

05.00

The contrast between the awe inspiring sunrise and the snuffling sound of the zombie eating was beyond comprehension. Agnes hummed an almost silent Christmas carol to block out the nauseating sound. It had surprised her that it wasn't the sight of them that made her feel sick to the stomach but the sound of them, oh and the smell, boy did they stink.

Agnes had seen some of the freshly turned and it was not the pale grey skin turning daily more purple that horrified her. She just imagined them a Goth with no finesse in applying makeup, like Mindy at sixth form. Agnes swallowed; she hated remembering people, her school friends, even the ones she hated, because they inevitably reminded her of her family, her now dead and rotting mother, father and older sister. So she refocused, it was the sound of them lumbering around dragging their damaged limbs, the amount of saliva that drooled hopelessly from their mouths. God that wet sound of lips chopping, the sound grandma used to make trying to chew without her false teeth. Agnes tried to snigger but it was difficult now, to snigger, to laugh to even smile, the muscles in her face had forgotten how to make the required shape.

As the sun rose the zombies slithered away back into their shelters avoiding the sensation of sun on their skin. Agnes had hoped they would be like vampires that they would burn if touched by the sun's rays. That was last year's hopes dashed, she had continued throughout her year alone to always find something to hope for. Initially it was that her father would come to save her that was just childish; he was just an ordinary man like all the other ordinary dead lying around her. Then that the army would rampage through the town and rescue her, it would be the American army of course, just like the films. That was unrealistic, they would probably torch the whole area, why risk coming into the town when they could get hurt, she would be collateral damage. Her latest hope was based on the law of probability. If she could survive, the Geek of the school, if she could survive with no fighting or strategy skills surly then others could. There were loads of people she knew who were tougher, braver more proficient with the necessary skills, they would have survived she just had to wait it out.

As each day had passed Agnes had become more concerned, what if they only survived because they had moved out of the town. Why would they come into the town now? They would expect that this was the worst place in the world to live, surrounded by them, but this was where Agnes could get food, she knew the streets and the sewers, she felt safe here.

A cat screeched in the distance. Agnes flinched, she hated the thought that a cat was being eaten, after all they had survived so long and it wasn't their fault, was it, all this. The figure scurried across the road and tucked in behind the door way. Agnes blinked and then peered closely, it was a man, with a gun, the army had arrived. She opened her mouth and then stopped. Her throat was dry, she needed to drink. Agnes scanned the horizon for the others. Everywhere was still. He was the scout, she pulled on her partially full rucksack and checked for her gun. It still felt cold on her hand but it seemed to grow lighter each day as she grew ever more used to it. The figure had a rifle; he would be able to shoot them from a distance that would be useful. Agnes prepared to go outside.

The figure moved closer towards the church. Agnes stared bewildered what was he doing? No one went into large buildings; they liked to live in large groups huddled together like maggots. In large groups they would always have a meal, she had seen it happen once, she had seen them suddenly turn on one of their own, without warning, without concern, maybe two or three were lost each night in each group. Agnes had tried to calculate how long it would be before she was truly alone and had been stumped without a calculator.

Agnes instinctively ran towards the church. She didn't zig zag commando style that would make no difference, she arrived at the entrance and waited listening. His footsteps were clearly audible in the silence. Agnes turned looking for something to help her, she ran towards the abandoned car, picking up a stick forcing it into the petrol tank, she pulled it out, a quarter full. She could get in and drive out of the city but where, no this was her city and she wouldn't abandon it or the stranger without a fight.

Agnes used her knife to remove part of the upholstery from the back seat and stuffed it into the tank, then unlocked the hand brake and pushed the car down the slope and towards the door. She stood behind the open driver door with the lighter in her hand and pressed hard on the car horn. The sound echoed around the quiet streets. The sound of fast footsteps running brought him sprinting from the church, he flung himself over the car as she lit the rag and ran. They followed after him, a few were able to manage a slow walk but most just shuffle. The initial blast obliterated about ten of them the fire moved swiftly through the entrance and into the main body of the church. They didn't have enough intelligence left to try to escape; they simply clawed at the walls in a mild state of confusion until the flames destroyed them. Agnes stopped running at the top of the hill, she watched the inferno that was the church, the flames reaching higher towards the cross, then eventually the roof collapsed inwards and she couldn't hold back the tears.

"What did you do that for?"

Her Saviour asked. Robert Bishop. She rolled her eyes in despair.

"What save your life? Why were you going into a Church? They like to hang out in large groups in large spaces, what made you go inside there you Dickhead."

Robert stared at her, his thin face grey underneath the pale golden beard.

"Agnes?"

He started to laugh as he stared at her.

"Agnes," he stopped suddenly.

No matter what had happened he hadn't changed, he still couldn't remember her name and she still hated him.

"Well now."

He continued trying to pretend he hadn't forgotten her.

