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The Zombies of the Apocalypse Episode 1

Bill had been driving for a few hours without taking a break. The coffee in his thermo had long since gone cold and his fag was completely out. It was time for him to stop at a Drive Inn, have a good beer and a good one pound steak. Bill's big red truck pulled into the Apple Pie Saloon car park. The wind was kicking up big bundles of sand. A dry, nervous thunderstorm thundered in the distance over the hills. Bill zipped up his jacket. The Apple Pie Saloon was a building made of wood and flashing neon lights, visible for miles. It was the drop-off point, at a certain time of night, for all the truckers, thugs, and misfits who hung around and didn't want to be left alone with the coyotes and the howling wind.

Bill parked his car next to an SUV with a cougar tied to the roof. These animals must be rampant in the area and prey on livestock. Bill felt an unpleasant chill when he saw the animal's bloody fangs. He shoved his hands deep into his pockets and tucked his head into his shoulders. As he walked towards the glitzy saloon and spat out his old cigarette butt, the smell of grilled meat filled his nostrils. There must have been about fifteen guys in the room. An unusually small crowd. Bill frowned when he saw one of them with a bloody face at a table. Two others were bringing him drinks and a sponge for his face. Bill shrugged and sat down a little ways away. His boots were shit. He needed a shower. The tension of the road had worn off, and fatigue was beginning to set in. An antediluvian radio was spitting out some incomprehensible news, drowned in static. He put his red cap on the counter and took out of his pocket a filthy, grease-stained rag.

He was wiping the sweat from his forehead and neck when a detail struck him; there were two girls in the saloon, about fifteen years old. They were standing near the window and seemed to be waiting for something to come out of the desert. One of them was wearing a black miniskirt, so short that half her buttocks were visible. The second was the archetypal rural girl: she wore a checkered shirt too big for her, probably borrowed from her father. Both were holding hands for reassurance, looking out with an anxiety that Bill didn't understand. He hadn't seen anything out of the ordinary on his way in, and dry storms were not uncommon at this time of year. He shrugged and took a big swig of the beer he'd just been served.

A tall guy, probably a hunter, wearing a cap and a dark green waistcoat approached him. Bill hoped it wasn't Baby Whore's daddy because he had been checking out her ass earlier and without discretion. The guy looked pretty rough, like all those Vietnam vets you saw in the movies in the 80's. Bill swallowed a handful of peanuts. The guy was a little shaky. He looked like he'd been drinking quite a bit. Bill was surprised, because usually, no matter how rough they were, the local guys didn't get drunk during their working hours. He smiled at the man, trying to establish contact. The guy stifled a burp with an acidic rise that made him wince, and gave Bill a demented smile. A smile he wouldn't have liked to see.

"They're gonna eat us, man. They're gonna eat us. Eat us."

At first Bill thought he had misheard, but no. The man had said the words correctly.

Then he suddenly remembered the cougar. The men, who appeared to him as a hunting party, must have been attacked by a pack of mountain lions. Bill hated the south and the damn desert. The guy grabbed onto Bill's jacket and yelled:

"THEY'RE GOING TO EAT US, ARE YOU DEAF?"

Bill put his hands on the man's shoulders and gently pushed him away, trying to avoid a fight. He gave him his best model of a Reassuring Smile.

"Come on, buddy. Who's going to eat us?"

Baby Whore or the other kid began to whimper.

"They're coming Daddy Dad, they're coming."

The big guy walked to the window and bellowed some instructions to his horde of hunters. Bill threw a five-dollar note on the counter and wanted to take the opportunity to get away. One of the hunters, a freckled kid, called out to the veteran:

"Hey, Daddy Dad, Charles Bronson is trying to run away."

Bill stood still, raised his hands in a gesture of appeasement, grinned his "okay guys" smile and sat back down carefully. He lit a cigarette and looked around the place. The Drive Inn was crumbling under the weight of years. An incredible number of decorative or functional objects, photos and various relics were on the walls or on the dusty shelves. Bill wondered, without really knowing why, if the building would resist an attack, like a truck rushing into it. A truck or something. He pouted in disgust as he realised he was starting to think like the other nuts. Waiting for God knows what.

The storm was getting closer and Bill laughed inwardly. Maybe these hicks were afraid of the storm, which wouldn't be so surprising after all. He gobbled down a piece of pie and lost his smile when he saw one of the yokels with a gun. The guy was sweating profusely and his terror-stricken boyish look clashed with his 6'3", 130 kilograms frame. He had a shaved head and was wearing a dirty black T-shirt; his buddy with the catogan and goatee was not doing much more than that and was loading a Glock with difficulty. Bill realised that everyone around him was actively preparing for an attack. His storm theory collapsed on its own.

"They're coming through the storm, you understand?" the behemoth said softly, stroking his rifle like a small cat. His gaze was pained.

