

~ The Dead can Dance ~

by Zee and Windy

Disclaimer - Its one of those feel-good chick-flicks. Okay I wish to state that this is completely my fault. I forced Windstar to write this with me when we could have been writing other things, probably worth literary merit.

This is at heart a horror story. If you don't like those kinds of stories, go elsewhere for your reading pleasure. My feelings won't be hurt. A big thank you to Ken for his help with all of our usual spelling and grammatical challenges.

Also this story and its characters belong to Windstar and I. If I find that they have been kidnapped and abused, well, I don't want to get into details, but it will get messy.

I hope you enjoy. Feedback and constructive criticism welcomed. Zeeamy@gmail.com, or adarkbow@yahoo.com

Jimmy Hendrix blared through the speakers as a figure ducked between shiny metal operating tables. Right now, the population of the Huntington Morgue was down to five. The living currently outnumbered the dead: dead 2, living 3. Three attendants made up the living.

The deceased consisted of an elderly man; his toe tag read natural causes, but he'd been slowly poisoned by paint chips that his daughter had stirred into his soup. Then there was a middle age man who had fallen asleep in what had been an empty irrigation ditch only to be caught in a flash flood around 2am and drowned about a week ago. His body had been found just yesterday by some kids.

A young woman with bright red hair, hair that was helped along into such garish redness by color in a box, scanned the room. She had a face that was on the plain side of pretty, however, her inner lust for life made her whole body light up. Her eyes sparkled and her grin was infectious, and that was what drew people to her and made her in certain circles, irresistible. Her blue-grey eyes caught a hint of movement to her left and she grinned pumping her super-soaker. She tilted forward into a roll and came up on to her knees, finger pressed on the trigger. Water arced six-feet into the groin of a thin young man.

Jimmy was doing a guitar solo as the young Pakistani man stood up cursing. "Damn it, Carson! Now I'm going to look like I pissed my pants."

She just grinned and started skittering through the tables in a crouched run for her last opponent. "Come out come out where ever you are," she said making her voice high-pitched and wobbly, like Glenda from the wizard of Oz.

God she loved working the late shift. Huntington was a new city; it had sprung up around HTR Industry to give food, shelter, and other amenities to those who worked for the mega-corporation. There was virtually no violent crime in the area. If people were seriously sick, or needed major surgery, they got life-flighted to San Francisco, 86 miles away, so the morgue was an easy job.

She would rather have been a doctor but Dr. Hamilton had made sure that would never happen. So, instead of being upstairs as an intern in the ER, she bagged and tagged dead people down in the local dungeon.

She heard a shoe squeak on the tile behind her and she turned firing. Water splattered on her chin and chest.

"Gahhh, Emily!" she shouted. "Why... how... do you get ice water into yours?" she howled then shivered.

The tiny little Goth girl, with her black hair swept up into two long pigtails, laughed, her obsidian eyes sparkling as she sprayed Carson again.

"No more! I surrender, she squealed. "You are yet again the reigning Queen of Morgue Tag."

Carson and Johar bowed to their Queen.

The girl cocked a hip sideways and hefted her super soaker in what she thought was a heroic pose. "I think I prefer the title 'Goddess' actually."

Carson quirked a brown eyebrow, "Someone is getting too big for their black tights." She laughed and went to the meat lockers, pulled open one of the doors, and slid out the table. It was empty of a dead body but held a couple of cases of beer. She grabbed one for herself, threw one to Johar, and then raised an eyebrow in question to Emily.

"You have to ask?" the dark haired girl demanded, holding out a hand for one after jumping up onto one of the autopsy tables, black lace up boots dangling.

"Whatever was I thinking? A frosty one for the Goth girl." She tossed a can to Emily and then opened another drawer. She hummed as she viewed the contents then turned around holding up a bright red Hawaiian shirt with little hula girls all over it. "Is it too much? Does it scream drug dealer?"

Emily shook her head, sending long dark braids flying. "No. And even if it does the police should be too busy laughing to catch you."

Johar rolled his eyes. "You know one day Hamilton will figure out where all his missing drugs are going and you'll really be in trouble." He sat down and took a drink of his beer a towel draped over his crotch.

Carson pulled a face. "Jay, my man you worry too much. Hamilton is too busy fucking interns and kissing corporate ass to pay attention to me."

"She has a point. Besides, he won't say anything. If there's an investigation someone might just notice he's been keeping some for personal use," Emily pointed out, laying down on the autopsy

table and staring up at the ceiling above her.

Rolling onto her side the Goth stared at where the other woman was considering her shirt options. "Do you think the Librarian is going to be there?"

Carson slipped out of her wet Hawaiian shirt, orange with pineapples, exposing a small beer belly on an otherwise fit frame. Johar blushed and quickly looked up at the ceiling. "Jay I'm wearing a sports bra, it's more than my bikini covers." She shook her head with a smile at her prudish co-worker before turning her attention to Emily. "Librarian? Oh you mean Samantha, 'Do not even think about calling me Sam or I will drive my high heels into your neck,' Sakamoto?"

"A woman, who likes high heels, sounds like someone I can respect." Emily quipped, tilting back the can and took a few gulps.

Carson shrugged, buttoning her shirt. "She probably will be there, I think she pissed someone off 'cause she works the night shift. She's been there the last three times I made a 'transaction.' God you should see her, she knows but she can't prove it, and its so pissing her off. Her black eyes get all fired up and she looks like, if she could, she'd be breathing fire. Last time I blew her a kiss as I left. I thought she was going to throw a book at me." Carson laughed remembering the look on Samantha's face.

Jay rolled his eyes, tossing away his empty can in the box behind the administrative desk. "I wish my shift were just ending so I could get out of here for some extracurricular activities." He mock leered at Carson.

Carson snorted. "Whatever? You run and hide every time a girl even looks your way."

Bony shoulders slumped "I do not," he whined.

She laughed. "You ever want pointers I'll take you out to the Pink Poodle. You can watch a master at work." She smoothed her shirt and looked at the clock, eight minutes until lunch and her 'lunch date.'

The Pakistani man blushed at the mention of the prominent gay club in town. "No, ah, thank you. I don't think I'll need pointers at a gay club, ever."

Carson shrugged her shoulders and closed the metal door. "Hey, what better place to get pointers? Who knows what a woman wants better than a lesbian?" She lifted her beer, finished the last of it, and threw the can at the garbage. She raised her arms in victory, "Two points!"

"Never know, Jay, you might just like it." Emily cackled at the look on the dark haired man's face, before shaking her head at Carson. "Get out of here, we'll hold down the fort while you're gone. If Dr. Idiot shows up we'll tell him you're gone to lunch."

She snorted, "Like he'd come down here. The new teaching session had started. He has all that

fresh meat to drool over. Thanks Emily, I'll be back in a bit. You want anything special for lunch?" she asked on her way to the door.

"Peanut butter and banana sandwich!"

Carson stumbled and made a face. "I'll see what I can do." She started whistling as she left. Once in the harsh white hallway she paused and ducked into the lone unisex bathroom. Once inside she promptly stood up on the toilet and pushed the ceiling tile up, reaching around she smiled as she found the small baggy of pills she had stolen from the pharmacy upstairs. "Hello my beauties," she whispered to the bag before tucking it into her pocket.

The librarian twirled a pencil, staring across the library at one of the late night patrons. Long dark hair was curled up into an imminently practical bun on the top of her head. Her Asian heritage was clear to anyone who glanced at her and if one more idiot made a Lucy Liu joke about her she was going to kill them.

Samantha, no one called her Sam to her face and lived to tell about it, Sakamoto was having a bad night. She'd had a string of them, ever since she'd been "promoted" to the night shift in the teaching hospital's medical and research library. She should have just quit, but damned if she was going to let those breauocratic idiots have their way. Instead, she fumed as she worked the night shift, keeping the library open for the steady stream of fellows, graduate students, interns and 'others.' The woman she was pointedly staring at firmly fit into the others category in Samantha's mind.

The woman, wearing some god-awful Hawaiian shirt tonight, was up to something. Samantha was positive of it and she was going to catch her. From her position at the front desk, the Japanese woman narrowed her eyes as she glared at the red haired woman, who was sitting in the periodicals section.

"Errr... excuse me?" Samantha glanced scathingly towards the nervous intern - a fairly new one - standing in front of her, dismissed him, and went back to staring at the redhead.

"Umm... Ma'am?" he asked, nervous with dealing with the beautiful woman who had a reputation of being a real bitch. She was definitely fantasy material, but the scathing look he'd just gotten was causing him problems right now.

The librarian sighed. "What?"

"Do you have the current issue of Clinical Cancer Research?" Maybe, he dreamed, he would be the one to crack her shell and get her to go out for a date.

Manicured nails bit into the palms of her hands as she swiveled to face the man who had dared to

interrupt her stakeout. She pasted a fake smile on her face as she asked, "Is it a scientific journal?"

Sensing danger the resident nodded slowly.

"Then I believe that you might find it in the journal section of the library. That stands to reason, doesn't it?" The fake smile became even faker. The young man nodded so quickly his glasses nearly flew off, giving up any dreams of asking her to dinner.

Dismissing him firmly she swiveled back to her prey.

"Umm... Miss?"

The pencil Samantha had been toying with snapped; the cracking wood loud in the relative quiet of the library.

"Yessss?" she hissed, turning back to stare at him.

"Where's the journal section?"

Her jaw clenched, locking her face in a rictus of anger as she jabbed a finger upwards. After a second, the puzzled resident looked up, and then blushed as he saw the sign clearly pointing the way to the journal section of the library. Feeling death nearby, the young man took off before something bad happened. Dark eyes followed him until he was well away from her, then Samantha made certain her hair was still impeccably tied up, and that her neat gray shirt still remained impeccable. The remnants of the pencil were carefully brushed up and deposited into the nearby trash can.

If there was one thing that Samantha prided herself in it was being neat and precise in everything she did. Only then did she go back to glaring at the woman in the Hawaiian shirt on the other side of the library.

Carson was well aware that Ms. Samantha Sakamoto was staring daggers at her back, it was a fun little game she had started playing with the librarian about two weeks ago when she became aware Samantha was on to her. It was fun to torment the uptight woman, and see the frustration there because she just couldn't prove what Carson was up to. The safety mirror she had strategically placed in her line of sight clearly showed her the fuming librarian.

She lazily flipped through the magazine before getting the periodical assistant's attention. "Do you guys carry Playboy?" She laughed as the assistant blushed.

"I-I-I, um, I don't believe we carry that one." The nervous woman stuttered out looking to her boss in a flustered panic.

The click of high heels on the tile floor signaled Samantha's approach, summoned by the

assistant's nervous look. "What seems to be the problem?" her tone clearly indicating that whatever problem there was, it was entirely Carson's fault.

"This person w-w-wants to know if we carry, um, Playboy. I told her that we didn't. Is that right?" She squeaked out the last part.

"This person," Samantha used the term lightly as she stared down at the bright Hawaiian shirt, "should know this is a research library, and we do not carry such journals."

Carson turned around giving her most charming smile. "No biggy. I'm sure one of the Doctor's at the hospital will leave his lying around and I'll just snag it then. Just love the articles. Don't you?" The redheaded woman was doing her best not to laugh, but Ms. Sakamoto just looked so serious.

Samantha, for her part, was not amused. She might not like the night shift, but she was in charge of the library. "If you continue to harass my staff I will be forced to ask security to escort you out." Her lips quirked in a small smile, she really hoped the redhead would push. It would give her an excuse to have her thrown out.

"There was no harassment; just gentle inquiry. I mean, this is an institute of learning, right? Okay then, I'll just go meet my friend up in the journals and not 'harass' this poor underpaid assistant anymore. Have a great night." She gave a happy little wave then turned and bounded for the stairs knowing that Ms. Sakamoto wouldn't be far behind.

Samantha gave her assistant a tight-lipped smile. "Don't worry about her Annette, go take your break." She then spun around and followed after the departing redhead, intent on keeping an eye on her.

Carson took a sharp left once upstairs and headed for the elevators. She was not meeting her lunch date in the journals but the lovely and charming Ms. Sakamoto didn't need to know that. Hitting the down button she was happy to see the doors slide open immediately. Stepping inside, she hit the button for the first floor.

Downstairs again, she waved to the Periodical assistant, who did a double take, and then headed to the stacks to find Bruce.

The Asian woman glared and did a slow spin in the journals section of the library. Where had that annoying redhead gone? Fuming, she started down the stairs, back to the front desk.

Job done and wallet heavier, Carson emerged from the stacks. She paused for a moment and watched the librarian. Every once in a while the woman would glance up from the book she was reading and give a piercing glare around the library, looking for her, Carson had no doubt.

The librarian was pretty enough but she was certain the severe bun was cutting off blood flow to the woman's brain. Of course, the sharp Asian features, the bun, and the nasty attitude brought to mind a sort of dominatrix librarian. Carson couldn't help but grin at that mental picture. "Oh

yeah, I bet you're a naughty librarian," she mumbled to herself.

As if sensing she was being watched, Samantha turned, eyes narrowing as she scanned the racks for any sign of her quarry. She knew the redhead was doing something, probably dealing, in her library, and she would catch her at it.

Behind her someone cleared their throat then asked, "Am I doing anything exciting?"

Controlling the urge to jump, Samantha slowly spun around on her stool, the ever-present glare in place. "You" she jabbed a pencil at Carson "are not supposed to be behind the desk."

"You're a control freak aren't you?" Carson asked with a grin as she moved around the desk, "and since there are stacks behind your desk there are always going to be people behind your desk."

"People are allowed - it's just you that isn't."

"Oh well that makes perfect sense then. You know I'd bet you'd be even prettier if you wore your hair down once in awhile." Carson gave her adversary a grin and a wave. "See you tomorrow night, same time." She then turned and walked out the front doors.

An inarticulate growl of barely controlled rage from behind Carson was punctuated by the sound of another pencil snapping.

Carson entered the bowels of the Hospital with a grocery bag under one arm. "Lunch time cats and kittens." She opened the sack and tossed a banana and sandwich wrapped in plastic to Emily. "The lunch lady still refuses to make your sandwich." She sat up on top of the one beat-up desk that they all shared and pulled out a half gallon of milk and her own peanut butter and jelly sandwich. "Yummy," she mumbled before taking a bite.

"Hey, what about me?" Jay demanded as he wandered in from one of the back rooms carrying a tray of autopsy equipment.

She reached into the bag and pulled out another sandwich, tossing it to the thin man. "You know, if you ate meat you might get some weight on that frame of yours."

The thin man made a face as he unwrapped his veggie sandwich. "I see enough dead meat every day."

"True." Her blue eyes flickered from Johar back to Emily. "Your librarian was there again today."

Emily mumbled something, her mouth full of peanut butter. Grabbing the jug of milk, she forced herself to swallow so she could talk. "Did you talk to her?"

"Of course. She threatened to have me removed from the library. She's got a huge oak stick up her ass."

Johar arched an eyebrow at that, but said nothing as he continued to munch on his vegetable sub. The Goth grinned, "You of course didn't provoke her at all."

Carson's blue eyes got all big and she tried to look innocent. "Me?" She started laughing, "I asked if they carried Playboy. You would have thought I'd committed a sin. I tell you, only sexually uptight people work in libraries." She stuffed the last part of her sandwich into her mouth.

"Maybe we could fix her up with Jay." Emily teased the Pakistani, loving it when she got him to stutter and choke, just like now.

"Hmmm." Carson eyed her shy friend. "I don't know, Ms. Sakamoto, I have the feeling is probably a naughty librarian. I'm not sure Jay could handle all that kink."

The ocean was glassy and black, like a smooth piece of obsidian. The faint wind barely caused a ripple on the night inked waters. Dim lights from the marina spread out feebly, but nothing important came through here, mostly private speedboats that only saw the water on a warm sunny weekend. A few diehards had their boats docked year round but the rest of the moorings were only occupied during pleasant weekends. Nobody was around when the Elora Dannon, a small cargo ship headed for Seattle, plowed through a couple of boats, the dock, and finally smashed into the pier walkway, destroying the snack shack. There were no warning bells, or shouts of alarm, and the ship's engines just kept running driving the ship into the unmoving earth.

When the morning rays of a golden sun hit the water, slowly changing it from black to a dirty blue, the shore was no longer quiet and silent. Police cars choked the partly paved, partly gravel parking lot. An ambulance was making its second run; a pale, visibly shaken EMT shut the doors and slowly walked up to the passenger side door his boots crunching on the gravel. Getting in, he shut the door and wiped a hand through his thinning blonde hair. "Jesus. You ever see anything like this. It's like straight out of some Stephen King novel."

The driver, a large man who was losing the battle of the bulge, ran a hand down his dark beard then shifted out of park. "Hell of a thing," was his only answer as they pulled away from the ship. Another ambulance was waiting to take their place as yet another body bag was unloaded from the silent ship. "Did they say how many bodies were onboard?"

His faded green eyes shifted up as he searched his brain, "Um, something like 15, I think."

"Jeeesus," the driver swore, shaking his head as they pulled up to a stoplight. "Wonder what happened to those poor bastards?"

The guy in the passenger seat seemed to pale even further. "I have no idea. The CSI guy thinks they were smuggling in large game cats or something. All I know is, every single member of the crew I saw looks like an animal mauled them." He lifted a hand to his forehead and wiped at the sweat that had suddenly beaded there.

The ambulance started to move again as the light turned green and the driver shook his head. "Poor bastards," he whispered again as they headed for the hospital.

Back on the ship, a small African American woman was examining the ship's hold, making her way among the small and large wooden boxes as she followed a trail of blood drops. She came around a crate noting a bloody scrap on the edge.

"Oh Fuck," she muttered as the weak light from her flashlight struck a hunched over figure. "Sir, are you okay?" When the figure failed to respond, she approached. She quickly realized why the figure was hunched over; another man had his feet planted in his stomach. They had died in a bizarre freeze frame from an action movie.

The guy on the bottom had a handgun loosely clutched in one hand; his upper shoulder and throat had bite marks and deep bloody scratches. He had bled out; probably a major artery had been nicked. The top figure was covered in blood starting disturbingly enough at his mouth and trailing to parts farther south. There was a gunshot almost dead center in the man's forehead.

"Hutch!" she shouted.

"What?" an annoyed male voice responded from somewhere behind her amid the rows of packing crates.

"I found two more bodies. You have to see this to believe it. Its out of one of those action flicks you like so much," she answered, reaching for her camera.

"Really?" The voice sounded closer this time and a moment later a tall gangly man moved around the corner, his own flashlight helping illuminate the area. "Holy Christ. Look at that." The blue gloves he wore were already bloodied and he pointed back the way he had come. "Found another one back there, looks like something gnawed off his leg."

She shuddered, her dark skin fading to grey for a second, until she got her stomach under control. "There's something different about the guy on top. See it?" She quirked an eyebrow at her sometimes partner.

"You mean other than the bullet hole in his forehead?" Hutch responded, looking a little green as well. Moving to the side, he peered at the two bodies, wincing a bit at the smell. "Huh, he's the only one that doesn't look like he's been used as a buffet lunch."

"Yep. I think we found our ground zero." She clapped Hutch on the back. "If I didn't know better I'd say these two were fighting."

The tall man worriedly looked at the dead men, then back at the woman. "You think this one guy killed everyone and... what? Ate them?"

She shrugged. "That's a theory I guess. We'll know more once we get this pretty boy back to the lab and pump his stomach. We can also get Nate to do a mold of the bites and compare them to his dental work."

Hutch stared at the dead men, shuddering slightly. There were days when he truly hated his job. "Come on, let's go get someone to help us move these guys," he said, eager to be out of the darkness of the ship's cargo hold.

The night shift progressed in its entire snail like glory until 20 minutes to eight when a shrill beeping noise echoed through the basement rooms. A pale hand reached off the metal table and slapped the alarm. With a horrible moaning noise, a body sat up, a white sheet slipping down the body as two arms stretched upwards. "Okay kids, night shift is over. Time to get up before our work-a-holic counterparts show up," Carson mumbled.

An interrupted snore came from the corner as the Pakistani yawned and slowly woke up from his nap. "I hate the night shift," he whined as he always did at the end of the shift, standing up and wincing as his back cracked.

"Yeah well that's what you get for not being white. If you were white and boringly normal, Hamilton would assign you the good positions. And if you were female he'd suggest a few positions," she said sliding off the table. Scratching her bright red hair, she went to the desk and started check marking all the duties they had supposedly done for the night.

"And if you were smart you'd let him have those positions," Emily mumbled through her own yawn, tossing off the white sheet she'd been laying under on top of one of the other steel tabletops. "Telling him to stuff it up his ass was fun but probably not the greatest career move you've ever made." The Goth grinned and hopped off the table. "But it was really, really fun."

Carson grumbled, "Yeah, yeah. Like I'd let him go where no man has gone before. Big ego, prick, man can stuff it up his ass. How could I be the greatest doctor alive if I couldn't look at myself in the mirror?"

Emily put an arm around Carson's shoulder and gave her a quick hug. "Awe, you can play doctor with me anytime you want." Grinning, the dark haired girl waggled her eyebrows as Jay started coughing in the corner.

Carson stuck out her tongue at Jay and hugged Emily back, "If you weren't one of my best friends, Em, I might take you up on that."

"You two...!" the short man started to say in aggravation as he rearranged his glasses, but was

interrupted when the service elevator dinged. Shaking his head at both Carson and the laughing Emily, he made certain there weren't any empty beer bottles lying out. The doors to the old elevator slid up with a grinding sound and the two orderlies inside started to wheel two corpses draped gurney's, covered with white sheets towards them.

Blue eyes widened and Carson let out a whistle. "Damn! We miss out on all the fun." She smiled as Truman Daly, the day shift manager, walked in after the orderlies. "Wow, Truman, two dead corpses and on your shift. Just remember to wear protection."

"I'm safer with them then I am with you," the balding man sneered, snatching the night watch sheet from Jay's hands as the dark skinned man offered it to him. "My crew will be doing real work today, unlike you bums. We've got twenty bodies coming in from a ship in the harbor."

She smiled back at him thinly. "True, but are they safe from you? If their poor families only knew into whose hands they had entrusted their loved ones. How's that fingernail collection going?"

There was just something about Daly that creeped her out, maybe it was because he looked so much like a walking corpse that it was unnerving. He was short for a guy, thin, and she bet if she ever saw him with his shirt off, she'd be able to count his ribs, even the floaters. He made eve Jay look overweight. She shuddered at the thought of him with his shirt off.

The clock behind him chimed and he gave her a nasty smile. "Look at that, your shift's over." Behind them, the elevator went back up for another set of cadavers. "Don't you three have a rock to go crawl under?"

"Not a rock, but there's a beer with my name on it. Have fun with the dead, but not to much fun Daly," she shouted as she left the back room.

Johar followed closely behind rubbing his eyes. "You know? Oddly enough I think he lives for those morning chats."

"Fingernail collection?" Emily whispered, grabbing her jacket. "Where does he keep it?"

"I don't know. I saw it on an episode of the X-files and Truman struck me as a guy who'd get off taking fingernails from the dead and keeping them in a shoebox under his bed."

The Goth wrinkled her nose at that, although she looked more thoughtful than disgusted. "Well, I'm off, there's a horror movie marathon on this afternoon."

Carson just shook her head. "Me, I've got a date with a beer and a nudie mag. Tell Snake or Carla, or whoever you're dating this week I said hi." She gave Emily a wave then punched Jay in the arm, as they got upstairs.

Samantha Sakamoto wanted to scream, actually to be more accurate she had screamed, stomped around a bit, and kicked the tire of her two-door car. Not only had she been transferred to the night shift, after moving to this god-forsaken-city - because of a girlfriend that had left her a month later - but now she'd locked her keys in the car. "It's not fair," she muttered, crossing her arms and glared at the cars that were beginning to fill the parking lot as the day shift began. Triple-A was supposedly on its way to help her get into her car, but they were taking their sweet assed time about it.

"Ah, fairest damsel, may I be of some small assistance?" a voice asked from behind the librarian.

The Asian woman closed her eyes, gritting her teeth. "Go away." She didn't need this. Not now, and not from 'that' excessively annoying woman.

Carson grinned. Oh, and here she thought she was going to have a boring morning of beer and porn, before giving in to a nap filled with warped dreams. "Hark. What is this? A foul metal beast has eaten your keys." She rushed forward falling to her knees and setting her ear against the cold metal. "Nay, fair maiden, I can not leave you in this your time of need." Her grin got larger as she wondered if Sam was going to burst a blood vessel.

There was just the barest hint of a twitch at the corner of the dark eyes that were staring at Carson with very obvious distaste. "Get away from my car," she growled, fingers clenching and unclenching behind her back.

Carson's grin got sly. "Well, if I get away from your car that just means I'll be standing that much closer to you. So consider this the lesser of two evils." Carson stood up and walked around the car examining it.

"Triple-A will be here any minute." Samantha tried to sound firm about that, but there might have been a hint of doubt in her voice. It had been nearly an hour after all.

After a moment, Carson paused and looked around frowning when she didn't see anyone from hospital security. "You didn't happen to rip security a new asshole or anything because it's odd for them not to be here. Especially since you're a relatively attractive female in distress."

"I am not in distress," the librarian growled, shifting back and forth on her high heels. She really just wanted to get back to her apartment, but apparently, even that was out of the question this morning. "Besides those idiots are useless."

"Oh, my mistake. Have fun waiting for 'Triple-A'." She used her fingers to quote Triple-A, and smiled sympathetically. "Last time I used them it was three hour." A lie for the express benefit of Sam's discomfort. She gave a little wave and started walking in between the cars.

Carson chuckled to herself. Steve Parnel was the only Triple-A shop in town and, if she knew her mom's old boyfriend, he was stoned out of his mind. She'd let the naughty librarian stew while

she got some tools from her car.

Behind her Samantha stamped her foot, crossed her arms over her chest, and leaned back against the aqua blue Toyota. "I'm going to kill someone," she muttered. She wasn't sure who, although the annoying woman from the library was a front-runner in the race.

After about 17 long minutes, Carson was back and happily asked, "Triple-A show up yet?"

"I hate this city," was Samantha's only answer, arms crossed over her chest, glaring down the parking lot towards the road.

"I'll take that as a no." Carson hummed a nonsensical song and walked over to the car. "I just had to find a big enough stick." She pulled a small metal bar out of the light jacket she was wearing. "Have this open in a jiffy. I'll just smash the windows and you'll have your keys," Carson said seriously, having to bite her tongue to keep from laughing at the irate woman.

"What?" the librarian asked as Carson pulled out the bar. "Stay the fuck away from my car!" she yelled, coming up off her leaning position against the car so fast she tripped. One high-heeled shoe went flying one way and Samantha went the other, right into Carson.

Startled, Carson dropped the bar; it clanged loudly on the cement. Not braced for the impact she staggered back trying to catch Samantha and keep her balance. She managed to catch the librarian but they both fell. Her breath whooshed out of her lungs as her back struck the ground and the Samantha fell on top of her.

Startled dark eyes stared down into Carson's.

Carson wheezed trying to catch her breath. "You know there are so many things I could say right now that the possibilities make my head spin. But I'm going to let them all go and just ask you to move your knee a little to the left."

