

Spin Study Guide

Spin by Robert Charles Wilson

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Plot Summary

Spin is an award-winning science-fiction novel published in 2005 by American author Robert Charles Wilson. Spin starts as the narrator, Tyler Dupree, recounts a night of October when he and his two close teenage friends witness the disappearance of the moon and the stars from the night's sky. Earth is enclosed in an artificial bubble that slows down time. While the rest of the universe ages at a very high speed and the sun decays into an uncontrolled ball of radiating fire, the people on earth try to cope with the seemingly unavoidable catastrophe. Spin is the story of the life of three friends, spanning the three decades of the Spin, as humans try to make sense of this incredible event.

From his hotel room in Indonesia, Tyler Dupree recalls the night in October when three young teenagers witnessed the disappearance of the stars from the night's sky. The youngsters soon learn that their planet has been wrapped in an energy field of alien origin and nicknamed the "Spin". Satellites are suddenly obsolete, time is more relative than ever and the end of the world is closer than everyone thought.

As life on earth remains unaffected by the Spin, the initial reaction to the Spin is minimal. Tyler and his two friends grow up their separate ways. Jason dedicates his life to learning about the Spin phenomenon. His twin sister Diane gets lost in the various religious movements that derived from the Spin. Finally, Tyler studies to become a doctor. Tyler has been in love with Diane from a very young age but their relationship remains mostly platonic.

Through his industrial business, Jason's father gains political influence and builds Perihelion, a foundation dedicated to researching the Spin and advising the government on related matters. Jason becomes the public voice of Perihelion and hires Tyler as the in-house practitioner. Humans send capsules of Earth seeds to Mars to build a biosphere on the red planet. Mars is then colonized by volunteers and a Martian civilization erupts. Soon a Spin wraps around Mars, stopping further development. However, a Martian ambassador lands on Earth, bringing along some technological marvel from the Martian civilization, but no coherent information about the Aliens that built the Spin. Tyler befriends the ambassador and uses a Martian drug on Jason to save him from the ravages of Multiple Sclerosis.

During this time, Diane keeps her distance, settles down and marries Simon Townsend, a religious sect leader. Tyler's mother Belinda dies. Simon calls Tyler and informs him that Diane has become sick from a cattle-borne disease named CVWS. The disease is related to the genetic manipulations performed by some religious cults. The Spin appears to be taken down and the heat from the decayed Sun threatens the planet. Tyler picks up Simon and Diane and drives to the twin's house. Jason is already in the house, dying from a different version of the drug. Tyler injects Diane with the original Martian drug to save her and learns the truth about the Aliens from Jason, who dies just as the Spin barrier is raised once again. Diane recovers, divorces Simon and flees with

Tyler to Canada and then to Indonesia. Tyler takes the Martian drug to level with Diane and they both flee across the bridge built by the Aliens to a new and promising planet.



Four Times Ten to the Ninth Power A.D.; The Big House

Four Times Ten to the Ninth Power A.D.; The Big House Summary

Diane and Tyler are in a hotel in Padang, Indonesia. They are looking at the Archway on the horizon, a magnificent bridge-like structure that rises high from the Indian Ocean and into the sky. Tyler reflects on his past and worries about the possibility of losing some of his memory to the recovery process. He concludes that he should start writing down his story from memory while he is undergoing the treatment. They both sit on the hotel bed and Diane injects a liquid in Tyler's arm.

On a chilly October night, Tyler Dupree and his two friends, the thirteen-year-old twins Diane and Jason Lawton, are sitting on a lawn discussing their relative knowledge of the stars, along with other more mundane subjects. Jason and Diane, who are about a year older than Tyler, are gifted children who attend a special private school. As Diane scrutinizes the rooms of the Big House with the children's powerful binoculars, she sees the stars flicker and then disappear from the sky.

Jason interrupts his father's social gathering to let him know about the event. The children wonder if the sun will come up the next day. Tyler returns to his house and the children stay up all night, listening to newscasts, which seem to systematically avoid the subject. Diane and Tyler keep calling each other while waiting for the morning sun to show up on the horizon. At dawn, something that looks like the sun rises again over the world.

Four Times Ten to the Ninth Power A.D.; The Big House Analysis

The novel starts with a first chunk of what will soon be revealed as its second to last chapter. Other parts of the same chapter later serve as introductions and dividers for the remaining sections of the novel. In this first part, the author sets a few facts straight: Tyler and Diane are together and alive, Jason is dead, human civilization is still standing, the stars are visible and there is a thousand-kilometer-wide structure that bridges Earth to space, starting in the middle of the Indian Ocean.

Setting the outcome of the story from the onset of a novel might appear counter-intuitive, yet it fits perfectly with the goal of the book, which is to show that it is the journey that really matters and that you cannot bet on the outcome of events that you are unable to understand.

The chapter named "The Big House" starts the main storyline as a series of journal entries by the narrator. From the onset, it describes a defining event - first referred to as the October Event, then later on as the Spin. This allows the author to develop the characters based on that event and its consequences. In Spin, the main characters are defined by a situation they are struggling to adapt to. This is in contrast with traditional approach to novel writing, which involves pre-defined characters that confront new situations.



Coming of Age in Boiling Water

Coming of Age in Boiling Water Summary

Before being known as a consequence of the Spin, the disappearance of the stars and the moon from the sky was first referred to as the "October Event" by the media. The first human casualty of the said event was the failure of all satellite-based communication networks; everything from GPS, broadcast television and international surveillance systems are suddenly useless. All space programs are suspended indefinitely. It turns out that the bright disc that shines on the horizon is but an imitation of the original star that used to light up the sky.

Jason, a science genius in the making, retreats to his room for months. He is intent on finding out what happened on that night of October. However, the general population reacts with relative indifference during the first few months following the event. After all, nothing changed dramatically, as the tides kept coming, the seasons kept alternating and the fake sun kept shining. Eventually, newscasts started to report that the recovered satellites that fell back to Earth were showing signs of aging far beyond what was expected. Jason tells Tyler that one of the three Russian cosmonauts orbiting Earth on the night of the October event survived the crash of his capsule, but he was deemed crazy by the authorities. It was later revealed that the cosmonaut insisted he was in orbit for weeks even though the vessel made it back to Earth on the same day they were scheduled to land.

Jason tries out Tyler's clunky bicycle for a ride but the vehicle breaks while going downhill. Jason escapes with little harm but his father tells Tyler that he has to watch over his son.

Coming of Age in Boiling Water Analysis

This chapter establishes the consequences of the defining event. The narrator maintains the suspense by hinting at the real nature of the Spin while avoiding to give too many details. In *Spin*, information only comes drip by drip, either because it is filtered by governmental agencies and news media for political purposes, or because the true nature of the event is uncertain or plain unknown. The example of the Russian cosmonaut's story being discarded by the authorities as the result of a mental problem on the part of the individual foreshadows a later episode where the American authorities threaten to sideline Jason as irrelevant because of his medical condition. The novel shows that the political filtering of information is a powerful tool that constantly plays with the public perception of the events that affects the population.

The bicycle episode is used to emphasize the difference in social status between the twins and the narrator. It also demonstrates one of Jason's main characteristics, "his unflappable belief that he could make it come out right, all by himself, if only he tried



hard enough, if only he didn't lose control" (p. 35). This particular character trait will be an important factor as the story develops and Jason becomes an important player whose own body proves as frail as a clunky, defective bicycle.



Time Out of Joint

Time Out of Joint Summary

Five years after the October Event, E.D. Lawton secretly reveals to his son Jason the truth about the Spin. By this time, his aerostats manufacturing company has become very powerful and his political influence has grown immensely. The teenagers attend a sledding party during which Diane sets up a disastrous date for Tyler. Later that evening, Jason relays to Diane and Tyler the information that his father told him earlier: Scientists have discovered that Earth is wrapped in a membrane that filters out objects, radiations and even time. In effect, this means that time passes much faster outside of the Spin than it does inside the Earth's atmosphere. During the five years since the October Event, the rest of the universe aged over five hundred million years. Jason adds that one of the consequences of this situation is that within half a century, the Sun will decay in such a way that the blue planet will be swallowed by the burning star.

Time Out of Joint Analysis

This chapter hints that the filtering of information is an important tool used by politicians. Five years after the October Event, the general public is still unaware of one of the basic properties of the Spin: The barrier filters out the passage of time. As a matter of fact, for every second that passes on Earth, the rest of the universe ages 3.17 years. By now, E.D. is such an important figure in the political world that he has access to privileged information. He passes this information to his son and heir, not because the information is immediately relevant to him, but rather because information is generally valuable in the hands of those who can use it.

However, the anticipated "end of the world" caused by the decaying sun is a key to the future of life under the Earth's Spin. It creates a world where the life of every young person will be cut short and everything that they build is doomed from the start to burn to ashes before its time. It is safe to say that life on Earth can only work if the individuals can safely assume that the world will go on after them.



Four Times Ten to the Ninth Power A.D.; Rumors of Apocalypse Reach the Berkshires

Four Times Ten to the Ninth Power A.D.; Rumors of Apocalypse Reach the Berkshires Summary

Hiding in the Padang hotel, Tyler starts to recover from the Martian drug injection. The narrator feels intense pain because of the drug but he says that writing from memory keeps his mind off the pain. Diane goes out to the city to locate a contact that will help them emigrate illegally. She mentions to Tyler that she already contacted Jala, a Minang who runs an import-export business as a cover-up for an illicit emigration brokerage. Diane reads some of Tyler's writing and seems surprised by how much he thought of her back in the early days. Tyler reveals that he fell in love with her when he was ten, after her dog died.

In the years that followed the initial October Event, the three friends grow up and go on separate ways in life. Diane deals with the Spin by following the religious path. Jason is a brilliant student that dedicates his life to the study of the Spin. Jason works at Perihelion, a foundation led by his father and dedicated to dealing with the Spin. Finally, Tyler chooses to become a medical doctor and studies at Stony Brook. On the year of Tyler's graduation, Jason invites him to a summer house rented by his father in the Berkshires and the two men chat.

Jason Lawton tells Tyler that Diane, who is almost engaged, will come to the house soon. He says that the Chinese are threatening to send nuclear missiles to the cubic structures that are hovering hundreds of miles over the Earth's poles, just outside the Spin. He also reveals that one of Perihelion's projects is to colonize Mars, first by sending seeds that will grow a biosphere on the red planet, then by sending humans as part of a plan to start a civilization of their own. Given that time passes much faster outside the spin than it does on Earth, chances are that an entire civilization could spawn on Mars in only a few months of Spin time. Jason insists that all this information should remain highly confidential.

