



THE

*MAXIMALIST*

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It was too dark for waking up. But the rhythm of four beeps and a pause of the alarm clock made it feel like morning. Julia had to wake up at four am to wash her face with cold water since the heater was broken, brush her teeth, and she had considered a fair amount of time to choose what to wear since she could not make that sweetly difficult choice before getting to bed last night, it had to be something convincing and not too normal as her typical style was. She believed that her appearance in addition to the eleven days of rehearsals should have been sufficient to get that job interview done right, she had to be there at seven.

According to her previous coworker's, John, exaggerated description of his experience in applying to that same job, it was pressurizing, intimidating, and maybe made to make someone feel incomplete.

Julia always had that feeling that she could have done the things a bit better if she were in the place of other people, regardless to her dissatisfaction of how she is doing with her own life. She, with some guilt, felt that John was a good motivation in life, he seemed to be a defeatist, and always gave her a good feeling about herself, for him being a mediocre in terms of looks, while she was good looking according to how she noticed random men look at her. However, she used to make a friend out of John. No, she was not that superficial pretty face that measured people's qualities according to how coherent their faces and muscles looked. But a woman has some ego to feed.

Julia's expensive support to John during his divorce paid when he found her the only one worthy of giving her his recommendation for that job. According to the system of application, applicants to the job should, at the end of the form, write a name of a person they recommended to be interviewed after them, if they were not accepted. And that was the only way to actually apply to that job.

On Julia's last day of her previous job, where she was coworkers with John, John told her that he had chosen her name to be the next applicant the same way he was chosen by one of his friends.

As she was walking out the door, putting on her jacket, John called her quietly;

- Jules...

She turned completely towards him, assuming that John then was going to give her a supportive word or something similar, because she was actually fired from that job. She prepared the "Oh thank you, John". But he proceeded to say:

- There's this job. It is really different, they pay a lot, a lot Julia. But the interview is different too; they don't ask many questions, and it is hard to actually know if you've done well or not, until they send you the rejection letter. The next interview will be...

And he looked at the little number in his watch to see the date...

- Around twelve days from today, you can just go to the interview, I've already suggested your name.

He made a big smile, while Julia's brain was messed up because her plans of sleeping and eating for the next month before finding the next job seemed to have vanished, she snapped back and smiled with her lips and eyes, then said:

- Oh thanks John!

Yes, her brain could not work out any change in the sentence she had prepared first,

- ...I mean, you are always a life saver, thank you John.

A better smile followed by John, he felt satisfied then, and Julia was pleasantly messed up.

In the next hour, John explained to Julia the requirements of the job. It was, according to him, becoming a kind of an assistant to the most important person in White Incorporated – one of the biggest business management companies in the world. The pay was relatively huge, but he did not know a specific figure. "It's your chance to shine Julia," he concluded.

Julia spent that hour smiling widely and curiously trying to imagine how the job was going to be, completely ignoring the fact that no one

had been accepted for it so far, and considering her acceptance inevitable.

As she was returning to her small apartment that night in the bus, she passed the hour of commute heavily thinking about that interview. Since her childhood, Julia enjoyed building complete situations in her mind and managed crises brilliantly within her imagination. And for the first time in years, this job gave her the raw material to shake the dust off of her now-silent imagination.

Maybe the best part –or actually the only good one- in her apartment was the big mirror in her room, she used to take a look at herself through it before leaving the house and after getting back from work. It gave her a picture of how she looked that day, and how confident about it she should be. And that night, when she knew about the job, she looked at herself and started building a picture of her future self. Yes, she was about to hit her thirties, but dreams never age, they may decay into a smaller piece of agony that gets triggered by a dose of nostalgia, but then they reward us with a smile, leaving us a bit charged for another battle in the next day.

An excellent idea that would pop up in Julia's head is taking the decision of spending the money she had on some fashion upgrade. Julia had received her last paycheck from her previous job, but she actually used to spend that money on the transportations from and to work, and on the restaurants she could not resist around the company. But now the only thing she would spend her money on was the coffee she bought when she would spend some time with her friend, Rose, in the nearby café.

Julia had a somehow unexplainable confidence, and for most of the eleven days before the interview, she behaved as if she will be starting the job immediately afterwards. So, she spent most of the money she had got on the new clothes she believed would be necessary for such a prestigious job.

As Julia and her friend Rose were looking at the fabulous, very expensive clothes in the shopping mall near the city center, she described to Rose how important it was to be chic in such jobs, and how handsome the company owner had to be.

As for Rose, there are two types of friends: the crazy friends that one spends time with when they want to do whatever they want without being very logical, or needing to explain a lot. Those crazy friends are important in times of being just tired of life. The other type is the not-crazy ones, those that constantly prevent you from ruining your life. However, Rose was of the crazy type.

As the date of the interview approached, Julia felt less prepared, but the little amount of detail she could get about it from John made her less worried about losing this job. It feels less worrying to lose something you do not know much about getting it. In some nights, the many mixed ideas her mind threw at her suddenly used to make her cry a little, without any clear explanation.

And one day before the interview, Julia felt very indifferent about it, her personality simply resisted to be shaken by a job interview, but she truly could not understand the way she behaved through the days just before it. Something constantly reminded her of John's words: "It's your chance, Julia."

- Can all this become reality?

She said to herself while looking through her mirror.

And on the day of the interview, Julia had to be at White Inc. headquarters at seven am sharp.

She got up from bed quickly, and it was her first time to wake up with excitement in years. She put on, carefully, some makeup. And she took the jacket she chose after all - not the one Rose thought was more suitable. And walked out the door after checking everything out through her mirror, she was around ninety-five per cent ready. And she managed to get the five am bus to the city center. The trip took one hour, she spent it literally staring, which was the effect of being sleepy with nonstop thinking at the same time.

She was at the entrance of White incorporated at six forty exactly, this was a good start for that day. As she walked through the reception floor, she carefully inspected the details of this different class of life and people. The strangely excellent air-conditioning, the differently classy suits men wore, the apparently expensive makeup women had, the marble in the floor, and even the language the reception worker used with her. Not forgetting the worker who took her jacket to hang it somewhere as she learned that the interview was going to be in the uppermost floor - the fortieth.

She stared at the red carpet inside the elevator as she was going up to the floor where the company's owner and his people were. Julia believed that this experience, even if she could not get the job, would be the most interesting thing she went through in years.

A classical beep alerted Julia before the elevator door opened. And Julia kept a small laugh for herself when the elderly worker with the mustache said "This way, ma'am" in a very English accent.

They walked in a long lounge, with many doors on the sides, and every once and a while, a uniquely elegant young woman or a man in a suit walked out of one of these doors carrying a few sheets of paper, with very confident steps and sharp looks. Some of them looked foreign, including many far Asians and Indians. The old, English assistant that walked Julia through the lounge started quietly speaking to her as he looked forwards:

- These are the most excellent employees of White incorporated. Mr. White selects the people he works with quite carefully, he is a very successful leader I must say.

Julia was very curious the moment she heard the name “Mr. White.” She proceeded to ask:

- So Mr. White is the top manager here?

The assistant answered:

- Actually, Mr. White is the founder of our company, and indeed, he is running it since its foundation.

After a couple of minutes, the two approached a large door at the end of the lounge, and the word “White” was written on it. Julia had some adrenaline rush in that very moment, the curiosity most probably was the most powerful challenge for her above all of the interview stresses. She suddenly had the greatest desire ever to get this job. The appearances of the workers there, and the way that English old man described this Mr. White made her have a rare feeling, Julia felt she belonged to that place.



And as they almost were at the “White” door, it opened, and a tall, fit, handsome, gray-haired man in his middle forties came out. He was wearing a black suit that looked even more different than all other suits Julia had seen that day. His gray hair was more of a good feature to his very balanced style, this man to Julia was the most classical mental picture of the word gentleman. He walked towards them looking straight through Julia’s eyes, but before she moved her eyes to look away, he moved his towards the assistant, they all stopped walking, and he initiated:

- I am Mr. James Fisher, the head assistant of management in White Inc. You may call me Mr. Fisher, Ms. Julia.

Then he turned to his right and pointed his finger to a small door next to the “White” door, and proceeded:

- Your interview will be held in this office Ms. Julia.

And he pulled a folded paper out of his jacket pocket and gave it to Julia, and said:

- Please fill this application appropriately. There is a desk inside that office, and a pen.

Then he returned back to the White office.

The assistant and Julia then walked towards that much smaller office. A small disappointment came after this last turn away from White’s big place, and it was apparent from Julia’s eyes. Until the English assistant opened the door to the small office. Inside was a big wooden desk that seemed just too big for the small room around it. With small car models, watches, pens, a digital camera and a professional one, and lots of paper were on top of that desk. Julia could not stop watching

around that small space that was full of details, from the souvenirs, the medals and trophies on top of a bureau on the left, to the brown, leather couch that looked badly comfortable in front of it. A large zigzag door occupied the whole right wall of the office, you could understand that this door should lead to the White office. It oddly was an intimate place.

The English assistant asked Julia to take a seat on the brown couch and to fill the application using a pen he randomly picked from the top of the big desk.

