

“Stunning and eye-opening.

I couldn't put this book down. Whether you're a college student or Fortune 500 CEO, this novel is filled with brilliantly taught new stuff about interviewing in today's ultracompetitive job market. I only wish I read this when I was 20!”

—Jeff Andrews, Vice President of IPC Technologies



THE UNSPOKEN
RULES
OF GETTING

HIRED



107 Job Hunting Secrets

That Employers DO NOT Want You To Know

LANDON LONG & JESSE STRETCH

The Unspoken Rules Of Getting Hired

107 Job Hunting Secrets
That Employers Do NOT Want You To Know

Landon Long
Jesse Stretch

www.InterviewMasterMind.com

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Grateful acknowledgement is made to Eben Pagan for his commitment to influencing the lives of others and changing the world with his teachings.

Your work has guided and inspired me throughout this process.

I am forever a fan and indebted to you.

This book couldn't have been written without my brilliant intern, Zach Elbert.

Thank you for meeting deadlines and keeping me in check. I encourage all employers to hire you before their competition does!

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Second Edition

For my family,
Grace, Jimmy, and My Grandmother;
who taught a little hellion that the only thing standing
between you and your dreams is yourself.
I love you all and owe you everything.

And for my future wife DJ,
The special woman in my life,
who gave me unwavering support through the
ups and downs of writing this book.
I love you with all my heart.

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EDUCATION IS WHAT REMAINS
AFTER ONE HAS FORGOTTEN
EVERYTHING HE LEARNED
IN SCHOOL.

.....

–Albert Einstein
Theoretical Physicist and 1921 Nobel Prize Winner

Dear Reader,

People like us didn't start off with a silver spoon in our mouths. Or, if we did, the silver spoon was taken away at one point or another. That's why you're here, reading this, trying to figure out how to safely and successfully navigate the seemingly indecipherable labyrinth known as Corporate America.

I take it that you don't have a job, or that you have a job that you don't like. This is the case for many people, and for many people this will continue to be the case for the next 30 years. Rest assured, this will not be the case for you. That is, if you are dedicated to your dreams, and thereby dedicated to your path of achieving massive success and comfort in your life. You can get any job you want, make any decision you choose, go in any direction imaginable. However, you must first choose a direction and a goal, and then acquire the skills and knowledge to take you there.

That being said, I have put together this book—a story of how I came to be called *The Interview Mastermind*—as a means of explaining the path I took to free myself from the cold shackles of unemployment. It is my sincere hope that my story, told from the perspective of a young man named Adrian Addler, will shed light on your current situations, both financial and personal, and will aid in your transformation, whatever it may be.

For some of you, the difficulty has arisen in finding a job. For others it has come about due to the need for finding a better job—a job you like, a job that pays more or that has better benefits. Whatever the case may be, the process of finding the job you want starts with how you present yourself. And I'd bet my ass you're not presenting yourself in the best light.

—Landon Lora
Founder of **InterviewMasterMind.com**

Meet Adrian

My philosophies about life, getting a job, and being a happy person exploded mid-air when I was on the cusp of finishing college.

“You’re a simple kind of guy, Adrian,” my friends would tell me. “You make good grades and you’re easy to get along with. You’ll do fine. You’ll get a good job. Don’t worry about it.”

These were the sons of executives or VPs. They were the kids who drove brand-new Beemers and flipped girlfriends like bad stock. They were my friends, but they were not me. I came from a modest family. My parents were nestled somewhere in the middle of middle-class America. My mother kept a secretarial position at a local glass-manufacturing company, and my father had been employed with R. Jamison Construction, a medium-sized general-contracting firm, for the past 20 years.

At the beginning of this story, I am 22 years old. I am an average-looking guy, and resemble a slightly more attractive version of Zac Efron. Although, some of my friends insist that the comparison is incorrect, that I’m merely a more mature-looking version of Jason Biggs—but what do they know? *Haters...*

I measure six feet tall, thin but not skinny, thick brown hair, clean shaven, and my body is constantly sore from hitting the gym for the first time in several years. I have no girlfriend and no job.

My name is Adrian Addler, and I am on my own.

* * *

My professors told me that my good grades would get me a good job. Of course they did. They were college professors; they wanted me to do well in their classes. They wanted to “teach” and they wanted me to “learn.” Who cared if what I was learning would *really* apply to my life post-graduation? No one did. That was the problem. Unfortunately, I did not realize this.

