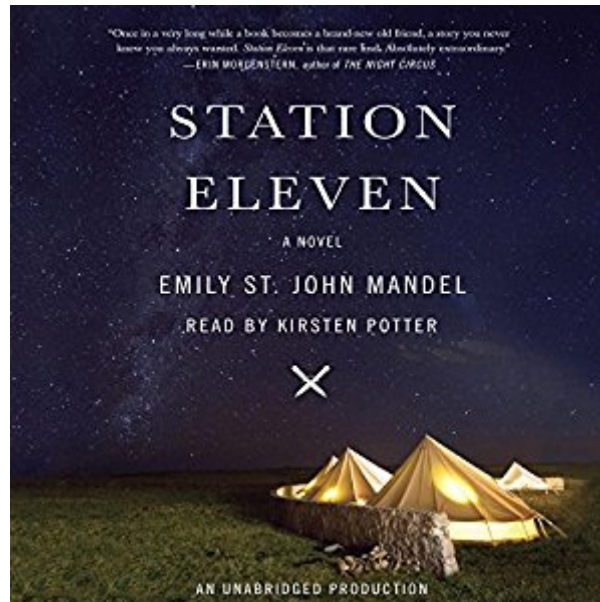


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# Station Eleven



## Synopsis

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, this suspenseful, elegiac novel 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? How do we go about redefining humanity, rebuilding civilization? The author also touches on the enduring power of art and storytelling, and the ways in which stories connect us all. Beyond the Beethoven and the Shakespeare, there's a comic book called *Station Eleven* that features prominently (and also gives the novel its name). It was written, somewhat randomly, by the first wife of a very famous Hollywood actor. She wrote the comic for herself and published only two copies, which end up in the hands of two of the main characters post-apocalypse. The comics have a profound impact on both characters (so the obscure art of the obscure ex-wife endures because art is forever, while the Hollywood actor is forgotten because who cares about Hollywood after the end of the world). The stories of the two characters in possession of the comics are mostly separate, though absolutely intertwined - as are ALL of the characters' stories. One of the most amazing aspects of this novel is how all of the

characters are connected, both pre- and post-collapse. I kept waiting for many of them to cross paths and realize their connection, their shared stories. Some did, and some didn't - the latter bothered me at first, until I realized that's the way the world works. We're all woven into the same giant tapestry, whether we see the individual threads or not. That, along with King Lear and Beethoven's 9th and unheard-of graphic novels about being stranded in space, is the beauty of humankind.

This isn't a straight forward narrative. It jumps around from character to character and time to time, and while all the strands are loosely connected, some of them are just so boring. There's a lot to keep track of and a lot of characters, and while the story isn't hard to follow because of that, it makes you wish that there was more space to develop certain characters who had a lot of potential but who didn't get much book time because there were so many other characters that needed to be addressed. If the book had told one person's story (preferably Kristen's or Clark's), then it would have been a much more interesting and MUCH more engaging book. What could have been a great story lost its potential and fell flat. There are only a couple interesting chapters and no real plot to the book as a whole. It's a story whose main purpose is to say "See what I did there? See how these are connected?" and make you go "oh cool" for a moment before coming off of a very temporary high and wanting much more substance. As soon as the story introduces a cool narrative or something resembling plot, it switches perspective and goes back to something far less interesting and that seed of plot never gets fully developed. Ultimately, I think the lack of plot is what killed this book for me.

Purchased because of several good reviews I'd seen in various publications. Novel is a blend of science fiction, adventure and romance, which was seamlessly written and beautifully narrated by ESJM. The story unfolds around a population decimating epidemic, giving equal time to the months before the pandemic, the event, and the aftermath, but cleverly jumping between the three instead of using a chronological format to relate the story. Often the use of this type of storytelling is confusing at first, sometimes to the point the reader gives up. Recently I read a young adult novel called "Code Name Verity", which had won numerous prestigious awards, was highly thought of, came with rave reviews, and try as I might, I could not get past Chapter 3, it was so confusing in the way it jumped back and forth between locations, characters, years, countries, I gave up (I went back to it later after having read an introduction and description of the novel and spent 5 hours reading it front to back, SUPER BOOK, IF YOU HAVENT READ IT, YOU SHOULD) . The way the story

unfolds out-of-order in this novel is what makes the book a compelling and provocative read, written using current colloquial verbiage and terminology which immediately hooks the audience, with such familiarity it seems as if the story is taking place somewhere you've been, the people are like people you know, the surroundings and landmarks are familiar, but the tale being told is like nothing you can imagine, a glimpse of a shocking brutal future. Excellent. Worth the price, would buy again. A+

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