

During the zombie apocalypse, survivors fight to find safety, family, and understanding in what becomes the end of the world as they know it.

Zombie Beach: Book 1 of the White Horse Trilogy

By Eric Perry

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BOOK 1
OF THE WHITE HORSE TRILOGY

Zombie Beach

Eric Perry

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Dedication

I love you, Summer. Thank you for your support in this endeavor, for being my wife, and my number 1 fan.

Chapter 1

In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to him and said, “This is what the Lord says: Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover.”

2 Kings 20:1

“Oh God...help me. What the crap was I thinking...” Aaron’s breathing was all through his mouth as the words barely came out.

There was no more controlled breathing. The warm ocean breeze from the early start of summer did not provide the usual comfort. Snot was running down his nose. His shirt was soaking wet from sweat and wiping his nose with his wet shirt only helped to spread the snot over his face more. Aaron wiped anyway out of habit and each time regretted it. Why was this such a consuming thought in a time like this? He was running full out. Giving everything he had. He could hear the yells and screams. They were nearby but seemed off in the distance. His ears throbbed; everything was muffled.

“Run, Dad!” Aaron could make out what he believed to be his daughter Wednesday’s soft, melodic voice.

“You can make it!” *Is that Autumn? Was that my wife’s voice?*

His whole body ached almost to the point of numbness. *I could just quit. Stop running. What’s the point? Why does it matter anyway? Why do I do this to myself? I guess I am a bit of a masochist, although there is nothing sexual about me right now.* His thoughts bounced all around, partly letting his mind wander away from the pain. *But maybe later...no, no...stay focused.*

“Go, go, go!” *Who was that?* Several voices yelled at Aaron—people he did not know.

“Number 435, Aaron Parker, finishes at four hours, twelve minutes,” a voice over the speakers announced.

“I finished. I did it. Oh my God, I’m dying, but I finished my first marathon!” Aaron exclaimed.

Aaron took in all the sights and sounds. The sun was high overhead without a cloud in the sky. The day had not hit its peak temperature, but it was already setting up for a hot day in May. The finish line was surrounded by hundreds of people celebrating those who had already finished their run. This was the largest run of the year in Myrtle Beach. It began at the baseball stadium, ran through the whole city, and finished at the same ballpark, where the organizer went all out this year with live music, booths, and vendors all around.

Wednesday, Bash, and Autumn ran toward Aaron to congratulate him on finishing his first marathon with a very good time, which he would find a way to insert into conversations for the foreseeable future. They instantly regretted hugging Aaron as they received a sampling of the sweat that had embraced him for hours. Autumn knew better. She patted Aaron on his shoulder and then wiped her hand on Bash’s back. Aaron saw it. She would definitely deny that she had done it, but she knew.

Aaron walked as quickly to the grass as he could and fell on his back, huffing and puffing and already feeling the pain surging through his body.

“Yep, definitely going to feel this tomorrow and the day after most likely. I should have known better than to stop and lay down after running for four hours.

Getting up will be hell,” Aaron muttered under his breath.

Aaron had run 26.2 miles before in preparation for this run, and it was equally as painful, but something about being in a race pushes you harder and pulls out the best in you, which also takes everything you’ve got. He had competed in several half marathons, but they really can’t compare. It’s the eighteenth mile that gets you in a marathon. You are almost there but still have so far to go. That’s the gut check marker. If you can make it through mile eighteen, you can finish. If you’ve trained properly then it is not the body that wants to give up; it is the mind trying to convince the body it knows best and continuing is just not a good idea. Donuts are a much better idea. The worst part is that the brain is right. There is a special kind of crazy that says, “Nah, I’m going to go five more miles, because why not?” As Aaron was staring off into space, trying to compose himself, he could hear Bash talking.

“Dad, Dad...will you run the Zombie Chase 5K with me next month? They actually have people dressed as zombies chasing the runners!” Bash asked.

