

Sleeping Giants Study Guide

Sleeping Giants by Sylvain Neuvel

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Contents

Sleeping Giants Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Pages 1 – 60.....	5
Pages 61 – 123.....	10
Pages 124 – 186.....	14
Pages 187 – 238.....	19
Pages 239 – 305.....	23
Characters.....	28
Symbols and Symbolism.....	31
Settings.....	34
Themes and Motifs.....	36
Styles.....	40
Quotes.....	41



Plot Summary

The following version of this book was used to create this study guide: Neuval, Sylvain. *Sleeping Giants*. Del Rey. 2016.

Sleeping Giants is a science fiction novel by Sylvain Neuvel in which an unknown interviewer and scientist Rose Franklin attempt to decipher the alien origins and purpose of a giant robotic weapon. Told by way of case files – transcripts, diary entries, and other documents – the novel spans the course of four years, beginning with a prologue set when Rose is 11 years old.

When the novel begins, Rose takes out the bike she has received for her birthday, only to fall into a massive hole near Deadwood, South Dakota, in which is a giant hand. Seventeen years later, Rose now spearheads the effort to determine what the hand is, and to crack the code of the symbols featured on it. At the same time, two American pilots, Kara Resnik and Ryan Mitchell, testing Syrian airspace for radiation, return over Turkey when another body part appears beneath them, activated by the radiation they trail. Because of this, Kara and Ryan are tasked to be a part of Rose's team. A French-Canadian linguist, Vincent Couture, is brought on board to help decipher the symbols. Scouring the globe, the team completes the robot.

The team is watched over, protected by, and instigated by an unknown interviewer (to whom the files belong and who appears in most of the files speaking to the members of the team). The interviewer has immense power that spans presidential administrations, and indeed he only has two equals: the sitting president and an unidentified subject whom he meets in Washington D.C. The unidentified subject turns out to be the descendant of alien soldiers who came to Earth as the most far-flung colony of their alien empire, to guard it against the threat of invasion using giant war machines. When the danger had passed, they left one robot behind in pieces so that when humanity advanced enough technologically, it could operate the robot on its own and prove worthy of alien contact – or destruction. The ability to master the atom for war is the sign of humanity's advancement, and progress by the 2010s has allowed the robot to be found, reassembled, and activated, for it uses radioactive material as fuel. The aliens are now watching to see what becomes of the robot they left behind.

Kara and Ryan become pilots for the robot, but they are unable to make much progress because the robot only responds to Kara. When Vincent attempts to operate the robot, he is successful, meaning he and Kara are both descendants of the aliens – the only ones who can operate alien machinery because of their genetics. As a result, Greek geneticist Alyssa Papantoniou is brought on board to study Vincent and Kara. But a testing accident on the robot destroys part of Denver International Airport, kills hundreds (seemingly including Rose), and exposes the top secret project to the world. The United States then goes public with the truth about the robot, and sinks it in the Puerto Rico Trench so no country may harness its destructive power. Secretly, the interviewer oversees a consortium of nations other than America which buy into a project to recover the robot.



The new secret project is overseen by Alyssa. But when the project is exposed because of Alyssa's incompetence, the United States must intervene – now holding the moral high ground – to take custody of the robot – with everything happening at the workings of the interviewer. The United States then gifts the robot to the UN to form the Earth Defense Corps, a multinational effort to prepare for potential alien invasion. As the novel ends, in an epilogue, Rose wakes up on the side of a road in Ireland, with no memory of the project and no memory of the past four years – though she does remember everything before.



Pages 1 – 60

Summary

In the Prologue, 11-year-old Rose Franklin has received a bike for her birthday, so she goes riding into the autumn woods at the end of the street. Rose sees something at the bottom of a hill, so she gets off her bike to look at it. She falls. When she wakes up, it is dawn, and she is in a square-shaped hole while her father and firemen are above, preparing to raise her out. When Rose later looks at pictures taken during the incident, she sees herself laying in the palm of a massive metallic hand.

Part One: Body Parts

In File No. 003, an unnamed interviewer speaks to Dr. Rose Franklin, PH.D., now of the University of Chicago's Enrico Fermi Institute, where she works as the Senior Scientist. Seventeen years have passed. She explains the hand was 23 feet in size, and that she had always been good at science, so that hand was not what made her decide to go into the field of physics. Rose reveals that about eight hours after being rescued, Colonel Hudson and the military took over. She recalls everyone only saying good things about Hudson, and that Hudson and his team wanted to find out what the carvings and symbols on the hand meant. The team's findings were likewise confusing, Rose reveals: the hole was found to be 3,000 years old by way of radiocarbon dating, while the hand was found to be between 5,000-6,000 years old. Rose explains the team was baffled by this, concluded that they must have contaminated the site, and dated the hand to 1,200 years old and belonging to the Mississippian American Indian civilization since there were no advanced American Indian civilizations so many thousands of years before.

Rose explains now to the interviewer that no evidence at all points to the Mississippians, but that Hudson was probably anxious to conclude the project. She explains he died not long after of a stroke. Rose says she does not believe in fate, but finds it fascinating that she has been put in charge of the team, backed by the NSA, now studying the hand a few years after the military – which had stored it in a warehouse – declassified and demilitarized the hand. Rose does not ask why the NSA is involved in an archeological project because they have provided a big, comfortable budget. Rose explains there are 16 panels on the hole walls around the hand, each containing six or seven symbols, and all glowing with no apparent power source – and no other language to which it could be compared. Rose explains that there is enough mystery about the hand to keep people guessing for a long time. She is not so much concerned about the age of the hand or the symbols as she is with the very hand itself. It is dark gray and bronze, slightly shiny, is made from heavy metals like iridium (which itself primarily comes from meteorites or can be found very deep underground), and appears to be womanly.



Rose reveals her original preliminary report concluded that even modern man does not have the ability to build something like the hand. As a result, many took it to mean alien life was responsible. Rose reveals she then took a leave of absence to travel to Deadwood, her hometown an hour northwest of Rapid City. She explains her mother and her have not seen eye-to-eye since Rose's father died, and Rose did not return home for the funeral. Rose reveals that when she visited her mother, she also visited the hole but discovered it had been filled in. Rose explains she then wondered what it was about that day that caused the hand to turn on after being dormant for thousands of years.

In File No. 004, Chief Warrant Officer 3 and helicopter pilot Kara Resnik of the United States Army is interviewed at Coleman Army Airfield in Mannheim, Germany. Kara asks the name of the interviewer, but the interviewer explains that revealing such information would lead to the interviewer's immediate death. Kara goes on to recount that she and CW Mitchell took on a NATO mission flying a UH-60 at low altitude to collect air samples south of the border of Ar Raqqa to determine whether or not Syria was pursuing nuclear weapons. Kara reveals that everything went smoothly until they returned to Turkish airspace, when over rural land, a strange turquoise light appeared and caused the 60 to crash. Kara reveals a kind elderly man and a kind teenage girl helped them out of the wreck. Kara reveals she saw a crater with a whale-like object glowing before her just as U.S. Marines arrived to secure the site before being brought back to Mannheim only an hour before. The interviewer explains the official story is that whatever has been found is being labeled a top secret World War II plane that must be returned to the United States. The interviewer asks Kara what she thinks of Mitchell, but Kara can only say so much because she has only known him a few hours.

In File No. 007, Rose is interviewed again. Rose wonders if perhaps the hand and other objects have reacted to argon isotopes in the air. Rose theorizes that perhaps the builders left behind things like the hand to communicate with humanity, but only when humanity had advanced to a certain point where they would be capable of understanding – which could have occurred once the power of the atom had been tapped. With argon in the fold, the panels are worth examining again, Rose says. As such, they must approach the hand objectively and open-mindedly, because the hand challenges everything they know from religion and history to physics and anthropology. The whale-shaped object found in Turkey is revealed to be a forearm that attaches to the hand when placed next to it. Rose believes there are other body parts out in the world, and that argon-37 will be needed to find them. Rose says she will need more funding, but the interviewer tells her to tell him what is needed, and he will secure it. This will include a team, pilots, and a massive warehouse.

In File No. 009, the interviewer approaches the argumentative Kara once more, saying a project is being initiated that Kara would be suited for. The interviewer then proceeds with a battery of questions relating to Kara's character as a person, her qualities, and certain beliefs. Kara says she does not believe in extraterrestrial intelligence, for example. She is upset she will no longer be allowed to fly because of a detached retina from the crash. The interviewer asks her what she would do to get her flight status back.



Kara says she would do anything, including putting her life at risk, and the lives of innocent people at risk if there is a need.

In File No. 017, the interviewer meets with Chief Warrant Officer 2 Ryan Mitchell at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington State. Mitchell has been flying around with Kara dispensing ARCANA, Argon-Rich Compound for Aerial Nocturnal Application. Mitchell admits to finding Kara cute. He explains that they have found six pieces so far, including a lower leg, a foot, and most recently a thigh under a Tennessee highway. The interviewer asks about Ryan's background. Ryan explains he is from Detroit, played football in high school, and that the military is a family tradition. Ryan explains everyone on the team gets along well, but the French-speaking linguist from Montreal, Vincent, is young and cocky. Ryan asks why the military is involved with the project. The interviewer explains it is for the purposes of the repercussions that could come from the discoveries, and that crowd control is needed. The interviewer explains they are all involved for the greater good.

In File No. 031, Kara writes a journal entry in which she expresses grief over killing a little girl while seeking out another piece of the body near the Grand Canyon. An emerged arm destroyed two houses in Flagstaff, and killed a little girl named Amy in addition to seven others, Kara writes. She admits she and Ryan had become too eager and casual in their work. Kara knows the work must go on, but feels horrible about what happened. She also does not entirely trust the interviewer, whom she knows would just as soon put a gun to her head if needed.

