

Station Eleven Study Guide

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Plot Summary

Arthur Leander, a famous actor, dies on stage in the middle of a performance of King Lear. Jeevan, a man training to become an EMT, rushes the stage to try and save Arthur, but it's too late. He ends up comforting Kirsten, a young girl, who witnesses Arthur's death. Later that night, Jeevan walks home in the snow. His friend, an ER doctor, calls and tells Jeevan that a plane has arrived from Russia full of sick passengers who are dying. This is the beginning of the Georgia Flu pandemic, which will kill ninety-nine percent of the population.

Fifteen years later, civilization as readers know it no longer exists. There is no electricity, air travel, cars, or stores. All governments and economies have collapsed. Settlements are starting to emerge, as well as doomsday cults.

Fifteen years after the collapse of civilization, Kirsten is now a young woman and is part of a Traveling Symphony. The Symphony goes to different settlements to perform Shakespeare's plays and classical music, but the world is full of danger. Charlie and Jeremy, two of Kirsten's friends, left the Symphony while Charlie was pregnant to stay in one place until the baby is born. When the Symphony returns to get them after two years, Charlie, Jeremy, and the baby are missing after the settlement was overrun by a doomsday prophet.

The Symphony goes in search of their friends and is led to a rumored location called The Museum of Civilization, an airport settlement somewhere near Sovern City. As the group travels, flashbacks provide clues to who Arthur, Clark, Kirsten, Miranda, Jeevan and others were before the collapse of civilization. Arthur became a famous actor who married three times. Clark left his punk-rock days behind and got a PhD and became a successful businessman. Kirsten was a child actress who befriended Arthur before his death. Miranda left an abusive boyfriend for life in Hollywood until she realized that her husband was cheating on her. Jeevan used to be a paparazzo and entertainment journalist, but was looking for something more meaningful in his life and was training to become an EMT.

After the Symphony leaves one of the settlements, they find a stowaway in their midst. It's a young girl who is promised to be the fourth wife of the prophet. Sayid, Dieter, and Sydney, three members of the Symphony, all vanish. Kirsten and August, another Symphony member, get separated from the group. They encounter followers of the prophet. His men have abducted the other Symphony members and he wants to trade them for the stowaway. Dieter accidentally dies while in custody. The prophet is prepared to kill the others to get what he wants. A young boy who is traveling with the prophet ends up shooting him.

Kirsten, August, and Sayid are within walking distance of the airport settlement. They meet Clark and are reunited with Charlie, Jeremy, and their daughter Annabel. Clark shows Kirsten evidence of an electrical grid coming on in the distance, and they are all left with the hope that civilization is about to reemerge.



Section 1, Chapters 1-2

Summary

Chapter 1 opens at a staging of King Lear in Toronto. Arthur, an older film actor, is on stage. During Act IV he collapses during the performance. Jeevan, a paramedic in training, sees the actor in distress and rushes the stage. Security tries to stop him, thinking he's a crazed fan. When they realize that the actor is in trouble and that Jeevan is only trying to help, they allow him to continue onto the stage. Jeevan starts CPR and soon the stage curtain is drawn. While the play has stopped, and the other actors are milling around the stage, whether talking to one another or on their cellphones, the stage snow continues to fall. Jeevan is joined by Dr. Jacoby, a cardiologist, who takes over CPR. Both Jeevan and Jacoby sense the direness of the situation as they await an ambulance. Soon after the paramedics arrive on scene, they call time of death for Arthur. Before transporting him from the theater, an oxygen mask is placed over his face to give the illusion that the actor is still alive.

Before leaving the theater, Jeevan helps Kirsten, a child actress find her guardian. He leaves the girl and discovers that his girlfriend Laura has left the theater. Jeevan decides to walk home and encounters the paparazzi waiting outside. Jeevan was once an entertainment journalist and paparazzo and wants to avoid getting caught up with the paparazzi he used to know.

He continues his walk home, thinking about how the walk used to be no big deal when he was younger. It's snowing outside and he feels oddly invigorated. Despite the tragedy of the evening, he is happy to know for certain that his career path is being a paramedic. He gets a text from Laura asking him to pick up milk. What he thought was supposed to be a romantic evening at the theater to make up for the troubles in their relationship, turned to her leaving the theater without him and wanting him to run an errand.

Chapter 2 finds the few people remaining in the Elgin Theater after Arthur dies. Actors and a producer sit at the lobby bar talking about whom should be contacted about the death: Arthur's young child, any of his three ex-wives, his agent or his lawyer. The producer decides they should notify the lawyer. They all go their separate ways and it is revealed that of all of them, the bartender will survive the longest, only to die three weeks later leaving the city.

Analysis

Arthur's death on stage has nothing to do with the impending outbreak of the Georgia Flu, but it is no less tragic. Without the flu, Arthur's death surely would have garnered a lot of attention in the news and in tabloids. There would have been speculation about his relationships, what was going on in his life and with his health. A lot surely would



have been made of the story of Jeevan rushing to aid Arthur in his final moments. Jeevan likely would have become famous for a short time in today's celebrity-obsessed culture and Jeevan would realize it. Prior to this, Jeevan worked as an entertainment journalist and paparazzo. Trying to save Arthur might have led him back into that world. Not only would he have intimate details of Arthur's final moments, but he transitioned from being someone who used to observe and report on the lives of famous people to interacting with them. If Jeevan had achieved some level of fame as a result of his intervening, Jeevan likely would have struggled with it. His actions likely stand in for what the reader might be compelled to do. It is natural to imagine coming to the aid of someone one admires. Since many people have a desire to attach themselves to fame, this creates a situation people would be more likely to witness. Jeevan becomes part of the story, thereby taking the reader with him. While the novel doesn't follow Jeevan's journey exclusively, it opens this new world to the reader and makes it accessible.

Regardless of what is about to transpire with the outbreak, Jeevan is in a transitional phase in his life. He has left behind his career as a paparazzo and entertainment journalist. He has decided to become an EMT. Even though he wasn't ultimately able to save Arthur, he gets a taste of what his life will be like with his new career path. He's excited for the change and the challenge. He wants to be able to help people. This act of caring for people connects with the reader. It may be easy to judge the paparazzi for the job they do, but it does have a high rate of consumer consumption. Because Jeevan is transitioning to a more pedestrian job, the reader can feel more comfortable with his character.

The allusion to King Lear presents the reader with an expectation for tragedy. Kirsten witnessing Arthur's death symbolizes a loss of innocence. She is eight years old and watches a man die in front of her. This would be difficult for anyone, but it's heightened because Kirsten is a child and is fond of Arthur. He's been kind to her and now he's gone.

Chapter 2 is a short chapter that gives the reader a quick glimpse into the somber fallout of Arthur's death. Cast members and people affiliated with the production are debating who should be told about his death before the public finds out. With social media being as prevalent as it is, it's likely that the news has already gotten out, if not confirmed. Anyone from the audience could have talked to the paparazzi or contacted a gossip or news source about what happened. The chapter is likely what the reader would expect given what happened to Arthur. Before the reader is submerged into the debate about who to tell about Arthur's death or discourse about what kind of man Arthur was, the chapter ends rather abruptly. It ends with the revelation that all of the people in the bar that night are hours and days away from their own death. It foreshadows the speed of the impending outbreak, but also signifies that a shift in perspective is coming. Fame or success holds no currency in the world yet to come, and no one is immune to death when it comes to call.



Discussion Question 1

Arthur's death would be considered a shocking celebrity death in our culture. Can you think of any similar events that have transpired? How did social media react to the news? How did reputable news sources cover the story?

Discussion Question 2

Kirsten is eight years old when she witnesses Arthur's death. How do you think this event would have affected her life had the pandemic not happened?

Discussion Question 3

Jeevan is reevaluating his life and career choice. Is it a viable career choice given his past? What does this decision reveal about his character?

Vocabulary

murmur, transitory, charade, gurney, gladiatorial, console, inarguable



Section 1, Chapter 3

Summary

Jeevan continues his walk through the park, enjoying making the first tracks in the fresh snow. He looks through the windows of the park greenhouse and the tropical plants inside remind him of a trip to Cuba. He decides he should call his brother Frank and tell him about his career revelation.

Jeevan gets a phone call from his friend Hua, a doctor at Toronto General. Hua tells Jeevan that the hospital is experiencing an outbreak of the Georgia Flu, and that he's never seen flu with such a short incubation time. Jeevan receives several updates from Hua about the outbreak. All the passengers from a flight from Moscow have died and ER nurses have also succumbed to the disease in the few hours that have transpired. Hua tells Jeevan to get out of the city or stock up on supplies and isolate himself in his apartment.

Jeevan makes multiple trips to the grocery store and stocks up water, canned goods, toiletries, and other necessities. He tells the clerk that she should leave the city. She asks if he's referring to the news, and he confirms. She thinks he's partly crazy and that this is likely to turn out like SARS and not be as bad as everyone says.

He leaves the grocery store and wheels each of the shopping carts to the freight elevator of Frank's apartment building. He has to bribe the doorman to use the freight elevator and tells him that he's a survivalist. He calls Laura and tries to convince her to leave the city, but she thinks he's being paranoid. With all of the supplies on the 22nd floor of the apartment building, he knocks on Frank's door. Frank, who is wheelchair bound, answers the door.

Analysis

In spite of the tragedy of Arthur's death, Jeevan feels good. He's made a decision that will affect the rest of his life and he's excited for it. He feels that he's found his place in this world. He wants to call his brother and tell him. This will make it real. It is one thing to think about something, or even to act on it, but communicate with others takes it to another level.

Then Jeevan gets the phone call from his friend at the hospital. When Hua tells him the news about what's occurring at the hospital, he can hardly believe it. Jeevan doesn't consider Hua someone who would panic or blow something out of proportion, so the gravity of the situation takes hold quickly. Jeevan doesn't have time for disbelief. He needs to make a choice and act on it. Much like how he reacted to Arthur collapsing on stage, Jeevan leaps into action.



Hua tells Jeevan to either leave the city or stockpile supplies and wait it out. Jeevan decides to gather up supplies and hunker down with his brother Frank. He's protective of Frank. He goes to his brother's apartment instead of home to his girlfriend. He attempts to help Laura, but he offers immediate help to Frank. Surely, Jeevan's actions help to keep Frank alive. His disability would have kept him from being able to gather supplies at all. For the moment, Jeevan has saved his brother's life.

Laura is a life he can't save, however. Jeevan understands that there is only so much he can do. In this instance, he can merely tell Laura, tell the grocery store clerk, and then let them make whatever informed decision they choose. His role in their survival (or not) is transitory much like an EMT would be. An EMT treats the patient in the moment and gets them to the next place. More often than not, an EMT never learns the final outcome of the patient delivered to the hospital. Jeevan won't know the outcome of the store clerk or Laura either.

Discussion Question 1

Is Jeevan's reaction to the call from Hua reasonable? What does Laura's reaction to Jeevan's phone call reveal about their relationship?

Discussion Question 2

Jeevan stockpiles groceries and goes to his brother's apartment. Why doesn't Jeevan leave the city? What does the reader learn about Jeevan from his choice?

Discussion Question 3

Laura thinks Jeevan is being paranoid when she received his phone call. Is her response reasonable? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

mortality, epidemic, paranoid, understatement, frenzy, survivalist



Section 1, Chapters 4-6

Summary

Chapter 4 is a short chapter in which the producer notifies Arthur's lawyer about his client's death. The lawyer reviews Arthur's will and many email exchanges. He discovers loose ends and reaches out to a friend of Arthur's he met at a Hollywood party. The friend begins the process of notifying the ex-wives.

Chapter 5 introduces Miranda, one of Arthur's ex-wives. She works for a shipping company and is looking at the ships lit up at night when she receives a phone call from Arthur's friend Clark Thompson. She's taken back by the news, having just seen Arthur two weeks earlier. When the call concludes, the reader learns that this occurs during the last month in which someone could telephone the other side of the world and reach someone else.

Chapter 6 reveals an "incomplete list" of things that no longer exist after disease wipes out so much of the population. The shelf-life of gasoline is a couple of years, while jet fuel lasts longer. Planes sit on the ground and are used for storage because there are no more flights. Borders are unmanned and the internet has ceased.

Analysis

Chapters 4-6 are short intervals to give the reader insight into the character's lives. Because they are short, it mimics the way people get glimpses into others' lives without obtaining the full picture. Chapter 4 finds the producer of the play passing along information about Arthur's death. It's a business transaction. A formality to be taken care of before the producer begins to think about what happens next with the production. Will he need to find a replacement? Is there an understudy? Will the play close unexpectedly? Will it lose money? Since the reader knows that something catastrophic is underway, it doesn't make sense for the author to spend a great deal of time with these intervals. That they seem to taper off mirrors the pattern with which people will disengage with everyday tasks.

The lawyer also goes about business as usual. Arthur is a client, not a friend. He may have known him for a long time, but he is a commodity, which means he no longer serves a purpose to the attorney. The lawyer reaches out to Arthur's friend Clark and passes the responsibility of notifying family onto him. Clark, in turn, reaches out to Arthur's first ex-wife, Miranda. Clark determines that she should know. The lawyer is symbolic of those who will resist coming to terms with the changes that are taking place.

By Chapter 6, the reader begins to understand the scope of the pandemic. This is not a disease that devastated one particular city or region; it decimated the human race. While the knowledge remains on how humans came to have telephones or computers or electricity or antibiotics, the amount of people needed to create and sustain these



things is no longer available. What humans take for granted is now gone. That the author has identified the list as incomplete signifies that it is likely beyond comprehension what will be lost if such an event transpired in real life.

Discussion Question 1

Clark makes the decision to notify Arthur's first wife about his passing. Why is this important to Clark?

Discussion Question 2

How does the removal of all modern conveniences change the way the characters interact with one another?

Discussion Question 3

The loss of many modern amenities (e.g. the internet and antibiotics) can seem overwhelming. The author gives a partial list of what no longer exists. What purpose does this list serve? How does it inform the overall plot?

Vocabulary

irritable, reserved, halos, halogens, pharmaceuticals, unmanned



Section 2, Chapters 7-9

Summary

Chapter 7 begins 20 years after the pandemic. Modern civilization as readers know it is non-existent. A group of actors and musicians called the Traveling Symphony are making their way through unfamiliar territory somewhere near Lake Michigan. Their destination is St. Deborah by the Water. One of the travelers is Kirsten, now an adult. The group is staging King Lear. People are surprised that after the end of modern civilization, Shakespeare is the most successful of the plays they perform.

Kirsten's friend August, a violinist who had recently started acting, and who secretly writes poetry, is introduced. August is fascinated with memories of television shows and TV Guide. Kirsten doesn't remember much from her childhood, unable to even recall what a computer monitor looked like. August and Kirsten like to break into abandoned houses. He looks for relics from television, while she searches for old gossip magazines with articles about Arthur. Kirsten's best friend Charlie, a cellist, calls Kirsten an archeologist and Charlie had wanted to be an archeologist when she was young. She remembers him fondly, along with the comic books he once gave her, and watching him die on stage. She also remembers Jeevan.

Chapter 8 describes the comics Arthur gave Kristen. They are titles Dr. Eleven, Vol. 1, No. 1.: Station Eleven, and Dr. Eleven, Vol. 1, No. 2: The Pursuit. Someone from the symphony suggests that because of the high quality, they may have been a vanity project. It is possible that there are only ten copies of each comic in the world.

Chapter 9 finds the symphony arriving at their destination. They move slowly through the town and play music. The people don't respond as some of the other towns have. The group decides that the town is too depressed for the likes of King Lear or Hamlet. Instead they determine A Midsummer Night's Dream appropriate and the reader meets Sayid, Kirsten's former boyfriend of two years, whom she cheated on four months earlier. They perform on stage together.

Analysis

The Symphony is traveling through unfamiliar territory when the reader is first introduced to them. Having the Symphony be out of their comfort zone helps the reader relate. The reader is just now being introduced to what the world is like following a devastating pandemic. The world has had time to adjust and the now the reader can as well. Readers' unease with this new world channels through the unease for the Symphony as they make their way.

The tragedy King Lear is alluded here. It harkens to the opening chapters of the novel. King Lear becomes a symbol that unifies the novel. It is a classic play that transcends generations. Great tragedies like King Lear are relatable in this world, not simply



because it is familiar, but because the world is trying to rebuild in the aftermath of catastrophic loss. Plays with heavy themes, questions, and decisions make sense in this post-pandemic society.

Still, people are surprised that audiences want Shakespeare more than other plays. Perhaps this is a persistent attitude about why humans need art and how certain pieces endure while others do not. Readers know that hundreds of years after his death, Shakespeare remains popular. Why wouldn't that continue? Many actors are drawn to Shakespeare because of the challenge and complexity of the roles. There is, however, an appetite for modern plays. This foreshadows Sidney's attempt at writing a new play.

The success and accessibility of film has changed the audience's relationship with actors and performances. The fall of civilization has taken away the mass distribution of film, and people are left to seek different entertainment.

Kirsten and August talk about the things they remember. They periodically do so throughout the entirety of the novel. Kirsten has a limited memory of her childhood and what life was like before the pandemic, while August has clearer memories. The reader knows one of the events that certainly shaped her development: Arthur's death. Readers can tell from these memory blocks that Kirsten has put a lot out of her mind because she doesn't want to remember.

