

And West Is West Study Guide

And West Is West by Ron Childress

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Plot Summary

NOTE: All citations in this Study Guide refer to the Kindle version of *And West is West*, published October, 2015.

Although Ethan Winters and Jessica Aldridge work in two separate fields, both learn that even in today's world of computer technology and one's ability to manipulate forces thousands of miles away, a human being still has a conscience that makes the person feel responsible for immoral acts. The novel describes how Ethan and Jessica use their experiences to make themselves better people. Ethan chooses to teach school over his high paying computer coding job in which he made money off acts of terrorism. Jessica gets a job as a drone operator on the Mexican border where she carefully considers those whom she calls to be intercepted by border patrol.

Jessica is working as a drone pilot in the United States Air Force when she is called to fire upon a convoy believed to be carrying al-Yarisi, a dangerous terrorist. Although Voigt, Jessica's commander, gets the command from his higher-ups to fire the missile, Jessica hesitates because she sees two girls dressed in burkas get out of one of the SUVs. Regardless, her superior officers order her to fire, and she follows their commands.

To deal with her stress, Jessica writes letters to her father who is incarcerated for murder. In her letters, she includes details about her work and information about the two innocent girls who were killed. Jessica is dismissed from her position with the Air Force for divulging the information to her father. She is shocked by her dismissal. While in the hospital suffering with dehydration and sunburn after a hike in the desert, Jessica becomes more disturbed when she gets a visit from Homeland Security. She senses the group wants to have her put in a psychiatric hospital to keep her from telling any information about the downfalls of the drone program. After it is learned that al-Yarisi was not killed in the drone strike, two FBI agents are tasked with arresting Jessica. Jessica chooses to turn herself in before the agents find her.

Meanwhile, Ethan is making a lot of money by writing computer programs for a bank. One of the programs allowed the bank to make money by trading forms of currency when it was most profitable. Ethan's world falls apart when he is accused of making a mistake in his programming that causes his bank to lose a good deal of money. Due to the error, Ethan loses his job and he is in danger of losing his accumulated wealth. Ethan fights the decision, believing that his program was sabotaged.

As Ethan is fighting his job battles, his ex-girlfriend, Zoe, is in the middle of a crisis. Against his will, Ethan becomes entangled in her situation. Zoe's father is suffering from pancreatic cancer, and her mother has dementia. Before Zoe's father kills his wife and commits suicide, he gives Ethan a package of information about Zoe's real identity. There is information in the package that tells Zoe the people she always thought were her parents were actually her grandparents. Her mother, whom she had never known, was killed in a car wreck when Zoe was an infant. Zoe is devastated by the news about



her true identity. To make matters worse, Zoe tries to start a new life with a new job in Washington, but she is quickly disenchanted with the job and loses faith in her ability to change the world for the better. While house sitting for a friend in New York, Zoe takes an overdose of medication and alcohol. She drowns in the tub. It is never determined if her death is accidental or intentional.

Already off balance from losing his job, Ethan takes Zoe's death hard. He believes he should have done more to help her and wonders if she was the one intended for him. Then, Ethan learns from the detective who investigated Zoe's death that her father, Don Aldridge, is alive but in jail in Florida. Ethan decides to visit Zoe's father.

It is while Ethan is in Florida that his and Jessica's paths cross. Ethan learns from Don that Zoe had a half-sister. Don asks Ethan to look for Jessica and tell him if she is okay. Because the FBI is monitoring all of Don's communication, the agents looking for Jessica arrest Ethan because they believe he can lead them to Jessica. He is later released when the agents get the information they wanted from another source but the experience initiates a desire in Ethan to protect Jessica. He goes so far as to offer to hire a private detective to help Don locate her. Don turns down the offer because he gets a postcard from Tucson, which he believes is from Jessica.

Despite the trials in their lives Ethan and Jessica use their experiences to make themselves better people. Ethan decides to become a schoolteacher instead of accepting a lucrative job offer where he would be using computer coding to make money off tragedy. Zoe gets a job with Defense of America flying a drone to patrol the Mexican border. She keeps in mind the two girls who were killed during the missile strike that she initiated and performs her job with sympathy.



Prologue and Part 1: Chapter 1

Summary

In the Prologue, Colonel Voigt watches behind Sergeant Jessica Aldridge in a military trailer in Nebraska as she centers a heat sensitive camera on the five men in the Somalian desert. Voigt gets the go ahead and tells Jessica to arm the missile, and then to fire. Jessica hesitates, sensing the men are waiting for someone. After half an hour the SUVs arrive. Voigt believes one of them carries Jabir al-Yarisi, a person of interest in a bombing of a British embassy and also in recruiting rebels.

Although they are supposed to wait for positive identification, Voigt and Jessica are given the go ahead to launch the missile. Jessica waits again and sees two women get out of one of the vehicles. They are again given the order from Langley to fire the missile. Jessica looks at Voigt who tells her to fire. Jessica imagines all of the people managing to get to safety in the twenty seconds they have once the missile launches. In real life, the men and vehicles are engulfed and the sensor of the drone blinded. Jessica will never know exactly what happened.

A letter written by Jessica's father makes up the remainder of the Prologue. He tells her that even though she believes she had taken two innocent lives, she needs to think of all the people who might have died at the hands of the terrorists if they were allowed to live. He tells her not to take all of the guilt on herself. Her father, who is in jail for murder, tells Jessica not to worry about him. He is glad that she has come back into his life.

In Chapter 1, Ethan Winters asks his girlfriend, Zoe, to move in with him in his twelfth-floor, glass-walled apartment in New York City. He considers their relationship somewhat like he analyzes statistical material at his work at the United Imperial Bank. Ethan believes he is unattractive and socially inept, a big difference between pretty, outgoing Zoe. He wonders if she likes him only because of the things he owns and the amount of money he makes. Ethan's friend Alex had introduced Ethan to Zoe. Ethan had immediately felt the need to protect Zoe. At the time, Alex was dating Zoe. Believing Zoe was more Ethan's type, Alex fixed the two up.

Zoe and Ethan had lived together for several months when Alex mentions to Ethan that they should invest in a loft apartment together. When Ethan indicates he would be worried about Zoe if they moved to that rough neighborhood, he notices that Zoe and Alex exchange looks. Ethan presses them and Zoe reminds Ethan that she is looking for a job in Washington. Ethan does not remember. He feels humiliated.

At work, Ethan is working overtime on a currency-trading algorithm based on anti-terrorist activity. He is home very little and suspects Zoe is doing more than just looking for a job in Washington. Even though he goes through her purse when he has a chance, he finds little incriminating evidence. He wonders if the stimulants he is taking to keep



him alert and working are interfering with causing him to have an overactive imagination.

Ethan is trying to work out a bug in his code when Zoe tells him that she has found a job. His mind repeats with the idea that he is losing Zoe forever, but he lies and tells her that he is okay with her new job. Although Ethan does not think there is a point to it, Zoe asks Ethan to attend a dinner party at her parents' home. She tells him that her parents want to meet him.

Analysis

The Prologue and first chapter of this novel introduce the reader to both of the main story lines in *And West is West*. The novel will deal with the fallout from Jessica's missile launch and her letter to her father. It will also deal with the relationship, or lack of relationship, between Ethan and Zoe.

All of the main characters are introduced in this section. Jessica is a sergeant in the Air Force who is "the first enlisted airman to pilot a drone strike" (2). She is also sensitive, a child who growing up did not even want to see insects killed. Even though she pushes the button to fire the missile, Jessica hopes the men have time to get out of the way of blast. Ethan, a socially inept computer coder who works at a bank, is the second main character. He is dedicated to his work to a fault. He works even as his live in girlfriend tells him that she will be moving to Washington where she has gotten a job.

A major theme is introduced in Don's letter to Jessica when he advises her not to feel personally responsible for the deaths of the women in the drone strike. "Above all you must remember it is not you alone who fires those angels. It is all of us. This whole country. But we are hiding behind you. You take the heat and we do not get burned. There is plenty of guilt to go around so dont take it all on yourself." (4). Even though her father makes a valid point on behalf of the military, they are the ones who do the dirty work to take care of America and ensure the freedom of its citizens, Jessica still must feel singularly responsible because she was the one who did push the button to release the missile.

Secrecy is another theme introduced in this section through the mention that Jessica will never know what came of the drone strike. She will never know specifically how many were killed or who they were. She will basically know what information the military chooses to give the public media. Perhaps, this is an attempt by the military to keep their soldiers from getting too involved in any one strike, but is also does not allow for closure. Jessica will go through her life wondering how many died at her hands.

In this age, technology allows us to be physically separated from the world around us. For instance, it is from a military trailer in Nevada that Jessica shoots a military drone at a target in the desert in Somalia. The drone allows Jessica to feel like "she might reach down and pick them up like dolls" (1) even though she is eight thousand miles away. After the missile is launched, there is no explosion as there might be if Jessica was



close to her target. Instead there is silence that is described as being “anticlimactic” (3) after Voigt completes his count down from eight. The author uses a simile to jab at the nature of the distance of the attack. Voigt counts down from eight “as if the three of them in the trailer are all supposed to shout ‘Surprise!’ at zero” (3). The comparison of the military attack to a surprise party stresses how safe and disconnected Jessica and her team are in Nevada as they target the enemy in another land.

The false belief that wealth will make one happy is another theme introduced in this section. For instance, Ethan worries that Zoe is dating him only because he makes a lot of money with the bank. Even though he is wealthy, he cannot buy security in his relationship.

A few things to note in this section include that Jessica and Voigt never get a positive identification that al-Yarisi is among the men in the SUVs. They do know there are at least two women at the location. Because of this, Jessica hesitates when it comes to firing the missile. Note also that when Ethan is trying to trouble shoot the code he is writing for the bank, he is upset by the conversation that he is having with Zoe. She is leaving him to go and work in Washington. A final bit of information to be gleaned from this section of the novel is that Jessica has told her father, a prisoner found guilty of murder, about the missile strike in which the two women were killed.

Significant also is that the novel is told in the present tense, even though the timeline jumps into the past from the Prologue to Chapter 1. The Prologue is set in July, 2012, while the first chapter of the novel is set in the time frame between September, 2011, and August ,2012. The novel is told from the point of view of a third person narrator.

Discussion Question 1

Do you think Jessica was right in hesitating before firing the missile? Do you see any problems with the strike?

Discussion Question 2

Do you see any problems for Jessica because she wrote to her father about the strike? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Why do you think Zoe’s parents want to meet Ethan even though Zoe will be leaving Ethan to go to Washington? Do you think that Zoe really cared for Ethan or did she just love him for the things he had? Use information from the book to support your answer.



Vocabulary

euphemism, privy, resonant, anticlimactic, impenetrable, diverge, behemoth, parsing, charismatic, predilection, myopic, petulantly, cadence, conspiratorially, volatility, curvilinear, penultimate, fixates



Part 1: Chapters 2 – 5

Summary

In Chapter 2, Zoe's father, Dr. Leston, overwhelms Ethan with his presence and his money. He accuses Ethan of being one of the people who helped to wreck the economy because he works for a bank. Ethan likes to think his job actually helped to ensure some liquidity during that time but does not mention this to Dr. Leston. Ethan senses Dr. Leston does not like him so he tells the man that Zoe is leaving him to work in Washington, knowledge that he believes will please the man. He asks since Dr. Leston knows his relationship with Zoe is ending, why Dr. Leston is so determined to belittle him. Dr. Leston laughs and tells Ethan it is because he knows that Ethan has been sleeping with Zoe.

Their conversation is interrupted when Elizabeth Leston enters the room. Ethan notices the diamond necklace she wears and estimates that it is worth \$15,000. All in all, he guesses Dr. Leston's net worth is about \$3 million. Ethan notices something wrong when Elizabeth calls her daughter by the wrong name. Dr. Leston apologizes to his daughter, telling her that her mother is not any better, but that she puts on a good front. Zoe had told Ethan that her parents had just returned from a cruise that was supposed to be therapeutic for her mother, whom she said was recovering from a stroke. Ethan believes the woman has dementia.

The narrator moves to describe the Monte Carlo Simulation, a mathematical model that Ethan created for the UIB to use to make money from fluctuation in currency rates as the results of things like natural disasters and mergers. He has recently been working on making money from the acts of terrorism. His program has given the bank such profitable results that his director of liquidity, Dwayne Hoke, sat in Ethan's office with him after the news broke that Jabir al-Yarisi had been killed, to watch Ethan work the market. Ethan has recently realized there is also money to be made off acts of anti-terrorism, like the drone strike. Although Ethan can use his model to determine what will happen after military drone strikes, he cannot come to any conclusions about his relationship with Zoe using the model.

Just after they left her parents' house, Zoe asks Ethan to pull over so that she could think. She tells Ethan that she believes her mother thinks that she is someone else. Ethan suggests perhaps Zoe looks like a Suzie that her mother once knew. Without thinking, Ethan suggests there was another daughter that her parents had never told her about. She asks to be taken back to her parents' house. Sitting in the car outside, Ethan notices that while Zoe's father talks to her, he has his back to her as he washes dishes at the sink.

In Chapter 3, a goodbye letter is written to Ethan from Zoe. She decided it would be better to write a letter instead of saying their goodbyes in person during lunch as they had originally planned. In the letter, Zoe apologizes for torturing Ethan by letting her



father torture Ethan because they had slept together. She adds that night her father had told her she had an older sister, Suzie, who was killed in a car crash when Zoe was an infant. She thanks him for being kind to her mother and father, but asks him not to try to contact her.

In Chapter 4, Jessica buys a pack of cigarettes at a bar. She has been watching an airman sitting at a video slot machine staring at it with glassy eyes even though he has had nothing to drink. She believes he suffers from staring at the drone monitors too long. Bob, with whom Jessica is playing pool, accuses her of killing herself with cigarettes. She tells him that he is doing the same by overeating.

Jessica had only recently been made a drone pilot and promoted to sergeant. Voigt believed women would be better at monitoring the drones than men would because they were more patient. He thought they would not go crazy from the lack of active involvement in the fight like men tended to do.

Lieutenant Dunbar, another drone operator, enters the bar and ribs Jessica by calling her “killer” (28). Because rumor has gotten out about Jessica’s successful drone hit, she is now Dunbar’s competition. Even though Dunbar is a jerk, Jessica is sexually attracted to him. She decides to leave the bar but stops by the airman, who has stopped feeding nickels into the machine and has let his cigarette burn his finger. When she speaks to him, he begins playing again but she knows he is not looking at the machine but playing by feel because she is holding her hand in front of his eyes. She suggests they go back to base but is interrupted by Dunbar. Jessica tells him there is no problem because she does not want to get the airman in trouble.

Jessica understands the man is suffering from screen fatigue as well as the stress caused from lack of danger even when a person is in an opportunity to take lives. A week later, he is kicked out of the drone program. Jessica blows off steam by writing to her father, a man whom she believes is safe because he is 2,000 miles away and is in prison.

Chapter 5 is a letter from Don to Jessica. Her father compares his promotion to the jail library from the laundry department to Jessica’s earning of her wings. He tells her that she should not feel bad about the airman getting demoted, as there was little she could have done besides what she had done. He suggests that she show herself some of the forgiveness that she shows others.

Analysis

Personal responsibility continues to develop as a theme as both Jessica and Ethan worry that they are not doing their best to protect public interests through their jobs. Jessica’s concerns center on the deaths of the innocent women when she piloted her first drone strike. She also feels responsible when she sees an airman suffering from stress and screen fatigue but is able to do little to help save his job. She knows the stress is partially caused by the Air Force having too few drone pilots and airmen in the



program to man all the hours needed to be worked. Ethan, on the other hand, wonders if he is doing right by helping his bank make money by taking advantage of wars. Because Ethan gets such a huge payout when his mathematical model is successful for the bank, he is somewhat able to more easily overlook what he is doing. Besides, his boss “has assured him that what they do is useful and good: it is helping a currency establish its true value” (23).

Meanwhile, although she has not yet found a niche for herself like Jessica and Ethan have, Zoe hopes to be able to change the world in the course of her career. In her letter to Ethan she writes: “This could be naive but I still dream the world might be a better place if I help” (25). This indicates Zoe’s desire to make the world a better place, and her belief that it is individuals who are responsible for improving the world.

The hurtful nature of secrets is a theme that is introduced in this section of chapters. It is because of Ethan’s suggestion to Zoe that she had a sister that Zoe learns that she did indeed have a sister whom her parents never told her about. Zoe is hurt by how little information her father is willing to give her about her sister.

As Jessica becomes more familiar with the drone program she learns about its benefits as well as its drawbacks. First, it is expensive: “no one gets hurt but the taxpayers at twelve million a pop” (27). The program is also short-staffed with not enough drone operators to allow sufficient rest. It is for this reason the airman at the bar suffers with screen fatigue and perhaps why he is kicked out of the program. Although it seems it would be a benefit that the men and women who man the drones are not in danger of being killed, the narrator indicates this lack of physical danger “never feels quite right” (30). After the adrenaline rush of watching a target on screen and the striking that target, there is no physical way in which a person can burn off that adrenaline.

Because of their stress level, many of the drone operators turn either to smoking or to eating to appease themselves. Jessica smokes, a habit she knows is bad for her, while her partner, Bob, eats. She believes “Bob’s gut hangs over his belt and is holding up his promotion” (28). Even though there is no longer a physical weight requirement for pilots to fit into and fly airplanes, they are still required to remain fit, just like pilots who got exercise with their jobs instead of sitting in a chair all day.

Significant in this section of the novel is Jessica’s belief that she is safe because she has her jail inmate father to whom she can write and blow off steam. She knows that if she were to talk to anyone on base about her concerns with the program she would be set up for a psychological evaluation and perhaps be booted from the program. By writing the letters, she believes that she can share her stress with someone in a way that will never become public knowledge.

In his writing, Childress uses several literary techniques to make the story lively and easily understood by the reader. For instance, the voice of the woman who runs the bar near Jessica’s military base is described in this way: “Her voice is an infrequent rasp and her skin a roadmap folded too many times” (29). This metaphor helps the reader to understand exactly the toll that years of smoking has taken on the owner of the bar. Also



notice the alliteration in the sentence “Pancho’s serves Pabst, peanuts, pretzels — apparently whatever starts with a p” (29). Personification is also used frequently in the course of the novel. Consider for instance this sentence about Dunbar: “He had logged two hundred hours in his father’s Piper before enlisting to be a jet pilot and astigmatism shot him down” (28). Not only does Childress use personification to describe Dunbar’s astigmatism, an eye condition, as a living being capable of shooting Dunbar down, Childress also uses the flight terminology “shot him down” to describe what happened to Dunbar because of his bad vision.

Discussion Question 1

How does Dr. Leston’s demeanor change after Ethan meets Elizabeth and realizes she is suffering with dementia? How does the author indicate this change by his use of words?

Discussion Question 2

What is the tone of this novel thus far? How does the author develop this tone?

Discussion Question 3

Do you see any connections at all between Jessica’s story and Ethan’s?

