

The Peace War Study Guide

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Plot Summary

Paul Naismith is known as the Tinker's "wizard." He is a brilliant mathematician and there are many who realize that his loss will be a terrible blow to the Tinkers. Those people urge that he take an apprentice or teach a class of some sort in an effort to share at least some of that knowledge. Paul, well past seventy, is among the majority of the population. There are few children following the plagues of decades earlier. One of the children who has survived is Wili Wachendon. At fifteen, he is very small for his age, having fallen victim to one of the diseases that causes children to simply waste away. However, Wili is brilliant and comes to Paul's attention when he beats an arcade game.

Wili is arrested by a local police officer, Miguel Rosas. Known as Mike, he is trying to figure out what to do with the child when Paul says he will take Wili on as his apprentice. Paul takes Wili home with him and Wili immediately begins planning his escape—and the things he will steal during that escape. He soon discovers that Paul and the others in the house trust him and Wili responds to that trust, eventually learning a great deal from Paul and his computer system. Paul risks everything to get Wili the bioscience that will end his painful disease but Mike, who is to take Wili to the bioscientists, betrays them to the Peace Authority—the organization that regulates all action on earth and that has banned bioscience in all forms.

Wili escapes with the help of Mike and an agent, Della Lu, sent to infiltrate the Tinkers and to capture Paul. While Wili continues to learn from Paul and to provide some new insights to old problems, the Authority comes to the conclusion that the Tinkers are developing technology dangerous to the Authority's power and will have to be stopped. It is Wili who eventually emerges with the plan that will bring down the Authority and their ability to control the world through their ultimate weapon—the bobbler. The bobbles are a concept of Paul. The bobbles encapsulate anything within set parameters, either above or below ground. The Authority has used them offensively, embobbling anything that poses a threat to the ultimate power of the Authority. The Tinkers, with Paul as their leader, want to put an end to this powerful threat.

With Wili interfaced into a computer system and coordinating with Tinkers around the world, the Authority is soon threatened. Wili is accompanied by Mike who continues to mistrust bioscience but has come to distrust the Authority even more. They are also accompanied by Allison, a military leader from the time prior to the bobbles who has recently been released from a fifty-year term in a bobble herself. Together with Paul, they mount a successful attack that brings down the Authority, then set out to pick up the pieces and to prepare for the time when the Authority, now encapsulated in a bobble of its own, will attempt to return to power.



Flashback through chapter 6

Flashback through chapter 6 Summary

The book begins with the chapter titled "Flashback." Allison Parker, a member of the United States Air Force, is in an aircraft piloted by Angus Quiller with Fred Torres as the crewman. Allison has been provided this trip as a reconnaissance mission. She has seen and recorded some unusual activity in a place called Livermore and knows that it will make a difference to Paul Hoehler. That activity includes some actions below ground, which is what Paul predicted.

Allison listens to Fred and Angus as they talk through their re-entry processes. Allison loves the view and is enthralled with what she sees. She loves flying and has for many years. Fred, who says that he is going to retire from the Air Force to join the private airlines takes on the tone of a commercial pilot, welcoming the "lady and gentleman to the beautiful skies of California ... or maybe it's still Oregon." He has just finished this playful statement when something goes wrong. Allison is thinking about Paul's concerns and the fact that his worries are, according to her surveillance on this trip, founded, when her world goes blank.

In chapter one, the Old California Shopping Center is a gathering place for Tinkers. Miguel Rosas, known as Mike to his friends, is the undersheriff for the Santa Ynez Police Company and he is assigned to oversee the activity at the shopping center. There are many horses and wagons around and Mike notices a man named Paul Naismith sitting near the top of a nearby hill. Mike walks up to talk with him and Paul invites Mike for a game of chess. Mike declines, knowing that Paul never loses.

Mike and Paul wander back down to the activity of the shopping center, where an array of people have their wares set up for sale. There is an arcade with a game called Celest and "a little black kid" has racked up a great deal of money making bets with the arcade owner. The kid is obviously an "outlander" from outside the immediate area and is very good at the game, though he is also obviously a novice. The kid rushes away as soon as he wins again. Mike, though saying that the kid has not broken any laws by winning the game, admits that he wants to know more about the kid and goes outside the arcade to look for him. When it is obvious the kid is hiding, Mike begins a search and spots the kid, who immediately slashes Mike with a knife and then runs. Mike shoots the kid, though it is only a stun gun of sorts, and notifies his boss that he is bringing the kid into the police station.

In chapter two, Sheriff Seymour Wentz learns that the kid's name is Wili Wachendon. A man who knows him says the kid is nothing but trouble. The sheriff and Mike begin discussing what they might do with Wili and discard the idea of placing him with a local family. Then Paul says that he will take Wili as his apprentice. Paul turns up his hearing aid to listen in as Mike talks privately with Wentz. Mike says that Paul is known as the Tinker wizard, has dozens of gadgets that are years ahead of anything the police have



and that Paul has been urged for years to take an apprentice in order to pass on at least some of his vast knowledge. They agree to let Paul take custody of the boy.

In chapter three, Wili is being transported in Paul's wagon with a man who is obviously Paul's servant driving. Wili is still weak from the stun and knows that even when he can escape, he cannot possibly return to the life he has left behind because the factions that had held him as a slave in the past years would kill him for having discovered secrets of the factions. They travel into the mountains and Wili is helped into the house where he is taken to a bedroom on an upper floor of a house he calls a mansion. He sees a great deal worth stealing and decides that he will remain for a week in order to gain strength and gather items he can carry away.

In the next chapter, "Flashforward," Allison hears tearing metal and discovers that Fred is dead. She and Angus escape the crashed aircraft. Angus picks up a cross and Allison believes they have crashed in a cemetery. She has a serious cut to her leg. She and Angus treat the cut and Angus travels off a short distance in search of a road.

In chapter four, Wili meets Paul's servants, a woman named Irma and the man named Bill who drove them from the shopping center. The woman makes Wili bathe and gives him as much food as he wants, but he is assigned chores such as working in the garden and helping with cleaning. One evening, Wili encounters what he believes to be a ghost and begins to hope that he can escape with his life.

In chapter five, several guests arrive at Paul's house and they disappear into underground areas where Wili is not in on their talks. However, they all bring gifts and Wili picks up what he believes to be the most valuable and the most portable of those, planning to make his escape soon after the guests leave. He finds Paul is outside and Paul tells Wili that he is certainly free to go but that he hopes Wili will decide to stay. Paul's winning point is when he points out two moving points of light in the sky and tells Wili that they are satellites. Wili is initially skeptical but Paul convinces him and Wili decides that Paul's words—including that knowledge is more powerful than possessions and that Paul can help Wili obtain that knowledge—convince him to stay.

In chapter six, Wili begins learning from Paul and studying the computer systems Paul has available. He learns about digital cameras Paul has scattered throughout the area and the computer system monitoring them, which is more effective than human lookouts.

Flashback through chapter 6 Analysis

The opening chapter is meant to be somewhat misleading. It will be some time before it is revealed that Allison and Paul have something deeper than a working relationship. Paul seems to have been in love with Allison though it will be some time before that is revealed. Paul Hoehler, as he is called by Allison, will be known through most of the book as Paul Naismith. The details of what happens to Allison and her crew upon re-entry will not be revealed for some time. In actuality, they are caught in a bobble, which



is an invention dreamed up by Paul himself. The bobbles—sometimes called bubbles or baubles—encapsulate everything within the specified coordinates. The theory is that a bobble lasts for eternity and that everything within it dies. However, it will later be discovered that the bobbles last for a specified amount of time and that time stops inside the bobble so that the person who escapes the bobble when it ruptures has no recollection of the passage of time and shows no signs of the passage of time.

