

# **Shift (Silo Saga) Study Guide**

## **Shift (Silo Saga) by Hugh Howey**

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## Plot Summary

As "Shift" by Hugh Howey begins, the year is 2049. Democrat Donald Keene has just been elected to Congress. He is heading to Washington to serve his term and meet with Georgia's Democratic Senator Thurman. Keene's background in architecture and his college design of underground silos prompted Senator Thurman to recommend him to work on the Containment and Disposal Facility project, or CAD-FAC. CAD-FAC is being designed to store the world's spent nuclear fuel, and it will consist of dozens of underground silos. Keene agrees to work on the project, though he isn't happy about the recommendation coming from Keene's daughter, Anna. Anna and Keene dated while in college, a fact which makes Keene's wife, Helen, uncomfortable.

CAD-FAC is completed in Georgia several years later. The land above the silos plays host to the Democratic National Convention. During this time, nuclear blasts are detonated. Keene and selected others are rushed below ground into CAD-FAC. It is revealed CAD-FAC's true purpose is to save humanity against total destruction. Thousands of people are put into the silos that extend miles below ground to live out their lives over the course of five hundred years while the earth becomes hospitable once more. The central silo, Silo 1, houses shifts of people from the old world, including Thurman and Keene. They are awakened every few decades from cryogenic sleep for six months at a time, where they oversee control and monitoring of the other silos. From time to time, rebellions and widespread violence in the silos cause the populations to be exterminated and replanted.

Keene is sickened by the knowledge that the entire operation was a conspiracy and by the knowledge that Thurman and his group set off the nuclear blasts themselves. Thurman explains that it was necessary due to the rise of nano-terrorism. He goes on to say that it would only have been a matter of time anyway before a catastrophic event occurred. Good people had developed cell-sized nano-medical bots to heal and repair the human body, but terrorists and thugs like the Iranians weaponized them to tear people apart. Thurman jumped ahead by killing billions with nuclear weapons, but saving thousands to restart the world's population all over again in five hundred years. Keene is horrified by what has happened, but knows he must now ensure as many people as possible survive in the other silos. Every few decades, silos must be restarted. Others go offline completely and cannot be raised.

In Silo 18, a revolution begins. Seventeen year-old Mission finds himself caught up in the middle of the violence, but he is given a reprieve. Instead of being killed, he has his mind wiped. He is allowed to marry and have children. In Silo 17, an uprising results in the population collapsing on its own, leaving a handful of survivors, including Jimmy. Jimmy lives for years at a time without seeing anyone. Meanwhile, Keene uncovers more secrets about the silo project. He kills Anna for her part in things. He then discovers the true goal of Thurman and the other founders. Only one silo out of dozens is to be released back into the world. All others, including Silo 1, are to be exterminated. Thurman explains this is in order to eradicate bad knowledge about nano-technology and nuclear weapons of the old world. Keene then kills Thurman. Keene learns that a

single female has escaped one of the silos and has headed toward another. This woman, Juliette, becomes the first person who Jimmy sees in years. Juliette radios in to Keene, telling him she has begun to uncover the truth about the silos and that they will be coming for Keene.



# First Shift: Legacy, Prologue – Chapter 22

## Summary

Prologue – In 2007, the two key ingredients for mankind's downfall arrive. One of the ingredients is the software from the Center for Automation in Nanobiotech (CAN). The programs will be used to create cell-sized, self-propagating medical robots. Propranolol, a pill intended to erase traumatic memories, also arrives. In 2110, under the hills of Fulton County, Georgia, the main protagonist Troy (formerly known as Donald Keene) awakens after years of confinement in a room full of coffins. He panics, and Men rush to hold him down. Troy longs to forget. He knows he will one day be forgotten as well.

Chapter 1 – It is the year 2049 in Washington, D.C. Freshman Congressman Donald Keene of Georgia, recently elected, hopes to bring change to Washington. He looks forward to meeting Senator Thurman, as do other recently elected freshmen congressmen. Some of them find it amusing the Centers for Disease Control have a manual for how to deal with a zombie invasion, but others find it merely precautionary, considering the behavior of a rabid dog. Keene's friend since college, Congressman Mick Webb, leaves Thurman's office as Keene is admitted. Thurman, who campaigned for Keene, stresses to Keene the importance of denial.

Thurman wants Keene to be in on the new Containment and Disposal Facility (CAD-FAC) in his energy plan, which is intended to house spent nuclear fuel. Conspiracy theorists believe it will house everything from aliens to advanced weapons. CAD-FAC needs an emergency underground shelter. Keene is stunned to discover the architectural plans for the shelter are his own from college, plans which made their way to the Senator through his daughter. Keene is to update and expand the plans based on his study of architecture in college. Webb will be working on logistics, and Keene will need to collaborate with him. The Senator's daughter, Anna, will be the lead engineer on the project.

Chapter 2 – It is the year 2210 in Silo 1. Troy's awakening continues to be monitored by a doctor. The doctor prescribes a pill to be taken twice daily with a meal of foul-tasting paste. The doctor explains that his shift will be over by the time Troy comes back in six months for a follow-up. Troy's older memories seem to be slipping away. Troy feels out of it. He runs into an older man who explains he himself is on his second shift, and recognizes Troy as being on his first shift. Troy heads off to be alone so no one can see him cry.

Chapter 3 – It is 2049 in Washington, D.C. Keene returns to his office. His secretary, Margaret, reveals that Keene has a visitor. It is Anna Thurman. She has installed a new monitor for him under the assumption he would agree to help her father. She herself will be handling mechanical spaces on the plans. Keene and Anna had a thing years ago.



He is nervous to see her now, especially because he is married. They agree to plan out when they can meet to work on the project.

Chapter 4 – It is 2210 in Silo 1. Troy is late to work. He will be taking the place of Merriman, who is ending his shift. Merriman cautions Troy to keep an eye on the workers, but to only use the deep-freeze if workers can't handle things. Troy's job is to make sure nothing goes wrong. Jones is suggested for any mechanical difficulties. Merriman urges Troy to follow the script, to be in contact with other silos as little as possible, that second and third generation survivors are now common, and that there are forbidden words and phrases. He suggests meeting with Victor, and explains that there is more fracturing than anticipated in some of the other silos.

Chapter 5 – It is 2049 in Washington, D.C. Weeks pass. Keene's schedule becomes busy, and he isn't able to spend as much time with his wife, Helen. Helen worries about the legality of the project that Keene is working on, but he assures her there is nothing to worry about. Helen does not like the fact that Anna and Keene are working together. Keene assures her she has nothing to worry about. Mick Webber swings by for a visit and to invite Keene out for a drink. Thurman calls, tells the young men to have a good time, reminds Keene to make sure Mick keep his mouth shut, and sets up a meeting for Monday.

Chapter 6 – It is 2110 in Silo 1. Troy goes to get food. Everything served is canned. As he sits down to eat, he thinks about how there seems to be something he should remember, but keeps forgetting. An elderly man named Hal speaks to Troy. Hal reminds Troy of someone, but he can't place it. Hal remarks how people who avoid watching the sunset are people trying to forget something, while those who watch are trying to remember. Hal comments on how bad memories seem to slip away, while the unimportant things can be remembered clearly.

Chapter 7 – It is 2049 in Washington, D.C. Keene meets with Thurman in Kramer's Bookshop. Thurman has heard that Keene's sister, Charlotte, has been redeployed. Keene explains his sister just couldn't relax or readjust to civilian life. Keene also explains his sister tried memory loss pills, but they made her too forgetful and gave her tremors. Thurman agrees to talk with Charlotte, who serves as a drone operator. Thurman explains that Keene and Webb are to go to Georgia to oversee how the excavation for the silos is coming along. The outer walls will be poured soon. Keene is also to meet with Charles Rhodes, governor of Oklahoma, who is handling supplies for the project. Rhodes served with Thurman in the armed forces years before. Thurman compliments Keene on all the good work he has done.

Chapter 8 – It is 2110 in Silo 1. Troy, as head of Operation Fifty, goes over the Book of the Order. The Book of the Order is intended as an operations manual, but seems more like a guide to human nature. Some parts are vague, making Troy wonder if they serve a deeper purpose. Troy himself wonders what his purpose is, considering he had originally studied for a different job but was just promoted. He considers asking Victor over in Psychological Services since the psychologists are responsible for the plan that



makes people feel so empty inside. There are no days off, six months solid of work, and decades of sleep between shifts.

A radio tech named Saul helps orient Troy to his work as a radio tech. Troy is to field calls from candidates and run through set questions. Troy takes a call from Marcus Dent who explains he has shadowed Deputy Willis, transferred to IT Security, and has been studying the Order for six weeks. He says his purpose is to uphold the Order, and protect Life and Legacy above all. Marcus is set to be married to a girl named Melanie. Troy welcomes Marcus to Operation Fifty. Marcus asks if everything in the Legacy is true. Troy explains that everything in the Legacy is true, but doesn't say that not everything that is true is included in the Legacy. Troy marvels silently at how Silo 1 has been charged with humanity's survival.

Chapter 9 – It is 2049 in Fulton County, Georgia. Excavation work is well underway. Keene and Webb oversee the work. The project is facing many delays and is two months behind due to the fact that so many international partners are involved. Keene says the job probably should have been left to the private sector, which causes Webb to make fun of Keene, telling Keene he sounds like a Republican. Webb contends the project is about the death of coal and energy independence. Meeting with Rhodes, Webb and Keene learn that Thurman wrote the bill that regulated cryogenic freezing, killing the fad for it. Keen decides to go home and see his wife.

Chapter 10 – It is 2110 in Silo 1. Troy does his best to suppress his emotions with the drugs given out, but has little success. He finds himself crying frequently. He is jealous of the people in the other silos who did not know the world before the silos, and so are allowed to live their whole lives unhindered. Randall brings reports to Troy which detail beliefs, the need for a formal induction for the head of Silo 6, and troubling population report on Silo 32 in which their population is fast approaching maximum while the head of 32, Biggers, denies this. It means Biggers has either been deliberately lying and is complicit, or has lost control. Troy agrees that Biggers must be replaced. Word then comes from Saul that Silo 12 is collapsing.

Chapter 11 – It is 2049 in Savannah, Georgia. Helen is thrilled to be out to dinner with her husband. She is proud of Keene, but worries about his working so closely with Anna. Keene reassures her that she has nothing to worry about.

Chapter 12 – It is 2110 in Silo 1. Troy and dozens of others rush to the control room where they listen to audio and watch video feeds from 12, all of which are chaotic. They can hear people shouting about others trying to break through. Troy attempts to guide the sheriff's surviving deputy through the situation, telling him to obtain all keys and wait in the holding cell. Troy knows whatever is going on in Silo 12 must be contained to Silo 12. The mob that has rebelled is seeking to break out of the silo. Troy orders gas canisters fired just as the people break out, causing them to scramble, cough, and collapse. Any remaining people in Silo 12 apart from staff are to be put down. The staff is to be debriefed.



