

Flesh and Blood



By

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Barry Brunswick's
Flesh and Blood

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Warning

This story contains comedy gore and scariness that some younger readers may find disturbing.

Sunday Lunch

“Dinner is served,” said Mrs Bleegley to her family. They sat impatiently with mouths watering. “Would you carve, dear?” she asked, looking at her beloved husband.

“Oh, absolutely, it would be a pleasure.” He took the silver carving knife and sharpened it. “Where on Earth did you get such lovely looking meat?” he asked.

“I got it from the butcher,” she replied proudly.

“What, the one down the street?”

“Yes,” she said. “It took me and the ladies half an hour to break down that barricade.”

“I know, it’s getting so difficult these days to get a nice bit of well-fed, free range, hormone free human.” He smiled, showing the gruesome hole in his cheek, exposing the teeth beneath. His green skin hung loosely from his skull.

“It used to be so easy,” she said matter of factly, as three flies buzzed about her head. “There used to be so many humans. Now they’re so hard to find, and the ones you do find, might well blow your head off.” Her hair was half gone; her eyes were yellow and bloodshot. Her lips were

green as she smiled grimly, but Mr Bleegley didn't see it. He looked upon his wife like she was some kind of angel.

“Yes, just the smart ones have survived this long. I don't even want the kids to play in the street anymore,” he said in a pompous tone.

“Yes, you get those night patrols. First, they blind us with their carts with circles of fire in the front, and then they attack, mowing down fifty at a time.”

“Who'd be a zombie these days?” Mr Bleegley fretted. “I mean, it's just no fun anymore.”



They both gave a rueful sigh as they dreamed of the rose-tinted past when everything was perfect.

They paused for a moment, staring into space, but the children soon got their attention by dribbling and moaning and reaching stiffly out for the meat.

The poor butcher had held his doorway for three long years, but now his days were numbered. At least he wouldn't have to suffer the indignity of becoming a zombie himself. His brain was dessert.

Amongst the horrifying sounds of ripping flesh and gnawing teeth, the family Bleegley: Mrs. Bleegley, Mr. Bleegley and their four ravenous children, got stuck into their Sunday lunch.

The Joneses

“I’m absolutely starving,” said Junior Jones. He hadn’t eaten for quite some time.

“I’m sorry, Junior. I’ve been hunting all night, but I couldn’t get a bean.”

“What about the dogs or rats, dear?” asked Mrs Jones.

“Even the rats are very hard to find at the moment,” her husband replied.

“It’s those blasted, irresponsible zombies!” Mrs Jones ranted. “They know nothing about sustainability. They’ve near on hunted the humans to extinction.”

“I know, I know. When it was just us, we only took the humans that we needed, but these zombies have hunted them all and now there’s none left.” He let out a huge sigh. “I’d better go hunting again.” He was a tired, hungry and dejected vampire. With that, he lifted his arms above his head and in a puff of green, magical smoke, he turned into a bat. He fluttered out of the window as his wife and son waved him lovingly off.

“Good luck, my love,” Mrs Jones said under her breath. She blew her husband a kiss even though he could never know it.

Mr. Jones flew away from the apartment in which he lived, almost with a tear in his eye. He and his wife had brought their precious child into the world in a time of plenty. In his eyes, that was the responsible way. But times were not of plenty anymore, and his poor son Junior was suffering.

He reminisced about the old days, about how he used to fly among the busy streets and then down an alley where he would bring a tasty morsel back to his family—the drinking of the rich blood that filled all their souls with such satisfaction. Now he saw no one and nothing. Even being disguised as a bat was not safe anymore. A human with a gun would just as easily make Mr. Jones a meal as he would them. The humans had nothing to eat either.



He simply had to find something, even if it was as disgusting and degrading as eating vermin.

He looked down at the scene below him with a sad feeling in his heart. He saw gangs of zombies walking, stiff-legged, arms out, moaning and groaning as they moved blindly from here to there. The zombies had no purpose but to feed. Their mouths were desperate for the taste of flesh—human flesh—a taste that was becoming increasingly rare. Every window was smashed, and car wrecks were strewn about the street. Blood stains that were

long since dry painted the roads. It was a nightmare, even for a creature of nightmares such as the vampire.

Mr. Jones flapped down into an alley where he had hunted many times before. His mind flashed back to when this alley was a rich hunting ground. An abundance of homeless humans used to gather down there, and they were the perfect prey for him. Nobody ever missed them when they disappeared. That was always the vampires greatest weapon, the fact that people didn't think that they existed. He dreamed of human blood, but on this night, he was hunting rats.

He slipped silently into the shadows and turned back to his normal form. There he waited, his cold, pale skin hidden from sight among the darkness and the mist. Silently, he thought back to days long since passed. How he longed to hear the screams of terror from a young girl when he emerged from the shadows. For the vampire, killing is not just about food, it's also about pleasure. In fact, it's the most fun that they could ever have. Mr. Jones was wallowing in a deep depression. Not only was his family suffering, but he was robbed of the little pleasures in life, or at least, in death.

He heard a scurrying sound behind the rancid rubbish bins that had not been emptied in years. Such things as street hygiene seemed so trivial now. The scurrying was a sure sign his prey was near. His eyes grew alert as his instinct as a great hunter took the million thoughts from his mind. He listened; he crouched low and a filthy brown rat rushed nervously out from behind the bin. Like a flash, Mr. Jones

shot forward. As quickly as a cat, he pounced and grabbed it by the tail. The rat's eyes opened wide in a look of sheer terror as the shadowy form engulfed it in his grasp. He held the struggling creature up in front of his eyes as it squirmed in blind panic. A half-satisfied smile appeared at the corners of the vampire's lips. The terror in the rat's eyes filled his heart with joy. Not quite the joy a screaming victim would bring, but just a little. At least he knew that his beloved son would eat tonight.

Checkpoint Beta

Once again, an explosion rocked the entire settlement. In any normal circumstance, people would jump out of their skins or get on legs and run, but behind the fences of Checkpoint Beta, the people that remained were used to it. It was as normal as birdsong in the morning is to you or me. There was a constant backdrop of explosions and gunfire in this place that was their home, as the soldiers or land mines took down another line of the undead creatures that moaned and clawed towards the fences, as they always did. The zombies seemed to know that this was the last vestige of humanity. There could be pockets of survivors in other parts of the country, but the only place the people were safe in the city was Checkpoint Beta.

The zombies came in groups constantly. As a result of a rotting brain, they didn't seem to care if they got shot or blown up; it didn't put them off at all. All they had was the hunger—the savage hunger that drove them on endlessly.

To start with, the deep pit around the perimeter had done its job, but now it was full of rotting corpses. These rotting corpses were very much alive, or at least, undead. They were piled thick inside it, one on top of the other. They were trapped by the weight of numbers on top of them, and now hordes of zombie raiders could just walk over the bodies like a bridge. The stink of rotting flesh filled the air, but people no longer noticed. That was the way the world stank now. Maggots and flies ate their fill, but it was only them that could consume the vile meat.

