

HUNGRY FOR HUMANS

By Alex Bair

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A YOUNG WOMAN lies on a couch in a psychiatrist's office. THE PSYCH sits a short distance away with a notepad and pen. We seem to be joining the scene just after the therapy session has begun. YOUNG WOMAN lies uncomfortably on the couch; she is clearly unsettled and can't stop fidgeting and moving. THE PSYCH has a bandage around one hand, which should remain hidden from the audience until indicated, and a handkerchief.

A YOUNG WOMAN: What do I worry about most? (Pause) Zombies. Well, specifically a zombie apocalypse, not the individual ones...? Is that strange? I—I know it's juvenile, I know that. Zombies do not exist.

THE PSYCH: *nods*

A YOUNG WOMAN: (the nod has caught her attention, distracts her for a moment) Uh...yeah, I...uh, *is* that childish? Should I be concerned?

THE PSYCH: *considers for a moment, breathes in deeply and audibly, shakes head emphatically. Coughs.*

A YOUNG WOMAN: It's not? Really? (She sits up) Because, to me, it, uh, it feels pretty strange. I'm not some sort of crazy person. The setting would seem to negate that point but... I used to be afraid of normal things. Fire. Muggers. Terrorist attacks. Bees—no spiders. Uh, well, bees and spiders. Murder. I had a pretty long period of time when I thought our next-door neighbor was a witch... I had for years these perfectly normal person fears but recently... I don't know. I'm not sure what happened. (Slowly, as if coming upon a great epiphany) I guess this all started after I first saw a Zombie movie...but of course, oh Jesus Christ of course it did. Why would I be afraid of zombies if I didn't even know what they were?

I mean, ok I'm not going to pretend that I don't watch a lot of zombie movies, I do. But I enjoy them! Why would I watch them if I didn't enjoy them? Some of them aren't even scary. Like "Night of the Living Dead" is this crazy allegory for racism more than anything else! And "Day of the Dead" is this huge criticism of consumerism and all of the zombies in it are *blue*. Literally. It's like they're in

blue-face like they're Smurfs or something. It's hilarious! A lot of the newer ones are super freaky, but, I read somewhere that watching scary movies is cathartic, you know, we release our tensions and, uh, anxieties by getting scared in a controlled situation. Is that true?

THE PSYCH: *looking down at notepad, coughs and wipes his forehead with the handkerchief, hands shaking. No direct response to YOUNG WOMAN.*

A YOUNG WOMAN: (Not phased by lack of response) It seems true. It seems like a thing that would be true.

(Long pause. The YOUNG WOMAN looks to THE PSYCH who is violently coughing)

Are you alright? We could stop? We should probably stop, I'm sure you've got real mental disorders to diagnose...

(Still coughing, THE PSYCH manages to motion for her to continue, revealing for the first time the bandaged hand)

Oh, ok. Well, if you're sure...

Hmm, it's just that, I've just found, recently, that I don't know anyone anymore. I mean, not literally, you know. I know you, now. That's one person at least, huh?

(Tries to laugh, looks at THE PSYCH who is holding the handkerchief to his mouth, perhaps shivering. He does not laugh)

Or, I guess not.

When I was younger, I knew tons of people. I'm an only child, which was fine, which was great! I only sometimes wanted siblings. And there was always school and kids on the block and my teachers and guidance counselors. And my parents, they *had* to talk to me. Legally I think, or else it's child abuse. And then I went to college out of state, but I still knew all those people. I, uh, maybe didn't make as many friends in college as some people but I had acquaintances certainly, and at home my old friends were sometimes around. It was more of an individual growing period for me. I guess I was one of those people that, uh, found themselves at college. I did all my readings and I wrote all those papers and my grades were always really great. I think I was happy! (pause) But now... So, yeah,

(She looks at THE PSYCH and points to the notepad in his lap. He looks like he might be asleep, although this fact is seemingly unnoticed by the YOUNG WOMAN)

it probably says on that chart there that I work for an ad firm, because that's how I have insurance to pay for this, uh, thing. But, doesn't that sound like it would be a fun environment? Graphic artists, cool clients, awesome ads, everyone super computer savvy. I was so excited to get a job there, I even moved to a new city which was something I swore I'd never do again after going away to college, but when I got there...or, here I guess...everyone was already, uh, in the middle of their lives. It's like they were in *their* lives, and I was in *my* life, except for my life has no one else in it and only wants to be in their lives. I've never felt so, uh, isolated, I guess, before. I mean, honestly, I only have 11 followers on Twitter! I haven't had a Facebook notification for weeks and even the creepy guys on MySpace have stopped asking to be my friends. I don't know what's wrong with everyone all of a sudden. Or maybe it's me.

But anyway, the reason I'm here is because I've been having these, oh god it's so embarrassing, these sort of elaborate fantasies I guess where I can't stop thinking about the world becoming zombie infested.

