

George, Shaun and Biff's Backyard Adventure

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/298989) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/298989>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	Gen
Fandom:	Newsflesh Trilogy - Mira Grant
Characters:	Shaun Mason , Georgia Mason
Additional Tags:	Zombies , Apocalypse , Siblings , Pre-Canon
Language:	English
Collections:	Yuletide 2011
Stats:	Published: 2011-12-22 Words: 1,944 Chapters: 1/1

George, Shaun and Biff's Backyard Adventure

by [coltsbane](#)

Summary

"She was diagnosed when we were five, so I don't really remember her without her sunglasses. And when we were nine, we got this really dumb babysitter who took George's glasses, said, "You don't need these," and threw them into the backyard, thinking we were spoiled little suburban brats too afraid of the outdoors to go out after them. So it's pretty plain that she was about as bright as a box of zombies."

— from Hail to the King,
the blog of Shaun Mason, April 7, 2037

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There were three things that made our decision to go into the backyard a dangerous one. The grass was long because Mom and Dad had been away for so long and no one had been by to cut it. There wasn't much light because it was way past our bed time and almost past the curfew that everyone with their brain intact kept to if they didn't want to end up zombie food. The third was that Shaun was beside me. That made it both safer, since he was better at fending off dead things than I was, and more likely that if there was something out here, he'd want to poke at it until it poked back.

I wasn't thinking about any of those things while digging through the high grass looking for my sunglasses. Most of my mental energy was focused on keeping my cool and trying to think about what I was going to say to our babysitter when we finally went inside.

"We should make sure Mom and Dad hire her again," Shaun said. He was on hands and knees ahead of me, trying to feel his way through the grass. He couldn't see as well as I could out here but that didn't stop him from groping at the ground in the dark.

My head shot up. "You say some stupid stuff sometimes, Shaun, but this might be the worst."

"I'm serious! Instead of sitting inside, getting told what to do by someone who has less of a brain than most of the zombies I've seen, we're out here having fun!"

"This isn't fun."

"I'm having fun."

Then it occurred to me that this wasn't the smartest idea I had ever made. When Shaun declared he was going out to get my sunglasses, I was angry and indignant and ready to charge out the door after him. Now the reality of the situation was starting to sink in. The babysitter hadn't come out after us. Her parting words were that we were too spoiled and scared to go outside. We weren't, but she was. Some babysitter. There was no way she was getting hired again.

"There's no way she's getting hired again. Mom and Dad won't want someone who thinks it's okay to leave us out here alone in the dark."

"Sure they will, George, as long as there's a camera running while we're out here."

I stopped feeling around in the dirt. "They're not that bad." For once, Shaun was silent. "They wouldn't put us in danger for ratings."

Shaun snorted. "They always do. Don't get me wrong, George, I love getting to eat outside and go on trips and doing all the stuff other kids don't get to do. It's going to give me an edge when we getting into blogging. I'm gonna be the best Irwin the Bay Area's ever seen and we're going to make lots of money and then move out and get our own place and go on adventures and you can tell the news and I'll make it look good and it's going to be so cool. But for now, we live with Mom and Dad and all of their viewers and readers. You don't have to get upset about it."

"I'm not," I protested. When Shaun had moments of clarity that got to me, it scared me more than any zombie ever could. I wanted to say that it wasn't like that, that Mom and Dad included us in their jobs because we were part of the family, but it was hard to keep telling myself that when Shaun's words held some truth, when I remembered every hug my mother had ever given me and when I remembered that most of them were only on camera.

"Yeah you are," Shaun said, but didn't push the issue beyond that. "It's okay. That's how they are and we are going to be way better than them when we're older."

I was about to retaliate, to say something about how Shaun had it wrong or ask if he'd been bitten since he got smart all of a sudden and personality changes were part of the onset of amplification, or even to silence him with a deadpan declaration that Santa wasn't real. He may have gotten over our parents being the way they were, but I wasn't sure he would ever get over the truth about Santa.

I didn't have a chance to say anything except his name. "Shaun?" I froze in place, my eyes wide.

"What?" Shaun knew that something was wrong.

"There's somebody else in the yard." I thought maybe the babysitter had come to her senses and come to get us before she got charged with negligence. You couldn't let two nine-year-olds run around outside after dark without some consequences.

It wasn't the babysitter.

Shaun turned and scrambled backwards towards me. "Holy shit."

We had to move. I grabbed Shaun's collar and hauled him back. "Shaun!"

