

THE OUTBREAK

FIRST LIGHT



SKYLER NEWMAN

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CHAPTER 1

ABANDONED SHOP
DAY 1, 5:47 AM

As Ben lay asleep on the cold basement floor, Amy called out to him.

AMY: Ben, can you hear me?

AMY: Come on, Ben. I know you're in there.

AMY: Ben, you have to wake up.

Ben stirred until he finally opened his eyes and saw Amy standing over him.

BEN: Amy, is that you?

AMY: Oh, thank God. Yes, it's me.

Ben rubbed his eyes.

BEN: How long was I out?

AMY: I don't know exactly, but my guess is about six hours.

BEN: Damn. What happened to Andre?

AMY: Dead. Same with his brother.

BEN: How?

AMY: Ricky was infected. Andre didn't know. It all happened so fast, but I... took care of it.

BEN: Good. Well, I'm just glad you're okay.

AMY: How are you feeling?

BEN: Not good. I've got a horrible headache.

AMY: I'm surprised you're even still alive after what happened to you.

BEN: Me too. I guess having a high tolerance comes in handy after all.

Amy smiled.

AMY: Or you're just really damn lucky.

BEN: I don't think I'll be able to do too much for a few hours. I need to build up my strength, but I'll be fine.

AMY: Good. We need to get out of here as soon as possible.

BEN: Agreed. The highway isn't too much farther, but it'll be dangerous out there.

AMY: Yeah, well that's a chance we'll just have to take.

BEN: How's our inventory looking?

AMY: Luckily, nothing was taken when we were knocked out. We still have several rations of food and water, plus the medical supplies I took from the hospital.

BEN: And weapons? What do we have to defend ourselves with?

Amy picked up a crowbar from the floor.

AMY: Andre's knife, two pistols, and this. I found it in a back room this morning.

BEN: Nice. Mind if I take it?

AMY: It's all yours.

BEN: Thanks. You take Andre's knife and pistol, then we'll each have a gun and a backup weapon.

AMY: Sounds like a plan.

BEN: And Amy, there's, uh... something I've been wanting to talk to you about.

AMY: Yeah?

BEN: About before. How I got into the hospital.

AMY: I was told you checked yourself in for rehab.

BEN: Yeah, I did, but that's not the whole story.

AMY: Alright, I'm listening.

BEN: A little over two years ago, I was discharged from the military.

AMY: Well, that explains a lot. Why didn't you tell me before?

BEN: It's not something I really like to talk about.

AMY: What happened?

BEN: I was sent on a mission in Afghanistan. It was my second tour, so I had been over there before, but we always knew there was a chance we wouldn't make it back home.

BEN: It's just the way things were over there. Always unpredictable, like something could go wrong at any moment.

AMY: And something did.

BEN: Yeah. We got some bad intel from an informant, and it led us straight into an ambush.

AMY: Damn.

BEN: After we lost our squad leader, me and the other guy left both got hit. To this day I still don't know how the hell we managed to make it out of there alive, but we did.

AMY: Sounds like a miracle.

BEN: Yeah, I think it was. Afterwards, once I made it back to the States, I stayed in the hospital for about a month. Doctor had me hooked up on morphine for the pain, but after a while it wasn't my leg that needed it any more.

AMY: PTSD?

BEN: Yeah. Sometimes I'd wake up in the middle of the night in a cold sweat. I'd be shivering and burning up at the same time. Fever dreams, the doctor called 'em.

AMY: What happened after you got out of the hospital?

BEN: Well, let's just say I wasn't too happy about being cut off from my morphine supply, and since I no longer had access to it legally, I had to find a substitute.

AMY: So you turned to heroin.

BEN: Look, I was in a bad place, and it was hard enough just being back home again. The military gave me a way out, but now I was right back where I started. I had no idea what the hell to do with myself.

AMY: I can't imagine what that must have been like. And then all of this? All that's happened now?

BEN: I know this might sound crazy, but this situation is easier for me to deal with than the way it was before.

AMY: Well, you are a soldier after all. And I guess soldiers need a war to fight.

BEN: Yeah, I guess so.

AMY: You get some rest now, okay? We've got a long day ahead of us.

BEN: Yeah, and thanks, Amy. For not giving up on me.

AMY: Never.

KINGSTON APARTMENTS

DAY 1, 7:10 AM

Adam stood at the window as he heard Marcus enter the living room.

MARCUS: You're up early.

ADAM: Couldn't sleep.

MARCUS: Me neither. Coffee?

ADAM: Yeah, that'd be great. Thanks.

MARCUS: No problem. Oh, and hey, why don't you turn on the news, see if there's any new information?

ADAM: Good idea.

Adam turned on the TV as Marcus headed to the kitchen.

NEWS ANCHOR: Earlier today, President Newell declared a state of emergency, enacting martial law in the United States. The government has issued warnings to all citizens to stay inside their homes, and keep all entrances secured until help from the military arrives.

ADAM: Shit. Marcus, come see this.

MARCUS: What's up?

ADAM: The president declared martial law.

MARCUS: Great, that means they're going to start quarantining the cities, and you know what comes next if they can't contain the infection?

ADAM: No, but something tells me it's not good.

MARCUS: They'll start firebombing the cities. They'll burn it all to the ground if they have to, regardless of who's left inside. Anything to wipe out the infection.

ADAM: Then we need to get out of the city as soon as possible. I'm going to call Kate and tell her what's going on.

MARCUS: I'll grab our gear.

ADAM: Good. Let's make this quick.

Adam grabbed his phone and called Kate.

KATE: Hello?

ADAM: Morning, Kate.

KATE: Good morning.

ADAM: How'd you sleep?

KATE: Not too bad, actually, considering the circumstances.

ADAM: That's good to hear. Um, I'm afraid I have some bad news.

KATE: Oh no. What is it?

ADAM: The president declared martial law this morning.

KATE: Isn't that a good thing? The military can protect us.

ADAM: We're not sure what their intentions are going to be.

KATE: What do you mean?

ADAM: We think they're going to quarantine the city and send any remaining citizens into FEMA camps, but there's no way to know for sure.

KATE: But isn't that better than being stuck out here on our own without protection?

ADAM: I don't know. We could get separated, or worse, they could think we're infected, and...

KATE: Kill us.

ADAM: Look, there's no telling what could happen when the military shows up. Marcus thinks they'll firebomb the city if they can't contain the infection. We just can't take any chances.