In Chapter 8, readers learn about Station Eleven and what is in the comic books. They are finely drawn books with sophisticated coloring. Someone in the Symphony suggests that the comics were part of a vanity project. These comics are unique and unheard of. This foreshadows that the comics are something special, not merely in design, but in content. Only a handful were likely ever created, signaling that when the reader hears about them again then notes that they're important.

In Chapter 9, the Symphony decides to change the play that they were planning to perform. They switched from a tragedy to one of Shakespeare's comedies. This demonstrates how the Symphony is able to gauge the crowd and give them not merely what they want, but rather what they need. They sense that something about this settlement is in need of happier fare. The allusion to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* gives the reader the opportunity to consider how much of the novel exists in what could be considered a dream-like state.

Discussion Question 1

Shakespearean plays are the most popular that the Traveling Symphony performs. Why do you think this is? What makes the works of Shakespeare stand the test of time?



Discussion Question 2

Kirsten has limited memories of her childhood, but August remembers quite a lot. Why do you suppose they remember so differently? What does this reveal about their characters?

Discussion Question 3

Kirsten and Sayid perform opposite each other in the play. They were in a serious relationship, which ended after she cheated on him. How might their past help or hinder their performances in the play?

Vocabulary

caravan, pinpricks, scrawny, turbines, mirage, mistress, snickering, wanton



Section 2, Chapter 10

Summary

Chapter 10 begins with commentary on the irritations people experience from traveling with other people. The Traveling Symphony is no different. Since they have arrived in St. Deborah on the Water, Kirsten is also looking to reunite with her friend Charlie, who stayed in the town a couple years earlier in order to give birth to her child with Jeremy, the sixth guitarist with the Symphony.

Restaurants, big box stores, and truck stops have been converted to shelters. When Kirsten last saw Charlie, she and Jeremy were staying at a converted IHOP. Now, the door of the restaurant is boarded up and marked with a silver-painted emblem that looks like a "t" with an extra hash mark toward the bottom of the letter.

Kirsten speaks with the midwife that she met when Charlie was left behind. The midwife remembers her, but will only tell her that the baby was healthy at delivery and that Charlie and Jeremy left with the baby. When pressed about their whereabouts, the midwife reveals that Charlie resisted the advances of the prophet. Dieter, another member of the symphony, finds Kirsten and takes her to show her a graveyard. Three graves are marked with Charlie, Jeremy, and Annabel's (their daughter) names, but clearly the ground is undisturbed. Kirsten reports back to the other members of the symphony and they discuss where they may have gone.

Analysis

Settlements have formed in restaurants, truck stops, and big box stores. These places make sense given the availability of supplies and facilities in the early days of the pandemic. There would be food, water, cleaning supplies, and other useful goods. It's obvious that people stayed where the supplies were. When the supplies ran out, the groups were united enough to go out and try to fend for the group instead of just the individual. Teamwork prevails because they are better united than apart. In some respects, this offers commentary on present society. Big box stores are popular in modern culture and are often filled with people. It represents western consumerism.

The Symphony is looking for their friends. They have some idea of where they should be, but they're gone when the Symphony gets there. This symbolizes the search early survivors must have made to find their loved ones and it gives the reader an opportunity to experience this search. There is confusion about where they've gone and reluctance about giving too much information away. Information is power and this settlement does not want to yield that power.

The midwife gives the Symphony some information. It's fitting that the woman who assisted Charlie with the birth would offer some information. She symbolizes the need for intermediaries. She functions as a liaison between the settlement and Kirsten and



Dieter. She is a careful ambassador, however, and she does not reveal too much and desires to make sure that they believe all is well.

Dieter finds the grave markers and shows them to Kirsten, but the graves clearly haven't been used. This gives them some hope that they're still alive, but it is also foreboding.

Discussion Question 1

Why does the author choose restaurants and big box stores as shelters?

Discussion Question 2

Kirsten and Dieter are given very little to go on in order to find their friends. How will they go about trying to locate them given that all methods of communication, e.g. telephone, email, internet, mail service, are now destroyed?

Discussion Question 3

The midwife tells Kirsten that her friends left the settlement after rejecting the prophet. Why is the midwife reluctant to give them any further information? What does this reveal about the settlement where she lives?

Vocabulary

camaraderie, transcendent, rosin, interspersed, accompaniment



Section 2, Chapters 11-12

Summary

Chapter 11 begins with Kirsten and Sayid on stage performing *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It is revealed that Kirsten has a sizeable scar on her cheek. The chapter highlights that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was likely written in 1594, after two years of the plague. It also highlights the tragedies in Shakespeare's life. Shakespeare had one son who died, and Shakespeare, himself, was the only child of his parents to survive infancy.

Chapter 12 begins with an ovation for the performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. At the conclusion of the ovation a young man rises and addresses the crowd. It's the prophet; he has a dog named Luli. He speaks to his people about how the great pandemic was a cleansing, just as the 1918 flu had cleansed the sins of WWI. He claims that this is the beginning – an initial culling – of God's plan.

The prophet describes how a person can die two deaths: death of the body and death of the soul. The grave markers of Charlie, Jeremy, and Annabel mark the death of their souls upon leaving the doomsday cult. As the symphony packs up to leave, they encounter a young boy who acts as a sentry for the town. The boy asks if they have permission to leave. He explains that if people leave without permission, the town has funerals for them. Kirsten asks what happens if people come back after they've had funerals for them, but the boy doesn't reveal the result to them.

The Symphony travels on and Kirsten studies a map as they debate which direction to go. If they head south, they risk moving inland or ending up in Chicago. There are stories about snipers on the Sears Tower. They decide to travel south to a settlement in Severn City. Kirsten reflects on her possessions in her child-size Spider-Man backpack: the comic books, bottles of water, the gossip magazines detailing Arthur's life, and the paperweight. She can't remember who gave her the paperweight, but that it was a woman just before the outbreak.

Analysis

Kirsten and Symphony readily assess that this community needs comedy more than tragedy and change the performance for the night. The reader is made aware of the timing of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and how it was completed during the time of the plague. Shakespeare and his family experienced many tragedies. One of the reasons why the reader can relate to tragedies is because people have personal experience with them to varying degrees. It may not be something as dramatic as the plague or a pandemic such as the Georgia Flu, but readers can relate to the emotions that correspond to these events. This universality is why Shakespeare remains relevant in the present.



The audience gives the Symphony a standing ovation. They are appreciative of the entertainment. Following this ovation, the reader first encounters the prophet. He rises from the crowd, almost as though the audience has risen to their feet to applaud his entrance rather than the conclusion of the play. He views the pandemic as a fresh start. Those who have survived have an obligation to do well; they are the chosen ones. The prophet performs as any of the other actors would. He has a captive audience. His message is as much to recruit new members to his cult as it is to reinforce the beliefs the current members.

When the prophet is introduced, his dog is introduced with him. A dog's bark signifies impending trouble in later chapters. By introducing the dog with his master, the author demonstrates how easy it is to follow someone when they offer something that is needed. The dog doesn't understand the prophet; the dog understands that the prophet feeds him and keeps him safe. In exchange for that, he gives his loyalty. As the reader will see in a later chapter, the dog willingly changes master because that is where the dog needs to go to survive. The dog symbolizes the people who follow the prophet's cult. Following the prophet doesn't make them bad people necessarily; it just identifies how they are meeting a particular need.

As the Symphony prepares to leave the town, they are asked by the sentry if they have permission to leave. Having a young boy as the sentry offers less intimidation to those leaving. People may be curious as to why they would need permission, but less inclined to become aggressive about in the presence of a child. It's unclear how many people travel through this settlement, but there are many grave markers. The markers are meant to intimidate, just as the boy's reluctance to reveal what happens to those who return. This appears to be a one-time offer. The cult doesn't want people to leave and spread the word about what's going on, and they don't want people coming back after witnessing how it differs in other communities. Limiting exposure is the surest way to keep control of the community.

Discussion Question 1

The prophet makes his presence known at the conclusion of the performance. Why does he reveal himself to the Symphony at this time?

Discussion Question 2

The town has funerals for people who leave. What might happen to them if they return?

Discussion Question 3

Kirsten carries a child's backpack and keeps a variety of items in it: water bottles, tabloids, and a paperweight. Why would she carry things like a paperweight that serves such a limited purpose?

Vocabulary

contagious, jagged, insufficient, respite, submit, chaos, marauders, oblivious, inscrutable



Section 3, Chapters 13-14

Summary

Chapter 13 centers on the life of Arthur Leander as a younger man. It begins just before one of the photographs published in one of Kirsten's gossip magazine is taken. He is with Miranda, who has a bruise on her face. She tells Arthur she plans to leave the man that beat her. He's happy. They go outside and are greeted by the paparazzi. Arthur doesn't divulge details about who Miranda is, but he begins to think about when they met when he was a young actor, having had bit parts on Law & Order and who came back to work on a film in Toronto. His mother suggests he take a 17-year-old Miranda out to lunch. He does so reluctantly, but connects with her. They both go on about their lives and Arthur becomes a very famous actor, famous as much for his work as for dating even more famous women. Years after they first meet, when Arthur is in his mid-30s and Miranda in her mid-20s, Arthur reaches out to her.

Chapter 14 gives readers insight into Miranda's life. She works a job that began as a temp position but went full-time. She feels inadequate in her appearance next to Thea, the more polished woman that she works with. Miranda lives with her boyfriend, Pablo, who is an artist. Pablo had some early success, selling two paintings for \$10,000 and \$20,000 respectively, so Miranda didn't have to work. His career has stalled and Miranda is supporting them. In her downtime as a secretary at a shipping company, she works on a series of comics that she may turn into a graphic novel. It's called "Station Eleven."

Dr. Eleven is the main character and resembles Pablo in looks only. The station is a planet-shaped spacecraft that can navigate through galaxies. It's in a state of twilight or night, as it requires no sun. The people on board Station Eleven miss the sun, however.

Pablo doesn't like the long hours that Miranda works. He calls her at the office to make sure that she's actually working. Miranda is peeved that she's supporting them and he doubts her whereabouts. They get into an argument on the phone and she hangs up. Pablo attempts to reach her via email and text, but Miranda doesn't respond. She received a phone call from Arthur offering to take her to lunch. She suggests dinner. They go out, hit it off, and then go back to his hotel room. She feels guilt about the betrayal, but also views the start of the relationship with Arthur as being positive. Arthur asks what Pablo will do when she returns to the apartment to collect her belongings. Miranda thinks he'll be angry, but nothing else; Arthur isn't convinced.

Analysis

Readers get a first glimpse at Arthur as a younger man. He is with Miranda in what he finds to be a surprising relationship. It's not that Arthur thinks he's better than Miranda, but rather that he is interested pursuing a life that is lived larger than most live. He has



escaped his small town home for a successful career in the entertainment business. His success didn't happen immediately, but he ended up achieving quite a bit of fame. He dates other actresses because this is what is expected of him and also what he expects of himself. It is possible he genuinely cared for the actresses, but there's little doubt that the tabloid exposure from being with them helped further his career. This gives the reader a glimpse into why Arthur may be questioning some of his life choices when more is revealed about the night of his death.

Marrying Miranda grounds him in a way and justifies that he wasn't merely getting into relationships that could further his career. It also helps the reader connect to Arthur. It makes Arthur more accessible and shows a side of himself that is less consumed by vanity and his career.

Miranda is insecure, predominantly about her looks. She doesn't think her hair and clothes match the image that she wants to project. In this regard she is an apt foil for Arthur. Both deal with their vanity in different ways. Arthur thinks he should be perceived by his public by how he navigates the press. Miranda, on the other hand, views herself as a work in progress. She admires the polish of other people to the point that it makes her feel bad about herself. She can't live up to the glossy expectations in magazines that people are led to believe are attainable. That she views herself as a work in progress signifies that she is willing to grow. Miranda's issues about her looks foreshadow some of the difficulties that will arise in her relationship with Arthur.

Pablo is also an artist. He has some success and he begins to define his art by his success. He needs something to sell in order to be successful. He had a taste of success and is trying to recapture that feeling. Miranda supports them, and this makes Pablo feel inferior. He tells Miranda that the next sale will come along and that she won't have to work. Miranda's job emasculates Pablo. In much the way Miranda doesn't think she's good enough for Arthur, Pablo views his failures as making him unworthy of Miranda. The Arthur is trying to convey how people may view their current circumstances as better as or worse than others, but that success and confidence are all relative.

While Miranda is insecure in her looks, she is confident in work. She likes to do it. Yes, there is a need to do so while Pablo struggles, but she wants and likes to do it. It makes her feel worthwhile. This is also reflected in how she like to work on her graphic novel 'Station Eleven'. Miranda isn't seeking fame or fortune from the graphic novel; she creates it for her own pleasure.

When Miranda starts working longer hours to support them, Pablo gets irrationally jealous. He doesn't want her to have to work and struggles with being emasculated by her having to support both of them. This jealousy pushes Miranda away. When Arthur reaches out to her, Miranda doesn't respond because she desires an affair, but rather because she wants to be able to connect with someone. Even without Arthur intervening, Miranda's relationship with Pablo is likely at an end. They have grown apart and want different things. When Miranda returns to collect her belongings, Pablo beats her. Readers don't know if Miranda tells Pablo about Arthur, but Pablo's actions aren't



unexpected regardless of whether or not she tells him. He likely views the relationship as something he should be walking away from rather than having the woman leave him.

Discussion Question 1

Arthur is asked by his mother to take Miranda to lunch. He is reluctant because of her age. Why does he relate to her? Is this surprising? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Pablo doesn't like the long hours that Miranda works. Why does he jump to conclusions about whether or not she's at work? What does this possibly reveal about him?

Discussion Question 3

The only thing about Dr. Eleven that resembles Pablo is in his looks. Why is it significant that Miranda chose only his looks for the character?

Vocabulary

serendipity, calibrated, claustrophobic, poised, mentor, repent



Section 3, Chapters 15-16

Summary

Chapter 15 starts with a jump in time and Arthur and Miranda have a house in the Hollywood Hills and are celebrating their third wedding anniversary. They are celebrating it with friends, however. One of the friends is Elizabeth Colton, a beautiful actress who has co-starred with Arthur. They are having an affair. The other guests include Arthur's lawyer, Gary Heller, and Clark Thompson, Arthur's oldest friend. Also present is Tesch, a pretentious woman who only goes by one name. They all talk about the business and the novelty of Clark not being part of business. Miranda doesn't feel comfortable around them and instead longs to be outside with her Pomeranian, Luli.

Arthur tells the story of how he met Miranda. While the others find the story on the dull side, Elizabeth believes that everything happens for a reason, as though it's a higher plan revealing itself. Miranda and Clark are outside having a cigarette. They acknowledge the affair Arthur and Elizabeth are having. Back inside, Miranda works on Station Eleven. Her study overlooks the pool where there is a crescent-shaped moon lamp. All the guests have left except for Elizabeth, who has passed out on the sofa.

Miranda goes outside. It's about three a.m. and two paparazzi are parked outside. One is Jeevan. He and Miranda talk over a cigarette about work. Jeevan asks why Elizabeth's car is still there. Miranda tells him that she's a raging alcoholic. They talk about Jeevan's work. He thinks she's only lived a life of privilege and she tells him that she's had to work all her life; she also knows that she'll be working again soon. Jeevan catches her off guard with a photo. After a while, Elizabeth comes into Miranda's office because she sees the light on. She tries to apologize, but Miranda doesn't want to hear it. The next morning, Miranda's photo is on a gossip magazine with a headline that indicates she's wandering around outside because of infidelity. In four months, her marriage will be over and she'll be going back to school, and spending alimony checks on expensive clothing.

Chapter 16 is an excerpt from an interview between Francois Diallo, a man who is publishing a newspaper and collecting an oral history. He comments that the world has gotten too local, and that people need to hear about other parts of the world since the end of civilization. He interviews Kirsten because she is a traveler. Kirsten asks if he's ever encountered the comics Arthur gave her; he has not.

Analysis

The dinner party makes for an awkward anniversary party for Arthur and Miranda. This should be a private affair and it's being celebrated with other people. This is a metaphor for Arthur's public life. He and Miranda can't simply have a quiet evening because one



half of the couple, in a way, belongs to the masses. Arthur is more comfortable in the presence of others. In order for it to be real, Arthur must have an audience.

Arthur's audience of choice are his friends and this further isolates Miranda. She doesn't readily fit in with the Hollywood crowd. Clark isn't part of the Hollywood crowd, either, yet he seems to handle the party better than Miranda. Less is at stake for him as he is included as a spectator instead of part of the show. Miranda further isolates herself from the group when she goes outside with the dog. Clark joins her and the two non-Hollywood people are left watching the actors inside. It is emblematic of the work that actors do and how difficult it is for outsiders to relate. It also separates the actors from an audience.

Clark and Miranda briefly discuss the fact that Arthur and Elizabeth are having an affair. It is not a dramatic conversation, but rather a matter-of-fact acknowledgement. Yes, the affair is happening, but how does that affect either of them? That it doesn't seem to affect Miranda even though it involves her husband, which further illustrates how far removed Miranda is from her marriage.

