

Last Night in Montreal Study Guide

Last Night in Montreal by Emily St. John Mandel

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Plot Summary

This novel "Last Night in Montreal," written by Emily St. John Mandel, focuses on the mysterious past of a woman named Lilia, who was abducted by her father at the age of 7. Lilia has no recollection of life before the abduction, yet the mysterious scars on her arms suggest abuse. Throughout the story, the perspective is shifted between the stories of various characters who are affected by the mystery of Lilia's story.

At the opening of the novel, Lilia was living with her boyfriend, Eli, in Brooklyn, New York. Although Lilia was happy with her life in New York, she felt the need to leave as leaving was all she had ever done. Within the first chapter of the novel, Lilia disappeared unexpectedly, leaving Eli distraught but determined to find her.

A few days later, Eli began receiving mysterious notes from a woman named Michaela in Montreal. One note contained a message written in Lilia's childhood handwriting on a Bible page with directions to meet in Montreal. Despite the advice of his friends in New York, Eli decided to go to Montreal to search for his lost lover.

Michaela, it turned out, was the daughter of the private investigator Lilia's mother had hired to search for her lost daughter. The private investigator, Christopher, had become so consumed in Lilia's case that he had neglected his marriage and his daughter, leaving Michaela to live on her own at fifteen.

When Eli arrived in Montreal, he found that Michaela was a go-go dancer at a local club. She was heavily addicted to multiple drugs and appeared decadent, yet beautiful. She and Eli began meeting nightly to discuss Lilia. Eli wanted to know where she was and Michaela wanted to know the details of a crash she had been in involving her father. Neither one wanted to tell their secrets.

In the end, all secrets were revealed. Eli informed Michaela that Lilia's father had purposely driven Christopher off the road, causing him severe injuries. Michaela told Eli Lilia's location. However, just as he was on his way to meet her, Michaela was meeting her at the train station. There, she revealed that her mother had thrown her through a window, prompting her brother Simon to arrange the abduction. With that, Michaela took her own life, despite Eli's attempt to save her.



Part 1: Chapters 1-5

Summary

“Last Night in Montreal” is a novel centering on the character of Lilia, a woman who was abducted by her father as a child and bears no recollection of her life prior. Throughout the novel, various characters are drawn together by her mysterious past and the desire to find the truth in her case.

The novel began on Halloween, when Lilia was living with her boyfriend of six months, Eli, in Brooklyn, New York. The morning began like any other. Eli was working on his thesis, which he had been working on for years by this point. Lilia woke up, showered, and kissed Eli on the head three times. He was so engrossed in his work that he did not look up.

Lilia announced she was leaving for the paper, as she did every morning. Yet, unlike mornings past, she did not ask Eli if he wanted coffee. This did not faze him at the time. He did not yet know that this would be the morning Lilia left him forever.

The scene then flashed forward to later that day. Eli had realized after hours of waiting that Lilia was not returning. He thought of all of the signs he may have missed that morning in his reluctance to look up from his work. He ran to the train station, although he knew that his search had begun too late.

Eli returned home, knowing he had lost Lilia. He heard a knock on the door and felt a brief glimmer of hope. It could be her. He opened the door to find trick-or-treaters. He stood there, speechless. He then remembered it was Halloween.

In Chapter 2, the story shifted to Lilia’s childhood. The chapter began with Lilia in her father’s car, driving through the desert with a fading map. She recalled the mirages she used to see in the desert and the transient nature of her childhood. She was forever moving between cities and states, between motels, libraries, and highways. She recalled that she and her father were always on the run.

Throughout their journeys, Lilia and her father would talk about anything except the past. When she asked, he responded that they were to live in the present. Lilia remembered nothing before the night her father had come to get her from her mother’s home, waking her by throwing glass at her windowpane and calling her down the stairs as her mother slept. Lilia knew nothing of her mother and this lack of knowledge gave her childhood memories a strange hallucinatory quality.

At the end of the second chapter, the novel flashed forward to Lilia 15 years later, staring out the window in Eli’s apartment, settling on the idea that she had been leaving for so long she no longer knew how to stay.



Chapter 3 began with Eli's considering his lack of suffering before he had met Lilia. His lack of suffering, he thought, was not so much an advantage but another a problem. His lack of suffering just contributed to his sense of lacking in any real experience in life. He considered his job at the museum, where he was paid to stand in an empty museum among artwork he did not understand. He longed to be more like his brother Zed, who travelled the world and did things rather than merely talking about them.

Eli then began to partake in a discussion with his friends Thomas and Genevieve about the meaning of art. Both of his friends claimed to be artists although they had not produced any work in quite some time. Likewise, he claimed to be a scholar yet lacked any scholarship to prove this fact. He considered the meaningless of the terms artists as many could claim the title while few earned it. When Thomas asked what was bothering him, he shared his frustration about the stagnancy of his life and his building resentment of theorizing rather than doing.

The scene then flashed back to Eli and Lilia's first conversation in a coffee house. He had been seeing her there for a while and wanted to talk to her. One day, he finally built up the courage to do so. Lilia told Eli she was a traveler and she liked to be as upfront about it as possible. She also said that she like the coffee house for its Matisse painting of the Greek legend of Icarus. He told her about his language studies. He studied dying languages, specifically the ways of life that were lost when a unique, untranslatable phrase died with its language. Lilia found this fascinating.

After walking Lilia home that night, the two began to see each other regularly. She lived in a dark rented bedroom and worked nights as a dishwasher. She loved learning, spoke five languages, and would sometimes stay up all night reading, writing, or taking photographs. She was mysterious. All Eli knew of her life before was that her father lived in New Mexico with his girlfriend and two small children. He noticed scars on her arms but was afraid to ask of their origin.

When they moved in together, three months after meeting at the café, Eli began to pick up on her strange idiosyncrasies. She had various hygienic rituals, such as changing razors various times while shaving. By the third night they spent together, Lilia told Eli she was traveling too much and wanted nothing more than to stay in one place for a while. To him the idea was exotic.

One night, Lilia began to tell Eli her story, beginning with her abduction by her father. Eli listened, shocked, and noticed Lilia tracing wings over his shoulder blades.

Chapter 4 began with Lilia's considering the toll her disappearance had taken on her mother. She thought of an interview she had seen on Unsolved Cases, where her mother had said that she wished she could forget Lilia. Although this had hurt, Lilia understood it as a responded to the suffering the disappearance must have brought her.

She recalled the night her father had come to get her, scooping her up from the snowy ground, calling her "Lilia, my dove." That night, her stepbrother, Simon, had watched from the window as she met her father and left. It was her escape.



In Chapter 5, the story shifted back to the morning after Lilia began telling Eli her story. He left her sleeping and went to the coffee house where they had met. He tried to distract himself but could think of nothing but her. He returned to the apartment but she was not there. He worried about where she might be.

That evening, she returned, vaguely recounting the activities of her day. This was normal for her. She said that she had seen Genevieve, who she disliked greatly. When she was finished describing the rude encounter, she and Eli went to sleep. As they laid in bed, Lilia continued her story, seemingly entering into a trance as she recalled the events of her past.

With his new knowledge, her tendencies began to appear more and more obsessive to him. Finally, he asked of her plans to leave. She admitted that she might, saying she did not know how to stay. He left her, throwing her book out the window in a rage.

He finally returned to her, bringing with him a pomegranate on a blue plate, thinking the color combination might please her. He hoped that any little thing might convince her to stay. He began to feed her seeds, begging her not to leave.

Analysis

The third person omniscient narration of the novel played a key role from the very start. The story of Lilia's departure was told by a third person with insight into Eli's thoughts as he replayed the events of the morning over in his mind. This also allowed for foreshadowing, as Lilia's actions that morning were given extra significance by Eli's future interpretations. As Lilia's actions were narrated, Eli questioned their significance. The morning that had seemed so ordinary had turned out to be life changing. He replayed the events over and over in his mind, searching for meaning.

When Eli did realize Lilia had left for good, she began to think anxiously of whether she had given any signs of her departure. He regretted not looking up from his work. He recalled that he was too busy "accomplishing things." to notice that she had not asked for his coffee order, the one thing that made that morning unusual. Eli's insistence that he was "accomplishing things" was significant as throughout the novel, he consistently compared himself to others. He felt that he talked about things without ever doing them. He resented his stagnancy, yet did nothing to combat it.

As he searched for Lilia, even realizing he was entirely too late, he recalled that he had been waiting for this day. He had known that Lilia was leaving, yet did not take action to stop her. His actions on the day of her departure mirrored his inability to do things despite the frustration his inaction caused him.

The realization that it was Halloween at the end of the first chapter was significant as Halloween is "the day of the dead." It is a day symbolizing the remembrance of all lost souls. In her many disappearances throughout her lifetime, Lilia was a lost soul to many.



The second chapter began with a comparison of Lilia's childhood to a mirage. The map in her father's car served as a metaphor for the lack of control and direction she had in her own life. Although she was supposed to be the copilot, she could hardly read the map. The states and cities blended together in an unintelligible haze.

The third person omniscient narration style throughout the chapters allows the reader insight into Lilia's thoughts of her own upbringing throughout the flashback. The lack of understanding she had about her past led Lilia to develop an inability to stay. She was always running, although she did not understand what made her run.

The introduction of Lilia's nameless father contributes to the air of mystery around his character. He is simultaneously presented as a benevolent, intellectual man and as a child abductor. The two sides to his personality, as well as his lack of a name, contribute to the depth and complexity of his character.

In the beginning of Chapter 3, Eli's notion that he had never endured any true suffering until meeting Lilia emphasized the lack of understanding he had for those around him. He compared himself to his brother Zed, who travelled the world helping others. He, unlike Eli, really experienced the world, rather than just theorizing about it. Eli's inability to understand suffering contributes to the shallowness of her character. He does not immerse himself in the world, but rather observes it. This also reflects his inability to connect with Lilia in her suffering and inability to commit. Just as she could not stay, he could not go. In the passage the characters are simultaneously compared and contrasted. While their reasons may be different, both characters shared the inability to connect with others or truly experience the world around them.

The art gallery was included as a metaphor for the emptiness experienced by various characters. Although the gallery was full of art, it was rarely visited and misunderstood, even by the museum's employees. The emptiness of the gallery symbolized the emptiness within both Eli and Lilia in their inability to truly experience life.

Eli's conversation with Thomas and Genevieve regarding the meaning of art further emphasized his frustration with his inability to move forward in life. Just as the artists he loathed did not produce art, he could not seem to actually follow through with any of his dreams.

When Eli considered that Lilia was the only woman who had ever been interested in his discipline, she was compared to the languages themselves. In her strange tendencies and inability to connect, she was as untranslatable as the lost languages. Likewise, she was disappearing just as they were. Eli's fascination with dying languages, then, is linked with his fascination with Lilia. In his inability to change, he obsessed over that which was fleeting.

The coffee house scene also introduced the significance of the story of Icarus, which served as a symbol throughout the novel. In wishing to fly, Icarus crafted wings. His father warned him not to fly too close to the sun. He did, however. His father watched as he plummeted to his death.



The narration of Lilia's description was very important as the omniscient point of view allowed the reader to see Lilia through the lens of Eli. In this way, his fascination with her was juxtaposed to his lack of understanding of her lifestyle. To her, her way of life was exotic and entrancing, yet something he could never truly reach. In this way, his relationship with Lilia ultimately added to his feeling of emptiness.

His reluctance to ask Lilia about her scars or any other details of her past life showed that he was afraid to learn too much as it might have caused his perception of what he believed her to be to become corrupted. Her mystery was part of what he desired about her and he sacrificed a true understanding of her for his infatuation with her.

When Lilia did finally begin to tell her story, she traced wings over Eli's shoulder blades, symbolizing her desire for him to save her from herself. She thought that if she told someone all she knew of herself, she could finally feel complete and longed for Eli to be this person.

In this Chapter 4, Lilia recalled with guilt the emptiness her mother must feel in her absence. Even after watching the interview, Lilia could not believe that her mother did not love her. This and her father's calling her "his dove" added to her characterization as a pure and innocent person. Although her disappearances had pained quite a few lives, she was without fault.

The narrator's inclusion of Simon, Lilia's step-brother, watching the abduction calmly suggested that there was more to the story than originally meets the eye. The narrator's reference to the event as Lilia's "escape" contributed to the sense that her father was in fact saving her from something.

In Chapter 5, Lilia was juxtaposed to Genevieve in their uncomfortable encounter. Throughout the novel, Genevieve was the only character Lilia openly criticized. The two were polar opposites. While Lilia was a listener, Genevieve was a talker. Genevieve thought about things while Lilia did them. While Genevieve approached life with a critical attitude, always ready for a debate, Lilia displayed genuine curiosity of all things. Genevieve's adversarial attitude made Lilia uncomfortable.

After listening to Lilia's story over the course of two nights, Eli began to panic. He began to feel the inflated image he had had of Lilia begin to dissipate in the truth of her past. The idiosyncrasies he had once found fascinating he now found obsessive. He now knew she would leave and it was all he could think about. Her story consumed him. When he confronted her on her plans to leave, she admitted that she might. In this way, Lilia was portrayed as honest above all else.

The pomegranate at the end of the fifth chapter served as a symbol for the Greek legend of Persephone. In the myth, Hades kidnapped Persephone, leaving her mother in mourning. He tricked her into eating six pomegranate seeds, dooming her to stay with him in the underworld for six months of the year. Like Persephone, Lilia was taken from her mother. Eli, like Hades, fed her the seeds in an effort to make her stay.



