

Pandemonium Study Guide

Pandemonium by Lauren Oliver

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Plot Summary

Pandemonium by Lauren Oliver is a novel about a futuristic society that attempts to cure the people of love by forcing people to endure a medical procedure that prevents them from feeling. In this world, cleanliness is Godliness and everyone holds the same beliefs, feels the same non-feeling, and roles are performed dutifully with little feeling. One's duty to country comes above one's loyalty to family. Spouses are matched by the government and children are born out of a contract with the government. This creates a clean and sterile world, with no people who aren't "perfect."

The novel begins with Lena who has just entered a new high school. The first chapter is elusive but the reader knows that Lena is different and that she possesses a knowledge that the other high school students don't have. From this point the novel begins alternating between the Now thread and the Then thread.

In the Now: Lena has begun attending a new high school. Throughout these sections there are brief flashbacks of what Lena's life used to be like. She used to believe what all of the others believed, that the DFA was an organization that protected people and that everyone must have the procedure for society to go on. In the Now, Lena is working covertly with Raven and Tack, two of her friends in the resistance. She goes to a rally where Julian Fineman, the DFA organizer's son, is present. He is kidnapped and it is her job to stay with him no matter what.

She finds Julian in an underground subway tunnel that has long been abandoned. They are captured by what they think are Scavengers — a rogue group that helps neither the DFA nor the resistance — but in reality they have been captured by the DFA. Julian and Lena escape and Lena is brought back to Tack and Raven, but Julian is scheduled to be executed as a punishment for falling in love with Lena.

In the Then thread: Lena escapes from her neighborhood with a boy named Alex. Alex is killed as they cross the border and Lena wakes up in the Wilds being taken care of by Invalids. Raven, Blu, and Lu nurse her back to health. She lives with them for some time on the Homestead. Life on the Homestead is difficult and rudimentary. Food is scarce and the people are constantly on the lookout for attacks. As the group is preparing to move south for the winter months, they are attacked. They flee, regroup and head south with little food or supplies. Again, they are attacked at a southern homestead and Lena, Raven and Tack assume fake procedure marks and enter the regular world as part of the resistance.

It is at this point in the novel where the Now and Then threads converge in Chapter 13.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Chapter 1, Now

Lena is a new student in high school. She doesn't know any of the other students or any of the teachers. She's worried that they will all know that she's not cured—she's worried that they'll think she has a disease and she'll be caught. During class she flashes back to Alex—a boyfriend to whom she alludes something bad has happened.

Chapter 1, Then

Lena escapes into the Wilds and is rescued by Raven. She notices that Raven has the mark of the cured, but many people at the homestead do not and male and females co-mingle and co-habitate together.

When Lena is initially rescued she is very thin and very ill. It takes her many days until she is strong enough to walk around on her own. Sarah, another girl on the homestead, gives Lena a tour once she is able to walk again. Lena discovers that their homestead is in the basement of an old church. When they walk up the stairs to the outer world she is surprised to see trees and grass and a beautiful open meadow.

Amidst the beauty she also sees the destruction of the old world with heaps of metal that were once old buildings and homes. During the tour she is reminded of her escape with Alex, who did not make it. All she sees is melted and disfigured metal everywhere.

Chapter 1 Analysis

In Chapter 1 Now, Lena is briefly in the present moment. She is at a new school and she has fears of being found out, but the reasons for this are never explicitly explained. She alludes to Alex's death and the traumatic events surrounding it, but the reader does not know exactly what happened or why.

The Then section picks the story up where her flashback to the present left off. After Alex is killed, she runs on her own and then loses consciousness. She is rescued by invalids at a nearby homestead. Initially, she's not sure that she can trust these people since, besides Alex, she has never encountered an invalid. She is surprised at how civil and kind they are. This surprise demonstrates that even Lena who doubts can still be affected by the brainwashing of the government. She is one who doubts but the fear has still been implanted and has followed her to the homestead.



Chapter Two

Chapter Two Summary

Chapter Two, Now

Lena attends a DFA (Deliria-Free America) meeting for the youth. She leaves forgetting her glove. She goes back to look for it knowing that she won't be able to get another. When she goes back she sees a projector showing photos of mountains and the ocean and she thinks about the life that she used to live, a life that has now been forgotten and buried, like her true identity. She notices Julian Fineman, the DFA director's son, watching her. She's startled by and a little nervous from this. He asks her if she's seen the mountains and she tells him only from before.

She leaves the conference center and goes back to Brooklyn where she has a cold, small apartment stocked with fake IDs.

Chapter Two, Then

Sara takes Lena on a walk on the homestead. Lena walks around dazed mourning the simplicity of her old world and the loss of Alex. She notices that Raven has the mark of the procedure, but she doesn't know if it is real. Raven acts distant and stern, and Lena thinks that it could be a real procedural mark, or something may have gone wrong.

Though she's been in the Wilds a week at this point she still misses Alex, her old life, and her friend Hana.

Chapter Two Analysis

In Chapter Two, Now, readers don't know yet why Lena is attending the DFA meeting or why she is suspicious of Julian Fineman. Based on her reflections of her past, her mourning her past identity and the simplicity of her life, readers can assume that she's not at the DFA meetings to support the cause.

