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**Never-DEAD** by Ann Greyson is a terrifying thriller of our contemporary world plagued with zombies. Tension and suspense grab the reader's imagination from the Preface in this science fiction-horror story. The basic plot involves several distinctive characters who react to the threat of being attacked and infected by growing swarms of zombies.

Jenna, a nineteen-year-old student, is desperate to leave San Antonio, Texas, where the zombies are rapidly taking over the city. She embarks on a long, nightmarish cross-country trip to join her sister. Told in the third person, she relates how she has been outrunning zombies without her cell phone that had been broken. Her car had been struck by a bus. Walking warily westward, she seeks shelter on her flight in various hideouts while watching out for the zombies that petrify her. She describes one zombie as a grunting, growling elderly male with coagulated blood dripping from a torn eye socket. Its swollen arms dangled rotten flesh. The action of zombies shambling toward a victim is vivid. The cannibalization of the zombies' victim is not for the squeamish reader. The imagery is vivid and bold, with fast-paced scenes that would make great visuals for a film.

Jenna's sister, Hannah, is employed at the Biogenetics and Disease Control research center in Dulce, New Mexico. The underground labs are safe from the apocalyptic nightmare. Here scientists are frantically searching for an antidote or vaccine for the contagious pathogen that is causing a viral pandemic. Told in the first person, Hannah is caught in the nightmare of work and worry about her sister, Jenna. The plot intensifies through conversations with co-workers with references to the Mayan Calendar that predicts the end of time in a specific period, which is the year the story takes place. Hannah's co-worker works day and night to develop the necessary vaccine to prevent the living from contracting the virus. It is a race against time for the survival of the human race.

The introduction of minor characters and their conversations during logical scene shifts tell more of the threat and the massive zombie takeover. Each character's ability to cope without losing sanity is

challenged. The reader is compelled to compare the zombie epidemic with the chaos of the coronavirus pandemic of the early 2020s. Rapidly spreading without an adequate vaccine or antibiotic, both are deadly and causing wide-spread personal distress, panic, and a global nightmare. This thriller will challenge the reader to question his own response to a cataclysmic event and consider making advanced preparations for unforeseen disasters. **Never-DEAD** is a survivalist horror story that begs you to ponder if a zombie virus breaks out; would you know how to survive from it?

**Reviewed by: Carole V. Weishampel**

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