

BOOK THREE  
JIMMY FINCHER SAGA



The  
Tower  
of Air

BEST-  
SELLING  
AUTHOR OF  
THE  
MAZE  
RUNNER

JAMES DASHNER

ILLUSTRATED BY MICHAEL PHIPPS

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JIMMY FINCHER SAGA

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—JAMES DASHNER—  
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CHAPTER 1  
Lots of Water



The ocean was big and dreary, and I hated it.

We had been floating on top of the dang thing for weeks, endlessly searching for something that perhaps did not exist. Even Joseph grew doubtful, and his cheerful demeanor had waned considerably with every passing day. The clues were as scarce as the ocean was vast. We were looking for a place where it was always *three days at the same time*, somewhere in the ocean. That was pretty much it, all we had to go on.

The Tower of Three Days.

It made no sense to me, and I had never felt so completely useless, without any hope whatsoever. How in the world could you take that one clue, and then go and have a look-see throughout the entire *ocean*? It bordered on insanity to even try.

It was almost evening on the thirty-third day when we had our first breakthrough.



The day was beautiful, cloudless and bright. I woke up that morning feeling better physically than I had in quite some time. The first couple of weeks on the ocean had been absolute misery, with nausea my constant

companion, and barfing a regular activity. Tanaka stayed well clear of me after meals. He'd had more than one run-in with the Jimmy Fincher puke brigade, and he told us that if he only accomplished one more thing in life, it would be to avoid being spewed on by me ever again.

Our yacht was extremely luxurious and comfortable, with plenty of food. Our captain told us we could last for months if we had to. The boat was nowhere near full capacity, but had been stocked as if we would have a full load. The mystery of how it had all been paid for was still up in the air. Joseph had either robbed a bank or sweet-talked a rich old Japanese widow into giving her husband's fortune away. He answered most of our questions, but not that one. We didn't need to worry about that, not yet, he had said. We didn't argue, because there were plenty of other things to grill him about.

Joseph's experience after being taken by the Shadow Ka on that scary day when I blocked the Black Curtain was very similar to Rayna's story. He'd been flown for many miles through the shifting mists of the Blackness, until finally he had seen a massive black object looming before him. It was made of the same black gooey substance that Rayna had plunged into when she was younger and had been abducted by a Ka.

A black carving of a face. Hers. Joseph's experience was only different in one respect. The face had been his.

The pack of Ka tore into the eye of that face, and Joseph was suddenly thrown through a terrifying maze of nightmares and visions. Then, just before a slumber from which he would have never awakened, the *girl* had appeared, and saved his life. The girl who I first saw so many weeks ago, waiting for me under the door in the woods. The Giver who wore jeans and sneakers.

She saved his life, releasing him from the living nightmare of the face.

Her words at that time had chilled Joseph. She said she would die for him, just before he was ripped away, out of the darkness. Very strange. And very creepy.

After the ordeal, Joseph had spent several days with the Givers, learning much about many things. Some he had since shared with us, some he had promised for a future time. I was thinking about all of this on the morning of the thirty-third day, standing in my favorite spot at the highest point of



the entire ship, looking out into the endless horizon where the blues of ocean and sky met in a distinct line.

That's when I saw something strange floating in the distance.

It was white and sparkly, bobbing in the waters like the last lonely Cheerio in a Sunday morning breakfast bowl. I watched it float there for a while, wondering what object could end up out here in the middle of nowhere. Perhaps it was a dead fish. I was just about to lose interest and search out everyone else on the boat to see what was in store for the day, when it got close enough that I could see that it was definitely not a dead fish.

It was something straight out of the storybooks.

CHAPTER 2

# The Lonely Dead Man



Intrigued, I ran down the stairs and into the main cabin, looking for someone who could help me retrieve the thing from the water. Our captain was standing at the main controls of the ship, methodically getting things ready for another day's journey to nowhere. He glanced at me, said hello, and then went back to his duties.

His name was Drake, but we all took the lead from his crew and called him Captain Tinkles. Now, there's something that just ain't right about calling a man Tinkles, but his crew referred to him by no other name. It had something to do with an old story from back when they were all in the Navy, but they refused to tell us the details. Every time I spoke with him, I cringed if I had to use the name. Usually, I just stuck with "Captain" and left off the disturbing second part.

"Captain," I said, "there's something floating up near the front of the yacht that I think we should try to bring on board."