KATE: I understand. I'll tell Lindsay to get ready to leave immediately.

ADAM: Good. Marcus and I are getting ready to leave now, and we'll be there as soon as we—

The lights and TV in the apartment shut off abruptly.

KATE: Adam, what is it?

ADAM: The power just went out.

KATE: It's still on here, but probably not for much longer. Hurry up and get over here, okay?

ADAM: We're on our way now. See you soon.

KATE: I love you.

ADAM: I love you, too.

Adam ended the call, and Marcus entered the room.

MARCUS: I'm all set to go. No reason to stay here with the power out, anyway.

ADAM: Yeah, perfect timing, I guess.

MARCUS: So, how far is Kate's from here?

ADAM: Not far. Only a ten minute drive, but who knows how the roads are going to be.

MARCUS: Ten minutes could turn into an hour if we run into trouble.

ADAM: Then let's be careful. We'll only take back roads if we can. Better safe than sorry.

MARCUS: Definitely. My car's parked in the private lot behind the building. Let's go.

ABANDONED SHOP
DAY 1, 7:15 AM

As Ben rested on the floor, Amy called out to him.

AMY: Ben, wake up.

Ben woke up immediately.

BEN: What is it?

AMY: I just saw two military vehicles drive by.

Ben stood up and looked out the window.

BEN: You're sure they were military?

AMY: Definitely.

BEN: The government must have declared martial law. Now the military's going to start quarantining the city.

AMY: Can we trust them?

BEN: Some will be trustworthy, but not all of them. If their orders are to contain citizens, then there's no telling what they'll do with us.

AMY: Then we can't take any chances. We have to go now.

BEN: Yeah, better to leave before they're fully deployed.

AMY: Are you sure you're going to be okay out there?

BEN: I'll be fine. It's not like I have much of a choice, anyway. Let's do this.

CITY STREETS
DAY 1, 7:20 AM

When Ben and Amy entered the streets of the city, they stared in disbelief at the devastation from the night before.

AMY: Damn, it looks like hell out here.

BEN: Keep your eyes open for any movement. There could still be stragglers around.

AMY: Got it.

They continued forward down the street and stopped at an intersection.

BEN: We're not too far from Howard Street. We should be able to cut through these side streets to get there.

AMY: Good idea. The main roads are probably packed.

BEN: Yeah, and that's where the military will look first. As long as we avoid the main areas of the city, we should be able to slip by unnoticed.

They heard a growl in the distance as they continued down the road.

AMY: Do you hear that?

BEN: Sounds like an infected. Let's take a look.

They took cover behind a truck as Ben peaked around the corner.

AMY: Do you see it?

BEN: Yeah, it's in the parking garage.

AMY: What should we do?

BEN: We gotta take it out. It's too much of a risk keeping it alive.

AMY: Alright, but we have to stay quiet.

BEN: I'll make it quick.

AMY: I've got your back.

Armed with the crowbar, Ben crept silently toward the infected.

BEN: Okay, nice and easy now.

Ben swiftly smashed the crowbar into the infected's head, knocking it to the ground, then called out to Amy.

BEN: It's down.

AMY: Alright, I'm coming.

Amy quickly made her way over to Ben.

AMY: Nice work. Hopefully there aren't too many more around.

BEN: They're probably pretty scattered by now, but that means we'll have to be extra careful. They could be anywhere.

AMY: Yeah, well, it can't be much farther to Howard Street now. If we keep moving, maybe we'll be able to avoid any more encounters.

BEN: Let's hope so. Come on.

HOWARD STREET
DAY 1, 7:24 AM

When Ben and Amy reached Howard Street, the entire block was filled with empty cars.

BEN: This doesn't look good.

AMY: We might be able to find a way through.

BEN: Well, this is the quickest way to the highway, so we have to try.

AMY: All of these empty cars. I guess the people just abandoned them.

BEN: They probably had no choice. Backed up the way it is, there'd be no way out.

As they continued forward, they heard an infected roaming around a few feet away.

AMY: Did you see that? I think there's an infected over there.

BEN: I'm on it.

Ben quickly bashed the infected over the head with the crowbar, knocking it to the ground.

BEN: Amy, look out! Another one!

AMY: I got it!

Amy took down the infected with the pistol.

BEN: You okay?

AMY: I'm fine.

BEN: Shit, looks like there's more of them.

AMY: The gunshot must have gotten their attention.

The entire block became filled with infected, and they were pinned down behind a car.

BEN: There's too many. We can't take all of them.

A gunshot rang out in the distance, taking out one of the approaching infected.

BEN: Sniper, get down!

The sniper called out from the top of Howard Hotel across the street.

SNIPER: Over here!

As Amy looked closer, she saw that the sniper was wearing a police uniform.

AMY: Wait a minute. Is that Logan?

LOGAN: Get inside, I'll cover you!

BEN: You know that person?

AMY: Yes, that's Officer Logan, one of the cops I was with before. We can trust her.

BEN: Alright, come on!

Ben and Amy started moving toward the hotel entrance.

AMY: We're coming!

LOGAN: I'll meet you in the lobby!

LOGAN: Alright, you ugly fucks. Time for you to die.

Logan took down the stragglers trailing Ben and Amy one by one.

LOGAN: Yeah, you like that, fuckers! That's what happens when you come into my territory!

BEN: Come on, let's get inside.

HOWARD HOTEL
DAY 1, 7:28 AM

Ben and Amy waited for Logan in the lobby of the hotel.

BEN: You're sure that's Logan? She sounded, uh...

AMY: Yeah, she's a little, uh-

Logan entered the lobby.

LOGAN: Crazy? Is that what you were gonna say?

AMY: No, uh, we just meant-

LOGAN: Forget it. I'm just fuckin' with you.

AMY: Oh, well, I just wanted to say thanks... for saving our asses out there.

LOGAN: Don't mention it. It's good to see a familiar face again. I thought you died in the riot.

AMY: I thought you did, too. I was really lucky.

LOGAN: Same here. Vasquez and Moore weren't so lucky.

AMY: I'm sorry.

LOGAN: Yeah, well, what do you expect in the fuckin' apocalypse? They were good cops, but that doesn't matter any more. You can only hold out for so long.

AMY: Well, hopefully together our chances will be better.

LOGAN: Yeah. So, who's your friend?

