



Science-Fiction Fanzine

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### Special message to our readership

Dear readers,

Due to the current illness afflicting our founding Editor-in-Chief, Aharon Sheer, I have been asked to **temporarily** take over the preparation and publishing of upcoming CYBERCOZEN issues. This June issue is, consequently, only appearing in late July 2014.

Feel free to send me any comments or contact me by phone:

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Wishing Aharon a speedy recovery,

Leybl Botwinik, assistant editor

### **The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy**

מועדון הקריאה

לקבלת עדכונים שוטפים על מפגשי מועדון הקריאה ברחבי הארץ ניתן להצטרף לרשימת התפוצה או לדף האגודה בפייסבוק.

More Society information is available (in Hebrew) at the Society's site: <http://www.sf-f.org.il>

This month, we're going to start a series of articles about Zombies! As scary and really disgusting as the subject matter is, I've discovered that there is a lot to learn here about humanity and human nature too – even about love and you can also throw in a dash of humour – Zombies are bad... but not all that bad.

Hope you find it enjoyable. Or at least interesting.

**Leybl Botwinik, Assistant Editor**

## **UNDEAD Reborn: About Zombies – PART I**

**by Leybl Botwinik**

**1.0 Introduction: Zombies, Zombies Everywhere**

**(Intro to the series of articles on "Zombies" in popular culture, literature, and movies)**

Scary stuff, about these Zombies....

So, why am I writing about them? (Why am I even reading these books and seeing the movies, for that matter...?). Well, the reason I'm writing about them – is to purge my system. A good writer knows, that by writing – a form of therapy – he can unload things that are pressing on his mind and dump the thoughts, ideas, and in this case –

often very macabre scenes and scary scenarios. Most people seek out someone to talk to, such as a friend, family member – or even pay for therapy sessions – they talk about it. Writers write... and if they are lucky, even make some money from it (not in this case, though – I've volunteered these pieces).

Are writers "crazy"? Not more so than anyone else. They just have a better way of releasing their 'craziness'. After reading some of Stephen King's books, on the other hand, you might wonder what he's like, and if you would want to befriend someone with thoughts like that... Or, take Edgar Allen Poe, as another example. He said about himself... **"I became insane, with long intervals of horrible sanity..."**. Makes you wonder... Still, writers tend to be harmless. The only people who die in their 'presence' are the characters in their books. Artists, on the other hand, do crazy things like cut their ears off ...

But, back to my topic: why get into this ugly world of Zombies at all? As I mentioned in a previous review, I had gotten all hyped up about John Ringo's SF *"Troy Rising"* series – about an Alien invasion (and Mankind's attempts to repulse it) – and was waiting for book #4, when to my dismay I discovered that Ringo has (for the moment) forgone continuing, and has instead begun a new series about a worldwide Zombie plague and how the survivors contend with it. So, having enjoyed Ringo's 3 *"Troy Rising"* books, and book # 1 of his new series had fallen into my hands – I decided to read it and see what it was all about.

At the same time, a few movies with the Zombie theme have recently appeared, and this also triggered my interest. To make the picture complete, I discovered that there are actually some universities in the US offering courses on Apocalypse, and specifically Zombie survival. How intriguing. **And** to top it all off, there was even a recent article in a Web-mailing from AISH Torah –

presenting a very good survey of the topic and a curt viewpoint about the 'Jewish' stand on the topic. I'll provide more about all this, and relevant links, as we progress.

What you are about to read, includes a very incomplete survey of Zombie-related literary works – Covering only 3 authors (John Ringo and two others) and several reviews of related movies. We'll cover such diverse topics as 'how to survive in a Zombie world', survival and fashion requirements, as well as a look at some unique twists, such as Zombie humor and Zombie love.

Some of the topics I plan on covering (some more in-depth than others) are:

- Classic undead: Vampires, Frankenstein's monster, Golem, etc.
- Voodoo (magic) Zombie
- Zombies in comics (Marvel + others)
- Zombies in literature:
  - James Matheson (*I am Legend*)
  - John Ringo (*Under a Graveyard Sky*)
  - Terry Pratchett (*Discworld* characters)
- Sample movies: 'Natural' plagues / 'Man-made' plagues (Biological warfare / experiments gone wild) / 'Alien' plagues / ancient curses
- Zombie studies (university and other)
- The Jewish and Israeli angles

We'll get back to all of the above, but first, a study of the origin of the "Zombie" and a look at the classic 'traits' and general characteristics of the Zombie and the related 'Zombie' plagues.

