

A man in a white lab coat is seated in a high-tech, futuristic chair. He is surrounded by numerous wires and cables that connect to various pieces of equipment. In the background, several robotic arms and hands are visible, some holding small, glowing spheres. The entire scene is bathed in a bright blue light, creating a high-tech, laboratory-like atmosphere. The man has a surprised or concerned expression on his face.

MISTAKEN

REBELLION OF THE REANIMATED

FOR DEAD

ROD TRENT

Welcome, dear reader. This is yet another story that has haunted and taunted me for a few decades, and I've finally given in to the whisperings.

The SciFi world of the dead and undead has always fascinated me. To me, the zombie will always be the perfect monster, capable of anything because of its semi-intelligence from memories of a past life combined powered by an insatiable hunger for life and that overpowers enduring pain. Come share this world with me, where I supply a different side to the genre and introduce some new nuances that might rewrite the zombie category.

As the author of this story, I began my career writing fiction, a passion that has never dimmed even as I ventured into the world of technology content to pay the bills and drive my career forward. The act of creation is not just a job; it is a therapeutic escape, a return to the roots of my creativity, and I am thrilled to be sharing this passion with you. In a very real way, this book is just for me. Selfish, huh? But for those that know me, I share everything, so, I hope you both excuse and enjoy my attempted intrusion into your world.

- Rod

Free Chapter 1

Cadavered

Pain clawed its way through every fiber of Jack O'Brien's being as consciousness seeped back into him like a reluctant tide. He gasped, his breath a ragged sound in the dimly lit confines of an unknown room. The air was thick with a metallic tang, and the low hum of machinery played a discordant symphony for his unwelcome awakening. His green eyes, usually sharp as cut emeralds, now squinted against the dull gleam of overhead lights that flickered like dying stars.

Jack's mind floundered, grappling for purchase in the slippery mire of confusion. The last remnants of a dream — or was it reality? — slipped from his grasp, leaving behind only the certainty of agony. It radiated from his core, spreading outward to limbs he couldn't yet feel, as if his body were protesting its own revival. An insidious chill wrapped around his muscular frame, the cold seeping into his bones with invasive persistence.

He tried to lift his head, to survey this prison of shadows and whispers, but the effort was monumental, sending shocks of pain ricocheting through his skull. Panic nibbled at the edges of his resolve, a relentless tide threatening to drown him in its depths. Where was he? How had he come to be here, entombed in this sterile purgatory?

"Think, Jack," he muttered to himself, his voice but a husk of its usual command. It was a mantra, a lifeline thrown into the turbulent sea of his thoughts. He clung to the familiar timbre of his inner voice, allowing it to anchor him amidst the storm.

Memories jostled for attention, each demanding recognition, but they slipped through his mental grasp like wraiths. All he could

summon was the echo of a scream — his own, perhaps — and the heavy weight of darkness that had pressed down upon him, smothering his cries.

His heart pounded, a staccato rhythm that seemed too loud in the hush of the room. Jack fought to calm it, to master the fear that threatened to unseat his reason. He was resourceful, intelligent, adaptable; these qualities had not abandoned him, even though the world he knew might have. They were the tools with which he would carve his path out of this nightmare.

"Focus on what you know," he coached himself, the whisper barely disturbing the stillness. The room was sparse, clinical, and hauntingly silent save for those distant sounds that lurked beyond his immediate perception. He tried to move again, a slight shifting of weight, and though his body rebelled, he reveled in the small victory over paralysis.

Jack realized then that understanding his predicament was the key to escaping it. With every throb of pain, with every shallow breath, he pieced together the fragments of his shattered reality. This was not the end, nor was it a continuation of the life he once led; it was something altogether new, a liminal space where the boundaries between life and death blurred into obscurity.

The dread that had been simmering beneath his panic rose to the surface, threatening to consume him. But Jack O'Brien was not one to be consumed. He was the flame itself — burning, enduring, fighting back against the suffocating dark. And in that moment of stark clarity, he vowed to reclaim his existence, no matter the horrors that awaited him in the shadows.

