

# *The Town Drunk*

*Presents*

## **GRAVEYARD SHIFT**

*Lucy A. Snyder*

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### **Dead Men Don't Need Coffee Breaks**

Brooklyn, NY—Corporations across North America are eagerly embracing new necro-technologies that enable them to employ the life-challenged.

“People are still a little uncomfortable with terms like ‘animated corpse,’” admits top HR consultant Mindy Axedame. “We prefer to call it ‘insourcing.’ We bring *in* the newly undeceased, which are an *incredibly* cost-effective *resource* for any company that needs non-managerial labor. *Insourcing.*”

Rick Flint, CEO of the popular online discount retailer Hawt Shawpz, is thrilled with the new employment trend. “Just last year, our entire call center was alive. We had to pay each of those 200 people \$7 or \$8 an hour. And they wanted sick leave, and health benefits—it was nuts. We only netted 14 million last year; I can’t afford frills and absenteeism.”

But since Hawt Shawpz started insourcing, Flint says, the company has become vastly more productive. “The dead don’t call in sick or slack off on Fridays. They don’t complain about rats in the walls. They’re never late, because we bus them in from our corporate crypt. It’s great! I can work a zombloyee for 20 hours straight for just \$20 worth of pig brains.”

Hawt Shawpz system administrator Brad Janett says that running the zombloyee staff is fairly simple. “I do the most work getting them booting Linux properly and debugging their wetware programming. The disk image gives them a hundred or so phone scripts to recite. Zombloyees are usually bright enough to pick the right script, even if they’re not so good at forming words on their own.”

Janett says that the zombloyee’s cyberspiritual operating systems are extremely robust. “Pretty much the only problems we have are wetware failure. Mr. Flint thought we could do without air conditioning last summer, but then about a quarter of the call center mildewed.”

Don Frites, owner of the O’Burger diner chain, says that insourcing has been a boon to his

company. He regrets that he can't use the undead as much as he'd like.

"Midwestern restaurant patrons have some squeamishness issues," says Frites. "They just aren't ready to accept a zombie taking their order or dishing up their chili. Zombies are great behind the scenes; you just have to make sure the public can't see them working."

Frites is quick to add that undead restaurant employees don't present any health risk to the public. "There's still this perception that they're these oozing corpses dropping parts everywhere, but that's completely outdated. When properly plasticized, our zombloyees are cleaner than our regular employees—all you do is wipe them down with orange cleaner every shift to get the grease residue off."

Ed Rudge, Outreach Director for Cybermantic Staffing Solutions Inc., sees a bright future for corporate insourcing.

"There's no limit to what businesses can do for their stockholders when employee living expenses are a thing of the past," he says. "Every one of our clients tells us the same thing: the dead are resurrecting corporate profit margins in a big way."

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### **Business Insourcing Offers Life After Death**

Atlanta, GA—The zombie insourcing movement is revolutionizing the U.S. healthcare industry.

"Medical costs and insurance premiums have been rising 10-20% every year, and over 50 million consumers don't have health coverage" says Ed Rudge, Outreach Director for Cybermantic Staffing Solutions Inc. "That means that a whole lot of consumers are going to default on their medical bills.

"In the past, all an ethical doctor could do was to sell unpaid accounts to a collection agency. And a lot of doctors just aren't good at insisting on payment if the patient dies."

Rudge says that cybermancy has created solutions that benefit both families and the medical industry.

"When an uninsured patient is circling the drain, CSS pays a small fee to the hospital or attending physician so we can come in to speak to the families," he says.

"We show them their projected bill and tell them they have two options. First option is their loved one dies. Second option is they sign their loved ones to a post-mortem labor contract, the bill goes away, and they get to see their loved ones on Sundays.

"Our corporate priests visit the patient shortly before death and perform a ritual to download the soul and its memories into a duppy jar," says Rudge.

“We’ll raise the body, preserve it, and install the operating system. The soul can express itself through the OS via our proprietary software. It gives the zombloyee and their family the sense that they still have an intact personality and free will, but our programming controls all their on-the-job behaviors.”

Rudge explained that after a patient’s corpse has been reanimated, CSS contracts with employers who pay \$3-\$4 per hour for the undead employee’s work. Families get 15%, and the rest is divided between CSS and the physicians and hospitals that were owed money at the time of the patient’s death.

“Most hospital-raised undead retain fair intelligence and motor skills, and we can work them 120 hours a week,” Rudge says. “The Sunday reunions I see would just warm your heart. Most families are so thrilled to have their loved ones back they don’t mind the way they smell one little bit.”

