

Dust (Silo Saga) Study Guide

Dust (Silo Saga) by Hugh Howey

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Plot Summary

“Dust” is a dystopian science fiction novel by Hugh Howey, and is the sequel to his novels “Wool” and “Shift”. Dust picks up where the events of Shift left off. Donald Keene’s health has declined dramatically as he tried to find a way to save the other silos, while Charlotte continues work on a modified drone to see what exists beyond the silos. Meanwhile, Juliette organizes the miners and diggers of Silo 18 to tunnel their way into Silo 17, where Jimmy, a young couple (Rickson and Hannah), and several children, including Elise, wait for contact with 18. Juliette’s silo contains many residents who are wary about digging through the wall of their silo, but Juliette tells them they have nothing to worry about because she has been to the outside and survived.

Keene continues to struggle with the entire concept of the silo system, which he unknowingly helped design. Intended to save humanity from nanoterrorism, Keene has learned that the fifty silos that have preserved humankind for 250 years so far will be scientifically computed and considered in another 250 years. The silo with the greatest chance of survival will be released back into the world, while all other silos – including Silo 1 – are exterminated. Keene races against the clock to prevent this from happening, attempting to talk Juliette through things.

However, one of the masterminds of the silo project, Senator Paul Thurman, is awakened. He is both enraged and saddened to learn what Keene has been up to. He has Keene arrested and brutally beaten. Juliette’s dig succeeds in breaching Silo 17 just as Thurman realizes 18 has gone rogue. He gives the extermination order, in which poisonous gas is pumped into the silo. Some 200 people manage to escape through the tunnel to Silo 17, with the tunnel being sealed behind them. The nearly-5,000 people still in 18 are all killed. Juliette blames Keene, unaware of what has happened.

Charlotte works to complete the drone, and establishes contact with Juliette. Juliette wants nothing to do with Charlotte, believing her to be part of the hierarchy that entrapped humankind in the silos. Charlotte is then confronted by a Security agent named Darcy who has figured out that Charlotte had been illegally awakened. Naturally curious, Darcy thinks there is something big going on. Charlotte explains everything to him, during which time he agrees to help her get Keene out of his holding cell. Keene tells Charlotte he is too ill to flee the silo, but that she and Darcy must go instead. Keene will stay behind to detonate a bomb which will destroy Silo 1, and which will give all other remaining silos a chance to escape. Darcy ultimately dies defending Charlotte’s escape, while Keene detonates the bomb and destroys Silo 1.

Studying a facility map with others, Juliette discovers that each silo has a digging machine directed toward a specific place called “Seed”. They tunnel out from Silo 17 to discover blue skies and green growth, while a computer-controlled veil of dust has been erected around the silos, completing the lie of a destroyed world. Juliette, Jimmy, and the survivors follow the map to a massive concrete bunker stocked with food and supplies – as well as seeds – to begin civilization all over again. Charlotte comes across them, and is invited by Juliette to join them. Juliette has realized the truth about

Charlotte and her brother. At little Elise's suggestion, the people decide to head north to water so that they can fish and settle.

Prologue – Part 1, Chapter 12

Summary

Prologue – Lukas converses with an unknown man by radio, saying that the Mayor is currently away working on something Lukas knows the unknown man would not be pleased about. Lukas thinks nothing good will come of what the Mayor is up to, and hopes the unknown man will keep his fingers crossed for them.

Part 1, The Dig

Chapter 1 – In Silo 18, Juliette Nicholls uses an excavator to tear into the wall. She knows miners are watching, many of whom have lost loved ones because of actions she has taken. At last she breaks through to the other side of the silo wall, pointed out by Raph. Juliette is desperate to reach an abandoned silo where friends are trapped. Juliette calls for a cutting torch and a flashlight.

Chapter 2 – On the other side of the wall are rusted hydraulic lines, steel plates, and other metal structures in another room. Dawson, the third-shift foreman, asks what comes next. Juliette says they must make the hole bigger. Shirly, the new head of Mechanical, cleans the genset with her shadow, Kali. Juliette blames herself for the death of Shirly's husband, and wonders if Shirley does, too. Juliette is anxious to show the others the world outside that she has seen.

Chapter 3 – In the next room, Juliette, Raph, and the others discover a massive piece of machinery designed to dig. She has seen a drawing of this machine in Jimmy Solo's silo. She realizes the machine was safely stowed away in the private room for a purpose. Juliette then realizes why the machine was put next to the generator room.

Chapter 4 – Raph and Juliette conclude the spare generator is intended to be inserted into the digging machine. Juliette's lover, Lukas Kyle, arrives to see how things are going. Lukas cautions her that the rest of the silo is growing uneasy, especially up top. Lukas is worried that hundreds will die for Juliette to save a few elsewhere. Juliette promises to dig quietly if they dig at all, and that she will come back to her Mayoral duties in a few days and will be home with Lukas for a while. Juliette explains she wants to get to the bottom of what is beyond the walls.

Chapter 5 – In Silo 17, Jimmy "Solo" Parker is worried about leaving and wishes he still lived alone. He now cares for some people from Silo 17, including little Elise who is interested to know that thousands of people may soon be coming.

Chapter 6 – Jimmy heads to the lowest level of the silo where pumps are forcing out the water that had previously been filling the silo up. Jimmy and the kids must tend to keeping the silo dry until Juliette comes for them.



Chapter 7 – Shirly is enraged to learn that the backup generator is going to be taken away from Mechanical. Bobby and the other workers report that they'll have to manually adjust the machine to dig for Silo 17 since the machine is only designed to move in one direction. Additionally, steel girders will be needed for the project, but Erik isn't thrilled about giving up his supply. Juliette tells Bobby that everything they are doing is worth it, for Silo 17 and for Silo 18. She says this is just the beginning.

Chapter 8 – Juliette goes to Walker's workshop. Walker reveals he has reformatted a radio to easily switch channels. This will help during the digging process. Courtnee, Juliette explains, has been put in charge of the dig. Juliette contacts Jimmy to learn how pumping is going, and to fill him in on their own activities. As Juliette returns to the upper levels, she can sense the unease among the people. While they were amazed she survived being in the outside world, they are now terrified by the digging project. She stops in to see Hank, deputy of the Down Deep. Hank explains his own office is concerned with lack of direction and contact with Juliette. She asks Hank to keep an eye on things since there may be trouble.

Chapter 9 – As Juliette climbs the levels, she thinks about the violence that broke out in her absence, and thinks about how the people in the silo need to depend on each other for survival. Father Wendel at the church pays his respects to Juliette, saying she is seeing to God's work. He also notes more and more people are now attending Sundays at the churches. He introduces Juliette to a new acolyte named Remmy. Wendel believes that demons, not gods, are responsible for the silos. He believes no good can come from digging. Juliette contends that there were good people who wanted to save everyone as well through the silo system.

Chapter 10 – Juliette attends a ceremonial farm planting. Lukas is waiting for Juliette when she returns home. He cautions her about spreading word about other silos, since some won't believe it and those who do will cause trouble because of it. Getting into bed, Lukas points out that one of Juliette's many scars, one that looks like a star in the crook of her arm, is gone.

Chapter 11 – In Silo 1, Charlotte Keene exercises in the old armory to get back into shape. She is also working on putting together a lighter drone. Her brother, Donald Keene, has been assumed to be Senator Thurman who oversaw the entire silo system before Keene killed him. He brings Charlotte breakfast. Keene reveals he met someone on the elevator who knew him from First Shift. Keene doesn't know if the man has recognized him or not. He also reveals he has been working with Lukas to crack computer servers to find data. Likewise, a new silo head is coming on soon. It is not clear if the new head will recognize Keene as Keene or believe Keene to be Thurman. Keene knows that the silo plan calls for only one silo to survive and be released back into the world. All those exterminated would include Silo 1. Keene is especially interested in Silo 18, since Juliette has been to the outside world and survived. Keene has been coughing up blood lately. He explains he is not afraid of dying, but of doing the wrong thing.



Chapter 12 – Charlotte has a nightmare about flying and crashing. She awakens to find her brother collecting a special bodysuit for people who need to work on the silo's generator. He gathers the supplies himself so no one else comes into the armory and finds Charlotte, who is not supposed to be awake. Charlotte knows that her brother is dying, and that the suit is so that he can leave the silo and not die underground because he has a fear of being buried alive.

