

# **The Kill Order Study Guide**

## **The Kill Order by James Dashner**

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# Plot Summary

"The Kill Order" is a young adult novel by James Dashner, which focuses around a group of individuals struggling to survive in the year after the Earth is ravaged by sun flares, all the while attempting to avert becoming victims of a deadly virus that is ravaging the eastern United States.

When the novel begins, the teenaged Mark, his girlfriend Trina, their friends Toad, Misty, and Darnell, together with army veterans Alec and Lana, have formed something of a makeshift family. They are encamped in the Appalachian Mountains in western North Carolina, living in a village of huts and crude shelters. For the first time in a year, things seem settled. One day, Mark and Trina are shocked to discover that a Berg, an airship, comes to the village, and men in hazardous material suits begin shooting the villagers with darts. Mark and Alec gain entry to the Berg, only to discover the darts are full of a dangerous virus, which comes to be known as the Flare. It drives people insane, ultimately killing them.

Mark and Alec return to the village to discover that Darnell has come down with the virus. Eventually, he dies. Misty later contracts the virus and dies, as does Toad. Mark, Alec, Trina, and Lana decide to head to the Berg's headquarters, seeking a cure. They trek through the woods, encountering a little girl named Deedee who is unaffected by the virus, as well as the members of her village who have been ravaged and rendered insane by the virus. Mark and Alec are separated from Lana, Trina, and Deedee by a fire caused by the insane people. They are captured by people at the Berg's headquarters. Mark and Alec infiltrate the base to rescue them, and they discover three things. First, the city of Asheville has turned its back on the Berg base; second, the virus is being spread deliberately to wipe out half the world's population to conserve resources; and third, Asheville has a Flat Trans, a transportation device linked to Alaska, where the PFC, the Post-Flare Coalition international government, is based. Orders have been issued to unleash the virus. The Berg base negotiates with the crazed locals, giving them Trina, Deedee, and Lana as ransom for time to attack Asheville. Mark and Alec rescue Trina, and Deedee. Alec puts Lana, who is near death, out of her misery.

Then, they fly a stolen Berg to Asheville, where Mark sends Deedee through the Flat Trans with a note saying she is immune to the virus, and she is somehow the cure as well. Meanwhile, the Berg base's operatives storm Asheville with an army of the infected, crazy people. Mark, Alec, and Trina have all come down with the virus. As Trina and Mark embrace, Alec crashes the Berg into the PFC building that houses the Flat Trans.



# Prologue - Chapter 14

## Summary

### Prologue

Set thirteen years before the events of the novel, the prologue opens with the Swipe implanting Thomas, while his best friend, Teresa, looks on. She knows that he will no longer be the same, and telepathic communication will be impossible. Thomas already wears the uniform of the Glade, and Teresa longs for a time before children were stolen and sent to the Maze, before when human brains were known as kill zones. Supposedly, it is all in the name of science. WICKED is determined to find the cure for the plague that affects millions, and if children die because of that research, it is all in a day's work. Others, including Alby, Newt, and Minho had already been implanted.

Teresa realizes she has no choice, that WICKED has no choice. Indeed, Thomas and Teresa had helped construct the Maze. After Thomas is implanted, he is taken down to the Maze.

### Chapter 1

Thirteen years earlier, Mark wakes up in his hut to discover he is a little chilly. Considering the world has become so hot, he finds this a good thing. On the other side of the hut, Alec, a former soldier and Defense Department contractor before the sun flares, snores. Alec is gruff but has a heart of gold. Also sleeping in the room are a few others, including Trina and Lana. They have come to the Appalachian Mountains in the western part of North Carolina, near Asheville, having survived a year of horrors and bloodshed.

Mark finds Trina by the stream, where she enjoys reading. Trina loves to read. But, without digital technology, she can only read old-fashioned printed books. She devours them whenever she can find them. Mark and the others live in a community of log and mud huts, tree houses and underground dwellings. The people living there in the mountainous woods are often dirty and thin, for food is strictly rationed. Mark finds Trina reading near a boulder. He believes she is pretty. He sits down beside her, and they hug. Mark decides it is going to be a perfect day.

### Chapter 2

Trina tells Mark she hasn't had a perfect day since she turned sixteen. Mark remembers how, at her birthday party, he was invisible to her, while she liked a boy named John Stidham. They agree to change the subject, but Mark feels his perfect day vanishing as dark memories cloud his mind. Trina takes Mark's hand, and Mark says that he wishes he could just forget everything bad because things are getting better. Trina says it will happen. They decide to head back down to the village, where they expect to find that Alec and Lana will have chores for them.



Back at the Central Shack, Lana, who had served in the military and as an assistant to Alec in contracting, demands to know where Mark and Trina have been. Mark recalls meeting Alec and Lana in New York City. Lana tells Mark and Trina to hurry up and get breakfast because they will be headed out to scout for a new branch location. The village is becoming overcrowded. Coming along with them will be Darnell, the Toad, and Misty, whom Alec refers to as the Three Stooges, friends made in the tunnels of New York. Darnell, wearing a pair of the Toad's underwear on his head, gets everyone to laugh, but the laughter is cut off by the sound of engines in the sky.

### Chapter 3

Above them outside, Mark, Trina, Alec, Lana, and the others see a Berg, an airship unseen since the sun flares. Bergs bring supplies to larger settlements, so it perplexes everyone why the airship is over their muddy little village. Bergs bring supplies to Asheville, and then share them with outlying settlements. That it lands outside the village adds to the mystery. Alec has heard that supply Bergs have PFC painted on them, for Post-Flares Coalition. But the current Berg has no markings of any kind. A crowd gathers, and the Berg opens up.

Five people leave the Berg, in body suits and helmets with visors. They carry black tubes which look like guns. They fire darts at the people around them, hitting many, including Darnell. Mark and the others run.

### Chapter 4

Screams fill the air, and Mark and the others drag Darnell's body along. People fall to the ground, hit by darts, left and right. They make it to the Shack with Lana, where Marc is waiting with grappling hooks. Mark picks up a piece of wood to use as a shield as he heads out to help Alec do whatever must be done.

### Chapter 5

The action and fury in Alec's face makes him look twenty years younger. Mark is given a gun by Alec, with orders to cover him. The Berg, hovering over the city, draws Mark's fire, causing three of the attackers to seek cover. Mark carefully aims and hits one of the attackers in the head, and his body tumbles from the Berg. Alec, meanwhile, fires a grappling hook to the Berg, takes the gun from Mark, and is propelled up to the Berg. Alec throws another attacker off the Berg. Alec then orders Mark to fire the other grappling hook, which he does. But as he does this, the Berg begins to take off higher into the sky.

### Chapter 6

Alec urges Mark to push the green button on the grappling hook cannon, which will pull him forward. Mark does so. He and Alec then scramble inside the Berg as the door closes. Alec figures that the guys sent in to do whatever job needed to be done were not professionals, but Mark isn't so sure. They begin to move through the Berg. Mark and Alec wonder why their village would be attacked with darts. They come to a sealed door,



and search for a way to open it. Alec begins to attempt to open the door with a sledgehammer. Meanwhile, Mark finds boxes full of darts. There are biohazard symbols on the boxes for Virus VC321xb47, Highly Contagious, 24 Darts, and Extreme Caution. Mark feels as if he shouldn't have even touched the boxes.

#### Chapter 7

Mark shows Alec the boxes. Alec tells Mark to calm down for the time being, and Mark retrieves a large wrench to use as a weapon as Alec breaks through the door. On the other side, a dart gun is on the ground, having been thrown down in panic. They rush to the cockpit of the Berg, weapons in hand, where a female pilot controls the Berg, and another male pilot attempts to fight Alec, but is apprehended. Alex demands to know what is going on. The man he holds tells Alec that they have been sent to do the dirty work. Alec demands to know who, but the man won't tell him. He demands the Berg be put down, and the man tells the female pilot to do so. It happens so fast that something hits Mark in the head after the sound of an explosion, knocking him out.

