

Wreckage Study Guide

Wreckage by Emily Bleeker

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Plot Summary

“Wreckage” is a novel of survival by Emily Bleeker which recounts the lives of stranded plane crash survivors Lillian Linden and Dave Hall on an island in the South Pacific before and after they are rescued. When the novel begins, Lillian and her mother-in-law are in the middle of a two-week all-expenses paid vacation in Fiji from a Carlton Yogurt contest. Lillian’s husband, Jerry, is at home with their two young sons, Josh and Daniel. Dave is a member of Carlton’s PR who always accompanies the contestants. His wife, Beth, is at home.

As Dave sadly reveals to a curious Lillian while they board a private jet for the second part of the vacation, he and Beth have been trying to have a baby for years. Their attempt at in vitro fertilization has just failed because Beth has missed required hormone shots. This annoys Dave to no end. Dave takes comfort in Lillian, who is friendly and outgoing. But forty-five minutes from their destination, one of the plane’s engines gives out. The plane falls into a storm and is rocked back and forth. The motion kills Theresa, the flight attendant, by breaking her neck. The plane crashes into the water. As it fills, Lillian helps Dave out of his seat. Dave inflates the life raft and then helps Lillian to rescue the unconscious Margaret. The plane’s captain, Kent, mans the radio until the last possible moment and then joins the others in the raft.

Kent is irate, believing that Dave and Lillian let Theresa die. Though Theresa did not return his feelings, Kent has been romantically interested in Theresa. Lillian, Dave, Kent, and the barely-living Margaret are adrift for three days. They finally sight an island that they paddle into. Margaret dies not long after. Lillian is distraught, but Dave pulls her back to reality through hugs and kind words. The three survivors then begin preparing for life on the island, not knowing when they will be rescued. They build a fire, a shelter, spears for fishing and hunting, collect fruits, discover a freshwater spring-fed pond, and quickly learn of the dangers of the island, such as sharks in the lagoon. They also do their best to keep focused on the situation at hand, rather than their lives in America.

Kent continues to be cruel, and Lillian can feel his gaze lingering on her as time goes by. Dave fashions a knife out of stone and wood for Lillian to use in self-defense should it ever be necessary. A few months into living on the island, Kent makes his move by attempting to rape Lillian. Dave intervenes, but Kent overpowers him. Lillian then kills Kent by stabbing him. Dave tells her that it was done only in self-defense. He mutilates Kent’s corpse to make it bleed, then shoves it into the lagoon for the sharks.

With Kent gone, Lillian and Dave have the island to themselves. More time passes. The two grow closer and closer until they realize they have fallen in love with each other. Eventually, Lillian becomes pregnant by Dave and gives birth to a baby boy that they name Paul James. Paul lives for three months, but then passes away unexpectedly one night. His death devastates Lillian and Dave. They are later rescued a year-and-a-half after they were first stranded when a realtor and a prospective buyer for the island arrive by helicopter.



Back home, Lillian and Dave struggle to return to life as normal with their families, though the love between them remains at first. Jerry confronts Lillian, telling her that she must choose either him or Dave. Lillian chooses Jerry. As the media swirls around Dave and Lillian, Genevieve Randall, famed Headline News reporter, suspects that the accounts Dave and Lillian have given of their time on the island are incomplete at best, and dishonest at worst. She undertakes an interview with them during which time Dave and Lillian cover up much of the trip. They say that Kent was killed by sharks while fishing, and that Paul was actually Jerry's child born after the crash event. Genevieve cannot crack Lillian or Dave, and Jerry's threats of legal suits if Genevieve does not back off help protect them. Genevieve's theory is that Dave fell in love with Lillian who fell in love with Kent after which time Dave killed Kent.

It is ultimately revealed that Dave and his wife have gotten pregnant using donated eggs from Lillian. Jerry reveals to Lillian that he knew the truth about Paul all along. Lillian asks him to forgive her; Jerry says he already has. Further, he will not stop Lillian from seeing Dave and Beth's baby. Lillian then confesses the one thing Jerry doesn't know about: the real death of Kent. Jerry explains it was clearly done in self-defense and is not bothered by it. Dave and Lillian ultimately fall out of love, each falling back in love with their respective spouses.



Chapters 1 – 7

Summary

Chapter 1, Lillian – This chapter occurs in the present. Lillian Linden tries to remind herself that sometimes people have to lie to protect the ones they love. She finds it easy to lie. Lillian is married to Josh, and has two sons with him. Lillian's house and appearance are transformed for the television crew. Lillian no longer looks like she did from the family photos of three or four years ago. She seems faded. She now knows that life sometimes makes different choices than people do. Genevieve Randall from Headline News then appears. Genevieve explains she'll be sticking to the questions given to Lillian ahead of time so Lillian's responses can be detailed and accurate. A few final checks are performed, assistants Ralph and Steve go over some notes, and the interview gets underway.

Chapter 2, Lily, Day 1 – This chapter occurs in the past. Lillian is in Fiji with her mother-in-law, Margaret. The trip to Fiji is a result of Margaret winning a free vacation contest. Margaret worries about her appearance constantly, while Lillian dresses casually. They board a small, private jet for a four and-a-half hour trip to a private island. The flight attendant, Theresa, brings Margaret a pillow and a blanket, and water for both Margaret and Lillian. The flight will begin as soon as Dave Hall, the Carlton Yogurt PR guy, arrives.

Chapter 3, Dave – This chapter occurs in the present. Dave's phone rings at 5:30 a.m. in California. His wife, Beth, is still asleep beside him. Bill Miller from Headline News is on the phone, saying that Lillian has given an interview and has provided Dave's number. Dave is stunned. Dave tells Miller that he is done with interviews and doesn't want to put his family back into the spotlight. Miller tells Dave that Lillian has passed along the message that Dave owes her. This also stuns Dave.

Chapter 4, David, Day 1 – This chapter occurs in the past. Dave hates Fiji and Adiata Beach. Dave works in PR for Carlton Yogurt, which sponsors the contests for winning free trips. Most of the winners are over the age of seventy, eating yogurt for digestive regularity. As Dave arrives at the plane, he is greeted by Theresa, who explains she has broken up with the pilot, Captain Kent. Dave reveals to Theresa that he and Beth are still trying for baby, even though in vitro didn't work.

Though Dave hates Fiji, he would rather be there than at home even though he longs for Beth. He then sees Lillian reading a book and is struck by her beauty. Dave calls Beth. Beth reports that she is bleeding, having forgotten to take the last three hormone shots for the pregnancy. Dave is angered. Dave has to hang up as the plane takes off and can't tell his wife he loves her back after she says it to him.

Chapter 5, Lillian – This chapter occurs in the present. Genevieve begins the interview with Lillian. Lillian explains that Margaret invited her on the trip because they'd never



been away anywhere together and because Margaret thought Lillian could use a break. She goes on to explain that one week was to be spent on Fiji, with the second week on a private beach called Adiata to be reached by private jet. She explains that about forty-five minutes away from reaching the Adiata resort, there was a loud bump when one of the engines went out. The plane loses altitude, flying into a storm rather than above it. Things get rough. The call comes for seatbelts. Genevieve asks how Theresa died.

Chapter 6, Lily, Day 1, Flight 1261 – This chapter occurs in the past. The small private jet prepares for takeoff. As the flight begins, Lillian uses her laptop to e-mail her family and send photos. Lillian, a history teacher, has taken time off to raise her kids. Lillian notices Dave is on his laptop, but rather than actually using it, he is staring at the wall unhappily. Lillian decides to introduce herself to Dave. She finds him relatively attractive and friendly. Dave tells stories about past contestants, including an eighty-two-year old woman who tried to seduce him while drunk.

The sky gets darker. There is a bang and Theresa appears to tell everyone that they are 45 minutes away from their destination, and that they should buckle in. The plane lurches around, throwing Theresa around and breaking her neck. The captain announces they will have to make an emergency water landing. Lillian thinks she will die, and wonders if her boys, Josh and Daniel, will remember her. Life preservers are buckled on. The plane crashes into the water and begins filling. Lillian unbuckles Dave, who has suffered a bloody head injury. Dave then inflates the life raft. He and Lillian lift up Margaret, unconscious, and head for the escape exit.

Chapter 7, Dave - This chapter occurs in the present. Before the crash, Dave had never experienced death firsthand before. He now knows death is terrible, and wonders how he could explain this to Genevieve Randall. Dave loses his attention during the interview, annoying Genevieve. A break is had, and then Dave continues. Dave explains that a combination of luck and teamwork led to the inflation of the life raft and pulling Margaret out. Kent worked the radio until the last possible moment, Dave reveals, grabbing the first aid kit when he exited the plane.

Genevieve presses on the point of Theresa's death, asking if they checked on Theresa. Dave explains they just knew, and that they did the best they could in a bad situation. Dave angrily tells her and her crew that none of them have been through something similar. Genevieve apologizes, saying she wasn't trying to imply anything. Dave nevertheless continues on with the interview, knowing that it will mean freedom for him and Lillian.