Tyler talks to his mother on the phone. He learns that she is sick but that she is taking medicine. She is talking about leaving her job as a housekeeper for the Lawtons.



Four Times Ten to the Ninth Power A.D.; Rumors of Apocalypse Reach the Berkshires Analysis

This chapter continues to use the mirror effect, as the narrator writes about writing the very same "journal" that makes the novel. However, the narrator purposely leaves a lot of questions unanswered and a lot of holes in the story. These holes will be filled later on by further developments of the story.

This chapter is set years later in the timeline of the story. It describes the different paths taken by the youngsters who first witnessed the disappearance of the stars. It also connects with future defining events, such as the "terraforming" of Mars. Just as he did previously by announcing the end of the world to his friend Tyler, Jason continues to provide him with advanced information about the Spin. This continuously drives the novel forward, as it provides a flow of key details related to the Spin.



No Single Thing Abides

No Single Thing Abides Summary

On the day that Diane is supposed to show up at the summer house, Jason warns Tyler that his sister is part of the New Kingdom (NK), a Christian Hedonist movement borne out of the fear of the end of the world. Diane shows up, accompanied by Simon Townsend, a leader among the local followers of the NK movement. Like his father before him, Jason does not like Simon but tolerates him. Simon does not work and the couple lives on small revenues from an inheritance and from the sect. Jason offers Simon a ride in his Ferrari so that they can get a part for their broken car. While this is going on and without further warning, the Chinese nuclear missiles hit the alien artifacts hovering over the Earth's poles.

Jason calls Tyler to tell him to look at the flickering sky. The call interrupts a discussion between him and Diane. Tyler and Diane end up making love in a room upstairs. In the morning, Diane prepares to leave and tells Tyler that their physical encounter does not mean that she will leave Simon, only that she was expressing feelings that she cannot talk about with words.

No Single Thing Abides Analysis

In the world of literature, the universe sometimes mimics the emotional events happening on Earth. In this case, a flickering of the otherwise dark and featureless sky corresponds to a physical union between two of the protagonists, Tyler and Diane. The episode is also used to underline the dangerous difference of opinions that are dividing the world along political lines. The firing of nuclear missiles at the anchors of the Spin hovering over the planet's poles is a logical, if a little barbaric and shortsighted reaction. In the end, the attack served no purpose but to scare the population.

Even though she is as the ultimate romantic goal of the narrator, Diane's character remains in the shadows during most of the novel. Her brother Jason appears to know her much better than Tyler, who is blinded by his interest. Referring to Simon, Jason asserts, "[h]e's exactly what she wants. He's the last thing she needs." (p. 80).



Four Times Ten to the Ninth Power A.D.; Unquiet Nights

Four Times Ten to the Ninth Power A.D.; Unquiet Nights Summary

Tyler is now into his second week of recovery from the injection. The symptoms are getting worse and he suffers from disorientation, physical pain resembling arthritis, and extreme rash. Diane, who is supposed to be supervising him, leaves and is nowhere to be found. Tyler recalls the day when Jason was forced by E.D. to spend a whole evening trying to repair an old lawnmower he had previously taken apart.

After a long absence, Diane finally shows up, only to tell Tyler that they have to leave right away and that a cab is waiting at the hotel's door for them. She does not give a reason other than that they have to run away from dangerous people; Tyler makes his way out of the hotel with great difficulty and they disappear in the slums that surround the city of Padang.

In the following chapter, Five years after the failed attempt by the Chinese to nuke the Spin, Tyler is called by Jason to replace Dr. Koenig, the General Practitioner at Perihelion. Tyler hesitates to make the move to Florida. He discusses his hesitation with Gisele, a neighbor and friend of his who works as a waitress by day and as a prostitute by night. She tells him that since he is so infatuated with the Lawtons, he might as well move to Orlando.

During the flight to Orlando aboard an old Airbus, he reflects on the past few years and his thoughts come back to Diane. Since the Chinese attack on the Spin, the New Kingdom movement was more or less dismantled. Tyler reads though a few articles he brought with him concerning the religious sects, including a paper related to the strange cult of the Red Heifer.

Tyler rents a car in Orlando and drive to the Perihelion headquarters, which are located next to the installation of NASA. He meets with Jason and the latter sends him to a hotel while they prepare an apartment for him on the coast. Jason says that he rarely hears from Diane, since he is extremely busy with the Martian project. He adds that they are close to sending the first seeds out to Mars and that E.D. spends most of his time in Washington, leaving him mostly in charge. Jason says that he has not been feeling too well lately and asks Tyler to check out his symptoms. Tyler agrees and fears for his friend's health.



Four Times Ten to the Ninth Power A.D.; Unquiet Nights Analysis

Diane disappears once again, leaving Tyler to his own thoughts. Reflecting on his past, he remembers an episode where Jason's father gave him a life lesson the hard way by forcing him to finish what he started. This was obviously a test of character, which Jason passed relatively easily. The constant struggle of power between E.D. and Jason, which seems to fascinate Tyler, points to the latter's own absent father figure. It also demonstrates the submissiveness of Jason and his willingness to outdo himself in the face of adversity.

In the following chapter, the story skips another extended period of time during which nothing seems to happen. The narrator is called to reunite with his friend Jason, this time as an experienced doctor working for Perihelion. His hiring proves to be part of Jason's hidden agenda: to use Tyler as his personal doctor and to keep Jason's medical condition hidden from his powerful father. From this point on, Tyler becomes not only part of the main action, but also a tool in Jason's hand to keep ahead of his father. Just like Tyler's bicycle in a previous chapter, Jason's body is failing him and he is unable to control it. Knowing that his father would not allow him to fail, he is again counting on Tyler to cover for him.



Under the Skin

Under the Skin Summary

Jason describes his symptoms, which seem to be getting worse by the day. Tyler asks him to come to the clinic for a physical exam, but Jason says that even though he wants to go, he cannot even walk. Tyler diagnoses Jason with a case of Multiple Sclerosis (MS). He says that the disease is generally treatable with a cocktail of drugs, but in some cases, there are complications and no remedy. Afraid of his father's reaction, Jason asks Tyler to give him a drug cocktail that will make him behave somewhat normally until a cure can be found.

Tyler and his friend Jason discuss the Spin for a while. It has been known for a while that if the protective membrane were removed, the rays of the decayed Sun would quickly make life on Earth impossible. They both wonder what the Hypotheticals (the name given to the fictional Alien race possibly responsible for the Spin) aimed to accomplish with the Spin. Jason says that Diane keeps in contact with Carol from time to time, but that he rarely gets to talk to her. Apparently, she lives with religious zealots and she feels secure among them.

Under the Skin Analysis

In this chapter, Tyler Dupree uses his professional knowledge and skills to put together a drug cocktail that will help Jason appear "normal," even though his body is obviously failing him in such a way that he would be totally dysfunctional without it.

Where Jason spends much of his energy trying to figure out the meaning of the Spin and standing up straight like E.D. would like him to, his sister Diane spends all her life running away from the father she fears. Religious sects are often a hiding place for people in trouble with their relatives or even with their own personality. Religion allows these people to take refuge in such manipulative mechanism as authority and firm moral principles.



Celestial Gardening

Celestial Gardening Summary

Early in the winter, the seed capsules are ready to be sent from launch pads located all over the world. All this is a grand plan in the hope of generating a Martian biosphere. In March, Tyler gets a call from Carol saying that his mother suffered a severe stroke and the doctors hold little hope for a recovery. He finds a replacement for himself and flies to the George Washington University Hospital, where he is greeted by Carol. Tyler sees his mother unconscious; Carol asserts that Belinda Dupree was the Lawtons' house pillar. E.D. joins them later that evening and offers his somehow premature condolences. Tyler browses through a box of old letters from his father Marcus to his mother but is overwhelmed by emotions and has to stop reading quickly.

Diane joins them in the morning, only to learn that Belinda Dupree has died ten minutes before her arrival. Hiding behind his professional secrecy, Tyler refuses to reveal details about Jason's medical condition. After the memorial service, Tyler packs up his mother's souvenirs and finds that one of the boxes, marked "Mementos (school)" has vanished. He offers Diane a pair of plane tickets so that she can come and see her brother in Florida. After consulting with her husband Simon, she accepts the offer.

Celestial Gardening Analysis

The death of Tyler's mother means that the narrator is now an orphan. In contrast, all the Lawtons (except Jason) are attending her funerals. In asserting that the woman was the "pillar" of the Lawton family, the twins' mother confirms that Tyler is part of the same tradition, as he keeps taking care of Jason and Diane. His refusal to inform Jason's parent of his medical condition is just another way of protecting him. Just like the government keeps filtering and often withholding information about the Spin from the public, Tyler filters out the potentially damaging information from his report.

For Tyler, inviting Diane to Florida is one way to reunite at least partially the only family he has left. He also has a strong romantic interest in her, but he is limited by her marital status.



Snapshots of Ecopoiesis

Snapshots of Ecopoiesis Summary

Tyler and Diane rent a room in Cocoa Beach, waiting for Jason to join them on the following day. They sit on the hotel's balcony and discuss their respective activities during the past few years. Tyler explains that the plan to colonize Mars is a case of ecopoiesis, a term coined by a scientist in 1990 to refer to the activity of creating a biosphere where none exists. The plan uses the time difference created by the Spin to allow a relatively quick evolution on Mars. After bombarding its surface with living seeds that will eventually create a biosphere, the humans would send volunteers to colonize the newly created environment and start a civilization of their own.

Diane says that the NK religion imploded after the failure of the hedonist movement and the many cases of AIDS and drug abuse among the followers. She is now part of a spin-off movement called the Jordan Tabernacle, based in Arizona. At noon on the following day, Jason joins his sister and spends rest of the afternoon talking with her. In the evening, the three friends look at the launch of the rockets that will bring the seeds of life to Mars. Jason explains that because of the nature of the Spin, all the rockets need to reach the membrane simultaneously. Otherwise, there would be too much time difference between the arrival of the capsule to have any effect on Mars' atmosphere. He calculates that within a year, Mars should have a breathable atmosphere ready to support human beings.

