

Keep Calm And Go Kill Yourself

A monologue by Pete Malicki

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Oscar: high blood pressure.

Hi. My name is Oscar. It's nothing personal, but I hate you.

How can me hating you *not* be personal, you wonder? It's easy – I hate pretty much everyone and by its very definition you can't take a generalisation personally.

I wish I wasn't like this but my life these days is like that telemarketer who calls at six thirty when you're trying to make dinner. My shrink says I should try to adopt an optimist... sorry, boss is coming.

“Good morning sir. How are you today?”

“Oscar. Where's the report I asked you for?”

I'm fine thanks, David. “Which report, sir?”

“The Finch report. Jesus Oscar, I don't need a PA who needs to be told everything twice.”

“I don't remember the request, sir. Did you email it?”

“Yes!”

“To Oscar Johnson or Oscar Wilson?”

You'd think a top corporate lawyer would remember which of the two Oscars working for his company had been his PA for three years. But wait, here comes the apology.

“Just bring me the damned Finch report.”

Oh, that's okay sir. An easy mistake. “Aye aye.”

I log on to the network and copy the file from his personal drive onto his desktop. Sometimes I wonder how this guy wipes his butt without someone to point out the toilet paper. At lunch time I head out to pick up my blood pressure medication. I'm in a rush so of course everyone gets in my way. Have you ever noticed that the general public's tendency to walk slowly and take up a far greater percentage of the pavement than necessary is directly proportionate to how urgently you need to get by?

Inside the chemist now. I say, “Hello sir. I'd really like to get high...” wait for it “...blood pressure medication.”

Apparently that wasn't very funny. Apparently the chemist thinks he's airport security where they “take all jokes about safety seriously.” I leave before the police come but now I'm out of time and return to work without my meds.

Ah, here comes Jane. “Oscar, can you print the quarterly report for me?” Jane is the partner’s PA so she thinks she’s the other PAs’ boss. Jane and I do *not* get along. “I’m flat out all week Jane but anything for *you*.” Too sarcastic?

Train trip home. My carriage has three sniffers and a cougher, three loud-headphones-dickheads and someone laughing at YouTube videos. At my stop, ten people form a scrum as they vie to be first off, then walk at the speed of a crippled pensioner when the doors open.

At home I take out the book my shrink gave me: the Little Book of Calm. “Rest in a tub”, it says, so I run a bath. I lean back and take a deep, soothing breath. Picture a vast green ocean. Sigh contentedly. Forget *all* my troubles.

The bubble is burst as my phone rings. Pop! It’s out of reach in my pants pocket so I ignore it, but they keep calling and calling and I’ll never relax unless I switch it off. I have to climb out of the bath to answer and it’s my mother.

“Oscar, I can’t find your father’s shoes. How can we go out without his shoes?”

A ripple appears in the vast green ocean. “A better question might be how can you go out without his heart beating. Mum, dad has been dead for eight years.”

We go back and forth and round in a few circles and my already very limited patience is stepped on and smeared into the floor tiles. As much as I love my mother, it’s time God did the merciful thing and moved her up to Heaven.

The next day and the ripple becomes a wave when I get to work and Jane is acting suspiciously nice. “Oscar, will you come see me in my office?”

“You mean your boss’s office?”

We go to the partner’s office and I immediately know she’s found some way to fuck me. She’s been trying for months. “Oscar, you’ve been promoted to Senior EA at head office.”

Head office is in a different state. “As flattered as I am Jane, I can’t do it. I have to stay here to look after mum.”

“You don’t have a job here anymore, Oscar. In anticipation of your positive response, David has already hired your replacement.”

I close my eyes and picture a little ducky sitting on top of a kitty. “Unhire them. You can’t just get rid of me like this. I signed a contract.”

Jane is leaning in now. “We both know your heart hasn’t been in it since you took that unapproved holiday a few months ago. Go out with dignity.”

The wave turns into a tsunami. Before I give in to the temptation to violently murder Jane I mumble “I’m not feeling well” and go. I leave the office and call the lift. Janet from HR steps out when it arrives and she holds it open so she can finish her conversation with the person continuing down. I call on wisdom from the Little Book of Calm: “Only worry about the big things,” I tell myself. Don’t stress about having to wait thirty seconds in an elevator.

