

seen something cross the beam of my light far in the distance. I stopped walking, clicked off the light, and listened hard. After a few moments I could hear a faint noise over the hum of electrical wires and pipes overhead. Slow and clumsy shuffling. It was not too far in the distance, about a hundred feet or so. I knelt down and, quietly as I could, pulled off my backpack, carefully unzipped, and gently dug around. My heart was pounding but as my fingers closed on the cool shaft of the retractable steel billy club I'd purchased online, I felt much more at ease. Standing straight, I replaced the pack on my back, and held the club in front of me with my right hand as my left clicked on the high intensity flashlight.

bright red gums. She'd been in her early twenties when she was living, with hair above her shoulder in curls. She used to be blond, but in the time since she'd died, her hair had turned the color of mud and dried blood.

"Hey!" I called out. My voice echoed sickeningly down the tiled corridor of the train station, reverberating louder back at me. Her head cocked in my direction, I heard no reply, but instead the unmistakable sound of sniffing. She started shambling in my direction, sniffing like a dog searching for treats in its owner's pockets. She came slowly at first, but upon detecting the scent of live meat, ambled faster down the corridor. I had not moved, nor did I intend to. I planted my feet shoulder width apart, bent my knees, and hunkered down like a rock. The closer she got to me, the more frenzied she became. At twenty yards, she was screaming an inhuman screechy wail, and her fingers were grasping desperately for something they she could not see but greatly desired. My heart pounded with every

footstep that brought her nearer, and my breath stopped altogether. When she was finally in range, I swung my billy club wide with as much force as I could muster.

It connected with her shoulder with a sickening crunch. The force was enough to knock her off her unsteady axis. She stumbled, but did not fall to the ground. Instead she caught herself on the nearby wall. She pushed herself back toward me, clearly untroubled by the blow I'd just dealt. Again her hands reached out for me, desperately clutching at the air. I dipped back to avoid her clawing and swung the billy club again, from the shoulder, with all force I could manage. This time I got her head, which dented like an aluminum soda can. She went down this time, but continued to move. She clambered on the ground, pulling herself forward with her ever grasping hands. I tried one more time, hoisting the club over my head and bringing it down with both hands onto her slithering form. This time her skull completely crumpled. She stopped moving, except for a slight twitch in her limbs.

I hadn't realized how sweaty or out of breath I'd been until now. My hands shook and my heart pounded painfully in my ears. Cautiously, I turned the flashlight behind me, back down the corridor the flashligh behind me, back down the corridor figures. I listened hard, but I couldn't hear anything over the sound of my own ragged breathing. Carefully I stepped around the unmoving figure on the ground and as soon as I was clear of her, ran towards the entrance of the subway station at full tilt. I reached the barricades and the caution tape in a quarter of the time it had taken to venture in. I hurried towards the stairs to the surface but stopped dead as I heard it.

The inhuman screeching wail. It echoed loudly down the corridor out of the darkness. The hair on the back of my neck stood up and I my heart went cold. Shaking, I launched myself full sprint up the stairs and didn't stop running until I felt the sun on my face in the streets above.

CAUTION: UNDEAD IN SUBWAY

A SHORT STORY BY LIZ WIEGARD



"Caution: undead in subway"

The sign was yellow with big black blocky letters and it looked very official. I had heard about this on the news the night before between stories of the president's latest golf trip and the new scientific study published about Amazonian deer beetles being a cure for human obesity. The blond female anchor had said that after a string of mysterious disappearances, "authorities" had discovered a hoard of undead bodies milling about the subway system. Apparently they'd been there for weeks, picking off maintenance workers and trespassers here and there, unwilling to fully emerge into the daylight world outside the tunnels. The news anchor had cautioned that the subway system was closed until further notice while scientists and the military studied this phenomena. But there are a lot of subway terminals in New York City, and the police department has been strained of late. This particular station was unmanned. The only barrier between the dark, winding tunnels below and the general public was

a flight of stairs, a few strands of caution tape, some short concrete barricades, and this big yellow sign. The fear of what lurked on the other side was supposed to be enough to keep anyone with common sense away and out of danger.

I lifted the nearest strand of bright yellow tape and ducked under, planted a hand on the barricade and swung both legs over. Hardly impenetrable. I adjusted my small backpack, clicked on my extra bright LED flashlight and trudged slowly forward into the gaping maw of the NYC subway station. Ordinarily it would be lit from overhead fluorescent bulbs, but some shortage in the power grid had left half this station in darkness. I walked slowly, trying to make as little noise as possible, listening hard for any sign of movement ahead. Soon I reached a section of the tunnel that was completely black, lit only by my flashlight.

It was about twenty minutes of steady walking before I encountered my first undead body. I'd

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I caught her square in the beam of light. She didn't seem to notice or care. I could see her eyes were milky and opaque, no doubt completely unseeing. Her skin was a pale with a slight grayish hue around the corners of the eyes and mouth. Her bottom jaw was completely missing, leaving white teeth to hang in space suspended from

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