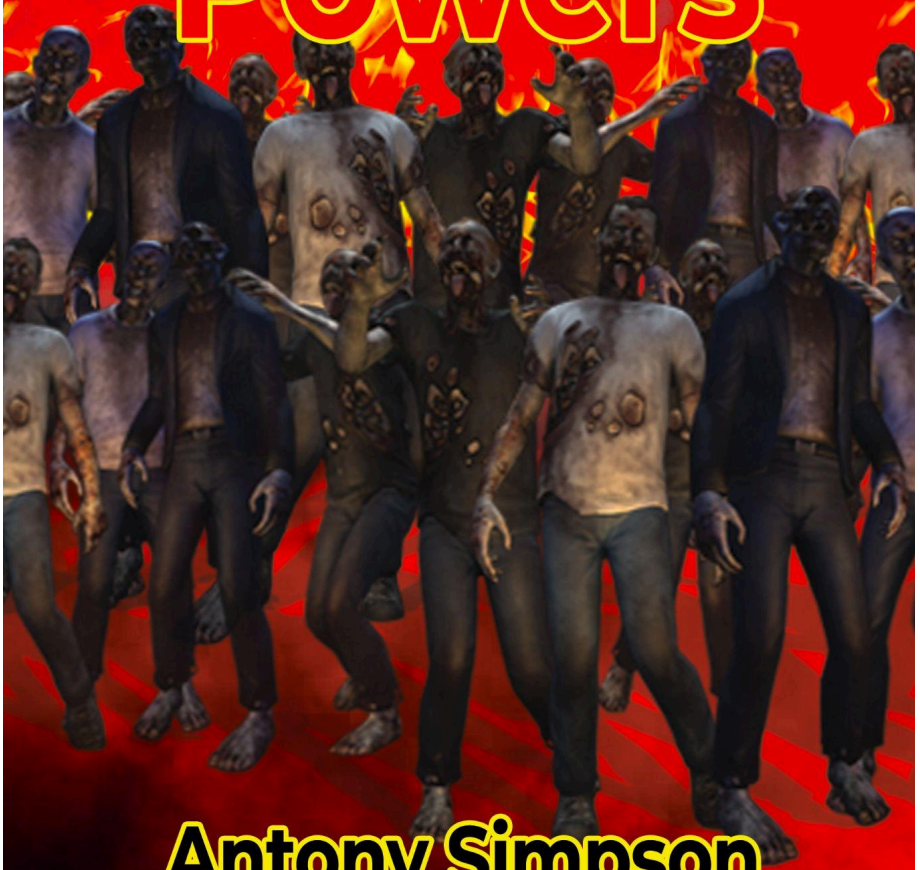


Z-VIRUS Powers



Antony Simpson

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Version 1.1

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Z-VIRUS Series

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DEDICATIONS

From the bottom of my heart and with eternal gratitude, I dedicate this book to:

My dear friend Kay Rothwell, who got me hooked on The Enemy Series by Charlie Higson.

May Lowton for her encouragement, support and for telling me I could write a fiction novel.

To Lewis Sherry, my Nephew, who loves a good zombie story and makes me proud every day.

For everyone who kindly agreed to review this book in its various draft forms and gave feedback.

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Finally to Vasculitis. It is a terrible and rare disease with its life-limiting expectancy. It has limited my lifespan and the treatments are harsh. But it is a positive, as it has given me the courage to write this story.

The characters and story that have been playing out in my head for decades. I sincerely hope that I did each of the characters justice and that you love each of them and the story as much as I do.

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Contents

Chapter	Title	Pages
1	A Close Encounter	7-11
2	The Outbreak	12-14
3	David & Goliath	15-20
4	The Telepathic Twins	21-23
5	Decisions	24-30
6	Making Plans	31-35
7	The Highrise	36-38
8	The Baby	39-45
9	The Stone Circle	46-52
10	The Seer	53-59
11	The Future	60-63
12	The Escape	64-66
13	The Outsider	67-71
14	The Voice of Reason	72-73
15	Love is in the Air	74-75
16	Cornered in Chester	76-81
17	Chan's Perspective	82-85
18	The Battle of Anglesey Bridge	86-93

19	The Aftermath	94-99
20	Coming Together	100-103
21	Sanctuary or Disaster Zone?	104-109
22	Dr Mark Robinson	110-112
23	Beaumaris Beach	113
24	Evolution	114
	Z-VIRUS Monsters	115

Chapter 1 - A Close Encounter

"I could do with some help!" Alexis shouted, as a group of about fifteen zombies snarled and grabbed at her through the railings of the metal fence. They were so close, she could smell the stink of them, a mix of body odour, bad breath and disease. There was a shimmer next to a yew tree behind the group of zombies who were now drooling a mix of saliva, blood and puss.

"No problem." Vis said, appearing where the shimmer had occurred. He went behind each zombie and whacked his cricket bat at their heads, efficiently working his way along the line of them on the fence. The last zombie heard the crack of his neighbour's skull but she wasn't quick enough. Vis knocked her to the ground mid-turn and with the same cracking skull sound as the others, she fell to the ground dead. At this point the telepathic twins, Chloe and Kyle appeared.

"Where have you been?" Alexis asked.

