

I am not your typical zombie.

At least, not anymore.

We used to talk. Oh, yeah. The ones who still had vocal chords could make the old sounds – words. Not easily and not well, but what did you expect? Now, though, silence is the name of the game. Silence is survival.

But, I'm getting ahead of myself.

It all started when I got a little too close to a petri dish containing a nasty cocktail of germs and chemicals. I always was a bit too clumsy. Stuck my hand right in it while going to lean on the counter. I was going to wash it off, honestly! But before I could, I was bitten.

The attack was brief. My coworker was a tiny Asian woman, so even with that good old zombie vigor, I overpowered her and fled. I thought I escaped with my life.

My muscles started feeling both loosely connected and stiff at the same time. I started moving slower in an awkward shuffle. My mind grew foggier until even the thought of thinking was a struggle. Then came the hunger. Think of your favorite meal. Your eyes light up and your mouth waters at the first hint. That was how every human smelled, amped up to a billion. You just can't resist that kind of pull.

I have to admit, I ate a few friends and relatives before I learned to control the craving. Like I said, thinking was hard but not impossible. I'm not sure we actually died, but our lives were never the same after that day. Not to say we all turned into monsters. There were plenty of foods... uhh... humans around. They fought back when I went out feeding. This body is very resilient. The parts don't grow back, but neither do I feel pain. They can shoot all they'd like, but nothing short of cutting off my head will stop me. Ugh. That was a horrible thought. Let's just pretend I never mentioned heads or cutting. Moving on?

Things were going alright for the first couple days. I shuffled around until I was hungry, then my instincts took over and I could move faster to catch my dinner. I forgot all about my hand. One day, I grabbed dinner by the arm with that hand, but he got away. He didn't get very far, though. I caught up with him a few blocks away. He was doubled over. He alternated between screaming and vomiting. His arm was covered in a green rash where I touched him.

I looked down at my hand. I couldn't feel it. It didn't affect me. But it was green as well. Worst of all, the man now smelled terrible. I couldn't eat that. Not anymore. He died within a day. It seemed I was going to have to be careful. If I didn't eat what I touched immediately, it would be entirely inedible. Too bad I lacked the coordination to put on a pair of gloves. All of my later troubles would have been avoided.

There was a place where we zombies gathered. It was a school, before the humans abandoned it to huddle in their homes or drive away. I saw a few acquaintances standing at the edge of the parking lot. We greeted one another with the usual grunts and moans. I told them about the incident with my dinner.

"Then...he...turned...green."

“What...? How...?”

Zombie conversations are incredibly slow. Maybe it'd be better to just tell you instead. I showed them my hand and explained how it came to be that way. None of them were from my lab, so I didn't go into details. They didn't have any good suggestions. Felix said I should ask the humans for help covering it. Yeah, right. As if food would help me kill them. They'd only shoot me again.

Jen mentioned that a bunch of the others were going to the mall that night. Apparently a whole host of humans locked themselves in there. It was going to be a feast. She nudged against my clean hand and told me not to worry so much. There was plenty of food, so even if a few got away and died, so what?

I lurched my head forward in a nod. Maybe I was overreacting. I agreed to join the mall group to make up for my lost meal. We shambled together in a large cluster. The mall was on the other side of town, so we didn't get there until some time after midnight.

Zombies don't have special 'see in the dark' powers. We navigate as best we can by senses that are little different from when we were human. Smells are amplified, but that's about it. Smells won't help me not run into walls or not trip over bodies. I did my best to hide my diseased hand and followed the guy in front of me.

Barricades blocked the mall doors. This was an excellent sign. The bigger the barricades, the more humans were inside to be eaten. These ones were gigantic. The zombies in front dismantled most of the barrier. The rest was taken out, along with those first brave zombies, by booby trap grenades. The humans would know we were coming. I stayed near the back and let the first waves deal with any other surprises our food had planned.