Major Hollows looked down from the watch tower. He was a practical man, no matter how he wished he could be someplace else. No matter how he wished his wife and child were still alive, not a single other person would know. He lived very much in the moment. His sense of duty was unwavering. He had taken it upon himself to be sure that the human race would survive. That was all he had left to live for.

For so long, he had thought of ending it all when the zombies took his family, but he wanted revenge. He swore that he would slay every single one of the undead soulless creatures, or he would, at the very least, die trying. He was in his mid-thirties and was brave and wise. His jaw was strong and chiselled; his frame was huge and muscular. The scars of many battles told their tales all over his body. To Hollows, he was nothing more than a soldier, but to the people he protected, he was hope. They looked upon him as a god, as their saviour, but even his cunning and bravery could only last so long against the endless waves of dead eyes and rancid flesh that faced them daily.

Many times, he'd worked out the equation which he feared they were facing. There were nearly seven billion people in the world. He could at least assume there were other camps like his, but even if there were two or three in every city, which there weren't, maybe they could hold a couple of million safe from attack. There were groups of street gangs that ran around the city looting and salvaging what they could. There could be another few million of those, though it was highly unlikely. If for every person bitten two died because their brains were devoured in a manner

most unpleasant and one came back as a zombie, that would mean there were roughly two and a half billion zombies in the world. There weren't enough bullets in the world to kill that many. It seemed hopeless, but what else could he do?

He sighed as he sipped his coffee. A bullet flashed and boomed next to him. But he didn't flinch; he didn't even blink. He stared downwards, watching the zombie's brain flying out the top of its head and splat onto the road behind it.

“Good shot, Godfrey!” he said. “Keep up the good work.” He gave his fellow soldier a pat on the back that made Godfrey feel ten feet tall.

Godfrey added another notch to the tally chart in front of him. “That's seventy-eight,” he said proudly.

Major Hollows smiled bravely, as if he was content with his lot in life. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The hardest task for him was to keep morale high amongst the troops. They all knew their plight was hopeless. How could these fifty-seven men and women protect the two thousand fenced in at Checkpoint Beta? Food and ammunition were getting harder and harder to come by, and the zombies just kept right on coming. Their sanctuary was little more than a prison, being watched over by guards that just so happened to be undead.

Hollows knew all too well that they needed to leave the camp and find some new food supplies. Leaving the camp was the thing that any of them least wanted to do.

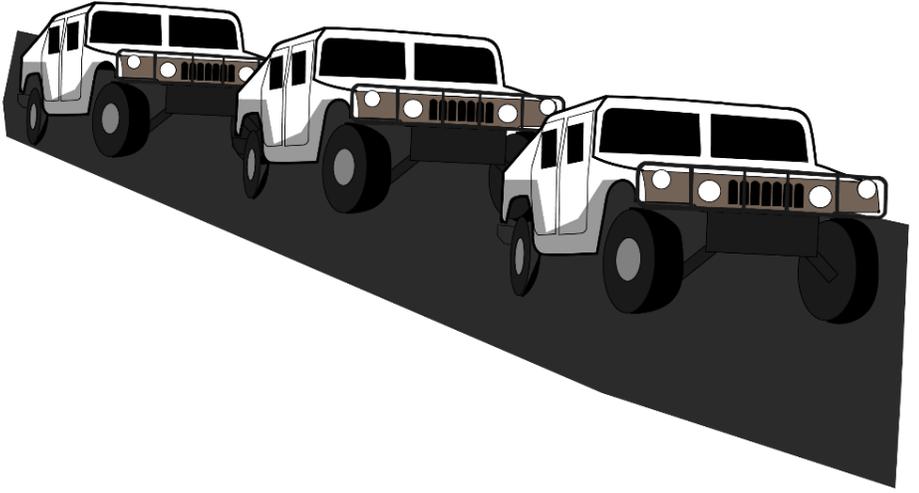
Lieutenant Knowles was Hollows' trusted confidante, not only because he was a fine soldier, but because they had bled in the trenches together as young men. They were the firmest of friends, each having saved the other's life on numerous occasions.

Knowles knew that they were about to have the same old argument that they had every time they had to go out to collect supplies. Knowles would insist that Hollows should not go and leave him to lead the expedition. After all, the camp could not afford to lose their mighty leader. Hollows, as always, would insist he did go, as he would never ask his soldiers to do something that he would not.

Needless to say, Hollows won the argument, as he always did, and as the sun was setting, their convoy was complete. Twelve heavily armed and brave fighting men and women were ready to leave the settlement for the zombie wilds that the city streets had become.

Three military Hummers roared out of the gate running over zombies as they went; soft rotting bodies squelched beneath heavily tired wheels. The glare of the spotlights on the front lit the way. They tore out into the darkness. The lights stunned the zombies momentarily as they stared at the onrushing vehicles—a mistake that spelled their doom.

As the vehicles headed towards the city, the lights were switched off. Stealth was the best weapon they had against the hordes.



The Unquenchable Thirst

“He’s sleeping like a baby now. Poor little mite, he’s worn out,” Mrs. Jones said to her husband, as she kissed Junior on the forehead and gently closed the lid of his coffin.

“Well, it is getting very early,” Mr. Jones replied, with a smile on his lips that was not replicated in his lifeless eyes.

His hands were shaking furiously, and his usually pale skin was even paler than normal.

His wife knew immediately what was wrong with him.

“You’ve got the thirst, haven’t you, dear?”

“No, I’m fine,” he snapped, trying with all his will to steady his trembling hands.

“Oh, Harold.” His wife shook her head. “You said you’d drank the blood of a rat before you brought the other one back for us.”

He looked at her sheepishly, knowing all too well she had spotted his little untruth. The tell-tale signs of the thirst are nearly impossible to hide. He nodded his head as if to confirm what she suspected.

“Oh, that’s very sweet of you, dear. You gave us the rat and yet you haven’t eaten for days yourself. Maybe tomorrow evening we can go hunting together as a family.”

The vampire shook his head. “Winnifred, when we got married, I promised I would provide for you and our children. It is my duty.” He said it firmly and defiantly.

Yet, Winnifred the vampiress folded her arms and pursed her lips in the pose that most men and vampires alike recognise and fear.

“Come on, we’ll all go together. It’ll be fun, like the old days.”

“Things aren’t like the old days any longer, my love. It is dangerous out there. There are zombies everywhere munching on anything they can get their rotten hands on. Those blighters give the undead a bad name. As for the humans, they’ve turned savage. They’re all armed to the teeth and as jumpy as a frightened flea. They shoot first and don’t worry about the questions at all. It’s a bad combination, to say the least.”

“Oh, those days when we first met, what a wonderful time we had.” She looked her husband in the eyes and took him by the hands. “Do you remember when we were on our honeymoon and we slayed a whole group of bikers? The blood, the wonderful blood! The carnage, I can hear their screams of terror now,” she laughed.

“Oh, Winifred, please,” he said. “You’d be lucky to find a bike that works, let alone a gang of bikers.”

“Now, now, Harold, I won’t hear another word on the subject. It is decided. We shall all go out for the hunt tomorrow. If you don’t feed soon, you’ll turn to dust. You won’t be much use to us then, will you?”

