daunis a bracelet of beaded strawberries. It's clearly Daunis's cousin's beadwork. As he fastens the clasp, Jamie says that the investigation can change fast, but he knows how he feels about Daunis. Daunis can feel her heart opening and starting to trust Jamie.

*Daunis takes it as a sign that Jamie genuinely cares about her experiences and emotional wellbeing when he asks to touch her hair. So, even though she knows that their relationship is in some ways an act, she can also tell that it's more than that. That their relationship begins to deepen in this way in this particular place, with a view of Sugar Island, highlights that it is in part Daunis's connection to her Ojibwe community that makes her so interesting to Jamie.*



*This passage helps explain why Daunis wants Dad's scarf so badly: she can't (or shouldn't) play hockey anymore, and she feels that having his scarf would give her the connection to her dad that she craves and struggles to recreate these days. Recall that TJ would tell Daunis he loved her during sex—and that she's found Jamie doing anything that TJ used to do (even innocently, without intention to harm) extremely triggering. Even if Jamie is being entirely truthful here, Daunis's past experiences keep her from reacting in a way that would allow her and Jamie to move through this difficult moment.*



*Note here that while Daunis blames Dad for not coming back, there's been no indication thus far that Dad's death was anything but an accident. Still, the trauma Daunis experienced after her dad's death and broken promise is real and continues to affect her. When it comes to Jamie, with whom her relationship is something of a lie due to the investigation, it makes things increasingly complex.*



*Despite Jamie's insistence that it's possible to separate their relationship from the investigation, Ron's earlier warnings suggest that this isn't actually true. Like Daunis, Jamie is perhaps young, naïve, and not well versed in how to best navigate this difficult situation.*



*The berry bracelet shows Daunis that Jamie is genuinely listening and trying to show her he cares—he's supporting a local artisan, and he chooses imagery that's particularly meaningful for Daunis. But even if his and Daunis's feelings are real, it's yet to be seen whether they can effectively navigate a relationship that exists separately from the investigation.*



At the Superior Shores Resort, crowds cheer as the line of couples makes their way to the building. When they hear Auntie shouting, Jamie and Daunis break away from the line to go greet her. Daunis laughs at Jamie's hand squeezes, which seem to communicate various things. Auntie takes photos of everyone on the steps. In the ballroom a bit later, Grant and Chief Manitou begin the ceremony. Levi, as team captain, gives a speech. Daunis winces as Levi talks: he's "doing that forced *I am but a humble Indian* routine." When he's done, she tells him he sounded fake, but Macy quips that Daunis only got into the tribe by one vote. Some people, it seems, won't let Daunis forget that that they see her as an outsider.

Levi passes Daunis's birthday gift to her across the table. It's not Dad's **scarf**: it's Dad's choker from his regalia. Levi hugs Daunis and whispers that there's another surprise at her house. After dinner, Grant and Mrs. Edwards introduce the Supes and let the players and their dates open the dance floor. As Daunis sways with Jamie, she thanks him in Anishinaabemowin and calls him Ojjiishiingwe, or "He has a scar on his face." He asks if Daunis has a Spirit name and she says she does—but she's not ready to share. Still, Daunis enjoys dancing with Jamie, and she's thankful when she feels nothing watching TJ dance.

As Daunis heads to the restroom, Ron catches her and says they need to talk. He asks what happened last night and says that everything Jamie does is his business. Daunis says that Jamie just took her to the ER after she hurt herself at the game last night, but Ron shares how Jamie got his scar. During Jamie's first undercover assignment, a drug bust went wrong; had backup not arrived, the person would've kept cutting his face. Now, Ron says, Jamie is jeopardizing the investigation by getting too caught up in Daunis. Daunis insists that they can honor the investigation and have a relationship, but Ron reminds Daunis that Jamie Johnson isn't real. He's just a rookie officer trying to redeem himself, and he's using Daunis—it was his idea to get close to her.

In the restroom, Daunis is stunned: how can last night have been so magical if Jamie is using her? She receives a text from TJ warning her that he's coming into the bathroom. Though Daunis locks herself in a stall, TJ tells her that Jamie is bad news—if only because he's friends with Levi. This angers Daunis, but TJ says he broke up with Daunis because Levi and his friends threatened to "end football" for him. Daunis remembers how Levi threatened the hockey player as TJ says that Tribal Police said he'd have a hard time getting anyone to believe him over Levi.

*It's been implied that a huge number of Supes players (and an even huger number of fans and sponsors) are white, not Native. So, though Levi might be doing his "I am but a humble Indian routine" to appeal to bigoted white folks (and get them to fund the team), Daunis still sees it as disrespectful and as selling out. However, Macy calls Daunis's right to feel this way into question, reminding readers again that to some, Daunis will never be "Native enough." This is even more ironic (and for Daunis, frustrating) because Daunis is portrayed as being more involved in day-to-day Ojibwe culture and spiritual practices than either Levi or Macy.*



*While not exactly what Daunis wanted, Dad's choker perhaps does more than the scarf would've to connect Daunis to her heritage and to her family. This is something Daunis can wear when she resumes dancing at the end of her mourning period, allowing her to feel close to Dad when she dances (and not just when she plays hockey). Giving Jamie a name in Anishinaabemowin shows that Daunis trusts him and is willing to let him into her culture, though she's not yet ready to take the step of telling him who she really is. This is fitting as Jamie hasn't told Daunis yet who he really is, so on some level, they're both continuing to deceive the other.*



*Ron is focused on the investigation, and that includes making sure Jamie doesn't put himself in a compromising or dangerous position—which having sex with Daunis has done, in his estimation. It's possible to see that Ron values Jamie's safety over Daunis (and Jamie's) happiness, though—and by extension, that he perhaps doesn't value Daunis's happiness and safety as much as one would hope. The revelation that it was Jamie's idea to get close to Daunis, meanwhile, reminds Daunis that parts of her relationship with Jamie aren't real. He is, as Ron notes, a federal agent working a case, not a high school student in love.*



*Daunis struggles to accept that multiple things can be true: she and Jamie can care about each other, but that doesn't change the fact that their relationship began with lies and deceit. TJ, meanwhile, throws another wrench in Daunis's worldview by suggesting that Levi is violent and abuses his privilege as a Supe. Daunis has seen Levi behave violently before, but she also doesn't like or trust TJ—so she may or may not take him seriously.*



TJ admits he was a coward for how he broke up with Daunis, but he's not a liar. Daunis insists he's wrong, but TJ says he's only wrong about what kind of a person Daunis is. Daunis already feels out of control when, down in the ballroom, Grant appears next to her and invites her to his room to see a video—security footage from his home office. Gramma Pearl always sad bad things happen in threes.

*As Daunis sees it, it's fitting that after being told she's wrong about Jamie and Levi, she'll have to face up to snooping in Grant's office. However, she seems to take his reason for wanting to see her at face value—when the predatory behavior he has displayed the past few weeks (and his possible involvement in the meth cell) suggests that his motives may be much darker and more dangerous.*



## CHAPTER 41

Daunis walks ahead of Grant to the hotel. She decides that she'll let him tell her what he knows and then alert Jamie and Ron if need be. They get into the side elevators—Grant doesn't want to be seen with Daunis. Daunis thinks about Jamie on the elevator ride up and then refocuses: she'll say she was in his office to take photos of Grandpa Lorenzo's furniture. She'd like to buy the furniture back. But when Grant opens his room, Daunis is shocked. It's a normal room, not the Edwardses' usual suite. Suddenly, Grant shoves Daunis face-first onto the bed and says that “hockey girls” are his weakness. Daunis wonders if he harassed Robin, too. But Daunis has no leverage to fight back. She watches from above as Grant rapes her.

*Daunis is far more focused on the investigation than on her safety—and despite Grant's predatory behavior recently, she doesn't seem to truly see him as legitimately threatening until he rapes her. This mirrors the way that Daunis continues to ignore the disturbing evidence beginning to pile up against Levi, and it raises the question of what crime he must commit before Daunis is willing to see it. Being raped in general, meanwhile, highlights Daunis's powerlessness as a woman. Her involvement in the investigation, her admittance into the Tribe, and other identity markers or affiliations don't change the fact that Grant primarily sees her as a vulnerable target.*



As Daunis takes the elevator back down, she combs her hair and blinks until it seems like nothing happened. She rejoins Jamie in the ballroom and tells Jamie she wants to dance. Daunis lets herself get lost in the music. When the DJ cues up a drumbeat for an honor song, she giggles at Jamie's awed expression. Though Daunis can't dance, she holds Dad's choker up. Stormy, a wolf dancer, dances next to Daunis, and nearby Zhaaganaash men whoop back at him—they don't get the dance's significance. As Levi dances toward Daunis, Daunis feels lucky to have such a great brother. During the next slow dance, Jamie tries to kiss Daunis's shoulder. She jerks away, unwilling to tell him what Grant did. He helps her put Dad's choker on, and Daunis imagines she's a kid dancing with her dad again.

