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Independent Novel Study:

**MONSTER by Michael Grant**

When the dome came down, they thought it was the end of the troubles. But it was just the beginning. Shade Darby witnessed events that day with devastating consequences and vowed never to feel that powerless again. Now, four years later, she gets her hands on a part of the meteor that began it all- and that’s when she changes. Trouble is, Shade’s not the only one mutating, and the authorities cannot allow these superpowers to go unchecked...

-https://gone.fandom.com/wiki/Monster?action=edit&section=2#UK

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**Summary**

In a town named Perdido beach, is a dome made of some opaque energy that only let light in. Precisely 20 miles in diameter around a power plant where an autistic four-year-old boy named Peter Ellison was given unimaginable amounts of power from a creature called the Gaiaphage. The Gaiaphage came from a meteor from somewhere in space that crashed into said power plant many years earlier, killing a single person in the process. It dug deep enough into the earth that people just covered it up where it fell and built a new power plant above in. Unbeknownst to anyone, an alien virus was wedged inside the meteor, which combined with the human DNA it captured from the human trapped with it and a pile of uranium from the power plant, became a power hungry, radioactive, barely conscious alien monster. It needed to learn the ability of creating life, monsters, to be exact. Peter would be the least likely to realize he even had power, so the Gaiaphage gave half of all its power to a four-year-old boy, who only had plans for himself. Let’s just say Peter’s priorities didn’t exactly fall in line with the Gaiphage’s. One day, Peter’s dad took him with him to the power plant where he worked, because nobody was available to babysit him. That same day, the Gaiaphage took over a man’s mind to force to him create some kind of nuclear accident capable of wiping out everyone in Perdido beach, as, from what I assume, Peter was turning out to be kind of a bust. While this was happening, Peter sat in a chair, playing his Gameboy next to his working dad. Bright flashes, loud, blaring alarms, and Peter got annoyed. He got off his chair and walked over to his dad, who was flipping the heck out trying to find out what was happening. Peter tugged on his dad’s sleeve, and his dad turned around and yelled at him, “Peter, just sit back down!” He realized he shouldn’t have yelled, but it was too late. Peter wanted this all to stop. And it did. The lights dimmed, the noises ceased. The adults, who always caused annoyance in his life, were Gone (tittle of the first book). Everyone 15 and older was teleported outside of a 20-mile dome in diameter around a nuclear power plant. Peter sat back in his chair to play his Gameboy.

A year and a half later, around half the kids trapped in the dome had been killed off by various things started by the Gaiaphage such as a plague, man-eating coyotes/bugs, a sociopathic/immortal kid with a whip in place of his arm, and a large hatred for Astrid Ellison and Sam Temple (the main protagonists in the previous books. You don’t need to know this, but it helps for later in the summary). The kids themselves have had wars against each other with the powers they developed. due to the radioactive demon sitting beneath them, leaking out mutative energy by accident. The Gaiphage took over the body of someone, literally absorbing into them with whatever weird, radioactive, conscious slop he was made up of. The dome previously opaque done turned transparent, almost invisible, after Astrid sacrificed her brother, Peter Ellison (the powerful autistic kid), to the man-eating bugs that the Gaiaphage created. She did this because since he only really thinks about himself, and until he was exposed to the threat, he’d had no reason to stop them. After a big fight with the kids of the FAYZ (Fallout Alley Youth Zone, dome was dubbed in the previous book series), the Gaiaphage is taken down with the help of the somehow still conscious mind of Peter, who inhabits someone who gains and can then use Peter’s powers. Caine, Peter, and many others died in the fight. Once the dome Peter made is completely destroyed, the dome disappears just like that, and the people of the FAYZ sprint out to freedom.

