

Mark Oshiro, <http://markreads.net>

Fan Writer packet

Mark Reads 'The Fellowship of the Ring': Book Two, Chapter Two

<http://markreads.net/reviews/2012/01/mark-reads-the-fellowship-of-the-ring-book-two-chapter-2-the-council-of-elrond/>

In the second chapter of the second book of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, the Council of Elrond begins and Gandalf tells a story that rivals John Galt in length. Don't worry, it's actually good. Intrigued? Then it's time for Mark to read *The Lord of the Rings*.

CHAPTER TWELVE: THE COUNCIL OF ELROND

Lords and Stuff

A Play

Act 14

Scene 1

[FRODO appears on stage, walking slowly next to the Bruinen River, appreciating the nature around him. He comes upon BILBO and GANDALF]

BILBO: So, are you ready for the council?

FRODO: I've heard it's sixty pages long.

GANDALF: Shhhhhh. You're not supposed to know that.

FRODO: Oh, sorry! Sorry about that! Well, I guess I don't have a choice in the matter.

BILBO: It'll be fun! There will surely be lots of poems and songs and storytelling!

FRODO: Can't I just go for a walk around here? It's so pretty.

GANDALF: NO HOW DARE YOU SUGGEST SUCH A THING. DO YOU NOT WANT TO HEAR MY STORIES.

FRODO: All right, all right, I'm coming!

[FRODO follows the others offstage.]

Scene 2

[We open on the Council of ELROND, hobbits, elves, and men seated on the porch of ELROND. GLOIN, GLORFINDEL, ARAGORN, ELROND, SAM, GIMLI, GALDOR, LEGOLAS, BOROMIR, and other counselors of ELROND are seated about for the Council.]

ELROND: Welcome, all. Thank you for coming.

SAM: We're on page two, right?

GANDALF: Shush, Sam! Just be patient.

ELROND: We are here to discuss matters of great importance, the least of which are the events that brought Frodo to our door. Glóin, would you like to begin?

GLOIN: Yes, of course. Moria Durin Khazad-dûm Thrór and Dáin Mordor and other words that no one else is going to understand and what am I saying.

FRODO: No, seriously, what are you talking about?

GLOIN: Don't be rude, Frodo! Anyway, the point I'm trying to make: Things were okay in Dáin until a horseman from Mordor arrived and made us an offer: give us information about hobbits, where they dwelt, and other such things, and he would offer us rings.

[The group gasps in horror.]

ELROND: I assume you did not take such an offer!

GLOIN: No! We refused twice, and the horseman was more perturbed each time. Also, we have no idea why he even offered us a second and third chance? Seriously, he could have just wasted the whole city. Hmmm. Apparently Sauron wants to do things "fairly."

ELROND: I almost thanked Sauron, but then I remembered why we are here. Actually, on that note, I'll just assume all of you don't know shit about this little meeting, so let me tell you the entire story of Sauron and the Rings of Power.

SAM: Um....Elrond?

ELROND: Yes, Sam Gamgee?

SAM: Gandalf has a forty-page speech coming up. Can your storytelling occur through a whimsical passing of time?

ELROND: Fair enough. Now you all magically know the whole story!

[The group looks perturbed by the newfound information.]

ELROND: Also, I should add that through this story, you'll learn that I am mysteriously a million times older than I should be, and I won't provide any rational reason as to how that's possible.

FRODO: Sounds fine to me.

ELROND: I'll also use the word "weregild" a lot and you won't understand what it means.

GANDALF: Really, at this point, should we even care? I daresay we shouldn't!

FRODO: So, what should we do next, then?

GANDALF: Hold on, my young, adventurous hobbit. I've got a lot more lecturing to do. Are you all prepared for a history lesson????

SAM: Oh, great. By the way, where are Pippin and Merry? Are they even mentioned at all? Are they off hiding? These are important questions! WHAT IF THE BLACK RIDERS FOUND MERRY AGAIN???

