

SHOWDOWN AT ZOMBIE CENTRAL STATION!

A Zombie Killer Series Shoot
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Deep in conversation, Lieutenant Souchik towered a foot over the captain as they walked around the patrol trucks waiting for the last of their ZK passengers to reach the rally point so they could convoy back to outpost. ZKs already there who weren't on guard duty organized their gear and cleaned weapons around the trucks. They noticed Lieutenant Souchik first, since he was 6'3" and 250 pounds; then they'd spot the captain and come to attention, but before they could salute, she'd peep out in her small voice, "at ease." It punctuated the two officer's conversation and the captain was becoming annoyed. Finally, they came to a line of bloody bodies on the roadside. Some were broken, some eaten, some just shot to death. Countless flies buzzed and walked over them.

"So we have eight dead men in some kind of Hollywood bad guy black tactical uniform with no insignia plus this guy you believe to be the kidnapper Karl Buchholtz?" she asked, looking at him for confirmation.

"Yes captain. The ZK's who escorted him across the Dead Zone identified his remains."

"Not much left of his face after that shotgun blast, did he have a birthmark or something?"

"ZK Conley and the rookie should know the guy, they spent enough time with him. They also recognized the clothing. Dr. Von Bloom said the guy identified himself as Karl Buchholtz too."

"Just sayin'. My impression is we may have gotten everyone from the two helicopters we shot down. Personal identification found on the bodies suggests these dead guys were ex-military but nothing connects them to recent civilian government employment. My feeling is they are private security contractors of some sort. What do you think?"

"I agree. The question is for whom?"

"Hopefully Dr. Von Bloom can shed some light on that. So far we haven't turned up much in the crashed birds. I'm told they were not military models at all. They're the civilian versions, and based on the external fuel tanks they had, they could have come from anywhere in a 500 mile radius. The briefcase we recovered belonged to Dr. Von Bloom, so that's a red herring. You know...this doesn't speak directly to who these people are, but my intuition is telling me it's important."

"What does your women's intuition tell you captain?"

"Our kidnapers have resources, but lack practical Dead Zone experience. Buchholtz appears to be the most capable of the bunch...you know, like their James Bond. Maybe good help is hard to find, but from the after action reports I've gotten, most of these guys didn't seem too familiar with basic Dead Zone protocols. They panicked around the undead, headed in all different directions blazing away full-auto with unsuppressed MP5s making all kinds of noise, wasting all their ammo, revealing their location and never really engaged us on the ground in a determined, or even organized way. You could say that they were trying to create a diversion so Buchholtz could escape with Dr. Von Bloom in tow, but I think they were just so messed up that Buchholtz gave up on getting any help from them and went his own way."

"Maybe. Damn shame we don't have a prisoner."

"Well at least we have their prisoner. I want to talk to Von Bloom. Please get his mad-scientist butt over here."

“Right away captain.” Lieutenant Souchik made some hand gestures over his head and two ZK’s brought a thin, one-eyed, balding, elderly man in a soiled sport jacket, necktie, and khaki slacks slowly over to the line of bodies. He looked weary, but pepped up as he drew closer.”

“It seems I owe you my life again captain,” he said to her in a heavy German accent. “Vielen herzlichen Dank.”

“The very reason I want to speak to you before the city intelligence guys take you away for debriefing. You and black helicopters go together like tears and misery. I’d appreciate an explanation.”

The old man hesitated, then realized that he had just confirmed the captain’s suspicions.

“Captain, I will not insult your intelligence with a subterfuge,” he answered, “but I cannot. I hope that you will believe me when I say that I did not go with Herr Buchholtz willingly. I was drugged and awoke hooded and handcuffed in a vehicle. I resisted and he grappled with me the whole way through. It wasn’t until your ZK fired that his arms finally fell away from me and my struggle ended. Those people are not my friends or my allies.”

The captain watched his face as he spoke, one of her eyebrows skeptically arched. There was no reason to bind a willing captive, she thought. That made his story plausible, but by his own admission he was hiding something. As she pondered the disciplinary implications of breaking his foot with a hammer to elicit answers to the bigger questions, there was some commotion on the perimeter. ZKs were shouting in excitement as they gathered in a small mob and then rushed over to her. In the middle of them was a small statured person in muddy black tactical clothes with a sack over their head and their hands restrained behind them. Her ZKs had a prisoner after all, and they were very proud of it.

“Captain,” shouted Sergeant Kruer. “We got a live one ma’am!”

Two ZKs virtually carried the docile captive forward. Genuinely surprised, the captain turned to Lieutenant Souchik and Dr. Von Bloom. The former was likewise surprised, but the doctor looked alarmed, possibly even fearful, as Sergeant Kruer pulled the sack from the prisoner’s head. A long mane of tousled golden blond hair fell down from it.

“Gott in Himmel!” the doctor blurted out in shock.

It was a woman in her mid-thirties, slim but not lean like a ZK or Dead Zone survivor. She was attractive and had a familiar quality in her blue eyes that blinked from the light and then fell on Dr. Von Bloom. She stared at him in silence for a moment and then began to cry.

“Vati,” she said through her tears.

The doctor’s stoic features gave way to the beginnings of a smile and he stepped forward and embraced the woman, pressing her face into his chest as she sobbed. The ZKs, looked toward the captain in confusion. She nodded and they released the woman and untied her hands. As soon as they were free, she wrapped them around the doctor’s neck and kissed his cheek. As the dramatic reunion unfolded, ZK Abbington casually walked up on the scene.

“Hey guys, what did I miss?” he asked no one in particular, clearly not expecting to see the captain. He looked concerned when she beckoned to him with her finger. He came to attention and saluted. She returned the salute and spoke.

“ZK Ryan Abbington isn’t it?”

“In the living flesh captain.”

“Lieutenant Souchik tells me you single handedly shot down 36 undead while tracking the kidnapper and Dr. Von Bloom through the Dead Zone. In addition you killed the kidnapper and rescued Dr. Von Bloom. That is no small feat and I want you to know I am impressed and intend to mention you in the after action report but there’s one more thing I need clarification on.”

“I am an open book ma’am.”

“How close was Buchholtz’s head to Dr. Von Bloom when you blew it off with a blast of 00 buckshot?”

“Like the shell on a hard boiled egg.”

“And you never asked him to surrender?”

“No ma’am. No quarter given and none expected.”

“So instead of asking him to surrender, you decided to peel him off the hostage from 20 yards away with a 12 gauge shotgun loaded with 00 buckshot? Nine pellet pattern in that load, and you shot at him with it?”

“Yes ma’am! Toughest shot I’ve ever made.”

“Why did you do that?!?! You could have killed the doctor!!” she erupted at him.

“Seemed like a good idea at the time captain.”

“I appreciate your candor ZK Abbington,” she replied, once again calm. “Fortunately your marksmanship ability has compensated for your questionable judgment. You are dismissed.”

“Captain?” the ZK rifleman queried.

“What now?”

“Who’s the babe?” He pointed over his shoulder with his thumb at the prisoner who was still embracing Dr. Von Bloom.

“Possibly his daughter.”

“Small world.”

“Please depart from my presence now Abbington,” the captain said softly, closing her eyes and rubbing her temples with her thumbs. “There’s already been too much crazy around here for one day and you are making it exponentially worse.”