Dark eyes narrowed as Samantha remember who it was she was lying on. Instead of answering, she used both hands to shove herself off Carson's body and then hobble upright. "Don't even think of hurting my car." Now where had that shoe gotten too?

The redhead sat up wincing. Gently she rubbed her lower back. "I was just kidding. I wasn't really going to smash your window. Jesus, you need to chill out." Crouching she found the metal jimmy bar. "I was going to open your car door." She held it up waving it about.

Snatching up the high heel shoe from the ground, Samantha held it almost like a makeshift club. "How?" the librarian asked warily.

Carson took a deep calming breath and walked over to the driver's side door. In a matter of seconds she had slipped the thin piece of metal down the windshield and down into the guts of the car door. The metal surfed back and forth until she got it caught on the part she was seeking

and the lock popped.

Brushing a small lock of dark hair that had gotten free from her face, Samantha blinked in surprise as the lock popped. "Oh." Steadying herself on the hood, she managed to put the shoe back on. Suspicion returned almost immediately "Do you steal cars?"

Carson rolled her eyes. "Actually, Sam, the proper response is 'thank you.'" Carson pulled the jimmy out and walked past the librarian. Once she was sure she couldn't be seen, she winced and tried not to limp, positive that she had bruised her tailbone.

"Thank you, and don't call me Sam!" was shouted after her, quickly followed by the slamming of a car door and the sound of an engine revving.

The steady beep, beep, warned anybody nearby that the forklift was backing up. The large wooden crate it carried shifting as the forklift turned and then sped off towards the warehouse where the ship's cargo was being sorted. An overhead crane groaned as it lifted another bundle of cargo from the ship's hold, many of the crates stained with blood. "What the hell is all this crap?" a man wearing the bright orange vest with the words foreman on the back growled to the person standing next to him, swiping a hand across his forehead.

"This crap is all stuff from that ship that ran aground." Lauren grumbled, rubbing her eyes. She was tired, a bone weary tired that made her want to cry and throw things all at the same time. Where the hell was her partner, Hutch?

She was so going to kick that skinny white boy's ass. With a large sigh, she went back to the ship's manifest, double-checking the numbers on the crates, as they were lifted out, to the numbers on the piece of paper in her hand.

The man grunted and used a small flashlight to study the sheets on his clipboard. The walkie-talkie crackled to life with directions from the team organizing the crates in the warehouse. "You're sure there's nothing in them that's toxic or something right?"

Her bloodshot eyes glared at him from over the clipboard. "The homeland security team was the first on site. We couldn't go in until they cleared it. So if your men start losing body parts take it up with them." She went back to the numbers. God they were starting to blur together.

She wondered again, where Hutch was and got a vision of him asleep at the chair behind his desk. She'd give him 15 more minutes then she was calling the station.

Sudden loud shouting came from within the warehouse, followed almost immediately by the sound of wood shattering. The foreman was already starting to move towards the big metal building when his walkie-talkie crackled to life. "Hey boss, you better get in here, we've got a problem," a worried voice shouted.

"Fucking A, just what I need," the man grunted, shifting into a brisk jog.

Loren threw up her hands in frustration. What else could go wrong? She ran after the foreman. "What's happened?" she asked briskly.

Instead of answering, the man stepped into the brightly lit warehouse and swore again under his breath. The forklift that had passed them only moments before was stopped in the middle of the warehouse. The large wooden crate it had been carrying had fallen, toppling several other crates as it went, and shattering on the concrete floor. The contents of the crates, which seemed to be mostly packing material, had spilled everywhere. "Jesus Christ! Decker, what the fuck were you doing, playing bumper cars?" the man yelled, stalking towards the unfortunate red-faced driver of the forklift.

The African-American woman snorted. That looked like exactly what the guy had been doing. "Great, more paperwork," she mumbled, thinking of the expression on her boss's face when she handed him this report.

The foreman took in a breath, obviously intending to rip a bloody strip off the driver for being so stupid.

"Hold up!" she shouted. "I need to go take a look and take some pictures so we have it for our records." She groaned, as she got closer and saw the mess. For a second she fumbled wearily for the camera at her side, but then she had it up and was focusing in on the mess. She snapped off some quick shots. The stuff looked like tribal art and figurines. Thankfully, none of it looked damaged due to the packing materials. Letting the camera rest back by her side she looked at the manifest looking for the shipper. Hugo Greene. She paused. That name rang some bells in her head. She'd have to look into it, if she ever got back to her desk.

"We'll clean up this mess," the foreman growled, glaring at the driver, who was trying to disappear into the floor. The way the older man said the word "we" it was crystal clear who exactly would be doing the cleaning.

She sighed. "Leave it. I'll have to have the CSI guys come in and bag and tag everything. Just for stupid lawsuit reasons now." Yep she was so kicking Hutch's ass.

A spiky black head bobbed up and down to a rhythm being blasted out through a pair of clunky grey headphones. Dark brown eyes watched the numbers highlight one after another as the elevator groaned down into the bowels of the hospital.

The metal box lurched to a stop and a hand fell off the cart. The orderly blanched and then crouched down picking it up. His nose wrinkled in disgust and he examined the wrist that looked like a dog had chewed on it. The index finger twitched and he screamed a loud scream that would do a pre-teen girl proud, just as the doors opened.

He threw the hand on to the white-sheeted figure and hurriedly pushed the gurney out into the hallway. The swinging doors to the morgue slammed open. "Here's another," the guy shouted and took off.

The morgue was already full and sheet covered corpses lined the walls as they awaited logging and storage in the refrigerator units. Those units were almost full as well and it was anybody's guess as to where they were going to have to start storing corpses after that. Scratching his nose, Truman Daly considered his options. Maybe they could commandeer one of the large walk in refrigerators upstairs. Autopsies were still being carried out on three more members from the ship that had run aground. "Hey, stop slacking, and move it. We've got more bodies on the way down," he snapped as he caught a few of his staff grabbing a quick cup of coffee.

The staff all rolled their eyes. "We need more space," someone grumbled. Another asked, "Why aren't they being taken to the hospitals in San Francisco?" Then a third person shrieked, "Jesus Christ, he winked at me. That fucking corpse winked at me."

"Knock it off." Truman snarled, shoving the man who had just shrieked away from the corpse. "Get a grip. God, you people are pathetic. Log them and put them on ice, do your jobs people."

Carson came into the morgue shaking her ass and singing, "Shake your groove thing. Shake your groove thing. Yeah, Ye...." Turning around, she stopped mid-shake. "Well, I've just lost my groove."

Emily, laughing at her friend's antics, ran into her back as she suddenly stopped just inside the door of the morgue. "Hey, if you want me to feel you up there are easier ways."

The walls were splashed with red splatter. "What the...?" She turned, looking at Emily. "I think someone on the day shift nicked an artery. Look at all that."

"Eww, I'm not cleaning that up. I think we should make Jay take care of it." Shaking her head, long beads swinging back and forth, she grinned mischievously up the stairs at the Pakistani as he slowly climbed towards them. "Clean what up? Why are you grinning at me like that?" he demanded, suspiciously.

"Truman tried to take a live one. I keep telling him that he should stick with the dead ones, they don't struggle so much, but does he listen." She pointed to the walls.

Making a face at the mess on the wall, Jay slipped past where Emily and Carson were standing. Opening the door to the little office they all shared he stopped, blinking. "Someone had a party and didn't invite us Carson." His voice had a high strained quality to it.

With a sigh, Carson went over and set her stuff on the desk. She looked over the desktop for any notes that would explain the mess on the walls. "You think Truman is getting back at us?" she asked with a frown when she didn't see any notes. Papers had been tossed everywhere.

Jay reached down to pull his chair upright. "He does not seem to like you," the dark skinned man agreed.

"Hey guys, you should come see this," Emily called from deeper in the morgue, her voice sounding very odd.

"Kay," Carson mumbled and picked up the bag and tag sheet, looking it over as she wandered back to Emily. "What's up?"

The younger woman tugged on Carson's sleeve to get her to look up from the file she was looking at and nodded towards the main area of the morgue. "That."

Unlike the entryway that had a splash of blood against the wall, the morgue itself was red. Blood was smeared across the walls, bloody handprints accentuating the bright red splashes. The floor was covered in it along with pieces of flesh. The tables were empty, but white sheets routinely used to cover corpses were strewn about on the floor, stained red.

Oddly serious, Carson looked at the morgue and at the file. After a few seconds, she said. "Well, I'm freaked. Anyone else?"

"How many bodies are supposed to be here?" Jay asked, coming up to stand next to the other two.

Carson's blue eyes darted down the sheet. "Um...." Her eyes got huge. "Looks around 20. Holy crap."

Emily started to back away. "That's it, I'm calling security. In the movies, this never ends well."

Carson's mind was trying to process everything. "What? Wait. There's a perfectly logical explanation." She went silent trying to think of one. "Okay. Call security. I'm going to go check the freezer."

The Goth grabbed the phone, wrinkling her nose at the blood splattered across it. "Ewww." Holding it up away from her black ponytails, she quickly dialed the number for security. A second later, she cut the line and then dialed again. "The line's busy. How can the line to security be busy? They don't do anything!"

Johar shrugged as he tried to pick up his little space on the desk. He really just needed a little bit of order in all this chaos, something that wasn't splattered with blood and out of whack. His dark skin was pale and his breathing a little rapid. "Maybe they're dealing with the police on whoever broke in and pulled this prank," he tried to reason.

Carson put the login clipboard under one arm as she went to open the freezer door.

"Jay, there's like ten gallons of blood on the floor, you really think this is some kind of prank?" Emily demanded, redialing and still getting a busy tone.

Johar took a deep breath. "Emily, it has to be a prank. The world revolves on certain truths. This is not a movie."

Carson eased the thick metal door open and looked in. The bodies inside lay at rest with white sheets pulled over them. The room was free of chaos; the dead were dead. She took a deep breath almost laughing at herself for jumping on Emily's horror movie bandwagon. Zombies. What had she been thinking? Walking over she pulled down a sheet and gave the body under it a quick once over. Bullet in the head, not much brain matter left. She went to the next body checking it, broken neck, and the next. This one she had to pull all the way down to see where the legs ended at the knees.

As she went to check on the next body out of the corner of her eye she saw a finger twitch. She paused and turned to face the corpse. Maybe he wasn't dead, she reasoned with herself. "Sir?" She kind of hoped he wasn't. Truman would be in so much trouble. Pulling a light out of her pocket, she pulled up an eyelid. "Sir, can you hear me?"

No response. Fingers to the neck revealed no pulse. She laughed at herself again. "Carson, you are losing it." She turned to the next sheeted body.

Emily pulled Johar with her to the door of the freezer, dark eyes large as she watched the other woman moving from corpse to sheet covered corpse. "Carson, maybe we should just, you know, go get somebody? Call the Police?"

With a sigh, Carson let the sheet fall back. "That's probably the best thing. This is seriously freaking me out. I swear one of the corpses twitched." She gave a strained laugh. "Let's go up and report this to the front desk upstairs. They can call security and we can wait for answers in a well-lit place with lots of exits. Everyone agreed?"

Johar, still holding the clipboard, with the night's duty sheet on it, to his chest, nodded. "Let us go quickly."

Emily, eyes still wide, grinned a little. "Careful Johar, if this were a horror movie you'd be the first to go. The guy who freaks out is always the first to go."

Carson rolled her eyes and bravely led the retreat from the morgue. "If this was a horror movie we'd all be the first to go. Minorities and women going down a long dark hallway... dear God, none of us are wearing red, right?"

"Nope, black all the way," Emily answered cheerfully, and then nearly did a nosedive as her feet slipped in a puddle of blood. "Ewww...."

Carson looked down and gave a sigh of relief until she noticed a strand of her hair. "Crap. Well, I'm cannon fodder." With a grin, she started towards the elevator.

Johar followed right after Emily, unbuttoning his red over shirt and tossing it into a waste bin as they passed, leaving him in a thin white t-shirt. At Emily's amused look, he forced a wavering smile. "No need to take chances, right?"

The sightless staring eyes of one of the corpses in the cold storage suddenly blinked and its eyes dilated. The legless man's mouth opened and a groan creaked out. Once dead flesh began to twitch and it tumbled from the metal table. The atrophied brain sent only the simplest of commands. "Food." Over and over, neurons fired this message. Flesh tore off fingers leaving bone exposed as it dragged its legless body across the cold floor to the door. Unable to move forward anymore it started ramming its body over and over again into the door not stopping.

"Sir, you need to remain seated. Sir, you can't come back here! Jesus, he just bit me! What the fuck? Ma'am just remain calm!" These and various other things were being shouted as the elevator doors slide open. The normally sleepy emergency room was utter chaos. Orderlies, nurses, doctors, and hospital administrators were running around, most splattered with blood.

"Wow," Emily whispered; dark eyes wide and ghostly against her blanched skin as she stared in shock at the scene outside the elevators. An orderly, his face, and white uniform red with fresh blood, screamed as three security guards struggled to restrain him. "Umm, how about a different floor?"

"I wish. First floor, front desk," Carson replied stepping out of the elevator. As a man growled and broke away from the security team trying to subdue him, she grabbed the bright red fire extinguisher off the wall and whacked him in the head. He spun about 90 degrees and dropped.

"Nice one," Johar nodded, impressed, as the large man collapsed. He started hiding behind Carson instead of Emily and ignored her not so subtly whispered, "wimp."

"Hey. Excuse me. What's going on?" Carson yelled at one of the doctors as she rushed past. There was no answer the doctor kept on moving.

"I'm seriously thinking a bunker in Montana would be a good thing," Johar whispered then flinched as teeth snapped inches from his face.

"Hello? Hey, there's a lot of blood in the basement, don't you think you guys should look into that?" Emily yelled at the three security guards, who ignored her and rushed off to the next patient trying to bite his doctor.

"Carson, I don't think they care about the morgue," the Goth grouched, annoyed at being ignored.

"I'm sensing that this is a lot more serious than blood in the morgue. There is a disturbance in the force young grasshopper." She started moving; Johar and Emily falling into a single file line behind her as she swung her newly acquired fire extinguisher. Once she even fired the cold foam into the face of a raving young woman who had blood ringed around her mouth. "That is so cool." She grinned and fired it again just for kicks.

"Did she just make a star wars reference?" the younger woman in the back demanded. "And how come she gets the fire extinguisher?"

"I heard that grasshopper, and for your information I stole it off the wall fair and square."

"Can we just get out of here?" Johar cringed, trying to step around a lady who was restrained to a bed and snapping at him. "Where did all these people come from? It must be drugs. They are all hopped up on PCP," Johar babbled.

Carson and Emily just looked at him.

"Is it a full moon?" the small woman in the black clothing wondered, watching as another ambulance pulled up to the emergency room doors and unloaded another screaming patient.

As they slammed through a set of double doors, Carson's blue eyes lighted on a familiar figure. "Hey Hamilton!" she shouted.

The tall, distinguished looking man, with black hair that was graying in just the right places to make him look like a trustworthy doctor, looked up and pulled a face. "I don't have time for your crap right now Mahoney."

"Ooohh, it's the big boss," Emily whispered to Johar, mock trembling. "Maybe I should kneel down in front of him or something?"

"We are in the presence of an exalted lord," Johar answered Emily, his tone brittle dry.

"What crap?" She snarled. "I just want to know what the hell is going on. There's blood all over the place in the morgue and I'm missing 14 bodies. I'm just starting to think I'm in a Resident Evil game."

"Well since you've managed to lose 14 bodies I can now finally fire you. So thanks for that bright spot in my day." Hamilton and Carson were now almost face-to-face snarling at each other.

"Right, and I'll just turn in that little home movie I have of you and one of the day shift nurses."

He sighed and looked down his hawk like nose at her. "If you must know, and I'll use small words so you'll understand Mahoney, from what we can tell that cargo hauler must have been carrying some sort of biological agent that is affecting some of the people in town. People have

been falling into violent rages and attacking each other without cause. Huntington does not have the manpower to deal with such an event and the armed forces have been notified. Now if you'll excuse me I have lives to save." He grasped his clipboard to his side and marched off.

Emily and Johar raised both arms and then made bowing motions as the senior doctor marched off. "We basked in the presence of his greatness, Johar."

The dark skinned man nodded sagely. "I feel wiser just for being here." They both broke out snickering.

"What an ass!" Carson shouted.

"Now if you'll excuse me, I have lives to save. Quickly, Carson, to the bat cave!" Emily poked her friend in the shoulder, trying to get her to calm down.

Blue eyes looked over at Emily. "Holy end of the world, Batman. Come on guys I'm thinking we need to scream like little schoolgirls and flee in terror. Whenever the Army is called in to deal with infectious disease in the movies, don't they just bomb the living heck out of everything?"

Both Emily and Johar sobered at that and shared a worried look. "Yeah, but that's just in the movies. Right?" Emily asked, as they moved away from the chaos of the emergency ward.

From up ahead of them came a shrill noise.

Carson rubbed her temples, "Great someone has set off the fire alarms."

Instead, a tiny man with short blonde hair came running at them. The shrill noise was him screaming, he was being chased by two snarling and growling men who were blood splattered.

"See, just like that; scream in terror and flee like a little school girl. Nice form." Carson swung her extinguisher as the man ran past. It connected with a bone-crunching thud that made everyone wince and the first attacker was dropped like acid at a grateful dead concert.

Off balance, Carson was only able to use the red metal as a shield between her and the other man.

"Fuck! Some help!"

"Axe!" Emily shouted, pointing at the nearest fire station. Johar took off at a sprint back down the corridor, then tripped, and went sprawling. He slid to a rest at the base of the wall, managed to shove himself upright and then stared at the window with a perplexed look.

"How do I open it?" he yelled back.

"Break the glass you idiot!" Emily yelled ducking as Carson swung around with the fire extinguisher.

"Oh, right," he said sheepishly then used his elbow to break the glass. Grabbing the heavy axe, he started back down the hallway. "Here! I got it!"

Carson screamed and let go as the bloody man she was wrestling with ducked his head down and bit her hand. "Fine, have it you freak." The tank dropped and the man tripped over it slamming into the floor.

The redhead quickly back peddled "what are you waiting for Jay? Get him."

"What?" He blinked. "I can't kill him!"

The man growled and started to get up off the floor, face slick and red with blood.

"Okay, remember what shorty was doing a few seconds ago?" She points to the blond man who is cradling his right hand to his chest. "On the count of three. One, two... three." In a dead run, they all started screaming and heading towards the front doors.

Down one of the stacks where the scent of dust and knowledge permeated old books that no one had looked at in years, an odd noise came slithering out into the lighted areas. Drag, thump. Drag, thump. Drag, thump.

Samantha Sakamoto frowned as she considered the doors to the library. The night shift was always a slow one, but there was always some resident ducking in to do some research. Tonight there was no one; despite the hustle and bustle, she'd seen in the hallways of the hospital when she'd come on duty at ten o'clock. Tapping a pencil against the book she'd been staring at, Samantha sighed. How had it all come down to this? She was supposed to be well on her way to a PhD of her own, instead she was staffing a hospital library at night. Life, she decided, really sucked sometimes.

The odd noise coming from the racks caused her tapping to stop. The dark haired woman hadn't realized there was anybody else inside the library. What was that sound? Was someone dragging something? Standing up, the Asian walked around the counter top, her heels loud on the linoleum floor. "Hello?"

There was a hollow moan that echoed eerily around the wing, but the drag, thump never stopped.

Samantha rolled her eyes. Perhaps it wasn't going to be quite so boring a night as she'd thought. "Whoever that is, stop it. This is a library, so be quiet." Maybe it was that annoying woman with the bright shirt.

There was another moan although this one sounded like there might have been a growl attached to it. As the figure got closer to the lighted area, its form could be made out in the light streaming through chinks in the books.

"Look, be quiet or I'll call security," Samantha snapped. She was about to march towards the offender when a sliver of doubt held her still. This had to be someone screwing around with her, right? Almond eyes narrowed. Whoever it was she was really going to let them have it.

Drag, thump. The right leg was shorter than the left where it was broken at the ankle. Drag, thump. Light struck the torso revealing a neat 'Y' incision on the chest, and then it was back into shadows.

Despite herself, she gasped and took a step backward then a second, until she felt the smooth wood pressed up against her. "This isn't funny, I'm calling security." Blindly she reached behind her, grabbing the phone.

The figure stopped and eyes seemed to glint in the darkness zeroing in on the librarian. It shifted its stance and began to move toward Samantha.

Jabbing a button on the old clunky black phone, she scowled at the busy signal. "Useless idiots." Samantha disconnected then tried again, with the same results.

The florescent lights hit naked, pale flesh as the figure emerged from the stacks. The skin was shrink-wrapped to the bones, blue veins etched darkly like a roadmap across the skin. Black eyes seemed to glow with a fierce hunger and it made a beeline for the librarian. It raised its arms, one hand missing where it had been gnawed off at the wrist, and made a grab for dinner.

For a second the dark haired woman stared at the creature that was lumbering towards her. The logical part of her mind, the part she valued above all else, froze. Such a creature did not, could not, exist. It was simply impossible by any law of nature that Samantha knew. Thankfully, the less logical part of her mind took over, kicking the gibbering logical part aside. She heaved the clunky black phone, a relic from the eighties or even seventies, at the creature's head.

The creature did not even attempt to duck and the phone struck it, glancing off the side of the face, tearing away skin, which hung loosely flapping as it moved. It started forward again its mouth opening revealing teeth and a black hole that was its mouth.

"Fuck it." Samantha turned and fled, surprisingly fast for a woman in high heels. Bursting through the library doors, she glanced up and down the empty hallway for help. "Where is everyone?" she demanded, turning back to the library door. She'd figure out what was going on later. Grabbing the keys on her belt, she started flipping through them, trying to find the door key. "Come on, come on."

"This one." she slid the key into the lock, looking up at the window in the door just as she started to turn the lock.

Then she screamed as a mangled arm smashed through the window.

Carson's face was red as they cut behind the library to the parking lot. "So far so good," she wheezed. "God, I'm so joining a gym."

The short blonde man who was tagging along piped up. "Could we stop for a moment? I really need a doctor to look at my...." The last part was drowned out by a piercing scream.

Carson stopped and hesitated at the sound of the scream. Her conscience warred with her common sense. "Damn it!" she growled then changed course and started running around the building.

"Hey wait! Seriously, I've lost a lot of blood," the blonde guy huffed out. "I really need a doctor." He trailed off when it was obvious no one was paying attention to him.

Samantha flew down the hospital hallway, her high heels long gone. The thing followed her, having burst through the cheap assed door of the library. With a scream, she slammed through the metal doors at the end of the hallway and tumbled out into the parking lot beyond.

Shoving herself up off the ground Samantha whipped around, brushing hair that had come loose from its topknot away from her face. Where was her car?

The zombie hit the door and the metal dented. It plowed onward its mass pressing against the lock bar opening the door.

"Go chase someone else!" Samantha yelled as the metal door swung open, the dead body stumbling after her.

Carson's face was even redder as she came around the corner. "Oh God," she wheezed. "Jay, go kill that thing." She gestured weakly to the thing fighting its way out the door.

The Pakistani skidded to a stop next to her, chest heaving as well, axe clutched to his chest. "I can't kill someone!"

Emily trailed behind them, cursing as she tried to keep up and leaving the blonde tag along behind. "Hey guys, wait for me!"

Carson waved her hands wildly at the thing. "It's not a someone, it's a zombie. It has a 'Y' incision on its chest for crying out loud."

Seeing his face was still wavering in indecision, she took a deep gasping breath getting oxygen into her abused lungs and said. "Fine. Give me that thing."

Samantha backed away as the thing managed to get out of the door and into the parking lot itself. "One of you idiots, *do*, something!" the blazer-wearing librarian shouted.

Jay hesitated and then handed over the ax. "Carson I don't know... what if he's just sick?"

She grabbed the axe out of Johar's hands. "Its okay, I like your ability to rationalize the chaos around us. It means, when this is all over, you can return to society a normal human, but really it's the living dead." She hefted the fireman's axe, her hand stung as the bite mark on her hand pulled open.

"God how many times to I have to come to your rescue?" she remarked to Samantha as she passed her, hefting the axe over her head. "Hey buddy?" She addressed the naked dead man.

He growled and lunged at its new target. Carson brought the axe down letting gravity do most of the work. The blade powered its way through the skull into the brain. Carson stared in terror as the man growled and continued to drag and thump his way toward her two more steps before finally dropping.

She felt funny. Intellectually she knew it wasn't a real person, but still she had just stuck an axe into some man's face. Her stomach twisted itself into a large knot.

Samantha brushed her hands through her hair, tidying it up as she tried to get a bit of control. "Well, you're almost useful for something," the librarian admitted, grudgingly. "One of your musketeers is bleeding all over himself though," she pointed out as the blonde man finally reached them.

The bleeding man in question looked quite pale but he managed to smile at the librarian in thanks. "I really was going to the emergency room for an emergency, and then those guys started chasing me." He held up his hand where a large nail was driven through it.

"Wow." Emily moved closer to peer at the wound. "How'd you do that?"

The short man cleared his throat nervously. "You see, I was tinkering with some stuff in my workshop when two chemicals that should never meet, did. So when they met and shook hands there was a small reaction and well...." He held up his hand.

"You should disinfect that and get tetanus shots," Samantha said, reciting the information for puncture wounds that she'd read in a first aid book. "You sure we can just leave him here?" she asked, nodding to the dead body. Distantly the sounds of sirens could be heard.

The small man smiled brightly, "I got a tetanus shot last month when an engine I was modifying blew up." He lifted up his blood spotted t-shirt exposing a small beer belly, and pointed at a scar right above his belly button.

Samantha shifted her gaze from the corpse with the axe buried in its head to the white beer belly being exposed nearby with the exact same look of disgust on her face.

Carson shook her head as the conversation became weirder.

Samantha rolled her eyes and stared at the dead man on the ground. "We should call the cops." She paused. "Maybe the army."

"Too late," Carson replied coming over to look at the hand wound. "According to the almighty Dr. Hamilton it's already been done."

"That's it. I'm leaving," the librarian announced, turning to walk towards her car. She moved gingerly, her pantyhose the only thing still on her feet.

"Did it hurt?" Emily asked prodding the bloody man's stomach. Johar rolled his eyes and offered the blonde man a handkerchief to wrap around his injured hand.

The man's grin got bigger, "Well not at first 'cause, you know, big boom. It was awesome. Then I realized, well my experiment had failed and a big piece of metal was hanging out of my body. I realize some people pay a lot of money to have that done but it wasn't really me." He pushed his wire-rimmed glasses back up his nose.

Carson shook her head again dislodging the picture from her mind and called after the librarian. "Um, Sam, you might want to stay with us. Safety in numbers and all that."

Tendrils of black hair, that had come free from her usually meticulous bun, flew as Samantha whirled, giving the annoying woman a blistering glare. "My name is Samantha, got it? Not Sam, or Sammie, but Samantha." Turning back around she stalked off two paces, stopped, winced, and let her head drop slightly as she realized where her keys were. She sure as hell wasn't going back inside the hospital for them. Turning around she walked back towards the group of insane people, watching the dark skinned man help the crazy inventor wrap his hand. On second thought, maybe she should just brave the hospital. How bad could it be?

