

The Postmortal Study Guide

The Postmortal by Drew Magary

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Plot Summary

There is a short note at the beginning of the novel stating that the work included in this novel was a collection of archived materials found on an old laptop buried in the rubble after the Great Correction took place. It chronicled the time from 2029 to 2079 and served as a very good indication of what life was like during that time in human history. The collection's owner, John, is no longer living and died during the Great Correction.

Postmortal, by Margery Drew, began with the first of the blog posts by protagonist, John Ferrell in the year 2029 before he had taken the cure. The cure was developed by Graham Otto and completely halted the aging process. Unfortunately, the technology was twisted and offered on the blackmarket before it was even completely tested or had gone through the clinical trial process. Appalled, Otto backed the President's ban on the sale of the cure. This only made it more popular. John Ferrell was one of many young affluent people who went to get it done under the table.

John's roommate, Katy, found out that he'd gotten the cure and begged him to take her to get it as well. He agreed and on the day that he took her to the building to have it done the building was targeted by terrorists who were against the cure and its application. Just before the bomb went off, John spied a hot blonde woman exiting the building. Then the bomb went off and Katy died in the building. John never forgave himself. The demonstrations for legalizing the cure escalated until eventually the President lifted the ban and everyone rushed out to get the cure. Extravagant cure parties were thrown in Vegas and John attended one because he never had one before. He met a man named Keith who had decided to take a full year and spend it in a new country. When John met him Keith had already lived in a dozen countries. John envied him, but just wasn't ready for that kind of freedom yet.

John told his father and sister that he'd gotten the cure and both of them are horrified that he'd done it. Neither of them are judgmental, but question the wisdom of wanting to live forever. John quickly told them that the cure didn't prevent death, just stopped aging. A person could still die from an accident, a heart attack, or other diseases. Still, they are unconvinced. Back in his law firm, his boss told him that he needed to re-specialize in divorce law as they were instituting a new type of legal transaction called cycle marriages. Since people were living much longer, the 'death til us part' clause had grown outdated.

John became involved with a woman named Sonia. They had dated for four years when Sonia asked him what his intentions were. He didn't want to get married because in his mind it was pointless. She confronted him and asked him if they hadn't taken the cure if it would have been easier for him to marry her. He told her that probably that was true. She also told him that she was pregnant with his child. He still won't marry her, but agreed to help raise the child. She left. John learned that the blonde woman from Katy's building bombing had been spotted at three other buildings that were targeted. He was certain that she was the instigator or leader of the group.



Many problems began to emerge due to the anti-aging public. There began to be a shortage of living spaces, food began to be more expensive, and there were rumors that many countries were implementing totalitarian measures to conserve resources. Russia had become aggressive in securing resources for its country, and China made it mandatory for its citizens to have their real birthdates branded onto their arms. In the U.S. the President told those taking the cure that they would no longer be eligible for social security or health benefits.

One evening while walking home from a local bar, John was jumped by three extremists calling themselves Greenies. They held him down and carved his real birth date on his forearm, then beat him and left him for the officials to find. He began carrying a pistol after that incident. Sonia remarried and soon John received a call stating that she was headed to the hospital to have the child. The baby was a boy and John was allowed to name him David. For the first part of David's life, John helped to care for him as he promised. However, after that he decided that he wanted to go see the world, and having enough money to do so, he left the country. His only contact with his son, for the next twelve years, was through video interface. He learned that his son was attending a Church of Man group. This was a group that had determined that the only divine element in the universe was mankind, himself.

After John returned from his round-the-world expedition, the time is 2059. He decided that he needed to reconnect with his son, face-to-face. Now a grown man, David has turned into a nice person. His devotion to the COM (Church of Man) has made him a respected member in the community. David asked his father to come to one of the services, and just to humor his son, he agreed to go to one near where he lived. He went to one but while there he was attacked by a man with a gun who declared that they were all abominations. John called David and told him that he went and that he would not be going back.

John's father took the cure, and then only a few months later came down with cancer. He refuses treatment and John must watch him die. He understood as he watched his father die, that death isn't the big evil that everyone thought it was. The media continued to report shortages of water, gas, and food in many of the countries. The homeless were increasing.

Having returned back to the city, John doesn't really want to go back to being a lawyer. A friend of a friend sends him to someone that might have a job for him. John learned that the job was called an 'end specialist'. Those who had taken the cure and no longer wished to live could purchase their death through government sanctioned and subsidized end centers. John, at first, didn't want to do the job, but then after a few of the jobs he realizes that they provide a merciful service to those who wish to die. He works for a man named Matt, and has a partner named, Ernie. Soon, John rose through the ranks and was promoted to the same rank as Ernie, which meant that he was able to end someone's life.

One of the targets that he was handed one day was someone he thought he'd never see again. It was the hot blonde that bombed Katy's building. John was more than



excited to try and track her down. However, she remained elusive for many years. Ten years later, while he was downtown getting a bite to eat, he spotted her. When he finally apprehended her she gave him her side of the story. John learned that she had only been the lookout for the buildings and that she had been afraid for her life because the actual bomber was crazy and would have killed her. John believed her, and more than that, realized that he had fallen for her and was feeling things that he hadn't felt in decades. Her name is Solara Beck.

During this time the pervue of the end specialists is expanded to include the elderly and John found that he could no longer do his job. He told Ernie, when they were sent to kill an old woman, that he would pretend to overpower Ernie and then just leave. Ernie agreed, but they both know that they are now on the hit list. Quickly, John ran back to get Solara, who had moved in with him, and they left town. Solara is pregnant and as they got into the car to leave, John confessed his feelings to her. He told her he didn't expect her to feel the same for him, but that he just needed to say it to her. He told her that he would marry her, cure or no cure, and that he finally got what it meant to care for someone that much.

The state of the world has gone downhill. China has nuked its own people in order to ease the overcrowding. They called it the Great Reset. There are reports of feral bands of soldiers that had defected from many of the world's militaries. A new medical breakthrough called skeleton key is a cure all and most that could afford it, took it. The military required it for their recruits. John and Solara attempted to get out of town, but when the power goes out, everyone panicked and headed for the roads. They didn't get very far before they were attacked. Before the soldiers can harm them, there is a bright pulse of light and the soldiers are blinded. The first of many nuclear bombs have been detonated.

John took Solara and they ran for cover, taking shelter in a basement for the next two days. Afterward, they ran toward a compound that the Church of Man were holed up in. He mentioned his son, David, to them, and they agreed to take them in. They are directed to go to a secret entrance point. However, on their way there, John was stabbed. Solara managed to drag him to the secret entry point, but just as he was about to crawl into the door, a soldier came out of nowhere and shot Solara through the shoulder. They are both pulled through the door at the last minute.

In the confines of the Church's bunker, the doctor treated Solara, but refused to treat John. They told him that he had been allowed to live for decades simply because of David's standing in the church. However, they would not help him live any longer. John didn't care, but asked the Reverend to formally marry he and Solara. He does. John settled back and watched Solara as she was taken care of. He is told that she and the baby will make it just as the next pulse of light goes off outside. John reached into his pocket and took out a vial of SoFo, which was the lethal injection he'd used on his targets. He injected himself as another flash rocked the building.



Part I: Chapters 1 - 3

Summary

Part I - PROHIBITION: JUNE 2019

Chapter 1 - "Immortality Will Kill Us All"

The reader is introduced to the protagonist, who at this point is not named, but has long been dead by the time the blog posts and digital journal are located. The main character states in the first of the entries that at the time in which he was considering whether or not to take the cure, he saw signs warning against it. However, he wanted 'the cure' so desperately that he said his normal caution gave way and he contacted a doctor who could provide him with the cure. The reader learns that the protagonist was 29 at the time, and was a lawyer by profession.

He wrote that he arrived at the doctor's clandestine office, and he was told that the doctor would not give the cure to those who were over 35 because it would be a waste. The protagonist was shocked, but said nothing. The doctor explained how the cure worked. It was a type of gene therapy, he told the protagonist. He went on to tell him that he would take some DNA from the protagonist, and then would deactivate the specific gene in the DNA that caused aging. Then, he said the procedure required him to reinsert the modified DNA back into the host using a 'vector', or in this case, a virus. He also said that he would take a sample of blood first, do the modifications, but wouldn't reinject them back into the protagonist for two weeks. He did this as a precaution so that the client could have time to consider the implications. He went on to say that just because the aging process was still turned off, a person could still catch colds, die from cancer, and so forth. The cure would simply stop him from aging, and nothing more. In the end, the doctor said, those taking the cure could be sure that they would eventually die, but that it would not be from natural causes. They would eventually die from disease, a bullet, or starvation. The cure, should he return for it in two weeks' time will be \$7,000.00.

As he turned to leave, the protagonist asked the doctor if he'd taken the cure. The doctor replied that he had. The protagonist asked him how old he was and the doctor replied that he was over 35. The protagonist smirked, but said nothing as he left.

Chapter 2 - "Death is the only thing keeping us in line"

The protagonist had written another blog and was upset that the Vatican had condemned those taking the cure with excommunication, basically damning them to hell for taking the cure. He's particularly upset that this came during his deliberation period of two weeks.

The article stated that the pope was condemning those taking the cure for death. He said this while on his Goodwill Tour of Europe. The protagonist wrote in his blog that he



used to believe that religion was an insurance against death. It was a 'just in case' kind of thing that one did. He wrote that now he found himself wondering if that whole concept had been flipped, and that the cure might represent insurance against religion. He reasoned that it would be pretty awful if someone believed in God, refused the cure that could make them live longer, then realized in death that there was no God to begin with. Wouldn't it be better to live an extra thousand years or so, just in case?

Chapter 3 - "I'm always gonna get my period"

The protagonist wrote that he finally told his roommate, Katy, that he was going to take the cure. He made her swear to secrecy, and she did - but she wanted details. She managed to wheedle the name of his referral person out of him. He made her promise to pay the cable bill for a month if he gave her the contact information. She promised, but worried that maybe the doctor wasn't legit.

He reassured her that the doctor was very legit. She stated that she would wait until the protagonist has had his shots and if he didn't drop dead, then she'd know that the doctor was legit. Then it occurred to her....taking the cure would mean that she would get her period forever. The protagonist stated that it was a small price to pay, wasn't it?

Analysis

Chapter 1

This first chapter indicates that the protagonist is generally a level-headed, reasonably intelligent person, but the notion that he can take 'the cure' and never die, never age, is so seductive that it overrides his good sense. This first section is told in past tense, as if he's already done something and is reporting it to the reader.

Irony is offered in this chapter as the protagonist asks the doctor how old he is. The doctor replies that he is over 35 which is counter to what he's just told the protagonist about giving the cure to anyone over 35. It is clear that the rules don't apply to the doctor, since he's stated that giving anyone over the age of 35 the cure is a waste of the process. This underscores the theme of Aging. It is clear from both the protagonist's views and the doctor's views that aging is seen as something to be avoided, stalled off, forgotten completely. They both acknowledge that they want the cure in order to stall off the inevitable for as long as possible.

What also comes out in this chapter is the theme of Death. It is not viewed in a normal sense because, as the doctor says, the cure is not a cure for death, just for aging. So, Death will happen, just not peacefully from old age. All other human frailties are still possible. Therefore, Death, though it will happen much later for most taking the cure (barring accidents and so forth) it will still happen, and it will be twice as unpleasant. The protagonist doesn't care (and neither does the doctor) indicating that they would rather live in the now, then worry about the future and its possibilities. This is going to be a prevailing sentiment with many of the people who will take the cure. The ramifications are ignored.



Chapter 2

Irony takes center stage in the first few paragraphs of this chapter with the pope going on a Goodwill Tour and then condemning the segment of society who are taking the cure. The pope had issued this because he believed that those taking the cure were trying to avoid God's judgment. The protagonist pondered the ramifications of belief in an archaic religion that couldn't embrace change.

This chapter shows that the protagonist was still not seeing the larger picture with living longer on the planet, seeing the pope's edict as evidence and justification for taking the cure. The reader sees that the protagonist clearly had concerns and reservations when it came to religion and would rather embrace tangible aspects in his life, such as science.

Chapter 3

The reader learns in this chapter that those physicians offering the cure were doing so illegally and could have been sent to prison if captured. The roommate also illustrates the point that there were people taking advantage of the desperate, selling them something they were calling the cure, and it wasn't; in other words, a false cure.

The first bit of foreshadowing is offered in this chapter when Katy told the protagonist that she would get her period forever, indicating that there might be some downsides to taking the cure. The protagonist didn't see it that way, however, quickly telling her that it was a small price to pay for living longer.

The interesting thought that comes to mind in this chapter is that neither of them had stopped to consider the ramifications of living longer beyond their own personal impact. Globally, locally, there are larger implications, which neither were interested in or aware of. Katy suggested that there might be a good old boy network going on, where only those connected to certain persuasions and professions were being afforded the opportunity. She accused the protagonist of keeping the knowledge to himself. Relenting, the protagonist gave her the information in an effort to avoid the argument.

Discussion Question 1

Consider the ramifications of never aging.

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the various types of irony in Chapter 1 and 2.

Discussion Question 3

How is aging viewed in these first few chapters?

Vocabulary

embers, immortality, simultaneously, discomfoting, mandatory, deliberation, codifying, excommunicate



Part I: Chapters 4 - 6

Summary

Chapter 4 - "Cake-batter mixes are one of the great food innovations of the past sixty years"

In this chapter the protagonist started viewing the implications of a prolonged life if everyone on the planet were to take the cure. He ran population projections and contemplated Death. He wrote that thinking about death made him very irritable. Deciding that he needed an outside opinion, aside from Katy's, he went to see his father in Connecticut. The reader learned that the protagonist's mother died when he was only 15.

The protagonist wrote that he told his father about taking the cure, and while his father was supportive and happy for him, he refused it for himself when the protagonist offered to give him 'his guy' for the cure. He told the protagonist that he would be ready to go when his time arrived because each day alive was a day away from the protagonist's mother. This brought up the discussion about the afterlife and religion. His father told him that he believed that he would see his wife again.

For the first time the reader is given the protagonist's name, John. The reader learns of it as a result of his father, who became agitated when John suggested that he could live longer and have a more fulfilling life if he took the cure. He told John to quit being judgmental since he was not being judgmental about John's decision to 'loiter' around on the planet forever. He asked him what they should do about celebrating his birthday each year...just continue to celebrate his 29th? John told him that he would just want a cake to commemorate the occasion. His father remarked that that would be good since buying a present for him for the next thousand years would be terrible.

Chapter 5 - The Woman in the Elevator

John wrote in his journal that he went to get the injections at Dr. X's office. The elevator up to the doctor's office stalled on the fifth floor, which angered John. After the very painful injections were over, the doctor told John that he needed to enjoy life because John didn't know how much of it he had left. On the way back down in the elevator, it stalled again, on the fifth floor. An extremely attractive woman exited the elevator as John was getting out, and in the end, all he could think about was the fact that he now had all the time in the world to track her down and ask her out.

Chapter 6 - "You realize you can never retire now, right?"

John woke the next morning feeling GREAT. He felt so fantastic that he decided to go for a walk, which took him into the downtown area where there were some pro-cure protesters demonstrating in front of the UN building. John went home for a short while then realized that he was supposed to have met Katy for drinks at the local bar. He



quickly ran to the bar where she was already drunk on his behalf. As they were celebrating his 'happy cure day' she observed that the day that he died he would actually still look the same. She laughed and said that she was looking at his corpse. John laughed, too, but didn't find it funny. They drank until the wee hours of the morning. Before he stumbled into bed he took the time to really look at himself in the mirror and Katy's words came back to him. All of a sudden he seemed to wonder what he'd done to himself, and knew that it was too late to contemplate it.

Analysis

Chapter 4

In this chapter the theme of Death is explored again, this time from John's father's viewpoint. He offered a different perspective to John's stating that while the news may call his generation the most unluckiest, he didn't see it that way. He was not afraid of Death at all. His father discussed all of the things that he had done in his lifetime and how he wouldn't trade any of them in, again. He also suggested that watching someone you love die isn't pleasant, either. This would seem to be more foreshadowing by the author as to the manner of death those taking the cure will suffer.

Chapter 5

John got the injections in this chapter, but there is a pervasive insinuation that he was doing something incredibly terrible. His father's words seem prophetic, and the Vatican continued to rail against people who were getting the cure. John was willing to push all of that aside and get the cure, which he did.