*Even if Daunis can't dance (because she's not dancing for a year to honor Uncle David and Lily), the honor dance still helps her feel a little more whole after the trauma she just experienced. That she turns to Jamie (as she did after Mike kissed her without her consent) in this situation also suggests that she genuinely trusts him to care for her, despite their relationship's questionably honest beginnings. Finally, when Daunis marvels at how great Levi is, she explicitly rejects what she's seen that suggests Levi isn't all that great and TJ's story of a threatening, dangerous Levi. Her familial loyalty overrides her own observations.*



As Shagala winds down, Daunis tells Jamie she wants to go home, not to Levi's after-party. When they pass Macy exiting the restroom, Daunis pushes Macy back into the restroom and growls at her to never be alone with Grant Edwards. Jamie asks about Daunis's behavior when they're safely in the truck, but Daunis refuses to say anything. Thinking back on what Grant and Mrs. Bailey said, Daunis is certain Grant harassed Robin. She tells Jamie to park so they can talk.

*Daunis and Macy might not get along, but Daunis still feels a responsibility to protect other women in her community from aggressors like Grant. She also feels like she must share with Jamie some of what she learned during her assault, suggesting that for now, she's coping with the trauma by trying to help others.*





In her head, Daunis thinks about how the conversation will go: she'll tell Jamie that Grant is involved with the meth cell and at least helped get Robin addicted to painkillers. She knows because he offered to get her something for her shoulder right before he raped her. And after, he squeezed her shoulder and said he could make it stop hurting, laughed, and said Daunis will be back for more, just like Robin. Jamie will tell Daunis that she was stupid to go to a hotel room with Grant, and he'll ask her why she didn't she scream or fight back. Daunis notices that her imagined Jamie voice sounds just like her own. She realizes she can't tell Jamie.

Remembering her conversation with Ron earlier, Daunis asks for Jamie's real name. He refuses to give it and says that it's safer for her not to know. Furious, Daunis notes that confidential informants risk injury or death. She says that Jamie read up on her before he started on the investigation, and he knew Uncle David's death was suspicious. He knew he had things in common with Daunis, and she'd like to know whose idea it was to bring her on. Before Jamie can say anything, Daunis punches him in the nose for endangering her. Just then, Ron drives into the parking lot. Daunis swings at Jamie again, misses, and is suddenly back in the hotel room with Grant when she hits the ground. Terrified, she punches and kicks until Ron helps her up. Ron fires Jamie, but Jamie asks what happened to Daunis. Daunis says that *Jamie* happened to her.

## CHAPTER 42

Ron, assuming Daunis is shivering from the cold, wraps her in a blanket and helps her into the front seat. She asks him to drive her home, and they sit in the driveway. It feels comforting to Daunis; it reminds her of when Coach Bobby would drive her home after games. Ron asks if Daunis can say what happened with Jamie, but Daunis wonders to herself why she's so mad at Jamie and not at Ron. Ron acts like a professional agent, but Jamie makes Daunis feel important. But maybe Jamie just isn't cut out for undercover work. Daunis says she confronted Jamie about the fake relationship; the fight was one-sided. Ron sighs that Jamie should change careers before he looks like Quasimodo. They both laugh.

*Daunis is berating herself and closing herself off to any comfort or support Jamie would probably be willing to provide—there's no evidence he'd blame her for the sexual assault, and sexual assault is, of course, never the victim's fault. However, her memory reveals that Grant is at the very least involved in distributing prescription opioids, seemingly illegally, in the Sault. Opioids and meth are entirely different types of drugs, however, suggesting that though Grant is doing something illegal, he's likely not involved in the meth cell.*



*It's especially infuriating for Daunis when Jamie cites her safety as his reason for not sharing his real name. She was just raped, after all—so clearly her safety is in jeopardy, no matter what she does or doesn't know about Jamie or the investigation. Rather than give Jamie an opportunity to fess up, though, Daunis punches first. This makes her feel briefly empowered, but this feeling disappears as soon as she flashes back to the assault. Her flashback—a trauma response—betrays how shaken she is, even as she tries to hide it. Now, she can't ignore how vulnerable she and other women like her are.*



*Though Coach Bobby hasn't appeared in person much in the novel, he continues to show up like this, in Daunis's fond memories of him helping her and making her feel safe and comforted. In this way, she continues to include him in her community. Ron, somehow, steps into a similar role—perhaps because both he and Daunis know what his goal is. Jamie, on the other hand, seems to struggle with navigating the line between real and fake relationships, which makes his relationship with Daunis confusing.*



Inside, Daunis discovers that Mom is sleeping at GrandMary's house, seemingly to give Daunis and Jamie privacy. When Daunis is ready for bed, she soothes herself by touching the beads on Dad's choker and saying her Spirit name again and again. When she falls asleep, she's back in the night Travis shot Lily. Lily is dead, and Travis tells Daunis that "They" are so mad at him. Lily, he says, is the only person who ever loved him, but she wouldn't try "it." "This" is the only way. When Travis lifts the gun to his head, he says that his life ended when he said he shot that BB gun. Everyone loved Levi, and Levi told Travis he'd be grateful if Travis took the fall. Not even Lily told Daunis the truth, which is why Travis had to kill her. Travis pulls the trigger.

The "They" that Travis mentions in his dream presumably refers to the Little People, while "it" is the love medicine and "the only way," killing Lily and himself. This is all stuff that Daunis already knew—what's new is remembering that Travis admitted that Levi, not he, actually shot the BB gun that blinded a woman. This adds more credence to TJ's earlier insistence that Levi is bad news and abuses his status as the town's "golden boy." If he truly convinced Travis to take the blame in his place, it suggests that Levi is generally unwilling to take responsibility for his mistakes—and is willing to harm others when it suits him.



When Daunis wakes in the morning, she notices the gift Levi left on her desk. Fingering Dad's choker, Daunis thinks of everything that happened last night—and her dream about Travis and Lily. The gift is a framed photo of Levi, Dad, and Daunis. As she studies it, Daunis hears dream Travis saying that everyone loved Levi, and Levi said he'd be grateful if Travis took the fall. Is Levi not the person Daunis thinks he is? Daunis dresses and goes outside to pray, but she's not sure what to pray for. Asking for something could have unintended consequences, so Daunis drops the semaa and confesses that she's afraid. She runs to the place where she and Jamie had sex. What if what Travis and TJ said about Levi is true?

When it comes to Levi's actions toward Daunis, Daunis feels like there's nothing to be upset about. He seemingly can't find Dad's scarf, but he went out of his way to give her two other birthday gifts that are meaningful and connect her to Dad's memory. However, she's now had two people tell her that Levi isn't actually that nice—and that he's threatened others and ruined their lives. When Daunis prays and confesses that she's afraid, it suggests that Daunis is continuing to mature—she's now willing to admit that she doesn't know what she doesn't know.



Mom isn't back yet when Daunis gets home. Daunis decides to check the emailed bank statement from Canada, and if it hasn't arrived yet, she'll take a bath. She wants real proof; she doesn't want to let her suspicions poison her relationship with Levi like she did with Uncle David. But when Daunis opens the statement, she sees that Levi deposited \$20,000 into the account and wired it to Panama. Levi is the mule.

The emailed bank statement is damning evidence that the account doesn't just have extra money in it because Levi is now 18 and receiving adult per-cap payments. Though it seems impossible for Daunis to come to any other conclusion, it's yet to be seen if she'll trust her evidence that Levi is bad news—or whether she'll protect him because he's her beloved brother.



Daunis stands in front of Dana Firekeeper's house, which should be empty. She enters through the garage and soothes the dog, Waylon. Letting herself in, Daunis plays fetch with Waylon and discovers that both doors to Levi's studio apartment are locked. Daunis ignores her painful shoulder, leaps to the garage roof, and pries the screen out of a window. Daunis studies the room. She can tell which parts of it are for Stormy and Mike, and she identifies what must be Travis's old gaming chair. Daunis digs through Levi's closet and finds his paper bank statements. Starting last October, he wired at least \$10,000 per month to Panama. This coincides with when Levi became a Supe—and when Daunis turned 18. He's been making transfers in her name. Daunis hears the garage door open.

