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I'm sitting at my computer. I'm frozen. Tears are leaking from my eyes. What's going on? Why am I crying?

I'm an old man now. I'm not. But the numbers aren't lying. I need to rise up. Instead, I keep clicking keys; where are they taking me? I am now bawling my eyes out. I feel my heart pinching hard in my chest. Am I dying?

I'm not. Not yet. I applied for more work but don't know if I'm qualified for it. I am? But I dread whatever the process is, is.

I need to walk.

I need to laugh.

I need to make someone I don't know, laugh.

I glow when I pull people together in the company of others, and I want to be a great man.

I want to be a great man.

I want to be a great man.

I want to be a good man.

I'm hurting. I'm crying. Does this mean I'm weak?

I need my family.

One of my goddaughters turned 17 today, J and I just sang a message to her on their answering machine, service, whatever it is called.

I need to stop my tears.

I need to thrive.

I've now read 301 books in the last three or four years.

I'm voracious.

I read everything.

I write.

I write everything.

Cheer for us!

Universe, listen.

I want to be a great man.

I want to be a good man.

THE SHADOW MAN



The Shadow Man is coming for you.
During the next week, he will visit the three of you.
You can't see him. He lurks. You will think you see him everywhere. He's coming to get you. Look over there → did a chill race through you?

What is The Shadow Man up to?

He's wired two out of three of your vehicles. Ignition firing. Kaboom. Kaboom. Two gone. One to go.

Morning? Afternoon? Evening? Night? When?

Who will be with you?

Alone? Family? Friends?

The Shadow Man is coming.

He will visit each of you sometime in the next week. Kaboom. Kaboom.

Is any of this real? Or is it part of your fever dream because you are stewing in a fishbowl filled with acid as the parasites are colonizing and chewing away at your insides?

Why is this happening to you? Because you deserve it!

The Shadow Man is coming for you. He's coming to get you. You can't see him. You never will.

Look over there →

Fire the ignition if you will.



SCAM

I don't have a reference letter.
I'm struggling. Depression has cloaked me in desperation.
I apply for several positions I do not really want.

I need to survive.

I need to protect my family.

I need to make you suffer.

Fifteen years of making you rich, you couldn't even climb out of your cowardness and provide me with a reference for what I did for you. You deserve pain. I will survive.

I walk mile after mile on another glorious day. I receive a text. A company has shortlisted me. I walk another mile. I receive another text. Another company has shortlisted me.

There is hope.

Reply YES if you want information about the position.

Yes. Within minutes, each company responds. \$X during training and \$XX once I complete training. The numbers are manageable. We will survive.

Wait.

There is no description of the positions they have shortlisted me for.

Fuck. It's a scam. In my depression and desperation, you have rendered me susceptible to being scammed.

Depression veils me in another cloak.

The Shadow Man is coming for you.

My momentary soaring spirit deflates. You couldn't even have the decency to fucking give me a reference.

The acid will eat your flesh, and the parasites will chomp at your insides.

DONNA + SANDY

I'm sinking. I'm flailing. Inflammation is attacking my joints. It has replaced the moment of elation from being shortlisted with terror. I walk another block. Another text comes.

Will you meet me for a drink?

It's my friend Donna. I'm unsure how or when we became friends; we just did. She teases my ego by calling me highly intelligent and a brilliant writer. Today, she waits for me. We share our frustrations with the people in our lives, often feeling like outsiders, often feeling like we are being sucked into the selfishness of bitterness.

We don't bite.

We vent with each other; however, we need to understand.

People are just who they are – if you are willing to listen – they give valuable lessons on how to grow by showcasing how not to be.

Donna and I have become good friends, and I'm blessed.

Donna leaves, and Sandy sits down beside me. Sandy and I have mostly pleasant conversations, always leading to a chuckle or two.

Not today.

Sandy mentions his partner died eleven years ago.

I delicately ask questions.

His partner battled cancer for eight years. They had been together for twenty years, sharing their origin story and showing me pictures.

I asked his partner's name.

Richard.

I told him there is no such thing as getting over a profound loss.

Sandy nodded and said, "This is the most I've ever talked here."

I thank him for sharing. We hug. I'm blessed.

I go home.

You never even had the fucking decency to give me a reference.

Leo and the Hired Man are looking for the gun – it will be less painful for you if they find it.

I hope they don't find it.

Grammarly Readability Score = 85



FUINSS HUPPNESS
*danviraape ino is
fomomess happing*

SILENCE
SILENCE



I'm one man.
I hurt.
Mostly, I'm joyful.

Age crept up on me – threatening me with the unknown.

I have lost my voice.

I can't speak.

I swallow my emotions, my fears, my uncertainty.

I need to become an island.

I need to find the door on the right.

I don't want to type the following words.

I feel alone.

Age says I should be able to support a family.

I am not sure how much longer I can support myself.

I need to swallow my feelings.

I can't react.

I can't be weak.

I can't make a mistake.

I can't be scared.

I can't fail.

I can't even wish people I've known for a long time: Happy Birthday. Seriously.

How is that a thing?

I write.

And then I write more.

There is no guarantee it will amount to anything.

I won't stop.

I can't stop.

I need to walk.

I need not think.

But really, I must think.

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I am breaking.

I won't break.

I love tomorrow too much.

I know at the end of whatever the bleep this is – lay better.

Lay next.

Lay a happy day.

I'm one man.

Scared.

BEFORE WE START
BEFORE WE START

| Given Name | Fucking | Surname | Him

See that person walking by. That's the first person I had sex with. 11

That person is about 18. You're 63.

I mean, he looks like the first person I had sex with.

Why are you telling me this?



HUMAN SNAPSHOT
HUMAN SNAPSHOT

ZACH

Is about 30-years old. He has done “all” the ecstasy a man could possibly do. Zach often makes “Pew. Pew. Pew...” sounds in the office as he points his laser gun finger at other workers. The dispatcher selects him for a job. On the drive to the site, Zach is still “Pewing.” A dance song comes on the stereo. Zach’s eyes light up. He looks at the driver, simulating dancing with his hand, and says, “I like this!”

One hour later, the client calls the agency, “Zach isn’t working out. He seems to be writing notes in the air.”

The Driver answered the phone; he asked the client if he could send a copy of what Zach was writing.

The Dispatcher jumps on the phone, offering to take the **client for lunch**.

Zach has not been “not high” in the last 10 years.

—

REG

The dispatcher tells the driver as he’s about to drive Reg to a site, “Watch him, I think he’s going to crack run.”

Sure enough, Reg jumps out of the car at the second set of lights and starts running.

The agency takes the super of the site Reg was going to — for lunch.