

Zombies Eat Lawyers

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The Law Offices Of My Foot In Your Ass
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"Someone's getting sued for this." A harried lawyer kept repeating it to himself while curled under his desk in the fetal position. The Zombie Plague had come to the Law Offices Of My Foot In Your Ass, and litigators were turning into lunch. Justice may well be blind, but the undead overran the Attorneys offices with unadulterated gore. The conference room turned into a blood-splattered tomb. Cubicles walled the workers in like prison. And the break room became the last refuge of the wounded survivors. It wasn't supposed to be like that. Especially not on Bagel Thursday.

It was a bad time for the apocalypse. Steve Walker's life was finally going places. He'd just gotten engaged. He was ready to trade his sardine-cramped apartment for a new condo, his hunk of junk of a car for one that didn't stall in the middle of intersections, his ramen noodle lifestyle for succulent steak. But on that Thursday morning, survival was the only thing on the menu. The zombies meanwhile were content to gobble Steve as an appetizer.

Steve never thought he'd die sorting issues of Super Litigator magazines in the bowels of a law firm. Then again, being a mailroom bitch was hardly a way to live, apocalypse or not. The fact was, Steve hated lawyers, even before he started working for them. Their smug sensibilities. The shark in suits mentality. They were a rung up from used car salesman on the slime ball ladder. It turned out lawyers actually deserved more bad press than they got.

Not to mention they worked Steve like a goat. But despite an existence filled with legal briefs and deposition transcripts, Steve managed to carve out a little slice of Heaven. Her name was Vanessa Tilden. She was dirty blonde, trim, sarcastic, and way smarter than her title as Congressional Aide gave her credit for.

They met at a bar in Georgetown and instantly hit it off comparing gripes about their fat cat bosses. From there, love took hold in a bond that couldn't even be broken by the End of the World. The apocalypse seemed anxious to test that theory, leaving Steve struggling to survive long enough to ever see the woman of his dreams alive again.

If Steve had known doomsday was coming, the last words

out of his mouth to Vanessa surely wouldn't have been "don't forget to pick up more toilet paper on the way home." Then again, Steve hadn't realized there was a chance he'd never see home again. So standing alone in the mailroom, Steve for once actually missed his matchbox sized apartment. He figured it would be a nice light Thursday. That he'd just coast through eight hours of sorting subpoenas, then pick up some Sir Lunch-A-Lot take out on the way to having engagement sex.

Instead Steve found himself listening to Indie Rock through his mp3 earbuds in the mailroom, trying to shake a sleep hangover. He stopped suddenly when he felt a presence behind him. Steve just figured it was one of the partners demanding he go out on a latte run. Maybe even a stop off to pick up some dry cleaning. So imagine Steve's surprise when he found Betty Hunter behind him, leaning in like she wanted to suck his face.

It was a bold move for a sexual harassment lawyer. Someone who made her living forcing others to pay for their unwanted sexual advances caught in the throes of an unwelcome come on of her own.

"Whoa, hands off. Engaged dude here," Steve insisted, as Betty lunged towards him.

But as Steve looked closer, he realized it was not the sweater vest loving, chain-smoking, husky Betty he'd come to resent. Betty's eyes were dead, her mouth drooped open. She groaned with a taste for brains.

"What the f..." Steve muttered, as Betty lunged a second time.

Steve dodged Betty again as she tried to bite him.

"Oh, hell no. I don't even let Vanessa bite me."

Steve didn't know what happened to Betty, or where she lurked from, but he wasn't about to be cannibalized by someone who got winded when she climbed up a flight of stairs.

"Don't make me hurt you," Steve warned, one last time.

But Zombie Betty only had one thing on her mind. She lunged for Steve again. Steve moved to the side, then grabbed hold of the mail cart beside him, and steamrolled Betty with it.

Steve rammed Zombie Betty into the wall, expecting that to do the trick. Betty fell to the ground and lay lifeless. Steve breathed a sigh of relief.

"What the hell is going on here?" he asked himself.

But Steve didn't have long with his thoughts.

Zombie Betty started groaning again. Steve turned around and saw Betty starting to stagger to her feet.

"You've gotta be kidding me."

Steve looked around for a weapon, but found none. He then got an idea. Steve grabbed a box full of Betty's latest harassment case load, and slammed it on her head. With the blow to the cranium, Betty fell back to the ground, lifeless.

"Case closed, bitch."

Steve caught his breath, not fully believing what he just saw. He slid his smart phone out of his pocket and pulled up the internet, hoping the days Breaking News would give him answers. But just as his internet browser was opening, Steve heard a piercing scream.

Dave Johnson's life was circling the drain faster than a goldfish gone belly up. He'd lost three cases in a row. His mistress left him for his life coach. And he'd just caught his wife getting wheel barrowed by an Icelandic pet psychic. It seemed things couldn't go worse.

That was, until he got served court papers. See, Dave made his fortune on frivolous lawsuits. His business card even said "no case too absurd." So when he wasn't able to convince the court it was Sir Lunch-A-Lot's fault for making a client obese, the supposed victim retaliated by filing a lawsuit against Dave for incompetence. That was why Dave had made bourbon his best buddy. And why Rebecca Webster thought nothing of Dave stammering into the offices that morning looking like he'd slept in a gutter.

Rebecca meanwhile held court over her Empire of gossip. She spent her work time complaining online about how much she hated her job. Whiny status updates went out to her thousand closest online friends. The fact was, Rebecca was overqualified to answer phones, but under qualified for anything less demeaning, the fitting result to getting a Liberal Arts degree from the University Of Arm & A Leg.

Rebecca was typing up another status update online when Dave trudged in, groaning.

"Sounds like someone could use a raisin bagel," Rebecca said, with fake cheer.

But Dave had other cravings on his mind. He leaned over the desk with blank eyes and his mouth wide open. Rebecca tore herself away from social networking to offer Dave a bagel, then noticed how close he was to her, and misinterpreted it for a sexual advance.

