WHEN IT RAINS

by

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CHARACTERS

IVY	A young woman who seems a bit awkward and anxious, but isn't naive. Mid 20s.
PHYLLIS	An ambitious woman who is kind but misguided. Late 40s.
EVELYN	Another applicant. Non-speaking.

SETTING

The waiting room in a large corporate building. There is one door to the outside and one door to the interview room. In the room is a coat rack, an umbrella rack, and a magazine rack.

TIME

Modern day.

(A woman in her late forties [PHYLLIS] sits stiffly in a waiting room. She has a book open but is not reading it, and stares at the wall. A woman in her mid twenties [IVY] runs in. It is pouring outside, and she has been holding her jacket over her head in an attempt to preserve her perfect hair and outfit. She hangs the wet coat on the rack in the corner, and finds a seat diagonally across from the other woman [PHYLLIS]. PHYLLIS does not break her concentration, and IVY shifts in her seat, fidgeting and looking around. After a long pause, IVY breaks the silence.)

IVY

Some storm, huh?

(PHYLLIS's head snaps up.)

PHYLLIS

Pardon?

IVY

(gesturing outside) The storm. Pretty big one.

PHYLLIS

(glancing outside) Yes.

(PHYLLIS stares down at her book. Another long silence.)

IVY

Are you nervous?

PHYLLIS

(sighing and closing her book) Not particularly. Are you?

IVY

A little. I've been going on interviews practically every day for almost a year since I graduated, and the best thing I've been offered is half a turkey sandwich from one of the assistants who felt bad for me.

PHYLLIS

Tough luck.

IVY

I’m starting to think it might be more than that.

(Pause.)

IVY

I’m Ivy, by the way.

PHYLLIS

Phyllis.

IVY

Phyllis. That’s pretty.

PHYLLIS

Thank you.

(Pause. IVY gets increasingly fidgety during the silence.)

PHYLLIS

Honey, relax. It’s an interview, not a criminal trial.

IVY

Oh, sorry.

PHYLLIS

You have nothing to be sorry for.

IVY

I’m just so restless. I can’t sit all still and calm and stuff.

PHYLLIS

Give it time. With age comes patience. And a desire to move as little as possible.

(IVY laughs nervously.)

PHYLLIS

Just take a few deep breaths. I'm sure you're going to do fine. Ok?

IVY

Yeah. Thanks.

(Short pause.)

IVY

Are you always this nice?

PHYLLIS

What?

IVY

I mean– sorry, I guess that sounded super weird.

PHYLLIS

No, no, it's fine, you surprised me is all.

IVY

Oh. I just meant, you know, you didn't have to say anything but you did. It's not a big deal, I just thought it was nice.

PHYLLIS

You're welcome?

IVY

Yeah, yeah, thank you!

PHYLLIS

I suppose you just reminded me of my own daughter.

IVY

Oh. You have kids?

PHYLLIS

Yes, but one's gone off to college and the other is already in medical school.

IVY

Is that why you're applying for this job now? Sorry, that was way too forward of me, I didn't mean to get all weirdly personal.

PHYLLIS

It's perfectly alright. Stop apologizing.

IVY

Sorry. I mean– crap. Forget that.

PHYLLIS

(laughing a little) To answer your question, yes, that is why I'm applying for this job now.

IVY

Cool.

(Pause. IVY gets up and starts meandering around the room. She goes to the magazine rack and starts leafing through it. She pulls out a magazine.)

IVY

(reading the cover) "Can Kim get her pre-baby body back?"

PHYLLIS

Those millennial magazines are so ridiculous.

(IVY's eyebrows raise a bit at this but she says nothing. She puts the magazine back and resumes leafing through the rack. She pulls out a binder and a concerned look comes over her face. She looks down at the binder, up at PHYLLIS, then back at the binder.)

PHYLLIS

Is everything alright?

IVY

Yeah, yeah… This can't be what I think it is.

PHYLLIS

What is it?

IVY

According to the cover… This is where they have all the interview evaluations filed.

PHYLLIS

(Adopts IVY's concerned look and gets up) Well, that can't be right.

(PHYLLIS walks over to IVY and looks at the cover with her.)

PHYLLIS

No, that's right. Why would they keep something like that in the waiting room?

IVY

Who knows. Maybe it was misfiled?

PHYLLIS

Strange place to misfile something.

IVY

Maybe they just didn't think anyone would look through the magazine rack?

PHYLLIS

Why would they have a magazine rack if they didn't think anyone was going to look through it?

IVY

Good point.

PHYLLIS

(taking a step back and crossing her arms) That is just bizarre.

