

I walked into a private investigators office and applied for a job. Recorded the conversation, transcribed the conversation cutting each letter from the newspaper employment ads and gluing them to the folder which was sent back to the investigators office.

Straightened my hair and made my way up to suite 201.

How you doing? I greeted a man standing in a sleeveless sweater scanning my body for suspicious bulges.

Can I help you?

Yes, I'm looking for a job as a private investigator. A small red headed woman popped up from behind the counter on my left.

As a private investigator? Um, I'll go back to the office and check, she said. She walks out from behind the counter and around the corner.

Then an intimidating man in the sweater vest asked if I had investigated before. No, I haven't. The red headed woman came back from the office.

Any education?

Yeah, I have a bachelor's degree from San Diego State University.

And your education is innnn...

Art.

The red headed woman answers the phone.

Pexis, Autumn speaking. She transfers the phone call and hangs up.

I hadn't moved very far from the door. I asked if they took walk-ins often to ease my discomfort in this unwelcoming situation.

Depends if he has time, said Autumn. The person who does investigations is the person you'll be working with.

Right.

That's a big one, the vestman commented on Autumn's manila folder the size of a phone book as he moved back to his initial position when I first walked in, leaning over the counter like a child looking down into a low walled zoo pen.

Yeah, we have three huge cases that we're wrapping up here, and then went on about something incomprehensible.

And do they charge to change the numbers, area codes and all that the vestman asked.

Oh no, said Autumn

The vestman looked over at me.

Yeah, you can have a seat.

O.K.

It'll be a couple minutes, said Autumn

I browsed the framed diplomas hanging in the office before sitting down. One for a police academy was attractive, yellow and blue ran across it. I sat down at a small table. To my right there was a small case, I looked through a book on club culture and ecstasy and then slid it back in the case.

How many people does he have working on a case I ask.

It all depends on the case.

On the vestman's belt a walkie-talkie starts making noise.

Close to nine thousand? a month, vestman responds.
I'm going off duty.

Then a tall man comes around the corner slowly in a light colored dress shirt and slacks.
He looks at Autumn and then to me.

This young man's here to see you, says Autumn.

O.K, just come around the corner here, come on back.

I get up from the table near the small case and follow the man around the corner into an office with an L shaped desk covered with papers and a little radio playing on low volume behind me.

Let me set up a little bit here.

He collects the papers into folders then stacks them.

Have a seat.

What's your name

Nathaniel.

Daryl.

Good to meet you Daryl.

What's your investigator experience?

I don't have investigator experience. I'm here to be a private investigator but I don't have any experience.

What sort of work have you done in the past?

I've been doing creative work for the past few years.

What level of education do you have?

Bachelors Degree.

In what area.

Applied arts and sciences, an art degree.

Can you write? Are you an excellent writer, good, average?

Average writer.

Writing is an important part of an investigation.

As an artist it is good (useful?) because you see things as they are and not what you believe they are, because a lot of investigation involves surveillance.

Sure.

Which, it involves interviewing, talking to people. No matter what you do the final test is writing things up accurately and objectively. And how are you earning your income now?

I work at a garden shop and also doing flower delivery, which I just quit. I'm looking for employment.

What part of town do you live in

I live in South Park

Do you have a car?

Yes

What kind of car do you have?

I have a Toyota 4 Runner.

What year?

1992

Color?

White

Do you have a cell phone?

Yes

Have any experience with cameras?

Yes

The problem with what your seeking - we do a lot of investigations here. Everything from casing to photography but I can't send you out on a job because you don't have the experience. I can't afford, I can't expose a client to you not doing the right thing and not having experience to do what is required.

That's the problem, um, and if you're interested in becoming a criminal investigator, and becoming a criminal investigator is difficult to make a living at that by the way. This town is full of investigators, most of them were cops, most of them have experience in surveillance, and most of them are clumsy. They rely on their badge and their gun and when they retire you take their badge and gun away and they don't know how to act, how to act using their wits. So there is a need for a good investigator with integrity and imagination and perseverance. You can't get that in retreat, in old cops retiring, even younger cops we've had, but they've been trained in law enforcement. So one of the advantages you have is you don't have the albatross around your neck of having been in law enforcement.

Have you acquired the experience the experience is the question. And the way you learn is to do investigations and learn some of the skills and one thing I might do is...um

How fast are you on the computer?

Fast.

Are you comfortable on the computer?

Yes.

Internet.

Comfortable.

Are you resourceful on the computer, because the computer is another side of investigations. The computer gives you direction and can help with analysis. Those things can make a difference.

What made you come here to Pexis?

I passed by a few times, I drive on India Street often.

The only thing I can do is ah, I'm going to have to think about it a little bit, ah, what you really need to do is apprentice yourself. You need to learn what it's all about.

Is there a way you can throw me into something as a test, an experiment?

That's what I'm kinda thinking of. I have several surveillants that I use and what I may have you do is go along with one or two of our more experienced. Simply go observe, tag along, operate the camera, maybe do a few things. It'll give you a little exposure to see what it's like, determine whether or not this is something you'd want to do. Cause as an investigator you've got to know surveillance, you've got to understand it, bread and butter.

Daryl picks up the phone and begins dialing.

Hey Graham

...

What state are you at on the Brown case?

...

Yeah

...

Is the address we have the home address?

...

Yeah, it's probably his, yeah.

...

I don't even know if he's still in business.

...

I suspect not, I suspect he's leeching off her.

...

It is, it's still active

I'm not so sure the business is still good. In any case I want to ask you a question, ah, I have an apprentice investigator here, would you be able to utilize him in any way? There are two objectives, one is to get him a little experience, and he has virtually no surveillance experience. I think he may have some capacity with the camera and hopefully some enthusiasm and you might..