"Ew, booze breath. Gross," Rebecca uttered, pulling back. But staring deep into Dave's eyes, she realized something was different. That he wasn't just horny and hung over--or even alive anymore for that matter.

Zombie Dave lunged across the desk at Rebecca and ripped into her flesh. She screamed for help, but the damage had been done. An online status update remained on Rebecca's computer. It read "just another boring day at the office."

You'd think a yell like Rebecca's would send the cavalry coming. But the partners sat in their corner offices thinking about who to sue next, and what Caribbean Island to bask on after their multi million dollar payday.

Elaine Boyle meanwhile sat patiently in her cubicle when Rebecca's scream reached fever pitch. Elaine had waited patiently all morning for the soothing dulcet tones of DJ Rick Smooth's cue to call so she could win an iCool tablet.

Leanne Miller meanwhile furiously scoured the internet for a recap of the last episode of "Bitchy Housewives Of Boise." Her boyfriend had forgotten to DVR it before he took her out to the hip new French Asian Fusion joint across town. Sure "Chez Wang" had killer foie grass wonton, but that hardly made up for missing America's favorite tantrum artist having a meltdown over shower curtains on national television.

And then there was Patricia Travers. She checked her lottery ticket, hoping she'd hit the jackpot. Then she could finally afford the singles cruise she'd been saving up for the last six months. Not to mention she'd finally managed to take off five pounds on the Hoboken Beach Diet. That left her a mere thirty-five pounds from her goal weight.

The paralegals were every day women. The kind of cubicle dwellers that packed bag lunches and set Kitten calendars on their desks. But the days of watching funny animal videos were over.

The ladies all sprang to attention with Rebecca's shriek from reception. They scurried to her aid, but stopped in their tracks as they saw their old shark of a colleague Dave making a meal of her. A mailman and firefighter zombie had joined Dave in devouring Rebecca.

The ladies couldn't believe what they were seeing. One of their closest friends torn apart right in front of their eyes. The paralegals stomachs started to turn. They wanted to puke into the nearest trashcan, but instead stood in silence, too petrified of drawing the zombies attention.

The silence didn't last long though. As the paralegals slowly back tracked, the zombies caught wind of fresh meat, and set their sights on a blond buffet.

Shrieks rang out while the paralegals nearly tripped over each other fleeing from the undead masses. Patricia and Elaine started to dash towards the partners corner offices

for cover while Leann discovered she'd picked a bad day to wear heels to work.

Leann tripped while trying to make her getaway, and found herself eating carpet.

Elaine was in too much of a terror frenzy to even notice Leann hit the deck, but Patricia turned back to aid her fallen co worker.

The zombies bared down on the paralegals while Patricia helped Leann to her feet.

As Zombie Dave lunged for Leann, Patricia grabbed a letter opener from an adjacent desk and plunged it deep into Dave's eye socket. Zombie Dave was stunned for a second, then kept plowing on, desperate for more brains.

With no more office products to use as weapons, Leann and Patricia retreated, joining Elaine pounding on one of the partners locked doors.

Elaine could see Samantha Stevens through the glass. Hell, she'd fetched a double decaf soy mocha for her just a few hours before. But Samantha wasn't about to unlock the door for her assistant. The irony of a lawyer that made a living out of championing underrepresented women hanging her own assistant out to dry was enough to make Elaine sick. Almost as sick as a criminal defense attorney who would defend Hitler for the right wad of cash holing up under his desk in the fetal position while three defenseless women stood exposed to a growing legion of brain hungry zombies.

The partners were a potpourri of litigation pet peeves. The Big Business Lackey, the Defense Attorney To The Stars, the Cease & Desist Shill, the Six Figure Settlement King. They were all sharks in the courtroom, but guppies in true times of crisis. Their eight hundred dollar custom cufflinks weren't going to save them. Nor were their snakeskin briefcases. More importantly, no one was going to save their souls. Not while they watched their underlings cling to life.

Chaos reigned on the floor. The court reporters and law clerks were roused from their cubicle coma's by the commotion, only to be thrust into danger.

Patricia, Elaine, and Leann tried to retreat into the ladies room as the ranks of zombies swelled. Leann opened the door to the restroom expecting refuge, but instead found a pair of their zombiefied co workers waiting for them.

Brock Foster was an personal injury shark that chased one too many ambulances. When he opened the back of a crashed EMT vehicle looking to land his next client, he instead

found a paramedic being devoured by a gurney bound sports mascot. Brock tried to flee the scene, but had found himself easy pickings for a local mime with a jonesing for a bite to eat. The beret-wearing clown took a chunk out of Brock's neck before he was able fight the Frenchie off, then Brock staggered back to the office, having become a personal injury case of his own.

When Brock returned to the office that night hoping to quickly gauze up and return to ambulance chasing, he ran into Claire working late at her desk. Desperate to sleep her way up the corporate ladder, the busty bimbo offered to nurse Brock's wound, standing extra close and looking deep into Brock's eyes as she bandaged up his neck in the ladies room.

By that point, the zombie bite had taken hold of Brock, leaving him laconic and wooden. Claire grew tired of waiting for him to jump her and decided to make her move. She dove in for a lip lock, but ended up biting off more than she could chew. Rather, Brock bit off a piece of Claire's lip, then went in for the kill.

The zombiefied duo spent the night trapped in the ladies room, pawing at the door, waiting for someone to set them free. Leann was the reluctant victim. Zombie Brock and Claire lunged for Patricia, Leann, and Elaine's while the rest of the zombies closed in.

Zombie Claire's lunge toppled Leann. They both fell to the ground where Zombie Claire tried to eat Leann.

Never a fan of Claire's hussy ways, Elaine took particular delight in wrestling Claire off Leann before slamming her head repeatedly into the ground. A pool of blood started gushing out of Claire's head.

"I think she's dead Elaine," Leann uttered, catching her breath.

"She was dead before," Elaine insisted.

"Well she's really dead now," Leann added.

"Better safe than sorry--"

"Hey ladies, little help," Patricia yelled.

