

1 EXT/INT. THE UNIVERSE/AN OFFICE.

1

After momentarily glimpsing the Universe, we move in toward a tiny Speck.

The Speck resolves itself as a long-bearded MAN, wearing sandals, in dungarees and navy shirt. He is covered with dust.

He sits motionless, his hands resting lightly on his knees.

We can now see that he is in an Office.

An Interval of Time passes.

A Sound at the door brings his face to life. His eyes lock onto the direction of the sound.

His head jerks toward the door.

It is the INTERVIEWER, a woman in business attire, entering the Office.

The Man springs out of the chair, attacking the Interviewer, trying to strangle her. Though surprised, she swiftly and deftly throws him aside.

He is wild-eyed. He leaps to his feet, a dust cloud, and dashes out of the Office screaming.

Tugging her dress back into place, she calmly closes the door. She opens the face of a large clock on the wall, advancing the time from 9:45 to 10. She sits behind the substantial wooden desk, arranging papers.

2 INT. OFFICE. -- MOMENTS LATER

2

There is a Knock at the door.

ANGLE ON THE DOOR

Through the frosted glass we see the shilouette of a man, LESTER, standing outside. He knocks again. After a moment he opens the door a crack and sticks his head in.

LESTER

Is this the place?

ANGLE ON THE OFFICE

INTERVIEWER

No. This is. Come in.

3 INT. OFFICE. -- CONTINUOUS 3

Lester sits opposite the Interviewer, a large clasp envelope resting on his lap.

4 INT. OFFICE. -- MOMENTS LATER 4

INTERVIEWER

May I ask you another question?

Lester starts to answer but stops. Then...

LESTER

Yes...?

INTERVIEWER

Have you completed the preliminary forms?

LESTER

Oh.

(handing her the envelope)

Yes. Here.

As she goes through and sorts the forms from the envelope, Lester discovers that one leg of the chair he is sitting on is shorter than the others. He experiments with avoiding rocking.

5 INT. OFFICE. -- CONTINUOUS 5

LESTER'S VOICE

Jesus! I didn't unplug the coffee pot!

Lester looks for the source of the voice.

LESTER'S VOICE (CONT'D)

You idiot! It's you.

LESTER

(softly)

Oh.

LESTER'S VOICE

You don't have to whisper. She won't hear you.

LESTER

Really? ... Really? ... REALLY?!

LESTER'S VOICE

See?

(CONTINUED)

LESTER
Wow. . . . Can she do the same?

LESTER'S VOICE
How would you know?

LESTER
Kewl. . . .

LESTER'S VOICE
So whattaya think? You gonna get
the job?

LESTER
I feel pretty good.

INTERVIEWER
Marital status?

LESTER
Single

INTERVIEWER
Were you ever previously married?

LESTER
No.

INTERVIEWER
Are your parents living?

LESTER
No.

INTERVIEWER
Any brothers or sisters?

LESTER
One brother: Leo. One sister: Rita.

INTERVIEWER
Their ages?

LESTER
Leo...thirty. Rita: thirty-
two...three. Two.

The Interviewer's eyebrow lifts ever so slightly.

LESTER'S VOICE
Okay, so I couldn't remember their
ages. So I made 'em up. Whattathey
gonna do? Check up on it?

6 INT. ANOTHER OFFICE.

6

The Interviewer is in conference with her BOSS.

INTERVIEWER

I don't think we can hire this guy.
He lied about his brother's age.

BOSS

(decreeing)
Anybody who'd lie about his brother's
age is certain to lie about his
sister's age too!

7 INT. OFFICE. -- CONTINUOUS

7

Lester is not certain he noticed the Interviewer's eyebrow
lifting, however ever so slightly.

INTERVIEWER

Name and address of nearest relative
not a member of the immediate family.

LESTER

I guess that's in case I die during
the interview.

(pause. Lester wants
to be certain she
didn't hear)

Duck Hebert. One-eleven Mercury
Avenue. Berwick, Louisiana.

INTERVIEWER

Relationship?

LESTER

Uncle.

8 INT. OFFICE. -- A MOMENT LATER

8

Lester jumps out of the chair grabbing papers from the desk.

LESTER'S VOICE

Numbers and names!

LESTER

Names and numbers! I mean look at
this: Elementary school what year to
what year junior high school what
year to what year high school what
year to what year I went to 3
elementary schools 2 junior highs
and at least a couple of high schools.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LESTER (CONT'D)

I bet that if she added up all these years she'd find that it took me 18 years to get to the ninth grade!

INTERVIEWER

(not seeming to notice
Lester is not seated)

Do you have a college degree?

LESTER

No. But here's my high school diploma.

He holds it out for her to take but she is frozen.

LESTER'S VOICE

I told you they wouldn't be interested in seeing it. So there you are standing there with diploma on your face. It's useless.

LESTER

Maybe not.

He takes his seat, folds up the diploma and uses it to even the short leg of the chair. He is pleased at the accomplishment.

INTERVIEWER

Have you ever bought anything on time?

LESTER

No.

INTERVIEWER

Borrowed money?

LESTER

No.

INTERVIEWER

Declared bankruptcy?

LESTER

No.

INTERVIEWER

Do you own credit cards?

LESTER

Yes.

(CONTINUED)

INTERVIEWER

How many?

