

The Magician's Land Study Guide

The Magician's Land by Lev Grossman

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Plot Summary

“The Magician’s Land” is a young adult fantasy novel by Lev Grossman, is the third part of his “Magicians” trilogy, and which follows the continuing adventures of Quentin Coldwater after his dethroning and banishment from the magical land of Fillory, and his efforts to nevertheless save Fillory once more. Having been exiled from Fillory, Quentin, now nearing the age of 30, struggles back in the real world. He ultimately decides to return to Brakebills, to at least exist in the world of magic peripherally through it. There, he becomes a professor of Mending Magic, growing comfortable with his life at the school, but remains haunted by the past – especially by the death of Alice.

Plum, a senior student at Brakebills, and a descendent of Rupert Chatwin from the “Fillory and Further” novels, looks forward to life after college. She and some of her friends decide to play a magic prank on another student for stealing wine from their club, but the prank backfires when Plum accidentally nearly releases Alice’s niffin. Quentin manages to save her, but chooses not to attempt to destroy Alice. Plum is expelled and Quentin is fired for this.

Quentin takes Plum under his wing, and the two become involved in the criminal world of magic. A blackbird hires them to steal a suitcase that once belonged to Rupert Chatwin. Inside is a journal with a spell that can be used to create an entirely new magical land, such as Fillory. Quentin and Plum successfully steal the suitcase and journal, and hole up in an apartment in New York’s West Village. Why the bird wants this journal is unknown to anyone, and the bird insists this is no one else’s concern but his own.

Meanwhile, in Fillory, King Eliot, Queen Janet, King Josh, and Queen Poppy receive word from Ember the Ram god that Fillory’s time is limited, and that Fillory will one day cease to exist. All four determine that they will find a way to prevent this. Ultimately, Eliot crosses over into the real world to see if Quentin has any ideas.

In the real world, Quentin creates a new land with a spell found in Rupert’s journal. Quentin is stunned to find that Alice’s niffin inhabits this new world. Quentin manages to trap Alice’s niffin, and to restore her to a human being. Alice is enraged that she is now mortal once more, but slowly comes to forgive Quentin for restoring her, and for the bad past between them.

Together with Eliot and Plum, Quentin and Alice journey to the Neitherlands to find Penny, who is still tending to things with the Order. They seek out his help to find a solution. They discover that Fillory still has potential, but how to save it is unknown. The bird also appears, confessing he works for Ember, and it is Ember who wants the journal.

Quentin and Alice then journey to Fillory as it collapses in on itself while a war rages across the land. They confront Ember, having realized his plan: With the journal, he would begin a new world according exactly to his specification while Fillory died. Now,



Ember will die with Fillory. There is one way to save Fillory, and that is with the sacrifice of holy blood from a god, just as a sacrifice of holy blood originally created Fillory. Quentin becomes a dragon to beat Ember into submission, and then becomes a man once more to kill Ember. Umber, Ember's brother, willingly gives himself up for sacrifice.

Quentin, now imbued with the power of a god, fixes Fillory and restores it to its former glory. He then gives up his god powers, for Fillory can exist without a god for the time being. He and Alice are the only ones who return to Earth, where they create a new land of their own, together.



Chapters 1 – 7

Summary

Chapter 1 – Quentin Coldwater, nearly 30 years old, heads to Bookbumpers bookstore in Hackensack, New Jersey. As the store closes, Quentin is ushered into the back room along with several others by the cashier, Lionel. In the back room, several more people emerge through portals. The people assembled there live on the fringes of the magical world, and take odd, morally-questionable jobs to try to survive and keep a foothold in the world of magic.

A talking bird addresses the room and explains that a certain magical object must be obtained. The job will entail securing the right resources, finding the object, breaking the magical bond on the object, taking it, and dealing with those currently in possession of the object, all for \$2 million. Most people refuse to take the job. Those who accept, like Quentin, are tested with a magical version of the card game Push. During the game, Alice's spirit helps Quentin win. Six people, including Lionel, are selected for the job, which will be to steal a 1937 brown leather Louis Vuitton suitcase that belonged to Rupert John Chatwin. Quentin is stunned.

Chapter 2 – This chapter deals with the past. Quentin has believed that his days dealing with Fillory were over when he was dethroned and banished from the place six months ago after he saved the magical universe. He has not seen his friends, including Julia, since then. He reflects on being given a beautiful silver watch by Eliot as a parting gift, and how miserable he was to return to the normal world. Quentin remembers taking on a teaching job at Brakebills magic school along the Hudson River in upstate New York, where he learned his magical specialty was the repair of small objects.

Chapter 3 – This chapter deals with the past. Quentin remembers teaching First Year students in Minor Mendings, and believing he could remain at Brakebills forever. When his father died, Quentin took leave to be with his mother and to help her arrange the funeral. While doing so, he reflected on how little his father had truly lived, and how normal he had always seemed to be. A page Quentin had taken from the Neatherlands attempted to escape that night, reaching out for a world of which it was no longer truly a part.

Chapter 4 – This chapter deals with the past. Quentin remembers examining the page from the Neatherlands. It was written in Old High German, and featured a solar system-like drawing of revolving circles and a flowerless, seedless plant. The notes written on the page had to do with largely theoretical magic, such as the exchange between magic and matter. Quentin took the page on as his research project, and experimented with the spells and ideas on the page.

Quentin asked botany professor, Hamish Bax, about the plant, to which Bax explained the plant was probably not real. Quentin continued to study the page, however. Quentin



ultimately found a note that magically appeared in his pocket beside his silver watch, which invited him to Bookbumpers in March.

Chapter 5 – In the present time, in the magical parallel land of Fillory, King Eliot faces down the champion, Vile Father, of the invading Lorian army in single combat and defeats him, though Eliot does not kill him. As a result, the Lorians leave, and are told never to return. The Lorians are a divisive people who haven't invaded Fillory in centuries, but it is apparent to Eliot that the magical wards in the mountains of the Northern Barrier Range have failed.

Eliot also wishes Quentin had been around to see the Golden Age that followed his dethroning. Queen Janet arranges for pegasi to fly her and Eliot back to Castle Whitespire, to resume reigning with King Josh and Queen Poppy, who are expecting a child. As Eliot and Janet fly, Eliot the Ram speaks to him, telling Eliot that the final war is beginning – a war that Fillory cannot win. It is a war against time. Fillory is dying.

Chapter 6 – Quentin gets into a black SUV with a former Brakebills student named Plum, a girl with a Pixie haircut named Betsy, an older Indian man named Pushkar, and a boy of about 15 who won't reveal his real name. The others decide to call the boy "Stoppard" after the author of the book "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead", which was being read by the boy at the bookstore. Quentin and the others are taken to the Newark Liberty International Airport Marriott. Each of them has a specialty. Pushkar is good at transport and precognition; Stoppard is good at devices; Betsy is good at attacks and damage; Plum is good at illusions; and Quentin is good at mending, though he thinks there is another unknown reason why the bird accepted him into the job.

At the Marriott Hotel, Lionel and the bird explain that the suitcase is somewhere in the Eastern United States, that the current owners know they hold something big but do not yet know exactly what it is, yet, and that the people who own the suitcase presumably killed the antique dealer they obtained it from. The two people are a cutthroat couple (called The Couple) in their thirties who enjoy messing with the non-magical world. The bird reiterates that why he wants the suitcase is not the concern of the group.

Quentin and Plum later meet for drinks. Plum is disheartened and feels lost after having been thrown out of Brakebills. They are interrupted by Stoppard, who thinks Quentin and Plum are having a romantic moment. Plum explains that she ruined not only her own life, but Quentin's as well.

Chapter 7 – This chapter deals with the past. Plum, a senior at Brakebills and head of the League, decided with the group that Wharton, a member, needed to be pranked to alter his behavior for the better in accord with Brakebills tradition. Wharton, in charge of wine, had been stealing some. Wharton loved his personal, high-class olive-green pencils, and so the League decided to target those. Chelsea teleported them and the silver case in which they were stored to outside Wharton's dorm window, where the case was dropped into the hands of Emma. The pencils then became a dusty topping for Wharton's oatmeal breakfast. The pencils they are replaced with only spell out "Compliments of the League".



Plum, the reader learns, is the last direct living descendent of the Chatwins from the children written about in the “Fillory and Further” novels. Plum Polson Purchas is the great-granddaughter of Rupert Chatwin. Plum’s mother is the daughter of Chatwin’s only son. Her family thus has high magical expectations of her. She also does not talk about her heritage, because everyone remembers her ancestors from the novels, not how they actually were. Plum herself has only ever read the first novel in the series. Fillory for her grandfather’s family was a curse, not a fantasy. Rupert was a neurotic wreck. Martin and Jane both vanished at the age of thirteen. Fiona denied her heritage; Helen moved all the way to Texas and became an evangelical Christian to escape the past.

Analysis

“The Magician’s Land” is a young adult fantasy novel by Lev Grossman, is the third part of his “Magicians” trilogy, and which follows the continuing adventures of Quentin Coldwater after his dethroning and banishment from the magical land of Fillory, and his efforts to nevertheless save Fillory once more. As the novel begins, the theme of magic is readily apparent to the reader, though in an unusual way. In the past two novels of the “Magicians” trilogy, Quentin’s experiences with magic had to do with schooling and Fillory –but in this novel, Quentin’s experiences with magic so far have to do with his determination to keep a foot in the magical world.