Analysis

"Wreckage" is novel of survival by Emily Bleeker which recounts the lives of stranded plane crash survivors Lillian Linden and Dave Hall on an island in the South Pacific, before and after they are rescued. The theme of Survival emerges front and center in the novel in three very distinct ways: the survival of the initial crash, the subsequent (though as of yet not revealed) survival on the island, and survival back in the real



world. It is readily made apparent that Lillian and Dave are lying about much of their experience to the media. Genevieve senses this. Lillian and Dave lie about their experiences as a matter of survival against the media, and to protect their loved ones from the truth of the nature of their time on the island.

Simply existing back in the real world aside from the media circus has been a struggle for survival. Lillian's marriage with Jerry has obviously been threatened by the time she spent on the island, and after being rescued with Dave, Jerry has demanded that Lillian have no more contact with Dave. Lillian, seeking the survival of her marriage and her family, has agreed and abided by Jerry's demands. Here, family becomes utterly important to the novel thematically, as family is a driving force for Lillian's words and deeds.

Indeed, it is family that first brought Lillian to her current situation. Her trip to Fiji with her mother-in-law was meant to be a chance to bond and enjoy a vacation. Lillian never imagined that the worst part of the trip would not be her mother-in-law. At the same time, Lillian befriends Dave and learns that he and his wife are trying to get pregnant. It appears as if Dave's own family life is strained, that his wife may be lazy or irresponsible, and that Dave's dreams of having children may not be possible with Beth.

All of this takes a backseat when the plane hits turbulence and then crashes into the ocean. Survival mentality kicks in quickly as the plane fills with water. Kent mans the radio until the last possible moment. Lillian and Dave help save Margaret after Dave releases the life raft to inflate. The survivors of the crash are struggling to avoid death, which itself becomes an important theme in the novel.

The first character to die is Theresa. She is killed when her neck breaks while being thrown around the plane during turbulence prior to the crash. It is the first time that Dave has experienced death firsthand in such a fashion outside of a funeral. It is terrifying and horrible to Dave. Dave has no idea how he can possibly relate such an encounter with death to Genevieve.

Death is only one of two choices in a survival situation; the other is to live. Genevieve's questioning of Dave's actions following the crash (his leaving Theresa behind) frustrate Dave. Dave reprimands Genevieve and her crew, saying that none of them have been in a similar life-and-death situation, that survival means having to make quick, conscious choices, and that they did the best they could in a bad situation. Theresa's death serves as an ill-omen for future such death.

Discussion Question 1

Why does Lillian originally agree to go on the Fiji trip with Margaret? Apart from the crash, how does the trip turn out for Lillian in terms of the time she spends with Margaret? Why?



Discussion Question 2

When the plane begins to go down in the storm, what do Lillian and Dave think of? Why?

Discussion Question 3

Genevieve presses the point of Theresa's death, and questions why no one checked on her before exiting the plane. What is Dave's response? Why does he respond in this fashion?

Vocabulary

allure, immaculate, submission, sufficiently, intoxicating, lingering, begrudging, interject, rhythmically, impeccable, cadence, inane, innuendo, staccato, deference, charade



Chapters 8 – 14

Summary

Chapter 8, David, Day 1, Somewhere in the South Pacific – This chapter occurs in the past. Lillian gets in the raft. Dave helps push the unconscious Margaret in. Dave rushes back into the plane to grab Margaret's life jacket. When Dave emerges, the plane is sinking fast. He scrambles for the raft, and Lillian helps pull him in. He has her backpack. Kent demands to know where Theresa is. Dave explains she is dead. Kent is in disbelief, enraged that Dave could save two people but not Theresa. Dave continues to explain that Theresa was already dead. Kent chokes Dave, screaming at him for a moment before he stops. Lillian blames herself for Theresa's death since she was sitting in Theresa's seat talking to Dave when the trouble began. Dave tells her this is not true.

Chapter 9, Lillian – This chapter occurs in the present. Since the rescue, Lillian has gained weight, going from being skeletal because of the island to fuller figured. On break from the interview, Lillian goes up to see how her husband is doing working on his laptop. Jerry holds her, reminding her she doesn't have to do the interview. She tells him she wants to. She explains she hopes that if she tells the whole story, it will all finally be over. She reveals that Dave will be interviewing the following week, and that she hasn't spoken to Dave in five months as Jerry has asked.

Jerry knows that Dave and Lillian fell in love, and doesn't want to be downstairs for that part of the story. It angers Lillian. Dave says he is glad that she chose him over Paul, but reminds her that nothing could be done for Paul. Dave tells her he loves her and he is sorry he brought everything up. Lily worries about getting mascara on Dave's shirt, but he tells her not to worry about it.

Chapter 10, Lily, Day 2, Somewhere in the South Pacific – This chapter occurs in the past. Lillian awakens in the raft with the sun beating down hard. Margaret is no longer by her side. Margaret is asleep, her head wound bandaged. Lillian cries with relief, and Dave holds her. He explains Kent is responsible for bandaging up Margaret. Kent explains, however, that they have been adrift for nearly 24 hours, have no food or water, and have no way to signal for help. While Margaret is alive, she is only alive barely.

Dave hands Lillian her backpack but reaching for it hurts Lillian's shoulder. She asks Dave to look inside where he finds a sixteen-ounce water bottle. Dave and Kent examine Lillian's shoulder. It is bloody. Kent cleans up the injury and uses a travel sewing kit from Margaret's purse to stitch up Lillian's wound. It is horribly painful. Dave must hold her down. After it is over, Lillian takes a nap.

Chapter 11, Dave – This chapter occurs in the present. Dave explains to Genevieve that they were in the life raft for three days. Dave reveals that on the third day around noon, they first saw land. By nightfall, holding onto the raft and kicking, Dave says they made landfall. By then, Dave explains, it was clear Margaret was not going to live. Genevieve



pulls out a coroner's report, revealing that an autopsy of Margaret proves she died of blunt force trauma to the head. Genevieve wonders aloud why Margaret's cause of death was never mentioned anywhere in an interview before. Dave carefully replies that no one has asked them before, and compliments Genevieve on her reporting. Genevieve retorts that at least Margaret, unlike Theresa, was buried.

Chapter 12, David, Day 4, An Island in the South Pacific – Margaret dies shortly after landing on the island. The next day, a meal of coral fish, roasted coconut flesh, and roots is had over a fire starting using Margaret's reading glasses. Lillian is distraught, thinking they will all die on the island. Dave holds her and tells her that everyone dies, but that everyone also lives. They will live on the island until they can all get home. Kent teaches Dave and Lillian how to drink from coconuts. Kent insists that everyone must pull their weight to survive. They all bury Margaret on a small peninsula away from the camp and the jungle on the island. Dave continues to encourage Lillian, helping her to function again.

Chapter 13, Lillian – This chapter takes place in the present. Lillian explains that to use the bathroom, they had to dig holes and kept away from camp by at least thirty feet. Genevieve says she doesn't want to know this, which makes Lillian realize that Genevieve could not be a mother, otherwise, even simple things like that would interest her. This causes Lillian to reflect on seeing her own two sons for the first time after being rescued. Lillian explains to Genevieve that they had a small freshwater pond fed by a spring near the lagoon for drinking and hygiene. Genevieve says that Lillian would know who bathed and who did not, since the three of them slept together every night.

Chapter 14, Lily, Day 65 – The chapter takes place in the past. It is laundry day. The freshwater pond has been lifesaving in terms of drinking water and water for hygienic purposes. At night, Lillian sleeps between Dave and Kent for warmth. In his sleep, Kent's arm comes to rest on Lillian. It causes Lillian to keep losing sleep. She seeks rejuvenation and solace in the cold pond while washing clothes and bathing using Margaret's travel toiletries. During one such washing, Lillian hears a strange sound in the jungle, like an animal. Kent arrives a few moments later and accuses Lillian of hearing things. He grabs her and holds her close, telling her she smells good. Lillian threatens to put a snake in his pants while he is sleeping. He lets her go. Lillian realizes Kent is the predator on the island.

Analysis

As the novel continues, the reader learns more about Lillian's lack of contact with Dave since the rescue. Lillian confirms to her husband that she hasn't had contact with Dave in five months. The reader begins to suspect that something must have happened between Lillian and Dave on the island, something perhaps bordering or amounting to love. The reader recalls Dave's assertion that people do the best they can in bad situations, and bad situations can bring people together. Here, Love emerges as a subtle theme, both in terms of Lillian's time on the island with Dave, and the loves she obviously has for her own husband.



Survival once more becomes the dominant theme in the novel as Dave, Lillian, Kent, and Margaret are adrift in the life raft. Their situation is dire. Margaret is near death. Lillian must have a wound stitched up with a sewing kit, otherwise her wound could kill her. A single bottle of water in Lillian's backpack means the difference between life and death until landfall is made. But landfall itself does not mean surviving. Rather, it generates a new realm for survival.

