

Urban Dead Drabbles
Louise Sellers

Chapter 1

Urban Dead Drabbles

Written for the Weekly DHPD Drabble Challenge.

Challenge 1: Welcome to Malton

Brigadier Hargreaves arrived at his new posting late at night. Bright search lights cast the camp into stark relief of black and white. Beyond the city wall and the camp, the empty fields of the town's former green belt vanished into darkness.

Hargreaves took a walk down the dual carriageway towards the wall which crossed it; enormous, heavy and brutal. Hargreaves could just make out the sentries patrolling the top.

“Welcome to Malton,” said a roadside sign.

“Largest prison in the world.” Someone had spray painted underneath.

At least Hargreaves knew what his first order in the morning would be.

Challenge 2: Shotgun

The shotgun was originally purchased by St. John Masters who wasted his Oxbridge education writing copy for the Malton Advertiser.

Two weeks after quarantine, it belonged to “Garfield”. In 2003, he had spray-painted “Not in my name” on the railway bridge.

A month later, it's owner was the self-proclaimed Lord of Fryerbank. A year later it was in the hands of Officer Jim Extreme, DHPD.

Rotting fingers closed around the stock and brought it level with a single eye. Somewhere in the depths of what was left of a brain, the thought formed that it might make a good club.

Challenge 3: Death be not Proud

Death walks the streets of Malton.
 We know it as we hide and run.
 We know that zombie has his fun.
 Death walks the streets of Malton.
 His time has come.

But see his cloak is tattered and torn.
 His scythe is blunt, in light of dawn.
 Amid the dead, amid the groans
 No longer does he walk alone.
 A new age is born.

Death hides himself amid the crowd
 That presses hard on barricade.
 No man in Malton needs a shroud
 Death is fleeting. The call is loud.
 Death walks the streets of Malton tonight
 He is not proud.

Challenge 4: Joy

Cat sang and Gabby played guitar. Once in a while they persuaded her to sing a folk song that wasn't depressing, although even the depressing ones seemed quite jolly if everyone sang "*Whack foll the daddio*" loud enough.

"And if I had more bricks and stones, I'd build my chimney higher"

Cat's father had sung this song. Gabby thought he had made bits up.

"It would stop the neighbours cat from pissing in my fire."

They all joined in:

"Come landlord fill the flowing bowl until it doth run over jbrç For tonight we'll merry, merry be. Tomorrow we'll be sober."

Challenge 5: Tonight the Witches Ride

Cat double-checked the barricades on the school room door.

“It doesn’t make a difference,” said BD. “If they’re coming for you. They’ll get you.”

“Just don’t open the door.”

The sound of tapping, “Let me in, BD!” cried a voice.

“No!” said Cat, clutching his arm.

“It named me.” BD began to demolish the barricade.

Cat’s eyes fell on a discarded box of chalk. The last plank was gone from the door and the handle was turning. She frantically drew a circle on the floor around them.

In a torrent of darkness and terror the hunt poured through the room.

Challenge 6: The Blackmore Building

It’s stands at the heart of the empire. It isn’t the heart, that would give it a significance it doesn’t deserve, but it stands there anyhow.

We flow through it and around it. The quick come and go. They light it up for a few brief hours. They celebrate their triumph and then they are gone. It stands at the heart of our empire.

The curse was born here and the cure can be found here. The quick think it is hope. The dead know it is not.

It stands at the heart of the empire and it is ours.

Challenge 7: Street Fight

Twycrosse Alley is one of the oldest streets in Malton. A narrow lane squeezed between St Luke’s Hospital and Withyman Road Firestation. During WWII, nurses evacuated patients across the gap while the wards burned. Now the DHPD are escaping.

In 1645, during the brief royalist defense of Malton, Thomas Mallows made an abortive stand in the alleyway. His son stood behind him, frantically reloading the muskets as he fired.

Gabriel Mallows doesn’t know this but he curses anyway. Cat is standing behind him, reloading one shotgun while he fires the other. They won’t keep the

RRF at bay for long.

Challenge 8: Silver

I'm in Stanbury Village, just south of Ridleybank, and running on empty. I lost my squad somewhere in the RRF rout. I've no clips left for the pistol and one shell in the shotgun.

Kersley Mansion is undefendable, as a result I have a small hope it won't have been looted as thoroughly as elsewhere. I stop to look for pickings. A display cabinet lies over-turned on the floor. I heave it up and realise I've got lucky. For whatever reason no one had ever checked it before.

I leave the silver, but take the ancient hunting rifle and ammunition.

Challenge 9: Family

"Where's Cat?" asked Gabby.

Anton shrugged laconically. "Off sulking somewhere."

"Bulldog?"

"Off sulking somewhere else."

Gabby groaned. "Not again. What was it about this time?"