“S’pose not,” said Mr. Jones, conceding and shrugging his shoulders. He had a bitter look of dejection etched upon his face.

The Unfeedable Hunger

Mrs. Bleegley stared bleakly at the empty space behind the pantry door. The butcher had long since been munched. The pantry that had not long ago been full of human offal, was now full of nothing but maggots, flies and dried blood. She sighed regretfully; she knew her huge brood needed feeding, and feeding soon. Even zombies eventually rot away to nothing if they don't get the sustenance of human flesh. She moaned and groaned and returned to her awaiting family to deliver the bad news.

They all gathered around the dining table, which was the hub of all the Bleegley family meetings. There was a growling gurgling sound. It was six hungry stomachs rumbling. Unlike a human hunger rumble which gurgles just a little, these stomachs let out a loud roar that sounded like a beast growling angrily.

Mrs. Bleegley began. "The food around here has run out. The humans are all dead or have moved on. It's a bleak situation."

"I've been out all day, and I haven't found a single person anywhere," Mr. Bleegley grimly confirmed.

There was a simultaneous whine from the children's mouths.

"So, it's clear we have to leave this place, but where on Earth shall we go?" Mrs. Bleegley asked.

Mr. Bleegley thought long and hard about it, as did his wife and children. The trouble they were having was that

zombies really don't have any logic, nor are they capable of thought as you and I would know it. You see, the zombie brain is dead and then undead again. When one is brain dead, they struggle a lot with concentration, memory, or any other kind of thought at all. The undeadness creates the instinct to search for human flesh to feast upon, and that is as close to thought as a zombie can get. So, the only thing that any of them could think to do, or at least, instinct told them to do, was leave the house and search blindly for humans, along with all the others of their kind.

Mrs. Bleegley, with her last semblance of human motherhood, made the children put their coats on because it was cold out. One of the thoughtless undead kids put his coat on backwards. Then the youngest son accidentally knocked a fettered ear right off the side of his head trying to put on a woolly hat. It fell and thudded down onto the floorboards. He gave a little moan of what sounded like disappointment at the losing of yet another body part. As if it wasn't bad enough that his nose was half hanging off his face, his eyeball dangled around on a rotting strand and rolled around on his cheek whenever he moved his head. He looked in the mirror and felt the new wound. And not to mistake the fact, he didn't think about looking in the mirror, but one of his last human instincts told him to.

Soon, the ravenous, flesh-hungry, drooling, rotting, disgusting four children stood proudly in front of their parents with flesh drooping off their bones. It was like the family photo from hell. With a jolt and a limp, a groan and a wild stare, the gruesome family Bleegley headed out of the front door and into the evening street.

The Family Outing

With the going down of the sun in the post-apocalyptic sky, the family Jones creaked coffin lids open and emerged from their place of slumber. On this evening, their eyes were wild with the thirst. Each still heart would have fluttered with excitement and anticipation, had they been human. This had been the biggest thrill in family life once upon a time—the family hunt—to feel the wind through their hair in the wild of the night, overlooking the swarming streets that had once been their larder. What flavour shall we have tonight? There once were so many to choose from. Each dreamed of the long-forgotten past, but sometimes the past is just that, forgotten.

Things were bleak, and no matter how they dreamed that they might find a nice juicy granny to eat or a plump little boy to munch on or even a teenage girl to drain, they could never be so lucky. It was a moment of extraordinary rarity that they ever even saw a human anymore. And even when they did, those wasteful zombies would be all over it, scoffing down the flesh and the organs and letting the good nutritious blood drip away onto the ground to mix with the soil and be ruined.

The thirst infected all of them, but especially Mr. Jones, who hadn't fed for many days. He was sweating and cold and shaking. His eyes rolled back as his stomach contracted in enormous cramps. He moaned and groaned in discomfort and pain. They knew that they could waste no time. If he didn't feed soon, he would grow weak, and weakness in a vampire is death. He would not be able to

hunt and eventually would run out of strength and explode into flames when the sun came up.

With a frightful cackle, the three of them turned like magic into bats and flapped out of the window and into the world.

The Supermarket

Hollows and Knowles in the first Hummer were tailed closely by the other two. They went steadily but carefully along. They went just fast enough to outrun any zombies that fancied them as a tasty morsel or run down any others that stood in their way. They wove carefully in and out of car wrecks and junk and the festering bones that filled the streets.

Suddenly, a gunshot cracked out loud from the vehicle behind. Hollows' face turned from one of concentration to one of annoyance. He pushed the button around his neck that opened a radio channel to the crew.

“Thomson, I heard a shot. What’s happening back there?” Hollows asked in a chillingly calm voice.

“I got one, sir!” Thomson said excitedly.

“Listen, private!” Hollows growled. “I don’t want to hear a single shot until we stop. Is that understood?”

“But, sir, we want to kill every single one of those zombie, undead, flesh-eating suckers, don’t we?”

“We sure do, Thompson, but we don’t want every zombie for miles around to know where we are, do we? The gunfire will attract them.”

Thompson stammered and spluttered a little. “I’m sorry, sir. It won’t happen again.”

“It’s okay, son,” Hollows said calmly. “It’s your first time out of the camp. You need to learn and learn quickly that

we don't want any unwanted attention. Keep your wits about you, son. We can't afford any mistakes. Mistakes out here, cost lives." The mental image of a hundred young soldiers lost to zombies on such expeditions before flashed through his mind. Behind the gates and watch towers of Checkpoint Beta, they could just about keep the zombies at bay. Out on the streets, however, they were in the zombie's world, and that city was overrun with them.

Hollows' eyes squinted with the hundred-yard stare—the glare of a man who's fought too many battles and seen too much blood spilt. Beside him, Knowles kept a watchful eye out. He was Hollows' bodyguard; he was steady handed, a fine shot, as brave as a lion and nearly as strong as a bear. He was certainly a useful friend to have when you're trying to make a living in such a grim world. Hollows needed him by his side; he was the only one who Hollows could confide in, the only one whose opinion he would ask. To the other soldiers, Hollows was the fearless leader, the one who always knew what to do. They felt safe under his leadership. They queued up to impress him, and each would gladly give his or her life for him and the people in the camp that relied on them for safety.

Hollows turned to Knowles. "The farm is coming on well, but it'll be another six months before there's enough to feed the whole camp permanently. The shops have been ransacked until we reach the far north of the city. We can get tinned food and bottled water from there. Hopefully there will be a good supply of batteries too. Then we need to stop and find some fuel. It's getting low."

Knowles nodded in agreement. "I suppose it's better to be further away from the camp anyway. Most of the zombies are hanging around in that area. They know that's where all the humans are."

Hollows agreed but he also knew that the further from camp they went, the harder it would be to get back if anything unexpected happened. And, as he knew all too well, anything could happen at any given moment.

The convoy went on for an hour until finally they found a shop. It was an old supermarket, and it looked like it had hardly been touched. They could stock up their supplies there. The Hummers pulled up and stopped in the carpark as close to the doors as they possibly could. The platoon jumped out and gathered round their leader.

