

Alas, Babylon Study Guide

Alas, Babylon by Pat Frank

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Contents

Alas, Babylon Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Chapter 1.....	4
Chapter 2.....	7
Chapter 3.....	9
Chapter 4.....	11
Chapter 5.....	14
Chapter 6.....	16
Chapter 7.....	18
Chapter 8.....	21
Chapter 9.....	24
Chapter 10.....	27
Chapter 11.....	29
Chapter 12.....	31
Chapter 13.....	33
Characters.....	35
Objects/Places.....	42
Themes.....	45
Style.....	48
Quotes.....	51
Topics for Discussion.....	53



Plot Summary

This 1959 work of fiction takes place in the same year it is published and is the story of a small town in north central Florida. The population of Fort Repose and the surrounding area is just under five thousand. Central characters in the novel are the Bragg brothers and their family. The older Mark is a career military officer. His brother Randy seems at first a ne'er do well lawyer and borderline alcoholic. Randy lives the carefree life of a wealthy old Florida family's younger son. Mark's premonitions and fears initiate the storyline but he is in only the spirit, hope and memories of his wife and children during most of it. Mark sends them to Randy in Fort Repose since Omaha is a primary Soviet target. Pat Frank narrates how nations destroy each other and themselves using nuclear arms. Randy Bragg leads a small band of survivors to remake a civilization with a stronger, deeper commitment to life and lasting value. Heroes and heroines develop in the struggle to survive amidst opposition from small-minded, weak-willed, greedy and selfish antagonists. Survival of the fittest rules Fort Repose but an invitation to depart is not accepted.

Mark's suspicions are correct. While his family is en route to the Orlando airport, Peewee Cobb flies patrol over the Mediterranean. He fires a heat-seeking rocket that goes awry. The errant rocket guides itself to a port used by the Soviets to harbor nuclear submarines and munitions. Conflict might have been avoided in previous years, but a change in Soviet strategy and tactics causes dire consequences. The explosion initiates immediate Russian retaliation which in turn causes United States counter-retaliation procedures to begin in Omaha and other SAC locations. Societies are destroyed and social structures rendered ineffective on both sides as a third world war begins on The Day. Fort Repose is an island of peace and relative calm in the contaminated zone of Florida. This is the tale of the extended Bragg family's ability to cope and successfully survive a feared nuclear holocaust.

Fort Repose society begins to break down at dawn on The Day as atom bombs drop on populated areas of Florida. An explosion occurs in south Florida and is followed by explosions in Jacksonville and then Orlando. Fort Repose is clear of fallout but is affected because the bombs destroy communication, electricity and replenishment of supplies from other areas. Virtually overnight, Randy Bragg sheds his alcoholic tendencies and ne'er do well lifestyle to become a family man, leader and eventual defender of the community. Lesser characters like the banker do not survive The Day when suicide is preferable to the assumed humiliation of financial collapse. Some hoard, rob and murder at the same time others share, help and lift the spirit of their compatriots. *Alas, Babylon* is the story of a civilization that disintegrates when external supports fail. Fort Repose remakes itself on a smaller, localized and more natural scale with a stronger, deeper commitment to life and core values. Heroes and heroines develop that overcome the small-minded, weak-willed, greedy and selfish. When an opportunity to depart Fort Repose is presented, no one asks to leave with Colonel Hart's helicopter.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

This 1959 work of fiction takes place in the same year published and is the story of a small town in north central Florida. Population of Fort Repose and surrounding area is just under five thousand. Central characters are the Bragg brothers and their family. The older Mark is a career military officer. His brother Randy seems at first a ne'er do well lawyer and borderline alcoholic. Randy lives the carefree life of a wealthy old Florida family's younger son. Mark's premonitions and fears initiate the storyline but he is in only the spirit, hope and memories of his wife and children during most of it. Mark sends them to Randy in Fort Repose since Omaha is a primary Soviet target. Pat Frank narrates how nations destroy each other and themselves using nuclear arms. Randy Bragg leads a small band of survivors to remake a civilization with a stronger, deeper commitment to life and lasting value. Heroes and heroines develop in the struggle to survive amidst opposition from small-minded, weak willed, greedy and selfish antagonists. Survival of the fittest rules Fort Repose but an invitation to depart attracts no one who accepts.

Florence Wechek is the Western Union manager in Fort Repose, Florida. She wakes up one early December Friday morning at her usual 6:30 AM. Florence shares her home with pets that also begin to stir in the gray dawn. A large yellow cat named Sir Percy comes from behind the water heater, African lovebirds Anthony and Cleo swing in their cage and a squirrel outside runs down the limb of a grapefruit tree. She feeds the birds and cat in the kitchen and the aquarium fish in the living room. Florence is an organized woman whose daily routine does not vary. She sits down at seven to breakfast of orange juice and eggs while watching the morning show news from Tampa. Russians launch a Sputnik spy satellite to circle above and Russian-built Syrian tanks cross Jordan's border.

Florence turns on an Orlando country music station to clean the kitchen and then dresses in her bedroom. She adjusts the blinds to see if her neighbor Randy is watching. He is outside in pajamas looking through binoculars like he has for three weeks. Florence remembers Randy graduating from bicycle to jalopy, college to law school and his parents Gertrude and Judge Bragg. He is an eligible thirty-two year old, well-known bachelor in Timucuan County. Florence thinks he's a Peeping Tom. She returns his greeting when leaving but thinks he is rude in pajamas. She would report him to the sheriff but fears his laughter since Randy has many girlfriends and no need to watch a forty-seven year old woman.

Randy likes Florence but considers her a gossipy old maid. He thinks she treats him like a stranger because she disapproves of his female visitors. He guesses she needs a man but is unlikely to get one. Randy calls his dog Graf and they walk into the house. He laces a second cup of morning coffee with bourbon to drink at the bar between kitchen and living-room in his second-floor bachelor apartment. His friend Dan says



drinking in the morning is an unhealthy habit and a sign of an alcoholic. Randy disagrees because he doesn't crave it. He drinks for pleasure and this morning drink is most pleasurable to clear his head after campaign partying. He recalls his campaign loss when asked about segregation and the Supreme Court. Randy realizes the humiliation of that loss will not let him run again. His maid and neighbor Mizzoo comes in to clean as he refills a cup with more bourbon than coffee. He calls her Mizzoo and the five foot-five two hundred forty pound maid tells Randy stories about her other customer, the McGoverns. Randy takes his mug to the highest point in the county, the captain's walk on the Bragg house. From there he looks out over the town, its estates and the riverfront where the Timucuan and St. Johns rivers join. Randy reflects on the history of the town he considers his own. His family traces back to 1838 in the Seminole Wars. Lieutenant Peyton names the town Fort Repose. Randy's house is built by Marcus Bragg, the son-in-law of Peyton. Randy stands on the captain's walk built for the Lieutenant to watch the river junction. Income from family holdings is shared with Mark his older brother. Mark is an Air Force colonel stationed in Omaha at the headquarters of Strategic Air Command. Randy has a comfortable income from their family holdings, trust dividends and sporadic legal fees. Mizzoo plays music as she waxes floors and the sound drift up to the walk. Randy reminisces while looking through binoculars. The phone rings and Mizzoo tells Randy it is Western Union for him.

Randy answers Florence's Western Union call. She informs him it's a cable from Mark. She reads the urgent message and Randy feels sick. Florence asks whether "Alas, Babylon" is from the Bible. Randy says he doesn't know but recognizes their family signal. "Alas, Babylon" is from Revelation and signifies impending doom. Mark and Randy agree the previous Christmas that "Alas, Babylon" signifies a potential nuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union. They arrange for Mark's family to stay in Fort Repose if such an event occurs. Randy tells Mizzoo to make up the front bedrooms for Colonel Bragg's family. Mizzoo is happy Ben Franklin and Peyton will visit. Randy prepares a list of things to do. He increases milk delivery for the children but it is the least useful thing to do.

Chapter 1 Analysis

Florence Wechek is an organized, middle-aged woman who lives a life of routine. Her friends include a motley group of pets with pretentious names and television morning show news announcers. That day's news is moderately disturbing but the crises do not interrupt her daily routine, like her neighbor Randy watching her dress. Symptomatic of middle-aged spinsterhood she thinks or maybe hopes every man that looks in her direction wants her. Randy Bragg is a bachelor with many girlfriends. He is fifteen years younger than Florence. Her obvious disgust with his assumed voyeurism may come from her suppressed desire for a man. Randy is correct she disapproves of his visitors but thinks she just wants a man. He has a pet dachshund Graf and a friend in a bottle. Randy is a developing alcoholic that says as long as he just enjoys but doesn't crave, he's okay. It may not be unusual in rural Florida for a young bachelor to have a first cup of coffee at dawn outside in pajamas. Randy's binoculars reveal a panoramic history of the Bragg family, Fort Repose and its setting at a junction of rivers and highest point in

the county. Randy and his brother are from an old Florida military family. Mark is a modern version of Lieutenant Bragg. The captain's walk symbolizes Mark's watch in Omaha and foretells their watch in Florida. Mark and Randy use a signal they learn as lads from Preacher Henry, patriarch of another old Florida family and minister of the Afro-Repose Baptist Church. Randy's watching interrupts Florence at home but her call from Western Union with Mark's message presages an interruption of all of their homes.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Randy leaves home in his new Bonneville to reach Orlando on Route 50 at eleven. He turns on the radio to hear Turkey, Syria, Israel and Egypt in conflict. Russia accuses the United States of plotting against Syria with Turkey and warns France, Italy, Greece and Spain that harboring American bases may cause a general war. The Secretary of State flies to London for conferences and the Soviet Ambassador is withdrawn. Randy recalls similar world turmoil in 1957 and 1958. He wonders if something new is happening.

Florence and Alice Cooksey meet for a regular Friday lunch together. Alice is late from having a squabble with Kitty Offenhause at the library. Kitty is on the library board. She asks Alice if the library has books she considers subversive and anti-south and orders her to remove them. When Alice refuses, Kitty threatens her job. Alice says she'll tell the paper and Kitty leaves in a huff. Alice explains to Florence that reporting on the story might hurt her husband Bubba's business. Florence thinks her Randy Bragg story may match Alice's story about Kitty. She tells her that Randy watches her. Alice does not believe it since she knows the Bragg boys from before Florence. Florence relays Mark's message with the last two words "Alas, Babylon" and asks if that isn't crazy. Alice says they're not crazy and tells Florence they're bright. Florence cannot convince Alice so she asks her to stay the weekend to see Randy's behavior herself. Alice cannot return the favor so she is noncommittal until she looks up "Alas, Babylon." She then calls Florence to accept her invitation.

Randy arrives at McCoy and asks Lieutenant Colonel Paul Hart to clear his entrance onto the base. Hart meets Randy at Base Operations. Randy notices the base seems deserted and Air Police more serious. He parks at the flight-line fence where he sees fewer planes but assumes they are on foreign duty, though Paul usually leads that duty. Paul explains SAC's interim dispersal policy to send planes to other airports since McCoy is a primary target. Paul says personnel are on alert and evacuating since warning time is now fifteen minutes. Paul describes a bomb carrier they call the red baby that guides itself to a target. When Mark's flight arrives he asks to spend time alone with Randy before they take off again. They buy snacks on their way to Randy's Bonneville where they can talk. Mark tells Randy his family's arrival time from Omaha to Orlando. Randy asks what is going on and Mark briefs him. Russia and NATO both target the Mediterranean as strategically critical to winning a war without fighting. Randy recalls the plan in 'fifty-seven is the same except now, Mark says, the odds have changed. A Russian General reveals the War Plan the Kremlin is not resigning if there is military resistance. One significant difference is a tactical method called time-on-target. All weapons fire to arrive on target the same time to eliminate or cripple the United States nuclear capability to retaliate. Mark describes a window of opportunity or "gap" to act within. He thinks now is the time since he has a priority message to return home. Mark believes the Russian General wants to stop the War Plan because there is too much room for human error. Mark gives Randy a check to cash as reserve for his family



and anything he needs. If nothing happens they agree to buy good liquor for a party. Mark confirms Randy will take care of Helen and be kind to her. He tells Randy how loyal and faithful they are to one another. Mark and Randy say goodbye and Mark boards. Randy drives away and stops unseen to hold back his tears.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Randy takes immediate action to meet Mark the next morning at McCoy Air Force Base near Orlando, Florida. He is concerned there is trouble in the Mediterranean and Mark's message suggests something is different than a year or two earlier. The base has fewer personnel and planes than previously. Paul Hart explains a dispersal policy reduces the risk of potential loss to primary targets during an alert. Paul describes the red baby that guides itself to foreshadow how the war starts. Mark explains the tactical change from 1957: time-on-target, revealed by a Russian informant. Mark's comment that there is too much room for human error foretells a cause of the war. He wants to make sure his family is safe with Randy and away from their home and primary target area of Omaha. The brothers realize they may never see each other again and Randy stops in sorrow on the way home.

