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Opening extract from

Undead Ed and the Demon Freakshow

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FIRST MISTAKE:

GETTING HIT BY A TRUCK



My name is Ed Bagley, and I'm dead. Well, technically undead. Thanks for the sympathy.

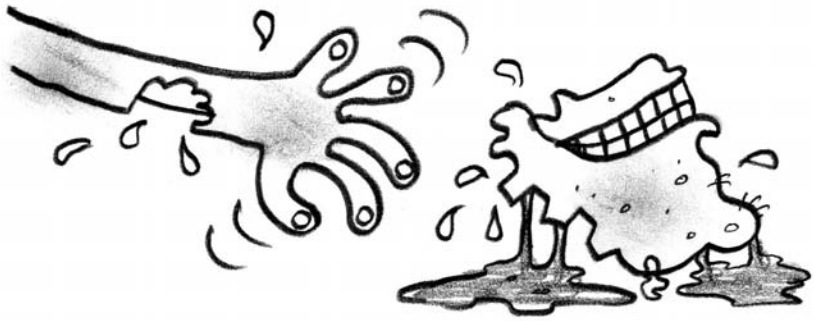
One rainy night I was hit by a truck and the lights went out. Weirdly, they came back on again and my undead 'life' began. Go figure.

Being undead is like getting to a cinema five minutes after the film has started and then having to clamber over a load of people to find your seat. Nobody really tells you anything: they expect you to find your place, keep quiet and try to catch up on the stuff you missed.

I'm a zombie too – that sucks harder than a mansion full of vacuum cleaners. I mean, I could have been anything: a vampire, a werewolf, even a ghost. Zombies are like the tramps of the living dead – you might throw one a few kind words occasionally, but you don't want them coming round for dinner and stinking up the place.



Besides, zombies tend to leave things behind ... and we're not talking hats and coats. We're talking teeth and jawbones.



Nope, we're definitely not popular ... even among our kind. Fortunately, my family don't suffer any real embarrassment: none of the 'breathers' can see us.

The worlds of the living and the dead fit together like a pair of escalators at a supermarket: one goes up, one goes down and never the twain shall meet.

It's just as well, really. If my parents saw me right now, my mum would scream

and run away, and my dad would probably call the police.

Of course, I can't help the way I am. It's not *my* fault I was hit by a truck ...

You know the dangerous type? Every story has one. In *Star Wars*, it was Luke; at Hogwarts, it was Harry; in Mortlake, it's definitely me.

I'm the one who brings destruction, the one who puts everyone in danger, the one who's *letting the whole class down.*

The horrible thing though, is that I did it all by accident.

You see, I became a zombie because, unbeknownst to me, I was cursed when I died. There's a long version of that story and a short version. You're getting the short version, because you're probably not going to live long enough to hear the full epic – I didn't.

Basically, I got electrocuted when I was younger and, in doing so, I accidentally interrupted this weird group suicide, masterminded by an evil clown. You should probably read over that last sentence a few times until it starts to sound slightly less warped.



Of course, like all bizarre statements, it's true.

Kambo Cheapteeth was a deranged circus clown who, together with some weird friends, planned his own glorious death. Unfortunately, I messed it up for Kambo ...

... and now he's equally determined to mess up my death. The hard way.

He's enlisted the help of two undead friends: Carble and Stein. Carble is a seriously sinister midget with a massive nose and gleaming brass teeth, while Stein has a sewn-up eye and innate ability to float above the ground. *Shudder.*

If I was on my own, I'd be terrified.

Unfortunately for Kambo, I've now got some pretty good friends watching my back. Max Moon, a crazy werewolf with an eye for trouble, and Jemini, a highly

emotional vampire who can't seem to accept the fact that she's dead.

Yeah, OK, they're not exactly the *ideal* gang, but you can't be too choosy when you smell as bad as I do. Try taping a dead mackerel to your armpits and see how many of *your* mates stick around ...



... especially if you also happen to have a half-demonic hand.

During my first week in the world of the undead, I discovered that my left arm had long been possessed by Kambo's demonic soul. The trouble was, I learned this when the entire arm detached from the rest of my body and went on a mad, destructive rampage around Mortlake. I had to move hell and high water to get it

back, and it hasn't been right since.

By 'hasn't been right' I mean a) it now has nine fingers, four of which seem to veer away at crazy angles from the regular five, b) the fingers are *in between* the normal ones so the above movement looks especially freaky to anyone who's not already insane, and c) every now and again the hand rises up and uses two of the demon fingers to flick the end of my nose, for reasons I haven't yet worked out. This last development is particularly worrying, as the end of my nose has already dropped off twice.

Still ... you've got to laugh, haven't you?

