

Sexy



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF JHUMPA LAHIRI

Although born in London, Jhumpa Lahiri moved to Rhode Island when she was three and has lived in the United States for the better part of her life. The daughter of Indian immigrants, Lahiri dramatizes in much of her work the experiences of Indian immigrants. In her early work, such as the short story collection *The Interpreter of Maladies*, the focus is on first generation Indian Americans; in her later work she focuses more on the experiences of second- and third-generation Indian Americans. In all of her work she presents a nuanced picture of the competing forces that are a core feature of the immigrant experience—a desire to maintain the culture and traditions of one’s native culture and a desire to assimilate into the culture of one’s adopted country. Lahiri’s first published work, *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999), won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. Her next work was the highly regarded novel *The Namesake* (2003), based, like much of her work, on personal and family history. Lahiri’s other work includes a second short story collection, *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008), and two novels, *The Lowland* (2018) and *Whereabouts* (2021). Lahiri wrote *Whereabouts* in Italian, following her interest in the Italian language and culture, an interest accompanied by a move to Italy with her family in 2012. Lahiri currently teaches creative writing at Barnard College and is actively involved with several arts-based organizations, including the PEN American Center.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

“Sexy” is set in Boston, presumably in the 1990s. Although the story doesn’t directly engage with any specific historical events, it’s worth noting that the 1990s were a decade in which social and cultural norms surrounding marriage and infidelity were continuing to shift. The 1960s and 1970s saw higher divorce rates than ever before in the 20th century, and though these rates leveled off somewhat in the 1990s, it was no longer culturally unheard of for couples to split up or end their marriages completely. What’s more, the idea of having more than one sexual partner became increasingly acceptable in the 1990s and beyond. In “Sexy,” however, Dev’s affair with Miranda is secretive, not something he has agreed on with his wife. To that end, a Gallup poll in 2001—two years after the publication of “Sexy”—found that 91% of Americans still thought extramarital affairs were always or almost always wrong. This prevailing sentiment perhaps informs Miranda’s decision at the end of the story to end her affair with Dev after reflecting on how their relationship might end up impacting his family.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Lahiri’s style, voice, and interest in the short story form—exemplified by the short story collection *The Interpreter of Maladies*—can be readily compared to such masters of the short story form as Anton Chekov, Alice Munro, and William Trevor, writers with whom she has been associated. Writers working in this vein are typically concerned with dramatizing ordinary but humanizing experiences such as love, heartbreak, friendship, disillusionment, and the challenges of finding purpose and meaning in life. Lahiri’s work can also be likened to writers such as Amy Tan who dramatize the immigrant experience in postwar America. For such writers, identity is always conflicted, never a given. While Amy Tan in such works as *The Joy Luck Club* focuses on the experience of Chinese Americans, Lahiri is concerned in such works as *The Interpreter of Maladies* with the experience of Indian Americans.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Sexy
- **When Published:** First published in *The New Yorker* in 1998; later published in *The Interpreter of Maladies* in 1999
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary
- **Genre:** Short Story, Contemporary Realism
- **Setting:** Boston
- **Climax:** Rohin finds Miranda’s dress and calls her sexy.
- **Antagonist:** Dev
- **Point of View:** Third-Person Limited

EXTRA CREDIT

Italian Interests. Jhumpa Lahiri taught herself Italian and originally wrote her novel *Whereabouts* (or *Dove mi trovo*) in the language. The novel is set in Rome, where Lahiri lived with her husband and children from 2012 to 2015. In 2019, Lahiri was honored as a Commander in the Order of Merit of the Italian Republic, one of the most prestigious awards in the country.

Rare Pulitzer Prize. Not only was it unusual for Jhumpa Lahiri to win the Pulitzer Prize for a first book (*The Interpreter of Maladies*), but it was also unusual for the prize to be awarded for a short story collection. Only six other short story collections have been awarded the prize.



PLOT SUMMARY

Laxmi tells her coworker Miranda about an affair that her cousin’s husband is having with a much younger woman.

Miranda distractedly thinks of an affair that she herself is having with a man from Bengal, the same state in India that the husband of Laxmi's cousin is from. Miranda recalls how she first met Dev at a department store where both were purchasing cosmetics, he from a list. Dev approaches Miranda after they leave, telling her that part of her name is Indian ("Mira"). Prior to meeting Dev, Miranda knew little of India and assumed Bengali was a religion. During the two first two weeks of their affair, they are with each other every night while Dev's wife is on a visit to India. When Miranda and Dev are not at her apartment they visit places around town including, on one memorable occasion, **the Mapparium**, a three-story globe at the Christian Science Center in Boston. Dev wows Miranda by whispering to Miranda from a distance inside the globe, "You're sexy." Miranda thinks about how he is the first lover who has ever said this to her.

Miranda goes shopping for clothing she imagines a mistress might wear and buys a cocktail dress and a silk robe. Dev now visits Miranda on Sunday afternoons. When Miranda greets Dev wearing the silk robe, Dev tells her that he prefers to see her long legs; she never does wear **the cocktail dress**. Miranda listens to Dev tell stories about his youth while they are in bed together. Dev, on the other hand, only seems interested in wanting to know about Miranda's past lovers. Miranda considers that Dev and Laxmi are the only two Indians she has known apart from an Indian family she knew in her youth, the Dixits. The Dixits were looked upon by their neighbors as odd, and Miranda recalls an unsettling experience she had while attending a birthday party at their house for one of their children. Miranda thinks of Dev's Indian background in a much more flattering way. Miranda begins to learn as much as she can about Indian culture and attempts to learn the Bengali language. When Dev tells her that his wife looks like an Indian actress, she seeks out videotapes featuring the actress.

Laxmi, in the meantime, updates Miranda on her cousin's marriage; after a brief attempt at reunion, the cousin's husband files for divorce. Laxmi asks Miranda if Miranda can look after her cousin's child on a Saturday while Laxmi and the cousin go on an outing together. When the boy is dropped off, Miranda notices that he has dark circles under his eyes. The boy quizzes Miranda on the capitals of countries and asks her to serve him coffee. Later in the visit, he rummages through the items on her bathroom shelf and then through her bedroom closet. When he discovers the never worn cocktail dress, he urges her to put it on. When she does so he tells her, "You're sexy." Miranda, disturbed by the comment, asks him what he thinks the word means and he tells her, "It means loving someone you don't know." While the boy naps on her bed Miranda weeps, thinking of her own affair and of the affair that the boy's father is having. When Dev calls the next day, Miranda makes up an excuse not to see him and the affair fizzles out. One day Miranda goes for a walk and finds herself sitting on a

bench across from the Mapparium thinking about Dev and their time together.



