

Endangered Study Guide

Endangered by Eliot Schrefer

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Plot Summary

Endangered, written by Eliot Schrefer, is the story of Sophie Biyoya-Ciardulli and her life with her mother in the Congo. Sophie is the child of a white man and a black woman. She spends her early years in the Congo until her father gets a job in Miami, Florida. By then, her mother has devoted herself to creating a sanctuary for bonobos and refuses to leave the Congo. Her parents divorce and Sophie leaves with her father to attend school in America, while her mother continues to work on the sanctuary. Sophie spends summers with her mother.

When she's fourteen, Sophie arrives in the Congo to stay with her mother. She sees a man with a young bonobo ape that is obviously malnourished and is being abused. Sophie rushes to the man and uses the money she has in her pocket to buy the bonobo, later named Otto. When she arrives at the sanctuary, her mother is furious. Sophie's motives in purchasing the bonobo are good but she has inadvertently promoted the bonobo black market. A few days later, the same man shows up with two more bonobo youngsters. Sophie later discovers their bodies and realizes that she's at least partly to blame for their deaths.

At the sanctuary, Sophie struggles to keep Otto alive. He bonds deeply with her and they spend all their time together. Her mother goes to a remote region of the country to release several bonobos just a few days before Sophie is due to leave for Miami. After her mother's departure, war breaks out. Sophie is cut off from news for awhile but then learns that she'll have a window of opportunity to leave the country. She plans to go but changes her mind when Otto runs after the van. She hides in the large bonobo enclosure, locking herself in with the electric fence.

When the military arrives at the sanctuary, many of the workers are murdered. Sophie spends weeks inside the enclosure, hiding and living among the bonobos. When she discovers that the electric fence no longer works, she knows she'll have to take Otto and leave. She hates leaving the other bonobos, knowing the soldiers will hunt them down and kill them, but doesn't know what else to do. She slips out but another youngster follows, followed by several of the adults. She has a close encounter with a soldier but manages to escape.

She plans to make her way to the nearby city of Kinshasa but has to drug the other youngster in the bonobo group in order to get away with only Otto. She finds the city in chaos and decides she'll go north to find her mother. She sets out on a very dangerous journey which includes a trip up a river with a native man. When Otto is captured in a snare, she has to venture into a dangerous military stronghold to rescue him.

After months of hiding and traveling, she finds herself in a small village where a kind woman provides food and a safe place to rest. She discovers that her mother is in the same village, recovering from a bout of malaria. They spend the coming weeks there, resting, recuperating, and waiting for the fighting to stop. When they arrive back in Kinshasa, they find that the sanctuary is basically intact but almost all the bonobos are



gone. Sophie's mother is determined to rebuild and sets about the duties toward achieving that. They soon discover that most of the bonobos are actually safe, living on the property that belongs to the country's president.

Sophie remains in the Congo with her mother where she finishes school and spends a great deal of time with Otto. She then goes away to college and returns after graduation with plans to help build a stronger economy in the country. She visits the remote bonobo preserve with her mother and spends a little time with Otto, discovering that Otto is accompanied by a female and a youngster.



Part 1, Chapters 1 - 2

Summary

Part One is titled "Otto." Chapter One, Kinshasa, The Capital of Congo, opens with Sophie Biyoya-Ciardulli's arrival in Kinshasa. She was born in Kinshasa and lived here until she was eight. Her father got a job in Miami, Florida, and Sophie moved with him to America. When her parents divorced, her mother remained in Kinshasa. Sophie attends school in Miami and spends summer vacations with her mother. The region is dangerous, crowded, and has few roads.

Sophie's mother, Florence, operates a sanctuary for bonobo apes. An employee of the sanctuary, Clement, is driving Sophie from the airport when Sophie sees a man on the side of the road with a bonobo. The ape is tied up, malnourished, dirty, and has obviously been abused. Sophie says she has to help the bonobo, but Clement says Florence will turn the information over to the Ministry of Environment. Sophie refuses to listen and jumps from the car, giving Clement no choice but to follow.

Sophie tells the man that her mother operates the bonobo sanctuary. The man says the bonobo is "my friend," but he offers to sell him. He says his family will starve if he doesn't get some money for the ape. Sophie believes him. Clement says they won't buy the bonobo because it's illegal to sell them, but Sophie has some money in her pocket. She hands it over in exchange for the bonobo. Sophie, Clement, and the bonobo get back in the car. The little ape is missing a couple of fingers and is in poor condition. He doesn't fight Sophie. He's not interested in her attempts at interaction. Sophie knows that he's too thin and that he may not live. She whispers a promise that she won't let anything hurt him but knows she may not be able to keep it.

In Chapter Two, Sophie arrives at the sanctuary, located on the former campus of a state school. Florence started the sanctuary as place for confiscated or orphaned bonobos. Fortunately, Florence is not out front to greet them. Both Sophie and Clement are relieved that they won't yet have to face Florence. Sophie takes the young bonobo, soon to be named Otto, inside. A worker named Patrice is in the veterinary office and he begins to examine Otto. Patrice tries to get an IV started but can't with the equipment available. He also takes blood to test for diseases and says Sophie should give Otto a bath.

As soon as he's clean and wrapped in a towel, Sophie offers him milk. Otto refuses to drink it. Florence enters the room. Sophie notes that Otto is immediately entranced, just like every other bonobo that comes into contact with Florence. Otto isn't interested in a bottle of milk. When Patrice leaves the room, Florence tells Sophie that she was wrong to take Otto. Sophie argues that Otto would have died but Florence says it was a mistake to give the man money. Florence says she can tell Sophie is beginning to understand the gravity of the situation and that she won't mention it again, but urges Sophie to think before she acts in the future.



Sophie is tired from the trip but Florence says Sophie and Otto will be staying at the sanctuary rather than going back to Florence's apartment in the city. Sophie will have to keep trying to get Otto to drink every couple of hours. Florence says she'll return in a few hours to spend the night at the sanctuary as well. She ends the conversation by saying that Sophie took on the responsibility for Otto when she picked him up.

Sophie knows she's safe because there are guards around the sanctuary. She video chats with her father. He says Otto is "really ugly." Together, they choose Otto's name. Otto doesn't sleep at all. He sometimes almost drifts off but then jerks himself awake. He doesn't drink anything. Sophie takes him out of the towel and puts him under her shirt so they can be skin-to-skin, which comforts him somewhat. Florence is unable to return because the roads are too dangerous after dark but she calls several times. He's still alive the following morning but still hasn't taken any milk.

Analysis

It seems that Sophie does the right thing by rescuing the bonobo. It's obvious the man is not taking care of the little bonobo and that the ape will surely die if he doesn't receive better care. With that in mind, Sophie's action seems reasonable. However, she has added to the problem by giving the man money. If the man was caught by government authorities, he would have faced legal repercussions for the illegal sale of a bonobo. Instead, he believes that he can take more bonobo youngsters to Sophie and that she will continue to pay him for them. With that in mind, it's easier to see why Florence is so angry at Sophie and why Sophie should have passed up the situation without interfering directly.

Selling bonobos is illegal in the Congo. The apes are endangered and are technically protected, meaning a person caught selling them can face legal action. For many years, the government had turned a blind eye to the selling because there was no where to take a confiscated bonobo. Once Florence opened the sanctuary, that problem was eliminated, making it more likely that the law will be enforced. Florence never becomes involved in taking the young bonobos herself. She turns information over to the government and they apparently do follow up as often as possible which is probably a deterrent to the bonobo trade. The problem around illegal sale of bonobos is an important theme in the book.

Sophie is obviously close to her father because she lives with him but there is an undeniable connection to her mother. She talks about the warmth her mother exudes and that she's enveloped by it from the moment her mother walks into the room. Sophie doesn't really understand why her parents divorced. She knows that her father has to live in Miami and that her mother couldn't bring herself to leave her work with the bonobos, but Sophie believes they could have made a long-distance relationship work out.

Otto is in very poor condition and when Sophie talks to her father for the first time, he comments that Otto is ugly. He asks what Sophie plans to name the little ape and



Sophie says it's the practice not to name youngsters that might not live. She says that he is bonobo number eight. Otto is eight in Italian, and that's how Sophie settles on his name.

Discussion Question 1

How does Sophie come to have Otto?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Florence object to Sophie's rescuing Otto?

Discussion Question 3

Describe the role of the sanctuary in the fight against the illegal sale of bonobos?

Vocabulary

Descending, barricade, random, agilely, pivoting, maneuvered, philosophy, fluent, quaking, confiscated, flecks, preliminary, corruption, fixated, piously, exuberant.



Part 1, Chapters 3 - 5

Summary

In Chapter Three, the sanctuary is described in more detail. There is a nursery where the orphans spend their early years. It's the former kindergarten building with a mural on the wall. The adult bonobos are kept in a large enclosure with an electric fence. The offices are in the main building.

The following morning, Sophie goes into the nursery. As soon as she enters, one bonobo bites her on the leg and another kicks her in the head, then both run away, laughing. Three native women serve as surrogate mothers for the nursery bonobos. They are Mama Evangeline, Mama Brunelle, and Mama Marie-France. Sophie is somewhat shy with the three mamas because they are a little caustic in their dealings with her. Mama Evangeline calls her "princess," which is used as a derogatory term. Mama Evangeline says Otto is really ugly. She says she has been "hoping you would finally get a nice Congo boy." However, she believes Sophie could have done better. The mamas laugh at the joke.

Mama Evangeline teases a great deal. Mama Brunelle is younger than the others. In summers past, she and Sophie would spend time "doing each other's hair." She is Florence's choice to someday take over the sanctuary. Mama Marie-France is very old and seldom makes small talk.

Sophie tries to turn the conversation serious, saying she's worried about Otto but Mama Brunelle interrupts. She says Sophie is probably worried she and her new boyfriend will have to live in the jungle with her "bonobo mother-in-law." When Sophie interrupts again, saying she hasn't been able to get Otto to drink, all the mamas become serious but still tease, pointing out that Otto can't get married because he is missing his ring finger. Mama Marie France pulls some guava leaves from her pocket and chews them into a mush, which will help cure diarrhea. The mamas also help dress Otto's sores, including the stump of his finger.

Sophie notes an adult female nearby. Her name is Anastasia and her daughter is Songololo, one of the youngsters who attacked Sophie when she first arrived in the enclosure. Anastasia isn't taking care of Songololo so mother and daughter are being kept in the nursery for the day. Anastasia was raised by adults and the mamas believe she doesn't know how to care for her daughter.

In Chapter Four, Sophie says that it was sometime during her years in the United States that she began to hate the Congo. She cites the poor conditions, constant threat of violence, and the fact that things don't change much. Two months have passed since Sophie's arrival in the Congo. Otto is improved and has bonded with Sophie. He still doesn't have a clean bill of health so isn't yet allowed in the nursery with the other baby bonobos. Sophie says that she spent a lot of time with her mother the first couple of



weeks but Florence is busy with sanctuary business, leaving Sophie to spend time with Otto. Sophie seeks ways to keep Otto entertained. Sometimes they play a modified version of Scrabble.

