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Introduction

The Developmental Book Analysis focuses on big-picture topics, such as structure, character arc, themes, relationships, supporting characters, and settings. This document is accompanied by the scene-by-scene breakdown and light annotations in the manuscript. Some sentiments expressed in this report may be repeated in the other materials, but this report is intended to be a summary and broad view of all the story topics. This document has three sections: Characters, Relationships and Plots, and Other Things.

Overall, the impact of this book is incredibly strong with focuses on friendship, love, freedom, growing up, and facing hard truths. Two best friends, Joseline and Aaron, are separated through secrets and personal struggles, and eventually they must each choose what is best for their lives. I enjoyed reading this book and appreciate the opportunity to create a developmental edit for it. Some things I particularly liked are:

- The characters feel like real and complicated people. They have flaws, but they have redeeming qualities as well. They don't react to their world in perfect ways. They have lessons to learn, and they learn them. As autonomous characters, they make decisions that push the story forward.
- The writing is clear, easy to read, and moving in the emotional parts. Through the writing, I understand the characters well. The chapters are engaging and have full stories/events embedded in them.
- The use of keeping information private from the reader. This technique is used in two key moments of the story, and both times it works very well.
- There is a good balance of proactive and reactive scenes. The characters get moments to themselves to reflect on their situations, but it is not so much the book is boring.
- I appreciate books that are about friendship first and foremost. Among all the plot that is happening, there is a clear theme that the story continuously returns to.
- The character of Raven is particularly fun to imagine and read about. She is unlike any of the other characters, and the descriptions do a great job of painting the picture of her

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life. I like that her and Joseline do not become friends in the end, which is what I expected to happen but would likely be too cheesy for this story.

- Aaron and Amir’s romance is particularly moving and kept me engaged throughout the story. The writing does a good job of not lingering too much in each stage of the romance, as the plot is continuously pushed to new heights.
- The addition of Joseline and Sawyer’s relationship is a wise choice that adds a nice subplot to the story and helps to develop Joseline’s character as a whole.
- Generally, the book follows an efficient structure and feels polished.
- The book consistently shifts the plot lines and keeps things moving so that the stories don’t become stagnant.
- Joseline’s story has what I would consider to be a false ending. The way this plot line is structured both surprised me and made the ending of the book more satisfying. Joseline experiences two parallel plot lines, first of her relationship with Aaron and the mistakes she made with him; second, her new relationship with Sawyer and her opportunity to not repeat the same mistakes.
- Both of the two main characters are faced with choices between obtaining their external goals or their internal needs, and these choices align with the trajectory of the book up until that point.
- Both characters have the same underlying desire to love and be loved. Their stories are, in the end, about love—how to find it, how to keep it, how to cherish it.

Characters

Joseline

Joseline’s story is about being a good friend and being someone that others care about. Her main flaws are that she can be insensitive to others and she is stubborn enough to impact her relationships with those around her. She is insecure about her merit and importance, which causes her to lash out and react with anger when she feels attacked.

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Even though the character of Joseline is flawed, she has a lot of good qualities. She really wants to see Aaron be happy. She hopes to be helpful to those in her life, but fails to see what is truly helpful to them. She genuinely wants to be a good friend, but mostly fails with seeing how to do so. She is passionate about making an impact on the world, either on a big scale or on an individual interpersonal level. The main motivation that I identified for her is to feel important and wanted.

Save the Cat

I've used the Save the Cat structure to identify the main beats in the various storylines, which allows me to see if any of them are missing or don't align in an effective way. Not every story will align perfectly to Save the Cat, but it is a tool that can be used to evaluate the structure of a manuscript. Omitting some beats that I don't need to discuss, the Save the Cat beats are:

- Opening Image: Establishes the world, tone, and characters
- Set-Up: Establishes the character's everyday world
- Catalyst: The event that turns the protagonist's life upside-down
- Break Into Two: The protagonist's reaction to the catalyst sets the story in motion
- Fun and Games: The character explores and experiences the new world they are in
- Midpoint: A big moment that changes the trajectory of the story
- Bad Guys Close In: Things become more difficult, the character's internal flaws are haunting them
- All Is Lost: Event where the character loses everything, what they care about the most
- Dark Night of the Soul: The protagonist reacts to the All Is Lost moment and is close to giving up, usually includes an epiphany that inspires the character to continue
- Break Into Three: The character is down but not out, and continues with their goal
- Finale: The climax of the story, the character uses what they have learned throughout the story
- Final Image: The lasting impact for the audience