The symbolism of the elevator is interesting in that it stops, equally and every time, on the fifth floor as John made his way to the doctor's office. This would seem to foreshadow and underscore what both John's father and the doctor told him....his life was not stopping, it would still continue on its journey. It would only pause for so long, and then the destination will be arrived upon. He was not avoiding death forever, though for now, the doctor's warnings about not knowing how much time he had, fell on deaf ears.

Chapter 6

The theme of Death is offered in this chapter, again, and is delivered by Katy's observation that John would look the same when he died as he looked that very moment. John was shocked at her observation and laughed it off, but in reality he was irritated. Taking the cure was supposed to guarantee that he wouldn't have to face getting old, and therefore, contemplate death for a very long time. It was driven home to him after he finished celebrating with Katy, however, that he was already looking at a dead man's face.

The inference that seems to come from both Chapter 5 and 6 is the fact that though he, and countless others, had taken the cure, it was no guarantee that he would live longer.



The assumption seems to be among those taking the cure, that the cure would stop death. However, it merely paused it for a short while until the person experienced something that trumped aging. It suggests that those taking the cure would die painful - and perhaps tragic - deaths.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Katy's statement about his death upset John (Chapter 6)?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss John's father's perspective on Death and Dying.

Discussion Question 3

What seems to be inferred in Chapters 5 - 6 in regards to death?

Vocabulary

slogan, voluptuous, explicit, inquisitive, enema, digits, corpse, stubble



Part I: Chapters 7 - 9

Summary

Chapter 7 - "The Conservative Case for Legalizing the Cure"

In Chapter 7, John included an email from a friend about Allan Atkins, a proponent and champion of the 'cure'. The email included the transcript from a televised speech by Atkins. In the transcript, Atkins challenged the government to prove that the cure was unconstitutional. He went on to vehemently accuse the government of purposely sanctioning the cure for themselves and those in elite societal circles while the average person was denied the cure. He ended the speech by urging listeners to take up arms, purchase a gun, and defend their rights.

Chapter 8 - "They're all getting divorced"

The reality of his situation sunk in as John went back to work. He realized that he didn't have to necessarily save for his retirement, and as a result he found that his motivation to actually be at work had dropped dramatically. But, on the plus side, he also realized that he could literally change professions every ten years or so and still be fine.

John's boss pulled him aside while he was at work and suggested that he begin specializing in divorce law because all of the people who'd taken the cure were now getting divorced in droves. The 'til death do you part' phrase in marriage vows and marriage licenses had been called into question and people taking the cure had created pressure for many commonly held institutions and behaviors to be challenged and changed. John took the suggestion under advisement, but then later that day witnessed a very wealthy client who walked in demanding an annulment from his wife. The lead attorney told him that it wasn't possible since they'd been married for more than twelve years. The client argued that when they married it was under the pretense that the duration would be no more than 70-80 years....having the cure had changed that and he wanted out. Unfortunately, the only thing the boss could offer him was a standard divorce. The client was upset because it meant that his wife would get half of everything.

Chapter 9 - "I never thought I had the luxury of time—now it's all I'm gonna have"

Katy wanted John to go with her to her cure consultation, but he told her that Dr. X didn't like people to come in pairs. He offered to walk her to the building, then they could go for drinks afterward. They walked downtown to the doctor's offices, passing by the UN building where the protesters had grown in number. They stopped in a bagel shop for a quick bite to eat and Katy confessed that now that she could get the cure all she could think about is what she would do with the time that it would gain her. She felt guilty about cheating death. John quickly corrected her by telling her that she could still get cancer, or die. She just wouldn't age, he explained.



When John and Katy reached the building John was shocked because the same hot blonde lady walked out of the building just as she had when he was there before. Excited that he was getting another chance at getting to know this woman, he pushed Katy towards the door and turned to pursue the blonde woman. The woman seemed nervous and quickened her pace when she looked back and saw that John was following her. He took the hint and, dejected, stopped following her. She was clearly not interested. He noticed that she turned to look back at the building, and curious as to what she was looking at, John turned to look, too.

The building exploded, and the offices, including Dr. X were reduced to rubble. John stood there in shock, along with everyone else on the sidewalk, and then he sprinted across the road to try and get into the building to find Katy. There were firemen there already and they wouldn't let him go into the building. He tried several times to get around the firemen, but they finally sent him out of the building. He allowed the feeling to roll over him: Katy was dead. And it was his fault.

Analysis

Chapter 7

This chapter introduces Allen Atkins, who had been mentioned in passing a few times in previous chapters. The reader learns that Atkins was spearheading a movement to formally legalize the cure. It is clear that Atkins was good at stirring up the crowd and the public sentiment. When he urged those listening to take up arms against the government, John felt frightened at the prospect. This short chapter is provided by the author to set the tone and create the environment where there is a great unease and growing resentment towards those who have the means to purchase the cure for themselves, creating a 'have' versus the 'have-nots'.

Chapter 8

In this chapter John was beginning to see the ramifications of a long life, both for himself and for those around him in various life situations. Not only is the term retirement needing a redefinition, but so is the institution of marriage. The client that breezed into the office demanding an annulment (when legally he had no grounds for it) is indicative of the type of social turmoil that was beginning to simmer just under the surface.

When John's boss pulled him aside and explained how their firm might benefit from all of the divorces that would now be coming through the offices, John was both frightened at the idea, and excited that the institution and notion of marriage would be changed as a result of the change. He was also looking at the impact to himself and saw that he would have the possibility of earning more money than he did before.

Chapter 9



This chapter introduces the uglier side of the conflict between those who were for and those who were against the cure. It indicates that those who were against the cure were willing to be militant and violent to uphold their views and way of life. Equally as violent and inciting were those followers of Allen Atkins. Katy seemed to represent the wild reckless abandon of youth, that propensity to leap first and look last. It was only as she was on her way to get the cure that she realized some of what that could mean for her in the future.

The blonde woman made another appearance in this chapter, having appeared at least once before when John was visiting the doctor. If she had something to do with the explosion, and John now believed that she did, then John also must reason that the explosion that killed Katy could just as easily killed him a few weeks earlier.

It is ironic that Katy was going to obtain a longer life, and in fact, ended up shortening it, even ending it prematurely. Her words about having the luxury of time seem painfully dramatic in the wake of her death. Once again the author has exposed the duality of those who are mature thinkers with those who aren't given to critical, deep thought. This is evident in Katy's thoughts about taking the cure and John's insight after having taken the cure. Also, there is the Doctor's viewpoint versus John's father's opinion on the matter.

What seems to be emerging is the circling of the old saying: just because something can be done, doesn't mean that it should be done. The technology is so new and its results have such a great implication on human life and its structures that the laws and governing bodies haven't had a chance to address those ramifications, or to institute workable solutions.

Discussion Question 1

Considering that those taking the cure will, potentially, live longer lives, what other social ramifications might be called into question (including marriage and retirement)?

Discussion Question 2

What are the arguments for and against the cure?

Discussion Question 3

Why is John unsettled by all of the unrest in the downtown area?

Vocabulary

consultation, permanent, vendors, scenario, horrific, pancreatic, substantial, intersection, wrested, tenants



Part I: Chapters 10 - 12

Summary

Chapter 10 - At the Protests

This chapter, and subsequent personal blog, showed John as he dealt with Katy's death. Surfing online he found another account about the explosion from the day before. The woman's post talked about the cure doctors being systematically targeted. She suggested that their deaths were sanctioned hits by the government. She wrote that she and others, who had been gathered at the UN protesting, were going back there in the afternoon in defiance, and to show solidarity. She predicted that there would be tens of thousands of protesters as a result of yesterday's bombing.

After John read this account all he could think about was packing his bags and leaving town. He didn't do so, however, because he knew that the same thing that was happening in his town was also happening across the country. There was no running away from it. The date that this entry is cited is Independence Day, 2019.

Chapter 11 - "A little bit of bloodshed now or a lot later on"

John attended Katy's funeral but there was no resolution for him. He found that sleeping was impossible because he kept seeing the explosion, the blonde woman, and imagined Katy lying in the building dead. He's read all of the accounts that were available to be read about the bombing and still he couldn't sleep. He told the police about the blonde woman and they made a composite sketch of her. John said that this seemed to be a dead end as no one came forward.

John referenced an earlier occurrence in Oregon pertaining to the 'cure' debates. Background on this is offered. A scientist named Otto worked for the University of Oregon had isolated the gene responsible for hair color. His attempts to create or change hair color failed, but in a hapless accident, Otto's fruit flies didn't die like the others. They simply didn't age. Though Otto was excited by the drug's use in helping those suffering from Alzheimer's disease, the use of his work for other non-medical reasons did not thrill him. He backed the president's ban on the use of the drug outside of medical necessity.

But the genie was already out of the bottle, so to speak, John wrote. Other scientists used Otto's initial work to create their own version of his drug and offered it behind closed doors for top dollar. Otto argued that with most drugs it took years to advance things a small step forward, but that with his drug it happened so fast and got into the general public so quickly that the oversight normally applied to such discoveries was overlooked.

Despite his stance on it all, one night, after working late into the evening, Otto and his colleagues were kidnapped, thrown into the back of a van, doused with gasoline, and



set alight. A group stepped forward to claim the incident, called Terminal Earth. An arrest was made. The man arrested, claiming evangelical ties to Terminal Earth, stated that it was much better to have a little bloodshed now than much more later on.

Chapter 12 - "How could you be so dumb?"

John wrote in a subsequent blog entry that he decided that he needed to leave the city for a while since he was reminded of Katy in the apartment. He opted to go see his sister, Polly, and noted that the train station was more than just crowded, now. He had attempted to catch the 6:30 train, but it was 10:30 before he could even get on. Why so many people were leaving the city, he couldn't fathom. His sister picked him up and once at her home, he confessed that he'd taken the cure. She asked him how he could be so dumb, and he told her that he'd done it for ego's sake. This made his sister even more upset with him. She asked him not to mention the fact that he had taken the cure to her husband, Mark, because he'd been talking about it for weeks. She confessed that she was usually the last to jump on any bandwagon, and that she would probably at some point also get the cure, but not for a long while. She asked him if he wasn't worried about consuming all of the resources. She said that with two children to raise these sorts of things weigh on her mind. Would there be enough food for everyone?

Analysis

Chapter 10

The theme of Death takes center stage in this chapter in a couple of places. First, there is the obvious appearance when John thought about Katy and her death. It seemed so meaningless, and he was wracked with guilt. Secondly, the theme of Death is demonstrated when the woman in the blog post stated that she and other demonstrators were going back to the UN building to continue their demonstrations, regardless of the risk to their safety or lives. In other words, she and the other demonstrators indicated their willingness to place themselves in harm's way and were embracing the idea of death, if it comes to that.

The reader also sees John trying to determine if what he had done in taking the cure was actually worth it. The theme of Consequences is evidenced in his mental processes and how he was only then thinking of the potential consequences of his actions. Had he doomed the future generations to starvation and famine? What would living longer do to the larger population and resources? These are ideas and consequences that he didn't examine prior to taking the cure. It lead him to thinking about whether or not it was worth living longer if you couldn't live well.

Chapter 11

The reader is given some background on the development of the cure in this chapter. A scientist named Otto, through a series of accidents in the lab, discovered the secret to halt aging in fruit flies. He would go on to use it in Alzheimer's patients and saw that it halted the mental decline of those suffering from it. He was, at first, elated, to have



produced something that would benefit so many. However, his technology was taken and used for other purposes and because of this Otto sided with the president in banning its use for anything other than medical necessity. Despite his stances on it, Otto was targeted by groups who opposed the technology. The theme of Technology was demonstrated in this chapter as the reader sees how technology is a double-edged sword. Even the best developments and technologies, without the proper oversight, have the potential of running amuck. The ripple effect was just starting in the year this blog was written, which was 2019. Resources were still available for people, but there was worry that in the future, there might not be. This is foreshadowing potential events in later chapters.

Chapter 12

John went to see his sister, Polly. The reader sees the dynamic between John and his sister. What becomes evident is that Polly acts as a foil to John's character. Whereas John was impetuous and took risks willingly, Polly was cautious and weighed the consequences. It was she who managed to make him see what the potential consequences were to the choice that he'd made in taking the cure. She didn't say that she opposed it, and even said that at some point she may also take it. However, she did offer the suggestion that new technology was inherently buggy, and that the cure came onto the black market so quickly that there were bound to be unforeseen consequences. She was worried for John and told him so.

The theme of Technology is demonstrated heavily in this chapter mainly through John's dialogue with his sister. That he trusted her opinion shows a lot about his character, and offers that he did value what she had to think about the cure. Both John's father and sister expressed grave misgivings about this technology, questioning its use, its value, and its impact to human quality of life. Thus, the author would seem to be suggesting that technology is wonderful and often offers to make life easier for people. However, it also forces the reader to question whether the ends justify the means. In other words, just because one can produce the technology, at some point there has to enter in a moral and ethical consideration, not to mention the overall impact on the planet. None of this has been done for the cure and as a result the entire situation spiraled out of control.

Discussion Question 1

What motivated Otto to agree to the ban on his product, siding with the president?

Discussion Question 2

How does Polly act as a foil to John?



Discussion Question 3

What is the author suggesting about technology?

Vocabulary

amiss, sect, integrity, engulfed, perpetual, castigate, tsunami, reassertion



Part I: Chapters 13 - 15

Summary

Chapter 13 - DC Apparently Stands for "Don't Come"

This chapter was noted by the archeologists who found the old laptop as an email from a friend of John's who was living in Washington, DC. He reported in the email that things were very bad there, that all of the mass transit systems were crowded or impossible. The buses had stopped running across the Potomac because protesters had increased in epic proportions. Things were so bad that the Supreme Court was relocated to a secret location just to protect them from harm. He stated that there had been many bomb threats to the White House. He also wrote that the National Guard had been put on standby and that a type of martial law had been enacted, which meant that armed guardsmen were stationed in all of the train stations and near governmental buildings. The profiling had been almost ridiculous since people who even looked as if they were going to protest were arrested, questioned, or detained. Mike, John's friend, was astounded at the chaos that seemed to be apparent everywhere. He wondered where it would all end.

Chapter 14 - A Blonde Everywhere I Turn

This two page chapter and blog entry, showed John chasing any and every blonde woman that fit the description of the blonde woman that was involved in Katy's death. He wrote that whenever he would see someone who was blonde, he'd follow her, take a picture of her on his phone, then cue up the police station's number just in case it ended up being her. Each time he was wrong. None of them were the woman he'd seen.

Chapter 15 - The Worst Since Kent State

This entry is John's reposting of an article about the escalating violence. The article stated that in New Hampshire, at the Capitol Building, protesters had become violent, demanding access to the building. National Guardsman opened fire on the crowd. Many were injured and several were killed. The newspaper article also reported that similar events had happened internationally, especially in Berlin where three students were gunned down. This latest incident was reminiscent, the report stated, of the 1970s Kent State incident.

John added a small paragraph after the news article. He'd looked out of his window to see a crazed man, half dressed, waving a huge sign that said; GIVE IT TO US on it. John also shared that he'd heard rumors that the National Guardsmen had been offered the cure for their continued assistance, and that they'd offered to extend their pension years, too. John wrote that he was officially frightened.



Analysis

These chapters chronicle the continuation of the degradation and unraveling of society. Martial law was enacted and seemed to have little impact on the escalating violence. What is apparent is that there was a perception by those not being given the cure that they felt as if they had been somehow slighted. The theme of Consequences is demonstrated in Chapter 13 as the reader sees the chaos that continued to plague the city as protesters see the government's ban on the cure as an act of oppression. The fact that the officials had been moved out of the DC area seems to suggest that the situation was very grim.

John was still grieving for Katy's death and continued to look for the woman in red that he'd seen outside of the office building the day of the bombing. The bombing continued in other parts of the nation and John included many news feeds and posts about the violence that was happening. In Chapter 14 and 15 on a closer scale, the reader sees John beginning to ask the questions he should have asked earlier on. What was going to happen when too many people begin living longer and having more children? What about retirement? Health benefits? Still, it didn't matter. The perception of those marching in the streets is that withholding the cure from the masses was the greatest injustice since civil rights movements in the ancient past.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the escalating consequences of withholding the cure from the general public.

Discussion Question 2

What does moving the officials from Washington DC suggest about the protesters?

Discussion Question 3

Why had John begun to be afraid as of Chapter 15?

