

Prologue

The world ended not with a bang, but a slow, relentless crawl.

Once, cities thrived with life and laughter now, only silence and shadows remain. The dead walk, minds lost to a merciless hunger, and the living fight not just for survival, but for hope.

In the ruins of humanity, two communities cling to fragile peace. But beneath the surface, old wounds and new dangers threaten to tear them apart. As the battle for the future looms, alliances will be tested, secrets will surface, and sacrifices will be made.

This is their story. This is what happens After the Fall.

Chapter 1: Echoes of the Old World

The sky over Blantyre was a dull grey blanket, thick with smoke and silence. Once a bustling town of life and laughter, now only wind and ash dared move freely through its broken streets. Six months had passed since the world ended, and the dead still walked.

Derek crouched behind a crumbled stone wall near the High Blantyre primary school, his knuckles white around the grip of a blood-smeared fire axe. Sweat dripped from his brow despite the chill in the air. Beside him, Jennifer silently loaded another magazine into her pistol, her eyes flicking between the street ahead and the alley behind them.

"Movement two shamblers, maybe three," whispered Callum, peeking over the top of the wall through a pair of cracked binoculars. His face was gaunt, beard overgrown, but the fire in his eyes burned hotter than ever.

Anne leaned against the wall, a makeshift spear in her hands. "We need that food drop. If we don't get it today, we're not seeing tomorrow."

Jennifer nodded. "Then we do it quiet. In and out. No heroics."

A low groan echoed down the street the unmistakable moan of the dead. One of them had caught their scent.

Derek stood. "No time for quiet anymore."

He stepped over the wall and charged.

Derek's boots hit the cracked pavement hard. The fire axe felt heavy, but familiar. He gritted his teeth as the first zombie came into view a gaunt man in a shredded Tesco uniform, its head lolling unnaturally to one side. It let out a low groan and reached for him with filthy, bloodstained hands.

He swung.

The axe buried deep into the skull with a sickening crunch. Derek yanked it free, barely missing the second shambler as it lurched toward him, arms wide like a twisted embrace. Behind him, Callum vaulted the wall and tackled the creature, driving his hunting knife up through its jaw. The body collapsed in a heap.

Jennifer followed a split second later, already scanning for threats. "Two more, ten o'clock!" she called, raising her pistol. Two quick pops one missed, the other took out the lead zombie's knee. It crumpled, still crawling, snarling.

Anne circled wide, jabbing her spear into the throat of another. She grimaced as black ichor sprayed across her coat, but she held firm. The creature gurgled, then stilled.

"Clear!" Callum shouted.

They stood in the silence that followed, chests heaving, surrounded by the twitching corpses of what used to be neighbors. The wind whistled through broken windows and the smell of rot clung to everything.

Derek wiped his axe on a tattered bit of clothing. "That was too close. They're getting thicker."

Jennifer pointed to the old community centre a few blocks down. "Food crate's inside. That flare last night came from the roof."

"Or it's a trap," Anne muttered.

Callum gave a grim smile. "Only one way to find out."

Derek nodded. "Let's move. Fast and tight. If we're lucky, we'll be back at the school before dark."

They took off down the street, weapons ready, eyes scanning every shadow. In this new world, hope was just another word for bait and the dead never stopped hunting.

The community centre loomed ahead, its faded sign hanging askew above the double doors. A burnt-out police van sat in the car park, half-eaten corpses still slumped inside. Windows were shattered. Blood smears decorated the walls like grotesque murals. Whatever had happened here, it hadn't been quiet.

Derek crouched by the entrance and motioned for the others to stack up behind him.

"Anne cover the left. Callum, check our six. Jen, on me."

Jennifer gave a tight nod, eyes hard. She holstered her pistol and unslung a small crowbar from her pack. Quiet was the goal if the building was full of biters, they didn't need to wake them all.

The door creaked as it opened, revealing a dim hallway lined with broken chairs and smeared handprints. A child's toy a plastic dump truck lay on its side, wheels still spinning slightly in the breeze.

