

Fate of the Damned

Kaden screamed as he frantically brushed the top of his puffy hair. “Get it off, Get it off,” He continued shaking violently.

“Mate! It’s just water!” I said, rolling my eyes.

“Shitty water,” Kaden corrected. “I’m never getting used to this place.” He went ahead of me still brushing his hair.

To be fair I don’t blame him, I’m never getting used to this place either. The stench is unbearable and you have to constantly double check the state of the floors or walls before stopping to take a rest. The sudden drips of disgusting water from the pipes above always kept us on our toes. Trust me, if you have an afro, it’s sometimes hard to tell when something touches your head and we don’t want to be unknowingly carrying dirty water. So, more things to be paranoid about. Every second we spend down here takes away a piece of my sanity, but better down here than up there... Even though I’m literally heading to the surface with my brother right now.

We had only walked a bit when Kaden groaned. He stopped to scrape his shoe on the ground. He must have stepped on something unpleasant again. With how much waste we’ve stepped on in these sewers, I’m too scared to look at the bottom of my shoes. I mean even the sides of my once bright vans are now brown and dirty. I’m starting to consider my chances against the horde of zombies on the streets, at least I’ll die breathing fresh air.

Kaden and I stopped at the sight of another ladder. We had been walking blindly, searching for another manhole cover to crawl out of. As dad used to say, ‘better to keep moving even when it feels safe.’

“I’ll go first,” I said as I pulled the metal crowbar from the side of my bag.

We didn’t have many tools for self defense, I only had this crowbar, whilst Kaden had a rusty metal pipe with a knife taped to its tip. I think dad deliberately did this to make us avoid confrontation as much as possible and stick to following his strategies for survival, one of those being ‘only leave the sewers for food.’

I made my way up the ladder and pried open the cover, easy as the others. As soon as I lifted the cover, I was greeted with the warm bright sun and sweet smell of fresh air, something I had been craving since our last visit to the surface. My brother and I had been walking through the sewers for weeks, only coming out to grab food from random houses or shops whenever we

found an opportunity, so I was definitely going to take this all in knowing I wouldn't see it for a while.

“Are there any shops?” Kaden interrupted my moment of basking.

My brother's words snapped me back to reality, making me realise how far out my head was from the hole and how a zombie could have easily spotted me had I been unlucky. I quickly retreated back to a peeking position, scanning the terrain with the heavy metallic cover pressing against my forearm. There was a large grey house in front, and around us were high concrete walls towering over the lawn.

“No just someone's... back garden?” I said before pushing off the metallic cover.

“Is it safe?”

“Probably.”

Kaden crawled out after me, and whilst he took in the fresh air, I noticed he had something brown on his hair but I kept quiet not to freak him out, plus it was funny.

“Let's check the place out and gather what we can find, but...”

“Be careful, “ Kaden interrupted me as he got to his feet. “I know, You don't have to say this every time.”

I bowed and made a “lead the way gesture” as my brother walked past me rolling his eyes. Once he'd walked past, I half covered the hole and followed him to the building. We went round the side of the grey house, walking over the brick floors until we found a winston window that led to the dining room. I pulled my face from the window and placed my crowbar in between the two glass cases but before prying the window open, I waited as Kaden pressed his ears against the concrete fence, listening for any zombies nearby.

Kaden placed his arm on the wall as if to listen harder. “We're clear.”

I nodded and used my crowbar to pry open the window, causing it to come loose with a large thwack! We stopped to listen again, no sound came after. We were in the clear. Kaden and I began to crawl into the dining room. ‘Never go in through the door when you're not sure.’ Another piece of advice dad left us before disappearing. I hope he's okay.

By the time we were in, Kaden pulled his weapon from the side of his bag and I gripped my crowbar defensively as we slowly paced through the area. The place looked rather tidy for a home in an apocalypse, further justifying dad's theory that there was more to this apocalypse than we knew of.

Kaden and I headed for the living room to peek out the front window and see if any of the zombies had found their way in, but to our surprise, the living room was also tidy. The rugs were almost spotless with little bits of dust and the furniture were lined nicely in front of the TV. The center table still had its little weird horned figures meticulously set over the white table cloth, though covered in some cobwebs. There was a faint stench which maybe was a result of lack of fresh air for a long time. The front door was bolted shut and the concrete wall had stretched all the way to the front of the house meeting at a large metallic gate.

“There are definitely no zombies here,” Kaden said as he put down his pipe.

“But we’re definitely not alone,” I replied. “Doors don’t lock themselves, we should leave.”