In Chapter Two, Then, Lena, like in the Now section, mourns her past. She is surprised by the complexity of the homestead, at how closely men and women live and how no one is worried about being infected with love. Though the natural world of the homestead is beautiful, Lena learns that it is a harsh way to live with hunger and exposure to the elements. She wonders if she has done the right thing in leaving her home; with Alex gone and dead, she wonders if the freedom she sought is really worth it.



Chapter Three

Chapter Three Summary

Chapter Three, Now

Lena is back at the high school. She is sitting in class daydreaming and pondering what the point is of the procedure and if Julian Fineman will go through with it though it may kill him.

The teacher stops Lena on her way out of school and tells her that she is worried about her because she is not fitting in. Lena worries that the teacher might figure something out about her and Lena says that the girls seem juvenile, not having had their procedures yet. The teacher nods in understanding and allows Lena to go on her way.

Chapter Three, Then

The homestead is preparing to head south for the winter. Raven is choosing scouts to walk south and find camps, bury food and return with directions. Lena has regained her strength and wants to be a scout. Raven will not allow it. Lena takes on extra duties such as hauling water to try and prove to Raven that she is now strong enough to be a scout.

Chapter Three Analysis

In Chapter Three, Now, Lena becomes paranoid that the teacher may suspect that she is different. In a panic she says that the other girls are just too young for her to befriend. When she says this the teacher notices her procedural mark and nods in understanding. This demonstrates how alike the teacher expects all of the students to be. Lena stands out to her for some reason, thought she can't figure out why.

In Chapter Three, Then, Lena is trying to prove herself on the homestead. She runs everyday and she's taking on more and more of the workload around the homestead. Raven will not allow her to be a scout, Lena does not understand why not and instead continues taking on extra work.



Chapter Four

Chapter Four Summary

Chapter Four, Now

Tack, Raven and Lena go to the big DFA demonstration in New York City. The demonstration is about whether early procedures should be done. The DFA says yes, but not all are convinced. Tack and Raven have given Lena specific instructions to not lose sight of Julian Fineman and to follow him no matter what. Lena is unsure of why she needs to do this. Right before they separate at the demonstration Tack insists that she take an umbrella and put it in her backpack.

At the demonstration, a group called the Scavengers attacks everyone and a pair of men kidnap and lead Julian Fineman away. Lena, as instructed, follows them into underground subway tunnels that have long gone unused. Fineman is being led by body guards who are quickly murdered by the Scavengers.

Chapter Four, Then

As the homestead prepares to depart for the southern camps, Miyako falls ill and dies. Raven berates herself for making Miyako do a large portion of the preparatory work. The ground is hard and frozen and they cannot give Miyako a proper burial. Instead, they burn her.

Lena walks through the woods to check and see if there are any messages in the color of the birds nests when she sees globs of red paint everywhere. She knows that when the birds are finding food and sticks for their nests that are red, there are people from the other side who are trying to tell them to run.

Lena runs back to the homestead but before she reaches them the first bomb falls.

Chapter Four Analysis

In Now, Lena follows Tack's and Raven's instructions obediently without questioning her task of following Julian Fineman or the need for an umbrella on a sunny day. She knows that their work is covert and that they are doing work on behalf of the resistance, but she does not know any more details than that. The fact that she is so willing to obey them means that she has come to fully trust them. For a while she had been weary of both Tack and Raven who both appear cold, stern and unloving — ironically exactly what the DFA is trying to produce in people.

In Then, the symbol of red paint is used as a warning to the homesteaders, but the warning comes too late and they are bombed before they have a chance to flee. While Lena is running, she has flashbacks of what it was like being bombed during her first

escape and when Alex was killed. Though she once again is going through tremendous trauma, she never gives up the will or fight to live.



Chapter Five

Chapter Five Summary

Chapter Five, Now

Lena wakes in a cell with Julian Fineman. Based on the lack of airflow and the markings of old, Lena knows that they are locked underground somewhere, probably in a old subway chamber. Lena lies and tells him that she is a high school student. She carries the mark of being cured and does not divulge that it is a fake mark. Even though she has lied, he still remains wary of her and she of him.

Chapter Five, Then

The homestead is being bombed. They run along the river for escape, so that if the fires surround them they can jump into the partially-frozen river. It is very cold and they are forced to flee the homestead with little clothing and little supplies. Bombs continue to fall and then poisonous gases are released. They follow the river until the bombs are far into the background and then they begin to head south.

After many days of walking silently in the cold, they find the first camp. None of the scouts have returned and they are not sure where their food will be coming from next. At the first camp, there is little food and snow begins falling.

Chapter Five Analysis

In Chapter Five, Now, Lena watches Julian. She likens him to a small frail bird being trapped with a wild animal, herself. She feels sorry for him because she realizes that he has no choice in life, she feels bad for him because it is clear that her presence, as a female, makes him uncomfortable. Every time that she gets a twinge of sympathy for him, she puts it out of her mind, reminding herself that they are on opposite sides and that it is his people who have bombed her home and taken her mother as a prisoner.

In Chapter Five, Then, the future looks bleak for the invalids. Their homestead has been bombed before they can prepare appropriately for their trek south and now they are forced out without provisions for food or warmth against the cold winter temperatures. Even so, they carry on. Their suffering compared to the docile comforts on the other side of the fence is a testament to how much they believe their freedom is worth. Lena realizes that to the others, the Cured on the other side of the fence, there is no such thing as the Wilds or the Invalids; there is no such thing as their suffering as they walk in freezing temperatures with few clothes and little food.



