

Cocoa Metro Vignettes

A series of shrieks shattered the quiet. The scientist awoke in an instant, leapt from her chair and ran to the observation room. Her assistant was already there, shock and disbelief etched on his face. Behind the double-paned glass, Miranda and Sigmund, usually the most docile of the monkeys, were alternately drinking Cocoa Metro and splashing the other monkeys (and themselves) with the drinking chocolate. Their screeching intensified as they struggled to keep the other monkeys away from the Cocoa Metro bottles they cradled in their arms.

The other drinks that had been set out for the experiment — numerous containers of Tang, Red Bull, and Mello Yello — remained untouched on the large circular table that was partially obscured by leafy tendrils of foliage.

“Ummm...you seeing what I’m seeing?” said the assistant, his eyes glued to the spectacle.

After a short silence, the scientist replied, “That’s no ordinary chocolate milk.”

“Agreed. So I get that it has Belgian chocolate, but how is that enough to set them off like this?”

“No idea. All I know is that I’ve never seen those two go after a drink — or anything, for that matter — with such gusto.”

The assistant flashed a mischievous grin. “So say I was to grab some Cocoa Metro from the fridge for myself. Think anyone would mind?”

“Besides the monkeys, you mean?”

The assistant glanced at his boss and laughed.

“You found something that worked?”, said the commander in disbelief.
The young man, clad in a camouflage hoodie and torn jeans, nodded wearily.

The world was ten months into the zombie apocalypse, and the commander led a ragtag band of 43 survivors in a walled compound just south of Pittsburgh, USA. They, and other pockets of survivors across the country, had been trying for months to lure packs of extremely fast zombies — or Zeds, as they were called — into predetermined

locations long enough to eradicate them. They'd had no success — until now.

"Tell me how it went down," continued the commander, rubbing his bloodshot eyes.

The young man said, "We launched 80 bottles of a chocolate milk called Cocoa Metro about 200 yards outside the perimeter fence. Just after sundown, around 20 Zeds came out of the forest and quickly found the bottles." He paused, and then said, "After some tussling over the milk, they drank it for about 15 minutes before running off to the south."

The commander leaned back in his chair and whistled. "15 minutes, huh? Plenty of time to get a bead on 'em. We'll need to duplicate this result, just to make sure. How much of this milk is out there?"

"No idea. But if we need more, word is there's a factory up north that can still produce it."

The commander stared at the young man for a moment, then scanned the haggard, worn faces of the men and women standing around him. He saw something in their eyes he hadn't seen in a very long time.

Hope.

I looked at the short man across the table flanked by two bodyguards. I knew something of his past. He knew something of mine. He motioned for the suitcase in my hands. I slid it across the table, knowing I had one chance to make things right. Popping open the suitcase, he peered at the contents for what seemed like an eternity. He slowly reached in and pulled out a bottle.

"Cocoa Metro", he whispered, as he slowly rotated the bottle. Glancing at me sharply, he asked, "Why the delay?" I responded, "popular stuff."

He stared at me for a few seconds, then broke out in laughter. His bodyguards nervously joined in. Stunned, I stood motionless, not knowing what to do.

"You've done well, my friend," he said, then ordered one of his bodyguards to pour us all some of the exquisite drinking chocolate.

Later, as I returned to headquarters, I silently thanked Cocoa Metro and vowed to carry a refrigerated supply wherever I went...

The attorney read aloud the last item on the oil tycoon's will:

"And to my eldest daughter I transfer control of the Cocoa Metro account and stipulate that 20 crates of Cocoa Metro be delivered to your current residence for the remainder of your natural life."

The reaction was swift. The eldest daughter gasped, while the son leapt from his chair, red-faced with rage. "He promised that to me years ago! This is an outrage! I will fight this to the bitter end!"

The youngest daughter quickly put her arm around her brother and said softly, "Things change. That was then. Father left you an enormous monthly stipend, the yacht, and the bungalow in Fiji. He'd want us to be happy for each other."

"It's not fair," he muttered.

The eldest daughter expected the outburst, but knew her brother just needed time. The funeral was just days ago, after all. She knew she had just been handed her father's most desirable asset, but did she really need that much drinking chocolate?

After quickly mulling it over, she decided that no, she didn't. But there were enough crates delivered each month to supply her hand-picked favorites among immediate and extended family. As for her brother? She'd offer a monthly crate — for a price, of course. She'd heard that the rain forests of Fiji were something to behold...