Chapter 13 – Nelson, the young IT tech in charge of cleaning in Silo 18, is working on a special body suit while Juliette deals with daily issues relating to the silo. She is assisted by Marsha, a young aide. She has served the previous two mayors as well. Marsha goes over population reports with Juliette, saying they are below 5,000 people for the first time in 30 years. The population will plummet when Silo 17 is reached. Lukas arrives to remind Juliette of attending a town hall meeting, and warns of the danger that she might be voted out of office. She promises to attend.

Analysis

“Dust” is a dystopian science fiction novel by Hugh Howey; it is the sequel to his novels “Wool” and “Shift”. Dust picks up where the events of Shift left off. From the very start, Keene is working from a position of the truth – and truth will become an important theme in the novel – in order to do whatever he can to save Juliette, and the remaining three-dozen or so silos. The truth is harrowing.

Thurman and a cohort of conspirators preempted a nanoterrorist attack with a nuclear attack to wipe out human life from the planet, while preserving a few tens of thousands of people below the earth in silos. After generations and 500 years of waiting, only one silo will be released into the world to repopulate it, while all others –including the controlling silo, Silo 1 – will be eradicated. Keene doesn't want to see this happen, as he knows there are even good people in Silo 1 who do not deserve to die.

Keene works quickly with his sister to prepare for a drone flight to the outside world to ensure that it is safe 250 years ahead of schedule. He believes the truth has been kept from everyone, that beyond the veil of the silo system, the world is largely habitable. He believes this because he has seen a glimpse of it through a previous drone flight, and wants a follow-up drone flight to confirm it. Over in Silo 18, however, the residents have a more difficult time ascertaining the truth.

While some – primarily those who know Juliette personally – believe Juliette that the world outside is safe, and that there are other silos out there, the majority are apprehensive about tunneling and the world above. As the reader and Juliette both recognize, these people have been kept in fear for so long they are afraid to seek out the truth, with many preferring the prevailing lies because they are at least safe. Someone like Jimmy at first doesn't even want to leave his own silo for another silo due to the nature of his life.



Here, the theme of good and evil comes into effect. While Thurman and the designers of the silo scheme believed it to be a good thing that thousands would be saved in silos while billions of others died, others such as Keene believed the cost to be too great. Keene is actively trying to save everyone he can as a measure of good to right the evil that has been done to the people in the silo.

It is staggering to imagine that thousands upon thousands of people have lived their lives miles underground, never seeing the outside. While Keene cannot right the evils of the past, he can correct the evils of the present and provide for a future of good. Indeed, the very idea of keeping people against their will miles underground –and essentially controlling their lives for the greater good – is totally in accord with the theme of dystopianism. Something intended for good has done far more harm.

Keene, Juliette, and Charlotte all know now that survival will be critical. The theme of survival itself becomes critical to the plot as well. Keene, Charlotte, and Juliette are all primarily focused on ensuring that Silo 18, and the other silos, respectively, are not eradicated. The fight for survival all three face now is not one merely for the survival of humanity at large (which it has), but each one of them in particular.

Keene is especially distressed in his illness, and it is clear he is dying. Keene's battle is to survive long enough to ensure that others survive. Juliette struggles to ensure survival not only as a matter for the silo, but in social order for the silo as well. She has been neglecting her mayoral duties, which in turn is not sitting well with most people. It is why Juliette endeavors to attend a town hall meeting later on.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Juliette decide to dig to Silo 17? How do various other people feel about her decision? Why?

Discussion Question 2

Do you believe the silo system serves the greater good or the greater evil? Explain.

Discussion Question 3

What appears strange to Juliette and the diggers about the digging machine? What do they believe this strangeness means? What do you believe it means? Why?

Vocabulary

obstinate, staccato, gossamer, schematics, coalescing, flippant, heresy, manifold, engendered, requisition, nonchalant, tumultuous



Part 1, Chapter 14 – Part 2, Chapter 26

Summary

Chapter 14 – Lukas heads down to the server room to continue working on the computers with Keene's help. Lukas also believes that much of what is in the Order is true, and is fascinated with the history of the old world. Juliette believes men like Castro and Lenin are nightmarish myths and legends designed to make people behave, but Lukas believes they are real and lessons of evil to be learned from. On the radio, Keene advises the digging stop, since the vibrations have been detected by Silo 1's equipment. Keene explains he is determined to see that no one in Silo 18 dies. Keene explains he wants to help whoever inherits the world to set things right.

Chapter 15 – Juliette attends the town hall meeting with Sheriff Peter Billings and Judge Picken. The meeting is well attended. From the start, people ask questions about the digging, the world outside, and other silos. Most of the audience is angry. Juliette admits what they've been told is a lie, but that she doesn't know much of the truth. Juliette proposes taking a sample of the air to see what is wrong with the world outside. Juliette is escorted from the room, where she meets with her father. He doesn't want Juliette risking her life outside. He points out the scars on her body from the fire in the last risk as proof. She then asks about scars going away over time.

Chapter 16 – Captain Brevard is almost through his seventh shift, and knows he only has three more to go before the entire silo affair is finished. A medic servicing the cryochamber has noticed blood on one of the cryobeds, and discovered a man shot inside, but the man is not dead. Brevard and security are now on the scene. It is believed the murder happened within the past month. The murder victim does not match the data or the name on the cryopod. Records are all fouled up, it is explained. Further, the blood on the cryopod bed is mixed with blood and does not match the person inside. Darcy, the night guard, believes that whoever Troy is must still be alive and awake.

Chapter 16 – Brevard, Deputy Stevens, and Darcy head for Medical. Stevens wonders if the Shepherd should be involved, but Brevard says the Shepherd has more important things to worry about. After learning the theory – that Troy is likely a rogue killer from Deep Freeze who tried to kill an administrator, take his place, and wake up different women – Brevard decides to inform the Shepherd. They then discover Anna Thurman dead in her cryobed. The injured but recovered man reveals his true identity to be Paul Thurman.

Chapter 18 – Digging draws near Silo 17. Rickson, Hannah, Miles, and Elise are thrilled. Jimmy watches with concern as a massive machine bores through the concrete wall. A pretty girl emerges from the other side named Courtnee. She says hello to Jimmy and reports that Juliette has gone outside.

Part 2



Chapter 19 – Juliette heads into the world above in a bodysuit and helmet. Lukas keeps in touch with her through radio. She begins collecting air and soil samples. She considers that all reports of the outside world done in the past were falsified to keep people living underground in fear. She also takes samples near the body of a dead cleaner, Jack Brent.

Chapter 20 – Juliette is readmitted to the silo through the airlock chambers. The air is decontaminated, Juliette is scrubbed clean, and the chambers are scrubbed clean. Lukas arrives and reveals the dig has gone through to the other side.

Chapter 21 – People from Silo 18 arrive in Silo 17, greeting Jimmy happily. They bring him, Rickson, Hannah, and the children over to Silo 18. The people in Silo 18 are amazed to see Jimmy and the young people from Silo 17. Jimmy feels as if uniting the two worlds has been a grave mistake.

Chapter 22 – Private rooms are set aside for Jimmy and the kids. Dr. Nichols, father of Juliette, comes to see how Jimmy and the kids are doing. Courtnee brings Jimmy and Elise to call Juliette. It is discovered that Silo 18 has dogs, and some have been breeding. Elise is taken with the puppies she sees.

Chapter 23 – In communications, Walker is pleased to meet Jimmy and Elise in person. He connects Jimmy with Juliette on the levels above by radio. She is thrilled to hear from Jimmy. Elise slips away to take a puppy, and then goes along with Jimmy for food.

Chapter 24 – With the samples of the outside world in hand, Juliette and Lukas travel to drop them off to Nelson at the suit lab. She asks Lukas if he believes in life after death. Lukas says he does not, but he does believe in decisions they make having a lasting impact on the future. So do mistakes. Juliette considers mistakes she herself has made in the past, and how they have hurt people. She and Lukas arrive at the suit lab. They suit up and begin to extract the samples. They appear to be contaminated. Juliette then begins to question the element and presence of argon.

Chapter 25 – In Silo 1, Keene knows he is getting closer and closer to death. He speaks with Juliette by radio. Juliette contends that when people go out to clean or take samples, they are covered in argon which eats away at them. She tells him never to bother them again and hangs up. Keene realizes the gas being used between entrance and exiting the silo contains the cell-sized nanobots the silos were built to protect humanity from. Keene reminds himself he is in part responsible for all of this.

Chapter 26 – Charlotte continues working on her modified drone. Keene agonizes over the gas and the lies that have been used to keep people in their silos. Suddenly, men arrive in the armory and apprehend Keene.