(The PSYCH has slumped even further down in his chair)

So, for example, I was at the grocery store the other day and I was buying only things that could last a long time without refrigeration, which I guess isn't a terribly bad plan because if there were any sort of long-term power outage or natural disaster or a Y2K type event I would be ok, but *then* I started exclusively choosing food that could be used as a weapon or zombie deterrent, and now I have a whole cupboard filled with coconuts and canola oil and vodka and hazelnuts with their shells still on and garlic even though I *know* that's for vampires, but just in case.

(She looks at THE PSYCH for a moment, he is still slumped down in his chair, and she interprets his lack of reaction as confusion or judgment. After an embarrassed pause she finally blurts out an explanation.)

If you're wondering about the canola oil, it's because I have linoleum floors and if zombies got in I could pour it all over so they would slip and fall. (She sighs) Everything else is pretty obvious, right? Coconuts to throw at their heads, hazelnuts to put on the floor like, uh, like marbles so they'll keep falling down. Vodka for Molotov Cocktails? But none of that made me feel better! And I think that I might be a little allergic to hazelnuts because every time I touch them or I open that cupboard I can feel my throat closing a little bit.

Also, I, uh...you know that feeling you get when you're driving home alone late at night? It's that time where, you park your car and then you have to find your bag or your hat and then you drop your keys or something while you're trying to lock the door and everything seems so much louder and echo-y and there's no one around, at least no one that you can see. And of course it's only when you're coming home late at night that you have to park across the street and half-way up the block and then you just walk really fast and fumble with your keys again as you're trying to unlock the door? Well, like everyone I've always imagined someone coming out of the shadows and mugging me or killing me or stealing my car or something. Or, sometimes I would imagine that scary story? You know, the one where the people are driving home and they hear a news bulletin on the radio about an escaped mental patient with a hook for a hand and then when they get out of their car a bloody hook is stuck in the door...I guess, now that I think about it a hook in the door wouldn't be that bad. I mean, it would be, uh, really disgusting and everything, but you would basically be a hero for having stopped the mental patient from hooking anyone. Although, maybe that's not really the point of the story... Anyway, I, like I say, I used to worry about the muggers and the hooks, but now I always think it's going to be zombies. Zombies coming out of nowhere while I stupidly turn my back and try to unlock my door. And I'm not afraid of just one showing up, I sort of figure I can take at least, uh, three of them just with what I have with me at all times. But what if suddenly *hoards* of them were stumbling towards you?

And then last night...oh, last night...I, uh, couldn't sleep. At all. I just kept hearing strange noises outside and it seemed like every time I would look out the window I would see some scary person shuffling around in the street. I was lying in bed trying to fall asleep but I couldn't just lie there without having some kind of protection, so I

had this axe lying next to me. But it turns out that trying to sleep with an axe in your bed is not very restful. It's like that in my whole apartment—it basically looks like a bunker or something. I've added fortifications everywhere, but I still don't think it's safe. I feel like I can't touch anything without getting caught in some potential crossfire or scratched by barbed wire or accidentally sitting on a hidden knife.

(The YOUNG WOMAN turns and lies down on the couch facing away from THE PSYCH) I hate insomnia. I can fill up 8 hours in the daytime easily enough, but 8 hours at night is impossible. Why do you think that is? Is it because we can't go outside? Or the TV is really boring? I live alone, but even in my own house at night I feel like I have to be quiet. And at 4am you don't want to have the lights in your house blazing, you know? It just seems rude.

(THE PSYCH, who at some point since he last coughed or moved has died from the zombie bite on his hand covered by the bandage, begins to re-animate.)

Maybe that's part of my problem. Being worried about zombies seems kind of like a weird projection of being uncomfortable at home, but I don't really understand psychiatry or psychology or whatever.

THE PSYCH: (looks up at YOUNG WOMAN, utters a zombie groan): Uhhhh HUUUUUUUH (should sound vaguely like he is agreeing with her)

A YOUNG WOMAN: (Without turning to look at him) Huh, yeah, I think you're right. I just need to be more comfortable with myself. Maybe I just need to spend some more "me" time instead of just working and barricading my house. Yeah, if I work on me I'm sure things will get easier. (Pause. THE PSYCH begins to stand and shuffle towards where the YOUNG WOMAN is lying) Or, maybe I should do something drastic to make myself more interesting. I don't think I could shave my head or get like a face tattoo or anything like that, but maybe I can bleach my hair or something. Or start talking only in accents or...OH! I got it, I'll start a vlog on YouTube showing people all my zombie fortifications so I can help other people like me. Because there must be lots of people like me out there, right? I just have to find them.

(As she speaks these last lines THE PSYCH has finally reached the couch and is about to grab her. He lets out a terrible zombie moan. BLACKOUT. She screams)

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