In the early days of being castaways, Kent's brutish nature is deemed manageable due to his obvious knack for leadership and for surviving. Lillian, Dave, and Kent gear themselves exclusively towards survival, for they do not know how long they will be on the island. Kent tells Dave that everyone must pull their own weight to survive.

Their first island meal is a testament to the survival mentality: they eat fish, coconut flesh, and roots in order to keep up their strength and their weight. The discovery of a spring-fed freshwater pond on the island is a blessing to the three castaways, as the catching of rainwater is a difficult and arduous task that only works if it rains. Kent appears as a source of anger for Lillian. It is clear he has sexual desires toward Lillian, and each day brings a renewed and unwanted closeness between Lillian and Kent.

The early time spent on the island, though not without triumphs, is not without tragedy either. Within a few hours of arriving on the island, Margaret dies. Once again, death emerges as an important theme in the novel. Dave explains to Lillian, brokenhearted over Margaret's death, that everyone dies sooner or later. He reminds her that people also live, and that they must adapt to live on the island in order to survive. Survival will allow them to get back home to their loved ones. Family here also emerges subtly, as a consequence of survival: survival means getting to see family again.

It is through Margaret's death that Genevieve blatantly begins demonstrating her true colors. Her questions are being more incisive, more insinuating. Genevieve notes that Margaret's autopsy reveals the cause of her death to be blunt force trauma. She wonders why Dave never mentioned much about Margaret's death to anyone else, thereby implying a host of different possibilities including that Dave had something to do with her death.

Death remains an important theme throughout Genevieve's questioning but also belies a darker side to Genevieve. She suspects something, and her loaded questions and thinly-veiled insinuations are evidence of her desire to root out the truth. At the same time, Dave's handling of Lillian over the death of Margaret demonstrates not only a growing closeness between the two, but a common ground of tragedy on which they can unite in comfort.

Discussion Question 1

Upon making landfall on the island, what tasks do Lillian, Dave, and Kent immediately set themselves to? Why?



Discussion Question 2

The death of Margaret shakes Lillian up badly. How does Dave explain life and death to Lillian? What is the result of this talk?

Discussion Question 3

While landfall at first appears a blessing after being stranded in the raft, Lillian, Dave, and Kent quickly understand that the island will be a whole new level of survival. Why?

Vocabulary

snipes, reflexively, catatonic, volatile, dubious, condescension, pulsating, peripherally, opaque, sacrificial, evade, intertwined, vicariously, insatiably, rejuvenation



Chapters 15 – 21

Summary

Chapter 15, Dave – This chapter occurs in the present. Dave reflects on how the worst enemy on the island wasn't hunger, but humanity. Dave explains to Genevieve that the island was about two or three miles in circumference, with fruit trees, a lagoon with fish, and a spring-fed freshwater pond. Dave explains they built a bamboo shelter, built a water catcher, ate snails, and used spears to fish essentially doing everything they could to survive. He explains that Kent, as a pilot, was a take-charge kind of guy, and that everyone worked together to survive.

Dave explains one of the most difficult things was the emotional nature of being away from family and loved ones. The castaways took to giving each other nicknames, Dave explains. Dave was called "David," even though it was his full name, because each victory on the island, such as catching a fish, was like David conquering Goliath in the Bible. Kent was called "Scout" for his skills, Dave reveals. Kent called Lillian "Lily," Dave goes on in a lie, because Kent thought "Lillian" was too stuffy. Genevieve asks about Paul, which Dave thinks is the hardest lie to cover up. Dave tells Genevieve that Lillian would be the one to ask about Paul.

Chapter 16, David, Day 81 – Dave feels primitive and close to nature due to survival on the island. While he hunts for fish, Lillian keeps a watch from overhead for sharks in the water. During monsoon season, tuna crowd the shores, and are easier to spear. Dave decides to call Lillian "Lily" because his family would have referred to her as that. His father, he reveals, was a florist before passing, and loved lilies. Dave explains his father raised him because his mother abandoned them.

Lillian reveals that she didn't marry the person her parents—a minister and his wife—wanted her to marry. She insists that her parents would love Dave, however. She also explains they would call him "David" after David from the Bible. They agree to take on the names Lily and David as their island identities. Dave gives her a gift of a handmade stone and wood knife which is for use on fish or in self-defense. Lillian is insulted that Dave would think she needs to be defended against Kent. Dave warns Lillian not to cross Kent. Dave knows that if Kent harms Lillian, he will kill Kent.

Chapter 17, Lillian – This chapter occurs in the present. Genevieve continues to interview Lillian. She reveals that she, Kent, and Dave made extensive preparations to celebrate Christmas as best they could with extra fruit and woven garlands of flowers. Genevieve reveals that Lillian's funeral was held around Christmas. Lillian knows that Jerry held out as long as possible against the rest of the family. She explains she knows that Jerry always held onto hope. Genevieve asks if the castaways celebrated New Year's Day, but Lillian says they did not.



Chapter 18, Lily, Day 112 – The chapter occurs in the past. Lillian tells Dave and Kent about her husband and children on Christmas, when on all other days, she tried to avoid memories because even the happy ones hurt. Christmas has a strange effect on Kent. He goes into the jungle for two days before coming back. He continues to try to touch Lillian when he comes back, and Lillian does her best to keep her distance. After bathing, dressing, and lying in the sun, Lillian awakens to find Kent standing over her. He struggles with her, beating her and preparing to rape her, when Dave appears from out of nowhere.

Chapter 19, Dave – This chapter takes place in the present. Genevieve questions how Dave and Kent Carter got along. Dave says Kent knew his stuff, but wasn't the friendliest guy. Dave knows that Carlton Yogurt blamed the crash on Kent due to Kent's history with alcohol, meaning his family did not get a ten-million-dollar settlement, but that Dave and Lillian did. Dave knows that Kent's family has pressured him to say that Kent was not drinking, and was not at fault. Dave also reflects on numerous calls with Lillian, in which they strategically coordinated to cover certain things up, and create lies about them.

Genevieve questions Dave's opinion on Kent, saying that Kent's family said Kent was a good guy who loved life. Dave explains he never said Kent wasn't a good son or good man, but that they were in a life or death situation and Kent was in pain over Theresa's death. Despite their differences, Dave assures Genevieve there was mutual respect. Genevieve says she has one more Kent question. She tells Dave that Kent's family insists Kent was a good swimmer. Dave says no one can outswim a shark.

Chapter 20, David, Day 113 – This chapter occurs in the past. Dave orders Kent to get off Lillian. Kent threatens to kill Dave. He attacks Dave, and Dave is stunned when Kent stops moving. He finds Lillian huddled in shock behind the rocks covered with drying laundry. Lillian explains that she stabbed Kent with the knife that Dave made her. Lillian is stunned that she has killed someone, but Dave tells her she saved his life, that it was necessary. Dave checks on Kent and learns Kent is truly dead. He brings Lillian back to the shelter. He then slices Kent's body so it will bleed, then pushes him off a cliff into the lagoon to be eaten by sharks. Dave feels no guilt at all about what he has done. Dave observes that Kent is the past, and Lillian is the future.

Chapter 21, Lillian – This chapter takes place in the present. Genevieve asks about Kent's death. It is the question Lillian has been preparing for more than other. She explains in a lie that she, Paul, and Dave were all busy when Kent went fishing. She explains in a lie that they all heard Kent screaming, rushed to help, but were unable to find him. Lillian explains that she cried for days after. In her own mind, Lillian reflects on how keeping busy keeps her from dwelling on the past. It also causes her to reflect on how her husband had a girlfriend for a while after thinking she had died.



Analysis

As the novel continues, the theme of Survival becomes especially strong once more. The survival in this section of the novel comprises two kinds primarily: survival on the island, and survival at home. Survival on the island becomes more than just shelter, food, and water, but because a question of dealing with Kent. Kent has become the primary predator on the island. He ultimately makes his move. Stopped by Dave, Kent tries to kill Dave, only to himself be killed by Lillian. Survival requires quick and decisive action. Lillian's stabbing of Kent is just such an action. It demonstrates how far she has come in order to survive. Covering up Kent's death, and allowing the crash to be blamed on Kent are further demonstrations of the struggle to survive.

Survival back in real life consists of yet another predator: Genevieve Randall. It is clear by now that not only is Genevieve determined to get to the truth of things on the island, but that she is willing to do whatever it takes to trip up both Dave and Lillian to do so. Genevieve is a civilized-world version of Kent. She is absolutely cutthroat in her dealings with Dave and Lillian, barely able to mask her true intentions.

Lillian and Dave must struggle to survive her questioning if they want to protect themselves and their families. They even call one another and strategize to this effect, developing a story to which they both stick. On the island, they were living to survive to get back to their families. In the real world, they are living to survive to defend their families. Here, family becomes an important theme once more in conjunction with survival.

