

Aftermath: Found

By

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SMASHWORDS EDITION

PUBLISHED BY

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Aftermath – Found

It wasn't good to be out in the open, but it wasn't good to be held up in one place either. You had to take your chances and figure out when it was best to do which. If you stayed in a one spot too long they would find you, and when one found you thousands would. That was the easy part, the second and hardest part was dealing with other people. Other people could get you killed faster then they would and most times with a sick twisted sadistic pleasure.

Hunger motivates you when you feel hopeless. Living was moving from place to place, watching your back, and scavenging for food. You lose track of time when you're running for your life. You

could run or be eaten, but hiding was learning when to move from one safe spot to another as fast as you could. They were never too far behind as they shambled their way after you, but if they caught you off guard they'd be on top of you before you had a chance to scream. Dying that way scared me the most. I was afraid of being caught when I was asleep, or in some other compromising position. I was afraid of going out with a whimper on a small blue rock in the middle of a vast dark universe.

I'd just made it to a gas station when I heard it. A regular pulsing beat that swelled as it got closer. It awakened something in me. Something I hadn't remembered in years. I remembered hearing it before things went to shit and being annoyed, but now I was in sheer terror. A person like that, who listened to that music, could want anything. I wasn't willing to find out if it was something I wanted to give or not.

I hadn't eaten in some time, and my desperation had made me careless. He was on the highway playing his music as loud as he could. Picking past the bloodied mess on the floor I hid behind the counter as best I could. I'd gotten used to seeing all of the blood and it didn't bother me so much. My main concern was staying away from him. I thought things would be in my favor because the only time people entered buildings was to gather what little supplies they could to survive, if there was even anything left by now. In the city it was rumored that whole towers were infested. As I hid, I prayed he'd just drive by.

Instead he did exactly what I was afraid he would do as I cowered lower to keep from sight. I could feel the bass from his armored truck vibrating through the windows and inside of me. His vehicle stopped just short of the gas pumps outside. Ironically, all I could think about was how the music made my hunger pains more bearable. The vibration that seemed to resonate up through the ground gave my body something else to focus on. I cringed and gripped my axe when I heard some cans falling. The distraction took my attention off of him for only a moment. It was long enough for him to turn the music off, step out of his truck, and stand between his vehicle and the building patiently waiting.

The cans scattered across the floor and I let out an involuntary whelp as the runner sprinted toward him. The recently deceased slammed its body through the glass door shattering it as the frame flung wide. The visitor didn't flinch. When the carcass was about ten feet from him he drew a larger revolver and shot the zombie tearing off the top right quarter of its head and leaving what remained of the face hanging at an odd angle. I watched in slow motion as the force of the round bent the zombie's body backward then lifted its feet off the ground. The dead again corpse dropped on its back and skidded a few inches toward him from the inertia of the original sprint. He stood unmoving, watching in a blank stare that told me he was searching for movement, listening with his arm bent from the recoil

of the revolver .

He stepped toward me and aimed his gun in my direction. I froze raising my arm begging him not to shoot me. He seemed cold and uncaring as I watched the muzzle flash sparks of molten fire. I was so rigid from shock with my eyes staring blankly at him, I could see the trail the bullet made as the vortex sucked out tendrils through the ring of smoke it created when he fired again. I heard a wet sound off to my side. I looked to my left and saw nothing. Then I looked down. I could see the small entrance hole the bullet had made, and the broken mass of muscle, bone, and brains it had tore through on the other side.

He'd saved my life, but I was more concerned about what he'd saved me for. He stepped through the glass and tapped the barrel on the frame trying to attract anything else that might have been inside. Once he was sure he'd cleared the building he went over to the food section and began loading a duffle bag on his shoulder with dry goods, ignoring me and my axe completely. He grabbed a few drinks from the cooler that were probably hot, then came over to the cash register where I was. He shoveled beef jerky into his bag and a few candy bars.

“Turkey.”

I shrank back from him and held up my axe uselessly, he looked over his shoulder and back at me.

“Turkey, please.”

“What?” Somehow I'd found my voice. I hadn't spoken in a long time.

“Whiskey. Turkey please, middle shelf right there next to you.”

“Oh...” I looked at the shelf and got his whiskey. “Here.” I gave him several bottles, he seemed to appreciate that.

“You expectin' me to pay?”

I looked around, “Um, no.”

“You been bitten?” his body was relaxed as he looked around sharply observing his environment. I looked down at the large revolver in his hand.

“No” I started lowering my axe realizing there was nothing I could do if he decided to shoot me.

“goin' somewhere?”

“No, and no place to go.” I looked remorsefully at the ground.

“Drop the axe.”

My hands were wet and clammy on the handle. We stood there with him looking out of the window and listening for movement. I got the feeling he could feel where I was or what I would do. He waited about five seconds before he pulled the hammer back on that huge hand cannon. I looked

down at it and considered my options. I noticed on the side it had the italicized letters *raging bull*. If he shot me with that thing I'd be dead even if the first shot didn't hit me in the head or heart. He took a few steps away from me out of my distance for a swing. The thing about dying, even if you know you are, is that the last few seconds become so important. I put the axe down.

He used his gun to tell me to move from behind the counter and to the armored truck sitting outside. I didn't know what he wanted with me but I got in the back and found a place to sit down while he closed the doors.

"Hi!" The sickly cheery sounding voice made me jump, "My names Casper, well, that's what *he* calls me anyway. Are you hungry?"