(Start of the book I read, five years later) Shade Darby goes with her mother, who is scientist working on the Perdido Beach Anomaly (the FAYZ). Shade sneaks out every night because her mom won’t let her go near it. While she sits down on the blanket, she brought with her to watch the kids sitting on the other side of the translucent dome, she hears her mom calling her name. But just before she can sigh and get to go look for her, she sees a bright flash as suddenly a white laser beam burns the people to her left into ash. She gets flat on her stomach until the laser stops, and about a minute later, a group of dirty, desperate, dangerous-looking little kids, each holding some form of a weapon in their hand come running/stumbling in her direction. Oblivious to her body, one of them kick her in the face and knock her senseless, while one little girl holding a machete in her swinging hands slits her neck, only to keep running on to safety. When she wakes up, Shade finds herself in a hospital bed, and sees a firefighter zipping up a body bag containing her mom.

4 years later, Shade Darby (now 17 years old) and her Ex-but-now-friend sit in a Starbucks, discussing how she had sabotaged her dad’s work on locating where a meteor similar to the one that spawned the gaiaphage would fall, so that only she knows where it will be. She tells him she wants to use the power from the meteor to gain superpowers like the kids in the FAYZ did. Her friend Malik Tenerife confronts her about her fascination with the FAYZ after her mother, Heather, was killed, and how it isn’t worth doing all this just to feel powerful. Shade says it's not just about feeling powerful, it’s also so that when the world flips upside down with mutants all over the place, she can be a hero. Afterwards, they split up and Shade walks to the school bus. She witnesses a couple of guys beat up a transgender (Went from guy to a girl) named Cruz. She decides to take a sick day to take Cruz back to her house to help her with her injuries. Shade has a collection of books at her house, all about the Perdido Beach Anomaly and what it could have been and how it was possible for the kids to develop superpowers, She had developed an obsession with it ever since the day the gaiaphage killed her mom. Over the next few weeks, Cruz and Shade become close friends, and Shade finally asks her if she would help her collect the rock when it lands. Cruz agrees, and the next day they drive to the crash site 4 hours away and retrieve the alien rock. Unbeknownst to them, someone else had gotten some valuable information from paying a hacker to hack Shade’s Dad’s computer. Justin DeVeere is a brilliant, talented, psychopathic artist, who with his beautiful 28-year-old girlfriend (he is 19) drove out to the site themselves and snuck away a shard of the virus infected rock. They get away from the crash site and Justin crushes and eats an ounce of the rock when they get on a plane. After some turbulence at the end of the ride, Justin freaks out and mutates into a 10-foot-tall, humanoid/crab/swordfish creature with a blue colored sword for its right arm and a pincer for its left. He crashes and blows up the plane, the only survivors being Justin and his girlfriend Erin O’Day. Shade and Cruz crush and eat their own shards of the rock. Shade wakes up to turning into a grasshopper-looking thing with backwards facing legs, chitin armor covering her body, and the ability of super speed. Cruz gains invisibility and can create illusions around her body to make her look like anyone she wants. Also, all the Rockborn can morph and de-morph at will, erasing all injuries sustained while in their morphed form when they de-morph, but not the other way around. Once they had time to determine who had sabotaged the location of the meteor, the police break into Shade’s house. Shade, Cruz, and Malik escape with Shade’s super speed and go on a mission to find Justin DeVeere who has started calling himself Knightmare. Earlier in the week, in a supermarket working as a cashier, is a 19-year-old black lesbian girl named Dekka Talent who was a mutant with powers during the FAYZ. A man named Tom Peaks recruits her and gives her some of the rock that they