Carson struck a Captain America pose. "Ok team, the hospital is overrun. I say we stick with the plan, make a break for my truck, pile in, and run away as fast as we can. All in favor?"

"Maybe I'll just go get my keys and...." Samantha trailed off as four police cars screeched to a halt in front of the hospital. Policemen jumped out, running inside with guns drawn. Seconds later, shots could be heard from inside. The librarian held up her hand. "Aye."

Jay quickly raised both his hands and the blonde man did the same, winced, then raised his unhurt hand.

"Okay, good, I'll just get my axe and we'll be off." She stared at where it was imbedded and her stomach did a little loop de loop. "Never mind." She turned and started off in a brisk jog.

"Hey shorty. I have a first aid kit in my car. I can stitch up your hand." She huffed out trying not to deplete too much precious oxygen from her body.

"M-m-my n-n-names not shorty. It's Jeff."

She eyed him with his shaggy blonde hair and weak goatee, which consisted of a few wiry hairs, "I'm calling you Shaggy."

Samantha looked back towards the hospital longingly, grimaced, and followed after the four people. She tried to keep up but running in nothing but pantyhose through a hospital parking lot was a painful experience.

"Are you a doctor?" he asked hopefully.

Johar and Emily laughed.

"You wish," the Goth chick said between laughs.

"What?" she huffed out, as her face was turning slowly red from the long overdue exercise. "I could have been a doctor. A lot of people say I have skilled hands."

That only caused Johar and Emily to laugh so hard that they had to slow down to catch their breath.

Samantha passed them as they were still chuckling. "She's a dealer," the librarian announced, eyes narrowed as she watched Carson run. She still hadn't been able to prove it, but she would eventually.

"Blah, blah, blah. She's a dealer," Carson mimicked. "I wouldn't be making fun of the person who is saving your ass. I could decide there's not enough room in the truck for your ass."

The Asian woman snorted, opening her mouth to tell Carson off when she stepped on a particularly sharp piece of gravel. Cursing, she hopped around, trying to limp after them towards Carson's truck.

For a moment, Carson felt bad. Then she figured it was just Karma and it wasn't like she could carry the woman. She wasn't that butch.

"Wait for me," Samantha called, hobbling towards the pickup truck they were headed toward. She really had to find some new shoes. "Oh no, tell me we aren't going in that?"

"What's wrong with it?" Carson asked looking at her truck, highlighted in the harsh yellow lights of the hospital parking lot. "It has four new tires and it runs." The redhead fished around in her pockets for her keys.

"Umm, Carson?" Johar asked, peering into the back and seeing through the rusted steel to the asphalt below. "I can see through your truck."

"Well, since most of my money went towards college, and then medical school, which Dr. Hamilton booted me out of, I do the best I can." She flushed feeling slightly embarrassed.

"Hey this things a classic," the geek said eyeing it appreciatively.

"Thanks, Shaggy," Carson mumbled finally fishing out her keys.

"If it runs, it's perfect," Emily chimed in, giving her friend a one armed hug. Shots echoed behind them followed by screams from inside the hospital.

"I don't care if it falls apart half a mile from now, just start it!" Samantha demanded, hobbling up to them.

Carson grinned and hugged Emily back, "Okay. Two up front and three in back. There's a little rug in the back you can unroll so you don't get paint chips all over you." She unlocked the driver's door and got in leaning over to unlock the passenger's door.

Samantha gave the glare of death to Johar as he started to head towards the passenger side door. "I'll rip out your tonsils," she said seriously. The Pakistani blinked, and then backed away. "Right, back it is."

Emily, Shaggy, and Johar all piled in the back, as Carson turned the ignition and prayed. "Come on start, first time, come on baby."

The librarian slammed the passenger side door shut, then frowned as she tugged on the seat belt, which didn't budge.

The engine coughed and sputtered but finally caught. "Okay, hold on." She threw the truck into gear and sped off.

"To what?" Samantha snapped, reaching for something, anything, to hold onto.

"Jesus aren't you supposed to be a smart woman. Be gentle with the seat belt. Ease it out and it will work. If you yank on it like a bell rope it won't move."

Not deigning to answer that, the Asian woman eased the seat belt out and buckled in.

Two more police cars sped past them, heading for the hospital. "That man. He was dead wasn't he?"

"Yes," she answered sharply but her mind was questioning what she had done. What if she was wrong?

"That's completely impossible you realize," Samantha said, glancing behind them to see if any of the three stooges had fallen through the bed of the truck yet.

"What's impossible?" Carson asked as she turned on her right turn signal.

"He was moving, he chased me through the hospital, and he was dead." The librarian turned back to see where they were going. "Where are we headed?"

"Out of town." She turned out of the hospital lot on to the darkened still sleeping streets of Huntington, though there were a few lights on from the sirens.

As they drove down the Old Shore Highway, the ocean was visible on their right in all its stoic serenity. Ripples could be seen as the waves rolled up onto the rocky shoreline highlighted by the highway lights. Carson yawned, feeling zapped of energy now that there was no immediate crisis.

Samantha fidgeted in the passenger side seat, turning to look behind them every few minutes. "I just got chased by a dead guy." The librarian shook her head, having a hard time making herself believe it. It seemed so, so impossible.

"Yes," Carson agreed, mid-yawn. "Excuse me. Yes, dead guy. Chased you. All better now." She looked into the back to see the trio all huddled together.

The Asian woman shot the driver a look of scorn, muttered something about smart asses, and crossed her arms. They were passing the last of the outlying village houses; soon they would hit the highway. "What is that?" Samantha asked suddenly, sitting up a bit straighter in the uncomfortable seat. A mile or so ahead of them lights filled the road.

The redhead squinted, "I don't know." She gently pressed on the break slowing them down.

They rolled along over some rolling hills before it became very clear what they were seeing. It was a roadblock. There were three other cars idling in line, an old bronco was in the lead the driver's window rolled down and a person in some sort of uniform was talking into the window.

"Crap."

"Yeah," Samantha echoed, squinting at the lights. "Are those army trucks?"

Carson pulled over into the break down lane and slowly came to a stop. "I have a bad feeling about this."

Emily shoved open the small sliding section of the rear window. "Hey guys, this our welcoming party?"

"I guess," Carson answered. She watched the Bronco get back on to the highway headed back to town. "Well double crap. Man, the army moves fast."

"How did they know about this?" the librarian asked, watching curiously as the second vehicle, a battered sedan, followed after the Bronco. "Maybe they'll tell us what's going on?"

"Well hospital procedure would be to call the CDC, and then they probably called the Army to quarantine the town I was just hoping to get out before they got here," Carson said while she flashed her lights at the Bronco but the driver passed them without slowing. "Dickhead!" she shouted out her window.

"What a way with people you have," Samantha remarked dryly as the driver of the sedan gave Carson the finger as it too sped past. The comment surprised a giggle out of Emily, who quickly decided she'd leave the two of them alone, when the small Asian woman gave her a scathing look, and retreated to the back of the truck's bed.

Carson turned in her seat, her blue eyes hard with anger. "Look you. Just keep your comments in the peanut gallery. I know you don't like me. It's as plain as the stick jammed up your ass. So if you can't stand me that much you're welcome to get out of the truck at any moment so you are not subjected to my drug dealer ways."

Dark eyes narrowed as Samantha built up a full head of steam, clearly intending to rip a bloody strip in Carson. A sudden squeal of tires on asphalt cut her off before she could start though. The dark four-door car ahead of them had apparently decided to take its chances with the army. The driver floored the accelerator and the car sped towards the barricade, blasting past the soldiers who had been talking to the driver of the Bronco just a short time before.

Shouted commands at the driver didn't slow him. The hail of bullets from the top of the Humvee parked diagonally across the road did. The sharp staccato bursts ripped through the car with flashes of tracers interspersed between them. Samantha could feel her mouth hanging open as the car slowed, then coasted to a stop near the army trucks. "Holy crap."

Carson didn't even wait to see the fallout. She killed the lights on the truck, flipped a U-turn, and started driving very slowly back to town. Once they had crested a few hills, she turned back on her headlights.

"They just killed that guy." Samantha was well aware her voice was rising to near screeching levels. Two impossible things in one night was a bit much to handle though.

"Thank you for yet again stating the obvious," Carson muttered. She pulled off the road and parked in the parking lot of a Dairy Belle.

The Dairy Belle was located near the edge of the small city, and often used as a landmark by locals driving into town. Next door stood an old white washed church, its single steeple still holding the same bell that tolled every Sunday morning as when it had been built generations earlier.

Samantha raised an eyebrow as they parked in the middle of the empty lot. Not even the Dairy

Belle was open after midnight. "What are you doing? We have to get out of here!"

"Stop shouting at me!" Carson yelled at the librarian. "I'm stopping so we can figure out what the hell to do."

The Asian woman crossed her arms, glaring out of the windshield. "I wouldn't have to shout if you weren't so dense."

"Where the fuck do you get off? I'm sorry, next time you're about to become a snack for a zombie I'll just keep on running. 'Cause if we hadn't stopped to save your ass we'd probably have gotten out before the Army set up camp." Carson face was flushed and her blue-gray eyes had turned grayer with anger.

"Really? You and your band of merry losers?" Samantha sarcastically asked, glancing towards the rear of the truck where the three in question were still seated. The young man was showing off his wound again, describing in graphic detail how it had happened and what he had been building when it had. Emily was staring at the nail with rapt fascination and Jay was wincing in sympathy to his explanations.

"It's a fucking peninsula Sam! Where would you like me to go, because the army has control of the only strip of land in and out of Huntington? So, I thought hey, maybe we'd should stop and discuss options before running into a pack of bloodthirsty zombies. As for that merry band, at least I have friends in this time of crisis. I don't see anyone looking for your ass!" Carson yelled getting into Samantha's face.

"I don't need anyone to look out for my ass! I've been doing just great on my own. I don't need a drug dealer and her mortuary goons to help me!" She didn't need anybody's help and she was going to be damned if she'd let this annoying, white drug dealing, horrible shirt wearing, mortuary technician tell her otherwise.

"Hmmm, let's see. Who killed the evil zombie? It was me! I stuck an axe into that guy's face." She blinked realizing that she was practically on top of the librarian and was feeling really rather turned on, if the funny feeling in her pants was any indication.

"Um, guys should we stop them?" The newly nicknamed Shaggy asked his fellow huddlers in the back of the truck.

Johar glanced at the ruckus in the cab, shrugged, and turned back to their conversation. "Not unless you want to try. I'm not getting my guts ripped open."

"Can you make it move?" Emily asked, still staring at the nail and completely ignoring his question.

"Huh? Well I don't know." He pushed his glasses up with his good hand and then tried tensing the muscles in his hand seeing if the nail would wiggle.

Back in the cab of the old truck, the librarian shoved Carson back against her door, moving with her and pinning her there. "You aren't the only one who can kill," she growled; dark eyes narrowed dangerously, her breathing speeding up with her pulse.

Carson squirmed against the door, this was so wrong, the woman had called her basically the lowest form of life on the planet, and she was just getting more and more turned on. "Um, wow," she mumbled when she realized she couldn't move.

Samantha knew she shouldn't be doing this. The fact that they could have died, that she probably would have without Carson's help earlier at the hospital, was sinking in. The fact that she'd had to be saved by the person who annoyed her most, that she'd been weak, annoyed the librarian. Actually, it pissed her off. She, who had never once sought help from someone, who had always prided herself in being self reliant, had needed help. From a drug dealer! It was enough to make her want to scream. Instead, she was pressing the very same woman up against a door in a dirty pickup truck, well aware of the warm flesh beneath her hands. Dark eyes dropped to study Carson's lips and she unconsciously licked her own.

Carson's eyes tried to look at what Samantha was looking at on her face. Was it a bug, or a booger? Her eyes went cross-eyed, oh her lips. Oh her lips. She squirmed a little more maybe there was hope for the librarian.

There came a knock on the window separating the cab from the truck bed. "You two aren't going to hurt each other are you?" came a timid voice.

Samantha quickly shoved back from Carson and slammed open the small hatch set in the rear window. Reaching out she grabbed the man's arm, digging her nails in, and dragged him down to her level. "What's your name?" she demanded.

"Jeff, Jeff King, um, Ma'am." he said with a squeak.

"Well Jeff, Jeff King, if you ever interrupt me again I'll rip that nail out of your hand and use it to gauge out your eyes." she shoved him back out of the cab, slammed the hatch shut and crossed her arms over her chest as she glared out of the front window.

"Are we just going to sit here all night or are we going somewhere?" she demanded, refusing to look at the woman in the driver's seat.

Carson's reddish brown eyebrow hitched. "Um, what? Oh yeah, well where would you like to go?" She asked shakily wondering if she could get a moment alone somewhere just to take the edge off her arousal.

"Away from you," was the immediate answer that sprang to Samantha's mind. For once though she didn't say it. "Home," she heard herself say instead. "I don't live far from here," she added,

scowling as she realized she was undoubtedly going to have to bring people to her place. She didn't like people, as a general rule.

"Sure." Carson turned to the small window and opened it, looking into the bed of the truck. "Hey guys. After much discussion Sam and I have decided to go to her place so we can regroup and maybe figure out an exit plan."

The blonde with the nail still in his hand nodded shakily and huddled between Johar and Emily.

"We should probably do something about his hand, Carson." Johar said, eyeing Samantha warily after hearing her threaten Shaggy.

"I'll take care of it once we're there, okay? Honest Shaggy I would have made an excellent doctor."

"But she works with dead people now," Samantha muttered.

Carson glared at the librarian. "Yeah but somehow I get the feeling you should be the one working with the dead." She threw the stick into reverse and pulled out of the parking lot.

"They can't be worse than the living," the librarian muttered under her breath. "Turn right," she said louder.

"Definitely a dominatrix in her spare time," Carson muttered but did as she was told

As they drove into town, they could hear someone shouting on a bullhorn several streets away. "Residents of Huntington. Please lock your doors and do not let anyone in. Huntington has been placed under quarantine."

The voice droned on and on about proper authorities, and that those who disobeyed would be punished.

As they drove around behind the Dairy Belle, Samantha sat glaring out of the windshield, arms crossed over her chest. She ignored the driver, preferring to fume, something that she had developed into an art form over the years. Squinting, she peered up at the night sky, wincing when a bright spotlight flashed over them as a helicopter flew past. "Cavalry is here."

"Yeah but will the Calvary know what to do or will innocent people die?" Carson asked her grumpy passenger.

Getting only the silent treatment in response Carson focused back on the road waiting for a terse turn here, and go forward, until she got a pull over.

The librarian grimaced as she glanced into the back of the truck cab at the three others. Why in the world did she want to bring these people into her house? A blare of a horn jerked her back to

the street as a dark car raced past them, far too fast for the narrow city street.

"Jesus. Watch out!" Carson shouted as she saw someone stumble out into the street. The car tried to swerve and the driver laid on its horn, but all in vain. There was a sickening crunch as the stumbling body was eaten up and spat out underneath the car's rear tires. The car leapt the curb and squashed itself on a light pole.

"Oh my god," Samantha whispered eyes wide as she stared at the car, it's front end crumpled inwards, horn still blaring as steam leaked from the hood, all illuminated by the street lights.

Not even thinking about it, Carson got out, reaching into the back of the truck, grabbing her first aid bag, and slung it over her shoulder then rushing over to the car.

"Are you insane!" the other woman yelled, and then cursed as she got out of the truck and started hobbling after her in the ruins of her pantyhose. She glared at the three in the back of the truck. "Are you going to do something or just sit there?" she demanded sarcastically.

Shaggy held up his hand showing the large nail still imbedded in it.

"Wimp." she scowled hobbling along.

Carson reached over the woman, who was now impaled on her steering wheel, and angled her hand until she found the ignition and turned the car off. She was fairly certain the woman was dead but searched for a pulse. "That is why you should always wear your seatbelt little lady." Carson mumbled, letting her hand fall away. She scanned the car seeing worldly possessions that had been hastily thrown in, before she turned away to the person that had been run over.

Samantha slowed to a walk, Jay and Emily coming up behind her to stare down at the quite obviously dead person. "Hey, Carson," Emily called, grimacing a bit at the smell. "This guy looks like he was buried."

"What the fuck?" Carson mumbled. She fumbled in her bag and produced a slim flashlight, which she turned on. The guy was covered in thin layer of some dark substance but the big thing was there wasn't any blood.

"Is it just me or is this guy bleeding embalming fluid?" Carson asked Johar and Emily.

"Why's he wearing a tux?" Samantha whispered. This was the second, no wait, the third dead person she'd recently seen. That was three more dead people than she'd ever seen before.

Carson picked up the hand. The flesh was shredded exposing finger bones. She let the hand fall back to the ground then lifted each eyelid and shined her light into them. Nothing but a cloudy film. "This guys been dead maybe a week."

The car door was shoved open with a metallic scream and a body emerged with a horrible groan.

Five heads whipped around to the noise.

"She's dead, right?" Emily asked, staring at the woman that slowly started to walk towards them, part of her chest crumpled in on itself.

Carson raised the flashlight to the chest, highlighting the bloody imprint of a steering wheel. "Um, yeah. Ribs crushed, probably puncturing the heart and lungs. Death was instantaneous on impact. The steering wheel prevented her from being launched out through the windshield."

Shaggy shook his head. "No airbag," he said sadly, studying the woman as she lurched towards them. "You know that makes me think of an invention I tried once."

"Umm, guys." Samantha started to back away from the group, staring to the left of them towards the old churchyard.

"So why isn't this guy still going?" Johar asked pointing to the corpse at his feet.

"Guys," Samantha said a bit louder, starting to back away even faster.

"I have no idea. What?" She turned to the bossy librarian.

The Asian woman pointed towards the cemetery behind the old church. "We should go."

"This can't be happening." Johar whimpered his eyes going wide.

"Not again." Shaggy said taking a step back.

Samantha turned and started to run for one of the houses on the opposite side of the street. "Move you idiots!"

"Time to go." Emily agreed.

"Okay kids follow the bossy woman," Carson agreed, herding the group after Samantha.

Shambling hordes of the recent dead were pulling themselves out of the earth in a horrible mockery of birth.

Jerkily they gained they're land legs and spilled out from the cemetery to satisfy the only urge they felt, to feed.

"You know, I could design a better security door for you." Shaggy offered helpfully as he held out his injured hand for examination.

Samantha stood by the street side window, staring down with the others at the hordes of the dead who were moving about in the street below. The apartment itself took up the entire second floor of a nice sized house. The furnishings were a bit sparse, except for the books. There were bookshelves across every wall, and more books piled nearly everywhere there was space. Books in the kitchen, in the bathroom, under the coffee table, and in the bedroom. The entire place was stuffed full of books. "I like to read." Samantha had growled as they entered, slamming and locking the door behind them, daring any of them to comment, while thanking God that her spare key was still where she'd left it.

Carson said nothing but she was wondering if there was an X frame hidden somewhere in the apartment, but she kept that to herself. She instead focused on cleaning the area around the nail. Holding the pliers, which Samantha had chucked at her head, when she had asked for them, she asked, "You ready to swab the wound when I pull this, nurse Emily?"

"Whenever you are, oh great, Dr. Carson." Emily mock swooned, fluttering eyelashes and all, and then made a face. "Ugh, I think I just made myself sick."

"Well no getting sick on the patient, Nurse Emily, or we will have to have a little discussion later." She was happy to note Shaggy had relaxed with their joking and she pulled the nail, going for her suture kit while Emily blotted the blood that pooled out of the wound.

"Don't you dare get blood on the sofa," Samantha commanded, causing Shaggy to hold his arm hastily out over the wooden floor.

"You should see this, Carson. There are some of them that are barely even bones." Johar called, from his lookout in the kitchen window.

Carson, "uh huh'd," while she stitched Shaggy up.

"What do you think is causing this?" The small man asked looking kind of pale.

She sprayed more deadening agent on the skin and then finished up. "I have no idea: planetary alignments out of whack, necro hoodoo, coming of Christ, or cows having too much gas. I haven't got the foggiest. Why don't you ask the reader?" She got up and went into the kitchen to throw away the gloves she was wearing and wash her hands.

"Necromancy, Virus, and Aliens are the top three causes in the books," Samantha answered absently, grimacing at something down in the street. "Misses Hood's cat just got eaten. I hated that thing," she muttered, smiling a little.

"So what's the plan?" Johar asked looking around at everyone's face.

Samantha crossed her arms, saying nothing. Emily studiously started to bandage Shaggy's hand, while the fussy haired engineer bit his lip. As one, they all turned to stare at Carson.

Carson came into the room with a shrug and looked for a place to sit. "I'm thinking of going to the local market for some beer and porn, and dying with a smile on my face. Personally I'm tapped out of ideas."

"Good to see you'll die as you lived, a moron," Samantha muttered.

Carson's face turned bright red. "Fuck you! I haven't seen you do one productive thing. All you do is bitch and moan, and tear us down for our personal flaws. But at least we're trying!" Carson stormed off, the bathroom door slammed shut behind her.

"Where's your TV?" Shaggy asked as Emily finished wrapping his hand.

"I don't have one," Samantha answered calmly, walking towards the bedroom and closing the door behind her.

"She doesn't have one?" He blinked, his tone conveying what a sacrilege that was "How can she not have one?"

"We're doomed," Johar said sobbing into his hands.

"It's not that bad," Emily remarked, getting up and going to see out the window for herself.

"Um, well maybe we should sit down and look at this logically," the blonde man said nervously. "I mean, the dead don't just come to life. There has to be some sort of trigger. An event that put all of this into motion. Maybe if we made a list of what we know, it would help." He got up looking for a paper and pen.

Carson sat on the toilet wondering how her mother and half-sister were doing. She smiled wryly. Her mother was probably passed out and zombie chow and her sister was probably in some hotel room giving a blowjob to some client. They'd never have a clue to the chaos that was going on outside.

There was a slight feeling of guilt for not rushing out to find them but she knew that they were doing the same thing, if they were even aware of what was going on. She sighed and ran the hot water in the tub. Happily, she noted it was hot, so life wasn't all bad. She was going to get a hot bath, in the naughty librarian's bathtub, of all places.

In her bedroom, safe from the people who had invaded her domain, Samantha removed what was left of the pantyhose then went to find a nice pair of slacks to replace the ruined skirt. "Stupid zombies," she muttered, tossing her stuff aside. "I hope they get Mary-Ann." The librarian spared a small smile for that thought, and then went back to her search.

As the early morning rays struck the frightened city of Huntington, Carson was sticking her nose into every nook and cranny of Samantha's apartment. The trio of Shaggy, Johar, and Emily were

passed out on the couch and the floor.

The door to Samantha's bedroom eased open and a yawning librarian peeked out. "Crap, it wasn't a dream," She growled, spotting the three people passed out on her couch. She'd rather hoped it had been a nightmare. Sighing she crept out, wearing the red silk pajamas she'd slept in, and tried to move to the bathroom without being seen.

Carson's head popped out from the doorjamb to the kitchen. Honestly, she tried to behave because she was mad at Samantha but her eyes wandered just the same.

"You're a pig," Samantha growled without turning around, slamming the bathroom door shut behind her.

"Blah, blah," Carson huffed. She moved into a small den that housed, big surprise, more books. There was a tiny desk that housed an old computer, and she noted happily, there was a phone line connected to it. She turned it on and waited what seemed like forever to connect to the Internet.

Scanning the news, she saw a small blurb on how Huntington was under quarantine for a biological agent. "My ass," Carson mumbled.

The sound of a flushing toilet came from the bathroom, followed by running water as Samantha took a quick shower. By the time she was done, and had slipped into her bedroom to change, the three on the couch were starting to wake up. "We still have electricity and water," the librarian announced entering her small den, somehow not surprised to see Carson behind the old computer.

"Again with the stating the obvious," Carson muttered.

"Are you always this annoying?"

She looked up from the computer, "So where do you keep the whips and chains?" Carson asked innocently.

Samantha leaned over the desk, her smile a touch feral. "If I had any, don't you think I would have used them to shut you up by now?"

Carson blinked and went to her happy place. "So what you're trying to tell me is that I need to work harder."

"What I'm trying to tell you is that I hate you."

Reaching out she caught Carson's hand, hauling it closer so she could peer at it. "What's this?" Samantha demanded.

"No you hate people in general. Me, I have a special place under your skin." She tried to grab her

hand back, "What's what?"

The Asian woman clung onto it, refusing to give it back. "This. Is this a bite?"

"Oh that. Yeah. Some guy bit me at the hospital yesterday. See, its already healing, its no big deal. Although if you want to play nurse...."

"What guy bit you?" Samantha demanded, ignoring the leer.

"One of the guys chasing Shaggy." She tried to get her hand back again. "Do you work out or something? Can I have my hand back? It's obvious we aren't having a moment here so I'd like it back."

Samantha suddenly released it and stood back from the desk, watching Carson intently with an odd expression on her face.

"What?" Carson sat at the computer looking back. She looked down at her shirt. It was relatively clean since she had been wearing a hospital scrub over it. She looked back up, her blue eyes looking at Samantha in question.

"Do you feel any different? Fever? Aching? Strange urge to eat flesh?"

"Huh?" Carson got up out of the computer chair. "I feel fine. Why are you concerned about health all of a sudden?"

"Virus is number two on the top three reasons for zombies." She let the rest stay unsaid.

Carson's eyes got wide with understanding. "Oh, and here I thought you had a moment of caring." She stormed out past Samantha.

Samantha refused to feel like an asshole for having raised what she thought was a valid worry. This, she decided, was just another reason why she didn't like people. They always blew things like simple questions, out of proportion. "I was just asking!" she yelled after Carson's retreating back.

"What's going on?" The trio asked sleepily as Carson stomped into the room.

"Nothing. She's just being her charming self again," Carson huffed, going into the kitchen and raiding the refrigerator

"For your information, I can be charming when I want to," Samantha muttered, stomping across the room to peer out of the window. She winced as she saw the chaos in the streets below. A thick column of smoke was rising from the direction of the hospital, and the streets were littered with debris and bodies, some of which still moved.

Carson grunted in the kitchen and drank right out of the carton just for spite.

"God, they act like an old married couple," Johar whispered to Emily.

Emily snickered until Samantha turned around to glare at her.

"What's going on?" Shaggy asked, looking back and forth from the kitchen to the annoyed looking Librarian.

"She has a bite. On her hand," Samantha announced, feeling it was best if they all knew, just in case.

The three stooges blinked for a moment before their eyes went wide in understanding.

Flicking a non-existent bit of dust off her sleeve, Samantha pretended not to notice as she turned back to studying the scene outside.

"Guys, chill out. I'm not going to come down with a sudden case of dead," Carson grumbled, seeing their panicky faces, and glaring at the librarian's back.

"I think it's getting worse out there." The Asian woman announced, in the same tone one would use to say 'I think it's going to rain'.

Emily, Johar, and Jeff just looked back and forth from one woman to the other as if they were watching a tennis match.

"Well, you have the dead killing people and those people getting up. Its kind of a slippery-slope of creationism," Carson muttered, scratching her itching hand unconsciously.

