



Zombies Don't Forget:

A Living Dead Revenge Story

By Rusty Fischer, author of *Zombies Don't Cry*

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Author's Note:

The following is a FREE living dead short story.

Any errors, typos, grammar or spelling issues are completely the fault of the zombies.

(They're not very patient with the editorial process!)

Anyway, I hope you can overlook any minor errors you may find; enjoy!

Zombies Don't Forget

Smitty leans against the loading dock, smoking a thin, black cigarette.

Smitty.

Why are these guys all called Smitty?

Or Smutty?

Or Snuffy?

Or Stiffy?

Let's face it; I spend way too much time around funeral home loading docks these days.

"We good?" I ask, handing him a wad of cash without actually touching him.

(Guys like Smitty hate it when girls like me touch them.)

"We are now," he says, pocketing it without counting.

Smitty knows enough to trust me by now.

He lingers in the parking lot below as I walk the four steps up to the loading dock, finding the back door open; just like we agreed upon.

"Privacy," I grunt, not bothering to turn around. "I paid for that, too. Remember?"

I hear the paper of his cigarette crinkle as he takes one last puff, then a loud exhale, then the crunch of his workday boots extinguishing it in the gravel lot.

“I’m off until 7 a.m.,” he insists over his shoulder. “You’ve got all the time in the world.”

I wait until I hear the driver’s side door open and close and the engine start before turning around.

The hearse pulls away from Scoffed & Sons Funeral Home.

(Smitty is neither Scoffed or Son; just another hired hand who’ll let a kid like me in for the right price).

When I hear the long, black car chug down the block, I stand still and listen some more.

A few cars pass in the mostly-deserted road, a streetlight hums in between, but other than that... nada.

I turn, walk inside and lock the door behind me.

Inside the air-conditioning hums constantly; I don’t think I’ve ever heard it go off.

The loading dock opens onto a supply room, and through some of those hangy-plastic strips supply rooms use instead of doors, you walk into the cleaning room.

I walk past the three stainless steel tables, the hoses and wicked looking tools and pass into the employee locker room, and on the other side of that; the break room.

I look in the fridge, find the little white to-go box waiting for me, and take it out.

The casket room is next.

It’s quiet and serene; just like I like it.

There are six caskets lined up side by side in two neat rows of three each.

I told Smitty not to warn me which one he’d be in.

What can I say?

I like surprises.

I look at my watch as I sit down in one of the old-fashioned wingback chairs sitting just so in the corner; he should be re-alive any minute now.

I put the to-go container on the small table between the chairs, resting it gently on top of a three-year-old *Cottage Homes* magazine.

I sit back to wait for the rumbling, and only when my legs are crossed and I close my eyes do I notice an old Beatles song playing on the speakers overhead.

It's not even the actual Beatles song, just a cheesy instrumental version like they play in elevators and while you're on hold to one of those late-night 1-900 numbers (don't judge) and, of course, funeral home coffin showrooms.

Uggh; that irks me.

I'd paid Smitty extra to remember to turn that crap off.

Just as I'm about to flip open my cell phone and get Smitty on speed dial to cuss him out, a white casket midway up aisle one starts shuffling back and forth on its stainless steel stand.

I smile and get up; I'd have bet good money Smitty would have stashed him in the cheapest casket on the floor.

The Beatles song that's not really a Beatles song is still playing but now it's overshadowed by the pounding on the casket top and the muffled cries for help coming from underneath.

Little-known fact: most caskets don't have locks on the lids, for obvious reasons, but the ones at Scoffed & Sons Funeral Home do because they've had a few incidents with the

local homeless wandering in just before closing and slipping in an unmanned casket for a good night's sleep.

The locks require no keys; just a four-digit code that hasn't been changed for as long as I can remember.

I punch it in now – 4-7-4-7, in case you're wondering – and hoist open the lid of the coffin.

The minute I do, Dill Perry sits up from the waist so fast he almost knocks me over.

His eyes are wide and white, to match his quite dead skin.

He's sucking in great gulps of breath like he's just come up from the deep end of the pool.

I lean against the closest wall and say, "Relax, rock star; you've only been re-alive for a few seconds!"

Besides, I want to tell him (but don't). You're breathing days are over!