Chapter Six

Chapter Six Summary

Chapter Six, Now

It has been a full day and Lena and Julian are still trapped in the small room. Scarce rations of food are being slid to them from a small trap door near the floor. Julian and Lena begin talking. She tells him only things that sound like something a Cured might say. He confesses to her that he has nightmares, but that he also has dreams — dreams of exploring the world. Lena says very little to him, but when their food comes, she gives him her rations of bread even though he is accustomed to getting full meals every day.

Chapter Six, Then

At their first camp, they stay a week. They are out of food and have begun hunting. Lena and Raven catch a rabbit in a trap. Raven wants Lena to kill it and she won't. Raven and Lena fight about Lena needing to do what is necessary for survival. Raven lets it slip that she knows about Alex and that he was killed when Lena was found. Lena jumps on Raven with the knife still in her hand and as they are rolling around on the ground, Raven takes Lena's hand with the knife and plunges it into the rabbit's heart, killing it.

Chapter Six Analysis

In the Now Lena is still fighting her sympathies, constantly reminding herself that Julian is the enemy. She's finding it hard to not sympathize with him because she is beginning to see that they are not so different. Like her, he has nightmares, and like her, he has dreams of exploring the world. Lena can reveal neither similarity to him because it would reveal that she has not really been cured. She allows him to eat her bread, even though she is starving and rarely gets a full meal. Ironically, Julian always gets a full meal and willingly takes her food.

In the Then, Raven reveals that she knows that Lena had been with Alex and that Alex was killed. This has many implications since Lena had run many miles once Alex had been caught at the border. This means that Raven knows much more than she ever has let on. Lena and Raven argue about the way things should be. Lena doesn't believe that in order to survive you should willingly take from others, thus she resists killing the rabbit. Raven thinks Lena is being naive and that she needs to kill, to do her part to stay with them.

In a fit of anger, they attack each other and Lena realizes that her attacking Raven is just as barbaric as her killing a rabbit. She is becoming like Raven, her humanity ebbing away. In the end, she still kills the rabbit.



Chapter Seven

Chapter Seven Summary

Chapter Seven, Now

Lena and Julian are still held captive. Lena has counted three days since they turn off the lights at night.

Lena wakes one morning to Julian watching her sleep and running his hands through her hair. This startles Lena and she stays resentful and angry with him throughout the day.

Later, Julian reveals that his father had a secret library to which he found the key. In the library were books that were illegal. Books that talked about emotions and love. Julian for weeks read the books until one day his father caught him. His father beat him and it was after that that he began having seizures.

Julian is taken out by a guard and questioned. He returns, beaten. While he is gone, she inspects the contents of her backpack. Lena discovers that someone has left her clues in The Book of Shhh in her backpack. The clues are instructing her to escape no matter what. She then looks again at the umbrella that Tack has given her. She discovers that there is a knife in the umbrella. When Julian returns, she comforts him and then tells him that they must escape. She tells him that she's not really cured, and that she is part of the resistance. He is angry and turns on her. She doesn't care, she plans to escape without him.

Chapter Seven, Then

Raven and Bram, another invalid, give Lena a fake cure. They brand her behind the ear so that it looks like the scar of the procedure.

Chapter Seven Analysis

In Now, Lena does not like that Julian has taken the liberties to touch her and stroke her hair. She is resentful because she is trying to control her feelings and does not want to feel sympathy for him. In the Book of Shh she realizes that someone has left her clues and she knows then that it must have been Tack and Raven. After Julian has been beaten, Lena cares for him and in this moment of intimacy she reveals that she has lied to him, that she has not been cured; he is angry and turns away from her. Lena's feelings that they have always been on opposite sides is confirmed. Even though Julian's world has hurt him so severely, he still is loyal to it.

In Then, Lena gets the mark of the cured. This indicates that soon Raven plans on sending Lena into the world and in order for her to fit in and function, she'll need to carry

the mark of the procedure to not get in trouble. Lena does not know that they are going to do this, nor does she have any knowledge of Tack and Raven's future plans.



Chapter Eight

Chapter Eight Summary

Chapter Eight, Now

Lena wrenches the trapdoor off and it falls with a clatter into the hallway. A guard comes and Lena hides behind the doorway. Once he has entered she slams the door into him and Julian and Lena tie him up. They escape and hide in a supply closet. They find guns and food and DFA badges. They kill two Scavengers in the process. They realize that the group which has kidnapped them are actually not Scavengers but DFA agents.

Chapter Eight, Then

In this brief section, Lena and the Invalids are still heading south. While camping out one evening, Blu falls ill with a fever and Raven carries her into camp. She dies that night. Raven opens up to Lena and tells her how she found Blu left for dead in a shoe box and how she took her and ran into the Wilds, never looking back.

Chapter Eight Analysis

In Now, Julian realizes that he has no choice but to trust and help Lena escape. Lena doesn't fully trust him until he helps her tie up the guard. As they escape and hide in the supply closet, they realize that this is a very sophisticated group of people which has taken them hostage — group with a lot of ammunition, and food, and clothes, and countless DFA identity badges. They both realize that it is not the Scavengers who have kidnapped them, but the DFA, the organization of which Julian Fineman's father is the director.