Rudge estimates that most undead workers should be physically sound for ten years or so. “Hospitals tell us ten years is the magic number to get most bills paid off, so our cyberspiritual experts have been working hard to guarantee that our zombloyees will hold up under extended physical labor conditions. A call center drone should last much, much longer.”

50-year-old CSS Contractee #1542A, who goes by the name “Chip,” expressed dismay over his wife’s decision to sign his corpse over to the company.

“I say, this zombie business... utter bollocks,” Chip says haltingly, taking a break from his 16-hour dishwashing shift to snack on a bucket of cow brains. “I was in a coma... not dead yet! Now I’m in hot water all day... this plastic skin bloody well itches. I want my solicitor... can’t work the phone. Ggggaaaargh.”

Despite similar complaints of deceptive recruiting, many terminally ill patients and people in dangerous lines of work are signing contracts with CSS and other labor supply companies.

“Hell yeah, I signed when the Infinity Labor guy visited our platoon,” says Marine Corporal Lance Pike. Pike, a 19-year-old West Virginia native, says that Infinity has recently signed an exclusive contract with the Defense Department.

“He was offering us \$10,000 sign-on bonuses,” explains Pike. “I figure, shoot, my woman back home can sure use the cash, and if I take one for the team in Iraq, Infinity will get me back on the front lines with my buddies.”

Pike’s Infinity Labor recruiter, Rusty Tiburon, praises the young Marine’s decision and hopes other servicemen and women will follow suit. “Now that we have the technology, it’s downright un-American to just lay there and rot when you could be doing your part for the nation’s economy.”

### **Corporate Vampires Sink Teeth Into Business World**

San Diego, CA—As corporations across North America embrace the life-challenged as cost-effective labor, many are turning to vampires to manage their newly-zombified staff.

“We always had a terrible time keeping our third shifts properly staffed and supervised,” says Don Frites, owner of the O’Burger diner chain. “The new crop of vampires has been great. They’re sharp, efficient, and we can partly pay them in cow blood from our affiliate slaughterhouses. Normally that stuff would just go right down the drain, and now it’s keeping our night managers very happy.”

Ed Rudge, Outreach Director for Cybermantic Staffing Solutions Inc. (CSS), says the corporate demand for vampires has increased nearly 1000% over the past year.

“Electricity is cheaper at night, so it makes sense for businesses to have third-shift zombloyee crews working factories and assembly lines, cleaning, trimming corporate lawns—the possibilities are endless,” says Rudge.

“But zombloyees present unique management challenges: they’re not very bright, and they crave living flesh. Normal managers stand a good chance of having their heads cracked open when their z-crews get hungry. Vampires are in demand largely because they don’t smell very good to the zombloyees. The z-crews listen to vampires instead of trying to figure out how to get to their sweet, juicy brains.”

Financial analyst Bentley Chazworth says corporate vampirism is no passing fad.

“Let’s face it, domestic zombie workers are cheaper than Chinese orphans. With a couple of buckets of cow brains and a vampire, you can run a windowless zombie call center around the clock. But you’ve *got* to have that vampire,” he says.

“Unless you have a degree from a top school like Harvard, the job market’s pretty tight for live workers,” says Chazworth. “If you’re a student in a state college MBA program someplace, becoming a vampire is definitely the way to go if you want a career in middle management.”

Eve Hart, a night supervisor for a San Diego software firm, claims that CSS misled her during her recruitment.

“Even though I’d heard horror stories of new vampires being sick for days, CSS promised my transformation would be painless. I’d rate it right there with my root-canal, so... eh.

“But there was a lot of other stuff they should have told me about,” she insists. “The sun thing, sure, I knew about that, *everybody* knows that. I’ve always been sun-sensitive, so no biggie. But they told me my body would be practically maintenance free, and *that’s* a load of crap.

“After a couple of days, I stank like spoiled blood. Ew. So I hopped in the shower, and I got totally burned all over! Nobody warned me about fresh running water.

“True, my period’s gone—total yay—but I still have to shave my legs and get my hair cut. That’s, like, totally maintenance-y.”

When asked if she regrets becoming a vampire, Hart admitted that she did not. “But I still feel like they weren’t straight with me. And when my contract’s up, if I ever see my counselor in a dark alley—well, dinner’s on him, if you know what I mean.”

Baron Olaf Würgerov says that he enjoys his newfound career as Overnight Overlord for the Hawt Shawpz customer fulfillment center.

“In olden days, I used to much enjoy putting villagers’ heads on spikes,” Baron Würgerov says. “I only sometimes get to do head spiking now, but you know, this job lets me assert myself in very positive way. I am much growing as person.”

Baron Würgerov agrees that his transition from haunting subterranean Berlin to working for a U.S. corporation wasn’t without a few snags.

