

Journal: 1st November. 2011.

*I'm sick to death of these bloody Zombies, they are everywhere now. I can't walk down the street without being accosted by them. They're in the library, my local pub, and the gym. When I'm at home they squash their faces up against my windows and peer through my letterbox. I can't escape them. They don't want to bite me, eat me or rip off bits of my body, it's much worse than that. They want to recite poetry to me.*

*It's a waste of time trying to hide from them, they smell my fear. They know that as soon as I hear the opening line of 'The Lady of Shalott,' I break out in a cold sweat. They could sniff me out hiding in lead box in a disused tin mine.*

*I wasn't always afraid of poetry, I used to quite like Pam Ayers on that TV talent show. It's the repetition that gets to me, the dreadful monotone chanting. Hearing one Zombie do it is bad enough but when there are thirty, fifty...*

*That's how they turn you. They don't need to bite. It's a slow brainwashing process and its effects are devastating. My girlfriend and my two best friends have already succumbed. One day they were normal people headbanging to Metallica, the next they were sticking their heads through my open bathroom window mumbling some Scottish nonsense about a wee timorous beastie.*

*I bumped into them again when I went to steal supplies from the looted supermarket. They were staggering along the High Street with about half a dozen others, arms held in front, fixed stare, bits of rotting flesh dropping everywhere. Pam spotted me as I came out with my box of scavenged food. I started to run but tripped over a discarded foot and went my length on the tarmac. Before I could get to my feet, my ears were assailed by an horrific recital of a Lord Byron lament.*

*And thou art dead, as young and fair*

*As aught of mortal birth,*

*And form so soft, and charms so rare,*

*Too soon returned to Earth!*

*After the tenth reprise I could stand it no longer and I kicked, spat and fought my way from beneath their fixed eyes and cruel tongues. I ran like the hounds of hell were on my tail and made it back home, bruised and soiled, but still able to sing Stairway to Heaven.*

I took the last cold Budweiser from the fridge and flicked on the TV. The power was still on thank God. They need the TV and radio stations to stay on air so they can speak to the unconverted in their own homes. There aren't many of us left in the town now. I don't know what it's like elsewhere, but I hope a resistance movement has been formed. I'll join up straight away if I manage to find them.

It all started about a month ago. The TV news interviewed a weird guy with stone grey skin, wearing a Victorian undertaker's outfit. He was angry after his poetry reading evening had been cancelled by the local library because of government cuts. He told the reporter that he was a powerful Witchdoctor, and cursed the town. His not so lovely assistant banged a couple of skulls together and tipped a bowlful of chicken giblets on the floor. The Witchdoctor

examined them and warned the reporter that the whole town must, 'prepare to meet its doom.'

'Rockville will die slowly,' he said. 'You have closed your ears long enough.' There was a flash of light, a puff of smoke and he was gone. The next day there were reports of a few open graves at the cemetery. Two days after that, the first of the Zombie poets was heard reciting Wordsworth outside the ladies toilets in the town square. Within a week there were hundreds of them, after a fortnight, thousands.

It backfired on the Witchdoctor of course. Even he became terrified of his 'Poets Army.' On the Wednesday of the second week, he was found dead on the pavement outside the multi-storey car park. Eye witnesses told the Evening News that he jumped from the top floor screaming, 'No, No, not Dylan Thomas.'

I finished my 'Bud,' and sat on my bed to work out a plan of action. There had to be a way to beat these mumbling misfits. I turned on my PC and fired up Google. Among the thousands of ads for 'Shelley's Greatest Hits' and 'The Very Best of Robert Graves,' I managed to find an uncensored link to YouTube. Two clicks later, Led Zeppelin were belting out 'A Whole Lotta Love.' I flicked a switch and sent the video to my 60' plasma TV. I sighed in relief as Robert Plant and Co drowned out the mangled words of James Joyce.

I must have dozed off because the next thing I knew I was sat up in bed surrounded by a room full of Zombies doing the 'Thriller' dance. I glanced up at the plasma and groaned as I saw Wacko Jacko lead his troop of undead dancers across the screen. The real Zombies in my bedroom were loving it. I cursed as I realised that I had left YouTube in random play mode. Thriller must have been one of the videos on the hotlist.

There's not a lot on this earth worse than a bunch of Zombies chanting the verses of long dead poets at you, but a Michael Jackson's video come pretty close. Gritting my teeth, I pushed the nearest Jackolyte aside and dived towards my PC. A few seconds later MJ had cleared the screen. My sigh of relief stuck in my throat as I realised that next up on the playlist was Leonard Cohen.

