

Schizo Study Guide

Schizo by Nic Sheff

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Plot Summary

Schizo, a novel by Nic Sheff, revolves around Miles Cole, a 16-year-old man who has been diagnosed with schizophrenia. After a major breakdown in the public restroom at the beach a year ago, he has fought the emotional and mental demons that have plagued him daily and lead him to believe that the kidnapping of his brother, Teddy Bryant Cole, was his fault.

He remembers that fateful day as being happy until the episode in the restroom. He and Teddy were in the water at the beach. His parents Audrey and Sam were on the beach with his younger sister, Janey. Miles went to the restroom and had a breakdown that attracted the attention of many beach-goers, particularly his parents, which led them to run to his aid. When he woke in the hospital his parents were very distraught. He found out that Teddy was missing and the suspicion was kidnapping. The police had no luck finding his captor or any solid leads to prove a kidnapping so eventually they put it in the category of a drowning.

Once home, Miles goes back to school and tries to resume a normal life, but realistically, what is normal for him? A tension exists in his home as if he and his parents must walk on eggshells around each other. Before the incident, Miles shared a love of movies with his mother and a love of jazz vinyl albums with his father. Now, although they still have the same common hobbies, they act strained around each other. Audrey, Miles's mother, is often stressed out and upset. She rarely eats dinner with the family, but takes a pill and goes to bed in the evenings. Sam, Miles's father, tries to act like nothing has happened. He acts cheery and pretends that the atmosphere at home is the same as it always was. He doesn't want to do or say anything that will upset Miles. Janey absolutely enjoys her time with her brother. She is the one who acts the most normal around him.

Miles only has a few true friends. He has been friends with Preston, a rich kid, since he was ten years old. Although they are from different sides of the tracks, so to speak, Miles had ended up at Preston's school, Stanyon Hills, when Miles' mom got a job in the library there, and they allowed her to bring her son with her. Preston pretty much treats Miles as if nothing has ever changed in either of their lives. The other of his two best friends is Preston's girlfriend, Jackie. She is very tender with him and incredibly aware of Miles' well-being, his emotional state, and the physical burdens that come with schizophrenia.

Eliza Lindberg was another of Miles' best friends when they were in the seventh and eighth grades. Her parents are also rich, like Preston's. Her dad's a famous chef who moved his family to New Orleans because of his career. Miles had not seen her since the end of the eighth grade and her move, but she and her mother have just returned to California because her dad left them for a female chef with whom he worked.

Miles had a huge crush on Eliza when she lived there before and had awkwardly asked her to be his girlfriend before she moved. It did not go as planned leaving Miles feeling



embarrassed. That's the last time he saw Eliza before she moved. Now, she's back, and although he is glad to have the opportunity to see her again, he is worried that the embarrassing moment in the past will make for an uncomfortable reunion. He and Eliza have a rocky initial meeting, but go on to find that they are attracted to one another.

Although Miles really likes her and wants to be with her, he has come up with a plan that he feels will solve the problems and the guilt he has at home. Miles, who does not believe that Teddy drowned, and feels that he is the only one who hasn't given up on finding him, plans to pick up where the police left off: find Teddy, and bring happiness and normalcy back to his family. After that, he will have time to enjoy friends, girls, and teenage endeavors.

Miles slyly begins his search for Teddy. He interviews the reported witness to Teddy's kidnapping, Dolly Peterson, after which he visits the police station and is able to obtain the list of potential suspects and their addresses from the police file. During a field trip to the same beach of Teddy's disappearance, which also happens to be near the home of the primary suspect at the time of the crime, Miles breaks away from the class and tries to find the suspect. Miles is sure that this man, Simon Tolliver, is holding Teddy in his home. After learning that Tolliver has moved, Miles concocts a scheme to find Tolliver's new home where he is sure Teddy is being held. Although Tolliver does have a young boy at his home, it is his own child who is very ill. Tolliver gives Miles a ride back to town.

Instead of going home, Miles goes to Eliza's house where he is having his always present, but building hallucination of black crows watching him. This time, instead of the crows congregating outside only, he sees them in Eliza's house and even more in her bedroom. He believes they are attacking her, so he attacks them trying to save Eliza. When the lights come on, he finds that there are no crows, just Eliza and another boy on her bed having sex. Distraught, Miles returns home, climbs into the bathtub, and slices his wrists. Before he loses consciousness, he calls 911 to report his suicide and to let the police know exactly where to find him so that neither Janey, nor their parents, finds him in that condition.

To his disappointed surprise, Miles awakes in a hospital with his arms stitched and bandaged. He is assigned to the psych ward under the care of the resident specialist, Dr. Dubonis. Audrey and Sam Cole are beyond worried about these new circumstances. It's almost a relief to them that now that they know he will live, they know he will be safe in the hospital under the doctor's care.

While in the hospital, Miles finds himself in group therapy where the acronym H.A.L.T., which stands for hungry, angry, lonely, and tired. The addicts are taught that mantra to keep their mental clarity or to avoid the risk of a mental relapse, these basic needs must be met. During his stay in the psych ward, his regular psychiatrist, Dr. S. Frankel, comes to visit him. Miles decides to finally divulge to the doctor something he hasn't told anyone since his whole scheme began, that he was trying to find his brother Teddy and put his family back together. First, he explains to Dr. Frankel that he flushed his many prescriptions down the toilet, hasn't had his meds, and his delusions and problems have



returned worse than before; the crows, the unexplained voice in his head telling him what to do, his problems with Eliza, and most disturbing, his acceptance of Teddy's death.

Dr. Frankel assures him that he is not to blame and asks about the boy, Teddy, that he speaks of. He remembers Miles discussing him in previous sessions. Dr. Frankel explains to Miles that he does not and has never had a brother. There was a young boy named Teddy Bryant who had been kidnapped from the same beach a week before Miles' breakdown. During that confusing time for Miles, the kidnapping case was prominent news everywhere. As a coping mechanism, Miles felt so guilty about the burden he placed on his family because of his breakdown that his subconscious took ungraspable guilty feelings of something out of his control and turned it into the real guilt that he had a brother named Teddy, that he had been the reason behind Teddy's kidnapping because everyone was taking care of Miles, and he had ruined his parents lives, making them worried and strained all the time. The truth of this delusion was beyond comprehension for Miles.

Coming to the realization that Teddy was not his brother and that not taking his meds had brought on extreme delusions due to his disease, Miles was able to be stabilized on his meds, own his actions, and understand what needs to be done to get his schizophrenia under control. He becomes stronger in the psych ward thanks to the doctors, the new meds, and the help of the friends he makes in his group sessions.

Before going home, Miles has to come clean with his parents. With the help of Dr. Frankel, Miles tells his parents all of the things that landed him in the psych ward this time. During his fall into this delusional existence, he had not told his parents about flushing his meds, about his hallucinations, about what happened with Eliza, and most importantly, about the fact that he believed all this time that Teddy Bryant was his brother and that he tried to find their lost (but not real) son. His parents are shocked by these revelations. As a family, they all cry and came to accept how this disease has toyed with their lives for over a year. Now that the truth is out, they feel confident that Miles can come home on his new stabilizing meds, visit his doctor regularly, and face the world with new hope and confidence that, although he will never be cured, he definitely can control his life.



Part One: Chapters 1-4

Summary

Chapter 1

Miles is hanging out with his best friends, Preston and Jackie, at Preston's parents' opulent home. Preston has the house to himself with the exception of the housekeeper, Olivia. The three teens are in Preston's bedroom watching old movies. Miles tells the reader that although they are all friends, he feels like a charity case because they let him hang around with them. Although Preston's family lives in a house that is like an old Gothic castle they became rich as actors on a tv show in the nineties. Miles' family live in a small three-bedroom home which is just the opposite of Preston's.

Preston and Jackie are smoking pot; Preston is what Miles calls a big pothead. Miles used to smoke pot also, but hasn't done that in more than two years. Miles is sixteen and hasn't had an episode in over a year, he tells the readers. He is having auditory problems, occasionally hearing sharp screams, which leads him to believe that his problems are returning. He thinks that Preston is lucky to have Jackie and believes that if he were not crazy, he could have a nice, attractive girlfriend, too.

Miles met Preston at summer camp when they were ten years old. They've been best friends ever since. They didn't start going to school together until Miles' mom got a job in the library at Stanyan Hill, Preston's school, Miles' seventh grade year. They've been in school together since. While chilling out in Preston's room, Miles starts hearing noises, buzzing, screaming-coming and going. He realizes that it's probably not real noises. This is a side effect of his disease. The meds must have stopped working for him. He zones out and becomes sick to his stomach. He overly focuses on a mosquito that lands on Jackie's shoulder and bites her. He's blankly staring at Jackie and the mosquito. Jackie realizes something is wrong with Miles and asks him. He answers that that is really the question.

Chapter 2

Miles goes to an appointment with his psychiatrist, Dr. Frankel. He doesn't know how his parents pay the bill, but is glad that his visits have been reduced to twice per month. Miles describes, or rather criticizes, Dr. Frankel's look, his office, and his way of talking to him. The reader learns that Dr. Frankel wrote a book based on Miles' situation called *Schizophrenia in the Adolescent Male: Signs, Symptoms, and Treatments*. This is the first reference to the particular disease that Miles has. As Miles sits in his appointment, his thoughts wander to his interpretation of how others view schizophrenics based on how he, himself, views them. He thinks about how often he can pick out people with his disease in his hometown of San Francisco. He thinks of an article his father wrote for the *Chronicle* that claimed that the increase in mental health problems is because of Reagan's cut of funding to that department.



Dr. Frankel discusses how the meds are making Miles feel. He tells him the meds make him nauseous and that because his mom's job cut her hours, the insurance won't pay for the meds anymore. The doctor says to let his parents worry about that. He needs to get well. Miles doesn't tell the doctor that the meds are starting to fail. He claims they are ok besides making him sick to his stomach. He does tell the doctor that he doesn't know if all of this work and trouble will be worth it in the end. He doesn't see himself holding a steady job or having a future. As a matter of fact, he says that he'd be doing everyone a favor if he ended it all now.

The doctor explains that he'd be making it worse on his parents, and they'd never get over losing him. Miles feels that his sister, Janey, needs their parents more than he does. He tells the doctor he didn't really mean that he should end it all. The doctor points out that Janey also needs him. Miles once again says that they'd all be better without him and that his parents will never forgive him for what he did. The doctor seems baffled by this statement about his parents. When he asks Miles why he thinks they won't forgive him. He just tells the psychiatrist that he 'knows' what happened.

Chapter 3

Miles describes the day that he had his first episode, the one he remembers as Teddy's disappearance day. School was out; it was a beautiful family day at the beach. Miles remembers he and Teddy in the cool water having fun. Sam and Janey were playing nerf football in the sand, while Audrey was posted at the place on the beach where they'd set up camp for the day. Miles left the water to go to the public restroom. On the way, he ran into some older kids from school who were smoking pot. They offered him a hit which he took. He'd smoked marijuana before and didn't see any problem with it.

He wanted to be friendly with these particular kids who were members of a band in his school that he was hoping to audition for with his guitar. After a brief visit, he headed to the restroom where he believed he heard the voice of an older male telling him not to leave the restroom because someone would get him. At first, he laughed it off as being high from the pot, but when he walked to the door to leave, he couldn't grasp the handle.

As he turned around, the room seemed to be greasy and pooling a thick fatty-type substance. He grabbed at the door again to leave, but couldn't get out and started screaming for help. That's when the voice returned and again warned Miles not to go out because "they" would get him.

Next came the first time he saw the huge black crows, flying, scratching, and cawing as they were trying to get into the bathroom. He stopped trying to open the door, fearing them. When the fire department arrived, they had to take an ax to the door to enter. Miles freaked out, thinking the firemen were the crows. Once he was sedated and taken to the hospital he didn't wake for an entire day. The doctors explained to Miles and his parents that he had a disease and they needed to begin the medication process.



Four days later, he was able to go home. That's when he learned about Teddy's disappearance. While he was in the beach's bathroom screaming and everyone was tending to him, Teddy wasn't being watched. A witness claimed that he was kidnapped and an investigation ensued. They were unable to locate him, leaving Miles to worry that he must have drowned in the current. Although everyone else has given up, even today, Miles feels like Teddy's alive. He believes that he has to do something because it was all his fault.

Chapter 4

Miles is still in his session with Dr. Frankel who is trying to reassure Miles that he has nothing to feel guilty about. Dr. Frankel asks Miles if he still worries about that fateful day at the beach. Miles lies and tells the doctor that he doesn't. Dr. Frankel decides to up some of Miles' meds and asks him if that's ok. Miles thinks this is funny, the doctor asking like Miles had any say in the matter. Miles agrees to follow the doctor's instructions and just sits back to wait.

Analysis

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 presents Miles Cole as the first person narrator for the novel. During this chapter, the reader learns that Miles has a mental disease, but its name is not yet shared. Miles talks about the auditory symptoms that seem to be coming back. He's worried that his meds are not working and that he'll be slipping back into episodes again.

The theme of Hopelessness is demonstrated in this chapter as the reader learns that Miles has a very low opinion of himself. He is not confident with girls which he expresses through his comments about Jackie being such a great friend to him, a great girlfriend, and a nice, beautiful person overall. He makes it clear that he realizes that he's lucky that she'd even be friends with him. He expresses that he feels like a "charity case" and that he's lucky to even be accepted in their presence.

An additional theme of Mental Illness begins here as well. Although Miles' disease has seemingly been under control for a year at this point in the story, he is beginning to experience signs that the problems are returning, such as the many auditory distractions that periodically interrupt his day. Because of the mental illness he feels defective and inferior to others.

Chapter 2

Miles realizes that his situation is serious, but he seems to have given up on himself. He isn't merely lacking confidence in himself; he feels that he shouldn't be allowed to live. The theme of Taking Blame is demonstrated more fully in this chapter. He is being swallowed by his own guilt and feels that everyone would be better off without him. He obviously doesn't take the doctor seriously because he doesn't seem to respect him or



his ability as a doctor. He criticizes his looks and actions. He doesn't trust what the doctor tells him. The doctor asks if the meds are working. Miles says yes because he doesn't trust the doctor enough to let him know that his problems are returning.

He feels that if the meds don't work, he has no hope and will never lead a normal life. He feels that he is a burden on those who love him and that all of the therapy and medication are merely wasting everyone's time and money. He says his parents will never forgive him, but actually he will never forgive himself. The theme of the Hopelessness becomes prevalent in this chapter. Although his meds seemed to initially work for the past year, Miles sees no hope when they begin to fail him. He doesn't trust anyone enough to let them in to see his struggles. He sees life as one spiral ride to the bottom before death.