Vocabulary

excised, regressed, sluices, scrimshaw, pretense, exploit, volatility, gyrate, touting, madrassa, arbitrage, covert, fraternization, atonement

Part 2: Chapters 6 – 9

Summary

In Chapter 6, even though Ethan has asked him not to do so, Alex has set him up with the music composer Yahvi. Ethan still keeps up with the number of days that has passed since Zoe last slept in his bed. Ethan and Yahvi do date. It is after she spends the night with him three times in a row that he decides to call in late for work. Before he is able to get back into bed with Yahvi, his phone rings. A male voice he faintly recognizes asks if he is speaking to Ethan Winter.

Ethan meets Dr. Leston at a chain café near his apartment. Dr. Leston seems thinner and unwell. He tells Ethan he needs to talk about Zoe. As Ethan orders coffee he notices that Dr. Leston takes several pills. He tells Ethan that Elizabeth's condition has gotten worse and that she is too much for him to handle since he is suffering with pancreatic cancer. He tells Ethan that once he is dead, he will need Ethan to do a favor for him that involves Zoe. Dr. Leston hands Ethan a manila envelope and tells him that the material in that envelope will help Zoe to understand her real background. Dr. Leston wants Ethan to look after Zoe after she reads the information in the envelope.

Alex sees the manila envelope the next time he visits Ethan. Ethan tells him it is from Zoe's father and contains some sort of family secrets. Alex asks when Ethan is going to show it to Zoe, Ethan tells him the information in the folder is not his problem.

That night with Yahvi, Ethan apologizes when he thinks of the drone strike on the Afghanistan border where some members of Yahvi's family live. The bank had gained an advantage because of Ethan's program and Hoke had showed Ethan an image of a burned truck and what appeared to be a burned corpse. Hoke congratulated Ethan for having "cashed in some more evildoers" (46).

In Chapter 7, Jessica is dismissed from the Air Force for writing to her father about the al-Yarisi drone strike. She is accused of breaching security. After she is driven outside the base and dropped, Jessica thinks to herself that she does not blame her father for what has happened to her. She feels stupid for thinking that their correspondence was in any way secret.

Two airmen offer her a ride to Pancho's and she accepts. She drinks and smokes making a pleasant bubble for herself. The feeling passes when she hears Dunbar's voice calling to her. Even though she wants to take up for the airman that he got booted from the program, Dunbar tells her to hush and walks her outside. He drives her to her new apartment in Amargosa. When he asks, she indicates that she chose Amargosa because the hiking opportunities were better. Before he leaves, Dunbar asks Jessica if she is properly prepared for hiking. She knows he refers not only to physical but psychological preparation.



The next morning she wakes and buys a bottle of water before heading toward the distant mountains. It is hot and dry. She knows she does not have enough water for even a hike of only an hour in length yet she keeps walking. At night she sets up camp. She wishes her brain would short circuit from dehydration so she would stop thinking about the girls whom she had killed.

In the morning, Jessica heads back to the apartment building. She knows she is not suicidal, but wonders what it is she feels she needs to achieve by walking into the desert. She finally realizes that her hike has been a need to bury her old self. She does this symbolically by digging a hole and putting into it her cap, military ID and shirt.

Chapter 8 is a letter to Jessica from Don explaining how guards searched his cell and confiscated all of the letters that she had sent him. A guard had later told Don the letters were taken because they contained secret military information. He wonders if he will ever hear from Jessica again and thanks her for the letters that she did send.

In Chapter 9, Voigt has received a copy of Don's last letter to Jessica. He has been enlisted by Janet Sloan from the Department of Homeland Security to let her know if there are any more breaches in security on Jessica's part. It was the warden of the jail where Don was being held who had alerted homeland security after Don's letters from Jessica were taken. Voigt realizes Jessica was not planning on her letters to Don going public and that Don was unlikely to tell anyone about what she had written to him. Voigt knows it is only because of interference by a busybody that he has even been contacted by Homeland Security.

Voigt is learning a good deal more about Jessica that he had even as closely as he worked with her. He also believes her father is not all bad. He wonders how she is dealing with her dismissal and is pleased that he has been given an opportunity to keep tabs on her.

Analysis

More secrets seem to be in the Leston family as Dr. Leston gives Ethan a manila folder of information to share with Zoe. Dr. Leston tells Ethan that there is more that Zoe does not know about her life and that he wants Ethan to share the information in the file with her when he is gone. Ethan does not immediately open the file so neither he nor the reader knows what it is that Dr. Leston has given him.

Notice how Childress gives the reader an entirely different view of Dr. Leston that what is given when Ethan meets the man for the first time. While Dr. Leston was a figure of authority and power when Ethan first met him, during their second meeting, Dr. Leston has egg on his face, literally. Ethan also notices that Dr. Leston seems smaller because he is hunched over and has lost a good deal of weight. Instead of being impeccably groomed, Dr. Leston's face is not shaved cleanly. In addition to the downgrades in Dr. Leston's physical appearance, his material possessions do not seem to be as valuable as Ethan once thought. For instance, the Mercedes the doctor drives gives off a



screaming noise when the doctor races the engine, a sign the car might not be in as good shape as Ethan once thought.

Even though at this point Ethan has not yet accepted any personal responsibility for Zoe, he does see the way in which the terrorist activities from which he makes his money have a negative effect on those around him. He is dating an Indian girl who has relatives living near the location of a recent terrorist attack. It is the first time he has had a face to associate with the terrorist attack off which he is making money. Additionally, Hoke shows Ethan a picture of the aftermath of the attack. This image is a significant object in the novel because it symbolizes the point at which the actions off which Ethan was helping the bank make money became real to him.

While it is well known that nothing sent electronically has any guarantee of being kept secret, Jessica had wrongly assumed that her letters to her father would be kept secret. “She had believed that letters sealed in envelopes were the final way one could keep a distant conversation private” (48). Not only did Jessica not take into consideration that letters to inmates are read before they are given to that inmate, but she also did not foresee someone who was former military and was looking to cause trouble would be the one to read one of her father’s letters. That man notified the Department of Homeland Security about Jessica’s breach of security. As a result, Jessica was dismissed from her promising position in the military.

Other significant symbols in this section are the military items that Jessica buries in the desert. It appears that Jessica is symbolically burying her military career, her way of putting to rest what might have been. She also may be hoping to put aside her feelings of guilt about the two girls who were killed in the drone strike. Despite her mission into the desert finally developing a purpose, it appears at first that Jessica walks into the desert with the intent to die. She takes no supplies and very little water. Even when she realizes how foolhardy her actions are, she does not try to turn back until the following morning.

Discussion Question 1

Why do you think that Jessica buries her military ID and other items in the desert? From what is she trying to separate herself?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Dr. Leston put make it Ethan’s responsibility to tell Zoe about her family and its secrets? Why does he not tell his daughter himself?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss Ethan’s realization that the terrorist strikes off which his bank makes money cause harm, death and grief in the real world. Why is this realization significant?



Vocabulary

exuberant, metaphorically, voracious, admonishment, cacophony, implodes, aural, monolith, gerund, dervish, petulant, gratification, contemptuous, deduces, capitulation, bequeathed, symbiotic, nostalgia, commiseration, disperse, emulate, contrails, insignia, insubordination, laconic, wizened, avenge, debacle, impostor, sundries, reconnoitering, lethargic, pacifist



Part 2: Chapters 10 – 12

Summary

In Chapter 10, Zoe calls Ethan telling him that her father had told her she should call him. When Ethan begins to ask if Dr. Leston is dead, Zoe assumes Ethan knew what was about to happen and accuses him of being heartless. She believes she might have been able to stop what her father had in mind if Ethan had told her. Realizing the doctor has killed himself, Ethan tells Zoe that he only knew that her father was sick. Zoe's further comments reveal to Ethan that Dr. Leston not only killed himself but gave his wife a lethal dose of medication as well.

Four days later, on the way to the funeral service for Zoe's parents, Alex tells Ethan that he cannot give Zoe the manila envelope without at least reading what was inside it. Alex looks at the material while Ethan drives. Two of the newspaper articles are about Susan, Zoe's older sister. They describe how she ran away from home as a teen and was located in Florida two months later. Another article details the wreck that killed Susan just more than a year after she was located in Florida. The article indicates that Susan was survived by her parents and an infant daughter. Also included in the envelope are court papers showing that Susan's parents legally adopted Zoe after Susan's death. Alex wonders why Zoe's grandparents kept her history from her to start with. Ethan is angry because Dr. Leston has put the responsibility on Ethan to tell Zoe about her real past.

Meanwhile, Ethan is distracted by text messages being sent to him by workers at the bank about a terrorist attack and his new subprogram. It has gone live only this week. He worries there may be fixes to be made to the program that he will not be around to take care of because he is away from work for the funeral.

At the funeral home, the lids of both caskets are open. Ethan and Alex are surprised and wonder if the public viewing is really necessary. Even though Ethan thinks that Dr. Leston did the right thing by ending his wife's life when he ended his own, Ethan thinks it is unusual that they would be laid out in the same room together. Zoe apologizes to Ethan because his father got him involved in the family's business. She is almost angry when he tries to take some of the blame on himself.

One of the couples with whom Ethan speaks to at the reception after the funeral tells Ethan that Zoe had been a delicate child. They explain she had been on medication, but had gotten straightened out. Later, Zoe asks Ethan if he brought the papers with him that her father had given Ethan. He lies and says he forgot them. To keep her from thinking he is making excuses to see her again, he tells her that he will mail them to her.

Chapter 11 is a newspaper article describing how Jessica was found dehydrated and disoriented by a trucker. She was taken to a VA hospital for treatment.



In Chapter 12, Jessica visits a tattoo parlor to get her air force tattoo covered. She had left the hospital before being discharged and is still wearing her hospital bracelet. The man in the front of the shop suggests that Shelly, who is working on a tattoo in the back, should be able to help her. They choose a sphinx to cover the eagle. As Shelly works, Jessica begins to smell a familiar odor. Shelly explains it is marijuana for Newt's back. Meanwhile, Jessica learns that Shelly is on dialysis. Shelly discretely offers Jessica some of the marijuana that Newt is vaping.

When Jessica wakes she imagines she is still in the desert. Then she notices warm breath on her neck and a dog licking her face. She has spent the night at Newt and Shelly's house. Shelly shows Jessica the newspaper article about her being located after having wandered in the desert. After she learns that Jessica has no family in the area, Shelly suggests that Jessica stay with them for a week or two. Jessica mails a copy of the newspaper clipping about her stay in the hospital to her father. She does not include a return address or a letter because she does not want to cause trouble for her father or herself.

Analysis

Suicide is a topic briefly touched on when Jessica wanders into the desert with no supplies. It is addressed again when Dr. Leston kills himself and his wife. Dr. Leston is suffering pancreatic cancer and has little time left to live. Because of his condition, he is unable to care for his wife any longer, especially since her Alzheimer's had gotten more severe. Ethan almost believes that the suicide and mercy killing is for the best because Zoe will not have to watch her parents deteriorate any further. He also knows that Dr. Leston did not want a future for his wife where she would "sit around in diapers with no memories and stare at wallpaper" (42). Even though Ethan thinks Dr. Leston did the right thing, he still finds it uncomfortable that Elizabeth is laid out in the same room with the man who was basically her murderer.

Consider what Ethan says to Alex when Alex asks his opinion about suicide. "At our age dying is still a game. You can choose to or not. When you're old your choice is basically to die slow or to die fast" (61). Even though Dr. Leston and his wife appeared to have all of the money they would need to make their lives comfortable in their last years even though they were sick, Dr. Leston made the choice for both of them that they wanted to die fast. Compare their situation with that of Newt and Shelly. Even though they both suffer with health issues they are still living and working. Shelly is even taking classes to ensure she will be able to work after they are no longer able to operate their tattoo parlor. While it might be easier for them to give up on life, they continue to want to live.

The themes of secrets and personal responsibility collide when Ethan realizes that he has information that Zoe is not the child of the Lestons but instead their grandchild. Suzie was Zoe's mother, not her sister. Ethan considers how Zoe's life might be affected if he tells her this new information about her identity, information that will change how Zoe sees herself and her family. He also considers that Zoe might be better off if she



were to never learn the truth. He is angry because Dr. Leston has left the responsibility of telling Zoe about her parentage to Ethan, an ex-boyfriend.

Meanwhile, Jessica has decided to live by a new life motto. She had imagined what her life would look like and how it would progress. Now that a situation that she did not expect has derailed her expectations for her life, she decides just to wander. She wants there to be no rationale for what she is doing and why. In a way her new tattoo symbolizes this desire for a life of happenstance since the hieroglyphs that Shelly uses to cover the letters USAF really have no meaning to them.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the way that the narrator describes Dr. Leston and Elizabeth as they are displayed in their coffins. How does the description make you feel about each of these characters? How does it make you feel about Ethan?

Discussion Question 2

In what way is the pattern that Jessica chooses for the tattoo to cover her USAF tattoo representative of her new outlook on life?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Jessica not send her return address to her father? If she is afraid to let him know where she is or write a personal letter, why does she send the clipping at all?

Vocabulary

remiss, demeanor, prognosis, overtly, abutment, spate, biers, florid, perverse, secular, ingeniously, fixates, solicitous, perusing, palimpsest, culminate, toking, vise, crepuscular, unabashedly, coheres, anarchists, transistors

Part 2: Chapters 13 – 17

Summary

Chapter 13 is a letter from Don in which he tells Jessica he has received the newspaper clipping from her but doubts it was the only thing in the envelope. He hopes Jessica's life is improving like his is. He has a new cellmate named Hector Ramirez who does not have hygiene problems. In his conclusion Don tells Jessica that although he knows she has lost a good deal, he does not want her to become broken by her misfortune like his misfortune caused him to become broken.

In Chapter 14, although Ethan generally likes his co-worker John Guan, he tells him to get lost after Guan hacks into his Blackberry and asks questions about the pictures of Zoe he finds there. He is picking Guan's brain about variables and odds to add to his drone strike algorithm.

Later, during his walk, Ethan calls Zoe and gets her voicemail. He tells her that he has just mailed the information her father left and apologizes for taking so long. Believing that he has cleared himself of any guilt, Ethan continues his walk. He deletes pictures of Zoe from his phone as he walks. Unfortunately, Zoe returns Ethan's call. She is angry with Ethan for sending her the papers through the mail and not telling her himself that she was not who she thought she was. Zoe hangs up when Ethan switches off her line to tell Yahvi he has to deal with a call from work. Ethan calls Alex but his new girlfriend, Juliette answers. She will not let Ethan talk to Alex. Ethan turns back to his office. He believes that if he works hard for three hours he can get to the point at which he needs to be. He reasons he can drive to Zoe's house after work.

In the next scene, Ethan talks to Zoe in the hospital. He had gone to her house and seen her on the couch. Even though he had knocked, she had not gotten up. He broke in, and then called an ambulance. Back at her grandparents' house Zoe tells Ethan she would have been fine. She offers to fix him some food and then insists that he stay at the house overnight because he did not sleep much the night before. In almost a dreamlike state, Ethan senses Zoe in the room with him that night.

Chapter 15 is a letter from a psychologist at the VA hospital where Jessica was taken after her hiking misadventure to Jessica's father. The doctor is concerned both because Jessica seemed uninterested in therapy to help her readjust to life as a civilian and because Jessica ran away from the hospital. She asks Don to urge Jessica to seek out some support if she does happen to come to him for help or advice.

In Chapter 16, Voigt speaks to Dr. Levy, the psychiatrist who saw Jessica at the VA hospital. Levy tells Voigt that Jessica is not suicidal, but that she seems confused and fearful. Levy goes so far as to tell Voigt that she believes Jessica is paranoid and that she believes someone is targeting her. She does acknowledge, however, that Jessica's paranoia might be justifiable based on the situation and not a symptom of a mental



illness. Levy explains to Voigt that a woman named Janet Sloan from the DHS had visited Jessica in the hospital and appeared to be trying to manipulate Jessica's situation. Although Levy thinks Jessica is not psychotic, Sloan had believed that Jessica needed to be institutionalized. Levy also mentions to Voigt that Jessica mentioned that she trusted him.

In Chapter 17, Ethan wakes up alone. He is sore and has a bleeding scratch on his shoulder. He remembers that he and Zoe had made violent love, as if Zoe needed to erase herself. He calls out to her but she does not answer. His BlackBerry is dead so he has received no calls or texts since the night before. He uses the landline phone in Zoe's room to call the bank. Guan tells him the bank is in trouble and they have shut down the currency mainframe. The rumor is that one of Ethan's algorithms went bad and was buying rupees at ten times their worth. Ethan hangs up and calls out again for Zoe after he dresses. She does not reply but Ethan hears the screen door bang.

On the way back to work, Ethan goes over his last minute changes he made to a formula for trading rupees against renminbi against the American dollar. The formula would have been used in the case of a Pakistani terrorist attack like the one that Guan described. Even though he had worked long hours that day Ethan doubted he had made a mistake. If he had made a mistake, Ethan knows the bank could have lost millions before the program was shut down.

Inside the bank, Hoke rushes out to Ethan and shoves him against a wall. Hoke first asks where he was the day before and then tells him to be in the conference room in five minutes. In his office, Ethan sees that everything has been searched. His computers are gone and the drawers of the desk dumped out on the floor. Ethan spots a penknife he got during a recruiting session for UIB. He is in the process of cutting his favorite painting by Alex out of its frame, he intends to keep that painting, when security men twist his arm and put him on the floor.

The security men escort him to the conference room where Hoke and a man from the legal department are waiting for Ethan to sign his departure papers. Hoke tells Ethan he is fired and that he is lucky that his case is not being taken to the Feds even though there is talk of Ethan conspiring with other banks to manipulate the exchange rates. They tell Ethan that in order to reimburse the bank for the money lost, he will have to pay back his bonuses for the last several years. Ethan quickly figures that he will be losing everything. He leaves the office without signing anything.

Analysis

Because he wrote the currency-trading program, Ethan is believed by his boss to be personally responsible for the losses the bank suffered when there was a problem with the program. Despite the fact he was distracted by Zoe's emotional phone call and hurrying so that he could check on her, Ethan doubts that he made an error. He even considers the fact he had been working a 15-hour day and that he was using energy drinks to stay awake, and still believed he was not capable of having made a decimal



point error like John told him that he had. Significant to remember in this section is that Hoke accuses Ethan of working with other banks to manipulate the currency rates so he could personally profit. Also, it seems unfair that while the bank's higher up officials could gamble the bank's funds and not be held accountable for losses, the low men on the totem pole, like Ethan, were held accountable. Even though his program had earned thousands of dollars for the bank in the past, those gains are not taken into consideration when Ethan's program causes the bank to lose money for the first time. Ethan is fired and his bonuses, based on the amount of money he earned for the bank, are called back.

Meanwhile, Ethan tries to save Zoe from herself. Although she believes she would have been okay, both Ethan and the doctor believe that she tried to commit suicide. Ethan feels responsible because he was the one that her father left with the papers about the family. Dr. Leston had intended for Ethan to tell Zoe the news in person and then take care of her afterward instead of mailing her the papers. When Zoe calls Ethan, she accuses him of being unwilling to take on "even the smallest responsibility" (87). When Ethan talks to Juliette on the phone as he tries to get through to Alex, Juliette tells Ethan that Zoe is his responsibility.

