# Concerning the Undead

Zombies are all the rage these days in popular television and cinema. From classics such as “Night of the Living Dead”, to cold-war favorites like “The Omega Man”, all the way to contemporary (2018) shows like “The Walking Dead”, humanity seems to have something of an obsession with zombies. In some ways, zombies and killer robots have a few things in common: they don’t fatigue, they cannot be reasoned with, and they have no mercy.

However, when I designed the World of Gaianar, I wanted to have a variety of Undead. I also was never convinced that a zombie apocalypse could actually happen. Here are my arguments against a successful zombie apocalypse: 1.) They are slow, cannot use tools/weapons, and cannot communicate; 2.) They would be immobilized by sub-zero temperatures (they would freeze solid because they cannot generate body heat); 3.) They cannot climb walls or ladders; 4.) They lack the higher brain functionality required for strategy; 5.) They would experience rapid deterioration from bugs, sun, and general weathering; 6.) They can only communicate their disease via biting and scratching (a good leather jacket and thick gloves would be suitable protection). All in all, zombies do exist in Gaianar but they are more of a nuisance rather than an existential threat.

There are, of course, varying types of Undead – and the Game Master is certainly encouraged to be creative when making monsters from scratch. Some Undead are damaged by sunlight whilst others are not. Some are free-willed whist others are simply feral. Some have spell-like abilities and some are mundane. Some can create more of themselves by slaying the living while others cannot. All said, there is no one single type of Undead.

Some factors that most Undead have in common are: 1.) Silver always inflicts damage (sometimes double damage) even if the creature is resistant to other types of attacks; 2.) Undead do not tire, do not need to eat (although some Undead do actually eat, it is a matter of preference and not necessity); 3.) Undead do not need to sleep (and usually cannot voluntarily sleep either); 4.) Undead are immune to poison and disease (since they are already dead).

With respect to an Undead’s mental function, there are three broad categories: feral, sentient, and sentient free-willed. Feral Undead are by far the most common type (70%). A Feral Undead cannot be reasoned with and will mindlessly attack the living until one or both parties are destroyed. A feral Undead may have animal cunning and sometimes may even be in possession of a limited vocabulary (usually used to taunt or antagonize foes), but higher functionality is beyond such creatures. Killing a feral Undead is neither a sin nor a crime.

Sentient Undead (20%) are creatures in which the Undead host body is animated by some extraplanar being (such as a darkling spirit or a demon). The creature is aware and intelligent, but it is not controlled by the mentality of the host body’s mind. The controlling spirit often (but not always) has access to at least some of the host body’s memory. Sometimes it has full access to the host body’s memories. However, such creatures rarely get the mannerisms or speech patterns of the original host correct.

Sentient Free-Willed Undead (10%) is the rarest of Undead creatures. These are beings in which the original mentality has full control and direction over the Undead body. It is essentially the same person in death as it was in life. Odd things happen the sentient free-willed Undead. They usually are in denial about their condition (usually believing themselves to be alive but merely ill, under the weather, or disfigured). They often get confused about the passage of time (for instance, confusing years for weeks, or decades for years). They also tend to get obsessive about order (obsessive-compulsive disorder is very common amongst sentient free-willed Undead. They also often get obsessed about carrying out the tasks they did in life. For example, an Undead security guard may continue to patrol an abandoned factory for centuries while an Undead professor may continue to hoard books and write lectures that no one will ever hear. A sentient free-willed Undead’s alignment tends to drift towards ordered/structured and away from anything chaotic.

It is worth noting that, under the North Point Charter of Rights, sentient freewilled Undead have legal status and legal protections. They can be employed, own property, hold elected offices (except for lifetime appointments). Killing a sentient free-willed Undead has the same legal consequences as killing a living person. Most sentient free-willed Undead did not ask to be what they are.