

ZOMBIE KILLER SERIES SHOOT
ZOMBIE TIGER BY THE TAIL?
JULY 23, 2017 (SUNDAY)
Knob Creek Lower Gun Range
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You are a contract zombie killer (ZK for short) employed at Outpost #7 on the perimeter of the fortified city of Live E-town. Your duties involve patrolling the dangerous Dead Zones outside the city searching for survivors and critical supplies, keeping tabs on and exterminating the undead, and eliminating raider groups who are bent on malicious mischief. Just when you think you're a seasoned veteran, some new and weirder than normal duty comes along. You sense it's about to happen again when Sergeant Kruer walks into the barracks and stands silently looking at each ZK thoughtfully while rubbing his chin.

"Hey Malone," he bellows. "You know a lot about tigers don't ya?"

"Not me Sarge," Malone replies. "I only saw one in the zoo when I was a kid."

"How 'bout you Cross?" Sergeant Kruer asks the man sitting on the bunk next to Malone.

"You bet I do Sergeant Kruer," Cross shoots back. "Fastest of the big cats. Able to reach speeds of 65 miles an hour."

Cross has the reputation in your squad as a know-it-all which wouldn't be so bad if he actually knew something. Unfortunately, not only is he usually wrong, he's always so completely confident in his infallibility that there's no arguing with him. Before Sergeant Kruer came in you spent ten minutes trying to disabuse him of the belief that the North on a magnetic compass is the same as true north on a map. His last outrageous erroneous statement is just too much for you to take.

"Cross is completely wrong Sergeant!" you blurt out. "He is talking about a Cheetah which is wildly faster than a tiger, only about one tenth the size and has spots for crying out loud! A tiger has stripes."

"Yeah, you're right," Kruer replies "You and Malone grab your field gear, guns and ammo and meet me at the HQ in ten minutes."

As you gather your equipment, you know you should have kept your mouth shut. When you go to HQ, you see other ZKs and some civilian hunters standing around in small groups. The hunters are armed with what look like tranquilizer guns. Before you can ponder the implications of this too deeply, you spot Sergeant Kruer leaning out the door of the captain's trailer and signaling for you and Malone to come over. By the time you get there, Kruer and Captain Soo-Z are standing outside. As usual, she looks annoyed. You come to attention and salute. She returns the salute.

"So you're an expert on tigers Malone?" she asks skeptically. Before he can answer, Kruer interjects.

"No captain," the sergeant says, "Malone is our second most-expert man on tigers." Pointing to you he adds, "this one's our most-expert."

"Got it. Thanks Sergeant Kruer. Please call the all volunteers to attention."

On the sergeant's orders you fall in with eight other ZKs in two ranks and a group of four civilian hunters standing off to the side. The captain takes her place in front of you and begins to speak.

“Over the past weeks reports have filtered in from the Dead Zone of hunters finding animals and at least one person torn to shreds and partially eaten. This in itself would not be unusual but for the fact they were not killed by zombies. This morning, one of our contract hunters spotted what he believed was a tiger in the forest east of outpost. The hunters are tasked with finding this beast, tranquilizing it, and bringing it to the city for display in the new zoo. Your job is to assist and provide security from the undead. I will lead one group myself, the other four will move out in parallel search sectors exactly as we do on patrol sweeps. Good luck and be careful. This animal's fresh kills are exciting the undead in our sector. MOVE OUT!”

As the teams start mounting their patrol trucks, the captain calls you and Malone over to her vehicle. You notice that unlike the other teams, none of you has a tranquilizer gun. In fact, the captain has what appears to be a vintage double barreled .450 nitro-express hunting rifle. Once the other teams are out of earshot, she steps right into your personal space and explains what she expects of you.

“Here's what we're going to do. I want a tiger skin rug. I have wanted a tiger skin rug for as long as I can remember. I can only interpret recent events as sign that the time to realize this dream has finally arrived. You are going to help me. If we succeed, I will see that you are amply rewarded for your contributions to the enterprise. Provided you aren't killed of course. Any questions?”

Neither you or Malone can think of any that you would dare ask. As you load your gear into the back of the patrol truck to ride gunner, Malone taps you on the shoulder and whispers to you.

“What an amazing job we have. How often did you go tiger hunting before the zombie apocalypse?”

You honestly can't recall a single time.