

This is an excerpt from *Imaginary Year*, a work of serial fiction by Jeremy P. Bushnell. Visit the *Imaginary Year* website (<http://www.imaginaryyear.com>) on Mondays and Fridays for new updates.

17 / DREAM JOB

She stirs granola into a bowl of plain yogurt. She is reminded of Ed, a bartender who she spent some time with a few years ago—when she quit waiting tables and went into corporate graphic design he joked about giving up bartending in order to work as a copywriter. He used to slip in and out of copywriter-speak in order to make her laugh: she remembers him holding up a bowl of morning yogurt and saying "YogurtCo: Bringing You the Latest in Yogurt Technology!" Funny guy; she wonders what he's up to these days.

She carries the yogurt into her bedroom. Sky-blue walls, the indigo I Mac at her little computer desk. She needs to get started with this job search. She has not been particularly diligent about it—the decent severance package that came with her layoff helped—but, still, she's been out of work for over a month now, and has begun to dip into her meager savings just a little too often. She has reached the point where stuff she bought while employed now stimulates feelings of guilt, simply because it is not money in the bank. (*Why* did I buy flatware from the MCA gift shop? Did I really need *another* black dress?)

She told herself *I'll start after Thanksgiving*, and she kind of extended Thanksgiving into a four-day holiday. But now it is Monday and she is ready. She has put together a good portfolio of designs that she did for the Woolcot Group. She has bought a new legal tablet and written "Job" at the top of it. She has sharpened six pencils. She spent yesterday cleaning the apartment so there would be no dusty surfaces left to distract her.

She has decided, this time, to avoid the paper version of the *Sunday Tribune*—its solid gray mass accentuated the depressing elements of the task. Instead, she is going to peruse their online listings. She eats her yogurt while the Mac is starting up. Connects. Types "designer" into the Keyword blank in their interface. The interface is labeled "Find your Dream Job," which makes her cringe. She has no hope that this machine will actually help her find her dream job—especially since she's not even sure what that would be. She will settle for anything that doesn't make her want to commit suicide (or run back to graduate school).

The first listing is for Engineering Mechanical Designers. No good; she scrolls down the page. The Global Fire Prevention Company is looking for a Graphic Designer of Fire Sprinkler Systems. Uh, interesting, but she doesn't think it's for her.

Here's something.

Graphic Designer - Perihelion Productions. Chicago company seeks a talented graphic designer for its in-house creative department. We specialize in immersive media games targeted to a culturally sophisticated audience—applicants should be familiar not only with QuarkXpress, Photoshop and Illustrator but also with the work of Sergei Eisenstein, Wassily Kandinsky, and Brian Eno.

Hm. She taps her pencil against her lips. That sounds OK. She can do art-geek when necessary. It's not her main hat, but it's one she knows how to wear.

She pulls the legal tablet into her lap and writes down the details. A tiny sense of accomplishment rises in her. *I found one, she thinks, can I go play now?*