#### Chapter 8

Mark dreams about knowing Trina long before the sun flares. He remembers how desperately he wanted Trina to notice him. While traveling on the subtrans bullet in the New York tunnels, the subtrans bullet loses power and stops. Mark notices his palm phone has also lost service. Two men open the doors on the subtrans, and all the people exit, walking along the sidewalk in the tunnel. Mark imagines that perhaps a small earthquake has caused a loss of power. After walking for about ten minutes, they hear screams up ahead, as though something terrible has happened. They come to a substation, where bodies litter the floor, burned, broken, and bleeding. Immense heat has also taken hold, and Mark can see people on fire.

#### Chapter 9

Mark comes to as Alec yells at him to wake up. They are surrounded by trees, and Alec reveals that the Berg has crashed. He reveals as well that he has been searching the record, and vows to find out who those people were, and what they were attempting to do. Half an hour later, Mark is feeling better, and helps Alex search the Berg wreckage. He finds a work pad, fully functioning, and turns it off to conserve power. Alec and Mark study it outside. It is full of games, books, and old news programs from before the sun flares. They find, however, a link to a tracer on the Berg, which reveals all the flights taken from home base, probably using an old-school radar system. The base of origin, Alec estimates, can't be more than fifty or sixty miles away. Despite the dangers of the virus spread by the darts, Alex and Mark know they must head back to the village to see how things have turned out.

#### Chapter 10

Alec and Mark uses strips of fabric from their shirts to wear around their mouths and noses. Alec tells Mark that their number one priority must be saving as many people as possible, and that their emotions cannot get in the way. They will have to be strong and



tough. They discover dead bodies piled up in an old shack, about twenty or so. Most have bloodied faces. No one is out on the streets. People look through windows, but no one is outside. Alec finally yells for some information. A muffled voice responds that those hit with the darts died, and those that helped them died a day later. Trina comes sprinting toward them, but Alex stops her, telling her they can't be too careful, and not to hug, yet. Trina says she has something to show them. Someone has been imprisoned.

#### Chapter 11

The imprisoned person is screaming. It is Darnell. Unlike the others, he hasn't died. Lana has had Darnell walled up for his own safety, for the safety of others. Darnell shouts over and over again about his head. He screams and pays no attention to Mark's attempts to comfort him verbally, bashing his head against the door over and over and over until he kills himself.

#### Chapter 12

Trina is horrified. She is so sad because she, and the others, had finally found a place to call home, to laugh again, all to be targeted by a group of people spreading a virus. Mark consoles Trina, rubbing her back. Mark promises her that they will stick together, and will survive. Trina tells Mark to get back, and tells him that, even though she doesn't think she is sick, they all have to be careful. They need new masks, and to wash their hands and faces vigorously. Alec tells Trina to bring them to the others, and Trina does so. They collect Misty and Toad as they travel along through the village, as well as Lana. Lana explains that most who contracted the virus, except Darnell, were dead within twelve hours. Symptoms appear within two to three hours, so Lana believes she and the others are not infected. They head to the Shack, pack food and supplies, making care to wash their hands repeatedly, and keep their distance. As they finish packing, Misty falls forward onto a table, declaring that her head hurts.

#### Chapter 13

Lana orders everyone out of the Shack. Misty collapses on the ground as the others leave the Shack. But Toad stays. Misty tells Toad to leave, but Toad tells Mark they can't keep abandoning people. Toad reluctantly heads outside. They wait an hour. They check on Misty, to see she is lying still on the floor. Lana tells the others they need to readjust their outlook: the virus doesn't necessarily take effect right away. They decide to march to the place on the work pad map right away. Alec believes there may even be medicine in this place to cure whatever virus is spreading. They speak to Misty, who says it feels like bugs are eating away at her brain. She tells them to leave. Alec compels the others to move and head out. But Toad says he is not going. Lana finally relents after trying to talk Toad out of staying, telling him to catch up with them if he changes his mind. As they leave, Mark thinks he hears Misty singing, and if so, she has snapped.

#### Chapter 14



The group moves out, but they only make three miles before dark. They make camp and eat a meal of packaged food from the Asheville factories. Alec has made a map using pencil and paper of the map on the work pad, and is now studying it for other clues.

Mark dreams about things in New York City after they have happened. He remembers fleeing with Trina through the tunnels of New York. He dreams of remembering someone chasing them. Mark uses his cell phone for light. Trina pulls Mark into a small room, used in the days of the subway. They are chased by tunnel dwellers, who catch up, and ask what is going on up in the world. The man eyes Trina up and down, but Mark is protective of her. Mark is now surrounded by others. Suddenly, the subway dwellers are beaten up and thrown aside by another man who introduces himself as Alec.

## Analysis

James Dashner's young adult novel "The Kill Order" begins with action, mystery, and terror, serving as a prequel to his acclaimed and bestselling Maze Runner series. The novel begins with characters from the Maze Runner, Teresa and Thomas, and then jumps back to a time thirteen years before. In that time, Mark, Alec, Lana, Trina, Toad, Misty, and Darnell appear to have reached a point where the horrific events of the past year following the sun flares is finally behind them. Despite this, Mark and Trina -especially Mark -have nightmares about the past. It is through Mark's nightmares about the past that the reader learns about all of the events that lead them up to their present point in time, just as the entire novel itself serves as a lead-up to the Maze Runner series.

The first twelve chapters of the novel mainly focus around the efforts of Mark, Alec, Trina, and Lana to put distance between themselves and the virus, even though they figure they probably all have it. They decide that there must be some form of antidote because it wouldn't make sense to create a virus without an antidote. So they head to the Berg's headquarters, seeking such a cure. As they leave the village, the virus claims the lives of Darnell, and then later, Misty. Toad insists on staying behind.

## Discussion Question 1

Mark and the others have no idea why anyone would be injecting people with a deadly virus. Why do you think people are spreading a virus? Are there any clues so far as to why?

## Discussion Question 2

Mark and Trina have survived a lot with the assistance of Alec and Lana. Do you believe that Mark and Trina could have survived at all without the assistance of Alec and Lana? Why or why not?





## Discussion Question 3

Why does the group decide to seek out the location of the Berg headquarters? Do you believe there is any truth to this theory? Why or why not?

## Vocabulary

Contemplation, disorientation, indecipherable, projectiles, suffused, gargantuan, distraught, haphazard, vigilant, quarantining.



# Chapters 15 - 28

## Summary

### Chapter 15

Mark reflects on the friendship he and Alex have, having saved one another's lives on multiple occasions. Alec, leading the way with a map and a compass, brings the group along. During an afternoon break, Mark and Trina slip off to use the bathroom, but end up kissing. They hold hands as they head back to the others, and then separate. During the night, Trina cuddles with Mark, who looks up at the stars and remembers how his mother taught him about the constellations when he was younger. He in turn told his younger sister, Madison. Suddenly, Mark hears a twig snap, and then looks up to see Toad near camp. Mark asks Toad if he is alright, but the Toad tells him that things are living inside his head.

### Chapter 16

Mark scrambles to his feet, wakes Trina, and pulls her back. He shouts for Alec and Lana to wake up. Lana questions Toad about Misty, but Toad wants help getting the things out of his head. Lana takes control of the situation, for she had been a nurse in the military. Lana asks Toad questions about what happened. Toad reveals he held Misty and kissed her head and watched her die, after which the bugs crawled from her and into Toad's head. Toad then says that "we" put her out of her misery. Lana asks for clarification. Toad begins to scream. Alec grabs Toad by the shirt, drags him off into the woods out of sight, and then Toad's screaming stops. Alec comes back, says he couldn't risk Toad doing something crazy, and then goes to the stream to wash himself off. Mark believes he hears Alex sniffle sadly.

