

ADMISSION IMPOSSIBLE

by Tom Moran

Setting

The Time: The present

The Place: A college admission office

Characters

MARK, 40's-50's, an anxious parent

DEBORAH, 30's-60's, a college admissions counselor

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(DEBORAH sits behind a desk looking at a computer.
MARK sits across from her.)

DEBORAH

You understand how unusual this visit is, Mr. Howell.

MARK

Yes, I know. But it's very important that I talk to you about my daughter.

DEBORAH

Certainly. Molly appears to be an exceptionally bright and well-rounded student.

MARK

And she would very much like to attend this university. But I also understand how difficult it is to get accepted here.

DEBORAH

We are an august and prestigious institution, yes. So Mr. Howell, why are you in my office?

MARK

I'm here to find out whether I might have any - sway in the application process.

DEBORAH

(wary)

I'm afraid I don't understand what you're asking.

(MARK drops a wad of twenties on the desk.)

MARK

Maybe this will clear things up.

DEBORAH

Excuse me?

MARK

Just to help you see my side of things. It's for the endowment. Nothing more important than a big endowment, right?

DEBORAH

Mr. Howell, this institution has never condoned bribery, and it will not commence on my watch!

(MARK drops another wad.)

MARK

You're killing me here. Would you let me finish?

DEBORAH

I do not understand you, sir. Molly scored perfect on her SATs. She was class president. She spent two summers volunteering in -

MARK

-in South Sudan at a refugee camp. Yeah yeah.

DEBORAH

My point is, we're going to accept her.

MARK

Are you sure you want to do that?

(He drops another wad. Pause.)

DEBORAH

I'm afraid you've lost me.

MARK

This is just a little something to make sure Molly is subjected to only the most stringent admission standards.

DEBORAH

Wait, what?

MARK

I just wouldn't want her to get a space that could go to some other, more deserving student.

DEBORAH

Mr. Howell. Are you bribing me to turn your daughter down?!

MARK

Thank you! Man it took you a long time to get there.

DEBORAH

But, why?

MARK

How much cash do you figure is on that desk?

DEBORAH

I don't know. Ten thousand dollars.

MARK

Good guess. And what does it cost to go here for a year?

DEBORAH

It's about seventy thousand.

MARK

Times four, two hundred eighty. So how about you take that stack off your desk, go build yourself a new patio and save me two hundred seventy grand.

DEBORAH

You don't think your daughter's education is worthwhile.

MARK

Now hold on. I know what you're thinking. And yes, I would do the exact same thing for my son. But I don't have to, because he's pulling a solid B-minus and his reach school is the University of Phoenix.

DEBORAH

There are lots of ways to pay for college. (points down the hall) Have you considered speaking to our financial aid office?

MARK

What, so Molly can spend the next two decades shackled to crushing student loan debt? What kind of dad do you think I am?

DEBORAH

I'm sure she could have a lucrative career in any number of-

MARK

Look, she's really not that great.

DEBORAH

What?

MARK

Being good at standardized tests does not equal intelligence. Class president is a popularity contest. And she mostly just sat around at that refugee camp anyway. You think they're gonna let a 16-year-old American do any real work? They got armed militias running the place and ebola monkeys like squirrels.

DEBORAH

She was also all-state in fencing and basketball.

MARK

Yeah, about that. Take a look at this.

(He shows her a photo.)

MARK(cont.)

State semifinals last year. This is her choking and missing a game-winning layup. I mean, look at that form! Yecch.

DEBORAH

I think - is this photoshopped?

MARK

What? No, of course not. That's our Molly, bluffing her way through another (air quotes) "achievement." (He produces smartphone.) You want to see a clip of her stinking up the school production of Annie Get Your Gun?

DEBORAH

No, I want you to leave.

MARK

Come on, you already reject 94 percent of applicants. What's 94.01? Use the money to go buy yourself (looks around) another fancy diploma to hang up here.

DEBORAH

Do you have any idea how higher education works?

MARK

Sure I do. Molly gets accepted, my wife and I go broke. Meanwhile she's surrounded by rich, entitled white people, starts yearning to be elite, graduates summa cum laude, moves to New York, becomes a hedge fund manager, spends her life making the rich richer, marries some douchebag who gouges people on insulin prices, has two rotten kids, 18 years later they apply here and the circle continues. Hakuna matata.

DEBORAH

That's a depressing way to look at it.

MARK

But I nailed it, didn't I?

DEBORAH

Well, okay, probably, yeah.

MARK

I ain't gonna fork over two hundred and eighty k for my kid to become part of the problem. So how about it?

(long pause.)

DEBORAH

Fifty.

MARK

Fifty?

DEBORAH

Fifty grand and Molly's on a Greyhound to safety school.

MARK

Geez, that kind of money, I have to check with my wife. It's been a bit of a hard sell with her, since she went here and all.

DEBORAH

Wait. Your wife is an alumna? Molly is a *legacy*?

MARK

Yes.

DEBORAH

In that case. A hundred.

MARK

Goddammit. This is bullshit. This same sort of thing only cost Felicity Huffman fifteen grand.

DEBORAH

You're no Felicity Huffman.

MARK

How are we supposed to come up with that kind of money?

DEBORAH

(points down the hall)

Have you considered speaking to our financial aid office?

(Blackout. End of Play.)