Florence knows the words the message contains but does not know their coded meaning. She decides the message is crazy. Florence gossips about Randy to Alice at their weekly lunch. Florence reads the words of Western Union messages and Alice reads the words of library books and research. Florence is not curious about deeper meaning and dismisses the message because of its source. She asks Alice to agree it's crazy but Alice thinks the brothers are bright and well-read. She looks up "Alas, Babylon" and accepts the invitation so she's not alone, but Florence thinks Alice wants to see Randy's behavior.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Edgar Quisenberry is president of the First National Bank in Fort Repose. The bank, built by Edgar's father in 1920, is constructed from Indiana limestone. Edgar is proud of the bank's financial strength and boasts Roosevelt could shut it down only by closing all the nation's banks in 1933. The bank employs two vice-presidents, a cashier, an assistant cashier and four tellers who refer all decisions to the president. Edgar deems himself the sole reliable judge of character, which means to him cash balance, unencumbered real estate value, and ownership of bonds and blue-chip stocks. Randy must talk with Edgar to cash Mark's five thousand dollar check. Edgar dislikes Randy's manner, dress and attitude but mostly Judge Bragg's humiliation of him in a poker game five years earlier. Now that Randy needs approval, Edgar hopes for revenge. Edgar thinks Randy has a hot deal for cash and wants him to tell him about it in exchange for approving the check. Randy says Mark wants him to make a bet that checks won't be worth anything shortly. Edgar feels like he is tricked and bluffed by the Braggs again.

Randy goes from the bank to the Ajax Super-Market, really just a grocery store. Fort Repose has less than five thousand residents and so is unable to support a real supermarket. He hates shopping for groceries and takes prides in his record of filling a cart and getting out the door in three minutes and forty-six seconds. On this trip he has a long list that fills three carts plus a meat order. He tells Pete that Mark's wife and children are coming to stay. Randy sets a new record for store purchases. On the way home he stops at Bill Cullen's to buy a case and a half of bourbon and six fifths of Scotch. Bill's nickname is Bigmouth so, when he asks why Randy buys so much, Randy says he has Christmas guests. Malachai helps with groceries and Randy gives him some extra cash and tells him about Mark's fears.

Elizabeth McGovern barges in and Graf barks. He recalls meeting her by seeing her long legs on the side of the pier and wanting to know whose body was attached. They are more than friends but not lovers. She kisses him and tells him she has made a decision about him. Lib tells Randy he should move to a large city with character and vitality rather than vegetating in Fort Repose. She wants a man, not a vegetable, and will follow him when he's settled. He says it's too late because Mark's wife and children are coming to stay. Before he can tell her Graf barks again. Randy answers the door to Dan Gunn, his friend and physician. He asks to speak to Elizabeth about her parents but suggests Randy join them. Dan does house calls on River Road that he calls the placebo circuit. He sees Lib's car at Randy's after leaving her parent's home. Dan talks to Lib about her mother's diabetes treatment and her father's depression from early retirement. Randy interrupts to tell them Mark fears an impending attack. Lib turns on radio news at six and asks Randy what it means. Dan writes war prescriptions and changes her mother's insulin to oranise. Dan leaves and Randy walks Lib out and agrees to see her the next day. Randy's favorite times are early dawn and dusk when there is stillness and peace. He sees movement in the bush across the road and the



white-rimmed eyes even without binoculars. Florence and Alice watch Randy say goodbye to Lib and now watch him move slowly across their lawn. Florence tells Alice to come see the Peeping Tom for herself. Alice says he's stalking something. Randy comes around the back porch. Florence opens the door and fusses at him for prowling around the house and watching her. He points at Anthony and asks if that's her bird. Randy thinks it is an extinct Carolina parakeet but she calls it an African lovebird. He tells Florence he's not watching her but her bird and Alice smiles. Florence slams the door and shrieks, "bird watcher!" Randy decides to tell them the next day about Mark. He listens to the news and falls asleep reading an article about Mars.

Chapter 3 Analysis

The Bragg and Henry families are old rural Fort Repose military settler families from the early 1800s and the Quisenberry family is the urban money family from the early 1900s. In 1920 Edgar's father built the bank that Edgar presides over forty years later. His boast the First National Bank is so strong Roosevelt could only shut it down by closing all banks is an ironic foreboding of its future. Randy's final humiliation of Edgar by trading paper for cash to buy goods symbolizes the fate he boasts won't happen with him in charge. Randy sets records at the Ajax for fast bachelor shopping. With family and Christmas as the pretense, he sets a record for buying as much as possible. Randy also buys a supply of his favorite bourbon and Scotch. Bill's nickname is Bigmouth so Randy avoids answering why he buys so much whiskey. Judge Bragg taught him bluffing is okay but lying is not. Elizabeth tells Randy she wants him to be a real man. He'll have to leave Fort Repose and move to a big city, settle in and she'll join him. Ironically, soon the only place left available is Fort Repose. Randy tells Lib it's too late, the kids are coming and, by the way, it may not matter. Dan stops to discuss the McGovern's and Lavinia's diabetes. He says insulin doesn't last without refrigeration so he'll prescribe orange. Randy doesn't think about the fact that the meat in his freezer won't last either. When they leave he watches the rare bird he's stalking. Florence discovers he's not watching her but her bird that's not so rare after all. Randy reads "Next Stop-Mars" which foreshadows their world.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Helen Bragg does not want to leave with the children because it makes her feel like a deserter. Mark wants them to leave because they live in a primary target area. She wants to stay with him but does not realize he will be underground in the Hole and she will be on the surface exposed. She believes her job is to stay with him but Mark says her job is to survive and care for the children. Ben Franklin and Peyton are on the other side of the terminal and excited about having a dollar to spend, getting out of school a week early and spending Christmas in Florida. Mark assures Helen she can return when it is safe. Their flight is announced and the children join Mark and Helen to go to the gate. Ben quietly asks his father if this is an evacuation and Mark answers it is but he'll be alright in the Hole. He watches them walk to the plane and out of his life.

Randy wakes at nine remembering things he still needs but decides to get them with Helen. He changes and feels cold so he raises the thermostat from sixty-one. Randy remembers he has enough oil since the tank is full in November. On his way to Jerry Kling's gas station he takes extra gas cans. Jerry is closing but fills up Randy's car and containers and sells him kerosene and oil. He drives home but the McGovern's lights are on so he pulls in.

Near dawn in the Eastern Mediterranean, between Cyprus and Lebanon, the aircraft carrier *Saratoga* catapults away four F-11-F Tiger fighter jets. Ensign James Cobb, nicknamed Peewee, is assigned to Combat Air Patrol duty under wartime conditions with live rockets and orders to intercept and destroy. He prays for a bogey to penetrate his sector so nobody will laugh at him again. Flying over his sector off Haifa he sees the Megiddo hills called Armageddon. Code name Sunflower Four crackles in his earphones to notice the bogey and orders he go get it. Peewee pushes throttle to ninety-nine percent power and chases the bogey. He gets close to the port of Latakia within Syrian territorial waters where Peewee should stop the chase to avoid violating borders. Instead he turns inside the bogey to shorten the range and fires a Sidewinder. The rocket tracks the bogey but then darts down toward Latakia seeming to chase a train. An orange flash and ball of brown smoke rushes up as Peewee climbs away. In fifteen minutes he is on the *Saratoga*, explaining his actions.

Randy is unpopular with Lib's parents so he wonders if he should go in. Lavinia's basic plan makes the front of the house plate glass. Randy suggests the summer sun may make it unbearable regardless of the air conditioning. Bill McGovern is a retired company president and thinks Randy is insolent when he disagrees. Randy hesitates to go in but feels Lib needs him. She opens the door and says she has troubles. Bill stands in the living room in a white bathrobe like an angry Caesar. He calls Randy a local Paul Revere. Randy is trying to do them a favor and turns to leave but Lib asks him to stay. Bill says some things Randy doesn't understand. Bill says he's twice as old and knows more about what goes on. Mark's fears are a scheme to raise appropriations



and Mideast trouble is just a brushfire. He says Mr. Offenhous isn't worried and Bill's not worrying either. Bubba heads Civil Defense because he owns the only ambulances. Randy asks about fallout and Bill says the brochures are too gruesome to show and it's as bad to scare someone to death as to kill them with radiation. Lib walks him out and they kiss goodnight. When Randy leaves for home he listens to late news and hears of a bombing attack on Latakia.

Mark Bragg straightens up the house before driving to Offutt for his midnight to 0800 shift. It is eleven in the evening as he wanders through his children's rooms feeling like an intruder. He does not know the late news reports. He comes across some books in Peyton's room to mail from Offutt in the morning. Driving in at eleven-thirty he hears the news but is puzzled by the Navy Department statement and accelerates. He arrives twelve minutes later to enter the War Room fifty feet down in the Hole. Dutch Klein briefs Mark about what is happening in the Mideast. Mark recalls the Latakia port has conventional mines, torpedoes, ammo and four to eight subs that a blast could cook off nuclear weapons. Mark worries the blast is an excuse for war. Ace Atkins welcomes him to Bedlam. Mark thinks Washington should give a complete statement to avoid misunderstanding. They worry a statement is caught in bureaucratic red tape and approvals. Since Moscow is silent it might be in countdown. Ace advises Mark of the airborne and standby status to decide. Mark agrees to check back in an hour. He reviews more urgent dispatches and hopes his family can arrive in comparative safety.

Randy is in the Orlando airport at three-thirty waiting for Helen's flight. When it lands he greets Peyton, Ben Franklin and Helen. She apologizes for all the baggage Mark insists they bring and for feeling like a coward. Randy explains what is happening in the Mediterranean. He tells Helen how wonderful it was between 1870 and 1914 when peace was a normal condition and people were appalled at the idea of war. He recalls they used to say a big war would cost too much, disrupt world trade and bankrupt everybody. Helen calls him an idealist. As they drive home Helen tunes the radio to get the latest news. They hear Washington issue a full statement explaining a mechanical error and deny a deliberate bombing. Randy talks with Helen but she is preoccupied. He gets them home to their rooms and asleep by five-thirty. He falls asleep on the couch in his apartment.

General Hawker returns early to Offutt Field's Hole at 0500. He meets with Colonels Atkins and Bragg in the Control Room for updating. There is no communication from Moscow but reports about unidentified movements and refused calls to Moscow come in. He worries that dawn approaches in an hour and they can't count on more than fifteen minutes warning. Mark proposes the General ask for release of weapons. Ace agrees and the General telephones the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. Weapons are released at eleven forty-four, Zulu. NORAD rings to advise an object from a Soviet base is detected. NORAD rings again with notice of four ballistic missiles from the sea and red alert.



Chapter 4 Analysis

Helen doesn't want to leave because she feels like she should stay with Mark. He convinces her she needs to take care of the children and they can't be with him and be protected anyway. Randy does last minute errands before leaving to pick them up in Orlando. He is not comfortable with Lib's parents but senses she might need him. Bill McGovern patronizes Randy and claims to know more about what is going on than Randy or Mark. Bill's friend Bubba is in charge of Civil Defense so he isn't worried. Randy mentions fallout but Bill gets defensive. Randy picks up Helen later at the airport. Randy comments that fears of cost, disrupted world trade and bankruptcy discourage war.

Earlier this evening, over the Mediterranean Sea, a young Navy ensign whose nickname fits his size but not his reaction prays for a chance to prove he's bigger than that. James Cobb bets they won't call him Peewee anymore if he can shoot a bogey out of the air. He fires but the Sidewinder seeks heat like the red baby Colonel Paul Hart tells Randy about. The armed rocket turns down towards a train at the port of Latakia where Soviets harbor munitions and submarines. Mark and the Russian general's fears of human error come true. Mark hopes the errors are not compounded by Washington bureaucrats that take too long to report a misunderstanding. He hopes the Soviets don't retaliate before his family reaches Fort Repose. The tactic of time-to-target requires that Mark recommend General Hawker request release of weapons to minimize the time needed to respond to an attack at dawn.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Randy wakes to the feeling of someone shaking his couch. He hears a long deep rumble, ebbing and then a boom. He recognizes it is not thunder and steps out on his porch to see the orange glow of the sun rising in the east and, to the south and beyond, a similar glow fading. He later learns his sleep is jolted by two nuclear explosions at Homestead and Miami. Shock waves through earth shake his couch and the glow from two hundred miles away incinerates a million people. Peyton, Ben Franklin and Helen burst onto the porch to see what is happening. Randy says he's afraid it's here and Ben asks why there is no mushroom cloud. They comment on the silence of no sirens or planes but Ben says planes woke him and they begin to hear more. Helen and the children want to climb the captain's walk for a better view but Randy says it's too exposed. They see another white flash, feel the heat and Peyton cries out holding her face. She screams she can't see and Randy carries her into the living room to comfort her. Helen suggests Randy call Doctor Dan Gunn. Randy cannot reach Dan but tells her he'll get him. On the way to Riverside Inn Randy passes the milk truck and a fatal accident. He listens to the Conelrad stations for emergency broadcasts and hears that a Red Alert was declared thirty minutes earlier.

Traffic is heavier towards town and lines form at Jerry Kling's service station for gas. He enters the driveway of Riverside Inn where the guests mill around in the lobby. They are all anxious to find help to leave town or complain about things not working. Randy takes the stairs to Dan's second floor suite but he is not there. Randy asks the manager where Dan is but Jennings is hysterical until Randy slaps him. Randy tells John Garcia to take his pregnant wife to Dan's room and he will get the doctor. He finds Dan tending a dead patient and tells him Marie Garcia is having a baby and Peyton is blind from a light flash. Dan tells the Garcias they're better off going home and he will follow. Dan gives Randy medicine and instructions for Peyton and promises to see her as soon as possible. Town is hectic, like Christmas Eve shopping, but not disordered. Randy listens to Conelrad for more information. He sees a dozen convicts with shotguns and pistols on River Road. As Florence and Alice drive out to the Western Union office, Randy warns them about the convicts. Florence drops Alice off at the library and goes on to the Western Union office.