Diane flies back to Phoenix on the following day. Several similar rockets are sent to Mars during the next few months, in order to insure that some of the seeds survive the harsh atmosphere of Mars. Jason has a relapse of MS in February of the following year, but recovers rapidly. Diane calls Tyler regularly, keeping him informed about the sect and its whereabouts. He invites her back to Florida, but she always refuses. Simon keeps a close check on his wife and is suffering a spiritual crisis.

Tyler diagnoses Jason with a new type of MS called AMS (Acute drug-resistant Multiple Sclerosis). The disease cannot be cured and life expectancy is unpredictable, but it seems like the symptoms can be kept under control, to the satisfaction of Jason. Diane calls Tyler and says that they ran out of money. She asks for some help and Tyler sends her 500 dollars.

Years later, after data shows that the Martian atmosphere has evolved to the point where it can sustain life, eight hundred human beings are sent simultaneously to colonize Mars. A week afterward, Tyler looks at photographic data showing that civilization has indeed fully evolved on Mars. However, the satellite data shows that within 24 hours, a Spin membrane was wrapped around Mars, making it disappear from the photographic image.



Snapshots of Ecopoiesis Analysis

Mars has always been an object of fascination for mankind. Spin plays on that fascination by allowing many of the folkloric fantasies about Martians to come true, sometimes in a twisted way. The first step in realizing these fantasies about Mars is to colonize the planet. Yet this colonization is only possible if the planet has a biosphere compatible with human biology - i.e., breathable air, sources of edible nutrients, water and an acceptable level of gravity. The "ecopoiesis" project put forward by Jason is a grand scheme that is only possible because of the time difference introduced by the Spin between Earth and the rest of the universe. Since over 3 years will pass on Mars for every second on Earth, the ecopoiesis experiment can be controlled like a video played on fast forward.

Diane's relationship with her religion continues to be driven by the personal politics more than by convictions or beliefs. The fate of the New Kingdom mirrors the aftermath of the initial reactions to the Spin all over the planet. Like most doomsday religious movements, the New Kingdom fails to keep its members together once it becomes clear that the end of the world is no nearer today than it was yesterday. The hedonistic reflex exchanges the advantages of long-term planning for the gratification of immediate pleasure. Such an attitude sounds profitable when the world is doomed, but it is doomed in the face of long-term survival.



Four Times Ten to the Ninth Power A.D.; Hospitality

Four Times Ten to the Ninth Power A.D.; Hospitality Summary

The cab takes Tyler and Diane to a village outside Padang where they are greeted by Ibu Ina, a doctor who owns a small medical clinic just outside the town. Tyler feels really sick. He lies down in a bed in a little room and falls asleep. When he wakes up, Diane is gone. He gets to talk to Ina who explains that she is Jala's ex-wife. They talk about Wun Ngo Wen, the Martian ambassador; Ina mentions that she has great respect for the man and that he is considered as a God by many Indonesians.

En, who is the ten-year-old son of Ina's nephew, lives in the town. He can speak a little English and wants to be a doctor one day. Ina tells him to come to her immediately if strangers were to show up in town looking for the clinic. Diane does not come back for a few days and Ina takes over caring for Tyler. One night, while Ina is gone, En hurries to the clinic and warns Tyler that strangers are coming from the village looking for the clinic. Tyler tells the child to run away and to come back on the following day; he then picks up his luggage and hides in a rice field nearby while the men who were looking for him search the clinic.

In the following chapter, Tyler learns about a new cattle-borne disease called CVWS, which seem to affect a lot of people. He starts a relationship with Molly, his receptionist. The latter hands him a magazine article about Jason. By then, Jason Lawton was the public face of Perihelion and its colonization project. The article traces a portrait of Jason as a puppet in the hands of his father, E.D. Lawton. It also traces a portrait of the political connections that the Lawtons enjoy with the people in power. E.D. spends most of his time in Washington and seems to exercise quite a bit of influence on the political process of the United States.

Jason returns to Perihelion and invites Tyler to meet Wun Ngo Wen, a Martian ambassador who landed in Manitoba (Canada) a few months earlier. The small and wrinkled man, a linguist and a historian, was sent to Earth by the Martian civilization just before the planet was wrapped in their own version of the Spin. The Martian ambassador explains that he was chosen among thousands of his peers as a representative of the planet to the Earthlings because of his skills and wide cultural knowledge. He traveled in his rudimentary vessel in a sleeping state and woke up before crossing the membrane of the Spin. He managed to land safely and was sequestered until he was ready to talk.



Four Times Ten to the Ninth Power A.D.; Hospitality Analysis

In this chapter, the novel offers a forward view of one of the main characters of the novel: Wun Ngo Wen. Before he even appears in the novel, the Martian is presented as having an enormous influence on the population. In *Spin*, the author maintains the suspense by constantly foreshadowing the events before they actually happen. The story is built like a puzzle made of many different images where the important step is to figure out how they fit together.

The character of Diane is almost systematically absent whenever Tyler is involved in the story. This absence participates in making her more desirable to Tyler. It also accentuates the mystery that surrounds her, as she is hiding from her father.

In the following chapter introduces a new disease that will later threaten the life of Diane, the narrator's romantic interest. It also introduces Molly, a woman who will play an important, albeit negative role in the unfolding of events. She is a simple woman with no real class or interesting feature, but she can easily manipulate Tyler with sex. She hands him a magazine article that shows that the public's perception of the Lawtons is not very flattering for either of them.



Four Photographs of the Kirioloj Delta

Four Photographs of the Kirioloj Delta Summary

Over the phone, Tyler discusses the inner workings of the Jordan Tabernacle's cult with Diane. He wonders whether Diane really believes all the things that the sect teaches her, but she can only reply that she is secure with what her husband believes. Later, Tyler argues with Molly over the people's reactions to the Spin, including the religious ones.

Jason tells Tyler that Wun Ngo Wen might have the answer to his AMS problem. Martian technology, he says, is way ahead as far as biotechnology is concerned. He asks Tyler to talk to Wun about it. The Martian ambassador tells him that there is a Martian drug that is meant to bring individuals to a "Fourth Age." He adds that the Martian drug is perfectly safe and it should help Jason get rid of his condition. Wun then shows him four personal photographs of himself, his family and his house. The last one shows a region devastated by flood; the Martian says that the disaster killed all his family. The ambassador then asks Tyler to bring him human literature that talks about Martians.

Jason tells Tyler that Wun told him about a unique Martian technology that could help them learn more about the Hypotheticals. He says that it requires launching artificial replicators in space where they would eat ice and create a network that would spread over the galaxy, collecting information as it expands.

Four Photographs of the Kirioloj Delta Analysis

The chapter introduces a key element in the storyline: The Martian drug. This drug allows an individual to go through another, artificial cycle of life. The Martian Fourth Age is like a second adulthood, a new level of completeness, wisdom and universal understanding that can only be understood by those who experience it. According to Martian research, it also rids an individual of all the disease and adds 50 years to a person's life expectancy. This so-called drug is the result of great technological advances in the domain of Martian biotechnology.



Four Times Ten to the Ninth Power A.D.; The Cold Places of the Universe

Four Times Ten to the Ninth Power A.D.; The Cold Places of the Universe Summary

Tyler watches from the rice field as the men burn down Ina's clinic. He waits until they depart and falls asleep. After waking up, he meets again with Ina who thanks him for saving En's life. He feels very weak, and then loses consciousness. He wakes up days later in an abandoned house. Ina tells him that the burning of the clinic is not important, since she plans on emigrating along with Jala, En and a few other members of her family soon. They discuss Wun Ngo Wen philosophy and principles. She says that Wun was highly regarded by the people of the Asian continent; partly because he looked a little like them and he lived in a rural environment. Tyler insists that Martians are humans too, just a different branch of the same tree. They also discuss the Fourth Age treatment and its meaning.

Ina says that they should leave soon. They use an ambulance and hide Tyler to get through the different controls scattered on the road to Sumatra. En plays the role of the victim and the driver is in charge of explaining to the officers that the passenger has CVWS. The officers let the ambulance go without any trouble.

In the following chapter, Tyler catches Molly Seagram playing with his computer terminal; she replies that she was only looking at how he organized things. Tyler thinks that he loves Molly, but he cannot be sure as it may just be a convincing substitute emotion. He goes to a meeting with Wun and they talk about the replicator technology. The Martian ambassador says that this is the most advanced technology ever developed on Mars. He adds that once launched in the right environment, the replicators multiply and form a network in an unpredictable but somehow limited fashion. The network then relays the information it gathers back to civilization. It is their only hope of learning anything about the Hypotheticals and the meaning of the Spin.

Jason calls Tyler and tells him that he does not feel well and needs more medication in order to appear normal in front of his father. He wants to be able to hold his place against E.D., whose time has passed and whose ideas are mainly political. Tyler gives him another, heavier dose of medication.

Four Times Ten to the Ninth Power A.D.; The Cold Places of the Universe Analysis

In this chapter, Ina expresses her need to leave a world obviously plagued by violence and a hard politically charged environment. She insists that the burning of her 'business'



is not as important as Tyler seems to think and that he is much more important than her clinic was. She is more curious about the Martian ambassador than she is about the "Fourth Age" treatment that Tyler is undergoing.

The novel shows that people typically identify positively with the individuals that look or sound like them. The Martian ambassador was short, black and somewhat rippled. This combination of physical characteristics made him look more Asian than American, which is why the Martian was held in higher esteem in Asian countries.

Molly Seagram is neither described as pretty nor interesting in the novel. In fact, she comes out as quite the opposite. She is mostly manipulative, uses a foul language and puts her own immediate interest at the forefront of the relationship. However, Tyler does not seem to notice these shortcomings. He ignores the signs of her double playing and only seems interested in her sexual features. He is confused and obviously mistakes this attraction with love, even though he knows he still loves Diane.

Once again, Jason uses Tyler to help him stand up to his father. As always, Tyler plays a supporting role for Jason.



Sacrificial Rites; The Ticking of Expensive Clocks

Sacrificial Rites; The Ticking of Expensive Clocks Summary

Tyler meets again with the Martian ambassador. Wun tells his doctor that he enjoyed the science-fiction literature and that he would like to have more books to read. He also says that he already met with Preston Lomax, the probable future President of the United States, and that the two exchanged general ideas. Later on, Lomax tours the Perihelion facilities along with E.D. After the tour, Tyler is called to meet with Jason and Lomax. Tyler discovers that Molly tipped E.D. about Jason's medical condition and that E.D. used that information to try and convince Lomax that Jason's plan on using the replicators technology was not a good idea. Tyler and Jason manage to turn the argument around against E.D.

