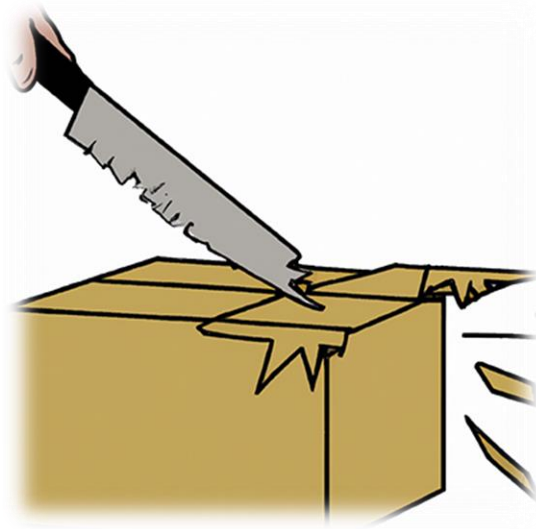




**MAY 2023**

CARDBOARD BOX  
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In today's world, sixty-three-year-olds who have loving partners who work in professional positions; must either find work or they risk dragging their families into homelessness with them because they can no longer afford their lives – even with a partner working a professional gig.

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The problem is that the sixty-three-year-old now has a cardiologist. A by-product of giving a company a quarter of his life without the company giving a damn if they killed him or not.

It used to be that if you worked hard, you could support your family and take care of older adults and the children in your family. Now, older adults must get jobs or die on the streets. The thing is, as soon as they start working again at sixty-three, they are already dead. Harsh. And if you have kids, you must send them out into the work world early.

My gut feels sick. I've realized that no matter how much you try, age creeps up on you, and trying no longer matters. It sucks. It's devastating.

I sent out over fifty resumes. My experience in futility has taught me that I am either obsolete and unqualified for positions I would be excellent at, or I am excessively qualified for jobs that will give me more room to breathe. Fuck mitigating monsters losses.

I walk. I need to pause. I can't catch my breath.

I sit down on the curb. I'm not sure I will ever rise again. Tears pour from my eyes. I can't stop crying. I'm having trouble breathing. My health is declining. I'm flailing away in the depths of misery.

I feel like an empty cardboard box with the one co-worker who pretended to be a friend, slicing through the tape holding me together with an exacto knife. Once he finishes cutting, he finishes me off by punching the box to break the last part of the tape apart. Then he breaks me down and tosses me into the dumpster.

He lords over me.

He used to tell older workers (in their sixties), “This isn’t for you; why don’t you try an office job?”

He does everything in his power to ensure I never get up again.

He used to pretend to be a friend.

I can no longer take care of my family, J and Hana (the cat); my mind starts playing tricks on me; *I start thinking it would give them a chance if you were no longer here; they could use our last dollars on something other than feeding me. Then, they could rub our last couple of nickels together and move on without me.* I don’t want to be a burden. I don’t want to die on the street.

Suicide?

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My former employer chose to destroy me and my family when I tried to protect myself (because I sought out legal advice), emphasis on family, after they canned me with nary a concern of how that would impact our lives—using the pandemic as shade to rid themselves of an older employee (me).

Unfortunately, the legal system was complicit, including the lawyers who were supposed to be protecting me.

I was foolish when I believed the severance calculator on their site was for me. When it is nothing more than a line in the water (*chasing ambulances*) and those in need. I bit. Once on the line, there is no escape because they keep dancing “laser-focused” and “don’t worry, you have the truth on your side,” in front of you. And besides, contingency translates into you have nowhere else to go.

During the initial consultation, they weren’t vetting my case; they were vetting if those who hurt me could pay... anything.

And then, they wait; doing as little as possible, until the day comes when time for fight or flight arrives. And at the first sign of pushback, they strongly suggest, folding. But, of course, since they are on the side of who can pay the freight, they show their true colours; they’re not on your side but on the side of getting paid... it sucks to be you... good luck. Please rate our service: Would you recommend us to anyone else?

No.

This is a devastating moment in life; what your former employer did to you without discussion was the epitome of cruelty. And your legal counsel was no different than your former employer – exploiter's of those in need.

I'm in trouble.

If a miracle doesn't come my way, I will die homeless.

After I helped a company generate \$78+ million in revenue, my efforts didn't matter.

I put every ounce of energy into building a future. It might not matter; I'm old now. Not mattering comes with age. It's terrifying. As I blast out resumes, I understand nobody wants to employ someone who ran a company for fifteen years and was deemed expendable, and not deserving of a fucking reference letter. My pretend friend helped to erase a quarter of my life. Exacto knife, please?

The people I worked for couldn't even find the decency or courage to give me a fucking reference letter so that I could at least have a chance to survive.

Reality dictates that I need an income.

I haven't worked for three years, except for writing over three hundred book reviews and eleven manuscripts.

