



PARACHUTES

by Kelly Yang

BOOK *Talk*

They're called parachutes: teenagers dropped off to live in private homes and study in the United States while their wealthy parents remain in Asia. Claire Wang never thought she'd be one of them, until her parents pluck her from her privileged life in Shanghai and enroll her at a high school in California.

Suddenly she finds herself living in a stranger's house, with no one to tell her what to do for the first time in her life. She soon embraces her newfound freedom, especially when the hottest and most eligible parachute, Jay, asks her out.

Dani De La Cruz, Claire's new host sister, couldn't be less thrilled that her mom rented out a room to Claire. An academic and debate team star, Dani is determined to earn her way into Yale, even if it means competing with privileged kids who are buying their way to the top. But Dani's game plan veers unexpectedly off course when her debate coach starts working with her privately.

As they steer their own distinct paths, Dani and Claire keep crashing into one another, setting a course that will change their lives forever.

QUESTIONS FOR *Group Discussion*

POWER. Describe the many ways the issue of power arises in both Claire's and Dani's lives. Who are the figures of power in Claire's life? Who holds power in Dani's life? What does Claire mean when she says, "Here we go again, life by committee" (p. 10)? Who does Claire think lives a "life by committee"? How do both girls find ways to channel their own power? What do they do with it? How do various power dynamics impact the way both girls deal with assault and harassment?

WEALTH AND PRIVILEGE. Claire and all the other parachutes live in a world steeped in riches and privilege. Though the parachutes do not have the comfort of their Chinese family and friends, they have many riches that provide power, strength, and security in their place. What aspects of the lives of the parachutes surprised you? Dani also must deal with wealth and privilege, though her experiences are very different from those of her more affluent classmates. How does her relationship with privilege and wealth differ from that of the parachutes?

FRIENDSHIP. Deep loyalty among friends is interwoven throughout the chapters. When both Dani and Claire are in trouble or need a friend to talk to, both girls have friends they can lean on and who come running to their side. What do you learn about friendship through Dani and Ming? What characteristics do you see that blossom through and because of their friendship? What do you learn about friendship through Claire's group of friends, Jess, Florence, and Nancy? How do they uniquely rely on one another as parachutes?

INSECURITY AND SECURITY. Dani relies heavily on her talents to secure her spot for the Snider competition, which allows high ranking debate students to compete for scholarships to prestigious universities such as Yale. Why do you think Dani desires the financial security of a scholarship? What makes her wish for better outcomes through a college education? Despite her talent, she wrestles with imposter syndrome, and the feeling of not being good enough. For Claire, who does she seek security from throughout the book? What insecurities does Claire leave behind in China? What security does she leave behind as well?

INDEPENDENCE. Dani, a first-generation student, has always solved her own school issues. How does Dani take it upon herself to prepare and travel for debate competitions on her own? Why does Dani feel as though she owes it to her mom to be successful? On the other hand, Claire has been forced into independence, living across the ocean from her family, friends, and the comfort of her home. In what ways does Claire show independence at school? What obstacles does she overcome in her studies after her initial arrival to the U.S.?