One afternoon, the man who had held Otto captive arrives at the sanctuary. He has two young bonobos in a cage on his bicycle. He wants to sell them for twenty-five dollars each. Sophie is furious and realizes that she has caused this situation. Florence hits the man and tells him that she is a sorceress who will curse him. The man threatens to kill the two bonobos unless Florence removes the “curse,” and she complies. He says he'll kill them if anyone tries to follow him and pedals away from the sanctuary.

Florence calls government officials. Two of the sanctuary workers try to find the man so that officials can rescue the bonobos, but Florence says the man likely escaped. She is angry at Sophie, saying that purchasing Otto has re-established the bonobo trade. Florence points out that the only way to capture a young bonobo is to kill its family. Sophie has always known that, but she has not given any real thought to it.

In Chapter Five, Florence has learned that the government is about to ban all non-commercial flights. She'd planned to release a group of bonobos into a wild preserve site after Sophie leaves for America, but knows their chartered plane will be unable to leave once the ban takes effect. Florence decides to go with the group to release the bonobos immediately, though Sophie isn't going to leave for another ten days. Florence and her group will be gone for weeks. Sophie is angry that her mother would miss their final days together but she can't bring herself to say so. She offers to let Sophie go home early but she declines.

The next day, Patrice says there are “fake police” and United Nations trucks around town. Patrice says Florence will be safe, far to the north of the capital. Sophie knows that means she is in danger.

Analysis

Bonobos are emotionally delicate. Sophie says the most important thing necessary for a bonobo's survival is its connection with its mother. Baby bonobos spend their first years literally attached to their mothers. When they begin to forage for themselves, they still remain near and are very dependent on their mothers' emotional support. Baby bonobos died in zoos for years until scientists figured out the importance of this emotional connection. At the sanctuary, there are three native women who serve as “mamas” for the youngest bonobos. They spend their days in the nursery with the youngsters. The youngsters attach themselves to their surrogate mothers and depend heavily on that emotional connection to replace the connection they would have had with their biological mothers.

The antics of the young bonobos in the nursery are the first humorous scene of the book, but there are many others to come. Sophie talks about being bitten and kicked the moment she walks into the nursery. Then, the two little bonobos run away, laughing like



crazy. When the mamas begin getting ready for the morning bottles, the bonobos all run around getting in the way. They find a large beetle and they play with it, each of them pushing others toward it and shrieking with joy. The mamas have baby bonobos clinging all over their bodies. The babies cover up their mamas' eyes and jump from one mama to the other. All this serves as some needed comic relief after the seriousness of Otto's situation.

Sophie is half-white, and her appearance makes her mixed-race apparent. She talks at one point about white people seeing her as black while black people see her as white. Her mother is black and she is readily accepted among the employees of the sanctuary. Sophie feels that people are looking at her differently, mostly because of her white father but also because she lives a somewhat entitled life in America. When the three mamas are teasing her, she believes they do so because they feel the need to put her in her place. This is an important part of Sophie's character and the mixed race is an issue that seems to cause her to struggle. She does, however, get a lesson in her attitude during her time at the sanctuary. One day, everyone gathers for a meal that's meant to resemble traditional American food though with ingredients found in the Congo. She says this makes her realize that the others aren't as critical of her as she sometimes believes.

In Chapter Four, Sophie talks about her impressions of the Congo. She says she has come to hate the Congo for several reasons, including the poor conditions. She talks about how her impressions changed over the course of her lifetime. As a child, she thought it was a wonderful place to live because it was the only place she knew. This is an example of the coming-of-age theme. Sophie will undergo additional changes in her perspective over the course of her lifetime and will return to the Congo as an adult to work for change.

Florence says that the man who had Otto and the other two young bonobos was probably telling the truth when he told Sophie that his family was starving. The situation in the Congo is dire for many people. There are not many jobs and people have trouble earning money through legal employment. When Sophie gave the man money for Otto, she did help feed his family. Florence recognizes that the man is probably desperate. She says that she would do the same, if she was desperate to feed Sophie. The problem is that Florence has spent years trying to eliminate the black market trade of bonobos. Sophie, by purchasing Otto, has taken a step toward re-establishing that market. Sophie already feels bad about the situation and about her decision, even though she saved Otto's life. Florence's rant makes her feel guiltier. She realizes that she has to accept the blame for the bonobos that were killed in order to capture the two young bonobos, as well as the blame for the fate of those young bonobos. When Sophie later finds their bodies, she will feel a new guilt for their deaths.

Discussion Question 1

Describe the nursery, the three “mamas,” and their role in the lives of the young bonobos.



Discussion Question 2

Describe the situation when the man brings the two bonobos to the sanctuary. Why is Florence so angry?

Discussion Question 3

Describe Sophie's relationship with her mother, considering Florence's decision to take the bonobos to the preserve even though it means leaving Sophie.

Vocabulary

Rambunctious, hassle, scrutinized, baffled, goaded, deliriously, malnourished, consumed, budged, wrenched, giddy, grimaced, drone, condescending.



Part 2, Chapters 6 - 7

Summary

Part Two is titled "A Country No More." Chapter Six opens with Sophie admitting that she was torn between worry about the state of affairs in the Congo and her happiness at watching Otto as he became healthy and happy. He becomes full of life and fun. He sometimes steals a magazine, hides it, then laughs about his action and finally showing Sophie the hiding place. His lab results are finally returned and he's free of disease. As he becomes healthier, Patrice decides Otto is probably closer to four years old and is just small because of his rough treatment.

Sophie begins trying to introduce him to the other young bonobos but he becomes upset so she continues to spend time alone with him. One day, Sophie and Otto are walking along the drive to the sanctuary when they encounter four men in "mismatched army uniforms." The soldiers ask where the road leads and mention a school. Sophie decides she won't answer any questions and begins to back toward the sanctuary gate. One of the soldiers picks up a rifle and aims it at Sophie. Suddenly, Otto drops from the trees and rushes at the soldiers, baring his teeth. They almost run then realize that he's very small and Otto flings himself into Sophie's arms. Sophie politely asks the men to leave and turns her back, walking to the sanctuary where she tells Patrice. He and Clement search the surrounding area but don't find the men.

Sophie says that she had once seen Otto only as a single bonobo youngster but now sees him as a symbol of the lives of the other two young bonobos and of her own guilt.

The older bonobos in the large enclosure tend to stay away from the outer edges and Sophie seldom sees them. One bonobo, Pweto, is different. He is in a smaller enclosure alone. One arm is crippled, there's a hole in one of his cheeks, and one ear is missing. He sits quietly by himself most of the time. Otto is drawn to him though Pweto never reacts to the youngster. One day, Brunelle says that Pweto was playing with a very young bonobo, carrying her on his back. The baby fell and died. The group of female bonobos attacked Pweto, leaving him damaged. Brunelle calls the group of females the "Pink Ladies" and talks about the matriarchal society of the apes. She says every time Pweto is introduced into the main enclosure, the Pink Ladies attack again.

One day, the workers hear that the Trans Liberation Army is trying to take control of the government. The president has been killed and there is literally no one in charge of the government. There is rioting and violence. Patrice says they'll be safe at the sanctuary. Mama Evangeline predicts people will soon be hungry and that they'll see the bonobos as food. There is no cell services and the only source of news comes from the short-wave radio in the office. The next information indicates more fighting and cites the traditional animosity between the two ethnic factions, the Hutus and Tutsi.



Sophie learns that any foreign nationals will be picked up that afternoon and taken to the airport where United Nations planes will take them out of the country. Patrice says Sophie will have to be on that plane. Sophie knows her parents would want that though she hates the idea of leaving the other workers behind. She knows that Otto isn't ready to be separated from her and that he probably won't survive without her.

In Chapter Seven, a van arrives to pick up Sophie. It takes several of the workers helping Sophie to get Otto's hands and feet pried off her. She tearfully gets on the van and is moving down the drive when Otto jumps out of Patrice's arms and chases after Sophie. Sophie, fearing Otto will be run over, jumps from the van, taking her bag with her. One of the officials says Sophie has to go, even if he has to arrest her and force her. She grabs Otto and they rush into the large enclosure.

Analysis

It's in Chapter Six that the term "mundele" is used for the first time. The soldiers use the term to address Sophie when she encounters them on the sanctuary drive. The term originated from a phrase commonly used by the Belgians when they wanted the Congolese people to act in a certain way. By this time, the Congo people use it refer to anyone who is white and snobbish. Sophie has come to realize that most black people see her as white but white people see her as black.

Another term introduced in this chapter is "kata-kata." It means "cut-cut" in Linglala, which is a language spoken by some people of the region. The term generally refers to any soldier who isn't part of the country's sanctioned military. The kata-kata might be deserters or renegades, and they are not bound by the rules of the traditional army. This makes them extremely dangerous. The existence of the kata-kata is another piece of information vital to understanding the overall situation in the Congo, which is one of the book's themes.

The bonobos are very devoted to their youngsters. This is probably why the females of the group attacked Pweto after the baby bonobo dies. Sophie is surprised to learn about the attack. The "Pink Ladies" are a group of females that band together and seem to be almost like a group of best friends. Sophie will see this group in action during her time in the enclosure. Anastasia is the leader and she is very much like a bossy snob. The interaction between the bonobos is important in the coming chapters and is a very interesting aspect of the overall story.

Sophie doesn't want to leave Otto behind and she argues against getting into the United Nations van, but she knows that her parents would want her to leave the country. The bonobos can't survive without that emotional connection and Sophie had planned to begin getting Otto attached to one of the surrogates in the bonobo nursery, but hadn't begun that process yet. When the van arrives, Sophie is holding Otto. She tells the official that Otto is a bonobo and that the species is endangered, hoping that will somehow make it possible for her to take Otto along. She knows it isn't a reasonable hope and the worker does make her leave him behind. It is something of a humorous



scene as Sophie tries to leave Otto behind. She tries to pry his hands off her but he simply grabs on with another hand or foot. She has to have help to get him off and Patrice isn't able to hold Otto when the van and Sophie pull out of the sanctuary drive. This connection between Otto and Sophie is an important theme in the story and it drives a great deal of the action.

Discussion Question 1

Describe the escalation of fighting and what it means for Sophie and Otto.

Discussion Question 2

How does Sophie see herself and how does she believe others see her?

Discussion Question 3

Describe the Pink Ladies and their treatment of Pweto.

Vocabulary

Instability, subtly, sarcastic, caterwauling, frolic, intrigued, imperative, reiterate, affiliation, oblivious, protocol, deactivated.