The questions of the application were simple; in addition to the name and date of birth, it asked about the marital state, and a very vague question was about “your capabilities.” Julia smiled as she imagined her friend Rose describing her capabilities if she filled that application. Yes, Julia was becoming more and more relaxed, enough to start thinking about Rose. And this also was in part because Julia decided to put Rose’s name as the alternative applicant, if she did not get the job. Julia innocently wanted to repeat the shopping trip if it happened that Rose got invited to apply to the job as well.

After a moment, the zigzag door opened from the other side, were gradually, the other, large office appeared. Julia tried hard to see as much as she could, but it was too dark in the White office. And from it, Fisher walked in and sat behind the desk. He spoke loudly:

- Welcome Miss Julia, let our interview begin.

Julia could figure out that Fisher’s loud voice was to alert someone setting nearby. She just pretended that Fisher was having a problem in toning his voice and behaved normally. To Julia, Fisher looked like this smart, a bit old man that she could outsmart easily. Yet, his serious looks and rare smiles made her describe this gentleman in her mind as

“cute, little, serious Fisher.” Julia could not just prevent her now-permanent smile as Fisher described the Job for her:

- As you may have understood, you have been applied to the position of being one of the personal assistants of Mr. Edward White, the owner and manager of White incorporated. The requirements of such a job, as far as you are concerned, are extensive. However, the pay will be satisfactory to you.

Fisher stopped talking unexpectedly and merely looked to his left through the open zigzag door, when suddenly a sound of a door lock being opened came from the White office through the darkness, this sound coincided maybe deliberately with the sound of one of the watches as the time was exactly seven am.

And a moment later, after hearing the sound of seven steps, a younger, black-haired, light-bearded man came out. He was in his middle thirties, with a very stable posture, a wide chest, sharp, green eyes, wearing a black suit, a silver watch, and a shiny pair of black shoes. A good combination enough to make any woman blush, he seemed very confident as he looked directly through Julia’s eyes. Fisher and the English old man were making Julia smile all the time, but the last addition made her simply stop. The presence of this man was different, and after a moment his perfume made things even more complicated.

She used lots of energy to get things under control, and bring her jaw-aching smile back. Fisher then introduced Julia to the young man, then introduced him as Mr. Edward White.

Edward sat midway between the two offices on a small chair he brought from his office, he was half lit by the sunshine coming through

the window behind Fisher, and the other half was dipped into the darkness of his office. He sat very quietly as an observer for some time.

Edward carefully looked at Julia through a very short glimpse before he moved his eyes to Fisher, a typical trick all men do to see a woman without looking freaky. He saw Julia, also, a beautiful young girl in her late twenties. She had a thick, smooth, brown hair that she kept tied with one hair tie during work. Her face, with dark, slightly small eyes, and sharp nose and cheeks that made it look wide, with full lips. Julia was tall, relatively to most women, especially Rose that frequently described herself as “Julia’s purse.” Other than her big smile, Julia had shallow facial expressions as she dealt with strangers or with distant friends or relatives, but she would burst with emotions, laughs and jokes when she was surrounded by people she felt comfortable with. She believed that her decent behavior and her frowny default face were how women are supposed to be around strangers, her true lively personality was a valuable property that only precious people should get the privilege to see.

Through the following half an hour, Fisher delivered to Julia all the boring questions of “why should we hire you?” And “how do you think you will improve the company?” And Julia went on consuming the reserve of words she had prepared during the previous days. Edward was listening very carefully when he suddenly concluded his silent observation, after getting off the small chair, and said with his strong, yet soft voice:

- Ok, Julia, do you happen to know geography?

Julia liked the fact that Edward used her name in his first words to her, but more importantly, Julia knew nothing about geography. So she answered:

- I know a little, I just remember what we learned from school.

Edward replied immediately:

- Then learn it, I need you to know a fair amount of geography, I have a meeting with some investors involved in meteorology and I want to impress them. Thank you so much, I see you on Thursday.

Julia was indeed confused, and she simply looked at Fisher with apparent surprise, while Fisher seemed unstirred, and the same applied regarding the English old man. Fisher broke the silence and said:

- Thanks Edward.

And Edward walked into his office after he had shaken hands with Julia, saying while he looked her in the eyes:

- It is really nice to meet you, you are a rich person, I could learn from you.

Julia was left with complete confusion then, she kept smiling and blushing after the last eye contact, the facts that she had to learn geography within two days to get the job and that Edward was too captivative made her in a hard position.

Fisher completely realized what was happening in Julia's head, he was a very intuitive man, understanding other people completely by merely looking. He spoke with a calm voice saying:

- Please excuse Mr. White's way of concluding his meeting, but he is a very busy man I must say.

And indeed the time was exactly seven thirty when Edward left, Julia could relax a little and replied:

- It is absolutely alright Mr. Fisher, but I would like to know, what topics in particular should I know about geography for Thursday's meeting?

Fisher replied with a smile:

- All geography Miss Julia.

Inside Julia's mind, she kindly asked Mr. Fisher to cut that stupid smile before she punched him in the face. Julia felt angry about the way the interview went. But Edward's last words, in a magical way, made her not angry of any of the three men around her, she was angry because she was stressed. Yes, we might feel anger out of stress, and direct that anger towards objects like the ticking clock that wouldn't just stop. This anger clearly showed that Julia was eager to get this job now. Her challenging character had never changed since her childhood. And as she walked out of the big building, Julia was indeed seeing a life changing curve ahead.

A small storm of thoughts rumbled in Julia's mind. Her practical thinking started generating a plan for the next few days, including the many internet pages she was going to read to learn that geography. And importantly, how she was going to get back to her house that was two hours away. She had the option of taking a forty-minute walk to the bus station instead of taking a taxi as she had done in the morning, and the slightly warmer weather made her take this option.

Julia, with a black jacket and a tall skirt, did not actually look very fitting to that region of the city centre, where everyone was almost wearing a uniform, a good-looking one, and in a hurry all the time. She

walked with her eyes wide open, dodging the fast-walkers on the wide pavements next to the huge skyscrapers, she looked at the world as it ran around her. An old man, maybe with grandchildren that were not as troublesome to their parents as they were to him, stood with a beautiful uniform at the gate of one big building for one of these grand hotels, welcoming the successful, opening the doors for them, with a smile more precious to Julia than the ivory pillars decorating those doors. A young man before hitting his middle age, with a face shrouded with a shaggy beard, held a newspaper that he was not reading, but selling to the business man in the black Benz who was probably going to see how many employees he should fire that year. A cute little girl, with a pair of shoes and a bag that most likely were more expensive than Julia's entire history of outfits, walked innocently chaining the hand of a busy father calling his partners for a business dinner, and the hand of a mother that was making the pavement a runway with her fascinating walk and vista. The fancy titles of restaurants, the cars, the motion, the crowd and the voices of the busy part of the world all made Julia feel something she could not explain, but it was good.

Another important part of that thought storm was dominating Julia's senses in addition to her mind. Edward, stood in the centre of her head during her long stare in the bus, with his unforgettable voice and fragrance. Julia did not fall into some teen fantasies and had these pink hearts floating around her head. Maybe she was not that mature yet about her attraction to someone, but Edward himself appeared to be a more serious part of her life than being just a source of pleasure. She was busy arranging her thoughts on how she should behave around him, to create the picture she wanted of herself in his mind appropriately. Pretty much Julia was imagining her hands going

through his mind and manipulating his thoughts the way she wanted them.

During the next two days, Julia spent a very fair amount of time in front of her computer screen memorizing capitals and reading maps. She never felt that eager about reading such a dull topic. Even during her college time studying business, she used to read the few pages she could copy from Wilkins, the one who cared about studying in her group, late in the night before the exam, and she had very mediocre grades all the time. Yet this time, Julia only answered one phone call from Rose who could not simply wait before she asked Julia to come to their café and tell her about the interview and her new “boss”. But Julia could not waste any moment, and Rose, at least for then, understood the rejection.

In Wednesday’s morning, Julia had had a very extensive thinking before she could make the decision to call the company from the number Fisher gave her to confirm about the meeting on Thursday:

- Julia: Hello, this is Julia from the job interview on Monday, I would like to confirm about our meeting tomorrow with Mr. Edward.
- Fisher: Yes Mr. White, just a moment Miss.

Julia could notice that Fisher did not like the fact that she called Mr. White as Edward, and that he also seemed confused, but she did not worry much because she had the feeling that Edward would not change his mind. And indeed, Fisher replied after keeping her on hold for one minute and told her that the meeting was on seven am, just like the previous time.

Waking up early was not Julia’s favourite thing, but she started to believe that her lifestyle was going to change to a more practical form.



And the fact that she was going to have a second interview, unlike John, made her feel almost sure that the job was in her hands.

At around seven in the evening, Julia's phone rang as she was trying out some of the clothes she bought with Rose to choose something for the next day. And a soft, young, female voice from White's company started talking to her about the important party she was going to attend on Thursday. The fact that the meeting turned out to be a party was not fully surprising as the young secretary explained to Julia that Mr. Edward made these parties as part of his business, and that it was a formal one. An important note was that the secretary asked for Julia's size and clothing preferences before she told her that a taxi was coming to her house to take her early in the morning to the headquarters, after dropping by one of the most prestigious and expensive fashion shops in the city to select an outfit for her. After this second phone call, Julia felt excited, but an unresting feeling was dwelling within her heart. Julia had grown up enough to understand that nothing is perfect. And that she should not be over excited about anything. But still, deep inside, the young lady within was dancing with happiness among the many shouting voices of discomfort. A picture that is common in the minds of women.