### Chapter 17

Mark reflects on Trina, finding her braver, stronger, and tougher than himself. The next morning at breakfast, Lana announces that she believes there is something wrong with the virus in the darts. Those hit with the darts were infected immediately; others that helped them died later on; still, others like Misty took days to show symptoms. Lana believes the virus is mutating and adapting, affecting people differently, which means that it is spreading more rapidly. Trina believes it has something to do with the heads of the victims. The group then decides to head out.

In the middle of the afternoon, they see another settlement, but Alec encourages them to move on, saying that they know nothing about the people who live there. They ultimately decide to head toward the village, then smell rotting flesh and see bodies on the ground. As they turn to leave, they see a little girl of five or six years in age. The girl tells the group that everyone has run off into the woods.

### Chapter 18



Trina, against Alec's advice, approaches the little girl, who says her name is Deedee. She says her parents are dead, and her brother, Ricky, is in the woods. She says that lots of people were hit with arrows from the sky. The other villagers have left the girl to die. Alec consents to the little girl coming with them, figuring that they are probably all infected by that point. The girl comes along, never complaining about the brisk pace they keep up. Mark is charmed by how well Trina takes care of Deedee.

#### Chapter 19

Mark recalls how easily Alex had taken out the three would-be attackers arrayed against him and Trina. Mark also likes that Alec is a soldier. Alec reveals the disaster to be sun flares. Sun flares, Alec reveals, mean radiation and extreme heat. Alec also reveals that both Mark and Trina fill out the group that he has formed, and they need to leave the subways before water fills them up as the polar ice caps rapidly melt.

#### Chapter 20

Alec, Mark, Trina, and their group head for the Lincoln Building, which had been one of the newest, tallest, and grandest buildings in the City. Alec introduces the group to Alec and Trina, including Lana, with whom Alec has worked for twelve years; Misty, about eighteen; a short, muscular guy whom Misty refers to as the Toad; Darnell; and a thirteen year-old kid named Baxter. They come to a newer section of the tunnels, and Alec warns them that there might be other people who can be panicked and angry if they know the world is ending. In the new tunnel, the air is overwhelmingly hot. Innumerable people, half of them wounded, are arrayed around. A fight ensues between the group and the others. But suddenly, a wall of water pours down the steps to the outside world.

#### Chapter 21

Mark wakes up, the nightmare plaguing him. Trina asks him what's wrong. Mark admits he has had a bad dream about the past. The group moves out. In the afternoon, they stop for granola bars and water from a steam. As they sit and eat, Alec speaks while chewing his food, and Trina tells him he can talk before he takes a bite, which causes Alec –and the others –to laugh.

#### Chapter 22

They come to an area of the mountains scorched by the sun flares, and Alec examines his map, the workpad, and the compass. Marc calculates that they can't be more than five miles from the base. Later on, they hear some singing, and Alec decides to go and check it out. Mark goes along. As they leave, Deedee tells them to watch out for the ugly man with no ears.

#### Chapter 23

Mark and Alec approach a dark part of the woods where they find a large fire, and five or six people dancing around it, singing. About a dozen others are looking on and



singing. But the people see Mark and Alec, and invite them to participate. Alex declines, and someone else tells them to join in. Mark then asks why they left Deedee behind, only to have the woman order that Alec and Mark be seized. They are then dragged toward the fire.

#### Chapter 24

Mark is punched in the face to be subdued, and Alec is choked with a rope to be subdued. Mark tells the people around him that they only wanted to see what was going on. He also asks why Deedee was left behind. Alec, still struggling, finally stops as Mark tells him to stop, or that he'll be killed. The woman tells Mark that they left their village to seek holier places following the rain of demons from the sky, and that the spirits speak, and she and the others follow their orders. The woman says that Deedee is evil, and has brought the evil on them all. Mark tries to reason with the woman and the others, but she will not reason. As the others commence to beating Mark and Alec, another man orders that it be stopped. He is hideously scarred, and has no hair and no ears.

#### Chapter 25

The man introduces himself as Jedediah, but his friends call him Jed. Mark and Alec are now his friends, he says. He reveals his appearance is due to the celestial events, the sun flares. Jed declares the sun flares to be demons. He also reveals it has been two months since his old village was attacked. Jed says it hurts his head when people disagree with him. His head begins to hurt even more, and he believes that Alec and Mark must be from the demons. Mark says they are not, and Jed reveals since the plague began, it has taken longer for waves of people to die –two days, five days, two weeks, a month, and others from the village are now seeking to attack them. Suddenly, in the woods around them, an unknown number of people begin making sounds, animal calls, and screaming. Jed suddenly lurches forward, declaring he has been killed. He is then still, and blood seeps from his mouth and nose.

#### Chapter 26

Their captors are caught off guard by the sounds, and Alec takes his chance. He and Mark loosen their nooses. As they sprint away, the woman asks how Alec and Mark could have brought their enemies to them, how they could have betrayed them so. The woman begs them to take her with them, but the surrounding people attack those around the fire, and a massive fight ensues, during which time people catch on fire, and run into the woods. They fight off attackers, but then notice the woods between them and their own camp is on fire.

#### Chapter 27

The fire around them spreads quickly, and Mark and Alec race against the spread of the flames. They run along the edge of the fire, so they know where they are. Alec leads the way, using his compass. Yet as they finally make it back to their campsite, they find it abandoned.



## Chapter 28

Mark is panicked, but Alec is very calm. He tells Mark that they probably left camp of their own freewill, not waiting around while screams, animal calls, and a fire took up in the woods. Even if they were taken prisoner, Alec says they will get them back. Mark is terrified, believing he has lost Trina. Mark finally calms down, and says he believes that Lana, Trina, and Deedee headed toward the base, away from the fire. They find a trail of broken bushes, as well as footprints about Deedee's size, only to discover the leaves on the bushes have blood sprayed on them.

## Analysis

Mark, Alec, Trina, and Lana discover a young girl named Deedee who has been left behind by her village to die among the bodies there. Surprisingly, though, she does not appear to be affected in the least by the virus, though the group learns that the virus affects different people at different times and in different ways. The virus, it appears, is weakening, but the number of people dying is not decreasing. A run-in with people from Deedee's village ultimately means that Mark and Alec are cut off from them, and Alec believes that the women have left of their own freewill, having seen the towering inferno.

The mystery of the virus is deepening. Jed and the others from Deedee's village have gone absolutely insane, forming something of a cult which plagues the woodland region around the Berg airbase. They are now at war with other members of their village, and the virus is continuing to spread, drawing more and more people into the psychotic world that has emerged. And it is into this psychotic world that Mark fears Trina, along with Deedee and Lana, have disappeared.

## Discussion Question 1

What does Jed have to tell Mark and Alec about the virus/demon flares? How do Mark and Alec use this information? What does this say about the creators of the virus, if anything?

## Discussion Question 2

Given the rapid spread and evolution of the virus, do you believe there is an antidote? Or, do you believe the virus was intentionally created without an antidote? Explain.

## Discussion Question 3

When Mark and Alec return to their camp, they find Trina, Lana, and Deedee gone. Alec believes they have gone of their own freewill. Why? What clues are there to indicate this? Do you agree? Why or why not?

## Vocabulary

Artificial, gaunt, enigma, lucid, escalated, exponentially, isolation, doldrums, ominous, incredulous, monotone, unintelligible, celestial, lunacy, gait, torrential.



# Chapters 29 - 42

## Summary

### Chapter 29

Mark forces himself to remain calm. Alec tells him the blood could be from a wound that is not bad. Alec is able to deduce that the three of them were being chased and Deedee's footprints disappeared, meaning she was carried. They follow the path to a canyon, which Alec reveals to be the landing area for the Berg. Alec believes the canyon houses an old government bunker, because they are so close to Asheville. They move on carefully and see an area where a struggle has taken place, crushing many of the bushes. Suddenly, there are loud, metallic bangs, and the ground on which they stand lifts toward the sky.