Chapter 13 – It is 2049 in RYT Hospital, Dwayne Medical Center where Thurman is in a chamber receiving nano- treatment which rejuvenates Thurman's body, thus greatly expanding his lifespan. He explains that terrorists and people like the Iranians are attempting to hijack nano-technology for use as a weapon. Thurman says there will be a cataclysmic event sooner or later, and that he wants Keene and his wife to have a place in the world after. He gives Keene a copy of the Order, and instructs Keene to memorize it. He will have a few years to do it. Thurman also tells Keene to pencil in the National Convention, and says that some of the nano-cells in the chamber are for him. This unnerves Keene even though Thurman appears to be joking.

Chapter 14 – It is 2110 in Silo 1. Troy goes through the Silo 12 reports alone so no one can see him cry. Decent people had put the wrong person into power in Silo 12. The Head of Silo 12 could sense danger, but would not kill to save the others. Her shadow, an IT tech named Jason, was clearly too young for the job, having had doubts sown in his mind by the rebellion. Victor delivers Troy's daily dose of pills, but he spits them out when Victor leaves. Troy desires to remember the past.

Chapter 15 – It is 2049 in Savannah, Georgia. Keene is worried after having read through enough of the Order to realize there is danger in what is going on. He reveals his meeting with Thurman, and the Order book, to Helen. He says he fears that nano-cells are going to be weaponized and used not to heal people, but tear them apart. Helen says they will get through everything, but Donald wonders about everyone else.

Chapter 16 – It is 2110 in Silo 1. Troy continues to spit out his pills. He constantly worries if he has been seen.

Chapter 17 – It is 2051 in Washington, D.C. Helen continues to worry about her husband working with Anna. He reassures her that most of their work is done electronically. Mick Webb is late for a meeting. The medical board has determined there should be one central stairwell in the emergency silo, and that there will be no emergency lift in order to keep things open. Anna explains the CAD-FAC project will be her father's legacy. She comments on how everyone thinks they will live longer and longer, but that no one ever stops to question just how much time they actually have left. Keene learns that Mick has gone to a movie, and sounds high. He tells Mick that some things are better left in the past.

Chapter 18 – It is 2110 in Silo 1. Troy receives word of a worker not responding to treatment. Deep-freeze is recommended. Troy is needed to sign the waiver. He heads down to see Dr. Henson. In the doctor's office, Hal has been constrained to a gurney, watched over by two security guards. Hal is shouting that his name is Carlton. He is given a sedative and prepared for cryogenic sleep. Troy helps bring Hal into the freezing chamber, where each cold bed has a name for the occupant. Some are empty, some are not. Among the names are two Helens, and an Helena. This catches Troy's attention and causes him to shudder and fall. He realizes his name isn't Troy, but he also knows his name isn't Donny, either.





Chapter 19 – It is 2052 in Fulton County, Georgia. The Democratic National Convention is coming to Southwest Georgia, resembling a state fair during its setup. During the event, Mick Webb brings Keene to see the emergency silo. Keene is impressed, but notes that not everything has been built exactly according to plan. Mick tells Keene that Keene has always been like a brother to him. Mick reveals that Thurman has offered him a spot on a top team, the first group, but has insisted the job be offered to Keene instead. He tells Keene that everything happens for a reason. Keene doesn't quite know how to respond.

Chapter 20 – It is 2110 in Silo 1. Troy wakes up. He feels sick. He heads into a familiar room in the silo complex because there is something he needs to see.

Chapter 21 – It is 2052 in the hills above Silo 1. The Democratic National Convention is getting underway and will take place in and above the CAD-FAC itself. Turnout is tremendous. Senator Thurman tells Keene the world will change that day, and that he wants Keene and Helen near the Georgia delegation stage when the 141st flies overhead, and a special visitor arrives.

Chapter 22 – It is 2110 in Silo 1. Troy walks among the cryopod cold beds. His memories come rushing back, wherein he is being strapped to a gurney and screaming. Troy remembers an accident, a controlled explosion, a fake catastrophe, and crowds of panicked people sobbing and shouting. Troy stops in front of Helen's cryopod and remembers the woman inside wasn't his wife, but wanted to be. The doctor and security arrive. Troy knows he will be put to sleep for good. Troy challenges the doctor, who admits that some of the staff remember the past because they know it was a good thing that they did. As Troy is put down, he realizes he isn't merely being put to sleep, but killed. His last thoughts are of his wife who is in Tennessee.

## Analysis

"Shift" is a collection of three dystopian novels by Hugh Howey. The collection includes "First Shift: Legacy", "Second Shift: Order", and "Third Shift: Pact". All three novels span the course of several hundred years, beginning in the year 2049 and ending in the 2300s. During that time, massive silos extend hundreds of miles beneath the earth in the State of Georgia. Thousands of humans live in silos, while the world above is dying. As the novel begins, the themes of Dystopianism and Survival can be seen through CAD-FAC and the silo system scheme. Keeping thousands of people locked up in silos underground for five hundred years against their free will speaks to Dystopianism, to the idea of things being done for the greater good regardless of the cost.

Even the people in Silo 1 are not immune to the ravages of dystopianism. They work to keep control over all of the other silos. They sleep in six month shifts because they have no say in the matter. Those who cannot handle the situation are either put into a deep sleep, or they have their memories erased. Some believe that what they are doing is good work for the future and for the survival of the human race. However, a large number of them –such as Hal –cannot suppress their true emotions. While their



memories are blocked by the pills, their emotions cannot be blocked out. It is human nature for emotions to run deep.

Human Nature is further explored as a theme by Keene when he begins spitting out his pills so that his memory will not be erased. While the Book of Order is a comprehensive guide to rules and regulations for the dystopian society, it does not take into account the resilience which is an innate part of being human.

The theme of Human Nature is further exemplified by Keene's rebelliousness and by the uprising in Silo 12. Despite all of the planning and protocols, Silo 12 erupts in a revolution, which leads to shutting the silo down. The memories of those saved are erased. All others are brutally killed. Human nature cannot be totally overcome, except by death. The struggle to survive is too great.

Thurman, Victor, and a group of individuals who believe the silo system is the only way of preserving humanity also believe that they are doing good by killing billions to save thousands. Thurman is concerned with survival, even if it comes at a high price. Keene disagrees. He believes killing billions is simply an evil act.

The theme of Good and Evil intertwines with the theme of Technology as both relate to the CAD-FAC underground complex. Nano-technology, which was originally intended for good, has been hijacked for evil purposes. Thurman assesses the hijacking correctly. However, his response to confront the danger is wrong, according to Keene. Thurman believes death is the only way to ensure life. This belief leads to an ironic tragedy later in the story.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Why does Keene agree to work on CAD-FAC for the Senator? Why has he been selected in the first place? What does he hope working on CAD-FAC will accomplish?

## **Discussion Question 2**

What aspects of human nature are not accounted for in the first section of the novel? Choose three and explain why.

## **Discussion Question 3**

Why is Keene put into deep-freeze? Does he have any say in the matter? Why or why not? What does this demonstrate about the nature of the silo scheme?

## Vocabulary

propagate, obligatory, orientation, claustrophobia, treachery, ritualized, arbitrary, apathy, indefinable, infallible, ubiquitous, quizzical, calamity



# First Shift: Legacy, Chapter 23 – Second Shift: Order, Chapter 43

## Summary

Chapter 23 – It is 2052 above Silo 1. Keene and Anna meet up by the Georgia stage. The special guest arrives. It is Charlotte, Keene's sister. Keene receives a text message from Helen, saying she is in Tennessee. He can't understand why she is there after all of his text messages to her told her to meet him in Georgia. As he heads to the Tennessee stage, Anna tries to get him to stay. He can hear a teenage girl preparing to introduce Thurman, speaking of how there can never be too great a price to pay for liberty. An air squadron flies overhead at the end of the National Anthem. Suddenly, flashes of light can be seen. Air raid sirens go off. Keene realizes it is a nuclear attack. The taste of metal is in the air. Anna and Charlotte grab hold of Keene and take him to a small tent where the Senator is directing certain people. They head down a concrete ramp beneath the tent. Keene is panicked because Helen is not with him. He knows the world has changed forever.

Chapter 24 – Troy awakens. He knows he should be dead, but he is not. The doctors who woke him are different than the ones who put him to sleep. They say they need his help with Silo 18. Troy then recognizes another man in the room. It is Senator Thurman.

### Second Shift: Order

Chapter 25 – It is the Year of the Great Uprising in Silo 18. Seventeen year-old Mission Jones and his buddy Cam are on a tandem delivery up hundreds of flights of stairs. The graffiti on the walls says the end is coming. Mission believes it is. His family has long worked the same plot of farmland in the silo. No one bothers to do maintenance jobs anymore, such as chipping –banging out raw spots of rust and painting them over. Mission picks up side work as a porter. Mission's grandfather was killed in the uprising of '78. Rodney, Mission's best friend, once spoke of a revolution seriously. He hasn't been seen in months, supposedly shadowing someone on the 34th floor.

Chapter 26 - Mission and Cam deliver their load –a body –to the coroner's office on the farm's lower level. Mission swings by the maintenance room to see if Winters needs anything carried up so his father won't lecture him for wasting time. Winters produces a massive water pump that needs to be carried up. Mission agrees. At the farm security gate, he sees Frankie, a childhood friend now working security. Frankie reveals that people on other levels have begun growing food, that the mayor has been letting things slide lately. Frankie asks if Mission will see the Crow anytime soon. Mission says he will, so Frankie asks Mission to say hello for him.

Chapter 27 – Mission says hello to his father and younger half-brother Riley. The corn is coming in well. Riley is thrilled to see Mission. Their father dislikes that other levels are



producing their own food now, since it means less work for porters to move between levels. His father also worries about Mission's health, especially Mission's knees. Porter takes a toll on porters. His father asks if Mission has been by to see Allie – Mission's first and shortest romance – saying that all the boys want to marry her, but she'll only have Mission. Mission says he won't have time to see her. He secretly knows that marrying Allie would mean returning to farming, and he does not want that. He also secretly knows that the move to independence by each of the levels of people means that there is a chance of violence. No one wants to have to depend on others if it can be avoided.

Chapter 28 – Mission goes to see Jenine in Sanitation. Jenine is the girl that Mission truly wants to be with. Jenine works testing water. She is thrilled to see him, and asks if he has been by the Nest lately. Mission says he will be by there soon. She will be hanging out with friends dropping paint bombs that evening. He tells her to be careful. She tells him to watch his step and kisses him on the cheek.

Chapter 29 – Mission and a gang of porter friends attempt to lift a massive generator through the levels, but the ropes break and a fight breaks out above.

Chapter 30 – It is second shift in Silo 1. After seventy years asleep, Donald Keene is rolled out of the cryopod chamber in a wheelchair. It takes a day for his mind to clear up. Thurman comes to see Keene in his room. He says they need Keene to remember everything. Keene's old report has been left for Keene to read when his mind sufficiently clears. Small pieces of the past come back to Keene, such as what happened to Silo 12.