"Well look at this, the only two people left in the world. Hey,"

He said letting his eyes wander across her body.

"You look good, this zombie thing has been good for you, you've lost weight."

Agnes turned away in disgust.

"Lots of weight."

He continued.

There were now waves of smoke billowing up from the inferno below directly towards them.

"We need to move."

Agnes replied. She turned up the hill and continued towards the tree line.

"The smoke will attract them, well the smell of cooking bodies will anyway."

Robert followed at a jog.

"So you survived then and you do look good, I mean you still have that bit of a facial hair issue but you know you look great for."

He stopped talking.

"For the last woman on earth you mean."

He stretched his legs to keep up.

“Well yeh I suppose. I mean you’re not angry are you? I mean all that silly boy girl stuff is a waste of time now isn’t it? It’s sort of me or nothing.”

Agnes stopped suddenly. She had never really thought about finding a man who would procreate with her. It was about survival, she needed someone who could protect her, who would allow her to sleep soundly for just a few hours. Now here he was a teenage boy from her sixth form with the social skills of a dead gnat and the personality and charm of an empty coffin. Agnes closed her eyes, she was so unlucky.

“Dreaming about us spending the rest of eternity together eh?”

He whispered, the smile was clear in his voice. As she slowly opened her eyes she realised the horror that awaited her. Agnes really did think she would choose nothing over him. She had to focus to remove all emotion and think clearly. He had survived all this time so he couldn’t be that stupid.

“Let’s keep walking and you can tell me how you’ve survived so long.”

“There was a group of us,”

He gasped.

“Wait up let’s stop here for a bit and I’ll tell you.”

Agnes pulled off her rucksack and sat on a rock staring at the undergrowth. She turned to look at him closely now, it was a stick, no a staff, not a rifle, what the hell use was that?

“What’s that?”

She asked nodding to the stick. Robert smiled and swung it precariously close to her head.

“It’s my staff, cool eh!”

Alice rubbed her hands together and waited.

“Well ok I’ll start then, we were hold out in the cellar. It was my dad’s idea and we were fine until he left to check out the area, and he never came back and as the food started to run out others went out and then there was just me. There was enough to last about four months if I ate just two meals a day and so when it was gone I came out.”

Agnes stared at him. She hadn’t really eaten a meal for about a week; when she travelled away from her base she just snacked on a few tins or maybe a packet of biscuits. When she was home she ate a warm meal but that was rare, food was becoming more difficult to find. Agnes decided then she would never take him to her home, she didn’t trust him. It could just be that the story was true but the timings were way out, the epidemic had started over a year ago, he couldn’t last that long in the cellar, the amount of food needed was too great and he was obviously inexperienced being outside, he would be dead by now if she hadn’t intervened.

“Impressive eh for someone you thought was thick.”

Agnes looked at her boots and felt guilty. It was true she had always thought he was stupid. She had always laughed at his inability to be even vaguely astute just as he had focused on her weight. Agnes watched his eyes dart across her body, she was wrong he wasn’t stupid somehow he had managed to stay alive but it wasn’t as he had said. Robert relaxed back smiling; the smug look he had always worn at school was still there. Agnes stared at the line of sun tan at his wrist; he had been out of the cellar a lot longer than he had said. He was lying and yet, she swallowed and forced a smile, he was alive and maybe she had been alone too long. Robert grinned back and pulled at his college bag.

“I have some biscuits, look.”

Agnes stared at the dark chocolate digestive biscuits and felt saliva gather in her mouth. After three biscuits each she felt deliriously happy, surly it would all be fine now, she didn’t need an army chocolate would do. The sugar in it made her feel lightheaded and as she headed for base camp one, the electricity substation the world became slightly more positive.

Agnes opened the door and Robert threw his bag on the floor followed by his coat. He removed his boots and flopped onto the mattress in the corner.

“So are you coming to join me?”

Robert asked grinning.

“I mean we are the last two people alive.”

Agnes locked the door and removed her coat.

Agnes stared at the cracks in the ceiling.

“Next time will be better.”

Robert commented as he fastened his trousers. Agnes smiled inwardly, she had always known sex with him would be disappointing and she felt vindicated by that knowledge. They didn't speak as she fastened her trousers and ate another of his biscuits.

“Maybe later.”

He commented as he watched at the window.

“Christ,” he shouted suddenly as he flung the door back.

The woman leaping through the door was considerably older than both of them and was soaked in sweat. She collapsed into his arms. Agnes analysed her. Robert held the tall blonde and the way his hands moved over her body annoyed Agnes intensely, she had now definitely been relegated.

“You sleep Agnes I'll take the first watch.”

Robert said commandingly, Agnes stared at them both, she couldn't believe this was happening; suddenly she was just another person under his guidance, what a prick. She the alarm for five hours and she closed her eyes as she listened to their voices drone on.