

Field Notes Collection No. 2

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1.

Overqualified Is Gaslighting: Exposing the Lie They Sold You

The light that cuts through the darkness and evil fog of Dr. Overlord.

That was what the blurb promised. Except, it didn't deliver.

Not far from where I grew up, a bicycle shop sold all kinds of stuff: toys, hardware, clothes, and, yeah, even bicycles and bicycle parts. That's where I purchased the flashlight that was supposed to eliminate all evil darkness.

A modern 50-watt LED would've outshone that toy.

I was also raised with this phrase: *"Paper is patient."*

Write what you like. The paper doesn't care. The blurb is patient. That which gets written or said does not always reflect reality. We know it. But the weight, and the apparent relevance of some words can blind us.

Dr. Overlord's flashlight failure sets up today's discussion about the phrase: *"You are overqualified."*

One can only surmise how qualified the blurb-writer was who created the copy for those toys back then. Was a qualification even a requirement?

I was sitting opposite Hank when he returned from what could've been his "dream job." You guessed it: "Overqualified."

"One word turned my lifetime achievements into a negative."

Translated, "overqualified" means one thing: "We can't afford you, if the salary expectation is indicated by the stack of degrees, diplomas, and expertise you carry."

A couple of years ago, I was a player inside a performative interview. "You are overqualified. Why would I pay you more than someone I could get locally?" the company owner asked me. I fumbled terribly that day.

Now I would reply: *"No need to pursue this any further. Have a great day."*

I have had engagements with honest and transparent interviewers: "We can offer you these positions within these remuneration brackets." Simple. No manipulation.

The gut-punch blanket term "overqualified" is designed to make you feel you need to accept an offer for a lower bracket without questioning anything.

Matt's takeaway

You know it's false equivalence. Opinions and a company's potential cashflow issues are no reflection on the value you could add to a company that understands accumulated expertise and qualifications.

Then, believe it.

Dr. Overlord would not have accepted such a weak light of employee insight, would you?

2.

Corporate Euphemisms: How Companies Reject You Without Telling the Truth

What is enlightenment? Is it much more than strapping a light to your forehead when you walk down a dark alley? You need your hands free, either for self-defence or to help someone. Once that dark alley lights up, you see it all: rats, dodgy and scary-looking characters, and a Samaritan trying to help someone worse off than themselves. Not everything inside the alley is bad. When you look up you might see a windowsill where a plant still clings to life — flowering even. But what you will see is truth: truth without anyone offering explanations.

Life, corporate environments, your family at the dinner table — those are the tour guides who take you down the nicer parts of town. Sometimes you stumble into an alley because you get derailed. Yesterday Hank heard he was "overqualified." He was devastated when he saw all his achievements reduced to a single label of rejection. It's in those moments when you find someone who asks, "Hey, dude, hang on — what the hell does that word mean, really?" That's a flashlight. Not necessarily a strong one, but good enough to guide you down that rabbit hole, that alley where truth is revealed in all its unexpected honesty.

Words like "overqualified" don't travel alone. The alley is seldom empty. They belong to a tidy little notebook that feels sanitized, dressed up to sound reasonable, neutral, harmless — until you switch on that flashlight.

The promise is bright, but the reality is dim.

“We’re looking for someone who can grow with the role.”

We want someone cheaper.

Preferably someone who doesn't yet know what they're worth.

Growth is optional. Obedience is not.

“It’s a fast-paced environment.”

We are chronically understaffed.

Everything is urgent because nothing is planned.

You won't be running — you'll be sprinting uphill, carrying other people's unfinished work.

“You’ll wear multiple hats.”

We didn't hire enough people.

You are the missing department. Congratulations.

“We’re a family.”

Boundaries will be tested.

Hours will blur.

Like some families, loyalty will be expected long after fairness has left the room.

“We need someone hands-on.”

The strategy is unclear.

Leadership is stretched thin.

You will not be shaping the system — you will be surviving it.

“We’re not corporate.”

There is no structure.

No process.

No safety net.

Just vibes and consequences.

“You might get bored here.”

We don't know how to use what you bring.

Instead of admitting that, we'll dress it up as concern for your happiness.

“We’ll keep your CV on file.”

We won't.

Every one of these phrases is "patient paper." Carefully written. Carefully vague. Carefully deniable. Because clarity is dangerous.

Clarity would sound like this:

“We don’t have the budget.”

“We don’t know how to manage someone at your level.”

“We’re afraid you’ll see the cracks too quickly.”

Those are conversations most companies don't have the courage — or the competence — to hold. So instead, they dim the language, soften the edges, and wrap hard truths in polite fiction.

