

The Job Interview

By Vip Malixi

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Sometimes all it takes is a bit of courage. A bit of fortitude. Some chutzpah. And your dreams will come true. That's what Aldy Bennhof told himself as he sprinted up the steps for his first job interview.

The firm of Schwartz & Mollie were looking for a top stock analyst, those with years on the job and with a great track record. Aldy had neither. But he gave the swimsuit-model-like receptionist his application form anyway and she smiled at his bushy hair, unkempt no matter how thoroughly he combed it that morning and made him sit on a plush burgundy leather couch along with two other applicants. Aldy smiled at his two competitors. He said a muted "Hi!" and the two, a jock in his thirties wearing a brown suit, and a woman in her forties wearing Armani just nodded at him. Their quick glance at his youthful appearance revealing their lack of confidence in his chances. Most stock analysts take at least five years to get the hang of the job and another five years to be any good. Aldy looked like he just got out of college—which he did. But he had something going for him which he knew very few could trump.

"Mr. Bennhof?" the receptionist who looked like she could be on the cover of FHM said, "Mr. Rizor will see you now."

Aldy smiled again at his two competitors, got up with a bounce and nearly crashed into Mr. Rizor's office door before being able to turn the knob and entering. Mr. Rizor was behind his desk and had on a worried expression. He asked Aldy to sit down on one of the stainless steel cushioned seats that flanked his huge mahogany work table.

Mr. Rizor, I'm Aldy Bennhof," Aldy said, putting out his hand. Mr. Rizor shook it without a change in expression.

"Have a seat," he gestured to the cold, shiny chairs."Mr. Bennhof," Mr. Rizor said, looking at the tidy, typewritten single page that was Aldy's resume, "We're looking for a veteran stock analyst,

someone who'll be guiding our multi-million dollar funds. Frankly, I don't see that kind of experience in your resume."

Aldy nodded. "I know. At first impression, that may seem to be the case. But if you need someone who'll get the best returns for your investments, then I'm the perfect person for the job."

Mr. Rizor raised his eyebrows lazily, "Oh, and why would that be?"

Aldy: "Because I can see the future."

Mr. Rizor's face contorted in various facial expressions, as if his eyebrows, nose and cheeks were performing a circus feat. "Oh?" he asked.

Aldy: "Well, not everything. Just stocks. If I concentrate hard enough on a stock, I can see what price it'll be the next day. I started out being able to see about a minute ahead, but with practice, I've been able to extend it to almost a day, 23 hours actually."

Mr. Rizor glanced at his multi-buttoned office phone, trying to remember if it had a speed button to call security or if he had to ask the receptionist to do so. He straightened up in his armchair and said, "But Mr. Bennhof, if that were the case, what are you doing here? Why are you applying for a job? If you are able to do what you say you can, wouldn't you be rich?"

Aldy smiled and nodded. "Good question, Mr. Rizor. You see, I did try. But after a couple of weeks since I...I gained this talent, I concluded I couldn't do it for myself. The several times I tried, I ended up with a string of severe bad luck—and I'm talking awful luck, Mr. Rizor, the kind you wouldn't want on anyone's head."

"Like?" Mr. Rizor asked. The smile left Aldy's face.

"I don't want to get into it, Mr. Rizor. Just trust me when I say, no one would want to experience what I had to go through."

Mr. Rizor paused and didn't know what to say next. Aldy seemed prepared for this and said, "I know this is all strange. But it's pretty easy to straighten out. What if I give you some stock tips—let's say for ten companies that I know will change in the next hour? I'll give you their future stock prices. Then in an hour's time, if I'm right on each one of them, you give me the job?"

Mr. Rizor shook his head. "But if, as you say, you can't, um, use this talent of yours for personal gain, what makes working here any different?"

It was Aldy's turn to look worried. "Well," Aldy said, taking too long to continue, "I've researched your firm, and I know that you handle a lot of retirement funds—teachers' retirement, firemen's retirement, as well as some charities that offer scholarships to inner-city children, saving the environment, research for cancer and AIDS cures. Well, I can only use my talent if the client belong to this group—you know, the kind that does some good for society. I can't use it for rich people or for-profit companies."