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Joseline's story lines up with Save the Cat like this:

- Catalyst, Break Into Two: Accepting the apartment with Raven
- Fun and Games: She lives in the apartment with Raven and tension grows with Aaron
- Midpoint: Finding out about Aaron's secret
- All Is Lost: When Sawyer confronts her (I could have made All Is Lost the second argument with Aaron, but decided it doesn't fully play the role of that beat)
- Dark Night of the Soul/Epiphany: Joseline decides not to use the story topic

Analysis

Because Joseline has a false ending, her full arc does not completely encompass the entire Save the Cat structure. Joseline has two storylines happening: her friendship with Aaron, and her journalism capstone project. In the plot line with Aaron, Joseline's All Is Lost moment is the second fight with Aaron, during which he tells her he doesn't need her. The Break Into Three beat is when they make up. After reading this, it seems that the main arc of Joseline's story is complete, until she gets to the argument with Sawyer. This is where it becomes clear that Joseline's true story is that of choosing to be a good friend, and the All Is Lost moment of her entire arc is not the argument with Aaron, but the argument with Sawyer; she has a Dark Night Epiphany in the same chapter, right before the book ends. Therefore, Joseline's main character arc does not get a full Save the Cat arc, but that is ok because the reader has already been satisfied by the Aaron plot line which did receive the full arc. Including the rest of the beats after her argument with Sawyer would bog down the story with unnecessary details. The place that the story ends provides all the information the reader needs to know in order to finish the book with a feeling that the plots are wrapped up.

Save the Cat also has guidelines for the Coming of Age genre:

- Life Problem: The disconnection between Joise and Aaron; Wanting more out of life but not knowing how to get it
- Wrong way to attack the problem: She continues to push Aaron to talk, eventually fully disconnecting herself from him, and then pursues a project that will hurt people

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- A solution that involves acceptance of a hard truth: In the end, Joseline, decides that she can be a better friend by choosing to do so, rather than choosing to give herself a one-up in the world by writing the article about Raven

Joseline’s story does have all of the Coming of Age components, and it is easy to see how they all interact with each other.

Ways to Improve

The first thing Joseline’s story needs is a much stronger Catalyst, or inciting incident. At the beginning of the book, something should *force* the protagonist to react; they need to be in a situation that thrusts the story forward. At the beginning of this book, Joseline decides that she wants to get a new apartment, and then she gets the new apartment. She is not in an urgent housing situation causing her to move. She makes her decision leisurely, and is offered the apartment immediately without contest. It is no choice for her to take it, no struggle to make it happen. Even later, when she thinks she may have to move out, the option to move back in with her old roommate is on the table. The only complication when taking the new apartment is that she will be living with an influencer, but the interaction with this influencer has very little impact on Joseline’s life. Raven and Ella’s presences in Joseline’s life are annoying, but they are not inciting incident material.

In the “Life Problem” listed above, there is not actually a concrete life problem for Joseline. It is too vague. Joseline senses disconnection between her and Aaron, and she wants more out of life. The Life Problem, or what is really the purpose of the story, needs to be something that Joseline is desperate to fix, something that she *has* to take action to do something about. The protagonist’s life should be a mess at the beginning of the book—something Aaron’s story does well, but Joseline’s could use some improvement. In the excel document, Joseline’s storyline is green (positive outcomes) for the first 6 scenes. Everything is smooth sailing for her. When that happens, there is no tension, nothing keeping the reader coming back for more. With Joseline’s story being the opening chapter, it not only harms Joseline’s story, but also the book as a whole.