"Thompson, Haze, Williams and Habeeb, you're on lookout duty. Get to the roof; check all corners, and I want two facing front and two facing back. If you see anything, let me know. If I give the word, come down to the ground and get the engines started. We'll be with you in a second or two, and we'll get out without the need for a fight if we've got time."

"What if there's not enough time, sir?" a nervous Haze said.

"Then, we fight!" Hollows growled.

"YES, SIR!" they all yelled together.

It didn't take them long to fix ropes and clamber up to the roof.

“All clear up here,” Haze whispered over the radio.

“Copy, Haze. We’re going in. Stay in radio contact. I want to know if you see anything as soon as you do.”

“Affirmative,” she replied.

Two of the men jimmed the door open. The stink of rotting produce exuded out the gap. The fish, the meat the dairy and the vegetables had rotted long ago. Dried, tinned and bottled stuff, however, was still good to go. The power grid had been down for a long time now. The only place with power was in the camp where they had engineered a series of wind powered turbines and solar panels. It seems so funny that only when people have the least, do they innovate the most.

“Entering now,” Knowles said. He always insisted on entering first.

He signalled with two fingers for three of the soldiers to follow him. They switched on the flashlights attached to their assault rifles. The musty air and the eerie silence surrounded them. The five of them hardly dared breathe as they slowly made their way around the supermarket. They checked every aisle and every corner expecting anything to jump out at them at any moment. All that could be heard was the gentle boot steps of the soldiers. They spent ten minutes checking the supermarket before the others were invited in.

“Hollows, Knowles, copy?”

“Go ahead, Knowles.”

“The supermarket’s clear. You can enter now.”

Hollows gave the order and the remaining soldiers entered. They worked quickly loading trollies high with batteries, tinned and dried goods, as well as bottles of water. They knew that time was against them. In both Hollows’ and Knowles’ experience, the zombies always come in the end. It was like they had a sixth sense when it came to finding humans.

Finally, the trollies were full, and they rushed out towards the doors.

“Hollows, copy?” A voice came into the major’s ear.

“Go ahead, Thompson.”

“I’ve got movement in the bushes to the west of the carpark.”

Hollows’ heart sank. They were so close to getting out of there without a fight. “What is it, Thompson?”

As Thompson on the roof looked through his rifle sight, the horrific form of a mangled stiff-legged zombie came out of the bushes. “It’s a zombie, sir, but it’s just one. I have a shot, sir. Shall I take it?”

“Negative, Thompson. We’ll be out in a second. Hold your position, and keep your eyes peeled.” Hollows knew that where there was one zombie, soon enough, there would be many more.

“There’s movement on the east fence. Looks like there’s three of them, sir.” Haze’s voice came into Hollows’ ear.

His heart sank even more. He now knew for sure that they wouldn't get away without a fight.

"There's some coming up from the south, sir!" Habeeb's nervous voice said.

"How many?"

"Three or four or maybe more. It's hard to tell, sir."

"There's some at the north too!" Williams reported.

Suddenly, with a huge gust of wind, the stink of rotting flesh filled the nostrils of the soldiers. There was a fearful rumble, and a wall of zombies rushed out into every corner of the carpark. There were hundreds of them.

The Battle

As the soldiers, led by Hollows flew out of the door with their trollies jammed full, a constant moan filled their ears. There were so many that one voice couldn't be made out above another. Hollows' eyes opened wide as the horde rushed relentlessly towards the shop entrance.

“Fire!” he yelled. He knew that now it was too late to run. It was time to stand and fight.

They took cover behind the Hummers, pointed their weapons towards the horde and started raining bullets into the onrushing crowd. Each skilled and practiced shot tore into the zombies, dropping them one after the other. Zombie bodies collapsed limply to the ground as their lifeless eyes became even more lifeless. Like glazed yellow marbles inside gruesome skulls, the undead became redead, but with each creature that fell, more came ambling blindly into the carpark. The sounds of the weapons attracted ever more of the fearless enemy. Like a stampede, they trampled their fallen comrades under foot and continued surging forward.

The soldiers looked on in wide-eyed horror as the horde got ever closer. Like an endless swarm of green flesh, the army of the undead kept coming forward like robots, completely undeterred by the bullets and the heads exploding all around them. Rotten chunks of brain rained down from the sky, splatting onto the tarmac.

“The roof!” cried Hollows. “Get to the roof!”

Thompson and Haze quickly dropped the ropes for the others to climb and immediately returned to spraying the oncoming zombies.

In pairs, the soldiers shouldered their weapons and clambered up the ropes onto the roof. No sooner did their feet hit the solid roof, they continued their noisy onslaught of bullets.

Only when the others were safe above did Hollows and Knowles sling their guns across their backs and grab the ropes. They started to climb as zombies surrounded them.

Before they could scurry out of reach, a putrid green hand reached up, and cold fingers grabbed hold of Hollows' boot. He kicked like mad, but the zombie started to drag him back down towards the ground below. Certain death awaited him in the jaws of the countless enemies beneath him as more and more hands reached up to grab him.

Knowles, seeing what was happening, wrapped the rope around his forearm. He reached down and took his side arm from its holster. One shot boomed out and then another and another until the weapon clicked empty. The zombie slumped to earth with its arm severed leaving its still clutching fingers firmly attached to the Major's boot.



With sweat pouring down his brow, Hollows flashed his friend a knowing look. He didn't need to thank him, Knowles knew; the look was more than thanks enough. They climbed up to the roof as below the zombies made clumsy attempts to follow them.

“Pull the ropes up!” Hollows ordered, as he took to one knee and started to fire his weapon in controlled bursts.

There they were, the twelve brave soldiers, trapped on a supermarket roof with a sea of zombies surrounding the building, thrashing against the walls like waves in the ocean thrash against the rocks.

We're Coming for You!

“Whatever is that noise?”

“It sounds like gunfire to me.”

“And you know what that means?”

“Humans!” the four ravenous, child-sized zombies that were the offspring of Mr. and Mrs. Bleegley cried as one.

That’s right. It sounds like it’s a fair way away, but hopefully we can get there before they’ve been eaten.”

“Yeah, yeah, fresh meat, yummy!” The children bounced up and down with excitement.

“Erm, guns, dear. We’ll just as soon get our brains blown out!” Mr. Bleegley said.

“Well, hopefully we’ll get there after they’ve run out of bullets,” his wife responded.

“Hopefully?” the father zombie questioned.

“Come on, Dad, we’re starving. Can we, Dad? Oh, please, can we go? We’ll be good!” the oldest child said.

Mr. Bleegley looked at the faces of his children, their green drooping skin, their yellow eyes, their scraggly hair.

“Oh, how can I resist those cute little faces? Okay then, let’s go!”

“Hooray!” The kids clapped their hands and attempted to skip around with stiff-legged joy.

And with that, the six zombies that made up the Bleegley family trudged stiffly off towards the sound.

Many miles to the south of the zombies, the Joneses fluttered high over the city.

“Oh, look down there, Harold,” Mrs. Jones said.

