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English 9-5  
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Title: Z- (A Teenage Zombie Story)

**Idea:** A group of students notice that they have a Z- on their report card for English class. Knowing that there is not a Z- grade, they wonder. Turns out that all of the students with the Z- are the typical failing student. These Z- students are called into a special meeting. There are men in suits and a lot of smiling. Our main character looks around, noticing that everyone in the meeting is what teachers would call a “lost cause.” Our main character, remembering many of those who were in the meeting, notices that these students are absent from school. And the number of them absent is increasing.

**Exposition:** Our main character, in an effort to find answers to his curiosity, and the fact that his best friend was at the meeting and is missing, digs into the disappearance of these students. What he finds is a government experimental facility, using the students as test subjects.

**Rising Action:** The facility is trying to perfect a way to increase knowledge retention. However, it is not working and what results is a student with very little brain activity, whose brain basically dies and is reduced to only the primal needs: eat. What these students crave: brains and human flesh.

The government figures that no one will miss these students and that they have been a burden on society, failing class, wasting tax payer’s time and money. Who would miss them? Who would care? Especially, who would care if the experiments did work out and the way to increase knowledge retention was found? As one of the government’s leader states, “It is the first time that these students will have been useful.”

**Climax:** The main character will break into the facility and saving the students that have not yet been turned. Not everyone can be saved. There will be a point where the reader will wonder what will happen because the main character will go into a room and be trapped.

**Falling Action:** Main character heads back home, and says bye to friend as he is dropped off.

**Resolution:** The story will end with the main character escaping with a small group of survivors. Some of the turned students will have been destroyed or locked up. The local police will arrive and realize that this is a situation that requires SWAT or some other federal task force. This task force will arrive by helicopter as they have been monitoring the situation.

**Cliff Hanger/To Be Continued:** The main character will be placed in an ambulance because of his exhaustion and injuries. The reader will think it is part of the final save at the end. However, the ambulance will be a fake one, taking the main character off to some undisclosed location. The story will end with the ambulance heading off and the main character will, after time, put pieces of conversations together and while talking to the driver, realize that he is not safe.

First person is the point of view & the format is narrative. Small city; present day.

Z- (A teenage zombie story)

Heading to school

At school

Getting close to first semester grade period (January). Talk about winter break.

Report cards

Asking about Z-

Special meeting

Phone/text conversation with friend

People at meeting start to disappear

Asks teachers. Sees "suits" again.

**Alternative opening draft:** The morning air was so hot and thick that I was unable to pull in a full breath for my body to use. I had been told that Wisconsin summers were muggy but I had not expected this. I hadn't wanted it either.

*Z minus (a teenage zombie story) Weekly Write #37*

Exposition

This was it. I was dying. Two monstrous hands, intent on killing me, wrapped around my neck. I could feel my life fading away. I gasped, reaching for a final breath. *Is this what death feels like*—my last thought. The light in front of me faded....

“Jason, time to get up!” Hearing these words, this voice, cleared the black. Cleared the darkness.

It was my mother. *My mother*. I wasn’t dead. That’s a relief. Although today I was headed to a new school, so maybe death was the better option. I had heard about the school and I wasn’t sure that this time around I would be any more successful.

“Time to get up!” I heard again from downstairs. This time, a bit louder.

“Okay, mom. I’m up.” I could tell from her voice that she had been trying to wake me for awhile. Reluctantly, I slid out of bed and saw my reflection in the mirror. Tired. There were dark circles around my eyes, and my hair was disheveled. The morning air was so hot and thick that I was unable to pull in a full breath for my body to use. I had been told that Wisconsin summers were muggy, but I hadn’t expected this. I hadn’t wanted it either. Even with the breeze gently lifting the curtains, there was no escaping the heat. My throat felt like sand. Were Septembers always like this in Wisconsin? I hoped not.

Pulling me back to the present, my alarm went off, flashing its red commandment—6:00, 6:00, 6:00. *I wouldn’t want to be late on my first day of school*, I thought. I got up and walked past Chip, my pet turtle, and saw that he had overturned his water dish, yet again. I got Chip 3 years ago on my 14<sup>th</sup> birthday, and he has been nothing but trouble, but, like a parent, I love him anyway.

“Jason!” my mom yelled from downstairs, “Hurry up. Breakfast is ready.”

I turned Chip’s dish over, scolded him with a smile, refilled the dish yet again, and headed for the bathroom. I have a bathroom in my room. It’s pretty cool; I guess. None of my friends have that, but then again—they have two parents. My parents got a divorce last year and my mom and I moved to this town to, *what did she say?*—*something about* “starting over.” She gave me the master bedroom as a way to help me cope with the move.

She’s a good mom: doesn’t yell too much, doesn’t make me do things just because, but she doesn’t understand her teenage son—me.

“Okay, mom. I’ll be down soon.”

“Great,” she replied, “I wouldn’t want you to be late on the first day of school.”

*Me either, I thought.*

I found my toothbrush and a nearly spent tube of toothpaste at the bottom of one of the boxes stacked in my room; the contents of this box clearly known in black marker: **JASON’S BATHROOM STUFF**.

A quick brush of the teeth, some water on my light-brown hair and I looked at myself in the mirror. God—adolescence is cruel. I have never liked my ears. **Too big**. My father told me that I would grow into them. I’m still waiting. This is not to say I am a horrendous monster to look at. I just won’t be appearing on any glamour magazines soon. Oh well.

I stepped down the curved, mahogany stairwell that opened into the living room, then cut through living room to the kitchen.

My mother was dressed in yellow, smiling. “There you are sweetie,” she said. Ever since the divorce, she has been putting on a good show—always happy, always cheerful. She will

probably explode from **over-happy-cheeriness**. I know she is doing it for me, but “sweetie?” Come on. I’m too old for *sweetie*.