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I have two suggestions for tackling this problem. One, Joseline's living situation needs to be urgent; she needs to be forced to move out. She needs to be desperate to make the choice to live there despite her misgivings. Two, there needs to be an inciting incident with Raven right from the start that develops the tension between them. This second point needs to happen for multiple reasons that will be addressed throughout this report. Raven is a foil character to Joseline. Joseline feels insecure and like she will not be successful in life—Raven is successful seemingly without having to try. In the book, the reason for Joseline's obsession with Raven is not immediately clear, but this is the root of it: Joseline is fascinated by Raven because Raven is everything Joseline is not, and Raven is the type of person that Joseline believes is not *deserving* of her success. There needs to be an inciting incident to spark this feeling for Joseline, and to give the reader something to latch onto—a concrete reason for Joseline to hate Raven, rather than the vague concept of not liking influencers as a whole. This could be a fight or argument with Raven, it could be an ultimatum or threat from either of them, or it could be Raven intentionally trying to make Joseline want to move out. Any of these options, and plenty more that you could come up with, would add more tension to the beginning of Joseline's story, and force Joseline to reckon with the insecurities that she faces.

Joseline's goals are unclear for the first third of the book. The first time her insecurities are mentioned is chapter 9. While Joseline's parents and her backstory are mentioned in chapter 3, this reflection does not adequately convey what Joseline's main goal in the book is, which is to be important and make an impact. In addition, there needs to be something concrete to show the reader why this goal is so important to Joseline. When Joseline reflects on her upbringing as a source of her insecurity, there is nothing specific other than general mediocrity to explain her strong feelings. This hinders our ability to understand her thought process. The Snowflake structure advises that the character need be derived from a specific event in the character's past. For Joseline, this could be things like teachers underestimating her, constant failure at schoolwork (possibly due to ADHD?), to any number of events that could cause her to feel insecure or want to prove herself.

Especially after Joseline gets the apartment, it is incredibly unclear what her goals are. She wants the apartment, and then she gets the apartment. I was not able to truly identify

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Joseline's goals/motivations until chapter 9. This makes it difficult to read Joseline's story while not fully understanding what she is working towards or what she wants out of life. After she gets the apartment, maybe her new goal becomes to avoid Raven, to make friends with her, or to sabotage Raven? It seems that part of Joseline's goal in that section is to figure out Raven, which could work if given more specificity. Even if not related to Raven, she needs something concrete to be working towards outside of the capstone project. At the beginning of the book, maybe she has an idea of what she can do to become important, and then she changes her mind after coming up with a good idea for the capstone project. The possibilities are endless, but her goals need to be embedded into the story more strongly for the reader to be able to connect with Joseline and to be invested in her story.

Even though Joseline's main character arc is to become someone important, when she finally latches onto the story idea to write about Raven, she does not need to work hard to get the story. She spends a few scenes asking for Raven to participate, and then she spends a few scenes on the phone begging people to help her. When she does figure out what's going on, it's all from overhearing conversations, not from actual investigative work. In the plot line "Joseline wants to be someone important" in the excel document, 62% of the 13 scenes have positive outcomes for Joseline, which leaves the impression that this is not actually an urgent goal for her to be focusing on. She comes up with the story easily, and she achieves it easily. Somehow, she gets Logan to agree to the interview even though they were hesitant about it; the reader does not get to see any of Joseline's techniques for getting the story. For example, Joseline asks Raven for her permission to do the article right after the scene when Raven tells Aaron to stop coming to the house, during which Joseline blew up at Raven and they had a full-on argument. It doesn't make sense for her to expect Raven to agree to the article after that happened, and after they have never had friendly feelings for each other. So with that information, what could Joseline do to try to convince Raven to do the story? What kind of sacrifices or scheming could she come up with to get her way? What did she say to Logan to get the interview; did she have to do any manipulation? When these things just fall into place for her, it gives the impression that she is not earning the victory at the end, and it's not satisfying for the reader. In addition, if Joseline

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actually does ethically questionable investigative work, that would help to add tension to this storyline so the reader can expect something to blow up at the end.