The grenades did take down quite a few of my comrades, but it also took out the doors. The mall inside smelled like Thanksgiving dinner. It drove us wild. We rushed in blindly, fighting to be one step closer to food. I could hear gunshots up ahead. That was where food would be hiding.

And then, it happened. I tripped. I fell right into Jen, hands first. My green hand touched the back of her neck. I picked myself up and continued on. She was far ahead at this point. The first zombies had found a stash of humans in a clothing store. Jen was among them. I apologized when I caught up. She hadn't even noticed. We shared an old couple before moving on to the next spot.

Even in the low light, I could see there was something wrong with her eyes. They looked as though they were coated in thick mucus. When I asked about it, she snapped at me. Literally and figuratively. Jen wasn't usually so angry. When she stood up, her movements were like spasms. She even smelled different. She stomped away toward the next meal without me.

When I caught up again, the scene was a mess. Humans fought zombies and zombies fought other zombies. Jen was in the center of the fray. The humans had spotlights on in the hall. I could see her eyes – made sightless from a green froth. Her nose, too, looked as if her head was filled with the green disease. She had bitten other zombies. They were like her now. They killed everything, zombie and human.

And it was all my fault.

I found Felix and pulled him back from the fight. We had to get out of there. Being a zombie didn't change my survival instincts. I wanted to keep existing, no matter my body's current state. I dragged him away, down a side path. I could smell a handful of humans ahead. They hid in a smoothie café. Hoping not to be shot outright, I searched my brain for the right gesture. My hands raised slowly in surrender.

Behind me, I could hear the anguished cries of human and zombie alike. Jen and her new zombies would come this way soon. I had to think. Thinking was so hard these days. The leader of the smoothie humans stood up from behind the counter.

"I don't know if you can understand me, Rot-bag, but you got five seconds to move on."

"Please...help...us. New...green...eyed...zom...bies. They...kill...everything."

"Huh. You talk. So your friends have a taste for dead flesh now? Good. Less of you to kill."

Jen screamed. It echoed down every hall. It bubbled with the green disease. We were running out of time.

"Won't...eat...you. Help...us."

They were coming now. I saw shadows moving. I could smell them, too. Like the human smell, it was maddening, but instead of hunger, it produced fear. Felix couldn't take it. He shuffled away in a desperate attempt to escape. The green eyed ones loped after him. I froze. What else could I do? That decision saved my life. They stormed straight past me. There was nothing left of Felix by the time they finished.

One of the humans whimpered in fear. Jen tilted her head toward the sound. I could see the green pouring out of every opening except her ears. The ears were fine, if a bit rotten. I held a finger up to what was left of my lips. The leader of the humans saw my signal for silence and nodded.

Jen stomped over to the smoothie counter. I could see her nose twitch. She was trying to smell food as she had since she turned. It was no use. She wouldn't find them if they were silent.

We waited there for some time before the green eyed zombies moved on. When the human leader decided it was safe, he whispered to me.

"Where did they come from?"

I held out my hand. My horrible, green hand. I don't know how I stayed unchanged, but I was a carrier for something terrible.

"Poison...hand."

The leader went to touch it and I recoiled.

"Kills...humans...too."

He frowned and gestured for one of his companions to step forward. She carried a machete. I knew what they would do. I would die, permanently, for my crimes. I lifted my head and waited for the end to come.

The woman grabbed a rag and wrenched my arm forward. When it was on the counter, she hacked off the offending hand. When she finished, she wrapped it in the rag. I followed the group outside. A young boy carried a blood-stained shovel. They dug a hole beneath the bushes and buried my green hand.

From that day on, I was no longer like the other zombies. Not even those I used to call friends. They resented me for bringing the green eyed ones into the world. Only that small human group accepted me. I know one day I will either grow too hungry to stop myself or will wither from starvation. Until that day, I will be their guard. I sense danger before they can. I will warn them and protect them from the evil I created.