I nodded my head, not sure of what to think, as Casper coughed into his hand.

"Well there're MREs on the right, and water right under it. There's a bucket in the back for personal business." He said grinning as the other guy started the truck and we rolled off. Whatever the future held, it seemed I was a prisoner of strong but silent and Casper the cheery guy. It was easy to see why they'd picked me up. It looked like neither one of them had seen a women in ages. Either that or they had killed the last one and needed fresh meat.

I sat in the back shoveling food in my mouth as I watched both of them suspiciously. Casper droned on happily unaware or uncaring about my animosity for being kidnapped.

"So if we'd have left you there it wouldn't have been long before they came. He's not much for conversation as you can see, but there is a certain degree of safety in his company," my ears perked up as he changed the subject, "If you're wondering what his name is, he prefers to just be called Asshole. He thinks it makes things easier that way. Also don't eat too many of those MREs. They're supposed to be called Meals ready to eat, but I call them Meals Rarely Edible. They go down hard and stay on your stomach for a week."

Knowing who they were, having a full belly, and Casper's way of trying to be comforting by rambling on incessantly, did actually make me feel a little more comfortable. It's harder to kill someone if you treat them like a person.

"Where are we going?"

"Asshole thinks we'd be better off up north in the cold, but since it's a long trip, he plays the music to attract zombies to one area while we keep driving. That's why the music is off now, we're getting ready to stop for the night soon. There's sleeping bags in the back too so you can be comfortable. That Asshole mostly sleeps up front just in case we need to drive off."

Casper didn't look like he was much over twenty and had that innocent blue eyed charm to him that made me not worry so much about what that Asshole, as he put it, would do. We pulled over

before evening and the Asshole got out with a shotgun and came to the back door. He had a gas can with him and told me to get out.

“Take your clothes off.”

I clutched my tattered shirt over my chest and looked at him as I pleaded with my eyes. He was uncaring as he stared at me blankly and I began to undress.

“It’s okay,” Casper reassured me, “He had me do the same thing and he ain’t gay or nuthin’. He’s just checking you for bites or signs that you’re turning.”

I finished undressing. Nervously and kept my arms over my breasts trying not to feel too ashamed by what was happening. Asshole’s brown eyes, void of emotion scanned over me without interest. Ironically it made me feel more exposed.

“Spread your arms and turn around.”

It was so quiet as I did what I was told I could hear Casper coughing in the truck. Asshole then told me to get a jug of water and wash off.

“It’s cause you smell like a human. It attracts them, they hunt by smell. They can smell all of your hormones and stuff through your sweat.”

When I finished he tossed me the gas can and had me pour a semi-harsh smelling fluid over me.

“You don’t want to know what’s in that. Let’s just say it helps hide you from zombies,” Casper weaved out a laugh, as Asshole pointed out some clothes to me. I was getting dressed when I heard the passenger door open and Casper’s footsteps. At least he’d waited till I was decent.

“Holy shit!” I shrank back as Casper held up a hand and crumpled to the ground. Asshole strapped the shot gun on his back and pulled out a small automatic pistol. Casper was bleeding from his arm and blood was all over the front of his clothes. It was obvious he was turning.

“You were witty kid, but you should have told me about that. I could have made it easier.”

“I knew you’d kill me sooner or later, just sometimes you want to live a little longer. Thanks a lot Asshole, but there's no way to make dying easy.”

“Don’t mention it.”

Asshole seemed to hesitate for a moment as Casper stared at his pistol hand. Casper slumped over dead. The Asshole waited for a moment and then shot him through the head. Blood caked through his fine blonde hair. I hadn’t known him for long but watching him die like that made me cry and hate the Asshole even more. He pulled another gas can from the back and dragged Casper’s body a distance away. This one actually had gas in it and as he burned the corpse my hope drifted off into the air. I was stuck with that Asshole all by myself, and he didn’t seem like the kind of person you wanted to be stuck by yourself with.

He sat in the back as I trembled wondering what to do next. As the light faded he seemed to be less real and blend in with the darkness. Grabbing some water and antibacterial cleaner, he began cleaning the back where Casper had been.

“Casper was witty. Did you finish college?” he asked over his shoulder.

“Yeah, I have a Masters.”

“Do you have a sense of humor?”

“Not any more you Asshole,” I spat at him.

“Oh well,” he replied apathetically. It occurred to me that I had been angry at him when I'd only known his companion for a few moments.

“We probably attracted some attention, if you're going then get in,” he instructed me dismissively as if he could care less whether I got in or not.

He left for the front and climbed in. While he started the truck I tried to decide if I was going to go. I took one last look at Casper smoldering ashes as black smoke coarsed skyward, and decided if he could trust this Asshole I probably could too. Besides, the alternative wasn't looking much better. I got in. Either way it went at least I knew where things stood with him, and dying alone is like having never existed at all.

“Hope you like rap, it seems to really piss those shit heads off,” the Asshole commented over his shoulder as he pulled off.

“I hate it Asshole.” I didn't like him, but Casper was right. He was growing on me.

THE END

Richard Schwarz has been sharing his imagination and writings for several years. He puts thought into each fictional work as if it was a real life situation. One of his prime motivations is the positive interactions he receives from readers of his work and he has found that writing gives each reader the opportunity to find out a little bit about themselves.

Thank you for reading this ebook by Richard Schwarz and I hope you enjoyed it. You can find this and other books, for free and to purchase, at Richard Schwarz's website. Hope to see you soon.

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