Julia decided to go to bed at six in the evening. The last time she slept that early was probably during her school days, but she wanted to be fully awake during this party. However, the same reason made her unable to sleep before eleven in the night. And again, the time to wake up was four am, but this time, Julia was fully charged once she woke up, she knew that this day was going to be long, and beautiful.

Julia stood in the street for one minute before her taxi arrived, only to see that it was not particularly a taxi, it was a silver BMW with a driver,

and a young woman was sitting in the back seat. Julia approached the car while the driver got off to open the door for her.

- Thank you.

Julia said to him before she sat next to the young woman who was merely looking at Julia with a big smile. This woman was fairly elegant and strikingly beautiful. Jasmine, as she introduced herself, had a very notable and unique style. She had this kind of beauty that made anyone say in their mind: "How?" Jasmine had a model-like height and general look, with minimal but artistically applied make up only to complete her already fine features. The black curly hair, the small nose and the cheek contour were the most notable in Julia's eyes.

Jasmine was a specialized stylist that worked directly with Edward. She explained to Julia that her job was to advise her on her style for the important party later that day. In addition to her unique accent, Jasmine added to her external beauty a sweetly friendly way of talking, one can notice this immediately from the fact that the second or third thing she said to Julia was: "You are really gorgeous Jules!"

For Julia, it was slightly odd to have a stylist caring about people working in business management, but Jasmine did not make Julia's surprise long when she cleared that Edward had his own ways of doing his work, and that he highly appreciated the effect of people's appearances on the impression they left on others. Indeed, a good portion of the impression Edward and even Jasmine had left on Julia was from their dazzling elegance.

Neither the remarkable beauty of Jasmine nor her way of talking about Edward as her close friend made Julia jealous, in fact, she even started to like Jasmine as a new friend. Yes, women do have a level of

competition among each other, but it is way simpler than that of men, and although the amount of self-satisfaction that they have is fluctuating, it is still high.

The two young ladies finished their shopping for an exquisite, black dress for Julia. They could not resist wasting some time in a chit-chat about fashion, Jasmine's earrings, and the old lady that was furious for no apparent reason in one of the shops. It was clear that Julia and Jasmine had become friends in a short time.

At seven, they arrived at the White headquarters where they separated since Jasmine had to meet Edward as well. And the old Englishman was waiting for Julia to accompany her to see Fisher in one of the meetings lounges.

As the two walked, the old Englishman spoke to Julia in a friendly tone:

- I believe it is time to introduce myself to you Julia. My name is Mr. Alan Charles, and you can just call me Charles. I am pretty much Edward's left hand, as James –referring to Fisher- is, without a doubt, his right.

He interrupted his speech with an old man's giggle, then proceeded as Julia was walking and listening quietly.

- You see, you are the only one that was actually requested to have a second meeting in our company among anyone who has ever been selected for this job interview. Let's keep it between us young lady, but I truly am confident that you have got this job.

And he looked at Julia smiling, while Julia really felt comforted by this warm talk, although deep inside, she had been confident about getting the job from the very beginning.

The two arrived at one fancy meeting room, with leather seats and a whole wall dedicated for a magnificent view to the city from the twentieth floor separated from the room only by a huge glass window. Fisher was waiting for them as he welcomed Julia once they arrived with a faint smile, but a small flare in his eyes made Julia feel that Fisher suddenly felt happy once he saw them coming. He asked them to take a seat, and asked Julia if she would like something to drink, and once her drink arrived, Fisher checked some sheets of paper then looked at Julia and said:

- Miss Julia Anderson, I apologize for you on behalf of White Inc. for our delayed response to your previous interview. But I and Mr. White could not completely see all of your potentials in that short interview, and we thought that inviting you to today's business meeting would be sufficient for Mr. White to take his final decision. I am certain that you will be satisfied at the end, we would absolutely be glad to have you with us in this company.

Julia could not help but feel the bureaucracy in Fisher's way of management, and that they were taking the things a bit too formally. But she also understood that these people were always dealing with business moguls and officials, which made it a requirement for them to be that specific and formal. Fisher took some time explaining to Julia the nature of their work. Not with many details but enough to make her

figure out that they took on the responsibility of managing the financial, social, political and legal matters of many businesses. They used the brilliant minds and capabilities of their employees to provide professional consultation or direct control over many aspects of a business. In other words, White incorporated was an assembly of the region's most brilliant minds in business that sold knowledge and pretty much, success.

After about one hour, and at eight and a half exactly, Charles looked at his watch for a moment and said:

- Mr. Edward white is coming now.

Indeed, Edward walked in shortly after, wearing a royal blue suit and a pair of glasses that he took off once he entered the room. Edward looked immediately towards Julia as if he was looking for her and welcomed her with a big smile, he then immediately turned to Fisher and said while alternating his eyes between Fisher and Julia:

- James, I would like Miss Julia to accompany me today until after the party, would that be OK, Julia?

He asked while looking at Julia, again, in the eyes. Julia felt confused a little and said after looking at Fisher who showed no reaction:

- Sure, I would be glad Edward...em I mean, Mr. White.

And she made a big smile to cover up for her mistake since she then fully understood that Fisher had a serious thing with official names. However, Edward had a short laugh while looking at Fisher who seemed slightly upset and said:

- It is OK Julia, you can certainly call me Edward. I know for myself that I am a mister you don't have to tell me.

Edward sounded to have this kind of sarcastic humor. But his face suddenly changed as he stared into Julia's face and said:

- You look sleepy though, you can't go with me yet, I guess you have slept for less than four hours last night, you can take a long nab in the room next door.

Julia was surprised by the way Edward spoke. "Did he just worry about my lack of sleep?" she wondered. And although Julia did not sleep for more than four hours indeed, she said that she was fine, because she did not find it comfortable to sleep in such a place. However, Fisher, who did not seem to be as well surprised, explained to Julia that they actually had prepared places for sleep inside the building, and that employees in a true need for sleep could take a nab in one of them safely. Fisher then asked Charles to accompany Julia to one of these rooms, and Julia did go with Charles while still in her wonder of this company's unique system.

Beyond all of Julia's expectations of White company, and of Edward in particular, they seemed to have a very different way of managing their works, she pretty much started remembering some of her management classes where these methods were thought of as unrealistic. And as Julia was understanding the "White method", she took the chance of having a nab in that small room, she knew that in terms of efficiency, the next hour of sleep will certainly not be wasted from that unique day.

Although uncomfortable with the unexpected nab, Julia could not resist the chance of having that needed slice of rest. Indeed, the alarm clock felt too soon to ring when Julia woke up one hour later, and she had a little time to tidy up her messed up hair and face before Charles

came to wake her up. While gently knocking the door, the old Englishman made Julia fully awake by saying:

- Wake up miss, Mr. Edward is waiting for you.

“I will be there in a moment” Julia replied. And the young woman consumed only one minute to fix her moderate make up with what she had in her purse. Charles did his typical giggle when Julia opened the door smiling to the man that never stopped reminding her with her grandfather.

And the two headed to the reception floor where Edward and Fisher waited for Julia. According to what Fisher explained to Julia when they arrived, she was going to accompany White during his daily “trip”.

- You will like it Julia.

Edward said to Julia smiling while he was signing some papers a worker delivered to him, just before they left the building along with Fisher.

- Julia: So the trip is not in the headquarters, Mr. Fisher?
- Fisher: Yes, Mr. White’s work is mostly outdoors, he meets a number of partners or customers every day, while finishing his paperwork inside the Limo.

Julia realized then that she had better keep her questions to herself and only observe how one of the richest people in the region ran his work. And that she should get the answers by herself.

The three took their seats inside the large, black limousine. For Edward and Fisher, each had his own seat with all of his needs around, and Edward had a complete office inside. So, Julia took the empty seat,

carefully watching Fisher as he was the maestro that had just taken on the stage while the car moved.

- Fisher: In twenty minutes, we will be at Carter's to try today's suit, we are going now because now is Al's shift and he's the fastest of all of their workers. After that, you will go and say goodbye to that ugly woman, she's traveling to Rome, again, and she will convince her husband about the deal during their vacation, so just go and say goodbye. And after her, you will have lunch. What diet, Edward?
- Edward, who actually looked very busy with the paper work, replied unexpectedly to Fisher's question: it's a party tonight, James.

Although, for Julia, Edward did not seem to pay the slightest attention to Fisher's talk, his immediate and short reply implied that White was practically distributing his concentration between the paper work and Fisher's announcement of the schedule. The one thing that Julia missed was the fact that Edward was also paying attention every once and a while to her, noticing, with a hidden smile, how Julia carefully wrote notes on her brand new notebook.

- Fisher: Oh yes, so the late-nighter. After the lunch you will see Stanley, it is the only time in the day that he doesn't spend playing golf so we will catch him in his office. Then the phone call. Then the meeting with the motor company people, they are Germans so timing is crucial. After that you will have some time for the sunset before we return to the headquarters. And yes, Jasmine's birthday is in a month and today is the only day where you'll have time to get her something.