"Carla?" he gasps, and I have to say he looks pretty darn cute in his burial tux.

"Who'd you expect, Dill? Your guardian angel?"

He opens his mouth to say something and then stops.

He looks around at his surroundings, and I can see the reality starting to creep in.

"Where am I?"

"Scoffed & Sons Funeral Home."

"Why?"

"Do I really have to answer that, Dill?"

"Yeah, you do because, I'm here, and you're here, so you must be in on this, somehow."

“In on what?” I ask.

“This, punk, this joke, this video or goof or whatever it is you’re doing.”

“It’s no joke, Dill.”

“It *has* to be,” he spits, getting a little of that old wedgie-giving, nerd-bullying, football-lettering fire back in his eyes again.

“It’d have to be some kind of joke, Dill. I mean, just think of how much attention to detail I’ve paid. The tux, those don’t come cheap. The funeral home; again, not exactly free. The funeral? I mean, that would have to be one elaborate hoax, Dill, even for a smart girl like—”

“Funeral,” he snaps. “What funeral?”

I roll my eyes, slide out my cell phone, cue up the video from that morning and push play.

“Yours,” I answer, turning the phone around so he can see the big, wide screen.

Even without seeing the images I’ve memorized the tape Smitty made for me.

The weeping mother, the strong father, the baffled priest saying words about a kid who never came to church and died far, far too young.

The kids from Ambrosia High packing the pews, the weeping football players, and let’s not forget the keening girlfriend, Melissa Dunwoody.

“The hell, Carla! That looks pretty damn real. I know Melissa and she’s not that good an actress.”

“I don’t know,” I crack. “She’s pretended to be in love with you for the last four months.”

He smiles, never taking his eyes off the video.

Then he smiles even broader, pointing to it, turning it around so I can see.

“If that’s my funeral,” he crows, obviously picturing some big “gotcha” moment coming up any second now. “Then where’s my casket?”

“You were cremated, moron,” I point out on the screen, showing him the little green and butterfly urn to the right of the babbling priest. “I must say, your Mom chose a very masculine urn to keep you in. Does she know something the rest of the football team doesn’t?”

He snatches the phone back, looks at it more closely, then at me, then back at the phone, then at me, until suddenly his trademark cocky grin dissolves into an entirely new expression for Dill: doubt, mixed with fear.

“But... then what am I doing here? I mean, what’s in that urn that priest is handing my mom?”

I take back the phone and turn the video off and slide it in my pocket.

“What would be the point in cremating the *real* you, Dill? I mean that wouldn’t be very fun now, would it?”

“What are you talking about?” he asks in a very small, very weak voice, bordering on a whimper. “What is going on, Carla?”

“What’s going on, Dill, is a little thing we zombies like to call payback.”

“Payback?” he whines some more. “For what?”

“For what? Dill, you can’t be serious.”

“But that was weeks ago, Carla.”

“Yeah, well, how long do you think it takes to set up a fake funeral, Dill? Just about two weeks...”

“I didn’t mean it, though,” he sputters, large hands waving around as his tux jacket pulls back on his broad shoulders. “It was just a joke.”

“No it wasn’t, Dill. A joke is taping ‘kick me’ to my back as I’m walking out of homeroom. A joke is inviting me to prom and then dumping a bucket of blood and fish guts on my head when you rig the voting and make me prom queen. A joke is definitely NOT writing ‘Carla Akers is a zombie’ in the C-wing girls’ room and letting every cheerleader snap photos of it, then upload it on ViewTube by B-Lunch.”

His eyes flit left and right, trying to summon up some excuse, some defense.

It’s almost a relief when he finally does: “How was I supposed to know you were really a zombie, Carla? It was a lucky guess.”

“I’m still trying to figure that out, Dill. But it doesn’t even matter, anyway. The fact is, you knew the Sentinels would investigate. You knew they’d come snooping around the minute word got out about what you’d done. And you knew that if I was a zombie, a real zombie, they’d kick me out of school, strip me of my citizenship and they’d cast me out into the wilderness. You knew that, Dill; and you did it anyway.”

Suddenly Dill backpedals, those beady eyes, already starting to drain of color, narrowing.

“How do you know it was me anyway, Carla?”