Discussion Question 1

How does the style of narration aid in the use of foreshadowing and flashback throughout the first chapters of the novel?

Discussion Question 2

Explain the significance of the fading map in Lilia's father's car.

Discussion Question 3

In the first section of the novel, Lilia's inability to stay is contrasted with Eli's inability to go. What draws these characters together despite their differences? How are the two similar?

Vocabulary

berets, mirage, awash, phantom, unimpressible, quantum, symphonic, fraud, ceased, pretense, pedantic, silhouette, topography, precedent, Cyrillic, erratic, tenuous, pragmatic, indelibly, receded, malicious, aver, impeccable, inscrutably, evasive, duvet



Part 1: Chapters 5-9

Summary

Chapter 6 began the morning after Lilia's escape. Her brother was the first to go downstairs, seeing Lilia's trail of footprints leading to her father's. He closed the front door, which Lilia had left open the night before, yet still felt the cold rush of air coming through a broken window in the kitchen.

He went upstairs and told his mom what had happened. She immediately asked him to get a ball as she cleaned the broken glass from under the broken window. Soon after, the police arrived and she told them that Simon had thrown a ball through the window. They did not seem to care about her story and instead focused on the two converging sets of footprints; one left by Lilia and the other by her father the night prior. During the police investigation, Simon answered many questions, for most of which he lied. He then took Lilia's stuffed bunny, which she had dropped in the snow, upstairs and washed it.

The focus then shifted to Lilia and her father, in a motel room 300 miles south. Although Lilia did not know her father very well at this point due to her mother's unwillingness to allow him visits, his voice soothed her. When they arrived at the motel, Lilia's father dyed her hair and changed the inexplicable bandages on her arms. For their first year together, Lilia remained fairly quiet, listening to her father share his stories and knowledge with her.

After dyeing Lilia's hair, Lilia's father made a comparison to Monet's painting, saying an object may change in the manner of memory. Looking in the mirror, Lilia was delighted to find that she did not know herself. Having no knowledge of the past that had brought her the mysterious scars on her arms, she was grateful for the freedom that came with a fresh start. She then received her first false name, Gabriel, which to her did not seem fraudulent.

Chapter 7 began with Lilia and Eli lying in bed the morning after he threw her book out the window. He asked her about what she had written in the book. She told that it was where she recorded her memories as memories go hazy when you stare at them for too long.

Eli was finding Lilia exceedingly hard to reach, although he could not imagine someone more perfect. She was deeply passionate in his area of study, perhaps more than he was. On the night before Lilia left, she and Eli discussed the language of the Hopi tribe, which had no way of distinguishing between tenses. Eli wondered what this did to the concept of time. Lilia wondered how it affected free will.

The following evening, after Lilia had disappeared, Eli sat, searching for a pattern in her escapes.



Chapter 8 began with a flashback to Lilia's childhood, traveling through the U.S. in her father's car. She asked her father where they had started from and he reminded her to live in the present. The past, she realized, was the only thing he would not talk to her about.

As they traveled, Lilia pointed out different locations on the map, fantasizing about the life they might have in each new place. Whenever she mentioned settling somewhere, her father would remind her that that would mean they would have to stay. She would then quickly change her mind. She wanted to keep moving.

As they stopped at different motels, Lilia began leaving notes in their Bibles. She kept these notes secret from her father. In their constant togetherness, these secrets were the only source of privacy Lilia had.

As their journey progressed, Lilia began to feel skittish from staying still. Lilia's father had always travelled, as his parents were diplomats. He had earned various degrees from a sampling of universities and then worked as an adjunct professor until his relationship with an underage student ended his career. He had also served a brief prison sentence for his involvement in a counterfeiting scheme. He had been married to Lilia's mother, who he described as impossible, for three years. Afterwards, he made a fortune in stocks, affording him the ability to travel continuously without income.

Throughout the first few years, they travelled out of necessity. Later on, it occurred to Lilia that they could have stopped afterwards but did not. As they travelled, her father educated her in languages. Once in a while they were forced to make quick escapes. Through it all, Lilia was calm. She felt too old to be afraid.

Chapter 9 began in the beginning of November, just after Lilia's disappearance from New York. Eli received a strange postcard in the mail, telling him to meet at Club Electrolite in Montreal to meet Lilia. The card was not written in Lilia's handwriting. He considered how everything in his life had been odd since he met her.

At the coffee shop, he discussed the idea of traveling to Montreal with Thomas. Thomas thought he was a fool to consider going as there was no way to save her. Mid-conversation, Eli got up and left, determined to follow her. As he walked to the train, he found himself noticing the small details of the city, just as Lilia had.

Later, Eli returned to the coffee shop and asked Genevieve about Montreal, a subject she loved to speak about as she had grown up there. Thomas again asserted his feeling that Eli should not go to Montreal. Still, Genevieve continued her description of Montreal, mentioning that it was a wonderful place to live as long as one knew French. As Quebec's native style of French was dying, the government took extra measures to ensure it was preserved. Genevieve insisted he go as he should experience life in a city with a doomed language.

The next morning, another envelope from Montreal arrived. This one had a note, written in Lilia's childhood handwriting, written on a torn out page of the Bible. The note read, "Stop looking for me. I wish to remain vanishing. I'm not missing; I do not want to be



found. I don't want to go home." On the envelope, there was a separate note, written in the handwriting of the original letter. This note read, "Call me when you get to Montreal," and included a phone number. The return address revealed the letters had come from a woman name Michaela.

While reviewing the new note, Eli answered a phone call from his mother. He let her speak, hardly listening, as he examined the Bible page. Lilia's note was written on the twenty-second psalm, which seemed like a cry for help. He considered the discrepancy between the messages and decided he must find her.

Analysis

In Chapter 6, Simon's calmness throughout the investigation of his sister's departure and the inclusion of the fact that he was lying to the police suggested that Simon had a greater knowledge of the turn of events than the reader. His preserving of Lilia's bunny showed that he did care for his sister, despite his knowledge of her abduction.

In this chapter, Lilia's mother is portrayed for the first time as suspicious. Her concern with making the broken window appear to be an accident trumped her concern for her missing daughter. Even after the police arrived, her preoccupation with setting the scene was obvious.

This chapter also introduced Lilia's father. Although he was said to have abducted Lilia, the suspicious nature of her mother and the calmness of Simon helped to characterize Lilia's father as a benevolent character. Lilia also described his voice as soothing and noted her comfort around him. By referring to Lilia as "his dove," her father pointed out the innocence of her character. She bore no blame in the debacle and he was determined to keep her safe.

Lilia's elation at not knowing the self she saw in the mirror signifies her desire to start over. This was the first instance in which Lilia desired to disappear. Her first false name, Gabriel, allowed held special significance. Like many names throughout the novel, the name held Biblical roots. The name Gabriel, meaning "God's strength," gave Lilia strength as it allowed her to leave the mystery of her past behind her.

In Chapter 7, Lilia's fascination with dying language lied in her relations to them. Just as the death of a language caused its remaining people to be unable to communicate, Lilia was unable to communicate her experiences to anyone. She felt as the last living speaker of a language felt, unable to relay her experiences due to a lack of understanding of those around her.

As Eli and Lilia discussed the language of the Hopi tribe, Eli at first did not understand Lilia's relation of lack of tense to lack of free will. After considering the phrases, "You disappeared. You are disappearing. You will disappear," he understood. In Lilia's continuous disappearances, she also lacked free will. With the obscurity of her past and the inability to remember a time before she began leaving, she had no choice but to continue disappearing.



Chapter 8 served as a flashback, giving background into Lilia's ceaseless need to keep moving. Her realization in this chapter that she did not want to stop, despite her wondering what it might be like to do so, emphasized her need to be disappearing from her past.

The explanation of the crooked past of Lilia's father challenged the reader to see him in a different light. Perhaps, the narrator seemed to suggest, he did have an ulterior motive in taking Lilia. However, given his positive characterization by Lilia, this seemed unlikely. In this way, the third person omniscient narration played a huge role in shaping reader opinion of the characters.

In Chapter 9, the strange postcard Eli received asked him to wave a white flag at Club Electrolite. This symbolized his surrender to both Lilia and Michaels, who we would later learn was the author of the letter. In his devotion to Lilia, he was willing to surrender himself in any way possible to find her.

As Eli left Thomas, determined to find Lilia, he started to notice all of the small details of the city just as Lilia had. His regard for small details exemplified the way Lilia had impacted his life. As he walked on, he noticed a glass bottle cracked in a gutter and thought the pieces to resemble tears. In this way, the glass was related to the unknown abuse that had left Lilia scarred.

In discussing Montreal, Genevieve used a metaphor of a fortress to describe the preservation of their language. The fortress, she said, used to stand on the beach. Now, it was halfway submerged and the water would not stop rising no matter what measures were taken. In this way, the strict preservation policies of the government were metaphorically portrayed as an attempt at defense against impending doom.

When reading the new note from Michaela, Eli considered the difference between Lilia's written message and symbolic message she may have intended through her inclusion on the twenty-second psalm. While one message begged to be left alone, the other begged for salvation. Believing he could be the one to save her, he resolved to find her.

Discussion Question 1

How does the narrator portray Lilia's father as a benevolent character despite his characterization as a child abductor?

Discussion Question 2

Describe Lilia's relationship with Eli's area of study. Why is it that she connects so deeply with it?



Discussion Question 3

Consider Lilia's message on the Bible page. Was her inclusion of the twenty-second palm intentional?

Vocabulary

monotone, unmoored, eroding, elated, delirious, languid, divine, skittish, catastrophic, paradoxically, unmoored, et cetera, unhinged, ransom, ploy, evaded, mesmerizing, cacophony, hieroglyphics, subsided



Part 2: Chapter 10-14

Summary

Chapter 10 began in a Montreal jazz club, years before Eli arrived. There sat Christopher, a detective who specialized in “malevolent patterns,” or the development of violent tendencies as a result of a traumatic childhood. After a while, his old friend Peter arrived, carrying a Bible, and asked for his help on a project. He opened the Bible to reveal Lilia’s note. Peter told Christopher that she was 11 years old and had been missing for four years. He told Peter he could find her in 10 minutes. Peter then told him that Lilia’s mother had a house in St. Jean, Canada, not far from the U.S. border. Lilia’s father, he said, was American and Lilia had dual citizenship. A salesman had discovered the note three year ago.

After leaving the club, Christopher considered his immediate fascination with Lilia’s language. He related to her desire to disappear. He returned home, considering the significance of the twenty-second psalm.

Chapter 11 opened on Lilia’s twelfth birthday. Her father gave her Life Magazine’s collection of the most memorable photos of the twentieth century. She was particularly drawn to one image: the crater caused by the Trinity bomb test in New Mexico. She imagined being found to feel something like a nuclear explosion.

After viewing the book, she asked her father why there were no pictures of her. When they stopped at a diner, Lilia’s father snapped a picture of Lilia with the waitress. To her knowledge, this was the first photo Lilia had ever been pictured in.

At the opening of Chapter 12, Christopher was lying in bed reading Shakespeare. He kept rereading one line in Romeo and Juliet: “She is a stranger in the world.” Although he was 45, he felt much older. He had trouble sleeping and his wife had formed a habit of coming to bed just before dawn. He felt as if he was fading.

He decided to take a leave of absence from his job and work on the private case his friend Peter had presented. He quickly began to watch all of the tapes and read all of the reports associated with the case. The case gave him a sense of purpose.

As he reviewed material on the case, Christopher was struck by the detachment of Lilia’s mother in her interviews. He wanted to interview her and Lilia’s step-brother Simon. Upon consulting Peter he found that Lilia’s mother had prohibited detectives from speaking to Simon. Something did not sit right with him. He returned to studying his map, searching for patterns in Lilia’s route.

Chapter 13 opened with a description of the simplicity of life before Lilia before she had thought about settling down. When she was 16, her father settled in New Mexico, hoping Lilia would stay with him. She wished to keep traveling, now on her own. He



worried about her but could not tell her to stop as he had awakened her urge to travel in the beginning.

On her own, Lilia began to consider the issues she had with her lifestyle. She wished to travel, but with the freedom of knowing she was not being followed. She was ever aware that even as she approached legal age, she would always be followed.

Another issue she had was her relationships. She found that people attached themselves to her and she could not return their feelings. Her need to disappear surmounted all else.

As Lilia recounted her many meaningless lovers, the scene changed to her last night with Erica, a woman she dated in Chicago. Erica was the only person to whom she had given notice before leaving. She quickly realized it was a mistake. The two spent the night arguing due to the mutual lack of understanding they possessed of one another's worlds.

After finishing her night with Erica, Lilia called her father. She told him she had seen a detective in St. Louis. He said that she must be mistaken after he could not possibly be around after "what happened." Her father suggested settling down for a few months, just as an experiment. As a legal adult she had in his words "successfully disappeared." There was no need to keep moving. Knowing the detective that was on her case was from Montreal, Lilia wanted to go there in order to confront her past. Her father warned her not to go.

In Chapter 14, Christopher found a cufflink in his room that did not belong to him. He started to think about his wife when they were young. The two had grown up together, the children of circus performers. They had spent their entire lives traveling and thus had been each other's only friends. He silently romanticized about their history, from best friends to lovers and became sad. Despite this feeling, he could not strike up the courage to confront his wife on their dying marriage. Soon after, he found a foreign tie planted in his closet. His wife seemed to be begging for communication. Still, he was unable to express himself. Unwilling to approach the situation, the two remained silent as the love they had once know continued to dissipate.

