

AGE OF THE ZOMBIES SERIES

IN THE BEGINNING

BOOK 1

DAVE FRIZZELL

PROLOGUE

The remote sensing team's job was to set the boundaries of the Amazon rainforest which would help to track the deforestation and to help some of the local tribes determine and protect their tribal land boundaries from each other. While in the process, the team's curiosity got the better of them and they decided to explore a large mysterious crater they came upon in the rainforest's floor. That was their mistake.

“KEEP RUNNING ANDRE!”

Three of the six team members from the remote sensing team were running as fast as they could. Fear had taken over and pure adrenaline was adding fuel to that fire. Erik was in the lead, Andre was ten paces behind him, but Philippe had fallen back and almost out of site. The three were the only ones that made it out of the crater alive.

“We have to keep running!” Erik yelled back to Andre.

“I know... I'm trying! I can't see Philippe anymore,” Andre said in his thick French accent as he kept looking back over his shoulder.

“We can't go back, not with whatever those things are,” responded Erik. “They just killed three of our friends and one of those things bit my arm! There's no way in hell I'm turning around!”

The gap began to widen as Andre started faltering with his stride to keep up. He was in turmoil over saving himself or running back to see if he could help Philippe.

“We have to do something.” Andre pleaded. “AHHHH! Something just stung the back of my neck.”

“We will once we get back to camp and radio this in... Just keep running!” Erik replied.

“Okay,” Andre gave in. He wasn’t sure if he could keep up this pace knowing that Erik was triathlete, it’s all he did in his spare time. “I’m not feeling so good Erik. Can we stop for a minute?”

“Suck it up Andre and keep pushing forward! We can’t stop!”

Andre’s face was pale and he labored with each new breath to get air into his lungs. His running was becoming chaotic and posture almost lifeless as he tried to push himself on. Sweat was running down his face.

“I feel numb... I... I can’t breathe... Please,” Andre slurred his words. It made him difficult to understand on top of his French accent.

Erik ignored his pleading and kept running. The distance between them continued to widen.

“Please...” Andre begged. “I... Can’t... Breathe.”

Andre slowed down to a half jog almost to a walk as he tried to continue on.

“Erik... Please.”

Erik turned his head to look back, “Sorry dude, I can’t stop.” He was terrified and had to keep running to get as far away from this nightmare as he could. His nightmares were now a reality.

“Don’t... Leave... Me,” Andre labored to get each word out. Each step was harder than the last and his arms just hung by his sides. The loud thumping in his ears was his

heart as it struggled to push blood through his veins. His entire body was becoming numb and darkness invaded his sight.

Erik turned his head once more only to see Andre fall face first onto the ground.

Andre never got up.

“Can’t stop... Just can’t stop... Not gonna get me,” Erik said under his breath as he pushed himself to run harder.

Erik frequently checked his compass, but continued to run nonstop in the direction of their camp. His whole arm was beginning to burn now and the pain was becoming unbearable, but he’d have to worry about that later. Getting to the camp was his only focused priority... Get as far away as possible from those things in the crater. He made his way through the forest whether there was a trail to follow or not, trying to convince himself that everything was fine and it was just another cross country run.

After an hour, the edge of camp was now in view. The burning and excruciating pain had now engulfed his chest and neck, his vision was becoming blurred. His mind was failing him as he began to question whether he’d make it or not. His body would sweat no more as the fever was talking over.

“Almost there, c’mon you can get there,” Erik said trying to convince himself. “Just a little farther.”

He felt like collapsing. He could feel his body beginning to fail him and wanted to rest. Concentrating and trying to clear his mind, he dug down deep for that last burst of energy to keep going.

“HELP!” Erik yelled as he approached the camp.

DAVE FRIZZELL

The two remote sensing team members and the guide that stayed at the campsite came running toward him as he collapsed at the edge of their camp.

Sitting on his heels and trying to keep himself propped up with one arm. He could feel his body succumbing to whatever was happening to it.

“They’re all dead,” he struggled to say as he breathed hard. “We have to leave quickly before they get us too.”

Erik slipped into unconsciousness.

“Quickly! Get that tracheal tube in before he stops breathing.”

Erik’s body was sporadically twitching uncontrollably as he lay on a gurney in an operating room. It had been eighteen hours since the remote sensing team had been airlifted from a remote village. His body was now a grey ash in color and he was burning up with a temperature of one hundred and ten. After unsuccessfully trying to lower it with ice baths several times, the doctors decided it was a waste of time in trying to help him and began alternative methods. None of them worked.

“He should have died with a temperature that high,” the nurse stated.