Daunis is now breaking and entering, suggesting that she's done playing by the rules and allowing Levi to control what information she gets. In Levi's room, she seems to identify the other people involved in the meth cell: Stormy, Mike, and Travis. Then, Daunis also discovers that Levi has been willing to use her and put her in danger in order to manage the meth cell's finances. Put simply, this tells Daunis that Levi isn't actually being nice to her. He's using her, just like he's used everyone else in his life.



## CHAPTER 43

It's Dana, not Levi. Waylon barks and a squirrel in the windowsill scolds Daunis—and then leaps into the room, exciting Waylon even more. Daunis is so scared that she knocks over a lidded basket. Inside is Dad's **scarf**. Levi has been lying to her. Daunis pockets the scarf and can hear Dana calling 911. Daunis exits through the garage just as Dana breaks into Levi's room and shrieks at the squirrel. Once Daunis gets home, she locks herself in the bathroom and vomits. Remembering a word Auntie taught her, which translates to "To be wise is to live with an abundance of sight," Daunis realizes she knows now that she didn't realize how hard it would be to be a strong Nish kwe. She's been searching for Levi this whole time. He's hurt so many people, and knowing this hurts her.

When Mom gets home, Daunis tries to hide the sound of her retching. But Mom offers Daunis some Gatorade and asks if Daunis is pregnant. When Daunis says she's on birth control, Mom says she's glad Daunis has Auntie, but Daunis can also come to her for help. Daunis lets Mom in and leans on her shoulder. She desperately wants to tell Mom her secrets, but she decides instead to say that she doesn't want to tell Mom things because she doesn't want to cause Mom even more pain. Mom is surprised, and Daunis says that it's her fault for being born that Mom is "stuck in limbo." Mom assures Daunis that children are never at fault for their parents' choices. Hugging Daunis, Mom says that she's making choices about her life, and nothing is Daunis's fault.

Mom runs Daunis a bath. Afterward, Daunis dresses in a sports bra that will hide the bruise on her shoulder. As she pulls a shirt on, she hears Grant telling her that the security cameras will show that she went with him willingly. Will she ever be able to forget that night? Mom approaches Daunis's room to ask about Shagala and the gift Levi left for Daunis. Daunis says she and Jamie had a fight and then shows Mom the photo. Mom smiles; she's clearly still in love with Dad. Then, she asks what else Levi left. He had two boxes. Daunis shrugs and Mom leaves for EverCare. Then, Daunis searches for the second box.

Under her hockey gear bag, Daunis finds a box of hockey pucks. They're the smeared dream catcher pucks, and Daunis finds them enraging—both because of the bad printing and because they're not regulation weight. Then, she realizes the puck in her hand has a lid. Inside is poor-quality crystal meth. This is how Levi has been distributing meth in other communities, but why would Levi leave a box of pucks in Daunis's bedroom?

*Discovering Dad's scarf in this tense moment seems to be almost more damning in Daunis's eyes than discovering that Levi has implicated her in the meth ring. It suggests that he doesn't care as much as she thought he did about her emotional wellbeing and her connection to Dad, as he selfishly kept the scarf for himself. Once she's back home, Daunis must confront that being an adult isn't as easy as she once thought. It's not just about being a certain age. It's about accepting the information she now has and doing the right thing with it—which is making sure that Levi isn't able to hurt more people.*



*In this passage, Daunis reveals the extent to which she takes responsibility for what she perceives as her mom's unhappiness. If she hadn't been born, she reasons, Mom would be happier and healthier than she is now. Being born, of course, isn't something that Daunis had any say in—it was Mom's choice, as Mom makes clear later in the passage. This helps Daunis see that she doesn't need to baby her mom or take on so much emotional weight when it comes to her mom. Her mom may be somewhat unwell, but it's still up to her to make her own choices, not Daunis.*



*As Daunis allows Mom to run her the bath and otherwise cares for her, she steps into a more childish role and allows Mom to be a caring parent. This represents a rebalancing of Mom and Daunis's relationship. Still, Daunis can't escape the trauma Grant has caused her by raping her last night—and the trauma that seems yet to come, as Mom reveals that Levi left a second, mysterious box in Daunis's room.*



*Discovering the hidden box of pucks, at least one of which contains meth, suggests that Levi is trying to frame Daunis. This again indicates that Levi isn't the protector and idol that Daunis has always seen him as. Instead, just as he made Travis take the fall for shooting the BB gun, he's seemingly prepared to let Daunis get in trouble for the meth cell.*



Daunis sits with Dad's **scarf** around her shoulders and inventories what she knows. She realizes that Uncle David intended the FBI to continue on a wild goose chase after discovering the meth wasn't hallucinogenic. He went missing after visiting Angie Flint, Travis's mom, so Angie needs to be questioned. Grant is involved if he's donating the pucks, and Levi is trying to set Daunis up by planting the pucks here.

Just as Daunis wonders what Levi will do next, her BlackBerry buzzes and someone knocks on the door. Hiding Dad's scarf and the puck, Daunis reads a text from Ron asking if she's seen Jamie since last night. Daunis figures Ron is at the door, but why would he be texting if he's here? Dana is on the doorstep, but she's not angry to have caught Daunis breaking in. She's afraid and says that she thinks Levi is in trouble.

*When Daunis sits with Dad's scarf and thinks of Uncle David and his logical, scientific method, she is symbolically connecting with her ancestors and drawing on their wisdom. This highlights the major role the deceased play in Daunis's culture: they're the ones to help guide her to what seems to be the correct conclusion.*



*It's worth keeping in mind that Daunis is frazzled here and afraid of getting in trouble for breaking into Levi's room. So, she's not totally thinking logically—as she notes, Ron wouldn't text her if he was already standing on her doorstep. This raises the possibility that Daunis (and perhaps Jamie, too) is in trouble—and that she might not be able to trust Dana.*



## CHAPTER 44

Daunis shows Dana in and gives her a paper bag to breathe into. Then, she makes Dana a cup of tea and pours one for herself when Dana says they have a lot to talk about. Daunis grimaces at her first sip—it tastes like the soap didn't get all rinsed out—so she pours in more milk. Finally, Dana says that Levi is mixed up in something bad, and it has to do with Travis and Lily. She talks about him going to Sugar Island to talk sense into Travis; Daunis knows now that Levi went to pick up meth to distribute.

As Dana describes how insistent and selfish Levi has become, Daunis finds that she can't hear Dana anymore. She can just hear Ron's voice in her head, asking if she's seen Jamie. Dana says that a teacher came to visit her as Daunis excuses herself. But when Daunis gets up, she falls. Dana helps Daunis up and says that "All you Fontaines ever do is mess things up." As they get in a pickup truck, Daunis realizes that Light Bulb's mom wasn't Angie Flint.

*Daunis is pretty sure she knows what's going on: Dana wants desperately to help her son, but she doesn't have all the information to realize that Levi is actually the person responsible for the meth cell in the Sault. To Daunis, it appears as though Dana is preparing to ask Daunis to help her get Levi out of the meth cell.*



*Finally, it's revealed that Dana isn't a caring parent and an ally to Daunis—rather, she too is involved in the meth cell. Noting that all Fontaines "mess things up" suggests that she's responsible for David's death too, and it becomes increasingly clear that Dana has drugged Daunis in order to kidnap her.*



## CHAPTER 45

At first, Daunis smells pleasant smells she associates with camping. But she realizes she's in a small aluminum trailer, and she can smell a piss pot. Jamie says Daunis's name and pulls her close, but his breath smells awful, and she tells him so. Amused, he observes that she cares about his breath when they've been kidnapped. This wakes Daunis up the rest of the way. Jamie says that he totally deserved Daunis's punch. He was just trying to boost his career, but then he got to know her. Continuing, Jamie says that Levi and Mike came to his house last night and invited him to a party. Mike tasered him and he woke up here this morning. Daunis has been here about six hours.

*The timing might not be ideal, but it's significant that Jamie is willing to admit he was wrong and made mistakes in this passage. Even if he and Daunis have butted heads throughout the investigation regarding whether he's doing the right thing by working as an agent, he seems to now accept that at least some aspects of his job aren't ethical—such as the parts that require him to lie to and use people like Daunis. He also confirms that Mike is involved in the meth cell.*



Realizing that Dana drugged her with a date-rape drug, Daunis asks if Dana said anything when she brought Daunis here. Jamie is shocked—a guy in a snowmobile helmet dropped Daunis off and tasered Jamie again before chaining Daunis to the bed. Daunis asks if it was Grant, but Jamie doesn't know. She flinches when Jamie tries to touch her and then says that soon, Mom and Auntie will contact Ron, and they'll all discover that Daunis and Jamie are missing. Jamie says that Ron should be getting the satellite tracking info from Jamie's watch. Daunis stands and listens. She can hear gentle waves and asks if Jamie has heard any Kelvin wakes. He hasn't. They realize they're on the east side of Sugar Island, in the cliffs and caves, where there's no service. Nobody is coming for them.

