 Searching for Survivors [The Run Series, #3]

by ReadWorks

"Dennis! Dennis!" Mac sounded frantic. Dennis raced across the parking lot toward the gas station. "I'm coming, Mac!" he yelled to his friend, and burst into the store.

Mac was at the counter. When Dennis walked in, Mac pointed to the back of the store. The door of the men's bathroom was slowly creaking open. Just then the door swung wide, and a man appeared. The man's hair was matted and disheveled. His clothes were ripped and dirty. Parts of his skin were covered in deep purple and black marks. Even from the door, Dennis could detect the man's stench. He smelled like the fermented slop that they fed to pigs on the ranch. It was obvious that the plague had gotten this man.

The man hovered in the doorway of the bathroom, looking first at Mac and then at Dennis. His eyes were red and bloodshot, and they rolled around in his sockets, unable to focus. "Argghhh," the man growled. Drool dripped down his chin as he stepped forward.

"Mac," said Dennis quietly, backing toward the front door. "Let's get out of here."

Mac began edging toward the door, too, taking the bags of food and supplies with him. Suddenly the crazed man lurched forward and started running toward the two younger men. Thinking quickly, Dennis reached out to the shelves of soup behind him. He threw the cans at the man as hard as he could. Back when he and Mac lived on the ranch, Dennis used to throw stones to scare off the coyotes. He had a strong throwing arm and good aim.

One of the cans hit the crazed man square in the face and he crumpled to the ground.
"Don't go near the body," said Dennis. "We don't know if he's contagious."

"Don't worry. I'm not going anywhere near it," said Mac. "Let's get out of here." They turned to exit when they heard another slow creak. Mac and Dennis paused. There was still someone else in the gas station. They turned around and saw that now the door to the women's bathroom was opening. Dennis picked up more cans and handed a few to Mac. They watched the door and readied themselves to throw the cans as soon as a target came into view.

"Hello?" A young boy stuck his head out from the bathroom. He couldn't have been more than six or seven years old. "Is it safe?" he asked.

Mac and Dennis looked at the boy. He seemed healthy but scared.

"How long have you been in there?" asked Mac.

"A day or two," said the boy. "I locked myself in. I saw a group of people coming; they looked dangerous. So I hid. There's no one else around anymore."

Dennis and Mac exchanged a look. They couldn't leave this kid here alone to fend for himself. He wouldn't last a week.

"Grab some supplies and come with us," said Dennis. "We're looking for other survivors."

The boy followed the two young men to the truck and climbed between them. As they drove, Dennis and Mac learned that the boy's name was Jeremiah. His parents had worked in one of the big hospitals in the city. When the plague hit, they had volunteered to help nurse the first victims. His parents had never come home. Jeremiah had waited a week and then tried to go to the hospital. No one was there. The entire building was abandoned and vacant.

"I don't know what happened to them," said Jeremiah. "So I left the city on my bike. I rode and rode until I came to the gas station. I thought I was safe until a new group of plagued people showed up."

Dennis and Mac nodded. Who knew how many families had been ripped apart by the plague? The important thing now was figuring out their next step. Dennis told Mac that he had heard the voice of a girl on the radio. "Her name was Anna, and she was the last one alive in her town, Sunnydale. She was on her father's radio kit, looking for others," said Dennis.

Mac looked at Dennis. "We're going to Sunnydale, aren't we?" he asked. Dennis nodded.

"And then?" asked Jeremiah.

Mac cleared his throat. He had an idea. Mac pointed out that it was too dangerous to go to the cities and that they only had enough gas to drive another four hundred miles. The safest thing to do would be to go somewhere rural. They should head to a place where they could set up a strong defense. Then they could wait out the plague for a few more weeks before trying to find other survivors.

Dennis thought about Mac's plan. It made sense. "Okay," he said. "But we look for Anna first. We might be her only chance at survival." In his head, Dennis could still hear the girl's voice and her sobbing as she made her radio broadcast.

The sun was setting when the truck pulled onto the main street of Sunnydale. "How will we find her?"
asked Mac. "We can't just knock on every door in this town."

Dennis was fiddling with the radio again. "Let's see if we can hear her," he said. "Maybe she'll say her address." The static cleared, and there again was Anna's voice. She was still broadcasting.

"Is anyone there? Anyone liste-"

Suddenly, Anna's voice stopped. The young men heard a pounding on the door in the background. There was a crash and then sounds of a struggle. Dennis gripped the wheel so hard that his knuckles turned white. They were too late.

"Look!" cried Jeremiah. On the main street, the doors to one of the houses had opened. A teenaged girl was running out. She looked terrified, but not like the wild members of the swarm. Something else came out of the house, chasing her.

"Jump in the truck!" screamed Mac. The girl ran and leapt into the back of the truck, and Dennis hit the accelerator. There was a howl of frustration from the plagued person as his victim escaped.

"Uh-oh," said Jeremiah. "That doesn't look good."

He pointed to the girl's leg. The zombie had cut a long gash in her shin. The wound was already turning dark purple.

