

Ejected
by
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INT. SMALL BUSINESS OFFICE RECEPTION AREA - DAY

Typical small business office. Small reception area, with two receptionists, and a waiting area. Tastefully decorated, but very corporate looking. Staff is in casual attire and the office is somewhat busy.

One job applicant, JAMES TUCKER sits alone in the waiting area. Mid 40's, balding, overdressed. Blue suit, shined shoes, clutching an attaché folder with too many copies of his resume.

He looks nervous, but trying to keep it in check. Little ticks betray him. Tapping his feet, looking at his watch, a lot. Looking down at his suit.

His suit's a little ill-fitting. It's old, it's sat in a lot of these chairs. He's kept it nice, but it is not crisp or stylish. It's a workhouse and it, like James, looks tired.

Trying not to look nervous or uncomfortable, but failing at both, James checks his watch, it's almost time.

He takes a deep breath, quietly. Looks up at the ceiling. Pulls out his phone so that he looks like he has something to do. He is just checking if there are any new messages for him. They're aren't.

James looks at his watch again.

HR DIRECTOR
(O.S.)
James Tucker?

He turns, sees the HR DIRECTOR standing in the hallway. She's middle aged, casually dressed in nice jeans and a company polo. James gets up.

HR DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
Come right this way, we'll meet in
my office.

James follows, a little hunched over, clenching his attaché folder tight. This is a big deal.

The receptionists watch him go by, staring at him as he goes. They are giving him a funny look, sort of like "What the?".

The HR Director gets to her office, motions with her hand, price is right style, that he should enter.

HR DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Come on in and have a seat. Don't mind the mess, it's been crazy on a stick around here.

INT. HR DIRECTOR'S OFFICE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

A typical busy person's office. Not messy, but cluttered. Stacks and stacks of papers abound. A computer monitor with 20 post-it notes on it. Her 2/3 eaten lunch on the far desk. Looks like she practically lives in here.

She comes around James to sit down at her desk. While passing behind James she opens the conversation.

HR DIRECTOR

So, did you have any trouble finding the place?

JAMES

No, Google maps took me right here, it was easy.

A little tremble in his voice, he coughs to clear it.

HR DIRECTOR

That's great.

She sits down, grabs a handy pair of reading glasses, and goes to pull his resume out of a stack of about 20. She has to dig find it.

HR DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

OK, James, James, yes... Oh, here you are.

She skims the resume, like she is seeing it for the first time. The discomfort in the silence is palpable. James just sits there quietly while being reviewed like he isn't in the room.

HR DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

OK, James, why don't we start by having you tell me a little about yourself?

James clears his throat.

JAMES

OK, great, I'd love to. First off, thank you for taking the time to meet with me. I've heard nothing but great things about your company.

James smiles uncomfortably, trying a little too hard to maintain eye contact.

JAMES (CONT'D)

OK, I got my start straight out of college working for IBM as a junior consultant. I worked for them for 10 years, mostly working with fortune 500 clients up and down the east coast. From there I worked for HP for 12 years, managing teams, doing large corporate installations all over north America.

HR Director is still reading his resume, a look of confusion grows across her face. She looks up.

HR DIRECTOR

HP?

JAMES

Hewlett Packard.

She looks back down.

HR DIRECTOR

OK, right. And are you still working for HP now?

JAMES

Um, no, I separated from HP a little over a year and a half ago.

She looks over her reading glasses right at him.

HR DIRECTOR

What were the circumstances of that?

JAMES

Um, well, my entire department was outsourced to an Indian IT firm. We were working with them as partners on a project, and I actually trained several members of their staff. But, it turned out that HP was looking to outsource everything except the traveling install teams offshore. Everyone on my team lost their jobs.

She looks up and gives a somewhat tender and sad look.

HR DIRECTOR
I'm sorry to hear that.

She looks back down at his resume again. A beat of silence while she skims some more.

HR DIRECTOR (CONT'D)
So, do you have any customer service experience?

JAMES
Well, actually, I like to think that most of my jobs have been customer service. I was tasked with taking very complicated project plans and integrating them into very diverse and challenging customer environments. A big part of my job was consulting clients on the best practices for their unique circumstances and context, as well as helping them solve complicated, difficult problems that cropped up along the way.

She looks up at James again, a little muddled.

HR DIRECTOR
That's very... impressive. What I mean is, do you have any experience doing basic, in-person customer service? Ever worked in retail? Ever worked in a call center?

James clears his throat, desperate to tamp down nerves and the flop sweat that is starting to form.

JAMES
Uh, well, no, not exactly. Almost all of my work has been in the technical management arena, supervising staff of up to 50 team members—

HR DIRECTOR
Again, that is very impressive, but I am not sure how it relates. You know this is for a receptionist position, right?

JAMES

(stammering a little)

Yes, I know, and I am a very, very, very fast learner and very, very friendly. I am sure I can get up to speed with whatever job skills I lack very quickly. I am more than happy to do training on my own time to reach parity with your other staff. I am incredibly reliable, motivated, and loyal.

HR DIRECTOR

OK.

(beat)

What was your last salary?

JAMES

At the end of my time at HP I was making \$125,000 per year.

She looks at James with big eyes and surprise.

HR DIRECTOR

Are you aware that this position pays \$12 an hour? We can't offer any benefits, either. Do you know that?

JAMES

Yes, I saw that in the job ad, that's fine. I am fine at whatever is appropriate for this role.

She puts his resume down, a look of sad confusion spills across her face.

HR DIRECTOR

Look, James, I don't want to waste your time. You are clearly overqualified—

James looks straight at the HR director.