Tyler catches up with Molly as she packs up her belonging and prepares to move. She admits her guilt in taking money from E.D. in exchange for the information she got from Tyler. She says that she needs the money to live fully before the end of the World, and then she leaves.

Jason's health is declining rapidly and he wants Tyler to inject him with the Martian Drug, even though the effect on humans is untested. Diane calls Tyler and tells him that E.D. and Carol are now divorced. Tyler replies that he broke up with Molly. He then takes Jason to the Big House of the Lawtons. The doctor injects Jason with the Martian drug and stays by his side for a few days without sleeping. He then asks Carol to help and take over while he sleeps. Carol agrees to help. Lomax is elected President of the United States. Wun Ngo Wen is finally acknowledged to the general public. The Martian makes his first public appearance at a televised U.N. Council. He talks about his planet, the state of Martian technology and his motives for coming to Earth. He adds that the Martians know nothing more than the humans about the nature of the Hypotheticals or about their motives for the Spin.

Jason recovers from the Martian drug treatment with success. After a call from Diane, Tyler discovers that her little church is linked to the spreading of a cattle-borne disease called CVWS.

Sacrificial Rites; The Ticking of Expensive Clocks Analysis

The "replicators technology" is a fictional technology based on an extension of the computer game and theory called 'Life.' The Martian replicators are also referred



elsewhere in the novel a von Newman machines. They are simple, self-replicating units that mimic life through a program that allows them to multiply, network and evolve as individuals through a simple mechanism of reproduction.

Molly is finally shown for what she is: a self-serving character that is not interested in anything but maximizing her own gain. She will be referred to negatively in several instances later in the novel. Yet she is not fundamentally different than those who use the 'end of the world' to justify actions that would not otherwise be considered acceptable.

In the following chapter, the Martian drug provides a way out for Jason. It will allow him to stand up to his father and live a longer life. However, Jason seems little interested in the long-term advantages of the drug. His ultimate goal is to understand the Spin. He has no social or romantic life and his network of relationships appears quite limited. He is entirely driven by his relationship with his father and by his quest for knowledge.

Tyler's breakup is mirrored by E.D. and Carol's divorce. In both cases, the breakups were highly predictable. Both breakups also involve E.D. Carol was obviously unhappy with her relationship with E.D. and drank her way through years of marriage. She will later reveal that she only married E.D. to stay close to Belinda, whom she really loved.



Four Times Ten to the Ninth Power A.D.; Desperate Euphoria

Four Times Ten to the Ninth Power A.D.; Desperate Euphoria Summary

Tyler and his friends make it to a harbor on the south end of Padang. Jala says that they will all leave once the freighter that he bribed into taking them to the right port is loaded with its usual cargo. He says that Diane will join them on the following day, then leaves. The migrants spend the night in an abandoned office of the harbor. Tyler talks to Ina about Wun and the possible motives of the Hypotheticals. He hints that the Spin was but a way of delaying the end of the world that humans were bringing onto themselves with overpopulation and the depletion of natural resources. In the morning, Jala returns, followed by a wounded and bleeding Diane.

As the world gets ready to launch the Martian replicators, Tyler agrees to accompany Wun to Arizona while he visits the Grand Canyon. Before their departure, Tyler gets a call from E.D. The latter complains about Jason and the Martian's replicators project, as well as about Diane and her religious husband. Tyler promises that he will try to contact Diane. He travels to Arizona with the Martian ambassador, then leaves him and drives to Phoenix and the Jordan Tabernacle church.

Tyler Dupree meets with Pastor Bob Kobel. The latter tells Tyler that Diane and Simon left the Jordan Tabernacle to form a more radical and somewhat eccentric sect with Dan Condon. They are now living together at the Condon's ranch. Tyler drives to the Condon's ranch and meets with Simon and Diane. Simon explains that the link between Jason and Wun Ngo Wen is troublesome, as many consider him the Antichrist. Diane tells Tyler that even though she does not believe the stories of the sect, she believes that the end is near and that she is safer there. Tyler stays at the ranch for dinner then leaves.

Tyler catches up with the Martian ambassador and his crew on the following morning. After flying to Orlando, Tyler rides along with Wun in a convoy that takes them to Perihelion. The convoy is attacked by a gang of road criminals who mistakes them for a Brinks convoy. The security is overwhelmed and the Martian ambassador is killed during the attack, while Tyler escapes unharmed.

Four Times Ten to the Ninth Power A.D.; Desperate Euphoria Analysis

In this chapter, Tyler explains that the Hypotheticals' intent was to save the human race from extinction. It already points to the fact that the end of the world did not happen. It



also underlines the central paradox of the novel: the Hypotheticals needed to condemn the planet in order to save it. In other words, the Spin represents the end of the world because it saves the world from an untimely end.

In the following chapter, the novel elaborates on the public's perception of the Martian. Wun represents the truly unknowable character, most notably because his background cannot be verified. Thus, his assertions have to be taken at face value. No one has ever lived on Mars but him. Humans are thus ambivalent about him, as they have no clue about his real motives. His physical characteristics make him an ideal target for those with xenophobic reflexes, especially in the United States. Indeed, Wun is short, black, rippled and he has an accent. His untimely death emphasizes the unpredictable nature of life on earth: nothing is a given, not even life itself. As Tyler notes, plenty of people have legitimate reasons to kill Wun Ngo Wen. Yet the Martian ambassador was shot by mistake, simply because he stood up and was noticed.



Home before Dark

Home before Dark Summary

The Martian replicators launch from an American site with the blessings of President Lomax but under much criticism from other nations and organizations. The end of the world was fast approaching and the Spin membrane started to give sporadic signs of disturbance by flickering for a few hours at a time. Tyler leaves Perihelion and goes back to practice as a regular doctor, but stays in contact with Jason. Years after the launch, the replicators were already an organized colony spanning several galaxies. At first, the replicators started to send back faint signals of their existence. Jason reports to Tyler that even though the information received from the replicators network is limited, it will undoubtedly improve as the network expands and it may well give important clues as to the nature and motives of the Hypotheticals.

A couple of years later, Jason reports to Tyler that the replicators network is expanding and is now transmitting very important data about the universe. Among other things, the replicators are relaying information about other inhabited planets wrapped in a Spin. However, the data coming back from the entities furthest from Earth is corrupted and faint, which seems to indicate that the replicators are competing for resources with another species of similar entities.

Later that summer, the sky starts to flicker more frequently, and for longer periods at a time. One night when the flickering is particularly bad, Tyler receives a call for help from Simon. Describing Diane as very sick, her husband is requesting Tyler's help urgently. The conversation is quickly cut off by the flickering and the phone line dies out.

Home before Dark Analysis

This chapter details the start of a new, artificial species in space. Just as the Martians themselves were borne out of human technology, the new species is borne out of Martian technology. This is an interesting twist of the central plot, as it points to a common need for all civilization to spawn a new and better race. In Spin, even some religions are intent on spawning their own race—in this case, a red calf. Once again, religion imitates science, although with mixed results. Indeed, Diane's disease will later prove to be linked to the breeding of the red heifer.



Four Times Ten to the Ninth Power A.D.; By Dreams Surrounded

Four Times Ten to the Ninth Power A.D.; By Dreams Surrounded Summary

Agents of the New Reformasi found Jala's safehouse just as he was leaving with Diane. The latter caught a bullet but made it back with Jala and two dozen members of Ina and En's family. As Tyler finds out, Diane's wound is only superficial. He feels strangely weak at the sight of the wound; Diane says that this feeling is related to his new "Fourth Age" state. He manages nonetheless to stitch up Diane's wound correctly, according to Ina.

Just as Diane is about to rest, gunshots erupt from the docks and the group is forced to retreat toward the freighter. The shooters are agents in governmental hired by the New Reformasi. The shooting continues and several gas tanks explode around the docks, throwing pieces of burning metal around. Jala pushes everyone on the freighter he hired to get them safely to the Archway port. The boat's engine starts and Tyler is the last one to make it to the gangway amid a firestorm, just as the vessel leaves the docks.

Traveling at night was difficult and dangerous, as criminal gangs were multiplying and highway attacks were more frequent than ever. Under a flickering sky, Tyler drives toward Condon's Ranch where he hopes to find Diane and Simon. He stops at a motel just outside of a small town, only to find that there is officially no vacancy. Through his knowledge of old jazz classics from the mid-twentieth century, he convinces the owner of the facility to let him in for the night.

Tyler Dupree sleeps for about an hour, then gets up and goes outside to talk with the owner of the motel. They can see the stars, but as the motel owner notes, they look scattered as compared to the ones he remembers. The flicker has ended. The protective Spin membrane is now gone. In most people's mind, this could only mean one thing: the end of the world was going to start as soon as the sun would rise. Oceans would be boiling, forest would burn and people would die. Newscasts keep reporting waves of suicides and violent acts of all kinds.

Unable to go back to sleep, Tyler leaves the motel and its owner and drives toward Dan Condon's ranch. While on his way, Tyler receives a call from Simon. After giving a callback number, Simon confirms that Diane is still alive but says that he cannot come for her. He is unable to give him a reason.



Four Times Ten to the Ninth Power A.D.; By Dreams Surrounded Analysis

This chapter describes the departure of the would-be migrants from the coast of Indonesia aboard a freighter. They face a lot of resistance from governmental agents and risk their life getting onboard the vessel. However, they feel that the outcome is worth the risk.

In this chapter, most of the action is centered on the relationship between the flickering of the sky and the level of unrest on the ground. It is as though the more people feel that their life is threatened, the more violent they get, generally speaking. It is an extension of the reaction exemplified by Molly Seagram; people are reacting as though they could compress life and squeeze it like a lemon, in order to get most of the good things it has to offer it all at once. This tendency to rush things and to pursue immediate gratification is universal.



The Morning and the Evening

The Morning and the Evening Summary

Tyler drives up to the hill that oversees Condon's ranch. He calls back Simon and asks where Diane is in the house. Simon answers that it is impossible to reach her and that he is risking his life coming in. The aging sun comes up and knocks off the cellular relay; the phone dies and the conversation is cut short.