CHARACTERS

Miranda – Miranda is the protagonist of "Sexy." She works in the fundraising department of a public radio station, but she doesn't have a social life outside of work. Her only friend is a co-worker, Laxmi, who is preoccupied throughout the story with supporting a distraught cousin whose husband is having an affair. Miranda herself is having an affair with a married man of Indian descent named Dev. Because Dev is married, Miranda and Dev spend most of their time at Miranda's apartment, where she lives alone. Miranda becomes intrigued by Dev's cultural identity as an Indian and makes efforts to understand Indian culture and geography and even makes a game attempt at learning how to write her name in Bengali. At the same time, Miranda comes from a non-descript background; the most readers know about her is that she moved from Michigan to Boston to live in a place where she doesn't know anyone. The solitary life she leads appears intentional; she seems to enjoy doing things on her own and has little interest in developing a social life outside of work, apart from her affair with Dev and her limited relationship with Laxmi. If Miranda's interest in Dev and his cultural background compensates for her own lack of a distinct identity, then the end of the affair largely leaves Miranda where she began—alone and without a clear identity of her own.

Dev – Dev is Miranda's lover. Although his age and occupation aren't stated in the story, he is older than Miranda and outwardly appears successful. He initiates an affair with Miranda after approaching her at a department store where both are buying cosmetics, he for an unspecified female. Unlike past lovers Miranda has had, Dev impresses her with his attentiveness and his cultural background as a man of Indian descent (he is Bengali). At the same time, it becomes increasingly clear that he is primarily interested in Miranda as a sexual partner; he compliments her on her body, calls her "sexy," makes little effort to get to know her at a deeper level, and spends most of his time at her apartment after an initial phase of going out in public together. When Dev's wife returns from a visit to India, he regularly visits Miranda on Sundays, deceiving his wife into thinking that he is going for a jog. The relationship eventually fizzles without Dev or Miranda explicitly ending it, although the precipitating incident is when Miranda spends an afternoon with a child who has been affected by his own father's affair and its messy aftermath.

Laxmi – Laxmi is Miranda's coworker at the public radio station where she and Miranda solicit donations. Laxmi, who is of Indian descent, is preoccupied throughout the story with comforting her cousin, whose husband is having an affair with a much younger woman. She talks about nothing else with

Miranda and becomes increasingly vigilant about her own marriage. Laxmi, at the same time, is an additional source through which Miranda learns about Indian culture. Laxmi is Miranda's only social contact outside of Miranda's relationship with Dev. The friendship continues throughout Miranda's relationship with Dev and even after it ends, suggesting that Laxmi, who has been bruised by her cousin's affair, never learns of Miranda's affair with a married man.

Rohin – Rohin is the child of Laxmi's cousin whose husband is having an affair. When Laxmi first tells Miranda about the affair, she comments that the boy is "something of a genius" and speaks four languages. In a lengthy scene near the end of the story, Miranda looks after Rohin at her apartment one Saturday while Laxmi spends the day with her distraught cousin. Rohin indeed proves to be a precocious child. He has Miranda quiz him on the capitals of countries and persuades her to serve him coffee. It also becomes clear that Rohin has suffered from the conflict between his parents. A sign of how he has been affected is when he pillages through Miranda's bedroom and, upon finding a **cocktail dress** that she purchased with the intent of wearing for Dev, urges her to put it on. When she does so, he tells her, "You're sexy," mimicking language he has likely overheard; it is also the language used by Dev in his efforts to flatter Miranda. When Miranda presses Rohin to tell her what he thinks the word "sexy" means, he says, "It means loving someone you don't know." The incident compels Miranda to reconsider the nature of her relationship with Dev, which ends soon after.

going to movies and bookstores by herself. Nor is there any indication in the story of how she has been shaped by the past, what her interests are in the present, or what her hopes are for the future.

If one were to pinpoint the moment when Miranda falls for Dev, it is when he playfully ascribes to her a specific identity: "Part of your name is Indian," he tells her upon first meeting her. From this moment onward, the focus of her relationship with Dev is weighted heavily on the side of her fascination with his cultural identity. However, this fascination seems unreciprocated by Dev, apart from his interest in her as a sexual partner. Arguably the most personal thing Dev ever says to Miranda, in fact, is that she is "sexy," suggesting that he values her primarily as a lover and not as an interesting individual in her own right. Miranda, on the other hand, imagines Dev as possessing an exotic, vivid identity. His exoticism is in part a function of her ignorance; she at first imagines that Bengali is a religion, not an ethnicity, and has little understanding of India's politics or geography. She is inspired to understand Dev and his cultural identity as their relationship deepens, even to the point where she attempts to learn the Bengali language and to write her name in Bengali. By the end of the story, however, Miranda's fascination with Dev's cultural identity and Dev's interest in her as a sexual partner aren't enough to sustain the relationship, suggesting that relationships based upon shallow perceptions of difference or sexual appeal are finally doomed to failure.



MARITAL INFIDELITY AND MALE POWER

The two affairs that form the crux of "Sexy" dramatize the dynamics of male power in extramarital relationships. Although Miranda's

affair with Dev is foregrounded in the story, in the background is another affair that concerns Laxmi, her co-worker. This second affair involves Laxmi's cousin, whose husband is having an affair with a much younger woman. Laxmi's cousin is so distraught by the affair that she has taken to her bed and is unable to care for her school-aged son. The affair seems almost to have happened on a whim: he met the woman on an international flight, "had a conversation that had changed his life," and chose not to return home. Later in the story Laxmi tells Miranda that her cousin's husband has had several affairs and that her cousin is willing to accept him back, not for her own sake, but for their son's. By the end of the story, the husband has decided to pursue a divorce after a failed attempt at reconciliation, once again leaving his wife powerless and bereft.

In the second, more prominent affair, Miranda accepts her status as Dev's lover without demanding more from him, even as her life increasingly comes to center around him and their relationship. Despite Miranda's efforts to understand Dev's culture and to please him, she is powerless to request more of the relationship and has no choice but to accept whatever he is willing to give. That he controls the relationship from the



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.