Part 3, Chapters 8 - 10

Summary

Part Three is "Enclosure." In Chapter Eight, Sophie realizes that she's made the decision not to leave the Congo when the country is at war. She also realizes that she's in the enclosure with a group of unpredictable bonobos. The youngsters in the nursery are very friendly, but the adults might attack a human. Sophie climbs a tree to get a better idea of what's happening. The van is gone from the sanctuary drive and a nearby village is on being attacked. Sophie witnesses people being killed and many structures on fire.

Sophie then hears soldiers inside the sanctuary. She hears Mama Brunelle begging. Then, there's a shot, and Brunelle is quiet. She hears the young bonobos in the nursery escaping and prays that at least some of them get away. She knows it's only a matter of time before the soldiers realize there are more bonobos in the enclosure and make their way inside. Sophie knows it's dangerous to remain in the enclosure but figures it's safer than outside with the soldiers. She plans to remain for a few hours then try to escape with Otto. Sophie is afraid for the bonobos, for Otto, and for herself. Then she realizes that she and Otto are no longer alone.

In Chapter Nine, Sophie encounters a teenaged male she later learns is named Mushie. He sits on Sophie's lap and begins to groom her, which she knows is a sign of friendship. She quickly tires of Mushie's weight but he shows no signs of leaving. Other bonobos appear, mostly foraging for food. At sundown, Sophie can still hear the soldiers and knows she can't leave the enclosure. She plans to leave after dark but realizes she can't see to find her way safely past the soldiers and abandons the plan.

The next morning, there are more bonobos. Anastasia tries to scare Sophie away but Sophie stands her ground, trying to keep Otto safe. When the bonobos leave, Sophie heads for the center of the enclosure where she knows there's a pond. Sophie is hungry and knows she needs her duffel bag, which she left outside the enclosure after jumping from the van.

In Chapter Ten, Sophie gets near the fence and evaluates the situation. She sees several bodies around the compound, including Mama Brunelle's. Her duffel is where she dropped it, near a tree. It's black and blends with the shadows, which is why the soldiers apparently haven't seen it. She chooses her time, puts Otto under her shirt, and slips out of the enclosure. She retrieves the duffel and then discovers that Songololo is next to Brunelle's body. Songololo has a rope tied from her wrist to a stake in the ground. Sophie can't untie the rope but manages to pull up the stake. She, Otto, and Songololo make their way back to the enclosure without being caught. The stake catches on the fence at the gate and Songololo begins to shriek, capturing the soldiers' attention. Several rush at the fence but Sophie manages to get Songololo free and

slams the gate shut as the electric fence begins to hum. She is relieved that the soldiers are armed with machetes rather than guns.

Analysis

The reader may not have an accurate image of the enclosure for the adult bonobos based on the earlier descriptions. The fence is more than twenty feet high and solar panels keep the fence electrified. Sophie says the electric shock is strong enough to turn an elephant away from the enclosure. The enclosure is also huge with lots of trees, water, and food sources inside. The bonobos literally live inside for months at a time with little human interaction. In most cases, the bonobos are released into this enclosure for a period of time before being released into the wild preserve deeper in the jungle.

The interaction between the bonobos is interesting and sometimes comical. When Anastasia sees Sophie for the first time inside the enclosure, she pulls up a sapling tree and rushes at Sophie, waving the tree like a weapon. Anastasia has several adult females standing near her, all obviously willing to back up her actions, and Sophie realizes these are the Pink Ladies. One of them walks over to Sophie and pats her, apparently trying to offer at least some small measure of comfort. Then Mushie mimics Anastasia's action, but he is waving a leaf at Sophie instead of a small tree. The reader can find the humor as they imagine the young ape trying to threaten Sophie with a leaf.

Anastasia is not particularly a good mother. She hasn't bonded with Songololo as most bonobo mothers would have, and it's probably because she was raised with humans and simply doesn't know what's expected of her. Despite her own actions, she seems to recognize that Sophie is intent on protecting Otto. When Anastasia attacks Sophie with a tree, Sophie initially stands up to Anastasia. When it's obvious that Anastasia is going to strike Sophie, she tucks herself around Otto's body, protecting him at the expense of leaving herself vulnerable. This seems to impress Anastasia who then stops the attack. It seems that Anastasia doesn't know how to be a good mother herself, but recognizes and admires that trait in Sophie.

Sophie and Otto have established a deep connection by this point in the story. Otto has a "raspy" voice and Sophie describes his laughs as having that quiet, raspy sound. He loves for Sophie to blow raspberries on his feet and he laughs when she does. He also likes to be tickled. Sophie loves Otto deeply and at one point she says she's determined to save Otto, and she'll be happy if she happens to survive during the process. This connection remains strong and is an important theme of the book.

Sophie was closer to Mama Brunelle than to the other surrogates, probably because Brunelle was nearer to Sophie's age than the others. When Sophie sees Brunelle's body, she doesn't immediately realize that Brunelle is naked. Then Sophie sees Brunelle's pagne, a large cloth that's part of Brunelle's typical attire. Sophie knows she can use the cloth as she continues to try to survive in the enclosure, and she wants it



because it's a token memory of Brunelle. This pagne becomes a symbol of the lives lost, including Brunelle's, and of Sophie's quest for survival.

Sophie counts the bodies outside the enclosure but she doesn't spend a lot of time examining them, other than her few minutes with Brunelle. The reader has to remember that Sophie is a young teenager and isn't capable of dealing with this situation. She has lived a fairly protected life and is now dealing only with herself. She can't give in to fear or grief because she has to move forward in order to protect herself and Otto.

Sophie talks about the sounds of the young bonobos. She describes it as a “murp” and uses the word frequently. She “murped” at Songololo to get the young bonobo's attention. Otto often “murps” in contentment. This is part of the bonobo language and Sophie's use of the word indicates her connection with the apes.

Discussion Question 1

What are Sophie's options at this point in the story? What do you believe she should do? Why?

Discussion Question 2

Describe Sophie's first encounter with the Pink Ladies in the enclosure. Why does she survive?

Discussion Question 3

What is the situation outside the enclosure?

Vocabulary

Shrouded, ruckus, pillage, hurtled, redundant, substantial, pungent, dominance, ineptitude, havoc, ebbed, linger, supple, tempted.



Part 3, Chapters 11 - 13

Summary

In Chapter Eleven, Sophie plans to save some of the granola bars from her duffel, but she indulges herself and eats several quickly. Songololo sits by the pond and Otto, once he'd eaten, joins her. Sophie naps and Songololo runs off with several granola bars and a pair of socks. The next morning, Anastasia and the Pink Ladies return. Songololo is with them. There's a brief fight between Anastasia and Otto with Sophie jumping in to Otto's rescue. A short time later, some members of the group begin to accept Sophie's presence, and she forages with them. Otto and Songololo play and forage together.

Sophie still has Mama Brunelle's bag and finds there are notes inside. This is how she learns the identities and histories of several of the bonobos. Anastasia was raised by a family of humans with her own bedroom and the run of the house until she was big, strong, and clumsy. Then she was relegated to the outdoors and eventually turned over to the sanctuary.

In Chapter Twelve, Sophie remains with the group. It begins to rain as she watches Mushie deftly tie several branches together to make a nest of sorts, high in a tree. She tries to mimic him, but he finally steps in and makes a nest for her. Sophie and Otto are relatively dry in their nest. In the middle of the night, Sophie wakes to find herself falling. She eventually discovers that Anastasia had pushed her out of her nest. The next day, the bonobos hold elephant ear leaves over their heads like umbrellas. Sophie uses her poncho to make a tent of sorts. A female bonobo named Banalia joins Sophie and Otto. Sophie convinces Songololo to join them as well. Mushie makes Sophie another nest, this time nearer the place where Mushie, Banalia, and an older bonobo named Ikwa sleep.

In Chapter Thirteen, ten days pass. Sophie knows the soldiers are still at the compound, but she has fallen into a routine with the bonobo group. The soldiers are scrawny. Sophie knows it's only a matter of time before the fence fails and the soldiers enter to hunt down the bonobos for food. Sophie spends a lot of time with Ikwa. One day, Mushie is wrestling around when he bumps into the fence. Sophie expects that he'll be shocked, but nothing happens. This means that the electricity is off.

Analysis

The relationships between the various bonobos and Sophie are convoluted, just as if Sophie had been dropped into a human community. Anastasia has little interest in Songololo, but Songololo desperately wants her mother's love and affection. One of the other females, Banalia, is also needy and seems to seek any scrap of affection from the other bonobos. When it's raining, Sophie makes herself a tent from her poncho. She and Otto are relatively dry under the poncho, and Banalia joins them. Otto is napping as



Sophie puts him in Banalia's lap. She says Banalia is “delighted” and squeals out her pleasure, though she's obviously a little confused about the entire situation. Otto continues to sleep. Banalia holds him while Sophie goes to Songololo. Songololo wants her mother but accepts Sophie's offer of comfort. After that, Songololo spends most of her time with Sophie and Otto rather than Anastasia. In some strange way, this seems to shift the balance within the group, and Anastasia stops harassing Sophie. This entire circle of relationships, friendships, and jealousy is an important part of the book and keeps action going in several sections.

Ikwa is introduced during this section of the story. He is an older bonobo. Sophie often tries to be near him. He becomes important to her as the group travels together because Sophie feels a connection with him. He isn't as energetic as most of the others, and he seems to be very interested in the condition of the group, remaining watchful for possible dangers.

The bonobos and Sophie spend a part of every day foraging for food. The bonobos have always foraged, but it was mainly out of habit because the sanctuary staff left piles of fruit for them each day. The enclosure is so large that there is food available. Various kinds of fruits, berries, and plants become the main course on any given day. Sophie notes that the bonobos have methods for opening some fruits and the bonobos depend on one or two members to perform this task. When Sophie begins opening some fruit for Otto, the bonobos see that she is skilled at this task and begin to depend on her, just as they would some other bonobo. This is another example of the emerging relationship between Sophie and the bonobo group.

Mushie is obviously trying to establish a relationship with Anastasia. One day, when they are all relaxing, Mushie reaches toward Anastasia, happy just to be able to touch her. What Sophie doesn't learn until much later is that Anastasia is either pregnant already or becomes pregnant soon after the group leaves the enclosure.

Discussion Question 1

Describe the relationship between Songololo and Anastasia. Why do you believe Songololo spends so much time with Sophie and Otto? What is Anastasia's reaction to that friendship? What motivates her to react in this way?

Discussion Question 2

Who are the main members of the bonobo group with Sophie inside the enclosure?

Discussion Question 3

How does Sophie spend her days in the enclosure?

Vocabulary

Predicament, cowered, fainted, commotion, recoiled, fixated, hierarchy, demonstrate, plummeting, amateur, brambles, liberation, jostling.



Part 4, Chapters 14 - 19

Summary

Part Four is "What Remained Outside." Chapter Fourteen opens with Sophie weighing her options. She knows the soldiers will eventually discover the electricity is off and that she can't hide from their guns. She knows the soldiers will kill the adult bonobos for food, keep the youngsters to sell, and that her own fate will be horrible.