Vocabulary

accommodate, riots, perimeter, pedestrian, thoroughfare, restricted, airspace, distraction



Part I: Chapter 16 - Part II: Chapter 18

Summary

Chapter 16 - "One infinite generation"

This chapter was an excerpt from the U.S. President's speech in regards to The Cure. He stated that he would revoke the executive order that banned the black market sale of the cure for aging. There would be stipulations in that those taking the cure would have a cut-off date for medicare and social security, so that they would not be receiving those indefinitely. It would also be expressly forbidden for anyone under the age of 26 to get the cure. He went on to state that there would not be so much as a future generation, but an infinite one, due to the cure.

Chapter 17 - "The floodgates are wide open"

This chapter was a collection of responses that John had included in response to the President's declaration. One media source, The Atlantic, stated that this lifting of the ban was just proof that if Americans pouted and shouted long enough that they would get what they wanted, whether or not it was in their best interest. Yet another one was a post from Allen Atkins denouncing the President and calling him a fraud and a criminal. He stated that people had to die in order for the President to listen to what Atkins had been saying all along. He declared that he'd gotten the cure and was excited about the future. Another entry simply says: You have no idea what you've just done. An anchorman from NBC news source stated that the President's caution in legalizing the cure was justified. He also warned that this had just opened the floodgates, and that life as everyone knew it, was going to change. Whether that would be for the better or the worse, only time would tell.

Part II: SPREAD: JUNE 2029

Chapter 18 - Photo No. 3,650

This chapter, and blog, was dated 10 years later. John had taken his picture, just as he had been taking his picture every morning for the last ten years. He remarked that other than his hair style and perhaps his level of five o'clock stubble, nothing ever changed. He hadn't aged. One day he drew a star on his cheek with a sharpie just to delineate one day from the next. He said that it was an odd thing not to see the statement of age writing its tale on his face, like it had done for his father. Literally, there was nothing to mark the passing of time, biologically, where he was concerned.

Analysis

In Chapters 16 - 17, John offered a transcription of the president's speech where he lifted the ban on the cure, legalizing it. Then, John offered the general public's view on



the president's decision. What comes of these two short chapters is that the politicians had decided to give the people what they were asking for so that they would be reelected. There were numerous scientists and mathematicians who argued against the widespread use, but no one wanted to listen to them.

Allan Atkins, the noted activist for the cure, was thrilled and elated at the declaration, but still took the moment to point out that people ended up having to die before the president did the right thing. One prophetic statement suggested that the president didn't understand what he had just done to mankind. The theme of Technology is touched upon lightly in these two chapters as many debate the decision to legalize the cure or not. John, who had already taken the cure, didn't see the harm, believing that mankind would adapt as he always had, that things would adjust and everyone would live a longer, happier life. Of course, nothing ended up being further from the truth.

Part II is titled The Spread and takes place 10 years later. At this point mass amounts of people had taken the cure. John was only now beginning to understand the ramifications of his decision, touching upon the theme of Consequences. He found that he was unable to commit to a woman as far as to marry her, since they would both live very long lives. He also didn't want to have to deal with any fallout in the way of a divorce. John was still not ready to see the full scale of the consequences for the legalization of the cure. He was still very much only concerned with himself. The symbolism of putting the star on his face, just to see the passing of time is the first inclination that the reader has the John might regret having taken the cure.

The theme of Age is suggested with the star on John's face, which he wore for a full week just to watch it fade. In photo albums in days past, one could see the passing of time as people aged, children grew, fashions shifted. But, John realized, all of that had halted, frozen in place. He still looked 29, but was really 39.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss how the theme of Technology is exemplified in these chapters.

Discussion Question 2

Why did John put a star on his face and take a picture?

Discussion Question 3

What did John realize about aging?

Vocabulary

prompted, unspecified, incident, sideswiped, primal, infinite



Part II: Chapters 19 - 21

Summary

Chapter 19 - "You said you'd love me forever"

In this chapter, dated 2029, John and his long term girlfriend were having an argument. They'd been together, he wrote, for four years and Sonia wanted to know where the relationship was headed. In other words, she wanted to get married. John didn't see the point. 'Till death do you part' seemed a little old fashioned considering that they both had taken the cure. He told her that he was as committed to her as he was in the beginning, but he didn't know that he could commit to her for five hundred years, if they lived that long. She argued that the commitment was the same whether it was fifty years or five hundred years. They argued, then she blurted out that she was pregnant. He told her that he was not ready for that type of responsibility. He agreed to support the child, begrudgingly. Sonia left.

Chapter 20 - I Seek the Grail

This short chapter was about John going out to buy a grail so that he could go on a weekend trip with his friends to Vegas. There was a new tradition that had sprung up around 'the cure' and John wanted to take part in it. However, he had to choose a grail (decorative cup) in order to take part. He looked at all of the choices, picked up and changed his mind a dozen times, and finally selected something that reminded him of a medieval knight's cup. He took it home, drank a rum and coke in it to break it in, and waited for the next day when he would leave for Vegas.

Chapter 21 - Field Trip: - The Fountain of Youth

There was a new tradition for those taking the cure, John shared in his next blog. People seeking the cure would make their way to Vegas where they would choose the cure ceremony of their liking, then they would dip in a Grail (purchased beforehand for the ceremony) into the symbolic fountain of youth, would be strapped into a chair, then given the cure. After the cure was given to them, they could choose from any number of after parties, including jumping from a throne into a pool of water. This was what John opted for, even though he'd already had the cure. The establishments offered the cure party for those who had taken the cure before it was legal. John and his friends left to take part in the ceremony.

Analysis

In Chapters 19 - 21, the reader sees that John, though he remained unaged for 10 years, still hadn't matured past the age of 29. He was still unable to commit to anyone longterm, even when he learned that his long time girlfriend, Sonia, was pregnant. And,



he was unwilling to take on the responsibility. This was underscored by his taking part in the Grail parties in Vegas.

The theme of Age is demonstrated in Chapter 21 when John went to one of these Grail Parties. All of the participants believed that they were thumbing their nose at those over the age of 40, in a type of snobbery, they celebrate their eternal youth by engaging in crass displays and drunken revelry. Age is seen as something to be avoided, reviled, avoided at all costs. The ironic thing, however, is that they were still aging chronologically even though their bodies were not.

Additionally, it is ironic to consider how much time, effort, expense, and worry John put into the proper selection of a grail to take with him to one of these parties, when in a previous chapter he couldn't even commit to raising his own child, let alone agree to commit to a relationship. His focus and goals were still completely immature and, thus, his decision making still quite juvenile. His priorities seemed permanently skewed and stuck in his late 20s.

Discussion Question 1

How was Sonia's reaction to her pregnancy different from John's reaction?

Discussion Question 2

What made John want to attend the grail parties in Vegas?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the theme of Age as it appears in these chapters.

Vocabulary

grail, fraud, legalized, semblance, relent, invested, unvarnished



Part II: Chapters 22 - 24

Summary

Chapter 22 - A Day in the Life of a Terra Troll

John shared a blog that he'd found about Terra Trolls. These were groups of extremists who committed acts of terrorism towards those obtaining the cure and taking part in the Cure Parties and Ceremonies in Vegas. He reported that this particular blog talked about a terra troll who came up to someone just after they'd gotten the cure and blinded them by throwing acid in their eyes. The blogger stated that the terra trolls were worse than true terrorists because they didn't want to kill anyone, they wanted to ruin lives.

John included a magazine article from the New York Magazine where the reporter had interviewed and profiled a terra troll. The young man, identified only by XMN (sounds like the word examine) turned out to be a deranged anarchist whose greatest joy was to bring misery and unhappiness, destruction to those around him. This particular terra troll group that XMN was part of liked to take their anger out on others via electronic means, such as message boards, blogs, feeds, and so forth. XMN's mindset was shown to be that he wanted to create people who would never be any happier than he ever was. He eagerly shared with the reporter that there were large numbers, and growing larger, of people just like him.

Chapter 23 - Afternoon Link Roundup

This was a collection of short three sentence blurbs about the escalating violence globally, as a result of the cure going international. In South Africa a freighter almost capsized when it was enmeshed in a huge garbage patch. Another link featured that there had been a consumer gas ban, and that a wealthy heiress had contrived to kill her father so that she would inherit the money (both had taken the cure).

Anti-Cure towns had sprung up around the U.S. and other parts of the world. They indicated that they wanted to secede from the rest of the country, as they didn't want their taxes going to support something that they believed was fundamentally wrong.

Chapter 24 - "I've made a terrible mistake"

John visited his father and later wrote a blog about his conversation with him. The date was still 2029. His father had determined that he would go and get the cure after all, just to see what all the fuss was about. He shared that he regretted the decision and wished he could reverse it. When John asked him why, he told him that each day he had to wake up and deal with the reality that he would always wake up old and tired. Now, he would have to wait even longer before he would join his deceased wife in the ever after. They argued about whether or not there really was an afterlife. John's father was also worried because he took the cure without thinking it through. He wouldn't have enough



money to live on forever, and he didn't have a job. It was Thanksgiving Day, but suddenly John wasn't feeling very thankful.

Analysis

Chapters 22 - 24 show the growing depravities that continue to exist because the general population isn't aging or maturing past the age of 29. There are some exceptions to the rule, for instance, John's father. In a moment of fear, he took the cure, and later regretted it terribly. John read on the news feeds that Terra Trolls interrupted a Grail ceremony in Vegas and threw lye in a newly cured person's eyes. These trolls wanted to create havoc and chaos to the people who'd taken the cure so that they would have a lifetime of misery.

John's father, on a personal level, represents many of the citizens who were swept in the grander, the idea of it all, but then regretted the decision. He told John that each day was the same after taking the cure. Nothing ever changed. He said that he took the cure when he was 65 and that the same aches and pains that he had then, he would then have forever. The misconception that death would be cheated was common among those who had taken the cure. The theme of Death surfaces again as John's father complained about his decision and that now he wouldn't be joining his wife anytime soon. The arrogance of mankind is exemplified in John's father's decision to take the cure, considering that if one stopped aging, one would never die.

Likewise, in Chapter 23 the reader sees that certain segments of the population had begun to think ahead to what the possible outcomes might be for a population that never ages and seldom die. They had created their own small compounds and towns where only 'organics' were allowed to live. Those taking the cure were not allowed in. This type of segregation is foreshadowing the sharply divided segments of the population that would happen in the future.

Discussion Question 1

What motivated John's father to take the cure, even though in an earlier chapter he tried to talk John out of it?

Discussion Question 2

Why had depravities and careless living continued to be on the rise, ten years after John took the cure?

Discussion Question 3

What were of the reactions by people to the reckless living of the cured?

Vocabulary

infirm, prenuptial, acrimony, assured, monstrosity, cheesy



Part II: Chapters 25 - 27

Summary

Chapter 25 - The Truth about China

This chapter talks about how some of the other countries dealt with the cure and the inherent issues it brought with it. John spoke about a friend of his named, Chan, who had come to New York to work in their law firm for a while. There was supposed to be a merger with the Beijing office, but it never took place because of the cure and its implications. John had assumed he'd never hear from Chan again, but then, out of the blue, he received an email through an American living in Beijing. Chan had begged the tourist to use her unregulated tablet to get a quick email out to John. He begged John to try and get him and his family out of China. He stated that everyone had been required to get their start date (birth date) tattooed onto their arms. He'd gotten the cure when he'd been in the U.S., so he'd had to lie about his birth date. He was worried that it would only be a matter of time before they would come to take both him and his wife away for having taken the cure. John quickly tried to go through all of their diplomatic channels to try and get Chan and his family out, but learned later that they had already been rounded up.

John received word that Chan and his wife were killed. John determined that he would get Chan's story out to the world so that people would know what was going on in China. John was devastated at his friend's death.

Chapter 26 - Afternoon Link Roundup

As before, this was a collection of relevant links that John felt were germane to the time and climate of the day. In British Columbia, doctors were killed by pro-death factions. Geriatric products had taken a hit economically, the mayor raised the tolls in New York to cover the levee system, and suicide bombings in the Middle East were down. There were rumors that many countries, including Russia, were executing citizens who were over the cure age of fifty. Sports figures were breaking numerous records, which brought into question as to whether they should be counted or not, or a new designation created. Cycle marriages were declared illegal in Utah.

Chapter 27 - Confessions of a Nonstockpiler

John wrote that many of those who had received the cure had begun the practice of stockpiling food and other supplies. He had a couple of friends who had rented out storage facilities in New Jersey. But the real professional stockpiler that he had to do some legal work for truly amazed him. The Texan had a compound and it held nearly ten years worth of everything he would need. The underground bunker was lavish and when he visited the complex, John said that he didn't even feel as if he were hundreds of feet underground at all. The client asked John if he was stockpiling and John told him



that he was working on it. Disappointed in John, the Texan gave John a gun, because at least he should be able to defend himself when the end happened. John didn't say so at the time, but he was appalled at the gun. He decided to turn it in at the local police station for money.

Analysis

Chapters 25 - 26 offer examples of Consequences. At this point, many governments had started taking drastic measures in order to conserve the dwindling resources. The example of John's friend, Chan, from China and his plea for help, underscore the drastic and draconian measures that many international countries were engaged in. Likewise, there were rumors that Russia had been offering the cure and other medical enhancements to its military. Using China as an example of a government's extreme measures is also foreshadowing the events that will occur at the end of the book, when China opts to use nuclear weapons as population control in their own country.

The first inclination (in Chapter 27) that John had about what the true future might hold was when he was sent to a client's home in Texas who needed some legal papers drawn up. The Texan showed John his bunker, which was lavish in nature, but whose message was simply one of survival. He told John that he had at least 10 years worth of materials and so forth to survive shortages, which he assured John were coming. John felt woefully unprepared and had some friends back home who had begun also stockpiling. John hadn't saved so much as a couple of beans. John didn't like to feel badly about himself, and in typical fashion, rationalized that the Texan was a kook.

The interaction with the Texan is foreshadowing a time when John would need to defend himself with deadly force, would need to have his own supplies stored up, and that there would come a time when it would be every man for himself. The clear indication that John was avoiding this reality is that he planned on taking the gun to the police station and selling it to them for fifty bucks.

Discussion Question 1

Why did John feel woefully unprepared?

Discussion Question 2

What was China doing to its citizens?

Discussion Question 3

What didn't John want to face?

Vocabulary

insurgent, mannerisms, vandalism, desensitized, consumer, immobilized, cirrhosis



Part II: Chapters 28 - 30

Summary

Chapters 28 - What Do We Do with Baby Emilia?

The date continued to be in the year, 2029. John had included a small news report on an infant who had been given the cure. The baby was born to a woman who had already had two sons by an earlier marriage. Now, after having taken the cure, she decided that she would have a child, a girl, and when the baby got to the perfect age, she would give the baby the cure. The cure was given to baby Emilia when she was only 8 months old, insuring that she would never leave the cute baby stage. The authorities learned of this and arrested the mother, Mia Burkhart, who insisted that she did nothing wrong. Incarcerated, Mia's sister had to take on the dubious pleasure of taking care of the infant, who would remain an infant for the rest of her life. It is evident in the interview that Mia's sister was quite upset about the entire situation. Of this article, John reported that he learned that Mia had obtained an agent and a publicist and was speaking to networks about a possible television program.

Chapter 29 - "He looks just like you"

John received a quick call from Sonia who said that the doctor had said after the last ultrasound that the baby would have to be induced immediately. John hurriedly rushed to the hospital to be there for the birth. Chan's experience at the hospital with his own child surfaced in John's mind, which made him fearful that something terrible might happen to his own child. He'd been very involved in the process and was there to see the baby's birth, even though Sonia had gotten married to someone else by then. Because of his dealings with Chan he was afraid when the nurses came to take the baby back to the nursery area, but they reassured him that it wasn't China and that the U.S. didn't treat its citizens like that.

Chapter 30 - The Man Who Will Live Everywhere

Still dated in the same year, but several months after the birth of his child, John went to a bar to meet a girl for a date, but went early so that he could be alone with his thoughts for a while. While there, he sat next to someone who seemed interesting. He was an Australian named, Keith. What fascinated John about Keith was that while Keith was Australian and married, he wasn't planning on returning to Australia anytime soon. He planned on living one year in every country in the world for the next hundred or so years. He shocked John when he said that he and his wife had an open relationship, which, according to Keith, was the only way that it would work with the new life expectancies.



