

Things weren't working out quite as Lazlo had expected. He'd been in London for six months now and all his early optimism had almost disappeared. None of the galleries were interested in his paintings and he was tired of carrying the same pictures from one buyer to the next. The response was always the same: a shake of the head, some comment about portraits not being fashionable these days and a suggestion to try somewhere else, usually somewhere he had already tried. He was beginning to lose hope and was thinking of going back home. It would be difficult, and he would have to face his parents saying "I told you so", but at least he could find a steady job.

He was sitting on a bench in a park one day considering this when he noticed a newspaper beside him. He glanced at it and the word "artist" caught his eye. He picked the paper up and read more closely. It was a job advertisement. An advertising company was looking for a portrait artist to work on a new advertising campaign. Lazlo ripped the advertisement out of the paper and started to look for a public phone. "I won't be able to choose my subjects," Lazlo thought to himself, "but at least I'll be able to pay the rent, and that's a bit more important right now." He spotted a phone, put a few coins in and dialled. After a few moments, a female voice answered. Lazlo explained who he was and that he was applying for the job. They arranged for him to go to their office the next day with some of his work. He went home excited and nervous.

That night, he chose three paintings from the dozens in his flat that he thought showed what he was capable of. He selected a self-portrait he had done a few years before; he thought it showed a thoughtful side to his work. He also chose a portrait of an old man that he had met in a cafe. It was simple but clear, and Lazlo thought that maybe that was the style they would want for an advertising campaign. The third one was a painting of his mother. It had always seemed to him that that picture captured a lot of feeling that was difficult to put into words. A lot of people thought it was the best portrait he had ever done, and Lazlo knew that if anything was going to impress them, that painting would.

The next morning, he woke early and got ready. He rolled the pictures up, placed them in a large tube so that they wouldn't get damaged and set off towards the bus stop. There was a lot of traffic, but he arrived on time. When he got to the office, he saw that another four people were waiting, each with a large tube of paintings just like his. The secretary asked him to take a seat.

Lazlo sat and waited for his name to be called. He knew that a lot depended on the next half an hour or so. With a job, he could begin to sort out his life, maybe doing his art in his spare time. He knew he would never completely give up on his dream, but he had also come to realise that he had to live in the real world, and talent doesn't pay bills. Without a job, he wouldn't survive the month; he had just about enough for the ticket home. The secretary picked up the phone and had a short, quiet conversation. She turned to Lazlo.

"You can go in now," she said, smiling.

1. When Lazlo first arrives in London, he _____.
 - A. immediately loses his job.
 - B. is confident of success.
 - C. doesn't expect to stay for six months.
 - D. knows that he will have to work hard.
2. The people at the art galleries Lazlo visits _____.
 - A. are very impressed by his work.
 - B. often give him helpful advice.
 - C. ask him to come back with different paintings.
 - D. tell him that his work is old-fashioned.
3. It seems that Lazlo's parents _____.
 - A. disapprove of his choice of career.
 - B. forced Lazlo into becoming an artist.
 - C. will be happy to welcome him home.
 - D. can help him to achieve his ambitions.
4. Lazlo thinks the job will _____.
 - A. give him more artistic freedom.
 - B. provide him with a salary.
 - C. mean that he has to move house.
 - D. stop him from studying.
5. Lazlo chooses to take the portrait of his mother because _____.
 - A. it was the third one he thought of.
 - B. it was used in an advertisement before.
 - C. the people at the company ask to see it.
 - D. it expresses emotion well.
6. At the office, Lazlo realises that _____.
 - A. his paintings are the same as everyone else's.
 - B. he isn't the only person interested in the job.
 - C. he should have chosen different paintings.
 - D. he has come at the wrong time.

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7. One of the things Lazlo's experience has taught him is that _____
- A. he needs money to live.
 - B. art is more important than money.
 - C. following your dream is a waste of time.
 - D. he has no artistic talent.



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Sean had never felt so nervous before in his life. Sitting alone outside the closed door, he suddenly realised he was physically shaking. "This is ridiculous," he thought to himself. "Pull yourself together. You've got to stay calm."

This was easier said than done, and when a middle-aged woman in a smart business suit opened the door and asked, "Sean Perkins?", there was a definite tremor of fear and weakness in his voice as he answered that that was indeed him.