Lastly, Joseline seems to have a likeability issue. I pointed this out in several places in the manuscript and in the excel document. There is a line between a flawed character and a character the reader doesn't like. Joseline leans fairly heavily towards the latter category for me. There are many reasons for her being an unlikeable character:

- She feels an entitlement to Aaron's emotions, his secrets, and his devotion.
- She pushes Aaron to talk about things or be involved in things that he is uncomfortable with, and she uses rude/demeaning language towards him. She has a lack of empathy for what he is going through and does not question that she might be hurting him.
- She is cocky about her place in Aaron's life, seeing herself as his guiding star rather than his peer. She likes for him to rely on her.
- She wants to control Aaron. When he doesn't follow in line with what she expects, she feels betrayed and lashes out at him.
- She feels entitled to Sawyer's loyalty when she's just met him, and wants him to give her Aaron's secrets. When she finds out that Sawyer didn't tell her about Aaron and Amir, she feels betrayed that he did not tell her someone else's secret.
- She repeatedly states that she wishes her parents loved her more conditionally, which is a very naïve and privileged position to have. If readers struggling with sexuality and religion are reading this book, they will not appreciate this side of Joseline.
- She has a lack of logic in her decisions.
 - She thinks Raven will agree to participate in the article, which makes no sense.
 - In chapter 33, Joseline is seemingly angry over things she should have expected to happen. She gets angry at Raven for not giving a statement, and at Sawyer for being disappointed in her. She gets defensive at Raven when she threatens getting a lawyer. She feels entitled for others to agree with her about writing the article and feels betrayed when they don't.

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- She is obsessed with Raven at the beginning of the story and says that she doesn't want to be "pulled into her orbit" but the reader has no reason to believe this would happen. Joseline has a huge dislike for influencers yet doesn't provide a rational reason for her opinion. Despite repeatedly saying she doesn't like influencers, her actions come off as more neutral towards Raven most of the time, because she doesn't take action on her beliefs.
- She believes she should be prioritized in Sawyer's life over Raven, who is his best friend. She feels betrayed when he backs Raven up by keeping Aaron's secret and by helping to direct Joseline away from the story.

Unfortunately, as the main character, Joseline does not provide a positive connection for the reader to latch onto. A lot of these reasons listed are related to Joseline's character flaws, but they take the whole thing just a little too far. It is one thing for Joseline to want to be important to Aaron; it is another entirely for her to be rude, pushy, and dismissive of him, and see herself as his savior. There are some traits that will prevent a flawed character from winning over the reader, and a lot of Joseline's qualities fall into that category.

One thing to keep in mind is the "save the cat" philosophy, the reason for the name of the Save the Cat structure analysis. Having an unlikeable character "save a cat" is to have them do something good early on to help redeem them in the reader's eyes throughout the rest of the story. While both Joseline and Aaron state that Joseline has helped Aaron with his struggles in the past, the reader doesn't actually see that happening; we are dropped into a story where Aaron is immediately keeping secrets because he doesn't like how Joseline will react, and then we watch as Joseline essentially berates and attempts to control Aaron for most of the book. This gives the reader the impression that Joseline is more unlikeable than not. Her actions need to be cleaned up a little, and she needs to do something to get the reader on her side early. It would be helpful to see some vulnerability from Joseline earlier in the story, so the reader can build empathy for her.

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Relationships and Plots

I have mapped out all of the relationships and plots/conflicts that develop throughout the story. This section will go over each, providing an analysis for them along with suggestions for improvement.

For most of these, I lined them up with the Save the Cat beats to help identify where they might need improvement (not all of the plot lines needed this kind of analysis, so not all of them have the beats included here). While most of the beats of these individual conflicts will line up with the character arc beats from the earlier section, it is important to look at the plot lines on their own to determine if they present a full, satisfying arc throughout the course of the book.

Relationships

Joseline and Raven

Save the Cat beats:

- Catalyst, Break Into Two: Joseline moves into the apartment
- Fun and Games: Joseline and Raven are sassy to each other
- Midpoint: Raven tells Aaron not to come around anymore, sparking a fight between her and Joseline
- Bad Guys Close In: Joseline trying to involve Raven in her capstone project and Raven saying no
- Epiphany: The interview with Logan
- Break Into Three, Finale: The conversation with everyone together about the article

Joseline and Raven are obviously not friends, which is one thing I like about this book. It would have been easy to develop a friendship between them instead of continuing the antagonistic relationship that they have. Their hatred for each other, though, is much more realistic and fun to read.