Analysis

The theme of Technology is demonstrated in Chapter 28 as the anecdote of Baby Emilia is offered through John's post. He showed that a woman took the technology, which was already questionable for adults, and gave to her 8-month-old daughter. This selfish act, alone, indicates that without proper oversight and forethought, technology can be a negative influence and have disastrous consequences. Now, since the mother had been sent to jail, the baby (who would always and forever remain 8 months old) had been given to the woman's sister to take care of. Having to perpetually take care of an infant for the rest of her life was a daunting prospective and was almost like a life sentence of another sort to the woman's sister. Acting without thinking, or knowledge without wisdom where technology is concerned is at the heart of this chapter.

The theme of Age is also lightly touched upon in this chapter because Emilia would always be frozen as an infant, robbed of her ability to age and go through the normal stages of life. What is interesting to note is that while the reader may be appalled at this, people were robbing themselves in the same way by taking the cure as older adults, too.

Chapters 29 - 30 give a quick overview to what people had been doing with the time that they had gained from taking the cure. John rushed to the hospital to view his son's birth, but then was totally unconcerned with raising his son. He convinced himself that he loved his son, but when the opportunity came to see the world, off he went, leaving Sonia and her new husband to shoulder the responsibility for the next 12 years.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the ethical and moral implications that Baby Emilia's story offers.

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the theme of Consequences for one's actions as they occur in all of these chapters.

Discussion Question 3

What actions on John's part indicate that he was still very immature.

Vocabulary

billionaire, prematurely, detained, complicit, definitive, cache, etched, superficial



Part II: Chapters 31 - 33

Summary

Chapter 31 - "Warmest greetings from the Church of Man!"

In this entry, John chronicled several days' events as they unfolded for him. As John walked to his dentist's appointment, he noticed some people handing out fliers. They belonged to a group called the Church of Man. Though he told them he wasn't interested, they shoved one of their fliers in his hand, anyway. The flier said that the new Church of Man would be opening soon and that people were invited to attend. The flier gave a basic overview of the faith, which included the fact that the Church didn't worship a deity, but rather embraced the ideology of celebrating mankind as divine, a type of collective divinity. John shared the flier with a friend of his who said he dated a girl who belonged to the church. He told John that he went to a service once and it was completely creepy, like a hippie day camp, he said.

Chapter 32 - "We'll see you again"

John went to a party at a local bar to celebrate a co-worker's pregnancy. Bored, John tried to make small talk with the bartender, but it didn't work out. He spotted a girl, Alison, whom he'd known back in school. He remembered that he'd been head over heels in love with her back in school. He determined that he would at least go over to speak with her. He ended up sitting with her and her friends for appetizers and some drinks. The friends left them to their own devices for a while and John managed to make arrangements to see her at a later date.

He was mugged in the alley by three men who demanded to know what his birthday and cure date was. John offered them his wallet and tablet, but they didn't want that. They took out a knife and while the others held him, they carved his birth date into his arm. He wished that he'd carried the Texan's gun with him that night. The trolls who attacked him were called Greenies, he later learned, and were roving by the hundreds, attacking people and branding them.

Chapter 33 - XMN Was Right

The incident in the alley continued to haunt John for many months and many times, in the middle of the night, he would imagine that they were coming back to do something worse. He started sleeping with his gun under his pillow, just in case. Many nights, however, he just couldn't sleep and thus began chronicling the events and circumstances surrounding the cure.



Analysis

Chapters 30 - 33 chronicle the now spiraling decline and response by society to the cure. One large segment of the population reacted by creating a Church of Man, designed to worship the better qualities inherent in mankind, perhaps in an effort to reinforce those traits. They seemed to share resources, offered support to their members, and imposed a type of regimented lifestyle for their congregation.

Likewise, the reader learns that in Chapter 31 there were wild, roaming bands of people called Greenies, who believed that, like China, everyone should be branded with their actual birthdate. Anyone labeled with a birthdate who had lived well past 80, and if found by the Greenies, would be killed. Their game of 'bag and tag' spilled over onto John when he was mugged after leaving a bar. They held him down while they carved his birthdate onto his forearm. The event traumatized him to the point where he decided to carry the Texan's gun from now on. This event also set into motion the events that would eventually lead to Alison's death, thus demonstrating the theme of Consequences for one's actions.

Ironically, John stated that because he has a hard time sleeping he decided to start chronicling the events surrounding the cure and all of the upheaval going on. If it hadn't been for his mugging, for meeting the Texan, or going to the bar, the entries and the archived data would never have been created and left for future generations to read.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Consequences in these chapters.

Discussion Question 2

How had people begun to react to having the cure and the growing population numbers?

Discussion Question 3

What are the pros and cons of a church like the Church of Man?

Vocabulary

etched, self-sustainable, presumably, vulcanized, supplication, masochist, maniacal



Part II: Chapters 34 - 36

Summary

Chapter 34 - "Does it hurt?"

John had his first date with Alison. She noticed the scars on his arm. He'd been to a doctor to have them treated and possibly erased. They couldn't be erased, but the doctor urged him to go and have them touched up so that they looked like a proper tattoo. John opted for plastic surgery, instead. Alison knew about the circumstances surrounding the scars and told John that she felt responsible, and that she believed that she was bad luck for anyone who was involved with her. John refused to believe this. They went to bed together and John said that for the first time since the attack, he didn't have any nightmares.

Chapter 35 - "Yeah, that's one of them"

The police called John to ask him to come down to the police station to view some people they'd captured. When he arrived at the station, the officer told him that they captured a Greenie but that he might not be the one that actually attacked him that night. In the lineup, one of the Greenies smiled at the one way window and that made up John's mind. He pointed out the man and told the officers that he was one of the men that accosted him. It wasn't true, but John wrote that he regretted nothing.

Chapter 36 - "Did you know that cigarettes have almond oil in them?"

John went to visit his father. John had not told him anything about the attacks because he didn't want to distress his father. As it turned out, his father had been distressed already having learned that he had pancreatic cancer. John watched his mother die of cancer and was familiar with the process, but was confused when his father said that he was going to forego all of the treatments. John asked his father if he was trying to commit suicide. His father argued that it wasn't anything like suicide. He told John that the doctors gave him a year, but he was hoping for a shorter time span than that. John could tell that there was no talking his father into anything, so he opted to just enjoy his time with his father. They drank Scotch together and discussed mundane things.

Analysis

These chapters see John's personality take a decided turn. In Chapters 34-35 he not only claimed Alison as some type of long sought out prize (pretty girl from his high school that he could never date), but he had no qualms about identifying the wrong man in the police lineup, simply because the man was a Greenie. The reader sees John's decline mirroring the decline of the general civilization.



When Alison asked him about his scars, John says that it was handled. He had gone to a plastic surgeon who had practically erased the scars from his arm. Alison declared that it was her fault, but John disregarded her belief that she was bad luck. What the reader sees is the fact that John was just so infatuated with the idea that he had been able to date Alison that he couldn't see past the moment he was living in to view any possible consequences coming at him down the road. He also didn't like the pity that he got from Alison in regards to the mugging incident. He resolved that if he ever saw the man who actually did the mugging that he will kill him.

In Chapter 36 the reader is offered the theme of Death again, by way of John's father. Instead of fearing death, like John, John's father was actually grateful that he had cancer. He told John that he didn't want to fight death, but was rather looking forward to it. John could tell that his father had a peace about it that he couldn't comprehend.

Discussion Question 1

How did John view Alison?

Discussion Question 2

What happened as a result of John's mugging?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the theme of Death as demonstrated in Chapter 36.

Vocabulary

ineptitude, sanguine, trajectory, mantle, holocaust, sewage, inaugural



Part II: Chapters 37 - 39

Summary

Chapter 37 - When They Tell You Not to Mess with Texas, They Mean It

A news article reported that in Texas, law enforcement had handed down the death penalty for a career criminal who'd taken the cure. Having raped many women, simply putting him behind bars, where he would live indefinitely on the tax payer's dime, wouldn't stop him from continuing the crime spree once he was released. A new legislation, the article reported, had been enacted to cover these sorts of crimes in the postmortal world. It was called Darien's Law.

Chapter 38 - "I'm not even sure this is a marriage anymore"

This chapter featured John's sister, Polly who had come into the city to have drinks at the Ocean Bar. She had heard about their father and was visibly upset. Or so John thought. What he found out was that she was more upset because of her husband, Mark. He had told her that he wanted a cycle marriage and would like to leave her in another ten years. She was devastated. She confided in John that she wished neither of them had ever gotten the cure. It had ruined everything.

Chapter 39 - "I don't know if anyone will ever get married again"

John was in bed with Allison when they began talking about marriage and how its definition had changed since the cure. She stated that she didn't think that anyone would get married any more, that it would be too outdated. John shared that he would marry her in a second, but she asked about why he didn't marry Sonia, then. He quickly responded that he wasn't in love with Sonia like he was falling for her. They continued to spar and wonder about whether love was even obtainable as postmortals, since there's no expiration date. John told her that at the moment he didn't care about that, just what he felt at that present moment. She was unconvinced.

Analysis

Chapter 37 deals with the ramifications of living longer lives. The short news feed that John included in this chapter details the changes that were having to be made, legally, so that career offenders weren't kept indefinitely in jail. They would outlive their sentences, then be released onto the public to continue their offenses. The new law recognized the government's realization that drastic measures, often harsh measures, would have to be put into place in order to accommodate such a burgeoning population.

The last two chapters (38-39) both focus on the topic of relationships. First, the focus is on Polly's relationship with Mark, her first husband. She was devastated when Mark asked her for a cycle marriage, wanting to leave the marriage in ten years' time. Polly



told John that this never would have happened, or have even been a conversation, had they not taken the cure.

Later that evening, when John was with Alison, they discussed Polly's remark and Alison says that she didn't see why anyone would consider marriage anymore. She asked John why he didn't marry Sonia when she told him about the baby. John's remark was telling in that he couldn't bring himself to tell Alison that he hadn't wanted to commit to Sonia, especially for the rest of his life. Instead, he distracted her with sex, and hoped that she wouldn't continue to ask more questions. While he believed that he was falling deeply for Alison, he believed that it was still too early to be considering whether she was 'the one' or not.

Discussion Question 1

What had the cure done to relationships, as evidenced by Polly's situation?

Discussion Question 2

What was society doing to adapt to the longer living population?

Discussion Question 3

What were the positive aspects of those who've taken the cure?

Vocabulary

adversity, populace, celebs, edifice, absorbed, periphery



Part II: Chapters 40 - 42

Summary

Chapter 40 - Afternoon Link Roundup

The dates on these blogs and entries were created in 2031. This was a collection of notable posts for the day. One report stated that the U.S. Army had massive desertions over the past year, and that an understudy on a Broadway play killed the show's lead because she was tired of being the eternal apprentice. Governmental officials were considering removing the allowable dependents for children all together, and that the Census Bureau had discovered that there were only 35 million true 'organics' left alive in the U.S. Lastly, there was a report that stated that oil prices had soared due to the fact that there were only several billion barrels of oil remaining in the Arctic.

Chapter 41 - "This is good"

John wrote that his father had gone downhill faster than anyone thought he would. The doctors had told the family that it would be only a matter of days, so John had picked up David, his son, from Sonia's, and he and Allison had gone to see John's father. This was the first time that his father had met Allison. Polly arrived and Allison took the children out for pizza and left Polly and John alone with their father. He told them that it was all good, then he laid back and died.

Chapter 42 - Home Cure?

John included a short internet article about a new product called Home Cure, which would allow a person to give themselves the cure in the privacy of their own home. The advances that had happened have allowed a person to take the cure without having to have a blood test first. Patients could get a prescription, pick up the cure from the pharmacy, then administer it at home. John included that the pharmaceutical company's stocks tripled.

Analysis

These chapters indicate that society and the government was still confused about how best to cope with the population increase and longevity. Those in the military had deserted their posts, gasoline reserves were nearly depleted, and resources around the globe were dwindling, while on the home front there was a new product that would allow people to get the cure and administer it to themselves from the comfort of their own home.

Chapter 41 is a poignant moment for Polly and John as they said goodbye to their father in his last moments. John still could not fathom how anyone could welcome death, but he saw satisfaction and even joy in his father's eyes when he took his last breath. The



theme of Death is demonstrated clearly in this chapter as John's father's last words were, "This is good." He was trying to tell his son, one last time, that death was not the enemy everyone made it out to be.

Discussion Question 1

What was John's father trying to teach him about death?

Discussion Question 2

What events and actions taken indicate that society was still confused about how to treat the cure and those taking it?

Discussion Question 3

Why might there have been mass desertions from the military?

Vocabulary

ecstasy, neuron, consume, lofty, hindsight, rogue, cyborgs, vicinity, cursory



Part II: Chapter 43 - Part III: Chapter 45

Summary

Chapter 43 - "Look at me"

The year was 2031. John and Allison were leaving a restaurant where they'd had a nice meal and a few too many drinks. John spied the Greenie that had attacked him in the alley so many years previously. Having kept the Texan's gun all these years, he pulled it out, and emboldened by the amount of bourbon he'd consumed, he pursued the man. He ended up pistol whipping him in an alley. Allison was appalled and when she backed away from John and the violence, she didn't see that a truck was coming around the corner. She was killed instantly. John decided that there was nothing left in New York for him any longer. He just wanted to leave.

Part III - SATURATION: MARCH 2059

Chapter 44 - "The cure for the cure"

Several decades had passed between entries. John had made an appointment with someone named Matt. Their mutual friend, Jim, had recommended John for a job. Matt looked at John's resume and noticed a three decade's long gap in time. John had left the law firm because he didn't like doing divorce law any longer. Matt revealed that the job was called, End Planning. In other words, John would be part of a group that facilitated death for those who had taken the cure and no longer wanted to live forever. The rules were given to John, with the most important rule being that he must verify the person's identity and cure date. He was told that there were two types of End Specialization. There was hard end and soft end. Soft End was when a person was voluntarily ending their lives, and hard end was not voluntary. Matt told John that they didn't do hard end jobs, yet. They decided that with John's skill set that he would be an asset to their business, and he was hired.

Chapter 45 - The Hippie in the Graveyard

John's first job was with one of the other workers named Ernie. They were directed to find a man named Chuck who lived in a microbus in a junkyard. When they arrived, Chuck told them that he wanted to end his life by being shot out of a cannon. Ernie told him that custom jobs would cost more, but Chuck didn't care. He wanted the entire event broadcast as well. After he consulted with Matt back in the office, it was determined that they could give Chuck the end he desired. Chuck tied a red blanket around his neck to form a cape. Afterward, John looked into the cannon to make sure that Chuck was truly gone. Chuck was gone, and John was officially hired for good.



Analysis

Chapter 43 demonstrates the theme of Consequences. Because John chose to pursue the man that had mugged him all those years before, and chose to nearly kill him in the alleyway, Alison died. If he hadn't chased him, then Alison might still, arguably be alive. However, this chapter shows the growing darkness that had begun many chapters ago, and culminates in this one. He enjoyed pistol whipping the man and didn't regret it.

The next two chapters take place nearly 30 years later, and it found John clearly in a state of complete emotional distance from anything, anyone, or anybody. He had spent much of this time going from country to country with Keith his Australian friend and upon his return needed a job. He could have chosen to do any number of jobs but opted to go into end specialization....sanctioned assisted suicide. His lack of regard for human life mirrors society's view at this point. There were so many people on the planet that the loss of a few, here or there, was insignificant in John's eyes. Plus, he believed that in many ways he's correcting a wrong, assisting Death as a partner.

The fact that John had zero qualms about putting Chuck into a live cannon and firing him out of it in order to die, reiterates how low John had sunk in regards to the sanctity of life and his feelings toward his fellow man. His willingness to allow the man to harm himself, and to feel nothing about it, proved to his new boss that he was the right man for the job.

Discussion Question 1

What indicates that John would be particularly suited to his new job?

Discussion Question 2

What had John been doing for the last thirty years, and why?

Discussion Question 3

What were the chain of events that lead up to Alison's death?

Vocabulary

articulate, whereabouts, euphoria, gaga, genuineness, cynicism



Part III: Chapters 46 - 48

Summary

Chapter 46 - What They're Saying about End Specialization

John shared in this blog that he'd hooked up with Keith the Australian and gone to enjoy Guatemala. However, while there John had decided that life was boring and that he wanted to die. He'd attempted to kill himself but couldn't seem to go through with it. He had made peace with helping others end their own lives since he didn't have the courage to end his own. He had included articles he found about End Specialization on the internet.