It is this desperation to keep a foot in the magical world that leads Quentin to participate in the criminal underground of the magical world. In this case, Quentin and Plum are tasked with stealing a suitcase with presumably magical contents. This criminal job is necessitated by the expulsion of Plum, and the firing of Quentin, from Brakebills, as well as by the fact that Quentin has been dethroned and banished from Fillory. Quentin simply cannot handle the real world. He needs to exist in a world, no matter how seedy, where magic matters.

The reader should also pay careful note to three things, here. First, the suitcase that Quentin, Plum, and the others are tasked with finding is a suitcase once owned by Rupert Chatwin. The reader will remember that it was the Chatwin children who factored into the original Fillory adventures written about in the Fillory novels. It is not incidental that the suitcase being sought by the bird belonged to a Chatwin.

Second, the reader should also pay close attention to the fact that the bird himself is utterly vague about his reasons for wanting the bag, and third, for wanting what is inside. The contents of the bag are not revealed by the bird, who himself denies knowing what is inside. Nevertheless, that the bird is willing to expend \$2 million to retrieve a suitcase serves as an ill-omen about the contents of the suitcase.

It is evident that Quentin and Plum also have begun an important friendship in their quest to find the suitcase – a friendship which will prove crucial in the coming chapters. Cast out of Fillory, Quentin appears to have no real friends anywhere, not even during



his tenure at Brakebills. Quentin largely keeps to himself and his studies in the chapters that deal with the events prior to the suitcase heist.

Quentin himself also serves to introduce the theme of coming of age. Quentin, as the reader will remember from the previous two novels, and as the reader will find reference to in this novel, was formerly utterly self-centered at best. By now, Quentin has largely grown up, demonstrated by his unwillingness to throw Plum under the bus in order to save his own job. He likewise refuses to invent some wild story about his own failure to kill the niffin, and even refuses to pretend to have attempted to kill the niffin – both things which demonstrate tremendous character growth.

At the same time, the reader is also able to recognize a sense of loneliness in Quentin, especially when he reflects on his past with Alice. Quentin's loneliness – his emotional hollowness – will prove to be consequential in upcoming chapters, and will ultimately prove to be consequential to the overall plot of the novel. It is largely the one final place where Quentin needs to grow – and that is that he needs to find love in his life.

While Quentin, Plum, and the others on Earth are attempting to pursue the suitcase, in Fillory, Eliot and Janet receive a dire prediction from Ember. This prediction is so frequently made and so commonly heard by the creatures of Fillory that the pegasus on which Eliot is flying can only roll his eyes and comment sardonically in response, "Not again." The prediction, however, also brings the dual theme of fate and free will into the equation in the novel.

In the past, Fillory's destruction has been predicted numerous times, and each time, the free will, free actions, and free choices of the rulers of Fillory have averted disaster. However, unlike the other times, Ember states that nothing can be done to save Fillory this time, that Fillory will meet its fate. Eliot, however, is not convinced based on the past. Thus, the idea of fate and the idea of free will will contest with one another for supremacy, and for the future of Fillory.

Discussion Question 1

When Quentin and Plum are cornered by Dean following their misadventure at Brakebills, Quentin does not lie about the experience or attempt to blame everything on Plum. Why?

Discussion Question 2

Do you believe Dean Fogg is fair in expelling Plum from Brakebills and firing Quentin from the staff? Why or why not?



Discussion Question 3

Why do Quentin and Plum take on work in the magical criminal underworld? Do you believe this is an appropriate thing to do? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

asymmetrical, novelty, phosphorescent, incorporate, guffawed, preliminaries, fluctuate, circuitous, disposition, supernatural, floundering, gramarye, aloof, nonplussed, idyll, arcane, cryptomancy, convulsively, alchemical, byzantine, submissive, requisitioned, decorously, synchrony, inevitable, appellations, grievously, virility, germane, astral, ligneous, daunting, anhedonic



Chapters 8 – 15

Summary

Chapter 8 – This chapter deals with the past. After the stealing of the pencil case, Plum went to the senior common room. Professor Quentin Coldwater was there, but was looking into the fire. Plum decided to hide in the wine closet, where she determined she would confront Wharton with the League's demands. To sneak into the wine closet, she had to go through a secret passage of multiple doors, a courtyard, the balcony in the library, tiny corridors, and through Wharton's dorm room. She came to a bloody scene from Fillory, with Ember the Ram and a group of 20-somethings fighting Martin Chatwin.

Moving on, terrified and upset, she came out into the League meeting room. In the mirror, there, she saw the spirit of a blue girl, the ghost purportedly haunting the school. She realized the spirit must be after her because she was a Chatwin, but then Quentin intervened to save her, and the two rushed back through the way they had come, with Quentin sealing the passages behind them. Quentin revealed that the spirit was a niffin, a malicious kind of magical ghost.

Fogg then came upon them, furious because they had set off 11 alarms by scurrying throughout the school. Fogg was also furious that Quentin did not try to kill the niffin. Quentin was then fired, and Plum expelled. Plum was heartbroken, not knowing how she would continue on. Wharton later explained he was leaving the extra wine as an offering for the ghost.

Chapter 9 – In the present, a week has passed. Lionel, Pushkar, and the bird are out attempting to locate the suitcase, while Quentin, Plum, and the others work on figuring out how to remove the bond that will be holding the suitcase down. Quentin is haunted by having seen Alice's niffin for the first time in seven years. He and Plum decide to journey as whales to Brakebills South, in Antarctica, for assistance from Professor Mayakovsky.

Chapter 10 – Quentin and Plum meet with Mayakovsky, and explain their bond situation to him. Mayakovsky says they are crazy, but a valid exploit. Mayakovsky explains that the main issue they face is not having enough magical power to break the bond. He also worries about the legality of their job. Mayakovsky knows that Quentin longs to be great, but tells Quentin he can never be great. Mayakovsky says he himself is great, and demonstrates it by showing off his lab, in which a number of amazing things can be seen, such as magic beans, a pen that writes only the truth, and a goose that lays gold, silver, and iridium eggs.

Quentin thinks Mayakovsky should return to the world, and not remain isolated. Mayakovsky disagrees. Quentin suspects that Mayakovsky can break an incorporate bond, and might even be under one himself, but Mayakovsky ignores this. He and



Quentin end up slapping each other, and hugging. Mayakovsky gifts Quentin with three gold coins, which store an immense amount of magical power.

Chapter 11 – Eliot, Josh, Janet, and Poppy discuss Ember’s prediction of catastrophe. They wonder if he has seen what will happen or what could happen. The four kings and queens decide that Fillory must be saved. If they cannot, they will return to the Neitherlands, and then to the real world. Only Eliot says Fillory’s fate will be his own, figuratively. It is only Eliot and Janet who set out from Castle Whitespire, for Poppy, pregnant, feels ill, and Josh does not wish to leave her. Eliot and Janet head into Queenswood, and then to the Northern Marsh. Janet likens their quest to checking the pulse of Fillory, to see what’s working and what isn’t working. Janet very much wants Poppy’s baby to be able to rule Fillory when she and the others are gone.

Eliot and Janet meet with the Prince of the Mud, a massive old snapping turtle. The turtle contends Fillory is dying, and instructs them to go and see the Queen of the Dwarves in the Barrens. Neither Eliot nor Janet have ever heard of the Queen. The Prince, angered, lunges at Janet, who freezes the Prince in the mud.

Chapter 12 – Eliot and Janet head toward Barion. Janet explains that during the time Quentin and the others were saving Fillory, she invaded and conquered the Wandering Desert to the south of Fillory’s Copper Mountains. It was wildly popular with the Fillorians, and brought great mineral resources into the empire. During that time, she encountered a man named Foremost and his tribe, who carried black metal weapons supposedly made from tiny grains found in the sand.

Janet slept with Foremost, and was initiated into the tribe by collecting the tiny grains. The Foremost, however, played a cruel trick on Janet, saying the grains she collected were not the true source of the black metal. Janet then pummeled Foremost and learned that the black metal source no longer existed. She then annexed the desert, took Foremost’s spear fashioning two battle axes from it.

Chapter 13 – A week after Quentin returns from Brakebills South, the team moves out into rural Connecticut on a magic carpet. Stoppard reveals he self-taught - and is good with - clock magic, including things like weather, optic, probability, and field effects. Lionel and the bird explain the Couple is in an isolated country manor-like estate. Stoppard conceals the team with a war generated by a silver cylindrical device he himself has built. The team takes out a guard, and sneaks into the house, removing magical wards.

They freeze an old man while Quentin and Plum locate the brown suitcase and work to remove the bond with a gold coin. The female half of the Couple is killed. They are interrupted and beaten by another group of thieves, who then steal the suitcase and the carpet.

Chapter 14 – Quentin and the others flee the mansion on flying objects enchanted by Pushkar. They then chase down the thieves on the stolen carpet, causing them all to



crash. Betsy kills the surviving thieves, and then opens the suitcase. Inside are a book and a long knife. Lionel attempts to kill the team, but Betsy cuts him apart with the knife.

Quentin realizes that Betsy has double-crossed the bird and Lionel, and that the bird and Lionel were prepared to double-cross the entire team. Betsy reveals the knife is a weapon for killing gods, and that she herself is actually Asmodeus. As she leaves with the knife, she tells Quentin to tell Julia she's gone fox-hunting.