Leann and Elaine turned and saw Patricia narrowly holding Zombie Brock back from biting her.

Leann and Elaine ran full steam ahead and pushed Brock back into the ladies room. They then close the door shut behind him, trapping him.

"Time to freshen up, bastard," Patricia yelled.

"Sounds like someone has some repressed anger," Elaine cracked.

"Yeah, like I'm the first person to hate an ambulance chaser," Patricia replied. But Patricia had been harboring

an unrequited crush on Brock, one that had served to break her heart upon just seeing him with Claire, undead or not. But the wounds of the past had nothing on the onslaught the present was baring down with.

With the scuffle side tracking the ladies from their dash to the break room, the zombies were practically breathing down their necks. The break room became a desert island away. The ladies held their breath, their paperwork filled lives flashing before their eyes, sure the end had come.

The zombies grunted and groaned, ready for their meal, convinced they'd found easy prey. But sometimes miracles did happen.

Steve emerged from the mail room with fire in his eyes. He hurtled the mail cart towards the staggering undead. Steve released it, letting it careen down the cubicle corridor like a bowling ball.

The mail cart left a 7-10 split, knocking over a mass of zombies, while missing a number of others completely.

"Oh thank God. I thought we were lunch," Elaine said.

"If you don't get in the break room, you still might be," Steve replied.

"Wait, but what about you?" Patricia asked.

"I'm going to law down the law," Steve replied.

Patricia, Elaine, and Leann ducked into the break room while Steve made a bee line for Tucker Trent's office. Tucker was a no show at the law firm, like every Thursday. The guy spent more time on the golf course than he did in court. Of course, Tucker treated trial as a suckers play long before he'd lowered his golf handicap to eight. See, Tucker never found a case he couldn't settle. Why waste precious golf time cross examining and interviewing witnesses when you could score a quick out of court settlement?

Matter of fact, Tucker was off at Lawyer-palooza, trying to recruit a new crop of clients to parlay into bulk settlements to finance his next golf vacation. Lawyer-palooza was the corporate stiff's idea of a recruiting fair. Rent out the conference hall at an uber ritzy hotel, set up a free buffet, then hawk your slick wares to new unsuspecting clients.

But the rancid ruse was fine by Steve, because it allowed him to dash into the office and grab Tucker's club from off his putting green.

Steve grabbed hold of Tucker's putter and squared up to the remaining lurking zombies.

"Fore."

While Steve played the hero to the cubicle crew, the lawyers cowered in their corner offices. But locking the minimum wagers out wouldn't stop terror from coming in. Pounding was heard on the offices glass windows. The undead had surrounded the building. The senior partners were boxed in, their posh offices turned into luxury coffins of their own making, and there was no one to save them.

The Big Business Lackey panicked as she looked out the window at the gore squad clamoring for brains with just a thin pane of glass between them. The Lackey lost her mind and bounded to the door, hoping to make her getaway. But when she opened the door, a cubicle zombie was waiting to eat her.

The Defense Attorney To The Stars took a different tact. He picked up his stapler to defend himself from the hordes pounding on the glass. But when the zombies broke through and poured into his office from the street, the stapler was little help. The Defense Attorney pleaded for his life, but ended up bleeding out on his hand carved mahogany desk.

Which left the shark in his office, rocking back and forth under his desk. It was one thing to be a hammerhead shark in the court room, but that didn't matter if you were toothless when it counted most. The shark became religious for the first time, just as his life was about to be cut short. He prayed, pleading for a miracle, but the shark had no soul left to save. The zombies crashed through the glass, leaving the shark turned from predator into prey. But while the senior partners of the Law Offices Of My Foot In Your Ass were turned into lunch, Steve cleaned up the cubicles like they were week old egg salad from the break room fridge. Steve wanted to believe he'd always been such a bad ass. But it was the adrenaline carrying him. There was only one thought in his mind. Being able to see Vanessa alive again. And no undead creature was going to come between that. Steve cracked the last skull with his putter, then tried to reach his fiancé on his cell.

"Dammit, pick up," Steve yelled, as Vanessa didn't answer his calls.

The paralegals were glued to the break room tv. The news was grim. Zombies weren't just eating lawyers. They were eating every man, woman, and child. The Zombie plague was world wide, and there was no help on the way. The news anchor warned not to go outside, but Steve had his foot halfway out the door, desperate to see his lady love again. He kept dialing, pleading that Vanessa would finally pick

up.

Capitol Hill

Vanessa Tilden's cell phone rang furiously, but she didn't answer. As a lowly Congressional aide, it was her job to actually read the eight hundred page bills the Senators voted on. And the latest paperweight of politics was a doozy. Never mind that Vanessa had been reading for hours, or that she couldn't see straight. The Senator wanted a detailed rundown of the proposed spending bill before he took off to Cabo.

It was days like that Vanessa wondered why she ever came to DC in the first place. She'd just gotten engaged, but had no time to celebrate her good fortune. She'd come to the Capitol full of idealism, but had choked down the all too gritty reality of how broken Washington really was. The Lobbyists, the back stabbing, the Sweetheart deals. It turned out Democrats and Republicans were just two sides of the same corrupt coin. There were no good guys, only darker shades of evil. Everyone could be bought for the right price. To succeed in Washington, you had to sell your soul, and Vanessa had a particular attachment to hers. But politics was a dirty game, and sometimes you got dragged into the mud.

That's why Vanessa was looking to get out while she was still squeaky clean. At page two hundred of the bill, she was ready to quit. By page four hundred, she started drafting her resignation. But little did she know she might not make it to page six hundred alive.

Bleary-eyed and nursing a ring tone induced migraine, Vanessa took a break from legislative dickery to check her voice mail and grab a chocolate pick me up. But terror lurked around the corner. As Vanessa exited the office, a zombie janitor lunged at her. Vanessa fell to the ground, with the janitor landing on top of her. She shrieked for help, but received none as the zombie tried to eat her face off.

