

"NO FLESH SHALL BE SPARED" (Book Review)

Written by Trevor Parker

Thursday, 30 December 2010 12:10



Full disclosure: Carnell, author of the rollicking new zombies-meet-Ultimate Fighting novel, NO FLESH SHALL BE SPARED (now available from ZED Presents... Publishing), is a longtime contributor to FANGORIA magazine. Please don't let notions of nepotism dissuade you from taking this review seriously, thus depriving yourself of a brawny, bloody slice of escapism that will launch your inner fourteen-year-old boy into paroxysms of glee.

If you no longer nurture an inner fourteen-year-old boy (or are female), your enthusiasm for NO FLESH SHALL BE SPARED may be dampened, since Carnell's effort is bolstered by the pillars of male adolescent interest: martial arts, girls, pro sports and messy undead mastication. NO FLESH's hero is Cleese, a mono-monikered tough guy recruited by the televised Undead Fight League to battle zombies in a cage for money. Cleese is the typically sullen antiauthoritarian whose ilk is usually portrayed onscreen by thick slabs like Vin Diesel. He finds himself sequestered in a Spartan training facility, where he's tutored on the finer points of competitive zombie dismemberment by Monk, his equally gruff coach and veteran of the cage. Cleese soon adapts to the UFL's philosophy of Zen and the art of mutilation, with firearms, blades and bare-knuckles at his tactical disposal. Once he's finally inside the cage and dispensing his particular style of havoc on platoons of rotting combatants, his matches quickly climb the Nielsen ratings. Outside the cage, he falls for a lovely, lethal co-competitor while struggling to sort out treacherous motives behind the figures manipulating the UFL from the safety of their plush boardrooms.



NO FLESH SHALL BE SPARED betters the recent spate of redundant "zombie apocalypse" novels in the sense that, here, the apocalypse has already come and gone. Readers are spared another unnecessary rehash of bursting graves and bickering survivors, as the initial outbreak is only glimpsed in flashback chapters. Society has had years to adjust, transfigure, and even profit from its new circumstance, its new idea of normality. NO FLESH's central conceit of zombie prize fighting is not exactly original (A similar sequence in Romero's LAND OF THE DEAD leaps immediately to mind) and the story follows a mostly predictable sports/action movie formula, but the steady pacing, friendly prose and tense fight passages combine to work smashingly well. The inevitable moments of zombie carnage are satisfyingly wet, the height of which is reached in the opening chapter and features a breastfeeding mother and a baby who is very, very, hungry. Really, Fango's only real quibble is this: while definitely appropriate for the

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subject matter, Carnell's testosterone-amped dialogue often tries too hard to be both breezy and threatening, with grown men bumping chests and calling each other "f**ksticks" and "a**clowns". Also, can we please now have a moratorium on straight-faced, non-ironic usage of the phrase "opened up a can of whup-ass?"

Even with its flaws, NO FLESH SHALL BE SPARED trumps pretty much every summer action movie released over the past few years in terms of providing muscular, rambunctious fun. A peek into a lesser-explored dimension of the zombie mythos is always welcome, and if you perhaps know of any real fourteen-year-old-boys that you'd like to see put down the game controller and dig into an actual book, buy them NO FLESH SHALL BE SPARED now and thank FANGORIA later.

You can order yourself a copy of NO FLESH SHALL BE SPARED right [here](#) .



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