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His mind churned, piecing together the disjointed memories that led to his awakening in this sterile tomb. The last thing Jack remembered was the crushing weight on his chest, the frantic voices around him, and then... darkness. At first, he thought it

might have been a dream — a nightmare from which he'd surely wake. But as he lay there, encased in the chilling embrace of reality, the truth seeped into his consciousness like poison.

The dull ache in his arm drew his attention to a small, circular adhesive patch. Beneath it, the faintest trace of a needle's entry — so insignificant, yet its implications vast and terrifying. They had declared him dead; they had to. No one would inject the reanimation serum into a living soul. Hopelessness clawed at him, a beast with insatiable hunger, as dread curdled in his gut. They thought him gone, nothing more than a husk to be reclaimed by science's unholy ambitions.

"Dead..." The word hung in the air, absurd and surreal. Yet, here he was, painfully aware and undeniably alive — or something akin to it.

With his resolve hardening, Jack attempted to rise, to break free from the invisible chains that bound him. His limbs betrayed him, heavy and obstinate as lead. He willed his arms to bend, his fingers to curl, but they responded with only the faintest twitch. It was as if his body belonged to someone else, a puppet ensnared by unseen strings.

"Move," he commanded through gritted teeth, the effort sending fresh waves of agony rippling through his uncooperative flesh. Each attempt was a battle, each minor twitch a triumph over the paralyzing grip of the serum that coursed through his veins. Jack's breaths came in labored gasps, hot against the cold air that seemed to press down upon him.

"Fight it," he urged himself, the thought repeating like a mantra in his head. The room, once an anonymous blur, sharpened into focus — the gleam of metal instruments, the antiseptic smell that clung to the air, the oppressive silence that promised madness.

It was in the grueling push against his constraints that Jack found a spark of his former self. Muscles screamed in protest as

he forced his torso upward, inch by grueling inch, like a man clawing his way from the earth itself. This was no resurrection—it was a reclamation. Jack O'Brien was not content to be a footnote in a tale of forbidden science. He would write his own story, one seared with struggle and the indomitable will to persist.

As his muscles finally answered his call, albeit weakly, Jack knew that his journey back to the land of the living was only just beginning. And though the road ahead was shrouded in uncertainty, Jack's determination to face whatever lay beyond the laboratory walls burned fiercely within him.

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Jack's senses, once dulled by the abyss of unconsciousness, sharpened with a merciless acuity. He could hear the faintest drip of a leaking faucet somewhere in the shadows, each plunk resonating like a sledgehammer against the silence. But it was not the water's rhythm that clawed at his nerves—it was the shuffling, the dragging of feet across the sterile tile floors, accompanied by the low, guttural moans of something less than human.

The sounds encroached upon his sanctuary of solitude, a chilling reminder that the world he had awakened to was governed by horrors unfathomable. With every labored breath, Jack's awareness ballooned, and with it, a visceral need to escape the bonds of his eerie tomb.

"Help," he tried to shout, but his vocal cords, still slick with the residue of death, betrayed him. The word scratched its way out of his throat, a raspy whisper dissolving into the cold air before it could claim existence. It was a sound so frail, so smothered by weakness, that even Jack questioned whether he had made any noise at all.

He listened, heart pounding in his chest, for a sign that his call had been heard. But the only reply was the relentless echo of

those distant, dragging footsteps – a morbid metronome counting down the moments of his captivity.

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Jack's heart hammered against his ribcage as the shuffling and moaning grew closer, a grotesque symphony orchestrated for the damned. The panic that gnawed at his insides was quick to kindle the fires of survival within him. He willed his body to respond, to fight against the paralytic grip of death that clung to his limbs like chains.

In the midst of his internal battle, an alien sensation began to seep into Jack's consciousness. It was as if tendrils of thought, not his own, were intertwining with his mind – a bizarre communion that bridged the gap between his living soul and the undead creatures beyond his sight.

At first, he recoiled from the intrusion, repulsed by the murky, fragmented emotions that lapped at the shores of his psyche. But then, amidst the fear and confusion, he discerned something extraordinary – control. The realization bloomed within him, unfurling like a dark blossom in twilight; he could influence them, those shambling remnants of humanity.