Vanessa used all her might to push the janitor off her. She then high tailed it down the hallway, too petrified to properly process what just occurred. But while Vanessa fought for her life in the bowels of the building, it was just another do nothing day in Congress. The end of the legislators hectic four day work week. The Senators already had their feet halfway out the door before the partisan bickering and finger pointing began. But soon enough, the hand wringing and filibustering over pork

barrel spending was a distant memory. There would be no more campaigning for re election six months into terms. No more mud slinging across party lines. And no more Congressmen in the pockets of special interests groups.

Capitol Hill was about to become ground zero for the undead revolution, with zombies turning the elected officials into brain dead corpses. Then again, Congress had the brain dead part spot on already.

It was politics as usual, but Senator Jones had another kind of stumping on his mind. He was craving K Street call girl and had eight thousand dollars of the taxpayers money at the ready. Jones had wanted a nice golden shower all week, but family value town hall meetings and a parent teacher conference had gotten in his way. But it was finally going to be his night. Jones' wife was away on a spiritual retreat, so once he put in a photo op at a Republican fundraiser, he was free to get kinky with his favorite escort Candy.

Brock Jamison's politics couldn't have been more different. His heart bled liberal. Matter of fact, Brock was so open minded that his brain had fallen out. But that didn't mean he wasn't above wheel barrowing a hooker so hard she couldn't walk straight in the morning. He just preferred to take his libido on the road. They were part of his official business. He was an environmentalist after all, so what better way to spread the message of stopping Global Climate change than on a private jet? Thank you, taxpayers.

Shannon Patterson was an institution on Capitol Hill. She'd been re elected so many times that she actually believed her own self fabricated hype, instead of realizing she just managed to suck less than the other nincompoops that ran against her every four years. But the people kept believing her salt of the Earth, woman of the people message. Never mind the fact that she lived in a gated mansion she'd bought padding her wallet with lobbyist money. The only question was which special interest to sell herself to that term. Did she want to be in the pocket of Big Oil or Wall Street? Hell, why not both?

Grady Lockwood was equally unfocused on the floor vote at hand. He was eagerly awaiting his guest spot on the Fair & Balanced News Network condemning gay marriage. But first, he had some naughty text messages to shoot off to the teenage male page he'd been stuffing like a Thanksgiving turkey. Grady had to be careful though, as his wife had been clogging up his in box with reminders of their Republican Ball later that evening.

But as much as the whiff of corruption and tawdry sex hung in the air, the stench of corpses quickly took hold of the chambers. Survivors of the zombie apocalypse would later look back and wonder how the undead had overtaken Capitol Hill security. But the breach had come from within. A night security guard had been bitten en route to work. He clocked in just in time to eat the graveyard janitorial staff as an early lunch break. From there, zombie fever took hold quicker than legislative incompetence.

The Senate floor became host to a blood bath. But even the end of the world couldn't bring the Republicans and Democrats to reach across the aisle. Instead of bipartisan ass kicking, the Senators used each other as human shields. But, though there's no one better at mud slinging, politicians couldn't fight worth dick. The stiff in suits made for easy prey. Even the chair of the Congressional Defense Committee put up little fight. But these were people that fought with rhetoric. Take the Senate Majority Leader. The old windbag had lost half his contingency, but he was too in love with the sound of his own voice to notice. A bite to the neck by his fiercest rival made for a wake up call a little too late.

Grady meanwhile was determined not to die with a hard on. He had a page to pork and made a furious dash for the exit. Grady ended up with male on male action of another variety. The Senator was jumped by a flesh eating Zombie Security Guard. As the Zombie's rippling biceps pinned the Senator down, Grady thought to himself how ironic it was to die with his flesh pressed up to a man-boobed meatloaf of a man while his true man love waited for carnal bliss in the men's room.

While the cow of a security guard devoured Grady like an all you can eat buffet, Shannon made her play to escape. Sure the Senator was known as a ball buster in a blouse, but with her life on the line, she threw the salt of the Earth regular folks under the bus she built her career supposedly championing. But if tussling with Tea Partiers was like wrestling pit bulls before, the zombieified versions were the scariest things Shannon had ever seen. In the end, the Undead Tea Partiers made a red state out of Shannon's blue blood, picking at her remains like vultures over fresh road kill.

Brock wasn't faring any better. The environmentalist was witnessing the largest bio hazard the world had ever seen, and would become Exhibit A if he wasn't careful. Brock tried to fight his way through the masses with the eight

hundred page beast of a bill making its rounds in Congressional chambers. Who said bureaucracy didn't pay? The mound of leather bound legislative drivel was weighty enough to ward off at least one zombie, but proved too little too late to save Brock. The Senator's open mind became a zombie mob's bulls eye, and the undead were sure to hit the target.

Which left Senator Jones and his call girl craving libido. But in the direst of times, the Senate's biggest proponent of family values finally found his way back home. Never mind his six figure hooker bill or yen for inflatable boobs; in his dying moments, all the Senator thought about was his wife and baseball-loving tyke. And like that, the man who sold his soul to the gun lobby years before fired his parting shot. But as much as Jones suddenly wanted the Lord to save him, the only miracle was that the Senator blacked out just before the zombies tore out his entrails.

As Vanessa reached the entrance to the Senate's Chambers, no help was coming. It was every man, woman, and Libertarian for themselves. The lobby was a hodgepodge of horrors. The tour group that picked the wrong time to tour the Nation's Capitol, the Congressional page's left for road kill, the undead cafeteria workers stuck in hairnets for eternity.

With the zombie mob catching wind of Vanessa's fresh meat, she realized it was time for a hasty retreat. But she had nowhere to turn. The zombie janitor had tailed her down the hallway and recruited a trio of rotting friends, the Senate floor was bloodier than a vampire ball, the cafeteria was a feast of flesh, and the main entrance was an invitation to have your arm gnawed off. Then, the answer came to Vanessa out the corner of her eye--the gift shop.

