

### Zoltan Gets a Job

Everyone is familiar with the saying: the best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago, the second best time was nineteen years ago, the third best time was... and eventually it gets to the point where right now seems pretty good as well. Come to think of it, it's entirely possible Zoltan was remembering the quote wrong.

Zoltan was unemployed.

He needed to get a job and knew he had put it off for too long. He looked down at his cardboard box, then across the street. There were only two buildings on this street, an employment agency and a McDonald's. He knew what he needed to do and where he needed to go. He pressed the pedestrian button, crossed the street and went straight into the building.

"Could I get a McDouble and a small Coke Zero?"

"6.50."

"I do not have that much money."

The cashier looked to the cash register between them, sighed and then turned to Zoltan with minimum wage eyes.

"How much money do you have?"

"I do not have money."

The cashier ran his hands up his face and through the hair he had left. His was still, emotionless, except for the tear trailing down his face, but Zoltan was not certain whether they were new or always there.

"I'd like one job please."

"Well," the cashier handed Zoltan a flyer. "We do have one entry level position open."

*Heya Kiddo! Do you have what it takes-* The cartoon fries on the flyer said. *To become our next executive director of public health and safety?*

“Oh,” Zoltan looked down at the floor, except he could barely see it through the mud and spilt fries. “God damn it... That’s much better than I expected! How much does it pay?”

“Three dollars an hour plus unpaid overtime, but you’ll have to buy your uniform before you start, which is sixty dollars plus tax for an extra small and sixty-five dollars for-” the cashier’s scanned Zoltan again. “Actually, you’ll be fine with an extra small, but you’ll probably need to buy another one soon after eating McDonald’s every day.”

“Huh.” Zoltan tried to do the math with his fingers but lost count before starting. Fortunately, the counter was covered in enough dust and grime for him to write in it instead. Maybe he would get extra points for showing his work. After a while, he realised he would need to work somewhere between twenty to thirty hours plus whatever overtime is before he could buy a McDougle and Coke Zero.

“I mean,” Zoltan pointed at the scribbles before him. “Don’t you think I should get paid more?”

The restaurant thundered with laughter, coming from both the patrons and the staff and even coming from a few passer-by’s outside who had overheard and came in to laugh at Zoltan. Further out in the street, cars crashed as drivers descended into laughing at Zoltan and a bus, with its driver stuck in a fit of blinding laughter, crashed into the other McDonald’s one block down. It was loud enough for Zoltan to no longer be able to hear the beeping from the uncountable broken appliances and to just barely be able to hear the clogging of arteries.

But the laughter was short-lived and softly turned into sobs from the staff as the beeping returned.

“Well,” Zoltan sighed. “I guess I’ll take the job.”

“Okay, you’ll need thirty years work experience and a master’s degree in fluid mechanics and human physiology.”

“But how do I get work experience?”

“Get a job.”

“Dang, there’s probably at least room for promotion, right?”

“I guess so, but I’m already the manager so you’ll need to replace me.”

“But if you’re the manager, why do you have minimum wage eyes?”

“I make minimum wage.”

“You know what? Maybe you should get a new job.”

Back outside, Zoltan could not go back to McDonald’s because he was banned permanently.

There was only one building left on the street, the employment agency. Zoltan wasn’t sure how it could help him, but he was willing to give it a go.

“I would like one job please.”

“Sure thing, just have a seat, we’ll be with you in just a second.”

Twenty-eight hours later, Zoltan was called into the only room of the building.

“Just have a seat,” the counsellor said, though her voice was muffled as a result of her head being inside one of the drawers of her desk. “What can I do for you?”

“I would like one job please.”

“A job, that’s a challenge.” She clapped her hands together, drawing Zoltan’s attention and forcing him to realize he had not yet seen her blink. “So, tell me about yourself, do you have any work experience, education, marketable skills or any reason at all for anyone to give you a job?”

“No.”

“Wow.,” She slammed her hands down onto her desk, knocking everything off of it. “What a coincidence! Me neither, I don’t even know how to turn on a computer! Hey, I’ll tell you what, why don’t you become an employment counsellor then?”

“How does being an employment counsellor work?” Zoltan asked, but when he looked up, the previous counsellor was already gone.

Zoltan was now an unemployment councillor.

He sat down and picked the monitor up off the floor. After moving the mouse a few times, trying to wake the computer, he realised it was off. Actually, it wasn’t off. There was no computer, there had only ever been a monitor. Looking for any hints on what to do, he noticed

something peculiar stuck to the drawer the councillor's head was just in, a sticky note reading 'open if you need help.' All he found inside was a sticky note reading "you can do it."

Before Zoltan could spend more time in perplexity, the door opened and a man sat down across from him. Though he still didn't know what an employment councillor was, he managed to remember he just met one. Maybe he could just mimic her.

"What can I do for you?"

"I can't get work because immigrants are stealing all our jobs."

"Do you have any work experience, education, marketable skills or any reason for anyone to give you a job?"

"No."

Zoltan blinked three times then held his eyes closed for longer on the fourth. Unfortunately, when he opened his eyes, the client had not disappeared.

"Uh." Zoltan thought back to the previous councillor. "How about you become an unemployment advisor?"

"Okay."

Zoltan leaned back, but then jolted upright again upon realising his chair had no backrest. Now that he thought about it, someone came in and he gave them a job—, isn't that what he was supposed to do? Maybe this line of work really was for him. But before he could celebrate, the door opened again.

“I can’t find work because the Chinese—”

“Do you have any- actually, you don’t need to answer that.” Zoltan interrupted himself.

“How about you become an unemployment advisor?”

Zoltan didn’t want to jinx it, but he felt like he was getting pretty good at it. But the excitement died down as the same routine continued for the next two weeks.

“Congratulations Zoltan!” The same woman from before popped confetti into Zoltan’s face.

“You’ve successfully solved unemployment!”

“For that, I’m making you employee of the month.,” She stuck a note with Zoltan’s name on it to the wall. “Hurray!”

“Yay.” Zoltan spat out confetti.

“Also, since there are now no more unemployed people...”

“Yes?”

“You’re fired!”

“What?”

“Get the hell out.” She popped more confetti towards Zoltan which, as he now got a closer look, was actually just shreds of an employment contract Zoltan never actually signed.

Zoltan was unemployed again. Back now on the street, he tried to turn around and go back to the employment agency to get a job but could not because it was shut down since unemployment doesn't exist anymore. Since he was also banned from McDonald's, there were now no buildings left on the street.

The sun was setting and he decided to go back to his cardboard box and end the day. He accidentally went into the wrong one and then went into another. One cannot blame Zoltan for this mistake, however, the shadows of the setting sun made it difficult for Zoltan to distinguish his cardboard home amongst the thousand others on the street.