In File No. 33, an Arizona Republic newspaper article blames the eight dead on a bombing accident blamed on a domestic terrorist named Owen Lehman, who along with his son, is among the dead.

In File No. 34, the interviewer speaks with Robert Woodhull, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, at the White House in Washington, D.C. Woodhull is enraged about what has happened in Arizona, and wants to know how the NSA could let something like it happen. The interviewer explains it is out of the NSA's hands – that giant artifacts left behind by an alien civilization it beyond their scope. The interviewer will not even identify himself to Woodhull, and assures Woodhull that everything is under control. The interviewer goes on to say the artifacts no longer seem to assemble a statue, but some kind of vehicle. The torso, it is revealed, has been found in Canada. The torso seems to have a kind of control center inside. The interviewer now needs authorization to begin exploring other countries in earnest, and will need immediate backup should pieces unearth themselves in places like London, Paris, or Moscow. A second team will be required. Rose knows about none of this, yet. Woodhull agrees to help if Rose is made aware of these things, and if there is credible proof the vehicle might actually work.



Analysis

From the very start of the novel, readers are introduced to two pivotal characters – Rose and the unknown interviewer. Rose, as a child, falls into a hand, which symbolizes fate (the hand of fate. The idea, not explained in this novel, if Rose herself was fated to find the hand to begin with). Rose becomes the head of the project that studies the hand – a project overseen by the unknown interviewer, whose collection of files makes up the novel. (The novel itself is structured to be a collection of case files including transcripts of in-person and recorded audio conversations, diary entries, and documents of various other kinds.) The interviewer never identifies himself, but the amount of power he wields is immense. Only the president seems an equal to the interviewer, denoting just how important – how fateful – the project regarding the hand and subsequent body part recovery for the device is.

Rose is critical for the approach to the project regarding the device. Rose is fully aware and accepting of the fact that human beings are flawed creatures, that they do not know everything, and that to pretend they do or can is erroneous. Because of this, Rose is able to approach the robot device with an open mind, which allows her to explore various options relating to it such as how to find its pieces and what the use of the device might be. At the same time, the interviewer works to provide cover for the project as it expands across the country, and seeks to expand around the world. The collusion of the interviewer, the president, and the president's Assistant, demonstrate the levels of power needed to make something like this happen, especially in secret. This forms a core thematic argument that the author, Sylvain Neuvel, argues: There are powers guiding events on Earth than is thought by most people. In this case, the power rests in the hands of the president and the interviewer.

As Rose undertakes the investigation, it becomes clear that original considerations of the device – that it was made by American Indians of a highly advanced branch of the Mississippians – are not true. This is because the researchers at the time approached the issue only from what they knew. As noted previously, Rose's acceptance of human limits has allowed her to approach the device with an open mind. It has also allowed her to recognize a fundamental truth – which Neuvel posits as a thematic argument through Rose, in that human beings are not as technologically advanced as we believe. This is a hallmark in science fiction literature involving extraterrestrial life – and it is very true in the novel as piece by piece, Rose and her team uncover the device and realize it is, indeed, a vehicle of some sort. She recognizes everything from the material to the symbols to the very device itself far exceed anything human beings are capable of doing.

Rose's respect of human limits also helps her to theorize in a deeper way about the hand and the pieces that follow. She believes that the hand defies humanity: in other words, it was not built by human beings. Instead, she comes to believe that the hand and body were built and left behind by an alien race to communicate with people, but only when people had advanced enough to be able to do so. This underscores two of Neuvel's important thematic arguments – that human beings are not as advanced as we



think we are, and that there are other powers guiding events on Earth. In this case, it appears as if aliens exercised some form of control over Earth, and their leaving behind of a method of communicating this information demonstrates the self-assurance of that power. They would not leave behind something they did not think they could handle – but also wanted to leave something behind powerful enough to demonstrate their abilities. As Rose notes, and as Neuvel argues through her, humankind is not alone in the universe. This will be an Earth-changing piece of information.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Rose selected to head up research into the hand? How does Rose approach the hand differently than her predecessors? Why?

Discussion Question 2

What is Rose's initial theory regarding the hand? What evidence does she have to support this theory? Why could Rose's theory have profound implications for Earth?

Discussion Question 3

Who is the interviewer? What roles does he seem to have regarding the device? What do you believe accounts for the power the interviewer wields?

Vocabulary

motley, redacted, preconceived, sporadic, preposterous, inexplicably, dormant, obdurate, repatriate, insufferable, infinitesimal, fraternization, epitome



Pages 61 – 123

Summary

Part Two: Break a Leg

In File No. 037, the interviewer meets with Rose in an underground complex in Denver, Colorado. Rose is thrilled that the torso has breasts, meaning the artifacts do indeed construct a girl. It also appears as if the torso has some sort of armor plate design. Rose explains the torso is as tall as a six-story building, and so they have had to relocate to beneath the Denver International Airport. Rose reveals the team has gained access to the inside of the torso by access of a door between the shoulder blades by way of heat-response from a handprint carved into the door. Rose is not happy about not being told about this earlier. The interviewer goes on to explain that Rose is no longer in charge of the search aspect of the project, but will continue to lead research. Investigation into the torso, Rose explains, reveals that two people are required to seemingly operate the device – one for the legs and motion, one for the upper body, all by way of braces into which people should fit. Rose reveals that the braces for control are not designed for human anatomy as the knees are backwards. Research into the symbols is still ongoing. Rose is worried whether or not Vincent Couture, despite his intelligence, is capable of deciphering the symbols. The interviewer gives Vincent one more week to make progress. If not, he will be let go.

In File No. 039, Kara records an experiment log from inside the device as the controls of the device are tested for the first time. Kara notes that to close the hatch to the torso, one must either be eight feet tall or have a barstool. Kara fits herself into the control straps. As she puts on a control helmet, she screams.

In File No. 41, in a personal journal entry, Rose writes that by the time they reached Kara, she had passed out from pain. Rose admits it was stupid for them to experiment with something they knew absolutely nothing about. Kara is now recovering in the hospital area, and the doctors are stunned because the helmet seemingly repaired Kara's damaged eye. Kara is due for an MRI to see if she has sustained any brain damage. Rose reminds herself that her first duty is to keep her people safe, then see what the device is all about. Rose now begins to wonder just what the device can do, and if it has the power to kill millions. She wonders if this is something she can live with on her conscience. She believes she can because the device is bigger than her and everyone else.

In File No. 42, Kara writes that she feels fine and that Rose should not blame herself for what happened. Kara sneaks out of the hospital wing and back over to the device, where she goes back inside. A second attempt to put the helmet on leads to more pain – but the healing of a cut on Kara's forehead. She puts the helmet back on, and now she can see everything outside the device. She also sees before her a hologram-like projection of the completed robot, and sees how that corresponds to each movement



she makes. However, the device itself does not move, because it is not yet fully reassembled.

In File No. 47, the interviewer speaks with Vincent Couture, who is revealed to be a graduate student. Vincent explains he has had a breakthrough: the symbols are not a language, but math – which is a universal commonality. Scholars were able to crack Egyptian hieroglyphs because of the presence of ancient Greek on the Rosetta Stone – a universal common starting point at the time. The alien symbols are a series of equations which feature true and false symbols. The true and false symbols can be applied in and out of math. They could be substituted for things like go, stop, yes, no, proceed, cancel, and so on. Vincent goes on to explain that they also have the symbols for things like addition and subtraction, and the basic reference for a base-8 system (where humans have a base-10 system for counting. Vincent explains that the human 12345 would come out as 30071 their way as a result. The interviewer calls Vincent a genius, but Vincent thinks the new geneticist, Alyssa, is smarter. Alyssa has been brought on to see why Kara is the only one who can use the helmet. Vincent is hopeful the device will work.

In File No. 092, the interviewer speaks with Ryan Mitchell. Ryan confesses that he and Kara have shared a romantic kiss and sexual relations, that after months of working together in close proximity and often alone, antagonism led to friendship which turned into more. They have been working on getting the “big girl” (the device) to walk. Ryan explains the more he tries to keep Kara, however, the more she pulls away. The interviewer suggests backing off, and letting Kara come to him.

In File No. 093, Transportation Specialist First Sergeant Dylan Rodriguez of the United States Army leads a search and recovery operation in Tuva. He reveals they were helped by friendly locals who hate the Russians but approve of Americans. The locals kill two Russian soldiers who arrive to investigate the dig, and help protect the Americans.

In File No. 94, Robert Woodhull slams the interviewer for what happened in Tuva to unearth a giant hand. The Russians know everything except what exactly had been discovered. They are torturing local Tuvans and demanding an American apology. Woodhull also passes along concerns from the president. The president wants to know what will happen to the big device. The interviewer advises taking the robot for a spin to let the world wonder what it can do, to think twice about crossing the United States. Woodhull reveals he has received an e-mail of concern from Alyssa Papantoniou, who worries about Kara’s temperament. Woodhull warns the interviewer to get a better handle on his people. The interviewer has no concerns. Woodhull worries everything might blow up in their faces.

In File No. 118, the interviewer meets with Kara. Kara admits to sleeping with Ryan. She is very defensive about it. In a shocking twist, it is revealed that Vincent tried on the helmet meant for Ryan - but did not work for Ryan - only to have it work for Vincent. Ryan is out. Kara explains that Ryan was very gentlemanly about everything, teaching his successor (Vincent) everything he knew to get Vincent ready for operation. She



reveals that when Kara and Vincent became romantically involved, Ryan had had enough. He attempted to run her and Vincent over, she reveals, but ended up only crushing Vincent's legs when Vincent pushed her out of the way. Ryan is now in jail.