Jane and I never got along but how could she be *this* heartless? She knows I have a senile parent to look after yet not only did she get me fired, she *took pleasure* in it. “Shampoo sans shampoo. Head massage, but without shampoo.” I dig my fingers into my scalp and try to latch onto the tiniest bit of composure.

This is why I hate you. It’s because you enter the elevator without letting people get out first. Because you bump into me when you’re looking at your phone and you tell *me* to “Watch out, you idiot.”

Wait at the lights and someone blows smoke right into my face. I fight to calm myself. “Picture yourself on an idyllic South Pacific island.” I close my eyes and see global warming and rising sea levels and panicked islanders being swept out to the ocean.

Oscar stops to compose himself.

I need to try again. To try harder. “Turn into a windmill. Wave yourself calm.”

Oscar waves his arms in meditative circles. He takes a deep breath and continues.

I keep going and a car almost hits me when it doesn’t stop at a pedestrian crossing. The windmill has just caught fire. “Smell the blooms. Certain scents stimulate the production of the relaxing chemical, serotonin, in the brain.” How the fuck does that help me in the middle of the city, Little Book of Calm? How the *fuck* does that help me? “Invest in a fruit bowl”, “Pat something”, “For five minutes in every hour, I give myself permission to relax and to be calm.”

This is *not* working. My exercises are backfiring. The person in front of me turns suddenly and we collide. He scurries off when he sees the look on my face. People around me are starting to give me space.

It’s all because of Jane. Jane is mean. And fat. And barely able to work the photocopier *and* she has a weird-shaped forehead. Like, did her mum steal a Neanderthal skeleton from a museum and do some weird Jurassic Park shit to get pregnant? Because only our early ancestors should have eye sockets that protrude like that.

I reach the next set of lights and a young woman pulls up beside me, glancing up in between writing text messages. The lights change and she goes, still texting, barely paying attention to the road and almost clipping a pensioner who didn’t move fast enough.

Before I know it I’m after her. I’m sprinting down the road, brakes screeching and people pointing and rubbernecking. Hatred courses through my veins. Anger and bitterness and resentment. This woman has become the representation of everything I hate about everyone. People like Jane. People like my rude, dumbarse boss. Inconsiderate, lazy, selfish people. People like you.

She stops at the next lights and I catch up within seconds. Rip her door open and pull the phone out of her hands. She screams as I smash it repeatedly against the door frame. I realise I’m screaming back at her, calling her a bitch and a murderer and threatening to break her neck as poison pumps through my blood.

I drop the shattered phone and lean in close. She's so terrified she pees herself. I'm about to do something truly horrible... and then...

I look at her.

Like, really look at her.

She looks so much like my wife did. Just an everyday person. An innocent young woman who does *not* deserve to die. This woman didn't do it. Even if she might have hit someone ten metres down the road, she hadn't hit anyone yet. I can't punish her for a maybe.

I put my hand on her arm and look her in the eye. "Don't use your phone when you drive, okay? It's stupid and fucking dangerous."

She stares at me.

"*Okay?*"

She nods.

I ignored the people all staring at me and walk off. I'm calm now. I don't quite know why but something has made me let go. All the hatred and misanthropy is gone. Just gone.

I take out my phone and call Jane. "Jane, it's Oscar. I want to tell you something. You know that 'unapproved holiday' you keep bringing up?"

Jane sounds wary but says "Yes."

"I stayed home for a week because my wife died. She was crossing the road and a forty-two-year-old man named Harry Cappari ran her over. He was talking on his mobile."

Now she's speechless. "Jesus Oscar. I had no idea."

"He got off with a suspended sentence. He'll be back on the road in less than two years."

"I'm so sorry Oscar. Look... about your job, I'll talk to David and we'll sort it out for you."

"Jane, you are a terrible person. You never asked me what was wrong, you just assumed the worst, then you got me fired. Even if you had no idea something was wrong you did this knowing I'm caring for my sick mother. I don't want to work with you anymore."

"I'll do anything I can to make it up to you."

It's too late for that. "I'll tell you what you can do, Jane. You can live with yourself. Every day you wake up, you will have to live with being the bitch who bullied a grieving widower out of his job. You are a truly miserable excuse for a human being and nothing you can ever do for me will change that. That's your burden for life. Goodbye now."

I hang up.

As I head towards the train station I do something that would make my shrink proud.
Something I haven't done since my wife was killed by a selfish, inconsiderate, thoughtless person, a person who is more or less just like you.

I smile.