The story of how Arthur and Miranda meet doesn't fit the cute definition of a Hollywood introduction. They met in a very ordinary way that many people would experience when meeting the person that becomes their significant other; they were introduced because Arthur's mother asked him to take her to lunch. Their meeting is characteristic of Miranda's life, rather than Arthur's. That Arthur chooses this time to reveal the story demonstrates how removed he has become from his marriage. How he met his wife has been reduced to a boring story told at dinner parties. That it's primarily only of interest to the woman he's having an affair with, illustrates how self-absorbed Elizabeth is.

Much is made of Elizabeth's beauty. It seems to be effortless, whereas Miranda has long been insecure about her looks. Elizabeth is a foil to Miranda. When Miranda goes outside and talks with Jeevan, she isn't concerned with her appearance. They connect on a human level. They challenge each other, but soon begin to see where the other is coming from: Jeevan isn't the horrible paparazzo predator and Miranda isn't the posh, privileged wife of a celebrity. For a moment it's as if they call a truce, but Jeevan sees an opportunity and takes it. He catches Miranda off guard in a photograph and publishes it with a leading headline. Yes, there are troubles in the marriage, but he is speculating and does so to turn a profit.

In Chapter 16, when Diallo tells Kirsten that the world has gotten too local, he speaks about the small pockets of people in the settlements that have cropped up in the aftermath of the pandemic. What's interesting, though, is how that speaks to readers' present society. Via the vast array of communication options, readers are as connected to the world as people have ever been. The Internet has made the world an intimate place with very specialized areas. It speaks to how people find like-minded people wherever they may be and risk limiting their exposure to things that are different.



Discussion Question 1

Readers learn that Arthur is cheating on Miranda with Elizabeth. Given that Miranda cheated on Pablo with Arthur, can Miranda be a sympathetic character?

Discussion Question 2

Elizabeth believes that everything happens for a reason. Why would Elizabeth have this reaction to how the man she's having an affair with met his wife?

Discussion Question 3

Diallo comments that the world has gotten too local. Is this a good or a bad thing? What advantages are there to a more local world? Disadvantages?

Vocabulary

languor, faulty, comatose, archives, pronouncement



Section 3, Chapters 17-18

Summary

Chapter 17 takes place a year before the Georgia Flu outbreak. Arthur and Clark have dinner together in London. Arthur has been served with divorce papers from his third wife and Elizabeth, his second wife, has taken their son to Jerusalem. They catch up, both recognizing in the other how much older they look now that they're in their fifties. Clark senses a type of disconnect between them, almost as though Arthur is performing for him.

Chapter 18 continues the interview between Diallo and Kirsten. Diallo asks what she remembers. Kirsten doesn't remember much from the time before the Georgia Flu. Diallo says that this is a common occurrence with those who were children before the end of civilization. She's been told by her brother that she was in a commercial and a television show. She has vague memories of being part of King Lear. She tells Diallo that the Traveling Symphony found her in Ohio after her brother died. Kirsten talks about the different places she's been and the energy that exists in those places. Sometimes they are lawless, or held together by a cult. She regards the ones with a cult as the most dangerous because they're unpredictable and absent of logic.

Analysis

Chapters 17-18 deal a lot with memory. Clark and Arthur have gotten together. They're older, but still have a connection. Clark realizes that something is different, and it goes beyond the superficial elements of each of them looking older. Clark suspects that Arthur is performing for him. Perhaps Arthur has lost a sense of himself and is putting on an act for Clark, or perhaps Clark has been influenced by who Arthur is in the media and lost sight of how he remembers him. Either way, a distance is growing between them. This is common occurrence between friends. People grow and change and their lives take them in different directions. It doesn't change what the person means to someone. Friendships mean different things to people at different times. This metaphor relates to how the world is evolving in the aftermath of the pandemic. Because Arthur dies just as the outbreak occurs, his life is frozen in the old world. Clark, who survives the pandemic, continues to evolve as a person.

When Diallo interviews Kirsten, she is effectively performing for him. He is her audience. Readers don't know why Kirsten has agreed to participate in this interview. Perhaps it is the actor's need to be seen, as it is an art form that requires an audience. Kirsten doesn't remember much from her childhood; readers never do learn the details of that first year. It is possible she is guarded in the interview and doesn't reveal the whole truth. Maybe she is keeping parts of her story to herself. She understands the legacy of fame because she is still looking for remnants of Arthur in the tabloids she finds.



Discussion Question 1

Clark senses that Arthur is performing during their dinner. Why would Arthur feel a need to perform for his oldest friend?

Discussion Question 2

Why is Diallo concerned with what Kirsten remembers from before the pandemic?

Discussion Question 3

Kirsten regards cults as the most dangerous because of the absence of logic. What does this reveal about Kirsten? What makes cults so dangerous?

Vocabulary

substance, cult, disorientation, recede, arrowroot



Section 4, Chapters 19-21

Summary

As Chapter 19 begins, the Traveling Symphony is on the move. The discussion turns to Kirsten's tattoo "Survival is insufficient" – a quote from Star Trek. Dieter is not a fan of tattoos, having seen someone die from an infected tattoo. He also quips about the absurdity of the finest Shakespearean actress having a quote from Star Trek tattooed on her body; she also has two knives tattooed as well. Others in the Symphony discuss what they do and don't remember of Star Trek and reminisce about air conditioning. It's July and it's hot. Kirsten remembers a childhood game of lying outside, closing her eyes, and trying to communicate with a friend via their minds. She tries this in order to reach Charlie, though she thinks it's impossible.

Someone finds a stowaway – Eleanor, who's twelve – under all of the costumes. They get her water and tell her she can't stay. She reveals that she's promised to the Prophet and that's why she left. Her parents are deceased. She claims to know Charlie and Jeremy and tells them that they've gone to the Museum of Civilization. The group can't take Eleanor back, and understand that there is risk of Eleanor being a trap. Most have heard rumors about the Museum of Civilization, but Kirsten has never heard of it. It's allegedly not far from Severn City. Eleanor tells them more about how the Prophet came to St. Deborah on the Water. He was part of a group of 19 people. They were helpful at first, but no one expected them to be so heavily armed.

Chapter 20 finds the Symphony two days away from St. Deborah by the Water. They reach a small town that was abandoned after a fire. They explore an old school building, finding some graffiti. Jackson searches for soap in one of the bathrooms and finds a skeleton with a bullet wound to the head. August explains that they never go into the bathrooms because that's where people were executed. Viola, whose given name is something different because she took the name of her instrument following the outbreak, finds the school creepy. Kirsten thinks about how the time to explore all these old buildings is running short because soon they will be too dangerous to explore as they continue to collapse. Alexandra was not allowed to go on the search.

Chapter 21 continues the interview. Diallo asks about what Kirsten thinks about the changes in the world since the collapse. Kirsten doesn't respond. He asks about the knives tattooed on her wrist. She tells him that he should know what those represent and that she does not speak of it.

Analysis

In Chapter 19, the fact that the Symphony is in a perpetual state of movement is a metaphor for how society is adapting to the new normal. It can't stay in one place for



long because so much is changing. In order for it to survive, it needs to move with what's happening.

With regard to Kirsten's tattoo, Dieter is not a fan of tattoos. Tattoos have become quite commonplace in modern society. The taboo once associated with them is dissipating. Dieter doesn't like them because of the risk of infection, but his dislike harkens back to those who view tattoos in a negative light. While Kirsten has a tattoo of choice with "Survival is insufficient", she also has tattoos that she feels obligated to have: the two knives. That Kirsten doesn't wish to discuss the significance of the tattoos reveals her inner conflict with what she's done to get them. In order to survive, she has had to rely on acts of violence. She desires to be more than just someone who survived attacks. Rather she is her art: she is an actress, a friend, a lover, and a survivor.

The complaints the Symphony makes about the heat helps connect the reader with what the Symphony is experiencing. The childhood game Kirsten recollects also serves to help readers relate.

Eleanor, the stowaway, is symbolic of how the individual is responsible for their fate. She has made the decision to separate from one group and join another in the hopes of making a better life. To do so at the young age of twelve demonstrates the resilience that people need. While her life would have been dedicated to serving the Prophet and comprised of merely surviving, Eleanor has determined that survival is insufficient.

As the Symphony travels to St. Deborah by the Water, they come across a town that experienced a tremendous amount of fire damage. The fire symbolizes how much is forgotten in their wake. They can arrive somewhere, do what is needed and then move. Like the fire, they move quickly through the area.

The old school building has a bunch of graffiti. The graffiti is a reminder that they are not alone in these travels. Finding the skeleton in the bathroom serves to illustrate the lawlessness of town following the outbreak. That they found a skeleton indicates how long this lawlessness has been the norm. Just as the body is stripped of its flesh, society has been stripped of its laws.

August's comments about the bathroom executions don't indicate whether he means the execution are a present danger, since the body in question is a skeleton. Additionally, the reason for the executions is not revealed, and ultimately it doesn't matter. What matters is that, after surviving the pandemic, people remain vulnerable.

Viola and Kirsten counter each other. It represents the struggle between being safe and taking risks. Neither character is judged for choosing their path, but rather lets readers identify with their own instincts in a given situation.

In Chapter 21, the act of asking Kirsten about her opinions about the world around her is a metaphor for how celebrities are often asked about their opinions about the world. Why Kirsten's opinions would be any more important than anyone else's remains unclear, except that she has achieved a small bit of fame. Glimpses of the old world remain even into the new.



Kirsten refuses to divulge information about the tattoos on her wrist. They are a part of her and are symbolic of something in her past that she must shoulder even if she'd rather forget.

Discussion Question 1

Kirsten has "Survival is insufficient" tattooed on her arm. What does this mean? What does it tell you about Kirsten's character?

Discussion Question 2

Why would survivors want to visit the Museum of Civilization? What function might the museum serve for them?

Discussion Question 3

Why is Kirsten reluctant to discuss the tattoos on her wrist? What does her attitude toward them reveal about her character?

Vocabulary

apparitions, stowaway, shortsighted, languidly, fascination



Section 4, Chapters 22-23

Summary

The Symphony is traveling on foot. Kirsten thinks about how the world has changed and she thinks of Alexandra. Alexandra knows how to shoot, but has never had to do so. She thinks about how Alexandra is younger at 15 than Kirsten was when she was that age. Alexandra sulks about not being able to go to the school. A storm is coming in. That night, Kirsten bunks with Dieter in his tent. She used to stay with Sayid, but since the breakup, she's been staying with Dieter. Their relationship is platonic. Dieter talks about dreaming of an airplane and how he used to think that if he was able to see an airplane flying that it meant that other places in the world didn't suffer the collapse. That night they take turns as lookouts. Dieter and Sayid would scout behind them, another pair ahead of them, and Kirsten and August would stay at camp. August is unnerved. They begin to feel like they're being watched and they hear something. They can't account for it. They go looking and discover that Dieter and Sayid have disappeared.

The next morning, the Symphony is looking for Dieter and Sayid. The forest is thick and they're not sure they haven't passed by them without seeing them. Still, there's no trace of them. The conductor talks about how each time someone from the Symphony has been lost, they start the separation protocol. This involves continuing on to the known destination and whoever is lost meeting them at the destination. The present destination is the Museum of Civilization.

Kirsten and August talk about how the prophet said he was the light. They discuss that if they consider themselves the light, then the enemy is darkness. If they can justify that they're on the right side, then they can justify doing anything.

Jackson comes back from his search. He went with Sidney, the clarinet player. He stopped to fill a container with water and she disappeared. When they go through Sidney's things they find the start of a letter stating that she was leaving the group. There's no way to really tell when the letter was written, as the date corresponds to a year ago, although keeping accurate track of time is difficult. Lin suggests the note indicates she was suicidal, but no one is sure of what to think. Later, Kirsten finds a slip of paper in her pocket: a brief poem from August. She thanks him for it. August and Kirsten scavenge a golf course and find an overpopulated pond. They catch fish with a net and stop to eat before the fish goes bad in the heat. They get separated from the Symphony.

Analysis

Kirsten is thinking about how different life is for Alexandra compared to how her life was at the same age. In a way, she is envious of Alexandra. She isn't as likely to have to make some of the more difficult choices that Kirsten has. This is a metaphor for how



older generations view the next. It's a common perception that one generation had an easier go of life. It's not that she romanticizes it, but she is envious. Kirsten feels a detachment from her youth. Alexandra has an innocence that keeps her younger. Kirsten lost her innocence at a very young age and it forced her to assume a more adult role. Readers also learn that Kirsten has been unfaithful to Sayid and lost a relationship she cared deeply about because of it. Kirsten is incapable of getting back the things that she's lost.

Dieter and Sayid go missing. They are scouting for the group and disappear without a trace. The ground is thick with brush, making it difficult to even attempt to track them. There is a protocol in place when people go missing; it clearly isn't the first time something like this has happened. It shows how the group works together to keep each other safe. Sayid and Dieter go missing while trying to protect the group. This symbolizes how vulnerable they are. It could have been anyone who was keeping watch that night, just as the Georgia Flu took people indiscriminately.

Kirsten and August discuss light and darkness. The prophet views himself and his followers as the light, although there's nothing to legitimately suggest he is the chosen one. Kirsten comments that if they think they are right, then they can justify anything. She should understand this given that she's had to kill people in order to stay alive. People make decisions based on their own perspective. The Prophet can view himself as the light, just as Kirsten can justify her actions as well. The Prophet is a foil for Kirsten. The potential exists in most to conduct themselves as the Prophet has. The society lends itself to people taking advantage, and people are vulnerable enough to believe just about anything given the pandemic. Kirsten is viewed as a leader in the Symphony, but she doesn't embrace any of the power that might accompany it. As an actor, she knows that she needs to work with the rest of the cast to achieve the best production. This carries over into how she conducts herself in the Symphony.

Sidney also goes missing. There is some speculation that she left the group on her own rather than it being connected to what's happened to Dieter and Sayid. One member of the Symphony suggests it could even be a suicide. It's almost as though it's easier to think of suicide than the unknown. Someone having control over their actions is preferable to the unknown.

Discussion Question 1

Dieter says that if he saw an airplane flying he would know that all of civilization hadn't collapsed. What does Dieter's dreams about the airplanes reveal about his personality?

Discussion Question 2

Kirsten and August talk about the prophet's justifying what they do because they are the light. What's the difference between knowing that you're right and justifying that you're right? Are Kirsten and August doing the same? What makes the prophet's justification so foreboding?



Discussion Question 3

When the group finds the letter in Sidney's belongings, they wonder if it's a suicide note. Why would the group automatically assume that Sidney's letter might be a suicide note? Does that assumption reveal more about the group or Sidney?

Vocabulary

indecipherable, intervals, marbled, plausible, dogged



Section 4, Chapters 24-26

Summary

It's day two apart from the Symphony. Kirsten and August come along some cars and small town. There is a taxi with bullet holes in the door. They hear a dog and a man appears; his name is Finn and eventually Kirsten recognizes him from when she was in Deborah by the Water two years earlier. He is standoffish at first and denies knowing about the Museum of Civilization. Kirsten tells him who they are and he remembers the music. He admits to leaving shortly after the prophet arrived. He also has a scar on the side of his face in the shape of the t with the extra hash mark.

As they head out of the area, Kirsten and August come across an untouched house. They find three bodies inside: a child in his room, and the parents in theirs. August says his prayer over them as he does whenever he finds a body. Kirsten eavesdrops as he does so. They're not so much prayers as his way of thanking them for what he might be taking and hoping there is something for them wherever they might be. Kirsten changes into a new dress and takes the wedding dress and suit for costumes. August searches for TV Guides and books of poetry. Kirsten searches for a copy of a book she lost years ago: *Dear V: An Unauthorized Portrait of Arthur Leander*.

Chapter 25 includes excerpts from the letters Arthur wrote to V. Some of the letters are from when he was a young man taking acting classes in Toronto. A teacher told him he didn't have the talent, but Arthur said he would show him. He mentions his friend Clark and how punk rock he is. Other letters reveal Arthur's frustration that V doesn't respond. He no longer regards her as a real friend. Later, a letter reveals that Arthur had seen V over a Christmas holiday. He's just beginning his affair with Elizabeth. He also talks about seeing Clark and seeing how much he's changed from the man who once said he would die before giving up his dream and settling into a business career.

Chapter 26 picks up with Elizabeth and Clark both learning that the book of Arthur's letters has been published. They both feel violated and consider legal action. It's three weeks before the pandemic begins. Clark is working on another 360° project and one of the employees that he meets with describes her boss as someone who's alive, but doesn't know it and doesn't even realize that he's unhappy. Clark wonders if what he read in the letter regarding him is why Arthur had been performing to him when they last had dinner together.

Analysis

Kirsten and August have been separated from the Symphony. They come across Finn, a man with a scar on his face. August discusses the scar with Kirsten later. Readers know that Kirsten also has a scar on her face, but readers are never told what it is; just that she got it during the year she can't remember. Perhaps August is trying to piece



together a part of Kirsten's past. It could be said that Kirsten's knife tattoos are like scars. They're scars she chooses to wear, but the scar on her face is different. Kirsten has no memory of that time in her life. She has repressed it, suggesting that it is something so horrific she hasn't opted not to remember. Yet, she still bears evidence of what happened to her. The idea that she can choose what scars to remember demonstrates her independence.

After running into the man with the scar, they come across an untouched, abandoned house. By shifting from scars to something that remains untouched, the author gives the reader balance. It suddenly becomes possible that some things remain unscathed. Both Kirsten and August are surprised to find an untouched house, thinking that all the houses must have been ransacked now. It symbolizes that there are still places that are untouched by the wild elements of the new world.