The Santa Ynez Police Department is a private company that serves in the same capacity a normal sheriff's department would, except that people and groups of people hire the police to keep order. It is noted that the Old California Shopping Center is the company's biggest account.

Paul is older, probably in his seventies, and is among the majority—most of the population are past fifty. This is because of the events of fifty years prior that cost many lives through war, plagues and infertility. The child is definitely in the minority in that there are not a great many children who survived the war and the plagues. The plagues were especially horrific and are blamed on a group of people referred to as bioscientists, though it will later be revealed that the rulers known as the Peace Authority are more likely to blame. The clues given in these early chapters are vital to the full understanding of the story that unfolds.

Mike had two sisters, twins, who died at an early age. It is not immediately clear why this is important but that will later be cleared up. Mike's younger sister died of a disease believed to have been released by bioscientists. This makes Mike hate the bioscientists and the ideal of bioscience. It will eventually lead Mike to betray those who consider him a friend and to turn a group of bioscientists over to the Authority.

Wili hears Paul talk to a woman upon their arrival at his house and later Wili encounters a beautiful young woman himself. He believes that this is the ghost of Paul's lost love, and he is actually very near the truth in one way. The "woman" is actually a holographic image of a computer-generated program that Paul has named Jill. The woman's appearance is based on Paul's memories of Allison.

Wili's personality is being revealed as he settles into Paul's home, though he believes he is settling in only briefly. Wili is often bored and remembers the sense of pride he felt working as a burglar for the group that had held him as their slave prior to his escape and arrival at the arcade. Wili is actually brilliant and needs mental stimulation in order to be happy. Another interesting point is that he pulls a knife on Irma and she trusts him when he says that he reacted impulsively, and asks that she not tell. She does not and this, along with the fact that Paul does not try to physically detain him, makes a great impact on Wili.

Wili refers briefly to a hovel in Glendora and his uncle Sylvester. He will later reveal the details of his childhood and that there was a time during that childhood when he had been happy and safe under the care of this uncle. After his talk with Paul about the possibilities of knowledge, Wili comes to believe that that safety and security may not be

something he lost as a child and seems to believe this is going to be what his life becomes under Paul's tutelage.



Chapters 7 through 12

Chapters 7 through 12 Summary

In chapter seven, January arrives and brings snow. Wili becomes sick with a terrible aching in his gut. He is constantly hungry and constantly eating, but continues to lose weight. He does not complain to the others about his illness, having endured the worsening with the arrival of winter for his entire life. However, Irma eventually sees the signs of his suffering and tells Paul. She then pulls on one of Wili's fingernails and it detaches easily, falling off completely. Wili is horrified at the sight. Though he has endured the pain, the fact that his body is literally falling apart is the stuff of nightmares. Paul is horrified too and Wili finds himself in the position of comforter, assuring Paul that the illness always worsens in the winter and improves in the summer.

Though there is the illness to contend with, Wili is incredibly happy with his life with Paul. He is studying nearly every moment he has away from chores. Paul teaches him to work with Jill, the computerized holographic vision Wili had initially thought to be a ghost. Paul has presented Wili with a new problem to be solved and Wili believes he is at the edge of solving it, though he anguishes over how slowly the full answers come. Paul one day reads over Wili's shoulder and is amazed at the progress the boy has made, immediately telling Wili that his work is remarkable. Wili is pleased with the praise.

In chapter eight, Paul calls Mike, describing Wili's illness and saying that by taking Wili to an area where the winters are worse, he has made Wili's illness worse. Mike dismisses it, saying that Wili has had more good food under Paul's care and that Paul should know that the children with the illnesses eventually waste away completely, regardless of care. Paul tells Mike that he knows of some bioscience labs, that there are scientists there who can cure Wili, and that he wants to plan a trip to have Wili seen. He says that the North American Chess Championships will provide the cover for the trip to the correct area. Paul says that anyone traveling to the event will be under the protection of the Authority and will be safe. He asks Mike to accompany Wili and Mike agrees.

In the second and final chapter titled "Flashforward," Allison and Angus continue to try to figure out where they are. Angus becomes convinced that they are not on Earth, or at least not as it was when they left. He suggests time travel though it is dismissed by Allison. He says that he has seen a huge sphere that does not exist on Earth as they know it. He does not know this is one of the many bobbles. He also tells Allison that the tombstone he found soon after their arrival had Allison's name and "today's date" inscribed on it. He says that the stone was badly weathered and was obviously old.

In chapter nine, Paul and Wili are joined by a boy named Jeremy Kaladze. Jeremy talks almost nonstop and tells the story of his grandfather's arrival in America as part of the Red Arrow Battalion, a reconnaissance group sent to America soon after the



appearance of the first bobbles. The group clashed with the Peace Authority and the remains of that force, including Jeremy's grandfather, had escaped into the mountains where they set up camp and began long-term survival plans. The sunlight bouncing off the bobble creates an artificial ecosystem makes the area a perfect place for growing specific crops, including bananas. Jeremy chatters almost nonstop and at one point shoots a fowl that they share for dinner, though Wili notes that it takes several shots for him to bring down the bird. Jeremy suddenly lowers his voice and tells Paul that he thinks they are being followed. Paul says that he has already noticed. Thinking that the pursuers might be trying to steal their belongings, they leave the wagon behind, taking only what they really need, and hope that their followers will not follow past the wagon. They set up a short distance later with Wili climbing a tree to set up part of their communication and surveillance equipment and Jeremy going to scatter cameras behind them so that they can be sure the enemy does not sneak up on them from the rear. Wili notes that they are on a bobble encapsulating the wreckage of a plane.

In chapter ten, Hamilton Avery is in a meeting in which the news that the Peace Authority near Greater Tucson has been completely destroyed by the detonation of a bobble. There is an immediate argument over what could have caused the destruction of a bobble with some believing that there are nuclear bombs that the Authority had not known about, though Avery says that is impossible, adhering to his position that there are no nuclear bombs in existence other than those owned by the Authority. Instead, Avery says that the bobble had encapsulated a blast, that contrary to popular opinions bobbles apparently decay over time, and that the decay had occurred naturally, releasing the blast that had been held inside since the bobble was put in place in 1997. Avery goes on through the meeting, assuring people that there is nothing sinister in the situation though he himself believes that someone has figured out how to burst bobbles.

In chapter eleven, Jeremy stands from their hiding place and shoots at the ten men who have been following them. To Wili's amazement, Jeremy hits all ten and they fall, but are down only a short time before standing up and running away. Wili had believed Jeremy to be a completely different kind of person but now sees similarities, including the fact that both are fifteen, though Jeremy looks his age and Wili's growth has been severely stunted. They arrive safely at Jeremy's home, Red Arrow Industries, and Jeremy shows Wili that his family's business puts the concepts dreamed up by people like Paul into practical use. The business, Red Arrow Industries, builds many of the pieces of hardware Paul uses. During their time on the farm, Jeremy shows Wili a half an airplane encapsulated in a bobble. The family believes it had just taken off from Vandenburg, a nearby metropolitan area that was completely bobbed by the Authority, when the bobbles began. Wili notes that there are constant mini-earthquakes around the bobble and he can imagine the other half of the sphere which is underground. The boys' explorations are cut short when they are summoned to a meeting with the adults.

In chapter twelve, Jeremy and Wili are to be accompanied to the chess tournament by Mike. Mike tells Wili that Paul cannot be in the position to be captured by the Authority. Wili notes that he did not blame his uncle for leaving him behind and that he does not blame Paul.



