

THE LEFTOVERS

By: David K. Montoya

I decided to write my daily events in this journal, maybe it will be helpful in subsiding the nightmares. But let's face it, what I now do for a living is no picnic. Sure, maybe being the Cable Guy wasn't as glamorous as a job as say a computer technician—but it was a paying job nonetheless, and boy, do I miss that job.

So, this morning when we all pulled up to that day's work site it was just barely dawn. I got out of the truck; the stench of rotting flesh filled the air. It had been three weeks since that scientist from Long Island created the cure for what was called the Zombie Flu. I mean sure, we'd all heard of the Bird Flu, the pig flu, and hell, at one point there was even a seal flu!

But the new strain of influenza only effected the poor souls, who (for the lack of a better word) were already dead. Somehow, this "Zombie Flu" actually raised the dead and gave them a big appetite for flesh. I know what you're thinking, and no they didn't come up from their graves and wander around saying, "Brains!"

How realistic is that? I mean, yeah, I believed what the bible said about the dead will rise again, although that wasn't quite what I had in mind. Anyway, perhaps the dead who were already entombed became reanimated as well, but we'll never know. Let's face it, gentle reader, if they did in fact come back to life, how in the hell were they going to get out of their coffins? Those suckers were sealed airtight and crafted from some sort of metal—there was no getting out of those bad boys.

I'm talking about the people in the morgue who hadn't received an autopsy. They were the ones who came back and raised some hell with us livin' folks. But, enough with the history lesson, if you're reading this, you probably already know what went down.

So back to my job. I was hired by the Feds to help clean up what they called *The Leftovers*. The bodies once infected by the Zombie Flu and treated by the military or militia formed by civilians to aid the Feds. And as you can guess, after eleven months of the flu, there were a lot of Leftovers.

Sun up to sun down, the crew and I drive out to certain locations where Leftovers were spotted. We pick up the bodies and disinfect the area with a high-powered sprayer. I know, fun job right? But hell, we're paid by the Feds, which in turn means big bucks; they even put some of us who lost our homes during the decontamination stage up in nice cabins (which were most of us). Today, we all headed out to Apple Valley toward the *Happy Trails* Highway (no really, I'm not making this up), it was named after a song former resident and legendary film star, Roy Rogers, sang in his movies. Anyway, when we got there it was still somewhat dark, but the weather was already uncomfortable. Once I got out of the truck I looked out at the road in front of us, it was covered with Leftovers. The desert sun had cooked the corpses and the smell of death was everywhere.

We started to load Leftovers into the back of our truck; it was another fun filled day as usual. During lunch, we all tried to get something to eat, well, everyone other than Martin. Martin came from the south, namely Arkansas. His family died during the flu and he decided to come out west, and eventually joined us in the cleanup crew.

Every day during lunch, Martin scavenged the area and lifted the wallets from the Leftovers' pockets. We'd all told Martin several times over that the money he found was useless, since our money was now backed by the Bank of England. He always smiled and told us he knew as he grabbed up another wallet.

But today, today was different. While we gobbled down our sandwiches, Martin decided to check abandoned buildings for more Leftovers. You couldn't blame the poor bastard, it was the last days of August and at one hundred and four degrees out—I wouldn't want to stay out in the heat either. I watched as Martin walked into building after building; he held the wallets out in front of him and dropped them in a pile in front of an old Walgreens to our left.

Martin always put his findings in a pile and right before the end of lunch, he decontaminated them with the pressure hose. *What a waste of time,*

I thought to myself as I watched him quickly go in and out of a building. But, hell now that I think of it, that was what made him happy. Martin didn't have any friends or family to go home to, so if counting useless money made him happy and gave him the drive to get out of bed in the morn, then good for him.

I had finished of my sandwich when Martin walked into another building. I glanced at the pile of wallets and noted he was having a *good* day as his mountain made from leather rose twice as high as usual by the end of lunch.

Martin was in the building for about five minutes or less, when he ran out screaming. A Leftover clung to his back and appeared to continuously bite at his neck and shoulder. Martin collapsed to his knees and three more infected ran out of the building and attacked him as well.

Me and the others ran to the truck and grabbed our rifles. We fired on the Leftovers as we made our way to Martin. By the time the three of us made it to him, he was on his back covered in his own blood. I looked down upon him and gave him a weak smile.

I told Martin he was going to be all right, and we'd get him help. Martin frowned and said: "They took my hand," as he showed me his bloody stump.

Martin's breaths became labored and his eyes rolled into his head. I told him to stay with us. His eyes focused on me one last time and he told me: "Wallets. Please finish. At my home. Please."

His body went limp. I wept for Martin. He was a simple and kind person, and didn't deserve to die like that. I held him for a few moments and told him to go be with his family.

After the attack on Martin, we agreed to call it a day. I washed the wallets and took them with us as we headed home. No one said a word until we got home, when one of the guys said: "Poor Martin."

It took me until after dinner to muster the strength to enter Martin's room. I'd never been in there before. It was a small room, with a bed over by the wall and a fan located at the foot. I noticed there was a wastebasket next to the door. It was full of odd and end junk, but mainly filled with currency.

At first, I wondered why Martin kept the money he found in the trash, but I answered my own question as I walked inside. The wall next to the door, was covered with wallet-sized pictures. I scanned over the unknown people, but they were all the same. Each wore a smile and appeared to be happy with life. The scenes were different. There was one black and white picture which stood out to me. A man, who appeared to be in his thirties or forties, stood next to a young boy. They were outside and next to a barbeque—they too looked happy.

Then, something caught my eye. A birthmark was located on the boy's cheek; it was the same as the one Martin had. I took the picture off the wall, flipped it over and read:

Pops (43) and Martin (12) 1969. I placed the picture back on the wall and sat on the side of Martin's bed. I took the pictures from each wallet and tossed the rest in the trash. One by one I carefully placed the photos in the blank spots on the wall. A little time later, I had filled all the open spots with the new photographs. There was only one blank spot left. I stared at the uncovered piece of the wall for a few moments.

Eventually, I got out my wallet and thumbed through my own photos. I pulled out one picture of me and my family and gave it a small kiss—then placed it in the last open space on the wall. It was a perfect fit, I couldn't help but smile as I turned off the light and stepped out of his room.

David K. Montoya



A writer, artist and entrepreneur, David K. Montoya began work in comics, but is recognized for his short-stories, which incorporates elements of horror, science fiction, mystery, and satire. Montoya is best known for *The End*, a series tale of an apocalyptic age ruled by a great plague and zombie-like creatures. More info can be found at: www.DavidKMontoya.Com