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Zombie Novel Sampler

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A Note from the Publisher

Dear Reader:

What you have here is a zombie sampler containing the first chapter of all of our zombie books as of July 25, 2009. They are published here in alphabetical order.

Monsters are something we feel very passionate about here at [Coscom Entertainment](#) and it is our hope that our love of the monster genre (zombies, in this case) really shines through in the pages to come.

It is our sincere hope you enjoy the following.

As well, should a first-chapter excerpt from a particular title(s) grab your interest, we kindly ask you support the author by purchasing a copy. The title's availability links and synopsis are listed at the end of each excerpt and should take you to the proper page in the format you choose.

Thank you for reading.

Sincerely,

Coscom Entertainment
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ADVENTURES OF
HUCKLEBERRY FINN
AND ZOMBIE JIM

MARK
Twain
with
W. Bill
Czolgosz



Scene: The Mississippi Valley

Time: 1839

CHAPTER I

The people used to own other people, an' they had a word for those people. Really mean. I think the only thing I was ever taught that managed to stick with me was that the widow better never hear that word come out of my mouth. Eventually, I learned that lesson good cause o' the whuppins I got when I tried it. Can't say I ever uttered it again. I believe not. All my days. Like I say, it was the widow's whoppin' what did it.

Other than that, she was always very kind. Strict, but kind.

I remember the widow now, sure I do. An' Miss Watson, too. An' pretty much everyone else. And that's sayin' a big deal 'cause the world was full-up of people in those times.

You don't know about me without you have read a book by the name of *The Undead Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, but that ain't no matter. That book was made by Mr. Mark Twain, and he told the truth, mainly. There was things which he stretched, but mainly he told the truth. That is nothing. I never seen anybody but lied one time or another, without it was Aunt Polly, or the widow, or maybe Mary. Aunt Polly—Tom's Aunt Polly, she is—and Mary, and the Widow Douglas is all told about in that book, which is mostly a true book, with some stretchers, as I said before.

Now the way that the book winds up is this: Tom and me found the bunderlugs that the robbers had put in the cave, and when we returned 'em to the traders it made us rich. There was almost a hundred of 'em, and th' reward money was plenty big. We got six thousand dollars apiece—all gold. It was an awful sight of money when it was piled up. Well, Judge Thatcher he took it and put it out at interest, and it fetched us a dollar a day apiece all the year round—more than a body could tell what to do with. The Widow Douglas she took me for her son, and allowed she would sivilize me; but it was rough living in the house all the time, considering how dismal regular and decent the widow was in all her ways; and so when I couldn't stand it no longer I lit out. I got into my old rags and my sugar-hogshead again, and was free and satisfied. But Tom Sawyer he hunted me up and said he was going to start his own band of robbers, and I might join if I would go back to the widow and be respectable. So I went back.

The widow she cried over me, and called me a poor lost lamb, and she called me a lot of other names, too, but she never meant no harm by it. She put me in them new clothes again, and I couldn't do nothing but sweat and sweat, and feel all cramped up. Well, then, the old thing commenced again. The widow rung a bell for supper, and you had to come to time. When you got to the table you couldn't go right to eating, but you had to wait for the widow to tuck down her head and grumble a little over the victuals, though there warn't really anything the matter with them—that is, nothing only everything was cooked by itself. In a barrel of odds and ends it is different; things

get mixed up, and the juice kind of swaps around, and the things go better.

After supper she got out her book and learned me about Moses and the Bulrushers, and I was in a sweat to find out all about him; but by and by she let it out that Moses had been dead a considerable long time; so then I didn't care no more about him, because I don't take *much* stock in dead people.

I do mean that when I say it, about taking stock in dead people, *most* dead people, especially these days. Folks say the world is turned on its ear. I don't know about that. Sure thing it's at a considerable wobble, though.

Pretty soon afterward I wanted to smoke, and asked the widow to let me. But she wouldn't. She said it was a mean practice and wasn't clean, and I must try to not do it any more. That is just the way with some people. They get down on a thing when they don't know nothing about it. Here she was a-bothering about Moses, which was no kin to her, and no use to anybody, being gone, you see, yet finding a power of fault with me for doing a thing that had some good in it. And she took snuff, too; of course that was all right, because she done it herself.

Her sister, Miss Watson, a tolerable slim old maid, with goggles on, had just come to live with her, and took a set at me now with a spelling-book. She worked me middling hard for about an hour, and then the widow made her ease up. I couldn't stood it much longer. Then for an hour it was deadly dull, and I was fidgety. Miss Watson would say, "Don't put your feet up there, Huckleberry;" and "Don't scrunch up like that, Huckleberry—set up straight;" and pretty soon she would say, "Don't gap and stretch like that, Huckleberry—why don't you try to behave?" Then she told me all about the bad place, and I said I wished I was there. And then she told me how boys like me was more than likely than not to catch the fissythis, and I said fissythis weren't such a bad thing, 'cause at least I'd be having adventures. She got mad then, but I didn't mean no harm. All I wanted was to go somewheres; all I wanted was a change, I warn't particular. She said it was wicked to say what I said; said she wouldn't say it for the whole world; she was going to live so as to go to the good place. Well, I couldn't see no advantage in going where she was going, so I made up my mind I wouldn't try for it. But I never said so, because it would only make trouble, and wouldn't do no good.

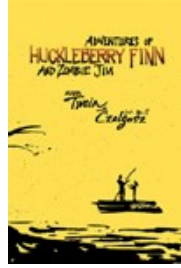
Now she had got a start, and she went on and told me all about the good place. She said all a body would have to do there was to go around all day long with a harp and sing, forever and ever. I asked about if the folks with fissythis got to go there, too, and she said they surely did get to go, eventually, when their material selves were all over and done with. And I asked if that included the ones who had bit people and wreaked havoc and such, and she said it probably did, as long as their hearts was right before the pox took 'em. So I didn't think much of it. But I never said so. I asked her if she reckoned Tom Sawyer would go there, and she said not by a considerable sight. I was glad about that, because I wanted him and me to be together.

Miss Watson spelled fissythis like so: PHTHISIS. That never made a lick of sense

to me. She said it could get into you just for breathing air blown in from the east, and that made even less sense. She said fissythis come from London or France, but those places might's well have been China. Tom told me Napoleon defeated all the pox over there and people was living healthier than ever. But I didn't know nothing about that for myself, nor how he pulled it off. I figured that Napoleon musta been a mighty big fella.

Miss Watson she kept pecking at me, and it got tiresome and lonesome. By and by they fetched the baggers in and had prayers, and then everybody was off to bed. I went up to my room with a piece of candle, and put it on the table. Then I set down in a chair by the window and tried to think of something cheerful, but it warn't no use. I felt so lonesome I most wished I was dead. The stars were shining, and the leaves rustled in the woods ever so mournful; and I heard an owl, away off, who-whooping about somebody that was maybe finally dead, and a whippowill and a dog crying about somebody that was going to catch the pox; and the wind was trying to whisper something to me, and I couldn't make out what it was, and so it made the cold shivers run over me. Then away out in the woods I heard that kind of a sound that a ghost makes when it wants to tell about something that's on its mind and can't make itself understood, and so can't rest easy in its grave, and has to go about that way every night grieving. I got so down-hearted and scared I did wish I had some company. Pretty soon a spider went crawling up my shoulder, and I flipped it off and it lit in the candle; and before I could budge it was all shriveled up. I didn't need anybody to tell me that that was an awful bad sign and would fetch me some bad luck, so I was scared and most shook the clothes off of me. I got up and turned around in my tracks three times and crossed my breast every time; and then I tied up a little lock of my hair with a thread to keep witches away. But I hadn't no confidence. You do that when you've lost a horseshoe that you've found, instead of nailing it up over the door, but I hadn't ever heard anybody say it was any way to keep off bad luck when you'd killed a spider.

