

THE COSMONAUT IN HUMAN RESOURCES

A short play by  
Jeremy Sony

Casting        1 M, 1 W

Dreyev        M. Late 20s-50s Between jobs. Speaks with a  
                 light Russian accent. Not Russian.

Nancy        W. 30s-50s Head of a Human Resources  
                 department in an American city.

Comedy/Drama. Run-time: 10 min

When Dreyev walks into human resources, he finds he's  
missing the one key requirement for the job he wants: he's  
not Paul. Who's Paul? That's what Dreyev needs to figure  
out before it's too late. Because it might just be him.

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THE COSMONAUT IN HUMAN RESOURCES

SETTING: HR office of a major American corporation. There is a DESK and ONE CHAIR, which belongs to NANCY.

AT RISE: DREYEV stands holding a resume, while NANCY sits in her chair. SHE's a cheerful sort. DREYEV speaks with a light Russian accent until otherwise indicated.

NANCY

Are you lost?

DREYEV

I am here for job opportunity.

NANCY

That's why everyone comes to Human Resources --

DREYEV

You post on internet.

NANCY

-- for a piece of the dream. Accountant, actuary, or auditor? Speak up, and don't forget to smile.

DREYEV

(not smiling)

I bring credentials.

(DREYEV hands NANCY the resume.)

NANCY

Okay, great, so you're -- oh, between opportunities. And, look at that, you've described the experience... marooned? Well, it's just fantastic to see you, Paul.

DREYEV

Who is --- no. You mistake me for --

NANCY

Please, have a seat. Bottled water? Soda? Bubble-gum?

(DREYEV looks around, confused.)

DREYEV

Is this where I get work? I remember... no. It's familiar, but it's been so long.

NANCY

Positively fascinating, I've never had an answer like that. Now, I have a few questions, Paul, and we'll know if you're going to be a fit here at the company.

(MORE)

NANCY (cont'd)

Did you need some coffee by the by? And feel free to sit down, Paul, standing makes me nervous.

DREYEV

There are no other chairs, you see? And my name is Dreyev, for the record.

NANCY

The chair is right next to you, Paul. You just have to see it, and take it. You see it don't you, Paul?

DREYEV

Take it?

NANCY

Answering questions with questions breaks down productivity.

DREYEV

Please, I very much need the money. That is why I answered your ad for workplace. I have family.

NANCY

Wonderful, that's lovely. I see on your resume that YOU have human resources experience, but that most recently you were... a cosmonaut -- oh my, tell me about that.

DREYEV

Actually, I was sucked into the cold vacuum of space three and half years ago quite unexpectedly, losing my wife and sons in the process.

NANCY

Sounds exciting, Paul. Did you get to do any moon walks or fix a telescope?

(Having fun with him)

See any little green men?

DREYEV

Please. My name is Dreyev. I am no cosmonaut. I just want to see get family back.

NANCY

Okay. Paul? Alright, you're going to have to trust me on this. Here -- your name is Paul, NO, don't even try to correct me.

DREYEV

No Paul.

NANCY

Yes. And there's a three and half year gap on your resume, which is more like four and some change, so it's my job to find a way to make you fit.

(MORE)

NANCY (cont'd)

Cosmonaut is a better term than 'marooned in space', which is what you listed. Okay? Great.

DREYEV

It's not an accurate representation of my experience.

NANCY

Do you want to see your family again?

DREYEV

Family, of course.

NANCY

Then let the Company deem what is accurate. Sit down.

DREYEV

Tell me your name.

NANCY

Nancy. And I love the quirkiness, however, we're going to need to do something about your speech pattern.

DREYEV

The way I talk has always suited me.

NANCY

Bubble-gum?

DREYEV

I don't chew.

NANCY

Bless you. I don't think we're understanding one another. You see, here at the Company, we have a direct way of speaking. With smiles. You're not smiling, Paul.

DREYEV

Because my name is not Paul.

NANCY

And my name is not Nancy.

DREYEV

Then tell me your name and maybe we can get somewhere.

NANCY

Okay, see, that was my attempt to say something untrue to corollate to your equally untrue statement, thus showing you the veracity of the situation.

DREYEV

I would like much to see vera-city.

NANCY

Good answer. Now, tell me you're ready to come back.

DREYEV

Sera loved the city. I remember this place. A place like this. My home each day until ...

NANCY

You got too comfortable?

DREYEV

There's there's... the hatch... blown. No warning. Cold, suffocating, alone --

NANCY

Okay, Paul? The door. Okay? They opened the door.

DREYEV

No warning. Sucked into space.

NANCY

Pushed through the door. Pushed you, pushed you out into the huddled masses, is that what it felt like?

DREYEV

Marooned, abandoned.

NANCY

Job displacement often feels like abandonment --

DREYEV

Set adrift, dying slowly --

NANCY

But it's a healthy shift in the economic development of major corporations allowing for internal growth.

DREYEV

She said with smile. I need to find Sera.

NANCY

Sera doesn't work here, Paul. I do. And I'm a teensy concerned about your prospects, I'm gonna be honest.

