

Twelve Days in Hell

by Patrick A. Walston

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Introduction

It's been days since the plague hit America.

Most of the population has turned into mindless creatures that hunger for human flesh and blood. Danny Hefner and a handful of others will try to live through this hellish nightmare, but they'll wonder if it's really worth it.

Danny had watched and read plenty of Zombie fiction in his life, but nothing could have prepared him for this unthinkable, unimaginable hell.

Everyone he knew had died. They'd become something less than human—wild animals with no self-control.

He'd had to fight his way past his wife after she had turned into just such a beast.

It's been said that nothing hurts more than losing a loved one. Well, Danny knew a pain that was a thousand times worse—not only had he lost a loved one, but she'd become some kind of zombie. He'd had to fight her, making sure he didn't get bit or scratched, hoping he would gain the upper hand.

The plague had started off as an airborne illness much like the flu. The symptoms were easy to identify—blurred vision, slurred speech, and going from icy cold to burning hot.

After a few hours the symptoms would become worse. It was noted by many health-care professionals that the patients would become numb, like their whole body was asleep—not like pins and needles asleep, just completely numb, where they could no longer feel when anyone touched them.

Without the sensation of pain the patients would start chewing on their hands and arms, and once they got the taste of blood they changed.

It wasn't long before the infected overwhelmed the living. The illness became blood-borne. When the creatures began to bite the other patients the illness spread faster than a wild fire.

From the mountains of North Carolina to the coast of California the sickness was out of control. There were people rioting in the streets.

It made it difficult to tell just what was happening. Madness had taken hold. People were punching, kicking, biting and pulling hair. As the cops tried to break up the acts of violence they soon noticed they were greatly outnumbered and quickly running out of room to lock people up.

Not only were they running out of jail cells, they were running out of bullets.

Day 1

Danny Hefner awoke at 5:30AM to birds chirping and the sound of the trash truck collecting a week's worth of garbage.

He had hopes that today would be his big day. He rolled over in bed and kissed his wife, Molly, on the cheek. She twitched at the kiss, wiggled her toes, and tried to go back to her restful dreams.

Danny smiled, patted her side, and arose from the bed.

They were truly a match made in Heaven. From the time they were in high school they'd made plans to marry each other, have a couple of good-looking kids, and live in the house on the hill, enjoying every day as if it were their last.

Danny was a muscular young man of twenty seven. He had black hair and a goatee and he sported crystal clear blue eyes that seemed to greet you without saying a word. He had a friendly nature about him, and a caring heart for anyone in need. He was the kind of guy most girls spend their lives either looking for or wishing they could be with.

He had never hurt a living soul and he never would if he could help it.

Molly was his better half, and the life of the party everywhere she went. She was twenty five years old, and happy to say she'd married the man of her dreams.

She had silky blonde hair that flowed past her waist to just below her wonderfully curved bottom. She had the face of an angel, untouched by makeup, a wonderful singing voice, and a way about her that always made people laugh.

Danny went into the bathroom and quietly shut the door. He reached into the shower and turned on the water, first the hot and then the cold, adjusting the temperature until it was perfect to the touch.

He stepped into the gold-trimmed enclosure, closed the sliding glass door, and started rinsing himself off. He closed his eyes and gave a long exhalation through his nostrils.

The water not only felt refreshing but also like it was washing away all the wrong in the world, so he stood under it for a good five minutes before he started soaping up.

He began to sing "It's the end of the world as we know it". He could never have guessed how true that song would become just a few hours later.

That's the funny thing about life, you never know what the day will bring.

He finished his shower and reached for the dark blue towel that hung over the toilet on the pearl white wall decorated with butterflies. He dried himself off before he stepped out onto the green carpet.

He put on a baby blue shirt that matched his eyes and then pulled on a pair of black cargo pants.

He went downstairs to the kitchen, where he brewed and enjoyed a nice cup of coffee. He slowly sipped it while he looked through the kitchen window at the world outside. Everything seemed perfect. It was dark but he could see the stars and the moon, which told him the skies were clear.

He was ready to leave for work at 6:00AM. He went upstairs to kiss Molly goodbye.

She told him to be careful on the road and to have a good day. She wished him luck with the promotion that he had been looking forward to.

He'd started working for the company when he was twenty five years old, and they'd told him to stick with it, keep up the good work, and he would go places. Two years after starting the job he'd been promised a raise and a promotion. Today could be his lucky day.

Danny always tried to keep his head up and think positive. "If not today maybe tomorrow" was one of his favorite things to say.

On the drive to work Danny took in all the sights and sounds, as he always did, but he kept his main focus on the road. His thoughts never wandered far from his driving.

He was an excellent driver, and he loved to drive. He sometimes wished he had taken a job with Checker Cab—or some other job where he could get paid to drive—but he tried to live without regrets, so he just smiled and continued onward toward his job.

At 7:00AM he pulled his lime green Dodge Neon into the parking lot at the furniture factory where he worked.