As Dave comes to explain, the biggest challenge to survival on the island was not physical, but mental and emotional in terms of humanity. The biggest threat to survival became themselves. Lillian, for example, struggles to remain focused on the situation at hand rather than wallowing in guilt and sadness over not being with her family. The reader is easily able to see how much Lillian is haunted by not being home with her family. It is a very human thing to miss loved ones, but Lillian must fight this in order to keep her focus and to survive. Likewise, Kent's true nature ultimately shines through in his attempted rape of Lillian. His own predatory lack of humanity becomes the biggest threat that Lillian and Dave have to survival.

Ultimately, Lillian must make a life-or-death survival decision when she decides to kill Kent in order to save Dave's life. Lillian's choice for survival is a quick and decisive action that immediately horrifies her. Dave assures Lillian that what she did was necessary for survival. Only in Dave's embrace does Lillian find any kind of comfort for what has happened. Here, death reemerges thematically as a necessary part of life, and necessary to the sustaining of life. Kent's death was a matter of self-defense, not hatred or malicious intent. Nevertheless, Lillian will continue to be haunted by Kent's death—as she is haunted by the deaths of Theresa and Margaret—and it will be something for which she ultimately comes to seek forgiveness. Forgiveness here slowly and subtly emerges as a theme.



Discussion Question 1

Although Kent's killing was clearly a matter of self-defense, why is Lillian still troubled by the incident?

Discussion Question 2

What does Dave say was the biggest challenge on the island? Why?

Discussion Question 3

Why do Lillian and Dave allow Kent to take the fall for the crash? Why do they later cover up the nature of his death? Do you believe their cover-up actions are justifiable? Why or why not?

Vocabulary

circumference, commodities, vibe, voluminous, primitive, ominous, misogyny, valiant, livid, delusions



Chapters 22 – 28

Summary

Chapter 22, Lily, Day 156 – This chapter occurs in the past. Lillian has been keeping track of the days since she killed Kent: 44 at that point. She begins falling asleep with her head on Dave's chest to soothe herself. By now, most of Lillian's injuries from the attempted rape have healed. She goes in search of Dave, who warns her the undertow is strong. Lillian misses whenever Dave is not touching her. As they are about to kiss, Dave pulls back. As Lillian does laundry, she wonders if Jerry is dating again. As a storm comes on, she and Dave cuddle up in the shelter but Dave quickly excuses himself. Lillian wants to know why Dave hates her. He says he doesn't hate her, but wants her and has been trying to fight it. They confess they are in love with each other, kiss, and have sex.

Chapter 23, Dave – This chapter occurs in the present. Genevieve asks how long Dave and Lillian were alone on the island after Kent died. Dave explains it was three months or so. Genevieve wants to know why Dave never got sick when Lillian did get sick. Dave says she'll have to ask Lillian. Genevieve asks Dave why there's been so much distance between Dave and Lillian. Dave explains that he and Lillian live thousands of miles apart, have their own lives, were brought together by extraordinary circumstances, and now live their own lives once more. Beth can see Dave is not happy, so on break from the interview, she asks him if he is all right. He says he is merely tired of the questions. He is also happy that Beth is finally pregnant. He puts his hand on her tummy, and can feel the baby kick. He then hugs his wife.

Dave thinks about his own life. Dave knows Beth wonders if he would go back to the island if he could. Dave also reflects on how his wife never gave up hope, especially after going to a psychic. Dave reflects on how Beth admits she did not forget to get the hormone shots for pregnancy, but refused to in order to prove she could have a baby on her own. Dave also remembers that Beth pleaded for another chance because she, like Dave, has changed.

Chapter 24, David, Day 201 – This chapter occurs in the past. For weeks, Lillian and Dave have been inseparable, making love constantly. On this day, Lillian realizes it is Jerry's birthday. She wonders if their families still think about them. Lillian asks about Beth and pregnancy. Dave explains that they couldn't have kids but tried in vitro fertilization, but this failed because Beth stopped getting the hormone shots. Dave explains he doesn't know why. Lillian thinks Dave should forgive Beth. They go fishing and collect mangos on the far side of the island. They then go swimming, and Dave realizes how happy he is.

Chapter 25, Lillian – This chapter occurs in the present. Lillian says that Paul was beautiful. Genevieve wants to know why Paul didn't get mentioned earlier in the press. Genevieve asks when Lillian first knew about Paul. She explains she was eating a



green banana. Lillian reflects mentally on being rescued by an Italian billionaire who owned and wanted to sell the island, visiting by helicopter. She remembers that she and Dave were taken to Guam where her sickness was treated. She remembers being told she was unconscious the first three days in Guam, and that Beth and Jerry had arrived within 24 hours of the rescue. She remembers how she and Dave vowed never to speak about Kent. She remembers how she and Dave realized they were still in love even after being rescued, but that Lillian wanted to try to go back to her old life for her children. She remembers promising Dave that if she wasn't happy with normal life, she'd go back to him.

Chapter 26, Lillian, Day 301 – This chapter occurs in the past. Lillian hates green bananas, but must eat them anyways. Lillian's stomach begins to hurt. She and Dave ultimately come to realize she is at least four or five months pregnant. Dave begins to panic and apologizes for what he has done. Lillian tells him to relax, and that he will be a father. She tries to be brave for him, knowing that many things can go wrong with a pregnancy. They kiss.

Chapter 27, Dave – This chapter occurs in the present. Dave lies to Genevieve, telling her that Kent was stunned and angered by the pregnancy at first because there would be another mouth to feed. This causes Dave to mentally reflect on the last time he saw Lillian and her best friend Jill Spears at the Carlton awards dinner, hounded by the press. He remembers Jill asking him if he was in love with Lillian, and telling him to stop calling Lillian. He remembers that during the dinner, a slideshow paid tribute to the airline crash and the dead, including Paul Linden. It crushed Dave. Dave also remembers agreeing to meet with Lillian the next day, and agreeing not to tell anyone.

Chapter 28, David, Day 465 – This chapter takes places in the past. Lillian has given birth. Dave is already in love with his son. The baby is named Paul James Hall. Dave wants to create an SOS sign and get Paul home. Lillian insists the island is home, that going back to the real world would make things more complicated. This stings Dave, who realizes he and Paul are the complications. Within a short amount of time, Lillian falls ill. While Lillian nurses Paul, Dave holds them both in his arms.

Analysis

Survival remains a key theme in this section of the novel as the months slowly turn to years on the island for Lillian and Dave. Without Kent, and with an accurate gauge of the island, their skills, abilities, and what it takes to get through a day, Lillian and Dave almost settle into a comfortable routine. This routine is made easier as Lillian and Dave ultimately fall in love. Here, love emerges as a strong theme. Bound together by tragedy in being castaways, Lillian and Dave have taken comfort in one another, a comfort which has grown into love. The struggles they have been through unite them.

The love between Dave and Lillian ultimately produces a baby, whom they name Paul James. Paul's birth, however, adds an entirely new dimension to life on the island. The fight for survival becomes especially prescient. It is one thing for two grown adults to



scrape together a method of survival on the island, but to care for a newborn baby is something else entirely.

Dave decides he wants to find a way to get Lillian and the baby back to safety, to the real world, but Lillian opposes this. She argues that things would get complicated quickly, and Dave realizes that he and Paul would be the complications. What Dave and Lillian have together on the island cannot exist outside of the island. It is a hard truth that what survives on the island cannot survive elsewhere. Paul, though the nature of his death is not yet revealed, does not survive the island. It is only by a stroke of luck, or God's grace that Lillian and Dave survive when the Italian owner of the island seeks to sell it.

Having Paul also causes Lillian and Dave to reflect on their own families. Family here becomes a very important theme. Dave especially is haunted by his wife's inability to stay pregnant. Lillian tells him to forgive Beth. Lillian herself cannot completely remove the past, as she is fully aware of when it is Jerry's birthday. Not only does family remain important thematically, but so too does love. Since returning from the island, Beth has pleaded with Dave for another chance at their marriage, and he has given it to her. Lillian has also clearly chosen Jerry over Dave.

As the events on the island unfold, and as the interview in the present unfolds, the events of the past year also unfold between them. Upon returning from the island, Lillian and Dave did everything they could to keep in touch and stay together despite outwardly appearing to rejoin and focus on their own families. How they moved from this longing for one another to their present situations is as of yet unclear, but it is obvious that their continued contact in the direct aftermath of the rescue was necessary for their survival in the real world as they readjusted. What is known, however, is that Lillian promised Dave she would come back to him if her own life didn't work out.

Discussion Question 1

What does Lillian mean when she says that returning to the real world with Paul and Dave would present unnecessary complications? How does Dave take this? Why?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Dave want to get Lillian and Paul back to safety off the island in the real world? Why does Lillian oppose this? Who do you believe is right in this instance? Why?

Discussion Question 3

How does having Paul cause Lillian and Dave to reflect on their own former lives and families? What do they think about with respect to their former lives and families? Why? How does this affect them in the present on the island?