Tyler walks toward the ranch but is knocked down by the butt of a rifle. He wakes up later with a bloodied head, locked inside a room somewhere in the ranch's main building. Unable to get out or even move much, he keeps falling in and out of consciousness throughout the day. He wakes up after sundown, happy to have made it through the first day without the Spin. He calls Simon on his cell. Simon describes Diane's symptoms, which Tyler recognizes are those of CWVS. Simon insists that Tyler cannot do much for her; Tyler asks him to leave the phone with Diane when he brings her dinner, but Simon hangs up before answering. A few hours later, Tyler calls again and Diane answers. He tells her to wait for him. A member of the sect irrupts in the room and brings him to the barn where he is required to help with the birth of a red calf. The process is painful and bloody, as both the heifer and the oversized calf die during the process. Tyler uses the confusion that ensues to escape in a car, along with Simon and Diane.

The Morning and the Evening Analysis

In this chapter, the doomsday cult established by the Jordan Tabernacle members has created red cattle. However, it is a folly that not only means nothing to either God or humans, but it also endangers mankind by propagating a dangerous disease. This rather gory episode serves as an illustration for the death of religious ideas in general. The red calf is oversized and stillborn, unable to survive its own birth. The creation serves no purpose and only point to the death of its own idea.



Spin; The Abyss in Flames

Spin; The Abyss in Flames Summary

Tyler decides that the only way to save Diane is to bring her to the Big House, thousands of miles away across the country. Lying in the backseat, Diane is getting dangerously weak from the disease. Tyler and Simon alternate between driving and taking care of the woman. Answering Simon's concerns, Tyler insists that even if everyone on Earth is about to die, he still needs to take care of Diane the only way he knows how.

There is surprisingly little violence along the road. Most of the trouble is created by people committing suicide in the face of what they thought was a sure sign of the end of the world. However, humanity is obviously surviving and the heat is not nearly as devastating as suicides are. Still, the situation is confusing and supplies are hard to come by. Tyler's position as a doctor helps him get provision and gas for the car.

Simon keeps talking about how much he loves Diane and how torn he is between his love for the woman and his love for God. He also feels extremely shameful and blames himself for not having taken care of Diane correctly. After falling asleep while Simon drives, Tyler is awakened up by a passerby who says that the tall blond man has left on foot and said goodbye. Tyler and Diane finally make it to the Lawtons' Big House. Carol greets Tyler at the door. Upon learning of Diane's situation, she wonders why both her children are coming home to die.

Carol is not worried about the fate of the world, both because her own world stops at the border of her propriety, and because Jason apparently told her not to worry as everything would be back to normal soon. However, she appears tired and extremely worried about her children. Tyler tells her that he will take care of Diane by giving her the same medication he gave to Jason. After looking up Diane, he injects her with the Martian drug and goes to talk with Jason. He tells him that his sister has a case of late-stage CWVS, with is lethal; however, she should be alright once the drug starts to work on her. Jason says that he is dying from an advanced version of the Martian drug he used on himself. He is extremely sick but says that he has important things to say and that they need to be recorded.

Spin; The Abyss in Flames Analysis

In this chapter, the narrator drives across America to save the love of his life from certain death. The timing of this speedy road trip is ironic, given that everyone in the world is apparently convinced of their imminent death. Death by suicide is so common that it is disrupting most public services. This desperate reaction stands opposite of the hedonist lifestyle promoted in the early days of the Spin by the members of the New Kingdom religious movement. The population of the entire globe is now scared to death



(almost literally) by the appearance of a huge red sun whose rays are knocking down communication networks. However, the heat is not nearly as bad as to fry every living creature on their feet. Hence, the prognostics for a massive death by fire of the population are proved wrong. The Spin was feared not so much for what it is, but for what it would leave once it disappeared.

The following chapter brings the twins under the same roof (literally) one last time. They are both dying at the same time, even though they followed entirely different paths in life. As Tyler noted early in the novel, the twins are very different characters. They are laying in different rooms, dying for entirely different reasons, and only one will survive in the end.



Ars Moriendi

Ars Moriendi Summary

Jason tells Tyler about the things he learned about the Martian society directly from their ambassador. He says that these things might be slightly different from the image that Wun Ngo Wen gave of Mars to the rest of the world while he was alive. Even though the Martian civilization had made great advances in terms of biotechnology, it was relying on the limited resources available on the planet. These resources were rapidly vanishing, so the Martians devised the replicators technology to scan the universe for more resources. However, they were unable to launch the replicators they designed, which is why Wun was sent to Earth.

Jason adds that the replicators technology required another component, which was not mentioned by Wun Ngo Wen: a human element capable of acting as a catalyst for a different communications channel between the network of replicators and its point of origin. Jason offered Wun to become this communication entity. This was accomplished by injecting a new version of the Martian drug. Jason further explains that his real goal in life is a greater knowledge, as he could not imagine dying ignorant.

He says that the replicators that launched from Earth had multiplied into vast networks across thousands of star systems. However, deep into space, they encountered another network of similar artificial entities that acted as predators toward them. This is what slowed down the stream of information sent back by the network. However, as an entity part of the replicators network swallowed by the predator, Jason became integrated with the so-called "Hypotheticals." Now, the same network that is feeding him all this information is also killing him.

Jason is having more and more difficulty keeping a straight discourse. His breathing is difficult and he is shaken by numerous involuntary convulsions. He explains that the Spins wrapped around Earth and Mars are but one single entity. The goal of the Spin is to allow technological civilizations having outgrown their own planet to move on and expand elsewhere. The Hypotheticals have the ability to create links between worlds that are unimaginable within the bounds of human technology. As Tyler leaves Jason's bedside to let Carol take over in the early morning light, he fails to notice that the rising sun is once again the old artificial, lifeless disc so characteristic of the Spin.

Ars Moriendi Analysis

This chapter is almost entirely about Jason, who ends up being the real "hero" of Spin. He represents science and the need for reason and knowledge. Jason would rather die sooner knowing the truth than living in ignorance: "Because I didn't want to die in a condition of ignorance" (p. 409)



In a way, Jason represents a social paradox, because as a scientist he represents at once the reason for the end of humankind and its hope for survival. When Tyler learns that the Spin was in fact a membrane meant to preserve the planet, he wonders: "Preserve it against what?' 'Its own senescence and eventual death. Technological cultures are mortal, like everything else. They flourish until they exhaust their resources; then they die.'" (p. 417)



Four Times Ten to the Ninth Power A.D. / We All Land Somewhere; North of Anywhere

Four Times Ten to the Ninth Power A.D. / We All Land Somewhere; North of Anywhere Summary

After learning of Jason's death, E.D. asks for an autopsy of his son's body. However, Carol, who is unable to face her threatening husband without alcohol, makes sure that the body of her son is cremated. After the funerals, Tyler opens an envelope addressed to him by Jason. The envelope contains multiple credit cards and counterfeit identifications, as well as a letter from Jason. In the letter, which reads like a testament, Jason explains that he is sorry for using him as an accessory to his own quest for the truth. He says that he will likely be the target of governmental inquiries and that he should go in hiding. He adds that there are too many secrets hidden in the Martian archives for the politicians to allow them to go public. The accompanying documents, falsified but reliable, should help him go in hiding relatively safely.

Following Carol's advice and the threat of E.D.'s presence, Tyler packs his things and prepares to leave the United States along with Diane. Carol brings him the missing shoebox of memorabilia that had previously disappeared from a cabinet after Belinda's death. She says that he should bring everything that belonged to his mother, except the strange love letters that she authored. Carol insists that Belinda never learned the identity of the mysterious writer of the love letters. She explains that she dated E.D. only to remain close to Belinda, who was dating E.D.'s friend Marcus at the time.

Diane continues to recover slowly in a motel room in Vermont. Tyler explains that the end of the world never materialized because the Spin was not turned off entirely but only partially, in order to allow the construction of the Archway. Once Diane heals completely, she decides to leave and attend some unfinished business. Tyler drives her to a bus station. When she reappears six months later, she is divorced from Simon. The new couple moves to Montreal (Canada) and live with counterfeit identities. Diane asks Tyler whether he would like to become a Fourth; he replies that he only will make the passage once he is ready. A decade later, Diane crosses the border back to the United States in order to attend E.D.'s funerals. During the ceremony, she meets a strange woman and is convinced that she is a Fourth. Tyler later confirms that she used to work around the Martian ambassador at the time. That woman sends Diane various electronic messages containing warnings that the government is chasing people like her. One day, Diane receives a message that simply instructs her to leave. While en route to Sumatra, Tyler decides that it is time for him to step into the Fourth Age.

Diane recovers quickly from her wound as the freighter she boarded, along with Tyler and the rest of the would-be migrants, sails toward the Archway port. The first night at is



quite hard due to unusually rough waters, but next couple of days are easier on the passengers. They finally come in sight of the huge bridge leading to Port Magellan, the city that welcomes all newcomers to the new world at the end of the Archway.

Diane, Tyler and the rest of the emigrants cross the Alien Bridge across an unknown distance and into a new life. Far from condemning the human race to burn under a mad red sun, the Hypotheticals used the Spin to preserve the human civilization and provide the inhabitants of the blue planet with a new world that would allow them to continue to evolve. At the moment of transit, Diane and Tyler join their hands together and open a vial that contains a sample of Jason's ashes. After the crossing, as the boat sails toward a new shore, En says that a new history will begin as soon as they land.

Four Times Ten to the Ninth Power A.D. / We All Land Somewhere; North of Anywhere Analysis

This last part of the running chapter merges with Tyler's memoirs as the two stories connect. Jason's life ended as he finally understood the nature of the Spin, which was his lifetime goal. E.D. is now a puppet in the hands of the government that he served so well all his life. He insists on having Jason's body autopsied, as the chase for those who are "Fourth" has already begun. The Fourth are a threat to the power of government, therefore they have to locate them and control or eliminate them. The chapter later terminates a whole generation of characters (E.D. and Carol) who have become useless. Jason appears as the real key player, having outdone his father in bringing about a new generation of people through the Martian drug.