DREYEV

I have prospects. I work hard -- I train for years to become master of this job.

NANCY

Masters don't get comfortable and lose their home.

DREYEV

I find new way home.

NANCY

Okay, then we need to get you back to reality and there are just a few more requirements --

DREYEV

Questions --

NANCY

-- I'm going to ask you to make sure you're suited to be part of this Company. To come home. You've been out there a long time --

DREYEV

My wife --

NANCY

-- was lost in space, with your sons, remember?

DREYEV

Not lost. Left. Me. In the second year, abandoned --

NANCY

And marooned, fascinating. Paul... Paul?

(Snaps fingers twice)

Eyes on me. Okay, Paul? Okay? Good.

DREYEV

You want Dreyev's eyes?

NANCY

We're talking about you now, Paul. There is no Dreyev.

DREYEV

I am standing here.

NANCY

Being away from corporate America's high-paced environment for even a month can take its toll on talented workers like yourself, so four years and some change, that's gonna mess with ya.

DREYEV

There is no Dreyev? But I stand here.

NANCY

Say it with me. No one wants to be blown into space. Into the cold. It's not fun being a cosmonaut.

DREYEV

Being a cosmonaut was wonderful and liberating.

NANCY

No, no, it was cold. Death. Abandonment, remember?

DREYEV

Abandonment. Freeing. Seeing the stars.

NANCY

You're going backwards, Paul -- stay with me.

DREYEV

To be pushed again.

NANCY

How can a you be pushed with a smile?

DREYEV

Confusion. Air thinning.

NANCY

Stay with me, Paul. What about your family, hmm? Sera?

DREYEV

Wife. Two sons.

NANCY

They need Paul.

DREYEV

I want for them.

NANCY

And you can have them. If you're ready to come back from four and some change. Ready to stay.

DREYEV

With you.

NANCY

Yes, yes -- okay? Wonderful. Now what happened? Say it. I got comfortable.

DREYEV

(in forced AMERICAN accent)

I got comfortable.

NANCY

And they pushed me out --

DREYEV

(back to RUSSIAN)

They killed me --

NANCY

No, pushed me -- but I'm ready to come back, put on my white collar --

DREYEV

-- my shackles --

NANCY

My white collar. Say it.

DREYEV

My white collar.

NANCY

Good. I'm ready to take my seat again.

(DREYEV looks around.)

DREYEV

There aren't any chairs.

NANCY

Looks like you were marooned out there just a skosh more than you should have been. Thanks for stopping by.

DREYEV

But I commander of my space, you said --

NANCY

Paul would see it. Paul would seize the opportunity.

(NANCY stands to escort him to the door.)

NANCY (cont'd)

I'm heartbroken this didn't work out.

DREYEV

That's what Sera say, before she left.

NANCY

Try smiling next time, okay?

DREYEV

Wait. Please, I need my wife. Sera come back if Paul --

NANCY

-- Dreyev --

DREYEV

Paul... if Paul sees chair.

NANCY

The opportunity has been filled.

DREYEV

No. Paul needs to see chair. Then Paul gets job? Yes?

NANCY

Everyone needs. What we need Dreyev, what the Company expects, are the "wanters" not the "needers". People who see the chair because, listen to me now, they want to.

(DREYEV circles an invisible chair,  
looking for it.)

DREYEV

Do you see the chair?

NANCY

I don't think that's relevant here, do you?

DREYEV

Answering questions with questions breaks down productivity.

NANCY

Now why would you say that?

DREYEV

Not enough chairs. That's why you get pushed out. I remember being in place like this... then push... through hatch, it could happen over and over.

NANCY

Only when you don't have a seat at the table.

DREYEV

There are no tables where the cosmonauts walk.

NANCY

Dreyev --

DREYEV

(LESS on the Russian)

Paul. My name is Paul.

NANCY

You see the chair?

DREYEV

(Less Russian)

And I'm going to take it.

NANCY

See, that wasn't so hard. You'll forget all about that cosmonaut life if you haven't already.

DREYEV

(Russian almost gone.)

I'm ready for this job.

NANCY

With a smile.

DREYEV

(Smiling. Perfect AMERICAN  
ENGLISH.)

I'm ready for this job.

(DREYEV sits in Nancy's chair. NANCY  
smile fades. DREYEV only speaks now in  
his American English accent as Paul.

With smiles.)

DREYEV (cont'd)

It's good to be home.

(Noticing Nancy)

Hello there, are you lost?

NANCY

No, this is Human Resources.

DREYEV

Nice digs, right...um, I'm sorry, I'm terrible with  
names.

NANCY

It's Nancy.

DREYEV

And my name is not Nancy. You have to be careful around  
here. It's so easy to get lost. Please, take a seat.

NANCY

That's odd.

DREYEV

I'm Paul by the way.

NANCY

Nancy. We've met. I work for the Company.

DREYEV

I knew a Nancy once. You remind me of her, but you don't  
have her smile.

NANCY

There doesn't seem to be a chair for me.

DREYEV

The chair is right next to you. You just have to see it.  
And take it.

(LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK. CURTAIN.)