CULTURAL DIFFERENCE AND ATTRACTION

The affair that Miranda has with Dev in "Sexy" is shaped by her fascination with his cultural difference as an Indian man living in America. The story suggests that Miranda's attempts to first understand and then appropriate Dev's cultural identity follow from her perception that he has a rich sense of identity that she personally lacks. This lack is reflected, in part, by the absence of detail concerning her own identity and background. In one revealing passage, Miranda tells Dev that she moved to Boston from Michigan, the place where she grew up and went to college, in order to live in a place where she isn't known. She appears at the same time to relish being alone, spending her evenings

beginning is reflected in how their time together is based upon his schedule, which is in large part determined by his home life and his relationship with his wife. It is also apparent in her gradual disappearance into the role of the occasional lover, to the point where even her efforts to imagine a life beyond the bedroom are defeated, symbolized by the dress she purchases for an evening out but never wears for him. The end of the relationship is much more due to his negligence than a lack of interest on her part; she is finally heartbroken at the awareness that the relationship can never be more than an affair. Her desires are finally secondary to his, leaving her at the end of the story where she began—mostly alone. By presenting marital infidelity from the dual perspectives of a betrayed wife and the lover of a husband betraying his wife—neither of whom has much power—the story suggests that women’s desires are often secondary to male power in such relationships.



SELF-DECEPTION AND HONESTY

Throughout “Sexy,” Miranda is flattered by Dev’s interest in her as a sexual partner. On one occasion Dev comments on her naked body, telling her that “[You are] the first woman I’ve known with legs this long.” Miranda considers that Dev was the “the first to tell her that.” On another occasion while visiting [the Mapparium](#), a three-story globe in the Christian Science center, Dev takes advantage of the wonderful acoustics to whisper to her from a distance away, “You’re sexy.” Overall, Dev expresses little interest in Miranda beyond her sexual attractiveness to him. Yet Miranda, despite her deeper interest in Dev, actively plays into this interest, suggesting that she’s allowed herself to be deceived by his flattery. For example, she buys attractive clothing and intimates to wear for him and suppresses her disappointment when it becomes clear that he has no interest in exploring a deeper relationship.

If Miranda willfully allows herself to be deceived into thinking that her relationship with Dev has the potential for greater meaning, her illusions are shattered when she spends an afternoon looking after Rohin, the son of Laxmi’s cousin. Rohin’s precocious awareness of Miranda as an object of sexual desire reflects how his understanding of relationships and of women has been impacted by his father’s affair and, in turn, prompts Miranda to consider how she herself has been objectified by Dev. This is made clear when Rohin discovers the never-used [cocktail dress](#) lying in a heap on the floor of Miranda’s closet and insists that she put it on. When she does so, he tells her, “You’re sexy.” When Miranda, unsettled by the comment, prods him to explain what he thinks the word “sexy” means, he tells her that “It means loving someone you don’t know.” Miranda realizes that the boy’s re-definition of the term “sexy” aptly reflects the reality of her relationship with Dev and, when Rohin falls asleep on her bed, weeps upon facing this reality squarely. Ironically, it takes a boy who is suffering from

the effects of marital infidelity to force Miranda to consider how she has contributed to her own objectification in her affair with Dev. Miranda’s changing perceptions of her relationship suggest that while it’s easy to believe what one wants to hear, an outsider’s stark honesty can shatter such self-deception.



SOCIAL ISOLATION, PASSIVITY, AND LONELINESS

A key aspect of Miranda’s character and situation in “Sexy” is her social isolation. Even her two major relationships, with her friend Laxmi and lover Dev, appear to have started without any great initiative on Miranda’s part. Even though she occasionally spends time with Laxmi (whom she apparently befriended because they work in neighboring cubicles), she spends the majority of her time outside of work alone, shopping, going to movies, and visiting bookstores. Even after she begins an affair with Dev (mainly because he lingered by the cosmetics counter while she made purchases), an affair that dominates her life for a time, the affair is insulated from any real contact with the outside world. They spend much of their time at Miranda’s house and, on the few occasions when they do go out in public together, are preoccupied with each other.

There is, at the same time, no sense that Miranda feels lonely or is willing to go out of her way to change her life. She tells Dev on one occasion that she moved to Boston in order to be in a place where she knows no one, and there is no indication that she any real interest in meeting anyone. She never speaks up to tell Laxmi the truth about her affair and generally goes along with what her friend wants (like when she agrees to babysit Rohin). And when Miranda changes her mind about dating Dev, she initially resolves to tell him the truth, but ultimately lets the relationship fizzle out, returning to her isolated existence. Nevertheless, the story ends on an ambiguous note, with Miranda sitting outside [the Mapparium](#) alone; while it’s implied that she is grieving her failed relationship with Dev, the ending could also be read as hinting that Miranda is cautiously opening up to a wider world. This hint largely confirms just how passive and isolated Miranda has been, however, and how likely she is to remain isolated without a concerted effort to lead a more connected and meaningful life.



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in [teal text](#) throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



THE MAPPARIUM

The Mapparium is both an enclosed space that represents a memorable moment in Miranda’s

relationship with Dev and an image of the broader world that Miranda is exposed to through this relationship. Miranda and Dev visit the Mapparium—a three-story globe in the Christian Science Center—early in their relationship. During their visit, Miranda is awed by the inside-looking-out perspective of the earth. Dev, acting as global tour guide, points out various places on the map as Miranda reflects upon how limited her experience of the world has been. When they have the Mapparium to themselves, Dev uses the wonderful acoustics of the globe by whispering to Miranda from a distance, saying, “You’re sexy.” Miranda strongly associates the words both with Dev and their visit to the Mapparium in consequential ways. On one occasion, Miranda thinks about the Mapparium and Dev’s words to her while purchasing “sexy” clothing to wear for him. She then thinks of the Mapparium again near the end of the story while quizzing Rohin on nations’ capitals; she’s devastated by the memory of the Mapparium when Rohin later tells her she’s sexy when she puts on the cocktail dress. Her experience in the Mapparium, she realizes, was driven by a kind of illusion that “sexy” might mean she is someone special; Rohin’s surprising comment forces her to consider that the word, coming from a married man, means something very different. According to Rohin, it “means loving someone you don’t know.” Rohin’s words puncture the illusion of love as if the illusion of the Mapparium itself were punctured. In the last scene of the story, Miranda finds herself sitting on a bench across from the Mapparium, this time an outsider to the experience of wonder and awe that the building represents.