The first article offered to its readers that the U.S. was just as bad as Russia with its population control and that subsidized suicide was ghoulish. The next article stated that with more than 720 million people on the planet something had to give. Someone blogged that the Patriots Program, which was created to honor those who decided to commit suicide for the good of others, was messed up. Lastly, a blogger responded that her brother had committed suicide and that it started her to wondering about the value and worth of a life anymore.

Chapter 47 - A Few Minutes with the Worst Domestic Terrorist in American History

John posted an excerpt from an interview with the man responsible for blowing up the building that Katy had been killed in. In the interview he was asked if he ever took the cure or wanted it. He stated that taking the cure had amplified mankind's animalistic urges, because there was now unlimited time to make amends, to make things right, to have do-overs. He continued by telling the interviewer that everything he'd done he'd committed for the sake of the human race; that without the deaths, life would be meaningless.

Chapter 48 - Exit Interview: - Edgar DuChamp

This is an exit interview that John did with someone coming for End Specialization. The man's name was Edgar DuChamp, and had been a legend in the business industry as well as a rock and roll legend. They arrived at his compound where they were ushered into a room that looked like a studio. Edgar had cut his last album and it was ready to launch. He told them that it would be his swan song. He wanted to have himself assassinated, which upset Ernie because he didn't like shooting people. Edgar was adamant that it be a theatrical and particularly bloody death. He told them that he'd already cleared it with Matt.

As Ernie and John sat outside the mansion, waiting for Edgar to go to bed one last time, both of them discussed the fact that something seemed off about this particular job. When they looked through the scope at Ernie stretched out on the bed, they noted that it wasn't Ernie lying in Ernie's bed at all. It was a plant. They had already been paid so



they took a pot-shot at the person lying in the bed, but aimed wide to miss. A volley of gunfire erupted around them. Once they returned to base, they realized that Edgar had been using them for a publicity stunt.

Analysis

All three of these chapters seem to point to the same message: the devaluation of human life, and the theme of Consequences. In Chapter 46, out of curiosity, John looked up end specialization to see what people really thought about his chosen profession. He found that most supported the practice, and he was actually understanding of the countries who were offering tax incentives and other types of subsidies for those who wanted to die for the good of their fellow man.

While this sounded noble to John, he was also cynical enough to understand that this was merely a way for the government to try and undo the mess they'd created by legalizing the cure. This touches upon the theme of Consequences as John, and the reader, watches the governments of the world struggle with how to reverse the ongoing devastation of a population escalating beyond its ability to sustain them all.

The interview with the bomber in Chapter 47 reiterates the devaluation of human life, and that in the end, it would have most likely have been better to have destroyed the cure. With unlimited time to make amends, even normally peaceful people were taking the risk at engaging in violence and behaviors that they normally wouldn't have considered.

Edgar's anecdote is included in order to show the reader just how shallow and shortsighted most of the population still were. Using End Specialists to generate publicity shows that a great deal of the population simply didn't care. They were in it for instant gratification and didn't care about the future.

Discussion Question 1

What sort of message do all three of these chapters seem to suggest?

Discussion Question 2

What insight does the bomber give as to why people were willing to commit crimes now?

Discussion Question 3

Why is government subsidized suicide something that John considered ghoulish but necessary?

Vocabulary

carnita, Gargonzola, unwitting, dissolved, spindly, appendages, impassable



Part III: Chapters 49 - 51

Summary

Chapter 49 - "You look just like me"

John had removed himself from his son, David's life. He hadn't seen him since David was a one year old. He had kept in touch via Facetime on the WEPS (computer), but had not visited in person at all. David had graduated high school and had become a devout Collectivist (Church of Man), and was now a grown man living on his own. John decided, once he returned to the states and had a 'real' job, that he would seek him out. He got on a train and went to Sonia and Nate's home, where he would meet David. When David walked into the room, the first thing that John could think to say was that he looked just like him. After some forced small talk, John asked David if he'd like to go with him to get a drink. David agreed.

They went to a local bar, but David didn't drink as it was against his religion. However, he sat there while John ordered some alcohol. He spent the rest of their time together trying to convince John to come to a church service. He thought that his father looked lonely and resigned to his fate. John agreed to come to one service, just to humor his son.

Chapter 50 - Alison on Stage

John had a dream about Alison. In his dream she was in the 8th grade again, just as when he'd first known her. She was on the stage and he'd bumped her off and she'd fallen. When he ran to her she was stuck to the floor and he couldn't seem to free her. She would seem to whisper something to him, but he could never make it out. He woke from this dream still missing her and wondering what their life would have been like had she lived.

Chapter 51 - "You get six shots"

John went on a End Specialist call with Ernie, and the exit interview took longer than usual. As a result, they were caught after dark in a bad area of Washington, DC. An angry mob headed towards the building where they were. Both Ernie and John knocked on doors as they made their way down to the street level, telling everyone to get out and save themselves. When they reached the bottom floor it was evident that they would have to shoot their way out of the situation. Ernie handed John a shotgun and told him that he had six shots.

Ernie and John made it to the streets but there were more angry people there. They began to fire their way through the crowd, but one grabbed John and threw him to the ground. The man tried to claw his way into John's ribcage, but Ernie doubled back and shot the man. As they began to run again, John understood what was going on and was sickened. This mob wasn't coming to rob the people or steal their things. They were



hungry. They had become cannibalistic. They were hunting. A small boy fell down and the hunters were on him in a second. John ran back to help the kid, but he was out of bullets. So was Ernie. Ernie took the lethal dose that they were going to give their client, and jabbed it into the man's neck. The boy was injured so they took him to a hospital where they left him.

Analysis

John's aloneness and isolation, both emotionally, and physically, are underscored in all three of these chapters. First, he met his estranged son, David, whom he had not seen since he was one. David, however, did not hold a grudge, and even though the meeting went well enough, John realized that he couldn't make up for the time he'd lost with his son. He was a stranger to him. John's choices earlier in his life had left him without much true and meaningful connection with anyone.

This is reiterated, again, when he had his dream about Alison, indicating that he saw himself as separated from her as an audience is from the performers on the stage, as he was when he was in high school and she was beyond his reach. Then, when he went on a call with Ernie, he truly saw what his life has become.

When John and Ernie were set up and caught after hours in a bad section of town, the reader sees just how depraved people had become. The theme of Consequences is strongest in Chapter 51 when Ernie told him to indiscriminately shoot into the crowd to make a way for them to get through. They barely escaped with their lives. At one point John realized that he could be killed in the middle of that dirty street and there would be no one to truly mourn his loss.

Discussion Question 1

What is the overall tone of these three chapters?

Discussion Question 2

What did John realize when he almost died in the street with Ernie?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the theme of Consequences in these chapters.

Vocabulary

anonymous, gullet, solitary, fearful, waistband, compulsive, partially, shrouded



Part III: Chapters 52 - 54

Summary

Chapter 52 - A Field Trip to the McLean Community Friends Church of Man

After a fitful night's rest, John drove to a Collectivist church, partially to keep his word to his son, and partially because the incident from the night before was still weighing heavily on his mind. A man named Jack approached him once he was inside the compound. Jack interviewed him and asked what he did for a living. John told him that he was a 'solutions consultant'. He was allowed to move into the parking garage where he met the pastor of the church. John asked him many questions, including why many of the congregation opted to wear khaki pants and denim shirt combinations. He didn't receive an answer.

The service began and at first John thought that the pastor might be on to something, but then the sermon took a turn for the worse when the pastor began to declare that they were all gods. Before the pastor could expound upon it, a heckler stood up, confronted the pastor and threatened him. Security guards stormed the building, there was mass panic and most, including John, ran for the exit. John called David on his way home and David told him to try another congregation. John doubted whether that would happen.

Chapter 53 - "We're going to take what we need to survive—and then maybe we'll take a little more"

This was a transcription from a news report. It stated that the Russian army had been directed to take the cure, then their sole mission would be to go into neighboring countries and obtain resources for mother Russia. This included everything from material goods, to fresh water resources, to manpower. The soldier interviewed stated that people were taken to work in labor camps and women were used as prostitutes. Anyone too old or too young to be of use would be executed, the soldier reported. Now, they still pillaged and took resources, but the goods came directly to the soldiers, instead of the council. He regretted nothing.

Chapter 54 - My Cure Day Surprise

As an added bonus on his cure day, his boss, Matt gave John the task of dispatching a glampire (someone dressing and pretending to be a real vampire). However, when John and Ernie went to the address and started checking amongst the fake coffins in the old house, they found them to be empty, filled with styrofoam and a tape deck making breathing noises. When they opened the last coffin to look inside, a Greenie popped out and sunk a knife into Ernie's thigh. Before John could react, the room was filled with Greenies. They threatened to carve him up where he stood. A woman walked into the



room and John instantly recognized her. She was the blonde from the bombing so many years before. John passed out.

When John awakened he was surrounded by COM (Church of Man) members. The pastor introduced himself and immediately John recognized him as the pastor of his son's church. The pastor told John that he knew what he did for a living and that reform of that particular kind of practice was frowned upon. They had dispatched with the Greenies. The pastor told John that he'd given him two gifts that day: his life, and an opportunity to stop doing what he was doing. He made sure that John understood that the next time the COMs came to clean house, if they found him still practicing end consultation that his fate would be the same as the Greenies....buried for decades under the parking garage with nothing but history books to read.

Analysis

Chapters 52 - 54 are about survival and living in an apocalyptic world. For the most part, with the exception of the COM, people were only looking out for their own best interests, now. This is evident in each chapter as some threat is introduced, and John just survive it.

In Chapter 52 this threat comes in the form of a terrorist who attended the Church of Man that John attended. John, along with many others in the congregation managed to make it out alive, but there were others in the church that weren't so lucky. All John could think after he left the church was that he was very lucky. He didn't feel badly about the people who lost their lives at all.

Then, the reader learns that this sentiment was common as it is shown that the Russian army had formed highly skilled resource teams to go into neighboring countries in order to take whatever they could for their own people. This spiraled out of control as the soldiers began to take things for themselves, became violent, and had little regard for anyone else. This is echoed in Chapter 54 when the reader sees John nearly lose his life, again, as he and Ernie were lured into another trap. The fact that it was a setup by Greenies just made John angrier than before. This clouded his judgement somewhat, and after Ernie was stabbed and he blacked out, John was sure that this was where he would die. But he didn't. He was offered the opportunity to turn his life around, but he rejected it. The church members who rescued him said that they had done so because of David and what he meant to the church.

Discussion Question 1

How did Ernie and John survive the Greenie ambush?

Discussion Question 2

What is the deal that the COM offered to John? And why didn't he take it?



Discussion Question 3

Describe the world as it existed at this point for John.

Vocabulary

eliminate, halted, veneers, asphalt, slab, hopscotching, hideous



Part III: Chapters 55 - 57

Summary

Chapter 55 - "They can't do anything to us"

John called Matt, his boss, to tell him what had happened. Matt told him that the COMs couldn't do anything to them, that the End Specialists were sanctioned by the government to do what they did. He stated that in a very short time they would be moving into hard end consulting. John didn't want to continue, but Matt gave him the week off at full pay to consider it first. He told him that the pay incentives for hard end deliveries was triple what he made now. John asked Ernie what he planned to do and Ernie told him that he was resigned to sticking it out.

Chapter 56 - "Let it overwhelm me"

John decided that he needed to let David know what happened to him and who actually saved him from a gruesome end. David and John discussed John's choice of occupation. John recalled a time when they'd helped a man drown himself in the ocean. John told David that it was very peaceful and that John wanted to know and feel what that man felt. He told David that he believed that if he could help end enough people then John would figure that out, too. David argued with him and stated that the church offered that same feeling and no one had to die. While John thought David was probably right, he committed to nothing.

Chapter 57 - "The cure for everything else"

This was a transcription of an interview with Steven Otto. Steven Otto was Graham Otto's son (the creator of the Cure). He had been only two years old when his father had been killed, but he'd gone on to follow in his father's footsteps. He'd created something called Skeleton Key, which was a type of robovaccine, which would eradicate any ailment introduced into the body. However, in the interview, he told the reporter that he had hesitated for many years before releasing the knowledge to the general public. Without diseases and weaknesses, the human race's impact on the planet would be devastating and significant. He didn't want to be responsible for that. However, he finally realized that progress must be made, and that in the end, someone would come along and develop it, so it might as well be released into the public with someone who would do so ethically and responsibly.

Analysis

Chapters 55 - 56 cover John's recovery from the incident and his serious consideration about what he had been told by the COM. He reached out to his son, which was something he hadn't done before, indicating that there may have been some slight change going on emotionally and spiritually. He offered his viewpoint about why he did



what he did for a living, but David didn't buy into his father's rationalization, offering him a different way to view things. The perspective on Death demonstrates the theme of Death in this chapter.

The last chapter (57) is significant in that it demonstrates the theme of Technology. Once again, a scientist, ironically Graham Otto's son, had developed a robovaccine that would keep everyone healthy indefinitely. While this came at a critical time to keep people alive when the sheep flu hit epidemic proportions, it could also just as easily be argued that disease was nature's way of balancing the scale of economies. Otto's son was worse than his father because his rationalization was that someone was going to do it sooner or later and it might as well be him because at least he cared. This was an irresponsible management of technology and only lead to further devastation.

Discussion Question 1

What makes the reader believe that John might consider a career change?

Discussion Question 2

Compare Steven Otto to his father in regards to their inventions and its release into the public.

Discussion Question 3

How is the theme of Death demonstrated in Chapter 56?

Vocabulary

culpable, edify, congregate, suffice, decisively, meticulously



Part III: Chapters 58 - 59

Summary

Chapter 58 - "They don't think this is the end of it"

A magazine report was included in this section. The report contained information surrounding massive nuclear explosions in China. John had also included posts from various message boards. All of them showed a panicked population. Early reports indicated that nearly 65 million people lived in China at the time of the explosions. There were no details as to why it was done, or who did it.

Chapter 59 - "They just can't help themselves"

John couldn't sleep one night and decided that in the wee hours of the morning the only company one was likely to get was a call girl. He called up a regular escort service that he routinely used and soon a girl named, Julia appeared. At first, she seemed to be just barely 18, but when they went to John's apartment, he learned that her cure age was 18, but that she was, in fact, 42. When she found out that John was an end specialist she begged him to do her; to end her life. John argued that he was just the consultant and that there were rules that had to be followed. She was unrelenting. John called Matt who told him to go for it. He warned him, however, that each life he took would take a little of his with them. John blew Matt off saying that he'd already seen plenty of deaths. Matt said that it was different when you were the one doing the ending.

Julia asked if she could choose how she went out. John told her, yes. She said that she wanted to have him give her the dose as she was climaxing sexually with him. At first John was appalled, but she was adamant and he relented. He went through with it, but afterward, when he was standing there looking at her lifeless body, he was so stricken with remorse that he had a heart attack and fell to the floor.

Analysis

Chapter 58

What everyone had worried might happen, had happened. Foreshadowing many chapters previously had set the stage for this to happen. The article reports that three massive explosions were detected by the U.S. and that the bombs specifically targeted the most populous cities. However, John went on to include global reactions to the incident and the general consensus was that China voluntarily leveled nuclear grade weapons on its own population.

The author has foreshadowed this event when in earlier chapters when China outlawed the use of the cure and made it a federal crime to do so. In order to keep track of its



citizens and their true age, each citizen was branded with their birth date. This showed how far China might go to control the population within its own country.

Chapter 59

This is a pivotal chapter in that the reader sees that John was willing to break the rules now. While he argued with Julia about the rules, John really doubted whether too many rules apply any more, and without little more argument, he relented. Julia outlined and personified many of the problems that 'cured' people had, which was while they may look the age at which they took the cure, mentally and emotionally, they were more than their cure age. This caused deep psychological issues, as Julia indicated. To be continually considered to be 18 and carefree had been a burden and she was done with it. John agreed, but afterward, when he saw her lifeless body, it traumatized him so much that he had a heart attack. This entire chapter demonstrates the theme of Consequences as John finally realized what he should have considered all those years ago. The cure wasn't a gift, it was curse.

