



**Lunch Meat**  
Michael M. Hughes

**Published:** 2008

**Categorie(s):**

**Tag(s):** horror fiction lunch "short story"

## Lunch Meat

by Michael M. Hughes

<http://michaelmhughes.com>

---

Lunch meetings were the worst.

I stared out the window of Morero Inc.'s boardroom on the eleventh floor, watching the crowd of activists milling below. It was the largest group of protesters yet, chanting slogans and shuffling in circles and jabbing their crudely painted signs into the air.

"Fucking idiots," Jorgenson said. I hadn't realized he was standing next to me. Jorgenson was the CEO of Morero Inc.—and my boss. He puffed a cigar, and the smoke leaked slowly out the side of his mouth. "Brain-dead imbeciles."

I nodded and took my seat. My stomach rumbled. The lunch caterer was late again. The eight of us sat at the mahogany table, in our usual seats, saying the usual things. But this meeting was particularly glum. The activists were winning—Morero's stock had plunged to a record low, and Jorgenson's ass was on the line. Meaning, of course, that my ass, as V.P. of marketing, was on the line, too.

Jorgenson's secretary, Mindy, sat across from me. Her makeup was thicker than an outhouse paint job, and her new wig, an auburn, curled monstrosity, had slid an inch or two off center and looked like it might slip even more. Pathetic. She smiled at me and mimed lifting a fork to her mouth. I rolled my eyes.

"Martin." Jorgenson glared. "Where's the update? What the hell are you guys doing down there on the fourth floor—jerking each other off?"

I cleared my throat. I hated the old bastard, and had regular fantasies in which I crushed open his fat head with a baseball bat. "We've done the rounds of the talk shows. And we've shipped thirty thousand of those Meat is Awesome comic books to grade schools up and down the East Coast. And the print campaign—"

He wasn't even listening.

"I don't care about that crap. I went into the grocery store today, and you know what I saw? Do you even shop at the grocery store, Martin? I don't think you do. Because Russo Meats had double the freezer space that we have. Double!"

I hoped the caterer would arrive soon or Jorgenson would be having me for his midday meal. "I have seen the latest market share figures. But I—"

“But nothing, Martin! If you don’t turn this around you’ll be up to your balls in slop at the slaughterhouse.” He looked at Mindy, who was idly picking at a sore on her elbow. “When did you call the goddamned caterers?”

“I called them at eleven. A half-hour earlier than last time.”

Jorgenson snarled. “Next time, call them first thing in the morning. And if they can’t get our lunches here on time, fire them.”

Mindy nodded. “Yes, sir.”

My stomach gurgled again. Mindy heard it, and stifled a laugh into her bony fist. When she pulled her hand away her lipstick had smeared. She smelled worse today than yesterday, and the perfume she’d been bathing in only accented her rancid odor. She limped to the door, struggled with the knob, and left. Thank God. I could breathe through my nose again.

Jorgenson paced stiffly. The others sat in silence, glassy-eyed. It was the same as every weekly lunch meeting—Jorgenson fuming and ripping me to pieces, Mindy stinking up the place, and the rest of them staring into empty space.

I jabbed my hands in my pockets. Felt something. I’d left home with some lady fingers in my right pocket—leftover dessert from a dinner party. But it would be rude to eat them in front of everyone. Just thinking about them made my mouth moisten.

Jorgenson asked for the usual rundown—Russo’s advertising campaign and market penetration, blah blah blah. Nothing had changed in a week. Consumer attitudes, typified by the chanting mob at the front door of the building, were making Russo into the leading distributor of hormone and pesticide free, organic, free-range meats. Russo used bigger cages, or, in some cases, no cages at all. Quick, painless, ethical slaughter. They claimed free-range was healthier and, most importantly, tasted better.

And everyone in the room knew they were right.

No one dared ask Jorgenson the question: Were they—the protesters—right? Our food production was still mired in our primitive, blood-drenched history, when we roamed and stalked and devoured anything we could get our hands on. Not much had changed—we’d simply industrialized the mayhem, hiding the carnage in factories and turning meat into plastic-wrapped merchandise.

“Humane! I hate that fucking word.” Jorgenson sucked cigar smoke into whatever was left of his corroded lungs. “Fuck humane. Fuck free range, fuck organic, fuck all of those mindless hippie scumbags and their

crybaby slogans. Meat is meat, goddammit. You can't taste the difference if it comes from a cage or if you catch it with your bare hands and eat it on the spot." He slammed his fist onto the table. "And if I hear one more—"

The door opened. Mindy smiled, and behind her a young guy shambled into view with a cart full of food. We all got out of our seats and swarmed the cart. We tore into it.

I was still hungry when the last of the food was gone. Mindy smiled at me, and wiped a gray, wet piece of lunch off her chin.

\* \* \*

\* \* \*

The protesters blocked the door. A guy in front of me refused to budge. I shoved him, and when he hit the sidewalk his arm snapped off neatly at the shoulder, the rotting hand still gripping a "Meat is People—Humane Treatment Now!" sign.

Things had changed so much since we'd taken over, especially in the forty-odd years since we wised up to our non-sustainable ways and started confining them to food camps. Before that, we'd been eating ourselves into extinction.

Now the activists wanted the living to roam free again.

I hurried through the crowd to my car. As I dug into my pocket for my car keys, I felt the lady fingers. I'd completely forgotten about them. I pulled one of the delicate treats out and bit into it. It was a little dried out, but still moist inside.

After I'd finished all four of them, I threw the bones out the window and drove to meet some friends at the mall. A Russo delivery truck was scheduled to unload a fresh crop of people, and I was already dreaming of dinner.

---

Copyright © Michael M. Hughes, 2008 • All rights reserved, which includes the right to reproduce this work or portions thereof in any form whatsoever.



**[www.feedbooks.com](http://www.feedbooks.com)**  
Food for the mind