

I'm With The Band

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'You know I was in a band before all this happened. God, it seems like such a long time ago, almost a different life time. We weren't exactly world famous but we had our fans, and we did pretty well in our home town. We were playing the night it all kicked off, we were actually on stage. It was the largest gig we'd ever done, in an old cinema which had been converted into a club. It had this massive glitter ball in the middle of the roof, and I mean massive. It must have been like three feet across, maybe four; supposed to be the biggest one in Europe or the country or something like that. Anyway, we were up there on stage just finishing off our set. We were doing our signature song, a real anthem which always brought the house down. I was knocking out this crazy rhythm on the bass while Baz was doing his thing on the drums. Mickey was noodling away on his guitar while Leon had both hands on the microphone; he was leaning on it, nodding along. Leon wasn't his real name, that was Donald, but he didn't think it was the right name for a rock star so he changed it. He chose Leon, after Trotsky, because he thought it was all left wing and right on; he didn't really know anything about politics though, he was just doing what he thought was cool.

'Anyway, everyone seemed to be really digging the music, jumping up and down, moshing along, but then something changed. At first it was hard to put a finger on it, just a slight shift in the energy in the room. I looked across at Mickey and saw he'd noticed it too. He shrugged and tipped his head towards Leon. He was still nodding along at the mike trying to look cool but I could see by the tightness in his shoulders he'd noticed the change in the atmosphere too. Baz, as usual, hadn't noticed a thing. When he got really into it, I swear you've could set a bomb off right in front of him and he wouldn't have missed a beat.

'Then I noticed people weren't really paying attention to us any more, instead they were looking round, showing each other their phones. I'd got used to people having phones at gigs over the last few years, holding them up in the same way people used to hold up cigarette lighters, or filming us as we played but I'd never seen this before. I felt my own phone go off in my pocket, but I just ignored it, letting it go straight to voice mail. It rang off just as we came to the climactic ending of the song. It was this great crescendo, with Baz and

Mickey and me all giving it laldy¹ while Leon faced us, arms held out, mike in hand, head thrown back. We ended, expecting the usual rapturous applause, but instead all we could hear was people talking. I could tell from the look on his face Leon was really pissed off at this reaction. He always was a bit of a diva, but then what lead singer isn't, and I'd seen him lose it with audiences before. I glanced across at Mickey, wondering if we should do something to intervene but he wasn't paying attention. Instead, he had his phone out and was staring at it with a confused look on his face.

'As I stepped towards Leon, he turned and faced the audience, his face like thunder and just started yelling at them. Saying how disrespectful they were being; that we deserved better. That was when my phone went off again, this time telling me I had a text message. I looked around. Baz was sitting there behind his drums, arms crossed, watching Leon with this amused look on his face while Mickey, unbelievably, was now speaking to someone on his phone. That's when I realised there must be something big going on so I pulled out my phone and opened the message I'd just got. It was from my Mum and all it said was that my Dad was at the front door, trying to get in and that I should come home as soon as possible. This really confused me because we'd buried my Dad the week before. I was just as I was about to call home to find out what was going on when I noticed a movement at the back of the room. Two bouncers rushed through the double doors, and were trying desperately to pull them shut – yet they couldn't because of all these people trying to get in. All around the room, I could see other security guys speaking frantically into their radios and running towards the doors but before they could get there, they flew open and all these people started pouring in. Except they didn't really look like normal, they were all, like, beaten up and disfigured.

'I glanced round at my band mates but none of them seemed to have noticed these new arrivals. Mickey was still talking urgently into his phone, while Baz pissing himself laughing as he watch Leon. Leon was getting more and more angry as the crowd continued to ignore him and was now in full rant mode just screaming and swearing at them, threatening to jump off the stage and take them on, all of them all at once. Meanwhile, the odd-looking newcomers were surging through the audience. At first I thought they were just pushing them out of the way, then with horror, I realised they attacking them, biting them, tearing at their clothes and their flesh. People were trying to fight back, but they were out-numbered as more and more of these dishevelled, dirty people streamed into the room.

'All I could do was stand there and watch in disbelief as this carnage unfolded in front of me. There was blood and guts spilling everywhere

¹ Laldy is a great Scottish word which, if you're not familiar with it, meaning to do something with great gusto.

as people fought for their lives, all surreally lit by the spotlights glancing off the giant glitter ball that hung above them.

'Then the first of them, a woman, made it to the stage and started to drag herself onto it. Still it seemed I was the only one in the band who'd noticed what was going on in the audience. I stared at the woman: her hair was lank and streaked with dirt, her skin grey and sallow, and it was clear she wasn't alive. There was no life in her eyes, instead they were just these dark holes which seemed incapable of seeing anything, yet she knew we were there, or at least she knew Leon was. Reaching forward, she grabbed his left ankle and started pulling him towards the end of the stage. Leon finally stopped ranting and looked down. One glance at the woman holding his leg, and Leon recoiled in disgust and fear, only her grip was firm and he'd managed to get the microphone lead wrapped around his body while he'd been yelling abuse at the audience. As he fell, another of the newcomers, this time a man, grabbed him and together the two of them pulled Leon, struggling and screaming, off the stage and into the audience. This was when Baz finally noticed something was wrong. There were more and more of these dead people pulling themselves onto the stage and before I could even shout a warning they'd surrounded Mickey and were biting and tearing at him.

As the first one approached me, I pulled off my bass and, grabbing the neck, I swung it as hard as I could. I felt it make contact, crushing the skull of this old man who was staggering towards me, half his face already missing. Behind me, I could hear Baz trying to make a run for it, but he must have tripped over his high hat because I heard it crashing to the floor. This seemed to attract the dead people away from me and towards him. For a moment I thought about trying to help him, but looking around, I realised that if I was going to get out alive, I'd need to leave there and then. I heard the sounds of the dead people crashing through the drum kit and Baz shouting as he tried to fight them off, but there was nothing I could do for him. Still clutching my bass, I fled off stage and towards the back door. Behind me, I could hear the sound of the dead chasing after me.

'I know I should have done more to help the others but the way I see it, if I'd done anything differently, I'd have ended up dead too. I still think about them sometimes, but most of the time I try not to. I think it's the only way I can cope, trying not to think about how the world used to be, trying not to dwell on the past. Instead, I try to focus on keeping myself alive and fighting the dead as we try to take back the land that once was ours. There's no music in the world any more, no one has time for it, instead there's just the sound of battle, of destruction, and of death. That's why I'm in here drinking when I should be trying to get some rest before I head back to the front line. So here's to how the world used to be and may it be like that again someday.'