

ENTRANCE EXAM  
By Mark Bellusci

© Copyright 2005  
Mark Bellusci  
104 Hemlock Drive  
Stamford, CT 06902  
[mark@markbellusci.com](mailto:mark@markbellusci.com)

CAST:

DAN: 35 to 45

LORI: 35 to 45

MS. GRAHAM: Any age from late 20's to 60's.

TIME:

Present

SCENE:

A bedroom.

AT RISE:

DAN is trying to put on a collared shirt and tie. The shirt looks foreign on him, and buttoning the top button is a chore. He finally gets it buttoned, but it's painfully tight. He then makes a knot for his tie, but he is badly out of practice, so the knot is too big, the thin part is too long, etc. DAN becomes enraged. He pulls on both sides of the tie in obvious frustration, almost choking himself in the process.

DAN

Come on!

(HE sighs deeply.)

Relaxxxxxx. Breeeeeeeeathe.

(He does so, taking a few long meditative breaths. He smiles and calmly buttons HIS TOP BUTTON. HE MAINTAINS A STRAINED SMILE as veins pop on his neck. He then tries the tie again, has the same problems and explodes again. He pulls at the tie, whips it against the floor and steps on it. After a moment, LORI opens the door and watches impassively. After a moment, DAN notices LORI.)

DAN

The, uh, shirt was, um, a little tight and--

LORI

The breathing exercise?

DAN

Tried it. The tie fell and -- haven't worn one since your cousin's wedding -- and the shirt was choking--

LORI

(Sighing, putting the tie around his neck and making a knot.)  
This is too important to--

DAN

Yeah yeah yeah.

LORI

Just plant a smile on your face and--

DAN

(Struggling with the tight shirt.)  
Why can't I just leave the top button open--

LORI

We're not taking any chances.

DAN

It's just an interview. You're treating it like the super bowl--

LORI

It could be the difference between our son getting in or not.

DAN

A million places would love to take our money--

LORI

They don't compare to this one.

DAN

A school is a school is a --

LORI

Don't be naive. You know how important--

DAN

No, I don't. Because we never went to some expensive, pompous,  
holier-than-thou --

LORI

Things are different today.

DAN

Not the basics: hard work, determination,  
(Imitating a running back's moves.)  
the right moves.

LORI

Please, no sports babble on an empty stomach.

DAN

(Ignoring her.)  
Got the moves,  
(Sports announcer voice, a la Chris Berman.)  
you could ... go ... all ... the ... way.

LORI

Today, you don't come from the right school, you won't even be  
looked at.

DAN  
Sure you will, if you got the "J."  
(Shooting imaginary hoops.)  
Talent rises.

LORI  
So does bullshit. Don't throw it.

DAN  
(Gesturing with sign language.)  
Fine. I'll just chime in with sign.

LORI  
(Looking at her watch.)  
Come on, we're going to be late.

DAN  
How come we couldn't go with Johnny?

LORI  
His meeting is longer.

DAN  
We could've rode with him, grabbed a cup of coffee--

LORI  
They didn't want--

DAN  
Sending the "official" van? We could've rode with him, grabbed a  
cup of coffee and --

LORI  
They want to meet him alone. As an independent person--

DAN  
What, we're going to prop him on our lap and throw voices?

LORI  
Watch the wisecracks, can the sports talk and take that chip off  
your shoulder.

DAN  
I'll be a Zen monk--  
(Tries to stretch his shirt collar.)  
unless this tie chokes me.

LORI  
Screw this up, and it won't be the only thing choking you.

**END OF SCENE.**

**SCENE II**

**SETTING:**

A meticulous academic office.

**AT RISE:**

MS. GRAHAM is seated, reviewing papers. Beat, then a knock on the door.

MS. GRAHAM

Enter.

(DAN and LORI enter. LORI effusively reaches to shake MS. GRAHAM's hand.)

LORI

Hi. We're honored and privileged to--

(Before taking her hand, MS. GRAHAM sets an alarm on a watch or desk clock. She then limply and imperiously takes LORI's hand, followed by DAN's.)

MS. GRAHAM

This institution is pleased to make the acquaintance of all prospective applicants and next of kin. It is requested that interviewees assume seated positions.

(DAN rolls his eyes at LORI.)