AMY: Oh, sorry. This is Ben. He's ex-military.

BEN: Hey.

LOGAN: Ex-military, huh? Well, good to meet you. Always good to have another trained soldier around.

BEN: Same to you.

LOGAN: So, what are your plans? You still tryin' to get outta the city?

AMY: Yeah, we were hoping to take Howard Street to the highway, but it looks pretty blocked off.

LOGAN: Yeah, that way's not gonna work. It's crawling with infected, and it's too slow-going with all the cars piled up.

BEN: Is there another route we can take?

LOGAN: Well, there's Westridge Avenue on the other side of this building. It's probably not as backed up as Howard, but even with the three of us it will still be dangerous.

BEN: Anywhere we go will be dangerous, so we'll just have to make due. Staying here is not an option.

LOGAN: Agreed. I wasn't gonna wait here much longer myself, but I didn't want to travel alone if I could help it.

AMY: Have you seen any military vehicles pass by? I saw two earlier this morning.

LOGAN: No, but that doesn't mean they're not around. I guess we'll just have to take our chances.

BEN: Alright, we leave for Westridge in thirty minutes. That should be enough time to rest up and prepare. Sound good?

AMY: Fine by me.

LOGAN: I'm in.

BEN: Good, then let's get moving.

CHAPTER 2

CITY STREETS

DAY 1, 7:32 AM

As Adam and Marcus drove through the city, they saw masses of corpses and abandoned cars scattered throughout the streets.

ADAM: It doesn't look good out here. You think it's this bad all over the city?

MARCUS: I don't know. If the only local source of the infection was at Memorial Hospital, then I can't see how it could have spread this far, unless...

ADAM: There was more than one source.

MARCUS: Right, but there haven't been any other local reports.

ADAM: Well, none that we know of, anyway, but I did hear reports of more outbreaks at hospitals around the country. Something about it being some kind of coordinated terrorist attack.

MARCUS: Not a bad theory. Nothing else really makes sense. There's no way it was just an accident.

ADAM: Well, all I know is that whoever did this would have needed some major resources to pull this off.

MARCUS: You think it was an inside job? Like the government or military?

ADAM: I don't know. Who else would have the ability to do something like this?

MARCUS: One of those mega billion dollar corporations, maybe?

ADAM: But what would they achieve from this? What's in it for them?

MARCUS: The only thing I can think of is that it was some sort of power play, a push to change the world order so they'd come out on top once this is all over.

ADAM: Sounds about right. I guess they didn't care too much about the collateral damage.

MARCUS: Have they ever? Look at all the wars that have broken out over the years. Thousands have died in their chess game, and all for what? More money, power?

ADAM: It's about control. It's all those bigwig millionaires out there trying to play God without any care about the consequences of their actions.

MARCUS: Well, this time they went too far. I don't know how they expect society to recover from this.

ADAM: Maybe that's the point. It's not supposed to recover, and after a few years, who do you think will show up as the savior?

MARCUS: The same ones who did this in the first place.

ADAM: Exactly. It's fucking sinister, man.

MARCUS: Yeah. So, how close are we?

ADAM: Almost there. Make a right at the next light.

MARCUS: Got it.

As they continued down the road, they saw a camouflaged truck parked down the street.

ADAM: Oh shit. Is that a military truck?

MARCUS: I didn't think they'd be here so soon.

ADAM: We can't let them see us. We have to get off the main road.

MARCUS: We're almost there.

ADAM: We can't risk it. Just turn right here.

MARCUS: If you say so.

Marcus made the turn, and they continued down a side street.

ADAM: Don't worry, I know an alternate route from here. I've taken it a few times when traffic was too heavy.

MARCUS: Well, hopefully the road is clear. These side streets are pretty tight.

ADAM: We'll just have to deal with whatever comes our way.

Marcus took it slow as they made their way down the narrow street.

MARCUS: I don't like this. We're passing a lot of abandoned cars.

ADAM: Just take it slow, and keep an eye out. It's not too much farther.

MARCUS: The distance isn't what I'm worried about--it's if we'll even be able to make it through at all.

ADAM: Good point.

Marcus stopped abruptly as they entered another side street.

MARCUS: Great, it's all backed up.

ADAM: We might still be able to make it through.

MARCUS: We should turn back. It's too risky.

ADAM: We're almost there. If we can just get past this—

A pack of infected started rushing toward them.

MARCUS: Shit, we've been spotted!

MARCUS: They're blocking the road!

ADAM: Then run 'em over!

MARCUS: But--

ADAM: Just do it!

MARCUS: Fine!

As the infected rushed toward the vehicle, Marcus smashed straight into them, crushing them under the tires of the SUV.

ADAM: Why aren't we moving?!

MARCUS: The bodies are stuck under the car!

Adam checked behind them as more infected approached the back of the vehicle.

ADAM: Behind us!

MARCUS: Shit!

ADAM: Get us outta here!

MARCUS: I got it!

Marcus immediately floored the vehicle, crushing the infected in front of them, and leaving the others behind.

MARCUS: I think we lost 'em.

ADAM: That was too close.

CITY STREETS
DAY 1, 7:46 AM

Adam and Marcus continued toward Kate's apartment building.

MARCUS: You know, Adam, sometimes I swear you're trying to get me killed.

ADAM: I assure you it's not intentional.

MARCUS: I still can't believe this is even happening. It's like being in a dream.

ADAM: Yeah, a really bad dream that you can never wake up from.

MARCUS: I suppose it could be worse. At least we have a chance to survive. There'd be no escaping an erupting super volcano or meteor strike.

ADAM: And that's supposed to make me feel better, how?

MARCUS: By taking your mind off the masses of vicious infected lurking around outside.

ADAM: Oh yeah, that makes me feel so much better.

MARCUS: Always glad to help.

ADAM: Alright, we should be coming up on Kate's building within the next minute or so.

MARCUS: You wanna give her a call?

ADAM: Yeah, good idea.

Adam dialed Kate on the phone.

MARCUS: Oh shit. Adam, look.

As they passed by the apartment building, they saw two military trucks and several soldiers patrolling the entrance.

ADAM: They must be searching for survivors.

MARCUS: It makes sense that they'd target the major apartment complexes first. That's what I would do.

ADAM: This isn't good. How the hell are we supposed to get in there with those troops outside?