Western Union service is drastically limited. Florence cannot send any telegrams north of Jacksonville. She tells her customers to come back later when things might be better. Edgar Quisenberry stops with a telegram typed at the bank. He insists she send it to the Atlanta branch of the Federal Reserve Bank. Florence agrees to send it to Jacksonville but, in a flash of light, the transmission stops. Edgar remembers how after Pearl Harbor the First National Bank remains open and does not believe this situation is all that serious. He believes there is a mechanical breakdown that will be corrected before long. The bank has a quarter million in cash so Edgar refuses to limit withdrawals despite the senior teller's recommendation. He tells her he is in charge and it's none of her



business. The mail carrier tells Edgar that morning's delivery is his last. Edgar refuses to cash out of town or travelers checks and government savings bonds.

When word spreads about his decision, the shopkeepers race to the bank to convert their checks to cash. Edgar discovers his cash on hand drops to \$145,000 within one hour. At this rate by eleven-thirty he will be out of cash. He immediately takes the cash drawers into the vault, locks it and closes the bank to resolve the problem. Massive evacuations occur from the larger cities stripped of inventory to the smaller towns and villages where there are still supplies. By that afternoon the shopkeepers' registers burst with cash but their shelves have no inventory. Within days the dollar's exchange value is degraded. Edgar leaves the bank at two to get gas. Jerry claims to have no more but then offers him three gallons from an old drum hidden in the back. Edgar offers to pay cash but Jerry refuses and says cash is no longer good for anything. Edgar arrives home to find his wife is out shopping. She plans to use checks since he left her no cash. He goes to their bedroom. He believes he cannot go on without credit or cash and civilization is ending. He refuses to face humiliation and holds an old pistol of his father's to his head. He pulls the trigger.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Randy hears rumbling sounds and feels the shaking earth like in earthquake-prone areas, not Florida. Peyton is blinded by a white flash. Her need for medical treatment makes Randy find Dan. The doctor lives in town at the Riverside Inn. His trip to town for Dan is an opportunity to survey and evaluate conditions. Mark fears Conelrad is not effective in an emergency and he is correct. Town traffic is heavier. Randy sees convicts on the road. Generally things are hectic like a holiday but not yet in disorder. At this stage systems run sporadically. Hotel residents complain things don't work. Gas lines form and the bank is open but teller lines are normal for an early Saturday morning.

The bank president thinks it's a temporary mechanical problem that will be fixed. Edgar is more offended that Florence won't send a telegram to Atlanta than realistic she can't. He is in denial, believing he has enough cash and the bank enough staying power to make it through. Pride and arrogance stop him from limiting withdrawals as his teller suggests. Within an hour of opening, cash is down \$100,000. He reacts irrationally by removing cash drawers to the vault, locking it and closing the bank. By early afternoon the town's shops are bursting with cash from the panicked buying of goods with no bank for deposits. Ironically, Edgar starts a bank run and single-handedly destroys the cash and credit he believes civilization needs to survive. He is humiliated and takes his own life because he cannot face it. The pistol he uses has not been not fired in years. Shortly after the crisis another Bragg proves Edgar can't take a bluff when Randy restores Fort Repose's civilization.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

The Day denotes a life-changing event in December for everyone. Events are dated as occurring before The Day or after. Previous to The Day reference to The War is used to denote another horrendous event. Randy is better prepared than most for The Day but it is still outside his experience. He is not beyond the sound of a radio to hear what is happening. He visits the McGovern's house to find their vast front window cracked and Lavinia medicated in bed to avoid more trauma. Helen lists necessities she feels she must have from town and asks Randy about adding ammunition. Their planning is interrupted by a radio announcement from the national Civil Defense Headquarters. Mrs. Josephine Vanbruuker-Brown is named Acting Chief Executive of the United States.

The Acting Chief Executive and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces declares a state of unlimited national emergency and martial law. She describes the status of the attack and the United States' retaliation. The Chief Executive indicates Washington is a primary target of the enemy and only a few members of Congress have escaped. She explains she is in another city and so survives. She is in an undisclosed military command post of relative safety. Helen asks Randy if Offutt Field may be where she is and that Mark is okay. He does not think so since Mark feared Omaha the next target after Washington. Randy suggests Admiral Hazzard who lives next to the Henry's place may know more. Helen wants to see him. Randy agrees but says he needs to sleep for a couple hours. She decides to drive to town and tells Ben to wake Randy if Peyton needs anything. Randy reviews his arsenal and calls down for Helen to pick up ten boxes of twenty-two caliber long-rifle hollow points at Beck's Hardware. Randy recalls hunting with his father and the small and piteous deer he shot but did not kill as he falls asleep.

Randy wakes at nine-thirty in darkness to sounds of Graf barking and voices downstairs. Helen enters his apartment with Ben and Dan Gunn to wake him and check on Peyton. The doctor examines her and assures her she is not blind but needs to rest for a week or so. He treats her with butyn sulfate and tells Helen she'll have to treat her if he can't get back. Randy fixes a drink for Dan but does not want one. Dan compliments him on his dealing with crisis since he's already seen two others drink themselves insensible since morning. Randy remembers he didn't harden from shooting his first and only deer. Dan recounts the number of deaths he's seen that day including Edgar's suicide. The cases of radiation poisoning are not local but refugees coming through heavy fallout areas. Helen calls them to dinner of soup, salad and sandwiches. They listen to Civil Defense bulletins as they eat and discuss fallout dangers. Ben hears a jet and Randy says it's still going on. Helen asks to see the retired admiral. They fear leaving Peyton alone when Dan leaves. Dan tells Randy she should know about Mark. Ben baby-sits Peyton with Randy's gun.



Randy knocks on Admiral Hazzard's door at ten to eleven. Randy introduces Helen to him. The Admiral comments it is an evil day. They follow him to the den where his shortwave gear is on a workbench overlooking the river. Voices crackle on the radio tuned to a Navy and Air Force anti-submarine warfare frequency. Hazzard interprets the code for Helen and Randy. Helen asks where the Acting Chief Executive is. He views his wall map and says Denver or Colorado Springs. She asks if it could be Omaha. He says that's the last place and he's heard no SAC radio transmissions from there since the attack. Sam sees her react and asks if her husband is there. She says it's their home and he works in the Hole. Sam comforts her by telling about his son Sam, Junior who he has not heard from. Randy asks if Sam hears Moscow. He hears Radio Moscow but believes the city is gone. Russian leaders are alive and well. Sam hears nothing from BBC, Paris or Bonn. Sam says SAC may have launched fifty percent of its aircraft and the enemy may be finished. The lights and radio go out and a white flash illuminates the night as if it were midday. The light becomes a red ball in the southeast and they recognize it is Orlando or McCoy but in any event the power for Timucuan County is gone. Civilization retreats a hundred years in Fort Repose on The Day.

Chapter 6 Analysis

The impact and implication of the nuclear conflict started that early December morning is so extensive the term used to denote it is singular, The Day. Destruction of the United States government structure and personnel is extensive. Successful preparations for survival are marginal at best. Sam Hazzard's shortwave radio receiver is the only continuing link to Omaha, Offutt Field and Mark. Dan is a local link to the condition of Fort Repose and its survivors. Randy has a dream that shows his dislike of killing in an ironic foreshadowing of a skill he will need for them to survive and maintain order. Randy's first step towards that loss of innocence is to give his young nephew Ben a gun when he baby-sits Peyton. Sam Hazzard greets Randy and Helen at his door on The Day and calls it an evil day. He provides the first clue that Mark is probably not a survivor. Sam empathizes with Helen by sharing uncertainty about his own son. The Admiral enlightens them on the status of world locations he hears on his radio. In an ironic flash, the night lights like Florida's midday sun and then plunges them into total darkness when Orlando's power station explodes.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

The nuclear blast in Orlando destroys power service to Timucuan County and disables all electrical appliances in Fort Repose. Power failure causes loss of heat and running water. Unlike normal storms when repair trucks are out within hours to fix downed lines, this power loss is from destruction of power plants. There is no regular radio communication except for battery-powered radios, Conelrad and WSMF with auxiliary power. There is no news from Mrs. Vanbruuker-Brown on Sunday or Monday. Conelrad warns that they should boil drinking water, avoid drinking fresh milk and stay under shelter. Randy and Helen are listening when Ben says they are almost out of water. Randy plans to drive to the dock for river water to flush with until he recalls the groves are irrigated from artesian well water he can pipe into the house. Ben and Randy walk to the Henrys and talk about the Hole that is not enough protection for his father. Randy affirms Ben is the man of the family. Preacher Henry offers Malachai and Two-Tone to help reroute the water and it takes two hours.

Three days after The Day, Helen finds the freezer meat floating in melted ice cream and butter. She plans to salvage what she can by boiling, salting, preserving or pickling it in Mason jars. Randy suggests they host a steak party for neighbors and friends. Randy goes to town for charcoal and salt. Fort Repose shop windows are shattered by the last blasts and broken glass litters the sidewalks. The parked cars are empty and many are stripped of wheels. Only a few apprehensive pedestrians are in town. Randy enters Ajax through a broken window to look for salt on the empty shelves. Pete Hernandez hides in a stockroom holding a pistol from the day before. Randy buys twenty pounds of salt Pete is hoarding for two hundred dollars. Pete asks when Randy is going to see Rita again and he says they're through. Randy buys a case of Mason jars from Beck's Hardware. Mr. Beck refuses to take any money since his safe is full and all he has left is money.

At Dan's Medical Arts Building, Randy finds no activity but does see Dan's car. The waiting room is empty and the building is ransacked. Randy calls out Dan's name. He answers from his back office to come back. Randy stumbles over a dead body of the Chief of Police and smashed bottles and jars. Dan explains a carload of armed addicts came looking for drugs. When his partner refused they beat him up, took or smashed all the drugs and ransacked the place. A woman hears the noise and notifies the police who race over with lights and siren. They arrive to a gunfight. Both the Chief and his assistant are shot and die. Dan asks Randy to give him a ride to the hotel. Randy agrees only if Dan promises to pack and go with him to live on River Road. Riverside Inn reeks of human waste. Dan explains the residents refuse to dig latrines in the garden preferring to believe everything will return to normal the next day. Dan fears there will be an epidemic and he is unable to stop it unless they listen. The River Road party is remembered as "the night of the steak orgy" not so much for steak as for a Civil Defense notice. The Acting Chief Executive declares certain areas Contaminated Zones



from which it is forbidden to bring any material out. She lists many states, regions and areas as Contaminated Zones including Florida, Omaha, and all surrounding territory in a fifty mile radius. Lib tells Helen she is sorry.

The fourth day after The Day Randy and the Henrys extend the water system to Admiral Hazzard and Florence Wechek's houses. The Riverside Inn burns down on the night of the sixth day. With no water in hydrants for firefighting, the firemen are helpless. Dan treats the few survivors and they go to the hospital in San Marco or the unheated school for shelter. Lavinia McGovern dies on the ninth day from un-refrigerated insulin. Randy and Dan drive to San Marco, in the Henry's Model-A since it is the most economical, to get insulin but the hospital has none. Lavinia is in a coma for forty-eight hours and dies with Alice Cooksey at her bed. Alice consoles Bill and Lib and then rides the Western Union bicycle to Randy's to tell them and arrange for burial. When Randy decides Lib and Bill McGovern should live at the Bragg house, Helen gets angry. Randy explains the McGoverns have no water or heat and little food. As Dan and Randy drive to Offenhaus Mortuary, he remarks on Helen's strange behavior. Dan reassures Randy it's not strange, she's just protective. Randy stops at the McGoverns and Dan drives to Bubbas. Bill does not want to impose by moving in but Randy insists and tells him to stop feeling sorry for himself. Randy assures him they need his machine skills. He tells them to pack for the move. Dan returns to tell them Offenhaus is sick so he cannot help. They decide to bury Lavinia in the yard by the azalea bed. They ask about a marker but Lib says the house is her monument. They all return to the Bragg house. Ben runs in to tell them something's wrong at Florence's. Randy and Lib walk over to find her cat Sir Percy has eaten Anthony the African lovebird. Randy thinks about survival of the fittest.

Chapter 7 Analysis

A civilization takes many things for granted but realizes their value only in their absence. Edgar's suicide is a metaphor for the collapse of a flowing money system and Orlando's explosion marks the death of Fort Repose's electrical system. Similar to the flow of cash and credit in a financial system that enables commerce to occur, the flow of power in an electrical system enables tools, motors and appliances to do many things. Edgar can't recall a time when there is no money so when cash flows stops, he quits. Randy recalls his ancestors had no systems a century ago so when things don't flow he looks into his soul. Battery radios work, water flows from an artesian well can be rerouted, neighbors are happy to help and meat is thawing to throw a great steak party.

Crises expose the nature of characters in Fort Repose. Randy and his neighbors on River Road struggle to survive by helping each other make the best of what they have. Some of those in town struggle with survivors to take the most they can. Pete hoards salt he'll sell for ten dollars a pound because he can but Mr. Beck is happy to donate jars to the cause. Doctor Dan and his partner offer medical supplies and drugs to the sick at no charge but sick addicts charge the clinic to take what they can, kill anyone in their way and destroy what's left. Dan tells hotel residents to take health measures but they ignore his advice in denial and belief that things will return to normal. The steak party that night is a defining event for survival in Fort Repose. The Acting President



announces Contaminated Zones including all Florida and Omaha. Her order that nothing be moved from zones presages deaths that occur from radiation poisoning. They realize survival is the primary goal on the fourth day after The Day. Water is routed to Sam and Florence's houses but not to a burning hotel. Cold insulin is not available. Lavinia dies in a house she designs that then becomes her monument. Randy tells Bill they need his skills more than he needs to feel sorry for himself. Randy watches the bird that Florence imagines is herself that then becomes lunch for Sir Percy - he's been watching the bird too.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Four months after The Day, Randy discovers that Graf warms his feet. Among many things he misses is a painless shave, music, cigarettes and a full stomach. He does not miss whiskey but misses a morning coffee. Although he weighs one fifty-two and loses, on average, a pound a week, he is leaner and harder and feels better than before The Day. Peyton brings him a steaming pot of water and watches him shave with his knife because he makes funny faces. Dan uses an electric razor but with no electricity lets his flaming red beard bloom thick. He wakes on April fourteenth after a nightmare about filing and paying income taxes. Randy goes with Dan to town to trade for coffee. Dan barter medical services for gas to keep the Model-A tank full and driving charges the battery. Bill rotates batteries to Admiral Hazzard's short wave receiver so they get news from the world. Helen's call to breakfast interrupts Dan's story of circumstances in town. Randy asks why he gets only one egg. The Henrys think they lose hens and pigs to wild cats or wolves. Randy decides they must help guard the food supply. Ben volunteers, Bill offers to watch the first night and Randy prepares a schedule.

