

## THE INTERVIEW

Matthew Turner

*Note: this excerpt = opening 10 minutes*

### Characters

Sir Gerald Mond: a business man, mid fifties, dressed in keeping with his wealth and status

Miss Piper: smart and professional, perhaps in her first job out of college

David Walker: in his late twenties, wearing an ill-fitting suit but otherwise well-scrubbed

*Scene: a large office with a sturdy desk placed sideways on in the middle of the stage. To the left of the desk there's a large, deep office chair which looks very comfortable. To the right of the desk there's a much smaller, more rigid chair. Another similar chair is further back and to the right, near the door. In the opposite corner there is a coat rack. There is a large clock on the back wall, above a window.*

*Sir Gerald is sitting in the large chair, looking down at a report on his desk. He turns the pages slowly. David stands between the doorway and the desk. Sir Gerald doesn't look up from his report. David waits a moment and then strides forward with his hand outstretched. Sir Gerald doesn't respond and David lowers his hand.*

DAVID. I got here a little early.

SIR GERALD. I won't hold it against you.

*Sir Gerald looks up from his report, as if a little surprised to see David standing there.*

SIR GERALD. We won't be conducting this interview on our feet, Mr Walker.

*David sits down.*

DAVID. I'm sorry, Sir Gerald.

SIR GERALD. What ever for?

DAVID. Excuse me?

SIR GERALD. What are you sorry for, Mr Walker?

DAVID. It's nothing.

*Sir Gerald isn't impressed. He turns the report over and puts it to one side.*

SIR GERALD. Do you make a point of apologising for things which aren't your fault?

DAVID. Professional courtesy, Sir Gerald.

SIR GERALD. Do you think this is a game?

DAVID. No sir.

SIR GERALD. So what is it?

*Beat.*

DAVID. A chance for me to impress.

SIR GERALD. And how do you think you're doing?

DAVID.

SIR GERALD. What sort of man are you?

*Beat.*

DAVID. I'm an energetic, resourceful problem-solver with good people skills.

SIR GERALD. No.

DAVID. No?

SIR GERALD. No. You see a woman lying on the pavement at noon on a sunny day. Are you the sort that stops to help or the sort that crosses to the other side?

DAVID. Some of these women are drunk, Sir Gerald. Sometimes they don't want to be helped.

SIR GERALD. Tell me, Mr Walker. What *interests* you about Mond Holdings?

*Beat.*

DAVID. I'll be perfectly honest. Until this morning I didn't know the first thing *about* Mond Holdings. I got a call saying I had an interview and the time and the place. But even now I can't tell you a whole lot more. [*He fidgets in his chair.*] You don't go for much in the way of publicity, do you?

SIR GERALD. We don't need to.

DAVID. Right. [*Pause.*] But even. The internet. I couldn't find a website.

SIR GERALD. Is that what you normally do, Mr Walker? Look for a website?

DAVID. ... It's a start.

SIR GERALD. Mr Walker, we *know* who we're looking for. We had a list of a thousand names. A thousand people fitting our broadest specification. We whittled a thousand down to a hundred, a hundred down to ten. Like grains of sand from one hand to the other. [*He mimes the action.*] At each stage we lose a few more by the wayside. And we are left... with *you*.

DAVID. Well I'd have to say I'm honoured, Sir Gerald. And I recognise that this is a marvellous... opportunity. And, well, I'm not being rude or anything but, you see, I think I'd just like to know exactly what the opportunity... is.

*Sir Gerald smiles and continues.*

SIR GERALD. We know that you went to St Peter's school in Maidenhead, attended chess club and computer club and played cricket for the first XI. We know about your Duke of Edinburgh's Awards, how you made sterling use of your hobby of mountaineering, your love of reckless challenges. And then your A-levels, in Maths, History and French. Acceptable grades.

*David is stunned. Sir Gerald is not reading these details from any file he can see.*

SIR GERALD. We know that you studied History at Exeter University – for want of a better idea – that you graduated with a lower second and that your tutors felt that with a little application you could have converted that grade into an *upper* second. You spent a year on a temporary contract working for a credit card firm while trying to decide what you wanted to do with your career, then six months travelling through Indonesia and the Philippines. Six years ago you took a job for a digital marketing start-up called Tangled Web, through a friend of your family, and when that evanescent enterprise folded you jumped ship to the marketing department of a major leisure goods retailer.

DAVID. You have my CV?

*Sir Gerald waves a hand and smiles.*

SIR GERALD. In a fashion. And to bring us to the present day, the sportswear firm offered to fund out-of-hours training towards the marketing qualification you so pointedly lacked, an offer you declined for reasons which may only be known to yourself, and which came back to bite you in the first round of redundancies twelve months ago. Since which time you've returned to temporary office work.

*Miss Piper enters, closing the door behind her with a loud click. She is carrying a shoe box. David turns his head at the noise.*

DAVID. I needed to... regroup.

SIR GERALD. And you've been regrouping for a year, Mr Walker. Are you yet ready to plan another assault?

*Miss Piper walks across to the desk and places the shoe box down in front of Sir Gerald.*

MISS PIPER. Your shoes, Sir Gerald.