It appears that Jessica had a better reason than just wanting her life to be random to leave the VA hospital without medical consent. The reader learns from phone call between Voigt and Shoshana Levy, the psychiatrist assigned to Jessica while she was in the hospital, that Janet Sloan from the DHS had wanted to have Jessica committed to a psychiatric hospital. Levy tells Voigt that she did not believe Jessica was psychotic or even suicidal but believed that she thought the DHS has identified her as some sort of target. Levy believes Jessica's paranoia is justifiable.

Discussion Question 1

Do the circumstances under which Ethan is fired seem fair to you? Is it right that his company should bankrupt him in addition to firing him?

Discussion Question 2

Do you believe Zoe's suicide attempt was intentional? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Why would the DHS see Jessica as a target? Why would they want her to be hospitalized?

Vocabulary

redacted, kleptomaniac, inept, altruism, euthanasia, liable, perusal, ambiance, bequeathed, paranoia, delusional, traverses, obliterate, fugitive, incommunicado, eviscerated, solvent, rogue, traverse, indemnify, lenient



Part 3: Chapters 18 – 21

Summary

In Chapter 18, just a few months into her job, Zoe is already feeling overwhelmed. Her friend, Mariatu tells her to enjoy the beautiful day and Zoe feels ashamed because Mariatu has had such a difficult life but is still able to enjoy it. During the war in Sierra Leone, Mariatu was attacked by soldiers, leaving a scar on one cheek, while teaching her students. Her students were taken away and trained to use assault rifles.

Zoe is trying to mediate between a group of women farmers with whom the company for which she works agreed to a contract for a loan, and the men of that same village. The village is to be the site of a visit by one of her company's biggest donors. Her contact in Bujumbura tells Zoe that in order for the men to let their wives out the huts where they are imprisoned, the men must be given money as well. Although it goes against company policy to pay a bribe, Zoe tells her boss she will arrange the bribe as if she had done so behind his back. If it is ever discovered, she will take responsibility.

When she calls Jean-Pierre, her contact, he tells her the men are asking for double the original amount. Since Zoe knows there is no way Jean-Pierre could have talked to the men of the village so quickly, she wonders if whole story is a lie. He does agree, however, to take the \$500 she offers the men.

At dinner, one of Zoe's dinner companions tells her that she made the right choice about the Jean-Pierre situation. He tells a story of a professor who was failing a student whose father worked for a diamond company. A bag of uncut diamonds showed up on the professor's desk one day and the professor turned the bag in to the authorities. He went ahead and failed the failing student and was arrested for having contraband material even though he had turned it in. The professor received a sentence for fifteen years in prison. He hanged himself.

Although another man says this story has nothing to do with Zoe's situation the man telling the story says that it does. He explains that because in America it is expected that people will play fair, Americans are shocked when they believe someone tricks them. He goes on to say that the rules are different in different countries. In some countries is it considered good business to ask for a bribe.

After their dinner, Mariatu talks to Zoe more about her injuries and the way she had chosen to teach even though it was a dangerous position. She explains the first time the rebels had come to her class she had scared them off because she did not appear to be frightened of them. Mariatu refers to a writer named Simone de Beauvoir who often traveled alone and accepted rides from men. One day the men from whom she accepted a ride took her to a desolate place and Simone sensed what they intended to do to her. Simone threatened to jump from their car and intimidated them so they let her go. Because she was not raped, Simone developed the strength to become the writer



she was. Had she been raped, she might have been broken so badly she would never have been able to write.

After they finish their talk, Zoe walks to the house of Porter Combs, her boss. She lets herself in before she realizes Porter's daughter is at home. Cassie does not seem surprised, she comments only that Zoe and her father must be dating. She also tells Zoe that Porter is upstairs taking a bath. He seems embarrassed that Zoe has come in with his daughter there. She does stay the night there. Before they go to sleep, Porter apologizes to Zoe for not going to her parents' funeral.

In Chapter 19, Ethan has begun working as Alex's studio assistant since he lost his job at the bank. He is surprised how popular Alex's work has become recently. With the advice of his lawyer, Ethan is in the process of suing the bank. This, along with the recent realization that it was disgusting of him to make money off military violence, has kept Ethan from looking for a new job.

Yahvi agrees to see Ethan again for the first time since they broke up. She seems disheartened when she learns that he has not even started looking for a job yet. Even though Ethan says that he is sure that someone at the bank sabotaged him and that he intends to find out who it was, Yahvi advises him to get on with his life.

Later in a conversation with Alex the reader learns that even Ethan's lawyer has suggested that he needs to accept the bank's offer as it might be their last. Because Ethan has the ammunition to fight back against the bank when so many who have lost their homes and families and been unable to fight, Ethan feels he is obligated to try to win one for them.

Chapter 20 is a letter from Don to Jessica. Even though all his letters have been returned, Don tells Jessica that he keeps trying to reach her because he wants to prove that he is not the unreliable father that he once was. He tells her that when he learned she was living with her aunt, he had considered going to get her but knew she would be better off where she was than with him. He also mentions as a warning to her that all of his letters are being read because they are turned to him with the flaps taped.

In Chapter 21, at a hospice, Shelly tells Jessica that she and Newt want to leave her their house. Newt is gone. He died of cancer. Shelly will also die soon. She has chosen to stop taking dialysis. She tells Jessica she wants her to start taking care of her personal bookkeeping. At home, Jessica adds up what is due from Newt's hospital bills and what is left to pay for hospice for Shelly. She imagines Newt is there, advising her what to do. She goes the next day and withdraws money from her bank account and purchases money orders to pay for Newt's hospital bills.

Jessica notices the glances she gets. She now sports tattoos the length of each arm. Her hair is also grown wild down to her shoulders. Regardless, Jessica does not think she deserves the looks of disdain that some women give her. At the post office, the clerk recognizes her name from letters that have been delivered to their post office



through general delivery. Although she is at first suspicious of the man, she does take the letter. When she reads it later, she is comforted by her father's words to her.

Analysis

Now that Ethan has separated from his job, he sees more and more things about it that cause him grief. Perhaps, he sees that it was so immoral to make money off terrorist attacks. He also understands how the big banks work to take homes and hope away from those who are less fortunate. Those banks make money. Ethan has begun to see himself as some sort of martyr by believing that he can make things change for these people because he does have the funds to fight against the bank. "Ethan's complaint, a lost career, he knows is minor compared to what others have lost to the banks: homes and families. But he feels a similar humiliation. It's insulting that despite the ruin they have inflicted, they still tread like giants. That Ethan is one of the few who can resist obligates him to try" (117). Although Ethan's attempt to go against the bank is commendable, he probably does not stand to win as the bank will always have more power and more money than he will.

Notice in this section the reference to Dante's *Divine Comedy*: "Mariatu has lived through a hell that makes Dante's seem naive, because Dante only punished the guilty" (103). This quote from the poem seems to reference the lives of many of the characters in the novel. Zoe never did anything wrong to deserve having the identity of her parents hidden from her. Now she has to suffer with the aftermath of a secret that her parents decided to keep from her. Ethan believes his program was sabotaged, causing him to get fired. To make matters worse, Ethan was not at the bank the day that the program malfunctioned so he does not really know what happened. He was instead sitting with Zoe as she recovered from a possible suicide attempt. Meanwhile it appears that the DHS has decided that Jessica is more of a threat to them than she really is. They are campaigning to get her put into a psychiatric hospital so if she says anything bad about the Air Force, it can be discredited as the ramblings of a crazy person.

The story of Simone is inserted to help the reader understand how one single event can change the outcome of a person's life. In Simone's case, Simone's ability to intimidate her attackers gave her the strength she needed to become a writer. Mariatu suggests that if Simone had been attacked she possibly would have been broken to the point that she was not strong enough to write as she did. Mariatu tells Zoe she is not the person she was before she was attacked by soldiers. She has lost a good deal of her strength and self-confidence. Zoe, also has lost strength and self-confidence even though the attack made on her was not a physical attack. Zoe's sense of self is shaken and weak. She is struggling to make the best of what she has left of herself.

Jessica, meanwhile, puts herself in danger in order to help the people who have been so kind to her. When she is given the paperwork for Shelly's financial affairs, she sees that Shelly does not have enough money in her account to pay both Newt's medical bills and finance her time in the hospice. For this reason, Jessica dips into her military savings account to pay Newt's medical bills. She knows it will send up a red flag alerting



the FBI to her location, but feels it is her personal responsibility to help her friends since they have been so kind to her.

Discussion Question 1

Do you think Ethan is really fighting against the bank in an attempt to help those whom the bank had cheated out of homes and families? Or, is he on a personal vendetta? Use information from the novel to defend your answer.

Discussion Question 2

Why do you think that Jessica decides it is worthwhile to give away her location in order to withdraw from her bank account and help out Shelly? What does this say about Jessica?

Discussion Question 3

Of all the letters that Jessica has not gotten from her father, why is it significant that this particular one reaches her?

Vocabulary

impoverished, philanthropist, extortion, antagonize, brazen, insurmountable, delusional, lintels, castigating, ambiance, sabotaging, pigment, berms, precedence, dissipates, prevaricates, malign, kamikaze, metastasizing, meticulous, palpable

Part 3: Chapters 22 – 26

Summary

In Chapter 22, Zoe and Porter attend a Broadway musical together at the Kennedy Center. She is wearing her engagement ring even though she usually does not. She has not gotten up the courage to give it back to Porter yet. Although she should have told him no when he first proposed, she had been too stunned to speak and he had assumed her answer was yes. It is during the intermission that Zoe returns Porter's ring. She does not even attend the remainder of the production.

Zoe leaves Porter a goodbye note telling him that she thinks it is best if she resigns. When Mariatu asks Zoe if she will miss her work, Zoe considers that all she has been allowed to do since the bribe she paid to Jean-Pierre was discovered is to proof read reports. Because she thinks that Porter is about to tell the truth of the matter for her sake, Zoe believes it will be best and simplest if she leaves. Zoe's sadness about leaving rests on her belief that she was unable to reinvent herself as she had hoped she would.

Back in New York, Zoe has agreed to house sit for a former college roommate. They eat dinner together and Zoe tells a story about running into a boy from college that they both liked. She mentions she had seen him when her parents were in town to watch *The Phantom of the Opera*. When Zoe corrects herself and says it was her grandparents who were in town, Marla kids Zoe for not being able to get her story straight. Zoe begins to cry. Zoe does not tell Marla about her recent revelations about her parents. She believes it is too much to dump on her old friend. After Marla leaves Zoe alone in her apartment with her pet turtle, Zoe "dissolves" (131) onto the couch.

In Chapter 23, Ethan often runs his algorithm on current events trying to guess what UIB is making by using it in his absence. The latest news, that al-Yarisi, a terrorist believed to be dead has made a web video proving he is indeed still alive. Ethan figures his program might have earned the bank as much as two million dollars that day. When Ethan wonders who might have gotten the bonus that would have been due him, all he can think of was that it was Hoke who was now getting his bonuses. His anger leads him to believe perhaps it was Hoke who set him up.

In Chapter 24, Don writes a letter to Jessica. After months of waiting and having his letters returned, Don has finally gotten a package from Jessica. The package, a Roy Buchanan CD, arrived on his birthday. Don also tells Jessica in his letter that he understands her hesitation at sending him a written letter as well as a good address. He figures she is being looked for since she walked out of the VA hospital.

In Chapter 25, although Voigt has been getting an earful about the reappearance of al-Yarisi, a replay of the tapes from the trailer on that day clear him of any responsibility. He notices again how Jessica would not have pulled the trigger if he had not



commanded her to do so. He continues to believe he made the right decision when he made her a drone pilot.

Voigt suspects Jessica is in hiding and believes that she is making the right choice. In fact, the FBI agent sent to find out about the situation from Voigt does not even know the entire story about Jessica. Voigt was ordered to tell the man as little as possible. He also does not really want Jessica to be found.

Meanwhile, Voigt gets word one of the unmanned crafts has crashed in Waziristan. There was no ammunition on board but officials want it destroyed before it can be found by the locals. When they reach the crashed craft with another drone they see that a group of locals is walking up to the crash site. Because the men have guns, it is permissible to go ahead and shoot the missile to destroy the drone. At the last minute Voigt orders that the drone camera be zoomed in on the group of locals. He notices two young boys in the group and makes the call to let the locals have the crashed drone to keep from injuring the boys.

In Chapter 26, Juliette has arranged a meeting between Ethan and Sergei Sokolov. The man has hired Alex to paint a mural in his dacha in Sevastopol. Sergei has also heard of Ethan's fight with UIB. Ethan is surprised when Sergei tells him that he heard about the decimal point error that he heard that had caused Ethan to be fired. Ethan responds generically and notices there is another setting at the table at which they have been seated. A crash as John Guan bumps into a nearby table announces his arrival. He is the fourth guest for the evening. Sergei asks them to sign nondisclosure contracts indicating that his precaution is taken in case they decide not to accept his job offer.

Analysis

While things seem to be looking up for Ethan, he is apparently about to be offered a job by Sergei, Zoe has hit rock bottom. She had gone to Washington with the belief that she could make a difference. She returns to New York in defeat because it was discovered that she paid a bribe that was against her company's policy. Although she was not fired and what she had done was not made public, she was only allowed to proofread other people's reports after that point. To make matters worse, Zoe had a relationship with her boss, a much older man. She allowed the relationship to go far enough that the man believed that Zoe had accepted his proposal for marriage. Not only because of the broken engagement but also because of the bribe Zoe paid, she feels she has no choice but to quit her job.

Back in New York, as hard as Zoe tries to put what she has learned about her past in the past, she discovers that the lies that her parents allowed her to live with find their way into her present in unexpected ways. For instance, Zoe tries to tell her former roommate a story about how she had run into a boy they had both liked when she was visiting with her parents. The friend picks on Zoe when she changes her story and says it was her grandparents with whom she was visiting. The friend does not realize how badly she upsets Zoe because Zoe has not told her the truth about her parents.



Zoe has developed a pattern of abusing drugs and alcohol when she is stressed. The first episode takes place when she learns that the people whom she believed were her parents are really her grandparents. She takes enough pills and drinks enough alcohol that she has to have her stomach pumped. After Zoe leads Porter to believe she wants to marry him, she begins stealing pills and alcohol from Porter's stash. This willingness to abuse drugs and alcohol when she is stressed is a troubling means of escape to which Zoe has turned after she learned the truth about her family.

Ethan remains focused on trying to get revenge for being fired. He is so certain that his program was sabotaged that he tries to imagine how much he might be getting for a bonus based on particular world happenings. Even though he is angry when he thinks that it might be Hoke who is benefiting from his misfortune, Ethan has also had time to rethink the morality of his job. "At UIB, when he actually was profiting from military destruction and screw-ups and had felt a twinge of shame, he'd told himself that if he wasn't writing the programs someone else would" (133). Ethan had tried to rationalize what he was doing by convincing himself that he was not the only one who was willing to profit off tragedy in the world.

Although he has had to dismiss Jessica from the Air Force, Voigt still believes that he made a good choice in promoting Jessica to a pilot. Since it was discovered that al-Yarisi was not killed in the missile strike piloted by Jessica, Voigt has had the opportunity to observe Jessica's actions again when she saw the two women get out of the SUV. He knows she would not have fired had he not ordered her to do so. Voigt seems to be a decent man who is not trigger-happy. This is proven when he chooses to let the natives take the crashed drone even though he could have shot at them because the men had firearms. Voigt chooses not to fire because he sees two young boys among the adults.

Notice the continued use of literary techniques in this novel. For instance, after Zoe is left alone in Marla's apartment, she melts on the couch "like a salted slug" (131). This description indicates how diminished Zoe feels. Notice also the way that the narrator compares the higher ups at UIB to a pharaoh in a simile. In the quote: "Such a person noticing Guan would be like a pharaoh identifying one of the thousand stonecutters building his pyramid" (142). Ethan thinks of himself and the others who held similar positions as he at the bank as servants building a pyramid, representative of the fortune Ethan and his coworkers helped the bank amass.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss Zoe's belief that she failed in Washington because she did not reinvent herself as she had intended to do. Do you think her time in Washington was a failure? Why or why not?



Discussion Question 2

Discuss the way that the author uses a variety of media (letters, newspaper articles) to tell this story. How do these alternate sources of information help to tell the story? What might have been missing from the novel if these different forms of media were not incorporated?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Ethan continue to go over in his mind his keystrokes leading up to the glitch in his system? Why does he also figure what he might have been making had he still been making at the bank during terrorist attacks? Why can he not move on with his life?

Vocabulary

torpor, tepid, rescinding, permissible, alibi, incipient, retroactive, abashed, interlocutor, rhetorical, familial, rancorous, periphery, atrocity, oligarchs, askew, succor



Part 3: Chapters 27 – 32

Summary

In Chapter 27, Zoe attends Alex' showing at the Medusa because she receives a personal invitation. It is the first time she has heard from either Alex or Ethan since she had been in Washington. She is pleased when she sees Alex has finally made a name for himself in the art business but wonders why she never saw his potential. Although a movie star she recognizes approaches Zoe, she seeks out Ethan in the crowd. Ethan tells her he is glad she came and admits he is the one who included her in Alex's invitation list. Zoe notices how rough Ethan looks as she tells him that she has returned from Washington. When the crowd begins to push them too tightly, Ethan suggests they go somewhere else.

At the restaurant, Ethan complains that Juliette is trying to take over his role in Alex's life. She's arranged to get Ethan a job offer to get him out of Alex's studio but Ethan does not want to work on Long Island. Zoe does not say, but she thinks that Ethan should stop putting his energy into his lawsuit and take the job. Zoe sees the similarities between her life and Ethan's. When she tells Ethan that she has completely messed up her life he tells her that she needs a reboot. Although she has sensed some compassion in Ethan, his suggestion that she could reboot, just like a machine, chilled her.

Back at Marla's building, the Chinese grocer gives Zoe a package of overripe raspberries for Marla's turtle. Zoe fills the tenement tub in the kitchen with hot water and gets some raspberry vodka, a bottle of amaretto and Prosecco. She begins drinking as she arranges candles and incense around the tub. After she finishes, she notes it looks like an altar. In Marla's medicine cabinet she finds her friend's muscle relaxers and painkillers. She gets a towel before she returns to the kitchen. Before getting into the tub she puts several raspberries in the turtle's terrarium so he will not starve. She believes she is taking Ethan's advice and rebooting herself. She believes this will be a way to reboot, by forcing herself to hit bottom so she can push herself back to the surface. She sinks deep in the tub and turns on the hot water to a trickle.

Chapter 28 is an email message to Zoe from Ethan. He asks if they can talk when he returns from scouting his job offer in Long Island.