LORI

(Nervousness and forced cheerfulness as they both sit.)  
Yes ... of course. We appreciate your time and--

MS. GRAHAM

It is in the interest of this institution to expediently ascertain the motives and desires of the prospective students and kin. Please discuss the aforementioned motives in a timely, succinct manner.

DAN

What??--

LORI

Well, your academic reputation is impeccable, so naturally you were Johnny's and our first choice.

MS. GRAHAM

A logical, if somewhat predictable, response. Next, provide a cogent, pithy--

DAN

Pithy??--

MS. GRAHAM

Explanation of the positive contributions this institution is likely to expect from the prospective student.

DAN

Besides our checkbook?

LORI

(LORI glares at him as she answers.)  
Johnny will add to the prestige and honor of this venerable institution through his diligence, creativity and winning personality.

(DAN looks at LORI, impressed with her answer.)

MS. GRAHAM

Additional comments?

(LORI and MS. GRAHAM look expectantly at DAN.)

DAN

(To MS. GRAHAM.)  
What she said.

MS. GRAHAM

(Warily looking at DAN.)  
Next, an objective critique is required of the deficiencies the applicant is striving to overcome.

DAN

What deficiencies? He's a good kid--

MS. GRAHAM

Responses must be provided in an objective, analytical manner.

DAN

I'm telling you, there's nothing wrong with--

LORI

(Nervously, as if memorized.)  
Empirical and experiential evidence suggest that Johnny must hone his Boolean logic skills.

DAN

Where'd you get that?

MS. GRAHAM

(Checking off on her list.)

The response is deemed sufficient.

(Sigh of relief from LORI; sigh of frustration from DAN.)

MS. GRAHAM

(Reading from her notes)

In reviewing the prospective student's evaluations, the Wexler-Mendrake scores--

DAN

Who??--

MS. GRAHAM

Are FTAA.

DAN

What?

LORI

(Sotto voce to DAN.)

"Fair-to-above-average."

(To MS. GRAHAM.)

Yes, Johnny is gifted in--

MS. GRAHAM

On the PPSAT testing, the prospective student achieved SITM status.

DAN

SITM? That's great! ... Right?

LORI

(Sotto voce, to DAN.)

"Somewhere in the middle."

MS. GRAHAM

On the Connith Hawkins Combined, he scored in the WTS range.

(DAN looks at LORI questioningly.)

LORI

(Sotto voce, to DAN.)

The "Wow, that's something" range.

DAN

Cool!

MS. GRAHAM

Mr. Vidra, it is the expectation of this institution that all family members will have memorized the testing and measuring glossary.

DAN

Sorry, I must have been out *trying to make a living*.

LORI

We're fully indoctrinated in the terminology of --

MS. GRAHAM

At this present point in time, it is required to examine the genealogy, philosophy and sociology of the student's line of descent.

DAN

Huh?

LORI

They need to know more about us.

DAN

What for? We're not applying.

LORI

We're happy to share our backgrounds.

DAN

Professions?

LORI

I'm an architect. I love my job and--

MS. GRAHAM

Logical, analytical, rational. Mr. Vidra?

DAN

I'm a Word prostitute.

(LORI groans.)

MS. GRAHAM

A?

DAN

A hack. Copy boy. Trained typing chimp.

LORI

My husband is a successful, influential and stable creative director at the powerful advertising agency of --

DAN

(Sarcastic.)

Yeah, the genius behind such winning lines as "Lasik surgery: Thirty-seven dollars per eye, per month." Tremendously successful for the client -- until people asked for one month of surgery in one eye.

(MS. GRAHAM writes notes.)

LORI

(With a forced laugh while glaring at DAN.)

Dan is embarrassed to boast about his many advertising accomplishments.

DAN

Would you like me to boast about my dog hair remover idea? Rubber bands attached to Velcro. Put it on your hand, pet your dog, pick up the hair. Called it the Love Glove -- till my client got sued by a pornographic supply shop.

LORI

I think you've explained enough, dear.

DAN

Did I explain why I stay at that agency? So Johnny can afford to attend *said institution*?

MS. GRAHAM

Said information is not relevant to the stated question. It is necessary to move on to heritage and genealogy. Please state your--

DAN

Why do you need--

LORI

I'm part English, part Welsh, and a tad Irish.

(MS. GRAHAM looks at DAN.)

DAN

You know what I am.

LORI

Guessing is inviolate of school policy.

DAN

I'm Italian. You satisfied?