WOWOWOWO," Bill said, "Now listen, you'll have to explain it to me or I'm going to get out of here. What the hell is going on here?"

Everyone looked at him suddenly. Daddy Dad moved closer to him and blew his head to one side.

"We told you, Charles Bronson, they're coming and they're going to eat us up."

Bill wasn't laughing at all, he looked around the room and everyone was looking at him. On the radio, Johnny Cash was singing "Ghost riders in the sky" over a sea of static. The

wounded man couldn't help but say, "They're close.

He moaned like a terrified old man, like a survivor of the French trenches, pressing the rag to his flayed face.

"They're going to... eat us they're going to eat us from the inside... we'll be in their bellies..."

"SHUT UP!" shouted Daddy Dad.

"They'll eat us but we'll make them see who we are, first."

He raised his rifle in defiance and looked around at the audience.

"Everyone keep a bullet for themselves."

"And what do you want from me?" moaned Bill, he himself was surprised at the dramatic tone of his voice.

"That's right, at least let me get out of here. I don't even have a gun."

The man with the catogan pointed at him.

"You don't move."

A bolt of lightning flashed nearby and struck the road. Electricity crackled in the air and Johnny Cash stuttered to his tune. Then the radio gurgled, the sound was organic. Daddy Dad ordered the girls to hide in the kitchen. He turned to Bill and nodded for him to follow them.

He did so and trotted into the kitchen, around the counter and into the sanitized world of the kitchen. The white tiles on the walls and the neon light contrasted violently with the rural and smoky atmosphere of the bar. The two girls hugged each other, shaking, and looked at Bill with little moans of fear.

"I'll do you good when this is over," thought Bill, looking at Baby Whore.

He closed the door and locked it, put his ear to the door to hear what was going on in the bar. Daddy Dad was shouting incomprehensible orders.

With his eyes, Bill looked for something to defend himself with, if necessary. A kitchen knife would do the trick. He hadn't even noticed the big negro cook crouching under his sink. A second bolt of lightning struck even closer to the saloon and the window shattered. Through the doorway Bill saw the boys writhe in pain as the glass tore at their flesh. The fat man turned towards the door, his big belly completely open and his guts and fat spilling onto the floor. He was so fat it looked like a deep fryer had just exploded.

Bill looked away, panting... He closed his eyes, the world swirling around him for a few moments. He couldn't even hear the two little girls screaming in terror, and the cook with them. Then he managed to control himself and the dizziness passed. He was about to get up when the kitchen door opened suddenly, and the fat man with the shaved head came in

screaming too, apparently unharmed except for a small piece of glass stuck in his arm.

"CLOSE THE DOOOOOOOOR" he shouted as he and the cook rushed under the sink, where he began to reload his rifle frantically. Bill excused himself and closed the door, looking out the window. All the guys were on the floor, convulsing, screaming. The guy with the catogan had even lost an arm and was waving a burnt stump, as if lightning had struck him. Only Daddy Dad seemed more or less unharmed and he was firing into the street. Bill would have gone for him but he was not in a heroic mood. He wasn't brave enough to walk across a floor littered with guts, crippled limbs and melted fat. Especially since he didn't care what happened to the old slob. Daddy Had was screaming like a madman, ducking in all directions. Bill realized that he was not shooting at anything, that there was nothing left to shoot at. The redneck finally realized that too. He lowered his gun and looked around in a daze.

"Daddy... Daddy..." moaned Baby Whore, her arms around the little peasant girl's neck, cheek to cheek, her eyes glistening with tears, her little body shaking and as she moaned and hiccupped her breasts vibrated in her cleavage. Her flesh was white and translucent and bluish veins ran through her breasts. Bill turned his back to the door and pressed himself against her. He slowly slid down until he was sitting on the floor. The shaved man had finished reloading his weapon and stood up in the middle of the room.

His eyes were a look of madness, his lips trembled as if he were about to cry.

"Good! he said. We'll wait for Daddy Dad for two minutes. If he doesn't come back by then, we'll go to the basement. There are several rooms and provisions. We're not going to be eaten by that.

– But eaten by whom?" asked Bill after a short silence. I looked out the window and saw no one.

Grunts and gurgles came from the restaurant. Bill stood up and saw black beasts with long dirty hair running into the room. The radio was blaring the same song over and over again, but this time the saturation made it inaudible. Daddy Dad turned the gun on himself as one of the creatures began to devour his feet. He screamed and fired. His head exploded and his brains joined the tide of guts. The beasts jumped around the room picking up the throbbing pieces of meat. They devoured and danced to the cacophony of the radio. The shaven-headed man gave the order to fall back; he led the whole troop in front, shouting "Go, go, go, go" and then closed the procession. They ran towards the cellar stairs. The stairs were old and poorly carved from the rough stone. Bill nearly stumbled several times but the sounds of chewing coming from the bar helped him keep his balance...