got from one of the 7 other meteors that fell to earth, that also came gave mutant powers. After finding out that she was going to be used as a weapon for the government, she managed to break out of the facility she was in, while in the process breaking out a guy named Aristotle Adamo, or Armo for short, who could turn into an abominable snowman-looking creature. Dekka can turn into a feline-medusa combination with the power to just shred apart anything into non-existence. Justin DeVeere, after destroying a bridge, tried to escape the police and was cornered at a lighthouse. Shade, Cruz and Malik also arrived at the scene, with Shade battling Knightmare in an intense one-on-one fight to the death. Shade with her super speed could rush in an out of Knightmare’s guard but was unable to do any damage because of the chitin armor covering every inch of his body except his eyes. Bingo. She stabs one of his eyes and gets away after seeing a helicopter about to drop a bomb on the whole scene. Knightmare’s girlfriend is blown to smithereens, but Knightmare de-morphs to heal himself and is captured by the facility that tried to take Dekka. Tom Peaks had been fired from his job at the facility and in anger he took 3 times the amount of rock that Shade had taken, to turn himself into a 30-40-foot-tall, molten lava covered dragon that spewed a substance like that of napalm. He recruits the sociopathic guy named Drake, who I mentioned earlier had a hatred for Sam and Astrid. Since he heals any injury given enough time, he lived out in a desert where he kidnapped and tortured people in a cave, not even really needing food. Together, Drake Merwin and Napalm (Peaks called himself) planned to take control of the mother rock, the biggest of the meteors that had fallen to earth, which was currently being captured by another mutant named Vicent Vu. Vincent Vu secretly had schizophrenia, but the voices in his head had told him not to tell anyone about them. They told him they would think he was crazy, and that they would stop him from being what they said he was; the reincarnation of a demon called Abaddon the Destroyer. He was aboard the ship that had collected the Mother rock from its place under the sea. He had recorded the codes to access the door to the room that held it, and broke off 5 shards, two more than Napalm. From the exposure to the creatures under the water, the rock gave Vicent the form of a gigantic starfish, capable of detaching his limbs to use as little controllable poisonous soldiers. During the final fight, Dekka and Armo go to stop Vincent, only to find that Shade, Cruz and Malik were there already to stop Napalm. They decide to team up to stop them together. As the heroes try to fend off their much more powerful predecessors, Malik is almost killed by Napalm’s …well, napalm he expels from his body, and Cruz stays with him to give him some of the rock so that he can survive, even though it means being in morph for the rest of his life. They all shift their focus to Vincent but can’t manage to get near him because of the puppet-like creatures that his limbs turn into once they get cut off. Vincent reveals to shade that the Dark Watchers were watching them like TV. Every mutant had them in their head, and every mutant was like a pawn to them. Then Vincent Vu de-morphs and escapes into the crowds of people to go back to his (someone else’s) apartment (which he broke into) and watch TV. Malik is taken to the hospital to be kept alive until he morphs and develops the power to make every person around him feel extreme levels of pain, to the point of killing themselves. Napalm/Tom Peaks beats up a woman and steals her car to flee the area. A navy ship unloads an onslaught of destruction upon a gigantic caterpillar that used to be a boy named Sean. Other monsters also raged around the world, involving Anomalous Space Objects 4, and 5. The third one was in possession of Shade Darby, and the first one hit Perdido Beach five years earlier. 6, 7 and 8 have yet to hit the planet, but who knows what trouble they could stir up. The book ends with Dekka and Armo going to Sam Temple’s house to hide out after the battle, and Shade and the gang waiting for Malik to morph.