Randy takes a bottle of Scotch to barter for coffee in town. Dan is anxious about three cases of radiation poisoning. He cannot determine the source since fallout would expose many more than three. These patients have burned hands and expected symptoms of nausea, headache, diarrhea and hair loss. Randy suggests Porky Logan was in south Florida on The Day and got radiation there. Dan says he was okay when he returned and gets no more exposure than any one else since then but still gets worse. Bill Cullen and Pete Hernandez have similar symptoms. Dan assures Randy it's not epidemic since radiation poisoning is not catching. Poisoning takes direct exposure by ingesting or handling metal or inorganic matter. They wave to Alice riding the Western Union bike on the road to the library. Reading books at the library is very popular when there is no other entertainment. Alice feels important and fulfilled for the first time in thirty years as a librarian. The library has more patrons than chairs and they sit wherever they can. Bill Cullen's fish camp, cady and bar at the edge of town is their first stop on the trip to town. The shop has no inventory and grounds are dilapidated and filthier. Bill's wife is the only person Dan sees gain weight. Randy thinks she eats hidden sacks of grits and fried fish. Bill gets worse but she is the same. She thinks he hides six cases he says he sold to Porky Logan since she sees no money from a sale. Dan and Randy enter his room but Randy gags and leaves. Dan confirms he is worse and looks like he has more radiation.

They drive on to Marines Park, the central barter market for Fort Repose. Randy takes his bottle of Scotch to the bandstand to barter for two pounds of coffee. He sees many once-good deals, like a late-model Cadillac for bicycle tires and a pump, that have no value now. One of the ads that get Randy's attention is the notice of Easter Sunrise Services on April seventeenth. He cannot find anyone with coffee to trade but there are many other items available. Visitors to the bandstand ask each other what they have to



swap and what they hear. Randy sees Jim Hickey the beekeeper and thinks Peyton and Ben might like something sweet. He offers Scotch for honey but Jim is an Adventist and doesn't drink or trade in whiskey. Jim and Mark are grade school acquaintances so Jim gives him two combs of honey for Mark's children. Dan returns to get Randy and drive through town to Pistolville where there is no garbage pickup since The Day. They are disgusted by the smells and sights there. The smell is bearable at the end of Augustine Road where richer residents like Pete and Rita Hernandez and Porky Logan live.

They stop at the Hernandez house where Rita greets them. She invites Doctor Gunn and Randy in. Randy sees the Ajax truck and a Jaguar sports car in the driveway. He is amazed by the merchandise in the two front rooms of the house. Randy asks if they're in the junk business but Rita says it's her investment. Dan checks on Pete and Randy visits Rita. He recalls dates they share and she asks if he has a present. He says they're trade goods and she asks if the two women in his house don't like Scotch. She believes things will get better and shows him her new diamond ring. When she slips it off he notices the dark, black circle around her finger. Randy drops it when she says it's from Porky. Dan examines her finger and she says Porky got the ring, watches and other jewelry from an abandoned shop in the Miami area. Dan and Randy determine the jewelry and watches are radioactive from fallout and suicidal to wear. They insist Pete take off the watches he wears and tell him they're radioactive. Pete takes out a toilet kit full of jewelry from under his pillow. Dan insists they put the jewelry and watches in a pile and not touch them until they can dispose of them safely. The next stop is Porky Logan's where they find him sitting up dead in bed with a beer case full of jewelry between his knees. Dan paints a warning of radiation and poison in yellow on the front door. The next stop is Bill's where they discover his wife took his boots with hidden jewelry to Apalachicola with her. Dan thinks Bill will die and his wife will trade jewelry for booze or be stolen.

Chapter 8 Analysis

Within four months of The Day, River Road residents set up rudimentary systems to satisfy recurrent needs. Dan barter medical services for gas to use in the Model-A since it's the most economical vehicle. Driving it on rounds recharges the batteries Admiral Hazzard uses in his shortwave radio. Table scraps from the households go to the Henry's chickens and pigs that return eggs and pork to the households. A crisis occurs when they notice missing hens. The neighbors schedule overnight watches. Town residents set up an open air market where traders can barter. This market enables supply and demand of goods to adjust. There is no value to cash as a medium of exchange in primitive conditions so value is in direct exchange of goods and services. The bandstand in the center of Marines Park is a central gathering place for town notices and other common services. Randy no longer drinks and whatever alcohol is not used for anesthesia is excess supply they trade for coffee. Coffee beans are not grown in Florida so must be imported. Imported goods can carry radiation from their origin so locally grown or raised items are more available.



The import of a good, such as coffee, foreshadows the eventual revelation that Porky Logan's imported jewelry from South Florida brings radiation poisoning into Fort Repose and affects those he trades with. Porky and the Hernandez family live in Pistolville that has a poor section closest to Fort Repose and a wealthier section where they live. Garbage and health hazards are evident in the poor section but improve nearer the Hernandez house. Pete and Rita are crass traders that take advantage of others when they can. Pete is sick from an illness Dan tries to diagnose. Rita has a symptomatic dark circle on a finger that she wears a ring Pete got from Porky. She explains Porky got the jewelry from an abandoned shop in the Miami area. The merchandise is not only hot from theft but also from radiation. They leave the Hernandez house to see Porky. He is dead in bed with his arms in a beer case full of the hot jewelry. Dan and Randy discover Bill's wife has the hot jewelry and he will die. Dan's comment that she may be robbed by highwaymen forebodes a fate soon to befall him.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Porky Logan is buried in a long and involved process that requires Randy draw his gun to get the job done. Randy and Dan explain the difficulty of burying Porky and the jewelry to the unconcerned Bubba. He has only one lead-lined casket that is a deluxe model and probably the only one left in the county. It cost Bubba more than eight hundred dollars and retails for fifteen hundred so he wants someone to pay for it. Dan assures him the government will someday. Offenhaus Mortuary must use their hearse and Bubba cannot refuse because he is the local Civil Defense Director. Bubba regrets the job now since he really just wants public relations, free advertising and government handouts. He objects because it will take eight strong men to move it. Randy assures Bubba he can get them. They go to Marines Park to raise volunteers from his speech. When none come forward and the crowd gets unruly Randy menacingly draws his pistol and orders individuals to be pall-bearers. Porky is buried with his and the Hernandez loot in the lead-lined coffin. Randy is concerned there is no authority in charge. The mayor barricades himself in at home from fear, the Chief of Police is dead, his assistants gone and Bubba is unable to decide or act.

Randy returns home to find Lib in a tall cabbage palm tree on a ladder held by Florence and Alice. A delegation led by Two-Tone meets him and Bill explains the women are preparing a surprise for them. Two-Tone asks permission to make corn whiskey they can trade for coffee. Bill says he donates his Imperial, hinting he'll need Randy's Bonneville for the still also and the lawn roller for a corn mill. At lunch with Helen and Dan, Randy mentions Jim's bees and their recent foul broods. Dan suggests it is from radiation and is nature's way of weeding out genetic damage to protect a race. That evening Randy hears a radio announcement by the Acting President to authorize Reserve and National Guard officers' action under her order of martial law. Helen hears it since she is cutting his hair. Randy confirms with her his action with Porky Logan's burial is legal. After the haircut, she flirts inappropriately with him. He pushes her away as she calls him Mark. Lib calls Randy from the captain's walk to join her and he escapes Helen. Lib explains she is just transferring emotions and dreams about Mark to Randy. He wonders at her detachment and professionalism. When the bell rings for dinner, Lib has Randy wait for the surprise. At seven, the dinner table is set for a feast with white cloth, candles and fresh, special greens Alice, Lib and Helen research, pick and prepare. Randy ignores the haircut incident so Helen is at ease. They worry that Dan is not yet home from his house calls.

Dan still is not home at eight and Randy decides to visit Admiral Hazzard to ask if he's seen him. Lib usually joins Randy to give them some time alone together. This is Ben Franklin's first night to watch with his shotgun and he comes along to stop at the Henrys. Randy asks Bill to ring three times if Dan returns. They reach the Henrys and Mizzoo offers tea but Randy declines. Caleb joins to watch with Ben and brings a spear Malachai makes for him. Malachai carries a lantern and they all walk to the barn and



bench that is Ben's stand for the night. Randy tells Ben to shoot whatever it is and if he misses, Caleb should stick it. Randy thanks Malachai for the light and walks with Lib to Sam's. The Admiral's den is compact, crowded and full of mementos, swords, nautical instruments, books, files and magazines. Sam clears a spot for Lib on the desk so she can be properly admired he says. Randy confirms they can hear the bell in the den since they worry about Dan. He asks Sam for any news. A voice booms from the radio with part of the message saying do not answer and they ask the Admiral what it means. Sam says answering gives the enemy a point to fix on but is uncertain what else the message code means. He tunes in to other messages and they hear references to the Big Three but do not know who they are. They hear a name, Dmitri Torgatz, who Sam and Randy think is running Russia. Lib mentions smallpox and what they can do now without vaccine. Sam admits he struggles with memoirs to address issues but confuses tactical with strategic. He confirms it takes two to make peace but only one to make war and keeps seeking answers. He announces his invention of a sailboat. Randy says he is sure it will become popular as they depart to walk home.

Lib and Randy embrace and plan to make love that night. Within fifty feet of the Henry place, Randy recalls his instructions to Ben. He holds Lib and calls out that it is Randy but Ben and Caleb do not answer. They decide to walk out on the dock but hear the bell ring three times twice more and then keep ringing. They run to the house but do not see the Model-A in the driveway or garage so conclude Helen, Peyton or Bill is hurt. They find Dan beaten bloody and in shock in the dining room. Randy and Bill take him upstairs to bed. Randy checks his pulse and calls for whiskey but Helen says no whiskey and she'll handle this. She gives him water with salt and soda and asks about the medicine chest. Randy asks for Dan's bag and Helen says highwaymen took it and the car. Randy is sickened about Dan. Lib asks what he can do and he says he will execute them. He decides Dan needs broth to recuperate and remembers iron rations in his sea chest. He finds the jars and cans and tells Lib and Helen to give Dan all he wants. Randy lies down and falls asleep with Graf under his arm. He wakes to gunshots and picks up his pistol as he races to the Henrys. They stand around the largest German shepherd he's seen. The dog has a collar and tag marked *Lindy*. Ben saw the dog as a wolf and gives Randy the shotgun and sobs. Randy tells Ben dogs may be wolves in times like these and returns his shotgun.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Randy dislikes violence and guns but draws his pistol to maintain order and get enough volunteers to bury Porky with his radioactive jewelry. The next change of circumstance alerts him to a lack of authority in Fort Repose. The Acting President authorizes Reserve and National Guard Officers to take action as needed locally. Her order affirms actions and thoughts Randy has. Dan is not back from rounds so timing of this announcement is a foreboding of the night's violence. Sam gives Randy an evasive message to use on his way home to alert Ben. Sam's humor that his invention of a sailboat will become popular confirms that a redeveloping society reinvents many items it takes for granted. On their walk home Randy uses Sam's heads up sign. A ringing bell that signals emergency interrupts their intimacy. Dan is beat up and the Model-A stolen.



Randy wakes to gunshots at the Henry's. Ben is upset that he shoots what he sees as a wolf but is a pet German shepherd. Randy consoles Ben that dogs can turn into wolves at times like these in a foreshadowing of the highwaymen he plans to kill. Ben's young age at first killing redeems Randy's disgust at shooting his first and only deer when he affirms Ben's killing of a wolf dog.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Randy wakes in a Miami Beach hotel before The Day dreaming a white-capped waitress is offering him morning coffee or evening chocolate yclairs at a French restaurant. The lady looks like Lib and calls him Randy darling. Actually it is Lib and real coffee from his iron rations she offers with powdered cream and real sugar. Randy asks if Dan and everyone else gets coffee, and there is broth for Dan and candy for the children specifically Caleb. Randy showers and shaves while Lib watches fascinated by his travail. He plans to see Dan and then Sam about a military operation. He asks Dan for the full story and he tells it with another cup of coffee. Dan stopped at the Marines Park bandstand to check for notes from any patients. Herbert Sunbury leaves a note that his children are sick. Dan goes to his house six miles past Bragg house on River Road. They have the typhoid Dan fears. He treats them and instructs them how to avoid further exposure. On the way home he sees a woman in distress on the side of the road. He stops to care for her but discovers she is a decoy when three armed men appear on the road. They tell Dan they're taking everything and to start walking. When he tries to keep his bag of medical supplies, they beat him unconscious. He wakes to ants crawling on his dried blood and decides it's better to die at home. He crawls home by following the setting sun.