“Here’s what you’ll find over the next few weeks, Dill. While some of your senses start dying off, others are reborn. Your hearing, for one. Your sight, for another. Every night for the last two weeks, I’ve been bribing the janitor at Ambrosia High. He lets me in once it gets dark out, gives me the combos for a wing of lockers, and I spend the next 12 hours opening every one, looking for a very particular thing...”

Beneath his tousled death curls, I can see Dill's eyes zipping left and right, wondering what it was that gave him away.

“The other night, I found what I'd been looking for, Dill; in *your* locker.”

“Found what?” he sneers, reaching up to loosen the garnet tie at his neck.

Then he unbuttons the top two buttons of his crisp white dress shirt, revealing the tiny bite mark just where his shoulder meets his neck; *my* tiny bite mark.

“Paint stains, Dill; the same metallic gold spray paint you used to write ‘Carla Akers is a zombie’ for the whole school to see.”

“That's BS,” he spits. “There were no stains in my locker. I made sure to—”

“Made sure to what, Dill? Cover them up? Scrub them away? Sure, you got rid of the can, but that stuff always drips. And trust me, it wasn't easy to see, even with my zombie vision. And I didn't want to jump to conclusions, either. That's why I spent the next two nights looking in every other locker to be sure. It was you, Dill. I wouldn't have done what I did unless I was 100% positive.”

His smirk turns to shock and he stammers, “W-w-what *have* you done?”

“Why, made you just like me, Dill!”

He leaps from the casket, his momentum propelling him forward and the casket backward.

It crashes into the one behind it, sending them both to the ground like giant dominos.

I look at them for two seconds – thinking only, “Well, now I have to clean that up!” – when suddenly Dill launches himself at me.

He catches me just under the chin with a jackhammer of an uppercut; so hard I hear my teeth clack against each other.

I don't feel it, I don't feel anything, but it pisses me off just the same.

I slam him to the ground with one hand, watching his eyes bulge with shock, then rage.

He tries to get up but I kick him back down; once, twice, three times.

Finally, he gives up, face tight with shame at being bested by a little old girl.

A zombie girl, at that.

"How... how are you doing this?" he asks, petulant but still unable to get up. "I'm four inches taller than you, Carly; I outweigh you by, like, two people!"

"You'll be able to do it too, one day," I insist, letting my foot off his chest; it leaves a dirty brown footprint across his clean white burial shirt. "Your muscle will turn into zombie muscle; zombie muscle is hard muscle, strong muscle, heavy muscle."

He shakes his head, unable to wrap his head around what I've just done.

"For now, Dill, just face it; a girl beat you."

He sits up as I lean warily against the wall; trying to look casual, feeling anything but.

I want to hate him, to destroy him – you know, even more than I already have – but the thing is, I know he's going to be a better zombie than he was a human.

He's already shown more emotion in the last 10 minutes than he has since I met him three years ago during freshman orientation at Ambrosia High.

He's handsome in that All-American way I've never much cared for; blue eyes (but not for long), pug nose with a spray of freckles across it, thick neck, broad shoulders, tiny waist, long legs; too bad he's an evil jerk and always was.

“You never liked me,” he accuses, still splayed out on the floor, though now he’s managed to sit up and cross his legs in front of him, kindergartener style.

“You always suspected me,” I reply.

He nods, because... it’s true.

“Always following me around, trying to bump into me so you could feel my temperature... why *should* I like you?”

“Why shouldn’t I suspect you, Carla? I mean, I was right, wasn’t I?”

“Why should it matter what I am, Dill?”

“Because you’re... unnatural; a freak. Because you’re dead, Carla.”

“Undead, jerk! And newsflash: so are you!”

He shakes his head, lips quivering.

“Why, Carla? How could you do this to me? *Why* would you do this to me?”

“You have no idea, do you Dill? No idea what happened after you outed me like that last week. No, you wouldn’t; because you’re human. Or were. Three years I’ve been passing at Ambrosia High. You know how hard that is, Dill? Every morning with the makeup, keeping my head down, warming my hands under my butt before touching anybody, blending in, keeping a low profile, not dating, not getting in fights. It’s work; hard work, and you ruined it with two minutes of your life and a can of spray paint!”

“So move on,” he groans, looking pained. “Move on and leave me out of it.”