## CHAPTER 46

Moments later, Daunis and Jamie hear Mike and Levi approaching the trailer. Quietly, Jamie slips his watch onto Daunis's leg. She must leave with the guys if she has the opportunity. Levi enters the trailer first, avoiding looking at Daunis. As Mike adds a log to the woodstove, Daunis notices the tape lines on the floor delineating how far captives can reach with the chains. Levi empties his backpack of water bottles and protein bars, and Daunis and Jamie chug a bottle each. Then, Daunis asks Levi what's going on. He says they need Daunis's help with a business opportunity.

When Daunis screeches with rage, Levi says he tried to bring it up on the day the hockey player insulted Daunis. Daunis retorts that she thought Levi was talking about buying a house to rent to college kids, but Levi says that he used to sit outside Uncle David's classroom while David and Daunis talked about chemicals. He realized just how brilliant Daunis is. Daunis is torn between loving the praise and feeling betrayed. Mike picks up the story and says it all started in Coach Bobby's business class, when the guys started to wonder why city drug dealers got more money than the locals.

Mike sits and urges Levi to tell Daunis how it all started. Levi says that Angie Flint started dating a guy from Vegas who dealt meth. She started selling to friends, and Travis started using. He said that the meth just made him skate faster. Mike says the guy from Vegas started hitting Angie for not meeting her quotas, and Tribal Police couldn't do anything about it because he wasn't Native, and he only hit her on the reservation. The Tribe got rid of him at the end of his probation period, but Travis started helping Angie with the business. Levi says that he and the guys only "invest[ed] in a growing business." Daunis realizes Levi doesn't know she knows he did more than invest, and she thinks that he's behaved like this because he always got special treatment and had Travis to blame for his mistakes.

*Daunis and Jamie realize that the meth cell is likely bigger than they realize—in addition to Levi, Mike, and Jamie, there's the person who dropped Daunis off last night. This means that there is yet another opportunity for Daunis's loved ones to betray her, depending on who this person is. Then, as Daunis and Jamie realize where they are on Sugar Island and why they haven't been rescued yet, they deduce that for now, they can rely only on each other. Put simply, it's essential they put aside any lingering conflict or differences so they can escape this situation alive.*



*Levi's body language (refusing to look at Daunis in particular) suggests that he feels guilty about what he's doing. Still, he doesn't seem to fully grasp the gravity of the situation or the pain he's caused—calling the meth cell a "business opportunity" makes it seem benign, when really, it's killed people. The trailer's existence in the first place, meanwhile, suggests that Mike and Levi have perhaps done this before—maybe even with Uncle David.*



*Daunis's relationship to Levi remains complicated. He has wholly betrayed her in so many ways, such as by kidnapping her and being involved in the meth cell to begin with. But she can't escape the fact that she still wants to impress her beloved brother and accept his praise. That the local meth cell began in Coach Bobby's business class should raise some suspicion, as it now seems possible that Coach Bobby himself is involved.*



*As Mike and Levi describe the meth cell's origins, notice how they overwhelmingly downplay meth's negative effects, as when they describe Travis's claim that it made him skate faster. While meth probably did make Travis faster, that doesn't cancel out the fact that it destroyed his health—and ultimately, his life. In this sense, the meth cell is presenting meth in much the same way the government video at the lab did: they don't acknowledge the real damage that meth does to people and to communities. Daunis now also suspects that TJ and dream Travis were right about Levi. Levi has no understanding that he should take responsibility for his own actions—he relies on others to smooth his way.*



Mike picks up the story. He says that Travis started using his own product, added psychedelic mushrooms, and then added more “wild stuff” while he was hung up on Lily. Annoyed, Mike says that Levi was bad at using meth—and at pitching the business plan to Daunis last year. He tells Daunis that had she been involved, they could’ve gotten Travis help, and Lily would still be alive. Daunis realizes Mike is in charge, not Levi. Mike says that Daunis isn’t as smart as he thought, but he’s going to follow Grant’s advice and play the long game. As Levi leaves, Mike says Daunis has a choice: she can help Levi and save Jamie, or Jamie will die. Insinuating that he knows that Grant raped Daunis, Mike says they expect an answer tomorrow.

*Levi might be used to having others clean up his messes, but Daunis infers in this passage that Mike is actually the most entitled of the boys in the meth cell—it even seems that he’s the one who pressured Levi into getting involved in the first place. Interestingly, Mike then seems to blame Travis and Lily’s deaths on Daunis. Their deaths were, of course, Travis’s fault; it’s not Daunis’s fault that Travis chose to shoot the gun. But by making Daunis feel responsible, Mike seems to expect that he’ll be able to manipulate Daunis in much the same way he’s manipulated Levi.*



## CHAPTER 47

Daunis can’t breathe; she’s too hot. She finds herself on the bed with Jamie holding a damp handkerchief to her forehead. Jamie doesn’t ask questions, but he seems to be piecing together what happened to Daunis. He doesn’t lecture her, either. Jamie unwraps two protein bars for Daunis and shows her how to turn off and on the tracking feature on his watch; when she has the opportunity, she must leave the trailer. Daunis, meanwhile, mentally takes stock of what she knows about Jamie. He’s 22, was a pairs figure skater and then a hockey player, and he doesn’t know his tribe. He wants to belong to something bigger, he loves Daunis, and he didn’t see any of this coming. Unable to keep her eyes open, Daunis curls up to sleep.

*It’s implied that Jamie is beginning to understand that Grant raped Daunis at Shagala. Recall that Daunis didn’t want to tell Jamie about the rape at the time because she was afraid he’d blame her, despite there being little evidence he’d react that way. Now, he confirms that he won’t blame her. Daunis seems to wrap this up in her realization that he loves her when she takes her mental tally about him. Essentially, she realizes that Jamie has lied to her and is still a mystery in many ways. But for now, it’s enough that he loves, respects, and wants to protect her.*



Daunis dreams that she’s a tiger watching Jamie, a panther far from home, fail to fight off an attack from Levi, Stormy, and Mike. Ron shouts that he can’t find Jamie, but when Daunis tries to fight the boys, she realizes she’s chained to a bed. She watches Jamie die as a snake slithers up her leg. Daunis wakes up terrified. Jamie is holding her and though Daunis knows he’s not Grant, his breath on her shoulder still scares her. After getting up, Daunis sorts through her thoughts. She knows that the guys, Grant, and Angie are responsible for the meth, and Dana is involved. Levi is the weakest link, and though Mike promised to let Jamie go if Daunis cooperates, Jamie won’t go free. Daunis doesn’t know many more things, including whether Levi was involved in Uncle David’s death and how to stop loving her brother.

*Daunis’s dream initially seems symbolically straightforward: Jamie is out of his element and (in theory) it’s up to Daunis and Ron to save him, but Daunis feels impotent at the moment. What’s a mystery is who the snake symbolizes—and how much revealing the snake’s identity is going to shake Daunis. Then, Daunis continues to rely on her Uncle David’s wisdom as she catalogues what she knows, as this is something that he encouraged her to do. The trouble now, Daunis finds, is that she still loves Levi. And this makes the prospect of doing the right thing (turning him in to the authorities) emotionally more difficult.*



Just after dawn, Jamie gets up to pee, and Daunis realizes that he's also been awake most of the night. But he suggests they sleep, since nobody will come back for hours. Daunis asks him to face the wall and asks if she can spoon him. Praying for courage, she says that Grant tricked her by saying he had a security video of her snooping in his office, and then he raped her. After a long silence, Jamie says that Daunis will get out of here today. Ron will help, the FBI will get Grant, and Daunis will be okay. Daunis relaxes and falls asleep. She and Jamie wake when they hear voices outside. Terrified, Daunis promises to find Ron and come back for Jamie. She says Levi is the weakest link and that she loves Jamie. Somehow, telling the truth right now seems important.

