

The sun rises pink and early from the hilltop. They slept for several hours and were woken with the usual violent abruptness, clawing into life. They rush to the overhang to look out over the city. It is the seventh day of siege.

“Are the zombies coming?”

The wall of upturned trams has not only held, its solid indifference seems to have bored the monsters for now. The fire in the Chinese section of the museum, whose smoke seemed to be drawing them from the surrounding hills, has burned itself out. They survive on little cubes of Rice Krispie treats that look not very alike to the travertine tiles on all sides.

“I’m glad we were visiting the Getty the day that the dead began to rise. We have the best sight lines in the city and the high ground will help us.”

“How long can we survive on rice crispies though?”

“Forever. Marshmallow will survive as long as the undead.”

Breath caught, they realize that a more mundane challenge awaits them today: establishing a more manageable shelter. For the first time they walk slowly over the abandoned Getty compound like surveyors rather than scared animals. “The zombies might remain in the city until it is picked clean. We will have to wait here for an indefinite period.”

We make another circle. There is that open courtyard next to the fountain on the top floor. It has three walls at least. We could raise a tent in the cactus grove near the cactus garden, the lookout would be the best. Or there is a catwalk leading to the top of the wedding-cake atrium overlooking the courtyard of cypress trees and the shallow stairs above the tram. That should be the tallest point.

We can cut some branches from the pollarded sycamores and make a low structure up there, almost like a blind— we can lie down and look out using the binoculars I found in the groundskeepers’ storage.

The zombies are gray and ugly. I see them from our blind, pawing at the hill, on their way up, baffled by fallen rocks and trees but then plowing into them until find a way over them. “They’re getting closer.”

“What do you think they do when they’re up here?”

“Sometimes I imagine them wandering around the gardens, the way we wander around, from one courtyard to another, from one outlook to the next. I think of their faces raised to the sun, they seem to like the sun, can they feel the sun? Everyday they come at the brightest light and then look around, while we hide in the cold storage at the research institute, they think everyone is already dead.”

”Yes, it seems to work well. I don’t know what they think. Our scent must be refreshed everyday but they still leave without hope, as if the place was long deserted.”

”Maybe they can’t really smell at all. Or maybe something about the falling light discourages them. I wonder if they lie on the beach at night.”

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It’s been months. They look haggard but my body can tell that they are still dangerous. Hopefully they are in a decline that will, eventually, end them, and that they don’t plateau at some weakened state.

Meanwhile, we’ve built a house with four rooms.

Of all the locations on the Getty grounds, we chose a site irrationally incompatible to the circumstances of a siege, but it was the most [beautiful]. Are we still alive?