Chapter 15 – From Barion, Eliot and Janet set out across the Great Salt River, head through Darkling Woods, and then head into the Clock Barrens, a forest of clock trees. They decide to hunt the White Stag for three wishes. They then encounter the resident witch of the Barrens, former Watcherwoman, Jane Chatwin, now studying clockwork with the dwarves. Most dwarves live underground. Moreover, the clocks on all the trees no longer agree, telling different times. Jane does not want to be a part of another adventure, for she has lost too much in her life. Jane encourages Janet and Eliot to return to Earth to see the things Rupert left behind.

Analysis

As the novel continues, so too does the theme of magic as it relates to both the heist, and to saving Fillory. Quentin's determination to see the suitcase job through leads to his journey to Antarctica, where Brakebills South is located. It is in Brakebills South that Quentin converses one-on-one with Mayakovsky, now more as an equal of sorts rather than a student. Mayakovsky reveals two very important things, both to Quentin, and to the reader.

First, Mayakovsky explains that the amount of magic needed to break the bond of the suitcase will be immense. This sheer magical power required dwarfs anything Quentin himself is able to provide. Mayakovsky gives Quentin three gold coins embedded with immense amounts of magical power to use for the job, or for whatever Quentin may need them for. (The reader should note that the three gold coins are symbolic of three wishes or chances in life. These gold coins will be invaluable to Quentin through the plot.)

Second, Mayakovsky can see much of himself in Quentin, and so he can see straight through Quentin. Mayakovsky tells Quentin that he knows Quentin desires to be great, and he says this is something that will never happen. Here, Quentin is still harboring dreams of grandeur which will establish his greatness, but Mayakovsky's proclamation that Quentin will never be great cause both Quentin and the reader to truly consider what Mayakovsky is saying. Greatness is not only something achieved by actions on a grand scale, but may be achieved on a very personal level as well. This is true of Mayakovsky, who creates things and practices incredible magic because he can, not because he desires global admiration.

Between Antarctica and the rural Connecticut, Plum remains beside Quentin's side. In some ways, Quentin has taken Plum under his wing because he feels badly for Plum



being expelled from Brakebills, but also because Plum is filling a void in his life through friendship. Indeed, the trust and loyalty that grows from this friendship is instrumental in Quentin and Plum sticking together when things go south during the robbery.

There are two items in the suitcase. One is a sword-like knife capable of killing gods. This is immediately stolen by Asmodeus, who tells Quentin to tell Julia she's gone fox-hunting. The reader will remember this closes a particular gap from the previous novel ("The Magician King"). Asmodeus is one of two survivors (the other being Julia) of an attack perpetrated by a trickster fox-god, who raped Julia. Asmodeus is determined to hunt down and kill this fox-god.

This is notable in the present time for one very important reason. If the seemingly-simple knife in the suitcase is capable of such immense power, then what is contained in the notebook can only be imagined at this point by the reader. It is obviously no accident that the knife should be pared with the leather-bound book in a bag belonging to Rupert Chatwin.

In Fillory, the quest of Eliot, Janet, Josh, and Poppy to find a way to save the magical world in which they live continues unabated. The themes of free will and fate again returns to the fore, as none of the four rulers believe that Fillory is fated to an inevitable destruction. They will stop at nothing in the attempt to save Fillory, though they are all agreed that if things are unsalvageable, they will return to the real world.

The reader should note here Eliot's comment that if Fillory dies, he will also die. He is speaking figuratively rather than literally, for Fillory has become an integral part of who he is as a person. If Fillory dies, Eliot will still be alive – but he will not be the same person anymore. In essence, his old self will die. This underscores in the reader's mind just how essential Fillory is to Eliot, and how determined Eliot and the others are to save Fillory. This calls into question whether or not their determination will be enough to change the predicted fate of Fillory.

The reader should also note that the visit with Jane is not without benefit. Jane tells Eliot that he and the others should visit Earth to study the things that Rupert left behind. It is obviously not coincidental that Quentin and Plum are now in possession of some things that Rupert left behind.

Discussion Question 1

When things go wrong during the suitcase heist, why do Quentin and Plum stick together? Do you believe this is to their benefit or their detriment? Why?

Discussion Question 2

Why is Eliot, especially, so determined to save Fillory? Why does he believe that Fillory is not fated to an inevitable destruction? Do you believe he is justified in feeling this way? Why or why not?



Discussion Question 3

When Plum's prank goes awry, Quentin does not throw her under the bus, nor attempt to lie for himself. Why?

Vocabulary

espaliered, interminable, inanimate, unrepentant, emboldened, noncontiguous, tertiary, quaternary, niffin, sensorium, tympanum, auditory, melancholy, transpose, supernumeraries, tenuous, manic, armillary, omnipotent, infallible, retroactively, impotently, translucent, imperative, gratuitous, sophisticated, apparatus, arduous, anonymous, addled, terminal velocity, peculiarities, uncanny, quixotic, ormolu



Chapters 16 – 22

Summary

Chapter 16 – Following the departure of Betsy, the group breaks up. Quentin and Plum head off together, coming upon the town of Amenia, in Dutchess County, New York. They examine the leather-bound notebook in Rupert's suitcase. The title page reads, "The Door in the Page: My Life in Two Worlds, by Rupert Chatwin". The contents of the notebook describe Rupert's time spent at his Aunt Maude's house in the summer, and how he and his siblings discovered a clock with no innards. Martin and Fiona go in, and are taken to Fillory for a month, while only a few seconds have passed on Earth.

Chapter 17 – The contents of Rupert's notebook explain that Christopher Plover's "Fillory and Further" novels do not tell the whole story. Many adventures the Chatwins had were not told to Plover, and Plover himself did not include some of what was told to him – such as Rupert claiming the Sword of Six and breaking it upon the peak of Mount Merriweather. In the novels, the children only go to Fillory in the summer, but in real life, they go year round.

The children originally befriended Plover next door, telling him about Fillory. Plover took it all to be fantasy. But Fillory began to divide the children as well. For example, the children wondered about attending Church in the real world, and about having gods like Ember the Ram in Fillory. Yet, only Rupert wonders why he and his siblings, of all people on Earth, were chosen to visit Fillory.

Rupert believes that the trips to Fillory will end sooner or later, but Martin cannot handle this. Being the oldest sibling, and having lived without Fillory the longest, he couldn't bear the idea of having to leave it. Fillory becomes his alcohol. Martin also comes to be sexually abused by Plover. Rupert believes that Martin becomes the first Chatwin child who cannot cross over into Fillory, because Fillory ran on the innocence of children, and Martin was losing his.

Chapter 18 – Rupert's notebook relates a story never told to Plover. When a Fillory portal opens for Rupert and Fiona, they bring Martin along with them. While Fiona goes to Whitespire, Martin and Rupert set out for the underworld castle of Blackspire, beneath the Northern Marsh. Martin explains he is never again going back to England. He intends to sell his humanity, or whatever it is that enables his travel to Fillory, in exchange for enough power to overcome Ember and Umber, the ram gods. Rupert comes to believe that Fillory is the same as the real world – full of unfairness and cruelty – but just happens to be prettier. It is Umber who makes the deal with Martin. Rupert flees.

As time passes, each of the Chatwin children become too old to return to Fillory. Helen and Jane had one last adventure together, and came back with magical buttons allowing them to go to Fillory whenever they wanted. Only Helen considered them to be



a perversion of magic, and hid them. Trips to Fillory were earned, not freely taken. The books come out soon after Martin's disappearance.

Rupert's own account of things is recorded as being written during the Battle of Tobruk, Libya, between the British and the Germans, during World War II. Rupert longs to return to Fillory, and directly asks Ember and Umber to bring him back to Fillory with his wife and family when he turns the page. The journal ends there. It is clear that Rupert died in battle. Quentin tells Plum that Fillory is real.

Chapter 19 – Quentin and Plum hole up in the West Village in New York. The journal brings Plum and Quentin closer together, as Quentin also gives her his own story. Plum is deeply affected by the journal, for it forces her to accept Fillory as real and that she has ties to it. Both Plum and Quentin wonder what sacrifice Martin made.

Quentin also studies an old spell written down by Rupert. It requires many exotic items, and is very old, primordial, and complex. It is a spell to create a magical land, a little world. Plum and Quentin are both amazed and decide to pursue the spell. Plum thinks their magical world should resemble Hundred Acre Wood from Winnie the Pooh.

Chapter 20 – Plum goes out with League members, whom she learns all have important plans following Brakebills, from averting violence to environmentalism. Everyone thinks that Plum is romantically involved with Quentin, but she insists it is wholly professional. Plum later asks Quentin about Alice. Quentin explains Alice was far more mature than he was, and that he wasn't ready for her, for commitment. If Alice could ever be brought back, he explains, he doesn't know if he would start over again with her because he is a different person now. Quentin and Plum work the spell, and a door appears on the wall.

Chapter 21 – Quentin and Plum go through the door. The world on the other side seems to be an incomplete opposite land. For example, the books there have nothing on the pages, and all the windows are mirrors. Exploring the building, they discover Alice is also there, and they run back to Earth. They have no idea how Alice has gotten into their created world. Quentin is a mix of happy, sad, and terrified.

Chapter 22 – Quentin is still baffled by Alice's presence, and sets every ward and spell to protect himself and Plum that he can. Still, he can't help but wonder what she wants, so he decides to go back to the parallel world to find her. Quentin notices that all that happens is that Alice follows him. Plum worries Quentin is tempting fate.

Quentin tries to fight Alice to see what will happen, but Alice does not fight back, merely batting away his attacks. This goes on for days. Quentin then goes through the mirror of the bathroom of the parallel world, into a parallel-parallel world. Outside, the streets are empty except for their building. He decides to cross into the parallel world of the parallel-parallel world, and then returns to Earth, where he find Eliot in the kitchen.