This sense of hopefulness is quickly extinguished by the discovery of the bodies inside the house. There are three bodies in the house - a family. August says his prayer over them, essentially thanking them for what they're going to take from the house. The prayers are a way for August to mark the horror that has befallen the people. He sees them as individuals, not merely nameless bodies. He is respectful of them.

Kirsten changes into a new dress and takes a wedding gown and suit for costumes. In a way, this may seem callous to take something as symbolic as a wedding dress and suit. Instead, by using the garments as costumes, the couple gets another chance at being alive and falling in love and finding a happier ending in one of Shakespeare's comedies.

Kirsten is also looking for a particular book. She remembers it from when she was a child and her mother told her that she shouldn't read it. Kirsten's mother tried to protect her for the scandalous elements in the book. Kirsten doesn't speak much of her family, primarily only referencing her brother. This is representative of how disconnected Kirsten is from her life as a child. That Kirsten continues to search for the book represents her desire to return to a simpler time when she could make the decision to read something that might alter her perception of someone she looks up to. She doesn't find the book, of course, signifying that she cannot return to that earlier time.

Readers do learn about the content of the book when Clark and Elizabeth learn about the book's publication. Suddenly, they are exposed to candid thoughts Arthur had about them. They are forced to see themselves through a lens they wouldn't otherwise see. The letters reveal how Clark has changed and it reinforces the impression that Clark had during his earlier dinner with Arthur. Learning about this and then having Arthur die foreshadows the radical change Clark will make to his appearance after the pandemic.

Discussion Question 1

Kirsten takes the wedding dress and suit from a dead couple to be used as costumes. Why does Kirsten do this? Is it practical or does it hold additional meaning? Is it disrespectful?



Discussion Question 2

Why does Arthur write letters to his friend over the course of many years? Why does he continue to do so even though she doesn't reply?

Discussion Question 3

Why do Elizabeth and Clark feel violated by the publication of the letters? Is this reaction justified? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

deliberate, resplendent, pretentious, gingko, obfuscating, deflect, flippant



Section 5, Chapters 27-30

Summary

Chapter 27 begins with Jeevan preparing to interview Arthur. It is seven years before the collapse and Jeevan is trying to make a go of being an entertainment journalist. He thinks about how his brother Frank is working for Reuters in Afghanistan; entertainment journalism pales in comparison. Jeevan hopes that Arthur doesn't recognize him at the paparazzi that used to park outside of his house and took the photo of Miranda when the news broke of Arthur's affair with Elizabeth. Jeevan holds Arthur in high regard as an actor. At the interview, Arthur is hung over and sleep-deprived. Arthur attempts to turn the interview and asks Jeevan questions about his line of work and how he got into it. Arthur decides he likes Jeevan and offers to give him an exclusive if Jeevan promises to sit on the news for 24 hours. Jeevan promises, but Arthur's publicist tries to dissuade him. Ultimately, he tells Jeevan that he's leaving his wife for a woman called Lydia Marks. Arthur says that Elizabeth has never had anything bad happen to her. He can't figure out how to tell her, but if he knows the story is about to break it will force him to do so.

Chapter 28 finds Jeevan thinking about the interview and how Arthur's publicist treated him. The publicist didn't offer a cappuccino and how he may never have one again. It's eight days after Arthur's death and he's confined in Frank's apartment during the outbreak. He thinks about his girlfriend Laura, but can't call her. Cell phones have stopped working and Frank lacks a land line.

In Chapter 29, readers learn that Jeevan kept his word and didn't reveal the truth about Arthur's marriage before the 24-hour deadline was up. He's proud of keeping the promise, but thinks about how he turned the camera on Miranda at a time when she was vulnerable.

Chapter 30 finds Jeevan singing 'The End of the World as We Know It (and I feel fine)' much to Frank's chagrin, even if it is appropriate. They've been cooped up in the apartment for several days. Sometimes they hear people knock on the door and people have tried to break in. They stay quiet and wait for them to pass. The news reporters continue to give the news, but slowly the news goes quiet: no more reports from Sydney, London, Paris, Moscow, Beijing. Local stations start dropping off as well. Frank continues to work on a ghostwriting a philanthropist's memoir because he signed the contract to do so, even though it's highly likely that everyone involved with the memoir is dead. The city is growing quiet. Food trucks aren't making it into the city and no one is around to restore the power. After 30 days, there is no longer any running water. Frank tells him it's like the tree house they had as children. Jeevan thinks they can last a while longer with all the supplies. He remains optimistic. Frank wonders why he thinks the power will ever come back on.



Analysis

Jeevan interviews Arthur in Chapter 27. This interview differs from the interviews with Diallo and Kirsten. It does not appear in transcript form. Its form and structure is like the other scenes in the novel. This is most likely because the interview takes place in flashback, whereas the Diallo interview is taking place during the present. Jeevan has transitioned from paparazzo to entertainment journalist. He, and likely others, view this as a step up. Jeevan, much like Miranda, is self-conscious. He wants to be more respectable. During the interview, he's hyper-aware of how he treated Miranda when he took the photograph.

He wonders if Arthur will remember him or recognize him from being stationed outside Arthur's house to take photographs. While he doesn't want to be recognized, he does have a longing to be part of Arthur's life. He enjoys and respects him as an actor, but in a way views his role in Arthur's life as more memorable than it is. Because it is memorable for Jeevan, he wants it to be memorable for Arthur. This symbolizes how people can feel connected to someone they don't know, such as a celebrity or anyone that can be looked up to, and not have the other party place significance on that event. Jeevan doesn't want Arthur to remember the incident with Miranda's picture, however. Instead he would want him to remember something more positive. This foreshadows that Jeevan gets the opportunity, even if Arthur isn't in any capacity to recognize him. Yes, Jeevan would have rushed to help anyone who had fallen on stage in the first chapter. Even when he could no longer help Arthur, he helped comfort Kirsten. Even so, it was important for him to have the opportunity to connect with Arthur.

When Jeevan thinks about how the publicist treated him, he wonders why he wasn't treated, not as special, but as someone. Jeevan feels treated like the help, someone who merely has a job to do and then moves on. In a way, Jeevan was there to speak with Arthur like a friend. This speaks to a common desire of wanting, not just to belong, but to also feel special. Jeevan's quest to feel that connection with a celebrity counters Miranda's discomfort at having the tangential fame of being married to Arthur.

Jeevan keeps his promise to sit on the story about Arthur's divorce from Elizabeth. Jeevan is capable of protecting Arthur's second wife – the famous actress – in a way that he was unable to with Miranda. He feels guilty about taking the photograph of her. This promise to Arthur is an avenue to redemption, even if it is only from Jeevan's perspective.

Arthur comments that Elizabeth has never had anything bad happen to her. This seems unlikely; bad things befall most people. He may mean it in context of Elizabeth's career, but again it seems unlikely. Readers can ascertain from Miranda's earlier comment that Elizabeth has a drinking problem, so it's likely that Arthur views Elizabeth as not having had anything bad happen to her. It also heightens his own self-importance by viewing the fact that he has cheated on her as the worst thing that's happened to her.

Overall, there is decidedly little humor in the novel. The reference to the REM song that Jeevan sings is a bit of humor and reflects how Jeevan and his brother have gotten a bit



stir-crazy cooped up in the apartment. It's in this chapter that readers get a broader picture of how dire this outbreak is. It's not just that the news is reporting the catastrophic numbers and consequences of the pandemic, but rather the news is disappearing. One by one, the news stations are going off the air. The world is losing its interconnectedness. Major world cities are falling away and the world is becoming more and more fragmented. The local news stations stay a bit longer, or at that least appears to be the case from Jeevan's perspective, but time is running out in the modern world.

Discussion Question 1

Arthur is again leaving his wife to marry another woman he's having an affair with. Why Arthur does keeps getting remarried? What does this reveal about his character?

Discussion Question 2

Why is it important for Frank to continue working on a ghostwriting project even though his client is most likely dead?

Discussion Question 3

Jeevan remains optimistic that the supplies will last until the power returns. Why do you think Jeevan is optimistic about it? Is Jeevan's optimism a necessary delusion?

Vocabulary

postmodern, land line, disseminate, fuse, sleazy



Section 5, Chapters 31-34

Summary

Chapter 31 is another excerpt from the interview with Kirsten and Diallo. Diallo is now identified as the librarian at the New Petoskey Library. It's Year Fifteen. Diallo asks Kirsten about witnessing Arthur's death on stage. She tells him about the man who came on stage to perform CPR; she doesn't remember Jeevan's name and he isn't identified in the obituary.

Chapter 32 begins 47 days after the outbreak. Jeevan watches fires in the distance and contemplates fires in a city without firefighters. He hears gunshots and there's a stench coming from the hallway, so they have to keep the windows open. They've got enough food for two weeks. Jeevan knows they'll need to leave, but Frank is wheelchair bound. Frank contemplated what civilization was when he was first injured and how he never wanted to see another war zone. He tells Jeevan that there is only survival in the world now. He tells Jeevan that he will leave first so that Jeevan can go out in the world and survive.

Chapter 33 continues the interview with Kirsten and Diallo. It gives more detail about the night that Arthur dies on stage. She remembers Tanya caring for her backstage, but Tanya doesn't remember Kirsten's name. She still carries the paperweight with her. Tanya tried to reach Kirsten's parents, but couldn't. She never saw her parents again and can only speculate that they fell ill and died. In the following days, Kirsten and her brother waited at home for them to return.

In Chapter 34, Jeevan asks Frank to read from the ghostwriting project. Frank does so: it's about how actors are charitable when they reach a level of fame, but that they didn't go into the business in order to do things for other people. They wanted to be actors because they wanted to be seen. In turn, thinking about actors on film, leads to the idea that they achieve a certain level of immortality after they die because they live on in their work.

Analysis

Jeevan knows that he will soon need to leave the apartment if there is any hope for continued survival. It's a difficult decision to consider given that he knows his brother will not be able to make it. If he tries to take him with him, Jeevan puts himself at higher risk of perishing as well. Frank tells Jeevan that he will leave first. Frank gives his brother permission to live his life to the best of his ability and will spare him the burden of having him make a choice. It is one aspect of Frank's life that Frank can control. This gives readers the opportunity to imagine what sacrifices and scenarios they could endure. It also fulfills Jeevan's desire to be a first responder. He took action at the start of the pandemic and went to help the person he determined most needed his help. Once there



was nothing more he could do, it leaves. This emulates how he would have dealt with emergency calls as an EMT.

Jeevan has Frank read from the ghostwriting project he's working on. Jeevan isn't sure if Frank is writing from the perspective of the person he's writing for or if it's his own thoughts. Regardless, Frank writes about immortality. People who achieve some kind of fame or notoriety end up with a certain level of immortality. A film actor, who made a movie as a child or a young man, has the opportunity to be forever young. People can look at the early works of Charlie Chaplin and still know how he looks and moves as a young man even though he died many years ago. Perhaps Frank thinks he will be able to achieve some of this immortality, even if it is highly unlikely. He has been hired as a ghostwriter; he's already removed from the project. It symbolizes how Frank already ceases to exist and foreshadows his impending death.

Diallo asks Kirsten about the night Arthur dies on stage. In a way, Kirsten has achieved the type of immortality that Frank searches for in the previous chapter. Additionally, she managed to achieve a connection with Arthur that Jeevan wasn't able to accomplish. It demonstrates how arbitrary fame is.

It also makes sense that Diallo would ask Kirsten about Arthur's death because it is a defining moment in Kirsten's life. It is one of the few memories she has from her childhood. It is a shocking moment, but she retains the ability to recall the memory. The fact that she cannot remember (or chooses not to remember) the events of the first year after the Georgia Flu symbolizes to the horrors she must have witnessed or experienced.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Diallo ask Kirsten about witnessing Arthur's death? Why is it an important question to ask in his interview?

Discussion Question 2

What does Frank's attitude about civilization after his injury reveal about how he might cope in the present? Why is it important for the reader to understand this about him?

Discussion Question 3

Frank writes about film actors having immortality because their work lives on after their death. Why is Frank drawn to the idea of actors obtaining a form of immortality?

Vocabulary

metropolis, minder, immortality, charitable, philanthropist



Section 5, Chapters 35-37

Summary

Chapter 35 continues the interview with Kirsten and Diallo. It's a short excerpt about the early days after the outbreak, staying in and her brother Peter going out and stealing food. Finally they had to leave. They headed south without a destination.

Jeevan begins his trek out of Toronto at the start of Chapter 36. He's decided to follow the lake. He thinks about checking on Frank twice before he left to make sure he wasn't breathing. Jeevan has the page that Frank read about thinking of immortality. He hears gunshots and Jeevan is cold, but trying to push through. Readers learn that Frank was shot in Libya and the bullet severed his spine. Jeevan thinks about all the events that had to transpire for that to take place. He walks for five days and the reality of how few people are left sinks in. He runs into a trio of people – Jenny, Ben, and Abdul – and spends a week traveling with them before they separated. Frank encounters a few other people, but not many. He travels in the woods primarily, as the road is dangerous. He takes canned goods from houses he finds along the way; the people who lived there are dead upstairs.

Chapter 37 returns to the interview with Kirsten and Diallo. Kirsten says it's easier for children to adapt in this type of situation because they have fewer points of reference for the way things used to be. The more people remember of the old world, the greater the struggle. They talk about what Kirsten remembers of refrigerators. Mostly, she wants to know that she isn't imagining that they had a light inside.

Analysis

Readers learn a bit about Kirsten in the first year after the outbreak. Her brother Peter helps care and provide for them. Readers don't learn much about Peter outside of the fact that he protected his sister. He dies of an infection after stepping on a nail. Kirsten's memory begins when she joins the Symphony following his death. For Kirsten, this is the start of her life. What happened prior to joining the Symphony is like a dream, even if portions of it must have been like a nightmare. This continues to support the idea that what happened is much like a dream.

Frank commits suicide. It happens off stage. Frank knows he cannot survive the harsh reality outside of the apartment. He takes his life, not because he wants to die, but does so to ensure that his brother can live. He sacrifices himself to protect Jeevan, just as Peter protected Kirsten. Readers don't need to witness Frank's suicide. He has made a personal choice and it reinforces his anonymity. Arthur, the celebrity, is allowed to die on stage – literally. Readers witness his death. His celebrity affords the readers access to that part of his life. Because Frank lacks this element to his life, he becomes one of the countless who die.



For a short time, Jeevan travels with another group. They have different views on which direction they should travel and Jeevan decides to travel on his own. He's not emotionally prepared to become part of a de facto family so soon after his brother's death. Readers can see that Jeevan has difficulty connecting with other people: being a paparazzo kept him a camera's length from people; working as an entertainment reporter kept him apart from his subject; he has difficulty relating to Laura in their relationship. Since Jeevan has only demonstrated an ability to commit with his brother, it symbolizes how it will take him a considerable amount of time before he is able to do so. And when he does, it will need to be family; this foreshadows that eventually Jeevan will find community when he finally settles down and has a family.

Kirsten talks to Diallo about how it's easier for younger children to adapt. The more you know about the old world, the harder it is to adjust to the new one. This foreshadows the discussion Jeevan will later have with his neighbors in the settlement about how much children should be taught in school about the old world.

Discussion Question 1

Jeevan thinks of all the events that transpired in order for Frank to have been shot. Why does Jeevan consider it pre-destined? Is it merely a series of events that came together as coincidence?

Discussion Question 2

Jeevan joins a group of travelers for about a week. Why did he stay with them for such a short time?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Kirsten feel that the more one remembers of how the world used to be, the greater the struggle with the new world?

Vocabulary

embankment, beckoned, hot wired, vertiginous, emanating



Section 6, Chapter 38-39

Summary

Chapter 38 finds Kirsten and August leaving the house in the woods with the stuff they've collected, including the suitcases and the Starship Enterprise figure. They're both surprised they found a house that hadn't been looted. August mentions wanting to lock the door when he leaves. He figures that Sayid and Dieter remember carrying keys.

August talks about the multi-verse theory and parallel universes. He remembers that some of the others weren't sure what to think of the theory, but he figures that if there are an infinite number of universes, surely in one he became a physicist like he planned. August finds a picture of Miranda in one of the tabloids they took for the house and passes it to Kirsten. It's from her trip to Toronto to visit Arthur just before the outbreak. Kirsten talks about being there, but she isn't sure she met Miranda. Kirsten thinks August invented the multi-verse theory. They continue talking about things that might exist in parallel universes, one of which is space travel. Kirsten says that space travel already happened in this universe. She touches the scar on her face and thinks about how if other universes can be better, then surely there are universes that are worse. August asks about Station Eleven and whether it has an orchestra or if he would just be playing violin for giant seahorses.

The group is getting closer to Severn City. Nightfall is upon them and Kirsten agrees to take the first watch. An owl swoops in and kills a rodent. August asks Kirsten if she remembers the man at the gas station with the scar on his cheek. He tells her that the symbol isn't as abstract as they think it is, but rather that it looks like an airplane.

Analysis

It's been a long time since Kirsten and August have seen a house that is untouched. In the 20 years since the pandemic, it seems likely that most houses and buildings have been looted for food and supplies. They find the Starship Enterprise toy and August takes it. Since August remembers much more of the past than Kirsten does, this symbolizes his desire to keep and hold as much of the past as possible.

