

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

a ten-minute play by Andrew Hinderaker

CAST

APPLICANT A: 31, female. Nervous about her big day.

INTERVIEWER A: 50s, male. Snooty. The interviewer you hope you never get.

APPLICANT B: 18, male. Riding an adrenaline rush. Needs to do this while he's still got up the nerve.

INTERVIEWER B: 30s, male. Couldn't be warmer or more inviting.

STAGING

A counter stage left.

A counter stage right.

Two chairs downstage right.

Applicant and Interviewer A operate stage right.

Applicant and Interviewer B operate stage left.

They never cross the centerline.

They never acknowledge each other.

A NOTE ON THE DIALOGUE

The play is formatted to replicate the rhythm of the speech.

For example:

INTERVIEWER A
Before we proceed with your application—

INTERVIEWER B
Lil' of the ol' paperwork.

INTERVIEWER A
I assure you it's absolutely—

INTERVIEWER B
Nothin' to worry about.

APPLICANT A
Wow.

APPLICANT B
Wow.

The dialogue should be read top-down. In this example, since Applicant A and Applicant B's line ("Wow") is written on the same line, they would both speak their line at the same time.

The dialogue should fire back and forth, unless otherwise indicated by a *beat*.

Lights up.

Interviewer A and Interviewer B stand behind their respective counters.

INTERVIEWER A

Before we proceed with your application –

INTERVIEWER B

Lil' of the ol' paperwork.

INTERVIEWER A

I assure you it's absolutely –

INTERVIEWER B

Nothin' to worry 'bout.

Interviewer A hands Applicant A paperwork.

Interviewer B hands Applicant B paperwork.

APPLICANT A

Wow.

APPLICANT B

Wow.

INTERVIEWER A

Is there a problem?

APPLICANT A

(flipping through the pages)

Oh, no, no. It's just... well, it's –

APPLICANT B

(turning his page over)

It's just one page?

APPLICANT A

It's so detailed.

INTERVIEWER A

We'll need your name –

INTERVIEWER B

Your address –

INTERVIEWER A

Your age –

APPLICANT B

Twenty-one.

APPLICANT A

Thirty-one.

(then, embarrassed)

I know. *Old.*

APPLICANT B

I'm old enough.

INTERVIEWER A
Your Social Security—

INTERVIEWER A
—goes here. Initial here, here, here, here,
here... and here.

INTERVIEWER A
(sternly)

I'll. Wait.

APPLICANT A
(frantically filling out forms)
You know it's funny.

APPLICANT A
I, I didn't expect to be so nervous.

APPLICANT A
I mean, I mean, of course I'm prepared – I
have been preparing for months—

APPLICANT A
But I'm on my way over here...

APPLICANT A
I'm sittin' on the bus –

APPLICANT A
And it hits me –

APPLICANT A
I am about to do this—

APPLICANT A
I haven't felt butterflies like this since I's
pregnant with Karen—

INTERVIEWER B
Totally optional.

INTERVIEWER B
One signature's fine.

INTERVIEWER B
No rush at all.

APPLICANT B
(filling out forms)
You know it's funny.

APPLICANT B
Thought I'd be a little nervous.

APPLICANT B
The idea just came to me this morning—

APPLICANT B
I'm on my way to school—and I'm sittin'
in my car—

APPLICANT B
And it hits me –

APPLICANT B
And the adrenaline—

APPLICANT A

And I'm riding along—and right there,
right on the bus, I start doing Lamaze—

APPLICANT A

(imitating Lamaze)

Nff-Nff-Hoo!

APPLICANT A

Cuz Lamaze isn't even—I mean, it doesn't,
it's not for stress. It's to help with the pain.

INTERVIEWER A

If I did Lamaze right now, would that ease
my pain?

APPLICANT A

I'm sorry. I, I talk a lot when I'm nervous.

INTERVIEWER A

I do have other appointments.

APPLICANT A

Yes, yes, of course.

APPLICANT A

(handing in sheet)

I'm done.

Interviewer A takes the paperwork.

APPLICANT B

And, you know, I'm driving along—

APPLICANT B

And my heart's like,

(thumping chest)

Boom, boom, boom—

APPLICANT B

And it's crazy, you know—

APPLICANT B

I talk a lot when I'm amped.

INTERVIEWER B

Hey, I'm just happy you came in.

APPLICANT B

(handing in sheet)

I'm done.

Interviewer B takes the paperwork.

APPLICANT B

So what now? Do I like, do I have to take
a test or something?

INTERVIEWER A

Look straight ahead.

INTERVIEWER A

Read the third row out loud.

APPLICANT A

E, T, J—

INTERVIEWER A

Third row from the *top*.

APPLICANT A

Oh, I thought you meant from the *bottom*.

INTERVIEWER A

Why would I mean that?

INTERVIEWER A

Do you read a book from the bottom up?

APPLICANT A

It made sense to me.

Interviewer A leans in. Dead serious.

INTERVIEWER A

Let's get something straight.

INTERVIEWER A

This is not a right.

INTERVIEWER A

It is a privilege.

INTERVIEWER B

A test?

APPLICANT B

Well... you know...

APPLICANT B

You know—to like, to test my vision?

INTERVIEWER B

Why would you take a test?

APPLICANT B

I just thought... I dunno—

Interviewer B leans in. Dead serious.

INTERVIEWER B

Let's get something straight.

INTERVIEWER B

This isn't a privilege.

INTERVIEWER B

It's your god-given right.

INTERVIEWER A

You are responsible for three thousand pounds of steel—

INTERVIEWER A

Barreling down the road at sixty miles an hour—

INTERVIEWER A

You could kill someone.

INTERVIEWER A

Now let's get started.

Interviewer and Applicant A sit in the two chairs to simulate the driver's test.