"Hello, I'm Katie Sutherland. Do come in."

Sean was invited into a comfortable and spacious office. The walk from the door to the chair he was to sit on seemed to last a lifetime, and Sean was terrified with each step that he'd suddenly trip or stumble. How could something so simple as walking and sitting down be so difficult?

As the interview progressed, however, Sean slowly began to relax. If he'd had time to think about it, he would have realised he was answering the questions put to him quite well. He was giving clear, full answers without saying too much or anything irrelevant. Then came a question which, at first, he was uncertain how to answer.

"So, tell me, why do you want to leave your current job?"

Sean hesitated. Should he tell her the truth? This was, of course, that he didn't feel respected. His boss, Air Dominguez, took him for granted, overworked him, was often rude, patronising and unpleasant and made him dread going in to work each morning. Sean decided a more positive response was called for.

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"Well," he said, "I've been with Brookes Brothers for over four years now, and although I've learned a lot there, and I'm very grateful for the opportunities they've given me, I think it's time for some new challenges, and this seems the ideal company to provide them. From what I've seen, Fisher & Fisher is an extremely dynamic company, and I'd like to be a part of that. I really think I could help contribute to the company's future success."

Sean was pleased with his answer and knew he'd been right not to criticise his current employer. From Katie Sutherland's expression, it seemed she was satisfied with his answer too. Her next question prompted Sean to smile. "What would you say were your biggest weaknesses, Sean?"

He'd thought he might be asked this, and so had already rehearsed an answer. He didn't want it to sound rehearsed, though, so he purposefully hesitated slightly before answering. "That's a tricky question, isn't it?" he said. "In fact, I think we both know it's a bit of a trick question too, because if I give a list of serious weaknesses, you won't think I'm suitable for the job, and if I say I haven't got any, you'll think I'm arrogant and over-confident. So, in answer to your question, I'd have to say that one of my biggest weaknesses is not being able to talk about myself in too negative a light, even when I know I'm not perfect. For any other weaknesses I've got, you might be better off asking my current employer, Mr Dominguez."

His answer was a risk, but he knew that if he said it in a fairly light-hearted manner, he could probably get away with it. From Katie's response, it was clear that he had. "Yes," she said, "it is a bit of a silly question, isn't it? You'd be amazed what some people say when I ask it, though. It can tell me a lot. I'm glad you didn't fall into that trap."

This was the first clearly positive comment that Katie had made on his interview so far, and filled Sean both with joy and hope. Perhaps he really was in with a chance of getting this job. Perhaps he would be able to put Mr Dominguez and Brookes Brothers behind him once and for all.

1. Waiting outside for the interview, Sean realises that _____.
 - A. his shaking must look totally ridiculous.
 - B. staying calm is not difficult to do.
 - C. he has to take control of his emotions.
 - D. it's the first time he's ever been nervous.
2. When Sean enters the office, he _____.
 - A. wishes the chair he has to sit on is nearer the door.
 - B. takes too long to walk from the door to the chair.

- C. almost trips over the chair he is supposed to sit on.
D. tries to get to the chair without doing anything foolish.
3. The answers Scan gives to the questions he is asked _____
A. do not contain unnecessary information.
B. show he knows he is doing quite well.
C. are a little longer than they should be.
D. show he is often unsure what to say.
4. Scan feels that the question about why he wants to leave his current job _____
A. deserves a totally truthful answer.
B. should not be answered in a negative way.
C. was not asked in a respectful way.
D. is an impossible question to answer.
5. Scan's answer to the question about why he wants to leave his current job implies that _____
A. he is not at all happy with the way he is treated at Brookes Brothers.
B. Fisher & Fisher will be more successful in the future than Brookes Brothers.
C. both he and Fisher & Fisher could benefit from him joining the company.
D. the work at Fisher & Fisher will be much more difficult than his current work.
6. Scan is careful to hide from Katie Sutherland the fact that he _____
A. has practised giving an answer.
B. has a lot of serious weaknesses.
C. thinks he doesn't have any weaknesses.
D. knows she is trying to trick him.
7. Katie suggests that she asks the "silly question" because _____
A. she's always amazed by the answers she gets.
B. she wants the people answering to feel trapped.
C. people usually give long answers to that question.
D. the answers people give can reveal things about them.



