

General Warning

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Six layers of barbed wire fence surrounded the Defense Utility Management warehouse in Louisville, Kentucky. Inside each of those fences was a manned turret, and past the fences and turrets was a moat that you could only cross when the guards lowered the drawbridge. Inside of the warehouse were three manned bank-vault style doors, with the area surrounding them designed to look like hotel reception lobbies. The guards at the first door did most of the work. They were there to greet and process any visitors and they were the ones in charge of the drawbridge for the moat. The guards at the third door took the job knowing that they'd be the last line of defense if anyone should ever infiltrate the building. It was a responsibility that they didn't take lightly. The guards at the second door were irrelevant. The architects realized too late that they probably could have got by with just two layers of doors. And so, since its inception, the Defense Utility Management warehouse staffed their second indoor security desk with any half-wits that were willing to sit there.

This type of job, one where you don't do anything and even less is expected of you, only draws two types of applicants. 1. Underachievers whose dream job consists of staring at a blank wall all day and 2. People who are so unaware of their station in life that they believe they're actually saving the world.

Smith Johnson, a man with two last names, was the first type of applicant. *Oh, to stare at a blank wall all day. Now that's the life.* Is what he once thought and probably would still think if it wasn't for his partner, Monty Anderson, who happened to be the second type of applicant. Monty was excited to come to work each day. Why? No one really knew. Maybe it was because this really was his ceiling. The best job he could ever possibly have. Everyone found Monty repulsive and found him repulsive in a way that didn't even make you feel guilty for thinking that he was repulsive. He would constantly talk about having sex with his girlfriend, saying things like "last night we got busyyyyyyy" while gyrating in his seat. With his slicked back hair and his red cheeks like processed-meat, he had the countenance of a retired professional wrestler. The nails on his left-hand were mangled together into one yellow claw that could probably carve a hole in glass if you were looking to steal a diamond.

Smith hated Monty. It would be such an easy job if he would just shut the fuck up. When he wasn't talking about fornication, Monty would do something akin to an open-mic comedy routine. He'd say things like "*do you see these guys on the news today*

wearing ninja turtle hats?" and then wait for Smith to laugh as if this was a common enough grievance for Smith to know what the hell he was talking about. *"I seen a guy the other day carrying a backpack. Can you believe it?"* *"Women didn't drink coffee when I was younger."* Smith would fake a laugh and nod his head until one day he lost the energy to do so. Monty didn't notice and kept right on with his routine. *"How come foreign countries are making movies now?"* It never stopped.

Smith eventually built up enough courage to quit, but when he went to speak with his boss, his boss started talking first. The boss explained to him that everyone at the warehouse would be going on a retreat to drink and fuck in the mountains and that he was counting on Smith to hold down the fort while they were away for the weekend. In its seven years of existence, no one had ever tried to attack or sneak into Defense Utility Management and so there was no reason to think they'd try now. Visitors, except in the case of extreme emergencies, had to book their visits well in advance, and there were no visitors booked for Saturday or Sunday. What the boss planned to do was put cardboard cutouts of soldiers in the turrets and disable the drawbridge. Smith would be okay to stay back wouldn't he? Good. Settled.

So, instead of quitting Smith agreed to watch the whole place by himself. Or, almost by himself. They asked Monty to stay behind as well- not because they trusted him, but because they didn't want him anywhere near them while they were fucking.

Smith showed up to work on Saturday more depressed than usual. Monty was delighted because they were getting to work on the first door for the first time. Neither of them were afraid of the warehouse being attacked. Smith because he was happy to die and Monty because he thought he could defend it single-handedly. It turns out it wasn't an attack they should have been worried about, but something much worse.

The boss and the rest of the warehouse employees went on a bus going up into the mountains, drinking and hooting. Hollering too. They were having the time of their lives when the boss pulled out one of his old party tricks. It was quite simple really. He put his shoes on his hands, his pants on his arms, and his shirt on his legs. This way he looked like a man upside down. He was walking up and down the aisle of the bus like this to raucous applause when he lost his footing and fell into the bus driver. The bus driver couldn't recover in time. The driver, the boss, and sixty-three warehouse employees crashed to their death in Appalachia.

Government officials broke the news to Smith and Monty back at the warehouse and, for the lack of a better option, promoted them to the highest guard positions available. The government would replace the rest of the staff with whoever they could (mostly employees from a local Sporting Goods store that had recently closed). Smith and Monty assumed they would now be stationed at the first desk, but they were wrong.

Their new positions were behind the third set of bank-vault style doors. The one thing Smith and Monty shared in common is that they never gave much thought to what they were guarding. They knew it was a weapon, but they didn't know anything else. Smith found the prospect of knowing too scary, so he never did too much asking. Monty felt it was part of being a good employee to never question anything. Ignorant for different reasons, they would soon find themselves enlightened. They would have to know what the weapon was because they'd be face to face with it.

