

The Interview.

a short story by

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Finding her way to the right office was not easy. Gemma had a pretty good sense of direction as a woman, rather than what she had read about men, and wasn't afraid to ask for directions. Sadly, the directions she had received so far had only added to her confusion. First it was up four flights, then down two. Now, she was thoroughly confused. A quick glance at her watch told her that she would soon be late, a disaster considering the importance of this interview. "Damn," she said out loud, "why do they make these places so labyrinthine." She closed her eyes and fired off a quick prayer, "please help me find it."

A voice came from behind her. It was a personable young man who had a kind face. "Are you lost?" He asked with a smile. The look on her face gave him his answer. "It happened to me when I first came here. Where do you want to be?" Gemma showed him the letter she had received. "Ah, I see. Yes that is a tricky one. Follow me." He led off in a totally alien direction to what she expected and she simply followed.

"I'm awfully grateful," she said as an after thought. He made no reply. Within 30 seconds they arrived at the door bearing the same letters as on her letter. He opened it for her and she passed through in front of him. The room was quite large, with a reception desk to one side of it. The other side had chairs set out for those who were waiting. Gemma strolled up to the desk and stood waiting for the receptionist to acknowledge her presence. It didn't happen. It was as though she was invisible. The over made up woman behind the desk was engrossed in a phone call and speaking in an overloud, put on posh voice. Gemma waited patiently for a couple of minutes, and then began to make throat clearing noises, getting successively louder as each was ignored. In the end, she gave up and went and sat in a chair.

Fully five minutes later, the woman behind the desk put the phone down and turned at last to the forlorn looking female sat on a chair. "Yes, can I help you?" She asked in that sickly voice that some receptionists develop. "I have an appointment," Gemma said, standing to show the letter she had received. The receptionist took it from her and glanced at it momentarily. "Ah yes, Mr. Fordham. You're late." Gemma bit her lip. "I have been waiting for ten minutes," she said as calmly as she could. She got no response. Instead, the receptionist hit a switch and said, "your 10 o'clock is here." The reply came, "send her in would you." There was a click, and the receptionist turned to Gemma saying, "you can go in now." Gemma wanted to wipe the sickly smile off her face, but thought better of it. "Which door?" She asked, but the phone rang loudly and drowned her out. The receptionist picked it up and was engrossed in conversation again within seconds.

Realising it was hopeless, Gemma turned and went through the door in the opposite wall hoping it was the right one. "Miss Freeman?" The man asked. "Yes Mr. Fordham." At last she was where she needed to be. Without looking up, the young man said, "please take a seat." Gemma did, and waited patiently for him to finish what he was doing and begin the interview. Several minutes passed in absolute silence, the man looking at papers on his desk. He didn't look up for another five minutes.

Gemma began to seethe inwardly, but tried not to let it show. "This is all part of some psychological plan to see what I do." She said inwardly to herself. Armed with this knowledge, she sat back and began to think of anything that might take her mind off her anger. It wasn't very successful.

Eventually, the young man put the papers away and sat back in his chair to look at her. She stared back without flinching until he smiled and said, "so you are here about the job." "Yes," she replied as calmly as she could. "I suppose you are aware that put great store in punctuality here Miss Freeman." Gemma thought for a split second before answering... "Why?" She asked assertively. He looked shocked at such a response and stuttered in trying to answer. "W w well, we feel it is important that our staff are on time..." "Why!" She cut him off, "So that they can be ignored for ten minutes by the receptionist, and then told they are late, only to come in here and wait another ten minutes whilst you behaved abominably!"

He was flabbergasted. "This interview is over Miss Freeman, Kindly close the door on the way out." "I certainly will Mr. Fordham, if only to keep mealy mouthed arrogant little men like you in. I wouldn't work here, for you, if my life depended on it, which it most certainly does not." With that, she stood up and gracefully left the office, closing the door behind her.

"How did it go dear?" The receptionist asked as she re appeared. "Rather well I thought." Gemma replied. "Thank you for the part you played in it." The receptionist looked puzzled. "My part?" "Yes, your rudeness got me warmed up for him." She pointed back to the office. "Without your ignoring me for ten minutes, I wouldn't have been in the right frame of mind to deal with young Mr. Spotty in there. As it was, I was in just the right frame of mind. Good bye."

Gemma turned on her heels and left the room. It was funny, she had no trouble at all in finding her way out of the building. Once outside, she slackened her pace and breathed in deeply. It was a beautiful day so she set off at a leisurely pace for the park.