INTERVIEWESE - Excerpt

Cast of Characters:

WILMA BLUCKLE – Female, Late 30's to Mid 40's – quiet, bookish
POPPY SZANK – Female, Late 30's to Mid 40's – loud, abrasive
JANET JANET – Female, Mid to Late 20's – bubbly, overly sweet
BEVERLY WEATHERS – Female, Late 40's to Early 50's – snobbish, privileged

There is an offstage female voice of a RECEPTIONIST that should be prerecorded audio.

Setting:

The lobby interior of Massil Technologies, Inc., 3rd Floor

Time:

Early Afternoonish

SYNOPSIS:

The economy sucks, the job market is hell, and four women arrive to the lobby of Massil Technologies Incorporated to vie for the coveted position of Senior Accountant: Wilma Bluckle, a brainy introvert with an extraordinary memory; Janet Janet, the model of gentility and grace; Beverly Weathers, an experienced worker with ambition in spades; Poppy Szank, who may or may not have just slept in the wheel well of 747. A voice on the intercom reveals that the interview will begin in ten minutes, but as the women get to know each other, test each other, taunt each other, they begin to realize that the interview may never come. Four women enter--and only one may leave with a 401K. *Interviewese* is an absurdist comedy about corporate ambition, ethics and morality, and what we would do for the right job.

The stage is set as an office lobby; a pleather sofa rests against the back wall; highly placed windows give the glow of sun from outside, but no light streams directly into the space. There is a potted plant SL of the sofa, tall and treelike, with leaves that dangle over the SL sofa cushion. There is a second chair positioned on an angle DSR of the sofa, and a glass covered end table between them with a working lamp. Angled between the SR wall and the US wall is a glass door leading to the "office"; the glass is tinted; translucent but appearing opaque. Beside the office door is a small beverage tray with several disposable hot cups and a small silver coffee pot. A second door SL (also tinted glass, with backwards lettering that read MASSIL TECH INC) leads out to the "hall / elevators." A second chair sits DS of the SL door.

INTERVIEWESE

(Lights come up dimly on the lobby of MASSIL TECHNOLOGIES, INC. The lobby appears empty, as the office lights are still off, but if one peers closely enough, one can see the figure of WILMA BLUCKLE, seated silently on the leather sofa. She wears glasses, a gray suit, and holds a suitcase on her lap. She is motionless. Then she sneezes. It is a loud, aggressive sneeze—the kind of sneeze you never want to witness coming from the guy sitting next to you on the bus. The kind that makes one's hat fly off. WILMA pulls out a folded handkerchief from her inside jacket pocket and dabs her nose, gently replaces it. She is once again motionless.)

(From the overhead loudspeaker, she hears:)

RECEPTIONIST VOICE:
The interview will begin in... ten... minutes. Thank you for your patience.

(The stomping of feet from outside, and the lobby door bursts open. Enter POPPY SZANK, who could only be described as a force of nature—if a tsunami and a hurricane had a one-night stand, she would be their bastard lovechild. POPPY is round, dressed in an ill-fitting floral dress, and she carries a monstrous purse, overflowing with loose sheets of paper. She wears two mismatched shoes; one is a sneaker, the other is a pump. She is winded, but she stops when she sees the lights are not on, and she grins in the darkness.)

POPPY:
Ha-lleh-fucking-loo-yah.

(Cheerily, POPPY drops her purse to the floor, and finds the light switch, turns them on.)

And I said: "Let there be lice, and there were lice."

(She scratches her head, and as she turns, spots WILMA)

Christ on toast!
Christ on muther-fucking toast.

WILMA:
I'm sorry?

POPPY:
You didn't—you did not scare me.

WILMA:
Okay.

POPPY:

I always—
Listen, lady, I thought I was the first—I was trying to be the first—

WILMA:

The first what?

POPPY:

Never mind. Goddamned receptionist. Made me take the fucking stairs. Can you believe it? Five flights—but the elevator's broke, she says. The elevator's broke and you have to walk up stairs. So I told her she should get hit by a bus. What a fucking joke. At least I got on my good shoes.

WILMA:

They are nice.

POPPY:

Who the shit asked you? What are you, the shoe whisperer? Christ toast! I was tryin' to be the first.

(POPPY dumps the papers from her purse onto the sofa)

WILMA:

You are the first.

POPPY:

You're the fucking first, four eyes. What time's your appointment? They told me three o'clock.

WILMA:

Me too.

POPPY:

You too, what?

WILMA:

My appointment is also for—

POPPY:

Oh, no it's not. No, no, no it's not. If I'm on for three, you better be not for three, you get me?

WILMA:

I think so—

POPPY:

I'm the fucking three o'clock. You can ask anybody. Ask Barry.

WILMA:

Who's Barry?

POPPY:

What is this, the Spanish Intermission? Lay off, Four-noses.

(Defeated, POPPY flops down on the sofa beside WILMA. The papers she ejected from her purse go flying.)

How long you been sitting here?

WILMA:

I don't know.

POPPY:

What, like, five minutes? Fifteen? An hour?

WILMA:

Maybe fifteen?

POPPY:

Fifteen hours?

WILMA:

Minutes?

POPPY:

Is that a question?

WILMA:

Is what a question?

POPPY:

I'M THE THREE O'CLOCK.

(WILMA shrinks back. POPPY takes a breath, calms herself, extends a hand)

Hey, I didn't mean to get off on the wrong shoe. It's stress. You know? Stress makes us do weird shit. Once, I ate a squirrel. What's your name, cheese log?

WILMA:

Wilma Bluckle. You ate a squirrel?

POPPY:

"Bluckle?" Know what that rhymes with?