Analysis

Digging continues in this section of the novel, headed straight for Silo 17. The digging in this section of the novel can be seen by the reader as metaphorical for the phrase



“digging for the truth”. The work being exhausted on the tunnel, and Juliette’s courageous walk above ground to collect samples, all speak to the desperation for survival. Survival will come to include not merely surviving the silo eradication scheme, but surviving the world above as well. It is why Juliette decides to go outside to collect air and earth samples. Keene’s own survival is already in question, but the discovery of blood in the cryosleep hall spells disaster for Keene.

Keene and Juliette both continue to get closer to the truth as they come to question the air around the silo system. Keene wishes to reveal to her the presence of cell-sized nanobots in the air prior to the silo system going into effect, but she won’t have any of it. She is resisting his attempts to relate the truth to her because her entire life has been a structure of lies. Juliette’s search for the truth is tempered less by reason and more by passion, as even the evils of genuine, real history – such as the horrors perpetrated by Communism and Socialism – are believed by Juliette to be mere myths.

Keene recognizes that people who venture outside do not survive because nanobots are in the gas used to pressurize the airtight chamber before people are sent outside. These nanobots kill those who head outside within a matter of minutes. Keene is forced to remind himself that he is in part responsible for everything that is happening. The reader should bear in mind this fact for chapters much later in the novel.

Technology truly emerges as an important theme here in conjunction with the theme of good and evil, both in regards to the nanoterrorism that brought about the silo system in the first place, and the methods Silo 18 has for testing the air and noting the presence of argon. Technology can be used for good or evil – including the nanotechnology which can heal or destroy human life.

It is ironic and tragic that the silo system, meant to save humankind, would so chillingly evaluate the lives of residents of silos as nothing more than numbers and destroy those residents on a whim. Evil, great value is supposedly placed on human life by the controllers of the silos, only to destroy human life without a second thought when the need apparently arises. Meanwhile, Keene, Charlotte, and Juliette rely on technology to try to keep people alive. Charlotte and Keene want to pilot a drone to see the outside world while Juliette wants to test the air and soil samples she retrieved. However, these bouts of good and evil – and the confusion between about what can be considered right or wrong – is in keeping with the theme of dystopianism, where lines between good and evil are always blurred, intentionally or unintentionally.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Juliette refuse to trust the history books about Lenin, and refuse to trust Donald Keene? Do you believe she is justified in her skepticism? Why or why not?



Discussion Question 2

What do Keene and Juliette both realize about the process for air decontamination? What effect does this have on Juliette, especially with regards toward her opinion of Keene? Why?

Discussion Question 3

In accord with the theme of dystopianism, the silo system both values human life by preserving it in silos, but cheapens it by destroying it on a whim. Do you believe this is for the greater good or the greater evil? Why?

Vocabulary

spectacle, blandness, expunged, agape, deluded, exile, normalcy, hypocrisies



Part 2, Chapter 27 – Part 3, Chapter 39

Summary

Chapter 27 – Juliette, who cut off all the camera and communications feeds going out from Silo 17 previously, now looks for the pipes that channel pressurizing argon gas. An emergency call comes in for Juliette in which it is explained the people from Silo 17 have been attacked, and the boy, Marcus, has been thrown off the stairwell.

Chapter 28 – Elise is terrified from everything that has happened. She runs lower into the silo until she meets a boy named Shaw who gives her some cooked pig. A mean man named Roy tries to grab Elise's puppy, whom she has named Puppy, saying Elise has stolen the dog. Shaw helps Elise and Puppy escape, where they run into Jimmy. Elise demands to go home. Jimmy agrees.

Chapter 29 – Juliette arrives to see what has happened. She and Jimmy hug. Elise assures Juliette she did not steal the dog, but found it down in Mechanical. Elise cries when she hears of the death of Marcus, because it means Miles is no longer a twin. As they head to the tunnel to Silo 17, Shirley explains things are getting crazy with the mob. Jimmy questions why people are taking things from his silo. Juliette explains she had said people could take unnecessary things from 17, but restates her promise to help Jimmy rebuild his home.

Chapter 30 – After Jimmy is taken, Charlotte remains in hiding until the coast is clear. She wonders what her next step will be.

Chapter 31 – Keene, bloodied and bruised, has been locked up. He is primarily worried about what will happen to Charlotte. He considers that the entire silo system is a folly of man, the belief that things needed saving. Keene considers that these things should have been left alone from the start, that mankind has a right to go extinct. Senator Thurman comes to confront Keene. He knows Keene has been busy. He explains he will be shutting down 18. He angrily demands to know how Keene managed to subvert the system, arguing that everything had been planned carefully. Keene contends Silo 40 managed to hack into the system to cut themselves off from control by Silo 1. Keene thinks perhaps Anna helped them do it. Keene says he bombed 40, and two other silos as was his job, all three rebellions which Thurman never saw coming. Keene admits to killing Anna, and says he thinks Anna lost faith in the project in the end. He argues that Thurman started the problems by awakening Anna in the first place. Thurman storms out.

Chapter 32 – Lukas receives a call from Thurman, and immediately knows something is wrong. Thurman asks for Bernard Holland, the former head of Silo 18, long dead. Thurman tells Lukas he has fifteen minutes to get Bernard. Lukas relays this information to Juliette. An attempt to fool Thurman with an imposter fails. Thurman announces he is



shutting 18 down. Gas begins pouring in from the ceilings. As Lukas rushes to get out, he sees blood pouring out of the nose of Sims, the Security chief.

Chapter 33 – Juliette receives reports of a vapor leak all over the silo. Peter reports the door to the outside has been automatically opened. She tells him to get outside. Reports come in of masses of people scrambling out on the stairwell. She realizes Silo 1 is going to kill them all.

Chapter 34 – Lukas radios Juliette that 18 is being shut down. He says Sims is dead and blood is pouring out of his own nose now. Juliette begins sending as many people as she can toward the dig site. She sees one man with a bloody nose who says he fell. She directs him to Mechanical. She herself then rushes to Mechanical as the white clouds of gas descend.

Chapter 35 – The crowds of people are pouring into the tunnel toward 17 as the doors to Mechanical are sealed. Shirly is put in charge of sealing the dig tunnel with explosives. Shirly doesn't want the job, but knows she has no choice. She punches Juliette, then seals the tunnel. Lukas says goodbye and tells Juliette he loves her over the radio.

Part 3

Chapter 36 – Charlotte listens in on the radio as Silo 18 is exterminated. Charlotte studies a map of the silo, and what departments are located on what levels. She knows she will need to get to Communications in order to find a microphone. She dresses up as a man, puts a screwdriver into her pocket, and decides to continue working on the modified drone until nightfall.

Chapter 37 – Charlotte heads out after midnight. She goes through Security on level 34 by saying she has come up to inspect a power leak in Communications. Charlotte runs into Thurman, and explains she is checking a power drain. Thurman tells her to see to it, and continues on his way. In Communications, she inquires about faulty equipment. She is directed to microphone number two. Charlotte says she'll have to take the microphone with her, but that she'll have it back tomorrow. Just as she is about to leave in the elevator, another man comes rushing in.

Chapter 38 – The man who comes rushing in is Eren. Eren introduces himself as the on-shift Head. He then recognizes Charlotte to be a woman. Charlotte attacks him, and the two scramble for the upper hand. Charlotte plunges her screwdriver into Eren's neck. She drags him out of the elevator, but he grabs hold of her pistol and shoots her in the shoulder. Charlotte knows she is now not only injured, but that people will be looking for her.

Chapter 39 – Charlotte knows it is only a matter of time before people come looking for her. She does her best to patch the shoulder wound. She changes clothes, and rushes to install the microphone. She is able to raise Juliette, who reports that everyone is dead.



Analysis

The establishing of a completed tunnel between Silo 17 and Silo 18 has mixed results. The truth is in question. Juliette's assertion that other silos exist is demonstrated to be empirically true, but there are still those who believe that there could not possibly be other silos. Additionally, many others believe that establishing contact and travel between the two silos is dangerous. The reader – as well as Juliette – realizes that these people have been lied to for so long that even when presented with the truth (such as another silo existing), the truth is still disbelieved.

Survival becomes prominent in this section of the novel, especially as it relates to truth. Keene's activities are discovered through a following of clues to the truth and the awakening of Thurman. Keene himself is apprehended and severely beaten, making his chances of survival almost impossible. Already ailing physically from illness, Keene is put in a much more dire situation from the beating he is administered. Without Keene to control things, the fate of 18 is sealed. Thurman orders 18 shut down.