The final chapter concludes by underlining Jason's role in the main story and literally saving all the remaining characters by bringing them into the new world. The Spin is finally recognized as a promise, a haven of humans otherwise condemned on Earth by their own unsustainable development. In effect, the chapter concludes by turning the whole meaning of the Spin inside out. It also means that science, logic and ultimately, technology is humanity's only hope in a world where religions and superstitions constantly fail to bring about closure.



Characters

Wun Ngo Wen

Wun Ngo Wen is the Martian that landed on Earth around the time the Martian Spin was discovered. He is around 55 years old, short, dark skinned and rippled like a melon. Wun Ngo Wen was chosen as an ambassador by the Martians despite his limited space-traveling skills. He was picked among several thousand applicants mainly because of his encyclopedic knowledge of linguistics and other academic matters. Indeed, he managed to adapt to the social life on Earth and he quickly picked up the English language.

The Martians decided to send an ambassador back to Earth soon after they discovered the same Spin-related polar artifacts hovering over Mars' poles. Wun Ngo Wen was sent to Earth in a simple vessel and made the trip in a state of drug-induced deep sleep. He awoke shortly before crossing the Spin's membrane and survived the landing in Manitoba (Canada). He was kept away from the public eye for almost a year. Upon his landing on Earth, he was kept hidden from the public eyes for months.

The vessel that carried Wun Ngo Wen to Earth also transported a lot of important documents, as well as a lot of vials and bottles filled with pharmaceutical supplies from Martian biotechnology. The Martians have a very advance biotechnology but due to their lack of material resources, they are behind human technology when it comes to manufacturing. The ambassador from Mars brings little information pertaining to the nature and possible intention of the Hypotheticals.

The Martian represents the friendly alien and he acts as a catalyst for the ambivalent feelings of humans. This ambivalent feeling appears whenever human come face to face with something that is truly different. As they did with the Spin itself, upon learning of the Martian's existence, humans react to the presence of Wun Ngo Wen with total indifference, overwhelming deference or fear and xenophobia. For some people, Wun Ngo Wen was like a Messiah and venerated as such, while other considered him the equivalent of the Devil.

Wun Ngo Wen befriends Tyler and calls him his personal physician. He travels with him when he wants to visit American landmarks and other important places. The Martian ambassador convinces Tyler that the drug that is used to bring Martians to the 'fourth age' will cure Jason. He later manipulates Jason into using the resources at Perihelion to launch the seeds of a unique self-replicating technology into space. The true nature and intention of the Martian ambassador is never revealed, but the narrator suggests that the alien's main goal was to use Earth technology to send the replicators in space.



Molly Seagram

Molly Seagram is the name of the nurse and receptionist at the doctor's office of Perihelion. Prior to working under Tyler Dupree, she was Dr. Koenig's assistant at the Space Center. After first five years of maintaining a purely professional profile around the doctor, she suddenly asked Tyler out. From that point on, the co-workers developed a relationship that the narrator associates with love.

Molly is foul-mouthed and has quite a few rough edges, but she manipulates Tyler by using her sexual attributes. Tyler typically avoids sharing his secrets with her, despite her repeated attempts to discover Jason's medical condition. Molly is caught spying on Tyler's computer but she avoids a confrontation by explaining that she was curious about her partner's working habits. After a confrontation involving Jason and the future President, Preston Lomax, the doctor concludes that Molly Seagram leaked important information to someone close to Lomax. Tyler discovers that Molly has been hired by E.D. Lawton to spy on the private medical records of Jason and to investigate his medical case. The nurse leaves Perihelion as soon as she is uncovered by Tyler. The latter catches up with Molly as she is about to move out of her apartment. Before leaving, she reveals that she had planned all along to use the money to retire and have a good time before killing herself. She was scared and wanted to avoid being burned by the fire that she imagined would engulf the world when the anticipated end of the world finally came.

Molly Seagram represents the reaction of a lot of self-centered people who will do anything for the right amount of money. Molly is driven by an intense fear of what she imagines will be the end of the world. The novel shows that she maintained a very superficial relationship with the narrator. Tyler feels a lot of resentment toward Molly. He feels as though he was fooled by her and refers to her very negatively afterward. However, he feels sad for her when he imagine that she probably killed herself, like so many other humans, when the Spin was momentarily turned off.

Simon Townsend

Simon is a slim individual who makes a living as a leader of various religious cults. He inherited some money from his father but quickly ran out of resources after the dissolution of the New Kingdom sect where he was active. He marries Diane Lawton out of love but never manages to bond with her as much as he wants. His beliefs seem to vary with time and he justifies his actions solely on the basis of religion. He controls and manipulates Diane as well as others around him quite efficiently and with minimal effort.

Carol Lawton

Carol Lawton is Edward Dean's wife and the mother of Diane and Jason. She used to be a nurse but she barely ever used her skills in a real work environment. In the first half of the novel, she appears as a drunk and somewhat inefficient mother who relies mostly



on her housekeeper to keep the Lawton's household from falling apart. As the problems compound and the tension between her and her husband become more important, she turns into a career drunk and rarely shows up straight. However, after the death of Belinda Dupree, she plays a more important role in the story and uses her training as a nurse to take care of Diane and Jason as they go through the pain induced by the Martian drug. She divorces E.D. and keeps the Big House. By the end of the novel, she reveals that she was the author of the many anonymous love letters to Belinda Dupree found by the latter's son after her death. This revelation hints at a justification for the failure of her marriage as well as her drunken behavior.

Belinda Dupree

Belinda Dupree is the mother of Tyler Dupree. The woman works as the housekeeper for the Lawtons. E.D. gave her a job at the house after her husband Marcus died in a car accident, several years before the Spin. Belinda dies as an aftermath of a heart attack in the middle of the novel.

Tyler Dupree

Tyler Dupree is the name of the narrator of Spin. When the story starts, Tyler Dupree is twelve years old. He lives in what is referred to as the Little House, along with his mother Belinda. His father, Marcus Dupree, died a few years earlier in a car accident involving alcohol. The Dupree's house, nicknamed the Little House, is adjacent to the Lawtons' Big House, where Belinda works as a housekeeper. The Lawton family comprise of his two closest friends, the thirteen-year-old twins Jason and Diane, as well as their mother Carol and their father E.D.

From the onset of the novel, Tyler is set to play the role of a guardian angel for Jason, a frail and tall scientific genius that is controlled by his father. Tyler goes on to become a doctor. He joins the Perihelion foundation as a General Practitioner, only to have to take care of Jason's complicated medical situation. Tyler is also in love with Diane Lawton, Jason's sister, who is following various religious trends until she marries a sect leader in Arizona. Because of his situation, Tyler Dupree is able to provide a privileged point of view on the events that followed the Spin.

The novel starts in a hotel in Indonesia, as Tyler Dupree starts a slow recovery process following the injection of the Martian drug. During that time, he starts to write his recollections of the events leading to his current situation. It is the content of this journal that will fill in the content of the novel. Indeed, Spin is written as a Journal constructed from a first person point of view. Thus, the journal of Tyler Dupree fills every chapter of the novel except the sections titled 4x10E9 A.D. and the last chapter.

Tyler Dupree represents the average person caught in a series of events as he tries to make the best of it. He is surrounded by people that are sometimes more powerful and more intelligent than he is (E.D., Jason and Diane), and sometimes less (Gisele, Molly, Mike). He is an average guy that does his best given the situation. As the most neutral



character of Spin, he best represents the typical reader: An average person who is more preoccupied with the consequences of an event and how to deal with it than he is worried about the event itself.

Gisele

Gisele is the name of a neighbor and friend of Tyler Dupree before he joined Perihelion in Orlando. Gisele worked as a waitress by day and as a prostitute by night. She discussed Tyler's problems and convinced him that it would be in his best interest to move to Florida in order to work at Perihelion, as requested by Jason.

Dr. Koenig

Dr. Koenig is the General Practitioner that left Perihelion to be replaced by Tyler Dupree, the narrator of the novel. Before being hired at Perihelion, Koenig was running a Cruise Ship clinic.

Marcus Dupree

Marcus Dupree is the name of Tyler's deceased father. He was married to Belinda. He used to be a close friend of E.D. Lawton and he was working as an engineer for his company. He died in a car accident a few years prior to the October Event.

En

En is the nephew of Ina. He is ten-years-old and has decided to become a doctor, like his mother. He is very intelligent and following instruction from her aunt Ina, he warns Tyler that there are strange men in the city out looking for him. This allowed Tyler to escape in time to avoid being caught by the agents of the New Reformasi.

Ina

Ina is a Indonesian woman doctor who owns a little clinic in a village near Panang. She helps Tyler by allowing him to use one of her rooms while he is recovering from the effect of the Martian drug. She is the ex-wife of Jala, the illegal emigration broker who organizes the couple's crossing of the Archway. Ina maintains a friendly relationship with her ex husband and emigrates over to the new planet along with Tyler, Diane and her own nephew En at the end of the novel.



Jala

Jala is the name of Ina Ibu's ex-husband. He is a Minang who runs an import-export business as a cover-up for an illicit emigration brokerage. Jala is Diane's contact in Padang. He knows everyone and has enough money to bribe the officials whenever necessary. This enables him to help the couple, his ex-wife and En to cross the Archway and avoid the government agents.

E.D. Lawton

Edward Dean Lawton is the husband of Carol and the father of the twins, Diane and Jason. He is a dominating and influential character, yet he rarely appears in person throughout the novel. Before the Spin, he managed a company that provided communication systems through intra-atmospheric aerostats. Once the Spin rendered all satellite communication system inoperable, his company instantly became very powerful. E.D. used this situation as leverage and later gained an enormous amount of political influence through his Perihelion foundation. The latter took care of dealing with Spin-related programs and was an important political tool for several administrations in the United States in the decades that followed the October Event.

Born in 1951, E.D. Lawton is authoritarian and obsessed by control. He treats his son Jason as his heir and his daughter Diane as Jason's irrelevant sibling. He rarely displays any emotions except in extreme circumstances where he feels threatened or frustrated. He feels that he owns his son's future and he refers to Jason as his heir, much like a king would treat his elder son.

The author underlines the emotional distance that the elder Lawton maintains with his children and his wife by constantly referring to him through his initials. His full name, Edward Dean Lawton, is only revealed through a magazine article written about his son Jason. The same article reveals is not very flattering to Jason and asserts that the public image of Perihelion is but a puppet in the hands of his father. As a matter of fact, though he is an experienced engineer, E.D. seems to leave all the decisions related to Perihelion in the hands of his son. He spends most of this time working as a lobbyist in Washington, under different organization. He loses much of his influence near the end of the first Spin era, when Preston Lomax wins the American elections.