The shaven man closed the trapdoor and it was dark. Someone lit a lighter: the black cook. He turned a switch and a neon light flickered on. The cellar consisted of a network of corridors and small rooms, sheds, cubbyholes. In one of them were two beds and a wooden table.

"We'll wait here. The trap door is made of steel, no one will be able to enter.

– No one will be able to get in or out..." said the peasant woman, looking up at the men.

A few moments later the animals began to scrape the trap door. And the shaved man looked satisfied that he had given the right order at the right time. Bill thought he would make a good leader after all. The negro was searching the cellars and armed himself with a pitchfork, he looked like one of those good old negro peasants of the last century. As for the two girls, they

sat down on the bed and practiced. Baby Whore's skirt was riding up, revealing the white triangle of her panties. The shaved man spoke up.

"For those who don't know, my name is John. The creatures will be gone by sunrise, as we have already seen."

The girls nodded.

"Tonight we'll set up guard duty while those who need it rest."

He turned to the cook.

"Hey negro, is there a radio here?"

The black man looked at the shaven man for a moment and seemed about to make a reflection, but his face darkened and he said in a weary voice:

"Yes, down the corridor, in the little room to the left. There's a radio and also several talkee walkee."

Bill was catching his breath. He wiped the sweat from his forehead with his forearm. Everyone looked up as several hard knocks were made on the hatch, which did not give way. The shaven-headed man grinned with increasing satisfaction.

"Your daddy died a hero, baby," he said to Baby Whore, looking her over from head to toe.

John handed Bill his gun.

"Negro, you're going to come with me to that radio and you're going to stay here. If the hatch gives way you fire."

Bill inspected the gun, remembering the hunting trips he used to take with Dad and Uncle Bill in Maine. John looked at him and Bill gave him a knowing look back. John was satisfied with his initiatives. He left with the cook.

When they were alone, Bill said to him:

"Listen to me, you don't like niggers and I don't like you. But tonight we're going to do everything the same. If you call me Negro again I'll skewer you.

John looked defiant and then picked himself up.

"OKAY OKAY."

"Good," the black man simply replied, and turned his head towards the end of the corridor. Bill had overheard their exchange and thought that if anything went wrong with the shaved man, the cook seemed a safer ally than he had expected.

He lit a cigarette and gave the two girls a reassuring smile. Yet he felt completely lost in this story. To understand the shaven-headed man, it wasn't the first time such a thing had

happened. He took a drag on his cigarette and looked at his feet. In spite of the terror, he felt surprisingly sleepy; but suddenly the trap door opened with a doomsday noise and two men – two human beings – entered the cellar, closing the passage behind them. Bill stood up and pointed at them.

"Where did you come from?"

The two guys looked terrified but up to the task. When neither responded Bill fired at their feet. John and the cook, interpreting these two noises as the attack of the beasts, locked themselves in the room and the cook blocked the door with the pitchfork. The shaven man thought that if the trap door had not held them then the door had no chance. He quickly scanned the room and grabbed a steel bar. He was resigned to selling his skin dearly. And in the worst case he would offer the nigger to the creatures, which would give him a slim chance to escape. Without thinking he knocked him out.

The two guys finally reacted when Bill shot at the ground...

"Hey, man, don't shoot, are you fucking crazy?"

They stepped back and put their hands in front of them to protect themselves. Bill lowered his gun. He nodded at them to enter the room where the two girls were. The two guys were wearing mechanic's outfits and caps, their hands were filthy and their hair greasy. They wore stupid smiles as if the whole situation was normal, and even funny in its own way. Baby Whore let out a frightened groan as the two men entered and smiled at her. John pulled the negro by the feet and put him in the centre of the room. He heard him groan and was reassured when he realised he was not dead. The beasts seemed to prefer to kill their victims themselves. Now he had to hide, but he sought his hiding place with a light heart, almost whistling. He liked it, this bastard, to be the only survivor. To have to kill to survive.

He thought that by now Judy and her cousin were being eaten. He remembered when he had first trounced her, behind old Johnson's gas station. The situation amused him greatly. John found himself chuckling softly.

He couldn't hear the other giggles coming from the other end of the corridor. The two mechanics had just entered the room. One of them, the bigger one, with the beginnings of a beard, began to gently stroke Baby Whore's long, straight, black hair.

"Did you see that, sweetie, your Daddy Dad doesn't seem to be here anymore".

The two guys started to giggle. Bill watched the scene, silent and attentive. In the room there was indeed a radio but John didn't care. He wanted to kill the beasts himself. There was also a freezer. John would hide there, the smell of the meat would mask his own. He would just pop out when the beasts ate that filthy nigger and smash them with a crowbar. He could also use the pitchfork to impale them.