THE COCKTAIL DRESS

The cocktail dress comes to symbolize Miranda’s awareness of herself as an object of sexual desire for Dev and, eventually, of the fact that her relationship with him is quite limited. Miranda purchases the dress after a whirlwind two-week affair in which Dev flatters her by praising her body and calling her “sexy”—a compliment she has never received before. Rather than end the affair when Dev’s wife returns from a trip to India, Miranda accepts her status as Dev’s mistress and purchases the cocktail dress as part of this role. If the idea of mistress already suggests a kind of limitation, the fact that Miranda never has the opportunity to wear the cocktail dress for Dev suggests just how limited her relationship with him is. That the cocktail dress ends up on the floor of Miranda’s closet powerfully illustrates the fact that their relationship is strictly confined to Miranda’s apartment. The cocktail dress takes on a darker shade of meaning toward the end of the story when seven-year-old Rohin tells Miranda she’s sexy when she wears the dress at his urging. Rohin also tells Miranda that the word “sexy” means “loving someone you don’t know.” Miranda is devastated by the awareness that the boy and his mother have been harmed by an adulterous affair, one Miranda imagines was driven by a married man’s pursuit of a

“sexy” younger woman—a situation that closely parallels her relationship with Dev. In turn, the story associates the cocktail dress not just with Miranda’s realization that her relationship with Dev is superficial, but also with her burgeoning sense of guilt about their affair.




QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Mariner edition of *Interpreter of Maladies* published in 2019.

Sexy Quotes

☹☹ It was a wife’s worst nightmare. After nine years of marriage, Laxmi told Miranda, her cousin’s husband had fallen in love with another woman. He sat next to her on a plane, on a flight from Delhi to Montreal, and instead of flying home to his wife and son, he got off with the woman at Heathrow. He called his wife, and told her he’d had a conversation that had changed his life, and that he needed time to figure things out. Laxmi’s cousin had taken to her bed.

Related Characters: Miranda, Laxmi

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 83

Explanation and Analysis

The first paragraph of the story quickly establishes what will be its central theme—marital infidelity. The first affair presented in the story is not Miranda’s, however, but one that impacts Laxmi’s cousin. The affair that this cousin’s husband is having is framed as “a wife’s worst nightmare,” which in this case is so debilitating for Laxmi’s cousin that she is no longer able to function.

The passage focuses more on the motives of the husband than the effects of the affair on his wife, however. That he has apparently decided, after nine years of marriage, to remain in London with a woman he met on a plane suggests a deeply flawed sense of obligation to his wife and child, even if no details are given about the state of the marriage. More telling is his justification for remaining with the woman: “he’d had a conversation that had changed his life, and [...] he needed time to figure some things out.” His words read as a cliché used by an unfaithful partner to justify infidelity, or as a subtle form of victim blaming in which the burden of the affair is subtly placed upon the faithful partner for not satisfying their partner’s needs.

“Part of your name is Indian,” the man said, pacing his steps with hers.


She stopped, as did he, at a circular table piled with sweaters, flanked with pinecones and velvet bows.

“Miranda?”

“Mira. I have an aunt named Mira.”

His name was Dev. He worked in an investment bank back that way, he said, tilting his head in the direction of South Station. He was the first man with a mustache, Miranda decided, she found handsome.

Related Characters: Miranda, Dev (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 86



Explanation and Analysis

When Miranda first notices Dev at the department store where both are shopping at a cosmetics counter, she has a difficult time placing his ethnicity. This confusion is cleared up here when Dev establishes that he is Indian. Miranda’s initial interest in Dev is not so much a matter of his ethnicity as of his outwardly successful appearance and handsome looks. She is also taken by his suave demeanor as he effortlessly approaches her after attentively observing her at the cosmetics counter.

Dev’s smooth approach is designed to put Miranda at ease. Dev can no doubt tell that Miranda is not in fact Indian, but he uses his observation about the Indian portion of her name (which he overheard the salesperson use at the checkout counter) as a way of opening conversation with her. Once the opening is made, Miranda quickly steps into it as the rush of details that follow suggests. Miranda quickly learns not only his name but what he does for a living, and she decides that Dev is handsome in a way she wouldn’t have expected from a guy with a mustache. The passage functions as a kind of origin story for the affair, as the seeds of interest planted by Dev develop in Miranda into a deep interest in Dev and his cultural background.

He said he admired her for moving to Boston, where she knew no one, instead of remaining in Michigan, where she’d grown up and gone to college. When Miranda told him it was nothing to admire, that she’d moved to Boston precisely for that reason, he shook his head. “I know what it’s like to be lonely,” he said, suddenly serious, and at that moment Miranda felt that he understood her—

Related Characters: Dev (speaker), Miranda

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 87

Explanation and Analysis

Although Dev’s handsome looks, air of success, and polished manners are what initially attract Miranda to him, their developing relationship also satisfies one of Miranda’s deeper needs—namely, a desire to be understood. This might seem odd in light of Miranda’s stated desire to live in a place where no one knows her—a desire, that is, for anonymity. And yet, the idea of “loneliness” normally suggests an unwanted, uncomfortable state, something one is subjected to rather than something one chooses. Dev may, from this perspective, fulfill both Miranda’s need to be understood and an unacknowledged need for companionship.

If Dev finds this bit of biographical information about Miranda interesting, he doesn’t seem particularly interested in wanting to know more about her as the story progresses. The only other instance in the story of him asking Miranda about her personal life is when he asks about past lovers. In retrospect, his expressed admiration at this early stage in their relationship for her courage in moving to a place is perhaps less true admiration and more a strategic effort to demonstrate his sensitivity.

“You’re the first,” he told her, admiring her from the bed. “The first woman I’ve known with legs this long.”

Dev was the first to tell her that. Unlike the boys she dated in college, who were simply taller, heavier versions of the ones she dated in high school, Dev was the first always to pay for things, and hold doors open, and reach across a table in a restaurant to kiss her hand. He was the first to bring her a bouquet of flowers so immense she’d had to split it up into all six of her drinking glasses, and the first to whisper her name again and again when they made love.

