



Z

By Michael Thomas Ford

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Z By Michael Thomas Ford

The First Rule of Torching: Cleanse with fire.

Josh is by far the best zombie Torcher around—at least, he is in his virtual-reality zombie-hunting game. Josh has quickly risen through the player ranks, relying on the skill, cunning, and agility of a real Torcher.

The Second Rule of Torching: Save all humans.

But luckily for Josh, zombies exist only in the virtual world. The real zombie war is now more than fifteen years in the past, and the battle to defeat the deadly epidemic that devastated his family—and millions of others—is the stuff of history lessons.

The Third Rule of Torching: You can't bring them back.

Charlie is the top-ranked player in the game. Since all the players are shrouded in anonymity, Josh never expects Charlie to be a *girl*—and he never expects the offer she makes him: to join the underground gaming league that takes the virtual-reality game off the screen and into the streets. Josh is thrilled. But the more involved he gets, the more he realizes that not everything is what it seems. *Real* blood is spilling, members of the team are disappearing, and the zombies in the game are acting strange. And then there's the matter of a mysterious drug called Z. . . .

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Z By Michael Thomas Ford Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Gr 7 Up—It is the year 2032 and Josh and his buddy Firecracker spend every spare minute playing their favorite computer video game fighting zombies. Josh's parents disapprove of the game; his aunt had been one of the unfortunates in the last generation who caught a terrible virus that actually turned people into real zombies. That tragedy seems a distant reality to Josh and his friend, and when one of the cyber-game players contacts him to see if he wants to play a reality-based version, he jumps at the chance. Charlie turns out to be an avant-garde girl who introduces him to the zombie game that at first seems something akin to today's paintball wars. However, the "kills" seem very real. Josh is a good player, and when Charlie introduces him to the drug "Z" that makes it all so much cooler, Josh starts ditching his friend and his responsibilities to play the game with Charlie and the other worrisome players like Scrawl and Clatter. As the games progress in various parts of the underbelly of the town and Josh takes more and more of the drug, things start ebooking out of control and the game gets more dangerous and a little too real. This book is a thriller, and the clever plot and characters will have readers hoping for more.—Jake Pettit, Thompson Valley High School, Loveland, CO©(c) Copyright 2010. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

From Booklist

Josh is addicted to a virtual-reality zombie-killing game, and his skills get him noticed by people who take the game to a whole new and very real level. He finds himself enmeshed in an enterprise involved in everything from creating fresh zombies to manufacturing illegal drugs. When friends begin to appear as zombie targets, things unravel quickly, and Josh must choose his allies wisely to get out alive. Ford expertly builds the tension in this long, escalating thrill ride. Subplots about friendship and first love are woven lightly but deftly through the action in a way that keeps the focus on the game. There are blatant parallels between the virus that creates zombies (from humans) and HIV, giving this book some potential as a conversational door-opener for a weighty topic. The frenetic action and near-future gadgetry make this a good choice to hand to graduates of Anthony Horowitz's Alex Rider books or perhaps fans of Vivian Vande Velde's *Heir Apparent* (2002) or Neal Shusterman's *Full Tilt* (2003). Grades 8-11. --Cindy Welch

Review

"Ford leaps in with flamethrowers blazing and burns through pages at a rapid pace." (Kirkus Reviews)

"Ford expertly builds the tension in this long, escalating thrill ride." (Booklist)

"A fast-paced, futuristic thriller. Ford artfully constructs a credible concept against the backdrop of a darkly atmospheric, post-apocalyptic world. Equal parts chilling and fun." (Publishers Weekly)

"The clever plot and characters will have readers hoping for more." (School Library Journal)

"A rollicking ride." (Voice of Youth Advocates (VOYA))

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Megan Snyder:

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