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Ed.: *The tale continues in Part 4, "On the Road".*
**broadcast**  broad-cast

**Definition**

**verb**

1. to send over television or radio.

   *The radio station broadcasts the news at seven o'clock.*

**noun**

1. a show or any other thing that people send over television or radio.

   *Millions of people watched that special broadcast on television.*

**Advanced Definition**

**transitive verb**

1. to transmit over television or radio.

   *The radio station broadcasts the news at seven o'clock.*

   *The show will be broadcast live from Washington.*

2. to spread broadly over an area; disseminate.

   *Don't broadcast what I've just told you over the whole school.*

   *The seed should be broadcast evenly over the soil.*

**intransitive verb**

1. to transmit a program or message over radio or television.

   *What frequency does the station broadcast on?*

   *We broadcast to a huge audience.*

**noun**

1. a single television or radio program.

   *The television broadcast of the wedding was watched by millions of people.*

   *Did you see last night's broadcast of the news?*

2. anything that is transmitted over television or radio.
The troops listened to the military broadcasts on the camp radio.

They were accused of making illegal broadcasts.

Did you hear the broadcast of the names of the winners?

3. a method of sowing seed by scattering it randomly over the soil.

adjective

1. transmitted over television or radio.

2. of or pertaining to transmission over television or radio.

broadcast journalism

adverb

1. so as to be widely disseminated over an area.

These are some examples of how the word or forms of the word are used:

1. A licensed ham radio operator, Dr. Olsen spoke to New Jersey students from space via a ham radio. In the first of three broadcasts from the International Space Station (ISS) Olsen said, "Welcome to space. It's really nice here. It's nice and roomy."

2. When George Washington first took the oath I have just sworn to uphold, news traveled slowly across the land by horseback and across the ocean by boat. Now, the sights and sounds of this ceremony are broadcast instantaneously to billions around the world.

3. Right now, it may not feel like a big deal if the world (including friends and strangers) knows what you are doing all day. It might not bother you that anyone can find you online (or, if you're using an application that uses GPS to broadcast your whereabouts, how to find you in person!).
frantic  fran·tic

Advanced Definition

adjective

1. frenzied; desperate.

They were frantic with fear when they realized their child was missing.

2. marked by hurried or agitated movement or nervous activity.

I was in a frantic rush to get everything ready in time.

These are some examples of how the word or forms of the word are used:

1. The four set to work, carefully but quickly assembling their pre-designed robot, then adding the door with the extra parts they had brought in case of a last-minute rule change. They struggled when adding the sensor, and time was running out. As the buzzer rang, Toby placed the last part on the robot, the butterflies in his stomach flapping frantically.

2. As the boat approached, it became clear that Marie's dad was the one steering through the turbulent river. Lina breathed a deep sigh, expelling her anxiety, and went running toward the water, waving her hands frantically. She saw the expressions on the faces in the boat turn, simultaneously, to relief.

3. The fox will not remain still, however. He is wriggling himself free. Frantic movements: a hard bearing-down on his front paws, and an occasional grunting.

4. Annabelle hurried to her locker. She reached up to the top shelf, but the small bag was missing. She began to look frantically through the locker. She shook out her jacket, pulled out her bag, and emptied her pencil case. The worms were gone.

5. "Dennis! Dennis!" Mac sounded frantic. Dennis raced across the parking lot toward the gas station. "I'm coming, Mac!" he yelled to his friend, and burst into the store.

6. That's when I saw Kristen. She didn't appear to be a zombie... yet. She was waving her arms frantically.

7. It was over before he realized what had happened. Marcus scrambled to his feet and held tightly to the tripod. When he looked through the eyepiece again, he only saw jagged shards. The lens was broken. Marcus began combing through the grass, searching frantically for whatever pieces of glass he could recover. That's when he came across the baseball.

8. Nursing quickly became his specialty, mostly because of the interaction time with patients. He admired everything his parents did, but doctors were in and out of treatment rooms, rushed and frantic. He much preferred to spend time with his patients, as much as he possibly could. So he selected nursing as his major, despite his father's blatant encouragement for him to become a doctor.
9. Hours before giant waves pounded coastlines in South Asia, many animals started behaving strangely. In Sri Lanka, elephants trumpeted **frantically** and fled to higher ground. Bats and flamingos deserted low-lying areas. Many other animals escaped unharmed.

10. I did the best I could. I tore my hood from off my head and struggled **frantically**. My hands were gloved and I could not take hold of the ice, but before I could give the "Grand Hailing Sigh of Distress," faithful old Ootah had grabbed me by the nape of the neck, the same as he would have grabbed a dog, and with one hand he pulled me out of the water, and with the other hurried the team across.
**rural**  ru·ral

**Definition**

**adjective**

1. having to do with country life.

*People in rural areas often live by farming.*

**Advanced Definition**

**adjective**

1. of the countryside or country life.

*People in rural areas often live by farming.*

2. pertaining to agriculture.

*We were discussing the rural economy.*

**Spanish cognate**

*rural:* The Spanish word *rural* means rural.