Sophie decides to leave with Otto. She is upset that she'll have to leave the bonobos behind, but she knows that she has no choice. Songololo makes it clear she's going with Sophie, and Sophie accepts that she'll be attempting to escape with two bonobos rather than one. Sophie, Otto, and Songololo are at the front of the compound when they hear a noise behind them and discover that Anastasia has followed. Mushie is behind Anastasia. Banalia and Ikwa are also following. Sophie is frustrated but can't change what's happening. Then a soldier shoots Banalia from an open window of the administration building. The rest of the small group make it to the jungle. They travel an even greater distance from the sanctuary before settling in for the night.

In Chapter Fifteen, Sophie plans to head for the capital. She expects the bonobos will remain near the sanctuary. A hunter shoots into the group but misses. Before he can fire again, Pweto jumps from the trees and knocks the hunter to the ground. The hunter runs away. Anastasia then attacks Pweto, forcing him to run away. Sophie wants Anastasia to realize that Pweto has saved them, but knows the bonobos aren't capable of that kind of reasoning.

Sophie resumes her journey, believing the bonobos will remain behind. She's wrong. Ikwa is holding one of Sophie's hands, Songololo is holding her other, and Otto is on her back. Sophie continues to walk, expecting the bonobos will soon give up. Bonobos usually don't roam far from wherever they consider home but it's obvious they are not going to let Sophie go on alone.

In Chapter Sixteen, they find an abandoned village. Sophie has sleeping pills in her duffel. She plans to give one to Songololo, believing that the others will remain with Songololo. She guesses at how much to give her, waits for her to fall asleep, then leaves with Otto. Sophie encounters an old woman and young boy who give her news of the fighting. She hides from soldiers but a soldier walking by himself spots her. Sophie enters a drive that indicates the entrance to an AIDS clinic and the soldier doesn't follow.

Sophie finds a large house with several young boys. A man says the house had served as a boarding school and AIDS clinic. When the teacher says the fighting is bad in the capital, Sophie decides she must try to reach her mother. She helps the man return to a farm where she'd seen crops going to waste. They gather enough food for the teacher and the young boys for days to come. When she's ready to leave, the teacher gives her



a motorized scooter and directions to the river where she hopes to trade the scooter for a ride up the river.

In Chapter Seventeen, Sophie leaves with Otto and encounters a large group of refugees. She loses her motorbike in the crowd. She learns that there is a United Nations station nearby. When a kind lady helps her reach it, Sophie impulsively gives the woman her duffel bag and its contents. At the UN gate, a guard says there is nothing they can do for Sophie; but, another guard finally allows her inside the gated compound. Though she has no documentation, a guard named Hector believes her story. Hector then discovers that there's a message for Sophie from her mother. The note indicates that Florence is safe but that it's not safe to travel, meaning she'll remain at the village near the release site.

Sophie learns more about the fighting and that a large city near the release site, Mbandaka, is apparently in rebel hands. Hector says Otto absolutely can't go with Sophie and reveals that two other bonobos were recently taken from a trafficker. Sophie goes into the wooded area where the youngsters were released and finds their dead bodies. She feels a new level of guilt and knows she can't leave Otto behind. She takes water purifying tablets from the UN office along with some rations. She leaves her father's email address so the officers can get a message that Sophie is safe. She then goes to the gate and tells the guard she needs to "go pee in the bushes" with a promise to "be right back."

In Chapter Eighteen, Sophie has to wade through a swampy area to reach the river that will take her to Mbandaka. She plans to go around the city to reach the village near the bonobo release site, believing she'll find her mother there. She finds a relatively dry spot to sleep and resumes the trip the following morning. At the river, she sees that most of the boats are traveling the wrong direction. She finds a man named Wello who says he'll give Sophie a ride in exchange for Otto. Sophie refuses. She gives Wello her necklace, given to her by her father, and promises to send him fifty dollars as soon as she reaches her mother. In Chapter Nineteen, the trip takes a long time. Wello leaves her near Mbandaka with the advice that she should "avoid everyone."

Analysis

The image of Sophie trying to get quietly past the soldiers in the administration building is another case of humor offsetting the seriousness of the situation. Sophie is trying to be quiet. She had assumed that she would manage to slip out with only Otto. Songololo has begun to bond with Sophie during the time in the enclosure, and the youngster is forced to choose between her biological mother and her surrogate. She chooses Sophie, possibly at least partly because she has also begun to bond with Otto. Sophie accepts that she'll have both Otto and Songololo with her as she leaves, and she begins the journey. Then one of the youngsters makes a noise and Sophie discovers that she's being followed by four adult bonobos. The reader will find the humor in the image of Sophie trying to make a quiet getaway with six apes either clinging to her or following.



The fact that one of the four is killed and that they are all in serious danger offsets that humor.

The complicated relationship between Songololo and Anastasia is seen again as Sophie is about to escape the sanctuary. Songololo chooses to go with Sophie, apparently because of her emerging connection to Sophie and Otto. What's surprising is that Anastasia follows Songololo. Anastasia is not a good mother as a rule and she doesn't care when someone else takes care of Songololo, but Anastasia isn't willing to let Songololo leave the enclosure without her. It's interesting that Anastasia doesn't insist on physically holding onto her daughter but doesn't want to completely let go of Songololo either.

Sophie knows the bonobos will be in greater danger if they are in the more populated areas, which is why she leaves them behind. She also knows that Songololo is the key to leaving the group behind. She packed the duffel with the idea that she might need sleeping pills for the plane ride. The pills are still in the bag and she uses them to drug Songololo into a deeper sleep so that she won't try to follow when Sophie leaves with Otto. Another humorous event takes place in this scene. Sophie pours out the pills to take stock of what she has available and Mushie grabs some, popping them into his mouth before Sophie can stop him. Mushie soon falls asleep and the other bonobos are obviously a little concerned about his "nap."

Sophie fully expects that the group of bonobos will remain near the sanctuary because of what she knows about typical bonobo habits. They usually roam only a short distance in a day and will remain near whatever area they consider to be home. The three adult bonobos – Anastasia, Ikwa, and Mushie – apparently decide that they'll follow Sophie, regardless of how much distance she travels.

Sophie likes the teacher and the young boys in Chapter Sixteen. The teacher is kind and intelligent, and he's obviously trying to do his best to take care of the boys. He is setting snares and has caught several antelope. Combined with the food Sophie helps gather, it's obvious that the group will have enough to eat for the coming weeks. The AIDS sign at the entrance of the school may help keep soldiers away and it seems possible this could be a safe haven. However, Sophie opts to head away from the capital in search of her mother. She briefly considers bringing the other bonobos to the school or leaving Otto with the boys, but she knows that the teacher would eat the bonobos if it became necessary and she decides against both. The limited perspective is seen in this section. Sophie returns to the school after the fighting is over but the building is abandoned by then. Sophie never learns what happens to the boys or their teacher, meaning the reader doesn't know their fates either.

Sophie is dedicated to Otto and has been determined to take care of him at any cost. However, she's now seen the horror of war up close. She's finally realizing that her life is very much in danger. When she's at the UN station, she wants to leave the country. She hopes that they'll let her take Otto with her, but she knows that probably isn't going to happen. When she arrives at the station, she accepts that she will leave the country on a UN helicopter without Otto, and she fully plans to go. She changes her mind once



she sees the dead bodies of the two young bonobos, but for a short time she seems determined to get out of the Congo, regardless of Otto's fate.

When Sophie first arrives in the Congo for the summer, she sees several animals being mistreated. She knows that she has to tune it out or that it will really hurt her to see all that suffering. She also knows that she has to weigh the suffering of animals against the suffering of humans. There are people literally starving to death in the region and people with untreated diseases. The level of human suffering is staggering and Sophie is aware of it, just as she is aware of the animals being mistreated. She thinks about this again as she is traveling up the river with Otto. She remembers the woman with two little girls who had helped Sophie reach the UN station. She knows without a doubt that the woman would have urged Sophie to take one or both of the girls if she'd believed they would be safer with Sophie. While Sophie is devoted to Otto, she must wonder whether she can justify her actions and the amount of effort it takes to save a bonobo while humans are suffering and dying all around her. This introspection is typical of Sophie's character.

The trip up the river is long and tedious. Sophie helps some with the rowing of the boat, but she isn't very good at it. Wello does most of the work. She chooses him to help because she decides that an old man, traveling alone and singing, might be trustworthy. She's correct in that assessment. Wello is a trader and has just come from the capital city where he sold his goods. Sophie's parents wind up sending Wello more than the fifty dollars Sophie promised, but his fate is not revealed.

Discussion Question 1

Describe Sophie's escape from the sanctuary.

Discussion Question 2

Who is Wello and what is his role in Sophie's journey?

Discussion Question 3

Describe Sophie's questions about the effort she's making to save Otto when there is so much human suffering in the region.

Vocabulary

Muster, jubilant, purge, anxiety, foundered, dithering, havoc, loamy, fraught, discreet, gawked, tentatively, stricken, extricate, wistful, manioc, splayed, bliss, bemused, gusto.



Part 5, Chapters 20 - 22

Summary

Part Five is titled "Everything is Raining." Chapter Twenty opens with Sophie's arrival on land after almost two weeks in the boat with Wello. Sophie considers her situation, knowing she needs to get past Mbandaka to reach the village where she hopes to find her mother. Otto acts strangely. Sophie can't be certain it's caused by his days in the boat or the fact that they are near the large city of Mbandaka. Sophie begins walking and soon finds some abandoned huts. She encounters two girls who have a gun. At first, she is afraid. Then, she realizes they are in poor condition. She gives them some water, and they tell her that the rebels have taken every able-bodied person to work in a gold mine and have killed almost everyone else. One of the girls tells Sophie about a hunting trail that will take her to a village named Ikwa. Sophie knows this is the village nearest the bonobo preserve. She follows the girl's directions and sets out.

Sophie tries to settle down for the night, but Otto is obviously distressed. She plays with him, blowing raspberries on his belly and eventually calming him. Sophie is surprised when it begins to rain but then realizes that it's no longer August. Then she discovers that it's actually caterpillars falling out of the trees instead of rain. Otto eats them until he's full, then offers Sophie one. She reluctantly accepts and discovers that it tastes like "sausage made from frothed soil and grass." It isn't bad so she eats another. Sophie tries to sleep, knowing she will need her energy the following day. Otto wanders away and doesn't immediately return.

In Chapter Twenty-one, Sophie wakes to discover that Otto is still missing. She waits until daylight then sets out in search of him. She hears him and follows his voice, discovering that he's caught in a snare in a tree. She climbs the tree and decides she is going to have to chew through the rope to free Otto. She is about to begin when she hears voices.

