

Station Eleven



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF EMILY S. J. MANDEL

Emily St. John Mandel was born in Comox, Canada, in 1979. She was raised in rural British Columbia on the tiny Denman Island, which she used as the basis for Delano Island in *Station Eleven*. Since the local schools were not very good, Mandel was homeschooled until the age of fifteen. At eighteen she left home to study dance at the School of Toronto Dance Theatre, where she remained until her early twenties, when she decided to pursue something different and began writing professionally. Before *Station Eleven*, she wrote *Last Night in Montreal* (2009), *The Singer's Gun* (2010), and *The Lola Quartet* (2012). Mandel has enjoyed critical success from *Station Eleven*, and she currently lives in New York City with her husband and daughter.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

While the novel does not include specific historical events as part of its plot, a number of events provide inspiration and resonance. The first is the spread of the bubonic plague (or Black Death) in Asia, Africa, and Europe during the 14th century, when about a quarter of the population perished. Bouts of the plague occasionally returned, and more than once closed theatres in Shakespeare's England –which places Shakespeare's plays, a great source of material for Mandel and her characters, in a distant yet similar context to the world devastated by the Georgia Flu. Other historical events of note are the 2009 "Swine Flu" pandemic, which generated tremendous fear and media coverage, as well as the 2014 Ebola outbreak, which occurred around the time of the novel's publication. Such outbreaks could be said to contribute to the fear surrounding deadly viruses and diseases, while lending some credibility to the future Mandel describes. In other words, while the Georgia Flu is fictional, something like it occurring is far from impossible. It could be considered a worst-case scenario of the Swine Flu or Ebola pandemics.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Station Eleven contains many explicit references to other works of art, and relies on them heavily for source material. The primary example of this is Shakespeare, specifically *King Lear*. Thematically, Mandel borrows from the tragedy, and she also stages two production of the play within her novel, one before and one after the collapse. The novel also includes references to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and at the other end of the highbrow/lowbrow artistic spectrum, to the television show

Star Trek: Voyager, which provides the Symphony with its motto: "survival is insufficient." In terms of influences on Mandel, it is easy to look to other post-apocalyptic novels, specifically *The Road* by Cormick McCarthy, which Mandel has said paved the way for works with that subject matter to be seen as valuable literature instead of lesser fiction. However, Mandel pushes against the usual format of the genre, setting her novel many years after the collapse of civilization instead of focusing on the chaos of the fall itself.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *Station Eleven*
- **Where Written:** Canada
- **When Published:** 2014
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary
- **Genre:** Science Fiction / Dystopia / Post-Apocalyptic / Literary Fiction
- **Setting:** Toronto, Hollywood, post-apocalyptic Great Lakes region
- **Climax:** The Georgia Flu Epidemic / Kirsten's Confrontation with the Prophet
- **Antagonist:** The Prophet (Tyler Leander)
- **Point of View:** Third Person, With Focus on the Perspectives of Major Characters

EXTRA CREDIT

High Praise. *Station Eleven* won the 2015 Arthur C. Clarke Award, which is given for the best science fiction novel in the United Kingdom, and the Toronto Book Award in the same year. The book was also a finalist for the PEN/Faulkner Award in Fiction in 2015 and the National Book Award in fiction in 2014.

Genre Pigeonholing. Mandel's first three novels were classified as Crime Novels or Thrillers, and so she wrote *Station Eleven* in part to escape from being pigeonholed into one generic category. This book is often considered Science Fiction, and it even won a sci-fi award, but, as it does not contain any new technologies, Mandel believes it is simply literary fiction. In a way, the novel defies genre, as most post-apocalyptic or dystopian novels deal with the chaos that immediately follows the cataclysm; *Station Eleven* is mostly set before or fifteen to twenty years after the Georgia Flu outbreak.



PLOT SUMMARY

Station Eleven opens during a production of Shakespeare's [King Lear](#) in Toronto. The lead role is played by Arthur Leander, an aging Hollywood actor minutes from his death. Onstage with Arthur is Kirsten Raymonde, a young girl playing one of Lear's daughters. Suddenly, Arthur suffers a massive heart attack, and Jeevan Chaudhary, a former paparazzo and now an EMT in training, leaps on stage to attempt to save Arthur with CPR. As a doctor and medics take over, Jeevan comforts Kirsten and explains to her that Arthur has died. In the theater, members of the cast and crew of *Lear* consider reaching out to Arthur's family, noting his young son Tyler who lives in Israel with his mother, Elizabeth Colton. They decide to reach out to Arthur's lawyer, and the narrator then states that everyone still left in the theater would die within three weeks.

Meanwhile, Jeevan receives a phone call from his friend Hua, who alerts him to the pending outbreak of the Georgia Flu, which Hua believes will become a global epidemic. Jeevan acts quickly, stocking up on survival equipment before going to board up with his paraplegic brother, Frank. While Jeevan prepares for the looming pandemic, word spreads of Arthur's death to his ex wives, including Miranda Carroll, his first wife, who is in Malaysia when she receives a call from Clark Thomson relaying Arthur's death.

The novel then jumps ahead to twenty years after the outbreak of the Georgia Flu and the collapse of civilization, focusing on the Traveling Symphony, a band of musicians and Shakespeare actors traveling in the Great Lakes region of the former United States. Kirsten, now a member of the Symphony, and the other actors rehearse for a production of [King Lear](#). We learn that Kirsten and her good friend August often break into abandoned houses, and that Kirsten is constantly seeking new editions of comics that Arthur had given her back when she knew him, titled "Dr. Eleven."

The Symphony arrives in a town called St. Deborah by the Water, where they expect to meet Charlie and the sixth guitar (Jeremy), two members of the Symphony who stayed behind in the town the last time the Symphony passed through because they were having a child. But the Symphony instead finds a changed town, which is now ruled by a religious leader called the Prophet. Not wanting to get caught up in the town's possibly dangerous drama, the Symphony leaves immediately after a performance. During their flight, Kirsten reflects on the tabloids she has collected that detail Arthur's life.

The novel then transitions back to a time before the Flu, pivoting on one of the photos of Arthur that Kirsten has collected. Arthur and Miranda meet and fall in love, and Miranda soon leaves her abusive boyfriend and marries Arthur. We learn about Miranda's art project, the "Dr. Eleven" graphic novels that will eventually come to be treasured by Kirsten.

Later, at a dinner party in Hollywood, Miranda meets Clark Thomson, and she realizes that her marriage with Arthur is ending, as he is cheating on her with a co-star in his current movie: Elizabeth Colton. After this realization, Miranda meets Jeevan, who is working as a paparazzo and who tricks her into an unflattering photograph.

Through a series of excerpts from an interview Kirsten did during Year Fifteen after the Flu outbreak, we learn that Kirsten's parents died immediately in the collapse, and that she and her brother walked for the first year, of which she remembers nothing, until Kirsten's brother, too, died and she found the Symphony. Back in Year Twenty, after leaving St. Deborah by the Water and fleeing the Prophet, the Symphony realizes that a young girl named Eleanor has stowed away to avoid being forced to become another one of the Prophet's wives. Despite being afraid that it will look like they have kidnapped Eleanor, the Symphony decides to keep moving and head towards the fabled Museum of Civilization.

After a few days of travel in this direction, members of the Symphony, starting with Sayid and Dieter, begin to go missing. The Symphony is unable to find them, and soon the Clarinet disappears as well, but they decide to follow their "separation protocol" and try to meet everyone who can make it at the Museum of Civilization. Soon after continuing on, Kirsten and August discover a golf course to loot. They find useful supplies, but when they emerge, they have lost the Symphony, and now must travel alone. They then find an untouched house, in which they find more useful items such as new costumes.

Back before the Flu, we are given a glimpse of Arthur's mind through the letters he has written to his friend Victoria, which are published without his prior knowledge in an article called "Dear V." Clark and Elizabeth, both mentioned in the book, plan to meet to discuss it.

We then return to Jeevan and his brother Frank, who have been surviving shut in Frank's apartment. The two keep each other company and slowly run through supplies, until Frank decides that his disability will be a hindrance to Jeevan. He kills himself so that Jeevan will have a better chance of survival out in the world. Around day sixty, Jeevan leaves the apartment and begins walking. Jeevan winds up working as a doctor in a post-collapse settlement in what was once Virginia.

Back in the days before Arthur's death, he gets in touch with Miranda to tell her that his father has died, and to alert her to the impending publication of "Dear V." The two meet, and when they do Miranda also briefly meets young Kirsten. Two weeks later, Clark calls Miranda to inform her about Arthur's death. Clark then boards a flight for Toronto, which is grounded early in Severn City, at which point he notices that Elizabeth and Tyler are on his flight. Meanwhile, Miranda contracts the Georgia Flu and dies in Malaysia.

In the terminal at Severn City, passengers are at first uncertain

as to what is going on in the world. A single **airplane** lands after the flight bound for Toronto, but it stops on the runway and is never brought to a gate. Slowly, the severity of the outbreak becomes clear, and many, including Clark, Elizabeth, and Tyler, settle permanently in the airport, building a community. Tyler also comes into possession of some of Miranda's comic "Dr. Eleven," which he loves. Through the first difficult years, Tyler and Elizabeth become extremely religious, and they eventually leave. Clark begins curating the Museum of Civilization, collecting and preserving items from before the collapse that now, after the fall of civilization, no longer work.

The novel then turns back to Kirsten and August, who have been separated from the Symphony for three days. Walking, they meet two of the Prophet's men and a boy, the three of whom are holding Sayid captive. Kirsten and August proceed to kill the two men, while the boy runs away. Sayid then reveals that Dieter has died, and that the Prophet had captured the Clarinet in the hopes of making an exchange for Eleanor. The Clarinet, though, had escaped, and alerted the Symphony to change their route. After Sayid explains what happened, the three continue on to the airport, but the Prophet intercepts them. During a tense faceoff between Kirsten and the Prophet, the Prophet quotes from "Dr. Eleven," revealing to the reader that the Prophet is Tyler Leander. Kirsten recognizes the quote from "Dr. Eleven," distracting the Prophet, and in that moment the young boy kills the Prophet and then commits suicide.

Kirsten, Sayid, and Eleanor then reunite with Charlie and Jeremy at the airport, and ultimately with the rest of the Symphony as well. At the Museum, Kirsten is recognized by Clark, who has read the interview she did in Year Fifteen. Clark takes Kirsten up to the top of the control tower, where, through a telescope, a town with functional electric streetlamps is visible in the distance. After some performances, Kirsten leaves one of her "Dr. Eleven" comics in Clark's care at the Museum before setting off to new territory. As the novel closes, Clark realizes that Miranda is the artist who created "Dr. Eleven," because he recognizes a scene in the comic as originating from the dinner party where he met Miranda all those years in the past.

tabloids in an attempt to remember Arthur and the world before the Flu. She is also constantly searching for any other copies of the "Dr. Eleven" comics, which she clings to as her most prized possessions. But the collapse does not change Kirsten's profession or what she likes most about the world. After her brother also dies, Kirsten joins the Traveling Symphony, a theater troupe that travels among the small post-collapse settlements of the Great Lakes area and performs music and Shakespeare plays. The motto of the Symphony is extremely meaningful to her: "survival is insufficient." She is thus a firm believer in the notion that humans, to be humans, must do more than just survive. For Kirsten, art is the best way to truly live instead of merely surviving. In the novel, Kirsten also wrestles with her fragmented memory of the old world, with the hope of civilization building back up, and with the terrors of the post-collapse world, a world of danger in which she has had to kill in order to survive even as she believes that survival alone is not enough.

Arthur Leander – Arthur is an extremely successful actor who dies of a heart attack on stage the night of the Georgia Flu outbreak. During the production he was somewhat of a mentor to Kirsten, who witnesses his death. The novel describes his early days struggling in Toronto with his friend Clark Thompson, and his rise to fame and celebrity in Hollywood, where Arthur marries and divorces three times. His first wife is Miranda Carroll, who is from the same small island as Arthur. His second wife is Elizabeth Colton, who is the mother of Arthur's child Tyler. His third wife is named Lydia Marks. Towards the end of his life, Arthur comes to regret his actions and stop valuing his possessions. In the weeks before his death he decides to move to Israel and discard his old life in order to be closer with his son, the only thing he truly values. His death is made all the more tragic by this realization, as he is unable to follow through on his plans to live a better life and be a better father to his son. Of course, the Georgia Flu would probably have prevented this life from happening even if Arthur had not died of a heart attack.

Miranda Carroll – Miranda is the creator of the "Dr. Eleven" and "Station Eleven" comics that give the novel its title. She is an artist from Delano Island who, to support an abusive boyfriend, enters the corporate world. There she finds order, stability, and the time to work on her project, which is a constant throughout her life. She eventually leaves the boyfriend and meets and marries Arthur Leander at a young age, but feels out of place in Hollywood. After their divorce – Arthur was cheating on her – she transitions back into the corporate world and grows from a young, unkempt woman to a confident, competent, well-dressed executive. Throughout her life, Miranda attempts to push herself and live with intensity and purpose. To her last day, she is able to stare herself in the mirror and whisper "I regret nothing." And even after becoming a high-powered executive, Miranda continues to work on her



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Kirsten Raymonde – Kirsten is eight years old when the Georgia Flu strikes. A child actor, she witnesses the onstage death of Arthur Leander during a production of *King Lear* the night before the pandemic breaks out. The pandemic quickly kills her parents, and she then walks with her brother for the first horrible and chaotic year of the collapse. These events traumatize her and change her: she remembers nothing of the first year, and spends her free time after the collapse collecting

passion project: the Dr. Eleven Comics. She creates the comics primarily for herself, not worrying about who will read them, and self-publishes the select few that will outlast the pandemic and become extremely important to both Kirsten and Tyler in the post-flu world. Miranda dies in Malaysia soon after hearing of her ex-husband's death.

Tyler Leander / The Prophet – Tyler Leander is the son of Arthur Leander and Elizabeth Colton. He is raised in Israel by his mother away from his father. During the collapse, he lives in the Severn City airport and becomes increasingly religious and extremist, coming to believe that the Flu was a divine cleansing of the population and that those who survived did so for a reason. He and his mother leave the airport to join a wandering cult, and as Tyler grows up he eventually becomes the leader of the cult and starts calling himself the Prophet. As the Prophet, Tyler runs a group of highly trained religious fanatics who carry a large arsenal of weapons and take over towns. In a strange mirroring of his father's wife-hopping, Tyler takes multiple wives, including very young girls, usually by force. He, like Kirsten, is obsessed with the "Dr. Eleven" comics.

Jeevan Chaudhary – Jeevan is the paparazzo turned paramedic who attempts to save Arthur's life after his heart attack and who comforts Kirsten after Arthur dies. Jeevan receives a phone call informing him of the upcoming epidemic from his friend Hua, and he decides to buy supplies and try to survive with his brother Frank. Over the course of the novel, Jeevan changes from a paparazzo to an entertainment journalist, to an EMT trainee, and finally to the role of a doctor in the post-collapse world. He at first believes that work should be difficult and painful, almost like an everyday battle, but Jeevan eventually comes to see that he wants to do something he believes is valuable and helpful to other people.

Clark Thompson – Clark is Arthur's best friend. Once an aspiring actor along with Arthur, Clark's career eventually leads him to become a job training executive in the years before the collapse. After the collapse he is stranded, along with Elizabeth Colton and Tyler, in the Severn City airport. After a few years there, he begins curating the Museum of Civilization in the airport, collecting technological items that no longer work and other fragments of civilization. He begins the museum since his boyfriend at the time was a curator, and since he noticed that people in the airport seemed to cling to the obsolete items that he collects. Clark makes some effort to help Elizabeth and Tyler and keep them from becoming extremists, but he ultimately gives up in favor of self-preservation. He is also the one who informs Miranda of Arthur's death, having met her at the party during which Miranda realized Arthur was having an affair. The novel ends with Clark reading a scene in "Dr. Eleven" based on this dinner party.

Elizabeth Colton – Elizabeth is Arthur's second wife and Tyler's mother. She is a borderline alcoholic movie star, and believes that everything happens for a reason. This belief is put to the

test and then reaffirmed after the collapse, as she comes to believe, perhaps as a way to stave off despair, that the pandemic was a cleansing that allowed only those who were meant to survive to live on. Elizabeth instills this point of view in Tyler, ultimately leading to him becoming the Prophet after her death.

August – August is one of Kirsten's closet friends in the Traveling Symphony. He is the second violin and has only recently begun acting with the Symphony. He also writes poetry in secret. The child of military parents, August moved around often in the pre-collapse world, and television had been a constant in his life. He therefore misses television terribly and remembers shows in great detail, and he collects TV Guides after the collapse. He and Kirsten break into houses together, and the two have a pact to remain only friends and nothing more.

Charlie (Charlotte Harrison) – Charlie (Charlotte Harrison) is the second cello of the Traveling Symphony and is a close friend of Kirsten's and August's. The three used to break into houses together, but Charlie and her husband Jeremy stopped in St. Deborah by the Water sometime in Year Eighteen so that their child wouldn't be born on the road. Her absence when the Symphony returns to St. Deborah by the Water is alarming and first raises the Symphony's suspicions about the Prophet.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Jeremy (Sixth Guitar) – Jeremy is the sixth guitar in the Traveling Symphony and Charlie's husband.

Annabel – Jeremy and Charlie's daughter.

Dieter – An actor and friend of Kirsten, old enough to remember the world before the collapse in detail. He dies when captured by the Prophet.

Sayid – An actor and Kirsten's ex-boyfriend. He is captured along with Dieter, but survives.

Frank Chaudhary – Jeevan's paraplegic brother. After the collapse, he kills himself because he believes it will give Jeevan a better chance of survival.

The Conductor – She ran the musical section of the Symphony before it merged with the acting troupe. She acts as the leader of the Traveling Symphony.

The Director (Gil) – Gil, the director, runs the Symphony along with the Conductor.

Alexandra – At age fifteen, she is the Symphony's youngest actor. The Prophet asks the Symphony to leave her so he can take her as another bride.

Olivia – A six-year-old girl in Year Twenty.

Eleanor – Eleanor is a young girl who stows away with the Symphony after they leave St. Deborah by the Water to avoid being forced to marry the Prophet.

Viola – A French musician whom Kirsten cannot stand. The Viola raids a school with Kirsten, August, and Jackson.

Jackson – An actor with the Symphony.

The Boy – A young boy in the Prophet's cult. He rejects the Prophet's teachings and ultimately kills him before committing suicide.

The Clarinet (Sidney) – The Clarinet, named Sidney, is a musician with the Symphony. She is captured by the Prophet, but is able to escape and warn the others.

The Tuba – The Symphony's tuba player.

The First Cello – The Symphony's first cello player.

The Third Cello – The Symphony's third cello player.

The Second Horn – The Symphony's second horn player.

The Seventh Guitar – The Symphony's seventh guitar player, with the note that the guitarists have a tradition of keeping their numbers even when someone leaves or dies.

The Fourth Guitar – The Symphony's fourth guitar player.

The Oboe – The Symphony's oboe player.

Pablo – Pablo is Miranda's abusive, failing-artist boyfriend.

Leon Prevant – Leon is Miranda's boss at the shipping company.

Victoria – Arthur's best friend from home. She eventually stops returning his letters and eventually publishes them in "Dear V."

Tanya – The child wrangler responsible for Kirsten during the pre-collapse production of [King Lear](#). She is sleeping with Arthur, who arranges to pay off her student debt in the days before his death.

François Diallo – François Diallo conducts the interview of Kirsten in Year Fifteen and publishes a post-collapse paper.

Hua – Hua is a doctor in Toronto who notifies Jeevan of the impending epidemic.

Lydia Marks – Arthur's third wife.

Kirsten's Brother (Peter) – Kirsten's brother, named Peter, walks with her during Year One, until he steps on a nail and dies of infection.

Gary Heller – Arthur's lawyer.

Tesch – A pretentious woman from a dinner party who is featured in "Dr. Eleven."

Daria – Jeevan's wife after the collapse in McKinley.

Frank – Jeevan's son, named after his brother.

Michael – Jeevan's friend after the collapse in McKinley.

Laura – Jeevan's girlfriend before the collapse.

Robert – Clark's boyfriend before the collapse.

Walter Jacobi – A cardiologist who performs CPR on Arthur and calls his time of death at the beginning of the novel.

Maria – The local midwife in St. Deborah by the Water.

Finn – The man August and Kirsten encounter after being separated from the Symphony.

Tyrone – A TSA agent living at the Severn City Airport after the collapse. He knows how to hunt.

Max – A man in the Severn City airport who pays for everyone's Mexican food.

Lilly Patterson – The girl needing Effexor in the Severn City Airport.

Stephen – One of the pilots stranded at the Severn City Airport.

Roy – A pilot stranded at the Severn City Airport. He flies out to do reconnaissance and look for supplies, but never returns.

Garrett – A businessman stranded at the Severn City Airport.

Annette – A woman stranded at the Severn City Airport.

Allen – A schoolteacher from Chicago stranded at the Severn City Airport.

James – The first person to arrive at the Severn City Airport on Day One Hundred-One after the collapse.

Sullivan – Head of security at Severn City Airport after the collapse.

Dahlia – A woman Clark interviews before the Flu.

Dan – Dahlia's boss.

Ben – A man Jeevan meets on the road after leaving Toronto. He is immune to the Georgia Flu.

Abdul – A man Jeevan meets on the road after leaving Toronto.

Jenny – A woman Jeevan meets on the road after leaving Toronto.

Emmanuel – A girl from the Severn City Airport, the first born there after the collapse.

Edward – A man who comes to Jeevan for help in McKinley in Year Fifteen after his wife is shot by the Prophet's men.

Dr. Eleven – The main character of Miranda's "Station Eleven" graphic novel.

Captain Logan – Dr. Eleven's mentor in Miranda's comic book.

Luli – Miranda's dog, the namesake of Dr. Eleven's dog in the graphic novel and the Prophet's dog after the collapse.

Dolores A friend of Clark's at the airport.



THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



DEATH AND SURVIVAL

Station Eleven begins with the death of Arthur Leander from a heart attack, and then quickly moves to portray a world in which 99 percent of

the population has died from a global flu pandemic. In this way, the novel explores death both on a personal and global scale. On a personal level, the primary characters of the novel are all connected to Arthur in some way. His on-stage death affects them all, whether because they witness it, like fellow-actor Kirsten or audience-member Jeevan, or because, as for Clark and Miranda, Arthur was such an important, if complicated, part of their lives. The novel is therefore able to show how different people react to Arthur's death. This connection of the main characters in the novel through Arthur and his death also emphasizes the impact individual lives, and individual deaths, have on a surprisingly large network of other people. Yet Arthur's death is immediately followed by the Georgia Flu pandemic, in which *billions* of people die. Through the juxtaposition of a single death with mass death, the novel is able to suggest how *all* of the dead are unique and important in the same way that Arthur is, while also depicting how mass death can often make those who died anonymous or just a statistic.