Another day, another dollar—and hopefully, a well earned promotion. He stretched as he got out of the car, gave a small yawn, and then headed toward the factory entrance.

He spent most of the day feeding wood into a planer and collecting the sticks that separated the sheets of wood. It was a pretty easy job but at times it was hard on the arms and back. But he always did it without complaining, and he found that the day was passing by quickly when he took his lunch break at 12:00PM.

He had packed a can of chicken and stars soup, a thermos full of coke, a BLT sandwich and some crackers for his lunch. First he ate the BLT sandwich, and after that he enjoyed the soup with crackers.

After he finished with his lunch he phoned his wife to let her know he still hadn't heard anything about the promotion. Then they started talking cutesy baby talk to each other, which made his coworkers raise their eyebrows at him.

He just nodded and waved at the poor idiots who must not know what it was like to be in love.

3:00 PM came around, and it was the end of Danny's shift.

He still hadn't received word on his big promotion. He was a little down about not hearing from his boss, but he didn't beat himself up about it.

He knew he tried his best every day, and that it was only a matter of time before he became a "somebody" in the factory.

He climbed into his little green car and drove away.

The sun was high in the sky, and it shone its light and warmth over everything it touched. The sky was blue, with a few fluffy clouds here and there. The traffic was decent, considering the time of day, and the weather couldn't have been more welcoming.

Danny loved his job, but he was always happy to be going home where he could relax for a while and spend a little time with Molly before she headed off for work. Every time she left the house he missed her, and he knew that every time he went to work she missed him too.

There was just something lonely, Molly thought, about being in the house without the companionship of their love.

When it came to work, she and Danny left their home life at the door and focused on their jobs. Truth be known, they both stayed too busy while they were working to notice that they were lonely.

She was employed at a local hospital. She washed the sheets, helped out in the cafeteria, and offered nice warm blankets to the patients—basically, anything that needed to be done.

As she pushed the heavy gray container full of dirty blankets and bed sheets down the hallway to the elevator that led to the basement where the washer and dryers were, she felt a little sad—that her husband hadn't got the promotion, and for the patients in the hospital, and that she didn't have children of her own.

She pushed the morose thoughts out of her mind and started to wash and dry the sheets and blankets. After a couple of hours had passed, she was feeling much better. She was even smiling and humming a happy song while she made her way from room to room offering blankets to the patients.

She felt good in her heart that she was actually doing something to help people in need. She knew she couldn't make friends with the patients but she was happy to help them none the less. From floor to floor and hall to hall she would ask them if there was anything that she could do to make their stay more comfortable.

Most of the time she was either asked to turn on the television set in the room or to change the channels. Every now and then she was asked to raise or lower the bed to make it more comfortable. All she knew was that she was happy to help.

The Ambulance rolled in with lights flashing, sirens wailing, and screeching tires.

Two young paramedics jumped out and flung open the back door. They rolled the gurney out as smoothly as they could while moving as fast as they were able.

One of the doctors met them at the door and asked what the patient's symptoms were.

“Blurred vision, slurred speech, going from icy cold to burning hot, vomiting and diarrhea.” said the younger of the two paramedics.

The doctor escorted them all to an empty examination room, where they began by taking the old man's temperature and blood pressure.

Whatever this illness was, it was new, so they ran a few tests to see what it was doing to his body. They kept him in room 502 while they ran the different procedures and read the scans.

Something was attacking the man's brain and nervous system.

Seconds turned to minutes and minutes turned to hours, and the patient's breathing grew more labored.

Molly made her way to room 502 and knocked lightly on the door.

The patient, an older gentleman, was lying on the bed facing the door when she walked in.

"Is there anything I can get for you to make you more comfortable?" she asked.

He sat up holding his stomach and said in a slurred voice, "I can't feel anything."

She thought he meant he was cold, so she gave him in a blanket.

"So numb" he said.

She told him everything was all right and that he was in good hands, and she walked out the room.

The hospital staff found out too late that the virus was airborne, only after a few more patients were brought in with the same symptoms.

A nurse became sick, displaying the tell-tale signs of the virus.

The doctors advised patients and staff to wear face masks and to report any unusual symptoms as soon as they experienced them.

Meanwhile, in room 502, the first patient was scratching at the flesh on his right arm. When he broke the skin, he placed his cold lips to the cut and tasted blood for the very first time.

His eyes became as large as disks in the sockets; and his pupils became so large that he looked like a cartoon character. Like a wild animal, he ripped off a large chunk of flesh from his right arm and chewed it then swallowed it.

The nurse went to room 502 to find a pool of blood next to the hospital bed and a trail of blood leading to the bathroom.

She called down the hall for a doctor, and then went to the restroom door and gently knocked.

"Mr. Hawkins are you OK in there sir?" she asked.

But the sounds she heard coming from the other side of the restroom door told her what she feared. She heard teeth chattering, and whimpering.

The doctor rushed in the room and he flung open the door to find Mr. Hawkins bleeding from his arms and wrists.

