

Mitchell Marks
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Pestilence

By Mitchell Marks

I watched as the lamb open the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures saying voice like thunder, "Come and see!" I looked, and there before me was a white horse! It's rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and road out as a conqueror bent on conquest.

- Revelation 6:1-2

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The bell rang, halting the laughter and conversations in the hall. It was time for class. I said goodbye and parted ways from my little group of friends occupying the hallway. I opened the door to my class and walked to the far end, taking the desk as far from the front of the room

and the teacher as possible. It wasn't that I didn't like Mr. Spencer, he was cool and he was my track coach, I just hated English class.

The small room was filled up with students when Mr. Spencer came in. He set down his bag and walked to the front of the room. He smoothed down his tie and teal button up shirt, as he always did just before speaking.

“Hey, how were your weekends?” He asked with a wide grin, showing his perfectly white teeth.

“Mine was pretty good, except for that creepy guy on the TV last night.” A voice said from the wide open door.

“Nice of you to join us, have a seat Mr. Wesley.” Mr. Spencer said.

Eric Wesley, my adopted brother walked over to the seat next to mine, carrying a bag of Taco Bell and dropping it on the desk. He was always eating. He was the linebacker for the school football team and seemed to be always hungry.

“Good news everyone, you guys did so well on your essays that I'm going to make today a free day.” Mr. Spencer said. “Talk, study, play games, do whatever you want, just don't leave the room.”

Mr. Spencer grabbed the remote and turned on the TV. The free day didn't really surprise anyone. Mr. Spencer would make any excuse to be able to watch ESPN and the principal looked the other way because no student had ever failed his class.

“Hey Marques, wanna give me a ride to work after class?” Eric asked me with a mouthful of taco, pieces splattering onto the desk.

“Ya, sure.” I said

“We interrupt this broadcast to bring you a special new bulletin.” the TV said.

Everyone turned to the screen as a skinny, sickly looking, and bearded man came into view. It was the crazy guy from the night before who had ranted about the “End of days” and “Pestilence”

“I have spoken to God and he has told me the end is upon us.” The man said. “Pestilence has come.”

The remaining color in the doomsayer’s face drained away and the lights began to flicker. The lights in the classroom also began to flicker. There was a frightened gasp from someone in the corner of the room, though I didn’t see who. As quickly as the light began flickering, they stopped. The man on the TV leaned his head back and it snapped forward. His eyes could be seen and the brown that they had been before faded into a grey color. His eyes presented no light and looked like the eyes of a corpse.

“Et suscita mihi morbo ad mortem damnatus.” The man said in a much deeper, more menacing and evil voice that felt as if it shook the earth itself. “Pura lux Dei, nisi.”

The TV went out and there was a blinding light that exploded in the room. The light made it impossible to see even the closest of things and then is dissipated. I looked around the room and half the students in the class were gone.

“What the hell was that?” I ask no one in particular.

“I don’t know.” Eric said.

I turned to the front of the room where I could see Mr. Spencer still standing there, his face drained of color and his eyes grey and lifeless like those of the crazy man.

“Are you ok, Mr. Spencer?” Natalie, a girl at the front of the class asked.

Mr. Spencer looked at the speaker and lunged forward, sinking his teeth into her neck and ripping a huge chunk out. Blood spurted from the wound onto the face of Mr. Spencer. At that point Jerry sitting next to Eric attempted to do the same, but Eric kicked out smashing Jerry in the chest. He flew out of his desk and collided into another student, Ben. Jerry then proceeded to rip into Ben’s shoulder. The room was in utter chaos.

Eric grabbed my arm and bull rushed his way to the door. Screams could be heard from the class, as well as from other rooms nearby.

“I’m going to go find Officer Larry.” I said.

Eric nodded and I ran into the library, the back of which contained Officer Larry’s office. I ran to the closed wooden door to his office.

“Officer Larry, I need your help!” I yell through door.

There was no response so I reached for the handle and as I did Larry dove through the door, splinter the hollow thing into little bits, his short, stocky form smash into me, throwing me to the ground. Fear enveloped me as I looked into his lifeless grey eyes. They seemed to stare into my very soul.

Saliva dripped out of his open mouth onto my face. His hot breath filled my nostrils with a stench like hot garbage. His jaw snapped shut and then opened over and over again. He was trying to bite me like Mr. Spencer did with Natalie.