I haven't had a job interview in over twenty years.

I'm turning sixty-three in slightly over a month, and I don't even know what that will look like or what a job would look like if anyone took a chance and hired me.

I'm turning sixty-three.

I must earn an income without being killed by the job I take. Or my new employer not caring that I have a cardiologist?

I have a cardiologist.

I want to bawl my eyes out.

I'm in stellar shape for a man my age, but I have a cardiologist. Most days, I feel like I will collapse because my time is slipping away. If it weren't for J, I think I would have been gone long ago.

I'm a broken man, and I'm scared.

## Donna + Family Gone

I sat down with Donna for a few moments. I shared the Trust Fund story – my mind races.

Twenty years ago, I discovered the parents I watched die were not my parents.

Twenty years ago, I had to convince Vital Statistics in Alberta; I am me, to receive a copy of my birth registration.

Twenty years ago, I discovered my mother was my eldest sister.

Twenty years ago, partial truths were told, and my family vanished.

Now, I must prove to The Law Society of Alberta my dead mother was my mother.

Donna hugs me.

I thanked her for listening to me.

A few hours later, I received a text.

Nice to see you. You are too sweet to have so much on your plate. Love you lots, and I'm so proud to count you as my friend.

I'm a lucky man.

I will never give up because I intuitively know my time to thrive is coming.

What would you call a friend<sup>(1)</sup> who used an exacto knife to cut through your soul?

That's all for today.

I'm sure tomorrow will be better.

Is this what depression is?

We live in a world where two people without children can't survive on one income because some monstrous people are just what they are – monsters – and living has become prohibitively expensive.

- 1) For the last three years *the man who pretended to be a friend* scoured everything I've ever written to find something to hammer the final nails into my coffin with. *The man who pretended to be a friend* used to tell people the reason the company was successful (an undeniable fact) was because of my efforts. If I kill myself, my death will be on *the man who pretended to be my friend*. I know *the man who pretended to be my friend* isn't worth an ounce of energy. Still, it's hard to just let something go when I broke bread with *the man who pretended to be my friend* every Monday for almost ten years. Especially when, *the man who pretended to be my friend* worked hard at destroying me and my family.

Grammarly Readability Score = 80

Grammarly Record: May 1 = 99!



# 6 TOMBSTONES 6 TOMBSTONES



I'm 21.

This probably was before the Spring Break Trip. Oh well.

I suggest reading this first and then going back and reading the Minot Story.

You're an idiot.

You're face.

What?

That's what I thought.

The cargo door of the plane opens wide, much like a Mickey's Big Mouth. The team climbs up the ramp. Fasten your seatbelts.

The propellers roar to life.



Roar.

Thirty minutes into our flight the attendants deliver us Big Macs + Fries.

Did we go through a Fly-Thru?

I throw a touchdown pass to Murray Wenhardt.

I'm now in Three Hall of Fames. Seriously.

Because of the pass?

Sure.



I NEED TO TALK. I NEED TO EVOLVE  
I NEED TO TALK. I NEED TO EVOLVE

I'm not 22, anymore, I'm my age, 62.

I used to think why keep or even try to save your memories + cherished photos.

What's the point: When you kick it, nobody is going to care, they are going to toss it in a dumpster.

Sad.

I know.

And then...

My friend Jim is 78 (79 by the time you read this).

He sat beside a horrible person at his favourite watering hole.

That's fucking mean.

John. John G, is not a good man. He's 62. He dumped his life on Jim.

I just found out who my father is – he's dead now – listen to me. John said.

Jim listened.

Jim told John; he spent numerous hours looking for a video in his files.

John said, "What a waste of time. When we die, nobody will ever look at that shit. Just delete it, you are wasting time."

Seriously, that's what he said to Jim. John is a fucking, bleep.

Jim is kind. He didn't speak up.

I used to think like John. I think differently, now.

John is like many of us, time is running short, and he's trying to make sense of life.

In one sentence he spoke of finding out who his father is – in the next, he told Jim his memories and pictures – saving them is a waste of time because when you're dead, who fucking cares?

Hypocritical?

I'm not that fatalistic, until the day you leave this earth protect your memories, even if they only provide a moment of calm.

Memories matter.

We matter.

Fuck you, John.

I've evolved. Except for maybe the profanity?

## A SAID THE WHITE GUY MOMENT A SAID THE WHITE GUY MOMENT

Another friend name Jim (67) said, I don't like Serena Williams.

I asked him, why?

He said it is because of her attitude.

I asked him, what is her attitude?

He said it's not because she's |inaudible|.

I said, I know, pretending I didn't know what he meant.

A few minutes later he said, "I don't like Australian tennis player Nick Kyrgios."

I asked him, why?

He didn't know.

I told him Nick, stands up for injustices.

He didn't care.

I hate being white.