IVY

So… should we, you know… look in it?

PHYLLIS

I'm sure that's not allowed.

IVY

I mean but, if it wasn't, why would they leave it out here? You said it yourself, they wouldn't have a magazine rack if they didn't expect people to look through it.

PHYLLIS

But do you think that looking in it would be the right thing to do?

IVY

I didn't say that. I just don't want to miss an opportunity, I guess? We should at least think about it.

PHYLLIS

I think this is a fairly cut and dry issue. It's wrong, so we won't do it.

IVY

I mean, maybe you're right, but don't you want to consider the other side of it?

PHYLLIS

No, I don't.

IVY

Is it that bad to see both sides of something?

PHYLLIS

If there's a clear right and wrong, then yes, I think so.

IVY

That's a little closed-minded, don't you think? I mean, what I'm saying is, who are you to decide right from wrong?

PHYLLIS

A good person.

IVY

Is that enough?

PHYLLIS

It should be.

IVY

But is it?

PHYLLIS

What are you trying to say?

IVY

I’m just saying that maybe nothing is a hundred percent black or white.

PHYLLIS

Really? Because this seems pretty black and white to me. It isn’t fair to the other applicants who didn’t get to look in it, so we don’t look in it either.

IVY

But who’s to say they didn’t look in it? I mean, they were in the same waiting room as us. They had access to this too. What if we’re putting ourselves at a disadvantage by not looking in it?

PHYLLIS

And what if they really didn’t?

IVY

Well, we can’t really know, can we?

PHYLLIS

Whether they looked in it or not, it’s wrong. Do you have any sense of morality? Honestly, I– you know what? You look in it. You clearly want to. But leave me out of it.

IVY

Either we both look in it or neither of us do. It’s not fair otherwise.

PHYLLIS

Good grief, it’s already not fair! And I don’t think it even matters to you. Clearly you’re just going to do whatever the hell you want.

IVY

Hey, that's not fair. If I was just gonna do whatever the hell I wanted, I would've made a decision already. I wanted to have a civil conversation about it. But apparently that's not possible.

PHYLLIS

No, it's not. I am not going to agree with you, and I am not going to apologize for that.

IVY

Fine. Whatever. I said both or neither, so I guess it's gonna be neither.

(IVY puts the binder back in the rack.)

PHYLLIS

(doubtfully) Whatever you say.

IVY

(fed up) What now?

PHYLLIS

My interview is first.

IVY

So?

PHYLLIS

So I'm certain that the second I close that door, you're going to open that binder and read every word.

IVY

Are you kidding me?

(PHYLLIS silently stands her ground.)

IVY

I didn't even say I wanted to look in it!

PHYLLIS

I think you made yourself pretty clear.

IVY

I was only arguing for that side because you obviously weren't going to! We couldn't very well talk out our options if we both only argued for one side!

PHYLLIS

Excuse me for choosing to defend what I think is right.

IVY

I'm not criticizing you for that!

PHYLLIS

Then what exactly are you criticizing me for?

IVY

Oh my God, we're talking in circles! I'm criticizing you for not keeping an open mind. Like– ok, this job requires making tough decisions. How are you gonna do that if you just rashly say something is "right" or "wrong" without listening to anybody else?

PHYLLIS

So that's what this is about.

IVY

Excuse me?

PHYLLIS

The job. I'm trying to do the right thing, but all you care about is beating me out for this job.

IVY

Oh my God! I was just giving an example! I– you know what, screw it, you're not going to listen to me anyway.

PHYLLIS

Alright, well, how are you going to do this job if you can't make a decision on your own?

IVY

I can make a decision on my own! But God forbid I should take anyone else's opinion into consideration. But I guess, unlike you, I know that I'm not always right.

PHYLLIS

Clearly!

IVY

This is unbelievable.

PHYLLIS

What's unbelievable is that I somehow ended up competing against a child for a vice presidential position at a multi-million dollar company.

IVY

Seriously? Are you– are you fricking kidding me? I have a master's degree! I own my own home, I support myself– what exactly makes me a child?

PHYLLIS

Oh, please. I am sure that your parents paid at least half your way through college, and I wouldn't be surprised if they helped you pay for your home and helped you get whatever job you're supposedly "supporting yourself" with. That's how it works now, right? My generation did all the leg work and now you all can sit back and leech off our success.

IVY

Hey, my parents did nothing for me. And you know what? My job is pretty frickin fantastic, so don't insult me. As for the whole "generation" thing– how can you possibly generalize an entire age group?