In Then, Raven breaks down and cries when Blu dies. Lena sticks by her helping her care for Blu and listening to her story. This is the first moment of weakness and vulnerability that Lena has ever seen in Raven. Her trust in Raven is restored.



Chapter Nine

Chapter Nine Summary

Chapter Nine, Now

Lena and Julian walk through the underground tunnels of the subway. Lena now has a gun and they've eaten some food. They find grates to the outside. The grates are two high and screwed in from the other side. They stand and watch the rain.

Julian agrees to keep watch as Lena sleeps. Lena falls asleep to Julian telling her about his brother. His brother had covertly worked for the resistance. During a DFA demonstration he had been attacked and his father had pulled his mask off. His brother had been beaten and then locked in the basement where he died.

Chapter Nine, Then

At the camp, they bury Blu, even though the ground is hard and frozen. It begins to snow and Raven watches as the snow fills the grave. Raven is devastated. They round up and walk on, leaving the grave to be filled with snow.

Chapter Nine Analysis

In Now, a new intimacy has been forged between Lena and Julian. They trust each other once again. Together they have escaped and now Julian is admitting that he has also doubted the DFA and his father. Julian has assumed a new protective role over Lena and agrees to watch while she sleeps.

The chapters are getting shorter and shorter as the timelines converge. Time has slowed down to hours in the Now sections of the chapters, while days pass in the Then sections. Soon, the story lines will converge and there will only be the Now.

The effect of the short chapters and the timelines getting closer and closer together is that there is a building of tension and excitement. Both timelines are building toward the climax of the story.

In the Then section, Blu is buried. Raven is devastated and slightly delirious. She keeps muttering that the snow will keep Blu warm. Everyone is at their physical limit in the Then sections. It is clear that with little food and exposure to the cold, that something will need to change; otherwise, they will not survive.



Chapter Ten

Chapter Ten Summary

Chapter Ten, Now

Lena wakes to find Julian, nearly naked, showering in the rain beneath the grate. She admits that she also would like to take a shower. While she showers Julian scouts ahead. She turns to find him returned and watching her shower naked. Julian admits that he has never seen someone naked before and reaches to touch her. Then they hear people coming. They hide in an archway. For several minutes flashlights light up and flash around the tunnel and then the light finally lands on them. Lena jumps on the pursuers. A fight ensues.

Lena feels herself being lifted and a torch flashes in her captor's face. He looks like a giant rat. Lena screams and then loses consciousness.

Chapter Ten, Then

The Invalids, broken, tired and hungry, find the third camp. There is no sign of food and no sign of Tack. Lena notes that things seem off and then they all hear a loud crack in the woods, and then Scavengers dressed in camouflage attack them.

Chapter Ten Analysis

In Chapter Ten, Now, both Julian and Lena's rain showers are a symbol of rebirth and renewal. In this instance, they have recommitted to each other, and to trusting each other. To bathe naked is one of the most vulnerable things that either of them could do and yet, they felt comfortable enough to do it. In a society where kissing is punishable, this means a lot.

Both the Now and Then sections end with catastrophe and the scenes blacking out. The reader knows that in the Then section, Lena, Tack and Raven survive, because they are in the Now section which is a future timeline.



Chapter Eleven

Chapter Eleven Summary

In Now, Julian and Lena wake in a small room where they are being tended to by a woman who looks like she's missing half of her face. Both Lena and Julian are weak and have been hurt in the attack. Julian is very protective of Lena and wants to make sure that the woman with half a face is not going to hurt her. The woman whose name is Coin, explains that she an Invalid and her people have been cast out for their deformities and that they live in the underground subway tunnels. She says that she's going to help them get out.

In Then, Lena and Raven are trapped against the rocks by the Scavengers, just when they think that they are going to be shot or burned, Tack and Hunter show up and shoot the Scavengers with guns.

Chapter Eleven Analysis

Both the Now and Then sections in this chapter are brief. In the Now, Lena learns why the homesteaders in the Wilds are called Invalids. The rest of the people must assume that all who choose to not be cured or live elsewhere are crippled or illegitimate babies and therefore unfit for society. Lena realizes that to the outsiders the Wilds and homesteaders don't exist.

Julian has proved his loyalty and has become very protective over Lena. She realizes that he has been infected, and that his outward affection for her could get him arrested and killed.

In the Then section, Tack and Hunter arrive just before Lena and Raven are out of options.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

In Now, the rat-man that saved Lena and Julian from their attack in the subway tunnels has agreed to lead them out into safety. They walk in the underground tunnels for a long period of time until finally, they arrive above land near a landfill with which Lena is familiar because of a nearby homestead where she once stayed. The rat-man warns them that somebody is always watching.

Lena leads Julian to the old homestead and they hunker down for the night. Julian confesses that he chooses her and they spend the night together in the same bed.

In the Then section, the remaining Invalids walk with Tack and Hunter to find an old camp. They find a house with a family and children. They are invited to stay there and rest for two days. Lena watches how the children only know this life and how they maneuver this world with ease.

Chapter 12 Analysis

When the rat-man warns Lena and Julian that someone is always watching, Lena becomes suspicious that their location is too convenient. She's in an area that she knows is within walking distance to a still existing, but abandoned homestead that has food and other resources. Though they stay the night there, Lena knows that something is not right.