Vanessa dashed over to the merchandising Mecca at full tilt, narrowly dodging the chomp-happy hordes. But getting to the gift shop was only half the battle. Having spent so many nights late nights aiding the Senator, Vanessa knew they gated up the joint after hours. It was time to close up shop.

But the zombies were onto Vanessa. They started stammering her way, all eager to make a quick snack of her. Vanessa looked up in the entryway and saw a pull down gate. She grabbed it and started to slide it down as the zombies got too close for comfort. Halfway down, the gate got stuck. Vanessa panicked, a bead of sweat dripping down her face. She got transfixed by the horde closing in, then came to her senses just in time.

Vanessa used all her energy to unjam the gate. She then pulled it down just as the zombies reached out to tear her apart. But having a gate between her and the undead wasn't enough to stop them from trying. The zombies reached their grubby paws through the gate, looking to clutch her blouse, and pull her close enough in to have a nibble of her.

Vanessa back stepped in a hurry, foisting herself as far away from the zombies as possible. That was, until she slammed into a fleshy roadblock. Feeling a presence behind her, Vanessa turned around to have her worst fears confirmed. She'd managed to lock herself into the gift shop with one of the brain eaters. The smock-wearing, pock-marked clerk lunged at Vanessa. She moved out of the way just in time, leaving the Smocked Zombie to topple a rack of "I Heart Congress" t-shirts.

Vanessa moved to the other side of the gift shop, desperately scrambling to find a weapon to bring down the monster. As the Smocked Zombie stammered towards her for a second go around, Vanessa found salvation in the form of a fire extinguisher. Vanessa ripped the extinguisher from the wall, then reamed the zombie in the face with it. The zombie dropped like a stone. Not content to rest on her laurels, Vanessa grabbed the computer monitor from on top of the cash register and broke it in half over the zombie's skull. The zombie laid lifeless on the ground while the computer monitor crackled and sparked.

Finally Vanessa was safe. But she was also trapped. With a protective gate between her and danger though, Vanessa was finally able to pick up her phone.

"Baby," Vanessa said over the line, trembling like a leaf in a hurricane.

"Vanessa. Oh thank God you're alive," Steve said, breathing a sigh of relief.

"I just want you to know how much I love you. That I don't want to live without you--"

"Why are you talking like you're never going to see me again? You're not bit, are you?"

"I just want you to know you're the best thing that ever happened to me--"

"Vanessa. Stop talking like this is the end."

"Steve, I don't know how long this gate will hold those monsters off," Vanessa replied, seeing the zombie ranks swell on the other side of the gate.

"Where are you?" Steve asked, panicking.

"I'm at the Congressional gift shop. I got the security gate down, but there's a lot of zombies out there."

"Just stay there. I'm coming to get you."

"But...but Steve, that's like a death march," Vanessa said, as shocked as the Paralegals back in the break room.

"Vanessa. You're the best thing that ever happened to me too. And I'd give everything I have for one more second with you."

And like that, Steve's fate was sealed, for better or worse.

All it took was a trip to the parking lot for Steve to realize saving Vanessa was much easier said than done. First, Steve needed better wheels. His jalopy was unreliable at best during his morning commute. A getaway vehicle to leave the apocalypse in his rearview, it was not. But soon the point was moot as Freedom Blvd had turned into a tin junkyard. Sport coupes, sedans, mini vans, new, old--it didn't matter. The street was slammed with cars like a traffic jam from hell. Unless Steve had a monster truck lying around, it was going to be a rescue on foot.

Then, shiny relief came to Steve in the strangest of packages. He caught sight of a motor scooter out the corner of his eye. Leave it to a bunch of wuss ass lawyers not to have one biker among the group. But did the scooter really have to be pink? Steve hardly had time to quarrel with the color palette though. A scooter wasn't about to strike fear into any creatures heart, but it could navigate a minefield of abandoned cars clogging the streets at thirty-five miles an hour.

Steve took to the side streets, trying to cut as many corners as possible in the twenty blocks that laid between him and the convention center. But soon Steve realized zombies weren't all he had to worry about.

As he rounded the corner onto Liberty Way, it became hard picking out man from monster. Stores were looted, fires were set, crowds ran rampant. It was like the Skins had just won another championship.

But if the apocalypse did anything, it was to show a persons true colors. Unlikely hero's were born while villains had shoot out's in the parking lot of Ammo 'R Us over who could steal the most uzi's. In a world overrun by the undead, the most horrific crimes were committed by the living. And sometimes the most surreal. Amidst the common folk fleeing for their lives, a pair of brain dead hooligans decided the best use of their energy wasn't saving the innocent, but snatching a big screen tv from a storefront. Because you couldn't watch the end of the

world on any old tv.

Steve got off Liberty Way in a hurry, as much to spare himself the view of humans behaving badly as to avoid becoming zombie munchies. It was amazing how the meaning of Steve's life became so clear just as human life was being annihilated. It wasn't about working overtime to make that extra buck at work or saving up for a new eco friendly washer dryer. It wasn't about fretting over how to the heating bill or getting psyched about the latest trendy Wine Bar opening down the block. It was about family, friends, and loved ones. Doing the right thing. Being the hero in the story of your life.

And no amount of zombies were going to derail Steve.

Vanessa meanwhile lapsed into delusion as the zombie hordes were narrowly kept at bay. They say your life flashed before your eyes just before you saw the light at the end of the tunnel. But instead Vanessa was faced with the life unlived. The heartfelt words left unspoken. The dreams deferred. The potential unreached. All the things she wished she'd done with her life, but was too busy eeking out a career to accomplish. It was bad enough she'd spent so many nights pounding down triple espresso's at the Capitol cafeteria. The worst part was that her dreams would never be fulfilled. There would be no fairy tale wedding. No honeymoon. And definitely no picket fenced house in the suburbs.

An Empire that took hundreds of years to build was toppled before lunch, and the rotten revolution was permanent. It made Vanessa realize how fragile life really was. How everything she knew about the world could be taken away in an instant. And how life would never be the same.