Chapters 7 through 12 Analysis

Mike's involvement in taking Wili to the chess championships in order to get him to the bioscience lab is an important part of the story in that Mike will become a traitor to the Tinkers by doing so. He apparently alerts the Authority to the plan ahead of time and is tracked to the lab. The Authority then embobbles the lab, putting an end to the work of the scientists there. Mike's reason is that he fully believes that the bioscientists are responsible for releasing the plagues that took the lives of his twin sisters.

There is a great deal of information revealed in chapter eight regarding the role of the Authority, the rules governing the Tinkers and their relationships. The Authority does not allow bioscience projects to occur at all. It seems that the Authority wants to eliminate the possibility that people will find the cures necessary to survive the plagues released over time. The purpose of these plagues is never fully revealed but is likely only a means to discredit the bioscience projects and the scientists involved. The Authority believes it is closely governing the Tinkers and their projects as well, though the Tinkers have actually progressed far beyond what the Authority has available. The Authority refuses permission to create any mechanized vehicles for transporting people, for example. The people are supposed to depend on horses and walking as their only means of transportation. While this is outwardly observed, there are those who have the capability to produce the banned items. Another important aspect of this is that there has evolved a working network that communicates without the knowledge of the Authority. These people combine their knowledge to come up with new ideas and to put those ideas into practical use, creating the hardware and software necessary to make it happen. All this is done despite the Authority's efforts to control all aspects of research and development.

As Wili is climbing the tree when he, Paul and Jeremy are being pursued by the Authority's men, he finds the cross with Allison's name on it, though he does not yet know Allison and does not deem this piece of information important. In actuality, they are very near the site of Allison's crash and this will enable Allison and Paul to reunite a short time later.

Wili is upset to learn that Paul will not be going with him to the chess tournament. Though he is told that there is a reason, Wili can only see the possibility that he will be parting from Paul and will never see him again. Wili has been forced to be tough, but remains a child in many ways, especially with regard to committing to relationships. He desperately needs someone to lean on, having not yet found the ability to stand completely on his own.

It is as Wili is preparing to leave for the chess tournament without Paul that his early childhood is revealed. Wili says that his parents, seeing in Wili the signs of the degenerative disease that costs most children their lives, decide to leave him so that the coyotes will devour him, thus ending his suffering. Instead, Wili's uncle, a man named Sylvester, convinces them to leave the boy with him. He takes over Wili's care, teaching him to read and do math even when Wili's body is too weak to walk. Wili eventually



grows stronger and Sylvester leaves him alone each day while he works. Even after he is able to walk, Sylvester refuses to let Wili outside in the daylight. One day when Wili is alone, he goes out and, reveling in the freedom, walks some distance from home. Sylvester returns home just in time to see Wili kidnapped.



Chapters 13 through 20

Chapters 13 through 20 Summary

In chapter thirteen, Avery meets with a young woman who is an agent for the Authority. Her name is Della Lu. She has recently returned from Mongolia and is very smart in the ways of espionage and infiltration. Avery says that the Authority has allowed the Tinkers a great deal of room to do research and create products and that he can now see that it was a mistake. Avery says that denying people the "things they need" has forced them to find alternative ways to get those items. He tells Della that her main priority will be to find Paul Hoehler. Avery says that the Authority is planning action against lots of people in the coming weeks but that it will not amount to much without Paul's capture.

In the next chapter, "Flashforward," Allison and Angus move a short distance from the site of their plane. They know the smoke from the plane will garner some attention and want to be near enough to show themselves if friendly forces come for a rescue but far enough away to escape if the forces that arrive are not friendly. When they see the planes, they know it is not United States military and prepare to run.

In chapter fourteen, Wili is one of the few players who is at the chess tournament without any kind of computerized aid. He soon advances past some with computer aids and is the last unaided player to remain. He plays a young woman who realizes that she is beat several plays before it actually happens. The woman is Della Lu. Mike tells Wili that he has to lose the next game so that they will have time to go to the bioscience lab. Wili gets caught up in his next game but is beaten and is upset at the loss, creating a scene that gives Mike and Jeremy the excuse to take Wili away from the tournament, ostensibly to cool off.

In chapter fifteen, Wili, Mike and Jeremy arrive at a grape vineyard and encounter a woman who tells them they are too late for the regular tour but that they can come in anyway. They are taken below ground, into a series of caves, where Wili is checked by a man and told that the disease that plagues him is a simple matter of an imbalance that can be corrected by taking yeast tablets. They are told that there is an authority probe underway and the man goes back upstairs to face the probability of an Authority search, sending Wili, Mike and Jeremy out a tunnel. In chapter sixteen, the three know there is the possibility that the entire facility will be embobbed and run as fast as they can in the near dark. Just as Wili emerges from the cave, the bobble appears. He initially believes they have escaped but find that Jeremy is trapped inside, having been so near the edge that the tips of two fingers are cut off. Wili and Mike return to the hotel where the chess tournament is supposed to be underway and discover that everyone is being taken into custody by the Authority. Wili knows that most of those present are Tinkers and that this is a sign that the Authority is now cracking down on the Tinkers, probably across the world. He looks for Della and discovers that she is not among those being taken by the Authority.



In chapter seventeen, Paul tries to convince Jeremy's grandfather of the imminent danger. Thinly disguised as a woman, Paul takes a horse and leaves the Kaladze stronghold. In chapter eighteen, Paul finds the concentration of soldiers and watches on his own surveillance equipment as Allison and Angus are almost captured. Angus is killed and Paul moves to a point where he can encounter Allison and help her escape. He has her pointed on the correct trail when he passes out from the exertion.

In chapter nineteen, Mike and Wili are picked up on the coast by a fishing vessel. Della is on board, claiming to have also been rescued though she actually coordinates the "rescue" of Mike and Wili. Mike is obviously unaware of Della's identity prior to being picked up but has been working with the Authority and actually revealed the presence of the bioscience lab where Wili was seen. Della tells Mike that he must continue as her secret ally or she will tell everyone that he has been a spy for the Authority for years. Though Mike's involvement with the Authority was only recent, he fears even that being told. Della knows her hold over Mike is tenuous but says that he has to help her find Paul Hoehler. Della has learned from Avery about the discovery of Allison's aircraft which Avery believes to be proof that the Tinkers have managed space exploration without the Authority's knowledge.

In chapter twenty, Mike, Wili and Della arrive at the Kaladze stronghold and Wili reveals that he heard Mike and Della's conversation aboard the fishing boat. Kaladze claims not to believe Wili though he seems at least somewhat concerned.

Chapters 13 through 20 Analysis

Avery's discussion with Della reveals that the Authority is located in an enclave that had been a private research facility prior to the situation that led to the Authority taking control of the world. Avery says that he is personally ensured over the course of his tenure with the Authority that scientists work only on projects he wants to see completed. In Avery's words, no one is given permission or funding to work on any "really imaginative" projects.

Paul has been "haunted" by the use of the bobbles, apparently since his concept was put into practice by the Authority. He knows that Allison and her aircraft were encapsulated by a bobble and says that this particular bobble has haunted him more than the others. It seems likely that Paul is responsible for the tombstone marking Allison's bobble as her grave. It also seems likely that Paul has romanticized his relationship with Allison over the years. It is after Paul leaves the Kaladze stronghold that he says that his entire concept—referring to the bobbles—was a "crock of sewage." This is true only in the fact that the bobbles are permanent and that they kill all they encapsulate. Paul seems to be amplifying the degree of his failure because of the way the bobbles are used, ignoring the fact that he came up with an incredible concept that could have been used for the good of humanity.