When Julian tells Lena that he chooses her, she doesn't really want to hear it. She feels like by kissing and being with Julian she is betraying Alex. Hearing Julian say that he chooses her makes her decision even more difficult.

In the Then section, Lena is jealous of the children living in the Wilds. She's jealous of the fact that their family and home is in the wilderness, that their parents are happy and that not everything is concrete and neatness. But, she also knows that soon their world will become dangerous. This is the last section of the Then.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

The following morning Lena notices that the door has been left open. Within minutes of waking and dressing, soldiers have invaded the homestead. One guard grabs Lena and throws her in a van and Julian is taken by another guard. Lena notices something familiar about her guard, but can't place how she knows her.

Lena is taken to a warehouse and once the van is inside a garage, Raven opens the back of the van and lets Lena out. Lena is happy to be rescued but demands answers. She discovers that Raven and Tack paid the DFA to be double-agents and that they set all of this up to weaken the DFA. Lena is outraged that she's been used like this.

Lena and the others hear of Julian's fate on the radio. An execution is scheduled for the following day. Lena wants to rescue him, and Raven tells her to let it go.

Lena leaves the apartment and goes out on her own to find and rescue Julian. She breaks into his house but it is initially empty. She finds the key to the secret library and finds a book that lists all of the prisoners at the prison where her mom had been sentenced. She sees a number by her mother's name that matches the tattooed number on the guard who put her in the van.

Lena hears Mr. Fineman, Julian's father, enter the house and mutter directions to someone on the telephone. Lena realizes that it is the hospital where Julian is getting his lethal injections. Lena rushes to the hospital and makes it to the viewing area. As she's watching the doctor and nurse prepare, an explosion happens and glass shatters everywhere. Tack and Raven have also sneaked in and are helping Lena save Julian.

They flee the hospital and are picked up in a van a block away. They go back to their city homestead and then eventually back to the Wilds. Lena and Julian are happy and Lena promises to always feel this way. Someone calls her a liar, and when she turns around to see who it is, she sees Alex.

Chapter 13 Analysis

Lena discovers that her mother is the guard who picked her up from the homestead. She confronts Raven about it and realizes that Raven didn't know. She's glad that the mystery of her mother has been solved but wonders why her mother didn't say anything to her. Lena assumes that it is because her mother didn't want to hurt her again.

Lena is angered by Raven and Tack's ability to use her and Julian Fineman, especially when the ultimate cost is his life. Lena is falling in love with Julian and risks her life saving his. Her chastising Tack and Raven pays off because she convinces them that



their manipulating and using her is just as bad as the DFA's actions using and manipulating people.

In the end, Lena stands her ground that she doesn't want to behave as animalistically and inhumanely as the DFA and that if she is going to be part of the Resistance it has to be without killing and injuring others.

The story ends with Lena and Julian safe and content and Lena finally giving in to her feelings. It is then, with her guard fully down, that her previous love, whom she had thought dead, returns to the story. Oliver sets the ending up perfectly for a sequel.



Characters

Lena

Lena is the main protagonist in the novel. For most of Lena's life, she follows what has been told to her. As a child she had known that there was a disconnect between reality and what was being told to her by the government and the DFA. Though she had not thought about unfairly how people were treated, she had also believed that people would be happier once they had had the cure and that being infected with "love" was a death sentence.

Lena's suspicion of the government and the idea of being cured no doubt stems from the fact that her mother was arrested and put in solitary confinement for resistance. Lena had always suspected that her mother escaped when the prison was bombed and prisoners broke free, but she had not seen her mother since the day that she was taken away. Lena's awakening to the world around her also came when she saw her sister after she was cured. She describes her sister as a zombie and all emotion and happiness had left her.

Lena's final change comes when she falls in love with a boy named Alex. Together they run away and cross the boundary, but Alex is caught and killed. At that point Lena knows that there is no turning back, though she does mourn the simplicity, the abundance and the cleanliness of the life she lived before. But with each day spent on the homestead, her old world no longer looks real to her.

With Lena's escape from the old world and her new role at the homestead Lena buries her old self and is baptized, metaphorically, through the fires from which she escaped. The new Lena has a hardness that she hardly recognizes in herself. As she finds herself turning colder and harsher she realizes that she is acting at the level of an animal and no more humanely than the DFA and Scavengers.

In the end, she reconciles her two selves so that she both stands up for humanity and the love and beauty in the world without resorting to the same violence and callousness as the others in the fight of resistance.

Julian Fineman

Julian Fineman is the son of the DFA leader. He has terrible seizures that have prevented him from getting the cure. The doctors have told him that the cure might kill him. As a testament to his belief as well as his father's and the DFA, he is still scheduled to have the cure, even if it kills him.

Lena and Julian are captured together and initially Lena tells Julian that she is a high school student and that she has been cured. He quickly discovers that she is lying and that her procedural mark is fake. Even though she has lied to him he soon discovers



that it is to help him. Julian confesses that he knew that the procedure would kill him and that that is why he wanted to have it done.

Julian falls in love with Lena and all of his doubts about his father, the DFA, and the cure are confirmed as they fight for their lives in their escape. They soon learn that it is not the Scavengers who have kidnapped them, but the DFA, the very organization that his father is in charge of.

In the end Julian chooses love and freedom over the life of the cured. He is scheduled for an execution because of having spent the night with Lena. In the end, Lena, Tack and Raven save him and he and Lena escape to the homestead together.