Seeing no alternative, Christopher shifted his focus to the case. He considered a peculiar picture in the file in which Simon and Lilia, both appearing miserable, were posed in front of their exuberant mother. The expressions irked him. He dove deeper and deeper into the case, feeling as if he was getting closer. As he worked ceaselessly, Michaela observed, longing for his attention.

Analysis

Chapter 10 introduced Christopher as a detective specializing in the development of violent patterns in children who had suffered trauma. This description was significant in that it foreshadowed the irony of Christopher's relationship with his own daughter, Michaela. After becoming obsessed with his case and breaking up his marriage,



Christopher had deserted his daughter Michaela, leading to her to multiple addictions and eventual suicide.

Christopher's instant connection with Michaela's letters was also significant. Knowing his family life was already in ruins, he chose to succumb to the obsession he knew this case would bring. Rather than fix what was broken, he desired to disappear.

In Chapter 10, Lilia's relation of the possibility of being found to the explosion of a bomb served as a powerful metaphor for her fear of being unable to continue disappearing. She imagined "the white hot flash of recognition and then her life blown open" and began to cry. Her life as an abductee was the only one she knew and she was terrified of the possibility of having it end.

In Chapter 12, Christopher's obsession with Lilia's case began. Before the case, Christopher felt that he had lost his sense of purpose. Although his wife and daughter still desired his affection despite his absence of the past years, he did not feel as though he could save the failing relationships. Unwilling to face his issues, he turned to the case for fulfillment. In doing so, he was completely consumed by the case, as it was the only thing in his life he felt he could succeed in.

His recognition of the distance in Lilia's mother throughout interviews added to the air of suspicion surrounding the character. Her adamant refusal to allow Simon to be interviewed also suggested she might be hiding something.

Chapter 13 emphasized the issues Lilia had assimilating to a world she had never truly been apart of. Always disappearing and playing the roles of other children, Lilia had never truly connected with anyone but her father, who shared her unique life experience. As she got older, Lilia found she could not fit into the world she had always dreamed of experiencing. She found that people were attaching themselves to her while she had no feeling of attachment towards anyone or anything. Her lifestyle of continuous disappearance had taught her not to become attached as departure was forever near. She longed for freedom from these meaningless relationships and the presence she felt following her at all times. Now, at age 16, she wanted more than to disappear. She wanted to finally be free.

As her last night with Erica is recounted, her discrepancy with ordinary perception is further emphasized in the couple's argument on bravery. While Erica saw Lilia's move to New York as a sign of bravery, Lilia knew it was the most cowardly thing she could do. In leaving, she was running away from her chance to connect with others.

The two also spoke briefly of their waitress's tattoo, a snake swallowing its own tail. This tattoo symbolizes the self-destructive tendencies of many of the characters throughout the novel. Rather than face the issues that haunted them, characters became entrenched in obsessions, further worsening the initial problem. The characters of Lilia, Christopher, and Michaela were symbolized in this image.

Lilia's father's reference to "what happened" to the detective illustrated a use of foreshadowing. It implied a future revelation of an unfortunate event that he obviously



had knowledge. Lilia's knowledge that the detective was from Montreal showed that she was aware of Christopher's existence, suggesting they had had an encounter in the past.

In the opening of Chapter 14, the narrator used the third person omniscient voice to portray Christopher as a sympathetic character. Up until this point, he had seemed a bit cold in his unwillingness to work on his marriage, as he seemed to replace it with his Lilia obsession. In this heartbreaking recollection of his youthful romance with his wife, however, Christopher is shown to be not unfeeling but rather afraid to express his emotions. He had allowed the silence in his marriage to overtake him and could not find the words to describe the loss he had suffered in distancing himself from his true love. In a futile attempt, he began observing his family as he would a case. A failure in interpersonal relationships, he hoped to somehow salvage his family by utilizing the one skill he had at his disposal.

Michaela, watching Christopher as he worked, was shown to be the ultimate victim of her parents' lack of communication. In their misery and attempts to distract themselves, they neglected her. Michaela remained alone, longing for connection with parents she hardly knew.

Discussion Question 1

Was Christopher's forfeiting his familial relationships for the sake of the Lilia case justified? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the symbolism of the waitress's snake tattoo in Chapter 13. How does the tattoo relate to the characters of the novel?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the transient tendencies of Lilia and Christopher. How were the characters similar to one another?

Vocabulary

malevolent, eerie, wielded, benevolent, surreptitiously, tranquil, asunder, disarray, adamant, impeccable, interlude, unsolicited, delirious, acoustics, origami, mezzanine, idly, stricken, sheer, cufflink, salvageable, redemptive, thermodynamics, inordinately, amassed, dwindling, perilous, stultifying, hinterland



Part 2: Chapters 15-19

Summary

Chapter 15 described more details of Lilia's childhood. The various motel rooms in which she lived were compared to islands, all disconnected yet forming the foundation of her childhood. She would spend her days in libraries, where her dad would do his best to educate her. When people would ask why she was not in school, she would reply that she was homeschooled. After a while, she had her story down to a science.

When traveling, Lilia began to keep a book of names as a distraction. It gave her something to do and helped keep her memories clear. Without this record, her identities had tended to blend together.

Although Lilia and her father were always on the run, they remained for the most part calm. However, at random intervals, Lilia's father would become overtaken by the fear of being found out. Early on, he would pull over to hide Lilia. Later on, she learned the routine and was able to hide herself in the backseat of the vehicle. In times like these, Lilia would imagine herself as a fugitive crossing the sea. She imagined search parties looking for her. In her fantasies, they were never successful. Sometimes she imagined that Simon had escaped with her.

Chapter 13 focused on Michaela as a 13 year-old. From the time she was 11, she had developed a strong interest in dynamite and cat burglars. Due to the insistence of her grandparents, Michaela went to circus school and learned to walk a tightrope. She dreamed of being cat burglars walking the tightrope. As her parents were never home anymore, she felt she had been given the house to practice her craft. When Michaela asked her mother why she worked so much, she told her that everyone was consumed by work, nodding at Christopher.

One day, Michaela's mother, Elaine, was called into school for a meeting with Michaela's French teacher. Although Michaela was excelling in her other subjects, she was unable to learn French. Due to governmental policies in place to protect the language, knowledge of French was essential for those working in Quebec. During the discussion, Michaela's teacher described her as ferocious. Her mother was strangely pleased by this description. Feeling uncomfortable at the reaction, the teacher did not schedule another meeting.

A week later, Michaela fell from the high wire at her circus school. Her mother was unreachable at the time. When her teacher called Christopher, he was reluctant to leave work to come get his daughter. When he came to get her, he asked how she had fallen. She said that she was distracted by the safety net. She then asked Christopher could join the circus. He told her she could not. After all, he and Elaine had left the circus for a better life. Going back would be devolution. She should be happy where she was. When he asked why she wanted to join, she said it was so that she could travel far away.



That night, Michaela went downstairs while her father slept and started reading his files in secrecy. She first opened to an interview with a chambermaid in an Arizona motel. She felt just like a cat burglar.

Chapter 17 opened with the events leading up to the interview with the chambermaid mentioned in the previous chapter. In the motel, Lilia sat alone watching TV while her father got dinner. She had always liked to watch television when her father left her as it distracted her from the uneasiness she felt when alone. On this night, however, what she saw on the screen prohibited her from ever watching it alone again.

The programming was an episode of Unsolved Mysteries centering on her story. Lilia noticed that the image of her father was very unappealing, making him appear suspicious. She was also said to have been “snatched from her bed,” which she knew not to be true. The special also featured an interview with Lilia’s mother, who stated, in a distant and rehearsed manner, that she wished she could forget her daughter. Her step-brother Simon sat beside her mother, refusing to speak.

Distraught, Lilia grabbed the motel Bible, wrote another note, making clear her intention not to be found, and fled the motel. She left the door ajar, a distress symbol she and her father had arranged, and ran to a nearby payphone. She felt as though the police would catch her any minute. Surprised to remember her old home phone number, she dialed. On the other end, Simon answered in French. He warned her not to come home. She then ran to the car, meeting her father. They left in a hurry, neither one speaking for quite some time.

As they drove on, Lilia regretted the call. Blinded by her emotions, she did not consider the danger her action could have put them in. She felt like a traitor.

Chapter 18, though very brief, revealed a lot of Simon. On the other end of the line, he spoke to Lilia and then stayed on the line for quite a while afterwards, listening to the sounds of the desert. Afterward, he pressed *69. The narrator revealed that he had known all along why Lilia had left.

In Chapter 19, Christopher received the phone records from Lilia’s mother’s home, as he did every month. While reviewing them, he noticed the call from the pay phone and decided he had to go to its location to collect further evidence. He told his wife it would only be a week.

Christopher also call Lilia’s mother to inquire about the call. She said she had been out that night. When he asked to speak to Simon, she hung up.

When Christopher arrived in Arizona, he interviewed the chambermaid who had cleaned the room Lilia and her father had escaped from the night Unsolved Mysteries aired. She was happy to give all of the details she had in exchange for her five minutes of fame. The chambermaid had found Lilia’s note in the Bible, which proved to be a breakthrough in the case. Feeling as if he was getting closer, Christopher drove through Arizona for the next six weeks, attempting to reach his wife only once.



While Christopher was gone, Elaine had started smoking. As she had not purchased ashtrays, she developed a habit of putting her cigarettes out on the furniture, leaving the house in ruins. Upon his arrival, Christopher said nothing about this and distracted himself by beginning an affair with his secretary. Meanwhile, Michaela continued to attain perfect grades, which went without notice from her parents. Attempting to have a pleasant conversation, Christopher and Elaine started to unleash their anger towards one another. While her parent's argument raged on, Michaela left, unnoticed. She wanted to leave for good. She did not need a safety net.

As she listened to her parents' senseless attacks on one another, Michaela continued searching through her father's files. She came across Michaela's note in the Bible and ripped the page out, keeping it for herself.

Analysis

The comparison of the motels to an archipelago, or group of islands, in Chapter 15 emphasized the disjointed nature of Lilia's childhood. Each city was a separate existence, with no relation to the one before. In beginning a book of names, Lilia aimed to preserve her memories. By keeping her identities on recorded, Lilia was able to attain a small amount of continuity despite her the lack of consistency that came with her lifestyle.

Lilia's imaginings of herself as a fugitive gave insight into her perspective on her situation. She did not consider herself abducted, but rather fleeing from injustice. Although she did not remember her childhood, she knew that she had escaped something by leaving with her father. She truly did not want to be found. The only thing about her previous life she remembered and missed was her step-brother Simon. She wished he had gone with her.

In Chapter 13, Michaela's early fascination with dynamite and burglary learned as dramatic irony. As a result of being neglected by her parents, Michaela was beginning to develop violent tendencies. Although Christopher specialized in this time of relationship, he was unable to recognize it in his own daughter.

Michaela's inability to learn French in a climate where it was absolutely necessary emphasized her characterization as a misfit in society. Despite her affinity for other subjects, she could not possess the one skill necessary for success in her society. Likewise, her talent and passion for tightrope walking, which would have been prized had her parents stayed in the circus, was of no value in her current situation.

Elaine's pleasure in her daughter being described as ferocious gave further insight into her character. As her marriage collapsed, she was unable to muster the courage to face the issue head-on. Instead, she passively planted items in her room, hoping her husband would confront her. She was pleased that her daughter had not developed her passivity and was instead quite ferocious.



When Michaela fell from the high wire, her parents' reluctance to respond further emphasized the lack of priority they gave their daughter. She had become invisible to them in their preoccupation with their own failing marriage. When she described the safety net as the reason she had fallen, she revealed that what truly appealed to her about the tightrope was the danger and risk that came with it. This was another example of her formation of malevolent patterns. Having nothing to lose, she craved danger.

Christopher's assertion the Michaela joining the circus would be devolution was another example of irony. Although he and Elaine had run from the circus for a better life, they had ended up miserable. Often, Christopher romanticized about the life he and his wife had had as young lovers in the circus. Although he knew his current life was not better than what he had left behind, he would not admit it. Michaela's desire to run away exemplified her dissatisfaction with her life. She was a product of her parent's poor decisions with no autonomy over her own existence.

In the opening of Chapter 17, a flashback is used to connect the ending of the previous chapter with the beginning of a new one. In this way, the lives of Michaela and Christopher and Lilia and her father are shown as parallel, although physically distant.

The author's use of language when describing Lilia's perception of *Unsolved Mysteries* is very important. At once, Lilia was aware of the bias included in the image of her father used. He was unshaven and suffering from malaria at the time, looking very far from his ordinary self. When her mother appeared on screen, she was described as "a woman identified in subtitles as Lilia's mother, while Simon was simply referred to as her brother. This emphasized the lack of familiarity Lilia had with her mother. After listening to her interview, in which she seemed entirely distant and rehearsed, Lilia was crushed. She was entirely set on never returning. As writing in Bibles was her only way of communicating with the world outside, Lilia translated her pain into the text's pages.

When Christopher told his wife he would be traveling to Arizona, he told her that he hated leaving her alone. This statement was ironic in that he always left her alone, even when he was physically present. When he decided to extend his trip, he tried only once to reach her. Their distance was growing and he was not attempting to stop it.

When Christopher read Lilia's newest Bible note, he felt as if he connected with her. For the first time, he felt his existence acknowledged. Lilia knew she was being followed and wanted to be noticed. Likewise, in his disconnection with his family, Christopher wanted to be noticed as well. The note gave his life purpose and thus he became further engrossed in the case.