The novel doesn't just focus on the dead, though. It also depicts the particular experiences, both physical and psychological, of those who survived. For instance, survivors often wonder why they survived while others didn't, and the novel shows how such a desire to find meaning in survival drives some, like Elizabeth and Tyler, to grow increasingly religious. Meanwhile, the novel also shows just how random survival actually is—both through Jeevan's luck in receiving a call from a friend warning him of the pandemic and the way that Miranda's graphic novel, which she had no intention of sharing, becomes an important piece of art for a number of the survivors.

Though surviving the Flu is random, the characters also have to struggle to *keep* surviving, to stay alive and sane in the harsh and dangerous post-collapse world. Kirsten's knife tattoos, documenting the people she has had to kill, embody both the stakes of surviving and its toll: she was forced to kill in order to remain alive, but performing those killings has marked and changed her, both figuratively and literally. Meanwhile, Jeevan's paraplegic brother Frank realizes that he is a burden on his brother, and he kills himself in order to increase Jeevan's chances of surviving. The novel emphasizes the way that characters try to avoid death at all costs, but it also shows time and again how closely survival is linked to death, like two sides of the same coin. What's more, as the words of both the Traveling Symphony's motto and of Kirsten's second tattoo read, "survival is insufficient." The novel argues that humans, to be human, must do more than just survive; they must live. It then offers art, ingenuity, and kindness as means of truly living.



FAITH AND FATE

Station Eleven shows how, in the face of peril and struggles, many people turn to faith. In the novel, Mandel portrays faith as offering many of the same

values of art: it provides purpose and community, and injects continuity and permanence into a terrifying, changing world. Further, faith is rooted in the idea that everything happens for a reason. In the face of a pandemic that decimated the Earth and left only a few survivors behind, such a viewpoint can be comforting because it offers a justification for the mass death and assuages the guilt of those who survived by making it clear that they *deserved* to survive. However, through the character of Tyler, the Prophet, Mandel also shows how faith can become extremely dangerous. Faith for individuals can be the means of personal survival, but in society it can become a means for power and control. The Prophet, as a cult leader, takes on such power and then abuses it by taking multiple young wives for himself and by forcing his will upon other people.

Because the novel seems skeptical of faith as a social power, and therefore on the idea that things happen for a reason, it seems reasonable to assume that the novel similarly doesn't put much stock in the idea of fate. However, *Station Eleven* abounds with so many coincidences that it can be tempting to see them as fate. The plot focuses on figures who, by chance or by fate, keep falling in and out of each other's lives. Jeevan, the man who covered Arthur as a paparazzo, took an unflattering picture of Miranda, and broke the story of Arthur's second divorce as an entertainment journalist, was there at the moment of Arthur's death to attempt to save his life and to comfort Kirsten. Kirsten received one of Miranda's comics, possibly the only editions of the **books** existing other than the ones belonging to Tyler, Arthur's son, the boy who Kirsten read about in tabloids and who would grow up to become the Prophet.

These wild coincidences can be seen as instances of fate, a concept that Mandel explores, complicates, and ultimately leaves open-ended in the novel. However, they might also be seen as representing a different idea of fate, one in which fate is not directed by some God but rather by the influences in people's lives. In this view, these characters are "fated" in the sense that they have become what they have become *because* of those they are connected to. Tyler is influenced to become the polygamous Prophet because of how Miranda's "Station Eleven" affected him, because of his mother's post-collapse religious belief in everything happening for a reason, and perhaps also because of his father Arthur's own womanizing ways. Tyler, then, isn't fated to become the Prophet in the sense that he has no other choice, but rather in the sense that the things he has inherited from those connected to him have pushed him in that direction.



CIVILIZATION

Station Eleven is a story about the collapse of modern civilization, but it also explores just what civilization is. By telling the story of the collapse

and including depictions of life both before and after it, Mandel is able to explore civilization through different lenses. Before the collapse, civilization is presented as mundane and at times stifling, or even as misguided and problematic. Arthur and Miranda's transition from their small native island to larger cities exhibits the disconnection between humans and nature. On Delano Island, for example, the night sky was filled with stars, but in a large city like Toronto, the stars are obscured by light pollution. Though civilization appeals to Arthur and Miranda for the anonymity, privacy, and freedom it offers, the difficulty of describing their island home to others also illustrates the way that civilization also disconnects human beings from each other. In the golden age of technology, humans seem to sleepwalk through life. Indeed, the only "zombies" in this apocalypse story are cellphone zombies who walk around completely disconnected from their environments and the people around them.

But after the collapse, devices and technologies that had come to seem mundane are suddenly revealed to be miraculous. In the depiction of modern society, people seemed to be isolated by their technology. But in a world without technology – no **airplanes**, television, radio, or internet – people are truly, physically cut off from each other, unable to know what is going on in the world at large or even in the next town over. Meanwhile, the loss of antibiotics and medicine make formerly routine infections suddenly life threatening. Even getting food or finding shelter becomes profoundly difficult. Devices taken for granted twenty years earlier now seem to survivors as miraculous, and get preserved as artifacts in the Museum of Civilization by those hoping to preserve knowledge of and eventually return to that civilized world that they now think of as a kind of paradise. The way that the survivors think about the civilization that has disappeared shows how much humans rely on civilization, and yet also underscores how many of its miracles are taken for granted.

The novel makes clear that a part of the reason people take the privileges of civilization for granted is our inability, or perhaps refusal, to see just how fragile civilization is. For instance, at one point Mandel traces the design, production, and shipping of one product that passes through countless human hands on the way to the consumer. In following the journey of this product, Mandel shows that such a journey, passing across so many minds and hands, *is* miraculous, but also that the entire journey is in some sense invisible: neither the person receiving the product nor those along the product's path ever thinks of it in its entirety. In a sense, then, modern civilization is built on connections while at the same time hiding those connections. At the same time, by highlighting how the connected world can

accomplish such marvels, Mandel also captures the irony that this very connectivity is what enables the destruction of civilization: it is because our civilization is so advanced and connected that the virus is able to spread so quickly and efficiently throughout the globe. Finally, by highlighting the human enterprise that goes into each object, Mandel emphasizes that even while our civilization has produced amazing technology, it is not technology that makes civilization—it's people, and the failure of civilization occurs not with the failure of technology, but with the mass death of human beings.

However, Mandel also makes clear that while civilization is made by humans, civilization is not what *makes* us human. During the collapse, many people can't accept that civilization has truly fallen. Instead, they believe that soon the lights will turn back on and the Red Cross will arrive. In other words, they can't imagine civilization failing and they continue to believe that civilization will "show up" and save them. Such fantasies provide comfort, of course, but they also fit the Georgia Flu epidemic within a larger narrative in which human civilization is unstoppable and always progressing. Civilization, though, *does* collapse; the Red Cross never rides in to the rescue. And yet, the novel makes clear, life continues. Towns slowly emerge out of the chaos. The Travelling Symphony travels from town to town, bringing art and culture that has endured. A museum devoted to the memory of the past emerges. Religious groups seek meaning. The post-collapse world is tenuous and dangerous, and the people in it can do terrible things, but they can also love, and build connections, and use their ingenuity, and create art. So when at the end of the novel Kirsten sees a town in the distance that seems to be using electricity, it is not the story of civilization returning, like some airplane suddenly appearing in the sky. It is instead part of the story of *humanity*, and how humans – because they are humans, and because for humans survival is insufficient – are creating civilization anew.



MEMORY

With its plot set both before and after the Georgia Flu pandemic, *Station Eleven* depicts both pre-collapse civilization as it was and that same civilization as it is remembered by characters who have survived. Through these characters, and the different way they experience and respond to their memories, the novel engages in a nuanced exploration of memory itself. Through Kirsten alone, for instance, the novel shows how memory can be a comfort and source of hope, as Kirsten seeks out **books** and gossip magazines in abandoned homes in order to spark memories of people and the world she used to know to keep her vision of that world alive. At the same time, the fact that Kristin even needs such "reminders" speaks to how easily memories can slip away and be lost, and how the sense of losing one's memories can be a source of terrible anxiety.

And yet, further complicating things, the novel also shows how lost memories can be a blessing: Kirsten regards her inability to remember any of Year One after the collapse as a gift, an escape from otherwise unbearable trauma. The novel also shows how memories of trauma can impact people. For instance, Tyler's polygamy as the Prophet bears a sort of resemblance to his own father Arthur's wife-hopping in pre-collapse days – wife-hopping that resulted in Arthur leaving Tyler and his mother – and seems to suggest that Tyler is in some sense re-enacting those memories in a twisted way that puts him in the position of power. The novel also shows that even good memories can be painful or damaging, as those who best remember civilization before the collapse often miss it most after. Through character after character, the novel shows how memories – both good and bad – can influence a person's behavior and identity.

But it's not just individuals who have to navigate memory in the novel. Mandel also explores what might be described as *communal* memory. Among the survivors, there are those who remember the pre-collapse world very well, those who are younger and remember it indistinctly, and those who were either so young when the collapse occurred or who were born post-collapse and therefore can only know of the pre-collapse from what they are told. Put another way, this last group only knows of the world before based on what *other* people remember and choose to tell them. Communal memory, then, has an element of choice to it, and the novel portrays different communities making different choices. Some towns decide to tell their children almost nothing about the pre-collapse world in the hopes of protecting their children from the pain of having lost out on that old world. In contrast, other characters see preserving memory of the past as critical. The Traveling Symphony can be seen as preserving memories of the past by performing their art. Clark preserves memory of the past with his Museum of Civilization.

Ultimately, the novel seems to side with the idea that communities have an obligation to preserve and pass memories on. Part of this obligation is immediately practical, such as the transfer of skills that pertain directly to survival or the preservation of knowledge that, in the particular setting of the novel, makes it possible for the post-collapse world to, perhaps, eventually recreate its lost technology. But even more importantly, the novel portrays how shared memories build social bonds. It shows how the strength of communities, in effect, are founded on communal memories, whether they are preserved in art, or museums, or stories told by the old to the young. Memory is valuable then, not only because it is practical, but also because engagement with communal memory is an engagement with human history, and contributing to and learning from communal memory is a way of holding on to humanity after the collapse.



ART

In contrast to modern technological civilization, which *Station Eleven* portrays as fragile, the novel presents art as something that endures. The first scene of the book (which takes place on the evening of the collapse) and the first scene after the collapse both feature Shakespeare's famous play *King Lear* (one a performance, the other a rehearsal). The message is clear: even after the collapse of civilization and the death of billions, art remains. Art is powerful enough to survive the epidemic, in part because it isn't reliant on technology or modernity. But even more so, the novel implies, art survives because it is so vital and so inextricably connected to human life. Art offers people a way to understand the world and a way to connect to a world now gone. It offers a way to connect to each other – artist to audience, and audience member to audience member, and might even be said to offer a way for an artist to connect to his or her own self – as Miranda seems to explore, process, and escape her own life through her art. And, finally, art connects people to the shared history of humanity. The people watching *King Lear* after the collapse, despite the hardships of their lives and the world they know they've lost, still feel themselves part of the human story.

Art may not be necessary to basic survival – to just staying alive – but the novel focuses on the idea that for humans, “survival is insufficient.” As the novel portrays it, the insufficiency of mere survival could be described as what makes us human. Or, put another way, it is the human instinct to create and celebrate art that makes us human. Art, therefore, will endure so long as humanity does, and humanity will endure so long as art does.



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



AIRPLANES

After the collapse, airplanes are a symbol of civilization. They represent the connectivity of the technologically advanced, pre-collapse modern world. In the immediately aftermath, people would look towards the sky, hopeful of seeing planes flying overhead. Such a sight would signify that somewhere, planes still took off, and civilization as it was once known still existed. The connectivity and ease of travel provided by planes, though, is also what enabled the Georgia Flu to spread so efficiently throughout the planet. Planes, then, also symbolize the ironically self-defeating nature of human civilization.

In the Severn City Airport, airplanes still symbolize civilization and its collapse, existing now only as repurposed homes or dark

places for teenagers to sneak off to. But during and immediately following the collapse they also take on a symbolism of hope and despair. Just as the full scope of the Georgia Flu is being realized, an airplane lands at the Severn City Airport, but it is forced to remain out on the tarmac. Throughout his life, Clark tries to avoid thinking about what the decision to keep the infected plane out of the airport must have been like, or what it meant for those on the plane during the last torturous hours of their lives. Mostly untouched for years after the collapse, this solitary plane represents death, dread, and the difficult decisions made to keep survivors alive. The Severn City Airport also provides the unique opportunity for pilots to try to reconnect with distant family after the collapse, as a few of them take planes in hope of finding loved ones. These rescue missions are among the last flights of human civilization, and though they leave in hope, none of them ever return to Severn City.

Finally, airplanes take on an intense religious symbolism within the novel. As the Prophet, Tyler combines his name with the cross, inserting an extra line into a lowercase t. This then becomes a symbol of his cult, which is even used as a brand or mark on human faces—and August recognizes the pseudo-cross as a makeshift symbol for an airplane.



THE PAPERWEIGHT

Like **airplanes**, the paperweight functions as a symbol in various ways. The paperweight, along with its peculiar journey, symbolizes human connection. It passes through the hands of many of the novel's important characters. It originates with Clark, who purchases it at a museum gift shop (which slightly foreshadows his role as curator of the Museum of Civilization). Clark then gives it as a gift to Arthur and Miranda at the dinner party, but Miranda takes it and holds on to it for years. In the weeks before the collapse, she decides to return it to Arthur. But Arthur has no memory of it, and to him it is a symbol of clutter and the materialism he tries to escape before the end of his life. Seeking to rid himself of possessions, Arthur immediately re-gifts the paperweight to Tanya, who in turn gives it to young Kirsten as a distraction after Arthur's onstage death. This journey from person to person is a physical representation of the interconnectivity the novel explores; it follows the chance connections of the novel's main characters and represents the influence they have on one another and the way that fate seems to operate in *Station Eleven*.

To Kirsten, the object's final owner, the paperweight represents beauty. A block of glass with a storm cloud inside, the weight is at once stunning and completely useless in the post-collapse world. When she receives it, Kirsten believes it is the most beautiful object she has ever seen. After the collapse, she continues to carry it around with her for this reason, despite

the fact that it is dead weight and utterly impractical. In this way, the paperweight represents the novel's appreciation of art and beauty as something that, while not practical for survival, is essential for doing more than surviving.



BOOKS

Printed text is extremely important within *Station Eleven*. Books are highly valuable in their many different forms in the post-collapse world. Kirsten's prized possessions are the "Dr. Eleven" graphic novels, and she maintains a collection of tabloid clippings. August collects poetry books and TV Guides to remind him of the past, and the Symphony carefully guards its copies of Shakespeare's plays. Books symbolize knowledge, a connection with the pre-collapse world, and an escape from the horrors of the post-collapse world. For a younger generation, they are one of the only ways of connecting with the modern world they cannot remember. Books also represent an effort to build civilization back up, as the town of New Petoskey maintains a growing library and prints a newspaper. The book *Dear V*, which publishes Arthur's letters to his friend Victoria, exhibits a final way that books function within the novel. This book shows the way that a publication can impact people (it is extremely painful for Arthur and damaging for his friends and acquaintances), and it shows how the printed word contributes to what is remembered and what will be forgotten.



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Vintage edition of *Station Eleven* published in 2015.

Chapter 2 Quotes

☞ In the lobby, the people gathered at the bar clinked their glasses together. "To Arthur," they said. They drank for a few more minutes and then went their separate ways in the storm.

Of all of them there at the bar that night, the bartender was the one who survived the longest. He died three weeks later on the road out of the city.

Related Characters: Arthur Leander

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 15

Explanation and Analysis

This quote comes in the end of the second chapter, after Arthur Leander's onstage death during a production of *King*

Lear. Some members of the cast and the crew have lingered at the end of the production, discussing notifying Arthur's family and drinking in the theatre's bar. They drink to Arthur's life, and then separate. This saddened reaction shows the way a single death affects a network of people, even those only known peripherally or through one's profession.

But by contrast, the next short paragraph is the first indication of the mass death that is coming. Mandel specifies that the bartender happened to live the longest out of anyone in that group, and he would die on the road out of the city. This short foreshadowing or hint towards the Flu's emergence is a small juxtaposition of one death against a group of deaths that mirrors the novel's shift of focus from Arthur's death to the death of billions and the collapse of civilization. This juxtaposition is a reminder that the bartender, and every other person who will perish during the collapse, is an individual person whose death will affect a network of people he knows, just as Arthur's does.

Chapter 6 Quotes

☞ No more flight. No more towns glimpsed from the sky through airplane windows, points of glimmering light; no more looking down from thirty thousand feet and imagining the lives lit up by those lights at that moment. No more airplanes, no more requests to put your tray table in its upright and locked position—but no, this wasn't true, there were still airplanes here and there. They stood dormant on runways and in hangars. They collected snow on their wings. In the cold months, they were ideal for food storage. In summer the ones near orchards were filled with trays of fruit that dehydrated in the heat. Teenagers snuck into them to have sex. Rust blossomed and streaked.

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 31

Explanation and Analysis

These lines are excerpted from Chapter 6, which begins "An Incomplete List:" and proceeds to list things that are lost in the collapse of civilization, including electricity and pharmaceuticals. This section of the list explains the end of air travel, and the end of the phenomenon of viewing towns and their shining lights through airplane windows. Along with this beauty, the small details of flying also vanish, such as putting tray tables in their "upright and locked positions."

By including both the beautiful aspects and the practical ones, Mandel shows the scope of what would be lost in the collapse of civilization, which eliminates both the ease and benefits of transportation and the opportunity to view the world from 30,000 feet.

The inclusion of rusting, dormant airplanes also indicates the vestiges of civilization that will remain as physical imprints of the past. No longer able to fly, they symbolize the civilization that once was, and their decay is at once sad, since they are no longer operational, and beautiful ("rust blossomed") since they are converted for new uses in the changing post-collapse society.

Chapter 7 Quotes

☞ They'd performed more modern plays sometimes in the first few years, but what was startling, what no one would have anticipated, was that audiences seemed to prefer Shakespeare to their other theatrical offerings.

"People want what was best about the world," Dieter said.

Related Characters: Dieter (speaker)

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 38

Explanation and Analysis

In the introduction to *The Traveling Symphony*, we learn that they perform music of all varieties, but that their theatre portion is strictly Shakespearean. Though they tried to perform more modern plays in the first few years following the collapse, unexpectedly, audiences prefer Shakespeare to anything else. Dieter's explanation for this phenomenon is that people want what was best about the pre-collapse world.

This quote in part explores the question of what art is preserved, since Dieter indicates that people want to preserve and experience what is best about the world, which in his opinion seems to be the very best art. Though 'high-art' like Shakespeare isn't the only art that survives, it's significant that some masterpieces are able to make it past the collapse and provide continuity for human progress and creativity, despite the seeming failure of the rest of civilization. Shakespeare's own time period, which often experienced closed theatres due to the bubonic plague and was an era before electricity, also seems to relate better to the post-collapse world than a play written during modern civilization could.

Chapter 8 Quotes

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

Related Characters: Dr. Eleven (speaker), Miranda Carroll, Kirsten Raymonde

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 42

Explanation and Analysis

This line is spoken by Dr. Eleven in one of Miranda's "Station Eleven" comic books. In the image accompanying this line, Dr. Eleven stands beside his dog Luli, surveying the broken space station and trying to forget how sweet it was to live on Earth. Dr. Eleven's memory of a pleasant Earth while being stuck aboard a broken world is a parallel for those living in the post collapse world with perfect memories of the world before the Georgia Flu. Part of surviving, or moving on, is trying to forget just how sweet the old life was in favor of embracing (or enduring) the circumstances of a new life.

☞ All three caravans of the Traveling Symphony are labeled as such, THE TRAVELING SYMPHONY lettered in white on both sides, but the lead caravan carries an additional line of text: Because survival is insufficient.

Related Characters: Kirsten Raymonde

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 58

Explanation and Analysis

This quote provides the Symphony's motto, later revealed as Kirsten's favorite line of text in the English language: "survival is insufficient." The line, lifted from an episode of *Star Trek*, speaks to the idea that, for humans, merely surviving isn't satisfactory. It isn't enough to just stay alive; we need to do something more to truly be human. For the actors of the Traveling Symphony, this "something more" is the performance of art, which enables the artists and viewers to experience culture, beauty, and pleasure even in the post-collapse world where much of one's effort is put into the tasks of surviving and staying safe.

Chapter 11 Quotes

☞ What was lost in the collapse: almost everything, almost everyone, but there is still such beauty.

Related Characters: Kirsten Raymonde

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 57

Explanation and Analysis

Mandel provides this short list of what was lost, even shorter than Chapter Six's "an incomplete list," during the Symphony's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in St. Deborah by the Water. Mandel emphasizes that even after the loss of civilization, of almost every human, the world is still filled with exceptional beauty. This surviving beauty, however, isn't just natural beauty. It's also the beauty that humanity and art are capable of creating, indicated by Mandel's focus on Kirsten's performance in the role of Titania. The Symphony's goal is to remind people that such beauty still exists, even after the loss of almost everything else.

Chapter 12 Quotes

☞ "The flu," the prophet said, "the great cleansing that we suffered twenty years ago, that flu was our flood. The light we carry within us is the ark that carried Noah and his people over the face of the terrible waters, and I submit that we were saved"—his voice was rising—"not only to bring the light, to spread the light, but to be the light. We were saved because we are the light. We are the pure."

Related Characters: Tyler Leander / The Prophet (speaker)

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 60

Explanation and Analysis

After the performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in St. Deborah by the Water, the prophet stands and delivers this small sermon to the townspeople in the audience and to the members of the Traveling Symphony. He says that the Georgia Flu was a cleansing equivalent to the biblical flood of Noah. Inner light or goodness is the personal "ark" (like Noah's life-saving boat) of each person who survived the flu. The prophet believes that those who lived were saved because they are "the light" and because they are pure.

This sermon introduces an extreme religious response to the Flu, in which the death of billions is refigured as a divine cleansing, and survival is thought of as an intentional gift from above as opposed to random or lucky chance. The prophet uses faith to understand the flu and the post-collapse world, but he also uses it as a tool for his own power, as his sermon is clearly directed at the people he controls as well as the Symphony passing through his town.