Raven

Raven saves Lena when she escapes with Alex. Alex dies and Raven brings Lena back to the homestead. Raven is in charge of the homestead. Lena describes her as thin, muscular and severe in both physical characteristics and demeanor. Raven's hardness comes from living constantly on the brink of starvation and ruin. Raven also cares for a young girl named Blu whom she rescued as an infant.

What Lena notices is that Raven's hardness often causes her to resort to the same type of animalistic violence to which the DFA and the Scavengers resort. Raven tries to teach Lena that in order to survive, you have to fight and that that often means fighting others.

In the end, Raven learns that Lena's perspective is valid too and that one cannot lose their own humanity in the fight for humanity. Because of this new insight, Raven and Tack help Lena save Julian from his scheduled execution.

Tack

Tack is a man who lives on the homestead. His nickname is Tack because the others feels he is brusque and tactless. Initially Lena is wary of him and his outwardly short and indifferent ways. But like Raven's hardness, Lena discovers that Tack has been hardened from the life that he has lived, that his demeanor is a survival mechanism, and that really he does care about Lena and the others and the outcome of their lives.

Tack is who gives Lena an umbrella with a knife in it and he also writes her cryptic messages in The Book of Shhh.

Alex

Lena initially falls in love with Alex and becomes "infected" by him. She runs away with Alex to the Wilds. But he is killed at an ambush at the border, or so Lena believes. He surprisingly reappears at the very end of the novel. With the exception of the ending, all scenes with Alex are in Lena's flashbacks.



Blu

Blu is the little girl whom Raven rescues as an infant. She names her Blu because when she found her in a box she had been blue and dying. Raven saves her and runs away to the Wilds.

Blu dies as they move south.

Mr. Fineman

Mr. Fineman is the director of the DFA and Julian Fineman's father. Julian describes him as a violent and cold man. Once Julian sneaked into his father's secret library and when his father found out he beat him unconscious.

Also, Julian's older brother was caught working for the resistance. Mr. Fineman locked him in the basement, where the brother died.

Mr. Fineman embodies everything that is wrong with this world.



Objects/Places

The Cure

The Cure is what people are given to prevent them from falling in love.

The Procedure

The procedure is what cures people. It is never described in detail but it is implied that it is a surgery that alters or removes part of the brain that regulates love and emotions. When the procedure does not work properly people become angry and overly violent or deranged.

Invalids

The Cureds calls the others the Invalids.

DFA

The DFA is the part of the government that oversees obedience to the laws surrounding the cure. DFA stands for Deliria-Free America.

Wilds

The Wilds are the incorporated spaces between city borders. They are old cities and towns that have been bombed and then abandoned.

Scavengers

The Scavengers are a rogue group of people who cause problems in the cities and at demonstrations. The Scavengers have not been cured.

Homesteads

Homesteads are what the Invalids living in the Wilds call home. They are often abandoned buildings and basements of buildings that have been razed in bombings and fires.



The Book of Shhh

The Book of Shhh is like the Bible. It is the only allowable book of scripture. It teaches the tenets of their faith.

Umbrella

Tack gives Lena an umbrella with a knife hidden in it that she uses to help her escape.

Bird Nests

There are birds that live near the homestead and rebuild their nests everyday. They often fly over the border to get material. The resistance helpers on the other side paint the trees different colors depending on what is happening. Green means food is on the way down the river, yellow means no supplies, and red means run.

Resistance

The Resistance is the movement against being cured and against the DFA. Lena, Tack and Raven are part of the resistance.

Love

Love is not a word uttered aloud. To be in love is to be infected and is a punishable offense.



Themes

Censorship

One of the main themes in Pandemonium is censorship. Censorship is enforced in the most invasive way, the censorship of feelings, of love and companionship and intimacy, through a surgery that affects one's brain. The procedure is mandatory by age 18, but the DFA is trying to lower the mandatory age because they are finding that despite their brainwashing, children are getting "infected" with love before they are cured.

This society believes that if the emotions and feelings of love are removed that society is calm and complacent. For a dictatorship, this makes a society also easier to rule. Mates are chosen based on genetics and it is implied that babies are conceived via test tube rather than coitus. Everyone is supposed to follow the tenets in the Book of Shhh which is based on a monotheistic belief system. The tenet, "Cleanliness is Godliness," is followed strictly.

Books about romantic love, familial love and themes that demonstrate strong emotions are censored and banned, and it can be assumed other forms of culture are banned as well. However, based on the actions of Mr. Fineman, director of the DFA, he has not received the cure himself. He is violent with his sons, easily angered, and has a library full of illegal books.

The Resistance is a group of people who are refusing the cure and living on the periphery of society—in the Wilds. They are fighting the forced Cure and the censorship of love and other things. With both groups fighting, humanity is lost to all and the question of what is the point of all it is raised for the reader to consider.

Class Resistance and Power

The entities of power within Pandemonium seem nebulous. For all of the bad that is happening, this makes it difficult to pinpoint anybody who is really at fault. The most easily blamable is the DFA leader, Mr. Fineman, but it seems that even he is working for a larger power. Based on Lena's observations and Mr. Fineman's actions, the people in power have not themselves had the procedure to be cured. This suggests that the procedure is not for the safety, sanity, and happiness of society, but so that society is easier to control for those who are in power.