GANDALF: That's not as important as EVERYTHING REGARDING ISILDUR. I'm going to continue rattling off information that actually is important, but becomes increasingly hard to keep track of because there isn't a single narrative break in nearly thirty pages. Are you following me?

FRODO: I have a headache.

BOROMIR: Now, you just hold on one minute. I've got some information, too. I know that the Enemy has arisen as well, and I've seen smoke rise from Mount Doom. Not only that, but Mordor waged war against us! I have come with news of such things.

SAM: No, seriously, where are Merry and Pippin?

BOROMIR: It took me one hundred ten days to arrive here, all by myself, to seek your advice, Elrond, about this war with the Enemy. I have been guided by a poem I learned in a dream, which is totally a reliable piece of information all of the time.

ARAGORN: It just so happens that by coming here, that poem is fulfilled! Well, isn't that wonderful?

FRODO: There sure are a lot of poems and songs around.

ELROND: Frodo, let us not forget that why we are all here. It's time you brought the Ring out.

[Silence falls once again amongst those of the council.]

FRODO: You just gotta put me on the spot, don't you?

[FRODO reaches into his pocket and slowly withdraws. He opens his hand and the Ring is sitting in the middle of it.]

ELROND: Behold Isildur's Bane!

SAM: That....that is like the coolest exclamation I've ever heard. Can I start using that?

ARAGORN: It's pretty damn good. I won't deny that.

BOROMIR: I'm still unsure what we're all talking about. What do I do about the Enemy? I traveled one hundred ten days to get here! Do you expect the guy who has traveled one hundred and ten days to just turn around with only the explanation of a dream riddle? Come on!

ARAGORN: Look, I've been to some weird places and seen some weird shit, man. But this is all coming together. I will reforge the Sword and return with you.

BOROMIR: But wait, how do I know that the ring that Frodo has is the Ring?

BILBO: Allow me to tell you all my side of the story in what amounts to a literary montage!

FRODO: And then allow me to do the same!

SAM: I'm beginning to be disturbed that none of you care about our friends.

FRODO: Gandalf, it's your turn! You're the one holding back the most information!

GALDOR: I haven't said a single thing this whole time, but allow me to speak up now to agree with Frodo. Dude, you're holding out on us. Spill the beans!

GANDALF: Fine, fine. But I want all to remember that it was Galdor and Frodo who begged this of me.

SAM: Oh, damn it. You two fell for it! Now he's going to tell us a story!

ARAGORN: Get comfortable, everyone. This one's a doozy.

BOROMIR: I don't know what y'all are talking about.

GANDALF: Well, let me start off by saying that, if you recall, I helped send the Necromancer out of the Mirkwood while Bilbo was heading to defeat Smaug.

BILBO: Yeah, you never did tell me what you were doing when you could have been helping me out.

GANDALF: Right, well, the Necromancer was Sauron.

ARAGORN: Son of a motherless bumblebee.

SAM: Behold Isildur's Bane!

ELROND: That's....that's not how that works.

SAM: Oh. Sorry.

GANDALF: Right, well, Sauron knows the Ring still exists, but does not know we have it; the advantage is ours.

FRODO: Great! So what do we do next?

GANDALF: Shush, I still have a lot more story to tell. If you recall, there is another great wizard, Saruman the Wise, that is even greater than I. It turns out that I was betrayed by him.

[GANDALF quiets in shame for a moment before continuing.]

GANDALF: Yes, even great Gandalf the Grey makes mistakes, and I misjudged both Saruman and Gollum, and those mistakes cost us dearly.

SAM: Was one of those mistakes forgetting about Pippin and Merry? That seems like a mistake.

ARAGORN: Pay attention. We are discussing the events that led to me capturing Gollum and Gandalf coming to interrogate him.

SAM: Wouldn't that be the worst interrogation of all time?

FRODO: Sam, be quiet, Gandalf is....wait. Wait, he's got a point. How do you interrogate someone who talks like Gollum?

GANDALF [glaring at FRODO and SAM]: Well, I might be able to tell you if you'll allow me to finish my story.

FRODO and SAM: Sorry!!!

