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2



Why are you following me?
Leave me be. I've endured enough.

Depression, quit. I'm six feet tall, or I was; I may have shrunk a little with age. I think I'm now 5' 11.837542100." Anyway, my stress level has been floating above me for the past three years at eight feet. It's killing me.

I go to the Asylum to blast my heart into action. It works, my inflammation subsides.

When I leave the gym, I step through a portal; I'm now in the Olympic Athletic Club. It's 2002. I'm walking to my car when I'm tapped on the shoulder, and a man asks me if I've ever thought of being in the movies.

"Have I ever!" I answer.

The man gives me a VHS tape and says to take it home to watch, telling me it is soft porn, not gay, but geared toward a gay audience.

In the tape, three buff guys are walking along a railway track, occasionally stopping to wrestle with each other. The men, one by one, retreat into the woods, have gay fantasies and masturbate.

A week later, the man asks if I've watched the tape. He tells me if I'm interested, I should go to a Chinatown studio to find out more.

I'm intrigued, I go to the studio.

I'm greeted by a man who tells me the gig involves masturbating for pay in front of a camera. The more times you come, the higher the income, \$100 per money shot. He tells me the top performers make \$1,000 per day.

A small man, under five feet tall, joins us in his office, and the man tells me they provide free fluffers.

I'm not interested, but as I leave, he hands me a sheet (rule book) with the last item on the list: **NO MONEY SHOT. NO PAY.**

I pass on the opportunity.

I step back through the portal. I'm back in the present, sitting with two friends. One says he lacks flexibility or would blow himself every day. This grosses me out enough to ask, "If you could blow yourself for money, \$100 per money shot, how many times could you do it in a day?"

One of my friends says \$400 per day would be great!

It would be gross and tedious, I suggest.

He disagrees.

I continue moving. I stop to read. I hit over 30,000 steps for the day, but before I reached the end of the day, I stopped at the Life Casino.

Welcome to Life Casino; I'm glad you have arrived. Today, I'm offering you three hands. Games of chance. Games that will change the course of your life. Sit down, my friend, and play.

Hand 1



I watched my mother die for the first time in 1987. She wasn't really my mother.
I watched my father die for the first time in 1985. He wasn't my father.
I floated through life with pieces missing.

In 2003, I discovered the truth about my parents, not being birth parents.

I used to be the youngest of seven.

After truth be partially told, I roamed alone as blood scattered, leaving me alone to cobble the pieces of my life together.

In 2006, I met my father for the first time during a windstorm. He welcomed me into his family with open arms. Two weeks after the cyclone, another storm blew through my being; I received the results of our DNA test, and my father died a second time, figuratively, because my birth mother had lied about my birth registration.

I don't know who my father is.

In 2016, I met my mother for the first time alongside her deathbed, where I said hello to her for the first time as my mother and goodbye because she was dying.

One week later, my mother died for a second time.

I was still roaming the world without a family.

In 2018, I received a letter (envelope) from a sister who became an aunt with a document saying I was the sole benefactor of a life insurance policy of my birth mother.

My mother reached out from the grave. Chills raced through me. I started shamefully counting possibilities. The policy was for less than my current coin collection. A few dinners at most. My mother treated me 'less than' and unwanted for the 78 years of her life, and all I was worth was some rolls of change.

Inside the envelope from my sister who became an aunt, was a scratched-out note that acted as my mother's WILL. Nowhere in the chicken scratch note is the acknowledgment of me being my mother's son, the gist of the note was everything my mother, who used to be a sister, had was being bequeathed to my sister, who became an aunt.

In 2022, a DNA test found a path to my third father; it quickly dried up when the person with the keys to the truth started digging into her family's past. I understand it drying up.

The Dealer is finished shuffling.

I flip over my cards. My birth mother had a trust fund, and the Law Society has reached out to me because now that my sister who became aunt has died, they want to make sure the funds go to the right person, which with me being the son of my mom who used to be a sister, would be me.

The amount isn't life-changing, but it is enough to help us for a few months. It is better than what the fucking assholes who exploited me were forced to... losers.

Hand 1, Winner = ME!

Hand 2



6

The Cards are Dealt

A competitor of the assholes I used to work for is on the face of the cards. They've reached out to me.