**Tittle Significance**

I think he chose this tittle because it captures the theme of darkness in the book, plus, throughout the book, the alien virus spreads across the world, to turn more and more people into monsters. More and more people are turning into giant killer caterpillars and monsters who wreak havoc across the world. The government is even turning people into weapons of war using the virus. Monsters are being made around the world in people’s mind sets as well. To quote the book, “Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” Average Joes all over the planet go suddenly from having an amount of power you would expect, to having more power than they could have imagined. Also, a fact I didn’t mention in the summary because I thought it was long enough already is that anyone infected by the alien virus inside the rock had this feeling of being watched by something. These things they called the Dark Watchers could push people into doing bad things with their powers, and were only able to do so when the person infected was in morph. So, when people were either infected on purpose or not, the Dark Watchers pushed them to be their worse selves. After gaining immense power, many people can’t resist a push from the Dark Watchers to do the things they never could when they were only human. The dark, bad things they never would have thought of on their own.

**Setting and Genre**

The book starts out in a Starbucks on Dempster Avenue, in Evanston, Illinois. The year is 2017, and the protagonist (Shade Darby) is in her senior year of high school. The genre is dystopian fiction and science fiction. The book is set predominantly at the protagonist’s house, The Ranch (The Facility), Dekka’s motorcycle when she and Armo escaped the Ranch, SUV Shade’s friends lived in, the Piedras Bianca lighthouse, The *Okeanos Explorer* (the ship carrying the mother rock), and the Los Angeles Port. Tom Peaks visits Drake, the immortal guy with the whip for an arm, out in the middle of the dessert to get him on his side so he can get revenge on Dekka, and Armo was at his school before getting in a car crash and taken to the Ranch.

**Main Characters**

The main characters of the story were Shade, Cruz, Malik, Justin DeVeere, Dekka, Armo, Tom Peaks, and Vincint Vu. Shade Darby is a confident, brilliant, slightly controlling 17-year-old that. She wants to be powerful so she can be a hero, the hero that she didn’t feel like she was when she couldn’t to save her mother and blames herself for it. She also thinks she wants to be a hero because when the meteors hit the planet, the world will start to change for the worst if there isn’t someone to keep it in check. She didn’t run away after having her fill of heroism, and I think she deserves some praise for having enough courage to do something like that, because if I was placed in that position I probably would have run away as fast as I could. I will say though, that Shade sort of manipulated Cruz into being her accomplice from day one of seeing her at the bus stop, which led to Cruz being forced into becoming a hero without entirely wanting it. The only real reason Cruz wanted to become a mutant was because she wanted a life different than her current, verbally abusive, non-excepting-of-who-she-is one. Her parents didn’t except who she was and the kids at school teased her. She believed that if she gained superpowers, things would be different, and she could just follow Shade with whatever she was planning. And if I’m being honest, I’m unsure of why Cruz continued to hang out with Shade after meeting her. Shade *did* help her out, but in the book, it always says how Cruz can tell there is something weird about her. Malik used to be in a relationship with Shade, but after breaking up they still remained close friends, regardless of their past. Malik has certain similarities to Shade. He is very smart and analytical like she is, without any of her obsession for power. To me, he always acts surprisingly calm and calculating, which I think is a pretty cool thing to be able to do during panicky situation. Moving on to Justin DeVeere, he was one of the main villains of the book. He is an 18-year-old psychopathic art student with an IQ of 152 (making him smarter than 99.9% of humanity), and a rich 28-year-old sort of partner named Erin O’Day. After destroying the plane, he came up with a plan to act as if he couldn’t control his mutation and that he was completely innocent, sort of like the Hulk. I think it’s a very smart move because it meant that the people would support him and killing him would be like killing an innocent bystander in the eyes of the public. I think Justin was one of the characters in the book who is actually evil down to their core, rather than most who are just overwhelmed with power and do bad things because they can. Dekka and Armo were people who weren’t ever corrupted by their power. Dekka was one of the people who were trapped in the FAYZ who also developed superpowers. I think because of this she was already prepared for the responsibility that came with being given the amount of power she was given when becoming mutant. I like that she is so tough, until someone else is threatened, as it shows she is actually someone who likes to help others. Armo, other than his ODD, was a normal kid who just happened to cross paths with Dekka after escaping the Ranch with the use of his new powers and his ability to resist what they told him even when he was drugged up to except orders. That is probably the thing I like most about him. He won’t let anyone control him, even being drugged, locked up, and tortured. Switching over to Tom peaks, I think he was all around well written, with the way he was portrayed as ruthless when he beat up an old woman and cleaned out her purse, but in contrast was also given a conscious where he questioned whether his wife and kids would like him the way he is. Whether they would be afraid of him, whether they would accept him, and whether they could love him.

