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### Cause and Effect Essay

As humans, there are often times when we allow someone else other than ourselves to shape our identity and thoughts. Literature brings about larger world issues by helping readers like myself, see the big picture of a situation and encourage us to ask questions about the problems that surround our society. We read literature in order to comprehend diverse cultures and their customs, but also because it has the power to transport us to different parts of the globe. The author of *Incendiary*, Chris Cleave, does a great job emphasizing this manipulation factor when the narrator's lover's girlfriend, Petra, begins to shape the narrator's appearance the day they go shopping together; it comes to the point where the narrator wants to be Petra. In the novel, *Incendiary*, a woman mourns the loss of her husband and her four year old son after one of the most infamous criminals that ever roamed the earth, Osama bin Laden, bombs the Emirates Stadium in London; this event causes the narrator to lose her sanity and turn into an ambitious woman. The character of the narrator of the novel, *Incendiary*, develops throughout the novel for many different reasons and in many diverse ways, which later lead to her downfall.

Her two chaps, as she used to call her husband and son, were her greatest motivators to strive to be a better person. Once the bomb exploded in the Emirates Stadium and the narrator presenced this event right on her television screen, she felt the world tumbling down on her shoulders. This phenomenon tore the narrator's four year old boy and her husband to pieces, literally. May Day, as this agonizing occurrence is known as, caused the narrator to avoid people that reminded her of the trauma,



hold negative beliefs about herself and have recurrent experiences of that day. After she escaped the hospital, she began to hear her son's voice everywhere she went; it even came to the point where she started to confuse other children as her own son. When the narrator tried on an outfit at Harvey Nichols, a store famous for its chic designer clothing in London, she was amazed at how beautiful she looked. Once she caught the attention of Jasper's girlfriend named Petra, Petra came up close behind her and gave her a grin in the mirror. A moment passed and all of a sudden, the narrator saw Petra in flames and her lips moving. Due to her disorder, the voice that spoke out of her lips was not Petra's; rather, it was the voice of her little boy. "I closed my eyes. I could still hear my boy's voice screaming out of Petra's mouth MUMMY MUMMY WHY DON'T YOU HELP ME? I put my arms over my ears and screamed into the smoke and the dark" (Cleave, 159-160). After reading this quote, it is made visible to the reader that the narrator was in a state of desperation, which was what led her to act in an impulsive manner in order to try to make that horrible experience come to an end. It was not until she was lying in a hospital bed with no one by her side that she finally realized she had no one left in the world to comfort her on her roughest days.

This idea of not having anyone left in the world changed after the narrator was hired by Terence to be his personal tea maker. As time went by, she began to develop feelings for this man who used to be no one other than, the boss of her husband. Once she started working for Terence, the narrator's doctor stopped prescribing her Valium; therefore, she was forced to be alert of her surroundings from that point on. Terence always used to tell the narrator, "You never seem to stop for a second... There is not one minute of my day you have not organized" (Cleave, 116). Without Valium, the narrator no longer had a treatment to control her anxiety nor was able to prevent her extremely bad nightmares, so she had no other form of therapy other than to plan the schedule of her dear Terence. She had to learn



to cope with her anxiety by going out for some drinks at the pub with either Petra or her new boss. It was interactions such as these that helped distract her from having hallucinations and thought of suicide.

As much as the narrator tried to distract herself, it seemed as if something always had to come in her path and ruin her plans. Whether or not the narrator called Jasper to come over to her flat or anywhere else, he always appeared to be near. The night Terence and the narrator went out for some drinks, they coincidentally encountered Jasper at the pub. After a couple shots, the narrator excused herself to use the restroom. While she was in a cubicle, the narrator became tense when she heard someone trying to come into it. In the novel, she states the following words which demonstrate her uptight behavior, "he came into the cubicle and closed the door behind him and leaned back on it. He stood there for the longest time just looking down at me with his 7 haircuts and his stupid grin. He looked a bit unsteady on his pins too. I should think he was more drunk than I was" (Cleave, 132). The narrator realized that Jasper's presence made her feel very uncomfortable at that moment. He was the living reminder in her life of the bombing of the Emirates Stadium since they were together the day that it occurred. As a result, she began to avoid Jasper by hiding, sneaking into her own house and not answering the door whenever he came knocking at it. She figured the farther she was away from him, the better she would be physically and mentally.

The downfall of the narrator was caused by many different situations she was forced to go through throughout the novel. The audience of any literary fiction novel specifically, *Incendiary*, should learn to feel sympathetic for the characters of the novel because its plot has happened to someone else with Osama bin Laden being the mastermind of the act. Literature is a means of expressing one's beliefs and point of view, which is why it is very valuable. From the day Terence Butcher confessed that he was aware of the bombing of the Emirates Stadium two hours before it actually happened and did



absolutely nothing to prevent it from happening, the narrator's perspective of war remained the same- she detested it with all of her might. Consequently, she began to blame her misfortune on Terence, the man that stripped the gift of life from the bones of her four year old son and husband. The narrator's life took a full-turn when she showed up at Petra's office with a red can full of petrol determined to put it on fire with her inside; luckily, something that's unknown to the reader stopped her. Unfortunately, it can be inferred that she will have to spend some time in prison for attempted murder or a mental institution to receive the proper treatment to recover from her Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. In order to grow as people, we should not allow others to manipulate our thoughts; rather, we should freely choose who we want to become and how we want to be remembered.