Randy expects the highwaymen to rob secondary roads once the main road travel is killed off. He thinks this is a setup from the notices at Marines Park. Since no car was used they probably wanted transportation. Dan apologizes for being careless. He has lost his glasses and the spare set from his bag. Randy tells Dan he is going to kill them but Dan says the typhoid spreading in the river is more critical. Randy worries the highwaymen may raid houses and they can only warn people about typhoid. He tells Dan his Reserve status and martial law duty. The first step to order is execution of the highwaymen. Randy and Lib walk to the Admiral's and she sees a change in his manner. Randy tells him Dan is okay but the car, medicine and bourbon are losses. The Admiral adds loss of communication because the car recharges radio batteries and he only has another eight or ten hours left. Sam says Randy will have to get the highwaymen who may be a hundred miles away. Randy thinks they're near because they don't have enough gas. Randy discusses setting up a company under martial law with his authority as an active Army Reserve officer. He expects there are more gangs. Randy suggests an armed patrol or roadblocks but Sam says they can avoid them. He mentions using Q-ships as a decoy tactic to draw initial fire but Randy says gas may be scarce. Lib says Rita and Pete may have gas and a grocery truck is irresistible. Lib wants to drive but Randy insists she stay home to protect it with Ben. Randy decides to go to Pistolville after dark. Before leaving Sam's he types three notice orders to the town exercising his Reserve Officer authority under martial law.

Randy decides walking the five miles to Pistolville is most sensible. Lib tacks his notices on plywood for him to nail to the bandstand on his way through town. He wears shabby



clothes and hides his pistol deep in a pocket to avoid seeming out of place in Pistolville. He kisses Lib goodbye and she threatens to come after him with a shotgun unless he's home by midnight. Marines Park is empty when he nails up his notices. An armadillo runs out from under the bandstand and he considers them a food source. He doesn't see anyone until Pistolville. Light is on in the Hernandez house and he is relieved. He knocks and Rita answers with a shotgun. She asks about Dan and Randy guesses Alice is the source of news to and from town. He explains he is there to ask for her help. Rita identifies one of the suspects as Leroy Settle who lives on the other side of town. Randy says he wants all of them and any others like them. He tells her his plan and she thinks he can get away with it. She offers both the truck and gas with only a request that he return whatever is left. She decides to say the truck is stolen and fire the shotgun after he leaves to make it believable. Randy starts it and drives away. He hides it in the garage at home after eleven. Lib's light is on but she is waiting on the porch and they walk down to the dock. Randy says he wishes they were married and Lib accepts instantly. She says it will be nice to marry on Easter. Randy notices the green eyes of a gator the Seminoles say is a source of meat sliding down stream.

Chapter 10 Analysis

In times of deprivation, dream fantasies like Randy's coffee and yclairs relieve anxieties associated with desire. The dream is a real Lib and coffee but Randy selflessly asks to be sure everyone gets a ration of the scarce treats. Dan briefs Randy on the beating incident so he can make plans to take action. His earlier observation that dogs can become wolves is indicative of the change of heart Randy has in the wake of Dan's beating. The highwaymen are a threat to the River Road enclave and the community as a whole. Randy calmly says he will kill them. To accomplish this mission he meets with Sam to plan a strategy and issue written orders and authorization to post at Marines Park bandstand. Lib suggests they use Pete and Rita's gas and grocery truck as a decoy but Randy insists she stay home when they do. When posting a sign Randy sees an armadillo crawl out that he considers a food source it foreshadows Ben and Peyton's later research and plan. Rita decides survival is better than coy behavior and becomes a strong ally of Randy. Lib asks Randy to marry her perhaps as insurance against Rita. He agrees and sees the green eyes of an alligator.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Lib and Randy marry at noon on Easter Sunday. She wears a white dress and heels that make her unsteady. Preacher Henry performs the service since Randy's Order No. 4 authorizes ordained ministers to perform marriages. Before the wedding there is news from Easter Sunrise services of the Hickey house raided by highwaymen. Jim and his wife are dead and two children orphaned. Randy wears his uniform because martial law requires it on active duty. He wants to ambush and kill the highwaymen right after the ceremony. Sam convinces Randy to wait and follow the plan because the highwaymen sleep days and strike at night. Randy's plan is on a large-scale county map marked with crosses where highwaymen attack. They have no information about them and no reserves to call on. Randy plans to drive twenty miles an hour since driving any slower is suspicious. He checks the weapons and assigns them to the others. Holes are cut in the truck for sighting and shooting. Randy checks the truck, equipment and gun ports. He smears mud on rear ports to cover shiny fresh-cut holes. They leave at four o'clock. Malachai offers to drive since Randy's uniform doesn't fit the Ajax truck and a white face is not as good a decoy as Malachai's black face. Sam says Malachai is better bait and Randy agrees. They drive east on River Road past Dan's attack and the Sunbury's and then the rest of the route. They are wary of anyone they pass and take a break at a high point to see anyone coming from either direction. Randy has coffee from Lib he shares. They drive again and pass the Hickey's where a car starts following them suspiciously. Randy says the driver is an innocent bystander or herding them into the guns of a pal.

Randy sees the blocked opposite end of a narrow bridge and revises tactics. He tells Bill and Sam to take the back and forget the sides. He'll help Malachai in the front. Their Model-A blocks the bridge and has a man at each bumper. Randy recognizes them from Dan's description. He counts four armed men but no woman. Randy tells Malachai to drive right up to them and Bill to let the ones in the rear get close too. When Malachai stops Randy tells him to make the one with a gun come to the truck. The one with a bat tells Malachai to get out. The gunner says to drag or blow him out. When the bat-man turns the handle Malachai jumps through the door and clubs him. The gunner fires and Randy shoots him three times in the belly and head when he twitches. Two highwaymen in the back are dead and the battle ends. Sam holds a shotgun to the head of the bat-man and asks Randy to shoot him. Randy wants to hang him. Malachai is wounded so Randy tells Sam to wait as he looks for Dan's bag. Randy threatens the bat-man for Dan's bag. The bat-man says the woman took it and went off with somebody else. Randy tells Bill to check for it in the other car and make sure the other two are dead. The other car is destroyed by shotgun blasts and the bag is not there. Gas leaks on the road. The Model-A starts but is almost out of fuel so Randy moves it from blocking the bridge and takes the key. They lift Malachai into the truck and load weapons and the prisoner. Randy tells Bill to leave dead bodies to the buzzards and toss the rest in the river. At home Bill, Sam and the prisoner get out. Randy tells Ben to get clothesline to tie him up until they hang him. Malachai is unconscious and Dan says he is in shock,



needs a transfusion and shouldn't be moved. They move him to the billiard table on a door so Dan can operate. Randy boils knives in water to sterilize but Malachai dies before Dan can help him.

Randy falls asleep wondering what to do. Lib thinks it is a husband's duty and leaves it to Randy. Bill enters and asks for Dan who is asleep. Bill tells Lib things he might give her and Randy as a wedding present that don't mean anything anymore. He tells them he and Dan give them a joint gift. Dan is moving in with Bill so Lib and Randy have the apartment to themselves but with Dan already sleeping it will not happen tonight. The newlyweds are delighted and return to their separate beds. The prisoner is hung at noon in Marines Park and the body hangs till sunset. Randy accepts his first enlistments in Fort Repose Provisional Company. He posts notices of the highwaymen executed for their crimes and that Malachai dies of a wound received in battle.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Randy marries in his uniform because he wants to chase the highwaymen immediately afterwards. They murder a citizen and his wife and orphan two young children. Randy plans swift action according to declared martial law. Admiral Hazzard encourages him to wait till evening when he's more likely to catch them. They outfit the Ajax truck as a decoy to battle from. Randy plans to drive but Malachai convinces him a shabby black man draws better than a white man in uniform. Strategy is to drive routes highwaymen travel and bait them with a grocery truck. When they surround the truck Randy and his crew counterattack through gun ports inside the truck. Strategy works when the truck is followed by a car that seems to herd them into a covered bridge blocked at the other end by the Model-A. As they drive into the trap Randy alters tactics to get as close as they can before counterattacking through front and rear rather than sides as originally planned. Malachai is effective bait. They threaten to drag or blow him from the truck. One shoots and Malachai knocks the other one to the ground with a pistol. Bill and Sam shoot two out the rear ports and Randy kills the one in front who has a machine gun. They take one prisoner to hang the next day in town. They leave three dead highwaymen to rot on the road as a silent witness that crime in Fort Repose won't pay. Malachai is mortally wounded and dies. Randy posts notice of the execution as a deterrent to future criminals.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

The Admiral's shortwave radio provides news from the outside world. More importantly his radio offers hope the world before The Day may return. In May a tube burns out and the hopeful lifeline is cut. Randy offers premium pay to replace it but there are no tubes available. Gas supply is low so recharging depleted batteries is not likely anyway. June is a month of plenty with ripening corn, sweet yams and sugar cane molasses to eat and new corn whiskey to taste before aging. The whiskey's high alcohol content is useful right away as antiseptic but not anesthetic. July begins a project for medical practice with hypnotism that Alice suggests Dan use for anesthesia. She reads to him to conserve his eyes in the dim light. Dan learns and practices on Helen and the others. Children are quick subjects but Randy and Sam are difficult. Timing is excellent since Ben gets appendicitis and Dan hypnotizes him for surgery on the billiard table with tools gathered for Malachai. August is hot and fortunes reverse with depleting salt, armadillos eating yams and fish not biting.

Randy and the community discover how important salt and fish are to survival. Salt is necessary beyond seasoning food. Workers in the hot Florida sun sweat out body salt and, unless it is replaced, they get weak, ill and listless. Salt is not available for trade and salt starvation causes absolute craving. There is no way to make salt. Fish are a staple and if they don't bite there is no way to get them and even shrimp nets don't work. Randy asks if radiation poisons the fish but Dan says that would be obvious with floating dead fish. He is more concerned with salt and recalls it from the diary. Randy rereads Lieutenant Randolph Rowzee Peyton's daily log and finds it from August 19 through 23, 1839. He recalls his father mentioning Blue Crab Run but never going there. The Fort Repose fleet of five boats commanded by Sam Hazzard set sail in the morning. Randy's light fiberglass boat is not suitable so he crews with Sam. They plan to arrive before night and return by noon. This is Randy's first night away from Lib but he is confident Fort Repose is protected. As the captain's walk disappears from view he wonders about the fish because he's hungry.

Peyton is upset since Ben wants her help to research and plan the armadillo hunt but won't let her hunt because it's too dangerous for a girl. She believes Randy understands but he's on the crab run and Helen agrees with Ben. Caleb, Ben and Graf go to the yam patch to hunt by moonlight. Graf roots them, Caleb prods them out and Ben chops their head off. By morning they have five armadillos for breakfast. Peyton wants to be a hero and praised too so she decides to catch some fish. Peyton asks Preacher Henry why fish don't bite since he's the only one Randy doesn't ask but she thinks he knows. Preacher tells her he was a great fisherman but now they think he's just an old man and useless. She's the only one to ask him so he tells her. Fish want to keep cool so they swim away from the shore and out deep into the middle where it's cool enough to bite so they can eat. Bait fish are out with the bass because they want to stay cool too. Peyton asks if bass bite goldfish. Preacher says it's illegal to use goldfish but he would if



it weren't and he'd fish deep in the middle. Peyton thanks him and skips away. She takes a bucket to see Florence who's not home but her goldfish are. She has Ben's rod and reel and takes Randy's boat out alone since she has goldfish.

At noon Lib is anxious that Randy is not back. Helen calls up to ask Lib if Peyton's with her or at the dock. She does not see Peyton or Randy's boat and scans the river to see that it is not in sight. The fleet returns at five with all five boats laden with salt, buckets and washtubs full of live crabs. They unload but Randy wonders why Lib is not there to greet them. He takes a tub of crab to the kitchen and finds four large black bass in the kitchen sink. He sees a plate on the table heaped with roast meat that looks like lamb and tastes wonderful. Randy hears sobs and sees three women crying in the living room. Lib is crying since she worries he is not back yet. She says Helen is crying because she spanked Peyton for taking his boat out alone even though she caught the bass. Florence is crying because she thinks Sir Percy ate her goldfish. Randy decides the more he learns about women the more there is to learn, but they need a man around. He cleans the bass and finds a torn goldfish in one's gullet but decides to say nothing.

School starts in September with Lib and Helen teaching in Judge Bragg's library. He is surprised to see Caleb appear but notices it does not affect Peyton and Ben. In October the early oranges begin to ripen, armadillos grow scarce but chickens, pigs, wild turkey and quail begin to appear. Dan is proud to announce delivery of the first baby after The Day. Lightning strikes a pine and Randy and Bill cut firewood for winter. Randy falls asleep exhausted and wakes up to what seems like the sound of music. Lib hears it too and it sounds louder in the hallway. They go to Peyton's room and Randy knocks. She has an old wind-up phonograph player with a collection of LPs from the attic. She also finds an old-time sewing machine, kerosene lamps, a pot-bellied stove and a black leather case with two straight-edge razors that she has for Dan and Randy. Randy kisses Peyton on the top of her head and says he would give her a medal.

