

SCENE FROM
The Exit Interview
(1W – 1M)

Published By Samuel French

DICK FIG - A young college professor with his leg in a cast - His PhD was on Bertolt Brecht

EUNICE - A pawn in the human resources department

LOCATION – Eunice’s office

(Lights up on EUNICE, a dry, professional human resources administrator sitting at her desk. Her latest case is DICK, a young professorish-type. Dick sports a large cast on his leg/foot and crutches.)

And how are we today? EUNICE

Fine. DICK

Can you believe all this rain? EUNICE

Sure is rainy. DICK
(Uncomfortable with small talk)

I heard we might have more. EUNICE

I suppose. DICK

Skiing accident? EUNICE
(Off his cast)

No. DICK

Auto? EUNICE

It’s complicated. DICK

EUNICE

I broke my big toe once. (*Beat*) Skiing. Painful. Very painful.

DICK

If I may be honest--.

EUNICE

We're all about honesty here.

DICK

I'm kinda not into small talk.

EUNICE

Small what?

DICK

You know - How's the weather? What did I do to my foot? I don't mean to be rude. I'm being pink-slipped because of budget cuts and talking about the weather isn't going to make me feel better.

EUNICE

When one is transitioning-and-broadening-their-field-of-endeavor there can be pain and deep resentment. Just remember when God closes a door he opens a skylight.

DICK

Question--.

EUNICE

Yes, free psychological counseling is available through our secure website. Shall we begin?
You're Dick Fig. Correct?

DICK

Richard.

EUNICE

It's says you're a Dick.

DICK

I go by Richard.

EUNICE

Question number one: Besides petty politics what did you find least satisfying about your job?

DICK

Besides petty politics?

EUNICE

You were a non-tenured instructor at a university; they just assume there was petty politics.

DICK

Besides petty politics I'd have to say - the exit interview.

EUNICE
(*Un-amused*)

You're being funny.

DICK

Just a little joke.

EUNICE

I've noticed that funny people are, more often than not, hiding their pain. Comedy comes from pain doesn't it?

DICK

True. That's why so many standup comedians come from Somalia.

(Beat. The stone-faced EUNICE writes a note on the form.)

EUNICE

Note: sense of humor.

DICK

What're you...?

EUNICE

There's a little side box here on the form and I'm noting that you have a sense of humor.

DICK

Why?

EUNICE

This way the higher ups get a sense for the personage. It helps them understand what transpired. For example if I noted "ruffled" they'd take that into account when they evaluate the results.

DICK

And what does "ruffled" mean?

EUNICE

Ruffled means that the interviewee more than likely has exaggerated complaints and feelings of inferiority.

DICK

And "Sense of humor"?

EUNICE

Just a note.

DICK

But it must mean something--.

EUNICE

You're taking this far too seriously.

DICK

Just wondering--.

EUNICE

Fine - A notation of “sense of humor” means that the interviewee is less than serious and that his answers should be given little or no weight. Perhaps even discarded if the attempts at humor continue.

DICK

My answers won't be taken seriously?

EUNICE

Let's not get ruffled. Question number two: Do you have any broad-spectrum complaints?

DICK

Broad-spectrum?

EUNICE

(Rapid fire)

For example, the university, for no apparent reason, moved me to this office. A former storage room that smells of chlorine. But there's little I can do cause there's no window. It's been two weeks and it still says “storage room” on the door and the lock is broken. To top it off, they put me a cross the hall from the Cheerleader Captain's office. If I hear him yell one more time, “Be authentic!” I might just never stop throwing up. If this were my exit interview, that'd be my broad-spectrum complaint.

DICK

I have no--.

(EUNICE checks a box on the form.)

EUNICE

Three: Now that you are transitioning-and-broadening-your-field-of-endeavor, who is your new employer?

DICK

None, I guess I'll be self-employed.

EUNICE

(Filling out the form)

Unemployed.

DICK

No, self--. I've written a book. Coming out next month. Confidentially--.