JAMES

Please, please don't say that I am overqualified. I can do the work, I am happy to do the work. Please just give me a chance. I would be glad to do a tryout day for free to show you that I can do the job, and do it well.

She looks at James, compassion washes across her face.

HR DIRECTOR

I'm sorry James, I just cannot see a fit here and I don't think you would be happy. I don't think this job could offer what you need, and I can't pay even close to what you should be making. You would be bored out of your mind.

JAMES

I don't get bored, and I don't care about not making what I used to make. Those days are over and I accept it. Please, please give me a chance. It has been so long since I was just given a chance. I'm stuck and I just need a chance. My kids are in school here, we own a home here. Please, just give me a chance.

HR DIRECTOR

I'm sorry James, I really am. This must be incredibly hard for you. But I just don't think that after all you have done you will be happy in this role. Fit matters, we want someone who really wants this job, not just someone who, for them, this job would just be settling for the best they could get.

JAMES

Please, you don't understand what this has been like. I did what I was supposed to, I've always done what I was supposed to. I got good grades, worked hard, and paid my dues. I've always done everything people told me to do. You don't understand, I've had everything taken away from me. I've lost the respect of everyone I know. I'm someone people pity and avoid, afraid they might get some of what I have on them. My life is empty and I sit alone in it every day. I need this, I need a win. I'm a nice person. I work hard, I don't deserve this. I've been beaten down so hard, so much. I don't know how much more of this I can take.

(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)

I just need something to work, I need to be a human being again. I'm stuck in between worlds, a hellish limbo isolated from the living. I need to get my life back, I need to have a life again. Please, PLEASE, I know I can do this job and I will be the most loyal, happy receptionist you have even seen. PLEASE just give me a chance.

She thinks about how to phrase this, delicately, for a moment.

HR DIRECTOR

I'm sorry, James, I really am. I can't help you. I'm sure there's something out there for you, but this isn't it. I don't want to make a bad hire here, and I don't want you to settle like this. I'm sorry, James, we are going to keep looking at other applicants.

James looks down, lets out a heavy sigh.

JAMES

I understand.

He grabs his attaché, stands up, dejected. Sighs heavily.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Thank you for your time.

HR DIRECTOR

Good luck, James. I hope you find something that works for you.

James nods sadly, turns around and leaves the office.

INT. SMALL BUSINESS OFFICE HALLWAY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Sad, dejected, hunched over, making the walk of shame back down the hallway, alone.

INT. SMALL BUSINESS OFFICE RECEPTION AREA - DAY - CONTINUOUS

James doesn't look at the receptionists who watch him go, he walks by with his head down. He opens the door and leaves. The door closes and the camera lingers there for a second. We just look at the empty space for a beat.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

James comes out of the office building and walks to his car. Gets in, heavy sigh. Sits alone for a moment processing what just happened. Puts his head in his hands.

Gathers himself slightly, pulls out his phone to call his wife.

JAMES

(into phone)

Hi honey. No, no I didn't get it.
They didn't think I was a good fit.
No, I don't know. I don't know. I
don't know what we are going a do.

A long pause while James is listening to his wife. A shameful sadness drains his face.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I'll keep trying, I guess. I'll see
you at home. I love--

Click. James puts his phone away and just stares forward for a moment. After a beat, puts on his seat belt, starts his car, and leaves the parking lot.

His lonely car drives down the road, back from whence he came. Slow fade out.

(CONTINUES NEXT PAGE)

SUPER: OR...

INT. HR DIRECTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

HR DIRECTOR

I'm sorry James, I really am. This must be incredibly hard for you. But I just don't think that after all you have done you will be happy in this role. Fit matters, we want someone who really wants this job, not just someone who, for them, this job would just be settling for the best they could get.

James looks up, wide eyed. Anger has replaced the desperation on his face.

JAMES

(intense)

You know what? Fine, good, don't hire me. God damn it, I am so sick of hearing all this. I'm over qualified? I'm not a good fit? How do you know? All you know about me is what is on that fucking piece of paper. That doesn't encapsulate me. I deserve so much better than this. God damn it, I am so sick of coming to people like you asking permission. I've become a beggar, holding my pitiful little bowl out for every person with HR in their job title. I've let everything be taken away from me because people like you don't think I'm valuable. No more. No more will I come into shitty offices like this, to beg for shitty little jobs like this. To beg for whatever pittance you are dolling out.

HR DIRECTOR is in shock, wide-eyed.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You know what the worst part is? The worst part is that I have been waiting. I've been waiting for 18 months, doing nothing.

(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)

Waiting for permission from someone like you to work a shitty job that I don't even want, working in a place I don't even like, taking care of people I don't even care about. Oh my god, I just realized, I don't need your permission! I don't need your permission to work. I don't need your permission to take my life back. I don't need your permission to be a whole human being.

James stands up and grabs his things.

JAMES (CONT'D)

So, thank you, whatever your name is. Thank you for finally beating me down to where I couldn't take it anymore. I am going to go get busy working. You give your job to whomever you want. I don't need it.

INT. SMALL BUSINESS OFFICE HALLWAY - DAY - CONTINUOUS

James turns around, leaves. A jaunty walk down the hallway, lighter, freer than the first time.

INT. SMALL BUSINESS OFFICE RECEPTION AREA - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Passes by the receptionists station, gives them a tip of the hat and big, coy smile.

JAMES

And, a good day to you, ladies.

Goes out the front door, it closes behind him. He stands up straight, squares his shoulders.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Fuck this place. Fuck this place right in the face.

James continues down the stairs on his way out.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

James comes out of the building, almost skipping. Gets to his car, gets in, doesn't call his wife. Turns on the radio, rolls down his window.

Sunglasses on, he drives away. Credit music rolls. Credits roll. Fade out.

THE END