The conversation between Mike and Della aboard the fishing boat makes it evident that Mike alerted the Authority to the presence of the bioscientists and that his going into the

lab was the signal to the Authority of the place. Mike is genuinely upset over Jeremy's fate, believing that Jeremy was killed or died a short time after the placement of the bobble. Della does not seem overly apologetic, saying that they had to be certain no one escaped. Della also does not reveal to Mike that Avery's plan included the arrests during the chess tournament which is nothing more than the Authority's efforts to take hostages before the next phase of their plan to eliminate the Tinkers.



Chapters 21 through 27

Chapters 21 through 27 Summary

In chapter twenty-one, Mike accompanies those making sure that Wili is safely on his way to Paul's. Wili again makes his accusations against Mike but Kaladze interrupts, saying that Mike had gotten Wili safely in and out of the bioscience lab, not only saving him from the bobble but saving his life by getting him a long-term cure. Wili says nothing else against Mike but asks Kaladze to hold Mike for ten days, keeping both Mike and Della from making outside contacts until he has time to reach Paul. Kaladze hesitates but Mike agrees to the terms. After Mike and Kaladze return to their camp, Wili stops to consider the situation. He knows that Kaladze will not reveal the location of Paul's camp, even accidentally, to Mike and Della, and that Mike does not know where it is. Wili also knows that his life depends on figuring out what Della and Mike are really up to. With this in mind, he searches his own clothing and the horse and finds a tracking bug. Rather than going on to Paul's, he finds an Authority truck and puts the bug on the truck to make it look as if he has traveled in a different direction.

In chapter twenty-two, Allison tries to come to terms with her new situation. Finally she grabs Wili's arm, twisting it behind his back in an effort to make him tell why he acts as if he knows her. He hedges, saying that he has seen her picture. Allison knows that she might have known the man who rescued her prior to her time in the bobble, but cannot place him until Wili addresses him as "Paul."

In chapter twenty-three, the Authority enclave at Livermore is still the picture of the University of California, as it had been a half century earlier. Avery holds a meeting with other of the world's directors, saying that there is an insurrection in the works and pointing out the current belief that the Tinkers have somehow managed to begin an air space project, meaning they could also be hiding a nuclear reactor big enough to create bobbles of their own. Avery says that Della has reported that Hoehler is working on creating a bobble generator and is near completion of that project.

In chapter twenty-four, Wili begins spending a great deal of time connected to Paul's computer system. He directly interfaces with the system, using a connection that makes him more a part of the system than a mere user. He comes to rely on Jill as a friend and says that he has not had the courage to tell Paul about Mike and Della, fearing the same reaction as he had gotten from Kaladze.

In chapter twenty-five, Allison and Paul talk about the bobbles and Paul says that he expects the bobbles to continue breaking down over the coming years. Allison discovers that a bobble containing many of her counterparts, other military personnel and equipment, will likely burst in the next five years. Paul watches as Wili interfaces with the computer and notes that they are very similar in intellect until Wili connects, at which point he is far superior to Paul who has never accomplished the level of connection Wili achieves naturally. Then comes the day Wili is ready to put what they have been



working on to a test. They go outside and Wili, connected to the computer system, creates a small bobble. Though the testing is still in the early stages, it proves the principles of the project. Paul worries that they will be forced to use it before they are ready.

In chapter twenty-six, Mike and Della remain in the compound past the ten days dictated by Wili. Della realizes that she does not have full control of Mike and that he is struggling to do what he believes to be right. One day they are alone in the woods, apparently taking a walk though Della is making note of everything she sees as part of her reconnaissance. They end up alone and have sex. They talk about what might make an impression on Kaladze and Della knows she is going to have to be clever if she is to urge him into any kind of action that will benefit the Authority. The following day they are eating and Della realizes that the group plans to remain quiet and to wait for Paul's invention to be completed before taking any action against the Authority. Della speaks up, saying that she does not understand how they can sit still while their loved ones—Jeremy—are taken. She says that she believes other groups would be willing to take the risk even if the Kaladze men are not. At Kaladze's reprimand, she returns to her quiet persona, letting a tear trickle down her cheek for effect.

In chapter twenty-seven, Wili is in the area known as Aztlan, an area that includes Baja and Southern California, where he is slated to give a demonstration of the generator that can make a bobble. Wili creates tiny bobbles as proof that it works and then tells the leaders what he needs to make a larger bobble that can be used against the Authority. Mike and Della are present as representatives of the Kaladze and Wili is careful not to give away his plan in front of them. The next afternoon, with the power supply he has requested, Wili is in a tenement building near where the hostages from the chess tournament raid are being held. Without giving away his plan ahead of time and careful to give Paul credit for all the knowledge so that no one doubts it will work, Wili embobbles the entire top floor of the building so that all the hostages are inside. Just before the bobble appears, he reveals that those inside will not die, as had previously been believed. The group then settles in to wait for evening and Wili carefully reveals what he wants Mike and Della to know without giving too much correct information.

Chapters 21 through 27 Analysis

Mike is absolutely torn by his decision to help the Authority in their quest against the bioscientists though he remains convinced that it was this group that released the plagues that cost his sisters their lives. Mike absolutely wants revenge for these deaths and sees his helping the Authority as a way of achieving that revenge. Mike's agreeing to Wili's condition for no outside contact over the ten days after Wili departs for Paul's may be Mike's way of trying to save face among Kaladze and his people but seems more likely to be his way of trying to make up for the guilt he feels.

An interesting aspect of the Authority is that they seem to keep depending on public support to make themselves popular. It is noted that spreading the stories about the evil

of the bioscientists has kept the majority of people fully against bioscience over the years. This makes any efforts on the part of the Authority to stop bioscience research very popular among the people. By the same token, the Authority is quickly looking at ways to make their new efforts popular. When they begin bobbling people in short-term bobbles, they publicize the fact that it is a more humane way of handling those who disobey the rules and are working against the best interests of humanity.

Mike is obviously relieved when he hears Wili tell those gathered that the bobbles do not kill everyone inside as has been previously believed. Mike seems to have taken his role in Jeremy's death more to heart than had been outwardly apparently and the fact that Jeremy could still escape with his life seems to be a welcome piece of news.



Chapters 28 through 33

Chapters 28 through 33 Summary

In chapter twenty-eight, Wili was careful to create the bobble around the hostages during the heat of the day. The plan had been to wait in the tenement building until late afternoon and Wili watches with the others as the approaching darkness cools the air around the bobble so that it becomes the equivalent of a hot air balloon and begins to float away, taking the hostages and upper floor of the building with it. It is driven inland by the sea winds, exactly as Wili had predicted. Wili tells the group that the bobble will last ten years and that they will be able to track where it lands in the mountains inland, and to be on hand when the bobble bursts. Wili has said that the bobble will last ten years to provide misinformation to Della but the bobble is actually created to last only one year. The Authority has been honing in on the area of the tenement all afternoon, trying to figure out how the bobble came to be. Wili and the others remain inside until the twilight will help cover their escape. As he runs, Della uses a flashlight to bring attention to his route. Della and Mike eventually corner Wili and Della sends Mike to bring the Authority to their location. He goes outside but says he cannot attract their attention. With Della off guard, Mike hits her brutally, but not enough to kill her and she runs away. Wili and Mike run also, Wili watching for the signs and codes that had been present during his years as a burglar in this neighborhood.

In chapter twenty-nine, the gangs in control of the area provide safe passage for Wili and Mike based solely on the fact that Paul wants Wili returned to him. On the way, Wili demands that Mike talk about his motivation for helping the Authority. After Mike's explanations, Wili continues to take Mike with him to Paul's, saying that he does not believe Mike had ever intended that harm come to the Tinkers.

