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MAY 2023

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TODD
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It was a spectacular day. The sun was beating down on the asphalt like a tinsmith working his craft. The monthly meeting had run long, long, long, like every fucking staff meeting Todd called where he tried desperately to flex his control. Never, ever, never, thinking about those who make the company run, primarily the leading man, the outsider; if he had to go by a name, it would likely be ().

Eyes closing, flashing open. Ridiculous agenda, droning, droning, droning, everyone trying to kiss a bit of ass of those in the ruse of importance; most of those in attendance had been up since 3 AM. It was now 4 PM, and the shitty sandwiches and Darren walking in in shorts, full of bravado like only a small person would, trying to portray his power, weren't enough to make it anything other than what it was – a veiled attempt to make it look like Todd was actually doing something to generate revenue instead of being the revenue drain, and morale killer he really is.

At 4:45 PM, the meeting finally adjourned. () drove one of the critical accounts receivable people home, a person being forced out of the company because Darren had decided he didn't like him, despite years of unquestionable service. A recurring theme. The person reluctantly accepted a transfer, confiding in () about how it wasn't what he really wanted but took it because he was a new father. Darren used fatherhood to manipulate. MONSTER.

Todd was the last one to leave by the back door, and as he turned the key on the door, SMASH, Jodi G threw him to the ground, jabbing him with a syringe; Harold was with him. He still hadn't found an office job. A white van came screeching up behind the office with the three men in hazard suits jumping out and tossing Todd into the van through the side doors as three children across the parking lot played hopscotch.

As the van screeched away, you could hear **BANG. BANG. BANG.**

"Leo, what have you fucking done?" Jodi bellowed.

"Shit. Shit. Shit."

"Leo, we were supposed to take him to the holding plant to store him next to Tyler. Remember the torture. You've fucked everything up."

"I couldn't help myself; Todd spoke of his staff like they were no better than monkeys like they were disposable garbage. He then droned on about how he gave people at homeless shelters \$5.00 gift cards to drum up business when he rented cars. And then Todd went on and on and on... I couldn't take it, I snapped."

"That's okay, Leo, we'll Bernie him. () will never know the difference."

"Jodi, do you mean Weekend...?"

"Yes."

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I STEP OF THE LEDGE

I'm free-falling.

Who are you?

I'm here to make things right.

What the fuck are you talking about? I don't know you.

I'm sorry. I never knew. The times were different. I was drunk.

Who are you? Stop it. Stop it.

A chill rushes through me. I'm flailing. I wasn't born into privilege. I'm not entitled. My most significant advantage is the colour of my skin. I understand it's significant.

My parents don't want me. I can tell. When I came into the world, the world was dark.

The times were different.

Fuck off. I don't care. You had a responsibility. You will never know me. I needed your guidance. I don't know who the fuck you are? I don't know why you are here? Or where you've come from? I don't know if this is real?

I'm not a good man. I wanted to be. But I was drunk. Your mother was drunk. It was one night. I never knew about you. It was the times.

FUCK OFF.

I'm hurting.

I'm unsure trying matters. I needed guidance.

I'm unsure if it will ever be enough; I wasn't raised in a construction family.

I should have tried harder and been born into wealth.

Are you insane?

Maybe. If I am, you had a hand in it; you had a hand in setting me up to be taken advantage of by predators. You had a hand delivering me to a deep pool of insecurity and longing.

I'm here now.

I never asked you to come.

Keep trying.

I've been watching you from above.

I know I failed you.

I know you'll never know me.

I've come to tell you to never give up.

You have gift you must share with the world.

You are a great man.

Never lose sight of that.

You carried the fuckers where you worked, those who willfully hurt you—you carried the company without being one of them—they, even the one who pretended to be your friend, couldn't handle an outsider being the reason for their success because they are pathetic, pathetic, pathetic humans with fragile egos who care more about how they look to people who don't matter than making any sort of difference. They are a disease. Anybody who willingly hurts people for money, their suns won't just set; they will implode.

Please go.

Don't cry. This is the first time I've done the right thing. I can't change what happened, but I can encourage you. I must encourage you.

Am I dreaming?

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No. This is real. Keep going. It may get darker before the light comes. But I need you to know you are on the right path. Don't sweat the monsters from your recent past; they are all they can ever be; you have a purpose, a mission. You don't have to worry about them because the wheels have been set in motion, and they will be over soon—you have so much ahead of you, brilliance, compassion, empathy, kindness, and love. It's astounding who you are becoming despite what has been thrown your way, including me.

Do you remember what Russ said to you at lunch one day? It was similar to what Norm, Craig, Ian, Mike, and so many others have said to you before; you were the reason people who didn't deserve you succeeded. I implore you to remember.

Russ told you; you have a POWERFUL VOICE; you must use it to change how the world talks about each other.

Shut up.

Believe it.

It's too much.

You must believe in yourself. Fuck those who hurt you. I'm here to stop you from crashing into the bottom.

I don't know you.

I know. But you do.

Who the fuck are you?

I'm your father. I've been watching you from above. I died ten years ago. This is my first time doing what I'm supposed to do. I'm sorry for all the pain I caused. I never knew.

I OPEN MY EYES.

Grammarly Readability Score = 91

HUMAN SNAPSHOT HUMAN SNAPSHOT

3 MEN INTERVIEW FOR THE SAME JOB 3 MEN INTERVIEW FOR THE SAME JOB

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Candidate 1: He's 67. He has Parkinson's Disease.

Candidate 2: He's 63. Ten years ago, he had a liver transplant.

Candidate 3: He's 62. In 2018, he suffered a stroke. He survived. He's a good at typing. He never had a single day off work after suffering a stroke. He couldn't have the time off – there was nobody who could replace him, and the people he worked didn't care.

Who would you hire?

A thirty-year old walks past the window. The recruiter hires the thirty-year old.

The 3 men start shopping for cardboard.

The 67-year-old with Parkinson's has another interview. For a software company. He tells his friends the sales cycle for the product is usually around 8-months. He's 67.

Some in the audience, wish him luck. Cheering for him. "Good luck." And "You'll likely be hired."

I tell him I'm sorry he has to go through this fucking process. I then add, "You say the sales cycle is 8-months, why would they even consider hiring a 67-year-old. I'm sorry you have to go through this."