The Glass Hotel

By Emily St. John Mandel

**About the Author:**

C.G. Drews lives in Australia with an overworked laptop and the goal of reading every book in existence. Consequently, her brain has overflowed with words and she spends her days writing novels to make you laugh or cry (or both). She never sleeps and believes in cake for breakfast. Author of A Thousand Perfect Notes and The Boy Who Steals Houses with Hachette UK.

**About the Book:**

Vincent is a bartender at the Hotel Caiette, a five-star lodging on the northernmost tip of Vancouver Island. On the night she meets Jonathan Alkaitis, a hooded figure scrawls a message on the lobby's glass wall: Why don’t you swallow broken glass. High above Manhattan, a greater crime is committed: Alkaitis's billion-dollar business is really nothing more than a game of smoke and mirrors. When his scheme collapses, it obliterates countless fortunes and devastates lives. Vincent, who had been posing as Jonathan’s wife, walks away into the night. Years later, a victim of the fraud is hired to investigate a strange occurrence: a woman has seemingly vanished from the deck of a container ship between ports of call.

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* The Glass House by Bettina Wolfe
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* The Girl from Oto by Amy Maroney
* Tracks by Eric Goodman

Discussion Questions:

1. Explore Paul and Vincent’s relationship. How does their relationship evolve as both characters move into adulthood? Why is Paul compelled to pass Vincent’s videos off as his own?
2. Discuss Vincent’s five-minute videos. What meaning does she find in this practice? Why does she choose water as her primary subject?
3. Explore the theme of opportunity as it is depicted in the novel. How does each character’s access to opportunity—or lack thereof—affect their fate? Is there such thing as a “good opportunity”?
4. When Oskar is cross-examined about his participation in the Ponzi scheme, he says, “It’s possible to both know and not know something”. What do his words suggest about the interplay between loyalty, morality, and denial?
5. Consider the role the financial crisis of 2008 plays in the novel. Which characters are affected, and how? Are they able to move forward—and to find happiness? What do these outcomes suggest about the possibility of starting over?
6. Examine the intersection of success and morality in the novel. Is success a corrupting influence? Consider, as you answer this question, Jonathan’s company, Vincent’s unofficial marriage, Leon’s career, and Paul’s music.
7. Explore Alkaitis’s understanding of his crimes. What motivates him to defraud his investors, and why does he maintain friendships with some of them? Why does he insist that he acted alone in the perpetration of the Ponzi scheme?
8. Consider Vincent’s decision to live onboard a ship after Alkaitis’s crimes come to light. What does she hope to experience there? Is she ever fully able to leave her previous life behind?
9. Explore the theme of interconnectedness as it is portrayed in the novel. In what ways are the different characters connected? Are they aware of these connections, or do their ties remain largely invisible? What qualities of the modern world facilitate these connections? Is connection a guaranteed cure for loneliness? Why or why not?
10. Discuss the conclusion of the novel, exploring, as you do so, the symmetry between Vincent’s death and that of her mother. Do you agree with Vincent that her mother’s death was an accident, as she asserts in the final paragraph of the novel? Why is Vincent able to come to peace with her mother’s death only after she herself dies?