



Book Club Questions
Coldwire By Chloe Gong

1. Coldwire opens up with a demonstration shut down by NileCorp riot bots. Throughout the book, there are scenes of civilians, anarchists, activists, and government officials protesting across a spectrum of intensity. What are the concerns voiced? Cite examples from the text.
2. Lia experiences episodes where she questions reality, wondering if she has Wakeman Syndrome. Does using technology ever cause you stress and anxiety? Why? As a class, identify physical and mental signs of anxiety or stress. What are ways to help alleviate those feelings?
3. There is a distinction between monthly and daily subscribers of StrangeLoom—those that can afford to ignore the harsh realities of downcountry for extended periods of time, and those that work hard to spend even one hour upcountry. Why does so much of life in upcountry include consumer activities like shopping and eating out? If you lived in the book's world, how would you spend your time if money was no obstacle?
4. Lia fondly thinks "Kieren, consequently, may be my primary competitor, but he's also my greatest source of joy." (Chapter two) What does Lia mean by this? Can you relate? What or who are your greatest sources of joy?
5. The downcountry deteriorated because of mutating pandemics, factories releasing toxins into the air, and megacorporations eliminating freshwater supply. Lia reflects on how "the government refused to do anything about it, people chose the selfish option, the easy option, the pretty option. They built another world and fled." (Chapter six) How do you feel about this? How far would you go to escape reality and seek comfort? Is it wrong to do so? Explain your answers.
6. Eirale fights Nik and is upset when he calls her a bootlicker, especially since she believes he holds a level of privilege she doesn't. She thinks, "The paltry existence I've been granted in Atahua is a life that I have worked for, bled for, no matter how corrupt NileCorp is. . . . Working for NileCorp is something. What else do I have?" (Chapter five) What do you think of this mindset? What are some scenes in the book where her mindset begins shifting?
7. Lia gives herself the following affirmation when she experiences Wakeman Syndrome: "I need to remember I have no physical form here. I am an avatar, and if something were to go wrong, someone only needs to yank the Claw off my head downcountry for me to exist again." (Chapter six) How could this be considered



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foreshadowing? What does it actually take for Lia to exist again after she sacrifices herself in Kunlun?

8. Kieren tells Lia that the story about Threto's "panda dog" was a propaganda campaign to portray Medaluo negatively. Lia finds a clarifying note on the news, but who among us has never been fooled by propaganda or an AI video of a cute animal? In pairs, discuss a time when you trusted a social media post or news article without investigating it further. What are some ways you can identify misinformation? What about an AI-generated video?

9. The A.I. Love Psychic tells Lia, "'I see love for you. It's up to you to let yourself have it rather than keep it outside.'" (Chapter twelve) What does this refer to? Is it about romantic love or something else? Do you agree with the psychic? Explain your answer using evidence from the book and your own experiences.

10. Both Lia and Eirale find themselves drawn to Medan culture despite knowing any semblance of allegiance could mark them traitors. Why are Medan orphans kept away from their culture, and why are they forced to join the military? Cite examples from the book.

11. After Headmaster Murray retires from his post as NileCorp's head of security, Kieren suspects his dad was manipulated into a cult or worse, a victim of NileCorp's Indisposition. In real life, we don't have chips in our brains that can be used to wipe our values and memories, so what do you think Indisposition is meant to represent? Explain your answer.

12. What is the significance of the old man helping Eirale escape the Threto surveillance drones? Explain your answer.

13. While Eirale waits for the influenza pill to work its curing effects on Nik, she debates whose actions are worse: Nik or NileCorp. What does she come to understand? Answer her question about remaining loyal to NileCorp: "So what am I exchanging to be a part of this?" (Chapter thirty-one)

14. Nik makes the statement, "'I'm Atahuan. I have the right to protest how Atahua is being run.'" (Chapter thirty-three) Why don't all Atahuans feel the same way? Use examples from the text and your own experiences to answer.

15. When Lia realizes she would never be treated fairly by NileCorp, she cries, "'I just want to be Atahuan... I want to be respected. I want to be more than the enemy's face.'" (Chapter thirty-four) Research "the perpetual foreigner" stereotype via your



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preferred trusted resource center, or through the Pew Research Center, here: <https://www.pewresearch.org/race-and-ethnicity/2023/11/30/asian-americans-and-the-foreverforeigner-stereotype/> What are examples in the book of Medan characters experiencing this stereotype? What are examples of how real-life people perpetuate or experience this stereotype? If you can relate and want to share with the class, please do. What actions can we take to end stereotypes like these?

16. Why was Lia never motivated before to explore downcountry? What was preventing her from learning the truth about herself?

17. Eirale did not have friends at the Nile Military Academy and was confused as to why Miz would trust someone she hasn't been in contact with for over ten months. Miz states, "'That's why it's called friendship. . . . There's nothing to uphold. It just is.'" (Chapter thirty-five) What does Miz mean by this? What does friendship mean to you? What do you value in a friend?

18. Compare Lia's and Eirale's experiences as wards of the state, specifically how they form relationships. How much of their personalities are because of how they were raised versus their programming?

19. As a class, discuss the social and economic barriers to accessing StrangeLoom. Why is it necessary to maintain a downcountry replica? Who has to work in the real, and why?

20. In response to Chung's explanation of Medaluo funding Project Wit, Lia thinks, "There is nothing in ourcurrent landscape that is no longer political. Even the color of someone's shoes is political." (Chapter forty) Find evidence in the book to support Lia's claim. How does this claim compare to current events?

21. Despite Chung regarding Lia as a being with consciousness who learned to become human, he still views her as a science experiment he owns. What do you think about Henry? Does he view Lia as his daughter and her own person? What about Nik, Miz, and Blare? Discuss with a partner, then share with the class.

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