

# Falling man delillo



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Falling Man introduces the reader to the family of Keith Glenn, a survivor of the World Trade Centres, Lianne Glenn, spouse of Keith, and their son, Justin. Lianne suffers her life with post traumatic stress disorder, having a constant fear of death after her father's suicide. She becomes desperate to survive amidst the deaths of the victims of September 11; consequently she fears over a slow painful death, resembling the Alzheimer's patients she manages over. At the start of the novel,

Lianne questions her faith and struggles to deal with death; however with her affiliation to God and the fraternity built among the Alzheimer's patients, she is able to overcome her ambiguity of life and death. The significant event concerning death in Lianne's life is the suicide of her father, Jack Glenn; causing her diagnosis of Post Traumatic Stress. The National Institute of Mental Health defines Post Traumatic Stress Disorder as "an anxiety disorder that some people get after seeing or living through a dangerous event".

Jack shoots himself after finding out he was diagnosed with Senile Dementia, a degenerative disease, causing the death of brain cells (Dementia). After her father's death in northern New Hampshire, Lianne recalls past memories with him as a last resort for her to remember his existence. Throughout the novel, Lianne's repentance is reflected off of the fact that she was not able to spend much time with her father due to the lack of propinquity. While Lianne was watching the World Trade Centres fall, she, thought he [Keith] was dead (DeLillo 11).

Lianne fears Justin will end up like her in an exclusive lifestyle of constant fear. Fortunately, Keith survives the terrorist attacks and Lianne welcomes Keith back home to live as a family once again. Later, Lianne asks Keith why he came to her house. She interrogates Keith in a way hoping for an answer that will help her revitalise the bond they used to have. Lianne realises in order to pull through rough times, a family is necessary despite her mother, Nina's opposition.

Lianne's storyline sessions attended by the men and women in the early stages of Alzheimer's diseases revolve around a central theme, memory. The attendees write about their feelings and memories, scratching off small bits of their dying memory. Lianne's dependence on the Alzheimer's patients correlates with how she dealt with her father's death. One common human aspect that is shared among all the attendees at the storyline sessions is the attempt to try to hold on to their past memories. For example, Lianne compares the rifle she hunted varmints and the rifle Jack used to shoot himself.

She attempts to engrave his death through words such as " muzzle blast" and tells, ". herself he'd [Jack] had done a brave thing" (DeLillo 41). Lianne depends on the first, Lianne is Jealous of the Alzheimer's patients because they are able to eventually forget painful memories and experiences. However, as time passes, Lianne starts to move away from her fear of dying off of depression and memory loss realising the Joy of living the moment. Towards the end of the novel, she finds herself wanting to talk about her experiences and felt a need for them to listen.

By the end of the novel, Lianne is able to live in tranquillity through the storyline sessions- expressing feelings and accepting the world naturally helps her let go of Jack's death. Lianne's encounter of the performance artist, Falling Man on 42nd Street disturbs her life of contentment. DeLillo's allusion to the famous picture of the, "... particular man who was photographed falling from the north tower of the World Trade Centre, headfirst, arms at his sides, one leg bent, a man set forever in free fall... ", caused controversy among the public crowd (DeLillo 221).

The public does not want to be reminded of the tragedy and through rejection and anger, the public grapples with the collapse of the World Trade Centres. In response, DeLillo uses paralipsis by not including a deep monologue of Lianne's reaction to Falling Man. Perhaps by doing this, Lianne is blurred into the public, having the same mindset as the them. The reader is left to ponder what Lianne was thinking deeply when she first saw the disturbing act in public. On the other hand, in Chapter 13, Lianne reads the obituary of " David Janiak- age 39... erformance artist known as Falling Man" (DeLillo 219). She goes to the extent of finding a newspaper from five days ago to find more details about his death and searching it online. Lianne's curiosity to find out about his death is illuminated because of the lack of interest presented when she first saw him three years ago on 42nd Street. David Janiak's augmenting way of suicide destroys his spine, resulting in a slow and painful death; which Lianne fears the most of dying this way. The newspaper published his death as, " Dead at 39, apparently of natural causes" (DeLillo 220).

