

# THE INTERVIEW

A one-act play

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## THE INTERVIEW

### A one-act play

Characters: Len, about eighty years old, dignified looking

Elaine, his wife, a few years younger

Beth, a young woman, a reporter from a small paper who has come to interview Len.

Setting: The setting should suggest a suburban back yard, with a small patio and yard.

*An elderly man, Len, steps somewhat slow, is walking in his small back yard, while two women, one elderly, Elaine, Len's wife, and one young, Beth, a reporter from a small newspaper, sit on a patio, talking quietly and watching him. He is speaking into a recording device, though he glances at the two women from time to time.*

LEN

Wilson, you're a worthless bastard.

ELAINE( talking to reporter)

That's all he's been saying for the last hour...He repeats it over and over, Wilson, you worthless bastard. I wouldn't interrupt him for now. He gets very irritable if he's interrupted when he's working. If you can call it working. It might be. It's hard to tell sometimes. I think it's for a play he's working on. Though I'm not sure who would want to watch it.

BETH

Who's Wilson?

ELAINE

I don't know. A worthless bastard, I guess. He might have been one of Len's editors.

BETH

How long have you been married?

ELAINE

Oh, I'm not his wife. His wife died some years ago. I'm just the housekeeper. Irma. I look after him.

BETH

Oh, I'm sorry, when you let me in for the interview, I thought...

ELAINE

It's okay, dear. Let me get us some iced tea. He'll come around in a bit.

*Elaine rises and goes into house. Len sees she is gone and comes over to the patio to join Beth.*

LEN

Hello. You must be the reporter.

BETH

Yes, I'm Beth. Irma let me in. She said not to disturb you when you were working.

LEN

Who's Irma?

BETH

Your housekeeper?

LEN (chuckling)

Oh, that's her little joke. She's my wife. Elaine. We've been married for forty years. When she gets in a mood, she calls herself my housekeeper. She's gone quite mad, you know. Mad as a hatter. How old are you?

BETH

Twenty-nine.

LEN

My God, that's a lovely age. A lovely age...Are you married?'

BETH

No...

LEN

Well, you should be. Seriously, though, just so you know, but please don't include this in the piece, Elaine is suffering from a form of dementia. We don't know how long she has to go...

*Elaine comes out of the house with a tray holding glasses of tea. Len moves quickly back into the yard and resumes his pacing, talking into the recorder again.*

LEN

Where do we find our comfort? Where do we find our comfort? Repeat line for one hour.

ELAINE *(calling out to him)*

Who exactly is going to pay to watch this?

LEN

Number 9...Number 9...Number 9..

ELAINE

Stop showing off for Brenda!

BETH

Beth.

ELAINE

Sorry, dear. I'm not very good with names.

LEN

Number 9, Number 9, Number 9... *(suddenly yelling)* Drill him! Drill him! Drill him! Dittmore, you're dead, you're dead!

BETH

Who's Dittmore.?

ELAINE

I don't know, but he's dead, I guess. I think he might have been Len's literary agent.

BETH

Is he always like this?

ELAINE

Like what?

BETH

Oh...

ELAINE

Do you want the interview or not? Are you even familiar with his work? Have you even heard of him?

BETH *(apologetically)*

Well...Not before my editor gave me the assignment. But I read some after. It's quite good.

ELAINE (*softening*)

Yes, some of it is quite good. Very good, really. Sometimes he goes off on these tangents...

BETH

He said you were his wife.

ELAINE

Yes, that's so. I don't know why I told you I wasn't. My little joke, I guess. He gets to tell all the jokes, and sometimes maybe I want to tell a few myself. I'm sorry. We must seem like horrible people

BETH

Not at all...I'd like to get to know you better.

ELAINE

Let's have our tea. He'll come around after a while. He's been very engrossed in this new project, but partly he's showing off for you. He likes to show off for younger people. Especially younger women. He taught at the university for a long time. I think he misses that, standing in front of a classroom, people listening.

BETH

Yes, I heard that. I heard he was a very good teacher.

ELAINE

He liked a lot of the kids, but he always thought he was sort of faking it. But he was very good at faking it. You should see the letters his students wrote him. One of the students said, 'You're the bomb.' What does that mean? Is it good?

BETH

Oh yes. It's kind of like...terrific. Fantastic.

ELAINE

Oh good, I was worried it might be some sort of warning.

LEN (*into the recorder*)

No more inspirational messages. I loathe inspirational messages. If I hear one more inspirational message, I'll puke. If I read one more obituary about a wonderful person, I'll puke. Give me an obituary that says, he was a son of a bitch, and now he's dead...He was a son of a bitch and now he's dead...he was a son of a bitch and now he's dead...

ELAINE (*calling out to him*)

Wilson?

LEN

No, he was a worthless bastard, not a son of a bitch.

ELAINE

Why don't you come out of it for a bit? You've shown off enough. Why don't you come over and talk to Brenda?

BETH

Beth.

ELAINE

Brenda has come a very long way to talk to you.

BETH

Well, only a few miles really...

ELAINE

She's traveled for days. You can write later.

LEN

I can write later. I can write later. I can write later. He can write later. He can write later. Teach me something! Read this essay, Professor, about my chickenpox...

ELAINE

He goes on about that one. One of his students wrote an essay about getting chickenpox. That was thirty years ago. He still talks about it.

LEN

The time I got chickenpox...The time I got chickenpox...Fascinating!

*A shiver passes through his shoulders. He comes over and kisses Elaine.*

LEN

Elaine, the babe from The Graduate. Though your mother was hot, too. Elaine! Elaine! Why the hell didn't I write that script?

ELAINE

Don't go there.

LEN

No. I'll close that right off.

ELAINE

You see you can. You can close it off when you want to.

LEN

Yes...Sure...I hear you've come miles.

BETH



Well, a few...

LEN

I'm yours. Ask away.

BETH

Well...oh...What were your early influences?

LEN

My early influences? The Hardy Boys. I loved those books.

BETH

I'm sorry...You know, I feel awkward telling you this. This is the first interview I've ever done.

LEN (*kindly*)

Really? Well, don't worry. We're going to knock 'em out with this one. What's the circulation size of the paper anyway?

BETH

I'm not sure. About five thousand, I think.

LEN

Five thousand...Motel Six...That's where they put me up...Not even a Best Western...

ELAINE (*to Beth*)

Don't pay any attention to him, dear. He got invited to speak somewhere and they put him up at a Motel Six. He has a thing about it...

LEN

Not even a Best Western...The air conditioner was broke...There was a roach in the bathtub...

ELAINE

Stop that. It was perfectly all right. At least they invited you.

LEN

Five thousand...Why not for once the goddamn New York Times.

ELAINE

Stop it. We're going to help Brenda with the interview. She's going to write a lovely piece and get a big promotion. We'll help you, won't we, Len?

LEN

Of course we will.

BETH

This is my first story ever. They sent me out...

LEN

Bastards...Cold merciless bastards...

BETH

Oh no, the editor is very nice really...

LEN

Don't trust him.

BETH

Her. She's a woman, the editor... As am I...

