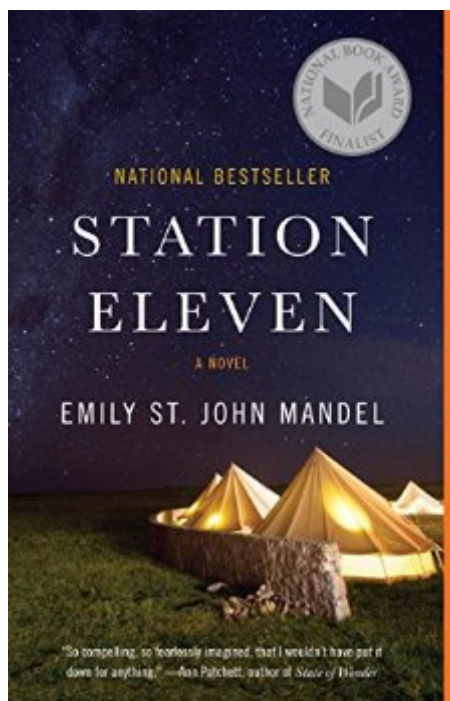


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Station Eleven: A Novel



Synopsis

2014 National Book Award Finalist
A New York Times Bestseller
An audacious, darkly glittering novel set in the eerie days of civilization's collapse, *Station Eleven* tells the spellbinding story of a Hollywood star, his would-be savior, and a nomadic group of actors roaming the scattered outposts of the Great Lakes region, risking everything for art and humanity. • One snowy night Arthur Leander, a famous actor, has a heart attack onstage during a production of *King Lear*. Jeevan Chaudhary, a paparazzo-turned-EMT, is in the audience and leaps to his aid. A child actress named Kirsten Raymonde watches in horror as Jeevan performs CPR, pumping Arthur's chest as the curtain drops, but Arthur is dead. That same night, as Jeevan walks home from the theater, a terrible flu begins to spread. Hospitals are flooded and Jeevan and his brother barricade themselves inside an apartment, watching out the window as cars clog the highways, gunshots ring out, and life disintegrates around them. • Fifteen years later, Kirsten is an actress with the Traveling Symphony. Together, this small troupe moves between the settlements of an altered world, performing Shakespeare and music for scattered communities of survivors. Written on their caravan, and tattooed on Kirsten's arm is a line from *Star Trek*: "Because survival is insufficient." • But when they arrive in St. Deborah by the Water, they encounter a violent prophet who digs graves for anyone who dares to leave. • Spanning decades, moving back and forth in time, and vividly depicting life before and after the pandemic, *Station Eleven* is rife with beauty. As Arthur falls in and out of love, as Jeevan watches the newscasters say their final good-byes, and as Kirsten finds herself caught in the crosshairs of the prophet, we see the strange twists of fate that connect them all. • A novel of art, memory, and ambition, *Station Eleven* tells a story about the relationships that sustain us, the ephemeral nature of fame, and the beauty of the world as we know it.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a beautiful, haunting novel about the end of the world as we know it (thanks to something called the Georgia flu, which wipes out 99% of the world's population in mere days). The story jumps back and forth between the time before and after "the collapse," and the narration rotates through various characters' points of view. Though the premise (plague apocalypse) sounds sci-fi, *Station Eleven* is light on the science and heavy on the philosophy. It's definitely much more about how the apocalypse affects humanity and civilization than it is about the details of the apocalypse. If you're familiar with survivalist stories like S.M. Stirling's *Emberverse* series, this is basically the inverse of that. The author isn't concerned with where people are getting their food and fresh water twenty years post-apocalypse. She's more into the tragic beauty of a fleet of jumbo jets that haven't flown in decades lined up neatly on a runway in the falling snow. That brings us to one of the main themes of this tale, "survival is insufficient." Taken from a *Star Trek* episode, the phrase is the motto of the Traveling Symphony, a ragtag band of musicians and actors who roam what's left of the Midwest, playing classical music and performing Shakespeare. The ability to create and appreciate art, they believe, is essential to our humanity. It's what takes us beyond mere survival and makes us something more than animals. I loved this part of the book, how the little settlements of people living in Walmarts and gas stations would rush out to hear Beethoven, tears streaming down their faces. This is one of my favorite angles of post-apocalyptic fiction - once we've figured out how to survive, how do we learn to LIVE again? What exactly is it that makes us human?

“Quiet” and “lovely” are not usually words one reaches for when describing a post-apocalyptic novel. Not with the reverted-back-to-savagery cannibals; the road-raging-mohawk-sporting highway warriors; the gleeful told-you-so rat-a-tat of survivalist gunfire, or the annoying mumblespeak “braiiiiinnnnss” from the shambling zombies. But quiet and lovely are exactly the words I’d use to describe *Station Eleven*, the post-apocalyptic novel

from Emily St. John Mandel that is happily missing all the above and shows the modern world ending with neither a bang nor a whimper, but with a gentle murmur. Mandel's chosen method of ending the world is the Georgia Flu, an incredibly virulent bug that wipes out 95+ percent of its victims within a span of 48 hours. In true form for the eventual tone and shape of the novel, though, Mandel opens not with a mass of deaths but instead with one very singular, very hushed one: famed movie star Arthur Leander, who dies of a heart attack on stage while performing King Lear in Toronto. A young EMT in the audience, Jeevan, first tries to resuscitate Arthur, and then, when the ambulance crew takes over, has a few moments of awkwardly trying to comfort the young child actress, Kirsten, who saw the whole thing. It is while Jeevan is walking home, his girlfriend having abandoned him at the theater, that one of his friends from the city hospital calls to warn him of the flu currently rampaging through the local hospitals and it is this that saves Jeevan's life. The story moves back and forth in time.

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