A tremor passed through Jack's body as he tentatively reached out with his newfound ability. His mind brushed against theirs, a conductor poised before a macabre orchestra of the lost. And they responded. The shuffling ceased, the moaning quieted – an eerie hush that hung heavy in the lab.

He had shaped their actions, however briefly.

The power was intoxicating, but it was a poisoned chalice. As the reanimation serum pulsed through his veins, it waged war upon his senses. Pain lanced through him, a tide of needles pricking every inch of his flesh. Confusion swirled in his head, a miasma threatening to erode his very identity.

"Focus," he murmured, the word a lifeline cast into the turbulent sea of his thoughts. He needed to keep a firm grip on who he was — the man, Jack O'Brien, not the monster this serum sought to make of him.

Each attempt to assert his will over the horde beyond his vision came at a cost. His temples throbbed, his thoughts splintered, and yet he strained against the chaos. He clung to memories of life before this nightmare, to the essence of his being that refused to be extinguished. In the grim dance between man and monster, Jack fought to remain the leader.

His control over the others flickered, like a candle in a tempest, each flicker a victory against the darkness that threatened to consume him. Waves of agony crashed over him, one after another, as relentless as the tide. But still, Jack persisted, his resilience a beacon in the nightmarish gloom.

"Remember... remember who you are," he whispered to himself, a mantra against the encroaching oblivion. The struggle was Herculean, but Jack O'Brien was no stranger to adversity. He would master this curse, or he would perish trying.

The mysterious tone of the laboratory's secrets cloaked him as he grappled with the dual realities of his existence, caught in the limbo between life and undeath. As the last vestiges of control wavered, Jack prepared to unleash his will once more, determined to bend the shadows to his command.

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Jack's eyelids fluttered open, the world creeping into his consciousness like a slow, insidious tide. Every inhalation was a discovery of sharp, sterile scents that clawed at the back of his throat — a cocktail of antiseptics and the acrid bite of preservatives used only on the lifeless. The cold embrace of metal pressed against the skin of his bare back, sending shivers that cascaded down his spine. His senses, now uncannily acute, drank in the surroundings with an unnatural voracity.

The laboratory sprawled before him, a tableau of horrors hidden in the shroud of dim lighting. Shadows clung to the corners, thick with secrets yet untold. Jack's gaze swept across the room, noting the glint of surgical instruments laid out with morbid precision. Vials of unnamed substances lined the shelves, their contents still as death itself. It was a sanctum of science perverted, where the boundaries between life and death were not just blurred — they were obliterated.

With every shallow breath, Jack's determination galvanized within him. He would not be a prisoner of this macabre domain. His mind, once reeling from the serum's grip, now raced with purpose. He scanned the room for weaknesses — the latch on the door, the space beneath it, any sign of a security panel that could be manipulated.

"Think," he murmured, the word a raspy invocation to his intellect. His voice, though feeble, was a testament to the human spirit that refused to be silenced. Resourceful and adaptable, he knew he needed to strategize, to fashion his escape with the cunning that had preserved him thus far.

The lab seemed impenetrable, designed to keep its subjects caged, but Jack's keen eyes caught a flicker — was it movement or malfunction? A soft red glow pulsed irregularly from a keypad mounted near the door, a sentinel tasked with guarding the exit. It drew Jack's focus, whispering promises of freedom through its rhythmic dance.

"Got to be a way..." he trailed off, the thought hanging unfinished as he scrutinized the device. If he could just reach it, perhaps he could trigger an opening, a slip in the fortress that contained him. This was a game of wits, and he would not concede defeat.

The mysterious tone of the lab seemed to mock him, challenging his resolve. Yet Jack O'Brien was no mere pawn in this

grotesque game; he was a player, a contender, his every heartbeat a defiance of the fate they'd planned for him.

In the quiet lull between his heartbeats, Jack steeled himself for action. The past was a distant shore, but redemption lay within grasp. There was no turning back, only forward — toward the uncertain future that awaited him beyond these cold, clinical walls.