I took the whole college experience with a smile on my face. I kept my grades up, made friends, hung out on the weekends, and did what was expected of me. I was a nice guy by nature, never had to fake too many smiles or tell too many lies. People told me that I had a great ability to get along with the world, and that the world would smile on me in the future.

People like to do that. They like to build you up and pat your back. Don’t ask me why, but everyone assured me that I was “something special,” that one day they would see me on the cover of the *Wall Street Journal* or *Forbes* magazine. And, to be quite honest, up until my last semester of college, I was stupid enough to believe them.

* * *

An old saying comes to mind: Hindsight is 20/20.

In hindsight, I could tell you about every hour that I wasted listening to a professor run his mouth about pointless shit. I could tell you every failed attempt I made at getting hired. I could tell you how many times I depended on the wrong people for the wrong guidance at the wrong time. I could tell you all of this, but it wouldn’t change anything for you. You’d still do everything the wrong way. So, instead of focusing on the wrong, instead of wrecking the institutions you are probably already a part of, I will tell you how to beat those institutions, to beat the competition, and to make

something of yourself in spite of having been held back by years of failed attempts at real-world education.

* * *

Let's start at the beginning, when I began to think about this stuff...

I was at square one: Jobless. Broke. Tired. A senior in college. Regardless of whether or not you went to college, we have all been unemployed at one point or another. Being unemployed, depending on who you are, is not necessarily a problem. Some people are entirely fine with making absolutely no money and living off their parents' funds. They always called me a simple guy, but I wasn't quite that simple.

I watched several of my older friends take the high road, and several take the low, and I figured that I'd rather be on the high side for reasons of health, comfort, and sanity.

I didn't realize it at the time, but by aiming for the high road, I had signed up to climb the tallest cliff in the world...without a tether. Like I said, I didn't have a CEO for a father, someone who could talk me through the whole "job market and finances" thing. I didn't have a trust fund to float me while I sent out three million résumés. I didn't have a girlfriend to hold me at night. I slept alone, beneath stringy spider webs and a pale white ceiling, and made up elaborate scenarios for my prosperous future.

Prosperous... I was far from it. I was driving a 17-year-old hunk of shit and eating dollar value meals at least once a day. I was living in a two-bedroom apartment with a beautiful woman who was NOT my girlfriend but who was successful, intelligent, and the desire of nearly every man within a 10-mile radius. It was a strange and unmapped world, and I was navigating it poorly at best.

* * *

As I have mentioned, senior year in college was my turning point. It was then that I realized the ultimate purpose of school: to become qualified and prepared for a specific job. This hadn't occurred to me before, and no one had really explained it in concrete terms. When it came time to get out the door and start working, my job searches trembled at the knees and fell face-first into the dirt.

I come from a good family. My parents are good people, and they taught me how to act in public, how to speak, how to work hard and do well in school. Sadly, they had assumed that high school and college would teach me the rest—namely, how to get a job and become a learned and successful human being. Upon realizing that this was not the case, I called my dad and asked him what he knew about getting a job.

He laughed and said, "Son, I haven't applied for a job in 25 years. I have no idea what to do." Then he said something that killed me: "Didn't you pay attention in college?"

* * *

People assured me that I was doing OK.

"Adrian, you have an internship under your belt and you make good grades. You're an employer's dream. You should just relax. Things will be fine, you'll see..."

Somehow my grades kept coming up in these conversations. This always reinforced me, gave me the false strength I needed to push forward.

So, I did what most guys do: I lay in my bed at night and imagined the future. I had a nice

house, a couple of kids, a golden retriever running through the yard, health insurance, a sailboat, Maserati, another house overlooking South Beach (or some exotic location), a couple million in the bank, Heidi Klum wrapping her arms around me, giggling, whispering into my ear, sipping martinis.

Don't act like you haven't done this.

My friends' assurances did the worst thing possible: They kept me in my comfort zone. They allowed me to keep dreaming, knowing that after I graduated things would "work themselves out." It was when I first came into contact with the real world, when I first tried to get a job, that I realized the truth: You are on your own, always and indefinitely. You are your own person, and you must use every resource you have to achieve your goals.

Chapter 1

The Suicide Caller

An explosion occurred somewhere in my brain and I snapped awake, grabbing my wallet from the nightstand. I flipped it open to check for cash. Nothing. I had no more money. I rolled over and stared at the wall.