Juliette's decision to dig a tunnel becomes salvation for some two hundred people who manage to cross through to Silo 17. Nearly 5,000 people in Silo 18 are eradicated with poison gas. It is chillingly reminiscent of Nazi gas chambers from World War II. Charlotte is now on her own without her brother, so survival is a matter of the greatest urgency. Charlotte knows she must survive in order to ensure that her brother survives. Charlotte's struggle for survival becomes an actual struggle when she grapples with Eren, plunging a screwdriver into his neck and being shot in the shoulder in turn.

Juliette and the survivors of Silo 18 are not the only ones who must now endure the truth, but Thurman must as well. Thurman confronts Keene over everything Keene has done. Because of their long history together, the reader notes how Thurman alternates between regret and anger with Keene. He understands why Keene has been attempting to save all of the silos, but Thurman – in dystopian fashion – knows that it cannot be for the greater good, which is to ensure the survival of humanity. Thurman is further angered by the fact that his own daughter was working to ensure the survival of the other silos, and may have even helped them go rogue.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Charlotte so desperate to ensure her brother's survival? What becomes of her attempt to free him? What happens to Charlotte as a result?

Discussion Question 2

What truths are uncovered in this section of the novel? Choose three important truths and explain how these truths affect those people associated with them.



Discussion Question 3

Why does Juliette's decision to dig a tunnel to Silo 18 become so important in this section of the novel, especially as it relates to survival? What does the tunnel ensure?

Vocabulary

bizarre, bewildering, nostalgic, redundancies, subvert, devoid, deaccentuate, jostling, stylus



Part 3, Chapter 40 – Part 4, Chapter 53

Summary

Chapter 40 – Dr. Nichols and Raph tend to Juliette, who has been injured in the tunnel sealing. Dr. Nichols confirms Jimmy and the kids are safe. Juliette tells them that they cannot allow people to dig their way back to 17, or everyone will die.

Chapter 41 – Charlotte heads into the tunnel where miners are clearing away rock and rubble under Courtnee's direction. Charlotte tells Courtnee to stop digging, that Shirly's sacrificing her own life to seal the tunnel has saved the people who made it through. Courtnee counters that Silo 17 cannot support Silo 18's people for more than a few days. Charlotte tells Courtnee that she has been confirmed correct about other silos existing, and now they need to listen to her about poison in Silo 18. Charlotte argues for a day or two of reflection, to figure out what happened. The backup generator in the digging machine can power Silo 17. She reveals the true enemy are the people who made the silos and brought death down upon them. It isn't revenge they should seek, Charlotte explains, but prevention that such things ever happen again.

Chapter 42 – As Elise makes her way up the silo stairwell, a man recognizes her as one of the kids originally from 17. The man invites her to church. Elise says she is looking for Puppy. The man says he will help her find Puppy. He tells her she is a miracle.

Chapter 43 – Charlotte hides in the drone lift whenever someone comes into the armory in Silo 1. Charlotte feels a connection to the people living in the fifty other silos. She continues to attempt to reach out to anyone she can by radio. She gets in touch with a man from Mechanical in 17, who says Juliette is busy. Charlotte says she'll try back.

Chapter 44 – Thurman, Brevard, and another security agent arrive with breakfast for Donald Keene. Keene is continuing to weaken. Thurman reveals that Eren has been killed, and wants to know who has been working with Keene. Thurman sends Security outside, and tells Keene he was right about Anna. Thurman asks if Keene remembers anyone tampering with gas feeds between Medical and Population Control. Keene says he does not. Keene wants to know what is wrong with him physically. Thurman explains that Keene's body contains nanobots fighting to save him, and nanobots fighting to kill him. Keene will be ripped apart in the end. Thurman seems to regret this, and then leaves.

Chapter 45 – Darcy cleans up the blood near the elevator. He discovers a fired bullet with blood on it, and imagines it hit the killer and traveled clean through the killer's body. Darcy brings the bullet to Dr. Whitmore. The DNA is analyzed as belonging to someone from Emergency Personnel. Darcy goes to the Emergency Personnel cryofreeze hall. Darcy discovers there are no names on these cryobeds, but only numbers. He discovers one of them empty. He takes down the number, notes the missing person is a pilot, and has a suspicion as to where the person might be.



Chapter 46 – Charlotte longs to help the three-dozen or so silos that are left out of the original fifty. She also knows about the suicide pact wherein only one silo will be saved and released, while all others, including the one in which she is now, will be exterminated. Charlotte gets in touch with Juliette on the radio. Juliette says she will kill Donald Keene. Charlotte argues that she and her brother were not involved in the silo system the way Juliette thinks. She argues that Keene wanted to tell Juliette there is hope outside, but that he was arrested because he wasn't supposed to be talking to her. Charlotte relates some of the details about Thurman and his plot. Charlotte apologizes for what has happened to Juliette and all the other silos. Charlotte explains that the digging machines were meant to go to a place called "S-E-E-D" noted on the map of silos. Before she can explain further, Darcy appears.

Chapter 47 – Courtnee oversees operations to get 17 up and running again as best as possible. Erik, Bobby, Fitz, and others discuss tunneling to another silo. Juliette reveals she is heading to Silo 1 above ground, and will need all the explosives she can get her hands on. She is determined to kill all the people responsible for the silo system. Juliette reminds her group that the people in charge of each of the silos work directly with Silo 1. Erik thanks Juliette for giving his wife and kids a chance by urging the dig to 17. He tells her every day he has with his family is now a gift. He tells her to get the bastards who did this to them.

Chapter 48 – Juliette says goodbye to her father, and asks him to watch after Jimmy and the kids. Raph says goodbye to Juliette, and explains that Gina from Supply tabulated they had about 250 years' worth of materials left in Silo 18, as though everything was counting down toward something.

Chapter 49 – Rickson, Hannah, and Miles await the return of Jimmy in the farmlands, for Jimmy has gone off to find Elise. Hannah worries about where food will come from. Miles wishes all the other people would leave. Rickson finds a tomato, and brings it to Hannah and Miles to eat. Jimmy, looking for Elise, comes across a man named Terry Harlson, who slices one of the rubber hoses pumping water out of the depths of the silo. Terry wants to know where all the power comes from. Jimmy acknowledges it comes from above. Terry says Elise is probably with the church men.

Chapter 50 – The religious men have found a number of books, and they ask Elise where they may find more. A man named Mr. Rash is especially interested in the books. He asks if Elise believes in God. She says she does. He asks her to sign her name to a piece of paper. She does as she is asked, though she would rather find Jimmy, Puppy, and her friends. Elise then hears that two people have been pronounced man and wife.

Part 4, Dust

Chapter 51 – Darcy points a gun at Charlotte, who tells him not to shoot. Charlotte asks about her brother. Darcy says Keene is not doing well, and is being put back into cryosleep that day. Darcy is curious how Charlotte and Keene were awakened. He is more curious than concerned, and tells her he will not hurt her. He knows something



bigger is going on, and wants to get to the bottom of it all. Charlotte asks Darcy if he wants the truth. She offers to show it to him.

Chapter 52 – Charlotte and Darcy arrive for Keene, and bring him to the armory. Charlotte reveals the world isn't gone, just their piece of it. She says she has seen it with the modified drone. Keene tells them what is known, with Silo 40 quietly going offline without warning. He tells them the silos are designed to collapse, crushing everything beneath them. They were designed with an open layout so gassing them would be easier. That includes Silo 1. Darcy points out that his night shift will be up in an hour, and his boss will be angry when a prisoner is discovered missing.

Chapter 53 – Juliette comes across Father Wendel, who has had a crisis of confidence in the new silo. He worries everyone is doomed. Juliette says the people who did this to them are doomed. Hank reports that violence has broken out on the farm level, but it has been subdued. Rumors abound that higher up people go, the greater the chance they have of dying. Juliette tells Hank to dispel the rumors.

Analysis

As this section of the novel begins, the survivors of Silo 18 attempt to make sense not only of their survival, but the loss of so many loved ones. The survivors also attempt to make sense of their new world in Silo 18. Survival remains a critical theme as Juliette and her close friends like Courtnee come to recognize that survival in Silo 17 will be extremely limited until the place is up and running – or until they dig their way out.

Survival in Silo 18 is not contingent wholly on having power, breathable air, or escape, but on social order being maintained. As is noted, people rush to claim plots of farmland, trampling on the rights of Silo 17 residents, while self-interested groups begin to size up the extent and scope of their influence and control, such as the priestly order. Indeed, Elise's captivity by the priestly class is disconcerting – especially when it is discovered the gentle Father Wendel has lost control of the congregation, and has lost his nerve.