Part Three: Headhunting

In File No. 120, the interviewer meets with Vincent at the Hospital for Special Surgery in New York, New York. Vincent's father was a selfish and egotistical man, he explains, whom his mother left. It was his father, he explains, who drove him on to learn and succeed no matter the cost. It is learned that Vincent will lose both his legs, that they must be amputated. Vincent takes the whole thing strangely well, saying he is not concerned because he never did much other than sit and think. He does not have any anger toward Ryan, whom he knows has been through a difficult period seeing the job of a lifetime and a chance at love all disappear quickly. The interviewer assures Vincent that no one will take his legs.

Analysis

The addition of Vincent Couture to the team changes everything, including the dynamics. Vincent is able to crack the code and reinforce Rose's theory relating to alien communication and language through symbols. The greater the propensity for alien life, and the greater the expanse of the operation to recover and reassemble the device, the greater the need there is for secrecy, symbolized by the cover stories that are drafted by the American government at the insistence of the interviewer. The interviewer continues to hold clear and immense power over everything going on – power that is rivaled only by the sitting president. The president continues to act as a partner with the interviewer, confounding Woodhull but ensuring the interviewer's continued operations. As Neuvel argues, there are great powers at work influencing events in the world – and this is clearly the case with the interviewer and the president. Additionally, Vincent's addition to the team leads to the romantic drama between him and Kara, and between Kara and Ryan – drama that ultimately costs Vincent his legs.

What readers should note as absolutely fascinating is that Vincent has the power, like Kara, to operation the machine – while it is previously believed Ryan's helmet did not work. In other words, there is something unique about Vincent and Kara for them to be able to work the device when no others can. Here, the geneticist Alyssa comes into play like never before. Yet, Alyssa's appearance into things in such a way serves as an ill-omen that readers should clearly note. She is not just seeking to do work on Vincent and Kara. Instead, she is also complaining about things like Kara's temperament. Alyssa is there to study genetics, not to question the chain of command or the fitness of an individual. That she is stepping beyond the parameters of her work indicates a streak of ambition – one that will ultimately play out by the end of the novel.

Respecting human limits, Neuvel continues to argue, helps people to reach beyond those limits. Those limits are not always technological or scientific. Sometimes they are moral. Moral values and ethics are meant to be a check on human flaws and scientific



endeavor. Just because something can be done, does not mean it should be done. Here, Rose does not respect the moral bounds of humankind. She realizes that what she is working on could very well be a weapon – but this does not deter her from working on it. She recognizes a moral concern – but ignores it. She does this because she believes the device is bigger than her and everyone else. This underscores Neuvel’s theme that there are greater forces at work than human beings imagine regarding Earth – and that humankind is not alone.

This is true in Vincent’s discussion of the symbols of the device. Vincent is able to crack the code with the understanding that human beings are not as advanced as they think. Vincent actually relies on a very simple system to crack the code – one that puts human advancement to shame. Sometimes the most basic answer is the actual answer, and all of the cleverness, intelligence, and advancement made in a specific area amounts to nothing as a result. This is clearly the case in the current situation, as Vincent relies on basic numbers to begin. The result is humbling in that no matter how advanced humankind has become, it still cannot crack an alien code except with the most basic of methods – and this is the genius of the aliens.

Discussion Question 1

How do human limits – especially by way of research into things like the symbols – affect the project into the device? How are these limits overcome? Why?

Discussion Question 2

In what ways does the interviewer continue to work directly and behind the scenes regarding the project? Does this offer an allusions to his motives? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

How do human personalities – specifically Kara, Ryan, and Vincent – jeopardize the mission? Why does this even happen?

Vocabulary

awed, inconsequential, universal, vulnerable, presumptuous, adamantly, narcissistic



Pages 124 – 186

Summary

Part Three: Headhunting (continued)

In File No. 121, the interviewer speaks with Dr. Pavel Haas, Chief of Surgery at the Hospital for Special Surgery. Pavel confirms that Vincent's legs will be removed. The interviewer tells Pavel that he has two choices: save the legs or she will be escorted out of the building unharmed and placed in a room that he will never be allowed out of again. The interviewer explains he has read Pavel's work about titanium implants, and that Vincent's legs must be reconstructed. No cost or resource will be out of Pavel's reach, he explains. Pavel will also receive cutting-edge assistance from muscle building agents to immunosuppressive agents. Pavel agrees to do this under protest, but says Vincent will believe he is in Hell for all the pain he will endure. The interviewer also shows Pavel a design for the way that Vincent's legs must look.

In File No. 126, the interviewer speaks with geneticist Alyssa Papantoniou, PH.D., at the Denver Public Library at the Civic Center Park in Denver, Colorado. Alyssa is originally from Greece, and stutters in nervousness when she speaks with people. The interviewer wants to know why Alyssa has gone over his head to complain about the way Rose Franklin is handling the team. She explains Rose lets her sympathy and emotions cloud her judgment, that she treats people like Vincent and Kara as children, and that Rose's own work often has to be rechecked. Alyssa argues that there is too much at stake to be worried about personal feelings.

In File No. 129, the interviewer meets with Robert Woodhull who reveals the country has been moved to DEFCON 3 after the Chinese spotted Americans leaving their territory. The Chinese have lodged a formal complaint with the UN, Woodhull explains. The Russians have now officially blamed the Americans for what happened in Tuva, have recalled their ambassador, and are cleaning out their embassy. The Russians are mobilizing for war, and the Chinese are expected to follow. Woodhull admits it is all posturing, but one day, someone will not blink. Woodhull worries about the human cost involved in everything, but for the interviewer, the ends justify the means. The interviewer believes that what they are doing will justify the cost, that it is on par with fire and inventing the wheel. Woodhull relates that the president is unhappy about what has been done to Vincent and the threats leveled against the doctor, but the interviewer defends these as completely necessary. The interviewer sarcastically tells Woodhull to tell the president to give Vincent a medal for his suffering. Woodhull actually considers this a good idea.

In File No. 141, the interviewer meets with Rose in the Underground Complex in Denver. The interviewer questions why Rose has gone to see Ryan. Rose explains it is because she wants Ryan to know that people still care about him, and explains Ryan feels horrible about what he has done. The interviewer explains he did not come only to



talk about Ryan, but about the incident in the lab. Rose reveals Alyssa's work visa was revoked, and she is now back in Greece. Rose praises the work Alyssa has done, such as suggesting a reevaluation of the metal. Upon doing so, Rose explains they learned the pieces are not merely activated by radioactive material, but feed off it. The more the exposure, the brighter they become, Rose explains, and they can give out an EMP which would explain why Kara's helicopter crashed in Turkey. She also reveals that the pieces can emit an energy field that vaporizes objects into thin air. Rose believes the big girl is a weapon. Rose says they will have to find the head which is probably underwater. The interviewer says it is, and that he knows where it is – in the Bering Sea.

In File No. 143, the interviewer meets with Captain Demetrius Rooke, United States Navy, at Naval Submarine Base Bangor on Kitsap Peninsula, Washington State. Rooke commands the USS Jimmy Carter, a nuclear attack submarine of the Seawolf class. Rooke recounts how, on August 17, he received a call from the Secretary of the Navy himself with orders to intercept two Russian subs in the Bering Sea along with the USS Maine, and to secure whatever they found on site, avoiding hostilities if possible. Their orders, he explains, were to secure something that had been being transported, but was dropped into the sea. Demetrius explains they were accompanied by Kara, who ordered them to fire on the object meant to be secured in order to scare off the Russians. When Demetrius refused, he reveals, Kara attempted to hold him hostage to force the crew to fire, but Kara was overtaken by the crew instead when Demetrius promised to do as demanded. Demetrius reveals the torpedoes fired on the object, resulting in a blackout and the need for the crew to be rescued by reinforcement vessels. Demetrius explains he was stunned to learn the opposing Russian submarine simply vanished. The interviewer tells Demetrius what he did mattered, though he cannot give Demetrius the details.

In File No. 161, the interviewer speaks with Kara, who is beside herself with agony over watching how painful and difficult Vincent's recovery and muscle-growth is. Kara feels as if they are killing Vincent. The interviewer then challenges Kara on her attempt to commandeer the submarine, saying she could have been killed. The interviewer says the other Russian submarine is still missing, to which Kara responds that she did not know firing on the head would have such a reaction as to destroy the ship. Kara explains that they have not yet attached the head to the body, wanting first to learn about the controls inside the torso. Kara worries if the interviewer is not manipulating or forcing Vincent into continuing, but the interviewer denies this, saying Vincent has several times expressed his interest in the project to both the interviewer and to Kara.

In File No. 182, Rose writes a personal diary entry in which she speaks of Oppenheimer and the Manhattan Project – the quest for the atomic bomb – and how Oppenheimer came to regret bringing such destruction to the world. Rose considers this now in light of the giant girl, knowing full well it is a killing machine. She has even been having nightmares about the giant girl, in which the girl crouches over her and stares her in the face. Rose considers that the face of the girl is young and delicate, and that more carvings are present. Strangely, the head does not have eyes. Once the head is attached, Rose writes, the girl actually moves gracefully and she also generates an energy sword and energy shield. The more they study and experiment with the girl,



Rose notes, the more they find. Rose says that while she has moral concerns, she is having the time of her life.

In File No. 188, the FAA Preliminary Report on the Disappearance of Flight Icelandair 670 is documented in which the plane, set for takeoff from Denver, disappeared in a massive light, leaving behind only a crater.

In File No. 189, the interviewer speaks with Vincent at Fort Carson Army Base near Colorado Springs, Colorado. Vincent admits that, despite the horrible pain he felt, he and Kara wanted to try to get the big girl to walk. Vincent recalls that he stumbled in the machine, causing a sound that began, like a camera flash charging up, and then only white light around them. Vincent recalls the roof being blown off, at which time news helicopters appeared overhead. The interviewer confirms that the world now knows their secret. Kara is safe, the interviewer explains – but Rose is gone.

