

Anonymous call

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Everybody has a price. I learned that recently. A price in which anybody will do anything for money. The premise is simple. If I said I would pay you one hundred pounds to walk into a supermarket and steal one item, it being of no concern what it was you stole, would you do it? Of course you would. What if I gave you 200 or 400 pounds? The more money I give you, the more likely you are to do it, to break the law. If I gave you one thousand pounds to smash somebody's window, well, I know the answer to that.

Being a poor student, I was given these incentives by a person I've never met. He rang me up and offered me money to perform tasks that have no real relevance to anybody. Thing is, though, he paid up. He knew my bank details, and paid the cash he said he'd give me when the tasks had been performed. How he knew I'd done them I do not know. I assume that he'd been watching me. I suppose it was a lesson in greed. The more money a person has, the more they want, and their only pleasure gained from it is in its attainment. They never spend it. It's the same with me. I'm rich, but I cannot earn any more.

The phone calls have stopped, and I cannot access my bank account. I came to understand the true power of money, and the stranglehold it has over society. Imagine suddenly waking up in a field, and you have absolutely no idea as to where you are. You discover you have no money whatsoever, or the means to attain it. What do you do? What about when you get pangs of hunger? Do you beg? Or do you steal? Do you break the law in order to eat? Would you, if you had to? Of course you would. The structure of towns and cities is geared to the pound, the dollar, the rouble, and if you haven't got it, you suffer.

Everything must be paid for. A ride on a bus, a ride on a rollercoaster, a place to park your expensive car, in which you put your expensive petrol. The privilege to watch a new film on a big

screen, and the food that goes with it. The staff that help out in your entertainment are not doing it for the fun of it, because they want to help you enjoy yourself. Their incentive for their painted smiles is money, is pay day, so they can go spending. How many people do you know who work a mundane job would do it for nothing? would work a forty hour week for no pay? I don't think there's anybody.

The incentive is the wage, the oil that keeps the vast economic machine running, society's lifeblood, and it can turn friend against friend. Friends who have known each other for many years can fall out over money. It can destroy marriages, cause deaths, and generally create vast amounts of misery.

Yet, by turn, it can cause vast amount of happiness. I thought it would make me happy. It did, I suppose in its attainment. I would receive a call on my mobile. It would always say: 'Anonymous call', and whoever it was, was making me rich. Burn down a derelict house for six thousand pounds he had asked. An empty house, just burn it down. Of course I did, and the next day, I checked my account, and found I was considerably richer.

Find somebody who owns a cat, kill it, then break into their house and hang it from the light in the living room. For that, I was to receive half a million pounds. Half a million. I found the task rather easy.

The next assignment I didn't think twice about. Such was my desire for money that I was entranced by its lure, and was hooked like a shark scenting blood in the water. Sever your bonds, said the voice, sever everything you know. Leave home, leave your friends, don't even say goodbye. Move down south to this address. He gave an address, and it's from there where I speak now.

On the journey to a London suburb, he rang again, and told me that before I was to reach the address, I was to bring the head of a tramp. For that, he would give me one million pounds. Would you kill a tramp for a million pounds? I would, and did. It took a while. I bought an axe, and searched the back streets. A tired old man was

half asleep in a back doorway to a restaurant, presumably hoping for scraps. I thought this doesn't happen very often, does it? Me, a rich student, standing before one of the poorest members of society. I axed him without hesitation, taking care not to harm the head, which took four strikes to come free. I put it in a new bag I had bought, and headed for the house, which, to my disappointment, wasn't a lavish affair, but a derelict abode along a side street with a 'for sale' sign outside, attached to which was a 'sold' notice.

Well, it didn't matter, it wasn't my place, and I could buy whatever house I liked. The door was open and I stepped inside. It was then that the phone rang again, and I saw that it was a text message. 'Go up into the attic' it said. So up the creaking stairs I went, and saw that there was a step ladder leading up. I clambered up and found that the light had been switched on.

I also discovered that the money I was to earn this time would not be going in the bank, as it was here, scattered around. The place was literally carpeted in money, and I could roll in it. As I did that, another text message disappointingly informed me that the money was not mine, yet. It could be if I did one more thing. There was a million pounds exactly in ten pound notes. The man rang me. I think he couldn't be bothered to text again. He told me to close the hatch.

In doing that, I knew I would be locking myself in, as there was a mortice lock on the entrance that could only be unlocked from outside. I had to shut myself in what was effectively a prison cell. I had to trust the stranger, have confidence in him to come and unlock it.

What I want you to do, said the voice, is read one more text message I will send after I finish speaking to you. Once you've read it, understood it, I want you to smash the phone, make it useless. I'm sure you can afford a new one. Perform what it says, and if you do that, the money's yours. Sayonara my friend, I won't see you again. That was it, he clicked off, and about a minute later, the text message came through:

Escape, it said, nothing else.

Alright, I thought. All I've got to do is get out of here. Easy, probably. I smashed the phone against a wooden beam. I made it useless. So I tried to escape, but couldn't. The floor was made of polished hardboard. I couldn't penetrate outside onto the roof, and after a while, sat down in the money to think about how I was going to do this.

I saw the bag, and emptied out the severed head. Wonder what that's for, I asked myself, not really thinking about it. I thought perhaps that if I couldn't escape, the stranger would come and rescue me, but I was wrong.

Another scout of the attic revealed that I really was trapped. There was absolutely no escape, so exasperated, I sat down again in front of the head, and then I realized what it was for. It was to give me time. It was my sustenance until I figured out how to get out of here, to keep me going if it took a while. I suppose it catered for all my nutritional requirements, being both solid and liquid. As I lie here, staring up at an abandoned cobweb, I understand now what the stranger had taught me.

So full of greed was I that all I saw was the money, and now it's useless. I can't eat it. In here, now, with me, it has no meaning, and it can't help stave off the pangs of hunger that I knew would come. After I'd eaten the head, every bit of it, the hunger stayed away for around a full day, and there was nothing else for it, but to start on myself. It hurt, but I managed most of my left forearm. Thing is, though, although I'm staving off hunger, I can't really think straight with regards to escaping, as I think I'm going mad. I ate the broken mobile phone, and my watch, and very reluctantly, some ten pounds notes, but still the hunger comes, and I know I'm not getting out of here. My lesson has been learned. Money isn't everything.

See, the thing is, as the stranger has access to my account, he can easily take out of it, so effectively, that money is his now his, and when I die here, he can come and take all this money away, and I

realize that he is no better than I. Money can warp a sane person's mind. He gets most of his money back, as being greedy meant I didn't spend much of it, and now as I lay here bleeding waiting for the inevitable, my sense of greed does not let up its grip on me as I find myself jealous of the stranger, because he is after all, rich.