

EVER FELT YOU'RE HOWLING AT THE MOON?

START HERE Q1



HOW DO YOU APPROACH YOUR CV?

A WITH ANXIETY – MY HIT RATE IS FAR FROM IDEAL

B I'VE SPENT MY WORKING LIFE FINE-TUNING IT

C IT'S VERY IMPRESSIVE, AND A WORK OF FICTION

02

ASPIRING TO BE YOUR OFFICE'S APEX PREDATOR? DON'T LET THE MASK SLIP

The Wolf of Your Street

MEN'S HEALTH
SIN SPECIAL
STORY 2 OF 3

If you ignore the bad press, being a sociopath has its benefits. Sex, power, bounteous riches – what's not to like? One MH writer, the archetypal Mr Nice Guy, tries immorality on for size and asks whether a sheep in wolf's clothing can bite just as hard

WORDS: ANDY JONES PHOTOGRAPHY: SUN LEE



People like you – ‘empaths’, I call them – are weak,” says my new mentor. “You’re beset by weaknesses. You talk all the time. You give away information, you expose frailty, you concede ground. Everyone is so keen to show how human they are. It doesn’t get results.”

My straight-talking guide, a woman who goes by the name of ME Thomas, is not so afflicted. Thomas is – in her own words – a successful attorney and law professor with “remarkably beautiful breasts”. She once ditched a friend whose father was dying from cancer because they stopped being fun. She claims she “has never had an insecurity in her life”. Now she’s going to teach me to be like her.

Thomas is a self-styled sociopath. While she keeps her true identity a secret, she proudly sees it as her defining characteristic. The only reason Thomas has agreed to speak to me is because there’s a chance to publicise her book *Confessions of a Sociopath*. By her standards I am an ‘empath’ because I can feel remorse and empathise with others.

“I have to memorise other people’s emotions in order to mimic them,” she tells me, “because I don’t feel them naturally.”

Sociopaths are defined by antisocial, destructive behaviour; by their insincerity and superficiality. They are egocentric, manipulative and have parasitic relationships. Evidently some have great breasts. So why would any right-minded man want to be one?

Well, put it like this. I haven’t had a pay rise in five years. I’m fed up with a prevailing culture of malfeasance where failure is rewarded and hard work is exploited. Psychologists estimate that one in 25 people are sociopaths, and guess what? They’re four times more likely to be your boss. A paper in the *Journal of Business Ethics* argued that the banking

crisis of 2008 can be partly explained by the number of people with an abnormally low capacity for empathy in high-powered positions. And where are they now? Living in a bigger house than I am and looking forward to their next bonus.

Do nice guys finish last while ruthless bastards roar off into the distance, throwing fifties into the air?

If that’s what being a sociopath is, I want in.

Olga, our cleaner, has to go. My partner Jennifer adores her, even though her work is sloppy. Also, I’m paying £40 a week for someone to break stuff and push a vacuum around.

Empathetic Me would have given her a warning; then – if I had to – the ‘it’s not you it’s me’ talk and sent her off with a tip. *Weak*.

Sociopaths don’t just take what they want, says Thomas. They take more. “Say a friend is selling a car for £5000 and another is looking to buy one for £10,000. Most people would simply put the two in touch. Not me. I would buy from the first friend, sell it to the second and double my money.” Emboldened by Thomas’s ruthlessly simple rationale, I corner Olga on Monday, cleaning day.

“We’re done here. No more cleaning.”
“OK, I see you next week.”
“No. I no longer need a cleaner.”
“But Jennifer...” she starts.
“No. I am saying I don’t need a cleaner.”

Now for the profit: I lie to Jen that I have booked the cleaner for the next week then do a deliberately half-arsed job of cleaning the house myself. Jen notices the house is still a tip. “You know what, you’re right – we need to let Olga go.” I offer to do the firing – covering my tracks while looking both decisive and

HOW WELL DO YOUR COLLEAGUES KNOW YOU?

A WE DON'T REALLY TALK. PROBABLY FOR THE BEST

B THEY KNOW MY WIFE'S NAME AND WHAT I DRINK

C AT WORK I WEAR A MASK – MANY MASKS, IN FACT

Q3

HOW REVEALING IS YOUR FACEBOOK PAGE?

A IT TELLS ALL: SELFIES, NIGHTS OUT, PLAYLISTS

B JUST HOLIDAY SNAPS, A FEW PITHY UPDATES...