Analysis

As the novel continues, the theme of friendship moves to the fore. As noted earlier, Plum's friendship with Quentin fulfills a particular part of the emptiness in his life – the hollowness inside him – but does not obviously fill the vacancy he has for love. The reader should understand here that what is missing in Quentin's life – real, true romantic love – is something that will dramatically impact Quentin's understanding of the world he creates in coming chapters.

It is through his friendship with Plum that Quentin and Plum work to create a new world from the spell found in Rupert's leather journal. It is a complex and powerful spell that requires both Quentin and Plum to work together on it, and Plum's determination to help Quentin cast the spell is clear evidence of her admiration for, and loyalty towards, Quentin. It is further not inconsequential that Quentin and Plum are working on creating a new world.

As the reader will remember, Jane told Eliot to seek out some of the things that Rupert left behind. Quentin and Plum now have in their possession Rupert's personal book, which recounts his life and his experiences in Fillory – and his desperation to return with his family. The instruments of Rupert's suitcase are likewise not without consequence: there is a spell for the creation of a magic land, and a knife for the killing of a god – life and death, creation and destruction.

Rupert's notebook itself also helps to bring to the fore the themes of magic, and of laws. Even the world of magic is structured by laws and a kind of order that may not always be rational or possible to understand, but that nevertheless still exists. This is certainly true of the case of Fillory, in which only non-native Fillorian human beings may rule Fillory. How those non-native human beings are brought to Fillory is also something that appears to be without true reason, though Rupert attempts to parse this question – as well as why he and his siblings, out of the millions of children on Earth, were chosen in the first place.

He imagines that innocence has something to do with being able to visit Fillory. But Fillory, in large part, proved to be the beginning of the end of the innocence of the children. As Rupert notes, Fillory divided him and his siblings. Fillory is not a land of magic and fantasy in a dreamlike way, but is no better than the real world, only prettier.

In many ways, Martin represents both Quentin and Eliot. Both Quentin and Eliot are desperate to remain in the magical world just as Martin was. All three fear never being able to return to Fillory. Quentin, Eliot, and Martin have all had difficult lives as teenagers. For Martin, the difficulties he endured were against his will, as he was abused sexually. Eliot has had to deal with bigotry because he is gay. Quentin's difficult teenage years were entirely of his own making through his selfishness. But here, the similarities between Martin, Quentin, and Eliot end.

Whereas Martin was determined to break the laws and systems of Fillory to remain behind and to eventually rule the land (including selling his very humanity), Quentin and



Eliot are committed to preserving Fillory as it is. Whereas Martin was also determined to do whatever it took to remain behind in Fillory, Quentin and Eliot themselves realize they have to work within the magical boundaries of Fillory and the magical world in order to save Fillory. It is the difference between creation and destruction. Rupert himself was desperate enough to return to Fillory that he was prepared to create an entirely new magical world on his own, though this never came to fruition.

Rupert also hoped against hope that his writing in the journal of his experiences would somehow return him to Fillory by turning the page. He is hoping, through writing in a book, that he will be able to return – escape – to Fillory (but with his wife and children). While this turns out not to be the case, the fact that the notebook contains not only a spell for creating a new land, but contains a sort of history of the Chatwin children in Fillory will also prove to be immensely important in the coming chapters.

The reader should also note that Quentin himself says that he is no longer the same person as he used to be when Alice died years before. The theme of coming of age again returns to the fore, as Quentin himself is able to see a difference between who he is, and who he was. That Quentin should risk his life in the attempt to contact Alice's niffin also underscores the fact that he is probably still in love with her, despite his own denials that he is.

Discussion Question 1

Rupert wonders why he and his siblings, out of all the children in the world, were selected to go to Fillory. Does he have a satisfactory answer to this? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Rupert relates in his journal that Fillory had a darker side to it than was illustrated in Plover's novels. How was this so? How did the time spent in Fillory affect each of the Chatwin children?

Discussion Question 3

What similarities are there between Martin, Quentin, Rupert, and Eliot? What differences are there between them? Why is Martin so determined to remain in Fillory, and eventually to subjugate it?

Vocabulary

substantial, affectation, diligent, glamorous, fractious, whimsical, soliloquy, colloquies, obstreperous, inauspicious, retribution, balked, indiscriminately, nondescript, sullied, listless, immobile, incarcerated, conspiratorially, affronted, fricatives, gait, stolid,



provocation, hubris, indefatigable, rhetoric, arcane, entropy, primordial, fraudulent, indisputably, ad hoc, delaminated, surreal



Chapters 23 – 28

Summary

Chapter 23 – Eliot and Quentin fill each other in on everything that has happened. Both realize the bird, and Rupert's belongings, are somehow connected to Fillory's fate. Eliot worries about Quentin's involvement with Alice's niffin. Plum tells Quentin that if he truly wants answers from Alice, he needs to speak to her like a person. Quentin later brings Alice through into the real world, and traps her in the demon cage tattooed on his back. With the help of Eliot and Plum, he casts an enchantment into the air using Mayakovsky's coins, into which he then puts Alice. Alice is then transformed back into a human being.

Chapter 24 – Janet, Josh, and Poppy receive a letter from Eliot explaining that Ember the Ram may not be dead as Jane had once said, and that they should search under the Northern Marsh. Janet, Josh, and Poppy wonder what they'll do to Ember if he is still alive. Castle Whitespire, which rotates, built on a magical clockwork foundation, has stopped spinning, underscoring that time is running out for Fillory. Janet, Josh, and Poppy set out at once for the Northern Marsh. Josh worries for Poppy due to her pregnancy as they travel into the swamp and beneath it.

There, they come upon Castle Blackspire, and meet with Ember, brother of Ember. They chase Ember back up to Fillory. Ember explains that Martin sacrificed his humanity to stay in Fillory, and Ember accepted because he felt badly for Martin, and because Ember erroneously believed having humanity would make him a king. He did not expect Martin to become evil, however. People likewise assumed Martin killed Ember because Ember has remained underground for so long. Ember likewise says there is nothing he can do to help avoid the end of the world. Janet, enraged, then beats Ember into unconsciousness. The world around them begins to rumble, signaling the beginning of the end.

Chapter 25 – Quentin is thrilled Alice is back, though he does not know if he is still in love with her or not. Alice is bitter and weary. She explains that transforming into a blue fiery demon spirit hurt like crazy. She tells Quentin he is too selfish to understand what she has been through. She goes on to say that being a niffin was a liberating experience, that she could think about herself for the first time in her life.

She explains she ended up in a Neitherlands-like place full of mirrors, where she eventually wound up in Quentin's created world. She laughs at this world, saying it is hollow because Quentin is hollow. She is disgusted with people, especially Quentin, because she says what they call feelings are emotional garbage. She tells Quentin she has given up everything for him, twice. The first time she gave up her life for his; the second time, he stole away her immortality as a niffin.



Chapter 26 – Fillory continues to rumble and shake. Regular animals and talking creatures pour toward Castle Whitespire to fight one another. Men and half-men (such as elves) fight one another. Every magical being is at war with others. Queen Janet watches it all unfold from the back of Winterwing, a hippogriff. She has no idea why this is all occurring, other than to imagine that it is from years of pent-up grievances. Cracks in the ground begin opening up. Janet meets Josh and Poppy at Whitespire. Julia then suddenly reappears, explaining that there is no way to save Fillory, and that she, Janet, Poppy, and Josh, must now all leave.

Chapter 27 – Quentin apologizes to Alice for everything, but Alice doesn't want to hear it. The blackbird responsible for the suitcase job suddenly shows up. Alice reveals the bird belongs to Ember. The bird reveals that Ember organized the job, but does not know why Ember wanted the suitcase. Quentin suddenly realizes that Ember's resignation to Fillory's fate makes sense. He wants Rupert's journal and spell to create a new land, to let Fillory die and start all over. Quentin appeals to Alice to come with them to find Ember, reminding her that she is human. They have sex. They then travel to the Neitherlands.

Chapter 28 - Eliot and Plum travel to the Neitherlands, where they appear inside a library with a fountain. Quentin and Alice follow not long after. Penny meets them. They have not seen him in a year. He reveals he now commands all travel to and from the Neitherlands. He explains that following the near-destruction of the magical world, time began in the Neitherlands. He leads them through the library, explaining that there are catacombs below filled with books people intended to write, but never did. He also reveals a shelf full of biographies of the lives of every person currently alive. The volumes disappear when the person dies.

Penny requests the return of the page Quentin took during his last visit, which Quentin then returns. Penny says that Quentin will be punished for the theft by working in the library for one year. Everyone is angered, saying that Fillory is dying. Penny brushes off the statement, and is then punched in the face by Alice to stop him from erasing Quentin's memory of the page. Penny then comes around and decides to help his friends find information to save Fillory.

He leads them to a shelf where the books are arranged like a map of Fillory. There is one empty slot – for Rupert's journal, which Plum puts in. Penny is stunned to see the journal, and admits the Order attempted to steal it from them. Quentin and the others notice there are still many more empty shelves around the book-map of Fillory, and these must be filled, too. Quentin realizes he knows how to fix everything.

Analysis

As the reader will remember from earlier, the fact that Jane has instructed Eliot to return to the real world to seek out Rupert's belongings, and the fact that Quentin is in possession of those belongings (with a descendent of Rupert, no less), Quentin and



Eliot both realize that the two are obviously connected, that Rupert's notebook and the suitcase have something to do with the fate of Fillory.