In Chapter 29, Sergei takes Ethan to his operations center, a communal work area where workers share even work tables. As Sergei tells Ethan that area is where he will be working, Ethan's stomach twists even though computer programming defines himself. As Sergei talks about the speed tests being completed in the new office, Ethan is impressed. Sergei tells Ethan that he was dumb for taking on UIB but that it showed his passion. In considering Ethan for the job, Sergei did some research and discovered that Hoke had set Ethan up to be fired. Ethan's cramp causes him to bend over in pain. Sergei goes on to tell Ethan that Hoke is now working for a hedge fund. Sergei believes



that Hoke sabotaged the program so he could help the hedge fund make money. It is when Sergei suggests that Ethan could get his revenge on Hoke by getting rich, that Ethan realizes that he does not want to be coding in order to get revenge. Sergei leaves Ethan, believing that Ethan intends to take the job. John Guan approaches Ethan in the workspace.

Chapter 30 is a letter from Don to Jessica. Don tells Jessica he has finally figured out why Jessica is not writing to him and why she is not getting his letters. He had determined that someone is trying to hunt Jessica down. Because he knows his letters are being read, he adds a note to the people who are looking for Jessica. He tells them that they can stop looking for Jessica because he has written down all of the information from her letters and has sent it to the Miami Herald. He asks that the people searching for Jessica leave her alone.

In Chapter 31, although Miss Shelly had wanted to celebrate her birthday outside, smoke from nearby fires forces she, Jessica and the rest of Miss Shelly's friends and family inside. Miss Shelly is ready to die. On her way home, Jessica asks Reggie, a nurse with a teardrop tattoo, to call her if anything happens to Miss Shelly during the night. Outside, Jessica and some of the others notice a black SUV and two men in dark glasses waiting down the street. One of the guests, who has active warrants against him, drives away believing the men are looking for him. Jessica asks a couple of the people to go back to Shelly's house with her. When the couple leaves, Jessica notices the black SUV again. Jessica asks them to take her truck with them with the promise she will come get it soon.

A short time later Skittles begins barking. Jessica knows that the men have already come to the house. When she steps out, the men assume she is Jessica Aldridge. Skittles is between Jessica and the men. She is growling. When the men tell her that they are from the FBI she tells them that she can get a message to Jessica. The agent who introduces himself as Daugherty tells her that Jessica's friends at the Air Force are worried about her and that she needs to come to the VA for an evaluation. He suggests it would be best for everyone involved.

Jessica is unable to sleep that night. At 4 a.m. she gets up and she and Skittles leave. They walk to the shop of the man who took Jessica's truck. She takes off immediately. She knows if the men get her to take a psych evaluation that she will fail it simply because they want her to fail it. She believes they want to shut her up in a psychiatric hospital just because she knows too much about the drone program and its faults.

Chapter 32 is a string of emails from Ethan to Zoe. He invites her to dinner and then questions why she does not RSVP or show up. Zoe finally sends Ethan a message including only an address and time. Ethan responds he will be there.



Analysis

Zoe's actions in this section are ambiguous, indicating on one hand that she may be considering suicide, and on the other hand that she may really believe her drug and alcohol binge is a way to reboot herself. She decides to try this "reboot" (146) after talking to Ethan. It is noted in Zoe's response that she "is able to quip" (148) to Ethan a question if he is considering reincarnation indicates that she is not serious about her statement about reincarnation. Still her comment about starting life over indicates that she may be thinking there is no way for her to succeed at life at this point.

This statement made by Zoe is not the only one that can be interpreted one of two ways. For instance, Zoe leaves a pile of raspberries in the turtle's terrarium. She indicates she does not want the animal to starve to death. Although this advance preparation for the turtle may indicate Zoe believes she will not be able to feed it again, it is also noted Zoe expects her drug and alcohol binge may last a few days. Note that Zoe also brings a fresh towel to the bath with her. This towel is a significant object in the novel because it is a sign that Zoe intended to get out of the bath and dry off.

In other ways, Zoe may be subconsciously trying to end her life. She not only drinks a good deal of alcohol before getting into the tub, she also takes a combination of drugs, both of which can make a person sleepy. Because the drugs are out of date, Zoe takes extra tablets, believing she is making up for the lost potency of the medicine. Remember this is not the first time that Zoe passed out from too much alcohol and drugs. She must realize she is setting herself up for disaster if she goes to sleep in the tub.

Another aspect of Zoe's bath that can make the reader wonder if she intends to kill herself is the candles and incense that she places around the tub. Even in her alcohol infused state, Zoe thinks that the tub looks like an altar, as if she is making some sort of sacrifice. While this may be Zoe's way of "touching bottom" (150) so she can "push back to the surface" (150) it looks strangely like a planned suicide.

Although Ethan had believed some one had sabotaged his program at the bank, he is sickened when Sergei tells him that he learned that Hoke was the one who moved the decimal point. Sergei has a good deal of inside information about what happened at the bank. Since John Guan is the only one who was at UIB at the time that Ethan was fired, the reader has to wonder if it was Guan who gave Sergei the information about Hoke. Sergei adds that Hoke has since moved on from UIB and is working for a hedge fund company. It is suggested that Hoke used the program to make money for that company under the guise of Ethan's mistake.

Even though Ethan does want revenge on the bank for firing him unfairly, he cannot believe the way to get this revenge is by getting rich. He wants to prove that he was not at fault for the mistake. Sergei's comment to Ethan seems to back up Ethan's belief he was not at fault, yet the information is unsubstantiated and cannot be used for Ethan's defense.



Notice in this section the variety of different media that the author uses to tell his story. These include the letters that Don writes to Jessica. In this section of chapters Don takes the opportunity to reach out to the people whom he believes are hunting down his daughter because he knows his letters are being read. Several chapters in this section are comprised of emails from Ethan to Zoe. One senses Ethan increasing frustration and concern when Zoe does not respond to his messages. When Ethan does finally get a text that he believes is from Zoe one can sense the relief in his short message back to her telling her that he will be at the location at the time she specified.

The author continues to use literary techniques to enliven his writing. When Zoe goes to Alex's opening at the Medusa, notice the author's play on the fact that in Greek mythology the Medusa is a woman. For this reason the door of this high class art expo center is described as a "glass maw" (143). When Zoe first sees Ethan at the art show and he realizes she has been talking to a movie star, Ethan looks down at the man as if he were "a pilot circling in a fog and unable to land" (146). This imagery not only captures Ethan's befuddled look of how to address a movie star who has been talking to his ex girlfriend but also draws into this storyline the idea of pilots and flying, the main motifs in Jessica's story.

Discussion Question 1

Do you think Zoe intended to kill herself? Why or why not? Use information from the novel to support your answer.

Discussion Question 2

Why do you think Ethan is so hesitant about taking the job offered to him by Sergei? Why does he feel sick about the idea of doing what he loves most in order to get revenge?

Discussion Question 3

In what ways are Zoe and Ethan's stories similar? In what ways are they not similar? How did their actions lead to their downfalls?

Vocabulary

queue, embargo, patina, ossified, aesthetic, commodification, impasto, entourage, dissimulation, yore, derelict, augment, voyeur, levied, bio-metrics, inducements, solipsistic, latency, contretemps, disparaged, retribution, treachery, verbatim, interloper, catatonic



Part 4: Chapters 33 – 36

Summary

In Chapter 33, Sarah Chen and her partner Eddie Banco meet at 169 Bar where she had set up a meeting with Ethan after reading his emails on Zoe's phone. They watch as a tall thin man whose description fits that of Ethan enters the bar. Sarah does not believe this man is a killer but instead a sheep. Later that night Sarah still has not seen anyone who might be Zoe's killer. Coming out the bathroom she bumps into Ethan. When she suggests that someone stood him up and might have sent her to tell him what happened, he asked if she knew Zoe.

Back at the police station, Sarah questions Ethan even as he begs for information about Zoe. When she begins to ask about drugs, Ethan becomes angry. Sarah realizes from his reaction that he is not the person who killed Zoe. She tells Ethan that Zoe drowned and offers contact information for a grief counselor. The only things Sarah has learned about Zoe, she has learned from the manila envelope of articles found near her body. She had originally thought there was no next of kin alive but learned from one of her contacts that Donald Aldridge is Zoe's father even though he had not contact with her since she was an infant.

Ethan continues to question Sarah about Zoe's death. He finally asks her if she thinks Zoe's death was perhaps a suicide. Sarah tells him that since Zoe left no note, it was not sure if she had died accidentally or intentionally. She does note to Ethan that there was a clean towel next to the tub. She uses this as proof that Zoe had believed she would be getting out of the tub and drying off.

In Chapter 34, FBI Agents Daugherty and Pyle follow a Texas deputy to the place where Jessica's truck stopped running. They go to a nearby café and Pyle convinces the waitress to tell them that she did see Jessica early that morning. The trail leads them to a post office and then a pet friendly hotel where Jessica got a ride from a couple with a dog. Pyle suggests the boy let him know who the couple was by printing out a copy of their receipt and dropping it in the trash can so they could "accidentally" find it. They reach a man named Everett Clayton. After the agents tell Clayton that Jessica had committed murders, Clayton tells them that he dropped her off at a pet friendly Motel 6.

Daugherty had been tasked with finding Jessica and returning her to the VA hospital. The time her status as a threat to national security was increased coincided with the time she had begun using money from her military savings account to pay medical bills for Newt and Shelly. The largest payment had gone to a hospice where a nurse with a tattoo, presumably Reggie, had told them about Jessica. A search warrant was issued for her. Because they had not recognized her as a result of her weight loss and tattoos, Daugherty and Pyle had decided not to arrest her when they first talked to her. Even though Daugherty does not think Jessica poses much of a security risk, Pyle obviously has a vendetta against her.



At the Motel 6, the night manager gives Daugherty and Pyle a key card for Jessica's room. When they arrive it is empty. Inside, Daugherty's heart is fluttering. He lies on the bed, unable to go any further.

In Chapter 35, Alex argues with Juliette because she wants him to finish a mural on which he is working rather than go to help Ethan with Zoe's death. As they argue, Alex tells Zoe he wishes he had kept his title Blood Money on the painting that has already sold twice. He admits the idea for the painting came from Ethan's anger over his lost job. Alex wants to be known as a great artist, not a rich artist. Juliette accuses Alex of crippling Ethan by letting him work at his studio instead of making him go out to find a new job. Juliette also scolds and lectures Alex because he has done so little of the mural for Sergei's home. She promises him that she will take care of Ethan at the funeral.

When Juliette arrives at Zoe's funeral, Ethan is outside. He looks disheveled and smells like alcohol. He tells her that Zoe's ex-fiancé is there even though Ethan is paying for the funeral. Ethan is angry when he sees that Porter has put Zoe's engagement ring on her finger. Porter retaliates when Ethan tries to remove the ring. Juliette tries to stop Ethan but her pushes her over backward.

Later Juliette chases Ethan as he walks away from the funeral home. When she catches up with him, he accuses her of taking Alex away from him. At a diner, Juliette tries to convince Ethan that he needs to take Sergei's job offer. She also tells him that Alex will need help with the million rubles that Sergei will put in Alex's bank account when he finishes the mural.

In Chapter 36, Voigt recognizes that Airman Sanders is in trouble. He has gained a good deal of weight trying to deal with the stress of his job. Even though Sanders has been warned about his need to lose weight and exercise, Sanders has not done so. Voigt has no option left but to dismiss him. Afterward, while he is waiting in line at the commissary, Voigt remembers that Sanders was Jessica's drone parter. They were both good at what they did and Voigt wonders how many more good pilots he will lose.

Voigt's thoughts return to Jessica and her father, whom Voigt had contacted the warden of the prison where Don was being held for more information about him. He has learned that Don had another daughter in addition to Jessica. Don blamed himself for the death of his other daughter's mother in a car crash. Meanwhile, Jessica's mother dumped Jessica with an aunt and had run away. Voigt also learns the warden had put Ramirez in the cell with Don intentionally because Ramirez would give him information about Don. Don had been convicted as a murderer after DNA evidence proved he had killed the doctor who had once supplied him with scripts for prescription pain medication. Voigt considers how it was with DNA evidence they had confirmed al-Yarisi was killed in the first drone strike even though it was later proven the evidence had been planted.



Analysis

Zoe's death results in a variety of questions. Sarah, the investigating officer, believes the girl might have been murdered and tries desperately to make Ethan the killer once she finds his emails to Zoe. Once she realizes Ethan did not kill Zoe, the question for Ethan is whether Zoe killed herself or if the death was accidental. He knows far too well that she has already hurt herself once using pills and alcohol. She had told him at that time what she did was not a suicide attempt and that he had overreacted. Ethan must wonder how much more he could have done. He is not as comforted as Sarah believed he would have been by the mention of the towel that Zoe had laid by the tub, a sign to her that Zoe was not intending to kill herself.

This section addresses the idea of how one should and should not be able to use a person's personal data even in this age of technology. In order to get a glimpse of the man who was emailing Zoe without alerting him to what was happening, Sarah sent a message to Ethan pretending to be Zoe. This message was sent by Sarah without first being authorized by her boss. She knows if she sends a second unauthorized message that she stands to be in trouble. Sarah has not only been misleading she has also used a false identity.

A second incident in this section of chapters that seems to be a misuse of technology takes place with FBI Agent Pyle orders the motel desk clerk to leave a copy of the Claytons' receipt and information in the trash so the agents can "find" it. If they had found a copy of this information in the trash it might have been acceptable for them to use the information on it but since one of the agents set up the incident beforehand, it seems like he is trying to exploit the system.

Meanwhile, notice the power struggle between Daugherty and Pyle. Daugherty is an older agent who believes in doing things by the book. He leans more toward good cop than bad cop and actually sympathizes with Jessica. Pyle is a younger agent who abuses his power and seems suspicious of everyone. He has no problem telling Clayton the lie that Jessica is a murderer even though it is a slanderous statement. Pyle believes in doing whatever it takes to get the job done. Even though there are no serious charges against Jessica, his anger pushes him forward to arrest her no matter the cost.

As Voigt considers his forced dismissal of Sanders, the reader learns more about the drone program and its effect on the military. Voigt mourns the loss of good pilots because they begin depending on cigarettes and junk food to deal with the stress of their jobs. While the drone operators are the Air Force of the future, Voigt realizes there is no glory in these jobs like those of the pilots of actual planes of times past.

Notice also the way the Voigt realizes that even DNA evidence, once believed to be foolproof is no longer beyond question. DNA evidence on the site of Jessica's missile strike had proven that al-Yarisi was among the dead. It was later learned one of the men had been carrying a bag of al-Yarisi's blood in order to make the American military believe beyond a shadow of a doubt that the terrorist was gone. Voigt seems to be



taking this into consideration when he learns that Don was convicted through the use of DNA evidence.

Ethan continues to spiral downward as Juliette insists that Alex not come back for Zoe's funeral. She wants Alex to make money rather than be able to lend support for his friend. Alex criticizes her habit of pushing him, especially when she pushes him toward money and away from Ethan. Remember that before Alex became famous, Ethan had vowed to himself to support his friend by buying his paintings. This is how Ethan came to have much of Alex's earlier work that Juliette suggests could be sold in addition to the work that was at the Medusa showing. Because Juliette is so small, she physically cannot help Ethan at the funeral when he tries to remove Porter's engagement ring from Zoe's finger. He pushes her away easily and with little thought to her well being. Juliette is able to calm Ethan down only by telling him that he can help Alex by converting the rubles that Sergei will put into Alex' account as means of payment for the artwork that Alex is completing for him.

Discussion Question 1

Why has Voigt become so focused on Jessica and her story? Why do you think her dismissal and disappearance haunt him so much?

Discussion Question 2

Why is Ethan so angry when he sees that Porter has put the engagement ring on Zoe's finger? Do you think Ethan is right to be angry? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Compare and contrast Agents Daugherty and Pyle.

Vocabulary

leverage, precinct, trifecta, bode, refute, cursory, behoove, stolid, defiant, amenable, syncopation, bequeathed, empathy, transient, coerced, dissolute, voyeuristically, abut, imminent, nonchalant, leverage, grandiose, swaths, mediocre, competence, feign, passivity, harbingers, aura, edible, insurrection, penitent



Part 4: Chapters 37 – 39

Summary

In Chapter 37, as Chen is finishing her report on Zoe's death, she is leaning toward terming the death accidental instead of suicide. Her decision is being swayed by her grandmother's stories in which Chinese ghosts are vengeful to those who have wronged them. Although she does not believe the stories, she does know that if she erred and called it a suicide when it was not, she would be haunted by her mistake. Her partner believes it was a suicide because of the ritual with the candles.

Chen calls Ethan back to the station to ask him about Zoe's family history. She learns about how Ethan was given the folder of information about Zoe's family before the Lestons' deaths even though Ethan and Zoe were no longer dating. Even though Ethan tries to leave when Chen says she has more information about Zoe, she follows him and tells him that she has located Zoe's biological father. She also tells him that she believes that Zoe's death was accidental. Even though she is far from certain, Chen tells Ethan that she is certain when he asks. Believing she is making him less alone in his suffering, Chen gives Ethan the name and address of Zoe's father.

In Chapter 38, as the plane on which Daugherty and Pyle are riding descends into the Miami airport, Daugherty tries to calm down his racing heart. Although Daugherty has mitral valve prolapse, he believes that a desk job will kill him faster than his heart condition. He hopes to be able to stick with his job three more years to reach his quota for retirement.

The car that he and Pyle have rented turns out to be a red Impala. Daugherty drives because he has been to the prison before but Pyle makes a snide comment when Daugherty almost misses the exit. Later during the ride, Pyle comments about how badly it sucks that their higher ups did not let them know about the connection between Jessica and Don until that point in their investigation.

At the jail, warden Eli Wagner is not happy to see the pair of FBI agents. He tells Daugherty that Don is in solitary confinement and shows him the letter that Don wrote. He will agree to letting the agents see him for an hour but only after his time in solitary is finished. As Daugherty tries to convince Wagner to let them see Don, Pyle is looking at the memorabilia on the walls and diddling on his BlackBerry.

Before they leave, Pyle lies to Wagner about being the stepson of Lee Benkowsky, a man who had worked with Wagner. As they leave the office Wagner asks his secretary to get Don out so the agents can talk to him. Wagner also mentions Don had gotten put in solitary because Chen had gotten him upset over the death of Zoe, his other daughter.



On the way to the visitation area, Daugherty asks Pyle about his stepfather story and learns it was false. He also learns that Pyle does not think that the warden believed his story. Daugherty cannot understand why the warden did not call Pyle on his false story.

Once they are with Don Daugherty suggests that Pyle ask the questions. After Don curses the agents, he calms down and tells them he is glad to see them. Don assumes that since they are there, it means they have not caught Jessica. Pyle instead tells Don that Jessica has been in an accident. Don suspects Pyle is telling him a false story. When Pyle promises a visit to Jessica in exchange for information about what Jessica might have told him. Don refuses to give any information. Pyle tells him they cannot get information from Jessica because she is unconscious. Aldridge is upset and bangs the window asking how badly hurt Jessica is. Pyle and Daugherty walk away. The prison guard uses a Taser on Don.