I felt my arms start to go weak from the strain of trying to keep a much larger and stronger man from ripping a chunk out of my face.

“You have to keep fighting!” I thought.

I started to push harder, finding every ounce of adrenaline power strength and using them to push back. Larry pushed back harder and I felt my arms give in.

“I am going to die!” I thought.

Suddenly the officer was off of me. I scrambled back, trying to figure out what happened. Eric was on top of Larry, his large linebacker frame pinning him to the ground. Larry tried to move, but he couldn't, his arms underneath the knees of Eric. I saw Eric lift his arm into the air. I tried to make out what was in his hand, but it shot down as quickly as it had risen. Officer Larry's body went limp and Eric pushed himself up into a standing position. Eric offered me a hand and I graciously took it. I looked down at the body of the man who had tried to kill me and saw a sharp piece of wood stuck in Larry's temple.

“We have to get out of here now.” Eric said. “We have to warn anyone else that is still normal.”

We ran out of the Library and around the corner to the main office. The two secretaries were bent over, facing lying down on the front desk, large pieces of their necks missing. I threw open the door and walked to the intercom. I pressed the button and cleared my throat.

“Attention everyone, something has happened.” I said “Some of the people are not normal. Everyone go to the gym. You will be safe there. Don't let anyone in that looks sick.”

As I let go of the button I noticed movement in one of the secretaries.

“Are you alright?” I asked as I walked over to her.

She lifted her head and I saw that she had the same lifeless eyes of the others. I ran out the door, Eric following, and headed for the gym, leaving the woman in the office. When I got to the gym there were not as many people as I would have expected. There was only about a quarter of the students and a handful of teachers and staff.

“What the hell is going on?” yelled out many of the students.

“Everyone remain clam.” Mrs. Otsfield, the gym teacher, said. “We are going to figure this out. Bobby hand me that radio, maybe it’ll tell us what’s happening.”

The radio didn’t tell us what was actually happening though it seemed that this was happening everywhere. It told us to go home and remain indoors. The staff told us to follow what the radio said and to go home. Anyone with a car was to drive themselves and anyone to their homes.

I looked away from my journal, not wanting to read the rest. I hated that day. The day life as I had come to know it ceased to exist. Life had not gotten much better in the five years since then. My thoughts were interrupted by Eric.

“Marques, there are pilgrims here hoping for a place to stay.” Eric said “They are in the processing room.”

I nodded my head and walked to the pilgrims. The processing room was the small entrance to the school that had both doors in front and behind that could be locked. There were two people in the room, a man and a woman, who looked like they were probably lovers.

"Oh thank god we found this place and thank you for letting us in." The man said with a look of relief in his face. "Mary got scratched a few days ago..." The man was interrupted by a gunshot.

Mary's head jerked back. She fell to the floor. Blood and bits of brain were spattered against the wall. The back of her head looked like hamburger meat and a large portion of her skull had been blown away from the impact.

I stood there not moving, my eyes fixed on the man. The smoking barrel of my Colt Python still pointed at the mutilated remains of Mary.

"Oh God, she's dead!" The man said, tears streaming down his face. "You've killed her!"

The man jumped up, knife in hand and lunged across the small room. In that split second time seemed to stand still. I felt like I had all the time in the world. I felt my finger tighten on the trigger. The heavy revolver kicked back, a bullet flying out. It smashed into the charging man, hitting him right between his eyes, emptying his brain pan onto the wall. The man's body slumped back, lying not so far from the body of Mary, his blood mixing with hers. The pool of blood covered the floor of the room.

I left the room leaving a trail of bloody footprints in my wake. My shoes squeaked on the tile floor like they did after a rainstorm. I walked to my room and laid my head down on the on the pile of blankets that I used as a bed and opened again my journal.

My truck was parked just outside the doors to the gym. It was a big red ford with a grill guard on the front. I ran over, Eric right behind me, and shoved the key into the lock. I open the door and hit the switch to unlock the other side. I hurried in and closed the door behind me,

happy to be inside of something safe. I started the truck and left the parking lot, heading for home.

The drive was not far and we got there in only a few minutes. I stopped the truck and looked at the empty driveway of the small, sky blue house.