Part Four: Body Blow

In File No. 211, the interviewer must go before Robert Woodhull at the White House. Woodhull is enraged, explaining that 311 people, many from other countries, have been killed, and more than \$300 million in damage has been caused from the destruction of buildings and runways. Woodhull says the number of dead increases to 312 when Rose is factored in. The interviewer is unmoved. Woodhull says that everyone is speculating about the robot, and that no one knows exactly what it is, but the Americans are being blamed. Woodhull says he will meet with the president to construct a story, but the interviewer says he has already met with the president, who is planning to go public at the UN Security Council to tell the world the truth to prevent war. Sharing the robot is out of the question, the interviewer asserts, so it will be dropped in the Puerto Rico Trench, five miles down below the ocean. No one yet has the capability to retrieve the robot, but the interviewer plans to retrieve the robot in a few years. He explains Kara is now back on duty thanks to redactions of her file, and Vincent is on the way home to Canada.

Analysis

As noted earlier, Alyssa's decision to complain about Kara's temperament now pales in comparison to her decision to go around channels to complain about Rose's leadership. Clearly the interviewer runs everything – he is a greater force at work – while Rose only runs the operation relating to robot research. Clearly Alyssa does not respect the interviewer, and her ambitious move is demonstrative of her desire for greater authority and power. Readers should note that this is immensely troubling given the understanding that the device itself is a weapon of war. Alyssa's refusal to acknowledge her own flaws – her sociopathic tendencies which will reveal her to be ruthless – make her a danger to the project. Her self-absorption is different from Vincent's in that Vincent recognizes he is narcissistic, but Alyssa does not recognize it about herself.



As if Vincent's own romantic issues did not jeopardize the mission enough, his desire – along with Kara – to make the machine walk leads to an accidental explosion that kills hundreds and destroys a significant portion of Denver International Airport, as well as exposing the device to the world. There is no hiding it anymore. The refusal of Kara and Vincent to see beyond their own flaws – that they were not ready to actually operate the robot yet – leads to this. The interviewer is alarmingly calm about this, indicating that he has already arranged for the situation with the president himself. The plan decided upon puts the robot into the depths of the Puerto Rico Trench after the president announces to the world at the UN that humankind is not alone in the universe.

What is ironic and tragic is that, just prior to the explosion accident, Rose had once again been considering the moral limits and ramifications of what she and the other project members were doing. She notes that Oppenheimer regretted the atomic bomb for the death and horror it caused, but also notes that as scientists, she and Oppenheimer had to see things through simply because it had to be done. Here, the limits of human endeavor – bounded by morality – are broken through by Rose. In some cases, acknowledging human limits is good and can allow one to grow, such as how Rose first approached the device with an open mind. But now, knowing what it is, and knowing the moral implications, she chooses to continue on with the research anyways. She is among those seemingly killed by the accident as a result, and the project, which has nearly led to war with Russia, is now exposed to the world. Despite all of this, the reader is disturbed to learn that the interviewer is not particularly bothered by what has happened.

Discussion Question 1

Why, despite knowing the destructive nature and moral implications of the device, does Rose continue to research it and follow through on getting it to run? Should she be considered right or wrong for this? Why?

Discussion Question 2

Despite Vincent not being fully recovered, he and Kara choose to attempt to operate the robot. Why? What happens as a result? Do Vincent and Kara bear blame for this? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Why does the interviewer believe full disclosure to the UN and to the public is the best way to handle the explosion at Denver International? What does he hope this will accomplish? Why does this matter?

Vocabulary

remiss, systematically, pragmatic, incursion, proportional response, rhetorical, tacit agreement, arbitrary, tantamount, vehemently, jeopardized, metallurgy, perplexed, objectivity



Pages 187 – 238

Summary

In File No. 229, the interviewer meets with Kara at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington State. Kara has been promoted, and so now plans rather than flies most missions. Kara is still sad about Rose's death, and angry that Vincent has not spoken to her since the incident. Kara asks how Vincent is getting along. The interviewer reveals Vincent now spends his days making World War II models. Kara reveals she also has struggles about the destruction they caused, but that she fights through each day to get on with her life. The interviewer now wants Kara to locate someone for him in Sarajevo. Kara is to attend the Sarajevo Film Festival, specifically the premier of the film *Oprosti mi, Mina* (Forgive me, Mina) by young Serb cineaste Goran Lukic. Goran will be Kara's guide in Bosnia. Goran is not expecting Kara, so she must introduce herself to him at the afterparty in Zlatna Ribica where she will remind him that he never paid the plumber in Belgrade. There, Goran is to bring her to Srebrenica where a woman named Fata must be found just so the interviewer knows where she is. Kara immediately agrees, and thanks the interviewer for the mission.

In File No. 230, the interviewer meets with an unknown subject (calling himself Mr. Burns) at New Dynasty Chinese Restaurant in Dupont Circle, in Washington, D.C. The subject seems to know about the interviewer, including that the interviewer has (or had) a son, and that the interviewer has brought along a sniper, but the sniper has fallen asleep. The subject tells the story of an Emperor who banished a people from his Empire when his daughter fell in love with the Warrior King of that particular people. The subject reveals that the Emperor knew that the banished people would one day seek revenge, so weapons had to be built to protect every corner of the Empire. These were massive devices in the shapes of beings. These were called "tittah." Twelve – six male and six female – were sent to the farthest colony of the Empire, the subject explains, but were later withdrawn when war did not come, all except for one female.

This, the subject explains, was to be left behind until those of the colony would advance enough to be able to use it to defend themselves should war ever come. The subject also reveals that many of the soldiers who first accompanied the beings took on wives among those of the colony, to produce incredibly intelligent offspring, whose descendants still exist on Earth. The interviewer hopes this means the subject can help them operate the robot, but the subject denies this. Instead, he tells another story, of a King and his two teenage sons. The subject reveals the two sons fought one another over who had the right to wield their father's mighty sword, leading to the death of one of the boys. The subject explains that if the interviewer left a weapon with people who were prepared to kill one another because of it, he would want to get the weapon back.

In File No. 233, the interviewer meets with Ines Tabib, the new Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs as the election has just swept a new president, also a woman, into the White House because of the airport disaster. The interviewer is



not concerned by this, and seeks to continue his work. Ines explains people around the world are still attempting to adjust to the reality of an alien war machine. Ines says the news has humbled most people and caused them to rethink priorities. Ines gets to the point: she and the new president want control over the robot, but the interviewer explains there is currently no one and no technology capable of retrieving it. The interviewer recommends increasing funding as they are now in a race against the Russians, Chinese, and other nations to claim possession of the robot.

In File No. 237, the interviewer meets with Vincent in La Fontaine Park in Montreal, Canada. Vincent is thrilled to hear of the news the interviewer has shared, about alien races and “tittah,” from which the word “Titan” is gained. The Titans are the children of the gods, a blending of Earth and Sky. One is Themis, the ancient take on the modern-day Lady Justice who is blindfolded, holds scales, and represents justice. For Vincent, justice in this case is more like divine law. The interviewer asks about Vincent and Kara. Vincent says he has not wanted to speak to her until he is sure he could walk again to avoid an accident like that in Denver. Vincent wants to reunite the project, but the interviewer says it might not be so easy. He believes Vincent is of sound mind, but Kara must also be convinced.

In File No. 239, the interviewer meets with Alyssa as the project is restored and Alyssa is made Chief Executive Officer and Chief Science Officer of BVI Company Number 462753 Inc., near San Juan, Puerto Rico. Alyssa lays out the process: a train track is being robotically laid into the ocean, at which time the device will be hauled out of the ocean piece by piece. Alyssa also believes there is one final piece of the device missing – a propulsion system. The interviewer agrees, and notes that the search will be difficult. Alyssa also wants blood samples from Kara and Vincent to test.

In File No. 249, the interviewer meets with Vincent who is now thrilled to be living on the beach in Puerto Rico. The interviewer explains that the BVI facility is now the product of a joint venture between Japan, Russia, South Korea, Germany, and the United Arab Emirates. In exchange for participation, the device can be used for the defense of any of these countries, but only ever for defensive purposes. The cost of joining is significant, the interviewer explains, and the company the countries have formed is known as The Consortium. Vincent thinks the name Themis Consortium would be better. The interviewer explains that Kara will soon be joining them during a period of medical leave garnered from a car accident, and that Vincent will need to make peace with her to ensure working together is possible.

In File No. 250, the interviewer meets with Kara. Kara admits she and Vincent can now work together, but their relationship has not been repaired or progressed beyond that. She reports successful testing with the robot, and that underwater tests will be conducted very soon at Alyssa’s insistence. Kara admits there is something about Alyssa she does not like – beyond Alyssa constantly taking blood samples and scans of Kara. The interviewer then thanks Kara for finding Fata. Kara thanks the interviewer for sending her to Bosnia. Kara admits to being touched by the postwar country, and worries what they are doing now with the device is no longer research, but war. It is then



that Kara and the interviewer learn North Korea has attacked South Korea, and is moving troops toward the DMZ. Kara realizes they will be deployed.

Analysis

Humankind is not alone in the universe, Neuvel contends in this section of the novel – an argument revealed through the president at the UN. The world is now dealing with the consequences. While there is little panic, most people acknowledge the fact that they are not alone in the universe as a method to recognizing their own limits and that many things, such as border disputes, now seem petty (here is Neuvel's argument that respecting human limits allows us to advance beyond them). The United States, thanks to posturing from the interviewer and the president, uses the moral high ground to release the robot into the Puerto Rico Trench. Indeed, the only real concern at this point comes from Kara and Vincent. Though their act was accidental, they still struggle with the fact that they killed so many people and caused so much heartache. Kara realizes there was a limit that they should not have crossed. The interview, seemingly all powerful, continues to work around the disaster.