MARCUS: Maybe there's another entrance we can use.

ADAM: The parking garage could work.

MARCUS: As long as they're not patrolling it.

ADAM: Well, it's not like we have much of a choice. Let's give it a shot.

MARCUS: Alright, I'll circle around back.

ADAM: Come on, Kate. Pick up the phone.

MARCUS: No answer?

ADAM: Just her voicemail. Not a good sign.

MARCUS: Don't jump to conclusions. We don't know anything for sure yet.

ADAM: You're right. Maybe she just didn't hear it or something.

MARCUS: Don't worry, we'll make it to her. You have to believe that.

ADAM: I know. We've come too far to fall short now.

They stopped outside of a back entrance to the apartment building.

MARCUS: It looks like we can get into the parking garage from there. What do you think?

ADAM: Let's try it. No point wasting any more time.

MARCUS: Alright, let's make this quick.

They exited the vehicle and went through the back entrance.

ADAM: Looks clear. No sign of any soldiers.

MARCUS: What's her apartment number?

ADAM: 316.

After they made their way through the parking garage, they scaled a flight of stairs and came upon a door.

MARCUS: Alright, this door should lead us inside. Hopefully we can slip by unnoticed.

ADAM: As long as they don't have any patrols.

MARCUS: Just keep an eye out.

They continued toward the front entrance and spotted the patrol of soldiers inside. Marcus continued to the stairs as Adam went to get a closer look.

ADAM: There's the lobby. Looks like they've got it all covered.

A soldier peered out a window near Adam.

MARCUS: Adam, watch out!

ADAM: Oh shit!

Adam quickly moved out of sight against the wall. Once the soldier returned to his patrol, Adam made his way over to the stairwell where Marcus stood.

MARCUS: That was close.

ADAM: Come on, let's keep going.

They continued up the stairs toward Kate's apartment.

MARCUS: I'm surprised they're using so many troops here. I wouldn't think they'd waste the resources.

ADAM: The quicker they wipe out the remaining stragglers, the quicker they can plunder the city.

MARCUS: Makes sense to me. I'm sure they'd only resort to extreme measures if they had no other choice.

ADAM: Right. No point in taking any unnecessary risks.

Once they reached the third floor, they continued down the hallway.

MARCUS: There's people in the hallway. Take cover.

Adam and Marcus took cover against the wall, peering around the corner at two soldiers as they questioned a man and woman.

SCARED WOMAN: Please, sir. He's not infected, I swear!

JACKSON: What's wrong with his hand? Why's he got it all bandaged up?

WOUNDED MAN: I... I cut it when I was cooking!

SCARED WOMAN: It's true! He's telling you the truth!

LYNCH: Jackson, take the woman, and dispose of the man.

ADAM: No fuckin' way.

JACKSON: Yes, sir.

WOUNDED MAN: No!

The soldier shot the man dead, and the woman cried out in terror as she was escorted away.

ADAM: Oh my God.

Adam ran broke off down the hallway.

MARCUS: Adam, wait!

ADAM: I won't let them take Kate!

SKYLINE APARTMENTS

DAY 1, 7:52 AM

Kate and Lindsay stood against the wall in Kate's living room as two soldiers stood guard in front of them.

LINDSAY: Are you gonna let us go or not?

MITCHELL: Shit, looks like we've got a feisty one here, Rod.

RODRIGUEZ: Look, lady, you either come with us, or you get a bullet in the head. Your choice.

MITCHELL: You know, it'd be a real shame if we had to let a sweet piece of ass like that go to waste, wouldn't it, Rod?

RODRIGUEZ: A damn shame.

LINDSAY: You don't scare me, assholes.

KATE: Just do what they say, Lindsay. There's no point in arguing with them.

MITCHELL: You know, your sister's got a point there, Lindsay. You should really listen to her more often. So, what do you say? You gonna come peacefully or not?

LINDSAY: Fuck you.

Sergeant Mitchell approached Lindsay.

MITCHELL: You've really got some fire in you. I like that in a woman. Makes for a great time. But right now, you're just pissin' me off.

Adam and Marcus entered the room.

ADAM: Don't you fuckin' touch them!

KATE: Adam!

Mitchell turned to Adam.

MITCHELL: Who the fuck are you?

ADAM: It doesn't matter who I am. Those two are coming with me.

MITCHELL: Oh, so you must be the boyfriend. Well, isn't that fuckin' romantic? Almost makes me want to tear up. Too bad I'm not in the cryin' mood right now.

ADAM: Why don't you just let us go? We never asked for your help.

MITCHELL: Look, buddy, I don't make the rules around here, okay? I just take orders, and the orders say to evacuate all non-infected citizens out of the city.

ADAM: You don't have to follow those orders. You don't have to do anything. No one will even know we're still alive. Everyone gets what they want, and no one gets hurt.

Mitchell moved closer to Adam, blocking his path.

MITCHELL: That's a nice thought, it really is, but that's not gonna happen.

ADAM: Then it appears we have a problem.

MITCHELL: And what exactly are you gonna do about it?

Another soldier entered the room.

LYNCH: What the hell is going on in here?

MITCHELL: Sir, these citizens were--

LYNCH: Are they infected?

MITCHELL: They don't appear to be, sir, but--

LYNCH: Then we need them alive.

MITCHELL: Yes, sir.

Colonel Lynch escorted Adam, Marcus, Kate, and Lindsay out of the apartment, and they continued down the hallway.

LYNCH: My apologies, folks. It seems the situation here has gotten a bit out of hand.

MARCUS: Where are you taking us?

LYNCH: Fort Rockwell. There are facilities for citizens there. I assure you it is well protected, and our staff will take great care of your people.

ADAM: So we're being quarantined.

LYNCH: If that's how you want to see it, but no need to worry, the future of the city is safely in our hands.

CHAPTER 3

HOWARD HOTEL
DAY 1, 7:58 AM

As Ben waited in a lounge room upstairs, Amy approached him.

AMY: Hey Ben, you ready to get going?

BEN: Yeah, just need to grab my gear.

AMY: Alright, I'm gonna find Logan. Meet us in the lobby when you're ready.

BEN: You got it.

AMY: Oh, and Ben?

BEN: Yeah?

AMY: How are you holding up?

BEN: I'm hangin' in there. Still tired, but the adrenaline keeps me goin'.

AMY: Got it. Did you manage to get any rest?