“Why’d you stop?” Eric asked.

“Dad’s not here.” I said, panic edging its way into my voice “I was hoping he would be here, but he’s not.”

“Maybe he’s at the office.” Eric said.

“He could be in trouble.” I said “We have to find him.”

Eric nodded and I spun the car around, exiting the cul-de-sac. The office was about twenty minutes from the house.

“Eric had killed Larry just a few minutes ago, after Larry had tried to kill me. He saved me, but he killed him. How could he do something like that and still be so cool and collected” I thought.

My thoughts were broken by a sudden voice coming from the radio.

“Lucerna corporis est oculus si fuerit oculus tuus simplex totem corpus tuum lucidum erit”

The voice in the radio repeated this over and over. I reached for the knob to turn off the radio when I am interrupted by Eric.

“Wait!” Eric yelled. “I heard that before.”

I nodded for Eric to continue with his explanation.

“My dad used to say this to me.” Eric said “It’s Matthew 6:22. He always told me the eyes are the gateway to the soul.”

“The soul...” I said. “It sounds to me like you believe that crazy guy on the tv.”

“What other explanation is there?” He asked “It’s the only thing that makes sense. Think about it, the guy on the tv, the flash of light, and now this. What other proof do you need?”

“If you really believe this tell me what happened. Explain to me just what the fuck is going on?” I said.

“It’s the apocalypse.” Eric said. “It is said that when the end comes those worthy will ascend to heaven and that the rest will remain to either prove themselves worthy or to damn themselves by their actions.”

“Then why did all those people go crazy and try to eat us?” I ask.

“All those people are atheists.” Eric said. “Their souls were already damned. That’s why their eyes were grey and lifeless, they had no chance.”

“If that’s all true then why am I not one of those ‘things’?” I ask.

“Remember that story you told me of when you were in daycare and they made you go to church?” He asked.

“Ya, I remember.”

“And then they took you to the river where that weird guy tried to drown you.” Eric said. “He was trying to drown you. He baptized you. You have a chance. You just have to prove you’re worthy.”

“What about you? Why are you still here?” I ask.

“After the accident with that drunk driver that killed my parents and your mother, I stopped going to church.” Eric said. “I even stopped praying. This is my punishment.”

“I just don’t think I can believe it.” I said.

“Why the hell not?” Eric asked. “It’s all right there in front of you.”

“Because if this is true then my dad is already dead!” I yell

“No, he might not be.” Eric said. “Your dad grew up in a religious house just like I did.”

I pressed my foot down hard on the accelerator. We were almost to the office and I knew we needed to get there fast if we were going to save him. The street leading to the office was empty of cars, making speeding an easier task. The office itself was located in the front of a lumberyard and it still had cars in its small parking lot, one of them being my dad’s.

I parked my truck right in front of the front door. I scrambled out of the truck and rushed to the door. I tried to turn the handle, but the door was locked. A scream came from inside the small office. I grabbed one of the large rocks that made up the planter on front of the buildings and smashed it through one of the two windows. I crawled through the window and ran to where I heard the scream.

I looked in shocked amazement at the scene in front of me. My dad was still alive, swinging a chair at the head of a down figure, one of many lying dead around him. My dad dropped to his knee and clutched the head of the “thing” he had just killed and I could see tears running down his blood streaked face. His tall, heavy form was soaked in the blood of those around him. Then I realized that the body he was holding was that of his girlfriend.

“Dad, thank God you’re alive!” I yelled as I rushed over to the crouching man.

He stood up and embraced me in a hug, squeezing until I thought my eyes would pop out, before letting me go. I looked at his bearded, bloody face and smiled, until I saw the light start to fade from his eyes. Only then did I notice the small bite mark in his shoulder.

Tears ran down my face as I realized that my father was gone, replaced by one of those “things”.

I backed up to the door and unlocked it. I threw open the door and ran to the truck, Eric following behind, when I heard a thudding sound behind me, the sound of a body being tackle to the ground. I turned around to see Eric underneath my father, struggling not to let the crazy man bite him.

“I’m sorry, Dad.” I said through tear filled eyes. I pulled the pistol taken from Larry out of my waistband and pulled the trigger.

I looked away from my journal, a grim expression on my face. I stood up and walked out of the room, heading to clean up the blood.