













Something must have startled him, because Albert shrieked and fell backwards on his ass.

“Boss!”

“What?!” Marc wasn’t sure yet if he should be concerned or just pissed off.

Albert scooted backwards, not quite on his feet yet.

“There’s another one of those mutant Chihuahuas over here!”

“What? Rat’s ass!” Undead bunnies usually were nearby any time Jeremiah was causing trouble.

“Get the Hell out of there!”

“Yeah. Right.”

Albert finally got his feet underneath him and galumphed like a snow-bound moose to Marc’s side.

He held up his prize as he panted to catch his breath.

“I got the pliers.”

“That’s great,” Marc said absently. “How many of those little monsters are there?”

“Just one that I saw.”

The bush rustled directly ahead of them, indicating there were two or more reanimated vermin tussling underneath.

The brush also rustled to their left and their right and directly behind them.

“Of course, there could be more,” Albert said.

“Get to the Bobcat,” Marc ordered. He always picked his battles, and with Albert to protect, too, this wasn’t a fight he wanted to start. Just in case, there was a shovel a few paces to his left.

Albert bent down to collect the tools.

“Get to the Bobcat, NOW!”

Albert dropped everything but the hard-won set of pliers and headed for Theodora, parked a few yards away.

Undead skinless rabbits and squirrels appeared at the edges of the brush, numbering no more than a dozen altogether.

Then, the reanimated roadkill appeared behind them. Raccoons, woodchucks, pancake cats, and

even a few dead deer joined the decomposing throng. Within a minute, Albert and Marc were surrounded by over a hundred zombie animals.

Albert froze several feet away from Theodora.

“Keep going, Albert,” Marc shouted, “I’ve got your back. Just hop behind the wheel and fire her up.”

“O-kaay.” The big kid stumbled his way to the cab of the Bobcat.

Marc picked up a shovel and moved in a martial arts crouch towards Theodora while trying to look in all directions at once.

Albert cautiously slid into the driver’s seat and started the engine.

The zombie animals just watched: not moving, not even breathing.

Marc climbed into the bed, holding onto the crash cage with one hand and his shovel with the other.

Albert flailed his hands over the various controls on the dashboard.

“What do I do with the bucket?” Panic was clear in Albert’s voice.

“Bring it up about a foot. Angle it down—forward. Use it like a cow-catcher.”

“There’s cows, too?” Albert squeaked.

“That’s just a figure of speech.” Marc pointed through the crash cage. “Pull that lever there!”

Albert fumbled his way through until Theodora’s bucket jerkily raised off the ground.

Marc watched in all directions as the undead animals continued to fill the clearing. He guessed at a count of two or three hundred, now.

Albert guided the Bobcat toward the path, nearly jolting Marc off his feet. The way out was four or five deep in undead, furry things.

“What do we do, now?” Albert whined.

“Gun it. We’re punching through.”

Albert locked his elbows and stepped on the gas. Theodora veered towards escape under minimal control, fishtailing in the mud, slush, and gravel.

The undead animals blocking the way held their positions in the middle of the gravel path. The

others behind and to either side of Theodora fell to pursuit. They hissed and screeched as they crashed through the dry bush.

The Bobcat hit the wall of undead flesh and punched through. Reanimated roadkill, whole and in pieces, was thrown every direction. Those on either side of Theodora jumped up to attack.

Marc struck back with various hand-to-hand and boot-to-head techniques while hanging onto the roll cage. Albert swatted at the creatures with his free hand and squealed like a piglet, but he kept driving.

Eventually, Theodora pulled away and the last of the animals were pushed overboard. A thin layer of green-grey hair and decomposed flesh covered everything.

Marc took a deep breath as they careened down the path.

“I think we’re clear now!” he shouted over the sound of the engine.

Albert glanced up at Marc, just daring a bit of a relieved smile. He looked back down in time to see a small herd of undead cows that were blocking the path ahead. They were black and brown and mossy green in several places.

“Jesus Christ! There ARE cows!”

Albert stomped on the brakes, but Theodora still plowed into the lead zombie cow at high speed. Bones, hair, and decaying leather flew up like confetti.

Marc got thrown over the top of the roll cage to bounce off the back of another undead bovine. He hit the ground, bounced again and landed in the grass on the far side of the herd.

He saw Theodora veer off the path, roll down an incline and run blade first into a tree. The metal of the bucket’s edge cut several inches into wood. She wasn’t going anywhere until a tractor dragged her back up the hill.

Albert pulled himself out of the Bobcat and limped up to stand over Marc.

“God, I thought it was bad hitting them when they were alive.” He spit out something fibrous and brownish-green.