### Chapter 30

Mark and Alec have no idea about what is going on. Then, they realize that only the area they stand on is lifting to the sky. It is a man-made structure, swinging on a pivot. They jump off before it gets any higher. They realize that Bergs take off and land from beneath the shifting ground, and the ground is covered with fake plants and shrubs. They creep over to the edge and see a metallic walkway beneath them. They decide to descend. Alec goes down first. Above, a Berg comes in for a landing, and Mark falls on top of Alec.

### Chapter 31

When the landing above them shuts, Mark and Alec are in total darkness. They use the workpad light to see around them. They can see cavernous spaces where the Bergs are pulled off the landing pad. They both hear humming sounds, perhaps from generators, knowing that the base has to have fuel, probably brought in from elsewhere, to keep things operating. They head off the walkway, and as they go along, they hear voices speaking about an entire burned out area, probably having to do with the people caught the previous night. They also talk about how things are more difficult since losing their other Berg, and that the others in Alaska haven't been communicating since everything has gone weird. One of the individuals says one last thing to the other before going through the door. He reveals that people are calling what has happened, "The Flare."

### Chapter 32

Mark and Alec believe the "Flare" is the virus. Mark and Alec decide they have two objectives. The first is to find Trina, Lana, and Deedee; and, the second is to find out what is going on. They go sneaking around and discover that there are generators powering the place. They move through the generator room, where they find other doors. One door is revealed to have a row of bunks behind it. What seems to be an old man is crouched on one of the bunks. The old man mumbles, and Alec and Mark get



closer and ask for clarification. The old man says he didn't want to give "her" away to the savages.

### Chapter 33

Mark begins asking the old man many questions, including why the lights are all off. When the old man does not reply, Mark introduces himself and Alec, telling the old man that they can trust them. The old man introduces himself as Anton. He explains that they had chosen a test settlement two months before, and even with disastrous results, the overall plan wasn't changed in the end. But the survival of the lone girl made him realize how horrible what they'd done had been. When they were forced to give the girl back to her people, he was officially done. Mark believes it has to be Deedee.

Anton goes on to state that the Post-Flares Coalition in Alaska wanted a virus that spread and killed fast, something old-fashioned. They wanted something brought back into existence, before the sun flares had burned it all up—a virus that shuts down the mind. It would cause instant comas and hemorrhaging. Transmission would be by blood and by air, when conditions were right. Anton reveals that the PFC is trying to wipe out half the population of the entire world to conserve resources. Anton also reveals the PFC would bring them back to Alaska, for homes and protection once the deed was done. Anton also believes that even he and his coworkers have been infected. He has come up to the upper levels to die or go crazy.

Anton also reveals that they are planning a revolt in Asheville, to take it all the way to Alaska, because Asheville is the last safe haven on the East Coast. They will raise an army to invade Alaska to seek a cure for the virus, but Anton believes such an antidote is a myth. Anton says that his coworkers will then go through the Flat Trans to Alaska, seeking the antidote, but all they will do is spread the virus. Anton then collapses on his cot, and his snoring fills up the room.

### Chapter 34

Mark and Alec don't speak for a few minutes. While Alec doesn't trust much of what Anton has said, he is deeply troubled, as is Mark. Alec locks the door and instructs Mark that they need to sleep, just an hour or so.

### Chapter 35

Mark dreams memories once more. The water is flooding the subway station, and Mark, Alec, Trina, and the others sprint away. The tunnel begins filling with hot water, and Alex points out a set of narrow steps with iron railings. They head for it. They struggle to get Baxter out of the current, working together to form a human chain. They successfully pull in Baxter, and go through the door at the top of the steps.

### Chapter 36

Mark wakes up to discover both Anton and Alex asleep. Mark decides to let Alec sleep, figuring that he will need all the sleep he can get. He remembers escaping the waters





into the Lincoln Building, and spending the next few months inside. Alec awakes a moment later, and curses himself for falling asleep. Mark and Alec decide to go down further into the base, to where Anton's coworkers are. They travel down a flight of steps to discover voices and a room with its doors propped open. There is a meeting going on. Mark creeps forward and peers in, then tells Alec there are about forty or fifty people inside, all up at the front of the room. Mark and Alec decide to sneak in. A man named Stanley has a man named Bruce take over the meeting. Bruce says they need to get moving quickly before they all lose their minds.

#### Chapter 37

Bruce addresses those before him. He states that the PFC has created a monstrous world, that Alaska, and even Asheville, have turned their backs on those on the outside, including those in the underground base. Bruce talks about how the PFC sent them to take part in the worst civil rights fiasco since the War of 2020. He says the PFC claimed it was to protect and rebuild what was left of the planet. Having done the dirty work, the underground base and its workers have now been cut off. Bruce announces that they have been negotiating with the sane members of the tribal cult that has organized on the outside world, and that exchanging the little girl and two women for time to make plans was harsh but necessary. Bruce intends that they will march on Asheville by foot, since a rainstorm has put out the fires and the cult people have scattered for the time being. Asheville has even erected walls to keep others out. Bruce declares that they will fight to keep themselves alive. Bruce then directs the people in the room to bound and gag the two spies in the back.

#### Chapter 38

Alec and Mark spring out of the room, chased closely by the people behind them. They charge up three levels of the base, and then head off in what they hope is the right direction. But suddenly, all the shouting below them stops. Mark wonders what is going on. But then they are surprised by a woman with a flashlight meets them.

#### Chapter 39

Bruce's minions attack Mark and Alec, and Alec fights like a lion against them. They get enough room to get into the door that leads beneath the Berg landing pad, and shut it behind them.

#### Chapter 40

They lock the door by spinning the wheel lock as tightly as they can. Nearby, they find the Berg. They decide their best chance of escape is the Berg. The sounds of their attackers die away, which Alec indicates means they're up to something. Mark is grateful that Alec had been a pilot. Inside the Berg, Alec and Mark look around, and discover a stack of three workpads. Just as they investigate the workpads, the landing pad in the central chamber begins to open.

#### Chapter 41



Mark scrambles to close the hatch to the Berg. But a man and a woman jump on the rising hatch ramp, and grab Mark. Mark realizes they are the pilots that were heard earlier. Something snaps inside of him, and he kicks the other pilot, a woman, in the midsection, knocking her off the rising ramp. He then grabs the other pilot, and tells him it is his turn.

#### Chapter 42

The male pilot tells Mark he is going to die, and punches Mark in the jaw twice. Mark feels rage building in him, and then he grapples with the pilot, gains the upper hand, and pushes the pilot halfway off the ramp, intending to crush him as the ramp seals shut. He then thinks better of what he is doing as the pilot is killed. He uses his feet to kick the pilot.

## Analysis

Marc and Alec correctly conclude that Trina, Lana, and Deedee will have headed to the Berg's airbase. From there, they infiltrate the base, and discover some horrifying things, including that Trina, Lana, and Deedee have been exchanged as ransom for time for the airbase's inhabitants to assault Asheville, and gain access to the Flat Trans. But what is even more disturbing is the information they glean not only from Anton, but from Bruce as well. The virus was intentionally spread by the very government that is attempting to save them. The PFC, fearing resource depletion due to overpopulation, has decided to eliminate half the world's population by virus in order to conserve resources. The revelation makes Mark furious.

The revelation of the PFC's plot also clearly outlines a classic dystopian society, where an all-powerful government exerts its abilities at will, relying on elitist politicians, experts, intelligentsia, and others to make decisions that rival the mass killings brought about by Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, and other statist thugs. All of it is done in the interest of the people, as it is claimed, even though the PFC is targeting the very people they claim to be helping. They are creating disorder to ensure that they can then create a new order from their efforts. Even those that were once a part of the operation -the PFC members in the Berg base -have been shut out by the PFC, with the knowledge that they, too, probably have the virus. And the PFC members at the Berg airbase will not take that lying down. They are convinced there is an antidote, and they will do whatever it takes to find it.

## Discussion Question 1

Explain the relationship between the PFC and the Berg airbase. What is the airbase's role in the wider plans of the PFC? Why do you believe the PFC shuts the airbase out?