☞ Being alive is a risk.

Related Characters: The Conductor (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 66

Explanation and Analysis

After the prophet's sermon, he quietly asks the conductor if the Symphony will leave Alexandra to be another one of his brides. The Symphony refuses, and packs and leaves in a hurry. In deciding where to go next, they consider the legendary Museum of Civilization, but are a little worried that it is risky and dangerous. At this point, the Conductor gives this short line, which speaks to the theme of survival and death in the novel: "Being alive is a risk." This line rings true after the collapse, since the world is extremely dangerous and not ruled by law and order. But Arthur Leander's pre-flu death and the novel's exploration of timelines before the collapse seems to suggest that the statement applies to the human condition in general. Everyone dies sometime, the world is extremely fragile, and part of being alive as a human means constantly being exposed to some sort of risk.

Chapter 14 Quotes

☞ "You're always half on Station Eleven," Pablo said during a fight a week or so ago, "and I don't even understand your project. What are you actually going for here?"

...
"You don't have to understand it," she said. "It's mine."

Related Characters: Miranda Carroll, Pablo (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 87

Explanation and Analysis

These lines come from an argument between Pablo and Miranda that Miranda reflects on in her office job. Pablo says that she is always "half on Station Eleven," meaning that she is always partially thinking about her comic book project and not present in the real world. He continues to say that he doesn't even understand her work. In one sense, his lines reflect the relationship between art and artist explored in the novel. Miranda is obsessed with her work, and she uses it as an escape from reality or bad situations. Even as she makes a big change in her life, she will always keep her artwork and Station Eleven as a constant.

Miranda's response to Pablo also reflects a unique aspect of the artist's relationship with her work. Miranda doesn't produce here art to be viewed, read, or understood by anyone else. Instead, she does it for the value of doing the work itself. In this way, the project is immensely personal, and we see Miranda pour herself into the comic, even using Dr. Eleven as a substitute for herself in scenes from her life. But, somewhat ironically, her art that is completed solely for herself will survive the collapse and become extremely important to both Kirsten and Tyler Leander.

☞ I repent nothing.

Related Characters: Miranda Carroll (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 89

Explanation and Analysis

After leaving her abusive relationship with Pablo and beginning her life with Arthur, Miranda begins saying this to herself in the mirror: that she repents nothing. This line is meant as self-assurance to herself that she is proud of her choices, even if they were not best, and a suggestion that she is living the way that she wants to. Such an assertion to herself can be seen as a survival mechanism in the face of her changing life and the difficult situations she finds herself in. Even as Miranda matures and grows into an elite executive, she continues to whisper this phrase to herself all around the world, just as she continues her work on Station Eleven.

Chapter 15 Quotes

☞ “No one ever thinks they’re awful, even people who really actually are. It’s some sort of survival mechanism.”
 “I think this is happening because it was supposed to happen.”
 Elizabeth speaks very softly.
 “I’d prefer not to think that I’m following a script,” Miranda says.

Related Characters: Elizabeth Colton, Miranda Carroll (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 106

Explanation and Analysis

This painful exchange comes at the end of the awkward dinner party at Miranda and Arthur’s Hollywood home, later referenced in one of Miranda’s Station Eleven comic books. Miranda has just realized that Arthur is cheating on her with his co-star, Elizabeth Colton, who tried to apologize and wondered if she is an awful person for having the affair. Miranda responds that no one thinks they’re awful, even if they really are. She attributes this disparity to a survival mechanism, which enables people to act badly and selfishly without feeling guilty.

The difference in Miranda and Elizabeth’s worldview is then expressed, as Elizabeth says she believes things all happen for a reason, and Miranda says that she prefers to believe she acts under her own free will. This interaction foreshadows Elizabeth’s faith and the role it will play in her strong reaction to the collapse of society—she will continue to believe everything happens for a reason.

What’s more, Miranda’s comment about bad people believing they are good as a survival mechanism looks forward to Elizabeth’s son, Tyler, as he uses his faith and belief that he is ‘the light’ to justify terrible actions in order to survive (and thrive) as the figure of the prophet.

Chapter 18 Quotes

☞ Some towns ... want to talk about what happened, about the past. Other towns, discussion of the past is discouraged. We went to a place once where the children didn’t know the world had ever been different, although you’d think all the rusted-out automobiles and telephones wires would give them a clue.

Related Characters: Kirsten Raymonde (speaker), François

Diallo

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 115

Explanation and Analysis

These lines are excerpted from an interview that François Diallo conducted with Kirsten in the town of New Petoskey in Year Fifteen. Here, Kirsten discusses the difference among small towns relating to the way they educate their children about the past. Some towns, she says, want to talk about the past and civilization. They (like New Petoskey, which has a library) build a communal memory and tell their children the way the world once was. Other towns, however, opt not to tell their children that the world was ever different, even though there are physical monuments and imprints (countless obsolete relics of the past) that should indicate to the children that somehow the world has changed. Such a debate speaks to the novel’s exploration of memory as communal and both a blessing and a curse. It can be extremely painful to remember the past, but it also can give hope and provide understanding of the full scope of the human story.

Chapter 23 Quotes

☞ “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.”

Related Characters: Kirsten Raymonde (speaker), August, Tyler Leander / The Prophet

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 138

Explanation and Analysis

Kirsten speaks these to August lines after the prophet has kidnapped Sayid and Dieter. In them, she unknowingly echoes the sentiment that Miranda expressed to the Prophet’s mother, Elizabeth Colton: bad people usually don’t think they’re bad, even if they are, as some sort of survival mechanism. Kirsten’s point is essentially that if the prophet believes that he is the light, that his enemies are the darkness, then there is nothing that he cannot justify to himself in order to further his ends and his survival, no matter how terrible (like marrying young girls or kidnapping and killing innocent actors) his actions might be. Such an argument expresses the novel’s critical exploration of blind

or fanatical faith, which can easily turn dangerous and has the potential to be used in the justification of despicable acts.

Chapter 25 Quotes

☝☝ I was thinking about the island. It seems past-tense somehow, like a dream I had once. I walk down these streets and wander in and out of parks and dance in clubs and I think "once I walked along the beach with my best friend V., once I built forts with my little brother in the forest, once all I saw were trees" and all those true things sound false, it's like a fairy tale someone told me. I stand waiting for lights to change on corners in Toronto and that whole place, the island I mean, it seems like a different planet.

Related Characters: Arthur Leander (speaker), Victoria

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 155

Explanation and Analysis

These lines are excerpted from one of Arthur's letters to his best friend Victoria, later published in the form of the book *Dear V.* In this letter, Arthur reflects on his hometown Delano Island while he is living in Toronto. On one hand, the letter is a reflection on how memory can be fleeting: Arthur's memories of his childhood home appear false to him, like some sort of fairy tale. The strange inability to describe the island to others and the feeling that it doesn't seem real is the very thing that continuously draws Arthur to Miranda, who uniquely understands where he is from.

But the letter also explores modern civilization, and the way that it feels for Arthur to move from an isolated island in nature to a large, interconnected city like Toronto, which to him feels like an entirely different planet. Later, we will learn that the city of Toronto, with its vastness and anonymity, was the only place that Arthur truly felt free during his life.

Chapter 30 Quotes

☝☝ On silent afternoons in his brother's apartment, Jeevan found himself thinking about how human the city is, how human everything is. We bemoaned the impersonality of the modern world, but that was a lie, it seemed to him; it had never been impersonal at all. There had always been a massive delicate infrastructure of people, all of them working unnoticed around us, and when people stop going to work, the entire operation grinds to a halt.

Related Characters: Frank Chaudhary, Jeevan Chaudhary

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 178

Explanation and Analysis

While locked up in Frank's apartment to survive the Georgia Flu and the collapse of civilization, Jeevan reflects on the very civilization that is falling, and how essentially human it is. A common complaint about the modern world, he thinks, is that it is impersonal, that for all of our interconnected technologies, humans are in general disconnected from one another. As the world collapses, Jeevan believes that this is a lie, since there has always been a huge infrastructure of people, all working unnoticed, responsible for the operation of modernity. Without humans going to work, everything, including transportation, medicine, electricity, energy, the whole grid of modernity fails. In this way, civilization is not what makes us human. Instead, it is humanity that continuously powers and operates civilization. The collapse of civilization doesn't necessarily cause deaths—in fact, it is just the opposite.

☝☝ "Well, we'll just stay here till the lights come back on or the Red Cross shows up or whatever."

...
"What makes you think the lights will come back on?" Frank asked without looking up. Jeevan started to reply, but words failed him.

Related Characters: Frank Chaudhary, Jeevan Chaudhary

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 179

Explanation and Analysis

This exchange takes place in Frank's apartment, while Frank and Jeevan are trying to wait out the Georgia Flu and the collapse of civilization. The two are discussing what their long-term plan should be. Jeevan speaks first here, saying that they should wait in Frank's apartment until the Red Cross or someone comes to help them. In these early days after the collapse, Jeevan fantasizes about being rescued, trying to retain hope that civilization will survive and somehow be rebuilt. But Frank seems to take a more pessimistic (and realistic) view of the situation: civilization has been changed forever. The lights just aren't going to come back on. They will have to adapt to survive, and eventually leave the apartment.

Chapter 34 Quotes

☞ I've been thinking about immortality lately. ... They're all immortal to me. First we only want to be seen, but once we're seen, that's not enough anymore. After that, we want to be remembered.

Related Characters: Frank Chaudhary, Jeevan Chaudhary

Related Themes:     

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 187

Explanation and Analysis

These lines are from the book that Frank is ghostwriting about a philanthropist. While bored in the apartment, Jeevan asks his brother to read a segment of his work, and Frank reads the pages that include the quote. The lines are in contemplation of death, immortality, and memory, and later Jeevan will come to suspect that they are Frank's own thoughts as opposed to the philanthropist's. Frank has been thinking about immortality, and says people who have done great things are immortal to him. People want to be recognized, he says, but, more importantly, they want to be remembered. Such an idea is significant given the billions of people dead or dying during the time that Frank writes this quote. It is also important given Frank's ultimate decision to sacrifice himself and commit suicide to increase Jeevan's chances of survival.

Chapter 37 Quotes

☞ I can't remember the year we spent on the road, and I think that means I can't remember the worst of it. But my point is, doesn't it seem to you that the people who have the hardest time in this—this current era, whatever you want to call it, the world after the Georgia Flu—doesn't it seem like the people who struggle the most with it are the people who remember the old world clearly?

Related Characters: Kirsten Raymonde (speaker), François Diallo

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 195

Explanation and Analysis

This is another excerpt from Kirsten's interview with François in Year Fifteen. In this moment, she tells François that she remembers nothing from Year One, which, she believes, means that she can't remember the worst part of the collapse. In this way, the novel explores the idea that forgetting can be a blessing. We can recall that the prophet claimed earlier to remember everything he ever saw on the road, which might be part of the reason he is so violent and delusional.

Kirsten also believes that those who remember the world before the Flu seem to have the hardest time adjusting to the new world. Memory, then, especially of civilization as it once was, can be a hindrance for moving forward. So while memory can be an escape during painful situations, remembering things we would rather not can be painful in its own right, further complicating the way that memory functions in the novel.

Chapter 38 Quotes

☞ "Well, it's nice that at least the celebrity gossip survived."

Related Characters: Kirsten Raymonde (speaker), August

Related Themes:    

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 201

Explanation and Analysis

Kirsten offers this line to August after ransacking an unlooted house. She discovers an old tabloid to add to her collection with a picture of Arthur and Miranda at the

theatre at which Kirsten and Arthur performed *King Lear* at the beginning of the novel. This short joke of hers speaks to the question of what survives, particularly what art, as well as how are we remembered as people. Throughout the novel, Mandel shows that both high art and low art manage to survive the collapse, both on an intentional and a random basis. The gossip tabloids also show what endures of civilization in general. The survival of celebrity gossip can be seen as the preservation of the most trivial element of society. At the same time, Kirsten's joke is ironic, since she collects the tabloids featuring Arthur for the personal value they have—they aren't really worthless at all.

Chapter 40 Quotes

☞ I think about my childhood, the life I lived on Delano Island, that place was so small. Everyone knew me, not because I was special or anything just because everyone knew everyone, and the claustrophobia of that, I can't tell you. I just wanted some privacy. For as long as I could remember I just wanted to get out, and then I got to Toronto and no one knew me. Toronto felt like freedom.

Related Characters: Arthur Leander (speaker), Clark Thompson

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 223

Explanation and Analysis

While Clark is informing Elizabeth Colton of the news of Arthur's death and his will's stipulation that the funeral be held in Toronto, Clark remembers a conversation in which Arthur spoke the excerpted lines. Delano Island, Arthur said, was so small and isolated that everyone knew him there. This overwhelming lack of privacy was claustrophobic and intense, causing him to move away to Toronto, where no one knew him. Due to the anonymity and privacy it offered to Arthur, Toronto felt like freedom. In this way, the novel explores how modern civilization can be freeing, while being disconnected and isolated from civilization can feel claustrophobic. This type of freedom, the ability to live anonymously in a massive group of people, is something that completely vanishes during the collapse.

Chapter 41 Quotes

☞ The corridor was silent. It was necessary to walk very slowly, her hand on the wall. A man was curled on his side near the elevators, shivering. She wanted to speak to him, but speaking would take too much strength, so she looked at him instead—I see you, I see you—and hoped this was enough.

Related Characters: Miranda Carroll

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 227

Explanation and Analysis

These lines describe some of Miranda's final moments in a hotel in Malaysia. She is suffering from the Georgia Flu, and will soon die. Interestingly, she is the only one of the novel's major characters to die of the Flu. Walking out of the hotel in her sickened agony, Miranda notices another person curled up on the floor. She feels the urge to speak to him, but is too weak to do so, so instead she just looks at him and thinks "I see you, I see you." This gesture is one of profound kindness and also profound sadness, as it's possible the man didn't even recognize her gesture. But regardless, it's an example of the camaraderie, commiseration, and deep connection between humans that Mandel explores in her novel.

Chapter 43 Quotes

☞ "I was in the hotel," he said finally. "I followed your footprints in the snow." There were tears on his face. "Okay," someone said, "but why are you crying?" "I'd thought I was the only one," he said.

Related Characters: James (speaker)

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 257

Explanation and Analysis

This short exchange takes place around Day One-Hundred, after the settlers in the Severn City Airport send out a scouting party to see what is left of the world after the decimation of the Georgia Flu. A little after their return, the first outsider, later named as James, walks up to the airport. He tells them that he was hiding in the hotel and followed the footprints of the scouting party. He is crying, he says, because he believed for a time that he was the only human to survive the Flu.

This exchange at once shows the extent to which the Georgia Flu eradicated humans, and the connection and need for companionship between people. So many people died in the collapse that James was convinced for one hundred days that he was the only being to have survived. His elation at finding otherwise is both for himself, since he no longer has to live alone, and for humanity in general, since he now knows that at least some form of humanity and some form of civilization will live on.

Chapter 45 Quotes

☛☛ When it came down to it, François had realized, all of the Symphony's stories were the same, in two variations. Everyone else died, I walked, I found the Symphony. Or, I was very young when it happened, I was born after it happened, I have no memories or few memories of any other way of living, and I have been walking all my life.

Related Characters: Kirsten Raymonde, François Diallo

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 266

Explanation and Analysis

These lines follow the end of François' interview with Kirsten. At this time, he has also conducted interviews with most members of the Symphony as well. Through this process he has realized that the Symphony members' stories all come in two forms: everyone died, I walked, I found the Symphony, or I remember basically nothing before the collapse, I have been walking with the Symphony all my life. These two stories represent the two generations in the Symphony and the way that one is required to pass on memories of life and civilization before the collapse on to the other. This also shows us that Kirsten's experience of memory loss is not unique. Instead, it seems to be a common feature of her younger generation, those that were children at the time of the collapse. Of course, those born after the collapse represent a subgroup of this younger generation that has absolutely no memory of life before the collapse, since they were not even alive at the time.

Chapter 50 Quotes

☛☛ She had once met an old man up near Kincardine who'd sworn that the murdered follow their killers to the grave, and she was thinking of this as they walked, the idea of dragging souls across the landscape like cans on a string. The way the archer had smiled, just at the end.

Related Characters: Kirsten Raymonde

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 297

Explanation and Analysis

Kirsten thinks about killing after an altercation with the prophet's men in which she was forced to kill an archer. She thinks about an old man who told her that the murdered follow their killers to their grave. This she imagines visually, as if she is dragging the soul of her latest kill across the ground on a string. The archer smiled in his final moments, Kirsten remembers, likely because he died in service of the prophet and his faith.

Killing is also what Kirsten thinks about when she wonders what has changed most in the world since the collapse. To her, being required to take a life in self-defense is one of the most painful aspects of survival, and something that was (for most) completely foreign during modern civilization. Those Kirsten has killed, in contrast to those that might have tried to kill her in Year One, are forever ingrained in her memory and on her flesh in the form of knife tattoos.

Chapter 51 Quotes

☛☛ She stepped back. "It isn't possible," she said. "But there it is. Look again."

In the distance, pinpricks of light arranged into a grid. There, plainly visible on the side of a hill some miles distant: a town, or a village, whose streets were lit up with electricity.

Related Characters: Clark Thompson, Kirsten Raymonde

Related Themes:    

Page Number: 311

Explanation and Analysis

This exchange takes place in an air traffic control tower at Severn City Airport. The prophet is dead, and Kirsten has been reunited with Charlie and Jeremy. At the top of the tower, Clark has Kirsten look through a telescope into the distance, where she sees pinpoints of electric light, indicating that there is a town using electric streetlamps. Her first response is to suggest that it's impossible, but the lights are real. Though the focus is on the light, Mandel's insistence that civilization is essentially human means that this ending does not indicate a miraculous return of civilization and technology. Instead, it provides just a glimpse of hope, and shows that humanity is continuing to

thrive, to survive, and, because survival is insufficient, to rebuild civilization and reincorporate technology into

everyday life.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1

During Act 4 of a production of *King Lear* in Toronto, Arthur Leander (playing the lead role) stumbles around on stage with three young girls, one of whom is Kirsten Raymonde. Suddenly, Arthur fumbles his line and clutches his chest; he is having a heart attack. In the audience, Jeevan, a man who is training to be a paramedic, notices what is happening and rushes towards the stage. As the play begins to devolve and the audience starts to panic, Jeevan attempts CPR on the unconscious, not-breathing Arthur.

A cardiologist from the audience takes over for Jeevan while they wait for an ambulance to arrive. When the medics attempt (and fail) to save Arthur's life, Jeevan comforts Kirsten and attempts to distract her from Arthur's death. The two then start to look for Tanya, Kirsten's wrangler and Arthur's latest girlfriend.

After finding Tanya, Jeevan looks for his own girlfriend Laura in the lobby. He is unable to locate her, and so he steps outside and briefly talks with the paparazzi, his former colleagues. He informs them that he is training to be an EMT, and pretends not to know what has happened to Arthur in detail. After finding out that Laura has left him at the show, Jeevan dejectedly wanders into a park in the snow.

From the onset of the novel, Shakespeare, theatre, and death are all introduced. This scene contains three of the book's major characters whose lives, by chance or by fate, meet in this dramatic moment. Like most of the primary characters in the novel, they're connected through Arthur. Jeevan's effort to save Arthur's life shows how characters often rely on the help of others for survival.



Arthur's death is at once personal and a spectacle. His death has a personal impact on the people he knows, like Kirsten, who needs comfort from Jeevan. But the death also occurs on stage, so it is almost like a performance.



The presence of the paparazzi reinforces Arthur's death as a public spectacle. Mandel seems to be criticizing civilization and its obsession with celebrity and gossip here. Jeevan, a former paparazzo himself, fights against this aspect of civilization by changing careers and omitting information when talking to his former colleagues.



CHAPTER 2

Back in the theatre, people from the production discuss Arthur's death and the need to notify his family. They discuss his son, Tyler, his second (out of three) ex-wife Elizabeth, and ultimately decide to call his lawyer. They all have a drink, toasting to Arthur.

In the dressing room, Tanya gives Kirsten a **paperweight** and tries to contact the young girl's parents. Back in the lobby, the people who have been discussing Arthur's death drink to the late actor once more and part ways. We learn that of those people, the bartender lives the longest. He dies three weeks later on the road out of the city.

Other people who will be personally impacted by Arthur's death are his ex-wives and his son. Since he is famous, though, it seems like everyone knows his family history.



The chance gift of this paperweight will have major significance for Kirsten later in life. At the end of this chapter, Mandel subtly introduces the notion that after Arthur's death, many other people will die too, setting up her juxtaposition of a single death with a mass death.



CHAPTER 3

Jeevan walks in the park reflecting on his career, his brother Frank, and his strange interaction with young Kirsten. Suddenly, he receives a tense call from his friend Hua, a doctor at Toronto General. Hua explains that he has been treating patients for the Georgia Flu, which is poised to break into a serious epidemic.

Jeevan walks a little more, before receiving another phone call from Hua. This time the doctor tells him to get out of the city with his family, or at least to stock up on food and stay in his apartment. The flu is apparently spreading throughout the city at an alarming rate. As Hua hangs up to make other calls, Jeevan realizes that this flu will be a divide in his life between “a before and an after.”

Jeevan decides to go to his brother Frank’s apartment, since getting out of the city with Frank will be impractical given that he is paraplegic. Jeevan then immediately begins stocking up on survival supplies. He fills grocery carts with water, food, and other essentials. He learns from Hua that the situation is still progressing and worsening, and decides to call Laura. He tells her to get out of the city as quickly as possible. He then takes his seven shopping carts to his brother’s apartment in hopes of surviving the epidemic.

After the previous chapter’s hints, Hua properly introduces the Georgia Flu here. This phone call can be seen as extremely lucky, since it is likely the reason that Jeevan is able to live while so many others die.



Again, Jeevan is extremely lucky to receive this information from Hua. Slowly, he begins to realize the extent of the epidemic the world is about to face. He knows his life is about to change fundamentally, and that even civilization itself will be divided into before and after the Flu.



Jeevan’s quick thinking and ingenuity enables him to survive. With the benefit of Hua’s phone call, he is able to make emergency preparations and get to a safe spot before all of the chaos begins. In the course of one evening Jeevan has gone from attempting to save one life to trying to save his own amidst a sea of death.



CHAPTER 4

The producer of *King Lear* calls Arthur’s lawyer to notify the lawyer of his client’s death. The lawyer then calls Arthur’s best friend and begins to call Arthur’s ex-wives.