"Fucked if I know. I sent Officer S in to find out. They sounded deep in the usual 'lack of responsibility' 'you're a control freak' schtick."

Gabby grinned. "Poor Rook. He OK?"

"He'll live. He said he thought Cat *had* let the team down on the last op. BD punched him, then Cat chewed him out for getting BD stressed."

Gabby shook his head. "I guess he knows not to mess with that family now."

Challenge 10: The North Wind doth Blow

"Frozen solid! They're frozen solid!"

Sam rapped one of the zombies with his hand. It stood stock still. It's mouth was frozen in a grimace. It's hands reached upwards, bent like claws.

"Too much to hope they'll stay this way when the thaw sets in I suppose," said Anton.

"Almost certainly," agreed Tarabon.

“Make you feel like home Anton?” asked Sam. “Let’s all decamp to Alaska, we’ll be safe from zombies there.”

“You can fuck right off.”

“Still, might as well enjoy a few days off,” said Tarabon.

“So,” Sam looked around uncertainly, “what are we going to do now?”

Challenge 11: Something Old

Something stalks through the streets of Malton. It dances in the debris of the dying city. It has been called the Morrigan, Crom Cruach, King of the Redcaps, Spring-heeled Jack.

It is ancient. It dwelt in Malton when it was just a part of the wild wood, thick and endless. It is wild and savage. It has been called Herne the Hunter, Cernunos, the Green Man. It leads the wild hunt. It isn’t a tame thing.

Something old moves through Malton. The living fight and squabble and kill each other. Something old and ancient doesn’t laugh but it knows joy.

Challenge 12: The Holly and the Ivy

Ivy covered the Neate Monument, an aging statue of a forgotten general in a war long lost. It had been unkempt even before the zombies took over. A holly bush grew, threatening and prickly, among the iron railings that surrounded it.

Cat had climbed the railings and cut both holly and ivy. They now trailed over the broken desks and shattered fittings of Cotty Street Police Station, covering the wreckage the war that had been lost and the new generals who were already forgotten.

“Happy Christmas, DHPD,” she whispered and drank to dead friends and comrades.

Outside the zombies groaned.

Challenge 13: Starlight

“Cat! There is no fucking point!” complained Gabby. He stamped his feet in the snow to keep them warm. “We’re out in the open here!”

“Don’t be such a misery! Pass me up that last bit!”

Gabby groaned and passed up the string of lights. Cat hung them over the doorway of Club Meade.

“There!” she said climbing down the ladder. “Now all we have to do is turn them on.”

Gabby grunted. “All we have to do is fit a generator, repair the building and *then* turn them on.”

“Whatever,” Cat grinned. “We’ll still have star lights for Christmas.”

Challenge 14: Something New

Cat spent the night on the roof of the library, clutching Black Betty. Gabby climbed up to see if she would come down but retreated in the face of her silence. He found blankets, though, and coffee and ventured back to make sure she was, at least, warm.

She didn’t know it was the Tattooed Man who had taken BD, but something had, something new.

She watched the sun rise. The red light flooding over the rooftops of Malton, bathing the place in a gentle glow.

It was a new day. Time to give the gun to its new owner.

Challenge 15: Molebank

“This suburbs a mess!” complained Gabby.

Steve shrugged. “That’s why we’re here to repair it. You want peace and quiet, go to one of the green ’burbs.”

The sound of groaning floated on the wind.

“That’ll be the local zombies. About time we had a look at them.”

Steve leaned out of a window and looked around. “Well, I’ll be...”

“What? What!”

“Take a look at these zombies for me and tell me if I’m imagining things.”

Gabby leaned out of the window and then gaped in amazement. Down the street came a line of zombies, all doing the conga.

Challenge 16: Running on Empty

BD got killed in West Beckettown, part of the fighting retreat from Caiger.

By the time we reached Havercroft and Ackland mall we were out of syringes, and low on everything else. Ackland was burning and empty. That was the last time I saw a member of Bravo. Gabby lies dead somewhere in the ruins.

We detoured round Ridleybank.

In Stanbury Village I threw away the shotguns, they were slowing me down. It was three days since I'd seen another officer.

I've not eaten since Edgecombe. Ahead of me is the wall. I'm empty and I've nowhere left to run.

Challenge 17: Light

Living in Malton makes you appreciate the light. You spend so much time behind boarded windows.

A small chink of sunlight is creeping through a gap. The planks aren't flush. Prying fingers could gain purchase. Just now, though, it's only the sun.

We could plug in a generator, flood the empty dance floor with harsh electric light. But there are soft, silent footsteps in the ruins; the faint click of a safety catch. Light makes you easy to find, easy to see, an easy target.

Living in Malton makes you appreciate the light, but it makes you love the dark.