Chapter 31 – Dr. Henson comes to check up on Keene, bringing food and medicine. Thurman comes to Keene's apartment. Keene remembers everything now. Thurman says they did what had to be done. Keene says there is no justifying what they did. Thurman argues that everyone was going to die anyways, that everyone was already infected, and that it was only a matter of time before the nano-infection was activated. Thurman explains that they are losing other silos, and need to know why. Because Keene was resistant to the meds, he has been temporarily awakened to find out. It is revealed the medication is not in the pills, but in the water. Some, like Thurman, are immune. Keene shouldn't be. Thurman wants to know why. He explains that someone believes he can help, and Keene will see her in the morning.

Chapter 32 – Keene studies the report for answers, from the age of IT shadows to inductees asking questions about the Order. Thurman brings Keene through the armory where Anna awaits them in a conference room. Keene is stunned to see her because no female is supposed to be awake during the era of shifts. She has been living there secretly for a year. Anna reveals that at least eleven silos have been lost and that it all began about a year ago with Silo 40. She reveals that it was Thurman's boss, Victor, who wanted Keene woken up. Victor was the one who wrote the Order and created the entire operation. Anna reveals that Victor committed suicide two days before.



Chapter 33 – Anna reveals that Victor was obsessed with the first silo that was lost, and that he blamed himself for what happened. Keene considers that maybe Victor had a sudden bout of sanity, realized the entire program was wrong, and so killed himself. Anna insists this is not true, that they did what had to be done. Still, Keene agrees to help solve the problem to avoid more bloodshed or loss of life.

Chapter 34 – In Silo 18, Mission leaves the fight that has broken out between porters and farmers over the generator. He heads to the Crow's Nest, which serves as a nursery, day school and classrooms that serve the Up Top. The teacher in charge of all operations is the elderly and wise Mrs. Crowe. She asks that Mission pass on a letter to Rodny through Jeffery, another old student, who now works in Security. Mrs. Crowe reflects sadly on remembering how things were better, once. Mission asks Mrs. Crowe to tell him about the old world.

Chapter 35 – Mission wonders what the world outside is like. He heads to IT, where a group of young people with computers are waiting for entry. Mission learns from IT Security that a power spike took out a large number of computers, there is some kind of fire down in Mechanical, and violence up in the farms, as well as IT looking to hire new techs. Mission agrees to accompany Jeffery when Jeffery brings Rodny lunch to deliver the letter. Mission discovers a fellow porter, Bradley, applying for an IT position. While waiting for Jeffery, Mission secretly reads the letter, which includes two lines from an old nursery rhyme: "Soon, soon, the mamma bird sings. Take flight, take flight!" Mission is admitted to see Rodny, who is training in repairs. Rodny secretly passes Mission a note with a handshake as Mission leaves.

Chapter 36 – Mr. Wyck, head of IT, requests service as Mission begins to leave IT. Wyck reveals he went to school with Mission's parents years before. He wants Mission to do a secret job for two hundred chits –a package delivered from Joyce in Supply. Mission says he'll think about it. As he leaves, he looks at Rodny's note. It says "Help me."

Chapter 37 – Keene wants desperately to find his wife, figuring she is in Silo 2 along with four thousand other people. He runs a search for "Helen" among the silo's records, and finds three. He then runs a search for "Karma" and finds one result. He looks at the records for Karma, and her photos. He confirms that she is indeed his wife, and that she has remarried a man named Rick Brewer –whose photo reveals him to be Mick Webb. They have grandchildren now. Keene realizes he is a hundred years too late. Anna does her best to comfort him as he cries.

Chapter 38 – Keene goes to Victor's funeral, attended by only four people: Thurman, Anna, Erskine, and himself. Keene realizes he is only alive because of having dated Anna briefly in college. Keene finds it hard to mourn the death of a man who has killed billions. Erskine reveals he and Victor worked together in the "before". Erskine is the one who discovered the nano- threat while working on nano- medical robots to heal wounded soldiers.



Chapter 39 – Erskine confirms that enemy nano-bots in the blood of people were crude but lethal, and would have taken most out. Erskine explains he argued for countermeasures while Victor argued for CAD-FAC. Erskine's own daughter, Caroline, is still in cryosleep. Erskine explains that all the meetings occurring with Thurman in the nano-chamber were not just about prolonging life, but healing the infected. But it was Victor who pointed out that one successive wave of nano-bugs after another could be created, just like computer viruses. Natural disasters bring people together, but terrorist attacks shatter unity. Erskine explains that a terrorist attack consisting of nano-technology that could replicate itself and act without need for a human agent would cause chaos. Five hundred years underground could cleanse the world above. Erskine reveals that Victor was glad knowing good people like Keene were around, and wishes the world was full of people who did the right thing.

Chapter 40 – Anna comforts Keene that night. She urges him to make love, but he says he won't.

Chapter 41 – Mission wants to help Rodny, but does not know how. He remembers how his own mother had been taken away years before after giving birth to him. Drexel has Mission bring medicines for below to Dispatch. In Dispatch, he learns that Cam is headed to Supply having just come from IT. Mission races out to beat Cam to Supply.

Chapter 42 - Mission races to Supply to learn that Cam has already beaten him, and I headed down six flights to an apartment. Mission races after him and discovers a landing on the staircase falling away, sending people tumbling into space. Mission wonders if the entire Silo stands to collapse. People above and below are panicked. A firehose is sent down. A woman screams and points to Mission, saying the porter did it.

Chapter 43 – A mob chases Mission, who flees downward avoiding wreckage. There is much smoke, and it is rising up.

## Analysis

The theme of Dystopianism remains strong in this section of the novel. The reader should note several important pieces of information, which Keene himself finally ties together. Against their will, the Democratic National Convention audience becomes the first generation of silo dwellers. It is being done for the greater good as Thurman and his fellows argue. The nuclear attack that propels the silo scheme into operation is not an act of a foreign or enemy power, but of Thurman himself. The attack is intentionally carried out by Thurman against his own people for the greater good –according to Thurman. Billions of people die to save thousands. This hideous mathematical equation for survival will continue to haunt Keene throughout the novel. Keene finds it impossible to work his way around the killing of so many people for so few.

Ironically, one of the architects of the entire scheme, Victor, becomes disillusioned with things and commits suicide. Victor comes to wonder if humanity was worth saving at all and if the planet might not be better off without them. Thurman is unmoved by Victor's





second thoughts or by his suicide. Victor had hope in people like Keen, Erskine reveals, not in people like Thurman. Some people have to do the dirty work so that others can clean it up and make things right for the future. Even then, a sacrifice must be made on the part of those willing to do the morally questionable things needed so that others may make moral choices in their wake.

Dystopianism remains strong in the fact that Thurman will do whatever is necessary and will pay whatever price is needed to ensure the survival of the human race and the success of the silo system. The reader has already gotten a glimpse of what the operators in Silo 1 are wither willing or required to do, such as when Silo 12 is exterminated. At least eleven other silos have had to be dealt with in the same way. It is up to the reader whether these things –and the silo system at large –are for the greater good or the greater evil.

Dystopianism can also be seen in the story of Mission, one (of many) who lives out an entire life in the silos. Mission works as a porter, carrying packages and deliveries up miles of steps. The lives that Mission and his fellows live are short and always hard. Most of them have a vague idea about life in the silos, but only the Heads of the silos ever know the total and absolute truth. Everyone else is kept in the dark intentionally in the attempt to subvert their human nature. However, human nature is not something that can be overcome. Violence, war, and evil still exist. This can be seen in the explosion that kills Cam and sets off a revolution in Silo 18.

Beyond the terrors that the people in the silos themselves face, Keene himself faces his greatest terror yet. He is unable to find the love of his life in person. He can only find records on her. She has been dead for decades, having married and had a family with Mick Webb. Keene realizes he has been betrayed by Webb, and he is heartbroken. This makes Keene's experience regarding the silo personal. It is one thing for Keene to be sickened by the entire situation, his role in it, and how Thurman, Victor, and others approach the silo system. It is something else entirely to learn that he has been betrayed by his closest friend.

## Discussion Question 1

Do you agree or disagree with the silo system as a means to saving humanity? Why or why not?

## Discussion Question 2

What finally makes the entire silo experience utterly personal to Keene? Why?

## Discussion Question 3

Why does Victor seemingly commit suicide? What does this say about the silo operation?



## Vocabulary

noxious, rendezvous, pseudo-intellectual, regaled, inverted, indoctrination, probabilistic, sinister, absurdity, ruminations, inanely



# Second Shift: Order, Chapter 44 – Third Shift: Pact, Chapter 63

## Summary

Chapter 44 – Keene is still depressed from everything he has learned. A year before, Silo 40 had hacked into the communications systems. It was assumed that the hack was accomplished by a rogue IT Head. Termination was enacted, but there was no way to verify. Thurman, Erskine, and Victor were all awakened according to emergency protocol. Anna was awakened to use a radio to activate the collapse mechanisms in other rebellious silos, causing them to self-destruct. In the present, Keene pours over Victor's comments on the report on Silo 18. The comments include "This is why" and "An end to them all." Keene wonders if these comments are suicidal or point to something else. Keene also wonders if he might end up dead if he follows Victor's trail too closely.

Chapter 45 – Keene takes breaks by walking through the armory. He finds an old hallway with rooms and bathrooms where people appear to have once stayed. He also finds a control room for the drones kept in the armory. This makes him think of Charlotte.

Chapter 46 – Thurman and Dr. Henson agree to allow Keene the chance to see Charlotte, though Charlotte will not be awakened. Keene explains his sister was taking propranolol to deal with her work but stopped using it due to all the side effects, such as not tasting food. Keene himself began taking them after reading the Order for a few years, up until the day of going underground. Thurman comes to believe that Victor was not interested in the report that Keene wrote, but in Keene himself.

Chapter 47 – Thurman explains that they have been considering resetting Silo 18, wiping it clean, and starting over again as Victor suggested. Thurman explains the cafeteria video screens showing the outside world are to remind people inside of the dangers of escape. While reviewing the reports over lunch with Anna and Thurman, Keene realizes why Silo 18 cannot be reached or reset. Someone in 18 remembers, or is immune like Keene. Victor wanted to find that one person who remembered. Keene believes they can still find that person. If they do, they might be able to save the other people still living inside.

Chapter 48 – The smoke gets thicker as Mission heads lower. He believes that the package Cam unknowingly carried was some sort of explosive. Mission heads to Lower Dispatch, which is in chaos. Morgan, Mission's boss, directs him to help the evacuation of records from the offices. A porter named Amanda explains "they" came for the crops they were growing, and burned everything. The porters rally together and determine what to do next. They believe farmers are responsible. Joel says they must strike back or they'll appear weak. Mission thinks something else is going on. He explains that



Rodny is in trouble and Cam is probably dead. Morgan advises caution in moving forward. Mission says he needs to get up top.