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Inside the third set of doors there was an enormous, glass structure. Inside of the glass structure was what looked like the set to a situation comedy. Ceilingless rooms that resembled rooms in a house, but not quite. One room (presumably the bathroom) had a curtain around it but you could easily see inside every other space. In the make-shift living room there was a man sleeping on the couch. With his hair ruffled and mouth agape and filled with drool, he didn't seem very dangerous. But this was the weapon.

The government officials gave Smith and Monty very simple instructions. They weren't to speak or interact with the man in any way. The one reason they were there was to make sure he didn't escape. With four-foot thick glass walls, it was unlikely that he'd ever be able to. They funneled food and supplies in through the top of the structure. The only way that he could ever get out was if someone let him leave. Smith and Monty were there to monitor the man, any visitors who arrived, and most importantly, each other.

Smith was tempted to still leave but he agreed to stay when he found out he and Monty were to be positioned on opposite sides of the room. Finally, some peace and quiet. Maybe this would be Smith's dream job after all Or maybe it wouldn't. The fact that Monty had no one to speak to led to their downfall. But before we get to that, let's explain some of the going-ons Smith witnessed.

As far as Smith could tell the visitors that came to visit the man in the glass arrived miserable and left ecstatic. They'd be lowered down through the goods shoot, disappear into the curtained room, and then leave smiling ear to ear. There was no other room that could possibly have been the bathroom so this curtained room must have doubled as both toilet and office. What was going on in there? Surely they weren't watching him take a shit. Was it possible this man was rubbing off some of his toxic powers on whoever came to see him and then they in turn would use that evil energy to wreak havoc in their homeland? It was possible, but after about a month on his new post he saw something that changed his mind. A child arrived to visit the man in the glass.

When the child came in unchaperoned, it looked terrified to enter the goods shoot. And for good reason. Sometimes melons shot out of that thing so fast that they fucking

splattered everywhere. The child, crying and shivering, was thankfully let down with ease. The man in the glass seemed different than usual. Brighter. Exuberant even. He pulled out a red ball and showed it briefly to the child before making it vanish and then reappear behind the child's ear. The child laughed, at first through tears, and then unabashedly when the man pulled out a toy monkey from his sleeve. He then took the child behind the curtain and when they re-emerged the child ran wild around the enclosed mock-housing. The man helped the child to the goods shoot and then stepped back so the machine could bring the child up.

Smith might not have been a Rhodes Scholar, but he knew whatever the man in the glass was doing behind the curtain wasn't evil. Oh well, it wasn't any of his business. Things would only last a little longer anyway. One night Smith heard whispers coming from the other side of the structure. It was the first time he ever heard noise in the room outside of visiting hours. Monty had finally broken and began to speak to the man in the glass. It was technically Smith's duty to stop the conversation from happening, but he didn't feel like it. Smith could clearly hear that Monty was whispering about intercourse, so he put in some earplugs he had snuck in. He hadn't used the earplugs at their previous post because Monty would have noticed. It only took another two days before the man in the glass would escape.

Using ear plugs became part of Smith's routine, as did dozing off on the clock. *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* Well, in this case, no one. Smith awoke in a state of fright after his first nap fearing that someone would have seen it on the video cameras. But no one said anything, so the next night he went to sleep about as soon as he started his shift. From there the man in the glass had it pretty easy. Someone informed Smith at a later date that the man in the glass asked Monty to see a picture of his girlfriend. Monty was happy to oblige and pulled out a picture from his wallet. The woman in the photo was much better looking than you'd imagine (but then again an old Halloween decoration would still be too good looking for Monty). The man in the glass accused Monty of doctoring the picture. Monty of course didn't even know how to use a computer, but the man in the glass hassled him enough that Monty physically came into the structure to let him get a closer look at it. Once Monty was inside, the man in the glass physically overpowered him and shimmied his way up the goods shoot. Smith was sound asleep through all of it. Once the man was out of the structure, he walked out the three vault doors without issue. They even lowered the drawbridge for him. The new staff, made up of people that used to sell basketballs and baseball gloves, suspected they were guarding a giant bomb or test tubes full of virus. No one knew they were guarding a person.

The man in the glass disappeared from Kentucky forever. There were rumors of him showing up in far-away villages where people needed him most. By the time the

authorities arrived to check, he'd already be gone. As for Smith and Monty, well they both got canned. Smith got hired doing security for a shopping mall where he could sleep in the furniture stores when no one is looking. Monty, who was already at retirement age, decided to call it a career. He now spends most of his time hanging out at the same shopping mall Smith works at.

The End.