

HUMANS VS. ZOMBIES

Written by

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Author's note:

The author is very much aware that the UChicago HvZ standard league rules and the HvZ rules present in the story barely overlap. This is due to the narrative demanding these specific rules and not due to the author's ignorance on all matters concerning HvZ.

INT. ATTIC - DAY

MC and TESS sit opposite each other across a small, fold-out table. They're dressed in camouflage/Rambo-esque survival gear with a green bandana tied around each of their arms. MC is sorting through an array of Nerf darts while TESS reads Anton Artaud's *The Theatre and its Double*, occasionally highlighting passages with a yellow marker.

MC

All right, now I'm going to say something and you should know - I'm only saying it because I trust you. I'm aromantic. That means I'm incapable of feeling any romantic attraction and before you say anything no, it has nothing to do with Sarah rejecting me. If anything it just proves that, atop all her other qualities, she's also remarkably perceptive. She knew that I couldn't have had any feelings for her, given my sexuality, so she rejected me. That's smarts. Coincidentally, she didn't have any feelings for me, but that's really beside the point.

MC's delusions are interrupted by the faint sound of somebody trying to forcibly enter the locked door to the attic.

TESS

Son of a BITCH.

MC

I'm fine talking about this later.

The two get up and begin furiously packing their makeshift camp.

TESS

I told you to check all feasible entrances!

MC

And I told you, I barricaded every opening in this pseudo-bohemian studio of a hideout. The only thing exposed here is brick.

TESS

What about the chimney?

MC

Repelling down 40 feet of darkness
through ash and soot in a space
tighter than Kevin James' arteries?
Nobody's that desperate.

A sudden desperate scream reverberates through the building,
followed by the sound of bones crunching. Faint comments of:
"Sorry! The rope was slippery".

TESS

Looks like Santa came early.

TESS reaches under the table, and pulls out a large sack of
NERF guns. She begins splitting them between her and MC. The
now aggressive lock-picking outside continues.

TESS (CONT'D)

What's our out?

MC

Garbage chute. It's a three story
drop into a dumpster on 53rd
street.

TESS

And that? What's that?

MC packs a flare gun into his backpack.

MC

Flare gun.

TESS

We don't need the flare gun.

MC

We do need the flare gun.

TESS

If we get separated, we'll lose.

MC

Which is why we have the flare gun!

Loud knocks. TESS and MC are now fully equipped in ridiculous
combat gear, dressed not unlike how you'd send a six-year-old
to war. NERF darts line a sash over their shoulders. Each are
decorated with an armory of NERF rifles, pistols, blasters,
etc. They point their rifles of choice at the door.

TESS

Ready?

MC

Yes ma'am.

TESS

All right. Eat foam, motherfuckers.

Both let loose their darts as the door falls.

Freeze-frame.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Humans versus Zombies is a game that works to prove that it doesn't matter how many plastic guns you can carry, you still look like a complete and utter tool.

Cut to chalkboard explanation of the rules following the NARRATOR's description.

NARRATOR

In "HvZ", players are split into one of two teams: "Humans" or "Zombies". The Zombies want to tag Human players, turning them into zombie players. The human players can stop zombies by shooting them with a dart gun, which renders them prone for five minutes. Simple, right? Games last until one human player is left standing, which usually takes between five and seven days. Usually.

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - SHORTLY AFTER

On screen: Day 28. Human players remaining: 2.

TESS and MC walk adjacent each other, covered in garbage. The campus is decorated like a zombie apocalypse. Bodies litter the floor, cars are abandoned in the street. The Clash's "Should I stay or Should I Go" can be heard faintly playing in the distance. They two walk over a pile of zombie players, spelling out the title. MC picks half a half-eaten Snickers bar out of his hair. He offers some to an unresponsive TESS before taking a bite.

Silhouettes of people lurking in the shadows of the brush, seemingly unnoticed by MC and TESS.

MC

You know who likes Snickers? Sarah likes Snickers.