Readers should note specifically that the interviewer meets with an unknown subject – the only one who seems to actually know anything real or personal about the interviewer (that the interviewer has, or had a son); and the subject is also the only one who has any sort of power over the interviewer apart from the President. The unknown subject presents stories, or myths, to the interviewer. These stories explain, without directly saying so, that the robot was part of an imperial outpost for an alien empire; and that the aliens will not hesitate to come take back their device. The story of the king proves to be symbolically ominous for what is assuredly coming. This confirms beyond a shadow of a doubt that the device is alien in origin, but also confirms another important argument Neuvel here makes – that there is more truth to myths than people believe.

Vincent echoes this as he talks about gods and goddesses, and how ancient peoples mistook technology for divine appearance. The presence of such alien life – and the fact that they could easily return to take back their robot – further underscores the thematic argument that there are greater forces at work where Earth is concerned. The interviewer, who seemed all-powerful through the majority of the novel, here appears to be insignificant now given the course of events. However, his influence is still telling in his gathering of the Consortium to recover the robot from the ocean floor. Readers should note here that the interviewer – clearly an American – is overseeing an operation with no direct American involvement under the ominous control of Alyssa. This is very curious, and the answer as to why the interviewer is operating in such a fashion will be revealed soon.



Discussion Question 1

Who is the unknown subject? Why does the interviewer meet with the subject? What is their relationship like? Why does the subject seem to be a rare equal to the interviewer? What does this mean for the interviewer?

Discussion Question 2

What important information does the subject reveal, especially with respect to the device? Why is this so important?

Discussion Question 3

What is so striking about efforts to recover the device at the foot of the Puerto Rico Trench in terms of no real American involvement? Why does the interviewer himself continue to be involved?

Vocabulary

minutiae, predispositions, cineaste, sentient, alterity, dexterity, consortium, modicum, requisite, loathe



Pages 239 – 305

Summary

Part Five: Up in Arms

In File No. 251, the interviewer speaks with Kara who is now proceeding in the device through South Korea with Vincent and a South Korean military jeep escort. They are headed toward the DMZ. As they approach the North Korean border, the North Korean troops below are stunned to see the approach of the device. Alyssa urges Kara to attack, but the interviewer tells Kara not to attack. However, when the North Koreans begin firing RPGs at the device, they must put up the shield. They also learn two North Korean MIGs are on the way. The interviewer tells Kara that Alyssa has found replacement pilots for them that they are to train upon their return. One is Ryan Mitchell. The MIGs then arrive.

In File No. 252, the interviewer meets with Alyssa, who confirms that she has fired Kara for disobeying orders. The interviewer reminds Alyssa that Alyssa does not have the authority to order invasions. Alyssa insists she was defied, and so Kara had to be fired. The interviewer insists Alyssa needs Kara, and Alyssa knows this. The interviewer agrees to a compromise: Kara must be allowed back if Kara voluntarily submits to more tests. The interviewer reminds Alyssa that Alyssa can be replaced – but Kara cannot. Alyssa then tells the interviewer he is fired, that she has spoken to the board of the Consortium. The interviewer then reminds Alyssa of the facts: Twelve days before, she revealed to the world for the second time the alien device, has antagonized the United States, and has raised tensions in Asia. Alyssa essentially stole the device from the auspice of the United States, then returned it to its point of origin in full view of the world. Half the U.S. Navy has been deployed to protect Puerto Rico. Alyssa demands to know why the interviewer did not order her to turn back from the North Korea border sooner, as clearly he knew based on the device's slow speed where it was headed. The interviewer explains his interest is to ensure the project does not fail, and that Alyssa must make peace with Karen. The interviewer will travel to Washington to attempt to handle the crisis Alyssa has created. Alyssa pitifully says she will speak to the board about keeping the interviewer on in some fashion.

In File No. 253, a transcript of GEOINT surveillance by KH-9 Satellite (Big Bird) is compiled at the National Reconnaissance Office in Chantilly, Virginia. The transcript reveals a team of eight armed men in tactical gear pursuing a male (Alpha) and female (Bravo) outside a Puerto Rico compound, with Bravo being taken down and Alpha escaping.

In File No. 254, the interviewer speaks with Vincent Couture, now officially employed as a Consultant for the Gaia Consortium in Bar El Batey, San Juan, Puerto Rico. Vincent explains that Kara was taken by armed men, while he barely made it out. Vincent explains that everything started the day before. He explains that he and Kara, with



Ryan's help, were forced by Alyssa into more tests, but he and Kara resisted. They were then locked up and knew they had to escape the base. They decided to hide out with the garbage and be taken out of the base. Kara needs to be freed, Vincent says. The interviewer agrees, but explains he is in the doghouse at the moment when it comes to his abilities. The interviewer says he could put together a team of mercenaries, but it might be better to speak to the president instead. Vincent says he will stay behind and return to the compound to see what he can do from the inside. The interviewer urges him to try to escape again, as the United States just may decide to cut its losses and destroy the facility if things get too bad. Vincent says he cannot leave Kara alone, because he does not want to spend eternity hearing her complain about how he left her to die in Puerto Rico.

In File No. 255, the unknown subject calling himself Mr. Burns is sought out by the interviewer on his way to the White House. They meet at New Dynasty Chinese Restaurant on Dupont Circle in Washington, D.C. The unknown subject knows just as much about the interviewer as the interviewer knows about others. The interviewer cuts to the chase: he needs the unknown subject's help. The subject explains that "they" are worried. The interviewer explains he is well-aware of things, and he is trying to avoid alarming the alien civilization while preventing chaos on Earth in the here and now. The subject says the problem with the interviewer is that the interviewer is placing the fate of the planet on his shoulders, and it is not in his control. The subject says "they" have not forgotten about Earth, and "they" are keeping a close eye on the interviewer, who is now counted among the adults and can no longer be forgiven childhood mistakes.

"They" do not care if humanity destroys itself – "they" only care about whether or not humanity can be responsible with the power they have acquired through the robot. The interviewer asks if they could stand a chance in combat with their robot against the aliens. The subject points out their robot is an antique, and that it would only take a half-dozen of the aliens' modern robots to wipe out Earth – though the newer weapons are basically the same in terms of using focused energy. The subject hints at the possibility of fighting the aliens from a distance using energy bursts. The interviewer asks why the subject is helping them. The subject explains there are people he loves he does not want to see anything happen to. The interviewer recognizes the subject is a descendant of the aliens, and is embittered about life and essentially being abandoned by the aliens. The subject tells the interviewer the interviewer owes him lunch next time – and a favor.

In File No. 256, it is revealed the interviewer is in contact with Ryan who begs for help for himself and Kara. The interviewer explains he can no longer help, as he and everyone else associated with the project are now considered traitors, and the U.S. Marines are standing by to take the compound in Puerto Rico by force and to arrest everyone. Ryan argues he can secure the base to let the Marines in to stop Alyssa from experimenting on Kara. He will attempt to do so with XREP (mini-Taser-like bullets that produce electric shock when fired) rounds. Ryan runs into Vincent. Vincent is ready to fight, but the interviewer has Ryan explain to Vincent the cavalry is not coming. Vincent quickly agrees to help Ryan. They move forward, taking down six guards. They break into the lab where Kara is sedated and restrained. Ryan then reveals this is why he



called the interviewer: Alyssa has been removing eggs from Kara's uterus to combine them with semen taken from Vincent. With Kara secure, Ryan opens things up for the Marines who move in immediately and cuff Ryan.

In File No. 257, the interviewer meets with Ines Tabib at the White House. Kara and the others have all been arrested, and are fine. The interviewer has not been arrested, thanks to the intervention of the president. Tabib is perplexed by this: the interviewer has coordinated a project with American money, material, and men, then nearly brought the country to war, then ordered the device put into the ocean, then decided to retrieve it to share with other countries. Tabib begins to realize that the president has been in on things the whole time, as has the previous president. The interviewer explains that there is an alternate path that Tabib has missed: because the robot does not belong to any one nation, the fact that a consortium of countries claimed the robot means they no longer have a moral card to play in the game: the United States has the moral high ground, and now has the robot in its custody. The United States must give the robot to the UN, and that the device can never be used to attack another person. It must instead be used to defend the planet – a gift of sorts found and shared by the United States. The interviewer says that Tabib can try the guards from the facility all she wants, but she is to release Vincent, Kara, and Ryan immediately. The interviewer also recommends hunting down Alyssa, who escaped.

In File No. 263, the interviewer speaks with Kara at United States Army Garrison Fort Buchanan, in Puerto Rico. Kara is amazed that Ryan saved the day. The interviewer explains he will be sent back to serve out his sentence in military prison for nearly killing Vincent. The guards, legally employed by a corporation, will probably be released for not doing anything wrong. Alyssa still evades justice, but even if caught, a trial would be messy, the interviewer explains, because Alyssa would claim she was only doing what was ordered of her. The interviewer reveals that Alyssa could be a doctor from Srebrenica who tortured people during the Bosnian War, the Butcher of Srebrenica. The woman the interviewer had Kara track down, he explains – Fata – was a witness to the crimes. The Bosnians could then help build a case against Alyssa, meaning she will be taken out for reasons having nothing to do with the device, thus avoiding a messy trial otherwise. Once she is found, the interviewer explains, she will be “caught” smuggling drugs, which will begin a protracted legal nightmare for her. Kara is impressed by the thoroughness of the interviewer.