BEN: I tried, but it didn't do much good. Can't get my mind off, you know, everything.

AMY: I know what you mean. It's a lot to handle.

BEN: Yeah, one minute you're just livin' your life, the next... everything you had before is gone.

AMY: Did you have anyone before? Family, a girlfriend?

BEN: Not really. Well, I had family, but we weren't exactly close. I haven't talked to my sister since I left for boot camp.

AMY: What about your parents?

BEN: Been even longer since I talked to them.

AMY: Why, did something happen?

BEN: Well, my dad was a career soldier, so he was away all the time, and when my mom got tired of raising my sister and I alone, she left my dad and took us with her.

AMY: That couldn't have been easy for you and your sister.

BEN: We were pretty young when it happened, but yeah, I think it screwed us up pretty bad. We weren't exactly the best kids growin' up. Made it pretty tough on my mother. I guess that's why she started drinkin'.

AMY: I can see why you're not in contact with them any more. They didn't exactly make things easy for you.

BEN: No, they didn't, but somehow they still managed to rub off on me. I swore the last thing I'd ever do was become a soldier like my father and a drinker like my mother, but here I am, a veteran and an ex-addict.

AMY: We all become like our parents in some ways, but you're not them. You're you, and you have to remember that.

BEN: I know, it's just ironic when you think about it. You try so hard not to turn out like them growin' up, but that's exactly what happens. I guess it's inevitable.

Logan entered the room.

LOGAN: Hey, are you two done jabberin' or what? We've got work to do.

AMY: She's right. We should go.

BEN: Yeah, see you downstairs.

HOWARD HOTEL
DAY 1, 8:01 AM

Ben, Amy, and Logan stood at the front counter in the lobby.

BEN: Okay, now that we're all here, let's get down to business. What's the plan, Logan?

LOGAN: Assuming Westridge is passable, and there's no interference from the military, it'll be five miles until the next exit on the highway, which is Miller Street.

AMY: Miller Street. That takes us to Jamestown, right?

LOGAN: Yeah. Once we make it into town, the local police station is only a few blocks away. If we can get inside, then we should be able to restock our supplies and take refuge there for the night.

BEN: Sounds like a solid plan. Where do we go if we can't get inside the police station?

LOGAN: I don't know. Maybe a local shop or an abandoned house. We'll have to scope it out once we're there, but at least we have a starting point.

AMY: It's better than nothing.

BEN: How are we on supplies?

LOGAN: I have enough ammo for my rifle to get us into town, but not much more. I managed to recover Moore's shotgun after he died during the riot, so here you go. It's all yours.

Logan handed the shotgun to Ben.

BEN: Damn, I haven't used one of these babies in a long time. Thanks.

LOGAN: Take good care of it. That man was like a father to me.

BEN: I will.

AMY: I still have half a clip left in my pistol, but we're getting low on food and water. We'll need to restock as soon as we get into town.

LOGAN: Once we find shelter, we'll make that our top priority.

BEN: Alright, sounds like we've got all our bases covered.

LOGAN: Just remember, once we commit out there, there's no comin' back. It'll be too dangerous. So make sure you're prepared to go all the way.

BEN: Got it.

AMY: I'm ready.

LOGAN: Then let's go kick some fuckin' ass.

**WESTRIDGE AVENUE
DAY 1, 8:17 AM**

A sea of abandoned cars littered the road as Ben, Amy, and Logan made their way on foot to the highway.

BEN: Well, you were right about it not being as bad as Howard Street, but it's still pretty backed up out here.

LOGAN: I never promised it'd be clear. I just said it'd be passable.

AMY: Well, as long as it doesn't get any worse than this, I think we'll be fine.

LOGAN: Don't get your hopes up. Just because we haven't seen any infected yet doesn't mean they're not out here.

BEN: We usually hear them first. They're not particularly intelligent. They just react on impulse.

AMY: It's like they're catatonic except for their basic motor skills and instincts. They just seem to lurk around without any motivation like zombies.

LOGAN: More like rabid dogs.

BEN: Well, whatever this disease is, it's obviously affecting their brain chemistry.

AMY: Like rabies for humans.

LOGAN: Sounds about right.

BEN: Before Dr. Ellis died, he told me that the blood is contagious. Then Shaina said her husband turned not too long after he was wounded by another infected.

LOGAN: So what are you sayin'?

BEN: The disease spreads through the transmission of blood from one person to another.

AMY: And that probably goes for saliva, as well.

LOGAN: So no make-out sessions with the infected. Got it.

BEN: It just makes me wonder how this could have started in the first place. Do you think tainted blood was brought into the hospital?

AMY: It's certainly possible, but it's a highly regulated process. It would've taken some major planning to pull it off.

BEN: Or in other words, a conspiracy.

AMY: Exactly.

LOGAN: Shit, I believe it. Those fuckers in the government and military will do anything to get what they want, especially if they're not the ones who have to get their hands dirty.

BEN: Well, I think we're onto something here, but we don't know anything for sure yet, so let's not point any fingers. How close are we to the exit now?

LOGAN: We're about a mile and a half in, so the turnpike should be right up ahead.

BEN: Alright, let's keep moving.

LOGAN: Roger that.

MACARTHUR TURNPIKE

DAY 1, 8:29 AM

As Ben, Amy, and Logan continued to the highway, they approached a tunnel up ahead.

AMY: This must be the turnpike.

LOGAN: Yeah, if it's not too backed up, we should be able to take it for the next few miles.

They continued forward into the tunnel.

BEN: I don't like being enclosed like this. Keep an eye out for any emergency exits in case we run into trouble.

AMY: So many abandoned cars. I wonder what happened to all the people.

LOGAN: They must have kept goin' on foot.

BEN: Or maybe they found another way out. There must be somethin' up ahead.

AMY: I don't know. The backup looks like it's getting worse.

LOGAN: Yeah, this doesn't feel right.

The sound of a crying baby echoed in the distance.

BEN: Hold up. Do you hear that?

AMY: Is that a baby?

LOGAN: It's still alive!

Logan broke off toward the baby.

BEN: Logan, wait!

LOGAN: We have to find it!

A pack of infected started rushing toward them.

AMY: Oh no.

BEN: Logan, stop!

AMY: Infected!

LOGAN: Fuck!

Logan stopped and took down two infected with her rifle.

BEN: Shit, look out!