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**These are some examples of how the word or forms of the word are used:**

1. Controlling malaria is difficult in poor countries. One reason is that medications to treat people who have the disease are expensive. People in *rural* Africa often cannot afford the drugs.

2. The *rural* or war-torn places where polio still thrives often lack the electricity needed to keep vaccines chilled. In addition, health workers have a hard time reaching and revaccinating the affected children because their families are often very mobile.

3. Night blindness was a normal occurrence among pregnant women in the *rural* village in Nepal that Venkatesh Mannar visited in 2003. Living high in the mountains, the women he met risked their lives walking blindly in the dark on narrow mountain paths.

4. Farmers generally sow seeds in *rural* land: land that is far from cities and suburbs. They need the open space, as many farms are very large, spanning over 400 acres on average - that's over 300 football fields!

5. At Rice University in Texas more researchers in search of low-cost ways to remove contaminants from water are testing sand that is coated in graphite. Graphite is the same mineral that is used in pencils. Both sand and graphite are abundant, making them easy for *rural* villages to find and use to clean their water.

6. Ms. Sullivan says, "In small gardens, on rooftops and indoors, city residents grow fruits, vegetables, grains and herbs, and raise animals to produce dairy, eggs, honey and meat. City residents use these foods as supplements [additions] to food produced by *rural* agriculture." Because even though people who live in urban areas sometimes work as farmers, there's not enough space to grow enough food for everyone in a big city!

7. In May of 2013 Jason Leon was driving in a *rural* area near Florida City when he spotted a python's head protruding from the brush.
1. Who walks out of the men's bathroom in the gas station?
   A. a scared boy who is about six or seven years old
   B. a terrified teenaged girl who has a wound in her leg
   C. a man with red eyes, ripped clothes, and a bad smell
   D. a nurse who volunteered to take care of plague victims at a hospital

2. What point of view is this story told from?
   A. second person point of view
   B. third person limited point of view
   C. third person omniscient point of view
   D. first person point of view

3. Read these sentences from the text.

   "Mac was at the counter. When Dennis walked in, Mac pointed to the back of the store. The door of the men's bathroom was slowly creaking open. Just then the door swung wide, and a man appeared. The man's hair was matted and disheveled. His clothes were ripped and dirty. Parts of his skin were covered in deep purple and black marks. Even from the door, Dennis could detect the man's stench. He smelled like the fermented slop that they fed to pigs on the ranch. It was obvious that the plague had gotten this man."

   Based on this evidence, what can you conclude about people who get the plague?
   A. People who get the plague have to go to the bathroom more often than people who do not have the plague.
   B. People who get the plague have short hair, wear long pants, and use a lot of deodorant.
   C. People who get the plague develop purple and black marks and become smelly.
   D. People who get the plague start to behave like pigs.
4. Why might Dennis have thrown cans at the man running toward him and Mac?

   A. Dennis thought the man was hungry and wanted to provide him with cans of soup.
   B. Dennis thought the man was harmless and wanted to tease him by throwing cans at him.
   C. Dennis thought the man was dangerous and wanted to protect himself and Mac.
   D. Dennis thought the man was lost and wanted him to start walking in the opposite direction.

5. What is the main idea of this story?

   A. A few young people try to stay safe from crazed plague victims.
   B. Dennis and Mac meet a boy named Jeremiah at a gas station.
   C. A man with ripped clothes and red eyes runs out of a bathroom toward Mac and Dennis.
   D. A teenaged girl jumps into the back of a truck after being attacked by a zombie.

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   Imagery is descriptive language that focuses on one or more of the five senses: sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste. What senses does the imagery in these sentences focus on?

   A. sound, touch, and taste
   B. sight, touch, and taste
   C. touch, smell, and taste
   D. sight, sound, and smell
7. Read these sentences from the text.

"Mac and Dennis looked at the boy. He seemed healthy but scared."

How could these sentences be combined without changing their meaning?

A. Mac and Dennis looked at the boy, which seemed healthy but scared.
B. Mac and Dennis looked at the boy, who seemed healthy but scared.
C. Mac and Dennis looked at the boy, although healthy but scared.
D. Mac and Dennis looked at the boy and seemed healthy but scared.

8. Whom or what is a teenaged girl running from at the end of the story?

9. What color does the wound on the girl’s leg turn?

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Based on these sentences and the color of the girl's wound at the end of the story, what might happen to the girl? Support your answer with evidence from the text.
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8. Whom or what is a teenaged girl running from at the end of the story?

The girl at the end of the story is running from a "plagued person."
(Students may also respond that the girl is running from a zombie.)

9. What color does the wound on the girl's leg turn?

The wound on the girl's leg turns (dark) purple.
10. Read these sentences from the text.

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Based on these sentences and the color of the girl's wound at the end of the story, what might happen to the girl? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

Answers may vary, as long as they are supported by the text. For example, students may respond that the girl may be infected by the plague and turn into a "crazed" person/zombie. As evidence, they may point out the similarity between the "dark purple" of her leg wound and the "deep purple" marks on the skin of the crazed man at the gas station.