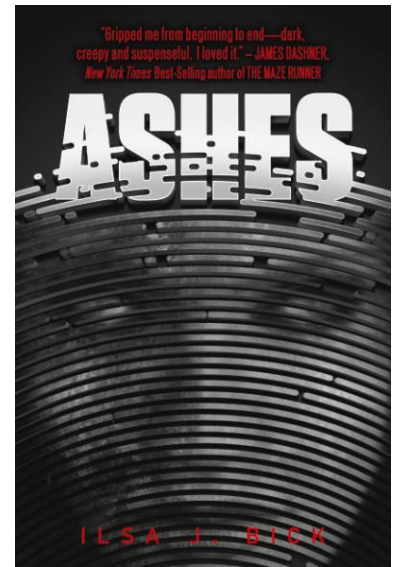


EGMONT  
USA

# Ashes

by Ilsa J. Bick

**Ages:** 14 up



“Splendidly paced apocalyptic zombie horror ends with a thrilling, terrifying cliffhanger.”—*Kirkus Reviews*

“Bick delivers an action-packed tale of an apocalypse unfolding, launching a trilogy with flair.”—*Publishers Weekly*

## **Summary:**

*It could happen tomorrow.*

A wave of electromagnetic pulses flashes across the sky, destroying every electronic device, wiping out every computerized system, and killing billions.

Alex hiked into the woods to say good-bye to her dead parents and her personal demons. Now desperate to both survive and find out what happened, Alex meets up with Tom—a young soldier just back from Afghanistan—and eight-year-old Ellie, whose grandfather was killed by the EMPs.

For this improvised family and the others who are spared, it’s now a question of who can be trusted—and who is no longer human.

## **Discussion Questions:**

1. The monster in Alex’s head has caused her to lose her sense of smell and, along with that, many of her memories. How have these losses affected Alex? How does she react when her memories return? Why do you think memories are such powerful elements of human life?
2. When Alex saves Ellie, she loses her survival pack and all her gear. Do you have a survival pack? If so, what do you keep in it? If you don’t have a survival pack and you were to make one, what would you include?
3. What are the four basic survival skills that Alex, Tom, and Ellie must master to stay alive?
4. After the Zap, why do some electronics work and others do not?
5. Why does Ellie become angry with Tom when he leaves one of their guns with Larry? Do you think she is right to be mad at him? Explain your answer.
6. Why doesn’t Alex tell Tom about the monster in her head? What is she afraid will happen if he knows?

# Ashes

---

7. “There is nothing near what you think of as civilized out there. Everything is different.” (pg. 182) Do you agree with Tom? If the world as we knew it were to end tomorrow, how do you think people would react and behave?
8. On page 217, Tom asks Alex to shoot him if he starts to change. Why do you think he asks her to do this? Do you agree with Tom, that death would be preferable to becoming one of the Changed?
9. When Alex first hiked into the woods, she wasn’t sure if she would be coming back. Considering she was ready for it all to be over before the Zap, why do you think she is fighting so hard to survive in this new world? What has changed?
10. What makes people like Chris, Peter, Alex, and Lena so valuable to a town like Rule?
11. The Council has the final say on who is allowed to stay in Rule and who must leave. Why don’t they help everyone who seeks refuge in the town? Do you think they are right not to let everyone in? Explain your answer.
12. Why have only the very old and the very young been spared? What makes them different from the adults who died instantly and the teenagers who Changed?
13. On page 342, Jess tells Chris that “peace comes with a price.” What is this price? Do you think what Rule pays for peace is too high? Explain your answer.
14. On page 366, Alex asks Sarah why she isn’t bothered by all the strict rules and customs of the Council. Sarah says that “it’s not safe outside Rule anyway so, who cares?” If you were in Alex’s or Sarah’s shoes, would *you* care? Is giving up free will a fair trade-off for safety?
15. Why does Jess need Chris in order to oppose the Council? Why can’t she stand up to them on her own?
16. Why is Rule feeding the Changed? What do they have to gain by doing so?

## *Ashes*

978-1-60684-175-4 \* \$17.99

e-Book: 978-1-60684-231-7 \* \$17.99

### **About the Author:**

Ilsa J. Bick is a child psychiatrist as well as a film scholar, former Air Force major, and now a full-time author. Her critically acclaimed first YA novel, *Draw the Dark*, won the 2011 Westchester Fiction Award and was named a Bank Street College 2011 Best Book. Ilsa currently lives with her family and several furry creatures in rural Wisconsin, near a Hebrew cemetery. One thing she loves about the neighbors: they’re very quiet and only come around for sugar once in a blue moon.



For more information visit:

[www.egmontusa.com](http://www.egmontusa.com)

[www.ilsajbick.com](http://www.ilsajbick.com)