

## THE INTERVIEW

BY JAMES J COLLINS

As she held her new born daughter she marveled at the intricate, little fingers and the beauty of the child. She is the image of her father, she thought. I wonder if she will have the marvelous blue eyes that he has? Was it only two years ago that we met? Who could have foreseen the results of that accident. The events of that day filled her mind.

Fifth avenue was everything she thought it would be. Well dressed people rushing by in the jostling throngs on their way to glamorous jobs in the heart of the largest city in America. Here she was fresh out of school going to the most important interview of her career. Thinking how lucky she was and how great everything was going, she smiled; two passersby scowled in return and one old man coming toward her reacted to the smile; he looked scared and obviously went over to the side to walk around her. New Yorkers sure were different from the folks in Vermont. Well, she was two hours early for the appointment but hadn't her father told her time and time again, "First impressions are critical. Don't be flustered when you go to meet new people. Make sure you are comfortable, confident, and most of all relaxed; leave enough time for unforeseen emergencies. You never know when a traffic tie up or trouble with your car will cause problems." Good advice she thought but you can't use a car here in Manhattan. Where would you put it? She was glad cousin Annie took her on the subway all weekend and showed her how to get from place to place. Now she was beginning to feel like a native. BZX corporation was the newest high tech corporation on the cutting edge of business equipment. She had successfully gone through two screening interviews at the up town offices but now they wanted to see her at corporate; this one was for the gold. Her plan was to find her way to the corporate offices with plenty of time to spare and then to go out for coffee and a doughnut at a little shop nearby to chew up the rest of the time. When she arrived she would be on time, refreshed and calm and she planned to ace the interview.

Her right foot stopped; she lurched to her left and she fell heavily to the pavement. Stunned, she shook her head as her brain tried to process a number of messages; pain in her knee. her ankle hurt and the heel of her hand was scraped. Two young girls helped her to her feet; asked her if she was all right but before she could answer, they were swallowed up in the crowd. As she leaned against the building wall, she tried to compose herself. Where is my shoe? she thought as she straightened her dress. Looking around she saw the shoe; destroyed was the word that jumped into her mind. It lay on its side, a pathetic remnant of its former glory; no heel attached; there, sticking out of a crack in the sidewalk, was the spike heel defiantly standing up to the crowds passing by. She hobbled over, picked up the remains of

the shoe, and pulled on the heel to free it from the grip of the pavement. Standing there with her heel in one hand and her shoe in the other, she started to cry.

"Are you all right sweetie? My, my look at all the blood. Was it a mugger?" The little old lady was very solicitous as she held out her hand to pat Linda on the shoulder as she pointed to Linda's knee.

Looking down she saw the blood in a small trickle running out of a small cut on her knee located in the center of a large hole in her panty hose. Like the elections she thought; the out lying districts were still reporting and the total results of the fall were still coming in.. "No not a mugger, I lost my heel and fell down. I must have cut my knee when I hit the side walk."

"Oh," she replied in a disappointed voice,"just a fall." Without further ado she removed her hand and herself, by stepping into the current of people rushing by. Strange people live in New York, she thought. She would have been willing to help if I had been mugged but the same injury from a fall is of no consequence. She must be looking for some excitement in her life to tell her friends. Just like the people who stop their car in traffic to watch the results of an accident.off to the side. They can't help, but they have to know all the details to spice up their life.

She slipped the remains of the shoe on her foot and, with the tears streaming down her face, walked, if you could call the bounce she took going up on the shoe with the heel to down on the shoe without one a walk, over to the curb to figure out her next move.

"Can I help you miss?"asked a pleasant male voice.

Turning Linda saw a smiling young man in a fashionable three piece suit; a young executive she thought; just like the Rotary members back in Vermont. Dark curly hair outlined a handsome face set off with the palest blue eyes she had ever seen. He hadn't reached twenty eight but had that calm self assuredness one attributes to a born leader. His voice was soft and modulated like a TV announcer and it offered the warmth she associated with the preacher back home."I had a little accident," she said, trying to compose herself," but I have to get to a very important interview and right now I'm a mess. I have enough time to fix everything but I don't know where any stores are in this part of town. If you could tell me where some are located you would really help me out. But first, could you give me a hand to get over there by the mail box so I'm out of the flow of people. I need to stop the blood on my knee."

His touch was gentle as he helped Linda hobble over to the large blue mail box that acted like a boulder in a stream; everything and everyone flowed around it. Taking a spotless handkerchief out of his breast pocket he handed it to Linda. "Use this to fix the cut on your knee. Hold it on the cut for a couple of seconds and the flow will stop. It doesn't look too bad; the blood makes it look worse than it really is. By the way my name is Tom what's yours?

"Linda"

"That's a pretty name," he said as she bent to doctor her knee,"what kind of store are you looking for?

"From the condition my clothes are in, I need a couple; a drug store; and a shoe store or a hardware store. I'm going to have to start with the drug store for some band aids and some panty hose; then I'll either buy new shoes or fix this one if I can get some help."

"Well there's a big drug store around the corner on the next block," Tom said as he pointed the way,"but I don't know of a shoe store close by. All the shoe repair stores moved out because they couldn't handle the rent. About six blocks down the avenue there are two big department stores, but they won't be open for another hour or more. However, there is a hardware store two blocks over on that side street next to the train entrance. They supply all the buildings and offices around here with tools and such. Maybe they can help you out."

