

mail boxes etc. /2/ not the guy

I **came to** the door **along with** a bearded man **in his 40's** holding a large brown box. The store was closed. It was 3:30 p.m. How **dare** the guy close his store **early** when he's so **obsessed with** time? Then **the bearded man and I** both noticed a small yellow **note stuck to** the window.

It said: "The owner of this store died yesterday. **There will be** a memorial service tomorrow at 3 p.m. at the church **down the street**. **We will not be having** normal **hours** until **things get organized**." It was signed by the assistant.

The bearded man **and I** stood there, **speechless**. "He died—that guy died? Jesus. That's **so** crazy." I said. "**Huh,**" the man replied, and he added, "God, he was a **jerk**." -- "I know," I said. "**Such a** jerk." -- "But, yes, it is horrible. Yeah."

We stood there **for a while as if** we were both trying to **figure out** how you're **supposed to** feel when a **regular** background player in your life dies. But not someone like the jogger who stretches outside your window every morning. Someone you actively hate.

Oh, God, **had he been** sick? I **wondered**. If he was sick **for a really long time** and that's why he was so angry **at** the world, then, wow, that is the saddest thing **ever**. But if he was suddenly **hit by** a truck, well, that would be sad, too. But a little less sad.

Then the man **picked up** his box and said, "Well, FedEx is just a mile **down the road**." -- "Yeah, I know, thanks." But I went home. When I **entered** the store the next week and the little bell **went off**, a tall man with a round head **was busy** behind the **counter**. He smiled **at** me and said, "Let me know if I can help you with anything."

I know I **should have felt** calm and **welcome**, but I didn't. **Instead** I thought: Hey, don't be nice to people. He **would hate to see you treat** me **this way**. It was his store. Ten years. Have some damn **respect**.