At first they thought it was a suicide attempt, but after looking closer to the wounds they realized it was teeth marks in the flesh and by the time they saw Mr. Hawkins's eyes it was too late.

He lashed out and bit the doctor on the neck and started to drink the warm blood which he found to be much tastier than his own cold blood. He then took a couple of big chunks out of the doctor's throat.

The doctor, unable to call for help, lay on the bathroom floor with blood spurting out of his wound like water from a garden hose. He took his last breath as the nurse ran out of the room screaming in terror.

Molly was wearing her mask, but she noticed she was starting to feel some of the symptoms that the doctors had warned about.

Her shift was over, so she was making her way to the emergency entrance when she heard the nurse's screams echo through the halls.

Frightened, she ran to her car, a silver four door Cadillac. As she was leaving, another ambulance screeched to a stop.

Needless to say, it was going to be a very long and hellish night at the hospital.

Day 2

Police flooded the hospital.

The middle aged doctor lay in a large pool of blood in the bathroom of room 502. The nurse was in shock, sitting in the waiting room wrapped in a blanket.

It was 1:30AM and the patients with the new virus were quarantined away from the larger populations.

An officer shot Mr. Hawkins, and the body was moved directly to the morgue, where they could transfer him to a medical examiner to determine cause of death and perform more tests.

From the coldness of the body the medical examiner was able to tell that Mr. Hawkins had died somewhere between 12:30AM and 1:00AM.

“How can this be?” he asked himself aloud. The patient had died *before* he was shot; the examiner could also tell this from the blood. The tests and examination didn't lie.

He reported his findings to the doctors on staff and told them to check on the other quarantined patients.

Doctors and nurses made their way to the quarantined section of the hospital. What they found was what looked to be a massacre. There were fingers and mangled pieces of flesh on the floor. Blood was smeared all up and down the walls. The smell in the air was unforgettable; a metallic smell that must have been from all the blood.

The police were still in the building when they heard the screams of horror. They rushed to the quarantined section to find the doctors and nurses surrounded by, for lack of a better term, zombies.

The cops immediately opened fire. A couple of bodies dropped but at this time there were around forty wide eyed creatures and the cops were outnumbered. One by one, screaming in the night, the not-so-healthy were joining the ranks of the undead.

Molly's symptoms were getting worse.

She knew she needed help but with the scream still echoing inside her head she decided the hospital was not the best place for her to be.

She didn't wake up Danny when she went to bed, she just hoped that she would feel better later on in the day.

The clock rolled over to 5:30AM and Danny awoke to strange noises. Not those of birds or passing cars but chattering and whimpers.

It was not like whimpering in pain, it was more like the sound of the need to do something, the way a dog whimpers to get outside to use the bathroom. Danny turned to see Molly sitting up in bed, and she looked to be her licking her arm.

“Honey what's the matter?” he asked.

She turned around and faced him, her lips blue and her teeth red.

“What the hell?” Danny leaned toward her to get a better look.

Her eyes were wild and she started screeching. She jumped at Danny.

He was so freaked out by the blood he saw that he didn't realize she was out for *his* blood until the second time she snapped at him.

He grabbed her arm, which was covered in teeth marks. He started to call her name, and then he realized she was not herself, and that he must fight if he wanted to live.

Molly came at Danny yet another time but Danny was ready and he pushed her to the floor.

He tried to run past her to call the cops but she grabbed his ankle and he tripped and fell hard onto the wooden floor. He gained the upper hand by kicking her in the stomach.

He had never fought anyone in his life, and here he was fighting his undead wife for his life.

He ran into the bathroom and locked the door.

She was soon outside it, breathing heavy and wild, banging on it and making chattering sounds with her teeth. Danny looked all around the room to see what he could find as a weapon to defend himself.

The fact that he was going to have to kill his wife started to sink in. He felt an intense pain in his gut, and he found it hard to swallow.

He looked under the sink and found a large wrench that he had used to tighten the water valves on the toilet.

It's do or die he thought to himself as he raised the wrench above his head and shoved the door open with his free hand.

He knocked Molly to the floor and gave her a good whack to the temple.

She went down, never to come up again.

Danny started shaking and crying uncontrollably. The reality that he killed his wife, his high school sweet heart, his better half, his best friend, started to sink in.

He hurried to the phone and dialed 911.

All he heard on the other line was static, hissing and buzzing. The line was dead. He turned on the TV just in time to see the images from the local news choppers of riots in the streets.

What the hell was going on, anyway?

The hospital was where the rioting started, they were reporting, when a large gathering of people spilled from the building onto the streets, but they had no more details than that.

It wasn't just a local thing, either—there were several news stations across America telling how riots were starting, in numerous places all across the map. From the Carolina's to California, it was like all the country was taking a turn straight to hell. Loved ones attacking each other, even children eating the flesh of their parents.