MS. GRAHAM

The question of my satisfaction is irrelevant to--

DAN

Yeah, right. Like you people don't notice.

LORI

Dan!

MS. GRAHAM

Racial bias is inimical to the ideals of--

DAN

Italian really throws you people for a loop. Not quite ethnic like Latino or African American, but not quite white bread.

MS. GRAHAM

It is unnecessary to provide editorial--

DAN

Still, something red flagish about it. Something Soprano-ish.

LORI

Um, Dan?

DAN

Damn, I hate that show! What it's done to Italians.

MS. GRAHAM

This academician has not been exposed to the aforementioned broadcast.

DAN

What, you don't like shows about Italians?

LORI

(Sotto voce.)

Dan!

MS. GRAHAM

The broadcast views of this academician are not germane to said interview, which will continue with religious affiliations, inclinations or lack thereof.

LORI

Certainly. My religious background is--

DAN

Why do you--

MS. GRAHAM

It is deemed necessary to ensure tolerance of all religious preferences.

LORI

I'm Protestant.

(MS. GRAHAM notes it.)

DAN

I'm confused.

MS. GRAHAM

(Without looking up.)

Confusion is not deemed an appropriate response for--

LORI

Dan is Catholic--

DAN

*Confused* Catholic.

MS. GRAHAM

(Flustered, looking at list.)

Space is not provided for modifications to existing religious denominations--

LORI

Catholic is fine.

DAN

*Confused* is fine.

MS. GRAHAM

It is unclear how to designate--

LORI

(To DAN.)

Can't you just say--

DAN

No. I like people who are religiously confused. Never have to worry about them preaching to you. What could they possibly say? "He -- or she, or it -- is coming soon ... Or maybe later ... Or maybe not at all. So repent. Or don't. Up to you."

LORI

Just call him Catholic, or he'll get his afterlife answers a lot faster than he thinks.

DAN

Then put an asterisk next to it.

MS. GRAHAM

(Glad for a workable solution.)

Ah yes, an asterisk. That can be accommodated.

DAN

Gee, my lucky day.

MS. GRAHAM

Next, provide verbal descriptions of the familial relationships within your household.

DAN

What??

LORI

We're a close family that--

DAN

There's no way I'm--

MS. GRAHAM

It is the position of this institution that the academic and communal capabilities of the student are directly proportional to the stability or lack thereof of prior child rearing experiences.

LORI

We're a stable family unit--

DAN

Can't believe this.

LORI

Dan and I are--

DAN

Are ax murderers.

LORI

(Nervously.)

There he goes again with that sense of humor.

DAN

We're cross dressers and couple swingers, all right?

LORI

(Nervous fake laugh as she glares at DAN.)

Oh, I just love when he kids like that.

MS. GRAHAM

It is the belief of this institution that sarcasm is detrimental to--

DAN

Johnny makes the grade, his tuition gets paid. That's all you need to know.

MS. GRAHAM

This institution is within its bounds to--

DAN

What happens between Lori and me at home has nothing to do with--

LORI

But nothing happens at home! I mean, out of the ordinary.

DAN

That's not the point.

LORI

What *is* the point, Dan?

DAN

The point is, these people, with their holier-than thou attitudes, their lofty airs, their--

LORI

Ummm--

DAN

No! What makes her think she's better than us?

MS. GRAHAM

This academician has never claimed superiority--

DAN

"This academician" has never heard of the word, "I."

MS. GRAHAM

It is unclear as to the meaning of the prior statement.

DAN

First person singular? Try it some time.

MS. GRAHAM

That comment is found to be derogatory and unfounded--

DAN

"I. You. She. Us. We. Them." Come on, give 'em a shot.

MS. GRAHAM

It is inappropriate to--

DAN

You people can't even argue right--

MS. GRAHAM

(Shouts.)

It has been deemed to be enough!

(Beat.)

LORI

I am soooo sorry for Dan's--

DAN

Don't apologize. They wanted to gauge us, now we're gauging them.

MS. GRAHAM

Is there a perception that this job is a cakewalk?

DAN

"Cakewalk." Better.

MS. GRAHAM

Dealing with students all day --

DAN

(Encouraging MS. GRAHAM.)

Okay, keep going.

MS. GRAHAM

(Bristling.)

Grading mediocre tests --

DAN

Come on.

MS. GRAHAM

(Building anger.)