PHYLLIS

Look around you, honey! There's a generation that works hard, and there's one that doesn't. Case in point– one of us wanted to do the right thing, and the other wanted to do the easy thing, the thing that might put her ahead even if it's unfair. Millennials are all about living life the easy way, right?

IVY

Oh my God, I didn't even– my life has been anything but easy, and you have no right–

PHYLLIS

And I'm so tired of you all trying victimize yourselves! Do you have any idea what real struggle is like? All you twenty-somethings think you're martyrs for taking on some student debt, or that you have "depression," and you have no clue. You're too young to have experienced real hardship but you pity yourselves because you got bullied in middle school or something! It's ridiculous! I'm so sick of–

IVY

You need to stop talking right now.

PHYLLIS

How fragile are you? Good grief, you say one thing that isn't "politically correct" and all of a sudden you're the villain! Grow up, honey. There are people with real problems out there, so stop feeling sorry for yourself over nothing!

IVY

Stop.

PHYLLIS

What I wouldn't give to have it as easy as you do! You couldn't possibly understand the loss, the pain that I–

IVY

Stop.

PHYLLIS

What is your problem?

IVY

(screaming) Shut up!

(Dead silence.)

IVY

(quietly) Just… shut up.

(IVY walks back to her seat and PHYLLIS stands in stunned silence. IVY sits in her chair and pulls her knees up. She hugs her knees and stares at the floor. PHYLLIS stands for a moment longer, then sits back in her seat. Her eyes close and she bows her head for a moment, her hands clasped together and resting in her lap, thinking and/or praying. After a moment, she unclasps her hands and lets them rest on her thighs, opening her eyes and lifting her head as she does so. Long pause.)

PHYLLIS

(quietly) I'm sorry. That got out of hand and I crossed the line, and I'm sorry.

(IVY just nods.)

PHYLLIS

Are you okay?

(IVY doesn't respond. PHYLLIS looks down at her hands. Long pause.)

IVY

(quietly) You don't know anything about me.

PHYLLIS

(looks up) I know, you're right.

IVY

You had no right to…

PHYLLIS

I know. I'm sorry.

(IVY nods. Pause. PHYLLIS suddenly laughs a little.)

IVY

What?

PHYLLIS

It's just… this whole thing was because of a binder.

(IVY smiles and half-laughs. Short pause.)

PHYLLIS

(suddenly) Tell me about yourself.

IVY

What?

PHYLLIS

You were right. I don't know anything about you. So tell me.

(IVY just stares at her.)

PHYLLIS

Ok. I'll go first. Well. I grew up in Pennsylvania. I got my bachelor's degree, got married, got my master's. Had two kids, a son and then a daughter. Life moved fast, they went off to college, I got divorced, and then I moved to Boston to try to start working again. So here I am.

IVY

What are your kids like?

PHYLLIS

They're great. My son is in medical school. Actually, he's about the same age as you. He's getting married in April.

IVY

Congratulations.

PHYLLIS

Thank you. And my daughter is in college, studying biology.

IVY

Are you paying half her tuition?

(PHYLLIS flinches at this but doesn't retaliate. Silence.)

IVY

So, um, why this job?

PHYLLIS

Because I need a job. Because it pays well.

IVY

That's it?

PHYLLIS

That's all I need.

IVY

What about the, you know, helping people and all?

PHYLLIS

Don't get me wrong, that's all fine and good, but to be quite honest with you it's not my primary concern.

IVY

No?

PHYLLIS

It's a big wig job. I can't imagine I'd handle too much personal interaction. I mean, it is a company dealing with pregnancy issues and knowing how crazy expectant mothers can get, I'm sure that I would have to speak with customers about the technology sometimes, but hopefully that wouldn't be a very frequent complication? I'm better with more administrative duties.

IVY

Gotcha.

PHYLLIS

I mean, I'm sure you didn't apply for this job just so you could help people.

(IVY shrugs.)

IVY

If you really only care about the money, how do you know you're right for the job? I mean, like, I'm saying that all wrong, but you know what I mean?

PHYLLIS

Like, why hire me?

IVY

Sure.

PHYLLIS

Well. I have the right credentials. I have plenty of managerial experience. And I work hard. I think that should be enough.

IVY

Yeah.

PHYLLIS

Where are you from?

IVY

Boston, actually.

PHYLLIS

Where in Boston?

IVY

Mattapan. But I live in Back Bay now.

PHYLLIS

Oh, I live right over in Beacon Hill. We're practically neighbors.

IVY

I guess so.

PHYLLIS

So, when you graduated high school, did you stay in Boston for college?