Chapter 3

This is the point when Miles begins to hallucinate. He describes in vivid detail the first time he sees the crows and explains that the sight of them mixed with the instructions from the floating voice make him realize that he has to stay put. Miles claims that in the present, even when everyone else has given up looking for Teddy, he can feel that Teddy's really still alive. His delusions of being to blame for Teddy's disappearance lead him to believe that he has no other choice but to find Teddy himself. The theme of Blame is furthered in this chapter, and the crows are introduced as a recurring symbol of Miles' disease.

Crows, in and of themselves, are often used to depict or foretelling doom, and in this instance, for Miles, that is exactly what they do. In his mind, when the crows show up, something bad is going to happen, either to him or to someone else.

Chapter 4

Miles acts like he is wasting his time being in the session. He also acts as if although the doctor is trying to keep his disease under control, he doesn't trust that anything will help him. He's just going through the motions, doing what everyone expects of him as his part in controlling his illness. He doesn't trust the doctor though, not anyone really. He neglects to tell the doctor that the symptoms are returning. He doesn't discuss Teddy. He lies and says that he never thinks about that day at the beach. He finds the doctor's efforts to keep his medication level amusing. He is slipping further into his illness again with the belief that the only way out of this is to find Teddy himself.

Discussion Question 1

What indicates that Miles is merely giving Dr. Frankel the answers he expects to hear?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the theme of Mental illness in these first few chapters.



Discussion Question 3

What is the significance of the crows?

Vocabulary

pungent, synapses, claustrophobic, gullet, schizophrenic, nauseous, cataclysmic, Vaseline, urinal, congealed, sedated, fixated, upping



Part One: Chapters 5-8

Summary

Chapter 5

As Miles rides the public bus home from the doctor's office, he is surrounded by similar sites: a drunk passed out on the bus bench, and the smells of sweat. He watches the drunk man lying on the bench and decides that he probably isn't just a normal drunk or junkie. He most likely is sick, like Miles, schizo. He feels confident that one day he will be that same type of person, aimlessly wandering, riding buses, dressing raggedly with no place to go.

Miles and his mother are both big movie fans. It's the one thing that they have in common. He wishes that his whole life could be spent lying in bed watching movies. He explained that he likes movies because for a short amount of time, he gets to escape the realities of his life. He even dreads the ending of the movie knowing that he'll soon be returning to the real world. He wonders if his mother feels the same way.

He thinks about how the kids at school act around him. Although it's been two years since the bathroom incident, he has had other episodes. One time he imagined that Janey was trapped in the sofa cushions and was discovered by his family tearing the sofa apart to save her. Once at school, he ran screaming from math class to escape the crows that were, in his mind, trying to get in to attack him. He feels as if other people are afraid of him.

As he walks home from the bus, he again sees the crows circling overhead. He's never sure if they are real or in his mind, but they are there most days. He starts thinking about how the wires upon which the crows often sat, connected the houses telephones, cable, electricity. He muses over the fact that most light coming from the homes is generated by the televisions in the homes where the people watched the lives of others and wished they were famous as their brains turn slowly into mush.

Because of the extensive wind, he pulls his hoodie up and covers the new gospel album that he had bought at lunch to share with his father.

Chapter 6

Miles describes the area around his house. There are crowded markets and a variety of stores all around them. It's like a smorgasbord of cultures up and down his street. He talks about his dad taking the kids to the bakery in the morning before school and how Teddy used to love the Vietnamese food, especially the hot and spicy stuff. Miles explains that their neighbors are an older Russian couple who only speak broken English named the Paganoffs.



The reader learns that Miles smokes, and because he's only sixteen, his father buys his cigarettes for him. He figures that his dad does this for him because he knows that Miles can't drink or smoke pot because of all of his medications, and he needs some outlet. There's a vacant lot behind their house. His mother used to keep a garden in the back yard, but since the incident has let it grow to weeds. He and Eliza had a fort there when they were in middle school, before she moved. It was there that they would tell each other their own deep, dark secrets. Miles admitted to her that he didn't really fit in with other kids. She told him about her dysfunctional family. They trusted each other. She was very nice to him, except at school where she would ignore him or make fun of him like the others kids. He wasn't bothered by this because he knew that when they were alone, they shared a special bond. He was totally in love with Eliza and felt that she was a lot like him.

Miles describes his parents' home. He sets the scene as if the house still decorated from 2010 before his dad lost his job at the Chronicle. The only new thing in the living room is the Ikea couch Miles and his dad had to put together when Miles destroyed the old one during one of his episodes. He sets the scene as being very poor and no frills. The main point of interest is the huge crack in the ceiling that sometimes leaks water when it rains. He admits that is probably the only reason his parents ever get into real fights. His mom cannot stand that the crack hasn't been repaired. The whole family tries not to mention it because it always starts a fight. In the event of a fight between his parents, Miles takes Janey into the other room and reads stories to her. He used to do that for Teddy too, but now it's just Janey.

When he arrives at home, Janey greets him at the door. She tells him that they are making brownies and that he can help. Although most nights since that day at the beach, the family eats their meal in front of the TV, tonight their dad has made a special meal of roast pork and Brussels sprouts. They decide to eat at the table and even their mom joins them. Miles is playing the new album he brought home. Janey loves it, but his mom makes him take it off saying it is too depressing. She is also upset that Miles has spent money on the record knowing the funds from his job are supposed to go only to his cell phone and his medication. Miles looks at his mother and worries that in the short few years since the day at the beach, Audrey has aged beyond her years. He feels as if it's his fault and thinks that the only thing he can do to make it up to them would be to somehow get Teddy back.

Chapter 7

Stanyon Hill, the private school Miles and Jane could not attend had their mom not worked in the library, is described in the beginning of the section. It was originally a church and church grounds, but when the school took over, modern things were added. Being an upper class school, it is equipped with all of the modern facilities, such as, an indoor pool, a theater, an art studio, a science lab, etc. The only thing they do not have are organized sporting teams. Although Miles doesn't play a sport, he feels like something is missing from school not having that aspect of the high school years and not having the opportunity to make the decision not to play. It has been made for him. He says that growing up in such a liberal place doesn't allow for the regular teenage



rebellion and that his dad was lucky to grow up in Georgia in the seventies with so much to rebel against. He decides that either his schizophrenia is his big rebellion or better yet, trying to be normal despite his illness is.

As Miles arrives at school, he begins his day as he normally does, getting books from his locker and heading to first period. He is stopped in the hall by one of the only kids at school who isn't scared of him because of his illness: Ordell Thornton. He asks Miles where he's been and why he hasn't been hanging out. Miles tells him he's been sick, but really Ordell gets on Miles' nerves. Walking to class, Ordell proceeds to tell Miles all about the weekend party he missed. Ordell goes on to talk about the winter formal and who he plans to ask. Miles, of course, is not planning to go. Miles misses a step on the stairs and bangs his knee. He's not sure if it's a hallucination from the pain in his knee or if it is a true sight, but he sees Eliza. Ordell tells him that she has returned to San Francisco and is back in school with them. Miles begins to worry about seeing Eliza again. He keeps remembering the last time he saw her, asked her out, and watched her burst into tears telling him he'd ruined everything. If that's not embarrassing enough, he's worried about what the other kids have told her about his illness and the scary episodes because of it.

He can't stop thinking of Eliza. During biology, he begins to feel sick. He leaves the room and rushes to the restroom where he waits to throw up all the while trying to convince himself that the meds are making him sick, not the worrying about Eliza. He thinks about dominant and recessive traits that they are studying in biology and wonders why he has the illness he does. He thinks he is a mistake and shouldn't be allowed to exist. He curls up in the bathroom trying to physically be as small as he feels emotionally waiting for the nausea to pass.

Chapter 8

Since Miles' illness, he is supposed to check in each day during lunch with his mother where she works in the library at his school. When he arrives to eat lunch with her, the library is almost empty. He notices that his mother's office contains pictures of his dad, Jane, him, and even their cat, Myshkin, but not one photo of Teddy. As Miles and his mother eat their sandwiches and drink their coffee, he tells her that Eliza is back. His mom becomes very concerned because she's worried that the stress of Eliza will be a setback for Miles.

Miles thinks back to the many times that he was "messed up" by Eliza, and those happened before his illness showed itself. During a game of Truth or Dare with other kids, Eliza said she would barf if she kissed Miles like she was dared to do. The very next day, she came up to him away from the other kids and kissed him. He was so excited, but she soon went back to being mean to him. Although his mom worries about how Eliza will affect him, Miles believes that he cannot get in a relationship while Teddy is still missing because of him. He believes, "...until Teddy is found, I'll never be able to move on with my own life." Like the décor of his family's livingroom, he feels frozen in time until Teddy is with them again. This is the first time that he realizes and decides



that it's all up to him to fix things and that means finding Teddy alive and bringing him home.

Analysis

Chapter 5

Miles judges people with mental illness probably more harshly than others would. Having a disease himself, he seems to not pity them, but look on them as his future self. He has little to no hope that he will ever become anything other than those pathetic people who he believe to be plagued with the same illness he possesses. This theme of Hopelessness recurs often whenever Miles sees, or thinks he sees, someone with a mental illness. He truly believes that ending up as these people have is his only option in life.

He struggles with the hardships of his disease, the various noises, the unknown demanding voice, and most often, the cawing and clawing crows. Crows can be symbolic of mystery, the unknown, and trickery. Appearing as a hallucination for Miles meets these criteria. He doesn't know when the crows are real and when he imagines them. He is "tricked" by their presence. Their existence in his life and delusions are "unknown" to him. The fact that these crows are described as black darkens their existence in his life. The color black is often associated with death, mystery, and sinister acts. The black crow is often depicted eating and picking at dead bodies. The fact that Miles believes they are a danger to him is important because the mysterious bird associated with the color black, death, and the unknown makes for a very scary omen that something bad may happen.

The symbolism of the movies is introduced in this chapter. It represents the link that he has to his mother, and the fact that they do connect on some level. Albeit, he does not connect with his mother as he wishes he would, like before Teddy disappeared, but it is at least something. Both he and his mother view the movies as an escape and he wonders if his mother hates it when they end, just like he does. There is a symbol representative of Miles' father as well: old vinyl albums. He has purchased one for his father, and since it is their way to connect, he is protective of it. This is indicated by his slipping it under his jacket when he thinks it might rain. This shows that he desperately wants and needs his parents to love him and connect with him.

Chapter 6

The ever growing guilt that Miles feels about having hurt his family continues to pile up. He blames himself for almost everything that isn't right in his family, even his mother's aging, which demonstrates the theme of Blame. He continually tells his family how sorry he is. He never feels that's enough. In his eyes, all of his family's life woes are his fault. He truly believes that bringing Teddy back is the only thing that will help. Although in this chapter, he mentions many things that cause his parents to stress, he only sees himself as the problem.



There is quite a bit of symbolism happening in this chapter. First, there is the mention of Audrey's garden in the back. Miles says that after Teddy died, she didn't tend to the garden any more. Now it's just a tangle of matted weeds. This represents the internal landscape of the family, all tangled with weeds. Likewise, there is another image/symbol that points towards the dysfunctionality of their family and that is the crack in the ceiling. It lets in the bad weather, Miles says. Likewise, there is a large 'crack' in the family and their way of relating to one another.

Miles' father has lost his job, and his mom works, but her hours have been cut causing the insurance not to cover the meds that she knows Miles must have. Audrey works in an upper crest rich school and comes home to a shabby run down house that they can't afford to fix. Miles describes all of those things, but doesn't see them as a cause of his parents' stress. It's only him. He carries the weight of the world on his shoulders.

His lack of self-worth is very prominent when he talks about his prior relationship with Eliza. He explains that he can tell her anything, and she shares with him. He says they are just alike, but they really aren't. He explains how she ignores or makes fun of him in front of the other kids. He's okay with that because he knows they have a special relationship in private. Because he feels he is not worthy of anything better, he looks at his relationship with Eliza as a good thing, never considering that he would never treat a friend that way. Just as with Preston and Jackie, he just feels lucky that any of them will be his friend because he isn't worthy of them. This entire mindset reflects the theme of Self-Worth.

Chapter 7

Miles still believes that he is worthless. Now, with Eliza back at school, he is extremely worried about what happened the last time they saw each other and what other people may have told her about his illness and odd behaviors. The continued theme of Miles' lack of self-worth is prevalent here. He is still down on himself. He deals not only with the regular worries of a teenager dealing with the opposite sex, but also has the added burden of his illness, the way other kids treat him, and most importantly, the pressure that he places on himself.

The idea of wanting to die, feeling that he doesn't want to live, continues when he has the episode in the restroom. The theme of Mental Illness is illustrated in this entire chapter in that Miles has not only the usual teenage worries, but he has the additional worry in regards to his illness. For this reason he feels out of place, and is just grateful that anyone wants to be near him.

Whenever Miles is thinking something to himself, the author uses italics to state his thoughts. The desperation of his feelings about himself are expressed when he realizes that he doesn't understand why he has this disease. His constant talk about wanting to die and wishing he were already dead foreshadows events to come.

Miles is glad that Ordell isn't afraid of him like the other kids, but he gets on Miles' nerves. One may wonder why Miles avoids Ordell when he is lacking in friends, but



Miles already deals with enough stress and worry. Being around someone who causes more aggravation only worsens the anxiety Miles already has a hard time controlling. Miles is already hiding from everyone the fact that his meds are no longer working. The reader is seeing the increase in Miles' headaches, hallucinations, auditory issues, and uncontrollable worrisome thoughts. Each stressful event in his life now, no matter how big or small, is becoming a major setback; yet he continues to keep it to himself. This also foreshadows an eventual breakdown.

Chapter 8

Once more Miles doesn't see how miserably he's been treated by Eliza in the past. She crushes his spirits in public, then in private, as if she's ashamed of him, she does or says something nice to him, and he forgets the bad until the cycle begins again. Her treatment of him is accepted, even though it hurts his feelings, because he doesn't think he deserves to be treated any better and grasps onto any scrap of kindness that anyone will show him, especially Eliza. His mother is right to worry about how she will affect his mental situation.

When he takes note that his mom doesn't have pictures of Teddy in her office, he makes the excuse that she must keep Teddy in her mind at all times like he does; therefore, she doesn't need the material photos to honor his memory. Miles thinks all of these things about Teddy, but never mentions him out loud to anyone else, probably out of the fear that he will open old wounds and cause more pain. His guilt over what happened at the beach that day weighs on him and keeps him stuck in time. He truly believes that all of his mother's worries and weariness is due to him. He believes that only by bringing Teddy home safely can he break this pause in their lives and bring happiness back to his family.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Miles so sure that bringing Teddy home will solve all of his family's problems?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Miles feel let down by the fact that he doesn't have anything to rebel against?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the theme of Self Worth in Chapter 7.