"Carson? Maybe we should, you know, disinfect that or something?" Emily said from her position on the chair. The Goth girl was watching the other woman itch her hand with a fascinated look on her face, as if she almost hoped Carson would change right in front of them.

"So are you going to start chewing on us?" Shaggy asked what they all were pretty much thinking.

Carson sighed and walked over, smacking him on the back of the head. "No." She turned to Emily "Yeah probably should get it cleaned. You wanna do the honors?"

"I'll help." Johar said quickly, standing up with Emily. He wasn't going to be left in the same room as the Librarian without Carson or Emily for back up.

The reflection of Samantha's face in the window smiled.

"My med bag is in the kitchen." Carson stuck her tongue out at the librarian before following

Johar and Emily back into the kitchen.

Shaggy sat nervously for a second, fidgeting. He cleared his throat but said nothing. Then he too got up and went into the kitchen.

The smile got larger and Samantha pulled a chair closer to the window so she could sit and watch outside. For the first time she wondered if she should have gotten a television, or even a radio, to replace the one's that her ex had taken.

A half-hour later Samantha entered her kitchen, pausing at the doorway to watch the three people who were huddled over Carson's hand. Medical supplies were spread out across her small kitchen table and a small reading light had been brought in to provide better illumination. How, she wondered had she ended up with this, this group of... people. For some of them she used the term lightly.

"Emily, unless you have a very powerful microscope you can't see if I've been infected with anything. Just wrap it already," Carson muttered.

"We have a problem," Samantha said finally.

"And what would that problem be?" Carson asked, her head poking up out of the huddle over her hand. "The one where sooner or later the zombies figure out that there's live meat to be had or the one where we run out of food?"

"I think we are going to have to leave before either of those." The Asian woman walked closer, trying to peer through the huddle at where Emily was wrapping Carson's hand.

"Careful. Don't get too close or I might eat you." The leer on Carson's face gave away the double meaning of her statement.

Samantha stopped and sneered. "I'd kill you."

Carson just chuckled. "You say that a lot. But you're warming up to me, I can tell."

"Umm, excuse me?" Shaggy interrupted before the two of them got going. "You said there was another problem?"

Johar kept his head down and whispered, "They're doing it again."

"What?" Samantha looked at the man, annoyed, and then shook her head. "Right. I don't think anyone's putting out the fires."

"Yeah, it's kinda weird." Emily whispered back, taping off the bandage around Carson's hand.

"We need to get out of town, but we can't do that; ten to one the armed forces have this town locked up tighter than the brothel owner's cash box. So that leaves one other option." She looked down and took her hand away from Johar and Emily who were gripping it tighter with each word she spoke.

"I made a fire extinguishing bomb, it was really neat: it exploded and flung foam everywhere." Shaggy said wistfully, lost in his own little world of inventions for a moment.

Samantha gave him a strange look and then turned back to Carson. "Anyway, you were saying?"

Carson was also looking at Shaggy oddly at the strange jump in topic. She cleared her throat. "Anyways, we need to find the source of the zombie infestation and stop it."

"Uh, Carson?" Emily looked back and forth between the two others for support. "We don't know what started it, do we?"

Carson leaned back in the chair. "What's the only thing that has happened in this town the same time people started walking post-mortem?"

"I got a nail in my hand." Shaggy offered helpfully, holding up his injured hand.

Samantha shrugged; her days had been going about as well as any of them ever went before she nearly became zombie food at the library last night.

"They were getting a lot of corpses yesterday." Johar said slowly, frowning as he tried to remember where they had been coming from.

Carson rolled her eyes. "Don't any of you pay attention when Truman is yelling at us? That ship that ran around? All the dead bodies came from that ship and from the bodies I saw, they didn't die in a boating accident."

Emily and Johar looked at Carson blankly. "Sorry, was he yelling at us again? I went away to my happy place," the Goth chick quipped.

The legs of Carson's chair hit the floor with a thump and she leaned forward, letting her head rest on the table with a thump. "What am I going to do with you guys?"

"Toss them to the zombies?" Samantha offered hopefully, only partly joking.

"You know I like you, right Carson?" Shaggy said hastily.

Sitting back up she retorted, "No. There will be no tossing of my faithful minions. Ok minions, time to start plotting. We need to find out if that boat was connected in any way to our current infestation of living dead."

The lights flickered and died, leaving only the sunlight coming in through the windows to illuminate the room. Shaggy looked up at the now dark kitchen lights. "The electricity lasted longer than I thought it would."

"There goes using my computer to find out things," Samantha sighed.

"Police station," Johar stated.

"What?" Carson blinked.

"The police would know what's going on. They probably investigated that accident, plus there will be guns and hopefully people to protect us there," he answered thoughtfully.

Carson beamed. "Well done minion." She patted him on the back.

"The police station is six; no wait, seven blocks from here," Samantha pointed out. "And I think someone set fire to your truck sometime last night."

"What?" Carson shot up from the table then went and pressed her face against the window trying to look out.

"See? That's where you parked it right?" The librarian shoved Shaggy aside to push herself up next to Carson and point at the smoldering truck below. A car had flipped over next to it, and burned as well.

"Oh man," Emily whispered, peering around the librarian's shoulder.

"Shit." She knew it would be forever until she could afford another vehicle.

"Sorry," Johar offered, patting Carson on her shoulder. He knew she'd liked that rust bucket of a death trap. "It's in a better place now."

She pulled away from the window. "OK now it's personal. I need a chainsaw." She looked at Shaggy.

He looked back. "What?"

"Make me a chainsaw, you're the engineering geek."

He sighed in relief. "Why don't we just go to a hardware store and get one?"

"Pffft. You and your logic."

"There's one opposite the church on Main Street." The Asian woman pointed down the block, past the cemetery.

"Fine." Carson strode toward the front door. "Teach those flesh eating creeps to torch my car," she grumbled.

"Wow, look at all those fires." Emily pressed her face against the window to see up the street, opposite the way Samantha was pointing. "Is the end of your block on fire?"

Samantha winced, looking around her apartment at all her beautiful books. Which one's to save? It was going to be impossible!

"Um, Carson maybe we should all go together. Safety in numbers," Johar pointed out.

"What? Fine," she huffed.

The light shone weakly through gathering dark clouds on the burning town of Huntington. Carson slunk down the street pausing every once in awhile. She wondered two things while she did this. One - why did she have to go first? Two - why did Sam have a baseball bat? It seemed sort of low class for the librarian to have in her apartment. She didn't complain and actually found the wood of the bat comforting as she gripped it tightly in her right hand. It just seemed out of place.

A zombie lurched out of the shadowy entrance of an alleyway and she came to a stop plastering her body to the brick wall of a building grunting as bodies thumped into her from behind.

The librarian in question was doing her best to manage a rucksack overflowing with books.

Carson grinned. Feeling the hand resting on her ass she turned her head and looked at Samantha. "I knew you were warming up to me," she whispered.

The librarian narrowed her eyes, opening her mouth to yell at the annoying woman. Realizing that was a bad idea under current conditions, she smiled suddenly and pinched, hard.

Carson jerked in pain and surprise smacking her head against the brick wall.

Blue eyes glared back at the smiling librarian.

Johar shook his head, turning to Emily. "They're acting weird again. Maybe we should lock them in a room and let them work out this thing they have going on."

"They might kill each other," Emily whispered back.

"I'm afraid their going to get us killed, if they don't kill each other first."

Carson stiffly moved forward as the Zombie started off across the street dragging its intestines behind it.

Samantha wrinkled her nose at the sight, tasting bile.

Shaggy nearly fell over as Emily suddenly moved forward, and he had to jog to catch up.

Blue eyes stayed looking forward not wanting to see what could be causing such a horrible stench from inside the alleyway.

"How much farther?" she asked. She could feel sweat starting to gather on her face and the palms of her hands.

"At the corner. See it?" The librarian pointed at the small hardware store.

"Thank goodness."

Curious, Shaggy looked to see what that god-awful smell was. Was that a... his face lost color and he hurled the meager contents of his stomach.

The creature lurching across the street stopped.

"Uh oh," Emily said, grabbing Shaggy and dragging him even as he continued to retch.

"Uh oh," Samantha echoed, as they suddenly became the center of attention. "I think we should make a run for it," the librarian announced, craning her head to see more and more undead starting to head towards them. "Now would be a good time."

"Holy...." Johar started.

"Crap," Carson finished. "Single file kids lets all run now." They broke into a panicked run.

Carson easily kept up with the librarian due to the fact she was lugging a sack of books around.

"Um, this is kind of a personal question," she huffed out.

"What?" Samantha puffed, trying to move faster, even with what felt like a ton of books on her back.

"But I know I can trust you with this. If I happen to shuffle off this mortal coil will you make sure to torch my body?"

"My pleasure. Now shut up, I'm running for my life here."

The redhead just grunted and then said. "But you can only torch me if I'm dead, no cheating." She dropped back to help Emily who was dragging a frightened geek who had picked up a hitchhiker.

A zombie, which was nothing more than an upper torso, had grabbed his leg and was trying to grab some lunch on the go.

"Shaggy, there is just something about you they find tasty." She hefted the bat and brought it down again and again. Bones grated and broke with a sickening sound, and finally the hand released as Carson swung the bat with such force it caved in the side of the skull. Congealed blood and rotting brain matter splattered over her neck and chest.

"We better hope it's not a virus," Samantha grumbled, using her bag full of books to bash aside a wandering zombie that was between them and the hardware store.

"Emily, tell me I'm getting massive butch points for this," Carson whined grabbing Shaggy's other arm and helped the Goth girl drag the small man forward.

"You are queen of the butch," Emily huffed, trying not to be too disgusted by the brain matter that was now splattered all over her.

The librarian slammed into the doors of the hardware store, nearly bouncing off them. "Oh crap! It's locked!" she shouted back to the others, frantically tugging on the doorknob.

Carson rolled her eyes. "Johar, help the lady. Put that manly body to work."

Johar rushed the door, and bounced back off it again just as quickly. "Ouch," he whined, rubbing his shoulder. "It's hard!"

Samantha rolled her eyes, and then worriedly took in the large crowd of zombies that were now shambling towards them. "Umm, does somebody know how to pick a lock quickly?"

Lifting up the gore encrusted bat Carson muttered. "Got your lock pick right here." She tossed it to Johar. "Just picture the doorknob as that bitch from payrolls head, the one who keeps calling homeland security on you because you're a terrorist."

Johar grabbed the bat, grinned, and slammed it down on the old-fashioned doorknob, which made a very satisfying crunch before falling off. "Oh yeah. Who the man!"

Samantha shoved the door open and tumbled inside. "I've never heard that said with an accent before."

"Look at all the toys!" Shaggy babbled as he was helped inside, in a bit of shock after nearly having become food.

Carson slammed the door shut and frantically searched for something to wedge the door shut. "Guys, a little help."

A half gnawed off face slammed into the door window, smearing it with blood. "Here!" Emily grabbed a heavy metal crowbar and ran towards Carson.

As Emily slid the crowbar in the handles, Carson's blue eyes began to search for wood and nails. "Let's get this boarded up."

Samantha left them to it. The librarian set her bag of books down on the counter top then went and made certain the metal fire door at the back of the store was dead bolted shut. "We're safe back here."

Carson just grunted, and started to hammer the nails that Shaggy was handing her into the 2x4 that Johar was holding.

"Hey, amateurs move out of the way." Emily grinned grabbing a nail gun from off the rack and holding it up. "Look at this."

"To bad it has to be plugged in to work," Carson mumbled around the nails in her mouth. "I'm thinking weapon."

Shaggy wandered away, leaving Johar and Carson alone by the door and the horde of zombies. "Oh nifty! I could make it work somehow, I'm sure."

"Geek boy!" Carson shouted losing nails. "Focus. Zombies out there who want to make you their bitch."

"Right, right, my bad," Shaggy hurried back, spilling nails from the box he carried.

Sam eyed the metal grating that was pulled across the front windows of the store, swallowing as she saw the mass of zombies pressing up against the outside. "I hope that holds."

"Me too," Carson sighed stepping back from the door. It seemed to be holding. So far, everything seemed to be holding. After a moment of surveying her domain, the redhead suddenly felt worn out. She could feel sweat and other nastier fluids drying on her body and it struck her that she had bashed several people in the face over the course of a few days. Sure they were dead, but she wasn't sure if that made it okay.

"If you guys are okay I'm going to go find a restroom and hope that it still works." Absently scratching an armpit, she started looking for at least a sink so she could wash her face.

Samantha followed her, leaving the three musketeers to rummage through the tool aisle for something that could be useful. Personally she had dibs on one of those fire axes in aisle one. "You feeling okay?" she asked, standing in the door of the small 'Employee's Only' washroom.

Blue eyes blinked. "Just worn out." The redhead mumbled in response unable to come up with anything snappy. She ran the water and splashed some on her face, grimacing. "You know I took

an oath to save lives. It feels like I made that oath a lifetime ago. Now all I do is deal with the dead, past couple of days the dead have been more active than usual."

"You were a doctor?" That was news to Sam. A triumphant exclamation from in the shop caused her to look back to where Shaggy was pointing at something. He caught sight of her staring at him, and winced, calming down.

Carson grimaced and wet a paper towel, trying to scrub away the drying gore on her neck. "Yes, well no, I was an intern in the ER, but Hamilton said I didn't have what it took and got me removed." She frowned eyeing her shirt. With a sigh, she stuffed paper towels in the drain and turned on the water.

"You start dealing before or after that?" The librarian knew how her question sounded, but she didn't really mean to sound that bitchy, she was just curious.

Carson turned off the water, stripped off her shirt, and tossed it into the sink to soak. Her blue eyes looked at Samantha "Nothing personal but I plead the 5th on that, cause once we go back to our normal lives you'll just go back to trying to get me arrested."

"Probably," she conceded that point. "But we might never go back to our normal lives"

Unconscious about her half-dressed state she walked out of the bathroom and started going through the five small lockers along the wall until she found a brown shirt with the name Bill sown on it. Slipping it on she faced the librarian and started buttoning it up.

"Nice shirt."

"Its mine. I found it fair and square." She grinned mischievously. "But if you want to wrestle for it I'm game."

"No thanks. I don't want to smell like Bill. He probably had lice or something."

Samantha turned in time to see Emily smiling in their direction. The second she was caught looking, the Goth hurried back to join the two men. "Are they always that weird?"

"Yes," Carson answered without thought. "Well, Shaggy is new, but he seems like he'll fit in well, if he lives."

Moaning from outside the shop's back door and the rattling of the fire door signaled that the shop was completely surrounded.

"We're not going to be able to stay here you know." Samantha figured she might as well state the obvious.

"Stating the obvious again. Really, Sam, why are you here, with us?" Carson asked, eyeing the librarian. "You don't like us and all you do is bring a rain cloud to our parade. You could have stayed holed up in your apartment. I'm fairly certain you're a big enough bitch to scare the

zombies."

The librarian's face tightened. "My building was going to burn down, remember?" She curled a lip into a sneer. "Don't worry, the second I can, I'm going to get away from you losers."

"There are always choices Sam and remember you chose us." Carson said with a tight grin. "Now if you'll excuse me. As nice as the brief thaw in our cold war was, I can tell, I'm now back up to ranking right up there with something you found on your shoe. I'm going to go be productive and check this place out. Wouldn't want the zombies to sneak up on us." Carson turned back to Bill's locker then, not finding what she wanted, opened the next one. With a grin of triumph, she held up a flashlight. Happily, it turned on and off like it should.

"Under," Samantha whispered. "Under my shoe." Her eyes wandered around the hardware store. Now, what was a good weapon?

The redhead clicked the flashlight to the on position and started to explore the back recesses of the shop. Carson figured she really needed to have her head examined. There was something about the librarian that was well... she was a siren to Carson, and like those foolish sailors from Greek mythology, Carson kept bashing her boat into Samantha's rocky shore. She stopped and frowned. God, that was like the worst metaphor. Wandering behind the counter she found a small business office with a safe and stairs, gulping she gripped the flashlight in one hand, the bat in the other.

Oddly, she was happy for the space from the librarian, she found her brain was functioning much better. She could blame her juvenile and somewhat lusty thoughts and behavior to the crisis at hand, but she had to admit, the librarian had been having an effect on her before the world flipped on its ass. The first stair down into the gaping black maw of nothing creaked making her jump.

"Are you insane?" Samantha called from right behind her, a metal crowbar cradled in her arms.

"Do you KNOW what happens to people who go off on their own during Zombie stories?"

Her heartbeat only increased to an alarming rate as Samantha's voice startled her. "Yes they die horrible deaths." She turned pointing back at the three stooges, "but look at them. They are happily playing and for a moment, they have forgotten that we all may die and right now they need that while they make weapons that probably will save us later on down the road. So I get to play lone hero exploring shadows."

The librarian snorted behind her. "And come back as a Zombie? I don't think so Lone Ranger, I'm coming with you."

"Of course you are because you love to torment me," Carson muttered.

"Shut up and let's get this over with." Samantha peered around the annoying woman. "I can't believe we're going into the basement. Do we really have to do this?"

Carson looked over her shoulder, "No we don't have to do this. You can stay here, thus losing the element of we."

"You're right, there is no 'we.' There is you and I going to do something stupid. Let's go." The irritation in her voice was growing.

Carson sighed and started down the stairs again. The stairs moaned and groaned in an obscene way as they made their way down into the darkness, the flashlight was making a feeble stab into that ominous gloom.

"You would think that a hardware store would have better stairs." Samantha grabbed Carson's shoulder and let out a startled yelp as the stairs shifted.

Carson was beginning to wonder if maybe this was a bad idea; briefly she thought about turning

around but as Samantha yelled and grabbed her that threw that thought out the window. The librarian would never let her live it down if she chickened out.

"What was that?" Samantha whispered as something skittered through the darkness. She moved closer until she was crowded up against Carson's back.

It was dank, an unfinished basement; part packed dirt, part rough poured cement. Carson took a deep breath as Sam's warm body pressed into her back. "Um, it's probably a rat. It doesn't sound like anything too big." Carson's brain paused. "You know we haven't seen any living dead animals."

The other woman pressed even closer to Carson's back, swallowing as she tried to look everywhere at once. "Undead animals?"

The redhead started to move slowly around the basement her flashlight slashing through the dark. "Yeah, like your neighbor's cat. The one that got munched on, it didn't rise up. At least I don't think it did?" Carson paused trying to think back.

"It's not Pet Cemetery then." The Asian woman was happy about that, holding the crowbar out, with her right arm, pressed against Carson's back. At least the other woman made a good shield.

There was another scrabbling noise and Carson jumped. "Big rat. A big goddamn rat," Carson muttered.

"That doesn't sound small." The librarian whispered, glancing back and forth, wishing they had something brighter than the little flashlight. "Can we go now?"

After a moment, she got herself moving again. "Um, I just want to make sure that there aren't any stairs leading out, or basement windows."

"I say we barricade the door upstairs."

She finally reached a wall and shined the light up to the narrow windows at street level; she moved the weak light over the glass happily seeing that they were locked. A bloody hand smacked the glass making her jump.

Samantha yelled, and then gritted her teeth. This was getting ridiculous. "You satisfied? We should get...." she trailed off as a long scrapping noise came from behind them. "Uh oh."

The hair on the back of her neck stood on end. "Uh oh? After spending the last few days being chased by zombies, 'uh oh' is the last thing I want to hear."

"Did you check under the stairs?" Samantha asked, holding up the crowbar.

Carson wanted to smack herself, "Um, well no I didn't."

"Shit."

Slowly Carson started to turn around, the flashlight slowly following. The weak beam stretched out over the floor coming to rest on a steel toed work boot. "Fuck me." Carson blurted out. She raised the light and it began to reveal length after length of bloodied denim, to a brown work shirt with the name Bill neatly stitched on the front. The shoulders were broad if only half there. The left one had been gnawed on, leaving the left arm hanging by a thin red rope of muscle.

What really sucked, Carson reflected, was he was standing in front of the stairs, and what sucked even more was that Bill was a really big guy, which would explain why her borrowed shirt swam on her a bit.

"I think Bill wants his shirt back," Samantha whispered, gripping the crowbar in both hands. This was going to be messy.

"Well he can't have the shirt, it's mine now," Carson spoke trying to draw upon whatever it was inside of her that made her go rushing forward bashing zombies, when she should be running

away.

"He's a really, really big boy." The librarian whispered, trying not to attract his attention more than possible.

"And he's blocking the only way out." Carson could feel her hands growing damp as she tried to get a better grip on the bat without dropping it or the flashlight

"At least he only has one arm." Samantha tried to be on the bright side, talking quietly. "Think we should yell for help?"

"They were playing with power tools. What do you think our chances are that the three stooges will hear us?"

"Shit."

Suddenly the big guy's nostrils flared like he was a hound searching the air for scent. Then two dead white eyes lasered through the darkness zeroing in on them.

The jaw opened, wider and wider, and he growled. He made no move, maybe some intelligence remained in his dead brain, but Carson could swear he was waiting for them, knowing they had nowhere to go but through him.

"Back up," the librarian whispered "Maybe we can get him away from the stairs?"

Carson whispered slowly taking a step back. "Well at least there are two of us to the one of him. I think we can take him." She tried to sound positive but she wasn't so sure, he was still a really big guy.

Holding the crowbar with one hand, and Carson's shoulder with the other, she slowly backed up, step for step, with the other woman. "Is he following us?"

"No. He's watching us though." Carson really wanted those dead white eyes to look somewhere else rather than at her.

The dead guy took a single step forward, and then stopped as if distracted by something, his large neck turned and he looked up the stairs.

"I think he's trying to figure out if he wants us or menu choice 2 upstairs."

As the other woman took another step backwards Sam followed, then stumbled as her foot landed on a pile of paint cans. With a yelp, she nearly went down, sending the empty cans tumbling across the cement floor. The sound was deafeningly loud in the quiet basement.

"Oops," The librarian whispered eyes wide.

Carson felt her heart leap into her throat, a very unpleasant feeling, akin to choking on a handful of dry cheerios. As the zombie's head turned back towards them, she fumbled to get Samantha back to her feet feeling subconsciously a change in the undead man's demeanor. The way the zombie held its body had changed; this was not the lazy decision of a dog with a full belly this was now about predator and prey.

Giving up on juggling the bat, the flashlight, and getting the bitchy librarian to her feet, Carson dropped the bat unwilling to give up her light source and hauled Samantha to her feet.

Bill turned his white eyes targeting them and he started to lumber towards them. To Carson's horror, she realized the stiff shuffling gate was gone. "Fuck, move it Sam."

"There!" Samantha managed to get her balance and pointed towards the back of the room. "There's a door! And don't call me Sam," she growled, yanking on the metal door. "Oh crap." it was a small storage room. A glance behind her showed that the undead man was still hunting them. They didn't have many options. Samantha stepped into the small room that stored the store's cleaning supplies.

Carson followed close behind practically running over Samantha.

The zombie once known as Bill sensed his prey getting away from him, and he let out a wet roar, lunging for the door as Carson hurried to shut it.

Samantha staggered back against the rough cement wall as Bill hit the door. Dents bulged inwards as the enraged man tried to get through it. "Can he get through that?" Samantha's voice definitely had a note of hysteria in it.

"I-I-I don't know." Carson panted out red faced. Relief washed over her as she had managed to get the door shut in time. "He's dead; he doesn't feel pain." She paused, "Well, I don't think he does. So he won't know when to stop because he can't feel tired, or hurt." She slid down the wall onto the floor.

A low growling sound came from the other side of the door and after another dent there was silence from the other side. "Do you think he's gone Carson?"

Bill hammered the door with his good arm, his primitive brain telling him if he could get past this obstacle that there was food to be had. Then a noise came from above him and he stopped mid-growl his white eyes looking up, then in ungraceful steps he lumbered to the stairs.

Carson rolled over to the door and hesitantly placed her ear to it. She strained to hear anything that would let her know where he was. "I don't know. I can't hear anything."

"You should check." Samantha stayed at the rear of the room, back pressed against the rear wall, staring at the door, crowbar held in both hands.

"What? You go check." Carson rolled back over brushing dirt off her arms.

"I don't think so." There was no way that she was going to open that door while there was a chance Bill was on the other side.

Carson opened her mouth, shut it, and then opened it again. "Well, fine then. I guess we'll just sit

here," She huffed.

The Asian woman glanced around the small room. "There is no way I'm staying stuck in here with you." Stepping over Carson, she grabbed the door and pulled. Nothing happened.

"Uh oh." Setting down the crowbar, she grabbed the handle in both hands and pulled. Metal groaned but the door stayed shut. "A little help here?"

Carson shrugged, "I'm perfectly happy to be stuck in here with you, so I guess you're the only one losing out." She grinned sweetly up at Samantha.

Samantha kicked her leg with a scowl. "I hate you," she muttered tugging on the door once more and then gave up.

"Ow." Carson frowned and rubbed her leg. "God, are you sure you're not a dominatrix in your spare time."

"You will never find out," the librarian growled, slumping down onto the floor across from Carson. The room was small enough that their feet almost touched.

"Promises, promises." Carson grinned and wiggled her eyebrows, "Admit it, I'm charming."

Irritably Samantha ran her hands through her dark hair. She really wished she could have it up in a bun. "I should be back in the library." Grumpily she crossed her arms over her chest, eyeing the door.

Carson got up with a sigh, wondering why she bothered. Sure it was fun, but obviously the librarian wasn't interested, but she just couldn't stop running her mouth. "Okay, fine." She grunted and a vein looked dangerously close to popping on her forehead as she tried to pry the door open.

"It's stuck." Samantha offered helpfully from the ground.

"Come over and help me, maybe we can both open it."

The librarian got up and tried to grab the door around Carson. The other woman was bulkier than she was and defiantly stronger. "Whenever you're ready."

"Okay on three. One, two, three..." Carson's muscles strained, standing out in her forearms. "Gah." She grunted. "He really bashed this door." She huffed out trying to get her breath back

"Who's stating the obvious now?" Samantha mumbled around the finger she was sucking on. "I think I broke a nail." She sighed, frowning at the finger in question.

"Poor baby, want me to kiss it and make it feel better?" Carson snapped out. She leaned her head

against the door. Bill was gone; there was no way he would ignore all the noise they were making, which meant he was going up the stairs. Her friends were in danger.

Dark eyes closed as she stared at the woman across from her. She was infuriating! "I hate you, you know that?"

Carson slowly turned her head away from the door her blue eyes lighting on the other woman. "Duh! That's hardly a news flash. I can't figure out why though. I get your car unlocked, save you from zombies, and still you hate me. I mean really, what does a girl gotta do to get a break, save the God Damn world!"

"That would be a good start! Can you make it go back the way it was? You know, before we were constantly running for our lives." She didn't think that was asking for too much.

Carson stood up and turned away from the door facing the librarian fully. "You know what you're problem is?" Carson nearly shouted pointing a finger at the pissed off Samantha.

"What?" she asked, glaring at the annoying woman.