“Rightfully so, but he hasn’t,” replied the doctor. “Increase his I.V. drip.”

“Will that produce a pulmonary edema?”

The doctor took a deep breath and let it out slowly, “At this point it’s all a guessing game on what this young man has and how to combat it.” He looked over to the observation window to see the expression on the face of

the man standing there. The doctor slightly tilted his head, raised an eyebrow, and sarcastically said, “Any ideas I’d greatly appreciate them Mr. Smith.”

Mr. Smith reached over next to the window and a low level electric buzz came on in the operating room.

“We’ve detained the other three members of the team for observation. They seem to be unaffected by whatever he has, but to be on the safe side we’ll keep them until we’ve figured it out. I have a Hematologist and a Microbiologist that should be arriving soon,” he replied then shut the intercom off. As soon as he did, he held up a finger as if he had forgotten something and then turned it back on. “I neglected to mention that I have an Infectious Disease specialist coming as well.”

“I really don’t think that he has an infectious disease,” he said in an alarming tone.

“What do you think he has Doctor Johannsen?”

Peter Johannsen paused and his shoulders slumped in defeat, “I don’t know what he has.”

“Exactly... There’s no disrespect intended. I’m sure you’re a good doctor, but there’s no room and no time to wait on this. We have to act quickly. You said so yourself that it appears that he was cut on the arm and that is where it started based on the deterioration of the tissue in his arm. Now we have to figure what got in the wound to do this.”

“Your right...”

“We may not be able to save him doc, but we have to look at the bigger picture. An epidemic or even a pandemic,” Smith added.

Doctor Johannsen had his suspicions that Mr. Smith wasn't his real name. His ID stated he was from a research institute, but it was more like he was part of a government agency with his sidekick goons that were just on the other side of the operating door. What person from a research institute could make one call and have specialist in those fields here in a matter of hours. The doctor's thoughts were interrupted as a warning tone erupted from the vitals monitoring device.

"Get the syringe ready with the adrenaline," Johannsen said with urgency.

"What's going on doc?" Smith asked.

"I'd say that his bodily functions are shutting down. I don't think he's going to make it!"

"I'll go get the paddles," said the nurse.

"Good idea," replied Johannsen.

"Can't let ya do that," Smith interjected sharply.

Doctor Johannsen looked up from what he was doing, "What do you mean you can't let us do that?"

"Just what I said, he's dying and we don't know from what. If it's infectious... We can't let it get out."

"Go get the paddles," the doctor instructed the nurse.

"You're officially under quarantine. If you attempt to leave the room, I'm afraid that my two associates will have to stop you by any and all force available."

The doctor looked to the nurse and shook his head, "This is fucking bullshit! We're trying to save him."

Smith reached over and turned off the intercom. He reached into his pocket, pulled out a cell phone, pushed the buttons, and placed it to his ear.

The audience behind the window had been growing over the past couple of hours. But it didn't matter now; the young man on the table had died thirty minutes ago.

"What do we have so far?" asked the newest addition to the growing observation room crowd.

"We have the blood and tissue samples that were taken when the patient arrived. They're sealed in an airtight container," Smith replied. "As you can see the patient has expired."

"Should we do an autopsy?" asked the Hematologist.

"To risky, let's have him get more blood and tissue samples. That way we can compare," replied the Infectious Disease specialist.

The buzz of the intercom in the operating room returned.

"Doctor Johannsen, they would like you to get blood and tissue samples from the body," Smith stated.

"Sure thing... It's not like I'm going anywhere soon now is it," he replied sarcastically.

"The quicker we get this over with, the quicker you and your nurse get out of there."

The doctor waved his middle finger toward the observation window in disgust with being held against their will. He understood what an infectious disease was and nothing about it screamed that is was. The three remaining team members were fine, they had been with the patient and exposed for a long period of time. To no avail, he knew he wouldn't get out until they said, so just do what they ask and get it over with.

“I’ll start with tissue samples from his legs and you draw the blood samples.” Johannsen kindly ordered his nurse.

The nurse had the instruments ready just in case and she gave a half heartily of a smile.

As the doctor stood down toward the feet of the body, he began to take small samples of the outer and inner skin. The nurse started with the major arteries in the thighs.

“That’s really odd,” she commented to herself.

“What’s that?” the doctor asked without looking up.

“His blood is really thicker than it should be.”

“Then try a different spot,” the doctor calmly suggested.

The nurse nodding in agreement removed the needle from the artery. As she did she was startled by a brief movement. It wasn’t enough for her to scream out or be in alarm over. Dead bodies sometimes moved do to gases or stored electrical impulses within the body at the time of death. It was something that you could never get used to. She took her small tray and moved up to the chest. She had decided that she would take the blood sample from the heart, hoping it would be easier than it was from the artery in the thigh.