## Discussion Question 2

Is it possible that there is an antidote to the virus at this point? Why or why not?

## Discussion Question 3

Mark's desire to crush the pilot may be simple human emotion, or violent rage brought on by the virus. Why do you believe it is? Why?

## Vocabulary

Cauterized, discernible, dumbfounded, stupor, iota, distorted, visage, clamoring, surreality.



# Chapters 43 - 58

## Summary

### Chapter 43

Mark shudders at the fact that he almost killed another human being. He feels as if he has lost his mind for a moment, and shudders. Mark realizes his head has been hurting more often lately, and that this rage that had taken hold of him meant that he had the virus, the Flare.

### Chapter 44

Despite realizing he must be infected, Mark surprises himself by being calm. He knew that Deedee had been infected two months before, and was alive and sane. Mark realizes that somewhere, someone has to have an antidote, otherwise unleashing a virus wouldn't make sense. Mark then joins Alec in the cockpit. But a man has climbed up on the Berg, and has used a hammer to shatter some of the glass. Mark goes to handle him, but is almost pulled out. Alec uses the hammer to knock the attacker from the Berg, and then with Mark safely inside the Berg, takes off to the sky.

### Chapter 45

Mark finds a bathroom on the Berg and throws up. He then heads over to Alec, and asks if there is food on board. Alec is sure there is, but first, he wants to get to a safe place. Alec settles it down as Mark almost falls asleep, and Alec brings Mark a standard military meal and a canteen of water. Alec explains he put the Berg down in an upscale neighborhood, in a cul-de-sac. Mark tells Alec about the moment he lost control, wanting to see the pilot crushed, but Alex shrugs it off, saying that men lose themselves when they have to fight to survive, and that it isn't due to a virus, simply human nature. Before they head out to find Trina and the others, Alec says they should sleep.

### Chapter 46

Alec's memories come back to him once more in his dreams. He has spent the last few weeks living and sleeping under a conference table, living off a diet of candy and soda from machines throughout the building. Mark, though bored, is happy that he is getting closer to Trina. Baxter wakes Mark up one night. A boat is driving down Broadway. Lana and Trina have spotted it from the fifth floor, so Mark goes down. The boat lands, and the people on board – a man with a scruffy beard, and a woman with a shaved head – demand to see everyone inside the building put their hands up. When some don't, the man shoots Baxter, and demands again.

### Chapter 47



Of all the dreams that haunt Mark, the one about Baxter's death is the most frequent. The man with the gun, who has just shot Baxter, yells at everyone to shut up. He demands food and fuel. The others obey, bringing fuel from the generators and food from the snack machines. Suddenly, Alec makes his move, swatting the gun away from the man. He and Mark then tackle the man, while Lana chases down the female. The stocked yacht is now boarded by Mark, Alec, and the others, and is cast off. The man attempts to board the boat, but Mark kicks him off. From the window of the building behind them, the woman has reappeared, and fires after them.

#### Chapter 48

Mark wakes up. His head hurts again. Alec explains that while Mark was sleeping he has taken the Berg up for a scouting run, and discovered that the people who took Trina, Lana, and Deedee are at the bonfire. Mark admits he is afraid, and Alec says that that is alright. It is how Mark responds to fear that matters. They break into the central storage facility of the Berg, where they find nothing but trash, until they discover a metal container. Mark uses an axe to bash open the box. Inside are shiny, elongated objects that look wet. They look like guns. Alec explains they are Transvices: they make people disappear into thin air.

#### Chapter 49

Alec asks Mark if he knows how a Flat Trans works. They work by disassembling the molecular structure and reassembling it at some other point. Alec reveals that the Transvice only breaks molecular structures apart. Alec begins to charge several of the weapons while they then set about preparing for the rescue mission. They gather food, water, and clothes from the barracks section of the Berg. They go outside into the neighborhood so Alec can show Mark how the weapon works. A crazed man, naked, and screaming indecipherable things, charged at them. Alec fires the weapon at him, causing a bright orange burst and white light that hits the man in the chest, turning the man gray, and then exploding him in a mist that simply disappeared.

#### Chapter 50

Mark compares the dissolving to a cloud of smoke caught in the wind. He is stunned by the crazed nature of the man. Mark tells Alec that they have to go and rescue Trina and the others immediately. Alec shows Mark how to use the Transvice, and they head up in the Berg. Below them, Alec points out where he has seen Lana, Trina, and Deedee. Dozens of crazed people mill about as well. They land in a quiet area, and proceed.

#### Chapter 51

The air is hot and dusty. Mark and Alec stick close to the houses as they move along. They are cautious and stay hydrated, drinking water as they go. They discover a ratty looking woman with wild hair on the roof of one house, and then she disappears. As he and Alec head across the lawn, the woman launches herself into the air, and collides with Mark on the ground.



## Chapter 52

Mark forces the woman off him. She crumbles up and begins rocking in a ball. Alec refuses to shoot her, opting to let her suffer, wanting to save ammunition. Mark, however, obliterates the woman with his Transvice.

## Chapter 53

The horrific sounds of the chaos beyond them draw closer, as Mark and Alec continue on. They hole up in a ruined building, where they prepare for going on. Alec tells Mark to not let anyone take the Transvice from him, and to not let them get close enough to take them. They then sprint down the road. While most of the infected people are further away, there are enough closer to them to make things difficult. As they proceed, they pass unnoticed, so absorbed in insanity are those around them. In the basement, they find a man with match and gasoline, who threatens to blow them all up if Alec or Mark come any closer.

## Chapter 54

The man tells them that the infected fear the fire, and if they come any closer, he will kill them all. Alec and Mark back off. They head to another house, where a woman tells them that her kids are the only things keeping the monsters away. Inside, there are about fifteen children. They then continue on searching each and every house. Five houses down, they see Lana being pulled out of a house.

## Chapter 55

Alec begins to sprint down the road, followed closely by Mark. Lana is battered, bruised, and bloody, and much of her hair has been ripped out. Three men surround Lana. One stabs her with a switchblade. Mark tackles the man and stabs him with his own switchblade. Alec tackles another attacker. More men begin to go after Lana. They shoot as many as they can, and then Alec shoots Lana, ending her misery.

## Chapter 56

Mark notices Alec appears to be deeply saddened, but he shakes it off. They head toward the house as others begin to gather around, shooting at them as they go. The people charge Alec and Mark, who fight them off. They fight their way through the house. They find Trina and Deedee in the basement, bruised and battered. Deedee is crying, and says that Trina is sick. When Mark tries to get Trina to talk, she asks him who he is.

## Chapter 57

Mark is stunned. He tries to get Trina to remember him. Alec shouts at Mark to get Trina and Deedee moving. Mark tells Trina he is her best friend, and is there to save her. Trina begs Mark not to let the people hurt her again. They fight their way upstairs but are forced back down when the infected push them back.



## Chapter 58

The group tumbles down the stairs, with the infected on top of them immediately. Trina shouts at everyone to stop, and surprisingly, everyone does, as though she has some sort of magical power over them. She tells them she is one of them now, but those who have come have come to help them, and they must let them go. The infected stop and clear a path, and Trina tells Mark to lead them up. But upstairs, order breaks down, and the infected swarm on Mark and the others.

## Analysis

As the novel heads into its latter half, Mark begins to struggle with tremendous emotions within himself, including rage and near uncontrollable violence. His desire is not only to kill, but to see the pilot of the Berg crushed between the ramp of the Berg and the body of the Berg. He begins to wonder whether or not he is suffering from the virus, or if he is simply prone to normal human emotions under such difficult circumstances, a theory ascribed to by Alec. Regardless, Mark begins to relax, understanding that he will have to remain calm to see things through to the very end. This includes a rescue attempt for Trina, Lana, and Deedee, who are being held by the crazed and bloodthirsty infected beings now populating the suburbs of Asheville.