- Edward: I have already got her something. And there is no phone call today, so I will stay a bit more in the view.

While Fisher appeared to be slightly confused with Edward's last reply, Julia was busy reviewing her random notes; that ugly woman, the phone call, the view... Practically, Julia wrote the things she had questions about, but she was still determined about figuring out all of these questions by herself.

As he picked up a glass of orange juice, Edward lift his head away from the papers around him and turned to Julia, he took one sip of the drink and asked:

- Tell me Julia, what is the second highest mountain in the world?

Julia, in her confusion, looked like a college student being surprise tested by her professor, but fortunately, Julia was good at this. She took a second to recall the Wikipedia article and answer:

- K2, it is called K2, a peak in Pakistan.

While Fisher had his attention stolen by the quick exam, Edward had an unprecedented look on his face when Julia answered correctly.

- Thank you Miss Julia.

Edward replied after a short moment of silence.

The trip went on smoothly as planned, Edward looked astonishing in his white suit while Al from the tailor shop had his moments of pride of the quality of their work. Later, in their way to one of the most prestigious districts in the city to meet Aster, the person interestingly described by Fisher as "the ugly woman", Edward, while hiding his laugh and looking at Fisher, said:

- Julia, you are about to see the ugliest woman in town according to Fisher here.

Julia knew very well that men like Edward and Fisher would never mock someone's appearance, she knew there was something about that lady. Aster of the diamonds, was Edward's more glamorous name of her.

An automatic gate opened before the car entered a mansion hidden among cypress trees. As they moved through the huge garden in front of a villa, some small marble sculptures of animals appeared between the trees occasionally, the image resembled a castle from a classical fairy tale. Julia could not move her eyes away from the window once the car crossed a small bridge inside a Japanese garden. She also could not resist expressing her fascination saying:

- Do places like this still exist?
- Fisher: Aster Asscher has inherited one of the largest diamond cutting companies in the world, you are looking at her Mansion Julia. Although she is a descendant of a family that collected diamonds from Africa for ages, her husband is the one managing their business currently. She, however, is interested in our company to manage their works, and to be accurate, she is interested in Edward.

What was more interesting to Julia than the story of the ugly diamond lady, is Fisher's sudden withdrawal of his use of formal names. The two men seemed uncomfortable from the moment they entered the Asscher mansion.

The inside of the villa showed no less evidence about the luxurious life this family had had. As the three waited in the centre of the big

palace, Julia captured the variety of arts the place housed, from renaissance-age paintings to contemporary sculptures, the house was embroidered with treasures. And after fifteen minutes of idle time waiting for the house princess, a fifty-something old lady, with blonde, tall hair walked down the stairs leading to the centre of the villa. To Julia, Aster seemed to be a non-aging vampire, her old age could be figured out from her voice or posture, but not from her face. The Dutch lady was anything but ugly, her height and the black velvet robe she wore made her shine like a black diamond.

The Asscher approached Edward and Fisher who stood up to welcome her, she raised the back of her hand towards Edward before he kissed it, and he said while she turned towards Fisher:

- I came here to wish you a nice trip, Aster. I, myself, will take good care of your business while you enjoy your time with Mr. Asscher.

While Fisher only shook her hand, the old lady shifted her blue eyes towards Julia, and said:

- Of course, Eddie. I can trust no one better than you darling. But please, don't bring strangers to my mansion without telling me, you know my issues with hygiene.

Julia raised her eyebrows with surprise. The old woman was talking about her, with disgust. While Julia's cheeks blushed out of fury, she decided to act mature and say nothing. When Edward confidently replied:

- One would never dig diamonds without getting his hands dirty, Aster.

- Aster replied, laughing with hidden anger: You are a witty man Eddie.

While Fisher giggled, Julia could not fully get what Edward meant, but she trusted that he defended her with that. However, Julia understood the ugliness Fisher was talking about earlier. She, with her mature mind, had a feeling of relief for realizing the depth of these men, regardless to the superficial world they spent their days inside.

The lunch was in one of the large restaurants in the city. It looked like everyone there knew Edward, he only needed to say that he had a party that night for them to know his order. Before the lunch arrived, Edward had a chat with Julia who sat opposite to him.

- Edward: So Julia, you have seen part of our daily routine so far. In our business, you need to deal with all kinds of people. You may not like it, and you may leave this job before someone causes you harm. But the thing about this world, is that you need people the same way they need you, you must learn to learn from everyone you meet, rather than getting hurt of what they say or do. I know you are not too young to already know this, but I believe I should apologize for you for what Aster said today. Trust me Julia, it is your choice to either learn then improve, or to get suppressed then retreat.
- Julia: you really did not need to apologize for me Mr. White, I was not offended by what Mrs. Asscher said. And for your advice, I guess I will learn a lot from you before I do from anyone else.

Fisher did not appear to be interested in their short conversation until Julia made her last reply, he immediately turned towards Edward once

she said “Mr. White”. Edward himself had a short laugh, and leaned forwards only to be interrupted by the waiter delivering their lunch. Instead of replying to Julia, Edward turned to the young waiter and said to him in a friendly tone:

- Aren't you a married man, Foster?
- The waiter replied: Sure Eddie, I am a married man.
- Edward then turned his eyes shortly for Julia then back to Foster, the waiter, and asked him: Then why are you working here now, Foster? Your wedding was only a week ago!
- Foster, laughing quietly while placing the dishes on the table: I could not leave anyone else serve you here Eddie.
- Edward replied, after laughing briefly along with Fisher: Thanks man.

He then turned towards Julia and said: Julia this is Foster, a friend of mine that works in here.

And directing his speech to Foster, Edward introduced Julia to him. Julia could not prevent her smile while she watched Edward chatting with the waiter, and Fisher laughing along with them.

When Foster left their table, Edward looked at Julia in the eyes and whispered: □

- Did you see that Julia? He called me Eddie, because I knew I was a mister, so please call me Edward the same way I call you Julia.

For Julia, indeed it was uncomfortable for her to be treated very formally as Fisher did. Yet, her slightly defensive character did not like the totally informal treatment Edward wanted either. She tried to maintain a certain distance, not because she had doubts about Edward's intentions, but, Julia knew that if her emotions got into the equation,

and she got hooked up by Edward too soon, she would be too vulnerable to the many new changes she had to challenge in this experience. Julia, for a short moment that day, felt lonely. But as the trip continued, the feeling of protection the two men provided her as they roamed around the big city had alleviated her worries.

Stanley, the golf addict, turned out to be one of their clients who was overly delaying their payments. Once Julia heard about him from Fisher, she for some reason recalled a scene from Pulp Fiction, imagining that Fisher and Edward are going to threaten him with guns. She burst with laughter as they entered Stanley's company, only leaving Fisher in wonder, and Edward saying, laughing with her:

- I know what you are thinking Julia.

Nevertheless, the meeting was more civilized than what Julia pictured. But not as dull as the one with the German motor company managers. Only one smile was drawn during that two-hour, colorless talk, and it was on the face of the worker who cleaned the table.

Later, the winter sun was about to set when the three were going to downtown, the busiest, yet oldest part of the city. The small rock buildings embedded into the old streets were crowded with tourists visiting the many restaurants and shops. Since college days, that place was Julia's favourite in the whole city. She would go spend hours in the coffee shops studying with her college friends, where they actually wasted most of their time with chatter and laughter. But as the years passed, Julia rarely visited those places, and the many hours she had wasted between those streets became the sweetest memories. Julia could never remember the old stories, the smells nor the craziness they

had there without smiling, with a small tear in her eye that she never understood its fall.

This place was not less intimate for Edward, this was apparent to Julia when Fisher explained one of her questions that she kept in the notebook:

- We are going to the view now, Miss Julia. For a long time, Edward loved watching the sunset from that place. The view is located on the top of the small mountain to the west of downtown. Many years ago, this part of the city was empty, but as you can see, many investments took place in that region. Fortunately though, we managed to maintain that place for ourselves; during the economic rush, Edward purchased a land on the top of that mountain, and he did not build anything on it, and so, he kept the view for so many years to come.

Once they arrived, Edward merely stood for some minutes watching the sun as it disappeared behind the high buildings of the new city centre. Julia, on the other hand, was mesmerized by the fact that Edward and she shared a love to one place. In her eyes, Edward was so loyal to his past, was so romantic, so white.

The trip back to headquarters was quiet. The three were tired, taking a rest for the party held in a few hours. As the city lights passed along Julia's window, memories of the past were crossing Julia's mind. It seemed that the past looked more beautiful if we recalled it while feeling good.

Charles was waiting for the two gentlemen in the company's hall when they arrived. He took Edward to prepare for the party, while Fisher left to take his daily patrol across the many offices of the company. And

Edward, before leaving, turned to Julia and told her that Jasmine is going to help her prepare for the party.

Julia had waited for a couple of minutes alone before Jasmine appeared leaving the elevator. Julia was like a child who had just found his mother after going missing for some time. Jasmine looked as fresh as she were that morning, she was that kind of a person you smile while thinking about.

- Oh! How cute you are sitting all alone shy and scared!