As is revealed later in this section, the bird that hired Quentin and Plum to steal the suitcase is actually working for Ember. Ember knows that Fillory is dying – and Ember, perhaps himself fed up with being constrained by the laws of the magical world of Fillory – wants to create a new world and start all over, leaving Fillory to its own fate. It now makes perfect sense to the reader why Ember contends that Fillory is finished, because Ember will not do anything to help it survive. He is intending to jump from a sinking ship like a rat. But to do this, he needs the notebook and the spell contained therein. He will thus create a world where he creates the laws, rather than being forced to maintain them.

In terms of new worlds, the theme of coming of age once again returns to the fore through Alice's return to a human state. She mocks Quentin, laughing at him for the emptiness of the new world he has created. The empty books in the new world are reflective of Quentin himself: empty. Quentin is without love in his life. To create anything is an act of love. Quentin did not create his new world out of love, but out of desire to see if he could create a new world. Without love in his life, without motivation, without inspiration, Quentin's world is hollow. It is the last area where he needs to come of age – to let love into his life.

Meanwhile, in Fillory, things are beginning to come apart at an alarming rate. The world is dying not just from a breakdown in the magical structure and laws that hold the place together, but as Fillory turns on itself in suicidal rage. The people and creatures of Fillory go to war with one another in a grotesque display of coming undone.

Magic is here again immensely important as a theme, as it continues to remain central to the plot. How Fillory runs appears to be on a clocklike method of mechanics. The reader should note that the stopping of the spinning of Castle Whitespire underscores the fact that things are indeed truly coming undone. What is running Fillory is falling apart, and everything set in motion and maintained by that clockwork system is failing.

The reader will also remember Rupert's journal. Rupert's account of his time in Fillory is important not only for its new world creation spell, but also for the fact that it contains a part of the history of Fillory. In the bookshelf-map of Fillory, Quentin and the others realize that not all the shelves are filled in with books. There is still room for more – and thus, there is still time for Fillory. The themes of fate and free will return here as Quentin and the others realize that free will truly does matter, and that Fillory is not fated to be doomed.

The rules and laws of magic, and of Fillory, are also likewise not inviolable, though they are held to be inviolable by gods like Ember. Ember's determination to let Martin remain behind in Fillory in exchange for the price of Martin's humanity comes about not by some loophole in the laws, but because Ember feels badly for everything Martin has been through. Additionally, the existence of magical buttons which allow travel to Fillory freely, rather than necessitating travel be earned, underscore the idea that not



everything is fated to be as it is. There is a way to work around, through, or in spite of what has been established as law, or has been predicted.

Friendship also remains incredibly important in this section of the novel, as Quentin and Alice resume something of a very tense friendship following sex. She reluctantly and bitterly agrees to accompany Quentin to the Neitherlands – as do Plum and Eliot. Quentin is still determined to save Fillory, even though he has been dethroned and banished. That Plum, Eliot, and even Alice agree to accompany him to the Neitherlands demonstrates the trust and loyalty between them, even when the cause – saving Fillory – appears to be a lost cause.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Alice travel to the Neitherlands with Quentin? Is it possible that Alice may still love Quentin? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Why is Quentin so determined to save Fillory, especially if he has been dethroned and banned from ever returning to live there?

Discussion Question 3

What appears to be Ember's root cause for wanting the suitcase and what it contains? Why?

Vocabulary

languorously, juked, funetary, kinetic, alarums, fraternal, effeminate, jostled, sublimely, stupendous, aesthetic, rapt, contemplation, voyeuristic, evasively, infrasonic, expendable, uncowed, abruptly, inundated, interdimensional, labyrinth, instituted, menagerie, intolerably, subdimension, impervious



Chapters 29 – 31

Summary

Chapter 29 – Alice doubts Quentin can fix everything. Josh, Poppy, and Janet then come through the Fillory fountain, revealing that Fillory is gone. Quentin cannot believe this, so using his magic button, he travels to Fillory. There, he discovers the world is not gone, but in ruins, with armies continuing to battle. Alice appears, and begins a search for Ember. They find Umber who brings them to Ember. Fillory was created with the blood of a dead god. To save Fillory, a god must sacrifice its blood. Quentin can tell Ember wants to sacrifice himself, but doesn't have the courage to do it.

Quentin then transforms himself into a dragon and battles Ember. Using one of Mayakovsky's coins, along with some silver nickels taken from the parallel world, Quentin forms the sword he wielded on his very first day at Brakebills. He uses it to kill Ember, and then Umber. Now having the power of a god, Quentin repairs and rebuilds Fillory – and then lets the power go. He will not remain a god. When he returns to his human state, Quentin comes face-to-face with Alice and Julia.

Chapter 30 – Julia praises Quentin for letting the power of a god go. As a reward for saving Fillory and relinquishing the godlike power, Julia brings Quentin to see the Far Side of the World. There, they come to the Drowned Garden, where emotions and feelings manifest themselves in plants, which grow and die accordingly. One such plant is the plant from the page of drawings Quentin took from the Neitherlands before. The plant is Quentin's own feeling of joy and wonder when he first read the Fillory books. Julia gives Quentin a seedpod from the plant to take with him. Back with their other friends, Quentin reveals his encounter with Asmodeus to Julia, which pleases her. Plum decides to visit her great-aunt, Jane. Julia will return to the Far Side, checking in on Fillory every once in a while, for Fillory has no need of a god at the moment.

Chapter 31 – Only Quentin and Alice return to Earth. They both work to create a new land. It is similar to Scotland, with three moons and apple-like trees. There are forests and mountains in the distance. Quentin's silver pocket watch begins ticking. He implants the clock into a tree. They come across the Cozy Horse, a creature from Fillory that has crossed over into the new world, who takes flight with them to explore the rest of the new world.

Analysis

The theme of friendship is clear in the final stages of the novel. Alice accompanies Quentin to Fillory to see things through to the bitter end. The fact that she remains beside him indicates as well that more than just friendship is involved in her decision to stay. She is still in love with him. And it is love that is borne of this rekindled friendship which will prove vital when Quentin attempts to create a second, new magical world.



As the novel ends, the theme of coming of age also comes to total fruition. Quentin's desire for greatness is also tempered, as Mayakovsky had more or less predicted. Quentin, imbued with the powers of a god, repairs and restores Fillory as much as it can be, and then relinquishes his powers the way that the Roman, Cincinnatus, surrendered his powers; and the way that George Washington relinquished his power after a second term as first president of the United States. Quentin's greatness comes not from heroic exploits, per se, but from the fact that he has become a truly good person.

The reader will remember that Quentin's previous attempt to create a magical world ended in failure, and that Alice mocked this world as being empty, and thus reflective of Quentin: empty. This is certainly true. While Quentin has indeed come of age, he still needs to let love in to his life. The return of Alice also means the return of love to his life. He is completed and fulfilled with her love and her return, and so the world that they next create together is full of life and beauty.

Alice's love for Quentin convinces her to leave Fillory when Quentin leaves Fillory, and to help him create a new world. The novel ends in the same way that it began – with magic. This is clear in the magical plant that grows in accord with Quentin's feelings and emotions – his wonder and awe at a place like Fillory. The reader should note that Quentin is allowed to bring along a seedpod from this plant, and the seedpod itself represents new growth and new beginnings – a renewed sense of wonder, hope, and awe, at both the new land Quentin and Alice have created, and at the love that has been rekindled between them.

Discussion Question 1

What is different about Quentin's second new world as opposed to his first? Why is this so?

Discussion Question 2

Why do you believe Alice decides to leave Fillory with Quentin, and to build a new world with him instead?

Discussion Question 3

Why do you believe Quentin willingly turns down unlimited godlike powers after he has completed fixing Fillory? If you were in Quentin's position, what would you have done? Why?

Vocabulary

deorbiting, surmounting, cohesion, fastidiously, phantasmal, mathematical, concept, subtle, deference, calibrate, copse, pristine, equine



Characters

Quentin Coldwater

Quentin Coldwater is the main character and principal protagonist of the novel “The Magician’s Land” by Lev Grossman. Quentin, who turns 30 in this novel, has come a long way since the first novel of the trilogy. Quentin is a confident, capable, and determined magician, though he deeply misses Alice, his former girlfriend. He is, however, emotionally empty, being without love in his life. Previously a king of Fillory who saved that magical land, Quentin was dethroned and banished from Fillory. As a result, Quentin is desperate to remain in the magical world.

Quentin goes on to take on work as a professor at Brakebills magical college in upstate New York, teaching Mending Magic. Quentin is happy with his new life as a professor, for it keeps him in the magical world, and allows him to focus on magic. However, when Plum’s prank goes wrong, and Quentin saves her, discovering that Alice’s niffin is actually a ghost purportedly haunting the school, Quentin refuses to throw Plum under the bus and save himself. Quentin is accused of not doing anything to destroy Alice’s niffin, and is thus fired as a professor. With Plum expelled, Quentin takes the young woman under his wing, and the two begin a friendship. They take on the task of stealing a magical suitcase belonging to Rupert Chatwin.

Using Rupert’s notebook, Quentin creates a hollow world in which Alice’s niffin is present. He is able to capture her niffin, and return her to human form, which angers her. Quentin later learns that Fillory is in peril, and together with Alice, Plum, Eliot, Josh, and Poppy, sets out to find a way to save Fillory. Quentin comes to learn that Ember is willing to let Fillory die so that Ember can create his own world using Rupert’s notebook. Instead, Quentin kills Ember and Umber, saves Fillory and returns to Earth with Alice in order to create a second new world. This world is full of life because Quentin’s own life is now full of love. He and Alice decide to live in this new world.

