**Persuaded**

*by Chris Stewart*

It’s been two weeks since this whole thing started.

It all started with a tanker accident. It was all over the news. Everyone thought it was just another oil spill. There were plenty of volunteers, plenty of people wanting to help the poor defenseless animals. Plenty of victims. Within hours of the tanker accident, it started happening. The animals had gone crazy; they were scratching and biting the clean up volunteers. They said that it was an adverse effect to whatever was in that tanker.

Rescue workers were still trying to get the crew out of the ship. They could hear screaming inside, screams to open the doors. But that’s when it all went to hell – as soon as they cut the door out.

They broadcast for six full minutes before it went silent. Six minutes of screaming and agony. The ship crew attacked the rescue workers like rabid baboons, breaking bones and tearing flesh. The people on the shore weren’t faring any better. Those that had been attacked by animals were attacking everyone else. It was worse than any warzone report; it was sheer brutality, and yet the broadcast still went on for six minutes. Six minutes and then…blank faces. Nobody could explain what was happening. They tried to continue with the regular news, tried to talk about the economy, the weather, a cute human interest story, anything at all – but they couldn’t make us un-see what we saw.

I tried to continue with my regular existence, but every time I switched on the news or walked by a news stand, it was there. The big mystery. They had some explanations: some kind of infection, brain parasites. But it didn’t matter. It wasn’t an infection we were afraid of, it was them.

Four days after the initial report a state of emergency was raised. And yet we’d all seen this before, in every zombie movie ever produced. People didn’t know who to trust. They were stockpiling food and weapons. Some tried to flee, but it seemed every zombie movie was right. They didn’t make it. Three days later they arrived in my town.

I expected moans, shuffling corpses, dismemberment, but that’s where the movies lied. They ran through the streets, screaming. I remember running to my front door as fast as I could, locking and barricading, doing anything to make sure it would stay shut, and then I headed for the window. I was on the second story and I could see the carnage. They were unstoppable. They were aware.

A group of them made their way through a building across the street. They jumped straight through plate glass windows. Even the shards slicing through them made no difference; they just kept coming. My barricade wasn’t going to hold. I rushed around my apartment, grabbing supplies and jamming them into the most secure room I had. I went back for one last look across the street, and I wish I hadn’t. In a second-story window, my face met one of theirs. They knew where I was. I quickly dashed into the room and locked the door.

I don’t have any kind of panic room, or a secure basement, so the safest place I could think of was my bathroom. No windows, one door with a lock. I had filled my sink and bathtub full of water, so I could stay for a while. So I sat there in the dark room, with the distant screams in my ears.

I began to feel like I may have overreacted; it had been two hours with no sign of them. It actually got quieter and I thought they had moved on. Maybe I could leave the room, get to the kitchen, and grab more food to wait it out.

A crash came from the front door.

Then I heard the sound of someone running full force into the door and knocking down the barrier behind it. There were a couple more crashes, and then I knew they were inside. Rapid footsteps began moving around my home; there were a couple screams and then a bang on the wall beside me. My eyes were open to their widest, even in the pitch black darkness of the room. There was another bang, and another. They knew I was there, and they knew I was scared.

This was the zombie nightmare I had been expecting from the start. I had nowhere to run. There was only so much time before they would break in. I sat with my back to the door, hoping my extra weight would make it harder for them to get in. And then it got worse.

“Why don’t you open the door?” said a voice on the opposite side of the door.

No screams or moans, just a quiet, whispery voice, followed by more of them.

“We’ve come for you.”

“You’ll be happier if you open the door.”

“It’s not so bad…”

The whispery voices became a cacophony of noise trying to persuade me, to break me, to fool me. I had heard that the moaning of zombies would drive people insane, but this was worse, a siren call. I sat in the darkness and hoped and prayed that they’d get bored. But they don’t get bored, and they don’t leave.

I managed to use the mirror to peak under the door, only to be greeted by horrible unblinking eyes, blood-smeared faces, screams, and more horrible whispers.

That was two days ago.

I don’t know what to do anymore…

Maybe it won’t be so bad.