(MORE)

MC (CONT'D)

I swear, you look through her trash, forty-percent Snickers wrappers.

TESS spares MC a quick glance. MC takes another bite. Players with bandanas wrapped around their foreheads begin to stealthily surround the pair walking.

MC (CONT'D)

I had this idea to get her a huge Snickers bar for Valentine's Day with a note that said: "Snickers? I'd rather cherish her. Yours platonically, MC". The "platonically" part was added after the fact.

MC looks at TESS.

MC (CONT'D)

What do you think?

TESS

I think you should stop going through the trash of girls that reject you.

MC

Okay so for the last time, I wasn't doing it because she rejected me. I was just making sure to collect all my letters she accidentally threw away and to re-send them with the preface that I'm aromantic now and -

TESS

I mean, I don't - I don't see why she needs to know you're aromantic.

MC

Oh my god, okay, you see this right here - this - this is exactly what I'm talking about.

The zombie players leap out of the bushes and ambush the walking pair. The pair keep talking, while effortlessly shooting the zombies with pin-point accuracy.

MC (CONT'D)

You know, I come out to you. I give you my heart and soul and you don't reciprocate. You're not reciprocating!

TESS

What do you want me to do?

TESS flips a zombie player over her back which MC shoots.

MC

Nothing. I don't know. I guess I just think our conversations should expand beyond the game.

TESS

You know what I'd say to that.

MC

Something hella edgy, I bet. "It's not a game, it's a reality".

TESS

To which you'd respond with -

MC

That's delusional and that games end.

TESS

And to that, I'd say -

MC

(sighing in resignation)
Only if we let them. Okay.

TESS

Don't forget to count your shots,
we're not picking up spent darts.

TESS advances forward. MC mocks her behind her back. GEORGIE, an exhausted zombie player, stumbles out of a nearby bush. The pair aim their guns at him.

TESS (CONT'D)

Georgie! Where's everybody else?
Thought this was supposed to be an ambush.

GEORGIE

They're tired, Tess. God knows we all are. We've been at this for a straight month and we can't stop until one of you two gets tagged.

TESS

Yeah well, you know, we don't see that happening in the near future.

GEORGIE

You won't need the foresight. We have a top-secret weapon.

Georgie smiles. Beat.

TESS

He's not bluffing.

MC

No, he's not.

TESS advances, pulling out a specialized NERF dart. GEORGIE is stunned with fear.

TESS

You know what this is, Georgie?
This little thing right here?
(flicks dart, dart rings)
This is the V8 Suspender. Used to arm kids during the cold war under threat of imminent soviet invasion. It walks the line between Nerf dart and anti tank round.

MC

Illegal in three states. The only foam dart with a mortality rate.

TESS loads the dart into a simple pistol.

GEORGIE

(sighing)
They call him Slenderman, captain of the division one tag team.

MC

We have a tag team?

TESS

How did you get him to sign up?

GEORGIE

It took some convincing. But mark my words, he's coming - and he's not stopping until one of you goes down, the other wins, and we all get to go home.

TESS

Thanks, Georgie. We'll make sure to keep that in mind.

TESS and MC step over GEORGIE, who shouts after them.

GEORGIE

You can't keep this up forever!
Only one of you can win! Only one!

TESS shoots GEORGIE with the V8 from behind. He screams in pain. TESS and MC keep walking.

EXT. CAMPUS - NIGHT

A small army of zombie players are huddled outside a lecture hall - shivering in blankets and makeshift tents. A lone, slender humanoid walks among them, towards the lecture hall.

INT. LECTURE HALL - NIGHT

TESS lounges in a chair in an empty lecture hall, highlighting passages from Artaud. MC softly sings The Clash's "Should I Stay or Should I Go".

The lights flicker, then go out. A lot of shuffling and guns loading. TESS and MC group together, laser sights on their pistols.

MC

Tess?

TESS

Yeah?

MC

It's really dark.

