

The Dead Wrangler (Working Title)

At the crack of dawn, the dead awaken. That's when life begins and when everyone runs. Life fears the dead, but the dead want nothing more than to be with life. Like the shine of the rising sun, the dead used to chase life across the globe to be with them. Like the passing of time, life diminishes, and there is just the dead chasing after a lost dream. Most dead spend their days chained to a gate, still craving life. Yet they never see Connor. He is the only life they would see these days if they weren't forced to look ahead to the empty concrete path.

Connor only ever sees life within the makeshift gates of his community. Backyard fences and concrete slabs that used to make walls of houses now protect the remaining bit of nature that hasn't been consumed by the outer world of the dead. Although all life in Connor's home is meant to keep him alive. Connor gathered potatoes from his vegetable garden to make soup in his watchtower. Connor does this to spend more time with the dead. He enjoys watching them. He often wonders if they can smell what he is making. Do they realise they're eating something different when Connor tosses them his leftovers. The dead that ate his breakfast this time were once a husband and wife. They were his neighbours once and one of the earliest dead to be added to his gate. In the early days of the dead uprising, catching dead was an exciting game.

At mid-morning, it began to rain. Connor had to leave his dead to attend to clean out the dirt from his water silos. Rainwater is undrinkable; it was ruined the day the sky became grey. Rain means the arrival of the cold. Things will freeze and die. Connor protects himself with a blue raincoat. His crops survive under a blue plastic sheet. The only other thing he needs is firewood from the forest to keep his furnaces running. Connor only ever brings out a collared chain as he had chopped down the forest near his community long ago. It was during the resurgence of life after the dead uprising. The forest regrew through the concrete slabs and buildings of old. It was life's second chance, but this resurgence was brief due the rain spitting its poison and killing most trees before it could heal the earth. Connor got lucky today when he found a small dead child resting on his cut-down tree. Connor gave her a collar and led her back to the gate to join her new family. She didn't notice them or her new collar. All she and her family could see was Connor. They were always eager to greet Connor when he came to the gate. They were always open for a hug. He thinks of accepting their warm welcome only when he is just within their reach. Connor sees the dead's chain, preventing them from coming to hug him. He moves away.