Last night I had been hanging out with my best friend, Jake Holland. There had been a bar, a girl, and several friends. I could remember it well: The girl's name was Isabelle and she had given me her phone number. Her friends had dragged her away from me at 2 a.m., just as the bar was closing.

My head pounded loudly, each heartbeat like a hammer on my skull. The daylight warmed the bedspread. I checked the alarm clock, which was still screaming: 10:07 a.m.

The house was too bright. I was hung over, tired, dehydrated, broke. I didn't want to move. The economy was in a tailspin, and I had no reason to believe that getting out of bed would have any sort of positive impact on the rest of my life.

"Alright," I said, stretching my arms and putting aside my negative emotions. "Time to get up."

I stumbled down the stairs and poured a glass of water. The bills were mounting and the bar tabs from last night would surely overdraft my bank account. I'd subconsciously known this as I had been buying the drinks, but I'd bought them anyway.

I sat down at the counter and rubbed my temples. I stared at the screen like a hypnotized zombie, tapping my fingers on the space key and muttering to myself.

"Come on... come on..."

Several painful moments passed while I stared into the endless circle of *Loading... Loading... Loading...*

The morning would never amount to anything if my laptop crashed. Again.

I sat back and sighed, remembering Isabelle and running my fingers through my hair. I leaned back farther, farther, farther, until the chair came close to slipping out from beneath me.

I scrambled and caught myself on the table.

"Nice one, klutz," Emily, my roommate, said. She hopped down the last three stairs and entered the kitchen in a pair of sweatpants and a t-shirt.

Emily took a seat across from me and opened her laptop. We sat face to face, our computers pressed against each other at the breakfast table. Emily was a very close friend of mine. She was two years older than I was and had become a very successful recruiter for Harrell-Finch.

"How's it going?" I asked, my computer finally deciding to wake up.

"Good, good... I was out at Century Lounge last night," she said. "Talk about socializing with people who literally *stink* of too much money."

"Wow," I said. "I wouldn't mind smelling like that."

"I'm not complaining. I got to meet some really interesting people. It's just that I sometimes miss when you and I used to go out together. Now that I'm with Josh, it's like we don't hang out quite as much." She clicked something on her computer.

"Eh, it's OK. That's how it goes." I checked my Facebook page and noticed three new friend requests. There was some guy named Joe, another named Mickey, and then a girl I didn't know. Wait—I *did* know her. It was Isabelle, the girl from last night at the bar. I clicked the image. Man, she was gorgeous...

Emily walked around me and reached into the refrigerator. I quickly navigated back to my own profile to avoid having to answer any questions about Isabelle. Emily poured a glass of orange juice and walked up behind me.

“Have any luck with callbacks from your résumés?”

—“No,” I said. “I’ve been out there all week putting myself in the line of fire. I’ve been dropping off résumés, calling to see who is hiring and who would be a good company to work for. I’m starting to feel really unmotivated, like I’m not sure—”

She cut me off: “What is THAT?” she asked, slapping her finger against my screen.

I pushed her wrist away and shrugged my shoulders. “What are you talking about?”

“Is that a picture of you with... two forties taped to your hands?”

“Yeah,” I chuckled. “It was the Edward Forty-Hand competition. I won this year.”

“Jeez, Adrian...” She stepped back around the table, taking a long sip of her orange juice. “You’ve got to get rid of that picture. Almost all employers are now doing internet searches on the applicants. I was reading in *Marie Claire* that a woman just lost her job over something she said on Twitter.”

“That’s crazy,” I said disapprovingly. “What did she say?”

“She said her job was boring and that the commute was too long. They rescinded the offer and took her job before she officially started.”

“Wow,” I said. “I didn’t ever think about that.”

“Maybe your employers aren’t calling you back because they’ve seen the Edward Forty-Hand picture.”

“Well, I doubt it, but I’ll take it down anyway.”

“Speaking of employers,” Emily said, closing her laptop, “I heard you talking about Emphyrean this morning. Are you putting in an application?”

“Yeah... I’m taking it as a sign that since I haven’t gotten a single callback from 4 applications, I must be doing something wrong. Emphyrean’s accepting applications starting in April. I’m going to spend a little time tonight trying to revamp my résumé. I have three months to prepare for this job.”