WILMA:

"Chuckle?"

(POPPY considers this.)

POPPY:

Touché. Well, Wilbur, I think you better go.

WILMA:

Excuse me?

POPPY:

Because I got this interview in the bag, see? I got the face, I got the attitude, and I got the body for it. And you got the nothing.

WILMA:

I beg your pardon.

POPPY:

I look at you, Wilpo, and you know what I see? I see a woman who's got two feet up her own hoo-hoo, you know? A woman who can't tell the difference between a conch or a scupper, you know? A woman who got up this morning and decided that she'd like her color scheme to read 'dust,' you know? And do you have any idea who you're up against?

WILMA:

Not... really—

POPPY:

My name is Poppy Szank—that's right, Szank. With a Z. And possibly a hidden H. Read 'em and wheat, girlfriend.

WILMA:

Wheat?

POPPY:

Shredded wheat. That's what I'm bringing to the table. I will shred your wheat for the right gig, shred it and stuff it and mark it with a fucking B, and bring it to the table for Barry and me. That's who you're fucking dealing with. So you can take your tiny little eyes and your big ass leather-all and waltz right back down the five flights of stairs and out the revolving door. You know?

WILMA:

I think I'll stay here.

POPPY:

Will you, now?

WILMA:

Yes.

POPPY:

And what if I decided to set the building on fire, would you stay here then?

WILMA:

Probably not.

POPPY:

Good. Safety first.
So go.

WILMA:

No.

POPPY:

I'll call you names.

WILMA:

I don't care.

POPPY:

Peuce.

WILMA:

That's a color.

POPPY:

Your grandma's a color.

WILMA:

No she's not.

POPPY:

Wark.

WILMA:

What's a wark?

POPPY:

A cross between a walrus and a fork.

WILMA:

That's a biological impossibility.

(POPPY stands, disgruntled)

POPPY:

It's your funeral, Willstein, it's your fucking funeral.

WILMA:

I'm sorry, could you not use that kind of language?

POPPY:

It's English, you racist.

(POPPY walks to the beverage cart. She pours herself a cup of coffee. It tastes like the inside of a giant's blister. She spits the coffee back in the cup and puts it back down on the beverage tray.)

(In the hall, the elevators chime)

What was that?

WILMA:

Sounded like the elevator.

POPPY:

I know what it sounded like, but what the fuck was it?

WILMA:

It was the elevator.

POPPY:

Like hell it was!

(The lobby door opens, and in walks JANET JANET, in her twenties, pretty, with a pink and purple ensemble and a handbag to match. She glows as she enters, like if Maria in the Sound of Music just had a quickie on an Austrian mountaintop.)

JANET:

I'm here!

POPPY:

How did you get here?

JANET:

I took the train! It was wonderful!

POPPY:

No, I mean from downstairs.

JANET:

Those elevators are beautiful—the crushed velvet interiors, the polished chrome hand rails? Even the buttons were pretty: blinking halos of cream and gold! And I don't think I've ever had a smoother ride—

POPPY:

That bitch. That fucking receptionist lobby bitch—

JANET:

And the music, all of these wonderful instrumentals of some of my favorite light rock tunes? Who would have thought that up? A genius, that's what I think—a real genius.

POPPY:

I will punch her in the stomach—I will choke her in the throat.

JANET:

Now then, that's not necessary—

POPPY:

Move it, sparky!

(POPPY storms out into the hallway.)

JANET:

She's wearing two different shoes. Some people are *so* creative.

WILMA:

Mm-hm.

(POPPY reenters, holding a sign that says "OUT OF ORDER")

POPPY:

This was on the elevator door.

JANET:

That's funny. It wasn't there a minute ago.

POPPY:

It what?

JANET:
Just lucky, I guess! I've always been lucky. Lucky in love, lucky in life.

POPPY:
I had to walk up five flights! FIVE! Count 'em!

(She holds up four fingers.)

JANET:
I love flying. Sitting up in first class with a flute of champagne and a copy of my favorite novel, *Love in the Shade of the Elm*, by Marguerite Bosley-Norwich! Smiling at the economy and coach passengers and offering them a little wave. Shaking hands with the pilot and complimenting his jaunty cap. And as the plane lifts from the tarmac, I turn to page seventy-three and read my favorite line: "The joys of this life, Juanita realized, are multitudinous in their blessings, and her chest rose and fell as she blew a small ring of cigar smoke from her pillowy lips."

POPPY:
"Pillowy lips?" Sounds like porn.

JANET:
I know Marguerite Bosley-Norwich isn't for everyone, but she's for me! And I know, with her at my side, my luck will truly hold! That's why I'm going to get this job!

POPPY:
Over my dead cat's body!

(JANET sits down across from WILMA, and smiles)

JANET:
I'm Janet Janet, that's two Js for two Janets. My mother liked the name so much, she named me twice!

POPPY:
Gay.

WILMA:
I'm Wilma Bluckle. That's Poppy Szank.

POPPY:
The Szank is silent.
But deadly.

JANET:
We're going to be best friends, I can tell.

WILMA:
That's okay. I'm just here for the interview.

JANET:
Nonsense. Marguerite Bosley-Norwich says: "When circumstance gives you new opportunities, you should suck on them like a lamprey."

POPPY:
I dated a lamprey once. It was hot. Lots of sucking.

WILMA:
Do you know what a lamprey is?

POPPY:
Your grandma?

JANET:
Silly. She's silly.

(JANET JANET steps over to the beverage cart and pours herself a cup of coffee. It tastes like a morbidly obese Austrian sex worker's belly button. She spits the coffee back into the cup, pours the cup in the nearest potted plant.)