Vocabulary

preparations, tainted, embellishing, estranged, apathetic, gravely, pensive, plethora, reverently, incredulously, parquet, tranquil, profusely, methodically



Chapters 29 – 32

Summary

Chapter 29, Lillian – This chapter occurs in the present. It takes Lillian six weeks to recover from the pregnancy, she tells Genevieve. Lillian finds it difficult to talk about Paul, including the fact that he had begun to smile the day before he died. Genevieve then asks Lillian why she is lying, that it is clear she didn't arrive on the island pregnant as she has told everyone. Jerry interrupts, saying enough is enough. He says he is speaking as her lawyer, and tells her she will be sued if anything she has just asked airs on the program. Genevieve relents. Lillian is amazed that Jerry has saved her.

This makes Lillian reflect on how Jerry arrived unexpectedly at the awards dinner weekend, confronting her and Dave, preventing them from continuing any affair. Lillian remembers how they denied it. She remembers how Jerry and Dave nearly came to physically fighting. Lillian remembers continuing to deny an affair. She remembers Jerry giving her an ultimatum: him or Dave. She remembers how Jerry said there would be no more phone calls or meetings between her and Dave. She remembers choosing Jerry.

Chapter 30, Lily, Day 589 – Paul dies after three months during the night. Lillian screams when she discovers her son has died sleeping in her arms. Lillian begs God to give her son life, and take her own in exchange. She thinks about how just a few years ago, she was a normal Missouri housewife. Now, she is stranded on a desert island and can barely eat. Dave does his best to remind Lillian it is okay to live even though Paul has died. Dave then turns down a sexual advance from Lillian, worried about getting her pregnant again and worried about her declining health. Lillian desperately needs Dave, but knows he will not touch her anymore. She feels crushed.

Chapter 31, Dave – This chapter occurs in the present. Genevieve asks Dave what the one thing is that he would change if he could. His response is the plane crashing. Genevieve ends the interview, and congratulates Dave on keeping all his little secrets. Genevieve says that Lillian and her lawyer husband have helped cover things up as well. Genevieve tells Dave she can't believe he's gotten away with it for so long, that it is clear he loves Lillian, but that Lillian fell in love with Kent. As a result, Genevieve claims, Dave killed Kent. Needing help, Lillian gave in to Dave and allowed him to care for her and Paul. Afraid of Dave, Lillian agreed with Dave that Paul's body should not be removed from the island. Dave is baffled. He then goes and hugs his wife, who says the crews will be back only for pictures once the baby is born.

Chapter 32, Lillian, Six Months Later – Lillian invites people over to watch the Headline News special edition "Nightmare in Paradise" with Genevieve Randall. Watching the show, it is the first time Lillian sees Dave in ten months. He appears with his wife and baby boy. After Josh and Daniel are put to bed, Lillian and Jerry talk. He is proud of how she handled herself seeing Dave on television. He reveals he knew the truth about Paul being Dave's baby the entire time. Lillian is stunned. She asks for forgiveness. Jerry



says he forgave her a long time ago. Jerry never brought it up to protect her and their family.

He asks about her other secret. Lillian assumes he is talking about killing Kent, and confesses to it. Stunned, Jerry was talking about the affair Lillian and Dave had while at the awards weekend. Lillian explains the attempted rape on her and the attack on Dave. Jerry says it is clear Lillian acted in self-defense. Jerry tells Lillian that he had her followed when she was in LA at the Carlton weekend, afraid that she would run away with Dave.

Lillian confesses the baby that Dave had is hers genetically, that she donated eggs to him and Beth. Jerry tells Lillian she will be allowed to visit her baby, that he won't stop her. He also tells her that he will not stop her from calling Dave and Beth. On the phone, Beth thanks Lillian for what she has done for her and Dave. Beth says the families will have to visit soon. Dave gets on the phone, goes into another room, and tells Lillian that he is happy with his family, and that he won't ever leave them. Lillian is glad to hear this. Dave reveals the baby's name is Solomon, after Solomon the Wise in the Bible.

Analysis

The struggle for survival remains a dominant theme through the end of the novel. While the struggle for survival on the island may be over, the struggle for survival back in everyday life is not. Lillian and Dave skillfully manage to avert Genevieve's prying questions, sticking to the story they have concocted around their experience on the desert island. Their lies are a matter of survival, but do not do the trick. Only Jerry's swift and perfectly timed intervention throws Genevieve from the track. Lillian is humbled and amazed by Jerry's intervention. While he claims he is speaking as Lillian's lawyer, it is apparent that his love for his wife is the motivating factor in his move.

As Lillian and Dave settle in with their families after Lillian's cutting off of Dave, normal life slowly begins again. As a result of the forced separation, Dave is able to focus on Beth, and Lillian is able to focus on Jerry. As a result, their families grow stronger. Lillian grows closer to Jerry; Dave grows closer to Beth. Indeed, Beth and Dave finally have a baby, a conception for which Jerry knows Lillian donated her eggs.

It is through this that Lillian finally breaks down to seek forgiveness, not just for the eggs, but for everything that she has done. Guilt has been eating Lillian alive, even when the guilt is unjustified, such as with the killing of Kent. Stunningly and surprisingly, Jerry proves to be a rock for Lillian. He explains he forgave her long ago for everything. His forgiveness is humbling to Lillian, and makes her realize just how deeply her husband loves her. She is further amazed when Jerry says he will not prevent Lillian from visiting Dave, Beth, and their son. Their families are connected now, after all, and here, family proves to be an important and positive thing.

In one final bizarre twist, it becomes apparent to Dave that Genevieve's pursuit of the truth wasn't pursuit of the truth at all but either a horribly wrong assumption about went



on, or a terrifying example of sensational journalism. Genevieve contends that the truth is that Dave killed Kent over unrequited feelings Dave had for Lillian, and that Lillian has been scared into submitting to Dave's constructed version of events. Ironically, this gives Dave the ability to truthfully say that Genevieve has no idea what she is talking about.

Discussion Question 1

Jerry is very forgiving of Lillian for everything that has occurred, especially those things occurring after the rescue. Why do you believe this is? If you were in Jerry's position, could you be as forgiving? Why or why not?

Discussion Question 2

Do you believe Genevieve's assumed version of events of the time Lillian and Dave spent on the island is because she genuinely believes that is what happened, or because she is looking for ratings? Explain.

Discussion Question 3

What surprises Lillian when it comes to Jerry and the baby that Beth and Dave have had? Why is this surprising to Lillian?

Vocabulary

defamatory, indignant, perpetually, glowered, injunction, sensationalism, extrapolation, blandly



Characters

Lillian

Lillian Linden is one of the two main characters in the novel “Wreckage” by Emily Bleeker. Lillian is the wife of Jerry and mother of Josh and Daniel. She is the daughter-in-law of Margaret, and is the daughter of a minister and his wife. Lillian appears to be very pretty and in her thirties. She is gentle, thoughtful, and very much loves her family. She has taken time off from teaching to raise her children as a stay-at-home mom. She travels with Margaret to Fiji for an all-expenses-paid vacation, during which time she first meets Dave during the second part of the stay. She feels the need to comfort Dave given his wife’s miscarriage. When the plane crashes into the water, Lillian reacts quickly, helping to free Dave from his seatbelt, and then working with Dave to bring the unconscious Margaret to the life raft.

Upon landing, Lillian is heartbroken that Margaret dies. She is comforted by Dave, and she, Dave, and Kent begin working to survive on the island. Lillian misses her family tremendously, but does her best to stay focused on the situation at hand. Kent begins to desire Lillian sexually. When Kent attempts to rape her, Dave intervenes and Kent turns on Dave. Lillian saves Dave’s life by stabbing and killing Kent. Lillian is immediately horrified by what she has done, and takes comfort in Dave’s embrace. Over time, Lillian and Dave fall in love, become lovers, and give birth to a baby boy that they name Paul James. Lillian is devastated when Paul dies of natural causes three months later.

When Lillian and Dave are rescued, they concoct a story to cover up the truth of events on the island to protect themselves and their families. After returning to America, Lillian and Dave continue to speak to one another, for they are still in love with one another. Lillian ultimately comes to donate eggs to Beth so Dave and Beth can have a baby. Lillian is forced to choose between Dave and her husband. She chooses her husband. As a result, Lillian and her husband repair and restore their marriage. Lillian later endures probing interviews by Genevieve Randall, managing to keep her cover from the island. Lillian ultimately confesses everything to Jerry, who forgives her.

Dave

Dave Hall is one of the two main characters in the novel “Wreckage” by Emily Bleeker. Dave is the husband of Beth, and is a member of Carlton Yogurt’s PR team. Dave attends each year’s contest vacation for PR purposes. Dave’s marriage is strained as he and his wife consistently fail at trying to have a baby through IVF because Beth isn’t sticking with her hormone shot appointments. When he attends the latest contest vacation, Dave is frustrated with his home life but takes comfort in Lillian’s friendly nature. The two quickly become friendly.



When the plane crashes, Lillian helps Dave from his seat. Dave in turn helps Lillian get Margaret to the life raft. When Margaret dies soon after on the island, Dave manages to comfort Lillian. The two slowly grow close over time. Dave intervenes when Kent attempts to rape Lillian, and is almost killed by Kent himself until Lillian stabs and kills Kent. Lillian and Dave then grow closer as the months pass, falling in love, becoming lovers, and having a baby they name Paul James. Dave is heartbroken when Paul dies of natural causes some months later.