**Major Change in the Main Character**

 At the very beginning of the book, Shade goes through a dramatic change. She is just a normal 13-year-old girl with a great interest in the dome and what goes on inside. After her mom refuses to let her go see it, she sneaks out anyway. When her mom realizes she left, she hurries to go find Shade among the crowds of parents looking through the transparent dome to watch their children. At this moment, the Gaiaphage in its human form tries to kill everyone on the other side of the dome by using laser powers that can go through transparent objects. Shade is transfixed by the Gaiaphage’s sheer power, and her mom gets killed. These two events drive Shade to develop an even more powerful obsession with the FAYZ than before. She buys as many books about how superpowers were possible, and all sorts of theories about everything that happened. After learning that meteors similar to the one that started the FAYZ were going to hit Earth, and that her dad was the put in charge of calculating where they would land, she knew she had found her way to gain power like the Gaiaphage. After Shade and her friends are chased out of town by the police, she starts to feel guilty for getting her friends involved in the whole mess just because of her obsession with becoming some crime-fighting superhero. After the first fight with Knightmare at the lighthouse, Shade also begins to realize that being a crime-fight hero isn’t some easy breezy thing. It’s scary, it’s dangerous, and it’s hard. But even after her experience with fear, the moment she learns that Vincent (AKA Patrick the starfish) is trying to steal the mother rock, she decides to go fight him regardless. She and her friends stare Death in the face to protect others. Overall, Shade goes from some average girl, to a brave, super powered hero willing to protect others no matter the consequences.

(There is so much room left on the page…)

**Favorite Phrases**

1. “She was, Shade thought, the most amazing creature she had ever imagined: fearless, insane, and powerful. A demented young goddess. Fascinating.”

This is a description of the Gaiphage by Shade. (The Gaiaphage had possessed a girl’s body, if you're wondering why she said goddess.) I think this helps show where parts of her fascination for power came from.

1. “In case you're wondering, I have a dick.” Said Cruz.

I think this says a lot about Cruz’s want to just get that fact out of way because she doesn’t want her asking or finding out later on. I think it’s also a little humorous just because it’s so blunt.

1. “It was as if there were two people living inside that pretty, scarred body: a high school science nerd and a shark.” Said Cruz.

I think this is a better description than I could give of Shade, and it helps me put her attitude and actions into perspective.

1. “*Frodo and the Ring,* Cruz thought, and laughed at nervously at the comparison, because the thought came with an extra question: *Is Shade Frodo or Gollum?*

I like that they referenced The Lord of the Rings, and it also rose the same question in me. At the time I chose Gollum. Now I choose Frodo.

1. “You know the Law of Holes, Cruz? It goes like this: when you're in a hole, stop digging.” Said Malik.

I find this both very clever, and very true.

1. “A kind, if scandalized women offered Peaks some of her husband’s clothing. He took that gratefully and then beat the women unconscious with a lamp and cleaned out her purse.”

I feel like the author intentionally made the first section of this sentence seem all innocent, just so he could turn the whole mood around from being slightly more calm than usual, to being entirely vicious. I think he wanted to keep up a constant feeling of evil throughout the book, especially to capture the feeling of the tittle. Plus, this just made me laugh because I so surprised the author would write that.

1. “Yeah,” Malik said, this will go really well when I explain to some cop that it wasn’t the fault of the young black male (Malik is black), it’s the fault of the young white girl. She’s the car thief, Officer, why are you pointing a gun at me.”

I find this really funny. I feel like it makes fun of racism by making a clever joke out of it.

1. “Malik? Shade was momentarily thrown off stride. She was not used to people being as observant as her.”

I think it speaks loads about her personality, how she thinks nobody is as smart as her. It also makes me feel a sense of victory to see her proved wrong because I’ve had friends like her who I was happy to see knocked off their high pedestal of smartness.

1. “Shade sighed like a disapproving parent. “Well, who knows? Maybe the world we’ll grow up in will be very different than we expect, and all that education will be useless.”