In the parking lot, Daugherty is almost too angry to talk to Pyle. He thinks Pyle was being sadistic by tormenting Don about Jessica. Daugherty gets in the hot car while Pyle waits for the air conditioning to kick in. Daugherty senses that Pyle is manipulating him. Trying to beat Pyle at his own game, Daugherty suggests that they should wait until Jessica comes to visit her father. As Pyle continues to toy with Daugherty and his plans to catch Jessica, Daugherty's mitral valve prolapse begins acting up again.

In Chapter 39, Ethan and Juliette met at the Jamba Juice on Houston and Mercer because this was the first place that Ethan met Zoe. Juliette notices that Ethan has cleaned himself up. They talk about Alex's account. As they leave, Juliette notices Ethan's Nike bag and asks if he is working out. He opens the bag and shows her the urn containing Zoe's ashes. He tells her that he is taking Zoe to all of their old places as well as some new places. He is planning a trip with her to Florida. Juliette believes that Ethan is going crazy.

Analysis

As they try to work together, the differences between Daugherty and Pyle become obvious. Pyle is young with an attitude while Daugherty is an older agent hoping to make three more years so he can retire. Daugherty feels that Pyle should respect him because of his age. However, deep inside Daugherty senses that Pyle is able to think several steps ahead of Daugherty. Daugherty is unnerved by the way that Pyle tells the warden an obvious lie and is able to get what he wants, a visit to Don. Later, Daugherty is angered by the insensitive way that Pyle treats Don. Not only do they not get any information out of him about Jessica, Pyle upsets him by telling him lies that his daughter has been badly injured. Don is so upset by the visit the prison guard uses a stun gun on Don to calm him down.

Meanwhile, note that Daugherty is struggling with the symptoms of his mitral valve prolapse. Pyle notices his partner does not look well as their plane is landing but Daugherty brushes the comment aside. He uses a meditative force to help regulate his heart.



Even though Chen is not at all certain that Zoe's death was accidental, she tells Ethan it was because she believes it will make him feel better. She also tells him it was accidental because it makes her feel better. She grew up listening to stories of how spirits who were maligned would come back from the dead to haunt a person who had done them wrong. Even though Chen does not believe these spirits would really haunt her, she does not think she would be haunted by her own sense of personal responsibility if she said Zoe's death was intentional and it was actually accidental. Notice how a simile is used to describe how unlikely Chen believes it will be that ancient spirits will come and haunt her: "Chen believes in spirits as little as she expects Martians to land in Central Park" (209).

Chen does have thoughts that suggest that the Lestons' decision to keep the identity of Zoe's parents secret perhaps played a role in her death. "It's too complicated for Chen to explain that if Zoe knew of her father, had through his example been aware of her own weaknesses, that she might not have taken those pills and stepped into a bath" (211). Don was addicted to prescription drugs, and killed the doctor who had been prescribing these drugs when that doctor refused to prescribe them any longer. Don's actions show how strong his addiction was. If addictions are hereditary, it makes sense that Zoe would show the same tendency toward addiction as her father. Chen reasons that if Zoe had known she was more likely to get addicted to pills based on her father's history, she might have been more careful when using them. Remember, however, this is not the first time Zoe has gotten into trouble by taking too many pills. At that time she reasoned because she was the daughter of a doctor, she knew not to overdose. Not only was she not the daughter of a doctor, she also did not know herself for her reaction to medications well enough not to overdose.

Zoe's funeral urn is a significant object that is introduced in this section of the novel. Juliette is disturbed when she learns that Ethan is carrying it around with him in his gym bag. When Ethan tells Juliette how he is taking Zoe to visit all of their old places, an idea that does seem strange, she thinks that Ethan is going crazy. She does not understand the motivation behind Ethan's actions. He realizes he had neglected Zoe when she was alive and is now trying to make up for his neglect. As hard as he might want to, however, a person can never make up for the way he had treated another person once that person is dead.

Discussion Question 1

Do you think Pyle's treatment of Don was necessary? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss Ethan's obsession with Zoe's funeral urn.



Discussion Question 3

Why might Zoe have not died if she had known her father's issues with drugs? Why did the Lestons' lie to Zoe not protect her from that part of her past?

Vocabulary

sentiment, sclera, exorcizes, viable, peripherally, jaunty, cruciform, cordoned, antagonism, palpable, acuity, capitulating, sardonic, tactic, elude, fibrillating



Part 5: Chapters 40 – 47

Summary

In Chapter 40, Jessica sits on Pompano Beach as Skittles plays in the water. She has returned to her hometown. When she was twelve, Jessica's mother had explained to her how lucky she was to be alive. She was preparing for an abortion when Don had convinced her to marry him. Even though her mother had been neglectful, Jessica had worshipped her until she had left Jessica with her aunt in order to keep a boyfriend who did not want children.

A lifeguard interrupts Jessica's thoughts by telling her that dogs are not allowed on the beach. She leaves and walks toward the house where she grew up. On the way, she risks stopping at an ATM for some cash. She knows she risks being found by using the ATM card but has no choice. She has not been in contact with her mother for six years. Because of her mother's absence in her life, it made her want to get to know her father. She was the one who initiated a conversation with him through letters. She worries that if she breaks off communication with him entirely, she will be doing to him the same thing that her mother did to her.

As Jessica continues to walk, a man watering his lawn at an apartment complex offers Skittles some water. Jessica notices a "for rent" sign in the front and the man offers to let her see the efficiency apartment that has just become available. d

In Chapter 41, Ethan is not allowed to fly to Florida because he is carrying a funeral urn and does not have the proper paperwork. He winds up on a bus headed for Florida.

Chapter 42 is a letter from Don to Jessica. Jessica had written to him, but had the letter sent to Hector, Don's cellmate. In the letter, Don tells Jessica that he is not worried that Hector will tell anyone about the letter but that it is still dangerous for her to write to him and to give an address. He tells her about his experience with the two FBI agents and tells Jessica she is wise to run from them. Because he is afraid someone will track Jessica, he does not send the letter he is writing to her. He decides he will ask Hector for advice on how to communicate with Jessica without causing her trouble.

In Chapter 43 although she feels as if she is betraying Shelly, Jessica begins the process of having her tattoos removed.

In Chapter 44, Ethan and Alex communicate through a video feed. Alex tries to talk to Ethan about Juliette's claim that Ethan is acting strangely but Ethan changes the subject. He tells Alex he does not want to work with Sergei. Alex, in turn tells Ethan to wake up and get over his obsession with Zoe. Ethan is angered when Alex tells Ethan he could never have had anything with Zoe and destroys his computer.

In Chapter 45 when Jessica calls Shelly's room at the hospice, she talks to a stranger. A call to the receptionist informs her that Shelly "went home" (244). The receptionist



clarifies the Shelly was discharged and passes the phone to Reggie. Reggie shares with Jessica that Shelly decided to live and that she had gone back on dialysis. Later inside her apartment Jessica scans the want ads for a job. She has decided that she is not going to run anymore.

In Chapter 46 in his hotel room in South Beach, Ethan is unable to sleep. He plans his visit to Zoe's father and hopes that the presence of her cremains will qualify him for an exception from the usual three week wait to see a prisoner. He begins to think about the things Alex said to him and realizes his friend was right about the way that he treated Zoe when she was alive.

In Chapter 47 Jessica applies for a job as a waitress at the Phantom Diner.

Analysis

In this section, Jessica intends to settle down in her old hometown. Remember that in Chapter 12 when Jessica had thought back over her plan for her life, her years after her work in the Air Force had included the purchase of an apartment building that she intended to paint pink. This pink apartment complex seems to remind Jessica of that dream as she decides this place, even though she does not own it, is the place for her to settle down.

Since Jessica has bad memories of her childhood in Pompano Beach, it seems a strange choice for her to decide to stay there. She almost feels fear when she walks past the house in which she lived until she was twelve with her alcoholic mother. Even though her mother was neglectful, Jessica had admired her until she had been abandoned by her mother with her aunt. It turns out her mother would have had an abortion if her father had not begged her to marry him. When she was twelve, Joanne, Jessica's mother, told Jessica that her decision to marry Don had been the worst one she had made in her life. As an adult, Jessica had tried to initiate a relationship with her father. She had felt that since she was an adult and was in control of the situation "her reality could not so easily be upended by family" (234). Jessica realizes that even as an adult she does not have full control over the circumstances of her life.

Violations of privacy are mentioned in this section of the novel both when Jessica writes a letter to Hector and when she withdraws money from her ATM account. Even though Don indicates to Jessica that he trusts Hector, the reader already knows that his trust is misplaced. During a discussion between Wager, the prison warden, and Voigt, Wagner told Voigt he had put Hector in Don's cell because he could get information out of Hector about Don's communication with his daughter. Sending a letter to Hector was just as bad as if Jessica had sent the letter to her father.

When Jessica withdraws money from her account using her ATM card, she knows already that those who are tracking her can find her based on her withdrawal. She also knows if they had really wanted to, they could have closed her account so that she could not withdraw money. Even with the power officials hold over a person's control of



their personal bank account, Jessica thinks of a time when surveillance will give officials even more information about each transaction. “Some day such monitoring will be tied to a network that instantly sends ID and facial data to whatever authority might want it” (232) Jessica thinks as she considers that the ATM is probably taking a photo of her as she withdraws the money. Not only can the authorities get information about Jessica’s whereabouts because she has to access her own money, they also get an updated photo of her. Ironically, when Jessica is leaving the ATM: “as if the future of ATM surveillance has already arrived, a police cruiser pulls up” (233). The cop in this instance is only stopping to get a withdrawal but Jessica still imagines the authorities being able to come that quickly to arrest her.

It is also in this section that Jessica shares her fears about being caught by the two FBI agents who have been tasked with bringing her in to the DHS. She knows they intend for her to fail a psychological evaluation so they can lock her up in a psychiatric ward. “There’s no parole for souls imprisoned in psych wards. That her skinny, tattered spirit is so obviously wrecked gives them a perfect excuse to commit her, to lock away whatever secrets they fear she might reveal” (232). Jessica understands clearly that she is being chased simply because she knows too much. She is also tired of running.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Ethan get so angry with Alex when the two talk through a video feed? Do you think Ethan is being unreasonable with his sudden interest in Zoe? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

What does the novel have to say about privacy, particularly in this section?

Discussion Question 3

Why is it significant that Shelly has been dismissed from hospice because she decided to live?

Vocabulary

spatial, detained, violate, feral, amenable, jalousie, piety, concourse, benign, commiserating, pixilated, revelers



Part 5: Chapters 48 – 54

Summary

In Chapter 48, Ethan finds himself feeling like he is back in high school as he waits for the warden to approve his request to see Don. The warden storms through, asking his secretary, Ann, to hold his calls. A few minutes later he asks to speak to Agent Daugherty. When the warden finally acknowledges Ethan, he says that he cannot arrange a visit that day, but that Ethan should come back the following day. Ann tells Ethan that they need the address where he is staying in Florida but Ethan refuses to give it to her. He promises to return the following day.

In Chapter 49, Jessica has an interview with the boss and is given the job at the Phantom Diner. She finally calls Shelly. Shelly says she realized she was just getting older waiting to die so she has decided to live all that she can. She also tells Jessica she always has a home there if she ever wants to return.

In Chapter 50, Ethan recharges his phone and checks his email. He has one message from John. He is passing along a message from Sergei that he is getting impatient waiting. Ethan deletes the message. In messages from Alex he encourages Ethan to get in touch with Sergei about the job and to also to get in touch with Alex. Ethan sends Alex a message telling him that they will talk when he gets back in town.

In Chapter 51, Kelso gives Jessica a letter with her address on it although it is addressed to Arturo Ramirez. Seeing the letter, Jessica believes she has secured a line of secret communication with her father. Jessica and Skittles walk to a nearby pier where she and the dog settle on the sand before she opens the letter.

Hector writes to her, whom he calls the girlfriend of his nephew, in a convoluted manner referring to her father as don Malagueña in honor of the music CD that Jessica had sent to him. Hector tells Jessica that a pair of men named Mutt and Jeff who wore black suits and badges had visited her father. Don advises his daughter not to try to contact him again, and warns her to stay away from Mutt and Jeff.

In Chapter 52, Ann warns Ethan when he arrives for his visit that he will not be able to have any contact with Don. Ethan comments about getting special treatment but Ann tells him they try to be sensitive when a prisoner has had a death in the family. She will not make eye contact with him when she tells him this. After Ethan is patted down in preparation for his visit he gets the urge to go to the bathroom. He barrels into the restroom even though one of the guards tells him to stop. There is a man already there wearing a black suit. Ethan vaguely recognizes the man believing that he might have seen him in his hotel's lobby the previous night. Ann is not happy with Ethan when he emerges from the bathroom. She tells him to follow the rules from that point forward. Before she leaves him, Ann warns Ethan to remember that his conversations are being recorded.



In Chapter 53, stressed because she feels she has withdrawn too much money from her account recently, Jessica jerks sharply on Skittles leash when the dog tries to tree a lizard. Skittles, who had been abused in her past, will not look at Jessica when she tries to apologize to her. Jessica keeps her eyes out for “Mutt and Jeff” as she walks to a nearby grocery store. She ties Skittles up outside and goes inside for groceries. As she looks, she is distracted by her thoughts. She has realized she is wanted because she is a potential whistle blower on the drone program. Even though she had thought about going to some public media, she is driven by her loyalty to the Air Force and Voigt.

Outside, Skittles is no longer where Jessica tied her up. Jessica calls for her. A woman in an SUV tells Jessica that she saw some teenagers teasing the dog earlier. Jessica notices a commotion on the highway and runs toward it. A man is dragging Skittles to the median. The man tells Jessica that Skittles ran out in front of his car. The man tries to comfort Jessica by telling her that the dog did not suffer. She was already dead by the time he had gotten to her.

In Chapter 54, Don tells Ethan that he last saw Zoe when she was only five months old. He knew that she did not remember him. Ethan tells him the complicated story about Dr. Leston giving him the papers telling Zoe about her real past when he killed himself because of his diagnosis of cancer. Don blames Leston and his desire to make decisions for everyone for Don winding up in jail. He thinks that if he had been able to be with Susan and Zoe he would have been able to keep himself straight.

Don points out that no one gets into a bathtub high enough to drown accidentally unless they want to kill themselves. Ethan knows that Don is coming to the same conclusion he has already come, that he was not there for Zoe when she needed him. Don tells Ethan he only knows half the story of how Susan died. Even though Don has more he wants to say to Ethan, he says he cannot talk anymore that day. He asks Ethan to pay him another visit.

Analysis

This section focuses on Ethan’s visit to Don. Notice that when Ethan is waiting to see the warden, the warden is on the phone with Daugherty, the FBI agent. Later, Ethan sees a man in the bathroom at the prison wearing a black suit. He believes the man looks like a man he saw in his hotel lobby the previous night. Keep in mind also Ann’s unsuccessful attempt to find out where Ethan was staying in Florida. It appears that the FBI are interested in Ethan’s visit to Don. Because the guard tried to keep Ethan from going into the bathroom, it probably means that the agent had gone into the bathroom in an attempt to keep Ethan from seeing him and perhaps recognizing him.

Ann’s behavior, in particular, is suspicious. “Ann would make a lousy poker player,” (250) Ethan thinks to himself as he watches the way that she averts her eyes every time she answers his questions. The first time that she averts her eye from him is when she tries to get him to give his address in Florida. She cannot give him an answer when he asks why his address is needed and does not look him in the eyes when she stammers



through the answer that she does give. Again when she tells Ethan that the personnel try to be sensitive to an inmate who has lost a relative she cannot look him in the eyes. This inability to make eye contact is a sign that she is not telling the truth. Notice that Ann does take care to warn Ethan that his conversation with Don will be recorded. She gives her warning in a quiet whisper as if she is trying to hide her warning from someone.

Of interest in this section is Hector's convoluted letter and the references to literature that he makes in his letter. Hector also uses backward ways to get to Jessica the messages her father wants her to have. Take this quote, for instance: "A man whom I shall refer to as don Malagueña — thus to honor a gift of music given to him by his deeply loved daughter, a child for whom his heart, like King Lear's, aches, so many tribulations has he caused her" (257).

Hector names Don after the music CD that Jessica sent him and offers his thanks for the gift, one Jessica sent while she was in hiding so there was no way to thank her prior. Through this one sentence, Hector is also to convey to Jessica how much her father loves her and how much he regrets the trouble that he has caused her.

Note also the reference to King Lear, a character from a Shakespeare play. King Lear is used to represent Don while Jessica is referred to as Cordelia, the daughter whom King Lear ejected from his kingdom. FBI Agents Pyle and Daugherty also get pseudonyms in the letter. Hector is obviously referring to this pair when he indicates that Mutt and Jeff had come to visit Don. Mutt and Jeff are a pair of bumbling characters of completely opposite personalities from a comic strip.

Also of significance is the unusual camaraderie forged between Ethan and Don. They each have their own, similar, regrets with the way they treated the women they loved. Ethan has been on his trek to pay tribute to Zoe because he knew that he had not cared for her as Dr. Leston had wanted him to do. He also is aware that he left Zoe alone when she might have needed him most. Even though Don tells Ethan he has a story to tell about Susan's death, he does not share his story immediately. It has been mentioned before that Don felt he was responsible for Susan's death. When his story is told, it is suspected that Don will tell Ethan why he believes that Susan's death was his fault.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss Ann's and the warden's behavior during Ethan's visit. Why does the warden's behavior remind Ethan of his ex-boss? What bothers Ethan about Ann's behavior?

Discussion Question 2

In what way do Ethan and Don connect?



Discussion Question 3

Discuss the letter that Hector writes to Jessica on behalf of Don. Do you think his references to literature and convoluted speech are too obvious he is trying to hide something? Do you think his writing is gobbledygook like Don says it is? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

anteroom, capitulating, egocentric, tribulations, convoluted, missives, obfuscation, paraphrase, inscrutable, anomaly, frugal, canted, crux



Part 5: Chapters 55 – 57

Summary

In Chapter 55, Don writes to Jessica but does not send. In this letter he tells Jessica about her half-sister. He says it was a visit by Ethan Winter that brought to light his memories of his first daughter. He tells Jessica that if Ethan were to ever come back, he will tell him about Jessica and see if Ethan can help her.

In Chapter 56, Jessica can only quietly tell Kelso he will not be seeing Skittles that night. She cannot even tell him what happened. She is 30 minutes late to her first shift at the diner. The night manager warns Jessica she needs to smile and be friendly with the customers or else she is a threat to everyone's jobs. At the end of her shift, Jessica looks at herself in the mirror and tells herself that she is no one.

In Chapter 57, Ethan rents a car and drives back to the jail where Don is housed. Aldridge first asks Ethan why he thinks he is being allowed to have same day visits with Aldridge since visits generally have to be planned four weeks in advance. Aldridge tells Ethan that he thinks the FBI may be planning on Aldridge telling Ethan where he can find someone. Ethan does not understand but Aldridge clarifies by letting Ethan know that Zoe had a half sister. Ethan is curious even though he does not really want to get involved.