All phone calls to 911 got busy signals or just static. The police started out heavily armed but there were so *many* undead that they were overwhelmed. Most jails across the USA were filled with both the sick and the healthy. The cops could no longer tell the difference, and more attacks would happen in the jails and prison cells. There was a problem of overcrowding,

Danny couldn't believe all of this had been happening while he slept. There should have been warnings and sirens—he shouldn't have had to just wake up next to the wild beast that was once his loving wife.

His heart was broken and he wished that he could die. He never had it in his heart to hurt anyone.

Now his simple life had turned into a struggle for survival.

Danny sat in the corner of the room feeling sorry for himself, something he had never had to do in his entire life. His future no longer mattered to him. He could live without the promotion. He couldn't imagine anything worse than this, whatever the hell it was.

When he finally ran out of tears to cry Danny got up, dead inside with a black hole for a heart.

He went downstairs and looked out the window. Sure enough he could see flames rising up in the distance, and the sun was shining brightly. The clouds were little, white, and puffy, drifting across the sky.

At 12:00PM Danny turned on the TV. The news stations were still broadcasting, so that was a good thing. They were talking about how the virus or plague, as they called it, was a form of Chemical warfare, an attack on US soil—the worst attack in the history of America. They reported how it was airborne for the first few hours and then how it turned into a blood borne virus. One bite or scratch would cause the victim to contract the sickness, which was how it traveled so fast.

There was only one thing for Danny to do now—go out and find other survivors. He got dressed and went out to his car. He drove off, for the first time without paying attention to the sights and sounds of the world beyond his windshield.

He sped through the mountain roads and rushed to the nearest gun and ammunition store.

Most of the guns had been taken and there was no one in the shop guarding the place. All Danny could think about was finding the living in the world of the dead. The air smelled of smoke and a strange metallic substance. He still wasn't too far from town.

As he walked to the counter he shouted, "Hello! Is there anyone in here?"

A crackling noise came from behind the counter,

Danny grabbed the nearest gun and loaded it with ammo. Hoping it wasn't another one of those creatures, he listened closely. Everything was so quiet he could hear and feel his heart leaping in his chest.

The crackling noise sounded again.

He went behind the register, looked under it, and spotted an emergency scanner.

He pushed the button on the radio and said, "Hello, can you hear me?"

A faint voice answered, "Copy that, I read you load and clear."

Danny's heart leaped for joy. Even if it was a stranger it was a survivor.

He asked for the location and was told that the survivors were holed up in the local Buy-Right super center.

Danny wasted no time. He grabbed a gun and five cases of ammo. Each case of ammo held 30 rounds, and he also picked up five ammo clips that held 30 rounds each.

He left the gun and ammo store and drove to the local Buy-Right super center. Knowing that there were survivors out there made him feel a little bit of comfort in a world of chaos.

As he reached town he was surprised to see the amount of damage the creatures had done. Some buildings were on fire, while others were missing their storefront windows and glass doors.

A lot of merchandise had been taken from different properties during the night. The damage was fixable, and the lost merchandise could always be replaced. The thing that really got under Danny's skin was the loss of human life.

Every zombie that was killed used to be somebody's loved one. Danny thought back to when he had to face his wife Molly as a monster, and just as before, he cried until there were no more tears.

Finally he reached town, and it was crawling with a countless hoard of zombies. The streets were full of the filthy beasts.

A female zombie with brown hair stumbled in front of Danny's car. He tried to swerve to miss her, but she fell under his front left tire, and her head exploded between the rubber and the road.

Danny kept on telling himself she was already dead as he drove into the Buy-Right super center's parking lot.

He whipped the little Dodge Neon into a handicap parking space next to a buggy coral. He sat for a few minutes, loading bullets into the ammo clips. He was preparing himself for the absolute worst.

He cautiously climbed out of the car, palms sweating, heart pounding, and with a sinking feeling in his gut.

He grabbed the gun and the ammo clips, stuck the gun into his belt, and put the extra clips in his deep cargo pockets.

He grabbed the scanner radio and pressed the button and quietly said "This is Danny, can you hear me. I am in the parking lot of Buy-Right super center."

A voice crackled over the radio saying "This is Tom. I hear you loud and clear."

Danny asked about Tom's location with the other survivors.

"We are in a hidden room just beyond the exit doors at the rear of the store next to the restrooms. Be careful. You can enter into Buy-Right through the lawn and garden section, all you have to do is climb the fence, get to the other side and slide the glass doors open, and you will be in."

Danny placed the radio through his belt and hurried across the parking lot.

Looking back and fourth through the parking lot he could see the shadows of the zombies growing. He froze dead in his tracks when he heard the chattering and whimpering behind him.

Danny couldn't see the zombie too well because it was on the ground crawling towards him. He saw it at almost at the last minute. He kicked the teeth out of the creature's jaw bone, and then ran full speed to the fence at the lawn and garden.

As he reached the fence he found himself dizzy and out of breath. He looked out across the parking lot and saw that zombies were coming from all sides. Some were missing large chunks of flesh from their throats or their arms, and many were missing their fingers.