The majority of the people go along with what is being told to them, often turning on and becoming informants of their neighbors and family members. Once someone has had the cure the emotional attachment is cut, which means that loyalty means nothing. A lack of loyalty to one's own family gives the government and those in power even more power. They are creating a society of workers and drones who don't really care about what is happening.



The Resistance is considered a rogue group of outsiders who are trying to rise up against the powers of the government and the DFA. They have much to contend with, but because they also have not had the cure, they have considerably more power and intelligence, more drive and persistence than the majority of people who have already been cured.

Coming-of-Age

Like all coming-of-age stories, Lena is trying to reconcile who she is. Though she is raised in a home with a mother who is a leader in the resistance, her mother had been sent to prison when she was very young. She is still raised in society, being brainwashed that love and emotions are bad, that everything must be clean and neat and that God and the government must be obeyed, without question. It is when she meets a boy and becomes infected with the feelings of love, affection and infatuation that she begins to doubt what has been taught to her.

She falls in love with Alex and he convinces her to leave society for the Wilds. Once in the Wilds, she is alone and Alex has been killed. She sees the world with fresh eyes; she sees what has happened without the structure of the other world. Things are dirty and people are hurting and hungry. She has never felt such raw emotions, nor such hardship. Though she knows that the old Lena must be buried, for there is no going back, she mourns the simplicity and ease with which she used to live.

As the novel progresses and Lena's involvement with the Resistance heightens, she is being forced to become more and more violent. She likens herself to an animal, just like the other side, the enemies. She decides that she will not give up her humanity, she will not kill to live—for that is not how she wants to live.

As she discovers who she is, she teaches others that in order to survive, others do not need to be harmed and killed.



Style

Point of View

Pandemonium is written in the first person point of view from the perspective of Lena, the novel's heroine. The chapters split into two time periods — "then" and "now." Lena narrates the Now thread with the perspective of also having lived through the Then — in the first person, present tense with lots of flashbacks and reflection. The flashbacks in the Now often precede the Then narrative thread. The Then thread is written in the present tense and with the understanding that at the time of the narration there is no future—so, no allusions to what happens in the Now parts of the chapters.

Lena has a unique perspective from all of the other characters. The other characters are fairly flat and one-dimensional. Lena has believed like most of the people, that getting the procedure is what is best for humanity but she also has been convinced, by Alex, that this isn't fair or the best way to live. From this, she is able to easily empathize with both sides.

Setting

The setting is in the Northeastern United States at an undisclosed future time. Nothing in the novel makes it sound like it is much more futuristic of a society, technologically, than current times.

The world that Oliver creates in Pandemonium is one of fear and xenophobia. To deal with that the government organization, the DFA is administering the procedure to "cure" everyone and eradicate love and all other feelings, including humanity. From there, the government is attacking and trying to kill all of the people, the Invalids, who refuse to get cured and who run away into the Wilds — the in between lands that are inhabited by renegades. Ironically, the government and the DFA officials are the most fearful and are creating havoc and discord.

Oliver creates the world so that it is enough like the "real world" for readers to see how something so dastardly could happen to a society like our own.

Language and Meaning

The language is modern American 21st century English plus jargon and terms from this future society. For instance, the land in between cities is called the "wilds." To "cure" everyone of love people get the "procedure." The people who refuse the cure become fugitive and are called "Invalids."

Oliver's use of these special terms makes the fictional world seem real. All of the terms are explained clearly and the language level is easily accessible.

Structure

The novel is broken up into twelve sections of Now and Then parts. The last chapter only has a Now part. Throughout the novel the Now sections are lengthier than the Then sections. However, as the timelines begin to converge, both the Now and Then sections grow shorter and shorter and then when the timelines are nearly brought together in time, the novel ends with a final Now section.

The Now section begins in the present tense and then quickly flashbacks to before the Then section while the Then section moves forward in time — this is how the narrative threads come together in time.



Quotes

"People avoid me like I have a disease—like I have the disease. If only they knew." Ch. 1, p. 2

"Fire in my legs and lungs; fire tearing through every nerve and cell in my body. That's how I am born again, in pain." Ch. 1, p. 4

"I am not born all at once, the new Lena. Step by step—and then, inch by inch." Ch. 1, p. 5

"On one wall is tacked a small wooden cross with the figure of a man suspended in its middle. I recognize the symbol—it's a cross from one of the old religions, from the time before the cure, although I can't remember which one now." Ch. 1, p. 9

"Of course it makes sense that girls and boys would be sharing a house in the Wilds—that's the whole point, after all: freedom to choose, freedom to be around one another, freedom to look and touch and love one another—but the idea is very different from the reality, and I can't help but start to panic a little." Ch. 1, p. 15

"Before I met Alex, I lived almost eighteen years believing fully in the system, believing 100 percent that love was a disease, that we must protect ourselves, that girls and boys must stay rigorously separate to prevent contagion." Ch. 1, p. 15

"There is no before. There is only now, and what comes next." Ch. 1, p. 19.