*For now, Daunis isn't in a good place to think critically about Jamie's promises. For instance, it seems likely that Jamie and Ron would advocate for the FBI to pursue Grant—but as Daunis has made clear throughout the novel, federal agencies often are unwilling to intervene on behalf of tribal citizens, particularly women. Still, Jamie seems to believe that he's telling the truth right now, and Daunis responds in kind. This strengthens their relationship, which they'll need in order to work together to get out.*



## CHAPTER 48

Levi and Mike enter and stoke the fire with a small log. Then, Daunis says she doesn't trust Levi, so she'll need Mike to assure her that Jamie will be safe. She hisses at Levi that she found Dad's **scarf**, so she knows he's a liar. Mike tells Daunis to let him unlock her chain while Jamie lies down on the bed. Daunis feigns relief, but her shock is real when Mike says that Daunis is awfully concerned about a guy she cheated on—he knows she had sex with Grant at Shagala. Mike thinks it was consensual. Jamie plays along and acts hurt, but Levi is genuinely upset that Daunis "cheated." Mike explains that Grant won't let him date during hockey season, but Grant has sex with lots of women, including Robin and Daunis.

*Though Daunis is acting here, it's true that discovering Dad's scarf showed her that Levi isn't trustworthy. Keeping the scarf from her was a very personal insult, and it showed her he doesn't truly care about her happiness. Then, when Mike insinuates that Daunis had consensual sex with Grant, it highlights how powerful Grant is in this situation. As he noted to Daunis, security footage will make it seem like she went willingly; video can't convey that she was coerced and then raped. Mike also confirms that Grant likely raped Robin, too, as it seems plausible that he habitually rapes women and goes out of his way to discredit them and make it look consensual.*



Mike is clearly pleased. He says he'll stay with Jamie while Levi takes Daunis to their meth lab. Turning to Jamie, Daunis winks and apologizes for her "stupid mistake." She hopes Jamie realizes she's telling him again that Levi is the weakest link. This is exactly what she hoped would happen: she can deal with Levi, and she's made Mike feel powerful. Mike says something bad will happen to Jamie if Levi isn't back in two hours, but Daunis remains privately gleeful.

*In Daunis's understanding, her close relationship with Levi is an asset: she'll know exactly how to try to talk him out of hurting her and Jamie, and hopefully she'll be able to talk sense into him. The question, then, is whether Mike will remain true to his word—he hasn't proven himself trustworthy over the course of the novel.*



## CHAPTER 49

Daunis follows Levi along the shore and almost falls into the water once. She takes the opportunity to turn the watch's tracker on. They reach a beat-up truck hidden in some pines, and Daunis recognizes it as the truck Dana used to bring her to Sugar Island. As they drive, Levi says he thought Daunis was too good to cheat. She says Grant raped her, but clearly, Levi believes what Mike told him—even when Daunis shows him her bruise. Daunis notes passing landmarks as she says that this is all so wrong. She asks if Levi was involved in Uncle David's death, but Levi explains that Mike figured David would be more willing to make good product once he tried the meth. Mike believes David injected too much on purpose.

Daunis asks about the pucks in her closet and if Levi will go along with it when Mike tries to convince her to cooperate. Though Levi insists Mike wouldn't hurt Daunis, Daunis says that Mike is untrustworthy and disloyal. Levi takes a right turn—they're headed north, where the tracker can pick up a signal. Daunis asks who else is involved. She's angry, but relieved, when Levi says it's him, Mike, and three other poor Zhaaganaash guys—it's not just an "Indian thing." Then, Daunis asks why Levi is involved when he gets per-cap money. Levi says that according to Dana, the casino will eventually go out of business. This way, they won't be poor again. Dana always says to chase what you want.

Daunis asks if that's how Dana got Dad and asks why Levi lied about the scarf. Suddenly scared, Levi says that Dana told him Mom gave the scarf to Dad to remind Dana that Dad belonged with her. Levi didn't want Daunis to wear it and anger Dana, who wanted Dad so bad that she had a friend get Dad drunk and hoped she'd get pregnant from the ensuing sex. Focusing, Daunis says that she's not mad at Dana because she got a brother, whom she loves. Levi suggests that he and Daunis could buy the others out and run the meth operation themselves; they'd be "unstoppable." Daunis feels her heart break as they board the ferry.

Daunis asks if they'd be unstoppable because Levi gets away with everything—she knows Travis took the blame for the BB gun incident. Suddenly stoic, Levi calls someone and tells them to meet him at the ferry launch. He makes Daunis put on a baseball cap, and Daunis thinks about what Uncle David would tell her to do. She notices Seeney Nimkee in the car next to them, and Daunis gives Seeney a pleading look. When the ferry reaches the other side, the car in front of Daunis and Levi—Minnie's Mustang—doesn't move. Seeney mouths to Daunis to go.

*It's another betrayal when Levi won't believe that Grant raped Daunis. He's essentially telling Daunis that he doesn't trust her—he'd rather listen to his powerful friends and let them dictate his reality. Finally, Daunis gets more of the truth about David's death. It seems as though Mike hoped to pressure David into cooking for the meth cell, just as he's now trying to pressure Daunis to make the meth for them. David, though, sacrificed himself to save all the people his product might kill—prioritizing the community over his own life.*



*Levi is already going along with Mike's plan, as he's ostensibly taking Daunis to the meth lab to cook for the group. Daunis's relief at learning the meth cell isn't just an "Indian thing" is palpable. This highlights her fears that her Ojibwe community will be blamed for the meth cell based on the fact that they're Native, something that's now less likely to happen. Levi's explanation of why he and his mom got involved in the drug trade highlights how difficult life has been for Native communities. Dana is, in a sense, right: per cap has become less lucrative since the early-mid aughts. But as Daunis sees it, the fear of financial instability doesn't justify being willing to hurt and even kill people.*



*Hearing Levi's interpretation of what the scarf means is a turning point for Daunis. She's associated it with good memories of Dad, but Levi makes it clear that for pretty much everyone else, the scarf's symbolism is way more complex. It's painful for Dana and probably Mom, and it's anxiety-inducing for Levi. But Daunis's attempt to understand and affirm her love for Levi backfires when he asks her to buy out the operation with him—he's still unconcerned about hurting others.*



*It's telling that Levi turns on Daunis as soon as she calls him out for the BB gun incident. He shows her he's totally unwilling to take responsibility for his actions. On the ferry, Daunis finds that her Elders are, somehow, aware of what's going on and are willing to help her. It's especially significant that Seeney is willing to help, since Daunis believes Seeney doesn't like her much. Daunis's support network is bigger than she realized.*





## CHAPTER 50

Daunis leaps out of Levi's truck and into Seeney's car, and Seeney moves her car to block Levi from following Daunis. With Seeney's flip phone, Daunis calls Ron and tells him where Jamie is. When she gets out of Seeney's car, she sees that Jonsy is blocking Levi's truck on the other side. Minnie calls Daunis to get in her car. From there, Daunis watches Seeney get out and lee-lee. Minnie joins in as Levi finally breaks free from his truck. He races for Seeney and knocks her over as he leaps off the ferry, but Seeney doesn't stop.

Daunis tries to chase Levi, but he's too far ahead. She notices Grant's car; he must be here to get Levi. Then, Coach Bobby pulls up. Daunis asks for help chasing Levi and to use his phone. He agrees and lets her in, but he moves his phone further away. Seeing that Grant's car hasn't moved, Daunis realizes that Coach Bobby lied. Grant loves publicity. If he'd donated the dream catcher pucks, he'd want everyone to know, but Coach said Grant wanted to keep that donation quiet.

## CHAPTER 51

Coach Bobby tells Daunis to be smart. He's always helped and defended her, but now he says that Jamie is "done" and Daunis will go to the middle of nowhere. If she cooks great meth, Mom will stay alive. Daunis knows they'll keep threatening her loved ones as Coach pulls over to let Levi into the car. He sits behind Daunis and puts a hand on her bruise. Though Daunis feels angry and betrayed, she remembers Coach Bobby's coaching: she can't control bad calls on the ice, but she can control how she reacts and decide what to do next. When Levi and Coach look back toward the sound of sirens, Daunis looks forward and sees TJ—one of the good guys—coming toward them in his cruiser.

Daunis jerks the wheel, causing the BMW to hit a tree and spin. She's bleeding within moments and crawls out the driver's side of the car. TJ has Coach Bobby at gunpoint, and his partner cuffs Coach. TJ ignores Daunis as he runs to the other side of the car. When he finally turns to her, he says paramedics are coming. He says he knows now that she's not part of the meth ring—she and Jamie were recently reported missing and in danger, and the FBI hasn't been telling the Tribal Police everything. Daunis finally notices Levi on the ground, his leg at an odd angle.