A man and woman arrive and are thrilled to discover Otto in their snare. They have guns and Sophie is helpless against them as the woman cuts Otto down. Sophie follows as the pair take Otto to the heart of the city. She climbs onto the roof of a bombed-out building and watches as Otto is handed over to a teenaged boy outside an old restaurant where several people are gathered. The boy, later identified as Bouain, is a soldier and is a leader among the soldiers. He gives Otto a beer and pushes Otto to drink it. As darkness approaches, Sophie fears that Bouain might intend to eat Otto for dinner. She goes to the restaurant and points, trying to indicate to the others that she somehow belongs with Bouain. She's allowed to enter.

In Chapter Twenty-two, Bouain shouts in a language Sophie doesn't understand. He then apparently realizes that it's only a girl, and they begin to talk in French. He asks for the identity of the person who sent Sophie, but Sophie doesn't answer.



Bouain tells the story of an attack on his village. He says there were many wild bonobos in the region before the attack. He describes a female bonobo that gave birth in a tree, labor apparently brought on by the attack. He says the adult chewed the umbilical cord, letting the baby drop to the ground, and ran away. Bouain says he wonders what happened to the baby and believes the rebel soldiers probably took it, just as they took Bouain. Sophie realizes that Bouain is associating Otto with that baby bonobo and says he and Otto are the same.

Sophie realizes that Bouain is superstitious and decides to play on that. She says she is a witch and that Otto is her “familiar.” She gives Otto the signal for “hug” and he rushes into her arms. Bouain is on alert and asks if Sophie can cure him of his disease, though he doesn't tell her the name of his affliction. Sophie says she has none of her “magic supplies” and that seems to satisfy Bouain. She says Otto can give Bouain magic that will shield him from danger. Bouain says he is already protected from bullets but agrees that another shield would be a good idea. She has Bouain close his eyes and tickles Otto so that he continually grunts while she chants “a magic spell.” Bouain's eyes close, and he is apparently falling asleep. Sophie notices that the back door of the restaurant is not locked.

Analysis

Mbandaka is a large, sprawling city. Sophie sees abandoned huts and some abandoned vendor stalls, all looted or damaged in some way. There are many people in the city, but they are not really going about their lives as they normally would. She notes that there is a group of people who are probably making deals that include who will live and who will die. The city's condition and the state of the two girls outside the main city are indications of the effects of the war.

Bouain's back story is not fully revealed, but there are some details about him that are an important look into his character. He is young, not much older than Sophie. He is wearing a necklace that is made of mummified fingers, indicating that he is ruthless despite his youth and his lack of violence toward Sophie and Otto. He is also respected among the “soldiers” that have taken over the city, indicating that he holds a position of some authority. He says that soldiers took him at a young age, which seems reasonable for the time and place. He speaks French, indicating that he is intelligent and he is anxious to learn, asking Sophie to teach him new words.

Sophie senses from Bouain's conversation that he's likely to be superstitious, but she gambles on just how far he's willing to go in that direction. At one point, he asks if she's an evil witch and Sophie knows that some people who claim magical powers are killed. Bouain seems to quickly dismiss that as a possibility. He says that he is “immune to bullets,” apparently indicating some other shield that he's been granted during his short life. He says another protective spell would be a good thing and agrees to let Otto share his magic. Sophie then suggests that Bouain should let them go but he says his men would see that as weakness. She counters, saying that it wouldn't be seen as weakness if Otto escapes. Bouain doesn't agree but he doesn't disagree, either. Sophie sees it as



a positive sign when she discovers that the back door of the restaurant is not locked, meaning she can possibly slip away.

There is some sexual tension when Sophie arrives in the room. Bouain obviously believes that someone has sent Sophie to have sex with Bouain, apparently as a gift to him. He has her pull off her shirt but later lets her put it back on. He says she's ugly. Sophie knows that she is dirty, has lost weight, and is covered in scrapes and bug bites. Bouain has also been drinking a great deal over the course of the evening. It's not clear why he decides not to follow through, but he seems to simply lose interest in Sophie.

Discussion Question 1

Describe Bouain.

Discussion Question 2

How does Sophie use superstition as a means of reaching Bouain? Why is it a dangerous proposition?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Sophie go to such lengths to rescue Otto from Bouain? What might Otto's life have become if she hadn't rescued him?

Vocabulary

Devised, circumvent, proximity, dominated, interspersed, antsy, ambling, intact, tributary, putrefy, vulnerable, constriction, teeming, stupor, crestfallen.



Part 6, Chapters 23 - 26

Summary

Part Six is titled "What Remained Inside." Chapter Twenty-three opens with Sophie trying to get away from the city. Sophie lost her bag when she was fighting her way through the men at the restaurant, meaning she has no way to purify water. Otto drinks from a stream, but Sophie decides she should wait.

She stumbles along a river and it's not until after daylight arrives that she discovers dozens of dead bodies along the water's edge. She worries about Otto, knowing that he drank that water. Later in the day, he begins having diarrhea. He's soon in a desperate situation, losing fluids rapidly. Sophie finds some guava leaves and, remembering that Mama Marie-France had chewed up the leaves as a cure for diarrhea, does so for Otto. That night, Sophie stretches her t-shirt out and collects dew on it. She wrings the fabric into Otto's mouth, saving a few drops for herself.

They have been walking only about an hour when they arrive at the village, Ikwa. Sophie approaches a woman with a child, but they are unable to communicate. A boy soon arrives who can speak a little French. Sophie and Otto are given water and food, including rice and bananas. Sophie manages to convey a question, asking if anyone has seen more bonobos in the area. An old man says something, and a boy motions for Sophie to follow him. She does and finds her mother in a nearby hut.

In Chapter Twenty-four, Sophie's mother, Florence, is recovering from a bout of malaria. She holds Sophie and Otto near and assures Sophie that she's on the mend. Sophie relates all the news she has, including the attack on the sanctuary. Florence questions her about individuals, asking who might have escaped and which of the worker were dead. Florence says she was certain Sophie would be safe so near the capital and apologizes for leaving her in danger. She says it won't be safe to travel for some time and that they are safe in Ikwa.

Sophie and Florence remain in Ikwa for a month. They settle into an easy routine there until the day a local farmer arrives with news that the rebels have left Mbandaka. Soon after that, Florence's phone rings and Sophie is relieved to talk to her father who has already arrived in Kinshasa.

In Chapter Twenty-five, Sophie and Florence return to Kinshasa and go directly to the sanctuary. Mama Marie-France greets them. She was away when the attack occurred. Clement is also present. Many others are dead or left and haven't returned. Sophie and Florence are surprised to find that Pweto is back in his enclosure. Mama Marie-France says he returned on his own, though he is the only bonobo to return.

Sophie's parents decide to send Wello one hundred fifty dollars and Sophie puts that money in a pouch and sends it up the river with a traveler. Florence gets started working



on the sanctuary and pledges to take care of the children of her employees who died. She knows it's going to require finding new funding but she pledges to make it happen. The sanctuary is important for saving bonobos but is also an important part of the local economy. There are only two bonobos at the sanctuary but wants to know if any of Anastasia's group has survived.

In Chapter Twenty-six, Sophie leads the way to the village where she left Anastasia, Songololo, Mushie, and Ikwa. They stop at the AIDS clinic and boarding school first. The building is abandoned with no sign of what happened to the teacher or the boys. Sophie knows their story could have a happy ending but could also have a horrible ending. Sophie leads her mother and Clement on to the village where she had left the group of bonobos.

By late afternoon, Sophie has gone deeper into the jungle and they prepare for the bonobos they can hear rushing their way. Clement hides because the bonobos don't usually like the male staff members but Florence, Otto, and Sophie wait for the group. Mushie arrives first followed by Songololo who is carrying a very young baby. Sophie realizes that the baby must belong to Anastasia. It soon becomes obvious that Anastasia and Ikwa are not going to emerge from the jungle and Sophie has to assume that they have died. The baby is instantly drawn to Florence. They arrive back at the sanctuary just before dark. According to Sophie, that evening is the first time she's ever seen Mama Marie-France cry.

Sophie spends most of her time working on administrative duties for the sanctuary while her parents work at getting the sanctuary and her mother's home back in order. One day, Sophie answers the phone. A woman says she is an administrative assistant to the country's Social Minister. She asks if there is a truck available for transporting bonobos. She says the country's new president has "finally gotten around to cleaning out the former president's winter palace," only to discover that bonobos have taken over the grounds. She says she is currently standing outside the property gates and asks that Sophie send someone immediately.

Sophie, Clement, and Florence leave immediately. Sophie says there are several bonobos, ranging from the youngsters from the nursery to adults from the enclosure. She estimates that half the youngsters are there. She says the bonobos have taken over, stealing clothing and furniture from the house while running rampant over the grounds. A bonobo walks by wearing a military beret. Others are jumping all over the Grecian statues. Sophie hugs her mother and says that it's "a shame to make them leave."

Analysis

Florence explains that the chief of Ikwa has made a deal with one of the important warlords involved in the current violence. The chief has agreed that some of the village's crops will be handed over to the military and the soldiers have agreed to protect the village from outside attack. In addition, none of the people of Ikwa are being forced to



work in the mines as has happened in most other villages and cities. This is part of the overall situation in the Congo, which is one of the book's themes.

Sophie's relationship with her mother remains complex throughout the book. The reader has to remember that Sophie left the Congo with her father when her parents separated. She remembers leaving her mother and the tremendous sense of loss because of that separation. While Sophie and her mother have remained close, they are not as close because Florence chooses to remain in the Congo while Sophie and her father move to the United States. Another aspect of their relationship is seen in Florence's willingness to leave Sophie at the sanctuary when Florence goes to release several bonobos. Sophie hates that her mother is willing to sacrifice their final few days of summer vacation, but she doesn't really express that to her mother. Their relationship seems to change again when they reunite at Ikwa. The reader will learn in the final chapter that Sophie doesn't return to the United States after the war. Instead, she remains in the Congo with Florence until it's time to attend college.

When Sophie first gets Otto, he has a cough that hangs on for a long time. During their trip across the Congo, Otto develops that cough again and it's soon evident that he's struggling with recovery. When Sophie goes with her mother to retrieve the bonobos at the president's house, she leaves Otto behind because of the cough. There aren't many details and it seems obvious that it's aimed at preparing the reader for Otto's death. In the last chapter of the book, Sophie travels to a specific spot at the preserve and the reader is likely expecting that she'll visit his grave. That's not the case. Otto actually survives to become a healthy adult living in the jungle in the preserve. This misdirection is a common literary tool used to provide a twist for the reader, and this one is very effective.

Discussion Question 1

Describe the reunion between Sophie and Florence, including how the reunion affects their relationship.

Discussion Question 2

Why do you believe Pweto returns to his enclosure?

Discussion Question 3

Describe the scene at the president's house.

Vocabulary

Orient, detect, silhouettes, context, luscious, lumber, agilely, relent, pantomimed, incomprehension, recuperating, delving, curry.