Plum

Plum Polson Purchas is a 21-year-old young woman who is formerly a student of Brakebill’s, and a good friend of Quentin’s. She is also a great-granddaughter of Rupert Chatwin, one of the Chatwin children who first went to Fillory. When Plum and her friends attempt to play a prank on a classmate, Plum accidentally sets off 11 alarms in the school, and nearly unleashes Alice’s niffin. Quentin saves her life. Plum is then confronted by an angry Dean Fogg, and she takes all the blame for what has happened, though in addition to her expulsion, Quentin is still fired. Plum becomes something of a sidekick to Quentin in the suitcase heist, and later helps him to create his first new world. She remains by his side through his quest to save Fillory, and later decides to remain in Fillory in order to see what that world is like, and to visit her great aunt, Jane.



Alice

Alice is the former girlfriend of Quentin, who died to save his life during the first novel of the trilogy. In saving his life, Alice was transformed into a niffin, a fiery-blue malevolent spirit. She spends the next several years of her life exploring reality, the edges of space and time, moves through Earth and through other worlds, and is thrilled to be immortal. She finds herself eventually at Brakebills, and later in Quentin's hollow world, where she is returned to human form. She is enraged by this, mocks Quentin as selfish, and mocks his world as being hollow. Nevertheless, she still loves him, and comes to stand by his side through his saving of Fillory. She is impressed by his refusal to remain a god, and helps him to create a second new world in which they both come to live.

Eliot

Eliot is one of the kings of the magical land of Fillory. He is in his thirties, is gay, and is loving life as a ruler and resident of Fillory. Who Eliot is as a person he attributes to the effect that Fillory has had on his life. When he learns that Fillory is fated to be destroyed, he refuses to accept that Fillory cannot be saved. He begins a quest to save the magical land which ultimately reunites him with Quentin, who in turn saves Fillory. With Fillory saved, Quentin returns to his kingly duties.

Janet

Janet is one of the queens of the magical land of Fillory. She is in her thirties, and rules as a fair and just queen. She is a fearless warrior, and is responsible for the conquering and annexation of the Wandering Desert into the Fillorian Empire. Like Eliot, she refuses to accept that Fillory is doomed to be destroyed, and so endeavors to save Fillory with Eliot and the others. When Fillory is saved, Janet resumes her post as queen.

Josh

Josh is one of the kings of the magical land of Fillory, and is the husband of Poppy. In his thirties, he and Poppy are expecting their first child. Josh, like the others, refuses to accept that Fillory is fated, and endeavors to find a way to save the magical land. When Fillory is saved, he returns as king.

Poppy

Poppy is one of the queens of the magical land of Fillory. She is in her late twenties, is the wife of Josh, and is expecting their first child. Though pregnant, Poppy both refuses to accept Fillory's fate and becomes a part of the quest to save the magical land. When the journey ends and Fillory is saved, Poppy returns to reign as queen.



Ember

Ember the Ram is one of the gods of Fillory. He is the brother of Umber. He is very responsible, very powerful, and very rules-oriented. When he prophesies that Fillory is fated to be destroyed for the umpteenth time, he has had enough. Rather than fight to save Fillory yet again, he decides to create an entirely new world using the spell in Rupert's notebook, serving as the source of the heist. He also knows that to save Fillory would require the sacrifice of his own life, and he refuses to let this happen, which underscores his desperation for the book. In the end, Quentin kills Ember in order to save Fillory.

Umber

Umber the Ram is one of the gods of Fillory. He is the brother of Ember. He is relaxed, doesn't always follow the rules, but is also very dutiful when things must be done. Feeling bad for Martin, Umber exchanges Martin's humanity for a chance to remain in Fillory. Umber later willingly and dutifully submits himself for sacrifice in order to save Fillory.

Rupert Chatwin

Rupert Chatwin is the great-grandfather of Plum, and is one of the Chatwin children who are brought to rule and visit Fillory numerous times. Rupert, like his family members, becomes disillusioned with Fillory, though he ultimately longs to return with his wife and son. Rupert, during the Siege of Tobruk in World War II, pens a journal in which he reveals the truth behind Fillory and the lives of both he and his siblings in the magical land. Rupert also includes a spell for creating a new world in his journal, and combines it with a knife intended to kill gods. Rupert is ultimately killed during the fighting at Tobruk.



Symbols and Symbolism

Rupert's suitcase

Rupert's brown leather Louis Vuitton suitcase is stamped with the date of 1937, and contains Rupert's journal and a sword-like knife intended for killing gods. The suitcase can be seen as symbolic of existence, for it contains both elements of creation and elements of destruction. The brown leather suitcase becomes the object of desire of Ember, who dispatches the talking bird to hire numerous individuals, including Quentin, to steal the suitcase.

Rupert's journal

Rupert's journal is a brown leather-bound notebook kept in Rupert's suitcase. The journal is Rupert's account of his childhood and the time spent in Fillory with his siblings. It also contains a spell for the creation of a new magical world. It is entitled, "The Door in the Page: My Life in Two Worlds". Rupert's journal is highly sought after by Ember, who wishes to use it to create a new world to his own liking. The journal is instead taken by Quentin and Plum, who use it to learn more about Rupert, and about how to create a new world. They learn that Rupert hoped the memoir-like journal would serve as a door back into Fillory.

Knife

A sword-like knife is included by Rupert in his suitcase. The knife is attenuated with magical powers which give it the ability to kill gods. The knife is thus seen as an instrument of destruction, and is taken by Asmodeus, who uses it to hunt down the trickster fox-god.

Silver sword

A silver sword is fashioned by Quentin out of silver nickels and one of Mayakovsky's gold coins. It is the same silver sword he wielded during his entrance examination into Brakebills. The sword is then used by Quentin in order to kill Ember and Umber, the ram gods, which in turn serves as the sacrifice which saves Fillory.

Magic buttons

Magic buttons are given to the Chatwin children in the 1910s. They are used to journey to and from Fillory at will, though this is considered an abomination by Helen, who hides the buttons with the belief that trips to Fillory can only be earned. One of the magic



buttons ultimately passes into the hands of Quentin and his friends, who use it to gain access to the Neitherlands, from where Quentin and Alice gain access to Fillory.

Three gold coins

Three gold coins are embedded with immense magical power by Mayakovsky, and are given to Quentin for use as needed. These three gold coins can be seen as symbolic of wishes and chances. The coins are used, alternatively, for in pursuit of the suitcase, to create a sword to kill Ember and Umber, and to create a new world. In the last example, the final gold coin serves mainly as a chance – a second chance – at a new world, a better world, and a better life for both Quentin and Alice.

Fillory bookcase

A bookcase full of blue and green books which make up a map of Fillory is found in the library in the Neitherlands that is overseen by Penny. The books include the story and life of the magical land of Fillory. The bookshelf has space not only for Rupert's journal, but for several more shelves worth of stories. This makes Quentin and the others realize that Fillory is indeed not fated to be destroyed, and has immense time left in existence to fill up the other shelves if the land is magically saved.

Demon cage tattoo

An enchanted demon cage tattoo is located on Quentin's back. It originally housed a demon which gave its life to save Quentin in the first novel – a parting gift from Brakebills. Quentin uses the cage to trap Alice, and to help restore her to her human form.

Magical blood

Magical blood of the highest order comes from gods. It is used in the creation of Fillory, and must be spilled in order to save Fillory. Magical blood may be spilled either voluntarily, or involuntarily. Quentin comes to kill Ember and Umber in order to spill their blood and save Fillory. While Umber willingly submits to his fate, Ember decides to fight for his life.

Magical page

A magical page is taken from the Neitherlands during Quentin's last visit, and the page spends much time early in the novel attempting to return to the magical world, much like Quentin. The magical page appears to be written in High German, and contains obscure diagrams, references, and drawings. One such illustration is of a magical plant that embodies human emotions. This plant is later shown to Quentin in the Drowning



Garden. Quentin's plant is fueled on hope, awe, and wonder – all things which Quentin felt when he first read about Fillory. Quentin is allowed to bring along a seedpod from this plant, and the seedpod itself represents new growth and new beginnings – a renewed sense of wonder, hope, and awe, at both the new land Quentin and Alice have created, and at the love that has been rekindled between them.



Settings

Fillory

Fillory is a magical land in a parallel world to Earth that is ruled over by Eliot, Janet, Josh, and Poppy. Fillory is guided by a set of magical laws and sustained by clockwork-like mechanisms and is ruled over by the ram gods, Ember and Umber. It is originally created by the spilling of magical blood from a god. It is full of human beings, creatures, animals, and other magical beings and agents. Fillory is a beautiful world, though it can be just as deadly and harmful as Earth.

Fillory is first visited by the Chatwin children, and these visits are recounted by Rupert Chatwin in his journal. Fillory is later ruled over and saved by Quentin, though he is ultimately banished from the world. Ember prophesies Fillory's destruction, and Eliot, Janet, Quentin, Plum, and their friends commit themselves to saving Fillory as it falls apart. In the end, Quentin manages to save Fillory by the shedding of gods' blood with the deaths of Ember and Umber. While everyone else remains behind in Fillory, Quentin and Alice return to Earth to make their own new world.