Modern technology allows the producer to notify the lawyer of Arthur’s death, who in turn is able to place phone calls and quickly spread the information.



CHAPTER 5

Miranda Carroll receives news of Arthur’s death in Malaysia, where she has been sent by her boss Leon to oversee their company’s shipping fleet, which is dormant due to the recession. She is notified by Clark Thompson, Arthur’s friend, whom she remembers meeting at a dinner party in Los Angeles when she was still married to Arthur. Clark informs her of the circumstances of Arthur’s death, and then hangs up the phone. The novel then hints at the damage the Georgia Flu will do by explaining that this was the last month when telephones were functional.

The dormant shipping fleet is a symbol of technological development and of the connectivity of the human race—a connectivity that allows for amazing success but also for the swift spread of something like the Flu. The phone call and the comment that phones will soon stop working then highlight this connectivity and also how it is taken for granted.



CHAPTER 6

This chapter consists only of “an incomplete list” of what is lost in the Georgia Flu. The list is used to show just how much the world was changed by the epidemic. The list spans from diving into swimming pools, cities, transportation, pharmaceuticals, planes, countries, all the way to the loss of the Internet and social media.

Mandel moves from the excess of dormant shipping containers to a list of what is lost: billions of lives and civilization as we know it. All the comforts of modernity, both large scale and small, are lost without the vast network of humans required to maintain them.



CHAPTER 7

This chapter begins the second section of the book titled “A Midsummer Night’s Dream.” It takes place twenty years after the outbreak of the Georgia Flu and the collapse of civilization it wrought. In July of Year Twenty, the Traveling Symphony walks and caravans near Lake Michigan while practicing lines for [King Lear](#). Kirsten, now a member of the company, carries a paperback **book** version of the play and helps the other actors with their lines, including August, her close friend. The Symphony, which includes a troupe of actors and a group of musicians, is headed for the town St. Deborah by the Water.

For the first time in the novel, Mandel leaps twenty years into the future, creating a parallel with the beginning of the book by showing the post-collapse world through actors in a production of [King Lear](#). Immediately upon seeing the world after the Flu, we realize that art and books have endured, even when much of civilization has not. Kirsten has grown up and graduated from playing a child version to the adult version of one of Lear’s daughters.



We learn that the Symphony has been traveling between settlements of the collapsed world since Year Five after the epidemic. A few months after setting out, the musicians met and merged with the actors, and the group has been traveling ever since. Their territory consists of the Great Lakes Regions in Michigan. They perform music of all varieties and Shakespeare. They tried to perform modern plays at one point, but they believe that audiences prefer Shakespeare, since they want “what was best about the world.”

The meeting and merging of two traveling post-collapse art groups is an example of the coincidences that border on fate in Mandel’s novel. While the Symphony performs all kinds of music, their actors exclusively perform Shakespeare. Part of what the novel explores is the question of what survives—particularly what art survives. It seems here that Shakespeare survives because he is considered the best that the world has to offer.



Many young people in the Symphony remember little to nothing about the world before the collapse. This is especially true of those so young that they were born after the collapse occurred, like Alexandra, the Symphony’s youngest actor who was discovered on the road as an infant. These young people ask the older people in the company to explain to them what the world was like.

The youngest in the Symphony rely on elders and communal memory for their understanding of what civilization was once like. For those who were young during the collapse, memories of the old world are fragile and always in doubt.



Kirsten reflects on August’s habit of staring longingly at televisions when they break into houses; he misses it more than she does, and collects TV Guides. Kirsten’s hobby is collecting gossip tabloids that mention Arthur Leander, the man she used to act alongside and who gave her the comic **books** that she now cherishes.

The now obsolete TVs are a constant reminder of what was one of the many technological artifacts that make for physical memories of civilization. The novel further explores what endures with the habit of collecting. Some of what survives is Shakespeare, but some books are just TV Guides or gossip tabloids. On one hand it is random, but it is also due to the conscious efforts of people like Kirsten and August to preserve what is important to them. Finally, we are introduced to the cherished comic books, a form of art which might be considered “lowbrow” in comparison to lofty Shakespeare.



CHAPTER 8

This short chapter describes the comic **books** given to Kirsten by Arthur. They are called “Dr. Eleven, Vol. I, No.1: Station Eleven” and “Dr. Eleven, Vol. I, No.2: The Pursuit.” Kirsten has memorized the contents of both comics.

In the comics, Dr. Eleven is a physicist living on a space station designed to resemble a small world. He has a dog named Luli. The comics are very high quality, most likely produced on a small scale, and created by someone named “M.C.” Kirsten cares for the comics and obsesses over them, as they are her prized possessions.

Kirsten has obsessed over the comics, which lend their title to the novel itself, so often that she now has each one completely memorized.



The comics are extremely important to the novel and to Kirsten personally. Opposing mass-produced Shakespeare, these high quality books were produced only in a limited number, making their survival into the post-collapse world very lucky.



CHAPTER 9

The Symphony arrives in St. Deborah by the Water, where it left Charlie and the sixth guitar behind two years ago, since Charlie was pregnant. A young boy greets them and instructs them to set up camp by the Walmart. Though they play music on the way in, no onlookers come and there is no sign of Charlie or the sixth guitar.

The curious town of St. Deborah by the Water is another reminder of the fall of civilization and of the act of repurposing out of necessity, as the Symphony camps in what once was a Wal-Mart. The first indication that something is not right in the town is that no one flocks to watch the Symphony enter the town even though they are playing music, a rare and valuable commodity in a world without electricity. Note also that many Symphony members go by the names of their instruments after the collapse, choosing to rename themselves and suggesting the importance of music to their identities.



The Symphony decides to perform *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, since the small town seems too depressing for a production of *King Lear*. While they rehearse, Kirsten reflects that the town is creepy and seems changed since the last time they visited. She is playing Titania, and acts awkwardly with Sayid, who plays Oberon. The two used to be a couple, but have broken up, and now must play quarreling lovers to the delight of the rest of the Symphony.

The town feels creepy, and so the Symphony adjusts which play they will perform, matching art to reality. Within the play, however, the opposite happens, as reality mimics or matches art. Sayid and Kirsten's relationship status is mirrored within their roles as Titania and Oberon. Art and reality are thus placed in conversation, as the awkwardness of their true relationship is able to make for a better portrayal of their theatrical one.



CHAPTER 10

Like any group of people who live and travel together, the Traveling Symphony has members who do not get along. The third cello doesn't like Dieter, who doesn't like the second horn, who in turn doesn't like the seventh guitar, and so on. The Symphony finishes their rehearsal, hangs the backdrop that will serve as the setting for the show, and begins to worry why Charlie and the sixth guitar haven't shown up yet.

Despite the apparent destruction of civilization, the artists of the Traveling Symphony remain essentially human in that they do not all like one another. The absence of Charlie and the sixth guitar is another sign of something off in St. Deborah by the Water.



While they wait to perform, August reflects on how intense small towns have become. Twenty years after the collapse, civilization consists only of tight-knit small towns that do not often welcome outsiders. August grew up moving from place to place, finding it very difficult to fit in, and the tensions of civilization after the collapse have only made it harder to move into new places. For the actors and musicians, the Traveling Symphony is their only home.

After these reflections, Kirsten decides to take a walk and look for Charlie, since the two were close friends. As she walks through the town, Kirsten notices that it is more abandoned than the last time the Symphony passed through. She also sees a strange symbol – a lowercase t with an extra line toward the bottom – marking a door. Kirsten then knocks on the door of the abandoned Wendy’s where Charlie and her husband moved in two years ago, but they are nowhere to be found.

Instead, Kirsten meets strangers, along with Maria, whom she recognizes as the local midwife. Maria tells Kirsten that Charlie and Jeremy (the sixth guitar) had their child (Annabel), and that they had to leave. Maria then covertly tells Kirsten that they left because Charlie rejected the prophet’s advances. She tells Kirsten to stop asking questions and to urge the Symphony to leave as quickly as possible.

As if the town weren’t already strange enough, as Kirsten leaves the Wendy’s she notices that a young girl has been following her. As Kirsten wonders where Charlie is, Dieter quickly approaches her on the road. She fills him in on what she learned from Maria, and he shows her the disturbing sight he found: a large graveyard including the grave markers for Charlie, Jeremy, and Annabel. Dieter notes that their graves are marked, but there is no one buried beneath the markers. Afraid for the lives of their friends, they try to question the little girl, but she becomes frightened and runs away.

Back at the camp at the Walmart, the tuba player recounts what he has learned on his own exploration. He says that St. Deborah by the Water experienced a mini-epidemic, where thirty people died including the mayor. After this epidemic there was a cryptic “change in management,” after which some twenty families left the town, including Charlie and the sixth guitar. Kirsten informs the Symphony that she learned there is a prophet in the town. Under the leadership of the conductor and Gil, the director, the Symphony decides to perform as planned and ask questions after.

The decimation of the Georgia Flu was so complete that cities are now nonexistent. The primary unit of civilization has now become tiny towns and scattered settlements. But the Symphony members don’t even have a small town to call home—rather, the road, the continuous journey, and the Symphony itself are their home.



Again, we note that the town is strange and changed, as it seems empty and is marked by a symbol that Kirsten cannot understand. The Wendy’s where Charlie and the sixth guitar settled two years ago is another example of a repurposed building or remnant of modern civilization.



Here we learn that the town’s strange feeling has come from a religious figure: the prophet. Maria’s warning that the Symphony should leave suggests that there is more danger in St. Deborah in the Water as opposed to mere creepiness.



Graveyards are essential for any town after the mass death of the collapse, but the haunting grave markers for unburied bodies are extremely disturbing to Kirsten and Dieter. The markers suggest a strange religious practice and continue the building tension surrounding the prophet and the presence of faith in the town.



Apparently the thirty who died the town’s mini-epidemic, which might have been prevented with the benefits of modern medicine, fill much of the space in the graveyard Dieter discovered. This illness left a power vacuum that enabled the prophet to take over, which drove around twenty others to leave the town. Despite this knowledge, the Symphony decides to perform and share their art with the town anyway.



CHAPTER 11

During the performance, the audience is silent and attentive. While Kirsten and Sayid play out the scene they rehearsed when they first arrived at St. Debora by the Water, we learn biographical details of Shakespeare's life, notably that the play was written in 1594, the year theatres reopened after the plague in London. We also learn that all three caravans of the Traveling Symphony are labeled with its name, but the lead caravan is painted with the additional line: "because survival is insufficient."

Even in the strange town, the audience is captivated by theatre, which makes sense given the decimation of most art in the collapse. Theatre, through, requires no technology and has existed for millennia, and the parallels between Shakespeare's time and the post-collapse world seem to make the performance of his plays even more fitting. The Symphony's motto blends survival with art thematically and introduces the important idea that for humans, just surviving isn't enough. Merely staying alive in the post-collapse world is insufficient for humanity, and so the Symphony provides art, music, and theatre as a means for doing more than just living and maintaining a connection with our humanity.



CHAPTER 12

After the performance, the audience gives applause. Then the prophet, a tall blond-haired, bearded man of around thirty-years-old, silences the crowd from his place in the back of the audience. He thanks the actors, and then he begins a sermon. He says that he believes that everything happened for a reason, and that the Georgia Flu was undoubtedly a divine event equivalent with the Flood, meant to cleanse the earth.

The power of art after the collapse is evident in that even the people from a 'creepy town' applaud at the end of the performance. The prophet's sermon, meanwhile, promotes an understandable response to the horror of a global catastrophe: that something as awful as the Flu couldn't have happened for no reason, and, by extension that everything must happen for a reason.



When the sermon concludes, the conductor asks the prophet about Charlie and Jeremy, but he only answers that people come and go. When the conductor asks about the grave markers, the prophet asks how long the Symphony and specifically Kirsten have been on the road. Kirsten responds that she walked for all of Year One, but internally she feels dishonest since she has no memory of this time.

The prophet's focus on Kirsten is the first indication of some connection between the two of them. This interaction also introduces Kirsten's memory gap. The implication is that some trauma or horror has left Kirsten without a single memory of the first year after the collapse of civilization.



The prophet, on the other hand, claims to remember everything he has walked through and seen, and he explains that when people die spiritual deaths or leave without permission, the town holds funerals for them since they are dead to the town. After this pronouncement, he whispers something in the conductor's ear, to which she responds "absolutely not." The prophet then turns away and calls his dog, Luli.

The prophet's memory of horror seems to link to his faith, and the strange funerals he holds following what he calls spiritual deaths but might really simply be people who disagree with him or don't share his faith. Note that his dog's name, perhaps coincidentally, is the same as Dr. Eleven's.



Following this strange interaction, the Symphony immediately begins to pack up and leave. A young boy asks if they have permission and even threatens them, but when they are leaving he asks if they will take him with them. The conductor responds that they cannot risk looking like they are kidnapping someone. Outside of the town, the conductor tells Kirsten what the prophet whispered to her before: he asked if they would leave behind Alexandra, a very young woman with the Symphony, since he is looking for another bride.

After a little debate, the Symphony decides to go outside of their territory towards Severn City, where apparently there is a settlement at the airport. They hope to expand their territory and find Charlie and the sixth guitar. With this decided, Kirsten climbs on a caravan to rest and to go through her clippings which, along with water, the “Dr. Eleven” comic **books**, and her **paperweight**, she keeps in her backpack. The clippings, which she has memorized, all contain images and details of Arthur Leander, his child Tyler, and his ex-wives. The chapter ends as Kirsten lingers on a photo of Arthur with his arm around a pale girl who will soon become his first wife.

The prophet’s request for Alexandra, a young woman, as his next bride indicates the extent that his faith and the circumstances of surviving the collapse have carried him beyond the boundaries of what’s normally considered acceptable. Not only is he polygamous, but he also wishes to seek a child bride. The Symphony, on the other hand, is extremely careful that they don’t even appear to kidnap or act inappropriately with children.



Kirsten’s backpack represents both aspects of survival. The water she carries is an essential for simply staying alive, while the comic books, the paperweight, and the tabloid clippings are carried not for practical use—indeed, the paperweight is probably impractical to carry given its weight—but instead for their beauty and the sense of pleasure and purpose they give to Kirsten. They also provide an escape from the present and a window into the past and Kirsten’s obsession with Arthur.



CHAPTER 13

Chapter 13 (and Part 3- “I Prefer You With a Crown”) begins with a scene depicted in one of the tabloid photos that will wind up in Kirsten’s collection after the collapse. The scene takes place fourteen years before the collapse, in a restaurant in Toronto. Arthur Leander and Miranda Carroll are discussing Miranda’s plan to leave her abusive boyfriend. As Arthur invites her to stay at his hotel so she doesn’t need to return home, the pair is surprised by paparazzi.

Later, Arthur tells a journalist that Miranda (whose name he keeps from the journalist) is from his hometown. This hometown, we learn, is Delano Island, the same size as Manhattan except with only a thousand residents. The island is in Canada, and it is pristine, beautiful, and isolated from civilization. Arthur finds it difficult to explain the place to friends, since it was both “gorgeous and claustrophobic”; he both loved it and always wanted to escape.

Arthur left the island, we learn, at age seventeen when he was accepted into the University of Toronto. But within months, he dropped out and began taking acting classes and going to auditions. In the classes he meets his best friend Clark, and the two party and enjoy life until Clark goes to England for university and Arthur attends an acting school in NYC. Once he has graduated, he gets a job on *Law & Order* and slowly gets more and more roles until he moves to L.A. and ultimately becomes a success.

Mandel uses one of the photos in Kirsten’s collection to smoothly leap back to a timeline fourteen years before the collapse. In the very beginning of their relationship, Arthur and Miranda leave a restaurant and the picture is taken that will somehow survive the collapse and end up in Kirsten’s backpack.



Sharing a unique homeland is essentially what bonds Arthur and Miranda. This beautiful island is isolated and carries the feeling of claustrophobia. It has none of the anonymity or connectivity that comes with modern civilization. Both characters, then, were driven to escape their childhood homes and break into the larger, connected world.



The drive to escape his homeland pushed Arthur to a huge city at the young age of seventeen. Arthur’s career then slowly evolves from partying as an unsuccessful actor in Toronto to acting as a budding star in L.A. Unlike his friend Clark, who changes careers, Arthur is one of the lucky ones who “makes it” in the field of acting.



In L.A. Arthur parties and acts, and at age twenty-nine he lands the lead in a low-budget movie that films in Toronto. One night, his mother calls and encourages him to get lunch with Miranda, a seventeen-year-old girl also from Delano Island who has just moved to Toronto. Though Arthur is a little hesitant, he realizes that finally he will be able to talk to someone who knows where he is from.

Arthur agrees to meet with Miranda because he longs for someone who understands his background. Without this common ground, he feels like there is a certain part of himself that goes misunderstood or unexplained. There is the sense that knowing where he is from will allow Miranda to truly communicate with him.



Miranda at seventeen is pale, beautiful, and poised, and she seems to Arthur to be older than her age. At lunch she tells him that she loves Toronto, and talks about her boyfriend Pablo. Like her boyfriend, Miranda is an artist. They talk a little while longer about their respective lives and part ways. Arthur continues to act in movies and plays, and he dates famous actresses and eventually becomes extremely famous himself. By the time he returns to Toronto for another film, he cannot go out in public without being photographed by paparazzi. Despite his fame, which he finds embarrassing, he decides to call Miranda after saving her number for years.

Arthur's art has now been embraced by the public, making him extremely, even uncomfortably famous. The paparazzi and fame-obsessed public paint a superficial civilization that contrasts starkly with the post-collapse world. At the same time, it's this fame and civilization obsessed with documenting fame that will allow Kirsten to collect tabloid photos as artifacts and mementos in the future.



CHAPTER 14

Miranda is at work for a shipping company when Arthur calls to reconnect. She works as an administrative assistant for Leon at Neptune Logistics, where she feels a little out of place. She thinks she doesn't have the right clothes. Her boyfriend Pablo assures her the situation is only temporary until he sells more paintings, but the truth is that she likes her time at Neptune Logistics more than she likes being at home. Her work is organized and clean, and it doesn't require too much attention or time, which allows her to spend her days working on her never-ending comic book project: "Dr. Eleven."

Though Miranda feels out of place at her office since she doesn't have the correct outward appearance, she relishes her time there since it provides organization and stability. It also gives her the space to work on her passion project and throw herself into her art, which takes the form of the graphic novel "Dr. Eleven."



Dr. Eleven is a physicist from the future who lives on a space station called Station Eleven, which was stolen from a hostile alien civilization that invades earth and enslaves its people. Station Eleven is the size of our moon but designed to resemble a planet. However, its systems are broken, rendering it permanently in sunset, twilight, or night. On Station Eleven there has been a split; a faction who lives in the Undersea, a network of tunnels under Station Eleven's oceans, wishes to return to Earth and face enslavement.

Dr. Eleven, like Miranda, is slightly out of place, as he lives on a broken space station that was never meant for humanity to live on. The comic's themes of survival and the loss of human civilization mirror those of the novel as a whole, as characters in the comic must grapple with the realities of a new world.



Before Miranda meets Arthur again, she receives a call from Pablo, who is rude to her regarding how often she's at work. During the call she is first detached, but she becomes enraged when she realizes that he's called her at the office to verify that she is actually there. A fight with Pablo quickly develops, and Miranda hangs up the phone. She goes back to working on "Station Eleven," when she receives a call from Arthur, who asks her out to dinner.

Pablo neglects the demands civilization places on Miranda (rent, money, etc.) and complains that she works so much. But at the same time, he has a lack of faith in her, as he doesn't really believe she is working at all. In the face of this unkindness, Miranda retreats into Station Eleven, using art as a means of coping with her bad situation.



Miranda decides not to contact Pablo about the dinner, and as she works and sketches she ignores his texts. She remembers a conversation she once had with Pablo where he accused her of always being half on Station Eleven. He doesn't understand her project, and Miranda doesn't seem to care.

Miranda is fully aware that Station Eleven is an escape for her. She remembers this conversation not angrily, but with the knowledge that Pablo doesn't understand her project and he doesn't have to. She produces it for herself and the joy and benefits it brings her.



At the restaurant, when Miranda mentions her comic to Arthur, he seems genuinely interested. She tells him about the inspiration for the comic book, and the two leave the restaurant together. Arthur asks her if she's still with Pablo, to which she explains "we're breaking up." The two begin kissing in a taxi and go up to Arthur's hotel room. Eventually Miranda responds to Pablo and tells him she is staying with a friend. She feels giddy knowing she is making a major change in her life, and she thinks that Station Eleven will be her constant.

Arthur, contrasting Pablo, expresses interest in Miranda's art, which helps foster the connection between the two Delano Islanders. Like when she moved from the Island, Miranda makes another big change in her life. She takes comfort knowing that she will always have her art as a constant. It will provide her with an escape, with pleasure, and with continuity from one stage of her life to the next, as she will always continue working on it.



Back in her apartment the next day, Miranda packs two suitcases and leaves. At work she says to herself in the mirror "I repent nothing." In bed that night with Arthur she discusses if she is being dishonorable or heartless to Pablo. She plans to return to her apartment one last time the next day to retrieve a few more items. She assures Arthur that Pablo won't do anything more than yell.

Miranda is slowly growing from the uncertain, out-of-place assistant to someone who acts decisively and proudly, evidenced by her message to herself of "I regret nothing." Her assurance to Arthur that Pablo won't do anything dangerous is an example of dramatic irony, as Chapter 13 has already indicated to us that he is abusive.



CHAPTER 15

Some years after this reconnection in Toronto, Arthur and Miranda are married; they have a little dog named Luli and a house in Hollywood. Arthur is extremely famous, and the photographers that follow them around make Miranda constantly anxious. At their house, Miranda and Arthur host ten guests to celebrate their wedding anniversary and the opening figures of Arthur's latest film. Miranda feels that there is something wrong with the evening and has trouble hiding the feeling.

While Arthur believes fame is embarrassing, his status as a super-celebrity creates more anxiety than embarrassment for Miranda. She has trouble identifying exactly what feels off about the evening—in which her wedding anniversary is paired with a celebration of Arthur's career, the very thing that drives so much of her anxiety. Again note the recurrence of the dog's name "Luli."



Arthur is sitting at the other end of the table, and Miranda can't seem to catch his eye. She doesn't say much, and feels out of place in Hollywood. Miranda listens in on various conversations between guests, constantly looking at her dog and hoping everyone will leave. But by midnight, everyone is still there and no one seems close to leaving.

We now see that from the beginning of their relationship to this point in their marriage, Arthur and Miranda seem to have grown more distant rather than closer together. Again, Miranda feels out of place in her life.