Vocabulary

atrophied, sprawled, neurotic, Taiwanese, nettles, bramble, phonoharp, astroturf, bougainvillea, angst, lumber, manic, elated, perpetual, animation



Part One: Chapters 9-12

Summary

Chapter 9

Although Miles attends a small school, he has been able to avoid seeing Eliza for two days until an assembly is called for the entire school. Although Miles sits with Preston and Jackie, he can see Eliza across the room. Preston notices Miles staring at Eliza and lets Miles know that he's spoken to Eliza, and she wants to see Miles and apologize for the way she previously treated him. This makes Miles feel even worse about seeing her.

Preston advises Miles to wait to see Eliza and give it time so nothing bad happens, in other words, so Miles doesn't have an episode. Miles tells Preston that he has more important things to think about, but refuses to tell him about his plans to find Teddy. Preston reminds Miles that he is having a big party at his house this weekend and tells him that Eliza hopes to see Miles there. Miles says he doesn't know if he'll be going or not. Jackie tells Miles that she hopes he comes to the party because she hates Preston's parties, and she and Miles can hang out. Jackie convinces Miles to go to the party and says they can hide out together from the crowds in Preston's room. Miles agrees to go. The students are eagerly chatting until the principal begins the assembly.

Chapter 10

Miles decides to contact the number one witness in Teddy's case, Dolly Peterson. First, he calls her, and she's very nice to him, even invites him to her home to discuss Teddy. Miles is excited over the prospect of meeting with her. He takes a bus to her home and commences to visit with her. As Miles takes his bus ride to Dolly's home, he sees black crows again.

As Miles walks the streets from the bus to Dolly's home, he sees one particular group of crows hanging overhead watching. He notices the trash littering the street as he walks to Dolly Peterson's home. He acknowledges the Christmas lights and decorations already assembled on so many homes. His family has yet to decorate, but will do so for Janey's sake. He ponders, though, how they can truly celebrate knowing that Teddy is still missing. This is the reason he must find him and bring him home.

Chapter 11

Miles is quite shocked at what he finds at Dolly Peterson's home. Her home is filled with five or more cats, lots of cat furniture, and the smell of ammonia like cat urine. Although Dolly is as kind in person as she was on the phone, she has little more to share with Miles than what has already been reported.

She suggests that he speak with Detective Marshall, the one in charge of the case. After two years, she still had the detective's business card on her fridge. She explains how an



open case looks bad on the police department and that she learned that on Law and Order, the TV show. Although she has a flat-screen TV, her other furniture is falling down around her. She tells Miles that she's sure that Teddy didn't drown. Dolly shares the information from her life that her parents were killed in a car accident when she and her sisters were young, and they never found the driver.

Dolly commences to telling Miles about how she is a toll booth worker who was miserable on a hot day and wanted to see the ocean. She said she sat at the picnic tables by the parking lot. Miles asked her about that because he didn't remember them, but she assures him they are there. She saw a group of kids go by, then saw Teddy, she's sure it was him, get into a white Ford Explorer with a man and drive away. She blames herself for the man taking Teddy. She feels that she should have done something to stop the abduction.

She describes the man in detail and explains that Teddy willingly got into his car. Dolly exclaims that she's been thinking of what to tell Miles since he called, and she decided to tell the truth. By this time, Miles is suspicious of her mental stability and just nods in agreement. She goes into an explanation that Jesus Christ can save him and his family. Miles politely excuses himself from her company. Before he goes, she sees why she was so eager to have him visit. She's lonely. She does the interviews and eye witness accounts to gain attention that she lacks in every aspect of her life. As Miles rises to leave, Dolly begs him not to go, but he insists he must get home and leaves.

Chapter 12

When Miles returns home from Dolly Peterson's home, he enters an empty house. His parents have taken Janey out. Miles decides, against his better judgment, to go to Preston's party. When he arrives, he's thinking about how Dolly tried to make him think that by relying on God, his circumstances would improve. When Miles gets to Preston's house, he immediately sees the rich kids in designer clothes, smoking designer weed, and ignoring Miles as he approaches. Miles immediately regrets coming there and thinks he should leave.

Miles stays because he remembers that Preston said that Eliza hoped to see him there. Miles goes back and forth in his thoughts about how he doesn't care what Eliza thinks; the only thing that matters is finding Teddy and repairing his family unit. He flip flops back and forth over his feelings about seeing her. Finally, he rings the doorbell.

Analysis

Chapter 9

Although Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder is not Miles' disease, he is kind of obsessed with watching Eliza in the assembly. Even after all she's done to him and all that he worries could happen upon their meeting again, he can't keep his mind off of being near her again. Although he wants to be with her and he's let her treat him badly in the past, he's scared to see her and her reaction to his new condition.



The theme of Friendship is demonstrated in this chapter as the reader watches Preston act almost custodial towards Miles. He is considerate of his friend's feelings, as he knows the history between Miles and Eliza. Preston also throws a party, giving Eliza and Miles an excuse to meet without pressure. Though Miles does not realize it, he does have friends; friends who are willing to go the extra mile for him.

Chapter 10

The witness, Dolly Peterson, is more than willing to meet with Miles. He sneaks a bus ride to see her and is surprised by the many already decorated homes preparing for Christmas. Although he and his parents are still too sad to decorate and go through the traditions, they do it for Janey's sake.

Once again the crows make an appearance, this time as he is visiting Dolly Peterson. This signals to the reader that something is a little 'off' about the visit, and moreover, something about Miles' quest. This foreshadows the visit with Dolly and the fact that she's fairly unstable, herself.

Chapter 11

To his disappointment, Miles finds that Dolly Peterson is not exactly a stable person. She's the kind of person who people in a neighborhood may call, "the cat lady." She has five or six cats and cat furniture around her house. The people furniture is old and musty. Although the incident with Teddy happened more than two years ago, she still has the newspaper clippings and the detective's business card on her fridge. Although she gives details of the suspected kidnapper's looks and explains that the car was a white Ford Explorer, Miles soon finds that the kidnapping, for her, was really more about her. She is a lonely middle-aged woman who was left orphaned as a child when her parents were killed by a hit-and-run-driver who was never caught. As Miles realizes her situation and need to be involved, he politely tries to excuse himself from the situation and her home, but she keeps adding more and more to her life story and suggestions for him to follow up about Teddy.

Miles realizes that Dolly Peterson is a fellow troubled soul, although in a different way than he is. She is lonely, sad, and desperate. She needs to be part of the story, needs to feel important. She may have made herself more important in the investigation than she truly was because she leads such a lonely life. Because Miles is troubled himself, he can easily spot another who is suffering like he does. He is able to pick out potential holes in her story, like the fact that she was sitting at picnic tables, and Miles cannot remember picnic tables in that beach area. He realizes her desperate loneliness, yet still uses her testimony as the first stop to finding Teddy. This entire scene also points toward another facet of Mental Illness as a theme, the fact that it can be isolating and lonely.

Chapter 12

Although Miles does not like to be near the kids at school, he decides to attend Preston's party anyway. Miles is willing to endure the embarrassment of not being



acknowledged and feeling uncomfortable around kids who are in a higher social status than he is so that he can see Eliza who very well, may treat him the same way. He doesn't know.

His mind plays tricks on him before ringing the doorbell. He claims that what Eliza thinks doesn't matter to him. Only finding Teddy is important. Although he runs the risk of Eliza treating him just as she did before, which at the time he seemed to accept, or treat him even worse, he can't help the temptation of seeing her and the anticipation of seeing how she will treat him. He has to brace himself before entering.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Miles still seem interested in Eliza when he knows that being around her sends him into episodes?

Discussion Question 2

Why do Janey and their parents never discuss the loss of Teddy?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the theme of Mental Illness in these chapters.

Vocabulary

shinto, bohemians, chateaus, scraggly, porcine, lurches, Film noirs, dissipate, ineffectually, oblivious, averting, invalid, drones, agitated



Part One: Chapters 13-16

Summary

Chapter 13

Miles enters the house which is full of people and loud music. Preston sees him and walks up to him. When Miles says that there are too many people, Preston says that he told all of his friends to invite their friends, so he'd have the party of the year while his parents were away. Miles begins to feel sick to his stomach. He asks Preston for food. Preston tells him to take a shot of alcohol first. When he does, it seems to set his stomach on fire. Preston says to help himself to the food in the kitchen. Miles begins to feel dizzy. He falls to the floor of the kitchen and starts to wretch. He feels a female hand on his forehead. It is Eliza. She asks if he's ok and if he wants to get some fresh air. He says yes and walks out back with her.

Chapter 14

When Eliza and Miles go outside, it's very cold. He gives Eliza his jacket and offers for them to return inside. She says no because she wants to talk to him. When he lights himself a cigarette, Eliza asks for one too. When he is unable to light it because of the wind and she has to light it herself, Miles feels like he has failed her. While they are outside Eliza confides in Miles that her father left her mother for another woman, a chef. Eliza's mother fell apart and was hospitalized. The doctor thought that moving back to California where she has family would be best for both of them.

Eliza asks Miles not to tell anyone else. He says that he doesn't talk to anyone else. They both apologize for what happened before she left for New Orleans. Although Miles feels sick through the whole conversation, he tries to hold it together so they can talk. Miles comforts Eliza about her dad and her family situation. However, he can't shake his nausea, so he tells her he needs to eat. He offers to make her something inside, in case she doesn't want to leave, or to go to a 24-hour diner. She chooses the diner.

Before leaving the yard, some upperclassmen come out of the house, say hello to Miles like they are his friend, and ask him to introduce Eliza. They offer to light a blunt, and Eliza looks to Miles for his approval. Although he is about to collapse from pain in his head and stomach, he tells her to go ahead. She takes two hits of the joint and whispers that they should leave. They leave Preston's yard. Miles starts to shiver. Eliza offers to give his jacket back, but he feels foolish taking it and tells her to keep it for herself. He starts feeling worse and worse. He tells her that although he's happy to see her and that he wants to have dinner with her, he's really sick and maybe should go home to lay down. He apologizes again for the past and tells her that he loved hanging out with her. She agrees.



He confesses that he was afraid of her back then, but now he's just crazy. At that, she stands on her tiptoes and leans up to kiss him. As he begins to kiss her, he feels dizzy and pushes her away. He drops to the ground and throws up. She freaks out and doesn't seem to understand what's happening, but Miles can't stop throwing up. He keeps apologizing and throwing up. He begs her to go away. Miles lays with his face on the concrete and asks her again to leave. She says she doesn't want to leave him. When he yells, "GO," she bursts into tears and runs down the street.

Chapter 15

Miles is still in the middle of the street after vomiting on everything including his shirt. As he looks up, he sees Jackie there waiting to help him. She offers to take him to Preston's room, clean him up, and hide out. Miles says that he just wants to go home. Jackie says that's no problem; she'll take him. He asks her if she saw Eliza. Jackie looks as kindly at him as possible and tells him that she passed her, heard he was sick, and needed an excuse to leave the party. Jackie helps him up, he gets into her car, and they head to his house.

Chapter 16

When Miles comes in the door with vomit on his clothes, his mom is still awake watching a movie. Usually, this type of thing unhinges her, but he can tell she is mellow from drinking white wine. She asks if he's been drinking. He explains that he took all of his meds without eating and that made him sick. When he cries, she holds him to her even though he protests because of the mess on his clothes. She sends him to shower and makes him a grilled cheese sandwich and hot chocolate. She asks him to be quiet because Janey is sleeping in his bed because of a bad dream. Miles reasons that that would make sense because she used to share a room with Teddy. After getting cleaned up, Miles eats and watches an old movie with his mom. She tells him that she loves him, and he says it back to her. He feels content for the moment.

Analysis

Chapter 13

Preston is supposed to be Miles's best friend. He treats him well, even in front of other kids, but he is oblivious to Miles' illness. When Miles asks for food, Preston doesn't say anything except that Miles needs to take a shot (of alcohol). Once Miles concedes and takes the shot, he feels even worse. Preston tells Miles to help himself to food and leaves him in the kitchen.

This is the first time that Eliza sees Miles since her return to town, and he is collapsed on the kitchen floor about to throw up. That in itself has to be very embarrassing for Miles. The thing is that Miles probably doesn't see it that way. He is so happy to see her and to see that in the middle of a party with people from school, she is being nice to him.



Chapter 14

Although Miles is feeling very sick, he is trying to hold it together to make a good impression on and be able to speak with Eliza. Interestingly enough, she finds him on the floor about to throw up, but overlooks this and helps him up. Miles tries to keep it all together despite the growing nausea and headache pains. He doesn't want to do anything to embarrass himself. He already feels worthless and has a hard time talking to people and trying to act normal.

Now, Eliza witnesses him throwing up after she kisses him. He feels ashamed and punishes himself emotionally. He extends that punishment to Eliza by telling her to go away. He is literally and figuratively as low as he can get, with his face pressed against the sidewalk.

Chapter 15

The theme of Friendship appears in this chapter through Jackie. Jackie is a true friend and shows it by her actions. Jackie doesn't make a big deal about Miles' situation nor make him feel embarrassed. She just offers to clean him up and hide out with him. He doesn't want to return to the party, so she agrees to take him home, no problem. He feels so comfortable with her that he doesn't have to pretend to be someone else or feel ashamed and embarrassed.

Chapter 16

Up to this point in the novel, Miles describes his mom as always being uptight, stressed, and upset. When he arrives home in this condition, he assumes she will be upset, but she seems mellowed by her wine and the relaxation of watching a good old movie. She wraps Miles in love and kindness. On this night, he receives from his mother the kind of love he experienced from her as a child. She is calm and comforting, and for once, Miles doesn't talk about wanting to die because he messed everything up. He is happy to be with his mom the way she used to be.

Miles only has a few incidents where he seems plagued by guilt from his disease. The first is not when he's with Jackie. She is very comforting and accepting of him. When he gets home and cries on his mom's shoulder, he feels like digging a hole and climbing in. Although this is an expression of wishing to die, it doesn't seem as serious as his normal rhetoric because he just seems embarrassed as anyone would be in a situation where he threw up at the feet of the girl he liked.

His second relapse in this section is when his mom says to be quiet because Janey is asleep in his room because of her bad dream. Miles was fine with that as expected, but he expresses that it's only natural that she'd have bad dreams being alone in that room when she'd shared the room with Teddy for so long. That is the one delusional slip in this otherwise comforting situation.