They seemed to move as one, all closing in on Danny's position. There must have been fifty or sixty of the sick beasts coming toward him.

Where had they all come from? What was leading them directly toward his exact location? All Danny knew was that he couldn't face so many of them by himself.

He had to do something and do it fast. Every second that he stood there watching them, he was that much closer to death.

He backed up and took a running jump on the fence, but he only made it about three feet high—and it was a twelve foot fence.

The nearest Zombie launched forward and grabbed Danny by the pant leg. It yanked him from the fence and slammed him hard into the pavement.

Danny screamed in pain and horror when he saw the wild eyes of the zombie, with her jaw broken off and her tongue hanging out like a dog panting for water.

He flipped on his back and scooted back away from the hungry dead.

The zombie jumped on Danny again. He pulled out his gun, put it against her temple, and pulled the trigger. The bullet violently ripped off a large piece of the skull and blasted over half of her brains out of the back of her head.

Danny got to his feet and made another desperate leap for the fence. This time he made it about six feet up the barrier.

He scrambled to get his legs over it and fell heavily to the pavement on the other side.

He got to his feet, listening to the chattering of teeth and the moans coming through the fence.

Just as Danny was about to turn and push open the sliding glass doors, a zombie slammed into the high fence.

But he showed no sign of the ability to climb. He slammed into the fence again and fell flat on his backside, and then sat there and growled.

Danny turned and pushed the sliding glass door open and closed it behind himself.

The Buy-Right was completely dark except for the emergency exit signs. From where he stood Danny could see four emergency exit signs that led to the world outside.

What he didn't know and couldn't remember was which door led to the hidden room.

He thought that Tom had said something about it being next to the restrooms. Just to be sure he reached for the radio, but he discovered that it was no longer attached to his belt.

It must have fallen off when the zombie pulled him to the pavement. Now Danny found himself disoriented and confused as to which exit to make for.

Day 3

Danny took his time walking through the empty aisles.

A couple of times he thought he saw shadows moving towards him from the corners of his eye.

He stopped and listened to the silence. A primal fear was taking over.

Somehow he managed to find batteries. He gathered three of each kind of battery and placed them in his pockets.

He remembered that the flashlights were in the camping gear next to the toys at the front of the store.

He clumsily made his way there with nothing but the exit light to guide him. It took him a good twenty minutes.

Finally he reached the flashlights. He picked one off the end cap and tried to open it.

The blister packaging was much thicker and stronger than he could have imagined. He would have to find a knife.

He searched the camping supplies, but found nothing. He thought hard, and finally decided that the knives would most likely be in house wares, or maybe the hunting department.

Luckily for him the hunting department was right next to the camping supplies. It took him another ten minutes to find the knives, but they were in a locked glass display case.

Danny realized he could just break the glass. He hit it with the butt of his weapon, and shattered glass sprayed the floor.

He picked out a yellow army knife and punctured the blister package of the flashlight. He opened a pack of C batteries and slid them into it.

He closed it and turned it on. The light was surprisingly bright.

He scanned the store with its narrow beam. Now he could find his way without worry of tripping over anything on the floor or running into shelves.

Tom and the other survivors had lost hope that the person they had heard on the radio would ever show up. It had been three hours since they had heard his voice from the parking lot. Tom had tried several times since then to reach him.

Outside, the zombies surrounded the radio. Hissing, growling, chattering and moaning in response to every word they heard coming through the speaker, they cocked their heads as if wondering how to extract the humans from the box.

At the front of the store, Danny pushed the emergency door open to be greeted by a zombie.

It gave a shriek of confusion and surprise. Danny also shrieked in surprise and in turn the zombie shrieked again. Finally Danny slammed the door in the zombie's face.

“Wrong door,” Danny said, his heart pounding.

So the front exit next to the restrooms was the wrong exit, He could also rule out the exits that were not next to bathrooms.

His stomach started to growl, and he remembered that it had been awhile since he had anything to eat. It would be a good idea to find the grocery area and get some food.

With his flash light he made it to the other end of the Buy-Right shopping center and located the deli fridge, where he found sandwiches that had been made the day before the virus had taken hold. He unwrapped a twelve inch sub and got a soda from a fridge nearby.

Danny sat on the floor, eating his sandwich and sipping on his soda.

Tom and the others were playing a card game when the door knob rattled and the door slowly opened.

They jumped up in surprise, not sure what they were going to see come through it.

“Hello, I'm Danny, the one who you talked to over the radio.”

Tom said, “Come in, Danny, it's nice to meet you. Sorry it's not under better circumstances.”

Danny walked into the well-lit room and turned off his flashlight.

He found it hard to believe that a store like Buy-Right would have a hidden room. He also wondered how Tom and the others knew about it. He was on the verge of asking, but he decided that they had more important matters to discuss.

“My name is Tom. and let me introduce you to the others. First we have William. He's a really bright kid” Tom said.

“Pleased to meet you, Danny,” said William.