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Even though Joseline and Raven don't have a friendship arc, their story can still be lined up with Save the Cat. The first thing to note is that the Catalyst for this relationship is vague and not urgent. Joseline doesn't even meet Raven until she's lived at the house for a few chapters, and when she does, their meeting does not act as a catalyst for anything. Throughout the Fun and Games section, Joseline and Raven are sassy and snappy to each other, but there is no real tension in their relationship. This is also why it's difficult to grasp Joseline's immediate hatred of and obsession with Raven; in reality, Raven has almost no effect on Joseline's life. Raven has the reputation of being mean, but nothing she does or says holds any real weight to it. This also makes the concept of Raven's character feel watered-down: She is a self-centered mean girl who barely does mean things (up until the midpoint, that is). In Joseline's section, I mentioned the need for developing Raven as a foil character for Joseline. Raven represents everything that Joseline is insecure about, but it isn't enough just for them to coexist together. There needs to be a true Catalyst to put Joseline in a situation where she is directly confronted with her insecurities; then she tries to fix the problem the wrong way, first by isolating herself from Aaron (lashing out instead of actually facing the problem), and then by trying to get revenge on Raven through the article. The Fun and Games section is meant to explore the premise of the plot—Joseline is living with an influencer, something most people will never experience and which readers are likely curious about—but the actual exploration of this premise lacks specificity and stakes.

In the beat structure for this relationship, the All Is Lost moment is missing. The All Is Lost moment is the lowest point of the story, where the protagonist considers giving up. For Raven and Joseline, this would be a moment that Raven is close to winning: She would have beaten Joseline down to the point of being fully vulnerable to the effects of the foil character, pushing her into the depths of her insecurities about her ability to become important, and causing Joseline to need to find the courage to make a comeback. That comeback, or the Epiphany, is the moment the power dynamic shifts—when Joseline learns through the interview with Logan something that Raven does not want to become public. Instead, the existing structure is the following:

- Joseline and Raven have a big fight about Aaron
- Joseline decides to write the story about Raven and badgers her to agree to participate

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- Joseline does minor investigating and ends up with a true story
- Joseline learns sensitive information about Raven and is able to hold it over her head

There is a lack of tension in this sequence of events. It doesn't make sense that Joseline would badger Raven about the story immediately after their fight together, and there aren't any stakes to her investigation, other than her class grade, which she could get by pursuing any other topic. If the relationship between Joseline and Raven was more antagonistic, with a true low point for Joseline, then the power shift in the Epiphany would allow the reader to be more invested in Joseline's comeback.

This relationship is also missing a strong ending. After the conversation with the group about the article, Joseline and Raven don't interact again, even though Joseline's relationship with Raven and the build-up to the article has been the focus of most of Joseline's story in the book. The article is used as a way for Joseline to get to stay in the house with Raven, and in the epilogue we learn that Raven isolates herself from Joseline, seemingly stewing in indignation. The story between Joise and Raven does *not* need a moment where they make up and become friends, and it doesn't even necessarily need another direct interaction between the two, but it does need something to wrap up the story—something to see the final impact of the situation on Raven. My first idea was that Joseline could observe Nara and Ashland's frenzied presence at the house as they try to figure out how to fix the problem, but it could be anything you come up with that gives us one more final image to indicate the new trajectory of Raven's life, the impact of the events of this book.

Joseline and Sawyer

Save the Cat components:

- Incomplete hero who is missing something: Joseline is missing the feeling of being loved/important, especially after her fight with Aaron
- A counterpart who makes that completion come about: Sawyer provides friendship when Joseline needs it most

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- A complication: Sawyer is Raven’s friend first and foremost, which is where his loyalty truly lies; Sawyer and Joseline’s lives are intertwined and they affect each other in different ways—for example, Sawyer getting wrapped up in Joseline’s anger about Aaron, and Sawyer being involved in manipulating Joseline’s story about Raven

When Sawyer was first introduced, I definitely thought this relationship would become a romantic one. When the book reached the last few chapters, I found myself wondering when the romance would happen, and hoping it wouldn’t be too rushed at that point. Of course, it is completely fine for this not to be a romantic relationship; this is actually another thing I like about this manuscript, as the story is primarily focused on friendship, and having the plot line of Sawyer’s friendship helps to support and develop the overall theme. My suggestion is to make it clear in the text that Joseline only sees Sawyer a friend, since most readers will also probably expect a romance between them.