Jasmine said to Julia while standing in front of her. Julia laughed briefly before Jasmine got a little more serious.

- We've got to move Jules we don't have much time to get you ready. We'll talk as we work.

The two went up to the fortieth floor, where Jasmine explained to Julia that her "work station" is.

- Jasmine: so Edward, every around a month or so, holds this charity party in his place. He gathers his many acquaintances and asks them to donate to his charity program. For seven years, he has collected money that supports millions of families in need around the world.

Julia did not find this surprising, she knew from her college days that all large scale companies had great focus on social matters. In one hand, it polished their public image. And in the other, it reduced their tax burden. However, Julia started to understand that, always, there was something special about how White did things.

Jasmine's work station was nothing but a large section in the administration floor of the White's company, close to Edward's office. It



was filled with mannequins, mirrors, huge make up kits, and an unforgettable fragrance all over the place. Apparently, Jasmine had her own business within the company; a fashion line, owned by and hosted by the White company. It had its own elevators and entrances independent from the rest of the company, to allow for Jasmine's unique customers to stay comfortable.

The two ladies helped each other to prepare themselves for the party. It did not take much time for them to get ready. Julia in her black dress, silver accessories and a simple yet elegant make up. For her, the fact that such a fashion master like Jasmine was consulting her about what to wear and if something looked nice on her made her see how down to earth Jasmine was. Quickly, Jasmine looked outstanding in many ways in Julia's eyes. Edward and Jasmine, felt like two humans from a different planet.

For the remaining time before the party began, Jasmine gave Julia lots of advice about working with Edward, in the company, and in the parties he held. For Julia, not much was adding to what she already had grasped during the short time she spent in White Inc.

A car came to take Julia and Jasmine to "Edward's place" where the party was held. Not a great distance from the headquarters, a fairly large apartment at the top of one of the highest buildings in the town was the place Edward held his parties every few months. The night sky was above, and the most prestigious class of people were below, enjoying their time in the huge balcony. Around fifty of the richest of the world were gathered in that place, according to Jasmine, showing off their wealth, their expensive toys, and the most recent achievements of their plastic surgeons.

Jasmine told Julia that Julia will accompany Edward for some time where he will introduce her to their new customers. Julia remembered that she had actually learned some geography for this, but she wondered whether Edward is going to show her abilities off like a proud parent.

The sudden shift of people's eyes to the balcony's entrance signaled the arrival of Edward. He, as usual, had stolen the show once he arrived. Briefly, he welcomed each and every guest, with a short chat, and some laughs. Until he finally reached Julia.

- You look beautiful.

He said. The first product of Julia's mind as a reply was "you too", but fortunately she fixed it in the last moment to "thanks". It is that she did not get used to hear that specific phrase from someone other than her girlfriends.

- Edward, with a tone of sarcasm: are you enjoying your time here Julia?

Not pausing for Julia to answer. He proceeded:

- Me neither. They call it a party, but I haven't seen a single balloon yet.

Julia could have continued with such a sarcastic conversation for the whole night, but she preferred to laugh along with Edward briefly. He then started searching with his eyes for someone in the crowd, paused briefly, then frowned a bit. He turned to Julia and said:

- Apparently, meteorologists do not respect time enough. But don't worry Julia, your efforts of learning that geography won't be in vain.

For the rest of the party, Edward was introducing Julia to a number of his guests. Neither Julia nor the guests seemed interested, but Edward did this out of etiquette.

Julia was becoming exhausted as the time passed, unlike Edward or Jasmine, who appeared to have got used to this lifestyle. And before the high heels pushed Julia to her limit, Edward concluded the party with declaring the total money they had collected that night, the number had seven zeros.

In the way back to headquarters, Edward and Jasmine were with Julia in the car this time. Julia had reckoned that Edward and Jasmine must have been in some kind of a relationship, but the dead silence that continued till they arrived made that a smaller possibility.

Fisher was waiting for them in the company hall, with a sheet of paper in front of him on the table. He stood once Julia, Edward and Jasmine reached him. And he initiated, talking to Julia:

- I think it is time for us to announce for you our decision regarding your application, Miss Julia.

In this timing, Julia did not expect to get the answer. She, for the first time, was not very sure about getting the job.

Fisher proceeded:

- You have been accepted.

For days, Julia had imagined this moment along with her reaction to it. In her imagination, the reaction looked excellent. But the world rarely does it help us render what we imagine into reality. She simply said “thank you” with a shy smile. She did not know that this reaction was actually better.

Fisher then told Julia that she could start her introductory stage in the next week, as an assistant to Edward White.

Edward, for the first time, looked unrelaxed as he welcomed Julia to his company. But Julia decided to ignore this for now.

And just before her cab took off, Julia opened the window and waved to Charles who, with his slightly stooping posture, stood at the exit of the headquarters looking at her. And as the car moved, Julia kept chasing the building with her eyes until it disappeared. She was genuinely good, the feeling you have when the person inside of you says “well done”. In such situations, Julia had always sought someone to thank, she always felt that happiness should be cherished with someone. And the person to come to her mind was, as always, Rose. However, Julia reached to the cab driver and said:

- Could you take me to Praetor Street?

As the taxi waited, Julia went up the stairs of a residential building, she quietly knocked the door, and waited for around a minute before it opened.

- Julia!? Is there anything wrong?
- Julia, suddenly realizing it was midnight: Oh, I’m so sorry, John. I know it’s too late.
- John, standing at his apartment’s door, wearing pajamas, and confused: Is everything Ok Julia?
- Julia: Don’t worry, John, everything is thanks to you. I have been accepted in the job.
- John, still confused: What jo... Oh! You did? Jules? I am so glad you did it!

Julia had never enjoyed doing stupid things, but she was too happy to worry about this odd situation then. She proceeded, trying so hard to make things look normal.

- Julia: Yeah, it is a very great job. I am so sorry I annoyed you at this time but I really wanted to thank you.
- John, with his confusion resolved, and eyes shining: It's Ok Jules, you're the one who earned it.

Suddenly, a feminine voice called from the inside of the apartment.

- Julia, trying unconsciously to see through the darkness behind John: ..ahm...
- John, promptly: Sasha and I are back together.

Then he turned back and shouted "Just a moment!" Julia was overtly surprised, but she quickly thought up an exit of the situation.

- Julia: Good for you John, I just hope you have got the stable life you've always wanted. I just wanted to thank you for giving me that great chance now that I have a job I think I will love.

John was speechless. He felt embarrassed in front of the person he had always considered a role model without her ever noticing. Julia had helped him with his divorce, encouraging him to make a powerful choice of leaving Sasha who had betrayed him. But he believed that he could grant forgiveness when Sasha returned to him broken. Apparently, John was ready to let go of many things to achieve his everlasting dream, to achieve stability.

Julia finally went back home, satisfied about herself in many ways, even about John for reasons she could not understand. She embraced her worn out pillow, and slept a long, dreamless night.

Really early in the morning, Julia could not wait to deliver her full report to Rose. Dew was still covering the fake roses decorating the outdoor when Julia knocked it forcefully to awaken Rose. Living with her grandmother in their old house, Rose, was the soul sister of Julia since college days. Rose was rather short compared to Julia, with thick, soft, light brown hair. She had a characteristically short haircut barely reaching her neck, with prominent cheekbones, sharp, green eyes and a permanent blush. Her high-pitched voice never prevented her from always being loud, and she was the kind of person that does not find time to think about things before saying them, still she could be nice to everyone effortlessly.

With her bunny-ornamented pajamas, Rose slowly opened the door for Julia. With red eyes, Rose stared passively into Julia and said:

- Wait.

Obviously, she was sleeping. However, six minutes later, she appeared again, had already changed her clothes, brushed her hair, and somehow, removed the redness in her eyes.

- Julia: You were sleeping?

- Rose: Shut up. Let's go to Paradise. Would you like some mint?

Not exactly what you thought, paradise was the name of the café they always went to. It was only a walk away from Rose's house, which was a walk from Julia's. The two only chewed some mint in the way and did not talk until Rose was fully awake when she took her first sip of coffee.

- Julia: Guess what Rosy?

- Rose, reading the menu: You've been accepted in that job. Julia, do you really think I would stare into that beautiful face of yours in vain? I can smell your happiness woman.
- Julia, giggling: So who's the boss now?
- Rose: Or maybe it's the smell of coffee. And I am the boss of course, my job is still better than yours.
- Julia, sarcastically: Oh really? No, you're right, you have a better boss than mine.
- Rose, bursting into laughter, splashing coffee on herself: My greatest love, Bob.
- Julia, laughing: Does he still eat paper?
- Rose, with a serious look: I still put a box of printing paper in his office every day with a flower.
- Julia, drying the laughter tears: Oh god Rose!
- Rose: So tell me how handsome is your boss in a scale from Bob to Leonardo DiCaprio?
- Julia: No really, Rose, this man is different.
- Rose: What? He eats furniture?
- Julia: His company is huge, they hire the brightest minds in the country, no, the world. He knows so many important people, and he is so wealthy but still so humble, Rose.
- Rose, rolling her eyes: So what are you going to do? What's your Job?
- Julia: I will be his assistant, I will have a nice paycheck, Rose. I swear I'll get you that necklace from my first pay.
- Rose, with a small tear her cheek stole from her eye: I am so proud of you sister. So, does Edward wear a ring or something?
- Julia, looking away in an attempt to remember: No, I don't think he does.