Another Card is Dealt

They want me to help change the industry.

Another Card is Dealt

They want to talk about bringing Retro to life.

Hand 2, Winner = ME!

I rise to leave the casino. The Dealer barks at me to return to my seat. I saved the best hand for last; he bellows.

Hand 3



The Cards are Dealt

I flip them over. I'm being offered a six-figure book deal to bring this story to life.

They like the angle of slaying monsters.

Hand 3, Winner = ME!

Despite my stress level being constantly two or three feet above my head over the last three years, I'm a good, kind, empathetic man. I never wallowed. I'm hurting, was hurting, but even with all the fucking pain, I never lost sight of who I am and my sense of right or wrong and the beauty of revenge.

What does this mean for Darren, Todd, and Tyler?

Firstly, they have legally applied to change their names to Jaxon, Sodd, and Lyler.

Secondly, and lastly, the intensity in the fishbowl is about to be cranked to eleven, and as a result →

TICK. TICK TICK.

You have done this to yourself.

When you screw with people's lives, do you think they will just walk away?

Grammarly Readability Score = 86

I WRITE I WRITE



I write.

And I write.

And I write.

And I write.

And I ~~write~~

8

And I write.

And I write.

And I write.

And I ~~write~~

And I write.

And I write.

Why?

Am I okay?

HUMAN SNAPSHOTS
HUMAN SNAPSHOTS

FLASHBACK: 18 AUGUST 2022: FUCKING FAGGOT
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I'm battling depression. The walls are closing in on me, us. I'm scared. Listen to the sucking sound, I am being pulled down the drain – I reach up – I grasp for something – I need to get out of my head.

I hit the Fitness Asylum. It helps.

I go for a walk. Down Richards Street. The air is fragrant. The sky is a perfect blue. There is no reason to be down. We live in paradise.

I can't afford my life.

Fuck.

I'm almost at Georgia Street. A barefoot degenerate (what a horrible word, I don't know her – yes, her), has corralled a young Asian girl. She's barking at her. I sense the fear in the corralled girl.

They break.

The girls starts walking – the tattered woman follows behind. I'm concerned. Is a stranger attack imminent?

The barefoot woman loses the chase because a man walks by her. The man is minding his own business.

What are you staring at fucking faggot. You are a fucking faggot. She screams. Faggot. Faggot. Faggot.

The Asian lady escapes.

I'm up. Don't look at the Contessa. Don't look. But be aware of where she is – not because I'm scared – because she's disorganized. It's best not to aggravate.

I don't look.

What are you staring at fucking faggot. Fucking faggot. Faggot. Screech. Faggot. Faggot.

Her words are weightless – to me – to most.

Another man walks past her.

What are you staring at fucking faggot. Fucking faggot. Faggot. Screech.
Faggot. Faggot.

He escalates. Screams back. Gives her the finger.

Her screams become guttural. Faggot. Faggot. Faggot. Faggot.

He gives her the finger again.

She begins to implode.

I'm standing beside a gentleman on the sidewalk.

I don't want to be called faggot. I'm glad she's not yelling at me. He says.

I reply. She would. She screams at everyone. I wouldn't sweat it if she did. Wait, she screamed at me. It had no impact. I wasn't listening, even though I could hear every word.

She's obviously got mental issues. He says.

You think. So does Mr. Escalator. What does he think he's accomplishing. I feel sad.

Me too. It's just sad.

I don't think she's any more mentally disorganized than one of the last US Presidents – the orange one if you are not sure who I'm talking about. I say. Or is she more mentally disorganized than the 50-year-old guy at the Fitness Asylum running backwards on the treadmill? I add.

4 WORKERS DIE

JJ was 23. He overdosed. JJ was a bright light; the slippery after-work path he was on took him away.

CM was 50. Pleasant always, respectful, appreciative of the work provided him. He passed. Just before Christmas. Cause: unknown.

WF was 47. The Driver drove him to several jobs. Pleasant like CM, list of demons: undefined, maybe living. Cause of death: unknown.

TZ was 55. Gregarious, funny; touching the edge of comedy limits, rarely crossing; at times unpredictable, in a challenging way. Cause of death: a *high* gone wrong.

Four workers—four months—lost—drifting into the shadows—known for years—backstories vacant.