I set down again, a-shaking all over, and got out my pipe for a smoke; for the house was all as still as death now, and so the widow wouldn't know. Well, after a long time I heard the clock away off in the town go boom—boom—boom—twelve licks; and all still again—stillier than ever. Pretty soon I heard a twig snap down in the dark amongst the trees—something was a stirring. I set still and listened. Directly I could just barely hear a “me-yow! me-yow!” down there. That was good! Says I, “me-yow! me-yow!” as soft as I could, and then I put out the light and scrambled out of the window on to the shed. Then I slipped down to the ground and crawled in among the trees, and, sure enough, there was Tom Sawyer waiting for me.



Synopsis

Free at last! Free at last!

This ain't your grandfather's *Huckleberry Finn*.

It's nineteenth century America and a mutant strain of tuberculosis is bringing its victims back from the dead.

Sometimes they come back docile, and other times vicious. The vicious ones are sent back to Hell, but the docile ones are put to work as servants and laborers.

With so many zombies on the market, the slave trade is nonexistent. The black man is at liberty, and human bondage is no more. Young Huckleberry Finn has grown up in a world that shuns the N-word, with its scornful eye set on a new class of shambling, putrid sub-humans: The Baggers.

When his abusive father comes back into his life, Huck flees down the river with Bagger Jim, seeking a life of perfect freedom.

When the pox mutates once again, causing even the tamest of baggers to become bloodthirsty monsters, the boy Finn is forced to question his relationship with his dearest, dearest friend.

In this revised take on history and classic literature, the modern age is ending before it ever begins. Huckleberry Finn will inherit a world of horror and death, and he knows the mighty Mississippi might be the only way out . . .

***Adventures of Huckleberry Finn and Zombie Jim* by Mark Twain
and W. Bill Czolgosz is available at the following on-line retailers:**

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STEVEN Savile

Piers Anthony

NANCY Kilpatrick

Lee THOMAS



TIM Waggoner

BITS OF THE DEAD

ADAM-TROY Casti

MICHAEL Laimo

edited by
Keith GOUVEIA

illustrated by
SEAN SIMMONS

JAMES Newma

The following is a complete story from *Bits of the Dead*, an illustrated zombie anthology of flash fiction.

R.J. Sevin
NOT AT ALL
LIKE THE MOVIES

The two men sat in rusty fold-up lawn chairs, their useless rifles at their sides, a Dixie-Beer-filled cooler between them.

“Maybe it’s all fake,” Roy said, crushing an empty can and popping open another.

“It ain’t fake. It’s really happening.” Carl looked around. Ten empty acres in the middle of nowhere, Louisiana. A dog barking. A distant lawn-mower buzzing. “Just not *here*.”

“Mnnph,” Roy said, belching into his mouth, his cheeks puffing.

“Yeah,” said Carl, knocking back his beer.

Six weeks. Six *weeks* since the dead began to stand up and bite and Carl hadn’t seen a single walking corpse.

“You see that video?” Roy asked after five minutes of silent drinking.

“Which one? The car accident?”

“Nah. The one with the kid in the morgue.”

“Yeah.”

There hadn’t been much holding the kid’s head onto his crumpled body, and the guy who brought his camera into the morgue seemed to have too much fun slapping it around the slab and playfully avoiding its champing teeth.

“I had to stop watching it,” Roy said. “Too much. People are sick.”

“Yeah,” Carl said around his fifth beer. He lost count how many times he’d watched the video.

The news and online clips didn’t count. It was something to see, yeah, dead people stumbling around with vacant eyes and slack jaws, yellowed and seeping flesh, missing limbs and spilling innards. But he wanted to *see* one.

Things weren’t at all like they were in the movies. The dead were typically found in two places: hospitals and funeral parlors—nowhere else. The first week had been rough—or so said the news—but then folks more or less started doing what they were supposed to do.

In the movies, society would be crumbling and he’d be holed up in his house or in a mall or something. In reality, people did what they needed to do, and the world went on.

“You wanna drive around?” Roy asked.

“No point,” Carl said. They’d driven around all last week, looking for accidents, almost getting in a few. No dice. Two weeks ago, Mr. Murphy down at the end of the road had died. By the time the news had reached them, Mrs. Murphy had already bashed in his skull with a meat tenderizer.

The sun sank, the mosquitoes came out. Roy stiffened, grabbed his gun.

Old Man Rideau crept down the road.

“Go to church,” he yelled, waving. “World’s ending.” Nothing new there. He’d been saying that for years.

“Man,” Roy said, sitting back. He opened another beer.

“Yeah,” Carl said. He got another beer. He finished that one and got another.

“I wanted to shoot one tonight,” Roy said, his words slurred.

“Me, too.”

After his ninth can of Dixie, just after the woods ate the sun and the light above the work shed flickered to life, Carl picked up his rifle and blew Roy’s heart through the back of the rusty fold-up lawn chair.

Then he waited.



Synopsis

They live.

They die.

They return.

Zombies.

38 authors.

38 gut-wrenching tales.

Flash fiction at its finest, all illustrated by underground favorite Sean Simmans and edited by Keith Gouveia.

Stories by:

Piers Anthony, Robert Appleton, Joel Arnold, Drew Brown, Adam-Troy Castro, Nick Cato, C.M. Clifton, Christopher Allan Death, Ed Dempster, J.G. Faherty, Paul A. Freeman, Charles A. Gramlich, J.H. Hobson, M.M. Johnson, Michael Josef, Kiernan Kelly, Nancy Kilpatrick, Michael Laimo, Catherine MacLeod, James Newman, Kurt Newton, Jeff Parish, Matthew John Peters, Jeffrey C. Pettengill, Daniel Pyle, Gina Ranalli, Steven Savile, Julia Sevin, R.J. Sevin, Nate Southard, Jeff Strand, Simon Strantzas, Marcie Lynn Tentchoff, Lee Thomas, William T. Vandemark, Steve Vernon, Tim Waggoner, John Weagly

Bits of the Dead is a hard-hitting, pulse-pounding collection of zombie tales that'll have you ripping through the pages faster than a ghoul through a warm body.

***Bits of the Dead* edited by Keith Gouveia and illustrated by Sean Simmans is available at the following on-line retailers:**