In chapter thirty, Paul and Wili, helped by a group referred to as the Moraleses, continue their work. Mike urges Paul to consider packing up and moving farther east. He says that the Authority is continuing to raid communities and that sooner or later someone will reveal Paul's location. Allison, using the military protocols of her time, says that she also believes they will be discovered at some point. Paul says taking time to move will be too costly in terms of developing the bobbler and a plan to defeat the Authority. Allison says that if Wili had not "trashed" the Authority's satellite system they could at least listen in to communications from the Authority. Wili is initially upset that his action has prompted criticism but then sees that the observation has merit and comes up with a new idea to manipulate the Authority's use of their communication system.

In chapter thirty-one, the Authority does not try to cover up the fact that the Tinkers have a bobbler, saying that the huge bobble containing the hostages that continues to float over the area would be too difficult to hide or even explain away. Avery is in his office when Della arrives. She says that her arm is healing well. Avery reveals that the communications system is back up and running, saying that he has overseen corrections of some lax areas including physical security of the system. He then tells her



that Hoehler remains her primary objective. When Della objects, he says that over the years there have been many times when someone said that Hoeler has done all the damage to the Authority he could possibly do, prompting him to fade from the spotlight. Avery knows that Della is skeptical but she is too good a military officer to show that emotion. Avery has by now discovered that the aircraft found was not evidence of the Tinkers having established a space program but is actually an aircraft that had been bobbled by Avery's father. He also now knows that one of the crewmen had vanished. Avery then tells Della that the Authority plans to use bobbles as a way to take undesirable people "out of circulation." He says that time stops inside the bobble, making it a humane way to deal with those who threaten the Authority.

It is during this conversation with Della that Avery reveals another phase of his plan. It is referred to as Renaissance and it is actually a series of nuclear bombs that can be deployed in a particular situation. Avery notes that the Authority has to win without implementing this plan. Avery also knows that the real location of the bobbler has never been made public, a continuation of the early necessity for secrecy in order to protect the bobbler from the remnants of the United States government.

In chapter thirty-two, Allison knows now that if her mission had been implemented "just a couple of days" earlier, the outcome of the Authority's actions might have been much different because the United States government would have known the location of some specific activities. Wili tells Paul that he is feeding the Authority faked images, many of them aimed at covering escape routes and hiding places for Tinkers being pursued by the Authority. The plan they have come up with is simply to find the bobbler used by the Authority and to bobble it. The problem is that they do not have enough power to encapsulate the entire enclave and they do not know exactly where the bobbler is. Allison tells them that she has that location, based on the information she gathered just prior to being bobbled fifty years earlier.

In chapter thirty-three, Allison's information has been put to use and the four—Allison, Mike, Paul and Wili—are traveling toward the enclave in an effort to get within the four thousand meters Wili and Jill know to be necessary in order to bobble the bobbler. Allison and Paul are driving banana wagons, pretending to be a father-daughter pair on their way to sell bananas. Wili, Mike and all their equipment are hidden inside the wagons. The strain is weighing on Paul who seems suddenly very indecisive. Wili is remaining connected to the computers for as long as possible whenever there is a power supply available—usually a cache left by other Tinkers. It is Wili who is coordinating the actions of Tinkers around the world, gathering information and making the plans for attack.

Wili and Mike remain hidden except when the wagons are stopped at night out of sight of the roads. They reach a check point and are told that no commercial vehicles will be allowed to progress further toward the enclave because of the imminent threat from attack. Paul pretends to be upset but complies with the order to pull over and wait out the night before making the decision whether to wait longer or to return the way he came. As Wili and Mike are watching the situation progress from their hiding place, they see Della Lu approach.



Chapters 28 through 33 Analysis

Mike's motivation for working with the Authority revolves around his belief about the bioscientists. It is interesting that Mike does not necessarily approve of the actions or methods of the Authority but does believe that the bioscience community were behind the plagues. At one point, Wili realizes that Mike may never be rid of the guilt he is living with.

Wili is maturing quickly and it is noted that he is in control of the situation when he and Mike are returning to Paul's house. Wili decides to take Mike along though it seems likely that most people would not have trusted Mike. It could be that Wili sees a great deal of his own efforts to achieve maturity in Mike's recent actions. Wili himself had not really been trustworthy until someone trusted him. That someone was Paul and Paul took Wili in when few would have tried or even dared. Furthermore, Paul believed immediately that Wili would respond if someone trusted him. Wili seems to see these same traits in Mike and apparently believes that if he trusts Mike with his greatest secret—the location of Paul's home—that Mike will respond by being trustworthy.

Paul's fears become a weight for the entire group. It seems likely that Paul is merely older and tired though he is also obviously dealing with the emotional upheaval of the return of the woman he loves—Allison. Paul will later say that he has her back exactly as he remembers her but that she does not feel anything for him at all except a level of pity. Whatever the catalysts, Paul seems to continually waver and Wili takes on more and more control of the entire planning and situation. What is interesting is that the group does not move initially until Paul's say-so. This all changes after the plan is completed but at this point, Wili remains—in the eyes of all the outsiders—as an unimportant apprentice of the great Paul Naismith.



Chapters 34 through 42

Chapters 34 through 42 Summary

In chapter thirty-four, Della arrives at the station where Paul and Allison are stopped with the banana wagons. She knows that those in charge are not doing everything necessary to ensure that an attack does not occur. The Authority believes they have about a day before the attack will occur and Della is working off that information, though she believes in her own ability to ferret out new information that might confirm or contradict that. Della is approaching the banana wagon and senses that there is something wrong when Wili instructs Mike to kick out the side of the wagon and run, taking Allison with him. He obeys without a second thought or clear instructions and Della rushes to an aircraft, rushing the lift off. As she rises, she notes that she at least has not been bobbed. She calls Avery, saying that the attack is nearer than they had thought and urging Avery to bobble the area. He refuses, saying the system is not charged at maximum capacity yet. There is a brief firefight as Della attacks the pass but her people are decimated, their attack bouncing off a bobble that was created around the area she had been sure held something important, though she still is not certain what. She knows that there would have been at least a hundred people killed had her attack been successful and is somewhat relieved that it did not happen.

In chapter thirty-five, the bobble, which had been created by Wili, is released the following morning in keeping with the parameters he had used to create the bobble. Allison and Mike retrieve two tracked vehicles, Allison quickly giving Mike instructions on driving the second and she taking control of the lead vehicle. The equipment needed by Wili and Paul are put into the vehicles and they head for the enclave, pretending to be reporting Tinker movements as would be typical of the Authority reconnaissance vehicles. Mike suddenly realizes the reason there is not some sort of attack underway against them as they prepare to leave the area is that Wili, immediately upon the bursting of the huge bobble, had created dozens of little bobbles around all the threats of the area.

In chapter thirty-six, Della talks with Avery, saying that she believes their satellite images to be falsified. She urges that they use manual reconnaissance—people in aircraft and tanks crisscrossing the area to verify the truth of the images from the satellite system. As this is being implemented, Della is alerted that there is an encrypted call coming in for her from Mike.

In chapter thirty-seven, Mike is unsure of his driving ability, having never driven before, but follows Allison's lead. A jet, apparently set to attack the other Tinkers in the area, explodes and Mike realizes that it must have sucked dozens of little bobbles into its engines. Wili's ploy is working and he is actually being urged by the Authority to continue the surveillance maneuvers nearer the heart of the enclave. Wili tells Mike to talk to Della, telling her everything he knows except their current location in an effort to get information from her.



In chapter thirty-eight, Della and Mike talk and Della realizes that Mike has not become loyal to the Authority. She reveals to him the project known as Renaissance and says that the effects will be disastrous. Then she says that the Authority is going to win even without taking that step. Mike's voice is shaky from the movement of the tank but Della realizes that he is inside the tank and informs Avery.

