

Would you accept this offer?

Just suppose that one of your senses could become super sensitive. Which would you choose? And suppose there was a price to pay . . .

Chapter One

David was lounging on his couch watching 'Britain's Got Talent' when he heard the unmistakable chime of the doorbell. Reluctantly, he hauled himself off the sofa to see who it was.

Standing in the doorway was a middle aged man who was dressed in a white lab coat and glasses. His hair was all over the place and he looked so excited that he could have won the lottery.

"Hello there, David." He began. "I didn't mean to disturb you, but I recently saw your article in the Daily Mail. Great piece on the recession. Anyway, I wanted to ask you if you would mind coming over to my lab tomorrow to do a report on my research. It won't take long; I promise."

David's heart skipped a beat. This could be his one chance to finally get a promotion. "Yes, I would love to go and have a look," David started, "What time shall I be there at?"

"Around two-thirty would be ideal. Does that suit you?" asked the scientist.

"Yes, that suits perfectly," replied David. "Before you leave, I don't believe I caught your name."

"Dr. Curley," he said. And with that, he was gone.

Chapter Two

David was waiting in Dr. Curley's waiting room for half an hour before the scientist finally came to meet him.

"David, I'm so glad you came. I couldn't sleep last night with the excitement. Anyway, let's not waste time. Follow me." Dr. Curley led David into a brilliantly bright room with white tiles and stainless steel worktops. It took a while for his eyes to adjust to the light. A little bit of anxiety crept into him because this looked more like an experimentation lab than a research one.

"Now David, I'm a tad embarrassed to tell you that I wasn't 100% honest when we first met. Instead of a report, I'd like you to try a new elixir I have recently concocted. You're probably wondering what this elixir does. Don't fret, I will explain all. This elixir will heighten, I suppose you could call it, one of your senses. But, any of the other four will suffer a blurring effect and be dulled. Now, I know this a lot of information to take in at once, but take your time and think through it all. Take a seat over there if you wish," he said, pointing to a row of chairs near the door where they had entered from.

David did just that and thought to himself for a while. "What have I gotten myself into!? I never knew he planned for me to be a guinea pig! One of your senses dulled... What could that mean?"

David returned to Dr. Curley and said; Dr. Curley is there a way to reverse the effects of this elixir once I have drunk it? "Well, that's a tough one David, I have not yet figured out a way to reverse everything but should the need arise, I will try my best"

David wasn't satisfied with the answer but then thought: "This could be my chance to make it big, or even get a promotion! The gain (in his mind) outweighed the risk and he made his decision

"Dr. Curley," David began, "I'll go through with the experiment."

Chapter Three

A few gulps of the horrible elixir later, Dr. Curley was literally jumping four feet in the air. David was feeling a little bit different, but he could still see, hear, taste and see, and he definitely felt the mixture bubbling up inside his stomach. "Any minute now," Dr. Curley said. Suddenly, David began to feel strange. A thin, piercing noise began in his ear and his mouth was becoming dry. In a few seconds the noise was gone and Dr. Curley started moving his mouth. No words. David tried to say something but nothing came out of his mouth either. He began to feel faint and the next thing he knew; he was back in his couch, lying face down on a pillow

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A million thoughts flew into David's mind at once. "Why had he ended up here? What happened to Dr. Curley?" But the most troubling was "What had happened in the lab?" David sat up from his position and realised he had left the TV on before he had left for the lab. Brian Dobson was making a report on the new Pope but David couldn't hear anything. The volume was up all the way and the only thing he could hear was that piercing noise, if a little quieter this time. David was ravenous so he made his way into the kitchen. He grabbed an orange from the worktop. He peeled the skin and took a bite. David experienced a sensation like nothing else. His whole mouth exploded in flavour and he literally got blasted into a seat nearby.

It all started to make sense now, he had become deaf but his sense of taste had been magnified tenfold. What had he gotten himself into!

Chapter Four

David was still getting used to the changes that had taken place after his experience the other day. His whole life would be different now. How would he explain it all to his boss without sounding crazy? He couldn't just ignore the fact that he was now deaf. Without thinking about it too much, he got in his car and was spooked out by the absence of noise.