Upon his arrival home, Christopher's whole family was begging for attention. By destroying the house, his wife attempted to force him to confront her. He refused, beginning an affair with his secretary to distract himself. Michaela attained perfect grades in an attempt to please and win the approval of her parents. Heavily engrossed in their own issues, they continued to ignore her. In refusing to communicate with one another, the family grew more and more distant. Christopher began to see Elaine as "an actress impersonating his wife." At the end of the chapter, Christopher acknowledged



that they were not living the life they had left the circus for. In realizing this, he realized his own failure to attain the life he had dreamed of.

While her parents argued, Michaela considered that she no longer saw the use in a safety net, although at one time she had. In the loss of her parents' love, Michaela had lost all she had. With nothing left to lose, she did not feel the need for a safety net. As their fight raged on, Michaela looked through her father's files, coming across Lilia's note in the Bible. The words were significant to her, although she did display an understanding of why. She tore the page out. Michaela's relation to the note established Lilia and Michaela as foils of one another. Just as Lilia's mother had shown a cold disinterest in her interview, Lilia's parents repeatedly exemplified a cold disinterest towards her. Both characters, while desiring salvation, felt inclined to disappear. The placement on the note on Psalm 22 exemplified to complexity of the girls' desires. They needed to be saved, but did not know where they could find it. All they knew for sure was that they needed to escape the lives they had been born into.

Discussion Question 1

Is Christopher a likable character? What, if anything, makes him a redeemable character despite his relationship with his family?

Discussion Question 2

Describe the ways in which Lilia's story is described through her mother's bias on Unsolved Mysteries. What point is the author making about the media in this example?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Christopher continue to pursue the case even when Lilia's mom seems distant and suspicious? Could he have another reason for pursuing the case?

Vocabulary

archipelago, tedious, concocted, improvised, stowaway, rudimentary, vanguard, petulant, devolution, chambermaid, pendant, hairbreadth, ajar, topography, chaparral, harrowing, skittering, lurchingly, immaculate, treason, oppressive, domesticity, tenor



Part 2: Chapters 20-21

Summary

In Chapter 20, Lilia and her father were traveling through the United States in his car. Lilia recounted how there were times in which they could forget they were being chased and enjoy their life together. Lilia's father always shared his love of details with her. He often described what he saw as to allow her insight into his one appreciation of the surrounding world. Although she enjoyed her father's company, Lilia felt as if she was not truly part of the world. She felt like a figure skater, skimming over life without becoming a part of it.

In Chapter 21, Michaela asked her dad if she could join the circus. He said that she had just asked him that, when she twisted her ankle. She reminded him that that had occurred six months ago. He told her she could not go as they had already left the circus.

One evening, Michaela sat alone watching television, as she always did as her parents were never home. When a commercial she disliked came on, she through a coffee mug at the television, breaking it.

At the end of the Chapter, Lilia's mother brought home a cake and announced that she was leaving. Shortly after, her father left on a yearlong business trip. Michaela grew to resent Lilia as her decision to leave had torn Michaela's family apart.

Analysis

As Lilia's father shared his appreciation for detail with Lilia, he allowed her to see the world from his perspective. In this way, nothing was ever taken at face value for Lilia, but rather with the fascinated value her father added to the ordinary. Although Lilia appreciated the way her father interpreted the world, she felt that the nature of their lifestyle disallowed her from ever fully entering the world. In comparing herself to a figure skater, Lilia acknowledged the innate separation she experienced from the world around her. Although the world fascinated her, she would never be a part of it.

In Chapter 21, When Lilia reminded Christopher that she had twisted her ankle six months ago, he felt the loss of time. He had disregarded his family for a long time now and it was only through brief reminders that he came to realize it. He wished to return to the distractions that separated him from loss. When he tells Michaela that they already left the circus, the author displays the irony of the family's misery in their pursuit of a better life.

Thinking his wife had taken Lilia's note, he grew to despise her even more. His inability to confront her emphasized his misguided rage. Likewise, Michaela's development of



rage is emphasized in her breaking of the television. Again, the reader is reminded of the irony of the malevolent pattern's Christopher's daughter has developed.

After Michaela's parents left at the end of the second part of the novel, the relationship between Lilia and Michaela is analyzed in Michaela's contempt for Lilia. Citing that Lilia had chosen to leave with her dad and had written the note in the Bible, she viewed Lilia as a willing destructor of her family. She saw Lilia as having full autonomy of her own life, leaving Michaela with no autonomy over her own. In reality, Lilia felt that she lacked free will, just as Michaela did.

Discussion Question 1

How does Lilia's constant exposure to her father affect her worldview?

Discussion Question 2

Analyze Lilia's figure skater analogy. How does the analogy emphasize her relationship with the world?

Discussion Question 3

Was Michaela's unhappiness truly Lilia's fault? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

anthropologically, bereft, prone



Part 3: Chapters 21-26

Summary

In the opening of the third part of the novel, Eli arrived in Montreal and tried to contact Michaela using the number she had included in her letter. She was not answering. He tried contacting Club Electrolite but the telephone operator only spoke French, a language of which he had no knowledge. He was frustrated already. He considered leaving but he knew he would not forgive himself if he did. He continued on, feeling lost. He watched taxis pass by, all random makes and models, and felt disturbed by their lack of uniform.

In continuing his journey, Eli realized that no one was receptive to English. He wanted to leave but could not go back to New York without Lilia. He finally found an old fashioned looking hotel to stay in and got directions to Club Electrolite from a bellboy. Upon arriving, he found that the club was not open until Thursday. It was Monday. He resolved to search for Lilia in all the places he thought she would like.

As he searched Montreal, he often found himself bogged down by the harsh cold. He spent his time trying to distract himself and stopped into coffee shops often. One day, he saw a woman walking a tightrope connected to two fire escapes. He wanted to call for help but was afraid he might distract her into falling. He was mesmerized by the casual way in which she crossed the rope.

When the woman returned to the ground, she stared at Eli with a look of recognition. She said she had seen him in one of Lilia's pictures. She was Michaela. She left, saying she would see him later that evening.

Chapter 23 included a flashback of Christopher leaving Canada to embark on his yearlong search for Lilia. He convinced himself that Michaela did not need him.

Chapter 24 centered on Lilia's relentless feeling of being followed when Christopher entered the United States. Most of the time, she could not tell if the feeling stemmed from grounded fear or sheer paranoia. Lilia compared the existence to ever-rising waters which her father was always able to rise above. Always noticing the same blue car behind them, Lilia and her father were always on the move.

Chapter 25 began with Eli contemplating leaving his hotel to go to Club Electrolite. It was finally Thursday and this was the night he was expected to see Lilia. Despite his intention to see Lilia, he could not dismiss the thought of her premeditation in abandoning him.

When he finally did arrive at Club Electrolite, he found the place to be infinitely dark. He saw Michaela dancing erratically up on a raised platform. Unlike the other dancers, she appeared lively and entranced in herself. He then revealed he had forgotten the white flag he was supposed to wave in order to gain Michaela's attention. He stole a towel



from the bar and waved it in the middle on the dance floor. Seeing him, Michaela glanced over, expressionless, and snapped her fingers. A light shone on Eli as a DJ welcomed him to the club.

After finding Eli, Michaela led him to her dressing room and apologized for Lilia's absence, saying she had been there earlier in the day and they had had a fight. She then revealed to Eli that her father was Christopher, the private investigator on Lilia's case. When Eli asked she and Lilia had started communicating, she responded that she was Lilia's only witness. She found it astounding that Lilia did not know why she had been abducted. Her memory had blocked it out. She asked Eli about a car crash Lilia had been in. He said that she had never mentioned the event to him.

After their first meeting, the two started meeting every night in an all-night coffee shop after Michaela's shift had ended. Each night, Michaela would appear exhausted and glassy eyed, but ready to talk to Eli for hours. Eli sensed a brokenness in her. Michaela mentioned various times that she wanted to leave Montreal but never showed any sign of following through.

Michaela revealed to Eli that Lilia had written to her father Christopher, requesting a truce. As her father had left six months ago to continue following Lilia, Michaela had collected his mail. That was when their correspondence began.

Chapter 26 briefly described Lilia's fourteenth birthday. Her father had given her a camera. She loved photography as it added a sense of continuity to her transient lifestyle. He warned her not to take pictures of herself as those could be used as evidence.

Analysis

When Eli arrived in Quebec, he became immediately angry when he was unable to reach Michaela. Observing the randomness of the taxis in the street, he felt uneasy. Eli was easily bothered and not very adaptable to different ways of life. In this passage, it was clear that he had been right in characterizing himself as a "thinker" rather than a "doer." When experiencing the reality of life in a place using a dying language, he realized that in actuality, the subject he had always theorized about was far more unpleasant than he suspected.

As Eli watched nervously, Michaela casually crossed the rope, at risk of plummeting to her death, he noticed how casually she moved. Like Lilia, she was abnormally calm in the face of fear. Due to the tremendous loss both characters had faced throughout their lives, nothing seemed frightening. While Eli watched Michaela cross the tightrope, he thought about how Zed had once written, "No one should have to die without a witness." He felt obliged to stay, even as he feared Michaela's fall. At the conclusion of the novel, this quote took on greater meaning, as Eli became Michaela's witness in her death. This event was foreshadowed when, after Michaela returned to the ground, the author mentioned that Eli "had just seen her die, whether she was breathing or not."



In Chapter 23, Christopher's way of convincing himself that his fifteen-year-old daughter did not need him seemed foolish. When emphasized by her drastic actions in the previous chapter, the result of this decision was clear. In abandoning his daughter, he had caused the malignant patterns he spent his life investigating.

Chapter 24 emphasized the lasting effect that being followed had on Michaela. Even as an adult, she could not shake the feeling of being watched. While Christopher thought that he was doing right by solving the case, he was really traumatizing Lilia.

In using the same rising waters metaphor to describe Lilia's escape as had been used to describe the preservation of the French language, the author illustrates the sometimes unconventional and even unethical measures one must sometimes go to the preserve that which is threatened.

In Chapter 25, as Eli struggled to follow through on his plan to meet Lilia, he was again drawn back to his stagnant state. The thought of her premeditated abandonment haunted him. He could not help but feel foolish for having followed her. In waving the white flag on the dance floor, Eli admitted surrender to both Lilia and Michaela.

As Eli spoke to Michaela, he began to see her as beautiful in a way that "suggested very little time for beauty left." She was a brilliant and unique individual, yet, beaten down by the hardships of her life, was decadent at a very young age. When Michaela spoke about leaving Montreal, she, like Eli, appear to be more of a "theorizer" than a "doer." She continuously vocalized an idea without any sign of follow through.

When Michaela told Eli that her father had left six months ago to pursue Lilia once again, Lilia's suspicions on always being followed were confirmed. Even after Lilia had reached legal age, Christopher had continued to follow her.

In Chapter 26, Lilia's fascination mirrored her fascination with keeping records in her journal. In both ways, she attempted to document and verify her existence. Unknown to all, she felt as if she needed to possess evidence that she really did exist.

Discussion Question 1

Was Eli's venture to Montreal really about Lilia or was it more about fulfilling his own desire to actually "do something"? Would he still have gone on the trip had it not been for his preoccupation with his own stagnancy?

Discussion Question 2

Analyze Eli's characterization of Michaela. What did his observations add to her characterization previously?



Discussion Question 3

Why did Christopher continue to follow Lilia even after she reached legal age? If he was no longer trying to solve the case, what were his motives for pursuing her?

Vocabulary

aboriginal, disconsolate, fluorescent, cavernous, imposing, frescoes, remnant, colossal, stoically, vertiginous, teetering, innocuous, ether, circuitous, alibis, procured, seldom, luminescent, pedestal, labyrinth, imperative, wanly, subtler, amended, barista



Part 3: Chapters 27-31

Summary

Chapter 27 opened with Michaela and Eli meeting once again in an all night coffeehouse. They would meet each night and talk for hour. Michaela had insomnia and Eli felt isolated by his lack of French. Neither wanted to be alone. It seemed to Eli that Michaela had a certain beauty to her, but was slowly losing her mind.

Speaking of her family history in the circus, Michaela wondered aloud if the desire to travel was genetic. Eli remarked that she sounded like Lilia. There was an awkward silence as the two had stopped talking of Lilia. Michaela wanted to know the details of a car accident Lilia had been in and would not give Eli Lilia's location until he told her. Eli said that he did not know about the accident.

Finally, Michaela responded that Lilia travelled beautifully. The two began talking about her again. Michaela wanted to know what it was like living with her. Eli thought it as perfect. In her unending pursuit of truth and beauty, he said, she rendered everyone else fraudulent.

Chapter 28 took place the year Michaela was 15 and living on her own. Her father was in hot pursuit of Lilia that year, finally forming patterns in her travel. Unable to sleep, he followed her continuously, always arriving just after they did. As Christopher travelled, he read many books, leaving them behind at motels. It took him six months to think of Michaela.

In Chapter 29, Eli thought he heard Lilia's name at the coffeehouse but after asking found himself to be incorrect. He was becoming preoccupied by the fact that he had not seen her yet. At the nightclub, he watched Michaela dance and realized that she has the only dancer that did not appear bored. As he watched her dance, he tried to think of Lilia but could only think of Michaela. She had a negative light he could not help but seep into.

As their friendship progressed, Eli noticed that Michaela was heavily addicted to a number of different pills, many of which the club's owner supplied. She often slept in her dressing room or with various lovers who mistreated her. Eli was bothered by the idea of Michaela with other men, although he did not quite understand why.

After leaving Michaela, Eli returned to his hotel room and wrote a letter to Lilia, pouring his heart and soul into the pages. After finishing, he crumpled the pages and threw it away. The letter did not bring him any closer to her.