John's collapse indicates that the impact of the perversity of the cure has finally sunk in. Using sex as a way to die unnerved him and he realized just how far humanity has fallen and that the value of a single human life is nearly zero. Additionally, he realized that he was been a part of that devaluation for far too long. Julia's tale of her life since taking the cure was proof of that for him. Symbolically as well as physically he stated that his heart was breaking, being squeezed out of his chest. He was in pain, and not all of it was being caused by the physical discomfort of the heart attack.

Discussion Question 1

In Chapter 59, what had John finally realized about the cure?

Discussion Question 2

What did John have a heart attack in Chapter 59?

Discussion Question 3

Why would China feel compelled to drop nuclear weapons on its people? What foreshadowing by the author suggested that this might happen?

Vocabulary

jailbait, phosphorescent, flighty, ditzzy, dictating, intractable, transitional, camisole



Part III: Chapters 60 - 61

Summary

Chapter 60 - "Wait over there"

John's roommate, Scott, found John lying next to Julia's body and called for an ambulance. Finally, Scott realized that the ambulance was going to take too long and wrapped a sheet around John's body and put both John and Julia into his car and headed to the hospital. Once Scott had checked John in, he ran to take Julia's body to the morgue so that it would all look legitimate. John waited in a vast and crowded ER. John decided that he needed to call David, which he did. He told David that he loved him, and David asked if he should come down. John told him no, but minutes later someone from the local COM church, named Ken, came to the ER. He offered to take over from Scott and Scott agreed. Polly arrived soon, but John was wracked with another heart attack and passed out.

When John woke, the televisions in the waiting area were reporting on the explosions in China. The reporters stated that it was being called a great 'reset'. The rumors were that there would be more 'resets' happening in China. Since it was determined that he was a 'cured' individual, John was forced to wait until the medical team dealt with organics first. Polly told him that she could afford water and that was what was most important to her these days. The doctor told John that he had a 95% blockage in an artery but that the insurance wouldn't cover it. She told him to not do anything that might overload his heart, and that he should talk to his family about scraping together the money. The soonest they could work him in for the surgery would be several months down the road. John was appalled. No one cared at the hospital. And, just like that, he found peace. He, unlike the people at the hospital, actually cared about those he helped to leave this world. He gave them what they wanted, and treated them like human beings. Incensed, he got up, got dressed and left.

Chapter 61 - "You're a real end specialist now"

John called Matt immediately and filled him in on what had occurred. Matt berated him for going to the hospital as it was only a roach motel. Since they work for the government, Matt informed him, they had their own exclusive health care center. They would take care of the blockage instantly. John also told him that he was ready to do what Ernie did, and if he wanted him to do hard ends then he would do those, too. After viewing the atrocities in the hospital, he had realized that what he had been doing was more humane. Matt was pleased and welcomed him to the big leagues.

Analysis

Chapter 60 and 61 see John make the final transition into full fledged commitment to ending people's lives. When China dropped the bomb on its own citizens, it only served



to motivate John to step up his work to help people leave a life that was increasingly harsh and unkind. He began to see himself as a savior of sorts, which irked most of those around him. However, he was very good at what he did and Matt, his boss, used him for many high profile jobs.

John took the final step and became the one that administers the lethal doses, solo. While he occasionally worked with Ernie, he mostly did the jobs on his own. The government fully sanctioned and subsidized anyone who wanted to end their lives. Businesses like John's were given full clearance to go anywhere, were offered additional resources, and were expected to also assassinate people when directed. John believed that what he was doing was more humane than anything he saw in the hospital.

Discussion Question 1

Why was John able to do what he did for a living?

Discussion Question 2

What motivated John to help people end their lives after he saw China drop their bombs on their own people?

Discussion Question 3

Compare John at this point in the novel to how he was at the beginning of the novel.

Vocabulary

able-bodied, winsome, deceitful, maudlin, cheapskate, harrowing



Part III: Chapters 62 - 63

Summary

Chapter 62 - That Was My Hospital

A magazine article was included in this section by John. It told of a mystery illness that swept through the hospital the day after he left there. Thirty-five people had died, and more were coming down with it. No one knew what caused it or how it was contracted. Citizens were urged to stay away from the hospital, and that those who needed medical care go to a different hospital for the time being.

Chapter 63 - There is Nothing Left to Lose

John wrote that he spent the day getting ready to go back to work and was sidetracked watching the feeds coming in from China. Entire swaths of cities were devastated, lands burned. There was a knock on the door and Ken, from the COM church was at the door. He asked how John was doing. John was confused. Ken shared with him that something had happened to David. He pulled out his WEPS and showed the footage to John. The church had been bombed and nearly 70 people were killed. David was one of them, along with Sonia, Ella, and Nate. John became furious and blamed Ken. He demanded that Ken leave, immediately. Matt called shortly afterward and told John that the final clearance to do Hard Ends had come through. He was sending the first target to him immediately. John smiled. The target was already familiar to him, though he had never known her name. She was the hot blonde from Katy's bombing. And her name was Solara Beck.

Analysis

John's assumptions were proven correct in Chapter 62 when he read that the hospital where he'd just been experienced an outbreak of some unknown illness that killed 35 people. He used this as further proof that he was in the right business. Then, in Chapter 63 John was devastated to learn that his son had been killed in another attack on the church. A bomb not only killed David, but Sonia and Nate.

Later, when he received mission data that gave him the hot blonde in red to find and eliminate, he was excited. He had been looking for this woman for a long time and in his mind she was the culmination of all society's ills. Her name was Solara Beck and John committed her name to memory.

Discussion Question 1

What assisted in John's belief that he was in the right business?



Discussion Question 2

What did David's death do to John?

Discussion Question 3

Why was John excited to be finally allowed to track the hot blonde in red?

Vocabulary

extrude, apparition, inclusion, mussed, smack-dab, lounged



Part IV: Chapters 64 - 66

Summary

Part IV: CORRECTION: JUNE 2079

Chapter 64 - "We weren't afraid to love her like our own"

The blogs take a leap forward to the year 2079. John had been doing 'hard ends' for a while. He hadn't been able to locate Solara Beck, though he always kept his eye out for her. John included, in this section, some feeds from various blogs. One of those concerned a woman named Abby O'Neill and her 35 year old sheep, Frederica. She began to look differently. A scientist interviewed for the article stated that each year of Frederica's life she'd been injected with the normal vaccinations. However, since she had been given the cure, the flu wasn't metabolized as it would have been in an organic animal. When Frederica became ill, O'Neill took her to the local vet and was urged to leave her overnight. When Mrs. O'Neill arrived the next morning to pick up her sheep, everyone had died, and the entire area had been sealed off. To date, the article reported, nearly five hundred million people worldwide had died from the sheep flu. Though the virus originated on their farm, the O'Neills never came down with the flu. They were ordered to kill all of their livestock. They moved to Canada and became gardeners.

Chapter 65 - Today's Insurgent

John received his job assignment for the day. He was to terminate an organic 40 year old man by the name of Murray Holdman. John stated that he was eager to try out some of the new equipment that the government had given him, including an armored car (called a plug in). Ernie told John that he'd read that the governments around the world had run out of gasoline. Only the missile silos still were rumored to have some petrol. On this assignment both Ernie and John headed to East Falls Compound. Hundreds of people wandered in the streets aimlessly.

John had become hardened to the tragedy of the human experience at this point and he and Ernie quickly found and shot the target. As the man laid dying John calmly asked him if he wanted his 'soft remains' transported to a family member. He urged the man to comply with them, because if he didn't tell them that he wanted his assets sent to his family, that the government would take them all. The man agreed after that. John told him that he had been scheduled to be executed because of his part in a tanning salon bombing two years previously. The man refused to cooperate any further and John killed him. John went into the house and came back out with some bottled water. Ernie found bomb making materials and called it in.

Chapter 66 - The Girl in the Marketplace



Though Solara Beck had been one of the first targets assigned to John many years previously, he'd never been able to track her down. However, one day while he was going into the marketplace to find lunch, out of the corner of his eye he saw a very attractive woman. At first, he didn't realize it was Beck, but when he got closer he knew that it was her. She finally turned and stared at him, with the same look as before. She saw his credentials and turned to run. He pursued her. She ambushed him and took a shot at him in a parking lot behind the Four Sisters Restaurant. The shots went wide. He returned the fire, but she had turned to run again. He caught up to her as she was trying to climb up a wall topped with razor wire. He finally caught her, but his elation didn't last. Now, at last, after 58 years he could ask her why she had bombed Katy's doctor's building.

Solara told him that she was the lookout for the bomber, and that Randall, the leader of the group, had threatened her and would do worse to her than those who would have caught her. She was finally able to run away from the entire thing and hadn't had anything to do with them for decades. At first John remained unconvinced, but then slowly he began to see that she was telling the truth. He made the decision to help her disappear, stating that as long as there was a kill order on her head she would never be safe. He told her that they fake deaths all of the time. Before he could carry out the exercise, however, he was called away on another task. He made Solara come with him.

Analysis

A lot happens in these three chapters, but chapters 64 and 65 cover some of the same aspects, which is the desensitization of John (and others) to the presence of death. The theme of Death is demonstrated these chapters as the reader learns of millions of deaths due to a flu sweeping the planet. The theme of Consequences is closely tied to this as it was the continued vaccination of a sheep that had received the cure that allowed the virus to develop and mutate. John was emotionless as he dealt with a hard end assignment, calmly walking the target through his options as they prepared to administer the lethal dosage.

In Chapter 66, however, the woman in red, whom he'd been seeking for nearly 60 years, finally surfaced. He captured her and then had his entire world turned upside down. He listened to her story and believed her. He began to see how things that he had been told, had believed all of those years, may not have been true or viable any longer. He realized after spending a few days hiding her that he had feelings for her, though he tried to deny it. He told her that he would help her to fake her own death. Then, in a turn of events, he realized that he no longer wanted to be a merchant of death.

Discussion Question 1

What did meeting Solara do for John?



Discussion Question 2

How is the theme of death demonstrated in these chapters?

Discussion Question 3

How was the sheep flu a result of the cure?

Vocabulary

abstention, rhythmic, aberration, death rattle, reverberated



Part IV: Chapters 67 - 69

Summary

Chapter 67 - The Sweep

The call that John had responded to in the previous chapter was a call to clear some victims of Sheep Flu away from the infected area. Most of the population had been given Skeleton Key, but those that had refused could still catch it. They walked into a clearing in a forest where dozens of bodies laid in the mud. John systematically began checking for signs of life, then told them that they could have the skeleton key dose for \$5,000, or, he could end their lives for free. All of the living opted for the free pass to death. He and Solara returned to the car where John offered her a beer. They discussed his career choice.

Chapter 68 - The Birthday Girl

John checked into a hotel and took Solara with him. He still wasn't sure how he was going to stage her mock end specialization. Usually there were protocols to follow, but since he was working off books, he was not sure how to proceed. She'd told him her sad tale of abandonment, abuse, and terror at the hands of a known terrorist, and her own family. It was clear that she didn't trust John, but he was okay with that. For some reason he'd decided overnight that the reason he'd kept seeing her in his mind was because he had been infatuated, maybe even in love with her, all these years. He had created his own secret compound and he offered to take Solara there after her fake death. She agreed to it if he would tell her the truth about why he was helping her. He lied to her and though it seemed as if she knew he was lying, she didn't question his answer. They staged the chase, the interview, and the 'lethal' injection (though it was just saline), and then left for John's compound.

Chapter 69 - "They wouldn't stop eating"

"They Wouldn't Stop Eating" was the title of the documentary film that John and Solara watched the first night at John's compound. It documented the Arctic War and the soldiers who had taken the initial early doses of Skeleton Key. Because it would keep the weight off of them, they took it upon themselves to eat nearly 10,000 calories a day just because they could. When they would walk into a village or town, they would pillage and eat their way through it, leaving nothing. At one point some of the soldiers captured and ate seals alive. Some rumors suggested that they ate human beings if they could catch them, too.

After the movie was over Solara asked him once again if her hiding out with him was stupid. He told her that it was not and that people had lived through much worse. They shared some more of their personal histories and Solara told John that she was pregnant. John smiled.



Analysis

The insensitivity to life by the government is evident in the protocols that John had to follow when he had to dispatch those dying from the sheep flu in Chapter 68. Even in the staged 'fake' death that he and Solara constructed, he followed the rules and made it look 'real'. Later, when he took her to his apartment and safe house, it was clear that he was more than interested in her.

It is also clear that John had made a fundamental shift in perspectives. Each time that it seemed he was about to lose a grip on his humanity, and simply become feral himself, it was his feelings for a woman that brought him back into perspective. Solara did this for him this time, as well, but the difference this time was that he had finally allowed himself to mature past the set point of 29. This time when a woman he cared about told him that she was pregnant, he was glad - even ecstatic - about it. He also didn't want to run from the responsibility and was excited at the prospect of sharing that experience with Solara.

What must be noted is that the theme of Death was introduced in a slightly different way in this chapter. It was only when there was the distinct possibility of death that John was able to truly appreciate each moment he was with Solara and wanted desperately to have more of those moments. This was a new sensation and experience for him.

The news that they learned about the soldiers in the Arctic is significant because they would run into these same types of soldiers shortly.

Discussion Question 1

What was beginning to happen to John as a result of falling in love with Solara?

Discussion Question 2

How was John different from the way he was at the beginning of the book?

Discussion Question 3

How does Death define life, according to the author?

Vocabulary

whitewash, protrusions, prophylactic, impromptu, guttural, wail



Part IV: Chapters 70 - 72

Summary

Chapter 70 - "This is the next logical step"

John and Ernie were sent to their next assignment, but when they arrived there John balked at the target. It is an old woman. John frantically called Matt to find out what was going on. This was the next logical step he told John. He told him that it was called Senior Care Management. It was government sanctioned. John was very upset. He was told that if he didn't do the job that he would be fired. The business would lose its license if it didn't comply with the new congressional mandate. He angrily agreed to do it, and then Matt told John that he also knew that he didn't kill Solara. John's blood ran cold. After he got off of the WEPS with Matt he told Ernie that he was getting out of the business. He wanted Ernie to tell Matt that he freaked out, pulled his weapon on Ernie and botched the job. Then, he would go his way and Ernie could go his. Ernie shrugged and agreed.

Chapter 71 - "A very urgent feeling"

John rushed back to his apartment and to Solara. He told her to pack everything up and that he'd quit his job because the job description had expanded to include the old. She cornered him and asked him why he would even want to continue to protect her and her child. John stopped packing long enough to tell her that he'd lied to her about the way he felt, and that he couldn't explain why he felt a sense of urgency about her, he just knew that he was supposed to protect her. They made love, finished packing, and then John handed her an old shotgun.

Chapter 72 - An Unwelcome Dawn

John and Solara stopped a little way down the road for supplies and to recharge the car. In that moment John was able to tell Solara that he wanted to marry her, to be the child's father. He told her that he just needed to say it, that it didn't require anything from her, and that she didn't need to say anything back. She laughed and asked who he was. He told her that he had found that he was not the man he thought he was. She told him that she liked the new John.

Shortly after they got back into the car the news feed lit up with the news that the U.S. had launched missiles at Russia. They immediately went to get what supplies they could from the stores. Just as they were leaving, the power went out. Mass panic ensued. Satellites weren't working and all of the news networks were silent. The roads were choked with people trying to leave, to get somewhere. The traffic slowed and stopped all together. John saw that soldiers were beginning to comb through the traffic, breaking into cars and eating everything in sight.



They were in an armored car, so John told Solara to stay put. She was terrified and wanted to get out of the car and run. One of the soldiers tried to shoot the windshield out, but the bullet ricocheted and killed him instantly. His friend reached back to pull out his weapon, but John rolled down the side window and shot him first. They were able to move further down the road, but once again, hit another gridlock. Solara compelled him to leave the road. He told her that he would, but not until the morning. She asked if he still wanted to be married to her and he told her yes. Then she told him that she would marry him. They both agreed there, in the car, that they were now married. Husband and wife.

In the middle of all of the chaos, John was happy. It wouldn't last. More soldiers attacked them, but just as it was looking grim for John and Solara, a white flash bathed everything. The soldiers fell to the ground, blinded. John grabbed Solara and they began to run. The whole sky was on fire. They found an abandoned house, then found the basement below it. There was already a family down there, but they shared. They were told that it had been an atomic bomb that had fallen. They waited as an atomic wind blew over the house, then there was another flash as another bomb detonated.