August also discusses how he longs to lock the door when he leaves. August is protective of this house. If he can lock the doors, then perhaps he can also keep the pandemic out of it. This isn't possible, of course, but August clearly has a desire for preservation. When he says his prayers over the dead, he displays some of that protectiveness, but something about this house makes him want to lock it away. It's like a time capsule. While he doesn't remember carrying keys or having to lock a house up, he understands the ritual and it's one he'd like to complete.

August also discusses the multi-verse theory: a theory that posits that there is an infinite amount of universes running parallel to our own. Kirsten thinks that August made up this



theory, but it is a real, working theory. Had the pandemic not occurred, August would have become a physicist. He is struggling with the reality he lives in; his life, and everyone else's, could have been so much different. Instead, he dreams about the multi-verse where other possibilities exist. This foreshadows the line in the Station Eleven comic about it being "like waking up from a dream". For August, this world doesn't have to be the only one that exists. Once again, readers are exposed to the idea that this all may be a dream. Readers know that this is a piece of fiction, but it's also something that could happen. The plausibility is what frightens. The author giving pause to reflect on this as a dream helps the reader stay with the story.

August also discusses the scar on Finn's cheek with Kirsten. He thinks the scar may be an airplane, but he has no way of knowing for certain. They've seen the emblem before. Readers can ascertain that this is likely the marking of the prophet, considering he came from the airport settlement originally. But August is the one bringing up the scar, not Kirsten. Readers know that she has a significant scar on her cheek, but don't know precisely what it looks like. Readers eventually learn that the scar is from something that happened to her during the first year, which she doesn't remember. August may be trying to piece something together from Kirsten's past, but she's not interested in uncovering what that might be. Again, this speaks to August's desire to keep the past alive.

Discussion Question 1

August discusses the multi-verse theory. Why does August hold on to the multi-verse theory? What purpose does it serve for him?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Kirsten continue to look for tabloids with Arthur in them? What do they mean to her?

Discussion Question 3

August thinks the scar on the man's face looks like an airplane, but readers never learn about the scar. Why does August need to understand the scar?

Vocabulary

quantum, crackpot, alternate, silhouettes, abstract



Section 6, Chapter 39

Summary

Chapter 39 picks up with Miranda two weeks prior to the outbreak. She visits Toronto and it's the first time she's returned to Canada in months. The city reminds her of who she used to be when she was young and awkward and didn't have any money. She over-tips the cab driver.

A few months earlier, Arthur reached out to her and told her that his father died. Miranda isn't sure why he decided to tell her, but ultimately he says he wanted to tell her because she knows where he came from. They reminisce about a Christmas on Delano Island and how his father liked the poet Lorca. Arthur comments about how strange his life must have seemed to his father; Miranda tells him that his life would seem strange to most people.

Miranda goes to meet Arthur at the theater. They decide to meet there to avoid the paparazzi in public. Arthur is in the middle of a divorce from his third wife Lydia. Miranda fixes herself up, making sure she doesn't resemble how she looked when she was living in Hollywood. Her curls are gone and her hair is slicked back. One of the paparazzi recognizes Miranda on her way into the theater and they start taking pictures as she slips inside the stage door.

In Arthur's dressing room, Arthur talks about working with a Shakespeare scholar to prepare for King Lear. They make small talk and then Arthur tells her that there is a book forthcoming: a collection of letters he sent to Victoria, an old friend. They trade barbs over Arthur's declaration that he is a man of discretion. He confesses that the letters to Victoria were more like a diary than writing to a friend. The conversation turns to Miranda's personal life: she's not married, no children. Kirsten comes into the dressing room and colors. Miranda gives Arthur copies of her comics. Miranda tries to talk to Kirsten, but doesn't relate well to children. When Miranda goes back to her hotel, she remembers that she forgot to return a paperweight to Arthur; she has it sent to the theater by courier.

Analysis

Arthur reaches out to her following his father's death. She's taken aback by it because her connection with Arthur has dissipated. She's far removed from his world, which is even more pronounced by her international travels for work. Arthur comments about how absurd his life must have seemed to his father, and Miranda points out that it would seem absurd to most people. Arthur lives in a heightened reality that is foreign to most people. His father's death is pedantic. It's a perfectly ordinary thing to happen, and one that has a lasting effect on people. Reaching out to Miranda is a way for Arthur to connect to who he was before fame and success.



Miranda takes care to not let the paparazzi in on her meeting with Arthur. They meet at the theater instead of in public, and Miranda goes to the trouble to try and change her appearance. It's as if Miranda is still looking for the way she is supposed to look. She doesn't want the attention of the paparazzi, but she has a history of not feeling comfortable with how she looks around people. The city, Arthur, and the paparazzi also remind of her who she is and how she has and has not changed.

Arthur talks about meeting with a Shakespearean scholar. Arthur also struggles with his own insecurities. He remembers being told that he wouldn't make it, and that he wasn't that great of an actor. In spite of tremendous fame and success, he's now doing theater in Toronto. Toronto is a very reputable theater city and King Lear is a coveted role by many. Meeting with the scholar shows Arthur's commitment to being the best he can be in the role, but it also demonstrates that he can't do it strictly on his own.

Arthur tells Miranda about the book of letters that Victoria published. While Arthur's life (and Elizabeth's as well) are in the public eye, Miranda (and likewise Clark) are exposed. Miranda may have been jealous of how Arthur wrote to Victoria, but now she learns that Victoria never responded; she didn't have a need to be jealous. This symbolizes the downfall in Miranda's relationship with Pablo before she began the affair with Arthur. Pablo assumed something was going on when there wasn't and this is just what Miranda does with Victoria. When Miranda returns to the hotel, she finds that she forgot to return the paperweight to Arthur. She sends it by courier to the hotel rather than returning it in person. She has no need to see Arthur again. She has made her life decisions and remains steadfast in them. Returning the paperweight to Arthur is her means of letting him go.

Discussion Question 1

Arthur calls and tells Miranda his father died. Why does Arthur reach out to her after all this time?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Miranda change her appearance so that the paparazzi won't recognize her?

Discussion Question 3

Miranda sends the paperweight by courier to the theater. Why is it important for Miranda to return the paperweight to Arthur?

Vocabulary

petroglyphs, flitted, diluted, compensations, indistinctly



Section 6, Chapters 40-41

Summary

Chapter 40 begins with Miranda back in Malaysia just as the world is about to end. The airports have closed and the hotel staff has been told not to cause alarm. She looks to the ships in the harbor and their bright lights. She goes to her office and receives a phone call from Clark; he tells her that Arthur died.

The chapter continues from Clark's perspective. Arthur's lawyer keeps calling him. Clark is frustrated and thinks the man doesn't sleep. Ultimately, Heller notifies Arthur's brother about his death. He wakes him in the middle of the night because it's better if he doesn't hear about the death on the news. When Clark talks to Heller, he tries to tell him what Arthur was like when he was young. He remembers Arthur telling him that Toronto was the only place he felt free.

The next morning, Clark takes a taxi to the airport. Somehow Clark manages to board the plane without touching any surfaces or being too close to an infected person. The others on the plane are also lucky. He sees Elizabeth and Tyler get on the plane. Clark mentioned what flight he was taking for the funeral services and Elizabeth said she'll try to get on the same flight. Their destination is Severn City Airport.

Chapter 41 opens with Miranda on the beach after learning of Arthur's death. She makes her way back to the hotel and the concierge wears a mask and tells her to stay away. The lobby is empty. She goes to her room and tries to find transportation, but everything has shut down. She has a sore throat and thinks it's just in her head. She wakes at four in the morning with more symptoms: fatigue, a fever, and joint pain. It takes all of her energy, but she makes her way from the hotel room, through the lobby, and outside. She collapses near a chaise lounge. She opens her eyes to see the sunrise and dies.

Analysis

Miranda has returned to Malaysia for work. She is ready to move on from her meeting with Arthur. The death of Arthur's father represented a door closing in their relationship.

At this juncture, readers begin to see how the disease is spreading around the globe. Miranda witnesses the changes that are taking place as a result. The airports are closing, symbolizing how remote the world is about to become. The hotel staff tries not to alarm people, symbolizing the denial of the horrors of what's to come. This sense of unease is not lost on Miranda. She may not readily understand the full scope of what's occurring, but something is off.

Miranda receives the phone call from Clark about Arthur's death. Although she is saddened by his death, she is not devastated. She has already let Arthur go. She likely



figured she wouldn't see him again anyway, but now it's real. There's not much left to be done. Miranda's acceptance of Arthur's death is a metaphor for the human race accepting the futility of the spreading pandemic.

Clark is frustrated with Heller and how Heller notifies Arthur's brother about the death. Clark thinks it would be more respectful to let them sleep and not disturb them in the middle of the night with bad news they can't do anything about anyway. Heller disagrees. The public will know and rumors will spread. He looks to contain the story. This exchange offers a perspective of everyday life and a life lived in public. Both men are correct in their assessment of how and when the family should be notified. There really is no good way to deliver bad news.

Clark prepares to travel for Arthur's funeral. Elizabeth and Tyler are on the same flight, but remain separated by first class and coach. It reinforces the distance between them and foreshadows how they will continue to be separated when the plane lands after the outbreak.

Miranda's death is the most detailed account readers get of how the Georgia Flu strikes. It is fast moving, but the symptoms are similar to most other seasonal flus. She is in the hotel when she presents with symptoms. She spends time in the hotel room, but is compelled to make her way outside. In her death, she isn't confined by anything: by Arthur, the paparazzi, her insecurities, or even the walls of a hotel room. She is outside and free when she collapses. She can see the harbor and the sunrise. It's full of possibility even if she is without it. She is free.

Discussion Question 1

Clark tells Heller about what Arthur was like when he was young. Why is it important for Heller to know what Arthur was like when he was young?

Discussion Question 2

Why does the author put Clark on the same airplane as Elizabeth and Tyler?

Discussion Question 3

Miranda sees the sunrise just before she dies. What does this represent? Does it reveal anything about Miranda's character that she needed to leave the hotel room?

Vocabulary

pandemic, improbability, preliminaries, amphetamine, informal



Section 7, Chapter 42

Summary

The people at Severn City Airport thought being stranded was temporary. Clark thinks about how time was measured differently (Year One, Year Two...) and knows that it won't go back to the way it was before. He's been in the airport for 20 years now and is the curator of the museum in Concourse B. It includes laptops, iPhones, iPads, records, and turntables among other things. He explains to teenagers who were born in the airport how planes flew by gaining momentum before taking off instead of going straight up in the air. He still has copies of his old 360° reports. He remembers being in the airport before the plane took off and seeing people watching the television. He figured it was a terrorist attack and decided to have a cup of tea in the last the moments of the life before he knew what terrible tragedy had transpired. When someone asks if Clark knows where his wife is, readers learn that he pretends that they asked him if he knew where his boyfriend is.

The airline gives the passengers food vouchers after the plane lands. They all eat Mexican food from the lone restaurant. They all struggled to understand what was happening. Some of the passengers left on foot. Others stayed. Elizabeth and Tyler remained. Another flight arrives and is quarantined; no one ever gets off that flight. Other passengers tied t-shirts around their mouths, but Clark thinks that if they were going to get sick, someone would have developed symptoms by now.

A teenager asks Clark if he has an Effexor – an antidepressant – he doesn't. None of the passengers do. The girl goes through withdrawal. Clark has imaginary conversations with his boyfriend, Robert, about how they'll talk about how awful this time was in the future.

Analysis

Clark is reconciling how much life has changed. Defining events in history often alter how readers perceive the world. There aren't any allusions to specific defining moments in history in Station Eleven, but it is natural to connect this crisis to other shocking moments. Readers can see this when people speak of how life changed post-WWII or in the aftermath of 9/11. There is a palpable change in the way life is lived, yet in many regards, life stays the same. Clark tries to impart what life was like before the pandemic to the young people who have been born since the Georgia Flu. He doesn't do it to make them think one life or the other is better, but rather to understand the context of each of them and how they shape lives. When Clark speaks to them, he understands that they don't know a different way of life. Clark, like many who have lived through disasters, is caught between the worlds of before and after. He remembers being in the airport when the news of the outbreak broke. This could allude to the events of 9/11.



Clark senses the significance of the event and took the time to delay knowing. He was able to savor the last few moments of the world as he'd come to understand it.

When the plane lands, the passengers are understandably scared. They remain in a transitional world. They identify the airport as a transitional point. The possibility of another flight and another destination is real for them in those first few days and weeks. Eventually, they start to feel the gravity of the situation. They can no longer deny what is happening and have to adjust. This is similar to Miranda's acceptance of the finality of her relationship with Arthur, and his subsequent death.

Clark ultimately begins his Museum of Civilization. This is his way of honoring the past. A vinyl record or a dead iPhone may have no use to the people who survive the pandemic, but they once were a part of everyday life and Clark seeks to respect that. This is a metaphor for the way in which humans seek to remember the past and what was once considered important. Compartmentalizing them in one place gives the opportunity to go back in time, even if it's pretend. This is the best way that Clark knows how to reconcile the two worlds he straddles.

Discussion Question 1

Clark decides to get a cup of tea before finding out what tragedy has struck. Why does he do this? What does this reveal about Clark in the face of the unknown?

Discussion Question 2

Clark has imaginary future conversations with Robert. Why does he does this?

Discussion Question 3

Why do some of the airline passengers leave the airport on foot? Why would some choose to stay and others chose to leave?

Vocabulary

splendors, persisted, scope, fluorescent, epidemiologists



Section 7, Chapters 43-44

Summary

Chapter 43 details the first winter in Severn City: the food in the restaurants is consumed, the vending machines are empty. They attempt to call 911, but service is unavailable. One TSA agent remains and has two TSA-issued guns. The girl who is in need of Effexor leaves the airport and is never seen again. Her driver's license is left with the AMEX card of the man who symbolically offered to pay for all the food everyone ate at the restaurant. People are still hopeful that this is all temporary.

Three pilots remain. One decides to fly to Los Angeles. Others fly with him even though the news reports are bad all over. One of the other pilots decides to leave the next day on a reconnaissance trip. He doesn't return. Clark talks with Elizabeth. She doesn't understand how this can be it. She thinks that this is happening for a reason and that it will eventually pass. On the 26th day, Clark shaves one side of his head like how he wore his hair when he was a young man. He befriends a woman named Delores. She has no family. Elizabeth worked to shovel snow from the runway so that flights can land when the rescue comes. Others help her clear the runway. Delores says that if help was coming it would have already arrived.

Tyler starts reading Elizabeth's copy of The New Testament and the Station Eleven comic books. Many of the people speak other languages and they start to learn from each other. After a woman is raped, the people tie the rapist up and take him to the forest at gunpoint. They tell him not to come back; he says he'll die. They leave him. They send out a scouting party, including Delores, which returns with deer and some batteries and soap. Clark notices the sky has darkened and the stars are brighter; the power grids are failing. He begins to collect items for his Museum of Civilization, including a snow globe and stiletto heels. A strange man arrives at the airport. The man is crying and is asked why: he thought he was the only one left in the world.

Chapter 44 takes place in Year Fifteen and finds Clark remembering Elizabeth and Tyler. He keeps their passports in the museum; he finds their images troubling. He remembers finding Tyler during Year Two, reciting from the Book of Revelations to the quarantined Air Gradia jet. Clark goes to tell Elizabeth about it and she merely comments that Tyler is an advanced reader. Tyler claims that the outbreak happened for a reason and Elizabeth concurs. Both eventually leave with a group of religious wanderers who claim to be guided by visions. Back in Year Fifteen, a trader brings the New Petoskey newspapers to Clark. Clark is thunderstruck when he reads the portion of the interview in which Kirsten describes Arthur's death on stage.



Analysis

The first winter in Severn City is one of adjusting to change. The people all eat the food in the airport restaurant, but they struggle with how it feels to not pay for it. When one man offers his credit card, it gives them permission. It's the ritual or routine that gives them comfort in this time. It also gives them hope that this devastation is temporary. They call 911, they wait for the National Guard, but deep down they know that no one is coming. They know that this is the end. That this takes place in winter symbolizes that end, but since winter eventually gives way to spring, it also becomes symbolic that hope may still loom.

Some of the passengers travel with the pilot who continues on to Los Angeles. Maybe they made it to their destination, maybe they didn't. With the breakdown of communication, there's no way to know. Then again, it's reflective of real life. People come together on a plane or train, arrive at their destination without incident, and then move onto the next leg of the journey. People most often travel with people unknown to them. Readers don't know where they end up or if they got there. In many respects, this is one of the most normal things the passengers can do. Those who decide to leave may be searching for something different, but ultimately they are comforted by the routine of it all.

The group is also left to deal with the aftermath of a very personal crime. A woman is raped and the group decides to send the rapist into the woods alone. He is most certainly being given a death sentence. The passengers are trying their best to make the place they are living safe. Sending the man away sets a precedent of what will not be tolerated in this community. Though it is disturbing, and is not dwelled on by the author, the rape and subsequent persecution of the rapist demonstrates how, even in the most drastically altered scenario, some things remain the same. Certain people will take advantage, cheat, or commit a crime. This act is not about what is or isn't legal. This is an issue of morality.