The interviewer then reveals the UN is going to be creating the Earth Defense Corps, a standing UN military force meant to defend the planet as a whole. It will be multinational, but consisting primarily of Americans and Canadians for now – Kara and Vincent. As the program grows, it will research the device and ways of defending the planet. Apart from that, Kara and Vincent will have to submit themselves to the public in a publicity campaign, join parades with the device, and do whatever else is expected of them in such form. Kara agrees to join. She also complains happily that Vincent is shopping for a ring.

Epilogue



In File No. 360, an unknown subject at the United States Embassy in Dublin, Ireland, is interviewed. The subject turns out to be Rose Franklin, who claims she passed out on the way to work and woke up on a roadside outside Dublin. Rose has been missing for four years. She should be 31, but her body demonstrates she is 27 despite missing dental work and scars suffered by Rose after the age of 27. Rose cannot recognize any of the pictures of any of the people (including Kara and Vincent) that the interviewer shows her. The interviewer tells Rose there is much they need to discuss.

Analysis

The interviewer, seemingly powerless, reemerges as the most powerful figure in the novel apart from the unknown subject and the new president. The interviewer has orchestrated a masterful plot that gives the United States the moral high ground to donate the device they have taken custody of in order to create the Earth Defense Force—a transnational planetary protection detail that will seek to protect Earth from alien invasion. This seems to have been (or become) the interviewer's ultimate goal: an American-led operation to save the world. Despite this, still nothing else is known of the interviewer—but there is something learned about the unknown subject, that he is the descendant of the aliens, that he is bitter against them, and that he wants to protect those he loves from the reappearance of the aliens.

This demonstrates alarmingly clearly the need for an Earth Defense Force. The EDF in turn symbolizes human hope: the hope for a better future, the hope for a future at all. Readers should also note the power the interviewer holds even over the Assistant to the President: he essentially tells her what she and the president are going to be doing relating to the EDF and that Kara and Vincent are to be released. This only continues to beg questions about just who the interviewer is, and why he has so much power.

However, not all is hopeful. Alyssa has escaped capture following her cruel scientific work done on Kara, with the seeming objective of breeding pilots for the robot. Ryan must return to prison, and his future is unknown. The threat of an alien invasion looms despite the EDF—which may not have the ability to repel the alien invasion at all, or even try to repel it. It is clear that there are still greater forces at work regarding the fate of Earth—and humankind must now think beyond human limits in order to find a way to protect the planet. The limits of human understanding are pushed greatly in the epilogue of the novel, when Rose makes a sudden reappearance in Dublin: four years younger, without any bodily issues, and totally unaware of what happened over the past four years.

Discussion Question 1

Do you believe that the interviewer was ever actually in danger of losing his power at any point in the novel? Why or why not?



Discussion Question 2

What new direction does the interviewer give the United States relating to the moral high ground and the robot? Why does the interviewer propel the United States down this path rather than allowing the United States to remain in custody of the device?

Discussion Question 3

What startling information is revealed by the unknown subject – both about himself and about the aliens? Why does this matter so much? How does the interviewer respond to this? Why?

Vocabulary

egotistical, master plan, imperial, subterfuge, pandemonium, apocalyptic, fundamentally, ambivalence, facetious, clandestinely



Characters

Rose Franklin

Rose Franklin is the Senior Scientist at the Enrico Fermi Institute's department studying the hand. A PH.D, Rose first discovered the hand as an 11-year-old girl, when she fell into the hole containing the hand. Rose, as a scientist, has a healthy respect for mystery and the unknown – not out of fear or superstition, but out of the realization that people do not know everything. It makes her a better, more objective scientist who is aware of human limits. However, her moral concerns about researching and testing the device – knowing it is a weapon in the vein of the atom bomb – does not dissuade her from enjoying her work and wanting to see things through. Rose is later obliterated in an accident with the device, only to wake up four years later in better health than before, and with no memory of the device.

The interviewer

The interviewer, never named or identified, is supremely self-confident and holds a position of extreme importance seemingly in an unknown branch of the American government. The interviewer is tough and harsh when needed, such as when dealing with Woodhull, and kind and responsive when needed, such as dealing with Ryan's romantic feelings for Kara. He is also particularly angered at the mention of his son by the unknown subject, who proves to be his only equal. The interviewer is so powerful he can manipulate events, and has survived multiple presidents without any interruption of his power. He plays weak as needed, and is not afraid to play trump cards as necessary. Kara ultimately sees in the interviewer someone with a good heart, but the interviewer denies this. The interviewer has only two equals: the sitting president, and the unknown subject. The interviewer's true goal and purpose seems to be the defense of Earth, but this cannot be determined for sure.

Kara Resnik

Kara Resnik is a United States Army Chief Warrant Officer 3 (later 4) and helicopter pilot who is also seemingly a descendant of the alien race. Kara is brought onto the device project when her aircraft trails radiation from testing in Syria to reveal a body part from the device itself. Kara is brassy, tough, courageous, and stunningly beautiful. She becomes a pilot for the device. She first has a romantic connection with Ryan, then later Vincent. Kara is later cruelly experimented on by Alyssa who forcibly removes eggs from Kara's ovaries for experiments and research. Rescued by Ryan and Vincent, Kara later agrees to work in the Earth Defense Corps where she will continue to pilot the device.



Ryan Mitchell

Ryan Mitchell is a United States Army Chief Warrant Officer 2 and helicopter pilot who is flying on a mission with Kara when the second body part is discovered. He is then brought on to research and help pilot the device. There, he becomes romantic with Kara but is ultimately passed over for Vincent. In a drunken jealousy, he attempts to run over Vincent, but only crushes Vincent's legs. Ryan is arrested, released from jail to work in Puerto Rico at which time he works for the interviewer to open the base for the U.S. Marines to seize the robot. Ryan does so in the quest for redemption and because he still has feelings for Kara, whom he helps to rescue. Ryan is then returned to prison.

Vincent Couture

Vincent Couture is a linguist and graduate student from Montreal, Canada, who is tasked with deciphering the symbols for the device. He is vain, arrogant, and self-absorbed, but brilliant. He manages to crack the symbol code. It is believed he is a descendant of the alien race, which is why he is later able to work the robot. When Vincent steals Kara from Ryan, Ryan tries to kill Vincent, but only ends up crushing his legs. The interviewer prevails upon Vincent to have titanium legs installed in reverse, so that Vincent can properly operate the robot. Vincent agrees, and later moves on to work in Puerto Rico, and then in the Earth Defense Corps.

Robert Woodhull

Robert Woodhull is the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. Woodhull is constantly annoyed and confounded by the interviewer, usually feeling powerless and out of the loop as the interviewer does not need him to get to the president. Woodhull is enraged by the Denver accident, and he is unable to handle damage control. As a result, his president loses reelection.

Ines Tabib

Ines Tabib is the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, who along with her president, replaces the previous administration. Tabib is at first sated with the power she has, believing she has control over the interviewer. She later learns this is not the case, as she – like Woodhull – is out of the loop and powerless against the interviewer and the president. It is Tabib who must support the giving up of the robot to the UN for the Earth Defense Corps.

Alyssa Papantoniou

Alyssa Papantoniou is a Greek-born geneticist. Sociopathic and ruthless, Alyssa has a stutter when speaking with other people. She believes Rose is too weak to handle the



project, and when Alyssa herself becomes head of the project, the power goes to her head. She performs cruel and forced experiments on Kara and Vincent to learn why and how they can power the robot – including forcibly removing eggs from Kara’s ovaries. Alyssa’s use of the robot to nearly cause war in Korea leads to the United States moving in to seize her base in Puerto Rico, along with the robot. Alyssa manages to escape, and her whereabouts are unknown at the end of the novel.

The unknown subject

The unknown subject, who calls himself Mr. Burns, is an elderly lover of Chinese food, specifically Kung Pao Chicken. He is brilliant, and knows far more than he lets on. The unknown subject is revealed to be a descendant of the alien race who brought the device to Earth, and is embittered toward the alien race for abandoning their kind. He is now fully in favor of humanity, wanting to protect those he loves from the aliens. How the unknown subject knows the interviewer, or how the subject knows what he knows about the interviewer is not revealed, but it is clear that the subject is one of only two equals to the interviewer in the novel.

The President of the United States

The President of the United States is mentioned but never seen in the novel. There are two presidents through the course of the novel. Both prove to be equals to the interviewer, and are willing to cooperate and work with the interviewer as needed, no matter who they must go around or what laws they must violate to do so.



Symbols and Symbolism

The device

The device symbolizes a reordering and reprioritizing of the world, destruction, and hope. The device, also called the big girl, the robot, the machine, and by other similar names, is a 6,000 year old alien weapon sent to Earth with a contingent of alien troops (and 11 other devices) 6,000 years before the novel to defend the planet as the outmost lying colony of an alien empire. The device is discovered by Rose, and reassembled. It takes the form of a beautiful young girl with no eyes and large breasts wearing armor, is composed of extremely rare metals like iridium, is illuminated by turquoise lights, and is powered by exposure to radioactive material. The device generates a shield and sword to fight with, and can emit bursts of brilliant light that seemingly obliterate anything in its path, perhaps even sending it outside time. The device can only be operated by descendants of the aliens. When discovered by the public, people are stunned by not surprised alien life should exist elsewhere. It forces nations and people to rethink priorities and cooperation with one another. It also leads to the establishment of the Earth Defense Corps, with the device as its central feature, in the hopes it will help them defend against the aliens when they return.

Case files

Case files symbolize the interviewer's records of operation. The interviewer collects documents, diary entries, transcripts, and audio and video recordings of important events and interviews with important people. These case files form the novel, and demonstrate the scope and scale of the interviewer's efforts regarding the device and surrounding research project.