Hearing the "you people" tirades --

DAN

You can do it! --

MS. GRAHAM

(Over the edge.)

One more interruption, and I will shove this evaluation up your--

DAN

Yes!

(MS. GRAHAM is shocked by her outburst.)

LORI

What are--

DAN

"I" She referred to herself as "I."

LORI

You've lost your mind--

DAN

Now we're communicating! *You and I and her.*

LORI

(With a smile, but ominous.)

Oh, you and I will be doing plenty of communicating later.

(MS. GRAHAM is still shocked by her outburst. Phone rings.  
SHE numbly picks up.)

MS. GRAHAM

Yes? ... Very well.

(Hangs up and addresses DAN and LORI in her former manner.)

It is determined--

DAN

Wait--

MS. GRAHAM

That the prospective student--

DAN

Don't slip back--

MS. GRAHAM

Has completed his evaluation and will be appearing presently.

DAN

You were making such progress.

MS. GRAHAM

Progression is not to be confused with regression. This is an esteemed academic institution.

DAN

But I knew where you were coming from.

MS. GRAHAM

Emotional outbursts are frowned upon, irrespective of their source.

DAN

(Sighing in defeat.)  
Just like the Mets, up a run in the ninth.

LORI

(Almost to herself.)  
Great, sports analogies. Completely bury our chances.

DAN

(Oblivious to LORI'S comments.)  
Then -- bam! -- a two-run shot from Chipper Jones.

MS. GRAHAM

It is the view of this academician--

DAN

Just forget it.

MS. GRAHAM

That Mr. Jones of the Atlanta Braves--

DAN

You know him?--

MS. GRAHAM

Will not have said opportunity now that the aforementioned Mets have acquired the services of Mr. Pedro Martinez.

DAN

I can't believe--

MS. GRAHAM

It is a particular passion of this academician to follow the *other* New York baseball team.

DAN

It is surprising to this fellow fan --  
(Surprised by his choice of language.)  
I am surprised that you would ...

MS. GRAHAM

It is unwise to prejudge individuals, even academicians.

DAN

So? Think they have a shot?

(The two are bonding. Conversation is faster, upbeat and more animated.)

MS. GRAHAM

It has proven to be difficult to predict the success ratio for said Metropolitans.

DAN

Tell me about it.

MS. GRAHAM

However, it is feasible to be guardedly optimistic.

DAN

Yep. Pedro has a few good years left, and if he holds up--

MS. GRAHAM

The question remains, however, will those responsible for driving in runs achieve their full potential?

DAN

Well, you never know, but if Piazza's healthy and Beltran--  
(Door knocks. MS. GRAHAM approaches door.)

MS. GRAHAM

It appears that John has arrived.

DAN

There's the old boy.

( MS. GRAHAM opens the door and is handed a sleeping baby,  
whom she then hands to LORI.)

DAN

Heyyyy, Johnny.

LORI

If you're lucky, you'll be accepted into this daycare institution.

MS. GRAHAM

*Academic* daycare institution.

LORI

Oops. Sorry.

DAN

And if you are, maybe you, mommy and I -- *and* this esteemed academician -- could play hooky --

MS. GRAHAM

Unexcused absences are in violation of--

DAN

(Pulling tickets from his wallet.)  
And enjoy these front row seats to the Mets.

(Beat.)

MS. GRAHAM

Unless, of course, extenuating circumstances arise ...

DAN

Includes Skybox seats at the Diamond Club.

(Beat. MS. GRAHAM then stamps various papers.)

MS. GRAHAM

It is the decision of this academician that the prospective student and immediate family have met the criteria of said institution.

DAN

Yes! --

LORI

We can keep our jobs!

MS. GRAHAM

Orientation is to commence at Oh seven hundred hours on Monday. Tardiness frowned upon, diapers required.

LORI

Thank you.

DAN

See you Monday.

(They're about to leave.)

MS. GRAHAM

Oh, Mr. Vidra?

DAN

Yeah?

MS. GRAHAM

(Timid, sotto voce.)

At said athletic event, is it permissible to bring one's baseball mitt?

DAN

We'll all have 'em.

MS. GRAHAM

Very well. Good day.

DAN

Later.

(They leave. Beat. She then pulls out a baseball glove from her drawer along with a baseball. She throws the ball against the wall.)

MS. GRAHAM

The Mets game is anticipated to be

(She giggles.)

... Cooool

LIGHTS DOWN.

END