

## After The Ending Excerpts

### Excerpt One: Zoe

Looking around apprehensively, I made my way toward the convenience store in hopes of finding a bathroom. The vacant world around me was eerily silent. All I could hear was the creaking of a giant wooden billboard being assaulted by the wind.

*How long has it been since anyone was here?* Through the dark windows I saw a bathroom sign that looked promising, but I couldn't bring myself to enter. *I wonder if it's safe...*

As I stood outside of the store, I noticed a newspaper box still filled with papers. I leaned closer. The headline read, BILLIONS DEAD, and the paper was dated December 9, right before everything had started to shut down. I inserted a quarter and snatched out a paper. Scanning its contents, my mouth grew dry and my body stiffened.

*...the H1N1/12 pandemic...*

*...looting and riotous outbreaks everywhere...*

*...end of civilization as we know it...*

*...survivors losing their minds...*

*...governments can't control...*

*...the Apocalypse...*

The newspaper slipped from between my fingers. Frozen in place, I was suffocated by the reality of our situation.

This isn't going away.

The world ended.

Thinking of the strange feelings I'd been experiencing, I once again questioned my own sanity. My thoughts were too loud to silence. My heart thudded, and I couldn't swallow the lump in my throat. Looking out into the abandoned world around me, I realized how alone we really were.

I bent down to reclaim the paper and turned on my heels to head back toward the truck, completely awestruck as the words I'd read replayed in my mind. Each was a reminder that the only world I'd ever known had ended.

## Excerpt Two: Dani

Eventually, sporting fresh pajamas and damp hair, I was again settled in the living room but on an unfamiliar couch.

“This isn’t my couch,” I said to no one in particular. I watched Jack as he stared forlornly at the clean kitchen floor. Someone had swept up the mountain of kibble and locked it away.

“Yes, well, yours was...unsuitable. We swapped it with one from an apartment down the hall. It’s not like they’ll be needing it anymore,” Chris explained, setting a glass of orange juice and a generous plate of breakfasty goodness on the coffee table in front of me. I stared at the food but didn’t touch it, even though my stomach grumbled in need. Cam usually made me breakfast. “What d’you mean? Why won’t they need it?”

Chris halted her efforts to arrange a fuzzy blanket around my legs and looked at me with sharp, sky-blue eyes. Her expression melted into sympathy before she spoke. “Because they’re dead, hon. Most people are. I thought you knew.”

“I...,” I tried to speak, but my throat caught after the first sound. I shook my head. Satisfied that I was covered and warm, Chris moved to the other side of the coffee table to sit in a large recliner—another item from the furniture shopping spree in my neighbor’s apartment.

“It was that damn Virus...we all had it...weeks ago,” Chris said, gesturing around the room even though it was empty of anyone but us. “Several days back, everyone in the world seemed to be infected. Now everyone’s pretty much dead. The rest are like you and me—Survivors. But as far as we can tell, we’re in the extreme minority.”

“I don’t understand,” I said, confusion creasing my brow. “This is impossible.”

“Not impossible. Just improbable...and really, really awful.”