## 2.0 Some of my Best Friends are Zombies

### Origin of and typical traits and characteristics of "Zombies"

When I wrote Aharon, that I was willing to do a multi-article review of Zombie-related books and movies, he answered:

Leybl -  
Having never met a zombie, it might be interesting to get acquainted.  
Aharon

So... let's get acquainted.

Before we discuss the Zombie, let's take a very, very brief look at other undead in popular folk lore:

- Vampires are commonly known to be thinking humans who have died and now exist by drinking the blood of their victims. Some of these victims, in turn, also become vampires. Some vampires

are more violent than others. There's more to this, but not within the scope of our discussion now.

- Frankenstein's monster was a creature patched together from various dead bodies and reanimated by a powerful electrical charge (probably affecting any drugs and potions pumped into the creature by the good doctor). Although mind-wiped and therefore acting like a child, the creature has potential for intelligence. He is also one-of-a-kind, since Dr. Frankenstein died and his notes and laboratory were (supposedly) destroyed. – Not within the scope of this discussion.
- The Golem is not human, but rather an animated statue of clay. Its 'life energy' is magical (if not 'godly') in nature. Also one-of-a-kind, though in theory, there is enough mud in the world to create many. – Not within the scope of this discussion.
- Mummies are dead pharaohs (and/or their consorts, etc. that were buried with them) who 'wake up' after centuries of death-like state. Something like coming out of suspended animation. Their 'energy' seems to have a magical origin. They kill but do not propagate. – Not within the scope of this discussion.
- Ghouls are not human (seem to be some evil force) and basically take over a human host, thereby killing him/her while keeping the body animated. They cause tremendous amounts of destruction and when their bodies are destroyed, often jump into another host body. Also not within the scope of this discussion.

The first thing we want to know, then, is where the Zombie story originated from, and of course, what to look out for when dealing with Zombies.

Modern 'cult' literature and fandom relate to two types of Zombies:

- The original, run-of-the-mill, Haitian/African voodoo Zombie that is based on some form of magic or curse and/or psychological brainwashing and/or potent drugs, and often a combination of these.
  - This is usually contained to individuals or small groups, most probably under the control of one person.
- The post-1960's rampaging dead or near-dead humans who are nearly impossible to destroy and who spread their 'plague' rapidly until almost no one but the story's hero remains alive.
  - This usually spreads to become a worldwide uncontrollable apocalypse.

Let's take a look at the origins and some common traits and behaviors of both types.

### **2.1 Voodoo Zombie characteristics**

According to lore, the original Zombie was a dead person who became reanimated. The stories we know of, originate in Haiti, but apparently the phenomenon was imported to the Caribbean region by slaves from Africa. The story goes, that a person would be (magically) cursed or poisoned/drugged – and when thought dead by his/her relatives, buried, only to revive (or be revived) a period of time later. A combination of drugs and psychological manipulation transform the 'dead' person into a slow moving, virtually mindless slave, to be manipulated and controlled by its master. Generally speaking, the Zombie has no will of its own and is not particularly aggressive, unless ordered to be so. – One might look upon them as humans that become robot-like, taking orders as if 'programmed'.

- See also:  
[http://zombie.wikia.com/wiki/Voodoo\\_zombie](http://zombie.wikia.com/wiki/Voodoo_zombie)

### **2.2 Plague Zombie characteristics**

Modern cult lore has the 'new' Zombie in several formats and traits, and with varying origins – each weirder and stranger than the other. These Zombies are rarely of magical origin. Following are some common traits,

but each story is subtly different. Most, originate from some plague-like disease.

- Contagious – air borne (via breathing in) and/or via bites and scratches – i.e. enters the blood or is ingested. In one movie, a drop of blood gets into one person's eye and he is infected.
- Human host dies and then reanimates as a new Zombie
- Depending on the story/movie, Zombies typically show the following characteristics and behavior
  - Usually slow and staggering, but can become swift and extremely aggressive in the presence of living humans
  - Transformation from living normal Human to Zombie can take from within about 10 seconds to a few hours, to even 1 day and up to a week
  - Very difficult to 'kill'. Need to decapitate or shoot/stab them in the brain
  - Has a sense of smell that tracks or identifies a live human

- Usually placid until it identifies a non-Zombie and then attacks it aggressively
- Mutated Zombies (i.e. a secondary level or stage of manifestation) are super-aggressive and often faster and stronger than the normally already very strong Zombie
- Attracted to noise and sometimes light
- Attracted to 'live' humans and except for fighting over corpses, generally ignores other Zombies
- "Prefers" snacking on the brain (a delicacy?) but is most often seen eating guts and limbs