Lilia and Eli continued to meet nightly. He was beginning to understand her on a deeper level. He stayed with her later and later hoping she would slip out of exhaustion and tell him where Lilia was. As they spoke, Eli remarked that loneliness was like a third



presence in their discussion. Michaela always had stories to share, yet they always circled back to Lilia.

Eli shared his stories of international travel. Michaela, having always desired to travel, said that she had heard all destinations started to look the same after a while. She asked Eli if this was true. He lied and said yes.

Chapter 30 transitioned back to the year Lilia was 15. She was being perpetually followed and she and her father were hardly ever able to stop. Lilia started keeping watch so that her father could sleep. This was the first time she had experienced responsibility.

One evening, the two stopped into the Morning Star Diner in New Mexico. They started speaking to a waitress named Clara who invited them to stay with her that night. They accepted. Clara listened from an upstairs bedroom as her father and Clara laughed.

The next morning, Lilia's father returned to the motel in which they had planned to stay to pick up their luggage. The desk clerk told him someone had been looking for him and handed him a business card reading: Christopher Graydon, Private Investigator. He returned to his room to see it had been searched. Christopher had been there the night before and had rummaged through his belongings and torn a note from the Bible. Clara had saved them. Lilia's father took this as a sign. They would stay with Clara.

Chapter 21 began with Eli spending the day searching for Lilia. He was running out of money and had to find her quickly. When he met with Michaela that night, she began speaking about the Gnostics, a group Lilia had told her about. The group, who believed nothing was real, was the subject of one of Eli's books. Michaela said she agreed with the Gnostics and thought that nothing felt real. Eli did not understand. She then told Eli that he was like a ghost floating over the world's surface. She told him she no longer slept, sometimes staying awake for days at a time. The two then asked each other what they thought the worst thing could be. Michaela said that it would be never sleeping again. Eli said it would be being alone. Michaela said that if she knew the story of the car crash she could at last feel complete and able to sleep.

Analysis

In their discussion of Lilia, Michaela and Eli united in their infatuation with her. At this point in the story, Eli believed Lilia to be perfect, even after considering how she had abandoned him. To him, she was without fault. Even as Michaela resented Lilia for destroying her family, she was drawn to her story and could not help but appreciate the brilliance of her lifestyle.

In Chapter 28, Christopher has become entirely consumed by Lilia's case. He was not able to sleep or think about anything but the case. It was six months before he thought of his daughter. In order to add continuity to his lifestyle, Christopher liked to read Shakespeare as he had been reading it when he first accepted the case. He also read Greek mythology, an interest he shared with Lilia. When he finished the books, he left



them behind in various motels, mirroring the way Lilia left notes in motel Bibles. These shared idiosyncrasies drew parallels between the characters.

In Chapter 29, Eli observed Michaela's dancing, noticing that she served as nothing more than a fixture in the club. As she danced, putting forth her greatest effort at all times, not a single eye was upon her. Her position at the nightclub symbolized her relationship with her father. As she put forth every effort to be noticed, she was undoubtedly ignored.

As Eli's relationship with Michaela progressed, her infinitely negative light began to overtake him. His infatuation with Lilia was slowly fading into Michaela's light. Just as thoughts of Lilia's habits had effortlessly filled his mind, worries about Michaela's addictions did the same.

After writing his letter to Lilia, he decided it was useless. Writing a letter he could not deliver brought him no closer to his lost lover. He then came to fully realize the inefficacy of theorizing without taking action.

As Lilia and Eli continued meeting, Eli began to understand why she felt so disconnected from society. Destined for success in the circus and without the ability to speak French, Montreal had nothing for her. All her potential for success had been wasted. She pointed out the irony of her parents' misery in their decision to try to escape the circus and lead "normal" lives.

When Michaela told Eli that she longed to be involved in a bombing, she mirrored Christopher's desire to be involved in a notable event. Seeing nothing in their own identities, both characters longed to be observers of stories that drew attention. Eli noted that her stories always revolved around Lilia's life events, highlighting the lack of development of her own identity.

When Eli told Lilia about his study of dying languages, she was pleased at the notion of their disappearance. As Lilia was symbolically identified with the dying languages, Michaela's pleasure in their disappearance noted her desire to escape from Lilia's influence.

In Chapter 30, Lilia described the highway to be like a wall. She saw the highway as a dividing force between where she was and where she was headed. In her relentless desire to keep moving, she began to see the process of travelling as an obstruction in her transience.

When Lilia and her father entered Clara's home, they found it to be covered in ocean-themed décor. She explained that she loved the ocean but had never been for fear it would not live up to expectations. In this way, Clara was characterized as a "thinker" rather than a "doer." She fantasized about the notion of the ocean but failed to ever experience it out of fear. In this way, she is compared to both Eli and Michaela, who share this trait.



Upon being informed that Christopher had been to their motel the previous night, Lilia's father decided that Clara had saved them, thinking her "a patron saint of travel." He decided they should stay with her. This characterized Clara as a benevolent savior of the fugitives. Symbolically, the name Clara, meaning "clear," served to emphasize the clarity and salvation that was offered to Lilia and her father in the form of this kind woman.

In Chapter 31, Michaela's identification with the Gnostics emphasized her lack of place in the world. Without a developed identity or any close friends or family, she was unknown to the world. Without a witness, there was no one to authenticate her story. When she told Eli she needed to know the story of the car crash in order to fill her missing piece, she was attempting to finish the story she only existed to bear witness to.

When Michaela describe Eli as a ghost floating over the world, she drew a comparison to Lilia's earlier ice skater metaphor. Like Lilia, Eli grazed the surface of the world without the ability to truly understand those inhabiting it. His worst fear was to be alone as he attached himself to others without developing enough of an identity to truly understand them.

Discussion Question 1

Was Michaela truly a victim of circumstance? Could she have been successful had it not been for her destructive upbringing?

Discussion Question 2

Describe Clara's characterization in the Chapter 30. How does the third person omniscient narration influence her description?

Discussion Question 3

Using the parallel metaphors of the ghost and the ice skater, describe the similarities that had drawn Eli and Lilia together.

Vocabulary

rasping, spasms, linear, lucid, incoherence, emanated, semi-residence, lunatic, deadpan, hallucinogenic, haggard, decrepit, dilapidated, turrets, somnambulant



Part 3: Chapters 32-35

Summary

In Chapter 32, Christopher watched as Lilia's father and Clara emerged from the Morningstar Diner with a cake. It was Lilia's sixteenth birthday. Christopher had been following Lilia for five years now, although he no longer understood why. He thought of the story of Icarus and recalled that in only one adaptation he had read Icarus had a witness to his fall. He felt as if his only function was to observe Lilia's story. Without a witness, he wondered, how could one prove her story was real?

Meanwhile, 2,000 miles away, Michaela began tying ropes to fire escapes and walking across, without a safety net.

In Chapter 33, Lilia, who was still going by the name of Alessandra, and Clara had breakfast together. Clara was described in greater detail than she had been earlier through her interactions with Lilia. Clara had never travelled. She enjoyed solitude but was happy to share her home with Lilia and her dad. For the first time, Lilia's dad did not seem as though he was being chased. Although Lilia would have love to stay, she felt as if she could not.

After breakfast, Lilia and her dad depart of their last journey. This final trip was a sixteenth birthday treat for Lilia. The map was so faded at this point that Lilia could hardly make sense of it. As Lilia and her father pulled away from the home, Christopher pulled in and knocked on the door. He asked for Clara. Clara responded, "Not here."

Chapter 34 began with Michaela's father's return to Canada after a year of following Lilia in the United States. He returned in a wheelchair, the result of a car accident he had gotten into when he fell asleep behind the wheel and drove off the road. He had decided before the accident that he did not want to chase Lilia and her father anymore. He simply wanted to look after Lilia and ensure her safety. By this point in his pursuit, he always knew where she was. He continued following her, returning home at random intervals. It had become an obsession he could not control.

On one of his stops home, he saw Michaela, now 22, who had lost her job that afternoon for speaking English on the sales floor. She asked her father where he had been. He told her he had interviewed Erica, who he described as sad. Christopher noticed, with some pleasure, that this was the most substantial conversation he had had with his daughter since she was around ten years old. He then told Michaela he would be selling the house, leaving her homeless.

The two then began to argue. Michaela accused Christopher of having sexual feelings for Michaela. He then threw a glass at her head, knocking her to the floor, covered in blood. Afterwards, he did not even remember deciding to throw it. After Michaela left the home, Christopher muttered, "sorry." He was not sure if he was speaking to himself or



his estranged wife. He was definitely not speaking to Michaela. He began muttering to his ex-wife, whose location he did not know. The circus, he realized, was not so bad after all.

In Chapter 35, Erica tried to stop Lilia from leaving Chicago. The morning of her departure, Erica had come to Lilia's house to attempt to thwart her disappearance. This was the first time Lilia had thought about staying. She knew, however, that she would have to leave eventually. As he boarded the bus to leave, she saw Christopher watching and knew she had made the right decision.

Analysis

In Chapter 32, as Christopher considered his reasoning for continuing to follow Lilia, he considered the story of Icarus. Everyone knew Icarus would die, yet only in one recollection of the story did Icarus have a witness. In Christopher's mind, such a noteworthy death needed a witness. Without a witness, how could a story be proven genuine? He considered his main function in life to be an observer of Lilia's story. He knew the damage had already been done and Lilia could not be saved from the traumas of her past. However, he still had to watch her fall. After all, everyone needs a witness.

As Christopher dedicated his life to being Lilia's witness, his own daughter suffered. It was revealed in this chapter that the two girls were the same age. An abandoned teenager, she had begun to live life without a net, casually risking her life for the thrill of it.

In Chapter 33, Lilia and Clara had a morning conversation in which Clara told Lilia that she could not leave New Mexico because all other places seemed too loud and unfamiliar. Lilia thought about how she could not stay. The thought, to her, was unimaginable. The two are juxtaposed in this conversation. While Clara had been conditioned to remain stagnant, Lilia had been conditioned to leave.

As Lilia and her father were set to embark on their final journey together, Lilia remarked that the map was too faded to comprehend. Symbolically, the fading of the map showed a final end to their travels.

When Christopher appeared at Clara's home, she told him she was not there. This line suggested Clara was aware of Lilia and her father's situation. She knew that they were fugitives and aimed to protect them.

In Chapter 34, the author revealed information on the car accident Michaela had been asking Eli about. Although Christopher claimed to have fallen asleep while driving, Michaela's insistence on knowing the whole story suggested this may not be completely true.

When Michaela was fired from her job for speaking English, she came to the final conclusion that she truly did not belong. Any hope for a normal life faded away. In this passage, it was shown that Lilia's abduction had affected Michaela in a far more harmful



way than it had Lilia. While Lilia at least had the love of her father, Michaela had absolutely no one. Lilia's impact on the lives of others was further emphasized in Christopher's description of Erica as "sad" a year after Lilia left. Lilia's abduction and the influence it had on her personality affected far more people than just her and her father.

When Christopher told Michaela he would be selling the house, he did so in a casual manner, thinking the decision rational. He needed money to continue following Lilia. He showed no sympathy for his daughter in this final act of total abandonment. When Michaela asked why he was following if Lilia was no longer a child, he thought it too late to explain how his wife hatred for him had caused him to find purpose in Lilia's case. Viewing himself as the victim, even in his daughter's time of desperation, Christopher was able to rationalize his decisions to himself.

When Michaela and Christopher began arguing, Michaela's assertion that Christopher had sexual feelings for Michaela sparked a tremendous rage within him. In his decision to protect her, Lilia had become much more of a daughter to him than Michaela. In his decision to abandon her, Christopher had decided to estrange himself from Michaela. He no longer saw her as a daughter. He had nothing but apathy for her. As he muttered to his wife at the end of the passage, he recalled the circus life they had escaped from. He knew now that there had been nothing to escape from. In this passage, Christopher showed that he had truly surrendered to his obsession. He no longer had his own identity and was too far gone to save himself.

In Chapter 35, Lilia's desire to stay showed that travelling was no longer causing her joy but instead, pain. She wanted to stop but knew she would always be followed. It had already become a chronic problem for her that was difficult to abandon.

Discussion Question 1

Analyze the meaning of the map throughout the novel.

Discussion Question 2

Is Lilia to blame for all the sadness she has caused others? If Lilia is not to blame, then who is?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Christopher show no remorse toward Michaela after he hurts her?



Vocabulary

exultantly, unfathomable, faltering, extraneous, companionably, impenetrable, serene, sporadically, obscurely, adjoining, clairvoyance, depleted, aghast, inconceivable, din, volition, trajectory, retrospect, throng.



Part 4: Chapters 36-40

Summary

Part 4 began with Lilia and her father's final road trip. Upon the wake of this trip, Lilia felt profoundly happy. She thought about her mother's presence in her life. To her, she felt like a ghost. She imagined her mother felt the same about her. Considering everything, she felt no regrets about leaving. She could not imagine her life any other way. She could not imagine being able to stay.

In the opening of Chapter 37, Michaela asked Eli if Lilia had given any explanation for leaving. He did not answer. She also asked if anyone would miss her if she did not come out to dance. He said no. She seemed oddly pleased.

As they continued to talk, Michaela put on a set of wings, a costume her boss had given her. She told Eli he and had something in common with her father: they were both left by Lilia. Eli thought of what Michaela may have been like before her parents had left her. He decided to tell her the story of the car crash.

