

Apocalypse Apartments Incorporated

This short story was written by Colin M. Drysdale, the author of [For Those In Peril On The Sea](#). Copyright: Colin M. Drysdale, 2013. While this story is free to download, it must not be stored or made available on any site other than <http://www.ForThoseInPeril.net>. The original can be found at [http://www.forthoseinperil.net/Free Stories From Colin M Drysdale.htm](http://www.forthoseinperil.net/Free_Stories_From_Colin_M_Drysdale.htm).

Who'd have thought my biggest problem in coping with the zombie apocalypse would be boredom? I know it's different for others, I can see them struggling and fighting and dying through the telescope mounted in the observatory in the top tower, but there's nothing I can do for them. I'm stuck here in the castle, set high above the nearby town, all safely locked away. Yes, there's zombies all around me, well I suppose they're not really zombies since they're not dead, but because of the disease they act just like the zombies you see in movies, so that's what I call them. Either way, when they first appeared all I had to do to keep them out was pull up the drawbridge and I was safe. The 30 foot wide moat is more than enough to stop them getting close enough to know I'm here, and even if they could cross it, they'd never get through walls which are six feet thick and made of solid stone.

Unlike those in the settlement below, I don't need to go outside to look for food, or, indeed, any other supplies. There's a well in the main courtyard and I've got enough stores stashed in what were once the dungeons to last a lifetime. I've got solar panels and a couple of wind turbines, and for those days which are dark and still, I've got a diesel generator and enough fuel to run it day and night for fifty years. When I was bringing all this stuff together, I wasn't worried about zombies or infected or whatever you want to call them, I simply did it to make enough money to stop the buildings around me crumbling to dust. You see, this had been my family's home for six hundred years, and as an only child it fell to me to look after it when first my father, then my mother died in quick succession.

At first I'd hated the fact that the dilapidated and ancient edifice was now my responsibility. At thirty-two I wanted to be out exploring the world and having fun, not worrying about leaking roofs, rotting timbers and rising damp. Then, one day, as I drove away after yet another disaster which would cost more money than I had to fix, an idea suddenly came to me and I realised how I could fund not just the repairs but the complete renovation it had need for at least a century. It would mean some rather drastic changes, but it would also mean I'd never have to worry about being able to afford it's upkeep again. My business plan was simple: I had a building which had some pretty serious fortifications and there were lots of very rich but very paranoid

people out there who feared civilisation was about to be brought to its knees by some disaster or other that was looming just over the horizon. If you look at it one way, you could say I was selling them insurance against their worst fears, in another you could say I was ripping them off because I never believed any of it would actually happen. All I did was build up the supplies and guarantee each of my subscribers a safe, secure and, most importantly, luxurious environment where they could ride out whatever catastrophe they feared was about to turn the world upside down. I converted otherwise unoccupied and unused rooms into up-market apartments, complete with self-contained plumbing and water filters and even air-scrubbers. That was just the standard stuff, depending on each subscribers own personal paranoia, I also offered customisations. Stuff like heavy-duty fire power, six-inch thick steel doors and built-in radiation shields. The only limitation I placed on the subscribers was that, in the event of any crisis, they had to find their own way to the castle; it would be once they arrived that my duties would begin.

Almost from the moment word started leaking out about what I was offering, I was inundated with requests from the rich and famous, and within the first week I'd filled every available apartment; that was before I'd even started any of the renovations. By the time I had all the conversion work finished, the apartments were changing hands for almost ten times what I'd originally charged. You'd have thought this would have annoyed me, but it didn't. You see they weren't buying the apartments, only leasing them, and every time a lease was sold, I got ten percent of the price. I also had the right to veto any sale if I thought anyone would be too high maintenance. After all, you've got to be selective if there's a chance you'll end up cooped up with people for months on end during some disaster or other. Each time an apartment changed hands, the new owner would want to change the decor, and the security options, and that had to come through me too – and as you might imagine, my prices weren't cheap.

It was funny, within a matter of six months, owning one of my apocalypse apartments, as they were being called by then, had become a status symbol for those who could afford them; that drove demand, and prices, up even further. I started to branch out, buying up other castles and lighthouses and old military bunkers wherever I could find them, and setting up apartments there too. I even adopted the name everyone was using for them for the company I created to run my little venture and officially I became *Apocalypse Apartments Incorporated*. That was ten years before everything fell apart, and in that time, while everyone else with ancient family piles was fighting just to keep them from falling down, I was making enough money to keep eight castles afloat as well as all the other buildings I'd picked up over the years. I'd become an expert in the ultimate home defence and I was the person everyone turned to when they wanted to do something crazy just in case their wildest nightmares ever came true.

Then came the zombies, or rather the infected. That was one eventuality I'd never counted on, but luckily it seems my defences are perfect for keeping them out. The moment the first hints something odd was going on started appearing on the news, I expected the subscribers to start turning up, but weirdly they didn't. No one ever even came near the place. That's one of those little mysteries of the apocalypse I'll probably never find an answer to. I mean, I'd specifically installed a helipad to allow people to get here even when the roads were over-run but, despite the millions they'd paid to have a safe place to hole up in the event of something quite so world-changing actually happening, not one of them ever made it.

This meant I was all alone; totally secure, but all alone. And oh so bored. In the two years since everything kicked off, I've read every book in the place and I know all the films I have on DVD backwards and forwards. I can repeat the entire script, word for word without making a mistake, for each and every one of them. I'd tried alcoholism but I wasn't really built for it; I found being drunk on my own very dull, and hangovers without anyone to commiserate even duller.

When the world first fell apart, I spent a lot of time in the observatory, keeping an eye out for the subscribers I was sure would be on their way, but once it was clear they weren't going to appear I stopped hanging out there. It was just too depressing watching all that death and destruction and people struggling for survival. But after a while, I started going back. I can't remember why but one day I found myself walking passed the door and I thought I'd take a look to see what was out there. I was surprised to find there were still people living amongst the zombies. Well, maybe living is stretching it a little. More like eaking out a meagre existence, struggling every day to find food while avoiding being torn apart by the hordes of zombies which haunted the streets around them.

By then, I'd been without human company for so long I found myself drawn into their struggles. I made up names for the survivors, and even some of the more memorable zombies, and I started making up back stories. It was like my own little soap opera and I couldn't resist it. It was the first time in months I'd felt alive: I knew I was living vicariously through their struggles and part of me felt uncomfortable with this, but the rest of me revelled in it. The telescope was so powerful, and the town so far away, I felt detached from them and it was like I was watching some fictional drama unfolding on a television rather than real people living and dying.

You might think of me as callous, but it's not like I didn't try to help. Once I knew they were there, grimly hanging on under the worst imaginable circumstances, I spent weeks and months trying to work out how I could help them but there was nothing I can do. There's no way I can let them know I'm here, and there's no way I can do anything to help them without risking being over-run, which would pretty much defeat the purpose of the exercise. So, here I am, living in total security

with enough food to keep all the little groups of survivors I watch each day fed for as long as we all live, yet there's no way to get the people and the food in the same place. All I can do is sit here as the zombie apocalypse engulfs the world but passes me by, leaving me with nothing to do but stare through my telescope, bored and lonely, unable to do anything to ease their suffering, and my own.