Aaron paused, looking at Sebastian Elijah Parker, his fifteen-year-old son and twin to Wednesday. Aaron had started calling him Bash for short to annoy Autumn, but the nickname stuck and now everyone called him Bash. For years he did not look like Aaron’s son at all, but now as he was going through puberty, Bash started to take on more physical features of Aaron when he was that age: slender with a muscular frame, not tall but not short, and a strong jawline. Aaron

snapped from his thoughts and answered Bash's question.

"Being chased by zombies sounds like fun. I'm in! We can start preparing next week," Aaron replied.

"Awesome. I'm going to smoke you, old man! No zombie is going to catch us," Bash boasted.

"Ha! You haven't yet, but you can try. Wednesday, would you like to run with us?" Aaron asked, knowing what she would say.

"Um, no, Dad.... In the words of an old, sometimes wise man...just because I can, does not mean I want to, although zombies do sound cool," Wednesday replied flippantly.

Scarlett Wednesday Parker looked less like Bash each year they aged. Wednesday was now blossoming into a beautiful young woman with auburn blonde hair, usually kept in pigtails. She was already as tall as her mother at five-foot-seven, and she almost always had a mischievous smirk on her face despite her proper and disciplined demeanor.

"So, it has come to this, huh? Using my words against me," Aaron said mockingly.

"You should have seen that coming," Autumn said. "Are you ready to get something to eat? I found one vegan restaurant in this town, and it is just a couple of miles from here."

Aaron's wife of over twenty years, Autumn, always thought of the family's health and well-being. She was a vegetarian from her childhood until becoming vegan late in high school, and she convinced Aaron that was the healthiest way to live. Autumn was proof of the

benefits of a healthy vegan lifestyle from her time as a competitive swimmer in high school and college to her swimming and free diving with dolphins as an adult. At forty years old, she was as toned as anyone in their twenties.

“I am,” Bash said. “Watching Dad made me hungry.”

“Pfft, you’re always hungry,” Autumn scoffed.

“Very true, Mom,” Bash stated matter-of-factly.

“Alright, alright, help me up and we can go,” Aaron grunted, starting to stand.

Chapter 2

“The urge to save humanity is almost always a false front for the urge to rule it.”

H. L. Mencken

Dr. Albert Goldstein stood in quiet contemplation, staring into the window of a dark room only seeing the reflection of himself. The clittering and clattering of scientists, technicians, and assistants filled the large laboratory. He was at peace in a lab, especially surrounded by competent, efficient workers that spared little time in idle conversation and more time making scientific breakthroughs. This lab appeared the same as any other lab he had worked in except that he was 50 feet below ground on a Caribbean island off the coast of Mexico. The island was owned by Uraeus Corporation with unlimited funds for even the wildest of his projects. Sometimes his anxiety of being underground and on an island would overtake him, but then seeing all the people working in his lab quietly, calmed him.

“Hey, Al, why the fuck is this not working yet? I thought you were a genius with this stuff. Shouldn’t you be testing on rats or something first? You know how much easier it would be to get you a hundred rats instead of humans,” US Army General Richard Harkin yelled, as he entered the white, bright, and pristine laboratory.

“General, or should I just call you Dick? Huh, Richard, is that what you would like? My name is Albert Goldstein. You can call me Albert if you must or just Doctor, and I will address you simply as General. Is that so hard?” Doctor Goldstein replied. He stood next to a large window, covering almost the entirety of the wall and a small desk with a computer and microphone sitting on top.

“Al...erm...bert, we have been together for a year now. Haven't we moved passed formality? We're pals, Al, but as much as I like you, you must start producing results,” the general said in a more collected manner, trying to look through the window into the darkroom beyond.

“As I was saying, General...we are absolutely not pals and you have no idea what we...what I...am doing here. This is a very detailed and tedious process to which I am sure you cannot relate. Our jobs are simple. I do my work and you provide security and supplies for my work,” Albert sharply told the general.