Near Miranda, Clark Thompson is talking to a woman named Tesch, who is pretentiously asking him what he does. Clark informs her that he does Management Consulting in New York City. When the topic of conversation turns to Miranda's work, she knows that most people view her as an eccentric since she's so private about Station Eleven. She says that she's almost finished, and isn't sure if she'll publish it when she is done. She maintains that it is the work that's important to her.

From this point Tesch transitions to a personal story about when she was in "Praha," at which point Clark interjects that she can call it "Prague" in English. Elizabeth Colton, Arthur's co-star and the woman he has been looking at all night, says that it is a beautiful city. She remarks that she wants to move to somewhere with history.

The topic of conversation shifts to how Miranda and Arthur met. When Arthur says that it's not that exciting of a story, Elizabeth remarks that she believes everything happens for a reason and that she loves hearing how people met. Arthur concedes to tell the story, at which point Miranda finally excuses herself to let Luli out.

Outside, Miranda reflects on the more personal details of the story that Arthur doesn't share with the guests, and the trauma of Pablo drunkenly waiting for her back at the apartment. As the story ends inside, Miranda notices the way that Elizabeth looks at Arthur and touches his arm. Miranda turns away and Clark comes out for a cigarette. Miranda has realized that Arthur and Elizabeth are having an affair. A comment from Clark suggests to Miranda that everyone else already knows. Clark wishes her luck and heads back inside to the party.

After the party has all but ended, Miranda sketches Station Eleven in her studio. She realizes that she has given Dr. Eleven a clone of her dog Luli. At three in the morning she goes to the kitchen for a cup of tea and notices Elizabeth Colton passed out on the sofa in the living room. Miranda tries to talk to Arthur, but he drunkenly tells her they'll talk in the morning.

The dinner guests in the entertainment industry cannot seem to understand Miranda's desire to produce artwork that will not be commercialized or produced on a mass scale. Art for them is monetized, but for Miranda, we have seen, it is a constant, a personal escape, and a means of coping with the world. It's also a source of pride, as she strives to make it as excellent as possible—but this effort isn't so that others will appreciate it. Rather, she does it for the value of the work itself.



This pronunciation of "Prague" becomes an important marker for a memory later on. Elizabeth Colton here first expresses her desire to move to a city with history, which, if we remember the discussion in the bar immediately following Arthur's death, ultimately leads her to move with her son to Israel.



After the introduction to Elizabeth's desire to move to a place with history, we are given insight into her faith, particularly with the idea that everything happens for a reason. This notion will play a major role in the way that she deals with the Georgia Flu and the collapse.



Miranda now realizes what has seemed so off about the evening: her husband is having an affair with Elizabeth. Thus as she reflects on the gruesome details of the beginning of her relationship with Arthur, she also comes to see its budding end.



Again, Miranda retreats from a difficult situation to Station Eleven. The unintentional cloning of Luli suggests again the way that art can mirror life, and that artists put pieces of themselves into their work.



Miranda then heads out to the driveway and approaches a paparazzo to bum a cigarette. The man agrees not to take her photo and says his name is Jeevan. He gives her a cigarette and asks why Elizabeth Colton's car is still in the driveway. Miranda responds that she's a raging alcoholic and was too wasted to drive. As they talk about his work, Jeevan says that he believes that "work is combat." As Miranda becomes lost in thought, Jeevan catches her off guard and surprises her by taking a photo of her smoking.

Back in the house, Miranda creeps into Arthur's study. She notices the beginning of a letter to Arthur's friend V, and finds the glass **paperweight** that Clark brought that night as a gift. She takes the paperweight and decides to keep it forever.

After taking the **paperweight**, Miranda returns to her studio to continue working on Station Eleven. Soon Elizabeth shows up to apologize. Miranda tells her that what she has done (have an affair with Arthur) is a terrible thing to do. The two end up sitting on a floor surrounded by Station Eleven drawings.

Three months later, Arthur and Miranda get divorced. While Elizabeth moves into their Hollywood home, Miranda moves back to Toronto and starts working for Leon at Neptune Logistics once again. She comes into a more high-powered position and begins traveling the world for work. She wears expensive clothing, which she thinks of as armor, and whispers "I repent nothing" into mirrors of hundreds of hotel rooms across the globe. She loves her life, and she continues to work on Station Eleven in her free time.

CHAPTER 16

This short chapter is an excerpt of a transcript of an interview of Kirsten conducted by François Diallo in Year Fifteen. They talk about how exciting it is that a paper is being published after the collapse. As a librarian, François wants to collect an oral history of the collapse. And since he is a librarian, Kirsten asks if he has ever seen any other copies of the Station Eleven comic **books**, which, she tells him, were given to her by Arthur Leander.

In another act of fate or chance, Miranda shares a cigarette with a man who will one day try to save her (then ex) husband's life. The interaction also exemplifies the other form in which the novel examines fate, namely the notion that we are fated to be a certain way based on the people that influence us. Jeevan's comments on work, for example, will leave a subtle imprint on Miranda.



Here the paperweight passes hands, foreshadowing the journey it will take and the connections it will symbolize, as at this point in the novel we know that Kirsten ends up with the paperweight (as well as the "Dr. Eleven" comics).



While the two women have every reason to hate one another (as one had an affair with the other's husband), they still share a moment surrounded by and marveling at the drawings of Station Eleven, suggesting that art can be a powerful unifying force.



Once back in the corporate world, Miranda reinvents herself. She gets her expensive clothing, and in a slight echo from Jeevan's "work is combat" line, she thinks of this clothing as her armor in the world. After the marriage and divorce, she still repents nothing. Opposing Jeevan, she loves her work and globetrotting lifestyle. And all the while, her art and Station Eleven remain the grounding constant she knew they would be.



The publication of a newspaper after the collapse represents a leap for humanity towards rebuilding civilization. Recording interviews meant to preserve the collapse seems to imply that something comes next, that some future civilization will want record of what occurred. Given Kirsten's obsession with Station Eleven, it makes sense that she would ask François about any other copies.



CHAPTER 17

A year before the Flu, Arthur and Clark have dinner in London. By this point, Arthur has a son with his second wife (Elizabeth Colton) and he has just been served divorce papers by his third wife. He tells Clark that Elizabeth is taking their son and moving to Israel. During the dinner, Clark gets the feeling that Arthur is performing.

Here we see Elizabeth's desire to move to a city with history playing out: she has taken their son to Israel. We also note art spilling over into life, as Clark can't tell if Arthur is being genuine or performing some version of himself, acting instead of really being there as an earnest human.



CHAPTER 18

In another excerpt from Kirsten's interview in Year Fifteen, François asks about Kirsten's origins as an actress. Kirsten says that she has some problems with memory. She remembers very little of life before the collapse. She says that after her brother died she was found by the Symphony in Ohio during a disastrous attempt at expanding their territory. They then discuss small towns, the danger of the world, and the threat and unpredictability that follow when a cult takes over a town.

Kirsten here reveals more details about her fragmented memory. Not only does she have no memory of Year One, but she also can't remember much of her life during the height of civilization. Her brother's death is, for the meantime, left unexplained. Such death and uncertainty make the world unpredictable, and susceptible for dangerous thinking. Such is the situation that enables cults, like the prophet's, to take over towns.



CHAPTER 19

Back in Year Twenty, the Symphony argues to distract themselves from their fear of the prophet and his men. Dieter says that the Symphony's motto, "survival is insufficient," would be more profound if it weren't taken from *Star Trek*. But Kirsten, who has this line tattooed on her left forearm, disagrees. She also has two black knives tattooed on the back of her right wrist. She tells Dieter that the line is her favorite line of text in the world. August remembers the TV episode that featured the line fondly.

Here we briefly see conversation and argument as a means of escape, survival, and coping. The subject of the discussion is a debate on high art versus low art. Though Dieter says the Symphony's motto would have more value if taken from another source, the idea that value and meaning can come from all levels of art parallels the notion that what survives isn't only Shakespeare—it's also gossip magazines and self-published comic books. Art has value because of the value that people find in it—and people don't only find value in high art or cherished masterpieces.



The Symphony soon stops to rest, and the conductor sends out scouts ahead and behind to see if the prophet has sent men after them. Kirsten thinks back on her childhood, and then tries to explain air conditioning to Alexandra while camp is set up. During the preparations, the first cello discovers a stowaway: the girl who was following Kirsten back in St. Deborah by the Water.

Alexandra relies on the memories of others, a communal memory, to understand the civilization of the past. People like Kirsten, who struggles to remember, and older Symphony members with memories that are fully intact build this communal memory.



The little girl, named Eleanor, explains that she left because her parents are dead and she is promised to be the prophet's next wife. She is twelve years old. She tells the Symphony that the prophet claimed to have a dream instructing him to repopulate the earth. She also tells them that Charlie and the sixth guitar have headed to the Museum of Civilization.

The young stowaway has taken action to save her own life, but by doing so has put the Symphony at risk, since it will appear that they have kidnapped her. The prophet's dreams and faith are filled with ideals for saving the world and rebuilding civilization, but they are also self-serving, misogynistic, and borderline pedophilic.



Over dinner, Eleanor tells the Symphony what she knows about the prophet. He is from the Museum of Civilization. He apparently came to St. Deborah by the Water, announced himself as a messenger of God, and took over the town. He married the mayor's wife after the mayor died and moved into the gas station. His group had a large arsenal of weapons. Finally, Kirsten asks Eleanor if she know why the prophet's dog is named Luli, but Eleanor doesn't know.

Coincidentally or not, the prophet comes from the same place that the Symphony is now headed. His stockpile of weapons gives him immense power in the lawless post-collapse civilization. Kirsten has recognized the strange connection between the prophet and Station Eleven because of the dog's name, but doesn't yet fully understand it.



CHAPTER 20

A few days' journey from St. Deborah by the Water the Symphony comes across an abandoned resort. They carefully make a camp and dinner. When scouts report of a school up ahead, Kirsten, August, Jackson, and the viola go to the school in hope of finding instruments or useful supplies. There they find a few useful items and graffiti and notes all around the abandoned school. Jackson finds a skeleton in the men's room, and August says a prayer over it. As they return to the Symphony, Kirsten tries to put the skeleton out of her mind.

One of the realities of surviving the collapse is interacting with countless dead bodies. August's tradition of saying prayers over the dead is one of the few instances of harmless religious faith in the novel, presented as a way to deal with so much death. Kirsten and August seem to be the only ones comfortable with this type of looting, and it's possible that August's prayers are part of what make it manageable for him.



CHAPTER 21

In a tiny interview excerpt, François asks Kirsten about the black knives tattooed on her wrist. Kirsten responds that François knows better than to ask about that subject.

The tattoos remain unexplained at this point, though they seem to relate in some way to Kirsten's affinity for knife-throwing.



CHAPTER 22

Kirsten thinks of how much the world has changed in her lifetime, which makes her think of Alexandra. There's a chance, Kirsten thinks, that Alexandra will live her life without having to kill another person. A rainstorm starts, after which the Symphony pitches their tents for the night.

Civilization has changed from modernity to chaos, and then to a semblance of calm or normalcy. During the first years following the collapse, the violence required many to kill in order to stay alive. Young people like Alexandra never lived through that time, and might be able to live a full life without being placed in a kill or be killed situation.



In their tent, Dieter whispers to Kirsten that the night before he dreamed he saw an **airplane**. Kirsten does not remember airplanes well since she was so young when the collapse happened, but Dieter remembers everything with perfect clarity. He tells Kirsten that after the collapse he would look up to the sky searching for airplanes, knowing that if he saw one, it would mean that somewhere civilization still existed.

Though Kirsten has very little memory of planes, to Dieter they symbolize civilization and the hope that it will one day return. Air travel is one of the most taken-for-granted examples of our technological advancement. The network of humans required for commercial flight is vast, and so the plane symbolizes a return to the possibility of globalization as opposed to the localized foot travel that currently limits the Symphony.



After this conversation about **airplanes**, Kirsten and Dieter take their turn as second watch. Dieter and Sayid scout the road behind the camp, August and Kirsten keep watch of the camp, and the fourth guitar and oboe walk ahead. Kirsten and August circle the camp and discuss the possibility of stopping their constant traveling and settling down, but then they hear a disturbance. They wake the third watch so they can go investigate, but they're unable to find Dieter and Sayid, who seem to have vanished.

CHAPTER 23

No one understands what has happened to Sayid and Dieter. They have vanished from their watch without a trace. The conductor reminds everyone that there have been other times when Symphony members have been separated, and every time they've followed the protocol and been reunited at the destination. Alexandra repeats the protocol that everyone has memorized: never travel without a destination; if you're separated on the road, go to the destination and wait. Thus the Symphony decides to continue to the Museum of Civilization at the Severn City Airport in the hopes that Sayid and Dieter will meet them there.

After more travel, Kirsten says to August that she thinks Sayid and Dieter have been taken. She can't stop thinking about what the prophet was saying about light. He said if you are the light, then your enemies are the darkness, and that means (Kirsten says) there is nothing you can't justify, which in turn means "there's nothing you can't survive, because there's nothing that you will not do."

Four teams of people are sent out to look for dinner, but only three and a half return, as Jackson reports that the clarinet has vanished. The oboe notes that the clarinet was close with Dieter, as the Symphony wonders whether they were taken or if there is something else mysterious going on. Later that day, someone finds a note in the clarinet's belongings, which reads "Dear friends, I find myself immeasurably weary and I have gone to rest in the forest." The Symphony wonders whether this is a suicide note or not.

While survival alone is insufficient, the Symphony must still take precautions and efforts to remain alive. The night watches are a key aspect of this precaution. Just as Kirsten and August discuss making a major lifestyle change and settling into a small town, drama unfolds, reminding readers of the harsh reality and dangers of living on the road in the post-collapse world.



The disappearance of Sayid and Dieter is so complete that it seems surreal. The Symphony, though, has a plan in place for this type of situation, which is why they always travel with a destination in mind, never wandering. Memory here plays an important role in survival, since it is remembering the destination and separation policy that can keep Symphony members alive when they have been separated from the group.



Kirsten suspects the prophet has taken her friends. She sees in his faith the scary truth which the novel projects: since the prophet believes himself to be a messenger of God, anything is justifiable. This faith enables survival, because it removes any limitations or actions that for many would be unjustified, even in a struggle to survive the post-collapse world. It also makes the prophet unpredictable and even more dangerous.



Though they travel in pairs, somehow another Symphony member is taken without her partner realizing. The clarinet's strange letter could be a suicide note expressing weariness with the life of travel and a constant struggle to survive, resulting in the clarinet deciding to "take a rest in the forest" and kill herself. However, this is up for debate in the Symphony, and is by no means conclusive.



Since they are both terrified, August writes Kirsten a small poem to comfort her. As the Symphony moves onward, fallen trees block them. While they clear the trees, August and Kirsten discover a golf course, which they loot, since they once found a bottle of scotch and a jar of olives in a similar location. Here they discover a pond filled with fish, which are so plentiful that they are able to catch them with nets alone. They clean the fish as it begins to rain, but when they return to the Symphony they find that it has already left. Kirsten and August make the difficult decision of eating the fish before it goes bad and finding a place to rest for the night. They have been separated from the Symphony.

August shares a small piece of personal art with Kirsten in a moment of comfort and closeness between the two. Just as they find good luck in the golf course and the fish they catch, they encounter the bad luck of being separated from the Symphony. Now the two must journey alone with hopes of reuniting with the Symphony at their destination as dictated by the separation policy. Their fear in this situation quickly goes from losing their friends one by one to suddenly losing all their friends at once.



CHAPTER 24

As they walk on their second day without the Symphony, Kirsten and August come across a gas station. They look around and a dog barks, and a man appears holding a rifle. They assure the man (who soon introduces himself as Finn) that they are only passing through and are headed for the Museum of Civilization in the Severn City Airport. After a tense interaction, he invites them to fill their water bottles in the back.

Traveling alone, even in a pair, is extremely dangerous. The man that they encounter carries a weapon, and though their interaction is polite, the tension throughout indicates the open mistrust among humans after the collapse. Luckily, Finn is kind and nonviolent, so Kirsten and August are able to pass unharmed.



There, Kirsten sees two redheaded twins, whom she recognizes from the last time the Symphony passed through St. Deborah by the Water two years ago. She wonders if it is better or worse for children to never have known any world other than the one after the Flu.

As Kirsten herself remembers the children, she wonders about the benefits and costs of memory. Knowing about the world before the Flu can be good explanation and history for children, but it can also be confusing, painful, and impractical.



When Kirsten asks Finn if they've met before, since she recognizes him from St. Deborah by the Water, he asks if the prophet sent her. When she says no, Finn says he remembers the Symphony passing through, and that he left once the prophet took over. Finn tells Kirsten and August that Charlie and Jeremy left a few days before he did.

Finn has apparently interacted with the notorious prophet. He provides the essential information that Charlie and Jeremy left St. Deborah by the Water safely soon before he did.



As Kirsten and August walk onward, they discuss the Symphony's absence and Finn's scar, which is the symbol of a lowercase *t* with the extra line added. Soon they come across a driveway, which they follow to a house that, miraculously, given all of the looting and time since the flu, has a locked front door. When they enter, they realize that the house is untouched, the first un-looted house they'd found in years. They pass through the house, admiring the now useless relics of civilization. August says prayers for the dead family members, and the two collect some supplies, including fancy clothing Kirsten plans to use for costumes. She believes that the Symphony's work is to cast a spell, and that wearing costumes helps. There is something special, she thinks, about the character of Titania in a gown, for example. They each leave with one suitcase full of new supplies, but before leaving August searches for a TV *Guide* or poetry **book**, and Kirsten looks for "Dr. Eleven" or a copy of *Dear V.*, a book she lost on the road. The book is comprised entirely of letters from Arthur Leander to his friend V.

At this point, Kirsten and August cannot yet ascertain the meaning of the prophet's symbol. They have the good fortune of finding an untouched house, which gives them an opportunity to gather supplies but forces them once again to encounter death. In collecting costumes, Kirsten reflects on the purpose of the Symphony, which is to partly provide a magical escape for audience members. The costumes make these escapes more convincing and seem to contribute something intangible yet important to the theatre experience. As always, they search for books for the memories, valuable information, and potential for comfort and escape that they provide.



CHAPTER 25

Chapter 25 consists only of letters from Arthur to Victoria, filled with memories and beginning with his time as a young man in Toronto. After a decade-long gap, he writes again to let her know that he's marrying an artist who does beautiful comic strip-type things. The next letter informs V that Arthur has met and fallen in love with someone else: Elizabeth Colton. He also writes of a dinner with Clark and Elizabeth, which was a bit awkward since the last time Clark was there was the dinner party when Arthur was still married to Miranda.

This chapter is filled with Arthur's memories, insecurity, and vanity. The leap from a letter about Miranda to a letter about Elizabeth portrays Arthur as somewhat fickle and womanizing as he moves from one marriage to the next. Arthur's mention of the awkward dinner party reinforces its significance as a crucial moment where many key figures in the novel overlap. The book is also a testament to Arthur's celebrity and the type of obsession with his personal life characteristic of Mandel's portrait of modern civilization.



CHAPTER 26

This chapter takes place before the Flu. It begins with Elizabeth Colton calling Clark to notify him of the impending publication of the **book** *Dear V.* Apparently, she says, Arthur talks about his friends and marriages in detail in his letters. Clark and Elizabeth plan to meet in New York.

Jumping from letters in the book, Mandel jumps to those who will be affected by its publication.



After the phone call ends, Clark runs to a meeting. He is doing executive consulting for a company near Grand Central Station, but he keeps getting frustrated by iPhone "zombies" in his way, people who walk slowly and are absorbed in their phones, completely unaware of the world around them. At the meeting, he interviews a young woman named Dahlia about her boss Dan. Dahlia complains that Dan is wandering through his life like a high functioning-sleepwalker. Clark realizes that he himself has been simply going through the motions of his life.

The iPhone "zombies" and Dahlia's description of high functioning sleepwalkers are clear criticisms of modern civilization and the detachment from other humans and from reality that technology enables. After hearing Dahlia's testimony, Clark realizes that he too has fallen prey to this degenerative force of civilization and technology.



CHAPTER 27

Seven years before the collapse, Jeevan Chaudhary books an interview with Arthur Leander. Jeevan worked previously as a paparazzo, but has decided to break into entertainment journalism. Jeevan is worried that Arthur will recognize him as the man who took the embarrassing photo of Miranda, but Arthur doesn't seem to know. Arthur takes a liking in Jeevan, and decides to give him an exclusive story. On the condition he won't tell another soul for twenty-four hours, Arthur tells Jeevan that he is leaving Elizabeth Colton for Lydia Marks. He says that nothing bad has ever happened to Elizabeth, and that he couldn't bring himself to tell her. He is using Jeevan's story as an incentive to force himself to tell his wife he's leaving her. Jeevan will make it a sensitive story, and will say that Arthur and Elizabeth are committed to co-parenting their young son Tyler.

In a new timeline, we see another coincidental or fated intersection of Jeevan and Arthur, but Jeevan is still in his transition from paparazzo to EMT trainee. Working as an entertainment journalist, he provides the opportunity for Arthur to force himself into action. Not only is Arthur leaving his second wife, but he is also unable to do so without the pressure of the story's looming publication. This is an extremely unflattering moment for Arthur, who at this time has just had his son Tyler, on whom these actions will have a large impact in the future.



CHAPTER 28

On his brother Frank's sofa in Toronto after the Flu, Jeevan tries to remember what happened after Arthur told him about leaving Elizabeth Colton. Jeevan entertains random memories and wonders if he'll ever see his girlfriend again. Cellphones have stopped working. The world is ending outside.

Back in the timeline in which the story began, during his efforts to survive the pandemic Jeevan thinks about the past as a means of escape and distraction from the apocalypse that's occurring.



CHAPTER 29

Jeevan remembers keeping his word and waiting a full twenty-four hours before telling anyone about Arthur's second divorce, one of the only moments in his professional career he's proud of. He tells his brother Frank that he's smiling about Arthur, and then he remembers tricking Miranda into the embarrassing photo with a cigarette.

While the moment is unflattering for Arthur, Jeevan is proud of keeping his word because it was a rare moment of integrity during that point in his life. He remembers that most of his entertainment career was trickery and taking advantage of people, which he seems to regret.



CHAPTER 30

Frank yells at Jeevan to stop singing "It's the end of the world as we know it." The two brothers continue to live in Frank's apartment, which has been set up with supplies and has its windows covered to prevent anyone from knowing they are there. Days go on and the news continues to report seemingly impossible death tolls.

While civilization ends, Jeevan and Frank survive and get on each other's nerves. The return to this timeline is the first time in the novel Mandel explores the realities of living through the collapse, having spent most of the novel either before or after the flu outbreak.



Jeevan uses Frank's telescope to note that the gridlock of cars on the highway is absolute, as people begin abandoning their vehicles. By day five, Frank has started working on his writing project instead of watching the news, since it was driving him and his brother crazy. Cities and countries began going dark until TV stations stop broadcasting and even the Internet blinks out.

As the days go on, Frank puts his energy into his project to distract himself from the situation. Jeevan often contemplates how human the city is, and how so many facets of modernity rely on an interconnected infrastructure of people. **Airplanes** cannot fly, food can't be delivered, and no one is alive to work at power plants. As Jeevan thinks about the reliance of civilization on so many humans, the power goes out.

Around Day Thirty, after running water stops, Frank reflects that living cooped up like this is similar to the tree house he and Jeevan had as children. Jeevan says that they can wait out the situation for a while. He has filled every receptacle in the apartment with water before it stopped running. He says they'll just stay there until the lights come back on and the Red Cross shows up. He has become prone to daydreaming that something like this will happen. But Frank, more pessimistic, or perhaps realistic, says, "what makes you think the lights will come back on?"

CHAPTER 31

This chapter is another excerpt from François Diallo's interview of Kirsten. Kirsten says that the night of the collapse, she was in Toronto in a production of *King Lear*. Arthur Leander had a heart attack on stage, and before he died, a mystery audience member tried to save him. Kirsten remarks that the man was kind to her, and asks if François knew his name from the obituary. François says that he's not sure anyone does.

CHAPTER 32

On Day Forty-Seven, Jeevan sees smoke rising in the distance. Sometimes he hears gunshots at night. The stench of death from the hallway seeps into the apartment regardless of how much plastic or duct tape they use on the door, so they keep the windows open at all times and sleep next to each other in Frank's bed. Jeevan thinks about leaving and knows it will be extremely difficult to navigate Frank's wheelchair through stopped cars and all the snow.

Like others in the novel, Frank turns to work and art to distract himself from the reality of what's going on. This reality is that civilization is collapsing and billions of people are dying. Frank and Jeevan try not to think about these horrible facts.



Civilization, Jeevan realizes, doesn't just rely on technology. Rather, it relies on a massive network of humans, working and thinking around the globe. The collapse of civilization isn't because technology just stops working—there simply are not enough humans left to make everything run smoothly.



Memories are another tool for coping with bad situations. By comparing survival in the apartment to a fond childhood memory, Frank makes it more bearable. At the same time, he seems not to share Jeevan's optimism that someone is bound to show up or that civilization will miraculously be repaired. Frank rightly knows there is no reason to assume that the lights will ever turn back on, or that anyone is coming to help them. They must rely on themselves and each other alone to survive.



Amidst telling the story of Jeevan's survival, Mandel cuts to another interview excerpt that shows that while Jeevan survives and the knowledge of his heroic deed is passed on, his name is lost to history simply by virtue of not being included in Arthur's obituary. This death obviously has a huge impact on young Kirsten, since she isolates it as an important moment in her life even though it immediately preceded the death of her parents and almost everyone she's ever known.



The scent of death is a reminder that even most of the other people in Frank's apartment building have died. Nearly fifty days into the collapse, Jeevan begins to realize that he'll need to leave, but wonders how he will possibly be able to take his handicapped brother and still manage to survive without the benefits of modern civilization.



They hadn't heard anyone in the apartment building for over a week, so Jeevan decides to risk venturing out of the apartment. Up on the roof, he feels exposed after being inside for so long. He sees a storm coming and decides that they will leave and use the storm as cover.

The exposure that Jeevan feels outside on the roof will become the normal feeling of fear and inconsistency experienced in the post-collapse world. Without the protective structures of civilization, humans are exposed to the elements and to each other.



Frank asks where they will go or how they will survive once they leave. He says that when he was shot while covering a war for Reuters, he spent a lot of time thinking about civilization and decided he never wanted to see a war zone again. He still feels this way, and says that he thinks there is only survival in whatever is left of the world. Jeevan says he can't just leave Frank, but Frank tells his brother, "I'll leave first," and "I've given this some thought." Jeevan asks him what he means, but he understands fully what Frank is suggesting.

Having seen war and been paralyzed, Frank values civilization and believes that whatever is out in the world no longer satisfies his definition of civilization. Frank implies here that he will kill himself in order to allow Jeevan to leave, a major sacrifice to enable his brother's survival. Frank doesn't seem to accept the notion of doing more than just surviving out in the post-collapse world, possibly because the requirements of adapting and surviving would be even harsher for him due to his paralysis.



CHAPTER 33

In the interview with François, Kirsten asks if he still has the obituary, which was in the second-to-last edition of the *New York Times*. François has it, but the CPR man (Jeevan) is unnamed in the publication. Kirsten continues the story of that evening, saying that the man spoke to her and helped her find her babysitter (Tanya). This woman, whose name Kirsten can't remember, gave Kirsten the glass **paperweight**, which she still carries with her because she thinks it's beautiful.

In the interview, François confirms that Jeevan's name has not been recorded. Kirsten carries the paperweight because she received it the night of Arthur's death, giving it meaning and memory for her, but mostly she carries it with her because she thinks it is beautiful. Though impractical in the sense that it serves no purpose directly related to surviving, simply carrying around a beautiful object helps give Kirsten the strength to maintain her humanity and to live a life of depth in the post-collapse world.



Kirsten says that what happened next she doesn't remember, but knows because her brother Peter told her. When the woman (Tanya) couldn't reach their parents, she called Peter and ended up dropping Kirsten off at home with him. Kirsten never saw her parents again, and she figures they must have been some of the very first to die from the epidemic. At first, Kirsten and her brother just waited for their parents to come back.

Again we see a major lapse in Kirsten's memory, only filled in by the support of her brother. Though she doesn't remember getting home that night, she knows that she never saw her parents ever again. The near complete lack of memories of her parents suggests that her obsession with Arthur Leander might be filling that parental gap.



CHAPTER 34

Back in Year One in Toronto, on Day Fifty-Eight, Frank reads Jeevan something he has been working on over the past months. Frank has been ghostwriting a philanthropist's memoir, even though the person is probably dead. The passage he reads reflects on actors, charity, and immortality and remembrance. He says that being remembered makes us immortal.

Frank's reflection that being remembered makes us immortal speaks both to his own looming death and to the question of Jeevan's name being omitted from Arthur Leander's obituary. And though Arthur's death begins the novel, every major character remembers him, thus making him, in Frank's definition, immortal.



CHAPTER 35

In the interview, Kirsten talks about the last days before she left Toronto. She stayed in the basement watching TV while the neighborhood emptied out, until one day Peter said to her it was time to go. They hotwired a car that the neighbors had abandoned, but eventually they got trapped by abandoned cars and had to start walking. They walked east and south, around the lake and into the United States.

Amidst all the death and emptying of civilization, the only course of action that seemed reasonable was moving and taking to the road. They embark on a journey of miles and miles that Kirsten will ultimately repress.



CHAPTER 36

Now outside, Jeevan decides to follow the lake and head south. It's implied that Frank killed himself; Jeevan checks twice to make sure he isn't breathing. With the hiking bag that Frank for some reason kept after being paralyzed, Jeevan sets out into the cold, dark, empty city. He moves as quickly as he can, at one point hearing gunshots and becoming terrified.

Frank's suicide illuminates the closeness of survival to death. For Jeevan to have a strong chance of staying alive, Frank must die. The hiking bag is a small detail that shows the way that fate keeps popping its head up in the novel. Did Frank know someday the bag would have a use? Was it merely a coincidence? Whatever the case, Jeevan's fate is tied inextricably to his brother's influence and sacrifice.



Jeevan finds it difficult not to think of Frank, both of the image of him on his bed next to an empty bottle of sleeping pills, and of older memories. As the sun rises, he builds a makeshift shelter, and is briefly able to sleep. When he wakes he has never been colder.

Not only has he just lost a brother, but Jeevan also must face for the first time the harsh physical realities of life in nature after the collapse.



At first Jeevan is terrified of being robbed or abused in a lawless world, but he soon realizes that there are hardly any people left. Five days pass before he sees another human. He meets and approaches a group of three: Ben, Abdul, and Jenny. Ben is apparently immune to the Flu, since he took care of his family who all died within forty-eight hours of getting sick. Jeevan travels with the group for a week until they decide to head out in different directions.

Though a world without civilization's structures of law can be terrifying and dangerous, at this point in time there simply isn't a large enough population for crime to be statistically likely. When Jeevan does meet another group of people, they only travel together for a week. After so many deaths, the world is a place of solitude.



On his journey Jeevan remembers a conversation with Frank over two months ago, about how in disaster movies there is always an apocalypse and then something after, and Frank asks, "what makes you think we'll make it to afterward?" Pushing the memory aside, Jeevan makes his way southward through the snow and the horrors. He avoids roads and towns, and tries to keep a grasp on his identity.

While Jeevan seems to hold out hope that civilization will be restored, Frank represents a counterpoint perspective. He is consistently realistic, pessimistic, yet calm and accepting of the reality of the havoc the Georgia Flu is wreaking on humanity.



CHAPTER 37

In the interview, Kirsten says that she remembers absolutely nothing of the first year after the collapse. She has memories of stopping in a town and from her entire life since then. She says that she can't remember her time on the road, which she thinks means she can't remember the worst part of it. The people who have the hardest time, she thinks, are those who remember the old world most clearly, since they remember what they have lost. Kirsten barely remembers her life before the collapse, including only small impressions of her parents. She also remembers looking out of an **airplane** window and gets chills thinking of the sea of electric lights. When sharing other fragmented memories from the past, she has to verify with François that refrigerators did in fact have light inside as well as cold.

Kirsten's memory is fragmented, but she believes this to be a blessing of a kind, since it prevents her from remembering the worst part of her life and the horrors on the road as the world collapsed. Remembering exactly what one has lost is figured as more painful than simply forgetting. In other words, she believes in the cliché "ignorance is bliss." Because she only has tiny fragments of memories of the world before the collapse, Kirsten must (like many young people) rely on communal memory and conversation with elders and those unfortunate enough to remember every horror and everything they've lost.



CHAPTER 38

Back in Year Twenty, Kirsten and August leave the house they found. Kirsten can barely comprehend the idea of living in a house and locking the door behind her. Later, while they flip through the magazines Kirsten found in the house, they discuss the theory of parallel universes. They like to imagine universes where the pandemic never happened, or where civilization hadn't been so devastated by the Flu. In one alternate universe, August suggests, it might have been Kirsten on the cover of tabloids.

The parallel universe theory discussion is a scientific worldview that contrasts with the faith-centric cult of the prophet. Instead of believing that everything happens for a reason, the Georgia Flu is simply something that happened randomly in this universe but also didn't happen in an infinite number of other places.



As she looks through the magazines, Kirsten discovers a photo of Miranda Carroll visiting the production of [King Lear](#) in Toronto. Kirsten realizes that she was in the building at that very moment, but can't remember exactly if she saw Miranda there. August notes that the photo is from two weeks before the apocalypse, and Kirsten jokes, "At least the celebrity gossip survived."

Kirsten's joke points to the seeming randomness or irony that masterpieces have been destroyed but low-art like gossip magazines survived, but the photo she has found helps spark her memory and connect her back to Arthur and Miranda Carroll.



After they are done with the magazines, they continue discussing parallel universes. This conversation has become a game and an escape in their years of friendship. They wonder about other lives where civilization had continued, or where space travel has been invented, or where they have boarded Station Eleven. They also imagine worse universes, for example a universe where Kirsten remembered her first year on the road and what caused the scar on her face. The conversation ends with a parallel universe where Sayid and Dieter didn't disappear (or a parallel universe where they could just call them on cellphones).

The theory of parallel universes is an escape to contrast the prophet's faith, but the conversation itself forms another kind of escape. It is a safe space, a familiar conversation that provides continuity in their relationship. Of course, it also helps to point out the frustrations of living without civilization, as in a parallel universe Kirsten and August could simply call the missing friends whose very absence has driven them to this conversation about hypotheticals.



When the conversation turns to Sayid and Dieter, Kirsten and August get moving again. They are close to Severn City now, but they decide they don't want to travel at night, so they set up camp in the backyard of an abandoned home. As they are falling asleep, August thinks about the man at the gas station (Finn) and the scar on his face. He tells Kirsten he realized what it is, and Kirsten says it was a mark from the prophet. But August has realized what the symbol is: it's an **airplane**.

After thinking about the absence of their friends, the reality of which universe they actually live in overcomes Kirsten and August and they are forced to keep moving. August's realization complicates the symbolism of airplanes, as strange notions of faith, marking other humans, and the prophet himself are juxtaposed with the ideas of hope, technology, and civilization that planes already have come to symbolize.



CHAPTER 39

Two weeks before the collapse, Miranda flies to Toronto from New York. At this point, she is a high-powered, well-traveled business executive for Neptune Logistics. She sees "ghosts" of her older self everywhere, poorly dressed, uncertain, and anxious. Now Miranda is confident and competent. She whispers into the mirror, "I regret nothing," once again. She goes to meetings for work until she has to meet Arthur.

After her divorce from Arthur, Miranda has made another major life change and evolved into a newly competent woman. She is still able to look back on the memories her life without regret. We can also note that she is fully engrained in civilization, acting as one of the people whose effort is required to keep the world as we know it moving.



The reason Miranda is seeing Arthur is a call she received a few months ago from Arthur telling her that his father died. She expresses her condolences and wonders why he called, as they haven't spoken since the divorce. Arthur responds that Miranda knows where he is from.

Again, the mutual background of Delano Island is the basis for a unique connection between Arthur and Miranda. Arthur can only seem to talk about his father's death with someone from the same place.



Arthur is staring in a production of [King Lear](#), and they decide to meet at the theatre, since Arthur is in the middle of his third divorce and believes going to a restaurant will be too public. Though the paparazzi stopped following her long ago, Miranda spends some time on her appearance (her "armor") before leaving her hotel. On the way in to the theatre, she's noticed by the paparazzi, and the photo Kirsten discovers in the tabloid in Chapter 38 is taken.

Miranda's frustration with the paparazzi has lingered beyond her marriage to Arthur, but now she has the clothing and the confidence to more effectively brave the onslaught of photos and questions. The paparazzi continue to symbolize the superficiality of modern civilization.



Arthur and Miranda meet in his dressing room, where they begin by exchanging pleasantries. She asks him how the previews for the play are going, and he tells her he has been enjoying working with a Shakespearean scholar as a consultant for his role of Lear. After Miranda expresses condolences for the loss of his father, Arthur takes the opportunity to tell her about the impending publication of *Dear V*.

Arthur is at once engaged in Lear and his artistic process, in grieving for his father's death, and in understanding the fact that he is aging. It could be seen as manipulative to use the news of his father's death to soften the blow of the impending publication of "Dear V."



Though she is mentioned in the **book**, Arthur tells Miranda he did use some discretion in his letters to Victoria. He tells Miranda he thinks he deserves this publication, since he treated Victoria like a diary instead of a real person reading letters. He assumes she agreed to publish the letters for the money. Throughout this conversation, Miranda can't tell if Arthur is acting or not, and wonders if the blurring of borders between performance and life happens to all actors.

The topic of conversation turns back to catching up: Miranda isn't married, she has no kids, and she loves her job and her life. Arthur, on the other hand, has an eight-year-old son (Tyler) who lives with his mother (Elizabeth) in Jerusalem.

At this point in the conversation, a young Kirsten enters the dressing room with her coloring **book**. Miranda is introduced to Kirsten and reflects that she will probably grow up to be unadventurous and well-groomed. Miranda also sees in the way that Arthur interacts with Kirsten how much he misses his own son.

Arthur then asks Miranda if she is still drawing, to which she answers yes, always. Her focus has lately been on the Undersea as opposed to Dr. Eleven himself. This question reminds her to give Arthur two copies of the first two issues of the "Dr. Eleven" comic **books**.

While Arthur flips through the comics, Kirsten colors in her coloring **book**. Kirsten fears that she has messed up coloring the princess's dress, but Miranda and Arthur think it's perfect. The conversation between Arthur and Miranda ends with Miranda saying she's headed for Asia in four days. She informs Arthur that twelve percent of the world's shipping fleet is moored outside of Singapore Harbor.

A little while later, Miranda realizes she forgot to give Arthur the **paperweight** that Clark Thompson brought to the dinner party in Los Angeles eleven years earlier. She studies it for a moment, and then has it shipped to the theatre for Arthur.

Like Clark, Miranda notices that performance and reality are blurring for Arthur, which leads to the question of whether or not Arthur is being genuine. While Miranda wonders if she is interacting with a genuine person or not, Arthur feels he deserves punishment for failing to remember that in writing letters to Victoria, he was indeed corresponding with a person, not just a journal.



While Arthur has remarried several times, Miranda remains unmarried, and she seems happier than ever in her working and personal life.



Kirsten will not remember this chance meeting with Miranda, who wrote the comics that Kirsten will come to cherish. Ironically, Miranda presumes Kirsten will grow up to be unadventurous, when in reality she will grow up to be a travelling actor with deadly knife throwing abilities. Note also how obvious it is to Miranda that Arthur is in pain and misses Tyler.



This exchange is what leads to Kirsten's eventual possession the "Dr. Eleven" comics. As always, art is a constant for Miranda. Even in her new happy life, she is perpetually drawing and working on the comics.



Miranda's comment about the shipping fleet reflects the excess of civilization. We are so developed that we have dormant ships, wasting away on the ocean and awaiting things to carry across the world. Soon the ability to order an item from the other side of the globe will be a distant memory.



This moment is a key step in the paperweight's connective journey. Miranda once took the paperweight, but must send it back in order for it to end up with Kirsten in the post-collapse world.



CHAPTER 40

Two weeks after meeting with Arthur in Toronto, Miranda is on a beach in Malaysia. She is unaware that the collapse is occurring. She's in Malaysia since Neptune Logistics owns dormant boats that have nothing to ship due to the recession. No one is spending money, so there is a surplus of shipping space. Suddenly, she receives a call from Clark Thomson, Arthur's oldest friend. Clark informs her that Arthur died on stage.

In New York, Clark hangs up the phone and pauses before moving on to calling Elizabeth Colton. During the pause, he receives a call from Arthur's lawyer, Gary Heller. Heller starts talking about the possibility of a second will, believing that Arthur intended to include Tanya as a beneficiary during his final weeks. But Clark is disinterested, and begins sadly (and fondly) remembering Arthur when he was a young man. Clark proceeds to hang up and call Elizabeth.

The conversation with Elizabeth is short. Clark informs her of the news, and tells her that the will dictated specifically that the funeral should be in Toronto. As he talks to Elizabeth, Clark remembers a conversation with Arthur years ago about the cities they'd lived in. Arthur says he values Toronto because he came from a tiny island where everyone knew him, and then he moved to L.A. where he was famous and well known. Toronto was the only place he felt free.

The next day, Clark wakes up early and heads to the airport. Though he doesn't know it yet, he has a series of miraculous near misses, as he manages to make it through the city and airport without encountering anyone who is sick or contagious. He then boards an **airplane** filled with similarly lucky, healthy people, including, by chance, Elizabeth Colton and her son Tyler. As they board he says hello, and they don't speak again during the flight until the plane is diverted to somewhere in Michigan and everyone deplanes in the Severn City Airport.

Again, we see the excess of civilization and the potential to ship items that will soon cease to exist. Before the billions of deaths looming, Miranda is informed of the singular death of her ex-husband. The news of the death, too, comes from a means of technology that will soon perish.



While Gary Heller wonders about the logistics of Arthur's death, Clark contemplates the loss of a dear friend and memories of young Arthur. The ease with which Clark connects with Gary and then Elizabeth is a further emphasis on the miracle of technology, which at the time seems completely standard and un-exceptional.



Arthur's funeral will be held in Toronto, since it is the only place he ever felt free. Delano Island is isolated and removed from civilization, which means that there is no anonymity. In L.A., because he was so famous, there was constant attention and expectations. But in Toronto he was able to feel free and anonymous in a large city, one of the most appealing aspects of civilization to Arthur.



Clark's miraculous survival is an example of the novel's exploration of fate and chance. Is it merely a lucky accident that Clark passes through New York City and manages to avoid contact with the flu, or is it some sort of fated occurrence? As always, this question involves the people to whom Clark is connected, as it's his coordination with Elizabeth that leaves all of them together in Severn City.



CHAPTER 41

After receiving the news of Arthur's death, Miranda sits on the beach for a while, thinking about Arthur. Slowly, she begins to realize that she is tired and feeling slightly ill. She heads back to the lobby, which is deserted, and receives a look of terror from an employee. She then makes her way up to her room and turns on the news.

While Miranda thinks about Arthur's death, she starts becoming sick, as the symptoms of the flu that will lead to her death are beginning to show. The news will bring her information that Arthur's death is just one of millions that day.



Once she is aware of the Flu and the emerging collapse, it is too late for her to leave Malaysia, since all of the airports are closed. As Miranda starts feeling sicker and sicker, she tells herself that it's just in her head, and begins working on Station Eleven to calm herself.

At four in the morning, Miranda awakes with a fever and aches and pains. She struggles to make her way across the room to her desk and laptop, and when she reads the latest news, she understands what's happening to her. In her feverous delirium, she decides that staying in the room will only make her sicker, that she needs to leave now before she's unable to, and that at the beach, someone might be able to help her. She staggers through the hotel, extremely weakened by the Georgia Flu. At one point she sees a sick man curled up on the floor, and looks at him in an attempt to communicate solidarity. The lobby is empty, as the hotel staff has fled.

Outside, Miranda sees the beginning of sunrise. Though she is very weak, she makes it to the beach, where she passes out alone. She becomes utterly exhausted and extremely hot, then very cold, as well as delirious and confused. No one comes to help her. For a moment, she thinks about the fleet of boats on the horizon, wondering if the crew on the boats has managed to avoid being exposed to the Flu. It makes her happy knowing that some people in the world are safe. She has just enough energy to open her eyes and watch the sunrise, which brilliantly illuminates the sky and sends Miranda into visions of Station Eleven before she dies on the beach.

The flu has spread even to Malaysia, and already the connectivity of civilization is severed, stranding Miranda there. Even in the face of a collapse of civilization and the potential loss of her own life, Miranda still turns to her art for comfort and stability.



Miranda is extremely sick with the Georgia Flu, which she fully understands when she reads the latest news. The moment with the sick man on the floor is sad and profound. While both are suffering and likely to die, Miranda still communicates and makes the effort to tell the man that she cares, she understands, and she feels his pain. Even in the face of death and extreme pain, Mandel shows a profound link between human beings, even total strangers.



While most of civilization is collapsing and billions are dying, Miranda is comforted by the idea that some people might be safe, continuing the emphasis on the connection of human beings and value on human life. Even in the moments of her death, Miranda is comforted by her art, as she hallucinates Station Eleven and her drawings as she watches the sunrise in her delirium.



CHAPTER 42

In the Severn City Airport, the catastrophe changes the way that time is measured. Dates are measured first in days, then in years after the collapse. Near the end of his second decade in the airport, Clark thinks about how lucky he has been to survive, and to see one world end and another begin. He feels lucky to have lived among all the wonders of civilization.

Clark often says to young people who come into his museum, "it's hard to explain." But since he takes his role as curator seriously, he believes this isn't good enough, and he tries to explain everything he can when someone asks about the obsolete technologies and items he has compiled into the a museum. He has to explain to a sixteen-year-old named Emmanuel, the first child born in the airport, for example, the way **airplanes** used to take off (by gaining speed, not launching straight up). In retrospect, all of the transportation and communication of the past seem like incredible, taken-for-granted miracles.

Again, the problem of chance vs. fate is brought up by the question of who and what survives the collapse, and why. Clark feels lucky not only to be alive, but also to have witnessed and remembered civilization and all its wonders in its prime.



Though it is difficult to describe to a younger generation what civilization was like before the collapse, Clark feels that, since he possesses memories and experiences of the world, it is his duty to pass them on into communal memory. After the collapse, he recognizes that the interconnectivity and technology of modernity were indeed taken for granted, as they now seem so miraculous.



At this point, near Year Twenty, most people living in the airport walked there or were born there. But there are some people, like Clark, who have lived there since the day their flights landed. While Clark's **plane** was in the air, news of the pandemic's spread to North America had broken. As fellow passengers watch the news, one man asks Clark if he knows where his wife is. Clark decides to pretend that the man asked if he knows where his boyfriend is, and responds that he has no idea. He doesn't understand exactly what's happening, or how it happened so quickly.

The airline staff has no information on what to do. They give out food vouchers, which makes everyone hungry, so the people of Concourse B line up at the one restaurant. Meanwhile, Clark goes to the Skymiles Lounge and finds Elizabeth Colton next to Tyler, who is playing videogames. The two adults are both shocked by what is happening to the world.

As Clark and Elizabeth sit in the Skymiles Lounge, a final **airplane** lands, but it is moved away from the terminal and left on the tarmac. No one goes to meet it. Suddenly, an announcement is made that the airport is closing for public health reasons. Some people leave, but many opt to stay, as they feel there is nowhere for them to go. Clark finds the security checkpoint unmanned and walks through it a few times for the fun of it, before going to sit alone. Elizabeth says that they just need to wait, and that the national guard will surely be coming soon.

The people in the airport are generally in shock. Clark finds and reads Arthur's obituary in the *New York Times*, and tries to figure out where exactly in the country he is. He has never heard of Severn City before. His cellphone doesn't work, and when he tries a payphone all the lines he dials are busy. He rests alone, thinking of his boyfriend Robert.

Some time later, while Clark is watching NBC, a teenager approaches him and asks if he has any Effexor, an antidepressant the teenager had run out of.

To comfort himself, Clark thinks ahead to a time when he and Robert can sit and talk about how lucky they are to have both survived. He tries to think of anything but the collapse and the Flu, going from imagined futures to memories of Robert and Arthur. All the while, the solitary **plane** is still alone on the tarmac. He looks around and realizes the world he knew is gone, and, like everyone around him, he waits for whatever comes next.

In the moments of realizing the collapse is occurring, Clark chooses to ignore a comment that mistakenly presumed his sexuality in order to focus on what is going on in the world, and the terror of civilization ending. Clark has no idea how the flu spread so quickly, but ironically, the means for the spread was civilization itself and the interconnectivity of airplanes, though, luckily, his plane carried no infected passengers.



Tyler is able to use video games as an escape for the time being, but readers know that soon there will be no electricity. In the face of loss and death, Clark and Elizabeth are shocked; they can barely fathom how much the world is changing.



The solitary airplane is symbolic of the difficult choices made for survival, as it remains isolated and quarantined to save those in the airport. Clark's ability to walk through the security checkpoint at will is a good indicator of how panicked and disorganized the world has become in a matter of hours. Elizabeth here expresses her stubborn optimism, rooted in faith, that things will work out, and that surely civilization isn't truly collapsing.



Already, one of civilization's technological miracles has failed: Clark can no longer use his cellphone. Interestingly, he still chooses to focus on Arthur's singular death, which affected him personally, as a means of distraction from the billions of deaths occurring around the globe.



Medicines such as antidepressants are another example of a taken-for-granted technology that will vanish when civilization falls.



While he knows in his heart that the world is changing and billions are dying, Clark uses memory as an escape from this harsh reality. He also entertains fantasies of a future where the collapse is over and somehow reversed. But ultimately, he starts to accept that everything he knows about the world has changed, and most people he knew are gone.



CHAPTER 43

On Day Two, there is a brief excitement when people living in the airport recognize Elizabeth and Tyler. They seem to be in shock, and they complain that they wish their phones were working so they could tweet about hanging out with Arthur Leander's kid at the end of the world.

By Day Three, all of the vending machines in the airport are empty, the battery in Tyler's videogame is dead, and the girl needing Effexor is sick from withdrawal. A raiding party is sent to find drugs, and though they find useful items, they do not find the drug she needs. They dial 911 from a pay phone, but no one answers.

That night they break into the Mexican restaurant, where a man named Max leaves his credit card to pay. It remains untouched for ninety-seven days. The survivors have a bonfire out on the tarmac, getting drunk on Skymiles Lounge champagne. They hope a passing **airplane** or helicopter might see them, but nothing passes overhead.

On Day Five, they break into the gift shop for clean clothes. By Day Six all the snacks are gone. And on Day Seven, TV networks begin to blink off the air one by one. The power goes off and back on, meaning that it has switched to generator power. Since by Day Eight no one has come to the airport, a TSA agent named Tyrone goes out to hunt and returns with a deer.

While everyone else eats the deer, the girl who needs Effexor sneaks away. They mount a small search party, but are unable to find her. She has left behind all her belongings, which reveal that her name is Lily Patterson. Someone places her driver's license next to Max's credit card.

During this time, Tyler spends his days reading his comic **books** over and over again. Elizabeth constantly prays. The televisions are all silent. On Day Twelve the power goes out, though the toilets will still flush if they are filled with water.

One of the last vestiges of civilization is the obsession over celebrity, which continues even as the world is ending outside of the airport. Many wish their phones work, not for contacting loved ones, but for posting trivia on the internet.



Three days into the new world, the effects of civilization's end are being felt in different forms: the difficulty of attaining food, medicine, technology, and medical care in the form of 911 calls. Those in the airport must rely only on themselves to survive.



Though it's completely unnecessary, as currency no longer has value, Max offers to pay for the looted meal to ease the consciences of those living in the airport. They look for airplanes overhead, which here symbolize the notion that they might still be rescued.



Tyrone has the useful skill of knowing how to hunt, which in a previous life was for fun, but after the collapse has become a necessity for survival.



Almost everyone in the airport celebrates the successful hunt, but without her medication Lilly wanders off by herself, presumably to die.



Tyler, like Kirsten, obsesses over comic books after the collapse as an escape. Elizabeth, on the other hand, turns to her faith as a means to deal with the catastrophe.



On the Fifteenth Day, one of three pilots among the stranded people announces that he will take an **airplane** to LA in hopes of finding his family. He invites anyone who wants to come with him, and most people who live west or in Asia end up leaving the next day, hoping to find family or closer to home. This trip leaves only fifty-four survivors living in the Severn City Airport. As the time reaches the point when the plane is probably approaching LA, Clark thinks of his memories of the city, including the awkward dinner party at Arthur's house. Tyler is almost always silent, while Elizabeth tells Clark, "I can't wait till things get back to normal."

After this departure to LA, another pilot named Roy announces that he's going to do a reconnaissance flight on a small **airplane**. He never returns.

A little while later, Clark and Elizabeth discuss the end of civilization. She doesn't believe that it has truly come to an end, and can't understand Clark's point that civilization was already fragile. She believes that this catastrophe will pass. She tells him about a **book** she read about vampires that made it appear as if the world had ended, but slowly revealed that in reality only North America had been quarantined to save the rest of the world from vampirism. Clark says he doesn't think this is quarantine and that there is nothing else out there. Elizabeth maintains that everything happens for a reason.

In order to maintain appearances, Clark is careful to shave every three days. He believes that this will help prevent crime and a decay of the people in the airport. On Day Twenty-Seven, he parts his hair in the middle and shaves one side, returning to the style he wore as a young man. His friend Dolores gives him funny looks, but Clark feels more like himself than ever.

To maintain his sanity, Clark trains himself not to think about and not to look at certain things. He tries not to think about the people he knew outside the airport, or the final **airplane** that landed but was kept away from the airport. Snow falls after Roy's departure, and Elizabeth insists on keeping a runway clean, even after it's clear that Roy won't return, as preparation for the rescue she believes is coming. They once see a helicopter pass in the far distance, but they never see another aircraft in the air after that.

The airplanes that take off are both a signal of hope and despair, since they signify that some pilots and passengers have the hope of reconnecting with family, but such a mission is extremely risky and unlikely to succeed. The flight leads Clark down a path of memory which reminds him of the award dinner party where he first met Elizabeth. Meanwhile, Elizabeth maintains the delusion that things will return to normal and that the collapse will somehow be undone.



This doomed flight represents part of the "despair" side of airplane symbolism in the novel.



Elizabeth has faith that somehow the collapse of civilization isn't what it seems. She likens it to something she remembers from a novel, where in the end, the situation isn't as bad as it appears, and she winds up living in civilization once again. She maintains the belief that she first expressed at the dinner party—that everything happens for a reason, even the Georgia Flu and the billions of deaths.



Clark maintains his physical appearance, as this gives him a sense of comfort and stability during the instability of the collapse.



In another effort to maintain sanity, Clark doesn't look at or think about the things that will make him face the harsh truths of the collapse, including the quarantined airplane. Again, we see Elizabeth's persistent faith that things will work out, as she maintains the runways long after Roy's plane is presumed lost forever.



Without artificial light, the night sky is brighter than anyone can remember seeing. Clark at first questions if the brilliance of the Milky Way is his own imagination, but Dolores confirms it's just because the age of light pollution has ended. Always optimistic, Elizabeth maintains that the lights will eventually come back on someday.

Every night, the citizens of the airport have a bonfire. Slowly, the conditions begin to feel normal. Tyler keeps mostly to himself and reads his comic **books** and the New Testament. The people living in the airport trade languages and learn to live together. There is a rape on the night of Day Eighty-five, and the assailant is tied up and forced into the forest at gunpoint.

Dolores wonders why no one has ever arrived at the airport. With Garrett, Annette, and Clark, she discusses the possible horrors occurring out in the world. Silently, Tyler wanders in and comments that everything happens for a reason, to which Garrett says that Elizabeth is a lunatic. Clark then suggests sending out a scouting party.

The scouts, Tyrone, Dolores, and Allen, leave the morning of Day One Hundred. In the tension of waiting for them to return, Clark wonders what Robert would do if he were there. At this point, he arrives at the idea of collecting obsolete items and creating an impromptu museum. He thus begins the Museum of Civilization. Placing a snow globe on display, he considers how many human hands were required to design, manufacture, and ship the small product and marvels at what human civilization once was.

The next day, the scouting party returns with some supplies. No one approached them during the journey, which they describe as silent. But a day later, a stranger (later named as James) walks in. The man seems stunned as opposed to dangerous. When instructed to drop his weapon, he cooperates, and slowly tries to speak. Crying, he tells the people from the airport that he was in a hotel and he followed the scouting party's footprints. He's crying, he says, because he believed that he was the only one who had survived.

The natural beauty of the world is able to shine without the artificiality of civilization, one of the few possible benefits of the collapse. But Elizabeth continuously says that the lights will return, that things will work out, even though it seems highly unlikely.



Tyler becomes obsessed with the New Testament, clearly influenced by his mother's strong faith that everything happens for a reason. In the airport, a culture and community begins to develop, even as crime breaks out within it.



Tyler here expresses explicitly that he has inherited his mother's belief that everything happens for a reason, even the Georgia Flu—an early indication of who Tyler will grow up to become. Clark comes up with the idea of a scouting to find out what is left of civilization out in the world.



While turning to the memory of Robert as an escape, Clark comes up with the idea of the Museum of Civilization, which will preserve now obsolete items as a testament to the way the world once was. As he begins curating it, he thinks about how essentially human and reliant on individual efforts civilization once was.



James' fear that he was the only one left exemplifies the extreme loss of lives and the isolation survivors felt outside of the airport, as he believed that the collapse was so extensive that he was the single human survivor. James also marks the first of many who will wander into and settle at the new town in the Severn City Airport.



CHAPTER 44

By the end of Year Fifteen, there are three hundred people living in the airport, and the Museum of Civilization has filled the Skymiles Lounge. Earlier, Clark had to work constantly on the everyday tasks of survival. But now that he is older and there are more people living there, he is able to tend to the Museum all day. Everyone seems to want to preserve something that has no practical use, and traders often bring things for Clark, who keeps detailed records.

Included in the Museum are Elizabeth and Tyler's passports, which they gave to Clark before leaving in Year Two. He reflects on them as unsettling people, remembering an incident with Tyler before they left. Clark had seen Tyler reading from a **book** to the abandoned **airplane** at the edge of the tarmac. Tyler was reading passages from the Book of Revelations from the Bible, and when confronted, he tells Clark that the virus happened for a reason, and that they were saved for a reason.

After this creepy interaction, Clark tried to confront Elizabeth, but she agreed with Tyler and clearly had given him the idea that the pandemic happened for a reason. Later that summer, when a religious group wandered to the airport, Elizabeth and Tyler left to join the group and live a more spiritual life. Clark thinks that he should have worked harder to pull Elizabeth from the edge of insanity, but knows that he had to fight hard to stay sane himself.

In Year Fifteen, people come to the museum after their days of work to reflect on the past. James likes to look at a motorcycle and Emmanuel is interested in the phones. At the school in Concourse C, children memorize things that make no sense to them, like the fact that **airplanes** used to fly, the abstraction of the Internet, or the notions of countries and cities.

In the fall of that year, a trader comes through with a newspaper from New Petoskey, which includes mention of a performance of *King Lear* by something called The Traveling Symphony and an interview by François Diallo of Kirsten Raymonde. In the interview, Clark reads Kirsten's retelling of Arthur's death, and becomes shocked to encounter someone who also knew Arthur. Reading these newspapers is incredible to Clark, and they give him the impression that the world might be waking up and heading back towards civilization.

In the years since the collapse, Clark has aged, and his responsibilities have shifted from the tasks of survival to only the upkeep of his Museum of Civilization. Everyone he encounters, not just Clark, seems to want to preserve some vestige of civilization. Clark takes his curator role very seriously, as he makes meticulous records.



Elizabeth and Tyler's passports, which are obsolete because there are no longer any countries or borders, have been in the museum since they left in year two. The haunting incident they remind Clark of indicates just how affected Tyler was by the collapse and his mother's religious influence, as he believes that he was saved for a reason.



Though Clark tries to confront Elizabeth in an effort to help Tyler take on less extreme views, he finds that Elizabeth agrees with the boy, having instilled the values in him herself. The mother and son leave with a cult to become even more religious, and Clark partially regrets not devoting more effort to helping them. At the same time, to survive one must focus intensely on staying sane.



For those living in the airport who remember the world before the collapse, the museum is a comforting reminder of the past. But for those born after the collapse, it is a source of education about the way the world used to be.



Clark reads the interview, which we have been given glimpses of, and learns that someone else who knew Arthur has survived. Even though the two have never met, they are connected by the people they know and by the paperweight which will eventually come into Kirsten's possession. What's more, the fact that someone is able to publish a newspaper indicates that perhaps civilization is slowly being rebuilt, small town by small town.



CHAPTER 45

At the end of the interview in Year Fifteen, Kirsten and François have an off-the-record conversation sparked by the question, “When you think of how the world’s changed in your lifetime, what do you think about?” Kirsten’s answer is immediately, “I think of killing.” François responds that he did it once too, as he was surprised in the woods. He asks Kirsten how many, and she responds by showing him her two knife tattoos.

At this point the Symphony has been staying in New Petoskey for two weeks, and François has interviewed almost everyone in the symphony. He has realized that all of the stories were the same in two variations: “Everyone else died, I walked, I found the Symphony. Or, I was very young when it happened, I was born after it happened, I have no memories or few memories of any other way of living, and I have been walking all my life.”

After Kirsten gives the answer of killing to François’ question, she turns the question back on him. He says that he thinks about his apartment in Paris. Kirsten thinks about killing as symbolic of the change in the world because in the old world (for her) you never *had* to hurt anyone. This was especially true for François, who was a Copywriter before the collapse. As a writer after the collapse, François has created a library, where he has accumulated a collection of **books**, magazines, and pre-collapse newspapers. Only recently did he get the idea to publish his own post-collapse paper.

As Kirsten looks around the library, François asks her how she got her scar, to which she replies that she has no memory of receiving it. Her brother Peter never told her while he was still alive, because he said it was better if she didn’t remember. Her brother, she says, was sad after the collapse, because he remembered everything. He ultimately stepped on a nail and died of infection.

As Kirsten gets up to leave, François notes the knife handles gleaming in her belt. This small woman, he thinks, is lethal, walking with knives through every day of her life. He has heard in his other interviews that she has incredible knife-throwing abilities, and can apparently hit the center of targets blindfolded.

We learn here explicitly that Kirsten has been required to take other lives in order to survive. Thus, she thinks of killing when she thinks of the way that the world has changed, since killing someone else is something that few people had to do before the collapse.



Kirsten is apparently not the only one whose memory was shaken or fractured by the collapse. François notes that many people who survived had a similar experience of walking and wandering amidst overwhelming death.



François’ symbol of change is his apartment, which signifies the lack of comfort and ease in the new world. Kirsten’s takes a more violent turn, as she emphasizes the harsh requirements of fighting to stay alive, even at the cost of taking other lives. François’ library is an effort to preserve the history of the collapse itself, as well as history of the world before civilization ended.



Here we see an example of a situation in which it is good not to remember something. Kirsten feels lucky to not remember the trauma that created her scar. Her brother’s death is an example of how seemingly simple aspects of civilization, like antibiotics, are so important but also so taken for granted.



As the interview ends, François emphasizes Kirsten’s deadly ability, possibly foreshadowing her use of the knives later on in the book.



Before she goes, François asks Kirsten why she didn't want the last part of the interview recorded, as he has heard many confessions of that kind. But Kirsten collects celebrity gossip clippings, so she understands permanent records. She doesn't want to be remembered for violence, knife-throwing, or killing. The interview officially over, the two walk to hear the Symphony's performance of music for the evening.

Because she collects gossip magazines, Kirsten understands that publications can affect how someone is remembered. Kirsten doesn't want the violence or the killings she was forced into in order to survive to be the things that she is remembered for in the future.



CHAPTER 46

That same night in the summer of Year Fifteen, Jeevan is drinking wine by a river in what was once a part of the state of Virginia. Before settling, he walked a thousand miles. In Year Three he wandered into a settlement called McKinley, named by the town's founders. Now there were twenty-seven families there. In Year Ten, Jeevan married one of the founders named Daria. Tonight, she is sitting with him and their friend named Michael.

Jeevan has found a new life after the collapse, after walking a thousand miles away from his home. In Year Fifteen, he is able to drink wine and relax with his wife and friend, people whom he met only after the collapse, having no connection to his previous life.



On the riverbank, Jeevan, Daria, and Michael discuss McKinley's school and whether or not they should tell children how the world used to be. Michael tells how his daughter came home crying after learning that life expectancies were much higher before the Georgia Flu. But Daria says that she would want her kid to know what the world has lost. The question is, does knowing make the children more or less happy?

The three friends are discussing the benefits of informing children of the past and giving them access to the communal memory of civilization prior to the collapse. Knowing the past can be painful, as it informs your understanding of post-collapse society and life, but it can also be important and speak to the potential of humanity.



During this conversation, Jeevan is not paying attention. Instead, he tries to relax and forget the stress of the day, as he had to set a man's broken bone without anesthetics, since he is the closest thing to a doctor in 100 miles. Suddenly, they hear someone calling for Jeevan. Back at the center of town (the motel), a man named Edward has just arrived on horseback with his wife, who has been shot. When asked what happened, Edward says that the prophet happened.

Here we learn both that Jeevan has become a pseudo-doctor in the post collapse world, and that the Prophet has been travelling and wreaking havoc since at least Year Fifteen. Part of the reality of being a doctor after the collapse is evidently treating patients in immense pain, as civilization's anesthetics are gone.



Jeevan hasn't seen a gunshot wound in a while, since most ammunition is gone and is reserved for hunting or self-defense only. Jeevan asks Edward what prophet he is talking about, and Edward responds that the prophet has been all around the south. Jeevan prepares to sew up the woman, since removing the bullet in her would be too dangerous. Instead, he needs to stop the bleeding. Everyone needs to hold her still while Jeevan sews.

The use of ammunition suggests that even in Year Fifteen, the Prophet and his men were stock-piling weapons and bullets. The Prophet has apparently built a reputation in the south. Again, we see medical care is limited drastically by the fall of civilization.



Edward then explains that the prophet came through that afternoon with around twenty followers. They had kidnapped Edward's son and wife, and wanted to trade the boy in exchange for all of his guns and ammunition. The wife would be released later as an insurance policy, but in reality, the prophet meant to keep her as a wife for one of his men. When she refused, she was shot and left to die on the road. As the story ends, Jeevan finishes his work and bandages the woman.

After he has cleaned up, Jeevan gets to work sterilizing the needle he used. He smokes his pipe, thinking about the prophet, who is apparently headed north, and how hopefully he won't have to interact with him. Thinking of the north makes Jeevan think of Toronto and walking in the snow, and the night Arthur Leander died all those years ago at the beginning of the end. His wife Daria then comes up behind him and calls him to bed.

CHAPTER 47

In Year Nineteen, Clark is seventy years old. His friend Annette has died two years ago. Recently, Clark made available the reports from his executive consulting job, and now the former executives are very interested in them. Garrett and Clark discuss the report on a man named Dan and the platitudes used in discussing him as a boss.

After a long silence, Garrett asks, as he has many times, if he has ever told Clark about his last phone call. Though he was married with two children at the time of the collapse, his last call was to his boss and was meaningless. Garrett notes the comment from one of Dan's employees that he was a high-functioning sleepwalker.

Lately, Clark has been spending more time in the past, getting lost in his memories. He falls asleep, and wakes to Sullivan (the head of security), who wants to introduce Clark to the newest arrivals at Severn City Airport: Charlie, Jeremy, and Annabel. They ask if they are welcome to stay at the airport, since they have been separated from their people. Clark learns that they are from the Traveling Symphony he read about in the paper from New Petoskey. They say they lost their people because there was a prophet, who says he was from the airport. No one knows his name, but as they describe the prophet, Clark's face shows a look of horror and realization; he knows who the prophet is. He asks Charlie and Jeremy if the prophet's mother is still alive, to which they say they think not, as there was no old woman with him. Clark wonders what became of Elizabeth, and remembers Tyler, Arthur Leander's son, now revealed to be the prophet, reading to the **airplane** as a young boy.

The Prophet's practice of kidnapping has been in place since at least Year Fifteen, as well as his stockpiling of weapons. The Prophet also had already begun taking as many women as possible for wives, either for himself or his men. When Edward's wife refused, she was shot so that she would suffer alone on the road—an especially vicious punishment from one claiming to be a godly leader.



This strange incident with the prophet gets Jeevan thinking about Arthur Leander's death, though he can't understand the full significance of this connection. We note that the Prophet is headed north to ultimately intersect with Kirsten and the Symphony, making another chance for fated connection between Jeevan and Kirsten, the two characters who were there the night of Arthur's death.



In the Museum of Civilization in Year Nineteen, former executives reflect on the absurd jargon and the lifestyle that they had during the height of civilization.



In retrospect, the fact that most people really were "iPhone zombies" or sleepwalking through their life is even more apparent than when Clark first wrote the reports.



While Clark gets lost in memories, he is introduced to Charlie, Jeremy, and their daughter, and we learn that they have in fact made it to the Severn City Airport after leaving St. Deborah by the Water. What's more, Clark reveals what has been suggested and foreshadowed throughout the novel: Tyler Leander is the Prophet. Tyler's recitation of the Book of Revelations verses to the quarantined airplane marks his budding instability, his faith that everything happens for a reason, his desire to preach, his fascination with death, and his obsession with airplanes that will be reflected in the "t" symbol that he uses to mark people.



CHAPTER 48

Three days after Kirsten and August are separated from the Symphony, Kirsten wakes up from a nightmare. The pair decides to wash up and get on with their journey toward the airport. Soon they see road signs for the airport, but as they are getting moderately close, they hear a dog bark.

After hearing the dog, they see a deer fleeing and realize that something followed it; there is someone close by. Then down the road, they see Sayid, along with two men and a boy. The boy carries a machete, one man carries a gun, and the other wields a bow and arrow. August whispers to Kirsten, "I have the gunman, get the archer," and he throws a rock into the air. The men react to the sound of the stone as August shoots an arrow into the gunman's back. While the boy runs away, the archer tries to shoot Kirsten, but she has already thrown her knife into his torso.

After the violence, August and Kirsten run to Sayid. He tells them that the prophet is behind them with the dog and two men. They realize that the archer is still alive, and question him, asking why they took Sayid. The archer answers that it was because the Symphony took something of theirs, referring to Eleanor, the intended fifth bride of the prophet. Kirsten learns that the clarinet got away, but Dieter is dead. As the archer continues spewing the prophet's teachings, Kirsten pulls the knife from his body and he dies.

Sayid says that the night they were taken they heard a whimpering in the forest. When they went to investigate, rags were pressed into their faces and they passed out. Sayid woke up in the woods, but Dieter just never woke up. Sayid isn't sure exactly how it happened, but no one was able to save Dieter once they realized he was ill. After his death, the prophet had his men kidnap the clarinet.

Regular bathing is another taken-for-granted aspect of modern civilization. They are near the airport, but the dog barking indicates that the prophet might be near as well.



By chance or fate, Kirsten and August are met by a captive Sayid and some of the prophet's men. Though the prophet's men are armed, August and Kirsten are also prepared for a fight. With a clever distraction, they kill the two men while leaving the young boy to run away. This scene exemplifies the harsh necessity of taking a life in order to survive, or in this case save a friend.



The archer has become totally indoctrinated by the prophet's teachings, believing that a trade of kidnapped victims for the child bride of the prophet is perfectly reasonable. Though the clarinet has escaped, Kirsten learns the brutal news that one of her closest friends has died while captured by the prophet.



Sayid explains that Dieter's death wasn't intended, but that he simply never woke up after the prophet's men drugged him. The prophet's men presumably wanted him alive, as they tried to save him, but they failed, and kidnapped the clarinet to replace Dieter as a live hostage.



CHAPTER 49

The clarinet, it happens, hates Shakespeare. She has always wanted the Symphony to perform something else. A year before being taken by the prophet, she started writing her own play with the hope the Symphony could perform it. But she only ever wrote the opening line: "Dear friends, I find myself immeasurably weary and I have gone to rest in the forest." It is this note that the Symphony later discovers and thinks might be a suicide note.

The potential suicide note is now explained as the opening line for a play that the clarinet was writing around Year Nineteen. She wants the Symphony to perform a wider range of plays, both because she doesn't like Shakespeare and because she believes that there should be art that represents the post-collapse world.



While they were reading the note, she was waking up after being drugged and taken by the prophet's men. Around her, the prophet and his men plan a confrontation with the Symphony. The clarinet realizes Sayid is there too, angrily asking questions to the prophet, and she realizes Dieter has died. She learns that she was abducted because two hostages are better than one for the exchange of Eleanor.

While her art is misunderstood as a suicide note, the clarinet realizes that Dieter is dead. Sayid is angrily confronting the prophet's men on the basis that their faith and actions have killed his friend. The clarinet has been abducted simply for assurance that the exchange for Eleanor goes well.



The clarinet manages to make eye contact with Sayid, who mouths to her instructions on how to get back to the road. She then pretends to be asleep, but alive, so that the prophet leaves her an opportunity to escape, but she ends up falling asleep for real.

Sayid covertly tells the clarinet how to get back to the Symphony while continuing to distract the prophet's men.



When she wakes, Sayid is discussing the horrible things the prophet has made his men do with the boy. The boy seems to know it isn't right, but feels he has no choice. Apologetically, he says that the men are highly trained and can pick off Symphony members one by one until they get what they want. During the conversation, Sayid keeps the boy distracted so that the clarinet can escape. Silently, she slips away and is able to tell the Symphony to change their route. They leave immediately, and are unable to locate Kirsten and August, who are at this point off fishing by the golf course.

The young boy feels bad about his actions, but feels like he needs to do them to survive, at least since he is under the prophet's rule. Sayid continues this conversation in hopes of helping the boy change his ways and escape his abusers, but also to allow the clarinet an opportunity to escape. She alerts the Symphony of the prophet's plan to intercept them, which explains the reason that Kirsten and August became separated from the group.



CHAPTER 50

We learn that the first knife tattoo on Kirsten's wrist marks a man who came at her in her first year with the Symphony, when she was fifteen. He didn't say anything, but she understood what he was trying to do. As he approached, time slowed, and she had plenty of time to pull a knife from her belt and send it spinning into the man's throat.

Kirsten has killed twice before the archer in Chapter 48. The first was a man who (it's implied) attempted to rape her. To stave off the attack, she threw a knife into his throat and killed him.



The second knife tattoo was for a man who Kirsten killed two years later. The Symphony encountered four men, two with guns and two with machetes, trying to rob them, but the sixth guitar whispered "guns first," and he and Kirsten each killed a gunman while the conductor took out the two with machetes.

The second person she killed was in a similar situation as the archer. A friend whispered whom to attack first, and, in order to survive, Kirsten acted without hesitation to kill rather than be killed.



Kirsten had hoped before killing the archer in Year Twenty that she wouldn't have to kill a third person. She realizes based on the look of August's face that the gunman was his first. She is too tired to tell August what she knows: that he will survive this, but that he will carry the man with him through the rest of his life.

We know Kirsten associates killing with the way that the world has changed, so it makes sense that she hoped never to have to kill again. Somehow August has made it to Year Twenty without being placed in a situation where he was required to kill.



Kirsten, August, and Sayid continue to walk in silence, wondering where the prophet is. As they walk down the highway, Kirsten reflects on the man she has just killed, and on Dieter's death. As they get closer to the airport, they hear the distant bark of the dog and realize that the prophet is approaching.

They hide in the woods, as the prophet, a man with a crossbow, a man with a shotgun, and the boy with a machete, now wielding a handgun, all approach with the dog, Luli. Luli smells Kirsten, August, and Sayid, and soon the man with the crossbow sees them. Kirsten doesn't know what to do, as she thinks she will get shot if she tries to attack with her knives. An arrow lands next to her, and the man with the crossbow instructs her to get up and drop the knife.

Kirsten stands and drops the knife, knowing it's unlikely she would be able to reach a second one before being felled by one of the four attackers. She hopes that they don't find Sayid and August, as the prophet approaches her. He calls her "Titania," recognizing her from the production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* back in St. Deborah by the Water, and has her drop to her knees. When asked, she tells the prophet that August and Sayid are dead, pretending the archer that August killed has killed them.

While the prophet's rifle is an inch from her forehead, Kirsten knows what August must be thinking. If he reveals himself to fire arrows, the three of them would likely die, rather than just her. She comes to peace with the fact that she will die for her friends. While the prophet preaches, Kirsten notices the boy with the handgun is crying. As he prepares to kill her, the prophet says, "We are the light moving over the surface of the waters, over the darkness of the undersea." Kirsten recognizes the Undersea as from the "Station Eleven" comic **books**, but the prophet is no longer listening to her. She responds to him with lines from the first issue: "We long only to go home," taken from a faceoff between Dr. Eleven and an adversary from the Undersea. "We dream of sunlight, we dream of walking on earth." The prophet's reaction is unreadable, and Kirsten cannot tell if he has recognized the text. She continues quoting the scene, but the prophet merely says it's too late. He adjusts his grip and a shot is fired.

After taking another life, Kirsten can only reflect on death, both those people she has killed and the friends she has lost, like Dieter. Amidst this reflection, the prophet approaches, putting her own life in danger.



The young boy has apparently rejoined the prophet after fleeing earlier. Though Kirsten, August, and Sayid hide from the prophet and his men, Luli locates them, and they are in a precarious position. Kirsten knows that she cannot act or attack without most likely dying.



The Prophet recognizes Kirsten from the Symphony's performance, showing the lasting impact of theatre and art. To save her friends, Kirsten lies about what happened in the altercation with the archer, hoping that if the prophet believes August and Sayid are dead, they might survive even if she must die.



With a rifle an inch away from her face, Kirsten is able to make peace with her death, since she knows that she is dying to save her friends' lives. The young boy, who Sayid was talking to before, appears deeply upset by what is happening. But as the prophet prepares to kill Kirsten, he begins reciting lines from "Dr. Eleven," which Kirsten of course recognizes. It's unclear if the prophet is as shocked as Kirsten is to find another person who knows about the comic books. He certainly appears taken aback by her recitations, but the coincidence is not enough to convince him to spare her. The two are connected by the comics and by Arthur Leander, but are unable to recognize each other or reconcile in this moment of extreme tension.



The shot comes from not the prophet's rifle, but from the boy's handgun. The boy has shot the prophet in the head. In the instant after, August kills the other two men, while Kirsten and the boy stare at the prophet. Though she tries to stop him, the boy then shoots himself. As she kneels by the dead bodies, Viola and Jackson, the Symphony's forward scouts, approach.

Just before the prophet can kill Kirsten, the young boy shoots the prophet and then kills himself, in a climactic moment of tragic violence. He has apparently been convinced that the prophet is evil and found the courage to resist him, and his suicide reflects how guilty and confused he appeared when talking to Sayid in the woods.



Later, August discovers a page from "Station Eleven" in the copy of the prophet's New Testament. Kirsten wonders who he was and how he came to be the prophet, wondering if maybe he had the misfortune of remembering everything. She, August, and Sayid continue on to the airport while Viola and Jackson head back to tell the Symphony they have reunited.

Kirsten marvels at the fact that the prophet had a copy of "Station Eleven," but cannot yet understand that he is the son of the actor she idolized. She wonders if his insanity and violent nature spawned from the unfortunate curse of remembering everything that happened to him, reinforcing the notion that forgetting painful or traumatizing things can arguably be a blessing.



CHAPTER 51

When Sayid, August, and Kirsten walk away from the bodies, the prophet's dog follows them. They stop to rest and Kirsten calls for Luli, and the dog approaches and stays by her side. A little while later, they find the airport. They meet sentries with crossbows, but one of them comes running towards them in joy.

Luli, whose name first indicated the strange connection of the Prophet to Kirsten, follows the group and apparently needs a new master. When they reach the airport, one of the armed sentries comes running since she recognizes her friends from the Symphony.



There are 320 people living in the airport, making it one of the largest settlements Kirsten has seen. August takes Sayid to the infirmary, and Kirsten lies down in Charlie's tent. The two friends discuss Kirsten's need of a new knife tattoo, Dieter's death, and an eerie memory of Charlie having an almost supernatural moment in the nursery of a home they were ransacking.

Finally, Kirsten and Charlie reunite. Reflecting on death, they remember an almost supernatural occurrence, which speaks to the strain of the losses and the difficulty of taking a life.



That night, August, Charlie, and the sixth guitar play music, during which Kirsten's thoughts drift between the friends she's lost, the people she's killed, and the strange coincidence of meeting someone else with "Station Eleven" comic **books**.

While the reunited musicians perform, Kirsten continues to reflect on death, loss, killing, and the strange connection with the prophet she still doesn't quite understand.



Later, she meets Clark Thompson, who recognizes her as Kirsten Raymond. They have apparently been introduced before. Clark says he knows Kirsten is tired, but he wants to show her something. Slowly, they make their way to and then up the air traffic control tower. Clark tells Kirsten he read her interview in the newspaper from New Petoskey and wants to talk about it with her in the morning. Once at the top of the tower, Kirsten looks through a telescope in disbelief. In the distance, she can see pinpricks of light aligned into a grid. Many miles away, there is a town whose streets are lit up with electricity.

Clark, who knows who Kirsten is and can explain who the prophet is as well, chooses first to show Kirsten a sign of hope that civilization is being rebuilt: a town in the distance with electricity. As the novel draws towards a close, there is a sense of promise and a (literal) light in the distance, suggesting that humanity is still on an upward progressing path, even if it was shaken off course or into a new era by the emergence of the Georgia Flu.



CHAPTER 52

Kirsten stares through the telescope at the town with electric light, while Charlie and August make Sayid smile in his infirmary bed (in baggage claim). A thousand miles south of the airport, Jeevan is breaking bread with his son Frank and his wife Daria. Back in the north, the Symphony is arriving at Severn City Airport.

Though they are a thousand miles apart, Jeevan and Kirsten both appear to have eventually reached stability and happiness after their meeting at the time of Arthur Leander's death at the beginning of the novel.



CHAPTER 53

Back before the collapse, on his last morning on earth, Arthur is tired. He has decided that when *Lear* closes, he will move to Israel so he can see his son Tyler every day. He goes to the theatre for notes but is distracted, and ends up taking a taxi to his old neighborhood. There, he finds a café he used to frequent and thinks about calling Clark, but decides against it.

The novel here jumps back to where it began, picking up with Arthur Leander in the production of *Lear*. He has chosen to make a major change in his life, though he will be unable to enact it given that he will die on stage that very evening.



At the theatre again, he talks with Tanya in his dressing room. She keeps telling Arthur that he looks terrible, and that he must have forgotten that they were supposed to meet for breakfast that morning. She asks if he's sure he's not sick, but he says he's just tired. As they drink wine, Arthur shows Tanya a copy of the "Station Eleven" comic **books** and says he has sent the other set to Tyler. Arthur doesn't really understand the comics, but fondly remembers Miranda creating them.

Though Tanya seems to know Arthur is truly unwell, he ignores her. Arthur here explains how Tyler (later the prophet) has come to possess copies of the "Station Eleven" comic books. Arthur has no idea what significance they will hold for his son, and he doesn't understand the art, but he does have pleasant memories of when Miranda made them.



Before Tanya leaves to look after the children, Arthur gives her the glass **paperweight**. She thanks him, and tells him to let her know if Kirsten shows up in his dressing room. Within fifteen minutes, Kirsten does arrive to tell Arthur that her mother has purchased *Dear V*. Arthur takes this opportunity to give her the other "Dr. Eleven" comics, because he doesn't want anything other than his son.

This moment is the penultimate exchange of the paperweight, which has made its way through Clark, Miranda, Arthur, and now Tanya. After learning how Tyler received his comics, we learn how Kirsten receives hers, as Arthur gives them to her in an effort to shed his possessions.



After getting into his costume, Arthur goes back to Tanya to tell her that he has decided to pay her student loans off. He wants to move to Israel anyways, and feels like he should help her get rid of her debt before he goes.

Fifteen minutes before the show starts, Arthur calls Tyler, who is angry with Arthur since he won't be in Israel for Tyler's birthday. Tyler loves the "Station Eleven" comic **books**, and begins excitedly explaining them to his father. This will be their last conversation, though Arthur believes he'll see his son in a week.

Arthur takes his place on stage before the show begins. He is supposed to sit on a high pillar while the audience files in for a visual effect. He hates it and feels self-conscious. He thinks of Miranda, remembering an instance when he overheard her saying "I regret nothing." He considers himself to be a man who regrets everything, and sitting up on the pillar is agony before the play begins. But he has devised a way to gain self-confidence before the performances. As he waits for his cue, he thinks through a list of all the good things in his life.

When he is halfway through the list, Arthur gets his cue, and gets ready for the play to begin. Later, just before he takes the stage, Kirsten tells him that she read the beginning of the comic **books** and that she loves them. Arthur walks onto the stage and bumbles his line, and he has trouble catching his breath. He feels a sharp pain on his chest, staggers, holds his hands to his chest, and remembers doing a similar motion with a wounded bird on Delano Island with his brother. He delivers his final, misplaced line "The wren goes to't, the wren..." and cradles his heart like he cradled the bird, while a man rises in the audience. He is lost in between memories and the fake snow shining in the stage lights, and as he dies he thinks it is the most beautiful thing he has ever seen.

CHAPTER 54

In "Dr. Eleven, Vol. 1, No. 2: The Pursuit," Dr. Eleven meets the ghost of his mentor Captain Logan. Miranda spent years perfecting this scene, and years later, she returns to it in her delirium on the beach in Malaysia. Dr. Eleven asks Captain Logan what it was like in the end. Captain Logan responds, "It was exactly like waking up from a dream."

In another gesture of kindness, Arthur tells Tanya of his intent to pay her loans, indicating the desire that Gary Heller will mention to Clark after Arthur's death and during the budding collapse.



In their last conversation, Tyler tells his father that he loves the comic books. The tragedy of Tyler's transformation into the prophet is made greater by the fact that Arthur was about to move across the globe to spend more time with Tyler, but was stifled by a heart attack (and the Flu).



In contrast to Miranda's supposed lack of regrets, at the end of his life Arthur seems to regret everything he has ever done. In order to maintain composure on stage, he escapes into happy memories and reflections on the good things in his life. He shows no indication that he knows he'll soon be dead.



Like Tyler, Kirsten loves the "Station Eleven" comic books, though she has only read part of them. We then see the opening moments of the novel from Arthur's perspective, as he suffers from a heart attack and gets lost in memories of his childhood. Though his death is different from Miranda's in the sense that she is alone and he dies publicly on stage, both of them experience visions of extreme beauty and light in the moments of their death. Though the death is tragic, it also gives Arthur one final beautiful experience.



This short chapter returns to Station Eleven and Miranda's death, which in a way echoes Arthur's. She too, is possessed by delirium and beauty as she dies. Her understanding of death is informed by the ghost of Dr. Eleven's mentor, whose lyrical description offers a glimpse of hope.



CHAPTER 55

The Traveling Symphony leaves the airport after a five-week stay of performing and resting. Kirsten has given one of her “Dr. Eleven” comics **books** to Clark to keep in the Museum of Civilization, so that if something happens to hers, there will still be a safe one. The Symphony plans on establishing new territory.

In the evening after the Symphony has left, Clark finishes cleaning the Museum of Civilization and sits down to read the adventures of Dr. Eleven. He stops at a scene of a dinner party on Station Eleven because it is so familiar. A woman reminisces about Earth and mentions spending time in “Prahá,” and Clark begins to cry, remembering that he was at that dinner party. He remembers the pretentious woman, and notices a figure in the comic with a passing resemblance to himself. There is a woman that is clearly Elizabeth Colton, and a man that looks a little bit like Arthur. Miranda is replaced by Dr. Eleven.

In the comic **book**, Dr. Eleven has his arms crossed, lost in thought. Clark remembers the dinner party in vivid detail and wonders what ever happened to Miranda. He looks up at the tarmac and the **airplanes** that have been grounded for two decades. He doesn’t expect to see planes fly again in his lifetime, but thinks that if there are newspapers and towns with electricity, then perhaps vessels are setting out somewhere. He wonders about the countries on the other side of the world and what happened to them, and takes comfort in the idea that maybe, there are ships moving across the water toward another world.

Similar to the hope provided by the town with electricity, the Symphony’s plans to expand their territory help end the novel on a positive note in which the future is full of exciting possibilities. There is some risk in this new plan, so Kirsten gives a copy of “Dr. Eleven” to Clark to preserve in the Museum of Civilization.



When Clark reads the comics, he notices a familiar scene: a dinner party on Station Eleven that echoes the awkward party at which he met Miranda. Thus he comes to realize who created the comics, and he grasps the full coincidence and spread of influence from person to person, as Miranda and Arthur have both had a profound impact on Kirsten, Tyler, and Clark himself. Dr. Eleven, we see, is an analogue for Miranda in the comics.



While the comics provided fantastical escapes for Kirsten and Tyler, for Clark they spark vivid memories of civilization and his life before the collapse. Turning from the comic to the world in Year Twenty, Clark, like the novel itself, reflects with hope that perhaps civilization is slowly being rebuilt, and humans are indeed moving forward on some sort of progressive pathway. He takes comfort in the notion that maybe, somewhere in the world, people are moving and humanity is blossoming once again.





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