See also:

<http://science.howstuffworks.com/science-vs-myth/strange-creatures/zombie3.htm>

#### Next time:

*Book review of "Under a Graveyard Sky" by John Ringo – about surviving during a Zombie plague.*

### *Quote of the month: "The future is not what it used to be"*

*I'm, writing this on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July, 2014, as modern and sophisticated, as well as crude amateur (but not any less dangerous) missiles are still flying through the skies of Israel on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the "Protective Edge" action by the IDF against the terrorist Hamas government in neighbouring Gaza. (Editor - LB)*

*You may or may not have heard this expression, but I recently came across an interesting study on the subject on the website "Quote Investigator" (QI) that is worth looking at (Read this first, at: <http://quoteinvestigator.com/2012/12/06/future-not-used/>).*

*In addition to discussing the various aspects and possible repercussions of the expression, the web-writer quote the "... earliest evidence of this saying located by QI was published in 1937 in a journal called "Epilogue" within an article titled "From a Private Correspondence on Reality" by Laura Riding and Robert Graves. The authors who were both prominent literary figures asserted that the perception of the future had changed: <sup>2</sup>*

*The human mind has reached the end of temporal progress: the future is not what it used to be, and people talk with less and less progenitive self-precipitation into the future, and behave with more and more fatally decisive immediacy. The future, that is, contains nothing but scientific development. It is an involuntary spending and manipulation of physical forces, empty of consciousness: it no longer matters.*

*Has it and/or does it, really (– and this was written in 1937)?*

*Are we losing sight of the future? People used to make long-range plans. Governments used to plan for at least 5 or 10 years ahead – now they look at 1.5-2 year plans. People used to look forward to a long and promising career in a single workplace, and not to being bounced about, from job to job due to layoffs, re-organization, or whatever other term is used to reshuffle the deck of workers. Is society becoming more time-conscious and less human-conscious, while trying to squeeze everything into as small a space as physically possible, and in parallel in as short a time-span as possible? The trend: mini>micro> nano?? Fast>faster>faster yet??*

*There are advantages and disadvantages here – and sometimes, even time-critical issues that can save lives. One of the disadvantages I've personally seen and survived to tell about it, is in the highly competitive High-Tech industry. Time-to-market is a well-known adage in our field: tight delivery schedules (and tighter budgets) – that are almost impossible to meet, and yet somehow we still manage to make it happen. Often, the sales team will promise results or a new version within a time frame that has not been discussed with the development team – and all sorts of pressure and stress results from this – often resulting in bug-prone code or otherwise not fully tested modules and sometimes even shoddy workmanship. To counter this accelerated rat race, new techniques are developed and/or re-tailored, and new processes and procedures are adapted, to meet the stringent requirements. It seems that we are continuously trying to catch up with the future...*

*And the miraculous also happens: More and more missiles were/are being aimed at civilian centers in the tiny State of Israel, randomly shot at innocent men, women, and children of every race, religion, colour and political flag imaginable – just trying to go about their daily lives – by the cold-blooded terrorist Hamas in Gaza. Israeli technologists and their support teams, had a real mission-critical job to do, to counter the life-threatening situation, by providing two new missile-defense batteries months ahead of schedule... and they did it. How many lives did they save? I don't know – but even one life saved is definitely 'mission-critical'. A tremendous investment in time and energy was made in providing technology to save and protect lives. That's good use of resources. If only others would learn how to use their energies positively, life would be better for one and all.*

*But back to our original quote: Where is that future 'we thought it would be'...? I recently came across two very interesting Robert Heinlein books. The first, "The Past Through Tomorrow" is a compendium of his 21 short stories and novelettes recounting a future history of sorts. The stories were originally published between 1937 and 1962. Even more interesting are the collections and essays concerning his own predictions of the future – written many years later, in retrospect to the current date of writing – including speculation of what may or may not still be viable predictions or outcomes. I guess I'll have to do a write-up on this at some point in time...*

*Remember – we are not Prophets. We cannot really foresee the future – and in many ways, that's possibly best. Time is not ours to manhandle, or to manipulate – and surely not to waste. The future is there. Enjoy your present, and do plan for the future – it will eventually get here. If we really want the future to be what we want it to be, then we have to proactively work at it.*

*Dear readers: What are your feelings on this issue? Drop me a line – (Editor – LB)*

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