

THIS IS BULL

By Jeff Dunne

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## CHARACTERS

INTERVIEWER	A somewhat bipolar man who is used to being in control, and doesn't handle it well when that control is taken away.
APPLICANT	A woman who wants to be a professional writer, and is not going to accept the absurd, artificial limitations being imposed upon her.
SECOND APPLICANT	Another left-handed person looking to be a writer.

## SETTING

A basic, modern-day office. The script is intended to be performed with British accents and timing.

*(It is an office setting, and a surly Interviewer is sitting behind a desk. On the desk are a few stacks of papers, a clipboard, some writing implements, and a pair of stress balls. He has just finished an interview and is calling out without looking up...)*

INTERVIEWER

Next!

*(Applicant enters carrying a folded newspaper, and a bag with papers. Interviewer still does not look up.)*

Yes?

APPLICANT

Good morning!

INTERVIEWER

Is it? How nice.

*(Applicant is taken aback, unsure how to respond.)*

Well?

APPLICANT

Well?

INTERVIEWER

*(Loses patience, calls out...)*

Next!

APPLICANT

No no no no no. I'm here to apply for a job.

INTERVIEWER

Another matador is it? Very well, have a seat and we'll—

APPLICANT

Matador? No. No no no.

*(Applicant unfolds the newspaper as she sits.)*

APPLICANT (CONT)

This one. I want to... You hire matadors? *(Before Interviewer can respond...)*  
Never mind.

*(Points to a spot in the paper so Interviewer can see it.)*

Here. I want to be a writer.

*(The demeanor of the Interviewer changes entirely, and he is now extremely happy.)*

INTERVIEWER

A writer!? That's excellent! All morning long it's been matador after matador, and not a one of them qualified for the position. Can you believe it?

APPLICANT

Well let me assure you, I am definitely qualified for this. I have a bachelor's degree in English from Cambridge, and two masters from NYU, one in journalism and the other—

INTERVIEWER

That's excellent. I mean really excellent. What about work experience, though? Do you have a portfolio?

APPLICANT

Oh yes. Definitely. I worked as a freelance writer for the past four years, and have had works published in over three dozen—

INTERVIEWER

Fine, fine. Jolly good. Really impressive.

APPLICANT

*(Reaching into her bag to retrieve a stack of papers...)*

I brought some samples if you—

INTERVIEWER

Chocolates?

APPLICANT

*(Looks at Interviewer, then glances down at the portfolio, then back.)*

What?

INTERVIEWER  
Are they chocolates?

APPLICANT  
N- n- no. *Writing* samples.

INTERVIEWER  
Oh. Well, alright then.

*(Applicant tries to hand them over, but Interviewer waves them away.)*

I'm sure they're excellent. No need for all that. And just between you and me, we'd hire you even if they were atrocious.

APPLICANT  
What?

INTERVIEWER  
*(Uncomfortable pause, then unnerving laugh.)*  
Just a little joke there. Ha ha ha! *(Beat)* But it's not, really. I mean, we've been trying to find a writer for so long that, well, honestly, we'd rather given up hope. If you are able to string two gerunds together you'll be—

APPLICANT  
Two gerunds?

INTERVIEWER  
Is that not what they're called? Well you know what I mean. Alright then, just a few simple tests...

*(Interviewer scrambles looking for the clipboard...)*

What... uh... what is... *(still looking...)* a... gerund?

*(Finds the clipboard, then looks up at Applicant?)*

APPLICANT  
Is that... is that one of the tests?

INTERVIEWER  
Oh heavens no. I've just always wondered. We have a bit of a pool going, actually. Herbert in accounting thinks it's a type of motorcar, and Aubrey in the front office insists it's just short for Jeremy.

APPLICANT

No. It... It's a noun you form from a verb.

INTERVIEWER

I *knew* it. I knew it was a word thing! That'll cover lunch, that will. (*Pause*) You're sure it's a... whatever you said?

APPLICANT

A part of speech. Yes. Quite sure.