"Gathering supplies." Chloe answered, giving a pull on her red backpack strap. Chloe had jet black hair, brown eyes and was thin, just like her identical twin Kyle who was standing next to her, wearing his black backpack. The noise of teeth grinding came from behind them. A zombie, fat, woman in her fifties came barreling towards them. Before they had a chance to react, a shower of rocks and bricks came down on the zombie lady and there stood Natalie. Natalie had brown hair, the curves of a woman and a voluptuous chest. Her brow was creased as she concentrated. One of the bricks struck the zombie's head and she went down.

"I think it's time we moved on, before we get any other company." Natalie said. The others looked to Alexis.

"Very well. Let's go home and see the others."

A short walk later and the group reached a Fire Exit door at the back of a *Sainsbury's Local*. This was their base. Alexis knocked on the door: Knock, knock, knock - knock, knock - knock. The door swung open and there was Chan.

"Welcome back, I hope you've brought plenty of grub."

They went inside, and the back room was lit by candle light. Chan whizzed off, running at an incredible speed - his power - to let Luke know that the group from outside had arrived home. Grace, a ginger haired woman hugged Natalie.

"So glad you're safe." Grace always worried when Natalie went outside.

"I'm fine. I'll always be fine with my power." Natalie reassured Grace.

"Just because you can move objects with your mind, doesn't mean things can't go wrong. You're not invincible."

Natalie waved her away. They passed through another door into the shop floor and were greeted by Luke. Luke was tall and thin like a giraffe's neck. Six foot three inches tall to be precise with no powers. The Z-Virus mutates people's DNA in one of three ways. The majority of infected people become zombies, a minority seem immune but the virus causes them to develop powers. An even smaller minority, some very rare people, have no mutations at all, no zombie traits or powers. These people like Luke and Grace in the group are called The Immune.

They had removed the shelving units from the shop floor and made a cosy living area, a makeshift kitchen and bedroom area all with things from the outside. Their own bedroom area was made private by hanging sheets and materials of different colours. The front of the store was glass with locked automatic doors and covered by a metal shutter that protected them from the dangers outside and hid them from being viewed by zombies. When they went outside by the Fire Exit at the back of the building they were very careful to ensure they were never followed back by any zombie. As one zombie would attract a horde and hordes never gave up on the chance for a meal. The shop floor was lit by candlelight. Vis wished everyone goodnight and went to his private bed space surrounded in a purple material, behind the tills. The others gathered on and around the large leather corner sofa.

Alexis ran her fingers through her hair. "It's getting harder and harder to find food locally. We are having to go further and further out."

"What does that mean?" Grace asked, concerned.

Natalie folded her arms. "It means that we need to move. Somewhere with a better food supply."

Alexis lowered her voice to a whisper, "I'm also worried about Vis. The Zs got too close to me today. He's never let that happen before. I had to shout for help."

"Maybe he couldn't help?" Luke suggested.

"What are you saying?"

"Well we all know that when he's invisible he can't interact with the world around him. Maybe he got stuck?"

"If that's true it's a worry for all of us with powers."

Vis, real name Noah, overheard the conversation. Both Luke and Alexis were right. He had got stuck invisible. He used to be able to become visible or invisible at will with a single thought. Now it was taking more and more concentration to appear visible again. He'd noticed that his periods of time invisible were getting longer and that it was harder to become visible again. He hated that he couldn't jump in and help Alexis earlier and felt guilty for not telling anyone about his struggles with his power.

Alexis was the last to bed. After Natalie and Grace to their shared bed space, after the twins who shared a bed space, Chan and Luke. Alexis laid there, wide awake. Alexis' power was her stamina, she never got tired. But recently she had taken some Diazepam on a regular basis to try and aid her sleep. She had even increased her dose of Diazepam. Yet even on this higher dose of Diazepam, Alexis hadn't slept for several days. She ran her fingers through her hair, then turned over to see the glass wall with the shutter in front of it. She would wait all night for sleep that probably wouldn't come.

The next morning Alexis made a black coffee, no milk, she longed for milk and went to see Vis. Vis was in this room.

"Knock, knock," she said outside of his purple curtained entrance. After a minute or so, he popped his head out of the gap in the sheets. "Can I come in?" she asked.

"Of course." He said with a smile and held the curtain open for her. She went inside, Vis' space was neat and tidy as always. His space was lit by a large pillar candle and at least a dozen tealight candles. Alexis, one of the few to see Vis' private space, had offered repeatedly to get him more candles from the store cupboard, or even a torch or a battery powered lantern, but he always refused saying he liked the dark. Next to Vis' bed was a small pile of books. His bed was made and to the left were the tills. He gestured to the tills and they sat on the till seats, close to one another.

"How are you my friend?" She asked.

"I'm okay. How about you?"

"I'm not sleeping great."

"The Diazepam isn't helping?" Vis asked, with a concerned look on his face.

"How do you know about that?" She asked.

Vis laughed, "Haven't you worked it out yet, I know everything."

"Ha ha, very funny." Then the tone of Alexis' voice went lower and quieter. "No it hasn't helped." Alexis ran her fingers through her hair. "It's getting worse. Plus I'm worried about feeding the group...if this continues we'll have to live off tinned food for a while."

"I know. You're our leader and you're doing an amazing job of it. Sounds like you need to take some time from doing to think...that and a good night's sleep."

"You're right, as always. Don't fancy being the leader for a while?" Alexis asked.

"No chance in hell." Vis replied.

END OF SAMPLE.

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