“Move on?” I growl.

I don’t do that often, but it works; he scooches back on his butt, until his head thumps against the back of one of the coffins he overturned.

“I *have* to move on, Dill; the Sentinels yanked it all. My ID, my brain donor card, my credentials. No more school for me, Dill; no more free brains from the government every week; no more... identity. No more protection, either. That means every zombie hunter, thug, bully or prejudiced jerk like you can come after me without fear of reprisal from the Zombie Protection Agency. Nice, huh? All because you got it into your thick skull to tell the world what I really am.”

“I didn’t know,” he bleats, lips quivering, eyes wide and looking close to tears. “I didn’t know all that would happen. It was just a prank. I saw you, the other night, you know? That’s how this whole thing started.”

“What other night?”

“I dunno, a few weekends ago. I was staying over at Jamie’s apartment after that keg party downtown? Well, you wouldn’t know about that but anyway, I got up in the middle of the night to take a leak and I couldn’t get back to sleep. That happens sometimes; I can’t turn my mind off. Anyway, I made a sandwich and ate it on Jamie’s balcony so I wouldn’t wake anybody up. I heard water moving, in the pool downstairs. I looked down and you were swimming laps.”

I shake my head. “That’s impossible, Dill. I always turn off the pool light when I’m swimming at night. No way you could have seen it was me.”

Dill chuckles; first time all night.

“Jamie’s Dad’s ex-military. He has all this Army surplus stuff he’s special ordered off the internet. Anyway, I thought it might be that hot college chick who lives in Apartment B-12, the one Jamie’s always squawking about, so I slipped on his Dad’s night vision

goggles. I could see you, plain as day. You swam for awhile, then you dropped something and went down in the deep end to get it..."

"My earring fell out," I say, looking past him to the hideous floral wallpaper beyond as I tug at the empty hole my favorite earring left when I couldn't find it, even after all that looking. "My Mom gave me that pair; I should have taken them off before swimming."

"Yeah, well, you were down messing with that drain so long, I started counting the minutes, just to see if you could hold your breath as long as I can. One, two, three, four... 10 minutes later you popped up, started swimming like nothing ever happened."

Stupid; stupid!

I should have known better than to think no one was watching.

If it's one thing I've learned since I caught the Z disease, it's that someone is *always* watching.

"That doesn't prove anything," I say weakly, thinking: *Of course it does.*

"I know," he admits. "So I followed you for a couple of days after that, just to make sure. You had all the signs, Carla; I checked with that website the government put up after the Great Zombie Invasion of 2015: you never sleep, you never eat, plus you can stay underwater for OVER 10 MINUTES. That was enough proof for me."

"So, what? You just had to tell the whole world about it?"

"The world *needs* to know, Carla. It's my duty as a citizen to report any known zombie entity to the authorities."

I open my mouth, but shut it again.

Guys like Dill, they're not worth it; you'll argue yourself blue in the face – not that I have far to go as it is – and all they'll see is another zombie, a freak, a monster, something out of a B-movie gurgling, “BBBBRRRRRAAAAIIIIINNNSSSSS!”

“Whatever,” I say. “What's done is done.”

“What IS done, Carla?” he asks.

“You already know, Dill.”

He shakes his head.

“I want you to tell me, Carla. I want you to say it. I want you to—”

“You're a zombie, Dill. Happy? I said it; you're one of the living dead now. You, and me, we're the same now. One little bite while you were fast asleep in your bed is all it took. Now you'll never sleep again, never eat another hamburger, never see your parents, never—”

“You think that's fair, Carla?” he asks. “You think that's a fitting punishment for what I did?”

“Yeah, Dill, I do. And one day, when you've worked your butt off to keep your nose clean and some creep comes along and outs you just for doing what you have to do to survive, you'll think it's *more* than fair. You ruined my life, I ruined yours. We're even.”

His eyes grow cold again; colder than his already cold skin.

“We'll never be even,” he says grimly, standing up and wiping his hands on his long, black slacks. “As long as I live, or un-live, whatever happens, I'll find a way to get stronger than you, and I'll figure out a way to kill you – again – and I'll do that. I'll do that when you least expect it, Carla.”

I shrug; chances are, he probably will.