GANDALF: Aragorn assisted me with bringing Gollum, who I captured, back to the Elves in Mirkwood. There, we held him in captivity for a really long time because I'm a good person and it's totally cool to imprison a creature because....well, because he was friends with someone we don't like. Well, not so much friends, as Sauron didn't treat him well either.

LEGOLAS: Oh, right. So the whole reason I'm here is to reveal that Gollum escaped from prison.

GANDALF: BY MY OWN GREY BEARD, WHAT?

LEGOLAS: I probably should have said something earlier.

GANDALF: YES. YOU PROBABLY SHOULD HAVE. How did that happen?

LEGOLAS: We may have been too nice to him.

GANDALF: Well, that's awkward.

GLOIN: Yeah, y'all were the opposite of nice to me when I was imprisoned by you.

SAM: Now that's awkward.

GANDALF: WILL EVERYONE BEHAVE? Legolas, what happened?

LEGOLAS: Well, we took Gollum outside, he climbed up into a tree, and he refused to come down. It was at that moment that we were caught off-guard by Orcs.

FRODO: What are Orcs?

GANDALF: Shhh, you'll find out....sometime. I don't actually know.

GALDOR: Can we get back to your story? I feel like a whole year has passed and I still have a lot of questions. Like: What is Saruman's advice? What does he advise we do, since he is above you?

GANDALF: Well...I think that may be the true definition of awkwardness. Unfortunately, I sought him out for his counsel; along the way, I ran into Radagast the Brown.

SAM: You wizards aren't really good at the color thing, are you? Brown, white, grey....not very colorful, eh?

[GANDALF ignores this jab and continues.]: Saruman, the greatest of my order, was right where I expected him to be, far south in Isengard. I ascended the stair of Saruman with him to the Orthanc to get his counsel. And....well.

FRODO: Yes???

GANDALF: Well, his robe was not white, but woven of many colours.

FRODO: I don't get it.

SAM: Is that a metaphor for saying he's gay?

FRODO: I don't think the rainbow meant "unholy homosexual" at this time.

SAM: I'm confused.

GANDALF: The point is....he changed. He was not the same wizard I once knew. He then lectured me on the changing times, and I knew that he had fallen the way of the Enemy. He was no longer on my side.

SAM: I mean, that literally sounds like an argument against being gay.

FRODO: SHUT UP.

GANDALF: So, if you recall, I was gone for some time. Well, Saruman imprisoned me on the pinnacle of the Orthanc. There was nowhere to go from there, and I despaired for many days, pacing back and forth in the little room I had up there.

FRODO: That's weird. I had a dream about that.

BOROMIR: And we all know how important those are!

GANDALF: Thankfully, Radagast was not of the Enemy; Saruman had deceived him in order to deceive me, so the Eagles of the Mountains, sent by Radagast, found me and rescued me from that precipice.

SAM: You got to ride a giant eagle? That's not fair!

FRODO: Sam, he was imprisoned at the top of a mountain. I think that's worse.

SAM: I'm not going to get anything I want, am I?

FRODO: Aren't you supposed to be hiding this whole chapter? Why are you talking?

SAM:comic relief?

GANDALF: Ahem. If I may continue....[Pauses, waits for silence from an embarrassed SAM]...Gwaihir the Windlord helped me find a proper steed in Rohan to ride away from that wretched place. I managed to make it to Bree just after dear Frodo left, actually! The very first thing I did was go see BARLIMAN BUTTERBUR to find out if he sent that letter to Frodo as I requested.

FRODO: Oh no.

GANDALF: What?

FRODO: Please tell me you didn't destroy him.

SAM: Yeah, he was rather nice to us.

FRODO: I mean, to be fair, he didn't send that letter at all.

SAM: Yeah, and he waited until the last possible moment to share it with us.

FRODO: But I like him! Plus, his name is really fun to say. BARLIMAN. BUTTERBUR.

GANDALF: No, the dude's fine. In fact I hugged him!

FRODO: YAY!

GANDALF: To death.