INTERVIEWER

Oh good. Jolly good. Just for that, I'm going to skip the first two tests here. (*Checks them off while saying...*) Pass... Pass... Alright, now.

*(Holds up a three fingers.)*

How many fingers?

APPLICANT

*(Completely confused now.)*

Three?

INTERVIEWER

Close enough. (*Checks off on spreadsheet.*) Are you willing to work weekends?

APPLICANT

Well, I do have a—

INTERVIEWER

Excellent, excellent.

*(Ticks something else off. Then Interviewer puts down the spreadsheet, picks up a stress ball, and tosses it to Applicant, who catches it in her left hand and then places it in her lap.)*

Hmmm. Let's try that again, shall we?

*(Takes the second stress ball and tosses it. Again, Applicant catches it in her left hand. Interviewer is clearly disappointed.)*

INTERVIEWER (CONT)

Well. Alright then. I think we have everything we need.

APPLICANT

So do I have the job?

INTERVIEWER

I... That is...

APPLICANT

What? What is it?

INTERVIEWER

*(Nodding in contemplation, then...)*

Alright. I *can* offer you a job.

APPLICANT

Oh, brilliant! I'm so happy! Thank you so, so—

INTERVIEWER

As a writer's assistant.

APPLICANT

A w- what?

INTERVIEWER

A writer's assistant. It doesn't pay quite as much, but you will be very close to where actual writing occurs.

APPLICANT

A writer's *assistant*? What does that mean?

INTERVIEWER

It means you'll be *assisting* the *writer*.

APPLICANT

How, exactly?

INTERVIEWER

You know, getting coffee, sharpening pencils, that sort of thing.

APPLICANT

And how long until I get promoted to being an actual writer?

INTERVIEWER

Ohhh. Well. That's really hard to say. Depends on a great many things.

APPLICANT

Such as?

INTERVIEWER

Ahhh... I'm... not at liberty to say.

APPLICANT

How long has it typically taken in the past?

INTERVIEWER

That varies wildly.

APPLICANT

Alright, the last person, then.

INTERVIEWER

Still not promoted, actually.

APPLICANT

The one before that, then.

INTERVIEWER

Also not promoted.

APPLICANT

When was the last time that—

INTERVIEWER

Alright alright alright! Fine. Just fine. No one has actually been promoted from writer's assistant to writer.

*(Applicant looks incredulous. Interviewer adopts a light-hearted, encouraging expression, and then...)*

Yet!

APPLICANT

So you're saying it could happen.

*(Interview hesitates, then shrugs.)*

APPLICANT (CONT)

Look, if you don't mind my asking, what the hell's going on here?

INTERVIEWER

*(The epitome of innocence.)*

Whatever do you mean?

APPLICANT

What do I... *(Takes a calming breath.)* When you first heard that I was applying to be a writer, you were thrilled. Ready to hire me on the spot. So what the hell happened?

INTERVIEWER

Isn't it obvious?

APPLICANT

No, it's not obvious at all! Why am I suddenly not writer material?!

INTERVIEWER

*(Looking at Applicant like he can't believe the question is even being asked.)*

You're left-handed.

APPLICANT

Yes? And?

INTERVIEWER

Left-handed people can't write. I mean, it's in the very word. *Write!* Right... left... If left-handed people could write they'd call it lefting!

APPLICANT

This is bull! Total rubbish!

INTERVIEWER

Look, this can't be that much of a surprise to you. Everyone knows that lefties can't string two gerunds together to save their life.

APPLICANT

First, you don't *put* two gerunds together. Second, whether I'm right-handed or left-handed has *nothing* to do with my ability to craft a sentence.

INTERVIEWER

Look, I'm sorry. You just aren't as qualified as the other applicants.

APPLICANT

Other appl... You just said that there are no other applicants! Said you'd given up hope!

INTERVIEWER

I think you're reading into things a bit, aren't you?

APPLICANT

Reading into things? You literally told me that you'd hire me even if my writing was atrocious.

INTERVIEWER

*Atrocious* can mean a lot of different things.

APPLICANT

No. It really can't.