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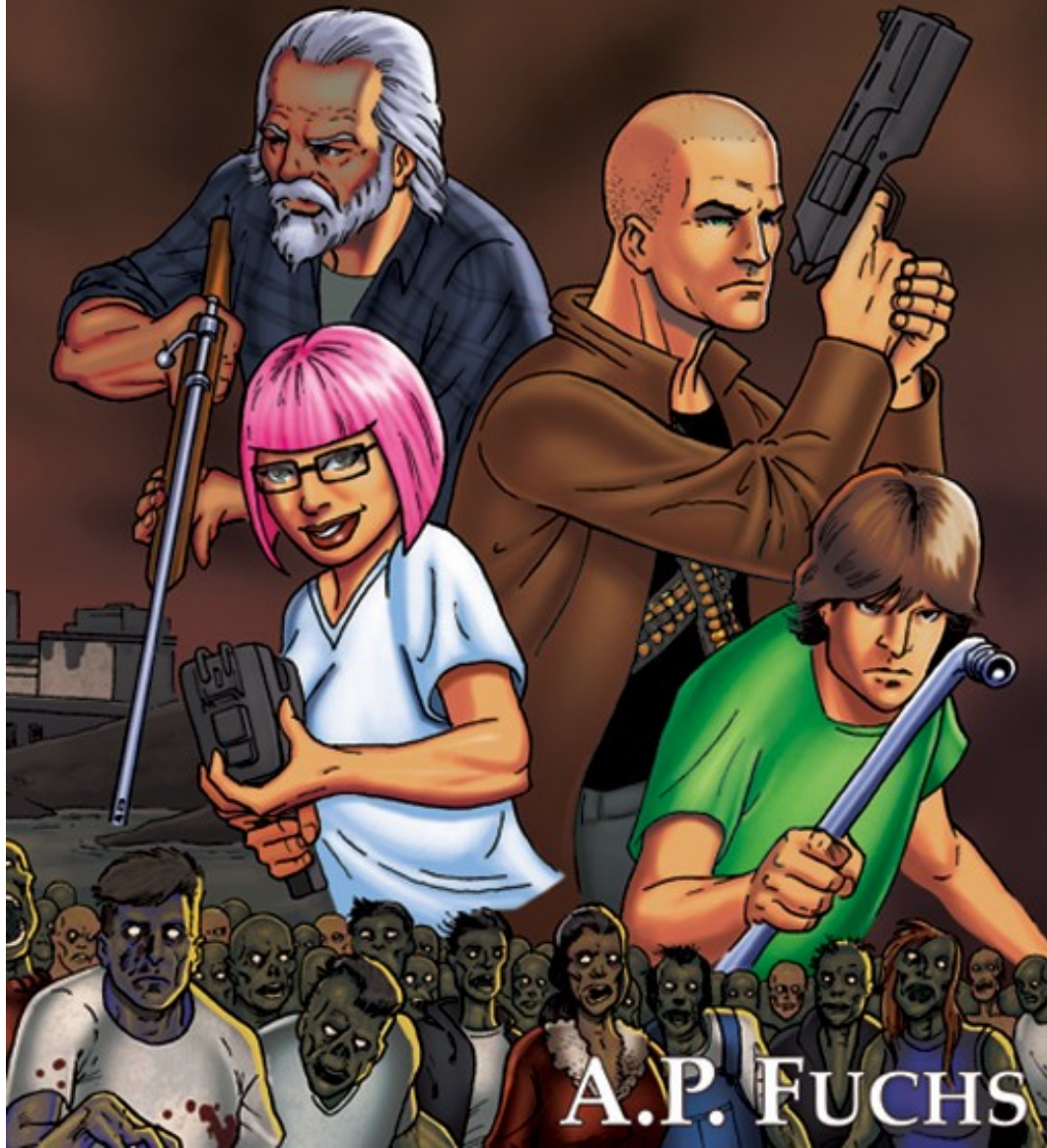
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Book One of the Undead World Trilogy

BLOOD OF THE DEAD



JOE BAILEY
ZOMBIE HUNTER

“Whattsa matter, baby? Never made love to a zombie before?”

The man’s voice was filled with sarcasm but, looking on from the shadows, Joe Bailey couldn’t help but think the guy meant every word and that he truly did want the girl to mess around with the dead man in front of her.

The girl, a blonde of probably seventeen or eighteen, frantically tugged at the iron collar around her neck. Joe knew that getting it off would be impossible. The collar was attached to a long iron rod. On the other end was the guy who wanted to see her come apart at the prospect of defiling herself with the undead.

Who knew what they had already done to her before now. What was once an off-yellow dress was mere tatters sagging off her frame like a torn shower curtain. Her cries were muffled by the band of silver duct tape across her mouth. From where Joe lurked off to the side, he could see how her long blonde hair had been pulled forward across her cheeks and stuffed into her mouth to help keep her quiet.

The air stank with booze and dope and the funk of the dead.

The man holding the rod jerked it to the right and left, whipping the girl side to side as he steered her toward the dead man across the basement floor. Four of his friends looked on, yipping and cheering. All five men were eager for what was about to happen. Three were on one side of the room, including the man holding the pole; two were across the way, both gripping a similar iron pole. This one was attached to another collar, one clamped around the neck of an overweight gray-skinned man with a blood-stained white shirt, brown dress pants and only one shoe. The fat man, Joe supposed, had probably been a hard worker when he was alive. Though he was now dead but somehow back to life, he still carried a look of innocence in his eyes, a look of pleading behind the rage and mindless hunger that consumed him.

The jerks cackled and cheered and stepped closer as their buddy forced the girl toward the monster, the dead man trying to step forward with arms outstretched, wanting to grab her. The two guys holding the zombie at bay fought with each tug against the pole. It was a wonder the zombie didn’t spin around and take those guys out in an effort to break free. Then again, intelligence was never in a zombie’s favor. Joe had been around them long enough to know that much.

Joe remained in the shadows behind an old furnace off to the side. The creeps holding the girl hadn’t heard him break in through the first floor window of the house and sneak down the stairs into the shadows, each too consumed with the idea of

bringing this girl to the edge of torment and despair before, finally, shoving her off the edge.

“Oh come on, girlie-girlie. It ain’t so bad,” her captor said. “The dude’s just hungry, that’s all. You know as well as I do that they need to eat now and then, just like anyone else.”

The girl’s muffled screams, grunts and heavy breathing through her nose sent a shockwave of apprehension through the air.

The guy holding the iron rod shook off his beaten leather jacket, first his right arm then, after switching his hold on the rod to the other hand, his left. He wore a blue T-shirt, one which reminded Joe of what the sky used to look like before it had permanently clouded over in a sickly mix of gray and brown.

“Whoo-hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo!” Blue T-shirt sang. “One, two, the dead’s coming for you!”

The girl screeched behind her gag. Blue’s friends howled. They shoved each other playfully like drunks.

“Ready, Betty?” Blue asked.

If “Betty” was the girl’s real name or not, Joe didn’t know nor, right now, care.

He cursed himself for sitting in the shadows so long, having to watch as Betty inched toward her doom, but if he didn’t time this just right, neither he nor she would make it out of here alive. You didn’t have to be paranoid to know that each of the men were packing heat, something that had become commonplace once the dead had taken over.

The zombie snarled and a gob of bloody-spit spilled from the corner of its mouth. It violently lurched forward, catching the men holding the iron rod off guard. A muffled *pop* came from the zombie’s neck. It had broken it from the force of the pull.

And it still kept moving.

The men holding it at bay yanked back on the rod, jerking the dead man back a step. The zombie grunted, but kept its feet firmly planted so it only leaned back against the air at an impossible angle before tugging itself upright again. The dudes holding the rod lost their grip and the second the iron rod clanged against the concrete floor, the girl screamed, muffled and scared.

“You idiots!” Blue shouted. Indecisiveness flashed across his eyes. He wasn’t sure what to do.

Joe pulled the large X-09 to shoulder height, cocked the enormous hammer, and got ready. As was his custom, he counted to three then kissed the tip of the thick barrel before settling his finger around the trigger. One cock of the hammer was good for two shots. He had designed the X-09 himself, a large handgun, black and smooth with a Western flare that packed more punch than a double-barreled shotgun. He could have made a fortune off it if the world was the way it used to be.

But those days were gone.

The zombie scrambled toward the girl. She veered to the side and breathed a shrill wheeze when the collar stopped her stride.

Blue yanked her back then threw her and the pole into the zombie. He and his buddies spun around and ran for the long flight of basement stairs.

Joe jumped out from behind the furnace, aimed at the two yahoos scrambling up the steps in front of Blue and sent a bullet into each of their backs. The sounds of the double gunshot froze Blue in his tracks and by the time he turned around to see the source of fire, Joe had already cocked the hammer again and had the barrel aimed between Blue's eyes.

"What the—" Blue started. He was cut off when the girl shrieked and the zombie, who was now on top of her, growled. "Me or her. What's it gonna be, hero man?"

"Both," Joe said and pulled the trigger.

A blood-red hole the size of a quarter sprang to life at the center of Blue's forehead, the back of his head spraying outward in a rain of flesh and bone. Eyes still gazing at Joe, the dude dropped to his knees then toppled face first onto the floor.

Joe turned and dove to the side as the two guys who had earlier held the zombie at bay aimed their pistols at him and fired. He pulled the trigger in mid air, sending a bullet into the zombie's back, the impact forceful enough to send the dead man rolling off the girl and to the side.

A numby *bang* rocked Joe's shoulder when he hit the ground. Fortunately the long, brown rain-ruined suede trench coat he wore was padded top to bottom so the pain wasn't as sharp as it should have been. He cocked the hammer.

The girl rolled onto her side and tried to get up, but the awkwardness of the neck collar and attached pole screwed up her balance and she fell back down, landing on her stomach and face.

The two men with the pistols opened fire.