The world in which Mark and the others have lived is not as peaceful, nor as placid as it might have first appeared, either. The wonders of modern technology in the novel have also brought about terrifying advances in weaponry, as evidenced by the Transvice. Such weapons are a reminder that the relative and seeming calm in which much of the people of the world lives is merely a veneer. It could disappear at any moment, much like the victims of the Transvice.

As if the Transvices were not terrifying enough for Mark, the discovery of Lana near death also reanimates him to want to find Trina and Deedee. Trina, however, has succumbed to the virus on a different level than others. She is merely becoming an amnesiac. Things seem familiar to her, but she cannot remember things exactly as they were. Mark is heartbroken that she has forgotten him.

## Discussion Question 1

Now that Alec's opinion on Mark's violent rage has been heard, do you believe that Mark is or is not suffering from the virus? Explain using evidence from the novel.

## Discussion Question 2

Trina appears to have some control or power over the other infected people. Why do you believe this is true?



## Discussion Question 3

What is the significance of the Transvice weapon? How does it relate to the world before the flares? Does it relate to the world following the flares? Explain.

## Vocabulary

Corrosive, glorious, oblivious, insensitive, conciliatory, reverberate, levity, cursory, invigorated, cacophony.





# Chapter 59 - Epilogue

## Summary

### Chapter 59

Mark lunges to keep track of Deedee, but loses her in the confusion. Mark is hit in the back of the head and falls to the ground, where the Transvice is taken. He can see Deedee being carried upstairs, pursued by Trina, while Alec battles six others. Mark resolves to go after Trina and Deedee first. He fights every step of the way. Mark frees Deedee, and Trina then takes hold of Deedee to protect her. Mark then goes for Alec, who is fighting away. Terror breaks out when one of the infected begins shooting a Transvice, and the infected mob flees from the house. Mark, Trina, Alec, and Deedee race down the street.

### Chapter 60

Mark, Trina, Alec, and Deedee race back to the Berg. Trina recognizes that Deedee is somehow immune to the infection, and that she herself has it, and that Deedee has to be taken to the people who can make things better before they all go insane. They all go on board. Mark is horrified that Trina, who says he seems familiar, is slowly losing her mind. On board, they eat, and Trina and Deedee lay down for sleep. Mark goes through the workpads later on, to discover one is unprotected by a password, and owned by a man named Randall Spilker, who has a folder on the workpad entitled, "Kill Order".

### Chapter 61

There are many documents to look through –correspondence, memorandums, announcements, and so on. Spilker worked for the Post-Flares Coalition, a group of government agencies gathered together in Alaska to determine what to do, because Alaska was relatively unaffected by the sun flares. He then finds correspondence with someone named Ladena Lichliter. Ladena is horrified about some PCC proposal and wonders how things have gone the way they have. Mark continues searching. He finds another document from Chancellor John Michael, an e-mail about population control. A response from Katie McVoy reveals a potential solution: a virus that attacks the brain, shutting it down painlessly, and spreading as it goes, the infection rate weakening as it spreads.

John Michael approves of the idea, and prepares a presentation with Katie. A memo is sent out from the PCC –the Population Control Committee –which is an executive order to implement the virus plan. Armed forces will ensure control. Mark is enraged. The PFC is indeed directly behind everything going on, for population control to conserve resources. Mark realizes their only chance now is Asheville. He has pleasant dreams for once.



## Chapter 62

Mark dreams about Trina being in his arms during a thunderstorm. They snuggle up, and Trina is amazed they are still alive. They are in search of settlements, rumors of which swirl about the area. Mark wakes up in the middle of the night, and sees Alec is not doing well. Alec tells Mark he is sick, and he doesn't want to die for nothing.

## Chapter 63

Alec tells Mark he doesn't want to end up like the others. Alec tells Mark to come to the cockpit to watch him fly, because they will take Deedee to Asheville if it is the last thing he does. Mark goes to check on Trina and Deedee, who are huddled together, pointing overhead. Deedee points to the ceiling and says the boogie man and his friends are up there.

## Chapter 64

Mark runs to the cockpit, grabs the Transvice, and heads back. He hears giggling above the barracks room. A man and two women are dancing around like monkeys. Mark fights them off at the man and one of the women. But the sound of giggling continues from overhead. Mark tells Deedee and Trina they need to come to the cockpit. As they head to the cockpit, a man reaches down and grabs the Transvice, and disappears into the rafters overhead.

## Chapter 65

Mark is humiliated because, for the second time, his weapon has been taken by an insane, infected person. In the cockpit, Alec is in serious condition, fading fast. Deedee is terrified and takes off running. Mark chases her to find the crazed man aiming the Transvice at Deedee. Mark begs the man not to shoot, but the man tells Mark she is a demon. Mark leaps into action, beating the man and taking the gun away from him. He begins to drag the man down the hallway.

## Chapter 66

Mark drags the man into the control room and throws him out through the broken window, almost falling out himself as he pushes the man off into the blue flames of the Berg's thruster.

## Chapter 67

Mark scrambles back into the cockpit, exhausted and weak. Mark announces to the others that they must reach the Flat Trans in Asheville. Alec believes he knows where to find it. He is fading even faster now, and Mark is beginning to see sparkles and feel unstable emotions welling within. Below, in the city, Bruce and hundreds of others are scaling the walls of Asheville. They see a building with a sign that reads "PFC Personnel Only". The last of the PFC workers are entering the building. Alec manages to land the Berg. Mark grabs Deedee and dashes outside, his vision going haywire. He drags Trina



along as well. Inside the building, he sees two people leap into the Flat Trans. Mark takes a note he has scribbled and gives it to Deedee to cross through the Flat Trans. It reads, “She’s immune to the Flare. Use her. Do it before the crazy people find you.” Mark then sends Deedee through. Trina rushes over to Mark, who is quickly losing himself. She kisses him and holds onto him, and Bruce appears in the doorway. Mark has flashbacks of his life. At the end, he has Trina in his arms, and she remembers his name. The Berg then comes crashing into the building.

### Epilogue

Two years later, in a small apartment, dark and dank, a woman is expecting a knock on the door, which comes. Her son, her only child, is taken for experiments to find the cure. The woman cries as the others leave with her son, for she will never see him again. One of them suggests the name Thomas, seeing the swinging light bulb from the ceiling.

## Analysis

With Trina and Deedee rescued, and with Mark and Alec beginning to suffer severely from the virus, the group alights in the Berg, and heads over the suburbs of Asheville to the city center. Below them, Bruce's rebellion has begun. They are now in a race to get to the PFC center before Bruce and his minions do. They are also racing against themselves, and the virus working within them.

As Mark races to get Deedee to the Flat Trans in the PFC center, he wonders how anyone could be that unsympathetic, that willing to harm so many people. As Deedee heads through the Flat Trans, Mark realizes that Bruce, as well as his infected minions, are prepared to invade Alaska. The danger in this action speaks volumes about Mark's moral character. In order to save other people, though not himself, he must send Deedee through the Trans Flat, and help the government that would not help him. He is beyond hope, as are the other infected people. Trina, in a last surge of clarity, remembers who Mark is, and Mark's life flashes before his eyes as Alec crashes the Berg into the PFC center in order to complete the process of saving the lives of countless others.

## Discussion Question 1

Why do you believe that Alec crashes the Berg into the PFC center at the end of the novel? What results could his actions possibly bring about?

## Discussion Question 2

If you were a member of the Population Control Committee, how would you approach the task of dealing with limited resources, and an overpopulated world? Explain.



## Discussion Question 3

Can the PFC be faulted for their decision to eliminate half of the world's population given the circumstances, or are they totally, morally wrong and evil for such an act? Explain.

## Vocabulary

Hellacious, vaporize, vigorously, extinction, deadpans, juddering.