SAM: HOW DARE YOU DO—

GANDALF: No, I'm just kidding! He's fine, seriously. Anyway, I made it here to Rivendell before you since you're impossible to find in this wilderness. And that concludes my story! What would you rate it, Bilbo?

BILBO [who quickly wakes from a nap]: Oh! Oh, it was splendid. Splendid for sure. I loved the part about the dragon the most!

[Awkward silence.]

ELROND: Well, it seems we all have a decision to make. We have all the information we might need. What do we do with it?

GLORFINDEL: I suppose we only have two options: throw it in the Sea, or destroy it.

ELROND: We can't destroy it here.

GANDALF: And it would still exist at the bottom of the Sea. It would come back.

GLORFINDEL: In like a thousand years! That seems like a long enough time.

SAM: There's a sea? Where the hell is there a sea?

ELROND: Well, there's nothing we can do here. I suppose there's really only one option.

FRODO: What's that?

ELROND: We send the Ring to the Fire. The one in Mordor.

[Everyone but SAM and FRODO gasp.]

SAM: I don't get it.

ARAGORN: ONE SIMPLY CANNOT WALK INTO MORDOR.

SAM:could we fly into it?

EVERYONE but FRODO and SAM: NO!

SAM: Sheesh, y'all are a vicious bunch!

BOROMIR: I have an idea. Why can't we just use the Ring to destroy Saruman and Sauron?

ELROND: It doesn't work that way.

BOROMIR: Why not???

ELROND: Um, duh. Rules of a fantasy novel.

ARAGORN: Aren't we inventing those rules?

LEGOLAS: I suppose so.

GANDALF: Regardless, anyone who uses the Ring for any reason brings themselves one step closer to taking Sauron's place. That path only leads to evil.

GLOIN: Wait, so what happens if we destroy the Ring?

ELROND: Well, I suppose we don't know.

GLOIN: What if it makes Sauron super powerful?

ELROND: I suppose that's a risk we should take.

GLOIN: And throwing it into the ocean where there are no creatures with fingers to even wear rings is still a bad idea?

GANDALF: So we shall destroy it, then.

ELROND: Yes, I think so. And the journey will be perilous, full of despair and danger, and one might not survive it. This is not a battle or a fight; whomever takes the Ring must sneak into Mordor and cast it into the Fire.

BILBO: Oh, all right, I'll do it.

[Everyone gasps.]

BILBO: What? I mean, I took it from Gollum. None of this would have happened without me.

GANDALF: My dear Bilbo, you are but a player in this long game.

SAM: This game of thrones?

FRODO: Seriously, Sam, you're supposed to be spying. Shut up.

GANDALF: Bilbo, you should not be the one to do this. The Ring has passed on from you. Finish your book. Enjoy your life. Let this chapter end.

BILBO: Don't tell me how to live my life!

GANDALF: Have I ever been wrong?

BILBO [begrudgingly]: No, you big sassy wizard. No, you haven't.

GANDALF: Then it's settled. We will need some other volunteer to do this.

FRODO: I suppose it has to be me, doesn't it?

ELROND: Why do you say such a thing???

FRODO: Because I'm the main character.

[Everyone nods and mumbles in approval.]

FRODO: I wish I could just stay here, but I suppose I have to do this.

ELROND: Then you shall go forth to Mordor to destroy the Ring.

[SAM jumps out from behind a bush in shock.]

SAM: No! He cannot go alone! I must go with him!

[All feign surprise.]

ARAGORN: You're not good at this hiding thing, are you?

SAM: Sorry, I had a lot to say.

ELROND: Then you shall go with him, too, Sam Gamgee.

SAM: Good. I mean...bad? Is this good or bad? What did I just sign up for?

ARAGORN: Oh, you are not prepared at all, Sam.

To Be Continued....

Mark Watches 'Buffy the Vampire Slayer': S05E16 - The Body

<http://markwatches.net/reviews/2012/05/mark-watches-buffy-the-vampire-slayer-s05e16-the-body/>

In the sixteenth episode of the fifth season of Buffy the Vampire Slayer, how the fuck am I supposed to write a non-spoilery teaser here? It's fucking absurd.