He was a short, chubby man in his late twenties. He was wearing a loose black shirt with a blue dragon on the front and baggy blue jeans, and he had on a pair of nerdy looking black plastic frames. Danny reached out and shook his hand.

“Here we have Samantha,” Tom said, pointing to a very attractive young female wearing a pink belly shirt and a short blue skirt.

“Pleasure,” Danny said, taking her small hand in his and giving it a nice shake.

“Over here we have Mark” Tom said pointing to a large muscular black man who was probably the tallest man that Danny had ever seen in his life. He was wearing red basketball shorts and a white top.

“Nice to meet you,” Danny said, and he shook Mark's giant hand.

“That's all of us,” Tom said, walking back to the sofa.

“Do you guys have a plan for getting out of here?” Danny asked.

Tom looked up and said, “It would be like suicide. I think we should stay here until this mess blows over.”

“What if it doesn't?” Danny asked.

“We all should try to get a little bit of sleep while we can,” Tom suggested.

The time was 11:59 PM.

Day 4

By 12:00AM Tom and the others were getting ready for bed.

Danny couldn't sleep. He dozed off once or twice, but he had vivid nightmares about Molly and some of the other zombie faces he had seen throughout the last three days.

His eyes were tired, and he started seeing flashing lights from the corners of his eyes. He had been up for a while and his body was trying to shut down and get some rest, but he was not about to let that happen. He continued to fight sleep until morning, and by 6:30 the others were awake and making coffee.

He had trouble getting to his feet. His mouth was dry and his vision was blurred. He started to think he was becoming one of those terrible monsters, and then he realized it was just the lack of sleep.

At 7:00AM, after Danny had had some coffee, he decided to go back into Buy-Right and do some “shopping”.

With the morning sun shining through the skylights he could actually see what he was looking for.

First he made his way to a restroom. He found a place to attach a water hose, which was exactly what he'd been looking for.

He hurried to the front of the store and found a shopping cart, and then headed to the lawn and garden department.

He could hear the muffled cries of the undead coming from outside the glass door. He put a water hose into the buggy and then pushed it to the hunting and fishing department. In the section where he'd picked up the yellow army knife, he also picked up a buck knife and a couple of really sharp pocket knives. Then he made his way to the gun section, which had so far remained untouched.

The guns were in a revolving glass case. It was locked, of course, but under the cash register behind the counter were some sliding drawers. He opened one of them and found a duster that was used to clean the glass. He slid a second drawer open and found a set of keys.

“These must be the keys to open the cases.” Danny said to himself.

There were only three keys on the ring, and the first key he tried opened the case. There were many guns to choose from. There were about twenty high powered rifles, fifteen shot guns, and many different types of hand guns. He found a 12 gauge shot gun, a couple of high powered rifles, and a crossbow.

He loaded the weapons into his shopping cart. Then he found the shelves that held the ammo, and he stocked up on box after box of bullets. He also found arrows for the crossbow and put those into his buggy as well.

He passed by the sporting goods section and spotted a selection of golf clubs that would make good weapons if you couldn't reach your gun fast enough.

He hefted several of them, feeling their weight, and selected the heaviest ones he could find. He added them to his shopping cart.

He walked over to the electronics section and found some two-way radios that required a special type of rechargeable battery, so he picked up a supply of the batteries along with a couple of chargers.

He made his way back to the hidden room. Tom, William, Samantha, and Mark all greeted him on his return from his shopping spree.

Tom was impressed. He hadn't thought about going through the store in search of supplies, he'd only thought about hiding until either help arrived or all the zombies had starved to death.

Danny gave out the radios with the batteries and the chargers. He kept one for himself and told them all he was going to go freshen up.

Tom and the others decided to go do some shopping of their own.

Danny picked up another shopping cart from the front of the store and made his way to the personal health aisles.

Now he was shopping for body wash, shampoo and deodorant. He picked out his favorite brands and then made his way to the men's clothing section. There he found some clean underwear, socks, shirts, and pants.

He chose all black shirts with gray and black camouflage cargo pants. Then he went to the home section of the store and grabbed a couple of towels.

He made his way to the men's restroom. He hooked the water hose up to the faucet, turned the faucet to the left, and was relieved to find that it was warm water that sprayed from the end of the hose.

He started off by washing his hair with his new bottle of shampoo. Then he rinsed out the shampoo and started washing himself with the new body wash, applying it with the sponge that had come in the package with the manly smelling soap.

The soapy water made its way to the drain in the middle of the bath room floor. Danny dried himself with a new towel and put on his new boxer shorts, his black shirt, his black and gray camouflage cargo pants, and his new black socks.

He walked out of the restroom and went to the shoe department. He found a pair of black steel-toed boots in his size and slid them on. He tied the boot laces and then went to the nearest mirror.

He looked good in his new style of clothing.

Tom and the others made their way through the store with radios in hand, talking to each other back, and forth.

Samantha went to the electronics section and picked out a stereo system for the back room. She also went to house wares and picked up a micro wave, and after that she made her way to the toasters.