“I do not work for you...Doctor.... We have the same employer, and they expect results and there are consequences for failing to provide results,” General Harkin said with as much bravado as he could muster.

The general paused for effect, letting his overwhelming bravado influence the outcome of the conversation as it had so often during his time as an armor officer. The large laboratory was filled with desks and tables with computers and high-tech equipment that very few outside Uraeus Corporation had ever seen. The scientists working in the room continued about their business as if the doctor and general were not there. This was not the first heated discussion the two men had gotten into, leaving the others numb to their banter.

“Yes, yes. I am fully aware of the consequences of failure, and I can assure you that we are nowhere near failure, but we are not at the end goal either. Without more test subjects I cannot achieve the end goal. So

please, General, acquire me another round of subjects. And while we are having such a long and arduous conversation, please refrain from vulgarities when speaking with me. I find them crude, unnecessary, and quite distracting,” Albert retorted.

“Doc, I meant no offense. I really am curious as to why you don’t just use rats. We have run our suppliers thin on available subjects over the last year, and my men are taking risks to get subjects and I cannot afford to lose one man.” The general spoke softer, pretending to be concerned for someone other than himself.

The doctor let out an audible sigh and then spoke. “Okay, okay, General, we cannot use animals for our studies because we are beyond that and because we are not professors in some American college. We are in the field of the most advanced cutting-edge science the world has ever known. What we are using was studied on animals twenty years ago. What we are doing now uses those studies and applies them to human subjects. And that is why they have me on this beautiful Caribbean island in international waters and away from prying eyes. Our end goal is for human use. Why would I achieve success with a rat when my goal is success with a human? Does that make sense to you, General?”

“Yeah, I guess,” said the general, a bit defeated.

“Now, please get me more test subjects. I am down to my last three. And please for the love of all things science, do not bring me another Asian. I need a variety of races from all over the world to get the best results. Every country has a homeless problem...let’s help

them out a little,” the doctor asked, coddling the general’s fragile ego.

“Fine, our Philippine source has dried up anyway. I have a team in New Orleans, and they should be back by the end of the week. I am sure they will have a diverse group from that city,” the general replied.

“The end of the week? Please, General, I need them here tomorrow. Have them bring what they have and send them out again. Must I do your job as well?” the doctor asked, exasperated from the length of this conversation and the incompetence of a man in such an authoritative position.

“No, and just remember who protects your ass here,” the general quipped.

“Is my ass safe when you are around, General? I’ve seen you looking.” The doctor smirked, knowing the buttons to press to end the conversation.

“Fuck you, AI!” General Harkin barked and stormed off.

“Captain,” the general called out through his internal communications system. The communication system, embedded in the body, was made up of nanobots that circulated through the user’s bloodstream and implanted select bots in the ear and larynx, which allowed for secure and immediate communications with others linked into the system all over the world. One of the many inventions of Doctor Goldstein.

“Yes, General,” the captain responded through his internal comms.

“What is your status?” General Harkin asked.

“We have rounded up eleven subjects. Heading out again tomorrow night for more,” the captain answered.

“Eighty-six that, Captain. Load up and return with what you have. The doctor is running low so bring those in, get reset for another run, take a day to get ready, and then head back out. More to follow upon arrival,” General Harkin ordered.

“Roger that, General, I will contact the pilot and let you know our ETA,” the captain agreed.

“Good job, Captain. Harkin out.” General Harkin ended the transmission. The nanobots recognized the end of the conversation when the general said “out,” just like regular radio communication.

Chapter 3

And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Genesis 6:5

“How are we coming along with the syringes?” Yuri asked. He stood in dim light looking out over Prague in the penthouse suite of the Mandarin Oriental, as the graceful and confident man strolled up to him in the shadows.

“Everything is going as planned,” the Russian man said, eyeing up Yuri from behind, wondering if this insecure man hidden behind a muscular body could ever truly take over the family business. Yuri looked the part, tall, well built, and squared jaw, but he would never possess the intelligence or cunning of his father. “The manufacturer is ready to deliver fifty million syringes to the pharmaceutical facility based in the United States in five days.”