I don't understand. I don't understand how this all happens. How we go through this. I mean, I knew her, and then she's – there's just a body, and I don't understand why she can't just get back in it and not be dead any more. It's stupid. It's mortal and stupid, and – and Xander's crying and not talking, and I was having fruit punch and I thought, well, Joyce will never have any more fruit punch, ever. And she'll never have eggs, or yawn, or brush her hair, not ever and no one will explain to me why.

This is not the first time I've had to write about death, and I am still, to this day, really happy with what I wrote during Mark Reads Harry Potter concerning the death of my father. I just read it again, and I'm crying once more. As I said in Tuesday's review, I am terrified of the reality I'm going to have to deal with. My mother will soon become a body. She will stop breathing. She will stop sending me email forwards. She will stop calling me to tell about some new recipe she's completed. And despite that I have lost my father, that I know what a horrific experience it is for me to deal with losing someone, I know that it won't help me at all. It won't be easier to accept, and it won't be easier to cope with.

I'm closer with my mother now than I ever was with my father, and the thought kills me. I purposely avoided my father the last week of his life, and as guilty as the thought makes me, I did it because I wanted to preserve the memory of his body. I did not want to see him wither away. I did not want to see him laying in a gurney or shrinking away into the recliner my mother threw away after he passed. I did not want to see him forget who I was ever again, and I did it for an entirely selfish reason. I didn't want to suffer anymore. How arrogant is that? The man had three different types of cancer, and he'd been dealing with the degenerative nature of Alzheimer's for almost a year. His own daughter had rejected him, and he was losing his grip on reality. And I wanted to avoid the inconvenience of it all.

But I didn't want my memory to disassociate from his life. And I use the word to refer to the fact that I couldn't deal with the idea that I'd have a

memory of my father where he wasn't in the body I'd known him to be in. I didn't want what I saw here in "The Body," and I think that's ultimately what was my undoing while watching this. I sat in horror at the quietness of it all, as if this was some fucked up sequel to "Hush." I even fell for Buffy's moment of imagining an alternate version of the future. I fell for it because I did the same thing.

I hadn't been at Buzznet long when I got the call from my brother. He'd called three times in a row, and despite that I was in an informal brainstorming meeting with my coworkers, I decided it was important to answer the call. My brother just sobbed, and then said, "Dad died." I remember collapsing, just like Dawn does here, and yelling at him, telling him that he was a liar and that it wasn't funny to play jokes on me.

The jokes came later. I discovered that my mother and my brother liked to use humor to heal, and I was happy to see it appear in "The Body," too. Well, I wasn't happy with this episode. It's not a fun thing to watch, and I don't even know if I could ever watch it again. I just mean that... well, it was satisfying, but not in that way that the end of "Checkpoint" was satisfying. It was satisfying because it was so real. The silence was real. The confusion with physical space, the obsession with tiny details in the aftermath of learning that you've lost someone, the detachments that happen in your heart as a way to protect yourself, the desire for pain because any momentary distraction is welcomed, the utterly horrific, endless awkwardness that comes with the territory... it's all so painfully real. And then I saw Joyce's body on a metal slab as the episode begins to reveal the reactions of the Scoobies, and I have to accept that Joyce Summers is gone, and I lost it. I had to pause the episode while I cried because it was very easy to imagine my mother in the same place, and I was crying over losing a fictional character just as much as I was crying about the thought of what's to come in my own life. I cried so hard that I choked, and then I fell on the floor and cried on to the rug under the table because I didn't want a single second of this. I cried for nearly fifteen minutes, heavy, guttural sobs of pain and rage and fear, and I knew that when my mother passed, it would be a billion times worse than this.

This just might be the best written episode of Buffy, and I can't imagine that it was easy for Joss to write. It's brutally honest about death, realistic in ways that only those of us who have lost a loved one can understand, and brilliantly acted by the entire cast. But my mind wanders back to Anya's monologue, and I'm just so struck by the fact that the character who has

spent the least amount of time being human so fully understands the futility and absurdity of death. Death will never make sense, and no matter how much I've dealt with it in my life, I don't think I'll ever truly understand it. I don't know that I want to. For now, though, it's time for me to admit that this is the last time I'll see Joyce Summers. And I fucking hate it.