Brakebills

Brakebills is a preparatory college for magic in upstate New York along the Hudson River. It is overseen by Dean Fogg, and is where Plum attends classes in her senior year. It is also where Quentin comes to teach Mending Magic as a professor following his banishment from Fillory. However, a prank perpetrated by Plum that goes wrong leads to her expulsion and Quentin's firing.

West Village

West Village is a neighborhood in New York City. It is in West Village that Quentin and Plum come to hole up when the suitcase heist goes wrong. It is in the West Village that Quentin and Plum also come to read Rupert's journal, and cast a spell that leads to the creation of a new magical world. It is later in West Village that Quentin comes to return Alice to a human state, and where Eliot comes to visit to reveal Fillory's dire circumstances. It is also in the West Village that the bird confesses the truth of the plot behind the suitcase to Quentin and the others.

Quentin's half-world

Quentin's Half-World is the first world that Quentin creates using the spell found in Rupert's notebook. This half-world is a pale reflection of the world that currently exists – a half-formed version of the West Village. Alice points out that Quentin's hollow world is a reflection of Quentin's hollow emotional self. This land's emptiness is clearly



symbolized by the empty books found in the magical land. Creation is an act of love. Without love in his life, Quentin's first attempt at creating a world is incomplete, just as Quentin is incomplete without love in his life.

The new world

The new world is the second world that Quentin creates, this time with Alice's help and love. The new world is similar to Scotland, has three moons and apple-like trees. There are forests and mountains in the distance. Quentin's silver pocket watch begins ticking here, signaling the beginning of a new time. He implants the clock into a tree and discover that the Cozy Horse, a creature from Fillory that has crossed over into the new world, is also present.



Themes and Motifs

Magic

Magic is an important theme in the novel “The Magician’s Land” by Lev Grossman. Magic, specifically, entails the use of words, intonations, or gestures to create supernatural responses, incidents, and actions. Magic generally and historically is a system and structural force in the world that is learned about by Quentin and the others through the course of the novel.

As in the previous novels in the trilogy, Quentin and the others learn that, with magic, not everything makes sense. Some things can be approximated, but never specifically defined, such as how the spilling of magical god blood can save Fillory. The true root of the magical cause of Fillory’s demise can only be guessed at by the reader, but is not specifically stated. It is possible that the introduction of time and aging into the Neitherlands has affected Fillory inversely by causing Fillory’s clock-like existence to stop – as if Fillory’s clock-like structure was what was suspending time itself by consistently regenerating time through rotations.

Plum herself makes the observation that magic, while certainly imperfect, is made beautiful by its imperfections. Between its vagaries and beauties, magic become something almost akin to faith or spirituality. Magic, with its imperfections, can also be seen as a symbol for the human condition – imperfect, but beautiful. Magic is something that neither Quentin, nor Plum, could ever imagine being without. This is why Quentin originally returns to Brakebills, and why he and Plum later take on the illegal odd magic job in order to remain in the periphery of the magical world.

The kind of magic that Quentin and Plum uncover in Rupert’s journal is of the most powerful and primordial kind. It is a kind of magic intended to create new lands and new worlds and requires some of the most immense power imaginable – the kind that Mayakovsky is able to embed in the gold coins he gives to Quentin. Quentin is unable to create a truly magical land, however, but he cannot figure out why. Alice later explains that this is because Quentin is hollow inside. The magical land’s emptiness is reflected in the empty books found in the magical land.

Creation is an act of love, not of science, whether one uses magic or not. Quentin has been hollow since Alice’s transformation in the first book of the trilogy, and only with Alice back in his life at the end of the novel can a real magical land be created. With Alice, Quentin again has love in his life, something substantial. Thus, the new magical land he and Alice create also has substance to it.

Coming of Age

Coming of age is an important theme in the novel “The Magician’s Land” by Lev Grossman. Coming of age involves the personal, spiritual, moral, or emotional growth



and maturation of an individual often based on real world experiences. While coming of age generally occurs among the young, teenagers, and young adults, coming of age can also occur among individuals at any age. This is certainly the case with Quentin.

The Magician Trilogy spans 13 years in Earth's time, beginning when Quentin is 17 years old, and concluding when Quentin is 30. Through the first novel, "The Magician", Quentin is selfish and self-indulgent, something clearly reflected upon, and remembered by Alice in "The Magician's Land". Through the second novel, "The Magician King", Quentin does mature more, saving Fillory in the process, something Quentin reflects on in "The Magician's Land".

By the events of "The Magician's Land", Quentin has at long last become a moral, ethically-driven character. His concern for Plum following her expulsion and his firing is evidence of how he no longer thinks only about himself. His desire to save Alice from her state as a niffin is evidence of his concern for others beyond himself, and for his sorrow at the sacrifice Alice made to save his life in the first novel of the trilogy.

However, despite the growth that Quentin has had in terms of character, he is still a hollow person inside, for he lives without love. His heart, mind, and values are all in the right place, but he has no real love in his life. Quentin, however, does not dwell upon this. Indeed, he doesn't even realize this until Alice returns to the world as a human being.

Quentin's hollowness is reflected and manifested in the hollowness of the first magical land he creates using the spell left behind by Rupert. It is Alice who points out that Quentin's hollow world is hollow like he is. Quentin, to his credit, is not angry or unkind toward Alice, especially in her own rage. He is comforting and responsive to her needs and misery – things which come about not only due to his maturation, but his underlying love for her.

Quentin's maturity is also demonstrated later on by his unwillingness to remain a god, turning down virtually unlimited power the way that Cincinnatus and George Washington once did. Quentin, who once sought relevance and greatness through power, has learned that all he needs in life is Alice's love, and to be with her. It is substantial. So too is the world that he and Alice create out of love in the end.

Fate and Free Will

Fate and free will form an important theme in the novel "The Magician's Land" by Lev Grossman. Fate involves the predicted and/or predetermined outcome of a person's life, world situations, or world events, to which there is no alternative and nothing which can be done to change how things will turn out. In the novel, fate directs the process of the novel. Free will is the ability of individuals to determine their own futures and outcomes. Everything is left up to choices and decisions, not an inescapable conclusion.

Early in the novel, Ember the Ram god predicts that Fillory is fated to end – that it will die, and cease to exist. This is not the first time in the trilogy that Ember (or others) have



prophesied that Fillory is fated to be destroyed. However, this is the first time that Ember reiterates, time and time again, that nothing can be done to save Fillory. Nothing, in other words, can be done to avoid the future. The fate of Fillory is the fate of Fillory.

Quentin, Janet, Julia, Poppy, Alice, Plum, and Josh, however, do not accept this. As they know from their past, nothing is ever fated to be the way it is prophesied. As such, they all commit to a search for finding a way to save Fillory. They believe they have free will, and that their individual actions, choices, and decisions, will ultimately influence the course of events – and change them for the better.

Quentin, likewise, is not keen to accept the fact that Alice's fate as a niffin is sealed, either. He is successfully able to return her to human form by way of powerful magic, a demonstration of individual human free will succeeding against what is believed to be an unescapable stasis in existence – being a niffin. This success underscores Quentin's faith in the idea that free will, and not fate, determines the future.

As it turns out, Fillory is indeed not fated to destruction. Only Ember, afraid for his own life, has said that Fillory is fated for destruction. Ember knows that the magical blood of gods is required to save Fillory, but does not wish to sacrifice himself. He has been looking for the coward's way out – creating a new land into which he can escape. Quentin kills Ember and UMBER, spilling the magical blood that comes to save the land of Fillory. It is an act of free will that saves Fillory.

Laws

Laws form an important theme in the novel "The Magician's Land" by Lev Grossman. Laws come in two forms in the novel. They come as a system of moral and legal guidelines for just behavior, and magical guidelines for appropriate magical behavior and actions within the magical world (though not all magical laws are clearly defined or make total sense). Both forms of law heavily influence the plot in the novel.

In Fillory, the legal system maintains that those who rule Fillory must be people from Earth. No native Fillorian is allowed to rule Fillory. In Fillory, those who rule are appointed Kings and Queens, and have dominion over all of Fillory, including its laws. Those appointed Kings and Queens are themselves in a ruling hierarchy, with High Kings and regular kings. Eliot, for example, is the High King as a matter of seniority, while Josh is a regular king.

At Brakebills magical college in New York, a legal system of governance also guides staff and student conduct and behavior. The failed magical prank conducted by Plum results in the triggering of eleven alarms, and her expulsion. Quentin's covering Plum, and his refusal to attempt to kill Alice's niffin – an act which violates the staff code of conduct in which the students are to be protected at all costs – results in Quentin's firing. Without Quentin being fired and Plum being expelled, they never would have come into possession of Rupert's journal.



Magical laws also exist unbounded in the novel. Magical lands may be created, for example, by the spilling of magical blood. Magical lands may also be saved by the spilling of magical blood. The spilling of magical blood may come about by way of sacrifice that is voluntary or involuntary. The spilling of magical blood first created Fillory, and the killing of Ember and Umber saves Fillory. Ember's sacrifice is involuntary; Umber's sacrifice is willing.

In the novel, powerful magicians may exercise powerful magic directly, while less-developed magicians may only use powerful magic through magical objects – such as Mayakovsky's gold coins. Another form of such powerful magic comes through use of the magical buttons to journey to Fillory.

Spells also form magical laws, as they dictate the extent and degree to which magic is used and practiced, and what its effects are. Such a magical spell is the spell left behind by Rupert, which allows for the creation of a new world. These spells are themselves beholden to magical laws – how the spells must be said, and what magical items must be used in their saying. For example, the magical spell to create worlds is complex, needing exotic items and precise timing to complete.