Related Characters: Dev (speaker), Miranda

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 86

Explanation and Analysis

Dev proves to be an attentive lover during the initial stage of his and Miranda’s affair. He flatters Miranda by praising

her body, romancing her as if she's the sole object of his desire; the fact that he is married is pushed far to the background in the excitement and glow of their time together.

The excitement for Miranda is partially a matter of Dev being very different from men she has known in the past—immature college and high school boys who lacked a sense of how to treat a woman with care and sensitivity. Miranda's inexperience with attentive lovers puts into sharp relief Dev's own attentions as he woos her on a grand scale by making grand gestures of affection.



There is a sense, even so, that Dev's interests are largely a matter of sexual intimacy. His flattery of her body and his whispering her name while they make love bookend the passage. What is unclear is the extent to which Miranda values sexual intimacy with him above other concerns. The emphasis in this passage on the male gaze suggests that Miranda lacks a clear sense of her own needs and wants; the payoff in the relationship for her appears to be Dev's ability to make her feel unique and special.


“Go ahead,” he urged, walking backward to his end of the bridge. His voice dropped to a whisper. “Say something.” She watched his lips forming the words; at the same time she heard them so clearly that she felt them under her skin, under her winter coat, so near and full of warmth that she felt herself go hot.

“Hi,” she whispered, unsure of what else to say.

“You're sexy,” he whispered back.

Related Characters: Miranda, Dev (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 90

Explanation and Analysis

Miranda's interest in Dev, at least in part, follows from how he broadens her horizons by introducing her to his culture and opening her up to new experiences. The Mapparium, for instance, is a place of wonder, as it gives the visitor an unprecedentedly unique view of the earth. It is also a place of romance (in the story, at least), as Dev takes advantage of the strange acoustics of the place to whisper the words that Miranda at the moment finds intoxicating: “You're sexy.”

The physical sensation of the room's acoustics prime Miranda for these words. It is as if she has been lifted out of herself and now has a deeply sensual experience of Dev's voice. The act of whispering, already a feature of their lovemaking, constitutes here an almost spiritual experience, one that becomes closely tied to sexual intimacy. Dev's ability to stir Miranda in such a way again reflects his command of her affections and her attention. It is an experience that Miranda returns to repeatedly in her thoughts of Dev.

“She says it's for the boy. She's willing to forgive him for the boy.” Miranda waited as Laxmi shut off her computer. “He'll come crawling back, and she'll let him,” Laxmi said, shaking her head. “Not me. If my husband so much as looked at another woman I'd change the locks.”

Related Characters: Laxmi (speaker), Miranda

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 90

Explanation and Analysis


Throughout Miranda's intoxicating affair with Dev, she is continually made aware of how deeply unhappy Laxmi's cousin is due to the affair her husband is having. The dual perspectives of extramarital affairs, one from the perspective of the betrayed wife and the other from the perspective of the mistress, allow for a complex view of marital infidelity. In both affairs, the controlling force of male desire is emphasized. In the case of the affair that the husband of Laxmi's cousin is having, the husband can afford to separate himself from his wife and child in order to pursue an affair with a younger woman and still be accepted back “for the boy.”

Laxmi's criticism of her cousin for taking back her husband presents a more female-empowered perspective. It is certainly possible that Laxmi's passionate words are those of an aggrieved friend, one who can freely comment on her cousin's actions because she herself isn't implicated in the situation. But it is also entirely possible that Laxmi is in earnest and would take an accordingly harsh view of Miranda were she to discover that Miranda is complicit in an affair of her own.

She kept the lingerie at the back of a drawer, behind her socks and everyday underwear. The silver cocktail dress hung in her closet, the tag dangling from the seam. Often, in the morning, the dress would be in a heap on the floor; the chain straps always slipped off the metal hanger.

Related Characters: Miranda, Dev

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 92



Explanation and Analysis

Although Miranda might take the hint from the ongoing saga of Laxmi's cousin that extramarital affairs rarely end happily, she is content enough to play the role of mistress in her own affair. Her understanding of this role isn't limited to a sexual partner, however; she purchases a cocktail dress with the idea that they might also occasionally spend an evening together in public, just as she wished earlier in the story that she were able to put a picture of herself and Dev in her cubicle at work. The dress, however, remains in the closet, more a nuisance than anything else. Every time Miranda picks the dress up off the floor and hangs it back up suggests a continuance of her hope that the relationship might expand beyond the bedroom; every time the dress slips off the hanger and falls back down to the ground suggests that her hope has been defeated.

That Miranda never wears the intimate items she purchases for the bedroom suggests the limitations of her affair with Dev even in the arena of sexual intimacy. Where Miranda's imagination is populated with images of Dev's Indian culture and the possibilities of their relationship beyond the bedroom, Dev's exclusive focus is on sex. Even if there is no suggestion that Miranda is resentful of her role—she in fact actively plays into it—their contrasting desires suggest a basic incompatibility at the heart of their relationship.

It had taken her several tries to get the letters of her name to resemble the sample letters in the book, and even then she wasn't sure if she'd written Mira or Mara. It was a scribble to her, but somewhere in the world, she realized with a shock, it meant something.

Related Characters: Miranda, Dev

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 95

Explanation and Analysis

Miranda's interest in Dev becomes closely associated with her interest in his cultural background. It is hard to parse whether her interest in India is an attempt to understand Dev on a deeper level or an independent interest based on Dev exposing her to his unique culture. Whatever the case, Miranda becomes interested in Indian geography, cinema, cuisine and, in this case, attempts to learn to the Bengali language and write her name in Bengali. That she attempts to write "Mira" in Bengali, the shortened version of her name that Dev used when he first approached her in the department store, suggests that she not only is interested in learning something about Dev's culture but also in appropriating it for herself. The final sentence of the passage reflects something of Miranda's openness, per her relationship with Dev, to the broader world of mystery and wonder, a world reflected in the Bengali language.

The boy was thin. He wore a yellow knapsack strapped across his back, gray herringbone trousers, a red V-necked sweater, and black leather shoes. His hair was cut in a thick fringe over his eyes, which had dark circles under them. They were the first thing Miranda noticed. They made him look haggard, as if he smoked a great deal and slept very little, in spite of the fact that he was only seven years old.