As she was about to place the tray on the stomach, the forearm of the young man laying on the table dead shot up and knocked it out of her hands.

“Doctor,” she screamed.

The doctor quickly looked up and saw the hand and fingers slowly moving. He looked to the nurse and then to the observation window. His eyes widened as he thought that the young man might still be alive. How? He had no clue, but he was going to try to keep him that way. He

grabbed his stethoscope and moved to listen to the patient's heart.

"Doctor Johannsen... What's going on?" Smith asked.

The nurse took two steps back and tried to calm her shaking hands.

"I can't seem to hear a heartbeat," the doctor stated as he moved the stethoscope around the chest area.

"Doctor Johannsen, I asked you a question."

Johannsen looked up and had an annoyed look on his face. He waved him off like someone would shoo a fly.

"Doctor!" Smith spoke loudly over the intercom.

"Would you shut the fuck up so I can try to hear a heartbeat!" the doctor yelled.

"Sure."

"Asshole," Johannsen said under his breath.

Not paying attention to the patient on the table during the exchange with Smith, the hand of the patient shot up grabbing him and then the other hand. The doctor tried to move back but couldn't break the grip of either hand. The patient's eyes opened.

"Oh... Please let me out," the nurse said as she looked back to the window. "Please!"

The patient sat up while still holding on to the doctor that was struggling to free himself and let out a low snarling moan that grew louder each time he did it. There was no indication of what was to come next; he viscosly tore into the doctor's neck with his teeth ripping out his a part of his jugular vein. Blood began to squirt out into the room and the doctor screamed at the top of his lungs until his vocal cords were ripped out as well.

DAVE FRIZZELL

“Oh my god! Please let me out of here,” the nurse hysterically screamed as she begged to the observation window. “I don’t want to die... Please... Let... Me... OUT!”

She looked back to see the patient noticing her while he was eating the doctor’s flesh. Blood was dripping down his chin as he chewed and there was a fire burning in his eyes as he looked to her. He started to get up as he continued to stare at her.

She turned back around, pounded on the window, and screamed, “FOR GOD’S SAKE HELP ME!”

Blood squirted on the window as the patient ripped into her shoulder and bottom of her neck. Her eyes went wide with terror and he bit down on her neck again hitting the jugular vein. He quickly dropped her as he noticed movement behind the window and began pounding it.

The nurse lay there sobbing as she bled out.

1

THE ROOM

SEPT 4

It was the day after Labor Day and normally I'm recovering from a world class barbeque that had plenty of brews to go around. Instead, I found myself in a dark interrogation room only God knows where and only God knew by whom. The room was pretty much typical as far as interrogation rooms went. It had four block walls, no windows or mirrors, one table, two chairs, one door, and a hi-tech video camera in one corner of the ceiling. I would know I spent a lot of time in them over the last couple of years.

After an hour of sitting there and running scenarios around in my head, I couldn't come up with just one reason for being there. Not one. Which was a bigger surprise to me since I usually remembered what infractions of the law I had recently broken and knew it would eventually come crashing down on top of me. It usually did. But this time was different; I couldn't think of one damn thing that I had done recently to warrant sitting there.

"Hello! Is anyone listening?" I said sarcastically toward the video camera. "It sure would be nice to get this fucking over with!"

No one responded.

Usually you can hear faint noises coming from outside most any room, but not this one. Based on my experience, that in itself led me to believe the room I was sitting in, was sound proof and or deep below the ground, and most likely part of some highly classified government agency.

I found myself sitting there for another hour before the metal door finally creaked open. One middle aged man entered the room. He wasn't dressed how I imagined he would be or how they usually did. In the past, most of the interrogators wore nice uncomfortable black suits which they tugged at throughout the questioning. But not this time, the man was dressed in a knit shirt, kakis pants, and loafers. He wasn't your typical interrogator and he had an aura of former military service oozing from his posture. He was well built and in shape. It reminded me of my time in the service, especially the latter years spent with a special ops group I was attached to. All of the guys in those groups stayed in shape, they had to it kept them alive more often than not.

He sat down without saying a word, opened a thin folder, looked up at me, and then slightly squinted.

It was a tactic used to get the person to start speaking, but I wasn't about to start the conversation. Hell, I didn't even know why I was there.

"Mr. Pike," he then cleared his throat. "I'm sorry to have kept you. My flight here was delayed, but couldn't be avoided."

