

This is an excerpt from *Imaginary Year*, a work of serial fiction by Jeremy P. Bushnell. Visit the *Imaginary Year* website (<http://www.ImaginaryYear.com>) on Mondays and Fridays for new updates.

63 / HUMAN RESOURCES

Jakob scans over her resume, taking in the basic facts. —So, he says, —you graduated in 2004, with a degree in Philosophy—?

—That’s right, says Anne, the woman sitting on the other side of his desk. She’s blond, pretty but with an edginess somewhere: her face gives him the vague impression that it would look more natural contorted into a snarl. It reminds him, somehow, of Freya.

—If you don’t mind my asking, he says, —what made you decide to seek a job in Human Resources? It seems like—

—A far cry from Philosophy? Anne says.

—Well, Jakob says, —not to put too fine a point on it, but—

She nods, somewhat peremptorily, as though she’s already gotten this question a bunch. —I guess the basic answer is that I was interested in Philosophy because I’m interested in *people*—I like *thinking about how people think*. And for a while studying Philosophy was really great for that—but I guess when I got my degree I basically had this choice, you know—go on to grad school and do more philosophy or—do something else. And I sort of got the

feeling that the people who did well in grad school were people who were more interested in *books* than in *people*. So—

—So you decided—something else, Jakob says.

—Basically, Anne says.

—I get that, Jakob says. —That was kind of how I ended up here, too. I think that's true of a lot of people, actually—I don't think there's too many people who grow up thinking *you know what I really want to do with my life?* *Human Resources*.

She gives him a wry smile in response. *She's attractive*, he notes, not for the first time. But he doesn't permit himself to dwell on that, he can't be falling into reverie in the middle of an interview. —So, he manages, —between 2004 and now—for employment, you—?

—You know, she says, kind of waving at the resume in his hand. —Normal post-college odd jobs. For the last six months I worked at a record shop.

—Really, Jakob says. He looks down at the resume and sure enough it's listed there, Automatic Records, a place he's heard of (probably through Freya) but never been to. —My girlfriend—ex-girlfriend—is the manager of a record shop, he says.

—Oh yeah? says Anne.

—Yeah, Jakob says. —This place Tympanum; you know it?

—Yeah, sure, says Anne. She gives him a look that seems to something like a re-assessment.

—That's a good store, she says.

Jakob nods, non-committal.

—I actually applied there, Anne admits. —They never called me back.

—I'm sure it was nothing personal, Jakob says.

—Let's hope not, says Anne.

This one, Jakob thinks. This is the person I'm going to hire. She's easy to talk to, she's funny, she's attractive—and it's there that some warning-beam in his head gets tripped, and some alarm goes off, he finds himself thinking wait a second; you can't do this; you can't hire someone just because you think she's hot, because you think maybe you can put the moves on her, there's something fucked up about that, plus she's what—?? And yet he can't shake the feeling that the part of his brain that's making the decision has already made it.

—So, um, he says. —In terms of what you think you could bring to the company—