Related Characters: Miranda, Dev, Rohin

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 98

Explanation and Analysis


Rohin was introduced early in the story as being a precocious child who knows four languages. He was later cited by Laxmi's cousin as her reason for accepting her husband back after his affair, even though the husband has by now decided to seek a divorce. Here, when Miranda first meets him, Rohin is described as having suffered a great deal as a consequence of his parents' failed marriage. The clothing he wears is impressive enough and is somewhat suggestive of the sharply dressed Dev was when Miranda first met him. Dev, in that instance, was a man on the move; Rohin is in this case a victim of his father's infidelity. The more telling description is his physical appearance. Contrary to what one might expect of a seven-year-old, he appears to be burdened by a lifetime of troubles. Miranda

might take his appearance as signaling the ugly effects of marital infidelity on children; certainly by the time their afternoon together ends she will have gained a new perspective on both her affair and that of the boy's father.

●● Rohin looked at her, his eyes like slits. He struggled to kick the mattress again, but Miranda pressed against him. He fell back on the bed, his back straight as a board. He cupped his hands around his mouth, and then he whispered, "It means loving someone you don't know."

Related Characters: Rohin (speaker), Miranda, Dev

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 105

Explanation and Analysis

The cascade of events leading up to the climax of the story begins with Miranda allowing Rohin to pressure her into putting on the cocktail dress. That Miranda would put on the dress for a boy suffering from the effects of his father's affair rather than the man whom she purchased it for is highly ironic. She is perhaps aware of this irony on some level, but she's still shocked when she hears the boy utter the words she has only heard once before from the mouth of her lover: "You're sexy." Unwilling or unable to simply let the incident go, Miranda demands that he tell her what he thinks the word "sexy" means. His response, "It means loving someone you don't know," sheds a painful light for Miranda on the nature of her affair with Dev.

The word "sexy" can, of course, be used as an authentic term of praise and affection for a cherished partner. This may have been how Miranda first understood it when Dev first spoke the word to her in the Mapparium (even though he followed it up with "Let's go back to your place"). Rohin's definition of the word, perhaps learned from his mother in castigating her husband in front of Rohin, compels Miranda to consider that her relationship with Dev is not based on love and affection but on sex. Certainly, Dev has made no effort to get to know Miranda despite her efforts to get to

know him, driving home the deeper truth of Rohin's definition of the word. This climactic point of the story is quickly followed by Miranda experiencing a profound sense of sorrow and loss as she considers how the boy and his mother and how she herself have been impacted by extramarital affairs, even if her situation is very different from Rohin's mother.

●● The third Sunday she got up early and went out for a walk. It was cold but sunny, and so she walked all the way down Commonwealth Avenue, past the restaurants where Dev had kissed her, and then she walked all the way to the Christian Science center. The Mapparium was closed, but she bought a cup of coffee nearby and sat on one of the benches in the plaza outside the church, gazing at its giant pillars and its massive dome, and at the clear-blue sky spread over the city.

Related Characters: Miranda, Dev, Rohin

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 108

Explanation and Analysis

The relationship between Miranda and Dev quickly fizzles out after the revelatory afternoon that Miranda spends with Rohin, in large part due to Miranda's lack of interest in pursuing the affair after realizing just how one-sided the desire for a more meaningful relationship has been. There is no sense, at the same time, that Miranda experiences resentment and bitterness at the affair ending. The final scene of the story suggests that she has been changed and deepened by her relationship with Dev, with the Mapparium functioning as a symbol of this inner transformation. Miranda, that is, has been exposed to the broader world of ideas and experiences through her relationship with Dev, and in particular to the world of Indian culture. Even if the Mapparium comes with additional significance—it is where Dev called her "sexy," which Miranda finally recognizes was less a term of genuine affection than of objectification—it is also the place where Miranda looked out at the world through new eyes, recognizing something of the wonder and diversity of the world. The image in the final sentence of the passage, and story, suggests as much.



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.

SEXY

Miranda's coworker, Laxmi, tells Miranda that her cousin is distraught over an affair that the cousin's husband is having with a much younger woman. The cousin's husband met the woman — “an English girl, half his age” — on a flight from Delhi to Montreal, and he'd gotten off the plane with her at Heathrow. He told Laxmi's cousin that he's staying in London to figure things out, and Laxmi's cousin has stayed in bed ever since. Laxmi says she feels worst for her cousin's boy, who's been missing school because of his mother's condition.

Although Miranda comments that the situation sounds awful, she is preoccupied with an affair that she herself is having with a married man named Dev. Although Laxmi, her cousin, her cousin's husband, and Dev are all Indian (Dev is Bengali), Miranda is not. Miranda has very little knowledge of India. She thought Bengali was a religion until one day Dev pointed out the region of Bengal on a map in an issue of *The Economist* that he had brought to her apartment with him. Miranda continued studying the map and the borders of Bengal after he left.

Miranda flashes back to the day when she met Dev. He is dressed in stylish clothes is making purchases at a cosmetics counter at the same time as her. Miranda notices him lingering and watching her and she thinks he's handsome, so she makes an excuse to buy wrinkle cream and some other makeup. He approaches Miranda after they leave the store and introduces himself, commenting that part of her name is Indian (“Mira”). When Miranda playfully questions Dev about the items he purchased, he tells her that they are for his wife and that his wife will soon be traveling to India for a two-week visit.

The story begins with an affair, one that Miranda learns about secondhand through her coworker, Laxmi. In Laxmi's telling, the blame for the affair rests solely on the husband, who—seemingly on a whim—leaves his wife for a (much) younger woman. Although the language the husband uses in explaining himself makes it seem as if he has been unhappy or unsettled in his marriage, it mostly reads as a clichéd attempt to justify his own impulsive actions. The emphasis is placed on the harm he has done to his wife and child, who are presented as innocent victims of the affair.



Miranda's perfunctory comment to Laxmi's story suggests that she is little interested in drawing a larger lesson from the story about her own affair with a married man. The fact that both adulterous men are Indian might serve as an additional point of reflection, but Miranda is mostly interested in reflecting on how Dev's cultural background has expanded her understanding of India, and specifically of Bengal. Miranda's interest is such that the magazine left behind with its feature piece on Bengal becomes a kind of totem for Miranda's desire to better understand her lover.