Aldridge tells Ethan that he needs someone to check and see if Jessica, the sister, is okay. He is not, however, able to tell Ethan where Jessica is. As they continue to talk, Aldridge presses his left palm against the window. An address is written on the palm. Before a guard comes and ends the visit Aldridge tells Ethan that he is okay. He also warns that Jessica was involved in a drone strike in the Air Force that went bad. He tells Ethan that he may be followed.

As Ethan is on his way to the address that Aldridge gave him, he gets a call from Ann. Ann tells him that she is not supposed to call him but wanted to warn him that he might be followed by some FBI agents because of his involvement with Aldridge. He notices a red car behind him but does not think that the FBI would drive a red car. When he tries to loose the car, the car makes the same U-turn he did but misses his turn into a restaurant.

Ethan is surprised when two men slide into his booth with him. It is Daugherty and Pyle. They tell him that they are there because of Jessica. Daugherty suggests to Ethan that they need his help to find Jessica. The agents ask him to explain the trip north he had started after visiting with Aldridge. Ethan smarts off to Pyle and Pyle moves to slap him but Daugherty stops the slap. He does tell Ethan that he will have to come with them. Ethan asks what the charge is and he is told that the agents do not need a charge to hold him for 48 hours. The other patrons in the restaurant are surprised when Pyle slams Ethan into the table and puts handcuffs on him.



Ethan is put into a red car in the parking lot. Daugherty tells Pyle to drive to someplace secluded. They tell Ethan they plan to work on his weak spot, which they understand is his dead girlfriend. They understand that he believes that it was his fault that Zoe died. Pyle gets a message and Daugherty looks at the screen of his BlackBerry. He comments that the warden had been communicating with Pyle in secret. Pyle responds that the warden likes him better than Daugherty. Now, Daugherty tells Pyle that the warden has sent Pyle an address where it is believed Jessica lives. Pyle tells Ethan it is his lucky day. They stop and put Ethan out.

Ethan is picked up by a bus that takes him back to the restaurant where his rental car is still parked. He drives to the address that Aldridge had given him. He sees the lights from the emergency vehicles before he sees the firetruck and ambulance. He hears two young men talking about how FBI agents had come for the “chick” (286) who lived in the pink apartment building. Ethan sees paramedics carrying a stretcher down the staircase. Ethan feels the need to protect and perhaps even save Jessica. When the stretcher gets closer, Ethan notices it is Daugherty, not a female on the stretcher. Ethan asks about Jessica but Pyle, who is following the stretcher will tell him nothing.

Kelso hears Ethan’s request for information about Jessica and invites him inside. Kelso knew Jessica had left but pretended as if he was not aware she was gone. He shows Ethan a note that Jessica left. She tells Kelso and his wife that Skittles had gotten killed when she was hit by a car. Jessica feels responsible. She will also not be able to fulfill the lease she signed. Although she knows they will want to return her deposit money she indicates she will not need the money where she is going. Ethan advises Kelso to burn the note.

Analysis

Jessica hits bottom in this section when Skittles is hit by a car and killed. It is the death of her best friend, especially after Jessica had just hurt the dog’s feelings with her unintentional rough behavior, that causes her to lose complete faith in herself. “Here is someone who has let down her family, her country, everything and everyone who relied on her. Even strangers. Jessica thinks of those two girls in burkas, their momentary images ever present to her” (273). The death of the dog brings back Jessica’s grief and guilt over killing the two innocent girls in the missile strike.

About the same time, Ethan feels he, too, has hit bottom. Unlike Jessica whose situation is beyond her control, Ethan believes that he is responsible for the position in which he has found himself. “He has no one but himself to blame. A happy childhood and successful siblings further incriminate him — a brother working as a civil engineer, a brilliant sister who’s writing a textbook on non-Euclidean geometry” (274). Notice the author’s use of the word “incriminate” in this quote. The use of this word infers that Ethan is guilty of some crime of which his successful siblings stand as proof of his guilt.

When Ethan learns that Zoe has a half-sister, he seems to connect with her even though he does not know her. He seems to think that saving Jessica will be a way for



him to exonerate himself of the guilt he feels in connection with Zoe's death. "He can save Jessica. He will. This time and from now on, he will do the right thing" (286).

After he is arrested and tormented by the two FBI agents, however, Ethan wonders how long he would have lasted without having told them her address. He is relieved when the agents find it through a different source. Later, when Ethan advises Kelso to burn the note that Jessica had left for him, he believes he is doing what Jessica would have wanted in letting her go free and not giving the authorities any insight into her location or state of mind.

In this section, the reader learns that Daugherty has a heart attack. It is most likely he will not be allowed to work as an agent until the time of his retirement. Notice that Pyle finally seems concerned about his partner rather than being focused on working against him and aggravating him. Kelso tells Ethan that after Daugherty had his attack in Jessica's apartment that Pyle had helped him lie down. He had even sped away from the apartment building, following the ambulance instead of continuing his search for Jessica. If Pyle had been observant, he would have seen signs that his partner was not well even before the heart attack. For instance, Ethan notices when Daugherty is talking to him that Daugherty had perspiration on his face, which is bloated. In the car, Ethan notices the gray tinge to Daugherty's face.

The prevalence of technology that allows for eavesdropping is expounded in this section when Ethan is told several times that his conversation with Don will be monitored. When the FBI agents corner Ethan in his booth at the fast food restaurant the fact that the conversation was being monitored is mentioned. Ethan thinks to himself "Though Ann had warned him there might be eavesdropping, the fact of being monitored still rankles Ethan — it's like completing an internet search and then discovering ads in your browser for everything you looked up" (280). Just like actions in the Internet are not secret, neither are conversations or interactions. Although a person may resent reminders that little he does is private, there is little he can do about that lack of privacy.

Discussion Question 1

If Pyle and Daugherty suspected that Ethan was traveling to Jessica's apartment, why do you think they did not just follow him? Why did they arrest and torment him for the address?

Discussion Question 2

How does Ethan make Jessica into a cause? How does he believe this cause will exonerate him from the guilt he feels about Zoe's death?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the way Skittles' death affects Jessica.

Vocabulary

insolvency, facility, tactic, obliterates, heeding, rankles, sieve



Part 5: Chapters 58 - Epilogue

Summary

In Chapter 58, Jessica waits in a conference room after turning herself in at Homestead Air Force Base. A woman brings a phone to Jessica, telling her that someone wants to speak to her. It is Voigt. Once the woman has left, Voigt tells Jessica she is talking on an encrypted line and suggests that they talk freely. She tells Voigt that all she knows is that she has been being tracked across the country by FBI agents as if she were a criminal. Voigt suggests they might just have wanted to know if she was okay since she disappeared from the VA hospital after her hike. He tells her that he might have a proposition that will solve her problems and his as well. When she says she is up for his suggestion, he tells her there is a C17 that will be making a trip to Reeger. She says she will be on board.

Before they end their conversation, Jessica asks Voigt why he is going to so much trouble for her. Voigt tells Jessica it is because he got his eagles because of their actions in the drone strike. Later it was Jessica's actions when supervisors viewed the tapes of the strike when it was discovered that al-Yarisi was still alive, that kept Voigt in his position. It was her actions that cleared the strike team in general and Voigt as the commander. He tells her that even though they followed the command to fire the missile, anyone who watched the tapes could see that he and Jessica would have not fired if they had the choice. Voigt also tells Jessica that he had not wanted to have to dismiss her from the Air Force just because of the letters to her father.

Chapter 59 is a letter from Don to Ethan. He tells Ethan he wants his help in finding out what happened to Jessica after she left the apartment in Florida.

Don also shares the rest of the story about Susan's death with Ethan. He writes that one night Susan had gone to the restaurant where Don said he had gotten a job as a waiter. Instead she found him washing dishes. She was angry he had lied to her, got in her car and drove away. Don chased her in his vehicle. She drove her car around a corner and the next thing Don saw was the fire from the wrecked car. Although Don believes he is responsible for Suzie's death, he tells Ethan that their relationship was different than the one between Zoe and Ethan. He tells Ethan he is not guilty in Zoe's death and that he should let go of her ghost "before she owns you the way my ghost owns me" (296).

In Chapter 60, Alex and Ethan meet face-to-face for the first time since Zoe's funeral. They are at Sergei's house. John joins them on the deck. He tells Ethan how cool it is that they will be working together again. Ethan replies that he has only come to tell Sergei no to his face. Ethan pulls John aside and asks him if he was the one who moved the decimal point in his program the day Ethan was fired. John explains that he had found some problems in Ethan's code that day. Even though John told Hoke there was a problem with the code, Hoke would not let him fix it. John goes on to tell Ethan



that he had told Sergei that Ethan had not made the mistake as a way of covering for him.

Learning the truth, Ethan no longer wants to code. Not only does he now believe he made the mistake, he also feels he has been betrayed. John asks Ethan if they are cool but Ethan only grabs his bag and walks away. Ethan takes Zoe's urn and pours her ashes out into the tide.

The Epilogue begins with a letter from Don to Ethan. Don congratulates Ethan on his new teaching job. He wonders if Zoe's death was intended to help Ethan become a better person. Don tells Ethan that even though he appreciates Ethan's offer to hire a detective to find Jessica, Don decides to go with what he has learned from Susan and not chase a person who does not want to be found. Don also tells Ethan that he got a postcard postmarked from Tucson. He believes it is Jessica's way of telling him that she is okay. Ethan writes a return letter to Don. Ethan admits to Don that he thinks about Jessica quite a bit. He adds he is not sure if he has what it takes to help even one of his students like Don suggests that he can do.

Meanwhile, Jessica watches a couple in the Sonoran Desert. She is working as a drone pilot for Defense of America, watching the Mexican border. The man and woman are illegal immigrants. Jessica notices that the woman is heavily pregnant and that the couple probably hopes to have the baby in America so it will be a United States citizen. If they walk further into the desert, where the man seems to want to go, Jessica will have to report them to the authorities. Instead, after the woman refuses to go into the desert, they turn toward a path that leads to a shaded arroyo.

Sanders enters the warehouse for his shift. Jessica does not tell him about the couple. Instead, she asks if she can borrow his Jeep. Jessica remembers the names of the girls killed in the airstrike. She cannot forget them. She drives the Jeep toward the arroyo in which she hopes the couple took shelter. If they are not there, Jessica will drive through the desert until she finds them.

Analysis

Jessica's act of turning herself in is probably the best thing she could have done for herself in her situation. Had she continued to run from the FBI agents, they would have eventually caught up with her and would have eventually taken her to the Department of Homeland Security. By going to the Air Force, Jessica has the support of Voigt, who is on her side. He works to get her a job as a drone pilot because it was her actions that cleared him and his subordinate officers from any trouble in relation to the botched drone strike.

Despite the upheaval in her life, Jessica is able to get herself back on track. She works again as a drone pilot but does so with more sympathy than she would have if she had not had the experience of killing the two innocent girls. They help to guide the decisions she makes. In the scene at the end of the novel, Jessica drives into the desert, looking



for the man and his pregnant wife. She knows they pose no threat to the country, only want a better life for their baby. She feels as if she is exonerating herself by helping them to fulfill their dreams, even if she is doing so in an illegal way. If she were caught hiding the fact there were illegal immigrants coming into the country that she was not reporting, she would be fired.

Privacy continues to be an issue in this section as Jessica watches the man and woman in the desert. She is alone in the warehouse even though there is a camera attached to the wall. Jessica considers its function in relation to her job. "Jessica doesn't think it's an employee spy cam so it probably doesn't have a microphone. But who knows" (304) she thinks to herself as she watches the screens.

Ethan, also has started a job where he believes he can be more of an inspiration than one who tries to gain off others' misfortune. Don encourages him to try to help influence the lives of the children he teaches for the better. He is not sure if he is able to do what Don asks, but has realized he can never go back to coding because of the way his abilities were manipulated and betrayed. Significant also are Don's words to Ethan that perhaps Zoe's death was a turning point in Ethan's life, a point at which he could make a decision to be a better man.

Never resolved is Ethan's interest in Jessica. Though it is perhaps a dream of Don's they will get together, this does not happen in the book. In fact, Don tells Ethan not to hire a private detective in order to find her. He tells Ethan he chooses to follow the lesson he learned from Zoe's mother and let Jessica stay lost instead of trying to find her.

Discussion Question 1

What does it mean for Jessica that because of her new job, she is unable to communicate with her father because he has committed drug related offenses? What does this mean for their relationship?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss Don's reasoning for not having Ethan go ahead with hiring a private detective to find Jessica?

Discussion Question 3

How has Ethan overcome the troubles that life handed him? Why does he decide not to work Sergei?

Vocabulary

volition, quarantine, encrypted, collateral, lobotomized, jitney, sporadically, homage, viable, vitrines, decibel, detainees, expedite, deportation, cartel, telepathy



Characters

Ethan Winter

Ethan Winter is one of the central characters in the novel. He is the one who has the most positive outcome. When he decides his job as a computer programmer was morally questionable, he switches to a job as a teacher and tries to help Don locate Zoe.

At the beginning of the novel Ethan is living with Zoe. He believes that Zoe is a girl who stays with him because of his money. He works as a computer programmer at UIB. His programs allow the bank to manipulate money based on exchange rates. He focuses on the fluctuations in exchange rates when there are acts of terrorism or war. After he is no longer working for the bank, he realizes he was making his money off other people's misfortunes.

After Ethan meets Zoe's parents, her father (Dr. Leston) asks for a meeting with Ethan even though Ethan and Zoe are no longer dating. Dr. Leston tells Ethan that he has a folder of information about Zoe's real background that he wants Ethan to give to Zoe. He hopes that Ethan will help Zoe deal with the information about her past.

Because Ethan is dating another girl at that time, he does not look at the information that Dr. Leston gives him. He does not think Zoe's family life is any of his business. It is only after Zoe's parents die and Ethan goes to the funeral with his friend Alex that he learns the truth about Zoe's family. As they drive to the funeral, Alex reads the information to Ethan. They learn Zoe is the daughter of Suzie, the daughter of the Lestons. After her mother was killed in a car wreck, the Lestons adopted Zoe. The Lestons are actually Zoe's grandparents.

Instead of giving Zoe the information about her family in person, Ethan mails it to her. When she discovers the truth about herself, Zoe overdoses. Ethan finds her and takes her to the hospital. While he is dealing with Zoe, Ethan's computer program at the bank is discovered to have a decimal point in the wrong place. Ethan is fired for his mistake and required to pay back his bonuses.

Because he is certain he has been set up and someone manipulated his program, Ethan sues the bank. He wants revenge. Meanwhile, he works for his friend Alex Carr as an art studio assistant. Ethan had once bought paintings Alex created with the intention of allowing his friend to practice his art and keep him from starving. Now their situations are exchanged because Alex is giving Ethan a job while he has become well known.

Ethan reconnects with Zoe when they meet at Alex's show at the Medusa. He tells her that she should try rebooting herself, like he is doing. The next that Ethan hears from Zoe he is being told she is a detective that Zoe drowned in her bathtub. Ethan is devastated



but takes charge of Zoe's funeral. He has learned from the detective that Zoe's father is her only living relative. He is serving time for murder in a jail in Florida.

Ethan takes Zoe's ashes to her father where he gets caught up in the FBI's search for Jessica. Don asks Ethan to check on his daughter because the feds have been looking for her. After he leaves the jail, Ethan is arrested by two FBI agents and held until they learn from the prison warden that he has learned Jessica's new address, a piece of information Aldridge had shared with Ethan. Because he was curious about Jessica, Ethan went on to the apartment in which Jessica had lived. He discovered that she had left her apartment before the FBI agents arrived.

Because he realizes how immoral the uses for his code were becoming, Ethan decides not to go back into the coding business. He instead gets a job as a school teacher. He continues to be curious about Jessica and offers to help her father find her with the aid of a private detective.

Sergeant Jessica Aldridge

Sergeant Jessica Aldridge is one of the central characters in the novel. She is the daughter of Don Aldridge and half-sister of Zoe though Jessica never knew she had a sister.

Jessica is employed as a drone pilot with the United States Air Force. It is believed that the terrorist al-Yarisi is killed in the first missile launch that Jessica pilots. Two innocent young girls are also killed by this missile. In order to deal with the stress of knowing that she had killed innocent people, Jessica began writing to her father, a convict in prison, about the things she was doing with the Air Force. The letters from Jessica to her father were confiscated and Jessica accused of being a threat to national security. For this reason, Jessica was dismissed from the Air Force.

Not sure what to do with herself, Jessica hikes into the desert with only one bottle of water. While in the desert, she buries her military cap, ID tags and shirt as if she is burying the part of life in which she was a member of the military. After she was found dehydrated and disoriented by a truck driver she was taken to a VA hospital.

During her time at the hospital Jessica was questioned both by a psychiatrist and a representative from the Department of Homeland Security. Jessica had the feeling that the DHS representative wanted to send her to a psychiatric hospital so she ran from the hospital without even checking out properly.

When getting her USAF tattoo covered up Jessica meets Newt and Shelly, the couple with whom she lives for nearly a year. The DHS begins looking for Jessica again when it is discovered that al-Yarisi is not really dead. Jessica believes it is because they are afraid that she will make it public how badly the Air Force's drone program is run.

When she learns the search for her has become active again, Jessica travels to Florida to her hometown where she tries to start a new life for herself. Jessica has rented an



apartment and gotten a job when the new life she has tried to build for herself falls apart when her dog, Skittles, is killed by a car. She decides to turn herself in.

Jessica is put in touch with Voigt who gets her a job as a drone pilot with Defense of America. She watches the Mexican border for people trying to enter the country illegally. Jessica hesitates to call border patrol on the people who do cross the border. In one specific case, Jessica even goes in search of a man and his pregnant wife to bring them to safety. Jessica seems to think it is her way of making up for the deaths of the two young girls.

Zoe Leston

Zoe Leston is another of the central characters in this novel. She is the daughter of Suzie Leston and Don Aldridge though she thought she was the daughter of Dr. Walter and Elizabeth Leston. The doctor and his wife were actually Zoe's grandparents.

Zoe is living with Ethan when the novel opens. She leaves Ethan in order to get a job in Washington. Before they break up, Ethan has dinner with Zoe and the Lestons. Elizabeth, who has dementia, calls Zoe by the name Suzie. Ethan suggests that perhaps her parents had another daughter about whom they never told Zoe. Zoe later confronts her father. He tells her that she did have an older sister named Suzie who was killed in a car crash.

Zoe is next in contact with Ethan after the death of the Lestons. The doctor killed himself because he was suffering with cancer. He also gave his wife a lethal dose of medication and alcohol because he did not want her to live in a nursing home for the rest of her life.

Zoe next appears after Ethan sends her a package of information telling Zoe that her mother was Suzie and that the Lestons were actually her grandparents. Zoe deals with the news by taking an overdose of medication and alcohol. Ethan finds her and takes her to the hospital to have her stomach pumped. Zoe is angry with Ethan because he took her to the hospital, she tells him she would have been okay. That night Ethan stays with Zoe at the Leston's house. Zoe goes into Ethan's room and has rough sex with him. She will not speak to him the next morning.