While Vanessa's headspace took up residence in the ethereal, Steve stayed squarely focused on grim reality. He darted towards the Capitol district, weaving in and out of the grid locked cars, mostly left stranded. He watched helplessly as innocent bystanders were devoured by the undead. It took all he had not to pull over and throw up.

But the dystopia of DC was the least of Steve's worries. With the Capitol in sight, it became clear Steve couldn't just barge through the front doors like a knight in shining armor and make a rescue.

Dozens of undead lobbyists more soulless than ever lined the steps leading up to the Capitol, forcing Steve to come to terms with getting so close, but still far away from

Vanessa. But Steve wasn't about to just give up. There had to be a way. It couldn't be the end of his road. Still, the zombie hordes were overwhelming. Then, like a beacon on a dark night, Steve saw a sign for the Capitol buildings service entrance.

He zoomed around the bend, looking to make a back door rescue. It was quiet, just a few stray zombie security guards. Steve held out the golf club and plowed full speed ahead on the scooter, lancing the undead stiffies like a jousting knight in medieval Europe. But the zombie security guards provided an added bonus. They were equipped with guns and tasers they had no use for.

Not to mention the service entrance had nifty handicapped access which allowed Steve to keep pursuing the rescue on scooter. Steve sped through the corridors of the Capitol's basement and onto an elevator.

He caught his breath on the two floor ride up to the Senate floor, bracing himself for the worst. But as the elevator doors opened, Steve found the zombie traffic to be lighter than he expected. And looking out at the lobby, he realized why.

After all the struggle, the hard work, the pain in getting to the Capitol, he was finally a few feet away from Vanessa. He could see her curled into a ball behind the gift shop gate. She was praying, rocking back and forth, and trembling.

But close as Steve was, he might as well have been halfway across the country. Hordes of zombieified Senators, Congressmen, and lunch ladies stood between him and a rescue. Steve wanted to just dash over to Vanessa, but the zombies would tear him limb from limb before he made it even halfway across the lobby.

Still, was it really going to end like that? Traveling so far, having risked his life for nothing. Watching helplessly as the hordes beat down the gate.

No. Steve wasn't about to go down without a fight. But he wanted to make sure the fight was fair. The zombies had strength in numbers, but Steve had what the undead wanted--brains.

Noticing how the zombies had migrated towards Vanessa's fresh meat, he realized the Senate floor was left empty. But it wouldn't stay that way for long.

Steve took a deep breath, then laid down the horn on the motor scooter, drawing attention away from Vanessa.

Roused from her delirium, Vanessa saw her fiancé inviting danger. At first, she sprang to her feet with pure joy of seeing Steve alive again--until she saw the

undead shuffling towards him for the kill. But it was all part of Steve's plan.

"That's right ugliest, come and get me," Steve yelled, baiting the zombies on. And the undead obliged, flocking at once like mindless sheep.

"Steve, what are you doing?" Vanessa exclaimed, panicked.

"Saving your life. Just be ready when I come back around," Steve insisted.

Vanessa furrowed her brow, confused.

Steve waited until the last moment possible, letting the zombies get uncomfortably close. He then put the pedal to the metal and made a bee line for the Senate floor. Like lemmings, the zombies mindlessly followed en masse, leaving Vanessa safe and alone.

Steve tore through the Senate floor on his scooter, then waited until the undead masses joined him before veering to the back exit. And like that, the first meeting of the new zombie congress was in session, but it would be in closed quarters.

The problem with zombies was how brain dead they were. Once the undead were all wrangled into the Senate's Chambers, Steve snuck out the back exit, closed the door, then whipped around to the front entrance and did the same. The zombies were trapped like sardines, left without an escape route.

Steve sped around to the gift shop, where he lifted the gate, and was reunited with his fiancé.

Vanessa looked on, mouth agape. "You did it. You really did it."

Vanessa threw her arms around Steve, holding him like she never wanted to let go.

"I always keep my promises," Steve insisted. "Besides, I'd die for you."

"I'm just so happy to see you alive," Vanessa remarked, nearly bursting into tears.

Steve pulled Vanessa in tight and made up for lost kissing. As the harried couple rekindled, the apocalypse around them faded away, at least for a moment.

All it took was a straggler zombie tour guide popping out of the shadows to remind them it was time to make a hasty retreat though. So Steve tased the little terror as Vanessa hopped on the back of the scooter, before Steve sped back to the elevator.

But while Steve and Vanessa put the Capitol in the rearview, one question lingered. They lived in a new world filled with lawlessness and disorder. A world without Government. A world under siege. The question was at the

tip of both their tongues. Vanessa was the first to utter it though.

"Where are we supposed to go now?"

Steve hated every moment of the summer he spent working at Colonial Williamsburg. What was more ridiculous than a bunch of adults playing dress up like it was 1829? Little did Steve realize the living history museum would end up saving his life.

Vanessa and Steve knew that if they had any hope of surviving, they had to get as far away from the city as possible. But making a home on the range out in the sticks still left them exposed to stray zombies. So plowing down the I-95 corridor, the answer dawned on Steve.

A place that was walled, sprawling, had tools, weapons, and gardens for a sustainable food supply--Colonial Williamsburg. If you closed the gates, you kept the undead out while giving yourself a life to live within. You'd be safe from zombies, but surrounded by gardens to grow your own food. You could do more than just survive. You could begin to live again.

It was a fitting refuge. Colonial Williamsburg was created as commemorative living museum to highlight life after a revolution. Where the survivors of the bloody battles sought to forge a meaningful life in the new world. Where the Colonists had to begin anew; unsure of what the future held, but eager to find out.

The End

Undead Reckoning:
A Zombie Novel
A Sample Chapter

Kevin Michael & Lacy Maran

Chapter One
Syracuse, NY
Morgan Road Cemetery

A headstone sat in a quiet row of the cemetery. No sounds or people around. Then, a faint rumble. A decayed hand of a corpse reached out from the dirt in front of the

headstone.

Jane Foster, thirty-two, lean, and pretty, was clad all in black. She laid flowers in front of an adjacent headstone, paying attention only to her grief. She closed her eyes and said a prayer under her breath. The rumble got louder, accompanied by groaning.