EUNICE

Everything here is confidential.

DICK

I just happened to have a friend of a friend who works at the New York Times. He thinks they're going to review it. My agent's assistant – who's probably wildly overestimating - says that it's entirely possible that I'll be in the Times top ten list within a matter of months.

EUNICE

Congratulations. I make it a habit to read every book on the Times top ten list.

DICK

Really. Every book.

EUNICE

Well, most. ... Several... Three--. What's yours about?

DICK

It's about the chaos of the human soul and the emptiness of the Copernican universe.

EUNICE

(Counterfeit)

That has bestseller written all over it.

DICK

Technically it's not about chaos or emptiness. It's more about Bertolt Brecht and how there's no divine presence in the universe, and that humans have little or no significant meaning in the vast cosmos.

EUNICE

Bertolt who?

DICK

(He can't help but sound PhD-ish)

Brecht - An influential playwright, director. Brecht felt the objective discernment that autonomous artworks presuppose in the viewer was inadequate while his didactic style reinforced his communist perspective. It's loosely based on my PhD thesis. It's called *No Religion, No Politics*.

EUNICE

I don't get it.

DICK

Those are the two things you're not allowed to talk about in polite society anymore. The title came from my girlfriend--. I should say, ex-girlfriend. When we used to go to her mother's - just before she'd open the door - Mary would squeeze my hand and say, "No Religion, no politics." Two subjects we *should* be talking about but don't because it's considered impolite - Even politically incorrect. So instead we engage in trivial small talk about things like the weather. Today she'd say, "No religion, no politics, no global warming--."

(During this next section Eunice professionally checks off the answers on the form.)

EUNICE

(Cold)

There's that sense of humor again. *(She notes it)* Next section. Rapid fire. "Yes." "No." Don't think, don't try to be funny, just answer. Ready. Go. Do you have any parking tickets?

DICK

No. Wait. No. Yes. ...No.

EUNICE

Do you have any over due library books?

DICK

No.

EUNICE
Would you recommend this university to a friend?

DICK
No--. I mean, yes.

EUNICE
If you were a snowflake would you look forward to melting?

DICK
...ah--?

EUNICE
You're thinking.

DICK
What kind of--?

EUNICE
No think-think.

DICK
Maybe?

EUNICE
That's not a box on the form.

DICK
Okay, yes, no, yes--.

EUNICE
Were you pleased with the parking situation on campus?

DICK
That's a loaded question.

EUNICE
Excuse me?

DICK
That's known as a loaded question. All the others were simple "Yes" or "No" but this one has the word "pleased" located within it. "Were you *pleased* with the parking situation..."

(Beat – EUNICE studies him.)

EUNICE
We're feeling hostility aren't we.

DICK
No. It's just that the administration obviously wants a positive response. It's known as a loaded question... An unloaded would be, "What do you think of the parking situation?" See, that's unloaded.

(Beat. EUNICE blankly stares at him. He gives up.)

DICK

Yes, I was *pleased* with the parking.

EUNICE

If your bride said, "But my first love is the oboe," would you still marry?

DICK

Wait--.

EUNICE

I don't write the questions.

DICK

Obviously they've come up with some sort of peculiar psychological--. What do they hope to prove by asking if I'd marry an oboe player--?

EUNICE

You're reading into the question. It doesn't say she *is* an oboe player. It says she has deep affections for the oboe. More than she has for you.

DICK

No, if a woman loved her oboe more than me I wouldn't--.

EUNICE

We're positive?

DICK

Yes.

EUNICE

I'm not supposed to say this but... No one who has ever answered "no" to that question has ever been re-hired--. Why don't we come back to it.

DICK

No--. If a woman told me that she loved her oboe more than me I wouldn't married. Final answer! Question--.

EUNICE

You're not allowed to ask questions until page six--.

DICK

Just one--.

EUNICE

But you're not--.

DICK

Hold on! (*Beat*) How did you know my ex-girlfriend played the oboe?