Miranda's interest in Dev is apparent from the first moment she notices him. His handsome looks, the aura of success he projects, and the fact of him purchasing cosmetics off a list for a woman all contribute to his allure. Perhaps even more compelling for her is his obvious interest in her. His social graces are as polished as his appearance—he knows how to engage Miranda without being overtly flirtatious. Miranda is in fact the one who acts flirtatiously by asking him who the cosmetics are for, and Dev responds in kind by hinting at his availability for the next two weeks.



At this point, since Dev's wife isn't home, an affair "[doesn't] seem so wrong" to Miranda. Dev and Miranda spend nearly every night together while Dev's wife is in India, although he leaves Miranda's apartment very early every morning so that he doesn't miss his wife's 6 a.m. call. Miranda tells Dev that she left Michigan for Boston in order to live in a place where she doesn't know anyone. Dev says he knows what it's like to be lonely, and Miranda begins to feel that Dev understands her. On one occasion Dev flatters a naked Miranda by telling her that "[You are] the first woman I've known with legs this long."

Dev lavishes Miranda with attention and affection. Miranda wishes she could tell her one friend, Laxmi, about the relationship but keeps it a secret, in part because Laxmi is still preoccupied with trying to comfort her distraught cousin. Dev and Miranda go to various places around town and on one memorable occasion visit the **Mapparium**, a three-story globe at the Christian Science center in Boston. Dev points out interesting details on the map, and Miranda notices London (where Laxmi's cousin's husband is) and wonders which city in India Dev's wife is in. Miranda has never traveled farther than the Bahamas.

Because of the **Mapparium's** special acoustics, Dev and Miranda can hear each other's whispers from across the room. Miranda is awed and moved when she can distinctly hear Dev whisper from a distance away, "You're sexy."

The affair quickly becomes all-consuming for Miranda and Dev, which at first blush might seem odd in light of Miranda's stated desire to live in a place where she doesn't know anyone. That she would make an exception for Dev suggests her desire for companionship, even if it is limited to one person. That the relationship is largely, at least for Dev, based upon sexual desire suggests at the same time the limitations of the relationship. Even though Dev professes to "understand" Miranda, it is hard not to read his words as strategic flattery with his real interest being in her body. There is no hint, at the same time, that Miranda questions the nature of Dev's interest or her or her own desire for him.



That Miranda keeps her relationship with Dev a secret from Laxmi suggests not only the insulated nature of the relationship but also Miranda's sensitivity to Laxmi's situation. Miranda no doubt knows that Laxmi would be highly critical of the affair, so she has little reason to share it with her. On the other hand, one can imagine Miranda wanting to share with Laxmi, an Indian woman, what she is coming to learn and appreciate about Indian culture through her relationship with Dev. That Miranda is developing an appreciation for Indian culture, and by extension the broader world outside her limited experiences, is reflected in her visit to the Mapparium with Dev. The Mapparium also becomes associated with the two affairs that center the story as Miranda notes both the place of Dev's origin and the place where the husband of Laxmi's cousin is currently having his affair.



Dev, already a figure of wonder and curiosity for Miranda, takes advantage of the Mapparium to elicit a deeper sense of adoration from her. His language is less that of affection than it is of objectification, however, even if she continues to bask in his attention.



At work, Laxmi tells Miranda that her cousin has decided to give her husband another chance, “for the boy.” Laxmi comments that she would never do the same if her own husband cheated on her. Miranda just nods in agreement, thinking that Dev’s wife is coming home tomorrow. She changes the subject, asking Laxmi about her trip to the Taj Mahal with her husband. Laxmi says it’s “The most romantic spot on earth [...] An everlasting monument to love.”

The two affairs in “Sexy” serve as a commentary on the dynamics of extramarital affairs—and, more specifically, on the gendered power dynamics that are often at play in such situations. These dynamics are reflected in the affair that the husband of Laxmi’s cousin is having, as the wife is compelled to take back her philandering husband for the sake of their child. Miranda’s discomfort at hearing Laxmi speak of the affair suggests that hearing about such things makes her feel guilty, most likely about the impact that her and Dev’s affair will have on Dev’s family. Laxmi’s strong words force Miranda to consider the implications of her own affair. Laxmi’s forceful argument for fidelity and love, associated with the Taj Mahal, may strike Miranda as being an ideal that she longs for, as difficult as this ideal may be for her to attain in this situation.



Miranda goes shopping for clothing that she imagines a mistress might wear; when she tries a **cocktail dress** on in the dressing room, an older woman admiringly tells her that “He’ll want to rip it right off you.” Miranda imagines wearing the dress while going out to dinner with Dev, but Dev’s visits to Miranda are limited to Sundays now that his wife is back from India, and Miranda never takes the dress out of the closet.

Even after hearing from Laxmi about the destructive consequences of extramarital affairs, Miranda embraces her own role as Dev’s mistress. That she would shop for clothing specifically for this role reflects the extent to which her imagination and her desires have been consumed by her affair with Dev. If Miranda harbors a hope that the affair will move beyond the bedroom (as reflected by her purchase of a cocktail dress), it’s telling that she never actually takes the dress out of the closet, as this hints at just how much her hopes in this regard are based on an illusion.



Miranda and Dev spend all their time together in her apartment when he visits, eating foods that Miranda purchases and making love. The only questions Dev seems to ask her are about past lovers. Dev takes brief naps before returning home, feeling a contentment upon waking up that Miranda “wished she felt herself.” Miranda observes Dev as he cleans himself up before leaving. She occasionally can smell herself on him when kissing him goodbye but considers that his wife never will, since he will take a shower as soon as he arrives home. (Dev tells his wife he goes jogging during these visits.)

Miranda invests herself in her relationship with Dev to the extent that she is able, ensuring that the limited time they can spend together is as comfortable and pleasing for him as possible. But Miranda’s efforts are unreciprocated by Dev, who willingly embraces the comforts and pleasures but gives back very little in return. The key detail here—that he rises from his naps feeling a contentment that Miranda doesn’t feel—neatly reflect this imbalance. There may be a slight hint of resentment in Miranda’s reflection that Dev’s outings are perfectly designed to deceive his wife and that there is little chance his wife will learn the truth of where Dev goes on his supposed jogs.



