

“Searching for Survivors”
“The Run” Vol 3

“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.

GROUP QUESTIONS TO PREPARE FOR:

1. 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?

2. Imagery is descriptive language that focuses on one or more of the five senses: sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste. Explain the author's use of imagery in this volume, using at least 2 examples from the text.