- Rose: Did you just try to remember this fundamental piece of information? Ok, what did you do for the entire day yesterday?
- Julia, happily: I went for a trip with them in his car, and a party.
- Rose, raising her eyebrows and closing her mouth in objection: How did you trust them that fast to get alone into their car, Julia?

For the first time, Julia had realized that she had given away her trust in someone that quick, and how bad things could have gone. This suddenly made her worried, but she could overcome this feeling immediately by reminding herself of how well things had actually gone yester night. She replied, but not with her usual confidence:

- Julia: No! It wasn't a *trip*. It was a work related tour, we went and saw some of his clients. It is part of the interview, Rose.
- Rose, with some relief: I see. And what did you wear for that party Jules?
- Julia: an expensive black dress they've got me. I've just worn it and I returned it back, but I have pictures!

For the rest of that day, which was a day off for both, the two spent it in their favourite places around their area. However, by the end of the day, Julia was way more tired than Rose, and she had to reject Rose's idea of sleeping at her grandmother's house. Julia was still exhausted from that long day, and she wanted to spend more time in her house before she got busy in the new job.

Many mixed ideas were taking Julia back and forth during that weekend. Her feeling of satisfaction has not changed, but for the first time, Julia kept asking herself "Why me?"

In her first week as a White employee, Julia was busier than ever. Everyone was doing their best, encouraged by the fact that each



employee had a small share of the company. Julia learned that time is the most important asset in her hands, and that order and efficiency were the keys Edward and Fisher used to unlock success. The two, Edward and Fisher, had perfectly synchronized minds. Fisher took over the responsibility of managing the inside of the company, the employees, and the paper work and legal matters. Hence, he was the one interviewing Julia and observing her as she learned her way through. Edward was the mastermind behind the witty ideas the company kept producing, for themselves and for the customers. He as well was the image of the company, a business celebrity known by all masters of their field.

Julia's questions kept filling the pages of her notebook, but still, she wanted to unravel them all by herself. Her job was practically to reduce the unnecessary things Edward or Fisher had to do. And to make this possible, she had to learn Edward's unique daily routine. He woke up at precisely six in the morning in the winter, and five in the summer. Interestingly, regardless to the fact that he had a luxury apartment near the headquarters, he slept in a small bedroom he prepared along with a bathroom and a kitchen that all were reached through a door in his White office, Edward was in fact living in the company's building. After waking up, he spent about half an hour running in a nearby park, returning to his office at about fifteen to seven, and getting completely ready for work at seven. He said once that he had never tasted tea or coffee, and that he was not intending to. Edward's favourite drink was orange juice. And he did not particularly choose healthy food, but apparently, the restaurant that he always ate at had a meal for every certain day for him. A meal if he planned to travel in the next day, and another one if he held a party that day, and so on. Edward once took

Julia to show her his library, and for someone that used to read very often, Julia thought that Edward's library was exquisite. He had a few books about each and every topic, some about math, others about Indian cuisine, and even a book about snails. Edward was rather versatile, speaking about eight languages, a polo player, a member of a chess club, he even had learned some coding languages. Edward had some ideas about just about everything.

Fisher on the other hand was predictable, he lived alone in an apartment near the company. He was not talkative, rather an observant. Julia had always believed that James Fisher was hiding a lot behind his silence, and was as significant to the company as Edward was.

Fisher noticed that Julia was good at organizing things efficiently, and he decided to give her the responsibility of managing Edward's schedules.

Day after day, Julia was getting better at her job. Brilliantly managing appointments with a certain difficult customer when Edward had a relaxed day, and learning about each and every meeting before hand, so well that she could give lots of advice to Edward afterwards. Fisher was impressed by Julia, and he started to get more and more relaxed with her. A man like Fisher would appreciate excellence coming from anyone, and he intelligently could analyze Julia's abilities and kept entrusting her with the correct tasks.

One interesting answer that Julia got was about Edward's phone calls. A routine he used to have daily that only recently stopped. He called his uncle, Clark White, every day to make sure that he was fine. The old man had Alzheimer's and could not recognize Edward most of the times, he only called Edward "good man" for Edward used to send

him money and a nurse to take care of him. Edward called him every day to keep himself in his uncle's memory. Clark died a peaceful death just one day before Julia's interview.

In one of the days where Edward and Julia had had some free time, Edward told her about the small office she had got her interview at:

- Edward: This, Julia, is where everything started. I and James spent most of our days inside this small office managing our newly formed company, we've only had this place then. White Co, as James insisted that we name it after my last name, he convinced me by saying that white carries a good meaning, while adding fisher to it would ruin it. I mean he's right fish and white never fit together.

Julia loved the way Edward talked about their beginnings, she looked at his eyes shining while talking about their first profits, their struggles and passion. They left that office unchanged for all those years, even Fisher is still operating from it.

- Edward: You see, Julia, it is full of stuff, these were all of our things, and we lived here for some time before we could hire the bigger room next to us, now my office. James and I have sold our houses and used them to run the company, and it worked fortunately.
- Julia, showing surprise: You risked everything for this?!
- Edward: We risked nothing, Julia, we had nothing and we tried hard to have something. That's what happened.

Julia merely smiled. It was possibly the first time that Julia felt something other than admiration towards Edward. It was aspiration.

Days were running quickly, and Julia was getting more and more involved into the work. Fisher offered her that the company hires an apartment for her and cut it from her pay, one close to the company to save her the time and cost of the long transportations she used to take. And she did move to it.

Since John's reunion with his ex-wife, Rose was the only one Julia had contact with outside the company. However, one of the busiest months the company had had made Julia too occupied from seeing or talking to Rose. Adding the fact that Julia had to move away from Rose's neighborhood, Rose and Julia were getting more and more away from each other, for the first time since they had met first.

Only one month after the beginning of their first year in college, Julia had already become popular among their colleagues. She was this beautiful young girl who rarely talked to boys and spent most of her time in the old town with her interesting friends from outside college. While Rose was the girl trying so hard to be known to everyone, talking to everyone about everything, yet unable to attract anyone's attention. Rose had lost both of her parents in a car accident when she were only four. Her grandmother raised her in her house, growing as a self-dependent girl that could almost do anything. She joined the school's football team as the only female, at the same time, she did hairstyles for the little girls for little money. Even though Rose hated Julia during their first college month, when she found Julia crying alone in the library, she could not but talk to her and calm her down. Since that moment, Julia and Rose became two inseparable souls.

Two months had passed since Julia was hired as a second assistant for Edward White, when an SMS arrived in Julia's phone. It was from Rose and it said "I needed you, and you left me". Julia read it while

walking up the stairs to Jasmine's place in preparation for another charity party. She remembered that Rose had called her several times while she either were in a meeting or sleeping during the day, and that she never could return back to Rose.

That SMS was like a slap to Julia's face, she had realized that she was carried away by her work and strong desire to become someone like Edward. In the few moments before Julia arrived at Jasmine's place, she could rearrange her entire mind, made new decisions, and even goals.

- Julia: I am sorry Jasmine I think I won't be able to attend the party today.
- Jasmine: Why Julia? Is everything Ok?
- Julia: Yes Jasmine don't worry, but I have a very important thing to do tonight instead.
- Jasmine, with some hesitation: It's alright Julia, Edward will understand. But don't get too busy from us, we need you out there Jules.
- Julia, with a true smile: Don't worry Jasmine, I won't.

From there, Julia walked outside the building with confident steps, and luckily found a cab immediately, and she headed to her old neighborhood to see Rose. On the way, Julia thought for a moment about calling Rose back, but then she imagined herself knocking Rose's door right after she sent her that message, and realized that that would be more dramatic, abandoning the first idea.

After quietly knocking the door non-stop for a minute, Rose opened the door, with the bunny pajamas and a frown on her face. She merely looked at Julia for a moment, saying nothing. While Julia was shouting

internally saying “just, forgive me!” She shouted so hard in her silence that she started crying. Still standing at Rose’s door and looking at each other, the two started crying together, and finally Rose broke the silence with:

- Don’t cry! I hate you.

The two hugged each other lightly, and started slowly calming down, when finally Rose put her left hand on Julia’s head and moved it away, moving her right hand and putting it right in front of Julia’s face, extending her fingers, with one shiny ring in one of them.

Julia stared for some time into Rose’s hand before she could analyze the scene, when suddenly all of her facial expressions changed. She promptly shouted:

- When!?

Rose immediately shut Julia’s mouth with her hand, and whispered:

- Shush! Grandma will wake up, let’s go to Paradise.

The two went quickly to their favourite place, Rose in her pajamas, and Julia in her official attire.

- Rose: It’s Ryan, Julia, he returned from Britain three days ago and proposed to me as he promised.
- Julia: Ryan, the Ryan?
- Rose, with glowing eyes and blushing cheeks: Yes, he was not a loser after all.
- Julia, with a faint sound: Oh my god!

Ryan was an athlete, he first met Rose in college days where he used to study art. He then dropped out and travelled to UK to join a gymnastics club. He indeed fell in love with Rose and promised her to

return back for her after he became a professional athlete. For Julia he returned in the wrong time, when she was most busy. But for Rose, it was the most appropriate time, when she was most lonely.

