VOCABULARY

CHAPTER 1

Deprivation (3) - While we ate, the war fasted, fed by its own deprivation.

Pocked (4) - Their bodies lined the pocked avenues at irregular intervals.

Minaret (5) - It passed over the minarets that rose above the citadel...

Acrid (6) - I had grown accustomed to it, the way he'd punctuate it's rhythm with a well-practiced spit into an acrid pool of dark liquid that always seemed to be growing between us.

Brusque (10) - "She did not try to replant them this year," he finished brusquely.

Correlation (12) - We confused correlation with cause and say a special significance in the portraits of the dead, arranged neatly to the number corresponding to their place on the growing list of casualties we read in newspapers, as indications of an ordered war.

Adherence (16) - There was something restrained about him, something more than simple adherence to nonfraternization.

Contorted (23) - She tried dragging the body, her face contorted by effort as she pulled the old woman by her one complete arm.

CHAPTER 2

Dormant (31) - And that as she pulled down the long gravel path leading to their little house, on the winter-dormant apple orchard Daniel had talked about so often, she kept sneaking glances at the return address.

Skepticism (31) - She must have taken those glances with an unusual level of skepticism for a rural mail carrier as experienced as she was...

Askew (35) - While Sterling's jaw line could have been transferred directly from a geometry textbook, Murph's features were nearly imperceptibly askew.

Elaboration (37) - So we'd come here, where life needed no elaboration and others would tell us who to be.

Dilapidated (40) - The sound of magazines being loaded by the range detail carried over the thin water air from the dilapidated ammo shed.

Unadulterated (43) - It was narrowly focused, but it was pure an unadulterated.
CHAPTER 3

Buoyant (52) - In the plane, the sun had a kind of buoyant dominance, but it had hidden itself away beyond clouds that appeared like pale, soot-colored sketches of themselves.

Opaque (56) - Their breath rose in one opaque breath, as it had risen in one small voice that hung above our heads briefly...

Commensurate (62) - Despite an age-old instinct to provide an explanation more complex than that, something with a level of profundity and depth which would seem commensurate with the confusion I felt, it really was that simple.

Morose (68) - He was drunk. I'd never seen him like that: on the edge of losing control, morose and somehow sentimental in his own way.

Veneer (70) - I imagined his body collapsing in on itself, the flesh rotting and then gone, the skin on his lips cracked until only dust remained in a thin veneer over his skull.

CHAPTER 4

Wadi (75) - I woke for my shift as the sun set into a wadi.

Naivete (79) - And yes, it was full of naivete and boyishness, but that is all right, because we were boys then.

Pungent (81) - The smell was sweet and pungent and filled the calm air.

Intermittent (82) - In the intermittent light Sterling seemed to flicker also, appearing and disappearing.

Predicament (83) - For a moment we forgot our predicament and were just two friends drinking under a tree...

Staccato (87) - His voice became a blunt staccato as he gained confidence in his capacity to motivate us...

CHAPTER 5

Innumerable (99) - ...it seemed I had left the better portion of myself as one among innumerable grains of sand...

Lurched (103) - The doors opened and we lurched down the gangway towards the bright shine of the airport.
Preoccupation (108) - It took her hands on my face to rouse me from my preoccupations.

Apparition (108) - Her grasp was firm, and she touched me hard as if to prove I was not a fleeting apparition.

CHAPTER 6

Momentum / Detritus (115) - Everything was in its proper place, waiting for a pause in time, for the source of all momentum to be stilled, so that what remained would be nothing more than detritus to be tallied up.

Lethargy (117) - I was stuck by a kind of lethargy, in awe of the decisiveness of every single attenuated moment...

Downcast (119) - When he only died, their faces became downcast and surprised.

Disintegrate (120) - I was disintegrating, too. How was I supposed to keep us both intact?

Morbid (123) - Some lay at odd angles with backs curved slightly off the ground and others were wrenched at absurd degrees, their decay an echo of some morbid geometry.

CHAPTER 7

Deteriorate (131) - I had deteriorated more than one might expect in the short time I'd been home.

Silhouette (134) - ...I'd look back and see my mother's face silhouetted in the kitchen window and I'd smile back at her and wave...

Vividness (135) - I was tired of my mind running all night through the things I remembered, then through things I did not remember but for which I blamed myself on account of the sheer vividness of scenes that looped on the red-green linings of my closed eyelids.

Tentative (136) - "I really think you should. Just think about it." She smiled tentatively.

Oxidized (142) - I moved to the edge where the ties met the structure of the bridge itself and moved along the oxidized metal, occasionally swinging my foot down out over the water flowing down below while watching the kids laugh and swim in the fresh water.

Gratitude (144) - Or like I'll give away that I don't deserve anyone's gratitude and really they should all hate me for what I've done but everyone loves me for it and it's driving me crazy.

Pitiable (147) - When they dropped me off at my house one of the cops looked at me with pitiable concern and said, "Try to keep it together, buddy. You'll be back in the swing in no time."
CHAPTER 8

Taut (152) - All his gear was on, as taut and orderly as ever...

Periphery (152) - On the periphery of our gentle domestic activities, citations were read.

Deviant (156) - "You've got to stay deviant in this motherfucker."

Savagery (159) - We were unaware of even our own savagery now: the beatings and the kicked dogs, the searches and the sheer brutality of our presence.

Abrasive (161) - The white painted boards were chipped and peeling from the abrasive wind...

Volition (165) - He wanted to have one memory he'd made of his own volition to balance out the shattered remnants of everything he hadn't asked for.

Prostrate (168) - I was still prostrate on the ground. My face and body had plowed a small plot in which I lay.

CHAPTER 9

Meander (177) - A stray tortoiseshell cat would occasionally settle in an unkempt flowerbox hanging from my window. It had a habit of meandering over ledges and sills, humping between air conditioning units and the building's few balconies.

Culpability (179) - It probably wouldn't matter what our level of culpability was. I was guilty of something...

Reprieve (181) - I should have asked the snow to stop, for one reprieve, to not have to face another next.

Disquiet (184) - I had in me a profound disquiet.

CHAPTER 10

Catacomb (194) - The city, past curfew, seemed vast and catacombed, its black alleys a tightly wound maze.

Remnants (194) - It was impossible to know... if we'd come back as one body or if we'd leave remnants of ourselves out along the dank canals or in the dry fields.

Furtively (196) - "Oooh," the man responded furtively," I don't know.

Goad (202) - He goaded the mule along.
CHAPTER 11

Entropy (217) - Entropy increased in the six-by-eight-foot universe of my single cell.

Dignified (219) - Her grief was dignified and hidden, as is most grief, which is partly why there is always so much of it to go around.

Obtuse (219) - The world clean and obtuse, no angles, nothing hard.

Deference (220) - The men, fulfilling their obligation with all the grace and deference that men could be asked to, finally left a card in Mrs. Murphy's hand that gave the address of the room's they'd rented while they waited for a break in the weather.

Reconciliation (222) - I was glad she came. Not because there was any unexpected reconciliation, but because she was tolerant and seemed to want to understand what happened to her son...

Obstructed (224) - I'd rather look out at mountains. Or to have my view obstructed by a group of trees.