Challenge 18: A Factory

Here on the production line
Stamp! Whirr! Clack!
Turning out the pretty dolls
Pack! Pack! Pack!

Turn the handle! Move the Boxes! Keep the stacking neat.
All for happy baby people out there in the street.

Now there's no production line.
Tiptoe! Run! Hide!
But we need the fuel and gennies
To be found inside.

Watch behind you! Watch behind you! Quick! Shoot! Quick!
BD nooo...

Here on the production line
Thwack! Arrgh! Scrunch!
Eating brains of pretty people
Yum! Yum! Munch!

In they wander! Always Creeping! In a lovely line.
All for happy babbah zambahs wanting for to dine.

Challenge 19: So Foul and Fair a Day

The government, or whoever was in charge these days, was leafletting again. White paper drifted down, half invisible amid the snow.

“I’m amazed they can fly in this weather,” muttered Ian.

Cat staggered out into the biting wind.

“It’s pointless,” BD shouted after her. “Just more propaganda!”

But Cat wanted to *see*.

The design was clumsy and amateurish.

WE’RE FIGHTING FOR YOU.

A picture of the “Free Malton League”; their leader sat in the centre, scowling and determined.

Cat touched it with frozen fingers.

“It’s Claire.” Her voice echoed faintly. “She’s alive!”

“Who’s Claire?” asked Gabby.

“My niece,” whispered BD.

Challenge 20: Tiger

Once the tiger had been caged in Malton Zoo. The enclosure had been generous but, to a creature used to ranging over twenty kilometres, it had felt small and confining.

Zombies broke through the walls in the early days of the outbreak. Uninterested in the tiger, they had let her leap and run past them.

Now the tiger glides among the shadows and over the rooftops. It isn't the jungle she's used to, but it's jungle enough. The high forbidding walls do not trouble her. She hunts her prey. She knows that now it is the humans who are caged.

Challenge 21: The Wasteland

The DHPD pulled out of the Hills weeks ago. I'm in the wasteland.

*Between the idea
and the reality*

I stumble across Brains Monroe.

*Between the motion
And the act*

He's put down his shotgun, but I'm holding mine.

*Between the emotion
And the response*

He's killed many, many of us.

*Between the desire
and the spasm*

I've only killed zombies.

Falls the Shadow.

The question is, can I pull the trigger?

This is the way the world ends

This is the way the world ends

This is the way the world ends

Not with a bang but a whimper

Challenge 22: Aren't you a little short for a Stormtrooper?

I never worked out what Gabby had done to get on the wrong side of the Veterans of Fort Creedy. Let's face it, the possibilities are legion.

The rescue plan we eventually came up with involved a looted army surplus store, some gas masks, and a rather unconvincing cover story about an old World War I stash of mustard gas.

For some reason it worked though.

I think Gabby must have been expecting us. Leastways, when I finally broken into his cell, he merely raised his head from the bunk and said, “Aren’t you a little short for a stormtrooper?”

Challenge 23: Law and Order

“Sic Temper Tyrannis!” The cry echoes through the building.

I carry on binding up BD’s leg as Delta come back, their excited voices chattering about the pursuit and the kill.

Gabby appears in the doorway. “We got Brains Monroe!” he says excitedly. “My twentieh kill!”

“Well done!”

They look up to BD. He started Delta, initiated the hunts for killers. Gabby’s eyes flame with pride and then he’s gone.

“Don’t act so disapproving Sis,” says BD. “It’s a tough city out there. We’re all the law and order there is.”

Some law and order where we turn teenagers into executioners.

Challenge 24: Biohazard

“Officer Scalia, get the civilians out the back!”

“Aye Ma’am!”

“Wha? Why?” asked Gabby.

“Not now Gabs.” It would be obvious before I finished talking that the ’cades weren’t going to hold.

“There are zombies out the back, too. What kind of a dumb plan is this?” That was Arthur.

“These zombies *are* the ones from the back.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes.” I could explain why but it would take ten minutes we don’t have.

Luckily Biohazard has already gone, taking the civilians with him. Some days you need an officer who won’t slow you up with too many questions.

Challenge 25: Citizen Mallows

“Well we’ve done away with money, haven’t we? You have to admit we’re not a capitalist society any more.”

“The bartering is a nightmare,” pointed out Cat. “You often complain about it.”

“Well that’s because the dealers in Caiger are fuckers. They’re trying to reimpose Capitalism by other means.”

Cat rolled her eyes. “I’m not doing it Gabby.”

“But you’re perfectly placed. Just announce we’re a commune. We share everything anyway.”

“We do? You want to redistribute some of your stash of chocolate then?”

“Hey! I’m saving it for Vicky!”

Cat laughed and shook her head. “No chocolate! No commune!”