Back in America, Lillian and Dave remain in love, though they try to commit to their own families. When Lillian is forced to cut off contact with Dave, Dave gives himself fully to his wife, coming to have a baby with her from eggs donated by Lillian. They give the baby the name of Solomon. As the novel ends, Lillian reestablishes contact with Dave as friends, with both knowing they are no longer in love with each other.

Kent

Kent Carter is the pilot of the jet that crashes into the ocean on the way to the second part of the Carlton Yogurt dream vacation getaway. After the crash, Kent mans the radio sending distress calls until the last possible moment. He grabs the plane's first aid kit on the way out. Having unreturned feelings for Theresa, Kent is enraged when he learns that Theresa is dead. As a result, he is bitter and cruel towards Lillian and Dave throughout the castaway ordeal. Despite this, Kent's survival skills come in handy, as he teaches Lillian and Dave how to survive on the island. Eventually, Kent comes to desire Lillian sexually. When he tries to rape Lillian, he is stopped by Dave. Trying to kill Dave, Kent himself is killed by Lillian. Kent's body is then disposed of by being fed to sharks. Ultimately, the crash is blamed on Kent due to his past with alcohol.

Margaret

Margaret Linden is the mother-in-law of Lillian, the mother of Jerry, and the grandmother of Josh and Daniel. Margaret is a typical mother-in-law, loving but full of unwanted advice and suggestions for Lillian about how to be a wife and mother. When Margaret wins the Carlton Yogurt Fiji Island vacation, Lillian accompanies her. Margaret is severely injured in the initial plane crash, and dies within a few hours of landfall.

Theresa

Theresa is the flight attendant on board the private jet set to bring Dave, Lillian, and Margaret to the second part of the Carlton Yogurt vacation. Theresa is warm, friendly, and has ended a bad relationship with Kent. She is killed during the plane's descent into the storm when she is thrown around the cabin and has her neck broken.



Jerry

Jerry Linden is the husband of Lillian, father of Daniel and Josh, and son of Margaret. Jerry is a lawyer and devoted husband who early on in his marriage was extremely jealous. Jerry becomes a rock for Lillian as she attempts to put her life back together after the rescue from the island. When he discovers that Lillian and Dave are in love, he forces Lillian to choose between himself and Dave. She chooses Jerry. Jerry goes on to help protect Lillian from Genevieve's question by intervening in the interview as a lawyer when Genevieve starts asking too many questions about Paul. Jerry later learns the truth about Lillian's relationship with Dave, the truth about Paul's parentage, Solomon's parentage, and Kent's killing and forgives Lillian for everything, which makes her incredibly happy. When the novel ends, he tells Lillian he will not stop her from visiting Beth, Dave, and their son.

Beth

Beth Hall is the wife of Dave. Her marriage to Dave becomes rocky when the two repeatedly attempt unsuccessfully to have children. Attempts at IVF fail when Beth deliberately misses hormone shots in order to prove she can have babies on her own. As a result, she loses her baby. When Dave's plane goes down, Beth never stops believing he is still alive. When Dave returns, she is overjoyed and begs him for a second chance at marriage. He agrees. Using eggs from Lillian, Beth is able to successfully give birth to a baby boy that she and Dave name Solomon. Beth personally thanks Lillian for everything on the phone by the end of the novel, hoping for a future visit.

Paul James

Paul James is the baby boy that Lillian gives birth to after becoming lovers with Dave. Dave and Lillian are thrilled with Paul, and are heartbroken when he dies in the middle of the night three months later. Paul's identity is kept a secret from the public in order to protect Lillian and Dave's family. The concocted story is that Paul is actually Jerry's son, and that he was born and died early on rather than later. Jerry, however, comes to know the truth when the doctors in Guam tell him that Lillian recently gave birth.

Genevieve

Genevieve Randall serves as one of the novel's antagonists. She is a famous reporter for Headline News, is devious, and is relentless in pursuing her stories. She cruelly barbs and insinuates in her questioning of Lillian and Dave, believing there is more to their story than they let on. Ultimately, Genevieve draws the wrong conclusion. She believes Dave killed Kent out of jealousy because Lillian came to love Kent instead of Dave.

Italian billionaire

The unnamed Italian owner of the island is the unsung hero of the novel. His decision to sell his privately-owned desert island on which Lillian and Dave were stranded ultimately leads to a realtor showing a potential buyer the island at which time Dave and Lillian are rescued.

Symbols and Symbolism

Life vests

Life vests are stored aboard the private jet plane utilized by Carlton Yogurt for its dream vacation contest getaways in the Fiji Islands. The life vests are meant to be used in an emergency should the plane go down over water. In the novel, the plane goes down in the ocean, and the life vests become essential to survival as Lillian and Dave must swim to the life raft with Margaret to push her on board. While returning for Margaret's life vest, Dave also grabs Lillian's backpack, which later proves to be invaluable for it has a bottle of water inside.

Life raft

An automatic self-inflating life raft is part of the emergency gear of the private jet plane utilized by Carlton Yogurt for its dream vacation getaways in the Fiji Islands. When the plane crashes, Dave's first instinct is to initiate the raft. Soon after, he, Lillian, Margaret, and Kent all board the life raft as the jet sinks into the ocean. The four survivors are adrift for three days until they can make landfall.

First Aid kit

A first aid kit is part of the emergency gear of the private jet plane utilized by Carlton Yogurt for its dream vacation getaways in the Fiji Islands. The first aid kit is grabbed by Kent upon exiting the downed aircraft. The first aid kit becomes invaluable aboard the life raft as Kent uses the materials to bandage Margaret's head wound, and treat the bad laceration that Lillian has on her shoulder. The first aid kit is the difference between life and death on the life raft.

Margaret's purse

Margaret's purse is among those items rescued from the plane before it sinks. The purse becomes invaluable due to the sewing kit it contains, which is used to treat Lillian's laceration with stitches. It is also invaluable due to the nail clippers, tweezers, and large number of travel-size and complimentary soaps, shampoos, and conditioners that Margaret has been collecting for years.

Lillian's backpack

Lillian's backpack is retrieved by Dave from the plane after it has crashed when he returns to secure Margaret's life vest. Dave's act of securing the backpack proves to be crucial to their survival. Lillian keeps a bottle of water in the backpack, which in turn



keeps her, Dave, and Kent hydrated enough to survive on the raft for three days until they make landfall.

Water bottle

A sixteen-ounce bottle of water is kept by Lillian in her backpack as she prepares to travel to the second part of her Fiji Islands vacation with Margaret. The bottle of water ultimately comes to be life-saving when Dave secures the backpack from the plane when he returns to find Margaret's life vest. The water keeps Lillian, Dave, and Kent hydrated enough to survive three days on the raft until they make landfall on the island.

Spears

Spears are crafted by Kent, Dave, and Lillian while on the island out of sticks. The spears become important weapons for hunting fish by spearing them in shallow waters. The spears often double as walking sticks as well. The spears prove to be instrumental in survival, as without the spears, Lillian and the others could not catch fish.

Knife

A knife is created out of stone and wood by Dave, and given as a gift to Lillian. Dave explains the knife is to be used not merely for hunting and handling fish, but in self-defense as well. Lillian is at first a little offended by Dave's gesture, but later realizes Dave's foresight when she must use the knife to kill Kent to save Dave's life, and her own.

Tuna

Tuna is one of the most abundant forms of fish around the South Pacific island on which Lillian, Dave, and Kent are castaways. During monsoon season, the tuna crowd in near the shore, and are especially easy to spear and pull in. The tuna provides an important source of protein for the castaways, becoming a main staple of their diet.

Mangoes

Mangoes are a delicious orange fruit found throughout the island on which Lillian, Dave, and Kent are stranded. Mangoes become an important source of vitamins for the castaways. They are consumed consistently throughout the novel.



Settings

Private jet

The private jet serves as a method of transportation from Fiji Island to Adiata for the second part of the Carlton Yogurt dream vacation contest. It is piloted by Kent, attended by Theresa, and used by Lillian, Margaret, and Dave. The jet has seen many years of usage, and appears aged on the outside despite a comfortably remodeled interior. The jet is outfitted with an emergency inflatable life raft, life vests, and a first aid kit. The jet also has wireless internet capacity and private television screens embedded into the seats. The jet is the setting for the first several chapters of the novel and ceases to be a setting upon its sinking.

The island

An unidentified island in the South Pacific, forty-five minutes from Adiata, and owned by an Italian billionaire, becomes the home of Lillian, Dave, and Kent after their plane wrecks. Margaret dies shortly after landfall due to injuries sustained in the plane crash. Lillian and Dave ultimately come to spend a year and-a-half on the island. The island is comprised of sandy beaches and cliffs, a lagoon populated by fish and small, dangerous sharks, a jungle that occupies much of the island itself, a spring-fed freshwater pond, large rocks and boulders, and is infested by mosquitos on the far side where Lillian and Dave do not make camp. The island comprises the setting for much of the middle part of the novel, and is where Dave and Lillian must kill Kent to survive, where they fall in love, where Lillian gives birth to Paul, and where Dave and Lillian bury Paul and Margaret.