Joe sent off two shots, tagging each of them in the heart. Their chests exploded almost simultaneously in a burst of blood and they hit the floor.

The zombie rushed on all fours and tackled the girl, slamming its forehead into the back of her skull. She lay there, still.

Joe got to his feet, cocked the hammer, and took three huge strides over to it. He yanked the dead man up by the collar. The creature turned its head toward him, its bloodshot eyes filled with malice. It reached for Joe's arm.

Joe pulled the trigger.

The shot took off the top of the dead man's head, everything from the eyebrows up. The syrupy splash of brain matter and the soft sound of bone hitting the concrete followed right behind.

Now no longer moving, the dead man's body suddenly weighed a ton and Joe needed both hands to dump it off to the side.

He got down on his knees beside the girl and checked her neck for a pulse. It was there, still frantic from the ordeal.

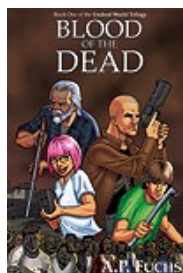
He turned her over and grimaced at the sight of her bloody face, a deep gouge caused by teeth on her left cheekbone.

“Crap,” he muttered.

Her tearstained eyes opened slowly then rolled back in their sockets. When they rolled forward again, a soft smile rose on her face.

“Thanks,” she whispered.

Joe stood, sighed, and aimed the gun between her eyes. “You’re welcome.”



Synopsis

One year ago, the world came to an end.

First came the rain.

Then came the screams.

Then came the undead.

The Haven became the only place in the city free of the walking dead. A place of community. A place to be safe.

Now, things have changed.

The zombies are coming to the Haven, seeking out the remaining survivors of the human race.

Joe Bailey prowls the Haven's streets, taking them back from the undead, each kill one step closer to reclaiming a life once stolen from him. Billie Friday and Des Nottingham soon have Joe to thank for their lives.

As the dead push into the Haven, the trio is forced into the one place where folks fear to tread: the heart of the city, a place overrun with flesh-eating zombies.

They soon discover they are not the only humans there. After meeting an old man with a peculiar past, Joe and the others must make one last stand against the undead or unwillingly meet the same fate.

A desperate escape leads them to a place thought impossible to exist and to a discovery that will shake the future.

Welcome to the end of all things.

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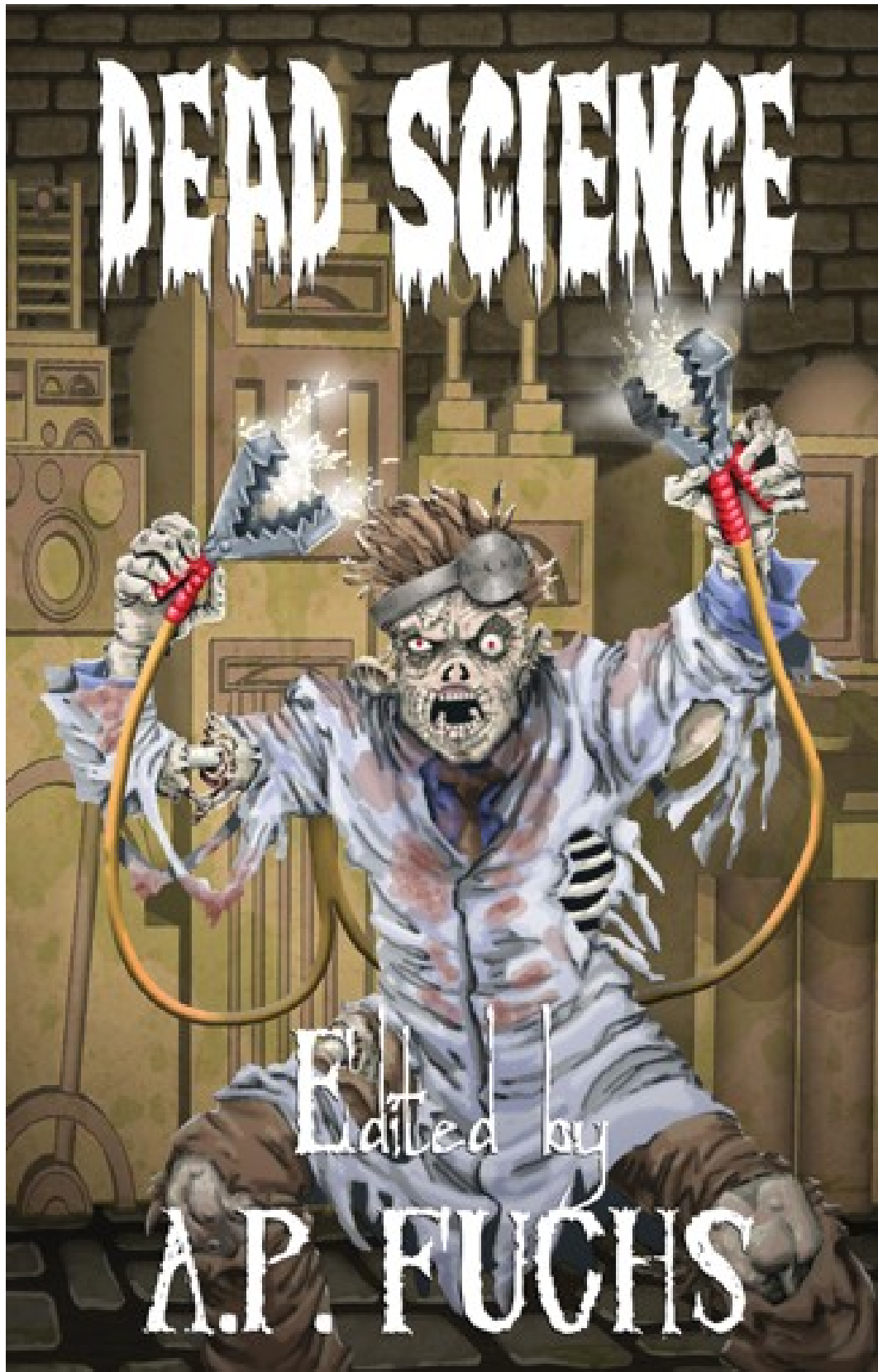
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DEAD SCIENCE



Edited by

A.P. FUCHS

The following is an excerpt from Lorne Dixon's story, *Sashimi À la Morte*, in the zombie anthology, *Dead Science*.

SASHIMI À LA MORTE

by

Lorne Dixon

The second chef waited for the fish to move before carving it with a long takohiki knife. He cleaned the fish quickly, scaling off the armor plates, shaving off skin and fat, and slicing off a series of one-inch-thick fillets. He spread out three slices on a square plate garnished with lime slices, bamboo shoots and seaweed. The chef slid the plate in front of Occhialini, bowed, and stepped away.

Occhialini took a sip of lemon water to clear his palate. He fumbled with his chopsticks, grinned and said, "Excuse me, I'm just excited."

Capturing a fillet between the shaking sticks, he brought it to his lips. The flesh wiggled as he sucked it into his mouth. He chewed.

"How's it taste, Boss?" Cesare asked.

Occhialini swallowed, took another sip of water, then turned to Cesare and said, "Difficult to describe. Nothing like modern fish. Meatier . . . more . . ."

Occhialini fell silent. There were two indications that he wasn't just searching for words to describe the cuisine. His white-knuckled fists slapping to his chest was the first. His eyes were the second hint. They exploded.

Guili blurted out a short, ugly word and took an unconscious step away from the table.

Convulsing, Occhialini collapsed onto the table and slid until the chair under him tipped over. He hit the floor, arms curled up over his chest like a dead bird. He stopped twitching.

Fitcher ran to Silas, put a hand on his back and pushed him towards his boss. Prodding him farther, Fitcher screamed, "Help him. HELP HIM NOW—"

Silas broke out of his shock and rushed to the fallen man, not out of the threat of violence or the promised payment for his services, but because he was a doctor. Kneeling, he put a hand on Occhialini's throat and felt the man's pulse wither down to a weak occasional pump. "I need a defibrillator and an Epinephrine syringe."

