

# Tales of the Soul

A Collection of Short Stories

Cadi Martin

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*I would like to dedicate this book to my ninth grade literature teacher, Mrs. Pat Pepper. Without her, my love of writing would have never been revived and this book probably would not have happened.*

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# A Christmas Short Story

I wake up one morning with a cold chill. I shiver and grab at my old worn blanket. I slow even my breaths in case they hear me; if they do I can't see them coming. I hear grunting and freeze in place. They don't move any closer, and my shoulders relax after a few minutes. I lay back down on my rough backpack and try to fall back asleep. I keep waking up shivering every hour or so, but eventually I lose consciousness.

When I finally decide to get up, the sun shines through the hole in the wall and all I hear is some far-off grunts. I throw the blanket off me, sit up, and throw my pillow over my back. I step out of the old abandoned house and into the streets. Rusty cars are sitting all over the place, and everything reeks of rotting animals. It's been about twelve years since I've seen another human being. The last person I saw was my mother, fighting for her life in the streets while I huddled under a car watching it all happen. I didn't make a sound while I was hiding under that car. Even to this day I occasionally have nightmares about it. Especially after I had to put the shotgun to her head three months after she died.

I trudge into the dilapidated grocery store, looking for some breakfast that hasn't expired yet. I find a can of some baked beans with the little pieces of hot dogs in it. My hand tenses

up and my arm moves slowly to grab the can silently. They like to hide in the corners and listen for prey. For creatures of the undead, they were pretty clever and pretty fast.

My fingers close around the can. My arm lowers so slowly it's almost as if it isn't moving. My elbow then hits a box of old pasta and it drops to the ground. My eyes widen in horror and my entire body tenses up. I hear surprised grunts, hissing, and shuffling feet move down the aisles. I spin on my heels and start walking toward the doors. My breathing is stopped, my eyes are moving everywhere at once, and I can hear my heart pounding in my chest. I see the doors in front of me when I am pulled backward onto the ground. Hands are all over me, tearing at everything. My pants are ripping, pants are tugged, and hair is yanked. I let out a blood-curdling scream when they tear at my skin. I look down and see the creatures stuffing my organs into their terrible mouths. I hear glass breaking and things crashing as more of them surround me and getting their share. The world spins around me, my eyes get heavy and the creatures are now blobs. I can't see anything but a bright light that is calling me. It's telling me that the pain will end if I go to it. Before I enter the light, a single thought crosses through my head:

Today is Christmas.