The pond

The pond is a spring-fed, freshwater body that is located in the jungle. It becomes a vital source of water and resource for the castaways, from everything including drinking to bathing. Lillian comes to love the pond, for it is tranquil, cool, and refreshing. She tends to laundry there, swims, and relaxes. It is while she is at the pond that Kent attempts to rape her and then attempts to kill Dave. It is at the pond that Lillian ultimately kills Kent to save Dave and herself.

Missouri

Missouri is the home state of Lillian and Jerry, and where they make their home and raise their family. Lillian returns to Missouri after her island ordeal and attempts to return to a normal life. Missouri is visited by Genevieve Randall and her camera crew while filming Lillian's portion of the Headline News interview.

California

California is the home state of Dave and Beth. It is where Dave works for Carlton Yogurt in the PR department. Dave returns home to California after the island ordeal in the attempt to return to a normal life. Dave is visited in California by Genevieve Randall and her camera crew while filming his portion of the Headline News interview. Genevieve's crew later returns for footage of Dave and his family in California after Solomon is born.



Themes and Motifs

Survival

Survival is an important theme in the novel “Wreckage” by Emily Bleeker. Survival in the novel consists of endurance through difficult and even life-threatening times. Survival in the novel occurs in three different places: the desert island against nature, in terms of humanity against the worst of human nature, and back in the real world when Dave and Lillian struggle to fit back in.

When it comes to the desert island, Dave, Lillian, and Kent recognize that they have only two choices: live or die. Survival then, realistically, is their only option. They must do whatever it takes to survive. Surviving the plane crash does not guarantee the survivors that they will live. Desperate choices are made on the life raft in order to survive. For example, Lillian must have her shoulder injury stitched up with a needle and thread without any kind of pain medication.

Awash on the desert island itself, Kent declares that every one of them must pull for themselves. Within a few days, Lillian, Dave, and Kent are establishing themselves on the island as if they must live there indefinitely. They build a bamboo shelter, make fire, collect mangoes and other fruits and roots, fashion spears to hunt fish, discover a spring-fed freshwater pond, and keep a watch for predators.

When it comes to humanity, survival is absolutely critical. The survivors must also keep themselves well mentally so they do not lose hope or fall into depression. Lillian, for example, does her best to live for her family while not thinking about her family, otherwise she becomes depressed because she is not with them. While Lillian and Dave may be physically and mentally set, Dave worries about Kent’s own animal nature. When Kent begins to make sexual advances on Lillian, Dave fashions a knife for Lillian to defend herself. The worst of Kent’s true nature comes through, and in his attempt to kill Dave and rape Lillian, Lillian must use the knife to kill Kent to ensure both her survival, and Dave’s.

When Lillian and Dave are rescued and returned to the real world in the United States, survival still remains critical. Survival here consists of keeping their families together, dealing with having fallen in love with one another, and surviving Genevieve Randall’s relentless and insinuating questions. Handing their love and surviving Genevieve are key to the survival of their families.

Jerry’s determination that Lillian choose him or Dave leads to Lillian choosing Dave and cutting off contact for nearly a year. As a result, both fall out of love with one another. Further, both Lillian and Dave’s families growing stronger in themselves. Likewise, Lillian’s marriage with Jerry grows stronger to the point that he intervenes against Genevieve to protect Lillian and the story she and Dave have created about their time



on the island. As a result, both families survive, and Lillian and Dave are able to largely return to life as normal.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is an important theme in the novel “Wreckage” by Emily Bleeker. Forgiveness is something that Lillian struggles with throughout the novel, seeking it for a variety of reasons. Most of these reasons have to do with the choices that she makes while on the island.

The first time Lillian seeks forgiveness is immediately following landfall after the plan has gone down in the ocean. Shortly after reaching the island, the mortally-injured Margaret dies. Although Lillian has no way to save Margaret, and although she is not responsible for Margaret’s death in any way, she feels horrible and falls into a state of depression. Only Dave assuring Lillian that everything that could have been done for Margaret has been done for Margaret does Lillian forgive herself.

The second time that Lillian seeks forgiveness is immediately following the killing of Kent. Kent’s true nature has shown through in his attempt to rape Lillian and kill Dave, but Lillian, acting on instinct of survival, stabs and kills Kent. Despite the fact that the killing was done wholly in self-defense, Lillian is still understandably shaken at having taken another person’s life. She feels as if she has done something unforgivable, but Dave reminds Lillian that it was self-defense, that killing Kent meant the difference between their surviving or dying. Only after some encouragement and rationalization does Lillian come to forgive herself.

The third time that Lillian seeks forgiveness is after returning to the real world, and following the airing of her interview with Genevieve Randall. Speaking with her husband after the broadcast, Lillian comes clean about everything, from baby Paul to killing Kent, and begs her husband to forgive her not only for lying to him, but for everything she has done on the island. Jerry, however, is very understanding, knowing that Lillian has gone through an incredibly difficult and trying time. Jerry explains to Lillian that he forgave her a long time ago which brings immediate relief and happiness to Lillian.

Family

Family is an important theme in the novel “Wreckage” by Emily Bleeker. The love of family is a motivating and driving factor in the novel for Lillian and Dave. This is true before, during, and after rescue from the desert island.

Before the island, it is clear that Lillian not only loves, but lives for her family. She has taken time off from teaching history in order to raise her two young sons and tend to the house for her husband. Lillian devotes herself to her family each and every day of her life. Indeed, her decision to go on the Fiji Islands vacation is a family decision, as Lillian travels with her mother-in-law. Family also matters tremendously to Dave, who has been trying for years to have a baby with his wife but for various reasons, keeps failing.



This leads to strain between Dave and his wife just prior to the crash. Interestingly enough, Beth is the only person who never gives up hope that Dave is still alive.

During time on the island, Lillian and Dave fall in love, have sex, and have baby Paul. When Dave learns he is going to be a father, he is thrilled but also terrified because the baby will be born on a desert island without the conveniences of modern medicine or medical equipment. Dave sets about doing all he can to care for Lillian while she has the baby. When Paul is born, Dave wants to double his efforts to find a way to get Lillian and Paul off the island to have a normal life back in the real world. Lillian insists the island is their home, that beyond the island, their family cannot exist. As such, she does not want to leave the island.

After the island, Dave and Lillian realize that they have a serious problem on their hands. The survival of their families is at stake because of the choices they have made. As a result, they construct an alternative story of their time on the island, a script which they both stick to through countless interviews, including Genevieve's. As a result, they are able to shelter their families from difficult truths, more media scrutiny, and being ripped apart by heartache. Proof of success comes at the end of the novel when it is revealed the Dave and Beth have had a child using Lillian's eggs, causing the families to be related in an unusual way, and forever uniting them.

Love

Love is an important theme in the novel "Wreckage" by Emily Bleeker. Love in the novel proves to be both a decisive and motivating factor that influences the plot in various ways. It is primarily the love between Lillian and Dave which is explored and examined given the nature of their trials on the island.

When the novel begins, it is clear that Lillian is in love with her husband, Jerry. She has had two sons with him, and has taken time off from work to raise her sons and tend house for her husband. Dave, likewise, through love of his wife Beth, has been trying to have children with her. But for various reasons, this has been impossible so far and has led to a strain in their marriage. This in large part explains why Dave takes such a quick liking to Lillian in the time leading up to being castaways, for she presents something of unknown alternative to Beth.

Lillian and Dave are thrown together in extreme circumstances in the plane crash, the time in the raft, landfall and survival on the island, and the death of Kent. Dave and Lillian come to depend upon one another for everything from physical to emotional support and slowly fall in love. As a result, they begin having sex and come to have the happiest time spent on the island so far without Kent, and with only each other. Lillian becomes pregnant as a result of their being in love, and baby Paul is born.

When Lillian and Dave are rescued, they realize that their love for each other is not only problematic, but threatening to the existence of their respective marriages and families. They do their best to get on, but end up calling one another and even visiting one



another. Only Jerry's ultimatum to Lillian to choose him or Dave leads to Lillian and Dave falling out of touch and out of love over time. By the time Lillian and Dave talk again at the end of the novel, they have fallen out of love with each other, and more deeply in love with their spouses.

Death

Death is an important theme in the novel "Wreckage" by Emily Bleeker. Death appears in the novel at various points and for various reasons and has profound consequences for, and impacts on, Dave and Lillian. Death also serves as the alternative to survival in the novel, and so death is something which Dave and Lillian know that they cannot give into.