Chapter 49 – Mission reaches out to friends he knows he can trust, including Lyn and Joel. He will pay them every bit of money he has – 384 chits –if they will do a tandem for him.

Chapter 50 – Mission pretends to be a corpse that Lyn and Joel must carry up so he can avoid the people who think he is responsible for what is going on. He thinks about his weight needing to be carried, and he feels like a burden. This causes him to cry because he thinks of his mother carrying him for nine months and then dying.

Chapter 51 – Keene searches through the Silo 18 database of ten thousand people with parameters similar to his own, and finds who he is looking for. Thurman and Anna congratulate him. Keene insists on being allowed to listen in on the call that is made to Silo 18. Thurman agrees. Wyck, the Head of 18, is brought online. But, it is Wyck's shadow who says he knows who Thurman is after. The shadow is then initiated to become Wyck's successor, and it is given the truth about the silos and the world above. The shadow is Rodny.

Chapter 52 – Keene and Anna organize the war room beyond the armory in case a future shift might need it. They, along with Thurman and others awakened in the emergency, are preparing to return to sleep. Anna returns first, but Keene isn't thrilled about it. He puts on an old military suit, helmet, gloves, and boots, activates a lift, and begins moving up from the armory.

Chapter 53 – Keene is elevated to a launch bay for drones, which he quickly climbs up. He comes to stand on a concrete platform in the world above. He begins to remove his gloves, feeling grit in the wind, then feels a hand on his shoulder.

Chapter 54 – Thurman looms above Keene with no protective gear on. He tells Keene it is time to go. Keene is grabbed by several security agents, who drag him back into the Silo. There, a needle is plunged into Keene's arm and he loses consciousness as his thoughts are on Victor saying the world would be better if someone like Keene was in charge.

Chapter 55 – Above Supply, Mission is let out of the bag in a restroom for a break and some water. Returning to the bag, he falls asleep. In Central Dispatch, he is let out again. Hundreds of bullet holes are in the walls. The place has been wrecked. Dozens of porters and workers are dead. The power flashes. Mission decides to go on to the level thirties.

Chapter 56 – The power is out by the time Mission continues. An explosion in Mechanical is said to be the cause. More and more people are crowding the stairwell as he nears IT. No one knows what is going on. He makes his way past the farms to Mrs. Crowe's school where Frankie and Allie are arranging desks while Mrs. Crowe is singing. Mission explains Rodny's note for help, but Mrs. Crowe says Rodny is not in



any danger. Mission insists Rodney is afraid. Mrs. Crowe says that she has judged Rodney wrongly.

Chapter 57 – A curfew has been announced. Far below, the sounds of a mob can be heard. Allie confesses to Mission that there has been an attack on the farms, and Riley has been killed. Mission is devastated, believing he should have been there. The sounds of the mob get closer. Mission realizes the mob is actually Security. Rodney is in the lead. He demands Mrs. Crowe tell everyone what she does. Rodney says he has learned the truth about the world. Rodney says it is Mrs. Crowe's fault that they are all angry. She says they should be after what has been done to the world. Rodney counters that Mrs. Crowe's talk of a better world makes them hate their current world. Rodney says the Crow must die and that the slate must be wiped clean. He goes to shoot her, but Mission jumps in the way and takes the bullet in the stomach. Rodney then shoots the Crow. He is attacked by Frankie. Frankie is apprehended.

Chapter 58 – It is years later. Mission has survived his wound. He has married Allie and gone back to farming. Allie announces she is pregnant. If it is a boy, Mission wants to name the baby "Cam," though he can't understand where the name has come from.

Chapter 59 – It is decades later in Silo 1. Keene is once again awakened. The orderlies refer to him as Thurman, saying another Silo has been lost and that they have lost contact with Silo 18. Keene realizes that he has no idea who the orderlies are; furthermore, they have no idea about who he is.

### Third Shift: Pact

Chapter 60 – It is Hour One in Silo 17. Sixteen-year-old Jimmy Parker and his friends and classmates always receive special lessons in civics the day before a Cleaning, in which someone will die. Cleanings are days off from school, while unrest and the Louds are silenced. Mrs. Pearson, the teacher, talks about the importance of the Pact, in which a person must choose a life partner. This earns Jimmy a smile from Sarah Jenkins. After school is up for the day, Jimmy learns they are all in trouble as he hears banging far below.

Chapter 61 – Sounds of chaos rise from below. The staircase shakes. Jimmy and his mother head down while most people are rushing up. Jimmy and his mother are looking for his father. His mother gets carried back in the rush. She shouts at Jimmy to find his father. Jimmy heads into IT.

Chapter 62 – A family friend, Yani, is standing guard at IT. He grabs Jimmy, saying his father won't let anyone in. Jimmy's father then shoots Yani. Jimmy rushes to his father's side. They move through a door into the communications hub. Jimmy's father gives him a key on a black cord –the key to the silo. It is only one of two in existence. They then move through a secret passageway. Jimmy's father explains there has been a breach, that "they" are trying to shut down the silo, and that "they" have opened the airlocks. Jimmy's father brings him to a hidden escape apartment to stay until he can come back with his wife. They will communicate by wireless radio. Jimmy's father tells him not to



open the door for anyone but him or his mother. A new code is enacted for movement through the silo.

Chapter 63 – In Silo 1, Keene comes into a third shift. Keene struggles to focus as he continues to fully awaken. He has been tested by Dr. Wilson. Keene is amazed by all the power he has been afforded as people think he is Thurman. He is taken to the communications room by Eren, Operations Head. Keene realizes something has gone wrong with the shifts. He learns a cleaner has headed toward Silo 17, shut down two shifts ago. The cleaner has not come back. Permission is needed to send someone after her. Keene calls for files on the cleaner and says she won't get far.

## Analysis

Human nature cannot be outdone, especially in conjunction with dystopian settings. This becomes readily apparent to the reader once again in the revolution that breaks out in Silo 18. Mission becomes caught up in violence and warfare while trying to help his friend, Rodney. Mission ends up grievously wounded. While the exact events are unknown, Mission ends up a farmer (something he did not want to do) married to Allie (a girl he did not want to marry) with his memory wiped. It is clear that his rights have been violated for the greater good in accord with the theme of dystopianism. The reader will recall what became of Keene and Helen, and how events beyond Keene's control –and in violation of his rights –led to the loss of Helen.

Human nature continues to confound the workers in Silo 1 as Silo 17 erupts into revolution. No matter what is done to curb or control the violence, violence continues unabated. The struggle to survive as a whole becomes a struggle for individual survival as Jimmy is taken to the silo's emergency safe-room apartments. With the loss of so many silos, and the previous loss of Victor, Keene is once again reawakened on Anna's insistence. She believes there is something going on that only Keene can help her get to the bottom of. Yet it is also her residual feelings for Keene that encourages her to want to wake Keene up. Survival of the project at large leads to the shutting down of Silo 18 while Silo 17's fate remains unknown in this section of the novel.

Interestingly enough, one of the individuals poised for rebellion becomes the enforcer of the order that exists. Rodney, upon learning the full, contextual truth of what is above in the world comes to the conclusion that the silo must be maintained. The theme of Dystopianism again becomes prominent here as someone pegged for a rebel sees the situation as a matter of good and evil. It would be evil to allow people to rebel and escape into the outside world, thereby threatening the silo system. Therefore, Rodney takes it that his current role of suppressing human nature is a necessary evil, thereby being an extension of good.

In the midst of everything he has learned, Keene's indomitable human spirit continues to lead him to rebellion. Reeling from the contextual truth of the silos and the loss of his wife, Keene decides he will risk his life to see what is beyond the hills above the CAD-



FAC complex. He decides to head out into the world above to learn this for himself, but he is stopped before he gets too far.

A number of strange things coincide with this. First, Keene realizes that neither he, nor the people who have come after him, have died or even become ill. Second, Keene realizes that he is somehow essential to the things going on in the silo system. Third, if all that waited for Keene beyond the silo grounds was death, no one would risk their lives to go after him. Keene realizes there is something else going on and something out there that no one wants him to see. When he is awakened a third time, the shift workers confuse him for Thurman. Keene realizes he now has a golden opportunity to do good.

## **Discussion Question 1**

Why has Keene been awakened a third time? What is Keene's reaction to this? Why?

## **Discussion Question 2**

Describe survival as it relates to Mission and Jimmy. How are their situations similar? How are they different? What does this indicate about human nature? Why?

## **Discussion Question 3**

Why does Keene go out into the world above? What happens when he does? What does this lead him to wonder about?

## **Vocabulary**

morosely, commandeering, quelling, brazen, confabulate, cloistered, disheveled, actionable, concoctions, banishment, undulating, chastised



# Third Shift: Pact, Chapter 64 – Third Shift: Pact, Chapter 84

## Summary

Chapter 64 – Keene goes to the central offices, to Psychological Services. Eren explains it has been thirty-some years since 17 was lost. The day it was lost, a shadow tech was on the line with Silo 1. Eren explains that if the cleaner makes it to the location of 17, all she will find is a hole in the ground. Keene directs Eren to contact the silos surrounding 17 to let them know to be on the lookout for the cleaner in case she changes direction. Keene feels as if he has been elected to Congress for the first time all over again, with the weight of responsibility coming down upon him.

Chapter 65 – Keene knows someone has tampered with the shifts and the names. He wonders about telling the truth. Keene longs into Thurman's computer account and reads through old messages. One is a message from Victor, questioning whether their world –or they themselves –were worth saving to begin with. Victor writes that while the world was worth saving, humanity was not. Keene also discovers what appears to be an old message from Anna to her father, asking him to wake her when he got the message. A locket number -20391102 –is included in the message. Eren brings in the files on 17 and the cleaner. He says the Head of 18, Bernard, is blaming himself for what has happened. Bernard is also in need of a new shadow, Eren reveals. He then points out Gable across the hall, a good guy who couldn't cut it so he took the option of his memory being wiped rather than being put into deep-freeze.

Chapter 66 – It is Day One in Silo 17. Jimmy waits for word from his father through the radio. He also watches events in Silo 17 using video monitoring. Looking around the apartment, he finds a book called "The Order". A voice comes in over the radio. Jimmy answers, but it is Deputy Mitch Hines looking for Jimmy's father. Jimmy then hears his father telling Mitch the traffic has to be stopped. His father says there is a breach up top, and Mitch is now acting sheriff until the end. Jimmy's father, Russ, tells Jimmy to remain where he is.

Chapter 67 – Jimmy anxiously awaits the return of his father. Suddenly, men from Security appear on video screen with Russ as a prisoner. They demand Jimmy to give them the new pass code. Russ tells Jimmy not to give it up, and he is shot and killed. The Security men then drag Jimmy's mother into view.

Chapter 68 – Jimmy is beside himself with panic and begins crying. He rushes to the door to enter the pass code, but it doesn't work. The men become angry and kill his mother. Jimmy falls to the floor, horrified.