"Your expectations. Tell me honestly, do you have any friends? Or are we all just a little too much beneath you to hang out with and experience life. Life isn't like one of your goddamn books, where people always know what to say and what to do and have a plot to follow. Life is messy, full of pain and ecstasy, and there are no pre-written plots."

For a split second, Samantha stared up at her, a hurt expression on her face. It was gone quickly though. "Fuck you."

"I'd love to, but I have a feeling its not in the script you have for your life. Let's see," She mimed picking up a book and flipping through it. "Nope I do not see having sex with an annoying, yet charming and sexy morgue attendant anywhere here so I guess you're out of luck."

"At least I'm not a drug dealing drop out from med school." The words were pure ice.

Carson froze. "I did not drop out," she said quietly all traces of friendliness gone from her face.

"So you say."

"I was top in my class; my only setback was not giving Hamilton extra credit. The only way a woman gets through his program is to spend a little time on her knees as I found out. When I refused to give him extra credit he got me booted by planting drugs in my locker and then it was bye-bye medical school. All I have left of that dream is loans out the ass to pay. But hey what do my dreams and hopes matter I'm just a drug dealing drop out, not a real person, just a stereotype, so we can all go about our day feeling better."

Carson really wanted to hit something. Remembering Hamilton's smug face when she was escorted out of the hospital always made her feel that way.

Samantha closed her eyes, swallowing. She knew too much about failed dreams and crushed hopes to avoid feeling something. "I'm sorry," she whispered, shaking her head. "I didn't know."

"Well now you do," Carson huffed and sat down feeling what little energy she had drain out of her.

It was quiet for a few minutes, each of them avoiding the other's gaze. "I hope the three losers are all right," she whispered when it stretched for too long.

Carson let her head hang at that, for all she knew that thing was munching on her friends right now. She had failed her friends. She had been the leader, promising them safety, and she had probably led them to their deaths.

"I was supposed to go to grad school." Samantha reached out and kicked the door in frustration.

Carson's head lifted up, "I could see that."

She shrugged, glaring at the door. "I was going to get my PhD, just a few more years of saving up and I could have done it."

"So what happened? I don't really see you to be the giving up type."

"Heather." Samantha's eyes turned to study the woman across from her, daring her to make a joke.

Carson didn't say anything just remained silent; love and lovers good or sour were not something to be joked about. People throughout history failed to grasp this vital lesson and had been killed. She would learn from what they had not.

The librarian relaxed slightly as Carson stayed silent. "I moved here with her. We had an apartment together. It was good. I worked part time at the hospital library while I was sending in my applications. Then she got a job in L.A. Left me a note telling me all about it." The noise she made wasn't even close to a happy laugh. "Took most of the furniture too." She studied her fingers, clenching them around the crowbar. "I started full time at the library but that bitch Francine found out I was... used to be with Heather. She made me take the night shift. We didn't even have a night shift for the library before that!" Samantha bit her lip and looked away shaking her head. She hadn't really meant to say all that. It had just sort of all poured out.

Carson opened her mouth and then shut, it not sure what to say. Sure, she had all the right one-liners and such when they were fighting but now, this sort of honesty bonding session left her feeling out of sorts about how to act.

Finally she settled for a, "that really blows." Wincing a little at how lame it sounded, once she

had actually spoken the words out loud.

"You have such a way with words." There was just the barest hint of a smile.

"Well, you know, I read a little bit every now and again," Carson replied.

"Oh, is that why you keep coming to the library at night? I thought it was to meet customers," Samantha answered dryly, glaring at the wedged shut door. "I haven't heard any screaming upstairs, that's a good sign right?"

Carson frowned and stuck her tongue out. After putting her tongue back in her mouth, she sighed. "I don't know. Did you notice how smooth Mr. Bill was moving out there? They're loosening up."

"Is that good or bad?"

"Bad I'm fairly certain. They're losing rigor. That means they'll be moving faster." She paused, "Maybe not the ones who dug themselves out of the graveyard, depending on how long they've been dead, there's bound to be deterioration of the bones and joints."

"Well that's definitely bad then." The librarian shuddered at the thought of the zombies being able to move faster. There was the sound of a lot of running from the floor above them, and then screaming. "Crap, Bill found them."

Carson jumped to her feet and started pounding on the door trying to get it open, fear for her friends sending her into panic. "Don't just sit there! They're in trouble." Carson snapped out, the muscles in her arms straining as she pushed and shoved the dented door.

Samantha stayed where she was, gripping the crowbar in both hands and arched an eyebrow as she watched Carson. "We already tried that, remember?"

"Yes, but now there in trouble up there. My friends are going to be killed; did you see the size of that guy? They don't stand a chance." Carson was getting frantic. She backed up a little ways and then ran at the door ramming her shoulder into the door. It didn't budge but she bounced off into Samantha.

"Hey!" they went down in a tumble, the crowbar clattering across the cement floor along with a stack of mops. "Would you get off me?" the Asian woman demanded, staring up at the woman sprawled on top of her.

Carson grimaced and shook her head slightly dazed. "God, he's a really strong boy."

"Or it could be that you're just a big wimp." the Asian woman tried to shove the other woman off her.

Blue eyes pinned the dark eyes underneath her. "At least I'm trying. They're dying up there and you could care less."

"Of course I care you moron!" She shoved against the shoulder above her. "I prefer to think things through before throwing myself into a situation though. Maybe if you thought things through we wouldn't be in this situation! After all, you're the one who didn't check under the stairs."

"You didn't have to come with me. In fact, I remember telling you to stay upstairs where it was safe. So I think you threw yourself into this situation MS. Smarty-pants." Carson rolled over so she could get a proper finger point at the librarian.

Samantha started to get up, tripped on a mop head, and crashed back down onto the other woman, driving an elbow into a soft spot as she did

"Sorry," she said, not sounding too sorry at all. "I was trying to keep you from getting yourself killed. Although the world would probably be better off without a drug dealer."

Carson grunted at the elbow. "Blah, blah. You know what? You are a stuck up, elitist, ivory tower snob and I am truly in hell!" Carson yelled not moving away.

Samantha sputtered for a second. "Ivory tower snob?" She grabbed the fabric of Carson's shirt and shook her. "Take that back! I am not an ivory tower snob!"

"If the ivory tower fits. The hell I'll take it back."

Dark eyes narrowed to dangerous slits. "At least it's better than being a medical school reject who gets her jollies from being with dead bodies all day."

Carson's face turned red, looking vaguely tomato covered in the weak light of the flashlight. "Hey at least when a girl dumps me I'm brave enough to go out and live life instead of becoming a mega bitch."

The librarian jerked backwards as if she'd been slapped in the face. She stared down at Carson, dark eyes wide with shock before they narrowed angrily. "You don't know what you're talking about." It sounded weak even to her own ears.

"You got your heart broken. Whopty-doo. Since the concept of love was invented, people have been getting their hearts broken. Did you really think you were the first? You go and cocoon yourself with your books and your bitchy attitude to keep people at bay. God forbid someone should make you smile."

Carson was on a roll and she didn't even really remember why they were fighting again, they did it so often; her brain was rolling along in the background. In the foreground, she was finding it harder and harder not to wipe the smudge of dirt off Samantha's nose, and there was something

about the way the librarian's eyes lit up when she was shouting at her, that caused some rather inappropriate thoughts. Or maybe they were appropriate, since for all she knew, they were the last two people alive.

For her part, Samantha was infuriated. Who did this woman think she was? To come and shake up her carefully planned life? How dare she say such things! Heather had hurt her, more than Samantha would ever be willing to admit. There was no way she would allow another person that sort of power over her. Never. "You are the most awful person I have ever met," she spat, punching Carson in the shoulder.

"No, the most awful person you have ever met is your ex; I'm merely annoying in a charming yet sexy fashion," Carson quipped chuckling at the outraged look on Samantha's face.

"You... you...." Words failed her, something that only seemed to happen around Carson. Samantha was infuriated beyond rage, how dare this annoying, charming, attractive idiot of a woman challenge her? It was either pick up the crowbar and bash in the other woman's face or kiss her. The Asian woman was surprised to find herself kissing Carson, she'd been pretty sure she had just decided on homicide.

Carson was pleasantly surprised at the kissing but like the trooper that she was, she went with it.

The man, formerly known as Bill, made his way up the stairs. Somehow, his decaying brain recognized the fact that up here there was easier meat to feed on.

Shaggy slapped the side of the nail gun, frowned at it, and then slapped it again. "Just wait guys, I'll get it to work, and I swear I'm good with these things!"

Coming up the stairs, the ropey tissue of his arm caught on the door jam hanging him up for second before it tore free, sending him with a lurch, into the room. He could smell them now, ripe from a day without bathing. Moving out of the office, he spotted the trio huddle together. Emily looked up from where Shaggy was trying to prove his genius, ready to laugh at Carson and Samantha. "Hey what took you guys so long...." she trailed off, eyes widening as she spotted the undead at the door to the basement.

Jay flinched as Emily went quiet. Without looking up he said, "It's not Carson or the scary lady is it?"

"I really wish it was. Even the scary lady would be good," the young woman dressed in black answered, starting to slowly back away from the door, leaving Shaggy bent over the nail gun.

"Uh... Shaggy?"

"Give me a minute here guys, look I've almost got it. I think it's jammed or something."

Bill opened his mouth, but no noise came out, then he snapped his mouth shut, the teeth clicking harshly together. A small black bug ran across his forehead and then disappeared back into his hair.

The generator that was providing power to the hardware store flickered and went out for a second causing Johar to jump and scream.

Shaggy jumped at the high-pitched noise, dropping the nail gun, which clattered under the nearby metal racks. "Oh great," he muttered, getting down on his hands and knees to grab it.

"Shaggy, that's not a good idea!" Emily was making constant waving motions with her hands pointing towards the very large zombie that was moving down the aisle.

"Y-y-you know, I was thinking this place was too good to be true, since it had power and all. I was wondering who would leave here and well I guess they didn't leave. They turned into zombies. Oh god, they turned into zombies. That mean's Carson is next. Who will protect us from the scary librarian," Johar rambled on almost terrified enough to wet himself.

"Zombie?" Shaggy asked, turning around on his knees and looking up, way up, at the lumbering undead creature headed towards him. "ZOMBIE!" the engineer screamed, his voice at least three octaves higher.

The zombie in question charged; its one good arm outstretched, and the other one dangling nearly severed at his side.

Johar screamed again and ran backwards tripping and falling over a display of paint cans.

"The nail gun, Shaggy! Use the nail gun!" Emily yelled, grabbing a hammer off the shelf.

Shaggy aimed the nail gun up at the giant and pulled the trigger. Nothing happened. With a curse, he tried again and again desperately as the zombie ran towards him surprisingly quickly for something that was dead. "Shit!" In desperation, he threw the gun at the undead Bill.

The gun bounced off and fell to the ground not stopping Bill at all. Hitting the worn wooden floorboards, the nail jammed in the nail gun came loose, firing. The nail sailed up and imbedded itself in the back of Bill's neck. The force was strong enough to pierce the bone of the spinal column severing the nerves. Forward motion carried him towards Shaggy three more steps before, gracelessly, he fell into a dead heap.

Shaggy cowered on the ground, arms over his head, screaming in complete terror. "OH GOD! OH GOD!"

Emily edged past him, kicking the side of the dead creature, hammer raised up to hit if he so much as twitched. When he didn't try to eat her, she peered closer at the dead man's neck, grinning at the nail protruding from the base of his skull. "Cool." Reaching over, the Goth patted Shaggy on the head. Johar shook his head from where he was laying in a pool of spreading paint. "Unbelievable."

Shaggy peered out from between his fingers. "Is it dead?" Thinking about what he just asked he added, "Again?"

"Looks like it," Emily called out, kicking the large man in the side again. "You got your nail gun to work."

Johar got up out of the wet paint, sighing as he flicked white, no wait; he looked at the paint can, cream-colored paint off his ass. "Where's Carson and the uber-bitch?"

Shaggy beamed. "It did work didn't it? Just not the way I was hoping." He took the nail gun out of Emily's hands examining it. Emily reached over with a sigh and turned it off before Shaggy shot himself in the eye. The engineer gave a sheepish smile.

"Maybe Bill ate them."

Johar eyed the opening to the basement. "They could be zombies now."

Shaggy frowned, "I liked Carson, so I hope she's okay."

"I'm not dealing with Samantha if she's a zombie," Emily said, coming to stand next to the two of them at the top of the stairs.

"Maybe we should just board up the door?" Johar asked anxiously.

Shaggy nodded his head in agreement. If Samantha was a zombie, he so didn't want to deal with her, she was scary enough alive.

"There is no way we're shutting Carson up in the basement." Emily glared at the two men. "Jesus, grow some balls, and grab a weapon. Let's go find her."

Johar scratched his bristly chin. "Um, well, if you put it like that." He went and pulled out the loaded shotgun he had found behind the counter. He had no idea how to use it, but he hoped it was just point and shoot like the 'House of the Dead' video game he played all the time.

If Carson were ever to be remotely utterly honest with herself, she would admit this was a position she had been trying to get into with the librarian since first they met. Well, maybe without the dirt and the zombies.

If they had been using their lips for verbal communication, Samantha would have agreed that the position was good. She was sprawled on top of the other woman, pinning her to the ground and engaging in some serious kissing. The only thing that could have made it better would have been a nice soft bed, or couch, and maybe a little more room to maneuver in. Determined fingers found their way under Carson's shirt.

As fingers found ticklish skin, Carson gave a muffled squeal and nearly bit Samantha's lip.

A truly evil look crossed Samantha's face. "You're ticklish?" Fingers tried to find that spot again. Carson squirmed again. "No, I'm not ticklish at all. What makes you say that?" She tried to pull Samantha back down for more kissing.

Filing that little tidbit of information away for future reference, the librarian let herself get pulled down. She really had nothing against kissing; it had been a long, long time since she'd kissed someone this thoroughly. Scratching her fingernails along the sides of Carson's chest, she moved her fingers higher, bunching up the other woman's shirt.

They never heard the trio coming closer arguing the whole time.

"I don't think we should open that."

"They're not down here, so they must be in there."

"What if there are zombies in there?"

"Jesus, stop being such a baby."

"I do not hold Jesus to any religious importance in my life."

"Fine, Muhammad, stop being such a baby."

Carson grinned into the kiss. "Wow. Just wow. I know what section you spend a lot of time in," she muttered before diving in for more, her hands gripped the narrow back slipping down slim hips.

"On the count of three, okay?" Emily hefted her hammer and stood next to the obviously banged in door. "One." Johar hefted the shotgun and aimed it inside. "Two." Shaggy placed a crowbar against the edge of the doorframe. "Three!" With a shove, the engineer sent the door banging open, the metal door slamming off the cement wall next to them.

"Holy shit," Shaggy whispered, staring inside.

"I'm going to be physically ill. How could she, with, with her?" Johar wailed backing away from the now open door.

Carson nearly growled as Samantha tore her lips away. "A little privacy guys. Go away."

Samantha shoved herself off Carson, horrified. As it always did for her, mortifying embarrassment was quickly changed into all out rage. Getting up she stalked towards Johar, grabbing him by the collar, and dragging him close to her so her nose nearly touched his. "What

did you say? I'll show you physically ill...." She started fumbling behind her for a crowbar. "Wait! You had a crowbar? Why didn't you use it to pry the door open?" Shaggy asked clearly confused. Why would anyone stay trapped when they had a perfectly good crowbar?

"Shut up!" Giving up on the immediate physical pain plan, Samantha stalked across the basement, and then up the stairs, her teeth grinding together.

Emily stared at the retreating librarians back, and then turned to look down at Carson a questioning look in her eyes.

Carson stood up and straightened up her clothes. "Well, for all I knew we were the last two people alive," she justified.

Shaggy and Johar nodded their heads.

"I thought you liked nice people," Emily said, accusingly.

"I do, I do. Hey, don't lecture me, you dated Spike, remember. She was a real big bitch if I remember correctly." Carson waved a finger at Emily. "So don't be throwing metaphorical stones at me."

The younger woman shrugged, examining a black painted fingernail. "Spike had a nice ride." She sighed, as if that explained everything and turned to follow after the librarian. Johar blinked "What? Who's Spike?"

"So that's like a motorcycle right?" Shaggy asked. "What?" He sputtered seeing both Carson and Emily's amused glances in his direction.

"It's okay Shaggy; you still live with your mother. We don't expect you to understand," Carson said, patting him on the shoulder before walking up the stairs, hoping she could manage some sort of damage control with Samantha.

"I don't think I want to know what you two are talking about," Johar muttered, taking off his glasses to clean them before following. "Come on Shaggy. Time to find more weapons."

"How did you know I lived at home?" Shaggy asked and then blushed realizing he had outed himself.

The rest of the day and evening had been tense with Emily disgusted at Carson and annoyed by the boys. The boys had tried teasing the two women but one snarl from Samantha had sent them cowering in a corner. Carson had tried to be smooth and charming because she wanted more alone time with Samantha, but the librarian was having none of it. The librarian sat by herself thoroughly disgusted by the situation she had gotten herself into.

"This is going to be messy." Samantha pointed out the obvious to the group of bleary-eyed survivors that gathered around the back door to Bill's Hardware shop. They'd spent a night and day in the shop, preparing for the inevitable excursion into the hell outside. They couldn't stay where they were; they'd run out of food and water quickly here. As it had done all night, the fire a block away still lit the sky, the flames engulfing the entire block where the librarian's apartment used to be.

Shaggy yawned and asked Jay. "Are you sure you don't want the flame thrower?"

Jay scratched under and armpit and looked over his shoulder where the monstrosity resided.

"Um, thanks but I'll put my faith in something I know works." He patted the old shotgun.

Everyone else cringed when he did that waiting for it to go off.

Samantha eyed the old double barrel shotgun with almost as much worry as she did when looking at one of Shaggy's new inventions. Almost. Avoiding looking at Carson, she hefted the crowbar

in one hand and quickly leafed through the instruction manual for a chainsaw that the other woman was holding. "Don't forget to avoid killing any of us with that thing, Carson." Carson's eyes twinkled. "Hey, if Bruce Campbell can do it, I can do it." She patted the chainsaw dangling at her side by a makeshift strap. "This is so cool, I get a chainsaw. Monsters of the world beware." Carson did a little dance that resembled the running man mixed with the chicken dance.

"Didn't he also cut off his own hand with it?" the Goth asked, having decided to stick with Samantha's trusty baseball bat.

"Huh? No he didn't. The monsters took his hand." She frowned trying to remember the movie. "I think."

Samantha snorted, flipping quickly through the owner's manual for the chainsaw. "You sure you don't want to read this first?"

Carson looked at her incredulously, "It's a chainsaw not a space ship. You get it started and then slice and dice the bad zombie attacking you."

The librarian frowned at the page she was reading. "You know it doesn't sound quite that easy...."

Johar grabbed the bolts holding the back door shut and started to pull. "We're going to the police station right?" the Pakistani man asked, grunting as he worked the bolt at the bottom of the door free.

"Yes, we're going to the police station where hopefully there are answers or armed people willing to help us, maybe even both," Carson replied swinging the chainsaw around and gripping it tightly in both hands.

"Carson, I think you really should read this," Samantha tried again, holding up the owner's manual. It was too late though; Johar grabbed the bolt on the top of the door and yanked it down. Emily shoved it open, the hinges squealing as the heavy metal door swung outwards.

Sunlight was wispy and weak struggling to break through the clouds and the smoke. The wind was absent making everything eerily still. There was no noise: no calling birds, no car motors, and no people shouting or laughing. It was all silent.

The dark skinned Pakistani stepped out first, shotgun held to his shoulder. Shaggy and Emily were a step behind, flattening out to either side of the narrow alleyway behind the hardware store, waiting for Carson to lead the way. Samantha fell into step behind the woman who had become the de facto leader of this little expedition, still flipping through the paper brochure.

Carson entered the street. It was so surreal. It had to be a movie set; reality could not be twisted into this post-apocalyptic nightmare.

The noise started faint, like sock covered feet three rooms away, and then it built into a marching, scratching, shuffling sound that sent fear two-stepping down Carson's back.

The dead came out of alleyways and shadows along the street, the sounds of life moving them into instinctual action.

"Oh man," Emily whispered, watching the dead come towards them. "Uh, can we go now?"

Carson began a quick pace down the street. "We need to go down to 5th and Garfield and take a left on to Garfield, then we go about a mile and take a right then just two more blocks and we should be at the police station."

Shaggy stumbled a little, and then caught up with them, trying to shift the weight of the machine on his back. "Great, sounds like fun. No problem right?"

"I can't believe I'm going to die with idiots," was Samantha's only answer to his hopeful grin.

"Sam, play nice. We have to work together now and you calling Shaggy there an idiot is counter-productive," Carson replied not looking back.

"Thank you." Shaggy beamed.

"Besides idiot is incorrect since he's obviously very bright, just absent minded verging on forgetful."

Shaggy's smile fell.

"Don't call me Sam," the librarian growled, shoving the pamphlet in her pocket and grabbing the crowbar with two hands.

"Why not? It causes you to get all feisty. I think you're even hotter when you're all feisty," Carson said with a grin.

Emily rolled her eyes. "You guys are making me sick up... oh shit." Movement in the street ahead of them alerted her to company. "Undead straight ahead of us guys."

Carson's grin got bigger and slightly off-balance. "Oh cool. I get to try out my baby."

The shambling mass of undead humanity was behind them; there would be no going back. The handful of zombies ahead of them was nothing compared to the mob trying to catch them. "No, wait, Carson, I think you should hear some of the instructions." Samantha's annoyance with her new nickname faded as she realized what the annoying woman was about to do.

She flicked the safety off and started the motor. With a loud growl, it came to life, jerking in her hands, drowning out all other noise.

"What?" she shouted.

"I said you should hear... WATCH OUT!" Samantha screamed, pointing ahead of them at the zombies that had suddenly caught sight of them and were running towards them with that odd loose-jointed gait.

"Oh my God!" Johar screamed. "When did they lose rigor? We're fucked. Oh, we're screwed," he shouted while his limbs fought between fighting and fleeing.

Carson moved in with the chainsaw, easily slicing through arms and hands that reached for her. It was when she missed and the chainsaw only ripped through the stomach of her attacker that she began to question how cool the chainsaw was. The spinning blade, caught up in rotting tissue, spraying her in gore.

The smell was horrible and the only thing preventing her from throwing up was the life and death situation she was in.

With a frown, she ripped the chainsaw away and twisted around to attack another incoming zombie. The blade was too low and it started to slice into a hip. As the blade began to buck and pull away from her grip, she had an inkling that she might be in trouble.

Bashing the crowbar over the head of a zombie that had been trying to sneak up on Emily, Samantha whirled to see how Carson was doing. A giant gout of flame, that lit two zombies on fire, distracted her for a moment. The two undead torches ran around in circles, finally crashing into a building and promptly setting off more fires. She glared at Shaggy before turning to see Carson pulling on the chainsaw. "NO!" the librarian yelled, "Push the blade in! Don't pull!!!" Carson's forehead wrinkled. "Why would I do that?" She shouted still attempting to pull the blade out.

Johar raised the shotgun and blew the head off an oncoming zombie, flipping open the weapon to toss out the spent cartridges and put in two new ones. The sound of the shotgun blast completely overriding Samantha's answering yell.

"Stupid librarian thinks she knows everything." Carson grumbled. She was well aware of her

vulnerable state as she felt a zombie paw at her head. Finally, with a mighty heave she was able to get the chainsaw free. The spinning blade had been pinched between the dense bone and when she ripped it loose, the spinning saw blade was pulled free spinning with tremendous speed past Carson's head. She didn't even have enough time to be scared. Eyes very wide Carson looked over seeing that her attackers head had been nearly cleaved in two. The blade was sunk deep into its skull. The zombie fell to its knees and then face-planted into the cement. Carson's bladder almost released then after a dangerous moment where she didn't move and the zombies surrounded her, she started beating them with her now useless chainsaw.

"I said don't pinch the blade!" the Asian woman screamed, bashing down a zombie who had been crawling after her. A glance over her shoulder showed the crowd behind them getting dangerously close. "Run!"

Johar ducked under the flying remnants of a zombie head that Emily had taken off with a homerun swing of her baseball bat. The left hand side of the street was rapidly turning into a raging inferno as Shaggy continued to use his homemade flamethrower.

Carson raised her chainsaw up, threw it with all her might at the incoming hordes, and took off running. "Shaggy throw me a nail gun."

He looked at her as if she were nuts. "No way! Come over here and get one. Last time I threw one it went off."

"I told you to read the manual, but no, you had to go off and be Carson the undead slayer!"

Samantha puffed as she fell into step next to Carson, making a dash down the street towards the police office.

"Fine, you were right. Does that make you happy? Will you sleep better at night?" Carson snapped while trying to fish out a nail gun from Shaggy's backpack. After a minute of trying, she got one. "Whoa. What kind of battery did you strap to it?"

"Actually it's a couple." He replied before firing the flamethrower again.

"That is so cool," Carson said in awe watching the belch of flame envelope a zombie.

"You could have killed yourself, you idiot," the librarian muttered, doing her best to keep up with the fast pace.

"Must run faster!" Johar shouted, puffing as he caught sight of the mob lurching onwards behind them.

Carson was seriously beginning to suck wind as they turned down the street that would take them to the police station. "I swear to stop smoking and drinking if you let me make it to the police station," she prayed to the Goddess, God, Allah, or the space aliens whoever was listening.

The police station looked like a refugee checkpoint in some country in the middle of civil war not some town in northern California.

"Oh my god." Samantha blurted out. It looked like a war zone, fires still burned fitfully here and there.

The front was barricaded and fires had sprung up from crashed cars; zombies milled around the front steps moving sluggishly occasionally they bumped into each other with no reaction.

"Is there any other way in?" the librarian asked, grimacing at the goo that covered her crowbar.

"There's a side entrance and a fire escape around on the right side of the building." Carson said while aiming her nail gun and firing at a zombie that was a little to close for comfort.

"Do I want to know why you know so much about the police station?"

Carson shrugged. "My half-sister is a stripper down at that gentleman's club, Twilight. I've had to pick her up a time or two when she's gone above and beyond duty."

Emily grinned secretly. "Well, there was that time you lost that dare and had to streak the mall."

Samantha blinked, opened her mouth to say something, and then decided to keep her breath for the running. Without any conscious decision, the five of them headed for the side entrance, mowing down the two unlucky zombies that were in their way. "Please be open," Samantha prayed, well aware that they only had a few moments before the rest of the zombie horde penned them into the side street.

Carson shot another nail and made a dash around the side of the building only to pull up as a gunshot echoed loudly in the alley. The shot ricochet off the wall and a chunk of concrete broke off cutting her cheek.

"Holy crap!" she shouted as her heart picked up triple time and she was certain a heart attack wasn't far behind.

"Zombies with guns!" Shaggy screamed, skidding to a stop before he went around the corner.

"You moron." Samantha shoved him aside then poked her head around to make sure Carson was still alive. "Hello?" the librarian called.

"Hold fire." A gruff voice barked out. "Please identify yourselves?"

"Well if I'm talking to you that means I'm not a zombie!" Carson shouted up where the voice had come from.