**With a mouthful of eggs, I said, “Yep. Here I am. Happy as a clam.”**

“Hey, no need to be rude.” I didn’t mean for it to be sarcastic, but it came out that way.

It was going to be one of those days. I could already tell. I didn’t even try to reason with my mom, and tell her that I did not mean it that way. I took the easy way out and simply said, “Sorry.” Pretty lame. I know, but I didn’t need a fight this morning.

We finished our breakfast in silence. This was fine with me. It gave me time to worry about school. Luckily, it was the first day of school so I won’t be coming into a crowded classroom and getting the hey-look-at-the-new-kid stare. I hate that stare. I’ve been there twice before.

The morning was starting to clear up which apparently did not happen often in this part of the country. I reached into the fridge and found the brown lunch bag with “Jason” on it, except there was a **♥ instead of the O**. Thanks mom. I’m a senior. Way to make sure I don’t make friends. *Maybe if I crumple it up enough, I thought, no one will see.*

My mother said cheerfully, “Have a great day at school!” The heavy wooden door closed behind me and with it, the safety of home. I started on the short walk to the bus stop at the end of the street, already there were kids hanging out and talking, undoubtedly sharing stories of the summer with friends. How I missed Oregon. It was going to be a long day.

\* \* \*

It was a cold Monday morning. The kind of morning where icicles glisten in the rising sun and hang from the edges or gutters in an attempt not to fall. A few birds flew over head as I walked down the long driveway to the country road. It is your average country road; a few accidents a year—nothing major. The largest problem may be a cow blocking the road.

Across the street was my bus stop. It was going to be a cold wait. Out of the dark came a figure, about a mile or so down the road, walking alone. From a distance I could see that the person was dressed in a black suit. The thought that popped into mind was why would anyone, other than a kid waiting for a school bus, be out at 6:45 in the morning. The man didn’t look to be out from a walk. He looked like he had some other purpose. I hoped that the bus would be late, like usual, so I could get a chance to see the man.

The bus arrived. The man was not close enough to see. My curiosity was still piqued as I stepped into the bus. I quickly wiped the foggy bus window so I could see. The window smeared. Condensation does not wipe away easily. Through a little patch of window, the man looked up at me with deep, dark eyes that went straight to my soul. I could feel the man’s eyes burn through me. He had come there specifically to see me. Somehow I knew this.

He was talking to someone on a phone, and looked out of place for the country in his tailored black suit, and short hair cut.

By second period my head was swimming with questions, and not the geometry I was supposed to be focusing on. I came slowly out of a daze and realized that the whole class was looking at me.

“Mr. Millings. We are waiting for the next step of the second proof.” Perspiration collected at the nape of my neck. Desperately, I went through my mind to figure out where in the lesson I had faded off. No luck.

“I’m sorry, Mr. Gilford. I wasn’t paying attention,” I said, feeling the eyes of the class on me.

*“I can see that. Does anyone have the next step? Yes—Thank you, Sally. I am sure Mr. Millings appreciates you saving him.”*

Mr. Gilford’s voice trailed off and I was once again concentrating on the lone figure from this morning. I could tell that Mr. Gilford would be one of those teachers that did not hesitate to put you on the spot. **Noted.**

The rest of the day was uneventful. Just another day in high school—cliques, drama, and homework. I was relieved when the final bell rang so I could head home. **Home.** That word hit me. *I have a new home. Will it be my new home?*

### Rising Action

The morning air was so hot and thick that I was unable to pull in a full breath for my body to use. I had been told that Wisconsin summers were muggy but I had not expected this. I hadn't wanted it either.

### Rising Action Continued

The hallway was dimly lit. Clearly this building did not get much use at night. No sign of security, but I was cautious as it could not be this easy. I decided to head toward the center of the building. I stood for a moment by each door in the hallway, listening to see if there was anyone there before moving to the next door. This made my travel down the hall slow, but I was gathering information about the purpose while I went.

Most of the rooms were set up like offices—filing cabinets, large desks, and cubicles partitioned with bulky walls that stood up about shoulder height.

Filing cabinet

Glass wall

Face smashed against window, attacking

More faces join

Runs and finds Brandon in adjacent room

### Climax

Pulls drugged Brandon out of building; fire started. Climatic point.

### Falling Action

### Resolution

## Extra material

The morning of that day was filled with. I sat in bed and heard the loud pounding of steps below me as my mother and her new boyfriend went from one room to the next like cat and mouse. More and more often I was spending my mornings trapped in my bedroom because of these fights. During this time, it was best if I stay hidden and wait until one of them left. Then I could quietly slip the back door.

This fight was taking longer than usual. Usually, my mother would give up. I imagine my mother did this as a way to end the fight; she was not comfortable with shouting. She did not like shouting which is why I think my father shouted.

The yelling eventually died down, but they were still both in the house-different rooms I guess. Our house was so small that even if they were in different rooms, they were close. Our kitchen, dining room, and living room were all one open room. A narrow table with dying plants separated the dining room from the living room. My mother had a room. I had a bedroom. There was one bathroom.

I lay in bed watching a fly do Ariel acrobatics. It seemed to have a pattern to its flight, but this was only noticeable after a lot of observation.

At some time, I drifted back to sleep. I woke up and the house was still. I didn't know if my parents were in the house or one had left. It was uncomfortable sitting in bed wondering.

My watch said 2:20 in the afternoon. I needed to get out.

Needed.

As quietly as I could, I lifted my window and paused and listened for a movement in the house. None. Slowly, I climbed out of my small bedroom into the open air.

It was a slightly overcast day where the sun blinked as the clouds rolled by.