I want Joyce Summers back right now. I want to hear her voice. I want to see her joking with Spike. I want to see her give that look to Buffy, the one where she cocks her head and frowns at her, the one that says, "Are you serious?" I want to see her cuddle with Dawn on the couch. I want to see her stare longingly at Giles. I want anything with her, just one more second and I would be fine with that.

Instead, I get this. I don't know if I could ever divorce the memory I have of Joyce Summers from what happens in "The Body." I don't know that I could ever forget Buffy breaking her mother's ribs while trying to revive her. I found myself thinking far too much about so many tiny details in this episode that I'll now forever associate with this character. I can't stop the image of Buffy soaking up her vomit with a couple paper towels from replaying in my mind. Buffy looks dead in that scene, covered in sweat and pale, and I don't understand how Sarah Michelle Gellar went through this.

I can't forget that Dawn was trying to find her identity in school, despite knowing who she really is. That speaks volumes to me, that she has friends and continues to live her own life. And that's why it destroys me that Buffy has to be the bearer of news that ruins her. All I can think about is Joyce's body being zipped into a bag, or of Giles's face when he discovers what happened, or of Willow's near-breakdown over a sweater, or of Xander punching a wall to feel anything, or Tara looking upon Dawn with so much empathy because she knows exactly what this feels like. Death isn't sudden, she explains, and then it is. And that's how it was with my father. He died over a long period of time, but when it happened, it was an instant, and it was surprising.

And I will be unable to forget that final instant as Buffy saves Dawn from a vampire, but Dawn must then see her mother's body, bereft of soul and life, laying on a table. That last image, of a numb daughter reaching for one final bit of comfort from a dead mother, is going to haunt me forever. Joyce Summers is gone.

Fuck, y'all. I don't want this.

PS: Willow and Tara kissed for real and it was goddamn beautiful.

PPS: That "Avengers assemble" line was... holy shit, HE KNEW.

Mark Reads 'The Sandman': 10x03 - Chapter Three: In Which We Wake

<http://markreads.net/reviews/2012/08/mark-reads-the-sandman-10x03-chapter-three-in-which-we-wake/>

In the seventy-second issue of *The Sandman*, the wake begins. Intrigued? Then it's time for Mark to read *The Sandman*.

Chapter Three: In Which We Wake

I can't say I knew Dream very well.

I've spent the last three and a half months with him. I've heard countless stories concerning what he's done since the beginning of time. I've been given the chance to observe his day-to-day life, to see him suffer, to see him grieve, to see him rage, to see him avenge, to see him act out tragedies, to see him give people hope, to see him doom others to an eternity of suffering, to see him go to Hell and back, to see him distort and mutate the universe simply by existing, to see him grant nightmares and awaken those from the world of the Dreaming, to gain friends and lose them, to love and fall out of love, to live.

And yet I don't know him very well. He was distant, reserved, and cold, often choosing to brood quietly, alone, or hide his emotions behind a brick wall of stoicism. Sometimes, I believed that he didn't have any emotions to hide.

I am crying, and I don't know why. Throughout this journey for the past few months, I have not grown particularly close to Dream. I have grown close to his sisters and brothers. I have grown close to the people he has affected, to those he has given eternal life, to those who died because of what he has done, to the stories told in his honor. And yet I am still crying, and as I watched the casket lowered onto his invisible body, I missed him. Yes, he is still here, and he still watches over the Dreaming, but it's not him. It is a different him. It won't ever be the same. And I miss what has now come to pass.

I will miss him visiting Bast. I will miss him verbally sparring with Desire. I will miss him comforting Despair and Delirium, growing close to his sisters even if he doesn't think he is. I will miss his family, especially since I know that once I wake up from this dream, I probably won't see them again. I will

miss Delirium's dresses, her candor, her sense of humor, her wonder. I will miss Death. I will miss her truth.