DeLillo uses situational irony to demonstrate the action of free fall as the most ideal falling motion regardless of the published death symptoms: heart ailment and high blood pressure. While reading articles on online, Lianne clicks on entries in European languages staring off into the world of diacritics and Cyrillic script. Lianne purposefully clicks on articles she cannot even read in pursuance to connect with Nina, her mother through the Morandi paintings in Berlin, Germany. A German theme is prevalent throughout the novel: Martin is from Germany, the terrorists lived in Marienstraße, and Janiak is a German last name (House of Names).

Lianne's imagination roams to, "the name of a trump card in a tarot deck, Falling Man, name in gothic type, the figure twisting down in a stormy night sky," (DeLillo 221). She imagines Keith as the figure, jumping into the never ending world of poker. DeLillo suggests the "Falling Man" jumping into the dark sky is applicable to everyone, thus, it is he or she's will that settles the one card pulled from the tarot deck. The theme of faith and god plays an important purpose in the novel; Lianne struggles to find what it means to worship God or an upper deity.

Many arguments throughout Falling Man are revolved around God and his will; Nina and her boyfriend, Martin are the prominent arguers. In the first half of the book, many arguments and opinions are directed toward the role of God on the attack on the World Trade Centres. People living in society tend to blame God and question his authority as a last resort to questions, Lianne attempts to start a life based on secular principles, in an attempt to release herself from spiritual enchainment. Lianne ponders over the existence of

God, the God people are referring to and God's will regarding the terrorist attacks.

During the heated fights between Nina and Martin, Lianne is usually listening from a third person limited stand point, reflecting her own principles to the fight. In Chapter Two, she agreed with her mother that public should not commiserate for the terrorists. The reader can infer that Lianne's faith and beliefs are largely influenced by the fast paced society of New York City and her mother. In Chapter Twelve, Lianne talks with Keith about his career as a professional poker player and their future. This scene marks a significant point in the novel because Lianne realises what she is looking for is not what Keith wants.

The last quote in Chapter 12, " She wanted to be afe in the world and he did not" reflects Lianne's growth as a mother and a human being- deciding to raise Justin by herself. Lianne embraces her faith as a Christian and engages with her own life, which gave her courage to break away from Keith.

Furthermore, when Lianne goes to the show of Morandi paintings at a gallery in Chelsea, she sees the third painting, similar to the one Nina owned and finds the hidden figures of her mother smoking in a chair and a standing man.

This proves that Lianne was able to part with her mother in a healthy way, thus she is able to move on with her life in an equanimous manner. Equally important, Lianne attends a mass service at the Catholic church near the Community Centre, the place where the storyline sessions takes place in East Harlem. Attending Mass helps her recall the voices and memories of all

the loved ones such as Nina, Jack, and the Alzheimer's patients. Along with her doubts of God, she would come early to be the only person in the church, enjoying the presence of the dead.

At this point in the novel, Lianne has conquered her fear of death and vows to live her life wholeheartedly. She accepts death of her loved ones in order to move on in life rather than fathoming over the person's death. This similar manner resembles Justin's natural acceptance of the September 11 attacks. For the first time, Delillo portrays a spiritual and mental aspect of religion rather than the questionings of God's existence. The power of faith and conformity to life is exemplified in the fictional firsthand account of Lianne. Lianne changes from a woman that is influenced by her surroundings to a mother with full intent and purpose.

Lianne ponders the meaning life and the existence of God, not being able to comprehend what is going on around her. The death of her father, the attack on the World Trade Centres, and her fear of death affect her supposedly in an interchangeable way, however she is proved at the end that she moved on in life and is ready to start a new life, unlike Keith. The picture of "Falling Man" taken by Richard Drew sends a powerful message of fate and free will. DeLillo's fictional performance artist and the photograph harmonise to illustrate the remaining souls of the 3, 000 innocent lives