Applicant A places her hands at 10 and 2.

APPLICANT A

(taking one hand off the wheel)

You're, you're probably wondering why I waited so long to do this—

INTERVIEWER A

Two hands.

Applicant A places her hands at 10 and 2.

INTERVIEWER A

Safety first.

APPLICANT A

I'm sorry.

INTERVIEWER B

(holding a bullet)

Twelve hundred grains, full-metal jacket-

INTERVIEWER B

Slicin' through the air, eleven hundred feet per second—

APPLICANT B

(impressed)

Lethal.

INTERVIEWER B

Let's have some fun.

Interviewer B places a .45 Ruger on the counter.

Applicant B takes the gun off the counter.

Applicant B aims the gun at an imaginary target.

He snaps back the empty chamber.

INTERVIEWER B

Two hands.

Applicant B wraps both hands around the grip.

INTERVIEWER B

And don't forget the safety.

APPLICANT B

I'm sorry.

APPLICANT A

It's just... you know... I lived my whole life in the city—it's just, it's a question of *need*, you know? Like, do I really need this? Is this, like, totally necessary?

Applicant B pulls the trigger. The empty chamber snaps forward. Applicant B nods; the interviewer hands him an unloaded .357.

APPLICANT A

But, see, the thing is, see the thing is Karen just started the third grade, and you know, well, see the thing is her bus drops her off kinda far from home...

Applicant B pulls the trigger. Nods. Next.

APPLICANT A

And she was... well, about a month ago, she was getting off the bus and these kids—these, these *sixth-graders*—they *surrounded* her...

He pulls the trigger. Grins. Interviewer B hands him two .22s.

APPLICANT A

And the thing is—the thing is they didn't even do anything—they just *followed* her, all the way home...

Applicant B stares at the .22 in each hand.

APPLICANT A

And of course I flipped out when she told me—but the thing is Karen, when she told me about it—it was just... she had the softest voice... you could tell she felt so *small*.

Applicant B lifts the two guns, aims them in the air.

Applicant B fires the guns five times, their empty chambers clicking each time he fires.

APPLICANT A

These things—they can stay with kids, you know?

APPLICANT B

I'm all set.

INTERVIEWER A

We're finished here.

APPLICANT A
Wait, no, what? *No.*

APPLICANT A
What'd I do?

INTERVIEWER A
You rolled through a stop sign.

APPLICANT A
What?

APPLICANT A
Please—no—

APPLICANT A
Just—just let me try again.

INTERVIEWER A
I'm afraid that's impossible.

INTERVIEWER A
You can try again in four weeks—

APPLICANT A
Four weeks?

APPLICANT A
No—

APPLICANT A
I can't wait that long—

INTERVIEWER B
Fantastic.

INTERVIEWER B
Which one'll it be?

APPLICANT B
What?

INTERVIEWER B
Which one would you like?

APPLICANT B
You don't get it.

APPLICANT B
I want *all* of them.

INTERVIEWER B
Well, that's not a problem at all.

INTERVIEWER B
You can pick 'em up in forty-eight hours.

APPLICANT B
Forty-eight hours?

APPLICANT B
No—

APPLICANT B
I need to do this *today*.

APPLICANT A

Please—just—I did everything I was supposed to do—I took a class—I took a class with fifteen year-olds—

APPLICANT A

I passed the eye exam—

APPLICANT A

I aced the written test—

INTERVIEWER A

The law is the law.

Beat.

APPLICANT A
(*resigned*)

Fine.

Applicant A starts to exit.

INTERVIEWER A

Young lady.

Applicant A stops.

INTERVIEWER A
(*with unexpected warmth*)

If it's really important...

INTERVIEWER A

Why don't you come in, we'll sign you up for another slot?

APPLICANT B

I filled out the form—

APPLICANT B

I'll pay up front.

INTERVIEWER B

No, hey, I'm awful sorry...

INTERVIEWER B

The law is the law.

Beat.

APPLICANT B
(*resigned*)

Whatever.

Applicant B starts to exit.

INTERVIEWER B

Young man.

Applicant B stops.

INTERVIEWER B

If you really need a firearm right now...

INTERVIEWER B

Why don't you take a look at some shotguns?

APPLICANT A

(resigned)

It's just... four weeks—

INTERVIEWER A

It's just a precaution.

INTERVIEWER A

You have to understand...

INTERVIEWER A

Once we hand over that license...

INTERVIEWER A

We have no control over what you'll do.

(quick beat)

Better safe than sorry—you understand?

APPLICANT A

It's just... it's a hard thing—to send your child off to school. And, you know, Karen's school is just so *big*. It's one of those all-in-ones, you know—grade school through college—they're all right there in the same building.

APPLICANT A

I just want her to be safe.

Quick Beat.

INTERVIEWER A

Come on. Let's get you signed up.

APPLICANT B

(confused)

Forty-eight hours?

INTERVIEWER B

Doesn't apply.

INTERVIEWER B

It's just for handguns.

Applicant B returns to the counter.

Interviewer B hands Applicant B a twelve-gauge shotgun.

APPLICANT B

And I can—I can have this today?

INTERVIEWER B

You won't even be late for class.

Applicant B stares at the shotgun in admiration.

Applicant B pumps the shotgun.

INTERVIEWER B

Let's get you squared away.

APPLICANT B
(not taking his eyes off the gun)
One thing.

APPLICANT A
I do have one question.

APPLICANT A
How many, um...

APPLICANT B
How many, um...

INTERVIEWER A
How many what?

APPLICANT A
How many times can I take the test?

APPLICANT B
How many can I get?

Interviewer A smiles reassuringly.

Interviewer B smiles reassuringly.

INTERVIEWER A
As many as you want.

INTERVIEWER B
As many as you want.

Lights fade.

Lights fade.

End of play.