Chapter 69 – A plastic bag with the word "Shift" is awaiting Keene when he returns to the apartment. It contains some of Thurman's personal effects. Keene knows that





someone has put him into his current position, but who or why is unknown. Keene considers that he has been put into this position to ask questions and get to the truth. Keene also considers that when the shifts end, nothing is going to come out well.

Chapter 70 – It is now Week One in Silo 17. Days have passed since the uprising. Men are periodically trying to break down the door to get to the secret apartment where Jimmy continues to hide. Jimmy goes on the radio and speaks with a man from level 40. Jimmy overhears the man talking to someone else and the words “we were too late” being said. Jimmy continues to try to raise someone. He finally hears someone asking for his dad. The person is saying that the silo is being shut down. He also overhears someone complaining about this happening on their shift.

Chapter 71 - Jimmy explores the apartment. There is enough food for two people for ten years inside. He also discovers a wall of drawings labeled “silos”.

Chapter 72 – The men who keep trying to break into the apartment talk about death and the outside world. On the radio, levels are dividing up to defend themselves or attack others. Jimmy looks the *The Order*. The book is full of horrible things that can possibly happen, how to prevent them, and how to stop disasters. He begins going through the books in the apartment’s small library. He begins to look up things in the encyclopedia, such as locomotives and locusts.

Chapter 73 – Keene confers on replacing the Head of Silo 18 with a recommended man named Kyle. He also learns attempts to regain control of Silo 18 are underway, but a barricade of sorts has stopped the progress temporarily.

Chapter 74 – Keene wonders about the outside world. He knows that cleaners have supposedly been killed in the outside world, but knows that he himself has not died or fallen ill. Keene goes through the file on Silo 17. There is no mention of anything out of the ordinary before the collapse, but everyone blamed everyone else for it. A mass exodus for the exit to the silo had been followed by a blackout in communications to 17. A boy had gotten onto the radio, inquiring about level 40. Keene then realizes it was not level 40, but Silo 40 that the boy had contacted. Keene wonders if Silo 40 is still alive and functioning, and that it has established contact with other Silos such as 17. There is a possibility that 17 is not lost.

Chapter 75 – Keene reveals his theory to Eren. He also decides that he is going to wake up his sister.

Chapter 76 – It is now year two in Silo 17. Jimmy continues to live in the apartment and to watch power shift in the silo as groups of people struggle to gain control or protect themselves.

Chapter 77 – Jimmy teaches himself how to use and load the guns in the apartment. He knows it is only a matter of time until the people figure out the right code to the door and break in.





Chapter 78 – At long last, the right code to the door is entered. Jimmy shoots two of the three men who appear, while the third runs off.

Chapter 79 – Keene meets with Dr. Wilson to oversee the awakening of a tech for his shift. Keene learns the process by heart for awakening someone. Wilson explains that when someone is awakened, their personal possessions are retrieved from their storage locker. Keene then realizes that Anna's message had a typo in it. The "loquet" was actually referring to a "locker".

Chapter 80 – Keene goes to the lockers in the storage levels of the silo. He opens his locker and finds a bag with the word "Legacy" on it. Inside are Keene's old clothes, wedding ring, and cell phone. As he thinks about the past, he comes to hate Mick Webb for stealing his wife and living the life that Keene never got to live. He is also enraged with Anna, who got him involved in the first place.

Chapter 81 – Keene finds the two other lockers he needs. He then goes and wakes up Anna. He asks her why he brought him into everything. She says she and Keene were never meant to be awakened. She tells him they need to get out, that it isn't safe. Keene gives her what she believes to be the mixture needed to help stabilize a person waking up. In reality, it is poison. Anna dies within seconds.

Chapter 82 – It is year seven in Silo 17. With his food supply going bad and water running short, Jimmy realizes it is time to venture out of the apartment.

Chapter 83 – Jimmy leaves the apartment. At first, he is terrified about leaving. He checks his pass code to make sure that it still works. He comes across the skeleton of one of the men he had killed years before. He moves on.

Chapter 84 – Jimmy carefully ascends the levels. He comes across a general store where the skeletons of the dead remain. Jimmy remembers the past sadly as he continues on.

## Analysis

As the novel continues, the theme of Dystopianism expands. The silo system, meant to be the salvation for the people of Silo 17, becomes a death trap. It is unclear whether Silo 1 makes a move to exterminate all the people in 17, or if the constant violence and fighting over scarce resources leads to an all-out population collapse. Regardless, Jimmy, who has holed up in the safe-room apartments for years, must not only fight to defend himself and survive, but he must eventually venture beyond his safe zone. Indeed, Jimmy's acts of killing can be viewed as morally-understandable acts of self-defense. They are a necessary evil, even though Jimmy doesn't like to think about taking other people's lives.

Other people's lives continue to hang in the balance as Keene tries to get to the bottom of why he was reawakened and why he has been identified as Thurman. Keene realizes that he now has the power to do good things and to make things right. This includes



getting to the bottom of a few remaining mysteries with the silo system, such as the end game. Keene's human nature –the desire to find truth, to rebel against imposed situations –shines through in his efforts to get to the bottom of things. Good and evil play a huge part in his determination, as he endeavors to do good rather than evil.

Keene goes to find Anna. Rather than reawakening her and asking for her help, Keene kills her. Anna's warnings that they are not safe go relatively unnoticed by Keene, but the reader should bear that warning in mind going forward. Keene will clearly be confronting a situation of survival, much like Jimmy now faces. Jimmy's tainted food supply means that his leaving the safe-rooms is now a matter of survival. In many ways, Jimmy's emergence from the apartment into the silo reflects the anticipated goal of releasing people from the silos into the world. The exact details of this process are unknown, but the reader senses that Jimmy's experience will probably mirror the experiences of the people leaving the silos.

Evidence is also mounting that the silo structure is breaking down beyond previous assumptions. While most silos remain operational and under the control of Silo 1, Silo 40, previously believed lost, has been contacted by Jimmy. Survival is in human nature. Silo 40 and its residents have seemingly struggled to survive. Keene wonders whether the control being exerted over the silos is more good or evil. If Silo 40 can survive on its own, can other silos do the same? If Silo 40 has contacted other silos, what does that mean for the population in the silos in the long run?

## Discussion Question 1

What appears to have happened to the people in Silo 17? How does Keene come to view the events that transpire in Silo 17, especially as they relate to the entire silo scheme? Why?

## Discussion Question 2

How does Jimmy manage to survive so many years in Silo 17? What must he ultimately do to continue to survive? Why?

## Discussion Question 3

Do you believe Keene's killing of Anna is justified? Why or why not?

## Vocabulary

vigorous, quandaries, cacophony, inscrutable, nefarious, quietude, mitigate, inevitable, exodus, sacrosanct, caustic, dissipated



# Third Shift: Pact, Chapter 85 – Epilogue

## Summary

Chapter 85 – There is an eerie silence as Jimmy continues on his journey outside of the safe room. He writes words on a chalkboard in his old classroom which say that ghosts are watching. He writes that he is Jimmy, just because he wants to leave his mark and be remembered. Jimmy realizes how utterly alone he is. He renames himself “Solo.”

Chapter 86 – Keene is not happy about taking Anna’s life. A folder is delivered to Keene by Dr. Wilson in which a single, old sheet of paper is found. It is titled, “RE: THE PACT.” It contains information agreed to by all parties involved that come to the end of the project. Only one silo will be released back into the world. Silo 1 is not meant to be released. The women and children in Silo 1 are being kept asleep. This is not to keep order, but to keep everyone working until the end of the shifts when they will all be killed.

Chapter 87 – It is now year 12 in Silo 17. Jimmy “Solo” Parker explores and scavenges the silo level by level each year, coming at last to Supply. The place has been ransacked. He thinks someone else is living in supply, and he runs out.

Chapter 88 – Solo tries to figure out whether his mind is playing tricks on him, or if someone else is truly still alive. He then hears someone crying.

Chapter 89 – The crying sounds like that of a baby. Solo cautiously seeks out the source of the crying. He ends up on the apartment level, in a community kitchen. He sees a cat.

Chapter 90 – Solo tries to figure out if the cat is wild or someone’s pet. He feeds the cat and takes it along with him. He is no longer Solo but Jimmy again.

Chapter 91 – Keene continues pouring through old records. Among the hopeful silos for release, Silo 6 is listed at the top. Silos 12, 17, and 40 are unknowns. Silo 18 is near the bottom of the list. As he reads, he realizes Anna must have previously stumbled onto something. He is coughing much lately, evidence of illness. He is summoned by Eren about the shadow in Silo 18.

Chapter 92 –Keene learns from Eren that he was previously not in a psychologist’s role, but in a communications role. It makes Keene realize that Silo 1 will fall apart in the future.

Chapter 93 - The communications hall establishes contact with the shadow in Silo 18. His name is Lukas Kyle. Keene runs through procedural questions to check whether or not Lukas Kyle will be a good Silo Head. Kyle asks how everything all began, because he thinks context would give him a better sense of purpose.



Chapter 94 – It is now year sixteen in Silo 17. The cat has become Jimmy's pet companion and has been named Shadow. While exploring, Jimmy comes across a massive door that has been tied shut. Dozens of dead bodies are inside.

Chapter 95 – One night while asleep, Jimmy is attacked by a man with a long, white beard. Jimmy shoots and kills the man. He realizes the power has gone out and that the man's appearance was not an accident. Jimmy investigates carefully around his apartment, then out into the hall where he finds another person. He shoots and kills the person, discovering it to be a woman with a large belly.

Chapter 96 – With the power and door undone, Jimmy is restless, knowing his safety is compromised. Jimmy goes fishing in an indoor water cistern where someone had released fish years before. He catches and prepares the fish as highlighted in the old books in the apartment. He realizes the fish will not last forever.

Chapter 97 – Keene secretly goes down to cryosleep to awaken his sister, Charlotte. When she asks where she is, Keene explains she is with him.

Chapter 98 – Keene brings Charlotte to the war room beyond the armory, telling her to stay there until he comes back. Keene reports progress in 18 to Eren, saying that it is believed the fighting will be over in a day or two.

Chapter 99 – Keene returns to Charlotte with food. The two discuss their situation and how some people leave the Silos and go over the hill, never to return again. Keene wants to know what is over the hill. He has Charlotte pilot an old drone to find out. The drone is old and gives out easily, but not before blue skies and green grass can be seen.

Chapter 100 – It is year twenty in Silo 17. Jimmy watches how things deteriorate and break down, from the silo to human bodies. Jimmy realizes the bodies previously found were between the inner and outer doors between the Silo and the world outside. To pass the time, Jimmy creates little parachutes weighted down by washers, and sends them down the center of the silo.

Chapter 101 – As the years go on, Jimmy collects all the things he needs, such as a machete. This helps him to hack through the greenery in the farmlands. His crops are coming in well.