*Daunis's Elders rally around her to make sure that she's safe and can do what she needs to do. Importantly, they trust her and don't even seem to question why she needs to escape from Levi, her brother and an enrolled member of their tribe. They trust Daunis implicitly in a way that Levi and Mike, for instance, do not.*



*Suddenly, everything becomes clear: Coach Bobby is the adult helping run the meth cell—and if Grant is involved, it's not in a big way. But Daunis trusts Coach entirely, so she ends up in what seems to be a dangerous situation.*



*Levi's choice to put a hand on Daunis's bruise is extremely threatening and controlling. He's showing her that he's more than willing to hurt her (and compound the trauma of the assault) if it suits him. Even as Coach Bobby betrays and threatens Daunis in this situation, Daunis recognizes that her coach has still spent years teaching her valuable things, such as to focus on what she can control.*



*It seems like Daunis and TJ are finally reaching a truce. They both know that the other isn't a bad person, which suggests that from here they'll be able to move on and coexist in their community. Indeed, TJ seems even more like a good guy as he implies that he wishes the FBI had shared more, as that way he'd be able to do a better job of protecting his community. That community, he implies, includes Daunis, even if they broke up.*



Levi begs Daunis to tell TJ that Coach Bobby forced him to help, but Daunis backs away. She tells Levi she loves him enough to tell the truth. Then, she tells TJ who's involved in the meth ring and that they were likely involved in Uncle David, Heather, and Robin's deaths. Then, she says she has to go back for Jamie. To her surprise, TJ lets Daunis go. Daunis races for the ferry, passing the Elders. She asks Minnie to borrow her Mustang, ignoring Ron when he appears and asks to drive. On the ferry ride over, Daunis tells Ron everything. She drives the Mustang off the ferry before the ramp is all the way down. They reach the spot where the truck was parked and continue on foot. As they open the trailer door, Daunis screams: Stormy is bringing an ax down on Jamie's ankle.

*As Daunis sees it, Levi's request that she lie to TJ is yet another incidence of Levi trying to skirt responsibility by blaming others. Coach Bobby is guilty of a lot of things, but it doesn't appear as though he forced any of the boys involved in the meth cell to do anything. When Daunis refuses to lie for him, she implies that she understands she must make a choice now between being loyal to her family (even if they don't deserve it) and being loyal to her community. She chooses her community, and the community then continues to rally around her and help her achieve her goals.*



## CHAPTER 52

Daunis attacks Stormy until Ron pulls her off and leads Stormy outside. Jamie is unharmed and leads Daunis outside, where officers are ushering Stormy away. Daunis raises an imaginary feather at Stormy in thanks for saving Jamie, and he nods in return. Then, she tells Jamie what happened with Coach Bobby, and Jamie says that Mike did nothing when the two-hour deadline passed. Mike left and hours later, Stormy arrived with the hatchet. Stormy said nothing until he screamed when Daunis attacked him.

*Stormy's actions help Daunis develop a more nuanced understanding of good and evil. He was likely involved in the meth cell, but he clearly had a change of heart and was willing to do the right thing in the end—unlike, say, Levi. Mike's disappearance suggests that if he's able to stay hidden, he'll end up getting away with his crimes, just as Levi has done in the past.*



Hearing another scream, Daunis sees Auntie running for her. Auntie says she's here because Seeney called and said Daunis was on the ferry with Levi and looked scared. Mom had reported Daunis missing, but nobody took it seriously. TJ approached Auntie and said that Dana and some officers were letting people clearly involved in the meth ring go free. Daunis says that Seeney, Jonsy, and Minnie saved her on the ferry, and Auntie says the Elders set up a group text after the Tribal Youth Council helped them learn to use their cell phones. Daunis is overwhelmed with love for her Elders. They're the community's greatest resource, and they connect the young to the past.

*Thanks to Auntie and TJ, Daunis finally learns just how deep the meth cell's corruption goes in her community: Dana was actively protecting those involved by using her status as the Tribal judge. Her loyalty was to her family (and her finances), not to her community. However, this passage also highlights how others have come together to support the collective and make sure that people stay safe and get justice—such as the Elders helping Daunis on the ferry, and the kids who taught them to use their cell phones.*



Daunis feels giddy and dizzy, and she realizes her stomach is rock hard. She's elated; her community will get justice—and hopefully, Grant Edwards will, too. Suddenly, Daunis gasps and collapses. She can't catch her breath, but the sky and the fall leaves are so beautiful. It doesn't make sense why Auntie and Jamie look scared, because nothing hurts now. The sky is purple, Mom's favorite color. Daunis dies.

*It's clear that something is medically wrong with Daunis, given her dizziness and the hard lump in her stomach. Still, as she dies, it's telling that her focus is on her community getting justice. This highlights her loyalty to her community and her desire to help others.*



## CHAPTER 53

Daunis is on a large rock in the woods. It's rained recently, and there are fires lit to her east and south. There are no fires yet to the north or west. Pansies sing to Daunis, and the world is beautiful. A drum joins in as the pansies start to dance. The flowers morph into dancing women—and then suddenly, Lily is behind Daunis. Lily is “more” now than she was in life. Everything begins to spin around Lily and Daunis as Lily puts a lei of pansies around Daunis’s neck. Lily kisses Daunis’s cheek and everything fades.

*It's implied that Daunis wakes up in the afterlife; recall that she explained during Lily's funeral that there are ceremonial fires lit daily in the next world for the recently deceased. Reuniting with Lily reinforces that this is the next world, and it seems cathartic for both Daunis and Lily to be reunited for this short moment. Lily gets to send Daunis off with her blessing and love—and Daunis gets proof that her best friend is doing okay.*



## CHAPTER 54

Daunis wakes up to beeps, buzzes, and pain. She can identify Mom’s voice, but she can’t stay awake long enough to respond. Finally, Daunis hears Mom ask her to come back and feels Mom kiss her forehead. Daunis feels Mom spreading lip balm on her lips—or she hopes it’s lip balm and not pink lipstick. Mom would totally do that.

*Daunis has remained focused on helping her community for much of the novel, but now, her mom is the one who's next to her and helping her return to this world. Aside from the possibility that Mom is putting lipstick on her, Mom makes Daunis feel safe enough to return.*



## CHAPTER 55

Three days after she almost dies, Daunis wakes up foggy and can tell instantly that something is wrong. Mom says that GrandMary died this morning, but Daunis says she died after a party. Mom continues that Daunis can’t go to the funeral because she’s at the University of Michigan ICU; Auntie is home making the arrangements for GrandMary. She suggests that GrandMary has been “in between” since Daunis graduated, and maybe she waited until Daunis was away to actually die. Daunis says that’s weird, not comforting.

*Keep in mind that Daunis is somewhat delirious in this passage. But still, it's telling that she insists GrandMary has been dead for a while—it supports Mom's suggestion that GrandMary may have been waiting for the right time to die. If Mom is right (and there's no way to know if she is or not), this would highlight how much GrandMary loves Daunis and has wanted to be around for her.*



Several days later, Daunis describes her race off the ferry and crashing Coach Bobby’s car in great detail. She continues that the crash tore her liver, and she eventually went into shock due to blood loss. Now, she says that after three days unconscious and three more in the ICU, she’s here answering Dr. Roulain’s questions. The doctor says that Daunis is clearly just fine mentally, but she’ll need to stay in the hospital for a week. Fortunately, the liver is the only internal organ that can regenerate, but Daunis will need to not play hockey for six months to a year for her safety. Daunis says she gave up hockey due to nerve damage.

*Now, readers learn exactly what happened to Daunis: she tore her liver badly and lost a lot of blood. That Daunis describes her injuries in such detail reminds readers that she dreams of being a doctor, a dream that seems to have become more important to Daunis in the last several days. As Daunis tells the doctor that she gave up hockey, it suggests that Daunis is ready to move on and start the next chapter of her life.*



Once Dr. Roulain is gone, Daunis prepares herself and then, remembering that Mom said Daunis doesn't need to protect her feelings, begins telling Mom her secrets. She says that Uncle David was helping the FBI research hallucinogenic mushrooms that might've been added to meth. He'd gone to see Dana about Levi when he went missing. Mom says that David will be happy knowing that she, Daunis, and his students know the truth—his death was the result of foul play.

Auntie visits with medicine: sage, cedar, sweetgrass, and tobacco. Daunis knows now that Auntie has been a great friend to Mom for Daunis's entire life. Auntie followed GrandMary's wishes regarding her funeral plans. Daunis also knows now that she and GrandMary love each other—when loved ones die, the love stays alive.