Aldy looked at Mr. Rizor's face when he said this and he grimaced as he felt this might be a deal breaker.

"But," Aldy stood up, "Please don't make a decision until you see the results of my work." He went over to Mr. Rizor's desk, taking a pen from his inner-suit pocket, he took one of Mr. Rizor's Post-It pads and scribbled on it several stock names and prices beside them. "These will be the prices of these stocks in an hour's time. If you check Bloomberg now, you'll note that these aren't the current prices. But they will be in one hour," Aldy said, continuing to scribble. "It's now 10:45 a.m. I can come back at 11:45 and then you can decide whether to hire me or not."

Mr. Rizor stood up shaking his head. "I don't know, Mr. Bennhof. This is highly irregular. I don't think..."

Aldy: "But please, just give it a chance. I've already came up with the predictions. You have a verifiable fact to guide your decision."

"Still," Mr. Rizor said, shaking his head. "I'm sorry son, we just don't hire fortune tellers. We're looking for analysts. I'm afraid this is not going to work for us." Mr. Rizor put his hand on Aldy's back and softly but firmly guided him to the door. "I still have a few interviews to finish, thank you for your time."

The door closed behind Aldy and he saw that the receptionist, who looked like she could win "America's Next Top Model," get buzzed, answered the phone and stood up to go toward him.

“Mr. Bennhof, let me help you to the elevator.” And she gently held on to Aldy’s forearm and led him to the lift.

“I’m okay, I can leave on my own,” Aldy said with a grating sound. The other two who were applying for the stock analyst position, still sitting on the burgundy couch, looked over at Aldy and subtly shook their heads.

The receptionist’s desk phone buzzed again. As the elevator door closed, she went and answered it immediately. “Yes, Mr. Rizor. He’s gone. Shall I send the next applicant in?”

In his office, Mr. Rizor glanced at the single sheet of Post-It that Aldy had left. “No, give a minute. I’ll buzz you when I’m ready.”

“Very good, sir,” the receptionist said and you could hear a “click” on Mr. Rizor’s phone.

Mr. Rizor got the Post-It and looked over the stocks and numbers. He turned to his laptop which was at a side-table and tapped in the stock symbols and came up with the current prices. He looked at the yellow note paper again. Then he lifted the phone handset, pushed a few buttons and said, “Hello, Sid? Yeah, George Rizor here. Yeah, wife’s fine, thanks. Listen, I have a couple of stock picks here. Could you get me a hundred shares for each one? Yeah, just a hundred. And I’m thinking of selling in an hour’s time. Will that be a problem? No, I’m just testing a theory I have. No...no, it’s nothing. Just do the buy now and sell at whatever price these stocks have at 11:45 a.m.? Okay, Sid. Thanks. And please don’t mention this to anyone. Okay, I’ll tell Helen you said ‘hi’.”

Mr. Rizor then pushed the receptionist call button. “Okay, send the next applicant in.”

At 11:47 a.m., Mr. Rizor closed the door on his last interview for the day and hurriedly went back to his desk. He opened his top desk drawer, got out Aldy’s yellow note and swiveled his chair toward his laptop. One by one, he compared the stock prices. His eyes opened wide. “I can’t believe it.” He grabbed the calculator on his desk and started tapping. “I just earned \$3,852 bucks in an hour’s time!”

He got on the phone with the receptionist. “Yeah, could you call up Mr. Bennhof on his mobile?”

There was a long pause as Mr. Rizor listened to the receptionist. "What's that? Right outside our building? A speeding taxi? Mr. Bennhof is dead?!"

Mr. Rizor put the phone down. His face was drained of blood. His shoulder's heaved up and down as he started hyperventilating. He looked at the yellow note. He hadn't noticed it before, but there was some writing behind it, much smaller and lighter than how the stock names and numbers were written. The fine print said, "Please don't use these predictions for personal gain." Sweat rivulets formed on his forehead. With a hand knotted with veins, he crumpled his tie and shirt as he felt a jabbing pain on the left side of his chest. His mouth opened, trying to suck in air but he could hardly breathe. His eyes bursting out of their sockets, he tried to grab for the phone but fell to the side of his chair, bumped his forehead on the side table, and slumped down to the ground.