- Rose: Do you think he would have a problem if I called him Jack?
- Julia, looking at the ring in Rose's hand: Is that diamond!?
- Rose, smiles: It's a tiny one yeah, he said he will get me a bigger one when we marry.

The two talked for a long time about how Rose's life is going to be, about the wedding planned in a year, they were happy. And after the café had closed, Rose asked Julia to come and sleep at her place, but they finally decided to sleep at Julia's house, since the company's car was coming in the next morning to pick Julia up from her house for work.

A couple of hours after midnight, while Julia was sleeping on a couch in the living room, Rose got up from Julia's bed and went to Julia, and she put her hand on Julia's shoulder. That was enough for Julia to wake up:

- Julia, hardly speaking: What's there, Rose?
- Rose: I'm scared.
- Julia, complaining: Are you serious, Rose?
- Rose: I'm scared of marriage, Julia.

Julia looked at Rose's worried face, and she folded her legs to give Rose a space to sit on the couch. They spent that night talking. While marriage only managed to occupy the first hour, memories could sneak into their night talk easily for the rest of it. They cried, laughed and gazed silently for that night, till Julia's car arrived with the morning sun.

On her way to work that morning, Julia could not stop crying, she was not prepared to have Rose stolen from her that fast.

And to overcome her emotions, Julia started thinking about the job, she went through many ideas but just before she arrived at headquarters, she had settled on asking James to reduce her working hours.

Since the moment Julia had received Rose's text message, she felt that her feeling of satisfaction that lasted for the past couple of months had been paused, and even when things between her and Rose were resolved, her satisfaction just could not resume. Julia hated that feeling.

Once at the company, Julia went directly to Fisher's office. Only when she passed by the White office, she remembered that she had not seen Edward for quite a while then. However, she knocked at Fisher's office door, really wanting him to be available at that moment, before she would lose her will to talk to him and just leave things as they were instead. Fortunately, a moment later, Fisher answered with "come in".

Julia quietly opened the door, and said:

- Can I sit down please?
- James: Sure, Julia.

She took her seat, on the comfortable couch, and she looked at James's face for a moment. Julia, for the first time, had realized that James had too much gray hair for a man at his age. He was eating from a small bowl of noodles, with chopsticks, and looking at an old photo album, when he smiled and looked at Julia's face, and said:

- I used to work for a small real estate company. I took the train every day for three years. And every day in that train, I saw this



young man, with long hair and a blue jeans jacket, sitting alone in the same seat and holding a book with both hands, eagerly reading at a strangely fast rate. I had never talked to him, neither did he tried to. But one day, he came to me, introduced himself as Edward White, and asked me if I can get him a job. Edward had left his home as a kid, a son to a troubled man and a crazy woman, the two did not even care when they woke up finding their twelve year old son missing. His parent's did not enroll him in any school, but there was that old fella who worked at the city library, his uncle Clark White. He taught Edward how to read and write, and gave him a book every month at first, then every week, and finally every day. I could safely say that when I first talked to Edward, he was as bright as an economist from my old professors back at college days, while he only was seventeen. He was a self-taught prodigy, he could convince my boss about his financial plan and he actually managed to get a better job than mine just in a month...

Julia could not make a single comment, the timing, James, and the story itself had paralyzed Julia in her seat. She had actually forgotten about what brought her to Fisher in the first place. James proceeded:

- ...Then he suggested that we should start our own company, and I think that I have seen enough from Edward to follow him in whatever he said. Our success bloomed rapidly, I did the official work since I was the one with the management degree, and he did the ingenious part. Do you remember when he asked you about the second highest mountain in the world? He was always fascinated by that mountain. He told me that when he first read about it, K2, he realized how unpopular it is. The mere fact that

there was one mountain greater in height than K2 made it insignificant in the eyes of common people, they even put the number 2 in its name to emphasize this point. He said that this mountain is one of the deadliest summits in the world. Edward believed that if you are great in what you are, the existence of something greater than you doesn't make you of less significance. He believed that we should aspire to be ourselves, not to be someone else.

James looked back at the photo album for a moment, then raised his head, with tears in his eyes, and he proceeded:

- Four years ago, Edward was diagnosed with cancer. The doctors told him that with chemo he would survive for seven more years, and without it, if lucky, he would survive for three. According to him, he chose to live. He refused the thereby.

So heavy, Julia's body felt so heavy, as if anchors were pulling her to the ground. Her inside was crying, but she could not. Julia had never thought that Edward had managed to occupy that much of herself. She kept silent. With her hands shivering she looked at James who just would not finish his speech, she eventually could move her lips and say with a trembling voice:

- Is he Ok now? Is Edward Ok now, James?
- James, immediately: Yes! Don't be afraid Julia, he proved the doctors wrong and he's been sticking around for four years now.
- Julia, about to cry out of relief: Then where is he now, James?
- James: Yesterday he fainted at the party, we took him to the hospital. They will keep him there for a while until he gets better, Jasmine is with him now.

- Julia: Can we go to him now? Please?

James told Julia that Edward did not want anyone other than Jasmine, Charles and James to know about his disease. But he had decided to tell Julia at that point, without mentioning the reason. They moved to the hospital, and on the way, Julia could not think of anything, her mind was frozen.

In the hospital, James took Julia to a room where Charles and Jasmine were. For the first time, Jasmine had lost her glow, she was sitting motionless on a chair near the door, staring into the air, and she could not even notice James and Julia when they had arrived. Charles was normal, he smiled to Julia, enough to make Julia feel slightly comfortable.

- James: How is he now?
- Charles: Excellent, however, the doctors have kicked us out of his room for now, they said he needs to rest. They don't know Edward white doesn't need to take any rests.
- James: Good.

At that moment, Julia's mind started working, she started to recover from her shock. Her presence in the hospital, and the way Charles talked made her more relieved, and the way Jasmine looked so weak made Julia want to be stronger in that situation.

Charles turned to Julia and told her that Edward wanted to see her but he got too sleepy from the drugs, and that maybe she would get to see him when he awoke.

Two extremely long hours had passed, Fisher spent them with the doctors and other managers of the hospital, while Julia tried to comfort Jasmine who was too depressed to even talk. Finally, a nurse came to

their room and informed them that Edward had awoken, and that he would like to see them.

He was pale, and for the first time, not wearing a suit. But still, Edward apparently had fixed his hair before they arrived. Edward, although exhausted, was still what Julia had used to see, powerful.

James moved a chair and took a seat close to Edward without saying a word. While Julia stood in a distant corner from Edward near the door, Jasmine approached him smiling then said:

- You scared us Eddie!
- Edward, laughed with difficulty: That was my goal.
- Charles, standing opposite to Edward and smiling: I almost thought that you were going to die before me, wouldn't that be something?
- Edward: Oh Charlie, I will tell your grave what's something.
- James, with hidden annoyance: The new girl came to see you as well but she's too shy, say something to your guest don't be rude, Edward.
- Edward, shifted his eyes towards Julia and smiled: I don't remember hiring shy people in my company, Julia.
- Jasmine, looked at Julia: This man becomes so rude when he gets sick, don't you think Jules?

Julia, who felt like a stranger who belonged only to those people, could not prevent herself from smiling. She might have looked pleased to see Edward so relaxed, but she was devastated by the fact that she was in that situation. Everything moved too fast, less than three months had passed since John told her about that farfetched job. And now, life had put Julia in that particular place, among those people, for a reason

she found difficult to know. We sometimes just fail to understand the signs life gives us.

For about an hour, the five continued their chat. At one point, they all were laughing innocently when Julia told them about her struggles in learning the hard names as she studied geography. At another point, Charles remembered WWII and told Edward about how thankful for this hospital he should be. And for a short time, Edward asked James for a short report on how their business was going.

They all were pretending that nothing was happening, they all were in denial. Maybe James, who was so quiet, was the only exception.

When the doctor asked Edward's visitors to leave so that he would rest, Edward asked Julia to stay that day with him, and asked Jasmine to take a rest since she had been with him in the hospital since he was admitted. Julia tried to refuse this request, but James somehow made her feel that it was necessary for her to stay. James asked Julia to stay till the night, and that he will send her a car to take her home whenever she wanted to.

Once they all, except for Julia, left, Edward fell asleep while thanking Julia for staying with him, she was scared and called for the doctor, who comforted her and told her that the analgesics they gave Edward were making him sleep frequently.

Julia took a seat near Edward's room, she was not fully comfortable about the fact that she was the one to stay with Edward, but something inside her told her that she should stay. Julia had totally forgotten that she also was very sleepy, since she stayed with Rose for the whole night. Julia was sleeping on the chair when a nurse woke her up, saying that Edward wanted to see her, it was already the evening.

Edward looked a bit more tired, or probably he used a lot of effort to look good when the others were around. He asked Julia to take a seat next to him.

