

Dead Hunger VIII
*Peace, Love
& Zombies*

The Nelson Moore Chronicle

By Eric A. Shelman

*A Special Prologue Preview, Exclusively
For Shannon Walters!*

Prologue

My name is Nelson Moore. Despite everything, these days I'm a content resident of [redacted]. The year is currently [redacted], and we've just finished dealing with a [redacted] who almost screwed our quiet little town beyond repair.

Yeah, man. That year means we've been doing this for a while now. Since 2011, as a matter of fact.

Whoa. When I read that back, I can't even believe I'm still alive. It kinda tells you we're pretty good at this by now; surviving the zombies. Not to mention others who have decided the apocalypse was a good time to grab some power.

I was a little surprised when Gem sat me down and told me that I should write the next chronicle. Hemp has started calling them our "Dead Hunger Chronicles." That's what they do, after all, right? The dead hunger.

I didn't figure I was the best candidate to write this because I've never been a writer. But Gem said my [redacted] will be a big benefit, and to just put the words down. She also told me not to leave everything that happened to me between the day most everyone we knew became monsters and the day I met her and the others. That was the day I found my Gramps, too.

Then Gem said she wants me to catch you up on what's happened since we met the [redacted] outside of [redacted]. Tough times, but lots of good stuff in there, too.

About my earlier story, I told her I wasn't sure I wanted to go back there. I didn't know what good it would do for anyone to know what happened to me. You know what she said?

"Sit your ass down and write, Nelson. I want to know."

Exactly that. I see a hug coming from Gem when she reads it. She's that way. She's a hugger. She's gonna get all emotional and tell me how much she loves me, and I'm probably gonna cry, too.

I admit I avoided talking about all that stuff because it just didn't seem important, and I had it running in my head like a movie anyway. A horror movie that I watched one time, didn't like at all, and now have to watch for the rest of my life.

So, yeah. I love Gem and the others and they love me and my family, so I'm gonna tell the story. All of it. Even the part before I met everyone.

I will warn you that what happened to me and the people I was with was horrible. Yeah, the dead walkers were there, but they weren't the worst of our problems; we'd learned how to handle them, as long as the numbers were manageable.

I learned it's the ones who think who can cause the most fear and pain – at least that's what I believe now. It's one of the reasons I went after Gem that first time I saw her. I figured if she had some abilities that I didn't, then others did, too. I didn't think it was too far-fetched to believe those people might eventually use those abilities against me.

I had to be sure. You know the rest, and you know that Gem and all the rest of them are the only family I have; more than I've *ever* had besides my Grampa Jim.

And while these chronicles are supposed to be the stories of how we dealt with the undead, that wouldn't tell it all.

Just understand that I've never breathed a word about what I went through from the time all this started until I ran across Gem that day.

Here goes.

Wait. Not yet. A little background first. I'm not sure if anyone outside of Kansas really gets it, but I just want to let you know that pot pretty much grows on the side of the road here. It's probably not necessary to tell you how quickly I had Flex pull the truck over when I spotted it for the first time. As it turns out, it's got bud but it's not potent. Luckily I had some stash of my own when we got there and my seed stock is like gold. I've kept them for a long, long time now and I replace them with each new harvest.

So anyway, I got sidetracked. That happens to me occasionally. I didn't start writing this to tell you where to find wild bud, but you might as well know I partake. Some dudes get all fuzzyheaded when they're high; not me. I can laser focus, but folks have always told me that they don't get that by lookin' at me.

I've got long, blonde-gray hair that comes about to my lower back. Don't like haircuts. Never did. My hair's always been thin like me – I'm kind of a beanpole – but it's me, so I keep it. When the beginning of this story took place, it was pure blonde. I'm older now.

That's good news.

Anyway, the beginning of the bigger story is how I met Flex's girl, Gem. It's pretty funny. If you read the other chronicles – particularly the fourth one where everybody kinda told the story – you'll remember meeting me, and you'll remember my first encounter with Gem.

Anyways, from my spot hiding behind the building I'd slept in the night before, I saw a woman doing something in the parking lot of a gun store that I considered amazing. My protective instinct kicked in because I could tell Gem was alive, you know? But the thing she was walking up on wasn't alive at all.

It was one of them; the zombies.

As I crouched there, one of my best stainless steel stars in my hand, there she was, whispering something in a zombie's ear.

The amazing part? The zombie wasn't biting her. Wasn't even trying. Next thing I know, I found myself tossing one of my Ninja stars and I took the rotter out. I had to know, though; I had to understand why this beautiful woman with long, brown hair and a stance that spoke of sheer confidence believed she could talk to something dead.

Dude, they've *never* listened to anything I tried to say. Never. Not even once, and not even for a second.

So I took her captive using my Subdudo, and maybe a bit of my hippie stoner charm. That disarms people quicker than any bravado stuff I've ever seen anyone try, either in movies or in real life. So, while we may be living in a messed-up fiction-like world right now, it's real. Not a nightmare and not a cartoon. There are things so rotted out there you couldn't believe they could even stand up – but hell if they don't come after you.

They're relentless, they never get full and they never sleep. They seek us – the living – out, they try to kill us and eat us.

Back to my meeting Gem Cardoza that day. If you know anything about her, then you know she can hold her own in a gunfight. If you know anything about me, and if you've read the chronicles that Flex, Gem, Hemp, Charlie and Dave wrote, then you know I created Subdudo as a way to take people out of commission for a few moments without hurting them.

I admit it. I'm a pacifist. At least I was. That's changed a lot, because I guess I tried to fool myself for a long time before I hooked up with this group. My family.

That's who they are now. I can't even tell you how much. They're more of a family than I've ever had, except for my Grampa Jim. People call him Doc Scofield, mostly.

Anyway. I'd die for anyone in this group. I almost have, a few times.

That's cool. They've almost died for me, too.

So that day I met Dave Gammon, Gem Cardoza and Charlie Chatsworth, we had some trust issues to work out before I could learn why she was talking to a zombie.

As it turns out, she was kinda fooling around. She wasn't actually having a conversation with the thing; she was just getting sort of cocky, telling the thing to get off her car. I beat her to it. The rest got pretty funny, but you probably already know it.

So now I'll go back to Sunday, June 19th, 2011, when the dead started walking.

Needless to say, I might've been stoned.