"It still amazes me to think how wrong I was all those years, when I trusted in rumors and lies. I thought the Invalids were beasts; I thought they would rip me apart. But these people saved me, and gave me the softest place to sleep, and nursed me back to health, and haven't asked for anything in return." Ch. 1, p. 20

"The animals are on the other side of the fence: monsters wearing uniforms. They speak softly, and tell lies, and smile as they're slitting your throat." Ch. 1, p. 20

"Free from love is close to God." Ch. 1, p. 31

"For the first time the thought comes to me—I wish I hadn't crossed—and I push it away instantly, try to bury it. It's done now, and Alex died for it. There's no point in looking back. I can't look back." Ch. 1, p. 33

"They are sanitized spaces, places where the miracle of life, and God's science, is celebrated and demonstrated with microscopes and centrifuges." Ch. 1, p. 34

"He, too, has a procedural mark, a three-pronged scar behind his left ear. I wonder if it is a fake, like Alex's was; or whether, perhaps, the cure didn't work on him." Ch. 2, p. 38



"Grief is like sinking, like being buried. I am in water the tawny color of kicked-up dirt. Every breath is full of choking. There is nothing to hold on to, no sides, no way to claw myself up. There is nothing to do but let go." Ch. 2, p. 40

"We will wipe clean all the sickness and blight from the world." Ch. 3, p. 51

"We shuffle forward, showing our identity cards and swiping them, again, as we board, and I am reminded of a bunch of herd animals, heads down, trundling ahead." Ch. 4, p. 90

"I wonder whether the old world could have possibly been worse than this—that time of dazzling lights and sizzling electricity and people who loved in the open—whether they also screamed and trampled one another to death and turned their guns on their neighbors." Ch. 4, p. 99

"The priests and the scientists are right about one thing: At our heart, at our base, we are no better than animals." Ch. 4, p. 100

"'We're on the other side of the fence now, Lena,' she says, tiredly, as she passes. 'Don't you get it? You can't tell me what to feel.'" Ch. 3, p. 107

"The DFA and organizations like it have pushed and squeezed and elbowed out all the feeling in the world. They have clamped their fists around." Ch. 5, p. 117

"I don't say anything. In a world without love, this is what people are to each other: values, benefits, and liabilities, numbers and data. We weigh, we quantify, we measure, and the soul is ground to dust." Ch. 5, p. 123

"If you take, we will take back. Steal from us, and we will rob you blind. When you squeeze, we will hit." Ch. 5, p. 130

"It was ebbing away now, replaced with a crazy grief for the stupid, dumb, trusting animal, who was running too fast and didn't look where it was going and still—even after its leg was scissored in the trap—believed it might escape. Stupid, stupid, stupid." Ch. 6, p. 146

"Just like that we are on opposite sides again. There's comfort in the morning's stony silence. It is how things should be. It is right." Ch. 7, p. 157

"When you consider how society may persist in ignorance, you must also consider how long it will persist in delusion; all stupidity is changed to inevitability, and all ills are made into values (choice turned to freedom, and love to happiness), so there is no possibility of escape." Ch. 7, p. 160

"'I don't know what's going on anymore,' Julian whispers. 'I don't understand anything. I don't know what's supposed to happen next.'

"'You're not supposed to know,' I say, and it's true: The tunnels may be long, and twisted, and dark; but you are supposed to go through them." Ch. 9, p. 209



"This is, of course, how they want us: panicked, weak, and separated. We are easier to kill that way." Ch. 10, p. 227

"Don't you get that yet? We're all different. We want different things. We live different ways. That's the whole point." Ch. 12, p. 235.

"They've been forced down here, the way we have been forced into the Wilds: all for a society of order and regularity." Ch. 12, p. 241

"It occurs to me, then, that people themselves are full of tunnels: winding, dark spaces and caverns; impossible to know all the places inside of them. Impossible even to imagine." Ch. 12, p. 243

"You're just as bad as they are,' I squeeze out, through the tightness of the fury in my throat, the heavy stone of disgust. That is the DFA's motto too: Some will die for the health of the whole. We have become like them." Ch. 13, p. 284

"I sink into a dullness, a place of suspension: I can no longer feel anything. The anger has ebbed away, and so has the guilt. I am completely numb. Julian will die tomorrow. I helped him die." Ch. 13, p. 286

"The normalcy of it almost kills me. Even in a world turned upside down, a world of war and insanity, people hang their clothing; they fold their pants; they make their beds." Ch. 13, p. 301

"We will curl back into ourselves, like a fern folding up against the frost, and leave the resistance to its guns and its plans, and the Scavengers to their tunnels, and the DFA to their cures, and the whole world to its sickness and blindness. We will let it fall to ruin. We will be safe, shielded under the trees, nesting like birds." Ch. 13, p. 323



Topics for Discussion

Why are the chapters divided into "Now" and "Then" sections? What effect does this have on the reader?

How is the world that Lena describes similar to our own world?

How does Lena change? What is her catalyst?

At one point toward the end of the novel, Lena accuses Raven of being just like "them"—why does she think this?

Why is "love" seen as something that destroys society by the DFA? How have they attempted to eradicate love? What else have they eradicated?

Lena compares people, including herself, to animals. Why?

What does Alex represent for Lena? What does Julian represent for Lena?

Why does Lena's mother choose not to reveal her identity to Lena?

Why does Julian choose to trust Lena even after she admits that she has lied to him? What has he experienced in his life that reveals the true nature of the people who are controlling the DFA?

What threat do the Invalids pose to the people on the other side? Why is the government adamant about eradicating them if they aren't harming anyone?