

## How Was Work Today?

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My father? are you kidding me? that old bastard is living out in San Diego somewhere, snorting coke and screwing anything he can get his hands on. Did I mention he was seventy-eight? He's a Korean war vet. Comes back all loony. I think they called it shell shock then...something. Now he's got colon cancer. Doesn't slow him down though. Every morning he gets up, drinks a Pepsi, eats some cold cereal—dry—takes a snort, smokes a joint, and he's off, out on the streets. Says he's gonna enjoy life. Goes to the VA when he needs a meal, pick up his meds, stuff like that. Then he's back on the street. He calls me the other day, says, Come on out, we can hang around together, do some stuff. Can you imagine? My sister—she looks in on him, sees if he's still alive. She calls me not too long ago and says he tried to put the make on her. She says, I'm your daughter, Pop, it's me. He says, Oh, sorry. Jesus, what mess...

And my ex-wife. That bitch won't leave me alone. Married to her twenty-three years and she still calls me every day. She calls me this morning, says she can't take it any more. Our daughter—she's twenty-seven I think—she's doing heroine, and she's pregnant for Christ's sake. Some older guy she said she met. Sex for drugs, that's what I'm thinking. And my ex-old lady—chronic pot head that one. She smokes everyday—and for the past twenty years—and now in front of the grandkids. Doesn't slow her down a bit either. They all watch cartoons together. Jesus, you would think...

But my daughter. I just happened to drop by last Thursday. I rang the door bell. Nothing. Then I noticed the door was unlocked. I opened it, stuck my head in, and there she was, on the floor, passed out cold. I don't know CPR so I slapped her a couple of times. Not hard. All I could get out of her was a moan and a groan. So I slapped her again. What the fuck, she says. I tell her she's got to get help. What do I do? Can I get into trouble for this, not calling the cops? somebody? I mean, the baby...

I've got chest pains. Stress, right? But my diabetes, my numbers are good. I have a gym membership now. I haven't been yet. I need to workout. I need a date, too. I really need to get laid. But this little guy, he's only four...get the fuck off of me, I'm trying to talk to the doctor...I had this woman over the other day, and this little guy calls her fat. I say, shut up, mind your manners. He keeps calling her fat. So she gets mad, says she's going to leave. I say no, no, I like you, just the way you are. You're pretty, to me. Stay, please. But I guess she thought, I got to get the hell out of here...probably had visions of this little monster in her life, what that would be like...

What do you think about the boy? Think any of this will rub off? Can't you inherit this stuff? I told you, right, that I used to let my mother babysit him, until I found him one day crammed in a closet,

lights out, in a dog carrier? A goddamn dog carrier! I went ballistic. She said that's where they'd keep him—she and my mother-of-the-year daughter—like it was some kind of normal, so they wouldn't have to watch him, keep track of him. I told her, What, are you nuts? When I got him out, he had little burn marks on his arms. They were putting cigarettes out on him, to shut him up. Look at his arm. There, they look good, right? You should have seen 'em then. He's smart, though. But Jesus, he spit on a lady the other day, this old lady who said, Aren't you cute? And he spits at her...

I don't think I have the energy for any of this. I finally got some meds, though, for the bipolar. I'm going to be fifty next month. I may not last to raise this little guy. He sticks to me like glue, too. But I need a break, some companionship. We go to the park, right buddy? We take long walks. I try to explain he needs to behave, try to make him understand. Maybe he's got PTSD too, what with the closet and all. He tells me he loves me, but then he embarrasses me when we're shopping, starts yelling at people, out of the blue. He's okay until someone looks at him.

Jesus, we better go. Thanks. We've got to get some shopping done. You're going to behave—right, monster? Did I tell you we're moving? I finally got some housing. Wish me luck. You validate parking, right?