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The ticket inspector handed the ticket back to Dora with a nod of his head and continued on his way down the train. He was a handsome young man, Dora thought, and he reminded her a little of her husband when he had been the same age. She smiled a little at the thought as she watched the countryside roll past the window of the train. She was now eighty-four and although she regularly forgot things that other people found so easy to remember, like where she had put her glasses, that March day when she and Ralph had got married stood out clearly in her mind. They hadn't known each other long, and relatives had tried to advise Dora against it, but they had both known that it was the right thing to do. They quickly found a house to buy and the wedding was organised in a couple of days. Dora was grateful for the forty happy years they had had together.

The sound of someone sniffing brought Dora's attention back to her surroundings. Sitting opposite her in the carriage was a woman, who Dora estimated to be in her early thirties. She looked up at Dora, who realised that the woman would welcome conversation. Dora pulled a tissue from her bag and passed it over.

"What's his name?" Dora asked with a friendly smile. The woman wiped her eyes with the tissue.

"Michael. He's just got a new job ..." the woman began, then laughed a little. "How did you know?"

"I wasn't always old, you know," Dora said and looked more closely at the woman. She was smartly dressed, although her clothes weren't new. Clearly she had had money in the past but now couldn't afford luxuries. Dora noticed that she had brought her own sandwiches on the journey, rather than spend money on the train. She had the air of someone who is educated but who has never had much luck at turning that education into money. Dora knew what it was like to keep up appearances on a small income and her heart went out to her fellow traveller.

"Tell me about it," she said. For the next half an hour, the woman,

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whose name turned out to be Sandra, told her story. Dora listened. The details of the relationship escaped her and Sandra mentioned people without explaining who they were, but Dora knew it wasn't important. Sandra wasn't looking for solutions from Dora. The only thing that mattered was that she gave Sandra a shoulder to cry on and a sympathetic ear. She nodded in all the right places and by the time the train pulled in at the next station, Sandra seemed a lot happier. Sandra looked up and cried, "Oh, this is my stop!" She grabbed her bags, thanked Dora for listening and hurried off the train.

Dora sat back and closed her eyes. A feeling of sadness came over her for a moment. Listening to Sandra talk had been what she imagined being a grandmother was like. It would have been nice to have had children and watch their children grow up. Still, it wasn't to be and she and Ralph had spent many happy years travelling the world. She opened her eyes and looked out onto the platform as the train pulled away. Sandra was looking up at the train window and waving at her. Dora waved back and smiled, watching over her shoulder as the train station got smaller and smaller. She turned back to see a teenage girl standing beside her seat. She had a suitcase in one hand and the make-up around her eyes had run as if she had been crying. She looked exhausted.

"Excuse me," she said in a quiet voice. "Is anyone sitting here?" She pointed to the seat where Sandra had been sitting.

"No, my dear. Sit down," said Dora, and began to reach into her bag for a tissue. It's going to be one of those days, she thought to herself.

1. Dora has problems remembering _____.
 - A. how long she was married to Ralph.
 - B. simple, everyday things.
 - C. where her husband had gone.
 - D. what her wedding day was like.
2. Before getting married, Dora and her husband _____.
 - A. waited until they knew each other well.
 - B. asked their families for advice.
 - C. arranged everything very carefully,
 - D. made sure they had somewhere to live.
3. Dora thinks the young woman _____.
 - A. would like to chat.
 - B. wants to ask her for a tissue.
 - C. looks younger than she really is.
 - D. is looking at her in a strange way.

4. The young woman seems to _____.
A. be poorer than she once was.
B. like only home-made food.
C. have problems finding a job.
D. be careless about her clothes.
5. While Sandra talks about her life, Dora _____.
A. gives her some useful advice.
B. tries to focus on the important details.
C. asks her to explain things more clearly.
D. acts as if she understands everything.
6. When Sandra leaves, Dora feels unhappy for a moment because she _____.
A. misses her husband.
B. never had children.
C. feels sorry for Sandra.
D. doesn't see her grandchildren often.
7. Dora thinks it's going to be "one of those days" because _____.
A. she would prefer the girl to sit somewhere else.
B. she can't find the tissues in her bag.
C. the girl seems to have the same problems as Sandra.
D. the girl doesn't realise that Dora is exhausted.

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