Ron visits soon after Daunis moves to the regular hospital ward. Mom scolds him for putting Daunis in danger, and Auntie asks who his tribe is and if his family knows what he does. Ron says he's an agent because they need "good people" in these agencies to help the tribes. Auntie just scoffs. He says nobody in local Tribal law enforcement was involved; involving Tribal officers hasn't gone well in the past, as officers have alerted family members.

Then, Ron tells Daunis what he can: Levi has been charged with several crimes, and Daunis will have to go to court, too, since Levi used her name for the wire transfers. They found Heather's flip-flop in Levi's closet. Daunis says it wasn't there when she searched his closet; she's sure Mike put it there. She tells Ron to watch Levi's face when they question him about the flip-flop; he'll know he's been set up, though he might not turn on Mike. Ron continues that Mike is missing. He's probably in Canada, and his parents are devastated. Daunis asks about Stormy, and Ron says that Stormy has stayed silent since they took him into custody. If he never talks, which seems likely, Stormy will be held in contempt of court and stay in jail. Daunis realizes that Levi and Stormy are going to sit in jail while Mike goes free.

*It's cathartic for both Mom and Daunis to know that Uncle David died trying to save others. This makes it clear to them both that David was a noble, community-focused person who gave his life to protect kids in the community. Daunis carried on his legacy by cooperating with the investigation and finally bringing David's killers to justice.*



*Daunis needs the medicines the hospital offers, but she also needs the traditional medicines Auntie brings. These connect her to who she is and remind her of all the people who love her, such as Auntie herself and GrandMary. Now, Daunis seems to have also come to terms with GrandMary's legacy: she was bigoted, but she also loved Daunis, and Daunis decides the love is what matters most.*



*As Auntie sees it, Ron's Native identity doesn't change the fact that he works for the FBI, an agency that has historically not done anything good for tribal communities. This pessimistically suggests that relations between federal agencies and tribal communities aren't going to change any time soon—suspicion and fear will persist.*



*At first, Daunis is hopeful that everything will be okay now that the FBI has caught Levi and Stormy and will seemingly soon catch Mike. However, it then becomes clear to her that Mike will mostly likely get off without suffering any consequences, if only because Stormy will refuse to implicate his friend. This reminds Daunis that justice isn't always straightforward or easy. It's clear to her what should happen, but the justice system isn't set up to, say, let Stormy go and Levi off with minimal charges just because Daunis knows what happened.*



Ron apologizes. He says that Coach Bobby has been charged, too. Daunis realizes she missed the signs, like his fancy car and his cabin's renovation. She still doesn't know how he could be so kind to her for years and then betray her, though Levi's betrayal continues to hurt the most. Ron continues that Dana has been charged by the feds, and the Tribe will likely prosecute her for various crimes. When Daunis asks about Dana drugging and kidnapping her, Ron says that the trailer was on land that the Tribe purchased and put in federal trust. Auntie gasps: she says this means that since Daunis was an enrolled citizen, the feds get to choose whether to press charges. Clearly, they're only going to press charges for Jamie's kidnapping.

Enraged, Daunis asks if Jamie shared that Grant raped her at Shagala. She says that Jamie is naïve—he expected the feds would help her more than they normally help Native women. She also says she suspects that Grant planned to rape her the moment he learned about her enrollment in the Tribe, since he knew he could get away with raping her on tribal land. Daunis is exhausted. She asks Ron to go and then leans against Auntie and Mom. After a minute, she tells Auntie that there will be a blanket party, and she's coming. Looking old, Auntie agrees.

## CHAPTER 56

A small boy visits Daunis. The boy's eyes remind her of Grandpa Lorenzo's, and he has brown curly hair with strands of copper. Daunis takes the boy's hand, and a bigger hand appears on top of hers. For a moment, everything is perfect. Daunis wakes up to Jamie's hand on hers, 12 days after she died on Sugar Island. He apologizes for taking so long to visit; he had to wrap up investigation stuff. They discuss that when Daunis gets out of the hospital tomorrow, she'll move into a nearby apartment with Mom so she can more easily come to appointments. When Mom goes home, Daunis will stay here.

Jamie begins to cry. He apologizes for involving Daunis and for Lily and Uncle David's deaths. Daunis doesn't comfort him; he needs to know that investigations have consequences and hurt people. Loving her doesn't change that he also thought it was okay to use her to boost his career. When he stops crying, Daunis tells Jamie he needs to find his own community. He says he really is Cherokee, and everything they shared felt realer than his real life. Daunis maintains that Jamie isn't cut out for undercover work, if only because he doesn't know what's true and what's a lie.

*In this passage, Daunis learns even more about how complicated justice is—especially when she, an enrolled Tribal member, is the victim. Because of how the tribal and federal laws interact, Daunis is essentially not as important to the feds as Jamie. And Auntie implies that it's the feds' choice, not Daunis's, whether to press charges for her kidnapping. So, though Daunis wants to make sure that everyone responsible for hurting her sees justice, she's unable to do so because of who and what she is.*



*Again because of Daunis's enrollment in the Tribe, the feds aren't going to press charges for Grant raping her, either. So instead of formal, legal avenues to get justice, Daunis has to turn to a blanket party. With this, she realizes that a blanket party isn't something to want to attend. It's an imperfect solution to a huge problem: the fact that the federal government usually fails to seek justice for its Native female citizens.*



*It's implied that Daunis dreams about her and Jamie's son in the moments before she wakes to find him in her room. As Daunis explains what comes next for her, it's telling that she says she's moving out of Sault Ste. Marie on her own—Mom is finally willing, it seems, to accept that Daunis is an adult and needs some independence. This continues to give Daunis the opportunity to come of age away from her family.*



*Finally, Jamie seems to fully acknowledge that he might see his job as noble and necessary, but that doesn't mean that innocent people like Daunis, Lily, and Uncle David don't get hurt. He must, Daunis implies, learn to think seven generations ahead, or he'll continue hurting people. Moreover, he also needs to do the work that Daunis has already done and piece together who he is. Only then, she suggests, will he be able to connect healthily with others.*



Frantically, Jamie says he wants to be with Daunis. They can go to any school she wants and pretend to meet as strangers. He insists that his feelings for her have been real from the beginning, and he can't find where he came from without her. Daunis knows she wants to be with Jamie—but she also remembers Travis telling Lily that he needed her and couldn't do it without her. Granny June's warning that "Things end how they start" also plays through her head. Daunis and Jamie's relationship started with deception, but Daunis decides to end it with the truth.

Daunis tells Jamie that she loves him and wants him to find himself, but they both have to do the work to better themselves. They both have to learn to stand on their own, and love means wanting your partner to live a good life, even if you're not in their life. Jamie sits for a minute and then finally kisses Daunis's hand and nose. He leaves the room without looking back. Once Daunis has imagined Jamie driving away, she says that they named their son, the boy from her dream, Waabun. That's the eastern direction. But Daunis realizes she doesn't know what their son's last name would be.

*As Daunis sees it, Jamie saying that he can't figure out his identity without her is uncomfortably similar to Travis telling Lily he couldn't recover from addiction without her there. Love, Daunis has learned over the course of the novel, is healthiest when it's honest and respectful—which her relationship with Jamie overwhelmingly hasn't been. Thus, Daunis chooses to end the relationship.*



*When Jamie accepts Daunis's speech and doesn't press her, he's already doing way better than Travis: he respects Daunis's wishes and seems committed to respecting her in this way, even if he doesn't take her other advice to figure his own life out. As Daunis realizes she doesn't know their son's last name, it reinforces that she made the right choice. Her relationship with Jamie wasn't based on honesty—as Ron noted at Shagala, Jamie Johnson isn't a real person.*



## CHAPTER 57

It's been 10 months since Daunis's hospitalization. Powwows aren't ceremonies, but they're healing nevertheless—and at the annual powwow on the third week of August, Daunis's community needs healing. During the most recent tribal election, a banishment referendum barely passed. With its passage, any tribal member convicted of a felony drug crime will attend a banishment hearing and face a banishment of up to five years. It's supposed to get rid of drug dealers while offering compassion to those who are in recovery. Banished members are still members, but they can't receive any benefits—including per-cap payments.

Dana Firekeeper will be the first person to appear at a hearing. She pled guilty in federal court in exchange for no jail time, and last week she was found guilty in Tribal Court of dereliction of justice for all her meth mistrials. She won't go to jail, but she's been charged the maximum fines. Public opinion is split on whether she got off easy or is being used as an example of what happens to powerful women.