“Why don’t you do a little research about the company tonight? Tomorrow, after I get back from Josh’s art show, I’ll help you write a good résumé. By the way, how’s your cover letter coming along?”

“Well,” I said, somewhat apprehensive about receiving unsolicited advice. “I don’t know that’s really necessary. I think I can handle everything.” I closed my Facebook page, having replaced my profile picture. “And honestly, I don’t think a cover letter is really necessary in the first place.”

“What? Are you serious!?” Emily looked flabbergasted.

“No one writes them anymore. Employers just throw your cover letter in the trash and go straight to the résumé.”

“I wish you knew how untrue that really is...”

“What do you mean?” I asked. “Almost everybody agrees that they’re a thing of the past.”

“Says who? Jake? A cover letter is not only extremely important for reasons of professional presentation, it is also essential for promoting yourself.”

“Promoting myself?”

“Yeah. Think of a cover letter as your promotional team. It’s what promotes you from a distance since you’re not physically able to do it yourself. The promotional team is tasked with getting the employer interested in your résumé. The cover letter should therefore lure the employers into reading your résumé by showing them your assertive personality.”

“OK...” I said.

“And please, Adrian, don’t crank out a dry, stilted, generic cover letter like most college grads do. You have no idea how bad they usually are. Every cover letter I read is as boring as a chemistry textbook and was clearly written as a one-size-fits-all document. It makes the candidate sound real

predictable and boring.

~~“When 500 people apply to a company, only one or two get hired. People don’t realize how crucial it is to put in a little bit of extra effort to find out how to make their approach *seem* even more personal. You know, things like finding out who to address your cover letter to before sending it out. Employers and recruiters pay particular attention to little details like that. It’s the details that make the difference in landing more interviews. There is nothing I hate more than receiving a cover letter that starts with ‘To Whom it May Concern’ or ‘Dear Sir or Madam.’ It’s so unprofessional.”~~

“What do you mean? People don’t get interviewed because they don’t know who to address the cover letters to?” I asked.

“No. They don’t get interviewed because they don’t put in the extra effort. Most people don’t have the balls to cross the *effort line* and take a gamble on giving all they’ve got in pursuing a position that isn’t a sure thing. The ones who are successful at landing interviews and high-paying salaries are the ones who take risks and make direct contact with the employer. How else do you expect to get hired if you aren’t willing to do whatever it takes to get noticed in this shattered economy?”

“Of course... that makes sense. But what happens if I can’t find a name? It’s so hard to figure out who to address it to when a lot of job postings I’ve seen so far do not include a contact name.”

Emily paused for a moment and stood back. It looked like she was deep in thought, contemplating whether or not she should tell me what was on her mind.

“Listen,” Emily said with hesitation. “I can give you something... a technique you could use, but you have to understand that what I’m about to tell you is classified,” she warned. “If I reveal this to you, you cannot share this technique with anybody. Agreed?”

“Why? What’s the big deal?”

“You’re about to learn some inner-circle stuff, Adrian. The last thing either of us would want is to have this technique exposed all over the internet, making it overused and commonplace.”

“Alright,” I said, genuinely intrigued. “What is it?”

Emily rested her elbow on the table and leaned in closer to me. “Alright, here it is.” She took another deep breath and continued. “Sometimes you just can’t find the name of the hiring authority. That’s a cold reality that many job seekers have had to come to terms with for the longest time. If that ever happens, here’s what you do...” Emily pulled out her cell phone and dangled it in the air. I stared at it, wondering what she could mean.

I didn’t want to seem dumb, like I had no idea what she was talking about, but I couldn’t figure out what she was alluding to by putting her cell phone in my face. “What are you trying to say?” I asked.

“I’m sure it never dawned on you, but if you can’t find out who to address your cover letter to, all you have to do is call the office.”

“What do you mean, *call the office*?”

“You call them and say, ‘Hi, I’m Adrian Addler. I’m writing a letter to the head of your ‘whatever’ department. Can I have the spelling of that person’s name?’ Odds are the employee at the front desk will give you the info and never think twice about it.”

I scratched my chin. I had never heard of a line like that before. I was pretty impressed. “That’s a crazy idea,” I said. “Crazy—but good.”

“It may be a little edgy for your taste,” she laughed, “but when it comes to getting the job you want, you have to go out of your way to take the steps that will put you above the competition. Doing this will often mean doing things that you once thought were impossible... even crazy.”

