

Chapter 1

The monotonous hum of fans and the buzz of cheap fluorescent lights whirred in my ears as I nervously sat in a plastic chair in the waiting room. Sweat ran down my brow as a man who seemed to be in a foul mood impatiently yelled "Next!", and the man next to me scrambled to his feet, hastily straightening his tie. Taking a deep breath, I glanced down at my watch. I'd only been sitting there for about 15 minutes, although it seemed like I'd already waited several hours. The crappy chair creaked under my weight as I uncomfortably shifted about; its sound penetrated through the awkward, humdrum silence that hung over the gloomy lobby. Just as I took out my handkerchief to mop my forehead, the man who'd gotten up just a couple minutes ago walked back into the lobby, his shoulders slumped as he trudged out of the building. "Next!" The man's shrill voice rang in my ears as I quickly rose to my feet, following him back into the industrial hallways of the office space. He led me into a bare bones room with little aside from a desk, two chairs, and several shabby decorations that did little to perk up the depressing place. "So." He said, leaning back in his rolling chair as I took my seat. "What makes you want to work here at LifeTek Medical Supplies?" I swallowed, preparing the response I'd already rehearsed in my head dozens of times. "I've worked in both sales and customer service at several companies, and I believe the skills I have make me the perfect candidate for this job." I said, moving my hands around in my pockets as I tried not to fidget too much. My interviewer didn't seem too impressed, looking down at a sheet of paper lying on his desk. "Uh huh. And how many previous positions have you held, and how long have you held them?" "I've been employed at two other companies, having both the positions for about a year each." I replied, trying to read his expression. His eyes seemed to narrow, though he said nothing. "And for our last question, what relevant skills do you have that qualify you to work here?" "I understand how to work with both customers and co-workers in a timely and effective manner, as well as having an advanced knowledge of the sales process. I'd like to call myself a people person, and I pride myself on being able to empathize with the problems people have in a variety of ways." "Alright then." The man said, standing up from his desk. "Write down your email here, and we'll reach out for a second interview if we choose to move forward." I quickly jotted down my email address and stood up, briskly walking out of the office. As I walked out onto the street and exhaled, I couldn't help but take a quick glance back over my shoulder. The line of nervous looking men in suits that were sitting in a long line, waiting for their interview did not help my confidence. Even the sky seemed on edge, as the sun seemed to furiously beat down on the city streets while portentous storm clouds approached from over the tops of the skyscrapers. I opened the driver's side door in my car, sitting down while turning the keys in the ignition. The engine sputtered, like it too was sad in some unknown way. Backing out, I turned onto the main street, allowing the mob of traffic to surround my car. The sound of curses and people blowing their horns angrily attacked my ears, like everyone else was also having a bad day. After a grueling drive back to my apartment, rain had already begun to fall, soaking my clothes as I ran towards the complexes' main entrance. "Afternoon, Horace." The landlord said, not even bothering to look up from his magazine. "Afternoon." I replied, not even trying to mask the tiredness in my voice. I walked towards the elevator and pushed its dimly illuminated button, looking at my reflection in its grimy, metal doors. It was nearly impossible to see. After several minutes, the doors finally groaned open, allowing me to step inside its filthy interior. Only 4 buttons were on the walls- Basement, 1, 2, and 3. I pushed 3, and the door closed with the

unmistakable screech of old machinery. As the cab began its slow ascent into the heights of the old building, I sat down on the shaggily carpeted bench, letting out a deep sigh. The grinding of the metal elevator began to fade from my ears, as I felt my mind begin to wander. And just as I felt the inky black of sleep tugging at my eyes, the elevator came to an abrupt, grinding stop. I looked up, rubbing my eyes as I looked around. The lights flickered once, twice, and, with a startling pop, fizzled out, leaving me in complete darkness. "For the love of Christ..." I muttered, getting up from the bench and placing both my hands on one wall. As I began to move them around, attempting to locate the emergency phone, an ear-ripping shriek tore through the stale air, like one of the cables holding the elevator had begun to rapidly fray. "Dammit, dammit, dammit!" I yelled, frantically trying to find the emergency phone as the squeal of deteriorating metal screamed in my ears. Finally, one of my hands landed on a dotted grate near the floor, and a singular button, which I pressed as fast as my hand would move. Static. Crackling, useless static filled the room. The creaking was growing louder, and louder, and louder. "Hello! Hello?!" I yelled into the phone's grate, as tears began to well up in my eyes. With a final snap, the elevator cab suddenly began to plummet towards what I assumed was a painful death. I dashed into the corner, curling up as best I could in the few short seconds I knew I had until the cab slammed into whatever sat at the bottom of its shaft. And just like that, I felt a bone shattering crash that launched me into the metal ceiling, then back down into the floor with alarming speed.

Chapter 2

A resounding clang rang in my ears, as I groggily opened my eyes, taking in the scene that lay before me. There was blood on the shag carpet and spattered on walls, and a disturbing amount of it. My vision was spinning, spanning from somewhat clear to blurry and red several times a second. Crawling over to one of the walls, I propped myself up, and examined my body. Gashes and contusions covered my hands, as if somebody threw me into a paper shredder. The faint sound of sirens and the stomp of bodies rushing towards me was muffled by the splitting pain in my head, making it difficult to even think. The sound of footsteps was becoming louder and louder, until, finally, the mangled cab's doors began to pry open. Despite its gut wrenching volume, my eyelids began to fail me, and I began to feel the tug of unconsciousness firmly grasp me. I felt my head lull backwards as my blackness engulfed me, and everything faded into a cacophony of silence.

An irritating, loud beep awoke me, followed by a never ending stream of similar beeps. My eyes would not open, miring themselves shut despite my mind being very much active. I