Other phone begins ringing.

He could go along in the vehicle or utilize his own vehicle and second he's a younger guy, you might be able to utilize him in some capacity there on the site in Rancho Santa Fe either as a house painter or gardener or whatever. You might want to have him run in and collect some information. See whose home and so forth or riding a horse by the horse trail or something along those fences.

...

Ah, not a lot. But, or you might if you have to use a face in front of somebody you don't want to use yours if your going to be surveilling on a longer term. You may also have a couple of shifts if we're going to get this guy with time date stamps arriving and then departing early in the morning. So there might be some stands there where you could work in an extra somebody who just wants to learn the business and I'm prepared to let him do that if it can complement our work and not interfere with it. Think about it a little bit and see if you can and I'll email you some basic data and I'll give you his cell phone number and you can take it from there and see if you can't fit that in.

O.K.

...

Good. Yeah we, Are you going to do it or is Tim going to do it? Yeah, he's a professor at San Diego State, an intelligent but very very apprehensive, very very timid soul and very much concerned with the twelve year old boy. But no blowback for instance with regard for him having left with the two subjects, he didn't want any further blowback. So, but I think he ought to be able to stop the kid and he can be in the car so they won't recognize him and they should be able to pinpoint where the kid's at.

...

Yeah, that would be nice to wrap that up. O.K.

...

O.K. I'll email you

...

O.K. take care.

Daryl hangs up the phone slowly and swivels his chair to face me.

Graham is a very experienced surveillant. I have him on a case now up in Rancho Santa Fe. A martial case where we have to establish, the woman is divorced, her husband is our client, he believes she's cohabitating cause that affects the alimony and she lives out in Rancho Santa Fe area and we have identified the boyfriend and essentially what we need to do is collect documentary evidence that he's really out there. That can be video or still photo, time date stamp, arriving, parking, staying there all night long and then leaving early in the morning. There may be difficulty in observing the site because it's in Rancho Santa Fe where there are trees and everything. There's a horse trail that goes right next to it that has visibility to it, so there are other ways to do it. Graham is currently casing it. But um, now you will have to do this all on your own time and your own cost. You realize that if you're going to learn I can't pay for training you. But if you try this on a couple and depending on Graham's comments and your own comments...um... surveillance and I can give you some training and some literature to read down the line too. If you take to it then I may be able to send you out on your own location and see how you do. Now the current rate for experienced investigators is 25.00 to 35.00 an hour. For the beginner you might command 20 to 25 an hour surveilling, plus mileage and other costs associated with it. But in the last analysis the investigator's surveillance, interviewers, everything, the price you command depends an awful lot on your ability. If you're resourceful and you're good at it and you do it well there'll be plenty of work for you, a lot of it is instinctive. Graham and there's another one Tim, a black guy, they're both quite good and they're both experienced. They both have over twenty years experience, you can learn a lot from them. Frankly it's probably an honor to be able to work with either one of these guys. Most P.I.'s in town don't know much about surveilling or anything else. These guys were both former federal agents, so what I'll have you do is fill out an application up front.

Do you live alone or what?

No, I live with my girlfriend in South Park.

Cause you can't discuss what you're doing with roommates or anybody.

Sure.

It's all very confidential.

Right.

You'll have to sign a confidentiality agreement as well, privacy issues involved, a lot of high profile people. You can't mention their names or say where or who or give any details. But fill that out with your home address, your cell phone, your car and your license plate number, a description of your car as well and oh, what I'll do is email Graham and tell him to give you a call if he feels that you can fit into...He's doing to things for me at the moment and if he feels that you can fit into any of those. Things are a bit quieter during the holiday season and so forth. I'll try that a couple of times and after you've done this two or three times and then when something comes up that I think you might be able to do, I'll give you a try. Your side is you've got to be able to invest a little bit of effort in learning at least the bare minimum without any

guarantee. Ultimately in California to become a licensed investigator, I don't know if you looked into licensing.

No.

3,000 hours of apprenticeship, so working as an investigator for two years, a year and a half, two or three years, something like that. You've got to apprentice a couple of years then take a test. So keep track even though you're not being paid or anything, keep a log of time-spent cause all this will begin to accumulate per hour. Get a little calendar or something you put down one hour, two hour, four hours. Keep track and I'll endorse and I'll endorse that for you at some point down the line. If this does turn out to be something you could be good at - if you don't feel you can be excellent at it I don't recommend you get into it at all. This field is full of mediocrity and you don't want to just add to that. But there's plenty of room for imagination, energy and creativity. There's also a lot of room for a single people because surveillance is often after hours and on weekends. Sometimes married guys like to come home to their families. This is the first Christmas as a matter of fact that I can remember in years that we haven't had gigs where we have to have surveillance out on Christmas Eve and New Years Eve. This doesn't go over big with a lot of people.

Right.

So fill out an application and ah...

I don't have all my past employer information.

Put down what you have because I want something from you within the next hour. Autumn's going to do a background on you.

Is there anything in your background that's going to be problematic?

I had a DUI when I was sixteen and just trouble in high school.

Where did you go to high school?

Grossmont, in La Mesa.

When did you graduate?

2001.

Where did you go to school in college?

San Diego State, graduated this summer.

A party school.

It can be.

Just graduated last summer

Yes.

O.K., have you got a reference you can use?

Yep.

Put those names down.

O.K.

All right once you're done filling that out give it to Autumn. You'll hear from me Graham or Tim, they'll see if they can fit you in. If they don't fit you in on this we'll work out something.

O.K.

I'll give you an opportunity to see what it's like.

All right.

Thank you.

Good meeting you.