Jane opened her eyes. At her feet, another corpse hand reached up from the grass. The hand flailed for her and grabbed her leg.

"Oh my God," Jane shrieked.

Jane shook off the corpse hand, then back stepped--only to have her leg grabbed by another hand. Jane narrowly shook that hand off to, then darted towards the cemetery parking lot.

"Help. Help," she desperately called out.

As Jane ran down the row of headstones, she was forced to dodge various corpse hands and arms reaching at her from the ground. With the parking lot in sight, Jane yelled out even louder.

"Help. Please."

Another rumble was heard, followed by a sustained moan.

Jane looked over her shoulder as she ran, checking for trouble. Behind her, the hands and arms of a legion of zombies were crawling out of the ground, lurching towards her.

As Jane went to turn her hand back around, she ran head first square into a zombie's chest. Jane moved to quickly get up just as another corpse hand popped out from the grass and clutched her.

"Help. Please," Jane yelled once more, as a last gasp effort.

Jane struggled, but could not break free. She was trapped and overpowered. She looked up at the zombie and his vacant eyes. Jane was overcome with terror and screamed at the top of her lungs, but there was no one to save her.

Chapter Two

Syracuse Airport

Charley and Emily stood in front of a ticket booth overcome with emotion. Charley was fit without ever working out, attractive without stopping traffic, and strong but silent. He was also the kind of guy with so much potential, very little of which was lived up to. But what Charley lacked in ambition, he made up for in devotion.

Emily meanwhile was ambitious beyond her means, always waiting for reality to keep up with her dreams. She had girl next door looks, a smile as wide as the Mississippi, and a way of looking at you like you were the only person she cared about.

Emily clutched her boarding pass with her carry on bag at her feet. "I can't believe you couldn't get the time off," she bemoaned.

"Fact is, we need the money," Charley replied, trying to make the best of the situation.

"Don't remind me."

"I'll really miss you though."

"You have to get a new job."

"Don't start this again. Not now."

"Hey, you're going to have to face facts soon enough."

"Look, don't forget to call me when you get in."

Emily bit the corner of her lip and furrowed her brow. "This isn't because you don't want to meet my parents, is it?"

"Em, my job might suck--"

"Does suck," Emily corrected.

"But it's the only one I have. And I unfortunately have to work this week."

"You know, you're going to have to meet my parents."

"Yeah, eventually."

"Charley, we've been together a year and a half."

"Next time, alright?"

But it was little consolation to Emily. "That's what you said last time."

"I promise."

"I'm going to hold you to that."

"Em, mark my words. This time next year, everything will be different."

"How different?"

"A complete remodel."

"Don't go overboard. There's too much about you I love to lose it all."

"I love you too."

Charley and Emily held each other, not wanting to let go.

Chapter Three
Taft Road, North Syracuse

Charley sighed as he sat in the drivers seat. He turned his attention to the radio to soothe his blues, then caught sight of the time.

"Son of a bitch."

Charley floored it to make it to work on time.

While Charley raced against the clock, he sped past an alley where a Hobo Zombie crawled out of a dumpster and staggered toward the street. With time counting down, Charley raced past a grocery store, where a Zombie Clerk pushed carts around the parking lot. While Charley took a short cut, his car darted past an ambulance where a Zombie sits up on a gurney.

With seconds to spare, Charley pulled into a Wowmart big box warehouse and sprinted towards the entrance.

Charley stood in the sporting goods section with a harried Father. The Father Crack Berried while his first grader Kid got too comfortable in the drivers seat of a dune buggy on display.

"So anyway, I was looking for a--" Father mustered, before his Kid interrupted.

"Daddy daddy, can I get this?" the Kid pleaded.

"Nice try sport," Father said, without looking up from his Crack Berry.

"Please?" the Kid continued.

"No."

"Pretty please Dad?"

"Maybe for your birthday," Father lied.

Kid folded his arms, pouting.

"Tell you what, how about some candy?" Father said, bribing.

"Yay."

Father turned back to Charley. "Sorry about that."

"No problem Sir," Charley replied, his mind squarely on Emily. "Now, can I help you?"

"I sure hope so. I'm looking for a birthday gift."

"I think the little guy made it pretty clear he wants the dune buggy."

"I'm talking about for my wife."

"Have you tried flowers?"

"Yeah, that's not going to cut it."

"Are you sure? Women generally love flowers."

"Wish it were that easy. See, I kind of forgot her

birthday."

"Try groveling. Lots of groveling."

"Dammit, I'm never having sex again, am I?"

"Look. You'll figure something out. It's not the end of the world."

Chapter Three

Wowmart Hunting Department

Paul stood at the gun counter ogling a rifle like a hot chick in a bikini while a camouflage-clad Redneck beamed at the firearm.

"She's something, isn't she?" Paul said.

"She sure is."

Paul watched as the Hunter stroked the barrel of the rifle with a little too much enthusiasm.

"Oh-k. Why don't we put her away?" Paul uttered, uncomfortable.

"Nah. I'm taking her home with me."

"Yeah. I don't even want to know what you'd do with it."

Paul went to grab the rifle.

"There's such a thing as the second amendment, you know?" the Redneck said.

"There's also something called a three day waiting period."

The Redneck stared Paul down, then handed Paul the rifle.

"Three days. Not a second more."

As the Redneck moved off, Paul spotted Charley at the end of an aisle pointing to his cell phone.

"Break time," Paul said to himself, putting up a "Will return in fifteen minutes" sign on the counter.

"Why are the creepiest people in the store always hanging out in your department?" Charley asked, as he and Paul made their way to the break room.

"Hey, just because that redneck gives guns a bad name--"

"You don't give them a much better one," Charley insisted.

"Dude, I forgot to tell you. I scored this deer over the weekend. I'm going to mount that bad boy on my wall."

"Paul, what did I tell you about talking about hunting around me?"

"Bro, you should seriously come out with me some time."