Jason Lawton

Jason is the son of Carol and E.D. Lawton; he is Diane's twin brother. He has little in common with his sister and often clashes with his powerful and somewhat dominating father.

Jason is diagnosed as a victim of a new strain of Multiple Sclerosis called AMS. The symptoms of his disease are treatable but the condition itself cannot be cured. Jason uses Tyler to keep his condition private and to hide it from his father. When everything



else fails, he uses the Martian engineered drug to circumvent the disease and step into a 'fourth age.' His constant quest for more knowledge pushes him to inject himself with a modified version of the Martian drug that puts him in contact with the Hypotheticals, a network of self-replicating entities that span the universe and collect information about everything. The by-product of the drug effectively kills him slowly and he comes back to the Big House to die. Before dying, he asks Tyler to record his information.

Jason Lawton is at the central character of the novel. By hiring Tyler, he allows the narrator to become a primary spectator and actor, effectively involving him in most every aspect of the development during the Spin era. Jason represents the scientific point of view, opposite her twin sister's religiosity. He explains everything from a purely rational point of view and like his father E.D., he is unable to cope with situations that require emotional restraint. He relies on Tyler Dupree to protect him from the fallout of his own actions, as illustrated by the bicycle episode described in the early part of the novel.

Diane Lawton

Diane Lawton is the daughter of Carol and E.D. Lawton. She is also Jason's twin sister, although she has little in common with him. She is thirteen years old when she witnesses the disappearance of the stars from Earth's skyline during the October Event. She is an intellectually gifted individual who is limited by her fear of E.D. and her resentment towards her situation.

Diane Lawton plays a limited role in the bulk of the novel. She is the romantic interest of the narrator of Spin but spends most of her time away from Florida, where Tyler Dupree works. The two meet from time to time but their relationship remains platonic, except for one occasion during Diane's early relationship with Simon. The relationship between Diane and Tyler never really blooms until the death of her brother Jason. This tragic event frees her from the family bonds and she is finally free to let personality shine. She never felt free of expressing her own emotions and was content on living with Simon, away from her father's authoritarian influence. After Jason's death and her passage to the Fourth Age induced by the Martian drug, she tells Simon that she is seeking a divorce. She then joins with Tyler, escapes to Canada, and then to Indonesia in order to emigrate to the new planet opened up by the Hypothetical's Archway.

Diane represents the people's tendency to fall back on religion when face with events that they cannot otherwise explain. Despite her physical absence, her religiosity stands opposite her brother's scientific rationality and illustrates a common tendency among humans.



Objects/Places

Spin

The Spin is an artificial energy field wrapped like a membrane around planet Earth. The field is held together by two huge cubes hovering high above the planet's poles. The Spin's primary effect is to create a bubble that modifies the time-space continuum, in effect slowing down the passing of time on Earth relative to the time in the rest of the universe. As a result, the universe ages over one hundred million years for every year that passes on Earth (or 3.17 years for every second on Earth). The Spin also acts as a selective filter, keeping meteorites, rays from the decaying sun and other spatial objects from damaging the Earth's atmosphere. However, it allows probes and vessels sent from and to Earth to pass through the membrane. The Spin is believed to have been build by a race of aliens referred to as the Hypotheticals.

CVWS

CVWS, an acronym for "cardiovascular wasting syndrome", is the name of a cattle-borne disease that breaks out near the end of the Spin era. The origins of CVWS are traced back to the religious cults that are trying to breed red cattle. CVWS is treatable with medicine if diagnosed early. Diane is infected with CVWS but her condition is so bad that Tyler resorts to injecting her with the Martian drug in order to save her.

Archway

The Archway is a bridge-like structure that links the Earth with a hospitable planet located somewhere in the galaxy. The Archway was built by the Hypotheticals at the end of the first Spin era.

Martian Drug

The Martian Drug is a bio-engineered chemical that was brought to earth by Wun Ngo Wen. It is first used on Jason Lawton, then on his sister Diane, and finally on Tyler Dupree himself. On the up side, the Martian Drug cures illnesses and diseases that cannot be taken care of by regular medicine. The drug also adds half a century to the life expectancy of a human being, thereby creating a 'Fourth Age.' On the down side, the drug requires a few weeks to work its way through the body, during which the subject has to remain in bed and under medical supervision.



Perihelion

Perihelion is the name of a space and research center promoted by E.D. Lawton to study the Spin. The company is located in Orlando, Florida. It manages the launches of the Marian program as well as the later launch of the 'replicators'. The company employs both Jason Lawton, E.D.'s son, and the narrator Tyler Dupree. Jason Lawton eventually rises to the head of the company.

Mars

Mars is the name of the planet that is closest to Earth within the solar system. It is 'terraformed' and then colonized by humans under the supervision of Perihelion. It is the birthplace of Wun Ngo Wen, a Martian who lands on Earth a few years afterward. Mars ends up wrapped in a Spin.

Condon Ranch

The Condon Ranch is a farm in Arizona owned by Dan Condon. The ranch is where a religious cult tried to breed a red calf and where Diane hides while she suffers from CVWS.

Ecopoiesis

In Spin, ecopoiesis refers to Mars' terraforming experiment. Ecopoiesis is a name coined by Robert Haynes in 1990 to refer to the act of creating a biosphere where none existed before.

Jordan Tabernacle

Jordan Tabernacle is the name of the religious movement located in Arizona that employed Simon Townsend after his departure from the New Kingdom.

Padang

Padang is an important city in Indonesia, near the Indian Ocean. Padang is where Tyler injects the Martian drug and where Diane negotiates their emigration passage with Jala.



Themes

Doomsday Religion

Religion plays a very important role in the novel. The author of *Spin* asserts that besides plain denial, humans typically have two opposite reactions when they come face to face with a phenomenon that they cannot grasp or explain thoroughly. Either they resort to religion and consequently build beliefs in un-reasonable entities that somehow reflect and explain what they see and feel, or they try to gather as much physical evidence as possible from the world around them and then do their best to come up with a scientific explanation for it. *Spin* shows that both exercises (science and religion) are aimed at satisfying the same human need; they are simultaneously opposite and twins. Diane represents the religious reaction, while her twin brother Jason represents the rational, scientific reaction.

Diane's character represents the evolution of the religious reaction of the humans to the unexplained and the impending doom of civilization. One night in October, twelve-year-old Diane Lawton observes first-hand the disappearance of the moon and the stars. During the following years, she slowly adapts to the new reality as she learns about it and tries to make sense of the event. These first few years correspond to the period of adaptation required by the human population on planet Earth to grasp the full meaning and implication of the Spin. On a purely practical level, most things on Earth remained the same after the October Event. Though the Moon disappeared and the visible Sun is now nothing but an illusion, the seasons keep on cycling normally, the tides continue to go high and low just as they always did, and temperatures remain perfectly normal all over the planet.

As soon as she reached adulthood, Diane vanishes from Tyler's life and begins a life of soul searching that leads her to multiple cults and religious groups. In the novel, religion is the knee-jerk reaction of those who blame the Spin and its expected aftermath (i.e., the end of the World) on God. The first step in religiosity usually consists in a hedonist reflex. As Diane's story shows, the hedonist reflex to the announcement of the end of the world tries to make the best of what's left of life on an individual basis, with no consideration of the long-term consequences of the actions. However, the religious justification that supports the hedonist reflex appears vain once the advertised catastrophe fails to materialize and when the consequences of the individual's actions become clear. In *Spin*, this is shown in the first part of the novel by the rise and fall of Simon's New Kingdom movement.

As doomsday approaches, religious people pick up internal strength by tightening the rules in their life. This, as the logic goes, ensures that they will be safe in the afterworld. This attitude is shown in the second part of the novel through Diane's new situation. She is now formally married to Simon Townsend. She is also somewhat submissive to her husband's religious rules of living, where no book or newspaper is allowed. Finally,



many religions are trying to get their hands on an earthly sign of an act of God. In the case of the Jordan Tabernacle sect, they are working of breeding a red calf.

Science and the Unknown

The author of *Spin* makes the point that people have one of three reactions when faced with a reality that then cannot fully grasp or otherwise make sense of: Simply deny and ignore it, blame it on God, or else wrap it in a veil of science. Accordingly, from the day the stars disappeared and until the very end of the *Spin* era, the majority of the people just ignored the *Spin* and continued to live as if nothing happened. When it became clear that the *Spin* was a membrane that was at once saving and dooming the world, a portion of the population - exemplified by Diane's story - started to blame God and to build religious cults around it. An even smaller percentage of humans tried to make sense of the *Spin* by rationalizing it through science. This latter reaction is exemplified in the novel by the story of Jason.

The same situation is repeated when the world is confronted with the presence of a Martian. This diminutive, wrinkled alien being was ignored by most, revered and elevated to the status of a God by many (such as a lot of Indonesians) and studied by a few. Just as with the *Spin*, none of these attitudes provides any help in grasping the true meaning and intention of the Martian ambassador. When the latter ends up dead, unintentionally shot by mobs looking to make a profit out of a highway robbery, the problem posed by the Martian remains as complicated as it was the moment it landed on Earth.

Science blames the *Spin* on a race of powerful Aliens, possessing scientific and technical knowledge far beyond that of the human race. Humans give those Aliens a name that underlines the fact that they are not certain of their very existence: the Hypotheticals. Religion tends to blame everything that cannot be fully understood on God or one of its evil counterparts. In the same way, science's last resort is to blame the incomprehensible on Aliens. Just like Diane and Jason, these two attitudes are related like twins. Aliens like God are fictional entities that possess all-encompassing technology, making at once anything and everything possible. Aliens and God need no absolute logic other than their own, since science can reorganize around new facts as well as use the power of words to provide new explanations to fit the circumstances. From this point of view, Aliens are not different than God. The former are essentially fictional characters with a scientific basis; they can take any form or shape imaginable.

The power of the Aliens knows no limit and ranges from drawing meaningless circles in wheat fields to encircling the whole planet with a powerful, time-permeable shield like the *Spin*. In both cases, they explain anything and everything. In the end, Jason reveals that the Hypotheticals are an alien entity that sealed the Earth in response to the planet's impending doom at the hands of human civilization. They used the *Spin* to protect the Earth from itself and to force humans to re-evaluate their status in the Universe.



