

THE SURVIVOR CHRONICLES

SURVIVOR SHORT STORIES



HARVEY'S DINER by Brian Kittrell

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The Survivor Shorts Stories – Harvey's Diner

H A R V E Y ' S D I N E R

Harvey looked through the street front window of the cafe and watched Pamela and Nadene walk around the side of the building toward their car. The loud noise of the busy diner seemed to dull to a quiet roar as he watched them walk away. She was making the right choice, a choice that he thought would have probably been best for him, too, but he stayed at the restaurant. He couldn't leave; the place was all he had, and he'd poured his entire savings into it over the recent bad years. If he had left, where would he have gone? He had nowhere left to turn, and the cafe was like an anchor that he couldn't pull back onto the boat.

"More coffee down here!" yelled the annoying man from South Carolina. "I've been waitin' for over twenty minutes for a refill on this coffee!"

Despite his claims the impatient man had only been waiting for about ten minutes at the time he demanded more coffee. "Hold your horses. It hasn't been no twenty minutes," Harvey said, lifting the coffee pot and carrying it to the end of the bar.

"Can I get some of that while you're down here, sir?" a man asked as Harvey poured the coffee.

"Not a problem," Harvey replied. He filled the man's cup and returned to his usual post at the cash register.

The hours went by as they always did, but the diner staff was exhausted; the parking lot and the diner

The Survivor Shorts Stories – Harvey's Diner

were flooded with customers trying to get a bite to eat along their way to the west. The average wait time had grown to over an hour for a table, so many customers were content to eat where they stood or where they could find a clean spot on a counter.

Then, the first sick person came into the cafe escorted by a woman, presumably her mother. It was a little girl, no more than ten years old. Harvey walked over to them.

“What can we get for her?” he asked.

“Hey, you can't serve them, we haven't even ordered yet!” shouted a man who was standing in line to see the first available beleaguered waitress.

“You see that sign up there? It says 'Harvey's Diner'. That's me, Harvey. It's my place. I'll serve whoever I want in whatever order I want. If you don't like it, there's the door,” Harvey said, trying to keep order. The man hissed with anger, but he didn't speak again nor did he leave. He was content to wait in one of the few diners in town that remained open.

“Thank you, sir,” the woman said, nearly carrying the girl into the diner. “A glass of ice water would probably be best. She has a high fever.”

“Is she sick with that virus?” a woman asked. “If she's got that virus, she can't be in here! She'll get us all sick.”

“Pipe down,” Harvey yelled, his voice showing his frustration with all of the out-of-town customers. “They said the virus wasn't airborne. Just don't get close to her, and you'll be fine.”

The Survivor Shorts Stories – Harvey's Diner

Harvey filled a plastic cup with ice water and brought it to the young girl. She sipped it slowly, but she had noticeable trouble keeping it in her mouth. Suddenly, she knocked the cup out of her mother's hand.

“Kelly, what's wrong, honey?” the woman asked. “Kelly?”

Without any warning the girl sank her teeth into her mother's arm. The woman reeled back and screamed. Blood sprayed from her arm onto the floor and nearby patrons.

“What the hell?” Harvey said, stepping backwards toward the register.

The girl turned to the next customer and grabbed him, ripping his throat open with her still-bloody teeth. The man collapsed onto the floor with a thud and a gurgling sound. His increased adrenaline caused his heart to pound quickly, sending a jet of blood shooting from the open wound into the girl's waiting mouth. The crowd gathered in the diner panicked, and everyone in the room scurried for the nearest exit or hiding place. Harvey grabbed a baseball bat from behind the counter. When he turned around, the girl's mother had risen to her feet with a blank stare on her face.

The woman's skin had grown pale from the blood loss. Her eyes met Harvey's, and he could tell that there was no life in them. She extended her arms towards him as if she thought she could reach him from where she stood about ten or more feet away.

The Survivor Shorts Stories – Harvey's Diner

“Everybody, get out of here!” Harvey shouted, wielding the baseball bat in an aggressive stance. The woman stumbled toward Harvey as if she was not familiar with how to control her limbs or walk.

“You, get back!” he shouted at the woman. She continued toward him, oblivious or ignorant to his commands.

Harvey swung the bat at the woman and struck her in the shoulder. He heard the crack of bones snapping, but she kept walking toward him. He slammed the bat into the side of her head, breaking the skull open. She fell to her knees, but Harvey wasn't finished; he continued beating the creature in the head until she stopped moving completely.

By now, several of the others had been bitten and were grabbing other customers. Harvey jumped over the counter to put more distance between himself and the crowd of frightened customers and creatures. He saw Megan hiding under the counter, and he took her by the arm. He led her to the back of the cafe and out the back door to the catering van.

“Get in, Meg,” Harvey said as he saw several creatures coming toward them, probably drawn by the loud clanking sound of the metal door slamming shut.

Harvey got into the van on the driver's side, and Meg climbed into passenger's seat. He tried to start the van, but it was no use.

“Come on, not now,” Harvey shouted at the van, trying to encourage it to start. The starter churned with activity, but the engine remained quiet.

The Survivor Shorts Stories – Harvey's Diner

“Slow down, Harv,” Megan said. “You're going to flood the engine.”

“Come on. Come on!” Harvey said as if he was trying to will the engine to start. Finally, the van cranked. They pulled out onto the side street next to the diner.

He laid on the horn as they turned the corner, but the creatures that had gathered in the road wouldn't get out of the way. The monsters simply walked monotonously toward the source of the engine noise and the headlights. Harvey punched the gas and accelerated. “If they won't move, they'll just have to get run over!”

The van plowed through the zombies, knocking them left and right. Blood and flesh covered the front of the van, but Harvey wasn't concerned with that. He just wanted to get out of the town. They continued down the side street until they reached the main boulevard through town, but Harvey stopped the van. The road was completely blocked with a wide variety of vehicles bearing out-of-state tags.

“Looks like everybody came this way to escape the east,” Harvey commented. Just as he finished speaking, Megan screamed as a creature slammed into the window outside the van on her side.

“Damn!” Harvey yelled. He hit the accelerator again to flee, but he quickly ran out of open roadway in front of him. The van crashed into a motor home that had been discarded by its former tenants. The airbags deployed, and the force of the impact disoriented them.

The Survivor Shorts Stories – Harvey's Diner

Megan sat up and fought with the airbag to free herself, but the creatures swarmed her broken window. They pulled her completely through the window, and she disappeared from Harvey's sight into a horde of zombies.

Harvey nervously released his seat belt and threw his door open. He fell out onto the street and tried to get his bearings. He was still in shock from the crash, but his vision was clearing. He saw that he was slowly being surrounded on all sides.

He searched for a way to escape, and he finally found one. He climbed onto the crumpled hood of his catering van and crawled into the opening in the side of the motor home that had been created by the crash. As his head and arms reached the inside of the RV - still halfway inside and halfway outside - he turned to see a pair of slippers to his left. He stopped for a moment to take a breath and followed the slippers from the floor, up the legs, and to the face of the wearer.

The creature was missing large segments of its body, and the bite marks along its torso made it obvious that this zombie had been mostly devoured before the change, probably by a large number of others. Harvey whimpered in fear as the creature crouched down towards his body. He let out tortured screams that echoed throughout the neighborhood as the monster took leisurely bites from his head, neck, and upper body. This drew the others in to the feast. After a few minutes, Harvey was out of pain; he had succumbed to blood loss and missing several of his vital organs.