And if you're not careful, you start translating it inward: *“Maybe I am too much.” “Maybe I should take less.” “Maybe I need to shrink to fit.”*

That's the real trick. Not rejecting you. **Resizing you.**

I seldom add disclaimers to my posts. The clever guys call it hedging. Whatever — it can actually advance the narrative logically. So...

Sometimes: "fast-paced" genuinely means fast-paced. "Hands-on" genuinely means hands-on. "Overqualified" genuinely means they believe you'll leave. Not all alleys are filled with those who wish to harm or deceive.

Matt's takeaway

Learn the language. See through it. Investigate. And when someone hands you a dim flashlight disguised as opportunity — don't squint. Walk away when you can. Not everyone in the alley is going to

like you.

3.

What Happens When You Outgrow Your Tribe? Part 1: Do You Need to Be Understood?

What happens when you outgrow your tribe? It's one of the most disorienting experiences in personal growth.

In previous posts we mentioned Hank, who was told he was overqualified. We talked about the alley of obfuscation and enlightenment.

When You Start Seeing the Clichés

When Hank began to notice the clichés in the office, he was surprised that his colleagues did not see it as a problem. For a while he became rather unpopular for pointing out generic phrases and clichés. He felt isolated. Nothing changed within the environment.

On Fridays the gang still went across the street to the cheap local pub. Everyone still talked shop, shared WhatsApp memes, and complained about the terrible burgers. But Hank wasn't doing well.

What do you do when you begin to understand what lives beneath the surface of platitudes and habit? Now that you can see a little more clearly, "What now?" is a valid question. How do I reintegrate without condescension or the feeling of loneliness? The office no longer feels the same. Conversations at family gatherings have begun to feel disconnected.

The uncomfortable possibility is that your tribe hasn't changed at all. You have. They are still speaking the language that once worked for you.

What Do You Do When You Outgrow Your Tribe?

That's a precise question — and it's where many people who begin seeing more clearly get stuck. When perception grows faster than emotional belonging, you risk seeing clearly but feeling isolated. Here's the challenge: return to a human circle of experience without shrinking your mind or inflating your ego. Integration will rely heavily on how you translate your current experiences.

Stop Needing Others to Understand You

A place to start is where you stop needing others to understand you. This is the big one.

When you stop needing others to meet you at your new level of sight, you stop signaling disappointment in them.

People can sense this, even when you say nothing, and even when they don't understand the context of your disappointment. That dude from IT Support knows you are annoyed with him, but he doesn't know why.

Live and let live. Let them speak in clichés and repeat their scripts — it's their way of surviving.

The paradox: when you no longer demand understanding, you become easier to understand.

4.

What Happens When You Outgrow Your Tribe? Part 2: Social Realignment

With time, Hank began finding ways to re-integrate into his current tribe while searching for a new one. He started sharing lived experiences instead of abstraction. People connect through stories. Sure, our minds and logic build systems, but stories anchor it all in a human way.

Instead of saying, *"This morning was shaped by the three forces,"* he tried, *"I woke up in a strange mood, and it's funny how one random thing can screw the whole day."* Same insight — different entry point. It made him seem less like a wannabe intellectual.

Hank still wrote down his undiluted, ostentatious observations each night. By day he chose to read the room. People trust experience. Theory can feel like condescension. How often do you read the room before rushing to share your knowledge at all costs? Often, others just need someone to acknowledge the shit they're also navigating.

Hank also regained his curiosity about the ordinary. Condescension dissolves when curiosity returns. Ask: Why does this simple meme work for them? What do they feel that I've forgotten? Curiosity is underrated; it turns distance into empathy.

When Hank first noticed all the pain, neglect, and reality in that alley, he realized how many people were doing nothing more than hanging on. He was one of them. At that pivotal point, you skip explanation and either become useful or you don't. The man on the ground isn't going to absorb your existential philosophy about mankind's fracture of disconnection. No — he needs a hand to get up. That's all. Integration now means others feel stability when they're around you.

On Sundays, when things quiet down and thoughts have time to creep up, Hank also realized: **loneliness is transitional, not terminal.**

This is the loneliness Hank took time to name: the old tribe no longer fits and the new one hasn't arrived yet. You are in a waiting area between flights. You're not doomed to walk alone. The right people will take time to find you.

You're not necessarily out of the alley yet, either. That's why you keep one foot in the dirt. When you're alone, or still with the old tribe, be human: cook, drive, repair something, feed a dog, laugh at stupid TV or TikTok (that's where I fail each day). These are grounding rituals — not distractions, but reminders that intellect is only one part of being. These rituals keep you humble.

When you see through people's illusions, protect them a little. Re-learn the ordinary. That's your new job.

End of Collection No. 2
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