Analysis

These chapters continue John's metamorphosis. In Chapter 70, the reader sees him balk at being told to kill an elderly woman, simply because she was old. He told Ernie that he couldn't do it and Ernie agreed to give him a couple of weeks' head start before turning in the termination orders. When John raced back to get Solara from the hotel, it was clear that he no longer only thought of himself, or lived in the moment. It is clear that he wanted a future with Solara. He took time to let Solara know his feelings for her, and it is clear that she felt the same way.

John had never felt like this before and it alternately terrified him and gave him strength. In Chapter 72 the theme of Death surfaces again when the rabid soldiers began to attack their vehicle. A worse threat happened just as John and Solara were about to meet with a grisly death. When the first nuclear bomb went off it allowed them to get away and find a basement to take refuge in. There, huddled in the dark with many other couples, it is clear that John had reentered the human race, seeing himself as part of them and not separate. He no longer viewed others as obstacles to be overcome, but rather as a team-like attitude towards those in the house. Despite the chaos happening around him, John had found the peace he had been looking for since the middle part of the novel. It was Solara who helped him come to that point.

Discussion Question 1

How had John found peace in the middle of chaos?



Discussion Question 2

Why couldn't John go through with killing the old woman? What's changed for him?

Discussion Question 3

What indicated that Ernie respects John?

Vocabulary

inerrant, spritzed, bizarre, exerted, receding, duffel, envisioned



Part IV: Chapter 73

Summary

Chapter 73 - The Human Wave

A rolling mass of humanity began simply walking from the east. The air was thick and hot, and John and Solara were among them. After they walked for a while, there was a stir from far behind them. Gangs had arrived and were pushing over everyone in their effort to steal what might be on anyone's person. John spied a COM building, manned and guarded by church members. Many of the people ahead of him were already trying to scale the walls and were being shot in the shoulder by the church members. John managed to get up close to the wall and talked to some of the guards who knew his son, David. The church member discreetly dropped a wadded up piece of paper down to them. It had instructions for them to follow. They were to go away from the compound to a place in the distance.

John was encouraged and they turned to leave, but John didn't get very far when a Greenie showed up out of nowhere and stabbed him in the ribs. Solara managed to drag him into the woods towards the meetup point. Once there John was able to roll under a car, near the storm drain which was the secret entrance. Just as John went down to get into the drain, Solara was shot in the chest. A soldier walked on her back as if she were just a piece of trash on the road.

John pulled her to him under the car. She was still conscious and John could tell that the shot was a through and through, exiting under the shoulder. The church member reached out for them both and pulled them to safety. Down in the tunnels under the church, the Reverend told John that his son, David, saved his life and he wanted John to know that. The work that John did as an end specialist had condemned him many times over, but because of David, they'd allowed him to live. They agreed to get a doctor for Solara when John told them that she was pregnant. She wanted to refuse the help, not willing to live without John. He told her that the last four days were the only ones in his entire life that he he had gotten right. He begged her to live. Then he asked the Reverend to officially marry them. As the doctor arrived and Solara walked away, the Reverend told John that the doctor had said that Solara and the baby would live. John nodded his thanks, then removed the one lone lethal dose he had in his pocket. The ground rocked with another detonation and John took the lethal dose.

Analysis

This last chapter sees John and Solara narrowly escaping the mass violence to make their way to the safety of the church. Once again, it was the collective who offered John an escape from the situation he found himself in. With Solara's help, they were able to make it to the rendezvous point, but then Solara was critically wounded. Both of them



were battered, bruised and bleeding when the church member rescued them and pulled them into the secret entrance.

For his crimes against humanity he was not offered a doctor, but Solara, because she was pregnant, was given help. John waved off her protestations. Just as his father had suggested, Death was not a bad thing. In fact, the theme of Death surfaces in this last chapter, to suggest that Death plays as much a part in life as in the ending of the life. Knowing that Solara would live, that the child would live, that he'd finally found that deep and abiding love for someone, even at the end of his life, left John feeling ready and peaceful about his own passing. When he asked the pastor to marry them, the pastor agreed. Then, after Solara said goodbye to him, he took out the last lethal dose he would ever give anyone, and took it himself.

Discussion Question 1

What sort of resolution happens to John at the end of the book?

Discussion Question 2

What is the author stating about technology without oversight?

Discussion Question 3

What is the most likely outcome to the story?

Vocabulary

inhaled, redoubled, conferring, besieged, propel, ricochet



Characters

Protagonist/John Farrell

John Farrell, whose name isn't mentioned for the first few chapters, has long since died when the novel begins. However, his story and insight are offered through the discovery of his laptop, some 100 years after his death in 2079. From John's collection of blog entries, magazine articles, personal emails, and journal excerpts the reader learns about the cure and John's experience after taking it.

Initially, John is seen as a self-centered young New York professional, whose only interest in life is moving ahead in the world. He works for a law firm in the downtown area and lives with a roommate named Katy. John decides that he will pay the expensive underground fee and have the cure given to him, an injection that will halt his aging at 29. At first the reader sees him celebrating the fact that he will never get old, without care to the consequences or ramifications of his (and others) actions. However, it becomes glaringly clear shortly after the death of his roommate that there will be severe and catastrophic consequences should the cure be allowed to continue. It is not only allowed, but legalized, setting off the chain of events that propel John down a road not of his own choosing.

The assumption, of course, is that John, with the added longevity, would grow wiser, would do something worthwhile and productive with the additional time. However, the reader sees not only John, but others who've taken the cure, consume all of the available resources, abuse their bodies, treat others cruelly, and generally waste the time they were given. When John learns that he is to become a father, he runs from the responsibility and the possibility of being married to someone he cared about.

Finally, nearly a hundred years down the road, his opportunities come full circle and he engages in ending the lives of those who've decided that the cure was no gift at all. For the most part he believes himself to be providing a service, helping those to end their lives with dignity and in a manner of their own choosing. For most it is a peaceful passing. John's demeanor and personality changes when he is asked to also do 'hard ends', paid assassinations sanctioned by the government. He becomes unemotional, hard, and bitter. When he reconnects with a woman, Solara Beck, he'd initially thought complacent in Katy's death, he learns the truth about that day and falls in love with Solara. He runs away with her and the reader sees him embrace and acknowledge the relationship issues he's had in the past, correcting them with Solara. When he learns that she is pregnant he not only steps forward to marry her, but wants to be there to raise the child. The reader sees him become the man he would have been had he never taken the cure.



David

David is John Ferrell's son with Sonia. Though John is in his life for the first year, he becomes an absentee father for most of David's formative years, speaking with him sporadically using video feeds (Skype). David grows up to be a genuinely nice person, who joins the Church of Man and dedicates his life to helping those less fortunate. He is shown to have extraordinary patience and compassion for those who are suffering because of the environment they are in as a result of the cure. He is purely organic and refuses to take the cure. He is killed when the church he is in with his mother and stepfather is bombed. However, John later learns that it was David's work with the church and his inherent goodness that stayed the hand of the church's leaders who had placed John on the elimination list because of the line of work that John was in (End Specialist). When John and Solara are running for safety after the first nuclear blast, it is the mention of David's name that saves them and allows them to be admitted into the Church's safe zone.

The Blonde Woman/Solara Beck

For a great deal of the novel, this woman is only referred to as the blonde woman in red. Later, the reader will learn that her name is Solara Beck. Initially, John believes that she is responsible for Katy's death, that she is the mastermind behind all of the terrorist attacks on doctors providing the cure. However, he is mistaken.

When John reconnects with her much later in the novel, he learns that she was merely a lookout for her, then, boyfriend, an abusive rebel leader. Having come from impoverished circumstances, Solara had fallen in with the terrorist cell and when she'd tried to leave, had nearly been killed. She had been able to sneak off and take the cure for herself, thus angering the rebel leader. After carving her birthdate onto her stomach with a coat hanger, he threw her out onto the streets. She had been running ever since, having been identified as the bomber.

At the time that John meets her Solara has been on the run for decades and has now found herself pregnant. John falls in love with her and thus their journey begins. They attempt in an apocalyptic world to hold onto a remnant of life before the cure. John finally understands what it is like to love someone more than himself, and is able to open his heart and his life to Solara. He wants to help her raise her child and to be married to her. At the end of the novel, the reader understands that she will be taken care of and did live, though John did not.

Polly

Polly is John's sister. Like their father, Polly lives in Pennsylvania and is married with two children. When she learns that John has taken the cure she is dubious as to whether she will actually take it herself. She is often the last to get the latest technology and figures that she will be one of the last to get the cure. She also reinforces the



question about what taking the cure will mean for marriages, since that would mean that people would be making a longer investment of time than previously enjoyed.

She also asks the question about children. If someone froze their bodies at 29 or so, then a woman could potentially have dozens of children, easily. And they could be spaced out by decades. What would this do to the world's population, and more importantly, she asks, the resources such as food and water and gasoline.

Polly does go on to get the cure, several decades later, and regrets it. She has remarried for the third time, and has many sets of children. She and John watch their father die of cancer and Polly, on some level, tells John that she is jealous. The entire cure was a mistake she tells John. This is the first time that John begins to think that the cure might be bad for mankind.

Graham Otto

Graham Otto is credited with creating the cure purely by accident. Through some sloppy scientific procedures in the lab late one night, while trying to perfect the DNA sequence for hair color, he leaves in some additional proteins on his fruit flies. He notices many weeks later that these flies haven't died.

Otto initially takes his findings to the proper oversight committees and he is allowed to test it on those suffering from Alzheimer's disease. It halts the progression of the disease and is hailed as a breakthrough in science. Unfortunately, the scientific community is so thrilled with the technology that it is fast tracked and soon many doctors begin administering the cure on the underground. Otto is appalled at how his work is being used and joins with the President to denounce its use and agree to the ban.

Unfortunately, Otto is kidnapped, along with six others from his lab in Oregon, thrown into the back of a van, doused with gasoline, and burned to death outside the university. His son would later continue to follow in his footsteps and would create something that would keep people healthy indefinitely.

Dr. X.

The doctor who gives the cure to John does not use his real name because at the time giving someone the cure is illegal. This doctor tells John about the cure, what it can and cannot do, and what he can expect from it.

LadyHawke

This character is a female protester and blogger after Katy's death. LadyHawke shows just how rabid and shortsighted most of the population are in regards to getting the cure.



Mr. Farrell

This is John's father, who lives in Pennsylvania. His perspective at 65 on death and dying (having lost his wife to cancer many years earlier) urges John to be cautious about taking the cure. Mr. Ferrell has the insight and wisdom to see that the cure won't be what everyone thinks it will be and offers several viable reasons why John should not take the cure.

Later, when John comes to visit him and tells him that he has taken the cure, Mr. Ferrell is curious about it, doesn't condemn his son, but it is evident that he is worried about what it means for the future of the human race. He is the first to voice his concern about overpopulation and the state of relationships, especially marriages. He later, in a moment of weakness, gets the cure and regrets it. He later dies of cancer.

Allan Atkins

Allan Atkins is a pro-cure activist whose loud and often violent demonstrations gain him a following. Protesters line up in key places across the U.S., rallying for the cure to be legalized for everyone, regardless of income. He is shown to be a fanatical, driven, zealous individual whose blatant rants online and inflammatory interviews on the television urge people to take drastic and violent actions to get what they want.

Sonia

Sonia is a woman that John dates for more than four years. At the end of the four years she asks John what his intentions are for their relationship. Both have taken the cure and John isn't ready to tell anyone that he'll be their partner for life, especially when that life could end up lasting hundreds of years. Sonia tells him that she is pregnant, but when is still unwilling to marry her, she leaves him. John and she remain friends, and at least for a year co-raise their son, David. Sonia remarries a man named Nate. She, Nate, and David die in an explosion in a church that they were attending toward the end of the book.

Keith Richards

Keith Richards is an Australian that John meets in the train station's bar. He tells John that he's taking a year to live in each country around the world. He's the one that shows John what living forever could mean, that it could mean more than continuing to live life as if the cure had never happened. His lifestyle inspires John, who will later seek Keith out and travel with him for more than fifty years.



Allison

Shortly after breaking up with Sonia John goes to a local bar. While there he spies a woman that he'd gone to school with named Allison. Back in school she'd been very popular and hadn't been interested in him. He recalls that while she turned him down constantly, she'd always been kinder about it than most of the other girls he'd tried to go out with.

They end up dating for a long while, but when she witnesses John pistol whip a man in an alleyway (a man who'd many months earlier mugged him) she is frightened and appalled of the darkness and cruelty in John. She backs away from him and is hit by a car. She dies instantly.

Katy

Katy is the same age as John (29) and shares an apartment with him in New York. She seems to look up to John and they both like to party and be impetuous. There is no romantic involvement between the two. It is Katy's death that sets up John's lifelong pursuit of the 'woman in red', holding this woman responsible for Katy's death. John never forgives himself for Katy's death because she was killed going into the building that he had taken her to for the cure.

Matt

Matt is John's boss at the End Specialization center. At first, Matt runs his business in a questionable side of town out of a ramshackle garage. Later, when End Specialization becomes government subsidized he moves into a legitimate office space. Matt is, by everyone's acknowledgement, a psychopath and unpredictable. As long as he is being paid, he doesn't care about the ethics or morality of a situation.

Ernie

Ernie is John's End Specialist partner. Initially, John would do the pre-end interview, draw up the legal papers, file all of the necessary documents, and then Ernie would actually administer the lethal dose, or however else the client wished to die. However, later, John decides that he wants to make more money so he becomes a certified end administrator, too. They still continue to work together and many times it is Ernie who saves John's life when they are attacked after hours. In the end, Ernie gives John a head start to leave town when John decides that he has reached a line that he will not cross (killing the elderly).



Pastor Stevenson

Pastor Stevenson is David's pastor at the Church of Man. He meets and speaks with John on a few occasions, but since nothing comes of the meetings, John doesn't think much about him for most of the novel. However, at the end of the novel, when he and Solara are running for their lives, he is the leader of the compound that they run to. Because of his great respect for David, he allows them to come into the compound, even though they are not believers.



Symbols and Symbolism

The Cure

Developed by Graham Otto, the cure was developed at first to halt the progression of Alzheimer's Disease. Unfortunately, the cure is a cautionary tale about what could and would happen without official channels and oversight. Without this guidance and scrutiny this new technology was released into the public (even though it was black market) without proper consideration to what the ramifications would be. The cure, as a title, is ironic at best, since a 'cure' for anything is a solution. The cure, ends up being anything but a solution for aging, and in the end, brings mankind to the brink of extinction. The very cure that was produced to prolong life and make it better, actually ended up doing the reverse.

The Elevator

John spends an inordinate amount of time fixating on the elevator in the building where he gets the cure. For some reason, since he's obtaining the cure illegally, he anticipates some sort of harassment, obstacle, or impediment. However, just as the elevator is a smooth ride, so, too, is his injection of the cure. Symbolically, when the elevators open, it is John's last chance to change his mind. When he crosses the threshold and the elevator doors close, he has made his choice.

Cycle Marriage

Since people are living longer, John's law firm decides that they need to create a new offering in their offices. Cycle marriage would be offered to those having taken the cure so that they are not 'stuck' with a spouse for hundreds of years. For a cycle of 40 years or so, a couple agrees to live together, then at the end of the cycle, they part company to start over again. By the end of the novel, some people have had several spouses and many cycles.

Otto's Fruit Flies

Otto originally worked with fruit flies in order to try and develop a genetic product that would allow a person to change their hair color permanently. Fruit flies have a short lifespan so many generations can be created and observed in a short matter of time. However, Otto's fruit flies didn't die. They are the turning point for the technology.



Blogs

John frequently posts or reposts blogs and forum messages about various topics of the day. This allows the reader greater insight into the events as they develop from a greater perspective than simply that of John's viewpoint. The blogs often tell the reader about global events, political unrest, and continued developments concerning the cure and society's involvement with it.

Posters

At the beginning of the novel there are posters placed all around town. They serve as foreshadowing for the rest of the novel. Most of them are crudely produced posters with the slogan: Immortality will kill us all.

Plug Ins

Plug ins are the futuristic word for cars or automobiles. They are called plug ins because all of the cars in 2059 are electric cars. Gas has become so scarce that it is only used to keep the missile silos operational.

WEPS

WEPS (wireless enabled projected-screening device). This is the future's version of facetime on their phones. It is a communications device that everyone has.

Jesus Bracelet

When John attends one of his first Church of Man services, he sees a man there with a bracelet on that says, Jesus is Us. John isn't sure what to make of that statement. When he learns that the belief system is such that mankind is held up as the divine, he isn't sure he can stomach that. He's seen too many examples of less than divine nature of mankind.