Chapter 102 – Keene goes to the cryosleep vault where he awakens Thurman, who is sleeping in Keene's old cryobed. Thurman asks what year it is. Keene says it is two hundred years before Thurman kills them all. Thurman says it is the only way, to let one silo go free and destroy all the others. This must be done to kill all deadly knowledge from the world before, such as nano-technology and nuclear weapons. Humanity will be able to reset itself, Thurman explains. Thurman reaches for the pistol that Keene holds. Keene shoots and kills Thurman.

Chapter 103 – It is year thirty-four in Silo 17. The rising water level in the Silo forces Jimmy to continue to move up higher into the silo. Heading home for the day, Jimmy is



stunned when he sees his door opened. Inside, an injured woman tackles him, holds a knife to his throat, tells him she doesn't want to hurt him, asks his name, and says she is happy to see him.

Epilogue – In the communications room, a woman named Juliette calls Keene. She says she has found out much of the truth in a roomful of books. She says she is going to get to the heart of what Keene and his people have done. Keene cautions her to be careful digging for the truth. Juliette says they'll be careful because she would hate for Keene to hear them coming.

## Analysis

As the novel comes to a close, important revelations are made. The reader will recall Anna's warning that she and Keene are not safe. As Keene discovers, the silo operation's end game is one more of death than life. Only one silo will be released back into the world, while all the other silos—including Silo 1—will be exterminated. This will be done to ensure the silo population with the best chance of survival will be released into the world alone, eliminating any other potential threats or populations considered below standards. The elimination of Silo 1 also has tremendous implications for the future global population, as well as Keene.

The greatest irony of Thurman's dystopian society is that the governing agent of that society is itself to be destroyed. This is to be done so that the new population of people will not have access to the evil knowledge of the former world. The evil knowledge includes nuclear weapons and nano-terrorism. This also makes it possible for the surviving population to exist without being preyed upon by agents of the previous world. Keene is horrified by this. He confronts Thurman about the truth of the end game and then kills Thurman. Meanwhile, Jimmy struggles to survive in Silo 17. Apart from running into a stray person every so many years, Jimmy ends up alone. To survive, he scavenges from every level of the silo while sowing crops and fishing in the water cistern. But, even Jimmy's outlook appears bleak as the supply of fish is dwindling.

The reader will also recall Jimmy's poem about ghosts. Ghosts come back to haunt Keene in the form of Juliette, who went missing from one of the silos. Juliette has found her way into Silo 17 and has met Jimmy. Juliette tells Keene that she doesn't want him to hear them coming. Keene, while he may not be directly responsible for the creation of the silo system, is now responsible for it. Survival for the system, as well as for Keene, is now up in the air. But the reader should also note the brief yet fruitful drone flight Keene and Charlotte undertake. Blue skies and green growth potentially mean the world is safe for inhabiting. Perhaps, the silo project will end early and everyone will be set free. However, what happens next will be revealed in Howey's next book, "Dust."

## Discussion Question 1

What are the results of the drone flight? What information is gleaned from the flight? How might this information affect Keene and the silo system? Explain.



## Discussion Question 2

Do you believe Keene's killing of Thurman is justified? Why or why not?

## Discussion Question 3

Why does Keene caution Juliette against digging too far into the truth? Do you believe this is hypocrisy on Keene's part? Why or why not?

## Vocabulary

bestir, redundancy, fortuitous, corral, acutely, stanchions, dilapidation, sadistic



# Characters

## Keene

Donald Keene is a Democratic U.S. Congressman from Georgia. He is the husband of Helena, former college boyfriend of Anna, and good friends with Mick Webb. An architect by training, Keene first went into politics determined to help people and change things for the better. He becomes a trusted confidante of Senator Thurman, who brings Keene on to work on the CAD-FAC project at Anna's request due to Keene's architectural talents. Keene only belatedly realizes the truth about the project and the salvaging of humanity.

Keene is awakened decades later to assist in Shifts, where he is first given the name Troy. Keene is disgusted with the truth of the entire operation, believing the killing of billions for thousands was not worth it. He is devastated when he later learns that Helena remarried Mick, had a family, and has been dead for years. Keene ultimately goes on to kill Anna and Thurman, becoming the head of the operation. As the novel ends, he has accumulated tremendous power, but he is becoming increasingly ill.

## Helena Keene

Helena Keene is the wife of Donald Keene. She is a tremendously supportive, loyal, and gentle woman who deeply loves her husband. She is detested by Anna for ultimately ending up with Keene. On the day of the attack at the Democratic National Convention, Helena is sent to the wrong location to find her husband. While the details are vague, it is known that she ended up remarrying Mick Webb, having children and grandchildren, and later dying.

## Thurman

Senator Thurman is the Democratic senator from Georgia. He is the father of Anna and a former combat veteran. He is an enormously powerful and influential man who successfully argues for the CAD-FAC program. In reality, Thurman and a secret cohort, including Victor DiMarco, believe humanity is doomed due to nano-terrorism. Thurman and his cohort decide to kill off the world's population, saving a few thousand in the CAD-FAC, which becomes the Silo system. Thurman further plans to exterminate all silos except for one, which will be released into the world five hundred years later. Thurman is eventually killed by Keene.

## Anna

Anna Thurman is the daughter of Senator Thurman. She is the former college girlfriend of Donald Keene. Anna has never gotten over Keene; so, she urges her father to bring





him onto the CAD-FAC project as an architect, to which her father agrees. She conspires to keep Keene away from his wife as much as possible. She later attempts to seduce him. Despite Anna's role in the entire silo operation, she is appalled when she learns the truth that her father intends to exterminate all silos but one. She leaves clues for Keene so Keene can figure this out. Keene learns the truth and kills Anna.

## **Mick Webb**

Mick Webb is a good friend of Donald Keene from college and a Democratic Congressman from Georgia. He never truly seems to grow up. He shows no desire to settle down, partying hard even while an elected representative. He gently makes fun of Keene's settled life, but seemingly envies it. Though the details are unclear, Mick Webb ends up marrying Helena and having a family with her after the nuclear attack.

## **Victor**

Vincent "Victor" Wayne DiMarco is a psychologist and one of the founding members of the silo project. Knowing humanity was doomed and aware of its flaws and shortcomings, Victor helped to plot the Silo operation. Victor is also the primary author of "The Order," which is a treatise on human nature as much as a regulatory book on how to deal with situations in the silos. Victor ultimately becomes disillusioned with the project, believing that humanity was not worth saving at all. He commits suicide.

## **Mission**

Mission Jones is a seventeen year-old resident of Silo 18 where he works as a porter, carrying packages and deliveries up and down the miles of steps throughout the facility. Mission does not want to become a farmer like his father. He does everything he can to avoid having to return to the farm levels. Mission ends up caught up in the great revolution that sweeps through Silo 18. He is severely wounded trying to help his friend, but he survives. He is deemed worthy of being saved by Silo 1. As a result, he has his memory wiped clean. He goes on to marry and have a family. He becomes a farmer.

## **Jimmy**

James "Jimmy" "Solo" Parker is the son of Russ Parker, Head of Silo 17. Jimmy is sixteen when a violent revolution sweeps through Silo 17. His father brings Jimmy to safe-room apartment where he orders Jimmy not to open the door for anyone except family. Jimmy must watch on the monitors as his father is killed by a group of revolutionaries who demand access to the safe-apartment. Jimmy remains isolated in the safe-apartment for years, fighting off intruders with firearms. As the population in Silo 17 collapses, Jimmy becomes the sole surviving occupant of Silo 17, where he renames himself "Solo." He is apprehended at the end of the novel by a woman named Juliette from the outside.





## **Russ Parker**

Russ Parker is the father of Jimmy Parker. He is also the Head of Silo 17. Russ does his best to prevent the revolution in Silo 17, but he is unable to quell the tide. He brings his son to the silo's safe-apartment, where he orders Jimmy to remain. Russ is later killed when he refuses to help revolutionary thugs break into the safe-room where his son is hiding.

## **Charlotte**

Charlotte Keene is the sister of Donald Keene. A drone pilot, Charlotte suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder. She is brought onto the CAD-FAC project by Thurman due to her experience as a drone pilot. She is awakened at the end of the novel by her brother to serve as his ally and to fly a drone to see the world beyond the silos.

## **Mrs. Crowe**

Mrs. Crowe is the teacher in charge of education in Silo 18. She is the person who gives a letter to Mission to pass on to Rodney. Rodney is in training to work on repairs. When Mission delivers the letter, Rodney secretly passes a note to Mission asking for help in Silo 18. where an uprising is on the horizon.

## **Rodny**

Rodny resides in Silo 18. He is training to be a repair technician. When Mission delivers a letter from Mrs. Crowe to Rodney, a secret note is slipped into Mission's hand by Rodney. The note asks for help in Silo 18.

## **Jenine**

Jenine is a girl who works in Sanitation. Mission likes Jenine and would like to be with her.

## **Eren**

Eren works in Psychological Services.



# Symbols and Symbolism

## CAD-FAC plans

Architectural plans for the emergency shelter for the Containment and Disposal Facility (CAD-FAC) are originally developed by Keene as a college project in architecture. The plans are kept by Anna, given to Senator Thurman, and become the basic blueprint for the Silo operation. The plans are refined over time by Keene, Anna, Webb, and others. They are implemented over the course of several years and are kept as schematic maps by the shifts over the next few hundred years.

## Propranolol

Propranolol is a simple pill given to sufferers of extreme trauma which wipes out the memory of any such traumatic event. The pills have numerous side effects, including depression, but also many of which are unknown –especially when taken with other medications. Keene’s sister takes the medication, which in turn is later taken by Keene. The medicine causes him great depression during the shifts, as it also interacts in unknown ways with the medicine given to shift members to help control their emotions and keep their bodies healthy.

## The Order

The Book of the Order is essentially an operations manual for the silo system while serving as a guide to human nature. The Order is written by Victor, and contains contextual information about the old world, as well as how to handle the silo system. The book details horrible things that can go wrong, how to prevent such things, and how to stop disasters in progress. Keene is made to memorize the book by Thurman early on, and Juliette and Jimmy later come to read a copy of the book in the safe-apartment in Silo 17.

## Note from Mrs. Crowe

A note from Mrs. Crowe is given to Mission to take to Rodny regarding a revolution being planned in Silo 18. The note contains a fragment of a poem in which a crow flies up, alluding to the revolution taking the Silo and heading up and out into the outside world. Mission has no idea what the note means. When he delivers the note to Rodny, Rodny passes back a note for help.



## Nano-bots

Nano-bots are cell-sized robots designed to heal and repair human bodies. The technology is hijacked and weaponized by Iran and various other terrorist groups and nations. Instead of healing bodies, nano-terrorist bots are designed to tear them apart. Knowing it is only a matter of time until such things happen, Victor, Thurman, and others devise and implement the silo plan to shepherd humanity through five-hundred years.

## Note from Rodney

A note from Rodney seeking help is passed to Mission. Mission becomes aware of the fact that Rodney is in trouble through this note, leading Mission to seek out a way to help. This leads to Mission being swept up in the revolution as it occurs and leads to his being wounded. It also leads to him having his memory wiped clean and put to work in the farms.

