

THE FIRST CANDIDATE:

The interviewer shrugged.

"Call it a whim, if you will, but I ^{have never} ~~don't~~ hired the first candidate of the day."

Julian McGuire stared at the interviewer, his face expressionless. Just over a month ago, he had graduated summa cum laude from Harvard Business School. His future shone bright ahead of him. And now: this. He was being rejected even before he had a chance to say anything. He noticed that the interviewer, a certain Martin Eriksen, was about his own age. And yet, he could be so high-and-mighty.

Martin continued.

"It helps to keep you sane in this business if you're a little superstitious

Just a fancy of mine, but the first
candidate is automatically out."

He paused for Julian's response.

When Julian spoke, his voice was
crisp and confident.

"With all due respect, sir, I think
I'll walk out this door with a job
today."

Martin was taken aback but
he didn't show it on his face.
"And what makes you so confident?"

Your grades?"

Julian chuckled.

"No sir, it is not my grades. It's
just that I possess a certain, well,
ability, which you might find very
useful indeed."

Martin raised his eyebrows but did
not speak.

Julian continued, "This, er, ability
involves foreseeing, quite frankly, a bad turn
of events. Simply put, I can sense bad
luck."

There was a long silence.

"Well, go on, I'm all ears."

"It is something everybody has, to an
extent. You know, premonitions. I have just
gone a step further and honed this skill.

My intuition is no longer just a gut feeling. ②
I have learnt from a very able master.
Which is why, I am so sure that I
will get hired today."

Martin's face was impassive,
something Julian had not expected. No
derisive cackles, no outbursts of laughter. ~~or~~
~~no~~ ~~attempt~~ Martin's next words were
~~to~~ surprising but not really unexpected.
"Prove it", was all he said.

Julian seized the chance.

"Well, it works like this. It

takes a huge amount of focus on
the ~~thing~~ person I am, so to say,
"observing". I have to block out everything
else. If everything goes as planned, I can
sense bad luck if ~~it~~ ~~is~~ approaching the
person ~~the~~ next 5-10 ~~minutes~~ days".

"Well, prove it" was all Martin said.

Julian took up a seat facing
Martin and looked into his eyes. He
never blinked throughout the minute or so
he was staring. When he broke out
of the connection, his breathing was
quicker and he was perspiring.

"The fund you manage is going
to take a hit in the next minute. It
is going to drop by more than 15%
because of increased trading in China."

Martin typed quick instructions to

his computer, which gave him the updated value of his stock. Before his eyes, the indicators crashed down, by 17%.

"NO!" he cried out. "What is this,

huh? You just walk in and tell me I'm going to lose money?!

Julian smiled.

"Precisely."

Several more demos followed the first one. ~~Mark's~~ ^{Julian's} predictions were accurate, and if made in time, ~~could save~~ the firm millions of dollars. All the powerful people high up were unimpressed. The firm was losing money, they needed this break.

The decision to hire Julian ~~to~~ was taken by the board of directors. They reached an agreement whereby Julian was held liable for the firm's losses, but his commission was 1% of the money he saved them. But there was a catch. If the firm lost more than a certain limit of money due to Julian's decisions, his life was theirs. He was liable not just financially, but by his life too.

At first, they only let him (3)
make the smaller decisions. But it was
soon evident that he was nothing
short of fantastic. During the first few
months, his decisions allowed the company
to bail out of sinking stocks and
save more than 20 million dollars.

The months passed by. Julian
was now making calls almost daily,
and literally, hundreds of millions of
dollars hinged on his nod. He was
personally making over a million dollars
a year.

Fame followed the money. Just
eight months into his job, TIME magazine
pronounced him as the brightest young
stock analyst in recent times. Others
hailed him as his firm's 'lucky charm',
considering how their fortunes had
reversed themselves. ~~and~~ He was quickly
becoming a legend in the professional
circles and got several offers very
month.

More than a year later, while
travelling in the subway, he was gazing,
absent-mindedly into, ~~a~~ looking at nothing,
really, when a young woman walked
opposite him and sat down opposite him.
His clothes were shabby, his hair matted,
and his eyes were blood-shot.

~~He was~~ Over the past few weeks he was realising that he couldn't handle the pressures anymore. He wanted out. His work no longer interested him, challenged him.

Without realising it, his eyes locked into those of the woman. About a minute later, he jumped up, grabbed her by the shoulders and shielded her against the wall, as another train crashed into theirs. She was saved by his timely move, while he suffered a broken hip.

Over the course of his recovery, the girl, Amy, and he became good friends. Soon, they realised that they were in love.

Julian had never felt like this before. His worries melted away, his mind seemed to be lifted of a great weight. Random thoughts about Amy kept floating into his mind, unannounced.

Day after day, he found it increasingly difficult to focus on his work. His decisions started becoming costly to the firm. ~~It~~ ~~to~~ ~~It~~ started losing money.

The bosses started playing hardball. They ~~had~~ grilled him over his performance many times. It only added to his

frustration.

(4)

A plan ~~had~~
He hatched a plan, ready to put it into action at just the opportune moment. Finding Amy had convinced him that he had to leave the firm. Now he just needed to wait till the time was just right.

The moment came a month later. He was prepared. He was secretly stashing away his commissions in a Swiss bank account. He had bought a villa in Naples to hide away for a while and he had made all the transport arrangements. He was even ^{setting up} considering his own firm in the near future. One day, he just didn't show up at the office. A few eyebrows were raised, but mostly it went unnoticed.

(second last)
Para The next week, was, to put it

mildly, a bad one for Martin. Every fund ~~to~~ ~~man~~ the firm managed collapsed. In the good old days, they had made lots of rash decisions, but they would pay now. Within a month, the firm was declared bankrupt. Martin suddenly found himself out of a job. And no one would hire him because of the tag he now came with. He spent long days drinking, and then drinking some

more. Finally, out of sheer desperation, he applied for a job to a firm founded just over a month ago. He was surprised when his resume was accepted immediately, and he was called in for an interview. His life suddenly had new hope.

(the second story starts here)

The man in the office was, as usual doing many things at once. ~~The~~ Supporting his cellphone on his shoulder, he was leafing through the applications for the interviews he would be conducting that day. He almost dropped the phone when ~~at~~ he saw a particular application.

As he turned off the phone & read through the application, his mind went back to the day when he had sat before this candidate ~~asking him~~ talking about for a job, and all that had happened after that. He told his secretary to send him in at once.

As the candidate walked in, and recognised the interviewer, his mouth opened, as if to say something, and closed soundlessly. He soundlessly took a seat.

The interviewer gave a crooked smile as he said, "Well, before we begin, let's clear one thing up. I have a certain policy about hiring staff."

He paused.

"You see, I ~~never~~ don't hire the first candidate of the day".