I liked the idea of separating myself from the pack, of having knowledge that few others possessed. Her words began to work on my imagination... “I see what you mean.”

“No matter how you look at it, it certainly beats the alternative, which is to send a ‘To Whom

May Concern' letter. Our society has programmed us to hate letters like that. It's the same as getting junk mail or a mass text message; all you want to do is scrap it or press DELETE."

"True," I agreed. I was beginning to see why Emily didn't want something like this to get out in the open; it would certainly ruin the 'WOW factor' if 500 people were dialing the company secretary and asking for names and addresses.

Emily continued with her lesson, putting the phone-call conversation aside for now.

"For some reason, people seem to think that an uninspiring, generic cover letter is professional. I don't know where this idea came from."

"Me neither..." I paused for a moment. I was still a little bit on the fence about putting in the extra effort, even though Emily had just explained everything so impressively. There was still something I couldn't quite put my finger on... something that was holding me back from taking the leap of faith and giving it my all in creating a cover letter.

"But do you really think it's *that* important to create a cover letter?"

"Let's put it this way: If you don't have a cover letter, the employer will think you're too lazy to write one or that you have poor writing skills and can't write one. Both will rule you out." She paused. "Remember to think of your cover letter as your own promotional team. The promotional team is working to make sure that a crowd shows up to your 'Main Event' (aka, your résumé).

"Most people won't want to go check out your show unless there's a promotional team talking up how cool it is inside. You gotta lure employers in by showing some personality in your cover letter. The key is creating a cover letter that does such a stand-up job promoting you that employers will *automatically* be dialing your digits to book an interview with you."

"OK... OK... I get it. I guess I can include one," I said, trying to pry her off my back. She looked at me and frowned. "And I'll make it *personal*. That shouldn't be too hard. But, beneath all this, it's not my cover letter I'm worried about." I lied. I was worried about everything.

"What's bothering you? Do you have doubts about your interviewing skills?" she asked.

"No, I feel like I've got pretty good interviewing skills (if I would ever get a damn callback). I just wish the whole hiring process wasn't based on a couple pieces of paper that they never teach you about in college."

"That's understandable," Emily said, "but are you comfortable with your interviewing skills?"

"Yeah, sure. I'm great with interviews."

"How many interviews have you been on?"

"Three," I said, clearing my throat. "But I'm naturally confident and well-spoken. People just seem to like me. My good interviewing skills were how I got my internship."

"I believe it," she said. "Interviewing is one of the most important, if not THE most important obstacles when it comes to getting hired. An interview can make or break a candidate, regardless of virtually everything else."

"That's good news for me."

"Well... don't get too far ahead of yourself. As a recruiter, I work with people like you all the time, and I've learned a lot about what it means to be 'great with interviews,' and most people who *think* they're great are really just plain average. They just never see it because they've never physically seen themselves or others go through an entire interview."

"Well, I'm pretty sure I'm the exception to that rule. Like I said, if I could get more callbacks from employers, I don't think I would have any problems during the interview."

"Fair enough," Emily said. "But why aren't you getting the callbacks?"

"I just told you, the damn hiring process is flawed!" I was heated over this. It had been ruining my life for weeks, months, and no one else seemed to understand how screwed up everything really was.

“You don’t think it has anything to do with you needing to improve your job-hunting skills?”

I paused. “~~Improve my job-hunting skills? What could I improve? There are only so many ways to push the ‘send’ button in your email!~~”

“That’s not what I’m talking about. I’m talking about changing your overall *approach* to how you get interviews. Job hunting is a skill,” she said. “It’s like martial arts. You can’t do all those fancy punches and ninja kicks until you build your skills, strengthen your core, and get your mind in the right place. You need to learn how to get the interview, how to get the employer interested in YOU instead of going in there blind and asking for a job.”

“I think you need to change the way you present your résumé and cover letter. You need to change the way you research companies and how you present yourself in the interview.”

“That sounds like a good idea, but I’m not really sure I know *how* to change it. I feel like I’ve been doing everything the best I can.”

“From what I’ve seen, you’ve been doing it the way you’ve been taught. And really, that’s not good enough to beat the masses.”

“Well, I appreciate the help,” I said.

“What do you mean? That’s it? You don’t want to work on your skills?”