C IT'S A PURPOSEFULLY CRAFTED FALSE PERSONA

Q4

SOCIOPATH v PSYCHOPATH

ONE'S A SKILLED MANIPULATOR, THE OTHER A BORN KILLER. LEARN THE DIFFERENCE BEFORE DONNING THE MASK

REMINDS YOU OF SHERLOCK HOLMES	REMINDS YOU OF PATRICK BATEMAN
BEHIND CLOSED DOORS UNDERMINES YOU TO COLLEAGUES	THROWS A LETTER OPENER AT YOU DURING THE BOARD MEETING
WOULD DATE YOUR SISTER THEN DITCH HER	WOULD SLEEP WITH YOUR WIFE. AND SEND YOU THE VIDEO
URNS UP ON TIME FOR DINNER (BUT "FORGETS" HIS WALLET)	URNS UP LATE AND STEALS £10 WHEN YOUR BACK'S TURNED
CONSOLES YOU OVER MISSED TARGETS, BUT ONLY TO DRAW ATTENTION TO THEM	BCCs YOU ON EMAILS TO YOUR BOSS ABOUT WHY HE DESERVES THE QUARTERLY BONUS MORE THAN YOU
RARELY GETS CAUGHT BUT ALWAYS HAS AN EXCUSE AT THE READY ON THE OFF CHANCE	ACTS ON IMPULSE AND LEAVES TOO MANY CLUES TO GET AWAY WITH IT FOREVER

THE MASK OF SUCCESS SLIP INTO SOMETHING A LITTLE MORE RUTHLESS TO GET WHAT YOU WANT – AT WORK AND HOME

strong – and pocket the £40. Later on, conscience-racked, I pay for dinner. This kind of stuff doesn’t come naturally. Deep down, I’m a nice guy. On a night out both the drinks and the jokes are on me. I’m ambitious but cautious and often think what I could achieve with sharper elbows.

Finding My Fangs

Self interest is the sociopath’s MO. Like psychopaths, they are deceitful. But while psychopaths are impulsive, the sociopath meticulously plans; where psychopaths cannot sustain relationships, sociopaths manipulate people and their emotions. Crucially, a psychopath is born, a sociopath is made.

The more I read about it, the more incentive I find. Sociopaths are driven, stress-free. And the psychologist Kevin Dutton likens their selfish behaviour to sunlight: too much is dangerous but small, regular doses are good for you. I resolve to be an arsehole and proceed.

The next few days are taken up with feeble sociopathic victories. I let my bag occupy a seat on the Tube; I tell a charity mugger why I won’t donate to their cause; I even let a friend buy three drinks in a row. Each brings me out in a cold sweat, and all for a saving of £15.

My pathological appetite grows, however, when talking to former stocks analyst, Geraint Anderson. While no sociopath (he claims), he was happy to behave like one before ditching investment banking to write his confessional book *Cityboy*. “To live among this lot, you need to adopt their traits,” he says. Unhinged greed goes without saying, but according to Anderson, sex is another key driver for corporate sociopaths. “The most controlling ones would even choose what underwear their wives wore,” he says. “In everything – bedroom, trading floor, squash court – they got what they wanted.” Dr Minna Lyons, a psychologist at Liverpool Hope University, agrees that sexual promiscuity is common to sociopaths and points to the ruling class as an example.

“Unsurprisingly, Silvio Berlusconi projects sociopathic tendencies,” she says. I look at Jen. I love her – desire her – but frankly she’s started to wear more in bed than an Inuit. The toweling PJs must



go. While she's in the shower, I bundle the offending items into the wardrobe and root out her Agent Provocateur peekaboo (worn once). I lay it on the bed but before I even realise she's in the room, £150's worth of lingerie is back in the drawer. Note to self: way too sleazy.

How To Bite Hard

I have the honour of being a friend's best man. Tradition dictates that I organise the stag do but some of Stuart's pals are already planning a golf holiday. I hate golf. Empath Me would cheerfully fold – "Golf? Yeah, why not?" – then spend a few days in the rough. So what about Sociopathic Me? Simple. No golf. I sift through my early emails with Thomas for a masterclass in the kind of manipulation I need to control a bunch of unknown men. Her correspondence is a persuasive mix of flattery ("You're familiar with this because you're a journalist") and unobtainability ("I'm out all day but try calling"). She leaves no space for discussion.

I email the stag party: "Hello chaps, I've sorted everything. Stuart wants a sporty stag do so we're doing two days at Cheltenham. I'm booking us into this hotel (link below). "If you don't know about racing, don't worry – I do! I can help you with form, tips and knowing one end of a nag from the other. I'll need £400 next week."

No chit-chat, no sign-off, no option. I picked what suited me and disregarded anyone else. I even look considerate by falling in with Stuart's only request to 'make it sporty'. No sunshine, no golf – just horses in a wet field. Stuart rings. "Look, a few of the lads are concerned..."

I cut him off. "Mate, don't worry." "Well, the boys, they..." "They will have a good time." As we speak I consciously kill off all lines of attack. Then come the lies. "Everyone said this was a good idea [lie], I got a huge discount [I didn't] and it will be full of hot fillies [horses]."

