

The Poverty Wreath

FADE IN:

INT. OFFICE LOBBY - DAY

Mr. Biggs moves past the reception area. A big Christmas tree. The SECRETARY, mid-forties, quietly looks up.

SECRETARY  
Good morning Mr. Biggs.

MR. BIGGS  
Any calls this morning?

She stretches her arm out holding a handful of telephone messages and faxes.

SECRETARY  
Just these. And, oh, that young man  
is here to see you about the position.

Mr. Biggs takes the messages, briefly glancing at them. He turns to see EDDIE, early twenties, wearing a suit and tie, getting up, hand outstretched.

EDDIE  
Hi Mr. Biggs. My name's Eddie Melvin.

Mr. Biggs ignores the outstretched hand. Eddie looks around nervously, and lowers his hand.

EDDIE  
I came in about the job you  
advertised.

MR. BIGGS  
Did you read the ad?

EDDIE  
Yes, sir.

MR. BIGGS  
The ad says to fax your resume.  
(to the Secretary)  
The ad does say to fax the resume?

SECRETARY  
Yes Mr. Biggs.

Mr. Biggs looks back at Eddie, steps towards the door.

MR. BIGGS  
Why didn't you fax me your resume?

Eddie walks in front of Mr. Biggs.

EDDIE

I wanted to meet you sir. In person.  
The position sounds perfect for me.

MR. BIGGS

Then make an appointment.

EDDIE

I didn't think I'd get one.

MR. BIGGS

How you get the address to my office,  
anyway?

Eddie straightens up, smiling.

EDDIE

I called information, and gave them  
the prefix of the fax number. I  
called this morning, and your  
secretary gave me the address.

Mr. Biggs shoots a look at the Secretary. She shrugs.

MR. BIGGS

You get a couple of minutes.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

The office is big but not opulent, a couch in the corner. A large wood desk in the center with two leather chairs facing it. A stack of papers on one side of the desk.

MR. BIGGS

I got over two hundred resumes. And  
they're still coming in. Ivy league  
graduates, masters degrees, top notch.  
And not one of them qualified.

EDDIE

My resume might not be that  
impressive.

Eddie holds his resume out to Mr. Biggs, who takes it and sets it in front of him.

MR. BIGGS

Resumes don't get jobs. People do.

He pushes the stack of resumes off the desk with one arm.

MR. BIGGS

Impress me some more.

EDDIE

I only have some experience. I'm a quick learner, though.

MR. BIGGS

Would you relocate?

EDDIE

Sure. Whatever it takes.

Mr. Biggs picks up Eddie's resume for the first time, and glances at it.

MR. BIGGS

Could you start next Wednesday?

EDDIE

Sure. I can start tomorrow if you like.

MR. BIGGS

Wednesday is better for me. Is that a problem?

EDDIE

Wednesday's fine. Next Friday's my birthday. I was wondering...

MR. BIGGS

Eddie, baby. What's more important? Your birthday or your career?

EDDIE

No problem sir. I'll be here.

Mr. Biggs looks up surprised that Eddie's still sitting there in the office.

MR. BIGGS

Anything else?

EDDIE

It's just that...

(looking around)

I kinda thought that your office would be different, that's all.

MR. BIGGS

Different? How so?

EDDIE

Well, I've heard you've won so many awards and stuff.

MR. BIGGS

You expected to see trophies? You think that's a measure of a man's success?

(points to the wall)

That's how I measure my success.

Eddie gets up and walks over to the pictures on the wall. The first one is a picture of a small house. The second is a small chunk of brick in a frame. The third frame holds a streamer made of green and red construction paper. The paper strips make interlocking rings, like a paper chain.

MR. BIGGS

You're probably wondering what the hell they are?

EDDIE

Yeah.

They look at each other for a moment.

MR. BIGGS

That first picture is the house I grew up in. I look at that every day when I come in and every day before I leave. It reminds me of the poverty I grew up in. I appreciate more what I have now, knowing that it wasn't always like this.

EDDIE

What about this brick?

Mr. Biggs chuckles.

MR. BIGGS

That brick was the first house I bought. It had a hideous kitchen with brick walls. My wife hated it. I kept that chunk. It reminds me of what you can achieve with hard work.

Eddie's gaze turns to the paper streamer.

EDDIE

What about...

MR. BIGGS

I call that my poverty wreath...

INT. SMALL APARTMENT - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

The front door opens. A young Jay Biggs steps into the bare living room. Not a single piece of furniture. A small TV sits on the floor. A tiny pine bush with tinsel.

JAY BIGGS  
(calling out)  
I'm home.

Jay looks around the empty room admiringly. He walks to the paper streamer. Gently touches it.

JAY BIGGS  
(whispering)  
I'm home.

INT. OFFICE - PRESENT - DAY

Mr. Biggs leans back in the big chair, looking across at Eddie standing by the pictures on the wall.

MR. BIGGS  
Some Christmas present, huh?

EDDIE  
That must have felt like the lowest point in your life.

Mr. Biggs stands up, motions towards the door.

MR. BIGGS  
Thanks for coming in. I'll see you next week.

Eddie looks up embarrassed. Walks towards the door, turns to Mr. Biggs.

EDDIE  
Thank you for giving me this chance.  
It's the best present I've received.

Eddie leaves. Mr. Biggs takes out a small picture frame from the desk drawer. It's a grave of a child with a red and green wreath around it and some tinsel.

MR. BIGGS  
The lowest moments in life are your most private.

We see his mouth quiver, and a tear rolling down his face. Then he replaces the picture frame back in the drawer.

FADE OUT: