

Severance: A Ling Ma Novel Explores the Desolation and Isolation of a Post-Apocalyptic World



A Harrowing Journey Through the End of the World

Ling Ma's debut novel, "Severance," is a haunting and unforgettable tale that explores the psychological and emotional toll of a devastating pandemic. Set in a near-future New York City, the novel follows Candace Chen, an adrift young woman who finds herself navigating a surreal and hostile world.



Severance: A Novel by Ling Ma

★★★★☆ 4.3 out of 5

- Language : English
- File size : 6877 KB
- Text-to-Speech : Enabled
- Screen Reader : Supported
- Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
- X-Ray : Enabled
- Word Wise : Enabled
- Print length : 297 pages



The Rise of the Shen Fever

As a virus known as the "Shen Fever" rapidly spreads, it leaves behind a trail of victims who suffer from a combination of physical and mental afflictions, including seizures, memory loss, and a strange sense of detachment. New York City, once a vibrant metropolis, becomes a city of shadows, its streets empty and its buildings abandoned.

Candace, initially dismissive of the pandemic, is soon forced to confront its reality when her boss succumbs to the fever. As society crumbles around her, Candace decides to leave the city and head north, in search of a sanctuary where she can escape the chaos.

A Nightmarish Landscape

Accompanied by two unlikely companions, a mysterious scientist named Bob and a resourceful security guard named Jonathan, Candace embarks on a perilous journey through the desolate countryside. Along the way, they encounter ruins of once-familiar landmarks, abandoned houses, and the remnants of a shattered civilization.

The landscape they traverse is ravaged by the pandemic, marked by empty roads, wind-swept fields, and the sound of distant gunshots. Food and water are scarce, and danger lurks at every corner. Yet, amidst the desolation, Candace and her companions cling to hope, believing that somewhere out there, there might be a place where they can start anew.

Existential Questions and Psychological Trauma

As they push forward, Candace grapples with the existential questions that the pandemic has raised. She reflects on the meaning of life, the nature of memory, and the fragility of our connections. She struggles with guilt and remorse, haunted by the choices she made before the world collapsed.

The trauma of the pandemic manifests itself in various ways throughout the novel. Candace experiences disorientation, detachment, and a sense of unreality. Bob, haunted by the memory of his infected daughter, becomes increasingly withdrawn and erratic. Jonathan, driven by a need for control, becomes paranoid and prone to violence.

The Search for Meaning in Desolation

Despite the bleakness of their surroundings, Candace and her companions continue to search for meaning and purpose. They find solace in unexpected places, such as the abandoned library where Candace loses

herself in books. They form bonds of companionship and support, providing each other with a lifeline in the face of adversity.

Through it all, Candace remains the central figure, a complex and flawed character who embodies both the fear and resilience of those who survive in a world torn apart. Her journey serves as a poignant reminder of the human capacity for both destruction and hope, even amidst the most desolate of circumstances.

Critical Acclaim and Literary Significance

"Severance" has garnered widespread critical acclaim since its publication in 2018. It was shortlisted for the National Book Award for Fiction and won the Kirkus Prize for Fiction. Critics have praised Ma's incisive social commentary, her deft exploration of psychological trauma, and her vivid and unsettling portrayal of a post-apocalyptic world.

The novel has resonated deeply with readers, who have found its themes of isolation, alienation, and the search for meaning highly relevant to the contemporary moment. In an era marked by global pandemics and social unrest, "Severance" offers a timely and thought-provoking exploration of the human condition.

Ling Ma's "Severance" is a powerful and unforgettable novel that transports readers into the heart of a post-apocalyptic world. Through the lens of Candace Chen and her companions, we witness the profound toll that a devastating pandemic takes on individuals and society.

"Severance" is not merely a tale of survival but an exploration of the human psyche and the existential questions that haunt us all. It is a novel that will

stay with readers long after they finish its final page, reminding us of the fragility of our world and the resilience of the human spirit.



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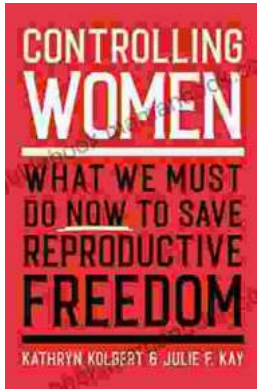
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