Politics and Communication

In *Spin*, politics is described as the art of using a given situation to control the population and to gain even more power. In *Spin*, politicians accomplish this by filtering the information available to the public. Information about the Spin and the related problems, as well as information regarding the Martian ambassador, is kept from the public eye until the release of the information can lead to political gain.

The novel marks the passing of time by referring to a different political administration. Each administration appears little different from the preceding one and nothing changes much in between each of them. Politics continues to have a limiting effect on the life of humans. Controlling the information is described as a key element in maintaining power. Even after the end of the first Spin era, when the population finally understands that the life of every human being is not as doomed as previously thought, the government continues to chase the 'Fourths,' which it perceives as a threat to its own power.

Communication media is also described as an essential mechanism of power. The reason for the rise of E.D. Lawton to such a high-level status in Washington is his grasp on a communication technology that can circumvent the effect of the Spin. His company produces aerostats that build communication networks that do not rely on satellites, all of which have become obsolete after the October Event. E.D. uses that newfound power to leverage even more political influence with Perihelion, a foundation that studies the Spin and its effect. As such, Perihelion does not accomplish much to save the world and its effect remains quite limited, given the importance of the Spin. However, it puts the power of communication technology in the hands of successive political administration to control the flow of information.

Style

Point of View

Spin is a science-fiction novel written as a story within a story. It uses the first person point of view. The bulk of the novel is an embedded journal written by a character named Tyler Dupree. Since the journal entries are mainly flashbacks, both stories tie up in the end, as they are joined together by the timeline. The novel starts in the very near future and ends a little over thirty years later, after the end of the first Spin era.

Tyler is a medical doctor that plays a limited and mostly supporting role in the unfolding of events described in the novel. However, because of his contacts, Tyler Dupree is privileged enough to have access to information prior to its disclosure to the public. Through Tyler Dupree's eyes, the reader is able to focus on the important events that unfold during the three and a half decades following the beginning of the Spin.

Despite the subject of Spin (a worldwide event that threatens to engulf the population of the globe in a deadly heat wave), the novel uses a surprisingly limited set of characters. Beside Tyler Dupree, there are two main characters in Spin: Jason and Diane Lawton. The latter are well-developed and present two sides of a single story. Each of these characters represents one of the two prevalent and somewhat opposing options for humanity: science and religion. In the end, the novel seems to suggest that science is a more sensible choice.

Setting

Spin recounts the thirty-some years during which the Earth was kept under wrap by an Alien civilization. The story starts in the near future (it could be tomorrow) when three young teenagers witness the disappearance of the stars and go on to live their life under the Spin. The story is told by Tyler Dupree, a medical doctor who is living in transit in Indonesia, waiting for a way to cross over the Archway and to a new planet. Since the novel anchors the storyline in a future close to the current period, it can use technological and cultural references that are easy to grasp by any reader.

The story of the Spin era is embedded as a journal, written by Dupree, while he's undergoing a transformation induced by the Martian drug and meant to bring him to a 'fourth age.' The bulk of the novel takes place in the three areas of the United States: the Midwest, Florida and Arizona. Tyler Dupree and the Lawton twins live in adjacent houses in the Midwest. Tyler and Jason move to the headquarters of Perihelion in Orlando, Florida. Perihelion is the name of a government-sponsored think-tank of scientists dedicated to dealing with the Spin. Diane, Jason Lawton's sister, eventually follows her husband to a ranch in Arizona where they live in a religious sect-like environment.



The final portion of the running chapter ("4x10E9 A.D."), which takes place in Padang, Indonesia, is followed by the last chapter of the novel, which sees the remaining characters crossing the Archway built by the Hypotheticals en route towards a new and mostly virgin planet.

Language and Meaning

Spin is written as a series of recollection by Dr. Tyler Dupree while he is undergoing his transformation towards what the Martians call the "Fourth Age." The bulk of the novel is embedded as a Journal written at the end of the first Spin era.

The author of Spin uses language in a way that closely follows the established structure of contemporary novels. Though it is not necessarily aimed at the hardcore science-fiction aficionado, it never feels "cheap" or rushed. Spin anchors the storyline in a future close enough to the current period to allow the author to use technological and cultural references that remain easy to grasp by any reader. The novel's conclusion and overall logic remain relatively straightforward throughout the book, given the highly improbable context.

Spin's premise is that Earth has now reached a point where its ecology is doomed by human proliferation and technology. The planet is wrapped in a time bubble by an Alien race referred to as the Hypotheticals, whose goal appears to be saving human civilization and providing Earth's inhabitants with a safe way out to a new planet.

The end of the world is a timeless subject, but Spin revisits it in a particularly interesting way. The novel also discusses such contemporary subjects as religious cults and their meaning, political affiliations and class relationships. The novel is devoid of gory violence and explicit sexual scene. However, it touches the subject of sexual taboos near the end when Carol, the mother of two of the main protagonists, reveals that she is a would-be lesbian.

Structure

Spin spreads over 30 chapters. The chapters are relatively even in length. Each one of them provides the details of the important events that occurred over a given period in the life of Tyler Dupree during the Spin era. The story is divided in 8 parts of 2-3 chapters each. These parts are separated by a single section of a dividing chapter titled "Four Time Ten to the Ninth Power A.D." The latter's title refers to the absolute date of the final episode — considering that the universe aged by 4 billion years since the beginning of the Spin, during which less than 40 years of time passed on Earth. The chapter named "Four Time Ten to the Ninth Power A.D." is in fact the second to last chapter of the novel. It recounts the weeks that Tyler spent writing his memories of the Spin era while recovering from the initial side effects of the Martian drug.

The chapters themselves are constructed from several parts of a few paragraphs in length. These parts are interrelated and usually closely follow the timeline of the story

but vary the point of view of the narrator. For instance, a chapter starts with a dialogue between Tyler Dupree and another character, then skips to a part that provides scientific explanation to some of the points discussed previously, then skips to a different event in the same timeline, etc. This intricate weaving of the storyline through various points of view is typical of the traditional approach to linear science fiction. The reason for this is scientific reasoning and factual descriptions are constantly needed to complement the undergoing story and bring the reader up to date on technology.

The author uses the dividing parts of the running chapter to wisely and manages to maintain the suspense without revealing the ending. Even though *Spin* is a science fiction novel, it follows an unconventional literary path to end by providing the traditional pseudo-scientific explanation to the events depicted.



Quotes

"St. Augustine died suddenly and prematurely - he was hardly more than a pup - that autumn. Diane was grief-stricken, and I realized I was in love with her. ..." Chapter 4 x 10E9 A.D., page 50

"Elsewhere, the Dong Feng missiles approached and then crossed the Spin barrier en route to their programmed targets. Strange to think of them streaking over a suddenly dark, cold, motionless Earth, operating solely on internal programming, aiming themselves at the featureless artifacts that drifted in suspension hundreds of miles over the poles. Like a drama without an audience, too sudden to see." Chapter No Single Thing Abides, page 81

"Another handshake, strangely weak, and then he was off, still listing to the left, leaving me to wonder not whether he was ill but how he was and how much worse it would get." Chapter Unquiet Nights, page 112

"She was beautiful without trying, but not quite at ease, all grace but at the same time just slightly off balance." Chapter Under the Skin, page 129

"The global economy had begun to oscillate, consumers and nations accumulating debt loads they expected never to have to repay, while creditors hoarded funds and interest rates spiked. Extreme religiosity and brutal criminality had increased in tandem, at home and abroad." Chapter Hospitality, page 190

"Suddenly E.D.'s surrounded by people he can't manipulate. Younger people, people who've assimilated the Spin in a way E.D.'s generation never did. People like us, Ty." Chapter Four Photographs of the Kirioloj Delta, page 216

"They grew at speeds that would make a bristlecone pine look rushed, but grow they would, assimilating trace volatiles and organic molecules and shaping ice into cellular walls, ribs, spars, and joiners." Chapter The Cold Places of the Universe, page 243

"He painted Mars as a foreign but entirely human place, the kind of place you might like to visit, where the people were friendly and the scenery was interesting, although the winters, he admitted, were often harsh. ('Sounds like Canada,' Carol said.)" Chapter The Ticking of Expensive Clocks, page 289

"Such as, who exactly is Wun Ngo Wen? Who does he represent, and what does he really want? Because despite what they say on television he's not Mahatma Gandhi in a Munchkin package. He's here because he wants something from us. He's wanted it from day one." Chapter Desperate Euphoria, page 306

"Let me confess. I do believe the world will end. I believe what Jason told me years and years ago, that one morning the sun will rise swollen and hellish and in a few hours or



days, our time on Earth will be finished. I don't want to be alone on that morning -"
Chapter Desperate Euphoria, page 319

"The moon, stained amber by the light of the gibbous sun, scarred and smaller than I remembered it, had risen over the eastern horizon. The night air was almost intoxicatingly cool. I took deep breaths." Chapter The Morning and the Evening, page 374

"Then I drove her to the local bus depot, where she vanished into a crowd of displaced tourists who had been stranded by the end of the Spin." Chapter We All Land Somewhere, page 441



Topics for Discussion

Discuss whether governments should hide critical information from the public. Do you think that your government is currently filtering information in order to make political gains? Give a few historical examples of such manipulation of information.

Are religion and science fundamentally opposed when it comes to explaining the world around us? Discuss areas where religion and science overlap.

If a firm date for the end of the world was announced tomorrow, what kind of plan would you make? Make a list of the things you want to do before you die.

How would humans really react if an Alien (Martian or otherwise) ambassador landed on Earth? How would this be handled by the government? Could you trust a totally Alien being, given that none of its assertions can be verified?

Evolution is the key principle behind the 'game of life', which is the basis of the (fictional) Martian "replicators" technology in *Spin*. Is this a proof that evolution is not just a theory, but a provable principle? Discuss the advantages and limits of evolution as a theory.

In *Spin*, an Aliens species imprison the earth in time so that it can save the human race from self-destruction. Do you think the world is really coming to an end soon? If you were all-powerful, like the Hypotheticals, what would you do to save the planet?

At the end of *Spin*, people are given the option of either staying on earth and actually wait for the end of the world, or migrate to a new and virgin world with no end in sight. Who would leave and who would stay? Make a list of arguments supporting both options and compare it with others.