TESS

Yeah. Don't do anything weird.

MC

I told you, I'm aromantic.

TESS

That's reassuring.

The lights come up. TESS and MC are back to back deep in the auditorium. A tall, lanky individual with a baseball hat scrawls on the chalkboard in the front of the room.

SLENDERMAN

You know, this is supposed to be a fun game - a balanced game. One team's got the numbers, the other side has range and a frankly annoying persistence.

The man turns to face them. He takes off his hat to reveal a bandana wrapped around his forehead.

SLENDERMAN (CONT'D)

So why then do you insist on playing hide and seek?

TESS draws and shoots her pistol at SLENDERMAN. SLENDERMAN catches the dart between his fingers. He flicks it aside.

TESS

Slenderman.

MC

Is that your actual name?

SLENDERMAN

Yes.

MC

Okay, not to be rude, kind of a trash name. I mean just really - really trash. You see, now you're doomed to be skinny forever, or else the name doesn't make sense. You know - protein shakes and a little confidence, you could change a lot if you really wanted. How much do you bench?

SLENDERMAN

I don't "bench".

MC

Well there's your problem, chief. Cut the slack, time to jack.

SLENDERMAN

I-

MC

Time to go 3-D, string bean.

SLENDERMAN

I tag people. It's what I do - what I was built for - my prime directive. And tomorrow, I'm going to tag one of you so, so, so hard.

TESS

What's wrong with trying now?

SLENDERMAN

With the night on my side? It would be too easy. I'm like a shadow in the dark. I'd tag you like I'm a marine biologist, and you, Shamu.

MC

What?

TESS

You come here just to scare us?

SLENDERMAN

I came here to get a look at the infamous duo, wondering if they'll live up to their reputation. I guess we'll just have to wait and see. Adieu, Shamus.

The lights flicker. SLENDERMAN disappears under the cover of darkness. The scrawling on the chalkboard reads: Midway - 10 am.

MC

We're not actually going, are we?

TESS looks towards MC. He is wearing SLENDERMAN's hat.

EXT. MIDWAY - NEXT MORNING

On screen: Day 29.

TESS and MC stand adjacent each other on the Midway, waiting patiently. SLENDERMAN stares at them from the horizon in a kind of Mexican Stand-off. Both sides wait for the other to make their first move.

SLENDERMAN

(through a walkie-talkie)
They're waiting for me. You all said you needed one tagged, right? Well then it's time to make the first move.

MC

What's soy-boy saying?

TESS

"Something, something, they've fallen into our trap".

A hoard of zombie players charges the duo from all sides.

MC
(loading gun)
They've got some fight left in 'em.

TESS
Just don't get separated.

MC
That's exactly what the flare gun's
for.

TESS
(loading gun)
Go figure.

The duo let loose on the incoming crowd. For the first time, we see the two working at their fullest potential, dodging hands and shooting indiscriminately with great precision. It is obvious that the two are veteran players that take the game way too seriously. But the crowd of zombie players is also frustrated - and their utter frustration leads to them being overcome by a beastly madness.

TESS (CONT'D)
MC!

MC spins around to shoot the incoming threat, which to his surprise, is the face of his former love interest SARAH. MC is stunned. His face a wild mix of fear, joy, and confusion. SARAH smiles kindly. Time seems to almost slow between them.

MC
Sarah?

SARAH
Hey... you.

TESS looks back at MC between shooting. She shouts something inaudible at MC. SARAH has a bandana around her forehead. MC doesn't seem to mind. He is mesmerized.

MC
I was going to give you a Snickers
bar.

SARAH
I love Snickers bars.

MC
I know.

SARAH gingerly touches MC on the cheek. TESS looks on in horror as SARAH's hand migrates from his cheek to his arm-bandana. She carefully unties it. MC looks totally entranced.

SLENDERMAN
(into walkie-talkie)
Got him.

MC
Sarah?
(whispering)
I don't think you got my letters.
I'm aromantic.