I really like Joseline and Sawyer’s relationship. Sawyer comes at the right time in the story to give Joseline a new perspective on the situation that she’s in with Aaron. They have a nice banter together, and they get along well. Sawyer’s friendship serves to spark Joseline’s Epiphany, and through this she learns the lesson about being a good friend. At the midpoint, Joseline faces the consequences of her treatment of others when she loses Aaron. At the end when Sawyer confronts her, she is presented with a choice: continue treating people the same way, or make a change. She would benefit in many ways by continuing on the same trajectory she has been on, but the consequences would again constitute her losing a friend. This is an excellent technique for creating a parallel between the two main relationships in Joseline’s life, and giving Joseline the opportunity to make a different choice the second time around—and when she does make the right choice, the reader is left satisfied, knowing that she has grown as a person.

The main way that the relationship between Joseline and Sawyer could be improved is by boosting up the emotional intensity. Most of my critique in the manuscript and the excel document relies on the impression that Joseline and Sawyer are not actually that close as friends, and therefore Joseline’s expectations of loyalty from Sawyer are unwarranted. At the midpoint, Joseline gets angry at Sawyer for not telling her Aaron’s secret, and at the end of the book, she

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gets angry at him for defending Raven. Both of these scenes would make more sense if Joseline had more of an emotional relationship with Sawyer that doesn't revolve around Raven or Aaron, which would allow her to logically expect Sawyer to stand up for her more than he does. That said, Joseline's anger at Sawyer not telling her Aaron's secret will never be warranted, as other readers will likely agree that Sawyer is in the right for not telling her someone else's business.

While Joseline has a few moments where she opens up to Sawyer, he does not open up to her at all. There are hints that he has an interesting backstory, and I would like to hear more about that. I know absolutely nothing about Sawyer, but I want to. I want to understand what about him is so alluring to Joseline. Their relationship lines up to Save the Cat like this:

- Catalyst: They meet at Joseline's house
- Midpoint: Joseline gets angry because she thinks Sawyer lied to her/manipulated the situation to keep Aaron out of the house
- Break Into Three: The conversation between everyone about the article
- All Is Lost, Epiphany: Sawyer confronts Joseline about the article

As seen here, the All Is Lost/Epiphany comes *after* the Break Into Three beat. In the context of this relationship, this structure works well. Sawyer confronting Joseline is essential to closing up Joseline's character arc. However, their midpoint moment is not very strong. What their story needs at the midpoint is a strong friendship moment where they're forced to trust each other in some capacity, something that would solidify their friendship without a doubt. Then, throughout the rest of their story, they need more adventures together. They need to be vulnerable with each other. The few activities they do together—going to the bar and eating pizza—do not serve as friendship-defining moments, and are still focused on Raven and Aaron more than Joseline and Sawyer.

Joseline and Sawyer's friendship is also another opportunity to introduce some new settings to the story. Their entire friendship exists in Joseline's house. This gives their relationship the feeling of being an afterthought, something that happens alongside other plots—something that either follows up or precedes another more interesting storyline with Aaron or Raven. In fact, they don't ever intentionally seek out spending time with each other—except for

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the one time Sawyer finds her on the porch and apologizes, but that scene also feels like a “ran into the right person at the right time” moment, like all of their other moments together do. That scene leaves off with the implication that they will continue to develop their friendship, but the text does not follow up on this.

Following that, Joseline is incredibly hot-and-cold about Sawyer. One moment she hates him, the next she’s perfectly fine with him; one moment she decides she won’t trust him ever again, and the next she’s thanking him for helping her feel better in Aaron’s absence. Sawyer spends a lot of their relationship apologizing to Joseline for things that I don’t believe he needs to apologize for. Joseline spends a lot of their relationship angry at Sawyer for one reason or another. When looking at the “Plots and relationships” page on the excel document, Joseline and Sawyer’s relationship is green and red back and forth; there is no arc. This makes it difficult to keep track of the stance that Joseline has toward Sawyer at any given moment, and it stunts the reader’s ability to see them as true friends who care about each other—which makes the confrontation at the end difficult to understand, impacting the impression of the book as a whole.

