

## **How does the writer use language to express the force of his rage?**

My girlfriend says I frighten her. When she told me this, about six months ago, I was horrified. We seldom argue and when we do I'm never threatening. I've never been violent in my life. But, she said, when I'm in a mood, she's often terrified. What seems like a mere sulk to me is to her a rage so powerful it becomes almost a living thing. It swamps the flat, pushes the air from the rooms and bends out the walls.

I was so confused when she made this claim that I simply discounted it. It just made no sense. It was as if someone had said to me, 'So how does it feel to be made entirely of onions?' Nonsense! So I forgot about it. Until - for some reason - now. I'm about five minutes into a three-day intensive anger-management course, which I'm attending for purely journalistic reasons, to see if schemes such as these have substance or are merely get-out-of-jail cards for toxic celebrities, road-ragers and parole-hungry psychotics.

And I've been worrying about this story because, well, how am I supposed to judge the worth of this thing if I'm not an angry person myself? Rage really isn't a problem for me. Not at all. I look down at my pad, where I notice I've been absentmindedly doodling a beautiful fairy with a machete sticking out of her eyeball.

Tch! That's not right. I turn to a fresh sheet and copy the words on the flipchart in front of me. 'It's a beautiful morning,' our teacher, Mike Fisher, is saying, 'And I am in a joyful place.' I snort inwardly, then begin to transcribe the information carefully. 'Life is not a rehearsal,' I write. Then, 'Listen with LOVE.'

'The skills I'm going to be teaching you over the next three days,' says Fisher, 'are bloody powerful.' The door opens, an old woman pops her head through and says, 'Oooh, I am sorry!' before closing it. I sigh theatrically.

But in the six weeks following the course the furious homunculus who's been driving my brain is noticeably more serene. Before, I'd spend my hour-long cycle ride to work gnawing obsessively at some problem or other, having fantasy arguments in my head, rehearsing defences that most of the time I'd end up not needing. Now, I recognise this is just anger 'coming out sideways'. So I take the time to fathom out what's really making me angry, isolate the fear beneath it, then allow myself to be authentically scared for a while, to 'sit in the discomfort of my hurt' as Fisher would have it. And - to my astonishment - it seems to work.

The biggest test of all, though, came eight days ago, when I was informed my job was going to be made redundant. As I type this, I'm petrified. I feel about 2ft tall, like I want to run off and live under a hedge, away from everything. But things at home have clung on admirably. Previously, I would have withdrawn so far into myself I'd have virtually lost the power to speak or move my facial muscles. The sulk inside our small flat would have been gigantic. But I've tried to talk to my partner about how I've been feeling and - bar an 'explosive' incident last night when I stormed out of the flat, took a random bus to Peckham and found myself sitting on a wall in a car park - we're getting through this well. And, best of all, my girlfriend tells me she's not been scared at all.