Chapter 12 Analysis

When the Admiral's radio tube burns out and the community cannot get any external information their attention turns to the flow of the seasons. Early summer months are plentiful and pleasant despite Ben's appendicitis operation. Alice becomes a learning resource for the community and helps Dan practice hypnosis for anesthesia. August is a challenging month when fish and salt supplies deplete at the same time. Randy defers to the wisdom of Lieutenant Peyton and initiates an old Fort Repose custom of Blue Crab runs. Ben and Peyton research armadillo as a food source but Ben won't let her hunt at night because it's too dangerous for a girl. Peyton tracks down her wisdom of the ages in Preacher Henry, who helps her think like a fish. She becomes a heroine by catching bass when no one else can. Randy returns with a fleet of boats full of salt and blue crab to a dining table heaped with delicious roast armadillo, and a kitchen sink with four large black bass. Three crying women convince him women need a man around. Fall comes and life improves when Peyton finds a way to bring music back into their lives.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

November arrives and Dan appears clean-shaven at breakfast to talk with Randy. He admits he loves Helen and wants to marry her. She feels the same but worries Mark is still alive and may return someday. Low-flying planes begin to appear this month that both frighten and excite them. A large four-engine transport flies over at one thousand feet and Sam believes it collects radiation samples. Another transport circles Fort Repose the next week and drops leaflets from its belly. The leaflets announce not to be alarmed or interfere with the United States Air Force conducting atmospheric surveys preliminary to bringing relief to the Contaminated Zones. The residents are encouraged by the news but leaflets are immediately useful as toilet paper. By the next day they become useful as paper money. December brings the appearance of a helicopter dangling a long wire with a cylinder at the end that touches the earth and circles the Bragg house four times. Helen and Lib watch and wave from the captain's walk and the pilot waves back. Helen weeps as she tells Randy she is sure he comes just to see them but Randy says he may just be looking for anyone. She prays that he come back and momentarily they hear it circling back. The grounds surrounding the house are overgrown with weeds and saplings except for a stretch of lawn between it and the road. Randy insists Ben mow it every week as a link between the house and the time before The Day. They watch the helicopter hover there and slowly come in to land.

Two men wearing helmets, plastic suits and oxygen tanks like divers or spacemen climb down a ladder out of the helicopter. They carry vacuum cleaner like equipment with nozzles they hold over the ground and then over Randy as they check a dial. One of them takes off his helmet touches Randy on the shoulder and calls back to the helicopter for the colonel to come out. Randy does not immediately recognize the gray-haired, aged man in an Air Force flight suit wearing the eagles of a full colonel on his shoulders. He reaches out his hand, speaks and Randy welcomes Paul Hart and his crew for lunch. They accept and go to his apartment for a drink. Paul is surprised they have liquor and Randy tells him they make and age it in charcoal kegs themselves. Introductions are made and Paul tells Randy there is no more Washington D.C. but that D.C. now means Decontamination Command. Denver is the capital and Paul is responsible for the Florida C.Z. Lib calls them to lunch of soup, broiled quail and orange juice. The airmen are surprised at the meal since other C.Z. people starve. Paul explains he wanted the Florida C.Z. to find his wife Martha and their children. They are stationed at McCoy before Paul is deployed to Kenya. He discovers a week earlier Orlando and McCoy are burned and still radioactive. It is a totally destroyed city and rebuilding is impractical in the T.D. Helen asks about Mark and Paul explains Omaha and Offutt Field was a primary target and Mark is not one of the survivors. Helen and Ben accept the news but Peyton slips away to the other room.

Randy and Paul discuss the situation and status of other cities and the clear zones. Water power, oil and coal are available but transport inability is crippling. Paul says their



hope is for atomic power and is thankful they still have a big stockpile of nuclear fuel. The technicians go to sample the river. Paul and Randy both expect the river to be clear. Paul tells Randy he would like to start in this area to get Florida C.Z. restored. The air crew has a stop in Georgia before dark and prepares to leave. Paul tells Randy his clear people are free to come out. He'll be back in a week to take two or three at a time by helicopter. No one indicates they want to leave. Randy does ask Paul to bring medical supplies and eyeglasses for Dan when he returns. Randy also asks who won the war. Paul replies that we clobbered them, "Not that it matters."

Chapter 13 Analysis

External civilization reappears in November. Air transports fly over Fort Repose to take radiation samples and drop warning leaflets. The residents are pleased to see government paper again that they put to use as toilet paper. When more leaflets drop than are needed they use the excess as paper money to exchange for goods and services like before The Day. In an ironic return to the past when Randy falls asleep reading about Mars, two men in protective gear like spacesuits step out of a helicopter the following week. They are crew members in the Decontamination Command that Randy and Mark's old friend Paul Hart now commands in Florida. He confirms to Helen that Mark is not one of the survivors. She and the children accept the news they expect. Paul offers to take anyone who wants back to civilization but no one wants to leave. Randy asks who won but Paul's answer includes the remark that there isn't much left to win.



Characters

Florence Wechek

Florence Wechek is a spinster and manages Western Union in Fort Repose, Florida. She is a gossipy woman but does not share embarrassing or scandalous information about her customers or friends. Florence has many pets around her while she follows her morning breakfast routine. Florence is forty-seven years old. She is offended that Randy Bragg uses binoculars to scan the neighborhood and thinks he watches her dress. Florence is puzzled by Mark's telegram to Randy. Florence tells her friend Alice at their weekly lunch that Randy is a Peeping Tom. Alice disagrees, so Florence invites her to stay the weekend to see for herself. Florence and Alice live together as one household in the enclave. Randy mistakes Florence's bird for a rare Carolina parakeet he watches fly around her house. Her cat Sir Percy eats her bird Anthony, symbolizing survival of the fittest. Peyton takes Florence's goldfish as bait and Sir Percy becomes the scapegoat.

Alice Cooksey

Alice Cooksey is the librarian and a friend of Florence. Alice is a tiny, drab in black and gray, active angry woman who has regular squabbles with Bubba's wife Kitty Offenhaus. Kitty disapproves of her book selections. She threatens Alice with the loss of her job but Alice threatens to tell the paper. Alice and Florence meet for lunch on Fridays. Alice knows the Bragg family and is rumored to date Judge Bragg before he marries Gertrude. Alice knows the Bragg brothers before Florence meets them and does not believe her tale about Randy. Alice accepts Florence's invitation to stay the weekend after she looks up Mark's phrase in the Bible and decides she does not want to be alone. After *The Day* she lives with Florence and rides the Western Union bicycle to the library to keep it open as a center of learning and activity. Alice researches edible greens and introduces hypnotism to Dan as an alternative to alcohol for anesthetic. She is the source of news in town. Alice feels important and fulfilled for the first time in thirty years as a librarian. She does not want to leave Fort Repose because she feels worthwhile for the first time.

Randy Bragg

Randy Bragg is Florence's neighbor who surveys the neighbors' yards with binoculars in the evenings and mornings. Florence suspects that he watches her while pretending to look over the entire area and is shocked by what she considers his Peeping Tom behavior. Randy is a young, well known and eligible man in Timucuan County who drinks too much and dates Pistolville girls. He is a thirty-two year old lawyer and neighborhood birdwatcher with an office at home. He once ran for public office but his defeat by Pork Logan due to unclear and ambivalent segregationist comments



humiliates him. Randy refuses to consider running again. He regularly drinks his second cup of morning coffee with bourbon and sugar. Randy and Mark have a code if a crisis begins. "Alas, Babylon" is the signal that eventually becomes the turning point in Randy's carefree bachelor life.

Mark's family comes to stay in Fort Repose and virtually overnight Randy becomes responsible for Helen, Ben Franklin and Peyton. The impending crisis forces Randy to give up his life as a womanizing bachelor and borderline alcoholic. He is a survival force for initially the Bragg family and eventually the whole Fort Repose community. His transformation to leading political figure and hero develops through many critical challenges he survives and lifestyle changes he makes. Randy abhors violence since a youthful shooting of his first and only deer but encourages and consoles Ben after he kills a pet dog. The Acting President declares martial law and authorizes individuals with military training to exercise authority in local situations. Randy Bragg will not run for office but accepts public responsibility since he has the required military background. His habitual morning bourbon disappears on The Day when he accepts responsibility for his brother's family and survival as a community leader. Randy no longer vegetates in Fort Repose as Lib claims but becomes the man she wants to marry. He improves the safety of Fort Repose by the successful counterattack and public execution of highwaymen. When Paul Hart offers to take anyone from Fort Repose that wants to leave, Randy's success as a community leader is confirmed by the fact no one wants to leave.

Preacher Henry

Reverend Clarence Henry is the formal name of Preacher Henry. He is pastor emeritus of the Afro-Repose Baptist Church. Preacher uses the phrase "Alas, Babylon" in his sermons when Randy and Mark are young boys -they later use it to signify a coming crisis. Preacher Henry is patriarch of the Henry family. His father buys their home site at the edge of the Bragg groves from Randy's grandfather. The Henry and Bragg families settle in the area at the same time. The original Henry is a slave and manservant to Lieutenant Peyton. Randy relies on Preacher to identify the birds he watches since he knows all the birds in the area. Peyton relies on Preacher to help her with fishing for the same reason. Randy authorizes Preacher Henry to perform marriages starting with his marriage to Lib.

Mark Bragg

Mark Bragg is Randy Bragg's brother in the Air Force SAC Intelligence. He is Deputy Chief of Intelligence and SAC's third-ranking Intelligence Officer stationed at Offutt Field in Omaha where they live. Mark's wife is Helen and they have two children. Ben Franklin is thirteen and his sister Peyton is eleven. Mark and Randy arrange a coded signal for Mark to use if he fears an imminent nuclear attack. Mark is critical to the survival of his family and the transformation of Randy when he sends them to Fort Repose. Mark meets Randy at McCoy near Orlando on his return from Puerto Rico. He



arranges for Randy to meet Helen and the children at the Orlando airport. Mark is on duty the night before The Day and he is instrumental in immediate retaliation for the nuclear strike. He does not survive the attack in Omaha according to their family friend Colonel Paul Hart.

Luther "Bubba" Offenhaus

Luther is Deputy Director of Civil Defense for the county. He owns Offenhaus Mortuary and a real estate development, Repose-in-Peace Park. Bubba owns the two ambulances in town that can be converted to hearses. He is responsible locally for Civil Defense but is unable to make decisions. He does not distribute nuclear fallout brochures and accepts the Civil Defense job only because he wants his business to benefit from the publicity.

Lieutenant Colonel Paul Hart

Colonel Hart is a squadron commander at McCoy and a friend of Mark Bragg. Randy talks with him while waiting for Mark to arrive at McCoy. Hart explains the dispersal policy that makes the base seem deserted. He tells Randy about the red baby that guides itself by heat-seeking device to its target. Paul Hart is a family friend and visits Bragg house in Florida. His family lives in Orlando. Colonel Hart requests Decontamination Command for Florida to look for his wife. He commands the helicopter that lands at the Bragg house to offer Randy and the others a way out of Fort Repose if they want to go.

Edgar Quisenberry

Edgar Quisenberry is a son of the founder and president of the First National Bank in Fort Repose. His father builds the bank in the 1920s. Edgar boasts the only time it is closed Roosevelt closes all the other banks in the country. His arrogance and pride cause him to ignore his teller's advice to limit withdrawals on The Day. When the vault cash drops a hundred thousand dollars in an hour, he locks the tellers' cash drawers in the vault. Edgar starts a run on his own bank and then shuts it down himself. He is too proud to accept the humiliation. In mid-afternoon he shoots himself with a pistol he's not sure works.

Pete Hernandez

Pete Hernandez owns and manages the Ajax Super-Market. Ever since his sister Rita dates him, Pete calls Randy by his first name rather than Mr. Bragg. Pete hides and hoards salt and other goods in a back room at the store. Randy buys twenty pounds of salt from him for ten dollars per pound. Pete lives with his sister Rita in a richer part of Pistolville near Porky Logan. Pete buys jewelry Porky gets when he drives from south Florida. Pete gets radiation poisoning from the watches and other jewelry he wears.



Bill Cullen

Bill Cullen runs a bar, short-order grill, package store and fish camp at the edge of town. Randy usually buys two or three bottles of bourbon from him. Bill's nickname is Bigmouth so Randy does not tell him why he buys out his stock of favorite bourbon and six fifths of Scotch. Porky trades jewelry from south Florida with Bill but his wife does not see any cash from the sale so she figures Bill hides it. When he gets sick, she fears he is dying and may leave her nothing. She finds the jewelry and takes it. Bill has radiation poisoning from the jewelry and laughs because his wife takes it all and she will get sick too.

Malachai Henry

Malachai Henry is Randy's gardener and helper. Malachai receives twenty-five dollars weekly from Randy for yard work. The family is black and poor but closer to Randy than any other family in town. Malachai and Randy grow up together. Malachai is single and does not drink. He reads discarded magazines and newspapers Missouri saves for him from Randy and her other customers. Randy tells Malachai about Mark's fears and gives him two hundred dollars to help prepare his family. Malachai and Two-Tone help Randy reroute the artesian well. Malachai insists Randy let him drive the Ajax truck because he makes better bait than Randy in uniform. Malachai is killed defending Fort Repose.

Elizabeth McGovern

Elizabeth McGovern is a shoulder-length blond, brash, unpredictable and outspoken friend Randy calls Lib. Elizabeth is the daughter of Bill and Lavinia McGovern. Randy meets her when he sees her long legs on the side of the pier and decides to find out whose body is attached. Lib and Randy are affectionate friends but not lovers when the story begins. She regularly just barges into his front hall and before The Day tells Randy she wants a man, not the vegetable he is becoming in Fort Repose. Lib wants him to leave the small town for a big city and will follow when he's settled. Lib visits Randy at home which gives Florence more to gossip about. Lib's mother Lavinia dies from lack of potent insulin and after her burial Lib and her father Bill move into the Bragg house.