The goons exchanged empty stares.

Silas pointed. "The crash cart."

Fitcher reached it first and rolled it over.

Silas pumped Occhialini's chest with his palms.

“What do I do?” Fitcher asked.

Silas took one hand off Occhialini’s chest and gestured to the defibrillator’s power cord. “Plug it in.”

Eager to help, Cesare snatched up the plug and ran towards the bar. The cord, still wound around the defibrillator’s base, snapped tripwire tight. The cart overturned, spilling the defibrillator, boxes of medical gloves and dozens of syringes across the floor.

Fitcher screamed, “IDIOT.”

Silas continued CPR even though he could no longer feel a pulse.

Cesare scrambled, still searching for a wall socket, dragging the defibrillator behind him. Guili chased the machine, hunched over, hands scraping the floor, trying to free the cord. He slid on a latex glove and fell screaming onto a bed of hypodermic needles.

“Idiots,” Fitcher muttered.

Silas pulled his hands off Occhialini, stood, and turned to Fitcher. “It’s not going to matter. He’s dead.”

Cesare and Guili ran to Fitcher’s side.

“You can resus—”

“—bring him back with the paddles—”

“—ain’t, you know, *dead* dead, right?”

Silas firmly shook his head. “He’s *dead* dead, yes.”



Synopsis

Science.

Research.

Knowledge.

The human intellect knows no bounds because of them.

We've built cities and nations upon them.

We've stopped the spread of terrible diseases because of what we've learned from them.

Lives have been saved . . . but lives also have been lost.

Now those lives have returned from the grave, seeking revenge.

Sometimes . . . science goes wrong.

Death.

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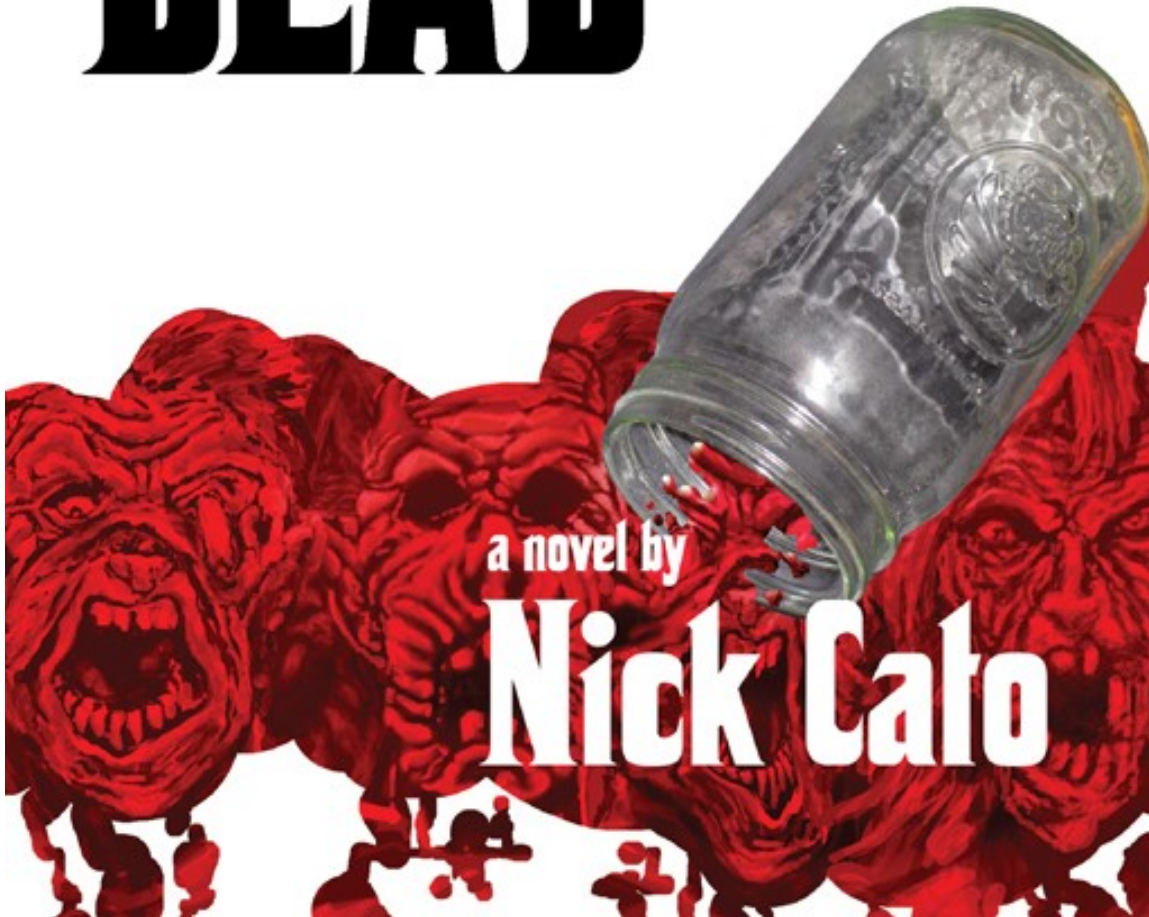
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"Don of the Dead is violent, visceral and fascinating—a comedy darker than heart blood." - Simon Clark, author of *Blood Crazy* and *The Midnight Man*

DON OF THE DEAD



Prologue

(Actually, What Happens Later)

WHAT WAS left of the underworld now belonged to the Barrlucio crime family. Salvatore stood on the stone steps of St. John's Church of the Blessed Sacrament, looking over the smoldering remains of mid-town Manhattan. The members of his family who had not suffered the effects of the virus that had overtaken New York positioned themselves, their weapons aimed at a horde of creatures crowding the street before them.

Behind the creatures, filthy dogs crawled underneath abandoned cars and trucks, chasing each other through the crowd of the undead. Sounds of pain and mumbling filled the air.

Although the living-dead things hungered, they stopped moving when Antonio stepped out from behind Salvatore.

Out of instinct, they knew they must obey him. They knew he could help them. They knew he could help *ease* their cravings.

Slowly, the Don began to speak to the subhuman beasts, many who would not understand a word he was about to say. Antonio raised both hands into the pitch-black night, looked down to the crowd and opened his decaying mouth.

As he spoke to his *new* family, mysterious trench-coated men from Sicily made their way through the cannibalistic clique.

Their leader stopped the Don's speech. "Antonio, you must come with us now. It's only a matter of minutes before this section of the city is destroyed."

Helicopters hummed in the distance.

"Bbutt, wwhaaat about aallll of them?" Antonio said, pointing to his fellow fiends.

"Antonio," the leader said, putting his hand on the Don's ice-cold shoulder, "without you, the Family will never be able to start over. Look around you, brother; there's nothing left! What are you going to control here? Almost everything has been ruined!"

The Barrlucio family raised their heads as the sound of choppers grew louder.

The don lowered his hands.

"Come with us, Antonio. Come back to Sicily. There's nothing in this city now except death."

"What about us?" Salvatore asked.

"By all means, you must come too," the leader of the darkly-dressed Sicilians said, motioning for him to put down his gun.

"But how are we gonna—"

“Trust us, Salvatore.” The leader snapped his fingers. “Now, before they start bombing the area, let us depart.” He turned and pointed at the creatures.

To Salvatore’s amazement, the flesh-hungry freaks stepped back, making a path for the Barrlucios to get through.

“Come. Do not be afraid. They will not harm you.”

Regardless, the remaining humans kept their Uzi’s drawn. They followed the don and the mysterious Sicilians onto a waiting school bus, packing it quickly. The zombies filled in the escape trail as soon as the doors closed, and began following the bus as it headed for the George Washington Bridge.

Salvatore stood in the aisle, his nerve-wracked mother holding onto his arm for support. Through the rear window, he could see the creatures chasing them in vain; whoever these people were, they had some kind of supernatural control over the undead. And, more importantly to the don’s son, they had the trust of his father.