“Oh, yes. I wonder where they are going.”

Below them an army of zombies surged towards the north.

“Can’t you hear the gunfire in the distance?”

He listened carefully. “Oh, yes, I can just about hear it above their frightful moaning.”

“You know what that means, don’t you, Harold?”

“Oh, yes, humans,” he said licking his lips.

“Oh, can we go, Daddy? Oh, can we, please? I’ll never be naughty again, I promise.”

“Bless your little un-beating heart,” said their father. How could Mr Jones resist his beloved son’s pleas?

“Okay, okay, let’s go,” he conceded.

“Yay!” Junior cheered.

And with that, the bat-shaped forms that were the Jones family fluttered off, following the zombie army towards the sound.

The Escape

Back on the supermarket roof, things were not looking good for the soldiers. Although they were fighting with everything they had, destroying the zombie hoard was starting to seem impossible. With each zombie brain destroyed and with each body that slumped to the ground, more were arriving. The sounds of the ferocious battle echoed for miles across the city attracting more and more of the undead.



Knowles knew there was little choice. They couldn't fight them off forever. With no end in sight yet ammunition running low, there was only one thing for it.

“We have to get out of here, sir!” Knowles yelled to Hollows.

“I know, Knowles. We’ll never kill them all. They must be coming from all over the city.” Hollows held his fire for a moment and looked at his friend. “What we need is a diversion, someone to draw them away so the rest can make a dash for the vehicles.”

You may think that Hollows would order one of his men to go, but he was not that kind of leader. There was no way Hollows would ever send any of his brave warriors on the suicide mission which it was almost sure to be.

He raised a hand in the air. “Hold your fire!” he yelled. They were safe on the roof for the moment at least. The zombies couldn’t reach them there.

One at a time the guns died down and eventually, apart from the constant moan of zombies, all was quiet.

“Gather round, people,” Hollows ordered firmly.

His troops encircled him.

“We need to get out of here. We’re running out of ammo. We need a diversion, so we can make a run for it. All of you, concentrate your fire on the south wall and take out all the zombies there. I’ll slip down and run to the south. Wait three minutes for the zombies to chase after me. Run for the Hummers and circle around, then come and pick me up.”

“Sir, are you crazy? You’ll be killed!” Haze sounded nervous.

“We’ve all gotta go at some time,” said Hollows, with a face of stone.

“I’m sorry, sir. I can’t let you. I’ll go instead,” Knowles volunteered firmly.

“I can’t risk any of my men or women, Knowles. It has to be me.”

“But without you, you’ll lose them all. Who else can lead us against them?”

Before anybody could do anything, they heard the sound of running feet. Thompson was heading towards the edge of the roof.

“Thompson, come back, you fool!” Hollows yelled, but Thompson was already attaching his rope.

The rest of the group rushed towards him to stop him.

“It’s okay, don’t worry about me,” the soldier said. “I’ve got to do it. Just pick me up in a minute.”

Before anyone could argue, he was over the edge and lowering himself into the wall of zombies below.

“Fire, cover him!” Hollows shouted. It was clearly too late to stop him. Thompson was a fool but a brave fool.

The soldiers above leaned over the edge of the roof and sprayed a volley of bullets down followed by a grenade and then another volley of bullets. The zombies below were annihilated in seconds as zombie ooze rained down from the sky and stained the ground.

“Go now, Thompson, go!” Hollows yelled.

Thompson saw his chance and quickly lowered himself to the ground. “Come get me, zombies!” he shouted, as his boots hit the ground. Not a second had passed before a huge swarm of the walking corpses were chasing him.

The soldiers returned to the north side of the building, waiting for the zombies below to join the chase and disperse. This they did in little more than a few moments.

“Right, get down there now!” The major shouted the order.

Their chance was upon them. They shot down the ropes, and as feet hit the ground, they ran for all they were worth straight for the awaiting vehicles. Boots hit the tarmac and four zombies came reaching and crawling from underneath the Hummers. They were met by the fury of eleven angry soldiers. Flesh ripped off bone as the bullets flew, and rancid zombie goo splattered all over the place.

Haze took the front seat, turned on the engine, and Hollows and Knowles followed her inside. The others piled into the other Hummers, and with a mighty smoky screech, Haze put her foot down to the floor and the Hummer jerked forward. The force pushed the others back into their seats. A wall of zombies surrounded the vehicles, but they became little more than mush quickly beneath the tires. The Hummer screeched around the building, knocking zombies everywhere and headed quickly to the south. Ahead, they could see an ocean of fettered flesh surrounding Thompson.

As they grew nearer, they could see that Thompson was starting to struggle. He stumbled; he tripped and then he

fell. That was the harrowing moment when they all knew that he was doomed. The zombies swarmed around him and covered him in seconds.

“NOOOO!” cried Hollows, Knowles and Haze as one. They burst through the swarm that were climbing and stumbling all over each other for the sweet, sweet taste of flesh.

Haze pushed her foot on the brake and they jerked to a stop.

“Keep going, Haze!” Hollows ordered.

“But, sir, Thompson!”

“Haze, I’m sorry, Thompson’s gone.”

A Fight to the Undeath

The Bleegleys entered the carpark just in time to see the Hummers scream away. The gunfire had long since died down. All they heard were the moans of disillusioned zombies whose prey had escaped their clutches. Mr. Bleegley had an empty feeling, and not just the emptiness of a savage hunger, but the emptiness of disappointment. Most of the zombies, fuelled by flesh lust, refused to give up on the pointless pursuit. They went slowly plodding after them, but the vehicles disappeared quickly out of sight. The zombies, being zombies, were relentless and determined. They kept on following the smell of fresh meat, and, before long, the Bleegleys were alone in the carpark. Alone that is, except for the three bats that hovered overhead.

Mr. Jones looked down scornfully.

“Zombies, these blasted zombies. They’ve scared our meal away!” he raged. Inside he felt something he hadn’t felt for a very long time. He felt a warmth growing inside him as the vision of the zombies that had made their existence next to impossible flashed through his fiendish brain. The warmth turned to heat. Then the heat grew until it burned. Then the burn became fire. It was the fire of rage.

Mrs. Jones shouted for him to return, but it was far too late. Mr. Jones’ eyes were blazing angrily, and he was hurtling towards the unsuspecting Mr. Bleegley. These rotten-breathed flesh eaters meant that soon his family would starve and turn to dust. As he neared the ground,

green smoke poured from around Mr. Jones, and his form changed from bat to vampire in an instant.

As the vampire's feet hit the ground, Mr. Bleegley sensed danger. He would protect his family with his undead life. Telling the rest of his tribe to run, he charged at Mr. Jones, roaring.

Mr. Jones rushed towards Mr. Bleegley, and as both of the families watched on in horror, the two creatures of death clashed in a savage battle.

As they met, Mr. Jones' shoulder crashed into Mr. Bleegley's chest. The zombie stumbled backwards and fell to the ground. In an instant, the vampire pounced on top of him. They scratched and wrestled, screaming, rolling over and over. And then, like the savage beasts that they were, they turned to their primary natural weapon—their teeth.