This is my dream every day, so that I could just go to school and never worry or stress about the two month long assignment I put off for way too long.

1. “Shade made a mental note to ask which worked best for him. Or her. And decided to insert female pronouns into her own internal monologue.”

I think it is very interesting that the author divulged that Shade had an internal monologue, because it shows that when the book is talking about what she is thinking, it is really her talking to herself in her head, not the narrator explaining her feelings. I just find it interesting.

**Theme of the Story**

**“A kind, if scandalized women offered Peaks some of her husband’s clothing. He took that gratefully and then beat the women unconscious with a lamp and cleaned out her purse.”**

I feel like this sentence speaks the most about the theme of the story because it contains the very element most present in the book. The sentence starts out kind and caring, but then switches to cruelty and uncaring. This element is basically the outline of the book. Things start out normal and switches suddenly to being eviler than you expect someone to be. In the book, your wall of expectation is broken down when people turn into monsters simply because of power. In this sentence your expectation is wrong when Tom Peaks gratefully takes some clothes from a helpful old woman, and then beats her with a lamp. Things just flip upside down, and that's what I feel the theme of the story is.

**Three Truths about Human Nature**

A truth is something stated that is reality; it is actually what the person says it is

**It is a truth that people don’t like to be used.**

Everyone likes to be thought about as an equal to others. Tom Peaks convinces Dekka that they need to give her some of the rock and make her mutant to learn how to take the powers granted by the rock away. But he lies, and when Dekka realizes he intends to lock her up and use her as a weapon, he doesn’t even care that what he’s doing is wrong. She hates being caged like an animal and used as a tool of destruction for bad people. She ends up getting a little help from some random guy (which I feel was just the author being lazy) that treated her like some goddess and

**It's human nature to play tit for tat. If I hold open a door, you rush to hold the next one for me. If I hurt you, you want to hurt me back more.**

After Tom Peaks doesn’t stop Dekka from escaping, he loses his job, which he considers extremely important, as he had to work his way all the way up there for years, just to have it taken by someone else. All because of some girl who, out of his control, broke out of the Ranch. He felt the need to hurt her back, preferably with death.

**It is true that humans respond to emotion.**

After Shade has the whole interaction with the Gaiaphage and her mom dies because of her, Shade has a load of never-ending emotion inside her. She knows she never wants to experience that thing again, which angers her. She feels guilty for doing nothing as her mom was killed, regardless of the fact that she couldn’t have anything. I think she feels she needs to be better han she was then, so when she hears that meteors filled a superpower-giving virus were going to hit the planet and make everyone into a monster, villain, or hero, she felt this was when she could redeem herself. Make up for doing nothing, having no power, to stop the Gaiaphage.

**General Review**

All in all, I quite liked the book. Throughout the book, the story was kept interesting by the constantly changing perspectives, but that was also what kept the book hard to remember and understand as well if it had been focused on only a few. The characters made a lot of witty jokes that kept things lighthearted even in the darkest of situations. The characters were sort of hard to relate to as they all had different backgrounds involving abusive parents or super powered people/creatures that I have never been in myself. Throughout the book, the author placed a lot of ups and downs within the text. When things were getting too calm, he would write something dark, and when things got too dark, he would place a joke to lighten things up but still keep it dark. I think that made all the light parts really stand out and make me think, “Ok, things aren’t so bad if they can make jokes still,” when **BAM!** He switches direction to make things dark and malicious again. I would recommend people to read this book only if they did not mind some dark descriptions, and if they didn’t mind jumping into it a little bit blindfolded, as there are like 6 books in the same universe (but they are a separate book series and not necessary for this one) that were all about the kids trapped in the FAYZ. Something I wish was that the author had explained Shade’s obsession with superpowers a little more, because it made the book feel unrealistic that a person could just get an obsession over something for no reason. It gave it a slight tinge that something didn’t add up, like the book wasn’t as worth reading because the plot was based off something that made no sense.