Two strong women in the same house is a situation ripe for conflict. Lib and Helen both vie for Randy's attention either as a potential husband or as brother in law and uncle to her children. Fortunately Lib knows psychology and rises above petty jealousy. When Helen has a particularly emotional moment, Lib calls Randy from the captain's walk to join her. She explains Helen just transfers her emotions and dreams about Mark. Lib impresses Randy with her ability to remain detached and professional. Lib's strength of character is further revealed by her suggestion Randy ask Rita to borrow the Ajax truck. Lib helps prepare him for his trip to visit Rita at night. Lib reveals a touch of jealousy by teasing that she'll come for him with a shotgun if he's not home by midnight. Lib waits up for his return and accepts Randy's wish that they marry. Lib wears a white dress and



heels at the wedding on Easter Sunday. Lib is uncomfortable about where they spend their wedding night but Bill gives her Randy's apartment back when Dan wakes up.

Dan Gunn

Dan Gunn is one of Randy's friends and a medical doctor who smokes a pipe. He wears heavy-framed glasses, moves awkwardly and speaks little. Dan is a thirty-five year old souring idealist. He dreams of a World Health Organization or comparable appointment but marries badly and tries to solve financial difficulties by building a practice in Florida. His ex-wife left him long ago but her alimony payments continue. He lives in two rooms at the Riverside Inn where he is house physician. Dan is bitter but also a kind man who struggles before The Day with twin financial difficulties of paying both his wife and the income tax demands on his increasing income. Dan has a house call route he calls the placebo circuit to check up on his River Road patients and write prescriptions.

After The Day he becomes the idealist his dreams lead him to. His ex-wife, her alimony and income tax demands all disappear when raw survival becomes the main purpose in life. The financial system of Fort Repose and beyond is destroyed and Dan's struggle returns to those of a physician dealing with life and death. Fellow residents of Riverside Inn won't follow recommendations to assure their health. When his Medical Building is ransacked and his partner killed, Dan accepts Randy's insistence to join them on River Road. Dan is a critical friend and confidant to Randy as they restore Fort Repose civility. Dan drives the Model-A on his rounds and trades services for gas to keep it running. The Model-A charges batteries Sam needs in his shortwave receiver. While driving rounds one day Dan is attacked by highwaymen that take his medical bag and the Model-A. The incident motivates Randy to catch and execute the highwaymen. Dan symbolizes good in Fort Repose and the pure evil of his beating provides a moral imperative to protect the community. Dan asks Helen to marry him but she is unwilling until she is sure about Mark.

Helen Bragg

Helen Bragg is Mark Bragg's wife of fourteen years. She lives in Omaha with Mark and their family. She leaves town with the children to stay at Randy's in Fort Repose. She feels like she deserts him until he makes it clear Omaha is a primary target and her job is to take care of their children. Helen's entrance into Randy's life motivates his change. He is no longer comfortable as a free-wheeling womanizer living a bachelor's life with his brother's wife and children. Helen and Lib have conflicts from living in the same house but eventually overcome feelings of competition or jealousy and help each other. Helen worries that Mark is still alive even though she loves Dan and wants to marry him.

Ben Franklin Bragg

Ben Franklin Bragg is the thirteen year-old son of Mark and Helen. Mark tells Ben about his work. He shares information and knowledge from Mark with Randy. Ben



understands he may become the man of the family. Ben does his first killing by shooting the pet dog that kills the Henry's hens. Ben and Peyton research and plan how to hunt and kill armadillo but Ben is protective of his little sister and won't let her hunt. Ben has appendicitis and is the first patient Dan operates on under hypnosis.

Peyton Bragg

Peyton Bragg is the eleven year-old daughter of Mark and Helen. Peyton has the given name of Lieutenant Peyton, the Bragg family explorer and settler. Her desires, curiosity and enthusiasm may come from him. Since she is a girl and Ben's little sister, she is protected. When Ben doesn't let her hunt armadillo at night she decides to become a heroine on her own. She talks with Preacher about the fish that don't bite since no one else asks him. Florence has goldfish for bait and Randy's boat can get her out in the middle of the river. Peyton is forbidden to take the boat alone but since she has the goldfish and thus is already in trouble, she goes fishing anyways. Peyton catches four big black bass and becomes a heroine. She brings music into their lives by discovering a phonograph and records in the attic.

Ensign James "Peewee" Cobb

Ensign Cobb is five feet six inches tall, weighs 124 pounds and looks younger than his twenty-three years old. His red head appears oversized with face pinched and mottled with freckles. He is shy with girls and never spends a night ashore. When he climbs into the cockpit of an aircraft he becomes as large, fast and powerful as his supersonic fighter. He has superb reactions and eyesight and is rated superior in rocketry and gunnery. His first CAP mission in wartime conditions is an opportunity to overcome his nickname.

Bill McGovern

Bill McGovern is a retired manufacturing plant president married to Lavinia and with a daughter, Elizabeth. He thinks Randy Bragg is an insolent young loafer who is a decadent example of a once-good family. Bill is bald, square-shouldered and tall with beaked nose and strong prominent chin. Bill relies on Civil Defense Director Luther Offenbach for his information about an impending crisis. Before The Day, he calls Randy a Paul Revere and patronizes him for his youth and lack of understanding about budget appropriations. After The Day Bill becomes another unsung hero of Fort Repose. Randy encourages him to use his skills and talent to design and build tools and equipment to improve their lives.

General Hawker

General Hawker is SAC's Commander in Chief. He becomes a four star general in his forties and follows the tradition of Vandenberg, Norstad and LeMay. At fifty he is in



excellent physical condition. The General adapts to twenty-four hour war by sleeping four hours at a time with short catnaps. Hawker is in charge of counterattack from the Hole. He takes Mark's advice to get early weapons release to avoid wasting time.

Ace Atkins

Ace Atkins is the Senior Controller on duty with Mark. He is a slight and wiry colonel of the rank A-2. He is called Ace because he earns the accolade in two wars. He is a man of proven courage and absolute coolness. He mans the red phone in the Control Room.

Mrs. Josephine Vanbruuker-Brown

Josephine Vanbruuker-Brown is the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare in the President's Cabinet but on The Day is appointed Acting Chief Executive of the United States. Vanbruuker-Brown is the only evidence the United States government is still operative. She maintains whatever sense of national order and control there is from a secret location. The Acting President makes informative, authoritative and directive announcements received sporadically by members of the Bragg enclave. She declares martial law and authorizes military reserve and National Guard officers to act locally to maintain order. Randy relies on her directive to exercise authority in Fort Repose.

Admiral Sam Hazzard

Admiral Sam Hazzard is retired military who listens to short wave to keep up with what is going on. His last duty is on the Intelligence staff of the Joint Chiefs. He lives on the other side of the Henrys. Sam and his wife plan retirement on the Timucuan while he is still a four-striper. They plant an orange grove and build a six-room house where they spend one month each year before he retires at sixty-two. A former carrier commander he favors submarines for defense and claims the most dangerous Russian threat is from nuclear missiles on submarines. His wife dies two days after his retirement so he keeps active with military matters, his citrus grove and other gardening with the Henry's help. His principal hobby is shortwave radio. Sam listens and monitors but does not broadcast.

Rita Hernandez

Rita Hernandez is the sister of Pete Hernandez and a former girlfriend of Randy. She lives in the wealthier section of Pistolville with her brother. Randy breaks up with her because she gets possessive from casual dating. Rita collects men as a hobby and does not let go without profiting. Rita develops signs of radiation poisoning on her ring finger from a diamond ring Pete gets from Porky. She lends the Ajax truck and gas to help Randy succeed in the plan to counterattack the highwaymen.



Objects/Places

Fort Repose

Fort Repose is a river town in central Florida. Population is 3,422 according to the State Census, including Pistolville and the Negro district. The Chamber of Commerce claims five thousand but that includes winter residents and those who live outside the city limits.

Sputnik

Sputnik is the name of a series of Russian spy satellites circling the earth in the late 1950s that are equipped to gather information as they travel in orbit.

The Bragg House

The Bragg house is a large ungainly and monolithic house that was once the showpiece of the River Road neighborhood. The grounds have poinsettias, bougainvillea, hibiscus and other plants. The house is well constructed of native cypress encased in pine clapboard. Randy keeps his law office and bachelor apartment in an upstairs wing. The house has a captain's walk that is the highest point in the county and a panoramic view of the area and river junction. Bragg house is a center of activity and a safe residence for the Braggs after The Day. Helen and her children move in, then Dan and finally Bill and Lib.

McCoy

McCoy is the Air Force Base near Orlando where Mark and Randy meet. Colonel Hart is stationed there and greets Randy before Mark's plane arrives for their meeting.

Ajax Super-Market

Ajax Super-Market is not a supermarket but a grocery store in the five thousand or so community of Fort Repose. Pete Hernandez owns and manages it. The store is looted after The Day and Pete hides in a closet. He sells Randy hoarded salt when Randy finds him.



The Hole

The Hole is a protected area at Offutt Field in Omaha where military operations are carried on in a national military emergency. The bunker is fifty feet underground and divided into a war room with maps and a glass-enclosed silent control room.

Sidewinder

A Sidewinder is a heat-seeking rocket with a nose sensitive to infra-red rays from a heat source. The rocket guides itself to any heat source after release from a fighter jet. An errant Sidewinder causes war when it diverts to a train at a Russian port.

Latakia

Latakia is the most important Syrian harbor, heavily fortified and with extensive construction of Russian submarine pens. The port is one of the most powerful anti-Western naval bases in the Mediterranean. Peewee Cobb invades enemy air space chasing a bogey. The rocket he releases diverts to a train on the ground where it causes a series of explosions.

NORAD

NORAD means North American Air Defense and is located in Colorado Springs. It provides early warning of incoming objects and sends alert warning information to the Hole where General Hawker and his staff decide on retaliatory action.

Conelrad

Conelrad is a system of Civil Defense communications for use in time of emergency. Under Conelrad all stations must operate at low power and are limited to two frequencies. Its purpose is to avoid an enemy homing in on radio devices to find targets. Mark thinks the system is tricky, obsolete and may not work but it provides adequate information.

The Day

The Day is a Saturday in December that changes lives throughout the world. Rather than commemorating an event or group, this day is unlike any other. Its reference is so broad and universal that everyone remembers The Day that separates life into before and after.



Marines Park

Marines Park is the barter center for Fort Repose after The Day. The raised octagonal bandstand is an open-air market and gathering spot for traders with goods to swap. The columns that support the roof are used to tack want-ads or offers to trade. The well-kept turf around it becomes overgrown and covered with weeds and sandspurs. Two drinking fountains are marked one for whites only and the other coloreds only but neither works.

Blue Crab Pool

Blue Crab Pool is a crystal clear pool surrounded by a white beach of pure salt. The blue crabs in the pool are like those found in the ocean but the pool is two hundred miles from the mouth of the St. John near the headwaters of the Timucuan. Legends about the Blue Crab Pool and Runs are written in the daily logs of Lieutenant Peyton's early exploration.



Themes

Deterrence to Avoid Consequences

A major benefit of civilized society is its ability to impose rules, laws and customs to deter other action with more serious consequences. If Peewee Cobb obeys the rule of not crossing into the airspace of another country he minimizes risks of provoking attack. If initial deterrence is breached subsequent consequences may occur. *Alas, Babylon* is an opportunity to view consequences of a civilization that has lost all vestige of deterrence and struggles to regain primitive rules of effective civility. Peewee has orders to seek and destroy but not to ignore all other rules. The rules of engagement forbid flying in pursuit across borders and thereby violating airspace. His decision to ignore the deterrent rule puts the United States in a position to risk the consequences of current Soviet policy. Had he pulled back into neutral airspace, the consequences might have been avoided since he would not have been within range to fire a heat-seeking Sidewinder. Once he ignores the deterrent, firing a rocket is automatic with training and technology. Risk of an errant rocket is presaged by Paul's talk of a red baby. Peewee fires a rocket that seeks heat on the ground rather than in the air.

Similarly twin Soviet policies of time-on-target and no resignation under resistance may deter action if consequences are well-known, understood and followed. Mark discloses a Soviet War Plan change revealed by the Russian General. Mark tells Randy because he and the Russian both fear human error can set unintended consequences in motion. This policy cannot act as a deterrent because it is a secret in the Soviet War Plan. Technology and training enable the policy to initiate all-out war and mutually assured destruction. Peewee fires a rocket that seeks its own target. When it strikes Latakia the secret Soviet War Plan initiates automatic retaliatory action. General Hawker in turn takes counter-retaliatory action to beat the Soviets and their bid to destroy civilization by mere seconds at dawn on the Day.

The restoration of civil order in Fort Repose begins with primitive deterrence that is readily understood, highly visible and definitive. When no one volunteers to help bury Pork and his radioactive loot, Randy draws a pistol for help. The highwaymen's dead bodies are left to rot on the road or hung in the town square to deter highway robbery. The pistol and dead bodies are clear and present evidence that can deter others from taking similar action if they want to avoid the consequences.

Character Development in Crises

A pervasive theme is the effect crises have on character development. Crises bring out the best or the worst in a person. Many dramatic changes occur in Randy Bragg. He first appears as a womanizer and Peeping Tom. He lives on the old wealth of his family and drinks bourbon with coffee at breakfast. One symbolic trait of his early character is revulsion at shooting his first and only deer as a youngster. Although serving in the



armed forces, Randy is neither a fighter nor a violent man. Randy runs for office but loses to Pork and decides the humiliation is too great to run again so he drinks instead. Similar to Randy's old family wealth, Edgar Quisenberry inherits his father's bank. Edgar is once humiliated by Judge Bragg and now by Randy and Mark. He dislikes but tolerates humiliation because he runs the bank and can lord that over them. He causes a run on the bank and then shuts it down fearing he might run out of cash. His humiliation is also too great to go on but, unlike Randy, Edgar shoots himself as he despairs of life in a world without paper money.