In chapter thirty-nine, Paul is severely injured as Allison makes a final rush to a position where Wili can create the bobble. Wili loses some of his contact with Jill briefly after Paul's injury but Wili urges Allison to keep her mind on the objective. In chapter forty, Wili is briefly torn by his desire to know if Paul survives but continues to work on the problem at hand. Allison drags Paul from the vehicle and races to a place she believes might be safe. Wili knows that he could bobble himself and save himself from the attack that is imminent now that the Authority has located him, but continues to work. Then Jill cuts him off the program, saying it will finish automatically and urging him to run. He does. Paul revives briefly and asks Allison if they won. She assures him that they have though she does not know for sure and fears the worst.

In chapter forty-one, Avery continues to focus on Paul, saying that he knows Paul is near his objective and that he cannot be stopped. Avery orders the implementation of the plan, Renaissance, which will encapsulate the entire enclave in a bobble and set off nuclear bombs outside the bobble. Paul assures Della that it will not be the end of humanity but the end only of these undesirables. Della grabs the box that would set off the nuclear bombs, striking Avery in the throat with tremendous force. Then she types the final command to bobble the enclave.

In chapter forty-two, the events are completed and Wili has learned that both Paul and Mike plan to bobble themselves, both believing that they will be needed in the future. Wili goes to Allison, fearing that she might also be making that plan for herself. Allison says there is a great deal to be done and that she plans to remain to work on those tasks. She tells him that at the time the Authority took over, the world had been on the verge of space settlement and that there will be the opportunity now to realize that dream. Wili leaves the meeting with Allison determined to increase his knowledge of physics, because math is really at the heart of all knowledge and he is going to need all the knowledge he can amass.

Chapters 34 through 42 Analysis

Della's reason for changing her mind at the last minute seems to be caught up in the fact that Avery is so determined to rationalize the reason for setting off the nuclear weapons. These are the same weapons that have been banned by the Authority. It should be noted that the full name of this organization is the Peace Authority. Any action against it is termed an action "against the Peace." Yet here is Avery planning what will amount to mass destruction and explaining his reasons for doing it in rational terms that probably should have swayed Della to his way of thinking. It is not clear what exactly happens but it seems possible that her time with Mike might have changed her as well. There is no doubt that Mike feels something for her. As one of his reasons for bobbling



himself, he notes that the bobble created by the Authority will, like all their bobbles, last about fifty years. He wants to be on hand when the bobble collapses to try to save Della. Mike also says that he wants to be at the place where Jeremy is embobbed in order to try to make sure that he is not killed by falling rocks or some other unforeseen accident. Mike also admits that he is not accepted by the people of this time anymore because of his traitorous acts. This seems to weigh heavily in his decision.

Allison points out that the Authority—though ultimately evil in its implementations—has served its purpose of being a ruling power of the time. She notes that without it, the people will be essentially without leadership and that she fears there will be anarchy, at least at some level. She also notes that there was a fire and that she was in danger during the first few minutes after escaping the bobble. She says that there will have to be coordinated efforts to provide support for others as they escape as well. Another point she makes is that there will be entire cities that will not know what happened to them and that they will have to be provided with leadership to prevent them from drastic actions, perhaps even launching attacks against a perceived enemy.

Wili says that it is difficult to remember that there are many vehicles on the road after the fall of the Authority and that they can arrive quickly, meaning that there is danger to pedestrians who are unaccustomed to the vehicles. As he is daydreaming after leaving Paul's office, he is almost run down. The men who rush to his aid know who he is and this seems another fact that makes Wili somewhat uncomfortable. The men call him "sir" and he knows that he has become something of a hero. As he leaves Paul, he promises that he will do everything he can to make Paul proud so that Paul will hear only good things when he returns from his time in the bobble.

An interesting point arises in the actions of Jill. Wili notes that Jill is absent from the computer for a moment following Paul's injury and that she seems to be checking on Paul. This implies a level of concern that is not possible with a machine, as Paul is quick to note later. However, Wili feels that the loss of Jill is the loss of a friend. He believes that her decision to cut him loose from the connection in the moment before he would have been killed was a sacrifice on her own part. Wili and Paul both rationalize that this was not a human sacrifice and that Jill was a computer interface, nothing more than a program. However, both continue to humanize her sacrifice and this seems to cut deeply into Wili's elation at having emerged from the battle. He realizes that this means that Paul's sense of loss would be multiplied because Paul's relationship with Jill had been so much longer than Wili's.



Characters

Wili Wachendon

Wili is a young black boy who is a genius, at least partly owing to the fact that his uncle forces him to keep his mind active. His parents abandon him as a child, initially planning to leave him for the wolves because they realize that he has a disease that typically causes a slow, agonizing death among children of Wili's age. Wili's uncle convinces them to leave the boy with him and he raises Wili, prompting Wili to use his mind when he is unable to walk and working with Wili until he gains some of his strength and is able to walk. Wili is kidnapped from the kind uncle and becomes a slave of the gangs that rule an area of southern California. He eventually escapes and wins a great deal of money in an arcade, which brings him to the attention of Paul Naismith. Paul recognizes the genius Wili displays in figuring out moves for the arcade games on his own, moves that are typically only possible for experienced players. When Paul takes Wili in, Wili pretends to accept the situation, which he believes will be nothing more than another slavery. He plans to steal what he can and to escape but finds that Paul's treatment and confidence make it impossible to leave. Paul risks a great deal to ensure that Wili receives treatment for his illness which turns out to be nothing more serious than a bacterial imbalance solved with the introduction of yeast tablets. Wili hates the fact that Paul is planning to be embobbed but promises that he will accomplish great things during Paul's absence.

Paul Naismith

Known before the wars and plagues as Paul Hoeller, he is a brilliant scientist who comes up with the concept of the bobble. Paul is an honorable man and when he realizes what the ruling Authority plans to do with the bobble, he tries to find a way to destroy the technology or at least to destroy the bobbles. He is unsuccessful in this endeavor for some fifty years though he knows that the Authority wants to kill him. This knowledge makes him incredibly careful and he spends the intervening years one step ahead of the Authority. This knowledge eventually prompts him to hide his identity and his whereabouts. Paul is the first to really recognize Wili's potential and takes the youngster on as an apprentice. This becomes an important step in his work and Paul finds that he can hand many problems over to Wili for a solution, even problems that Paul himself has been unable to solve. Paul seems somewhat wistful when he realizes that Wili—with the aid of the computer interface—has abilities that supersede Paul's own. At one point, Paul wonders if he might have been as smart as Wili if he had started working as young. Paul is also sentimental about those he cares for. When he loses Allison, he creates a holographic image of her that he uses in his everyday life. He later admits that he had used the ideal of Allison, making Jill more beautiful and perfect, as Allison had been in his memory. Paul eventually decides to have himself embobbed following the bobbling of the Authority's enclave, mostly to escape the fact that he remains in love with Allison and that Allison does not feel the same for him. He also



realizes that there is a need to have someone available after the Authority's bobble bursts in order to remind the people in that time of the threat posed by the Authority.

Allison Parker

A member of the United State Air Force prior to the bobbles, Allison is in a plane and is caught in one of the first bobbles to be used. She believes that she has had a brief memory loss upon crashing into the earth, but discovers that the pilot shares that memory loss. It is later revealed that Allison had been trapped in the bobble for some fifty years and that time had stopped inside the bobble.