Jones sunk his fangs into Bleegley's neck and started to suck. As he did, Bleegley sunk his teeth into Jones' ear. With a rip, it came off.

The green zombie blood was rancid and lumpy, and Jones shuddered to the core. He removed his fangs and grabbed his ear, as the pain surged through his wound. Bleegley grabbed his neck and struggled back to his feet. He stumbled, limping away.

“Stay here, Junior,” Mrs. Jones said, as she rushed to the ground to tend to her wounded husband.

“I'm okay,” he said, as she looked at his ear.

She put her hands on her hips and tilted her head to one side in the pose that children and husbands had feared for an eternity. “And what was that? And in front of Junior. Really, Harold, how could you?”

“I’m sorry, love. I just lost it. It must be the thirst that got to me.”

“The thirst, how convenient. I don’t think that’s an adequate excuse,” she scolded.

“Oh, Winnifred, again, I’m sorry, but what’s done is done. I wish I could go back and change it, but I can’t.”

That was the moment a startled and tearful Junior landed next to them.

“Daddy,” he said, “are you okay?”

Mr. Jones took his hand in his. “I’m fine, my love.” He smiled gently at his son. His heartstrings felt a tugging as the guilt swelled inside.

“You showed that zombie, didn’t you, Dad?” Junior looked up at him with doting admiration.

“I think he showed me,” Mr. Jones laughed, as he pointed to his ear.

“Come on, you two. That’s enough excitement for one night and it’s getting early. Let’s go home,” Mrs. Jones suggested. As one, they took to the sky, and flew back to their little apartment in Jones Towers.

“Are you okay, dear?” Mrs. Bleegley asked with great concern, having rushed to her husband’s side.

“I’m fine. I’m undead, remember. It’ll take more than a pesky vampire to stop me.” Mr. Bleegley smiled.

The kids jumped up and down excitedly around them.

“Wow, Daddy! You were great! You sure showed him!” They skipped around their father.

“Well, do you think that I’d let anyone hurt you guys?”

“Of course not. You’re much too tough for that.”

“You were very brave, Victor,” said Mrs. Bleegley, smiling at him. “Does it hurt, my love?” she asked, as she prodded the two holes in his neck.

“Pain, what’s pain?” he said bravely.

“Yeah, you’re too tough for pain as well, aren’t you Daddy?” the oldest child said.

“No, son frankly, I’m not. It’s just because my nervous system rotted out months ago.”

They all laughed heartily.

“That’s enough excitement for now. Let’s go home.” And with that, they trudged back to their semi-detached town house that was Casa Bleegley.

The Zombie Onslaught

“Open the gates,” Hollows ordered over the radio, as the Hummers screamed back towards Checkpoint Beta. Still, they were tailed by zombies, and they knew that, though it would take a while, the troops must be rallied against the coming zombie onslaught.

The gate opened as the guns fired to hold back the zombies that permanently surrounded the gate. With the way clear, the vehicles came through and then the gates were shut and secured once again.

Hollows emerged with a face of stone. Though his heart was heavy with thoughts of their fallen comrade, the ones that he commanded would never have known the bitterness. It is the hardest thing about being a leader in such times. Lives are lost and death and undeath and redeath were simply a way of life.

Haze had taken it hardest of all. She and Thompson had been the best of friends. With tears in her eyes, she climbed out of the vehicle.

Hollows put a comforting hand on her shoulder and looked her in the eyes. “Thompson gave his life so we could live. He is a hero and a fine, fine soldier.”

She nodded and sniffed. “He was more than that, sir. He was my friend.”

“Okay, Haze, I know. Why don’t you take the rest of the night off? Try and relax, get some sleep.”

She looked at him with granite determination. “No, thank you, sir!” she yelled. “Those zombies are coming and I’m going to get revenge. I’m going to kill every single one of them!”

“Well done, Haze, well done.” Hollows patted her on the back, and she jogged away to join the other soldiers on the front wall.

“Right, Knowles, we’ll need the big guns to repel this onslaught. I want the machine gun nests manned. I want bazookas in the watch towers; I want snipers on the roof, and I want every spare gun on the gangway.”

“Sir, yes, sir.” Knowles started giving the orders. There was a rush of clanking boots and activity all around.

Hollows climbed up onto the gangway with his night vision binoculars and looked out towards the north. He knew at any moment the zombies would emerge from the gloomy city and charge straight for the camp. Though the zombies were in great number, they were extremely predictable. Zombies act like, well, zombies. They have no cunning, and they have no thought. They will come blindly and fearlessly into a hail of bullets and try and force their way through the fences into the camp to feast lustily on the flesh within.

“Not on my watch,” Hollows growled to himself. Unluckily for the zombies, he was there to protect his people, and for three long years he had done just that.

Ten minutes passed before the mass of zombies could be seen in the distance.

“Incoming!” Hollows yelled, as guns were cocked and ready for action. It seemed forever until the slow-moving army came within reach of the bullets. The soldiers watched silently, adrenalin pumping, waiting for the battle to ensue.

Then, from the silence, the first shot rang out, and then, a second, and then, all hell broke loose. Guns flashed and explosions removed zombie heads from zombie bodies one after the other. The zombie horde stretched as far as the eye could see. There must have been thousands of them.



The people in the camp cowered in hiding places, all too aware of the war that was waging on their behalves.

With each line mercilessly mowed down by the guns, another surged forward, stampeding and trampling the fallen beneath their plodding feet.

Although none would ever know it, Hollows was worried. This was the biggest zombie onslaught he had ever seen, and the camp’s defences were surely being tested to their very limit.

“Knowles, copy?”

“Yes, sir?”

“We need to get some more numbers. We’ll have to enlist some of the citizens. Put a call on the tannoy system and ask any man, woman and child with a weapon to report to the front gate.

The Change

Mr. Jones was having a sleepless day. He was tossing and turning in his coffin. Strange dreams surged through his brain. For the first time in four hundred and fifty years, he broke out into a sweat. Fire burned through his veins as he convulsed over and over. As the sun set, he awoke, grumpy and sick. He sat at the table silently. His skin was almost white. His concerned wife looked him over.

“Are you okay, dear?” she asked.

“I’m fine, Winnifred!” he snapped aggressively.

“You don’t look well.”

“Nonsense,” he said. “I’m immortal. I haven’t been sick in centuries.”

Mrs. Jones didn’t want to push the matter further, so she left her husband to his grumpiness while she went to wake up Junior.

A moment later, there was a blood curdling cry and a loud crash from the other room. Mrs. Jones and Junior came rushing in with concern written all over their faces. Mr. Jones was rolling on the floor yelling out horrific cries of pain. The moans and screams were terrible to hear. The fire surged through his entire body.

Mrs. Jones crouched beside him and helplessly tried to comfort him. The blood in his veins fizzed around his body, scorching through his insides.

Junior started to wail in fear. Mrs. Jones started to panic.

With a final roar of fury, Mr. Jones' arms went limp and he passed out. He was lying unmoving and unconscious.

