

Job Interview

By Hunter Ellis

“How do you do Mr. Sanders? My name is Nicholas Cameron.” Nic holds out his hand towards Mr. Sanders for the assumed handshake that follows first-time introductions.

“It is a pleasure to meet you, Nicholas,” says Mr. Sanders, “I’ve heard a lot about you. My daughter tells me that you are more than qualified for the position.”

“I’d like to think so. You must be well-aware that we will be finishing up at UC Berkeley this spring,” says Nic.

Without looking up Mr. Sanders answers, “Yeah.” He opens his cigarette case and begins to thumb through the remaining cigarettes contained within. “Do you mind if I smoke during the interview, Nic?”

“Do whatever you like, Sir.”

“Okay, can I get you anything before we start? I can have my secretary bring in a coffee or a bagel?” says Mr. Sanders.

“I’m alright. I had a cup of coffee before I left my apartment.”

“Alright, Nic, let’s get started.” Mr. Sanders takes a puff from his cigarette before asking his next question. “So Nic, tell me about your time at Berkeley. What clubs did you participate in?” He pauses. “What did you do during your free time?”

“Well, Mr. Sanders, may I call you ‘Red?’”

“I would prefer if you called me Mr. Sanders, Nic.”

Nic takes a moment to think about the question while Mr. Sanders takes a sip of coffee from a nearby mug. “I was a member of the Golden Bears club golf team and I joined the jazz band as a trumpeter. I enjoy playing either whenever I can find the time.”

“Do you not have much free time these days?”

“I am finding that I have less and less. Graduation is drawing near and everything is happening so quickly. I’ve got to get a job to support myself.”

“Have you had any classes in the law school at Berkeley?” says Mr. Sanders.

“No, Sir. I majored in social psychology, but I am always up for a challenge. Debra tells me that I have what it takes to be a great lawyer like you.”

“I see. Well tell me about your interests you in becoming a lawyer. Why and how did that come about?” says Mr. Sanders.

“I think it was what Debra said to me a couple months ago, ‘My dad has always been able to provide for us. He is well-respected in our community. He always seems to do what he is supposed to.’ That’s what I want for her.” Nic leans back in his chair.

“So you plan to marry my daughter, Nic? Is this what this is all about?”

“I guess.”

“Well, what is it?”

“Yes, Mr. Sanders. Can we keep the conversation on this job interview for the moment.”

“What does your father do, Nic?”

“He’s a carpenter.”

“And what about your relatives? Did any of them go to Berkeley?”

“No, Sir, there are no Berkeley alumni in my family.”

Mr. Sanders takes a moment to inhale from his cigarette. “If you don’t mind me asking how did you afford Berkeley?”

“I worked some odd jobs in high school and made the right connections. I think that same skill set would greatly benefit your law firm, Mr. Sanders.”

“Exactly what did you do in high school to earn the kind of money?”

“It’s something I’m not too proud of. At night after I got off work at the local grocer I would go to jazz clubs and peddle cocaine. I was good. You can check my record. I’m clean – I never got caught by any narcs, Sir.”

“So, you are clean presently, I presume? I mean you aren’t selling or using?” says Mr. Sanders.

“No. No, Sir. I’m through with selling. Also, I never used, personally.”

“Did Donna use?” Mr. Sanders’ nostrils flare. The hand that contains his still-lit cigarette winces slightly.

“Donna has been on and off codeine for a year and a half now. I met your daughter during last October at a friend’s house party.”

“And?”

“Trust me it wasn’t my doing. I have been trying to get her to stop.”

“Continue your story, Mr. Cameron.”

“Well, a friend of mine told me about this girl he sold opiates who was really screwed up. She was going to be at the party. He wanted to introduce me to her and I saw past her addiction. We connected.” Nic returns eye contact with Mr. Sanders. “Trust me. I never sold to Donna. Remember, my thing was coke, not opiates.”

Mr. Sanders appears visibly unnerved. “Why the fuck did you not contact me if you thought her drug use was getting serious? Now I’m supposed to trust you and give you a job?”

“Did I not just tell you that your daughter has been using since before I knew her? It’s not like I really knew you or anything. You seem like such a busy man.” Nic stares at the carpet next to his foot.

“You are a punk. No, I take that back – you are a goddamned worthless piece of shit.”

“Mr. Sanders.” Nic lifts his head up and returns the cold stare of his new adversary.

“So how did it all begin? Donna’s drug use that is,” says Mr. Sanders.

“She told me that she remembered going to a house party of some high school friend in Vallejo after freshman year. She had to call her best friend to come pick her up. He said that she just watched television for over four hours without moving.” Mr. Sanders takes a long puff of his nearly finished cigarette. “Apparently, he told her that she would go minutes between blinking.”

“This is the first that I have heard of this,” says Mr. Sanders.

“When I met Donna she already had a thing for mushrooms. She would buy a few for the weekend and stay strung out for the better part of Friday and Saturday. She told me that she was only doing mushrooms until I confronted her about the codeine use.”

“I don’t know what to say, Nic.” Mr. Sanders takes another sip from his coffee. “This is all news to me.”

“Yeah, I guess.” Nic begins to shift in his chair as if to signify his understanding that his judgment was determined many minutes before. “Well, it was great meeting you, Mr. Sanders. I wish the best for your law firm and all.”

“Wait a moment, Nic,” says Mr. Sanders, “What you did here today. That took some guts. You could have easily have lied to me. Made it all up to shield Donna. And I guess you thought I long feigned ignorance of my daughter when in reality I knew nothing of the matter.”

“Yeah,” says Nic, his voice trailing off.

“So you really care for my daughter despite her flaws?”

“She’s so smart. I know she can move past her drug problems. Seriously, check my record. I have,” Nic says.

Mr. Sanders takes a moment to think. He buzzes his secretary to come to his office door.

“I just might have a position open if you are interested. Would you be?”

“Absolutely.”

“Great. I’ll have my secretary contact you in the coming days about the position.”

“Sounds good. Take it easy, Mr. Sanders,” says Nic as he extends his hand. “I’ll see you soon.”