Miguel Rosas

Known by most of his friends as "Mike," he is an undersheriff in the Santa Ynez Police Department, which is actually a private law enforcement agency. Mike is highly respected and trusted but eventually turns traitor to those who believe in him. His actions, though despicable in their results, are prompted by his desire to do the right thing. Mike really believes that helping the Authority shut down a bioscience lab is the right thing. However, he also hates the fact that he has become a traitor to those who trust him. As the book draws to a close, Mike decides to have himself embobbed in order to be available when the bobbles begin bursting, hopefully to save both Jeremy and Della Lu.

Jeremy Kaladze

The grandson of the leader of the Red Arrow Company, Jeremy joins Wili and Paul on their way to the chess match where Wili is slated to receive medical care. Jeremy is about Wili's age but is much more outgoing. He talks almost constantly and pushes the letter of the law regarding approved inventions by making a tractor that a small person could ride on. Jeremy is caught in a bobble near the coast when a group of bioscientists are captured.

Della Lu

The agent for the Peace Authority who is assigned the job of finding Paul Naismith after it is believed that he has the ability to create bobbles. Della is an excellent agent and it seems she will stop at nothing to accomplish what she sets out to do. She takes on the role of a submissive woman in the Red Arrow camp though it obviously makes her angry to do so. There, she seeks ways to find Paul and to further the cause of the Peace Authority as they begin their campaign against the tinkers. Della ultimately realizes that the plan being enacted by the Authority is unacceptable and attacks the man trying to set off nuclear bombs.



Hamilton Avery

The man in charge of the North American Peace Authority located in California. Avery is the son of one of the original men who proposed and implemented the Authority. He rules with decisiveness and says that his only failure during his life has been his inability to capture Paul Hoehler. Avery is obsessed with Paul's capture. It is Avery who comes up with the idea of Renaissance, a series of nuclear bombs to wipe out the area around the Authority enclave. Avery is struck by Della Lu in the moment before he could have set off the bombs, in order to stop the bombing.

Nikolai Sergeivich Kaladze

Jeremy's grandfather, he is a Russian who was sent to the United States to figure out the bobbles as they began to appear in North America. He becomes a Tinker, one of many who create the gadgets that keep the groups in touch with each other and safe from the Authority's intervention. Nikolai's group values their women, likely from having seen so many die in their early days in America.

Seymour Wentz

The man who serves as sheriff of the Santa Ynez Police Company, he tracks Wili's identity soon after Mike captures the boy and brings him to the police station. Wentz is anxious to find someone to take Wili off his hands but is reluctant for that person to be Paul.

Irma

A woman who works for Paul, she is apparently married to the man named Bill who also works for Paul. Irma believes in Wili's innate goodness, though she brooks no argument from him when she declares it is time for him to have a bath. When Wili hands over his knife, Irma trusts that he really is sorry for having had it and does not tell on him.



Objects/Places

Santa Ynez Police Company

A private protection force headed by Seymour Wentz with Mike Rosas as the second-in-command.

The Old California Shopping Center

Where tinkers go with wares to buy, sell and trade and where Paul and Mike first meet Wili.

Bobble

A large impenetrable bubble that is believed to cause death to every living thing trapped inside but that actually only stops time. The authority uses bobbles to quarantine areas believed to contain those operating contrary to the authority's law.

Jill

The holographic computer interface used by Paul and Wili to solve problems and conduct surveillance, she is in Allison Parker's image though is more beautiful than Allison.

Red Arrow

The name used for the battalion of soldiers who arrived in California to try to figure out the bobbles as they were first being used and the name of the company headed up by Jeremy's grandfather.

The Peace Authority

The rulers of the world, the organization is actually a thinly-disguised dictatorship.

The Authority Enclave

Where the Peace Authority is housed and where there is a great battle between the Authority and the Tinkers.

Tinkers

The group of people who provide items, usually electronic, to consumers. The tinkers are not allowed to create at will and there are many banned technologies, including motorized vehicles. Eventually, the tinkers are targeted by the Peace Authority as well.

Aztlan

The area that was known as Southern California, the Baja region and Arizona, it is ruled by a "loose confederation of local rulers."

Renaissance

A plan put in place by the Peace Authority to set off nuclear bombs in the area around the Peace Authority.



Themes

Coming of Age

Wili is the most prevalent example of this theme, though Mike Rosas also exhibits changes in his life that seem evidence of an emerging maturity that he lacked prior to the story. Wili's changes are overt and are seen almost from the opening pages of the story. When Wili arrives in Paul's life, he is little more than a thief, having recently escaped a gang that holds him captive and forces him into clandestine activities. Wili plans to steal everything he can from Paul and escape, but encounters Jill before he can put that plan into action. He initially believes Jill to be a ghost and Paul's property to be haunted. This is a very youthful response to the situation, though understandable. When Wili sets out to make his escape, he encounters Paul. Paul does not even try to force Wili to remain with him. Instead, Paul points out a few simple pieces of knowledge that Wili finds he cannot refute. Paul then tells Wili that what he has to offer is an abundance of knowledge, and that this kind of knowledge is much more powerful than any worldly possession. Wili recognizes the truth of what Paul says—and the power of what he offers—despite what Wili had known to be important during the time he spent with the gangs. This is an important step toward the maturing young man Wili quickly becomes.

This emerging maturity is seen in many scenes over the course of the story. Perhaps it is seen most clearly as Wili faces the fact that he is going to lose touch with Paul and Mike. He could choose to embobble himself as they are doing in order to reappear when they do. This would be an easy decision to make but Wili does as Paul requests and pledges to remain at work with Allison. In the case of Mike, he never seems to forgive himself for his traitorous actions but does see a way to try to make up for some of it, and takes that option.

The Power of Trust

Wili has grown up with little reason to trust. When he first meets Paul, Wili is trying to make money from an arcade owner and is immediately distrustful of Mike's presence. When he leaves the arcade, he rushes to hide, fearing that Mike will give chase. That is exactly what happens and Wili reacts by slashing at Mike with a knife. The reactions on both sides are based on a lack of trust. When Paul takes Wili home with him, he does not restrain the boy. In fact, Wili notes that he is given an upstairs room, which is not typical accommodation for slaves. Wili does not initially realize that he is being trusted to do what is right and sets out to figure out how to escape and how to steal as much as possible in the escape. The next person to trust him is Irma, Paul's servant. Irma discovers that Wili has a knife but declines to tell on him. This show of trust is initially viewed by Wili as a sign of weakness.



Wili shows his first sign of trusting someone else when he agrees to remain with Paul and does not try to regain possession of a weapon, having willingly given up his knife. Wili later shows a deep level of trust of Mike, though Mike provided information to the Authority and apparently cost Jeremy his life. When Mike points out to Wili that taking him to Paul's house is not a good idea, Wili says that he does not believe Mike intended to cause harm to the Tinkers. By showing Mike that he understands how he had been motivated to his previous actions and that he trusts him to do the right thing now, Wili uses the power he has learned from Paul's treatment. Mike reacts favorably and turns out to be an important part of their efforts to overthrow the Authority.

The Desire to Do What is Right

There are many characters who desire to do the right thing, but the conflict is that there is a difference of opinion as to what really is right. Paul is a prime example of this. Paul was a researcher prior to the Authority taking control of the world. During that time, Paul worked on projects aimed at defense and defense was his original concept of the use for the bobble. Paul then spends the rest of his life trying to avoid capture by the Authority in order to figure out how to demolish the bobbles because the Authority uses them as weapons rather than defensive mechanisms. Mike also wants to do the right thing and he believes the Authority's propaganda indicating that the bioscientists are responsible for the plagues that took so many lives. Since Mike believes this, he wants to help the Authority capture and eliminate any bioscience activities. Mike's actions may also be motivated by revenge, but he truly seems to believe that he is doing the right thing. Della is another example of a character motivated by the desire to do the right thing. In Della's case, she fully believes in the Authority, though she also behaves as a typical military person, willing to obey commands. However, when those commands seem to Della to be at a high cost of human life, she rebels and chooses instead to do what she believes to be right, avoiding the detonation of nuclear bombs.