William went to do the grocery shopping. He picked out the freshest bread and sandwich supplies, and he also picked up a lot of canned good items.

Mark found a pallet jack behind the double doors that led to the shipping docks. He wheeled it into the main store, and then asked the others over the radio to help him move a refrigerator to the back room.

Samantha, William, Tom and Danny made their way to the back of the store with their new supplies. They left their full buggies there and went to help Mark with the refrigerator.

They were able to stand the heavy appliance on the pallet jack, and they all walked back to the hidden room together. Everyone helped unload the fridge from the pallet jack and they plugged it into one of the strange looking outlets in the room. It buzzed to life.

They were happy at the thought of staying safe in comfort. If they stayed in the store they would have everything they needed to survive for a long time.

Danny still said they should move on and search for other survivors, and then they could return to the store after they were finished. Tom and the others agreed that there must be more survivors out there. Maybe they were stuck in their own homes unable to fight the hordes of the undead.

With their new found weapons they stood a chance of survival. Danny, Tom, Samantha, William, and Mark made their way to the front of the store to have a look at the parking lot.

They could see bodies in the street. They scanned the whole parking lot and it looked like the nightmare could actually be over. They looked all across the empty parking lot, seeing no sign of the living dead.

They went to the lawn and garden to have a look. They saw more bodies lying motionless in the parking lot, but no signs of movement. Only the stench of death filled the air.

“Maybe the beasts have starved to death.”

Danny could sense something was not right about it. The hungry dead had to be somewhere close by.

Tom climbed the 12 foot high fence and jumped to the other side.

He was armed with the 12 gauge shot gun. He made his way to a circle of bodies, wondering why they were in such a strange circular pattern.

He stepped over one body, and then he saw the radio in the center of the circle.

He heard a sharp hiss of breath, and it dawned on him that these were not just dead bodies they were the bodies of the undead.

He tried to hurry over the body that he had stepped over, but it grabbed him by the ankle.

He aimed his shot gun and pulled the trigger. The bird shot scattered into the upper torso of the hideously deformed zombie.

The other zombies roared to life, scratching and biting at Tom as he ran back to the fence.

He jumped back to the other side, to safety. The others asked if he was OK. He said he was, but they had just about scared him into a heart attack.

Now they knew the living dead slept during the daylight hours. The shotgun blast had awakened all the other sleeping zombies and they were soon surrounding the lawn and garden section on all sides.

“Well, looks like we will need to wait till tomorrow if we want to make it out of the parking lot alive.” Tom said.

They went back into the main store. Suddenly Danny figured out why the zombies were in a circle around the radio.

He had a plan. He talked it over with Tom and the others, explaining that it might be possible to lure the zombies to the back of the building using a couple of two way radios.

They had to act fast if they wanted it to work. Mark and Tom volunteered to take the radios out the loading area at the back of the store. They placed one radio on one side of the back doors and another on the other side.

They closed and locked the doors. On another radio Danny started making loud noises, and the hordes made their way to the back of the store, leaving the front and side parking lots empty except for the two truly dead zombies at the lawn and garden fence.

Samantha, William, and Mark stayed in the store making noises over the radios as Danny and Tom jumped the fence of lawn and garden and made their way to a large black SUV parked in the side lot next to lawn and garden.

They had no luck finding a key but Tom said he could hot wire the car. Danny sat in the passenger side of the SUV as Tom crossed the wires and the big car roared to life. They peeled out of the parking lot and onto the main road.

Danny and Tom were heavily armed, ready to start their search for survivors.

They decided to check all the local churches. The first church they pulled up to was a two story Baptist church.

They exited the vehicle and cautiously looked around. There were no signs of the dead *or* the living. They went to the door and turned the knob, listening.

When they decided the coast was clear, they finally turned on their flashlights. They went from room to room, looking for any signs of life.

When they reached the middle of the church and opened the double doors that led into the sanctuary, they spotted bodies in all the pews. But they noticed that the air smelled not of death but of body odor and sweat. These people were alive!

"Hello!" Danny called. One after another heads started popping up from their resting places.

"My name is Danny and this is Tom, we want to take you to a new place of safety."

People sighed in relief that help had come. There was cheerful whispering throughout the church.

"We have to act fast if we want to make it there alive." Tom said.

"Is there anyone here that can drive the church bus?" Danny asked.

One man stood up and said "I am a regular driver of the bus." It was the youth pastor.

"Are there any more people located in other parts of this church?" Tom asked.

"No," said the youth pastor. "We are all in the sanctuary."

"Good," replied Tom. "Follow us."

There must have been sixty to eighty people lined up to go through the doors of the church and they made their way to a large church bus that only held about thirty people. They squeezed onto the bus more packed than a can of sardines.

All together there were forty passengers on the bus. Others climbed into the four remaining church vans. The keys were always kept above the driver's seat in a magnetic box that was attached to the roof of the vans.