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Jack's sinews screamed as he wrestled against the leather straps binding him to the cold steel of the operating table. Each flex of his muscles was a silent war cry, an assertion of life against the deathly stillness that enveloped him. His body had become a battleground, with the serum infiltrating his veins like a foreign invader — yet it also lent him a grotesque strength.

Eyes clenched shut, he envisioned the restraints as mere threads, willing them to snap under the pressure of his resolve. Sweat mingled with the chemical scent that hung in the air, each droplet a testament to his exertion. The material groaned, stretched to its limits by Jack's powerful frame — a frame that refused to yield to the indignity of this unnatural paralysis.

"Come on," Jack grated out between gritted teeth, the words barely audible over the lab's haunting silence. They were not just a plea but a command, spoken to his own body, to the universe, to the unseen forces that seemed hell-bent on keeping him captive.

A pulse of adrenaline surged through him, and suddenly, with a sharp crack that cut through the quiet like a gunshot, one strap gave way. It was the sound of hope cracking the shell of despair. Emboldened, Jack doubled his efforts, contorting his body, fighting for every inch of slack. His heart hammered within his chest, a rhythmic drumbeat urging him forward.

Then, as if answering his fervent calls for freedom, the last of his bindings snapped. Jack's body jolted upright, free from the table at last, his breaths coming in ragged gasps. He paused, allowing himself only a moment to savor the bitter victory. His muscles trembled, not solely from the strain but from the realization of what lay ahead.

His fingers brushed against the cool metal surface of the table, grounding himself in the reality that surrounded him. He was no longer confined horizontally to the realm of those who lay in wait for death; he was vertical, alert, and — against all odds — alive.

The laboratory, with its gleaming instruments and hushed secrets, loomed before him. Jack knew that beyond these walls lay a labyrinth of horror, each corridor potentially leading to a fate worse than the one he had just escaped. But nestled within him, alongside the dread, was the ember of defiance that refused to be extinguished.

"Let's see what you've got," he murmured, more to himself than anyone — or anything — that might be listening. With unsteady legs supporting him, Jack took a step, then another, towards the sterile glow of the door. His past was a closed book; redemption lay somewhere in the unknown expanse that waited in the darkness, beckoning him to uncover its secrets.

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Jack's silhouette cast a ghostly shadow against the stark white walls as he edged closer to the threshold of the laboratory. Each step was a triumph over the paralyzing serum that had sought to claim him as one more casualty in an experiment gone awry. The air was heavy, laced with the sterile tang of antiseptic and the undercurrent of decay which seemed to be the island's true perfume.

His hands, still bearing the marks of his restraints, trembled not with weakness but with a resurgence of willpower. Jack's mind,

a maelstrom of strategic calculations, worked feverishly to piece together an escape from this clinical purgatory. His green eyes, now adapting to the dimness, scanned for signs of life – or its grotesque imitation.

A sudden thud echoed down the corridor outside, and his heart thundered in response. Jack's breath hitched, and he fought to suppress the primal urge to flee without thought. He knew that outside these walls, an uncharted nightmare awaited, a twisted jungle of the undead where his newly awakened senses would either be his salvation or his doom.

"Fortune favors the brave," he whispered, his voice a rasp of resolve in the quiet. It was a mantra to stave off the creeping tendrils of fear that threatened to ensnare his thoughts. His fingers curled into fists, ready to fight, to push through the horrors that hungered for his flesh and soul.

He reached for the door handle, slick with condensation, the metal cold and unyielding beneath his grasp. With a determined pull, the seal of his tomb broke, and the door creaked open, revealing only shadows and uncertainty beyond. There was no turning back now; the die had been cast.

Taking a deep breath that did little to steady him, Jack stepped over the threshold. The corridor stretched before him, a gauntlet of flickering lights and distant, guttural sounds. He could feel their presence, the others like him but not like him – mindless husks roaming the halls.

The realization hit him with the force of a physical blow: he was alone, yet connected to this macabre collective – a king among the damned. As Jack took his first faltering steps into the bowels of an unknown jungle, the journey into a nightmarish reality had just begun.