MC grabs SARAH's shirt and head-butts her in the face. SARAH is thrown backward in pain.

SARAH
(grasping nose)
Fuck! Are you crazy?!

Zombie players grab MC, wrestling him to the ground.

MC
Run, Tess! Don't stop playing!

TESS looks distraught as MC is swarmed by angry zombie players. For a brief moment, she seems conflicted - as if questioning the purpose of her escapist adventure without a companion. Unsure of what else to do, she turns around and flees.

Fleeing, she sees the familiar silhouette of a tall, lanky SLENDERMAN looking intimidatingly at her.

SLENDERMAN
Don't worry. The game's not over
until I say so.

SLENDERMAN throws the walkie-talkie aside. TESS doesn't hesitate to aim and shoot. But to her dismay, she's carrying an empty gun. SLENDERMAN slowly begins walking towards her, a cruel smirk on his face. TESS juggles every one of her plastic firearms, only to discover they are all empty.

SLENDERMAN (CONT'D)
Uh-oh, looks like you weren't
counting your shots. Good thing
somebody was.

SLENDERMAN keeps advancing. A small crowd of zombie players forms a circle around the two of them. SLENDERMAN extends an outreached tagging hand. TESS stands still, seemingly accepting her fate.

SLENDERMAN (CONT'D)

You both tried so hard to stay in this world you imagined, at the cost of everyone's time and patience. What were you thinking, that you could win together? At least now, you can lose together.

TESS glances over at MC, getting kicked repeatedly on the grass. He looks up with a look of encouragement. She nods. She drops her last gun, inhales deeply, and slowly pivots her back foot. SLENDERMAN fully extends his tagging arm, only to miss TESS. They both momentarily make eye-contact. SLENDERMAN sees TESS' sudden determination, and is overcome by a rage. He begins unleashing a flurry of tags, each strike dodged precisely by TESS. The two get locked in a close-quarters game of tag - weaving and bobbing and lunging in between each other like vicious ballet.

MC

Tess! The V8!

Out of the corner of her eye, TESS spots the infamous V8 dart. She lunges for it, but is tripped by SLENDERMAN. She skids on the grass, seemingly prone. SLENDERMAN, chuckling, saunters over to her.

SLENDERMAN

Nice. Good effort. Had me really going for a second there.

With his foot, he turns over TESS' body. Her expression is check-mate. There is a V8 dart between her teeth.

TESS

(Through clenched teeth)
Eat foam, motherfucker.

TESS spits out the dart, which lightly taps SLENDERMAN squarely in the chest. For a moment, there is no reaction. Then, suddenly, he collapses in a heap of loose-fitting turtle-necks and sweats. TESS stands, panting. She looks at the other zombie players who can't help but gaze in awe. She looks longing back at her friend, wounded in the grass. He gives her a reassuring smile. Weakly, she picks up a gun and a few bullets off the ground before walking off. The remaining zombie players part for her.

ZOMBIE 1

Did she just win? We can go home now, right?

EXT. / INT. (LECTURE HALL, DINING HALL, SIDEWALK)

A short montage of MC moving back into his dorm. A dark cloud of depression seemingly looms over him. He lounges with his house mates, but can't really seem to connect with any of them. He walks to class and accidentally steps over a used Nerf dart on the sidewalk. At a dining hall, SARAH glares at him angrily from across the room with a band-aid over the bridge of her nose. He sits in a lecture, imagining that the professor is wearing a head bandana. His existence, to him, seems totally meaningless and empty.

EXT. MIDWAY - NIGHT

On screen: Day 32.

TESS sits around a makeshift campsite surrounded by NERF equipment. She's in full camo, looking dishevelled. She reads Artaud by phone light. She softly sings "Should I Stay or Should I Go". Her phone runs out of battery. She sits backwards in quiet resignation.

Suddenly, she is overcome by a bright, red light. She looks up to see a flare soaring high above the university. Her expression turns from dread to pure joy.

End.