The silence was wrong.

Derek stepped inside first, moving low and slow. The group followed, weapons raised. Their boots barely made a sound on the bloodstained linoleum.

They passed a smashed vending machine, shattered glass crunching underfoot.

Then a noise. A distant, dragging shuffle. Somewhere deeper inside.

Jennifer whispered, "South wing. Gymnasium maybe."

"That's where the flare came from," Anne added.

Derek looked over his shoulder. "We stick to the plan. In, grab the drop, and out. No sightseeing."

They crept toward the gym doors. Derek placed a hand on the metal handle cold, sticky. He signaled: three... two...

He yanked it open.

The gym was darker than the rest of the building, lit only by a skylight half-covered in grime. Dust motes danced in the pale light. And there, in the centre of the room—*

The crate.*

Bright red paint, marked with the Scottish relief symbol. Supplies. Real ones.

Beside it, a flare's burned-out shell.

Jennifer exhaled, a flicker of hope on her face. "Looks untouched."

They moved in quickly, Anne already cutting the straps. Callum popped the lid. Inside canned food, water purifiers, gauze, a fresh battery pack, and

"Ammo," Callum said, awestruck. "Holy hell, there's ammo."

Then the sound hit them like a brick: a metallic clang from the rafters above.

They all froze.

A slow creak followed. Then the unmistakable sound of dead weight sliding on steel.

Jennifer looked up and swore.

A cluster of zombies, tangled in the gym's overhead scaffolding, began to fall.

One by one.

Right on top of them.

"AMBUSH!" Derek roared.

The first corpse hit the ground with a wet crunch, bones snapping as it writhed and lunged.

Derek swung his axe mid-step, the blade splitting rotten skull. Another dropped behind him he turned too slow. The thing grabbed his shoulder, jaws snapping inches from his face. He grunted, shoved it back

Bang! Jennifer's pistol barked, dropping it cold.

Anne screamed as a corpse slammed into her, knocking her flat. Her spear skittered away across the floor. The zombie thrashed atop her, gnashing teeth dripping foul saliva. She jammed her knee up hard, throwing it off just long enough to reach her knife.

Shhk! Blade buried to the hilt. The corpse twitched and went still.

Callum fought near the crate, fists covered in blood and dirt, a crowbar in one hand, a revolver in the other. "They're everywhere!" he shouted. One shambler grabbed his coat he spun, firing point-blank. Click.

Empty.

He drove the crowbar into its eye socket with a yell. It dropped, and he grabbed a box of ammo from the crate, tucking it under his arm.

"Move! Out the back!" Jennifer shouted, already dragging Anne to her feet.

Derek was hacking down the last of them near the stage. His breathing was ragged, arms soaked in gore, but his eyes were sharp. "Let's go, now!"

They sprinted for the fire exit at the rear of the gym. Jennifer kicked it open it stuck for a second, then flew wide. Cold air blasted in, along with the distant moans of more undead approaching.

Derek slammed the door shut behind them, wedging a bent folding chair through the handle.

They stood in an overgrown alley, panting, blood-splattered, alive.

Barely.

"Is everyone—"

"I'm fine," Anne said, wiping gore off her face. "That was a bloody trap."

Callum nodded grimly. "Zombies don't plan that. Someone put them up there."

Jennifer looked back at the building. Her voice was quiet, hard. "Which means someone was watching."

Derek glanced at the crate in Callum's arms. "Let's get back to the school. We talk after we eat."

They disappeared into the shadows, the moans of the dead trailing behind them and something else.

Something watching from a rooftop above, unseen.

Chapter 2: The School

Blantyre Primary School had once been a place of learning and laughter. Now, it was steel-barred windows, fortified doors, and a perimeter of scavenged scrap rigged to maim anything that moved. It wasn't safe. But under Derek's leadership, it was still standing.

The group entered through the rear fire door as dusk spilled across the sky. Derek was the last one through, eyes sweeping the street one final time before slamming the door shut and locking it tight. His axe stayed in his hands until he was certain no one had followed.