Discussion Question 1

Why did Jackie seem natural and casual about helping Miles after he threw up while Eliza handled it poorly?

Discussion Question 2

Why do Miles and Jackie allow Preston to continue mistreating them?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the theme of Friendship as it is presented in these chapters.

Vocabulary

shushing, conned, silhouetted, manicured, humiliated, sculptural, reel, psychopharmacologist, pompadour, primordial, writhing, gyrating, secreting



Part One: Chapters 17-20

Summary

Chapter 17

Janey is sleeping in Miles' bed while he is on a blow up mattress on the floor. He wakes to her screaming for help from a bad dream. Although it's not yet morning, Miles offers to take Jane out for donuts and hot chocolate. He tells her to get dressed without waking their parents. While he dresses he notes the items in his room; jazz posters, cased taxidermy insects, a replica of a human skull, and blown-glass medicine bottles. He takes a look out of the window to see a wonderful day on the horizon, no fog, no clouds, and the promise of sunshine. Unfortunately, he begins to notice the black crows collecting on the telephone wires. He starts to feel anxious when Janey comes into his room to see if he's ready. She looks out the window and comments on the crows. Miles is shocked and asks her if she really sees them. She says, of course. This fills him with relief, and he knows he'll have a good day with his sister.

Chapter 18

Miles is at work counting the minutes until his shift is over. He decides to check his phone and sees that Ordell has texted him to ask if he really threw up on Eliza at Preston's party. The text ends with three exclamation marks. Miles starts to worry when the phone beeps again with a second message from Ordell telling him that everyone is talking about it. Again, three exclamation marks. Miles starts to freak out. He heads outside by the dumpster to smoke a cigarette and thinks about what to do. He sits on the curb and rocks back and forth and breaths heavily.

While outside smoking his phone rings. When he sees that it is Preston, he decides not to answer because he needs to figure out how he is going to handle the situation. He waits to see the text message that Preston leaves on his phone. He is giving Miles a heads up that he gave Miles' phone number to Eliza. Preston hopes he doesn't mind and wants to make sure that Miles is okay. Interestingly enough, Preston also left three marks at the end...question marks this time.

As Miles sits smoking and worrying, some crows are eating a dead squirrel carcass in the street. First, a car driving by causes the crows to scatter, but they return to the still bloody body. Next, Miles tries to shoo them away by yelling, stamping his feet, and rushing at them. Miles tries to convince himself that it doesn't matter what others think of him, but admits that it hurts his feelings that Eliza not only didn't defend him, but allowed this rumor to be spread around. Finally, he decides that nothing matters more than finding Teddy anyway.

Chapter 19



Back at home in the evening, Miles and Janey are working on a comic book that Janey has created. She's better at art than Miles, but he's trying to do a good job. They are killing time until after dinner when they can watch some movies that Miles rented for them. Their mom has taken a pill and gone to bed. Miles decides to put on the music that his mom doesn't like to hear since she is already in bed. Their dad looks through the albums and decides to change the music to jazz while he cooks dinner.

There isn't much in the fridge, so he decides to make bacon and egg sandwiches with coffee and hot chocolate. While they eat, they watch the show 60 Minutes, one of their dad's favorites. When the reporters state their names in the beginning, Miles remembers Teddy including his own name at the end. Miles says that they talk through that part now to keep from thinking about it. He's really enjoying his evening with his dad and Janey. He knows that it will be even better once he gets Teddy back and their mom joins them as well. After eating, Miles does the dishes and realizes that his phone has a voice message. It's Eliza telling him that she's sorry people are talking. She didn't mean for anyone to find out. There's nothing for him to be embarrassed about. She wants to hang out with him again. Does he want to get coffee after school? Miles listens to the message then erases it.

When he goes into the bathroom to take his meds, seven different kinds, the first ones get caught in his throat. He gags them up. He starts thinking about how horrible it is to be tied to these drugs, so he opens each bottle and flushes the contents down the toilet. He feels that he can't do it anymore. He feels that he's ready to make things better at home with his family. He decides that he'll visit Detective Marshall tomorrow at the police station.

Chapter 20

Miles goes to the Central Branch of the San Francisco Police Department to speak with Detective Kerry Marshall about Teddy's case. When he enters and asks for the detective, the lady behind the desk informs him that the detective had been transferred a year ago but that Detective William Demarest has taken over all of Marshall's cases.

Miles explains to the lady that he came to discuss the case of his brother Teddy Bryant Cole with the detective. She thought for a moment and then stated that the case of Teddy Bryant was unsolved. Miles tells her that Teddy Bryant Cole was his brother. She goes to get Detective Demarest to speak with Miles. When Detective Demarest comes to greet Miles, he tells him to call him Bill. Once in the detective's office, Miles is surprised by the clutter and mess surrounding him. Bill tells him that it may look messy, but he has a system and can find anything. He pulls Teddy's case file.

When Miles tells Bill that he believes Teddy may still be alive and that he spoke with the witness Dotty Peterson, Bill has an odd expression and explains that she isn't a reliable witness. He informs Miles that nothing that Ms. Peterson reported checked out. Bill explains to Miles everything that the police did in an effort to find Teddy. Miles asks to look at the file but is told that it's against the rules. When he asks why nothing new has



been done with the case, Bill tells him that most likely Teddy Bryant drowned and that he is sorry.

Bill is called out of the room to sign some papers, and Miles takes the opportunity to go through Teddy's file and take the suspect list with their names, photos, and addresses. He leaves the office before Bill comes back. As he heads toward the exit of the building and past the lady at the front desk, Miles becomes more and more upset; fast heartbeat, barely breathing, sweat, and blurred vision. He tries not to give himself away or even hint that he actually has these papers in his own backpack. He is sure that Teddy is really alive.

Analysis

Chapter 17

Miles believes that he is not worthy of being alive, but although he loves Janey with all his heart, he doesn't seem to realize how much she depends on him. He doesn't realize that he brings joy and security to her life. She chooses to sleep in his room when she has a bad dream. She waits for him to get home every day. She runs and greets him with a kiss and a smile. He believes he's worthless and doesn't even see how important he is to Janey, how her life would suffer without him in it.

The symbolism of the crows appears in a different way this time. Just as Miles is about to allow himself to feel good about the day, about spending time with his sister, the crows show up and threaten to ruin it. It is only when Janey shows up and says that she sees them (that they are real crows) that Miles realizes that his day hasn't been ruined after all.

Chapter 18

The contentment that Miles felt from Jackie's and his mother's kindness on the night of this incident became less comforting as he discovers that the rumor of what happened is spreading around school. Even worse, he can't believe that Eliza let it happen and didn't defend him. He tries to act like although it's bothersome to be ridiculed and laughed at, nothing is more important than Teddy.

Miles thought that Eliza would let others know about his embarrassing situation at the party. He hadn't though he'd need to fight off or deflect the ridicule from his classmates....and his friends. Jackie and his mom had been so understanding and comforting. Now he has to face the cold cruel world. Not to mention the fact that Preston gave his number to Eliza....the last person he wants to discuss this with. Symbolism can be seen through the crows' attack of the carcass of the squirrel. Their attack of the dead squirrel could be symbolic of how the teenagers will attack Miles and feast on his humiliation.

Chapter 19



It seems that when Miles is with his dad and Janey at home he has a positive uplifting attitude. He loves his mother, but because she always looks so worried and worn out, he feels guilty and stressed himself. Everything seems easier with his dad and Jane. Miles enjoys falling back into the family ritual of watching 60 Minutes on Sunday nights. His only sad thought is how he remembers Teddy chiming in and adding his name to the opening with the reporters. He feels like everything is so nice with his family, and once he brings Teddy home and Mom decides to join them again, all will be well.

Miles doesn't have bad feelings until he sees the voicemail on his phone; then, he feels even worse after listening to it. Eliza tries to convince him that she didn't mean for anyone to find out about what happened and wants to hang out with him. Already, Eliza is causing turbulence for Miles, even in the calm waters of his own home. Now, he'll worry about what to do about Eliza and everyone talking about him at school. The safe cocoon of his home and the support of his dad and Jane have all been pushed aside by the worry that comes with Eliza and people from school. When he flushes his pills down the toilet, he believes that he is going to be better without the meds, but this is merely another foreshadowing of bad things to come.

Chapter 20

Several times throughout this chapter, the people in the police station mention Teddy Bryant's name. Each time, Miles corrects them and says Teddy Bryant Cole. When the detective explains to Miles that Teddy most likely drowned and then is called out of his office, Miles decides to take matters into his own hands. He truly believes that Teddy is still alive and plans to use the police papers that he stole from the file to help him find the boy.

The reader may be beginning to understand that Teddy's last name and Miles' last names don't sync up. No one at the police station, nor even Dolly, mention Teddy as being Miles's brother. Given his mental state, the reader is right to begin to have suspicions.

Discussion Question 1

If Teddy's case is considered "unsolved," then why did the police stop searching for him?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the symbolism of Miles shooing the crows from the squirrel's body.

Discussion Question 3

How does Janey affect Miles' life in a positive way?



Vocabulary

replica, peacoat, skyline, squint, paranoid, reconvene, musses, turntable, spigot, trattorias, tufted, gristle, perpetrated, panned



Part Two: Chapters 21-24

Summary

Chapter 21

Rushing quickly from the police station, Miles worries that they will come running after him. On second thought, the detective will probably just replace the file in his cluttered system without even looking at it. Miles can't wait to sit and read the papers, but he doesn't want to take that chance until he has put distance between himself and the police station. As he hurries down the street, he hears someone calling his name. It's Eliza, of course, sitting at a café doing homework.

She calls him over. She asks him to join her, so he does. They get coffee and make small talk. Eliza apologizes that the vomiting incident at Preston's party got out and everyone was talking about it. She explained that she never meant for it to leak out and was sorry. He told her he knew she didn't mean to do that to him on purpose. As they sit drinking coffee, a guy wanders by and stares at Eliza. When Miles points out that a guy was eying her, she acts like she hasn't even noticed.

She says that it happens a lot, and she doesn't even notice anymore. Miles eases her mind and explains that he was never mad at her. Another guy who's been watching her across the street whistles at Eliza. Eliza and Miles decide to leave. While walking from the café, they hold hands like a couple. He stops and kisses her. She reacts positively as if she likes him too. Then, remembering his undertaking of finding Teddy, Miles steps back and tells Eliza that he wants to date her, but this is not a good time in his life for that. He says that he needs to focus on his stuff for a while. Because she seems confused, he almost tells her about trying to find Teddy, but decides against it. Eliza's bus pulls up; she gets on saying that she'll see him tomorrow.

Chapter 22

When Miles arrives at home, he rushes to his room to look at the police papers. He's disappointed that the photos are grainy, but is engrossed in reading the details. He reassures himself that the police on this case are incompetent when he reads the incident report and sees that the "date in question" is actually exactly one week later than Miles' episode at the beach.

The main suspect who fits Dotty's description, drives a white Explorer, and lives by the beach, is Simon Tolliver. He spent fifteen years in jail, but his alibi on this case checked out. Of course it checks out; Miles refers back to the wrong incident date. Although the thought of this man frightens Miles, he knows that he must go to his house and rescue Teddy. During school the next day, his class will be at that same beach picking up trash. He'll slip away from the group and find Tolliver's house.



When Janey bounces into his room, he tells her that very soon everything will be alright. She expresses that she thought everything was okay. He tells her that he doesn't want her to worry. He plans to fix everything. He doesn't mention Teddy, but knows that bringing him home will make everything better.

Chapter 23

Miles hasn't been back to this beach since that tragic day. Before departing the bus, Miles asks Jackie if she will cover for him while he slips away to take care of something. She agrees, but asks if he's ok. He says yes and thinks of course he's ok; he's so close to finding Teddy. Once again, he almost tells Jackie his real plan, but decides against it. Miles believes that finding and bringing Teddy home is the only way to become whole.

Miles slips away and finds Tolliver's listed address. He rings the doorbell, but no one answers. He can't see inside the windows, but notices a shed in the back. As he approaches the shed, he is trapped by a big dog. After a few tense moments, the dog sniffs Miles' hand and decides that he's ok. Miles feels certain that Teddy is probably tied up and gagged, being held in that shed. The dog begins barking at the shed. When Miles opens the door, the dog rushes in before him. Miles follows only to find a shed full of live chickens being chased by the dog.

Miles tries to save the chickens, and the dog kills and runs off with one. At that moment, something screams at Miles asking what he's doing there. Miles is disappointed to see that the man is not Tolliver. The man explains that he bought the house after Tolliver moved away, but the realtor had told the man about the horrible thing that Tolliver did. Miles chokes up, and the man apologizes for not knowing where to find Tolliver now. He bought this house from the bank. Miles is very upset, turns, and runs. The man lets him go.

Chapter 24

Miles sits on the curb on the street near a liquor store. He looks at the picture of Tolliver and feels totally deflated. He is sinking into desperation and worried that he'll never find Tolliver, and therefore, will never find Teddy. He goes into the liquor store for a water and a snack. He decides to show the Korean man behind the counter the photo of Tolliver. The man recognizes him and says that he comes into his store to play the lottery every Friday that there is a big cash prize at stake. Suddenly, Miles' mood shifts from defeat to hope and eventual victory again. All he has to do is wait for the lottery to build up again, come back to the store, follow Tolliver, and save Teddy. He's so close now. He feels it; he just knows it. Miles walks carefully through the dense fog back to the beach.

Analysis

Chapter 21



Once more Miles has fallen under Eliza's spell. Knowing that she's the only one who could have told the story of him getting sick at her feet, when she apologizes he tells her he was never mad at her. He acts as if she can do no wrong. The theme of Self-worth is demonstrated in his willingness to allow Eliza to continue to pull his strings. His low self-esteem and extreme desire to be with Eliza makes him turn into a sheep, a person who will follow her around when she gives him attention, hurt and worry when she's unkind, and is back to worshipping her with only one word from her. He doesn't think enough of himself to refuse her up and down games that she plays with him. Because they kiss and claim to like each other, Miles almost confesses his plan about Teddy to her....almost.

Looking at Eliza's character, the reader can judge what kind of person she is based on what Miles and others say about her and by her actions. So far, she leads Miles on and says one thing to him, then her actions prove just the opposite. Eliza is a beautiful girl who "knows that she's beautiful."

Chapter 22

Miles is very observant about the details on the police papers; he notices the difference in date on the incident report. As he reads about the suspects, he decides that Simon Tolliver is the bad guy, that he still has Teddy, and that Miles will save him from Tolliver. Earlier in the story, Miles is very timid and apologizes for living. The reader is seeing a different, more confident Miles now. He is very sure of himself and of his plans to fix everyone's lives. His job of finding Teddy is second to none. He must "fix" his family.