"Oh yeah?" he replied. His voice was grainy, as if he were mixing cement in his mouth while trying to speak. He nodded his head toward the front window. "What is it, a retired dolphin or something?" He didn't laugh, so I wasn't completely sure it had been a joke.

"Just come look. I don't think you'll be disappointed. Do you have something we could reach down and grab it with?"

“Yeah, boy, if it's worth grabbin'. Come on.”

He stepped out of the cabin back into the open, with me right behind him. He grabbed a long pole with a net on the end of it from the supply boxes, and headed for the front part of the ship. Joseph, Rayna, and Miyoko had come out while I was talking to the captain, and they were up front pointing at the same object I had seen.

“Ho, there!” yelled the captain. “What you got your eyes glued on? You telling me this boy ain't lying?”

“Ah, good,” said Joseph in his whispery voice, the pale sun glimmering off his bald head. “I was just about to go looking for that.” He pointed at the net and pole. “So, Jimmy, I take it you saw this little gem, too, huh?”

“Yeah, I hope it's what I think it is.”

“There's no doubt that there's something inside of it,” Rayna said. She was a member of The Alliance, a mysterious group of people that had dedicated their lives to helping the Givers prepare for the inevitable battle against the Shadow Ka and the Stompers. Her disfigured face and strange green clothes no longer fazed me.

Captain Tinkles leaned out over the railing and reached toward the water with his pole. Our ship was huge, so he had to really stretch himself and extend the pole as far as he possibly could. After several failed attempts, one of which just about sent him swimming, he grabbed the shiny object with a final burst of effort and a heavy grunt.

“Aha! Got the little—”

“Watch your language, there, Tinkle-Boy,” said Joseph, cutting him off.

Tinkles pulled the long pole up, hand over hand, and then laid it on the deck of the boat. We all stared at the object, with a sense of reverent awe.

Dad came up from behind.

“What's everyone gawking at?” he asked.

When he saw the source of our wonder, he stopped short.

“What the—” He bent down and picked it up.

In one of those moments where you just can't help but state the obvious, Dad announced to everyone what we had just discovered.

“It's a bottle.”

He paused.

“With a note in it.”



Dad knelt down and we all crowded around him as he fumbled with the bottle.

It was green glass, the shape of an old-fashioned Coke bottle. Despite having floated in the largest washtub in the world for who knows how long, it was covered in spots with slimy dirt and grime. But the glass was just clean enough to see the rolled piece of paper inside, a magical note waiting to be read. A message in a bottle. It was something that everyone had dreamed about at one time in his or her life. I never knew which would be cooler, sending a message and having someone find it, or finding one sent by someone else.

We were all anxious, and urged Dad to hurry and open it.

He grabbed the twist-off lid, squeezed and turned. At first it didn't budge, but Dad strained until veins were popping out of his neck, and it soon gave way. He twisted the lid until it came off, and handed it to me.

He turned the bottle over, and shook it. The note was stubborn, and kept getting stuck on the lip of the bottle, not wanting to come out. Dad finally had to have Miyoko stick her little pinky finger in the bottle and slowly drag the piece of paper out. She handed it back to Dad.

He bent over and placed the note on the deck and unrolled the paper, spreading it out with his hands. He then read its message out loud, although we could all see it for ourselves.

The paper was white, and yellowed around the edges. In the middle,

*Please come find me  
I am stranded  
Small island, forty miles west of IDL  
(The place where yesterday meets tomorrow)  
32 degrees latitude*

scrawled in black, was the message:

*David Millstone*

“My goodness. We have to help this man,” said Rayna.

“I don't think so,” was Dad's reply.

“Why not?” I asked.

Dad pointed to something at the very bottom of the page that none of us had noticed yet.

It was dated October 8th, 1963.



It was way too late for us to help the poor man. We would never go to the island he described, and we would never meet anyone named David Millstone. But his note, written decades earlier, would finally give us the break we so desperately needed.

### CHAPTER 3

## Dinner and Riddles



That night we all met at our usual spot for dinner. The yacht came with a full crew, although they didn't mingle with us too much, and this included a chef. He was the best cook I'd ever come across, and I looked forward to every meal. So far, he'd only served peas once, and I made sure that he knew this was unacceptable. The entire staff, including the captain, was a mystery to me. Although they would end up seeing many strange things, they never really questioned why or how. And Joseph seemed to know more about them than he would let on.