COM Clothing

All of the Church of Man (COM) clothing is the same. As one of the pastors explain to John, no one is forced to wear the khaki pants or skirts and denim shirts, but most in the COM do as a way of making the clothing insignificant and the focus to be on the person wearing the clothes, instead.

Glampires

Glampires are those individuals who are so entrenched within their own vampire fantasies that they've had themselves permanently altered. John and Ernie are called to a glampire house in order to 'end' one of the glampires who no longer wanted to live forever. However, once John and Ernie are there, they are ambushed and nearly killed.



Settings

New York

The predominant setting in the book occurs in New York City, NY, in the United States. John works in a law firm in the city, there, and has an apartment near where the protests were held early on in the cure's history.

John's Father's Home

John's father lives just outside of Pennsylvania. John goes to visit him regularly, and especially wants to see him after he's taken the cure. His father is the first voice of reason that John hears, who voices concern about people living longer and that the perspective about death is a wrong one.

Polly's Home

Polly is John's sister and she also lives in Pennsylvania. John goes there shortly after he takes the cure to let her know what he's done. Polly is unsure about taking the cure, herself, bringing up many of the problems that could come with living that long. Her home is a slice of suburban happiness, according to John. However, she tells John that she and Mark are having problems. John would visit Polly several more times at her home.

The Doctor's Office

The doctor's office was located in a nondescript area of the city. He purposely chose this building because it wasn't conspicuous. This is where John comes to get his cure and where Katy comes to get her cure the day the building is bombed.

NY Train Station

John gets stuck at the train station for nearly six hours trying to get onboard the train to go to Pennsylvania to see his family. He had never seen it so clogged and begins to see the impact of many people having the cure and the drain on resources that it will present.



Themes and Motifs

Age

The theme of Age predominates the novel in that all of the characters are dealing with the notion of growing older. Most view aging with disdain and fear, as if it were something to be avoided at all costs. At the beginning, when John is considering whether or not he wants to take the cure, he considers his father and what he's gone through as he's aged. John doesn't think he has the guts to grow old. In fact, he is fairly vain and doesn't want to eventually lose his looks, his hair, or his waistline. If the cure can keep him looking as if he's in the prime of his life, he rationalizes, then why wouldn't he get it?

However, an alternate viewpoint is offered from several characters. First, there is John's father, who is concerned about the cure and its ramifications. He tells John about going through the stages of life, of looking at pictures in the albums and seeing the march of time writing their story on their bodies. Now, he suggests, there will be no marking of time because aside from various localities and the people in the pictures, no one will have changed. It will be as if things have simply frozen. He isn't sure that this is going to be the blessing that John believes it will be. He also states that he would not get the cure because that would postpone his eventual reunion with his deceased wife.

David offers several thoughts on the matter of aging. As John's son he shares with John that he has not taken the cure, nor will he. Being human, according to the church, means that part of that time is spent focusing on the divinity within the person, and not worshiping the outward appearance of him. That mankind can be a gift to the world is at the very heart of the COM ministry and is one that David fully embraces. Instead of age being something to be feared, in the church it is revered and honored. John has a difficult time understanding this concept especially when the video feeds on television only show young, healthy, vibrant people being successful.

Lastly, it is only at the end of his life that John realizes what his son and his father had tried to tell him. The potential for living longer and halting the aging process is not the gift that he'd thought it was. Facing his own mortality and imminent death, John realizes that all he really wanted was to find someone to love completely, and to grow old with her. The gift of growing old together was something that had been missed in everyone's rush to get the cure and 'cheat' death. In the end, John states, the world finds you, death finds you, and what have you really won?

Death

Death is another major theme in the novel. Since most people getting the cure believe that it will allow them to 'cheat' death millions rush to take the injections. However, the doctors administering the doses continually tell their clients that it will not stop a bullet,



stop cancer, or a heart attack, and that in the end, they will die. As a type of foreshadowing John's doctor, after giving him the last dose, tells him that he should go and live a happy life, until, of course, famine, disease, or a bullet stops him. The doctor has perhaps taken a glimpse into the potential for the future and has rightly considered that there are only a finite set of resource for everyone on the planet.

Secondly, there is a poster telling people to EMBRACE DEATH, as a warning to those thinking about taking the cure. In the end, ironically enough, John becomes a merchant of death, becoming an end specialist to help those who had taken the cure to die. At first, when John takes the cure, he is like everyone else..hopeful to live a very long and exciting, even profitable, life. But, at the end, the dream becomes a nightmare and he changes his mind, offering those who no longer wanted to live, a dignified exit. He came to see death as an elegant release for many people. One person that he helped to die was a man who'd lived a decent life. He wanted to wade out into the ocean and simply let the tide roll in over him until he was dead. Ernie and John stand with him, weighing the man down with cinder blocks. At the appropriate moment, just as the man's head had gone under, they dosed him with the lethal injection. John said that the look on the man's face, as he watched on more sunset, and felt the water rise around him, was peaceful and John was jealous of that feeling. He was also proud that he could help to facilitate that sense of peace for the man.

Death is also apparent in several gruesome ways. First, people are dying of disease and famine, but also from violence from other people. As society begins to deteriorate Death becomes a constant for most. Gangs of feral humans roam the streets, many of them former military. After a while, it becomes commonplace to see dead bodies in the road, piled up in corners in major cities, and ti comes to the point where John doesn't really notice them any more.

Death is shown to be patient and methodical in this novel. It's inevitability is a given, and yet, most fear it. Towards the end of the book, however, most embrace it readily as a release from the harshness of the reality they are faced with. Without death to keep human population in check, everyone begins to suffer, including the planet. Great societies crumble, philosophies disappear, and survival of the fittest becomes the law of the land. Death is shown to be a kind process, one that allows space and motivation for the young to succeed and survive. Death is shown to be the very thing that defined life, and gave it purpose. Stalled off indefinitely, most found life not worth living.

The Afterlife

What comes after death? This question, and debates about the afterlife are brought up in several chapters throughout the novel. The first occurrence happens when John visits his father to tell him that he'd taken the cure. When John's father tells him that he'd rather die and be reunited with his deceased wife, John angrily tells him that there is no heaven, no afterlife, nothing. Dead is nothing. One simply no longer exists. John's father, a normally level headed man, reacts to John's statement vehemently, telling John



that he is ignorant and that the afterlife is indeed real and something to be looked forward to.

John remains unconvinced through most of the novel until he becomes an end specialist. Viewing and facilitating so many deaths sets him to wondering about the nature of death and what happens to a person's consciousness and bioenergy when the body dies. John wonders if it might be the best route to actually try to believe in an afterlife, simply as disaster insurance. That way if one was wrong about it, then nothing ventured, nothing gained. However, if there were an afterlife, and he'd believed in it, he'd have a free pass.

This type of immature thinking evolves over the last part of the novel, culminating in his declaration of love for Solara Beck. With her he is capable of envisioning himself with her, reunited in a better place. He begins to understand the need to believe in the afterlife, and goes so far as to understand the strength and hope that it gives people.

He changes his mind at the end, believing that there was an afterlife and that if people would just recognize that earlier that there would never have been this issue with taking the cure. People would not have feared death because they would have somewhere else that they would exist, where they could be freed from the troubles of the present world, and live in another state of being.

Consequences

Most of the characters in this novel don't stop long enough to consider the consequences of their actions. John is a key example of this, though the author is quick to show that John is not the exception to the rule...he is the norm. John is self-centered and immature when he takes the cure. In many ways, though he chronologically continues to age, his body does not.

Psychologically speaking, he still feels compelled to continue to act as if he is 29 even though he is well into his 80s. Instead of considering how he is going to be able to live for a longer period of time, saving his money, stockpiling food, weapons, gasoline, he goes out and lives it up for several decades. In the end, just like many, the consequences of those actions means that many years down the road he is part of the growing mass of people who are starving and homeless.

This lack of forethought on his part is also evident in the fact that when he returns from his global walk about he has no job to come back to. As a result, he takes a job as an end specialist, something he would have been diametrically opposed to only a few decades before. Now, he begins to see that the consequences of legalizing the cure, have reached the point where it is not the godsend that everyone thought it was. He is able to see the consequences playing out, and he wants to be part of the correction. At one point, he even calls himself 'the correction' to the problem of the cure.

As a result of the cure going global, most countries suffer the consequences of overcrowding, a total collapse of their governments, programs, and even social



institutions such as marriage. Because the cure wasn't officially and gradually investigated before its release to the public, before the important questions could be asked, the cure was given to too many people. In a ripple effect that became a flood, the mass of humanity turned in upon itself and instead of thriving, failed to do so, in an epic way.

Technology

In this novel technology is offered from two viewpoints. First, it is shown to be helpful and even beneficial as exemplified in the various gadgets people own, such as WEPS devices, and other inventions that contribute to creating a more enjoyable living experience. Mankind has shifted away from fossil fuels, in this futuristic society, and are using vehicles that they call plug-ins.

However, one of the stronger, more salient points that the author suggests is that technology run amuck will be the doom of mankind. Not taking the time to fully examine a technology's impact on mankind, society, and the planet, fully commits mankind on a course to its own demise. This is seen when not enough oversight is given to the cure when it is discovered. Bowing to political pressure, the president lifts the ban on the cure and legalizes, even subsidizes, the cure, which speeds the human race to suffer the consequences that lack of forethought brings with it.

This is nothing new in the history of mankind, however. Consider that prior to the mid-fifties in the US, and around the world, the types of pesticides and fertilizers were considered safe and were used indiscriminately. It nearly brought many of the planet's species to their knees. On a grander scale, of course, this novel shows what happens when the ramifications of a new and emergent technology are not fully vetted and considered.

Just because the general public want something, doesn't mean that they should be allowed to have it, seems to be the overarching message in this theme. Sometimes people need to be protected from their own worse proclivities. John's father even says something to this extent when he is dying of cancer and has refused to take anything for it. Later, when Otto's son creates another technology called skeleton key, it is a grim reminder that though hundreds of years have passed, the politicians and public are still making many of the same mistakes as before.

When the skeleton key drug is released, in one sense, it saved a great deal many people from the sheep flu. But saved them for what? The world, at that point was already in a dire situation. Nature seeks a balance, as Otto's son states, and eventually, one way or another, it will reach that balance, either through famine or diseases. So, by interfering with this balance, the technology threw off the delicate and interrelated series of checks and balances.



Styles

Point of View

The entire novel is told from the first person point of view, but it is told from the point of view of someone who has been long dead. So, though the entries are in first person, the reader understands that everything that is shown in the entries has already happened and come to some conclusion.

What is interesting to note is that though it is written in first person, many of the magazine articles, news feeds, and so forth, are not in first person, but in third person, past. However, these serve a greater purpose in offering a wider scope to the first person narrative.

John, as the first person narrator, is often an unreliable narrator, and as such the news accounts and blog entries serve to act as a point and counterpoint to John's comments and personal entries. The reader is able to gain perspective and understand when John, as the narrator, is being selfish, introverted, blind, or cruel, even though John, himself, is clueless to recognize it.

Language and Meaning

The language in this novel includes many futuristic and wholly fabricated words to describe things in the world of 2029-2079. Cars are called 'plug ins' for example, and cell phones are called Wireless enabled projected screening devices. There are concepts, such as cycle marriages, and other new societal concepts that the author introduces, which are explained by the narrator, or in the media excerpts that he includes on his feeds.

Structure

The entire novel is structured in linear fashion, with only a few flashbacks offered by the protagonist. Most of the information that the reader gains comes from John's blog posts, journal entries, his inclusion and reposting of germane (to him) news items, occurrences, and video news feed transcriptions. There are no chapter numbers, but rather headings, such as one would read on a blog listing. At the beginning of the novel the reader is told that the entire book is a collection of the recovered hard drive of John's WEPS device and laptop, and that they chronicle that darkest period in human history, prior to the great correction.



Quotes

Normally, any decision I confront is forced to navigate the seemingly endless bureaucracy of my conscience.

-- John (Chapter 1 paragraph 2)

Importance: This quote shows the state of mind that John was in when he was considering whether or not he should get 'the cure'. He is stating that ordinarily he tends to take a long time to carefully weigh his decisions, but in this case, he didn't. It is clear that he regrets this rash decision, though at this point in the novel, the reader doesn't know why.

It's an ageless life, John. Did you really expect it to be painless?

-- Dr. X. (Chapter 5 paragraph 32)

Importance: John is shocked that there are restraints on the table where he's to lie down and get the cure injections. When he asks the doctor why there are restraints the doctor replies that they are deep tissue injections and that he can give him a topical analgesic if he needs it. This is also a bit of foreshadowing because he's telling John that just because he won't age, doesn't mean he won't feel pain, or experience unpleasantness.

This is bereavement: the slow, eventual reassertion of your own meaningless preoccupations.

-- John (Chapter 12 paragraph 42)

Importance: John says this when he's visiting his sister, Polly, just after Katy's death. He says that he begins to feel some ease from the grief and guilt that he's feeling and that he believes this is part of the bereavement process, that it signals the beginning of healing.

People got married before because they knew, deep down, that there would come a time in their lives when they would become too old, too ugly, and too infirm to have anyone care about them except their spouse.

-- John (Chapter 19 paragraph 41)

Importance: This quote indicates how the very fabric of human belief systems are being challenged because of the longevity factor. No one views marriage as the natural endpoint for a serious relationship.

He was me. He's the part of me I'll leave behind whenever I exit this plane of existence. I looked at his face, and it was as if he existed both inside and outside of my body.

-- John (Chapter 29 paragraph 23)

Importance: John says this shortly after his baby was born and was shocked at the intensity of his feelings.



How are we supposed to deal with criminals who have an indefinite lifespan?
-- John (Chapter 37)

Importance: John comes to this conclusion as another aspect of never aging and it leads to further thoughts about longevity. This quote occurs after he posts an article about a career criminal who was given a life sentence.

The best part of my life is now over. A wisp of beautiful reality that I'll spend the rest of eternity desperately trying to hold on to, as it floats away like a speck of dust in time's ever-expanding black chasm.
-- John (Chapter 43 paragraph 22)

Importance: This happened after John decided to pursue one of the Greenies that had attacked him years previously. Allison watched him pistol whip the man and was appalled. As she backed away from John she was hit by a truck. As he cradled her in his arms he was thinking this thought to himself.

It's what the church teaches us. It teaches us that the goodness and selflessness of man will always rise to the surface. Man is gifted in that way. I knew we'd have this conversation at some point, and I knew it would be fine. I knew it was only a matter of time. Every man eventually aims to redeem himself.
-- David (Chapter 49 paragraph 59)

Importance: David says this to John when they meet and David is a grown man. John apologizes for not being in David's life, but David is gracious and a better version of John (as John says).

Nobility sounds wonderful as a concept. But nobility tends to go out the window when you find yourself forced to choose between life and oblivion.
-- Dmitrov (Russian Soldier) (Chapter 53 paragraph 21)

Importance: In an interview with a news reporter, Dmitrov and his fellow Russian soldiers had defected together. Part of protecting themselves from reprisals was to contact the outside news agencies to let the world know what was going on.

Is it a good thing to eliminate an illness, or many illnesses, that are devastating on an individual scale but necessary in the grand scheme of nature?
-- Steven Otto (Chapter 57 paragraph 14)

Importance: Steven Otto, Graham Otto's son (who was the inventor of the cure) would go on to develop his own medical breakthrough. It would cure cancer and almost any other ailment known to mankind. And yet, he was hesitant to move forward with it because of the ramifications.

Because that's what people do, Solara. They go along in life and they figure out who's worth giving a shit about and who they can let fall by the wayside. And all they can do after that is hope against all hope that they cast their lot with the right kind. And that they



didn't let slip away someone they desperately should've held onto. So I pick you.
-- John (Chapter 71 paragraph 31)

Importance: When John has quit his job because they were going to make him execute the elderly, Solara calls his bluff in regards to how he feels about her. This indicates that he's not the toughened and hardened person that he thought he had become. He is now remembering what it was like to be human and to care about something.

I've always known it was a lie. You cannot hide from the world. It will find you. It always does. And now it has found me. My split second of immortality is over.
-- John (Chapter 73 paragraph 11)

Importance: As John is dying he has this realization about living. It is only in death, and knowing that death will eventually come, that living becomes worth it.