

# ZomBell

It is unwise to anthropomorphize. Used to be that it wasn't, really, but then: it used to be that the planet didn't have over eight billion people on it. Belief matrices that were perfectly safe in 1900 AD aren't nearly as innocuous now. Case in point: 'Ma Bell.' Americans under the age of forty are unlikely to remember the old Bell System of local phone service, but it was both real and ubiquitous. People *believed* in the System, even when they didn't like it. They also gave it a human name and role, which is *never* a good idea.

Why? Because companies and organizations don't die like human beings die. Occultly, that is. When a person dies, usually all the occult detritus that's accrued to him or her gets pulled through to the Other Side along with the human's soul. Undead are what you get when that detritus *isn't* pulled through; depending on how much is left behind, you can get anything from a barely manifesting ghost, to a revenant inexorably looking for its lost soul in other people's brains. Fortunately, the condition is rare.

Also fortunately, it's rare that a corporation generates its own occult detritus. Unfortunately, in ZomBell's case there was a combination of detritus being collected *and* the company being publicly executed in a ritualized fashion

(via a court case, in other words). It took several years of occult curdling before the effects became obvious, but by 1997 random phone booths were *eating* at least a thousand people per year. No bodies, no residue, they were just *gone*. Some researchers aren't sure if they're even really dead, which gets very horrifying to contemplate, if you let it. Which is why -- along with cell phones -- we don't have phone booths anymore. The problem was just getting worse, and desperate measures were called for.

Unfortunately, people still think about *phone booths*, too. It makes it harder for ZomBell to feed, since it has to manifest a booth first, but Undead are patient. Actually, they're not. They just don't get bored.

Anyway, that's why we don't go into random phone booths that we find in the wild. In fact... hand me that hand grenade, will you? Thanks. Either way, what happens next is going to be *spectacular*.

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