Before, he was saying, he must make up for what he's done to his family. At this point, he is seeing himself as the rescuer, the victor and ignoring his previous testaments of wanting to die, blaming himself for everyone's problems, and apologizing for every single thing he has ever done. Miles is making a plan that he doesn't seem to realize is very dangerous. He also is confident that Teddy is there. He's not even giving thought to the possibility that he is mistaken, or that he could be harmed or arrested for what he plans to do. He is overly confident, which is the exact opposite of his normal nature.

Chapter 23

Miles puts himself in a dangerous situation. First, he thinks he can just walk up to a suspect's home, find Teddy, rescue him, and leave without any problems. He doesn't even consider the possible consequences of his plan. When Tolliver doesn't answer the door, Miles boldly enters the yard and the shed sure that he will find Teddy. Had Tolliver been there, Miles could have been hurt or at the very least disappointed to not find Teddy. As it is, he's lucky that the new homeowner didn't call the police for trespassing and damaging his property.

The symbolism of the chickens is evident in this chapter. Miles' thoughts are as disorganized and unrealistic as the chickens trying to outrun the rabid dog. In many respects the scene that plays out is indicative of Miles' mental state. Additionally, in a parallel to Teddy's abduction, the dog singles out a chicken, grabs it and runs away.



Miles may be thinking of himself as a fearless hero in this plan, but he's actually acting like a reckless, over-confident, mental case. Just when Miles feels the most confident in his actions is the time when he is literally acting the most mental.

Chapter 24

Miles does not realize that he is acting manically...on a super high that everything will work out perfectly, then to the depths of despair, then up again to be the victor. At this point, Miles has stopped taking his medication, but that doesn't stop his mental illness; actually, it will only make it worse. Because he is not sharing his thoughts and plans with anyone, no one is seeing the signs of his disease rising again. No one even knows he's stopped his meds. He doesn't notice the difference in himself and believes himself to be acting totally rationally.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Miles feeling so confident all of a sudden?

Discussion Question 2

What are the potential flaws in Miles' new plan?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the theme of Mental Illness in Chapters 23-24.

Vocabulary

lumbering, karma, parka, alibi, compliant, incompetent, graffiti, post-apocalyptic, pedophile, trellised, oppressive, onslaught, jutting



Part Two: Chapters 25-28

Summary

Chapter 25

Miles is walking home from working a shift at Cala Foods. He gets a text from Jackie asking if she can come over to his house. He says yes. Then he sees he has missed a call from Eliza asking Miles to have dinner with her tomorrow night and telling him that she's ok with him taking things slow. After listening to the message, his thoughts flip flop back and forth between wanting to see Eliza, and thinking what harm is dinner, then to the fact that he must focus totally on finding Teddy. Jackie is already on his porch when he gets home. She's been crying and explains that she and Preston had a fight. She asks Miles if he thinks Preston has changed and become too much of a partier. He tells her that Preston is different from them. They are more of the sensitive side; they are thinkers, and Preston is not. Eliza texts him again. Jackie tells Miles that he should go to dinner and enjoy himself. It's just one dinner, and he's always taking care of others. He decides to go, then asks Jackie to come into his house for dinner that night.

Chapter 26

Jackie stays and has dinner with Miles, Janey, and their dad. Miles' mom took a pill and went to bed. Sam and the kids have dinner and eat ice cream while watching TV. Jackie's mom picks her up around ten thirty. Miles tries to bring up the internet to check the lottery, but it won't seem to work. He receives a call from Preston asking Miles if he can come over. Miles agrees and thinks that he must be their counselor tonight. He doesn't mind because they are his best friends and have been there for him when he needed them. As he heads downstairs, his dad's sitting in the kitchen having a drink. Miles tells his dad that Preston's coming over, and his dad has the same reaction, that Miles is the marriage therapist.

Audrey hears the noise from the kitchen and yells to ask Sam what he's doing. Preston and Miles stand on the front porch freezing and talking about Jackie. Preston is worried that Jackie is still upset. While Preston is talking, Miles starts seeing black crows again. He can't believe this is happening. Then, a crow flies over Preston and poops on his shoulder. Preston's not too happy, but at least Miles knows that the crows were real and not a hallucination. Preston says that he'll be hanging out with Jackie and maybe they can all see a movie on Saturday. He asks Miles if he plans to see Eliza. When Miles says yes, Preston asks him to please be careful.

Chapter 27

Miles and Eliza are walking to Eliza's house for dinner. It's freezing even though it's a clear sunny day, but she lives in an area with a beautiful view. Eliza makes the first move by holding Miles' hand, then she leans in, and he realizes that she wants to kiss



him. He drops the backpacks, they kiss. She tells him that this is her taking things slow. He feels like it's so natural for them to be together. He feels hope and believes that this is exactly how it's supposed to be. There is some greater power looking out for them both. They stop kissing and head into the house.

Chapter 28

Eliza's mom, Christina, is an eccentric, bohemian woman. At the beginning of dinner, she asks Miles if he'd like a beer. He accepts. During dinner, she goes on and on about how they must have gone through all of this relationship together many times in former lives. She tells him about the trip she and Eliza are taking at Christmas and asks him to come. She reminisces about trips he'd taken with them years ago.

Miles says he'd love to go. Christina is very into astrology and tells Miles she needs his birthday and time of birth, so she can compare his and Eliza's charts for compatibility. She takes it a step further and nonchalantly asks Miles if he'll be spending the night. Before answering he thinks of the consequences. His mom already thinks Eliza will make his condition worse. She'd freak out and say no if he asked to spend the night there. But life seems to be falling into place for him. He believes that his mom will come around once she sees how happy he and Eliza are, and of course and once he's brought Teddy home. He agrees to spend the night.

Analysis

Chapter 25

When Miles gets the invitation from Eliza, he talks himself in and then out of going, over and over. He wants to focus on Teddy, but it's just one dinner. Teddy is his top priority, but the lottery jackpot's not big enough yet to stalk Tolliver. He starts to believe that his plan is a good one, and it can't hurt to eat dinner with Eliza. He is an emotional roller coaster. He's up; he's down. Instead of seeing risks or flaws in his actions, he is able to reason with himself until he makes the story line up with what he hopes to happen.

Jackie says that Miles is always trying to help others and deserves some fun. She is right. The theme of Friendship is demonstrated in the interaction between Jackie and Miles at this point. It is shown that Miles is quite capable of being a very good friend, and that he is worth knowing. He seems so level headed when dealing with the problems of other people, problems that don't involve him. He can sensibly reason the differences in Jackie and Preston's personalities. He's straight forward and not wishy-washy about his advice to others. He cannot seem to see himself through those same reasonable eyes. When it comes to himself, he has extremely irrational insights.

Chapter 26

As in his relationship with Jackie, Miles plays therapist to Preston as well. He tries to be a good friend to them both. Once again, he speaks rationally about their relationship. It's still his own relationships that he can't keep controlled. The worry of seeing the crows



again is put to rest in the comic relief of Preston being pooped on. Therefore, Miles still seems at ease and isn't exhibiting symptoms since he's been with his family and helping his friends.

Sam can see that Miles is a good person. He tells him he's a good friend. Miles most often feels like he has ruined everyone's lives and that he's destroyed his parents, but he only sees negative emotions and comments that are normal in daily life. He doesn't realize the admiration that his dad is extending to him, showing that he is not upset with Miles, but proud.

Preston tells Miles to be careful when he finds out he plans to see Eliza. This is pretty much the opposite of how Jackie reacted to the same news. She encouraged him to see her and said he deserved to be happy. Jackie doesn't seem to see the danger in Miles dating Eliza that Preston sees.

Chapter 27

Eliza obviously knows how Miles has always felt about her. She also knows about his mental illness. Even though he's asked her to take things slow, she is on the offense and making advances towards him. He is so overwhelmed because despite what he told her, he does like her and has been hoping for a chance like this with her for years. Eliza doesn't seem to understand or care about the potential consequences that this rushed relationship could have on Miles. She's pretty; she's popular; she's used to being sought after. If something bad happens, she will be able to simply move on.

Chapter 28

Christina is extremely different from Miles' parents. She gives the kids beer and invites Miles to sleep over. Although she tells him she's sorry about what he's been through, she doesn't seem to factor any of his problems into the equation of her free for all mentality. She acts very nonchalant about it all and tells Miles that.

Although it's a good thing that Miles hasn't had a major episode or heard voices lately, this manic high that he's on may seem wonderful, like a life changer, but the problem is that once that euphoric, happy feeling is over, he will crash hard, affecting everyone around him who really cares for him.

He believes that he and Eliza are meant to be. He wants to tell her he loves her....only days after kids at school made fun of him for throwing up at her feet. He thinks the situation is a good kind of crazy. He even references God. When he's up and things are going well for him, on the surface at least, he believes in God. When he's desperate in an emotional schizophrenic fall, he doesn't believe there is a God. He doesn't realize that what he feels with Eliza and even her mom is merely superficial. They don't care about his condition enough to watch out for him. They'll be the first to step away when his mood turns. He can't tell them about his plan to rescue Teddy. This superficial happiness has left him blind to the reality of his world.



Discussion Question 1

Why does Preston tell Miles to be careful around Eliza?

Discussion Question 2

Compare Preston to Eliza.

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the theme of Self Worth in these chapters.

Vocabulary

distortion, bundled, dreads, therapist, incense, crouches, tiered, shivers, flushed, mosaicked, vibrant, brooch, amulet



Part Two: Chapters 29-32

Summary

Chapter 29

On the porch, Eliza apologizes that her mom is so intense. Miles doesn't mind. He answers her apology by kissing her. He feels that this moment, this relationship is a dream, that a greater power has sanctioned their union, and they can't be touched. He feels like he's in heaven. He thanks God silently and out loud.

Chapter 30

Miles wakes up next to Eliza in her bed. He makes note of how white and pure her room is and her bed. He says that she tastes perfect and clean. They make out some more and have sex. Miles falls asleep and has a dream that he's back at the beach. He sees Teddy from behind and tries to get his attention but he doesn't listen and goes into the water. As Miles struggles to reach Teddy, he is swallowed by quick sand. He can feel the heaviness, the pressure against his chest. Then, the voice from his episode in the bathroom at the beach is back.

At this point in his dream, Miles is freaking out, then he suddenly awakes. It's late in the morning. Christina didn't wake them for school. Miles rushes to the bathroom trying to fight his panic. The voice is back again only this time it's tell him the opposite of what he's been thinking about Eliza for the last few days. He had thought God was leading him toward Eliza, but he realizes now that it was only a trick to test him. He believes the voice made him forget. Now in this state of reality, Miles is frantic because he knows that he's lied and hurt his family. He's betrayed them after all they've done for him. He's dressing to leave in a panic. He'll go to school, confess everything to his parents, and go back to his search for Teddy.

Eliza doesn't understand what's going on. He keeps telling her it's his fault, not hers. He says they can't be together again. She begins to cry as he runs out of her house. The voice comes to him again. This time it's telling him to stay away from her; until he finds Teddy, he cannot be near her. He is flooded with the realization that nothing is more important than his family and finding Teddy.

Chapter 31

Miles does make the confession to his parents. He is very upset and extremely apologetic. His parents, of course, are upset. His mom is very upset and yells at him. She tells him he can never make it better, that he lied to them, and that is unforgivable.

Sam is much calmer, hurt and disappointed, but calmer. He tries to ask Miles why he lied. Audrey breaks in yelling that it doesn't matter why. While Miles sits on the couch and cries, Sam tries to tell him it will be okay. Audrey yells at Sam because she thinks



he is making her look like a bad guy. Sam tries to comfort both his son and his wife. Janey is watching from the door of her room. Miles keeps crying and saying over and over that he'll make things right. Audrey exclaims that after all the worrying they do over him, he lies to them. She can't take it anymore and cries into her hands as they cover her face. Miles brings his knees to his chest and begins to rock back and forth. Sam tells him to go to his room for a while. Miles does as he is told.

Chapter 32

Miles comes into the living room an hour or so later. His family is watching the movie *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Janey gets up and kisses Miles. Even though he knows his family is upset with him, he's still happy to be with them. During a commercial, the announcer says that the lotto is the biggest jackpot in history. Miles starts to cry softly because he believes that now he will be able to find Teddy. He says that he'll make everything right, and his dad rubs his back.

Analysis

Chapter 29

Again, Miles turns to God to thank him for this relationship he has bestowed upon them. He's so caught up in the moment of happiness and hormones that he can't see anything past it. He doesn't remember the bad way Eliza's treated him in the past. He doesn't think about the reasonable worries that his friends and family have about her. He simply wraps himself in a cocoon of happiness and denial.

Chapter 30

As Miles wakes up in bed with Eliza, he is still in that euphoric state from the previous night. He sees everything as white and clean and perfect. That could be symbolic of purity and his thoughts that they were divinely linked. It isn't until his dream, his subconscious expressing itself, that he realizes what he's done. As he drowns in quicksand in the dream, this symbolizes how he is drowning truly in the unrealities of his life. He is off track. He's lost focus. When he wakes in a panic, he sees everything clearly. He understands the importance of the betrayal of lying to his parents. He realizes that he has done wrong.

Interestingly, he doesn't see Eliza as the one who led him astray. It was God, the voice that speaks to him and tells him what to do. Last night, God had purposely brought them happily together. This morning, God was testing him and leading him astray. He doesn't blame Eliza or even the hold she has always had on him. He blames God and himself. The voices are back, and he has betrayed his family.

Chapter 31

Miles has dropped from his manic episode back into guilt, grief, apologies, and the hope of dying. He keeps telling them he'll make it up to them. In his mind, that will be when he



returns Teddy, but they don't know that's what he's thinking. His mom expresses that all they do is worry about him. It doesn't seem to cross his mind that she says they worry about him and not Teddy or what he's done to Teddy. Audrey is inconsolable and at a breaking point herself. Miles is back to where he was before this Eliza situation started. He thinks his family will be better off without him. He wishes himself dead. The theme of Hopelessness comes back in this chapter. He also doesn't see the drastic affect that not taking his medication is having on him. He was already starting to show signs of his schizophrenic symptoms returning when he was on the meds. They are only getting worse now, but he can't make the connection.

Chapter 32

Miles realizes that even though he's hurt them and they are upset with him, with his family is the place he wants to be. The fact that they are watching *To Kill a Mockingbird* is symbolic because the movie is all about doing the honorable thing, making right what is wrong. That's exactly what Miles hopes to do with his ill-planned scheme. He just wants to return to them all that he believes he's taken, not just Teddy, but trust, normalcy, and hope.