The hand

The hand symbolizes mystery and the fate of Earth. The mystery regarding the hand – who built it, why, and for what purpose – is slowly determined through the course of the novel. It is part of an alien device meant to defend Earth, built by an alien civilization. The hand therein symbolizes either the use of the machine by humanity to destroy or defend humanity. The fate the hand implies ultimately rests in the choices made by humanity. The interviewer and others in power are determined the hand's fate should be that of life and hope.

Radioactive material

Radioactive material symbolizes human advancement. Vincent theorizes that the device was left behind to be discovered and used by human civilization when it had advanced to a specific point. That specific point, he explains, is clearly the mastering of the atom



and the use of nuclear material. The radioactive material produced by man in turn powers the robot.

ARCANA

ARCANA symbolizes the efforts of Rose's team to draw out the scattered metallic body parts. Argon-Rich Compound for Aerial Nocturnal Application, or ARCANA, is developed by Rose as the search-and-recovery operation in which the various pieces of the device are tracked down and reassembled. ARCANA involves discovering the devices by spreading light amounts of argon over an area until the corresponding device piece bursts to life.

Cover stories

Cover stories symbolize deception. Following incidents like Denver International Airport and the North Korea disaster, the interviewer and the American government are forced to come up with cover stories that explain away these incidents while securing American power and capabilities in their wake. These stories are intended to deceive the public in order to allow work to continue.

The account of alien empire

The account of alien empire symbolizes foundational information needed by the interviewer. The account – in which Earth, as the most far-flung colony of an alien empire given the devices and a contingent of soldiers to defend it – is told to the interviewer by the unknown subject, a descendant of the aliens. The story demonstrates how dangerous and how powerful the alien empire is.

The story of the king and his sons

The story of the king and his sons is an omen. The story is told to the interviewer by the unidentified subject. The story features two princes who fight over who gets to wield their father's sword, and one of the boys dies as the king returns. The story ominously serves to warn mankind that the aliens will return for their device if the device is ill-used.

Kara's stolen eggs

Kara's stolen eggs symbolize the maniacal nature of Alyssa. Alyssa forcibly removes eggs from Kara's ovaries in order to breed pilots for the device. The eggs demonstrate Alyssa is bound by no moral code or constraint, and that she will do whatever she must to achieve her ends and pilot the robot.



The Earth Defense Corps

The Earth Defense Corps (EDC) symbolizes human hope. It is the brainchild of the interviewer on behalf of the United Nations, formed by the gift of the robot to the world not as a measure of war against other people, but as a measure of defense of the planet against aliens. The sole purpose of the EDC will be to protect, and find new ways to protect, the planet against alien attack.

Settings

Deadwood

Deadwood is a town in South Dakota where Rose grows up. It is in the woods near Deadwood on her eleventh birthday that Rose discovers the hand in the ground, which propels her down a lifetime path of research and wonder about the hand. Rose, in adulthood, leaves Deadwood, and does not even return for the funeral of her father. Although she feels roots in Deadwood, she does not wish to be around the place anymore, and so she works to secure her life in Chicago at the forefront of one of the nation's most prestigious scientific institutes.

The hole

The hole contains the hand in the woods near Deadwood. Composed of the same metal materials as the hand, the hole is square in shape and lined with symbols that are later deciphered to be numbers. Rose considers the hole and the symbols to be secondary to the purpose of the hand, but her time in the hole is life-changing. It helps reinforce her love of science, and forms the root of the mystery she will try to solve as an adult.

The Enrico Fermi Institute at the University of Chicago

The Enrico Fermi Institute at the University of Chicago is where Rose oversees the research program into the hand. It also becomes the initial site for reconstruction before efforts are moved to Denver International Airport. The Institute is prestigious and known for its scientific exploits, research, and advances, and so it is only natural that Rose should come into possession of the hand to study it there initially. The Institute ultimately proves too small for the assembling, which is why Denver is sought out.

Denver International Airport

Denver International Airport, in Denver Colorado, is where secret underground facilities located beneath the runways and some of the buildings are located where Rose reestablishes her device research project with assistance from the interviewer. There, they have the space, quiet, and security to actually reconstruct the entire robot. It is in Denver as well that Vincent and Kara accidentally generate an explosion from the device, leading to tremendous destruction and the deaths of 311 people, not including Kara. Denver thus becomes a fiasco and exposes the project to the world.

Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico is a country and territory of the United States of America in the Caribbean. It is in Puerto Rico that the Consortium establishes operations to retrieve the device from the Puerto Rico Trench. It is in Puerto Rico that Alyssa takes control of the project, attempts to force out the interviewer, and begins to wield a terrifying control over Kara and Vincent, as well as operations relating to the robot. U.S. Marines later seize the compound in Puerto Rico, securing the device in American custody.

Washington, D.C.

Washington, D.C. is the capital of the United States of America. It is where the interviewer meets with two presidents, their representatives, and members of their respective administrations. It is where the interviewer puts his power into action, forging United States policy relating to international affairs and the robot. Washington, D.C., is where the interviewer also meets with the unknown subject, and learns the truth about the hand, the device, and the alien empire.



Themes and Motifs

Respecting human limits helps us to reach beyond those limits

Respecting human limits helps us to reach beyond those limits, argues Sylvain Neuvel in his novel *Sleeping Giants*. Humankind faces three principal kinds of limits in the novel: those of knowledge, those of technology, and those of morality. The limits of each must be understood to make proper or beneficial choices and decisions.

The hand proves to be mysterious to early researchers because they think inside the box. They do not recognize that they need to look at the hand beyond the limits of their own knowledge. They ascribe the hand to an ancient American Indian civilization. Rose recognizes human beings do not know everything, and so approaches it with an open mind. Because of this, she recognizes the decidedly nonhuman, non-Earthly origins of the device.

The hand, when assembled with the device, denotes a kind of technology that human beings are not capable of, not even in the 2010s. The device is a weapon the likes of which the world has never seen. Because of this, it must be used properly. In turn, it decided that the device will be used as the core feature of the UN's Earth Defense Corps. Rather than destroying humanity with such weapons, humankind will protect all of humanity with it as they recognize their own technology cannot match it – or anything the aliens bring against them.

Human morality plays a key role in respect to the hand. Rose herself considers the hand in lieu of the atomic bomb, Oppenheimer, and the scientists associated with the Manhattan Project. Oppenheimer regretted his work on the bomb after the fact, but at the time, pushed aside moral limits to see where science could take him. Rose also has moral concerns, but she pushes these aside to see where science can take her. As a result, hundreds of people die in Denver when the continued project leads to the accident caused by Vincent and Kara.

Humankind is not alone in the universe and the implications are far-reaching

Humankind is not alone in the universe and the implications are far-reaching, argues Sylvain Neuvel in his novel *Sleeping Giants*. As his characters note in the novel, people have become desensitized to things like alien life thanks to books, movies, and popular culture. When alien life is acknowledged in the novel, most people accept it because they already believed it – but it still has important consequences.

First, the confirmation of alien life causes nations to reprioritize. At first, the struggle is about who will have control of the giant device given whatever nation holds it, rules. The



United States submerges the device so no one will have it, thus taking the element of global supremacy off the table. But even without the device, alien life must still be contended with.

Nations begin to cooperate more closely with one another, even countries traditionally antagonistic, such as Russia. Border disputes and international friction seem much less significant given that Earth is no longer alone in terms of harboring intelligent life. Several countries come together to form the Consortium, which in turn gives way to American intervention and the establishment of the Earth Defense Corps under the UN.

Indeed, the American decision to give up the robot to the UN to form the Earth Defense Corps recognizes that differences between people are no longer relevant, though countries like North Korea continue on as if nothing has changed. The establishment of the EDC recognizes the common humanity of all human beings, which may well be threatened by alien forces. Rather than falling apart, the world comes together. What the future of the EDC may be is unknown, but the fact that such a transnational organization has been formed is demonstrative of the desire of humankind to work together.

Human beings are not as advanced as we believe, but we have made great strides

Human beings are not as advanced as we believe, but we have made great strides, argues Sylvain Neuvel in his novel *Sleeping Giants*. This is exemplified in the device and the alien civilization that leaves it behind. It is also exemplified in the knowledge that this very same alien civilization may have to be fought.

Early on, thinking outside the box, Rose begins to wonder if the hand was not left behind by an alien civilization as a means of communicating with human beings when humanity had advanced enough to operate the device. Vincent, too, shares the theory in that such communication is possible given commonalities between them – such as numbers. While humans have mastered the atom, which in turn gives rise to radioactive material that can be used to power the device, it also demonstrates that human beings themselves have no such devices.

There is great pride in human advancement, but there are still limits. Early researchers believed the hand could be traced to American Indians. The researchers knew a lot, but not enough to accurately determine the hand's origins. For all the advances humans have made in linguistics, human pride is evident when the brightest cannot crack the code – until Vincent goes back to simple basic numbers. This demonstrates abject hubris on the part of mankind to be so concerned with their advances, they had forgotten their basics.

Additionally, the device itself could be used to defend the world since there are no weapons like it. But even this could be folly as the unknown subject reminds the interviewer the device is 6,000 years old, essentially an antique compared to anything



the aliens have now. Even with alien technology at their disposal, humans are still far behind in technology. Human beings can build nuclear bombs and commandeer alien technology, but they cannot actually build it or improve upon it themselves.

There is more truth to myth than people think

There is more truth to myth than people think, argues Sylvain Neuvel in his novel *Sleeping Giants*. The novel includes several stories and references to myths of ancient civilizations, such as the Greeks, while the alien civilization is being spoken about. While modern humans consider most such stories and myths to be merely that – fiction – Neuvel reminds readers that even these cannot be dismissed as untruths.