"A little help here?" Johar demanded, tossing out two empty shells and reloading his shotgun to deal with another approaching zombie.

"Carson, we're about to have visitors here!" Emily shouted, as the mob lurched around the corner. Shaggy started to send out bursts of fire, helping with the cremation of the dead. Samantha and Emily hefted their weapons, backing up to the entrance of the side street, ready to bash any zombies that got close enough.

"Sir, we have what appear to be non-infected people here. I think we should open the side door."

A voice replied.

"Roger that," was the barked reply.

Carson eyed the door hopefully, her gaze shifting to the approaching zombies and then back to the door.

"Carson, whatever you're doing, do it faster!" Samantha shouted as the first of the zombies managed to get close enough for her to take a swing at with her crowbar. Blood and brain matter splattered sideways.

Carson sighed and ran to the door pounding on it. "Open it faster, before we die out here and you have more zombies to deal with!" Turning she fired again and again at a zombie that was rushing towards her. Three shots in the chest and then it slammed into her pushing her into the door that suddenly opened sending her to the ground screaming as the monster got its teeth sunk into her forearm.

A pistol muzzle pressed up against the side of the zombie's face. The thing might have understood what was about to happen, as it let go of Carson and looked up. The officer holding the pistol smiled grimly and pulled the trigger, blowing the rest of the man's head straight off.

Carson screamed, not able to hear herself, the blast of gun so close had temporally deafened her. "Crap, crap, crap!" She shouted her heart in her throat. Slowly on trembling legs, she got up facing the policeman. "Are you insane you could have killed me? How did you know that bullet wouldn't go straight through him and into me?" She continued to shout, unaware that she was shouting.

Emily and Samantha helped Johar in through the door, the Pakistani grimacing, and limping from a wound he'd taken in the leg. A zombie had gotten close enough to latch onto his leg and started to gnaw away. Shaggy emptied his flamethrower of the last of its fuel, buying them time to get in through the doorway. Two officers shoved the door close, baring it against the insanity outside.

Two other officers trained their weapons on the ragtag group. "Please drop any weapons you may have on the floor," a man with a clean-shaven head demanded gruffly.

"Are you nuts? You've already tried to kill me once!" Carson continued to shout.

Exhausted, Samantha let the crowbar rattle to the floor. Thankful that they'd actually made it. "What? What are you talking about, Carson?" the librarian had to go over and grab the other woman's arm to get her attention as Shaggy started taking off his flamethrower.

Carson turned, "When the zombie fell on top of me Officer Friendly there tried to kill me. He shot the zombie in the head. It was right on top of me. He's damn lucky it didn't keep going through into me."

"Ma'am that was a risk I had to take. Please set your weapon onto the floor. Or you will have to go back outside," the officer replied calmly.

"Listen to the Officer, Carson." The Asian woman narrowed her eyes at the officer in question. "I'm sure he was just trying to help." Her tone made that doubtful.

"Fine, but I'm doing this under protest," Carson said in a slightly lower volume, her hearing starting to return too normal.

The other officer picked up the makeshift weapons staring that the flame thrower slightly frightened.

"Okay Ms...."

"Carson," Carson answered.

"Right, Carson, if you and the Indian man could go with Officer Thompson. Both of you have suffered wounds. He will see that you are taken care of."

"Pakistani, I'm Pakistani and my name is Johar."

"Right please go with the officer."

Samantha, Emily, and Shaggy all started to follow after their two comrades. "We're staying together," Sam said, daring them to try to split them up. She didn't actually say the words, 'and if you don't like it you can fuck yourself,' but they were implied in her tone.

The officer grinned, "If you insist." It wasn't a friendly grin. "After you treat Carson and Johar's wounds put them in lock up for 24 hours to make sure they aren't infected. If their friends insist on not being separated, put them in there too.

Carson figured it wasn't all bad. If the zombies managed to break inside, they would be separated by a set of metal bars. Of course then there would be that whole food and water thing and they might have to resort to eating one of their own. She was up to eating Samantha but the woman probably wouldn't be fond of the audience. At that thought, a lecherous grin sprung across Carson's face.

"You know, jail cells are really as crappy as they show on TV," Shaggy commented from where he was hanging off the bars. Five minutes ago he had been positive he could break free but now had to admit he was no MacGyver and would need more than a paper clip and chewing gum.

"Stop looking at me like that," Samantha growled, giving the annoying woman a dark look while trying to find a comfortable way to sit on the hard metal bench.

Blue eyes blinked and Carson came back from her happy place. "Stop speaking. Every time I

make it to the good parts you open your mouth and ruin everything."

"You realize I hate you right?"

Johar rolled over and put his hands over his ears.

"Well, actually you just think you hate me. Secretly you're attracted to me and want to have my love child," Carson responded shifting so she could see the librarian better.

Dark eyes narrowed dangerously. "You aren't going to live to get out of this prison cell."

Carson just grinned and laced her fingers behind her head. "You know you have a lot of built up aggression, and I know of a couple things we can do to reduce that."

Johar started whistling. Shaggy started pulling on the bars and Emily laughed.

The Asian woman rolled her eyes, grimacing as she stood up from the metal bench. "I can't believe I volunteered to stay with you people. I must be insane."

"Then go. For the love of all that is holy, leave us alone." Johar shouted red faced. "All you do is belittle us. I happen to think if Carson didn't have a soft spot for you, and had saved your life that you'd be zombie chow. I would have been perfectly happy if we hadn't stopped to save you. Don't you realize how stressful this is for all of us? On top of that, we have you snarling down our necks, repeatedly telling us how much you hate us and how worthless we are. I don't need the extra stress. Fuck, my therapist bills were huge already, now after this they're going to be through the roof." He suddenly realized he had said all of that out loud and slapped a hand over his mouth. His face got even redder, but in embarrassment instead of anger.

Carson clapped. "Johar has a domineering mother," she explained.

Horried at himself he went and sat in a corner and covered his face with his hands.

Samantha stared at him in shock, then blinked and sat down quietly. That had been a bit more than she'd been expecting to hear coming from the normally reserved Pakistani.

"Well, isn't this fun?" Emily quipped, arms wrapped around her knees, and rocking back and forth a few times.

"Oh come on, Jay, that was great. We keep telling you not to bottle so much stuff inside," Carson said trying to keep everything light.

"Carson you are one of my best friends, but shut up! This isn't a joke. A zombie bit me in the leg, which hurts like hell, I have had very little sleep, and your tendency to make everything a joke is really rather annoying at the moment."

"Oh." Was all she said and then closed her mouth, not sure what to say or do.

The silence, something that she used to find pleasant in the library, was hard to endure in the small jail cell. "I don't think it's a virus," Samantha said finally, trying to at least be somewhat nice.

"Um, well, I was already bitten once and didn't go all undead. So... so we know that much," Carson said carefully.

"If it's not a virus, then we still have aliens, magic, and the wrath of god or demons in the top list," the librarian went on just as carefully, feeling out her words, trying to behave, but it was hard.

"Well we can't do anything about it 'cause we are locked in here, thanks to Officer Friendly. Are you sure he didn't recognize you from that streaking incident?" Emily asked Carson.

"No, the officer that arrested me was Gina, err, Officer Reynolds and she was very nice," Carson replied huffing that Emily had to bring that up again.

Dark eyes narrowed once more and the librarian stared at Carson. "Gina?" the way she rolled the name made it into something not quite a curse. "You know Gina?"

"Well, 'know' is maybe overstating. She was my arresting officer when I lost a bet to Emily, who I might add wins at everything, and she sent me streaking the Mall during the lunch rush. Gina, um, Officer Reynolds was very understanding."

"I bet," Samantha muttered, folding her arms over her chest as she tried not to picture that.

Carson opened her mouth to explain something, she wasn't sure what, but something needed to be explained about Gina. Although it was probably exactly what Samantha was thinking, it had been just the one time and she had very satisfactorily gotten out of her ticket, no fuss, no muss, on either party's part. She was thankfully stopped before she got started by the sound of a door opening.

"Jesus Dennon, we are not dealing with a virus no matter what the military is telling us. I just shot my first grade teacher 45 minutes ago; Ms Rhaines died 4 years ago I went to her funeral. There is no need for these people to be locked up," a female voice barked.

"With all do respect...." The male voice was cut off.

"That would be a first Dennon. Look, I'm letting these people out."

"Finally, a voice of reason," Emily cheered, springing up from where she'd been sitting.

A petite African American woman came into view with a scowling man dogging at her heels. He

had a puffy face and droopy jowls giving him a vague bulldog like appearance.

"Dennon, please let these nice citizens out," the woman said in a clipped tone.

The man glared and seemed on the verge of arguing then he just tossed the keys at her. "I'm not going to be responsible for breaking orders. Do it yourself," he barked out before turning and stomping away.

"You're right, it isn't a virus," Samantha agreed, glad for the prospect of getting out of the small cell. Much more of this and she was certain she'd either start killing the three stooges, or making out with Carson. Or both.

The small woman sighed and picked up the keys. She unlocked the door and pulled it open.

"Yeah. You know that, I know that, but those jarheads can only follow orders. Military sent down something saying it was a virus causing people to act all crazy. I'm sorry but after shooting a few folks I know to be dead, I know it's not a virus. I just can't get anybody else to believe me."

Carson popped out of the cell with a big smile. "Hi, I'm Carson." She held out her hand.

Samantha's lips curled in dislike as Carson obviously tried to be charming.

The police officer smiled. "I'm well aware of who you are, Mahoney. I use to be partnered with Officer Reynolds."

Carson's smile fell a bit. "Oh well, then I'm still Carson. And you are?"

The librarian made a mental note to ask about that story as she heard Emily snicker behind her.

"I'm Lauren Henderson and I'm very straight, so if I ever catch you breaking the law, handcuffs will be used on you the way they were designed to be used." The woman moved away from the door. "If you'll follow me I think we can go someplace more comfortable."

Carson just shrugged and tried to look nonchalant but a faint blush dusted her cheeks.

Despite herself, Samantha found herself actually laughing at the look on Carson's face.

"My name is Samantha Sakamoto; I'm the librarian for the hospital." The Asian woman introduced herself as she stepped outside the cell. Behind her, the other three mumbled introductions as they hurriedly escaped the confines of the holding cell.

Lauren led them down a short glaring white hallway and for a moment Johar, Carson, and Emily thought they were back in the hospital. Then the woman opened a door on the right and led them into a windowless room that housed a couple of worn chairs, a fridge, and a small microwave.

"Oohh, their break room is nicer than ours," Emily whispered, nudging Johar, who'd been even

quieter than normal after his outburst at Samantha.

"I can't believe you just tried to pick up the one person who was willing to let us out." Samantha hissed at Carson, brushing past the other woman to find a seat that actually wouldn't hurt to sit on.

"What? What are you talking about? I was being thankful someone let me out of that shithole. I was being nice." She followed after Samantha making sure the librarian was clear that she was not hitting on the nice police officer.

"Sure you were." The words dripped venom.

"Sure she's attractive and all, but that would be rude since we were making out not 24 hours ago." Carson plopped down next to Samantha.

Lauren arched her eyebrows in surprise. The Mahoney's had a reputation for being, um, well, players. "Right, anyone care for a soda?"

"Ooooh, can I have a Mountain Dew?" Shaggy shouted and raised his hands at the same time.

The look Samantha was currently giving Carson promised the other woman a slow painful death.

"Doctor Pepper?" Emily asked hopefully. "Root beer?" it sounded like a prayer coming from Johar.

The detective began tossing out sodas. "Mahoney and Samantha?"

"Orange?" Carson asked hopefully.

The librarian made a derisive sound. "Water, please."

"Um, no water. We're not much for healthy stuff and I'm not sure the tap is safe since most of the power is out in the city."

Carson popped the top on her orange soda and sipped it loudly.

Samantha took the offered coke can with a look verging on distrust. She was thirsty enough to take whatever was being offered though.

"What has the army been telling you?" the librarian asked, crossing her legs and popping the top of the coke can then sipping it - quietly.

"Stay put, set up road blocks, and wrangle infected people into lock up. Then the town lost power. We have a hydrogen generator here so we're good for decades and so is the hospital. I just don't know if there's anyone left in the town for it to work for. We haven't had any more

messages from the army since last night." She shrugged. "So we just barricaded ourselves in and let the world go by, hoping we'll be okay." Lauren let out a frustrated sigh.

"You have a hydrogen generator?" Shaggy perked up, looking positively gleeful as he considered what he could do with that.

"The hospital and police station have one because the hospital is a research hospital with some government contracts and so if power goes out, or if there is a terrorist attack it needs to stay up and running. The police station would need to stay up and running to protect the hospital." Lauren responded dryly before sipping her own soda.

Shaggy squirmed a bit, hopped up on sugar, caffeine, and yellow dye number 5. "That is so cool."

"Could we get back to the zombies?" Samantha demanded, eyeing Shaggy as he downed the last of his mountain dew.

"Well, shooting them in the head, or breaking the neck near the skull will send them back to being dead. That's as much as I've figured out," Lauren said.

"Oh hey, that explains why the corpses from the that boating accident thing with head trauma stayed dead and the other ones got up and started munching on us." Carson jumped in.

"My first undead. Seems like a long time ago now." Emily sighed, trying to see if there were any more sodas lying around.

"What? What was that?" Lauren broke in.

Samantha looked up as well, abandoning her mental catalog of the ingredients in coke that were unhealthy. "They were the first?"

"No the boat. What corpses?"

Emily shrugged, looking to her fellow morgue attendees for help.

The Pakistani frowned, trying to make sure he was correct. "The first ones in the morgue to get up were from some ship, I think. Right Carson?"

"Yeah that's our patient zero." Carson added. "Well, we think."

"Wait here a second." The smaller woman leaped out of her seat and ran out of the room.

"And you failed to mention this until now?" Samantha sighed.

Carson snorted. "Um, no, we were talking about it in your apartment but you were too busy treating us like scum to pay attention."

"Don't you dare try making this my fault."

Blue eyes blinked. "I wasn't doing anything. I was pointing out that we did bring it up before, nobody's at fault."

"No, you were implying that it was my fault." Samantha crossed her arms over her chest, eyeing the other woman coldly.

"Huh? I did not. I was just saying that...." Carson went quiet going over the conversation they were having. "Um, you said, why didn't we bring that up earlier, and I said we had and...." she trailed off confused. "Why are you mad at me again?"

"Because you are infuriating and you slurp your soda." The other woman mentally winced as she heard her own words. She hadn't intended to say anything about Carson's noisy drinking habits.

Carson laughed. "You left out charming."

Lauren rushed back into the room a thin manila folder in her hands. "The Ellora Dannon. A cargo ship that ran aground the other night, the crew all dead," she said, dumping the file on the beat up table.

Samantha studiously ignored Carson, gladly diving into the information that had just been dumped on the table in front of her. Finally, something she felt confident doing. Quickly she sorted out the information into categories and scanned it, ranking it by importance and alphabetizing them for further cross-reference.

Lauren looked at Samantha quizzically.

"There." she straightened out one of the piles and looked up to see the expressions on the other's faces. "What? Now you know where all the information is."

"She's a librarian. She needs to Dewey Decimal stuff so it will fit inside the box of life. She's not one for outside the box thinking," Carson replied before taking a noisy slurp of her soda.

Samantha's glare promised that death would be preferable to what she would do to her.

"Um, okay. So you think the ship is the cause of the zombie plague, and I'd have to agree. Don't know why it didn't occur to me sooner."

"Probably 'cause you were running for your life." Carson broke in with a cocky grin. "I know we were."

"Actually, I was busy building a flame thrower," Shaggy said helpfully, hopeful that he would get

to make another one soon. He had a few new design ideas.

Lauren paused wondering if maybe she shouldn't have left them in the cell. "Okay. The ship came from South America, where exactly we are not sure, the manifest becomes a little hazy. So it could be a virus or maybe an item of voodoo..." She trailed off realizing how insane that sounded although talking about zombies was pretty insane.

Samantha reached over to a side table, grabbed the brightly colored free bank pen and a pad of paper, and started making a list. "I think virus is out, but we can leave it in the secondary list. Voodoo is good, Aliens less likely if it has to do with a ship." She kept scribbling.

"A statue." Lauren said suddenly. She remembered it distinctly shining blackly in the harsh light of the warehouse. She reached across rummaging through Samantha's organized piles until she pulled out some photographs.

The librarian frowned and started to straighten up the piles that the policewoman had just messed up.

The statue was small, carved from an unknown substance. It was a humanoid figure. The face was a grinning skull and in one hand it held a scepter made of tiny crying and laughing skulls. "This fell out when one of the crates was broken."

"That's a pretty cool piece. I wish I had one." Emily peered over Lauren's shoulder, tapping a black boot in approval.

"So what, we waltz over to the warehouse and smash it?" Carson broke in.

Lauren looked up grinning. "Yes. Goddamn yes."

"What if it's not the key?" Johar asked.

Samantha shrugged, looking up from the reports she was reading. "Then we keep searching until we find it. The zombies have to be linked to the arrival of the ghost ship somehow. It's just too much of a coincidence." She grinned evilly at Carson. "What do you say, oh fearless leader?"

Carson's red eyebrows raised in confusion. "What? Now I'm the leader?"

The librarian gave the others gathered in the room a scathing glance. "They sure as hell aren't."

She looked around the table where everyone was nodding at her except for Lauren. "Um, I'm down with that if the police officer is game."

Lauren stared at the ragtag group in front of her. "I'm thinking it's our only option. The military sure isn't helping out at the moment." The back part of her brain was screaming at her that this could be a very bad idea, very bad.

Shaggy looked around, smiling widely. "Does this mean I get to make new weapons?"

"No, we have a weapons closet." The police officer said quickly.

"Oh." Shaggy looked down, a little dejected.

"Um, you're going to issue us weapons. Aren't you're other officers going to have a problem with that," Johar jumped in looking pensive.

"Oh." Lauren deflated a little. "They may have a problem with my handing out firearms to civvies."

Shaggy started to perk up.

"I'm using my crowbar." Samantha declared, folding her arms over her chest. No way was she touching anything Shaggy cobbled together out of spare parts.

"We might be able to get some stuff," Lauren said then turned to Carson. "You're used to breaking the law, you come with me. The rest of you figure out how were going to get to the warehouse." She got up yanking Carson out of her seat.

"I resent the fact you think I'm a law breaker. It was that one time...."

"Can it, Carson," the officer replied.

The expression on Samantha's face was as carefully neutral as she could make it, but the slight curl of her lips gave her away. "We need a map."

They had managed to get there hands on several rounds of ammunition, some service revolvers, and a semi-automatic which had been found during a routine traffic stop in the back of some kid's car.

An old Triple-A map of the city had been spread out on the tabletop. The options for how to get to the docks were depressingly small. "We can try to go across the rooftops, but we won't get across any of the major streets that way. We could try to take a police cruiser, but there's so many zombies outside we probably wouldn't make it. Or...." Samantha sighed, wishing she had a better idea. "We could go through the sewers."

Johar and Shaggy wrinkled their noses. "Ewww."

For the first time, Samantha was in complete agreement with both of them.

Emily shrugged, going up on tiptoes to look over Johar's shoulder at the map. "Oh come on, the sewers aren't that bad."

"Right, Emily, you're a horror movie buff, you know what can come out of a sewer," Johar responded.

"But some cool stuff can live down there."

At Samantha's incredulous look the Goth grinned. "I hear there are bats down there. I like bats."

"Emily, its crocs. Everyone knows that crocs and mutant goldfish come from sewers," Carson jumped in.

"The best way is the sewers; unless the zombies have developed higher brain functions suddenly, our best bet is the sewers to avoid them," Lauren jumped in ending, hopefully, a very lame discussion.

Johar decided against asking what bats would be doing in the sewers. "How do we get in?"

"The garage. Our police garage has a sewer entrance." Lauren said after a moment of thought.

Samantha started gathering up the file on the ghost ship, bringing it along with them. "I guess we aren't going to get any help from your fellow officers?"

"No. They're certain that the military will be here any moment to save us all." Lauren said with a sigh, rubbing her forehead.

Johar patted his trusty shotgun. "I'd rather go do something about this." The three of them nodded, and after a moment of hesitation, Samantha joined in, looking to Carson expectantly.

"Yeah, I just want to go home sit in front of my TV and zone out for a week and drink a beer, oh, and maybe have sex with a hot woman. I can't do any of those things cause the freakin' zombies are everywhere." She clicked the safety off on the semi-automatic. "Let's go storm that warehouse."

They crept quietly into the garage. "We should be fine. Everyone is focused on the windows," Lauren whispered.

They stopped around the manhole cover everyone staring at Samantha.

"What?" She frowned at them.

Carson leaned over and whispered, "You have the crowbar."

"Right." she ignored the faint chuckle coming from her right and set it against the metal cover. With a grunt she shoved against it. "A little help here?"

With a grin Carson slid next to Samantha and grabbed the crowbar.

"Jesus, Carson, don't you ever stop," the officer chuckled.

"Eww, its like watching mom hit on a scary woman," Johar whispered.

Carson's head shot up. "Jay don't ever compare me to your mother. You do that again and I'll... well something unpleasant."

The manhole cover scrapped across the cement floor and Samantha reclaimed her crowbar. Taking a step back, she let the officer aim her flashlight down into the unpleasant smelling space. Taking another step sideways, she drilled the Pakistani with a withering look and whispered, "And that's, Ms. Scary Bitch, to you."

Johar shrank back away from the scary lady. Carson waited as everyone entered the stinky black hole. She thumped a hand on the young man's skinny shoulder. "Jay. I love you like a brother, and I've been sticking up for you guys, don't think that I haven't, but if you don't knock it off I'm going to pound you. Who I flirt with, make out with, and even have sex with is not your business, so knock it off." She clapped his skinny shoulder again and then walked to the open sewer and climbed down.

"Sure, but when she ruins your life, I get to say I told you so," the dark skinned man muttered, strapping the shotgun over his back and following her down.

If anything, the smell was worse than Samantha had expected. So was the fact that there was a thin stream of some liquid, she was certain she didn't want to know what it was, flowing down the center of the main sewer tunnel.

"Oh god, I think I'm going to vomit," Shaggy gagged.

"It's not so bad, just breathe through your...." Suddenly Carson leapt into Samantha. "Holy shit, something grabbed my leg. Something grabbed my leg," she screamed.

"AHH!" The librarian started bashing at whatever it was with her crowbar even as everyone else spun and aimed guns down at where Carson's feet had been. The poor rat never had a chance.

Lauren laughed and patted Carson on the back. "Way to go, champ, that evil rat is so dead."

"It could have been an evil zombie rat."

"One down, four million to go," Emily quipped, stepping around the red smear.

"Hey I've been munched on twice and neither time was it in a good way," Carson said to Emily's retreating back.

"Is that all you think about?" Samantha demanded, trying to scrape a bit of... something off the

end of her crowbar.

"Pretty much," Carson admitted.

In the dark she could feel Samantha giving her that look. "I actually think it's genetic, my half-sister is a stripper, and my mom has a new boyfriend about every other week."

"Are you two done with your moment over there?" Emily called, the four others pausing several feet ahead of them down the tunnel.

"Yes, and we weren't having a moment," Samantha answered, annoyed, as she hurried to catch up. How did she always end up in these conversations with Carson?

"We weren't having a moment. Samantha just wanted to know how much I think about sex in a day," Carson replied.

"More than a teenage boy," Was Johar's instant response.

"I'd think at least double," Emily agreed.

"It's like going on a class field trip," Lauren complained.

"Can we go now? The sooner we get this over with the sooner I'm back at the library." Even to her own ears Samantha's voice sounded annoyed.

In the dark Carson mimicked the irritated librarian even doing the little stance she did whenever she was annoyed.

"Yes, just follow the flashlight," Lauren said, clicking on the flashlight she had grabbed from a locker.

The light was tiny in the overwhelming dark of the sewers, seeming scared to tread to far out into the overbearing darkness.

Carson coughed and shifted to a more neutral position.

The five of them trailed through the sewers, trying not to breathe in through their noses. The stench was worse than expected, helped no doubt by the lack of power that had shut down the sewer plant. There was little other evidence of the carnage that was raging in the street above them though. No sign of zombies either. This didn't cause any of them to relax.

"You think we're lucky enough to find a sewer grate in the warehouse itself?" Johar wondered out loud, shotgun sweeping the darkness ahead of them as they walked.

"I don't think there is one but there's one right outside a side entrance," Lauren replied scanning the dark.

"Nothing personal, but how will we know when we're there?" Carson asked, looking for signs that they were going the right way. "Everything looks the same."

The flashlight swept up to a metal ladder. "There are numbers by the accesses," Lauren said before sweeping the light down so she could see where they were going.

"Oh, so you know what number we're looking for?"

"Yes, Mahoney, I do. I'm a police officer. I occasionally research things so I don't jump feet first into dangerous situations."

"Oh." Carson decided it would be best to be very quiet.

"See, she actually reads," Samantha whispered, white teeth bright in the darkness as she flashed a wicked smile at the quiet woman.

"Well yee haw. We found you your dream woman. To bad she's straight," Carson shot back.

Emily rolled her eyes. Maybe it would be better if they just locked the two of them in a room together and let them get it over with.

"Please tell me we're almost there?" Johar begged.

"Mahoney, I'm seriously considering shooting you so shut up."

Carson gulped and said, "Being quiet now."

"Has a gun and can read," Samantha quietly amended her previous statement, grinning.

Shaggy trudged through the sewage glumly. They hadn't let him make another flamethrower, or even try to tinker with any of the guns. It just wasn't the same.

They trudged on in silence. Carson wondered why she was so attracted to a woman who loathed her. As far as she could tell Samantha, the mighty rat killer, wasn't that in to her, of course they were making out pretty hot and heavy. Damn, women were confusing.

The librarian, for her part, tried her level best to ignore the irritating Carson. Soon this would be over, and she'd be back in the library. She'd find a way to get back on the day shift and then everything would get back to normal. She would never have to see the annoying drug dealing Hawaiian shirt wearing woman again.

The thought didn't fill her with as much anticipation as it used to and she scowled at the

realization that somehow she was starting to tolerate, maybe even like, these people.

Carson was lost in thought. She didn't notice when everyone else stopped, and she ran into Samantha's back. Fumbling, she nearly lost the semi-automatic. Luckily she had put the safety back on a mile or so back when it was obvious that for the first time they weren't in immediate danger.

"Sorry," she whispered and without trying to cop a feel stepped back, waiting, the whole time telling herself, I will not bait the librarian; I will not bait the librarian."

The Asian woman let out a hiss, although it was hard to tell if it was really in annoyance or not. "Be careful," she whispered, watching as Lauren started to climb up the iron rings embedded in the side of the tunnel.

Shaggy, Johar and Emily aimed their weapons upward, just incase. Samantha hefted the weight of her crowbar and bit down on her lip, watching the cop climb to the manhole cover above them. If there were a lot of zombies right above them, this was about to get very messy.

Lauren grunted and shoved the cover but it wouldn't move. "Damn it," she whispered harshly before climbing back down. "It's stuck."

"Um, hello, the librarian has a crowbar," Carson pointed out, her voice sounding loud in the darkness.