When they were halfway across the span, the explosions began. Salvatore swallowed hard. Whatever was left of the New York *virus outbreak*—as the local news had labeled it—was about to come to an end. It was just a matter of luck and precise timing the over-crowded school bus made it to the Newark airport before anyone spotted them.

A matter of incredible luck.



Synopsis

Two mob families go to war after one family's main hitman switches sides--and to show his newfound loyalty, he has to whack his former boss, who also happens to be the current Don. The Don is buried alive on a mob-controlled construction site that was once the location of a church that had banned the same Don's ancestors, causing them to invent their own religion.

The Barrlucio and Piranzza families battle for control of the underworld before their main henchmen find out a Don has been offed without permission. Major problems arise when a group of mysterious Sicilians arrive from Italy and manage to retrieve the Don's corpse.

Well, his *living* corpse.

Before long, the Don's undead state leads to the outbreak of reanimated dead, including a showdown at the Staten Island Mall and NYC's Central Park. Add to the mix a corrupt military general that is bent on using the outbreak to bring down the mob and the entire city and an even more corrupt Catholic priest who is responsible for the whole mess in the first place.

Ah, nothing like a few bowls of scungilli, classy suits, bullets and zombies.

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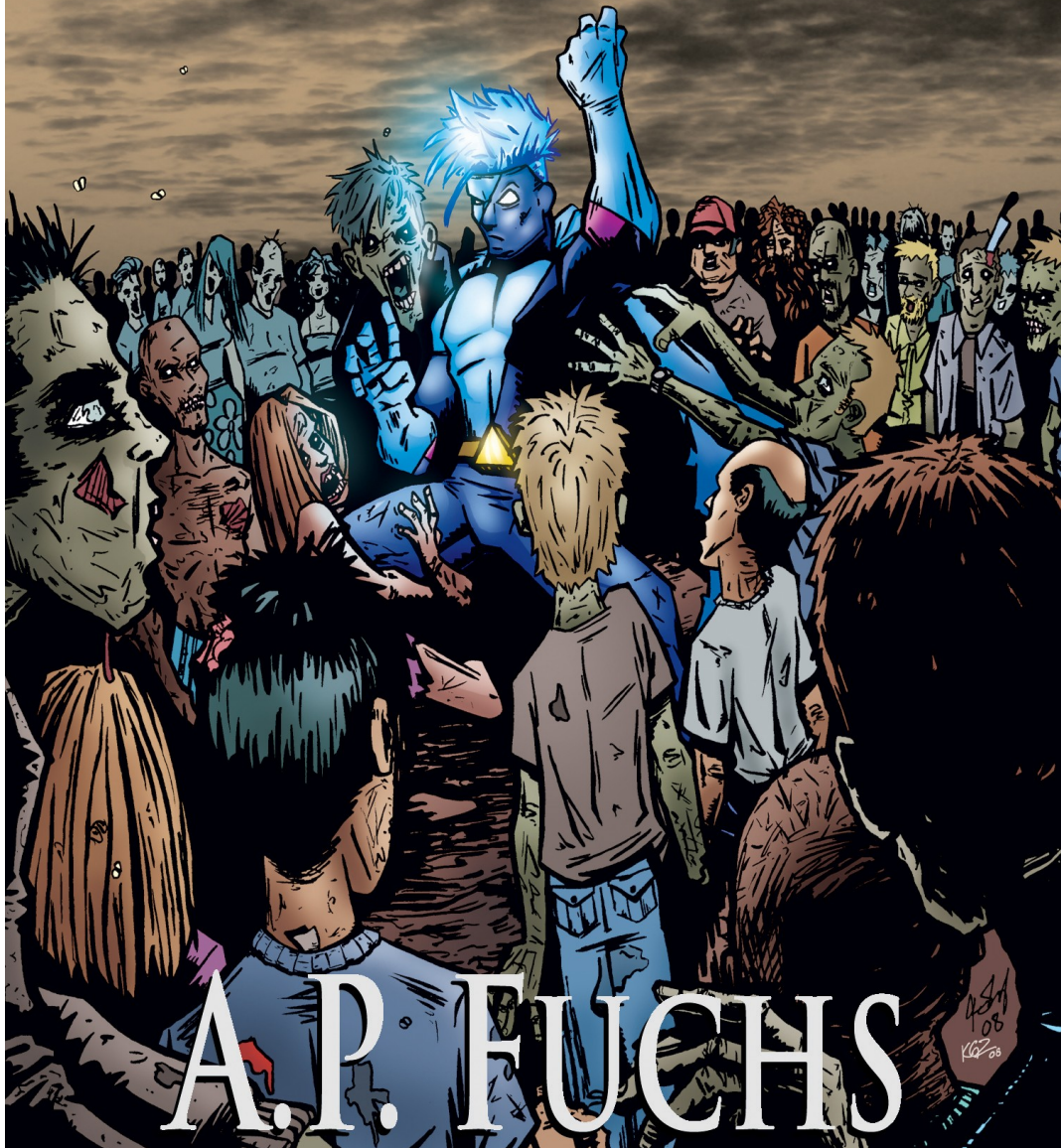
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EPISODE No. 1

AXIOM-MAN™ THE DEAD LAND



A.P. FUCHS

PROLOGUE

FOR THE FOURTH time that night Payton Marsch heard the muffled low and raspy groan coming from his closet.

He checked the clock: 1:48 A.M. Three minutes since the last groan. The previous one had occurred after a six-minute silence. The other two he hadn't bothered to time, but he did know that they were spaced further apart.

Buried in his sheets, the comforter so huge that it engulfed his seven-year-old frame, he rolled over onto his side, facing away from the closet door. Even at his young age he knew it was unwise to turn your back on potential danger, but at the same time he drew comfort from this small effort to make himself stronger.

His father would have wanted it that way.

"Big boys don't complain or cry out for their dads at the first sign of trouble," his father'd been telling him over the past six months.

He lay there, body curled up, knees drawn tight against his chest. The muscles in his back were weak and loose from the fear of what might be in his closet making that noise.

Eyes closed, he prayed that sleep would come and after a nice long dream, he'd open his eyes to the morning light that always spilled through the window just above the headboard. He'd walk to school with Dave, settle into class, and by first recess, tonight would be nothing but a faded memory.

I wish my door was open, he thought. His father was adamant about bedroom doors being shut at night. A fire hazard if they're left open, he'd say.

"Gotta be safe should something happen," Payton was told more than once.

Dad had never been the safety freak of the family, but ever since Mom didn't come home last month, Dad had changed. He was more paranoid, more unsure, and the man that Payton once thought of as his own personal Axiom-man was now just a mere mortal.

His eyes snapped open as the low, raspy groan seeped from behind the closet doors again. He cringed beneath his sheets, sucking his body up into an even tighter ball. Dare he look at the clock?

"No fear, no fear, no fear," he whispered and forced himself to roll over.

It was 1:49. Probably 1:49:30, if the red digital display on the little black clock showed seconds.

It's getting closer. Though he was just learning the art of telling time in school—something he had a little difficulty grasping, especially when dealing with those catalogue clocks—no wait, fire log clocks?—that wasn't it either, but whatever they were called, it didn't matter. Point was, he understood that there were sixty seconds in a minute, which was different than one hundred pennies in a dollar. And half a minute

was thirty seconds, so that meant the next time he heard the sound, it would be less than a minute from now.

He closed his eyes and focused on the math. Though he was ahead of his class and already grasping the basic concepts of division, what he wouldn't give for a pencil and paper to make figuring this out easier. Less than a minute, less than a minute, less than . . .

Thirty-five seconds? Forty?

Wait. A minute and a half is ninety seconds, right? So half that is . . . um . . . half is . . . forty . . . forty-one, forty-two, forty-three, forty-four, yeah, forty-five seconds. Less than a minute. I was right!

That "less than a minute" quickly came round and once more another groan came from his closet, this time louder.

"Dad . . ." he whispered, half-expecting his father to hear him all the way to his bedroom at the end of the hall. "Dad, wake up. It's almost here. Dad."

