



Strategic Tale 4.1

(On the influence of the environment on business)

In a pickle!

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Julius was waiting for the landlord to come and pick up the keys. He was sitting on the only chair now left in the place where he had spent most of his time over the last few years. How had it all gone wrong? "Damn crisis!" he said to himself, barely concealing his pent-up anger. Knowing that others had also lost out was no consolation. The estate agency on the corner had closed months ago, and no properties were being sold anymore. The nearby home decoration store and the car dealership on the industrial estate where he went running at the weekend had also gone to the wall. "What am I going to do now? I'm in a pickle."

Julius had opened the restaurant with little money and tons of enthusiasm. Little by little, the business had been finding its feet, making money, and gaining some recognition. He had had a good eye when he decided to open it in an area of the city with numerous offices and businesses. His restaurant was not one of the most expensive, catering solely for those with deep pockets, but nor was it one of those franchises that serve fast-food sandwiches, pizzas, or salads. No, he had set up a restaurant serving good food for a price. Admittedly, it was not cheap, but still affordable for the managers of local companies that filled it every day.

Yet the economic crisis, the "damn crisis", had ruined everything, as many of the restaurant's customers had been laid off by their companies; others saw their salaries reduced, while some companies no longer paid the bills their employees submitted after entertaining a client they thought would secure a good deal.

Julius thought the crisis was temporary, hoping it would soon be over, and that he could prevail. That is why he did not want to change his philosophy of à la carte food and introduce a cheaper menu of the day to weather the storm. He had always wanted to have one of those restaurants with stars that had hardly been affected by the crisis, as the people who could afford these luxuries did not have their salaries reduced or were made redundant, and they could continue to enjoy their perks without a care in the world.

Now he regretted his pig-headedness. Some of the local restaurants had adapted their business and prices to the crisis and were pulling through. In a way, although he did not like to admit it, he envied his friend Raffy. They had both started off in the restaurant



business at the same time, but Raffy had no grand ambitions for stars or recognition and set up a pizzeria. It went well from the start, but even more so with the crisis. Artichokes fresh from the garden and juicy beef steaks had lost out to quattro stagioni pizzas and prosciutto. Not only had he introduced home delivery, but he had also opened new premises in another office area. It was going so well that he was even considering setting up a chain of franchises, but he needed backing. In recognition of their friendship, he offered Julius the opportunity to participate in the expansion as a partner. But Julius had turned him down. His dream had been shattered, and he did not want to end up selling pizzas over the counter. Furthermore, he needed a change.

While waiting dejectedly for the landlord to arrive, Julius glanced at a newspaper from a few days ago that was lying on the dusty bar, and his attention was drawn to an item at the bottom of the front page. "The food of the future: insects are here to stay". He kept his imagination in check, but for the first time in many days, a faint smile crossed his face. After all, he thought, he might not yet have to return the keys to the landlord.

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