“At weekly meetings, nobody want to sit next to me. It was all the rotted fluids, you see. After 1000 years living with rats, these little things you do not notice,” Baron Würgerov shrugs. “So I learn about dry cleaning and Altoids. Is no big deal after all.”

Business trainer Laura Loveblut, author of *Who Moved My Spleen?*, stresses that new vampires need to educate themselves to stay competitive.

“Knowing the ins and outs of being a modern corporate vampire is like knowing how to dress properly for an interview, or knowing that you shouldn’t slaughter the secretary on your way out of the building. It’s simply not your prospective employer’s job to tell you these things,” says Loveblut.

“Will you still have to shave? Will you have to shower? Most definitely,” she says. “Being undead doesn’t mean you’ve left behind the expectations of the living world.”

“You’ll be able to see yourself just fine in any mirror, unless it’s backed in real silver, and last I checked Pottery Barn didn’t stock many of those,” says Loveblut.

“You *will* have to worry about burns from unusually clean running water or from water contaminated with trace silver. I tell my new vampire clients to invest in an elective ion exchange water filtration system for your home. It takes out the silver, and puts in just enough crematory ash to de-purify your supply. Braun makes a good model called Midnight Bathworks,” she says. “And after you shower or shave, be sure to use a good moisturizer to prevent flaking.”

“And kids, do yourself a favor: get those old silver fillings taken out of your teeth *before* you make an appointment with your campus vampire rep to have yourself turned.”

### **Unemployed Playing Dead To Find Work**

Columbus, OH—Some still-living workers have covertly joined the ranks of zombloyees in call centers and on work crews. Employment agencies have nicknamed these live workers “cryptos.”

“I didn’t set out to be a crypto, that’s for sure,” says a 33-year-old Columbus resident who identifies himself only as John. “I’ve got a BFA in musical theater and an MA in Enochian Literature; I always figured on being a college professor, but I got hella burned out in grad school.”

John quit his PhD program just as Internet start-ups were discovering riches, and he quickly found work as a Web designer. However, his good job didn’t last; the dot-com bust left him unemployed with no money to continue his schooling.

“I couldn’t even get a job grilling weenies,” he says. “Nobody’s in a hurry to hire you for entry level work if you’ve got a graduate degree. They think you’ll cut and run the moment you get something better. Which you will, but who expects anyone to make those jobs a career anyway?”

During his two-year unemployment, John made ends meet by moving into a dilapidated farmhouse at the edge of the city with six dryads who had lost their forest to a failed condominium development. His parents also lent him money until his father was forced into early retirement.

“But then I finally I got a job at the Hawt Shawpz call center on the westside. Eight bucks an hour wasn’t much, but it made my rent.”

Disaster struck when Hawt Shawpz replaced their live call staff with zombloyees practically overnight. John was ineligible for unemployment, and soon his housemates were threatening to turn him into an elderberry bush if he didn’t pay his share.

Despondent, John went to visit his elderly grandmother in her nursing home. “There was this cute girl there signing the old folks up for her zombloyee agency—I’m not gonna say which one. But listening to her... the light just went on inside my head,” John says.

“I chatted her up a little and asked what it would take for me to get onboard at one of the call centers,” he says. “I haven’t been eating too well and everyone says I look sickly, so I figured I could play dead pretty easily.”

John says the young woman took pity on his situation and got him a copy of the call response script.

“I memorized it front to back—I was always good at that when I was doing theater. We made this deal where I pay her \$50 out of each paycheck and she works things so I slip in and out on partial shift changes so I don’t have to go more than 16 hours at a stretch.

“I have to put this mix of rotten fish and catnip in my hair. The fish makes me smell dead, and zombies hate catnip. They won’t come near my brains when I’m wearing that stuff, not as long as management feeds them on time, anyhow. Alley cats follow me home all the time now, though—the dryads are running a makeshift shelter for them under our porch.

“I work twice as long now to make what I did at Hawt Shawpz, but at least I’m not homeless. Or shrubbery,” he says.

John remains optimistic about his situation. “I’m getting really good at this zombie thing. I guess I’m a better actor than I ever gave myself credit for. If I don’t end up joining these guys for real soon, I’m moving out to New York or LA to try to get some theatre gigs.”

John’s dryad roommate Ellora is confident that he will eventually reach his goals.

“He’s pretty smart for a mortal,” she admits. “My cousin’s attached to a blue oak near FOX Studios, and she’s heard they’re going to start hosting auditions for a new reality game show called *The Simple Unlife*. They pitched it as cryptos versus celebrity vampires in Amish farm contests in rural Pennsylvania. John will be a shoo-in!”

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