Challenge 26: With it or on it

They’d come in through windows and skylights, guns blazing, and if you survived or even if you didn’t you maybe did or didn’t pass their test and eventually they’d leave.

Since they were killing ‘civilians’ and we were all that counted as ‘police’ we took them on. We hunted them down and crashed through windows and skylights (or at least Jim did).

We shot them and they shot us. Meanwhile the zombies tore down the barricades.

Then they went away, leaving the suburb in ruins. Wellington once said, “The only thing worse than a battle lost is a battle won.”

Drabble Meme: Revolution for Gabby

“This is the Revolution! Hand over executive power!” stated Gabby as he swept in, his forces at his heels.

Cat laid down her pen. She looked tired. “Someone needs to run things.”

“Dunell Hills is a police state, and you know it. That’s without discussing the way civilians are expected to support officers.”

“Take away the DHPD and everyone gets eaten.”

Gabby pointed Slasher at her. “The time to talk me out of this has passed.”

“I’m not going to hand over.”

Gabby placed the muzzle against her forehead.

Cat raised her eyebrows. “Go on. Make my day,” she said.

Drabble Meme: “I’m back from the Dead” for Bio-hazard

A tattered police jacket hung from the zombie’s shoulders. Rotting flesh was falling away from an empty skull, but there was some semblance of a man I had known.

Biohazard had been missing for months, swallowed up into the interior of Malton, defeated by the simple effort of remaining alive in this town. I’d not expected to see him again.

Yet here he was, constituting a biohazard as usual.

Muscles rebuilt themselves over bone, and flesh over muscles. Bio twitched and writhed as Necrotech’s poison did its work.

Finally his eyes opened and he groaned. “Ah! Bittersweet taste of life.”

Drabble Meme: “Basically... Run” for Gabby

I sat down next to the little man. He stared down at the swarming hordes of zombies in the street below. Some were already collapsing and crumbling to dust, victims of the accelerated virus.

“You planned this all along, didn’t you?” I couldn’t help the tone of accusation in my voice.

“Broadly speaking.”

“People died.”

He looked at me, expression neutral. “You should have done as I told you.”

A crash below us. Some zombie must have broken through our barricades. “Is that part of the plan?”

The little man stood up. “Not exactly.”

“So what do we do now?”

Drabble Meme: Life in Uniform for Goldstar (Double Drabble)

“There’s really no escape, love. You might as well come back here.” Alasdair Crowley leaned out of the window.

The plank hung out over empty space. Cotty Street Police Station beckoned invitingly on the other side of the road. The DHPD were so close and yet so far.

“You’ll fall to your death. Come back to your Uncle Alasdair.”

Zombies thronged the street. One of them, a policeman’s cap strangely askew on its head, let out a long low groan.

“Come back. There’s a good little girl.”

I jumped and crashed into the throng of semi-rotted bodies. I closed my eyes, waiting for the inevitable; the teeth, the claws, the death that is not the end.

There was a lot of noise. When I opened my eyes, I saw the zombie in the police cap, in fact an entire uniform, between me and the horde. He groaned once more and his arms flailed, knocking back a lurching monstrosity.

A door banged open. “In here!” shouted a voice.

I got to my feet and ran.

“What happened there?” I asked, once I was safe inside the PD.

“That’s Goldstar,” said a grim-faced blonde woman. “A life spent in uniform dies hard.”

Mean Streets

I dropped through a skylight into a nightmare torture chamber that stank of blood, fear and urine. A lone man was chained up to the wall, his mind broken, cursing and swearing at the burns and lacerations that swarmed across his body in intricate patterns. The place was littered with home-made blades and spikes whose use was only too clear.

I shot the man once, through the head and hoped the resulting zombie would break free before his tormentors returned. Then I fled.

The streets of Malton are mean, but sometimes they are preferable to the horrors behind the barricades.

The Dead

We are The Dead.

We have woken, clawing our way out of clammy earth, pushing aside rotten timber, opening our eyes to the baleful sun. Sinew and bone knits together.

We rise and answer the call.

We are many. We are one.

The sole purpose is to sweep away everything in our path, slowly but inexorably. We will cleanse the pathetic detritus of the living, who scrape together meagre, small-minded lives in the wasteland that is our birthright.

In the end each one is alone and lost and friendless.

Only we will remain, united, together and it will be good.

Medical Attention

I stared in disbelief at the man on the stretcher. His head rocked back and forth as his mind raced through some delirious fever dream. When I touched his wounded leg he screamed with the pain.

“He fell and broke his leg, then it festered. We heard the DHPD had medical supplies.”

I looked at the stretcher bearers. They were obviously new to Malton.

I sighed, pulled out my gun, and placed a bullet in the patient’s brain.

“This is what counts for medical attention in Malton, sweetie.” I said to their disbelieving faces. “He’ll be fine once he’s revived.”