Discussion Question 1

When Miles tells them that he'll make it right, what does he mean by that?

Discussion Question 2

Why do you think Audrey is reacting as dramatically as she is, but Sam is trying to stay calm?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the theme of Hopelessness in these chapters.

Vocabulary

sacred, dragging, intense, frantic, compressed, quicksand, presidio, unforgivable, unacceptable, Mockingbird, scraggly, jackpot



Part Two: Chapters 33-36

Summary

Chapter 33

Miles takes the bus to the liquor store by the beach in hopes of finding Simon Tolliver. He waits for hours, but he knows not to give up because the voice is talking to him again and telling him this is exactly where he needs to be. Eventually, the white Ford Explorer pulls up to the curb. Miles doesn't have a lot of time. He climbs into the car and hides under a tarp in the back. He checks his phone and has two missed calls from his dad and one from Eliza. He's sure that his parents are going to be angry, but they'll quickly forgive him when he brings Teddy home. He silences his phone and grabs a wrench just in case.

Chapter 34

After a long car ride and a turn onto what Miles believes to be a dirt road, the car stops at last. Tolliver gets out of the car and goes inside. Miles creeps out of the car to look through a window. Inside he sees Tolliver with a young boy of about ten. Miles knows it has to be Teddy. Miles left his cell phone in the truck, so he goes back to call the police, but there is no reception. So, he grabs the wrench again. At the same time, another car pulls up and a man hurries inside. Miles grabs the door handle, raises the wrench, and rushes into the house to save the boy. Tolliver gets the wrench out of Miles' hand. Between the two men, Miles ends up on the floor being restrained.

The men ask what is going on, and Miles explains that the boy on the couch is his brother Teddy who Tolliver has kidnapped. The other man in the room is a doctor. As Miles tells his story, the little boy throws up several times. The doctor races the boy into the bathtub and runs cool water over the little boy. Tolliver keeps telling Miles that the boy is Colin, his own son, who is very ill. The doctor is there to care for him. When Miles stops and really looks at Colin, he doesn't look anything like Teddy. When asked why he came to accuse Tolliver, Miles tells them about the police report. Simon Tolliver turns to the doctor and explains that he had been a bad man many years ago and done time in jail. But his life is turned around now. He promises Miles that he had nothing to do with Teddy's disappearance.

Colin is getting worse and worse and needs to be rushed to the hospital. Tolliver offers to give Miles a lift to the police station. He asks if he could just go home instead. They all load into a car and head back to town through the foggy night.

Chapter 35

Miles is beside himself with grief. He's sitting on the bus with his knees to his chest rocking back and forth. Luckily, Simon Tolliver and the doctor are very nice to him. They give him money, put him on a bus home, and make him promise to go straight there.



Miles is very sad because it is finally over. He finally has to accept the fact that Teddy is gone. Teddy is dead. He's still hearing the voice in his head. Now, he believes it is telling him that all of this was God's plan and was meant for Miles to accept Teddy's death and move on. After thinking about that for a while, Miles realizes that if it's over, he can have Eliza back. That is God's plan for him. He'll tell her the whole story, so she can understand what happened.

He decides to go to her house from the bus. As he reaches her yard, he notices an unfamiliar car in the driveway. Crows began to swarm the wires, the yard, the porch....they are even inside her house as he goes through the unlocked door. He calls out for Eliza, but no answer. As he heads to her room he hears her scream. Miles races to her room where Eliza is on the bed covered with crows attacking her. Miles tries to save her. He fights off the crows and tries to destroy them.

The crows swarm Miles, and he's thrown to the hardwood floor where he bangs his head hard. Next, Eliza, wrapped in a sheet to cover herself, is by Miles telling him to stop. When he opens his eyes, Miles sees on the floor beside him a kid, Kevin, who talked to Eliza at Preston's party. He is bleeding from his mouth and naked. When Miles realizes what was going on, he drops to his knees and throws up. Kevin gets dressed, laughs at them both, telling them they are both crazy, and leaves. Miles vomits again, but when Eliza tries to help him, he yells for her to get away from him. When Miles gets up, he trips over himself and falls, then, rises and runs down the stairs and out the door. The crows are gone, but so is everything in his world.

Chapter 36

When Miles gets home it's late, dark, and everyone is asleep. He grabs a never-before-used expensive knife that his parents received as a wedding gift. He figures it will be sharper than the ones in the kitchen. He climbs into the bathtub in his sweatpants, so no one will find him naked. The voice is still talking to him. This time it is telling him that he's worthless, a burden to his family, sick and diseased, and the world would be better without him. Then the voice tells him to "do it." So he does. He slices his right wrist first, so it will still be dominant enough to slice his left, which he does next. He is in extreme pain and begins to throw up. He reaches for the phone, dials 911, and reports that he has committed suicide in the back bathroom of his home. He wants the EMTs to find him and not his parents or Janey. Then, he passes out.

Analysis

Chapter 33

Miles is only listening to the voice now. Where before, the voice told him the crows wanted to attack and the Eliza was a distraction, now it's giving him what he feels is solid believable information. It is telling him that he's in the right place, that all will work out, and that he is where he's supposed to be. Miles feels totally at peace with what he even admits is a shaky plan. Instead of worrying that his parents will be furious



especially in light of his recent betrayal, he only thinks of how happy they will be and how they will forgive him when he brings Teddy home, and he is sure he will.

Chapter 34

Miles was so certain that Tolliver had Teddy that he wouldn't even consider other options. After being subdued, Miles was lucky that Tolliver was much kinder than he'd anticipated. Because of how he loved his son Colin, he understood Miles' grief over Teddy and was gentle with him. When Miles saw the boy through the window, he was sure it was Teddy. He felt the same way when he was throwing up on the couch and rushed into the bathroom. Finally, when Tolliver calmed Miles down and had him take a good look, he realized that wasn't Teddy.

Now, Miles, who has told no one about his search for Teddy, must return home after not telling his parents where he'd be and face whatever the consequences without the joy of bringing Teddy home and making everything better. Now, he's made his situation worse.

Chapter 35

On the bus, folded up and rocking back and forth, Miles is reverting into a schizophrenic episode. He tries to rationalize what has happened and deal with his loss and sadness by claiming that it was God's plan for him. Following the same line of thought led him to realize that now he could be with Eliza. As soon as he entered her yard, the crows started swarming. There is no doubt for the reader that these crows are not real. Miles believes they are. There is a multitude of swarming crows outside, on the porch, inside, up the stairs, and on Eliza laying in her bed. Because Miles cannot see that they are a hallucination, he tries to fight them off to save Eliza.

When he hits his head and opens his eyes to reality, he sees that she's not in bed with crows attacking her. She's in bed with another guy having sex. One of the specific symptoms that come with Miles' episodes is throwing up which he does twice before he can rise to leave. He realizes that he has lost Eliza. She's done it to him again, hurt him and sent him into a mental tizzy. He also realizes that on the same night he has had to accept that Teddy is gone, dead. He claims he's lost everything in his world, but he's in a mental state and not thinking clearly. He hasn't lost the people most important to him, Audrey, Sam, Jane, Preston, and Jackie. They will always be there for him. He just can't see that in this state of mind.

Chapter 36

At this point in the story, Miles is in a full blown schizophrenic episode. He repeats his mantra that he is worthless; everyone is better off without him. He's been seeing the crows. He is hearing the voice in his head. When he's looking for a bright side, like being with Eliza, the voice is encouraging. When he is down and out, like now, the voice is mimicking what Miles feels inside, and it's all negative.



Although he is desperate and following the voice's instructions, he is still worried that his parents or Janey may find him, and they would never get over that. By calling 911 himself, he may not realize it, but he's probably saved himself from himself.

Discussion Question 1

After seeing the boy, why did Miles still insist it was Teddy, his brother?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the significance of the birds swarming at Eliza's house.

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the theme of Hopelessness in these chapters.

Vocabulary

sunken, engulfed, suspicious, twangy, lurch, Illuminates, adrenaline, musky, toxic, preening, swarm, albeit, mildewed, conscious



Part Three: Chapters 37 - Part Four: Chapter 40

Summary

Chapter 37

When Miles wakes up, it takes him a few minutes to realize where he is. He tries to talk, but there's a tube in his throat. He makes noises to get the nurses attention. She leaves the room, and two other nurses return to take the tube out of his stomach and put a morphine drip into his IV. They tell him that the doctor will be here shortly. Just before falling asleep, Miles tells himself that he's failed at yet another thing.

Chapter 38

When Miles wakes up for the second time, he hears that same voice whispering through his head. It tells him to get out of there. It keeps repeating over and over. He yanks at the needles to pull them free from his arm. He falls on the floor feeling a tugging between his legs and a piercing in his side. He yells for someone to help him get out.

When the nurse helps him he finds that he has a catheter and broken ribs from the CPR. Once back in bed, he apologizes and says that someone was telling him to leave. He notices his mother when she starts crying and yelling that her son needs his medication. Miles feels horrible. This is exactly what he didn't want to happen. He sees that his mom looks pale, frail, and gray. Miles feels a needle in his arm and passes out.

Chapter 39

This time when Miles wakes, he is calm and clear. They must have his meds right. He sees that his mom, dad, a doctor, and a male nurse are all around him. He asks for water, and when he holds it, he feels the pain from his stitched up arm wounds. The doctor informs Miles that he and Miles' parents have discussed an aftercare plan. He will be held in the hospital under suicide watch for the state mandated time, then moved to a psych ward. Miles and his parents start crying at this, but they both reassure him that it is for the best, and it's not for long. Miles still has a fever and is freezing. The nurse gets more blankets. Miles can't stay awake, so he covers his head with the blanket and goes to sleep. He's sure he will never dream again.

Chapter 40

Miles finds himself in the psych ward in group therapy. Dr. Dubonis, the primary care physician on the unit is running the meeting. On the whiteboard in the room are the letters, H.A.L.T. which stands for hungry, angry, lonely, or tired. These are the things one must not let oneself be if a person wants to be mentally healthy. Miles crosses his legs and tries to be small. When Dr. Dubonis introduces Miles, a Japanese, punk-looking girl



starts to yell obscenities at the other members. When she stomps up and starts to leave, men in white uniforms carry her out with the doctor telling her she can return when she can act right. Miles introduces himself, tells them he has schizophrenia, and that he failed at trying to kill himself. Some of the patients try to be nice, some are sarcastic and hateful. One boy who had been quiet up to now, begins vocalizing an awful scream over and over. Although it is annoying, Miles feels that he is probably screaming for all of them.

Analysis

Chapter 37

Miles is not happy to wake up and realize that he has not succeeded at committing suicide. He only thinks that even with killing himself, he's still a failure. The chapter is short and disjointed, mimicking the mental state that Miles is in. The theme of Hopelessness and Self-worth combine in his statement about his failure to end his life.

Chapter 38

Miles wakes again, and the fact that he is still hearing the voice telling him what to do indicates that he is not back on track, to say the least. He not only hears the voice, but still tries to follow it. This time, following it causes pain because he is already injured and tethered to the equipment. The one thing that Miles does realize soberly and regrets is his mother's tears, her crying for his medication, her frail look, and her tender consolation. Before passing out again, Miles feels really bad for what he did.

Chapter 39

At first, before he learns about the aftercare program, Miles feels calm and clear for the first time in a long time. Although he's cold and has a fever, he is in much better spirits. When his mother comes close to him, he tries to pick up her smell, but only smells the hospital cleaning solutions. Everyone has their own scent and being near the comforting, loving scent of the woman who loves him most in the world would have been nice. He is sad to see how pale and worn his dad looks as well as his mom. He's always felt like being sent to a psych ward was the end for a schizophrenic. He worries that he'll be institutionalized forever now. His parents try to reassure him that it's not forever, but all three of them cry. They are sad, but know it's for the best. Before falling asleep, Miles asks his dad if Eliza knows. His dad merely says that that's all behind him now.

Chapter 40

Miles is still shy and wants to stay unnoticed, but does speak up when asked to. He makes mental notes about the other patients, but doesn't seem to judge them. All of the patients, including Miles, seem to, in their own way, act like this is a waste of time. That's why when the guy starts screaming, Miles just takes it as the guy screaming for all of them....the scream that they don't vocalize.



Discussion Question 1

Why doesn't Miles ever question the voice he hears?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the theme of Hopelessness.

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the theme of Mental Illness.

Vocabulary

catheter, parched, callused, audibly, hoist, linoleum, crook, pockmarked, lexicon, tranny



Part Four: Chapters 41-44

Summary

Chapter 41

After group therapy, back in his room, Miles is looking out of the caged window. He's amazed and distraught that he's in a psych ward. He watches crows in the tops of trees and circling around the caged window. He gets sick to his stomach when he thinks about Eliza. His roommate comes in. It turns out to be guy from the group, Max, who told the rest of the group to let him speak. Max is about two years older than Miles. He seems very nice and has a severe stutter. When they sit down to chat, Miles asks him why he's in the psych ward. He simply tells him that he can't function in the real world. Miles tells him that he can't either.

Chapter 42

Miles has been paged to the nurse's desk. He's not sure why, but once he obtains the attention of one of the two nurses who are ignoring him and seem bothered by his presence, he gets his answer. The one nurse is short with him and looks at a large board with the names of patients, times, and doctors. Apparently, Dr. Frankel is here to see him. His parents must have made the arrangements. The nurse seems agitated when he says he doesn't know his way to where Dr. Frankel is.

Chapter 43

Despite Miles' critical opinion of Dr. Frankel, he is actually glad to see him. It is somewhat comforting to be with this familiar person. As soon as Dr. Frankel tells Miles he is sorry this happened, Miles spills his guts. He tells Dr. Frankel everything....Eliza, the voice, the crows, flushing his meds, everything. Dr. Frankel still tries to console Miles and tell him it is the fault of his disease not him. When Dr. Frankel hears this confession, he tells Miles that all will be okay, but he asks about Teddy.

He remembers Miles mentioning Teddy, but wasn't sure who he was. Miles reacts to Dr. Frankel like he's stupid. He explains that Teddy's his dead brother who disappeared on the day of his first episode at the beach. Dr. Frankel tells him he has a sister, but no brother. Miles starts to get agitated. When Miles reminded the doctor of the circumstances of Teddy's appearance, Dr. Frankel asked if he meant Teddy Bryant.

Miles says the same thing he has said to everyone as he searched for Teddy, yes, Teddy Bryant Cole. The doctor gently tries to explain to Miles that he has no brother, and this must be a delusion brought on by his illness. Miles gets very upset, curses, and lashes out telling the doctor he doesn't know what he's talking about. Then, all goes black for Miles.