In Chapter 38, Christopher and Clara met in a bar shortly after he had arrived at her home. She revealed that she had known who Lilia and her father were all along and had chosen to help them. Christopher revealed that he now knew Lilia's father had saved her life after interviewing her brother. He told Clara never to turn them in.

In Chapter 39, Lilia told Eli about her accident in their apartment, making him promise never to tell anyone, even if he was angry with her. It was sixteen days before she left him.

Chapter 40 began in the midst of Lilia and her father's final journey. They were on a highway, being followed closely by Christopher, whose car they now recognized. Lilia's father began to panic. He did not know what to do. Both drivers pulled over. Christopher got out of his car and came approached Lilia's father. Christopher told him he did not have to keep running. Christopher had talked to Simon and decided to close the case. Lilia's father pretended not to know what Christopher was talking about. Christopher said he understood what Lilia's father had done and wished he had done the same for his own daughter sometimes. He left, saying to Lilia, "Happy Birthday my love."

When Christopher walked away, Lilia told her father than he was genuine. Her father thought that her mother had told Christopher what to say. Convinced it was a trap, he decided he had to get rid of Christopher once and for all. Restarting his car, he drove Christopher off the road. As Lilia watched Christopher go over the edge of the highway, she was haunted by his smile. Even as her father tried to kill him, he could not show anger toward Lilia.



Analysis

The first chapter of Part 4 dealt with Lilia's coming of age on her sixteenth birthday. She thought of her mother and described her presence as a ghost, thinking her mother shared this feeling about her. She even thought her mother would be upset to have her gone. Even after replaying her mother's lifeless interview over and over in her head, she could not believe her mother did not miss her. Thinking back to the night her father had come to get her, Lilia decided she regretted nothing. For the first time, she thought of her leaving as her own decision. As she was near adulthood, Lilia was forming her own sense of agency and was making her own decision to continue leaving. Although her life had been far from normal, she could not imagine it any other way.

In Chapter 37, Michaela and Eli's conversation foreshadowed Michaela's suicide at the end of the novel. In asking if anyone would notice if she was gone, she made apparent her intention to leave. The wings that Michaela wore drew a connection to the story of Icarus. She was ready to journey out of Montreal. Although that journey meant death, she was going to go through with it.

In comparing Eli to Christopher, Michaela brought to attention the obsession the two men had with finding her. Although she had left them both without notice or care, they made it their mission to look out for her. This comparison pointed to the futility of their plan. In deciding to tell Michaela the story of the accident, Eli was chose to betray his confidence to Lilia. Still, he felt obliged to tell.

In Chapter 38, Clara's characterization of Lilia and her father's savior was solidified in the realization that she had knowingly chosen to help them escape the law. Christopher's revelation that he had found out the truth of the case was also important in that it confirmed the notion that Lilia's father had good intentions when taking her. In telling Clara not to turn them in, Christopher showed that he genuinely cared about Lilia's well-being as more than just a detective.

In Chapter 39, Lilia's insistence on having Eli promise he would not tell about the car accident showed that this was something she had not revealed about herself prior. In saying "even if you are mad at me" Lilia foreshadowed her disappearance. She knew that Eli might betray her in anger after she left him. In telling Michaela of the crash, he did just that.

In Chapter 40, Christopher approached Lilia's father with the genuine intention to end the chase. Having been a fugitive for so long, Lilia's father could not trust him. When Christopher remarked that he wished he had taken his own daughter, he acknowledged the fact that he had been at fault in abandoning her. In saying that he did not mind being the Shepard but did not want to be the Minotaur, Christopher again referenced the story of Icarus. She would observe Lilia and her father, even as they fell, but would not be the one to condemn them. When Christopher said, "Happy Birthday, my love," the relationship he thought himself to have with Lilia was clear. Although she had spent her life fearing him, he saw himself as her guardian.



After Christopher left, Lilia's decision to believe him added to her characterization as a honest and genuine person. This, in addition to her feelings about her mother, showed that she was quick to forgive and was without resentment for those who hurt her. Lilia's father's decision not to believe him showed his protectiveness over Lilia. He would take no chance of having her hurt, even if protecting her meant hurting others.

When Lilia's father drove Christopher off the road, he smiled as Lilia watched him go over the edge of the highway. This haunted Lilia for years to come. Even as her father tried to kill him, Christopher surrendered completely to Lilia. His identity had become nothing more than an observer of her story. Even if filling that role meant his own downfall, he was completely committed to it.

Discussion Question 1

Is the revelation that Lilia was in fact saved by her father surprising? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

If Lilia knew that she was leaving Eli, why did she tell him her greatest secret?

Discussion Question 3

Was Lilia's father's decision to drive Christopher off the road justified? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

sepia, searing, inconsolable, imminent, calamitous, spindly, embankment, reconfigure, discernible



Part 4: Chapters 41-44

Summary

In Chapter 41, Eli finished telling Michaela the story of the car accident. Michaela then revealed she did not know where Lilia was. Eli then realized that a lifetime of missing out on suffering was better than even a day of true suffering. She said she was tired of talking about Lilia's whereabouts. It was all people cared about. She had lied to Eli. She blamed it on Lilia, saying she had lied to her when she left Michaela on the first night.

Michaela was very shaken up by the story. Although she had wanted to know the truth her entire life, she now regretted finding out. Lilia, too, had regretted the journey she had contemplated her whole life. Michaela told Eli that Lilia had said she had wished she stayed in New York. Eli felt light at the news.

Michaela told Eli she knew he would leave if he knew where Lilia was. She also claimed she was leaving soon.

Michaela then asked Eli if he knew the source of Lilia's scars. She said that he did not and he did not want to know. She told him anyway. Michaela's mother had thrown her through a window, leaving her for dead in the snow. Simon had saved her, bringing her in the house and bandaging her up. Lilia's mother had told him later she wanted to annihilate Lilia and did not know why. That night, Simon called Lilia's father arranging the abduction.

Michaela then told Eli Lilia's location. She said that she wanted him to tell her the story of her past and to say good-bye for her. Eli felt at first upbeat. He would finally see Lilia. On his way to her hotel, however, he realized the truth: Michaela planned to leave Montreal through death. Eli ran back to the train station, trying to stop Michaela. He knew even in doing so that he could not stop her.

In Chapter 42, Simon called the payphone Lilia had called from. It was a habit he had developed in order to feel closer to his sister.

Chapter 43 began with Eli in the hospital following Michaela's death. He felt that nothing was quite real. He had felt this way since he was a child. But now the feeling was much more overpowering. In the hospital room, he replayed the events of that day over and over in his mind, speaking to no one. In some memories, he thought he had heard Lilia as he ran towards the track, trying to jump after Michaela. The hospital had lost his wallet. In his refusal to speak, he was unidentifiable.

Finally, Zed came to find him. He was able to speak for the first time in 27 days. Zed calmed him, removing him from his thoughts. Zed had come to take him home. He returned to his mother's home in New York. His mother seemed distant and unable to comprehend what her son had been through. Zed told Eli he had to stop thinking of the past. The question, he said, was what Eli was going to do now. Eli wanted to travel. Zed



showed Eli the letter he had written to Zed but never sent. It was tucked away in his coat pocket. It was the way the hospital had identified Eli. Eli read the letter, detailing his feelings for Lilia, and could not recognize his former self. The feelings he had were a thing of the past. He could no longer relate to that version of himself.

Chapter 44 began with Lilia's last night in Montreal. Her cell phone, which only her employer and Michaela knew the number to, rang. It was Michaela. She wanted Lilia to meet her at the train station. She would tell her what she wanted to know.

Two hours later, she boarded a plane to Rome, Italy. She thought of her first solo trip and how in those days, she was always ready to cry. Now she was finally free. When she arrived in Rome, she called Simon and thanked. He responded, saying it was all he could do.

Lilia stayed in Rome. On the seventh anniversary of their marriage, her Italian husband laughed, asking her when she had ever been scared. Only a few times, she thought to herself. She thought of the time she had met Michaela in the Montreal train station. Michaela had told Lilia the truth about her childhood. It all came back to her. Seeing Lilia finally happy, Michaela made her decision. She headed for the train, telling Lilia she was going far away.

Analysis

When Michaela called Lilia a liar, she drew attention to the liar in herself. Michaela had used Eli for information, just as Lilia had done to her. The characters were only related in their desire for self-fulfillment.

When Michaela told Eli she would be leaving Montreal soon, she foreshadowed her suicide. Although he did not understand this at the time, she did.

The revelation that Lilia's mother had tried to kill her verified the suspicion the author had built around her character throughout the novel. In this revelation, Lilia's mother is characterized as a truly evil character and Simon as a savior. Selflessly, he arranged the abduction. Although he knew he could not escape his mother, he had to save Lilia.

By asking Eli to tell Lilia "good bye" for her, Michaela again foreshadowed her death. This time, she hoped Eli would interpret her message. Michaela had already told Lilia to meet her at the train station, where she was headed. She would then tell Lilia her story and jump to her death. If Eli interpreted her message correctly, he would come to the train station as well. She did not want to die without a witness.

Eli realized that "screaming stopped nothing" when he ran back to the station in an attempt to save Michaela. This was a final assertion that his previous lifestyle of inaction was no longer viable. He had to take action.



In Chapter 43, Eli's feeling that nothing was quite real explained his identification with Michaela. Although he tried to talk her out of her beliefs that life was not real, he secretly understood.

When Zed came to retrieve Eli from the hospital, he saved him from the horror of his own thoughts. He helped Eli leave the past behind him and to think about the future. In jumping after Michaela, Eli had transcended his past self. He was no longer a mere theorizer. He could now take action. He now realized that Lilia, like himself, had an inability to connect with the world. She too was a theorizer, living under the guise of a doer. When he read the letter he had once written of his love for Lilia, he could not recognize the self he had once been. The façade that was their relationship was gone. He was ready to pursue his own happiness.

In the final chapter, Lilia's life after her encounter with Michaela allowed her to finally leave the past behind her. With full knowledge of her past, she was no longer haunted by the inability to understand her identity. She was now complete and able to connect with others as she connected with herself. In leaving for Italy, Lilia symbolically left the past behind her and start anew.

When Michaela told Lilia the truth about her childhood and saw that Lilia was finally happy, she felt as though she had served her life's purpose. Having been a witness to Lilia's life, she was relinquishing her ties by telling Lilia of her childhood. As she jumped into the train, the roles of the two women were reversed. Lilia had become Michaela's witness.

Discussion Question 1

Examine the relationship between Lilia and Michaela. How do their parallel existences affect one another?

Discussion Question 2

Running after Michaela, Eli felt as though he could not save her. Could she have been saved? If so, when?

Discussion Question 3

Did Eli ever truly love Lilia? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

tottering, predecessor, languidly, unfathomably, corralled, dire, laden, vellum, cadences, transatlantic, intermittently



Characters

Lilia

Lilia, the main character in the novel, was among the most complex in the story. Without any recollection of her past, Lilia was unable to form her own sense of identity. She felt the need to move from place to place, as leaving was all she had ever known. In this way, she was characterized as transient and ever-changing. Lilia did not have own fully formed identity. Rather, she shaped a new identity as she moved from place to place forming no permanent attachments as her journey progressed.

Another major quality associated with Lilia was her innocence. Although Lilia's transient life style caused a great deal of pain for the many people she left behind, Lilia was never shown to be blame-worthy for their unhappiness. Rather, she was characterized as a victim of circumstance. Her inability to recall her troubled past caused an inability to connect with others. She did not seem to have any autonomy over her own decisions. Rather, she was tortured by the fact that she could not deem to stay, even when she truly wanted to.

In the novel, Lilia was compared to an ice-skater, skating over the surface of the world without ever immersing herself in it. This analogy described the affect that Lilia's abduction had had upon her. Living her life in secrecy, she never felt as if she was truly part of the world. Even when she attempted to form connections, the lack of understanding she had of her own past prevented her from being able to connect with others. She was always preoccupied with solving the mystery of her own life.

Lilia also served as the central character, drawing all of the other characters together in their relation to her. The mystery of Lilia's abduction served as the central plot while the other subplots of the story dealt with characters whose lives were affected by the abduction.

Michaela

Throughout the novel, Michaela served as a foil of Lilia. As both girls were the same age, they led live parallel to one another. As Michaela's father was the private investigator assigned to Lilia's case, Michaela's life had resolved around Lilia since her childhood. When Michaela's father, Christopher became obsessed with Lilia's case, Michaela's mother had left the family, Shortly after, Christopher left on a yearlong business trip, only to return in intervals. Seeing Lilia as the cause of her family's disintegration, Michaela grew to resent her.

What Michaela did not see in her resentment was that she and Lilia were actually very much alike. Both characters, due to their traumatic upbringings, lacked autonomy over their own lives. They also shared the characteristic of having an abnormal calmness in chaotic situations. This was because the chaos of their own lives gave them a skewed



perception of what was to be normally expected. Lilia's abduction, therefore, caused both characters to be denied access to a normal lifestyle.

Michaela's development of malevolent patterns was a source of irony in the novel. Christopher, specializing in solving cases of development of malevolent patterns in children, was unable to recognize the patterns when they affected the life of his own daughter.

Lilia's Father

Lilia's father was characterized as being the brave protector of his daughter, Lilia. Although Lilia's father is said to have abducted his daughter in the very beginning of the novel, he is characterized as a good man even before the reason for the abduction is revealed.