The truth again becomes crucial in this section of the novel. Thurman comes to discover that Keene was correct about Anna lending assistance to the other silos. Thurman's stance towards Keene becomes less harsh, but Thurman is still unforgiving. Rather than killing Keene, Keene will be put into Deep Freeze forever. Keene himself learns from Thurman why he is in such ill-health: Keene has both good and bad nanobots inside him, warring for control of his body and warring against each other – with the end result being that Keene's body is being ripped apart. Keene is suffering the fate that billions on the planet would have suffered had Thurman not preempted it all with a nuclear attack.

Truth also becomes the most powerful weapon that Charlotte has when Darcy arrives to find her. Darcy has been investigating the entire situation with respect to Keene, and reveals to Charlotte that he believes there is something bigger than all of them going on. Charlotte confirms this, and tells him the truth behind Silo 1, Thurman, and the silo



system at large. This leads to Darcy throwing his lot in with Charlotte and Keene, helping Keene out of his cell and to the temporary safety of the armory.

Charlotte struggles to convince Juliette of the truth – that neither she, nor Keene, were involved in the silo system the way Juliette thinks – and that there is an area on the map that Juliette and her people must head for that is labeled “SEED”. What the purpose of this area might be is currently unknown, but it is something that Charlotte (and later Juliette) seeks to find out. However, Juliette’s determination to destroy Charlotte and everyone else in Silo 1 may prove costly. Juliette’s determination for revenge clouds her judgment, and it obscures her as being a true agent of good because she is so bent on vengeance.

Discussion Question 1

What do you believe explains Thurman’s reluctance to kill Keene outright? What does Thurman hope to gain by keeping Keene awake and alive for at least a little longer?

Discussion Question 2

How does Charlotte convince Darcy to side with her against Silo 1? Why does Darcy ultimately switch sides to assist Charlotte and Keene?

Discussion Question 3

Do you believe that Juliette’s desire for revenge is clouding her judgment and undermining her position as being on the side of good? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

vaguely, recurring, relic, intoxication, nirvana, makeshift, burgeoning, ravaged, morosely



Part 4, Chapter 54 – Epilogue

Summary

Chapter 54 – Shaw finds Jimmy to tell him that a group of people have taken Elise and won't let her go. Jimmy heads after them. Elise is terrified, cries, and wants to leave. Rash won't let her, squeezing her by the wrist whenever she tries to leave. Jimmy arrives with Shaw and a gun to save Elise.

Chapter 55 – Juliette heads to Communications in Silo 17. There, a crazed priest in robes has started a fire, only to be knocked out by Raph. They are too late to stop the fire from destroying the communications equipment.

Chapter 56 – Charlotte and Keene hide in the drone lift while the armory is searched. They then rush to the radio to try to raise Silo 17. Charlotte suggests flying Keene out by drone, but Keene won't leave his sister. He is dying anyways, he explains. He calls for a bodysuit, and asks about the sixty-kilo bombs the drones can carry.

Chapter 57 – Charlotte and Keene prepare to leave the Silo. They do not know how long they will survive outside. Darcy brings them food and says he is sympathetic to their situation. Charlotte and Keene announce they are going to destroy the servers so the silos cannot be destroyed. Donald then forces Darcy and Charlotte into the drone lift at gunpoint. He will get them out of the silo while he detonates the bomb. Keene tells Charlotte he loves her as the door to the lift closes.

Chapter 58 – Juliette and Raph are helpless against the fire in Silo 17's Communications room. They consult a map of the silo system, and consider the digging machine meant to go in only one direction. By finding Silo 17's digging machine, they can determine the direction the machine is truly meant to go. Elise, Puppy, and Jimmy arrive. Juliette decides a town hall meeting will be necessary to determine what the next step is – to stay hidden or to leave.

Chapter 59 – People arrive for the town hall meeting. Juliette explains the entire situation, including the silo system as best she can. She reveals that they can either stay and try to make a life, or leave and never come back. She notes on the map how the digger is oriented up toward a specific place in order to allow escape from the silo. Most people agree to proceed and get out.

Chapter 60 – Digging gets underway immediately. Meanwhile, Juliette, her father, and some others clear away the bodies between the doors to the exit to the silo. Dr. Nichols believes there is something wrong with the bodies, because they appear to have died only a few weeks before, when Juliette says they've been there for years. He thinks there is something wrong or different with Silo 17, and notes how many sets of twins there were from the place. He points out how healthy Jimmy is, and how healthy the



kids are. Juliette then points out that some of her scars have disappeared. Juliette suspects it is something in the air, and that it is time to get out.

Chapter 61 – Mean appear in the armory. Darcy shoots at them. He covers Charlotte's escape. She is heartbroken as she heads out across the land. Keene is shot while trying to position the bomb. With the last of his strength, he shoots and detonates the bomb. Charlotte falls to the ground above from the rumbling. A crate quickly forms as Silo 1 collapses.

Chapter 62 – Juliette, her father, and several others move beyond the dead zone around the silos in the above world to see blue sky and green grass. A wall of dust and grime hangs like a veil over the silo area. Everyone who has followed them is stunned at the beauty of Fulton County, Georgia. The first wildlife they see are black birds in the sky. They then find the concrete structure intended for them on the map – the place called "SEED", with seeds for a new beginning.

Chapter 63 – Juliette cautions the 200 people with her not to take more food, supplies, and seeds than they need from the concrete structure. Elise points out a map in one of the books they have, and urges everyone to head north toward water so fishing will be possible. Others do not want to live in the shadow of the silos, and decide moving north is best. They then see a woman in a silver bodysuit approaching. The woman introduces herself as Charlotte. Juliette welcomes her to come along, realizing Charlotte was telling the truth about everything.

Epilogue – Everyone gathers around campfires on the journey north. Juliette and Elise look up at the stars. Juliette thinks of Lukas, who loved to watch the stars on the massive video screen in Silo 18. Juliette and Courtnee share a cup of lemon and rose tea, which they have never had before. Courtnee asks Juliette if she thinks they'll make it.

Analysis

As the novel (and the series) comes to a conclusion, the final truths are made apparent about the Silo to Juliette, and the final truths are uncovered by Juliette and by Charlotte. The digging machines each silo had been equipped with from the start was directed to dig toward the seed building, where food, supplies, and seeds for crops were all located. Other truths are hinted at, but never clearly discussed.

For example, Dr. Nichols contends that something is wrong with Silo 17 for people to be so healthy there, for twins to be born in such great numbers, and for the dead bodies not to have decayed. It is presumed that the medical nanobots overpowered the terrorist nanobots, and remained operative and efficient in Silo 17. It would explain why no one is ever sick, most children are born as perfect twins, and why the bodies –though dead –never decayed, because the medical nanobots continue to repair and restore what remained of the bodies following death.



As social order breaks down to some degree in Silo 17, and with inherent danger still looming from Silo 1, Juliette decides getting out is the only real option. Juliette calls together a town hall meeting to address the question of leaving and to tell everyone the truth about the silo system once more, but as is common for the course, not everyone believes her or is willing to leave the silo. Many people agree with her, though the total number is not known. But a large enough group emerges for there to be a chance that humanity will make it. Juliette notes as much when Courtnee asks whether or now they will survive. Interestingly enough, not much thought is given to the other several dozen silos that remain underground.

Meanwhile, Keene's own struggle for survival becomes a quest not for him to survive, but to make sure his sister and the people in the other silos survive. He ultimately and heroically gives his life so that everyone else might live. Darcy, too, surrenders his life protecting Charlotte in the drone lift. The survival of humankind comes to rest on the shoulders of just a few people. True, there were innocent people in Silo 1 – mainly, the women and children still asleep – but there is little doubt that nearly all others would have done as bidden by Thurman.

Yet truth ultimately wins out in the end. Juliette and her group are seen by Charlotte, who appears alone and exhausted. Juliette comes to accept the truth that she and Keene were never truly a part of the silo scheme. Juliette welcomes Charlotte with open arms and invites her to come along north. The reader should note that compasses are set by true magnetic north. North becomes symbolic of the truth – headed for true north reflects the accepting of the truth at long last. Heading for what is true also means heading for what is good and what is just.

Discussion Question 1

Why do Juliette and her group decide to head north rather than staying near the silo system, or heading off in another direction? Why does Juliette think that they will survive?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Keene ultimately sacrifice his own life by detonating the bomb in Silo 1? Do you believe his act of self-sacrifice is justified or demanded based on his role in the silo system? Why?

Discussion Question 3

When Charlotte comes upon Juliette's group, how does Juliette respond? Why?