"Well then do something useful, you get up there and move it," Lauren snapped back about ready to kill the morgue attendant.

"I hate you people." Glad she had changed out of her skirt back at her apartment, Samantha started to climb up to the manhole cover before Carson got herself shot.

"Well I was figuring Carson could do it so she would be too occupied to run her mouth," Lauren shot out.

"Sheesh. I can take a hint," Carson said scurrying over after Samantha. "How's it going?" she whispered up at the librarian.

Hanging by one arm, holding the crowbar in the other, and trying to maneuver the tip of it under the manhole, Samantha grunted "Peachy. A little help?" It was definitely harder than it looked.

"Okay well don't take this the wrong way." Carson climbed up the metal rungs and hauled herself up behind Samantha. "I know its tempting but don't knock me off," She whispered into the hair that was attacking her face. For a record first, Carson was trying to be good but it was really hard with Samantha's ass pushing into her groin. "You..." She was going to say workout but then changed her mind. "Need me where the crowbar is or do you want me to push on the cover?"

The librarian swallowed. This was defiantly not the time or place. For one, they were still in the sewer and there were zombies above them. That didn't stop her body from reacting to the warmth pressed up behind her. It had been... a very long time. "The cover," she answered, and if her voice wasn't quite as hard as usual she pretended not to notice.

"Okay." Carson swallowed thickly and reached up. Nearly losing her balance she swayed and then grabbed for the rung. Touching warm flesh she let go and nearly fell again before she grabbed the cold metal rung. "Sorry," she whispered and then reached up with her right hand.

"Would you two hurry up? Something just tried to crawl up my leg!" Johar complained.

"On the count of three?" Samantha asked.

"Kay." Carson waited in the dark trying to be good, trying not to notice the smell of the herbal shampoo that Sam used, or anything else.

"One." The librarian shifted, tightening her grip on the crowbar. "Two." She really hoped there weren't a lot of zombies right on top of them. "Three!" with a grunt she shoved on the crowbar, pushing as hard as she could, using her whole body as leverage.

"Crap," Was all Carson said. As she pushed, the cover lifted and she saw feet, some of them in various stages of decomposition.

With a shove the heavy metal cover ground sideways across the asphalt until there was a two-foot gap. "Shit," Samantha agreed, peering up at the crowd that was shuffling around the new opening. "We have company up here!"

"Um, they are looking at us funny." There was something in the eyes staring down at them that was very disturbing.

"Is that one smiling?"

Carson and Sam were practically trapped in a very compromising situation. Carson reached for the semi that she had tucked into the back of her pants.

"I think he, she, it, or whatever is, is. Sam I want you to slide underneath me down the ladder," she said quietly as she got the gun free.

"Sure," The librarian answered, trying her best to do so without knocking Carson off. The zombies just stood there, watching, with those disturbing eyes. She realized only after she'd managed to go down three rungs why they were so disturbing. There was intelligence in them. Unlike the zombies in the other parts of the city, the ones above them looked aware. "I think they're aware of what's going on," The Asian woman called down to the four below.

Carson raised the gun and squeezed the trigger the zombies stilled and pulled back, nothing

happened. "Fuck!" Carson shook the gun desperately and squeezed the trigger again.

"The safety!" Lauren yelled up. "Take off the fucking safety!"

"Thanks." Carson lowered the gun and balancing on her toes released her other hand and flicked the safety off. Looking back up she found smiling zombies reaching for her. Panicked she raised the gun and fired. The gun roared to life and like a thing possessed, sprayed bullets everywhere regardless of what Carson wanted to shoot.

Samantha didn't realize she was screaming until Carson had emptied the entire clip into the air above them. Pieces of dead flesh and gore rained down through the manhole cover covering both her and the redhead. "Fantastic." She flung a piece of something, she was sure she didn't want to know what, off her arm. "Up or down, Carson." She was done with hanging off a ladder. "And could you try to move your leg off my head?" she demanded, realizing where exactly her head was and why it was warm there.

"Huh?" Carson couldn't hear a damn thing. The gun was surprisingly loud and scary, very scary. Next time she'd leave weapons, which were so cool in video games, alone and stick with baseball bats.

Her face pressed up against Carson's lower stomach, one of the other woman's legs over her shoulder, and an arm dangerously close to uncharted territory, Samantha took a deep breath. "I said get off my face!" the librarian yelled.

There was a yelp and the woman swayed dangerously on the rungs, Carson threw the gun up and out and started to climb up following. She really wanted something clever to say but the rapid gunfire had addled her wits.

Ignoring the burst of laughter from the group at the base of the ladder, Samantha followed her up. It was good to be out of the stench of the tunnels, even if she had just traded the smell of raw sewage for that of decomposing bodies. Those were in plentiful supply, spattered around the open manhole cover.

Swallowing against a sudden rush of bile Samantha stepped over what used to be a person.

Carson was trying to wipe her hands on her gore-encrusted shirt. She stared around a little pale. "Whoa. That's a hell of a gun."

Johar pulled himself up first, followed by Emily and Shaggy, with Lauren providing cover and bringing up the rear. There was a small silence as the group of them surveyed what Carson had wrought. "I could make it better." Shaggy finally said.

"NO!" Carson shouted. "That's okay I really don't want that gun anymore." She leveled an unhappy look at the police officer. "Why didn't you warn me about that?"

Lauren shrugged. "You didn't listen. I tried to get you to take a different one."

Samantha made a face. "Imagine that, Carson, not listening?" she stepped over another part of a body. "Let's just get this over with. Which warehouse is it?" The street they were in wouldn't stay abandoned for long.

Lauren looked up scanning the dark, deserted buildings. "That one with the fence and wire, that's the police warehouse."

"Fucking great." Carson put her face in her hands. Couldn't anything be easy?

"Umm, Guys?" Emily looked around nervously. "How did those zombies know to be standing above that particular manhole?"

"What, you think they were waiting for us?" Johar asked, nervously clutching his shotgun at that idea.

"Maybe they heard us coming up the sewer ladder. Carson and Sam were hardly quiet." Shaggy said after a moment of thought straightening his glasses up on his nose.

Emily didn't look very convinced, but she shrugged and followed the others as they headed towards the warehouse. "At least there aren't anymore zombies."

A murmur like wind rushing through trees or waves on the beach began to grow as they moved closer and closer to the warehouse. Then a smell came: dirt, decay, like a compost pile resting in the sun.

Carson held her hand over her nose. "Jesus, did the anchovies' beach themselves again?"

"Actually that would be more of a fish smell, this is more like earthy smell." Shaggy added then hiding behind Johar as Carson shot him a glare.

"I have a bad feeling about this," the policewoman muttered, checking that her pistol was fully loaded.

"I know that one. It's, It's, um, don't tell me."

Lauren looked at Emily. "What are you talking about?"

"I know what movie that's from?"

"Empire Strikes Back, Han Solo." Carson jumped in.

"No, Indiana Jones every movie." Johar countered.

"Don't make me smack you Jay. Indiana Jones, really." She made a face.

"Don't make me shoot all of you," Lauren said ending the conversation, a hand on her gun.

Samantha nodded in approval. "That's a good one; I'll have to remember it."

Lauren smiled, "I'm finding it effective, especially with Mahoney

Carson grumbled but said nothing. Turning the corner, she stopped.

The librarian nearly ran into her back at the other woman's sudden stop. "Hey what are you...." Samantha trailed off, her mouth open eyes wide, as she stared at the scene in front of her. "Oh shit."

Carson started to scrabble backwards. "Back, back," she hissed.

Between them and the warehouse was a sea of undead. The street was clogged with them, bodies of every age and stage of decomposition. They made the mob of undead that they had faced back at the police station seem like nothing. Very carefully, the five living people slowly inched their way backwards, around the corner.

The dead were pressed up against the wire fence grabbing and shaking it. It could have been a trick of the wind but they could have sworn some of the zombies were chanting "In, in, in."

"What the fuck is that?" Johar nearly screeched.

"Are they talking?" Emily hissed, eyes wide and clutching her weapon.

Samantha shook her head, looking at Carson. "We might have to come up with another idea."

"They want something inside the warehouse," Carson said peeking around the corner.

"They're dead how can they want anything?" the Pakistani asked.

"That's so cool." Emily went to join Carson peeking around the corner as well.

The librarian decided against trying to get a spot at the corner with the three stooges. "It's like something is calling them from the warehouse." That would fit in with some sort of magic, she supposed. "Is there any other way inside?" she asked Lauren.

Lauren opened her mouth and shut it, thought some more. "I don't think so. There might be a side or back entrance."

"Well, what's the plan, fearless leader?"

The redhead did nothing, looking at the writhing mass of dead, and then Emily poked her in her side.

"What?"

Emily pointed behind them. "You're girlfriend asked you a question."

Dark eyes narrowed at Emily, and Samantha started to open her mouth to cut into the Goth chick.

"She can ask the nice police officer, she seems to like her better," Carson said not turning around; she went back to counting the shuffling mass of zombies.

"You know what? Fuck you both." Samantha took up her crowbar and started to march off down a side street, gritting her teeth in anger.

Emily smacked Carson on the back of the head.

"What?"

"I don't like her, but you do, and you're going to feel like shit if something happens to her cause you were a jerk."

"What? What did I do?"

"Carson, you are having a guy moment, stop it. Now go." Emily pointed at the pissed off librarian.

For her part, Samantha continued to stalk down the alleyway. She would find a better way in on her own if that's what it took. Then she'd find out what was causing the dead to rise, stop it somehow and then everything would go back to normal. Simple. Sure.

Emily had to smack Carson one more time before the redhead started after Samantha. "Sam, wait up. Sam. Jesus what did I do now. I thought you wanted me to leave you alone; you seemed to like Laurens suggestion to shoot me. Stop," Carson huffed, out of breath. 'Hello higher power, it's me Carson again, if you let me live through this I'll start going to the gym and do volunteer work - honest."

The librarian kept right on going, ignoring the calls from behind her. She was furious and she wasn't going to let Carson's half-assed apology slow her down. Another half block and she turned the corner, slowing her pace a little, as she took in the scene in front of her. Changing direction slightly she sprinted towards the side of the building, feeling sweat drip down her back.

There was a burning going on in Carson's lower legs, she was getting exhausted, and the muscles there were starting to tremble, but doggedly she kept after Samantha. "Would you stop?" she

hissed out. "You're going to get yourself killed playing hero."

The Asian woman nearly collapsed against the chain link fence behind the warehouse, lungs heaving as she peered back the way she had come. No sign of zombies, only Carson yelling at her. Well, one out of two wasn't too bad she figured. "Would you stop making so much noise?" she hissed when she'd managed to stop seeing spots in front of her eyes. She really had to start exercising more.

Carson frowned and scurried to the fence. "You really don't like me do you," she asked, her blue eyes searching Samantha's dark eyes.

"You are the most annoying woman I have ever met," the other woman answered immediately, her eyes darkening even more. "And I am not getting involved with a womanizing drug dealer who likes to hit on other women right in front of me." Samantha tried to keep her voice low but it climbed a little at the end of that.

Blue eyes dimmed a little and Carson's lips drew into a firm line before relaxing. "I can respect you being honest in this dire time. I guess that make-out session earlier was just you wanting a cheap thrill just incase we died." The jab was cheap but she was just a little hurt here.

The librarian stirred slightly at that, her lips twitching as she remembered the time they'd spent locked in the cellar.

Carson turned away from the librarian her eyes scanning the fence. There was a gate but it had a keypad lock on it and the top of the fence was topped with razor wire, but down just a bit, the wire was snapped and broken away. Something had cut, or broken the wire.

Samantha shook her head, watching Carson's profile. Firmly she reminded herself that it wasn't worth the pain that getting involved with the annoying woman would undoubtedly lead to. No, much better this way. Keep a cold exterior and keep everyone at a distance.

"Here's what I'm thinking. You go get the others and I'll scale the fence and open the gate from the other side. Okay?" She looked at Sam waiting for her to argue.

"And leave you here alone?" An eyebrow arched up at Carson's plan. "No way."

"Well if you yell for the other's the Zombies will hear and come this way. Plus, I'll be fine on the other side, and well, I don't have a weapon." She showed her empty hands.

Samantha scowled at her, but despite herself stood up. "Don't get in trouble," the librarian warned, in her best school teacher voice. "I'll be right back."

"Hey what's the worst that could happen? I'll die and then you'll still have to deal with me...." She trailed off before she said, 'trying to eat you', but Samantha wasn't interested and well one should only push so far then take the clue before you were arrested on stalking charges.

"Then you can shoot me for real and not go to jail," she finished lamely, and went over to the fence and started to climb.

The dark haired woman watched her go, mouth open for a second, as if she was going to say something. Instead, she shook her head and took off at a sprint back the way she had come. The sooner she got the others the quicker they could be back.

At the top of the fence, Carson eyed the split wire wondering what had done it, but then figured she shouldn't shoot gift horses in the mouth or whatever. She eased over the side but her pant leg caught on the wire and she scrambled for a moment then giving a quiet squawk of fear, she tumbled to the ground.

Heads with hair, heads with hair that was rotted out in clumps, and baldheads all seemed to turn and sniff the air. Sightless eyes looked to each other then with some sort of silent communication a few packs broke off from the writhing horde to see if there was food nearby.

Her stomach was cramping and her legs were on fire by the time Samantha ran back to where the others were waiting. Limping and out of breath she had to lean against the side of a building for a few seconds before she could speak. "Come on, we found a way in." the librarian gasped, wondering how the crowbar had become so heavy.

"What did you do with Carson?" Emily asked suspiciously.

"She climbed over the fence," Samantha snapped. "Are you done being suspicious and ready to follow me?"

They nodded. Lauren looked at the fence. "She really is a nut case isn't she?"

"Come on, she found a gap." Samantha led the way back, trying to keep up a good pace, but well aware that she was lagging. That was it; she was going to take up kick boxing or something if they got out of this.

Carson got up and checked herself for damage. Her hands were scraped but nothing too serious. She sighed as she got to her pant leg, it was sliced neatly open, a tiny red slash on her skin but it didn't look too deep. Fuck, she had no idea when she'd get to put on a new pair of pants.

She shook herself off and took off for the gate. She hoped it was the kind that could be opened from the inside. If it wasn't then they were screwed and they'd have to waste time having everyone climb the fence. She didn't put it past Johar and Shaggy to have an 'incident.'

Lauren, predictably, outpaced Samantha back to the section of fencing where she'd left Carson. On the plus side, there wasn't any sign of zombies yet. There also wasn't any sign of Carson either though. "Shit." the librarian swore, looking around for any sign of the other woman.

"Guys, down here," Carson whispered loudly. "I said bring them to the gate." Carson put her hand on the knob and let out a huge sigh of relief as the knob turned.

For a second, when Carson opened the gate, she thought she heard running feet, but shook it off. Then she stepped out to let the others in. "Oh my freakn God." Her mouth dropped. A pack of the dead was running towards them, Jesus, they were putting Olympic athletes to shame.

"Holy fuck! They're running!" Emily screeched, as everyone turned to see what Carson was staring at. The dead moved with an eerie fluid grace, the stiffness they'd shown when they first started to rise gone. They ran fast and completely silently, intent on the prey in front of them. "Move!" Lauren shouted, shoving people into the gate.

Carson bounced into the fence as Shaggy yet again screamed like a little girl and pushed past her, she bounced off into Samantha her hands going to two very inappropriate places. Instead of making any sort of joke, she just pulled her hands away like she had been burned, mumbling an apology before moving into the safety zone of the fenced in yard.

Samantha was too busy trying to flee for her life to realize Carson hadn't made a lewd suggestion. The police officer slammed the gate shut just as the first group of undead slammed into it. Now they made noises, snarling and moaning, hands prying at the fence as they tried to reach the food on the other side.

"Uh oh," Johar whispered as the first of the group started to climb. "How do they know how to climb?" he yelled, bringing up his shotgun and blowing a chunk out of the first zombie on the fence, sending it flying backwards.

"Johar don't," Carson shouted. "You're blowing holes in the fence you're making it easier for them to get in."

Over and over, the shotgun blasted, ripping apart the fence and the zombies, but more just swarmed over the pieces of flesh and bone. Johar wasn't capable of hearing Carson. All he wanted was for those things that belonged in the safety of horror movies and campfire tales to be gone.

"We have to get inside!" Samantha screamed flinching as Johar emptied another shotgun blast into the fence. "Move!" she tried to shove the others towards the doors of the warehouse. "Carson!"

Carson grabbed for the shotgun shoving the barrel upwards, the hot metal searing the flesh on her palm. "Jay!" She shouted her blue eyes looking into his glassy dark eyes. "Jay, you need to stop."

It took the Pakistani man a few shakes before he realized what it was that Carson was saying. "I'm almost out of shells anyway." he backed away from the fence.

"The doors are locked!" Emily yelled, tugging on the handle of the nearest side entrance.

Carson turned Johar around and pointed him at the door. "Shoot the handle."

As he brought up the barrel of the gun, Emily and Samantha scrambled out of the way with a yell of surprise. The second they got clear the man blew the handle straight off the door.

"Guess that'll do it." Samantha grimaced, ears ringing.

Inserting her pinky into her ear and wiggling it around, Carson grimaced; she was going to have to get her hearing checked if she lived through this.

In comparison, Lauren's pistol was considerably quieter as she put a round through the first Zombie to make it over the fence. "Move people!" Another one followed, and five more after it.

Everyone scrambled through the blasted doorway, Lauren slammed the door shut behind them glaring at Carson when it just popped open again. "Great Mahoney, just fucking great!"

"What? Jesus I can't think everything through," Carson defended.

"Obviously," Samantha snapped, looking around wildly.

"Hey guys! Watch out!" Shaggy had stumbled ahead of them into the warehouse and sudden bright lights flooded the area along with the growl of a motor as he started up a forklift.

The engineer revved up the engine, then squealed the tires as he went in reverse by accident. "Oops, wait, I got it now!" The four of them looked at each other and sprinted away from the door as he put it into forward.

The whole building shook as the machine slammed into the door and there was a faint metallic burning smell

Shaggy tumbled out of it, stumbling to the ground. "See." he announced proudly, swaying as he tried to get his bearings after crashing the forklift into the doorway. "I figured it out."

"That was great, good thinking," Carson said with a forced smile.

Samantha sat up from where she'd landed, eyeing the contraption now blocking the side door. "That should hold them for a while." she stood up and went over to see if Carson was all right offering her a hand up from the ground.

Carson ignored the hand and got up on her own. "Thanks but I'm fine." She walked past Samantha towards Lauren. "So where's this statue doohickey?"

The librarian turned as Carson went by, hand still outstretched, a strange look on her face. That

was twice now that the redhead had ignored a chance to say something. What was up with that? She checked her front, she wasn't covered in blood or brain matter. Was there something in her hair?

Lauren looked around, "it should be in the Warehouse manager's office. The crate was broken so we had to put it somewhere safe." She turned in a circle, trying to get her bearings.

Johar loaded the last two shells into his shotgun, while Emily helped Shaggy stand upright without collapsing. He'd hit his head on the steering wheel of the forklift when it rammed into the side of the building.

The librarian looked up from trying to comb her fingers through long dark hair that had come undone from its customary bun. "I think the records said that was in the North West corner of the warehouse."

"Yeah I'm trying to figure out which direction that is." Lauren snapped.

"Do I have something in my hair? Or my teeth?" Samantha whispered to Emily as the Goth girl helped Shaggy to walk.

Emily gave Samantha a slow once over. "Not that I can tell."

"Weird." The librarian muttered, taking Shaggy's other arm, and helping him.

"Mama?" The engineer muttered, obviously dazed and confused.

Carson looked around and then pointed to the right where there were some large double doors. "It's that way."

Lauren glared at the other woman. "What makes you think that?"

"The big sign that says 'Manager's office' with the red arrow pointing, that way." Carson smirked then ducked behind Johar as Lauren took a step toward her.

Samantha couldn't quite help snickering at that. It was a bad sign when she was starting to worry about Carson not hitting on her, and finding the annoying redhead's jokes funny.

The police officer sighed, "Sorry, I'm a little on edge."

Carson peaked over Johar's shoulder. "It's cool, just don't shoot me."

Emily glanced over her shoulder as several somethings started to bang against the door that the forklift was wedged up against. "Let's go before they find another way in."

Following the direction the red arrow pointed, they pushed open the double doors, which opened

silently. Carson was getting creeped out by the silence. For the last couple of days they had been surrounded by the steady groaning and moaning of the undead. Now in the stillness of the warehouse Carson really couldn't deal.

Samantha had lost her crowbar somewhere back in the mad dash into the warehouse. She liberated Shaggy of his pistol though, and tucked it into the waist of her jeans. "But mommy, I wanna go to school," he whined. The two women carrying him shared an amused look.

Crates and boxes were stacked in column after column creating a large wooden maze.

"On the other side of this are stairs to the manager's office," Lauren said turning to the left and disappearing into the maze. "Carson?" Lauren's voice came from the shadows.

"No you can't shoot me," Carson replied.

"Stop that! It just makes me want to shoot you."

"Have you thought about seeing someone about these violent tendencies?"

"Shut up, Carson. As I was getting ready to ask, how did you get over the fence?"

Silence was her answer.

"Carson?"

"You told me to shut up."

Samantha sighed. "Carson, please don't make Lauren shoot you?"

Carson looked at Samantha, "Why do you care? You liked the idea of her shooting me," she huffed but then spoke up as Lauren came marching back from around a stack of crates. "The wire was cut and pulled away on top of the fence."

The librarian frowned in the darkness of the warehouse at the bitter note in Carson's words. "What? I don't...."

"What?" Lauren stopped and frowned. "That doesn't make any sense."

Carson shrugged, "That's how I got over."

"This is a police warehouse, if they left stuff like that go on people's heads would roll."

Carson made a face, "Considering our situation that is a sucky assed metaphor."

Emily had a more important question. "I was wondering. What are we going to do with this statue when we find it anyway? Do we break it? Say a prayer over it?"

"I was going with breaking it; it always works in the movies."

Johar double-checked that his shotgun was ready "I knew this was too easy."

"Look, the longer we stand here, the more there's a chance those zombies are going to get in here. Let's just find it and break it okay?" Samantha pleaded uneasily, shifting her grip on Shaggy.

Lauren nodded, turned around, and started walking again.

Finally, they made it to the other end of the room. There was a set of black metal stairs. At the foot of the stairs, a body lay in pool of dark blood.

Everyone just stared uneasily at it.

"Is it really dead, or kinda dead?" Emily whispered.

Carson eyed the neck and seeing it broken stepped up to the body. Squatting, she reached out and moved his head a little bit. "He's dead, dead. His throat has been cut, and I guess he was thrown down the stairs. His neck is broken." She got up and stepped over the body.

The others followed her, giving the dead body a wide berth, half expecting it to rear up. It stayed where it was though, and Samantha let out a sigh of relief once they'd started up the stairs away from it.

"Come on Emily." Samantha tried to get them to climb the stairs faster. She had no intention of getting left behind while fearless leader charged into trouble unarmed.

Lauren charged up the stairs and shoved Carson back. "You dumb shit, someone is here. They killed a warehouse worker in cold blood and you march up the stairs unarmed."

Hands held up Carson moved to the side of the stairs, the metal railing pressing into her legs. "Whoa, I didn't mean to step on any toes. You should of course go first. You are the professional bad guy getter."

Lauren eyed Carson for a moment, sure that the woman had made a slam on her. "That and I have a gun," she finally said moving up the stairs past the redhead.

Still half-guiding, half carrying the stunned Shaggy, Emily, and Samantha managed to catch up to Johar who followed Lauren, shotgun ready.

"Try not to piss off the cop too much," Samantha whispered as they came even with Carson. "She'd probably get a kick out of shooting you."

"Yeah, and you'd be there cheering her on," Carson whispered over her shoulder as she followed behind after Johar.

Samantha looked over Shaggy's head at the Goth punk, carrying his other arm and raised an eyebrow in question. "Was it something I said?"

Emily met the other woman's eyes unflinching "You treat us all like shit and then you have the nerve to be surprised when the same shit gets thrown in your face."

"Yeah, your right. The sooner we get this done with the sooner we split ways." If the librarian's voice didn't seem quit as eager as it would have been a few days ago about that prospect, she chalked it up to fatigue.

Emily shrugged "If that's what you want. Look, Carson thinks about sex all the time, talks about it all the time, flirts like there's no tomorrow, but she really doesn't just take anybody to her bed. I should know. I've been trying since I was transferred to this hospital. I played the friend card and I'm okay with that 'cause Carson is the best friend you could ever have. She would do anything for her friends, but if I could get her to think of me in a romantic way at all, don't think I wouldn't jump on that. Unfortunately, she went and fell for you, I respect that, but I won't stand by and let you treat her like shit. So either get gone, or get your head out of your ass."

"You sweet talk all the girls like that?" Samantha asked as they finally made it to the top of the stairs. Emily's words stung, but only because they had a sliver of truth in them.

Emily grinned, "Wouldn't you like to know," she winked a massacred eye at Sam, Shaggy just hung between them, oblivious.

That actually got a startled laugh out of Samantha, earning the Asian woman an evil look from Lauren even as she immediately shut up. The librarian felt like pointing a finger at Emily, but figured that would be regressing to a high school level.

Ahead of them, down a corridor lined with glass office doors lay the managers office. A light shown through the door's window, the only sign of light in the hallway after Lauren switched off her flashlight.

"We should leave Shaggy here." Samantha whispered as the others slowly crept down the hall.

Emily nodded.

The door was kicked open and hung awkwardly on its now busted hinges. Lauren reached out a hand her dark skin looking almost pitch black next to the harsh off-white color of the door.

Slowly she pushed the door open. It groaned, as the metal of the twisted hinges squealed as they rubbed against each other. A gun fired. Lauren automatically ducked and Carson scrambled to

the wall.

Samantha slid up next to her, offering the redhead the gun she'd taken from Shaggy. "Here, I hate these things."

Carson looked at for a moment then slowly took it. "Thanks." She gave a quick smile and clicked the safety off.

The other woman answered with a quick twitch of the lips, nearly a grin for her.

"This is fun," Johar commented from across the hallway as he slid up against Lauren's side, shotgun aimed at the entrance to the manager's office.

There were a few more wild shots and Carson looked to Lauren.

Lauren frowned and then shouted. "This is the Police. Kick you're weapon out the door and then come out with your hands up."

Carson rolled her eyes.

"Wow, good thing she's on our side." Samantha whispered, dryly.

A deep belly laugh came out of the room. "I think I'll keep it. Besides I have the power of a whole army behind me." The voice was a masculine baritone.

Carson raised an eyebrow, well that wasn't good.

"What? You keep thinking that buddy. There's no way there's an army in that tiny little room with you." Lauren shouted. God her day was just sucking more and more.

"He must be here for the statue; maybe he's found a way to control the zombies." Samantha whispered, trying to get Lauren's attention.

There came a loud beep and then a grinding noise came from the somewhere in the warehouse.

"What the fuck?" Carson looked around where daylight was now streaming into the warehouse.

Johar dared to risk raising his head, "Oh Crap." The morgue assistant whispered, falling back against the wall, clutching the shotgun.