Kaden rolled his eyes. “Mate, if there was someone here, we would have alerted them by now, let’s at least look around first before making assumptions.”

“True, but what if they’re waiting to surprise attack us?” I asked swatting a fly. “We’re not taking chances, let’s go.”

I reached for Kaden’s arm but he pulled away. “Who put you in charge?”

Is he seriously doing this right now?

“I’m not going back to those sewers,” Kaden said. “Not until I have a proper look around at least.”

This guy. I sighed in response. “You’re not going to listen to a word I say, go for it, look around,” I said dismissively as I plopped myself on the couch.

Kaden left for the stairs and when he was out of sight, I went to the kitchen to do a little digging, after all that’s why we were here in the first place. The kitchen was a spacious area with the counter and the sink three steps apart. I headed straight for the fridge where to my surprise, there was still a good portion of food, almost like they had just come back from food shopping. Most of the food had gone off as expected but the fact they still had this much left further solidified Kaden’s point that we were alone in here, but who locked the doors from the inside? Did they have a secret bunker? Was it suicide?

As I pondered staring at the abundance of food stacked in the fridge, I heard Kaden running down the stairs. “Shit! Shit!” he cried.

I immediately ran out of the kitchen to meet my brother, leaving the fridge open. What on Earth had he seen? My mind began to race a bit. I was right, something was off. As if that wasn’t

already obvious anyway. Kaden came out of the living room, presumably looking for me and when he did, he grabbed me by the shoulders.

“You were right, we need to get out of here,” he said, still catching his breath.

Tell me something I don't know. “What? What did you see?”

“Dead people, they hung themselves,” Kaden said, shaking me.

So it was suicide. Still, why is he so freaked out? It's only hanging. We've seen worse corpses in stores already. “So?”

Kaden shook his head. “You don't get it, come see for yourself,” he said as he grabbed my hand and began dragging me up the stairs.

By the time we got upstairs, the stench from earlier had grown exponentially and only seemed to get worse as I followed Kaden to the master bedroom. There I actually had to cover my nose whilst staring at the hanging bodies. Their mouths hung open and blood seeped from it down their naked bodies to their toes where it poured in drips into a carved image of a wild goat. At least I think it was a goat, I couldn't tell from the large number of flies circling the area, their buzzing the only sound at this point.

“What the fuck?” I whispered.

“We should leave,” Kaden said.

“Now you want to leave.” I shut the door to the bedroom.

As we began to head towards the stairs, I noticed Kaden walking a bit faster than usual. Surely he's not thinking their ghost is going to jump us, those were just crazy religious people.

When we got to the front of the stairs, we heard the master bedroom door creak back open. Kaden and I exchanged glances then turned to the direction of the sound. We looked back at each other.

“Was that?” Kaden asked.

I was about to respond when we heard footsteps coming from the bedroom. Slow heavy footsteps. Kaden was about running but I held him in place. If we ran we'd easily give away our location. I know dad told us to avoid confrontations, but this person was going to follow us down the sewers anyways. Better to take care of the problem now.

The footsteps slowly approached, and I pressed my body against the wall. Upstairs was another thin corridor and by the end to the right were the stairs. I gripped my crowbar above my head ready to strike down whenever the person turned towards said right.

“You really think you can harm a ghost?” Kaden asked.

I didn’t believe in ghosts, someone was trying to scare us, and this set up was the perfect atmosphere to create paranoia in their victims. Unfortunately, they ran into the wrong victims. I waited patiently as the footsteps got closer. I gripped my crowbar tighter and lifted my arms higher.

The figure finally emerged... in a white sheet? Very creative, twat. I dropped my crowbar with every ounce of force I had. To my surprise, the crowbar went straight down sending the sheets flailing. There was no one underneath. Kaden and I gasped in unison as the sheet fell. We had just seen this thing in human shape. I stepped back terrified. “We need to leave, now.”

We ran back outside to where the manhole cover was but to our surprise, it was... gone. The manhole cover that I was certain we had crawled out of was now... gone.

Kaden dropped to his knees and started digging at the grass. “It was right here, right here.”

“Shhh!” I urged Kaden as I heard the sound of zombies groaning on the other side of the walls.

Kaden fell to a sitting position defeated. “We’re fucked.”

Before I could speak, I noticed someone staring at us through the window of the master bedroom. I don’t know what it was but it definitely wasn’t human. I turned back to my brother, my heart beating profusely. He had his hands on his head. I had to think, what to do, what to do.

What would you do?

[Word Count: 1,999]

SID: 2187752