Chapter 44



Miles comes to the office of Dr. Dubonis. Dr. Frankel is present as well, looking through some files. After Dr. Dubonis gives Miles a drink of a vitamin drink, Dr. Frankel shows him news clippings of Teddy's disappearance. He explains that the week that Miles was in the hospital recuperating was when Teddy Bryant was taken, and Miles must have used the information he heard about that case and manifested his guilt of his psychotic episode into a concrete situation of the missing boy. They allow Miles to look through the articles. He comes to the realization that he has been apologizing to his family for two years over the loss of a brother who didn't exist. Dr. Frankel does let Miles know that this means he's free from guilt now. He hasn't done anything to feel bad about. That's great, but now Miles isn't exactly sure who he is anymore.

Analysis

Chapter 41

Although Miles seems to be doing better, his need to be there is shown through his worries over Eliza and what she thinks, and his visions of the crows. Even if there were crows in those trees, swarming the caged window would be in question. As he is with everyone, Miles is very nice to his new roommate, Max. Max plainly states that he can't function in the real world and is there because of it. Miles agrees that that's his problem too, but it seems there may be more to it where Max is concerned.

Chapter 42

The way the nurses behind the desk are acting, reading People Magazine and steering clear of the patients, it is no wonder why the patients feel awkward and unwanted in this ward. The nurse, Edna, finally tells Miles that Dr. Frankel is there to see him and seems annoyed when Miles needs directions.

Chapter 43

Miles doesn't realize how much he feels comforted by Dr. Frankel's presence. He seems relieved to see him. As a matter of fact, as soon as the doctor starts talking to Miles, the boy admits it was his fault because he flushed his meds, then confesses everything to the doctor. Dr. Frankel seems shocked at the revelation that Miles believed that Teddy Bryant was his brother. The shock of the truth from his doctor agitates Miles to the point that he passes out. Knowing about the disease and the symptoms are one thing, but truly believing something for two years and learning it's all been a delusion is catastrophic to Miles.

Chapter 44

Once Miles is convinced that he had been mistaken for two years about Teddy being his brother, he realizes that he's put himself and even his family through unnecessary hardships. Now it all makes sense to Miles; no pictures of Teddy at his house or in his mom's office; every time he mentioned Teddy to outsiders, they always called him Teddy Bryant and Miles would correct them and say Teddy Bryant Cole. But there was never a



Cole on the end of Teddy's name. This disappearance truly did happen to this poor boy, but it had nothing to do with Miles.

This disease, schizophrenia, has allowed Miles to believe for two years that not only was Teddy his brother, but that it was his fault that the boy was taken. Miles needs to come to terms with the fact that this is only one of the symptoms that manifested itself in Miles as he became sick; there was the swarming crows, the insistent voice, the influence of Teddy's circumstances, and even the relationship, or rather manipulation by Eliza. Eliza may not have intentionally added to Miles' illness, but the manipulative games and the overpowering influence she had over him was detrimental to his illness. She didn't see; she didn't care to see it; she wasn't a true friend to Miles, no matter how hard he wished it to be true.

Unfortunately, now that Miles understands all that he was delusional about during his breakdown, he is now left with the question: "Who am I?"

Discussion Question 1

What does it imply that neither nurse Edna nor nurse Carl seemed happy to help a patient?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the inclusion of crows in these chapters.

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the theme of Mental Illness in Chapter 44.

Vocabulary

orthopedic, paunchy, reticent, harbinger, tracksuit, delusion, episode, psychotic, recuperating, electrolyte



Part Four: Chapters 45-Epilogue

Summary

Chapter 45

Miles is happy that they've finally found a mediation that is helping him. No more crows, or voices, or even obsessions over Eliza...well, almost. He is happy to go to group sessions where he has made friends, like Dr. Frankel said he needs. Particularly, a girl named, Wanika is his friend. They are both to be dismissed tomorrow. Miles is worried about being out, but Wanika isn't. She tells Miles that they are good people with a bad disease. It's not their fault.

Chapter 46

Miles is scheduled to leave the hospital. The condition of him leaving, set by his doctors, is that he confess everything and be honest with his parents. He's ready to go home, but nervous about telling his parents. Both doctors are in the room with him to support and guide him through this. He tells his parents everything. They are shocked and cry. They truly had no idea. His mom in particular feels bad about making him feel bad. They all agree that an open dialogue is the only way for Miles' success. He will see Dr. Frankel twice per week. He will be upfront and honest with his parents and the doctor if he feels that he is slipping in any way. That will help everyone keep him stable and on track. He and his family are happy that he's going home.

Chapter 47

Miles is so happy to wake up in his room. He looks out the window to see no crows hovering outside. He also has no hallucinations. He feels great. He goes to the kitchen and is greeted overwhelmingly by Janey. Dad makes pancakes and bacon, and surprisingly, mom squeezes fresh orange juice and is going to eat with them. He promises Janey that he will be with her all day, help her with her comic book. His mom asks if he thinks he's okay to start school on Monday. He says yes; seeing Eliza will be weird, but he has true friends he can talk to. Wanika understands exactly what he's going through; Jackie has her own problems...some sort of darkness that he can share with her as well. Preston may not get all of those things, but he's there, as is Miles' family. He finally has hope in his life.

Epilogue

Miles is settled back into a routine. He and Jackie are at the beach watching seals in the water and waves crashing about. Miles is not speaking to Eliza. Jackie and Preston are still together. Sam is working on a book and doing freelance work. Audrey is still working at the library in Stanyan Hill. Janey is still wonderful. Miles' meds are working for now. He knows what he must do to keep balanced. He and Jackie are meeting Preston and



Wanika at a restaurant. Miles and Wanika are friends, but that is just what each of them needs.

Analysis

Chapter 45

Miles is coming to terms with his real life, not the delusional one he lived before he was hospitalized. The doctor told him he needed friends now. He realizes that Eliza is not his friend, although he does still defend her to Wanika. He knows that his family and Preston and Jackie are his friends, and he wants to be with them. He wants to go home.

Chapter 46

At first, Miles' parents, especially his mom, were worried that he wasn't ready to come home. Maybe they were scared about him being under their care. He had lied, snuck out, not let them know where he was, and the big one, tried to commit suicide. Of course, his parents would be scared. They see him as safe in the hospital and are scared about him being in their care again. What they don't know is anything about what he did or was thinking before the suicide attempt. His parents were shocked by the truth of what he was going through. They want nothing more than to help him lead a normal, happy life, which can be done with the proper treatment program. They all need to keep open communication and trust among them, and all will be fine.

Chapter 47

Miles is responding well to the medicine, but more importantly, he realizes that sharing his thoughts, problems, worries, and setbacks with his friends and family will help him to stay stable. The meds are working; as long as he does his part and shares with family, friends, and doctors, he will do fine. He finally feels some sort of peace.

Epilogue

Miles and Wanika are not only sticking to the program, they are helping each other out. As expected, the same people who Miles could always depend on are the same ones by his side now. He is clear headed enough to know how to keep on track. He is finally happy.

Discussion Question 1

Why are Eliza and Miles are not speaking?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the theme of Friendship in these last chapters.



Discussion Question 3

Discuss the overall theme of Mental Illness in the entire novel (and in particular these last chapters).

Vocabulary

vocalization, podium, generic, amalgamation, hallucinations, fidget, imperative, contorted, barrier, status quo



Characters

Miles Cole

Miles is a young man of sixteen who has been diagnosed with schizophrenia. He was always awkward at school and shy around others, but at about fourteen, he had his first schizophrenic episode in the public bathroom on North Beach in San Francisco. After this incident, he was treated medically, but the meds didn't seem to help.

His symptoms of headaches, nausea, hallucinations, hearing voices, and freaking out started coming back slowly until they were full blown. He neglected to tell his parents, friends, or doctor about any of these changes. He hid his symptoms well. Because of that, he had a major backslide to the point of attempting suicide.

He has a very supportive family who wants nothing more than to help him, but he doesn't open up and tell them the truth about what he's going through. His younger sister, Janey, is his favorite, most treasured person. His best friends Preston and Jackie are always there for him, but he, in turn, is always there for them too. He is in love with a girl named Eliza who is a fair-weathered friend, totally reliant and hopelessly devoted alone, but follows the teasing crowd in public.

Miles is a kind soul with a good heart. He is harder on himself than anyone else is on him. He is constantly apologetic and full of self-loathing. Because he doesn't truly know how to deal with his disease, he ends up causing more harm than good, especially to the feelings of the ones closest to him. He doesn't mean to and feels horribly guilty over every single thing he does. He apologizes for living.

Audrey Cole

Audrey is Miles' mom. She works in the library of the rich, fancy school that Miles and Janey attend, Stanyan Hill. Because their family is not exactly well off, her job is the only reason that allows Janey and Miles to go to such a prestigious school.

Audrey and Miles share a love of movies. That is their shared hobby. After Miles' first episode at the beach, Audrey started worrying. She became frail, gray-headed, pale, and quick-tempered. Being the sole bread winner, she was under a lot of stress. Because her hours were cut, she lost the part of her insurance that paid for Miles' meds. She was under tremendous strain and didn't fare well. She usually took a shower, took a pill, and went to bed when she got home. She loved and worried about Miles, but because of her stress had a volatile way of expressing her worries which often came off as angry or aggravated, making her seem mad, she often seemed uncaring or mad which was far from the truth.



Sam Cole

Sam shared a love of music with Miles. They both loved old record albums of jazz and gospel. Sam is a writer who originally worked for the Chronicle.

After being let go, most of the financial burden fell to Audrey, although Sam continued freelance writing which wasn't enough to support a family. Sam had a calm temperament.

Where Audrey would explode, he tried to smooth everything over. Many times by doing that, he upset his wife and made her think that he was trying to make her the bad guy. Yet, when she escaped reality in a world of sleep, Sam was left to carry on the daily duties of dinner and such.

Janey Cole

Janey is Miles' younger sister. She adores Miles. She is a very talented artist who loves to write comic books, draw, listen to music, and watch old movies. When she has a bad dream or is afraid at night, she sleeps in Miles' bed while he sleeps on a blow up mattress to make sure she doesn't become afraid in the night.

Preston

Preston has been Miles' best friend since they were ten. They were both sent to the same summer camp right after Preston's grandmother had passed away. Preston was distraught, and Miles comforted him and listened to him talk daily. Because of this, although they were in separate social classes, Preston considered Miles his best friend from that summer on. Preston is dating Jackie, another of Miles' friends. They both have taken Miles under their wing and try to include him in all of their activities.

Jackie

Jackie is one of Miles' best friends and Preston's girlfriend. Like Miles, she is a tender soul who has a fragile existence in a busy cruel world. She dates Preston, but is not always happy with the way he acts. She's not into crowds as he is and often hides out with Miles in Preston's room until parties are over. She has no romantic involvement with Miles, but is truly a pure soul to whom he connects and respects.

Eliza

Eliza was one of Miles' best friends in junior high when he was already friends with Preston, but not with Jackie yet. Miles was head over heels in love with Eliza. At home,



they were best friends. They slept out in his fort, went on family vacations, told each other their secrets, and shared their family intimacies.

That's when they were alone; when in public, Eliza, one of the cool kids, ignored, laughed at, and made fun of Miles. Although this hurt his feelings at the time, she would make it up to him in private by telling him he's her true friend. Miles was so easily captivated by Eliza.

Her rich chef dad decided to move them to New Orleans. Miles worked up the courage to ask her to be his girlfriend. She just ran away saying that he had ruined everything. Her return in high school was even worse. He fell in love with her yet again only to have his heart broken which contributed to his biggest psychological breakdown.

Teddy Bryant (Cole)

Miles was obsessed with the disappearance of Teddy. It occurred one week after Miles' first episode at Ocean Beach. One week later, while Miles was in the hospital, a young boy named Teddy Bryant was suspected of being kidnapped.

Later, when no lead panned out, they ruled that he must have drowned in the ocean. Because Miles had seen and heard all of these report about Teddy's disappearance and he was holding onto his own guilt about what he'd put his parents through at that same beach, Miles created the delusion that Teddy had been his brother, and that he had gone missing that day because Miles took everyone's attention away from the young boy.

In actuality, Teddy's incident happened one week after Miles'. Unfortunately, Miles believed Teddy to be his brother and suffered tremendous guilt about him; yet, he never told anyone in his family, none of his friends, or even his doctor about these thoughts. So for two years, Miles believed that Teddy was his brother and his disappearance was Miles' fault.

Simon Tolliver

Simon Tolliver was an ex-con who had done horrible things in his lifetime and served fifteen years in prison for them. When he got out of prison, he lived close to the area in which Teddy was taken. The police questioned him, but ruled him out as a suspect. When Miles believed that Teddy was his brother, he also believed that Simon Tolliver was Teddy's captor.

Miles went through many struggles to obtain a name and then fixated on Tolliver as the guilty party. When Miles found Tolliver, he was with a young boy, but it wasn't Teddy. It was his own son, Colin, who was very ill and in need of a hospital. Because Miles had broken into Tolliver's home at the same time Colin need to go, Tolliver listened to Miles' story, told him he had the wrong man, took him into the city, put him on a bus home, and



gave him money. Miles felt horrible about his mistake. Tolliver had changed and had treated Miles very kindly.

Dr. Frankel

Dr. Frankel was the first and only private psychiatrist that Miles visited until his final breakdown. Miles didn't have a lot of respect for the doctor. He judged him based on his appearance. He was short, so that his feet dangled from the chair.

During the first two years of their sessions, the doctor would ask if the meds were working, and Miles would lie and say yes. Miles refused to tell the doctor anything private. He basically "yessed" the doctor and waited for his time to finish.

After his major breakdown, the doctor came to see Miles, and Miles finally spilled his guts to the doctor. He told him everything he should have been sharing all along. Dr. Frankel is the one who broke the news to Miles that he didn't have a brother named Teddy, and that was part of his delusions from the schizophrenia, which Miles didn't take well. He was also there to help Miles explain all of this to his parents before returning home. He would remain Miles' weekly doctor and insisted on honesty and trust.

Dr. Dubinos

He is the resident physician at the psych ward. He seems timid as he conducts group sessions and picks at the scabs and marks on his hands and fingernails. He seems very reluctant to engage with one of the young people in his session as she rebelled and left the group. He relied on the "men in white uniforms" to take her away. He was also kind to Miles and assisted Dr. Frankel as Miles confessed to his parents. He conducts group session with Miles until he is released.

Wanika

She is the friend that Miles made during his stay in the psych ward. They were friends inside, shared all of their secrets, and were released on the same day. After returning home, both Miles and Wanika remain friends and help each other through rough patches.