Half of forty-five . . . His jaw dropped. There is no half of forty-five. Five can't be split in half!

"Oh no," he said louder than he meant to and quickly slapped a palm over his mouth to keep himself quiet.

He peeked over at the closet door. The white dual-doors joined together by a pair of hinges, which were gray in the darkness that covered his bedroom, sat there, unassuming, the wood the only thing separating himself from whatever was within.

Another groan.

A shockwave zipped up and down Payton's chest and his breathing kicked into overdrive.

"It's almost here," he mouthed, the only sound escaping his lips the sibilance of the letter S.

Hands shaking, he ducked under his quilt.

"Dad, come here. Dad, come here. Dad, come here."

His father never came.

He had to scream—*needed* to—and make some kind of noise to alert his father to what was going on. His closet had never made noise before. The clothes inside didn't make noise. Even the toys and board games lining the top shelf within were quiet ones.

Something was inside there.

"Ggrrrruuuhhh . . ." The sound. That awful sound.

"Dad! DAD!"

The closet doors creaked open, their squeal against the hinges sending a wild tingle up and down Payton's arms. His body locked. He couldn't move.

"DAD!" He pictured himself throwing the comforter and sheet off his body, leaping out of bed, throwing open the bedroom door and bounding down the hall and barreling into his father's room to seek solace beside his dad's big and warm body.

The mental image was so clear and so real that Payton's heart broke when he realized that he was still in bed, covering beneath the sheets.

"Hhrrrgggrrrrhhhuuuuhhhh . . ."

"Dad!" His voice caught in his throat and when he tried to call out again, only a soft "Da" escaped his lips.

Silence.

Payton remained there in the dark beneath his quilt, hugging his knees to his chest, head pressed tightly against his kneecaps. "Go away, go away, go away." Breathing hard and breathing deep, he waited there in morbid apprehension. Any moment now, whatever was within his closet would come out, whip back his bed sheets and rip him to pieces.

Yet nothing happened.

The moments ticked by. One minute? Two? He didn't know. He didn't have a clock here under the covers to help him keep track of time.

"Big boys aren't afraid of the dark," his father told him last week when he took away his nightlight. "You're going to spend your whole life sleeping in a dark room. You'll be safe. There's nothing to be afraid of."

If only he could hear those words now: "There's nothing to be afraid of."

Dad, you just don't know. Dad, you're not here. You never hear me. Tears leaked out from the corners of his eyes.

"I wish you were here," Payton said, his voice heavy with grief.

Snot leaked from his nose; he wiped it against his knees, the snot's dampness seeping through his pajama pants to the skin beneath.

The moments ticked by.

Silence. The whole house was quiet.

His heart began to slow and his breathing calmed down.

"I think it's gone," he whispered. "H-hello?"

No reply.

More than anything he wanted to be strong. More than anything he wanted to show his father he was brave and that he could face the dark.

Be fast. You can do it. He gripped the comforter near his head. *One . . .* He squeezed the quilt even tighter. *Two . . .* Tighter still. *Just go fast.* And he prepared the word "Dad" to come screaming out of his lips should he need it. *Three!*

He threw the quilt forward, ripping it from over his head.

There was no one there. The room was quiet. The room was dark.

The closet door was open, offering a gateway to endless black.

A rush of heat coated Payton's skin and sweat burst from his pores.

He sat there for several minutes, his lips pursed, breathing out the fear.

The clock read 1:54.

Ears perked, he listened again for the groaning. Listened for any sign of life in the house.

Quiet. Absolute silence.

Heart beating quickly, he thought maybe that groaning was his imagination after all, that the closet—which needed to be closed all the way to remain shut thanks to its janky hinges—that maybe that groaning was just built up tension in the frame.

The thought brought a smile to his face and a sudden feeling of foolishness. Perhaps his dad was right. Perhaps he *was* a scaredy-cat.

“I thought . . .” he started. “Stupid.”

He slowly swung his legs over the side of the bed, slid his bottom to the edge then planted his feet on the plush carpet. When he stood, it took a couple of steps for his feet to be sure beneath him, his legs still rubbery from the ordeal.

The closet loomed before him, its inside pitch black, an endless pit of the unknown.

Just close it then go to bed. Don't tell Dad tomorrow. His heart ached. *He'll just make you feel bad.*

“Just do it quick,” he said quietly and stretched out his hand to push closed the dual-door.

Something stirred in the dark.

Before Payton could scream, a gray hand snapped out of the dark and grabbed him.



Synopsis

A young boy goes missing.
Taken, in the middle of the night.
No clues. Nothing except the remnants of a black cloud, like the one coughed up from inside the Doorway of Darkness.
A black cloud that takes Axiom-man to a world not his own.
A dead world, where a gray and brown sky shrouds an entire city in a miasma of decay.
The streets are empty. The young boy is nowhere to be found.
Those he does find . . . are dead.
And walking.

***Axiom-man Episode No. 1: The Dead Land* by A.P. Fuchs is available at the following on-line retailers:**

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THE WAR OF THE WORLDS

PLUS BLOOD, GUTS AND ZOMBIES

H.G. WELLS AND ERIC S. BROWN



CHAPTER ONE

THE EVE OF THE WAR

No one would have believed in the last years of the nineteenth century that this world was being watched keenly and closely by intelligences greater than man's and yet as mortal as his own; that as men busied themselves about their various concerns they were scrutinised and studied, perhaps almost as narrowly as a man with a microscope might scrutinise the transient creatures that swarm and multiply in a drop of water. With infinite complacency men went to and fro over this globe about their little affairs, serene in their assurance of their empire over matter. It is possible that the infusoria under the microscope do the same. No one gave a thought to the older worlds of space as sources of human danger, or thought of them only to dismiss the idea of life upon them as impossible or improbable. It is curious to recall some of the mental habits of those departed days. At most terrestrial men fancied there might be other men upon Mars, perhaps inferior to themselves and ready to welcome a missionary enterprise. Yet across the gulf of space, minds that are to our minds as ours are to those of the beasts that perish, intellects vast and cool and unsympathetic, regarded this earth with envious eyes, and slowly and surely drew their plans against us. And early in the twentieth century came the great disillusionment.

The planet Mars, I scarcely need remind the reader, revolves about the sun at a mean distance of 140,000,000 miles, and the light and heat it receives from the sun is barely half of that received by this world. It must be, if the nebular hypothesis has any truth, older than our world; and long before this earth ceased to be molten, life upon its surface must have begun its course. The fact that it is scarcely one seventh of the volume of the earth must have accelerated its cooling to the temperature at which life could begin. It has air and water and all that is necessary for the support of animated existence.

Yet so vain is man, and so blinded by his vanity, that no writer, up to the very end of the nineteenth century, expressed any idea that intelligent life might have developed there far, or indeed at all, beyond its earthly level. Nor was it generally understood that since Mars is older than our earth, with scarcely a quarter of the superficial area and remoter from the sun, it necessarily follows that it is not only more distant from time's beginning but nearer its end.

The secular cooling that must someday overtake our planet has already gone far indeed with our neighbour. Its physical condition is still largely a mystery, but we know now that even in its equatorial region the midday temperature barely approaches that of our coldest winter. Its air is much more attenuated than ours, its oceans have shrunk until they cover but a third of its surface, and as its slow seasons change huge snowcaps gather and melt about either pole and periodically inundate its

temperate zones. That last stage of exhaustion, which to us is still incredibly remote, has become a present-day problem for the inhabitants of Mars. The immediate pressure of necessity has brightened their intellects, enlarged their powers, and hardened their hearts. And looking across space with instruments, and intelligences such as we have scarcely dreamed of, they see, at its nearest distance only 35,000,000 of miles sunward of them, a morning star of hope, our own warmer planet, green with vegetation and grey with water, with a cloudy atmosphere eloquent of fertility, with glimpses through its drifting cloud wisps of broad stretches of populous country and narrow, navy-crowded seas.

