

The image shows a microscopic view of several spherical virus particles. Each particle has a distinct outer shell with a textured, almost crystalline appearance, and a darker, more granular interior. The particles are scattered across the frame, with one large one in the center-left and others in the top-right, bottom-right, and bottom-left corners. The background is a light, grainy blue.

The Virus

Liam S

Chapter 1: Hunt or be Hunted

Chapter 2: Man up!

Chapter 3: Lost

Chapter 4: On the move

Chapter 5: Another attack

Chapter 6: Alone

Chapter 1: Hunt or be Hunted

My name is Liam. I have one brother and one sister. We live with our Mom in Ireland. It's been three years since the virus broke out. The year is 2027. My Dad got the virus last year and bit my younger brother and we had to kill them, it was very sad. I'm writing this so that when I die I hope that future generations can see what it's like back in our time. I have very few friends and we don't see a lot of each other because it's dangerous outside. The population of Ireland is only 2 million now including zombies.

That's how it is nowadays, just trying to keep yourself alive.

We grow our own vegetables at home but a lot of the time people try to steal them. I usually get up to go hunting for rabbit and deer and even sometimes when we're desperate for food I hunt squirrel. I've been sitting and waiting for about two hours, finally I spot a deer. I take a deep breath and fire the rifle. The deer falls to the ground, I sprint over to skin it so I can make a fur blanket for my little sister Maisie because it's her birthday soon. As I am skinning the deer I hear a low growling sound. When I turn around I see a horde of at least seven zombies. And they look very hungry.

I quickly took out my gun, I only had about ten bullets. My aim isn't the best but zombies are slow so I should have no problems, I took out the first six when one jumped on me from behind, I didn't have time to shoot so I took out my pocket knife and stabbed the zombie in the gut. I was tired and hungry, all I had to do now was carry the deer corpse back to our small cottage.

Chapter 2: Man up!

When I got back to the cottage I started to cut up the meat. A few minutes later my sister rushed in “Liam, Michaels been bitten”, she exclaimed. “Where is he?”, I asked. “Mom brought him to the hospital”, Maisie replied. I thought to myself once you’re infected chances of you surviving are zero.

When I got to the hospital Maisie and Mom were there. Before they pulled the plug Michael told me to look after Mom and Maisie. And so now I was the only boy in the family which meant it was going to be hard to gather food, I could feel

the weight of responsibility on my shoulders.

We ate the deer I caught for dinner, no one spoke. After that I went into my room and lay there thinking about all the good times I had with my brother.

The next morning I decided to go on a walk around what used to be Dublin City. When the virus first broke out people came to Dublin and raided the shops so now all the shops are practically empty. Up ahead I spot some zombies so I sprint to the nearest shop. It was very quiet in the shop. I looked around to see if there was anything left on the shelves. Suddenly the stench of rotten meat hit my nose. I walked over to the counter to find a zom-

I turned around and I was surrounded
there were three more zombies closing in.
I didn't have a weapon on me so I turned
away and ran for my life!

Chapter 3: Lost

I had been hiding behind some crates for a few minutes. The zombies were still there, waiting for me to come out. A few minutes later I made a break for it, I was too fast for the zombies to catch up with me. I was about a mile away from the cottage and it was starting to get dark so I started to make my way home.

It had been an hour of walking and I think I'm lost. I can't read any of the signs.

When I was so tired that I couldn't walk anymore I went into a field and lay my head down beside a tree and drifted off to sleep.

The next morning I woke up to a crow pecking at my face. It was brighter now so I knew where I was. I was at the big tree about 500 metres away from the cottage. I stumbled my way back to the cottage, relieved to be home.

“Where have you been?”, asked my Mom as soon as I walked through the door. “I got lost”, I replied. I didn’t mention the zombies because she probably wouldn’t let me go to the city for a long time.

“Where’s Maisie?”, I asked. “She said she was going to the neighbours to see if they would trade some bread for the venison you caught yesterday”, replied Mom.