Across the city at that very same moment, Mr. Bleegley was sitting in his favourite chair. He was wrapped in blanket and he wasn't feeling very well at all. He moaned and groaned, more than usual that is, as his fists clenched and the veins popped out in his neck. His screams aroused his wife and she came into the room.

"Whatever is it, Harold?" she asked, with great concern in her voice.

He looked at her with his lifeless eyes, and a frightful rumble came from his throat. He was freezing cold. He felt as though he was dying again. He shivered, and his eyes rolled up into his skull. He roared out screams of agony while his wife tried to hug him. He pushed her away roughly, and she fell to the floor. He fell to the floor next to her, convulsing and shrieking shrilly at the top of his lungs while his helpless wife watched on in horror. He rolled over and over.

The children ran into the room and started to wail in fear. Mrs. Bleegley started to panic.

With a final roar of fury, Mr. Bleegley's arms went limp and he passed out. He was lying unmoving and unconscious.

Deep in their slumbers, both Mr. Bleegley and Mr. Jones drifted away. They were out of space and out of time. Golden meadows surrounded them as they skipped amongst the flowers. The strange and beautiful dream felt

like it took forever, but in truth, it was only minutes. Outwardly, both of their bodies were changing. Bleegley was growing fangs like a vampire and his skin went from a deep green to yellow. Mr. Jones' skin started to rot and he went from white to the very same yellow as Mr. Bleegley.



Mr. Jones opened his eyes with a start and rose to his feet. With a roar he looked at his family gathered all around him.

“Hello, dear. Are you okay?” Mrs. Jones asked.

“I’ve never felt better,” Mr. Jones said, standing tall. He felt strong; he felt different. He felt powerful—the thirst forgotten. His eyes were wild as they stared through his wife.

She took a step back and pushed Junior behind her. Mr. Jones stared wildly, and with a roar, he rushed quickly towards them.

Mr. Bleegley opened his eyes and rose to his feet. He roared as he looked at his family gathered all around him.

“Are you okay, dear?” Mrs. Bleegley asked her husband.

“I’ve never felt better,” he said. He hadn’t; he felt strong and powerful. He was standing tall. He stared at his family with eyes of fire as his worried wife ushered the kids into the other room. He growled and rushed towards them.

Both Mr. Jones and Mr. Bleegley had become a new breed of evil. They were the un-undead. They were fury; they were evil. They had become a creature never seen before. They had become zompires!

Zompires

Wiping bits of his family from his mouth, Mr. Jones sat and watched. He was very proud of himself. They may well look dead, but he knew that in mere hours, they too would become zompires, creatures of extreme power, with all the benefits of being a zombie and all the benefits of being a vampire rolled into one.

Mr. Bleegley looked over the scene before him. The torn bodies of his family were strewn all around the kitchen. He waited patiently, watching over them, waiting for the moment they would awaken and become zompires like him.

Finally, the time came, and they started to dream. The vampires stirred, and then they screamed with the fire burning in their veins. Mr. Jones felt bad because he hated to put his family through such discomfort and grief, but he knew it was for the best. The time of the vampires had gone. With no food to quench their thirst, they would soon perish in a manner that none would want. Soon enough, the screaming finished and eyelids opened, revealing yellow eyes. Mrs. Jones and Junior rose to their feet.

Likewise, in the Bleegleys house, the four children and Mrs. Bleegley shivered with cold. They writhed and screamed, and within half an hour, they were on their feet in their new form. The Bleegleys and the Joneses were the new breed of undead and they had only one thing on their minds and stomachs too – food. They headed out into the empty street in search of prey.

No End in Sight

The gunfire continued to flash and bang behind the fences of Checkpoint Beta. Zombies fell one after the other, but still there was no end in sight. The battle had raged for over a day and the soldiers were worn out. It was all they could do to hold the line back. The howls and moans of the zombies were a monotonous tone that constantly filled the background.

Hollows, though ice cold on the outside, was filled with panic. He knew that if they couldn't soon repel the horde, they would be climbing the perimeter fences and then the two thousand, which he had made it his duty to lead and protect, would be overrun. The three long years that he had kept the zombies at bay would soon mean absolutely nothing. They would be ripped limb from limb by the fearsome undead. Most of them would return and become the thing they feared the most. The future for these innocent people would be nothing but a cold-blooded march for food—for flesh.

He wondered if there were other outposts of humanity elsewhere, but the truth was, he had no way of knowing. It had been years since communications between checkpoints had been broken. Was the time of man over? Had the time of the zombie begun?

Wide-eyed soldiers stared on, firing their weapons, but the zombie horde still numbered in their hundreds. The sounds of gunfire kept attracting ever more hungry zombies from all around the city.

“Sir, I’m not sure we can stop them,” Knowles said, as he watched.

“We have to, Knowles, we simply have to,” Hollows replied.

Hollows thought of his wife and his child who had long since gone, and somewhere in his heart he knew that their fate was sealed. Long ago, he would have loved to end his own life, to get away from this miserable existence. But who else could lead his people?

Hollows’ heart sank as he knew now they needed the rest of the people to fight. Any man woman or child that could carry a weapon was needed. He hated having to make such a decision but what else could he do?

He shuddered to his soul as he watched children and the elderly being loaded up with weapons and ammunition, both of which would soon run out.

The guns rang out for hours and hours with the rotting undead crowd endlessly and relentlessly trudging forward. The zombies had no fear, they never got tired, and they would never rest until the human flesh was at last theirs.

At 7.00pm on the second night of the battle, the first zombie fingers grasped the chain link fence. Then another rotten hand joined in and then another. They started to pull and push. As the fence bulged at the weight, other zombies started to climb upwards.

From above, a hail of bullets rained down upon them, but the zombies kept right on coming. Soon, without a doubt, the defences at Checkpoint Beta would be breached.



Snack Time

Behind the zombie horde, seven strange figures emerged from the darkness. Their skin was yellow, and their teeth were sharp and fang-like. Their mouths watered with the thought of food. They were the members of two families, the Bleegleys and the Joneses—the zompires. A roar left the lips of each and the crowd of zombies turned to look upon the new strange creatures in their midst. They swarmed like a wave of fettered flesh towards them. And with that, the zompires were completely surrounded in moments. The zombies surged forward, reaching their dead fingers out and groaning.

A circle surrounded the two unspeaking families. They watched on without any sign of fear or emotion on their hideous faces. Then Mr. Jones rumbled out a roar, a loud and fearsome roar like a lion. He was quickly joined by Mr. Bleegley. The circle enclosed and then engulfed them. The zombie's teeth gnashed, trying to get a taste of the new meat.

The zompires charged forward as one, leaping fearlessly upon their foes. They were quick and deadly, unlike their zombie cousins. They sprang into ferocious and savage action. They ripped into the zombies, sucking rancid blood and ripping flesh from bones with their teeth.

The undead horde had never known such a thing—creatures that could eat them. This was the first time in zombie history that they were on the menu. The zompires ripped through them, one after the other, until hands, feet,

heads, entrails and of course brains, were thick upon the ground. It was like the butcher's shop from hell and the smell was twice as bad as the sight.