Max

Max is Miles' roommate while at the psych ward. He tells Miles that he is there because he can't cope with the real world. At the time, Miles agrees with him.



Ordell

Ordell is a boy at the school that often tries to include Miles in things, but Miles finds him irritating. Several times Ordell asks to walk with him and invites him to things. Miles turns him down every time.

Colin

Colin is Tolliver's sick child, whom Miles mistakes as as Teddy initially.



Symbols and Symbolism

The Crows

The black crows played a big part in the story each time Miles slipped mentally. The crows swarmed, picked at their prey, and signaled Miles when things were bad or were about to get bad. The color black is symbolic of death, evil, or the unknown. In this case, the evil/unknown would be accurate.

Each time Miles sensed and saw the black crows something bad happened. The crow itself is a bird that feeds on the dead carcasses of other animals. This is symbolic of Miles giving up on life and leaving what's left to the crows that surround him every time he is distraught. This bird symbolizes mystery, the unknown, and trickery.

The Color White/ Cleanliness

When Miles spent the night with Eliza and woke in her room, he described it as white and pure. He described her kisses and the taste of her skin as clean and pure. Although in the end, that's not how it turned out. He was fooled into believing that she was the pure Holy Spirit sent to him to stand for and guide him to purity and cleanliness.

The Unknown Voice

Miles often heard a voice in his head as he was going into an episode. Depending on what was happening, the voice meant different things at different times. When Miles was distraught and at the bottom of the barrel, the voice would tell him how worthless he was and that he didn't deserve to live.

When he felt happy, on top of the world, like when he spent the night with Eliza, it told him to go for it and be happy. The next morning that same voice told him that Eliza is a distraction and he should run away from her and keep away until he finds Teddy.

When he discovers that Teddy is dead, the voice tells him to reunite with Eliza. He goes to her, sees the crows everywhere, and has a mental breakdown. Back at home, in his tub with the knife, the voice tells him he doesn't deserve to live and tells him to slice his wrists. Even at the hospital, when he wakes up and realizes where he is the voice says to run away. Sometimes he just says that it's a voice telling him to do things, and sometimes he says it's God.



HALT

This is the mantra that he is taught in the hospital. It stands for hungry, angry, lonely, tired, and is also a mantra. The residents are taught that they need to take care of these basic needs and that focusing on those will help stabilize their mental clarity.

Teddy

Teddy Bryant was the boy that was kidnapped from the beach the week before Miles had his first breakdown. But, in Miles' mind, Teddy is his brother. It is his motivation for doing much of what he does, and in many respects is the reason he feels many of the misplaced emotions that he feels. Figuratively, Teddy represents Miles' disease....out of control, just outside of his reach, shameful, and is the reason for the strained relations between Miles and his parents.

Audrey's Garden

Miles talks about how, when Teddy was alive, his mother kept a beautiful garden in the back yard. Now, he says, she doesn't tend to the garden and it is full of choking weeds. This represents Audrey's lack of focus on the family. When she comes home from work, she immediately takes a sleeping pill, effectively checking out of her family life. Audrey's Garden is very much like Audrey right now....choked and full of weeds.

Ceiling Crack

In Miles' house a large crack has opened up on the ceiling. He says that sometimes when it rains, the water drops through. Symbolically, this represents the fissure that exists in the family. This is another symbol by the author to indicate dysfunction.

Miles' Name

Miles' name has significance in that he has 'miles' to go before he will fully be able to function in a normal fashion.

Unlit Cigarette

The night of Preston's party, Miles and Eliza go out back to smoke a cigarette. Preston is not able to get it to light because of the wind. Eliza has to light it for him. This indicates that Miles isn't quite able to 'light' his own life, or that of anyone else's, and yet, Eliza is able to.

Quicksand

In one of Miles' dreams he is stuck in quicksand and it goes over his head. This symbolizes how in over his head he has gotten since going off his meds.

Chickens

When Miles goes to Tolliver's house, he finds a shed. He's sure that this is where Teddy is being held. But when he opens the door, it is filled with live chickens. A dog gets in there and grabs one of the chickens and leaves with it. This parallels the fact that Teddy was abducted at the beach, and the chickens also represent the disconnected and frantic thoughts in Miles' mind.



Settings

Miles's home

Miles' parents are not rich and live in humble surroundings. They live on a street filled with foreign markets and bakeries. The house itself is a small three-bedroom house with a huge crack in the living room ceiling that drips when it rains. However, this is the one place where Miles feels at peace...at home with his family.

Preston's House

Preston's home is very ostentatious. His parents are former TV stars who travel a lot, leaving Preston home alone with the house keeper, but the house is very stylish. Miles compares it to a mansion style home.

Eliza's House

Eliza is also from a rich family. Her father is a famous chef. She and her mother live in an upscale home with a tremendous view of the city.

The Psych Ward

In the group meeting room, the shell is just like the individual rooms, but instead of beds, it contains plastic chairs in a circle and motivational posters on the walls. In the room that Miles shares with Max, they have the same type room, but with beds instead of chairs. There are also bars on the windows looking out into the real world.

The Beach

This was the turning point for Miles. It is where he had his first episode, and it is where he returns to look for Teddy. In the end, the Beach ends up being a place where he looks for himself, and instead, only finds a missing Teddy...a brother he never had.



Themes and Motifs

Mental Illness

The main theme or motif is how people deal with mental illness. This novel shows the hardships on and support from the family; the support from true friends, not fair weather friends; the necessity of mental health professionals; and, most importantly, the acceptance and handling of the illness by the patient himself.

In this story, Miles' family is very supportive. Each handles these problems differently depending on his/her personality type. Audrey, Miles' mom, loves him dearly and supports him, but she easily flies off the handle and yells at him when things are unstable. Sam, Miles' father, is just the opposite. Even when he is upset by a situation with Miles, he tries to calmly talk it through. Although, often he ends up soothing Audrey more than Miles.

Janey stays out of the way during heated discussions, but she is nothing but loving and supportive of her brother. She greets him with kisses and a positive attitude. Preston worries about him and asks him to be careful when he sees potential problems, like Eliza, but mostly treats him like a normal guy.

Jackie, who is a sensitive soul herself and didn't know Miles during his turbulent "Eliza days," just wants him to be happy. She worries that he's had so much pain and should find happiness for himself. Eliza acknowledges that he has a problem, says she's sorry to hear what happened, but proceeds to treat him like any other high school guy she would use, abuse, and throw away.

Self-Worth

Miles is constantly apologizing for everything. He apologizes for his existence for his very being. So many times, throughout the story, Miles casually mentions how his family would be better off without him.

He feels so guilty about being in existence that he constantly references what a pain and tragic drama he is for his family. He even takes it to the extreme of trying to take his own life by slicing his wrists. Throughout the story, he doesn't just apologize for the wrongs he's done, he apologizes for being in existence.

There are numerous instances where, either through his own choices or the actions of others, he feels himself worthless and unlovable. When he throws up at Preston's party, right in front of Eliza, who is newly back into town, he feels as if he is worthless and not worthy of someone as beautiful as Eliza.

Later, when he figures out that Teddy wasn't real, or wasn't alive, he crawls into the bathtub and commits suicide. He realizes that he has been putting his family through



hell for two years, and himself as well, for something that wasn't even real. He feels that he is defective, and after he hears the lecture in biology class, he's sure that Darwin would have selected him for extinction.

Hopelessness

Hopelessness is a feeling felt by many throughout this story. First and foremost, by Miles, who believes that the diagnosis of this disease and the fact that despite the initial medications, he doesn't seem to be getting better, leave him hopeless that anything will ever get better or that he will ever experience any normalcy in his life again. He sees this in himself, in his own symptoms. He also sees this when he sees his mother.

Mile's mother has done nothing but deteriorate since his episodes began. She is graying, frail, and withering. She is short-tempered and yells a lot. She doesn't participate in family rituals anymore, not even dinner. She comes home, showers, takes a pill, and goes to bed. She is wallowing in hopelessness.

It is this feeling of hopelessness that causes Miles to reach rock bottom and attempt suicide. He understands what he's put his family through, feels that he is never going to be worth anything, and that he is doing them a favor by killing himself.

However, it is this feeling of hopelessness that offers him a common ground with the other patients in the psych ward. With a shared sort of misery, a good deal of them are able to turn things around. So, while hopelessness isn't a good thing, during his stay at the psych ward it became a starting place.

Taking Blame

Miles knows that his condition has put a strain on his family. Without even thinking of his delusion of losing his non-existent brother, Miles feels that every single hardship in his house is because of him.

The way his mother acts, her hopelessness, may be partly because of him, but so many other things in life affect a family. Sam, Miles' dad, lost his job at the Chronicle. He is trying to do freelance work here and there, but it doesn't pay well, certainly not enough for a family. Audrey, Miles' mom, works in the library at his school. Her hours were recently cut adding to the financial strain on the family as well as cutting benefits such as the insurance that pays for Miles' medication. As the sole "bread-winner," Audrey has a lot on her plate, so to speak. She feels down, depressed, and overwhelmed. The way she handles it is to go to bed, sleep and pretend it doesn't exist, until she has to face it the next day.

They live in a poor home in need of repairs that they can't afford. The tension is so strong in the house that the slightest disagreement about money or repairs sends the parents into an argument. Miles blames himself for all of the family problems, but truthfully, his condition is only one, albeit a major one, of many problems.



Friendship

Throughout the novel there are many examples of good and bad friendships. Foremost, it is established early on that Miles has two very good friends: Jackie and Preston.

Preston and Miles have been friends since they were ten years old and attended a summer camp together. It matters little to Preston that Miles is poor and on psychiatric medications. Preston's parents are uninvolved and he doesn't have anyone in his life. Jackie and Miles are his family and he is devoted.

Jackie shows her true colors when she comes to Miles' rescue after his episode at Preston's party. She routinely hates Preston's parties, but comes to them anyway to make Preston happy. When Miles gets ill she uses that as an excuse, she tells him, to get out of being at the party. She allows Miles to save face, and makes him feel as if the episode wasn't that big of a deal.

Later, when rumors begin flying about his episode at Preston's, it is Jackie who stands up for him. Both Preston and Jackie band together and warn Miles about Eliza. After Miles figures out Eliza's true colors, they are both there to be his friend and help him through the heartache.

Later, Miles begins to add to his list of true friends, including a new girl named Wannika, and his old roommate from the hospital, Max.

Styles

Point of View

The point of view of this story is told in first person from Miles' perspective. He explains the scene, describes the atmosphere, gives details about the people present, and exposes his own thoughts to the reader. Although the narrator is first person, the reader can still see when the narrator is being unreliable and affected by his mental illness.

Language and Meaning

The language is that of typical teenagers in modern society. Often for emphasis about a point, foul language is used. The teenagers speak openly in foul or crass language to one another, but refrain and speak in respectful language to and in front of adults. There are no cases in this story of a young person cursing at an adult; however, when Miles is in the hospital freaking out, he does say foul language in front of - but not aimed at - his parents.

Structure

This story is basically told in chronological order with the occasional relapse into a flashback from Miles' childhood or from the day he had his big break down at the beach.



Quotes

If I want to see other schizophrenics, I don't really have to look far. This is San Francisco. I see 'em standing on every street corner downtown—yelling at cars and talking to shit that isn't there.

-- Miles (chapter 1 paragraph 41)

Importance: Miles has schizophrenia. He has come to recognize people on the street not merely as homeless, but he's been able to pick out the mentally ill based on what he now knows are the symptoms. He is embarrassed that they are there because he has the same type of disease, and he sees himself as one of them in his future.

I appreciate you trying to give me hope and all. But I know what my chances are. It seems like I'd be doing everyone a favor if I could just end it, you know?

-- Miles (chapter 5 paragraph 23)

Importance: Because this is early in the story, it is a foreshadowing of things to come. It also emphasizes that Miles truly believes he'll end up like the street people he sees with his disease and that he'd be doing everyone a favor if he wasn't here. The thing he doesn't see is that he has a great support system that would never let him end up in that position.

But that feeling of otherness never left me, like I could never let anyone know who I really was.

-- Miles (chapter 7 paragraph 15)

Importance: This quote is important because it describes how Miles felt about himself before he was diagnosed with schizophrenia.

No one else in my family is crazy like I am. I'm the only defective one—the mistake. And I am obviously not fit for survival. If I were out in the wild, I would've been left for dead long ago.

-- Miles (chapter 8 paragraph 85)

Importance: Miles feels bad, like the black sheep of the family, because he is the only person in his family history, who he knows of, who has this mental illness. He feels like a reject, a mistake, the one in the litter that the mother would leave for dead.

Seriously, my mom is absolutely the worst person to be with in any kind of a crisis situation. She completely loses her shit—going from zero to full-blown hysteria in, like, half a second.

-- Miles (chapter 10 paragraph 2)

Importance: Miles loves his mom, and he knows that she loves him, but he doesn't trust her to be reliable in unexpected situations.



Madness and genius are very closely related, you know? ... You are a sensitive soul. The world needs more people like you.
-- Christina (chapter 12 paragraph 42)

Importance: Christina, Eliza's mother, says this to Miles. She means it as a compliment, but by the way her daughter treats Miles these are merely words to them.

I curl up tight and try to hold on to that voice, that cool breeze in my mind. That voice will tell me what's right. It will protect me.
-- Miles (chapter 13 paragraph 2)

Importance: Most everyone wishes for some kind of protector, but Miles' perceived protection comes from a delusional voice from within. He doesn't realize that his mental illness is what is guiding him.

Jane and my mom and dad—I kept apologizing to them for what happened. I thought they knew I was talking about Teddy. But they must've thought I was talking about my sickness.
-- Miles (chapter 16 paragraph 11)

Importance: All this time Miles thought they knew he was talking about Teddy, but he didn't realize that neither he nor his family ever mentioned that name. He thought it was a coping mechanism for them to forget what happened.

Her hands are knotted and arthritic-looking. There are lines and creases around the corners of her mouth and eyes. I don't say that to be cruel. I know it's my fault. I've made her this way.
-- Miles (chapter 1 paragraph 19)

Importance: This shows not only what Miles' mother looks like, but that he feels responsible for how bad she looks.

It's starting again.
-- Miles (chapter 1 paragraph 3)

Importance: This shows that Miles is aware of when he is about to have an episode and shows how afraid he is when they begin.

Sometimes I like to pretend that Jackie and Preston are my parents.
-- Miles (chapter 1 paragraph 17)

Importance: The importance of his friends is pointed out in this quote.

Are you sure you're all right? That's the fucking question, isn't it?
-- Miles (chapter 1 paragraph 53)

Importance: This sets the tone and shows the character's mindset for the rest of the novel.