Three more came toward Ben, and he blasted them with the shotgun.

AMY: I've got these two!

Amy shot two more dead with the pistol.

BEN: Logan, on your right!

Ben took down another approaching Logan.

AMY: Behind you, watch out!

Logan quickly turned and shot another one dead.

AMY: There's an exit over there!

BEN: Come on, let's move!

They quickly made their way to the exit as the pack of infected swarmed toward them.

LOGAN: What about the baby?

BEN: It's too dangerous! We have to go!

LOGAN: We can't just leave it there!

AMY: Logan, you have to let it go.

LOGAN: I know, I just...

LOGAN: I'm sorry.

MADISON HIGHWAY

DAY 1, 8:51 AM

The morning sun shone down on Ben, Amy, and Logan as they made their way down the deserted highway.

BEN: Logan, do you know where we are?

LOGAN: We came out on the west side of the highway. Jamestown is northeast from here.

AMY: How many miles?

LOGAN: I'd say about seven. Our detour took us pretty far off route.

BEN: Alright, we'll have to change plans, then. We're not gonna be able to make it to Jamestown today, but if we can find somewhere safe to stay for the night, then we can travel the rest of the way tomorrow.

LOGAN: Yeah, that's probably our best bet. If I remember correctly, there should be a motel a few miles from here.

BEN: Perfect. It'd be nice to sleep in a bed again.

AMY: As long as it's safe.

LOGAN: I doubt there will be any better choices, so we'll have to make due with whatever we find.

BEN: If we have to clear it out, then we will.

AMY: Well, judging by all these abandoned cars, we may have a bigger problem on our hands. It looks like a deathtrap out here.

BEN: Or a graveyard.

LOGAN: Yeah, I don't like this either. Be ready for anything.

BEN: God, it's even worse than the tunnel. There must have been an attack out here. There's no other reasonable explanation.

AMY: But how could any of the infected even make it out this far?

LOGAN: Some of the people must have gotten infected in the city and then tried to drive out.

BEN: And it wouldn't have taken long for it to spread. In less than an hour, every person in proximity could have gotten infected.

LOGAN: Unless they were smart enough to escape before that happened.

An infected's growl rang out in the distance.

AMY: Uh, guys, do you hear that?

More guttural sounds filled the air.

LOGAN: Oh no, not again.

BEN: Come on, let's go check it out.

AMY: I'm not sure that's the best idea.

BEN: We have to see what's out there.

LOGAN: Cut the chatter. We're not alone out here.

As they continued forward, they spotted a massive horde of infected in front of them.

AMY: Oh my God.

LOGAN: Guys, I think we may have a problem...

BEN: Run!

The horde of infected burst toward them as they ran quickly to a fork in the road.

LOGAN: Keep heading north! The motel should be up ahead!

BEN: Oh fuck!

As two infected approached Ben, he blasted them with the shotgun.

BEN: Amy, where are you?

AMY: Over here!

BEN: Watch out!

Amy took down another infected with the pistol.

LOGAN: Come on, this way!

They headed down the fork in the road.

AMY: They're still behind us!

BEN: Just keep running!

Amy spotted a sign that said Whispering Oaks Motel in the distance.

AMY: There's the motel!

LOGAN: Secure a room! I'll hold them off!

Logan picked off three more infected as Ben and Amy made their way up the stairs to the motel.

BEN: Come on!

AMY: We better hurry.

BEN: In here!

Ben kicked open the door of a motel room.

BEN: It's clear.

Amy called out to Logan from the balcony.

AMY: Logan, it's clear! Come on!

LOGAN: On my way!

AMY: Behind you!

A straggler ran toward Logan, but when she tried to fire her rifle, it was empty.

LOGAN: Shit, I'm out!

Amy tried to line up a shot with the pistol, but Logan was in the way.

AMY: I can't get a shot!

The infected was only a few feet from Logan now, approaching quickly.

LOGAN: Fuck, fuck, fuck!

Ben ran down from the balcony.

BEN: Logan, get down!

Just as the infected lunged toward Logan, she dove out of the way, and Ben blasted it with the shotgun.

LOGAN: Thanks, that was close.

BEN: I think that's all of 'em. Come on, let's get inside.

CHAPTER 4

WHISPERING OAKS MOTEL

DAY 1, 8:24 PM

As day turned to night, Amy and Logan held up in the motel room, while Ben searched for supplies.

AMY: Hey, Logan. How are you holding up?

LOGAN: I'm hangin' in there. Just can't stop thinkin' about that baby, ya know?

AMY: Yeah, me too. I can still hear it crying in my head. It's just... horrible.

LOGAN: It's not like me to react the way I did. I'm usually in control of my emotions, but when I heard that baby, it just brought me back to the past.

AMY: What happened?

LOGAN: Back in college, I had this boyfriend named Tommy. Like most kids in school, we were pretty wild and crazy, and well, one thing led to another, and one day I found out I was pregnant.

AMY: Wow, that must have been quite the wake up call.

LOGAN: Yeah, it really fucked up my life, actually. Since I wanted to keep the baby, I had to drop out of college, and my dream of being a news reporter went right out the window.

AMY: A news reporter, huh? Interesting.

LOGAN: Yeah, I thought it would be exciting to drive around the city coverin' crimes and murders and everything, but I guess it just wasn't in the cards for me.

AMY: So what happened next?

LOGAN: Well, Tommy and I decided we'd stay together and get married after we had the baby, but that never happened. I had a miscarriage, and well, there's only so much a person can take, ya know?

AMY: Oh God, I'm so sorry.

LOGAN: Ah, it's in the past now. It may as well have been a whole 'nother life ago.

AMY: So that's why you reacted so strongly to the baby.

LOGAN: Yeah, I guess so. After all that time I spent preparin' myself to be a mother, I guess that instinct is still in me somewhere.

AMY: So how did you end up as a cop?

LOGAN: Well, after the miscarriage, Tommy and I broke up, and I was left wonderin' what the hell to do next. I figured my shot of bein' a reporter was over, so I looked for somethin' else that would give me that same level of excitement.

LOGAN: So, I became a cop. I guess I figured if I couldn't have any children myself, then at least I could protect other people's. And, you know, it was a job I could bury myself in. I wasn't exactly the most happy and healthy person after all I'd been through.

AMY: I don't blame you. That must have been really tough.