When he arrived at work, David saw one of his co-workers, Jenna, heading his way. He tried to swerve away from her path but she was very intent on reaching him. David acted as naturally as possible as Jenna's lips began to move. When she was finished, she looked at David as if awaiting an answer. He was getting nervous now so he just blurted out; "Yeah, Jenna that sounds great, but I have a meeting in less than five minutes, so I better get on my way. David had no idea what his voice sounded like and Jenna was giving him a funny look so he just walked quickly to his office and collapsed into a chair. "I have to get back to Dr. Curley and get all of this reversed! I'll do it first thing tomorrow..."

Chapter Five

David woke up the next day at 7:15 and immediately got dressed. He went straight to his car and hastily made the 40 minute drive to Dr. Curley's lab. He knocked on the door and a few seconds later; Dr. Curley (in all his madness) was looking at him with a suspicious look in his eyes. "What do you want?" he said irritably. David mouthed as best as he could; I can't hear you. After a few second of confusion Dr. Curley retreated in his office and returned with a pen and paper. He signalled for David to read it. In terrible handwriting were the words; "What do want".

David wrote back; "I need you to reverse the effects of that elixir you gave me. Now!"

The reply was, "I'm afraid I never suspected that you would want rid of the effects, so I'll have to create a whole new brew. If I work hard, I'll have it done by tomorrow". Without giving David a chance to process this, he shut the door hastily.

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It started raining heavily as soon as David lay down on his couch. This was left unnoticed by him as the usual pattering of water against the roof was absent. He was miserable at the thought of having to trek through another day with

the effects of that dreadful elixir. Even under these circumstances, David was dedicated to his job and got into his car. Who knew what was to come?

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David luckily found a free parking space fairly close to the entrance of Superior Journalism (his workplace) and managed to get to get inside the main entrance without bumping into anyone. With his office door in sight he thought he was in the clear, but David spotted his boss, Anthony, bee-lining towards him. David quickened his pace but felt a hand on his shoulder. He gingerly turned around and faced Anthony. David had to stand by as the none-the wiser Anthony began talking to him. David was getting a strange look from him and he noticed he was waiting for a reply. David's palms began to sweat so he quickly nodded. He regretted it instantly. It was obvious by the way Anthony was talking that he hadn't asked a question. Anthony now wore a puzzled expression on his face. Once again, he began to talk. David felt like running away but that would further his boss's suspicions. This time he just smiled when Anthony stopped talking. He looked even more confused now.

David hastily walked away and made it to his office. He fell into his chair and his face flushed red with embarrassment. Just when he thought it was all over, Jenna entered his office. Here we go again, he thought...

Chapter Six

Just like the day before, David woke up early and got into his Fiat. The journey to Dr. Curley's lab felt even longer than the time before, but it was for an important cause. His car made mud tracks along Dr. Curley's pristine white driveway, which confirmed his idea that he was the only person that had ever visited. He knocked on the (also pristine white) door and had to wait nearly two minutes before the mad scientist appeared. Dr. Curley looked like he had been up all night, which he probably had been. He gave David a puzzled look and then ushered him inside.

The once spotless lab had been covered with all types of substances, some of which David didn't even recognise. The smell was absolutely awful. Dr. Curley gave a notepad and a pen to David, David wrote: So, where's the new elixir? The written reply in scrawled handwriting was: In the back, please follow me.

And so he did. The back of Dr. Curley's Lab had no similarities to the previous room. Numerous containers bubbled with sticky liquids and others released foul smelling steam into the air. The "Scientist" walked over to a table with a single vile of orange fluid inside. He returned and gave it to David.

David looked at it with suspicion and raised an eyebrow at him. Dr. Curley motioned towards it with his head.

This was the moment he had been waiting for, the moment when his life would get back to normal.

His shaking hand took the bottle. Without hesitation he gulped down the whole bottle. His head felt like it was about to explode. Suddenly he heard the first sound that had entered his ears in a long time. The laughing of Dr. Curley.

A story by Seán Byrne