- Julia: How do you feel now, Edward?
- Edward: Not so good, but that's not our topic. Our topic is that I want to thank you.
- Julia: Thank me?
- Edward: Listen, Julia. When I was first diagnosed with this, I knew that my end was very near. Actually, I have never imagined myself living more than forty years. James told me that if I got ill, he wouldn't be able to run the company without my so called ingeniousness. He said that if I insist on not taking the therapy, my dream of reaching mount K2 will never come true.
- Julia: Your dream?
- Edward: Yes, for a long time, I've always admired that mountain, and I dreamt of reaching it. But when I grew up a bit, I understood that what I aspired for wasn't the mountain itself, but my idea of that mountain. I aspired for unprecedented, complete success. I wanted to reach my own maximum, not a mountain's maximum. What about you, Julia? What's your dream?
- Julia, giggled a bit: Me? Well my dream is a bit simple, I have always dreamt of having a nice restaurant.
- Edward: It's not simple, for some reason, such places stay in our memories for longer than we'd imagine.
- Julia: Indeed. So what was your response to James?
- Edward: I told him that we would reach our dream without me needing to take that destructive treatment. I had a suggestion, a unique type of an interview, where we examine people carefully,

we study every possible aspect of them, and we hire one person as an assistant of mine, and I spend my remaining years teaching him our business, we support him as much we can, and then, once James finds that this person is capable of running the company, he gives him his and my shares of the company, and we retire from our part in this dream. James is actually more important than myself to the company, and the only thing me and him worried about was that our dream should never die with us, we wanted it to stay no matter how. I really don't know how, but James was convinced with my idea, he said "I can't see myself running this place without you". We started the interviews shortly after, without putting any high level requirements, we wanted people just like me and him when we started. Too much education makes your mind restricted, you gradually lose your creativity, and start believing that the only correct way to do things is the way people before you used. We wanted someone as ignorant as we were, ignorance makes you brave sometimes. And for four years, we had an interview with someone every two weeks, but no one was good, they were all brainwashed by the books they read. We were almost desperate.

- Julia: Then I came?
- Edward: Yes.
- Julia: But why me? I mean I can confidently say that there is nothing special about me.
- Edward: Exactly, you were confident, and an ignorant, that's all we needed. But to be honest, neither I nor James know why we have chosen you after all these years.
- Julia: Maybe you were just desperate?

- Edward: No. When we first interviewed you, I told James that you were the one, but he did not want to haste it. The next day, I told him that he was right and that maybe the best solution at that point was to give our trust in those who already work in the company to keep it after we've left. But a moment later, I had a phone call, they told me that my Uncle, Clark, had died. In my last phone call with him, he, for the first time in years, knew he was talking to me, as if his entire memory had returned to him, he said to me something he used to tell me when I was little "You should become complete my son, not perfect". Julia, do you know how I and James met?
- Julia, with hesitation: He, he told me about the train.
- Edward: Well, let me tell you my part of the story then. Every day, I used the train to visit the city library in order to get a new book. And as he told you, I saw James every day as well. This young man in his late twenties, wearing the same suit and tie every day, with the same exact hair, he shaved regularly, he read the same newspaper, smiled to anyone sitting next to him, and he looked through the window each time we passed from a point where one could see the early morning sun. He was a happy man, with a ring in his finger, buying a beautiful gift wrapped in white every once and a while. One day, I stopped seeing him, I looked for him in the train, and when about a week had passed, I went to the company he worked at, I knew where he worked from the logo printed on his notebook. When they told me that he did not come to work since a week, I told them I was a friend of his from another country and I asked for his home address. When I knocked the door, he called from the inside with a weak voice "it's open". He was sitting on a chair, he lost weight, with a long



beard. I could see a man living without a soul. I introduced myself to him, and after a few hours of mere silence, he talked. James was married to this woman, Rachel. He loved her more than anything in this world, she was the reason he wanted to wake up in the morning, and to return home after work. She was his reason to live. She could not have children, but he did not care about that as long as they had each other. Rachel died in a car accident a week ago, but in fact, James was the one who died from the inside. He did not go to work, and the only one who noticed his disappearance was me. I think you know the rest of the story, Julia. For years, I kept looking at James as the man I used to see in the train, he was complete, just as my uncle wanted me to aspire. Even though Rachel had gone, but a piece of her had remained in James's heart, making him complete. As we continued our lives together, James had always been the powerful person, the one who knew what he wanted, or, the one who had got what he wanted. But I was still feeling incomplete, until I saw you, Julia.

Julia could not keep her tears, she also could not stop Edward at any point as he spoke. She had just kept listening.

- Edward: I don't know why, but the fact that my life was about to end made me forget about what my uncle kept telling me, I have just thought that I will die incomplete. But you, you have changed that. Thank you, Julia.

Edward closed his eyes again and slept calmly. Julia looked at him silently for a moment, then loudly said, crying:

- Wait! I have many questions, Edward wait don't sleep just now!

A doctor came, and asked Julia to wait for Edward outside until he woke up. Julia was sitting for about an hour when her driver came, he told her that the time for visits is over, and that she should go home. She told the driver that she would sleep on the chair for the next day, but the driver told her that it was not allowed, and that he would drive her back to the hospital in the next day.

Once Julia arrived at her apartment, she felt very sick, she kept going to the bathroom and throwing up. Finally, she could sleep because of her exhaustion.

The sound of the doorbell easily awoke Julia, she was sleeping with the previous day's clothes, and it was the driver coming to take her to see Edward. The morning sun was pale, everything was too noisy, too quick, and exhausting. Julia's heart was beating strongly since she woke up. The hospital elevator was larger than usual, Julia realized that it was her first time at a hospital. The fifth floor, she walked quickly looking for Edward's room, until she saw James standing in one of the corridors. She ran towards him and said "thank god you're out here, I've stupidly forgotten where the room was". James was crying. She turned to Edward's room, and it was empty. "Did they move Edward?" Julia said. James replied:

- He died yesterday, in his sleep, peacefully. Just the way he wished.

Things went blurry for Julia, she saw herself leaving the hospital, taking a cab and going back to her old house, crying for hours, and then she slept for a long time.

It was the doorbell that awoke Julia again. Sleeping on the couch, Julia opened her eyes slowly, and for the first few seconds, she thought

it was the driver coming to take her to see Edward. But it was James, he entered through the open door, and walked into the living room, looked at Julia and said:

- Sorry for getting in this way, the door was open.

Julia kept looking at him without talking, her hair was very messy, her eyes were red, and she slept with her shoes on.

- James: Edward, before he died, wrote me this.

And he gave a small piece of paper to Julia, it said: "I finally feel like a complete man, and it's nothing special, James, don't be so full of yourself... No, it's everything". Julia burst into tears, and finally said:

- I also wanted to thank him Fisher! He also made me complete!

For the two, the world felt too narrow, the skies too distant, the colors too pale, and the time too slow. For James, Edward's death was something he thought about every single day for the past four years. A man like him could not think that he would see something as devastating as losing Rachel, he thought that Edward had given back some of what Rachel took when she left. But still, he could eventually find peace within himself before Edward had also left. But for Julia, she felt sadness that destroyed something inside her every minute. She for some moments wished she had never applied to that job, but she then knew she found happiness in it, she belonged to those people, she became complete, and through it, Edward had probably achieved his only dream.

After the funeral, James asked Julia to come with him to headquarters. There, Edward's lawyer announced his official will. According to the lawyer:

- Mr. Edward Maximilian White has left his share of White Inc. for Mr. James Fisher, Mrs. Jasmine Fareed and Mr. Alan Charles, divided equally, after giving Miss Julia Anderson two percent of his share.

Two percent was actually around eighty millions. But Julia showed no reaction to this, she looked at James for a long time.

A week later, James and Julia met in his office.

- James: What are going to do?
- Julia: Do you believe that I am ready to run your company along with Charles and Jasmine as Edward had planned?
- James: I don't know. But as I told you before, I have seen enough from Edward to trust him in everything he said or did.
- Julia: Can you give some time to decide?
- James: Sure, Julia.

And a month had passed, James was having his typical noodles lunch in his apartment when someone knocked the door. It was Julia, she was in a simple dress, wore makeup, and held a small purse.

- Julia: I asked about you in the company, they told me that you were at home, are you sick or something, James?
- James, laughed and said: No, on the contrary, I am a retired man now, Julia. And you look beautiful by the way.
- Julia, smiled and replied: Thank you.

The two took a seat on his dining table, and James served Julia a glass of apple juice.

- James: So, have you decided?
- Julia: Yes, I guess so. I want to buy the view.

- James: What?
- Julia: The piece of land Edward bought to keep seeing the sunset every day.
- James: You can buy it, but what are you going to do with it?

Since the days Julia started rehearsing for the job interview, she always slept early and woke up early. And in the few months she spent around Edward, she grew up. The things Julia felt shattering the day Edward died were her weaknesses, or at least this was what she believed. She stopped overthinking, and her mood fluctuations became a constant state of calmness. Her wild dream of becoming as great as Edward had matured, and she became someone that sought her own maximum, not someone else's. She became complete. Julia became a maximalist.

- Julia: I want to build a restaurant there, with delicious foods. Not too expensive so that college students can handle it. I want it small and similar to the places we used to go to in the past. And I want the tables to be outside, roofed by the sky. I will call it "the View". I am just afraid that a day would come where the sun would rise and she finds no one looking at her through a train window. Or a day where the sun would set and she finds no one looking at her from downtown.

The End