LOGAN: Yeah, it was. God, I don't know why I'm telling you all this. I haven't talked about it in years.

AMY: It's okay. This is what I'm here for. You can always talk to me about anything.

LOGAN: Thanks, Amy.

Ben entered the room with a bottle of whiskey and three glasses.

BEN: Hey, look what I found in the back office. Still cold, too. Who wants some?

LOGAN: Oh, nice. I could use some of that right about now.

AMY: Me too.

BEN: Alright, I guess we'll have ourselves a little party, then.

AMY: What are we celebrating?

LOGAN: I think not being dead is good for starters.

AMY: Works for me.

Ben poured three glasses and handed them out.

BEN: To not being dead, then. Cheers.

They raised their glasses and drank down the whiskey.

LOGAN: You know, Ben, I've gotta say, I was impressed by the way you handled yourself today.

BEN: Ah, it's nothin'. Just doin' what's necessary to stay alive.

LOGAN: Well, if that means savin' my ass, then thank you.

BEN: Just returnin' the favor. If it wasn't for you, we probably wouldn't have made it this far in the first place.

AMY: He's right. We owe you a lot, Logan.

LOGAN: You don't owe me shit. I'm a cop. I swore an oath to protect and serve, and even if I'm the only one left, I'll continue to do that until the day I die.

BEN: Well, we're lucky to have you with us. Not everyone we've met has been quite so trustworthy.

LOGAN: Yeah, well that's people for ya. Always lookin' out for nothin' but themselves, especially in times like this.

AMY: We just can't forget there are good people out there, too. We won't be able to make it like this forever. Eventually, we'll have to expand our group.

BEN: You're right, but we have to be careful. We can't just trust everyone we come across. We need a system.

LOGAN: People can be deceptive. I've seen it too many times on the job. One minute they're on your side, the next they're tryin' to stab you in the back. All we can do is keep an eye on them, and stay well-armed just in case.

AMY: Violence can't always be the answer. Without trust, we'll never be able to sleep at night.

LOGAN: Well, they'll just have to earn our trust the same way we all did. Until then, anything's possible.

BEN: Agreed. Well, I think that about does it for me. We should all get some rest.

LOGAN: You two go ahead. I'm gonna stay up and keep watch.

AMY: Are you sure? We should be safe in here for the night.

LOGAN: I'm not takin' any chances. Besides, I don't think I can sleep, anyway. I'm too wired.

BEN: Well, if you change your mind, wake me up, and I'll take over for you.

LOGAN: Will do. I just hope we can find a way out of here in the morning.

AMY: I'm sure we'll find a way.

BEN: We always do.

WHISPERING OAKS MOTEL

DAY 2, 7:16 AM

The next morning, Logan entered the room as the sound of a helicopter rang out in the distance.

LOGAN: Guys, wake up.

BEN: What is it?

LOGAN: Listen.

AMY: Is that a helicopter?

LOGAN: Yeah, come take a look.

They went out to the balcony and spotted the helicopter in the sky.

BEN: That's a military chopper.

LOGAN: That's what I thought.

AMY: They must be searching for survivors.

BEN: Or just scoutin' the territory. They'll be keepin' track of the roads and the movement of the infected.

LOGAN: Either way, it's not gonna take 'em much longer to find this place. It's the only shelter near the highway.

BEN: Yeah, you're probably right.

AMY: So what should we do? If we stay here, they'll find us.

BEN: We have to make a choice. We either leave now, or take our chances with the military.

LOGAN: I hate to say this, but goin' with them may be our best option. We're low on supplies, and we still have miles to go before we can get to Jamestown.

AMY: And with that horde out there, who knows how safe the roads will be. I think Logan is right. This could be a blessing in disguise.

BEN: Or just the lesser evil. We came all this way to avoid gettin' caught by the military, remember? Are you sure you want to do this?

LOGAN: Of course not, but what's the worst that could happen?

BEN: Well, barring they don't just shoot us on sight, we'll probably be placed in a work camp at Fort Rockwell.

LOGAN: But you're ex-military. Don't you think tellin' them that could give us some leverage?

BEN: What do you mean?

LOGAN: I don't know, maybe we can work out a deal or somethin'. Scout for them in exchange for supplies.

AMY: What, like mercenaries?

LOGAN: I guess so. There has to be somethin' we can do.

BEN: It's worth a shot. I'll see what I can do, but I can't guarantee anything.

LOGAN: Well, that's better than nothin'.

AMY: Look, the chopper's getting closer.

The helicopter was heading straight toward the motel.

BEN: We don't have much time. Grab your gear.

They went back inside, grabbing their weapons and backpacks.

LOGAN: I hope this is worth it.

BEN: Looks like we're about to find out.

The helicopter landed on the roof on the other side of the motel, and the pilot called out to them through the intercom.

PILOT: If there are any survivors inside the building, come out now if you wish to be evacuated!

AMY: I guess this is it.

BEN: Come on, let's go.

PILOT: I repeat, if there are any survivors inside the building, come out now if you wish to be evacuated!

They went outside to the balcony, waving to the helicopter.

BEN: Over here!

Two soldiers piled out of the helicopter and made their way toward them on the balcony.

SOLDIER: Stay where you are, and keep your hands where we can see them!

Ben turned to Amy and Logan.

BEN: Just stay calm, and let me do the talkin'.

The two soldiers approached them.

CHEN: Sergeant Chen and Corporal Marshall at your service, sir. Are you or any of your people infected or injured?

BEN: No, sir. All members of this party are clear for evac.

MARSHALL: How did you all end up here? Did you come from the city?

BEN: Yes, sir. My sister and I were in the city when we heard the news about the outbreak, but luckily we ran into this police officer here who was kind enough to escort us to safety.

MARSHALL: Well, you managed to make it a lot farther than most other folks, I'll give you that.

BEN: Yes, sir. We've been through hell these past few days.

CHEN: Alright, I'm sure you're all exhausted, so why don't you come with us to the chopper, and we'll get you outta here.

BEN: Thank you, sir.

CHEN: Okay, let's make this snappy, people!

As Chen and Marshall escorted them to the helicopter, a pack of infected approached them on the ground.

MARSHALL: Shit, we've got company, Sarge!

CHEN: Let's take 'em out!

MARSHALL: Yes, sir!

Chen and Marshall unloaded on the pack of infected with their rifles, leaving a pile of corpses on the ground.

