

# Zombie Strippers

*by* Chris Okum



There's something wrong with the man who cuts my hair. I have very strange hair. It takes someone with a lot of experience to cut my hair without making me look like I'm suffering from post-Apocalyptic radiation sickness. Every hair on my head goes in a different direction. That's what makes it hard to cut my hair. The man who cuts my hair is the only person I have ever met who understands my hair and how to cut it. I've been going to see this man every two weeks for over twenty years. His shop is two blocks from my apartment. I go there every other Sunday. I am always the first customer of the day. The man who cuts my hair waits until I sit in the barber chair before he reminds me that there is a fifth of scotch and some peppermint patties on the counter if I want them. I always

tell him thank you but no thank you and he always makes sure to emphasize that they're there if I want them. Around ten years ago I started to try and make conversation with the man who cuts my hair. I would say things like, "Hey, have you seen any good movies lately?" and he would say, "*Zombie Strippers*," and I would say, "Was it any good?" and he would say, "Jenna Jameson is in it," and then he would ask me if I knew who Jenna Jameson was, and I would say, "Yeah, sure," and then I would ask him, "Is she any good in it?" and he would say, "Yeah, she's a pretty good actress. For a fucking whore." Or I would say things like, "Hey, have you noticed there are a lot more homeless people walking around the neighborhood these days?" and he would say, "Didn't notice it. But then again, I'm not fucking looking for it either, now am I?" At some point I stopped trying to make conversation with the man who cuts my hair. He didn't seem to mind. He could stand there and cut my hair in total silence and then take my money and it didn't bother him one bit that we didn't talk. It has always cost forty dollars to cut my hair and I have always given the man who cuts my hair sixty dollars. I thought that was a nice tip but the man who cuts my hair doesn't act like it is. Sometimes when I'm walking my dog around the neighborhood I will walk past the shop and the man who cuts my hair will be sitting outside and I will stop and say hello and the man who cuts my hair will always act like he has no idea who I am. I will stop and say, "Hello, Victor," and he will say, "Hi," and he won't say my name because I don't think he knows my name. I will ask him how he is and he will say, "Fine," and that will be the end of the conversation. Lately I have been crossing the street if I see the man who cuts my hair sitting outside of his shop. But the man who cuts my hair hasn't been sitting outside of his shop that much lately. And he hasn't been at his shop in general that much either. There have been a number of Sundays when I've gone to the shop and he's not there. There's a GONE FISHING sign in the window and that means I have to wait another week to get my hair cut. The last time I got my hair cut I asked the man who cuts my hair how he was doing and he said, "Not good. I have COPD. I smoked cigars for thirty fucking years and now

I'm having trouble breathing." And he is. The man who cuts my hair wheezes while he cuts my hair now. And he also needs a knee replacement. He already had one knee replaced before I started going to him and now he needs the other replaced. So the man who cuts my hair can hardly breathe or stand while he's cutting my hair. But he still cuts my hair. And he still does a good job. I started to try and make an effort again to talk to the man who cuts my hair. I said something like, "I think I'm starting to lose my hair," and the man who cuts my hair said, "Yeah, you are," and I said, "Oh well, at least I had my hair for 53 years, right?" and he said, "Oh yeah? I had my hair for only 18 fucking years before I lost it." The man who cuts my hair is bald. It almost looks like he has alopecia. There is not one hair on his entire body except for his eyebrows. What he does have though is lots of pictures of himself with famous people up on the walls of his shop. There is a picture of him with the award-winning actor, singer and entertainer Robert Davi. There is a picture of him with the world-famous chef and restaurateur Wolfgang Puck. And there is a picture of him with former two-time Governor of California Jerry Brown. When I saw the picture of him and Jerry Brown I asked him how he knew Jerry Brown and he said, "I don't." I asked the man who cuts my hair what Jerry Brown was like and he said, "He's a fucking asshole." The man who cuts my hair has lived in the same neighborhood his entire life. He went to high school down the street. One day he was in class and they told him to go to the Principal's Office and when he got there they handed him his draft notice and said, "Good luck."