In Washington, Zoe gets a job working for an agency that gives grants and loans to women in other countries. She is quickly discouraged by her job because she is manipulated into paying a bribe to one of her contacts about a loan in order to get a photo op for her business. Zoe also backs herself into a corner because she gets engaged to her boss without even intending to do so. He gives her a ring and she does not have the heart to tell him that she does not want to get married to him. Zoe later breaks off her engagement with her boss and quits her job. She believes it is best but hates that she was unable to reinvent herself.

Back in New York, Zoe apartment sits for a friend. She reconnects with Ethan at Alex's art show at the Medusa. That night, Ethan suggests to Zoe that she try rebooting



herself. That night Zoe drinks a good deal of alcohol and takes prescription pain medications and muscle relaxers before getting into a bath. She goes to sleep and drowns. It is never determined if her death was accidental or intentional.

Colonel Voigt

Colonel Voigt is Jessica's commanding officer in the United States Air Force. He is the one who is overseeing her and commands her to shoot the missile at what was believed to be al-Yarisi's caravan.

Because he knows that Jessica is a good pilot, he hates to let Jessica go but is given no choice because of the information she has given her father in letters she has written to him. He wishes she had realized how likely it was for those letters to get her in trouble.

Voigt seems to think the DHS's classification of Jessica as being a threat to national security is unfounded. Although he cooperates on the surface, Voigt secretly hopes that Jessica will not be found.

After Jessica does turn herself in, Voigt is the one who questions her. He asks why she ran from the VA hospital in the first place. Then, he offers her a proposition. Voigt is able to set Jessica up with a job as a drone pilot keeping tabs on the Mexican border in Arizona.

Voigt is the one who tells Jessica the names of the two innocent young girls who were killed in the missile strike that she piloted.

Donald Alan Aldridge

Donald Alan Aldridge is the father of both Jessica and Zoe. He is serving a sentence for murder at Seminole City Correctional Institutional.

After Don has been communicating with this daughter, Jessica, by letters for nearly a year, Don's letters are confiscated because they contained classified information. Jessica had been writing to him about her activities in the Air Force.

Even after he is unable to mail his letters to Jessica any longer because he does not know where she is, he continues to write to her. He hopes this will prove to her that he is no longer the same man who abandoned her as a young girl.

Don tells Ethan that he feels personal responsibility for Susan's death. He describes his role in the wreck that killed Zoe's mother. He says he had lied to Susan about his new job as a waiter at a restaurant. He had really been hired as a dishwasher. Susan discovered his lie and cursed Don before driving away. Don had chased her in his car, an action that he believed led to the wreck that killed her.



Don advised Ethan that he was not responsible for Zoe's death and that he should put her ghost to rest before it owned him.

FBI Agent Tom Daugherty

FBI Agent Tom Daugherty is the older detective in the pair of detectives sent by Homeland security to arrest Jessica.

In the good cop/bad cop scenario Daugherty is the good cop. He does not believe in roughing up his detainees or his interview subjects in order to get what he wants out of them.

Daugherty has three more years in the FBI before he can retire. Although he has mitral valve prolapse, a heart condition, he has an agreement with his doctor to keep the condition hidden so he can continue to work.

The stress of chasing Jessica and dealing with his manipulative becomes too much for Daugherty and he has a heart attack when he and Pyle arrive at the apartment Jessica had been renting to discover she had already left.

Juliette

Juliette is the girl whom Alex is dating at the time of Zoe's death. She will not let him attend the funeral because he is working on a mural for Sergei, a project that is supposed to earn him a good deal of money.

Juliette is also the one who sets Alex up with a showing at the Medusa. Much of his artwork displayed at this showing is sold for a good deal of money. Despite Juliette's insistence that Alex's talent is finally being recognized, he believes she is only interested in his artwork making him rich.

Also she denies it, Ethan senses that Juliette is trying to force Alex and Ethan apart. She seems jealous of the time the friends spend together. Ethan believes Juliette sets him up with a job offer from Sergei simply because she wants him to stop working as Alex's studio assistant.

Alex Carr

Alex Carr is a character who is Ethan's best friend. Alex is the one who sets Ethan up with Zoe. After Ethan is fired from the bank, Alex lets Ethan work in his studio as an assistant.

Through the course of the novel, Alex goes from being a little known artist to be very sought after. Juliette, Alex's girlfriend, pushes him to be more successful and get rich



from his paintings. Following Juliette's advice, Alex does not attend Zoe's funeral to support Ethan.

Following Juliette's advice, Alex encourages Ethan to take a job offered to him by the rich Sergei and to forget his obsession with Zoe.

Shelly

Shelly is the tattoo artist with whom Jessica takes refuge for several months when she is first dismissed from the Air Force. Jessica meets Shelly when she goes to Shelly's tattoo studio to have her USAF tattoo covered.

Shelly is suffering with kidney failure when Jessica first meets her. After the death of her husband, Newt, Shelly decides she is ready to die and stops her dialysis treatments.

After waiting several weeks in the hospice without dying, Shelly decides it is not time to die and checks herself out of the hospital. She tells Jessica that she has decided to embrace her life. She has started dialysis again, and she has also put herself on the list for a new kidney.

FBI Agent Pyle

FBI Agent Pyle is the younger of the two FBI agents sent to try to arrest Jessica.

In the good cop/bad cop scenario, Pyle is the bad cop. He is willing to do whatever it takes to get the information he wants. He tells lies to people about why Jessica is wanted, hoping to manipulate them into giving up her location, and even torments Don with the false information that Jessica has been critically injured in an automobile accident, in an attempt to get the man to give up information about her.

Even in his relationship with his partner, Pyle is aggressive and manipulative. He notices that Daugherty is suffering from some sort of medical condition but does not seem to be concerned about his partner's health until after Daugherty has had a heart attack.

Jabir al-Yarisi

Jabir al-Yarisi is a powerful terrorist. The Air Force officials erroneously believed that he had been killed in Jessica's drone strike. However, it is later learned that al-Yarisi set the Air Force up with a decoy convoy. A man in that convoy was carrying a bag of al-Yarisi's blood so DNA evidence of al-Yarisi's death would be located at the scene of the strike leading the Americans to believe with certainty that the terrorist had been killed. About a year after it was believed Al-Yaisi was killed, he reappears in a web video.



Dr. Walter Leston

Dr. Walter Leston is the father of Susan Leston and grandfather of Zoe Leston. He commits suicide because he is suffering with pancreatic cancer. Before Leston dies, he gives Ethan the information that Zoe needs to know about her mother and her background.

Because his wife has dementia, Leston gives her an overdose of medication when he kills himself. He had told Ethan earlier that he did not want his wife to be put in a nursing home where she would wear adult diapers and stare at the wallpaper.

John Guan

John Guan is a fellow coder with Ethan at UIB. He was the one who talked to Ethan on the day that Ethan's program malfunctioned. Before the malfunction John had made some tweaks on the program that Ethan had asked him to make.

John cannot seem to get his story straight about the decimal point error. He tells Sergei that Hoke moved the decimal point in order to get Ethan fired. Later, when Ethan questions John about the error, John tells Ethan that it was Ethan who made the error. John had noticed it, but Hoke had not allowed him to correct the mistake. In this second version, Ethan was used as a scapegoat to keep Hoke and John from getting into trouble.

Captain Shoshana Levy

Captain Shoshana Levy is a military psychiatrist who interviews Jessica while she is in the hospital. She writes in a letter to Jessica's father that she is concerned because Jessica does not appear interested in getting counseling to help her transition to civilian life. Jessica's act of leaving the hospital also concerns Levy, and she asks Don to encourage his daughter to get support.

Levy also calls Voigt to tell him about Jessica's disappearance from the medical center. Levy says she does not believe Jessica is psychotic or that she is a danger to herself. She does worry about Jessica because she senses the DHS is trying to get Jessica committed.

Mariatu Nowrojee

Mariatu Nowrejee is a coworker and friend of Zoe's from Washington. Mariatu bore a scar on her cheek where she had been assaulted by officers for teaching during the war in Sierra Leone. Mariatu told Zoe that the assault had destroyed some of her self-confidence and had made her less sure of herself than she was before the attack. She



wonders what she might have been able to do for her country had she not had that experience.

Dr. Porter Coombs

Dr. Porter Coombs is Zoe's much older boss at Zoe's job in Washington. Zoe dates Porter and then moves in with him. He gives her an engagement ring, which she is too surprised to give back to him at the time. Knowing she cannot marry Porter, Zoe gives him back his ring and quits her job to return to New York.

Porter attends Zoe's funeral. He puts the engagement ring back on Zoe's finger, a move that infuriates Ethan.

Warden Eli Wagner

Warden Eli Wagner is the warden at the prison where Don is being held.

He is the man with whom the FBI agents as well as Ethan must deal when they try to visit Jessica's father.

Ethan compares the warden to Hoke, his former boss, who had to boss people and manipulate them around in order to feel that he had power over them.

Wagner is strangely motivated by Agent Pyle's false claim that his stepfather worked with the warden. It is after Pyle tells him the lie that the warden agrees to let Pyle and Daugherty have a visit with Don.

Sarah Chen

Sarah Chen is the detective who investigated Zoe's death. She at first thought Zoe was killed but when she met Ethan she realized he was not a killer.

Because Zoe had put a fresh towel next to the tub, Chen decides that Zoe's death was accidental. Chen also came to the conclusion that Zoe's death was accidental because she knew she would be haunted if she called Zoe's death a suicide when it actually was not.

Janet Sloan

Janet Sloan is a worker with the Department of Human Services. Apparently, Sloan is assigned to Jessica's case.

Levy, a military psychiatrist who talked to Jessica in the hospital, told Voigt that she believes that Sloan was trying to influence Levy's diagnosis of Jessica as having no psychiatric conditions. Levy got the feeling that Sloan wanted to institutionalize Jessica.



Airman Bob Sanders

Airman Bob Sanders is Jessica's partner in the United States Air Force. He later works with her at Defense of America.

Although Sanders is a good drone pilot, he is dismissed from the Air Force because he gains too much weight.

Hector Ramirez

Hector Ramirez is the cellmate that the warden pairs with Don. Ramirez is a college professor who has committed murder. The warden puts Ramirez in the cell with Don because he believes he can get information about Don and his relationship with Jessica from Don.

It is Hector who tells the warden the address where Jessica is living in Florida.

Ann

Ann is Warden Eli Wagner's secretary. She is the one who works so closely with Ethan to get him multiple visits with Don in jail. When Ethan leaves the jail after one visit, Ann calls him to warn him that he may be followed because of his visits to Don.

Skittles

Skittles is the long-haired Shepherd that Jessica inherits from Shelly and Newt. Jessica takes Skittles with her when she travels cross-country to Florida. Skittles is hit by a car and killed after Jessica ties her to a post outside a grocery store in Florida.

Newt

Newt is Shelly's husband. Jessica meets Newt at Shelly's tattoo studio. Newt and Shelly take Jessica in for several months after she is dismissed from the Air Force. Newt dies shortly after Jessica moves in with the couple. He has been suffering with cancer.

Sergei Sokolov

Sergei Sokolov is a Russian millionaire who offers Ethan a job doing computer coding for him. It is when Sergei suggests that the best way for Ethan to get revenge on his old boss is to get rich that Ethan realizes he does not want to code, an activity he loves, for revenge.



Elizabeth Leston

Elizabeth Leston is the wife of Dr. Walter Leston and mother of Susan Leston. She is the grandmother of Zoe Leston. Elizabeth is suffering with dementia. She is killed by her husband when he kills himself because he is suffering with pancreatic cancer.

Dwayne Hoke

Dwayne Hoke is Ethan's boss at UIB. Ethan first believes it was Hoke who moved the decimal point in his computer program. John later tries to make Ethan believe that Hoke would not allow him to fix the problems he saw with Ethan's coding.

Reggie

Reggie is a nurse at the hospice where Shelly is being treated. Reggie is the man who tells the FBI agents about Jessica and her visits to Shelly. He later apologizes to Jessica for ratting her out.

Sahira and Azhaar

Sahira and Azhaar are the two innocent girls who were killed in the missile strike that Jessica initiated because it was believed that al-Yarisi was in the caravan. Jessica asks Voigt to give her the names of these girls after she turned herself in.

Teddy Kelso

Teddy Kelso is the man who owns the apartment building where Jessica rents an apartment when she is living in Florida.

Susan "Suzie" Leston

Susan "Suzie" Leston is the only daughter of Dr. Walter Leston and Elizabeth Leston. She is the mother of Zoe. Susan was killed in a car wreck when Zoe was still an infant.

Joanne

Joanne is Jessica's mother. When Jessica was still a small child, her mother ran away and left her with an aunt who raised Jessica.

Jean-Pierre

Jean-Pierre is Zoe's contact in Bujumbura who manipulates Zoe into paying a bribe to the husbands of the women to whom Zoe's company gives a loan.



Symbols and Symbolism

The Monte Carlo Simulation

The Monte Carlo simulation is a symbol of Ethan's intelligence and his ability to work with computer code. This simulation is the program that Ethan uses to manipulate the trading of the currency of different countries during both terrorist and anti-terrorist attacks.

The Manila Envelope

This manila envelope that Dr. Leston gives to Ethan symbolizes Zoe's true past. The envelope contains newspaper articles and court documents that tell the story of her real mother's death and her adoption by her grandparents.

The Burned Corpse

This burned corpse symbolizes Ethan's realization that real people were hurt and injured in the incidents from which the banks profited. Hoke shows Ethan a picture of the burned corpse after one of the terrorism attacks.

Jessica's Identification Tags

Jessica buries her military identification tags, a symbol of her life in the military.

Jessica's Letters

Jessica's letters, written to her father, represent Jessica's breach of security.

Mariatu's Scar

Mariatu's scar, which she got when she was attacked by soldiers, is a reminder of the war and unrest in her home country of Sierra Leone.

A Fresh Towel

This fresh towel that Zoe laid out next to the tub is a sign to Chen that Zoe did not intend to kill herself.



A Bag of al-Yarisi's Blood

This bag of al-Yarisi's blood is a symbol of the way that even DNA evidence can be manipulated. It is believed that there was a bag of al-Yarisi's blood in an SUV that was hit by a missile that Jessica launched. This bag of blood gave false DNA evidence that the terrorist had been killed, allowing al-Yarisi to go underground.

Candles and Incense

Lighted candles and incense that were around the bathtub in which Zoe drowned herself symbolize the possibility that Zoe did intend to kill herself.

A Metal Urn

This metal urn that contains Zoe's ashes is a symbol of Zoe. It is an item that Ethan uses as a substitute for Zoe.

Jessica's Tattoos

Jessica's tattoos represent the person whom Jessica became once she left the military. After Jessica decided to have her tattoos removed, she felt guilty in doing so because they had come to represent Shelly. Jessica felt she was betraying Shelly by getting rid of the tattoos.

A Cactus Postcard

A cactus postcard is a sign from Jessica to her father that she was living in Tucson.



Settings

Seminole City Correctional Institution

The Seminole City Correctional Institution is the jail in which Don is incarcerated. FBI Agents Daugherty and Pyle, as well as Ethan, visit Don in this jail.

Pancho's

Pancho's is the name of the bar near the USAF base where Jessica is stationed. It is at this bar that she sees the airman who is trouble because of the signs of stress she sees in him while he is sitting at a video casino console. It is also to this bar that Jessica goes after she is dismissed from the Air Force.

Oberland Funeral Home

Oberland Funeral Home is the place where Dr. Leston and Elizabeth were laid out for public viewing after their deaths.

Tattoo Heaven

Tattoo Heaven is the tattoo parlor owned by Newt and Shelly. It is at this parlor that Jessica meets the couple who invites her to stay with them.

Sagaponack in Long Island

Sagaponack in Long Island is the place where Sergei lives and has his business.

Jamba Juice on Houston and Mercer

This Jamba Juice store is the one where Ethan first met Zoe. He takes her ashes back to this store as a way of reliving their relationship.

Pompano Beach

Pompano Beach is the place where Jessica grew up as a child and lived with her mother. She returns to Pompano Beach in an attempt to try to settle down once she is released from the Air Force.



Themes and Motifs

The Acceptance of Personal Responsibility

The ability to take responsibility for one's own actions is an ability often missing in today's culture. This novel includes the stories of three characters who took personal responsibility for situations in which they were only a factor. While taking personal responsibility for a tragedy can cause a great deal of guilt, the lessons learned from these experiences can also help a person to improve himself. In this novel, Jessica, Ethan and Don are all characters who chose to grow from their own experiences with tragedy.

The tragedy for which Jessica feels she is personally responsible is the death of two innocent girls who were at a site Jessica was ordered to bomb as one of her duties in the Air Force. Had she been left on her own, Jessica would never have fired the missile since the terrorist believed to be in the convoy was never seen. Jessica is so disturbed by the deaths of these young girls that she writes to her father about her grief and guilt. It is one of the breaches of information that gets her dismissed from the Air Force. Even after her dismissal, Jessica continues to feel as if she had failed her duty to protect the civilians. When Jessica begins working as a drone pilot with Defense of America, she is cautious with the people she chooses to alter Border Patrol about their act of crossing the border. She feels so sympathetic for one couple, the woman of whom is obviously very pregnant, that she goes looking for them in her partner's Jeep. It is assumed that her intent is to get them to safety, out of the desert.

Ethan is a character who also experiences his share of tragedy. His ex-girlfriend, Zoe, drowns in a bathtub. At the time she died, she was under the influence of the both prescription medications and alcohol. Although the detective who investigated Zoe's case tried to convince Ethan that Zoe's death was accidental, he never really seems to believe it. He tries to make up for his perceived neglect of Zoe by taking her urn of ashes to various sites they had visited when they were dating as well as others to which she had wanted to go but he had never taken her.

Zoe's death is not the only aspect of his life in which Ethan learns to take personal responsibility. In his job as a computer coder for a bank, he eventually comes to the realization that he is taking advantage of tragedy in order to become rich and to make his bank rich. As Ethan begins to see more clearly the effect of the acts of terrorism of which he takes advantage, Ethan feels more and more that his job is morally reprehensible. He wanders for months toying with the idea of taking another job as a coder. He finally decides to leave coding all together and gets a job as a school teacher. Although Ethan makes much less money, Don suggests to Ethan it is a job where he can use his example to help better the lives of his students.

Don is a final character who has learned lessons from the mistakes for which he believes he is personally responsible. Don believes first and foremost that he was



responsible for the death of Susan, Zoe's mother. He thinks that if he had not chased her the day of her fatal car crash, she might have still been alive. Although his advice to Ethan suggests that he has allowed Susan's ghost to haunt him to the point he cannot get free of her, he tells Ethan not to do the same with Zoe's ghost. Likewise, when Ethan suggests he can hire a private detective to help them find Jessica, Don asks him not to do so. He tells Ethan that he had learned from Susan that it is best not to chase after those who do not want to be caught.