# Characters

## Mark

Mark is a teenage boy and a native of New York City. Little is said about his physical appearance, but much is said about his emotional and moral nature. His morals are strong and his convictions good, while his emotions run the gamut from sadness and terror in his nightmares, to bravery and anger. Mark's family, including his sister Madison, have perished in the sun flares. Mark is in love with Trina, who returns his feelings. They knew each other in school before the flares, and are rescued in the New York City subways by Alec, Lana, and the others of the group that has formed around them. When their village in North Carolina is attacked by a Berg, Mark and Alec board and crash it. When they discover their village has been infected by a virus, Mark, Trina, Alec, and the others head out to find an antidote at the Berg airbase.

Mark is captured, beaten, and has to fight his way out of numerous situations brought on by the virus. He works together with Alec to infiltrate the Berg airbase, discover the truth about the virus, and then rescue Trina and Deedee from the infected people who have encircled the suburbs of Asheville. Mark ultimately comes to find that Trina has lost her memory due to the virus, and that he is also beginning to suffer the effects. On a last-ditch effort to save those uninfected, Mark travels with Alec, Trina, and Deedee to the PFC center in Asheville, sending Deedee through the Flat Trans. Mark is killed alongside Trina when Alec crashes their stolen Berg into the center, eliminating the chance that Alaska can become infected.

## Trina

Trina is a slender, blonde sixteen year-old girl with a love of reading and a love of Mark. They have fallen in love over the past year and have come to live with Alec, Lana, and the others in North Carolina, after being rescued by them in New York City months before. Trina becomes part of the group, along with Mark, Alec, and Lana to flee the village in search of the Berg airbase, and a cure. Trina, Lana, and Deedee are separated from Marc and Alec during a fire, and they head to the Berg airbase, but are apprehended and ransomed to the infected tribes of people in the area. They are then beaten and abused, and Trina begins to lose her memory. Rescued by Mark, she has no idea who he is, and only later, just before she dies, remembers who Mark is.

## Alec

Alec, a veteran of the United States Armed Forces, is a defense contractor in New York City at a conference with his partner Lana, who is also a veteran, when the sun flares hit Earth. They gather a group, including Mark and Trina, and bring them to the Lincoln Building, where they live for a few months. They then head to New Jersey, and then to North Carolina, where they settle down. When their village is attacked, Alec and Mark



take down a Berg, and with Lana and Trina, head out to find the Berg's airbase. Marc later becomes infected by the virus, and in his last moments of clarity, crash-lands a stolen Berg into the PFC center, destroying the Flat Trans seconds after Mark and Trina have sent Deedee through.

## Lana

Lana is a former member of the United States Armed Forces, where she served in medicine, and later worked with Alec in the defense industry. In New York with Alec for a conference, she and Alec come across several others, including Mark and Trina. Lana's medical expertise is invaluable and used time and time again, especially once the virus is spread. Lana, captured by members of the airbase along with Deedee and Trina, and is exchanged in ransom for time. Lana is brutally beaten, stabbed, has her hair ripped out, and near death, is killed by Alec.

## Darnell

Darnell is a goofy teenager, about Mark's age, who forms part of the group rescued by Alec and Lana from New York. He is hit with a dart containing the Flare virus. He later dies.

## Misty

Misty tall, thin, pretty red-headed girl, who is about eighteen, Misty is part of the group that Alec and Lana lead out of New York. She contracts the Flare virus and later dies.

## The Toad

The Toad is a short teenager with large muscles who forms part of the group that Alec and Lana lead out of New York. The Toad stays behind in the North Carolina village when Misty contracts the virus, later contracting it himself. He becomes very unstable, tracks Alec, Mark, and the others down, and then is put out of his misery by Alec.

## Deedee

Deedee, a young girl who is about five years of age, is abandoned by members of her village after being hit with the virus. Her mother and father die and her brother runs off. She is taken in by Mark, Trina, Alec, and Lana. Despite the others coming down with the virus, Deedee is immune for some reason, and so she is sent to Alaska to the PFC through the Flat Trans to presumed safety.

## **Anton**

Anton is an older scientist and member of the Berg team tasked with spreading the virus. He has become disillusioned and meets Mark and Alec, telling them everything that has transpired. Anton's morality has come over him, and he knows there is no antidote. He has gone off by himself to die or go crazy.

## **Katie McVoy**

Katie McVoy is the scientist and member of the Population Control Committee of the PFC who first suggests using the virus to wipe out half of the world's population. She is objective and emotionless in her offering of the theory to the chancellor.



# Symbols and Symbolism

## Rations

Rations, consisting of food and water, are consumed by Mark, Alec, Trina, Lana, and the others as they journey throughout the eastern United States to survive. They are, however, in short supply, and so are very carefully guarded and used. People often go without them for at least one meal a day in order to have enough to survive.

## Workpad

Workpads, which appear to be similar to iPads and tablets, are used by the members of the PFC, including the pilots of the Bergs and the airbase. They contain personal files, as well as work-related documents that reveal the true extent of the desires and motives of the PCC and the PFC. Workpads are used by Mark to search for clues and to get to the truth.

## Black Darts

Black darts are filled with the deadly Flare virus. They are used to shoot at innocent people to infect them with a virus by members of the Berg airbase group. They are discovered on board the Berg by Mark.

## Berg

Bergs are massive airships used by the military, the PFC, and their outlying groups to carry supplies, weapons, and the black darts containing the Flare virus. Bergs are crashed and hijacked by Mark and Alec twice in the novel.

## Transvice

Transvices are weapons that literally obliterate people, making them disappear in an ashy cloud. The weapon literally disassembles the molecular structure of the individuals that are shot.





# Settings

## New York City

New York City is the hometown of Mark, Trina, Toad, Misty, and Darnell. It is where they live and work. New York City is also the site of a conference for the defense industry, which brings Alec and Lana to the area. Following the sun flares, it is where they hole up in the Lincoln Building, and then later flee for New Jersey.

## North Carolina

Western North Carolina, in the eastern United States, is where the Appalachian Mountains and the village in which Mark and the others live are located. It is where Asheville is located, and serves therein as the main setting of the novel.

## Asheville

Asheville is the last safe city in the eastern United States. It is controlled by the PFC, and houses a PFC center with a Flat Trans linked to Alaska. It is assaulted by Bruce's rebels and the infected at the end of the novel, and is where Alec brings Mark, Deedee, and Trina, so Deedee can escape through the Flat Trans.

## Berg Airbase

Located near Asheville, North Carolina, the Berg airbase is where a group of the PFC is headquartered, tasked with the job of spreading the virus. It is infiltrated by Mark and Alec, and serves as the launching ground for a rebellion against the PFC by Bruce and his minions.

## Alaska

One of the few areas of the world relatively unscathed by the sun flares, Alaska serves as the headquarters for the Post-Flares Coalition, and international governing organization dedicated to rebuilding the world. It is from PFC headquarters in Alaska that the deadly virus plan is hatched.



# Themes and Motifs

## Friendship

Friendship is a dominant theme found consistently throughout the novel "The Kill Order" by James Dashner. Friendship, both platonic and romantic, has to do with mutually shared affections, concern, compassion, reliance, loyalty, support, and camaraderie between individuals. Friendship appears in two distinct ways, that of platonic and romantic.

Platonic friendship occurs between all of the characters in the book, including Mark, Trina, Alec, Lana, Toad, Misty, and Darnell. This group of people, obviously from all walks of life, are brought together by the natural disaster of the sun flares, and they instantly come to be friends and rely on one another for survival. Their loyalty to one another is tested time and time again, especially during the viral epidemic that follows settling in North Carolina. The friends watch out for one another, share what they have, share laughter, and commiserate together. Their fraternity with one another helps keep them going and gives them the incentive to live for each other.

Romantic friendship occurs in the novel as well, most clearly between Mark and Trina. Before the solar flares, Trina doesn't give Mark too much of a second thought. However, over the following year, they fall in love with one another. They cuddle, kiss, hold hands, and delight in the happiness of one another. They also offer each other emotional support in ways that platonic friendship does not provide, and this love between them is no stronger than when Mark risks his life time and time again to rescue Trina. Ultimately, they die together in Asheville.