As soon as the opening bars of Len's classic, 'Halleluiah' hit the speakers, the Zombies stopped dancing and fixed their hollow eyes on the screen. Some fell to their knees, their eyes raised heavenwards, their hands clasped together in supplication. One Zombie, with a rotten tooth sticking through a gaping hole in his top lip, wept tears of joy. I took my chance and clicked an item further down the playlist. To my surprise and disgust, Madame Gaga's face appeared on the screen.

The giant shudder that went down my spine was nothing compared to the reaction of the Zombies. At the first 'Ra Ra' of Bad Romance, they were fighting to get out of the door, by the first Oh Oh woah oh, chorus there wasn't a Zombie left in the room.

I was jubilant. I had done it; I had found a way to ward off the Zombie poets. Madame Gaga, the woman I detested most among pop singers, had come to my rescue.

For the next few weeks Gaga and I were inseparable. I let my iPod hang loose around my neck so that the tinny, Gaga sounds could be picked up by anyone within ten yards. After a while the Zombies ignored me completely. They even crossed the road when they saw me coming. My joy was almost complete...Almost.

About three weeks after my Eureka moment. I began to get the feeling that I was being followed. I stopped dead in the street and turned to find a young girl with a hideously made-up face standing in front of me. She wore a dress made from strips of bacon. She was being followed by a hungry-looking pack of dogs.

‘Why are you following me?’ I asked grumpily. The girl looked at me from under thick black lashes and chanted, ‘Ra Ra.’

‘Piss off,’ I snarled, ‘Gaga is mine.’

I turned away and stomped off towards the ransacked off licence where I had stashed a case of Bud a few days earlier. By the time I came out there were half a dozen Gaga lookalikes staring doe-eyed at me.

‘Ra Ra,’ they chanted. ‘Ah ah ah.’

‘Oh Christ, no,’ I muttered.

The Gagas chanted again, I took a careful step backwards, then another. I wanted to turn and run but it would have meant leaving the Bud and it was getting harder to find.

‘Ra Ra.’ Came the chant from behind.

I turned in horror to see a walking bacon factory performing the Bad Romance dance. There was another pork fest prancing around further down the street. The RA Ra chant crept into my head pushing all other thoughts away. I tried to concentrate, tried to bring an Alice Cooper song to mind but the blessed words were blocked by the insistent ‘Ra Ra.’

Across the road the Zombie poets looked on sadly. I stared at them, willing them to come to my aid.

With my last ounce of willpower, I pulled the iPod from my neck and dropped it to the floor. ‘Please,’ I whispered. ‘Help me.’

The Zombies suddenly stopped chanting. Their leader, dressed in red leather with black dancing shoes and white gloves, held up one arm. The rest were hushed, waiting on his lead. Then with a high-pitched wail, ‘Wooh Hoo,’ he leapt out into the road. The Zombies lined up behind him and began the first steps of the fabled Thriller dance.

The Ga Ga’s reacted to the challenge with a huge roar of Ooh La La.

I crawled behind a set of waste bins and watched in horror as the two hellish armies staged a terrifying dance off in the middle of the High Street.

I crawled away from the dreadful scene on hands and knees, thanking God, Buddha and even the Wicker Man, for saving my life.

My relief was short lived. As I pulled myself to my feet, I heard the strains of a new chant coming from the corner of Randall Street. My heart sank as the chant got louder and my fevered brain recognised the full horror of the situation I was about to encounter.

‘Oh Baby Baby...’ Tears of despair rolled down my cheeks as 300 dancers dressed as schoolgirls lined up to perform the soul destroying Britney Spears classic. My head began to spin; I had to do something, and quickly. I shouted out a quick prayer, but God, Buddha and

the Wicker Man must have been on their tea break and no divine help appeared. Sobbing with despair and frustration I staggered back into the High Street and begged the Zombies for help.

On a signal from their wet-haired leader, the Zombies stopped dancing, raised their arms and crossed the road towards me. Bad Romance slowly faded away; the Ra Ra's replaced by the dreaded poetry of Carol Ann Duffy. The Gaga gang fled in terror as the mumbled words of 'Mrs Lazarus,' filled the night air.

'I had grieved. I had wept...'

My eyes glazed over; I lifted my hands out in front of me. The Zombies had played their final card. I was theirs; there was no going back now.