I will miss his poetic sense of justice and revenge. I will miss him overreacting. I will miss his moments of staggering wisdom distilled in a sentence. I will miss the way he changed his appearance for different people, to make his perception more palatable.

And I will miss the stories. Oh my god, the stories. They are what give me life. They give me anger and rage and happiness and wholeness and sadness and too many other things that it would be silly to list. I will miss the lord of stories.

I know that I'm waking up soon, and when I do, the events of this wake will pass through me, and I'll only be able to recall the feeling of it. I know that when I wake, I'll feel a bit more complete, as if a chapter has finally ended in my life, one that I'd been secretly craving for a while, now satisfied that it has gone by. But while all things must end, I know that at the very least, I can continue the story in some way. That's what he would have wanted, right? He would want the stories to never end, to fold into one another, to find new ways of telling us that we aren't so alone and distant after all. That's the only real obligation I feel to his memory, which is already fading away. Keep telling stories.

I can't say I knew Dream very well. I miss him.

Mark Reads 'Feed': Chapter 26

<http://markreads.net/reviews/2012/11/mark-reads-feed-chapter-26/>

In the twenty-sixth chapter of *Feed*, you all tricked me into reading this, and I will never forgive you. Intrigued? Then it's time for Mark to read *Feed*.

Chapter Twenty-Six

You're not supposed to do this.

And to Mira Grant's credit, that's why I'm hoping this works. I'm not optimistic for the sake of it; after this, I really should just prepare for the worst. If Grant's willing to kill off *her narrator* in the first book, then the stakes here are just... well, unprecedented for Mark Reads. And life. Yeah, that, too.

Jesus, what the fuck do I write? I'm sad? I'm upset? I'm completely emotionally destroyed? This is one of the more draining reading experiences I ever had, especially since I put so much stock into the idea that something, *anything*, any sort of *deus ex machina* would swoop in and save the day. It *had* to save the day. Georgia is the life of this goddamn book. As fun as Shaun is, as reliable as Rick has proven himself to be, *this is Georgia's story*.

But I suppose the signs were littered throughout *Feed* anyway. Shaun's blog post from a future date saying that this journey was absolutely not worth it. The constant fear that a blood test would hit all red lights, something *I picked up on myself*. Mahir's fear that he'd never get to meet Georgia in person. (AND I THOUGHT MAHIR WOULD DIE. HELP ME.) Georgia's ongoing commitment to the news, putting herself in danger in order to report the truth.

What's the "truth" anyway? The implications of what happened in this chapter are so far-reaching that I can only speculate about the future. Did Georgia's post get published? Was Tate outed as being complicit in the attacks? I don't even know if Rick or Shaun survived. What about Peter Ryman? Who in the government was involved? Was this all a ploy to get Tate into office? Oh my god, I have so many terrible, awful questions, and I can't concentrate. I'm still in shock. I keep thinking that I'll turn the page next week when I start the next batch of reviews, and there will be a twist,

and Georgia will totally have survived. But I know better than this. I know that this story had to unfold like this. I guess that's pretty weird, right? As horrified and upset as I was when I first read this chapter, there's a strange and unsettling sense of poetry to Georgia's death. She died to save the world. Well, she died to *try* and save the world. It's not like her death guarantees a world of puppies and joy. She died for a concept she devoted her whole heart to. Central to this is the fact that Georgia discovered that the entire country was being lied to, that they were being fed an alternate reality, and she died to expose that.

How is Shaun going to move on? I don't even want to think about this. I don't. In a way, I'm glad this is the last post I'm writing this week. Will it be agonizing to not know how this book will continue? Sure. But I'm also relieved that I get a momentary reprieve from this horrible chaos. I imagine that things are going to get *bleak as fuck* for the remainder of *Feed*, and while I'll be ready for it when the time comes, right now, I'm not ready.

Fuck, y'all, I'm so devastated. I truly never saw this coming, and it hurts.

R.I.P, Georgia Carolyn Mason. FUCK.

