

A Zombie Tale

By Bill Wolfe

There are a few advantages to being a zombie that the living never takes time to think about. Breathing, for one. I can hold my breath for hours underwater before the engineered virus that brings the dead back to a semblance of life, forces me to the surface. It's gotten me out of a few sticky situations when I've been caught in the crossfire.

You wouldn't know it to look at me, but I'm one of the first of the undead. I look like a fresh kill, with relatively clean clothes and no gaping wounds. Fortunately, I was sporting a buzz cut when I died, so my hair doesn't have that wild maniac look to it. With a lot of time, effort and concentration, I can even tie my shoes. All the other zombies look just like Hollywood depicted them. It's one of the few things they got right.

In four years, I've picked-up a lot of useful information about the disease. The living believes that everybody has the virus, by now. It was definitely engineered on purpose, and spread through the global population for four or five years before it 'activated.'

Makes sense to me. When I went into the hospital for a severe viral brain infection, the first unverified reports of the recently departed coming back to life, attacking—and eating—the living, were barely even news. I don't know if it was the fact that my brain was infected with another, active virus, or that the massive doses of antiviral drugs they were using on me is the reason that I'm somewhere between the mindless undead, and the living. I probably died of a fever as the hospital fell to the undead, and by the time the local zombie population got around to eating my corpse, I had already converted. We only eat each other when we haven't fed for weeks.

I'm not nearly as bright as I was, of course. But I'm smart enough to duck into a side alley when the conveniently slow-moving squad of tasty soldiers leads my pack into a street with all exits blocked and flamethrowers stationed on all the rooftops. Zombie life is tough, sometimes. The living are getting a lot better at handling us.

And when I smell canned salmon, I have the willpower to walk the other way. It draws us like almost nothing else. The living smell like food, but canned salmon smells like ambrosia. The closest I ever came to being killed and eaten by other zombies is the time I found a whole stash, while scavenging. If I hadn't smeared it on the first one to break down the door, the rest would have torn me apart to get to it. I'm the only zombie I've ever seen that can open a can. The living has learned how we react to salmon, and they use it to draw us into a killing zone.

I can't talk; I just walk around moaning like the rest. But I can still read, pretty well. It takes me a long time, but I can also type. And I am typing this now to tell the world three important things.

First of all, it hurts to be a zombie. I find newspapers, sometimes, and I know that many of you think that your Aunt Millie is still herself somewhere in that shambling, moaning, dangerous thing that looks a little like her. She's not. Shoot her in the head like you would any other zombie. Your yapping about 'Undead Rights' and the existence of a soul just gives us a chance to locate your position better. Then we will come to kill you.

And that goes for me, too. I may be a little smarter, but I pause every few hours in writing this to go munch on the frozen limbs of three children—aged five to ten—that I strangled, and then dragged into a walk-in freezer that is run by the same back-up generator that runs the power for this computer. More about that story, later.

I am not your friend! I will kill you and eat you. If you see me coming at you, put a bullet in my brain if you can. The virus won't let me kill myself or intentionally walk into the line of fire, but sooner or later some sniper or one of your artillery rounds will kill me, again. And only then will this endless, unimaginable agony end.

Second, by pure dumb luck I discovered the 'Terrorists' who developed and spread this disease. They are all dead now, and except for the three children in the freezer, they have all been eaten by the zombies I brought here.

Third and most important, there is a cure. I will give you directions to a place where your scientists should be able to find it. You see, these people were immune to the virus. They made it, they cured it.

How do I know? Well, you smell like food to us. Salmon smells like ambrosia, but an uninfected human? I have no words at all to describe it. The virus drives us to try and infect as many of the uninfected, as possible. Perhaps in the early days of the reawakening, a few uninfected were still around. They wouldn't have lasted long. Every zombie for miles would kill themselves trying to get to them.

And everyone in this compound was uninfected. Not one of them reanimated. Not one.

I remember my name, but I won't tell you what it was, even though I may have saved the world and punished those who unleashed this horror upon it. Here's my story.

The End