

I ordered a chocolate milk and a cookie. I know it wasn't terribly professional of me to be drinking chocolate milk at my first official meeting with an investor, but I couldn't resist. It's chocolate milk. Who doesn't love chocolate milk? And Dad was paying.

Ok so it wasn't exactly an official meeting. Not really. I knew that Dad met weekly with Mr. Dubois at the coffee shop to go over the progress of their venture. I asked Dad if I could come along and at first he said no, but after much pleading and begging he finally agreed, but only if I could sit quietly during the meeting as they had important things to talk about. And then he offered to get me a cookie and chocolate milk, assuming that would keep me occupied and quiet.

Mr. Dubious arrived in a huff, quickly declared he was sorry he was late, plunked his briefcase down on the table and hurried to order his coffee, but not before shooting me a what-are-you-doing-here look. He returned a moment later with a tiny coffee cup. It looked like it held just a couple of sips, really one decent gulp. Yet he managed to sip at it throughout the meeting, gripping it fussily with his index finger and thumb, while his other fingers fanned out as if to announce to the world, "not now, go away." His eyebrows had grown angrier since the last time I saw him. They were blacker, bigger, meaner and closed ranks into an impenetrable wall every time he took a sip of his espresso.

I tried to follow the conversation as best I could, but I have to admit I was pulled away by my cookie. There was a big chunk of macadamia in the middle. Who likes macadamia? If you ask me, it's just an excuse to not put more chocolate chips into the cookie.

So at first I was eating around the giant nut strategically, thinking I'd just leave it on my plate when I was done. But then I realized there was a nice chunk of chocolate next to it, so about halfway through I switched gears and decided to nibble at the macadamia, and mix a bite of nut with a bit of chocolate and so, yes, maybe I

did get a little distracted and didn't quite catch everything they said.

I did hear them talk about stock options and pricing models and cost basis and something about a vesting period, which I assumed meant they were supposed to wear vests for a certain amount of time, though I'm not sure why. I made a mental note to ask Dad about it later.

The meeting was over before I knew it. I hadn't even finished the cookie! There was still a half-eaten chunk of macadamia left on the plate, taunting me. Everything I had planned to say to Mr. Dubious went out the window.

"Wait!" I exclaimed, just as Mr. Dubious was standing to leave. He turned to me, his two eyebrows moving like searchlights to find the culprit who had disrupted his exit.

"Can I ask you something," I said nervously. "Mr. Doobie—" I started to call him Mr. Dubious, realized my mistake as the word was coming out, tried to switch to Mr. Dubois and instead ended up calling him Dr. Doobie. Not a great start to my sales pitch. He just nodded.

"Mr. Dubois," I said, regaining my composure, making sure to pronounce his name as flawlessly as I could.

"Yes, that is my name," he said flatly, shooting a questioning look at my father.

"I have a proposal," I said, speeding up, realizing I didn't have a lot of time. "Look, you're obviously busy and I don't want to waste your time."

"Yes, let's not waste my time."

"I was wondering if you wanted to invest in my new company."

He just stared at me. If it was possible for his eyebrows to jump off his face and strangle me, I'm sure they would have.

"It's a...a...a new business." I needed to focus and stay calm. I resolved to look at the spot on the wall above his head so I wouldn't get intimidated.

"It's a snow shoveling business. We're going to make a lot of

money. And I wanted to...uh” I made the mistake of looking back down at him. I quickly looked back up at the spot on the wall. “...and I wanted to give you the opportunity to participate in this great, um, opportunity.”

Mr. Dubious smiled widely. I couldn’t tell if he was smiling because he liked the idea, or if he was smiling in anticipation of the bloodbath that was to come. It was hard to get a good read on him, between glancing at him and the spot on the wall above his head.

“What makes it a great opportunity?” he asked. Dubiously, I might add.

“Because we already did it once,” I said, mustering the courage to look him in the eye. “Over the summer, with our pool cleaning business. It’s the same idea, only for winter. So there’s really no risk, because you *know* I can do this.”

“How do I know you can do this?” The smile, if anything, widened. “Because I’ve already done it once before.”

“And how do I know it wasn’t just luck?”

“Luck!” I practically shouted. Now I was offended. “It wasn’t luck. You wouldn’t say that, not if you saw how hard I worked.”

“You can work hard all day digging a ditch,” Mr. Dubious said calmly. “That doesn’t mean it’s a good idea.”

“But...but...”

I couldn’t think of what to say. I was literally speechless. I had rehearsed my pitch to Mr. Dubious over and over again in front of the bathroom mirror, trying to anticipate what he’d say. I thought he would ask me questions like how many people we had on the crew and if we had shovels. You know, *real* questions. Important stuff. Not this luck stuff.

“But we have a plan,” I said, regaining my footing. “A real plan. It’s a good plan. Want to see it?”



“I don’t invest in plans, Young Mr. Sterling.” And just like that, the smile went away. “I invest in people. Show me you can do this twice, and then it starts to get interesting.”

He nodded curtly at my dad and then hurried out the shop. I looked down at my cookie but had lost all interest in nibbling at the chocolate riding the big nut.

As we drove home, I was sure my dad would be mad at me for jumping on Mr. Dubois like that, when I was supposed to sit quietly and just listen. But he wasn’t.

“I’m proud of you Son.”

“You are?” It always takes me by surprise when he says that.

“Why?”

“For asking Mr. Dubois to invest.”

“But wasn’t it pretty much a disaster?”

My dad chuckled.

"I can't believe I called him Mr. Doobie."

My dad laughed. "It's going to be hard to sit in a meeting now and not think of him as Mr. Doobie."

"Sorry Dad."

He looked over at me and smiled widely. I'm glad he was amused.

"A real disaster."

"Well, maybe," he said. "But what matters is you spoke up for yourself. Mr. Dubois can be a hard guy to talk to, I know."

"You do?" It had never occurred to me that perhaps those meetings with Mr. Dubois were hard for my dad too.

"He's tough, no nonsense," my dad continued. "You really have to have all your ducks in a row before you talk to him. He always seems to ask the one thing you didn't prepare for..." my dad trailed off.

We drove around quietly for a few more blocks. I thought the conversation had receded into the rear view mirror. Then my dad spoke again. "But you know, I love meeting with Mr. Dubois. He keeps me sharp. I always come out of those meetings smarter."

As my dad pulled into the driveway, I tried to think about why it bothered me so much that Mr. Dubois had been so dismissive of my new venture. It really bugged me and I couldn't figure out why. I followed my dad into the house as he hugged my mom and played peek-a-boo with my baby brother.

I think maybe I wanted Mr. Dubois' approval because he respected my dad.



What do you think Mr. Dubois meant when he said he doesn't invest in plans, he invests in people?

Is this a great opportunity?

Would you invest in Chance's new venture?