

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 walk 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 draw them from the surrounding hills, has burned itself out. For the first time they walk slowly over the abandoned compound’s decadent architecture like surveyors rather than animals.

“The zombies might remain in the city until it is picked clean. We will have to wait here for an indefinite period.”

They make another circle.

“There is that narrow 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.”

They cut some branches from the pollarded sycamores and make a low structure up there, almost like a blind so they can lie down and look out using the binoculars they found along with saws and hammers in the groundskeepers’ storage.

The zombies appear gray and ugly, but they’ve hardly had to see them up close since the first hours of the attack. They see them from the blind, pawing at the hill, baffled by fallen rocks and trees but then plowing into 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, the cold seems to work well. Maybe they can’t even see, although they have eyes and turn their heads, maybe they can only read thermal images or feel heat. That would explain their clumsiness with rocks.”

“But the rocky slope gets hot in the sun. Maybe during the heat of the day it looks like a field of lava to them but at night the cold rocks disappear.”

“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.”



It’s been months. The zombies look haggard but any human 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, the two have built a house with four rooms, which doesn’t make sense.