INTERVIEWER

I meant 'atrocious' in the pejorative sense.

APPLICANT

That's what I'm... (*Pauses, suddenly realizing...*) You don't even know what that word means, do you?

INTERVIEWER

Atrocious? Of course—

APPLICANT

No, you don't know what *pejorative* means.

INTERVIEWER

I do. It means... non-judgemental.

APPLICANT

No. It doesn't.

INTERVIEWER

Well that's how I learned it. And what would you know about it anyway? You and your fancy wrong-ways-slanty penmanship—

APPLICANT

My—

INTERVIEWER

And your holier-than-*now* attitude.

APPLICANT

Holier than... *now*?

INTERVIEWER

There's a reason why you southpaws don't get hired to write. Why can't you just accept that you simply aren't well-suited for some kinds of work?

APPLICANT

This is discrimination at its worst. This is bull, and I'm not going to sit here and just accept it.

*(Applicant stands, puts hands on hips in same posture as The Fearless Girl statue, stress ball in either hand.)*

Give me the job.

INTERVIEWER

You... you are behaving completely irrationally.

APPLICANT

Give me the job.

INTERVIEWER

You're insane.

APPLICANT

Give me the damn job!

INTERVIEWER

No! Left-handers can't write! Everyone knows that!

APPLICANT

That's total bull—

INTERVIEWER

It's common knowledge!!! You can't just waltz in here and—

*(Interviewer is clearly beginning to hyperventilate. Starts gasping a bit, and looks about on the desk for a stress ball while clutching his hands. Sees that the Applicant still has them.)*

Give me.

No. APPLICANT

Give them to me! They're mine! INTERVIEWER

No. APPLICANT

Mine!!! INTERVIEWER

You can have your balls back when you start behaving like a rational adult. APPLICANT

Mine mine mine mine mine!!! INTERVIEWER

Give me the job! APPLICANT

Give me the balls! INTERVIEWER

Job! APPLICANT

Balls!! INTERVIEWER

Now you listen to me, and you listen good! APPLICANT  
*(Applicant glares at Interviewer, gesturing with a hand that has one of the stress balls squeezed really tightly.)*

What? *(Interviewer cringes, looking utterly terrified.)*

You're squeezing them too hard. INTERVIEWER  
*(Turning into a pouty, scolded little boy)*

APPLICANT

What?!

INTERVIEWER

*(Motions to the stress ball)*

You're going to bruise them.

APPLICANT

If you don't give me the writer's job, I'm going to tear the damn things apart.

INTERVIEWER

You're really mean.

*(Applicant takes one of the stress balls in two hands, and gets ready to tear it.)*

APPLICANT

What is it going be? Do I get the job, or do I start ripping?

INTERVIEWER

*(After a pause, and with a defeated voice...)*

Fine. Take the stupid job. Just give me my balls back.

*(Applicant glares at the Interviewer until he takes out a piece of paper, checks a few boxes, then signs it. Interviewer hands the paper to Applicant, who looks at it, nods, and hands back the balls.)*

APPLICANT

Thank you.

*(Paper in hand, Applicant exits. Interviewer uses the stress balls for a few moments to calm himself, and then another Second Applicant enters.)*

SECOND APPLICANT

Excuse me. I would like to apply for a job...

INTERVIEWER

Matador?

SECOND APPLICANT

No, a... you hire matadors?

*(Interviewer just looks at him/her.)*

Anyway, no, not a matador. I want to be a writer.

INTERVIEWER

I see.

SECOND APPLICANT

I should tell you, though, I'm... you know...

INTERVIEWER

You're what?

SECOND APPLICANT

Left-handed. Is that going to be a problem?

*(Interviewer is about to protest, but pauses. Then...)*

INTERVIEWER

No. It's fine.

SECOND APPLICANT

It is? Wow! That's great. You folks are *really* progressive. Did you know that most people won't even think about letting a left-handed person work as a writer?

INTERVIEWER

You don't say...

*(Second Applicant sits down at desk and they start a proper interview as the lights fade out.)*