"Follow us, keep together and when we get to where we are going keep quiet."

They took off down the road in the black SUV with a bus and four vans behind. They drove through the mountains back to Buy-Right super center.

They pulled up to the front entrance and radioed to Samantha, Mark, and William to unlock the front doors of the store. They had many survivors. Mark and William made their way to the front of the massive store and unlocked the doors while Samantha stayed in the back room making screams over the radio to the two radios out the back door.

The zombies remained at the loading dock of the supermarket while Tom, Danny and about eighty others made their way into the front door of the store.

The time now was 7:00PM. They had another long night ahead of them but at least they made it into the store safe and sound.

With the front doors of the store locked again and the bars on the windows and doors they decided to turn on the power to the whole store. The store was now well lit, and everybody could see each other clearly.

They were then told to make themselves at home, that there was access to water hoses in the restrooms where they could shower. Any needed supplies could be found within Buy-Right. The members of the church were reluctant to take anything without asking and without paying for it.

Tom then told them, "Your money is no good here, not now. Please feel free to take what you need."

Tom started to explore more of the store and he found the employee break room. It had a stove, microwave, toaster oven and coffee makers. There were plenty of seats and even a smoking area.

He came back into the main store and picked up a nearby telephone and put it up to his ear. He heard nothing, no static, no crackling just anything at all. He pushed the intercom button and he heard himself breathing over the stores speakers.

The others heard it too. He made the announcement that there was a way to cook food and he needed some volunteers to do some shopping and some other volunteers to do some cooking in the break room. He also asked for help to hook up more stoves and ovens so they could have more people cooking.

Many volunteers showed up at the front of the store more than willing to shop and cook for the survivors. They had enough people willing to help to split the group up into two smaller groups, the cooks and the shoppers. There were also enough volunteers to help with getting more than one stove operational.

Everyone seemed happy to be in a well lit store. It was much better than being in that cold dark church.

The shoppers filled their buggies with frozen meats, canned goods, breads, pizzas, tacos, and noodles of all shapes and sizes. Tonight would be a pizza night.

The youth were with their youth pastor and he was leading them up and down the toy aisles. He told them to pick out toys that they could share and have fun with to keep them busy throughout the day.

The less they thought about those monsters that lurked outside the better off they would be. He picked out some card games and some of his favorite classic board games and tucked them into the youth shopping cart.

Many people were putting together beds, tables, desks and anything else they thought they might like to have right in the middle of the store.

Danny had asked over the intercom if there were any hunters or sharp shooters and if they could make their way to the back of the store. About thirty men showed up, all members of the church, and all hunting buddies.

He told them he knew it wasn't going to be easy to do this task but they needed to narrow down the zombies as much as possible. He equipped them with weapons and sent them out into the lawn and garden section. Then he asked them to make as much noise as possible to lure the zombies to the garden fence and when they came around they could fire the weapons through the fence and hopefully thin out the hoard of zombies.

The men all started screaming and jumping up and down and sure enough the zombies found their way to the fence.

"This is going to be like shooting fish in a barrel," one of the hunters said.

The zombies came close to the fence but again showed no climbing ability. The men took their guns and started firing into the night. Most of the bullets hit their marks and the men shouted with the joy of having thinned out the large group of zombies.

There must have been over a hundred zombies and the bodies continued to fall as each blast rang out into the night. Finally the survivors had the upper hand. All but ten of the zombies were dead. The hunters talked about it and took aim at the last ten standing and fired. All the zombies in the parking lot were now on the ground unmoving, dead.

The hunters went inside and reported the good news over the intercom. The people cheered and ran to the barred windows for a look outside. It was dark but no zombies were out.

They remained happy. At 9:00PM dinner was served.

There was pizza for the youth, tacos for whoever wanted them, salads, and sandwiches. It was a large feast and everybody was fed.

Things were definitely looking up. Danny was hopeful that they would all be rescued and taken somewhere much safer, where they could actually have individual rooms, bathrooms, kitchens, play areas and everything they needed to start life over.

They knew with the staggering number of survivors found in that one church that they must go out tomorrow and look for more survivors. Danny and Tom went to the youth pastor and asked him if he would be willing to drive the church bus to look for more survivors.

"Of course," the youth pastor said. "I will do anything to serve, and if you think there might be more survivors I will be willing to pick them up."

The youth pastor found four other men and brought them to the hidden room where Samantha, William, Mark, Tom, and Danny were sitting

He said, "Here are some more drivers."

Danny looked up and greeted all four men and said how thankful he was to have people ready and willing to go on the dangerous mission of locating survivors.

Each driver would drive his own van and they made plans that night to rescue more human lives.

Everybody found a place to lay a pillow and a blanket, when they ran out of pillows they would find towels and clothing to lay on and then they all got ready and said goodnight. The time now was 11:55PM.

Day 5

Tom, Danny, the youth pastor, and the four other drivers went out the front door and into the parking lot. They were welcomed by a sound that they hadn't heard for days; the

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