“When did she leave?”, I asked. “Around 12 o’clock”, said Mom. That was about

5 hours ago. "I'm going out to look for Maisie", I said. "Okay but be careful", said Mom anxiously. I grabbed my knife and went out to look for my sister.

Chapter 4: On the move

I went to all our closest neighbours and they said, "Maisie came by a while ago", it was five minutes later when I heard a scream. "Help", I ran over and saw Maisie being attacked by some zombies.

"Maisie", I shouted, "Liam help me", she screamed. I jumped on one of the four zombies and stabbed it with my knife. I ran over to Maisie after stabbing the other two zombies. The last zombie jumped on Maisie. I sprint over and stab him.

When I pushed him off I saw that Maisie had a bite mark on her neck, "No", I said, "Maisie can you hear me". "Kill me Liam,

I don't want to become a zombie, please Liam", she said shaking. I knew what I had to do.

I walked away crying after what I just did. Thinking what Mom will do after she finds out her only daughter is dead.

When I got home Mom sensed there was something wrong. "What's wrong, where's Maisie?", asked Mom. I just stood there for her to know the answer. She came over and hugged me crying in the process. "What are we going to do?", asked Mom, "I don't know", I replied. "We can't stay here there's too many zombies", I said. "We can leave tomorrow", Mom suggested. "Okay, that sounds good", I said. "But we don't have any food

apart from a few pieces of raw venison”, I said worryingly. “We’ll go over to the Petersons house tomorrow and trade our meat for maybe a bit of bread”, Mom replied. “Okay”, I said heading towards my bedroom.

I thought to myself in bed. I’ve only seen the Petersons once or twice even though they’re our closest neighbours and they have no children, I think. A few minutes later I decided to pack my bag instead of rushing it tomorrow. This is what I packed: Picture of the whole family, rifle, knife the little bits of food that I had, some bandages, a flint and steel to light a fire, a few bottles of water and finally this journal that I’m writing in. I was very, very

tired after the long day. A few moments later I stopped writing, blew out the candle in my room and fell fast asleep.

Chapter 5: another attack

I woke up feeling nervous and excited at the same time. “Mom wake up”, I shouted , “I’m coming”, replied Mom. We ate a bit of bread and left the house.

