

Remember

Running late for the job interview, James dropped the clutch, spun the steering wheel hard, and pulled the parking brake. The car executed a sharp 270 degree spin and ended in the parking spot perfectly centered, facing out, still leaving room for a wheelchair accessible van next to it.

“Damn...” After leaping out of the barely stopped car, James took a split second to admire his work. Bond, James (not senior secured debenture) couldn’t have done a better job. He didn’t take the time to remember he had started the drive with an automatic.

James headed to the Gothic entryway of the building. The gargoyles on either side of the steps seemed out of line for an insurance company, but private companies all had their idiosyncrasies. The door did not creak ominously upon opening it.

“Hello, you must be James, you may call me John, I’ll be showing you around today.” He looked more like a Jeeves than a John. His full butler suit contained the obligatory bow tie, a classic chapeau, and even a serving tray on his hand. “Would you care for a cup of Earl Gray?”

“Uh, no thank you, I’m fine thanks.”

“Excellent, then, shall we begin?” Without further ado, John opened the door into a garden worthy of Eden. “Right this way sire.”

It was a magnificent horticultural display. Trees of all varieties flowered along the walkways, blooming tulips lined the paths, and butterflies fluttered betwixt the many flowers. The immense aroma of hyacinth hit James fully, but for once, his allergies did not act up.

“Well, hello, I am Allahn.” A nondescript gentleman said to James as he entered the garden.

“Hello, I’m here for the Senior Actuarial Pricing role interview.” James said.

“Yes, of course, we’ve been expecting you.”

“Sorry, traffic was bad, and...”

“Oh, no worries, these things happen.” Allahn motioned James forward, “Please, this way, it is always better to show than to tell.”

They walked down the tulip and daffodil lined path. To his surprise, James thought he saw hobbits weeding the flower beds. And, if he was not mistaken, there were gnomes carrying bags of mulch to the flower beds.

“Right this way son.” Allahn opened the gate and nudged James through.

James’s eyes expanded as he saw the vast fields of grain. Wheat waved in a gentle breeze. Corn tassels wafted in the air. Rye, well, it did whatever rye does in a wide open field.

“This is amazing!” James gushed. He took in the workers in the fields and said, “wow, you do this with horses plowing the fields?”

“Not exactly.”

James looked closer, and saw that the horses wore a single horn. “Wait, are those unicorns?” James asked.

“Of course, now let’s proceed this way.” Allahn indicated.

The sharp right turn took them into a lagoon. Bathers were lounged around the sides of the large pond. The heat would have been debilitating except for the gentle breeze gusting occasionally.

“You see, there are many opportunities here for enjoyment.” Allahn elaborated.

The fountains spewed water into the pond from their mouths and assorted other orifices. The breeze came from a large machine with wings.

“Is that a moth?” James asked.

“Absolutely not, that is a mothra. It is a critical difference.” Allahn seemed alarmed by the mistake.

“But ‘mothras’ don’t exist.” James complained.

“Of course they exist, you know of them don’t you?” Allahn replied.

“Sure, I know of the myth. I also know of the hippogryff, but that doesn’t mean it is real!”

“Oh dear, we should go into the next section.” Allahn walked off to his right, opening a door.

“What? That door wasn’t there before.” James was becoming distressed with this interview.

“Through here please.” Allahn tugged James across the threshold. On the other side, dozens of hypogryffs were lined up in a queue waiting for passengers. A princess daintily climbed on the first hypogryff and with a tap of her heels the couple gracefully flew off into the night, wasn’t it just morning, sky. A down and out ruffian with a messenger bag clambered onto the next hypogryff in line and the two wobbled off.

“This is impossible.” James stammered.

“Of course it is, but impossible is relative, don’t you think?” Allahn smiled at James.

“Why am I here?” James asked.

“All these beings, they want to exist. But, you see, there is limited capacity in the world’s collective conscious. They must work to maintain their existence. That is where you come into play.’

“I don’t understand, how am I involved?” James asked.

“Well, as our actuary, you will calculate how much work translates to each remembrance.”

“How is that actuarial?”

“Think of remembrances as an annuity, or a pension if you will since the beings no longer exist. The actuary must calculate the cost of that remembrance annuity.”

They had turned around and were walking back. In the lagoon, James looked closer at the Mothra, and the beings being fanned. Some creatures looked vaguely recognizable, and others were completely new to him. “What’s that?” James pointed at a particularly slotherly creature.

“Ah, that is an Anchovardack.” Allahn responded.

“A what? I’ve never heard of that!”

“Of course not, look at it. Its chosen to just lie there and do no work. It has earned no remembrance annuity. Nobody knows of it anymore.”

They continued onward.

Back through another gateway, James looked closer at what he was seeing. Unicorns struggling to pull plows in the heat. Mastodons hauling heavy loads of grain from the fields. Centaurs galloping around directing the action.

Through another gate. James saw the hobbits bent over the flower beds tediously pulling weeds. The gnomes carrying endless loads of mulch to the beds. Eden did not look as appealing to him anymore.

They entered an office space full of cubicles and surrounded by small offices with tacky motivational posters on the walls.

“Please come into my office, and we can talk about the terms of your employment.” Allahn signaled to the corner office with broad windows overlooking the grounds they had just passed through.

James collapsed into the chair across from the large desk. “I don’t know if this is the right job for me.”

Allahn looked at James with a sad, but understanding, expression. “This is what we have available for you with your particular skill set. You could continue being an actuary for awhile, I’m sure your family and friends will appreciate that.”

James gazed out the window at the creatures toiling to continue existing in the minds of people.

“I think I prefer to stay with my current position.” James said with determination.

“Oh no, I’m sorry, you seem to misunderstand, you died in the car crash on your way to your interview. This is your opportunity to be remembered.

“So, will you take it?” Allahn asked, with a small smirk.