“This is all a bit much for me,” I said, standing up from the table and shuffling toward the staircase. I felt like I was in a maze of words and options. The echoes of her advice were swirling around me, dizzying me, making me nauseous and tired. “I just don’t have the energy to work on this right now.”

“Are you ever going to have the energy?”

“Maybe...” I began walking upstairs, feeling very overwhelmed. This whole *getting hired* thing had become something different than I’d imagined. Emily was part of a different school of thought, something elite. To be honest, I didn’t know if I had the energy or the will power to meet her standards—to be a part of her circle of trust. I stopped on the staircase and told her this.

“You’ve got to do it, Adrian. This is not like you’re trying out for high school basketball. Getting a job is going to determine the rest of your life.” She stared at me, waiting for a response. “You’re either in, or you’re out. If you’re in, we can talk again tomorrow and nail down some more advanced techniques. If you’re out, I won’t bother you again.”

I wondered about my chances of finding a job on my own. I could probably do it. But I’d turned in 40 applications so far without a single callback... With this economy it would be stupid to not take everything I could get. What did I have to lose by learning her secrets? What did I have to lose by being a bit more risky and aiming at a higher target?

“First of all, you’re asking me to make some big changes. I appreciate what you’re trying to do, but before I decide to tear up my cover letter and résumé I’m going to need a few hours to think about all of this.”

I walked the rest of the way upstairs and sat down at my desk, pulling out my cover letter and résumé. I carried them across my bedroom, toward the far corner. I stood there silently, reading the first few lines of my cover letter as it dangled dangerously close to the trashcan.

“Alright, Adrian,” I said to myself, “do you really want to do this?”

Part Two

“You didn’t need to throw it in the trash,” Emily laughed.

“I needed to get rid of it. I still have it saved on my computer, but there was something liberating about throwing it away. I even took the trash out afterward.”

“You didn’t recycle it? You’re such a *green* kind of guy.”

“Whatever. I forgot. But, I’m telling you right now that this doesn’t mean you have full license to do whatever you want with my résumé. It means that I’m willing to hear your point of view on how to get hired.”

“I appreciate your concessions,” she mocked.

“So, Professor Anderson, where do we begin today?”

“Hmm... Let’s see...” She twirled her finger in her hair. “Interviewing is all about *perception*. Every little thing that you do during your job hunt gives the employer a certain perception of you as a potential candidate: the way you format your résumé, the way you write the opening sentence in your cover letter, whether or not you’ve spent any time proofreading for typos. All of these little details are like brushstrokes that paint a bigger picture for the employers of the type of person you would be if they hired you. You just need to ask yourself, ‘Am I painting myself to be more valuable than the average job applicant?’ If you’re not, you need to change your tactics.”

A multitude of thoughts flooded into my head: Maybe I wasn’t working hard enough? Maybe I needed to focus my energy in different areas? Maybe I needed to spend more time on my job search? I hated the idea of sacrificing my last sacred “college days” for my job hunt, but I knew I didn’t have a choice.

Emily continued, “Think about it like this: There are three types of people who apply for jobs. The first type are those who are most qualified for the job but have terrible résumés and sub-par interviewing skills. These types of people are called the true *Under Dogs* of the job market, and they miss opportunities every day because of their sub-par presentation skills.

“The second type are what we call *Smooth Talkers*. They’re really good at promoting themselves in a way that lands them almost any job they want. They have a natural ability to market themselves. Although, most, if not all, of these types of people are notorious for underperforming in their jobs. They are masters of ‘gaming the system’ once they’re hired.

“The third type are those who are both really good at promoting themselves while also being the most qualified for the job. These types of people are called *Stars*. Needless to say, this is where you want to aim. I feel like you, Adrian, are among the *Under Dogs*. You’re fully qualified but need to improve your job-hunting skills. You’ve told me time and again that you’re a very hard worker and that your supervisors compliment you all the time.”

“I am a good worker,” I said.

“I know you are. The problem is that you’re not demonstrating this on your résumé, and therefore you’re not getting called back.”

“You think so?”

“Yeah, I do. And here’s a good example that will illustrate exactly what I’m talking about:

“Before I graduated I knew this guy who was kind of an introvert. You see, to me, he was a ‘let’s just be friends’ kind of guy. He wasn’t particularly charming, didn’t dress very well, and looked like a scrub. I really didn’t think any girl would ever be interested in him. He was a great friend, but he wasn’t very sexually attractive. Anyway, I think there was literally only one girl on campus that liked him, and she was in my poli-sci class. She would hound me every day asking me all these questions

about him. One day I just couldn't take it anymore and I asked her, "Why are you so into Jason?"