The completion of the device reveals a gorgeous young warrior girl who reminds Vincent and the interviewer of ancient Greece. The girl, like American conceptions of Lady Justice based on ancient Greek goddesses, is blind (Lady Justice is blindfolded and the warrior device has no eyes). Vincent considers that ancient civilizations must have encountered the aliens and their devices, and understandably mistaken them for gods.

The unknown subject provides a story to the interviewer regarding the origin of the devices, about a king who sought to support even the most far-flung edges of his empire with important war devices and contingents of soldiers. Taken lightly, the story could be about a Roman Emperor or a medieval king or an Arab warlord. But taken in context of the device, it is clear the truth in the story is that it involves how alien war devices came to be on Earth.

The unknown subject also provides a story about a king who leaves his sword behind with his two sons when he is away, only for the sons to war over the sword and one of them to die. The king returns to discover what has happened, only to take back the sword. Taken lightly, the story is about the importance of responsibility and unity – but taken in context, it is an omen for the return of the aliens for their device.

There are greater forces guiding events on Earth

There are greater forces guiding events on Earth, argues Sylvain Neuvel in his novel *Sleeping Giants*. These forces include the interviewer, the subject, two presidents, and the aliens. These forces work behind the scenes, and sometimes in full view of the public, to order events on Earth.

Readers are first exposed to the interviewer, who is an American who wields such tremendous power that he is only rivaled by the president – but he is so powerful he remains when presidents come and go. The interviewer works behind the scenes, putting together the device project, orchestrating foreign policy, securing funding, providing advice, and even delivering orders. The Earth Defense Fund is the brainchild of the interviewer, and the fate of the planet rests on his singular decision.



The two presidents readers encounter in the novel (spoken of, but never seen) are both completely in cooperation with the interviewer. They work behind the backs of even their own staffs and most trusted friends and advisors to create policy and plans with the interviewer. When the device is exposed at Denver, the president announces to the world that aliens exist – and in full public view, manipulates events at the behest of the interviewer which will ultimately lead to the EDC.

The aliens are spoken of, their effects are seen (the device), but the aliens themselves are never personally encountered. The aliens have claimed Earth as a colony that they once fortified against the threat of invasion, and have left behind one of their devices to seemingly be used by humankind when humankind is advanced enough to do so. Earth's safety was once assured by the aliens, but now it seems to be in doubt. It would seem as if the aliens wish to invade and take back their device, or to destroy the planet. At the present, it seems as if humankind has no real way of protecting the planet beyond the device they have – and even this is in doubt against forces greater than their own.

Styles

Point of View

Sylvain Neuvel tells his novel *Sleeping Giants* in the first-person perspective from the points of view of each of the characters involved in the novel through transcripts of their own words. There is scant narration beyond this (occurring only in a handful of diary entries and similar transcripts), leaving the characters themselves, speaking to one another, to narrate events of the novel. The most common narrator is the interviewer, who appears in nearly every section of the novel. Indeed, the files that form the novel are believed to be in the possession of the interviewer himself. Because Neuvel approaches his work with a strong emphasis on science, it is only natural that those in the thick of the novel—in the thick of research, policy, and experimenting on the device—should tell their own stories just as scientists record their own observations, results, and thoughts relating to their work.

Language and Meaning

Sylvain Neuvel tells his novel *Sleeping Giants* in language that varies according to the individual. Because nearly everything in the novel is told in the first-person from multiple points of view (from different characters), it is only natural the language differ according to each character. The interviewer's language is calm, simple, and very measured. He is not one to use contractions or slang. He is very deliberate in what he says. Kara's language is casual, sometimes foul, and full of exclamatory remarks, reflecting her brassy and independent nature. The language employed by Rose and Vincent in turn often uses large vocabulary and obscure scientific and linguistic terms, reflecting their stellar intelligence and level of education. In Vincent's case, this probably has more to do with the fact that he is a descendant of the aliens.

Structure

Sylvain Neuvel divides his novel *Sleeping Giants* into seven primary parts. The novel begins with a prologue in which Rose discovers the hand, and ends in an epilogue when Rose suddenly reappears in Ireland. The interior five parts form the bulk of the novel. Each part is given a number and title to identify it, with the title referencing a part of the plot in some way. For example, Part Two: Break a Leg involves Vincent's legs being crushed. The parts themselves are divided up into chapter-like sections identified as Case Files. Each case file is a transcript of a recorded conversation, or may be a document such as a diary entry or a drone log. It is surmised the case files are all in the possession of the interviewer, who features into the majority of these case files. The case files, told by participants in their own words, symbolize a record of the interviewer's operations in a very systematic way, which in turn reflects the thoroughness of the



Quotes

It was my eleventh birthday. I'd gotten a new bike from my father... I really wanted to ride it...

-- Rose (Prologue)

Importance: Here, Rose sets the stage for the events and the novel to come. She recalls her eleventh birthday party where she received a bike from her father. She could not wait for the party to end so she could go out and go riding. It is because of this she comes upon the hole and falls in.

There I was, this tiny little thing at the bottom of the hole, lying on my back in the palm of a giant metal hand.

-- Rose (Prologue)

Importance: When Rose wakes up in the morning after falling in the hole, she realizes the hole is square shaped. She also realizes her father and some firemen are far above her, preparing to raise her out of the hole. When she looks at pictures of the incident later on, she realizes she had fallen into the palm of a gigantic metallic hand.

What's fascinating is how much effort they put into disproving their own findings.

-- Rose (File No. 003)

Importance: Here, Rose talks about the confusion relating to the hand and the hole. Tests demonstrated the hole to be 3,000 years old, while the hand 5,000 or 6,000 years old. However, this did not fit with what was known about American Indian tribes at the time, as there was no American Indian civilization advanced enough for such a thing – and therefore the conclusion was that the hole was contaminated and the hand actually belonged to a religious site for a branch of the Mississippian civilization.

Perhaps I was biased – because I stumbled onto it – but I felt drawn to the hand. I couldn't explain it, but every fiber of my being was telling me the hand was the important piece.

-- Rose (File No. 003)

Importance: Here, Rose explains to the interviewer that she is less bothered by questions of age and language relating to the hand. Instead, she reveals, she is more interested in the overall hand itself. The hand itself is beautifully built and constructed from incredibly rare metals. She believes the hand itself is the key to understanding the people who built it, and why.

This is all pure speculation, of course, but if that's what they did, I'm impressed.

-- Rose (File No. 007)

Importance: Here, Rose offers her first theory about the hand. She believes it may have been built by a people or beings who wanted to communicate with an advanced



humanity, but only once that humanity would be capable of understanding what the builders had done. Rose thinks that the harnessing of the atom's power and the use of argon could lead to the activation of the things left behind, making communication possible.

It challenges us. It spits in the face of physics, anthropology, religion. It rewrites history. It dares us to question everything we know about ourselves... about everything.
-- Rose (File No. 007)

Importance: Here, Rose lays out the one known truth about the hand. Whatever it may be, and whatever purpose it may have, it challenges everything people think they know about everything. As such, the hand must be approached with an open-mind because it rewrites human knowledge. Based on this, a team is built together to track down and recover the missing pieces of the body.

Then rest assured, Mr. Mitchell, we are all in this for the greater good.
-- The interviewer (File No. 017)

Importance: Here, Ryan Mitchell asks about the interviewer's intent with the entire recovery and research project. The interviewer explains that everything they are doing is for the greater good. Ryan seems to agree, and so he continues to work with great courage and dedication.

Let me get this straight. You want this president to authorize violating the airspace of every single country on the planet so you can spread radioactive material over them, all in the hopes of finding parts of a giant alien robot. Is that all?
-- Robert Woodhull (File No. 34)

Importance: Here, the interviewer speaks with the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs about what will be needed to continue the operation to recover the pieces of what now seems to be a vehicle. The interviewer confirms what Robert says about needing to violate airspace, but explains that the government must be willing to do anything it needs to in order to secure the pieces once they are found.

Am I ready to accept all that may come out of this if it works? It might give us a cure for everything. It might also have the power to kill millions. Do I want that on my conscience?
-- Rose (File No. 41)

Importance: Rose considers the potential moral consequences of reassembling and operating the device in full. It could be amazing, or it could be destructive. She wonders if she can live with the consequences on her conscience whatever they may be. She decides she can, because she believes the device is bigger than her or anyone else.

I've been giving a lot of thought to Oppenheimer and the Manhattan Project these past few days. I haven't been building a bomb, but it's becoming increasingly difficult to ignore a very simple truth. I am building a weapon, and a formidable one at that.



-- Rose (File No. 182)

Importance: Here, Rose begins to compare herself to Oppenheimer and the scientists who worked on the atomic bomb during World War II – a weapon the likes of which the world had never seen. Rose knows the robot she is now putting back together is a weapon that will dwarf even the atomic bomb. The weapon Rose is now overseeing construction of is something the world has, once again, never seen before.

If you left a weapon with someone so they could defend themselves, and you found out they were killing each other with it, you'd probably want to take it back or get rid of it. It's just common sense, really.

-- Unknown subject (File No. 230)

Importance: The interviewer meets with an unknown subject – the only one who seems to know anything real or personal about the interviewer, and the only one who has any sort of power over the interviewer (apart from the President). The interviewer tells the story of an alien race that left the robot on Earth as a way to defend its most far-flung colony. The interviewer also tells the story of a King whose sons killed one another over the right to wield his sword, meaning that whoever left the robot behind, will probably want to return to secure it first.

My name is Rose Franklin.

-- Rose (Epilogue/File No. 360)

Importance: Here, Rose, believed dead, ends up talking to the interviewer in Dublin. She has appeared four years younger and with no memory of the four years she spent working on the hand. How Rose ended up in Dublin, younger, and healthier, is beyond anyone's comprehension - but proves to be the cliffhanger mystery for the end of the novel that will help feed into the second book in the series.