Plots/Conflicts

Aaron’s secret that he keeps from Joseline

Here is this plot aligned with the main Save the Cat beats:

- Catalyst: Not clear. It might be chapter 4 when Aaron runs off after seeing Amir on Raven’s Instagram
- Fun and Games: Aaron tries to keep the secret from Joseline and avoids her/her house; Joseline pays attention to the disconnect that is growing between her and Aaron
- Midpoint: Aaron’s secret is out, causing the first argument between Joseline and Aaron
- Bad Guys Close In: Joseline realizes that she could have been better to Aaron
- All Is Lost: The second argument between Joseline and Aaron
- Break Into Three: Aaron and Joseline make up

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Analysis

As noted, the Catalyst for this plot line is unclear. While this is a plot line that develops slowly, as Aaron is forced to face his reality and as Joseline starts to notice something is up with Aaron, it doesn't feel as urgent as it should. This plot line is what sparks the driving of the entire story—of Joseline and Aaron separating, Aaron starting the relationship with Amir, and Joseline and Aaron both eventually making choices that are best for them in the end. But the build-up to these moments is slightly underwhelming, mostly because there is a lack of specific things for the characters to react to, particularly Joseline. There needs to be a stronger Catalyst moment that sparks Joseline's paying attention to the situation.

This plot line also lacks an Epiphany moment, which is where Aaron decides that he needs Joseline in his life, and Joseline realizes that she was a bad friend to him. These two points have been addressed in the "Joseline and Aaron" relationship section. While they both overcome their flaws that originally drove the separation between the two of them, neither of these moments are written directly into the story with clear triggers and specificity to the characters, making it difficult to understand how the characters get from "separated" to "together."

I also suggest revealing Aaron's secret to Joseline in a more interesting way. Joseline learns a lot of information from eavesdropping on people, and it's a habit that gets old quickly. Since Aaron's secret is the main source of tension in the story up until that point, and it is what forces them to separate, I expected Joseline to learn about it in a more explosive way. It's underwhelming for Joseline to learn about it from Raven and Sawyer after she just had a moment where neither Raven or Sawyer would willingly reveal it to her. This could also be an opportunity to add more settings to the story; for example, maybe Aaron and Amir run into each other somewhere and Joseline observes the interaction, or maybe Joseline finds a picture or letter between them. The plot line needs something more dramatic for this moment.

Joseline's life with an influencer

Here is this plot aligned with the main Save the Cat beats:

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- Catalyst, Break Into Two: Joseline moving in with Raven
- Fun and Games: Joseline and Raven are sassy to each other
- Midpoint: Raven tells Aaron not to come around the house anymore, causing an argument between her and Joseline
- Epiphany: Joseline’s interview with Logan
- Break Into Three: The conversation with everyone about the article

Analysis

The need for an All Is Lost moment and a stronger Catalyst and Finale for Raven and Joseline’s relationship has been discussed above. The only other note I have about this plot line is the role of Raven’s parents, Nara and Ashland. The dinner scene with them comes with the implication that they will have a bigger role in the story than they do. Though Nara does make a few more appearances, and Raven’s illegal activities revolve around Nara’s profession, it feels like these two characters were introduced—and given an entire chapter—for their presence and impact on the story to be limited. What do these two characters add to the plot? What is the benefit of Joseline going to dinner with them and almost 2,000 words being spent on it? This scene does not have to happen for Joseline to learn about Raven’s parents’ requirements for her life. It does serve to provide information about the level of involvement that Nara and Ashland have in Raven’s life, but even with that revelation, the dinner scene feels out of place. At first it seems that Ashland will be helpful for Joseline’s capstone, but then he isn’t.

Other Things

This section is a summary of other topics that are related to the story, but are not necessarily related to any specific character or plot line.

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Utilizing minor characters

I've made notes about increasing Cameron's presence earlier in the story to add nuance and conflict to Aaron's story. The other minor character that I noticed could be used in a more complicated way is Miu. Miu is an interesting character to me, but her story drops off at the midpoint. She plays two main roles in the story: 1) to add some tension to Aaron and Joseline's relationship, and 2) to represent some of Joseline's insecurities about not being good enough. This second point for Miu could be expanded to have a more positive impact on the book overall. Whereas Raven is a foil character whose success Joseline doesn't believe is deserved, Miu is a different type of foil character whose success she obviously *does* deserve. This dynamic could be used to add more pressure onto Joseline throughout the story, as she is reminded of someone who has the determination to work hard and reach her goals.