And we men, the creatures who inhabit this earth, must be to them at least as alien and lowly as are the monkeys and lemurs to us. The intellectual side of man already admits that life is an incessant struggle for existence, and it would seem that this too is the belief of the minds upon Mars. Their world is far gone in its cooling and this world is still crowded with life, but crowded only with what they regard as inferior animals. To carry warfare sunward is, indeed, their only escape from the destruction that, generation after generation, creeps upon them.

I imagine that even they did not realize the full effect their war with us, the dwellers of this bright blue and green orb of light, would bring about or the utter terror it would unleash.

But before we judge of them too harshly we must remember what ruthless and utter destruction our own species has wrought, not only upon animals, such as the vanished bison and the dodo, but upon its inferior races. The Tasmanians, in spite of their human likeness, were entirely swept out of existence in a war of extermination waged by European immigrants, in the space of fifty years. Are we such apostles of mercy as to complain if the Martians warred in the same spirit?

The Martians seem to have calculated their descent with amazing subtlety—their mathematical learning is evidently far in excess of ours—and to have carried out their preparations with a well-nigh perfect unanimity. Had our instruments permitted it, we might have seen the gathering trouble far back in the nineteenth century. Men like Schiaparelli watched the red planet—it is odd, by-the-by, that for count-less centuries Mars has been the star of war—but failed to interpret the fluctuating appearances of the markings they mapped so well. All that time the Martians must have been getting ready.

During the opposition of 1894 a great light was seen on the illuminated part of the disk, first at the Lick Observatory, then by Perrotin of Nice, and then by other observers. English readers heard of it first in the issue of *Nature* dated August 2. I am inclined to think that this blaze may have been the casting of the huge gun, in the vast pit sunk into their planet, from which their shots were fired at us. Peculiar markings, as yet unexplained, were seen near the site of that outbreak during the next two oppositions.

The storm burst upon us six years ago now. As Mars approached opposition, Lavelle of Java set the wires of the astronomical exchange palpitating with the amazing intelligence of a huge outbreak of incandescent gas upon the planet. It had occurred towards midnight of the twelfth; and the spectroscope, to which he had at once resorted, indicated a mass of flaming gas, chiefly hydrogen, moving with an enormous velocity towards this earth. This jet of fire had become invisible about a quarter past twelve. He compared it to a colossal puff of flame suddenly and violently squirted out of the planet, "as flaming gases rushed out of a gun."

A singularly appropriate phrase it proved. Yet the next day there was nothing of this in the papers except a little note in the *Daily Telegraph*, and the world went in ignorance of one of the gravest dangers that ever threatened the human race. I might not have heard of the eruption at all had I not met Ogilvy, the well-known astronomer, at Ottershaw. He was immensely excited at the news, and in the excess of his feelings invited me up to take a turn with him that night in a scrutiny of the red planet.

In spite of all that has happened since, I still remember that vigil very distinctly: the black and silent observatory, the shadowed lantern throwing a feeble glow upon the floor in the corner, the steady ticking of the clockwork of the telescope, the little slit in the roof—an oblong profundity with the stardust streaked across it. Ogilvy moved about, invisible but audible. Looking through the telescope, one saw a circle of deep blue and the little round planet swimming in the field. It seemed such a little thing, so bright and small and still, faintly marked with transverse stripes, and slightly flattened from the perfect round. But so little it was, so silvery warm—a pin's-head of light! It was as if it quivered, but really this was the telescope vibrating with the activity of the clockwork that kept the planet in view.

As I watched, the planet seemed to grow larger and smaller and to advance and recede, but that was simply that my eye was tired. Forty millions of miles it was from us—more than forty millions of miles of void. Few people realise the immensity of vacancy in which the dust of the material universe swims.

Near it in the field, I remember, were three faint points of light, three telescopic stars infinitely remote, and all around it was the unfathomable darkness of empty space. You know how that blackness looks on a frosty starlight night. In a telescope it seems far profounder. And invisible to me because it was so remote and small, flying swiftly and steadily towards me across that incredible distance, drawing nearer every minute by so many thousands of miles, came the Thing they were sending us, the Thing that was to bring so much struggle and calamity and death to the earth. I never dreamed of it then as I watched; no one on earth dreamed of that unerring missile. That night, too, there was another jetting out of gas from the distant planet. I saw it. A reddish flash at the edge, the slightest projection of the outline just as the chronometer struck midnight; and at that I told Ogilvy and he took my place. The night was warm and I was thirsty, and I went stretching my legs clumsily and feeling

my way in the darkness, to the little table where the siphon stood, while Ogilvy exclaimed at the streamer of gas that came out towards us.

That night another invisible missile started on its way to the earth from Mars, just a second or so under twenty-four hours after the first one. I remember how I sat on the table there in the blackness, with patches of green and crimson swimming before my eyes. I wished I had a light to smoke by, little suspecting the meaning of the minute gleam I had seen and all that it would presently bring me. Ogilvy watched till one, and then gave it up; and we lit the lantern and walked over to his house. Down below in the darkness were Ottershaw and Chertsey and all their hundreds of people, sleeping in peace.

He was full of speculation that night about the condition of Mars, and scoffed at the vulgar idea of its having inhabitants who were signalling us. His idea was that meteorites might be falling in a heavy shower upon the planet, or that a huge volcanic explosion was in progress. He pointed out to me how unlikely it was that organic evolution had taken the same direction in the two adjacent planets.

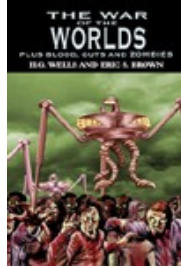
“The chances against anything manlike on Mars are a million to one,” he said.

Hundreds of observers saw the flame that night and the night after about midnight, and again the night after; and so for ten nights, a flame each night. Why the shots ceased after the tenth no one on earth has attempted to explain. It may be the gases of the firing caused the Martians inconvenience. Dense clouds of smoke or dust, visible through a powerful telescope on earth as little grey, fluctuating patches, spread through the clearness of the planet’s atmosphere and obscured its more familiar features.

Even the daily papers woke up to the disturbances at last, and popular notes appeared here, there, and everywhere concerning the volcanoes upon Mars. The seriocomic periodical *Punch*, I remember, made a happy use of it in the political cartoon. And, all unsuspected, those missiles the Martians had fired at us drew earthward, rushing now at a pace of many miles a second through the empty gulf of space, hour by hour and day by day, nearer and nearer. It seems to me now almost incredibly wonderful that, with that swift fate hanging over us, men could go about their petty concerns as they did. I remember how jubilant Markham was at securing a new photograph of the planet for the illustrated paper he edited in those days. People in these latter times scarcely realise the abundance and enterprise of our nineteenth-century papers. For my own part, I was much occupied in learning to ride the bicycle, and busy upon a series of papers discussing the probable developments of moral ideas as civilisation progressed.

One night (the first missile then could scarcely have been 10,000,000 miles away) I went for a walk with my wife. It was starlight and I explained the Signs of the Zodiac to her, and pointed out Mars, a bright dot of light creeping zenithward, towards which so many telescopes were pointed. It was a warm night. Coming home, a party of excursionists from Chertsey or Isleworth passed us singing and playing music. There

were lights in the upper windows of the houses as the people went to bed. From the railway station in the distance came the sound of shunting trains, ringing and rumbling, softened almost into melody by the distance. My wife pointed out to me the brightness of the red, green, and yellow signal lights hanging in a framework against the sky. It seemed so safe and tranquil.



Synopsis

The invasion begins . . . and the dead start to rise.

There's panic in the streets of London as invaders from Mars wreak havoc on the living, slaying the populace with Heat-Rays and poisonous clouds of black smoke. Humanity struggles to survive against technology far beyond its own, meeting fear and death at every turn.

But that's not the only struggle mankind must face. The dead are rising from their graves with an insatiable hunger for human flesh. Friends, neighbours and loved ones lost to the war of the worlds are now the enemy and the Earth is forever changed.

It's kill or be killed, if you want to survive, otherwise you might become one of the walking dead yourself.

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