The section of the ship where we ate was called the Mess Hall by the crew, and a massive wooden table and chairs filled the room and made it feel cramped. After the food was served (steak, shrimp, and potatoes) and we all dug in, Joseph kept talking about the note from the bottle, and how something from it was tugging at his memory, driving him crazy. We were no help, and soon Joseph drifted off into silent contemplation.

For the umpteenth time since our ocean quest had begun, I looked around the huge round table at all of my companions. Mom sat next to me, a look of worry an absolute constant on her face. Rusty was next, devouring his third helping of steak and shrimp, oblivious to the line of sauce dripping off his chin. Then sat Dad, wondering aloud at the fate of poor Mr. Millstone, stuck on that island so many years ago.

Miyoko ate with quiet reserve next to my dad while her eyes remained fixed on an indeterminate point across the room. Her father, Tanaka, sat next to her, his lack of table manners matched only by his bad jokes. They, along with Rayna, were also members of The Alliance. I wondered again if either of them had special powers like some of the other members of that group.

Then there was The Hooded One. Hood. The man who couldn't speak, but painted with his finger. The man who could travel in an instant by way of a red hula hoop. The man who had been through so much, and who had become such a close friend. As had Rayna, sitting next to Hood. She had the ability to manipulate photographs to show the future. It could be a downright spooky gift.

Then there was Joseph. Twice we had lost him, and both times he had come back. We hoped that this was one thing that didn't end up coming in threes, like plane crashes. I still felt that Joseph knew a lot that he wasn't telling us about, but I tried not to push him too hard for information. Sometimes there was such a thing as too much knowledge, and it was enough burden just thinking about the next task in our mission: finding the Third Gift.

Captain Drake, or Tinkles, and the rest of his crew ate with us sometimes, but usually kept pretty much to themselves. I was glad for that, because it was very uncomfortable talking about things in front of them. Tanaka spoke, jostling me from my train of thought.

“Hey Jimmy-san, you seem very quiet tonight. Make it much harder for me to make funny jokes about stupid things you say. What's wrong?”

“Nothing.” I took a sip of my drink. “I'm just thinking about all of us, and wondering if we're going to float in the ocean for the rest of our lives.”

Tanaka was just about to spew forth an interminable comment when Joseph slammed his fist on the table and stood up, revelation spread all over his face. Everyone's dishes jumped and clattered at the sudden thump, and Mom yelped in surprise.

“Joseph,” she said, “what's wrong?”

Without saying a word, he ran out of the room.



“Ah!” Tanaka shouted, after Joseph left the Mess Hall. He pointed his finger up into the air. “Joseph no wait when he gotta go, neh?”

Not even sure we knew what Tanaka was talking about, a couple of us gave a slight courtesy laugh, but we were mostly enthralled by Joseph's strange behavior. Dad was just scooting his chair from the table to follow when Joseph sprang back into the room. The yellowed and dated note was in his hand, his face lit with excitement. He must have finally realized what had been nagging at his mind.

Joseph grabbed his chair, dragged it around the table, and placed it next to my dad. Then he went back to the door and yelled for Captain Tinkles to come down. Joseph came and sat next to Dad, and soon the captain joined us, wondering what in the heck all the fuss was about.

“Okay, okay.” Joseph paused, and put his hands together and brought them to his lips, as if gathering his wits to explain something of great importance to all of us.

“All right, J.M., read this note again.”

Joseph handed the note to my dad, and with a questioning look, Dad did as he was told.

“Uh, *please come find me ... I am stranded ... small island, blah, blah, blah, David Millstone.*”

Dad handed the note back to Joseph, who looked like Dad had just called him a big dumpy dopey head.

“Excuse me, Mr. J.M. Fincher, you just blah, blah, blahed over the one part that I intended to point out. Now come on, humor me for a second, and read it again. Geez, you're getting as bad as Tanaka the puke magnet over there.” He jerked a thumb at Tanaka, who was trying his darnedest to retaliate with a comeback but, for once, came up empty.

Dad took the note back. “All right, sorry, it's just that we've all read this note a million times.” He cleared his throat, and read the note word for word.

“*Please come find me ... I am stranded ... small island, 40 miles west of IDL ... the place where yesterday meets to-morrow ... 32 degrees latitude ... David Millstone.*”

Joseph took the note back. “We have all been feeling sorry for this guy, knowing that we could do nothing for him. This is true—hopefully



someone else saved him after he threw this bottle into the ocean. But we completely ignored his directions to the island on which he was stranded.”

He sat back, and crinkled his brow, which set off an assortment of strange wrinkles on his hairless head.