Tyler reads the Station Eleven comics, but he also begins to read Elizabeth's copy of The New Testament. When the Air Gradia plane arrives it is quarantined. It landed, instead of crashed, so it is likely that, at the very least, the pilot or co-pilot was alive on the plane when it landed. This is symbolic of the last bit of control the human race had in the face of the pandemic. Perhaps doctors could treat symptoms at the start. Perhaps people were able to avoid exposure to the disease. But the fact that the plane was never opened upon arrival, tells readers that each person inside was left to die. Readers can assume that all the passengers succumbed to the illness and that no one inside had any immunity because there were no attempts by anyone to depart the jet.

Clark later finds Tyler reading to the passengers of the Air Gradia jet from the Book of Revelations. While it is far too soon to understand how and why Tyler will become the prophet, readers do begin to see the origins of his journey.



Discussion Question 1

Twenty-six days into the pandemic, Clark shaves his head like he did when he was young. What does this reveal about Clark's personality?

Discussion Question 2

What are the consequences of the decision to send people in the airport out on their own, such as with the rapist, knowing he will likely die?

Discussion Question 3

Why would Elizabeth and Tyler leave with a group of religious wanderers? Is this expected of their characters? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

ulcer, apocalypse, quarantine, impeccable, tarmac



Section 7, Chapters 45-47

Summary

Chapter 45 gives more of the interview between Kirsten and Diallo. She tells him that she will talk about how she thinks the world has changed if it's off the record. She tells him that she thinks about killing and that she's had to kill two people. He tells her that he's had to kill someone as well. She says she feels like she's been walking all of her life. Diallo thinks about his apartment in Paris and how he used to be a copywriter. He asks how she got the scar on her face. She says she doesn't know because it happened during the first year, which she has no memory of. Her brother told her it was best she not remember.

Chapter 46 picks up with Jeevan in Year Fifteen. In Year Three he ended up in McKinley, a settlement in what used to be Virginia. He's married now to a girl called Daria. They sit by the river and talk about the life expectancies of people before the pandemic. They debate whether children should be taught it in school because it is upsetting to them. Edward arrives with his wife and is looking for a doctor. Jeevan has what EMT training he had before the pandemic and what he learned as an apprentice to a doctor afterwards. The wife has been shot. Jeevan cares for her. She's been shot by the prophet. The prophet and his followers are looking for ammunition and weapons and offer a trade. They've abducted Edward's son and wife. Edward trades the guns for his son. They want the wife to return with them and marry one of the other followers. The woman refuses and the prophet shoots her. After Jeevan cares for the woman, he goes to sterilize the equipment. He sits and thinks and remembers his brother, Toronto, and King Lear. His wife tells him to come to bed.

Chapter 47 takes place in Year Nineteen. Clark is 70 and is placing his 360° reports in the museum. He talks to Garrett about them and they wager that all the people involved are dead. Clark remembers his mother making cookie mixes and they discuss the absurdity of "shooting" someone an email. Clark has been reminiscing a lot lately. Sullivan, the head of security, comes in to introduce some new arrivals to Clark. Charlie, Jeremy, and their daughter Annabel enter. Charlie is covered in tattoos; she has four knives tattooed. Jeremy has two. They ask to stay until they are able to meet up with their people. They tell them they're waiting on the Traveling Symphony and tell Clark where they've been. Jeremy describes the prophet and how he read from the Book of Revelation. Clark is unsettled and asks if an older woman traveled with him. Clark knows the prophet is Tyler, but never learns what happened to Elizabeth.

Analysis

Kirsten continues her interview with Diallo, but eventually tells him that she will speak to him off the record. This breaks form from the interview transcript and returns to the traditional narrative of the novel. Kirsten feels comfortable enough to reveal a bit more



of herself to Diallo. This is reminiscent of Arthur and Jeevan's interview. While Jeevan never gives of himself during his interview with Arthur, Diallo does talk about his personal experience. Readers learn that he's from Paris and worked as a copywriter, and also that he has had to kill. This allows Diallo to connect with Kirsten, but it also gives readers the opportunity to prepare for how Jeevan continues to evolve. This connection between interviewer and subject foreshadows that Jeevan is coming closer to reaching a family of his own.

As Chapter 46 begins, readers learn that Jeevan has found a wife and a settlement to call home. He has fulfilled his dream of helping people, putting to use his brief training as an EMT and apprenticing with a doctor. While August laments earlier that he will not be able to become a physicist as he planned, Jeevan has found a way to make his career path come to fruition. He is able to help the woman who has been shot by the prophet. Jeevan has finally found his place in this new world when he wasn't able to really do so in the old.

Jeevan still thinks of the past, however. Perhaps his memory triggers trying to save Arthur on stage whenever he is tasked with helping to save a life. Like Clark, he is a man of two worlds. While Clark seeks to preserve the past, Jeevan remains haunted by the events of the pandemic 20 years on. Jeevan, like Clark, is also involved in discussions about what is and is not important to tell the younger generation about life before the outbreak.

Clark and Garrett talk about how language was used in the past, particularly shooting someone an email. They can talk about the good old times like anyone getting older would. It's a normal interaction and symbolic of how life carries on. It also foreshadows how interconnected the characters are becoming. Clark will soon meet Kirsten, just as Jeevan is now connected to one of the victims of the Prophet.

Clark meets Charlie and Jeremy and learns of the prophet. His concern is not so much with Tyler, although he clearly has concerns about Tyler's behavior as a young boy, but with Elizabeth. Clark doesn't know that Miranda died. He doesn't know whether his boyfriend Robert died, but he does know that Elizabeth originally survived the outbreak. When she left, he was resigned to not knowing what would become of her and Tyler. Now he's given partial information. He can infer that Tyler became the prophet, but he remains without knowledge of Elizabeth's fate. This metaphor helps the readers understand that while people may be interconnected with one another – and overlap through different relationships – people can never be fully aware of where someone else's story, or rather life, ends. People may wonder about someone as it is a perfectly normal question, but not knowing the result is just as common.

Discussion Question 1

Why is it important for Jeevan and others to discuss whether children should be taught about how the world used to be?



Discussion Question 2

Clark and Garrett talk about the unusual way in which people use words, like to shoot an email. What are some other, unexpected ways that people use language? What is the author trying to convey with this?

Discussion Question 3

Charlie has four knives tattooed on her. Why do the survivors feel it necessary to commemorate their kills with tattoos?

Vocabulary

sheathed, periphery, gaze, intricate, improvised



Section 8, Chapters 48-49

Summary

Chapter 48 begins with Kirsten and August arriving at the outskirts of Severn City. It is three days after they are separated from the Symphony. August carries his Starship Enterprise. They see resorts along the lake shore with broken windows. Kirsten hears a dog bark. She and August hide in the underbrush. A man appears on the road. He's gaunt and filthy. It's Sayid. He's followed by two men with a gun and a bow and arrow respectively. A boy with a machete also follows. August throws a stone at the gunman and misses. Kirsten wields her knife at the archer and strikes, but doesn't readily kill. The archer tells them they want what belongs to them: Eleanor, the stowaway. Sayid reveals that the prophet is coming with two other men and that Dieter is dead. He didn't wake up from the initial ambush. Either he was allergic to chloroform or the dose was too high. The clarinet player who was also abducted escaped. The archer is still alive; Kirsten finishes him off with her knife.

Chapter 49 discusses the clarinet player and how she doesn't like Shakespeare. She likes the classical musical the symphony plays, however. She thinks that the present situation in the world would be better served by new plays. She discusses this with Dieter who tells her that Shakespeare is appropriate, given that he wrote during the time of the plague. She disagrees because of what the future held. There was so much advancement to look forward to, and now civilization was being forced to look back. All she writes is the first line of an opening monologue. It's written in the form of a letter. It's the letter the rest of the Symphony uncovered after she went missing; they mistook it for a suicide note.

Sidney remembers waking up and hearing the men speak with the prophet about their plan. They are planning to trade her for Eleanor. The prophet tries to convince Sayid that this is all part of a bigger plan. The boy with the machete apologizes for Dieter. Sayid tells them that when they approach the Symphony to make the trade, they will be outnumbered. The prophet tells him that they possess the skills to take each person one by one.

Analysis

When Kirsten, August, and Sayid are approached on the road, they are confronted with their mortality. At any given moment, any one of them could perish. This is a metaphor for how people can never know how much time they have left. Sayid is frail and has watched Dieter die, but he's not ready to give up. August throws a stone and misses. This is symbolic of August not being the one who can aptly battle the Prophet. Instead, it is Kirsten who throws her knife at one of the men and makes contact. Yet, it doesn't instantly kill him. This represents the battle between Kirsten and the Prophet.



Kirsten must deliberately finish him off. This is Kirsten's third kill. The first two she was able to do from a distance. She throws the knife; it hits its target, and kills the intended victim. This time she comes face-to-face with the consequence of her action. She has the time to make the decision to finish him. It's likely that the wound would have been fatal without modern medical attention, but she must finish the job. It is up close and personal – the most intimate of the kills she has made. This reminds the reader of when Kirsten and August discuss how the Prophet can justify what he's done and convince himself that he's on the side of right. In this moment, Kirsten invites the reader into how she justifies what she's done.

Readers discover that the letter the Symphony found in Sidney's possessions is actually the opening line of the first monologue in her play. She has chosen to use letters as a framing device in her play. She doesn't get beyond the first sentence. She understands the need to create something new and that the world will need new material in time, but it's not ready. She's not ready. Enough time hasn't transpired for her to understand what's happened. The important thing to remember is that art is prevailing. A desire to create remains even in the darkest time. Sidney knows that she is incapable of matching the level of genius of Shakespeare, but she understands the desire.

The boy apologizes for Dieter's death. Perhaps Dieter's death is accidental, but readers don't know for certain. However, it is clear from when the Prophet shot the wife that Jeevan treated in an earlier chapter that the prophet does seek to harm without killing. This is as close as Jeevan and Kirsten get to a reunion. It symbolizes the myriad of ways people's lives intersect without them knowing. It is possible that Dieter had an allergic reaction, but the prophet and his followers are master manipulators. Having a boy follow them around with a machete shows how far the group will go to present an image. It's absurd to have a child walk around with such a weapon and be expected to use it. That element of surprise and intimidation is part of what the group thrives on. It also becomes a metaphor for how the pandemic occurred.

Discussion Question 1

Dieter dies while in custody of the prophet and his followers. Sayid wonders if he was allergic to chloroform. Is Dieter's death an accident? Or did the prophet and his followers mean for it to happen?

Discussion Question 2

Sidney thinks new plays would better reflect the current state of the world. Is this a fair assessment? Or do you think that revisiting classic works like Shakespeare is the right approach in this situation?

Discussion Question 3

How would each of the characters approach writing a play about the end of civilization?

Vocabulary

chloroform, encampment, shards, machete, ammunition

Section 8, Chapter 50

Summary

Chapter 50 begins with a flashback to reveal the stories behind Kirsten's tattoos. The first man she kills came at her when she first joins the Symphony. She kills the second man two years later. The man is part of a group who wanted food, horses, and a woman. The sixth guitar and conductor kill the others; Kirsten throws her knife at the fourth.

In the present, Kirsten, August, and Sayid are walking. They reach the highway, but still haven't encountered the prophet. There are lots of cars abandoned on the highway. As they continue to walk, Kirsten considers what it must have been like to make this trek in the snow. They hear a dog bark. They hide and after a while they hear footsteps approaching. One of the men with the prophet has a metal crossbow. The dog, Luli, catches the scent of Kirsten and the others. The man with the crossbow says he can see them. The prophet tells Kirsten to come out and drop her knife. She does. She considers the other knives on her belt and calculates whether she could kill the prophet before his men kill her. The prophet orders her to her knees and demands to know where the others are. The prophet begins talking about the state of the world and he mentions the "darkness of the undersea." Kirsten recognizes the Undersea from Station Eleven and begins to quote from the face-off between Dr. Eleven and someone from the Undersea. She can't tell if the prophet recognizes what she's saying. The prophet points the rifle at her. The boy shot the prophet in the head. August shoots arrows at the other men. The boy turns the gun on himself.

August finds the prophet's copy of The New Testament. He offers it to Kirsten. She looks through it and a piece of paper falls out. It's a page from Station Eleven. She wonders who the prophet is and where he came from. She figures they are about the same age. She places the page from Station Eleven in his hand, closes his eyes, and leaves the prophet's body behind. Luli, the dog, follows Kirsten.

Analysis

Chapter 50 begins with the stories behind the first two men that Kirsten has had to kill. In each case it was in self-defense, just as it is when she kills the prophet's man. Readers would likely consider Kirsten's actions as justifiable homicide in the current legal system. Kirsten owns the responsibility of killing these men. She understands why she had to do what she did, but the guilt weighs heavy.

When the prophet nears, Luli, the dog, can be heard barking. The dog bark has foreshadowed the prophet's presence many times, even if he's not seen. A dog is thought to be a faithful companion, and they are very loyal creatures. They are also survivors. When the prophet is killed, Luli does not stay with him, but rather finds a new



master in Kirsten. The dog knows what she needs to do in order to survive. In this way, she is a fitting companion for Kirsten.

When the prophet begins quoting Station Eleven, readers get confirmation that the prophet is Tyler as a grown man. Arthur, by giving both Tyler and Kirsten copies of the same comic, has given them the tools needed to recognize each other. He cannot know what the future holds and that these two will meet in the future in a battle of good and evil. Tyler is prepared to kill Kirsten because she challenges him and he can't have that. He is, in this moment, as indiscriminate as the Georgia Flu virus. He has deemed himself the light and all those against him as the darkness. As Kirsten states earlier, he can justify anything he's about to do. Kirsten is at a disadvantage. If she makes an attempt to stop him, he will likely be able to get a shot off. She contemplates sacrificing herself for the others. Before she has to make that ultimate decision, the boy shoots the prophet. The prophet has given him the knowledge and tools to commit this act. It's symbolic of the way a virus is attenuated in order to be used as an effective vaccine. In that moment, the boy sees himself as the light, but he no longer views the prophet in such a way. He kills the prophet to stop him, but the boy cannot live with the decision he has made. He turns the gun on himself because he sees himself as dark as he began to see the prophet.

Discussion Question 1

The boy commits suicide after he kills the prophet. Why does he kill him? What does his decision to shoot the prophet reveal about him?

Discussion Question 2

Luli, the dog, follows Kirsten after the prophet, the dog's master is killed. What does this say about the animal world?

Discussion Question 3

Kirsten discovers that the prophet carries a page from Station Eleven in his bible. Why did he keep it?

Vocabulary

askew, physiological, monotone, underbrush, gridlock



Section 8, Chapters 51-52

Summary

At the beginning of Chapter 51, Kirsten, Sayid, and August make their way toward the airport. They arrive and head toward the Departures Gate. A man and a woman meet them with crossbows. The woman drops her bow and runs toward them: it's Charlie. Kirsten and Charlie reunite and Kirsten asks about a tattooist to mark her latest kill. They talk about a time when they explored a house together and found a tea set arranged on a table that wasn't dusty, like the rest of the house was. Charlie wonders about that tea set. Kirsten suggests a ghost had taken care of it. Kirsten remembers that night and how the Symphony was performing *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. She recalls Dieter talking about Shakespeare and how he was defined by the plague.

Kirsten hears noises in the distance and sees Clark on a bench. She walks over and sits on the opposite end of the bench. They were introduced earlier. He tells her he wants to show her the museum and she asks to wait until tomorrow because she's tired. Luli is with her. Clark asks to show her something else. He leads her up the air traffic control tower, which is nine stories high. He hands her a telescope when they reach the top and points something out to her: in the distance there are streets with electricity.

Chapter 53 begins with Kirsten looking through the telescope, then takes readers a thousand miles away to where Jeevan lives. He now has a young son named Frank. They are baking bread.

Outside of Severn City, the Symphony approaches.

Analysis

Kirsten and Charlie reunite when Kirsten, Sayid, and August arrive at the airport. Their reunion is warm, but Kirsten is grappling with what has happened. She asks Charlie about finding a tattooist, as she is quick to mark herself for the murder she committed. Charlie understands and says she'll introduce her to someone. Charlie is like a home base for Kirsten. Much as Jeevan has struggled with finding his family, Kirsten can now relax since she's been reunited with hers.

The girls talk about a time when they were in an abandoned house and found a tea set. What set it apart was the fact that it was perfectly clean, while the rest of the house was dusty from sitting for so long. Both recognized it as an anomaly and it has stuck with them both. Kirsten, however, is ready to grapple with an otherworldly possibility. She suggests that a spirit or a ghost may have been the one that kept the tea set clean. Charlie isn't so quick to think so and mentions how many ghosts there would have to be given what happened with the pandemic. Kirsten agrees, but finds the possibility more likely because of it. Kirsten may want to know that there is something to an afterlife. Readers won't find much of a discussion about an afterlife in *Station Eleven*. The author



has kept that at bay. It could be argued that the reason there isn't much discussion about heaven or hell is largely because most of the characters can consider their present situation as a living hell. Watching the boy turn the gun on himself has altered Kirsten's perception. Perhaps she wants there to be something else. The boy didn't have to kill himself. Kirsten tried to stop him, but it was too late. Perhaps Kirsten wants the boy to have something else on the other side.

