

Zombie Journal

By Beth Frykman

4:12 a.m. August 31

I just woke up from another nightmare. I'm writing by the blue light from my alarm clock instead of turning on the overhead light, trying to get my letters in between the lines on the page that I can barely make out, because I'm worried about attracting attention to my house, worried about one of those things maybe wandering around outside and seeing the box of yellow light coming from my window and trying to get in here. I just had to start writing about this stuff though, so here I am writing with the lights out.

I'm scared shitless about this whole thing. It's showing up in the news--people talking about this crazy shit that's only supposed to happen in the horror movies. I've been totally glued to the TV whenever I'm near one--I just can't turn it off. When I'm not near a TV, like at work or in the car or whatever, I'm tuned in to NPR so I don't miss anything. I mean, the whole mess is just so horrible, you know? I'm just hoping that I'll flip to the station that knows what's going on. It's like any time something massive happens – people turn on their TVs hoping there will be something new. It's something to cling to in their hour of need. They don't have any idea what to do, so they watch. Predictably, there's not anything of help on the news. What there *is* is a lot of people acting like they know something and a lot of *fucking* scary images being shown over and over – images of people being taken down in the middle of the day by the walking dead...it's seriously just a mindfuck. There are so many people dying right now. It's happening right on the street sometimes. One time on the news there was an interview of a guy who saw an attack, and he said he was just walking down the street and all of a sudden somebody started screaming, and he looked over and somebody was bleeding with a ghoul right there next to him, and the dude being interviewed said that it was all so random, that it could have been him instead of the person who ended up getting it, and that he didn't even know there was one of those things nearby, like you think you'd be able to tell, you know? Now when I walk through a crowd I can barely

breathe for fear that one of the people near me might not be a person at all, but one of those monsters.

It started a couple of weeks ago. I saw it when I was at the gym. You know those spots where there's a whole wall of TVs in front of the stationary workout equipment, like the bikes and the treadmills and all of that? I was actually watching good old Martha showing us how to make some homemade wonder out of something from the 18-acre backyard garden we're all keeping, and I looked over at one of the other TVs when she was on commercial break, and there was one of those national TV news shows with the running tickertape on the bottom of the screen. It said something about "Man arrested in Connecticut after eating neighbor; arresting officer bitten too." So it's just some random story about some nutjob though, right? But then there were more of them happening all over the country and they stopped being just tickertape weirdnesses. They started being treated as full news stories. They had psychologists on TV talking about copycat killers. They had right-wingers talking about how it was because of people watching horror movies. They had left-wingers blaming right-wing religious zealots. Whatever it was, the stories were getting bigger every time. It wasn't just one guy attacking anymore. It was a few people, then like ten or twenty people, more people all the time, and with more frequency, like they don't even report the small ones anymore unless there was somebody important involved.

Then there were the prisons and the hospitals. That's when they figured out these people weren't just crazy people, but they were...I don't know what they are, nobody does. I guess they're like zombies. I know people are like, whatever, but that's totally what they are. They don't stay down. They found that out when the hospitals and the prisons started to be full of these things, one of them after another ripping somebody apart. In Connecticut, where the first guys got brought, that cop who was arresting that first dude and got bit, he was admitted to a hospital, and within a few days he bit the chick sharing the hospital room with him and then tried to bite his nurses and doctors. They gave him some drugs, but the drugs didn't do anything, and they tied him to the bed so he couldn't get to anybody. And the original guy from the tickertape at the gym, they had to give him his own jail cell cuz he wouldn't stop trying to bite people, and no matter what kind of tranq's they gave him, nothing happened. But of course

nobody knew about that stuff til later, they weren't telling anybody about any of that.

A few days after the cop bit his roommate at the hospital they ended up having to bring in riot police to try and keep all the people who were acting like that from getting out, cuz there were just dozens of them, biting anybody who got too close to them. The hospital security had locked the exits so the weirdos couldn't get out while the police were on the way, and all these other people, the patients and the nurses and all of those types, they got locked in with the crazies, and it was this horrible scary mess cuz the hospital staff couldn't get the really sick patients out of their beds or anything of course, and they were trying to lock the doors to all the rooms they could and they had a bunch of people locked in the cafeteria, I mean what else could they do, really? But there were a bunch of people who got all messed up by those things while they were trying to go into lockdown, it was just a mess.

So the riot cops showed up and there were so many of those things pushing on the doors in the front lobby trying to get out they broke the safety glass of the front doors, and one of them bull-rushed one of the cops right away and his buddies were hitting him with their billy club things, and the freak wouldn't stay down! Then more and more of them were coming out of the doors and running at the cops, and they didn't know what to do, cuz they tried some of that gas they use sometimes, but the gas didn't work on them, the billy clubs barely slowed them down, the cops were getting bit by those things, and finally somebody started shooting. And you guessed it; they got right up and kept coming. One of the clips they keep showing on the news, you can tell they slowed down the footage a ton, too, so you can watch all of it and not miss anything, one of those things got hit like eight times in her trunk and there was blood going everywhere, and she fell over backwards and then the cops ignored her cuz they had their hands full and of course they thought she was dead (well, she was, but not just dead, and it's an overused word, you hear it all the time so it doesn't even mean anything kinda, but she was *undead*), and she got up behind one of the cops and jumped up on top of him like some crazy cat or something and bit him right on the neck! Then you could see one of those zombie-things running up to the camera and the camera guy dropped it and ran, and it was laying there on its

side, and then all you could see was feet, the boots of the riot cops and the other ones, the white nurse's shoes and the barefoot patients and some guy that had those yellow suede workman's boots on, and a bunch of blood everywhere, and the gas they had tried to use on them was sort of giving this weird haze to the whole thing. The news shows didn't air all of it, cuz the camera kept going for a long time, but somebody posted it on the internet, and then people posted it on youtube and google video and wherever, it was all over the place. So the part they didn't show on the news was when one of the cops ended up getting taken down by one of the zombies and it was eating the cop *right in front of the camera*, god, it was so disgusting and horrifying and the guy was screaming, and then you couldn't really see what was going on besides this guy getting literally eaten alive by this thing. So fucking nasty.

And scary! I mean, holy shit, if the cops can't fight these things off, what the fuck is someone like me going to do? I mean, I don't know the first thing about self-defense. I s'pose with something like this it's about getting away, really. Like just break and run, hope you can run faster than the zombie who's after you. But what if there's a bunch of them? Where do you run? How do you break free from a ring of zombies if you can't fight?