"Liam," he said to the young lookout on guard, "get Maggie and tell her we've got a crate food, ammo, medicine."

The boy nodded and sprinted off.

Derek led the others to the library, now their command room. Maps, schedules, and rosters covered the walls. A daily log was scrawled across a blackboard. It all ran on order. On routine. On Derek.

He dropped the crate on the table. Callum opened it, revealing tins of food, water purifiers, medical kits and bullets.

Anne raised an eyebrow. "This is the best drop we've seen in weeks."

"Which is exactly why I don't like it," Derek said. "It was bait. Walkers were rigged in the rafters. Somebody wanted us there."

Maggie entered, grey hair tied back, sleeves rolled up. Once the school nurse, now she ran point on injuries and supplies. She scanned the contents, then met Derek's gaze.

"You think it's a trap?"

"I know it was," he said. "They were watching. Not walkers someone with a plan."

The room went quiet. Tired eyes turned to him not out of fear, but expectation.

"What's the call then?" Jennifer asked, arms crossed, trusting him.

Derek moved to the whiteboard and wrote two words in thick red marker:
"INTRUDER WATCH."

"We double shifts tonight. No fire, no lanterns after dark. I want scouts posted near the north fence. If someone's out there, we find them first."

Callum glanced at the supplies. "Still taking the food, though?"

Derek gave a rare, grim smile. "Damn right. We're not starving for someone else's game."

Anne chuckled dryly. "Now that sounds like a plan."

Maggie nodded. "We'll ration it. People need hope more than calories right now."

Later, after a quiet meal and tense inventory checks, the school settled into an uneasy stillness. The wind howled through the empty corridors. Somewhere beyond the walls, the dead wandered aimlessly.

And Derek, sitting alone at the old principal's desk, stared at a hand-drawn map of Blantyre and whispered to himself:

"What are you planning, and when are you coming for us?"

As the others bedded down or took up their watch shifts, Jennifer climbed the stairs to the radio room once the janitor's closet, now their only line to the outside world.

She slid on the headset, adjusted the frequency dial to their open-band, and pressed the mic button. Her voice was calm, practiced.

"Hello... is anyone out there? This is Jennifer. We're in a safe zone. We have food, medicine, and water. If you can hear this, please respond."

The radio crackled with nothing but static. She waited, listening to the silence.

Fifteen minutes passed. She tried again.

"Hello... this is Jennifer. We're in a safe zone. We have food, medicine, and water. If you can hear this please respond."

Again, static.

She repeated the call every fifteen minutes, her voice steady despite the growing sense of futility. Two hours passed. Her back ached. Her hope flickered. She reached to switch the radio off—

—kkktshhhh—

A crackle.

Then a voice. Weak. Strained.

“...Jennifer? Is that you? It’s... it’s Jillian.”

Jennifer’s breath caught. She jerked forward, grabbed the mic.

“Yes! Yes it’s me. Jillian, where are you?”

Static... then—

“I’m at St Joseph’s Chapel. Help me... please. I’m alone. I can hardly walk...”

Jennifer’s mind raced. She and Jillian had been close before the world fell apart. She’d thought she was dead like so many others.

She spoke fast, urgent. “Hold on, Jill. Stay where you are. We’ll come for you.”

The radio hissed once more and went silent.

Jennifer didn’t wait. She grabbed her coat and sprinted down the hallway, feet pounding over old tiles. She burst into the principal’s office, where Derek was poring over maps.

He looked up instantly. “What is it?”

“I got someone on the radio,” she said, breathless. “Jillian. She’s alive.”

Derek stood at once, alert. “Where?”

“St Joseph’s Chapel. She’s hurt. Alone. She can’t move far.”

For a second, Derek said nothing. Then he nodded, grabbed his axe and coat. His voice was firm.

“Wake Callum. Anne too. We move in ten.”

Jennifer hesitated. “It could be a trap.”

“It could be,” Derek said. “Or it could be someone we save. Either way we’re not leaving her out there.”