The zombies turned, no longer streaming towards the zompires. They were running for their lives, well, stiffly walking at least. But the zompires, who had all been so close to withering away from hunger, were far from done yet. The zombies that were close to or climbing the fence of the camp hadn't seen the commotion, but they noticed the zombies heading in another direction. Naturally enough, they assumed that they had found some other humans to feast upon, ones that weren't so hard to catch as these that rained bullets and grenades down upon them. They had no idea that above them, Hollows and the rest of the camp would be out of ammunition soon.

Operation Certain Suicide

The scream of victory rang out from the gangways and watchtowers as the zombies turned tail and headed away from the fences of Checkpoint Beta. Hollows showed not a single hint of emotion, but he was filled with huge relief. He had started to contemplate the worst. Should they all kill themselves before they suffered the harrowing ordeal of the zombie curse? It was far better to be dead than undead, and with their deaths, the last thread of humanity that survived would be taken from this world. It seemed for reasons unknown, that the zombies were heading away. However, unlike his warriors, he knew that they would return.

That was when it dawned upon him, and the hero in him awoke. The zombies would only be heading off towards the city if some other humans out there were in trouble. Everything in his head told him that those people were lost already, but his brave heart burned. There were hardly any humans left in the world. He couldn't very well just let these other humans die. He at least had to try and rescue them.

"Knowles," he called out, "you're in charge!"

"Where are you going, sir?" his friend asked.

"There's people out there, in trouble. I can't just leave them to die."

"No, you can't, sir, but you won't be going anywhere without me."

Hollows put his hand on Knowles' shoulders and looked deep into his eyes. "You can't come, old friend. The people need you."

"No, Dave, they need you. So, I'll be there right by your side to make sure you get back in one piece." The two men looked at each other as the memories of the past flashed like a movie through their minds: all the things that they had been through together, all the battles that they had faced and come through unscathed.

"Okay," Hollows smiled, "you can come with me."

"I'm coming too." A determined voice came from behind them.

Their heads turned to see Haze standing there bristling for the fight. She was putting shells in her shotgun.

Hollows didn't even bother arguing with her. He knew that look on her face, and his vast experience told him that he'd never dissuade her.

They waited another ten minutes until the majority of the zombies were out of sight. Then Hollows ordered the gates open and their vehicle screamed out of the gates and away into the darkness.

They followed the crowd of zombies, running them down and squishing them under the heavy tires leaving zombie pulp driven deep into the tread.

They tore through the city streets, mowing down as many as they could along the way. They kept going and going

until finally, they reached a tall apartment building. The zombies seemed to be gathering around it.

“Haze, drive up to the door. We’ll bombard them with grenades and then force our way inside.”

Of course, she did, and the explosions echoed out around the city and the night turned to day as instantly cooked zombie meat flew all over splattering the building and raining down onto the roof of the Hummer. In seconds, the path was clear and the three brave soldiers climbed out of the vehicle and ran to the building. They checked their backs and then shot out the lock. They cautiously entered.

47b Granville Court

“Barricade that door, Haze.”

“Yes, sir,” the soldier replied, as she drove the Hummer tight against the building. She climbed out through the window because the door wouldn’t open.

She checked the street behind her, and to her surprise, she could see that, rather than the zombies trying to enter and rip them apart, they were heading off in the opposite direction.

“Why aren’t they trying to kill us?” she asked.

“I don’t know, Haze.” Hollows looked out over the street. The zombies were certainly going further towards the city. “It looks like they’re running away.”

“I got a bad feeling about this,” Knowles growled in a manly rasp.

“Okay, people, stay frosty. I don’t want any surprises in here. Expect anything,” Hollows said. “Let’s go.”

He shone his flashlight around the foyer of the tall apartment building. The air was still and musty inside and the darkness was deep. It had once been a bustle of activity inside but now it was deathly still. It was creepy and silent. Not a sound entered their ears except their own footsteps and breath.

They checked every corner of the bottom level and found nothing moving. Hollows pointed towards the stairs, and slowly and nervously, together they started to climb. Their

guns were ready, and even in their exhausted state their eyes were sharp. Adrenalin pumped through their nervous veins. The shadows loomed around them. Slowly, they reached the first floor and burst through door after door. They silently checked each apartment. The scene behind every door told a different chapter in a harrowing story as thick dust and darkness covered what was once a family home. They saw awful scenes of the skeletons of families that had barricaded themselves inside to escape the zombies and had starved to death. Even that, however, was far better than the alternative of the outside world.

“It doesn’t look like the zombies ever got inside this building, sir. There’s a chance that someone is still alive inside,” Knowles pointed out.

“You’re right, Knowles. Keep pushing on.” Hollows was all business. He didn’t want them to be in that place a moment longer than they had to be.

They checked each apartment floor by floor with no sign of life anywhere. Finally, after an hour, they reached the top floor. Again, they went through the apartments. Still there was no sign of anyone. They went back out to the hall. That was when they heard a noise. It was a shuffling, coming from a dark corner.

Hollows put his finger to his lips and shone his flashlight into the gloom. There they saw a figure huddled in the corner. It was the silhouette of a child-sized figure.

“Hey, kid,” he said.

There was no reply.

The soldiers edged nearer. Still, the figure didn't move.

“It's, okay, kid. We're here to help. Come on out. We've got you.”

The figure growled and looked up into the light.

The soldiers took a step back. Far from being the child they thought it was, its eyes stared at them—evil yellow eyes. The three companions froze, trying to figure out what it was.



Hollows was taking no chances. “It's a zombie fire!” he cried.

They aimed their weapons and squeezed the triggers. But before a shot could ring out, a swarm of shadows emerged from all around them.

“FIRE!” he yelled again.

In blinding flashes of light, bullets flew around the hallway. They entered skulls and pierced brains. But even so, the zombies didn't fall down dead. They just kept

coming, charging towards them. Then, in the light, Hollows saw sharp fangs flashing and coming towards them.

“They’re not zombies, they’re vampires!” screamed Haze.

Hollows unsheathed his knife, and surging forward, stuck it in the nearest creature’s heart. The creature cried out in pain, but to his horror, he didn’t kill it.

“No, no, fools, we’re not zombies! We’re not vampires either! We’re zompires!”

And with that, the creatures flew at them and consumed them all.

The Time of the Zompire

Twelve hours had passed, and a new horde was heading towards Checkpoint Beta. The soldiers fired from the gangway and the watchtowers. They were hitting heads and destroying brains but this horde wasn't falling. They just kept marching forward. Panic was setting in amongst the troops.

Finally, they breathed a sigh of relief when they saw Hollows' Hummer coming around the corner. In an instant, the happy soldiers opened the gates and the vehicle drove inside. A group of soldiers gathered round and cheered their great leader's return. The doors opened and out stepped figures wearing military fatigues.

The soldiers' eyes opened wide in fear as yellow eyes stared back at them. They tried to fight. They tried to stop them, but they were unstoppable. More of the creatures flew down from the sky above them and started ripping into the soldiers. It seemed the age of the human would soon be over. The time of the zompires had begun.

To Be Continued...

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