

BRUNCH OF THE LIVING DEAD

by

Dan Conover

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FADE IN:

INT. GRANVILLE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

A casual but sophisticated restaurant in Charleston, S.C., before opening for the day's business. Waiters are prepping tables and light jazz plays in the background over the tinkling of glasses and silverware. MOOT, the relaxed owner/operator, sits at a table for a video interview, sipping water. A lower-third title identifies him as MOOT FUNWALL, RESTAURANTEUR, CHARLESTON, SC.

JOURNALIST (O.S.)

So you were just looking for ideas?

MOOT

Always. The restaurant market in Charleston is extremely competitive. I tell my people: If you're not innovating, you're dying.

JOURNALIST (O.S.)

Such as?

MOOT

Well, when we opened we specialized in tapas on small plates. One day I thought: How much could we charge if we served tapas on *medium-sized* plates? Or the *amuse bouche*. People didn't know what it meant. Solution? We hired a French translator.

JOURNALIST (O.S.)

And were these innovations profitable?

MOOT

No. Not even remotely. Which is why I brought in a consultant.

INT. CONSULTANTS' OFFICE - DAY

FRANCIS is a professionally dressed, serious looking woman. She is seated in a conference room for an interview. A lower-third title introduces her as FRANCIS MACHSNIXER, FOOD INDUSTRY CONSULTANT

FRANCIS

The magic word in the modern restaurant business today is niche.

(more)

FRANCIS (cont'd)

*Niche, niche, niche, niche, niche, niche, niche.* Moot had a great restaurant, a great kitchen staff, fantastic service -- but he needed a niche.

JOURNALIST (O.S.)

So you did some market research.

FRANCIS

Exactly. What are the underserved demographics in our market? We spent three months collecting, analyzing and running P&L simulations on all available data for this MSA, then drilled down on two particularly strong data points that, I believed, would boost Moot's charming little bistro into a cash-generating, competition-smashing, gourmet juggernaut. Number One: We found an enormous demand for upscale Sunday brunch service. And Number Two...

JOURNALIST (O.S.)

Zombies.

FRANCIS

Our preferred term is "Animated Non-Living Consumers." But yes...  
Zombies.

EXT. HOUSE IN MIDDLE CLASS NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Half a dozen ZOMBIES in varying states of decomposition and shabby dress stand outside a house, moaning and shuffling. One scratches awkwardly at the screen door, which summons the WOMAN OF THE HOUSE.

WOMAN OF THE HOUSE

(shaking her head)

Oh no, no, no. Get off my porch!

(turns head indoors)

Harry! It's those damn zombies again!

FRANCIS (V.O.)

It's hard to get solid numbers on the zombie population because the Census Bureau doesn't acknowledge their existence. Which is really irresponsible, since the federal government produces the Boson radiation that creates them. Anyway, our research indicates Zombie-Americans are the fastest-growing demographic group in the country.

The man of the house, HARRY, bursts through the door with a baseball bat.

HARRY

Fuckin' brain-eaters!

HARRY begins flailing at the ZOMBIES with the bat. They converge on him. There is moaning and growling and yelling and screaming.

FRANCIS (V.O.)

But effective marketing is more than just crunching numbers. You have to observe. Zombie-Americans typically lead difficult, stressful non-lives. So I thought, "Hey! Why not give them a relaxed, sophisticated dining experience where their special nutritional needs are met and they can feel comfortable and welcome?"

HARRY and the ZOMBIES fall out of the frame toward the ground in a struggling scrum. WOMAN OF THE HOUSE runs out the door, stops on the porch with a wild look on her face, then brandishes a chainsaw. She gives a wild-eyed battle cry, yanks the starter cord, and the chainsaw roars to life.

INT. TEST MARKETING STUDIO - DAY

We see VIDEO taken to document a FOCUS GROUP, and the date and time of the test are displayed as a digital watermark. ZOMBIES are seated around a conference table. Each zombie has a plate on which several different bite-sized pieces of food are arranged for tasting. The zombies are in the process of tasting something. Heather stands at the head of the table with a clipboard, smiling politely.

JOURNALIST (V.O.)

The next step for Machnixer: Focus groups.

FRANCIS

(in the video)

OK then, super. The next preparation we're going to try will be brains in a white wine reduction with capers and fresh shallots. It's the one on the top right.

The focus-group ZOMBIES take a food item off their tasting plates and begin chewing. FRANCIS notes their reactions appreciatively.

INT. GRANVILLE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

We are back at the table with MOOT.

JOURNALIST (O.S.)

Were you at all apprehensive about the consultants' recommendation?

MOOT

Sure. Are you kidding? I've worked at all sorts of restaurants, and none of them ever broke even on brunch service.

EXT. GRANVILLE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

A bunch of ZOMBIES are shuffling around outside the door to the restaurant, moaning and pawing at the window. A disgusted-looking WAITRESS unlocks the door and the ZOMBIES surge past her, staggering to tables and flopping awkwardly into chairs.

MOOT (V.O.)

But it was a hit. You know, on a good evening we were doing about 80 seatings, but our first Sunday zombie brunch we did 75, and now that the word is out, we're seating 100, 125 every Sunday.

VARIOUS SHOTS of ZOMBIES eating disgusting food with disgusting manners.

JOURNALIST (V.O.)

Have there been any difficulties?

A ZOMBIE paws at the WAITRESS, who flips open a butterfly knife and goes into a defensive crouch.

MOOT (V.O.)  
Staff turnover. I'd say that's probably been the biggest challenge.

ANOTHER ZOMBIE lurches into the frame and attacks the WAITRESS from behind. She screams and they fall out of the shot.

MOOT (V.O.)  
(continuing)  
I wouldn't say that the change has been exactly popular with the wait staff, but I think that's just because of the cultural differences. They're not exactly big tippers, you know.  
(chuckles)  
You can edit that out, right?

MORE WAITERS AND WAITRESSES run into the shot, bearing various improvised weapons, and a battle ensues.

INT. GRANVILLE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Back at the table interview with MOOT.

JOURNALIST (O.S.)  
So the menu is basically... human brains?

MOOT  
Brains, yeah. And gristle. You know: Organs, bones, various soft tissues. But mostly brains.

JOURNALIST (O.S.)  
Where do you GET them?

MOOT  
(Suddenly cautious)  
I have a supplier. But, um... that's proprietary information.  
(awkward pause)

INT. CONSULTANTS' OFFICE - DAY

We're back in the sit-down interview with FRANCIS.

FRANCIS

The future? I think it's bright.  
Let's face it: More Americans are  
turning into zombies every year,  
and it's time the food services  
business took a cue from  
television and Hollywood and Wal-  
Mart and started catering to  
zombie needs and tastes.

EXT. GRANVILLE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

A BUNCH OF ZOMBIES stagger out of the restaurant after their  
brunch.

JOURNALIST (V.O.)

In light of your success, have you  
ever considered expanding your  
regular menu to attract more of  
the zombie market?

MOOT (V.O.)

What? No. Are you kidding me?

INT. GRANVILLE'S RESTAURANT - DAY

Back at the sit-down interview with MOOT.

MOOT

They're ZOMBIES, dude.  
(takes a sip)  
I fucking HATE zombies.

FADE OUT.