Unlike Frank's suicide, the boy's suicide happens on stage. Readers are not spared the horror of it. It completes Kirsten's journey to understanding her place in this post-pandemic world. Kirsten witnessing the boy kill the Prophet may also allude to the parts of Kirsten's childhood that she chooses to forget. It is possible that she, too, was faced with a decision such as the boy made.

Kirsten remembers talking with Dieter about how Shakespeare's life is often defined by the plague. Not necessarily because he suffered from it, but rather because of the time in which he lived and survived. Likewise, Shakespeare's work survives to this day. Kirsten, August, Sayid, Clark, Dieter all share this attribute. Anyone who managed to survive the Georgia Flu does. Life goes on and even in the time of great tragedy, art can help heal.

Clark shows Kirsten evidence that electricity is beginning to return. It is like a sunrise and it represents that the worst may finally be over.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Kirsten wonder if the tea set had been dusted by a spirit or ghost? What does this reveal about her character?

Discussion Question 2

Clark shows Kirsten evidence of electricity returning to civilization. Does this mean the world is on its way to being like it was? If you had to choose a modern convenience to not bring back, what would you choose? Why?

Discussion Question 3

When readers last see Jeevan he is with his son and baking bread. What does the bread represent?

Vocabulary

glinting, ransacked, pinpoint, peephole, telescope



Section 9, Chapter 53

Summary

Chapter 53 details Arthur's last day. He wakes up tired and prepares for the day. The weather reports reveal an approaching snowstorm. He goes to a diner he used to frequent with Clark when they were young; he can't believe it hasn't changed. He meets Tanya in his dressing room. She comments that he looks bad. He realizes he forgot to meet her at breakfast. She shrugs it off and drinks wine; she asks if Arthur is sick. Arthur says he wants to move to Israel to be closer to his son and see him grow up. Arthur wants to get rid of his material possessions. He asks Tanya how much she has left on her student loan and tells her he will pay the balance. He wants to simplify. Tanya gives him the paperweight that Miranda sent to the theater by courier. When Kirsten arrives in the dressing room, Arthur gives her Miranda's comics and the paperweight. Kirsten tells Arthur her mother won't allow her to read the book of Arthur's letters.

Before he goes on stage, Arthur calls Tyler in Jerusalem. It's early in the morning and Elizabeth is hesitant to wake Tyler. She relents and Tyler is upset that Arthur didn't make it to Jerusalem for his birthday. Tyler talks about the space station and Dr. Eleven in Station Eleven. Arthur asks about the giant seahorses and Tyler explains that if they catch you they take you to the Undersea. Arthur gets the five minute call from the stage manager and has to end the phone call. He waits on the platform in the strange transitional place between being part of the play and the play actually starting. He thinks about Miranda and going to a Golden Globes party with her and how she fell and twisted her ankle in her high heels. He thinks of Elizabeth and Lydia and going out with Clark. He remembers Tyler as a toddler.

As the play begins, he sees Tanya in the wings. Kirsten thanks him for the comics. He becomes lightheaded and can see Jeevan running onto the stage. The snow falls on the stage and he thinks it's beautiful.

Analysis

As the novel draws to a close, readers learn about Arthur's final day alive. He doesn't feel or look well, but he has plans for the future. This reminds readers to make plans for the future and live their lives as fully as possible without fear of what may be lurking. Arthur's death is a surprise. He is middle-aged, but still relatively young when dies at 51.

Throughout his last day, Arthur thinks of the women that have had an impact in his life. He remembers Miranda falling in her high heels. It's comical memory that demonstrates how she was out of her element in his world, yet she made the effort to be part of it. He thinks of Elizabeth and Tyler and their spiritual quest to Israel. He wants to be a part of that. The closer the novel draws to a close, the more readers can see evidence of



spirituality. Though nothing definitive is ever declared, it does reinforce the idea of hope that there is something more.

Arthur sees Tanya before he takes the stage. He is happy. The theater is a spiritual place for him; it's like his church. In many respects the spectacle of the theater is like the rituals in a church service. His last thought as he sees Jeevan running toward him is that the stage is a place of beauty. He won't survive the impending winter, but there continues to be the promise of what's yet to come. Arthur has the luxury of never knowing about the pandemic. There is a certain sense of hope in the moment he dies, much like when Miranda dies near the harbor.

The author gives readers this final glimpse of Arthur's life because his last day was the last day before the outbreak. In doing so, the author foreshadows that the pieces of the old world may be returning.

Discussion Question 1

Readers learn about Arthur's last day. He doesn't know he's about to die and is making radical plans for the future. If he had lived, do you think Arthur would have followed through on his plans? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Arthur gives Kirsten the paperweight and comics. Is he simply getting rid of things or does he want Kirsten to have them?

Discussion Question 3

Arthur offers to pay Tanya's student loans. Why does Arthur want to do this? How does it reflect his mindset? If he had lived, would he have made good on the offer?

Vocabulary

dehydrated, insomnia, luminescent, astray, negotiated



Section 9, Chapters 54-55

Summary

Section 9: Station Eleven, Chapter 54-55

Chapter 54 summarizes Dr. Eleven, Vol. 1, No. 2: The Pursuit and the versions Miranda went through before settling on this one. Dr. Eleven asks what it's like at the end and Captain Lonagan says "it's like waking up from a dream."

Chapter 55 finds the Symphony leaving the airport. Kirsten leaves one of the comics with Clark for the museum. She promises to come back through the airport and swap it out for the other after she visits the place that has lights.

That evening, Clark dusts the objects in the museum and reads through the comic. There is a scene of a dinner party. The conversation is reminiscent of the conversation of the dinner party on Arthur and Miranda's third anniversary. Clark recognizes it and himself in the comic. He wonders what happened to Miranda. He starts to wonder that if places now have lights and newspapers and symphonies, what else is yet to return.

Analysis

The novel ends with two very short chapters. Chapter 54 provides a glimpse into a scene in Station Eleven. It ends with Captain Lonagan stating that "It's like waking up from a dream." In many ways the reader is, as it can be seen that the world has the potential to return to some of its finer inventions, like electricity. Readers are ready to resume our lives outside of the book. Perhaps this was merely a timeline in an alternate universe as August discusses earlier. Clark also refers to the world experiencing an awakening. The long winter is finally coming to a close. The novel began with a great snowstorm getting ready to hit Toronto; there is snow falling on stage, and now this winter seems to be ending.

Clark recognizes the dinner party in the comic when he reads it. He recognizes himself. He can recognize and understand his place in both worlds. He is ready and hopeful at what the next world may bring. His readiness mirrors the readers' as they return to their worlds.

Discussion Question 1

Captain Lonagan says at the end of Station Eleven that "it's like waking up from a dream." Does the ending of the book feel similarly? Is the novel at all dreamlike? Why or why not?



Discussion Question 2

Kirsten says she will return to swap out the comic she gave to Clark for the museum. Will she return? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 3

Miranda used the dinner party of her anniversary as the setting for a scene in Station Eleven. Why does she choose to do so?

Vocabulary

garnish, translucent, plummeting, concerto, reminiscing, resemblance



Characters

Arthur Leander

Arthur Leander, 51, is an actor who has achieved a great deal of fame from film and television. Originally from Delano Island in Canada, he has returned home to star as King Lear at the Elgin Theater in Toronto. He has been married three times. His wives are: in order, Miranda Carroll, Elizabeth Colton, and Lydia Marks. Each marriage suffered from an affair he had with the woman who would become his next wife. At the time of his death, he is ending his marriage to Lydia and conducting an affair with Tanya, the woman who looks after the children.

Arthur dies on stage from a massive heart attack in the first chapter. Of any of the characters in the novel, he is the only one readers get to know whose life is not defined by the Georgia Flu. What is revealed about Arthur is done so through the use of flashbacks and memories of other characters.

Like Kirsten, he loves acting, even though he wasn't considered to have much talent when he was in acting school as a young man.

He has one son, Tyler, with his second wife Elizabeth. Tyler and his mother live in Jerusalem. At the time of his death, Arthur has decided to leave fame and materialism behind and go live in Israel to be close to his son. When his father dies, he reaches out to Miranda because she knows where's he came from and he doesn't have that with either of his other wives. He is kind to Kirsten and gives her the Station Eleven comics because he is getting rid of things he doesn't need.

Though he misses the wild young man Clark used to be and thinks that he sold out, Arthur and Clark have been life-long friends.

Jeevan Chaudhary

Jeevan tries to save Arthur's life when Arthur collapses on stage. He is at the theater with his girlfriend Laura and their relationship is strained. Prior to the pandemic, Jeevan studied to be an EMT. Previously, he worked as a paparazzo and entertainment journalist and used to take photos of Arthur and Miranda. During his time as an entertainment journalist, he once interviewed Arthur. Arthur gave him the exclusive when he decided to leave his second wife Elizabeth.

Though not much of his family is known, he had one brother, Frank. His friend Hua, an ER doctor, informed him about the outbreak and this saved his life. After the call, he stockpiled food and isolated himself with his brother at Frank's apartment. Though Jeevan tries to convince his girlfriend, Laura, to do the same, she doesn't heed his warning. When the supplies run out, Jeevan makes his way out into the world. Frank, who is paralyzed, commits suicide.



Jeevan travels and ends up at a settlement in what used to be Virginia. He apprentices with a doctor. Eventually, he marries and has a son. Sometimes he thinks about Arthur.

Kirsten Raymonde

Kirsten Reymonde is first introduced as a young girl playing one of King Lear's daughters at a younger age. As a child actor, she loves acting; this continues well into her adulthood. While working on King Lear together, she befriends Arthur and witnesses his death on stage. During the aftermath of Arthur's death, Kirsten is comforted by Jeevan. As an adult, she remembers Jeevan, though she never knew him by name.

The second time she is introduced, she is a woman in her mid-twenties. As part of the Traveling Symphony, she continues to fulfill her need to act. On her body, she has three tattoos: two knives and one that reads: "Survival is insufficient." On her belt, she keeps three knives and has become a skilled knife-thrower. Her memories from the outbreak are sketchy at best. In fact, she does not remember anything from the first year after the Georgia Flu. From her time on stage, she still has the Station Eleven comics and the paperweight Arthur gave her. On the side of her face is a sizable scar, but she doesn't know how she got it. She is strong-willed and a survivor at her core.

Throughout the novel, Kirsten searches for tabloid artifacts that reference Arthur when they investigate run-down buildings. She is good friends with Dieter, August, and Charlie, and is very concerned with finding Charlie.

Kirsten and Sayid were once in a romantic relationship. No other relationships of note are mentioned, but she and Sayid parted ways after she was unfaithful to him. She is clear about loving him, though.

From the old world, she has some memories, although she doubts many of them - like whether a refrigerator really had a light inside. When Clark shows her that an electrical grid has appeared, she is drawn to it.

She kills the archer when they are confronted before the prophet shows up. When the prophet arrives, she recognizes what he says from the Station Eleven comic; he is the only other person she has encountered to have it as well.

Clark Thompson

Clark is Arthur's friend from when they were young men. A native of Great Britain, he was punk rock when he was in his early 20s. After some failed attempts at living an artistic life, he went back to school and earned a PhD. He works as an organization psychologist; he fixes CEOs, which means he interviews employees for 360° business reports and tries to help corporations fix their management.



A gay man, the reader never learns when he originally came out, but prior to the outbreak was in a relationship with a man named Robert. One of his regrets is never learning of what happened to him, but Clark must assume the worst.

When the pandemic begins, Clark is on the flight that lands near Severn City. He spends the next twenty years in the airport settlement. He curates the Museum of Civilization.

Miranda Carroll

Miranda is Arthur's first wife. Like Arthur, she is from Delano Island in Canada. She is an artist who creates the Station Eleven comic. In a relationship prior to Arthur, she once lived with another artist, Pablo, who was prone to jealousy. Pablo beat her after she told him she was leaving him.

An independent woman, she enjoys her job working for a shipping company. When she works on the Station Eleven comics, she does so for herself rather than for anyone else. When she was married to Arthur, she was never comfortable as a Hollywood wife. A lot of insecurities, primarily about her appearance, led to the divorce. After the divorce, she spent a good amount of her alimony on fine clothing. She never remarried and doesn't have children. When she briefly meets Kirsten, readers see that she doesn't know how to relate to children.

She dies of the Georgia Flu in Malaysia after collapsing outside.

August

August is the second violin in the symphony and a recent addition to the acting repertory. He also writes poetry, but only Kirsten and one other knows this about him. When he and Kirsten go into abandoned buildings to search for useful items, he prays over the dead when they find bodies. One of the things he searches for is old TV Guides. He keeps a Starship Enterprise with him after they find it in an abandoned home.

The Prophet/Tyler

Tyler is the son of Arthur and Elizabeth Colton. As a young boy, he lives in Jerusalem with his mother. After Arthur's death, they travel back to Canada. He is on the flight that lands at Severn City. Stranded, he reads his comics and Clark eventually finds him reading the Book of Revelations to the dead passengers in a quarantined jet.

He and his mother leave the airport settlement with a religious cult. It is later revealed that he is the prophet of a doomsday cult. Eventually, he is killed by a boy in the cult just as he prepares to kill Kirsten.



Elizabeth Colton

Elizabeth is a beautiful actress who is described as never having anything bad ever happen to her. She has an affair with Arthur and apologizes to Miranda for it on Arthur and Miranda's third wedding anniversary. Her marriage with Arthur results in one son: Tyler. A believer in fate, she takes her son and follows a religious sect after the pandemic. It is not revealed what happens to her.

Frank Chaudhary

Jeevan's brother. A former war correspondent for Reuters, he covered the war in Afghanistan. While stationed in Libya he was shot and lost the use of his legs. Working as a ghostwriter, he is ghostwriting a memoir when the pandemic hits. When supplies run out, he commits suicide so that he doesn't burden his brother Jeevan.

Sayid

Sayid is a member of the Traveling Symphony. He is an actor. He was in a relationship with Kirsten until she cheated on him. After he is abducted by the prophet and his men, he returns to the Symphony frail, but survives.

The Traveling Symphony

The Traveling Symphony acts as a collective character. Many of the symphony members are referenced by the instruments they play rather than by name. For example, sixth guitar, second violin, etc.



Symbols and Symbolism

Delano Island

Delano Island is an island in Canada that is about the size of Manhattan, but with only about 1,000 residents. Both Arthur and Miranda are from the island. It represents the reduction in population after the Georgia Flu and ties in with the theme of isolation.

Shakespeare's Plays

Shakespeare's Plays are referenced throughout the book, with King Lear being the most prominent. Lear is regarded as one of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies, fitting the mood of the post-pandemic world in which the novel takes place. When lighter fare is needed, A Midsummer Night's Dream is performed. Romeo and Juliet is also mentioned. The plays represent classic literature that has stood the test of time. Additionally, Shakespeare was writing at the time of the Plague, drawing comparison to the new world.

Airport

Airports are transitional places. Many settlements are established after the pandemic, some in old restaurants or big box stores. The settlement at the airport is the one that has the most focus. Airports are designed to see people come and go. This is the perfect representation of a world in flux. The settlement in the airport bridges the old world with the world that's yet to come, as readers can see with Clark's thoughts about the world awakening.

Costumes

Throughout the novel, costumes are referenced. The dress Kirsten wears in A Midsummer Night's Dream needs to be washed. When Kirsten and August are going through a house, they find a wedding dress and suit. All these costumes make up the pageantry of what life used to be like. They give the illusion of something that is normal or traditional. It also symbolizes an escape. Putting on a costume transports the actor to another time, pretending to be someone else. They are an avenue to escape from the harshness of reality.

Tabloids & Photographs

With social media, today's society has the ability to document virtually every moment of someone's life. Western culture is fascinated by celebrity and how other people live. These tabloids and photographs reflect a life that most of us cannot attain or don't want



to attain. People may envy the wealth and exotic locales, but wouldn't want the constant speculation about our personal lives. Through the tabloids and photographs, people can live vicariously through them. The photos and tabloids provide the same for Kirsten. They provide a lens into the past, to how life used to be, and to a person who had an impact on her life at a very early age.

Museum of Civilization

Like the photographs, people like to document our lives. Readers understand the importance of preservation, whether it's archiving cinematic masterpieces, or preserving ancient ruins. The Museum of Civilization holds together the memory of what life was like before civilization fell. Most of what Clark keeps are items that people view as temporary. He archives iPhones in his museum, but in our present society, people may be inclined to trade that model in for a newer one. The museum holds together a memory of how life was.

The Traveling Symphony

The Traveling Symphony symbolizes the need for family, communication and working together. Although it is made up on individual contributors, all of the parts of the symphony have to play together to get the proper sound. This demonstrates how the individuals who survive the pandemic must unite and find their proper working order in the new settlements.

Snow

Snow is referenced many times throughout the novel. When Jeevan is first walking home from the Elgin Theater and gets the phone call from Hua about the outbreak, it is snowing. The snow blankets the city. Snow is referenced on the wings of planes. When Jeevan first ventures out after the supplies run out, the city is covered in snow. As the book progresses and readers learn more about how each individual that survived the initial outbreak, there are more references to snow. It symbolizes the great winter that befalls winter in the wake of the pandemic. Only when Clark sees the electrical grid do readers get the sense that the awakening of spring is coming.

