

Genuine Sanity

An audio diary by William Zirkle,
Transcribed by Leslie Stockard, 2042

I was not mad. I am still not mad. Countless media outlets reported that I was mad, but that was far from the truth. I was paranoid, simply put. I still am. I feared for my children and I feared for my wealth, so I hoarded it to ensure their futures. This does not equate to madness, of course. Any man in my shoes would have done the same.

Paying my workers minimum wage was not a confirmation of my madness. I cannot fathom how it could be, as it proves quite the opposite. Low wages had allowed me to employ more workers and increase workplace productivity. Low wages allowed me to invest in further ventures. Low wages allowed me to expand the business to further corners of the world and send packages to *astronauts*.

I am not mad. Yes, I killed my wife, but not in an act of madness. It was an act of corporate enlargement. She was too weak-willed to further the business on her own. Her death was an act of mercy; allowing me to give her the legacy she deserved.

There were shouts across the street, people yelling obnoxiously and distracting me from my tea. *It must be the protesters again*, I remember thinking. *How amusing that people would take time out of their day just to insult me! I suppose I am quite an important man.*

I had barely finished the thought when my daughter began bounding down the stairs, gesticulating

wildly and pointing out the window. She's the mad one, if anything. It was upsetting to me, of course. Such a shame that a young girl like her had become so invested in liberal propaganda. She must not understand that all this was for her. Oh, how I hated it when she got like that! She was such a beautiful young girl, brainwashed by leftists into becoming their dog...

“Do you feel nothing?” she yelled, face red hot and trembling. “You have the money to end world hunger and still be the world's richest man! Doesn't that make you feel like you're responsible for something?”

Now, not only was she drastically wrong, but she was also incredibly naive. I had already made a difference? My goods were being shipped globally to those in need, provided they had the money.

So I explained to her that throwing money at such problems does not solve them, and only teaches people to be lazy. They should work for their stability, as I had.

The grief must be making her delusional.

“We know you killed our mother,” she said, stock still and with the seriousness of someone who knows the absolute and irrefutable truth. “I haven't forgiven you. Neither has my brother.”

My son? I thought. *The one who does nothing but play video games all day?* He could never bring himself

to care about something so trivial. He barely cared enough to leave his room.

Yet there he was, behind me.

He raised his phone at me, pointing it like a gun.

“We already have evidence against you,” my daughter continued. “We hired a private investigator with our allowances. We can take this to court right now.”

“You’re not old enough to hire a private investigator!” I exclaimed quite pathetically.

(There was a smile in my son’s voice when he said: “we threw money at the problem.”)

My daughter took a confident step forward, looking up at me. “You have two options,” she stated clearly, leaving no room for negotiation. “You can raise your employees’ wages to fifteen dollars an hour and donate ten percent of your income from now on, or we can call the police.”

I took the chance to glance at my son, still holding his gun with a fierce look in his eyes. I decide to look outside the window instead, weighing my options. The protestors outside looked bigger than they did before, their signs brighter and bolder than they had ever been. The words painted on most were meaningless, but I remember a few:

- WE ARE HUMAN, NOT ROBOTS. ZIRKLE WORKERS ON STRIKE.

- JUST WHEN WE THOUGHT WE WERE DONE WITH BEZOS...
- CAPITALISM IS FLAWED. EAT THE RICH.

Their behaviour disgusted and *still* disgusts me. I could never agree with such unrefined opinions. If they wished to make a change, they should have done it through civil conversation, not communist propaganda.

Now, of course, only a spiteful idiot would have allowed his children to call the police on him in such a situation. As a businessman, I could not afford to go to court. None of my employees were competent enough to run a business in my absence. So, feigning defeat, I agreed to their terms.

My son lowered his phone and smiled.

Killing those two children that night was not a sign that I was mad or obsessive or cruel. It was simply the mark of a talented businessman,

I did it in the same way I killed their mother: in the dead of night, pressing their pillows to their faces until their breathing stopped, then burying them among the newly planted fruit trees.

My daughter had her phone lying on her bed. *No notifications? How sad.* I turned it off, just in case.

I fell asleep soundly that night.

There was a knock on my door in the afternoon. Five hasty raps, two policemen, eyes hardened, wishing to enter. I welcomed them inside with a sincere smile (which they did not return) and offered them a cup of tea (which they did not accept).

“Where are the children?” they asked as I guided them upstairs.

“Camping with their aunt, in Maine”

They opened my daughter's bedside drawers and nodded. “I see.”

I took them around the estate, making idle conversation about the chipped statue around the corner of the time my son and I saw a fox—*right in this place!*—or the cutlery my grandmother passed down to me or—

“Mr Zirkel, you are being arrested for an account of first-degree murder and two alleged filicides. this is necessary in order to prompt the investigation of the offence, please place your hands together behind your back like you're praying...”

In the end, the phone *was* a problem.

I did not get bail.

I had to be separated from the rest of the convicts (which, frankly, I preferred. They all had the stench of impoverishment, I did not wish to be around them either).

I still do not regret killing those children. My only regret is that I did not pay closer attention to their activities.

I am not mad. I will get out of this situation, too.