Then the clincher: "Do you really want to organise an alternative?" The phone clicks. This time I don't even feel guilty. The glee of victory overrides any shame. We will have a good time, only this way

A MAN OF MANY FACES
YOUR HANDY, HOWL-TO GUIDE TO
DECEIT AND MASS MANIPULATION.
USE IT TO BECOME THE ALPHA
MALE IN YOUR PACK

*TEST COMPILED WITH PSYCHOLOGIST PAUL BABIK, CO-AUTHOR OF SNAKES IN SUITS: WHEN PSYCHOPATHS GO TO WORK. MODEL: ZACK O'TOOLE | SHIRT: HUGO BOSS, SELFRIDES.COM | LEATHER ATTACHE CASE: LETTINGER, LETTINGER.CO.UK | SHOES: LOAKE SHOEMAKERS, LOAKE.CO.UK | COAT HANGER: MUJI, MUJI.UK

"Power without blowback is thrilling. I behave awfully yet get what I want at every turn"

I won't be playing golf. That was too easy. In the bedroom, I've been persistent in my campaign against Jen's negligence with negligées. It's working. "I like this power game," Jen purrs as she tries the lacy ensemble I've picked. But I don't enjoy manipulating her. Being a sociopath is fine in emails. Face to face, it's a very different matter.

At *Men's Health* HQ, I adjust my tie and run through my plan. I'm going to demand more money for writing this article, plus a list of (false) expenses. I'll deploy my best sociopathic skills against the very person who asked me to learn them, my editor Ian Taylor. If I pull this off, it will be proof that sociopathy can be learnt. Ian gives me a handshake and leads me to a coffee shop. He's 6ft 5in – bigger than expected – but I've spoken with Joe Navarro, an ex-FBI interviewer who knows every trick in the sociopath handbook. "They do tiny things to set the tone," Navarro had said. "They tell you where to sit or pick lint off your shirt." I take control. "Not this coffee place," I announce, leading Ian to a choice of my own. Inside, I insist the staff turn the music down and leave him to pay. I'm charming, without laughing at his jokes. Unconsciously, he works for my approval when it should be the other way around. I go up a notch. "Isn't your boss a great guy?" I announce, launching into some entirely believable fiction about how I met a superior of Ian's at an awards bash. I've researched Ian, yet practically stalked his boss, all because Thomas said it would

give me authority. "He loved my last story," I say, turning up my self worth. Ian's eyes flicker – he's either nervous or impressed. "Ah yeah, it was good." "Great! I want more money for this article. Also, I need to file it next month." "But we agreed you'd file it tomorrow." "We did. But I have upset my friends [sort of], my family [lie], and changed my persona [horribly so]. I deserve more money and time." Note the use of 'I' and the presentation of two problems at once. "No, that's not going to work..." "Why not?" I tease, all chuckles. "You're the boss – you can juggle your budgets." Despite the flattery, Ian looks in turn cross, anxious, confused. "Look..." he says, the sound of heels digging in. My mask doesn't slip but my heart's thumping. I shovel on problems so he'll have to concede something. Anything.

The Mask Slips

The outcome? Ian speaks to his boss about a raise, I get an extension and he makes a mental note to rain-check any future meets with me. Frankly, I don't want coffee with this me again either. Power without blowback is thrilling. In the past month I have behaved awfully yet got what I wanted at every turn. My karma account is overdrawn but my life balance says 'winning'. In my experience sociopathy is a mask, a game face. You don't wear it all the time, which is crucial because it's exhausting being so calculating. Jen claims she couldn't tell that I had become a sociopath; worryingly, she thinks I was simply 'more efficient'. But I couldn't bring myself to manipulate her to the same extent. The mask is not something I'd advise you to wear at home. Elsewhere, however, it's body armour. We all project an image of ourselves that we think will please other people. Acting like a sociopath is just an escalation of default human behaviour. Every once in a while, it pays to be somebody whose only interest is his own. **👤** For your own masterclass visit sociopathworld.com where you can swap tips with other sociopaths in training

ARE YOU PART OF YOUR COMPANY'S MANAGEMENT PLAN?

A WAIT – MY COMPANY HAS A MANAGEMENT PLAN?

B NOT SURE. I HAVE MY CV IN OTHER PLACES

C YES AND COCK-BLOCKING ALL OF MY COMPETITION

06

SOMEONE TAKES CREDIT FOR YOUR WORK. WHAT NOW?

A I COMPLAIN AT LENGTH TO A NON-WORK FRIEND

B I TAKE THE OFFENDER TO ONE SIDE, TACTFULLY

C UNLIKELY. THE OTHER WAY AROUND, MAYBE

05

HOW SOCIOPATHIC ARE YOU?*

MOSTLY A YOU'RE PREY TO ANY OFFICE SOCIOPATH: EAGER TO PLEASE, SLOW TO SPEAK UP AND EASILY BRUSHED ASIDE

MOSTLY B YOU HAVE BACKBONE BUT DEEP DOWN YOU'RE A PUSSYCAT, ONLY EVER REALLY RUTHLESS WHEN PLAYING POKER

MOSTLY C YOU'RE REMORSELESS – VAIN, COLD AND SCHEMING. EVEN YOUR PARENTS FEAR YOU. OR THEY SHOULD...