Rachel Gonzales

delirium

Background: Lena Haloway is a 17 year old living in Portland, Oregon in the years after the Blitz, when the government officially declared love a disease and destroyed all cities whose population disagreed. At the age of 18, people are now “cured” of the disease through a surgical procedure involving cutting into the human brain. The procedure removes all feelings of compassion, pain, and attraction, essentially making the person cold and emotionally stunted. Even parents feel no love for their children.

Lena’s mother was infected by love after Lena’s father died of cancer when Lena was a girl. After her mother’s condition became known, her mother went through the curing procedure three times. None of the three procedures cured her mother, and the surgeons had stopped using anesthesia during the third operation, fearing that it was interfering with the efficacy of the cure. The day that her mother was scheduled for her fourth procedure, she left Lena and her older sister Rachel and killed herself. In the days after her mother’s suicide Lena moved in with her Aunt Grace and two younger cousins, Grace and Jenny. However, Lena’s name was still synonymous with the disease. Lena was determined to avoid her mother’s fate at all costs, choosing to fully support her society’s government. This proves difficult when her beautiful and rebellious best friend, Hana, begins going to unsanctioned co-ed parties and listening to illicit music. Lena also finds herself falling in love with a boy named Alex, a 19-year-old Invalid posing as a “cured” in Portland’s population. After Alex learns of Lena’s mother’s death, he takes Lena to the Crypts, a highly guarded psychiatric prison for Sympathizers and the Infected. There, Lena learns that her mother’s suicide was in fact a lie, and she had been living in solitary confinement in a cell in the Crypts for years. However, just a few weeks prior to Lena’s visit, her mother had esca ped and was now presumably living free in the Wilds. This infuriates Lena and, believing that there is nothing more tying her to this society, decides to run away with Alex and live in the Wilds. Just before they can make their escape, Lena is discovered as an Infected and captured, and her family moves up the date of her procedure so that she can be cured within a matter of weeks. In the meantime, seeing her as a flight risk, they drug her and keep her tied up in her bedroom with a 24-hour watch on her door while they continue to look for Alex, the boy who “infected” her. With the help of her little cousin Grace, Lena breaks free of her confinement and makes a run for the Wild’s border with Alex. The police catch up with them less than a mile from the border and Alex uses himself as a distraction to give Lena enough time to make it safely to the other side. Lena does, and in the process, Alex is shot and killed.

Magdalena Haloway.

Plain

Clothes.

Hair.

Looks.

Average

Family.

Social Status.

Grades.

Job.

Normal.

Nothing extraordinary,

Nothing beautiful.

But beauty is nothing but a trick;

Excitement in your eyes is

Delusion in the brain.

She lives with an extraordinary burden

wishing,

hoping,

To wash away her family’s mark

In the cool, cleansing waters of societal compliance.

Desire is enemy to contentment;

desire is illness, a feverish brain.

And yet,

Her heart is a compass,

Needle spinning erratically,

Uncertain of true north.

Every which way she turns

She encounters a new moral dilemma.

To the north and the east,

(North and east?)

The vast Wilds.

Where vampires,

Werewolves,

And invalids

Prowl unseen in the inky shadows.

The evil beings

from children’s bedtime stories and nursery rhymes

haunt the dense forest,

Bodies

melting into the trees,

Obscured by leaves and hidden from our eyes.

Birthplace of all the nasty creatures

and home to those whose shame erases their identity;

Sympathizers.

The word dances with the wind,

Twisting,

Contorting,

Landing on scandalized ears.

The wilds;

Home to the boy she

**loves**.

Mama, Mama, Help me get home,

I am out in the woods, I am out on my own.

To the west,

(West?)

The vast ocean.

The only barrier between the cureds

And the rest of the infected world.

She is lost in the rolling sea

Of misinformation.

The waves of propaganda churn and crush her.

Safety, sanctity, community.

She chokes on the burning saltiness of blatant half-truths,

Gasping for air

And honesty.

To the south,

(South?)

Lies the paved road of her future,

Planned out by a panel of expert educators

After evaluating her on her worth.

A life of normalcy

With a husband she feels nothing for,

Walking hand in hand down the same manicured path of life,

after she is cured.

Ex rememdium salus:

From the cure, salvation.

She is steered down this path of imprudent truth

By a puppet whose master

You are not allowed to see.

Marriage is order and stability,

The mark of a healthy society.

Her name tainted by the disgusting reality

Of heartbreak,

Blood infected with

The deadliest unseen

Disease.

Sympathizer.

Suicide.

Cautionary tale.

Words forever tattooed on her soul

For all wagging tongues to whisper.

Her mother

infected with the devil’s seed.

I love you.

Remember.

They cannot take it.

The devil stole into the Garden of Eden.

He carried with him the disease

in the form of a seed.

(amor delirium nervosa)

It grew

And flowered into a magnificent apple tree,

which bore apples as bright as

blood.

Her compass spins,

spins,

spins,

spins

until the needle stops,

Unwavering,

Certain,

Strong.

Her heart’s compass points north.

Into the Wilds.