## Silo Master Key

A silo master key is given to Jimmy by his father, Russ. There are only two such keys in existence for Silo 17. The keys grant access to any part of the silo in conjunction with the correct key code. Jimmy retains the key and code throughout his ordeal in Silo 17, using it to move freely about the facility.

## Radios

Radios are backup communications devices for the main communication systems within and between silos. When communications networks go down, radios are relied upon to transmit important information. In Silo 17, Jimmy uses a radio to contact his father. He also ends up being contacted by someone in Silo 40 as the revolution unfolds in Silo 17. Radios are later used by Juliette to contact Keene in Silo 1.

## Cryobeds

Cryobeds are cryogenic freezing chambers designed to put people into a deep sleep for decades. While sleeping in cryobeds, people do not age at all. The cryobeds allow for the occupants of Silo 1 to leapfrog through time, awakening decades later to serve a six-month operating shift. All cryobeds are kept in isolated chambers away from the rest of the silo.

## Drones

Drones are part of the aerial technology derived from the old world. Drones are used for aerial photography, surveillance, and military missions. Several drones are kept in the



armory warehouse in Silo 1. Keene awakens his sister Charlotte to pilot a drone out of Silo 1 to explore the terrain beyond CAD-FAC's property. Once they are out of Silo 1, they discover blue skies and green growth on the ground.

## **Blue Skies and Green Growth**

Blue skies and green growth are seen by the drone that Charlotte pilots away from Silo 1 at the request of Keene. The blue skies and green growth indicate that the world around CAD-FAC is alive and healthy and that the world overall does not appear to have been destroyed. The consequences are immense, as Keene realizes that it is possible the people in the silos might be allowed to go out into the world.



# Settings

## Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C. is the capital city of the United States of America. It is where congressmen and senators from each of the fifty American states go to discuss and make policies and laws. Keene and Webb are elected to congressional office before the novel begins. They are in Washington, D.C., as events get underway. Keene does much of his architectural work on CAD-FAC while in Washington, D.C. There, he meets with Thurman a number of times to discuss events unfolding surrounding CAD-FAC, such as the importance of the Order. Washington, D.C. is presumably destroyed during the nuclear blasts that signal the operational start to the silo program.

## Silo 1

Silo 1 is the central and lead silo to all other silos in the CAD-FAC project. It is where all those associated with the silo project reside. Those who live in Silo 1 know much about the situation. Some know all about it. They are in cryogenic sleep for decades at a time and are awakened to serve six month shifts overseeing the other silos. Silo 1 is the safest and most well-provisioned silo, as it must serve as the hub for all silo-related activities. Silo 1 is the home and workplace of Keene, Thurman, Victor, and Anna. It features everything from apartments to a cafeteria, as well as an old armory and war room full of drones and other old weapons of war.

## Fulton County

Fulton County is a county in Georgia in which the state's capital city of Atlanta is located. Part of Fulton County remains rural. It is selected as the location for CAD-FAC and the Democratic National Convention. Fulton County is visited by Keene, Thurman, and Anna several times throughout the novel as progress on CAD-FAC is overseen. Fulton County becomes ground-zero for the nuclear holocaust that Thurman initiates in order to get CAD-FAC into motion. The first glimpse that anyone has of the land beyond the CAD-FAC facility grounds comes hundreds of years later by drone. Blue skies and green growth are discovered in Fulton County.

## Silo 17

Silo 17 is one of dozens of silos in the CAD-FAC complex underground. Extending miles beneath the earth's surface, Silo 17 is composed of one central stairwell and hundreds of levels devoted to specialty activities that range from farming to IT. The upper levels of Silo 17 are designated for control of the lower levels. Silo 17 is the home of Jimmy Parker, and it is headed up by his father, Russ Parker. Silo 17's population is involved in an internal revolution. During the revolution, Jimmy hides out in the safe-room



apartments of Silo 17 at the order of his father. After the revolution, the population collapses and almost everyone is killed. Eventually, only Jimmy remains alive. Years later, Silo 17 is entered by a woman named Juliette, who comes from another silo.

## **Silo 18**

Silo 18 is one of dozens of silos in the CAD-FAC complex underground. Extending miles beneath the earth's surface, Silo 17 is composed of one central stairwell and hundreds of levels devoted to specialty activities that range from farming to IT. The upper levels of Silo 18 are designated for control of the lower levels. Silo 18 is home to Mission Jones and his family. Silo 18's population is involved in an internal revolution, resulting in an armed team supported by Silo 1 cracking down and restoring order. Thousands are killed, and the memories of those who survive are wiped clean. Among those whose memories are wiped is Mission, who goes on to be a farmer and raise a family.

# Themes and Motifs

## Dystopianism

Dystopianism is an important theme in the novel “Shift” by Hugh Howey. Dystopianism involves a government, organization, association, or company which exercises tremendous or total power and influence in the lives of everyday people. The actions often deny individuals their human and legal rights in the name of the greater good. Those in power will do whatever it takes to retain power and will do whatever is necessary to secure their own ends. On the surface, those with power have the stated goal of helping the people. In reality, they are more likely to harm people than help them.

Dystopianism arises in “Shift” by virtue of the CAD-FAC complex, in which dozens of silos have been constructed miles into the ground beneath Georgia to act as arks of the human species across five hundred years. This has been done to allow the damage wrought by nuclear detonations to pass and to allow any survivors above ground to die. At the end of five hundred years, one silo and one silo alone will be chosen to be released back into the world to repopulate it. The other silos will all be exterminated, including Silo 1.

The entire silo project was conceived of by Thurman, Victor, and a cadre of others who detected the presence of nano-terrorism in the bloodstream of human beings across the planet. As Thurman later explains to Keene, it is only a matter of time until these nano-terrorist, cell-size bots were activated. To save humanity, Thurman preempts the attack by staging his own nuclear holocaust against the world. Billions are killed to save thousands in the silos below ground. Generations of people live and die as the decades pass. Keene finds the truth of it all to be horrifying. He devotes himself to saving as many lives as he can.

However, life in the silos itself is not a comfortable thing. Life expectancy is not long, and the lives and jobs that people have are often very difficult and very grueling. For example, Mission is a porter who carries packages up and down the steps all day. This leads to serious injuries and ill-health early in life. Violence is common. The residents of the silos also live largely in ignorance of the total context of their situation. They may die at any given moment as Silo 1 orchestrates control over the other silos. For example, a rebellion or disaffected population will result in memory-wiping at the least and extermination as most. Thurman insists this is all done for the greater good, but Keene knows otherwise. He believes the silos should all be released given safe circumstances and that everything possible must be done to save as many people as possible.



## Survival

Survival is an important theme in the novel “Shift” by Hugh Howey. Survival in the novel consists of the survival of the human race at large and individual survival within the silos themselves. Survival becomes essential not only to the plot of the novel, but to the theme of Dystopianism as well.

Years before the novel begins, the rise of nano-technology allows for the evolution of cellular-sized robots that repair, rejuvenate, and heal the human body. Considered a breakthrough in medicine, terrorists and hostile regimes commandeered the technology so that it could be used as a weapon. Instead of survival and prolonged human life, the nano-terrorist bots would literally shred apart human beings. They lay dormant in almost every single man, woman, and child across the face of the Earth, leading to the likelihood that the human race will go extinct.

Thurman, Victor, and a core group of people believe the human race must survive. To do this, they undergo nano-therapy, wherein the malicious nano-bots within their bodies are battled, eliminated, and immunized against returning. To save the human race, several thousand people from the Democratic National Convention are taken into CAD-FAC where they will live out their lives. In order to wipe the slate clean of all evil knowledge in the world, such as nano-terrorism, generations of human beings live and die in confinement in the silos where their lifespans and quality of life deteriorate sharply. Out of all of the silos, only one will be released back into the world as survivors. All other silos, including Silo 1, will be exterminated. Thurman insists it is all for the greater good, but Keene does not see it that way.

Individual survival also comes to play in Silo 17 and Silo 18. In Silo 18, Mission gets caught up in a raging revolution that is brutally put down by Silo 1 and loyal forces in Silo 18. Everyone is either killed or has their memories wiped clean in order for the silo to survive. Mission himself survives only because he is not actively engaged in the revolution. His memory is wiped clean. In Silo 17, a revolution rises up that engulfs almost the entire facility.

Jimmy survives initially on the virtue of being the son of the Head of the Silo, who himself is killed in the uprising. As time passes, while it is unclear how it happens, nearly the entire population of Silo 17 expires. When Jimmy emerges from the safe-apartments where he has survived for years alone using guns to defend himself, he is one of only a few people left. Within a few years, he kills the other people because they are trying to kill him. He survives by sowing crops in the farm level and scavenging what he needs from around the facility. As the novel ends, a woman from the outside joins Jimmy, overpowering him to get into the safe-room apartments. Nevertheless, Jimmy survives.

## Human Nature

Human Nature is an important theme in the novel “Shift” by Hugh Howey. Human nature has long been questioned and studied by philosophers, scientists, theologians, social





scientists, and great thinkers in order to make the world a better place. Human nature is questioned and meticulously studied and detailed by Victor and the other psychologists in the core group of planners for the silo scheme.

Thurman, Victor, and others consider human beings to be generally good and worthy of survival. The silo scheme –essentially imprisoning thousands and detonating nuclear weapons to wipe out the rest of the planet’s human population –is engineered in order to restart humanity without its corroded aspects and evil tendencies. Of the dozens of silos in the complex, only one will ever be released to the world to repopulate it. All others, including Silo 1 which has the only living survivors of the previous world, are to be exterminated.

In order to help guide and control the silo process, Victor has written a guide called “The Order” which provides contextual information to CAD-FAC. The guide notes, describes, and provides remedies for human-related actions, issues, events, and situations including disasters. It also explains what is to be done to prevent and handle such emergencies (such as violence and rebellions). Victor accounts for all problems, except those within Silo 1.

Victor does not adequately account for human resourcefulness or moral integrity as a part of human nature. Juliette, who has escaped her silo, is believed to be dead –but she makes it to Silo 17. The revolution in Silo 17 is either put down, or the people die out from constantly fighting with one another or from scarce resources. However, Jimmy manages to survive almost two decades practically alone. Meanwhile, while most of the people in Silo 1 are assured of the nature of their mission, not everyone believes what they are being told. Among them is Keene, who kills Anna and Thurman for their role in the mission. Keene aspires to save as many human lives as he can rather than killing anyone deemed unfit to release back into the world.

## Technology

Technology is an important theme in the novel “Shift” by Hugh Howey. Technology proves crucial to the decision to create CAD-FAC, which plays host to the silo scheme and to the silo scheme itself. Technology also becomes incredibly important to Keene and Charlotte as they attempt to see what is beyond the CAD-FAC property.