The Danger of Keeping Secrets

Keeping secrets can be dangerous, the reader learns in the novel *And West is West*. This is particularly true in the story line where Zoe's parents hide her identity from her only to reveal it to her after they are gone. For Zoe these secrets are dangerous not only because they destroy her sense of who she is but also because by not knowing who her parents were, she is not aware she has a genetic tendency to abuse drugs and alcohol. While knowing the true identity of her parents might have saved Zoe an identity crisis, knowing their genetic makeup might have helped to save her life.

Learning the truth about her parents' identity first destroys Zoe's sense of self. She had always believed she was the only daughter of Dr. Walter and Elizabeth Leston. When she first hears her mother call her Suzie, Zoe tells Ethan that her mother believes she is an entirely different person. When Ethan suggests that perhaps Zoe had a sister no one told her about her father lies to her and tells her that Susan was her older sister. He does tell her the truth about how Susan died but will say little else. At this point, Zoe's sense of self and her trust in her parents are already shaken.

When Zoe receives in the mail the information that the Lestons had hidden from her for years, her sense of self is destroyed. She learns that Susan was her mother, not her sister. The people she had thought were her parents were actually her grandparents. Not only did Zoe's grandparents keep the truth from her all of their lives, they also waited until after they had died to tell her truth. At this point, she has no way to learn their reasoning for hiding the truth from her.

The way that Zoe responds to her destroyed sense of self is particularly dangerous because of her father's status as a drug addict. Children of people who are addicted to drugs tend to be more likely to become addicted themselves. If Zoe had known this, perhaps, she would not have been as likely to use drugs as a way to dull her emotional pain. Instead, she reasoned that since she had been raised by a doctor, she knew enough to be careful with prescription medications and alcohol.

Instead of using medication safely, however, Zoe overdoses on two different occasions. The first occurrence is right after she discovered the truth about her real identity. Zoe overdosed, but she was found by Ethan in time to save her life. The second time Zoe overdosed she drowned in a bath tub when she went to sleep. Chen, the detective who investigates the case of Zoe's death suggests that if Zoe had known her father had



been a drug addict, perhaps Zoe would have been more careful with her own use of drugs.

The Case for Suicide/Euthanasia

The act of suicide is presented from a variety of different angles in the novel *And West is West*. Because he is dying of pancreatic cancer, Dr. Leston kills himself. He kills his wife because he does not want her to live the rest of her life in a nursing home. Zoe overdoses on medication twice. The second overdose results in her death. It is unclear if she intended to kill herself or not. Shelly takes herself off dialysis, a form of suicide, after her husband dies of cancer. There are lessons to be learned from all of these attempts to take one's own life.

Because he suffers from pancreatic cancer, Dr. Leston decides to end his own life. He makes the choice for his wife to end her life as well. Ethan believes Dr. Leston made the right choice in giving Elizabeth an overdose of medication as well. He knew that Dr. Leston did not want his wife to live the remainder of her life in a nursing home. Although it is easy to understand that Dr. Leston wanted to end his own suffering and the suffering of his wife, he did not think about Zoe, the daughter he would leave behind. Not only was Zoe traumatized by the news her father had killed himself and her mother, Dr. Leston also went to his grave without telling Zoe about her real identity. Zoe had to try to deal with both the unnatural deaths of her parents and the secret Dr. Leston bequeathed to her.

Perhaps, Zoe follows in the footsteps of Dr. Leston when she dies. It is never completely decided if her death was accidental or intentional, but it left Ethan feeling as if he had failed his friend. When Zoe drank the alcohol and took the pills with the intention of getting into a tub full of water, she set herself up for death. Another point in favor of Zoe's death being a suicide is that she had already overdosed on pills once and had to have her stomach pumped. The decisions that lead to Zoe's death leave Ethan feeling as if he was responsible for her and the way her life ended.

After the death of her husband, Shelly decides that she wants to stop fighting to live. She has been on dialysis, a medical procedure keeping her alive, but she stops the dialysis and checks herself into a hospice. Even though she believes she will not last long, Shelly lives longer than she ever imagined. Because death does not come quickly, Shelly gives up desire to let herself die and embraces life. She has realized that any life, even if she is sick, is better than waiting for death.

Jessica also has a brush with death when she hikes into the desert with only one bottle of water. This hike takes place just after she was dismissed from the Air Force. A psychiatrist who talks to Jessica after her hike into the desert confirms that Jessica was not suicidal. It appears that Jessica was looking for a way to figuratively kill the part of her that was in the Air Force. She does this by burying her military cap and ID badges in a hole in the desert. After she has completed this ritual, Jessica walks back out of the desert, a sign that she has not decided to stop living.



Downfalls of Modern Technology

Although it is generally believed that modern technology improves life, there are ways that even these things intended to make our lives better and safer have their downfalls. In the novel *And West is West*, both Jessica and Ethan encounter situations in which technology negatively affects their lives. Each must come to his own conclusion about how to handle and live with the downfalls of technology.

As a drone pilot, Jessica sees first hand the way pilots are challenged not only by the physical separation from danger but also the long hours they sit staring at computer screens. In the specific example of Jessica's drone strike, she is in Nebraska, thousands of miles away from the terrorists at whom she shoots the missile. After she pushes the button to launch the missile, there is no sound of explosion. Although her adrenaline level has built just like that of a soldier who physically dropped a bomb on a terrorist location, there is no aftermath to witness. Jessica is even kept from learning the end result of the missile she dropped.

This stress with no relief as well as the long hours they spend sitting in chairs looking at screens lead to unhealthy behaviors among the airmen. To keep from gaining weight, Jessica chooses to smoke. Her partner, Sanders, eats to relieve his stress. His habit of eating is his undoing because he is eventually dismissed from the Air Force because he is so overweight.

The hours of staring at computer screens in addition have a bad effect on the airmen. She recognizes that the airman she sees sitting at the video poker machine is suffering from screen fatigue as he mechanically puts nickels into a slot machine even though he is not really seeing it. Jessica knows that the way the man's physical condition has deteriorated that he is in danger of losing his job.

In Ethan's position, he also struggles to deal with the way modern technology allows him to make money off terrorist and anti-terrorist activities. He tries to reason with himself that if he were not making money off these acts of terror, someone else would be. When he dates a girl who has relatives in India, he first realizes there are actually people who suffer in the situations from which he profits.

Ethan additionally learns, too late, that his dependence on technical gadgets is hamstringing his relationships in the real world. While he is dating Zoe, Ethan spends more time typing on his BlackBerry or his computer. Although it is never stated specifically, the reader can sense Zoe resented Ethan's obsession with his gadgets.

After Zoe's death, Ethan learns that correspondence through messaging is not necessarily guaranteed to be from the person who owns the device from which the message comes. For example, when Ethan gets the message from the detective investigating Zoe's death, he believes it comes from Zoe because it came from her phone. He learns it instead was sent by the detective in an attempt to determine if he was responsible for Zoe's death.



Greed as a Motivator

While people are motivated by a variety of factors, there are some characters in this novel who appear to be motivated only by greed, such as Ethan. Another character motivated by greed is Juliette, Alex's girlfriend. It is only after Ethan's experiences with Zoe that he realizes that money will not necessarily bring a person happiness.

As a young man, Ethan appears to have his life made. He lives in an expensive apartment and has everything that he could want. When Zoe agrees to move in with Ethan, he worries that the only reason she is dating him is because he does have so much money. This belief bothers Ethan because he wants to be loved by Zoe, not just used for her because of his possessions.

Later in the novel, Alex faces a similar situation. He has struggled to make his name as an artist. When he meets Juliette, she arranges for him to have a showing at the Medusa Gallery. This showing is successful and not only does it cement Alex as a famous artist but also begins to make his art a lucrative business. Although Juliette appears greedy and pushes Alex to make more money with his art, Alex is unhappy because he does not want to be rich if he has to compromise his artistic abilities. Just like Ethan, Alex realizes that a good life is not all about the money one makes.

It is after Zoe's death that Ethan realizes that life is not all about one's money and possessions. He loses everything of monetary value when he is fired from the bank. As he begins to think about his job and what he had to do in order to make his money, he realizes the money he was making did not justify the immorality of what he was doing to earn it. After Zoe's death, Ethan realized there were things in life more important than money.



Styles

Point of View

The majority of this novel is told from the viewpoint of an omniscient third person narrator. This narrator tells the thoughts and emotions of all of the main characters. This ability for all of the main characters to have their thoughts and feelings shared is significant because they are all placed in situations in which they must make a decision about how they want to proceed with their lives. If the novel were told from the first person point of view only one character, not only would it not adequately cover the decisions made by the other characters, but it would also allow the reader to get too close to the one character from whose point of view the story was told.

While the majority of the story is told in the third person point of view, there are parts of the story that are told in the first person point of view. The letters that Don writes to Jessica are in the first person point of view, the typical point of view for a letter. Since Jessica's father is in jail and really has no contact with the others in the story, these letters are an ingenious way to include Jessica's father in the action of the story without including a good deal of information about the jail. Text and email messages included throughout the novel are also in the first person point of view.

Language and Meaning

Probably the most significant section of this novel language wise is the letter that Hector writes for Don to Jessica as well as the letters that Don writes himself. Hector's letter is written in a style that is very baroque, as described by the author of the letter himself. He covers his true meaning in an allegorical story about a friend of his whom he compares to King Lear, a character from Shakespeare. The words chosen for use in this story are dated words and phrases not heard often like "panoptic" (257) and "cavaliers" (257) making it challenging for readers not familiar with those words to understand.

Don's letters also are written in a fashion that is unique to him. While there are few distinguishing features between the way that the other characters talk, Don is distinguishable both in his writing and his speech by his bad grammar. He uses "ain't" often in his writing and speech. He also uses colloquial phrases like "ratted out" and "torches the pavement."

Structure

This novel is divided into four large parts with each part divided into chapters. The parts are given a title as well as notation of a period of time covered in that part of the novel. The novel is introduced with a prologue and ended with an epilogue.



A variety of different forms of media are used to tell this story. The narrator uses not only exposition and dialogue, but also letters, emails, texts and newspaper articles. The letters, written to Jessica from her father, provide a way for Don to be involved in the story. Three of the newspaper articles tell part of the story of Zoe's mother. Another article tells about Jessica being found by a truck driver after she had gotten lost in the desert. These newspaper articles give credence to the facts stated in those articles. Since there is no one left alive to tell Zoe about who her real mother is, there is no other way for the information to be passed along than through a newspaper article.

Exposition occurs through almost all of the novel with the reader learning new information about the characters until almost the end. The plot builds to the point that Ethan is in Florida helping Don look for Jessica with a climax when he sees a stretcher being brought down the stairs from Jessica's apartment. The action falls from that point as Jessica turns herself in to the Air Force, and Ethan decides on a job as a teacher.



Quotes

Not until dawn will anyone completely see what Jessica has done. She never will. Strike analysis is above her security classification.”

-- Narrator (Prologue)

Importance: For security purposes, Jessica is destined to never learn the outcome of the missile that she launched. It is believed that the terrorist al-Yarisi was killed in this strike but Jessica knows that at least two innocent girls or young women were killed as well.

You accuse yourself of taking two innocent lives. But I can only tell you to think of the people you have stopped who would murder a hundred innocents for their cause.

-- Narrator (Prologue)

Importance: After Jessica has written to her father telling him how she believes she killed two innocent young girls, Don writes a response telling her that she needs to think of the innocent people she has saved by taking out such a powerful terrorist. At the time it was still thought that al-Yarisi had been killed in the missile launch.

Leston is blaming him for steering the Titanic into an iceberg when he was only manning the ship’s telegraph.”

-- Narrator (Part 1, Chapter 2)

Importance: In Ethan’s mind, he realizes that he does not have the power at the bank that Dr. Leston believes that he has when he accuses Ethan of being among those who wrecked his financial portfolio. He compares the position Dr. Leston seems to think he had to the position of captain of the Titanic while Ethan really held a position more like that of a telegraph operator.

His latest algorithms have shown such good results that yesterday, after the Pentagon announced that Jabir al-Yarisi had been eliminated, UIB’s director of liquidity, Dwayne Hoke, rushed to Ethan’s office to watch the currency prices gyrate.

-- Narrator (Part 1, Chapter 2)

Importance: Ethan is flattered when Dwayne Hoke comes to his office to watch the rising and falling of the currency prices when it was learned that al-Yarisi had been killed.

Colonel Voigt heard of the security breach during a call from Washington. Sergeant Jessica Aldridge had been relating sensitive information about the al-Yarisi strike in letters to her father, one Donald Alan Aldridge, a convict in Florida. It has led to this, her final briefing.”

-- Narrator (Part 2, Chapter 7)

Importance: Because Jessica had been writing to her father about her assignments



and tasks in the Air Force, she is accused of breaching security and is dismissed from the military.

She almost wishes this would happen so she could stop remembering her dismissal and those girls in that other desert. Curling up on the slope, she offers her bones to the ground.”

-- Narrator (Part 2, Chapter 7)

Importance: The day after Jessica is dismissed from the Air Force she wanders out into the desert with no supplies and little water. That night she wishes that her brain would stop working so efficiently so she could forget the girls who she believes she is responsible for killing. The next morning, however, Jessica takes charge of herself and tries to make her way out of the desert. She believes she is not suicidal even though this quote makes it seem that she wanted to die just so she could stop thinking about the innocent girls who died in the missile strike.

A former student of the Ethel Walker School, Susan is survived by an infant daughter and her parents, Walter and Elizabeth.”

-- Narrator (Part 2, Chapter 10)

Importance: It is from this sentence in a newspaper article about Susan’s fatal car wreck that Ethan and Alex realize that Susan is not Zoe’s sister, but instead her mother.

Wars don’t happen every day and he’s responsible for capitalizing on them.”

-- Narrator (Part 2, Chapter 10)

Importance: This quote refers to Ethan’s original offhandedness about the way that he helped the bank at which he worked make money off terrorism. As he began to realize that real people were hurt and injured in these terrorist attacks, he became less lackadaisical in his attitude about what he was doing.

Apocalypse now,’ Guan says. ‘We’ve shut down the currency mainframe. It started buying rupees at ten times their value. The bank took a major hit. Don’t tell me you got no alerts — oh, right, your phone’s down. Bummer. Rumor is one of your algos spazzed.’”

-- John Guan (Part 2, Chapter 17)

Importance: After Ethan finally gets in touch with the bank where he works after being away from his cell phone for nearly a day, he learns that things have gone badly there. Guan, a man whom Ethan had enlisted to help in his algorithms, tells Ethan that the bank had taken a major hit because of one of Ethan’s programs.

After Lehman blew up in ’08 and the world nearly followed, UIB tossed a bone to the Fed by tying employee bonuses to long-term performance, claiming a claw-back clause would prevent shortsighted trading.

-- Narrator (Part 2, Chapter 17)



Importance: Because of the banking troubles in 2008 UIB had tried to ensure their employees would not participate in trading they had not studied well by attaching their bonuses to long-term performance. If employees lost money for the bank they would be forced to give those bonuses back.

As there are no cell towers near the village Zoe knows that Jean-Pierre cannot have spoken directly with the husbands about the new demand. And if this much is a lie, what about the rest of Jean-Pierre's story?"

-- Narrator (Part 2, Chapter 18)

Importance: Because Zoe knows there was no way that Jean-Pierre could have communicated with the people in the village who were supposedly having a monetary conflict, she wonders if perhaps Jean-Pierre made up the entire conflict in order to benefit from it.

If she had been abused by those men, perhaps she would not have become the writer we know. Perhaps she would have been broken. Our lives turn on such fortunes."

-- Narrator (Part 3, Chapter 18)

Importance: In a story that Mariatu tells Zoe about Simone de Beauvoir she indicates that a person's life story often depends on what happens to a person and how he responds to what happens to him. Mariatu believes that people's lives can turn based on these turns of fortune.

Over the past three months he has mentally reconstructed his keystrokes countless times and has concluded that the decimal point shift was not his. That someone had sabotaged him."

-- Narrator (Part 3, Chapter 19)

Importance: For the three months since Ethan was fired from UIB he has spent his time going over and over his keystrokes when he altered his program before it malfunctioned. He believes that the mistake was not his, that another employee changed the decimal point in an attempt to get him fired.

When that happens I will offer these returned letters as proof that I am no longer the unreliable father who was not there to see you grow or be your mothers support."

-- Narrator (Part 3, Chapter 20)

Importance: Even though he keeps getting the letters he writes to Jessica returned to him, Don continues to write to her. He hopes one day he can show her these letters as proof that he had changed from the unreliable person that she knew as a child.

Mariatu strokes Zoe's cheek and she is overcome by the loss of what she is giving up — which is not simply Porter or her job or even her friendship with Mariatu. She is losing her future. She has failed, here in DC, to invent herself.

-- Narrator (Part 3, Chapter 22)



Importance: When Zoe is forced to leave Washington, she believes she is a failure. She had gone to that city with the intention of helping people and also inventing an identity for herself.

The big event is a botched drone strike: a terrorist supposedly blown up a year ago has resurfaced.”

-- Narrator (Part 3, Chapter 23)

Importance: Although it was believed that al-Yarisi was killed when Jessica launched a missile, the man has shown up again.

But, then, Voigt doesn't really want Jessica found, certainly not to be a victim of some Beltway bureaucrat's damage-control campaign.”

-- Narrator (Part 3, Chapter 25)

Importance: Voigt's allegiances to Jessica remain strong. He does not want Jessica to be caught in order to just be caught up in a damage-control campaign in relation with the missile strike that it had at once been believed to have killed al-Yarisi.

But then,' Sergei says, the skin orbiting his eyes crinkling, 'I did a little more investigation. You do know that Dwayne Hoke, your own boss, set you up, yes?’”

-- Sergei Sokolov (Part 3, Chapter 28)

Importance: When Sergei tries to convince Ethan to take a job with him, he mentions to Ethan that he knows Hoke set Ethan up by moving the decimal point in his computer program.

I am not worried that Hector is going to rat us out.”

-- Narrator (Part 5, Chapter 42)

Importance: This statement included in one of Don's letters to Jessica is ironic in that Hector was made Don's cellmate intentionally so he could spy on Don and report to the prison warden about Don and Jessica's correspondence.

It's not the anticipated pain that Jessica fears will change her mind but remorse: at betraying Miss Shelly, and even herself.”

-- Narrator (Part 5, Chapter 43)

Importance: Although Jessica believes she needs to get rid of her tattoos in order to be more anonymous, she almost decides against the removal. She sees the removal of the tattoos as a way of betraying Miss Shelly.

Wrong,' Aldridge says. 'They don't hold your hand around here. You get your bad news and you deal with it. That means these visits of yours don't add up. There's a reason you're here that you don't even know about, Mr. Ethan Winter.’”

-- Aldridge (Part 5, Chapter 57)



Importance: Don explains prison ways to Ethan in an attempt to help him understand that he is being given special treatment in the case of Zoe's death. He uses this special treatment to try to convince Ethan that he is being spied upon and that he needs to be careful about what he says and does.

I just had to tell you there might be folks following you because of Don Aldridge.”
-- Ann (Part 5, Chapter 57)

Importance: Ann, the prison warden's secretary, backs up Don's message to Ethan that he is being followed and that people are interested in learning what he might know about Jessica's whereabouts.