"What? What is it?" Emily asked.

"The front doors of the warehouse, they're opening."

Carson figured out something in a nanosecond; if the guy was opening the door, then he wasn't

pointing a gun at them. She tensed and then bolted into the room and right into the large meaty fist of the guy watching the door. Stars popped out and did the backstroke in her field of vision before she went down. There were two men, one large and silent watching the doorway. The other was bent over a console a hideous black statue next to him. She fell over backwards, as she hit the ground her finger pressed the trigger and the gun fired. The bullet flew upwards striking a metal beam and deflected back down into the shoulder that was attached to the meaty fist. The man bellowed but stayed upright.

"Carson!" Samantha yelled, trying to follow her into the room, only to be shoved aside as Lauren and Johar charged in. She caught a sight of the redhead crumpling to the floor, and a gun went off. Then Lauren and Johar were yelling at someone to, "drop their weapon." Two more shots rang out and the man who'd hit Carson fell in a pool of his own blood.

Emily and Samantha inched into the room, the librarian trying to see if Carson was still alive.

"All right, you by the desk put up your hands!" the dark skinned woman yelled; her gun trained on the man hunched over the statue.

The man sighed and slowly began to raise his hands then in a swift move, he swung his leg kicking the office chair. The chair sped on its wheels striking the police officer. As everyone turned their attention to the chair he grabbed the statue and took off for the connecting door to the other office. Not stopping to open it, he rammed it with his shoulder. The door groaned and popped open letting the man stagger through.

Johar spun, bringing up his shotgun and blowing a hole through the doorframe, showering the fleeing man with splinters.

"He has the statue!" Emily yelled.

"Carson, get up. You okay?" the librarian tried to drag her out of the way as there was a sudden stampede of people heading after the fleeing man.

Carson's blue eyes fluttered open and she moaned. "What happened?" she slurred out, a trickle of blood spilling from a split in her lip.

Samantha winced and helped the redhead up to her feet. "You ran into someone's fist." A quick glance down through the windows to the floor below showed zombies streaming in through the front door. "Come on, we have to go, we've got company."

Feet staggered but Carson managed to get upright. "Really, one guy's fist made me feel this crappy? Must be some guy?" Her eyes landed on the bullet hole riddled man on the floor and she paled. "Oh crap."

"Careful, you're standing in his blood." Samantha caught her as she swayed a little. "What? What

is it?" There was shooting from the offices further back by the stairs.

"He's looking at me," Carson whispered.

The recently deceased man's eyes were open and they watched Carson and Samantha, then he grinned.

The librarian couldn't help it, she screamed.

The dead man rose stiffly to his feet and Carson looked around wildly for a weapon.

He lunged for them and Carson pushed them apart and he staggered through the space where they had been standing.

Samantha stumbled sideways, up against the splintered doorframe. Grabbing a part of it that had come off, she swung it at the man. Only to watch the piece of wood shatter on his chest. He really was a big guy. "Fuck." tossing it aside she made an awkward jump over the desk as he lunged for her.

Hands scrambled over the tiled floor as she tried to pull herself out of the way, crab walking backwards, her hand brushed against something metallic and gun shaped. Carson spat a glob of blood out of her mouth and shouted. "Hey, fuck head!"

The man stopped his attempt to get the librarian and slowly turned around. She saw him zero in on the gun and then he grinned.

"Oh you think I'm not a threat do you." She fired the gun. It nicked his shoulder and a weak stream of blood dribbled out. He licked his lips and started to lurch towards the woman on the ground.

"Shoot him in the head!" Samantha yelled, from her position hiding behind the manager's desk. Those were definitely words she never thought she'd be yelling at someone.

Carson fired twice more the second bullet entered through his left cheek and blew the back of his skull out and for the second time that night the huge thug hit the ground.

Carson breathed harshly and slowly set the gun down, before her shaking hand fired the weapon again.

Leaping up from where she had been hiding, Samantha scrambled over the desk, grabbed the redheads other hand and tugged her back the way they had come. "Come on, let's find the others." she could hear the moaning of the zombies below them, hell, she could smell them.

Carson nodded.

Shaggy was right where they had left him, head back against the wall, legs stretched out into the hallway. A flurry of gunshots lit up one of the adjoining offices, shattering one of the windows and raining glass across the hallway. "We better grab Shaggy." Samantha yelled over the gunplay.

Carson nodded numbly, her brain still foggy and scrambled. She bent over and placed one of Shaggy's arms behind her head and started to stand dragging the unconscious man up as she stood. Once upright, she spit another gob of blood out of her mouth and looked around.

The undead were herding in like hunting dogs on a scent. "Shit," she whispered. "I didn't even know we had so many people in this town."

The librarian grabbed the engineer's other arm to help Carson carry him. "I don't think they're all from this town," she grunted. "Some of them are wearing army uniforms."

The door next to them flew open and the man holding the statue barged out. Aiming his pistol behind him and letting off a series of shots, he barreled straight into the three of them at a full run. The crash sent them all flying, to end up in a tangle of cursing and groaning people.

Mmm, boobies. Carson's addled brain thought for a second then added, Mmm, soft boobies. Carson's blue eyes shot open as she realized what that meant. Crap she was sprawled out on top of Samantha. She sighed, why does it feel so good to touch the woman who wanted nothing to do with her? Must be the forbidden fruit thingy she guessed. She started to untangle herself keeping all rude and suggestive commentary in her head, and then she noticed the statue. With a quick glance under her arm, she saw a figure in black staggering to their feet. With a desperate lunge, she went for the statue.

Samantha had just managed to raise her head, trying to get her bearings, when Carson shoved an elbow into a delicate place. With a yelp she rolled onto her side, curling up for a second and squeezing her eyes shut until they stopped watering.

There was a mumbled curse and something struck Carson's back sending her to her knees, but her left hand scooped up the black nightmarish figurine.

Cursing, the librarian opened her eyes in time to see the redhead snatch up the black statue. She also saw the man in black raise his pistol, murder in his eyes. Lunging, she tackled his knees with a wild scream. They both went tumbling down the stairs, yelling and screaming as they went.

Wheezing, and her back throbbing, Carson used the rail to haul herself to her feet, her eyes went to the figures tumbling down the stairs and she watched the zombies halt and turn to the noise.

Lauren and Johar stumbled out of the broken doorway; the cop was clutching her right arm where blood was pooling through her fabric. "Thank god, you got it!"

"Shit, shit, shit...." She looked at the statue, not a single clue how it worked or if it worked as

they suspected it did. She held it up. Nothing happened. The zombies approached the two on the stairs like starving dogs. "Fuck, fuck, fuck...."

Even more confused than she had been a moment ago, Samantha weakly lifted her head from where she was lying on top of the man in black. "Huh?" she mumbled, blinking as she tried to focus on all the noise around her.

The man in black got to his knees, one hand grabbing the fucking bitch that had knocked them down the stairs the other pulling a knife. He held it tightly to her throat.

"Listen here young lady. Throw me that statue or your friend her dies." He bellowed.

The librarian let out a startled squawk as she felt the knife press against her throat and she was dragged to her feet.

Lauren, gun in her off hand, aimed down the stairs at him. "Carson, any ideas?"

"Um, you're kind of dead anyways." She gestured at the zombies.

He smiled, "I know how to use the statue, I can make them all go back to their crypts and go back to the peace of their eternal sleep."

"Don't listen to him Carson, he'll use it to kill us all." Johar shouted, coming to stand next to Lauren, shotgun raised to his shoulder. He had one shell left and he'd use it if he got a chance. Samantha blinked rapidly, jerking again as he swung her around, trying to keep her between him and the approaching zombies.

Carson turned to Johar slipping out of her shoes, "I'm going to throw him the statue. Jay, I need you to shoot the statue, the shotgun should reduce it to toothpicks and hopefully put an end to all this."

"You think I can hit that in mid air?" he whispered back, dark eyes widening in surprised horror.

She looked at Johar, seeing his nervousness, and she said softly, "It will be okay just pretend it's that bitch who keeps calling homeland security."

"Hurry or your friend dies!" The man shouted, desperation edging into his voice as he tightened his hold on Samantha. The zombies were nearly upon them now.

She turned around. "Okay I'm going to throw the statue to you, just don't hurt our friend."

"Your friend maybe," Emily shot out.

Samantha met Carson's eyes from down below, shaking her head as much as she could with a knife to her throat. "No Carson, don't give it to him!"

Carson caught Samantha's eyes and gave her a lop-sided grin. Then she tossed the statue high into the air. The man let go of Samantha raising his hands up to catch the statue as Carson had hoped he would. Then in her sock covered feet she jumped up onto the metal railing in a crouch and started to surf down the pole. God she remembered it being more fun when she was high school.

"Shoot!" Lauren yelled as Johar hesitated. He followed the statue through the iron sights of the shotgun, praying, and squeezed the trigger.

As the statue disappeared only to reappear as a rain of wooden splinters, the man's face turned purple. "You are all fucking dead!" He howled, "Once my boss finds out who ruined his prize, trust me you will all pay." He turned around gripping his knife tightly; he was so intent in leaving them a grizzly reminder of their deception he failed to notice the woman shooting down the railing.

Legs taunt with strain bunched and Carson leapt from the railing tackling the pissed off man.

Just as the zombies reached them, Samantha could almost feel their touch; Johar's shot disintegrated the statue. The effect was immediate. All around them the undead dropped, like puppets with their strings cut, to lie where they fell in ungainly heaps. Samantha dodged backwards, intent on the insane man with the knife coming at her. Only to watch Carson slam into him at full speed.

They tumbled down the last few steps stopped by the rotting speed bumps on the floor. Carson sat up. "Oh my god! I got a face full of dead person!"

Emily and Johar started laughing. Carson was just fine.

Samantha stepped over a rotting corpse and delivered a good swift kick to the man's face. "Let's see how you like being hit! Huh?" She kicked him again. "You like that, bitch?" Followed by one more good swift kick for good measure.

Suddenly the warehouse was lit up in glaring bright white lights, and there was the sounds of helicopters and the shouting of voices.

The man on the floor shot up knocking Samantha back and took off.

The librarian stumbled backwards into Carson, taking them both down as the man sprinted for the nearest exit.

Carson instinctively wrapped her arms around the other woman as they fell.

The Asian woman landed on top of the redhead, and blinked as she met Carson's eyes. "Umm, hi." She ignored the man running away from them, she was too tired to chase after someone, and

she figured that was the military's problem now.

"You know," Carson started as they landed on the pile of the dead. "I'm tired of seeing dead people. Maybe its time to find a new job." She realized she was holding Samantha and unwrapped her hands. "I'm trying to be good and respect the fact you don't like me touching you, but it's been hard since I seem to keep getting stuck in these situations."

The librarian considered their position for a moment, and then smiled. "Carson, shut up." She leaned down to give the other woman as thorough a kiss as she could manage.

Carson's eyes went wide, and then she resigned herself to getting thoroughly kissed.

Wind whipped through the warehouse as the first of the helicopters landed in the street outside. Soldiers leapt from it, weapons at the ready as they swarmed into the warehouse. They all wore chemical and biological safety suites, making them look alien in appearance. Right behind them were scientists in their own biological hazmat suites, stopping at the first set of zombies to take samples.

"Hey, Carson!" Emily yelled. She and Johar were helping Shaggy down the stairs with Lauren trailing behind. "Think we'll get a medal out of this?"

Carson made a shooining motion with her hands not willing to give up the lip lock with Samantha to respond.

The policewoman wearily sat down on the bottom step, laughing at Carson and Samantha as the soldiers reached them. Johar made a face at the two of them making out in the middle of corpses. "I think I need a vacation."

Carson was rather forcibly removed from Samantha and both women where placed into isolation suits while Carson shouted and cursed like a sailor.

The librarian didn't enjoy being manhandled much either, judging by the yelling she was giving to the soldiers holding her. After kneeing one in the groin, the other three picked her up and proceeded to carry her out of the warehouse, still swearing.

Lauren and the others shared a quick look and decided to go a little more peacefully, medics taking over with Shaggy.

"Hey, I was born here; I am not a terrorist no matter what that bitch from accounting says." Johar yelled as he was approached by two menacing looking marines.

"What are you doing?" Emily asked the two who where putting her into a containment suit.

"Just procedure ma'am," one barked out through his suit. "We're not sure what caused the

re-animation of the dead so we aren't taking any chances. You all have been too close to what we consider ground zero with the amount of dead around this place."

Medics carried Shaggy out followed by Emily, Johar, and Lauren who were all escorted out. Carson, true to her inherently difficult nature was carried out by two large marines.

The last Samantha saw of her comrades in arms, they were all being escorted to different helicopters. The marines holding her tossed her into one of them, climbed in after her, slammed the outer door shut and the chopper took off.

The sun was straining through the early morning cloud cover, bright golden knives stabbed through the seams of the fluffy clouds breaking them apart. The day was cool with the breeze coming in over the ocean bringing a heavy damp feel to the air as well as the smell of fish.

A worn and tired looking Greyhound bus pulled into the Gas and Go, which also served as the bus stop. It gave a lurch as it came to a shuddering stop, giving the few people on board a start. The driver opened the door yelling, "Huntington, stop!" before getting out. He was a squat man who had the rolling gait of a man who probably spent most of his life on the sea before taking up a life of sitting on his ass in front of a steering wheel. With a grunt, he opened the luggage compartment and tossed out a single tiny duffle.

A figure emerged with dull reddish-brown hair, skin pale, wearing clothes that hung off her frame. Sunlight struck the figure's hair revealing a bright red ring at the bottom of the cropped off hair. Blue eyes stared at the bus driver. "Thanks. You know I could have something breakable in there."

The bus driver just grunted and climbed up the steps back behind the wheel.

With a tired huff, Carson bent over and grabbed her bag. Standing back up, she looked around hoping that her mother would remember that today was the day she would be returning from wherever the military had taken them. Where they had been taken was still very vague. She assumed they had been separated, but only really knew that she had been. She hadn't seen anyone else in nearly a month, only military personal. She had been poked, prodded, blood taken, and talked to innumerable times. God, she didn't know how many times she had given a statement about what had happened in Huntington, or to how many different people. Right now, the last thing she ever wanted to do was talk about the 'zombie incident.'

With a quick survey of the pitted parking lot, she knew her mother had forgotten, which wasn't really a surprise. She had twenty bucks in her pocket and the single change of clothes in the duffle, and since she had no idea if she still had a job, she decided to walk.

The Military had promised that her old job would be waiting, that they had made the necessary calls, but still, the military had been keeping her against her will, so she would be skeptical until it proved to be true.

Face red, and sweat making her shirt stick to her back, Carson walked up the weed-choked driveway of her mother's house. Her mother's beat up dodge was there, so the chances were good her mother was too.

The front door didn't work, so she went around to the back. The screen groaned as she opened it and a familiar voice shouted, "Who's there?"

"It's me mom, Carson."

"Child, where have you been? You missed all the weirdness. You remember my ex, Billy."

Carson set her bag down and followed her mother's voice into the kitchen. "Yes, I remember Billy. Didn't he die in a drunk driving accident?"

"Yes, he did. Now you stop with your lip and let me finish."

Carson smiled and said sorry. Her mother was nursing something in a paper cup that smelled like whiskey, her half-sister waved from the table and Carson waved back. Her sister was short with caramel skin, and had a body full of curves and twists; in Carson's mind she was the sin called lust personified, and imagining her sister doing anything other than stripping just seemed wrong. Melinda reached over and scooped some ice into a paper cup, poured a splash of coke followed by a deluge of whiskey, and then pushed the cup over in front of the empty seat at the table. Carson nodded taking the invitation.

"So as I was saying," her mother started up again. "I'm sleeping on the couch when there's this moaning and groaning coming from outside. I get up to tell whoever it is to get a room. I figured it was hot lips here with some guy again and they got too worked up to make it to the bed room."

Carson snickered at her sister's outraged expression.

"But I pull back the curtains and what do I see...?"

Carson shrugged, "Santa?"

Her mother sighed and took a long drink. "No dumbass, I saw Billy trying to get into the house, but it's not Billy. His face is all rotted and there's worms and stuff crawling on his chest."

Carson choked on her drink.

"Yep scared me half to death, so I went and got Simon's hunting rifle, you know he was Melinda's dad."

"Yes, mom, I remember who Simon was." Simon had been swept off a fishing boat in a bad storm when she was a kid. After that, her mother had sworn off marriage and only dated.

"Good. Jesus, he was a great man." Her eyes went dreamy for a moment then she seemed to shake herself. "Anyways, where was I...? Oh yeah, Billy. So I opens the window and shoots the nightmare in the head and he goes away. The next morning I get up, the hunting rifle is there next to me and I'm thinking, Jesus, I could have hurt someone. That's when I decided that God sent me a vision to get me back on the right path."

Carson choked again.

"Yep no more drinking on Sundays, that's Gods day."

Carson looked at her sister who shook her head telling her to let it alone. "Good for you, mom."

"So where you been? You find a new girl? That why you haven't been home?"

Carson opened her mouth, and then shut it, not sure where to start, then she decided on, "Yes, mom, there's a new woman in my life."

"Well you be careful with that, you know us Mahoney women are cursed never to find romantic happiness. Look at me. Every time I think I find it, the guy ends up dead in some freak accident."

"Of course, mom." She took another drink and wondered if she really did have a new woman in her life. That last kiss with Samantha had given her back hope that she was still charming, in her own weird way, but the military had rushed in leaving Carson nothing to go on. Just that last intense kiss.

Carson pattered around the house calling the utility people, who hadn't been paid since she hadn't been home to write the checks, and since her truck had been destroyed it wasn't like she could go anywhere. Monday afternoon found her getting ready to go into work and see if she even had a job or if the military was blowing smoke up her ass. She caught the 27 downtown bus and got off at the stop a block from the hospital.

It was weird. Mostly the town looked the same, like those days when she had been running for her life were some nightmare. There were little things; Fresh paint, some burned out buildings, people looked wary, a shadow in there eyes that hadn't been there before. The impossible had happened and now they weren't sure what to trust.

There were a lot of new people. It was the first thing she noticed as she entered the hospital. Gregory, the normal security guard on duty wasn't there. Instead, Fred asked to see her badge. On her way down to the morgue, she only recognized one nurse. She shook her head and then nervously scratched her neck missing her long hair. She had cut it in a fit of boredom while locked down with the military.

She knocked on the ME's door. "Come in," came the muffled reply. She opened the door nervously clearing her throat. "Um, hi."

A short man with a wild tangle of dark hair sprouting off the top of his head looked at her over the top of a report.

"I'm Carson Mahoney, a Sergeant Eriksson was supposed to...."

"Yes, yes, you're almost late for your shift. Get to work," was all he said. Recognizing her dismissal Carson retreated and headed down to the bowels of the hospital.

Carson peaked in the door and didn't see anybody. "Hello?"

The room was a lot more organized and happily, the blood splatter was gone from the last time she had been at work.

"Carson?" An accented male voice called from the back of the morgue, followed by some rustling. "What took you so long?" Johar demanded, grinning as he emerged from the back office.

Carson gave him a huge grin. "Jay, my man. How are things?"

Laughing, the Pakistani came over to give her a swift hug, obviously glad to see her. "Well, other than all the medical exams they put me through after the warehouse, I'm good. I was starting to get worried that I was the only one they let out."

Carson grew worried, "Emily, Sam, the annoying police officer?"

He shrugged. "Don't forget Shaggy." He started to lead the way towards the back of the office. "Lauren, her name is Lauren, not annoying police officer. No sign of any of them yet. I just got here though."

Carson heaved a sigh of relief, "I was worried they were keeping me longer because I was being my usual charming self."

Carson sat down at the shared shift desk and automatically picked up the late shift clipboard "Knowing Emily, she hooked up with a grunt and now they can't get rid of her," she said with a laugh.

"Hey!" An old magazine bounced off the side of Carson's head, as Emily blew into the place grinning. "I resent the implication that I'd hang around after someone tried to get rid of me. Besides, they didn't even take me out to dinner before they had me strip." The Goth hopped up on top of one of the metal examination tables, as if she'd never left.

Carson rubbed her head. "I missed you too. I had no one to beat me at everything."

The other woman gave her an impish smile and swung her legs back and forth. "Guess who I

found wandering around outside?"

"Daly. Don't tell me he survived," Carson said in horror.

Emily shuddered in mock horror. "No, Shaggy. I told him to come in, but he didn't want to come into the morgue for some reason." She shrugged.

Carson blinked and looked around. "You know, I don't really want to be here either." The white walls and harsh lighting closing in on her. She coughed and gathered herself. "So how is the little geek?"

"I don't really know. He was sketching out weapons on graph paper." Emily hoped off the table and headed for the door along with the two of them. By unspoken agreement, Johar locked the door to the fridge room where the corpses were usually stored.

As casually as she could Carson asked, "Anyone heard from Samantha?"

Emily and Johar shared a look behind the woman's back as they emerged from the hospital. "No, but that doesn't mean anything," Johar answered slowly, waving as he spotted Shaggy sitting on a nearby bench, sketching something in a large notebook.

"Shaggy how's the head?" Carson said startling the young man.

"Huh? Oh, yeah, great. Look at this! I think it will work much better than the old flame thrower." he proudly offered her the sketchbook.

A police cruiser slowly trolled past, the lights on the top flashing briefly to get their attention. Inside, Lauren gave them a brief wave, before slowly cruising onwards.

Carson laughed, "Don't change, Shaggy." She handed the sketchbook back, having no clue what she was looking at. She looked at her watch and figured she had been at work for a whole 14 minutes. "Look guys, I'll be right back. There's this thing that I need to do, err, check on... yeah, I'll be right back," she finished sheepishly knowing Emily was seeing right through her lame story.

The Goth rolled her eyes and joined Johar sitting on the bench with Shaggy. "Get out of here. We'll be here when you get back."

A loud whoop from behind her and the sudden flash of red and blue lights cut through the evening as a cop car pulled up next to her, pacing the redhead as she walked. Inside the car, Lauren rolled down the window, grinning out of it at the morgue assistant. "Do you have any I.D. on you?"

Carson rolled her eyes. "Yes, it was one of the things the military gave back when they dumped me on a bus. So what are you up to officer friendly?"

"Oh you know, rounding up delinquents and drunks, the usual. No more zombies, thank god." The dark skinned woman grimaced slightly. "Glad to see you and your misfits got set loose by the military."

Carson scratched her now brown head, "well I haven't done anything yet." She grinned devilishly, "but the night is young. So when did they let you go?"

"Three days ago. Made me sign all sorts of confidentiality papers. Where's Samantha? I haven't seen her around yet."

"I..." She blew out a nervous breath. "I don't know. I was just headed across the parking lot to the library to check and see if she was there."

The squawk of the radio interrupted whatever the cop was going to say. Shaking her head, Lauren started to accelerate away, lights flashing. "Good luck!" she shouted, heading out of the parking lot and towards town.

"Yes, we should have these warm fuzzies more often," she yelled at the police car.

The inside of the hospital had been sanitized since the "outbreak," as everyone was referring to the zombie incident. Gone were the splashes and pools of blood, the screaming and piles of dead. Things were calm, well as calm as they ever got in a teaching hospital. The area around the library was calmer than most, although a resident hurried past Carson, beeper in hand and a worried look on his face.

Carson rubbed her bare arms against the chill of the air conditioning she turned a corner and saw the carved wooden sign for the Agnes Gates Memorial Library. She pushed through another set of double doors and looked around.

After a moment, she found the information desk and walked up to the thin man working the desk. She wondered if she sneezed if he would blow away. "Excuse me?"

Pushing thick black glasses up his nose he looked up from the books he was stamping. "May I help you?"

"Um, yes. I was wondering if, Samantha... err," she paused for an awkward second when she realized she couldn't remember Sam's last name. "If Samantha was back to work."

"I don't think she's available right now." The thin man stated nervously, his eyes darting towards the back of the library.

"Oh, well." Carson scratched the back of her neck in thought not sure what to do. "Could you tell her Carson is here?"

"No problem I'll let her know that you...."

"You know what you can do with your job? You can stuff it up your ass you homophobic old bitch!" a familiar voice cut through the silence of the library with all of the subtlety of a chainsaw, followed by a door slamming shut.

Carson's eyebrows rose into her badly cut bangs and she looked at the guy wide-eyed.

"Perhaps you could just give her a message?"

He coughed and started to side step away from the front counter, clearly intent on making a retreat. "Sorry, I'm taking my break," and all but sprinted out of the library.

"Shit," she huffed out. She debated whether it was a good idea to go any farther. With a shrug she went behind the desk and picked up the phone sitting there and scanned the phone list.

A frazzled looking young man in a wrinkled lab coat came up to the desk. "I was wondering...."

She didn't look up. "No."

"But..."

"No...."

"I really need...."

"No."

"But...."

The sound of high heels clicking against the linoleum tiles quickly came closer as the owner of the previously loud voice headed towards the front of the library.

"Try the third floor," she said finally.

Grateful the young man ran off not realizing there was no third floor.

"Sam, Sam, Sam," she muttered. "Where are you? You must be in this stupid thing somewhere."

"I thought I told you not to call me Sam?" Samantha said, stalking out from the stacks.

Carson grinned and put the phone down. "Samantha. How is my favorite librarian?"

The Asian woman grinned slightly. "Well, I'm no longer a librarian." she glanced behind her towards the back of the library. "I just gave the head librarian a piece of my mind and that felt pretty good."

"Oh, well that's good right? I used to give Truman a piece of my mind all the time... I wonder if he's still alive, anyways, how are you?" She bounded out of the info desk over to Samantha, who blinked at Carson's upbeat outlook.

"I guess so. You know of any apartments for rent? Mine seems to have burned down." struggling with herself for a moment, Samantha answered the redhead's question. "I feel pretty good actually. Nice of the military to let me go finally. How about you? Are the others okay?"

Carson frowned at the cool reception, but shoved a smile back on to her face. "Everyone is good. I've seen them all today. I got in a couple of days ago. As for an apartment there's a couple of places downtown on Wilson, 5th, and Jefferson. They might be renting."

Samantha winced slightly at the look on Carson's face. She knew she was being a little chilly, but she was still furious with the way the old head librarian had been trying to treat her. Taking a deep breath, she tried again. "Hi Carson, I'm happy to see you." Deciding she didn't have much left to lose, the ex-librarian even dared to give Carson a hug.

Carson's eyebrows shot into her bangs again, but she returned the hug. "Whew, I was wondering if you were going to be my shortest and weirdest relationship to date."

"Relationship?" Samantha smiled slowly. "We're in a relationship?" She tasted the word, deciding she rather liked it.

"Well, um, if we're not, let me know 'cause I only date one person at a time. I'm cutting myself off from other opportunities," Carson coughed.

Dark eyes narrowed at that. "We're going to have to work on your answers, you know that?" Samantha grabbed Carson's arm and started to herd her towards the doors. "Come on, you owe me a date."

Carson grinned, "Actually, I think you owe me a date, since you've kissed me. Twice. I'm not easy you know."

"I know you're not easy. You're annoying," the other woman huffed, grinning despite herself. "What did you do to your hair?" The doors to the library swung closed behind them.

End