## Survival

Survival is a dominant theme of the novel "The Kill Order" by James Dashner. Survival occurs at two levels -personal survival, and global survival, involving individuals and governmental organizations, the actions of which impact one another.

In terms of personal survival, survival occurs at the individual level. Mark, Trina, Alec, Lana, and the others must fight to survive from day one, fending off subway dwellers and paranoid people following the sun flares. They must then battle to survive in a flooded New York against a thuggish boatman and his female counterpart, and make it through the wilderness of the east to North Carolina, where they hope to settle down. Even then, survival is difficult, as overcrowding in the village and few rations spell danger for them as individuals. Mark, Alec, Trina, Lana, and Deedee go on to fight for survival on a personal level when they must confront the virus-infected, crazed people that confront them as they seek an antidote.

In terms of global survival, world governments have cobbled themselves together in Alaska to form the Post-Flares Coalition, which exercises control over the planet.



Concerned about the survival of civilization and rebuilding the world, as well as conserving resources, the PFC implements a plan to wipe out half of the world's population by virus. Doing so will allow the survival of the human race, though the decision to wipe out untold billions is heinous at best. This decision directly impacts Mark and the others, but also in turn comes back to haunt the PFC, for there is no antidote to the virus. Yet, the individual survival of Deedee, courtesy of Mark, means that the PFC will ironically survive to solve the problem it has created to solve another problem.

## Dystopianism

Dystopianism is a major theme present in the novel "The Kill Order" by James Dashner. Dystopianism has to do with society gone wrong, usually in a future setting, in which an all powerful government controls nearly all aspects of human existence, causing darkness, disenchantment, and disillusion against a wider backdrop of tyranny and the loss of individual freedom, rights, and abilities.

In "The Kill Order," dystopianism is presented in the form of the Post-Flares Coalition, a cobbling-together of world governments that exercise hegemonic control across the globe. The PFC is concerned about the world's population and dwindling resources. But rather than seek to save all of the people on the planet, the PFC, on advice from the Population Control Committee, decides to kill half of the world's population by infecting them with a virus. The PFC thus becomes tyrannical, denying people freedom, and presiding over their very existence. Their fate is sealed by the hands of a few intellectual elites in a government panel without real concern or care. The PFC also exercises control over the villages and makeshift communities throughout the world by rationing the food and water shipped to them and offering them little or no security. It is this world into which Mark, Trina, Alec, Lana, and Deedee must fight to survive.

# Styles

## Point of View

James Dashner tells his novel "The Kill Order" in the third-person perspective with limited knowledge of events surrounding the characters. This is done for at least three reasons. The first is that the reader is kept in suspense, learning about the mysteries of the book only as the characters do. The second is that the third-person allows Dashner to visit the emotions and feelings of characters outside the character of Mark, allowing the reader to understand much more about the other characters as well. The third reason seems to be that, because Mark is killed at the end of the novel, the third person, while intimate enough, does not provide the intense personal intimacy of the first-person narrative mode. This allows Dashner to kill off all of the characters of the novel, save one -that of Deedee. It is then such that the reader does not walk away feeling totally brokenhearted at the deaths of all of the major characters of the book.

## Language and Meaning

James Dashner tells his novel "The Kill Order" in language that is straightforward, simple, and brisk. He does this for at least two reasons. The first is that the action of the novel is fast-paced, urgent, and even chaotic, and his quick writing with simple vocabulary reflects the pace of the novel itself. The reader is therefore not dragged down unnecessarily by weighty words or dense prose. The second reason is that the language also reflects the education of the characters of the novel, particularly Mark, whose level of education is only that of high school.

## Structure

James Dashner structures his novel "The Kill Order" into sixty-seven chronological chapters, flanked by both a prologue and an epilogue. The prologue deals with events related to the Maze Runner trilogy, serving as a gateway to the ensuing novel, which serves as a prequel to the entire Maze Runner series. The sixty-seven chapters are arranged in linear order, but the events of the chapters alternate between events of the past year and the present. The chapters relating past events therefore serve as a prequel to the prequel. In the epilogue, two years later, the character of Thomas from the Maze Runner series is born. This is in order to tie in the events of the novel with the later events of the Maze Runner series.



## Quotes

The memories. They never let him go, not even for a half hour. They always had to rush back in, bringing all the horror.

-- Narrator (Chapter 2 paragraph p. 13)

**Importance:** Here, the narrator explains that Mark is haunted in his sleep by his dreams, which are memories of the horrors and terrors of the past year of fighting to survive. Mark cannot escape his dreams, just as he cannot escape the past. The past constantly plays at Mark's mind, driving him on in the search of normalcy.

I'm kinda sick of surviving. At least Darnell is done with this world.

-- Trina (Chapter 12 paragraph p. 62)

**Importance:** Trina, feeling horrified following the contamination of their village, and their friends by the virus, has lost hope. She is beginning to have survivor's guilt, as well as exhaustion from fighting to survive. She is tired of having to struggle so hard to stay alive.

The world is beset with evil in many forms.

-- Crazy Woman (Chapter 24 paragraph p. 123)

**Importance:** Although uttered by a virus-infected crazy woman, her statement has profound truth to it, especially as Mark and the others discover that there is evil in the world. The evil presents itself in many forms, such as the PFC, which concocted and initiated the virus.

The dreams came. The memories. More vivid than ever before. As if the depth of his exhaustion had created the perfect canvas for them.

-- Narrator (Chapter 34 paragraph p. 173)

**Importance:** As Mark struggles to survive after the attack by the PFC agents carrying virus-bearing darts, he begins to become exhausted, mentally and physically. This allows his mind to recall the most terrifying moments of the past year, and this continues to drive Mark on in search of something better.

It'd been so close that day. If he'd known all that would come after, would he still have fought so hard to survive? Yes, he told himself. Yes, he would've.

-- Narrator (Chapter 36 paragraph p. 181)

**Importance:** Having escaped to the village in North Carolina following the sun flare disaster in New York, Mark believes that things can only get better. Instead, they get worse. Mark questions whether he would have fought so hard to survive if he knew that things were only going to get worse, and he realizes he still would have, especially because he has Trina.



Something had snapped inside of Mark. He didn't understand what it was, but something felt different, and there was no way he was going to let these people on board.

-- Narrator (Chapter 41 paragraph p. 203)

**Importance:** Attempting to steal a Berg from the airbase, Mark is forced to defend the ascending ramp against the Berg's two pilots. His life is literally in the balance, as is the fate of humankind. Anger and rage take over him like never before as he fights to defend the Berg.

I've seen many a good man go south on the battlefield, and there wasn't a virus around to blame back then, either. It doesn't mean... you have it. Humans do crazy things to survive.

-- Alec (Chapter 46 paragraph p. 218)

**Importance:** Here, Alec comforts Mark by saying that when men become angry, especially in a fight or in a battle, a virus is not to blame. Anger and rage are human reactions to extraordinary circumstances, and Mark shouldn't worry.

Scared. That's good. A fine soldier is always scared. Makes you normal. It's how you respond to it that makes or breaks you.

-- Alec (Chapter 48 paragraph p. 232)

**Importance:** Preparing to rescue Trina, Lana, and Deedee from the infection legions in the suburbs of Asheville, Mark tells Alec he is afraid. This is a startling revelation, but Alec handles it calmly and compassionately. Fear is not the problem, Alec explains -but how one handles fear that matters.

The problem is simple: the world has too many people and not enough resources.

-- Chancellor John Michael (Chapter 61 paragraph p. 292)

**Importance:** This quote, taken from an e-mail directive from Chancellor John Michael of the PFC, posits the issue that has to be tackled. From this statement comes the solution - a virus to wipe out half the world's population.

Mark.

-- Trina (Chapter 67 paragraph p. 324)

**Importance:** This is perhaps the most heart-wrenching quote of the novel, for it is the return of Trina's memory. Trina recognizes Mark just before they are both killed in the PFC center in Asheville. Mark does not die with a broken heart because of Trina speaking his name.