Characters in Fort Repose divide into two classes relative to Randy. Rita bridges givers and takers. Her brother Pete and neighbor Pork are takers who hoard goods they can sell for a higher price later. Givers help and share with each other to thrive while takers hoard and hide from each other and shrivel and die. Rita and Randy start at similar points of womanizing and chasing. Randy changes when Helen and the children come to stay and he tells Pete he's done with Rita. Rita changes when Randy sees a dark circle under the diamond ring she wears from the same jewelry that makes Pete and Pork get sick and turn black. Pete, Pork and Bigmouth Bill hoard jewelry from Miami. They all get sick from radiation poisoning, turn black and are dying. Bubba hoards the only lead casket safe to bury Pork and the hot loot in until Randy convinces him the government will pay his price later. Rita gives Randy the Ajax truck and gas to help him catch and hang the highwaymen that rob, beat and murder anyone they can.

Randy loads up on groceries and meat at Ajax, bourbon and scotch at Bigmouth Bill's and doubles milk delivery to share with Mark's wife and children. When crises begin he quits bourbon cold turkey and offers it to Dan for anesthetic. Dan is caught between his ex-wife's alimony and IRS demands for more income taxes. The Day silences demands and he has one nightmare and far too many patients that need medical care to worry about money anymore. He compliments Randy after seeing two alcoholics drink themselves senseless on The Day. Florence asks Alice to move in. Her menagerie becomes a home for humans when the cat, birds and fish find survival a primary need. Alice changes from a drab gray lady librarian to a woman who is happy, needed and fulfilled when her library becomes the center of learning and culture in Fort Repose. Bill McGovern is pompous and pretentious because he feels useless in forced retirement. When Lavinia dies Randy tells him to use his talent with tools for the community and begin a new life rather than feel sorry for himself in the old. Randy becomes leader and protector of Fort Repose so successfully its citizens express no desire to return to the civilization offered by Paul Hart.

Ingenuity in Survival

Randy leads by drawing on the talents and skills of others. He recognizes their talents and skills and accepts ideas and initiative unlike Edgar. Bank tellers suggest limiting withdrawals but Edgar refuses to listen. When no limits cause a run on the bank, Edgar refuses any more withdrawals. Cash hoarding causes the bank to close in the morning but by afternoon cash abounds in Fort Repose from panic purchases and no bank to put cash in. Residents trade, making goods more valuable than paper money and Marines



Park becomes a natural place for traders to meet. Before The Day, Alice is a lonely librarian since few patrons read with other things to do. After The Day her library is the most popular spot in town. Since there is no Western Union service, Florence lets Alice ride their bicycle to the library every day. When the power plant explodes there is no power to pump water so Randy and the Henrys reroute well water to the Bragg's, Florence's and Sam's houses.

The Bragg enclave on River Road organizes into an interdependent ecological system for survival. Preacher Henry's ancestors arrive with the Braggs and are originally slaves that tend domestic needs. The Henrys fish, raise chickens and pigs, and grow yams and corn among other crops. Hens lay eggs and pigs provide pork. In return the households' table scraps feed pigs and chickens. Bill knows tool design and sets up a battery recharging system to keep Sam's shortwave radio working. Dan drives the Model-A since it's the most economical way to run his medical rounds and keep Sam's batteries charged. Bill and Randy donate their cars to use as parts in a still for Two-Tone and Malachai to make corn whiskey. Randy's alcohol for antiseptic and anesthetic is long gone. Raw corn whiskey works for antiseptic and Alice brings home hypnosis books for Dan to use as anesthetic.

Peyton helps Ben research and plan an armadillo hunt but he won't let her hunt at night because she's a girl. Peyton decides to find something she can do to make a contribution too. The fish don't bite so Peyton asks Preacher why not because no one else asks him since he's old. She takes Florence's goldfish for bait and uses Randy's boat to get four big black bass. Sam's reinvented sailboats sail for salt and crab. The decontamination plane drops more leaflets than useful for toilet paper, so the residents use the excess as paper money.

Style

Point of View

Pat Frank's *Alas, Babylon* is written in third person as an omniscient neutral narrator of events and occurrences that lead up to and from a worldwide nuclear attack. Characters reveal their true natures and tendencies through actions and conversations they have with one another. The author does not offer sympathetic commentary on the characters but the consequences of their actions reveals their natures. For example, theft, greed and hoarding of jewelry by some residents is not discussed or sanctioned by the author as a moral issue but consequences of radiation poisoning from the stolen jewelry are a skin-blackening and debilitating sickness leading to death. The rural environment where Randy and River Road neighbors live is safer and more amenable to survival than Fort Repose and its residents. The broader civilization of the United States and other governments is presented as an uncontrollable source of destruction compared to the ability of a small civilization to form an effective interdependent community of individuals.

Setting

Written and published in 1959, *Alas, Babylon* describes survival and reestablishment of civil order after the impact of nuclear war on a small rural Florida community. Fort Repose is the geographical setting where events from the Mediterranean to Miami and from Washington D.C. to Omaha have an impact. Sam Hazzard's shortwave radio is a window from the once civilized world. The Bragg and Henry ancestors that settle Fort Repose a century earlier impact current time through the history and daily logs read by its residents. The setting is impacted by geographic and temporal events from local, regional, state, national and global environs far beyond the ability of current residents to control.

The focal point of the local setting is the old Bragg house on River Road that Randy lives in and modifies to fit his bachelor lifestyle. The Bragg house is a hub and its captain's walk an observation point from and to which events and characters emanate and relate. In the immediate neighborhood settings include Florence's house with her pets, groves, Henry's home site and Sam Hazzard's den. Down the road is the McGovern house designed by Lavinia in a Midwest style. Towards town is Bill Cullen's bar and fish camp. In town there are Ajax Super-Market, First National Bank, Western Union, the Library, Marine's Park, Medical Building and the Riverside Hotel that burns down. Fort Repose's outskirts border Pistolville's poor, black and rich sections with Pete and Rita Hernandez' house and Pork Logan's house and bed in which he's found dead.

Settings beyond Fort Repose and environs include McCoy Air Force Base near Orlando where Randy talks with Paul Hart and makes arrangements with Mark who is in transit back home. In the Omaha airport, Mark and his family say goodbye. Mark tidies up their



home and children's bedrooms before reporting to the Hole with War and Control Rooms at Offutt field. Some settings are vehicles in which the characters travel. Randy and Mark talk confidentially in the Bonneville that he drives in and around Fort Repose and to Orlando. Peewee reveals his motivation in the cockpit of a fighter jet he flies over the Mediterranean. Mizzoo rides in the Model-A Malachai maintains and Dan drives rounds and to town with Randy in it. The Ajax truck is a safe decoy to attack highwaymen from. Sam captains sailboats on the Blue Crab Run and Hart arrives in a helicopter to offer rescue.

Language and Meaning

The author is masterful in his use of language and words to develop a lighthearted side to the story. If the subject of nuclear devastation were not so tragic, his treatment could be comic. For example, General Hawker orders retaliation since he is obviously a war hawk ready, willing and just waiting to fight. Ironically, one of his own called Peewee fires first to prove he's bigger than his nickname. The Bragg family history gives them reason to brag and Randy is a womanizer. Mark works at Offutt Field where he and Ace help Hawker hit the targets they've marked. Marcus Bragg is the son-in-law of Lieutenant Peyton and Peyton is Colonel Mark Bragg's daughter and sister of his son Ben Franklin. Mark sends them to Fort Repose which is a place of calm and rest and Colonel Hart has the heart to offer rescue when it's over. Lib liberates herself from jealousy of Rita and Helen but can't liberate Peyton from her protective brother Ben or herself from Randy's refusal to let her drive the Ajax truck even though it's her idea. Sam Hazzard gives Randy a cue to be safe on their hazardous walk home in the dark past Ben who is told to shoot at sounds sight unseen. Pork Logan is piggish when he steals from the abandoned Miami jewelry store and exemplifies greed at death with his arms buried in the hot loot between his legs.

Structure

Alas, Babylon is comprised of thirteen chapters. Each chapter focuses on an event or series of events that lead up to or follow The Day. Each chapter's subsections describe events that may occur far from Fort Repose but affect conditions there. For example, chapter four has consecutive subsections that describe Helen and Mark saying goodbye at the Omaha airport, Randy waking in Fort Repose to get gas and oil, Peewee flying and firing a rocket over the Mediterranean and Bill McGovern patronizing Randy about Mark's message. Descriptive subsections continue through the chapter to its end with General Hawker ordering a retaliatory strike at dawn that segues to the next chapter. Randy wakes at dawn in chapter five to the rumbling of nuclear explosions in Florida that bring the disparate environments and experiences back together.

The first four chapters lead up to and prepare scene, setting and characters for events to come. Randy, the River Road neighborhood and history of the Braggs, Henrys and Fort Repose are presented before the telegram arrives. Randy meets Mark at McCoy



where the message is explained and they plan Helen and the children's arrival. Randy stocks up on cash, groceries and liquor from Fort Repose merchants. While Helen flies to Florida in the fourth chapter Peewee drops the Sidewinder that fulfills Mark's fears. The fifth chapter opens to the dawn of the bomb. The sixth chapter describes The Day and how residents begin to feel its consequences. By the seventh chapter, Randy and the River Road enclave face the challenges of survival without power and in primitive conditions. The eighth chapter describes conditions four months later when rudimentary survival systems operate but radiation poisoning appears. The last five chapters begin the return to civilization. Violence occurs in the ninth chapter with Dan's attack and civil order is re-established in the tenth and eleventh chapters. By the next chapter goods are acquired from beyond Fort Repose and in the thirteenth chapter a return to external civilization is possible via Colonel Hart.



Quotes

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"Urgent you meet me at Base Ops McCoy noon today. Helen and children flying to Orlando tonight. Alas Babylon." Chapter 1, p. 13.

"Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour is thy judgment come." Chapter 2, p. 25.

"Sure. Time-on-target. You don't fire everything at the same instant. You shoot it so it all arrives on target at the same instant." Chapter 2, p. 32.

"Peewee may be a mouse aboard ship, but he's a tiger in a Tiger. If I sent him up with orders to shoot down the moon, he'd try." Chapter 4, p. 69.

"So here comes our local Paul Revere,' he greeted Randy. 'What are you trying to do, frighten my wife and daughter to death?'" Chapter 4, p. 74.

"Ben Franklin, staring to the south, said, 'I don't see any mushroom cloud. Don't they always have a mushroom cloud?'" Chapter 5, p. 92.

"Edgar hesitated. To refuse to cash government savings bonds was fiduciary sacrilege so awful that the possibility never before had entered his head. Yet here he was, faced with it. 'No,' he decided, 'we don't cash any bonds. Tell those individuals that we won't cash any bonds until we find out where the government stands, or if.'" Chapter 5, p. 115.

"As Chief Executive of the United States, and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, I hereby declare a state of unlimited national emergency until such time as new elections are held, and Congress reconvenes." Chapter 6, p. 126.

"Who's winning? Nobody's winning. Cities are dying and ships are sinking and aircraft is going in, but nobody's winning." Chapter 6, p. 141.

"In four months,' Randy said, 'we've regressed four thousand years. More, maybe. Four thousand years ago the Egyptians and Chinese were more civilized than Pistolville is right now. Not only Pistolville. Think what must be going on in those parts of the country where they don't even have fruit and pecans and catfish.'" Chapter 8, p. 197.

"I think most of us sensed this truth, but we could not accept it. You see, no matter how well we understood the truth it was necessary that the Kremlin understand it too. It takes two to make a peace but only one to make a war. So all we could do, while vowing not to strike first, was line up our lead soldiers." Chapter 9, p. 231.

"It was a wolf,' Randy said. 'It wasn't a dog any longer. In times like these dogs can turn into wolves. You did just right, Ben. Here, take back your gun.'" Chapter 9, p. 239.



"No. A company under martial law. So far as I know I'm the only active Army Reserve officer in town so I guess it's up to me." Chapter 10, p. 250.

"The end of the corn and exhaustion of the citrus crop had been inevitable. Armadillos in the yams was bad luck, but bearable. But without fish and salt their survival was in doubt." Chapter 12, p. 284.

"Ben Franklin was credited with discovering a new source of food, and was a hero. Peyton was only a girl, fit for sewing, pot washing, and making beds." Chapter 12, p. 290.

"It was proof that the government of the United States still functioned. It was also useful as toilet paper. Next day, ten leaflets would buy an egg, and fifty a chicken. It was paper, and it was money." Chapter 13, p. 303.

"We won it. We really clobbered 'em!" Hart's eyes lowered and his arms drooped. He said, 'Not that it matters.'" Chapter 13, p. 312.



Topics for Discussion

Compare and contrast the Bragg family and the Henry family from their origin in the early 1800s through their experiences with each other a century later in Fort Repose.

Compare and contrast the two Bragg women Helen and Lib and how they each relate to one another and to Randy.

Discuss how the residents of Fort Repose deal with integration and segregation to the extent possible up to, during and after the nuclear crises.

Discuss why Edgar Quisenberry committed suicide when the financial structure of Fort Repose collapsed.

What is the symbolic value of the leaflets dropped by the airplanes being used as paper money?

Discuss what the residents of Fort Repose did to maintain or reorganize institutions, i.e. schools, markets, police authority, etc. from before the crisis.

Explain why none of the Bragg group was interested in accepting Paul Hart's offer to leave Fort Repose.