One of the main components of Lilia's father's character is his air of mystery. The author's decision to leave the character nameless contributed to this mystery. Also contributing to the mystery was Lilia's feeling towards him despite the fact that he had removed her from her mother and brother. Lilia described her father as having a calming voice. She felt that they could talk about anything. She often referred to herself and her father as refugees, fleeing corruption for a good cause. It was clear that her father loved her enough to sacrifice his own sense of normalcy to live with her. The mystery lied in his reason for having to have taken her in secret.

He is also characterized as being fiercely protective. When he drove Christopher off the road, he believed himself to be doing so in order to protect his daughter. He was willing to go to any length to protect her. Lilia's safety was his sole concern.

Eli

Eli was Lilia's final short-term lover before facing her past in Montreal. While living with Eli in New York City, Lilia realized she had to go back and face her past if she had any hope of a better future.

Throughout the novel, Eli was haunted by his own stagnancy. He saw himself as a theorizer rather than a doer. He had a lot of dreams but never followed through on them. After meeting Lilia in a coffee shop, he thought her to be a doer and became immediately infatuated by her seemingly free spirit. He thought Lilia the type of person who did whatever she desired to and he loved that about her.

After going to Montreal to try to find Lila, Eli realized that she was not in fact as free as he had thought. All she wished to do was stay. She did not leave because she was free, but rather, because she was afraid to stay. In realizing this, his infatuation with Lilia ended.



In the end of the novel, Eli realized that he related to Lilia in that they were both unable to fully connect with others in their lack of understanding of themselves. As Lilia had ventured to Montreal to find the truth about her past, Eli decided to leave with his brother Zed to pursue his lifelong dream of travel. He realized that instead of pursuing his own dreams, he had spent his life attaching himself to the dreams of others. In the end, he was ready to become a doer and in doing so discover his true self.

Christopher

Christopher was the private investigator assigned to Lilia's case. After growing up in the circus, he and his wife Elaine ran away together to try to lead a "normal" life. This lifestyle brought them misery. As Christopher's marriage was falling apart, he decided to become engrossed in Lilia's case rather than attempting to fix it. In this way, he used his obsession to distract himself from solving his true issues.

After his wife left, Christopher abandoned his daughter, Michaela, and began to see his role in Lilia's case as his only function in life. He felt as if he had to be a witness to Lilia's life story as the brilliance of her life could only be verified through his account. He grew to be extremely protective of Lilia although she did not need his protection. Christopher lacked a true identity and existed only in his relation to Lilia.

The focus of Christopher's detective work was the formation of malevolent patterns in abused children. This served as a source of irony in the novel as his abandonment of his own daughter led to her addictions and ultimate suicide.

Simon

Simon was Lilia's step-brother who planned her abduction. He saved Lilia from his abusive mother. In doing so, Simon showed selflessness and courage. He was shown to be a brave and benevolent character.

Lilia's Mother

Lilia's mother was characterized by suspicion from the beginning on the novel. Although Lilia could not remember her mother, she was bothered by her mother's coldness in a television interview. When it was revealed that Lilia's mother was abusive at the end of the novel, the reader's suspicion is confirmed. Lilia and her father were true refugees.

Zed

Zed was Eli's brother. Zed symbolized freedom through travel. Although Lilia travelled often, she felt that she did not do so out of freedom but out of fear of facing reality. Eli always longed to travel but could not find the courage to pursue his dreams. Zed



symbolized the ability to follow one's dreams regardless of the circumstances. Unlike the other characters, he was not trapped by fear and obsession.

Clara

Clara was a waitress at the Morning Star diner who knowingly gave shelter to Lilia and her father when they were on the run. Lilia's father decided to stay with her because she had saved them. Clara was a symbol of salvation and benevolence in the novel.

Elaine

Elaine was Christopher's estranged wife. She symbolized Christopher's past in the circus and how his search for normalcy had ruined his life.



Symbols and Symbolism

The Name Lilia

Throughout the novel, names served as the most consistent form of symbolism. Lilia, meaning Lilly, is a traditional symbol of innocence, purity, and beauty. This symbolism was further emphasized in her father's reference to her as his "dove," another reference to innocence and purity. Throughout the novel, Lilia was portrayed as an innocent victim of circumstance. Although her abduction and her need to travel upset the lives of many, she never left with the intention of upsetting anyone. Instead, she seemed tortured by her own way of life, unable to escape the lasting impact of her upbringing. In her worry for her mother and her decision to believe Christopher, she showed herself to be an honest character searching for the genuineness in others.

The Name Zed

Zed, like many of the names in the novel, has roots in the Hebrew language. The author's choice to use Hebrew names tied back to the symbolism of the Bible throughout the story. The name Zed is connected to the deep desire for travel and living life for adventure rather than tradition. In the novel, the character of Zed symbolized the freedom of travel all of the other characters desired. His name emphasized this symbolism.

The Name Eli

Eli, another Hebrew name, means ascended. Symbolically, this meaning referred to the epiphany Eli's relationship with Michaela caused him to have. After his breakdown, Eli was left with a clear vision of what he needed to do with his life. He had ascended from a mere theorizer to a doer.

The Name Simon

Simon's name is a Biblical allusion. In the Bible, Simon had carried the cross of Jesus before his crucifixion. In the English language, "carrying a cross" is a popular idiom referencing this Biblical passage. To carry a cross means to have an unpleasant responsibility that you must accept as the situation deems necessary. In the context of the novel, Simon's "cross" was his planning of his sister's abduction. Although he knew it would lead Lilia and her father into a difficult lifestyle, it was the only way to save Lilia's life. Putting himself at risk of the law Simon planned the abduction for the good of his sister.



The Name Michaela

Michaela's name also bears Biblical significance as it is a derivative of Michael, meaning "gift from God." In the novel, Michaela served as Lilia's "gift from God," as she was able to bear witness to her life. Unable to be part of the world around her, Lilia questioned the authenticity of her existence. When Michaela finally met Lilia, she found that there was another person leading a life parallel to hers. When Michaela told Lilia the truth of her past, Lilia was finally freed from the bondage of the unknown. She could stay. Wanting her whole life to be saved, Michaela was finally able to offer such salvation.

The Name Christopher

Christopher's name had a Biblical connotation in that Christopher is the patron saint of travel. In devoting his life to watching over Lilia, Christopher's purpose in life was to be her guardian, or 'patron saint.'

The Name Clara

Clara means bright or clear. Working at the Morning Star diner, Clara served as Lilia and her father's Morning Star, guiding them to safety. This symbolic function was solidified when it was made known that Clara knowingly took in the refugees.

Pomegranate

The pomegranate that Eli fed Lilia towards the beginning of the novel served as an allusion to Greek mythology. According to Greek mythology, Hades had kidnapped Persephone and brought her into the underworld with him. There was a rule that if a prisoner of the underworld ate during their stay, they would be condemned to stay forever. Hades tricked Persephone into eating six pomegranate seeds and she was thus required to spend six months of each year in the underworld with him.

When Eli fed Lilia the pomegranate seeds, he was trying to get her to stay with him although he knew it was her intention to leave. He hoped that in doing so he could change her mind. Like Hades, Eli used the pomegranate as a way of attempting to make one stay. To make Lilia stay would be to bar her from ever receiving closure on her unknown past. By leaving, Lilia avoided the temptation of safety in order to attain salvation.

Map

The map was a very important symbol through Lilia and her father's journeys. The more they travelled, the more faded the map became. This reflected Lilia's recollection of the



different places she travelled to. Without setting up any sort of permanence in the various destinations, Lilia's memories blended together, just like the lines of the map. On the day of their last journey, the map was completely discernable, pointing to the end of their transient way of life together.

Icarus

The story of Icarus resurfaced at various points in the novel. In their parallel lives, Michaela and Lilia both symbolized Icarus throughout the story. Lilia's fascination with the story showed that he identified with and even embraced her relation to the character. She knew that in pursuing her transient lifestyle, she was falling in her attempt to fly. Still, she continued on.

Michaela, in her self-destruction, also exemplified the character of Icarus. She was falling further and further as she continued life in Montreal. When Michaela finally 'left' Montreal in committing suicide, she mimicked Icarus' flight. Just as Icarus had flown closer to the Sun despite the warnings of others, Michaela jumped even though she knew she would die.

In Christopher's fascination with being the witness in Lilia's fall, he left his own daughter Michaela without a witness. In the end, however, Eli served as her witness, feeling that no one should die without one.



Settings

Brooklyn, New York

Brooklyn, New York was the location where the novel began. In a Williamsburg apartment, Eli and Lilia had cohabited for three months. In the first chapter of the novel, Lilia left Brooklyn unexpectedly to finally face her past in Montreal.

Montreal

Montreal was the city where Christopher, the private investigator assigned to Lilia's case, lived for some time with his wife, Elaine and daughter, Michaela. When Lilia disappeared from New York City, she went to Montreal to confront Christopher and in doing so finally confront the mysteries of her past.

When Eli followed Lilia to Montreal, he found it to be a very drab and depressing city. He met Michaela, who seemed to radiate the hopelessness of her surroundings. At the end of the novel, all of the intertwined stories of the novel intersected in an eventful conclusion.

The location of Montreal was also significant in that their native French was a dying language. Thus, their government took extra, sometimes unethical, measures to preserve the language. Having been fascinated by dying languages throughout his entire college career, Eli found the reality of experiencing life with a dying language to be dreadful.

New Mexico

New Mexico was the location in which Lilia's father decided to settle down after nearly a decade of evading the law. After falling for a waitress at a local diner, Clara, Lilia's father decided that New Mexico was finally the place in which their running could end. Although he wanted Lilia to stay with them, she could not help but continue traveling.

New Mexico represented the peace and quiet of solitude. Away from crowded cities and heavy media influence, Lilia and her father finally had the opportunity to stop running. They had beat the odds and successfully disappeared.

Lilia's Father's Car

Although transient, Lilia's father's car was a prevalent setting throughout the novel. Because much of the novel was represented through use of flashback, the scenes in the car captured Lilia's childhood perception of the world around her. Although the time spent between motels in various cities seemed to blend together, the moments spent in



her father's car were recounted in vivid detail. In these memories, Lilia's interactions with her father seemed to shape her perspective as she dreamed about the world outside.

Chicago

Chicago was a significant place in the novel as it served as a turning point in Lilia's solo travels. Although Lilia had had many meaningless love affairs as she traveled on her own throughout the United States, her lover Erica in Chicago was the first person with whom she shared notice of her departure. Feeling as though she was leaving out of cowardice rather than out of the desire to travel, Lilia left Chicago with the sad realization that her transient way of life was causing her to lack the ability to connect with others.

For this reason, Lilia left Chicago with the intention of travelling to Montreal not long afterwards. She knew that the private investigator following her lived there and she knew that she needed to confront him in order to finally settle the mystery of her past. It was in Chicago that Lilia finally decided to take control of her own fate.



Themes and Motifs

Mystery

Mystery played a huge role throughout the novel. Particularly, the mystery of Lilia's upbringing had a significant effect on all of the characters in the novel.

Lilia, lacking the ability to remember the early years of her childhood, was plagued by her lack of understanding of herself. Knowing only that she left with her father at 7 years old without having any idea as to why, Lilia felt as if she would be unable to truly connect with the world without knowledge of her own past. In traveling to Montreal, Lilia was seeking the long awaited answer to this mystery.

Christopher, in seeing himself as a failure in his own life, became consumed by the mystery of Lilia's life. Immersing himself completely in the various questions he had on her upbringing, Christopher lived solely to solve the mystery.

For Eli as well, the mysteries of Lilia are what drew him to her. He became intoxicated by the untranslatable nature of her character. He became obsessed with solving the mystery that was she. He, like Christopher, became so entangled in the mystery that he began to identify solely with it in relation to his pursuit of Lilia.

Travel

Travel was a major theme in the novel as many of the characters saw travel as a way of life. Others, however, longed to travel yet found themselves unable to do so.

In the case of Lilia, she had lived her whole life traveling out of necessity. As she grew older, she found herself longing to stay but unable to do so. To her, travel did not mean freedom, but rather running away from her issues. Lilia found herself unable to connect with the world around her and used travel as a means to escape commitment. It was not until she found out the truth of her past that she was freed from her compulsion to leave.

For Michaela and Eli, travel meant a freedom they could not possess. Trapped in a life lacking passion, Eli longed to follow his brother Zed as he travelled around the world freely. However, his fear of leaving safety behind kept him from pursuing this dream. Michaela, feeling like a social outcast in Montreal dreamed of escaping but lacked the means to do so. She found herself trapped, dreaming of escape but remaining stagnant.

For Christopher, travel had been a way of life as he grew up in the circus. Growing to resent this way of life, he had become a detective in order to lead a "normal" life. Betraying his natural tendency, he and his family grew miserable. He reverted back to his way of travelling in his obsession with following Lilia.



Obsession

Obsession is a dominant theme throughout the novel. Throughout the novel, characters engaged in obsessive behaviors in order to avoid facing the reality of their problems. Perhaps the greatest example of obsession was seen in Christopher's obsession with Lilia's case. In order to escape facing his own failure in his marriage, Christopher became totally obsessed with Lilia's case. While following Lilia, he could not rest. He was completely transfixed on the idea of finding her. Even when he found she did not need to be saved, his obsession had grown to the point that he could no longer stop it. In the end, he only existed as a witness to Lilia's life.

Lilia had many obsessive idiosyncrasies that she used to assert her control over her own life. Really, they were just a distraction from the fact that she had no control. The largest of her obsessions was travel. Lilia went from place to place, as she did not know how to stay. She lacked the ability to connect with others. Rather than face this issue head on, she travelled from place to place in an attempt to face her harsh reality. In the end, Lilia finally faced her past and was able to rid herself of obsession.