IVY

I didn't actually graduate high school.

PHYLLIS

You said you had your master's degree.

IVY

I do, but I didn't graduate high school. I had to get my G.E.D. instead. I dropped out of high school when I was sixteen.

PHYLLIS

Goodness. Why?

IVY

To live with my boyfriend, if you can believe it.

PHYLLIS

Not a great guy, I take it?

IVY

I thought he was at first. But he kicked me out when he found out I was pregnant.

PHYLLIS

You have a child?

IVY

No.

PHYLLIS

Oh.

(Pause.)

PHYLLIS

What… No, I'm sorry, I shouldn't ask.

IVY

No, it's ok. I um, I miscarried. In the third trimester.

PHYLLIS

Oh my goodness. I'm sorry about– I, uh. I'm sorry. That's…

IVY

Yeah.

(Pause.)

PHYLLIS

So this job is personal for you, huh?

IVY

Yeah.

(Pause.)

PHYLLIS

So, after… After, you went to college?

IVY

Right.

PHYLLIS

And then what?

IVY

I tried to start a business.

PHYLLIS

Oh goodness. I know how difficult that is these days. It's so easy to dream that you'll start a company and everything will magically work out when you have your whole life ahead of you, but the reality is so harsh, isn't it? If you don't have the experience, you just can't be expected to anticipate all the complications that come along with an endeavor like that. Youth is a blessing and a curse. You're blissfully unaware of most of the bad things in the world, but that also means

that you're simply unprepared to handle challenges when they come your way. But I suppose my generation only has itself to blame for that. We're the ones responsible for spoiling you all like this. I almost pity you.

IVY

You still don't get it, do you?

PHYLLIS

Pardon me?

IVY

I'm not any less capable just because I'm younger than you.

PHYLLIS

Look, I already apologized for earlier–

IVY

It's not even that. It's how you're still assuming things about me now.

PHYLLIS

Honey, I'm making observations. I know that–

IVY

No, you don't know.

PHYLLIS

Excuse me?

IVY

I said you don't know.

PHYLLIS

You don’t even know what I was going to say.

IVY

It doesn’t matter.

PHYLLIS

Okay, we can stop being overdramatic now.

IVY

I’m not being overdramatic. I’m just trying to get you to listen to me. That’s all I wanted from the beginning.

PHYLLIS

I am listening! Honestly, what more do you want from me?

IVY

Nothing. I want nothing from you.

PHYLLIS

Alright, I don’t know what’s wrong with you, but a word to the wise, I’d collect myself a bit before the interview. You’re not making much sense right now.

IVY

The interview is over.

PHYLLIS

What?

IVY

I said the interview is over.

PHYLLIS

Then why have you been sitting here with me for so long? Why are you even here?

(IVY stares at her in silence. PHYLLIS starts to panic as she realizes what has happened.)

PHYLLIS

No.

IVY

I'm afraid so.

PHYLLIS

No. No!

IVY

Phyllis, it's been thrilling, really, but unfortunately we cannot offer you the position at this time.

PHYLLIS

You have got to be joking.

IVY

I apologize for the unorthodox interview method, but I've found that people tend to be much more candid in situations like these.

PHYLLIS

Oh my–

IVY

The position requires a great deal of very personal dealings with young mothers, and by your own admission you are more suited for administrative duties. And you've made it clear that helping people is not your priority.

PHYLLIS

I can’t believe this!

IVY

I was hoping that you would be right for this, because you’re a mother yourself and like you said, you do have all the right credentials and experience. You even passed my integrity test with the binder.

PHYLLIS

This is ridiculous.

IVY

But if you can’t listen to or respect me as a person, I cannot be your boss. And if you can’t respect me, then why should I believe that you would respect the customers, the young women I specifically created this company to help?

PHYLLIS

This is completely ridiculous!

IVY

No, this is harsh reality, as you put it.

PHYLLIS

This is not ok! You can’t just– you can’t–

IVY

Again, I apologize. If you’d prefer a more administrative position, we have openings for interns and I would be happy to review your application for that.

PHYLLIS

Screw you.

IVY

In that case, we wish you the best of luck in future applications and apologize that this did not work out like we both hoped it would.

(IVY extends her hand to PHYLLIS, who ignores it. PHYLLIS takes her coat off the rack and quickly puts it on. She takes her umbrella from the rack and walks past IVY to the door. She exits. After a pause, EVELYN enters, carrying an umbrella. She puts it in the umbrella rack and takes a seat, folding her hands in her lap. Pause.)

IVY

Some storm, huh?

(Blackout.)