"And what did she say?" I probed.

"Apparently, they had gotten wasted at a party once and slept together, and she said he was, you know, good in bed."

"Good for Jason..." I said, shrugging my shoulders to elude the fact that I was missing the relevance of the story.

"Just let me finish," she defended, shaking her head and gathering her thoughts. "The funny thing is I asked Jason how his dating life was, and he told me that other than the one girl, no other girls were interested in him."

"That sucks."

"Exactly. He was a great lay, but he had a hard time *getting* laid."

"Like I said, that sucks."

"OK, and let me tell you about a time I experienced the exact *opposite*. About three years ago just before I got with Josh, I was on a spree of failed dating attempts. I had gone out with three or four guys in a short period of time, and none of them were up to my standards. Finally I met a guy who was smart, charming, and good-looking... someone girls always seemed to gravitate toward."

"OK..." I said, not understanding exactly where this was going.

"So, we went on a few dates and I kept thinking, 'This guy is so smooth!' He really seemed like he could be the perfect match for me."

"And what happened?"

"Well, when it came time to sleep with him, he was just... bad in bed."

"What do you mean?"

"He just had no idea how to turn a woman on. It felt like he was trying to puncture my lungs rather than give me an orgasm..." She raised her eyebrows. "And beforehand he spent about three minutes sticking his tongue in my ear." She covered her face with her hands, trying to block the images from her head. She spoke through her palms, "It was literally like getting hit on the side of the head with a big wave... Or a large... wet... *jellyfish*—"

"Gross!" I said, cutting her off. "That's enough."

"Yeah, you're right... Let's just say he turned me off and I didn't want to have anything to do with him. I slept with him *once*, and that was that."

I was still a little confused as to why Emily had decided to divulge so much about her sexual past with me and so I asked, "How does this relate to me getting a job?"

"Don't you see what I'm saying? Sometimes getting a job is exactly like having a tongue in your ear," she joked.

"Ha! Ha!" I bellowed sarcastically.

"No, but seriously, getting a job is the same as getting laid. Some people have sex all the time because of their charisma and presentation skills, even though they're terrible in bed. Other people are the exact opposite: They are really good in bed but have no charm and poor presentation skills. Therefore, they never get laid."

"So having sex is like getting the job?"

"That's right. Remember this: There's no relationship between being good and getting hired."

"That is the most bizarre analogy I've ever heard... but, strangely enough, I see what you mean. So you're basically saying that I'm like Jason: I can perform on the job, but all the stuff before that isn't so great."

"Like the way you present your résumé and cover letter."

"At least I'm good in bed," I joked.

"That's great, but being good in bed isn't worth anything if you can't find someone to sleep

with.”

“Yeah, I see what you mean. But wait, what about the last group? Someone who is both charming and good in bed?”

“I’d tell you about that, but Josh doesn’t like it when I discuss our sex life in public,” she said with a smile.

I shook my head.

Emily’s cell phone rang. She darted up the staircase and answered. I walked into the living room, my laptop in hand, and began doing some research on Empyrean. Emily had told me several weeks ago to make an account on LinkedIn.com, so I took a few minutes to do that. LinkedIn was a good way to research the companies I was applying for and to see what type of people worked for them. I typed “Empyrean” into the search bar. I clicked through the results. Almost the entire Board of Directors was there—the CEO, VP, high-ranking sales reps, basically everyone who worked for the company.

“Alright, Adrian,” Emily called. “I gotta run. Do me, and yourself, a favor: Make a list of the top 20 companies you want to work for.”

“Twenty? That seems like a lot.”

“Yeah, well, you’ll need plenty of companies to practice with before you gun for Empyrean. And don’t forget, not every company you apply to is going to call you in for an interview. Just make sure Empyrean is the last name on the list. That way we have a pecking order that we can go off when you actually start submitting résumés. Oh, and spend some time researching Empyrean, and maybe tonight or tomorrow we can work on making changes to your résumé.”

“Yeah, I will,” I said. “Have fun at Josh’s thing.”

“I will!”