LESTER

Two. May I have some water?

INTERVIEWER

No.

This has caught Lester with his ass in the air halfway out of the chair.

She notices this. Is poised with pen.

Lester sits.

She needn't note this.

Lester notices that the clock on the wall still reads 10. He consults his watch. There is a discrepancy.

9 INT. OFFICE. -- CONTINUOUS

9

A fresh Form before her, she girds for...

INTERVIEWER

Names and places of employment beginning with the least recent. Account for all periods of unemployment.

LESTER'S VOICE

"Least recent"? "Least recent"? Oh okay first job I guess.

LESTER

Nifty-Thrifty Department Store.

INTERVIEWER

Exact title of position.

LESTER

Stock clerk.

INTERVIEWER

Description of duties, responsibilities, and accomplishments.

LESTER

I...stocked.

INTERVIEWER

Name of immediate supervisor.

(CONTINUED)

LESTER
Uh...Lyra Martin.

INTERVIEWER
How long did you work there?

LESTER
About a year.

INTERVIEWER
Reason for leaving.

LESTER
Personal reasons.

INTERVIEWER
Would you care to elaborate?

LESTER
I got tired of the job.

INTERVIEWER
Starting and ending salary.

LESTER
(seemingly mocking)
Minimum. Minimum.

LESTER'S VOICE
If it's not important enough for me
to remember why do they have to know?

LESTER
Then there was a year and a half of
unemployment.

INTERVIEWER
Then?

ANGLE ON THE INTERVIEWER'S EYES

LESTER (O.S.)
The Beef Palace.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)
Exact title of position.

LESTER (O.S.)
Cook.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)
Description of duties respon-
sibilities, and accomplishments.

(CONTINUED)

LESTER (O.S.)

I cooked.

10 EXT. CONVENT. DAY. -- MORNING 10

A suspiciously-looking Corporate Building that could possibly be a Convent. A B-movie sign announcing "Convent" rests uneasily over what may very well say something like "East Chatham Bank & Trust".

The Interviewer as a Young Woman comes into view.

INTERVIEWER'S VOICE

When I was first brought to the convent to start down the road to becoming an Ursuline Nun I was 14 years old.

She carries a duplicate of Maria's bag in The Sound of Music as she walks toward the building.

11 INT. OFFICE. -- CONTINUOUS 11

INTERVIEWER

Name of immediate supervisor.

LESTER

Don't remember.

INTERVIEWER

How long did you work there.

LESTER

About a year.

INTERVIEWER

Reason for leaving.

LESTER

I quit.

INTERVIEWER

Starting and ending salary.

LESTER

Minimum.

12 INT. CONVENT. HALL. 12

The Interviewer sits on a backless bench in a long and empty dark Hall, A blinding sheet of light at its end.

(CONTINUED)

INTERVIEWER'S VOICE

I knew they were going to cut my hair. My beautifully long locks. So I cut them off myself.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

Next employment.

LESTER (O.S.)

Harry's Fill-Um-Up.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

Is that "f I double-l dash u m dash u p"?

13 INT. OFFICE. -- CONTINUOUS

13

LESTER

"...dash u p". Yes.

INTERVIEWER

Exact title of position.

LESTER

Assistant manager.

14 EXT. CONVENT. COURTYARD. DAY.

14

The Interviewer is led across the hard-surfaced Courtyard by a SISTER. In the course of their crossing several groups of Nuns in Black close-fitting Habits march through. Though muffled by their long Habits, it sounds as though they may be wearing boots.

INTERVIEWER (O.S.)

Description of duties, responsibilities, and accomplishments.

LESTER (O.S.)

I was night manager of the gas station. I had to supervise another worker. He would fix flats and run the premium pumps. I kept up the stock in the food part. We had stuff like beer and eggs and jerky and milk and bread and oil and anti-freeze. I worked the diesel and regular pumps.

15 INT. OFFICE. -- CONTINUOUS

15

(CONTINUED)

ANGLE ON LESTER

LESTER
Whatever happened to Ethyl?

16 INT. CONVENT. CELL.

16

In what looks suspiciously like an office cubicle without anything which would identify it as so, Interviewer is putting away the few things from her Maria-Bag into a simple dresser.

INTERVIEWER'S VOICE
It was the custom that the novitiates be segregated for the first week. My only contact with anyone was with one of the Sisters who brought me food. At the end of the week I was to see the Mother Superior.

MONTAGE OF 2 VISITS OF THE SISTER BRINGING FOOD TO INTERVIEWER

INTERVIEWER'S VOICE (CONT'D)
The first days I was brought food I tried to get the Sister to speak. But she wouldn't. So I merely accepted the food in the silence in which it was given. And then on the sccond-to-last day...

17 INT. CONVENT. CELL. -- LATER

17

The Sister has entered, deposited the food in silence, and turned to leave as usual but this time she hesitates and turns back into the Cell.

Instead of wearing a Crucifix, two pairs of silver Crossed Crosses are pinned on each side of the throat.

SISTER
I am telling you this in the strictest confidence. In two days you are to see the Mother Superior. When you are before her she is going to ask you two questions: "What thing do you love most?" And "What thing do you hate most?" And after you answer she will say that "from this day on you are to forsake for the rest of your life that which you love most and to embrace that which you hate most.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)