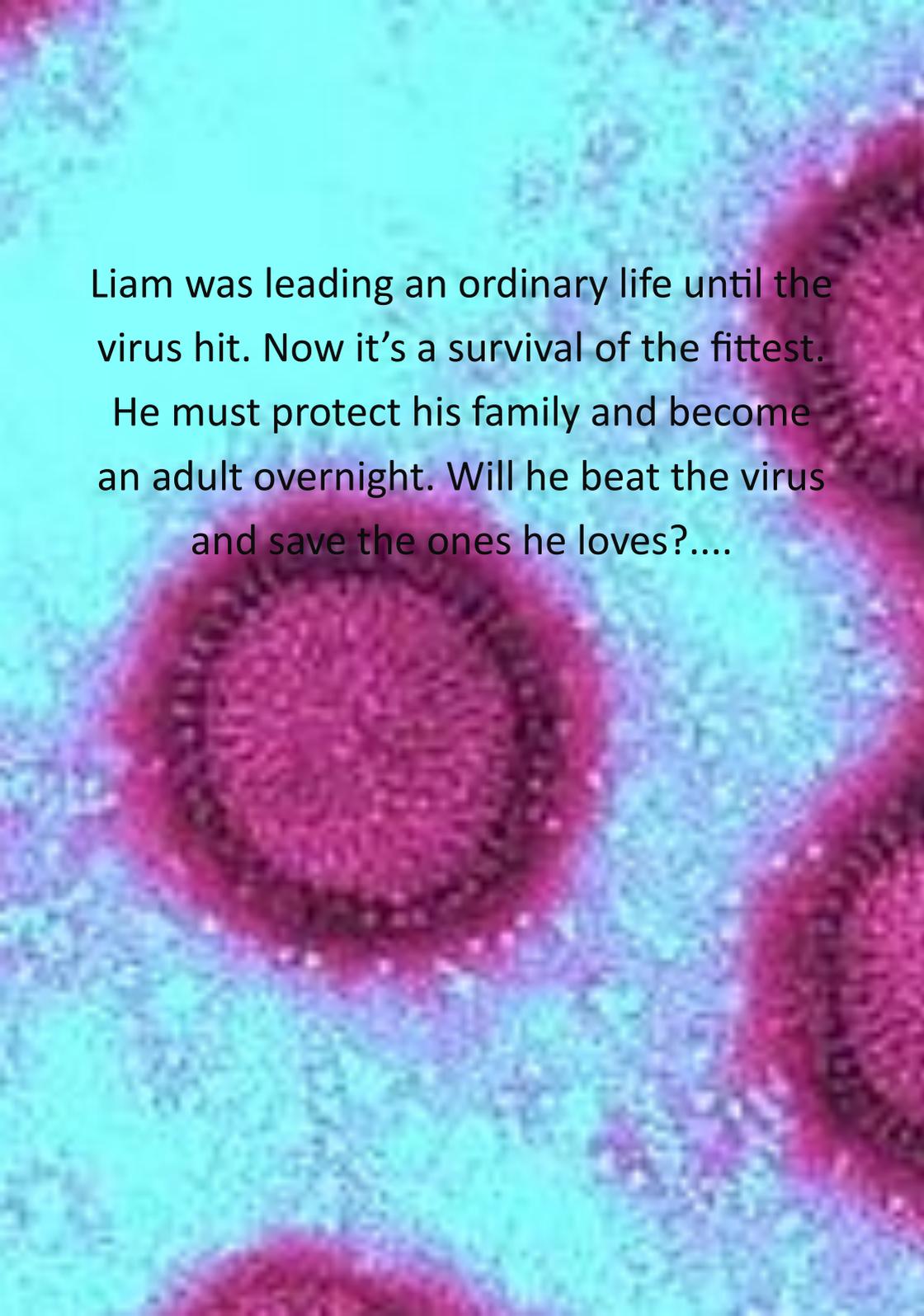
It was about midday when we got to the Petersons. We knocked on the door but no one answered so we walked in. The second I walked in I was hit by an awful stench. “It smells like someone died in here”, I said aloud. “I wouldn't be surprised”, my Mom said sarcastically. There was only one candle lit beside the couch I saw a head popping over the couch.

“Mr. Peterson, hello”, I said worryingly . When I looked over the couch I saw Mr. Peterson blood and guts spilled on the floor. “Ahh!”, I yelled, “Mom we need to go now!”, I shouted. I heard a low growl coming from the bedroom. “Mom”, I said. When I opened the door I saw Mom fighting a zombie, I quickly took out my gun and fired and pushed the zombie off of Mom. “Thanks Liam”, she said. A few seconds later I realised something was wrong, I looked at Mom and saw blood coming from her chest. “Mom you’re going to be alright”, I said reassuringly, “we can get you to a hospital”. “There’s no time Liam”, Mom said quietly. She stroked my tear stained face and whispered

gently to stay strong and that she loved me.

Chapter 6: Alone

I didn't know what to do so I went back to the cottage. There is no food in the house, I don't know where I'll go. The population of zombies is growing faster and faster and it is not likely a cure will be found. As I lay there in my bed I thought about all the great times before the virus outbreak , but especially I remember my Mom's final words and her soft, sweet voice.

The background of the image is a microscopic view of several spherical virus particles. These particles are a vibrant red color and have a highly textured, almost crystalline surface. They are scattered across the frame, with some appearing more prominent than others. The overall lighting is bright, highlighting the intricate details of the virus capsids.

Liam was leading an ordinary life until the virus hit. Now it's a survival of the fittest. He must protect his family and become an adult overnight. Will he beat the virus and save the ones he loves?....