And she was gone. After an hour or so I went on a walk and stopped by Jake’s house for lunch. I’d left a loaf of bread and some sandwich meat in his fridge. I reached in and helped myself.

“What are you getting into today?” he asked.

“Nothing. I’ve been trying to figure out how I’m going to apply to Empyrean.”

“Empyrean? I remember you talking about them junior year, but I didn’t think anything would ever come of it.”

“I’ve been doing the research, getting myself ready for the challenge.”

“You’re not kidding around, huh?”

“Well, at the rate I’m going it will be a miracle if *anyone* hires me. Did I tell you that I’ve applied to 40 companies? Guess how many I’ve heard back from?”

“How many?”

“Zero.”

“Whoa,” he said, cocking his head in disbelief. “None of those companies called you back?”

“Nope.”

“I don’t get it, man. You have such a good track record. It sucks that you can’t find a job.”

“It’s the damn economy...”

“Yeah, but you’re not some deadbeat. A guy like you, a guy who has his head on straight and his shit together, shouldn’t have this much trouble getting a job.”

“I wish it was that way,” I said dismally. “Anyway, no sense in pissing and moaning about it. I’ve been doing research to get ready for Empyrean. I really want to work there, and if I’m going to compete with the other résumés I’ve got to be as prepared as possible.”

I ate the rest of my lunch and went down to the school library. It was 2:00 p.m. and I somehow managed to research Empyrean until the evening hours. I went for a long walk around campus and stopped by the gym to shoot hoops. After an hour of basketball I walked home and fell asleep on the

couch. I hadn't done much that day, but I was mentally exhausted from the hours and hours of reading on the computer.

Something startled me from sleep and I reached out toward a fuzzy blue light. It was my cell phone. Isabelle had sent me a text message. I opened it:

I'm at a party on Grace St.

Wanna hang out?

Part Three

I woke up at 7:00 a.m. the following morning and walked downstairs. Emily was already awake.

"I take it you didn't find anything to do last night?" Emily asked.

"No," I said, remembering Isabelle's text with mixed feelings. "It just didn't seem like much was going on."

"Yeah. That's the way it is some nights."

I sat down at the table and poured a glass of water. I was starting to feel a bit like a homebody. But what was I supposed to do? My bank account was overdrafted and I had no money coming in. I couldn't go to parties or bars or play golf... I couldn't really do ANYTHING except look for another job, a task I had so far been a colossal failure at completing.

"You make your list?" Emily asked.

"Yeah. I found about 15 companies that I wouldn't mind working for. I can only really see myself working for about four of them. Emphyrean is still my first choice."

"Did you do the research on Emphyrean?"

"Yeah," I said casually. "About eight hours' worth."

"You really like that company, don't you?"

"You could say that."

"So, what sort of research did you get done?"

"I made a profile on LinkedIn like you told me to, and I searched the job listings there and researched the Emphyrean execs."

"Cool, cool... Did you look anywhere else for job listings?"

"Yeah. I checked Craigslist.org, Monster.com, Careerbuilder.com, and... umm... Simplyhired.com. I think that's it."

"Good. Sounds like you hit most of them." Emily stretched her arms into the air and yawned. She stood up and paced the kitchen, looking for something. "Now, Adrian, you know you can't keep sending out that same old résumé..."

"What do you mean?"

"Here it is," she reached into a pile of paperwork and pulled out my résumé. "This thing looks... well... it looks like a rusty old pickup truck."

"Take it easy," I said, snatching the résumé from her. "This is exactly how I was taught in school. My professor was a doctorate of... something important."

"Well, your professor did what he thought was best. He taught you how to drive a rusty pickup truck into a parking lot full of rusty pickup trucks and beg for a paint job."

"This thing looks pretty good to me," I said. "In all honesty, I don't think it needs a whole lot of work."

"Adrian..." she looked up at me and raised her eyebrows.

"What?" I shrugged my shoulders, claiming innocence. "It's not *that* bad!"

She looked back at the résumé. "It's pretty bad. The problem is that it looks *exactly* like everyone else's, and everyone else's look like... I don't know... *obituaries!*"

I couldn't believe her analogies. First it was rusty pickup trucks, now it was dead people... when would it end? I read over the résumé again.

"It looks alright to me."

"Seriously?"

"Yeah, seriously. Look at this thing!" I said, bringing a tone of confidence to my voice. "The

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