

## “ZOMBIE ZOOLOGY” (Book Review)

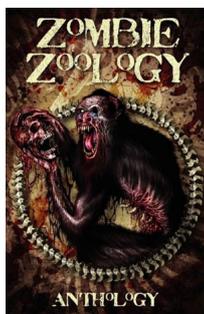
Written by Michael Compton  
Saturday, 05 June 2010 08:45

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ZOMBIE ZOOLOGY, a recent addition to Severed Press' canon of undead horror fiction, offers up something fairly novel for fans of the ever-more-crowded subgenre. Quite simply, each short story in this anthology deals with the notion of zombie animals.

Few past movies have tackled carnivorous canines, putrid primates and festering forest dwellers, and from a filmmaker's perspective, that's understandable. Pre-RESIDENT EVIL and its integration of CGI, getting traditional zombie makeup on, say, a Doberman would not only prove difficult, but likely result in animal-rights organizations such as PETA intervening. Having animals behave in an undead manner on screen would also likely be quite difficult. This is a handicap that doesn't apply to the written word, yet the books and short tales in this subgenre have largely avoided the subject as well. But authors have the benefit of being able to take whatever liberties they wish in order to get their stories across, and ZOMBIE ZOOLOGY certainly takes advantage of this.



The collection opens with Tim Curran's "Monkey House," in which protagonist Emma steps outside her and her Marine husband's home, now a makeshift military stronghold, under the impression that a human zombie epidemic has finally subsided. Emma is barely out the door before she finds herself confronted by a roving pack of ravenous and rotting baboons that have broken loose from a nearby animal-testing facility. Other noteworthy entries include Ted Wenskus' "The Yule Cat," in which Iceland native Jon tracks the supernatural feline beast that killed his younger sister on Christmas Eve 20 years prior; "The Rising" by Hayden Williams, featuring New Zealand's South Island farm community being terrorized by creatures centuries extinct; and—this reviewer's personal favorite—Carl Baker's "Why The Wild Things Are." Here, our rather lax central character Lionel shifts about his house, sips Earl Grey, reads newspaper articles from the previous week and indifferently muses over whom he should notify regarding the dead postman lying face-down in his garden pond, being picked apart by infected fowl.

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Giving little thought toward the well-being of his former mail carrier, Lionel seems instead occupied with how he'll obtain a second copy of *Reader's Digest* to replace the copy he lost to the gore-filled pond in his front lawn.

In any anthology, not every story is going to be exceptional, and when thumbing through ZOMBIE ZOOLOGY, one can't help but feel as though one or two of the entries were initially intended as basic animal-attack tales that underwent last-minute rewrites to better fit in with the undead angle. That said, there isn't a single story in ZOMBIE ZOOLOGY that sinks below mediocre, and most of them, particularly the aforementioned, are quite clever and engaging.

Overall, ZOMBIE ZOOLOGY is a reanimated rarity that's certainly worth the time of all devotees of the decomposed. It's a more than welcome alternative to a visit to an actual zoo where the miserable monkeys, pacing pandas and agitated alligators merely wish they were dead.



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