

## The Cliché Interview

By Daniel German

“I am so sorry I’m late, Mr. Anderson,” Josh said rushing into a large office room. The walls were lined with bookshelves and diplomas. Josh felt very out of place in this office.

“It’s no problem... Joshua?” Mr. Anderson said noticing a large stain, not so cleverly, covered by a vest on Josh’s shirt. “We received your message that you got stuck in traffic, at ten a.m. on a Thursday. I’m just happy you made it.”

“Likewise.”

Mr. Anderson offered Josh a seat and then proceeded to go across his large, cluttered, desk and sat down himself. Clearing his throat, he picked up a clipboard ready to start the interview, however he spotted Josh was still breathing hard. “Do you need some water?”

“Oh, no I’ll be fine,” Josh took off his messenger bag and started to rummage through it, he paused for a second, then he emerged with a small box of apple juice. Smiling, Josh drank the juice.

“Okay, well Joshua Cooper, tell me about yourself.”

“Oh,” Josh said almost as if he was physically punched by the question. “First things first, no one’s called me Joshua since...” he cleared his throat, “It’s just Josh.”

“Okay, what else is there to know about you, Josh?”

“Not much, I’m kind of a shut in.”

“Okay.”

“Sorry, is that wrong? I’ve never been good with questions like that. Those first day of school cliché questions, the ‘What did you do over summer?’, ‘Tell us three surprising things about you, things. I always hated them, was never good at them.’”

“Good to know.”

*Did I just call his question cliché? Josh thought to himself, don’t worry about it, I’ll do better on the next one.*

“So, were you popular in school, how do you think your fellow students would describe you?”

*Seriously dude, two clichés in a row, get some new material.*

“I had a couple friends still talk to them all, even now that we’re all busy with life.” Josh said.

*And they’d probably describe me as the liar who stopped talking to us after freshmen year.*

“Awesome,” Mr. Anderson said, “I loved my time in high school, what would you say were your greatest achievements of your time there?”

*Sitting through this interview has vastly surpassed any achievements I made in high school.*

“Probably, joining debate team, and being with them as we went all the way to state,” Josh said.

Mr. Anderson smiled, “We are constantly looking out for former debate students. What would you say was your greatest strength that you brought to your team?”

*Not openly gagging at this string of questions, and possibly the follow up...*

“What were some weaknesses?”

Josh gagged a little. “There it is,” he said. “Strengths I would say, my devotion to studying, I always loved learning new things about whatever subject we were debating.

Weaknesses, I would say caring too much.”

*Stick that in your cliché and suck it!*

“Wonderful,” Mr. Anderson said with a smile “So, we here at Anderson, Barry, Parker, and Xing, want our employees to feel like they are able to grow here at our law firm.”

*Oh no.*

“Where do you see yourself in five years?”

*If I make it out of this interview with my sanity intact, I'll be hitting the streets informing everyone that miracles still happen. Other than that, I have no clue.*

“Most likely, I would have built up my case portfolio, vying to become an associate here,” Josh said.

“Well said, but tell me, in your eyes why should we hire you?”

*Because I need a job and you're allegedly hiring, so I feel this could be a 'two birds' situation.*

“I feel as though I will be able to thrive in this company as well as cause this company to thrive as long as I am here.”

*Ugh, I think I pulled something with that one.* Josh subtly stretched his shoulder and winced a little.

“Amazing,” Mr. Anderson said. “Why do you want to work here?”

*I've been told to go to hell so many times, I thought I'd might as well check it out.*

“You have amazing lawyers here, I want to be one,” Josh said.

“Good answer, now, do you want to work here?” Mr. Anderson asked.

*What?*

“What?”

“I don’t know if you’ve noticed but every time I ask you a question, your face scrunches, and your head falls like you’ve just been hit in the stomach, plus your left eyebrow has been raised since you sat down as if you were quietly judging me, not to mention the time that you openly gagged for no reason like I wouldn’t notice. So, I just want to know if it was a waste of my time agreeing to do this interview, or if you really want to work here at all? Because, I have a job, and I would very much enjoy getting back to it, if you want to get back to whatever you call a life.”

“I’m sorry,” Josh said. “I’ve just always been warned against clichés. My father used to always say, ‘A man who can’t speak in his own words, shouldn’t speak at all.’ He was an English professor so every day he received student’s papers using every stock phrase in the book, it worked his nerves, and I guess that rubbed off on me.”

“Though that does answer some questions, I asked if you want to work here, and now I want a different reason why?”

*Because I enjoy Wi-Fi and food.* A small smirk crept onto Josh’s face.

“You are incredibly funny in your head, aren’t you?”

“And you are invasively perceptive.” The two chuckled.

“Look,” Josh continued. “I do want this job, and I want it because I need it.”

“I don’t understand.”

“My parents died six months ago, car accident.”

Mr. Anderson shifted in his seat, "I'm so sorry."

"Why, you didn't do it," Josh said. "Unless you moonlight as a streetlamp."

An awkward smile was shared between them

"Anyway, they left me in charge of my two sisters, they're four. In this instance, a twenty-year difference in children was a good thing because, in their will, they stated that they wanted me to 'take care of them and watch over them, as I always have.' I took this as 'you have custody of your sisters,' however, my overbearing, loveless, rightwing, nut of a grandmother tried to take my sisters from me. And the appointed lawyer we were given was, in a word, horrible. In multiple words, he was a week out of law school, and finally passed the Bar on his fourth try."

"Wow" said Mr. Anderson with wide eyes.

"I know right! So, after the horrible first month I court, I fired him and took over the responsibilities of the attorney, and somehow, I found it fun. The most fun I ever had, verbally sparring with my grandmother's head lawyer, cross examining their witnesses and trapping them in their own words, providing my final plea to the judge having everyone hanging on my every word. I hadn't felt that way since debate team," Josh smiled, Mr. Anderson took a deep breath then smiled back

"Then somehow," Josh continued, "I won, and along with that I found a passion that I didn't even know I had. So, I want this job, but even more than that I need this job, not only because I have two more mouths to feed, but because this is what I love to do, and you're the only law firm hiring."

Mr. Anderson then laughed a little, “If you had said that for my first question I would have had security on you faster than you could say cliché. Although it would’ve explained the juice box.”

“Kelly likes to switch lunches without telling me.”

“And the stain?”

“Tory’s been sick and... laundry day.”

“Understandable, I have three girls myself, I don’t even let the oldest stay in the same room with the youngest for too long. I admire your strength, and love for this field. And if I could hire you, I would.”

“Wait, what?”

“I can’t give you this job, you’re not even in a school of law currently, you’ve had one experience with the court room, and that’s awesome, but we have applicants that have shadowed people, or been through internships, and one who used to have their own small firm.”

“Then why did you see me?”

“Apparently you made a good impression on my assistant during your custody trial.”

“Well, now I know,” Josh packed up his bag and started to storm off.”

“Wait,” Mr. Anderson said.

“What?”

Mr. Anderson took a card from his desk drawer and walked over to Josh. Handing him the card he said, “Take a class, I don’t care where, pass the Bar, then call again for a lawyer position.”

Josh took the card and went for the door again.

“In the meantime,” Mr. Anderson called. “I may be needing a second assistant.”

Josh turned and smiled from ear to ear. "I'm in," he said.

"Great," Mr. Anderson said. "Do you have any last questions for me?"

Josh's smile fell and he turned and walked out the door, "Seriously!" he said, as it closed.