"There's a zombie right there! Right there, George!"

"I know. I see it. We need to go." It wasn't fresh. It was almost human, except for the way it slumped to the side and couldn't walk straight and, oh right, the low moan. I hated that sound.

"Wait, I've never seen one this close. Get me a stick."

"Shaun, now!" It wasn't charging towards us and I wasn't sure it could with it being that rotten, but I didn't want to take any chances. We had to go now to give the house a chance to

let us in before anything got too animated – namely, Shaun's new friend.

"Fine," he sighed and picked himself up off the ground so I didn't have to try to drag him back to the house.

We were almost at the door when I realized he wasn't behind me. I looked around, but only saw tall grass. "Shaun?"

"Hey George!" Shaun backed out of the grass with a rake outstretched in his hand. At the other end of the rake was the zombie. "Look what I can do!" He wasn't big or strong, so keeping the zombie from pushing him back was hard work. "George, this is Biff. Biff, this is my sister George. We were out looking for her sunglasses when we ran into you. You see, the babysitter threw them out here because she was dumb and didn't think George needed them but, well, she does, so-"

"This isn't funny, Shaun."

"No," Shaun agreed solemnly. "This is awesome. There's a zombie in our backyard. You give me the best presents."

"Merry Christmas," I muttered, keeping as much distance between myself and the zombie as I could. Sometimes my brother did things I couldn't stop him from doing. One of these days it was going to get him killed. I hoped that day wasn't today. "How are you going to make him go away when you're done?"

Shaun didn't answer at first. He was struggling with Biff, who was getting antsy. "Um, well to tell you the truth I hadn't thought that far ahead." One day he was going to be a great Irwin until it got him killed. Right now, he was nine and headstrong and making me angry that we were going to die because he wanted to poke the dead guy. The babysitter wasn't going to come to our rescue. We were on our own, like we always were. It was just us.

"If we die, I want you to know I hate you."

"You're so good to me."

"And yet you're trying to get us killed."

"I'm not trying to get us killed. I have a rake." He said that with a touch of pride that didn't make sense to me. "And a plan."

There it was, the impending sense of doom that came with the words 'I have a plan' as said by Shaun Mason. The moan being carried by the wind from a few houses down wasn't helping. "Please tell me this plan involves more than running."

"This plan involves more than running," Shaun promised. "But you might want to start with that and keep the door open for me. Now. No really, George, start running!"

When someone told you to run, you ran. It didn't matter why. You didn't stop to ask questions. You ran and you ran hard and as fast as you could and you hoped it was in the right direction. I hit the door hard and tugged it open. Before the house was retrofitted, the

room I hurried into was a laundry. Now it was a secure room used for blood tests that would let us into the house if we passed or would make sure we didn't get out alive or dead if we failed.

The 'we' depended on Shaun getting here without Biff taking a bite out of him. I turned, door held open, to see Biff grab hold of Shaun. It wasn't full contact, but it was enough for Shaun to lose his footing and sprawl onto the concrete back porch. Biff went for Shaun's legs, the closest things to him, but received a kick to the kneecap instead. The crunch was loud as Biff went down. He really was rotting, but he'd still managed to keep up with Shaun this far. Even if they looked ready to drop, zombies were dangerous and would do everything they could to spread the virus that had made them what they were.

Shaun shot past me a second and a half later and I slammed the door shut behind him. The low lights came on in the room and made me wince. Even at this strength, I was going to get a headache. Biff was no longer an issue. Nothing got through that door now that it was locked. Not even us. "Did it-" I started to ask, but Shaun backed away from me. He wiped his mouth and blood came away on his sleeve.

"I hit my chin when I fell," he said and waved me off. He reached down to check his pants. There was a tear.

"Blood test. Now." I was in charge again. Out there was Shaun's territory. In here, I knew what I was doing. I grabbed his arm and pulled him over to the wall. Two vocal tests and a blood test would make everything okay.

We didn't mess around with the house security system today. There was no need to antagonize it when we needed it to tell us that everything was fine. I needed it to tell me everything was fine. This was the closest I'd ever come to losing Shaun. I knew that one day he would die first. I accepted that in theory. I'd never had to actually deal with it being a reality. I said my name. Shaun said his. We repeated the lines that showed up on our displays.

"Place your right hands on the testing pads," the security system ordered.

"On three?" Shaun asked, trying to keep his cool for me as much as for himself.

"On three." I kept my eyes on him the whole time.

"One."

"Two."

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