Part 7, Chapter 27

Summary

Part Seven is titled "Congo." Chapter Twenty-seven opens years later. Though Sophie is now an adult, she still has one of the sneakers she wore during her trip across the country during the war. She sometimes offered up the full story of that summer when someone asked about the sneaker, but she found that they were uncomfortable by the details. She later began saying only that it is the shoe she wore during the war.

Sophie is headed back to the Congo now, this time as a college graduate. She didn't leave the Congo after the war but attended an American school there. She did go to the United States for college and now has a plan to establish a company that will aid the country's economy. She wants to make the country more accessible to tourists as one part of her plan. She hopes the bonobo sanctuary and some gorilla "hot spots in the east" will entice visitors, and that that money will go into the local economy rather than into the coffers of crooked bureaucrats.

Sophie is engaged and her fiance will soon join her in Kinshasa. The sanctuary is still going strong and has expanded with new enclosures. There are a hundred employees, and the sanctuary provides vital income for local farmers as well.

Sophie arrives in the Congo just in time to join her mother on a release expedition. There are four bonobos being released, including Mushie, Songololo and Anastasia's orphan, whom Sophie named Congo. Once the group is established in camp, Sophie takes a pirogue and goes around the island. She stops the boat and waits, eventually seeing Otto in the distance. He raises his arms, his sign for "hug." Sophie returns the sign but doesn't go to the shore. The bonobos that are released into the preserve are strictly cut off from direct human contact to lessen the chance that they'll approach a human intent on capturing or harming them.

In the camp the following morning, Sophie sees that Otto has slept inside the enclosure but very near her own sleeping place. With her mother's permission, she slips inside and plays with him briefly. Otto is accompanied by a female bonobo and an infant. Sophie doesn't touch the infant, knowing that it's best if the baby never has direct human contact. Florence cuts the electricity to the fence and Sophie returns to the human side of the enclosure.

The rest of Florence's group wakes. They prepare to release the four bonobos. Otto waits while the door of one of the boxes is opened, then puts his hand out in a sign of trust. Congo looks around for a moment, then steps out into his new home.



Analysis

Sophie's clothes are worn and tattered by the time she reaches Ikwa. She keeps one of the sneakers that she wore crossing the country with Otto. As a young adult, she displays the sneaker on a book shelf. When someone asks about it, she makes a pot of coffee and tells the entire story. What she discovers is that telling all the details makes her sad and makes the listener uncomfortable. No one knows what to say about it. That makes Sophie change her tactic. Later, when someone asks, she says simply that it was the sneaker she wore during the war. This sneaker is important to Sophie because it represents the trials she faced and the fact that she and Otto survived.

Sophie talks about the little bonobo that was with Songololo and Mushie in the jungle. The little ape was probably Anastasia's baby and it's only by chance that the little creature survived until Sophie and Florence arrived to take care of her. Sophie notes that she names the bonobo Congo. It's common for the apes to be named after specific places, as is seen in the case of Ikwa. But Sophie's decision to name Congo might indicate her hope that the country will recover and become a better place after the war as well as her hope that the little ape will survive and thrive.

Sophie talks about her connection with Otto in the years after the war. She says she began leaving him for a half hour at a time, gradually making him able to withstand separations of longer periods over the coming months. Through it all, they remained close. When Sophie was in college, Florence called to say that Otto had come down with a goiter. Sophie almost drops everything to return to the sanctuary because she believes Otto needs her. She says she might have needed to "save" Otto again. That indicates the depth of the relationship between Sophie and Otto, despite the fact that they are often separated by that time in their lives.

Discussion Question 1

Describe Sophie's plan for her future and the role she hopes it plays in the Congo.

Discussion Question 2

What is the significance of the four bonobos being released during Sophie's first days back in the Congo?

Discussion Question 3

What is Otto's fate?

Vocabulary

Convoluted, exact, reining, infuse, extorts, potential, porters.



Characters

Sophie Biyoya-Ciardulli

Sophie is a teenager as the story opens. Her parents are divorced. Sophie lives in Miami, Florida, with her father. She spends her vacations in the Congo with her mother. Sophie's mother founded and operates a sanctuary for bonobos, a type of ape with a DNA very similar to that of humans. Sophie doesn't adapt well to the move to Miami but she is also torn when she spends her summers with her mother. She is half black, half white, which also sometimes seems to weigh on her.

When Sophie arrives for her visit with her mother, she sees a man on the side of the road with a bonobo. She buys the bonobo, though her mother's driver urges her not to do so. Sophie doesn't consider the impact of her actions until much later when the man arrives with two more bonobos, obviously hoping the sanctuary will buy more. She's devastated by the situation then, but she is helpless to make any amends. She later finds the two little bonobos, clutched together in death. She fully realizes that she was instrumental in their deaths.

When war breaks out, Sophie begins working to get to safety. However, when Otto is in danger, she changes her plan. Instead of trying to get out of the country, she begins a perilous journey to find her mother. Sophie has opportunities to leave the country, but she would have been forced to leave Otto behind. She can't bring herself to do that. She risks her life to save him. She finds that he gives her a reason to keep going when she might otherwise have given up.

Sophie remains with her mother after the war and attends an American school there. She does leave the region to attend college but returns with a plan to help rejuvenate the region's economy. As soon as she returns to settle down, she makes a trip to the wild sanctuary with her mother and reunites briefly with Otto.

Sophie is a serious character who risks her life to save Otto. While it's admirable because she survives, she could easily have been killed. Neither of her parents would have approved of that risk, even though she was doing so to save Otto. As an adult, she is serious in her determination to help the region progress. She retains her connection with Otto and her love for the bonobos.

Otto

Otto is a young monkey rescued by Sophie at a high cost. Otto is in the possession of a man along the road as Sophie is riding to meet her mother. He is malnourished and covered in sores to that point that he is near death when Sophie sees him for the first time. Over the coming days, Sophie cares for Otto around the clock, and Otto soon bonds with her. He becomes her closest friend as they travel across the Congo in



search of Sophie's mother. Otto is precocious and intelligent like most of the bonobos, but without the ability to think things through and reason.

Otto is a product of the abuse against him during captivity. Sophie witnesses some of this abuse when she first sees Otto on the side of the road. For the coming weeks, Otto struggles with health issues associated with that abuse, but there is a physical side of that abuse as well. When his captor arrives at the sanctuary, Otto is terrified but goes toward the man, obviously fearing that he will be beaten if he doesn't.

Otto's story turns out well. As an adult, he is released into the large, remote sanctuary with very limited contact to humans. He is happy and healthy, living in an area that resembles the native habitat for bonobos. When Sophie comes to help release a new group of bonobos, Otto is present and has a female and a juvenile with him, indicating that he might be a father. He reacts ecstatically toward Sophie's presence and stands at the fence, interacting with her even after she's no longer inside with him.

Florence Biyoya

Sophie's mother, she is the founder and director of a large sanctuary for bonobo apes. She is a strong woman and is passionate about the bonobos. She doesn't spare Sophie's feelings when explaining why Sophie was wrong to buy Otto and forces Sophie to take responsibility for her actions. It's obvious that Florence loves Sophie but she also wants to make Sophie strong. She continues her work with the bonobos throughout Sophie's life and is still working there when Sophie graduates college.

Anastasia

Anastasia is an adult female bonobo and mother of Songololo. She is a rarity among the bonobos and doesn't bond with her daughter. She is often cruel to Songololo, leaving her to fend for herself and to depend on others in the group for help and care. Anastasia apparently gives birth to another baby after her escape from the enclosure at the sanctuary but dies before being able to raise that baby.

Anastasia is the leader among the bonobos in the enclosure at the sanctuary. She sets the tone for many of the group's actions. While she isn't thrilled at having Sophie inside after the soldiers attack, she doesn't attack. She does, however, shove Sophie out of her perch in a tree one night, further evidence of her displeasure. As Sophie is escaping the enclosure, Anastasia leads the group to follow.

Songololo

Songololo is a bonobo and daughter of Anastasia. Anastasia doesn't care for her in the caring way typical of the bonobo mothers. Songololo is somewhat unsure of herself because of her mother's neglect. She soon becomes close friends with Otto. Ironically, it is Songololo who takes over caring for Anastasia's new baby after Anastasia dies.



Mushie

Mushie is a young bonobo that is obviously interested in Anastasia. He is full of life and energy but is typical in his efforts to care for the other bonobos. He builds nests for Sophie each night when she is traveling with the group.

Pweto

Pweto is a bonobo that accidentally kills a young ape. He is attacked by the other bonobos, is badly injured, and is never again allowed to be part of the group. When Sophie and the small group of bonobos are trying to escape the sanctuary, they are confronted by a soldier. It's Pweto who comes to the rescue; but, even then, Anastasia chases him away from the group. Pweto survives the war and is the first to return to his enclosure at the sanctuary.

Wello

Wello, a Congolese man, agrees to give Sophie a ride up the river on her way to meet her mother. Wello takes Sophie's necklace as payment with the understanding that she will later send him some additional money. He leaves her near her destination with directions.

Bouain

Bouain is a young Congolese who seems to be the leader of a group of soldiers in Mbandaka. He winds up with Otto, and Sophie follows him inside his small house when he takes Otto inside for the night. Bouain is very superstitious, and Sophie uses that to her advantage. He doesn't stop her when she leaves.

Sophie's Father

Sophie's father is white and lives in Miami, Florida, with Sophie. He is an executive and left the Congo for his job. He is obviously devoted to Sophie and goes to the Congo the minute travel into the country is available. He helps work toward re-establishing the bonobo sanctuary after the war.



Symbols and Symbolism

Otto

While Otto is a main “character” of the story, he is also a symbol for the lives of the two young bonobos that die after Otto's rescue. Sophie buys Otto though it's strictly against her mother's policies. Her mother knows that buying any ape, even with the intention of rescuing it, only increasing the illegal poaching of the bonobos. The man who has Otto at the opening of the story shows up later with two more bonobos. Sophie later finds their bodies in the forest.

The Bonobos

The bonobos are apes with DNA that closely resembles that of humans. The bonobos are endangered in the Congo. Sophie's mother has established a sanctuary designed to help raise the youngsters in order to release them into a wild preserve in the region.

The Pagne

This is a cloth used by the women of the Congo as part of their attire. Sophie takes the pagne that belonged to Mama Brunelle . She plans for this pagne to serve as a memory of her dead friend and to sleep on it. The pagne is a symbol of the lives lost and of Sophie's effort to survive.

The Trans Liberation Army

Also known as the TLA, this is the army that leads the revolt, prompting an all-out war in the Congo.

Mundele

This is a slang term referring to any white person. It's a derogatory word and indicates that the person is stuck-up. Sophie notes that her father is white and her mother is black, but no one looks at her as a blending of the two. People either consider her black or “mundele.”

Tutsi and Hutus

These are the warring factions most often responsible for fighting in the Congo, though they are not solely to blame for the war that occurs the summer Sophie connects with Otto.



