

Fire lashed out from the base into the horde of approaching infected. Mortar bombs exploded over the infected heads, sending dozens of sharp razor-like fragments down into the skulls of the infected. In some cases, it killed them, in others, it was nothing more than a mosquito bite. The handful of heavy machineguns opened fire, spraying hundreds of rounds of lead into the group, each round tearing off a limb of an infected person in the front, then continuing on into the infected behind it and tearing off one of their limbs too. The heavy machineguns were so powerful that the rounds likely went through a half dozen or more infected before finally stopping. Stone thought back to his heavy weapons course eons ago and what his instructor had told him about the heavy machinegun the Canadian Forces used.

“If you lined up six cars side by side and fired this gun, the round would go through the first eleven doors with ease and finally come to a rest inside the twelfth door. It will also go right through cinder blocks and concrete thinner than six inches.”

He winced as he watched them fire, mowing down rows of infected. They fell below the massed fire like wheat before a scythe. Thank god he had never been on the receiving end of one of those monsters, he thought to himself. The only problem with the weapon was that they would go through their ammo in a minute or two, and then would need several minutes to refill their ammo hoppers. Sure enough, well before the horde was gone, the machineguns stopped firing. Their crews scrambled to reload as fast as possible.

Once the mortars and heavy weapons opened up, many soldiers began firing far more rapidly and unfortunately, far more inaccurately. While the heavy weapons were

unlikely to kill many infected outright, it tore them apart and knocked them down, or otherwise disabled them so that snipers could finish them off later.

Meanwhile, Master Corporal Stone and the other marksmen continued their steady, methodical slaughter of the infected. Below him, troops at the fence had shoved their barrels through the chain links and were firing indiscriminately into the horde. The horde was huge and their bodies lay in heaps everywhere, but they kept coming like some elemental force such as the tide.

Stone had engaged the first infected at more than five hundred metres. Now, ten minutes later, the horde was about three hundred metres away and still closing. Stone kept firing, reloading and firing until his shoulder was sore. He hadn't fired this much in a long time. A thundering roar came from behind him and Stone glanced backwards.

Two of the base's Griffon helicopters had lifted off and were racing to assist the troops at the perimeter. As they did, the mortars shifted fire to the flanks of the horde and the helos flew over the fence and dropped to only fifteen feet above the ground. Both then turned broadside to the horde, and the door gunner opened fire with their miniguns, firing hundreds of rounds per minute into the horde. The miniguns fired so fast and with such ferocity that rows of infected literally melted before its onslaught, leaving gaping holes in the horde. As soon as one minigun fell silent, the pilot swiveled the chopper around 180 degrees and the other door gunner opened fire. Despite the metal rain pouring down on the horde, it never once faltered.

To Master Corporal Stone, the horde reminded him of the ocean, uncaring and relentless in its effort to wear down the beach in front of it. Methodically, he and his fellow soldiers kept pouring fire into the faceless horde bearing down on the base.

Soon the horde was at the anti-vehicle ditch, and one by one they toppled into it like lemmings diving over a cliff. The first few hundred crumpled into heaps of broken flesh when they hit the bottom of the trench. They were unable to stand back up, but soon other infected were landing on top of those already in the trench, and they were able to stand up, clawing and reaching for a way out.

“The infected have reached the trench!” Stone shouted into his radio.

“Continue firing, as per plan Foxtrot.” His radio crackled back.

Plan Foxtrot? Stone thought to himself. What the hell is plan Foxtrot? He hefted his rifle again and resumed firing, without giving it another thought.

Hours ago, he had noticed the half dozen fuel tanker trucks parked by the fence, but had never really paid any attention to them or the crews manning them. Hoses from each of the trucks had been hung over the fence and drooped down again into the trench. Suddenly, torrents of gasoline began to spray from each of the hoses, dousing the infected nearby. In less than a minute, there were pools of gasoline everywhere.

Master Corporal Stone quickly understood what Plan Foxtrot was.

Then he heard the order over the radio, “Foxtrot units, fire the trench!”

Several men opened fire with C-9 squad automatic weapons, sending bursts of fire walking up and down the length of the trench. Within seconds, most of the infected in the trench were burning. As each burning one stumbled around, it touched others, and ignited them too. In less than two minutes, every infected in the trench was on fire, and an evil, black smoke soared skyward. The sickening stench of burning and rotting flesh filled the air. Up and down the line soldiers vomited, while those with stronger constitutions simply turned green and held their breath. Stone’s constitution was no

stronger than most and he too vomited, spilling out a vile mixture of coffee and sandwiches over the side of the tower and onto the ground below.

The fire in the trench was so hot that it consumed the infected rapidly, burning their legs out from underneath them, and plunging their torsos into a massive puddle of burning flesh, which burned even hotter as the fat in the chest cavities was incinerated by the intense heat.

Above the trench, troops kept firing into the oncoming horde, never wavering in their efforts to prevent the infected from breaching the base perimeter. The infected were oblivious to what was occurring to those in the trench, and all kept marching lemming-style into the flames in a vain effort to reach the base. Eventually, the numbers of infected began to thin and within an hour, the only infected near the base consisted of those being roasted in the trench.

Master Corporal Stone looked out over the expanse at the mounds of corpses, some still twitching and moving occasionally. Aimed sniper fire began to dispatch those who had survived the onslaught above ground. The fire in the trench burned for hours, and smoke poured into the sky for a day after that, as the remains smoldered.