Friendship

Friendship is an important theme in the novel “The Magician’s Land” by Lev Grossman. Friendship is absolutely essential and crucial to the plot of “The Magician’s Land”, especially when it comes to Quentin and Plum, and later, Quentin and Alice. Both sets of friendships are critical in terms of saving Fillory.

When the novel begins, though Quentin is a matured person, he is still very lonely and hollow inside. His protection of Plum during the failed magical prank leads to his firing, and the expulsion of Plum. Though Quentin takes Plum under his wing in a familial way, he also comes to truly befriend her over the course of their time after Brakebills. They become a working team based on their friendship, and their trust for one another. This is especially important when the suitcase heist fails, and the two must hole up together in New York.

Indeed, on Earth, Plum comes to be the only real friend that Quentin has. She helps to care for him, and he helps to care for her in turn. They take emotional comfort in one another, offering up their pasts to each other, and finding acceptance with one another. This furthers the level of trust between them, and loyalty toward each other, spurring Plum on to assist Quentin in his creation of a new land.

While Alice and Quentin were in a relationship in the first novel in the trilogy, they resume knowing one another in this novel as almost enemies. Indeed, Alice has even entertained thoughts of killing Quentin. When they parted, she had given her life in the defense of her friends in order to kill Martin Chatwin. While Alice denies that she gave her life in love for Quentin, it is clear to the reader that such a sacrifice can only truly



come from an act of love. Alice's love for Quentin overpowers her hatred of him at the very end.

In the present time, Alice and Quentin slowly reconnect as friends, and then simply fall back into each other once they have sex. They become close quickly, and Alice accompanies Quentin to the Neitherlands. There, she gladly punches Penny in the face in order to prevent him from administering a punishment to Quentin for theft. She continues to watch out for him as they journey into Fillory, and once Fillory is saved, leaves with him. This is done both out of love, and friendship. Together, as both friends and lovers in a resumed relationship, Quentin and Alice create a new land of their own. The new land is full of promise and possibility, just as the friendship and love between Quentin and Alice is also full of promise and possibility.

Styles

Point of View

Lev Grossman tells his novel “The Magician’s Land” from the third-person limited-omniscient point of view. This is done for two reasons. First, the third-person narrative mode allows Grossman to pursue two seemingly separate plots that ultimately combine. There is the plot revolving around Quentin and Plum, their quest to find Rupert’s suitcase, and to create a new world; and there is the plot revolving around the efforts of Eliot, Janet, Josh, and Poppy to save the magical kingdom of Fillory from destruction. The limited-omniscient aspect denies readers the knowledge of everything always going on, and so adds a sense of suspense to the plot, but also another level of believability. In the real world, no person truly knows everything going on at every moment everywhere in the world – and neither do the characters in the novel.

Language and Meaning

Lev Grossman tells his novel “The Magician’s Land” in language that is simple, straightforward, and contemporary. This is done for at least several reasons. First, the target audience of the novel consists of young adults, new adults, and adults, and so the language employed reflects their general level of education. Contemporary lingo and phrases (for example, “WTF”) are interspersed throughout in order to give the characters a greater relatability to contemporary readers. Secondly, the characters in the novel themselves are new adults, and adults –and so the language they employ is reflective of both their age, and their level of education (they attended magical college rather than an ordinary college).

Structure

Lev Grossman divides his novel “The Magician’s Land” into 31 consecutive, linear, numbered chapters. The simple and straightforward structure of the novel allows the reader to remain focused on the plot, especially where the plot weaves back and forth between Quentin, and Eliot and Janet. The chapters themselves deal with specific sequences of action, or events. For example, Chapter 23 involves Quentin’s transformation of Alice from a niffin back into a human being. Other chapters, however, are devoted entirely to the past – such as Chapter 2, which deals with Quentin’s return to Brakebills as a professor. Other chapters, such as Chapter 18, comprise entries from Rupert’s journal, plunging the reader into the far-distant past.



Quotes

It was a bookstore, and he felt at home in bookstores, and he hadn't had that feeling much lately.

-- Narrator (Chapter 1 paragraph 4)

Importance: When the novel begins, Quentin, dethroned and banished from Fillory, lives in the real world. As with most people, for Quentin, books can offer a way of escape. This has certainly been the case for Quentin, especially with the "Fillory and Further" novels, so it is clear why he loves bookstores. This quote also foreshadows the importance that books of various kinds will have in the novel.

Quentin watched it thrash along in the air, feeling a little sorry for it. He wondered where it was trying to get to. Back to the Neithalands, probably. Back home.

-- Narrator (Chapter 4 paragraph 3)

Importance: Quentin, having stolen a page from a book from the Neithalands in his last adventure to save Fillory in the previous novel, studies the page. It is trying to escape him to get back to the magical realm beyond Earth. Quentin, too, feels the same way: he is struggling to get away from the real world, and back into the world of magic.

A war is beginning, Eliot, a war we cannot win. The last war.

-- Ember the Ram (Chapter 5 paragraph 143)

Importance: Here, Ember prophesies that Fillory will meet its doom. This becomes the core focus of the plot for Quentin, Janet, Poppy, Josh, and later, Quentin and Plum – to save Fillory. This quote also calls into question the dual theme of fate and free will: is Fillory indeed fated to be doomed, or can it still be saved by human free will and choices?

Who I am is who I am in Fillory, and if Fillory dies, then I'll die with it.

-- Eliot (Chapter 11 paragraph 37)

Importance: While Eliot does not speak literally here, he does speak figuratively. If Fillory dies, a part of him will die with it – and thus, he will never be the same again. In essence, his old self will die with Fillory. This demonstrates just how deeply Fillory is a part of Eliot's existence, and underscores how desperate he is to save the magical world.

Magic was decidedly imperfect. But the really funny thing, she thought, was that if it were perfect, it wouldn't be so beautiful.

-- Narrator (Chapter 20 paragraph 67)

Importance: Here, the narrator describes Plum's thoughts about magic. Magic, as the reader learns, is a craft, and is neither an art, nor a science. It is imperfect, but beauty can be found in its imperfection through perfecting. The same is evident of human



beings, as magic is taken to be seen as a symbol for people. People are imperfect – like Quentin and Plum – but this is what makes them beautiful.

Let's be careful, Plum, this feels a little off.
-- Quentin (Chapter 21 paragraph 29)

Importance: Quentin, having created his own magical world, cautions Plum as they enter. While Quentin at first fears danger in the new world, the reader later comes to learn what is really off when Alice explains it. Quentin's world is off because it is hollow, just as Quentin is himself hollow. Creation is an act of love. To be whole, Quentin needs love in his life. Without love, he cannot create a full world.

But what did Alice want? To haunt him? Laugh at him? Hunt and kill him?
-- Narrator (Chapter 22 paragraph 5)

Importance: Discovering Alice's niffin in the newly created magical world, Quentin cannot understand what she is doing there. As with all magic, not everything makes total or rational sense, no matter how hard Quentin, other characters, or the reader tries to figure it out. Nevertheless, it is known that Alice has a purpose, and her reintroduction to the story will be incredibly important.

The world is falling apart. We have to do something, and this is the only lead we've got.
-- Janet (Chapter 24 paragraph 37)

Importance: As Fillory begins breaking down, Janet and the others know they must do everything they can now as quickly as possible to save the world from being destroyed. They decide to seek out Umber, brother god of Ember the ram, who was believed killed by Martin Chatwin years ago. This is immensely important because the rooting out of Umber will directly affect the outcome of the plot as Umber becomes the second part of a sacrifice needed to save Fillory.

He felt like the rest of his life could begin now. He didn't know if he was still in love with Alice, but he knew that being in the same room with her made him feel real and whole and alive in a way that he'd forgotten he could.
-- Narrator (Chapter 25 paragraph 2)

Importance: Quentin is thrilled beyond belief when he is able to return Alice to human form. It is a bittersweet moment, for he is glad to have her back, alive, but also worried because they did not part on the best terms. However, her presence also completes Quentin, making him feel whole, and making him feel love again – the kind of love needed to create a new world.

He definitely never though he'd see it like this... Fillory, his beautiful Fillory, was ruined and dying.
-- Narrator (Chapter 29 paragraph 38)

Importance: Quentin is stunned to see what has become of Fillory when he returns to



that magical world. All of the people and creatures of the land are at war with one another, the sun and stars are falling from the sky, the ground is breaking up, and cities and towns are in ruins. Quentin realizes just how serious the situation is, and how desperate times call for very desperate measures.

For a dying land to be reborn, its god must die for it.
-- Narrator (Chapter 29 paragraph 73)

Importance: Fillory was created by the spilling of magical blood. Fillory can be saved by the spilling of magical blood, voluntarily or involuntarily. Quentin knows that Ember must die, and so he transforms into a dragon to battle Ember and kill him. Umber appears a short time later, and voluntarily submits himself for killing.

Fillory is who I used to be, but I'm somebody different now.
-- Quentin (Chapter 31 paragraph 9)

Importance: After Fillory is saved, only Quentin and Alice return to the real world. They are back together now, and are looking forward to creating a new land of their own. Fillory is Quentin's mark of coming of age: in Fillory, he lost his selfishness and narcissism, and began to do things for other people. He even gave up his throne and life in Fillory in order to save it. He will never go back to live in Fillory, for Fillory is the past, just as who he used to be is also in the past. His new self calls for a new land.