Pirogue

This is a kind of boat used to navigate the river. Sophie travels in this kind of boat to the spot near the village where she hopes to find her mother.

The Pink Ladies

This is the nickname given to a group of female bonobos that are the rulers of the apes in the sanctuary enclosure. The bonobos are matriarchal, and Anastasia is the leader among the Pink Ladies. The group is responsible for Pweto's injuries. Led by Anastasia, they refuse to give Pweto another chance at being part of the larger bonobo group.

Ikwa

Ikwa is a village near the site of the bonobo preserve. This is where Sophie and Florence reunite. The village becomes a symbol for hope as it is the destination that Sophie believes will end her journey. The reader should remember that the name of the village is the same as the name of one of the bonobos.

The Sneaker

Sophie keeps one of the sneakers she wore during her trip across country with Otto. That sneaker is in terrible shape, but it represents the miles Sophie walked in her quest for survival and her effort to save Otto.



Settings

The Sanctuary

The sanctuary is the place Sophie's mother has established to house and care for bonobos. The goal is to get them to the point that they can survive on their own at the wild bonobo preserve in a more remote region. The sanctuary is an abandoned school and the very young bonobos are cared for in the kindergarten area. There is a mural on the wall and additional enclosures nearby. Pweto's small area is on the grounds as well as an over-sized enclosure where the majority of the adult bonobos live. The other large building on the grounds is used as administrative offices. This is where Sophie and the others are when they learn the severity of the situation and that Sophie will soon be taken to the airport to leave the country.

The Wild Preserve

This is a bonobo sanctuary outside the populated areas where the bonobos are released when they are deemed capable of living on their own. The area is surrounded by electric fences and water. When Sophie returns as an adult, she goes to the water side of the island and finds Otto; but, she doesn't approach him from there. He later comes near their camp site and sleeps just on the other side of the fence. The preserve is designed to keep people out and the bonobos know that they shouldn't touch the electric fence.

Kinshasa

Kinshasa is the town where Sophie's mother lives and where Sophie lives after the war. This large city is the government's capitol. There are markets and all the places typical of a large city of the region. There are only a few descriptions of specific places in the city. One of those is the president's home where Sophie and her mother find most of the bonobos have taken up residence after the war.

Mbandaka

Mbandaka is a war-torn town near the wild preserve where the bonobos are released. The town is in the hands of the military when Sophie and Otto wind up there. There is no real law in place. As a result, Sophie is in danger the entire time she's there. There are a few specific descriptions given about the town. Sophie climbs up on the roof of a decrepit house to get a view of the town's layout in order to rescue Otto. She later enters the house where Otto is being held by a young military leader.

Miami, Florida

Sophie lives in Miami with her father after her parents divorce. She remains there until her summer with Otto. None of the action of this book happens in Miami, but it is important because Sophie is very much out of place when she arrives there. Even though she has friends at school, she feels like an outsider in Miami. However, she tries to adapt.

Themes and Motifs

The Plight of the Bonobos

Bonobos are an endangered species of primates. Sophie's mother, Florence, has dedicated her life to trying to preserve them. The bonobos are very cute and affectionate when they are young, which makes them an appealing pet. They later become large and protective, making them less so. One family that had a bonobo as a pet found that an adult bonobo was a liability, which prompted Florence's determination to help save the species.

As the story opens, Sophie arrives in the Congo. She sees a man with a bonobo in poor condition and sets out to rescue the ape, which will later be named Otto. She negotiates a price with the man and buys the little ape. He hangs on to life by a thread for a time and it seems that he might die, but he survives under Sophie's care. Though she saves Otto's life, she creates a bigger problem by buying him. The man who had Otto shows up at the sanctuary with two more young bonobos. He wants to sell them and Sophie realizes that she has encouraged the man to capture more youngsters.

Adult bonobos are highly protective and the only way to get a youngster from the group is to kill all the adults willing to fight for that youngster. When the man shows up with two young bonobos, Sophie realizes that she has put many bonobos in danger. Not only will the two youngsters probably die, the hunger probably killed several adult bonobos in order to capture the youngsters.

Another problem with raising bonobos in captivity is that they literally cannot survive without care and affection. It's not enough to meet the physical needs of bonobos. They will die unless they bond to their caregivers. That means zoos cannot keep young bonobos alive unless their mother cares for them. In the sanctuary, local women are hired to be surrogate mothers for the young bonobos. Otto bonds with Sophie to the point that he mourns whenever they are separated. Songololo is abandoned by her mother and is cared for by the surrogates but she always craves her mother's affection and attention. When her mother won't take care of her, other members of the group step in and see to her needs.

When war comes to the area, bonobos become food for the military. When the electric fence goes off, Sophie knows that the military camped at the sanctuary will soon be hunting the bonobos. She fears this is to be Otto's fate when he's captured in a snare.

The Connection between Sophie and Otto

Sophie sees Otto on the side of the road and immediately wants to rescue him. She does so, even though she later sees the magnitude of her action. From the moment she takes him into the car with her, Otto latches onto Sophie and never wants to let her go after that. The depth of their connection is seen when Sophie is being transported from



the sanctuary by the U.N. It takes two people to pry Otto's hands and feet off Sophie. Even then he chases her, prompting her to leap from the moving van to be sure he isn't killed.

Sophie travels across a good distance before she finds another U.N. military spot where she could be taken to safety. They refuse to allow her to take Otto and she slips away with Otto, knowing that he would die if left behind. Her dedication to his safety is so deep that she risks her life several more times before she finds her mother.

Otto's dedication to Sophie is equally deep, though his actions are based more on primal instinct than on his emotions. Otto bonds with Sophie soon after his rescue. He refuses to be parted from her and becomes highly agitated whenever they are separated. When Sophie steps out of the enclosure at the sanctuary, she has to take Otto with her because she knows he'll become loud and attract the soldiers' attention if she tries to leave him behind.

This connection stands the test of time. Otto is eventually released into the preserve and lives there with other bonobos while Sophie goes to America to college. When she returns to the Congo after graduation, she travels to a side of the island near the water. When Otto sees her, he raises his arms in the signal for a hug. Sophie raises her arms in return but, in keeping with her mother's rules, doesn't make physical contact. She does spend a few minutes inside the enclosure with Otto before leaving the area. They pick up their old habits, including mock kisses, without prompting.

The Situation in the Congo

When war breaks out in the Congo during Sophie's visit, no one panics. Her mother goes on with her planned trip, leaving Sophie in the care of the workers at the sanctuary. While no one takes the unrest in complete stride, fighting is such a common occurrence that everyone goes on with their lives. The threat of war is constant and stories of fighting are not news.

The economics of the Congo is another constant problem. The workers at the sanctuary make a decent living, but many people are near starvation. This is most of the reason for the illegal capture and sale of animals. Sophie knows that the man who sells her the bonobo is only doing it for the money. She believes him when he says his family is near starvation because there are many people in that situation. While the man seeks to make more money by turning up at the sanctuary with more bonobos, it still seems possible that he's trying to provide for himself and his family.

The poor economics of the country are why Sophie is able to convince Wello to take her up the river in his boat. She offers him fifty dollars, which is a great deal of money to him. She leaves him with a necklace as partial payment and to assure him that she'll pay the rest. Her family pays more than the agreement. The amount of money he receives is huge for him and his family.



The fact that the situation doesn't change dramatically over the next few years is seen when Sophie returns as a college graduate. She says everyone talks about the improvement but that it's difficult to see them. She plans to devote herself to helping change things for the common person, specifically with regard to economics.

Coming of Age

Sophie is a very typical Coming-of-Age character. As the story opens, she is a young teenager. She is kind and intelligent. She knows more about the world than most teenagers because she has lived in both America and the Congo. As a typical teenager, she is still self-absorbed and doesn't listen to the advice of Clement regarding Otto. Sophie believes she is doing the right thing by buying Otto because she sees it as rescuing him from his abusive captor. Clement says that Sophie's mother would not approve but it's not until later that Sophie sees the full ramifications of her action.

Sophie's mother, Florence, is furious when Sophie arrives at the sanctuary with Otto. Florence says that Sophie has made a serious mistake. Sophie accepts her mother's chastisement but still tries to justify her action by pointing out that Otto is now in a safe place. Later, the man who held Otto captive shows up with two more bonobos. Sophie is powerless to stop the man from leaving with the terrified youngsters. It's only then that Sophie fully realizes the extent of her mistake. By giving the man money for Otto, she has encouraged him to capture more bonobos, believing he would have an easy market for them.

Florence might have tried to protect Sophie from the effects of her actions, but she doesn't. She knows that it's important for Sophie to learn from the mistake and to accept the consequences of her action. She feels guilty when she sees the two young bonobos at the sanctuary, but she fully accepts the blame when she finds their bodies after the war erupts. This acceptance that she played a role in their deaths is a sign of her emerging maturity.

The final chapter of the story is set years after the summer Sophie rescues Otto. She is an adult and has finished college. Sophie has returned to the Congo with a plan to help improve the conditions in the region. Her plans are selfless. It's obvious that she has matured into a caring adult.

Otto is another character that exhibits this theme. He is a young bonobo ape as the story opens, in the hands of an abusive captor. Otto bonds to Sophie as a youngster to the point that he becomes frantic if he's separated. It takes multiple people to pry his hands and feet off Sophie when she's picked up by the U.N. van as the war first breaks out. Even then, he runs after the van. Sophie jumps out to ensure that he isn't run over. He continues to cling to her during their trip across the region to the village where they find Florence. Years pass between that summer and the final chapter of the book. In that time, Otto grows into an adult bonobo. Though he recognizes Sophie and is obviously pleased to see her, he is not frantic when she leaves him again. He is with a female and a baby, indicating that he might now have a family of his own.



Sophie's Journey

A journey is a typical theme, especially in literature aimed at young adults. Sophie's journey has several stages, and each holds some importance in her story. Sophie learns lessons along the way that are important to her. Her journey essentially begins in the first pages of the book with her arrival in the Congo for her summer vacation. She sees Otto, and she makes the decision to rescue him. She is aware that she shouldn't, but she gives the trader all the cash she has available in exchange for the ape he has in his possession. She believes she's doing the right thing and refuses to listen to any reason that she shouldn't.

Once Sophie is at the sanctuary, she is forced to face the reality that purchasing Otto has essentially renewed the illegal bonobo trade. Sophie feels guilty over the realization, but she knows that she doesn't have any idea of how to fix the situation. It takes some time for Sophie to realize that she can't change what's already happened. She decides that saving Otto will help make up, at least in some small way, for her mistake. It's with this knowledge that Sophie spends hours caring for Otto and nursing him through his initial heal issues. It's also this knowledge that makes her refuse to leave the sanctuary when the United Nations van arrives.