"I'm sure." I couldn't contain my sarcasm as it poured out. "Don't worry about it. I've been sitting here enjoying

myself for hours. As a matter of fact, they've been so hospitable I just finished a six course meal."

"Samuel Pike, age forty-three, home town Daytona Beach Florida, attended Mainland Senior High School, went on to attend the University of Florida, and upon graduation entered boot camp at Parris Island to become a Marine. Later with an exemplary service recorded, combat seasoned, and highly decorated... was assigned to a special ops group focusing on..."

"I already know who I am and apparently so do you. So can we cut with the bullshit and get to the fucking point of why I'm here?"

"We need your help," he said with a straight face.

We both remained silent for what seemed like forever as our eyes locked on to each others. The old proverbial saying that you could have heard a pin drop would have been dead on. Both of us tried to figure the other out in a matter of seconds.

"Oh you have a funny way of asking for it!" I shot back.

"My name is Jack Fisher and I'm with the Omega group."

I sat there for a few more silent seconds and actually tried to come up with what the hell he was talking about, but that didn't happen and I spoke up, "Okay pal... I'll bite. What the hell is the Omega group?"

He closed the small file that was lying on the table, laid his palms flat on the table, looked to the ceiling, let out a deep sigh. I could tell his frustration lied with that fact he didn't have the answers. I'd been there before and seen that look staring back at me in the mirror more than once. He was pretty much out of options. "I'm sure you already

know what the Delta Force is, so I won't bore you with those details. The Omega Force, or group as we prefer to call it, has a somewhat similar mission as Delta. Where their main focus is terroristic actions. We focus on doomsday weapons that will end or partially end our existence as we know it here on earth."

"Let me get this straight... You want me to join your little party?"

"Information," Fisher said without blinking.

"Alright, now I'm really confused. Are you accusing me of deploying a doomsday weapon of some sort?" I stood up and pounded my fist on the top of the table. This guy was starting to jerk my chain and I was about to lose control. "Cause if you are, you're out of your fucking mind!"

"Sit down Pike. No one is accusing you of anything," he said calmly and without even a flinch.

I paused, stared into his eyes, and then I slowly sat back down as I let out a loud sigh of frustration.

"We have a situation that's about to blow up on us and we need all the info we can get," Fisher said with a sense of urgency in his voice.

"And you think I have some sort of information that you're looking for?"

"We certainly hope so," slowly flipped through a few pages in the folder sitting in front of him. "This situation is about to get out of hand if we can't find a solution and frankly, it's got our scientist scared shitless."

I had the knack for reading people and all indications were telling me he was on the level. Picking me up and dropping

me in a secret location just to ask me for some information that I might have... Gave me a feeling this was just about to get a little freakier than it might usually have been.

“Okay... I’ll bite. What kind of information that I have could you possibly want?”

“I need the details from your recent trip to South America,” Fisher said with a deadpan expression. “I have the briefs, but I want to hear it straight from you.”

“You brought me here to ask me for information about a joint research trip to South America when it’s all right there in front of you? You got to be freakin’ kidding me!”

“Need every last detail about that trip.”

“You’re serious, you want information on a trip that went from a research expedition in the jungles of South America that skipped by SNAFU and went straight to FUBAR in less than a week?” I could feel the blood pressure rising and my face get flushed. Maybe he was one of only a few that I couldn’t read. “What in the world does that fucking trip have to do with anything? The natives went schizo or some voodoo shit. Half of the research doctors lost their lives on that trip! Half of our group was lucky enough to get out of there in one piece.”

“I would have to say it was a miracle and luck had nothing to do with it. But I wouldn’t say in one piece. So you haven’t heard what happened after the trip?”

“When a job’s done, that’s it. It’s over and done with. I try real hard not to mettle with the affairs of government since I’m no longer active and don’t have a security clearance. Although I do hear things from time to time, I don’t go looking for it.”

“Well, by the order of The United States of America, I’m here by recalling you to active duty as of now and reinstating your security clearance and promoting you to the rank of Sergeant Major,” he said with a grim smile. “You’re assigned to Omega and report to me Sergeant Major Pike.”

“Holy shit!” It was the last thing in the world I wanted to happen. Not that I had contentment for the military, but rather it was my entire life, it had to be with the job I was doing. No time for family, but now, I was trying to start over and do it the right way. I suppose being a hired security force might not be perfect, but it was a start none the less.

“Yes, well hold on to that thought, cause that’s what we’re in. A bunch of deep shit that’s gonna get real holy real soon. Now I need every last detail of that trip.”

A few seconds seemed like minutes as I paused to recall the details of the trip, “I guess the best place to start sir... Is the beginning.”