Vocabulary

lamented, razed, calamity, foray, dwindled, euphoria, reticent, consternation, sonorous



Characters

Donald Keene

Donald Keene is a former United States Congressman who unknowingly helped build the silo system in 2049. Along with several hundred others in Silo 1, he became one of the workers committed to overseeing the survival of humankind in the silos until he learned the truth. Keene thereafter endeavored to do everything he could to save as many people as possible. Throughout the novel, Keene is slowly dying from the inside out as nanobots war with one another for control of his body. Keene is utterly remorseful for his part in things, and to ensure the survival of the other silos – and his sister, Charlotte – Keene detonates a bomb that not only kills himself, but destroys Silo 1.

Charlotte

Charlotte Keene is the sister of Donald Keene. A former drone pilot, Charlotte becomes a part of the silo operation through Senator Thurman's request, though she does not learn the truth of things until she awakened by her brother decades later. Charlotte becomes Keene's only ally as he struggles to save the silos. Charlotte attempts to keep in touch with Juliette, works to free Keene, and is later heartbroken when Keene sacrifices his own life to save hers. Charlotte later comes across Juliette's traveling band of people, and is welcomed among them.

Juliette

Juliette has been elected Mayor of Silo 18, and as mayor oversees a digging operation to reach Jimmy in Silo 17. Juliette has been outside, and knows the world above is dangerous. She knows everything they have been told is a lie, and so becomes overly-skeptical of everything she sees and hears. Juliette is devastated when her boyfriend, Lukas, is killed in Silo 18. She rallies some two hundred people in Silo 17 after Silo 18 collapses, and leads them on into the world above. She tells Courtnee that she believes they have it in their power to do anything they want, including not only to survive, but to thrive.

Jimmy

Jimmy "Solo" Parker is one of the few survivors of Silo 17. He befriends Juliette when she first encounters his silo, but worries about opening a link between Silo 17 and Silo 18. Jimmy concerns himself primarily with caring for the survivors of Silo 17, and accompanies all those who leave for the world above.



Darcy

Darcy is a Silo 1 Security agent who helps track Keene and Charlotte down, but realizes there is something bigger going on than any of them combined. He confronts Charlotte and Keene about this, who deliver the entire truth to Darcy. Darcy, a former Secret Service member and ex-military, gives up his own life to protect Charlotte as she escapes.

Thurman

Paul Thurman is a former U.S. Senator who was one of the head conspirators of the silo system. He is nearly killed in the last novel by Keene, but awakened from cryosleep when blood is discovered on his cryobed. Thurman is enraged at what Keene has done, but also feels sentimental toward Keene because of their working history together, and because Keene once dated his daughter. Keene is killed when Silo 1 collapses.

Elise

Elise is a small girl who is among the survivors of Silo 17. She is a sweet, gentle child who falls in love with a puppy that she names Puppy, and keeps as a pet. She is forced into a marriage ceremony with Rash, but is saved by Jimmy. Elise becomes one of the people who leave Silo 17 for the world above, and suggests everyone head north to where they can fish.

Courtnee

Courtnee is a good friend of Juliette, and one of the survivors of Silo 18 who makes the journey through the tunnel to Silo 17. There, she helps Juliette to keep things stable and organized. Courtnee is among those who leaves Silo 17 for the world above, but she remains worried about whether or not they'll survive. Juliette assures her that they will.

Rash

Rash is a religious fanatic who forces Elise into a marriage ceremony with him. Rash is a twisted and disgusting individual who has no qualms about marrying a child. Rash is only stopped by Jimmy, who threatens to kill Rash at gunpoint if he does not let Elise go. Rash is among those who stay behind in the silo.

Miles

Miles is one of the surviving children of Silo 17. Miles is a gentle and kind child who journeys over to Silo 18. There, he is killed by a mob in Silo 18 fearful of him and his

survival. His death indicates the truth that not everyone in the silo is prepared to handle people from another silo, indeed, another culture.



Symbols and Symbolism

Silo system map

Silo system maps are located in the control rooms of each of the silos, including in Silo 1. The silo system maps denote the positions of fifty silos, including Silo 1, and an area marked SEED. The SEED area is a storage place of supplies, seed, and food for survivors to use in their efforts to repopulate Earth. Silo system maps are used by Keene and Charlotte to demonstrate the truth to Darcy, while Juliette uses a map to learn where other silos are, and where the survivors ought to go.

Microphone

A microphone needing repair is taken by Charlotte from Silo 1's communication center. Charlotte repairs the microphone and uses it to establish contact with Silo 17 by radio. Charlotte speaks with Juliette several times by microphone and radio, though Juliette is disinclined to hear anything Charlotte has to say.

Blood

Blood is found on the exterior of Thurman's cryobed. The blood is ultimately traced back to Keene. Blood is also found on the bullet that passes through Charlotte's arm, leading Darcy to track down and find Charlotte. Because of this series of events related to blood, Darcy learns the truth about the silo system, and then turns against it.

Cryobeds

Cryobeds are cryogenic freezing chambers designed to allow an individual to sleep for hundreds of years without aging. Cryobeds are occupied by hundreds of people in Silo 1, allowing them to leapfrog through time, awakening for six-month shifts every several decades.

Samples of earth and air

Samples of the air and earth from the world above are collected by Juliette for testing in Silo 18. These samples will determine whether or not the world is safe for human habitation. Juliette learns the samples all have a high amount of argon in them, which she believes is what is leading to the deaths of anyone who ventures outside. Keene later realizes the argon is how the nanobots – both good and bad – are transmitted by Silo 1.



Screwdriver

A screwdriver is utilized by Charlotte to remove a microphone in the communications lab in Silo 1. The screwdriver later becomes a defensive weapon as Charlotte plunges it into the throat of Eren. The screwdriver does not kill Eren outright, however, as Eren is able to shoot Charlotte through the shoulder before she can escape in the elevator.

Bullet

A bullet fired from a gun handled by Eren passes through Charlotte's shoulder, and embeds into the wall. This bullet is coated in Charlotte's blood. Darcy finds the blood-coated bullet, has the blood analyzed, and tracks Charlotte down. Because of this, he is exposed to the truth about the silo system.

Bomb

A sixty-kilo bomb, often carried by drones, is instead used by Keene in his plot to bring down Silo 1. The bomb is moved into position where Keene specifically seeks to destroy the computer infrastructure of the silo, but is shot down before he can detonate it by hand. Keene in turn uses a firearm to shoot the bomb and detonate it, thus destroying Silo 1 and ensuring all other silos have a chance to survive.

Seeds

Seeds are among the supplies that Juliette and her group find in the SEED storage tower. The seeds are primarily of a variety of crops, with the intent that new food sources will be able to be grown wherever Juliette and her people settle. These seeds are a vital resource and make a farming-based, stationary community possible.

Lemon rose tea

Lemon rose tea is among those foods and supplies found in the SEED tower. It is a simple but utterly delicious drink that Juliette and Courtnee quickly fall in love with. It demonstrates the amount of variety there is to be had in the outside world, and demonstrates just how much those living underground are deprived of. This includes simple comforts, like tea.



Settings

Silo 1

Silo 1 is the central control center in the silo system. It extends miles underground, and is serviced by some 100 shifters at any given time. Silo 1 is the home of Keene and Charlotte as they work together to save the other silos. To Keene, Silo 1 is largely full of good but misguided people in some cases, and cruel and malicious people like Thurman in others. As Keene learns, only one silo is to be released into the world based on the performance and chance of survival of its residents within. All other silos, including Silo 1, are to be destroyed. Keene ultimately comes to destroy Silo 1 so that all surviving silos – some three dozen of them – have the chance to survive.

Silo 17

Silo 17 is the home of Jimmy, and is located next to Silo 18. Silo 17 extends miles underground, and is largely a wreck after violence and flooding have decimated the building. Only Jimmy and a handful of others, including Rickson, Hannah, and Elise, have managed to survive in 17. Juliette has a tunnel dug to connect 17 to 18, ensuring travel between both. When 18 is shut down, 17 becomes salvation for some 200 survivors of 18. It is from Silo 17 that Juliette ultimately leads most people into the world above.

Silo 18

Silo 18 is the home of Juliette, Courtnee, and some 5,000 other people. Juliette is elected Mayor of 18 due to her experiences in the outside world. She tries repeatedly to make people in Silo 18 see the truth, but most refuse to accept it. Juliette spearheads a digging operation to create a tunnel to Jimmy in 18. When Thurman discovers that Silo 18 has gone rogue, he orders it shut down. Nearly 5,000 people are butchered by gas in Silo 18, and only about 200 escape to Silo 17 with Juliette.

