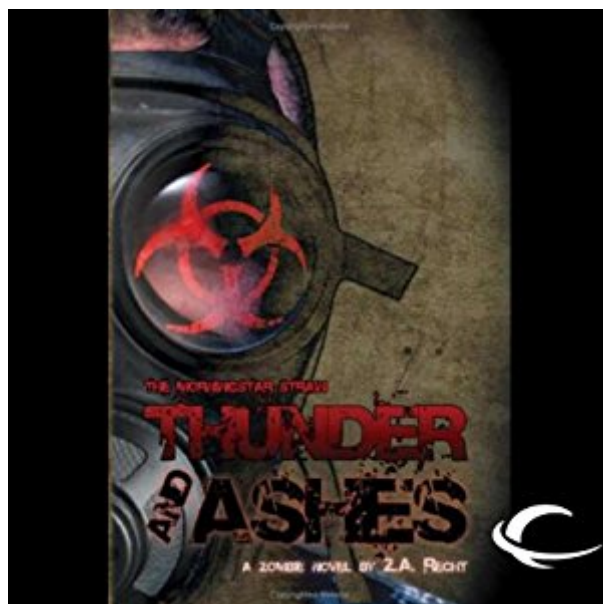


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Thunder And Ashes: The Morningstar Strain, Book 2



Synopsis

A LOT CAN CHANGE IN THREE MONTHS: Wars can be decided, nations can be forged . . . or entire species can be brought to the brink of annihilation. The Morningstar virus has swept the face of the planet, infecting billions. Its hosts rampage; its victims don't die, but are reborn as cannibalistic shamblers. SCATTERED ACROSS THE WORLD, EMBATTLED GROUPS HAVE PERSEVERED. For some, survival is the pinnacle of achievement. Others hoard goods and weapons. And still others leverage power over the remnants of humanity with a mysterious cure. Francis Sherman and Anna Demilio want only a vaccine, but to find it they must cross a ravaged landscape of the infected and the lawless living. THE BULK OF THE STORM HAS PASSED, leaving echoing thunder and softly drifting ashes. But for the survivors, the peril remains, and the search for a cure is just beginning. . . .

Returning to the terrifying vision of his awesome zombie novel • (David Moody) *Plague of the Dead*, Z.A. Recht will once again make you turn your lights on • (J.L. Bourne) with this chilling apocalyptic thriller. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Thunder and Ashes starts out where the first book left off in this trilogy. We have the split story, one of General Sherman and his team of army men and civilians making their way from the west coast towards Omaha, hoping to meet up with Anna Demilio and her much smaller group coming in from the east coast. They are racing towards a facility where they hope to hatch a vaccine for the

Morningstar virus, the plague that has swept over the world creating two forms of plague victims, one still alive, fast, and brutally violent, and one undead, slower, but just as dangerous and cannibalistic. I could have given this story a full five stars, it does rate that based on the action in the story. General Sherman's march was far more interesting to me, especially his pit stop in a little town in Kansas, than the more brief excerpts from Anna and Mason's more silent trek, but their stories tie together nicely, with plague victims, raiders, and rogue government agents all nipping at their heels. The story is cohesive and written with a certain amount of zip to it. I am no military expert so I have no reason or desire to punch holes in the author's use of various terms and equipment. Again, the story and its use of military armaments are smooth and seamless. We are provided with an action packed zombie thriller as two sets of people are racing against the clock, not even sure what they are racing towards will mean anything in the end, but they are determined to do whatever it takes to get there and try to spare humanity any more agony from this brutal virus, if at all possible.

Thunder and Ashes is a very solid follow-up to Plague of the Dead. I give it 4 stars with some very nitpicky complaints. First of all, the jet fuel in trucks issue I can't let pass without comment. I will not give away the scene but the author does lead us to believe that trucks can run on jet fuel without problems or consequences. So before you pull up your truck to that learjet for some gas, do some research first! I looked this up, and though technically true, Recht does not explain that in the long run this is not good for a truck engine. In fact if a truck uses jet fuel for too long, it can ruin the engine. I think Recht should have used the fact behind this to sweeten the plot and suspense a bit, as it would have made for a real problem down the road for Sherman's group. Especially as there are situations later in the book that would directly resolve the problem. Yes I admit, I am nit picking on this but sometimes readers will catch these things. Maybe change this in a re-write or expanded addition of the book. I just have some points of criticism on this otherwise solid book. First of all the pace of this story is just like the first book, excellent. Recht's narrative moves you along quickly and the action is well thought out and executed. The pace of the story when it focuses on Sherman's group is wonderful. You care about these characters and you want to know what happens to them next. The pacing doesn't work as well with Mason's group though. When the story focuses on Dr. Demilio and Mason it does weaken a bit (maybe to a *** story vs. ****) and you find yourself counting pages until Sherman's group is focused on again. The pacing in the first book overcame the characterization flaws but it is starting to wear thin as the saga goes on.

I read the first book, *Plague of the Dead*, and in general I enjoyed it. There were few real problems with it, the characters were interesting, and the action was enough to make one's heartbeat increase if read at night while all alone in an old house. Good fun, nothing absolutely revolutionary, but reasonably smart and well thought out, etc. Z. A. Recht, who recently passed away, showed definite potential as a writer, and *POTD* was a nice addition to the zombie apocalypse genre. *Thunder & Ashes*, however, seems to read almost like a piece of zombie youth fiction. The dialogue is much more simplistic and obvious, the description of action is extremely literal and soft-hitting, the infected appear to have devolved into pansies (even the sprinters, who should continue to unsettle people like the *28 Days/Weeks Later* infected they appear to be related to) that are easily dispatched by a high-fiving crew of one-dimensional characters. The last of these is very strange, because in the previous novel these characters had at least some depth, but now they are just a bunch of action figures giving lines that alternate between grinning, scowling, chuckling, and swallowing. A standard exchange of the dialogue/narrative might read: "These blood-spraying, very infectious, scary zombies are easy to kill, and fun!" Brewster grinned. "Keep your head screwed on straight, soldier," scowled Thomas. "Don't worry about him, Brewster. He's still upset about yesterday, when you killed more raiders and made better jokes about combat against armed and non-infected foes than he did," Krueger chuckled. "That's right."

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