*The FBI has gotten those responsible for cooking and selling meth out of Sault Ste. Marie, but it's still up to the community to decide what happens next. This is, incidentally, what Daunis told Jamie needed to happen a year ago: the FBI can't expect to swoop in with the plan that will magically fix things. Rather, the Tribe itself, which knows its members and its culture, is best positioned to come up with something like the banishment referendum that will do the most good.*



*Daunis, interestingly, offers no opinion on whether Dana got off easy or is being unfairly punished. This suggests Daunis realizes that justice isn't straightforward or easy. Even when someone is punished, as in this case, it won't always be clear if the punishment is appropriate.*



That Friday, Daunis picks up Granny June and drives to Auntie and Art's house. At the clearing, they join over 100 women. Auntie tells a story about a young Nish girl who'd gather pansies with her nokomis every summer. The girl's nokomis would set aside the yellow pansies, but she wouldn't tell the girl why. Finally, when the girl became a woman, she stopped asking about the yellow pansies. She couldn't tell her nokomis that a man hurt her. At the end of that summer, the nokomis took the woman to a clearing, where women all took a yellow pansy and prayed. The girl then understood what the pansies were for, and she prayed and "released her pain."

Daunis takes a pansy and watches woman approach the fire to offer their pansies. She thinks of what Grant did to her and prays. When she sits back next to Granny June, Granny June says that Lily was always thankful that Daunis never attended this ceremony—Lily started coming to this ceremony when she came to live with Granny June. Daunis cries: Lily had secrets, and she tried to protect Daunis from them. But on the way back over the ferry, Daunis realizes with relief that Macy wasn't at the ceremony. She offers semaa to the river and prays thankfully for all the Nish women and girls who didn't have to come.

On Sunday, Daunis peruses the vendor stalls and refuses to tell anyone who asks about Levi anything. From Auntie, who she believes is in contact with Ron, Daunis knows that Levi is being held without bond until his trial. He hasn't accepted plea offerings, but that might change now that the prosecution has a "star witness." That person isn't Daunis, and it's not Stormy, who has said nothing in English since his arrest. (Stormy's parents speak to him in Anishinaabemowin when they visit daily, and they drum outside the prison each night.) Mike is still at large; his parents divorced. The star witness is Coach Bobby. When he accepted the plea deal to testify against Levi, Daunis started having nightmares about not being able to crash Coach Bobby's car and being taken to cook meth. She burns sweetgrass, prays, and wears Dad's choker when she has those dreams.

On Sunday, Daunis prays for love. Today her mourning period for Lily ends, and she'll dance for the first time since Uncle David died. Daunis asks to braid Pauline's and Perry's hair for the Grand Entry so she can tell them about her college plans: she's going to the University of Hawaii to study ethnobotany. Ethnobotany "look[s] at things with Indigenous eyes," and she'll also apprentice with Seeney Nimkee so she can eventually be a traditional medicine practitioner and a scientist. Pauline and Perry ask if they can go to museums and surf when they visit.

*This ceremony is for Native sexual assault victims, such as Daunis—but also, given the fact that they're here, for Auntie and Granny June. Sexual assault, this shows, is a bigger problem in Daunis's community than she may have previously realized. But she and the girl in the story can find some peace by connecting with other women who have suffered in the same way and by ceremonially offering the pansies to the fire.*



*Lily, recall, came to live with Granny June in sixth grade—so she would've been abused as a child. Daunis's tears are for Lily, but she also seems to recognize how naïve and privileged she was as a kid, since she didn't pick up on Lily's many clues that she was abused. The ceremony is both restorative and painful for Daunis. Offering her pansy to the fire does make her feel better, but knowing how many women in her community suffer is still weighty and painful.*



*Stormy's experience in prison mirrors the poster Daunis saw on his parents' wall, which depicted Nish parents camping out outside of a residential school to be close to their children. This suggests that in some regards, the prison system replicates some of the residential schools' atrocities, highlighting again that Daunis's Native community continues to suffer trauma into the present day. Learning that Coach Bobby is the star witness also reiterates that justice isn't easy or straightforward. As Daunis sees it, Coach deserves to be punished, not have the opportunity to lessen his sentence by testifying against her brother.*



*In the last year, Daunis's dreams and plans have changed somewhat. She no longer dreams of becoming a doctor in the traditional Western sense: instead, she wants to continue to combine her interest in traditional Native medicine with the kinds of scientific practices that David taught her. She expresses faith that she can, indeed, do both, offering hope that Daunis will be able to successfully navigate her identity as an Ojibwe woman with one white parent.*



Then, Pauline asks if college is like a boarding school. Daunis asks why she asks, and Pauline describes how the government used to take kids, not give them back, and punish them for speaking Anishinaabemowin. Daunis is emotional. Art and Auntie clearly decided Pauline and Perry were ready for “the talk,” and she’s sad these bright girls now know about the trauma their community has suffered—and still suffers. But she’s also proud, because the girls are making the ancestors’ dreams come true. She explains that college isn’t like that kind of boarding school; she can study what she wants and leave if she doesn’t feel safe. Hugging the girls, Daunis says it’s good to know their history, even if it’s sad. The girls trill perfect lee-lees and run to get dressed.

Daunis puts on her red Jingle Dress, with the 365 cones that Daunis sewed on one per day for a year as Auntie taught her about being a strong Nish kwe. She puts on a leather belt from Gramma Pearl, a beaded bag from Auntie, and a velvet yoke beaded with yellow pansies. Finally, she adds Dad’s choker, blueberry earrings from Mom, the strawberry bracelet from Jamie, and GrandMary’s red lipstick. Auntie attaches an eagle feather to Daunis’s head. Daunis joins Perry and Pauline for pictures and thinks of the envelope she received recently, which contained two postcards and no return address. One postcard of a Minnesota lake said, “The kids are all right,” and the other, of University of Wisconsin, said, “Someday.”

Daunis dances simply as she enters for the Grand Entry. She leads Pauline, Perry, and Auntie through the honor beats. Late in the afternoon, the emcee calls for Jingle dancers with red dresses to dance and tells the Jingle Dress’s story. A sick girl’s father experienced a vision: a dress with jingly cones, which would heal the girl as she danced. The Jingle Dance, the emcee explains, represents healing, and the red dresses represent Anishinaabe women—specifically those who are murdered or missing. Seven girls and women, ranging from ages five to 50, enter the arena.

Daunis sees Mom smile. Mom knows now that letting Daunis go isn’t losing her. Daunis remembers Granny June telling her about boats made for oceans and rivers, and those that can go anywhere “because they always know the way home.” She recalls telling Seeney about the ethnobotany program after Seeney invited Daunis to be her apprentice. Daunis asked if she could study both ways, and Seeney said they’ve always adapted. Daunis studies her community and then dances and prays for Lily, Robin, Heather, herself, and all the girls who are seen as invisible and expendable. She introduces herself to Creator and asks them to keep her community strong and safe. She thanks Creator for her good life. When the song ends, Daunis is ready to start her next journey.

*Up until recently, Art and Auntie haven’t made Perry and Pauline learn about the terrible things the federal government has done to Native Americans throughout the country. Daunis knows, though, that knowing this history is important—forgetting it, after all, means it’s more likely to happen again in the future. Further, she knows that Perry and Pauline, as small kids, represent the Tribe’s future. They’ll be the ones to one day pass down this knowledge to other young people when they’re old and have become Elders.*



*Recall that a dancer’s regalia can tell a knowledgeable bystander about her family and her ancestors. Daunis’s regalia connects her to her Firekeeper relatives through Dad’s choker and Gramma Pearl’s belt, but it also speaks to her Fontaine family (with the lipstick) and to how the two families have blended (as with the blueberry earrings from Mom). Jamie also remains a part of Daunis’s past that she’d like to honor, and it seems possible he’ll also be part of her future. He’s clearly learning to think about the community when he tells her, finally, that the kids in Minnesota are okay.*



*Here, the novel explicitly mentions the huge problem of Native women being murdered or kidnapped, and the lackluster (or totally lacking) government response to these crimes. Ron may have found one woman’s killer, but this doesn’t help the hundreds of other families who don’t yet have answers. Thus, Daunis and her community must turn to ceremonial activities like the Jingle Dance to find healing.*



*Finally, at the end of the novel, Daunis seems at peace. She and Mom have realized that Daunis leaving won’t make their relationship any less strong or meaningful, as Daunis will continue to come home to her family and her community. And Daunis sees it as her responsibility to dance and continue living her life as a Native American to honor girls like Lily, Robin, and Heather—by doing this, she can make sure that their stories won’t be forgotten, and life will improve for future generations of Native girls.*







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