"I appreciate your stopping to help," Linda beamed,"it's unlike the response I've gotten from the rest of the people around here. Your offer of help is more like the way people back home in Vermont react. "

"Are you from Vermont? I'm originally from Maine. How about that, we are neighbors. Well it's always nice to help out a neighbor. Are you sure you are all right now?"

"Thanks to you I'm just fine now that I know where everything is located. I really appreciate the help. I don't know how to thank you."

"Well if you see someone else in trouble try to help them out; pass the favor along. This would be a great city to live in but everybody ignores people in trouble. I guess the place is just too big. It's not like back home. Well I've got to be running off,I've got a full day ahead of me."

"I hope you won't get in any trouble because you stopped to help me."

"No problem there's nothing that can't wait when a person needs a hand. . . Take care of yourself,"was the last Linda heard as Tom waved and was swallowed up by the crowd.

"Dummy," she muttered to herself,"you didn't even get his last name or where he works. What a nice fellow. Well he's probably married with a couple of kids so you're wasting your time day dreaming. . . ah but what eyes."

Once Linda found the drug store, the pieces started to come together. She bought a new pair of panty hose and a small box of band aids. With the help of a ladies room she was able to clean out the cut, bandage it and change into the new hose. The shoe was a little more of a problem. Time was against her. By the time the store opened and she was able to get a new pair of shoes, she would be late for her interview. That would never do; not after all this effort and time; she had to come up with another solution.

Coming from a rural area has its advantages; you get used to making do. Linda went to the hardware store and spoke to the owner, a very knowledgeable man who was impressed by her questions and her independent nature. With his help, Linda purchased a new glue which allowed her to attach the heel in fifteen minutes. A borrowed hammer and two well placed small nails finished the repair. With a wave of thanks Linda was on her way with twenty minutes to spare. Thanks dad, she thought, you really prepared us for all eventualities.

Arriving at the interview on time Linda filled out all the forms that were needed at

this location and waited for her two scheduled meetings to take place.

"You've been selected from the screening process as a candidate for the administrative assistant position in the marketing department. Personally I think it's the best job in the area for a new person to start with." Joanie, for that was how she wanted to be addressed, was a friendly motherly type who claimed to have been with the company for twenty five years, had been talking for ten minutes. She and Linda hit it off because according to Joanie, Linda looked so much like her eldest daughter Kim. "Now that young mister Miller is the shining light in the marketing department; good looking and single; all the girls your age have been trying to get him interested in them. You're just going to be another bee in the hive I'm afraid."

Linda wasn't interested in the unknown but she didn't tell Joanie that; she wanted Joanie to keep talking so she could glean as much information about her potential new boss. All she wanted right now was to do well in the interview. Besides she was still thinking about that nice fellow Tom from this morning. Without him, she probably wouldn't be sitting here right now totally composed and ready for anything they could throw at her.

Standing next to a divan in the executive suite, Linda was admiring the art work on the wall when she heard the glass door behind her open. She turned and stopped in amazement; there was Tom glancing at a sheaf of papers in his hands.

"Hello again," said Linda.

"Well hello neighbor," beamed Tom, "How did you do?"

"Thanks to you everything is great. All the repairs have been made and here I am."

"Looks like everything is in great shape," he commented as he looked her up and down. "Nobody would know you had gone through a rough morning. New shoes?"

"No," she laughed, "My purse looks like a hardware store after all the things I had to buy to repair this shoe but it all worked out great. Do you work here or are you in for an interview also?"

"Guilty, I'm one of the workers in this illustrious organization. Who are you interviewing with?"

"Mister Miller for a position as administrative assistant. Do you know him?"

"Sure I know him, he's a real nice guy; heads up the marketing department, maybe I can put in a good word for you."

"That would be great. I really want to work for BZX; it's the kind of company I feel has a future and it has a great reputation for treating its people well. Do you know anything about the job?"

"Well, around here the administrative assistant is the jack of all trades; they handle every emergency or tough assignment and they are expected to make it all look easy. It's the training ground for young managers or potential managers who want to show what they can accomplish. It's also the Sargasso sea for failed careers. Many have tried this job and failed. Then the company moves them down to a job that more nicely fits their talents. You have to be aggressive and results oriented to succeed at this job. Does it sound too tough for you?"

"No it sounds just like what I want. I need a challenge and a job that stretches my ability. I've got talents that are just itching to be tested. How do I convince this mister Miller that I'm the person for this job?"

"You just did. At our meeting I never gave you my last name. I'm Tom Miller. Your interview though unscheduled started with your accident and culminated just now. You demonstrated everything I want in an assistant; you didn't panic even though you were hurt and bleeding; you set up a plan to fix the problem; you worked your plan; and you showed up here on time with no indication that anything had gone wrong this morning. This business is full of unforeseen emergencies and I need some one that I can depend upon to handle them . If you want the job I just described, you can start right now or tomorrow. What's your answer?"

"You just hired a new administrative assistant, what do you want me to do first?" Linda knew this job would work out; who knows it might take her farther than she ever hoped.

And as she smiled down at her daughter she realized that it had.

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