Michaela, feeling alone and disconnected, became addicted to various substances. She used the substances to escape from her harsh sense of reality. These obsessions were a result of the malevolent patterns she had formed as a neglected child. In the end, she could not overcome her obsessions.

Lack of Connection

Lack of Connection is a huge theme within the novel. Many of the characters are faced with the inability to connect with others, leading them to misery. Although some of the characters were able to form connections in the end, others failed, continuing to avoid facing their problems.

Lilia was compared to an ice-skater grazing the surface of the world within ever really entering it. Through her transient lifestyle, Lilia found it impossible to connect with others. She did not see how anyone could understand her as she did not truly understand herself. She had many short term love affairs, though she did not experience connection to any of her lovers. When the truth of her past was finally revealed to her, Lilia was finally able to connect.

Eli, as well, did not allow himself to become connected with others. Instead, he attached himself to other people, failing to build his own sense of identity. In this way, he mistook attachment for connection, feeling emptiness inside. After finally realizing the error of his ways, Eli sought to search for his own identity in order to build the ability for true connection.

Michaela lived in Quebec but could not speak French. Symbolically, this emphasized the lack of commonality she shared with the world around her. Being abandoned by her



parents, Michaela felt she was truly alone in the world. With no means to escape or connect with those around her, he was left hopeless.

Christopher, in his disconnection from his wife, lost the only connection he had ever had with another. Rather than attempting to win her back, he became obsessed with Lilia's case. In losing for affection, he felt he had lost everything.

The Parallel Lives of Lilia and Michaela

Throughout the novel, Lilia and Michaela served as foils of one another, being continually compared and contrasted in their parallel lives. Being the same age, the two women were deeply affected by Lilia's abduction at the same points in their life. In this relationship, the women shared various similarities and a few key differences that are pointed out in their relations to one another.

One huge similarity is that both Lilia and Michaela lacked free will. Michaela resented Lilia throughout her whole life as she saw her as choosing her own fate. However, it became apparent when they met in Montreal that Lilia was just as trapped as Michaela. While Michaela was trapped by the abandon of her parents, Lilia was trapped by the lack of understanding she had of her own life. Both characters felt as though they do not fit into society and thus lacked connection with others.

They were also similar in the fact that their lives revolved around Lilia's abduction. In both cases, the abduction disallowed the possibility of a calm upbringing. Both women were characterized by the abduction and were unable to escape its effect on their lives. They were also both characterized as being abnormally calm in chaos as chaos was all they ever knew.

The main difference in the women was that where Lilia was the object of obsession, Michaela was the object of abandon. As Lilia wished to disappear, Michaela wished to be seen. This interesting contrast drew attention to the fact that freedom could be lost in having too much or too little attention.



Styles

Point of View

The novel was told through the point of view of a third person omniscient narrator. The ability of the narrator to give insight into the character's unique thoughts and feelings shaped the reader's understanding of the novel as a whole. Through the narration of the novel, all of the characters were represented in a very in-depth manner.

Due to the nature of the narration, the reader was able to gain insight into different characters through various stages in their lives. For example, the character of Michaela was described through the lens of Christopher and Eli at very different stages in her life. Likewise, Lilia was described in various ways through nearly all of the other characters, adding to the mystery of her characterization. In this way, the characters were represented as quite multidimensional. Through the omniscient narration and various subplots, the reader was given insight in the thoughts and feelings of different characters at different times, allow the reader understanding into the progression of the characters' developments.

Language and Meaning

Through use of third person omniscient narration, the author was able to give insight into the thoughts and feelings of various characters. As the central plot of the novel was Lilia's mysterious abduction, much of the language was used to evoke suspense. In the interrelated and highly emotional relationships between characters, the language of their thoughts and feeling had strong emotional value and allowed the reader to empathize with the characters.

The language also varied depending on which subplot the narrator was addressing. In using different language patterns when representing the thoughts of different characters, the narrator was able to represent the characteristics of characters through the language of their thoughts. For example, Eli's thoughts were written using romantic language whereas Christopher's thoughts were represented in such a way that emphasized his procedural way of approaching life. In this way, language played a large role in characterization.

Structure

The novel was structured in such a way that various stories are told from a third person omniscient narration. In each chapter, the storyline of a different characters or characters was told, revealing new information. At the end of the novel, all of the different stories converged. Much of the story was told through use of flashbacks. This allowed the author to give insight into the events in the character's lives that shaped their personalities.



The novel was separated into four parts, each of which focused on a different piece of the story as a whole. Part One, which began with Lilia's disappearance, focused mainly of Lilia and Eli's relationship. It also gave insight into Lilia's past through use of flashbacks. Part Two focused mainly on the past through fairly consistent flashbacks. Lilia and her father's past was focused upon in a more in depth manner in this section. The disintegration of Christopher's family was also a huge focus of this part of the novel, giving insight into Michaela's troubled adulthood. In the third part, Eli arrived in Montreal. In this section, his interactions with Michaela were accompanied by flashbacks relating to the characters' connection. Part Four was the section in which all of the stories of the novel conversed. In the final part, the connections between characters were made clear and the mysteries of Lilia's past were revealed.

The interrelated nature of the stories told in the novel added to the depth of each character. It also strengthened the air of mystery throughout the novel as different characters shared their insight into the mystery of Lilia's early life. The structure of the novel allowed the reader a vivid understanding of each of the main characters, adding unity and depth to the novel as a whole.



Quotes

There was a map folded on the dashboard, but it was fading steadily under the barrage of light; Lilia was supposed to be the navigator but entire states were dissolving into pinkish sepia, the lines of highways fading to grey. The names of certain cities were indistinct now along the fold, and all the borders were vanishing.”

-- Narrator (chapter 2 paragraph 1)

Importance: This quote emphasizes the lack of control Lilia had over her life throughout the novel. An abducted child, Lilia was constantly moving but never truly free. The places she had been blended together despite her efforts to record the changes. Lilia felt a lack of control and choice in her life and desired the freedom she never had.

Lilia pressed her forehead against a windowpane in Eli's apartment, looking out at an uncharted landscape of Brooklyn rooftops in the rain, and came to a somewhat unsettling conclusion; she'd been disappearing for so long that she didn't know how to stay.”

-- Narrator (chapter 2 paragraph 1)

Importance: In this quote, the narrator allows us to experience the difficult situation Lilia finds herself in. Although she did not necessarily want to leave Eli, her lifestyle up to this point left her no alternative. The mystery of her past had left her always wanting to flee, even when she had nothing left to run from.

It always seemed later on that he loved her, at least partially, because she rendered him fraudulent. He talked about traveling, but she traveled. He talked about photography, but she took photographs. He talked about languages, but she translated them.”

-- Narrator (chapter 3 paragraph 2)

Importance: This quote serves a very important role in the novel in explaining the complex relationship between Lilia and Eli. Eli had become fascinated by Lilia upon meeting her. He grew to love her as he observed the ways in which she experienced life. After her disappearance, however, Eli realized that they were not so different after all. Her transience, he found, was just as debilitating as his stagnancy. In her inability to fully connect with anyone despite her efforts, she too was merely an observer of the world around her. With this realization, Eli's love for her faded. Their relationship was itself fraudulent as each romanticized the other and lost their love with the realization of reality.

How much loss can be carried in a single human frame? Their last words hold entire civilizations.”

-- Narrator (chapter 7 paragraph 2)

Importance: This quote compares Lilia to the dying languages Eli studies. In being abducted and lacking memories of her childhood, Lilia held a unique worldview that she was unable to communicate to anyone else. Likewise those who were the last to speak



in a dying language lacked the ability to communicate their experiences to those around them. In her abduction and unending desire to disappear, Lilia was continuously lost to those around her. This quote also relates to Michaela, who serves as a literary foil to Lilia. As Michaela's father became obsessed with Lilia's case, Michaela watched her family fall apart. As her father aimed to protect Lilia, Michaela was left alone with no one to rely on. Directly after telling Lilia the truth about her childhood, Michaela jumped to her death. Thus, her last words completed the unique "civilization" that was Lilia's existence.

Stop looking for me. I'm not missing; I do not want to be found. I wish to remain vanishing. I don't want to go home."

-- Lilia (chapter 9 paragraph 3)

Importance: As Lilia traveled across the United States, she repeatedly left this note in motel Bibles. As she travelled with her father, she felt a need to remain moving. The thought of settling down made her anxious. Although she did not understand who she was evading, she could not stop running. Seeing her mother say that she wished to forget Lilia's existence in a news interview, Lilia's decision to remain disappearing was solidified. The note itself was juxtaposed to the Bible psalm on which it was written. The psalm itself read like a cry for help, ending in the lines, "Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help." This juxtaposition emphasized that although Lilia did not want to return home, she was perpetually trapped by lack of control she had over her own life. She was always disappearing, not knowing where she belonged.

In the impeccable past before the broken-down present, in the long hectic interlude before she'd begun leaving people behind, pre-Eli, it sometimes really was as simple as a coin toss.

-- Narrator (chapter 13 paragraph 1)

Importance: This quote recounts the simplicity of Lilia's lifestyle before she had begun connecting with others. When it was just Lilia and her father, her nature of disappearance brought her excitement and freedom. She and her father shared a bond of mutual understanding outside the realm of ordinary life. When she began forming connections with others, however, she realized herself to be a stranger. She was unable to communicate her experience and worldview to anyone, as she herself did not completely understand her past. As she tried to assimilate to a world she had been living outside of, she began to feel as if he did not fit. He longed for the days where everything was simple and decisions could be made by the toss of a coin.

She moved over the surface of life the way figure skaters move, fast and choreographed, but never broke through the ice, she never pierced the surface and descended into those awful beautiful waters, she was never submerged and she never learned to swim in those currents, these currents: all the shadows and light and splendid horrors that make up the riptides of life on earth.

-- Narrator (chapter 20 paragraph 1)

Importance: This quote explains Lilia's relationship with the world around her. Although



she was always passionately curious about the world around her, she felt her perspective to be more likened to that of an anthropologist than one truly experiencing life. Forced to flee and travel from place to place, Lilia could not imagine life as a member of society; with connections to people, places, and things Her disconnected style of living allowed her a fascination with the world around her but deprived her of the ability to truly submerge herself in the wonder that is life.

When she told Eli this, some years later, he understood that she thought of the quiet dissolution of her family as having been more or less Lilia's fault, Lilia had, after all, written her name in a Bible, and she did run out barefoot into the snow.

-- Narrator (chapter 21 paragraph 10)

Importance: In this passage, Michaela's characterization of Lilia as an autonomous being responsible for destroying her family is explained. Although Lilia had struggled with the feeling of having no control over her own situation throughout her life, Michaela, viewing only the evidence her father had access to, thought her to be quite self-sufficient. She saw Lilia as the person who had willingly ripped her family apart in her decision to live with father all those years ago. What she did not, however, was that Lilia had escaped abuse and did not have the option of returning. Thus, she was forced to live a life of secrecy, isolated from the outside world. This quote showed the relationship of the two characters, both suffering from isolation and lack of free will due to circumstances outside of their control.

But no one, Zed had scrawled once in a letter from Africa several years ago, should have to die without a witness.

-- Zed (chapter 22 paragraph 2)

Importance: Eli recalled this quote first when watching Michaela cross an alley on a tightrope suspended between two fire escapes. He had not met her yet at the time but felt compelled to stay with her in case she fell. She would not let her die alone. Later, Michaela referred to herself as Lilia's witness. Aside from Lilia's father and Christopher, Michaela was the only one who had watched Lilia's life unfold. She knew more about Lilia's past than Lilia did. The two led parallel lives, both deeply affected by the events of Lilia's case. The two gave each other purpose in their unique awareness of each other's existence. This quote took on new meaning when in the end of novel when Eli returned to the train station and witnessed Michaela's death. Despite her isolation throughout her entire life, Michaela had found a witness.

His only part in the story: to observe and remember the chain of events. Not all of us will be cast in the greatest dramas; someone has to remember them...If no one else remembers your story, how are you to prove that it was real?

-- Narrator (chapter 32 paragraph 2-3)

Importance: This quote explained Christopher's relationship with Lilia. Seeing his own life as a failure, Christopher had latched on to Lilia's case in order to give himself a renewed sense of purpose. Becoming entirely consumed by the case, he began to see his life purpose as a witness of Lilia's story. He felt as though he existed to give



credibility to the great drama that was Lilia's life. To stop watching would be to take away his purpose in life. Thus he trudged on, disregarding all other aspects of life in order to fulfill what he saw as his life's mission.

Her stories were always in the margins of Lilia's life.

-- Narrator (chapter 29 paragraph 1)

Importance: This quote explains the relationship between Michaela and Lilia. Throughout Michaela's childhood, her father's sole intention was to be an observer of the epic drama that was Lilia's life. In doing so, he disregarded Lilia. In an attempt to connect with her father, Michaela too had become obsessed with Lilia's case. She too existed only as an observer of Lilia's story, failing to form her own identity.

I wanted to disappear with her, and fold her into my life. I wanted to be her compass. I wanted to be her last speaker, her interpreter, her language. I wanted to be her translator, Zed, but none of the languages we knew were the same.

-- Eli (chapter 43 paragraph 1)

Importance: In this passage, Eli summed up his issue in communicating with Lilia. In doing so, he also described his and Lilia's reasons for being unable to connect with the worlds around them. Both characters avoided forming deep relationships with others, feeling as if their own concepts of reality were too unique to explain to another. In lacking true understanding of themselves, the characters isolated themselves from the world around them.