Sophie spends several weeks in the enclosure with the bonobos there. She learns a great deal about the apes and about herself. It's during this time that Sophie gains the confidence to set out on the next stage of her journey. She learns to forage with the apes. Foraging makes it possible for her to survive during the coming weeks on the road.

Another important stage of the journey is seen when Sophie arrives at the United Nations center. When Sophie arrives, she fully intends to leave the country, regardless of the consequences to Otto. But, when Sophie sees the bodies of the two young bonobos, she renews her determination to save Otto. Giving up the chance to leave the country, she slips away and continues her journey.

The remainder of her journey to join her mother includes a trip up the river, an encounter with a military leader, and a battle with the elements. She does manage to survive and keeps Otto alive for the trip. The culmination of the journey is Sophie's reunion with her mother, and she is relieved when it comes to an end.

The final chapter of the book can be considered a final stage of the journey. Sophie has become an adult with a plan for her life. She travels with her mother for a brief reunion with Otto.



Styles

Point of View

The story is presented in first person and is strictly from Sophie's perspective. This means the point of view is extremely limited and the only information the reader has is whatever Sophie has. This limitation is appropriate because Sophie goes through her life working with only that information.

An important example of this limitation is seen in Sophie's relationship with her parents and their relationship with each other. Sophie's parents are divorced and she believes she knows the reason. Her father has a job in Miami and her mother is strictly focused on the bonobo preserve. This means they can't live together. Sophie doesn't initially understand the reason they divorced, saying it seems they could have maintained a long-distance relationship. She comes to realize that her mother's first love is for the bonobos and that Florence will choose the bonobos before family. After the war settles down, her father rushes to the Congo and remains to help with the repairs and recovery at the sanctuary. It's only as she ages that Sophie realizes that there are things other than distance keeping her parents apart. She apparently never gets a full picture of their relationship, but she does come to accept it.

Another important example of this limitation is seen in the relationship and connection between the humans and bonobos. The humans who work with bonobos are in tune with the habits of the bonobos but the bonobos are ultimately unable to communicate. When Sophie sees Otto scrunch up his face, she can make an educated guess at what's wrong, but the reader knows only whatever Sophie reveals. These interactions are important to the story and the limited perspective affects the story during these times.

Sophie seems to be a reliable perspective. She doesn't appear to change things to her favor. For example, when her mother explains that Sophie has made a huge mistake by buying the bonobo, Sophie is initially upset. When she fully understands the magnitude of her mistake, she doesn't downplay her role. She also accepts responsibility for the deaths of the two new bonobos that she can't save as well as the adult bonobos that would have been killed in order for the hunter to take the young bonobos.

Language and Meaning

The story is written in a straight forward manner that is easy to read. The action flows quickly which keeps the reader engaged. The reader with an average vocabulary will find few unfamiliar words. There are a few phrases in other languages, such as Sophie's thoughts toward Otto when he is captured in a snare. She refers to Otto as "mon petite." Even the reader who is not familiar with these phrases will be able to figure out a close meaning based on the surrounding content.



There are a few sections that refer to the “humping” of the apes, which some young readers may not understand. There are only a few of these sexual references. There is a great deal of violence and some sections that may be disturbing to some readers. When Sophie sees Otto for the first time, a man has him tied up and is abusing him. Sophie takes possession of him when Otto is malnourished and covered with sores. The descriptions of his condition are disturbing in their graphic detail. The scene in which Sophie sees the two young bonobos being taken away from the sanctuary on the back of a bicycle is also disturbing as is the scene in which she and Otto find their bodies.

Sophie also sees some scenes of violence in which humans are dead. She describes the dead bodies outside the sanctuary enclosure and these scenes are also described in detail. Through these descriptions, the reader will be able to imagine the scenes. The fighting and danger may be overly frightening for some young readers.

The story is divided into narrative and dialogue though there is much more narrative because Sophie spends a great deal of time alone or only with the bonobos. In some cases, Sophie imagines conversations. For example, she interprets one of Otto's actions as having a particular meaning and will imagine the words he would have said, if he could talk. These “conversations” are set apart with italics, indicating to the reader that she's imagining them and that they aren't true words being spoken. In some cases, the italicized words belong to Sophie, as is seen when she is trying to mentally reassure Otto after he's caught in the snare.

Structure

The book is divided into seven parts and twenty-seven chapters. Part One is titled Otto and contains five chapters. In this section, the various characters are introduced and Sophie arrives in the Congo. The reader also begins to learn about the bonobos and their characteristics. It seems that Sophie's decision to buy Otto in order to rescue him is a good idea but Sophie learns her lesson about this decision in this section when a man arrives trying to sell two more bonobos.

Part Two is A Country No more. In this section, war breaks out. Chapters Six and Seven appear in this section. Sophie is offered the opportunity to leave but rushes away and hides when Otto chases the van. Also in this section, the reader sees Otto's level of commitment to Sophie and her commitment to keeping him safe. Part Three is Enclosure and it opens with Chapter Eight. This part ends with Chapter Thirteen. Sophie spends time getting to know the bonobos in the sanctuary enclosure. From high in the trees, Sophie can see the damage the soldiers have wreaked on the buildings of the sanctuary. It's in this section that Anastasia seems about to attack but backs off when Sophie wraps her body around Otto, intent on saving him before worrying about herself. It's also in this section that Anastasia finds Sophie asleep in a tree and pushes her out.

Part Four is What Remains Outside. Chapters Fourteen through Nineteen are in this part. In this part, Sophie has discovered that the electric fence has been turned off. She



has to decide whether to leave the relative safety of the enclosure or risk running away. She is forced to make the painful decision to leave the other bonobos inside, taking only Otto with her. She does leave and sees the full destruction by the soldiers. She also sees the spots where several of the workers died. She manages to escape but several of the bonobos follow and she winds up with a group rather than just Otto.

Part Five is Everything is Raining. Chapters Twenty through Twenty-two. In this section, Sophie tries to get past Mbandaka, a military stronghold, to reach her mother. Hunters capture Otto in a snare and Sophie risks her life to get him back. Part Six is What Remained Inside and Sophie has to fool a soldier to convince him to release Otto before continuing her journey. She reunites with her mother and they spend the remainder of the war in a small village before returning to the sanctuary, reuniting with her father, rebuilding the sanctuary and their homes. They also find many of the other bonobos, alive and healthy. Chapters Twenty-three through Twenty-six are in this part. Part Seven is Congo and includes an overview of Sophie's life after that summer along with her plans for helping boost the economy in the Congo.

The book is roughly presented in chronological order. Details about Sophie's childhood are presented as memories and these are generally related to her relationship with her parents and their relationship with each other.

Quotes

The guidelines on how to keep a young bonobo healthy are pretty short: When they're with their mothers, they're happy and healthy; when they're not with their mothers, they begin to die.

-- Sophie (Chapter 3 paragraph 6)

Importance: Sophie is introducing the three surrogates who serve as “mamas” to the baby bonobos in the sanctuary nursery. The three women are vital to the survival of the young bonobos.

Sometime during my six years in the states, I began to hate the Democratic Republic of Congo.

-- Sophie (Chapter 4 paragraph 1)

Importance: Sophie's dislike for the Congo is an important part of her character. She says she liked the country as a young girl because she didn't know anything different.

His life stood for those other two lives. And it stood for my own guilt.

-- Sophie (Chapter 6 paragraph 24)

Importance: Sophie is very much aware that her decision to buy Otto prompts the trader to kidnap the other two young bonobos. She feels guilty about it and realizes that she is responsible for the deaths of the other young bonobos and their families.

I recognized Mama Brunelle crying, then heard a man yelling back at her, their voices fading and then getting stronger, a rush and a crash and a scream cut off.

-- Sophie (Chapter 8 paragraph 25)

Importance: Sophie is describing the death of her friend, Mama Brunelle, who is killed by a soldier just outside the sanctuary. The attack on the sanctuary grounds is a traumatic event for Sophie.

Though I was intimidated by the prospect of facing the apes, I was far more willing to risk my life with them than with the kata-kata.

-- Sophie (Chapter 8 paragraph 34)

Importance: Sophie is dealing with the fallout of her decision not to go to the airport. She's now in the bonobo enclosure and knows that not all the adult bonobos are friendly. She might be attacked by the apes but feels safer there than outside the enclosure where the soldiers have attacked the sanctuary.

Food had been discovered, which meant the weird naked ape girl had become old news.

-- Sophie (Chapter 9 paragraph 8)



Importance: The bonobos are very interested in Sophie when she and Otto first arrive in the enclosure; but, Mushie has discovered some shoots and begins eating. His action captures the attention of the other bonobos.

I'd fallen out of my nest. I was such an amateur bonobo.
-- Sophie (Chapter 7 paragraph 19)

Importance: Sophie is trying to fit in with the bonobos by sleeping in a tree. She believes she has fallen out but later realizes that Anastasia pushed her. Her reference to herself as “an amateur bonobo” is an indication that she is trying to live like the bonobos as a means of surviving.

At one point, I slid snoozing Otto into Banalia's lap. She squealed and looked down at him with a mix of confusion and delight, like I'd given her a pound cake.
-- Sophie (Chapter 12 paragraph 32)

Importance: The statement is humorous and is one of many examples of the author's use of humor to counter the serious situation Sophie is facing. Sophie has put Otto into Banalia's lap so that she's free to offer Songololo a dry place to sit.

But these were extraordinary times, and they were apparently willing to make an exception for their leader. Me.
-- Sophie (Chapter 15 paragraph 35)

Importance: Sophie has been expecting the bonobo group to give up following her because they don't usually go more than a mile or so from wherever they consider home. However, they are continuing to follow Sophie much farther than they would normally go. Sophie realizes it's because they have been traumatized by the recent events as well.

Did life go on in America when I was hiding from militias in Congo?
-- Sophie (Chapter 20 paragraph 28)

Importance: Sophie has suddenly realized that months have passed since the sanctuary was attacked. She is forced to realize that life goes on with everyone else while her life is literally on hold.

That thought, that bonobos saw only behavior and not reasons, has always made me sad. But maybe being able to say 'I love you' was just smoke and mirrors compared to having a living being under your fingers.
-- Sophie (Chapter 23 paragraph 12)

Importance: Sophie is talking about the differences between humans and bonobos. They are very similar in DNA, but the apes don't have the ability to reason. While Sophie sees the lack of reasoning abilities as a handicap, she also admits that depending just on the results of situations has its advantages.



On the other side of the elegant wrought-iron entrance lay what looked like a bonobo theme park: bonobos draped over cupid planters; bonobos pooping in a birdbath; bonobos chasing one another up and down Grecian statues, leaping from the head of Aphrodite and swinging around Poseidon's tri-dent to land in the arms of Zeus.

-- Sophie (Chapter 26 paragraph 41)

Importance: Sophie and her mother have just arrived at the estate of the former president where there are eighteen bonobos running all over the place. They are thrilled with the sight of the bonobos running rampant over the estate. Sophie says it's a shame that they have to take the bonobos away.