*David turns to Miss Piper and smiles. Miss Piper stands by the desk and stares at David.*

SIR GERALD. Thank you, Miss Piper. *[To David.]* Well?

*David formulates one response, then stops and formulates another.*

DAVID. Yes I'm ready. And I... I refuse to throw my talent away on worthless opportunities.

*Miss Piper walks over to the seat by the door and picks it up.*

SIR GERALD. Your talent? *[He smiles.]* And what exactly is your talent, Mr Walker? Please, describe it to me.

*Miss Piper positions the seat behind David, sits down and places a notepad on her knee, watching him closely. David can't help but notice.*

DAVID. I'm very... hands-on. I make things happen.

SIR GERALD. Good things?

DAVID. Yes, good things. I'm very results-oriented.

SIR GERALD. Tell me. Can you think of a time when you've shown great moral fortitude?

DAVID. *[Thinks.]* Moral fortitude. I'm not sure I...

SIR GERALD. Surely you know what moral fortitude is.

DAVID. I know what it is...

SIR GERALD. You're just not sure if you'd ever recognise it?

DAVID. No. No that's not it. Right... *[He gathers confidence.]* At Tangled Web I had a client who wanted to run a campaign of banner adverts over the top-ranking sites for the search terms 'loans' and 'car insurance'. *[He laughs quietly.]* Can you imagine the cost? He had a niche product, he needed niche search terms. It made no difference to me. I'd be getting my commission either way, and the client was sure he wanted to spunk his budget like that. But sometimes you have to tell the client no, no way, whatever the rulebook says. I had to tell him he was wrong and explain why. And that's what I did.

*David is a little more pleased with himself.*

SIR GERALD. I think we may have to get you a dictionary of theology, Mr Walker.

*David looks around at Miss Piper, as if for help, but gets no response. He looks back at Sir Gerald.*

DAVID. Excuse me?

SIR GERALD. You don't have to restrict yourself to your working life, Mr Walker. Give me an example of a situation where you had to make the right decision under pressure.

*Beat. No response.*

SIR GERALD. Do. You. Respond. Well. Under. Pressure?

DAVID. Forgive me, Sir Gerald, but it would help if I knew just a little bit more about the position before answering these questions. Is it a marketing role or...

SIR GERALD. The position? Why would you need to know any more about *us* to think of a time when you made a decision under pressure?

*David is trying to stay calm.*

DAVID. ... It's a matter of criteria, Sir Gerald. I'd like to know the criteria I'm being judged against.

SIR GERALD. Ah wouldn't we all? [*He smiles broadly and opens his palms to David.*] But I jest. [*He stands up.*] You shouldn't think I'm toying with you, Mr Walker. Criteria, then. Miss Piper?

*Sir Gerald walks to the corner behind his chair, facing away from David.*

MISS PIPER. Yes Sir Gerald.

SIR GERALD. Would you kindly elaborate to Mr Walker our list of criteria?

MISS PIPER. Certainly Sir Gerald.

*Miss Piper opens her notebook and begins reading. David is caught between the two, not knowing who to look at.*

MISS PIPER. We have Exeter University. A male student graduating in any year from 2000 to 2002. We have a genetic match to suggest blue eyes and fair hair. And we have a childhood in the Berkshire-stroke-Surrey area.

*She looks up from the notepad.*

DAVID. And what has any of that got to do with a job?

*Sir Gerald reaches into his pocket and pulls out a blindfold. He turns to David.*

SIR GERALD. Would you mind wearing this?

DAVID. What is it?

SIR GERALD. What does it look like?

DAVID. It looks like a blindfold.

SIR GERALD. It is a blindfold.

*Beat.*

DAVID. And you want me to wear it?

SIR GERALD. Do you have any objection?

DAVID. Is it, like, the latest thing?

SIR GERALD. Yes or no, Mr Walker? You can say no.

DAVID. No it's fine.

*David reaches for the blindfold but Sir Gerald holds it out towards Miss Piper. Miss Piper rises from her chair to take the blindfold. David tries to catch her eye to no avail, as she looks at the blindfold in her hands for a moment, then holds it over David's face and secures it behind his head. Sir Gerald has walked back to the corner.*

SIR GERALD. Nothing?

*Miss Piper waves his hands in front of David's face.*

DAVID. Nothing.

SIR GERALD. Then let's begin.

*Miss Piper returns to her chair behind David.*



SIR GERALD. Would you say you had a happy childhood?

DAVID. Yes.

SIR GERALD. When the toast falls off the table does it land butter side up or butter side down?

DAVID. Butter side up.

SIR GERALD. You're quite sure.

DAVID. Quite sure.

SIR GERALD. Do you have a religion?

DAVID. No.

SIR GERALD. Does that bother you?

DAVID No.

SIR GERALD. What sort of company would you like to work for?

DAVID. One where I would know my place and I could make money.

SIR GERALD. Is money important to you?

DAVID. Of course.

SIR GERALD. Would you like more money than you have?

DAVID. Wouldn't everyone?

SIR GERALD. I ask the questions.