“Okay,” Dad said, “what are you saying? We should go to this island?”

“No, no, no, not at all.” Joseph turned and looked at the captain. “Captain, uh, Tinkles,” (Joseph was as uncomfortable with the silly name as I was), “we have all ignored the term ‘IDL’ that was in the note. Can you tell us what that means?”

“Well, that's easy, my friend.” His voice was the sound of gravel being poured into a foundation. “It stands for International Date Line—some have given it the nickname that the note referred to. *The place where yesterday meets tomorrow*. His directions would make it very easy to spot the island he was stranded on.”

Joseph stood up and began to pace around the table.

“International Date Line. Captain, explain to us what that means, what it is.”

Tinkles acted happy to show off his wisdom on such things. “The IDL is the place in the world where the day officially changes from one to the next. In other words, it's where Sunday becomes Monday.”

Rusty was confused, and asked the captain what he meant. Okay, I was confused, too, and was glad that Rusty spoke up.

“All right, lad, think about time changes and time zones. As you move west to east, it gets later and later, hour by hour, as you enter the next time zone, one by one, correct?”

Rusty nodded.

“Well, the world has twenty-four time zones. If you didn't have the International Date Line, you would just keep getting later and later as you continued to travel around the world, eh, for infinity? The IDL is the place in the world, a theoretically drawn line, defined and agreed upon by the countries of the world, where you actually switch days.” The captain drew an invisible line in the air, and then pointed to one side of it. “On the east side of the Line, say it was noon on Monday.” He pointed to the opposite side of his invisible line. “On the west side of the line, it would be noon on

Tuesday. Oh ... dolphin-burgers, I never realized how difficult it can be to explain.”

Joseph slapped the captain on the back. “Nah, that was pretty darn good, actually. That’s why some people call it ‘the place where yesterday meets tomorrow.’ Do you get it, Rusty? Jimmy? Tanaka?” Tanaka grumbled at being included with the kids in the question.

Rusty and I looked at each other, and then nodded. It seemed to make sense, although it was a bit confusing.

“Now for the kicker,” Joseph said, a proud look on his face. It was the look of someone who had finally won Monopoly after a ten-hour marathon game. “What if you could literally stand on this theoretical line, straddle it, with one foot on one side, and the other foot on the other side?”

He was met with a mixture of looks, most of them confused.

“The Tower of Three Days, my friends. The tower where it can be three days at the same time.”



I felt like things were almost making sense, but it still eluded me, like trying to see out of a frosted window in the car.

Dad interjected, also on the cusp of understanding.

“I can see where it could be two days at the same time, if you straddled the line, I guess. But where are you getting the third day?”

“Well,” Joseph replied, “it sounds crazy, but I’m confident that I’m right. Look.” He sprung up onto the table, his head brushing the ceiling. There was a crack down the middle of the table, a place to separate if you wanted to move it. Joseph put his feet on opposite sides of the crack. He then gestured to each side.

“Okay, this side of me is Monday, where my right foot is, and this side of me is Tuesday, where my left foot is.”

“Right, two days,” said Dad.

“No, don’t think of it that way!” Joseph replied, with a hint of frustration at not being able to explain himself as well as he would like. “To my left foot, the right foot is in ‘yesterday.’ To my right foot, the left foot is in ‘tomorrow.’ To both feet, they think they are in ‘today.’ Yesterday, today,

and tomorrow. My body would be in all three days at the same time. If this 'Tower' straddles the International Date Line, it would be as well. We know the Tower is in the ocean, where most of the IDL is located."

We stared, letting it sink in. It seemed to click for all of us at the same time. Joseph was right. How could yesterday meet tomorrow without a today squeezed in the middle? He jumped down off the table.

"I say we head for the Line and travel along its path. Hopefully we'll meet the Tower of Three Days more sooner than later. Sound feasible, Captain?"

"Aye. It would be easy to maintain a path traveling along the Line. I'll alter our course right away."

The words were barely out of the captain's mouth before everything changed in a chilling instant.



A frightful scream came from above, on the decks. It was the terrified yell of one of the crew. Without hesitation, we all headed for the door and climbed the short staircase out into the open air.

The night was dark, more so than usual because of a storm that had begun to creep into the area. The air was wet with mist. The man screamed again, and we saw him standing near the railing on the far side of the boat, pointing to the sky.

We could not see the object of his frightened attention.

But a sudden and dreadful sound filled the air. I felt my heart pause before it set to racing.

It was the clanking sound of metallic teeth.

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