Not for a good, long time maybe, but one day he'll be strong enough, maybe even stronger.

“For now, Dill, you need me more than I need you. Here...”

I hand him the to-go container and gently guide him to the chair I sat in earlier.

“What’s... this?” he asks. “Why do I feel so... weak... all of a sudden?”

“It’s a brain,” I say. “Eat it, fast, or you’re never going to be strong enough to re-kill me.”

He makes a face; they all do that.

At first, anyway.

I reach down and pop the tab on the white Styrofoam container; the brain smells waft out, as rich and hot and sizzling sweet as burgers on a grill – at least, to me.

Apparently, to Dill too.

He reaches down, grabs the brain and... well, let’s just say what happens next isn’t pretty.

But it does happen.

Afterward, Dill looks up, embarrassed, and hands back the white Styrofoam container.

I set it on the table next to him and say, “Better?”

He nods.

I yank him up and say, “Then help me fix these caskets; we need to get out of here.”

He looks at me funny, then stands.

His legs are suddenly steady, his eyes alert.

“Those look... heavy,” he says.

“They are,” I grunt, cracking a smile; my first of the night. “Don’t worry, I’ll do most of the heavy lifting.”

He smirks and I help him help me get the middle casket back on its rails.

It’s hard work but by the time we get the second one back up and straightened out, I can tell the brains are working on him.

We stand next to each other, surveying our handiwork.

“We better go,” I say. “If anyone finds you out and about now that you’ve had your funeral, there will be a lot of explaining to do.”

He starts to argue, then just nods.

He won’t look at me as we walk from the coffin room, back through the employee break room and lockers and when I look back just before walking into the storage room he’s standing by one of the stainless steel cleaning tables, kind of running his fingers across the raised edge.

“One thing I don’t get,” he says, looking up at me. “If I’m here, who did they cremate?”

“Nobody,” I say, shrugging. “Smitty, he’s the funeral director’s assistant, he just borrowed a little bit of ashes from a few days’ worth of other cremations and, well, put them all together in the urn your parents took home.”

“Gross,” he says.

I turn and face him, taking two steps closer.

“Would you rather he cremated you?”

He looks past me to the room beyond, but I know he’s looking through the door and picturing the *world* beyond.

The big world; the real world.

“Maybe.”

“No you wouldn’t, Dill; trust me.”

He nods and looks so sad, I almost – almost – regret what I did to him.

Then I think of the life I left behind, the relative ease with which I’d been able to slink along at Ambrosia High, and what he took from me when he did what he did.

Suddenly, I don’t regret it anymore.

He follows me out the back door and into the night.

“What time is it?” he asks, wincing.

I smile and say, “Close to midnight, but... your eyes are adjusting. You’ll be able to see in the dark from now on. Kind of like with Jamie’s Dad’s night vision goggles. You’re welcome.”

I take his hand to lead him down the four steps to the ground; he flinches and says, “You’re cold.”

“What do you think you are, Dill; hot stuff? You’re as cold as I am.”

“Oh,” he says, and takes my hand anyway.

He holds it until we’re down the steps, then past the gravel drive, then tromping through the acre of prime Alabama scrub brush out behind the funeral home.

“Carla,” he says, quietly, following me in the dark as we make our way toward a future neither one of us can possibly predict. “That thing I wrote, in the girls’ room. I honestly thought you’d forgotten about that.”

“One more thing you need to remember, Dill; zombies don’t forget.”

About the Author:

Rusty Fischer



Rusty Fischer is a professional freelance writer who lives in sunny Florida with his beautiful wife, Martha. They enjoy riding bikes, long, leisurely walks on the beach, romantic dinners and zombie movies; lots and lots of zombie movies! (Well, Rusty does, anyway!)

Rusty runs the popular website *Zombies Don't Blog* @ www.zombiesdontblog.blogspot.com. At *Zombies Don't Blog* you can read more about Rusty's work, view his upcoming book covers and read – or download – completely FREE books about... zombies! (And the occasional vampire...)

Rusty's new book, *Zombies Don't Cry*, is available now from **Medallion Press**. Check out www.medallionpress.com/blurbs/zombie_cry.html for updates, excerpts, blurbs and reviews. And don't miss *Vamplayers*, due out from Medallion next year!

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