Miranda thinks about her limited experience with Indians. The only other Indians she has known were a family, the Dixits, who lived in the neighborhood she grew up in. The Dixits were considered strange and the three children were friendless. On one occasion Miranda went to a birthday party for one of the Dixit children and was terrified by a picture in the house of a woman “wearing a necklace composed of bleeding heads.” Mrs. Dixit told Miranda that it is the goddess, Kali. Mira was so shaken by the experience that she avoided walking past the Dixit house for months afterward.

In the beginning of the story, Miranda knew little about India; she thought Bengali was a religion and had little understanding of Indian culture and geography. Through her relationship with Dev, however, she becomes intrigued by Indian culture and considers the negative impressions she has had of India based upon her past experience with the only other Indians she has known, the Dixits. Miranda recalls seeing the Dixits through a childhood lens that was keenly aware of their otherness. This sense of otherness combined with a sense of terror when attending a birthday party at their house. Although the Dixits would have hung the picture of the Hindu goddess, Kali, in their home with pride, to Miranda—who had no context for the piece—it seemed like a terrifying image of violence.



When Miranda and Dev make love, Miranda’s imagination is filled with exotic images of India such as “deserts and elephants, and marble pavilions floating on lakes beneath a full moon.” Miranda, now deeply interested in India, samples food at Indian restaurants, attempts to learn the Bengali alphabet, and practices writing her name in Bengali with limited success.

Miranda’s negative impressions of Indian culture, based on her limited childhood experiences with the Dixits, have by now been replaced with the much more flattering images of Indian culture based on her relationship with Dev. This is largely a function of the glow that Dev casts over everything Miranda associates with him. This glow extends to the language and culture of India, which Miranda makes efforts to understand and appropriate for herself.



Miranda and Laxmi begin eating lunch together. Over lunch, Laxmi updates Miranda on her cousin’s strained marriage. Miranda tries to change the subject without success. Miranda spends her weekday evenings waiting for Dev’s visits on the weekend. Dev calls Miranda late one Saturday night and, with noise and laughter in the background, asks her if she misses him. During Dev’s visit the next day, Miranda asks him about his wife, and Dev tells her that she looks like an Indian actress, Madhuri Dixit. Miranda seeks out videos of the actress at a video store attached to an Indian grocery store. There’s a video playing in the store, and Miranda assumes that Madhuri Dixit is beautiful like the Indian girls dancing on the video.

Although Miranda begins eating lunch with Laxmi, Miranda’s life continues to revolve around Dev. This is the case even when it becomes increasingly apparent that Miranda plays only a bit role in Dev’s life, which appears to be rich and full compared to Miranda’s. This is evidenced by the phone call he makes from a house full of people and by his marriage to a woman who looks like a famous Indian movie star, Madhuri Dixit. Miranda’s preoccupation with Dev is likewise reflected in how she goes out of her way to track down a video of Madhuri and notes her beauty. In this, as in much of the story, Miranda doesn’t have a strong emotional reaction to this discovery, however. Her response is such that Miranda oftentimes appears a bystander to her own story,



Laxmi tells Miranda that her cousin's husband is seeking a divorce after a failed attempt at reuniting with his wife. Miranda agrees to look after the cousin's son one Saturday while Laxmi and her cousin have an outing. The boy, Rohin, has dark circles under his eyes "as if he smoked a great deal and slept very little," and is quite precocious. He is attempting to learn as many capitals of countries as he can and asks Miranda for coffee. Afraid of upsetting him, Miranda complies. Miranda sits with him while he draws; when she begins to put polish on her nails, he "protests" and asks her to quiz him on national capitals.

Later that day, Miranda is surprised to find him waiting outside the bathroom and looks on as he goes through the items on her bathroom shelf. He then explores her bedroom and, finding the **cocktail dress** on the floor of her closet, urges her to put it on. When she does so, he tells her, "You're sexy." When Miranda presses him to tell her what he thinks the word "sexy" means, Rohin tells her that it means "loving someone you don't know." Then the boy takes a nap on Miranda's bed. While he sleeps, Miranda cries, thinking of the boy's mother and her own affair.

The following day when Dev calls, wanting to visit, Miranda tells him that she has a cold. Miranda is in fact congested from crying. Miranda imagines telling Dev that they need to break off the relationship, but after several failed attempts to see each other, the relationship fades of its own accord. One Sunday, Miranda goes for a walk and finds herself sitting on a bench across from the **Mapparium**, "gazing at its giant pillars and its massive dome, and at the clear-blue sky spread over the city."

Rohin was mentioned in the beginning of the story as a precocious child who knows four languages. During the time Miranda spends with him, his precocity is reflected in his efforts to memorize as many national capitals as he can and in his interest in adopting such adult behaviors as drinking coffee. He is also, as indicated by the description of him here, suffering from the effects of his parents' broken marriage. Although there aren't obvious signs of how he is suffering emotionally, the "dark circles under his eyes" speak volumes. He's also somewhat demanding, perhaps from modeling his father's behavior, as he acts like someone who mainly cares about his own wishes and desires and not those of others.



The effects on Rohin of his parents' broken marriage becomes clearer as the afternoon wears on, although these appear in an unusual way. When he calls Miranda "sexy" and then defines the term as "loving someone you don't know," he is clearly mimicking his mother's response to her husband's affair, words uttered either to Rohin himself or to her husband in the heat of an argument. Rohin's words have the unexpected effect of compelling Miranda to consider just how much Dev's use of the word "sexy" and her relationship with him is based on his objectification of her. This recognition fills Miranda with a sense of sorrow, not only for the boy and his mother, but also for herself. Although she can hardly consider herself a victim in the same way, she likely recognizes how much she has invested in a relationship that has no potential to be anything more than sexual.



Miranda's emotional response to her exchange with Rohin over the word "sexy" seems to puncture whatever illusions she might have had about her relationship with Dev. Although she is at first not quite willing to break off the relationship altogether, she seems mostly untroubled over the broken engagements and finally lets it end of its own accord. Her relationship with Dev has, even so, left its marks on her, but the effect isn't completely negative. That she can sit outside the Mapparium and gaze at it suggests that the Mapparium isn't a source of painful memories but a point of reflection for her—a sign, perhaps, of how much her relationship with Dev has opened her up to the broader world and what it has to offer, or of what a more authentic relationship might actually look like.





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