I also had the idea that Miu and Joseline could develop some sort of relationship throughout the book; similar to how Aaron has developing relationships with both Amir and Jon, Joseline could have relationships with Sawyer and Miu. Joseline becoming friends with Miu throughout the story would help develop her character arc because she would have to truly change her opinions about others in order to develop this friendship. Miu is someone that Joseline is jealous of, who she sees herself in competition with, in her classwork but also for Aaron's attention. To develop a friendship with Miu, Joseline would be forced to create a new worldview, one that includes more nuance and empathy. She would have to realize that Miu is not as bad as Joseline thinks she is; that Miu is just a person, just like Joseline, with a complicated backstory, a love for journalism, and a determination to succeed. Just as how Miu is a foil for Joseline, she is also the same as Joseline. Through this revelation, Joseline would come to understand that Miu and her are not in competition, that they never were, and then this could give her the confidence to continue with the housing topic (or any other topic) for her story. It would symbolize that Joseline is no longer comparing herself to others and that she knows she has merit regardless of what others do.

Regardless of which direction you choose to take Miu's character, her story does need to be wrapped up in a more complete way. She is a fairly important character up until the midpoint,

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after which her and Aaron make up, and then she disappears. Even if she doesn't get a full additional plot line in the story, keep in mind that she represents competition, insecurity, and jealousy to Joseline; she needs to have a few more appearances just to help push Joseline along her character arc journey, and to make it feel like she hasn't disappeared completely.

Conclusion

This is a book that I completely enjoyed reading. The story is poignant and relevant to today's world. Even though the concept of a character conflicted between religion and sexuality is not new, this story has a unique take on the character and situation. Joseline, while flawed, is earnest; her goals are not lofty or unrealistic. She wants to love and be loved. Both of Aaron's and Joseline's character arcs are relatable, as we all have moments of wanting to run from our problems; we all lash out in anger and feel insecure about our place in our loved ones' lives; we have all wanted more for ourselves without knowing how to get it; we have hurt those who care about us without meaning to.

My suggestions in this report are the result of my analysis from having read the book with a critical eye. I have offered ideas and recommendations for how to strengthen the story as a whole. Whichever notes the author wants to use is up to them; this story is not mine, and the author should always choose to keep the story authentic to their vision and the meaning that it has for them.

The main advice in this report is summarized here:

- Joseline needs a Catalyst/Inciting Incident that forces her to act. Her story should have tension right away. In order for the reader to invest in her story, her life should be in more disarray than it is.
- Joseline's character arc is dependent upon Raven's role as a foil character. The tension between these two characters needs to be urgent and critical from the beginning.

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- Clarify the stakes of Joseline pursuing the article about Raven, and show the reader that she knows what she’s getting herself into.
- Add in an “All Is Lost” moment between Joseline and Raven, where Joseline is close to giving up but finds the courage to continue.
- Wrap up Joseline’s plot line with Raven by showing where Raven ended up/how the events of the story affected her.
- Joseline’s motivations, both internal and external, need to be clarified earlier in the story. Joseline needs to immediately have a physical goal she is working towards, whether that is related to Raven or not.
- Joseline’s approach to the capstone project is haphazard and does not showcase hard work or investigation on her part. She seems to fall into this story due to her proximity to Raven rather than actually discovering it on her own merit.
- Consider changing Joseline’s final project topic to something that wraps up the story in a more satisfying way.
- Unfortunately, Joseline’s character falls into unlikeable territory. Consider lightening up her negative traits and/or using the “save the cat” technique to make her feel redeemable.
- Show the moment that Joseline realizes she could have been a better friend to Aaron, triggered by something specific.
- Reveal Aaron’s secret to Joseline in a more interesting way.
- Develop Joseline and Sawyer’s relationship by allowing them to have more emotional vulnerability with each other and intentionally seek out spending time together. Smooth out the bumps in their relationship so their story has more of an overall arc, with a rising tension and then a climax.
- If Joseline’s parents are the backstory for her need to feel important, then Joseline needs a confrontation moment with them.