"For the hundredth time, I have a thing with guns."

"What thing?"

"I don't want to talk about it."

Paul shook his head with disapproval. "You were so much cooler before you got a girlfriend."

Chapter Four

Break Room

"I'm not whipped," Charley defended himself, slurping on discount cola.

"You kidding? You're so whipped you could start an S&M club," Paul retorted. He scarfed down on a ChocoZilla, the pinnacle of all sugar, ultra processed, cavity-baiting snacks.

"Dude, how can you eat those things?"

"Because they're delicious."

"They're practically radioactive."

"Isn't it good to know if the apocalypse were to go down today, we'd always have tasty treats like these?"

"I'd rather die."

"No, you'd rather dodge the unavoidable truth that you're cross country whipped."

"Paul, she's in Florida."

"So?"

"So, we're in Syracuse. It's down the coast, not across the country."

"Don't bother me with details. Just admit you're power whipped and I might not make you turn in your man card."

"Hey, just because you can't spell monogamy--"

"Dude, that's what spell check is for. Besides, this is the prime of our sexual lives. Why waste that on one chick?"

"She's not just some chick."

"No no. She's 'the one.' The one that won't let you go splurging at the titty bar or spend all night shot gunning brewski's."

"Or, the one I'm going to marry."

Paul almost choked on his ChocoZilla. "You have two seconds to take that back."

"I know you don't understand it Paul, but I love her."

"My parents 'loved' each other too, but now they're taking their antique sword collection and trying to cut each others heads off with them."

"I'm sorry about your parents. But it's different with me and Emily. Why do you think I requested all these extra hours this weekend?"

"I thought you were trying to get out of meeting her parents."

"No. I'm trying to save up money for a ring."

"I've never wanted to vomit so much in my life."

Chapter Five

Wowmart Front Entrance

Nightfall. Charley and Paul ushered the last straggling Customers out of the store after a long day. Paul locked the front doors, never more ready to hit the bar for a cold one.

"Dude, we are getting so wasted tonight," Paul declared, already at Drunk Uncle's sports bar in his mind.

Charley put a key in a wall lock, then turned it to lower a linked steel protective gate.

"You mean you're getting so wasted tonight?" Charley corrected.

"Tell you what. I'll get wasted enough for the both of us."

"That's what I was afraid of."

Charley and Paul exit the break room and turned in their work vests and fake smiles for street clothes and emotional exhaustion. They walked past the front registers of the store, only to hear a tap on the glass.

Charley and Paul stopped dead in their tracks.

"You gotta be kidding me," Paul muttered. He turned to the front door and yelled. "Closed."

Charley and Paul then kept moving towards the back of the store. More tapping. Paul turned again. "Come back tomorrow, loser."

The tapping got louder.

"I'll bet it's four ninety-five guy," Paul griped. "Just my luck."

"Four ninety-five guy?" Charley asked.

"Yeah, you know. 'It's four ninety-five in the circular, but five ninety-five at the register.' Dammit, it's a dollar difference. Get a life."

The tapping got more furious.

"That's it," Paul snapped and moved towards the glass door.

"Dude, you're wasting your--"

"Je-sus."

Charley turned to see Paul stopped in front of the door, staring down tapping culprit. But what they saw was not a man, but the Redneck hunter from before, now zombieified. He kept trying to force his way into the store.

"What the hell happened to that dude?" Paul asked, not wanting to know the answer.

Charley looked out at the parking lot, where dozens of

zombies of all shapes and sizes were gathered.

"I don't know, but there's more of them out there," Charley said.

Redneck Zombie slammed the metal gate, breaking a piece of glass in the door. Charley and Paul stepped back.

Zombie then reached his hand through the gate and the hole in the glass, trying to clutch Paul.

"Dude, tell me this is just a dream," Paul muttered.

Charley hit Paul in the arm.

"Son of a..." Paul said, wincing in pain.

"It's not a dream."

Moaning was then heard from inside the store.

Paul and Charley raised their eyebrows at each other, then slowly turned around, and saw a Zombie Personal Trainer staggering behind them. The brawny Zombie Trainer then lunged at Paul, teeth out, ready to bite.

Paul put his hands up to stop the Zombie from biting him, but had trouble holding the creature back.

"Dude!" Paul screamed.

Charley watched, shocked.

"Little help bro," Paul continued.

Charley snapped out of his haze. He looked around for the closest attack item available.

Paul narrowly dodged another bite.

"Dude. What are you doing?"

Shopping carts then hurtled towards the Zombie Trainer and Paul. Charley pushed the carts on a collision course with the Trainer, sideswiping the zombie, and pinning it against a wall.

As the zombie was trapped, Paul checked himself frantically for bite marks, then breathed a sigh of relief.

"Guess the customers not always right, bitch!" Charley quipped, as he looked at the motionless creature.

"What the hell took you so long?" Paul said, berating Charley.

"You're welcome."

"Bro, that thing almost bit me. Good thing I've been polishing my guns or there's no way I could have held it off."

"Paul, playing video games isn't polishing your guns."

"Really. You're going to bring details into this conversation?"

But Charley couldn't look away from the creature.

"Damn, now I really need a drink," Paul continued, to no response. "Dude--"

"It's not dead," Charley replied.

Paul looked over at the Zombie Trainer trying to free

itself from the train of shopping carts. Paul looked at the Zombie's vacant eyes.

"Oh, he's dead alright."

"Not dead enough. We have to do something."

"Talk about ugly."

Charley moved over to one of the registers. "Paul, help me out here."

"No wonder he's so pissed. No way he's gonna score with a chick looking that nasty."

"Paul."

Paul moved over to the register.

Charley and Paul unplugged the register, slammed it down on the Zombie's head. Sparks flew, leaving the Zombie motionless.

"Keep the change," Paul cracked. "See, now that's a catchphrase."

"There's bigger issues Paul. Like Jesus, what the hell was that thing? And how did it get in..."

Charley and Paul turned to each other simultaneously.

"Loading dock."