MARSHALL: That's all of 'em.

CHEN: Come on, let's get the hell outta here.

MILITARY HELICOPTER

DAY 2, 7:25 AM

As Ben, Amy, and Logan sat in the back of the helicopter, Sergeant Chen worked on a laptop a few seats away from them.

BEN: Is everyone okay?

LOGAN: I'm fine.

AMY: Me too.

BEN: Well, we're not dead yet. That's a good start.

LOGAN: Doesn't mean we're in any less danger, though. Those soldiers shot up that group of infected like it was a game.

AMY: Yeah, they weren't even a threat from where we were standing. It was completely unnecessary.

BEN: I agree. I hate to say it, but you should probably get used to it. A lot of these guys have been waiting a long time to see some real action in the field. Expect a lot of them to be trigger-happy.

LOGAN: Well, as long as it's just infected they're shootin' and not actual people, then I guess I can manage.

AMY: It's not like we have much of a choice, anyway.

BEN: Don't lose hope. Logan's idea might still work if we can prove ourselves valuable to them.

AMY: Is that why you told them I was your sister?

BEN: I figured if they think we're family, they'll be less likely to split us up, and since Logan's a cop, maybe they'll give her a break, too.

AMY: But what if they find out you're lying about our relationship?

BEN: Well, considering I do actually have a sister, hopefully you can just pose as her, and they won't think anything of it. You know, you even kind of look like her, and you're about the same age, so this could actually work.

LOGAN: Here's hopin'.

CHEN: This is Sergeant Chen reporting in. I have a message for Captain Thompson. We've just recovered three civilians from the Whispering Oaks Motel, one male and two female. Heading back to base now, over.

BEN: Excuse me, sir, did you say Captain Thompson? Is that Captain Anthony Thompson by any chance?

CHEN: Yes, it is. Why, do you know him?

BEN: Yeah, we served in the same company a few years back.

CHEN: No shit? Well, I'm sure he'll be glad to see you, then.

BEN: I certainly hope so.

BEN: For all our sakes.

MILITARY TRUCK

DAY 2, 7:38 AM

Adam, Marcus, Kate, and Lindsay rode in the back of a military truck as Sergeant Mitchell and Corporal Rodriguez stood guard a few feet away from them.

MARCUS: Well, I guess this isn't all bad. At least they gave us lunch.

ADAM: Of course they did. We're no good to them hungry.

KATE: What do you think they're going to do with us?

ADAM: I don't know. They'll probably stick us in a holding cell, then evaluate us to see what our skills are.

KATE: So, in other words, they're going to assimilate us into the army.

MARCUS: Makes sense to me. They'll recruit those who can fight or offer intelligence and use the rest to do their dirty work.

LINDSAY: Screw that. I'm not cooking or cleaning for any of these assholes.

KATE: It'd be better than being recruited as a soldier.

LINDSAY: I don't know. At least then I could protect myself. And carry a gun.

MARCUS: I wouldn't get too carried away with that idea. A lot would have to happen before they trusted you enough to put a gun in your hands.

ADAM: Yeah, a lot of brainwashing, maybe.

LINDSAY: Well, there are other ways for a woman to get a hold of a gun.

KATE: Lindsay, for once, please don't cause any trouble. We're in a bad enough situation as it is.

LINDSAY: Hey, it's not my fault if one of the soldiers just so happens to invite me into his room. They're the ones who can't control themselves, not me.

ADAM: As horrible as it sounds, it may come down to that. If we have no other way to escape, then we'll have to get creative.

LINDSAY: At least someone else here understands the situation.

MARCUS: Oh, we get it alright, but if we can find a safer way to get out of here, then we should try that first.

LINDSAY: What do you have in mind?

MARCUS: Well, Adam and I are both doctors. That has to count for something.

KATE: Medical students, you mean.

MARCUS: Not any more. We're doctors now, and we're two of the top practitioners in our fields. But, in order for us to be able to perform at our best, we need our faithful wives at our sides, healthy and safe. Get what I'm saying?

LINDSAY: So you think if you can convince them that the two of you are some genius doctors that they'll just give us whatever we want?

MARCUS: Exactly. If they want to keep us in service, then they'll have no other choice but to comply to our needs.

ADAM: You know, as crazy as it sounds, it might just work.

KATE: It's not that far-fetched of an idea. You two do have training after all, and Marcus, from what Adam's told me, you actually were at the top of your class, weren't you?

MARCUS: I was. Look guys, if we just be ourselves, well, except for the whole married part, then we'll be fine.

LINDSAY: As long as they need doctors, that is.

MARCUS: I'm confident they will.

ADAM: Well, then, it appears we have a plan. I guess we should start acting a whole lot more married, then.

KATE: Not a problem for me.

LINDSAY: Speak for yourself.

MARCUS: Hey, I'd make a great husband.

LINDSAY: They're the ones you need to convince, not me.

Sergeant Mitchell called out to them.

MITCHELL: Passengers, we're approaching the entrance of the base now. Prepare to exit the vehicle.

ADAM: Okay, here we go. Just act natural, and everything will be fine.

The truck stopped at the gate of the military base, and Mitchell and Rodriguez piled out.

MITCHELL: We're here. Now get your asses movin', people.

The survivors hopped down from the back of the truck, meeting Colonel Lynch and his guards at the front gate.

LYNCH: Welcome to Fort Rockwell, folks. I hope your journey wasn't too unpleasant.

ADAM: It was fine, sir. We're grateful for your hospitality.

LYNCH: You're quite welcome. This is your new home now, so I hope we can put all past grievances aside. We know civilians aren't always too comfortable with the idea of working alongside the military, but I assure you we'll do all we can to make your stay as painless as possible.

MARCUS: That's much appreciated, sir.

LYNCH: Well, then, I should be on my way. Sergeant Mitchell and Corporal Rodriguez will escort you to your quarters. I wish you all the best.

ADAM: Thank you, sir.

They followed Mitchell and Rodriguez into the base, stopping outside of the entrance to the underground bunker, while Mitchell initiated the powered door.

KATE: He sure was friendly.

LINDSAY: More like creepy. I swear there's somethin' off about that guy.

ADAM: Yeah, I don't trust him either.

MARCUS: Well, we should probably get used to it.

MARCUS: 'Cause it looks like we'll be staying here for a while.

END OF FIRST LIGHT