

When I got separated from my unit, I knew I was dead. Worse than that. I knew it was only a matter of time before they got to me and turned me into one of them. I don't know how they do it, but it isn't with a bite. I've seen what happens to the ones who get bitten. It's something else. They drag you away and do something to you. And I wasn't about to go out like that.

I had my pistol with me. My rifle broke against the face of the enemy when I was trying to escape this house. That's where I found the diary. A little while later, I found the girl. This is what happened.

It was dark. I remember that. And it was cold and only getting colder. I could hear them outside the door. I threw a bookshelf up. It wouldn't last long, but it would last long enough. I had my pistol. One bullet left. I told myself that if I had one bullet left, I'd make the most of it. So, I put the barrel under my chin, closed my eyes and said a quiet prayer. I started to squeeze the trigger when I heard her voice.

"What are you doing?" she asked me. I opened my eyes and pointed the gun straight out. This little girl ducked. She didn't scream. "Don't shoot me," she said.

It took me a while to realize she was still human. Then, she told me that she lost her mommy and daddy. They told her they would meet her at the high school just up the road if they got separated. And she asked me if I could help her get to the high school.

I started balling right there. She told me not to cry. Loud noises make the monsters come. I nodded and told her she was right. I told her I would help her get to the high school. Then, she asked me, "Are you a mommy, too?"

I know it's strange, but being a soldier kind of makes you forget things like that. "Yes," I told her. "I'm a mommy, too."

We waited there all night, listening to the sounds outside. We were quiet and in a tiny room. We didn't make a single sound.

In the morning, we started making our way through the street. We moved as quickly as we could. I rigged my backpack so I could carry her. She watched behind me as we ran. We stopped a few times to drink from my canteen and eat the rations I had in my backpack. We found little rooms at night and camped out. In one of those rooms, I found this diary. I wanted to write in it, but I made myself a promise. I could only write something if we made it to the high school.

Two days later, we were moving down the street, half-hidden by the barricades the Army left behind. I was cutting barbed wire when she screamed. I turned to look and saw what must have been the entire town racing down on us.

I ran. I felt her bouncing in the backpack. Once, I felt hands trying to grab her away. I spun around and without thinking, used the last bullet from my pistol. Then, I turn and ran and ran and ran. Until my lungs were bursting, I ran. I could feel them just behind us. I could hear her screaming. And then, I saw the high school.

Guns on the rooftops. Windows barricaded. Sandbags with machine guns. I knew what to do. I grabbed her and clutched her to my chest. My body begged me to stop, but if my training taught me anything, it taught me that the body tricks you. I kicked my feet into that ground as rounds of ammunition flew by me. I made it to the door and they slammed that heavy steel behind us.

Her mother and father found us while I was still on the ground, trying to breathe. She ran to them. They threw me a quick thank you and then rushed back into the hungry, frightened crowd.

It has been two days since I carried her through the metal door. I haven't seen her since. I don't even know her name.