Thurman, Victor, and others originally decide to create the silo scheme under the cover of CAD-FAC because technology has progressed to such a point that the future of the human species is assured destruction. Nano-technology, which includes cell-sized medical robots designed to heal and restore life to people, has been hijacked by evil regimes and terrorists. Instead of using the medical robot technology to save lives, the evil sectors use the bots to literally shred apart human beings. Almost everyone on the planet is infected by these nano-bots. It is only a matter of time before the technology is activated or before some other form of mass destruction –such as nuclear weapons –is utilized to wipe out humanity. Thurman, Victor, and their group preempt such a disaster by intentionally staging their own to speed up the process.



The leaders in Silo 1 believe that five-hundred years will be sufficient time for all knowledge of the prior world's malicious technology to be forgotten and for the earth to be wiped clean. Traditional kinds of technology, such as steam-powered locomotives and electricity, are considered acceptable for future generations. When Jimmy reads through some of the books that have been kept in the safe-room apartments, he learns about things like trains. Other forms of technology, such as computers and laptops, are considered safe technology as well because they are widely used among the people living in the silos.

Technology of various forms can also be found elsewhere in the novel. Video and telecommunications –using computers and radios –remain in common use within and between silos. Cryogenics allow the members of Silo 1 to leapfrog through time, serving six month shifts awake for every several decades that they spend asleep. In the armory of Silo 1, technology of the previous age –ranging from firearms to drones –can be found. Keene uses some of the forbidden technology of the old age – a drone piloted by Charlotte –to investigate the outside world to see what it is like.

## Good and Evil

The intertwining of Good and Evil is an important theme in the novel “Shift” by Hugh Howey. Good and Evil –what is morally right and morally wrong –is explored in the novel by virtue of the events which lead to the silo scheme, the perpetuation of that scheme, and the actions of individuals attempting to deal with the scheme.

The original aspects of nano-technology are judged to be good. Cell-sized robots meant to heal and restore human bodies, prolonging human life, are considered a very good thing. Saving human lives is a very good thing. However, the evil regimes and terrorists who use nano-technology as a means to kill people are unquestionably evil. They have hijacked a sound and good technology for evil ends. It is because of this that silo scheme is instituted.

On its face, the silo scheme is a good thing with the intent of saving humanity. However, the nature of the process to do so is unquestionably evil. A staged nuclear assault propels the silo scheme into operation, saving thousands but killing billions in the process. Keene, no matter how hard he tries, cannot justify saving thousands while killing billions. Thurman argues it was a necessary evil and that it was the only way to save humanity, but Keene is not convinced. Later on, Keene kills Anna and Thurman. While the killing of Thurman may be morally justifiable, the killing of Anna is morally questionable since she had far less to do with the scheme than Thurman or Victor.

Keene himself struggles to be morally good. As the novel comes to a close, Keene's focus is on saving as many people within the silos as humanly possible. His intentions are good and just. Meanwhile, Mission's efforts help in the midst of a revolution can be seen as good. Restoring order will save lives. However, on the other hand, killing numerous people and wiping clean the memories of others violates their rights. Jimmy,

meanwhile, must kill in order to survive. While Jimmy does not consider killing to be a good thing, he knows it is a necessary evil needed in order for him to survive.

# Styles

## Point of View

Hugh Howey tells his novel “Shift” in the third-person limited-omniscient narrative mode from the point of view of an unknown and unnamed narrator. This is done for at least two reasons. First, the third-person aspect of the narrative allows Howey to tell a story that involves numerous characters and takes place across hundreds of years. The third-person narrator acts as a common, unifying thread between all of the stories, guiding the reader between the general plot and several subplots. This is important as in each section of the novel as two plots are intertwined with one another in an alternating fashion. Second, the limited-omniscient aspect adds a sense of suspense and drama to the novel, as the reader only knows about events as they unfold and are informed by the characters themselves.

## Language and Meaning

Hugh Howey tells his novel “Shift” in language that is simple and straightforward. This is done for at least two reasons. First, the simple and straightforward language allows for a brevity that helps to drive the plot along by giving it a feeling of quickness and drama. This ties directly into the novel’s disaster and dystopian nature. Secondly, most of the characters in the novel are young. Keene is not long out of graduate school, and Mission and Jimmy are teenagers. The simple and straightforward language is reflective of the age range and general level of education of these characters. This adds a sense of realism and believability to the characters and to the novel itself.

## Structure

Hugh Howey’s “Shift” is a collection of three novels, “Shift: Legacy,” “Shift: Pact,” and “Shift: Order.” Each novel is divided into chapters. There are 105 numbered, linear, chronological chapters, including a prologue and an epilogue spanning the years between 2049 and the 2300s. Each novel deals with a specific set of circumstances. “Shift: Legacy” is about the formation of the silo system, the beginning of the nuclear holocaust that leads to the implementation of the silo scheme, and Keene’s first shift decades later. “Shift: Pact” involves Keene’s second shift and Mission’s experiences in Silo 18. “Shift: Legacy” involves Keene coming into control of Silo 1 and Jimmy’s survival in Silo 17. The chapters in each of the novel alternate back and forth between two different times and two different plots. Some plots are decades apart, while others occur simultaneously. For example, the plots in “Shift: Legacy” occur in 2049 and 2110, respectively. The end events in “Shift: Pact” occur simultaneously, and ultimately join.

## Quotes

A handful of Keene's fellow freshmen filled the waiting room, pacing and stirring, their terms of service newly begun. Like Donald, they were young and still hopelessly optimistic. They were bringing change to Capitol Hill. They hoped to deliver where their similarly naïve predecessors had not.

-- Narrator (Chapter 1 paragraph 3)

**Importance:** Keene comes to Washington, D.C., as a new and hopeful congressman. Keene hopes to do good, to change the country and the world for the better. However, Keene does not realize the tragic irony of what he is setting out to do. He will not come to bring positive change. Instead, he will become a part of a negative change that will lead to the deaths of billions.

It makes you wonder, don't it? Why we all feel so rotten inside?

-- Hal (Chapter 6 paragraph 28)

**Importance:** As Keene awakens for his first shift, he meets and becomes acquainted with a man named Hal. Hal, like Keene, feels depressed and sad without realizing that the medications they are being given are not having the effect of blocking out the emotions that come with bad memories. Though memories may become faulty, emotions run deeper. This is an example of how human nature cannot always be overcome.

It made Troy wonder what his purpose was. How necessary his position.

-- Narrator (Chapter 8 paragraph 3)

**Importance:** As Keene is shuffled around in his positions (still believing his name to be Troy), Keene wonders just how vital he is to the entire operation. Interestingly enough, Keene is central to everything that has happened, as he will come to remember later. Ironically, Keene's consideration that he might not be necessary at all will change by the end of the novel, as Keene becomes the best chance people have of surviving.

Order. Order. Order. He had read enough to worry, to wonder what he'd gotten himself mixed up in. Helen had been right to warn him, had been wrong about the scale of the danger.

-- Narrator (Chapter 15 paragraph 3)

**Importance:** When Keene is first given "The Order", he is tasked with memorizing it so he can familiarize himself with what is going on. "The Order" terrifies Keene, who knows there is something very wrong in the book. He becomes terrified of an apocalypse, but Helen calms him and tells him they will get through everything. Keene ignores the warnings that pop up from reading "The Order," ultimately to his misfortune.

Just remember this, all right? That I love you like a brother and that everything happens for a reason. I wouldn't have wanted it any other way. For you or for Helen.



-- Mick Webb (Chapter 19 paragraph 91)

**Importance:** Just prior to the nuclear detonation and the initiation of the silo scheme, Mick Webb acts as a Judas to Keene, telling Keene that everything is for the greater good and for a reason. Keene can't exactly understand what Webb is talking about, but he will learn decades later. Webb goes on to marry and have a family with Helen, while Keene is asleep awaiting his first shift.

We did what had to be done.

-- Senator Thurman (Chapter 31 paragraph 22)

**Importance:** Keene confronts Senator Thurman about the initiation of the silo scheme and what brought it about. Thurman contends that the only way to save humanity is to butcher most of it. Nano-terrorism, Thurman explains, was going to come into effect sooner or later; but, it was better that it was preempted. Because billions have died, thousands have lived –and humanity will survive. Thurman has no regrets about what has been done because he believes it has had a greater purpose.

The absurdity of Donald's existence, of the state of the world, swooped down on him in that gathering. He did not belong. He was only there because of a girl he had dated in college, a girl whose father was a senator...

-- Narrator (Chapter 38 paragraph 9)

**Importance:** As Keene considers the implications of the silo scheme, he realizes his own survival has been relatively accidental. If he had never dated Anna in college, he would never have been recommended to work on the silo project, and he would now be dead. It defies belief for Keene, who realizes his existence is predicated on Anna's feelings for him.

Eren stood, and Donald marveled again at being treated as if he were in charge. It was already beginning to make him feel as if he really were. Just like being elected to Congress, all that awesome responsibility foisted on him over night.

-- Narrator (Chapter 64 paragraph 29)

**Importance:** When Keene is awakened a third time, he is stunned to discover everyone thinks he is Thurman. This gives Keene an immense amount of sudden power. He feels as if he has been elected to Congress all over again. However, this time, Keene is in control of things and has a chance to do good things that he never could have done before.

Was this world worth saving to begin with? Were we worth saving?

-- Victor (Chapter 65 paragraph 14)

**Importance:** In a suicide note to Thurman, Victor reveals that disillusionment with the entire silo scheme. He hoped, once, that humanity could be saved and altered so that it would never again reach a level of nuclear weapons and nano-terrorism. Yet, even



without these weapons and with being given everything they could need –from shelter to food to technology –human nature is unconquerable. Violence and evil still occur.

The ghosts are watching.

-- Jimmy (Chapter 85 paragraph 12)

**Importance:** As Jimmy survives alone in Silo 17, he writes a poem on an old school blackboard in which he attests to ghosts watching. The ghosts that haunt Jimmy are not literal ghosts. They are memories of the past. The ghosts that bear in on the silo system only transcend Jimmy's immediate past, but they speak to the entire plot to bring the silos into operation. There is much more going on than Jimmy is aware of, and these ghosts of the past will come back to haunt those in the present –including Keene.

You saved all these people just to kill most of them. And us as well.

-- Keene (Chapter 102 paragraph 26)

**Importance:** Keene confronts Thurman with the dire truth Keene has recently discovered. After killing billions to save thousands in a few dozen concrete silos, only one silo will be released back into the world to repopulate it. Keene is horrified by this possibility. To ensure that it does not happen and to seek vengeance and justice for the past, Keene kills Thurman.

I'd hate for you to hear us coming.

-- Juliette (Epilogue paragraph 34)

**Importance:** At the end of the novel, Juliette and Keene speak by radio communications devices between Silo 17 and Silo 1. Keene cautions Juliette about digging too deeply for the truth. Juliette knows much of the truth already, and she explains she'd hate for Keene to hear her coming. Juliette's veiled threat promises vengeance for the silo system. Keene himself understands that the ghosts of the past are finally coming back to haunt him and the workers in Silo 1. It is only a matter of time before those ghosts arrive.