Style

Point of View

The story is written in third person from a limited omniscient point of view. The perspective is wide and varied, sometimes vague and sometimes offering details. The point of view ranges through an array of characters, including Mike Rosas, Paul Naismith, Allison Parker and Wili Wachendon. These changes of perspective are necessary to the method of storytelling because the author depends heavily on misdirection and details offered out of order to maintain suspense. For example, Allison's crash is detailed in the opening chapter of the story from Allison's point of view. Her escape from the bobble is presented several chapters later, again from her point of view. Both of these scenes are presented only with the information Allison has at the time of the events. It is much later that the reader learns the background behind Allison's crash and her release from the bobble, and those pieces of information are presented through the views of other characters, including Paul.

The perspective is often limited to the perspective of a particular character at a particular time, but is overall omniscient because the reader eventually learns everything necessary to put the entire story line together. For example, the reader learns that Mike is trying to contact Della from Della's perspective in one chapter and it is not until the next chapter that the reader learns that Mike is doing this at Wili's request.

Setting

The story is set along the West Coast of America in the future. The year is approximately 2047 though there is a single chapter set in 1997. The physical setting is real in that the geographical locations described actually exist. However, the settings are fictional in that they are created from the author's imagination in a futuristic time frame. For example, it is noted that Aztlan is a region that takes up most of what had been Southern and Baja California during the time before the Peace Authority takes control as the governing body. The geographic locations of Southern and Baja California do exist but the Aztlan region is fictitiously created solely for this book. The same is true of the Peace Authority Enclave. That area seems to be set on the grounds of the University of Southern California with the focus on the research facilities there. The university grounds are real and likely have research facilities, but the Peace Authority Enclave is not real. The use of real settings lends the story an air of truth that could draw the reader into the story more readily than if the entire setting were fictitious. There are a great deal of changes with the fictitious, futuristic story line. For example, people are not allowed to have cars. These specific points, while unbelievable overall, are acceptable within the confines of the story line.



Language and Meaning

The story is written in fairly simplistic language with one notable exception in that there is a great deal of technical jargon thrown in. This jargon is convoluted and is likely aimed at confusing the reader away from trying to fully comprehend any of the technical aspects of the story line. For example, it is known that there has to be a large power source and a sophisticated computer system in place in order to create the bobbles. After providing those two pieces of information, the author uses the dense jargon as a method of misdirecting. Another important aspect of the language is that the story line and the overall plot is presented in disjointed pieces, meaning the reader must read carefully in order to find the important aspects of the plot and to make sense of the ending. This is balanced by the traditional good-versus-evil aspect of the story which is simplistic in nature and will likely keep the reader interested in following the details. Some readers may find the characters almost superficial because character development seems almost lost in the convoluted technology of the story line. The overall tone is one of hope as a group of people seek to undo the wrongs done by a powerful authority organization.

Structure

The story is divided into a total of forty-five chapters. Forty-two of those are numbered without titles. Three of them are titled. The first titled chapter is "Flashback" and is the opening chapter of the book. The second chapter is titled only with a number one. The other titled chapters fall between chapters three and four and between eight and nine and are both titled "Flashforward." The three titled chapters are devoted to Allison Parker's arrival on the scene. The first is very difficult to understand in conjunction with the first few chapters of the book because it is disjointed. That first chapter is the moment of Allison's arrival back to earth after a reconnaissance trip. The arrival is punctuated by Allison's aircraft and her crew being embobbed, though it is some time before the details of that are fully explained. The "Flashforward" chapters details Allison's escape as the bobble bursts though the full explanations are not revealed for some time. It is actually Allison's escape that makes it clear that the bobbles are not permanent as has been previously expected, and that those trapped inside did not die as had been initially proposed.

The chapters range from three pages in length to about ten. The average seems to be six to eight pages. The chapters roughly cover a specific event. For example, the first chapter covers Mike Rosas' capture of Wili. The second begins with Wili being held at the police station and ends with Paul Naismith deciding that he will take the boy on as an apprentice.

Quotes

"If Rosas had been of the older generation, there would have been no contest: ingrained respect for children and an unwillingness to damage them would have let the kid slip from his grasp. But the undersheriff was willing to play fairly rough, and for a moment there was a wild mass of swinging arms and legs." (Chapter 1, p. 19)

"He has gadgets we won't see for years. He isn't called the Tinker wizard for nothing." (Chapter 2, p. 24)

"And beyond power, Wili, there is knowledge—which some say is power." (Chapter 5, p. 48)

"It was old, the stuff carved on it was badly weathered, but I could see ... It had your name on it and ... and today's date." (Flashforward, p. 64)

"Somewhere beneath their feet lay the wreckage of an aircraft or missile, embobbed by the Peace Authority when they put down the national armies of the world." (Chapter 9, p. 73)

"When it comes to survival, the rules of evidence become an art, and Avery felt with dread certainty that someone, somewhere had figured out how to cancel bobbles." (Chapter 10, p. 81)

"For fifty years, bobbles—and the one up ahead in particular—had haunted him. For fifty years he had tried to convince himself that all this was not his fault." (Chapter 17, p. 134)

"He fought down hysterical laughter. He had invented the damn things, provided his bosses with fifty years of empire, but he and they had never realized that—though his invention worked superbly—his theory was a crock of sewage from beginning to end." (Chapter 17, p. 136)

"Take a weak person, encourage him to betrayal (for whatever reason), and then use the stick of exposure and the carrot of wealth to force him to do far more than he'd ever have had the courage or motive for in the beginning." (Chapter 19, p. 144)



"But the bobble: For an enemy to have that was an unwelcome and incredible as hell opening a chapel." (Chapter 23, p. 173)

"If we bobble up ... if we bobble up, your pretty Tinker culture gets bombed back to the Stone Age, and we'll build anew when we come out." (Chapter 38, p. 282)

"She wondered fleetingly if hard-boiled types like Della Lu and Hamilton Avery always ended up like this—rationalizing the destruction of all they claimed to protect." (Chapter 41, p. 195)

Topics for Discussion

What is Wili's life like prior to meeting Paul? Compare that to what his life is like after meeting Paul. How do the two meet? What is it about Wili that makes Paul want to further their relationship past that initial meeting? Is he right in his assumptions? Support your answer.

What is Paul's life like prior to meeting Wili? What is his role in the world's current situation? What does he think about that role? Is he correct? Support your answer.

What is a "bobble"? How are they initially created? What does the creator intend them for? What is their eventual use by the Peace Authority? What facts are initially believed true about those captured in a bobble? What comes to be known about those inside the bobble?

Who is Miguel Rosas? What is his role in bringing Paul and Wili together? What does he say about Paul? What kind of person is he? What is his eventual role in bringing down the Authority? What is his role in the Authority's capture of some bioscientists? Why does he play each of these roles?

Who is Della Lu? How does she come to be aware of Wili and of Paul? What steps does she take in her efforts to find out where Paul is staying? Why does she want to know this information? What is her fate?

It could be said that both Della Lu and Miguel Rosas are traitors. In what ways does each of them fill this role? What are the situations that lead them to these decisions? Are their actions honorable? Why or why not?

Who is Allison Peters? What does she have in common with Jill? How does Allison's appearance impact what Paul knows about bobbles? What does her appearance reveal about bobbles to the Authority?

What is the Peace Authority? Who is Jeremy Kaladze? Who is Jill? What are the roles each play in Wili's life? What are the fates of each? What is Wili's reaction to their fates?