SEED Tower

The SEED tower is located near the silo system, but beyond the dust veil that obscures it. The SEED tower is stocked with food, supplies, and seeds for crops and food plants. Juliette and the survivors of Silo 17 and Silo 18 who have ventured above ground head for the SEED tower, where they load up on only what they need before moving north. Much of the stockpiles of SEED remain in place in case other populations should follow Juliette and her group.

North

North is a vague and unidentified area that to which Juliette and the survivors of Silos 17 and 18 decide to head. North is a location and direction suggested by little Elise, due to the area's proximity to water. This, Elise contends, will be a good place to settle because people can fish from the water. As the novel ends, Juliette, Jimmy, Elise, Courtnee, and dozens of people are headed north.



Themes and Motifs

Dystopianism

Dystopianism is an important theme in the novel "Dust" by Hugh Howey. Dystopianism involves a government, organization, association, or company, that exercises tremendous or total power and influence in the lives of everyday people, often denying their human and legal rights in the name of the greater good. Those in power will do whatever it takes to retain power, and will do whatever is necessary to secure their own ends. On the surface, those with power have the stated goal of helping the people, but in reality, they are more likely to harm people than help them. Such is the case with the silo system in the novel.

Originally developed as a way to save humanity against nanoterrorism, the silo system was meant to ensure the redevelopment of the human race in the world after being kept in the silos for generations across five hundred years. From the fifty silos constructed, only one silo of people will be released back into the world based on diagnostics measuring their chances for survival. All other silos, including Silo 1, will be destroyed.

250 years, and generations into the scheme, some three dozen silos still remain operational and under control of Silo 1. Several of the silos have been destroyed, while some others, including 40, have gone rogue and gone offline. That tens of thousands of people can have their lives ended in an instant is emblematic of the terrible power Thurman and Silo 1 have, and is proof that the entire project to save humanity in silos is questionable when it is done against the will of the people, and when so many more people must die.

The people who live in the silos are lied to, as Juliette comes to learn. They have been lied to about other silos not existing, about the world above being too dangerous, and about their best interests being kept at heart. They are refused any great independence or freedom, and can be exterminated on a whim. Such is the case when Thurman realizes that 18 appears rogue. Thurman gives the order to shut down 18, and some 5,000 people are killed in a matter of seconds. Only when Juliette and a group of people decide to leave for the world above do they throw off the mantle of dystopianism. Only when Keene destroys Silo 1 does the mantle dystopianism crumble.

Survival

Survival is an important theme in the novel "Dust" by Hugh Howey. Survival in the novel consists of the survival of the human race at large, individual survival within the silos themselves, and survival beyond the silos by the end of the novel. Survival becomes a principle motivating factor for Juliette especially.

Originally, the silo system was constructed to save humanity from nanoterrorism. Several billion people were killed around the world in a staged nuclear attack to preempt



the nanoterrorist event believed to be coming. Several thousand people were saved in the silos beneath the ground, where for the next 500 years, they would be studied and tabulated based on their performance to see which silo would be released back into the world, while all other silos would be destroyed. In effect, of the tens of thousands of people saved, only a few thousand would survive to go back out into the world.

Keene, Charlotte, and Juliette, all knowing the truth, race to find a way to save as many people as possible. They are aware the survival of thousands of lives is in jeopardy. For Juliette, the survivors of Silos 17 and 18 are a priority, while Keene is concerned with the entire silo system, especially Charlotte. Charlotte herself is primarily concerned with Keene's survival. When Thurman learns that 18 has gone rogue, he orders 18 shut down. Some five thousand people die, while only two hundred survive by fleeing in the tunnel to 17.

Knowing that their survival hangs in the balance due to scarce food, power, and air, Juliette decides a move to the surface is the only plausible option. She, together with most of the survivors break out into the world with a digging machine designed for just that purpose. There, Juliette assures Courtnee that they can indeed survive, and do anything they set their minds to. Additionally, Keene and Darcy give their lives in order to allow Charlotte to escape into the world and meet up with Juliette. Keene sacrifices his own life for the survival of all remaining silos by detonating a bomb that brings down Silo 1.

Truth

Truth is an important theme in the novel "Dust" by Hugh Howey. The truth is an incredibly crucial aspect to survival in the novel, as Keene, Charlotte, Juliette, Darcy, and dozens of others become aware of the truth and endeavor to live. The truth becomes vital in convincing people of the best courses of action, and what is actually real and good in the world.

Ostensibly, the silo system has been constructed to save humanity. Those who live in the silos have been told the world above is poisoned, that they cannot reemerge for 500 years, and that they must do as they are told and live well in the silos until then. The truth is far more complicated. The truth is that Thurman and a band of conspirators, learning that humanity was infected by cell-sized nanoterrorism bots, constructed the silos to shepherd humanity through time to an era when the world was safe again from such evil technology. However, Thurman and his henchmen preempted the nanoterrorist attack they all knew was coming by starting a nuclear war that wiped out billions of people. However, the world above has quickly healed, and just 250 years in is safe and ready to be reclaimed.

However, the truth goes against Thurman's plans. The conspirators of Silo 1 ensure that only a select few in each silo know the truth, so that the rest of the silos may be kept in line. Yet even there, some truths are obscured. For example, each silo is being evaluated for its chances of survivability. The best performing silo will be the only silo



that will be released back into the world. All other people in all other silos will be destroyed. It is a harrowing and terrifying truth. Yet even when confronted with this truth, after having been lied to for so long, many people do not believe Juliette's words about the world above or the silo system itself.

Additionally, the truth becomes a valuable tool for those who wish to survive and who choose to believe Juliette. It allows them to escape into the world above. Likewise, when confronted with the truth of things, Darcy decides to throw his lot in with Keene and Charlotte against the greater silo system. He gives his life to ensure that Charlotte can escape. Keene himself, confronted with the truth, gives up his own life in order to ensure that tens of thousands of others live. This is finally a truth that he can live – and die – with.

Technology

Technology is an important theme in the novel "Dust" by Hugh Howey. Technology proves critical in the decision to create the silo system complex, and to the silo scheme itself. Technology also becomes crucial as Keene, Charlotte, Juliette, and others endeavor to ensure Silo 1's plans are foiled, and as many people as possible survive.

Each silo is a world in and of itself, with technology providing everything from artificial sunlight for farmland to circulating air to communications and computers. Technology here enables tens of thousands of people to survive underground for centuries. Meanwhile, technology also created a need for the silo system in the first place, as medical nanobots the sizes of cells were hijacked by terrorists and evil governments who used the nanotechnology for nefarious ends. Recognizing humanity was doomed, Thurman and his conspiratorial circle preempted the nanoterrorist attack they knew would happen with a nuclear strike that killed billions. Yet, it also wiped the earth clean of evil technology.

Technology also allows communication between the silos. This is critically important for Silo 1, which endeavors to keep tabs on all other silos. Technology not only allows Silo 1 to monitor the other silos, but to destroy them as well should these silos go rogue or try to go offline. It is ironic that the people seeking to eliminate technology used for evil – such as nanoterrorist bots and nuclear weapons – should also use technology intended for good to do evil – such as video monitoring.

A simple digging machine enables Juliette and the others to breach the outside world. They emerge, interestingly enough, with every little technology at their disposal. They will essentially have to start all over again – not only in the world, but in terms of civilization as well. The technology that they depended upon for survival in the silo – such as power for air circulation – is not worthless to them in an oxygen-rich world. Ironically, Thurman and his conspirators achieved what they wanted, just merely ahead of schedule.



Good and Evil

Good and evil forms an important theme in the novel “Dust” by Hugh Howey. Good and evil – what is morally right and morally wrong – is explored in the novel by virtue of the events which lead to the silo scheme, the perpetuation of that scheme, and the actions of individuals seeking to end the scheme.

On the face of it, the desire to save humanity against destruction is a good goal. Even the idea of saving humanity through living in silos underground while the danger above passes is a good thing. However, what is downright evil is the killing of billions of people to preempt a nanoterrorist attack in order to jumpstart the silo system. What is evil (with reference to the theme of dystopianism) is keeping people against their will in the silo system. What is evil is killing thousands of people living in these silos on a whim because they do not conform to what the operators in Silo 1 expect. What is evil is ensuring that only one of these groups of people will be released, while the rest are all killed.