“Perfect. And the syringes are undetectable, correct?” Yuri asked, having heard the answer a dozen times, but knowing this single aspect could expose the plan and leave him in the unfavorable position of being the one accused of mass genocide on a level never seen before. His bravado wavered as he thought of being caught.

“Oh, Yuri. Yes. The same answer you have received every time you have asked. The special coating on the inside is unnoticeable by the naked eye, and the syringes are coming from the same manufacturer in China that the Americans have always used, so there will be no need for them to check the syringes out,” the man said in a comforting tone, responding in a manner uncommon to him. He knew the risk Yuri’s father was taking and allowed Yuri

some room to question him—something others were rarely allowed to do.

“And there’s no way to trace it back to us, correct?” Yuri asked, taking a deep breath of resolution. He felt confident standing next to the man in black who was several inches shorter and several pounds lighter than Yuri.

“Not quickly or easily. By the time anyone knows that it came from us it will be too late. As far as anyone will know or suspect it will have come from the vaccine itself, made in America. They will blame their own people and will begin searching for answers in their own country while fifty million of them are dying. And if they do as we expect, we anticipate that the majority of the fifty million will be military and healthcare workers, completely crippling their entire system. We will put fifty million capable Americans in the ground. They will not have the military to strike back nor the healthcare workers to handle the daily needs of the people, much less care for wounded soldiers. The United States will no longer exist as we know them to be today,” the man said triumphantly, displaying his deadliness despite his smaller stature.

“Five days until the end of the world as we know it. No turning back now,” Yuri sighed, as he moved to the bar and poured himself a drink.

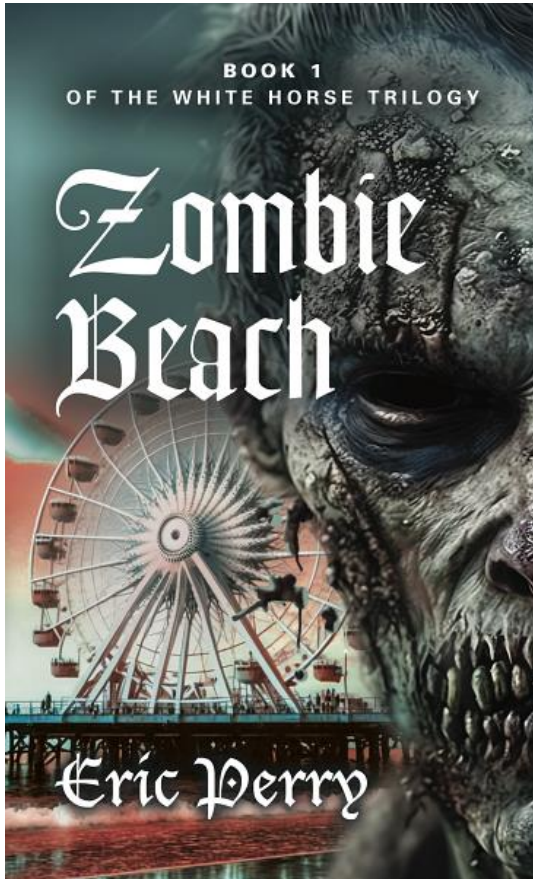
“No, there is not,” the man agreed, and meant it as a warning.

“Now they will know how we felt during World War II when our population was decimated. They will know what it’s like to watch the world from the

sidelines. Our time has come. You ready for this, Yuri?" the man in black asked, needing reassurance and commitment now.

"I am more than ready, but you would have to be a psychopath not to be concerned with what is about to happen or how this will have a ripple effect," Yuri stated.

The man slipped his knife back into its sheath and slipped out of the room before Yuri finished his sentence and without Yuri hearing anything, even the door closing behind the man.



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