

“What are your plans?” said the girl.

Joe was standing in front of her desk. Behind her desk the wall was a floor-to-ceiling mirror, with potted rubber plants along the base. In the mirror, between the rubber plants, he could see a guy wearing a tired brown polyester suit. It wasn't rumpled or wrinkled because that's the whole point of polyester. But it wasn't crisp, either, because polyester does not have it in it to be crisp. The guy was standing there among the plants with this suit wilting on his shoulders. If a guy like that came up to you and tried to sell a vacuum cleaner you might feel sorry for him and offer him a piece of pumpkin pie, but you would not buy a vacuum cleaner. If a guy like that came up to you and made an innovative suggestion for rewarding the top earners in your company you would reject it out of hand. He was just the kind of guy you'd *expect* to come up with the kind of dirty idea that was totally inappropriate to your company.

“I'm going to buy a new suit.”

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THE NUMBERS GAME