While Keene had a hand in constructing the facility, and while he had a part in eliminating a few silos, he is largely innocent of the entire experiment. Keene can be considered a morally fallen character who has devoted the rest of his life to making up for the past. Keene endeavors to do good by securing the lives of thousands in their silos by seeking to instruct Juliette, and by seeking to find a way to outmaneuver the system. Keene manages to accomplish this through the detonation of a bomb by way of self-sacrifice, ensuring Silo 1 is destroyed and all remaining silos have a chance of survival.

Juliette is aware that great evil has been done through the silo system. She seeks to do good by saving as many lives as she can primarily, and then exacting revenge on Silo 1 in return. Juliette does her best to save people by explaining the truth to them, but not everyone believes her after having lived their lives according to so many lies. Juliette is nevertheless able to save two hundred people from Silo 18, and then a large number of these who emerge from Silo 17 into the world above. The intent from thereon in is to live as good people, and to never repeat the mistakes of the silo system again. As Juliette explains to Courtnee, she believes they can do anything they want.



Styles

Point of View

Hugh Howey tells his novel “Dust” in the third-person limited-omniscient narrative mode from the point of view of an unknown and unnamed narrator. This is done for at least two reasons. First, the third-person aspect of the narrative allows Howey to tell a story that involves numerous characters, and takes place between three very different silos -1, 17, and 18 – and culminating in the world above. The third-person narrator therein acts as a common, unifying thread between all of the stories, guiding the reader between the general plot and several subplots (such as Charlotte’s attempts to modify a drone and Juliette’s digging operation). This is important as in each section of the novel, several subplots are intertwined with one another in an alternating fashion. Second, the limited-omniscient aspect adds a sense of suspense and drama to the novel, as the reader only knows about events as they unfold and are experienced by the characters themselves.

Language and Meaning

Hugh Howey tells his novel “Dust” in language that is simple and straightforward. This is done for at least two reasons. First, the simple and straightforward language allows for a brevity that helps to drive the plot along by giving it a feeling of quickness and drama. This ties directly into the novel’s disaster and dystopian nature. Secondly, most of the characters in the novel are young. Keene, his sister, Juliette, Courtnee, and others are all seemingly in their twenties and thirties. The simple and straightforward language is reflective of the age range and general level of education of these characters – especially those who have grown up within the silos. This adds a sense of realism and believability to the characters and to the novel itself.

Structure

Hugh Howey divides his novel “Dust” into 63 numbered, linear, chronological chapters, preceded by a prologue and succeeded by an epilogue spanning the course of several days sometime in the 2300s. This simple and straightforward structure adds a sense of brevity to events, and gives the story a fast-paced feel. The simple and straightforward approach also allows the reader to move from one subplot to the next without interference between, and gives the novel a more desperate, dramatic feel as chapters – and events within them – can easily be moved between. “Dust” itself forms the third part of a dystopian trilogy by Howey, beginning with “Wool” and “Shift”.

Quotes

They were doing the right thing, she told herself. She had seen with her own eyes how vast the world, had stood on a summit and surveyed the land. All she had to do was show others what was out there.

-- Narrator (Chapter 2 paragraph 22)

Importance: As the novel gets underway, Juliette oversees a digging operation with the intent of reaching Silo 17 by tunnel. Having been outside, Juliette knows that there is an entire world above ground. Her goal is to ultimately reach the outside, but first she must ensure the survivors in Silo 17 have access to 18 so they, too, can get out. Juliette does not yet know it, but the tunnel to 17 will be Salvation for her and people from 18 rather than the other way around.

This is just the beginning.

-- Juliette (Chapter 7 paragraph 38)

Importance: During the digging process, Juliette is seeking to prove to the people in Silo 18 at large that another world exists beyond their own. Juliette's comment that this is only the beginning references not merely the physical digging or the beginning of the process of establishing travel between two silos, but the beginning of learning the truth about the entire silo system. Indeed, this can be extrapolated to reveal a new era in the lives of the people of all of the silos, and the beginning of a series of events which will lead to death or freedom.

I'm afraid of doing the wrong thing.

-- Keene (Chapter 11 paragraph 66)

Importance: As Keene endeavors to do everything he can in order to save the people living in the other silos, he secretly expresses his doubts about messing up. His entire existence since understanding the true nature of the silo system – and indeed, his own part in it – has been redemption. He wants to ensure that as many people in the other silos survive as possible. He also wants to ensure that the final plan – eradication of all silos but one – is never enacted. It demonstrates the renewed moral course that Keene has found himself on.

And Jimmy felt at his core that this was a grave mistake. Two worlds had been united, but they were not anything alike.

-- Narrator (Chapter 21 paragraph 19)

Importance: After living for so long alone, and then for so long with only limited company, Jimmy is concerned about the worlds of Silo 17 and Silo 18 meeting. Jimmy highlights a problem that Thurman and other conspirators in the past had noted –that each silo was like a self-contained nation with different customs and practices that had evolved over centuries, and therefore might not get along elsewhere. This comes to



fruition when a mob from Silo 18 kills a child from Silo 17 by throwing him over the stairwell.

Someone to save. The folly of man – the folly of the blasted silos he had helped to build – this assumption that things needed saving. They ought to have been left on their own, both people and the planet.”

-- Narrator (Chapter 31 paragraph 6)

Importance: Here, Keene considers the state of the world and of the silo system. He notes, interestingly, how people always want to save the world, or how people are always looking for someone or something to save – but whether or not this is a good thing seems unknown to Keene. Keene’s idealism has been trampled by Thurman’s cruelty and the nature of the silo scheme, and now he wishes that mankind and the planet had been left alone to survive or die.

The world isn’t gone. Just our piece of it.

-- Charlotte (Chapter 52 paragraph 22)

Importance: Charlotte explains much of the unfolding situation to Darcy, including the truth of the entire silo system. Darcy has long suspected that there is something far bigger going on than he and the others had been led to believe, and Keene and Charlotte confirm his suspicions. As a result, Darcy becomes an ally of Charlotte and Keene in their struggle to shut down the silo system.

She hoped to rise above the injustices strewn about her, to escape this last spasm of civility before chaos reigned.”

-- Narrator (Chapter 55 paragraph 2)

Importance: As the situation in Silo 17 begins to break down, Juliette knows that time is running out. If she does not move quickly to get as many people out of Silo 17 as possible, chaos will take over and people will die. One person has already died in a dispute over a plot of farmland. This is too much for Juliette to accept.

But there were other silos, dozens of them, teeming with life and lives.

-- Narrator (Chapter 55 paragraph 9)

Importance: As Juliette considers the state of the world, she realizes that the world hasn’t exactly ended. There are dozens of other silos –dozens of other worlds – completely contained within themselves. It is staggering to think they live at the whim of a central silo. It is also staggering to think that so many people have lived and died completely underground and in ignorance of the greater world above.

We could stay here and make a life, but I don’t know for how long. And we could live in fear... The alternative is to go. But if we do, there’s no coming back.

-- Juliette (Chapter 59 paragraph 22)

Importance: With tensions escalating, Juliette calls a town hall meeting with all of the



survivors of Silo 18 who have crossed over into Silo 17. She lays out the truth to everyone – not all of whom accept her word – and reveals there are two options. One is to stay for an undetermined amount of time; the other is to leave and never come back. Juliette is determined to leave. Most people end up following her.

There's something not right about this entire silo, I'm telling you.
-- Dr. Nichols (Chapter 60 paragraph 19)

Importance: Dr. Nichols believes that there is something is wrong with Silo 17 for people to be so healthy there, for twins to be born in such great numbers, and for dead bodies not to have rapidly decayed. It can be assumed by the reader that the medical nanobots overpowered the terrorist nanobots, and remained operative and efficient in Silo 17. It would explain why no one is ever sick, why most children are born as perfect twins, and why the bodies – though dead – never truly decayed, because the medical nanobots continued to repair and restore what remained of the bodies following death.

Juliette studied this concrete tower, knowing what they would find inside. Here was the seed of a new beginning.
-- Narrator (Chapter 62 paragraph 22)

Importance: Out of the ground, Juliette and her group come to the building on the map marked "SEED". Here, they find the start for a new beginning: food, supplies, and seeds for crops. The building is a wealth of possibility. Juliette cautions everyone not to take more than they need, for undoubtedly, other people will emerge from the silos one day and will be in need of the same supplies and assistance.

I think we'll make it. I think we can make any damn thing we like.
-- Juliette (Epilogue paragraph 49)

Importance: While traveling north at Elise's suggestion, Courtnee asks Juliette if Juliette thinks they'll make it. Juliette contends that they will. She thinks that not only will they make it as in terms of surviving, but that they have it in themselves to begin the world again and make things right provided they are willing to do so.