The first death to occur in the novel is that of Theresa on board the plane. It is the first time that Dave has seen death firsthand. Theresa's death is stunning to Dave, because it is so terrifying and under such extreme circumstances. Dave recognizes what death will mean if he does not fight to survive. Dave finds it incredibly difficult to convey what death is like while being interviewed by Genevieve. Genevieve herself questions why Dave did not check on Theresa before leaving the sinking plane only to have Dave fire back and say that he knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that Theresa was dead, that neither Genevieve nor her crew have been through a similar situation, and that he and everyone else did the best they could in a bad situation.

The second death that occurs is that of Margaret. Margaret is severely injured during the plane crash, and dies not long after reaching the island. Margaret's death is haunting to Lillian because Margaret is her mother-in-law, and Lillian is with Margaret as she lingers and dies. Margaret's death causes Lillian to go into a depression alleviated only by Dave's kindness. Margaret's death reminds Lillian of what is at stake: she can survive and get back to her family, or she can die and will never see them again. Lillian vows to live.

The third death to occur on the island is that of Kent. Kent's death is not accidental or the result of a tragedy such as plane crash, but is the result of self-defense. Kent's attempted rape of Lillian, and his subsequent murder attempt against Dave, propels Lillian into action. Lillian stabs and kills Kent to save her life and Dave's life. Kent's death, done in self-defense, is justifiable, but causes Lillian to temporarily become despondent. Regardless as to its justification, Lillian has still taken the life of a fellow human being. Lillian herself now realizes she, a teacher and mother, can kill if needs be.

The final death to occur on the island is that of baby Paul. Paul's death is especially haunting for Lillian and Dave because Paul is their son. Paul is the result of the love between Dave and Lillian, and can in many ways be seen as the summation of that love. Paul's death devastates Lillian and Dave since it is expected that parents are not meant to outlive their children, and it becomes symbolic of the beginning of the end for Dave and Lillian. Soon after Paul's death, Lillian and Dave will be rescued.

Styles

Point of View

Emily Bleeker tells her novel “Wreckage” in the third and first-person limited omniscient narrative modes, alternating between first and third-person based on the chapter and the circumstances. Interview chapters between Lillian and Genevieve, and Dave and Genevieve, occur in the past-tense in third-person as though the reader is a viewer watching events unfold, or a viewer watching the aired interview. Chapters detailing the time spent on the island are told in present-tense from the first-person perspective of either Lillian or Dave depending on the chapter, giving the reader a firsthand account and glimpse of life on the island. This also underscores the point that Dave and Lillian are alone on the island without viewers or readers, and so the reader must access their minds to understand what they went through. The limited-omniscient aspect of the narrative not only adds a sense of realism because Dave and Lillian themselves do not know what is coming next, but a sense of suspense as well.

Language and Meaning

Emily Bleeker tells her novel “Wreckage” in language that is simple and straightforward. This is done for at least two reasons. First, the novel occurs in the present-day (the 2010s), so simple, straightforward, and contemporary language is used. Secondly, the simple and straightforward language reflects the experiences of survival of Lillian and Dave, giving the story a brevity consistent with the direness of the situation. Lillian and Dave do not have much time to dwell on poetics or beauty, for their lives are on the line. They must work and fight to survive, and the simple and straightforward language is reflective of how little time they have, and how much they must focus elsewhere: on survival.

Structure

Emily Bleeker divides her novel “Wreckage” into thirty-two consecutive, linear, numbered, and titled chapters ranging from 1 to 32. Each title chapter is given either Dave or Lillian’s name, and will thus be told by, or revolve around, that character. Each chapter either revolves around, or is told by Lillian or Dave; and each chapter alternates between the past and the present. For example, Chapter 1 details the beginning of Lillian’s interview with Genevieve in the present, while Chapter 2 details the beginning of Lillian’s survival experiences. Chapter 3 consists of Dave’s time in the present, with Chapter 4 consisting of Dave’s time in the past. Chapter 5 returns to Lillian, and this pattern is maintained throughout the rest of the novel.



Quotes

Sometimes you have to lie. Sometimes it's the only way to protect the ones you love.
-- Lillian (Chapter 1 paragraph 1)

Importance: The principal thing Lillian seeks from her husband at the end of the novel is forgiveness. This forgiveness is for everything that happened on the island, from Lillian falling for Dave to killing Kent to lying about Paul and everything else. Jerry is very understanding, and says he forgave Lillian a long time ago.

At this point, she wasn't completely sure herself what the truth was. It was only at night, in the darkness, that she found she couldn't forget.
-- Narrator (Chapter 5 paragraph 15)

Importance: As the novel begins to unfold, and the lies Lillian has told become unraveled by the truth, Lillian comes to realize just how difficult it has become to discern between the two. This comes not just because of the well-constructed nature of the lies, but because of the harrowing experience of the island, because many of the lies are half-truths, such as baby Paul. Yes, there was a baby named Paul, but Paul was not Jerry's child. It was Dave's.

As they became better acquainted, Dave learned that Death is the opposite of peace: it's struggle, it's ugly, it's horrific, it's dirty. And ultimately, Death is emptiness.
-- Narrator (Chapter 7 paragraph 5)

Importance: Dave's experience with seeing the death of Theresa shakes him to his core. He has never before experienced death firsthand in such a way. As a result, Dave knows what the alternative to survival is: that is death. Death is something that Dave does not want, and will fight with everything he has in him.

The sun on my skin means we're alive, but it also means we haven't been rescued.
-- Lillian (Chapter 10 paragraph 3)

Importance: Following the plane crash, Lillian finds herself in a raft with Dave, Kent, and the barely-living Margaret. When Lillian wakes up after the first night, she can feel the sun which means she is alive, but which also underscores the fact that surviving the plane crash does not mean surviving the ordeal. They have not yet been rescued, and must prepare to survive the next part of their journey.

If they only knew it wasn't hunger that caused their biggest pains, it was their own humanity.
-- Narrator (Chapter 15 paragraph 2)

Importance: As the novel unfolds, Lillian and Dave both come to realize that the news crews and the public know nothing of the biggest danger to survival: humanity. Hunger and thirst are one thing, but dealing with human nature is something else. Humanity



means sadness, depression, loss of hope, anger, rage, and in Kent's case, an animal, sexual desire that threatens Lillian's personhood and Dave's life.

By far Paul was the hardest lie. There was so much to cover up.

-- Narrator (Chapter 15 paragraph 48)

Importance: Out of everything that Lillian and Dave have to lie about, Paul is the hardest. Paul is the love child of Lillian and Dave. Lillian has told the public that Paul was the product of her marriage with Jerry, however, and this covers up the fact that she and Dave fell in love and became lovers over the course of many months.

But, Ms. Randall, no one can outswim a shark.

-- Dave (Chapter 19 paragraph 68)

Importance: Genevieve questions the death of Kent. Lillian and Dave have maintained that Kent was killed by sharks while fishing. In reality, Lillian killed Kent to save her life and Dave's life. Dave attempts to explain away Kent's death and the assertion that Kent was a good swimmer with the truth that no one can outswim a shark.

You saved my life, Lily. You had no other choice.

-- Dave (Chapter 20 paragraph 64)

Importance: Lillian, having killed Kent to save herself and Dave's life, is nevertheless understandably distraught. Even though it is done in self-defense, Lillian cannot abide the fact that she has taken another human life. Only Dave's kindness and patience bring Lillian back around to normality.

Her strategy was avoidance. The busier she could make their lives, the fewer opportunities for dwelling on the past.

-- Narrator (Chapter 21 paragraph 10)

Importance: As time goes on on the island, Lillian commits to the everyday tasks at hand. She focuses on survival rather than on the past, either her own family, or the deaths of Margaret and Kent. By doing so, Lillian is able to keep her mind sharp and clear, and is able to stay oriented toward surviving the island.

The past weeks have been surreal but heavenly. Ever since that cold afternoon in the shelter, where Lily and I finally realized what our friendship had evolved into, we've been inseparable.

-- Narrator (Chapter 24 paragraph 3)

Importance: As the novel progresses after Kent's death, Lillian and Dave grow increasingly close. They ultimately fall in love and become lovers. They do everything they possibly can together, from collecting food to fishing to maintaining their shelter, all to be in one another's company. It doesn't matter how mundane or everyday the task might be. What matters is that they are in love and do not want to be out of one another's company. Being together makes them feel less alone on the island.



That means you're going to be a father.
-- Lillian (Chapter 26 paragraph 40)

Importance: Lillian discovers that she is pregnant while eating a green banana. She is both worried and elated with this news. She relates as much to Dave, telling Dave that he is finally going to be a father. Dave is thrilled and terrified: happy to be a father, but also terrified for the health and lives of his child and his child's mother.

I forgave you a long time ago.
-- Jerry (Chapter 32 paragraph 39)

Importance: At the end of the novel, Lillian comes clean to her husband about everything, from the love affair with Dave to the killing of Kent to the true timing and parentage of Paul and Solomon. She is seeking forgiveness from the person who loves her most: her husband. Jerry tells Lillian he forgave her a long time ago. He knows she was in difficult situations, and did the best she could. Lillian is beyond grateful and relieved at this, which provides greater evidence for the love shared between her and her husband.