Paperweight

The paperweight that Kirsten carries with her is clear glass with a cloud in the dome. She thinks it's pretty and keeps it in her bag. For as much traveling as she does, it seems nonsensical to carry an object that weights something down. It reminds her of the past. Its weight keeps her grounded. She shoulders the burden of what's happened to her, from forgetting the first year after the outbreak, to remembering the men she has had to kill. The paperweight reminds her of the gravity of those situations.

Comics

The comics capture the world that Miranda created in her imagination. Each frame is unchanging. It preserves a moment in that world. Kirsten or Tyler can look at those frames and see what used to be. The comics symbolize nostalgia and memory. They also symbolize something that can never be and really never was. They represent the fallacy of memory.



Settings

Elgin Theater in Toronto

The novel opens at the Elgin Theater in Toronto where “King Lear” is being staged. It snows on stage and is snowing outside. The theater is a place where reality can be simulated. Staging the productions mimics out reality, even if it is heightened. Starting in the theater prepares the reader for the rest of the novel and the transitional world that awaits. While readers don’t realize the catastrophe that’s yet to come, readers are introduced to an unreal world that for a time becomes reality when it is presented.

Traveling Symphony

A significant portion of the novel finds characters on the road. The Traveling Symphony is a group of actors and musicians moving from settlement to settlement for their performances. The caravan is transported by horses. They carry their instruments, costumes, and supplies with them. The Traveling Symphony is meant to signify how the world is transitioning since the outbreak of the Georgia Flu. Many changes have taken place and the Symphony represents how humans are adjusting to their new world.

The Airport

The Georgia Flu comes to North America via flight. Clark is in the airport en route to Arthur’s funeral when he realizes something catastrophic has happened. The outbreak spreads violently while Clark, Elizabeth and Tyler are in the air. When they land at the airport, the airport becomes their home. In the early days of the pandemic, food and other supplies are present. It’s also a place to be found. If help is coming, as they hope in the beginning, it is a likely place for the National Guard or the Red Cross to find them.

Ultimately, Clark establishes the Museum of Civilization in the airport. The grounded Air Gradia jet acts as a mausoleum for the passengers quarantined inside. The air traffic control tower also acts as a beacon into the future. From the tower, Clark is able to see that an electrical grid has emerged. While the airport becomes a settlement, the fact that an airport is a stop that connects us to the next place is fitting because readers can see the changes that are taking place outside of the confines of the airport

Station Eleven

Station Eleven is the fictional world of Miranda’s comic. It is a small space station that experiences only twilight and night. Full sun is never present. While Station Eleven was created by Miranda prior to the pandemic, it represents the how the world functions after the end of civilization. It is a dark time and people on Station Eleven long to see the sun. Similarly, the end of civilization has created a figurative darkness and people are



longing for reasons for hope. The fact that Station Eleven experiences twilight during sunrise and sunset, gives us hope that eventually a brighter time will exist in the new civilization. This is most emblematic with the emergence of the power grid in the distance as the novel comes to a close.

Hollywood

The novel doesn't spend a great deal of time in Hollywood, but it's referenced throughout. Arthur is a famous actor who works in the film industry. He and Miranda live in Hollywood during their marriage. Miranda feels insecure during her marriage, like she's a fraud among the beautiful, well-styled people. Hollywood is where Arthur meets and works with Elizabeth Colton, who becomes Arthur's second wife. Readers first meet Elizabeth at a dinner party at Arthur's house in Hollywood. They are celebrating Arthur and Miranda's wedding anniversary. This is the dinner party that Clark later recognizes in the Station Eleven issue Kirsten leaves with him.

Hollywood parallels the Elgin Theater. It is a place of heightened reality that is pretend.

Harbor/Malaysia

Miranda works for a shipping company and spends a fair amount of time in Malaysia near the shipyards. She is compelled by the lights on the new ships. Like the other settings in the novel, the harbor is a place of transition. She receives the phone call from Clark about Arthur's death when she is there. Ultimately, she can see the sunrise on the harbor as she dies of the Georgia Flu.

Having a portion of the novel set half a world away gives perspective on the global state of the pandemic. As Miranda's life is ending, she sees the sunrise. It may be on the other side of the world from where the majority of the novel takes place, but it demonstrates that a new day is about to begin. Miranda's life is over, but life will go on.



Themes and Motifs

Change

Throughout “Station Eleven” the idea of change is evident. As the novel opens, Arthur changes into character to perform King Lear and Jeeven considers his decision to change careers. The lives of both men intersect when Arthur collapses on stage and Jeevan rushes to help. Witnessing Arthur’s death effects Jeevan both in how he viewed a celebrity that he was fond of, but also of how it reinforced that the change he was making in career was a positive step.

When the Georgia Flu outbreak occurs, change abounds. It has a high mortality rate and acts fast. Within the first few weeks of the pandemic, virtually all modern systems break down, from governments and economies, to aviation and the transportation of goods. The disease radically changes the entire globe. All is lost, but those who live are tasted with survival and the option to rebuild. The opportunity exists to recapture what worked, but also to understand what didn’t. The reader only gets a glimmer of what may return, but twenty years after the collapse, evidence can be seen that the world is changing once again.

Readers initially meet Kirsten as a young girl and then twenty years later. Growing up in this world has undoubtedly changed her. She shoulders the burden of having killed two people for survival. She bears a scar on her face that she doesn’t know how she got. Some of the changes she’s experienced she can’t identify much like many of us have experiences over time that readers don’t readily see as having a significant impact on our lives.

Clark’s transformation from punk rock kid to straight-laced business man seems like a normal change. While in the airport settlement, however, Clark shaves half of his head like he did when he was young. Clark recognizes the change he underwent and decided he didn’t like who he became. He opted, instead, to return to the punk-rock look of his youth and celebrate that change.

Isolation

At one point in the novel, a man wanders to the airport. When he sees other people he begins to cry. He’s overcome with emotion because for a portion of his life he was isolated in such a way that he thought he was the only person left. Isolation becomes an important theme throughout book. The pandemic leads to the destruction of methods of modern communication. Phones, internet, mail service and the like are all gone. There are no radios. Settlements have little awareness of other groups of people. Often they think of groups they hear about as rumors. Without exploration, people don’t know what exists outside of their world.



When the outbreak first occurs, Jeevan is told by Hua to either leave the city or isolate himself from others. He chooses to isolate himself with his brother. When people knock on the door or try to break into the apartment, they stay quiet. They keep to themselves until the supplies run out and it's deemed safe to try and venture out into what remains of civilization.

When Jeevan leaves the apartment after Frank commits suicide, he doesn't know what he will find. From the view of the apartment, he sees how life comes to a standstill when the city went dark. He ventures out into that world. He doesn't know what he will find. Much like when Kirsten and the Symphony journal back to the settlement where they left Charlie and Jeremy to have their child. They remember what it is like when they leave, but upon their return find it very different: the prophet has taken over the settlement. Mystery surrounds him and his influence, but it is clear that he holds power over these people.

As the Symphony continues their journey to find the Museum of Civilization and their friends, Said, Dieter, and Sydney are all abducted. The prophet knows that the easiest way to defeat the Symphony is isolate them. Kirsten and August get separated from the Symphony as well.

Survival

In the aftermath of the pandemic, many of those who do survive, survive because they have an immunity to the disease or have, by luck or coincidence, ended up surrounded by others who haven't come in contact with the disease.

Hua contacts Jeevan and tells him about the outbreak. While Hua will more than likely succumb to the disease, he has time to reach out to someone so that they may survive. In turn, Jeevan stockpiles all the supplies from the grocery store so that he and his brother have a chance. Neither can anticipate the scope of what's about to happen, but they get an opportunity for survival.

Likewise, sacrifices are made to ensure survival as well. Frank commits suicide in order for Jeevan to be able to go out into the world and continue his survival. He knows that he would not merely be a burden because of his injury, but that he likely wouldn't survive for long. He has to die so that his brother can live.

In order to survive, many things are done because they have no other choice. Kirsten has two knife tattoos; Charlie has four. Both women have had to kill in order to stay alive. Kirsten doesn't relish killing for a third time, but understands that she must do so in order to live. When a woman in the airport is raped, the people decide as a group to remove the rapist from their society. The rapist claims that he has no chance of survival when they send him into the woods. The group understands that they are effectively sending him to his death for his crime, but they don't see another alternative to preserve themselves.



Death

Death is a persistent theme throughout the book. The first death occurs in the first chapter. Arthur dies on stage on a massive heart attack. He doesn't succumb to the virus that will wipe out nearly all of the world's population. It reminds readers that death doesn't come in one form or another, but that it is inevitable. Death is arbitrary, indiscriminate, and inevitable. No one is immune, not even the famous actor who appears larger than life.

Death doesn't have to be dark, however. Because of life being finite, it heightens dreams and what people do with their lives. It gives life a sense of urgency for accomplishing goals.

When Kirsten and August search through the abandoned houses they find, August prays over the dead bodies they find. They are both aware of what could have just as easily befallen them. August pays respect and offers gratitude for what they take in exchange. His prayers aren't necessarily religious in nature, as Kirsten witnessed when she eavesdropped. Rather, he wishes them peace in the afterlife, and thanks them for they take. He appreciates that their death helps improve the quality of his life.

"Station Eleven" also deals with the death of civilization as readers know it. There is the death of all major forms of communication, the death of aviation, the death of transportation. Governments and economies collapse. Money ceases to have value. Modern medicine ceases to exist. Ailments easily treated with vaccines, antibiotics, or even chemotherapy can be no longer.

Rebirth

If death is a recurring theme, rebirth must be as well. While readers never see a return to what life was like previously, readers do see that events are put in motion to embrace and rebuild the parts of life that served us well.

Every time a play is staged, it marks a rebirth. The world of the play is put on display. Audience members can experience the characters' triumphs and failures anew. Set pieces are reused and costumes re-purposed. When Kirsten and August explore the abandoned houses, they don't just look for trinkets of the past, or items like soap, they find and re-purpose clothing as costumes.

Many of the buildings they visit are run down and some are nearing collapse. While the buildings or cars or planes may be of no use, the underbrush is growing. Where there were pavements, grasses, weeds, and wildflowers are taking over. Nature's rebirth prevails.

At the conclusion of the novel, Clark witnesses the faint lights of a power grid coming on. While the modern conveniences readers take for granted ceased to exist, the knowledge of them did not. They are not merely a memory. People can educate

themselves on how to rebuild, as a group clearly has with the electrical grid. This faint hint of light may be a small step, but it's much like Miranda witnessing the sunrise as she dies. It is not the end of the day that she witnesses, but the dawn of a new day. It offers hope that civilization will be born again.



Styles

Point of View

The author uses a third-person, omniscient narrator. The narration is fairly straightforward and trustworthy. It does not dwell in maudlin details. It presents the facts as they happen in the given time frame. Readers learn what characters are thinking via the narrator.

The novel begins in the present, but jumps around to different time periods. It's a non-linear story. The perspective shifts from that of Kirsten in Year Fifteen after the pandemic to when Arthur was a young man in acting school, 25 years before his death. Many other times in between are covered as well.

There are excerpts from an interview between the publisher Diallo and Kirsten. Readers know that he has interviewed other subjects, but are only privy to his conversations with Kirsten. Readers never see the final product in the newspaper. Arthur's obituary is mentioned throughout the book, but the full text of it is never revealed. Readers merely experience it through the memories of others. Those memories are largely consistent.

Arthur writes letters to his friend Veronica over the course of many years. Readers never get the perspective of Veronica; instead excerpts are given from selected letters written in different time periods of Arthur's life. At no point in the story do readers meet Veronica. All that is known of her is that she collected the letters and published them.

Jeevan worked as a paparazzo. Readers get his perspective as someone who captures the lives of people in the public. He takes advantage of a brief conversation with Miranda about work ethics and photographs her with a headline exposing marital troubles. The photo deliberately makes her look bad.

Kirsten's perspective is the least reliable in that she doesn't remember a lot from when she was young. She questions things that she does remember, while actively deflecting from things she'd rather not remember.

Language and Meaning

The language used throughout the book is simple and straight forward. The vocabulary is accessible. Curse words and slang are kept to a minimum, as is technical jargon.

Given that a large portion of the novel deals with the theater, there isn't a lot of technical terminology with regard to that art form. Many of the members of the Symphony are referred to by their place in the orchestra, e.g. sixth guitar, second violin. This is the most technically specific aspect of the language.



The descriptions are sparse. Physical descriptions of the characters are at a minimum. A scar or height might be noted. Adjectives and adverbs are not overly used. The emotional weight of the language comes from the experience of the characters rather than describing the emotion.

The action sequences are fast-paced and have a sense of urgency. The sentences tend to slow when the weather turns hot, while they have a faster pace when it's cold. There are some descriptions of the locations. The natural world is noted throughout, e.g. owls swooping down, wildflowers overgrowing, thick brush along the side of a road, and how snow covers planes or parks.

Structure

The novel is divided into nine major sections, with each section divided into multiple chapters. It utilizes a non-linear story. It jumps around from present day to 25 years in the past to 20 years after the pandemic. The chapters are of varying length. Often two or three chapters will only have a paragraph or two followed by a lengthy chapter.

Given that there is a global catastrophe, the novel does give a lot of focus to the celebrity character. Readers know more about Arthur's personal life than many of the other characters in the book. Early on readers learn that Arthur has been married three times, but it's not until around the halfway point that readers learn that Clark is gay. This reflects western culture may know more about the lives of celebrities than their neighbors. It takes longer to get to know about the people that surround you.

The time jumps lend the book an air of hyperactivity. The way it jumps around is much like someone playing around on the internet or watching a series of videos on YouTube. Just as one video leads you to something that might be associated with what you just watched, the chapters move along similarly. The focus might be on Kirsten's search for tabloid information on Arthur, which leads to a chapter on one of Arthur's marriages, which then leads to information about his first wife Miranda. It reflects the way people process information in today's digital age.

While the majority of the novel is in a traditional narrative, a few chapters differ. There are excerpts from the letters that Arthur sends Veronica. None of the letters are complete. There are also excerpts from Diallo's interview with Kirsten and these appear as partial transcripts.



Quotes

It was all too transitory, all those doorways and dark spaces between wings, the missing ceiling. It was more like a terminal, he thought, a train station or an airport, everyone passing quickly through.

-- Narrator (Chapter 1 paragraph 15)

Importance: The theater is described as looking like a terminal, foreshadowing the settlement at the airport terminal.

I stood looking over my damaged home and tried to forget the sweetness of life on Earth.

-- Dr. Eleven (Chapter 8 paragraph 3)

Importance: Dr. Eleven's words speak to those trying to remember what life was like before the pandemic.

My people and I,' he said, 'when we speak of the light, we speak of order. This is a place of order. People with chaos in their hearts cannot abide here.

-- The Prophet (Chapter 12 paragraph 13)

Importance: The prophet tries to justify his place in the world and what he's doing by seeing himself as a beacon of hope.

Her friendlessness is never mentioned in gossip blogs, which she appreciates.

-- Narrator (Chapter 15 paragraph 24)

Importance: The quote references Miranda. She's not comfortable in her situation in Hollywood. She has difficulty adapting to her new world, much as others will after the pandemic.

There were moments around campfires when someone would say something invigorating about the importance of art, and everyone would find it easier to sleep that night.

-- Narrator (Chapter 19 paragraph 1)

Importance: The importance of art is a discussion that stands the test of time. It is something that is easy to dismiss, but it can reflect society with honesty to help readers understand situations people might not otherwise.

If you are the light, if your enemies are darkness, then there's nothing that you cannot justify. There's nothing you can't survive, because there's nothing that you will not do.

-- Kirsten (Chapter 23 paragraph 22)

Importance: Kirsten understands the mindset of the cult. Perspective can be dangerous when people see things as they want to see them instead of how they are.



So many species had appeared and later vanished from this earth; what was one more?
-- Narrator (Chapter 24 paragraph 54)

Importance: This quote helps us understand humanity's place in the world. There's nothing to suggest that humans couldn't vanish, yet because of our awareness of self it seems strange to consider.

They acted because they loved acting, but also, let's be honest here, to be noticed. All they wanted was to be seen.
-- Frank (Chapter 34 paragraph 8)

Importance: This reflects the needs of many of the people left after the pandemic to find others and be acknowledged.

Clark was thinking about how lucky he'd been. Not just the mere fact of survival, which was of course remarkable in and of itself, but to have seen one world end and another begin.
-- Narrator (Chapter 42 paragraph 3)

Importance: People like Clark are in a unique position to see the transition between worlds. This is a radical change, of course, but similar to what people who witnessed other significant events in history (e.g. war, famine, terrorism, technological advancements) have experienced.

If there are again towns with streetlights, if there are symphonies and newspapers, then what else might this awakening world contain?
-- Clark (Chapter 55 paragraph 8)

Importance: The quote comes close to the end of the novel, ending it with a sense of hope and wonder, not just of returning to what was, but of what new things may come.

If nothing else, it's pleasant to consider the possibility.
-- Narrator (Chapter 55 paragraph 8)

Importance: Clark is thinking about all of what may be in store for the world now that he knows electricity has been reborn. He may never see or know anything that's being done in the other parts of the world, but he is a man of hope.

Decisions would have to be made soon. There was enough food for only another two weeks.
-- Narrator (Chapter 32 paragraph 5)

Importance: Jeevan thinks of what may have to be done when the food runs out for him and his brother. It is representative of many of the difficult decisions other characters will have to make throughout the novel.